



Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Rehabilitation

Community Conversation:

Project Status and Archeological Findings Update

March 2017





Meeting Rules

- Turn off or put on vibrate all electronic devices
- Meet new people
- Stay on topic
- 'Ponder' (think) before you speak
- Listen for new information
- Be mindful of how much time is used to express your thoughts
- Respect the viewpoints of others (listen to their truth)
- Identify ways to continue the conversation
- OTHERS FROM INDIVIDUALS IN ATTENDANCE:



Meeting Rules



- Questions from community members should be written on notecards and submitted to meeting facilitators for discussion after presentation is completed
- Save questions until presentation is concluded
- 10-15 minute Q&A will follow presentation before breaking into small groups for additional discussion



Meeting Goals



- Inform community of findings at Oakwood Chapel and hear your feedback
- Review project constraints, archeological input and precedent cases
- Discuss how a decision to move forward will be reached
- Organize community outreach process for commemorative and interpretive component



PARD's role in municipal cemeteries



- Management and maintenance of 5 sites:
 - Oakwood and Oakwood Annex Cemeteries
 - Austin Memorial Park Cemetery
 - Evergreen Cemetery
 - Plummers Cemetery
- PARD took over full operation of cemeteries in Spring 2013

Historic Overview

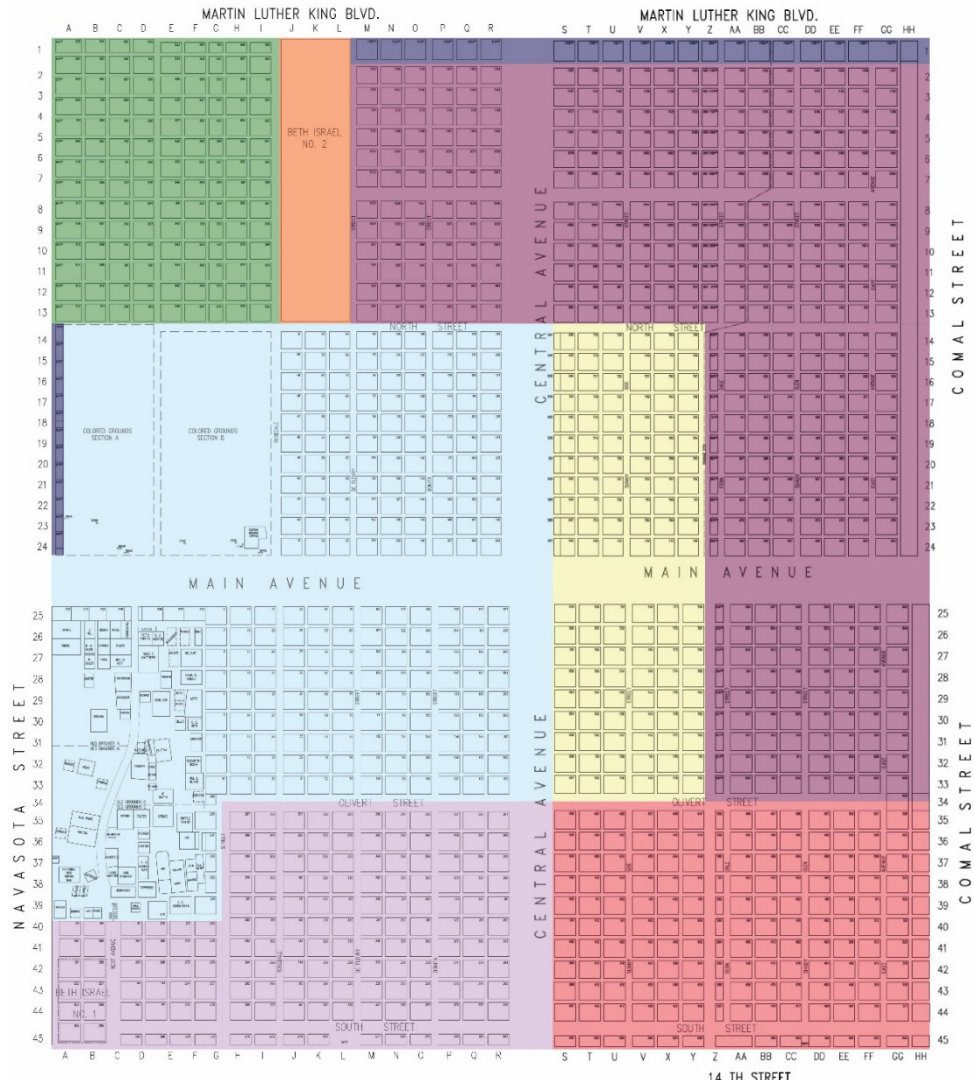
- Earliest burial possibly enslaved person killed near Bastrop in 1839
- Earliest recorded burial in 1841
- State property from 1839-1856
- Oakwood Chapel, 1914
- National Register Property and City of Austin Historic Landmark
- 40 acres
- 23,000 burials
- Receives approximately 40 burials a year
- Lots sold out by early 20th century



Figure 3. Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, 1873. Hand-colored lithograph published by J. J. Stoner, Madison, Wisconsin, with addition of arrow showing location of city cemetery (Library of Congress)



Oakwood Cemetery Development



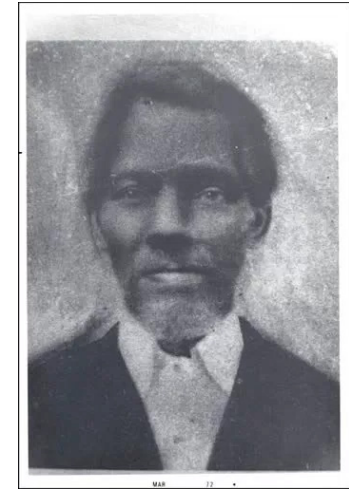
- Pre-1866
- 1866 Addition
- 1875 Addition
- 1885 Addition
- 1889 Addition
- 1892 Addition
- 1900
- 1910 Addition



Segregated section for People of Color



- Entire cemetery relatively informal until 1859, when the mayor designated three sections, including a section for people of color
- Approximately 1,200 people were buried in the section designated for people of color between 1859-1880.
- Burials include:
 - Jacob Fontaine (1808-1898)
 - EH Carrington (1847-1919)
 - L.C. Anderson (1853-1938)
 - Everett Givens (1888-1962)



Reverend Jacob Fontaine



Laurine Cecil (L.C.) Anderson

Development and Master Plan

- Chapel to maintain historic function and be programmed as community space and visitor center
- Historic Cemeteries Master Plan calls for better interpretation of cemetery history including section for people of color

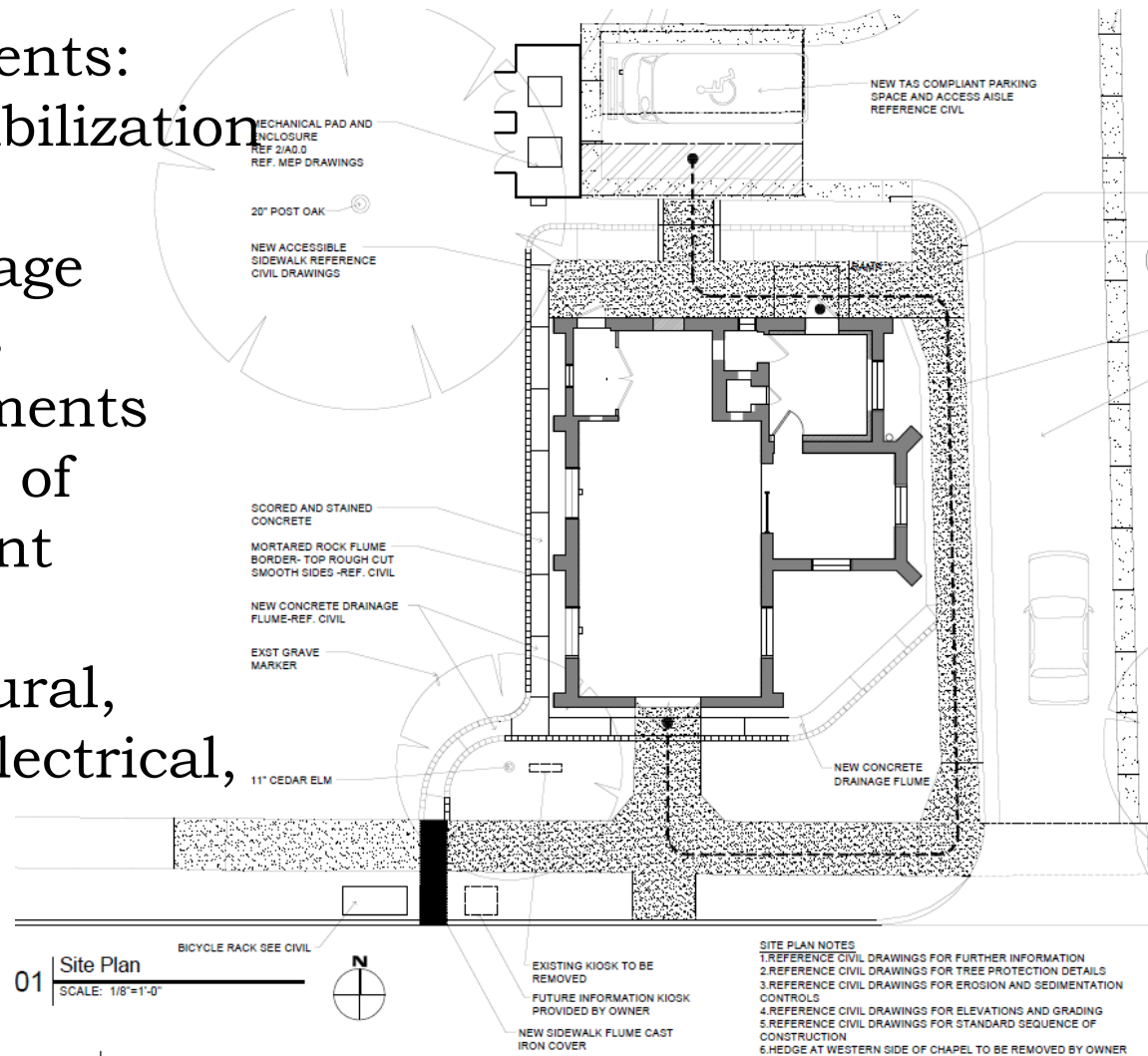




Chapel Rehabilitation

Project Components:

- Structural stabilization of foundation
- Surface drainage improvements
- ADA improvements
- Rehabilitation of single-occupant restroom
- Full architectural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rehabilitation



Chapel Rehabilitation



Antiquities Permit:

- Archeological monitoring
- Documentation of burials and cultural resources
- Procedures for discovery of remains
- Bioarcheological analysis
- Production of project report

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

July 15, 2016

Josh Haefner
Hicks & Company
1504 West 5th Street
Austin, TX 78703

Re: Project review under the Antiquities Code of Texas
COA Oakwood Chapel Restoration, Travis County, Texas
Texas Antiquities Permit Application #7709

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your Antiquities Permit Application for the above referenced project. This letter presents the final copy of the permit from the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the state agency responsible for administering the Antiquities Code of Texas.

Please keep this copy for your records. The Antiquities Permit investigations requires the production and submittal of one printed copy of the final report, a completed abstract form submitted via our online system, two copies of the tagged PDF final report on CD (one with site location information & one without), and verification that any artifacts recovered and records produced during the investigations are curated at the repository listed in the permit. The abstract form may be submitted via the THC website (www.thc.state.tx.us) or use url: <http://xapps.thc.state.tx.us/Abstract/Login.aspx>. Additionally, you must send the THC shapefiles showing the boundaries of the project area and the areas actually surveyed via email to archeological_projects@thc.state.tx.us.

If you have any questions concerning this permit or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Lillie Thompson at 512/463-1858. The reviewer for this project is Tiffany Osburn, 512/463-6096.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William A. Mark".

for
Mark Wolfe
Executive Director

MW/lft

Enclosures

Cc: Kevin Johnson, City of Austin



GREG ABBOTT, GOVERNOR • JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIR • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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Site discoveries



Figure 7: Burial stains in Blocks B and C; facing west from eastern edge of Blocks B and C.



Figure 3: Burial stains in tower room of chapel, facing east.



Figure 5: Headstone uncovered in scraping Block A north of chapel.



Figure 1: First headstone discovered north of the chapel.

Site discoveries



Figure 13: Solarized amethyst glass stopper from Block C.



Figure 15: Stoneware base with maker's mark.

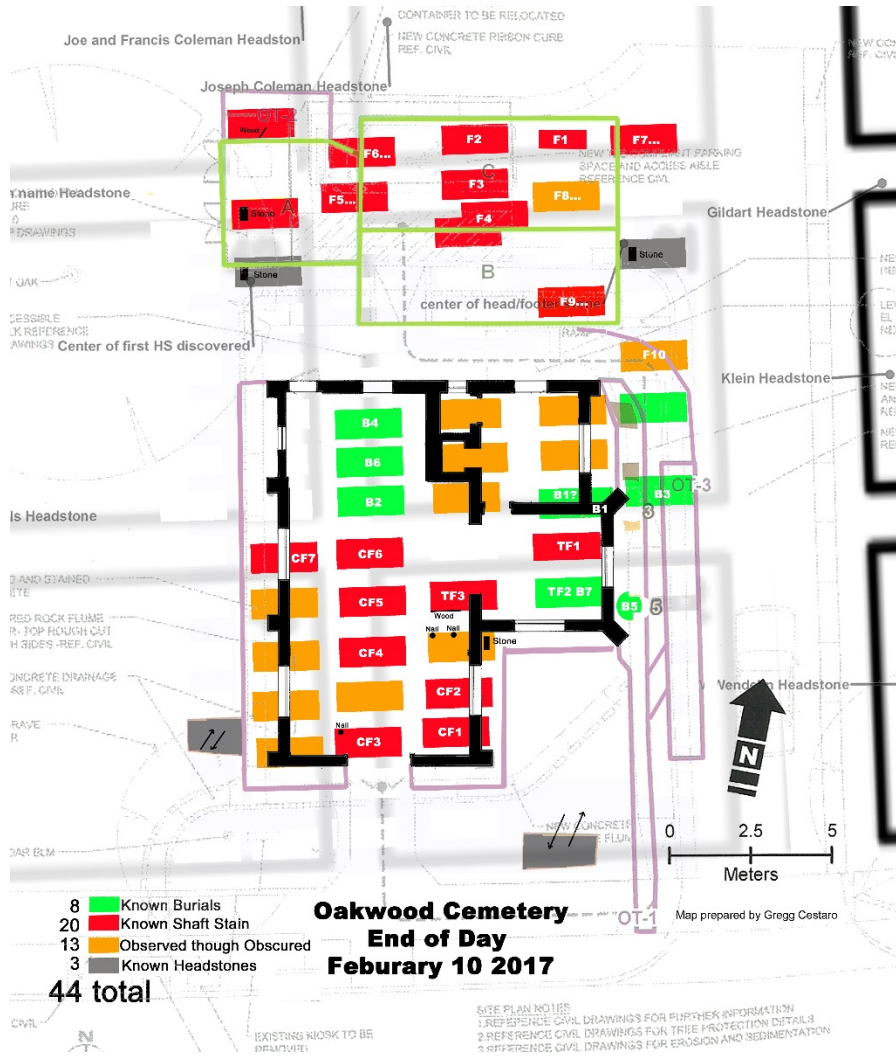


Figure 6: Iron horse shoe



Figure 1: Assorted Keys

Site discoveries



Constraints and Challenges



- The Oakwood Cemetery is a COA Historic Landmark and the building cannot be moved or demolished
- The Chapel has received past renovations, previously disturbing interior soils
- Portions of some burials extending underneath the building walls cannot be exhumed
- Limited documentation of burials from this time period exists



Constraints and Challenges



- Legal and regulatory considerations
- Burials should be addressed quickly to ensure protection and safety
- Construction and demolition are underway, building is vulnerable to water infiltration
- Construction delay results in increased costs
- Costs for exhumation, redesign and adjustments to proposed construction



Church exhuming remains from unmarked graves as part of building project

- More than 100 bodies to be examined, reburied
- Discovery result of building restoration project

posted Sept. 23, 2015 12:00 a.m. (CDT)

[email article](#) [print](#) [font size](#) - +

LEADER-TELEGRAM

Serving Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and surrounding communities

Archaeological investigations at the Texas State Cemetery reveal information about the state's long-gone heroes.

Archaeological Investigations

The archaeological work at the Texas State Cemetery was all done in 1995 under the direction of the authors. It began by searching for unmarked graves in the planned construction zones using a backhoe and a gradall (a large machine that works like a backhoe). Since historic cemeteries are notorious for containing many unmarked graves whose locations are long forgotten, the investigators were pleased to find that the development of the State Cemetery was well documented in archival records, but it was decided that an archaeological search be conducted just the same. Using a gradall to carefully strip away thin layers of soil, the crew discovered unusual finds in the northeast corner of the cemetery and in the southern end under the old

improvements to facilitate increased vehicle traffic. Excavated in June and July of 1995, the 57 burials consisted of 51 Confederate Army veterans and six spouses.

The burial excavations began by using a gradall to remove overburden, revealing the tops of the caskets. Large blocks were exposed so that two graves would be ready



A Burial Ground and Its Dead Are Given Life

By EDWARD ROTHSTEIN FEB. 25, 2010



The African Burial National Monument in Lower Manhattan includes a memorial sculpted by Rodney Leon. Jessica Ebelhar for The New York Times

FREEDMAN'S CEMETERY MEMORIAL

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Freedman's Cemetery, as the name suggests, belonged to a community of former slaves established in this area after the Civil War. Dedicated in 1869, the cemetery closed in the 1920s and suffered from both neglect and vandalism. In the 1930s-40s, the construction of an expressway and a major intersection eliminated most of the remaining above-ground reminders of the cemetery. In the late 1980s, efforts to expand the city's Central Expressway led members of the local community, including descendants of those buried in the cemetery, to wage a successful campaign to halt freeway construction long enough for an archeological survey and excavations of the cemetery and the relocation of those interred within it. Between 1991-94, an archeological investigation uncovered more than 1,000 graves, which were carefully relocated, and the local community constructed this memorial. Sculptures by David Newton tell the

story of African Americans and their descendants' journey from slavery to emancipation. Poems around the perimeter also commemorate those originally buried here.

Precedent

- African Burial Grounds, Lower Manhattan, NYC
- Dallas Freedman's Cemetery
- First Street Cemetery, Waco



PARD decision to be based on:



- Community feedback from today's meeting
- Email feedback received prior to April 5
- Professional archeological recommendations
- City of Austin Law Dept. opinion
- Time constraints
- Precedent cases
- Financial feasibility
- Interpretive value of bioarcheological analysis



Commemorative Public Process

- “Interpretation, Commemoration, Reclamation”
- Facilitated by PARD Cultural Center staff
- Series of 3 meetings, to commence in late Spring
- Seeking recommendations for a memorialization ceremony and interpretive components of burial discoveries





Schedule and Next Steps

- Document community feedback in staff report, to be issued and posted by April 7
- Share draft report and staff recommendation at follow-up meeting:
 - Britton, Durst, Howard, Spence Building
 - 1183 Chestnut Avenue
 - April 11th, 6:30-8pm
- Initiate first public meeting for commemorative process – sign up to be notified

Questions & Small Group Breakout



- TABLE 1: Share general feedback and thoughts for commemoration
- TABLE 2: Provide input for additional outreach or notification (“who is not here?”)
- TABLE 3: Learn about archeological process and construction project

Feedback and Questions



PARD Project Contact:

Kevin Johnson

kevin.johnson@austintexas.gov

512-974-9506

PARD Cemeteries Contact:

Tonja Walls-Davis

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512-974-2464

www.austintexas.gov/oakwoodchapel

