

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission

☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic African American Cemeteries in Duval County, Florida (1765-1969)

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Historic African American Cemeteries in Duval County, Florida (1765-1969)

C. Form Prepared by

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Date August 2019

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alissa Lotane, Deputy SAPO
Signature and Title of Certifying Official

12/20/19
Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

James Walker
Signature of the Keeper

2.5.2020
Date of Action

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Name of Multiple Property Listing

FLORIDA

State

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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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.460 et seq.).

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E. Statement of Historical Context

Summary

This historic context describes the history of African American (and African) burials in northeast Florida, specifically Jacksonville and greater Duval County. The narrative is divided into several overarching, chronological sections. The first three sections describe enslaved life and known burial practices during the early Spanish Period, British Period, and Second Spanish Period (1565–1821). The fourth section describes burial practices and lives of enslaved people in Florida during the territorial and immediate antebellum period (1821–1845). Jacksonville had at least two segregated cemeteries that began operations in the late antebellum and early postbellum periods. The fifth section of this context explores the history of African American burials in these cemeteries. In the early 20th century, African Americans began to open and operate their own private cemeteries. This is the subject of the sixth section of this narrative. Together, the various sections of the context provide a broad history of African American cemeteries and burials in and immediately around Jacksonville and necessary criteria for consideration of individual sites under this nomination.

Early Spanish Period (1565–1763)

Spain laid claim to the southeastern U.S. as early as 1513, when Juan Ponce de León sailed from Puerto Rico in search of indigenous enslaved labor and other resources. Aboard his ships were people of African origin, the first to contact the shores of Florida. Over the ensuing decades, the Spanish brought enslaved Africans with them on various exploration and settlement missions, culminating with the 1565 establishment of St. Augustine by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés. Conditions in Florida were difficult, and the rate of escape was particularly high in these early years. This prompted the importation of more Africans, which continued for the next few centuries, although the total population of Africans and those of African descent remained small. The small population and relative difficulty of living in Florida, coupled with the Spanish system of enslavement that allowed for a greater amount of freedom, meant that north Florida's enslaved population in the early colonial era experienced greater social mobility and evolving status than enslaved people in later periods. It was during this period that many African Americans served in the Spanish militia and owned property themselves.¹ There is no evidence that present-day Jacksonville was occupied by the Spanish or any Africans at this time. There also is no evidence of settlement or enslavement occurring in what would become Jacksonville until the late 18th century. The populations of Florida were centered in St. Augustine and Pensacola, as well as scattered Spanish missions across northern Florida, which were gone by the mid-18th century.

¹ Larry Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000) 1–4.

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British Period (1763–1783)

The British system of enslavement came to the Jacksonville area in 1765, when colonists established plantations near a British outpost known as Fort St. George. Throughout the British Period (1763–1783), it is estimated that Africans outnumbered whites in Florida by a ratio of two to one. During this period, plantations were established between 1765 and the early 1780s in northeast Florida and planters imported substantial numbers of Africans into the region for the first time. A 1775 census tallies nearly 2,000 Africans living in Florida, and by the end of the American Revolution in the 1780s, that number had grown to more than 10,000 individuals.² The territory of East Florida stretched from the St. Mary's River, south to the end of the peninsula. However, most of the population lived near St. Augustine and Pensacola. The British approach to agricultural production mirrored the plantation system in South Carolina. East Florida Governor James Grant had a plan to bring enslaved people from South Carolina to Florida and then rely on imports of African after the plantations were established and operating.³ In East Florida, the British employed a large enslaved population on a series of plantations growing cotton, indigo, and rice. Operating out of St. Augustine, Gov. Grant established an indigo plantation known as "Grant's Villa" south of what is now Jacksonville. He began training overseers new to East Florida, and also brought in a large number of enslaved persons directly from Africa. He boasted about a successful first crop and the efficiency with which his "new" workforce adapted to the work and environment, building their own dwellings.⁴

Daily living conditions for enslaved persons living on East Florida plantations during the colonial period are difficult to determine, although it is certain that during the American Revolutionary War, many of these individuals faced greater hardships as routine raids from Georgians and Spanish marauders carried many enslaved people away from East Florida.⁵ Acres of crops and homes were destroyed, and many of the enslaved certainly perished during this time period. There is no evidence of large-scale violence or rebellion on any East Florida plantations, but there had been a definite shift in the demographics of the enslaved population in East Florida because the majority were from Africa, rather than South Carolina.⁶ Little to no evidence of African burial practices survives in the record, and very little material concerning daily enslaved life in British East Florida exists to help understand their role colonial society. In the 20 years that Britain controlled Florida, many enslaved people died and were buried in Florida. Given the increased numbers of enslaved Africans living in the territory by 1780, we can assume that some burial practices from East African traditions may have been employed, although no evidence in British records substantiates this claim. Many people escaped and found

² Wright, J. Leitch, "Blacks in British East Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 4, 425–442.

³ Daniel Schafer, "'Yellow Silk Ferret Tied Round Their Wrists': African Americans in British East Florida, 1763–1784," in *The African American Heritage of Florida*, eds. David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 72–74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

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refuge with the Seminole and Creek tribes in the interior of Florida, others were shipped out of Florida to other British colonies, and a few remained behind as the Spanish moved back into Florida.

Second Spanish Period (1783–1821)

After Spain resumed control of Florida in 1783, the Spanish task system of enslaved labor commonly employed throughout the Caribbean returned. Yet, a problem existed for the early colonists of Florida. They could not entice enough Catholics to move there. This created an opportunity for those who escaped enslavement, who had fled to St. Augustine and Pensacola seeking refuge and sanctuary. This system allowed hundreds of formerly enslaved people and their families to live freely in Florida, owning land and serving in colonial militias.⁷ The geopolitical situation of Spanish Florida, coupled with established colonial law and the unique position of Florida in the greater Atlantic world, meant that many freed people could forge a life very similar to white artisans, farmers, and cattle ranchers in Florida. As a requirement for Spanish sanctuary, many freed people converted to Catholicism and baptized their children. This not only ingratiated them into the colonial Spanish community, but it also ensured the transmission of property rights and other freedoms to their children. Although the requirement to convert to Catholicism was dropped by 1790, many formerly enslaved people were married in the Catholic Church, baptized their children, and took Spanish surnames.⁸ This brief period marks a shift in the cultural practices of freed people in the territory of Florida, and their burial practices would have reflected this integration into Spanish society and an adoption of Spanish Catholic funerary practices, especially in urban areas such as St. Augustine.

In the early 19th century, the combined effects of the Napoleonic wars, the revolutions occurring in Latin America, the War of 1812, and the expansion of the United States greatly weakened Spain's ability to control Florida. Enslavement was still present in northeast Florida during this period, but a sizeable population of freedmen established their own farms and rooted their families in Florida before leaving the territory for other Spanish holdings, including Cuba. Despite the United States agreeing to respect the rights of free blacks living in Florida when negotiating the transfer from Spain, the few who stayed behind lost their most of the legal and economic rights after the takeover. This brief period of substantial freedoms for Africans, and those of African descent in Florida, meant an increase in agency in regard to ones' death rituals and burial practices. Second Spanish Period burials of freedmen in Florida might feature signs of a mix of African traditional burial practices and Spanish Catholic attributes.

Kingsley Plantation

It was during the Second Spanish Period that one of the most well-known Jacksonville area plantation owners, Zephaniah Kingsley, established his plantation on Fort George Island. Kingsley, a British loyalist during the

⁷ Jane G. Landers, "Free Black Plantations and Economy in East Florida, 1784–1821," in *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane L. Landers (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000) 128–129.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 122–123.

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American Revolution, was a slave trader who immigrated to St. Augustine in 1803 and became a Spanish citizen. At first he ran a plantation in an area that is now part of Orange Park before it was destroyed in the Patriots Rebellion of 1812. He later settled on Fort George Island in 1814 and began renting land from another landowner, John Houston McIntosh. Kingsley purchased the plantation outright in 1817. Over the years, he expanded his holdings throughout eastern Florida until he controlled 32,000 acres of land. The plantation grew a variety of crops, including Sea Island cotton and oranges. Kingsley practiced a form a paternalistic enslavement that was a divergence from the British system of gang labor.⁹ The plantation ran on the Spanish style task system, in which enslaved people were given a series of individual tasks to perform each day, after which they were allowed to spend the rest of the day on personal projects. The incentive of this system was it allowed the enslaved to either accumulate money or raise their own crops.

While Kingsley was considered atypically permissive during the Second Spanish Period (1783–1821), inequality and segregation still formed the contours of daily life on the plantation. Enslaved persons on the plantation lived in segregated quarters comprising 32 small tabby cabins. They likely carried this segregation into death. Archaeological investigations have recently located a cemetery where enslaved people were buried, located near their quarters¹⁰ (Figure 1).

⁹ Daniel L. Schafer. *Zephaniah Kingsley and the Atlantic World: Slave Trader, Plantation Owner, Emancipator* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).

¹⁰. James M. Davidson, "Interim Report of Investigations of the University of Florida 2010 Archaeological Field School: Kingsley Plantation (8DU108) Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve National Park, Duval County, Florida." Report prepared for the National Park Service Southeast Archeological Center, September 2011. On file with the Southeast Archeological Center.

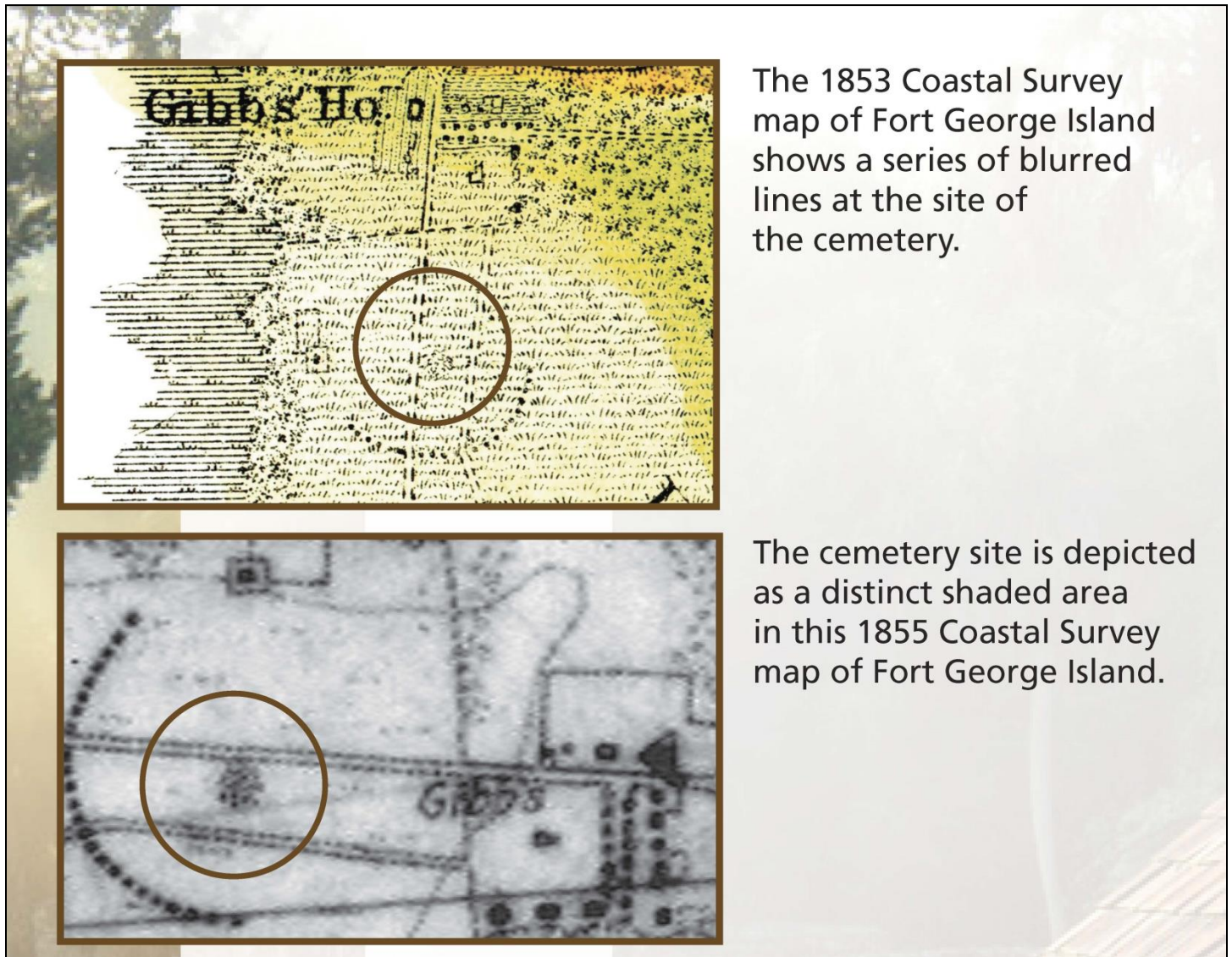
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The 1853 Coastal Survey map of Fort George Island shows a series of blurred lines at the site of the cemetery.

The cemetery site is depicted as a distinct shaded area in this 1855 Coastal Survey map of Fort George Island.

Figure 1. Location of burials on two historic maps of the Kingsley Plantation, courtesy of National Park Service, Kingsley Plantation.

The location of the cemetery is not unexpected because African Americans in the antebellum South were almost always buried separate from the white population. In rural areas, they were buried on the farms and plantations where they lived and worked. Landowners rarely recognized the cemeteries, and land often was reused for other

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purposes. This is evident at Kingsley Plantation. The cemetery site was obscured by years of crops and plowing and went unrecorded until 2010.¹¹

Located about 50 yards north of the quarters for enslaved persons, the Kingsley Plantation enslaved cemetery consists of at least six unmarked graves. Archaeologist James M. Davidson notes that the burials reflect a hybridization of African and European traditions. The location of the cemetery in a space separate from the domestic living area is a European tradition. Such practices were not common in African culture, where burials more likely were located within the domicile or nearby.¹²

The organization of the graves reflects a typical burial pattern. Many accounts of enslaved and freedmen funerals note that bodies typically were buried facing east/west.¹³ Some have theorized that the orientation provided a link to Africa.¹⁴ While we do not know how the graves on the Kingsley Plantation originally were marked, typical adornments found at other cemeteries included wood planks, plantings, and objects such as shells. The deceased's personal items and offerings often also were placed on or within the grave.¹⁵ This pattern appears in the Kingsley burials. Personal items and sea shells were observed in the graves. The Kingsley cemetery represents the only known antebellum African or African American burial in Jacksonville, but additional graves or informal cemeteries may be found in the future.

The plantation economy in East Florida never reached the same production and scope of operations in other parts of the state, namely Middle Florida during the antebellum period. After 1821, planters from other southern states began moving to the fertile lands of Middle Florida, where a plantation economy similar to that seen in Georgia and Alabama emerged. Soon after, the planter elite imposed harsher slave codes aimed at eliminating the perceived threat of insurrection by Florida's free black population, which was larger than many other southern states. Despite this, the Spanish system persisted in East Florida as the growth of plantations plateaued in this region.¹⁶

Seminole Wars Period (1817–1856)

Another event that shaped the enslaved experience in East Florida was the Seminole Wars (1817–1856). Three separate conflicts consumed Florida's territorial populations including enslaved communities. Since the 18th century, Seminole Indians had either captured or encouraged the incorporation of enslaved persons into their

¹¹ Matt Soergel, "UF Archaeological Team finds Six Human Burials at Kingsley Plantation," *The Florida Times Union*, November 10, 2011.

¹² Davidson, Interim Report: Kingsley Plantation (8DU108), 112.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Chicora Foundation, Inc., *Grave Matters: The Preservation of African American Cemeteries* (Columbia, S.C.: Chicora Foundation, Inc., 1996), 4.

¹⁵ Chicora Foundation, Inc., *Grave Matters*, 4–5.

¹⁶ Larry Rivers, *Slavery in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 9–12.

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kinship groups. These populations of runaway people and their descendants lived throughout Florida and represented a perceived threat from the American planter class. Separate communities of “Black Seminoles” formed throughout the state. Although they dressed, built similar dwellings, and entered into alliances with the Seminoles and Lower Creek, they retained and practiced their own culture and traditions.¹⁷ This large presence of free black people and the complicity of the Seminoles in what planters saw as holding stolen property played a role in the Seminole wars, especially the First Seminole War. Sporadic violence and targeted attacks on planters in East Florida prompted a massive federal campaign to remove the Seminole Indians and return their African comrades to enslavement. It was during this period that many plantations were abandoned, residents fled, and the production of agriculture in Florida slowed substantially. By 1842, the U.S. government instituted the Armed Occupation Act in an attempt to revive the territorial economy and encourage development. This act provided free land to settlers in areas once occupied by Seminoles and their black compatriots. Although no known Seminole burial grounds have been found in Duval County, it is possible that new archaeological discoveries might yield clues on Seminole funerary traditions adopted by freedmen who were living and fighting alongside the Seminoles during this period.

Territorial Period (1821-1845) and Statehood

During the Territorial Period (1821-1845), many planters established cemeteries on their properties due to the remote surroundings. Enslaved people were often interred in unmarked designated spaces within a landowner’s family cemetery. Both Caucasian and African American burials often employed rudimentary and homemade headstones that have long since vanished over time, but they would later adopt locally available resources such as concrete and found objects in nature such as wood and stone.¹⁸ A survey of “folk cemeteries” in Wakulla County revealed many similarities in material culture between Caucasian and African American cemeteries. The use of shells, and carved wooden headstones in the form of a human head and shoulders were discovered in both African American and white cemeteries. The shared space of both enslaved populations and free white communities meant that a sharing of cultural attributes during the territorial and early statehood periods led to an amalgamation of European and African funerary practices within the enslaved community.¹⁹ For many in Florida, the practice of funeral rites meant a time of celebration and “communal unity” that was outside of their circumstances.²⁰ Just how much of the material culture of slaves in Florida can be viewed as a reflection of the power relationship between master and enslaved person is debated among archaeologists because so little material culture survives today.²¹ The mortality rate for enslaved persons was much higher than for whites in

¹⁷ Rosalyn Howard. “Black Towns of the Seminole Indians: Florida’s Maroon Communities,” in *Africa In Florida: Five Hundred Years of African Presence in the Sunshine State*, eds. Amanda B. Carlson and Robin Poyner (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014).

¹⁸ Sherrie Stokes. “Gone But Not Forgotten: Wakulla County’s Folk Graveyards.” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 4, 177–191.

¹⁹ Ibid., 182.

²⁰ Larry Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 119.

²¹ Theresa A. Singleton. “Cultural Interaction and African American Identity in Plantation Archaeology,” in *Studies in Cultural Contact: Interaction, Culture Change, and Archaeology*, ed. James G. Cusick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 183.

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Florida yet early records of their funerary practices do not survive. However, because enslaved people often were buried on the landowner's property during the antebellum period in rural area, it is likely that known locations of the antebellum plantations most certainly would hold unmarked burials somewhere on these properties.

Antebellum Jacksonville (1822-1861)

Although it was located between two Spanish towns (St. Augustine and Fernandina), the town that became Jacksonville saw little development prior to American takeover in 1821. The first settlers arrived late in the Second Spanish Period. The settlement that began to take shape in the early 1820s was originally known as Cowford, for the shallow river crossing from which it grew around. The King's Road, which connected St. Augustine, Florida, to Savannah, Georgia, ran through the middle of what is now downtown Jacksonville, utilizing the river crossing. Officially established as Jacksonville in 1822, the town quickly became a center of river commerce, specializing in the shipping of cotton, oranges, lumber, and vegetables, and the importation of manufactured goods from the northern United States. The city was a recognized commercial center by the 1840s. The population grew exponentially during this period, from an estimated 350 people in 1840 to over 1,000 by 1850 and a little over 2,100 by the beginning of the Civil War in 1861.²²

Despite the fact that Jacksonville was a largely mercantile town that did not possess the plantation economy of Middle Florida, life for free and enslaved people in this city was markedly worse than during the Territorial Period. Free blacks were prohibited from entering into the state and could not vote or serve on a jury. Those who were recently freed were required to leave the state within 30 days or face arrest and re-enslavement. Within the city, they were mandated to serve on manual labor projects, had a 9 p.m. curfew, were required to register themselves under a white guardian, and could not congregate without the express permission of the mayor. Biracial children could not inherit property from their white fathers.²³ For enslaved people, they were faced with the far more stringent American system of chattel slavery, with few rights or protections. Although generally free of the gang labor system of slavery, they nonetheless faced often brutal public punishments and often had no recourse when faced with an abusive slave master. Permanent separation of families was also a harsh reality of life.

Jacksonville During the Civil War (1861-1865)

The Civil War proved to be an opportunity for Jacksonville's enslaved population to seek freedom when federal forces occupied the city as early as 1862. At the start of the war, there were roughly 2,000 enslaved people living in the city. The strong Union control of nearby Fernandina along with the active presence of U.S. Colored

²² Stephen Olausen, *Historic Building Survey of Downtown Jacksonville* (St. Augustine, FL: Historic Property Associates, Inc., 1991), p. 3-7.

²³ H. Franklin Robbins, Jr., and Steven G. Mason, "Florida's Forgotten Execution: The Strange Case of Celia," *Florida Supreme Court Historical Society* vol. 2 (Spring/Summer 2014), 6-7.

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Troops along the St. Johns River provided impetus for a large number of black people to seek refuge. Nearly half of Jacksonville's enslaved population fled behind Union lines during the war. Many joined the cause, volunteering to join the Union army or to help as informants, guides, and river boat pilots. African American soldiers from Florida comprised a large portion of the Second South Carolina Volunteers and were involved in several coastal raids along the northeast Florida coast. They also were responsible for reoccupying Jacksonville and bringing the Emancipation Proclamation to Florida's interior. After the war, many African American Union veterans decided to settle in Jacksonville and made the city their home.²⁴ The city of Jacksonville became a haven during this time for black people looking for work off the plantation. By 1870, African Americans comprised a majority of the population of Jacksonville.

Jacksonville After the Civil War (1865-1901)

Reconstruction was a period of hope for freedmen throughout the south. In Florida, black support was crucial to the power of the Republican Party, who controlled state and local politics during this period. Formerly enslaved people were present during the writing of the state constitution of 1868, which was the most liberal written in the state up until that time. During this period, freedmen voted, held office, and received a number of important political appointments. This proved short-lived, however, as almost immediately the Democratic Party and their white allies moved to suppress the newly gained freedoms of African Americans. With the 1876 election of Governor George F. Drew, there would be no Republican governor of Florida until 1967. This was followed by the crafting of the state constitution of 1885, which further restricted the rights of black Americans by granting authority to impose poll taxes and apportioning the state legislature heavily in favor of white-dominated conservative rural counties among other changes.

After Reconstruction ended in 1877, violence permeated urban life in Florida. Much of this was due to the rapid growth in urban populations after the Civil War and the competition for space and influence between Florida's white and African American populations. Vigilantism became a common occurrence in Florida's cities, and the victims of these crimes were predominantly black.²⁵ Many African Americans in Jacksonville were restricted by codified laws, known as "black codes," to lower-class jobs and public life was strictly segregated. The emergence of African American communities such as La Villa on Jacksonville's west side laid the foundation for social and civic engagement among the African American community that would eventually lead to private cemeteries owned and operated by African Americans.

²⁴ Daniel L. Shafer, "African Americans and the Civil War in Northeast Florida," in *The African American Experience in Florida*, eds. David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers, 157-179.

²⁵ Jeffrey S. Alder, "Black Violence in the New South: Patterns of Conflict in Late-Nineteenth-Century Tampa," in *The African American Heritage of Florida*, eds. David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers, 207.

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The Role of the Church in 19th-century African American Communities

It was often the church and other benevolent societies that picked up the tab for funeral costs for Jacksonville's working-class African Americans. It was the church, as well as African American labor unions, lodges, and other civic organizations who, as historian Paul Ortiz writes, "made up bedrock of African American culture and society in Florida's cities and towns."²⁶ However, there is no evidence that churches in Jacksonville practiced burials on church property in the antebellum or immediate postbellum period. Locations of many churches in Jacksonville moved several times as the city's center grew after the Civil War and again after the 1901 fire. This meant that an established cemetery would not have been attached to a church property, but rather the citizens of Jacksonville relied on the public cemeteries or the later private, segregated cemeteries that began in the early 20th century. The cost of living for many African Americans in Jacksonville around the turn of the century meant that an increasing number could not afford to pay for proper burials of loved ones. Many white-owned insurance companies would not write policies for African Americans, which led to the establishment of African American-owned insurance companies to fill that necessary gap.²⁷

Burial Practices in Jacksonville Cemeteries, 1852–1969

The Old City Cemetery

As the city of Jacksonville grew, so did the need for a public cemetery. The first recognized municipal cemetery, eventually known as the Old City Cemetery, was established in 1852 on land donated by Charles Willey, a local steamboat captain. There is evidence that the parcel, located near the intersection of Washington and Union streets, already was being used informally as a graveyard. In the 1940s, researchers located buried grave markers dating to 1827. Other undated and unmarked interments were found in the cemetery prior to 1950. The burials may have been those of Africans or African Americans from the antebellum period.²⁸

African Americans have been buried in a segregated section of the Old City Cemetery since at least 1885 (Figure 2). In 19th century urban areas such as Jacksonville, African Americans usually were buried in the public cemetery, but nearly always in a section that was separated from the white burials. The segregation of Old City Cemetery continued into the postbellum era in Jacksonville. The lands surrounding the municipal cemetery were sold to Jesse D. Cole in 1869. Cole filed a plat for a town he called Oakland, which included a two-acre cemetery tract adjacent to the north of the existing municipal cemetery. North of the planned two-acre Oakland Cemetery was a smaller area identified as the Freedmen's Cemetery. Both sites were designated as African American cemeteries. Like other areas of public accommodation, segregation of the cemeteries

²⁶ Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 104–105.

²⁷ David H. Jackson, "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious": Jacksonville's African American Businesspeople during the Jim Crow Era," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 90, no.4 (Spring 2012), 472–3.

²⁸ Philip S. May, "The Old City Cemetery," *Papers: The Jacksonville Historical Society, Volume 2* (1949), 2.

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continued into the 20th century. The 1928 city directory listed two Duval (Old City) cemeteries, one at East Union Street and the other, labeled “c” likely for colored, located along Washington Street.²⁹

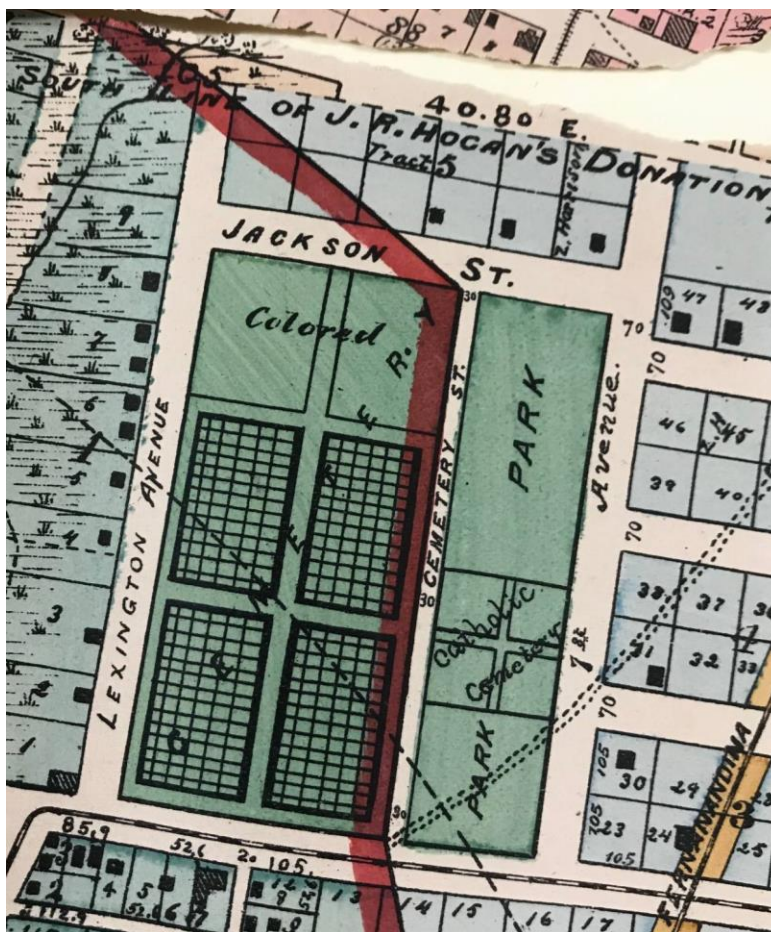


Figure 2. Section of 1885 map of Jacksonville, J. Francis LeBaron (Map Collection, Florida Historical Society, Library of Florida History, Cocoa) Note “colored” sections of Old City Cemetery in northwest corner.

The segregated section of the Old City Cemetery holds the remains of working class and elite African American Jacksonville inhabitants. For example, the cemetery holds the remains of Charles Davis, a teamster who was not yet 30 years old when he died in 1904. James Johnson, a laborer born into enslavement, died and was buried in

²⁹ May, “The Old City Cemetery,” 3–4; R. L. Polk, *Polk’s Jacksonville (City) Directory 1928* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1928), n.p.; R. L. Polk, *R. L. Polk & CO.’S Jacksonville City Directory 1921* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1921), 82.

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the cemetery in 1908.³⁰ William Lewis, a Civil War veteran who served with the 34th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment in South Carolina, was buried in the cemetery in 1906. He worked as a carpenter late in life, but little else is known about him.³¹

Prominent community members buried in the Old City Cemetery include Alexander Darnes, Princess Kofi, Mother Clara White, and her daughter Eartha M. M. White. Darnes was Jacksonville's first African American doctor. Born in Saint Augustine to a house worker, he became the servant to Edmond Kirby Smith, the scion of the family that owned Darnes and his mother. Smith was a soldier in the United States Army, and Darnes followed him on his travels west and ultimately into the Civil War when Smith became a general in the Confederate Army. The end of the war resulted in a dramatic change in Darnes's life. He enrolled in school and eventually earned a medical degree from Howard University in 1880.³² He established his medical practice in Jacksonville that same year and became one of the most important members of the African American community.³³ He died in 1894.

Mother Kofi, whose given name was Laura Adorkor, came to America in the early 1920s from West Africa. She settled in Jacksonville and quickly became associated with Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). She became a prominent spokesperson and national field director for the organization, which advocated black nationalism and asserted that African Americans should return to Africa to establish their own nation. Mother Kofi's fame grew throughout the 1920s. She traveled throughout the South speaking to enthusiastic audiences of tens of thousands. Mother Kofi's speeches blended optimism, activism, black nationalism, and the spiritual. Her most ardent followers felt she has been sent by God to rescue them. However, not everyone celebrated her influence or popularity. Marcus Garvey and his most ardent followers chafed at Mother Kofi's rise. They saw her as a threat, not an ally. She was assassinated by members of Marcus Garvey's inner circle on March 28, 1928, while giving a speech at Thompson's Hall in Miami.³⁴

Eartha M. M. White was a prominent humanitarian and entrepreneur in Jacksonville.³⁵ She owned a dry goods store, housecleaning business, taxi company, and steam laundry. White was a licensed real estate broker and the first female employee of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. She also was a charter member of the Jacksonville branch of the National Negro Business League. Her business success allowed her to use much of her wealth to finance humanitarian work in the African American community. Her projects were

³⁰ 1900 U. S. Census, Duval County, Florida, Population Schedule, p. 9, Enumeration District 0044, National Archives Microfilm Publication T623.

³¹ USGenWeb Archives, "Old Duval Colored Cemetery, Jacksonville Duval County Florida," available at <http://files.usgwarchives.net/fl/duval/cemetery/oldduval.txt>; Duval County, Florida, 1900 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, p. 23, Enumeration District 0050, National Archives Microfilm Publication T623.

³² The Jacksonville Historical Society, "Alexander Darnes, Jacksonville's First Black Physician," available at <http://www.jaxhistory.org/portfolio-items/alexander-darnes-jacksonvilles-first-black-physician/>.

³³ Jackson, Jr., "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious, 468.

³⁴ Ben Brotemarkle, "Rise and Assassination of Mother Kofi," *Florida Today*, February 16, 2016.

³⁵ James B. Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire: 1901-1919* (Jacksonville, Fla., University of North Florida Press, n.d.), 94.

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diverse. She created Oakland Park, the first public park in Jacksonville for African Americans. White also founded several community support institutions, including an orphanage for African American children, a home for unwed mothers, a nursery for children of working mothers, the Boy's Improvement Club, and the Colored Citizens Protective League.³⁶ She also established the City Federation of Women's Clubs, an organization that placed various groups catering to the African American community under one umbrella. The groups advocated for and secured the creation of the first playground in the African American community, improvements to the county jail, the employment of a social worker that served the community, and the installation of school nurses in African American schools.³⁷ White is most famous for the establishment of a homeless shelter serving the African American community in 1904. The facility, known as the Clara White Mission, was run by her mother (Clara White) until her death in 1920. Eartha White continued to operate the mission after her mother's death. The mission, which at one point was Jacksonville's largest employer of African-American people, continues to operate.³⁸ Clara White was buried in the Old City Cemetery in 1920, and Eartha M. M. White joined her mother in 1974.

African American entrepreneur Abraham Lincoln Lewis began operating separate cemeteries for African American residents in 1911. However, this did not result in the wholesale abandonment of the Old City Cemetery. After a decline in the first decade of the 1900s, African American burials in the Old City Cemetery actually increased. There were 55 African American burials in the Old City Cemetery between 1920 and 1925 alone. There is no evidence that the Old City Cemetery was ever closed to or shunned by African Americans during segregation. African American burials continued into the 1990s, with the most burials occurring in the decades of the 1920s and 1960s.³⁹

Evergreen Cemetery

Evergreen Cemetery, established near 4535 Main Street North in 1880, was another segregated burial ground. Unlike the Old City Cemetery, which was publicly owned, the Evergreen Cemetery was privately owned and remains so today. Local business leaders formed the Jacksonville Cemetery Association to manage and operate the site, which was quite profitable. The cemetery association was renamed the Evergreen Cemetery Association in 1910 and restructured as a nonprofit organization. Even as a nonprofit, the cemetery provided considerable wealth to the association members, who were all linked to the funerary industry. They were the men who owned the city's funeral homes, monument carving establishments, and other funeral support businesses⁴⁰ (Figure 3).

³⁶ Euell A. Nielson, "Eartha M. M. White (1876–1974)," *Black Past*, available at <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/eartha-m-m-white-1876-1974/>.

³⁷ Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 89.

³⁸ Nielson, "Eartha M. M. White."

³⁹ USGenWeb Archives, Old Duval Colored Cemetery.

⁴⁰ Sidney Johnson, Robert O. Jones, and Andrew Waber, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Evergreen Cemetery (DU14270)," September 2010.

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In 1881, the founders of Evergreen Cemetery established the Mount Olive Cemetery, an African American burial ground located to the west. A rather small site, Mount Olive Cemetery was eventually surrounded by whites-only burial areas and is hereto referred to as the Mount Olive section of Evergreen Cemetery.⁴¹ This section of the Evergreen Cemetery is not to be confused with the Mount Olive Cemetery. This second Mount Olive Cemetery was established in the 1940s near the intersection of Moncrief Road and West 45th Street.

Mount Olive Cemetery contains hand-carved headstones, handmade barrel-arch sepulchers, and a few commercial headstones, memorials, and obelisks.⁴² The markers often reflected the poverty and inequality that defined post-Civil War Jacksonville in that they were made from cheaper materials as compared to the white markers.⁴³ The symbolism of a “lesser” marker is emblematic of the systemic oppression that Jim Crow laws and social norms created and that segregated burials enforced.

One of the earliest burials in the Mount Olive section was that of William A. Johnson, who died in 1882. The concrete stone exhibits vernacular characteristics, but is somewhat detailed with recessed and embossed elements and varied styles of lettering.⁴⁴

Another burial belongs to Dr. Andrew L. Peirce, who died in 1903. Like Dr. Darnes, Peirce was a prominent physician who served the African American community.

The Mount Olive section of Evergreen Cemetery was also the final resting place for working class African Americans. For example, Isabelle Clayton, a maid, died in 1905 at the age of 45. Her grave is marked by a brick vault with a cement headstone. The 1901 grave of Mamie Johnson is one of the most prominent markers in the cemetery. Carved out of granite, it stands five feet tall. Except that she died in her mid-30s, we know little about Mamie Johnson or her place in the community.

The establishment of African American cemeteries after 1910 resulted in a decline of use at the Mount Olive section of Evergreen Cemetery. However, like the segregated section of the Old City Cemetery, African American burials continued on the site at least into the 1990s. John Irvin Kennedy was buried in the Mount Olive section of the cemetery in 1998.⁴⁵ Born in Jacksonville in 1926, Kennedy was the first African American to play in the regular season for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1957, making them the last team in the National League to integrate. After a short stint in the major leagues, Kennedy spent several years playing minor league

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Johnson, Jones, and Waber, “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Evergreen Cemetery.”

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baseball before returning to Jacksonville following his retirement. Kennedy played in local baseball leagues into his seventies.⁴⁶

Development of African American Funerary Industry

Like other aspects of African American life, segregation affected the ability of African Americans to properly commemorate their dead. This extended not only into cemeteries, but also into funeral homes and mortuaries. The few white funeral homes that offered services to black people usually provided very little beyond embalming and often subjected black families to indignities such as careless handling of bodies, entering through back doors, and basement services. This provided a business opportunity for enterprising black business owners. In the late 19th century, funerals and wakes were gradually moving out of private homes and into commercial funeral homes. What was traditionally seen as a family responsibility of preparing the body and digging the grave was now seen as a business transaction involving the family and one or more companies. In Jacksonville, the black funeral homes were amongst the most profitable businesses in the community. Despite the poverty, members of the community were known for throwing elaborate celebrations of the lives of the departed, often paying for the ceremonies through community-supported benevolent societies and burial leagues. The first black funeral home established in Jacksonville was the Totson Funeral Home, which was founded by Wyatt Geter in 1880. In 1904, the Holmes and Glover Funeral Home was founded by Rosa Glover and J.C. Holmes. Another important funeral home business that opened in La Villa was the Lawton Pratt Funeral Home. Its proprietor and namesake, Lawton Pratt, was one of the wealthiest and most successful black businessmen in Jacksonville. These funeral homes often contained a fleet of hearses that not only transported the dead but also served as ambulances for the black community. The business partnerships formed with funeral homes were crucial to the development of black-owned cemeteries.⁴⁷ In a condensed directory of black-owned Jacksonville businesses from 1936, there were seven undertakers identified. By 1957, there were at least ten black-owned funeral homes.⁴⁸

African American-Owned Cemeteries in Jacksonville, 1909–1969

The first decade of the 20th century was one of transition for Jacksonville's African American community. Hopes of equality created by Reconstruction had faded away. Jim Crow laws officially sanctioning segregation by now had become fully entrenched in the South, strengthened by the US Supreme Court's infamous 1883

⁴⁶ Larry Moffi and Jonathan Kronstadt, *Crossing the Line: Black Major Leaguers, 1947–1959* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 167.

⁴⁷ Brittany Brown, "Ancestral Landscapes: A Study of Historical Black Cemeteries and Contemporary Practices of Commemoration Among African Americans in Duval County, Jacksonville, FL." (PhD. diss. College of William and Mary, 2018), 131-136; Glenn Emery, "Funeral Home Ambulances," Jacksonville Historical Society, <http://www.jaxhistory.org/portfolio-items/funeral-home-ambulances/>.

⁴⁸ National Baptist Convention, Inc. Courtesy Committee, "A 'Thumb-Nail' Sketch of Colored Jacksonville, Florida," September 7-14, 1936, n.p.; Eartha M.M. White, compiler, *Who is Who in Jacksonville Business and Professions* (Jacksonville, FL: Clara White Mission, Inc., 1957), n.p.

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Civil Rights Cases and its 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. At the same time, a cohesive, economically diverse community developed. It was a community that provided some protection and opportunity to local African Americans as they built productive lives in the city.

The overall economic condition of Jacksonville's African American community reflected racial disparities. African American residents made up nearly 60 percent of the city's population in 1900, but they were mostly confined to poverty stricken neighborhoods on the margins of downtown. Employment opportunities were generally limited to menial unskilled labor. A total of 77 percent of the unskilled workforce was African American. Another 17 percent were skilled workers, such as carpenters, stone masons, painters, and bricklayers. In contrast, only 17 percent of the white workforce was employed in the unskilled and skilled trades. The vast majority of white workers instead were classified as white collar workers, while African Americans only accounted for 5 percent of the white collar work force. Public spaces such as schools, theaters, hotels, restaurants, churches, and hospitals were segregated, as was public transportation. A poll tax also limited African American voting rights.⁴⁹

However, the next decade brought important changes. Employment patterns shifted. White collar employment among the city's African American population increased to 35 percent by 1910. Many of these jobs were created by African American-owned businesses. There also was an increase in African American people working in the skilled trades. This shift was partly influenced by the railroads, which attracted skilled workers to Jacksonville regardless of their race. Over the same period, white employment increased in the unskilled and skilled trades.⁵⁰ Overall, white residents still dominated the professional class, and African American residents continued to compose most of the unskilled working class, but African Americans were finding their own economic path among the inequality of Jim Crow Jacksonville.⁵¹

As with the funeral home industry, segregation created business opportunities in the life insurance and cemetery industries for black entrepreneurs. For the average African American, securing life insurance coverage from white insurance companies proved difficult, even if they could afford the premiums. It was during this decade of transition that Abraham Lincoln (A. L.) Lewis and four African American leaders formed the Afro-American Industrial & Benefit Association to help allay the costs of medical care and burials for local African American residents. The association provided individuals with affordable insurance. Lewis directed the organization until his death in 1947, serving as the association's first manager and treasurer.⁵² Subsequently renamed the Afro-American Insurance Company, the association experienced robust growth in the early 20th century. The company grew to 81 branches, with locations in Jacksonville, Tampa, and Miami. Lewis became one of the first

⁴⁹ Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 13, 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁵¹ Jackson, Jr., "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious," 454.

⁵² Mavynee Betsch, Carol J. Alexander, and Barbara E. Mattick, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Lewis Mausoleum," April 1997; Crooks, *Jacksonville After the Fire*, 39.

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African American millionaires in Jacksonville. When its new headquarters building was constructed in 1956, it was widely heralded as the first black-owned million-dollar building in the state of Florida.⁵³

The establishment of the private African American cemeteries located along Moncrief Road was an extension of the Afro-American Insurance Company operations. By 1909, Lewis determined that black residents needed their own cemeteries, separate from the segregated Old City and Evergreen Cemeteries. While the segregated cemeteries accepted African American burials in designated areas, the establishment of African American-owned and managed cemeteries reflected the ways in which residents strove to build and maintain a safe and secure community in the face of inequality. They wanted to have control of their own cemeteries in order to protect their own interests.⁵⁴

The proper disposal of the deceased has long been considered an important element of public health. By the early 20th century, all cemeteries within the city limits of Jacksonville fell under the oversight of the Board of Public Works. All new cemeteries within the city required the approval of the city council. Like their white counterparts, the African American cemetery managers and funeral home directors worked closely with the city health officer. Before bodies could be prepared for funerals, transported outside of the city, or released for burial, a permit was required from the city health officer. New public health reporting requirements came into effect at around this time as well. Death certificates listing vital statistical information of the deceased, where they died, their cause of death, and location of burial became mandatory. By the mid-1910s, state law mandated that funeral home directors handle the filing of death certificates. Cemetery managers were required to provide certification of burials. Both the funeral home directors and cemetery managers in essence played vital roles in public health reporting for the community. The development of private African American cemeteries also coincided with a period of increased regulations and responsibilities.⁵⁵

Memorial Cemetery

Looking for a location to establish a cemetery, Lewis eventually found a fitting property on the former estate of John Seymour Pickett, an early settler who founded Pickettville. The estate was subdivided by his son James A. Pickett in 1884 and sat relatively idle until 1909, when Leo K. Benedict, treasurer of Benedict-Pollack Company, a dry goods store on West Bay Street in Jacksonville, asked the city to survey a parcel he owned for use as a cemetery.⁵⁶ Benedict named the site, located near the corner of Moncrief Road and West Edgewood

⁵³ Jackson, Jr., "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious," 473-4; *Florida Star*, "Dedication of Afro Bldg. Set for Sunday, April 22," April 21, 1956.

⁵⁴ Jacksonville Planning and Development Department, Draft National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Moncrief Road Cemeteries, on file with the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department.

⁵⁵ *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Jacksonville*, Chapter 39 (Odom 1911), 280-284; Florida State Board of Health, "What the Legislature Did for the Public Health," *Health Notes* vol. 10, no. 6 (June 1915), 196-200.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

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Avenue, Memorial Cemetery. The property encompassed Lots 25, 26, and 17 of Pickett's Subdivision.⁵⁷ A year later, Benedict sold the cemetery to the Memorial Cemetery Association (MCA), a subsidiary of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Lewis was also the president of the Memorial Cemetery Association. The cemetery office was located in the Afro-American Insurance Company building at 402 Broad Street.⁵⁸ The warranty deed, dated December 28, 1911, conveyed roughly 21 acres to the MCA. It is not clear whether any cemetery plots were sold prior to Lewis's acquisition of the property. At the time the property was transferred, the cemetery was subdivided into 302 sections. In 1916, the MCA subdivided another nine acres of the cemetery that were not originally divided in 1911. In June 1928, more land was subdivided.⁵⁹

On December 14, 1936, the MCA, which by now also included Pinehurst and Sunset cemeteries, was dissolved. The Lewis family acquired Pinehurst and Sunset cemeteries and retained ownership of both until 1986, when the property was transferred to Memorial Cemetery, Inc., which was a subsidiary of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company.⁶⁰ Memorial Cemetery, Inc., operated the cemeteries until the insurance company went bankrupt in the 1990s. The cemeteries are now managed by the City of Jacksonville.

Under Lewis's ownership, Memorial Cemetery became the preferred site for the burials of African Americans in the city of Jacksonville. The connection of the cemetery to the Afro-American Life Insurance Company provided a natural link between the cemetery and the local African American population, as Lewis's company was the primary provider of life insurance to African Americans in Jacksonville.⁶¹

Individuals buried in Memorial Cemetery represented a cross section of Jacksonville's African American community. The graves of soldiers, teachers, educators, and businessmen are intermixed with the graves of laborers, carpenters, and chauffeurs. A. L. Lewis, one of the most prominent community members, and other Lewis family members are buried in a mausoleum on the site. A second mausoleum holding the remains of Afro-American Life Insurance Company executive Louis Dargan Ervin and his wife is also located on the site.

Prominent African American architect Sanford Augustus Brookins died in 1968 and is buried at Memorial Cemetery. Brookins was born to farmworkers in Macon, Georgia, in 1877, but relocated to Jacksonville in 1904. He worked as a construction foreman until 1916, when he established his own contracting company. Brookins focused on the design and construction of single-family homes. In less than ten years, he had designed and built nearly 160 houses in Jacksonville.⁶² Most of Brookins's homes were constructed in the African American neighborhoods of Sugar Hill and Durkee Gardens. He also built homes in the African

⁵⁷ R. L. Polk, *R.L. Polk & CO. Jacksonville City Directory 1910* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1910), 58, 155, 284.

⁵⁸ R. L. Polk, *R. L. Polk & CO. Jacksonville City Directory 1928* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1928), 1435; R. L. Polk, *R. L. Polk & CO. 'S. Jacksonville City Directory 1935* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1935), 1039; R. L. Polk, *R. L. Polk & CO. 'S. Jacksonville City Directory 1929* (Jacksonville, Fla.: R. L. Polk & CO, 1929), 583.

⁵⁹ Draft National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Moncrief Road.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Jackson "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious," Ibid.

⁶² Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945* (New York: Routledge), 64.

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American resort of American Beach.⁶³ Working with a white builder, he even designed several homes in the exclusive white neighborhood of Riverside.

The cemetery also contains the burials of lower class and working class African Americans. For example, Hattie Mae Evans, a servant, died at the age of 21 and was buried in the cemetery. Clarence Frier, a 25-year-old laborer, died in 1922 and was buried at Memorial Cemetery. Joseph M. Argett, a machinist born in 1880, was buried in the cemetery in 1964.

There may also be unknown, unmarked burials. The 1918 influenza pandemic hit the African American community hard. The Afro-American Life Insurance Company lost 12,000 members to the epidemic. It is likely that at least some of the bodies were interred at Memorial Cemetery. However, there are few markers dating to 1918. It is possible that the great number of deaths, the haste with which funerals were conducted, and the tight money situation for many members of the population might explain the lack of grave markers at Memorial Cemetery dating to this time period. Wood markers that may have been placed, along with expressions of African burial traditions, have disappeared, leaving large sections of the cemetery with unmarked graves. Although there was a map of Memorial Cemetery, there was no systematic way of recording deeds to lots. A representative of the Afro-American Insurance Company handled the sales at the cemetery and made notations directly on the map, which has subsequently been lost.⁶⁴ Memorial Cemetery no longer is actively managed or maintained, but burials continued into at least the mid-2010s.

Sunset Cemetery

Two years after acquiring Memorial Cemetery, Lewis and the cemetery association acquired a second property for just over \$3,000. The new site was located at the corner of Moncrief Road and Edgewood Avenue across the street from Memorial Cemetery. The original property consisted of a ten-acre plot, but parts of the original tract were eventually sold for commercial development before being subdivided into burial plots.⁶⁵

According to records of the Memorial Cemetery Association, the new cemetery was named Price City in 1914. The name "Price City" probably was chosen to honor A. W. Price, president of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company from June 1909 until his death on November 1, 1918.⁶⁶

⁶³ Historic Property Associates, *Historic Building Survey of Urban Core Southwest of the City of Jacksonville*, (Historic Property Associates, 1997), 14, 22, on file with the Jacksonville Planning and Development Department; Joel McEachin, *Historic Building Survey of American Beach Nassau County, Florida* (The American Beach Property Owners' Association, Inc., 1998), 31, on file with the Amelia Island Museum of History.

⁶⁴ Draft National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Moncrief Road Cemeteries.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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A question exists about when the cemetery was first used. The property is depicted on the 1918 Jacksonville topographic map, which is based on surveys conducted a year earlier. Therefore, the cemetery existed by 1917. However, it is not clear when the first burials occurred. It is reasonable to assume that the cemetery was in use by 1917, but documentation produced by the Memorial Cemetery Association indicates that, although Sunset Cemetery may have been platted, it did not become a prominent place for burials until a decade or more later.⁶⁷ This may reflect a lag between the time in which burial plots were sold and when they were used. Sunset Cemetery is not listed in the Jacksonville city directories because it was part of the Memorial Cemetery Association. Records of Sunset Cemetery are believed to be lost.

Unlike Memorial Cemetery, Sunset Cemetery was formally landscaped and was marketed as a burial location primarily for wealthy African Americans prior to desegregation. The most visible manifestations of the original landscape plan are the cedar and arbor vitae trees planted on the site in the 1930s.

Burials in this cemetery include James "Charlie Edd" Craddock, an influential member of Jacksonville's African American community. Craddock was a local businessman who owned several nightclubs in Jacksonville. He opened his first club, the Little Blue Chip, at 426 Broad Street in 1921. He is perhaps best known for owning the Two Spot, one of the most popular African American nightclubs in Jacksonville. Located at 45th Street and Moncrief Road, the Two Spot opened on Christmas Day, 1940. The club attracted major acts, including B. B. King, Dinah Washington, Sam Cooke, James Brown, Lionel Hampton, Ruth Brown, Charlie Singleton, and Jackie Wilson. The Afro-American Insurance Company staged a yearly formal dance at the Two Spot. Sadly, the stature of the club declined after Craddock's death in 1957. The venue ultimately was demolished to make way for residential housing.⁶⁸ Over the years, Craddock acquired and owned several other properties, including the Charlie Edd Hotel, Young Men's Smoke Shop, Uncle Charlie Edd's Barber Shop, loan offices, and pawn shops. His businesses employed as many as 500 people.⁶⁹

William Edward Langley and some of his family members also are interred at Sunset Cemetery. The Langley family owned a taxi business that catered to African Americans in Jacksonville.

On May 20, 1986, James L. Lewis, representing the Lewis family, signed a quit claim deed transferring ownership of Sunset Cemetery to Memorial Cemetery, Inc., a nonprofit corporation based in Jacksonville. The cemetery fell into disuse and was not being actively maintained by the 1990s. Maintenance of the cemetery was taken over by the city of Jacksonville. Despite burials taking place as late as 2010, this cemetery is in poor condition.

⁶⁷ United States Geological Survey, Jacksonville, Fla., 15 Minute Quadrangle, 1918.

⁶⁸ Jacksonville Historical Society, "The Two Spot," available at <http://www.jaxhistory.org/portfolio-items/two-spot/>.

⁶⁹ Jackson, "Industrious, Thrifty and Ambitious," Ibid.

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Pinehurst Cemetery

Pinehurst Cemetery is the third cemetery acquired by Lewis and the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Located about one quarter mile west of the Memorial Cemetery, it was platted originally in 1928 by the Memorial Cemetery Association. It was divided into five sections. Four of the sections (B, C, D, and E) had small 8 ft. x 4 ft. (individual) grave plots. One section (A) was platted with 10 ft. x 20 ft. lots. The original design plan indicates a straight road into the cemetery from Moncrief Road, terminating in a turnaround.⁷⁰

Pinehurst was planned as a cemetery for less affluent members of Jacksonville's African American community. However, detailed information on the property is difficult to find because it generally was not separated out from the operations of the broader Memorial Cemetery Association. In fact, like the Sunset Cemetery, it was not listed in the contemporary city directories because only the Association office was listed.⁷¹ The cemetery is now owned by the City of Jacksonville.

The Memorial, Pinehurst, and Sunset cemeteries were the most notable of what became a larger African American cemetery district along Moncrief Road. There were several other smaller African American cemeteries that sprang up along Moncrief road. The Mount Olive Cemetery is located at 45th Street and Moncrief Road. It was established by Craddock in the 1940s. The Duval County Paupers Cemetery is located on Moncrief Road, near its intersection with Raines Avenue, just west of the Pinehurst Cemetery. The New Mount Hermon Cemetery is located adjacent to the west boundary of Memorial Cemetery. It appears to still be maintained and is not owned by the City of Jacksonville.

Old Mount Hermon Cemetery

While the Afro-American Insurance Company's cemeteries were the most notable private African American cemeteries in the city, they were not the only ones. Burials were also not strictly confined to Moncrief Road. A good example of this was the Old Mt. Hermon Cemetery, which was located near the Durkeeville community. Burials took place here as early as the 1880s. In 1891, the cemetery was one of the earliest approved by the city's Board of Health. The size of the cemetery at this time was ten acres. Exactly when it stopped being used is uncertain. By 1931, there was a New Mount Hermon Cemetery in operation, which was built near the Afro-American cemeteries on Moncrief Road. In 1941, the land for the Old Mt. Hermon Cemetery was donated to the city, which turned the cemetery into a public park. Afterwards, the city moved all but a few scattered tombstones to the City Cemetery. Perhaps the most notable burial still here is that of Thompson Williams, a local hero and father of ten who lost his life while coming to the aid of a white woman who was being attacked.

⁷⁰. Draft National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Moncrief Road Cemeteries.

⁷¹. Ibid.

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His story was profiled nationally years later by *Jet*. Today his tomb along with the few remaining headstones sit in the middle of Emmett Reed Park near Interstate 95, the last remnants of the cemetery.⁷²

Other Black Cemeteries in Duval County

Prior to its consolidation, Jacksonville was merely the largest of several incorporated and unincorporated communities in Duval County. African Americans residing in these surrounding communities were confronted by similar problems to their counterparts in what is now downtown Jacksonville. In the 1880s, South Jacksonville, which was located across the St. Johns River from Jacksonville, began to see significant development, spurred in large part by the construction of railroads through the area. In 1884, it served as the terminus of a narrow gauge railroad, the Jacksonville & Atlantic Railway, which connected to Pablo Beach (Jacksonville Beach). In 1899, the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) acquired the railway, converted it to a standard gauge line, and built a station in South Jacksonville. Several communities either sprang up or developed along this line, including the community of St. Nicholas. The disregard shown to black people in life often extended to death, and like many communities, setting up a cemetery free from public or private white control was one of many ways African Americans in South Jacksonville sought to maintain dignity.⁷³

In 1910, the FEC donated four acres to the Trustees of the Community Cemetery of St. Nicholas. This is the earliest property record specifically referencing the St. Nicholas Cemetery. It is clear, however, that there was a preexisting African American burial ground here which was associated with the Mount Zion Baptist Church of Spring Park going back into the 19th century. This cemetery, which had roughly 974 marked burials as of 2011, was the largest and most significant African American burial ground in South Jacksonville. In contrast to several historic African American cemeteries found in Duval County, St. Nicholas Cemetery is well-maintained and actively managed by the St. Nicholas Cemetery Association, which was reformed in 1990.⁷⁴

Rural Community Cemeteries

In the late 19th century, a number of small, rural African American communities developed throughout Duval County. Some of these communities, such as Yukon (where present-day NAS Jacksonville is located) trace their origins to enslaved communities already living there on earlier plantations. In the northeast section of the county, particularly in the Mill Cove area along the St. Johns River extending towards Fernandina Beach to the north, the local African American culture was heavily influenced by the Sea Islands, a series of islands along the Atlantic coast which extend northward into the Carolinas. Nearby Amelia Island and Little and Big Talbot

⁷² *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Jacksonville*, Section 795 (Barrs 1901), 257; Matt Soergel, "A Hero's Grave," *Florida Times-Union* [n.d.], <http://static.jacksonville.com/files/1908/hero-s-grave-thompson-williams-story.html>; *Jet*, "Dixie City Keeps Monument to Negro who Saved White Woman," vol. 4, no. 7 (June 25, 1953), 6-7.

⁷³ Joel McEachin, "Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission Landmark, Landmark Site, or Historic District Nomination Form: St. Nicholas Cemetery," Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission (2011), 8-1 [n.p.].

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

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islands represent the southernmost extent of these islands. After the Civil War, black homesteaders from the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina also moved into Duval County, further strengthening the influence of what is known as Gullah Geechee culture. The African American communities near Mill Cove, which included New Berlin, Cosmo, Fulton, and Lone Star, developed in relative isolation from the rest of Jacksonville and Duval County. Many of the residents spoke Gullah, which was a creole language heavily influenced by the Mende and Vai languages of Sierra Leone. The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which was created as part of the National Park Service's National Heritage Area program, extends through this part of Duval County.⁷⁵

A good example of a Gullah community in Duval County is Cosmo, which was situated in what is now known as the Fort Caroline area of Jacksonville. It was one of several small African American communities located near Mill Cove. This community was comprised overwhelmingly of Gullah farmers and fishermen who lived in relative isolation from the rest of Jacksonville for many years. The first documented presence of Cosmo dates to the late 19th century, as black homesteaders acquired land in the area. In the late 19th century, the community was a stop along the Jacksonville, Mayport, and Pablo Railroad, and had its own school, church, and post office. There was a small community cemetery, Palm Springs Cemetery, which was in use prior to 1950. By the mid-20th century, development significantly impacted the area. A channel was cut through nearby Alligator Point, forming Blount Island, which became the major port terminal of Jacksonville. Mining also started in the area. Craig Airfield was constructed near the community of Lone Star, not far from Cosmo. Pressure from residential developers eager to acquire the valuable riverfront properties eventually drove many of the residents to either sell or lose possession of the land. The nearby Gullah community of Fulton became the Beacon Hills neighborhood. As suburban development encroached upon Cosmo, it was renamed Fort Caroline. Today, one of the few remnants of the Cosmo community is the cemetery itself, which is set between suburban enclaves and a golf course.⁷⁶

Many African American cemeteries in the county fell under the ownership of non-profit organizations controlled by members of the local black community. This imposed particular challenges on maintenance responsibilities in the cases where the respective communities either disappeared, the non-profits were inactive, or there were few financial resources upkeep the cemeteries. This ownership pattern is perhaps best illustrated in several of the cemeteries found in the Moncrief area. It was not limited here, however. A good example of this is the Yukon Cemetery located in the defunct community of Yukon in southern Duval County near Orange Park. The core of Yukon traces its origins back to an enslaved community that worked the Mulberry Grove Plantation prior to the Civil War. In the late 19th century, the Savannah, Florida & Western Railway, which was

⁷⁵ Joseph A. Opala, "The Gullah: Rice, Slavery, and the Sierra Leone-American Connection,"

<https://glc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Gullah%20Language.pdf/>

⁷⁶ Cosmo Historical Preservation Association, "Cosmo History," n.p.; Cristin Wilson, "Remembering Cosmo: For About 100 Years, Families of Former Slaves made a Life on East Arlington Land," *Florida Times-Union*, January 18, 2015,

<https://www.jacksonville.com/article/20150118/NEWS/801237613>; Ryan Benk, "Descendents of Slaves Work to Preserve Jacksonville Community Heritage," <https://news.wjct.org/post/descendants-slaves-work-preserve-jacksonville-community-heritage>.

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part of the Plant System, came through here. This rail line later became part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL). A depot with its own post office, known as Yukon, was built here, which gave the community its name. In 1914, the railroad donated a portion of land to the trustees of the Yukon Cemetery Association. Although this is the earliest direct reference to the cemetery, the burials here likely predates 1914.⁷⁷

In 1908, the state of Florida acquired land near Yukon for the purposes of serving as a Florida National Guard camp. In 1939, the US government took over the property and converted it into what is now Naval Air Station Jacksonville. Commissioned in 1940, the base expanded to over 700 buildings by the end of World War II. The federal government acquired over 300 buildings in Yukon, demolishing all of them. The acquisition of the area by the US Navy coupled with housing development which began in the 1920s and continued until well after WWII resulted in the relocation of nearly all of the community. Today, the cemetery is all that is left of the pre-WWII community of Yukon and the Mulberry Grove Plantation. The cemetery is still owned by the Trustees of the Yukon Cemetery but is currently abandoned. It is in poor condition, with heavy overgrowth and little to no visible markers left. There are indentations in the ground to show that the burials are still present.⁷⁸

Lee Kirkland Cemetery

The few public burial grounds available to African Americans living in Duval County were either underfunded or poorly maintained. A good illustration of this is the Lee Kirkland Cemetery in Jacksonville Beach. The town, which was founded as beachfront tourist destination in the late 1800s, was known as Pablo Beach until 1925, when the name was officially changed to Jacksonville Beach. In the early 20th century, the town began to grow as both a tourist destination and bedroom community for Jacksonville. The tourism industry drew a number of African Americans into the area, who primarily settled into what is now South Pablo Beach. The earliest known burials in what was originally known as the Jacksonville Beach Cemetery and later the Colored Cemetery date back to 1926 but the city did not officially assume control of it until 1932.⁷⁹

This cemetery is an excellent example of the type of substandard treatment experienced by African Americans in public burial grounds. In contrast to the better-maintained white cemetery, the H. Warren Smith Cemetery, the “colored” cemetery relied on a single person for maintenance. The black cemetery was unfenced and unplatted. The man for whom the cemetery was named, Lee Kirkland, was its caretaker from the 1940s until his death in 1959. In addition to maintaining the cemetery, Kirkland and his sons also made many of the cement headstone markers for poorer members of the community unable to afford one. Despite Kirkland’s efforts and the cemetery’s relatively young age, the exact number of people who are buried here and where they are all

⁷⁷ Joel McEachin, “Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission Designation Application for Landmark or Landmark Site: Yukon Cemetery,” Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission, 3-7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8-15.

⁷⁹ Richard W. Estabrook, *Background Research and Historic Evaluation of the Lee Kirkland Cemetery (8DU11054), Beach Boulevard (SR212) at Penman Road, Duval County, Florida* (Jonesville, FL: Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc., November 2004), 3-4, 9.

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buried remains unclear. A number of burials here remain unmarked, some were buried on top of each other, and some were never recorded. Burials were so haphazard that caretakers would sometimes dig a hole in the cemetery and not realize there was already someone buried there until they would hit a casket. According to some sources, the commercial properties adjacent to the cemetery fronting Beach Boulevard was built over some of the graves. Among those affected was the burial of Rhoda Martin, a local community leader who founded two black churches and black school in South Pablo Beach. Sometime after 1946, an adjacent commercial business was built over her burial. Following Kirkland's death in 1959, the cemetery entered into a long period of neglect. For a long period, the city was not aware that it even owned the cemetery. It was renamed Lee Kirkland Cemetery sometime after 1959. In the 1970s, a portion of the land originally set aside in 1932 as a cemetery was given over to the state for the purposes of expanding Highway 90/Beach Boulevard. By the 1990s, a group known as Pablo Renewal in Duval East was particularly vocal in lobbying the city for improvements, which were successful. the city began beautifying the cemetery, building a concrete block boundary fence and adding landscaping. The mobile home park built to the south was removed. The cemetery is no longer active but thanks to efforts from the community in forcing the city to take accountability for its maintenance, it is now much better maintained and documented than it was during its historic period.⁸⁰

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, African American residents of Jacksonville were taking part in the modern civil rights movement, demonstrations, civil unrest, and the "New South" understanding that African Americans would be tolerated, but not integrated. Jacksonville at this time was a fairly diverse city, and as a result, African Americans pressured the status-quo to seek public office and challenge long-held segregation laws. However, this movement was slow to take hold in Jacksonville, which meant that segregated funerary practices, established in decades passed, continued into the late 1960s.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9, 13-14, 18-21; Alliniece Taylor, "Cemetery's Past Murky, Future More Promising," *Shorelines*, June 14, 1997.

⁸¹ Abel A. Bartley, "From Old South to New South, Or Was It? Jacksonville and the Modern Civil Rights Movement in Florida," in *Old South, New South and Down South: Florida and the Modern Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Irvin D. S. Winsboro (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2009), 47-64.

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F. Associated Property Types

Property Type: Historic African American Cemeteries

Sub-type: African and African American Cemeteries located in greater Duval County

Description

Cemetery

The African American graveyards found throughout Duval County reflect an important element of the history of the county's black community from the Second Spanish Period to the present. The cemeteries contain a variety of markers and exhibit a diversity of vernacular styles. The design, size, and materials of the markers can imply the position and economic status of individuals buried at the sites, but they also can tell a broader story about cultural traditions, segregation, and social cohesiveness. They provide information about changing attitudes toward death and resurrection, virulent epidemics, settlement patterns, and ethnic and cultural diversity. The layout of African American cemeteries varies depending on their location and historic uses. For example, early colonial burials of enslaved people were usually located on the property of the owner's land and were often unrecorded. These burials were usually carried out by members of the enslaved community. Their configurations, as is the case on the Kingsley Plantation burials, do not employ a systematic grid system, but rather a much looser grouping of graves for enslaved people in a general area.⁸² There are few known burials for enslaved persons that have been located. This along with a general lack of documentation on the part of owners to specify enslaved burial locations means that very little is known about these early cemetery arrangements, other than their general location on an owner's property, sometimes near dwellings of enslaved persons.

The cemeteries also are useful for exploring the retention and evolution of African American cultural traditions. In her book, *The Last Miles of the Way: African-American Homegoing Traditions, 1890–Present*, Elaine Nichols states:

African-Americans ... have consciously and unconsciously continued to preserve African religious traditions, especially funeral and mourning customs. And although these customs reflect an African past, it is the presence of European customs that is most apparent today.... Slavery separated the African from the environment which had socialized him, but it did not erase his cultural memories. While adopting Christian teachings, slaves in South Carolina kept some African beliefs. Protection of the living and dead through several rituals permeated African and

⁸² Christina Brooks, "Exploring the Material Culture of Death in Enslaved African Cemeteries in Colonial Virginia and South Carolina," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 14, no. 3 (September 2011).

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African-American values. Protective measures involved the use of symbolic writing, colors and designs, proper burials and passing children over coffins.⁸³

African American burying sites often retain artifacts related to traditional west/central African cultural traditions that were brought with the people forced, and enslaved, to the New World as long as 300 years ago. These are especially prominent in areas such as the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands, where, until recently, residents were fairly isolated. However, African burial traditions have been identified in many areas that had early populations of Africans or African descendants. In Florida, the sites are geographically widespread. Various studies have located urban cemetery sites that, to a greater or lesser degree, have examples of these traditions. These include the cities of Tallahassee, Coconut Grove, West Palm Beach, Orlando, Alachua, Micanopy, Gifford, Daytona Beach, and Miami. Rural counties such as Wakulla and Marion also have graveyards where these traditions were, or are still, expressed.

Traditions observed in Florida are based most prominently in the Kongo (Ba-Kongo) and Yoruba cultures.⁸⁴ One of the most common practices was the placement on the grave of personal items that were used by or belonged to the deceased (this has included such things as eye glasses, bottles of hand lotion, toys, and radios) or the placement of items used just prior to death, including medicine bottles and dishes. Pitchers, cups, glasses, and other things that can hold water usually had the bottoms broken out. Ceremonially broken possessions of the deceased were placed on top of the grave to prevent the spirit from returning to this world in search of them.

Cracking or punching holes in the objects frees the spirit within them to find the human spirit that is searching for it. Breaking objects also breaks the chain of death or saves other members from immediately following the deceased in death.⁸⁵

In some African religions, a belief exists that the soul must pass over a body of water to reach the world of the afterlife. Therefore, some grave items are associated with this concept. Seashells are a common item found on earlier graves (although there are more interpretations for this custom). Other items that indicate water or the reflective property of water also might be placed on graves. These may include tiles, terra cotta water pipes, mirrors, and other shiny objects. Some researchers attribute the covering of flower containers with aluminum foil as a modern-day adaptation of this tradition. The objective is to camouflage the container's utilitarian purpose (it is often a large jar that once contained food) and make it more attractive. This usually is set in place of a "real" vase, which might be broken or stolen from the grave.

⁸³ Elaine, Nichols, ed., *The Last Miles of the Way: African-American Homegoing Traditions, 1890–Present* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina State Museum, 1989), 10, 16.

⁸⁴ Onajide A Shabaka, "Medicines of a Reconstructed Past: African American Burial Art in Florida," *Tomb With A View* (Spring 1997), 3.

⁸⁵ Nichols, ed., *The Last Miles of the Way*, 10.

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Shells are also used by European Americans and Native Americans in southern burial grounds, and each group probably has a different reason for the tradition. In West Africa,

Nigerian Yoruba funerary party members typically threw cowries to the assembled crowd, and shells sometimes appear as Yoruba grave decoration. Some Ghanaians made shell offerings to the dead, and along much of the old slave coast, ceremonial gifts of shells at funerals were once common. A traditional Zairian belief held that the dead became white creatures living under river beds and lake bottoms. Bleached shells could symbolize both the whiteness and watery character of death. Folklorist John Vlach finds this evidence sufficiently convincing to claim that southern American shell decoration is unquestionably African in origin.⁸⁶

Some researchers attribute the painting of grave markers and vault covers with bright or metallic (reflective) color, such as gold, silver, or copper, as a recent expression of ancestral African traditions, rather than an attempt to beautify or make a marker appear grander. As more research is done regarding these practices, it is likely that a more definite set of criteria will be developed for describing what are or are not African-influenced traditions and what has developed from popular tastes within recent times.

Nichols writes that:

colors and designs were a defense for individuals and for households which used them. Among many West and Central African ethnic groups, certain colors and patterns communicate a person's social status, wealth, occupation and history. In contrast to European-American colors of soft pastels, that are designed for viewing from a close range, African and African-American colors and patterns are bold and bright. African-American use of colors also incorporates other protective African traditions. Red, white and black are colors used to fight against all sorts of disturbing influences in the living world, by confusing people. The addition of yellow indicates a contest with forces from the dead. Blue is another equally important color for success, protection and for causing the death of others.⁸⁷

The placement of bed frames over graves has been documented in West and Central Africa; the practice was still occurring as late as the 1940s. The field diaries of explorer John H. Weeks, whose notes on his travels in West Africa during the early 1900s give further clues to African American burial traditions, indicate that beds were among the items commonly needed by spirits in the Kongo world of the dead:

When a man or woman's spouse died, the surviving partner sometimes carried the bed of the deceased into a stream and broke it apart, letting the pieces float away with the current. Thus the

⁸⁶ Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (Austin, TX.: University of Texas Press, 1982), 21.

⁸⁷ Nichols, ed., *The Last Miles of the Way*, 16-7.

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bed was symbolically “killed” in order that its spirit might be free to travel, via water, to its owner in the other world. In other cases, the bed remained intact as a grave marker.⁸⁸

Placing bedsteads on graves also is practiced in southern white cemeteries, although this may be a cultural adaptation from the African American population. Mounding graves is a tradition that is common among African Americans, Native Americans, and some ethnic white groups in the South. This often is associated with the custom of removing all surface vegetation in a cemetery. Terry G. Jordan writes that:

Traditionally, the scraped earth was heaped up in elongated mounds at each grave, giving the visual impression of fresh burials... Even into recent times, West African groups, such as the Dakahari of northern Nigeria, continue to mark the grave by mounds. A conical shape is perhaps most common for African burial mounds, but elongated ones like those of the American South also occur, as among the Talense [sic] of Ghana and in Nubia.⁸⁹

The presence of elements of African cultural traditions in Jacksonville’s cemeteries reinforces the sometimes-unrecognized connections that late-19th and 20th-century African American residents maintained with the African nations of their forefathers and foremothers. Planting of native vegetation which would withstand climate is also common, for example coontie plants.

In some African American burials dating from the early 20th-century is the use of vaulted burials, and above ground concrete vaults. These features have been traced to various West African traditions of digging a primary grave shaft, then inserting a casket within a secondary shaft, and placing wooden planks of the coffin, thus stopping soil from interacting with the actual burial. Although common in many cemeteries in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries, it was only until recently that these forms of burials have been attributed to a “creolization of Euroamerican mortuary tradition with African roots.”⁹⁰ The grave vault phenomenon became a very popular choice for burials in Florida during this time period, because of the proliferation of materials at a lower cost, and the development of African-American-owned funeral homes offering this option in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹¹ Many early 20th-century African American cemeteries feature these types of vaulted burials.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁹ Jordan, *Texas Graveyards*, 16–7.

⁹⁰ James M. Davidson, “They Laid Planks ‘Crosted the Coffin’; The African Origin of the Grave Vaulting in the United States,” *International Journal of Historical Archeology*, 16 (February, 2012) 86.

⁹¹ Kevin A. Gidusko and Patricia L. Meyers, “African-American In-Ground Vaults: A preliminary Investigation into Differential Burial Practices Identified Through a Public Archaeology Initiative,” Presented to the Society for Historical and Underwater Archeology Conference, Washington D.C., January 7, 2016

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Markers

Markers, either wood or concrete, in diamond or “head-and-shoulder” shapes also are attributed to African burial traditions. While these forms are traced to Africa, usually as prayer sticks placed at graves, it must be noted that the same shapes are prominent in the cemeteries of some Native American cultures. In Florida, the Seminoles use these shapes to indicate both gender and status of the person within the tribe. The placing of seashells on mounded graves also is among their burial traditions.

Some of the hand-fashioned grave markers in the cemeteries with incised inscriptions include words that are broken so that parts of them are on two lines. It is common to interpret this as poor planning, assuming that the person who made the inscription ran out of space or was semiliterate and therefore didn’t understand how a word should be written or hyphenated. However, this arrangement of words is considered part of the African belief system for protection of the dead and living. Randomly arranged writing or script was used to confuse and preoccupy evil spirits. Forcing evil spirits, which traveled in straight lines, to decipher irregular patterns of symbols inhibited their capacity to do any harm.⁹²

Some markers in Jacksonville’s African American cemeteries reflect African cultural traditions. Aluminum-foil covered flower pots, a small number of painted vaults, and inscriptions that “broke” a word so it actually was on two lines have been identified in Jacksonville’s African American cemeteries. As noted above, the practices of covering flower containers and painting vaults are open to interpretation. However, interviews that were conducted to compile the history of the cemeteries revealed that African burial rituals were practiced in the earlier part of the century. This discovery supports the continuity of the African culture from the days when Florida received its first enslaved persons to the present. Additional research on this topic, with other informants who were associated with the cemeteries in the early 1900s, undoubtedly will produce more information about African-influenced burial practices in Jacksonville. Mr. Samuel Davis, who worked in Jacksonville’s funeral industry from 1932 until 1997, reported that during the 1930s and 1940s, when a person died, it often was the custom for the family and friends of the deceased to put medicine the person used on the grave. Washbasins and bedpans were also left on the graves. If the person had been ill for a long time, sometimes the entire bedstead was placed around the grave. Earth also was mounded over the grave.

Mausoleums

Mausoleums often are large, stone, or concrete structures housing one or multiple burials in above-ground vaults. Mausoleums are designed to accommodate either a single burial or a number of individual remains, usually from a single family, with a family name often placed on the outside of the structure.

⁹² Ibid, 16.

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A number of large, elaborate stone vaults are featured in some of Jacksonville's African American cemeteries, including that of A. L. Lewis, owner of the Afro-American Insurance Company and founder of the Memorial Cemetery. Located inside the Memorial Cemetery, the vault was designed by Leeroy Sheftall and features Art Deco detailing, with elongated urns, geometric wrought-iron grill-work, and streamlined concrete decoration. It was constructed in 1939 and houses six members of the Lewis family.⁹³ These mausoleums are found in both African American, white and integrated cemeteries and their features are similar.

Other buildings / structures

Other features to note when establishing qualifying criteria are the stone walls or iron fencing with wrought iron gates, or more contemporary chain-link fencing employed strictly for protective purposes. Modern protective enclosures such as chain-link fencing should not disqualify a property for consideration.

Ranging from formally established, grid-system plotted cemeteries to less organized and seemingly random pre-emancipation and antebellum burials, Jacksonville's African and African American cemeteries range in the nature and scope of available tangible materials, from examples of stone and concrete single markers to vaulted and boxed coverings to large, freestanding mausoleums. Some overarching characteristics might include the existence of shells, personal items, and various religious symbols.

Significance

All cemeteries that are being proposed either for individual listing under Criteria A, B, or C or constitute a substantial portion of a National Register-listed district under Criteria A, B, or C must meet a special set of requirements laid forth by the National Park Service (NPS), known as Criterion Consideration D. Under ordinary circumstances, a cemetery is not considered eligible for individual listing unless it "derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events..."⁹⁴ Criterion Consideration D does not apply to cemeteries being proposed for listing either individually or as a substantial portion of a district under Criterion D. It also does not apply to cemeteries that are merely ancillary in nature to a primary resource such as a church nor does it apply to cemeteries that are but a small portion of a larger district.⁹⁵

The African American cemeteries found within Duval County may possess significance at the local or state level, including but not limited to Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black, Settlement/Exploration, Social History, Commerce, and Community Planning and Development. The cemeteries may also be significant at the

⁹³ Wayne W. Wood, *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage: Landmarks for the Future*, (Gainesville, University Press of Florida; 1996) 370.

⁹⁴ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete a National Register Registration Form*, 37.

⁹⁵ National Park Service, "IV. Evaluating Cemeteries and Burial Places," in *Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb41/nrb41_7.htm.

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local, state, or national level under Criterion B for the collection of burials of people who were significant members of the African American community. The cemeteries may be significant at the local level under Criterion C for Architecture, Art, or Landscape Architecture. The burial grounds can potentially be significant at the local level under Criterion D for the potential to yield information on African and African American burial customs.

The African American cemeteries in Duval County can be deemed eligible under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black, Early Settlement, Community Planning and Development, Social History, and Commerce. The cemeteries are excellent visual reminders of the pervasiveness of segregation that existed throughout the south during the Jim Crow era and attempts by black people to navigate around it. The difficulties in finding life insurance or affording a proper funeral led to the creation of burial leagues and benevolent societies who provided an important social safety net for members of the black community. Several private cemeteries were major components of significant African American businesses such as the Afro-American Insurance Company. As the city of Jacksonville and other communities in the county were laid out and expanded, having designated burial areas for both black and white people in the communities were vital. This was for both public health and visual appeal reasons. The opening of exclusively black cemeteries highlights the growth of the black community and the increasingly segregated planning of black and white neighborhoods in Duval County from the late 19th and into the mid-20th centuries.

Age can be considered when determining the eligibility and significance of a particular cemetery for listing in the National Register. It can be applied to cemeteries that date to a period determined to be “early relative to the exploration, settlement, and development of an area by a particular group.” This is often closely tied to community planning and development as well as early settlement.⁹⁶

For a cemetery to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B, it must meet the additional requirements set forth by the NPS under Criterion Consideration C. This means it must contain one or more burials of people deemed of exceptional significance to local, state, or national history. It must also be determined that there are no other extant resources associated with the life of the individual. There can be some exceptions to this, especially in the case of A.L. Lewis, whose involvement in creating and operating the cemeteries along Moncrief Road were intricately tied to his significance as a prominent businessman in the community. His mausoleum, which is found in Memorial Cemetery, is already individually listed in the National Register in part under Criterion B. Many of the historic black cemeteries in Duval County hold the remains of some of the most significant members of the African American community.⁹⁷

Under Criterion C, the cemeteries can be eligible for Architecture, Art, and/or Landscape Architecture. A number of African American cemeteries in Jacksonville contain mausoleums that are excellent examples of

⁹⁶ National Park Service, “IV. Evaluating Cemeteries and Burial Places.”

⁹⁷ Ibid.

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particular architectural styles applied to funerary buildings. Some of these mausoleums were also designed by prominent architects. The cemetery can also possess a design aesthetic in its landscaping or contain a significant collection of grave marker designs.

Cemeteries eligible for Criterion D may be significant at the local or state level for their potential to yield information on the African American communities in what is now Duval County, Florida. In order to be listed under Criterion D, the preparer must first determine the information found at the site and whether this information is important. This can be determined by an archaeological investigation of the cemetery and historical research. While this criterion most often applies to archaeological sites, it is not strictly confined to archaeology.⁹⁸ African American cemeteries in Duval County can be potentially eligible under Criterion D for their potential to yield information on burial customs.

For more information on how to evaluate and list cemetery proposals, please see the National Park Service publication *Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, which can be found online at <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb41>.

Registration Requirements

To qualify under this listing, a property must contain African or African American burials between the dates of 1765–1969 and must reside within the contemporary boundaries of Duval County. A property also must contain its original integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The cemetery must be in its original location, must not have been significantly altered in terms of original design (if any was created), and also must possess the attributes of original workmanship, which is particularly important for mausoleums, obelisks, special design features, and any other above-ground markers. The property also must possess the appropriate feel, which is important for antebellum cemeteries with little to no obvious design characteristics or tangible artifacts present.

The African American cemeteries in Jacksonville will be registered most effectively as historic districts or sites. To qualify for registration, properties under this MPS must have been used for burial of African Americans or Africans during enslavement and later segregation (roughly 1765–1964). In addition, the spatial layout of the cemetery should reflect a diversity of gravesite organization, including grid-like family plots and single graves. Markers can range from simple monuments to ornate mausoleums. Ideally, the cemetery would contain a combination of markers reflecting the diversity of Jacksonville's African American community. There should be evidence of simple drives and walkways with mature landscaping and grassy areas. Ideally, the organization of the cemetery or decoration of the graves will reflect African American burial customs. The continued use of the cemetery in and of itself does not undermine integrity.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

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G. Geographical Data

The entire area of Duval County, Florida.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

A PaleoWest team consisting of a historian (Chris Baker) and historic architect (Helen Juergens) visited Jacksonville in December 2018. The team visited and photographed Sunset, Memorial, and Mount Herman Cemeteries. Dr. Baker and Ms. Juergens also met with the City of Jacksonville to determine what research had been conducted to date and to collect relevant documentation related to the city's African American cemeteries. The team also visited local libraries and archival collections to locate additional documents. Ben DiBiase (historian) also contributed insights from various archival sources to build the extended contextual narrative. Kevin Gidusko (archaeologist) visited Memorial cemetery in Jacksonville to take photographs.

In addition to the site visit, Dr. Baker conducted background research on the history of African American and African burial traditions, African American cemeteries in the United States, architecture, and local Jacksonville history. He collected documents from online sources and the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The fieldwork and additional archival research allowed the team to place the cemeteries into the larger history of African Americans in Jacksonville.

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Historic African American Cemeteries in Duval
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Figure 1: List of Cemeteries in Duval County Identified as Exclusively African American⁹⁹

Cemetery Name	Site File #	Location	Date	Current Status
ARLINGTON CEMETERY	DU11057	Arlington	c1924	Active
BETHEL CHURCH CEMETERY	DU14255	Jacksonville	c1952	Abandoned
BORDEN CEMETERY	DU14256	Normandy	c1949	Active
BRUNSON CEMETERY	DU14314	Jacksonville Westside	c1937	Active
DINSMORE CEMETERY #2	DU14267	Dinsmore	1890	Unspecified by Surveyor
FULTON CEMETERY	n/a	Fulton (Ft. Caroline)		Abandoned
GREENWOOD CEMETERY	DU14275	Jacksonville	1890	Maintained But Not Used
JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS CEMETERY	DU11061	Arlington	c1860	Maintained But Not Used
JERUSALEM BAPTIST CEMETERY	DU14278	Jacksonville	c1901	Active
JULINGTON CREEK BAPTIST CEMETERY	DU14280	Jacksonville	c1919	Unspecified by surveyor
KIRKLAND, LEE, CEMETERY	DU11054	Jacksonville Beach	1854	Active
LONE STAR CEMETERY	DU11062	Lone Star (Ft. Caroline)	c1862	Active
MEMORIAL CEMETERY	DU14285	Jacksonville	1909	Active
MT OLIVE CEMETERY	DU14286	Jacksonville	c1944	Active
MT PLEASANT BAPTIST CEMETERY	DU14320	Jacksonville		Abandoned
MT ZION AME CEMETERY #1	DU14287	Jacksonville	1883	Active
MT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH CEMETERY	DU14288	Jacksonville	c1960	Active
OLD MT. HERMAN CEMETERY	DU13271	Jacksonville		Abandoned
NEW MOUNT HERMAN CEMETERY	DU14289	Jacksonville	c1917	Active
PALM SPRINGS CEMETERY	DU06823	Cosmo (Ft. Caroline)	c1954	Active
PINEHURST CEMETERY	DU14295	South Jacksonville	c1928	Active
PINEHURST CEMETERY - NORTH	DU22450	South Jacksonville	c1928	Active
ST JAMES BAPTIST CEMETERY	DU14328	Jacksonville	c1992	Active
ST NICHOLAS CEMETERY #2	DU14306	South Jacksonville	1874	Active
SUNSET MEMORIAL CEMETERY	DU14309	Jacksonville	1967	Abandoned
YUKON CEMETERY	DU14312	Yukon (Jacksonville)	1865	Unspecified by surveyor

⁹⁹ This list is not a comprehensive list of all known historic burial places of African Americans. There were a number of cemeteries that were historically either integrated, had a segregated black section, or were predominantly black with a few scattered white burials. Further surveys of the county may reveal additional African American cemeteries.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: COVER DOCUMENTATION

Multiple Name: Historic African American Cemeteries in Duval County, Florida (1765-1969) MPS

State & County:

Date Received: 12/27/2019 Date of 45th Day: 2/10/2020

Reference number: MC100004972

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 2/5/2020 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The cover does good job of tracing the history of African-American burials from Spanish Colonial times through the end of Jim Crow segregationist policies. It explains the importance of these places as transmitters and repositories of culture and tradition and as a symbol of autonomy for a group that had little autonomy. A list of possible cemeteries worth investigation is provided. The property descriptions and registration requirements are adequate, but could provide more detail.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept Cover

Reviewer Jim Gabbert

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275

Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments: No see attached SLR: No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

LAUREL M. LEE
Secretary of State

December 20, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the Multiple Property Documentation Form for the **Historic African American Cemeteries in Duval County, Florida (1765-1969)**. The form includes the historic context, associated property types, geographical data, summary of identification and evaluation methods, and bibliography.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruben A. Acosta".

Ruben A. Acosta
Supervisor, Survey & Registration
Bureau of Historic Preservation

RAA/raa

Enclosures