

# **SAPPINGTON AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY STATE HISTORIC SITE**

## ***CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN***

**May 2025**

**Location: Saline County**

**Established: 2021**

**Size: 2.28 acres**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Sappington African American Cemetery State Historic Site is to preserve the gravesites of the approximately 350 burials of Arrow Rock's African American population and to interpret their roles in Missouri history.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1880, Black Americans comprised 51% of Arrow Rock's total population. Black people built much of the infrastructure of Arrow Rock and improved the surrounding farmland. Their increasing presence kept Arrow Rock from sliding into complete economic oblivion following the Civil War. Thomas Rainey, an early historian of Arrow Rock, made this comment in 1914: "The forefathers of many of them helped to fence and clear the fields, open the roadways, and make Saline a pleasant place to live in. Although they now lie in nameless graves, we owe respect to their memory. They were also pioneers." However, segregation persisted. Black individuals were forced to develop and maintain their own social, religious and educational institutions. Most communities in Missouri had designated cemeteries for Black burials, continuing the institution of segregation even after death.

In oral tradition passed down through his family, Emmanuel Banks, one of 24 enslaved workers held by Dr. John Sappington, shared that Sappington set aside 1 acre as a burial ground for his enslaved people before his death in 1856. The cemetery contains about 350 burials, many of whom are now unknown. Before the emancipation in 1865, there were probably no headstones, just simple wooden markers, if any at all.

In 1906, another half-acre was added to the cemetery as generations of Black Americans with links to the Arrow Rock community continued to use this cemetery. The last burial was of jazz and blues musician James C. Van Buren and took place in 2012. Other notable people buried at the site include Zack Bush, who helped stop the spread of an 1872 fire in Arrow Rock's business district; John Thomas Trigg, the first Black teacher in Arrow Rock to be born a free man; and members of the extended family of Emmanuel Banks.

In 1999, descendant Teresa Habernal formally approached the state about the possibility of acquiring the cemetery. No official record of ownership in the county records reflect actual ownership of the cemetery. In 2008 the Sappington Negro Cemetery Association was officially

formed, which became the means for the state to officially accept responsibility for the cemetery. Day and Whiney Kerr, who owned the tracks surrounding the cemetery, agreed to give a quitclaim deed for the property. The African American cemetery became part of Sappington Cemetery State Historic Site in 2014 and was recognized as a separate historic site in 2021.

Only about 75 grave markers remain today, but the eclectic variety of stones reflects the Black community's economic and social status throughout its history as well as burial traditions. Some markers are simple concrete slabs with a name and date scratched in them. Others are simple flat markers on the ground. Only a very few are more ornate. The simplicity of this cemetery stands in stark contrast to the more ornate cemetery of the Sappington family. The open hilltop locale of the African American cemetery contributes to its overall aesthetic appeal.

## **SITE GOALS**

- Preserve the natural and cultural resources located within the Historic Site's boundaries;
- Provide adequate orientation and interpretive facilities to enhance visitor experience;

## **INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

- African American History in Missouri.
- Saline County History
- Connection to the Sappington Cemetery and Arrow Rock

## **SITE STRUCTURES**

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Sqft</u>	<u>Const. Year</u>	<u>Historic</u>
None	NA	NA	NA

\*National Register of Historic Places

\*\* National Historic Landmark

## **USE AREAS & DEVELOPMENT**

Sappington African American Cemetery State Historic Site's development should accentuate the preservation and interpretation of the historic site's significance in Missouri's African American communities and contributions to Saline County.

### **1. Information Kiosk**

An informational kiosk is to be constructed near the parking lot of the cemetery. This kiosk will house additional interpretation panels to better explain the historic site's significance.

### **2. Construct New Veterans-Focused Interpretation Panel**

A new Veterans-Focused interpretational panel is to be constructed and installed near the entrance of the cemetery. This will educate the public on African Americans buried at the site and their involvement in U.S. military history.

### **3. Paved Parking Lot**

The parking lot, which is currently gravel, is to be paved to allow for better access and more defined parking spaces.

### **Special Considerations**

- This is a new CDP.

### **PLANNING AND RESEARCH GOALS**

- History of the veterans buried at Sappington African American Cemetery, as well as the local Black community's economic and social status throughout its history and burial traditions.

### **PROJECT PHASING**

- Phase 1
  - Information Kiosk
- Phase 2
  - Construct New Veterans-Focused Interpretation Panel
- Phase 3
  - Paved Parking Lot

Cultural and natural resource clearances will be required before on-site modifications and development occur.

### **ACQUISITION UNITS**

If offered, acquisition of adjacent property may be pursued only through willing sellers or donors. To be considered, units should enhance the mission of Missouri State Parks through one of the following categories:

- Resource preservation and protection
- Recreational access and opportunity
- Management facilitation

### **CONTEXTUAL PLANNING INFORMATION**

#### **Public Input**

Public input is an integral part of the CDP process. Throughout the CDP process, MSP staff utilized online surveys to gauge public opinions on various proposed developments. The following includes input opportunities throughout the planning process:

1. **Public Survey #1, September 17, 2024 – October 17, 2024**
  - a. n = 6
2. **Public Survey #2, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025**
  - a. N=56

**Communication methodologies:** News release, legislative letters, social media posts, [mostateparks.com/CDP](https://mostateparks.com/CDP), email bulletin, and QR business cards/flyer.

Stakeholder input was also collected by contacting the descendants of Sappington African American families, who were consulted during the process and given drafts of the CDP documents for their review. No changes were requested by the descendants.

#### **CDP Team Members:**

- Laura Hendrickson – Division Director
- Melanie Smith – Deputy Division Director
- Dustin Webb – Northern Region Director
- Matt Carletti – Northern Region Deputy Director
- Cynthia Imhoff – Superintendent
- Allison Vaughn – Natural Resource Program Ecologist
- Dr. Mike Ohnorsorgen – Cultural Resource Management Program Director
- Kim Dillon – Cultural Resource Management Section Chief
- Terry Bruns – Planning and Development Program Director
- Don Stier – Design Section Manager
- Ryan Dunwoody – Grants, Recreation & Interpretation Program Director
- Daniel Engler – Planning Section Manager
- Rylee Lorts - Planner
- Rebecca Young – Outdoor Recreation Management Section Chief
- Logan Nuernberger – Trail Coordinator
- Zane Price – Real Estate Manager
- Tisha Holden – Information Officer

#### **APPENDIX**

- CDP Map
- Public Survey #1 Results

# SAPPINGTON AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY STATE HISTORIC SITE

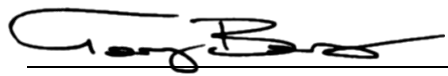
## CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

May 2025

### APPROVED BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Laura Hendrickson**  
Director, Missouri State Parks

5/19/25  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Terry Bruns**  
Program Director, Planning and Development

05/09/2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Dustin Webb  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dustin Webb**  
Regional Director, Northern Region

5/09/2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Matt Carletti  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Matt Carletti**  
Deputy Regional Director, Northern Region

5/7/2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Cindy Imhoff  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Cynthia Imhoff**  
Superintendent

5/12/2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

# **SAPPINGTON AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY STATE HISTORIC SITE**

## ***PREAMBLE & MISSION STATEMENT***

**May 2025**

### **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

In 1880, Black Americans comprised 51% of Arrow Rock's total population. Black people built much of the infrastructure of Arrow Rock and improved the surrounding farmland. Their increasing presence kept Arrow Rock from sliding into complete economic oblivion following the Civil War. Thomas Rainey, an early historian of Arrow Rock, made this comment in 1914: "The forefathers of many of them helped to fence and clear the fields, open the roadways, and make Saline a pleasant place to live in. Although they now lie in nameless graves, we owe respect to their memory. They were also pioneers." However, segregation persisted. Black individuals were forced to develop and maintain their own social, religious and educational institutions. Most communities in Missouri had designated cemeteries for Black burials, continuing the institution of segregation even after death.

In oral tradition passed down through his family, Emmanuel Banks, one of 24 enslaved workers held by Dr. John Sappington, shared that Sappington set aside 1 acre as a burial ground for his enslaved people before his death in 1856. The cemetery contains about 350 burials, many of whom are now unknown. Before the emancipation in 1865, there were probably no headstones, just simple wooden markers, if any at all.

In 1906, another half-acre was added to the cemetery as generations of Black Americans with links to the Arrow Rock community continued to use this cemetery. The last burial was of jazz and blues musician James C. Van Buren and took place in 2012. Other notable people buried at the site include Zack Bush, who helped stop the spread of an 1872 fire in Arrow Rock's business district; John Thomas Trigg, the first Black teacher in Arrow Rock to be born a free man; and members of the extended family of Emmanuel Banks.

In 1999, descendant Teresa Habernal formally approached the state about the possibility of acquiring the cemetery. No official record of ownership in the county records reflect actual ownership of the cemetery. In 2008 the Sappington Negro Cemetery Association was officially formed, which became the means for the state to officially accept responsibility for the cemetery. Day and Whiney Kerr, who owned the tracks surrounding the cemetery, agreed to give a quitclaim deed for the property. The African American cemetery became part of Sappington Cemetery State Historic Site in 2014 and was recognized as a separate historic site in 2021.

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**Laura Hendrickson**  
Director, Missouri State Parks

5/19/25  
**Date**



**Terry Bruns**  
Program Director, Planning and Development

05/09/2025  
**Date**



**Dustin Webb**  
Regional Director, Northern Region

5/09/2025  
**Date**



**Matt Carletti**  
Deputy Regional Director, Northern Region

5/7/2025  
**Date**



**Cynthia Imhoff**  
Park Superintendent

05/08/2025  
**Date**





**1. Informational Kiosks**

- To house additional interpretation panels and historic site information.

**2. Veterans-Focused Interpretation Panel**

- Additional interpretation panels to focus on the site's military veterans.

**3. Paved Parking Lot**

- Gravel parking lot is to be paved to allow for better access and more defined parking spaces

**Sappington  
African American  
Cemetery  
State Historic Site**

N

Projected Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983, UTM Zone 15N  
Absolute Scale: 1:388

0 0.01 0.01 0.02 Miles

**Legend**

**MISSOURI  
STATE PARKS**

5/20/2025

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