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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sunset Hill Cemetery
other names/site number City Cemetery

2. Location

street & number 1100 N. Oak St.
city, town Valdosta (N/A) vicinity of
county Lowndes code GA 185
state Georgia code GA zip code 31602

(N/A) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	0	1
sites	1	0
structures	32	2
objects	4	0
total	37	3

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

W. Ray Luce
Signature of certifying official

7.15.04
Date

W. Ray Luce, Ph.D.
Historic Preservation Division Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

Elsa H. Beall 9/10/04

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions:

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

N/A

Materials:

foundation	brick and granite
walls	granite
roof	asphalt
other	marble, granite, cast iron

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Sunset Hill Cemetery is located on the northwest side of Valdosta, Georgia, the county seat of Lowndes County, in an area that is relatively flat. The cemetery began in 1860 to 1861 when the original parcel consisting of approximately thirty acres of land was donated to the city by C. O. Force. The cemetery has since grown to encompass approximately sixty-six acres. It is the oldest publicly owned cemetery in Valdosta. The cemetery is bounded on three sides by residential areas and by a Valdosta State University parking lot on the northwest side. The cemetery contains areas representative of late nineteenth century, early twentieth century, and contemporary cemetery landscaping and grave arrangements.

Sunset Hill Cemetery has a park-like setting in the central and eastern sections, the oldest parts of the cemetery. (Photos 4 and 9.) There is a perimeter fence with seven entrances, but the main or formal entrance is on the east side opening onto Oak Street. There are placed the 1913 entrance posts and gates. (Photos 3 and 10.) Also at that entrance begin the winding paths and orderly rows of grave sites marked with a variety of headstones, mausoleums, and statuary. These winding roads were all part of the 1915 plan. Contemporary sections on the outermost borders of the cemetery are laid out in a more linear fashion, with grave sites placed close to one another in rows. (Photo 35.) There are just over 25,000 burials in the cemetery. The cemetery is divided into 23 sections labeled A through W. The first burial is thought to be that of Dr. (pharmacist) T. W. Ellis who died in February 1861 and has a marked burial. (Near photo 39.)

Grave markers can be found that are made of marble, granite, cement, bronze, brick (photo 29), and some prefabricated out of metal (photos 17, 28, 38). Grave markers include flat tombstones (photos 15 and 16) with inscriptions, small decorative upright markers, decorative small obelisks (photos 7, 9-background, 13, 14,), as well as some with special motifs. James F. Holmes has a

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Section 7--Description

Coca-Cola bottle on his marker. Emma Tillman Lane has a marble statue (photo 27) as does K. M. Howell. There is a very rare statue of a man, Charles Strickland, carved in Italy in his own likeness, and placed in the cemetery by his son, B. F. Strickland. (Photo 1.) Funerary motifs common to 19th century American cemeteries can be found throughout. There are lambs representing children, or perhaps an angel. (Photo 27) Crosses are found throughout, some of the largest are in the Greek Orthodox burial area. (Photo 23.) Most plots are family plots and are delineated with marble coping to define the plots. Some plots have commemorative benches on them.

The largest and most impressive monument in the cemetery is the Lane family obelisk seen in photograph 6. It is the tallest structure in the cemetery, and is placed over the graves of members of the Remer Lane and Walter Lane families; one of the descendants, Mills B. Lane, was a prominent banker in Savannah.

There are about 160 Confederate soldiers buried within the cemetery, but not all in one plot. Seven are marked with government-issued tombstones (see photo 37 for one) and some are marked with the Iron Cross fashioned after the Southern Cross of Honor and placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (photos 15 and 38-center). Other United States government-issued tombstones honor soldiers who fought in the Spanish American War, as well as wars of the 20th century. (Photograph 33.)

There are several historic granite and marble mausoleums, some with central entrance porticoes (photos 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 32, 41, 42). At least one, the Burdick Mausoleum, photo 2, has a much more modern design to it. The larger, house-like mausoleums represent some of the most prominent families of Valdosta, including the Burdette-Worthington (photo 32), Langdale (photo 41), West (photo 13) and Strickland (photo 11) families.

The Jewish section, begun in 1931, has an overhead entry sign and many of the tombstones have Hebrew inscriptions and some have the Star of David on them. (Photos 20, 21, and 22.)

The African-Americans were buried from the earliest days in what for years was considered a separate part of the cemetery and with later expansions is considered to be Sections M-N-P-R-S and T. The area was once separated from the white section by a fence. The area pointed out as having been a slave burial area was recently memorialized with a memorial and park benches. In 1995 the memorial to the former slaves buried in unmarked graves in the cemetery was dedicated. (Photo 19.) The memorial contains an archway as well as other commemorative markers.

The cemetery is on flat land, typical of the coastal plain, with no significant natural features. There is a variety of trees, including live oaks in the older section and along Oak Street, that date from c.1900 scattered throughout, as well as cedars, and flowering shrubs, particularly azaleas and camellias. The historic granite entrance gates (photo 10) date from 1913, although the entry was later widened for modern vehicles. The only non-burial building on the premises is a c.1960 non-historic, cinder-block office building/sexton's office, located in Block C-3. (Photo 30.)

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The cemetery is bounded on the south and west by residential neighborhoods, on the east by a historic residential district, and on the immediate north by a parking lot associated with Valdosta State University.

Changes to the cemetery have consisted mainly of expansion in 1882, 1892, 1918, 1932, and 1956 as outlined in the Historical Narrative section of this nomination. After the acquisition of the new land, the continuation of the cemetery plan as well as the addition of landscaping elements, mostly trees, helped tie parts of the cemetery together into the 66 acres it represents today.

The cemetery remains open and active today and is owned, managed, and operated by the city of Valdosta.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Art
Community Planning and Development
Landscape Architecture.

Period of Significance:

1861-1954

Significant Dates:

1861

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Unknown

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Sunset Hill Cemetery is the largest historic cemetery in Valdosta and surround Lowndes County. It is the largest historic landscaped place in the county and it contains the largest collection of historic sculpture in the area.

Sunset Hill Cemetery is significant in architecture because of the thirty fine, granite and marble historic mausoleums that are found in the cemetery, housing the remains of some of the most prominent Valdosta citizens. These house-like structures are one story with a central entrance portico and produce a very solid appearance. They reflect fine craftsmanship and many were no doubt architect-designed, although no direct attributions can be made. There is a very significant marble obelisk erected by the Lane family and many smaller obelisks. Most of the mausoleums reflect the Classical Revival architectural style, with its emphasis on symmetry and the use of columns and pediments. The Classical Revival style was commonly used for mausoleum design throughout Georgia.

The cemetery is significant in art because of the unusual Charles Strickland statue, produced in Italy, and said to be in his own likeness, as well as other statuary and decorative artwork found therein including the statues of angels on the graves of Emma Tillman Lane and K. M. Howell, a few remaining historic iron fences, and several pre-fabricated metal tombstones. The Strickland statue is unusual because there are very few known examples in Georgia of cemetery statues carved in the likeness of the deceased. The remainder of the mortuary art in this cemetery reflects prevailing designs and motifs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of the larger works reflect popular architectural styles such as Victorian Gothic, Egyptian Revival, and Classical Revival. Taken together, the monuments and artwork constitute the largest collection of historic outdoor public sculpture in Valdosta and Lowndes County. For many people in this area, this cemetery would have provided their sole exposure to sculpture.

The cemetery is significant in community planning and development because it shows the role the city played in providing a publicly owned cemetery for its people as early as 1861 (after 30 acres were donated by a citizen) and maintaining and enlarging the same to the present. A burial place was a necessity in the growing urban centers of Georgia as people moved away from the previously used burials sites of farms and rural churches. This cemetery was created and dedicated for public burial purposes within only a few short years after the town of Valdosta was created. It was once divided by a fence to separate the black and white burials, reflecting racial segregation.

Sunset Hill Cemetery is significant in landscape architecture because it was begun in 1861 during Victorian times when the Rural Cemetery Movement was in vogue and cities were creating park-like settings to be their city of the dead. While this cemetery began on the outskirts of town, it became after the implementation of the 1915 plan a much more park-like setting. It now contains a variety of mature cedar, oak, and palm trees that enhance that setting. Valdosta created such a place, which retains its park-like original core, with a variety of trees, paths, roadways, and a picturesque variety of grave markers. Newspapers in the early 20th century report the city's continuing interest in making

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Sunset Hill "one of the most attractive" cemeteries in the state. The cemetery was officially named "Sunset Hill" as early as 1914 and continues to be an active burial ground.

National Register Criteria

Sunset Hill Cemetery meets National Register Criterion A because as a city-owned cemetery, it reflects the broad patterns of civic involvement in the burial of the dead, once burials were no longer taking place on family farms/ plantations or in churchyards. The cemetery continues to be operated by the city of Valdosta. It reflects a mini-city in itself, being laid out with streets and blocks or plots for burials, with specific sections devoted to different ethnic or religious groups. The cemetery meets National Register Criterion C because of the variety of funerary art and architecture found throughout, from the fairly rare monument carved in one man's image, one of only a handful in Georgia, to the various uses of different stones and metal for markers. Many statues and other carvings can be found throughout, many of high artistic quality. The entire cemetery reflects many of the tenets of the 19th century cemetery movement in the United States, with the cemetery being laid out in a grid pattern, expanding as the needs arose for more burials, but being a beautiful, park-like setting, that in the earlier century was a major public green space, a place for visitation and reflection.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

Sunset Hill Cemetery meets National Register Criteria Consideration D for its historic planning, landscape, architectural, and sculptural qualities.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance runs from the creation of the cemetery (1861) until the end of the historic period (1954) because it continued to be a functioning city cemetery during that entire time, and on into the present day.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Buildings: Contributing: 0 Non-contributing: 1 (the c.1960s Sexton's office)

Structures: Contributing: 32 (30 mausoleums, the entry gates, and the historic Jewish Archway)
Noncontributing: 2 (the Burdick Mausoleum, and the Slave Arch/memorial)

Objects: Contributing: 4 (the Charles Strickland statue, the Lane obelisk, the statues on the graves of Emma Tillman Lane and K. M. Howell.) Noncontributing: 0

Sites: Contributing: 1 (the cemetery plan itself)
Noncontributing: 0

Total: Contributing 37, Noncontributing: 3

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Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Valdosta's first official city-owned cemetery (now known as Sunset Hill) was founded in 1861, one year after the city was incorporated and made the new county seat of Lowndes County, which had been formed in 1825. Before 1861, burials took place on family farms/plantations, in churchyards, or at rural crossroad community burial grounds. The first burial in the cemetery is that of Dr. T. W. Ellis, who died in February, 1861 and has a marked grave.

Charles Ogden Force (1823-1892), a former resident of Rome, Georgia, who sought refuge in Valdosta during the Civil War, donated to the city the initial parcel of thirty acres for the new city cemetery. He later served as postmaster. This old cemetery, or original cemetery portion, was not originally divided into lots. Citizens would just pick a spot and use it for family burials, as was the case in many other city-owned cemeteries when they got started. This portion is now designated as C-3. A "Birds-Eye-View" or "Panoramic View of Valdosta" from 1885 shows the developing city of Valdosta and the true remoteness of the cemetery which is not shown in the view but is located way past the city's core; today the original old section is one mile from the center of town, the county courthouse, which is in the same location as its 1885 predecessor.

Over the years, as the city grew and expanded, the city of Valdosta regularly purchased additional acreage for the cemetery through the turn of the century and into the 1950s. Special provisions were often made for different ethnic, religious, patriotic, or fraternal groups. For example, in 1930 the Jewish community of Valdosta officially created the Valdosta Hebrew Congregation Cemetery, a separate section within the larger cemetery (photos 20 through 22). The congregation purchased the land and consecrated it for their use. There is also a section for Greek Orthodox community burials (photo 23).

The African-American section, originally separated by a fence, with enlargements continues to historically occupy Sections M-N-P-R-S and T. (Section P is the location of the 1995 Slave Memorial addressed at the end of this narrative.)

The following two newsletter articles give a rich, chronological history of the cemetery, its founding and its expansion, covering the years from 1861 through about 1920:

Adapted from the *Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter*, January 23, 1974, Volume III Number 3:

Sunset Hill
A Shell, a Dove, an Earthen Jar

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...angels, clasped hands and hands pointing upward, and little lambs who watch over an eternal ground where, in spiritual sleep, rest Troupville and Valdosta's founders. The lives of these people in Sunset Hill made Valdosta what it is today.

"Our Cemetery," as it was called for many years, was founded in 1861, the stone columns at the gate erected in 1913, and the name, Sunset Hill, began to be used about [1914.] Many of the names on old monuments are from Troupville, [the previous county seat that flourished from 1825 to 1859,] near Valdosta. We see such old names as, Force, Ellis, Varnedoe, Goldwire, Hightower, Briggs, Smith, Converse, Morgan, Howell, Scruggs, Parramore, and many more. Some graves were moved from Troupville and then there are the names of other Valdosta settlers, too numerous to mention. [But if you visit the cemetery], ... you will see names of families [known] today [in Valdosta.] [The city's history] is in Sunset Hill Cemetery.

The oldest recorded [date of death on a tombstone] in [the] cemetery is on the Smith-Bacon lot and is the grave of "Clarence Smith, 1859-1860." Miss Irene Bacon once said that some of her ancestors were moved from the cemetery at Troupville to the one in Valdosta, and this could be one of them. The next oldest known and recorded grave is "Dr. T. W. Ellis, Died February 27, 1861."

The beginning of the cemetery is known [due to an interview with] Mrs. Arthur Strom about it. She [stated] ...that her step-grandfather, Mr. C. O. Force, gave thirty acres for Sunset Hill as a beginning. At the same time, he reserved a cemetery lot for himself, just southeast of the sexton's house. [cemetery office] It is the one with bricked tops on the graves, four in all. Mrs. Strom [stated] ... who was buried in these unmarked graves. [The most significant being] ...that of Mr. C. O. Force, local land owner, census enumerator, progressive citizen, who had earlier refuged [in Valdosta] from Rome, Georgia during the Civil War and stayed. [The others are of his family.]... At the time the land was given, the old stagecoach road from Savannah to Troupville, the former county seat, went through the middle of what became Sunset Hill Cemetery.

Apparently there was no caretaker at the City Cemetery before 1895. A news item from *The Valdosta Times*, March 16, 1895, gives first mention of a sexton for the cemetery:

.... The cemetery committee, composed of Messrs. L. F. Shaw and C. B. Peebles, are arranging to employ a sexton for the Cemetery, whose business it shall be to keep the walks, drives, etc. in perfect order, and to give police protection to those who desire to work around their family squares. The distant location of the cemetery has made it rather risky for ladies to go there alone to look after this work. A house will probably be built near the cemetery and the sexton will be required to live there. We believe the people of Valdosta will give hearty approval to every step of this sort made by the city fathers.

There were many [other] burial grounds in Valdosta, some still in existence. But interest in [this] cemetery picked up in 1897 when, according to *The Valdosta Times* of September 28, 1897, there was a cleaning and a great deal of work done there:

.... the appearance of the place is much better than has been in a long time before. It strikes us, however, that a good roadway ought to be opened from the eastside of the place and that be made the main entrance. With an entrance of this kind, it would be easier for people in the city to get out to look after their

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squares and would certainly give a more inviting appearance. The work which is being done at the cemetery should be continued until it becomes one of the prettiest in the state. There is no reason why Valdosta should not be well up with other cities in this respect.

It was about this time that Mr. William J. Giddens was made the first caretaker of [the] cemetery[around 1904]. Mrs. Avie Christie, who lives at 412 East Magnolia Street with her daughter, Mary Lee, remembers this well, for Mr. Giddens was her father. They lived in a house [not part of this nomination] near the south entrance of the cemetery on Oak Street, a house remodeled and added onto many times...

Mr. Giddens also farmed land on which now rests Valdosta State College [now University]. He planted short and long staple cotton, peanuts, and corn...

As caretaker for the cemetery, Bill Giddens sold lots, [and] dug the holes for burials. "He charged \$5.00 to open a grave," Mrs. Christie said. "There were no vaults as we know them today. He was a brick mason and built brick vaults. He also kept the streets and alleys of the cemetery grounds. For his services he was paid the salary of \$33.33 a month."

Mr. Giddens, who had much earlier laid brick for the chimney at Strickland's Cotton Mill, dug a well in the cemetery for people who brought flowers. The well was just back to the left behind the sexton's house. Mr. Giddens then put in all water works and pipes on the grounds. There was a fence around the cemetery. After water was put in, Mr. Giddens planted a hedge of shrubbery. "He put up the Lane monument [the obelisk, photo no. 6], among others, and the Little [family] mausoleum, and the Lilly (or Clark) mausoleum," related Mrs. Christie.

There was no grass in the cemetery. Mrs. Christie knows this for sure, for she helped keep the grounds swept. She [said] it was a disgrace then to have grass in any yard or square. After school, she remembers changing clothes to rake up brush and grass that did grow and was cut down. There was a small pond nearby, probably to the rear of the property.

Mr. Henry Boone and Mr. Giddens named Oak Street, and Mr. Giddens planted all the oaks that border the street. There were many trees in the cemetery, cleared away through the years. Mr. Giddens, who was born April 28, 1873, was sexton in Sunset Hill until he died July 3, 1914. He was only 41 years old.

The story continues from the *Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter*, February 25, 1974, Volume III, Number 4:

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In February, that same year, the City Council donated "land in the old cemetery to the Valdosta Chapter Daughters of Confederacy [now the United Daughters of the Confederacy] for their use in holding memorial services, and that no further interments be permitted or allowed in such parcel of land." And that they "are to have the use... so long as their organization is in existence and so long as they use it for such purposes." The land was described as follows:

Commencing at division fence between the white folks and colored folks cemeteries at a point where the west side of a street dividing the old and new cemetery connects to said fence, and running South 63 feet, thence west 63 feet, to said division fence to starting point.

On April 30, 1905, *The Valdosta Times* reports a Memorial Exercise:

...The procession formed in front of the court house square on Patterson street headed by the Valdosta Videttes. Governor Terrell, Judge Emory Speer, Mayor Briggs and Col. W. S. West occupied the first carriage, and Hon. C. R. Ashley, Rev. C. E. Powell, Major Varnedoe and Mr. Roy Powell occupied the second.

The Daughters of the Confederacy occupied carriages and the old veterans went out on the cars to the big oak and marched across to the cemetery. The procession to the grave yard was an unusually large one, though a great many went ... without taking part in the parade.

... The select choir sang "Cover Them Over" (a quartet). A fervent prayer was pronounced by Rev. C. E. Powell and Mrs. L. J. Jackson sang a solo with the chorus, which was both beautiful and appropriate.

Then came a recitation by Anna Ashley, one of the brightest of Mrs. Parks' pupils, followed by the introduction of the orator of the day, Governor Joseph M. Terrell by Mr. Roy E. Powell....

By December 9, 1913, the cemetery began to take shape and be much as it is now. *The Valdosta Daily Times* reports on December 9, 1913:

The improvements which have been made in the Valdosta cemetery during the past few months have changed the appearance of the place so much that one would hardly know it. All of the old "swamp" has been filled in and the place has been parked. [That is, made into a park.] The lots that were recently bought by the city have been converted into cemetery lots and more than 300 new lots have been added, exclusive of the amount of land to be used in parking. The city can get 600 lots together by work which has recently been done. It is proposed to extend the colored cemetery toward the north and park this. It may be necessary to move some of the graves, but the city officials will try and arrange that in a satisfactory manner with the families....

The two entrances to the cemetery are both handsome, and the main entrance has had a way paved to it, making the appearance there unusually attractive. [Photo 10.]

It is proposed to pave the main avenue through the cemetery and to put a good roadway of gravel and oil on some of the other drives. The work of parking [i.e. make into a park] the place will be continued. A hedge fence is to be planted on all of the squares that have not been sold. It is the purpose of the city officials to have these attended to and to make it one of the prettiest cemeteries in this section of the state.

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The work which has already been done will give an idea of what is to be done in the future. It will take some time to carry out the plans that have been adopted, but in the next few months the improvements will be very marked.

The work has been done almost entirely by Dr. Smith, who is at the head of that committee in the city council. Not much money has been spent in the work, but the new cemetery lots that have been added to the place have improved it from \$30,000 to \$50,000, that being the amount of money that will come to the city from the sale of these lots.

As Councilman Clark expressed it, Valdosta is going to have a first class cemetery and not a graveyard where ghosts prowl at night. People have expressed themselves as being very much pleased with the work that has been done.

More information is provided by a news article in *The Valdosta Daily Times*, January 20, 1914, under the heading of a Mayor-Council meeting:

Another larger force of hands is at work at the present time in the city cemetery, building concrete roads from the main entrance and also laying off other roads, which are to be improved and hardened, either by use of oil and gravel, or some other means yet to be determined.

By February of the same year [1914], more improvements had been made, making [the] cemetery the most beautiful anywhere. From *The Valdosta Daily Times*, February 21, 1914:

By the purchase of two and one-half acres of land at this place by the city and the work of filling in some, we have increased the space to five hundred and fifty-four lots. The work which has been done there consists of a perfect draining system, wire and fence hedge, the wire to be used until the hedge is of sufficient size to remove same; two extensive iron gates supported on granite columns [photo 10]; granolithic approach to the main entrance; main drive of concrete with smaller drive of gravel. The front of the property has been laid off in beautiful drives and parkways, and if all places adopted are carried out, the City Cemetery will be the most beautiful spot in this section. The total cost of all this work is approximately fifty-two hundred dollars.

Many symbols abound in [the] cemetery. The shell is there, the symbol of eternity, or the eternal sea, or the second coming. The dove, with or without the olive branch, brings peace to Edenland. And there is the most holy earthen jar, which contains, or attracts, the Spirit of God. It is also said to hold dirt or clay, from which man was made.

[The]...cemetery could be as neat as a beautiful park, and it should be. [A visit to the] the sexton's house once [revealed]... a map of the cemetery, two maps, really, but one shows that all the streets and "alleys" are named, names of flowers and trees and shrubs. [For example, Cypress, Laurel, and Honeysuckle, to name a few.]

[This is the end of the article.]

A map of the cemetery shows that there was a formal plan for the cemetery dated 1915 that was prepared by the City Engineer's Office and with the caption: " Plan of 'Sunset Hill' Cemetery" which would also be the earliest officially-recorded use of the name. It is recorded in Deed or Plat Book TT, page 384. This plan shows the sections labeled with Roman numerals, rather than the

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

letters by which they are known today. It would also appear to have included only the area fronting Oak Street and not showing the earlier "Old Cemetery" portion, now known as C-3. In this plan, it covers the eastern portions known today as Blocks C-1, L-1, L-2, L-3, and F-1 and F-2, and a portion of B. If the plan went further west, the copy does not reflect it. The original design featured more curvilinear streets and park like settings on the front or east side than were implemented or remain today.

Known simply as "City Cemetery," or "Our Cemetery" in its earliest years, its current name "Sunset Hill" was proposed by 1914-1915 as indicated above when the plan was drawn. Mrs. Belle H. Finley stated in an interview published in a January 31, 1968 article in the *Valdosta Daily Times* that in her youth, the cemetery was just called "the cemetery." She credits Dr. Jim Smith, mentioned above, a city council member and his wife, Pearl, with coming up with the name for the cemetery, possibly because it sounded "pretty."

The cemetery's expansion from the 30-acre donation from C. O. Force to the present 66-acre size is as follows. In 1882, eight acres were added that were south of the original 30 and ran up to Oak Street on the east and Mary Street on the south. Part of this would have been redesigned in the 1915 plan. In 1892, the portion on the north/northeast, a six-acre tract, was added and was used as an African-American section. It was north of the original 30 acres. In 1918 to 1920, 8 acres were added west of the 1882 portion. This would be Blocks A-1, E-1, and E-2. Around the same time, a three-acre tract was added northwest of that portion, and west of the Old Cemetery (Force) portion. This would be Section D today. The Jewish or Hebrew Congregation Section was added in 1930, a half-acre tract north of Section D. This was purchased and considered owned by the local Jewish congregation and was consecrated for use by them. Then in 1932 approximately 8 acres were added on the northwest side of the cemetery, roughly sections F, S, T, V, and W, with S and T being additions to the African-American Section. In 1956, the west and southwest portions of the cemetery were added, an 8-acre tract, roughly Sections G-1, G-2, H, and I, to fill out the cemetery's boundary today. Today the cemetery comprises 66 acres. [The original 30 acres, when recalculated, was perhaps less than thirty acres, making the totals of all the deeds, cited above, more than the present acreage, but all in all, the current size of the cemetery on the city tax maps is 66 acres.]

The cemetery contains graves that are significant to local history, as well as regional and national history. Mr. [Albert] Pendleton's "Interesting Tour of Sunset Hill Cemetery" provides locations and short descriptions of the colorful historical characters who are buried in the cemetery. Among these are the mother (Alice Jane McKey Holliday (1829-1866) of national icon Doc Holliday (photo 14), as well as a local cotton mill owner B. F. Strickland (1854/1859-1915) (photo 1) whose memorial statue to his father Charles faces west towards his cotton mill rather than towards the traditional east, and an elephant trainer who was killed by his elephant, Gypsy, in 1902 when a traveling circus passed through Valdosta. There are about 160 Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery, although not in one specific area as in some cemeteries. One grave with the Iron Cross fashioned after the Southern Cross of Honor and placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy is shown in photograph number 15. There are a number of Valdosta mayors buried throughout. United States Senator William S. West (1849-1914)(photo 13) also rests in Sunset Hill inside his

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

family's mausoleum. Many of the most prominent families are buried in mausoleums on their family lots, including Sen. West (mentioned above), and the Langdale family (photo 41), involved in education, politics, and the naval stores industry, as well as the Strickland (photo 11) and Varn families (photo 42).

Perhaps unique in Georgia to Sunset Hill Cemetery, the recently completed (1995) Slave Memorial commemorates the area of the cemetery where slaves are thought to have been buried in unmarked graves (photo 19). This part of the cemetery's history had been largely forgotten or ignored until, during the late 1930s or early 1940s, African-American workers began digging in the section that now holds the memorial. A local woman who witnessed their excavations warned them that they were "destroying their heritage." The work was halted and the area marked off. Though formal recognition of the site was delayed for over fifty years, in 1995 the area was officially commemorated with the present memorial. The text of the archway reads:

A Memorial to the Unknown Slaves of Valdosta In Recognition of their Sacrifices and Contributions To Our Community.

Sunset Hill Cemetery continues to be operated by the City of Valdosta and remains an active burial ground for citizens from all walks of life.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography of materials used by the compilers of the draft nomination upon which this nomination is based:

Council, Mrs. Ruth. Interview by Albert Pendleton. Valdosta, Ga., January 29, 1976.

Daughters of the American Revolution, General James Jackson Chapter. *History of Lowndes County, GA, 1825-1941*. Spartanburg: Reprint Co., 1978. (Originally published in 1942.)

Georgia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy. *Roster of Confederate Graves, Vol. III, Georgia, Grady County - McDuffie County*. By the authors, 1995.

Lowndes County Superior Court. *Plan of Sun Set Hill Cemetery*. Deed Book TT, page 384. Recorded, October 1, 1918. (The plan has the date 1915 on it.)

Lowndes County Superior Court. *Deed, Mrs. E. B. Wisenbaker*. Book J, page 166. Dated May 22, 1882, recorded November 7, 1888.

Lowndes County Superior Court. *Deed, W. M. Force et al.* Book M, page 100. Dated May 4, 1892, recorded May 24, 1892.

Lowndes County Superior Court. *Deed, Heirs of A. Converse, Sr.* Book ?. File notation Cem-1 35. Dated March 21, 1932, recorded approximately the same date.

Lowndes County Superior Court. *Deed, H. M. Goldwire*. Book ?. File notation Cem-1 30. Dated May 10, 1951.

McKey, Mrs. Joyce. Interview by Albert Pendleton and S. Thomas. Valdosta, Ga., September, 1981.

Nelson, Melvin. Interview by Albert Pendleton. Valdosta, Ga., October, 1991, May, 1992, and September, 1993.

Pendleton, Albert. "Sunset Hill." *Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter*. III(3) (1974):1-3.

Ibid. "Sunset Hill, continued." *Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter*. III (4) (1974): 1-3.

Photographs taken in Sunset Hill Cemetery. Collection of Mrs. Avie Giddens Christie. *Lowndes County Historical Society Newsletter*. III (3) (1974):1; and III (4) (1974): 2.

Proceedings [Minutes] of the Valdosta, Georgia, [City] Council. April 5, 1882.

Shelton, Jane T. *Pines and Pioneers: A History of Lowndes County, Georgia 1825-1900*. Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Co., 1976.

St. John, Mrs. Hattie. Interview by Albert Pendleton. Valdosta, Ga., August 27, 1972.

Valdosta Daily Times. March 16, 1895; September 28, 1897; April 2, 1904.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- 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 Cemetery Office, Sunset Hill Cemetery, Valdosta, Georgia.
- University
- Other, Specify Repository: Lowndes County Historical Society, Valdosta, Georgia.,

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 66 acres.

UTM References

- A) Zone 17 Easting 281032 Northing 3414424
- B) Zone 17 E281232 N3413966
- C) Zone 17 E280562 N3413948
- D) Zone 17 E280569 N3414370

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for Sunset Hill Cemetery is marked on the enclosed map Lowndes County, Georgia Tax Maps provided by the City of Valdosta, the owners.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is all the land that is associated with this cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 47 Trinity Avenue, S. W., Suite 414-H
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** June 1, 2004
e-mail ken_thomas@dnr.state.ga.us

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

name/title Albert Pendleton, Lowndes County Historian and Glair D. Anderson, consultant
organization Valdosta Heritage Foundation
mailing address P.O.Box 1792
city or town Valdosta **state** GA **zip code** 31603
telephone N/A
e-mail N/A

- () property owner
- (X) consultant
- () regional development center preservation planner
- (X) other: county historian

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Steve Priest, Supervisor
organization (if applicable) Sunset Hill Cemetery (for City of Valdosta)
mailing address 216 E. Central Ave., P.O.Box 1746
city or town Valdosta **state** GA **zip code** 31603-1746 (for POBox)
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Sunset Hill Cemetery
City or Vicinity: Valdosta
County: Lowndes
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: August 2001

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs:

1 of 44: Charles Strickland statue above cemetery marker to B. F. Strickland and family, on West St.; photographer facing northeast.

2 of 44: Burdick monument, near entrance, Oak Street outside cemetery in background; photographer facing southeast.

3 of 44: Near Oak Street entrance, looking toward, in center, the entrance gates and the street; photographer facing northeast.

4 of 44: In Block L-3, southeast of intersection of Cypress and Laurel, showing trees and Spanish moss; photographer facing southeast.

5 of 44: Just northwest of no. 4, above, with road in center rear of photograph; photographer facing northeast.

6 of 44: Further southwest of photo no. 5, showing in center the marble obelisk of Lane family; photographer facing northeast.

7 of 44: Southeast of photo 6, in Section B, showing a mausoleum in left background, small bricked grave in foreground (Thomas lot), and large trees; photographer facing southeast.

8 of 44: Above ground grave of John W. West with other family members on the West lot and mature tree coverage, plot located on Laurel Avenue, Section A-2; photographer facing northeast.

9 of 44: A-205, at southeast corner of West St. and Laurel Avenue, showing lot with sandy soil and a variety of monuments; photographer facing east/northeast.

10 of 44: Entrance gates as seen from Oak Street, note several mausoleums in center and Burdick monument shown in photo no. 2 to the right; photographer facing northwest.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

11 of 44: Strickland family mausoleum, in Block L-3, south of photo no. 10 with roadway in rear; photographer facing northwest.

12 of 44: Area in Block L-3 to the west of photo no. 11, showing mature trees and Spanish moss as part of the landscaping; photographer facing northwest.

13 of 44: Senator W. S. West Family Mausoleum in Block L-2, south of those shown in photos 11 and 12; photographer facing southwest.

14 of 44: Grave of Doc Holliday's mother (Alice J. McKey Holliday, 1829-1866) in foreground with simple slab and vertical tablet, with above ground small burial to the left, in Section C-3, north of Laurel Avenue; photographer facing northwest.

15 of 44: At edge of Section C-3, showing a metal Iron Cross fashioned after the Southern Cross of Honor adjacent to grave of Civil War veteran and Confederate Soldier, Thomas G. Jenkins, in foreground, and mature trees, cemetery office barely seen at far left rear; photographer facing west.

16 of 44: African-American Section, northeast portion of cemetery, Blocks M-4 or M-5, with simple monuments looking back toward larger, white mausoleum and statues in rear; photographer facing southwest.

17 of 44: Thompson grave marker (1912) out of pre-fabricated metal, located around Block N-7 in the African-American area; photographer facing southwest.

18 of 44: African-American graves, note informal writing on the marker in foreground, in Block M-10; photographer facing southwest.

19 of 44: Slave Memorial Marker placed in 1995, located in "Slave Section" south of Block P-1, west of Block M-11; photographer facing northwest.

20 of 44: Hebrew or Jewish Section, marker having temporarily fallen down at time of photo but it reads "Valdosta Hebrew Congregation Cemetery" located at entrance to "Hebrew Section" on map; photographer facing west/northwest.

21 of 44: Jewish Section, in "Hebrew Section" on map, inscriptions are in Hebrew, Karlip plot; photographer facing west/northwest.

22 of 44: Jewish Section, in "Hebrew Section" on map, Kulbersh monument in middle has Star of David carved on it; photographer facing west/northwest.

23 of 44: Greek Section, just northwest of the Jewish Section on map, monument in foreground has inscription in Greek carved on it; photographer facing northwest.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

24 of 44: Northwest of previous photograph in the NW portion of Section F; photographer facing northwest.

25 of 44: Section H, southwest of the Jewish Section, a more modern section; photographer facing southwest.

26 of 44: Along Laurel Avenue in Section E-2, older section with mature trees; photographer facing southwest.

27 of 44: Northeast of previous photo, north of Laurel Avenue, Section C-4, showing mature trees, statues of an angel on the grave of Emma Tillman Lane, and a variety of monuments; photographer facing northwest.

28 of 44: Section C-3, near the office, grave in foreground is prefabricated metal with very elaborate decorations in the metal; photographer facing east.

29 of 44: Section C-3, near the office, above ground brick mausoleum in the foreground; photographer facing southwest.

30 of 44: The cemetery office in Section C-3; photographer facing northwest.

31 of 44: Section E-1, south of Laurel Avenue and west of West Street; photographer facing west.

32 of 44: Burdette-Worthington Mausoleum in Section E-1, at West Street border; photographer facing west.

33 of 44: Section E-1, just west of previous two photographs, markers in foreground are military tombstones/government issue markers; photographer facing west.

34 of 44: Sandy dirt road at southern edge of Section E-2 at southern edge of cemetery; photographer facing northeast.

35 of 44: Same area as no. 34, other direction; photographer facing northwest.

36 of 44: Sections W-1 and V-2 on the extreme northern/northwestern area of cemetery; photographer facing southwest.

37 of 44: Back in center of cemetery, Section C-3, near the Strickland statue in rear center, note tree trunk-like marker in center rear; photographer facing southwest.

38 of 44: Section C-3, again, to the northwest of previous photograph, Strickland statue in left center rear, those markers in foreground are prefabricated metal ones; photographer facing southwest.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

39 of 44: Cement markers in center of the cemetery; photographer facing southwest.

40 of 44: Section C-3, north of the office, one of the few decorative fenced-in lots remaining; photographer facing north.

41 of 44: Langdale Mausoleum, Section C-2, on Cypress Street; photographer facing southwest.

42 of 44: Four different types of mausoleums are shown here in Section C-1 near entrance to the cemetery, the one at far right is the Varn mausoleum; photographer facing northwest.

43 of 44: Along Cypress Street at Laurel Avenue looking back toward obelisk; photographer facing southwest.

44 of 44: Intersection of Cypress St. and Laurel Avenue; photographer facing northwest.

(HPD WORDPERFECT form version 11-03-01)