

PH 0662925

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1978
DATE ENTERED	SEP 6 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Laurel Grove-South Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON

Laurel Grove-South Cemetery

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

37th Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Georgia

VICINITY OF

CODE
13

COUNTY
Chatham

CODE
051 ✓

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__DISTRICT

__BUILDING(S)

__STRUCTURE

XSITE

__OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

XPUBLIC

__PRIVATE

__BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__IN PROCESS

__BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

XOCCUPIED

__UNOCCUPIED

__WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

XYES: RESTRICTED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__NO

PRESENT USE

__AGRICULTURE

__COMMERCIAL

__EDUCATIONAL

__ENTERTAINMENT

__GOVERNMENT

__INDUSTRIAL

__MILITARY

__MUSEUM

__PARK

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__RELIGIOUS

__SCIENTIFIC

__TRANSPORTATION

XOTHER: cemetery

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Savannah

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Chatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Laurel Grove-South is a fifteen acre cemetery located at the western end of 37 Street in Savannah, Georgia. This black section is separated from the white portion of Laurel Grove by Highway 204.

The original plan of Laurel Grove was done by J. O. Morse, a northern engineer, while he was in Savannah assisting with the proposal for a new waterworks. William George, a landscape gardener, was hired to carry out Morse's plan. It is not clear whether Morse or George participated in the laying out of Laurel Grove-South or limited themselves to designing the white cemetery.

The oldest section of Laurel Grove-South, bounded by First Avenue, Fourth Avenue, George Street, and Booker Street, is laid out in a grid pattern. A row of stones which marks a mass re-interment of slave graves forms the southern boundary of this section. As the burial area expanded, a modified grid design evolved with less emphasis on geometric regularity. Numerous live oaks with Spanish moss are set back from the sandy lanes which traverse the cemetery.

The predominant type of grave marker in Laurel Grove-South is a small stone tablet, slightly rounded at the top. Decoration on these markers is minimal, with an occasional wreath motif or cross embellishment. The gravestone of Flora Boles, died 1860, contains a carved image of a mourning woman standing underneath a weeping willow. Several tombstones are lancet-shaped. These range from simple undecorated tablets to the more monumental marker of Jane A. Deveraux, died 1883. This lancet-shaped tablet surmounts a three-tiered pedestal and is embellished with a garland motif and molding. The inscription is raised on a shield.

There are very few mausolea in the cemetery, probably less than ten. Most of these are rectangular brick structures. The Robert Verdier family vault is fronted by a brick facade which projects above the vault itself. This facade contains a large stone inscriptional tablet as well as a semi-circular stone nameplate with floral decoration. In at least two of these brick mausolea the soft mortar has given way, thus exposing the interior. The rectangular A. M. Monroe mausoleum is constructed of coursed quarry-faced ashlar masonry with black iron gate opening into the interior of the vault. The other style of mausoleum found in Laurel Grove-South is a rectangular white stucco structure with tablets recessed into the front.

One brick three-crypt walk-in vault similar to those in the Colonial Cemetery is fronted by a stepped gable facade which frames three recesses for commemorative tablets. The individual vaults are covered by triangular gable roofs.

There are several monolith grave markers in the cemetery. These range from the hexagonal white stone monolith which marks the grave of Rev. Ulysses L. Houston to the pink marble column surmounted by an urn which commemorates the gravesite of member of the Morse family.

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Very few of the gravesites have any delineation of grounds around the monuments. However, three or four do have a cast iron fence which encloses a small space around the grave. These range from simple railing to the ornate iron work which surrounds the grave of Rev. Houston.

Twentieth century grave markers range from the common granite monument to concrete slabs poured on the ground into which have been pressed the name and dates of the deceased.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Commemoration
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1852 to present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

J. O. Morse

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Laurel Grove-South cemetery is a significant record of Black history in the Savannah, Georgia, area. It documents various aspects of Black social history in the nineteenth century that have not been extensively reported in the more traditional historical media.

The beginnings of Laurel Grove Cemetery are linked with the recurring fever epidemics which periodically took their gruesome toll in this port city. By the mid-nineteenth century, city encroachment on the old colonial cemetery was necessitating a new burial site. The selection of the Laurel Grove site was a function of increasing concern for health reasons about the rice cultivation which bordered the city on the southwest. While the mosquito had not yet been determined to be the cause of "malarious fevers," health officials did suspect that wet culture contributed to their spread. Accordingly, the city fathers had managed to arrange a corridor of dry culture around the city, except on the plantation of Joseph Stiles which bordered Savannah on the southwest. After Stiles' death, the city of Savannah, in 1850, determined to buy the land for resale for dry culture purposes and for the establishment of a new cemetery. A canal was dug, the low land drained and resold, and the high land readied for interment.

J. O. Morse, a northern engineer who was in Savannah to assist with the proposal for a new waterworks, won the \$100 awarded for the best plan of the new cemetery. Morse subsequently surveyed the site and William George, a landscape gardener, was employed to carry out his plan. The Ogeechee Plank Road Company, in consideration of \$5,000 in city bonds, laid a plank road from the city to the cemetery. Finally, on the tenth of November, 1852, the dedication ceremonies were held for the new Laurel Grove Cemetery.

Fifteen acres of the Laurel Grove site were set aside for the burial of "free persons of color and slaves." The land so designated was the farthest from the city as well as the lowest, no doubt in accordance with the current status of its future residents. The ordinances enacted in 1852 regulating the cemetery show similar evidences of discrimination. For various infractions of these rules, an appropriate fine was levied against a white person. A black person was subject not only to a like fine, but also "to such corporal punishment as the Mayor may cause to be inflicted."

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Laurel Grove Cemetery; An Account of its Dedication. Savannah, 1853.
Report of Honorable Herman Myers, Mayor. Savannah, 1901.
Savannah Morning News/Press, August 8, 1973.
 Perdue, Robert E., The Negro in Savannah 1865-1900. New York: Exposition Press, 1973.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 15 acres ^{2 35} *Lebowich see cont. sheet 8/24/78*
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 7	4, 8, 9	4, 3, 0	3, 5	4, 7	2, 7, 0	B	1, 7	4, 8, 9	3, 3, 0	3, 5	4, 7	0, 3, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING
C	1, 7	4, 8, 8	8, 8, 0	3, 5	4, 6	6, 7, 0	D	1, 7	4, 8, 8	7, 3, 0	3, 5	4, 6	8, 3, 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on the south by the Ogeechee Road; on the east by Kollock Street; on the north by the I-16 ramp; on the west by the property boundary which runs on a diagonal line roughly parallel to Kollock Street; and the south and rear lot lines of the city nursery at the northeast corner of the cemetery.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Steve Henson, Intern
Morton R. McInvale, Manager, Historic Analysis Unit, Hist. Preservation Section
 ORGANIZATION Historic Preservation Section DATE July 1977
 STREET & NUMBER 270 Washington Street, S. W. TELEPHONE (404) 656-2840
 CITY OR TOWN Atlanta STATE Georgia 30334

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Elizabeth A. Lyon 2/9/78
 TITLE Acting Chief, Historic Preservation Section DATE 2/9/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
ATTEST: <u>[Signature]</u>	DATE <u>9.16.78</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>8.29.78</u>

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In 1855, all bodies in potter's field and the negro cemetery were ordered exhumed and re-interred in Laurel Grove-South to make room for city expansion. Most of the black burials removed to Laurel Grove were those of slaves. These burials in the old cemetery were extremely simple, without, in many cases, well-marked graves, or even tombstones. Thus, when these graves were exhumed, they were moved en masse to a location in Laurel Grove, re-interred, and any associated markers which could be found at the old cemetery lined up in a row to mark this mass grave. The inscriptions on these markers range from name (Christian and surname) and dates with occasionally a short religious poem, to those which record only a Christian name, as for example the stone which records simply the name "AUGUST."

The graves of slaves who died after the opening of Laurel Grove reveal this same dichotomy of memorialization. Again, some are marked solely by a crude stone with Christian name. However, other stones, sometimes erected by the slave's master, give details about the person's life. The grave of "SARAH" is an excellent example of this type and illustrates the extent of the documentary record to be found in Laurel Grove-South.

This Tablet
is erected by her surviving master
to the memory of
SARAH,
the excellent colored servant of
Mrs. Corinne Louisa Hutchison,
who in her 20th year was drowned
by the destruction at sea of the steamer
PULASKI,
on the night of the 14th June,
1858

From the age of eleven years, at which she became the personal attendant of her mistress, Sarah was never known to tell a falsehood, to take the most trifling article which did not belong to her, or for a moment to lose sight of her habitual good temper.

Always cheerful, affectionate, intelligent and trusty, She was the very model of a faithful servant and enjoyed as she served the respect, confidence and affection of each member of the family to whose service she was devoted.

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Laurel Grove-South also contains the largest number of free blacks of any cemetery in Georgia. Especially significant among these are the graves of Andrew Bryan and Andrew Marshall. Andrew Bryan was born a slave on the plantation of Jonathan Bryan outside Savannah. In 1783, Bryan was converted to the Baptist faith by an itinerant black missionary, George Liele. Shortly after his baptism, he began to preach to his fellow slaves. Subsequently, in January of 1788, Bryan's incipient congregation was visited by Abraham Marshall (white) who ordained Andrew Bryan and officially organized the congregation. The congregation under Bryan's leadership was the first black Baptist church in North America. Bryan, after his master's death with the help of white friends, bought his freedom in 1789 or 1790 and continued to pastor the church, often under oppressive conditions, until his death in 1812.

Andrew Marshall, buried in a three-crypt burial vault next to the grave of Andrew Bryan, was Bryan's nephew and the second pastor of his new church. Like Andrew Bryan, Marshall was born a slave, but managed to purchase his freedom. Marshall was also the founder of what is now the First African Baptist Church in Savannah. Next to Marshall in the vault is Rev. Henry Cunningham, the first pastor of the Second African Baptist Church in Savannah.

The three-crypt burial vault which contains the remains of Revs. Andrew Marshall and Henry Cunningham forms a striking contrast with the row of simple stones which mark the mass grave of slaves less than one hundred yards away. The lengthy and detailed tablets which front the graves of the pastors who were so important to the stability of the black community in ante-bellum Savannah are clear testimony of their rise out of the class of slaves who received scarce individual attention in any historical media. In recognition of the supreme importance of Revs. Bryan, Marshall, and Cunningham to the black community, the local chapter of the NAACP, in 1972-73, funded a historic restoration of their graves. This involved needed restoration work and was accomplished without alteration of the form or style of the graves. Members of the black community also recognize the importance of the mass grave of slaves to their heritage and are concerned that it too retains its historic appearance. At present, this row of stones is overgrown with vines and many stones are sinking under their own weight into the sandy soil.

In addition to the graves of slaves and free blacks, Laurel Grove-South also documents a sub-class of mulattoes in ante-bellum Savannah. Many mulattoes were slaves, of course, but in Laurel Grove-South are the graves of members of the free Mirault family. The Miraults were mulattoes who came to Savannah in 1790 to escape the slave revolt in Santo Domingo. Aspasia Mirault became one of Savannah's first bakers. Other Miraults later became tailors, seamstresses, and bricklayers, taking their places among the artisan class.

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Also among the mulattoes buried in Laurel Grove-South are members of the Deveaux families. Jane A. Deveaux, a free mulatto, is listed as seamstress and pastry cook on the Chatham County register of "free persons of color" between 1828 and 1863. Her tombstone, however, records a far more important occupation which she pursued. Between 1836 and 1864, Jane Deveaux ran a clandestine school, teaching blacks to read. For almost 30 years she risked fines and public whippings for her efforts to educate her people. Her tombstone in Laurel Grove-South registers her true importance, recording that she was "a devoted Christian celebrated as a early educator of her people, she has built for herself a name more enduring than monuments of stone or brass."

The grave of the Rev. James M. Simms is another very important landmark in black history in Savannah and the State. Simms, like Jane Deveaux, taught blacks to read and write in the years preceding the Civil War. He spent the war years in Boston, returning to Savannah after Sherman occupied the city. Simms became one of the most effective black political leaders during Reconstruction. He was instrumental in the organization of the Republican party in Savannah and served in the state Senate from 1870 until 1872 when blacks were expelled from the legislature. Before his election to the legislature Simms had founded the Southern Radical and Freedmen's Journal in 1867, the first black publication in Savannah after the Civil War. Simms' tombstone in Laurel Grove-South records another, lesser known fact about his life: "First Grand Master of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons Georgia and Jurisdiction..." Simms was the first black Mason in Georgia.

Another of the three black Reconstruction legislators buried in Laurel Grove-South is Rev. Ulysses L. Houston. Houston, listed as a "drayman" on the ante-bellum register of free blacks, became pastor of the First Bryan Baptist Church in Savannah in 1861, serving the church until 1880. Houston's cemetery marker is one of the few monoliths in Laurel Grove-South and is surrounded by a black iron decorative fence which clearly signifies his importance. A biographical sketch of Houston published in 1888 in Atlanta noted that "In the ministerial field, no man in the State is so widely known and more highly esteemed, revered and respected... He has been identified with all of the great movements in this and other States looking to the advancement of the cause of Christ and our fellow-man. To the Baptist cause of the State he is regarded as a father and a shepherd. No one in the denomination possesses so fully, thoroughly and completely the entire confidence of all as he." The local chapter of the NAACP, in recognition of Rev. Houston's importance to the black community, accomplished needed restoration work on Houston's grave site in 1973.

One of the reasons why Laurel Grove-South is such an important landmark to the black community in the Savannah area is because its tombstones and grave markers are in many cases the only visible memorial and documented record to many of the most important black in the city's history. The stone of Samuel Benjamin Morse is

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an example of the type of historical information, often unavailable elsewhere, which this cemetery retains: "...He was one of the first colored men to graduate at one of our institutes, Atlanta University, after the Civil War. Bringing his Church letter from Atlanta he joined the First Congregational Church of Savannah, and became a Sunday School Superintendent, for nearly ten years; and one of its trustees for nearly twenty years. And serving a number of years as musical director and organist. He was a man of considerable usefulness. For a number of years he was employed in the United States Government and was delegate in some National Conventions, and did nominate some Presidents of the United States."

Laurel Grove-South is a very important landmark of black history in the Savannah area. The records preserved on its stones provide in many cases the only remaining public documentation of the lives of many of Savannah's most important black citizens. In addition to the historical record which the tombstones themselves preserve, the physical arrangement of the graves as well as the types of grave markers record changes in the social status of blacks in nineteenth century Savannah. For example, the row of simple, weathered stones which marks the mass re-interment of slaves in 1855 contrasts with the graves of Revs. Andrew Marshall and Henry Cunningham in a relatively massive three-crypt walk-in vault. While Revs. Bryan and Cunningham were re-interred in Laurel Grove at the same time as the slaves in the mass grave, their final resting place bespeaks their prominence as pastors in ante-bellum Savannah. The grave of Rev. Ulysses L. Houston, with its monolith surrounded by a wrought iron fence, stands as visible testimony to the importance of black pastors after the Civil War. The economic position of blacks in Savannah is also documented in Laurel Grove. There are very few mausolea in the cemetery and little ornate decoration of tombstones. One often observes twentieth century graves where names and dates pressed into wet concrete serve as the only commemorative stones.

Current leaders of the black community in Savannah recognize the importance of Laurel Grove-South to their heritage and social and historical awareness. The gravestone of Dolly Bryan records that this consciousness of the importance of adequate memorialization for the preservation of black historical heritage was operating in ante-bellum Savannah: "Sacred to the memory of Dolly Bryan, wife of Andrew Bryan, who departed this life May 15th 183[?] aged 97 years and 6 months. She was 51 years a member of the first African church in this city. This stone is erected by the Rev. Andrew Marshall [died 1856] as a tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased."

Laurel Grove-South and the black history it preserves, is tightly woven into the social fabric of Savannah and exists as an essential component of the city's historic heritage.

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AMENDMENT


LAUREL GROVE-SOUTH CEMETERY, SAVANNAH, CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

This statement is attached in reference to questions concerning the total acreage included within this nomination. In the nomination submitted to the National Register office on February 8, 1978, it specified the verbal boundary description and listed the acreage as 15. We have rechecked the acreage figure. The verbal boundary description remains the same as that originally given in the nomination form, but the correct total acreage is approximately 35, rather than 15. This has been reviewed several times and checked with Steve Henson, preparer of the nomination.

Prepared By:

Mr. Morton R. McInvale
Historic Preservation Section
Department of Natural Resources
270 Washington Street, S. W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

July 28, 1978



Elizabeth A. Lyon, Ph.D., Chief
Historic Preservation Section
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer