



CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER AREAS

CHARACTER AREAS



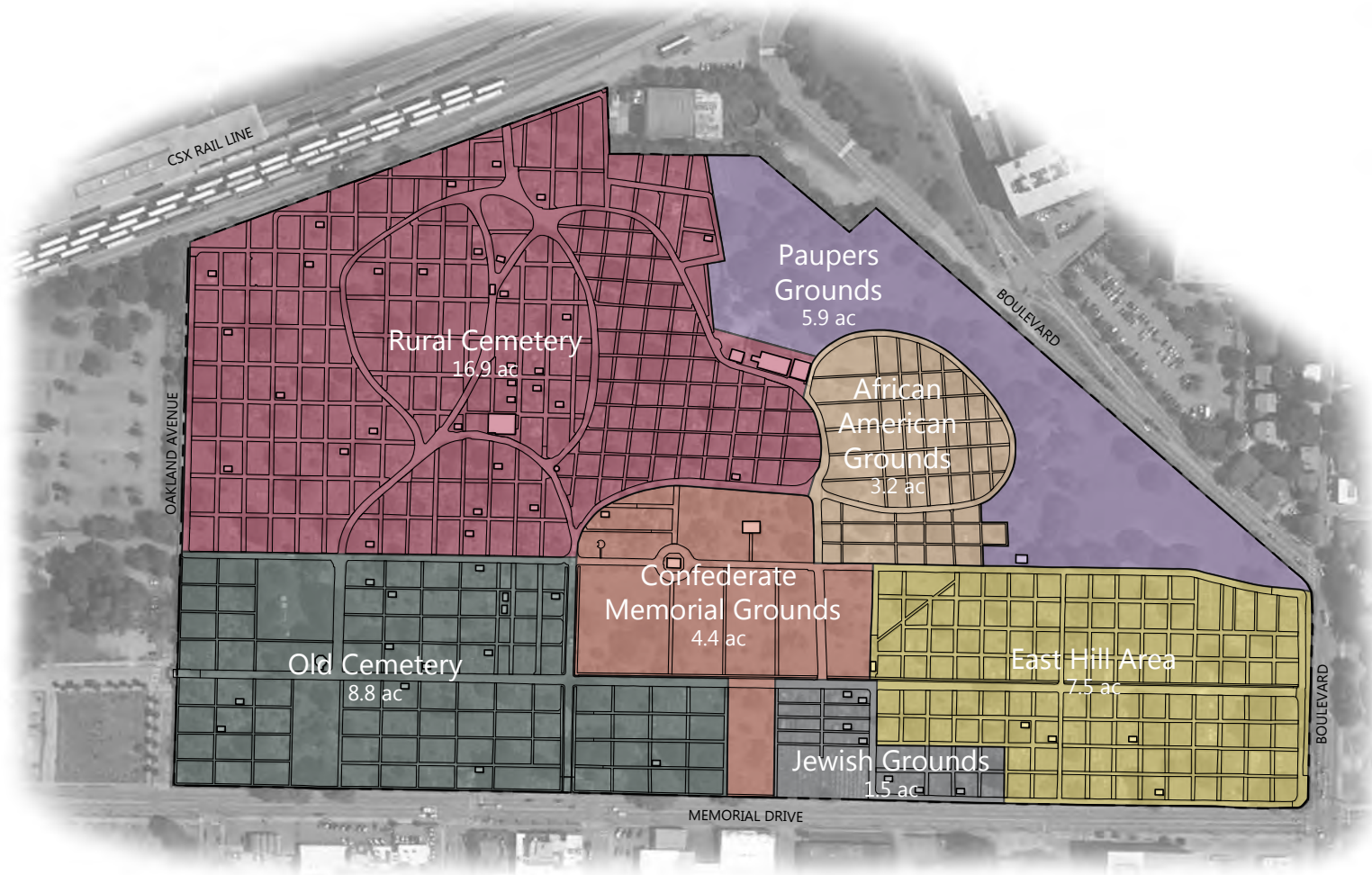
Due to its gradual growth since establishment, Oakland is comprised of unique spaces, each speaking to the era and communities buried there. The seven character areas were established in keeping with accurate historic records and features. Understanding the histories of each character area aids in planning for and prioritizing restoration efforts.

Though each character area is further divisible by more specific sub-areas (Old Jewish Grounds and Slave Square are within Old Cemetery), these seven present an approach to management based on the growth of the cemetery, burial traditions, and progress of restoration and enhancement efforts to-date.



*Top: View northeast towards the Boiler Room and Greenhouse. Bottom Left: Mausoleum doors on Jewish Hill.
Bottom Right: Pedestrian path in the African American Grounds.*

CHARACTER AREAS



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Old Cemetery

The tract at the southwest corner of the current cemetery was originally purchased in 1850 by the City of Atlanta from A.W. Wooding for a new municipal cemetery on the eastern edge of the city. Oakland's oldest graves are located in this section, including the grave of Agnes Wooding, who was buried on the original site before the land was purchased from her husband. This section also includes the Public Ground, Slave Square, and the Old Jewish Burial Grounds.



Looking east in Child Square.



Old Cemetery is distinguishable by dense plots and shaded areas.

The design of Old Cemetery is representative of secular cemeteries prevalent throughout the eastern United States that were often laid out in a geometric grid pattern. This part of Oakland represents its original intent, that of a cemetery born out of necessity due to overcrowding from other burial grounds.

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Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

This current restoration plan identifies the Old Cemetery as Phases Three and Four. Four is best known for Bobby Jones' grave. One quarter of the area's 8.8 acres (about 2.4) has been restored.

Identifiable Needs /Restoration Challenges:

- Recent loss of the tree canopy in this area makes it a priority for new planting when feasible.
- This is the most visible part of the cemetery because it is Oakland's front door. Future preservation efforts need to consider this in maintenance efforts.
- Erosion is occurring on sloping lots without retaining walls.
- Monument Drive represents the northern boundary of the character area. It extends to the western wall as an asphalt drive but with no opportunity for turning around. This part of the drive needs to change to better manage vehicles.
- The Guardhouse's use will continue to grow as more security personnel are hired.
- The viewshed extending west out of the cemetery needs to be maintained and is threatened by development along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.
- Some of the oldest headstones in this section are critically in need of restoration.
- There are serious erosion/collapse problems near the northern walkway boundary of Bobby Jones grave site .

CHARACTER AREAS

Rural Cemetery

The nearly 17 acres in the northwest portion of Oakland make up the Rural Cemetery. It is bordered by Oakland Avenue to the west, MARTA and CSX rail lines to the north, the Greenhouse and African American Grounds to the east. This portion of the cemetery is identifiable by generally less tree canopy and curvilinear roads.



The Rural Cemetery section has larger family plots, with a variety of wall and pavement materials with comparatively less tree canopy.

In 1866 and 1867 the city purchased additional land surrounding the Old Cemetery, nearly doubling the size of Oakland. Some of the highest points of elevation in the cemetery are in the central portion of the Rural Cemetery.

After the 1867 purchase, the city determined that a landscape gardener was needed to lay out the grounds. Responding to current design trends, it is believed this is what led to the curvilinear layout in this portion of the cemetery. The Rural Cemetery is known for its high-style architecture, large number of mausoleums, and well-known burials. It is also home to several impressive structures. Consequently, this portion of the cemetery, like the Old Cemetery, is heavily visited.

The 1899 Bell Tower is centrally located on high ground in the Rural Cemetery, overlooking many large mausoleums with elaborate architectural details. The Bell Tower is the home to the Historic Oakland Foundation offices, Visitors Center, sexton, gift shop and adjacent to newly restored grounds. Historically it is believed that the asphalt

road leading to the north wall was the location of a receiving tomb. There are two closed entrances in this section – one at the northwest corner, and the other directly north of the Bell Tower. On the eastern end of the character area is the newly restored Greenhouse flanked by the Boiler Room and Carriage House. These structures house workshops for restoration staff, offices for city workers, and storage.

The Rural Cemetery character area experiences significant topographic change, which causes



View northwest from Rural Cemetery towards downtown Atlanta.

CHARACTER AREAS

considerable flooding issues both around the Boiler Room and along Oakland's west wall. This area also sees the highest concentration of parked vehicles throughout the day, making it a very congested part of the cemetery. To date, over 22% of the Rural Cemetery has been restored, however the northern and western outskirts are less often visited and will take special consideration in addressing flooding.

Current state of Restoration/Preservation:

The area is home to what is known as Phases One and Two of HOF's previous restoration plan. These areas include restored walkways and heavily planted plots highlighting Victorian burial practices. The "Out in the Rain" Fountain has been repaired and is situated southeast of the Bell Tower. In total, 3.7 of the 16.9 acres have been restored including many prominent mausoleums.



View south along Oakland's west wall. Due to lack of access, this portion of the cemetery sees the fewest visitors.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- Thoughtful consideration should be given of how to best use the historic entrances.
- Parking needs to be managed to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
- The Bell Tower, Carriage House, and Boiler Room all require restoration, and space reallocation for staff needs to be reconsidered. Historic records are housed in the Bell Tower and are not protected from potential damage such as a fire.
- Sloping terrain creates challenges for wall restoration. Tall monuments are also challenging to restore.
- There are significant flooding issues along the west wall and near the Boiler Room due to non-functioning gutters and undersized drains.
- Prominent views of the state capitol from multiple vantage points have been preserved with the impending MARTA development. The following pages depict before and after images of the new development. Impact to Oakland's viewshed is minor.

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View west from the Rural Cemetery, with the State Capitol in the distance (Courtesy of Smith Dahlia Architects).

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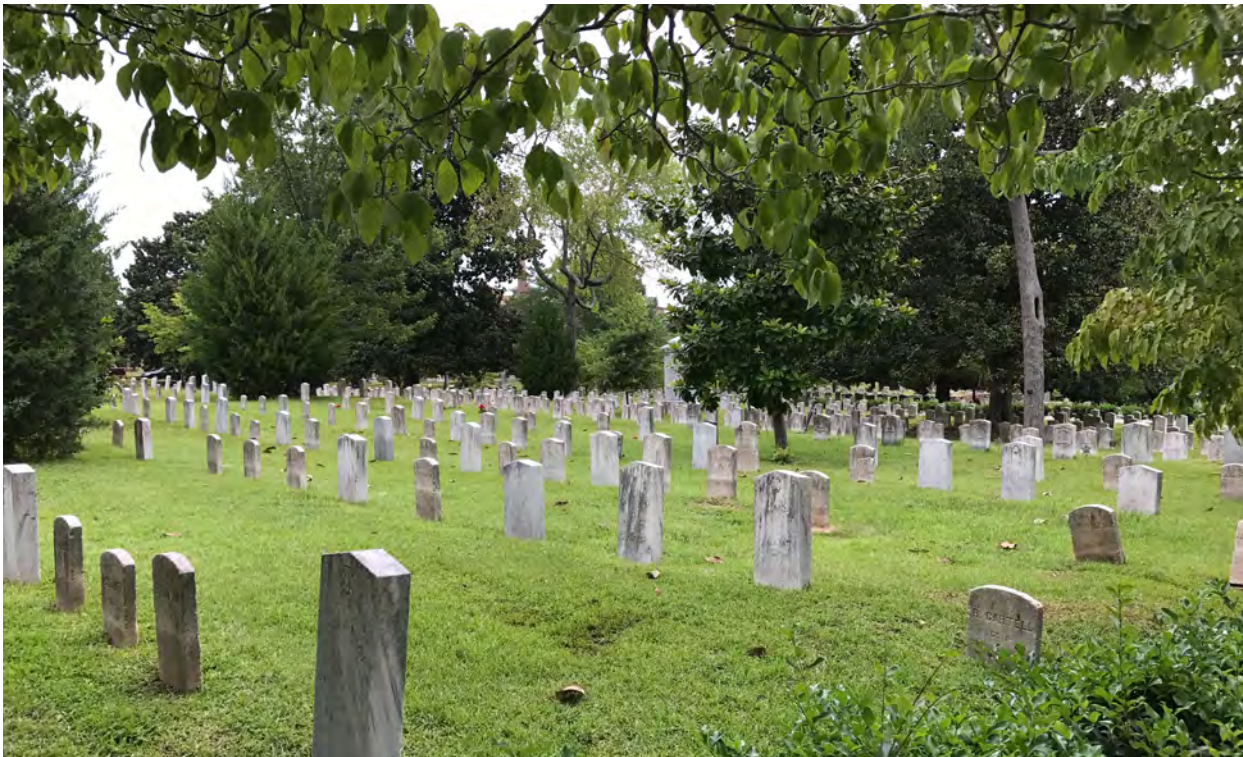
View west from the Rural Cemetery. The planned residential development will have little impact on Oakland's viewshed (Courtesy of Smith Dahlia Architects).

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Confederate Memorial Grounds

Oakland's most centrally located character area is the final resting place of approximately 7,000 Confederate soldiers, many of whom are unknown. Following Oakland's acquisition of additional land, this four-acre portion of the

cemetery began its transformation in 1866 by the Atlanta Ladies Memorial Association (ALMA). Several hundred of these graves were originally marked by simple painted wood headboards, then replaced by marble markers with rounded tops in 1890.



Consistent rows of gravemarkers in the Confederate cemetery create a unique landscape compared to small family plots elsewhere.

Near the center of the Confederate Memorial Grounds, Oakland's tallest monument is a sixty-foot granite obelisk memorial to the Confederate Dead. Erected by the ALMA the foundation of Stone Mountain granite was laid in 1870, on the day of the funeral of Robert. E. Lee. The monument wasn't completed and dedicated until Confederate Memorial Day, on April 26, 1874.

Flanking the obelisk to the northeast, the Lion of Atlanta monument commemorates unknown Confederate soldiers who died in the Battle of Atlanta. The large sculpture carved in marble from Tate, Georgia was commissioned by ALMA and unveiled in 1894. With the famous Lion of Lucerne as his model, T.M. Brady depicted a weeping lion, representing courage, and dying on a Confederate flag.

CHARACTER AREAS

This area of the cemetery has some of the most comprehensive documentation of the original layout and plant material. Portions of the grounds have been restored as part of an ongoing enhancement project. The City of Atlanta and Historic Oakland Foundation collectively worked to restore the original hexagonal pavers that are a prominent walking surface in this section.



The Lion of Atlanta

Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

The restored northwest portion of Confederate Memorial Grounds is called the Ladies Memorial and was sold publicly when it was not needed for Confederate burials. It was restored as part of the current Phase Two restoration plan. Recent landscape efforts have included installing the appearance of the original hedges and arbors at selected entrances. Overall only 0.25 of the 4.4 acres has been restored.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- This section of the cemetery has significant historic documentation. Portions of what currently exist today do not reflect the historic character of the space.
- A period of significance for the landscape of the Confederate Memorial Grounds should be formally established.
- The curbing and the roadways in this area are in poor condition and should be addressed.
- This area is used heavily for HOF events and improving accessibility needs to be a priority.
- Erosion in this area is extensive because the grounds are heavily trafficked.

CHARACTER AREAS

Jewish Grounds

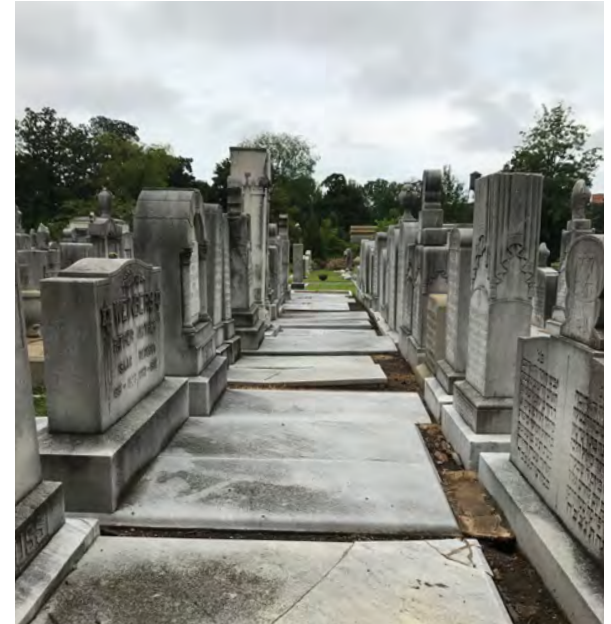
Jewish Flat and Jewish Hill make up the Jewish Grounds and are along Oakland's southern border. The land for Jewish Hill was acquired first, in 1878, and was the second acquisition by a Jewish group in the cemetery. (The Old Jewish Burial Grounds - acquired in 1860 - are a small southeastern portion within the Old Cemetery.)



Tall, narrow, and dense arrangement of gravemarkers in the Jewish Grounds.

Levi Cohen, president of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, (today known as The Temple) acquired the lots for Jewish Hill, and planned the site reflecting the assimilation of the old German-Jewish community into the Victorian Atlanta culture of the time. Artistic statuary, more landscaping, and elaborate mausoleums stand in contrast to the Jewish Flat immediately to the west.

The Temple acquired land for the Jewish Flat in 1892 and sold a small portion of the new plot to the Ahavath Achim Congregation, which was composed mainly of recent Russian immigrants. The dense placement of gravemarkers was in keeping with Russian-Jewish tradition and is clearly identifiable by tall headstones located close together. Initially planned with narrow passages, the limited space eventually prevented any formal walkways or aisles as burials filled available space. The gravemarkers, written in Hebrew, stand in



The Russian-Jewish portion of Jewish Grounds has no formal walkways or aisles.

contrast to the nearby graves of German Jews, who had largely abandoned the use of Hebrew by the 1890s. Oakland's three distinctly different Jewish burial areas reflect specific eras and traditions, and speak to the diverse histories of those interred within.

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Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

Much of the area has been restored or currently is being restored. This includes a new watering system that incorporates quick connects to new Murdocks. 70% of the 1.5 acres has been restored.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- Persistent drainage issues exist at the base of Jewish Hill and Memorial Drive that need to be addressed as part of infrastructure upgrades.
- There is an entrance to Memorial Drive known as the Park Drive entrance that should be reopened for pedestrian traffic.
- A new watering system is being installed in this area. It should be monitored for effectiveness and, if acceptable, expanded throughout other parts of the cemetery.
- The density of monuments in this area makes restoration a challenge.



Multiple images of the Jewish Grounds which has distinctive funerary architecture and is in the process of being restored.

CHARACTER AREAS

East Hill Area

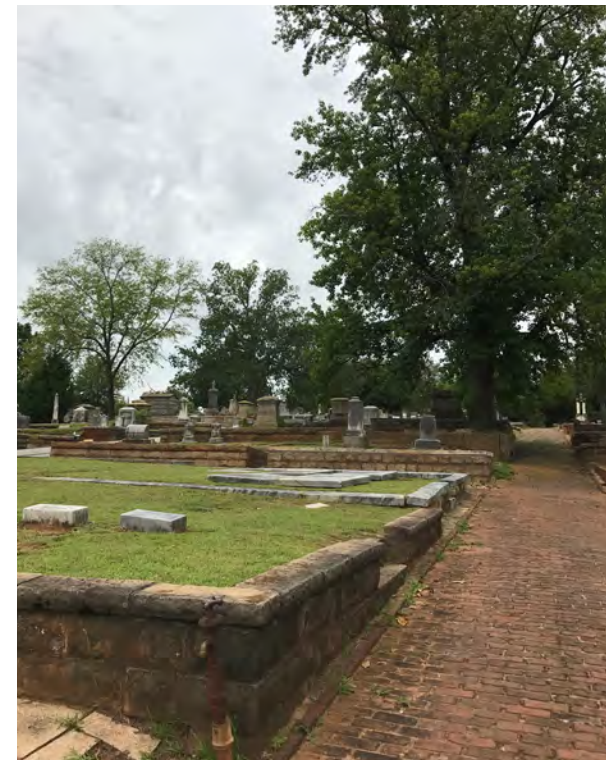
In 1866, the City of Atlanta acquired almost 24 acres of farm land to the east of the cemetery from Lemuel P. Grant, and a section of this land near the southeast corner, became known as Rogers Hill. The derivation of the name is unknown, though there are some markers bearing the name Rogers in this section. The new, more appropriate, name is the East Hill area representing the last portion of the cemetery to be developed and overlooking Boulevard. The change in topography is noticeable at the end of Old Hunter Street Drive where the cemetery is 10 to 14 feet above Boulevard. This character area is reflective of the southern half of the cemetery, with grid-like patterns intercepted by Monument Drive and Old Hunter Street Drive. The landscape changes dramatically north of East Hill where the topography slopes downward toward the Paupers Grounds. This area contains two former comfort stations which now are closed to the public and in poor condition. The Women's Comfort Station sits below street level adjacent to the Confederate Memorial Grounds. The Men's

Comfort Station lies to the northeast near African American Grounds. Both require stabilization, but the female comfort station is more threatened. Connecting them is a drainage line originally put in place to capture a dry creek in order to put in the road to open up the east end of the cemetery. Later this became the sanitary sewer connecting the comfort stations and is the only diagonal path in the cemetery. This sanitary line now acts as a



Looking south towards Memorial Drive, the easternmost road in the cemetery.

storm pipe and extends all the way to the east wall in Paupers Grounds. The drives and walks are a mix of brick, exposed aggregate, hexagon pavers, and asphalt.



East Hill has comparatively less tree canopy than older sections to the west.

CHARACTER AREAS

Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

Less than 3% of the 7.5 acres has been restored. However, HOF has taken steps to address vandalism on the eastern end of East Hill.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- There are several low lying areas that receive a great deal of surface groundwater which compromises the Women's Comfort Station.
- This area of the cemetery has the greatest number of walls and is also the most deteriorated. The walls should be a priority with any future condition assessment.
- HOF should consider visibility as part of the restoration effort, especially if a new entrance is constructed.
- The walk adjacent to Memorial Drive should be redesigned to address unsafe heights.
- HOF should prioritize the stabilization of



View west along the south wall bordering Memorial Drive.

both comfort stations.

- This area of the cemetery has a more complex underground drainage network that needs to be fully investigated.



View southwest in the East Hill area showcasing varying conditions of hardscape and landscape.



A deteriorated wall near the intersection of Boulevard and Memorial Dr.

CHARACTER AREAS

African American Grounds

From the inception of Atlanta's municipal cemetery in 1850, the burial grounds for slaves and free African Americans were, by custom and by law, separate from the other sections of the cemetery. In 1852, soon after Oakland was established, the Atlanta City Council ruled that slaves were to be buried on the eastern extremity of the property, apart from the public burial grounds, and this area became known as Slave Square. As the cemetery expanded over the years, the eastern boundary line moved further east and consequently the graves of many African Americans were exhumed and moved, some of them twice, to where they now lie in the area adjacent to Paupers Grounds.

Today, the final resting places of African Americans are in the northeastern portion of the cemetery in an area known as the African American Grounds (historically known as the Black Section), partially enclosed by Circle Drive. The paths between the tombstones were not paved with cement or bricks, but lined with brick and filled with chert, cinders, and

limestone screenings. There is one mausoleum located in this section, belonging to Antoine Graves, a realtor and educator. The graves of other prominent African Americans in this section include those of Bishop Wesley John Gaines, who founded Morris Brown College; Rev. Frank Quarles, the founder of the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary (precursor to Spelman College); and Carrie Steele Logan, who founded the first orphanage for African Americans in Atlanta.



View west towards the Carriage House.

Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

0.8 acres restored (or in progress) of 3.2 total acres has been restored. This includes new hardscape walkways and the recently completed Rev. Quarles lot. The roadway is in good repair and this area is now a focus of HOF in the next two years. This renewed focus includes support from the City of Atlanta.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- Lack of walls and a dense tree canopy have led to eroded slopes. However, there are many burials in this section that are well-maintained.
- Increasing interpretive opportunities will shed light on many unmarked burials and previously untold stories.
- Misplaced and missing headstones make restoration a challenge in this area.

CHARACTER AREAS



Restored Rev. Quarles Plot.



The African American Grounds are identifiable by fewer terrace walls, less defined plots, and more open space than other character areas.

CHARACTER AREAS

Paupers Grounds

Just beyond the African American Grounds to the east, there is a sloping, grassy hillside encompassing approximately six acres, known as Paupers Grounds. Among the estimated 7,500 persons interred in this section, many are some of Atlanta's poorest citizens, indigents, and unknown persons of various races and religions. However, archaeological investigations in the 1970s suggest that not all of those interred here were from Atlanta's pauper population and that this area also contains a number of graves of the moderate-to-low income class of Atlanta's nineteenth-century population. Some of the graves, spaced less than a foot apart, were originally marked by wood headboards or small headstones, which have deteriorated or been removed over time. This area was utilized as a burial place until the mid-1880s. A rectangular monument represents those buried, stating, "A memorial to the citizens of Atlanta who are buried in unmarked graves." This area is prone to flooding and contains several large catch basins and a granite swale along the Boulevard stone wall. **Because of the absence of grave markers and an overall lack of records, the exact size and dimensions of this section are not known (A. Shares, 4/12/2018- citing S. VanBeck).**



View northeast toward the former Fulton Cotton Mill.



View from Paupers Grounds to the East Hill area.



View south in Paupers Grounds near the African American Grounds.



Drainage swale along the eastern wall in Paupers Grounds.

CHARACTER AREAS

Current State of Restoration/Preservation:

This portion of the cemetery is regularly mowed by the City of Atlanta. It faces flooding problems that make this part of the cemetery difficult to navigate. The east wall is currently being repaired by the city.

Identifiable Needs / Restoration Challenges:

- The dimensions of the burial area are not know. Further archaeological investigation is recommended to determine the extent of burials (Shares, 4/12/18)
- Utility poles should be relocated or obscured by vegetation.
- HOF should continue to implement the Landscape Management Plan which includes removal of historically inappropriate trees.
- HOF and the city should consider transforming portions of the lawn into a meadow.
- The catch basin network and stone swale do not support the hydrology of the cemetery and alternatives should be examined.
- Interpretation is minimal but additional signage would be powerful.



View north in Paupers Grounds.

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