Discovering Our Ancestors and Preserving Historic Gravesites

Introduction to Investigating, Documenting, and Preserving Gravesites

MAY 10, 2023
Mary Fernandez, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Jason Church, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training
Barbara Barksdale
Friends of Midland Cemetery, PA Hallowed Grounds Project
Midland Cemetery

And the

Pennsylvania Hallowed Grounds

Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Barbara Barksdale, presenter
The beginning
Pre-Conservation Site
Getting the community to be aware of the history

Board members on site
Visitors exploring the history
Wooden headstones of the Roebuck family
What is the game plan to clean the cemetery up.
So much to do
of May next, at Ashley-Ferry; a choice cargo of about 250 fine healthy
NEGROES,
just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast.
—The utmost care has already been taken, and shall be continued, to keep them free from the least danger of being infected with the SMALL-POX, no boat having been on board, and all other communication with people from Charles-Town prevented.
Ashley-Ferry, 7 May, 1761.
Mary Ann Dixon was born in Virginia
Colonel Robert Shaw
Died at the Soldiers' Home.

Six months ago Jeremiah Jackson, a gallant member of the colored troops during the rebellion and one of the first to enter Richmond after it surrendered, went to the Soldiers' Home, at Erie, and on Thursday last he died. On Sunday his remains arrived and after services in the A. M. E. Church, were interred in the Midland cemetery, Rev. Brooks officiating. Deceased was 64 years old and was a highly respected citizen. Many went to view the remains.

FUNERAL TO-DAY.—The funeral of Jennie Simpson, wife of Sam Simpson, was held at her late residence, 40 Furnace street, this morning at 10 o'clock. Interment was made in the Midland cemetery.
Students of the Hygienic Colored School on Adam and Bailey Streets in Steelton, PA
3rd USCT re enactors of Philadelphia

Annual memorial day service at Midland Cemetery honoring the veterans
Eagle Scout Policare project of placing new fencing along Cole Alley and a veteran monument at the corner intersection of Kelker Street
Federal employees (day of caring) cleaning headstones
The Road does not end at Midland, this is just the beginning!
Midland Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 27, 2023

PENNSYLVANIA, DAUPHIN COUNTY,
Midland Cemetery,
206 Kelker St.,
Swatara Township, MP100008865,

LISTED, 4/27/2023
(African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644 - c. 1970 MPS)
Gaynell Brady
Our Mammy’s LLC
Genealogy & Gravesites

- Importance of grave sites in African American genealogy research
- How burial information increases knowledge about your ancestors' lives?
- Why should we get involved in the preservation of burial grounds?
Dedication

Paternal 3rd Great Grandmother
Lizzie Riley

& Paternal 2nd Great Grandmother
Classie (Clarissa) Nixon
Dedication

Lizzie Riley (1839 - ?) & Dempsey Nixon (1830 - ?)  
13 children (Clarissa)

m. 1870  
Joe Riley (1837 - ? )  
2 children
Dedication

Classie Nixon (1869-1941)
20 children

m. 1883 Charlie Clifford, other children fathered by William Coates & James Sultzer

William Coates, 2nd great grandfather
Genealogy & Gravesites
Genealogy & Gravesites

• Museums, cemeteries, and churches are often overlooked during genealogy research

• Historical sites also offer insights into our ancestors’ history and culture

• Visit places where your ancestors lived
Genealogy & Gravesites

Russell Everett (c.1845-1913)

• Found while researching families of Fazendeville (Chalmette Battlefield)

• Union soldier
Genealogy & Gravesites

Where are my ancestors buried?

• Obituaries
• Death Certificates
• Oral history
Genealogy & Gravesites

Obituaries

- Online newspapers (genealogybank.com or newspapers.com)
- Easily obtained from family historian
- Found in public libraries
- Church records/funeral programs

St. Mark Cemetery, Glynn, LA (Rougon, LA)
Genealogy & Gravesites

• Photocopy or scan
• Highlight names, dates, and locations
• Look for Internment location
Genealogy & Gravesites

Death Certificate

• State Office of Vital Records
• State Archives
• May not exist depending on the date of death
• Place of burial located at the bottom

Death Certificate William Brown (1871-1947)
Genealogy & Gravesites

Oral History

• Speak with relatives who lived during your ancestors’ lifetime

• Talk with neighbors who lived near your ancestors

St. Mark Cemetery, Glynn, LA (Rougon, LA)
Genealogy & Gravesites

Paternal Burial Sites

Note: Oral history says St. Mark Cemetery is located in Glynn, Louisiana. Other sources state Rougon, LA.
Genealogy & Gravesites

St. Mark Baptist Church Cemetery

• Located adjacent to sugar cane fields and up the road from Glynnwood Plantation
• Town named after Martin Glynn
• Operated by St. Mark Baptist Church

Glynnwood Plantation, Glynn, LA
Genealogy & Gravesites

Maternal Burial Sites

- Florence (living) (Resthaven Cemetery, New Orleans, LA)
- Delilah Jackson [Charles] Landry (Resthaven Cemetery, New Orleans, LA)
- Willie Landry, Jr. (Resthaven Cemetery, New Orleans, LA)
- Florence Jefferson Willet (Holt Cemetery, New Orleans, LA)
- Josephine Buchanan Landry (Holt Cemetery)
- Belle London Jefferson (Holt Cemetery, New Orleans)
- Leslie Ross Buchanan (Orleans Parish)
- Sarah Green Meyers (Holt Cemetery, New Orleans)
- Sallie Robins (East Feliciana Parish)
Genealogy & Gravesites

Holt Cemetery

- Opened late 1800s in New Orleans
- Used a coroner’s burial site until 1960s
- Owned and operated by City of New Orleans
- Most affordable burial site in New Orleans

Holt Cemetery, New Orleans, LA
Genealogy & Gravesites

Holt Cemetery, New Orleans, LA
Genealogy & Gravesites

• Why should I get involved in the preservation of burial grounds?
• Why should I care?

Bell London Jefferson, New Orleans, LA
Genealogy & Gravesites

• To say thank you
• To remember
• To preserve what’s left
• To preserve history

Bell London Jefferson, New Orleans, LA
Photo credit: Arthur Ruiz
Genealogy & Gravesites

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Jason Church
National Center for Preservation Technology and Training
Importance of Cemetery Documentation
Plants as Grave Markers
“Unconventional” Grave Markers
Survey Forms / Written Documentation

• Several forms available
• Not all forms serve all needs
• Check your State Historic Preservation Office for State Forms
• “Cemetery Conditions Assessment Form” used by NCPTT with an additional “Terms and Definitions” attachment.

• “Rapid Cemetery Documentation Form” and “Rapid Cemetery Documentation Definitions“. These were developed by NCPTT as a disaster response tool.

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/cemetery-conservation.htm
Written Documentation

- Before you begin pick your form
- Decide the “meaning” of all terms on the form
- Train all people involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of interment (circle one):</th>
<th>tomb</th>
<th>marker</th>
<th>family name marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of tomb (circle one):</td>
<td>mausoleum</td>
<td>vault</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of marker (circle all that apply):</td>
<td>headstone</td>
<td>footstone</td>
<td>ground tablet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ruin</td>
<td>cross</td>
<td>pedestal obelisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedestal column</td>
<td>funeral home plaque</td>
<td>other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions (primary stone)</td>
<td>Height:</td>
<td>Width:</td>
<td>Depth (or L):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions (base)</td>
<td>Height:</td>
<td>Width:</td>
<td>Depth (or L):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions (other):</td>
<td>Height:</td>
<td>Width:</td>
<td>Depth (or L):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation (circle one): North</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interment status (circle one): active</td>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>abandoned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of interment (circle all that apply): standing</td>
<td>ruin</td>
<td>fragment</td>
<td>relocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>altered</td>
<td>replica</td>
<td>tilted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of interment (circle one): individual</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>undeterminable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestal (circle one): yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base (circle one): yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornament (circle all that apply): urn</td>
<td>sculpture</td>
<td>cross</td>
<td>plaque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incised decoration</td>
<td>ornamental vase</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture (circle all that apply): sculpture</td>
<td>container/vase</td>
<td>plaque</td>
<td>immortelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape (circle all that apply): brick</td>
<td>asphalt</td>
<td>concrete</td>
<td>soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclosure (circle all that apply): curb</td>
<td>wall</td>
<td>fence</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade slope (circle one): positive</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>cross-slope</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of grade (circle one): 0 (low)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 (high)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Headstone and Footstones

[Images of headstones and a cemetery]

Preservation Leadership Forum
Ledgers etc.
Funeral Home Plaque
Documentation

LEWIS H HAMILTON/
BORN FEB. 2, 1922 /
DIED JAN. 20, 1978 /
BECAME A /
MEMBER OF ST /
JOHN BAPTIST /
CHURCH /
IN HIS EARLY DAY
FLORINCES JACK “S”(b.w.)ON/
DIED. “S”(b.w.)EPT 2. . 1946/
AT S . 2 . W. 34 ST/
“S”(b.w.)AV GA

FLORINCES JACKS*ON/
DIED. S*EPT 2. . 1946/
AT S . 2 . W. 34 ST/
S*AV GA

* Indicates backwards letter
https://www.findagrave.com/
Documentation
Iconography

*Stories in Stone; A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* by Douglas Keister
Photodocumentation
Photodocumention

Do not use

• Shaving cream
• Flour
• Chalk
Photodocumentation
Involve the community.
Documentation

Other Types Phase of Surveys

• Historical Documentation (primary resources)
• Historic / Community Photographs
• Oral interviews
Branching out, Who Were the Makers?
QUESTION AND ANSWER

Use the chat box on the bottom right to ask questions of the speakers.
Keep Learning

• Upcoming webinar in this series:
  • Beginning to Care for a Gravesite, June 21 at 3pm eastern
Thank you!

Visit Our Website: forum.savingplaces.org

Watch for Upcoming Webinars & View Webinar Archives: forum.savingplaces.org/forum-webinar

Contact Us: forumonline@savingplaces.org