

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 07000186

Date of Listing: March 20, 2007

Property Name: Oakland Cemetery

County: Gibson

State: Tennessee

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*for* Dannel J. Vivan  
Signature of the Keeper

March 20, 2007  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5. Classification

The resource count is hereby changed to one noncontributing building, one contributing site, one contributing structure, and two noncontributing structures, for a total of two contributing and three noncontributing resources.

Section 8. Statement of Significance

The applicable area of significance is hereby changed to exploration/settlement.

[These changes were made in consultation with and approved by the National Register staff of the Tennessee SHPO.]

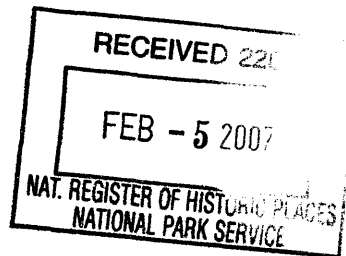
The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oakland Cemetery  
other names/site number Silent City of the Dead

2. Location

street & number 800 Brownsville St. NA  not for publication  
city or town Trenton NA  vicinity  
state Tennessee code TN county Gibson code 053 zip code 38382

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard H. [Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

1/31/07  
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other,

(explain:)

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

3/20/07 Date of Action

Daniel J. Vivan

Oakland Cemetery  
Name of Property

Gibson County, Tennessee  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> private                 | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal          | <input type="checkbox"/> structure       |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object          |

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
1		sites
1	1	structures
		objects
3	2	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: Cemetery

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Funerary: cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation NA

walls NA

roof NA

other STONE, METAL

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C moved from its original location.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Settlement Patterns

Period of Significance

1825-1956

Significant Dates

1825: cemetery founded
1828: oldest stone document in place
1900-1904: gazebo constructed

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hight, Alfred (builder of gazebo); multiple; unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
Previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal Agency
Local Government
University
Other

Name of repository:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Oakland Cemetery  
Name of Property

Gibson County, Tennessee  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 31 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Trenton 437 NW

1	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>324493</u> Easting	<u>3982409</u> Northing	3	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>324661</u> Easting	<u>3982601</u> Northing
2	<u>16</u>	<u>324671</u>	<u>3982409</u>	4	<u>16</u>	<u>324468</u>	<u>3982028</u>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Lauren W. Grisham, Emily Reid, and Carroll Van West  
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date September 7, 2006  
street & number Box 80 telephone (615) 494-8783  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Trenton, c/o Tommy Litton, Major  
street & number 309 S. College St. telephone (731) 855-2013  
city or town Trenton state TN zip code 38382

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Oakland Cemetery,  
Gibson County, Tennessee

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Oakland Cemetery is located in the city of Trenton (population 4,602), the seat of Gibson County, Tennessee. The irregularly shaped 60-acre cemetery is situated in the city's southwest corner, near the historic downtown, on the corner of West Eighth Street and South Brownsville Street. The lot is bounded on the west by the historic corridor of the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad and in the north, east, and south by residential lots and agricultural land. Around 1900 the cemetery was updated to reflect a more Victorian era appearance. Paved roads, gravel and rock paths for vehicles, and numerous plantings of oak and maple trees were added. This nomination does not include the entire 60 acres of the present property but includes the historic areas of the cemetery, where most historic burials are located on an approximately 31-acre section in the center of the cemetery property. As a still active city cemetery, the markers in the cemetery represent a mixture of social classes, occupations, and ages. Throughout the cemetery there are simple stones placed next to large, elaborate and/or obviously expensive stones. The nominated portion of the cemetery retains its historic integrity.

Oakland Cemetery has two sets of vehicular entrance gates on its east side at the West Eighth Street entry point. Residents built the inner gates c. 1900. The gates consist of a red brick post with a red brick sloping wall capped with concrete to the south and an arched brick doorway to the north, above which a rounded masonry sign reads "Oakland Cemetery". The outermost gates, which date to c. 2004, are iron gates with brick posts, upon which stand two lanterns (noncontributing). On the south post is a stone plaque stating "Oakland Cemetery Est. 1828". According to city records, the earliest burial at the cemetery took place in 1832.

Just past the historic gates stands a white Victorian era wood gazebo built between 1900 and 1904 by Alfred Hight. The octagon-shaped building has original benches along the edges and a light red-shingled roof. Victorian details include the sawn wood that embellishes the eaves, the curtain below the eaves, and the balustrade, similar to trim seen on Queen Anne houses of the era. The floor is wood. It is the only contributing building on the property. A c. 1970 metal maintenance building is just west of the gazebo; it is noncontributing to its date of construction.



Houston marker

A variety of grave markers are distributed throughout the nominated property. The dominant early marker forms include tablet and block markers, a large percentage of which are the burials from the cemetery's first generation of use from c. 1825 to 1860. Most of these have only a hand-carved inscription, some incorporate traditional antebellum burial motifs such as the raised hand pointing upward and the weeping willow tree. A representative example is the tablet stone of Thomas Fite (died 1858), who is said to be the first settler in Gibson County. His stone has words both incised and in relief and has no symbols (photo 20).

<sup>1</sup> Dent Partee, chair Oakland Cemetery Association to Leslie Sharp, undated (c. 2005), National Register files, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

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Oakland Cemetery,  
Gibson County, Tennessee



The directness and simplicity of the antebellum era markers stand in sharp contrast to those of the Victorian era into the early twentieth century. The majority of the markers date from 1870 to 1950. Motifs include a variety of both religious symbols and secular decorative elements, such as Classical, Gothic, and Egyptian revivals. Two firms of stone carvers were identified on markers: from the late nineteenth century, the firm of Sesson & Baird and from the early twentieth century, the firm of Snyder & Autry. An outstanding marker, a sculpted life-sized statue of a woman and cross, designates the grave of Bettie Sue Carne, who died in 1913. Located in the Carne family plot, a cross rises from a pile of sculpted rocks with the woman, clad in a flowing ankle-length dress, looking up at and holding on to each arm of the cross. The carving has wonderfully detailed long wavy hair and bare feet. A

carved open scroll lies to her right. This cross and statue sit atop a square rusticated stone block.

Another sculpted marker is that of eight-year-old Virginia Dell Wade who died in 1905. This double-stepped pedestal marker has the life-sized sculpture of a barefoot little girl in a flowing knee-length dress standing next to a stump. Her left arm is flexed and holding the sash of her dress, while her right arm is extended and missing the right hand (the statue has been broken). She has long wavy hair and is looking down. Her plaque is on the top third of the base and has lettering in relief with "Thy will be done" incised below. The statues of both Bettie Sue Carne and Virginia Dell Wade are white bronze with granite bases. Other markers, like that of Hays Davis (photo 31), hint at the uniqueness of the individual buried there. Davis' marker is a pile of rocks resembling a water well. The marker appears to have been damaged at some point. The rectangular inscription attached to the marker faces the southwest and says "Hays Davis" in relief and "born" incised below, but the rest of the inscription is gone. The inscription may have been part of a tablet, and restoration may have been attempted at some point to save this part of the inscription. Other late Victorian era markers include the large cross marking the grave of Samuel Beverly Williamson (died 1902) as well as the open scroll marker for Mary Caldwell (died 1895).

As has been documented at other nineteenth century cemeteries, several family sections are surrounded by either iron fencing or concrete curbing (photo 26). Each iron fence is unique in style. Surrounding a family plot in the northwest area of Oakland is a four-walled bow and picket fence with open corner and gateposts. This plot has three graves with two tablet stones (one of which is broken on top), and a taller die-and-base tablet (vertical tablet set on a horizontal base) that has a Victorian era carving of a man on his knees next to a dancing maiden. Slightly east is the Dodson family plot (photo 12), surrounded by a fence composed of short and tall pickets with ornate corner and gate posts. This plot near the gazebo also has one of the more sizable obelisks in the cemetery. Not all fenced grave lots were dedicated to multiple burials from a family; for example, a plain iron tulip-head picket fence encloses the grave of infant Mary Jane King who died in 1848.

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Oakland Cemetery,  
Gibson County, Tennessee

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Art Deco styles, starting in the 1930s and continuing into the early 1950s, are a dominant twentieth century marker type at Oakland. A representative example is the granite marker for Scarley Mills Creasy (died 1944), who died in World War II and the Mclaran marker (photo 15).

Oakland Cemetery is one of Gibson County's prominent commemoration sites for Confederate veterans from the American Civil War. A monument, erected by a local United Daughters of the Confederacy group c. 1900, is the in the northern corner of the nominated property. It is dedicated to unknown Confederate soldiers from Gibson County (photo 7). This small area near the northern boundary also has nine government-issue tablet markers for the unknown soldiers as well as a Confederate Bonnie Blue flag flying in the center of the section.

Near the gazebo in the center of the nominated property is a second memorial marker, erected at an unknown date in the twentieth century (considering the weathering of the stone). This marker inscribes the names of Confederate veterans buried in the cemetery. In c. 1990, a local chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans installed a metal sign nearby the marker that lists the names of Confederate veterans buried in the cemetery. (Photos 5 and 6)

The Confederate nature of the cemetery was reinforced by the adjacent location of a historic African American cemetery. Adjacent to the cemetery's southern boundary, but located on a separate parcel, is an African American cemetery that dates to the post-Civil War years and that contains several hundred burials. The Trenton African American cemetery is currently and historically a private burial ground not associated with the city cemetery and thus is not included in this nomination.

Within the nominated property, there is an additional commemorative area devoted to local industrial workers. On the southern end is an older pauper section of 80 plots, without markers, that was purchased by the Trenton Cotton Mills in the nineteenth century for the sole use of employees and their families. The section was used for burials from c. 1890 to c. 1940. A modern monument was erected by the Dyersburg Corporation, c. 1990, in honor of these employees. (Photo 8)

The nominated 31-acre section of Oakland Cemetery retains integrity to its period of significance, from c. 1825 to c.1957. The nominated section of this still active public cemetery is concentrated around its entrance, gazebo, and driveways, installed c. 1900. The cemetery was formally segregated after the Civil War, when a separate cemetery for African American residents was established adjacent to the nominated property. The nominated part of the cemetery contains a diversity of marker types, starting in the antebellum era through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and ending in the decade following World War II.



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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Oakland Cemetery, in Trenton, Gibson County, Tennessee, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its locally significant association with the town's settlement history. Town leaders planned for and set aside acreage for a public cemetery when the town was initially platted and settled between 1825 and 1828. A majority of the burials date from c. 1830 to 1957, with the greatest concentration of burials dating from 1870 to 1950. The nominated 31 acres contain the vast majority of the historic burials of the cemetery. As the town's only public cemetery, the site contains the burials of most of Trenton's citizens and contains burials from all social strata. It also contains the burials of many significant local social, civic, political, and business leaders. It is the oldest identified historic property in Trenton.

Residents formed Gibson County in 1823 and named it in honor of John H. Gibson who served under General Andrew Jackson in Indian Wars of 1812 and 1813. This section of West Tennessee was originally a dense forest, with the first white settlers, Colonel Thomas Fite, his brother-in-law John Spencer and James F. Randolph, arriving between 1818 and 1819.

Col. Thomas F. Gibson, younger brother of John H. Gibson, settled c. 1825 at the center of the county, on the North Fork of the Forked Deer River, where he established a store and named the settlement Gibson-Port to honor himself and to reference his proximity to the Forked Deer River and the anticipation of using the river for shipping and transportation. Gibson-Port did not last the year; the name of was changed to Trenton on November 2, 1825, and it was designated as the permanent county seat. John W. Evans, John W. Buckner, William C. Love, Robert Tinkle, and John P. Thomas were appointed by the county court to lay off the town site into a public square, streets, lots and a commons, the latter to comprise six and one-fourth acres, and the town plat proper just fifty acres. A city cemetery lot, the present location of Oakland Cemetery, was established by 1828, possibly as early as 1825, to the southwest of the town square. Today Oakland Cemetery, the street grid, and the town square are the primary physical remnants of the original town plan for Trenton. The nominated property's first known name was Silent City of the Dead.

As the only municipal burial ground in Gibson County, Oakland Cemetery became the final resting place for many of the town's and county's founders, leading business operators, and key civic and religious leaders. For example, Thomas Fite (died 1858) was one of the county's first settlers and operated the county's first water mill. He also served as the first Clerk of the Gibson County Court. Margaret Daviess Hess (died 1861, photo 29) was another early settler of Gibson County who entered the history books when she argued a case in a federal hearing held in Shelbyville, Tennessee. Munson R. Hill (died 1867) was a prominent antebellum attorney and political leader in Trenton. He was a colonel of the 47<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Infantry, CSA, and after the war he practiced law in Memphis.

Other examples of prominent individuals buried in Oakland Cemetery include:

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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

- Dr. M. M. Marshall (died 1874) played a key role in the post-Civil War reconstruction of Trenton as the minister of the Trenton Presbyterian Church and one of the leaders of the Andrew College, a private institution established for white males.
- Robert Porter Caldwell (died 1885) was an antebellum attorney who served as the State Attorney General from 1858 until 1861. Before the Civil War Caldwell served in the Tennessee General Assembly (1847-49, 1855-57) and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1871.
- Basil M. Taylor (died 1886) was a contractor who built the roadbed through Gibson County for the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. The connection of Trenton to the region's expanding railroad network in the late nineteenth century was significant to the town's growth and development from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.
- Thomas J. Freeman (died 1891) was a colonel of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tennessee Infantry, CSA, during the Civil War. After the war Freeman, an attorney, became an important civic and political leader. He was one of the founders of Trenton's Baptist Church. He served on the Tennessee State Supreme Court and became the Chief Justice of that court. Freeman then became the first dean of the school of law at the University of Tennessee. (Photo 10)



- Watkins H. Dodson (died 1901) was a leading Gibson County industrialist. He established the Dodson Plow Company in Humboldt, where he also organized the Farmer's and Merchant's Bank.
- James C. McDearmon (died 1902) was another Confederate veteran who became a postwar political leader. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1893 to 1897.
- Quentin Rankin (died 1908) and Robert Z. Taylor (died 1922) were victims of the Night Riders incident at Reelfoot Lake in 1908. In a dispute over land rights and access to fishing on the lake, local citizens around Reelfoot Lake formed an organization, called the Night Riders, who carried out various acts of domestic terrorism against the land company and its attorneys who were proposing changes and development around the lake. The Night Riders kidnapped Rankin and Taylor; they murdered Rankin but Taylor escaped. He became a prime witness in the case and continued his career in Trenton.
- Gentry R. McGee (died 1922) was a leading educator in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He founded Peabody High School in Trenton. He also wrote one of the first standard school textbooks on Tennessee history, *The History of Tennessee*, first published in 1899. (Photo 9)

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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

- Waller Cochran Caldwell (died 1924) was a law student at Cumberland University during the Civil War and served in the Confederate army during latter stages of the conflict. His real significance came in the state's legal history in the late nineteenth century. Caldwell married a daughter of noted jurist and professor Nathan Green, Jr., and served on the State Supreme Court from 1886 to 1902.
- Matthew M. Neil (died 1925) was a prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth century attorney. He too served on the State Supreme Court and served as Chief Justice from 1913-1918.
- Mack Morris (died 1949) was a Jewish merchant and entrepreneur, who made numerous contributions to the town's commercial development and was one of the town's leading philanthropists, who established a local Boy Scout camp and funded the county's poor farm.

Along with prominent educators, attorneys, and businessmen buried at the cemetery, one section speaks to the town's industrialization in the late nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, approximately at the time of the name change to the Oakland Cemetery, the Trenton Cotton Mills purchased some 80 plots for the sole use of employees and their families. There are no markers in this section but the plots were reserved solely for former employees of the mills. It is not known when burials in this section ceased. The plots are identified, however, by a c. 1990 monument, erected by the Dyersburg Corporation (a textile factory), which memorializes the workers who were buried in the cemetery.

The pauper graves for the Trenton Cotton Mills were part of an overall redesign of the cemetery in the late nineteenth century. The cemetery's appearance today largely reflects changes instituted c. 1895, when the Ladies' Cemetery Association of Trenton took steps to improve the cemetery's appearance. The group held a naming contest, choosing the name Oakland Cemetery, and began improvements to the cemetery, including plantings of new oak and maple trees, a new layout of paths and roads, and the construction of a gazebo where public programs, music, or sermons could be given. These changes reflect the late nineteenth century trend toward care of the deceased in a landscaped, designed setting that evolved from the earlier "rural" cemetery movement. Although it includes a naturalistic landscape, the cemetery lacked formal gardens or non-burial space reserved only for landscaping as was typical of the subsequent early twentieth century "City Beautiful" movement that followed the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Instead, it provides a pastoral setting with trees integrated into family plots and occasional ornamental plantings.

The changes also coincide with the introduction of the concept of Jim Crow segregation into all facets of southern life. In that same decade, the practice of burying African Americans in the adjacent but separate graveyard began. The name of that cemetery, which is private and not public, has not been identified. Moreover, the cemetery's first commemorative Confederate monuments were erected either at the same time of the name change in 1895 or a few years after c. 1900. Although Union veterans (the 7<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Infantry) were associated with Gibson County, there are no Union soldiers buried at the cemetery.

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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

The cemetery certainly commemorates the local Confederate side of the Civil War and a portion of the cemetery grounds is associated with the Battle of Trenton of December 1862. At about the same time as the renaming of the cemetery, between 1895 and 1900, when the local United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter was established, Mrs. R. N. Davis of the Trenton United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) funded a Confederate memorial for three unknown soldiers and six known Confederate soldiers. Part of the memorial included a metal flagpole on which a Confederate flag flies today.

This portion of the battlefield is associated with the position of General Nathan B. Forrest's artillery during the Battle of Trenton, which took place on December 20, 1862. This battle took place as General Ulysses S. Grant moved his Union troops towards Vicksburg, Mississippi. In this battle with the federal forces of Col. Jacob Fry of the 61<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry, Forrest located artillery in this corner of the cemetery property because the location gave him a commanding view of the Trenton depot, where federal forces were concentrated. The Confederates successfully captured about 400 soldiers, another 300 African Americans who had sought protection in the Union lines, over 1000 horses and mules, 20,000 rounds of artillery and 400,000 rounds of small arms ammo along with other military stores and supplies.

Another example of commemoration in Oakland Cemetery occurred at approximately the same time, c. 1900, when the Trenton UDC raised the funds for a large stone tablet that listed the names of the Confederate dead in the cemetery. Around 1990, after the inscription and names on the stone weathered during the century, the Hill-Freeman Camp of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans erected a metal sign that listed the names.

The improvements at the cemetery at the turn of the century included the construction of a gazebo, where music performances and memorial services could take place, between 1900 and 1904. The Victorian era styling of the gazebo reinforces the image that the cemetery developed in its landscaping and the more prominent grave markers of the early twentieth century. Throughout the nominated property, grave markers after 1900 became more elaborate and stylistic. The tombstones range from large pedestal markers to elaborately carved life-size statues. Oakland has several stones and monuments that are distinctive due to the size or intricate carvings. One notable monument is the large obelisk of capitalist Watkins H. Dodson that was shipped in from Scotland in 1901 at a cost of \$1,200. Other monuments demonstrate the amazing talent of the artists who carved these stones. The monument of eight-year-old Virginia Dell Wade who died in 1905 is a beautifully detailed statue of a young girl standing atop a three-tiered stone marker. The marker for Bettie Sue Carne (1913) also has a striking statue of a woman holding onto a large cross. Many other monuments were carved to resemble scrolls or urns, while many tablets hold simple yet striking symbols to accompany the epitaph.

Oakland Cemetery is a significant property associated with settlement history in Trenton from its origins in the 1820s, its Civil War history in 1862, the impact of Victorian era design and Jim Crow segregation in the 1890s, and the Confederate commemoration movement in the early 1900s. It is the burial spot not only for prominent early citizens but also for the class of local capitalists and

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Oakland Cemetery  
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attorneys who transformed what had been a small county seat in 1870 into a southern industrial and railroad town by the end of the nineteenth century. The cemetery effectively links the town's beginnings to its past and is well maintained by the city and various civic groups today. There is a group of citizens who have restored and maintain the gazebo; events are held there sporadically. Approximately 300 markers have been repaired between 2000 and 2003.

Trenton has one National Register-listed historic district, the Trenton Historic District (NR 3/17/82). It contains 123 residences dating from the 1830s to the 1930s, a similar timeframe as the cemetery. The district is listed only for its architectural significance although it appears that some locally prominent individuals lived here. However, the cemetery has a wider representation of the settlement and development patterns of the community than the historic district.

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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

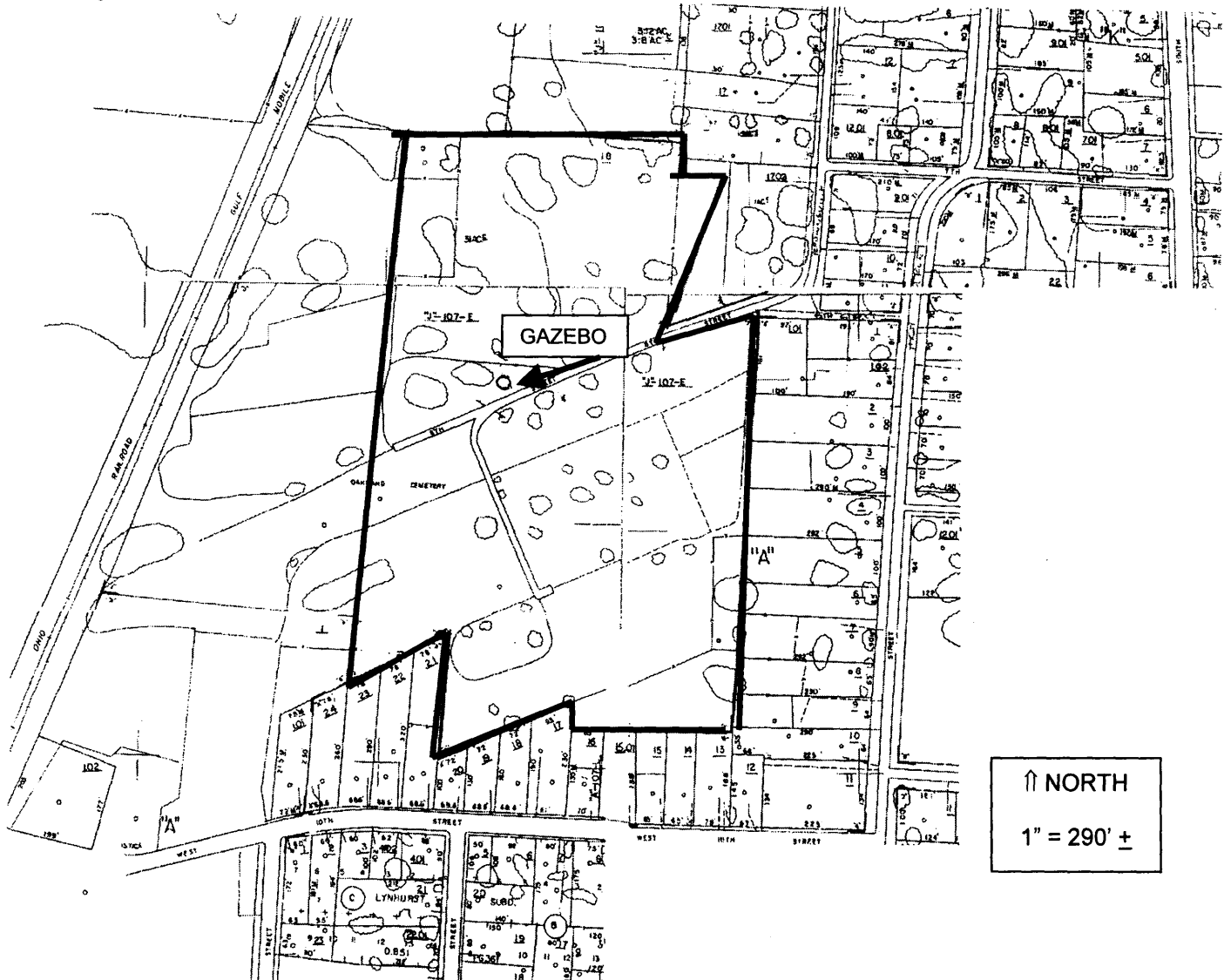
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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The Oakland Cemetery is located at 800 Brownsville Street in Trenton, Gibson County, Tennessee, and occupies the marked 31 acres of J-107-E in the attached Gibson County Tax Map 107-F. The nominated boundaries contain all of the extant historic property significantly associated with the cemetery. Property not included in the nomination has been added to the cemetery in modern times and is discernable as non-historic.



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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**Oakland Cemetery**

Trenton, Gibson County, Tennessee

Taken by: Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University

Date: May 2005

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission, 2941 Lebanon Road, Nashville, TN 37243

Brick entrance gates, facing west

1 of 39

Historic entrance gates, facing west

2 of 39

Gazebo, facing northwest

3 of 39

Gazebo, facing west

4 of 39

1895 Davis Confederate monument, facing northwest

5 of 39

1895 Davis Confederate monument, facing southwest

6 of 39

UDC Confederate monument, facing east

7 of 39

Trenton Cotton Mills monument, facing west

8 of 39

Gentry McGee marker, facing west

9 of 39

Thomas J. Freeman marker and cemetery landscape, facing northeast

10 of 39

Mid-twentieth century section, facing southwest

11 of 39



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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

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Dobson family plot, facing northwest  
12 of 39

Johnston family plot, facing northwest  
13 of 39

Johnston family plot, facing east  
14 of 39

McClaran Art Deco-styled marker, facing west  
15 of 39

Mid-twentieth century markers, facing southwest  
16 of 39

Mid-twentieth century markers, facing west  
17 of 39

Wilkins marker and landscape, facing northeast  
18 of 39

Cemetery landscape, facing south toward gazebo from western edge of nominated boundaries  
19 of 39

Thomas Fite marker, facing west  
20 of 39

Blakmore marker, facing southwest  
21 of 39

Nannie Strong marker, facing east  
22 of 39

Infant son of John and Emma Parr marker, facing east  
23 of 39

Cemetery landscape, facing west  
24 of 39

Grigsby marker, facing northwest  
25 of 39

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Oakland Cemetery  
Gibson County, Tennessee

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Concrete family plots, facing northeast  
26 of 39

Cemetery landscape near 1895 Confederate monument, facing north  
27 of 39

Isabella N. McCulloch marker, facing east  
28 of 39

Margaret Daviess Hess and William Hess tablet, facing north  
29 of 39

R. Z. Taylor and Samuel B. Williamson markers, facing northwest  
30 of 39

Hays Davis marker, facing south  
31 of 39

Madison and Mary McLanrine marker  
32 of 39

Cemetery landscape, facing east  
33 of 39

Hillsman marker, facing northwest  
34 of 39

Cemetery landscape, facing north  
35 of 39

Cemetery landscape, facing northwest  
36 of 39

Cemetery landscape with trees, facing southwest  
37 of 39

Ornamental trees and plantings, facing east  
38 of 39

Original lane and tree plantings, facing east  
39 of 39