

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 530 Fourth St.
city, town Athens (N/A) vicinity of
county Clarke code GA 059
state Georgia code GA zip code 30608

(N/A) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

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

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	0	0
sites	1	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	0

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

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard Luce
Signature of certifying official

2-23-06
Date

fr W. Ray Luce
Historic Preservation Division Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 4.19.06

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

for
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions:

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

N/A

Materials:

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other stone: granite, marble (various stones used for tombstones and grave lot copings)

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is a historic African-American cemetery dating from 1882 located on a ten-acre site, east of downtown Athens, in a traditionally African-American neighborhood. The property is bounded by Fourth Street to the northwest, Springfield Baptist Church to the southwest, a CSX railroad line to the southeast and Hillcrest Cemetery to the northeast. The main entrance off Fourth Street is an unpaved, informal driveway, from which extends an angular grid of unpaved roads in both linear and curvilinear patterns leading to both family plots and individual gravestones. Markers vary from formal, granite markers raised on pedestals to more informal, concrete markers in a tablet style to simple, metal funeral home markers. There are some plain rock markers, and some government-issued military markers. The most prominent family plots (e.g., Morton, Davis, etc.) are found near the entrance and at the site's highest elevation. Some plots contain multiple graves and are delineated by low stone or brick retaining walls and copings. Some lots are situated on raised terraces. While the cemetery might appear to have no formal arrangement with graves found in both a linear pattern and random, irregular placement, aerial photographs of the cemetery and a map made from recent field surveys clearly indicate there was an overall plan with roads and sections. Today, as in some previous periods, the cemetery is heavily wooded; ground cover, brushy vegetation, and softwood and hardwood trees cover the site. By one professional archaeologist's estimate (2003), the site may contain as many as 3,000 individual graves, many marked only by depressed areas. The cemetery is located in a mostly residential area in an urban-suburban setting on the outskirts of Athens. The historically unrelated Springfield Baptist Church borders the cemetery on the west, and the historically unrelated Hillcrest Cemetery adjoins the cemetery on the east. The cemetery retains its historic boundaries and overall design.

In 1882, 8.25 acres were acquired by Gospel Pilgrim Society for the purpose of establishing a cemetery, and an additional 0.75 acres were obtained in 1902. In 1905 a small piece of land

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

ARCHAEOLOGY—HISTORIC (NON-ABORIGINAL)
ART
ETHNIC HERITAGE-AFRICAN AMERICAN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance:

1882-1956

Significant Dates:

1882

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographic References

NOTE: This bibliography was prepared for the original submission of nomination materials by the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center and has been augmented with a few additional newspaper articles and the recent master plan. Also note that futile attempts were made to locate original maps and burial records of the cemetery, but it appears that all of the Gospel Pilgrim Society records were lost following the death of Alfred Hill in the 1970s.

Major secondary sources of information:

Gresham, Thomas H., principal investigator. An Archeological Survey of Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, Clarke County, Georgia. Athens: Southeastern Archeological Services, Inc., September, 2003.

The Jaeger Company. Master Plan for Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, Athens, Clarke County, Georgia. Gainesville: The Jaeger Co., December 2003.

Biographical Sketches :

Derricotte Obituary, Athens Banner-Herald, October 23, 1964.

Dictionary of Georgia Biography, Vol. 1 & 2. Coleman, Kenneth and Charles Stephen Gurr, Editors. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1983.

Harris Obituary, Athens Banner-Herald, July 2, 1935.

Morton Obituary, The Banner, February 13, 1919.

Thurmond, Michael L. A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History. Athens: The Green Berry Press, 2001.

County Histories/City Histories:

National Park Service. African Reflections on the American Landscape. 2003.

Reap, James K. Athens: A Pictorial History. Norfolk: Donning Company, 1985.

Thomas, Frances Taliaferro. A Portrait of Historic Athens and Clarke County. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Wright, Roberta Hughes and Wilbur B. Hughes, III. Lay Down Body: Living History in African-American Cemeteries. New York: Visible Ink Press, 1996.

County Records:

Clarke County Courthouse, Superior Court, Warranty Deeds (1882, 1902, 1905)

"Georgia Deaths." *Ancestry Plus* on-line.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 10.071 acres

UTM References

A)	Zone 17	Easting 281653	Northing 3761114
B)	Zone 17	Easting 281803	Northing 3761139
C)	Zone 17	Easting 281984	Northing 3761064
D)	Zone 17	Easting 281819	Northing 3760971

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the nominated property is marked on the 2004 plat map by a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The proposed boundaries correspond to the legal boundaries associated with the Gospel Pilgrim Society and its ownership of the cemetery as determined by a deed search conducted June 19, 2002. This boundary is also based on archaeological investigations.

The boundaries follow the property lines of the cemetery. These essentially include two parcels: 1) The original 8.25 acres acquired at the time of the cemetery's founding in 1882; and 2) an additional, smaller parcel of 0.75 acres acquired on June 24, 1902. The 2004 plat produced a revised acreage total of 10.071 acres, rather than the 9 acres from the earlier deeds, due to more modern surveying techniques.

The Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery was determined legally abandoned in 2002. Deed research confirmed the boundaries as recorded on a new plat map. These boundaries appear logical in that they terminate at two obvious barriers: Fourth Street and the CSX railroad line. On the other sides, the property is bounded by the Springfield Baptist Church to the west and Hillcrest Cemetery to the east. The more prominent graves are near the entrance and concentrations of graves exist on either side of the main drive as one proceeds to the southeast.

These boundaries were affirmed with a new plat dated February 13, 2004, used here to show the boundary for this nomination.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

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

name/title Burke Walker, Preservation Planner/ David Arning, Preservation Intern
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telephone 706-369-5650
e-mail N/A

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

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (contact person) Winston Heard, Executive Director
organization (if applicable) East Athens Development Corp., Inc.
mailing address 410 McKinley Dr., Suite 101
city or town Athens **state** GA **zip code** 30601
e-mail (optional) N/A

name (property owner) Heidi Davison, Mayor
organization (if applicable) Athens-Clarke County
mailing address P. O. Box 1868
city or town Athens **state** GA **zip code** 30603-1868
e-mail (optional) N/A

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measuring 60 feet by 100 feet at the northwest corner of the property apparently was deeded to the adjacent Springfield Baptist Church, but this is not reflected in current legal plats; the small tract is currently used as a small parking area by the church.

In 2002, the East Athens Development Corporation (EADC) began a concerted effort to reclaim the cemetery. Two major clean-up operations in January 2002 and October 2003 were carried out, and in the process many long-forgotten gravestones and other cemetery features were discovered. A field survey of the cemetery was carried out during the summer of 2003 by Southeastern Archaeological Services, Inc., in Athens. In August 2003, the metal gate was installed at the main Fourth Street entrance to limit access and discourage people from trespassing; the gate was upgraded in October 2004 with brick pillars. Also in August 2003, supporting documentation for this National Register nomination was compiled and submitted to the state historic preservation office by the preservation planner at the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center in Athens. In December 2003, a master plan for the preservation of the cemetery was completed by The Jaeger Company of Gainesville, Georgia; funding for the master plan was provided in part by a grant from the Georgia Department of Labor. Early in 2004 a professional legal plat of the cemetery was prepared by Ben McLeroy & Associates, Inc., Engineers and Surveyors, Bogart, Georgia.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

NOTE: The following detailed description was prepared for the 2003 Master Plan for Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery (The Jaeger Company, in association with Southeastern Archaeological Services, Inc.), and has been edited by the Historic Preservation Division for inclusion in this National Register nomination.

General Description of the Cemetery

Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is, for the most part, a planned, systematically laid out cemetery that occupies a broad ridgetop and its slopes. It has retained its original design of roads and graves, but it expanded somewhat less formally around its periphery. It appears to always have had a main entrance off of Fourth Street very near the center of the cemetery. It was originally laid out with a system of six northwest-southeast roads and several cross roads. The two crossing central roads meet at a diamond in the center of the cemetery. All of the area within and just outside of this road system was used for burials within the first two decades of use--that is, almost the entire cemetery was used from the beginning, rather than filling up one section and then moving to the next. The exceptions are the western and southwestern portions, which appear to have been brought into use in the 1930s.

The cemetery is composed of numerous family plots, often delineated with stone, brick or concrete block coping, and more numerous individual graves. A few plots bounded by chain link fencing were observed, but there is no ornate fencing. The vast majority of the family plots and graves are aligned with the road system. Thus the graves are aligned more northeast-southwest than true east-west, as is often the case with formal cemeteries. Along the steeper slopes of the southern portion of the cemetery, some graves are on terraces excavated into the slope and are thus aligned with the topography, with the head-end of the burials uphill. In general, the tombstones are in good condition

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for a long neglected cemetery in a wooded environment. There appear to be relatively few broken stones, but some have toppled or have been dislodged. The copings of the family plots have suffered more, mainly by being broken in places by tree roots or tree falls. There appears to have been little to no vandalism of the cemetery.

The cemetery appears at first glance to be an overgrown jumble of graves and thick vegetation. Actually, most of the central portion of the cemetery is only lightly overgrown with understory, shrubby vegetation, and the entrance and central road are clear. Most of the other main roads are fairly thickly overgrown with privet, giving the impression that the entire cemetery is similarly overgrown, when in fact it is the roads that are more thickly vegetated than the surrounding body of the cemetery.

Physical Layout of the Cemetery

As mapped during recent field survey, the central main road system closely resembles the historic road system as revealed in aerial photographs and in several maps found after completion of the fieldwork. The main roads within the cemetery are about ten feet in width, with an additional two to three feet of shoulders on each side. Due to the slope of the ridge, some portions of the roads are entrenched about two to three feet below the surrounding ground surface. Others, along a slope, are cut and filled--that is, entrenched on one side and built up on the other. The most significant deviation noted from the published maps of the cemetery road system is an additional road through the western part of the cemetery. This western road also has two or three small, deeply entrenched side roads to the west.

The central portion of the cemetery is quite uniform and systematic, with each section between roads being 75 feet in width. The graves are perpendicular to the roads. Beyond and at the flanks of the central core of the cemetery, especially where the slope is steep, the road system differs, presumably to accommodate for the slope. Thus, two of the main roads curve in the southern half of the cemetery, roughly following the contour of the ridge slope. The spacing of graves here increases to accommodate the slope. Graves on the steeper slopes are often on terraces, a few of which are reinforced with rock to create retaining walls of sorts. In addition to the main set of roads, the field surveyors noted several other possible roads or lanes. As with most cemeteries, there probably were smaller lanes or "alleys" that led to the interior of some sections. Only a couple of these were pronounced enough to be mapped. (Some of these possible or apparent roads should be more visible and easier to discern when the area is cleared of ground cover and understory vegetation.) The cross road that leads to the central diamond from the west (Section S), which is visible on the 1944 aerial photograph as an apparently traversable road, is filled with graves that date to the 1950s and 1960s. It appears that this former road was deemed not necessary sometime in the 1950s and began to be used for burials. The central diamond itself was also filled in with burials at this time. It is not known if the cemetery had reached capacity at that time, or whether this central, elevated location was more desired and thus converted to use for burials.

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Numbers of Graves

In each of the nineteen sections of the cemetery, graves with headstones and suspected graves (marked by ground depressions) were counted. By this means an actual count of graves per section was derived. Actual counts where visibility was good were used to derive square footage figures from those samples (for example, actual counts in Section P provide a figure of 78 square feet per grave), and this number was used to extrapolate the total number of graves for the entire cemetery. The actual number of counted graves is 2,192, and the best estimate of the total number likely to exist is about 3,000. Graves fill nearly the entire cemetery. The one area that lacks graves is the southwest corner.

Types of Grave Markers

The most visible marker for graves is an upright, inscribed, cut stone, usually granite. Most of these are inscribed with the deceased's name, birth date, and death date. However, the amount and specificity of information varies considerably. There are about 500 inscribed tombstones of various styles in the cemetery. Most are of granite, but a few are of marble. There are also a relatively small number made of concrete, with incised inscriptions. The cemetery also contains several hundred roughly shaped small granite headstones that are uninscribed. Perhaps as many as a hundred, graves are marked with uninscribed fieldstones of the type more commonly found in rural cemeteries. A very small number of graves are marked with a concrete slab flush with the ground. No above-ground vaults or crypts were observed. Several hundred graves are marked with one of several types of metal funeral-home markers. The greatest number of graves in the cemetery have no readily visible marking at all and are only visible as linear depressions.

Types of Coping, Walls and Fencing

A large number of family plots throughout the cemetery are delineated with masonry copings or low walls. These are made of three basic materials: stone, brick, and concrete block. Approximately ten are made of brick; twenty to thirty of stone; and forty to fifty of concrete block. The stone copings and walls are made of partially cut or shaped stone or of roughly shaped stone and fieldstones. All are mortared; no dry laid walls were observed. The quality and appearance of the walls and coping varies from crude to fine. Brick was used to make simple coping several courses high and for fairly elaborate walled plots with entranceways and ornamentation. The largest number of family plots are delineated with concrete or cinder blocks, often just one course high, but occasionally two. The delineated plots are not of uniform dimensions but generally follow the pattern of surrounding graves. They are oriented to the road system, at about 55 degrees East. The only fencing observed was of the chain link type; no iron fencing was noted; there are approximately four or five chain link fenced family plots, mostly in good repair.

Grave Artifacts and Adornments

Also observed during the 2003 field survey were small numbers of containers, all broken, that were almost certainly placed at graves. Clear jars (including mayonnaise-type jars), glazed ceramic vases

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and containers, and terra-cotta flowerpots were noted. There are probably many more such container fragments underneath the leaf mold and ground cover, especially within grave depressions. Also noted were wire wreath holders at several graves. A few graves, especially several fronting on Fourth Street, have plastic flowers in plastic containers. At one grave near the entrance there are almost a dozen black felt stars nailed to a tree near a grave.

Condition of Graves and Markers

Overall, the cemetery is in good condition, aside from its obvious overgrown state. The road system is intact and not badly eroded. Due to the 2002 clean-up, there is little trash on the site. In spite of several encroachments into the cemetery from power lines, sewer lines, and the railroad, no graves appear to have been disturbed. A large percentage of the headstones are intact and standing and relatively few are broken. There are quite a few headstones that have toppled, but most have not been damaged. Almost all the toppled and broken tombstones appear to have resulted from natural causes, not vandalism. The main forces causing the toppling of tombstones are trees falling on stones, roots dislodging the base of stones, and tombstones sinking into collapsed grave shafts. Only about five broken tombstones were counted, but there may be more. The metal funeral-home grave markers have suffered; most are broken and not legible. However, the remaining frames of these markers can be easily bent back or placed back into the ground. The greatest wear and tear to the cemetery is on the copings and low walls of some of the family plots. Many of these walls are partially tumbled down or otherwise damaged, mostly by tree falls and root growth.

Vegetation Patterns

The field survey of the cemetery landscaped focused not so much on historic or funerary plants that might relate to graves and burial practices but rather on the general types and densities of vegetation that characterize the cemetery today and to some degree affect one's ability to see and count graves and to perceive the overall arrangement of the cemetery grounds. Many visitors to the cemetery first see it as an overgrown jungle of vegetation, mostly composed of weeds, but in actuality, large parts, especially near its core, are not too heavily overgrown. Other portions, however, mainly the western third, are very heavily overgrown, to the point where the vegetation is difficult to penetrate. Six major vegetation categories were identified and mapped: wooded with vinca; wooded with ivy; no trees--very thick wisteria; wooded with thick privet and wisteria; wooded with ivy and privet; and grass. The most common introduced ground covers in the cemetery are English ivy and vinca, with minor amounts of periwinkle. The predominant shrub is privet, which is an invasive weedy species, along with wisteria and honeysuckle vines. Few trees species were identified during this initial field survey, but it was noted that there are virtually no mature cedars or magnolias, which are species often found in cemeteries.

Cemetery Boundaries

When the field survey of the cemetery was done in 2003, no professionally surveyed plats of the cemetery could be found, and thus the exact legal boundaries of the cemetery were unknown. The only document establishing boundaries of the cemetery was the tax map of the parcel at the Clarke

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County Tax Assessor's office. The tax map showed the cemetery parcel to be roughly rectangular, bounded by Fourth Street on the northwest, the railroad on the southeast, Springfield Baptist Church on the southwest, and a small creek or drainage on the northeast. In 2004, a professional survey of the property was done by Ben McLeroy & Associates, Inc., Engineers and Surveyors, Bogart, Georgia. The legal boundaries established in this survey appear to correspond closely with the boundaries as observed during the 2003 field survey of the cemetery. A copy of the 2004 plat map is included with this nomination form.

The north boundary of the cemetery is Fourth Street. From observations during the field survey, it appears that the grading for Fourth Street may have extended slightly beyond the city right-of-way onto the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery property; it may be that the right-of-way is wider here or is asymmetrical with the road's centerline. At one point the cut bank extends to the stone coping of the Thomas family plot, exposing the corner of this plot. However, no graves were observed within the city's right-of-way. Other possible minor incursions include a short section of sewer line, an underground communications line, and an overhead electrical distribution line and poles.

The east boundary of the cemetery is shown on the tax map and survey plat as a nearly straight line with a slight dogleg 141 feet south of Fourth Street. In the field, this boundary was readily visible as a deeply entrenched ditch or old road that ran along the natural drainage that separates Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery from the next ridge to the east, on which the adjacent but historically unrelated Hillcrest Cemetery lies. Also observed in the field on this eastern edge are two property corner markers, one near Fourth Street and one at the edge of the railroad right-of-way; both are marked by recently placed pink survey flagging, presumably by the adjacent landowner. A third, intermediary corner marker that would correspond to the angle of the dogleg shown on the tax map could not be found. Until the property line is precisely marked in the field and legally verified, it is not possible to know if any graves lie on the adjoining property, but initial indications are that several may be present in this area.

The south boundary of the cemetery is the edge of the right-of-way of the CSX railroad. On the tax maps, the railroad right-of-way is a uniform 100 feet, a standard width for railroads. As there are no observed graves within fifty feet of the railroad tracks, it would appear that no graves extend beyond the southern boundary of the cemetery. However, depending on exactly where the property line actually is, it appears that railroad-related piled dirt and debris and old railroad ties may have encroached slightly upon the cemetery. Also, a short section of sewer line runs outside of the railroad right-of-way, and thus within the cemetery, near the very southernmost corner of the cemetery; one manhole, located near the southern corner of the cemetery and marked by an upright piece of PVC painted pipe, is 60 feet from the railroad centerline and thus within the cemetery's boundary.

The west boundary of the cemetery is depicted on the tax map and the survey plat as a straight line running between Fourth Street and the railroad. Records suggest that a small rectangular-shaped tract of land measuring 100 feet by 60 feet at the northwest corner of the cemetery may have been deeded to the adjacent Springfield Baptist Church in 1905—this tract is now used as a small parking lot for the church—but the recent professional survey shows this tract as part of the cemetery property. The property line runs close to the adjacent church building and closely follows an existing

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utility corridor. A pair of graves protrude into the church-used parking lot and have been protected from infilling by a low concrete retaining wall.

Development of Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery

Based on the styles of markers, inscribed dates, and the layout and pattern of roads and graves, some tentative conclusions can be drawn on how the cemetery developed. The principal conclusion is that the site is a formal, planned cemetery with a systematic, planned set of access roads. Most of the sections within the core of the cemetery are uniformly seventy-five feet wide and about 250 feet long. Two of the main roads curve to allow for the steep slopes at the southern end of the ridge. Like most cemeteries, this one is centered on a ridge, but also incorporates the ridge slopes, and even the low-lying areas adjacent to drainages. It is clear that the main roads were designed and constructed at one time, presumably shortly after the cemetery was founded in 1882.

The observed dates inscribed on stones in the various sections indicate that all of the core sections (E-H and L-P) were used for burials within the first decade or two of its founding. Presumably, family plots and individual graves were purchased or reserved throughout the cemetery at the very beginning, and then the sections continued to be filled for the next four or five decades. Outlying and western sections (A, B, C, J and R) appear to have been brought into use later than the rest of the cemetery. It is possible that the core of the cemetery was nearing capacity in the 1930s (at least with reserved plots, if not actual burials), and that expansion into the front and western sections was initiated. To be sure, people continued to be buried in virtually all sections well into the 1960s and 1970s (and even the 1980s in some sections), but these probably were in plots that had been purchased or reserved much earlier.

An interesting aspect of the mid-20th-century development of the cemetery is that one 75-foot length of the cross road that leads to and around the central diamond of the cemetery from the east along with the central diamond itself was filled with graves in the mid-1950s and early 1960s (Section S). It appears that a decision was made to abandon this road and junction and fill them with graves. This might indicate that the cemetery had sold or reserved all of its available plots by the mid-1950s. However, it was observed that the low-lying, southern third of Section R appears to not have graves, thus undermining the case that the cemetery was full and that it was necessary to utilize a road segment and the diamond junction. On the other hand, it may have been that this higher-situated areas were deemed more desirable for burials.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT GOSPEL PILGRIM CEMETERY

One of the first steps in Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery's revitalization effort was to conduct an archival and field study of the cemetery with the goal of developing a plan for restoration. Given the near absence of historical documentation such as maps, plans, plats, or burial records, a major aspect of this study was an archeological survey of the cemetery tract. The field survey was conducted by Southeastern Archeological Services in July and August of 2003. A report entitled *Archaeological Survey Report for Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery*, Thomas H. Gresham, Principal Investigator, was prepared and presented to the East Athens Development Corporation in September 2003.

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The principal task undertaken by Southeastern Archaeological Services was the mapping of the cemetery, mainly its boundaries and road system, but also a select sample of family plots that could be used as landmarks. The secondary task was inspecting and counting graves with a cursory description of each section of the cemetery that would include an estimate of the total number of graves, the types of grave markers, the type and density of vegetative cover, and the ages and names of some of the grave markers. The report's Appendix is composed of the section-by-section description of the cemetery and is preceded by a map showing the location of a select sample of family plots.

No specific historic maps of the cemetery or of its road system were known to exist at the time of the survey. Historic aerial photographs showed what appeared to be a formal, systematic road system, and a few of these roads were readily apparent in the field. Using aerial photographs, the apparent roads were sketched out for the field archeologist to use as a guide. The archeologists then began at well-defined points along Fourth Street and used a compass and measuring tape to plot in the roads. Field observations confirming the actual locations of the roads were made. Once the base map had been prepared, the team returned to the tract to count and describe graves and family plots and to record major landscape features including general vegetation. To better record the cemetery at this level of field investigation, the archaeologists divided the cemetery tract into sections, using the original and now mostly overgrown road system as dividers. Nineteen sections were delineated and labeled "A" through "S." It is important to note that the count and description of graves was not comprehensive or definitive; although the archaeologists spent over two person-days combing through each section of the cemetery, they did not (and never intended to) count, map or note every grave. For example, they noted earliest and latest death dates for each section, but did not look at every tombstone. Finally, a map was prepared presenting the results of these field observations.

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Section 8—Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is a historically important African-American cemetery significant for its underlying design plan and landscaping, its range of African-American funerary art, its associations with an important local African-American social organization, and its burials of persons of importance to African-American history in Athens and Georgia.

The Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is significant in the combined areas of social history and ethnic heritage: African American as an outstanding example in Georgia of a large, historic, late-19th-century cemetery created and operated by and for African Americans for the permanent care of their community's dead during the period of strict segregation following the Civil War and Emancipation. It illustrates the pronounced change in African-American burial practices and locations from the widespread antebellum tradition of individual burials on farms and plantations to the post-bellum practice of more formal and often family-oriented burials in new cemeteries within emerging African-American communities. Three principal cemetery traditions developed during the late 19th century: burials in the many relatively new African-American churchyard cemeteries, burials in designated areas in public community cemeteries, and burials in privately owned cemeteries. Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery represents this last new practice. It also illustrates the important role played by local benevolent organizations or "societies" in emerging African-American communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The importance of these self-help organizations within African-American communities has long been recognized (see, for example, the statewide historic context *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*, pages 45-47, published in 1984). The Gospel Pilgrim Society, organized in 1882 to create and maintain the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, is an excellent example of this type of African-American benevolent society dedicated to the care of the community's deceased. The society was a lodge-type burial organization, similar to those found in many African-American communities, that offered burial insurance to its members and plots in this cemetery. While the society took care of the cemetery generally, family members were expected to maintain family plots and individual graves. In African-American communities especially, cemeteries like Gospel Pilgrim were not only community landmarks but also played an important role in the establishment, growth, and development of the African-American community. In Athens, the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery literally provided a unique and important sense of place for the local African-American community. From its founding in 1882 into the 1970s, it served as the Athens area's principal cemetery for African Americans. As such, it is also significant as the final resting place for many of the city's and the state's leading African-American figures in politics (Madison Davis, d.1902), education (Samuel F. Harris, d. 1935), medicine (the Jackson brothers), the performing arts and journalism (Monroe "Pink" Morton, d. 1919), and in civil rights. It is also significant in this area because of the role of the Gospel Pilgrim Society, an African-American organization, in securing a cemetery and insuring proper burial places through its burial insurance program. Although not unique to African-American communities, such societies were especially important in those communities which traditionally were denied social services generally available to white residents. Such self-help organizations, along with churches, ranked among the most important African-American community organizations.

Laid out in 1882, Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is significant in the area of landscape architecture as one of the oldest if not the oldest African-American cemetery in Georgia reflecting the 19th-century "rural cemetery" movement in America. "Rural" cemeteries were located on expansive tracts of land on the outskirts of communities (rather than on small tracts of land within communities), they made use of

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sometimes dramatic natural terrain (rather than broad, level ground), they were developed according to an overall plan (rather than piecemeal), and they featured overall picturesque landscaping (rather than strictly formal landscaping or no landscaping at all). In its location, size, topography, plan, and overall landscaping, Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery clearly conforms to the “rural cemetery” model. It retains its historic plan of roads, family plots, and individual burial lots, and landscape features including copings, low retaining walls, and low terraces, although the details of some of the smaller-scale historic landscaping in the cemetery are not fully documented. Among “rural” or landscaped African-American cemeteries on the National Register in Georgia, only Linwood Cemetery in the Pleasant Hill neighborhood in Macon is known to date from the 1880s.

The cemetery is also significant in art because of its wide variety of grave markers, tombstones, and monuments which reflect a variety of funerary art forms. While more might be discovered once the cemetery is cleared of undergrowth, there is visible a variety of monuments, tombstones, and grave markers reflecting prevailing burial traditions; these include a small obelisk, one monument from 1914 with a carved drapery over the top, other incised and inscribed cut-stone headstones, military-issue markers, distinctively African-American concrete markers with simple inscriptions, simple uninscribed and uncut rock markers, and metal funeral-home markers, all characteristic of African-American cemeteries in Georgia. Presumably because Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery was the principal African-American cemetery in Athens, it contains both a large number and a wide variety of grave markers, making its collection nearly unique within the state.

Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is significant in the area of historic archaeology (non-aboriginal) for the important information about the cemetery already obtained through archaeological investigation and for the potential to yield additional important information through further archeological investigations. Archaeological investigations at the cemetery, conducted during the summer of 2003 and reported in the *Archaeological Survey of Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery*, Thomas H. Gresham, Southeastern Archaeological Services, Inc., 2003, already have yielded important information about the current physical conditions and the historical development of the cemetery. This information could not have been obtained in any other way given the apparent lack of historic documentation on the cemetery, including the virtual absence of historical plats, plans, and maps and written burial records. The archaeological investigations successfully answered several important research and preservation-related questions including the use of the entire tract of land for cemetery purposes, the extent of burials and the geographical boundaries of the cemetery, the approximate numbers and locations and the general orientation or arrangement of burials and family plots, including many unmarked graves, and the original plan or layout of the cemetery with its roads, paths, and family plots. The archaeological survey also recorded important descriptive information of smaller-scale physical features in the cemetery, many which had become obscured or hidden due to undergrowth, ground cover, and ground settlement, such as the great variety of grave markers and landscape features such as copings, retaining walls, and low terraces, and the different types of vegetation present. Also gained was important information about the historical development of the cemetery, primarily from marker inscriptions in various areas indicating dates of burials, which contributed to an understanding of how the cemetery developed over time. A specific product of the archeological survey was an up-to-date base map showing the major physical features of the cemetery. Based on the findings from the 2003 archaeological survey, it is clear that additional important information about the cemetery could be obtained through further archaeological investigations—in particular, more precise locations and numbers of all the graves in the cemetery including the many unmarked or poorly marked graves, better analysis of historic plant materials and a clearer distinction between them and the more recent invasive species, a more thorough inventory and analysis of what appear to be grave

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goods left at burials in the cemetery (for example, what they are, when they date from, what purpose they may have served or what value they may have had to family and community members), and a better recording of the more modest or obscure grave markers including the many small rocks on the surface of the ground. It also is possible that a more thorough analysis of grave markers and plots could shed light on the socio-economic status of the persons buried in the cemetery about which little else may be known. Finally, distinctive burial practices or customs associated with African Americans in Athens and Georgia might become apparent.

National Register Criteria

The Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery meets National Register Criterion A through its reflection of African-American burial practices and customs at a time when segregation was pervasive and for its associations with the Gospel Pilgrim Society, a local African-American organization that provided burial insurance policies, representative of many such African-American “self-help” organizations formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Georgia and elsewhere. The cemetery meets National Register Criterion C for its overall landscape design including its formal plan of roads and family burial plots as well as its variety of funerary art in the existing monuments marking the graves of many of the region’s most prominent African-American citizens as well as its most ordinary residents. The cemetery meets National Register Criterion D for the important information about the cemetery which already has been obtained through archaeological investigation and which could not be obtained elsewhere due to the virtual absence of historical documentation such as maps, plans, plats, and written burial records, and for additional information about the design, layout, landscaping, graves, and burial practices which could likely be obtained through additional archaeological investigation. As a whole the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery is an unusually well-preserved example of a relatively rare privately created cemetery which was owned, planned, and laid out by an insurance burial society.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

The cemetery meets National Register Criteria Consideration D because, as a cemetery, it has served as the major privately-owned cemetery in Athens for African-Americans for nearly a century, reflecting the use of insurance policies to insure a burial spot, and reflects in its original plan, a well-laid out cemetery with curvilinear streets, and lots for families.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance runs from the creation of the cemetery in 1882 until 1956, the end of the historic era, because it was continuously used as a cemetery during that period of time, and in fact, continues to be used as a cemetery as of this writing (2006).

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

For the purposes of this nomination, the one contributing site is the cemetery itself, including all of its historic features such as roads, paths, family plots, burials, grave markers, and landscaping.

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Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Like most of the region, Antebellum east-Athens was largely agrarian. Following the Civil War (1861-1865), most African-Americans resettled in outlying areas and undeveloped land near rivers. One African-American community developed around 1865 along the east-bank of the Oconee River known as "Blackfriars" (Thomas, p. 110). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, these areas developed into more formal neighborhoods for the black community. Located in east Athens, Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery evidences the establishment of this type of neighborhood as a reflection of minority communities.

The cemetery was founded in 1882 by the Gospel Pilgrim Society, which acquired the nine-acre property through two separate warranty deeds. The largest section of land, approximately 8.25 acres, was acquired on July 25, 1882, from Elizabeth A. Talmadge. The Society also received a contiguous plot of three-quarters of an acre from George P. Brightwell on June 24, 1902. On June 3, 1905, the Gospel Pilgrim Society transferred a parcel measuring one hundred feet by sixty feet to the Springfield Baptist Church, on which to build a church.

The cemetery was socially and spatially connected to the Springfield Baptist Church. Many erroneously believed that the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery was owned by the Church. However, the church has its own, small cemetery adjacent to its current church building. The boundaries appear accurate as marked on the tax map. Additions to the original cemetery property may suggest the demand (historically) for additional graves in response to local mortality rates.

The cemetery was founded and cared for by the Gospel Pilgrim Society, a lodge-type organization centered around burial insurance. These societies were common among the African-American community. They sometimes offered medical and disability benefits to participants but primarily provided for a proper burial. By 1919, in fact, 75 percent of African-Americans in Athens were members of lodges organized around burial and life insurance programs (Athens Banner-Herald, 11/10/2001). African-Americans, generally speaking, held proper burials sacred. The reason can be traced to African cultural traditions where proper burials ensured an untroubled, resting soul (Hughes, 18-22). The Gospel Pilgrim Society, like countless others, is a manifestation of this ethos that pervaded black culture. Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, on reflecting of this society, indicated in his experience that African-Americans were uninsurable after the Civil War and thus had to band together to form such groups to insure funds were available for burials.

In the case of Gospel Pilgrim Society, members paid dues amounting to ten cents a week and were ensured a funeral and full burial in the cemetery. Most families accepted responsibility for maintaining their own plots; perpetual care was not carried with individual and/or family plots. Families spent afternoons visiting and tidying up family plots. This was the custom in most all cemeteries of the period. Oral histories indicate that family members regularly visited the cemetery on the birthday of a deceased relative and on other holidays, Sundays, and special occasions. Families, including children, would visit the site not only to spend time at the grave, but also to clean the plot. This activity reflects the cemetery's importance to east Athens not only as a burial ground, but also as a place of repose. As the principal African-American cemetery for Athens, Gospel Pilgrim

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was a community center that provided spiritual and cultural enlightenment.

In Athens, as in other cities, the main public cemeteries, such as Oconee Hill, had a section for African-American burials. In Athens these burials started in antebellum times for some slaves and were at the discretion of the slave owner. After the Civil War, burials continued in some cases, but African Americans were also being buried in family or church cemeteries. Until the 1970s, the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery served as Athens' principal African-American cemetery.

The neighborhoods that developed around this cemetery were distinct, African-American neighborhoods and were largely a break from the Civil War (1861-1865) and Reconstruction Periods (1865-1870s) where most blacks in Athens lived in or close behind white, residential homes in servants' quarters (Glickman, p.15). Rocksprings Shotgun Row (listed in the National Register) is one example of residences of this type that housed domestic servants in support of larger white homes—in this case, homes on South Milledge Avenue. By 1913, new black neighborhoods or "settlements" existed as shown on a map entitled "The Negroes of Athens, Georgia" (1913). It shows twelve African-American communities, one (#10) of which is near Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery. These communities and the Gospel Pilgrim cemetery show the progression of African-Americans in the New South (1880-1910s) in creating their own neighborhoods and cemeteries.

Continuous changes occurred as new plots were sold and the deceased interred. This sometimes resulted in individual markers but also in development of family plots with fencing, retaining walls, and planted trees.

Some of the more prominent members of the African-American community who are buried in marked graves in the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery are listed below, in alphabetical order:

Davis, Madison (Sep 27, 1833-Aug 20, 1902). Black state legislator during Reconstruction Period.

Derricotte, Annie Smith (Sep 8, 1890-Oct 21, 1964). Pioneering educator.

Harris, Samuel Frederick (Feb 3, 1875-Jul 1, 1935). Principal of Athens High and Industrial School, the first accredited black high school in Georgia.

Jackson Brothers (Farris, Albon, Thomas, Samuel and Burnett). Prominent family of black doctors and dentists.

Lyons, Charles S. (?-1955). Respected teacher and administrator for whom (along With Harris) Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School in Athens is named.

Morton, Monroe Bowers "Pink" (1856-Feb 12, 1919). Prominent businessman, politician and builder of the Morton Building and Theater (listed in the National Register), one of the finest vaudeville theaters in the South. Morton was appointed postmaster of Athens from 1897-1903 and published *Progressive Era*, a black newspaper, in 1914.

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Pledger, William A. (1852-Jan 8, 1904). Newspaperman, orator and president of the Reconstruction era Republican Party.

Richardson, Alfred (1837-Jan 9, 1872). Athens' first black legislator during Reconstruction period.

The earliest aerial photographs available (1938) show the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery as a wooded, roughly rectangular parcel. The plot is covered with mature growth and is surrounded by several open, terraced agricultural fields. Similar forested areas are also evident in the area, though less common. Also visible in the 1938 photograph of the cemetery are intersecting paths or roads in an informal grid pattern. A later photograph (1973) show an increasingly forested plot, with the roads still evident. Surrounding agricultural areas, however, are noticeably more developed. By 1973, a great number of residential buildings existed, including a government housing complex and several single-family structures. Today, considerable overgrowth has covered the site, but the roadbeds are still evident, particularly the main road.

The Society oversaw the management of the cemetery until its last surviving member, Alfred Hill, passed away in the early 1970s. All Society records were also lost at this time. In the ensuing decades, the cemetery entered a period of neglect and abuse. The Society had no provisions for perpetual care; maintenance was left to individual families. As family visitation decreased, neglect increased. Renewed interest beginning in 1986 resulted in debris clearing that occurred again in 2002 when 30 tons of garbage were removed from the site. The cemetery was determined legally abandoned and a new owner was secured, the consolidated government of Athens-Clarke County, which worked out an agreement to manage the cemetery with the East Athens Development Center on June 19, 2002. A plan for the long-term management of the cemetery was prepared by the Jaeger Company in 2003.

In October 2003 a team from the University of Georgia's horticulture and landscape clubs began work on clearing paths and roads. Phase Two of the master plan, if funded and implemented, calls for the opening and paving of the cemetery's roads and reclaiming the walking trails.

Historian and Athens-native Michael Thurmond, the Georgia Commissioner of Labor, was able to secure a \$100,000 grant from Georgia Department of Labor to the East Athens group. It in turn hired the Jaeger Company of Gainesville, Georgia, to help develop a master plan (dated December 2003) for restoring and maintaining the cemetery.

The first phase of their recommendations was celebrated in October 2004, that was for the surveying of the cemetery and making it more accessible in order for it to become an asset to tourism and heritage.

A professional archaeological survey was part of the master plan. It was conducted by Southeastern Archaeological Services of Athens. In June 2003 it began to map the site's graves and landscape features. It estimated that there are at least 3,000 burials.

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In February 2004, the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation provided a \$10,000 grant to the cemetery toward the restoration efforts. The money will be used for a legal boundary study and thus the establishment of the official boundary, mapping of the existing roads, and the mapping of the gravesite locations.

There have also been new groundskeeping jobs created and other temporary jobs. As part of this, a new entrance was installed to prevent littering and trespass and was dedicated October 11, 2004.

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Glickman, Sara Orton. "Historic Resources in African-American Neighborhoods of the Piedmont Georgia." Athens, Georgia: 1986. Paper presented in the Historic Preservation Program at UGA.

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National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

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

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

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

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Photographs

Name of Property: Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery
City or Vicinity: Athens
County: Clarke
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: August 2004

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 26

1. At front of cemetery from Fourth Street, showing cemetery lot with brick wall; photographer facing southwest.
2. View of entrance from Fourth Street, with new gates and sign; photographer facing southwest.
3. Just inside cemetery with Fourth Street in background, showing rock coping; photographer facing northwest.
4. Morton family plot with chain-link fence; photographer facing southwest.
5. Another lot near the front entrance; photographer facing northwest.
6. A lot near the Morton Lot (photo 4); photographer facing southwest.
7. A lot east of lots in photos 4 and 6; photographer facing northeast.
8. A lot southeast of the one in photo 7, toward the center of the cemetery; photographer facing southwest.
9. Lot with three markers in the background; photographer facing west.
10. Overgrown lot in southeast part of the cemetery; photographer facing northwest.
11. A lot on the east side of the cemetery closer to Fourth Street, with some markers and rock coping visible; photographer facing southwest.
12. A lot in center of cemetery, near photo 8, with a cement coping; photographer facing northwest.
13. Overgrown area with road at rear/southeast end of the cemetery near the railroad tracks;

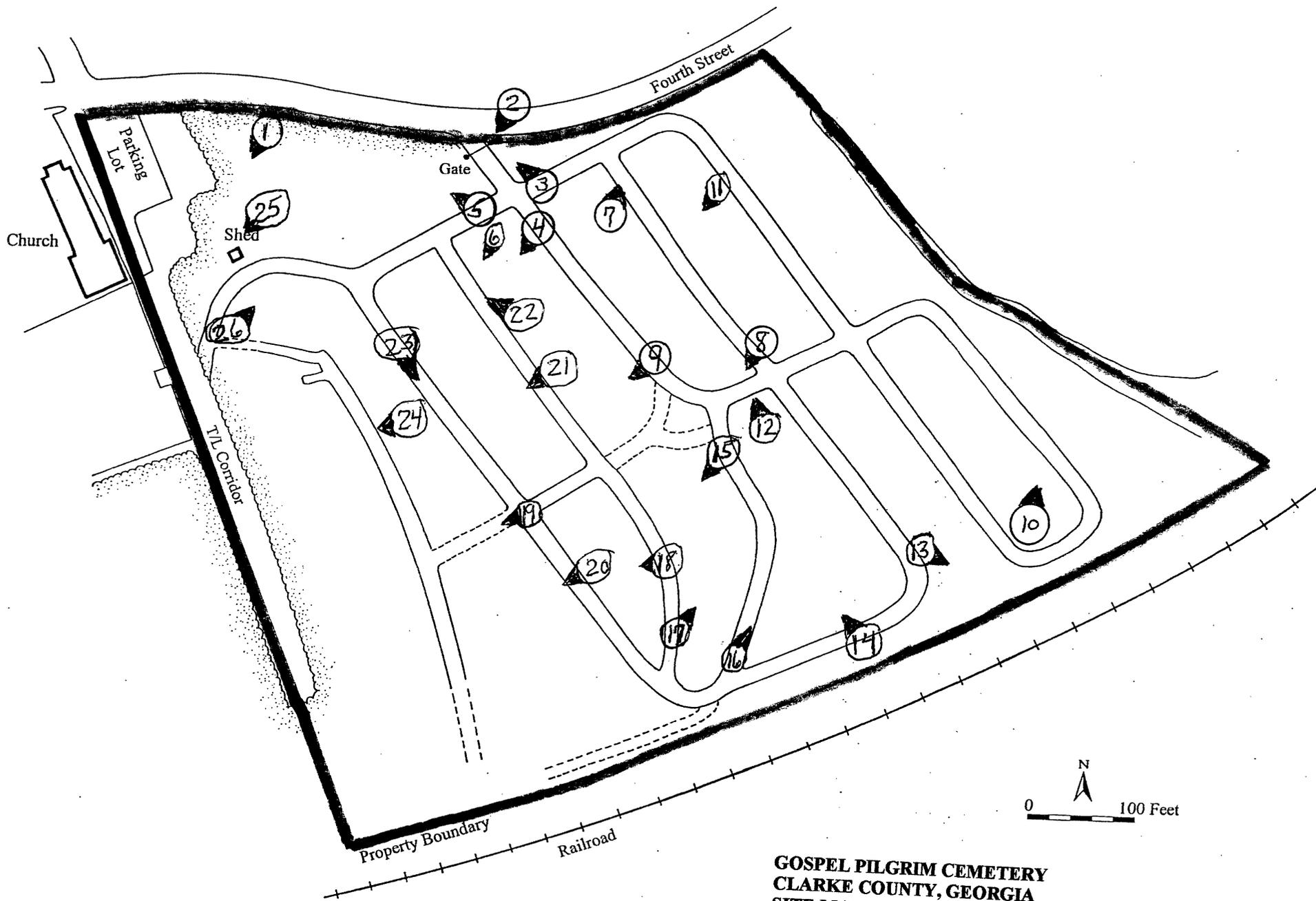
National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

photographer facing southeast.

14. Lot at rear of cemetery near railroad tracks with two markers and a hole where a body was moved to another cemetery; photographer facing northwest.
15. Lot in center of cemetery near photo 12 showing slab grave marker and a few other upright ones in the rear; photographer facing southwest.
16. Roadway at the south end of the cemetery; photographer facing northeast.
17. Lot near photo 16 with a variety of markers visible; photographer facing northeast.
18. Lot just north of photo 17 with some markers visible in the undergrowth; photographer facing southwest.
19. Area in southwest portion of the cemetery that has heavy undergrowth; photographer facing southwest.
20. A lot just south of photo 19 with some markers visible, mostly rock markers; photographer facing southwest.
21. Marker of Ann White (died 1914), one of the more elaborate ones, with a drapery motif; photographer facing southwest.
22. Lot just north of photo 21 with rock walls, and other markers in the distance; photographer facing northwest.
23. Roadway near west end of the cemetery, some markers are seen; photographer facing southeast.
24. Western edge of cemetery, lots of undergrowth, some tombstones visible; photographer facing southwest.
25. Maintenance/storage building; photographer facing southwest.
26. Gravestones at far western edge of cemetery; photographer facing northeast.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)



GOSPEL PILGRIM CEMETERY
CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA
SITE MAP
 NORTH: ↑
 PHOTOGRAPH/DIRECTION OF VIEW: ①
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE
 SOURCE: EASST ATHENS DEVELOPMENT CORP.