

# Cultural Resource Survey

## **Blue Ridge Boulevard African American Cemeteries**



Prepared for

**Concerned Citizens for Highland  
Cemetery Committee**

By

**SALLY F. SCHWENK**

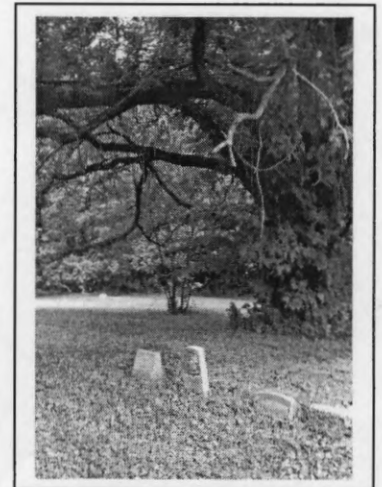
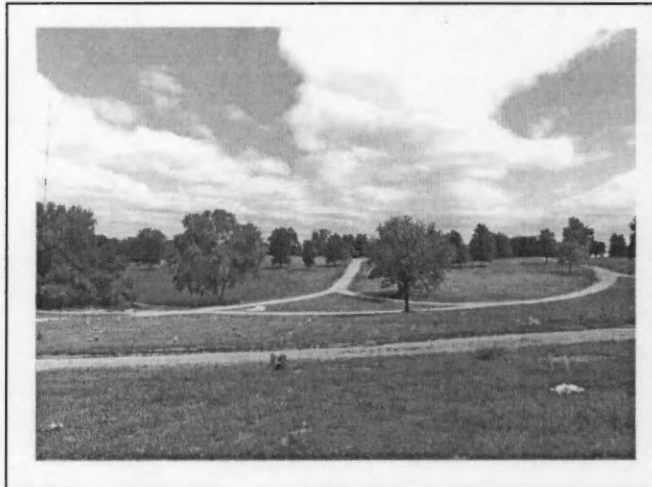
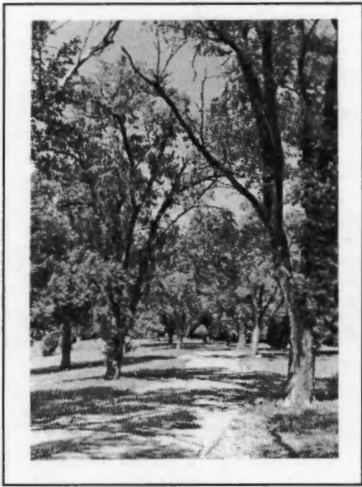
**Historic Preservation Services, L.L.C.**

**April 2001**

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**1**



## **METHODOLOGY**

**2**

## **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

**10**

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

**33**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**37**

## **MAPS**

**38**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**43**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Concerned Citizens for Highland Cemetery Grant Committee

H.B. Jefferson, Chairman  
Ida Rose Harvey Dockery  
Carrie R. Evans  
Delores Ewing  
Audrey McKinnie Hunter  
Artie L. Johnson  
Herman A. Johnson  
Carrie R. Evans  
Richard H. Love, Sr.

## Research Volunteers Shirley Bethel Dorothy Johnson

## Midwest Afro-American Genealogical Interest Coalition (M.A.G.I.C.)

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# METHODOLOGY

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Historic Preservation Services, L.L.C. (HPS) completed a survey of African American cemeteries located on Blue Ridge Boulevard in Jackson County, Missouri in conformance with the procedures for reconnaissance level survey outlined in *National Register Bulletin 24, Guidelines for Local Survey: A Basis for Preservation Planning*. Evaluation of resources for significance will be in accordance with *National Register Bulletin 41, Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program's "Minimum Guidelines for Professional Surveys of Historic Properties." The National Park Service's *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (1996) were utilized in the identification and evaluation of significant landscape features.

## SCOPE OF WORK

Survey objectives that defined the scope of work included:

- Preliminary identification of all historically and/or architecturally significant sites, objects, buildings, structures, and/or districts;
- Preliminary identification of each resource's history and significance, design, period of construction, architect, builder, construction types, etc. if known;
- Preliminary evaluation of eligibility for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places*;
- Determination of the relevant broad patterns of development which will include historic contexts, cultural themes, geographical limits and chronological limits; and
- Synthesis and interpretation of history; important patterns, events and individuals; socio-economic trends; and cultural and aesthetic values.

The Scope of Work requires the following activities:

- Compilation of existing data on the history and development of the cemeteries;
- Field inspection;
- Compilation of data relating to the individuals buried in the cemeteries;

- Analysis of data gathered;
- Identification of properties and districts that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; and
- Preparation of a report and maps that summarize the findings.

## **SURVEY COMPONENTS**

Historic Preservation Services approached the survey as three distinct components. The first component focused on field inspection and photography. The second phase included data collection and historical research relating to each cemetery as well as information relating to historic contexts. The third component focused on analysis of data and evaluation of resources for significance, preparation of survey forms, preparation of maps, development of historic context statements, and preparation of a final report

### **FIELD SURVEY**

Field survey included inspection and photographic documentation (35-mm, 5" x 7" black-and-white photographs) of above-ground resources and landscape elements within each cemetery sufficient to document their appearance and setting. Field work documented burial placement and organization of the burial grounds, which included identification of landscape design elements and features including but not limited to roadways, paths, gates, walls, graves, tombs, monuments, flush markers, gravemarkers, headstones, ledgers, monoliths, obelisks, sepulchers, slant markers, tablemarkers and tablets. The consultants relied on information gathered as well as photographs in developing written descriptions of each property. Consultants noted camera angles on field site plans as well as significant areas, objects and other landscape elements for each cemetery.

### **RESEARCH**

Research of individual cemetery records, historic atlases and plat maps documented the dates of construction and the physical evolution of the cemeteries. Volunteer teams conducted research to determine noteworthy individuals buried in the cemeteries as well as developing a cross-section of individuals by date, sex, occupation, etc. based on burial records maintained by the cemetery associations.

In addition to the documentation of the appearance and evolution of the cemeteries through an examination of historic maps, research focused on the preparation of

historical contexts for the time period in which the cemeteries developed through to the passage of civil rights laws relating to public accommodations (Title II. Civil Rights Act of 1964). Historic Preservation Services used the archival and research collections of the Mid-continent Public Library, Independence (MO) North Branch; the Jackson County Historical Society Archives and Research Library in Independence, Missouri; the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections; the *Kansas City Call* files; and the records of the Highland Sales Investment Company and Lincoln Cemetery Inc. Particularly valuable were the database indexes published in *Highland 1909 Cemetery, Vol. 1. 1909-1950* and *Blue Ridge Lawn Memorial Garden Cemetery 1925-1950* published by the Midwest Afro-American Genealogical Interest Coalition, and photocopies of the record book maintained by Lincoln Cemetery, Inc. assembled by volunteer H. B. Jefferson.

A literature search and archival research led to the development of historic context(s) for the cemeteries. Research yielded information relating to attitudes about death and burial practices of African Americans and the evolution of African American burial practices through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Research also focused on gathering general information about perpetual care lawn cemeteries or memorial parks of the late nineteenth and early to mid- twentieth century and "modern" cemetery planning. In addition, research identified information to assist in developing historic contexts that examined:

- Segregated facilities in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries;
- How the twentieth century influx of rural African Americans into cities impacted development of African American communities in Jackson County, Missouri; and
- Twentieth century African American burial customs, cemetery design and management.

## **ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF RESOURCES AND SURVEY REPORT**

### **Survey Forms**

After analysis of research information and field data and evaluation of significance, consultants prepared a version of the Missouri Historic Property Inventory Form for each of the three cemeteries. Descriptions include important or large buildings, structures, objects and other landscape features, as well as a discussion of the types of graves, gravestones, and other funerary objects within the legally established boundaries of the three cemeteries.

### **Evaluation for Significance**

For the purposes of listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a cemetery is

*... a collection of graves that is marked by stones or other artifacts or that is unmarked but recognizable by features such as fencing or depressions or through maps or by means of testing. Cemeteries serve as a primary means of an individual's recognition of family history and as expressions of collective religious and/or ethnic identity.*

In order to make a preliminary determination of what resources are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and to make management recommendations for significant resources identified in the survey, HPS conducted preliminary evaluations of significance for each cemetery and its resources according to the criteria and standards established by the National Park Service. This included preliminary assessment for individual eligibility for listing on the *National Register of Historic Places* as individual cemetery districts, and as districts that are part of a Multiple Property Submission.

Historic significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture of a community, a state or the nation. Consultants evaluated the significance of the properties according to the following criteria developed by the National Park Service. To be listed, properties must have significance in at least one of the following areas.

- Criterion A: Association with events, activities or broad patterns of history. In this case, mere association with historic events or trends is not enough, in and of itself, to qualify for listing. The property's specific association must be considered important as well. Significance for cultural associations is derived from the role a property plays in a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs and practices.
- Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons significant in our past. The person or persons associated with the property must be individually significant within a historic context. For example, a property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is a member of an identifiable profession, class, social or ethnic group. It must be shown that the person gained importance within his or her profession or groups. Usually the property must be associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
- Criterion C: Embody distinctive characteristics of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

- Criterion D: Has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

In addition, properties must retain integrity. Integrity is based on significance: why, where and when a property is important. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historical significance. Only after significance is fully established can you evaluate the integrity of the property. In evaluating the integrity of the cemeteries, HPS applied the following seven aspects of integrity:

- Location – the place where the historic resource was constructed or where the historic event occurred;
- Design – the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property;
- Setting – the physical environment of a historic property including topographic features, vegetation, man-made features, relationships between buildings and other features or open space;
- Materials – the physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property;
- Workmanship – the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory;
- Feeling – the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time; and
- Association – the direct link between an important historic event of a person and a historic property.

HPS also used the following steps in assessing integrity:

- Determined whether the essential physical features are visible enough to convey their significance;
- Determined whether the property needs to be compared with similar properties; and
- Determined, based on the significance and essential physical features, which aspects of integrity are particularly vital to the property for it to be nominated and if they are present.

Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant. Different properties and resources depend on certain aspects of integrity more than others to express historic

significance. Properties important for associations with a historical pattern or patterns or important persons under Criteria A and B, such as the three cemeteries on Blue Ridge Boulevard, should retain some features of all seven aspects of integrity. For example, assessing the integrity of the cemeteries' workmanship might not be as important to the significance of the resources as design, setting, feelings and associations.<sup>1</sup> Assessing the integrity of a historic cemetery required evaluating the principle design features such as the plan, grave markers and any related elements. First, it was important to determine if the overall integrity had been lost because of the number and size of recent gravemarkers or, if new construction altered the original plan. Secondly, it required determining what, if any, portions of each historic cemetery retained historic integrity.

Because cemeteries are among certain kinds of properties that are not usually considered for listing in the National Register, it was necessary for HPS to determine if the cemeteries met special consideration requirements developed by the National Park Service. Cemeteries can be eligible for listing if they meet special requirements called "Criteria Considerations" in addition to being eligible under one or more of the four previously listed Criterion and they possess integrity.

Usually Criteria Considerations apply only to individual properties. Components of eligible districts do not have to meet the special requirements unless they make up the majority of the district or are the focal point of the district. Cemeteries that qualify for listing in the National Register derive their primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, and/or from association with historic events. HPS therefore investigated the cemeteries to see if they met any of the following criteria considerations.

- A cemetery containing the graves of persons of transcendent importance may be eligible for listing if the persons have been of general prominence in their fields of endeavor or had a great impact upon the history of their community, state, or nation.<sup>2</sup>
- A cemetery can be eligible if it achieved historic significance for its relative great age in a particular geographic or cultural context.
- A cemetery can qualify for the National Register on the basis of distinctive design values. These values can include aesthetic or technological achievement

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<sup>1</sup> *National Register Bulletin How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.* (Washington D.C.: National Register Branch, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service Department of the Interior, 1998), 48

<sup>2</sup> A single grave that is the burial place of an important person and is located in a larger cemetery that does not qualify under this Criteria Consideration can be listed under Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces and Graves.

in the fields of city planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, mortuary art and sculpture. As is required of other nominated properties, a cemetery must clearly express its design values and be able to convey its historic appearance.

- A cemetery may be listed for its associations with historic events including specific events, or for general events that illustrate broad patterns of history.
- Cemeteries, both historic and prehistoric, can also be eligible for listing if they have the potential to yield important information that is not available in extant documentary evidence. The information must be important within a specific context and the potential to yield information has to have been demonstrated.

Another factor HPS considered in evaluating the African American cemeteries on Blue Ridge Boulevard was the Criteria Consideration concerning the age and period of significance of the properties. Preliminary research had already established that the cemeteries might be locally significant as examples of racial segregation in public accommodations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Segregated cemetery facilities did not end until after the passage of the Civil Rights Law of 1964 that outlawed segregation in public accommodations.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, there was a question of whether to include graves of individuals buried between 1951 and 1964 in assessing the integrity of the cemeteries. Ordinarily resources that have achieved significance within the past fifty years are not considered eligible for listing in the National Register. Fifty years is a general estimate of the time needed to evaluate significance. However, there are certain instances when resources less than 50 years in age may be considered and which applied to the cemeteries.

Resources not yet fifty years of age that are of "exceptional importance" may be considered for listing. Assessing the importance of the resource should be within the appropriate local, state, or national historic context. There has to be sufficient historical perspective based on scholarly research to conduct such an evaluation. The evaluation must also consider both the historic context and the specific property's/resource's role in that context. Moreover, to justify exceptional importance, it was necessary to identify other properties within the geographical area that reflected the same significance or historic associations and to determine which properties best represent the historic context in question.

Resources that have achieved significance within the past fifty years also can be eligible for listing if they are an integral part of a district that qualifies for National Register listing. This is demonstrated by documenting that the resource/property dates from within the district's defined period of significance and that it is

associated with one or more of the district's defined areas of significance. In such cases, there must again be sufficient perspective to consider the properties as historic. This is accomplished by demonstrating that:

- the proposed district's period of significance is justified as a discrete period with a defined beginning and end;
- the character of the district's historic resources is clearly defined and assessed;
- specific resources in the district are demonstrated to date from that discrete era; and
- the majority of the district resources are over fifty years old.

In these instances, it is not necessary to prove exceptional importance of either the district itself or the less-than-fifty-year-old resources within the district. However, exceptional importance still had to be demonstrated for districts where the majority of properties or the major period of significance is less than fifty years old (and for less-than-fifty-year-old properties that are nominated individually).

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<sup>3</sup> Public accommodations include facilities that may be privately owned and are open to the public such as hotels, restaurants, housing, etc.

# HISTORIC CONTEXTS

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To evaluate the significance of a property, it is necessary to relate the property to important themes in the history of the locality, state, and/or nation. This includes gathering information about the history of the community or larger geographical area that explains the ways the property is unique or representative of its theme, place and time. It requires the examination of the role of the property in relationship to broad historic trends, a brief history of the community where the property is located as it relates to the property, and identifying patterns of development that affected the property's history, significance and integrity. Finally, it is important to explain the importance of the property by showing how the property is unique, outstanding, or strongly representative of an important historic context when compared with other properties of the same or similar period, characteristics or associations.

There are two major themes that emerge relating to the African American cemeteries located on Blue Ridge Boulevard. One relates to the evolution of burial practices in the United States including those of African Americans. The other theme relates to the evolution of the African American community in the area and, in particular, to Kansas City, Missouri. Within the latter context, the sub-context of the role of the properties as representative examples of segregation facilities in the City and of the diverse life of the African American Community is important.

## AMERICAN BURIAL PRACTICES

### EARLY 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BURIAL GROUNDS

From the earliest period of colonial settlement, the European tradition of the churchyard as the primary place to bury the dead was a common practice that continued well into the twentieth century in rural areas. Regional differences occurred as early as the colonial period, reflecting different settlement patterns, cultural practices and religious beliefs. In New England, members of the Puritan faith rebelled against the European based "papist" practice of the churchyard cemetery and set aside land in their villages and towns as community burial grounds. By the nature of the local circumstances, and still largely restricted to individuals of the same religious preferences, these burial grounds almost uniformly segregated the races.

In the Middle Atlantic states and the South, where settlement patterns tended to be more dispersed and where Protestantism dominated the rural culture, family cemeteries joined the church cemetery as the most common form of burial ground. Enclosed by a fence or wall and located on high ridges with good drainage, they accommodated both the extended white family and white employees. Black house servants were sometimes buried just outside the perimeter of the burial grounds. For the larger population of slaves, separate burial grounds accommodated their dead.<sup>4</sup>

### Slave Cemeteries

Understanding how African groups buried their dead is the first logical step to determining the burial customs of African Americans, which leads to identification of some of the historical contexts associated with African American cemeteries in the early to mid-twentieth century. However, the assembly and synthesis of this information is problematic. Africa is a large continent and historically contains many different cultural groups. The 10 to 20 million African slaves who reached the United States came from a number of different cultures. This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that very few records of slave owners address African American burial customs.<sup>5</sup>

Limited early accounts of slave burials in the southeastern United States mention the use of wood coffins and a processional to the cemetery often singing special hymns. Slave burial records indicate that most burials took place at night, possibly to allow slaves from throughout an area to attend or, just as likely, because no other time was available.<sup>6</sup>

At these early evening gatherings a large torch-lit assemblage gathered around the coffin resting on trestles in front of the deceased's home. After the assembly was complete, a processional accompanied the coffin to the "peoples' burial ground. The corpse was lowered into the grave and covered, each person throwing a handful of dirt into the grave as a last act of kindness to the deceased. A prayer concluded the services at the grave. All of the accounts suggest that the burials were significant

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<sup>4</sup> "Grave Matters: The Preservation of African-American Cemeteries " <http://www.sciway.net/hist/chicora/gravematers.html>; Internet: accessed 6 February 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., citing information from Margaret Washington Creel, "A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs" (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 1-4; and Jenel Few, "Buried Treasure," *Savannah Morning News*. (8 February 1999) at <http://www.savannahmorningnews.com/smn/stories/020899/ACCblackhist2.html> Internet: accessed 19 March 2001. The latter source cites information relating to Laurel Grove Cemetery listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

occasions, sometimes resembling a pageant. Often attendance ran as high as 200. At such ceremonies, prayers and singing sometimes continued into the next day.<sup>7</sup>

It was a universal practice to locate slave burial grounds away from family plots in a designated place on marginal property -- land that the owner was not likely to use. Descriptions of African American burial spots of the South characterized them as "ragged patches of live oak and palmetto and brier tangle. . ." ". . . hidden away in remote spots among trees and underbrush." While the graves of the owner's family, as well as other burial grounds of white laborers and their families, usually featured some type of enclosure around the graves, African American burial areas were often protected only by dense foliage and underbrush.<sup>8</sup>

Tombstones marking African American graves at this time were rare. Often only field rocks served as a headstone or wooden crosses marked graves. African Americans also denoted their graves in a variety of other ways. Carved wooden staffs representing religious motifs or effigies reflected African origins. Certain plants, such as cedar trees, marked graves. Anthropologists traced this tradition to Haiti where slaves combined the Christian belief in the resurrection of the soul and the African belief that trees live on after death. Tradition holds that Yuccas and other prickly plants kept spirits in the cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

Probably the earliest, most enduring and most commonly known African American grave marking practice was the use of "offerings" on top of the grave itself. The research of Elaine Nichols, chief curator of African-American Collections at the South Carolina State Museum revealed that many southern black funeral traditions had connections to Africa. For example, the Bkongo people of Central Africa and many blacks in America placed objects like medicine, food or drink, so the spirit of the deceased would not have to return to earth looking for necessities. Objects found on graves of African Americans in the last three centuries include a wide variety of bric-a-brac including pottery -- cups, saucers, bowls, pitchers, tureens and jugs; medicine and liquor bottles; spoons and knives; shells and colored pebbles; toys and dolls heads; candles, light bulbs and flashlights; soap dishes and razors, spectacles and false teeth; clocks; statues; cigar boxes; piggy banks; gun locks; and the ever-present flower container. The meaning and origins of the practice remains unknown. The use of everyday objects to mark graves can be traced back to the widespread practice throughout Africa of placing a wide variety of

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<sup>7</sup> "Grave Matters," 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 4 and "African-Americans Celebrate 'Going Home' to Better Place," *The Sharon-Herald* at <http://www.sharon-herald.com/localnews/recentnews/9902/In020199b.html>. Internet accessed 19 March 2001.

<sup>9</sup> "Grave Matters;" and "African-American Funeral Customs," *Reconstruction and Rural Life* at <http://www.mtsu.edu/~then/cemetery/page3.html>. Internet accessed 10 February 2001; and "Symbols" at <http://www.tsu.edu/1then/cemetery/page3.html>. Internet accessed 10 February 2001.

items used by the deceased on the grave. Some believe the objects are for use in the afterlife — some deliberately damaged or “killed” to accompany the deceased. Others hold that the objects resting on the grave denote the finality of death or guard the grave and prevent the dead from returning to interfere with the lives of the living. Certain items are important symbols. Reflective items such as glass and mirrors show the “mirror image” of this life compared to the next. Items that involve water represent both how African Americans arrived to the Americas as slaves and how they will be transported into the next world.<sup>10</sup>

## 19TH CENTURY CEMETERY DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

By the nineteenth century in most communities of any size, the community cemetery at the city limits replaced the churchyard burial ground. Whether owned by a church, private association or a municipality, the burial ground was considered a community facility.<sup>11</sup>

### Evolution of American Cemetery Design

By the 1830s, formal design of burial places among the Euro-American population occurred. The “rural” cemetery movement, influenced by European trends in gardening and landscape design, had a major impact on American cemetery development and design. This “picturesque” mode of landscaping, dating to the eighteenth century, emphasized the naturalistic effects of graceful curved pathways and watercourses adapted to a rolling terrain. The massing of trees and plants and the arrangement of ornamental features provided contrast and variety to plans that featured open meadows of irregular outline, uneven stands of trees, naturalistic lakes, accents of selected plants and objects such as statues for variety.<sup>12</sup>

The movement had its roots in a time period and culture that romanticized nature, art and death. Beginning in the 1830s in the United States, horticulturists designed cemeteries in the nation’s larger cities to be serene and spacious grounds imitating romanticized pastoral landscapes based on the landscape gardening of the eighteenth century estates of the English nobility. Cemetery designers chose hilly wooded sites at the city’s edge that they shaped by selective grading, thinning of trees, and massing of plant materials. They then designed a series of gracefully

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<sup>10</sup> “Grave Matters,” 5, citing John Michael Vlach’s *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*” and Janel Few citing Elaine Nichols, chief curator of African-American Collections at the South Carolina State Museum and creator of “Last Miles of the Way: African-American Homegoing Traditions 1890 – present.”

<sup>11</sup> Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 123.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 41 Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* (Washington D.C.: National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, 1992), 6.

curving paths and roadways that followed the land contours and revealed, at different points, broad scenic vistas. Beginning with the entrance gate and a winding drive of gradual ascent, the picturesque cemetery was a place removed from the noise and activity of daily life that focused on nature and its implied continuity of life. Within the cemetery, "natural" features and monuments combined to present spiritually uplifting spaces that, due their beauty and usefulness to society, came to be viewed as public places of respite and recreation.

The use of these naturalistic landscape precepts in cemetery design continued into the twentieth century. But, beginning in the late nineteenth century at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio, cemetery superintendent Adolph Strauch introduced a lawn plan system which de-emphasized monuments in favor of unbroken lawn scenery, or common open space. Supporting Strauch's uniform design concept was landscape architect and cemetery engineer Jacob Weidemann who published in 1888 *Modern Cemeteries: an Essay on the Improvement and Proper Management of Rural Cemeteries*.<sup>13</sup>

### **Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century African American Cemeteries**

A review of African American cemeteries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals significant differences between traditional African American and traditional Euro-American cemeteries. Some of these differences can be traced to different religious beliefs and customs. Some are probably the byproduct of one group being enslaved by the other and, later, the economic and physical nature of a segregated society.

After the Civil War, freed slaves began at once to establish their own communities and churches. Many African American rural communities were enclaves created from land donated or set aside by their former owners for their use. Here, burial grounds typically were in churchyards or at the edge of their community. Well into the twentieth century, African Americans shipped their dead back to the rural community and family burial places from which they or their parents migrated. Larger towns and cities provided segregated areas in public cemeteries and "potters fields" for the indigent -- black or white. Private cemeteries that also served as municipal burial grounds also provided segregated areas.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>14</sup> Information relating to burials of African Americans in the region resulted from a review of cemetery records and related publications in Jackson and Clay counties by Sally F. Schwenk. Included in information reviewed was documentation relating to the White Oak Cemetery in Clay County, municipal cemeteries in Independence and Kansas City, Missouri, and rural cemeteries in the metropolitan area. Information relating to the practice of shipping the remains of blacks who immigrated to cities to the "home" cemetery or family plot resulted from a review of funeral parlor records from the Bruce Watkins Funeral Home, the Lawrence Jones Funeral Home in Kansas City and Janel Few's documentation.

Within the black community, burials continued to be viewed as a "homegoing" celebration, a release from the onerous conditions of the peculiar predicament of economic and social discrimination. "For so long we held second-class status. A funeral was considered an exodus from all the hell on earth."<sup>15</sup> The funeral ceremonies provided a time for family, friends and community to gather together and pay their last respects to a loved one who had passed on to a better place. By the late nineteenth century black fraternal organizations participated in the last rites. It was common for organizations like the Odd Fellows and the Masons to conduct special ceremonies. Many poor blacks enlisted the help of burial societies to ensure that their loved ones would receive a decent burial. Twenty-five cents a week would ensure a family's ability to cover the funeral and burial services.<sup>16</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the typical African American rural cemetery or churchyard burial ground consisted of a few marble and brick headstones. However, most grave markers were wooden slabs, some with painted names and dates, which stood moldering from the dampness of the surrounding woods. Graves continued to be fairly shallow and were around four feet in depth. There is evidence of both coffins and bodies wrapped in shrouds. Many accounts of mid- to late-nineteenth century African American burials relate that it was a uniform practice to bury the dead in an east-west direction with the head to the west. One freed slave explained that the dead should not have to turn around when Gabriel blew his trumpet in the eastern sunrise. Others suggest that they were buried facing Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Elaborate markers in nineteenth century African American burial places were rare. Many tombstones were handmade. The practice has its roots in the economic situation of the majority of former slaves. It also reflected a pragmatic view of death (and its release) than a romanticized view of death and its incumbent funerary customs practiced by white Americans at this time. The use of temporary markers of stones, wood or shells also ensured that the cemetery is always available, never full.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Euro-American cemeteries in the nineteenth century, African American cemeteries were not landscaped. As a rule, native trees, not special varieties, appeared randomly throughout the cemetery. Depressions and mounds as well as

<sup>15</sup> Few, 2, quoting Howard G. Johnson an authority on African American funeral traditions and a member of the National Funeral Directors Association; and also citing Elaine Nichols' "Last Miles of the Way: African American Homegoing Traditions 1890 to present."

<sup>16</sup> Few, 3-4, citing Nichols; and "Business and African Americans" at [http://www.africana.com/tt\\_232.html](http://www.africana.com/tt_232.html), 1-3. Internet accessed 19 March 2001.

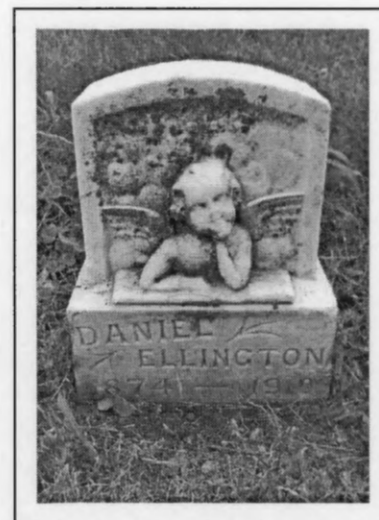
<sup>17</sup> "Grave matters," 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

simple grave markers denoted individual plots. No attempt to create grassy lawns occurred. Each family maintained the graves of their relatives, sometimes planting cedar trees or perennials near the grave. Many graves were not marked. Family plots were not predominate in these burial grounds and the placement of graves often appears to be random. Many African American cemeteries did not typically preserve family groupings. Although generations of related kin shared the same graveyard, the tie was to the burial ground not a particular area within it. The economic conditions that forced many a family to purchase only one lot at the time of interment further entrenched the custom. It is important to note that many traditional beliefs tied to the burial ground prompted many to ship their dead back "home" to rest in peace.<sup>19</sup>

## TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN CEMETERY DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

During the nineteenth century, voluntary associations typically organized and operated community cemeteries and sold individual plots to be marked and maintained by private owners according to individual taste. The idea of a memorial park with common open space and unbroken scenery required a comprehensive approach to design and management. Whether owned as a business venture or as a non-profit corporation, the new memorial park approach that gained momentum in the late nineteenth century incorporated the idea of extending perpetual care to every lot and grave.



**Headstone  
Highland Cemetery**

As such, the perpetual care lawn cemeteries of the early twentieth century represented a transition from the early nineteenth century "rural" cemetery ideal to the comprehensively designed and managed memorial parks that dominated American funerary customs for the next century. As early as 1900, parks and cemeteries began to reflect the more formal landscape planning made fashionable by the "City Beautiful Movement." In particular, by the twentieth century, cemetery design almost universally incorporated axial alignment of principal approaches and interior road systems. Cemetery designers continued to enhance the natural beauty of cemetery sites; but they eschewed picturesque roughness and hilly features, grading them into smooth slopes and contours. For cost-effective maintenance of the grounds, they used mechanized equipment that stimulated the use of markers flush

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 6, quoting Elsie Clews Parsons, "Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina." *Memoirs*

with the ground level and eliminated walls, fences and large monumental objects and structures that defined individual plots.

By the 1930s, newer cemeteries showed the influence of modernization through a general preference for buildings, structures and monuments that were completely stripped of excessive decoration, which promoted universal sizes and types of grave markers.<sup>20</sup> The plan was also efficient. Most early twentieth century cemeteries sought to accommodate at least 1500 burial spaces per acre.<sup>21</sup> This allowed ample room for headstones and allotted about 15 percent of the land for drives and walks as well as space between the graves. The modern "lawn type" cemetery utilized this wasted space by simply eliminating footpaths between graves and banning tombstones altogether, thus making possible unbroken rows of snugly packed 7 foot by 3 foot graves. A standard bronze marker set flush with the ground replaced the tombstone, eliminating 75 percent of maintenance costs for hand trimming. Another innovation was the sale of companion spaces for husband and wife where they could lie in repose one above the other in a single grave space. Another space-saving innovation was to set aside separate sections for the burial of babies and small children where three could be buried in the space required for one adult.<sup>22</sup>

Cemeteries continued to be located at the edge of the city. Modern transportation made it possible for the cemetery to be some distance from commercial centers and high-priced residential areas. As a result, enough land for the vast new memorial park could be acquired for a modest cash outlay. This was important as mechanization of maintenance functions and the lawn type design brought about efficient land use and stimulated speculative investment in cemetery development. Market conditions allowed costs for services at private cemeteries to be as much as three times higher than burial in municipal cemeteries. Most commercial ventures established "perpetual care funds" for future maintenance, as a surcharge to the cost of cemetery space.<sup>23</sup> In addition to this income, most cemetery associations did not pay taxes. The idea of a cemetery as a commercial operation did not coincide with the prevailing Victorian sentiment that there was something special and sacred about cemetery land and, therefore, cemetery associations deserved special consideration. Even the United States Supreme Court reflected this view in its 1882 ruling that recognized that cemetery associations were formed for "a pious and public use."<sup>24</sup>

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*of the American Folk-Lore Society, 1923.*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>21</sup> Mitford, 127.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 124.

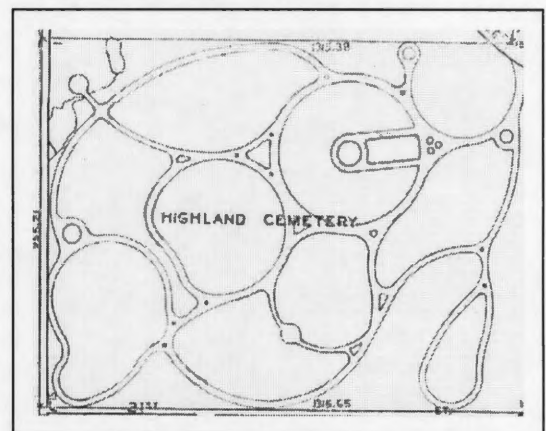
### Twentieth Century African American Cemeteries

By the twentieth century, African American cemeteries also changed. The migration from the south that contributed to the growth of northern urban areas created a greater demand than the traditional local church/community black burial grounds and the "colored" section of public cemeteries could accommodate. At the same time, as blacks gained prominence in the professions, practices traditionally reserved by white society began to change African American institutions. As black mortuary businesses became established in the late nineteenth century, so did the form and appearance of African American burial grounds. The education of black landscape architects and engineers, and consequent exposure to Euro-American design aesthetics, resulted in change in cemetery and burial practices within the African American community. African American leaders who promoted self-sufficiency, such as Booker T. Washington, stimulated the founding of black commercial enterprises and ecumenical cooperative ventures such as cemetery associations, burial societies and fraternal organizations. A significant influence in cemetery design of both black and white cemeteries at the turn-of-the-century was the work of black engineer Garnet Baltimore, the first African American graduate from the Rennseselaer Polytechnic Institute. Baltimore designed the landscaping for Forest Park Cemetery and cemeteries in Albany, Hosick Falls and Glens Falls, New York as well as serving as a consulting engineer for Oakwood Cemetery. His philosophical view of the park as a place of recreation, combining aesthetic form with practical function, gained popularity nationwide.<sup>25</sup>

### Blue Ridge Boulevard African American Cemeteries

The designs of the three African American cemeteries along Blue Ridge Boulevard

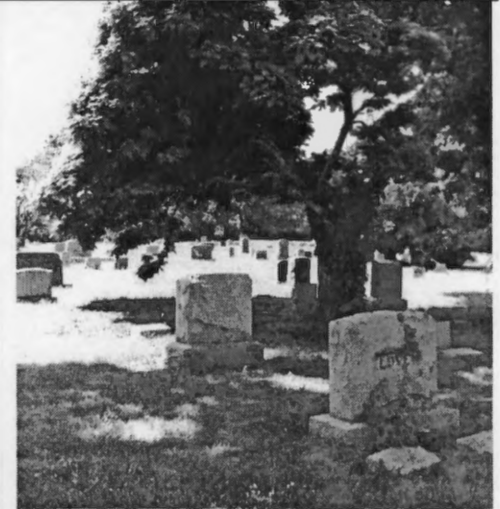
reveal that by the early twentieth century, the design and appearance of black cemeteries differed little from those erected for whites. The design of the 1909 Highland Cemetery reflects the influences of the nineteenth century Rural Cemetery Movement. Located on gently sloping ground, a wrought iron gate supported by square fieldstone piers denotes the formal entrance. At the first "V" juncture in the road, a triangular area focuses attention on a flagpole and bronze plaque dedicated to war veterans that is affixed to a short, square limestone column. A series of looping and curvilinear narrow gravel roads intersect at various points throughout the cemetery creating irregular areas with curving



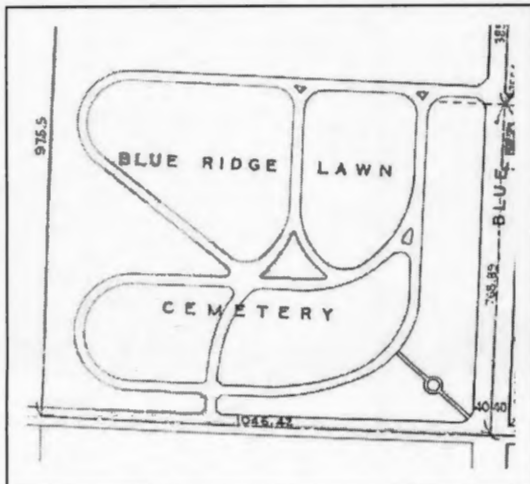
<sup>25</sup> "Report of the Municipal Improvements Commission" (Troy, NY: Bureau of Parks, 1903), 26.

boundaries. They form 11 "blocks" that are divided into rectangular or square grave lots that include 12 grave sites. According to Lee Benson, a retired gravedigger, the choice spot for burial was in Block 6 named "Christie's Gardens." The age and species of trees reflect some conscious landscaping efforts, as do the open grass lawns. A wide variety of headstones and grave markers are scattered throughout the cemetery. In addition, there are tombs, fences, objects, monuments, and features routinely found in cemeteries of the time period.

In addition to the division into blocks, there are special sections denoted in the registration books for infants and one for paupers called "Strangers Rest." Records also reveal that, at times, custom allowed an infant and mother to be buried in the same casket. Some entries note the practice of separate coffins for mother and child, with the child's smaller casket resting on top of the mother's casket. Entries denoting military service begin in the 1930s for veterans of the Spanish-American War. Military headstones furnished by the federal government mark these graves.



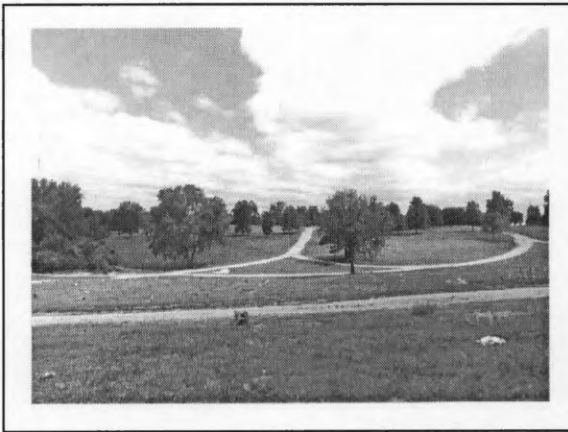
Established in 1925 and advertised as a "Park Plan," the 23.2-acre Blue Ridge Lawn Cemetery reflects the shift in the early twentieth century in cemetery design to the



memorial lawn plan. The advertisement for the cemetery introduces the concept of the "Park Plan Cemetery," noting that it evolved out of a "careful and exhaustive study of the very latest and finest cemeteries in America." The ad goes on to explain that the advantage of the park plan over the old-fashioned cemetery is that it allows "unrestricted development of landscaping plans and unhampered utilization of all the natural beauties" of the

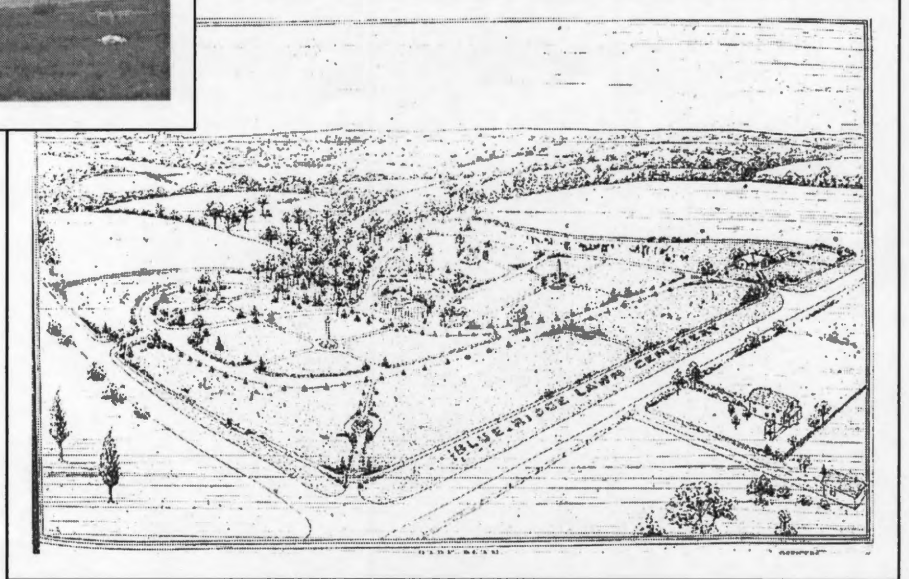
site. The text urges the reader to consider the contrast between new and old.<sup>26</sup>

*Go to any of the older cemeteries and the eye is greeted by confusion. Monuments here, monuments there, without symmetry, without design, some of them lovely, many of them hideously ugly. The magnificent marble shaft which one man rears above his loved dead casts its shadow across a dozen cheap and tawdry stones. The stately vistas of the spreading trees are marred everywhere by grotesque distortions. How different is the park plan. The cool reaches of the velvet lawns are unbroken by any of the marble monstrosities of the older type. No unsightly mounds appear, no scattered, ragged weeds around the bases of the monuments, no chicken wire fences – only the trees, the shady paths, the close clipped lawns, the flowers, the shrubs and the spotless purity of the white marble markers.<sup>27</sup>*



While the planned spatial arrangement and road system remained essentially as designed, the uniform “white marble markers” and certain other landscape elements did not materialize. With a few exceptions, grave markers are

small flat markers, creating relatively unbroken expanses of lawn. There are a few vertical headstones scattered throughout the cemetery. Street post signs designate the special sections within the cemetery. Some bear the names of sections such as “Garden of Gethsemane.” A formally designed entrance introduced the visitor to the idea of a formally planned memorial park.



<sup>26</sup>

“Announcement Blue Ridge Lawn,” *The Kansas City Call*. (April 10, 1925): B5.

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid.



Lincoln Cemetery established in 1934 provides a true park setting and is the simplest in plan consisting of one major paved road bisecting the property from east to west. In the western half of the cemetery, the road forms a circle. Mature trees flank the road on both sides providing a bower effect and reflecting conscious landscape

planning. The grave markers are low and flat, providing broad expanses of rolling lawns. A memorial area has been created for the double grave of jazz legend Charlie "Bird" Parker and his mother.



## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF KANSAS CITY'S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

The historic significance of the African-American cemeteries on Blue Ridge Boulevard is based on their associations with and representation of the diversity of Kansas City's African American Community and the history of its development. This diversity reflects the forces and individuals that shaped the history of this ethnic group. Moreover, any understanding of the evolution of local burial practices and institutions of the African American Community in Kansas City requires an examination of social, economic and religious institutions that shaped that society.

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY EVOLUTION OF KANSAS CITY'S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of African Americans were slaves in southern states. Torn from their homes in Africa and scattered among the whites and other African cultural groups, their ancestral culture and

language quickly became homogenized. They acquired the English language and assimilated the practices of their masters.<sup>28</sup>

The adoption of new religious beliefs was an important part of their assimilation and this occurred in the context of the evangelical religious movement that was then spreading through revival and camp meetings among the white population. Known as the "Great Awakening," the country's mainstream denominations at this time were intensively evangelical in nature, an effort that grew from their zeal to convert as many as possible to New Testament Christian standards. Religious practices in the United States, particularly in the Middle South, the South and the Western settlement areas, became marked by mass conversion (primarily through Protestantism). The rise in church membership, from 6.8 percent of the population in 1800 to 43.5 percent in 1910, serves as testimony to the significant role religion played in the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

During the period prior to the Civil War, large numbers of slaves converted to the Christian faith. By 1860, black church members in the South numbered close to one-half million. Of these, approximately 215,000 were Methodists and 175,00 were Baptists-- denominations that flourished among whites of lower income and educational levels. In areas where the Roman Catholic faith predominated, the slaves practiced the religion of their masters. In the North, free blacks organized into two denominations, the African Methodist Church (later the African Methodist Episcopal Church) which organized in 1816 in Philadelphia, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which grew out of a congregation begun in 1800 in New York City and formally organized in 1821. By 1860, about 11.7 percent of African-Americans were church members.<sup>30</sup>

In Missouri, a slave state, most African Americans attended church with their owners. State law and public opposition to the assembly of blacks, particularly by mid-century, blocked any effective organization of black congregations. A study of 35 churches, two Baptist associations, six Methodist circuits and two presbyteries in central and western Missouri documents that the Baptist and Methodist congregations held the largest proportional number of slaves. All of the

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<sup>28</sup> John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom. A History of the Negro American* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 55-59.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The History of Christianity. Vol. 2* (New York: Harper and Row, 1939), 1258.

<sup>30</sup> Sally Schwenk, "Religious Properties in Kansas City, Missouri. Final Report," July 1996, 26. Copy on file at the Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri.

Presbyterian churches studied had African American members, including free blacks.<sup>31</sup>

With the exception of infant baptism, churches founded by Missouri's white settlers in this part of the state admitted slaves and free blacks into membership by the same means as whites. A "separate but equal" status existed within these congregations. Blacks worshipped, received communion and accepted moral discipline, as did whites. White members addressed slaves as "brother" and "sister." White pastors conducted slave funerals and African American ministers preached before white congregations. Blacks received the same wages for church work as whites. Church obituaries listed slaves and free blacks. However, just as they separated the sexes, most churches provided segregated seating areas for slaves and free blacks. Occasionally churches with a large black membership provided separate worship services for slaves. At times, an African American preacher conducted separate worship services. Other congregations paid a white pastor to preach to black members once a month. This segregation extended to separate burial locations within the churchyard cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

In 1850, the year that Jackson County formally recognized the Town of Kansas, the county's 2,969 slaves far overshadowed the free blacks that numbered only 41 at this time.<sup>33</sup> By 1860, there were approximately 4,000 slaves and 80 free blacks in the City. Despite a robust economy with ingrained pro-slavery sentiments and the profitability of slavery, in 1853, Jackson County found itself in the position of being surrounded by "free territory" in Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska -- a situation that set the stage for two decades of turbulence and strife. With the increasing tension regarding the sectional issue of slavery and the advent of the Border War in western Missouri in the mid-1850s, individual congregations underwent a change. Records of the churches in central and western parts of the state indicate that, as the Civil War approached, churches in general suffered a decline in membership, and many lost all or most of their black members.<sup>34</sup>

After the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of all slaves, the number of African Americans joining churches grew rapidly. The overwhelming majority of the

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<sup>31</sup> Hugh Gaston Wamble, "Negroes and Missouri Protestant Churches Before and After the Civil War. *Missouri Historical Review*. 61(April 1967):321-347.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 321-323; and Perry McCandless, *A History of Missouri Volume II 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 212.

<sup>33</sup> Hattie E. Poppino, *Jackson County Missouri Census of 1850* (Kansas City: 1957).

<sup>34</sup> Hattie E. Poppino, *Census of 1860 Population Schedules for Jackson County, Missouri* (Kansas City: 1964). In Jackson County, Missouri the free black population constituted only .2 to .3 percent of the population, which was a static population, not a settled one. The majority lived outside the boundaries of present day Kansas City in Blue Township to the east.

membership was in denominations and congregations entirely under African American control. Although this occurred with some encouragement from the white community, it was primarily by the choice of the ex-slaves themselves. Their churches were the only institutions in which they were fully independent of the white establishment. They served as not only places for worship and social and religious communion; they also functioned as social centers with their own insurance companies, burial societies and lending institutions.<sup>35</sup>

Advances in the formation of African American churches in the fifty years after the war was phenomenal. By 1916, about 44.2 percent of the total black population attended church regularly; a proportion that was approximately the same as that of the number of whites attending churches. Of these black churches, about nine-tenths were either Baptist or Methodist bodies entirely controlled by their congregations.<sup>36</sup>

The evolution of African American congregations in Kansas City followed these trends. Following emancipation in 1865, black churches became a vital force in the consolidation of all levels of the city's African American community. The white community provided little organized effort to assist ex-slaves in the transition to self-sufficiency. Nor was there any substantive change in lifestyle of the African American. Most continued to remain in the area and to work for minimal wages on the farms or at the businesses of their former masters. Enclaves appeared in the Northeast section of Kansas City near the Missouri River and in Westport on land granted by their former owners. Their numbers grew as blacks from the rural areas of the county moved to the city looking for jobs. Within five years, most blacks in Jackson County resided in Kansas City proper.

By 1870, 3,400 African Americans constituted 11.6 percent of the city's population and, by 1880, they numbered 8,172, or 14.6 percent.<sup>37</sup> Most formed Baptist congregations or joined independent denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) and Centennial Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) churches. These denominations and countless small congregations, meeting in homes or quickly erected small frame sanctuaries, became the nucleus of every phase of their parishioners lives. Within these religious organizations, benevolent missions and burial associations formed.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Richard D. McKinzie, *At the River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence, and Jackson County* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., in association with the Jackson County Historical Society, 1982), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Schwenk, 27.

<sup>37</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 62; and A Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, K. C. *A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978,) 96.

<sup>38</sup> Schwenk, 27.

The growth of the African American churches in Kansas City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the result of an influx of blacks from both rural Missouri and the South.<sup>39</sup> The first wave came in 1878-1879 as part of the "Exodus Movement," a spontaneous migration of blacks northward and westward from the South and rural areas of Missouri. The availability of 160 acres of free land west of the Missouri border through the Homestead Act promised economic opportunity and escape from the repressive constraints of the black codes of the South.<sup>40</sup>

Kansas City was a significant point on one of the major exodus routes. Ex-slaves migrated to the area to cross the Missouri River into Quindaro, Kansas where there was already a thriving and stable community of African Americans. Nevertheless, many found themselves stranded on the Missouri side. Several hundred Exodusters erected tent villages in Stragglers Camp in an area along the Missouri River landing in a shanty town called Juniper at the mouth of the Kaw River (Kansas River). Some were near starvation when ministers in the local black community intervened and, with concerned whites, organized relief efforts that included food, transportation, clothing and medical care.

Many remained in Kansas City and were joined by others escaping the continuing poverty and oppression in the South. To these people, Kansas City became a destination point creating a rapid surge in the local African American population, as opposed to the much more gradual growth experienced in the state's other urban area, St. Louis.<sup>41</sup> By 1878, 7,432 former slaves lived in colonies in Kansas.<sup>42</sup>

The Exodusters were typically young families from rural areas, of which the overwhelming majority were headed by two parents. For the most part, they held few marketable job skills. Color made it impossible to assimilate into Kansas City's mainstream social, political and economic life and African Americans had a great deal more trouble than other ethnic groups in achieving success. The men usually found employment as common laborers and the women worked as seamstresses or laundresses. Nevertheless, a small number of well-educated leaders managed to effectively organize their community. As a result, the black community enjoyed a vigorous social life. Efforts to gain economic independence began early with the

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<sup>39</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 47. Brown and Dorsett site school records documenting the origins of African Americans in Kansas City at this time.

<sup>40</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>42</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 62.

attempt to establish a cooperative store for black buyers. A newspaper, the *Freedman's Record*, appeared as early as 1876.<sup>43</sup>

During this same period, African Americans first established neighborhoods in the West Bottoms where the Kaw and Missouri rivers converged; at Stragglers Camp on the north side near the river landing; on the Exposition grounds south of Fifteenth Street between Charlotte and Virginia avenues; and in an enclave near Westport on land granted them by former owners.<sup>44</sup>

During this period in the city's history, the color line was not always distinct. As late as 1900 some hotels, restaurants and theaters admitted black patrons; almost all saloons accepted their business. Although blacks found housing throughout the city before residential segregation became formalized at the turn-of-the-century, there were recognizable African American settlement areas that began to appear in the 1880s and 1890s as the black population grew from 8100 to 17,500. Black newcomers of limited means could afford only the deteriorating houses and tenements abandoned by whites and crowded into rundown areas in the northeast known as Belvedere and Hicks Hollow. Congestion grew worse in these areas when blacks in the West Bottoms relocated in the north end. In some cases, small middle class neighborhoods appeared, revealing the economic and social differentiation that was taking place within that minority community. The doctors, dentists, teachers, and real estate owners formed an emerging African American middle class in the area just east of Troost Avenue and south of 13th Street, which was known as the "Negro Quality Hill" because of the neighborhood's fashionable apartments.<sup>45</sup>

Economic diversity within the black community and the strong institutional support of the churches prompted political action by African Americans that addressed such issues as relationships with the police and overcrowded educational facilities. In 1882, an Independent Negro Party formed and united with a local, white labor party that placed an African American on its credentials committee and nominated another for justice of the peace.<sup>46</sup>

## KANSAS CITY'S TWENTIETH CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By the turn of the century, Kansas City's blacks lived in a community increasingly separated from the dominant white one. The need for economic self-reliance had

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<sup>43</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.; and Schirmer and McKinzie, 62-63.

<sup>45</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 63; and Brown and Dorsett, 96.

<sup>46</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 47-48.

created a middle class. A local editor commented about this period, "Never before in the history of the Afro-American population of Kansas City, have there been so many energetic Negro business men engaged in mercantile pursuits as now – or so many colored college-bred ministers, lawyers, professors, doctors, etc. . ." The one-half million dollar aggregate wealth of the members a new Pythian Lodge, formed in 1900, reflected these gains.<sup>47</sup>

Segregation and discrimination became more prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century than they had been thirty years earlier. At this time, a large migration of the prosperous white members of the community began to neighborhoods in the city's northeast area and into suburbs farther south and north of the Missouri River. Formal segregation in housing occurred in new neighborhoods to the south and west due to restrictive practices by developers and neighborhood associations. Consequently, the African American community, which numbered around 24,000 by 1910, remained largely on the eastern part of the city and Troost Avenue became the western line of racial demarcation that continues in the city today. African Americans, remained in Hell's Half Acre in the West Bottoms; in Hicks Hollow and Belvedere in the North End; in what became known as "The Bowery" in the area west from Admiral Boulevard to 27th Street between Troost Avenue on the east and The Paseo Boulevard on the west; in enclaves south of Westport Road; and near 53rd Street and Agnes Avenue. Two new neighborhoods, characterized by a growing entrepreneurial spirit among African Americans, emerged during this period: 18th Street along The Paseo, Highland, Vine and Woodland and the area around 12th Street along Woodland and Vine.

The more restrictive real estate practices reflected more formalized efforts of segregation beginning at this time. The change was most visible in the area of public accommodations. Where once the city's theaters provided segregated areas with the same amenities, after 1903, the black section was in the balcony area. Black organizations found it increasingly difficult to rent halls for gatherings. Changes in employment were subtler as African Americans found themselves slowly excluded from occupations, which many of them had formerly held. White barbers displaced black barbers. Downtown hotels employed fewer and fewer black waiters and bellhops, and the number of African American nurses for white children declined.<sup>48</sup>

Kansas City's population grew from 163,752 to over 400,000 between 1900 and 1945. Due to the continued migration of families of ex-slaves moving from the South and

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

rural parts of Missouri, the African American population grew proportionately, comprising 10 percent of the city's population. Between the years of 1910 to 1920 around 34,000 blacks left their farmsteads seeking work in urban areas. Although there was a growing middle class, only a small percentage of African Americans gained entrée into the business and professional world. In 1912, over 5,000 of the 8,100 blacks employed in Kansas City worked as common laborers, especially in the building industry where few enjoyed the prospect of year-round work. Others had steady employment as waiters, janitors, housekeepers, porters, and laundresses. Many worked in the meat-packing industry. A few had jobs in the police and fire departments. Among the city's professions, the only area where blacks were proportionately represented was the teaching profession. Almost double the number of black mothers worked than their native and foreign-born white counterparts. Social workers at this time estimated that a family needed at least \$600 a year to maintain a minimum standard of living. Seventy-five percent of the city's African American families earned less than this; one-third of this number made less than \$300.<sup>49</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a wide range of church-supported benevolent agencies evolved from individual church efforts within the African American community. As a segregated society, basic social needs in health, education and welfare had to be met within the community. For example, white physicians typically did not treat African American patients and the City Hospital, built in 1873, provided only a few beds for blacks. Kansas City's blacks crossed the state line into Kansas City, Kansas to use the services provided by Douglas Hospital. In 1905 in response to the increasing need for adequate health care, the African American Episcopal Church and other black churches from both sides of the state line joined and took over the support and maintenance of the hospital.

The cooperative efforts of black churches reflected a significant diversification of African American religious groups. In addition to Baptist and Methodist (including the A.M.E. and C.M.E. branches) denominations which dominated the city's African American community, new denominations appeared and included Catholic, A.M.E. Zion, Disciples of Christ, Christian, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Spiritualist, Holiness and Pentecostal churches. The joining of these churches in an ecumenical approach to social welfare causes did much to promote the development of nondenominational organizations within the black community.

The economic boom of the "Roaring Twenties" and the social programs of the 1930s, had little effect on the living conditions of African Americans. Efforts within the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 185; and Schirmer and McKinzie, 64.

Black community, however, did improve their quality of life. The number of professionals increased and the black middle and upper classes founded organizations for every sort of interest including the arts, research, social and community service.

In an effort to achieve economic self-sufficiency, African American pastors initiated savings plans for members, organized financial clubs and joint stock companies. In addition to the work of individual churches to establish insurance companies and burial societies and to conduct mission work in their neighborhoods and surrounding communities, in the first decade of the twentieth century an organized attempt at economic solidarity within Kansas City's African American community occurred. Under the leadership of the Reverend T. H. Ewing and the Reverend James Wesley Hulse, a number of black ministers promoted economic self-sufficiency through home ownership and exclusive patronage of the growing number of businesses owned and operated by African Americans.

The Great Migration of blacks to the industrial North during the first decades of the twentieth century and the continued urbanization of Southern blacks were important factors in the expansion of black businesses. The expansion of Jim Crow laws, which enforced racial segregation, led to the establishment of black hotels, vacation resorts, and transportation businesses in the South, as well as in the large urban ghettos in the North. <sup>50</sup>

Few blacks at this time had disposable capital for investment and those who did preferred cooperative investment. In response to segregated facilities, discrimination, and the growing number of black cooperative business ventures, blacks began founding financial institutions. Financing by black fraternal organizations initially provided the capital for African American-owned insurance companies and banks. In turn, these fraternal orders accumulated capital through membership dues paid to acquire benefits for sickness and burial expenses.<sup>51</sup>

The leading black economic nationalists of the era, including the rivals W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, encouraged African American consumer support of black business. African American bankers, insurance executives, funeral directors and merchants all established groups to promote the professionalism and advancement of their business activities. Segregated African American areas of towns and cities featured personal service businesses such as black-owned barber and beauty shops, restaurants, taverns, pool halls, grocery and drug stores, dry

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<sup>50</sup> "Business and African Americans," 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

cleaners and shoe repair stores, photographers, printers, florists, funeral homes, delivery services and clothing stores. More than 200 black newspapers flourished at the turn-of-the-century. African Americans founded real estate companies and black manufacturers produced cosmetics, clothing, toys, and, among other products, mortuary supplies and caskets.<sup>52</sup> It is not surprising that in the early decades of the twentieth century that new cemetery associations owned by African Americans and/or catering exclusively to the black community appeared.

After the Great Depression, there was a moderate increase in the city's black population and, in 1920, they comprised less than 10 percent of the city's population; by 1960 they constituted 12 percent of the total population. They continued to reside in the area north of 27<sup>th</sup> Street to Independence Avenue that is bordered by Oak Street on the west and Prospect Avenue on the east. Smaller, isolated all-black enclaves such as Roundtop and Leeds-Dunbar were east of Prospect Avenue near Van Brunt Boulevard and U.S. Highway 40 and around 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Chestnut.<sup>53</sup> African Americans continued to operate in an openly segregated community. A modicum of relief occurred in 1939, when the courts ordered special days set aside for blacks at amusement parks and golf courses.

During the Depression and War years, jobs were scarce and a housing shortage reached crisis proportions. Thousands of African Americans came to Kansas City from farms and small communities in the South in search of work in the booming war industries and as service men. Many remained after the war ended.<sup>54</sup>

Kansas City's black community continued to deal with most of its problems through either self-help programs or adroit political maneuvering. Self-help took the form of thrift societies, attempts to wrest better education and vocational training for the segregated school system and organizations that assisted black businesses. Politics offered intermittent opportunities to trade votes for patronage jobs and much-needed community services.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these difficulties, the black consumer dollar still provided the foundation in the 1930s and 1940s for the second wave in the rise of black economic enterprises. As early as the beginning of World War II, almost all the businesses in the African American Community were owned by blacks – the last generation of black

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>53</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 254-255.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>55</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 217.

entrepreneurs to produce goods and services limited strictly to the black consumer market.<sup>56</sup>

City ordinances and traditional practices continued to segregate or deny service to blacks in all forms of public accommodations. At the same time, white residents took pains to confine blacks to their original neighborhoods, which were progressively becoming intolerably overcrowded. By 1940, 94 percent of the city's 41,574 blacks lived in the area between 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> streets and Charlotte and Benton Boulevard. One result of the congestion and poor living conditions was illness and death rates that were markedly higher than that of whites.<sup>57</sup>

Kansas City's African American community first experimented with direct confrontation and independent action during World War II when local war industries advertised jobs at attractive wages and denied employment to blacks. A mass protest by 13,000 African Americans at Municipal Auditorium in March 1942 coupled with similar demonstrations in other cities prompted new federal regulations that aided in opening limited war industries jobs to black workers.<sup>58</sup>

After the war ended, the improvement of the daily life of African Americans in Kansas City continued to be slow. In the 1950s efforts led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People lead to court decisions to end segregation in public parks and swimming pools. In 1958, the city's African American women's clubs banded together as the Community Committee for Social Action to successfully force desegregation of eating facilities in five downtown department stores. Other local events and efforts, together with successes at the national level in winning desegregation of schools and public facilities followed.<sup>59</sup>

By the end of the decade, little real progress had been made. The median family income of African American families was \$4,063, which was \$2,074 less than that of white families in the metropolitan area. While 25 percent of the area's total population had attended college, not even 11 percent of blacks had the opportunity and only two in ten graduated from high school.<sup>60</sup>

Segregation of public facilities continued into the 1960s, a time when African Americans constituted 17 percent of the city's population. Blacks were excluded from movie theaters, parks, playgrounds, restaurants, hotels, golf courses, and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 217-218.

<sup>60</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 256.

public events. Blacks sat in segregated areas of city buildings, including the higher balconies of Municipal Auditorium and the Music Hall. All public transport, including streetcars and buses, segregated the races. Only the City's Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches had integrated services before the 1950s. In 1960, the Jackson County Circuit Court declared segregation in public facilities such as hotels, restaurants, and motels unconstitutional. After appeals of the decision, the city passed an ordinance in 1963 to end segregation in all businesses and public facilities.<sup>61</sup>

In 1962, black leaders established Freedom Incorporated, the city's first truly independent African American political agency. Freedom quickly developed a reputation for marshaling black voters, which was key to the passage of a referendum to desegregate public accommodations.<sup>62</sup>

As early as 1963, two blacks, Earl D. Thomas and Bruce R. Watkins became the first African Americans elected to the city council and Dr. Girard T. Bryant, a leader in the black community, served on the Board of Police Commissioners during the decade of nations-wide racial strife.<sup>63</sup>

As soon as the public accommodations ordinance was in place in 1964, Freedom Inc. began campaigning to ban discrimination in the sale or rental of homes.<sup>64</sup> However, it was not until after the riots associated with the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 5, 1968, that the city council found a way to enact a modified fair housing ordinance.<sup>65</sup>

For the next two decades, Freedom Inc. continued to field successful candidates for state and local office. At the same time, demands by proponents of Black Power led the federal government to support black capitalism. Through the Small Business Administration and the Department of Commerce, the federal government for the first time assisted black American businesses.<sup>66</sup>

Freedom Inc. also gained increased control over the city and county governments. This had a positive impact on black business, especially for construction companies and suppliers who were able to gain contacts under both federal and municipal set-aside programs.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 218.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 266.

<sup>64</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 218.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 218-219; and Brown and Dorsett, 266-67.

<sup>66</sup> "Business and African Americans," 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## BLUE RIDGE BOULEVARD AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES

The founding of Highland Cemetery in 1909 as a privately owned business providing non-denominational burial plots for use by African Americans reflects the quest for self-sufficiency within a segregated society and an ecumenical approach to providing needed services. Prior to this time, blacks in the area buried their dead in rural, family or church cemeteries both near and far from Kansas City. For example, the residents of the African American White Oak community north of the Missouri River in Clay County continued to bury their dead in the village cemetery well into the 1980s. Other black families buried their loved ones in sections of public cemeteries, such as Union Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri and Woodlawn Cemetery in Independence, Missouri. These customs mirrored that of the white population. The earliest Euro-American settlers of the region followed the southern custom of burying their dead in family burial grounds. The earliest residents of the county, having no alternatives, formed the habit of reserving on their farms from a half to an acre of ground upon which to bury their dead.<sup>68</sup> In addition to this practice, during the initial settlement period, burial grounds were often located adjacent to a congregation's first church building. Gradually communities acquired public burial grounds.<sup>69</sup>

The Old Town Company platted the first public cemetery in what became Kansas City in 1837. Lots were free to all (including people of color) who wished to use the burial ground. The tract was a rough, forested tract of hilly terrain with a great ravine in its southeastern portion. Nearly all the graves were on a high ridge, running north and south, parallel with what is today Oak Street. As the town grew, the graveyard rapidly filled and the cholera epidemic in the late 1840s added hundreds of new graves. Although there were several marble monuments and many tombstones, the graves were not in rows and the fencing surrounding the graves was not systematically placed, creating a disjointed, erratic appearance.<sup>70</sup>

In 1857, the city council passed an ordinance closing the cemetery. As the years passed, deterioration and decay took its toll. Family members moved some of the remains to other cemeteries. In the 1870s, the city moved the remainder of the bodies to Union Cemetery and in 1878 leveled the entire area to create a park.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Jackson Co. Missouri* (Philadelphia: Brink, McDonough & Co., 1877).

<sup>69</sup> Schirmer and McKinzie, 126-127; and *The History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Kansas City, MO: Union Historical Company, 1881; Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfire Press, 1966,) 168-169.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

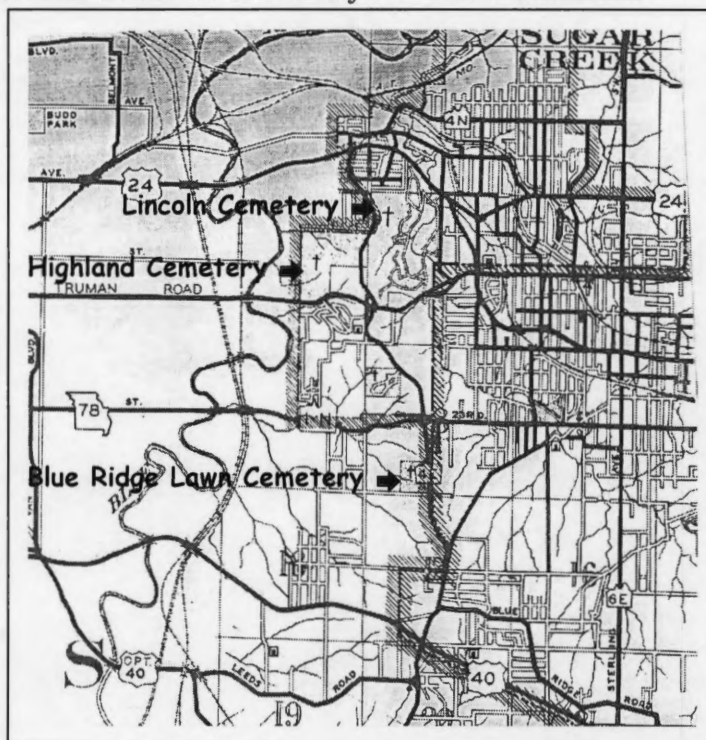
<sup>71</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 122.

Cemetery records indicate that Union Cemetery had a separate section for interment of African Americans.<sup>72</sup>

For the next eight decades, the prevailing prejudices and practices of the living world continued to be reflected in racial segregation in burial practices through the first half of the twentieth century. Even as court decisions in the 1960s forced change, developers and owners, through de facto practices, continued to discourage integration in their cemeteries long after the passage of Civil Rights Laws.<sup>73</sup> Ironically, the end of segregated facilities in the 1970s also ended financial support by middle class blacks of segregated cemeteries. It is interesting to note that while they continued to pay into a form of burial plan at their church, members of the family of baseball great Satchel Paige purchased an entire section in the previously white cemetery of Forest Hills in Kansas City, Missouri. Paige was buried there in 1982, while many of his fellow compatriots who did not rise to national fame were buried in the African American cemeteries lining Blue Ridge Boulevard.

### Highland Cemetery

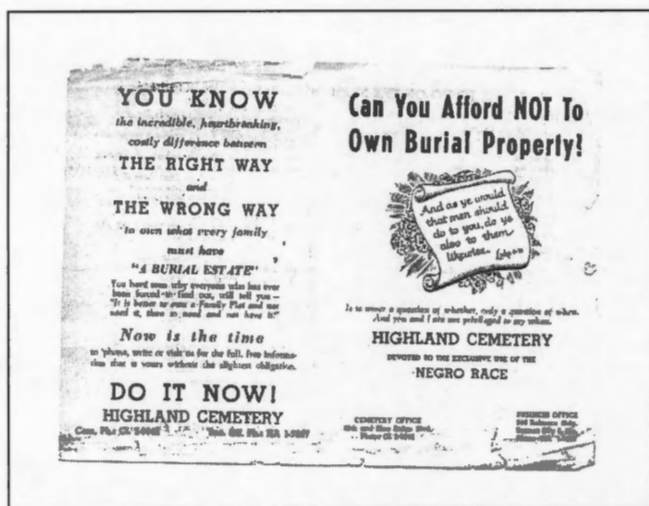
Highland Cemetery is the oldest of three cemeteries that served as the only privately owned local burial grounds available to the city's African Americans between 1909 and the passage of public accommodation laws in 1964. John A. Eames and his wife Frances G. Eames sold a tract of land, legally described as the west one-half of the Northwest one-quarter of Section 8 Township 49, Range 32, located in an unincorporated area of Jackson County called Blue Summit to the Highland Cemetery Company for \$15,000 on February 17, 1909. John Eames, served as president and P. J. Loers,



<sup>72</sup> "Resolution Dec. 30, 1872, 'Minutes of the City Council.' City Engineer to make arrangements for disinterring and reburial of remains, " and "Resolution May 12, 1872, 'Report of City Engineer Marvin on same. Contracts with Undertaker Welden to remove remains to Union Cemetery referred to' "

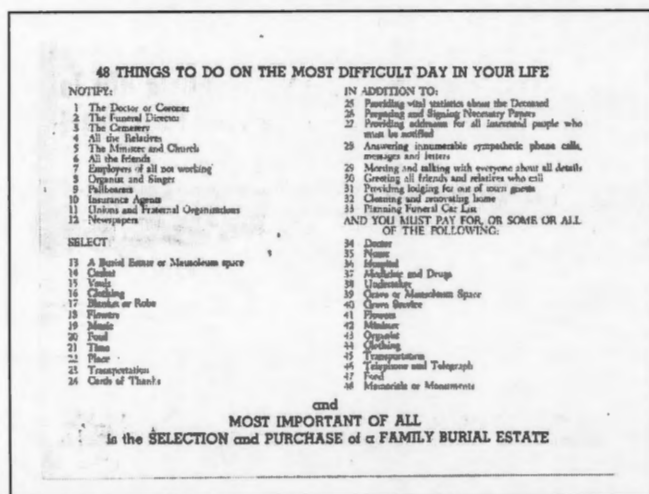
<sup>73</sup> Mitford, 128.

served as secretary to the board of directors who administered the company.<sup>74</sup>



Envisioning 25,000 burial plots, on June 4, 1909, the directors platted the land into twelve blocks and further subdivided it into lots to be made available for sale and burial. On June 15 of that year, Sallie Powell was the first person buried in the cemetery.<sup>75</sup>

Advertised as “devoted to the exclusive use of the Negro Race,”<sup>76</sup> its development and location outside the city limits and near public transportation routes reflects not only customary placement of cemeteries at this time but patterns common to segregation at that time.



Through the years, it became the burial place for some of the city’s African American elite as well as the final resting-place for the thousands of ordinary African American citizens of Kansas City. From its beginnings in 1909 through 1950, the African American community buried over

11,000 of its people at Highland Cemetery.<sup>77</sup> This period of time encompassed the site’s greatest number of interments. The thousands of graves provide visual insight into the rich, diversified life of the area’s African American community by the early

<sup>74</sup> Collins F. Anderson, D.D.S., “History of Highland Cemetery,” *Highland Cemetery 1909 Vol. I. 1909-1950* (Kansas City: Midwest Afro-American Genealogical Interest Coalition (M.A.G.I.C., 1999), 1-2; Warranty Deed #65883, February 24, 1909, Warranty Deed Book, Book 282, page 527. Recorder of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City, Missouri; Grantee Book #19 January 1, 1907-January 1, 1911, Grantee J. A. Eames, Grantor E. E. Thomason February 13, 1909, Book 282, page 483, Recorder of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse Annex, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, 1-2. “Road and Block Plan for Highland Cemetery.” Plat # 67710, September 24, 1985 Cemetery Plat Book #6, Book 6, page 1, Recorder of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse Annex, Independence, Missouri.

<sup>76</sup> “Can You Afford NOT To Own Burial Property?” (n.d.) Photocopy of promotional brochure, Private Collection.

<sup>77</sup> *Highland Cemetery 1909 Vol. I. 1909-1950.*

twentieth century. Among the notables buried here are: Richard Thomas Coles, the 'father' of vocational education in Kansas City; entrepreneurs, Alexander Johnson, J. Edward Perry, Walter Williams and Stephen Hightower; social worker Mini L. Crosthwaite; publishers Nelson C. Crews of the *Kansas City Sun* and Chester Arthur Franklin of the *Kansas City Call*; early civil rights activists such as the Reverend Daniel Arthur "Fighting Parson" Holmes, John Wesley Hurse and Ann Louise Bryant, the first black women admitted to the Kansas City University School of Education; jazz singer Julia Lee; and physicians Dr. J. Edward Perry and Dr. L. P. Richardson. In addition, there are the graves of the ordinary citizen -- porter, beautician, teacher, cook, clerk, delivery man, domestic servant, laborer -- many of whom had great difficulty trying to raise enough money to bury relatives and friends.<sup>78</sup>

### **Blue Ridge Lawn Memorial Garden Cemetery**

Established in 1925 and advertised as a "Park Plan," the 23.2-acre Blue Ridge Lawn cemetery reflects the shift in the early twentieth century in cemetery design to the memorial lawn plan. Around 4,700 burials occurred between the year of its founding and 1950.<sup>79</sup> Of the three African American cemeteries found on Blue Ridge Boulevard, it is the only one protected by an endowed trust fund. Developed by United Cemeteries Company, the designers are the New York architectural firm of George B. Post and Sons and landscape architect Charles D. Woodward of the engineering firm Tuttle-Ayres-Woodward. Officers of the company are the president, Dr. J. E. Stevens, a Kansas City native "well known in Republican political circles;" general manager, James A. Hodges, former manager of the Hollywood Mausoleum and Cemetery of Los Angeles; secretary, H. D. Payne, a Kansas City lawyer; vice-president and treasure, F. A. Mayes of the Chase Manhattan Bank and a Harvard graduate who was once secretary to the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and general sales manager, Charles O. Gossard, formerly with Mt. Moriah and Memorial Park Cemeteries. L. A. Knox, C. H. Calloway and the firm of Hudson and Payne served as attorneys for the United Cemeteries Company.<sup>80</sup>

An article in the April 10, 1925 edition of the *Kansas City Call* states that some of the city's leading fraternal men and ministers endorsed the plan. Among the

<sup>78</sup> Robin Mackey, "Nature Reclaiming Black Community's Historic Cemetery, *Kansas City Star*, 3 October 1984, Section 8, 1. Bruce Watkins Wall of Honor, Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Center; Kansas City Star Clipping Scrapbook, Vertical File, Special Collections, Kansas City, Missouri Public Library; Volunteer Questionnaire; and *Highland Cemetery 1909 Volume 1. 1909-1950*.

<sup>79</sup> Ida Rose Harvey Dockery and Aubrey McKinnie Hunter, ed. *Blue Ridge Lawn Memorial Garden Cemetery 1925-1950* (Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Afro-American Genealogical interest Coalition (M.A.G.I.C., 2001).

<sup>80</sup> "Announcement Blue Ridge Lawn," B5

African Americans listed are Eugene Lacey, Grand Master of the Masons; Reverend J. W. Hurse of St. Stephens Baptist Church; and Charles Harris, business agent of the Building Laborers Union. The article states that Blue Ridge Lawn "... will rank among the finest cemeteries in the west and easily the best in the United States devoted exclusively to colored people."<sup>81</sup>

An advertisement in the same edition states that the two-fold mission of the men who planned the cemetery was the belief that "... your people have made for themselves a place in life which should command for them in death a resting place which could suffer by comparison with no burial ground in the land. . ." and that,

*... your pride and sense of justice, demands that you should no longer be denied the privilege of a burial compatible with the dignity of your people.*

*You comprise nearly a fifth of this city's population. You are active and prominent in every field of endeavor, You have given to the world, men and women, who deserve their places amid the galleries of the greatest. Alive, you are respected and honored as a valuable member of the community. Dead you have been consigned to whatever poor resting place could be found for you. The gates of many cemeteries have been opened in Kansas City, each one vieing with its predecessor in the pretentiousness of its development, but not one of those gates has ever opened to you. Not one of all the great cemeteries of this city has ever allotted to you a portion of its ground as a place where you might bury your dead with the reverence which is their due.*

*Now for the first time you are offered a cemetery exclusively your own, one whose stately grandeur and tranquil beauty will endure forever as a tribute to the deathless spirit of your people; one in which you will be proud to lay your loved ones in their eternal sleep, and one in which the burial of your honored dead may be performed with all the dignity and respect to which, as member s of a great people they are entitled.* <sup>82</sup>

### **Lincoln Cemetery**

The 160-acre Lincoln Cemetery established in 1934 is the largest of the African American cemeteries on Blue Ridge Boulevard. Privately owned and administered by an African American board of directors, Lincoln Cemetery Incorporated is in an unincorporated area of Blue Summit on Blue Ridge Boulevard just south of Truman Road (15<sup>th</sup> Street) and west of the all-white c.1900 Mount Washington Cemetery. Its size and simplicity as well as almost total adherence to the memorial park design lends it special significance. Over 2,800 graves date from 1934 to 1950. Like the other black cemeteries on Blue Ridge Boulevard it includes notables such as jazz

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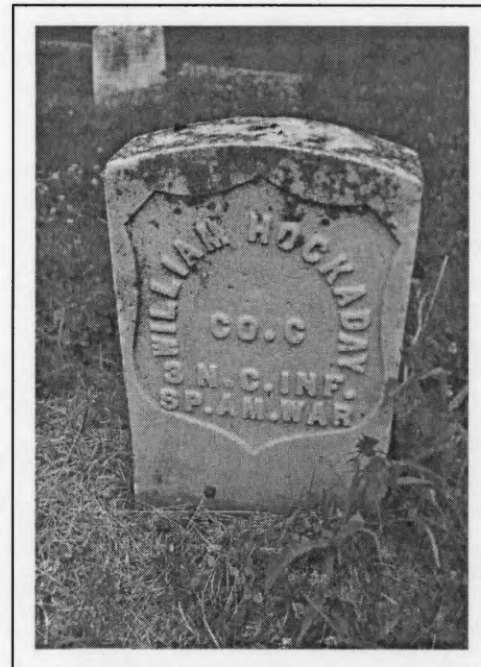
<sup>81</sup> "New Cemetery Open in City," *The Kansas City Call*. (April 10, 1925): 5.



musician Charlie "Bird" Parker; war veterans, including members of the famed Buffalo Soldier army units; community leaders such as Charles W. Williams, pioneer photographer, Mrs. P.S. Street, hotel owner, and architect, W. T. Thomas.<sup>83</sup> It also is the final resting place of the common people who made up the city's

African American population, those whose occupations as city laborers, porters, barbers, waiters, railway service workers, teamsters, laundresses, cooks and housekeepers reflected means of livelihood for the largest proportion of blacks. Also laid to rest in special sections, as in the other cemeteries, are the unknown and forgotten.

These burial grounds are the only formally organized cemeteries in Jackson County specifically reserved for African Americans and were the only cemeteries available to Kansas City's black community in the twentieth century during the era of segregation. The approximately 40,000 graves represent the majority of the City's black population from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century. They contain the elite and talented of Kansas City's black community -- jazz musicians, Negro League baseball players; Buffalo Soldiers and veterans of the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean and Vietnam wars; educators, entrepreneurs, religious and civil rights leaders, physicians, dentists, social workers, journalists and publishers. The



<sup>83</sup> William H. Young and Nathan B. Young, Jr. *Your Kansas City and Mine*, 1950, (Kansas City, MO, Midwest Afro-American Genealogy Inters Coalition, 1997); Volunteer Questionnaire; and "Account Book, Volumes I and II," Lincoln Cemetery Inc. Herman Johnson Trustee, 912 Baltimore, Kansas City, Missouri.

thousands of graves also provide visual insight into the rich, diversified life of the area's African American community during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The cemeteries are part of a handful of remaining African American landmarks in the county. Their location, just outside the city limits in an unincorporated area, and exclusivity of race imparts important knowledge of the nature of racial discrimination in public accommodations that occurred until passage of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## RESULTS OF SURVEY

“A cemetery is a collection of graves that is marked by stones or other artifacts or that is unmarked but recognizable by features such as fencing, or depressions, or through maps or by means of testing.”<sup>84</sup> Cemeteries are sites developed specifically to commemorate the dead and to reflect upon the past. Here, man honors the deceased – whether family member, friend or historic figure. Such sites also yield vast amounts of information regarding our cultural, historic, artistic and architectural heritage. Until recently, burial sites were not recognized as important historic sites within the cultural landscape. Historians and the lay public, alike, often viewed cemeteries as a collection of markers whose significance lay in recording genealogical data and denoting the final resting-place of prominent individuals. Increased public interest and concern for threatened burial sites resulted in the development of a new area of historic preservation. To understand their significance and to develop preservation strategies and methodologies for these cultural resources, it is important to evaluate and understand these resources in the context of their cultural associations and physical setting. Both of these factors play an important role in the future preservation of these sites.

## PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

The three cemeteries are located on sloping ground with frontage on the west side of Blue Ridge Boulevard which follows a ridge of limestone bluffs that run parallel to the Little Blue River. Located roughly between 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> streets, the addresses for the cemeteries are: Blue Ridge Lawn Memorial Gardens, 2640 S. Blue Ridge Boulevard; Lincoln Cemetery, 8604 E. Truman Road; and Highland Cemetery, 2100 Blue Ridge Boulevard. Blue Ridge Boulevard runs north and south and is in an unincorporated area east of the Little Blue River between the Kansas City, Missouri City and Independence, Missouri City limits. Because of its location on a ridge, Blue Ridge Boulevard was a trail and, beginning in the early 1800s, a road. During the time the cemeteries were established, the road was paved and was accessible from major collector streets including Independence Avenue (U.S. 24 Highway), Truman Road (15<sup>th</sup> Street) and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The use of these major thoroughfares for public transit, beginning with steam and then electric rail lines and later bus routes, made

the location advantageous as a cemetery location. Directly east of Lincoln Cemetery is, Mount Washington Cemetery established in 1900, which was not integrated until passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s.

### ASSOCIATED FEATURES

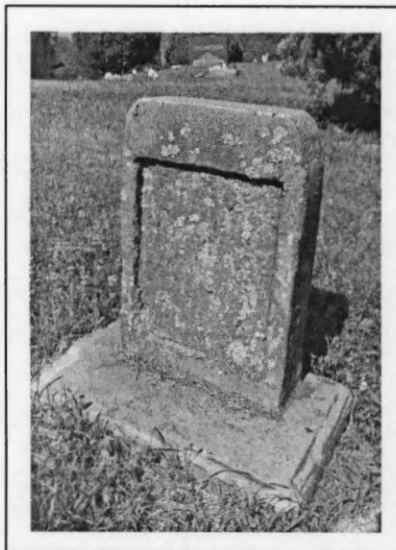
The survey identified character-defining features typical of twentieth century cemeteries. The following chart is a listing of common elements of cemeteries and those identified in the survey.

**Figure 1: FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH BURIAL PLACES**

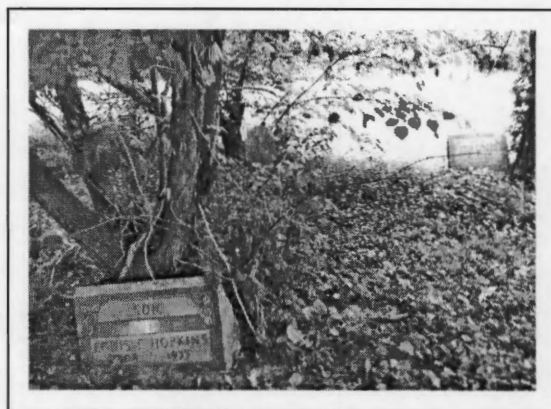
FEATURE	HIGHLAND CEMETERY	BLUE RIDGE LAWN	LINCOLN CEMETERY
Amphitheater			
Bench			
Burial Cache			
Burial Mound/Mound Complex			
Burial Site	X	X	X
Cairn			
Cemetery/Memorial Park	X	X	X
Chapel			
Columbarium			
Cremation area/crematorium			
Entrance Gate	X	X	X
Crypt			
Fountain			
Grave/grave marker/grave yard	X	X	X
Grave shelter			
Greenhouse			
Lych Gate or Gatehouse			
Mausoleum			
Monument/Sculpture	X	X	X
Mortuary			
Office Building/Service Building			
Ossuary			
Plot Enclosures	X	X	
Parameter Wall/Fence	X	X	X
Road/Lane/Paths	X	X	X
Pumphouse			
Receiving Tomb			
Rostrum			
Sexton's Superintendent's Residence			
Shelter House			
Tomb/Tombstone			
Vault	X	X	X
Landscaped Vegetation	X	X	X

## HISTORICAL INTEGRITY

Because of the scarcity of artwork, ornamentation and monuments found in these African American cemeteries that reflects a high degree of aesthetic value and, due to the presence of minimal formal landscape design other than the roadways and informal plantings, HPS evaluated each of the cemeteries as historic sites rather than individual districts made up of individual graves, headstones and plot-defining features.<sup>85</sup> The components that delineate the integrity of the three cemeteries are their overall appearance and direct associations with the social history of a particular African American community. As noted in *Bulletin 41*, it is important that the cemetery resource be placed in as broad a context as possible including the relevant social, political, economic and environmental circumstances of the historic period in which the cemeteries were developed and continued to function.<sup>86</sup> This approach and the high degree of integrity and the long period of significance precluded the need to identify potential districts within each cemetery. And finally, because there is no substantial loss of overall integrity, it was not necessary to determine if some individual features such as buildings, structures or objects retained sufficient integrity and significance to be considered as individual properties eligible for listing in the National Register.<sup>87</sup>



All three cemeteries retain enough of their characteristic features to represent the associations, functions and appearance they had during their period of significance. They retain both the natural and developed landscape features that are associated with these burial places. They retain integrity of location and setting. For the most part viewsheds are intact. The most significant loss of integrity is due to electrical power and telecommunications towers erected in the area, particularly the one adjacent to Lincoln Cemetery. Each cemetery retains a significant degree of their original design and plantings, and to a lesser extent, materials, to communicate feelings of a particular period of time and associations with important historic patterns and persons. In particular, field inspection and historic documents revealed that grave



<sup>85</sup> Potter and Boland, 8.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

sites, grave markers, plot enclosures, road systems, entrance gates retain sufficient integrity to communicate their age, function and original design and workmanship.

Typical needs are headstone repair, correction of poorly repaired headstones, illegal dumping, and maintenance of the grounds and the network of gravel and paved roads. The planted vegetation relating to their construction date and historic period of significance are apparent. For the most part, original boundaries are discernable. In low areas with steep ascents, underbrush and forest growth reclaimed some areas and there are instances of ground disturbances.

The majority of burials date to the period of significance, which is the date of construction through 1964. Because there are no other cemeteries from this time period designed for and exclusively used by African Americans in the metropolitan area, it was not feasible to compare them with similar resources.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Under the National Park Service guidelines for evaluating and listing cemeteries and burial grounds in the National Register of Historic Places, distinctive mortuary features and burial places may be eligible 1) individually; 2) as a component in a district with a larger historic context; or 3) as a historic site or a district in its own right. Individual listings include freestanding buildings and individual sites. Burial grounds may be eligible as significant elements in a larger context, such as a plot on a farmstead or churchyard; or as a component of a multi-resource district such as a village, military reservation or cultural landscape.<sup>88</sup>

Cemeteries may be evaluated either on an individual basis as either a historic site or as a district made up of individual graves, their markers and plot-defining characteristics. A cemetery that is a site may or may not possess aboveground features that convey their significant historic associations, but must retain historic integrity. On the other hand, a cemetery district like other historic districts, is more than an area composed of a collection of separate elements, it is a cohesive landscape whose overall character is defined by the relationship of the features within it. For example, more elaborate cemeteries may have, in addition to the basic cemetery features, ornamental plantings, boundary fences, road systems, gateways and substantial architectural features such as mausoleums, chapels, and residences of sexton or superintendent.<sup>89</sup> The complexity, importance and number of character

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<sup>88</sup> Potter and Boland, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

defining elements therefore characterize the cemetery as a district composed of numerous parts that contribute to a cohesive landscape.

The African American cemeteries surveyed have restrained landscape designs that reflect common cemetery plans popular at the period of their construction. With a very few exceptions, the graves are simple burial plots with simple markers; many have no makers. As noted previously, because of the thousands of burials in each cemetery, their simplicity and common landscape designs, HPS evaluated each of the cemeteries as historic sites rather than as potential individual districts made up of individual graves, headstones and plot-defining features.<sup>90</sup>

### Criteria Considerations

Certain types of properties, including cemeteries and graves do not qualify for the National Register unless they meet special conditions. They must be integral parts of larger properties that do meet the criteria, or they meet conditions known as Criteria Considerations.<sup>91</sup> Burial grounds serve as an important means by which individuals recognize their family history. They also serve as expressions of collective religious and/or ethnic identity. Because cemeteries may embody values beyond personal or family-specific emotions, the National Register criteria allow for listing of cemeteries under certain conditions<sup>92</sup>

The fact that, as a group, the cemeteries have approximately 40,000 burials and served as the only twentieth century burial grounds available to and established exclusively for the general population of African Americans in Kansas City makes each cemetery a significant contributing component of a larger group. As such, they meet National Register Criteria Considerations in that they derive their primary significance from (1) "the presence of graves of persons of transcendent importance," from (2) "age" in their association with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period of segregation, and (3) "... from association with historic events" related to the nineteenth and twentieth century development of African American communities in the area. Specifically, the cemeteries provide insight into (1) a period of time (1910-1920, 1940s) when the area experienced an influx of rural African Americans and (2) a period of time when public facilities were segregated (1909-1964).

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 8 and Anne Derry, H. Ward Jandl, Carol D. Shull and Jan Thorman, *National Register Bulletin 24 Guidelines for Local Surveys A Basis for Preservation Planning* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Interagency Resources Division, 1985) 9.

<sup>91</sup> Potter and Boland, 14. Except for the graves of historical figures, burial places nominated under Criterion D are exempt from the Criteria Consideration requirements.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Because they include such a significant number burials from Kansas City, Missouri, as a group they (1) physically communicate the richly diverse African American communal life in the area; (2) include the final resting places of nationally and locally important African American personages in art, education, music, sports, politics, civil rights, religion, journalism, business, medicine and commerce; and (3) also include the final resting place of the “everyman” – laborers, teamsters, porters, waiters, laundresses, housekeepers, cooks, barbers, etc. providing insight in to the composition of the African American communities in Kansas City and in the surrounding area.

### **Potential Areas of Significance**

National Register Criterion A: To be significant under this criterion, properties can be eligible for the National Register if they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. “The events or trends with which the burial place is associated must be clearly important, and the connection between the burial place and its associated contexts must be unmistakable.”<sup>93</sup> The three cemeteries, individually and as a group, are significant under Criteria A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History and meet Criteria Consideration D in their representation and associations with a number of important aspects of Kansas City’s African American community’s history, representing broader patterns of attitudes and behavior associated with the contexts developed in “Kansas City’s African American Community” during the survey.

- The cemeteries are representative examples of facilities developed for use by a specific race during a period in history where racial discrimination and segregation existed in public accommodations. Their location just outside the city limits in an unincorporated area and exclusivity of race<sup>94</sup> has important associations with the legal and defacto racial discrimination that existed in the twentieth century in public accommodations that endured until passage of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The period of significance for each cemetery begins with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends with the passage of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlawed segregated public facilities. Contributing resources will include all burial places dating from the period prior to the passage of the civil

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<sup>93</sup> Potter and Boland, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Only a small percentage of the burials in the three cemeteries were residents of other communities. Independence’s public cemetery had its own “colored” section as did a number of other eastern Jackson County communities. Some African American enclaves such as the White Oak community in Clay County, established after the Civil War on land granted by the former owners, had their own cemeteries, usually associated with a nearby church.

rights legislation in 1964. This constitutes a significant majority of the burial places in each of the cemeteries. Because each of the cemeteries enjoys a high level integrity of their original design, character defining landscape features built prior to 1964 should be considered as contributing elements to these cultural landscapes. The properties do not have to meet "Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within The Last Fifty Years," due to the fact that a minority of the potentially contributing elements are less than fifty years old while the majority of resources and the most important Period of Significance are greater than fifty years old.<sup>95</sup>

- The cemeteries are also significant as the only community burial places for Kansas City's African American population in the first sixty-four years of the twentieth century. As such from their "creation and continuity reflects a broad spectrum"<sup>96</sup> of the city's black community, in particular, and, in general, the city's history and culture. The thousands of graves in each cemetery provide visual insight into the size of and rich, diversified life of the area's African American community during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As such these sites are significant in conveying feelings about their important associations with the social, political and economic development of Kansas City, Missouri which are included in "Kansas City's African American Community," historic contexts developed in this survey.<sup>97</sup>

The period of significance for each cemetery begins with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends at the arbitrary fifty year cut-off date established by National Register guidelines. Contributing resources will include all burial places dating from their period of significance. This constitutes a majority of the burial places in each of the cemeteries. Because each of the cemeteries enjoys a high level integrity of their original design, character defining landscape features should also be considered as contributing elements to these cultural landscapes.

- Because there are so few extant historic properties associated with Kansas City's African American community, the cemeteries, individually and collectively enjoy special significance as rare reminders of a cultural group that played an important role in the development of the city.<sup>98</sup> As such, their period of significance begins with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends at the arbitrary

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<sup>95</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15, 41.*

<sup>96</sup> Potter and Boland, 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 24, and *National Register Bulletin 15, 12.*

<sup>98</sup> Potter and Boland, 3.

fifty year cut-off date established by National Register guidelines. Contributing resources will include all burial places dating from their period of significance. This constitutes a majority of the burial places in each of the cemeteries. Because each of the cemeteries enjoys a high level integrity of their original design, character defining landscape features should also be considered as contributing elements to these cultural landscapes.

National Register Criterion B: To be significant under this criterion, properties must be associated with the lives of a person or persons of "transcendent importance" and great eminence in their fields of endeavor or had a great impact upon the history of their community and/or State.<sup>99</sup> Cemeteries may be eligible under this criterion if they contain the graves of numerous persons who made outstanding contributions to the history of the State or area in which their graves are located.<sup>100</sup> These individuals must be individually significant within a historic context. Moreover, the property associated with this important individual should be the one that best represents the person's historic contributions.

For a single grave of an important person located in a larger cemetery to be nominated to the National Register, such as the Charlie "Bird" Parker gravesite at Lincoln Cemetery, it must also be considered under "Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces and Graves." The grave must be that of an individual who was of singular outstanding importance in the history of the local area, State or nation. In addition, an individual burial place is eligible only when a geographical area strongly associated with a person of outstanding importance has lost all other properties directly associated with the individual's formative years or productive life.<sup>101</sup>

Based on information revealed in survey, all of the cemeteries include individuals significant in the history of Kansas City's African American community. Because these cemeteries served as the only local community burial places, each contains the remains of numerous individuals important in local, state and national history. Moreover, because of the rarity of extant properties associated with Kansas City's African American community, it is probable that few other properties exist that have direct associations with these individuals during their period of significance. Therefore, each of the properties and as a collective group meets the minimal requirements for listing on the National Register under Criterion B and is

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<sup>99</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15*, 32-34. This does not preclude an individual grave significance for associations under Criteria A with important events or under Criterion B for association with the productive lives of other important persons, or under Criterion C. for architectural significance.

<sup>100</sup> Potter and Boland, 11.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

significant in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History. In addition, they minimally meet "Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries" and in some instances, "Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces or Graves."

The period of significance for each cemetery begins with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends at the arbitrary fifty year cut-off date established by National Register guidelines. As a historic site, resources that contribute to the site's significance will include all burial places of significant individuals interred during the cemetery's period of significance. (Because of the large numbers of individuals buried in each cemetery, the number of significant individuals contributing to a district would constitute a small percentage of the interments.) It is possible that, due to the number of individuals connected with the Civil Rights efforts that extended into the 1960s, that the period of significance could extend into that period. The contributing resources should then be evaluated under Criteria Consideration G: Properties That have Achieved Significance within the Last Fifty Years." Because each of the cemeteries enjoys a high level integrity of their original design, character defining landscape features built during the period of significance should also be considered as contributing elements to these cultural landscapes.

National Register Criteria C: To be significant under this criterion, properties must "embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction."<sup>102</sup> Under Criterion C, cemetery monuments and associated art works, buildings and landscapes must be good representatives of their stylistic type or period and methods of construction or fabrication. Alternatively, such property types may represent the work of master artists, designers and craftsmen or the highest artistic values of the period. For these types of cemeteries, appropriate areas of significance would be architecture, art or landscape architecture.<sup>103</sup>

The three cemeteries each appear to have conscious, functional design plans in their arrangement that reflects typical cemetery landscape design treatments for their time period. Moreover, as a group, they demonstrate the evolution in cemetery plan and design from the nineteenth century "Rural Cemetery Movement" to the twentieth century perpetual care lawn cemetery/memorial parks. As the burial places designated for exclusive use by African Americans, the design of the cemeteries is evidence of that group's appreciation for modern cemetery design and a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

departure from the burial practices of the nineteenth century. A letter from Booker T. Washington providing guidance to an individual associated with the establishment of Highland Cemetery reflects the adoption of common landscape planning practices by African Americans in the early twentieth century. They have strong associations with the contexts "The Evolution of American Cemetery Design," Twentieth Century American Cemetery Design and Management, and Twentieth Century African American Cemeteries" identified in this survey. As such, they meet two of the criterion requirements in their embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period and method of construction and as significant and distinguishable entities, whose components may lack individual distinction. In addition, they meet "Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries" based on distinctive design values and historic appearance addressed in Criterion C.

The period of significance for each cemetery under this criterion begins with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends at the arbitrary fifty year cut-off date established by National Register guidelines. Resources that contribute to the site's significance will include all burial places and because each of the cemeteries enjoys a high level integrity of their original design, original character defining landscape features should also be considered as contributing elements to these cultural landscapes. As such the cemeteries, individually and as a group are significant in the area of Landscape Architecture.

National Register Criterion D: Cemeteries may be eligible for listing on the National Register for their potential to yield important information about cultural and ethnic groups. While often understood to apply to archaeological research, Criterion D also encompasses important information in the study of material culture and social history.<sup>104</sup> A general guideline to follow in the initial evaluation of a resource's potential to yield important information is whether the information yielded cannot be found in other sources. In cases where written and other documentary evidence is not extant, studies of these cemeteries may reveal important information about Kansas City's African Americans. The scope of work for this survey did not include determination of this potential as it should result from a development of a research design and a set of questions that can be resolved by controlled field and archaeological investigation of the site.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, it can be expected that, due to its association with a specific racial and cultural group, the cemeteries have the potential to yield information within a specific context and thus is potentially significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage. The period of significance for each

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. and *National Register Bulletin* 15, 35.

cemetery significant under this criterion would begin with the date of their construction (Highland Cemetery, 1909, Blue Ridge Lawn, 1925; and Lincoln Cemetery, 1934) and ends at the arbitrary fifty year cut-off date established by National Register guidelines.

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Understanding cemetery sites through identification and evaluation is the first step to developing a strategy to preserve and, when appropriate, restore historic cemeteries. Designation on the National Register of Historic Places and, where available, a local register of historic places is a logical next step. Designation is an important honorific that signifies to the general public, governmental agencies, historical organizations, and property owners the importance of the property. The designation procedure itself further documents this importance, providing important information to be included in strategies and decisions for future development and management as well as preservation and restoration efforts.

### **LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

As the previous analysis of significance indicates, the three cemeteries are eligible for listing on the National Register in a variety of ways. They may be listed as individual districts or together as a non-contiguous district as part of a Multiple Property Submission. In addition, the graves of individuals of special importance may be nominated as individual properties.

#### **Multiple Property Submission**

The greatest significance of the resources is as a collective whole. As a grouping, they comprise the only collective burial ground of Kansas City's African American population. Moreover, as a grouping they demonstrate a continuum in the design of twentieth century cemeteries. As such they have significance in all of the National Register Criteria and meet all relevant Criterion Considerations. <sup>106</sup>

Because they derive their highest level of significance as a collective group of resources that share a defined period of time, and have common themes, trends and patterns of history as well as a specific geographic area, it is recommended that, from a practical and financial standpoint the properties be nominated for listing in the National Register using the Multiple Property Submission format. Property

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<sup>106</sup> Because further investigation of documentary sources relating to African American material culture and social history is required before an argument can be made that the cemeteries have the potential to yield information about African Americans that is not available from other extant sources, no management recommendations are offered that include listing under Criteria D.

types developed in this approach that are significant under Criteria A and B for historical associations will likely emphasize associative characteristics such as the property's relationship to important patterns and activities and will include dates, functions, roles, cultural affiliations and relationship to important research topics. Property types significant under Criterion C will emphasize physical characteristics such as the design and plan, size, scale, proportions, spatial arrangement, materials, workmanship and environmental and landscape elements.

In addition to the identification of property types that will assist in future planning and management of the site, the Multiple Property Submission vehicle for nomination has the advantages of efficiency and cost effectiveness, this approach to nomination will initiate a comprehensive approach to their management and preservation. It will allow future decisions by federal entities to be considered in the largest possible contexts. Moreover, the preservation of these entities will require private and, hopefully, local governmental support. A unified approach to designation will assure a unified approach to their future management and preservation.

### **Historic Districts**

The cemeteries are each eligible for listing as individual cemetery districts. Each has a high level of integrity and is significant as one of only three burial places created specifically for Kansas City's African American community. As an African American community burial ground, each cemetery has significance in Ethnic Heritage and the Social History of Kansas City under Criterion A. Each has sufficient numbers of graves of individuals that made outstanding contributions to the city's African American community to minimally meet the requirements of Criterion B. Although each cemetery is representative of the memorial garden approach to cemetery design in the early twentieth century, any significance under Criterion C would be as a representative example. Moreover, while each cemetery represents a distinct phase in the evolution of cemetery design and, as a group, the three cemeteries contribute to an understanding of this evolution, the lack of aesthetic resources and simplicity of plan of each individual cemetery appears to preclude a strong argument for significance in the area of Landscape Architecture under Criterion C. Because burials did not occur at the same time in the same areas, and the lack of ornamental, artistic or notable features in concentrate areas, nominating districts within the cemeteries is not feasible.

### **Individual Graves**

As noted in the discussion relating to significance, the nomination of individual gravesites is difficult. While a case can be made for a number of graves for their association with individuals of outstanding significance locally and nationally, and

the lack of other extant properties associated with these individual's period of significance, this approach is a piecemeal approach to protection of a larger cultural resource. As such, it does not provide the full advantages of National Register listing in protecting associated resources. The approach also presents legal and practical considerations of delineating specific plots for designation that are part of a larger whole that enjoys equal significance. It is recommended that such an approach be taken when efforts to designate the larger areas are not successful or anticipated.

## **ORGANIZING A CEMETERY PRESERVATION PROJECT**

Once a cemetery has been documented, the next step is developing management and preservation strategies. This begins with the existing administrative structure governing the site. The owners usually provide maintenance and administrative function and regulate activity within the site. It should be determined what the agency can and will be able to provide. The owners and administrators of the three cemeteries were actively involved with the survey project and anticipate listing their properties in the National Register of Historic Places. The problem facing Highland and Lincoln Cemeteries is the lack of an endowment to guarantee continued maintenance and management on a level that will protect the resources. Blue Ridge Lawn has a limited endowment that covers administrative and maintenance costs but cannot fund preservation activities.

### **Building Support**

The formation of a strong support group for each of the cemeteries or collectively for all three of the cemeteries is an important strategy. Highland Cemetery already has such a support group. During the first public hearing to announce the survey, other groups and individuals volunteered to assist in the survey. The Midwest Afro-American Genealogy Interest Coalition (M.A.G.I.C) provided invaluable support in developing a database of interments in Highland and Blue Ridge Lawn Cemetery. Their continued support in the documentation and interpretation of data will be valuable during the preparation of National Register nominations and in interpretive and educational programs in the future. These efforts can be strengthened by the formation of a non-profit umbrella group that can include property owners, volunteers, and representatives of the aforementioned groups that focuses on funding and volunteer support for the future maintenance and preservation of all three cemeteries. Once a support groups has been established, complete with bylaws, board of directors and elected officers, the members need to carefully define their goals and strategies through development of a Preservation Plan for the sites.

## **Developing a Preservation Plan**

A preservation plan is essential to preserve the historic integrity of the cemeteries. to protect them from unwarranted change and to ensure knowledgeable stewardship. Such a plan emphasizes the need for continued research, landscape preservation planning, appropriate and thoroughly documented conservation, and guidelines for routine maintenance and site management. The plan should also address funding, security, visitation, educational programs, vandalism and theft. Both short-term considerations, such as protecting markers from mower damage, and long-term, such as funding and interpretation, should be included.

## **Funding**

Obtaining funding is one of the most immediate and difficult goals of the entire process. No readily available funding sources exist specifically for burial site preservation. Creativity is required and fund-raising possibilities, therefore, must be varied and strategically planned. Care should be taken to first target funding for stabilization and security of the sites, and then toward establishing an endowment and specific programs.

Local fund-raising drives can be very effective if well organized and sustained. Joining forces with one or more local or area historical and civic organizations can be useful, especially when an organization of long standing has more fund-raising savvy and more clout with prominent members of the community than the newly organized umbrella group.

Local community foundations and trusts can provide a variety of grants for projects that are in keeping with their objectives. Large corporations, especially those with local divisions should be identified that may have community programs that can provide both short-term donations and assistance as well as funding.

Municipal and County government programs that promote heritage tourism should be investigated for funding to develop interpretive programs and for funding to maintain and open the sites to the general public on a regular basis and set time.

After development of a preservation plan for each cemetery, the umbrella organization should also explore the possibility of in-kind services for assistance in interpreting, maintaining and enhancing the cemetery. For example, a local garden center may donate supplies or plant materials or a local printer may contribute the printing of a tour brochure.

There are a number of matching grant programs through the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund available through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program for designation, planning and research.. The grants provide for a 60% government match and require a 40% local match (in kind services/donations and cash). Interested parties or property owners may apply for funding to prepare a National Register Nomination. (The support of the property owners is required.) The completion of survey is considered in allocating grants. Funding is also available for properties listed on the National Register or eligible for listing to cover preservation planning activities. A very limited amount of funds are available for actual restoration work for properties that are listed on the National Register.

Other federal, state and local government programs should be investigated and target as sources of support. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through a variety of programs may have funding or services to control or mitigate erosion. Humanities grants may be available for funding interpretive educational materials or for workshops.

## **Resources**

The National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior; the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the American Association for State and Local History provide planning and technical information relating to the preservation of historic cemeteries. In addition, many states have published information and passed legislation relating to cemeteries and burial places. The Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS), a non-profit organization, publishes an annual journal as well as a quarterly newsletter that serves as an information network for cemetery preservationists. AGS maintains an archive and a limited mail order lending library service for members.

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