



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Historic Resources

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July 17, 2025

Alex Dandridge, CLG Coordinator  
City of Richmond  
900 E. Broad Street, Rm 510  
Richmond, VA 23219

**Re: Woodlawn Cemetery, County of Henrico, City of Richmond**

Dear Alex Dandridge:

The Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Virginia's historic preservation office, is planning to present the **enclosed** National Register nomination for Virginia's State Review Board and Historic Resources Board for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places and inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Because this resource is within your Certified Local Government, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) is entitled to a sixty-day comment period during which the ARB may review the draft nomination and relay any comments or concerns to the DHR. I hope you will consider the enclosed nomination at your next meeting and relay your comments to us. All comments will be forwarded to the SHPO Director and the Boards for consideration along with the nomination. We have scheduled the nomination for presentation to our boards on **Thursday, September 18, 2025**, and would like to receive your comments by that time in fulfillment of the comment period. This letter serves as notification initiating the sixty-day comment period and no further action will be taken on the nomination until we have received your comments, or the full sixty-day period has passed.

I look forward to receiving your comments. Should you have any further questions regarding the nomination or the register program, please contact Austin Walker, National Register Program Manager, at (804) 482-6439 or [austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

Jolene L. U. Smith  
Director, Division of Resource Information & Register

cc: Mayor Danny Avula; Odie Donald II

Enclosure

Western Region Office  
962 Kime Lane  
Salem, VA 24153  
Tel: (540) 387-5443  
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office  
5357 Main Street  
PO Box 519  
Stephens City, VA 22655  
Tel: (540) 868-7029  
Fax: (540) 868-7033

Eastern Region Office  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23221  
Tel: (804) 367-2323  
Fax: (804) 367-2391



## **Woodland Cemetery, Henrico County and City of Richmond, DHR File No. 043-0742**

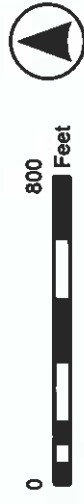
Situated at 2300-A Magnolia Road on gently rolling terrain lies Woodland Cemetery. The historically Black cemetery opened in 1917 during the Jim Crow era and continued to accept interments into the early twenty-first century. The cemetery contains an estimated 30,000 burials within its approximately 30.5 acres, though many markers are no longer visible. The cemetery has a curvilinear design and open landscape similar to those of the landscape lawn cemetery movement. Accessed via a grand gateway on Magnolia Road, the road system leads visitors to a fountain featured within concentric circles near the center of the cemetery, to a chapel on a knoll east of the fountain, to a Veterans' Memorial at the knoll, and to the thousands of grave markers identifying the final resting places of local citizens.

Woodland Cemetery at 2300 Magnolia Road in Henrico County, just outside of the City of Richmond, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History as a cemetery created by local Black leaders during the Jim Crow era in the south for Black residents of the City of Richmond and Henrico County. The cemetery is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as representative of a landscape lawn cemetery. The cemetery opened in 1917 and continued to be used into the twenty-first century. Woodland Cemetery stands as a visible reminder of the efforts put forth to provide Black residents in the region with a dignified burial when faced with persistent discrimination. It is a place of racial pride and respect and resistance against segregation and discrimination. Woodland Cemetery satisfies Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries as it derives its primary significance from its association with African American history and broader social trends as well as its distinctive landscape design. The period of significance for Woodland Cemetery begins at its opening in 1917. As its use as a cemetery continues today, the end of the period of significance is the default 50 year cut off typical National Register considerations – 1975.

# BOUNDARY MAP

Woodland Cemetery  
Henrico County and City of Richmond, VA  
DHR ID# 043-0742

 Nominated Boundary







## The National and State Registers in Virginia

### A Quick Guide to the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register

- Established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the **National Register of Historic Places** is the Nation's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

In 1966, the Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, now the Department of Historic Resources. DHR is the State Historic Preservation Office responsible for nominating properties to the National Register and managing the **Virginia Landmarks Register**, the State's official list of properties important to Virginia's history. The same evaluation criteria and nomination form are used for the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

#### ■ Key Points

- Listing in the National and State Registers is **honorary**. It recognizes a historic property's importance to its community, the State, and/or the Nation and encourages good stewardship.
- National and State Register listings **do not** place any obligations or restrictions on private property owners. Owners remain free to do what they wish with their property within existing laws and regulations and are not required to restore or maintain a property in particular ways as a result of listing.
- To ensure public participation in the process, property owners and local officials are notified and given the opportunity to comment on proposed nominations. When a nomination is submitted to the National Park Service, another public comment period is published in the Federal Register.

#### ■ Benefits of Register Listing

- Owners of listed properties may qualify for Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, historic preservation easements, and Federal and State grants for historic preservation when funding is available.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give the Department of Historic Resources an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.

#### ■ Additional Information

DHR Historic Registers Program:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/programs/historic-registers/>

VLR Online, an online database of State and National Register listings in Virginia:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/>



## The National and State Registers in Virginia

### Rights of Private Property Owners to Comment or Object to a Nomination for Listing

#### ■ Supporting and/or Commenting on a Nomination

- A private property owner who supports a nomination for listing in the Registers is invited to send a letter of support but is not required to do so for the nomination to proceed. Private property owners are also welcome to comment without formally supporting or objecting to a nomination. Copies of letters of support and/or comment are provided to the Boards for review, along with the nomination to which they refer, and are included with the nomination if it is recommended to proceed to the NRHP.

#### ■ Objecting to a Nomination

- Per 17VAC10-20-200, a private property owner has the right to object to listing in either or both Registers. For a private property being individually nominated, each owner or partial owner may object to listing regardless of the portion that party owns. For a historic district that is being nominated, each owner of private property in the district is counted as one individual regardless of how many properties that party owns or whether the properties contribute to the significance of the district.
- An objection to listing must be provided to DHR in writing a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting. Letters of objection must be addressed to the State Historic Preservation Officer at the Department of Historic Resources, 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221.
- When objecting to listing, any owner or partial owner of private property must submit to DHR a written statement that references the subject property by address and/or parcel number and certifies that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property, as appropriate.
  - For objections to listing in the VLR, the written statement of objection must be attested and notarized by a notary public in order to be counted by DHR in determining whether a majority of private property owners has objected to a nomination.
  - Objection letters concerning NRHP listing are not required to be notarized. Per 28 U.S. Code § 1746, a written objection should state: "I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on (date). (Signature)".
  - A property owner may submit a single written objection to listing in both the VLR and NRHP, but in order for the objection to be applied to the VLR listing, the letter must be notarized.
- If a majority (50% + 1) of private property owners object according to the process above, the nomination will not proceed to listing. In such cases, DHR is still required to submit the nomination to the National Park Service for a Determination of Eligibility for the NRHP, per 36 CFR 60.6(n).
- Letters of objection received a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting will be copied to Board members for review, along with the nomination to which they refer. If the nomination is approved to proceed to the NRHP, all letters of objection will be forwarded to the National Park Service to consider with their review of the nomination, along with any letters of support or comment that DHR has received.
- Letters of objection to listing in the NRHP may be submitted to DHR even after the Board meeting at which the nomination is approved. DHR will forward any letters of objection to the National Park Service. The National Park Service continues to accept letters of objection up to the date of listing in the NRHP. The National Park Service typically concludes review and approval of a nomination within approximately 45 days of receipt of the nomination from DHR.











United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**Historic name: Woodland CemeteryOther names/site number: DHR ID 043-0742

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**2. Location**Street & number: 2300-A Magnolia RoadCity or town: Richmond State: VA County: Henrico; Independent CityNot For Publication: N/AVicinity: X**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A     B X C     D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
- District ☐
- Site ☒
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐



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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: Cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: Cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Granite, marble, concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Situated at 2300-A Magnolia Road on gently rolling terrain lies Woodland Cemetery. The historically Black cemetery opened in 1917 during the Jim Crow era and continued to accept interments into the early twenty-first century. The cemetery contains an estimated 30,000 burials within its approximately 30.5 acres, though many markers are no longer visible. The cemetery has a curvilinear design and open landscape similar to those of the landscape lawn cemetery movement. Accessed via a grand gateway on Magnolia Road, the road system leads visitors to a fountain featured within concentric circles near the center of the cemetery, to a chapel on a knoll east of the fountain, to a Veterans' Memorial at the knoll, and to the thousands of grave markers identifying the final resting places of local citizens.

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#### Narrative Description

##### Location and Setting

Woodland Cemetery is nestled at the City of Richmond/Henrico County border north of Interstate 64 and west of Mechanicsville Turnpike (Route 360). The cemetery occupies approximately 30.5 acres of gently rolling topography and is roughly oriented north-south at Magnolia Road and the



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CSX Railroad. The location was advertised in 1917 as easily accessible, particularly to those living in Shockoe Hill or Church Hill in the City of Richmond. The cemetery remains easily accessible, though it is now tucked away and surrounded by industrial land to the west, south, and east. Despite this, the cemetery retains the feel of a peaceful rural cemetery with nearby businesses and infrastructure generally visible through gaps in the tree lines. Along the northern and northwestern end of the cemetery, in an area that originally served as Woodland Park, the terrain drops to an unnamed tributary of Shockoe Creek (Photo 17). A transmission line cuts through the far northwestern corner of the cemetery.

### Plan/Layout

T. Crawford Redd and Bros., well-known local surveyors, designed the layout of Woodland Cemetery. The company used the unique shape of the parcel and its gently rolling topography, as well as plans for parkland at the northwestern end of the cemetery, to create a slightly curvilinear road system and burial sections (Photo 25). The design prominently highlights a fountain feature in concentric circles near the center the cemetery (Photos 14 and 24). Roads, historically gravel and now graveled or paved, radiate out from this central area and connect to the curved roads that roughly parallel the boundaries of the parcel and differentiate each of the 26 burial sections. The roads extending through the cemetery have names relating to important historical figures and natural elements.

Early plats, historic aerials, and topographic maps depict three entrances into the cemetery from Magnolia Road, two of which flank the fountain. The existing, formal vehicular and pedestrian entrance into Woodland Cemetery is at a curve in Magnolia Road at the western boundary of the parcel. The second entrance was to the northwest at cemetery road, Jasper Road, which then branched and led to the fountain to the east and to Hillcrest Road and Woodland Park to the north. The third entrance was at the southern end of the cemetery at the juncture of the cemetery roads, Woodlawn Avenue and Meadowbrook Road; both of which parallel the parcel boundary. The second and third entrances have since been closed and though Jasper Road, Woodlawn Avenue, and Meadowbrook Road exist they no longer extend to Magnolia Road.

Though the fountain is near the center of the cemetery, it is not the highest point. The terrain rises to its east to a small knoll on which sits a one-story, three-bay concrete block chapel on a raised foundation. Also on the knoll are a temporary storage bin and dumpster used by the grounds crew and volunteers. A steep rise at the southern end of the knoll features a Veterans' Memorial.

The 26 burial sections are defined by the curving road network and are identified, on the cemetery plats, by letters A through Z. Though not identified as such on the 1964 plat of the cemetery, Section Z has been further sectioned with newer areas receiving designations of double letters (e.g. AA). Each section was further divided by concrete walkways (Photos 7 and 15). Today some of these walkways remain visible though most have sunken below ground level. Like other rural cemeteries, Woodland was designed in a way that defined social classes. Burial locations near the fountain and along the road system were prime locations for noteworthy families and figures, being highly visible and easily accessible. Notable burials, as identified by the Woodland Restoration

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Foundation, are largely centered near the fountain and extending south. One such prime site was that of Rev. John Jasper, at plot R 1, with a view towards the City of Richmond (Photo 18).<sup>1</sup>

It appears that burial plots became less expensive the more inaccessible the location - along the boundaries of the cemetery at its southern end (Section A, D, and I) and, particularly, at its northern end (Section Z) – and further away from water sources used by family and friends to aid in care of plots. Less expensive burial plots often house wooden caskets, or no caskets. If wood caskets were present, the majority appear to have degraded over time. This situation has resulted in significant grave subsistence at burial plots in the northern end of the cemetery and eastern and western property boundaries near the southern end. These are also the areas at which trees have grown and matured over the years.

After years of volunteer efforts, unwanted trees and overgrown vegetation have been removed leaving a landscape in which markers are once again visible on a green lawn and are complemented by a spattering of trees, some native and some invasive, and mature shrubs as well as trees along the property's borders. The northern section of the cemetery remains fairly wooded. While the majority of the cemetery is covered by lawn, those previously mentioned areas (Section A, D, I, and Z) are covered with ivy vines, periwinkle, and small saplings (Photos 5, 8, and 16).

### Burials and Grave Markers

With an estimation of 30,000 burials in Woodland Cemetery, not every burial features a marker.<sup>2</sup> A ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) completed in 2023 in select areas confirms this – in one discrete section, 13 markers were visible though there were an estimated 80 burials. Additionally, examination of the cemetery, historic maps, and GPR survey confirms that many of the sections of Woodland Cemetery possess unique grave orientations. In areas that underwent GPR survey, it was found that burials corresponded with the layout of roads rather than the conventional Christian burials along the typical east-west axis.<sup>3</sup>

With those headstones that are visible, given the size and age of and economic range within Woodland Cemetery, a wide variety of grave marker types are evident. These range from high-style monuments to complimentary metal name plates and from newer commercially produced granite headstones to hand shaped and engraved concrete headstones.

In addition to the two large obelisks – for Rev. John Jasper (7/4/1812-3/30/1901, Section R Plot 1) and William Washington Browne (10/20/1849-12/21/1897, Section J Plot 20) – there are a few

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Rafferty, Ankita Parekh, Hannah Woehrl, Guy Roach, Jenaya Moore, Grace Lumsden-Cook, Megan Perkeybile, Eric King, Michael Boeh, Colleen Campbell, *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*, Updated July 20, 2023, Virginia Commonwealth University, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1e00e41ae35f415b8031d4313a40f3b6>.

<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, some grave markers may have sunken below ground level.

<sup>3</sup> Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, "A Ground Penetrating Radar Survey of a portion of Woodland Cemetery (043-0742) Henrico County, Virginia," December 2023, 13-16.



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smaller obelisks and many more straight-sided pillars with vaulted tops or supporting carved urns.<sup>4</sup> Another notable large monument is the architectural façade for Thomas Morris Crump (2/13/1868-8/3/1918, Section R Plot 35) (Photo 19).<sup>5</sup> Some flat and raised ledger stones are found, as are cross monuments.<sup>6</sup> Even more common are upright marble headstones and granite headstones, both of single and double width, as well as flat and slanted granite block headstones.<sup>7</sup> Some marble headstones are adorned with sculpted tops of various designs.<sup>8</sup> Some markers also include ceramic portraits of the deceased.<sup>9</sup> Woodland Cemetery holds 376 government-issued marble and bronze markers for veterans (Photo 22). These markers are set in place at grave sites or assembled near the chapel as part of the Veterans' Memorial.

By far, however, the most prevalent type of marker found throughout Woodland Cemetery is the rectangular marble slab placed horizontally flat on the ground, at an angle supported by a metal easel, or set upright in a concrete base or in the concrete curb surrounding a plot (Photo 21).<sup>10</sup> This type of marker was called a plate, breastplate, or tablet in the J. Henry Brown Monuments order books. Brown, a White stone carver in Richmond, appears to have standardized and popularized this style of marker given the thousands of such designs found in his order books.<sup>11</sup> Some graves have multiple markers of this type that were lovingly provided by different organizations,

<sup>4</sup> An example of a smaller obelisk is the marker for Edward A. Samuels (unknown-7/19/1927, Section S, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/113325265/edward-a-samuels>). An example of a straight-sided pillar with a vaulted top is found for Sarah Cannon (1/8/1890-3/10/1919, Section K, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205540708/sarah-ethel-cannon>) and of that with a carved urn for Cordelia A. Reese Gilpin (6/1858-8/20/1928) and St. James Gilpin (12/30/1850-10/23/1934, Section F Plot 53, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111971786/cordelia-a-gilpin>).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16972326/thomas-morris-crump>.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of ledgers are those of Robert Johnson (2/22/1838-12/29/1921) and Harriel Archer Johnson, (unknown-2/5/1921, Section G, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/215365884/harriel-johnson>) and Rev. Joseph Lynwood Loving (3/20/1867-7/2/1959, Section F Plot 22, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111971841/joseph-lynwood-loving>). An example of a cross monument is that for Henrietta Ellison Trent Forrester (1782-3/21/1959, Section U Plot 13, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205260107/henrietta-ellison-forrester>).

<sup>7</sup> Examples of a single marble monument was that for Margaret Brown (unknown-12/27/1930, Section G Plot 93, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/112579380/margaret-brown>) and a single granite marker for Rev. Marshall Henry Payne (3/1/1862-5/2/1939, Section F, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/154697120/marshall-henry-payne>). Examples of a double-width marble headstone is that for Julia L. Payne Ragland (11/3/1875-12/20/1917, Section G Plot 32, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/204921978/julia-l-ragland>) and a double-width granite marker for William Robinson Minor (unknown-6/18/1929, Section F, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/20579091/william-robinson-minor>). The marker for Mary E. Flowers is an example of a flat granite block headstone (7/24/1871-3/30/1940, Section C Plot 45, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/217803939/mary-e-flowers>).

<sup>8</sup> A couple of examples of headstones with sculpted tops include Mary Cowans (unknown-6/21/1945, Section D, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/234056134/mary-cowans>) and Eleanor Taylor (2/8/1948-8/5/1957, Section Q, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/107139646/eleanor-savira-taylor>).

<sup>9</sup> An example of a monument with a ceramic portrait is that of Hattie Harris Jefferson (9/11/1895-12/17/1923, Section S Plot 1, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17346450/hattie-jefferson>).

<sup>10</sup> An example of a plate sitting in an easel is that of Mary Pryor (unknown-10/21/1935, Section I Plot 312, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/239178062/mary-pryor>) and an example of a plate in a concrete curb is that of Armstead Harris (1880-11/17/1939, Section D Plot 213, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/224022393/armstead-harris>).

<sup>11</sup> Ryan K. Smith, "Signs of Community: African American Plate-Style Gravestones in Central Virginia," *Markers XXXIX*. Ed. Elisabeth L. Roark (2024), 16.

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churches, family members, or neighbors, as indicated by inscriptions at the bottom. Shallow probing of grassy areas in the cemetery as well as the head-ends of burial depressions (caused by the decay and collapse of wooden coffins over time) in the more wooded areas often reveals markers of this type. There are also a few markers made from thin marble slabs with one or more edges molded or beveled.<sup>12</sup>

As at other African American cemeteries of this era, Woodland Cemetery also contains several unique handmade concrete markers (Photo 23). These distinctive headstones all vary in ornamentation from impressed shapes to formed concrete with embedded pebbles and glass fragments to a human bust.<sup>13</sup> The concrete headstone for Hubert Justice (6/9/1885-11/15/1974, Section B) is unique in that it is brightly whitewashed, with contrasting, black-painted letters.<sup>14</sup>

The most fragile grave markers at Woodland Cemetery are the metal courtesy markers provided by the funeral homes at the time of burial (Photo 22). Sometimes, especially in the single-burial sections that are now the most wooded areas of the cemetery, these are the only physical marker remaining on or just under the surface.

Some plots are defined by a small fence or border. These enclosures may be made of metal or plastic fencing, brick, or concrete.

### Interred Individuals

It is estimated that up to 30,000 people are interred at Woodland Cemetery.<sup>15</sup> The cemetery has recorded approximately 18,000 burials, far more that can be listed within this nomination. At least 60 deceased may have been reinterred at Woodland prior to its grand opening in May 1917; the earliest of these deceased was William W. Hill (1802-1885). The vast majority of burials in Woodland Cemetery, nearly 80 percent, took place in the mid-twentieth century. This was between 1930 and 1970, after which burials began to taper following the desegregation of city cemeteries in 1968.<sup>16</sup> Despite the difficulties faced by the cemetery in the late twentieth century, burials continued with proof of family purchase of plots. The most recent burial is that of Barbara Jane Roane Banks (1937-2023).

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<sup>12</sup> An example of this type of marker is that of Elsie Anne Holman Moore (1/8/1853-12/26/1930, Section AA Plot 34, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/236904565/elsie-anne-moore>).

<sup>13</sup> An example of a concrete headstone with impressed shapes is that of Richard James (unknown, 10/13/1941, Section Z Plot 871, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/207394935/richard-james>), of formed concrete with pebbles and glass fragments for Eva Callahan (10/15/1926-11/19/1943, Section Z, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/219876103/eva-callahan>), and of a bust and geometrical shapes is that for Lillie Beatrice Shepherd Powell (1/8/1892-10/20/1957, Section Z Plot 3237, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/234275843/lillie-beatrice-powell>).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111714262/hubert-hayward-justice>.

<sup>15</sup> Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, "A Ground Penetrating Radar Survey."

<sup>16</sup> Ryan K. Smith, *Death and Rebirth in a Southern City: Richmond's Historic Cemeteries* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 177.

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Among the thousands of deceased resting at the cemetery, each remarkable in their own way, the Woodland Restoration Foundation identified 23 "Notable Burials" including:

- Martha S. Ferris Pryor Anderson (12/20/1889 – 5/5/1992) (Location: C 21)
- Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. (7/10/1943 – 2/6/1993) (Location: M 11)
- Isom Lincoln Bailey (4/25/1886 – 10/25/1972) (Location: U 16)
- Leslie Garland Bolling (9/16/1898 – 9/27/1955) (Location: T 15)
- Rev. Augustus Walter Brown, Sr. (10/5/1885 – 3/19/1067) (Location: R 67)
- William Washington Browne (10/20/1849 – 12/21/1897) (Location: J 20)
- Marietta Lillian Chiles (1/18/1862 – 4/16/1921) (Location: W 16)
- Anne Cofer (4-1868 – 6/4/1949) (Location: H 50)
- Dawson Cofer (unknown – 10/26/1933) (Location: H 50)
- Thomas Morris Crump (2/13/1868 – 8/3/1918) (Location: R 35)
- Christopher French Foster (9/19/1880 – 12/23/1970) (Location: T 23)
- Lucy Ann Jackson Foster (7/17/1883 – 3/26/1961) (Location: T 23)
- Elizabeth B. Gaiters (2/22/1896 – 5/20/1979) (Location: G 102)
- Arthur Lee "Stretch" Gardner (1/22/1904 – 5/5/1985) (Location: V 26)
- Dr. Zenobia Gustava Gilpin (7/10/1903 – 6/11/1948) (Location: F 53)
- Clarence Peyton Hayes (6/8/1889 – 7/27/1960) (Location: T 27)
- John Thomas Hewin, Sr. (12/25/1876 – 9/26/1957) (Location: W 17)
- Rev. John Jasper (7/4/1812 – 3/30/1901) (Location: R 1)
- Hattie Harris Jefferson (9/11/1895 – 12/17/1923) (Location: S 3)
- Henry J. Moore (11/20/1856 – 7/2/1921) (Location: U 23)
- Robert Dean Pharr (7/5/1916 – 4/1/1992) (Location: K 1)
- Prof. Charles Thaddeus Russell (1873 – 8/24/1952) (Location: W 13)
- Florence Louise Ragland Waller (6/22/1923 – 6/16/1955) (Location: H 14)

#### Entrance Gate: Contributing

Paired granite pillars flank Dunbar Road leading into the cemetery (Photos 1 and 2). Between the centered, larger, piers are curved double metal gates which serves as the vehicular entrance. Concrete sidewalks, flanked by a metal railing, extend from Magnolia Road to the small gates on either side of the drive for pedestrian entrances. The gateway appears much as it had historically with the exception of the overarching metal name panel that is currently missing. Near this entrance is a wooden sign announcing Woodland Cemetery as well as a historical highway marker placed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and installed in 2024 which provides visitors with an important background to the cemetery's history.

#### Fountain: Contributing

Centered in a series of concentric circles lies the fountain; this feature had been lost over time and was rebuilt in 2024 (Photos 13 and 14). Concrete sidewalks extend from Douglass Circle, extending the line of Jasper Road and Langston Road, and surround a brick wall, laid in a common



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bond and rising seven courses. Within the brick floor of this basin, a metal tiered fountain, capped by a welcoming pineapple, sits in a concrete basin. Benches are spaced around the fountain to provide visitors a place for reflection. Though the feature was rebuilt recently, the cemetery was designed with a fountain at this location. As such, this is considered to be contributing to the cemetery.

#### Chapel: Contributing

Located on the knoll east of the fountain is a one-story, three-bay concrete block chapel on a raised basement (Photo 10). A single concrete step is centered on the main, south, façade to access solid, double-leaf metal doors with a simple door surround. Upon entering the building, a set of steps rise to the main level of the building. The entrance is flanked by fixed windows which each feature a brise-soleil, or solar screen. A side-gable roof, with asphalt shingles, covers the building; a single exterior end concrete block chimney pierces the front slope of the roof. At the rear of the building, a second entrance, at ground level given the slope of the land, accesses the basement level. The construction date of this chapel remains unknown and occurred at some point between 1953 and 1968.

#### Veterans' Memorial: Contributing

Located at the southern slope of the knoll is a Veterans' Memorial which was created in 2022 as an Eagle Scout project (Photo 11). At that time 82 Veterans' markers that had never been placed at the corresponding grave site or had been delivered to the wrong cemetery, were laid within gravel along a slope at the intersection of Jasper Road and Woodlawn Avenue thereby creating a memorial to those that have served in the military. These markers, and other military markers throughout the cemetery, are for veterans who served in the Spanish American War, World War I and II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Benches above the memorial provide visitors with a place to contemplate and look out over the cemetery. Though the memorial itself was created in the twenty-first century, the markers forming it have been within the cemetery for decades. As such, this is considered contributing to the cemetery.

#### **Integrity**

While Woodland Cemetery has undergone periods of neglect, the cemetery continues to have a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

#### Location, Setting, Association, and Feeling

Woodland Cemetery retains its historic location on what had been available land that was considered safe for use by Black area residents. The current boundaries include the original footprint of the cemetery and its associated and adjacent Woodland Park. Though portions of land around the cemetery have transitioned to industrial use, Woodland generally retains the feel of a peaceful rural cemetery with nearby businesses and infrastructure typically visible through gaps in tree lines. Woodland Cemetery was created by a local Black entrepreneur for use by the Black

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community. It continues to be entrenched within this community providing the cemetery with a strong sense of Association and Feeling.

#### Design, Materials, and Workmanship

The cemetery's original curvilinear design remains intact and has been enhanced by reinstating the central fountain feature. The only elements that may be considered modern infill within the cemetery are this fountain and the Veterans' Memorial, each of which are in keeping with the original design and function of Woodland Cemetery. Additionally, these features are within areas that do not contain burials. The Veterans' Memorial is itself non-invasive, with stone laid flat in gravel covering the slope. Removable elements, a metal tool shed and dumpster on the knoll, have only a temporary impact on the site. As the cemetery remains in use, new markers put in place are similar in scale and material to those existing and easily blend into the historic landscape.

Years of neglect have resulted in fallen, broken, and sunken markers and subsided graves. However, persistent and systematic volunteer work to uncover grave markers from overgrown vegetation, soil, and, in some areas even trash, have restored the site's historic landscape and beauty. Burial markers generally remain intact throughout the cemetery providing visitors with a broad array of markers indicative of the economic and social variety of the deceased therein. These are also reflective of the burial trends at different times as well as historic African and African American burial traditions.

It is through years of efforts that the original design and beauty of Woodland Cemetery have been revealed once more to bring the local Black community a sense of pride in their history. Thus, the historic integrity of the Woodland Cemetery remains intact as it continues to be a space of commemoration and reflection for community members.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☒ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

SOCIAL HISTORY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1916-1975

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1917

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

T. Crawford Redd & Bros.

J. Henry Brown

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Woodland Cemetery at 2300 Magnolia Road in Henrico County, just outside of the City of Richmond, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History as a cemetery created by local Black leaders during the Jim Crow era in the south for Black residents of the City of Richmond and Henrico County. The cemetery is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as representative of a landscape lawn cemetery. The cemetery opened in 1917 and continued to be used into the twenty-first century. Woodland Cemetery stands as a visible reminder of the efforts put forth to provide Black residents in the region with a dignified burial when faced with persistent discrimination. It is a place of racial pride and respect and resistance against segregation and discrimination.<sup>17</sup> Woodland Cemetery satisfies Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries as it derives its primary significance from its association with African American history and broader social trends as well as its distinctive landscape design. The period of significance for Woodland Cemetery begins at its opening in 1917. As its use as a cemetery continues today, the end of the period of significance is the default 50 year cut off typical National Register considerations – 1975.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Woodland Cemetery History

As the most marginalized segment of Richmond's population, early Black residents of the city, enslaved and free, struggled to have a dignified final resting place. This began with what is now known as the African Burial Ground in the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood of the city. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were additional options – Potter's Field (1814, aka Shockoe Hill African Burial Ground), Phoenix Burying Ground (1815, aka Cedarwood Cemetery), Smith Cemetery (1832), Union Burial Ground (1848, aka Union Mechanics Cemetery), Methodist Cemetery (1855), and Ebenezer Cemetery (c.1858), in addition to the segregated Oakwood Cemetery (1855). Eventually, several of these cemeteries (Cedarwood, Union Mechanics, Ebenezer, and Methodist) and later burial grounds (Sycamore and Sons and Daughters of Ham) were combined and renamed Barton Heights Cemetery.<sup>18</sup>

Despite earlier efforts to have distinguished final resting places, White supremacy and racism were ever present.<sup>19</sup> The Post Civil War era saw continued segregation of cemeteries with Black

<sup>17</sup> Kami Fletcher and Ashley Towle, editors, *Grave History: Death, Race and Gender in Southern Cemeteries*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2023), 164.

<sup>18</sup> Veronica A. Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down: A History of the Black Cemeteries of Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 2003); Ryan K. Smith, *Richmond Cemeteries*, <https://www.richmondcemeteries.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> Kami Fletcher, "Jim Crowing the Dead: A Fight for African American Burial Rights and Dismantling Racial Burial Covenants," *Grave History: Death, Race, and Gender in Southern Cemeteries*. Edited by Kami Fletcher and Ashley Towle (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2023), 165.

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sections under deplorable conditions and existing Black cemeteries reaching capacity and facing threats from development in the growing city. This period also saw the Black community fight back to create new, more formal and peaceful Black burial grounds including Evergreen and East End cemeteries in Richmond's east end area, which "would host memorials for some of Richmond's most notable residents."<sup>20</sup>

However, by the early twentieth century, many of the Black burying grounds in the Richmond area were either nearing capacity, within segregated cemeteries, faced obliteration due to development in the city, or had grown neglected and overgrown. Facing these conditions, entrepreneur and activist John Mitchell, Jr. decided to act. In 1916, he founded the Repton Land Corporation to buy, sell, and manage property for Black residents in Richmond and to make land available for religious and charitable purposes.<sup>21</sup> Knowing the condition of existing Black cemeteries in the region, he began looking for land and found a suitable parcel at the city line in Henrico County.

Prior to the property becoming a cemetery, it was owned by the late John P. Schermerhorn, an established and well-known pottery manufacturer in the region. Circa 1830, a brick dwelling was erected on the property. A mid-nineteenth century map of the county identifies this area as part of the estate of Schermerhorn and to its east, along Mechanicsville Turnpike, was the home of Schermerhorn (Montezuma). A survey of Virginia's historic resources in the 1930s identified the dwelling in the future cemetery as Red Hill, though deeds identify it as Poplar Hill, and that it was occupied by the Christian family. According to this survey and local lore, three iron rings in the estate's kitchen were used to "secure unruly slaves."<sup>22</sup> Little did the family know that the land would eventually be used for a substantial cemetery for Black residents of Richmond and Henrico County.

After the passing of John P. Schermerhorn, his real estate was divided, and the portion that now encompasses Woodland Cemetery was assigned to his daughter, Isabella J. Schermerhorn Shine, and her children.<sup>23</sup> The 46.62-acre parcel remained in the family until the late nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century, it was in the hands of Richmond Sand and Gravel Co., Inc.<sup>24</sup>

Under the Repton Land Corporation, John Mitchell, Jr. purchased 38.89 acres from the company in November of 1916 for \$18,000.<sup>25</sup> Of this purchase, 25 acres were set aside for Woodland

<sup>20</sup> Ryan K. Smith, *Richmond Cemeteries*.

<sup>21</sup> Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 36.

<sup>22</sup> J. Archer Evans, "Red Hill: survey report," December 1, 1936, Works Progress Administration of Virginia. Historical Inventory. Library of Virginia.

[https://lva.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01LVA\\_INST/altrmk/alma990006865030205756](https://lva.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01LVA_INST/altrmk/alma990006865030205756).

<sup>23</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 129A:175, Robert H. Whitlock, Ellen P. Pedin, and James W. Pedin to Charles E. Belvin, January 4, 1890.

<sup>24</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 129B:214, Richmond Locomotive Works to Richmond Sand and Gravel Co., Inc., August 15, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 209A:418, Richmond Sand and Gravel Co., Inc. to Repton Land Corporation, November 28, 1916. The land that Mitchell chose was just southwest of a tract known as Hedge Plain that the Greenwood Memorial Association had tried to purchase for a Black cemetery in the late nineteenth century. Greenwood would successfully found the East End Cemetery in 1897 southeast of Woodland Cemetery. Henrico County Deed Book 149A:113, B.A. Bauer to Greenwood Memorial Association, June 10, 1895; T. Crawford Redd



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Cemetery and a smaller acreage set aside for an adjacent park (Figure 1).<sup>26</sup> Mitchell formed the Woodland Cemetery Corporation in November of 1916 to develop and operate the cemetery, and Repton Land Corporation conveyed the 25-acre cemetery parcel to the Woodland Cemetery Corporation in December 1917.<sup>27</sup> The Repton Land Corporation, however, made an agreement that they would retain ownership of the burial lots that were to be sold and had a voice in how the cemetery would be disposed of should the venture fail.<sup>28</sup> As head of both the Repton Land Corporation and the Woodland Cemetery Corporation, John Mitchell hired well-known local White surveyors, T. Crawford Redd and Bros., to lay out the 2,038 plot park.<sup>29</sup> Bragg Bros. & Co., local Black real estate agents under George W. and Dorsey P. Bragg, served as agents for the cemetery. Mitchell spent over \$40,000 (\$986,000 in 2024) to develop a “a space that would exude pride in Black culture while providing a safe place for Black residents to enjoy.”<sup>30</sup>

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& Bro., Inc., “Plat of Hedge Plain, Henrico County,” Henrico County Plat Book 16:36, August 21, 1935; T. Crawford Redd & Brother, *Map of Henrico County, Virginia* (Richmond, VA: T. Crawford Redd & Bro., 1916). Despite the racism from surrounding neighbors that had thwarted Greenwood’s purchase of Hedge Plain, Mitchell was successful in his.

<sup>26</sup> T. Crawford Redd & Bro., “Plat showing outline of Woodland Cemetery on the north side of the continuation of Magnolia Street in Henrico County,” Henrico County Plat Book 11:81, September 14, 1916.

<sup>27</sup> The Woodland Cemetery Corporation was led by John Mitchell, Jr. (President), George W. Bragg (Vice President), D.P. Bragg (Secretary), Dr. J. Mercer, G. Ramsey (Treasurer), Rev. T.J. King, John T. Taylor, S.J. Gilpin, R.C. Mitchell, N.G. Booker, J.J. Carter, R.W. Whiting, and E.F. Johnson. “It is a Grave (Yard)...” *The Richmond Planet*. April 19, 1919, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>28</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 211B:368, Repton Land Corporation to Woodland Cemetery Corporation, December 12, 1917; Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Rafferty et al., *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*.

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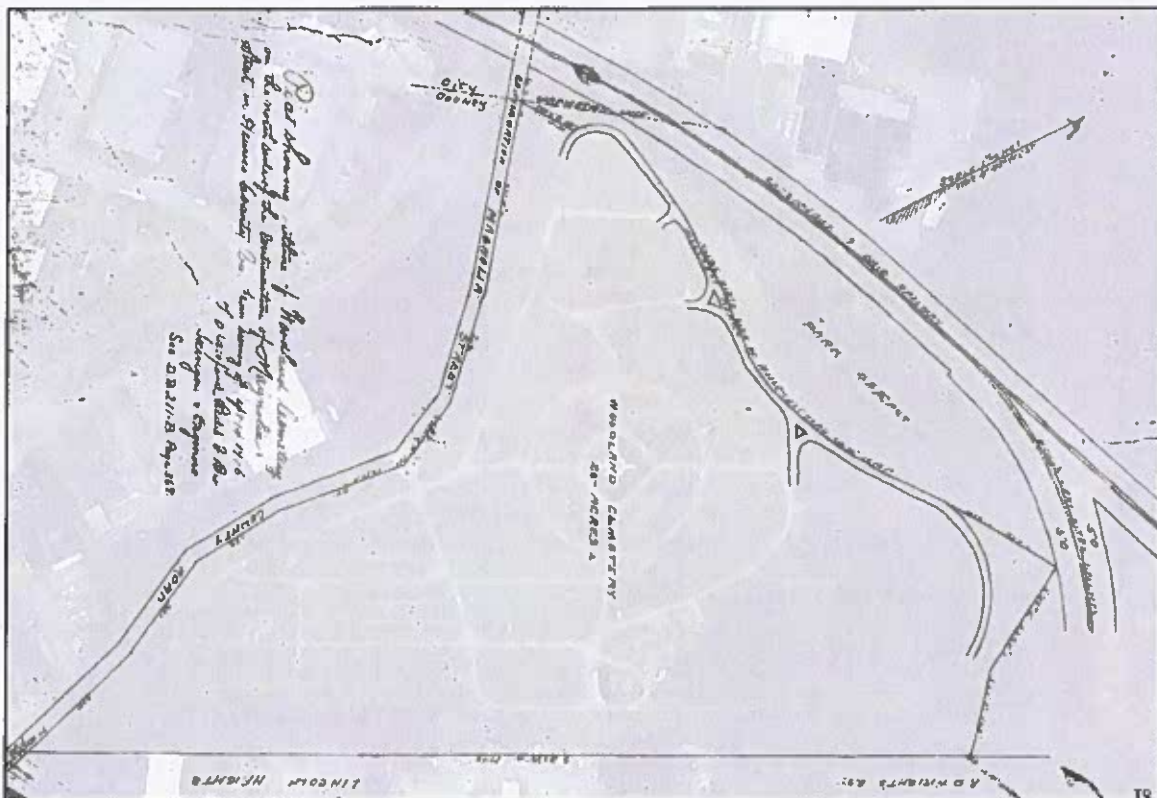


Figure 1: 1916 plat of Woodland Cemetery, overlaying a modern aerial, illustrating the cemetery section and the park section of the enterprise. Source HCPB 11:81

Mitchell first announced the new cemetery in his newspaper, *The Richmond Planet*, in January of 1917 and advertisements for the cemetery ran in the newspaper (Figure 2). He describes the location, not far from the Black neighborhoods in northern and eastern Richmond, and its ease of accessibility via automobile and the Fifth Street Car Line in an area where “progressive colored people may rest assured that they will not be disturbed.”<sup>31</sup> Fifteen-foot-square lots were placed for sale; single lots started at \$35.00 (\$863 in 2024) and a grave at \$5.00 (\$123 in 2024).<sup>32</sup> The most expensive lot sold for \$250 (\$6,158 in 2024).<sup>33</sup> Though access and levels of lot ownership varied along class lines, Woodland Cemetery still offered the entire community space for a respectable death.<sup>34</sup> The higher price “first-class” lots bordered the concrete sidewalk or curb, and water hydrants were nearby.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> “A New Cemetery For Richmond,” *The Richmond Planet*, January 27, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>32</sup> “A New Cemetery,” *The Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>33</sup> Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Case, “The Intersection of Activism and Black Memory: Space, Memory, and Resistance in John Mitchell, Jr.’s Woodland Cemetery and Remembering Emancipation in Hampton Roads, 1917-1963,” 2021, 52. *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1638386949. <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd/1638386949/>.

<sup>35</sup> “Woodland Cemetery Grounds.” *The Richmond Planet*. June 5, 1920, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

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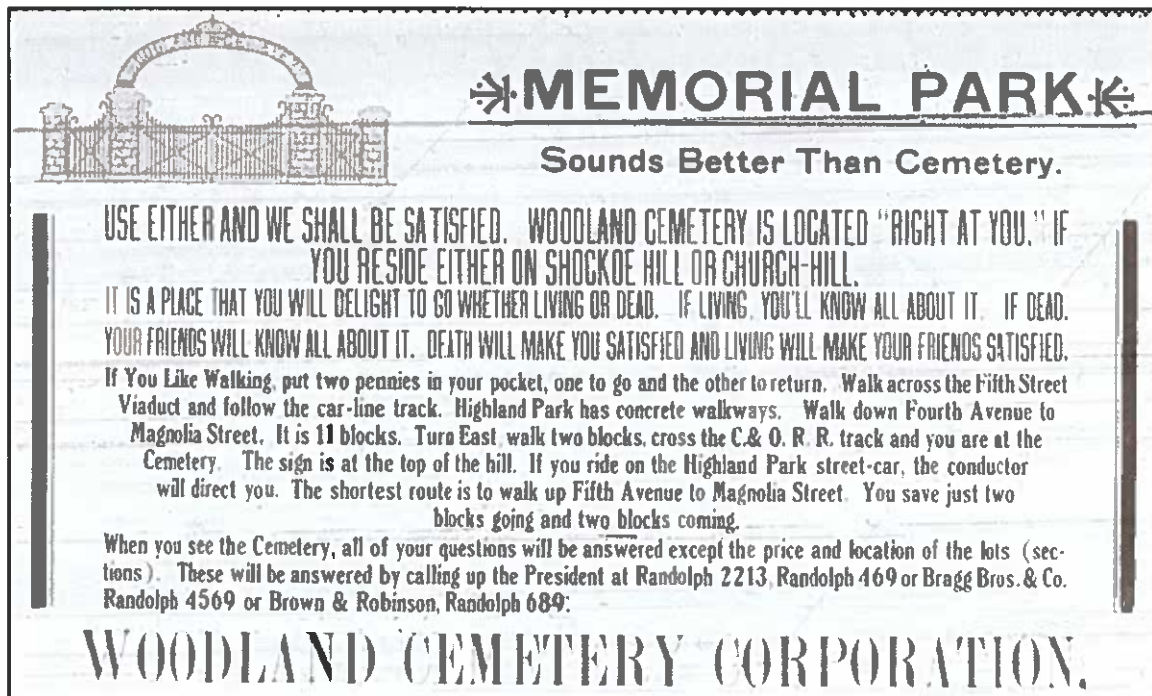


Figure 2: Advertisement for Woodland Cemetery in *The Richmond Planet* April 7, 1917.

Purchasers of lots who paid in full would become members of the Woodland Cemetery Corporation; these members elected board members that controlled the cemetery.<sup>36</sup> They also received a deed to the land as evidence that they held “a valid title to the place of internment.” As profits from lot sales went towards improvement of the cemetery grounds, the endeavor created a collective enterprise in which lot owners had a stake in the maintenance of Woodland.<sup>37</sup> Later advertisements noted the option for perpetual care for burial lots at an additional small cost.<sup>38</sup>

On the northwestern side of the property, Woodland Park was created.<sup>39</sup> The two enterprises were intertwined as the lake in the park furnished water to a 25,000-gallon reservoir near the brick caretaker’s house (the pre-existing brick dwelling), which, in turn, supplied the fountain and hydrants in the cemetery; it is presumed that the dammed tributary to Shockoe Creek along the northern edge of the cemetery served as the lake.<sup>40</sup> The lake in Woodland Park would become a “popular skating and picnic spot for Richmonders.”<sup>41</sup> The park was advertised as having “plenty of shade – fine spring water. The lake will be open to boating. These grounds are adjacent to the

<sup>36</sup> “A New Cemetery For Richmond” *The Richmond Planet*, January 27, 1917; “A New Cemetery,” *The Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1917.

<sup>37</sup> Case, “The Intersection of Activism and Black Memory,” 46.

<sup>38</sup> Perpetual-care cemeteries were not established until 1919, after the institution of Woodland Cemetery. As such, the families of people buried there are responsible for upkeep. Janet Caggiano, “Grave site service: At last, respect is paid to area’s black cemeteries,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 10, 2005. [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>39</sup> “A New Cemetery For Richmond,” *The Richmond Planet*, January 27, 1917.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Virginia History Landmarks Commission Staff, Archaeology Office. Archaeological Site Report 43-178, January 1976.



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'magnificent Woodland Cemetery grounds, where wide drive-ways and concrete walk-ways are a feature."<sup>42</sup> The fountain was surrounded by flowers, adding to its visitors' enjoyment.<sup>43</sup>

The grand opening for Woodland Cemetery was on May 30, 1917, and by that summer, the associated suburban park was open.<sup>44</sup> Visitors to the cemetery were greeted by an ornate entrance featuring granite pillars and ornate metalwork in the form of gates and a name panel. This grand gateway was completed by William R. Mason, a successful Black stone mason in Richmond in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>45</sup> A photograph in a 1963 edition of *The Richmond Afro-American*, shows the now missing arched name of the cemetery with painted letters.<sup>46</sup> When the cemetery opened, the gateway was highlighted with flower beds.<sup>47</sup>

Within the cemetery, roads and paths created easy accessibility to individual lots. The walkways, six feet wide, were covered in concrete and contracted to E.G. Bailey (White) and the drives, sixteen feet wide and contracted to John J. Curley (White), were gravel.<sup>48</sup> Sand and gravel existing on the property, due to its previous ownership by the Richmond Sand and Gravel Company, saved the cemetery money in its construction.<sup>49</sup> A plat of the cemetery was provided to potential lot purchasers in the newspaper (Figure 3).

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<sup>42</sup> "Woodland Park," *The Richmond Planet*, July 7, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>43</sup> "The New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, August 31, 1918, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>44</sup> "Woodland Park," *The Richmond Planet*, July 7, 1917; "A New Cemetery For Richmond," *The Richmond Planet*, January 27, 1917.

<sup>45</sup> "A New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1917; Ray Bonis, "The Stone Work of Two Richmond Brownstones: W. Franklin Street's Brown House and the Anderson House," *The Shockoe Examiner: Blogging the History of Richmond, Virginia*, 2010. <https://theshockoeexaminer.blogspot.com/2010/10/stone-work-of-two-w-franklin-street.html>.

<sup>46</sup> "Please take note if you have loved ones buried at Woodland," *The Richmond Afro-American*, April 6, 1963. On file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

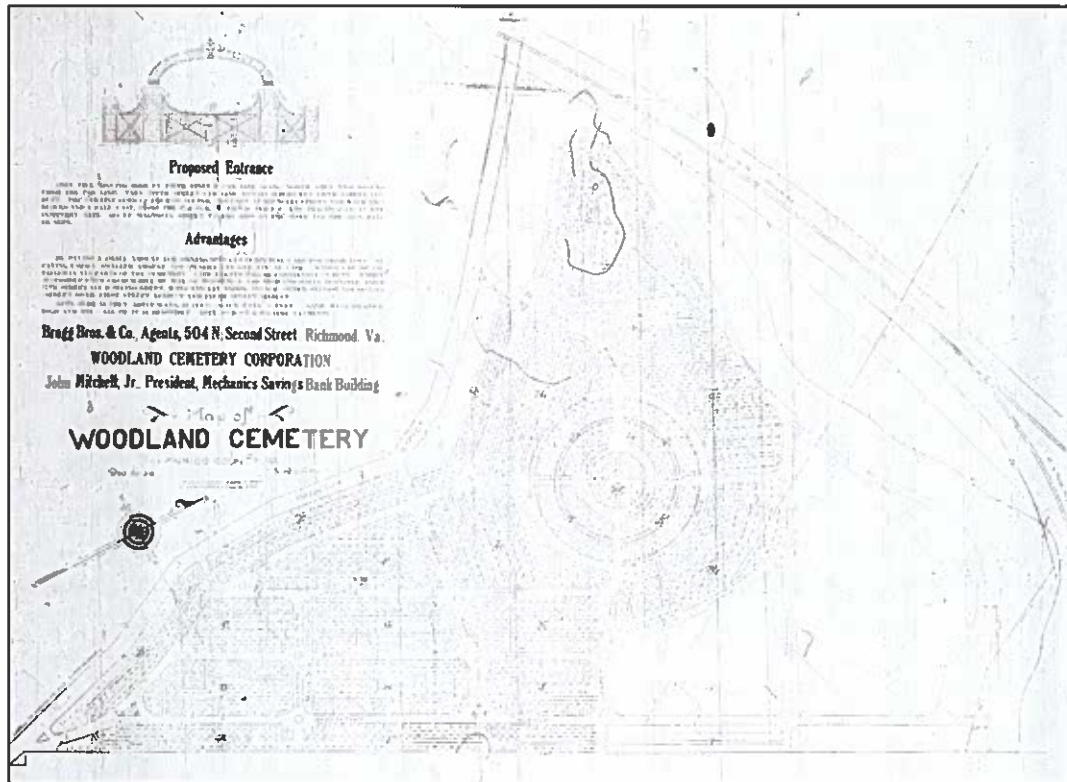
<sup>47</sup> "A New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1917.

<sup>48</sup> "The New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, April 7, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>. A later newspaper noticed identified F.L. Randolph (Black) as the concrete contractor. "The New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, August 31, 1918, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>49</sup> "A New Cemetery," *The Richmond Planet*, September 22, 1917.

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**Figure 3: Map of Woodland Cemetery in 1917. Source: *The Richmond Planet* December 15, 1917**

The first 101 burials had taken place by November 17, 1917, and the following years would see many burials of newly deceased and those relocated to Woodland from other Black cemeteries in the Richmond area.<sup>50</sup> Many families, as a tribute to loved ones buried in cemeteries that had declined, disinterred and moved their remains to better-kept or newly established cemeteries.<sup>51</sup> Woodland Cemetery was among those that responded to the community's need. Thus, the earliest dates of death recorded for the cemetery predate its opening in 1917. The earliest is 1885 (William W. Hill, 3/2/1802-2/25/1885). At least 64 burials prior to 1917 were relocated to Woodland, including some of the most prominent individuals buried at the cemetery.

In March of 1918, the celebrated Rev. John Jasper's (7/4/1812-3/30/1901) remains were removed from Mechanics Cemetery in Richmond's Barton Heights, which had become overgrown and faced sale by the city and were reinterred at Woodland Cemetery. The prominent spot chosen for the reverend and his wife, Mary Jasper (1833-2/13/1909) sat "affectionately in front of the cemetery's Chapel on the highest point of the cemetery overlooking the Richmond skyline."<sup>52</sup> The

<sup>50</sup> "Three Funerals at Woodland Cemetery." *The Richmond Planet*. November 17, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>51</sup> Denise I. Lester, "Barton Heights Cemeteries," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Prepared by Burying Ground Preservation Society of Va., Inc., August 30, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 21.

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Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church installed a grand obelisk monument, made by J. Henry Brown, at his gravesite.<sup>53</sup>

A 1937 aerial of the cemetery shows Woodland Cemetery's early design, vegetation, and development, as well as the adjacent park (Figure 4). On a knoll east of the circle, the brick house previously associated with the property remained standing and a chapel was built nearby. Many of the earliest burials with markers appear to have taken place in the southern half of the cemetery, in sections E, F, and G. Trees appear to have lined the property and along the entrance road, Dunbar Road. The wooded land north of the cemetery's Hillcrest Road and south of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad held the park with its lake. The formal arrangement of roads, though designed, had not been completely realized by this time.



**Figure 4: Detail of a 1937 aerial depicting development of Woodland Cemetery to date. Source: VDOT**

The new, sophisticated cemetery faced uncertainty early in its existence. Mitchell's Mechanics Savings Bank collapsed in 1921 and, as his bank continued to struggle, John Mitchell, Jr. fell ill

<sup>53</sup> "Rev. John Jasper's Remains to be Removed." *The Richmond Planet*. March 9, 1918, <https://www.newspapers.com>; "John Jasper Monument Unveiled." *The Richmond Planet*. July 13, 1918, <https://www.newspapers.com>.



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and passed away in 1929.<sup>54</sup> To recoup their losses, receivers of the Mechanics Savings Bank sued Repton Land Corporation for the balance of their loan, which forced the land company to sell the remainder of the unsold burial lots; Atlantic Finance Corporation, a White-owned business, purchased the parcel.<sup>55</sup> After its purchase, Atlantic Finance Corporation announced they it would be “Making Extensive Improvements and Beautifying it” to make “this Cemetery a Shrine and to best serve Richmond’s colored people.” The company also offered the option of perpetual care at an additional cost.<sup>56</sup>

Historic aerials show that the remainder of roads through the cemetery were established by the early 1950s. Given that the vast majority of burial lots were cared for by friends and family, at that time, Woodland was beginning to have an unkept appearance. As noted by journalist Zach Mortice – “African-American cemeteries are attached to communities that have been redlined and segregated out of billions of dollars of wealth that could have been passed down through the generations, and the usual perpetual care funds that are replenished regularly in burial businesses that cater to whites simply aren’t available at” Black cemeteries.<sup>57</sup> Woodland Cemetery was situated between two redlined neighborhoods in the City of Richmond to the west and Henrico County to the east.<sup>58</sup> Despite these setbacks, the chapel currently in the cemetery was built between 1953 and 1968, and the brick dwelling that had been on the parcel before its purchase was no longer standing by 1974.<sup>59</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, Woodland Cemetery was operated under the real estate firm Schmidt and Wilson, Inc. In early 1963, L.A. Knuckles became the cemetery’s new manager. At that time, Knuckles planned several improvements for Woodland, including paving the roads, removing weeds and overgrown vegetation and replacing them with a lawn, and re-painting the caretaker’s house (the earlier nineteenth century dwelling), and entrance gate. A new city water line was also installed to serve the reservoir and the spigots. He noted that while the majority of the plots have been sold only about 100 plot-holders have arranged for annual care and many plots

<sup>54</sup> John Mitchell, Jr. (7/11/1863-12/3/1929) was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery where his mother, Rebecca Mitchell (unknown-12/12/1913), also lays. Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 37.

<sup>55</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 247B:258, J.R. Tucker, M.J. Fulton, and Jas. W. Gordon to Atlantic Finance Corporation, August 27, 1929; Davis, *Here I Lay My Burdens Down*, 37; Case, “The Intersection of Activism and Black Memory,” 46.

Strangely, throughout out its history the 25-acre cemetery parcel and the majority of the Woodland Park were sold together. However, the Atlantic Finance Corporation separated less than an acre of the Woodland Park and sold it to Highland Park Sand Company in 1933. The Highland Park Sand Company was given permission to mine sand and gravel from this area, though not within 10 feet of the cemetery and gravel drive, for two years before the land was to be refilled with clay and made available for burials in connection with the cemetery. From this point forward, the approximately 0.9 acres has remained under separate ownership from the remainder for the cemetery land. Henrico County Ded Book 256C:34, Atlantic Finance Corp. to Highland Park Sand Co. to S. King Fulton, Sherlock Bronson & H.M. Smith, Jr. to J.R. Tucker and James W. Gordon, January 25, 1933.

<sup>56</sup> “Woodland Cemetery Under New Management,” *The Richmond Planet*, October 19, 1929, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>57</sup> Zach Mortice, “Perpetual Neglect: The Preservation Crisis of African-American Cemeteries,” *Places*, May 2017. <https://placesjournal.org/article/perpetual-neglect-the-preservation-crisis-of-african-american-cemeteries/?cn-reloaded=1>.

<sup>58</sup> Rafferty et al., *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*.

<sup>59</sup> County of Henrico County. Parcel card for 2300 Magnolia Street.



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have been neglected which resulted in a “downtrodden look.” At the time, a direct appeal was made to lot holders and a plea to ministers to advise all their members who had loved ones buried at Woodland.<sup>60</sup>

After 40 years, the Atlantic Finance Corporation sold Woodland Cemetery to Metropolitan Memorial Services, Inc.; Evergreen Cemetery was also purchased by the company.<sup>61</sup> This ownership was short-lived, and Metropolitan defaulted on their payments, forcing an auction of their land. A group of Black funeral home directors bought the property at auction, and it was conveyed to the U.K. Corporation.<sup>62</sup> The U.K. Corporation had been chartered in 1971 with three Black funeral directors as its directors: O.P. Chiles, O.F. Howard, and W.S. Watkins, Jr. The Corporation was run by Richmond resident Isaiah Entzminger, who also served as Woodland Cemetery’s superintendent. U.K. Corporation was dissolved in 1981 for failure to pay franchise taxes and the owner of its assets was unknown.<sup>63</sup>

Over the years the cemetery continued to be neglected. With the desegregation of cemeteries in the late 1960s, the local Black community gained a greater number of burial options and Woodland Cemetery “declined to a wretched state observed” by the early 1990s.<sup>64</sup>

Woodland Cemetery came into the spotlight in 1993 with the death of tennis champion, author, and humanitarian, Arthur Ashe (7/10/1943-2/6/1993). Ashe wanted to be buried beside his mother, Mattie C. Ashe (8/23/1922-3/25/1950) in Woodland. By this time, the cemetery had become overrun with vegetation and vandalized and served as a local dumping ground for appliances and trash. To avoid international embarrassment, city and state workers descended upon the cemetery to clean it up.<sup>65</sup> In preparation for Ashe’s burial, the state of Woodland Cemetery was improved: the stone entrance was repainted and the gate straightened; trees were removed or trimmed; underbrush was cut; and overturned gravestones were righted.<sup>66</sup>

Following this rush of work, the cemetery was adequately maintained until about 2016.<sup>67</sup> Woodland Cemetery continued to struggle financially as it suffered years of “neglect, vandalism,

<sup>60</sup> “Please take note if you have loved ones buried at Woodland.” *The Richmond Afro-American*. April 6, 1963, On file, Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

<sup>61</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 1416:712, Atlantic Finance Corporation to Metropolitan Memorial Services, Inc., January 15, 1970; “Notice.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. February 17, 1970, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Paul Williams, “Cemetery for Richmond’s prominent blacks suffers.” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. March 2, 2007; Henrico County Deed Book 1548:209, E.F. Schmidt, Jr. and A.D. Smith to U.K. Corporation to John S. Massad and Peggy D. Massad to J. Reginald Harris and Catherine H. Harris, March 15, 1973.

<sup>63</sup> Estelle Jackson, “Cemeteries Fight Losing Battle,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 22, 1981, p.C1; Rafferty et al., *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*.

<sup>64</sup> Michael A. Plater, *African American Entrepreneurship in Richmond, 1890-1940: The Story of R.C. Scott* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996).

<sup>65</sup> Michael Paul Williams, “Among the liveliest places in Richmond? It’s our cemeteries,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 14, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Gary Robertson, “Cemetery cleaned,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 9, 1993, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> “We All deserve Better,” Video, September 27, 2021.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=P8pZ6WhOMOA&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0ThVcAOKESiEsE99Zc\\_VV0x5I0yS\\_pVZdVvUJvh51RiKBJIFcMULY1ZaE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=P8pZ6WhOMOA&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0ThVcAOKESiEsE99Zc_VV0x5I0yS_pVZdVvUJvh51RiKBJIFcMULY1ZaE).

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illegal dumping and overgrowth.”<sup>68</sup> Even as the cleanup and restoration began at Evergreen and East End cemeteries, Woodland Cemetery fell behind. However, with changes in ownership and financial issues at those cemeteries, the volunteer efforts there stagnated and shifted to Woodland Cemetery. In 2020, Marvin Harris purchased Woodland Cemetery for \$50,000, with a \$25,000 donation from Henrico County and others. Later that year, he formed the Woodland Restoration Foundation, previously the Evergreen Restoration Foundation.<sup>69</sup>

Under the leadership of Marvin Harris and the remainder of the Woodland Restoration Foundation’s Board, and through the efforts of local volunteers, the beauty and history of the cemetery has been restored. In addition to the many volunteers that have worked within the cemetery’s boundaries, local schools and universities have provided students with the unique opportunity of providing technological data and historical research to the cemetery as they learn.

To learn more about the location and number of burials within Woodland Cemetery, ground penetrating radar (GPR) surveys were conducted in the early twenty-first century. In 2021, Schnabel Engineering performed a sample GPR survey of a small area of the cemetery at the western edge of the property south of the entrance gate; however, no report was produced for this work. In 2023, using a grant from the African American Cemetery and Graves Fund from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, NAEVA Geophysics, Inc. conducted a GPR survey of discrete areas of Woodland Cemetery. Within the 1.77 acres covered, 756 graves were found, however, soil conditions and tree roots likely prohibited the recognition of all burials.<sup>70</sup>

As Delegate Delores McQuinn, of Richmond, noted “These [cemeteries] are sacred spaces, and we must treat them as sacred spaces...For those who contributed so much in their life, in their death, we need to contribute some of our time to make sure that we are preparing the next generation to understand how important these spaces are. These are lifelines to our history.”<sup>71</sup>

### Notable Individuals Associated with Woodland Cemetery

Each person buried in Woodland Cemetery is remarkable in their own way, whether for raising families, educating local youth, starting businesses, championing the rights of individuals, or a myriad of other ways. In the combined words of Foundation members Kathleen Harrell and John Shuck, those buried at Woodland are poets, artists, sculptors, nurses, doctors, architects, builders, and innovators – many of the people who helped make Richmond the city it is today.<sup>72</sup> However, because of the immense size of the cemetery, not every individual can be addressed within the context of the nomination, therefore, the following are among the more well-known of individuals associated with the cemetery, whether through its creation or burial there.

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<sup>68</sup> Chris Suarez, “Foundation involved in restoring Richmond’s historic Black cemeteries purchases Woodland Cemetery,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 12, 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Henrico County Deed Book 6033:1017, U.K. Corporation to Evergreen Restoration Foundation, July 31, 2020; Micaela Coelho, “Restoring History,” *Richmondmag*, January 30, 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, “A Ground Penetrating Radar Survey,” 11, 15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Rafferty et al., *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*.

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*John Mitchell, Jr. (7/11/1863 – 12/3/1929) – Founder of Woodland Cemetery*

John Mitchell, Jr. was born into slavery on July 11, 1863, in Richmond. Following the Civil War, Mitchell had a comparatively comfortable upbringing in the home of his former master, James Lyons. Though Lyons was opposed to educating enslaved persons, Mitchell's mother ensured that he went to school, and Mitchell graduated as valedictorian of the Richmond Normal and High School, a school established by the Freedmen's Bureau to train Black teachers.<sup>73</sup> As he was trained, Mitchell initially taught in the city's public school system but he quickly turned towards politics, activism, and publishing. In 1884, he took the helm of the fledgling local paper, *Richmond Planet*, and transformed it into one of the largest circulating Black newspapers in the South. Earning the nickname "The Fighting Editor," he used the paper to champion civil rights, racial justice, and Black pride amid the codification of Jim Crow segregation and an upsurge of White supremacist violence. Just as he encouraged his Black neighbors to be engaged in the world, he became involved in politics (representing Jackson Ward on Richmond's City Council from 1888 to 1896); benevolence (leading the Colored Knights of Pythias), and business (chartering the Mechanics Savings Bank in 1901).<sup>74</sup> Though Mitchell founded Woodland Cemetery, when he passed away in December of 1929, he was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery beside his mother, Rebecca Mitchell (unknown-12/12/1913). Just like his Mechanics Savings Bank (VDHR #127-0237-0113) at N. 3<sup>rd</sup> and E. Clay streets, Woodland Cemetery stands as a part of his legacy within the metro Richmond area.

*Rev. William Washington Browne (10/20/1849 – 12/21/1897)*

William Washington Browne was born into slavery in Habersham County, Georgia to Joseph and Mariah Browne. He was forced to move to Tennessee as a young boy and in 1862, he escaped bondage and served on a Union gunboat and in the Union infantry. Following the Civil War, Browne received an education in Wisconsin before returning to the south, where he taught in Alabama. During his time in the Deep South, he spoke out against the Ku Klux Klan and became a temperance advocate.<sup>75</sup> Unable to join the Independent Order of Good Templars because of his race, he joined the Grand United Order of True Reformers, where he quickly became a leader, founding multiple chapters. To expand his audience, Browne became a preacher in 1876 and led Richmond's Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers beginning in 1881. Browne encouraged the Black population to live productive lives, and created insurance companies to aid those sick and at death. He expanded his enterprise to include a savings bank, real estate company, retirement home, and a youth and children's division that taught discipline, thrift, and business skills all to cultivate a growing Black middle class.<sup>76</sup> Reverend Browne passed away in 1897 and

<sup>73</sup> Ann Field Alexander, *Black Protest in the New South: John Mitchell, Jr., (1863-1929) and the Richmond Planet* (Duke University, 1927).

<sup>74</sup> Karen A. Sherry, *Determined: The 400-Year Struggle for Black Equality*. (Lewes, UK: D. Hiles Limited, 2021) 110, 112.

<sup>75</sup> James D. Watkinson and The Dictionary of Virginia Biography. "William Washington Browne (1849-1897)." *Virginia Humanities Encyclopedia Virginia*. December 7, 2020. <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/browne-william-washington-1849-1897/>.

<sup>76</sup> Donna Hollie, "Grand Fountain of the United Order of True Reformers," *Virginia Humanities Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020. <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/grand-fountain-of-the-united-order-of-true-reformers/>.

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was laid to rest in Union Sycamore Cemetery. With the overgrowth of the cemetery, in 1918, his widow, Mrs. M.A. Browne Smith, had her late husband removed and reburied at the "Beautiful Woodland."<sup>77</sup>

*Rev. John Jasper (7/4/1812 – 3/30/1901)*

John Jasper was born in Fluvanna County, Virginia, on July 4, 1812, to Phillip Jasper and Tina, who were enslaved to the Peachy family. Phillip Jasper was a preacher, and he predicted that John Jasper would be a great preacher. Prior to the Civil War, John Jasper was forced to move to Richmond. In July 1839, Jasper transitioned from an unschooled and illiterate magnetic man to a man of religion. Though still enslaved, Jasper preached when he was able and became sought after to serve at funerals.<sup>78</sup> After becoming a free man, he began holding religious services and he and several other organizers founded the Sixth Mount Zion Church which would stand in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of Richmond. Jasper became nationally known for his sermon "De Sun Do Move."<sup>79</sup> The Reverend passed away in 1901 and was laid to rest in Mechanics Cemetery. When the cemetery became threatened, he and his wife, Mary (1833-2/13/1909), were moved to Woodland Cemetery.

*Dr. Zenobia G. Gilpin (7/10/1898 – 6/11/1948)*

Born in 1898 to St. James and Cordelia Gilpin, Zenobia Gilpin faced Jim Crow adversity in the form of both sexism and racism head on and became a Black female doctor in the south.<sup>80</sup> Dedicating her career to providing medical services to Richmond's Black communities, she operated her own practice and developed a program of health clinics held at Black churches at a time when most city hospitals were segregated did not treat Black patients. This program became a model across the nation.<sup>81</sup> Among her many roles she served as chief of obstetrical services at the Richmond Community Hospital and a physician at the Gilpin Court Clinic and City Home; was on the City Lunacy Commission and on the Board of Directors of the Memorial Guidance Clinic, and the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA.<sup>82</sup> Gilpin spoke out about racial disparities in public health and held leadership positions in civic organizations including the NAACP and Alpha Kapa Alpha Sorority.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> "The William W. Browne Memorial," *Richmond Planet*, June 28, 1919, p.1. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>78</sup> Howard H. Harlan, *John Jasper – A Case History in Leadership* (University of Virginia, 1936), 16, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Benjamin Ross, "Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, April 21, 1996.

<sup>80</sup> There are various years for Dr. Gilpin's birth, 1898, 1903, and 1904, in various sources. The 1898 date, used here, stems from her being listed in the 1900 federal census as a one year old.

<sup>81</sup> Virginia Museum of History & Culture, "Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today," <https://virginiahistory.org/learn/agents-change-female-activism-virginia-womens-suffrage-today/dr-zenobia-gilpin-serving-segregated-communities>.

<sup>82</sup> "Dr. Z.G. Gilpin Dies at Home At Age of 44," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 12, 1948.

<sup>83</sup> Virginia Museum of History & Culture, "Agents of Change."



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*Charles Thaddeus Russell (6/19/1875 – 8/24/1952)*

Charles T. Russell was born in 1875 in Richmond to James T. Russell and Mary Hammons and grew in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of the city.<sup>84</sup> Russell trained as a carpenter at the Hampton Institute and supervised the Carpentry Division of the Tuskegee Institute where he honed his mechanical drawing skills. When he returned to Richmond in 1907, he worked for Virginia Union University before beginning his career in architecture in 1909.<sup>85</sup> This was at a time when Jackson Ward was blossoming, and Russell designed several buildings to contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood. Russell became the first Black architect to maintain an architectural practice in Virginia.<sup>86</sup>

*Arthur Ashe, Jr. (1943-1993)*

Born in Richmond to Arthur Sr. and Mattie C. Ashe, Arthur Ashe, Jr. grew up in Brook Field, a Black park which included tennis courts. With easy access to courts and a natural talent, by the time Ashe was a teenager he was competing in tournaments throughout the country; he won a full scholarship to UCLA. Ashe became the first Black player in the U.S. Davis Cup team and in 1968 he became the first Black player to win the U.S. Open in 1968, still as an amateur. When he became a professional, he cofounded the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) to represent the interest of professional tennis players. In 1975 he became the highest ranked male tennis player in the world. When Ashe retired in 1980, he had a record of 818 wins, 260 losses, and 51 titles.<sup>87</sup>

Following his retirement, Ashe became a writer and continued his humanitarian and activist efforts throughout the world which had begun in 1969 with his formation of the National Junior Tennis League in 1969, to expose children to tennis and encourage attention to academics. He fought against Apartheid in South Africa for decades. In his later years, he founded additional organizations for the promotion of tennis and education (the ABC Cities Tennis Program, the Athlete-Career Connection, and the Safe Passage Foundation) as well as for the treating, curing, and prevention of AIDS (the Arthur Ashe Foundation for the Defeat of AIDS), which he contracted after a blood transfusion in 1983 and to address issues in the inequality of healthcare (the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health). Ashe was laid to rest at the Virginia Governor's Mansion after his death in 1993, the first person to lie in state at the mansion since 1863 and was buried beside his mother at Woodland Cemetery.<sup>88</sup> According to Michael A. Plater, "Ashe's decision to join...others at Woodland Cemetery was a tribute to the past leaders and institutions of Richmond's African American community."<sup>89</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, State File No. 18758, Register No. 2303, Charles T. Russell. <http://www.ancestry.com>.

<sup>85</sup> Dreck Spurlock Wilson, editor, *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 510.

<sup>86</sup> Benjamin Ross, "Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, April 21, 1996, 8/4.

<sup>87</sup> UCLA, "The Arthur Ashe Legacy at UCLA," <https://arthurashe.ucla.edu/life-story/>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Michael A. Plater, *African American Entrepreneurship in Richmond, 1890-1940*, xiii.

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### Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History

Woodland Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History as a formally designed cemetery created for and operated by local Black leaders and residents during the Jim Crow south. While death might be the ultimate equalizer among races, burial practices had long been inequitable.<sup>90</sup> As noted above, enslaved and free African Americans in Richmond struggled for dignified and respectful final resting places and instead often had few choices that were overgrown, quickly filling, or facing development in a growing city. Despite the freedom put forth by the emancipation proclamation, the struggle continued after the Civil War forcing local Black residents to assert their rights in all forms of life and death.<sup>91</sup>

Some enterprising Black individuals and organizations established cemeteries, which also gave rise to other funerary businesses (e.g., undertakers, coffin-makers, and stone cutters).<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, this energy and capital “often could not overcome the indifference or outright hostility of the White establishment, or the nation’s sustained attacks on any and every kind of African American wealth building.” With the decline of area cemeteries and threats of development, in 1915 under the banner “Should Have Better Cemeteries” John Mitchell, Jr. advertised in his *Richmond Planet* a forum to discuss the condition of existing cemeteries and resolutions for their improvement.<sup>93</sup>

Mitchell’s personal response to the issue was to develop a new cemetery that would be safe from White hostility and threats of development from the growing city and provide Black Richmond and Henrico County residents with a memorial park that would serve as a peaceful and dignified resting place and a destination for outings. An advertisement for cemetery read “We felt that the Colored People of this Community were entitled to a New Cemetery, easy of access from all parts of the city and kept up to the standard of excellence unexcelled by any other similar place in the city.”<sup>94</sup>

As evidenced by early drafts of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner’s sweeping 1870 civil rights bill, which included a ban on racial discrimination in cemeteries, “cemeteries are not simply passive sites of rest and repose, but rather reflections of history, society, and structures of power.”<sup>95</sup> In the shadow of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and continual discrimination, the founders of Woodland Cemetery rose above it and create a grand resting ground which would be the pride of the local Black community. Woodland Cemetery’s creation during this period and its continued use and restoration is a celebration of Black history, culture, and community in the City of Richmond and Henrico County.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Fletcher and Towle, *Grave History: Death, Race, and Gender in Southern Cemeteries*, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Smith, “Signs of Community,” 12.

<sup>92</sup> Anna Klemm, “African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia, 1818-1942, MPD,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (2008), E/1.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> “It is a Grave (Yard)...,” *The Richmond Planet*, April 19, 1919.

<sup>95</sup> Fletcher and Towle, *Grave History: Death, Race, and Gender in Southern Cemeteries*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Rafferty et al., *Woodland Cemetery: An Interactive Tour*.

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### Criterion C: Landscape Architecture

Woodland Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Landscape Architecture as a fine example of a late landscape lawn cemetery. This movement had its beginning in the rural cemetery movement that began with the opening of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1831. Revolutionary at the time, the cemeteries were a response to a growing need in urban environments for natural space. As written by Jeffrey Smith, rural cemeteries “came to represent, then, a great paradox – they were “rural” yet urban, sacred yet secular, burial places for the dead but used regularly by the living, natural yet manicured.”<sup>97</sup> These new burial grounds were placed in landscapes with rolling hills and water features and were adorned with ornamental plantings strategically placed to direct views to broad vistas.<sup>98</sup>

The rural cemetery movement later evolved into the landscape lawn cemetery developed by Adolph Strauch at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio. Strauch “emphasized expanses of open, well-manicured lawns carefully framed by masses of trees and shrubs.” The simplified and uncluttered designs of these cemeteries became the dominant cemetery style near the end of the nineteenth century. While the typical rural cemetery was romantic and created a “naturalistic and contemplative environment,” the landscape lawn cemetery had a more pastoral effect with manicured lawns framed by trees and shrubs which “suggested the pleasures of a park more than the meditative mysteries of a cemetery.”<sup>99</sup>

Though Woodland Cemetery was created nearly a century after the rural cemetery movement and well after the landscape lawn movement began, it followed established design aspects of the earlier rural cemetery movement as well as the more pragmatic and simplified theories of the later landscape lawn cemetery movement.

With its location just beyond the Richmond City limits and near historically Black neighborhoods, Woodland Cemetery was like other rural cemeteries as an accessible hidden gem. The parcel shape, natural elements, and topography were each used in the composition of the cemetery. The parcel shape naturally lent design of the cemetery to resemble an arrow pointing north, toward the freedom provided there for enslaved Black individuals prior to the Civil War. The tributary along the northern end of the resource was able to provide water for upkeep of the cemetery as well as be dammed for a lake for recreational use and enjoyment as part of the associated Woodland Park. The slightly rolling topography of eastern Henrico County and the parcel shape were used to create a gently curvilinear road system based on concentric circles near the center of the cemetery. This system provides a central focal point in the cemetery and the use of the circles with roads radiating

<sup>97</sup> Jeffrey Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), xi.

<sup>98</sup> Vincent Turner, II and Catherine Weinraub, “Ivy Hill Cemetery,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form prepared by University of Maryland, College Park.

<sup>99</sup> James R. Cothran and Erica Danylchak, *Grave Landscapes: The Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemetery Movement* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2018).

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from its center served as a symbol of eternity in the burial ground.<sup>100</sup> The importance of this central area is reinforced by the names of these circular roads, which harken back to significant Black leaders Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. The monumental gateway into the cemetery announces the safety offered there to its Black visitors during the Jim Crow era.

While Woodland Cemetery features some enclosures to lots, which is antithetical to the landscape lawn plan, the majority are low concrete enclosures that do not interrupt the overall view. The lack of mausoleums and presence of only a few large architectural markers also contribute to the open vistas within the cemetery.

In addition to the aesthetic appeal of the cemetery, like rural cemeteries, Woodland illustrated the socio-economic variation of local Black society with upper-class and middle-class burial plots being in highly visible and easily accessible locations, while lower-class burials were relegated to the less attractive areas along the outskirts of the parcel and lower areas.<sup>101</sup> The individual grave markers and the collective cemetery represent the successful combination of a landscape lawn cemetery with African American burial traditions.

Away from the “din and disorder of everyday urban life,” Woodland Cemetery provides inhabitants with a dignified area in which to lay and visitors with a safe and peaceful place to visit and reflect.<sup>102</sup> Woodland Cemetery fulfilled the need for a new beautiful Black cemetery while also creating green park space for Black city and county residents.

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<sup>100</sup> Katie Kresser, “Square and Circle: Deep Structure in Christian Art.” *Magis Center*. March 14, 2024.

<https://www.magiscenter.com/blog/christian-art>.

<sup>101</sup> James R. Cothran and Erica Danylchak, *Grave Landscapes: The Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemetery Movement* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2018).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*



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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☒ Other

Name of repository: Woodland Cemetery, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** 043-0742

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ±30.5 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37°33'46.82"N Longitude: 77°24'55.41"W

2. Latitude: 37°33'52.12"N Longitude: 77°24'45.35"W

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3. Latitude: 37°33'50.80"N Longitude: 77°24'36.20"W

4. Latitude: 37°33'33.97"N Longitude: 77°24'44.95"W

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Woodland Cemetery is nestled at the City of Richmond/Henrico County border north of Interstate 64 and west of Mechanicsville Turnpike (Route 360). The cemetery occupies approximately 30.5 acres of gently rolling topography and is roughly oriented north-south at the eastern juncture of Magnolia Road and the CSX Railroad. The boundary is formed by multiple tax parcels, including a small, 0.1015-acre, parcel in the City of Richmond (N0000720012). The remaining three parcels are located in Henrico County, the largest of which is 25 acres (798-730-2114) and forms the bulk of the cemetery. The remaining two parcels in Henrico County form the associated Woodland Park: a 4.45-acre parcel (797-730-9868) that is discontiguous with itself and a 0.91-acre lot that is currently part of a larger parcel (799-731-6492), the bulk of which lies outside of these boundaries. The true and correct historic boundaries are shown on the attached Location Map and Sketch Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the original footprint of Woodland Cemetery (±25 acres) and its associated and adjacent Woodland Park (±5.5 acres) as originally designed and intended. The two entities were intricately historically associated with the lake in the park providing water to the cemetery and the park itself providing additional shade and respite to visitors of the cemetery. The entirety of this area is currently owned by the Evergreen Restoration Foundation (Woodland Restoration Foundation) excluding approximately the 0.91-acre parcel that had been sold by Atlantic Finance Corp. to Highland Park Sand Co. in 1933 and remains under

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separate ownership. Despite this, the original plat of Woodland Cemetery and Woodland Park clearly include this portion. Additionally, the 1933 deed references the ability of the Highland Park Sand Company to mine sand and gravel from a specific portion of this small parcel for two years before refilling it and making it available once more to the cemetery for burials, once more illustrating the relationship between the parcels. Woodland Cemetery's historic setting and all known associated historic resources have been included within the nominated area's boundary.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dara Friedberg, Research Historian

organization: Dutton + Associates (a Timmons Group company)

street & number: 1115 Crowder Drive

city or town: Midlothian state: VA zip code: 23113

e-mail: dara.friedberg@dutton-associates.com

telephone: (804) 897-19600

date: May 2025

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.



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### Photo Log

Name of Property: Woodland Cemetery

City or Vicinity: City of Richmond

County: Henrico County

State: VA

Photographer: Dara Friedberg (unless otherwise stated)

Date Photographed: October 5, 2024 (unless otherwise stated)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 25: Main entrance, view northeast.

2 of 25: Main entrance, view northeast.

3 of 25: Cemetery, view northeast from Dunbar and Meadowbrook roads.

4 of 25: Cemetery, view northeast from Myrtle Avenue and Meadowbrook Road.

5 of 25: Area D of Cemetery, view south from Meadowbrook Road.

6 of 25: Area B of Cemetery and with low enclosure, view north from Woodlawn Avenue.

7 of 25: Path in Area G of Cemetery, view south from Dunbar Road.

8 of 25: Area I of Cemetery, view south from Woodlawn Avenue.

9 of 25: Veterans' Memorial, view west from Jasper Road and Woodlawn Avenue.

10 of 25: Chapel, view northeast from Elm Avenue.

11 of 25: Cemetery, view south from Chapel.

12 of 25: Cemetery, view southwest from Chapel.

13 of 25: Fountain, view south from Washington Circle.

14 of 25: Fountain, view west from Douglass Circle.

15 of 25: Path in Area U of Cemetery, view northwest.

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16 of 25: Area Z of Cemetery, view north.

17 of 25: Tributary, view northeast.

18 of 25: Marker for Rev. John Jasper, Area R, view northeast from Jasper Road.

19 of 25: Marker for Thomas Moore Crump, Area R, view north from Jasper Road.

20 of 25: Markers for Arthur Ashe, Jr. and Mattie C. Ashe, Area M, view southwest from Meadowbrook Road.

21 of 25: Example of a plate marker, for William Nelson in Area R, view northwest.

22 of 25: Example of a military marker and courtesy marker, for Bennie Clements in Area Z, view northeast. (Photo taken November 22, 2024)

23 of 25: Example of a concrete marker, for Roosevelt Garland in Area Z, view west.

24 of 25: Circles at fountain feature, view north from drone. (2022 by Henrico County)

25 of 25: Cemetery, view southwest from drone. (2022 by Henrico County)

### **Embedded Images Log**

Figure 1: 1916 plat of Woodland Cemetery, overlaying a modern aerial, illustrating the cemetery section and the park section of the enterprise. Source HCPB 11:81

T. Crawford Redd & Bro. "Plat showing outline of Woodland Cemetery on the north side of the continuation of Magnolia Street in Henrico County Va," September 14, 1916. Henrico County Plat Book 11:81

Figure 5: Advertisement for Woodland Cemetery in *The Richmond Planet* April 7, 1917.

"Memorial Park." *The Richmond Planet*. April 7, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

Figure 6: Map of Woodland Cemetery in 1917. Source: *The Richmond Planet* December 15, 1917

"Map of Woodland Cemetery." *The Richmond Planet*. December 15, 1917. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

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Figure 7: Detail of a 1937 aerial depicting development of Woodland Cemetery to date.  
Source: VDOT

Virginia Department of Transportation. 1936 aerial. VDOT Location and Design Division.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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