NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

Historic name: African Cemetery No. 2
Other names/ The Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2/ site number (FA NE-172)

2. Location:

Street & number: 419 East Seventh Street Not for publication: N/A City or town: Lexington
Vicinity: N/A State: Kentucky Code: KY County: Fayette Code 067 Zip Code: 40505

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this __X__ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X___ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide _X__ locally.

David L Morgan 02-13-04

Signature of certifying official **David L. Morgan, SHPO** Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
✓ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain):

for Signature of Keeper 3/31/04 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
- X private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property
- ___ building(s)
- ___ district
- X site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
___	___	buildings
1	___	sites
___	___	structures
___	___	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions Category: Funerary Sub: Cemetery

Current Functions Category: Vacant, Not in use Sub: N/A

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions) N/A

Foundation _____
Roof _____
Walls _____
_____
Other _____

Narrative Description: The African Cemetery No. 2 is approximately eight acres of relatively flat land located on Lexington's northeast end. Its surroundings are characterized by residential, industrial and commercial properties. The residences are mostly T-plan and shotgun style houses that developed during the first quarter of the 20th century. The commercial development consists of a significant auto salvage yard (Ernie's Bluegrass Auto Parts) and a tobacco plant nearby (formerly the Liggett and Myers/American Tobacco Company). The CSX railroad company owns the rail line that clips the rear of the cemetery. This section of track was installed by the Belt Passenger and Freight Railroad Company around 1890. Within the cemetery are a mix of Tablet, Baroque, Obelisk, and other professionally cut stones that represent a range of ideologies associated with changing attitudes about death. Additionally there are many handcrafted mortuary artifacts that reveal certain preferences African Americans had about death. There are a collection of military markers that range from the Civil War to World War II. The stones are laid out on a grid with fairly even spacing. The cemetery has two entry points that front East Seventh Street. A path leads into the cemetery from both entry points and it forms a "U" shape. The cemetery is in a fair state of condition and is routinely maintained by volunteers and others under the direction of the African Cemetery No. 2 Board of Directors.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Areas of Significance	**Social History**
Period of Significance	**1869 - 1940**
Significant Dates	**1869 – 1875 - 1940**
Significant Person	**NA**
Cultural Affiliation	**NA**
Architect/Builder	**NA**

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets beginning with Section 8 Page 1.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
X University
___ Other

Name of repository: Kentucky State University, Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.72

UTM References

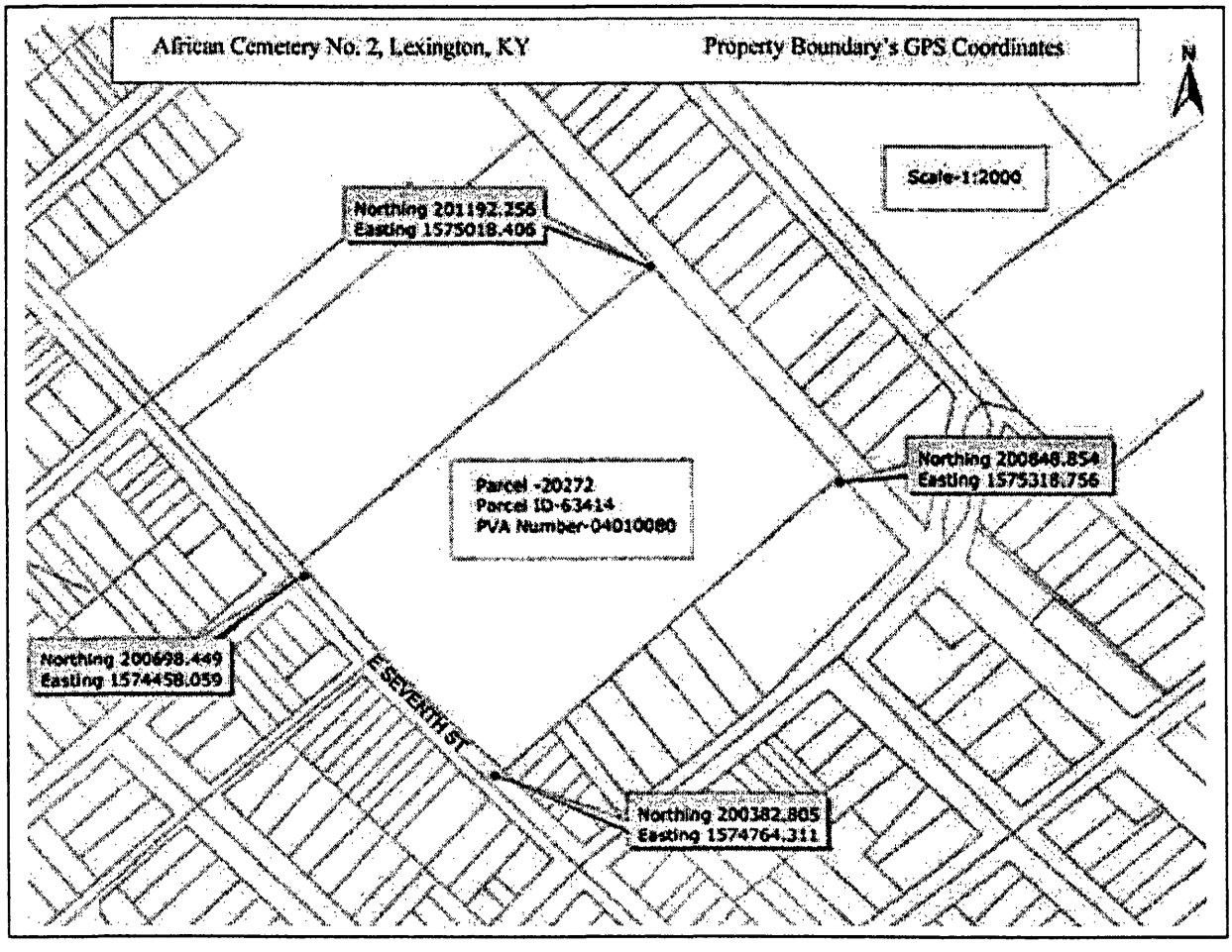
	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	721 300	4214 300
2			
3			
4			

All coordinates on Lexington East Topographic Quadrangle Map J42

Verbal Boundary Description: beginning at the southwest corner of the site going northwest for a distance of about 460 feet then from the northwest corner going northeast for a distance of about 750 feet, then from the northeast corner going southeast for a distance of about 460 feet, then from the southeast corner going southwest for a distance of about 750 feet. The total area is approximately 7.72 acres of land.

Boundary Justification: The property became a cemetery in 1869 and was expanded in 1875. The cemetery's boundaries have remained unchanged since that time.

PVA Account Number: 04010080



11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Fred J. Rogers, Principal Investigator
Organization: African Cemetery No. 2, Board of Directors Date: December, 2003
Street & Number: P. O. Box 54874
Telephone: 859-258-3132
City or Town: Lexington State: KY Zip Code: 40555-4874

Property Owners

Name: African Cemetery No. 2 Board of Directors, Trustees of the Property

Street & number: 419 East Seventh Street Telephone 859-258-3132

City or town: Lexington State: KY Zip code: 40505

Statement of Significance:

The historic African Cemetery No. 2 located at 419 East Seventh Street in Lexington, Kentucky, was established by the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 in 1869. It is the city's first significant African-American cemetery to be designed, built, and maintained by a chartered black organization. With a membership totaling 685, the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 was Lexington's premier African-American fraternal organization established during the antebellum period.[1] It originally purchased four acres on Lexington's east end for use as a cemetery and by 1875 the organization had acquired four additional acres of contiguous land.[2] It played a significant role in perpetuating the values, both contemporary and traditional, that helped to define the cultural, religious, and social dimensions of African-American life in Lexington.

The cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A for its significant association with the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, and it is all that remains on the landscape of Lexington which conveys the important contributions that group made to, and through, the generations of African Americans buried there. Additionally, the cemetery is eligible under Criteria Consideration D because it is of sufficient age and scope to represent important aspects of a local community's history. The mission of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 was to "provide mutual aid in times of sickness, death and other charitable needs; help elevate and uplift the race along religious, moral and educational endeavors."[3] This property is being evaluated as significant within the historic context of "the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, Lexington, Kentucky, 1852 – 1940."

While the cemetery illuminates our understanding of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, the cemetery is in no way limited in its ability to convey other important aspects of African-American history in Lexington and elsewhere. The society's organizers were leaders in securing rights for their fellow citizens that had statewide impact. They secured the admission of African American testimony in the courts; an equal division of the public school fund for students of color; and they initiated the 1892 Anti-separate Coach Movement.[4] Additionally, the importance of horseracing as a state sanctioned sport is clearly embedded within the heritage of African Americans in Lexington. The cemetery is the burial place of several prominent jockeys who were national figures during their lives. Additionally, the cemetery is the final resting place for many veterans who participated in national conflicts from the Civil War onward. Some represent elite units of "Colored Troops" such as the 54th Massachusetts Regiment or post war "Buffalo Soldiers." In other cases, some of the cemetery's mortuary artifacts speak to the accomplishments of many blacks, including area ministers, educators, doctors, and community leaders. The cemetery exemplifies and perpetuates the importance of familial and fraternal relationships as conveyed through the mortuary emblems that remain in the cemetery. The cemetery has been the focus of community leaders in the past, including local political figures interested in its preservation. It remains the focus of the African Cemetery No. 2 Board of Directors, and receives community wide support by those interested in reclaiming it through extensive historic and genealogical research, and maintaining it through volunteers and other support networks.

Historic Context: Union Benevolent Society No. 2, Lexington, Kentucky, 1852-1940

While churches played a significant role in disseminating aspects of African culture and religious thought, benevolent societies were a major driving force in perpetuating African burial customs. Benevolent societies were originally formed by free blacks, which established the basis for fraternal and institutional life among ex-slave communities in the North. The first black benevolent society in America was the African Union Society (AUS), organized around 1780 in Rhode Island. According to Robert Harris, the AUS emphasized the emigration of blacks to Africa and the abolishment of slavery. The organization also provided cash benefits for widows of its members and their children, while attempting to build and support the free black community through education, recording of births, marriages and manumissions. Similar groups formed in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey and were characterized as "primarily cooperative economic enterprises and genesis of black group insurance."[5] These groups also served as burial societies through the intervention of the mortuary process, thus benevolent society activities were an attempt to normalize and control various aspects of death and dying.

The African American experience with death and the mortuary process are historically rooted in African customs that survived by way of oral traditions throughout slave communities in America. Maurice Jackson explains that the traditional experience held by most blacks was the belief that death was "part of the normal life process, as an inevitable event in a naturalistic context, occurring in a world of experience."[6] This belief system was one mechanism that allowed enslaved Africans the opportunity to retain a part of their culture that had significant spiritual and secular implications. Grave decorations such as broken pottery, for example, perpetuated the belief that above ground material artifacts served as symbolic attributes that related to a traditional African view of the world of ancestral sprits (Figure 1). The objects left at the grave reflected "material messages left by the living to pacify the deceased and keep stormy souls at rest."[7] Thus the perceived dual nature of the material world provided a balance between the physical universe and the non-physical world of spirits.

Figure 1: Many African Americans used pottery, broken glass, and a variety of other things such as shells and beeds to decorate their graves. (Vlach, John M. 1977. "Graveyards and Afro-American Art" in *Southern Exposure*, 5 (2-3): 163.)

African mortuary customs were not only manifested thorough oral traditions and systems of belief, but also in practice. While Africans were subjected to Christian ideologies that over time blended with their cultural norms, the African funeral was a "value laden and unifying social event, which the slave community in the United States was able to preserve from both physical and ideological onslaughts of the master class."[8] The dominant ideology for many blacks became a blending of African oral traditions with Christian doctrine to form an Afro-Christian perspective on death. These combinations of beliefs had unique meaning for blacks and helped define what it meant to be African and American.

Early benevolent societies advocated the integration of all blacks into American society after the Revolutionary War, anticipating that the war would bring about the abolishment of slavery. While this did not occur, they succeeded in becoming vital social organizations that provided cohesion and avenues for social connectedness within the black communities they served. More importantly many of these groups promoted themselves as distinctly African with the hope that "the functions fostered by traditional African structures might be perpetuated by different forms in the new environment."[9] Benevolent societies were widespread in the North by the 1830s. Philadelphia, for example, had "approximately eighty black benevolent societies, with close to eight thousand members and annual expenditures exceeding fourteen thousand dollars."[10]

Figure 2: Non-Christian burials at the First African Baptist church. A lady holding a plate on the left and a man buried in a semi-prone position on the right both reflect African burial practices. (Parrington, Michael and Janet Wideman, 1986. "Acculturation in an Urban Setting: The Archaeology of a Black Philadelphia Cemetery" in *Expedition*, 28(1): 62.)

While these societies were active in issues related to racial uplift, they also provided burial services to their members, many reflecting African norms. Archaeological research on the First African Baptist Church cemetery in Philadelphia, for example, revealed a number of non-Christian burials (Figure 2). The earliest burials date from around 1842. Michael Parrington and Janet Wideman concluded in their report on the burial grounds that the non-Christian burials "can be linked to an African parallel, suggesting the survival of Africanisms in urban Philadelphia."[11] An even greater number of Christian burial practices were observed as well, which indicates a measurable degree of acculturation. Of the eighty five burials, only eight reflected African norms while the remaining burials mirrored Christian preferences.[12]

Overall the burials reveal a point at which the mortuary process and the funerary artifacts were predominantly linked to Christian doctrine. The use of obelisks, crosses, and Gothic tablets (among other things) became the preferred material expressions for a belief in Jesus, hope for eternity, and heaven. Many free blacks in Lexington, Kentucky, also used Christian mortuary emblems. The grave of Robert Cromwell (1780-1844) for example, was marked using a Baroque period stone tablet, the type widely used by Christians throughout cemeteries in America. Cromwell was not only a free African American living in Lexington; he was a founding member of the Colored People's Union Benevolent Society No. 1 formed in 1843.[13]

The Union Benevolent Society No. 2, 1852

According to Marion Lucas the black population in Lexington never fell below 30 percent during the antebellum period. However, the city's free black population during the 1850s was only a small portion of the total black population, at less than 1 percent.[14] While the free black population was able to establish a benevolent society, namely the Union Benevolent Society No. 1 (UBS), only members of the free-black community could participate in the organization. Activities of the society can be traced back as early as the 1830s, although the organization did not become official until May 1, 1843.[15] The UBS No. 1 established a Constitution and Bylaws that governed its activities, and those principles likely governed subsequent UBS organizations that spawned from the No. 1 society (Figure 3). While early benevolent societies in the North openly advocated emigration and abolition, the Lexington organization's published documents make no mention of either idea.

The racial climate during the 1850s in Lexington was tense. Although Lexington was a hot-bed for abolitionist zeal, blacks, both free and enslaved faced the potential that hostile whites might view their activities with suspicion. Certain slave codes had implications for the free-black community by promising "corporal punishment for those participating in clandestine meetings or making "seditious speeches."[16] While the benevolent society's activities were in no way clandestine, it had to carefully guard against misperceptions among whites. Affluent whites frequently regulated the movement of blacks (mostly slaves). Some whites even disrupted black church services for fear of an insurrection.[17] Thus, Black organizations were not immune to the hostilities of whites.

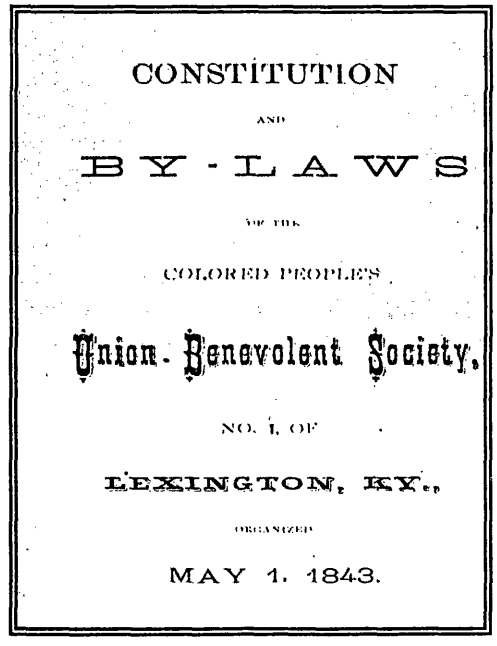

CONSTITUTION
AND
BY-LAWS
FOR THE
COLORED PEOPLE'S
Union Benevolent Society,
NO. 1, OF
LEXINGTON, KY.,
ORGANIZED
MAY 1, 1843.

Figure 3: The Union Benevolent Society No. 1 formed in 1843 and was made up of free blacks. Other societies likely modeled themselves after the No. 1 organization and were numbered sequentially.
(The *Constitution and Bylaws of the Colored People's Union Benevolent*

Because of the constraints placed on blacks, the need to provide avenues of support and uplift within Lexington's African-American community were great. Blacks responded to these needs in many ways, and on October 20, 1852 the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 (UBS No.2) was chartered as an organization "comprised entirely of slaves."[18] The organization formed on the basis that it was to provide for the "mutual protection" of its members.[19] Its mission was predicated on the idea that it was "responsible for bringing people together" and that it;

"will always feel it a solemn duty enjoined upon them on becoming members, to aid and assist a distressed and afflicted brother or sister, and also to cherish those principles of charity and benevolence which constitute man's highest duty and his only true source of happiness: and they will ever esteem it their dearest privilege to keep alive their warmest sympathies for the afflicted in all parts of the city."[20]

While the organization provided uplift for members of the slave community, it also established a rigid protocol for the funerary ritual upon the death of one of its members;

"at the death of any male member of the society, the male members shall meet one hour before the appointed time for the funeral, and go in procession from the house of the deceased member to the place of burial. If any member shall absence himself from the funeral of a deceased brother he shall be fined the sum of fifty cents, unless a lawful excuse be given. All male members shall wear a regalia at the funerals. All male members shall wear crape on the left breast of their coat for thirty days after the death of a member. Any member neglecting or refusing to wear crape, shall be fined at the discretion of the society. All members buried by the society, shall be furnished with a coffin, box and hearse at a cost of twenty dollars, unless otherwise directed or in case of epidemic."[21]

The burial custom was designed to be a unifying social event that promoted a high degree of harmony among the society's male members. Moreover the society placed demands on its male members that reinforced gender constraints and punitive actions for non-conformity. Participating in the society's burial ritual was mandatory for its male members, thus placing an emphasis on the organization's desire to intervene and govern social and communal aspects of the mortuary process. This process sowed the seeds for the creation of the African Cemetery No. 2, which allowed the society to have a greater opportunity to influence the mortuary process throughout the African-American community in Lexington. During the antebellum period however, it is believed that society members buried their dead where they could.

While it is likely that many free black members of the society were buried near churches, such as the "Colored" Christian Church on Bolivar Street, it is not certain were enslaved members were buried. Many of Lexington's antebellum cemeteries were integrated, including the Lexington Cemetery which never had a policy forbidding blacks (free or enslaved) from being buried there.[22] Additionally, many free and possibly enslaved African Americans were buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery. That cemetery was established after the First Hill Cemetery on Main Street filled up during the Cholera epidemic of the 1830s. It occupied a five-acre out lot between Six and Seventh Streets near Mulberry (today Upper). William Tucker and George Tandy, both prominent free black men were buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery in the 1830s and 1840s and later relocated to the African Cemetery No. 2.

The UBS Creates the African Cemetery No. 2, 1869

Make me a grave where ever you will,
In a lowly plain, or lofty hill,
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.[23]

The Civil War dramatically changed the social landscape of Lexington and elsewhere. Although the UBS No. 2 provided burial services and benefits for its members it did not have a cemetery of its own during the antebellum period. By 1865, the black population in Lexington was nearly fifty percent of the total population and the city's north-east section became the area where several African-American neighborhoods developed.[24] The farm land that surrounded the city quickly became the focus of expansion and development after the Civil War.

The African-American population after the civil war placed stringent demands on the black community in general. "Those who migrated to the cities frequently found jobs scarce, competition keen, and unemployment widespread."[25] Lucas describes Post-Civil War Lexington's march toward extreme segregation, which forced blacks to live in tightly constrained housing clusters, mostly out of view of whites. Compounding the problem, black "schools, stores, churches, and benevolent organizations remained on "black 'main street'" which deprived black neighborhoods of badly needed social centers."[26] Despite the many hardships blacks faced in Lexington, by 1869 blacks owned 4.3 percent of the city's total assessed property, which accounted for about 420 individual lots of property. The following decade, those numbers increased improving the black share up to 6 percent.[27]

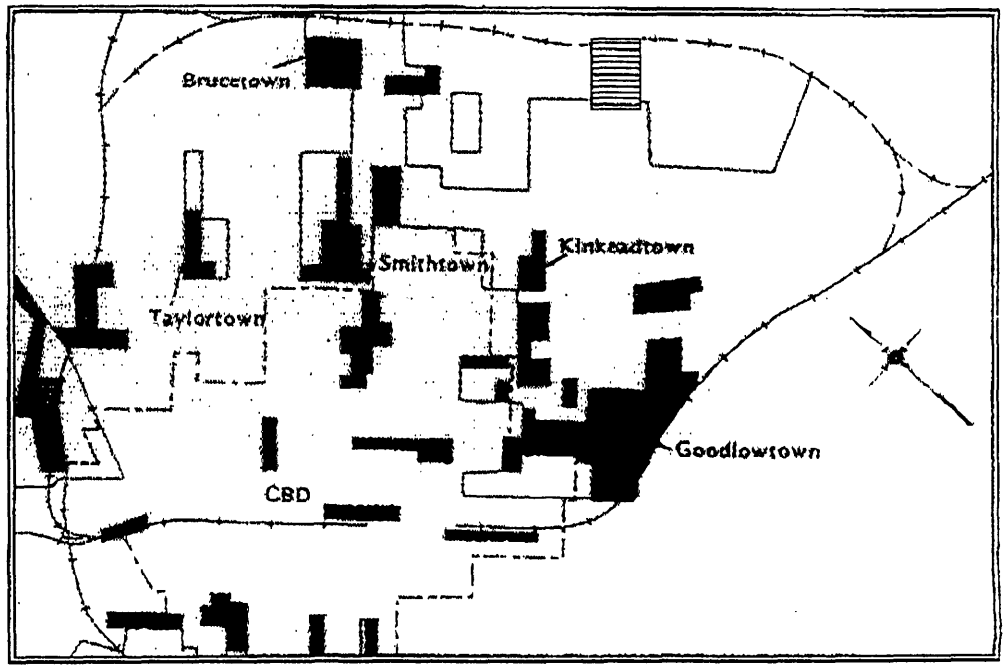


Figure 4: Hatched area represents the relative location of the cemetery to primary black residential clusters on Lexington's east end. (Kellogg, John, 1982. "The Formation of Black Residential Areas in Lexington Kentucky, 1865-1887" in *Journal of Southern History*, 48: 40.)

The UBS No. 2 contributed to this phenomenon on November 19, 1869, when three trustees of the organization, together with Rebecca O'Mara (the property owner) entered into an agreement for the purchase of four acres of land on East Seventh Street. The trustees were Leonard Fish, Henry King, and most importantly Jordan C. Jackson.[28] The trustees were acting as agents for the society in accordance with their bylaws, and in 1869 the cemetery became an autonomous entity on the landscape of Lexington. The agreement for the purchase was based on a $500.00 down payment by the society, and an additional $1,000.00 to be paid over a twenty-four month period. The cemetery property was adjacent to the Kentucky Race Association's track, and just outside of the African-American residential clusters that developed after the Civil War, including Kinkeadtown, Goodlowtown, and Brucetown (Figure 4). The property clipped the outer edge of the city's survey boundary and was a highly visible marker that illuminated one aspect of the social stability that the UBS No. 2 provided for the community it served.

The UBS No. 2 Grows and the Cemetery Expands, 1875 – 1885

Purchase of the property in 1869 followed the general trend in Southern cities among whites to sell marginal land to blacks, usually of poor quality, near railroads or industrial sites, or on the periphery of town.[29] Despite the attitude whites may have had about the poor quality of the land, and their isolation of blacks to marginal areas of the city, the UBS No. 2 succeeded in paying for the land, and on April 17, 1875, the organization purchased an additional four acres of contiguous land from the O'Mara's. The organization succeeded in securing eight acres of land that became a significant place on the landscape. Its sense of autonomy was perpetuated in its first officially recorded name "The Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2."[30] Likewise, the cemetery was listed as the "Colored Cemetery" in the *Lexington City Directory* around 1885.

Land contiguous to the cemetery also changed hands within ten years of the benevolent society's original four acre purchase, and this land would be an important part of the cemetery's history. In 1878 the O'Maras lost a lawsuit against Ephram Sayer who sued them for failure to pay for the property sold to them by his uncle David Sayer. The O'Maras had a remaining balance of about $4,000, which meant that they already paid about $3,000. Sayer bought back the remaining 24 acres at public auction on April 21, 1878, and divided it up into smaller lots.[31]

James Grimes purchased a lot that was bound on the east side by the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2. It constituted about 287 feet along Seventh Street and ran parallel to the cemetery all the way back to Strode's Road (Loudon Avenue). The property Grimes purchased was an extension of the same bottomland as the cemetery and, as a marginal piece of property, it cost him $800 in August 1881.

Grimes was a member of the Colored People's Union Benevolent Society No. 1, and was also one of the members responsible for revising the Constitution and Bylaws of the society on February 19, 1877.[32] On August 8, 1881, he sold a portion of the land he purchased from Sayer to the Ladies Auxiliary Society No. 2, and they began using the land as a cemetery.[33] The tract of land Grimes sold to the auxiliary group joined with the northwest side of the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, forming an extension or an "ell" to the eight-acre cemetery. By 1885 the cemetery was approximately nine acres of contiguous land, and the most widely used burial grounds for African Americans in Lexington (Figure 5).

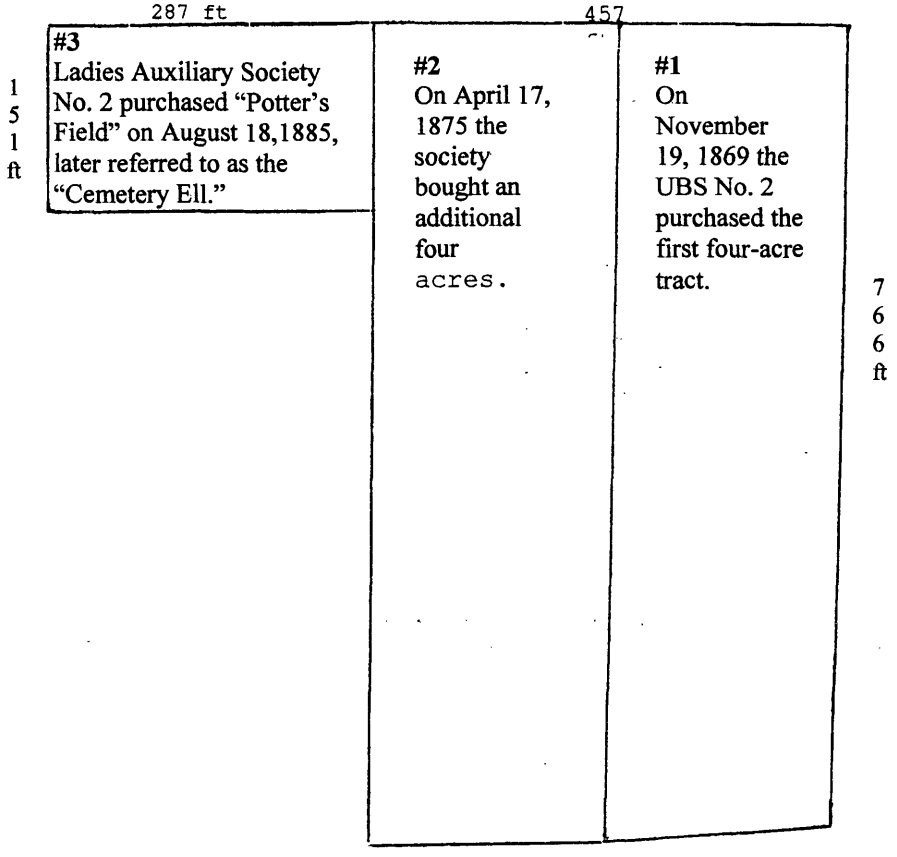


Figure 5: Sequence of purchases 1869-1885 (Retracing meets and bounds of original property deeds, Fayette County Vault. Not to scale)

The UBS No. 2 Maintains and Facilitates Changes in the Cemetery: 1889 – 1935

By the middle of the 1880s the UBS No. 2 had purchased, designed and constructed Lexington's first all black institutional cemetery. It was supported by its members through their dues to the society and became the most widely used African American cemetery in the city. The mission of the UBS No. 2 and other similar charitable organization focused on the needs of destitute blacks. The sister organization of the UBS No. 2 was instrumental in contributing to the needs of the black community as well. Its purchase of the additional land in 1885 created a significant addition to the African Cemetery No. 2, which provided burials for orphans, the sick and homeless who were unable to participate as members in the UBS No. 2. Thus, the organization provided a necessary service to Lexington's black community by providing burial space for blacks from all walks of life. During this time, membership in the organization increased to 685 so that it outnumbered all other black fraternal and benevolent organizations in the city combined. No other organization established a burial ground for its members. While the cemetery was founded by the UBS No. 2, it was open to the community at large so that even non-UBS members could purchase individual and family lots from the society.

Maintaining the cemetery became an extremely challenging task. Beginning in about 1889 the east end of Lexington underwent several periods of industrial, residential and commercial development. The process of development changed the rural character of the area into an extension of the urban fabric of the city. The cemetery fell within the path of several key development plans while leaders of the UBS No. 2 faced the onslaught of Jim Crow politics and growing trends of segregation in America.[34]

The first significant challenge in maintaining the cemetery came when the Waverly Square Cemetery was declared abandoned in 1879 and sold a decade later to developers. The Presbyterian churches in Lexington owned and operated the cemetery, which likely started to accommodate victims of the first cholera epidemic in the 1830s. This cemetery was the resting-place for several prominent free blacks during the antebellum period, including William Tucker, a successful merchant, and Robert Cromwell, a founding member of the Colored People's Union Benevolent Society No. 1.[35] Many more blacks were buried in Waverly, indicating that freed blacks, and perhaps some slaves, whose masters were inclined to purchase them burial lots, were not discriminated against in terms of where they could bury their dead before the Civil War. By 1889, however, attitudes about blacks and whites being buried together became the focal point of an intense segregation issue when the bodies in Waverly Cemetery were unearthed and relocated.

On May 19, 1889, the *Lexington Morning Transcript* reported "A Vigorous Protest" when the exhumation of bodies got underway at the Presbyterian Graveyard. "One of the most revolting scenes of the nineteenth century is now being enacted by the Presbyterian churches of this city. To describe it in its full enormity is more than I have power to do."[36] Developers bought the land from the churches, despite the fact that the land belonged to the family members who originally purchased the lots; the developers proposed to transform the five-acre cemetery into residential lots.[37] Although some smaller cemeteries had been relocated or developed, this was the first time a cemetery of this size was relocated, and Lexington's citizens were amazed and perplexed to witness such an event.[38]

The protest centered on the problem that, after the lots were sold to whites, the sexton allowed blacks to purchase the same lots and presumably bury their dead in a grave already occupied by a deceased white person. This news outraged many whites, and the newspaper reported that the cemetery was "torn of its shrubbery, despoiled of its tombstones" because the bodies were "mixed up, colored and white, without the power to separate."[39]

Once people realized that blacks were being buried in the same graves as whites "those so disposed, and had the means, disinterred their friends and buried them elsewhere. The poor, God bless them, were covered by the dead of the African race."[40] As the relocation got underway "the bones of children and grown people, white, and I have no doubt colored also, mixed in the same boxes and carted off to unknown and un-cared for graves in the Lexington Cemetery."[41]

The clear frustration among the white community protesting the event was that deceased blacks and whites were mixed together. The treatment of removing the bodies, however, was not as confusing as the *Lexington Morning Transcript* reported. On May 20, 1889, *The Leader*, another Lexington newspaper, reported that the First and Second Presbyterian Churches had acquired legislative approval to sell the grounds and relocate the cemetery. The churches bought lots at the Lexington Cemetery and the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, and followed the guidelines for relocation set out by the legislature. The condition for the sale of the grounds to developers was that "the identified bodies were carefully disinterred and properly re-interred in other cemeteries, and that all the headstones and other distinguishing marks were removed to the new abode of the dead."[42] The assumption was that blacks would go to a *black* cemetery and whites would go to a *white* cemetery. Thus, segregation was the norm and perhaps the preference with respect to the dead. The developers, Joseph M. Scott, R.H. Courtney, and T. T. Skillman "purchased a beautiful site near the lake in the Lexington Cemetery and a choice plat in the colored cemetery on Seventh Street" and the un-segregated Waverly Cemetery was emptied out. An estimated 2,600 bodies were relocated according to later newspaper accounts.

The treatment of the corpses of both blacks and whites demonstrates the segregationist attitudes prevalent at the time. Whites were placed in a receiving vault until they could be transported to the Lexington Cemetery, at which time they were interred in individual or collective graves. The deteriorated condition of many coffins meant that only bones were recovered and were then placed in small boxes. Many of these boxes were placed in a common grave containing no more than three people to a grave, while intact coffins were placed in autonomous locations. Much care was given by Lexington Cemetery officials to document and oversee the process of internment, and today hundreds of graves remain at the Lexington Cemetery as silent reminders of the turbulent relocation process.

On the other hand, many blacks buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery were relocated to the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2. It is unlikely that a vault was used to shelter the remains of the blacks being disinterred, as evidenced by a newspaper article that described "an old negro woman was sitting on the fence at the entrance and before her was a box of bones. Every passer-by was stopped and gaining their attention she said the body before her was that of her sister who had died twenty years ago. 'They are now digging up my cousin,' she continued, 'and if you will wait you can see her.'"[43] A lack of dignity was apparent, but the woman was content to cradle the bones of the person for whom she no doubt cried many tears. Most likely she carried the bones of her relatives to the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, about one-third of a mile away. There is no record that survives indicating where the bodies of those moved from the Presbyterian Cemetery were placed in the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, and many blacks were among "those who strenuously opposed the removal, and some denounced it as desecration of the most heinous character."[44] The paper reported that "a large number of negroes were there all day, and almost without exception they objected to the removal."[45]

Maintaining the cemetery meant that the UBS No. 2 was able to use the cemetery to provide continuity and cohesion within the black community during calamitous times. Despite the need for maintaining the cemetery as a force for stabilizing the city's African- American community, development continued to shape the cemetery. The second significant event, which reshaped the boundaries of the cemetery, came on the heels of the relocation process. Large companies associated with railroads wanted to acquire inexpensive and low-lying land for development. The Belt Land Company proposed not only the development of low-cost housing for the North Side through the Loudon Park Plat, but also the extension of a section of track that connected the two primary railroad lines in Lexington. The Kentucky Central Railroad Company owned the north/south artery of track, while the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company owned the east/west vein. The Belt and Passenger Railroad proposed linking the two sections of track to facilitate passenger and freight trains and divert rail traffic from congested areas near the central business district of downtown. The cemetery property, which was low-lying, inexpensive land, fell within the proposed route for the extension.

The first major encroachment on the cemetery property came around 1890 when the Belt Railroad Company installed the proposed tracks. The approximate centerline of the tracks constitutes what was the original north/east property line for the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 and the same line for the Potters Field owned by the Ladies Auxiliary Society No. 2. The installation of the track overlaps the cemetery "ell" about fifteen feet, and the overlap continues for nearly 744 feet across the entire back of the property on a diagonal trajectory. By the time the line crosses the eastern boundary of the cemetery, the right-of-way overlaps onto the cemetery property almost 40 feet. This means the Railroad Company developed in excess of 19,000 square feet of cemetery property (Figure 6).

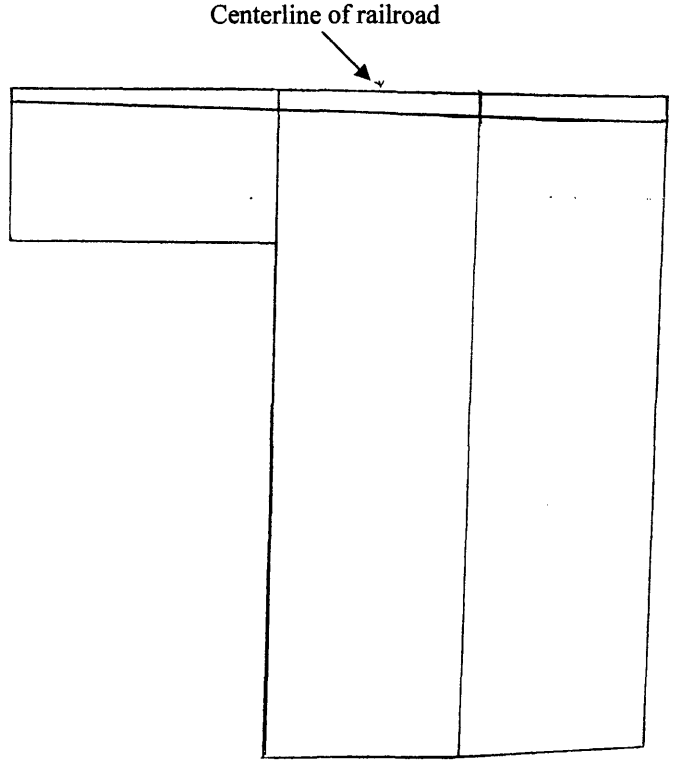


Figure 6: Installation of the Belt and Passenger Railroad Tracks, ca. 1890. Today the centerline of the railroad constitutes what was originally the north/east property line for the cemetery. Yellow highlight represents the area that overlaps the cemetery property. Not to scale.

Maintaining the cemetery forced UBS No. 2 officials to be in a reactive position. Not only did they have to accommodate burials and the day-to-day affairs of the site, they had to confront and mitigate the social and physical changes that affected the cemetery. While industrial development encroached upon the cemetery, residential development closed in around the site as well. In order to survive the period of social change and development that took place near the cemetery between 1890 to 1900, the members of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 had to insure that the cemetery did not appear abandoned or neglected like the Presbyterian Cemetery had become. The society responded by constructing an image of the cemetery that mimicked a national trend that saw cemeteries become professional organizations. "In the last half of the nineteenth century, managers and entrepreneurs transformed the cemetery into a business" so that "by 1900 the cemetery co-existed with a new set of professionals involved with the dying of death. Death was likely to occur in a hospital while a nurse watched and a physician consulted. The funeral director became the overseer of the funeral process, mediating between the family, the hospital, and the cemetery."[46] People were aware that the cemetery represented a major aspect of death, so that by the turn of the century, a superintendent's office and very often a chapel replaced the familiar gated entry point for many cemeteries. The Lexington Cemetery built a Romanesque Revival style building in 1890 and by the end of the decade the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 built a residence near the entry point of the cemetery (Figure 7).

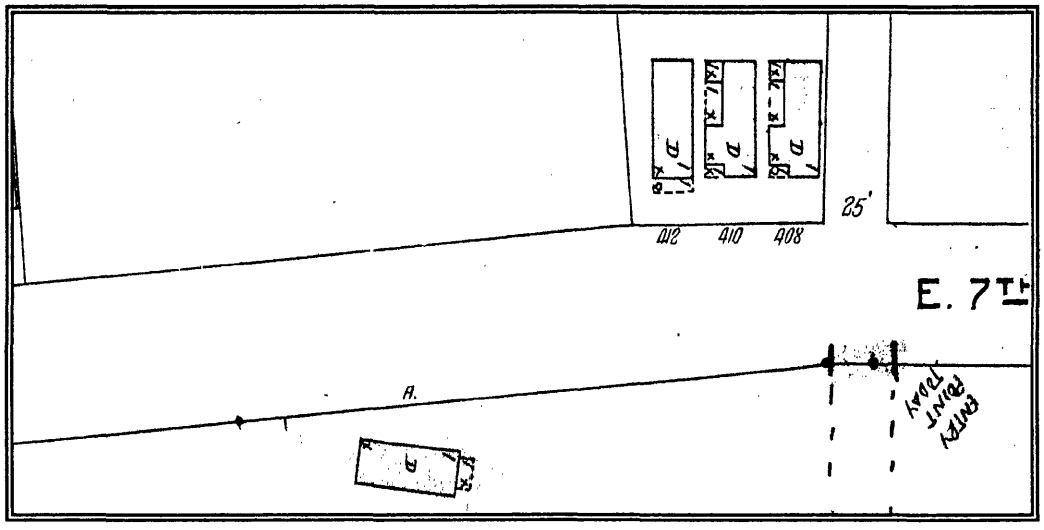


Figure 7: The 1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map above reveals the cemetery residence and its relative location to the entry point.

The first listing for the residence appears in a 1902 edition of the *Lexington City Directory*, and revealed that a black man named John Carr lived at the location. More importantly his occupation was listed as "Cemetery Superintendent," which was not one of the official roles designated to an individual in the1877 edition of the *Constitution and Bylaws* for the Union Benevolent Societies in Lexington.

Changes occurred not only around the cemetery, but also within the cemetery organization itself. The residence was a clear response to the desires that the organization had to become "official" in the eyes of the community around it; this community was a mostly white, working-class community, disconnected from the black organization that ran the cemetery. The presence of the residence on the cemetery property, and its full-time occupant with the official title of "Superintendent," meant that many would see the cemetery as occupied and in use, thus avoiding the notion that the property was abandoned, and warding off land speculators and developers. During this time the cemetery reached its peak point of use (Figure 8).

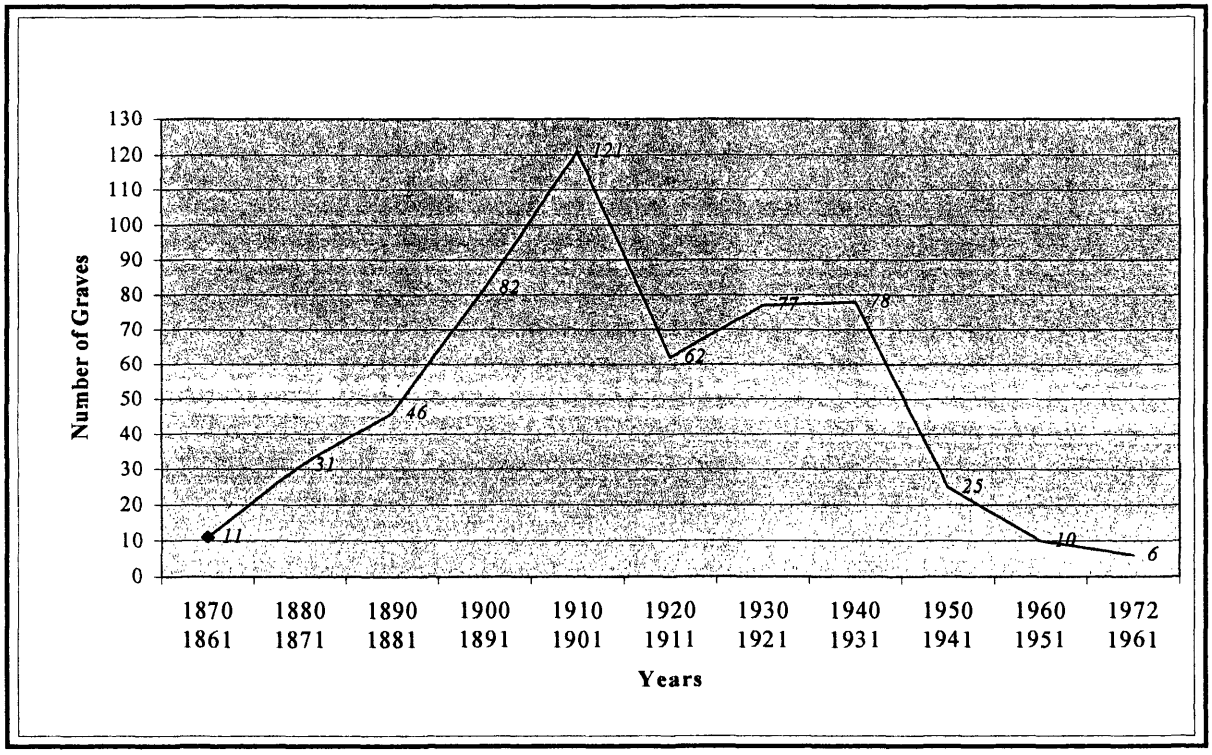


Figure 8: Known number of graves 1861-1972
(Information extracted from Richardson's Survey of the site in 1973)

Likewise the Cemetery of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 ultimately changed its name at some point to include the word "African." Ethnic distinction served as a catalyst for racial pride, setting blacks apart with their own cultural identity as perpetuated through the cemetery. Maintaining the image of the cemetery was not strictly an attempt to be like other cemeteries in Lexington and elsewhere. The black organization that designed and maintained the cemetery understood that it reflected their ancestral heritage, which was African. The organization also understood what was necessary to do in order to construct an image for the cemetery that most people would readily understand when they saw it. It adapted the cemetery to conform to American conditions, as reflected through other cemeteries, while maintaining it as a representation of their culture. Accomplishing this complicated task meant more than just constructing an official office/residence. It also changed the name of the cemetery to reflect an African ethnic heritage, so that, sometime before 1917, the cemetery became known as the African Cemetery No. 2.[47] Maintaining and enhancing the image of the cemetery was a point of significant renewal and helped sustain the cemetery as a vital part of the African-American community in Lexington for several more decades.

The cemetery continued to be widely used through the 1920s and into the 1930s, but its use began to decline from the previous decades. The black population in Lexington decreased in terms of the percentage of blacks to whites, which paralleled a decline in the use of the cemetery. More importantly, the community of blacks that experienced slavery and emancipation, the same community that organized as the Union Benevolent Society No. 2, either died, was very old or moved away. It is not known how long the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 operated successfully in Lexington. The cemetery probably began to decline, however, as a result of the decreased activity of the society. It is also possible that the cemetery became full and burial spaces were not as readily available through the 1930s. Regardless, the cemetery did remain in operation despite another significant intrusion through the site that occurred in 1934.

During the 1930s, Lexington city officials became extremely aggressive in planning and zoning areas of the city for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Planning was a response in part to the pressures placed on the city government to provide adequate services to a growing population, which more than doubled from 21,567 in 1890 to 45,736 in 1930 Housing continued to be an issue, and the government's attitude toward segregation meant that planning included the separation of blacks from whites in low rent housing districts. Demands for urban services forced the city to consider developing its infrastructure by providing water, sewers, and storm drainage collection points in areas of the city that were previously underdeveloped, including the east end.

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One of the most significant problems for certain areas of the north side, particularly those near the bottom of a major water shed, was flooding and standing water, prime locations for mosquito and other insect infestations. This included the African Cemetery No. 2 and various other adjacent properties that fell within the low-lying topography. The Lexington Water Works proposed storm drainage collection points throughout much of the city in 1933 as a way to route rainwater and to control flooding.[48] The proposal included the installation of a 36-inch diameter concrete pipe to be installed through the flood-plain area, which ran through about 461 feet of the cemetery property near its center.

To achieve the proposed installation of the storm drainage system the City of Lexington acquired easements through areas of the north side, including the cemetery. On July 2, 1934, Samuel Burdette, the acting President of the UBS No. 2, signed a deed releasing ownership of 7,376 square feet of the cemetery property to the Lexington City Government.[49] The process of installing the pipe was extremely destructive, and although the deed specified that "no steam, gasoline or other mechanical shovel shall be used in excavating," the property was severely damaged by the construction of the pipe. The easement called for "the right, power and privilege to lay, construct, inspect, maintain, operate, repair, rebuild, and remove a storm and sanitary sewer and appurtenances, to be part of the sewer system of Lexington."[50] The deed also stipulated that the city owned eight-feet of property on each side of the centerline, which meant that a section of the property 16 feet wide by 461 feet long belonged to the city.

It is not known how many bodies lay in the pathway of the easement, nor who the people were, nor what ever happened to them. If any graves were disturbed, the city agreed to "bear the expense of removing and reburying (them) in other portions of the cemetery, including the cost of burial," but no record exists detailing what actually stipulation was of no use to the society. The deed limited the society's access to the easement by stipulating that "the first party shall have the right to use the *surface* of the land" lying over the sewer pipe.[51] This meant that the society could not bury people over the top of the pipe. Regardless, the UBS No. 2 continued to operate the cemetery and accommodate burials. A total of 78 grave markers that remain today have death dates that range from 1931 to 1940, which reflects the third most active decade in the cemetery's history.

To conclude, the cemetery is all that remains of an organization that was born from the desire of enslaved men and women to care and provide for their community in a dignified way. The emancipation period was a time when the UBS No. 2 created and designed a cemetery that reflected the vitality of fraternal and institutional life among Lexington's African Americans. The cemetery illuminates the society's willingness to extend benevolence and charity toward non-members within the community at large. UBS No. 2 facilitated the relocation of the deceased from the Waverly Square Cemetery. It served to mediate on behalf of the African-American community and to maintain the remains and mortuary artifacts associated with many of its former citizens. Evidence remains in the cemetery today of the events associated with the relocation process. While accommodating the needs of the black community, the organization managed the cemetery through the transition of Lexington's east end from that of rural to urban. While many of Lexington's cemeteries were lost over time to development, the UBS No. 2 actively preserved their cemetery despite the installation of railroad tracks, extensive residential build up, and improvements to the city's infrastructure. All of these things left a permanent mark on the cemetery that is visible today. The Lady's Auxiliary Group No. 2 left no trace of their existence, and the cemetery ell was developed over during the early 1980s. Likewise, the cemetery residence burned down, and likely all the records for the cemetery vanished with the residence.

What the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 could not prevent was its inevitable decline, which culminated in the abandonment of the cemetery sometime after 1940. The UBS No. 2 ceased to exist during this same time leaving behind its greatest work, namely the African Cemetery No. 2.

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[3] Robert L. Harris, "Early Black Benevolent Societies" in *Massachusetts Review*, 1979, 10:611
[4] Smith, S.E., History of the Anti-Separate Coach Movement in Kentucky,
[5] Harris, Robert l., 1979. "Early Black Benevolent Societies" in *Massachusetts Review*, 10:611.
[6] Jackson, Maurice. 1980. "The Black Experience with Death: A Brief Analysis through Black Writings" in *Death and Dying: Views from Many Cultures*. ed. Richard A. Kalish. Baywood Publishing Company, p. 93.
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[9] Ibid, 612.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Parrington, Michaeland Janet Wideman, 1986. "Acculturation in an Urban Setting: The Archaeology of a Black Philadelphia Cemetery" in *Expedition*, 28(1):62.
[12] Ibid
[13] Obituary records in the Kentucky Room of the Lexington Public Library indicate that Cromwell was originally buried at the Presbyterian Cemetery located between 6th and 7th Streets near Upper Street. His remains, as well as the remains of many other deceased African Americans were relocated to the African Cemetery No. 2 in 1889.
[14] Lucas, Marion, 1992. *A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Volume 1, From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891*, The Kentucky Historical Society, p. xviii. See also Omalley, Nancy, *Kinkeadtown: Archaeological Investigation of an African American Neighborhood in Lexington, Kentucky*, Archaeological Report No. 377, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
[15] The earliest record of the society is recorded in the will and estate inventory for Baron Stuben, a free black who owned a building on Water Street in Lexington. Stuben died in the 1830s and made arrangements for a 99 year lease of the third floor of his building to the Benevolent Society of Colored Citizens in Lexington.
[16] Lucas, 59.
[17] Ibid, 61.
[18] Peter, Robert., ed., 1882. *History of Fayette County, Kentucky,* O.L. Baskin and Company, Chicago, p. 479.
[19] Ibid.
[20] *Constitution and Bylaws of the Colored People's Union Benevolent Society No. 1*, 1843
[21] Ibid, article 1, sec. 11.
[22] According to the curator of the Lexington Cemetery, several enslaved blacks were buried in the cemetery. Records of their burial locations are filed at the Lexington Cemetery archives.
[23] *Bury Me In A Free Land,* 1851, first stanza in a poem by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, unpublished.
[24] See John Kellogg, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas in Lexington, Kentucky, 1865-1887," in *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. XLVIII, No. 1, pp. 21-52, February, 1982.
[25] Lucas, 268.
[26] Ibid, 275.
[27] Ibid
[28] Jackson and partner, Isaac Porter, became Lexington's first black undertakers to advertise in the city directory in 1890; most likely Porter and Jackson were the first black professional funeral directors in the city. Jordan C. Jackson was perhaps one of his generation's most influential leaders in the Lexington community with ties to local, state and national movements within the African American community.
[29] Kellogg, John, 1977. "Negro Urban Clusters in the Post-bellum South" in *Geographical Review*, 67: 313.
[30] Lexington Deed Book 111, 165. Although the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 owned the property for some time, the first official name for the site appears on a deed dated in 1897.

[32] *Constitution and Bylaws of the Colored People's Union Benevolent Society No.1*, 15.
[33] The Ladies Auxiliary Society No. 2 is representative of the role women began to play in African American life after the Civil War. Auxiliary groups provided avenues for racial uplift that centered on the poor, homeless, sick, and widowed. The group may have formed (in part) as a response to the restrictions placed on females by the male organization. Harris points out that this did occur with other benevolent societies and it further emphasizes that the benevolent societies in Lexington were following the precedent set by earlier societies outside of Kentucky. For more on women's roles in African American life during the Jim Crow era see Stephanie Shaw's *What a Woman Ought to Be and Do* and Glenda E. Gilmore's *Gender and Jim Crow.*
[34] See George C. Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: In Pursuit of Equality, 1890-1980,* Volume 2.
[35] Index of Funeral Notices 1804-1880, Lexington Public Library.
[36] Warren, George J., "A Vigorous Protest" in *Lexington Morning Transcript*, May 19, 1889, 5, C-4.
[37] "The churches broad back is not strong enough to bear the odium of selling what does not belong to them." Ibid.
[38] The first cemetery to be relocated in Lexington was the Spinoza Society's cemetery belonging to a Jewish Organization in Lexington. The cemetery was located on Mt. Tabor Road in 1872 and was only used for a short period of time. The society realized the cemetery was not located in a convenient place and winter weather combined with rainy seasonal weather made it difficult to access the cemetery in the county. The Spinoza Society resolved the issue by purchasing an entire section of the Lexington Cemetery to be set apart for the burial of Jewish citizens in Lexington. A total of 30 bodies were relocated to the Lexington Cemetery in 1884 and the one-acre plot on Mt. Tabor Road was sold. The relocation of the Jewish graveyard was not due to development, thus the Presbyterian Cemetery was the first cemetery in Lexington to be successfully moved to make way for development. Milward, Burton, 1980. *The History of the Lexington Cemetery*. Published by the Lexington Cemetery, 16.
[39] Warren, George J., "A Vigorous Protest" in *Lexington Morning Transcript*, May 19, 1889, 5, C-4.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Author Unknown, "Removing the Dead" in *The Leader*, May 20, 1889. 5, C-2.
[43] Author Unknown, "Among the tombs" in *The Leader*, May 24, 1889. 5, C-4.
[44] Author Unknown, "Every Nationality Visit the Scene of Disinterment" in *Lexington Morning Transcript*, May 22, 1889, 1.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Sloan, David C. 1975. "The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History" Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 156.
[47] The first reference for the cemetery being called "African Cemetery No. 2" was found on a 1917 streetlight map. It is probable that the name was changed earlier, but no evidence has been found to date that verifies the actual time when the name changed. A more complicated reason for the name change may be that the role of the Union Benevolent Society No. 2 diminished to a degree that made it necessary to disassociate the cemetery with the organization, and give it a name that reflected a broader aspect of the community which it served.
[48] Lexington Water Works, archived at special collections, M. I. King Library, University of Kentucky.
[49] Lexington Deed Book No. 282, 346, Fayette County Vault.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 348, italics mine.

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NPS Form 10-900a
(Aug. 2002)

OMB Approval No. 1024—0018
(Expires Jan. 2005)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 04000245 Date of Listing: March 31, 2004

Property Name: African Cemetery No. 2

County: Fayette State: Kentucky

none
Multiple Name

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

for Signature of the Keeper

March 31, 2004
Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8. Statement of Significance
Ethnic Heritage: Black is hereby added as an area of significance.

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

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)