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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

FEB 23 1993

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 Rest Hill Cemetery

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number State Highway 141 not for publication

city or town Lebanon vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Wilson code 189 zip code 37087

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 forth 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.)

Herbert L. Hays 2/16/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State of 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 of the Keeper

**Entered in the
National Register**

Date of Action

Velous Byrum 3/25/93

Rest Hill Cemetery
Name of Property

Wilson County, TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
1	0	sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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) N/A

foundation N/A
walls N/A
roof N/A
other STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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 a birthplace or grave.
- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE; African-American

Period of Significance

1867-1933

Significant Dates

1867

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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): N/A

- 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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.7 acres

Lebanon
314 NE

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	565600	40072510
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

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 Carroll Van West and Janice Allen

organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date 9/30/92

street & number Box 80, MTSU telephone 615-898-2947

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 Wilson County Civic League C/O Harry Watson

street & number Box 1231 telephone 615-444-3175

city or town Lebanon state TN zip code 37087

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 listings. 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 20503.

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Rest Hill Cemetery, Wilson County, TN

7. Description

Rest Hill Cemetery is a historic African-American cemetery located on the Trousdale Ferry Pike at the eastern city limits of Lebanon, Wilson County, Tennessee. The cemetery currently contains approximately 7.7 acres of land, bordered on the south by State Highway 141 (Trousdale Ferry Pike), on the north by U. S. Highway 70N, and on the east and west by residential lots.

A three-foot high stone fence defines the southern border of the cemetery. According to oral interviews, the stone fence dates at least to the 1930s. Scattered minutes of the meetings of the Rest Hill Cemetery Association exist and according to these minutes the fence was repaired in 1956. In 1991, a small section of the fence collapsed and cemetery association members repaired it once again. The southern border of the cemetery also contains two entrances, marked by opened stone entrances. On the top of the western most gate entrance the date 1868 has been carved. These gates, however, date to the twentieth century. The minutes of the Cemetery Association do not detail the date of construction, but local community members place the date of construction during the 1930s.

Another stone fence, approximately two and a half feet high and constructed in folk fashion with no mortar, defines the western and over half of the northern boundary of the cemetery. No historic documents exist to determine the date of construction, but local residents maintain that the fence is "original," meaning that it dates to the actual establishment of the cemetery in 1867-68. The presence of this hand-laid stone fence is mentioned in the Cemetery Association minutes as early as 1920.

A wire fence, erected at an unknown date in the mid-twentieth century, defines the remainder of the cemetery's northern border and well as half of the western border. From that point, no fence defines the property lines of the cemetery, although a row of trees created a rough outline along the western border to where it meets the southern border along Tennessee Highway 141.

During a reconnaissance survey of the cemetery in February 1992, an exact count of the remaining cemetery stones was not determined because it was difficult within some family plots to identify what were footstones or headstones. Some headstones also appeared to be broken in one or more pieces, again making an exact count difficult to achieve. 83 headstones, however, can be read for either their name and/or both their name and death date, and of this number, 32 were buried during the site's period of

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significance, from 1867 to 1933. Almost all of these historic headstones are located in the southern half of the cemetery, with a concentrated placement of stones and family plots near the southern border along the stone fence line. Graves interred after 1933 are also located in this older half of the cemetery, intermixed with earlier historic grave sites. Many of the newer stones, however, are located in the northern section, where very few historic stones were ever placed.

It is important to emphasize that several factors skew the number of remaining historic headstones. First, the older the stone the more likely it would be broken or missing. Second, many members of the African-American community were too poor to pay for a large headstone, complete with name and birth and death dates. They were buried with a simple marker, often made of wood, that has disappeared in the decades since. Finally, many were interred in large family plots, a property type which constitutes one of the most interesting features of the cemetery. Clearly, judging by the number of depressions without an associated marker, many stones have been lost, or more likely, many graves did not have individual markers. The earliest identified marker was dated 1877; the latest was 1991.

A very interesting characteristic of the cemetery is its numerous roughly outlined family plots. These are located in the southern half of the cemetery, with most concentrated as near as possible to the stone fence defining the cemetery's southern border. According to local African-American residents, families often purchased large rectangular plots where family members would be buried without individual headstones. The plots were rectangular in shape, marked by sometimes difficult to find stones along the plot's boundaries. The February 1992 survey identified the remains of at least 33 of these family plots at Rest Hill Cemetery.

Despite the ravages of time, and the infrequent maintenance of the property, Rest Hill Cemetery retains its historic integrity. Pine and oak trees, together with evergreen bushes, still stand. Planted in an asymmetric, naturalistic pattern, these large, mature trees and bushes help to convey the historic landscaping of the cemetery. Another row of large, mature trees marks the eastern border of the cemetery. A circular unpaved drive passes through the west gate and goes to the center of the cemetery where it then returns and exits from the east gate. These landscaping features combine with the cemetery's remaining stone walls, historic headstones, and family plots, to create a strong sense of time and place and to physically document the decades when Rest Hill Cemetery played a significant role in the lives of

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Lebanon's African-American community.

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8. Statement of Significance

The Rest Hill Cemetery on Trousdale Ferry Pike in Lebanon, Wilson County, Tennessee, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its significant association with the development of the African-American community in Lebanon during the Reconstruction period of American history. Created in 1867-69, it is the only remaining physical remnant of the establishment of the Reconstruction period African-American community in Lebanon and it continued to serve that community as the only African-American cemetery in the city until 1933.

For African-Americans, according to folklorist John Michael Vlach, "the cemetery has long had special significance. Beyond its association with the fear and awe of death, which all humans share, the graveyard was, in the past, one of the few places in America where an overt black identity could be asserted and maintained." Vlach emphasizes that cemeteries supported and enhanced African-Americans' "sense of ethnicity as well as satisfying their personal need to communicate with their deceased family members." (1)

The Rest Hill Cemetery is certainly a significant property associated with the ethnic identity of African-Americans in Lebanon. Established in 1867-69, it is the only surviving remnant of the original African-American community of Lebanon. Before 1865, according to Dixon Merritt's History of Wilson County (1961), Lebanon had no distinct African-American neighborhood. But after the war, with the assistance of the Freedman's Bureau, which was active in Lebanon from 1865 to 1872, an African-American neighborhood soon began to establish itself on the eastern outskirts of the city.

In 1866 the town's first black church was built on East Market Street. According to the research of historian Eric Foner on the nationwide impact of Reconstruction, the church was second only to the African-American family as source of identity and community in the Reconstruction years. The new freedmen established religious institutions, such as churches and cemeteries, as soon as possible. The history of Lebanon reflects this national trend because the church of 1866 was followed the next year with the community's first African-American cemetery. In 1867 B. B. Manson, Nicholas Manson, Joseph Provine, and Thomas Stokes purchased a large sixteen-acre lot from the heirs of Ben K. Owens. By 1869, the four men gave three acres of this land to a group of trustees empowered to establish a African-American cemetery since, in 1869, African-Americans were barred from burial in the city cemetery. Thus, was established during the

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Reconstruction period, this crucial component of the new African-American community in Lebanon. Also, by this time, the Freedman's Bureau had opened the city's first school for African-American children. Over the next seven years, the community continued to grow in numbers. In 1876, the last year of southern reconstruction, Lebanon African-Americans elected S. Jordan as the first African-American member of the Wilson County Court.

For the next 50 years, the cemetery remained a focus for African-American ethnic identity as is evident from the periodic political activity to secure consistent city support and maintenance for the cemetery. In 1880, a group of citizens successfully petitioned the Lebanon City Council to provide funds for repairs to the cemetery fence (which is still extant along the eastern and northern borders) and regular maintenance funds. By 1890, the growing African-American community needed an even larger cemetery and B. B. Manson sold another 3 3/4 acres as a cemetery addition. Although the record is not clear, it appears that the city sexton of cemeteries, John Kanary, acquired control of the cemetery for the city of Lebanon at about the time of the cemetery expansion. City support appears to have ended by the early twentieth century, which would be keeping with the regional trend of ever decreasing public services for African-Americans. The African-American community established a special Rest Hill Cemetery committee to provide for the care and maintenance of the cemetery. Scattered surviving minutes of the committee exist for the years between 1922 and 1958. Initial meetings took place in private homes but once the community's Rosenwald school opened on East Market Street in 1923, meetings took place at this new source of community pride and identity. This building is no longer extant. Early meetings led to the hiring of a cemetery caretaker, John Hale, who served from 1923 to 1929. For the next six years, a caretaker could not be provided due to the lack of funds in that depression period. But the cemetery committee met on a regular basis and decided to build the rock fence that presently defines the southern border and entrance to the cemetery. By 1935, the committee was able to hire out a new caretaker, Sam Helms, who served from 1935 to 1939.

Throughout these years, prominent members of the local community were interred at Rest Hill. These citizens included Dr. Joseph Turner (died 1914); Reverend Robert Bond (died 1891); Jake Owen (died 1901), who was a Republican party leader and served as a delegate to the state convention of 1898; Martin Manson (died 1905), who was another Republican leader and served as a delegate to the state convention of 1888; B. B. Manson (died 1914), a

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local businessman who sold the cemetery its northern half in 1890; and J. R. Inman (died 1917), who led the fight for public schools for African-Americans in Wilson County and was one of the founders of the Wilson County Colored Teachers Association. These individuals were significant people in the African-American history of politics, education, religion, medicine, and business in Lebanon. Since Rest Hill was the only African-American cemetery available at the time of their death, their families buried them here, along side the hundreds they had served during their lifetime.

By the 1930s, a second African-American cemetery, Greenwood Cemetery, had opened on West Adams Avenue. Ben T. Caruthers established it in 1933 as a more modern, fully landscaped, counterpart to the unplanned Rest Hill Cemetery. Although many blacks chose the new cemetery as a final resting place, Rest Hill continued to have burials in the following decades. Indeed, the last recorded burial, noted in the February 1992 fieldwork, took place in 1991.

However, the upkeep of the cemetery was sporadic from 1945 to 1991. A Dr. Kelly became cemetery sexton in 1946, but by 1954 records indicate that no one had responsibility for the maintenance of the property. Four years later, the cemetery committee again approached the city for assistance in maintaining the property. Regular meetings of the cemetery committee took place until 1962, when documentary records of the cemetery's upkeep end. Two single entries concerning small city donations were recorded in 1976 and 1981. Otherwise, it appears that Rest Hill Cemetery received little regular maintenance until 1989 when the Wilson County Civic League, the primary civil rights organization in the community which was established in 1936, became actively concerned about the cemetery.

In 1989, the Civic League requested that city of Lebanon take responsibility for the upkeep of Rest Hill. A June 28, 1989, letter from J. C. Hellum and Maggie Corley to Fred Burton, the Second Ward Council member, noted that "the cemetery has a social and historical value to the community" and that Hellum and Corley as members of the old cemetery committee would donate the property to the city. On March 9, 1990, the Civic League again asked the city to take control of the property's maintenance. In its formal position paper, the Civic League stated that "the Rest Hill Cemetery maintenance issue is one of great concern to the African-American community of Lebanon given the cemetery's origins and history." In its arguments, the League once again

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emphasized the "historical significance of the cemetery" and observed that family members of the deceased buried there "live in each and every ward of the city." As of this date, the city has not accepted the offer of the Civic League and the League still maintains the cemetery.

Of the major African-American community institutions established during the Reconstruction period in Lebanon--the time when the city's first black neighborhood began--only Rest Hill Cemetery remains. The property is intact and retains its boundaries from the last expansion in 1890. The cemetery is a remarkable community artifact of the hopes and dreams that the brief Reconstruction era provided African-Americans, throughout the South. Other historic community institutions, such as the 1866 church and the 1920s Rosenwald school, are no longer extant. In fact, the cemetery is one of the few nineteenth century resources associated with African-American history still standing in Lebanon and may be the only Reconstruction era property left extant. Still in use today, the cemetery is a very significant resource associated with the ethnic heritage of Lebanon's African-Americans and is consequently eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Endnotes

1. John M. Vlach, By the Work of their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1991), 109 and 112.

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9. Bibliography

Allen, Paul N, et. al. A Survey of Historic Cemeteries of Tennessee. Division of Archaeology, Report of Investigations No. 6. Nashville: Tennessee Department of Conservation, 1987.

Corley, Maggie. Interview with Janice Allen, March 1992.

Foner, Eric. Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

Merritt, Dixon. History of Wilson County. Lebanon, 1961.

Meyer, Richard E., ed. Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989.

Rest Hill Cemetery Committee Minutes Books, 1922-1982. Photocopy in the files of the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Murfreesboro, TN.

Schlink, Ellen T. This Is the Place: History of Lebanon, Tennessee, 1780-1972. Lebanon, 1975.

Strangstad, Lynette. A Gravestone Preservation Primer. Nashville: AASLH, 1988.

Vlach, John M. By the Work of their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife. Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1991.

Wilson County Civic League Papers, 1989-1990. Photocopies in the files of the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, 1992.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is on Trousdale Ferry Pike at the eastern town limits of Lebanon, as defined in the attached tax map "A"-67-G.

Boundary justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the acreage of the Rest Hill Cemetery because the property has not been expanded or decreased since its period of significance. The nominated boundaries contain all of the historical acreage associated with the cemetery.

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Photo Identification: Rest Hill Cemetery, Lebanon, Wilson County,
Tennessee

Photographs by: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
Box 80, MTSU
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
701 Broadway
Nashville, TN

Rear half of cemetery, facing N
1 of 9

West gate entrance, stone wall, facing W
2 of 9

West gate entrance, facing N
3 of 9

Gravestones, family plots, facing southeast
4 of 9

Family plot, gravestones, facing northwest
5 of 9

East gate entrance, stone wall, facing northeast
6 of 9

Family plot, gravestones, facing southwest
7 of 9

Family plot, gravestones, facing east
8 of 9

Family plot, gravestones, western stone wall, facing west
9 of 9

H W Y CORPORATE 70 520' M 420'

1.65 AC. ▲

Tomkinson

X ▲ 1.95 AC.
CAL GAS ENERGY INC

32 AC

95' 31
PRIVATE CHARLES ROBINSON DR. 412' DR. 465'

LEBANON

↑ N
1" = 100'
Rest Hill Cemetery
State Hwy 141
Lebanon TN boundary

"A" - 67 - G

1920/500

Boyle

85' 0.01
152' LIMITS
CITY

REST HILL CEMETERY
77 AC. E

EXEMPT

"A"

32 AC. E

"A"

79' M 8
315' M 310' M
EARNEST WARD

60' 9
210' 210'
LOCKETT

PITTS

115' M

445' M

FERRY

PK. 2

TROUSDALE

110.6'

170' M

83M

98' M

65' M

75' Wm. Gilliam 48 132

50' M

46

47

133





191.4'

Rest Hill

Cemetery

Old Cemetery

822.8'

778.0'

Bk. X-2, Pg. 577
3 3/4 Acres±

Established 1868
(Unknown)

Note:

This office is not responsible for the accuracy of this drawing. Dimensions and other data was furnished by others.

Scale: 1" = 100'

Trousdale Ferry Pike

Rest Hill Cemetery

City of Lebanon Engineering
Drawn By: T. Warren Date: 9-6-89
Approved By: B. Proffitt Date: 9-6-89