

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

X  New Submission   Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia, 1818-1942, MPD

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Development and Use of African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, ca. 1840-1942  
Social Organizations of free African-Americans in Petersburg, ca. 1818-1942

**C. Form Prepared by**

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(1999 research and survey done by Sarah Fick for the Chicora Foundation)

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date June 2007

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city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature and title of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets *in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	Pages 1 through 8 Endnotes Pages 15 through 16
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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

Development and Use of African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg ca. 1820-1942  
Social Organization of free African-Americans in Petersburg, ca. 1818-1942

Petersburg's "free persons of color" had been contributing to the community from its founding, despite living under white control.<sup>1</sup> The aesthetic, social, and entrepreneurial history of this socio-economic class is visible in their cemeteries. By 1830, this class of people comprised nearly a quarter of the city's population. While many held positions in tobacco factories, free people of color established themselves as craftsmen, trades people, entrepreneurs, blacksmiths, barbers, carpenters, mechanics, preachers, shoemakers, boatmen, and restaurant owners. Despite the fact that whites ran both the local and state governments, the African-American community in Petersburg was one of the most prosperous in the nation; due largely to their own success at organizing in churches and benevolent societies.

Found most often in the Mid-Atlantic States, these benevolent societies, fraternal organizations, and mutual aid societies all functioned to give their members social solidarity along with health and funerary benefits. A unique characteristic of African-American cemeteries is the presence of "lodge stones," identifying members of these organizations. Additionally, the land for each of these cemeteries was purchased by leading members of several benevolent societies, beginning in 1818. The exact location of this first cemetery, along with many of the records of these societies, has since been lost, making the surviving cemeteries themselves among the best records of these efforts.

Segregation necessitated all-black cemeteries, therefore creating an opportunity for enterprising African-American undertakers, coffin-makers, and stone cutters to establish their own businesses. Vernacular variations on the national aesthetic trends of early African-Americans are visible in the masonry and inscriptions. Established just as the rural cemetery movement was beginning to take root in America, these cemeteries also reflect some of the nation's earliest interpretations of this movement.

Historical Context

Located in the southern part of Virginia, along the Appomattox River, Petersburg is situated on the "fall line," a narrow zone of rapids that are found at the point where rivers pass from the resistant granites of the Piedmont to the more easily eroded sands and clays of the Coastal Plain. Power generated by these falls proved ideal for running the many cotton mills and tobacco factories that would characterize the City of

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Petersburg. The fall line also marked the farthest inland point that ships could travel up Virginia's rivers.<sup>2</sup>

Here, plantation-dwelling Virginians could easily sell their produce and purchase supplies in one location. This was a prime location for a trading station, a fact recognized by Peter Jones, whose business gave rise to not only the city itself but also the name of "Petersburg." Due to the fact that it grew out of necessity, the city expanded with relatively few large-scale planning efforts. As a result, streets were extended in a meandering fashion. The majority of homes were built from wood, mined from the oaks, hickories, and other deciduous trees native to the area. By 1745, Petersburg was large enough to be considered a town, and its inhabitants petitioned for its legal establishment. This was granted in 1748. As it continued to expand, Petersburg was united with neighboring Blandford, Pocahontas, and Ravenscroft in 1784.<sup>3</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, the Appomattox River had enabled Petersburg to become home to thriving cotton mills and iron foundries. Tobacco, however, continued to be the most profitable industry. This opportunity for wage labor drew many free African-Americans to the city. In 1810, only 310 free persons of color resided in Petersburg, but by 1830, this number had grown to 2,032.<sup>4</sup>

Economic History

From its inception, one of the City's primary sources of income was the tobacco industry. Located in the heart of Virginia's "tobacco country," Petersburg was a natural place for the state's largest cash crop to be prepared for shipment, making it the third-largest tobacco producer in Virginia.<sup>5</sup> In 1831, Leslie and Brydon, a typical tobacco factory, recorded a labor force which included 52 slaves and 44 free African-Americans. An unspoken understanding existed among Petersburg's labor force, as blacks typically worked in the unmechanized tobacco industry while white laborers staffed the steam-driven cotton mills. By 1860, about twenty-five per cent of tobacco factory workers were free blacks.<sup>6</sup> Other working-class African-Americans worked in the railroad industry, building such monuments as the floating roadbed that made the Petersburg-Norfolk Railroad an engineering milestone.<sup>7</sup>

Not all free African-Americans competed in the tobacco industry, however. Instead, many established themselves as craftsmen, trades people, and entrepreneurs. African-Americans who worked as blacksmiths, barbers, carpenters, mechanics, preachers, shoemakers, boatmen, and restaurateurs were the most likely to own property. African-Americans often held the lowest-paying jobs in their industry. For example, of the 6,959 African-American railroad employees in 1930, nearly all worked as porters, waiters, and cooks.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, the year of 1860 saw about one-third of Petersburg's 811 free black families owning property. About half of these families were headed by women, owing to the fact that there were more free black women than men.<sup>9</sup>

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Petersburg's twenty tobacco factories did not escape the national economic crash of the 1870's, but they were among those that survived to reach a peak in the 1880's. Despite the crash and the seasonal nature of tobacco processing, the city's free African-Americans continued to be among the most prosperous in America. This was among the reasons that the Commonwealth of Virginia chose to establish the State Colony at Petersburg in 1938 to care for homeless and mentally challenged African-American youth.<sup>10</sup>

When American tastes in tobacco shifted from the darker smoking and chewing tobacco to lighter cigarettes around the turn of the century, several factories stayed open by exporting plug and twist tobacco to Asia. In 1908, Petersburg was home to five such large tobacco-exporting companies, which employed over 5,000 people (most of whom were African-American). Racial segregation continued in the labor force, with whites working in the mechanized cigarette factories, and an equal number of black men and women completing the manual tasks of plug, twist, and leaf-producing factories. In 1942 much of this dark tobacco was bought by the U.S. government as a trade item for workers in the South Seas.<sup>11</sup>

Undertaking

Undertaking was an occupation that came into existence during the nineteenth century as some carpenters, livery-stable keepers (who often supplied the horses for funerals), and barber-surgeons trained in embalming began to coordinate for funerals. Embalmers preferred to do their work outside the home, and viewing rooms began to appear at the embalming locations. The position developed into that of a funeral director when the ceremonies began to be conducted outside the home as well.<sup>12</sup>

The occupation of undertaker developed along parallel lines in the white and black communities. Both began doing the work part-time. Four such part-time undertakers (all white) are first mentioned in the 1859 city directory; the earliest black undertakers are not mentioned until 1873. However, by 1888, there were four prominent black undertakers in the city of Petersburg: Green & Crowden, Philip Robinson, Thomas Scott, and James M. Wilkerson. Wilkerson was the fourth registered embalmer in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the first of African descent.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the fact that burial grounds were segregated, undertaking provided a rare opportunity for these men to operate their businesses without white competition. Additionally, a successful African-American undertaker could earn a comfortable living, making it one of the most competitive occupations in the community. Petersburg has seen no less than sixteen different African-American undertaking firms since 1873.

Next to Wilkerson's establishment (which is still in operation today), the most successful of these enterprises was owned by Captain Thomas H. Brown. Brown entered the trade

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through knowledge gained from working in a pharmacy, and, by 1897, he had taken over Thomas Scott's undertaking business. Also a prolific writer, Brown published newspapers targeted toward the black community, and wrote numerous letters to editors, politicians, and club members.<sup>14</sup>

One of the topics that Brown felt most passionately about was the preservation of Petersburg's African-American cemeteries. It was his ownership of a part of People's Cemetery, and Wilkerson's ownership of Little Church, East View, and also a section of People's Cemetery, that had enabled the two men to outlast their competitors.

African-American Burial Customs and Cemeteries

Funerals have long been an important feature in African-American societies. In Africa, tradition dictated that funerals were one of the most important events of a person's life. Although separated from this heritage by thousands of miles, most slaves retained this tradition, though the ceremonies themselves took on a more Christian nature after many slaves converted. Funerals provided a rare opportunity to celebrate the life of an individual from their own community, despite the observation of a white overseer.

African-American funerary tradition retains many elements of African origin, although they are essentially a synthesis of the African and European burial practices. African belief stated that any soul not interred was forced to rest uneasily, roaming the earth as a frightening "plat-eye," or ghost. The first body interred at a particular burying ground was also thought to be subjected to an unrestful afterlife. For those lucky enough to be interred in an established cemetery, clay figures (later substituted by prized personal effects of the deceased or effigies, or carved likenesses, on tombstones).<sup>15</sup>

While African graves were usually only marked with these small artifacts, favorite slaves were often accorded the honor of a tombstone, a tradition that seemed rather impersonal to slaves. They recognized the permanence of this memorial, however, and adapted it to their tradition by decorating such slate, and later concrete, monuments with shells or pebbles. Wealthier African-Americans began to desire markers even more like those of their distinguished white neighbors, and, in the Victorian era those who could afford marble headstones began purchasing them. The weight and softness of marble made it extremely difficult to transport, causing many to begin using granite stones.<sup>16</sup>

Another unique feature of African-American graveyards is the appearance of the word "Mizpah" on many stones. Used in reference to the Biblical covenant Jacob and Laban struck, "God will watch over us when we are apart" (Genesis xxxi, 49), the blessing promised the believers a future meeting. It is interesting that very few white cemeteries contain a reference to this verse, while it is found on several stones in each of

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Petersburg's African-American Cemeteries. Perhaps African-Americans interpreted the statement as Jacob's hope for future justice for Laban's mistreatment of him<sup>17</sup>.

In the lives of free African-Americans, funerals continued to be an important feature in community life. These events provided an opportunity for people to gather together, remain updated on the lives of neighbors and friends, take a break from often mundane or grueling jobs, as well as to remember the deceased.

The importance of funerals necessitated a burying ground. Usually, "free persons of color" and urban slaves were buried in a potter's field; the cheapest option for the public. A few early African-American cemeteries existed, such as the "colored burying ground" given to Petersburg in 1794 by Robert P. Bolling. In 1856, however, the city decided to develop the land.<sup>18</sup> Some churchgoers were allowed a plot within the church's cemetery, and a few wealthier individuals were buried in a corner of Petersburg's Blandford Cemetery (purchased by the African-American community in 1818). This, too, was soon put to an end with the passing of Petersburg's 1837 Ordinance, which stipulated that no African-American burials were permitted within white cemeteries.

The free African-American community responded quickly; in 1840, twenty-eight prominent men purchased one acre of land from William H. Williams "for use as a burying ground" in what is today People's Memorial Cemetery. Through the organization provided by benevolent societies, groups of free blacks expanded this cemetery in 1865 and again in 1868. Perhaps due to mistrust of the city after its 1856 decision, each of these purchases was made by groups of individuals and (although these men were associated with specific organizations) ownership remained private. James Wilkerson purchased Little Church Cemetery in 1882 from a prominent white family and, by 1866, he owned East View/Wilkerson Memorial as well.

These complicated ownership titles meant that cemetery plans were often lost or ignored. Responsibilities for maintenance were often unclear and, as a result, Petersburg's African-American cemeteries fell into varying states of disrepair. Conventional headstones were not always used; often they were simply too expensive. One of the notable remedies for this was the placement of "lodge stones" at the member graves of fraternal or mutual-assistance organizations. At least fifty of these organizations are represented by extant lodge stones. These small plaques, however, garnered little respect from the white community, who continued to see the unfenced, overgrown black cemeteries as eyesores.

The misuse of African-American cemeteries did not go unnoticed. Thomas H. Brown campaigned for the elimination of Petersburg's property tax on burial grounds (which he achieved in 1922), and continued to appeal to the City Council for funds to maintain the grounds of this rapidly deteriorating local landmark. These efforts proved to be in vain,

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as the only money City Council spent on the site in Brown's lifetime was for the reinterment of 108 graves that were exhumed to allow for an expansion of route 301.<sup>19</sup>

With the end of the Civil War in 1865, African-Americans were allowed to attend white churches for the first time. As this became increasingly popular in the years of Reconstruction, many white churches began granting their African-American members ownership of separate pieces of property on which to build separate African-American branches of the church. Here, sermons were preached by interim white ministers or unordained African-Americans until Henry Williams (buried at Little Church), who was one of the state's earliest African-American ministers, began preaching at Petersburg's Gillfield Baptist Church in 1866.<sup>20</sup>

Benevolent Societies

Private fraternal organizations have a long history in America, and their goals range from socializing, to creating cultural and ethnic affinity, to religious outreach, to educational philanthropies and charitable support. The free black community's emphasis on burials created a need among working-class individuals for respectable burials at a low cost. This would be the primary function of Petersburg's African-American benevolent societies.

The Elebecks and Stewarts, two of the families represented among the purchase of the 1840 "burying ground," were members of the Benevolent (later "Beneficial") Society of Free Men of Color (BSFMC), which caused the cemetery to be known as "Beneficial." The earliest American benevolent society dates to 1783, and the BSFMC, Petersburg's first African-American society, was chartered in 1818. As time progressed, local societies replaced national ones.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of benevolent societies stems from the sense of community they fostered among city-dwelling African-Americans. The number of these societies increased as Petersburg's industries grew. There were at least twenty-two beneficial societies by 1898, due to the lack of health benefits available to industrial workers. These societies functioned by collecting an initiation fee and monthly dues from each member, which, in turn, ensured the member "a square in the place of internment," along with small cash grants to surviving family members. As every member was required to attend each member's funeral, funerary arrangements soon became a primary function of these societies.<sup>22</sup>

Often the funerals of society members became quite elaborate: the wealthiest African-American funerals would include a five-piece walking band, three- to six- horse hearses, followed by mourners' coaches. Even the most elegant African-American funerals were tainted by inequality: an 1832 Virginia "Black Code" stipulated that a white minister must

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perform any burial service. Although it was amended in 1859, the law still required the presence of at least one white person at all funerals.<sup>23</sup>

Funeral customs were also dictated by the rituals associated with each of these societies: one known generically as the "Bury League" required women to wear white gloves and white paper flowers to be placed on members' graves. The graves of society members were also marked with plaques or "lodge stones," which date from 1873 to 1948, with the highest concentration in the 1920s. Members of secret societies, such as the Masons and Elks, are represented alongside beneficial societies such as the Order of St. Luke, National Ideal Benefit Society, Young Men's Industrial Benefit Association, and Blandford Industrial Benefit Club.<sup>24</sup> In the 1920's, most of these societies were replaced by similar associations organized by undertakers, which held the advantage of being exempt from taxation during the Great Depression.<sup>25</sup>

Aesthetic and Artistic Values

The rural cemetery movement first appeared in America in 1831 with the opening of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Massachusetts. This movement saw a shift from planned order to a more naturalistic setting, with individual families responsible for the decoration of loved ones' grave sites. Petersburg's African-American Cemeteries show evidence of this movement in their winding pathways (People's was known to originally be accessed by a horseshoe-shaped road), small clusters of trees, and less formal organization.

The African-American cemeteries of Petersburg also show influence of the lawn-park cemetery movement, beginning around 1910. This movement reacted to the sometimes overly showy displays on individual gravestones and attempted to allow the "beauty of the lawn" to speak for itself.<sup>26</sup> "Lawn-type" markers became popular; these were concrete or bronze plates with their tops set flush with ground level. Whether these markers were chosen because of their cheap cost or to comply with this simpler trend is not known, but these "lawn-type" markers comprise almost a tenth of the stones at People's Memorial Cemetery, with a similar number occurring at East View and Little Church.<sup>27</sup>

Petersburg's African-American Cemeteries include a remarkable variety of stones, which have been classified by their shape and method of construction. Symbolism is highly prevalent, from Christian crosses and signs of the trinity to African emblems, such as jackals, spiders, hares, and tortoises. Most unique for their craftsmanship, however, are a type of concrete monument called "barbed spears" or "roofed obelisks." These obelisk-shaped monuments are topped with either a roof or an object, such as the head atop one such monument found in East View. Not only are such monuments not found at any other African-American cemeteries in the South, they would have been

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extremely difficult to construct due to the fact that they had to be made by pouring the concrete into a single mould.<sup>28</sup>

The high occurrence of concrete monuments in Petersburg's African-American cemeteries has been attributed to several different factors. Rotundo argues that such monuments were favored because they were cheaper to construct than marble or granite markers. Conversely, Little points out that these unique monuments represent the "typical and uninhibited handling of materials that characterize much of the African-American material culture"<sup>29</sup> and they were not overly concerned with adhering to white aesthetic norms.

The fencing and curbing of these Petersburg cemeteries became popular in the 1860's (following the Southern trend), and remained popular until the 1920's and 1940's. Fences in these cemeteries bear the inscriptions of the Stewart Iron Works, one of the most prolific in the nation, and the Cincinnati Iron Gate Company, operated by a member of the Stewart family. Almost none of the fencing appears to have been made locally, although it was only in the South that such decoration remained popular after the 1880's. The nearest fencing was manufactured at the Valley Forge in Knoxville, Tennessee; a small forge that employed ten men around the turn of the century. The most mysterious of these companies, however is C. Hanika and Sons, also from Ohio. Very few records have been found on this company and the few works it left behind may be among the only surviving evidence of this enterprise.<sup>30</sup>

Curbing was not marked by its manufacturer, however, several of Petersburg's stonecutters left records describing their manufacture of curbing. Charles Miller Walsh is the most widely researched Petersburg stonecutter. Active in the trade from 1865 to 1901, the Confederate veteran was willing to work for African-Americans. Other stonecutters include Arlie Andrews, V. H. Poppa, and Milton Rivers; the latter two of whom were African-Americans (for a full listing of all recorded carvers, see appendix 1). It is interesting to note, while all of these iron works were located outside of the state, the Richmond-based Oakwood is the only stone works located outside of Petersburg.<sup>31</sup>

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F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

Property Type: Historic African-American Cemeteries

Subtype: Churchyard cemeteries

*None are documented in Petersburg*

Subtype: Plantation slave cemeteries

*None are documented in Petersburg*

Subtype: Private family burying ground

*None are documented in Petersburg*

Subtype: African-American community cemeteries situated outside the core city

Description

The land for the African-American cemeteries in Petersburg was acquired through deeds between the former property owner and a group of free, successful African-American citizens. Often, this land had experienced previous use as a cemetery, but a deed (located in Hustings Court) formalized this arrangement. A grid system was set forth for the assignment of lots, but, as plans were often lost through the transferal of the property, these systems were not adhered to. In some cemeteries, families could select properties within the grid, based on what was available. In others, burial plots were sold in groups for families, and as a result, some of the oldest cemeteries still contain unused plots.

Some plots are enclosed by fences or coping, while others remain open. Deeds are not the only things that have been lost from these cemeteries; much of this fencing and even headstones have disappeared over the years, making some burials indistinguishable from unused plots.

These cemeteries include a range of markers, which we have divided into several categories: headstones and footstones, which include those vertical stones set directly into the ground, those fit into a buried "socket" or base, and those with an attached base; base, die, and cap monuments, which are topped by a heavy "cap"; box tombs, which were coffin-sized masonry boxes topped with horizontal "ledger" stones; burial vault slabs, in which the top of the concrete burial vault was left at grade, imitating a ledger; government stones, which were similar to lawn-type stones carved in bas relief and given to veterans free of charge; obelisks, which may be either marble or granite and consist of a column or shaft that terminates at a pyramidal point; pedestal tombs, which predate 1920 and contain several tiers of carving, usually terminating in a urn or other decorative element; plaque markers, which are simple metal tablets, usually set at a forty-five degree angle within a recessed frame; pulpit markers, which also have tilted

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surfaces and usually a carved Bible or verse; table stones, which consist of four to six pillars supporting a ledger stone two to three feet off of the ground; and raised-top inscription markers, which are similar to lawn-type or government markers except that they are raised about six inches above the ground.

Significance

Cemeteries that qualify for registration under this nomination are significant because of the information they provide about the African-American community in Petersburg, ca. 1820-1942. Under Criteria Consideration D, a cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from its association with historic events or distinctive design features. Those that qualify with this nomination reflect various aspects of black ethnic history in Petersburg, and through their location, grave markers, and landscape plans they illuminate the similarities and differences between Petersburg's two separate communities.

These cemeteries qualify under Criteria Consideration A because they display the features of Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History; and may be appropriate for listing under Community Planning and Development. They represent broad patterns of attitudes or behavior in an ethnic group whose impact on the larger community was significant but not well-documented.

Those cemeteries that display a collection of well-made commercial markers of granite or marble, as well as distinctively crafted concrete markers of less-common designs, also qualify under Criterion C as Art.

Registration Requirements

To qualify as a member property under this listing, properties must have been used for African-American burials between the years of 1820 and 1942. The key registration requirements are a grid organization into regularly-sized family plots; casual drives and/or walkways; a few trees in a grassy landscape; the predominance of middle-cost gravestones with standardized iconography and text; and the juxtaposition of other markers: marble obelisks, unique concrete pedestals, lodge stones, and pulpit markers.

To qualify, a property must retain its original integrity of setting, design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, feelings, and association. Although boundaries may have shifted over time, the makeup of the landscape will still include open ground, grassy cover, scattered trees or shrubs, and uncurbed walks and/or driveways. Any new features must remain in number and size unobtrusive less of a focal point than the historic gravestones. These gravestones will not have been taken very good care of and will be in varying states of disrepair.

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Any modern building added to the land of a cemetery must be simply designed and of a small scale. Rubbish should be cleared and the vegetation trimmed periodically to ensure that the properties retain their historic integrity. This ongoing maintenance will be vital to the survival of the cemeteries. Three known resources are People's Memorial Cemetery, Little Church Cemetery, and East View Cemetery.

G. Geographical Data

The corporate boundaries of the City of Petersburg (independent city), Virginia.

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**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods** (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The multiple property listing of historic and cultural resources of the African-American Cemeteries of Petersburg, Virginia is based on extensive archival research, a detailed field survey and inventory, and a penetrometer survey conducted by the Chicora Foundation and Historic Preservation Consultants. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the City of Petersburg developed a cost-share plan to fund the research. The properties to be surveyed (People's Memorial, Little Church, East View, and the African-American section of Blandford Cemetery) were identified by the City of Petersburg's Museums Manager and Director of Planning, so a reconnaissance-level survey was not necessary. Site surveys from the project's first fieldworkers focused on determining the layouts of the grounds, marker types and dates, and plot orientation. These surveys determined that the most visible social patterns documented within the cemetery were employment and associational patterns within Petersburg's African-American community, cemetery ownership and management, and contemporary trends in other American cemeteries. Additional field surveys conducted in People's Memorial Cemetery included a penetrometer survey (which measured the compaction of soil), a detailed inventory of all of the markers, and a plat of all markers and features, conducted by Harvey L. Parks. A final reconnaissance survey and photos were taken to update these records in the summer of 2007.

The archival research of the survey report, Michael Trinkley, Debi Hacker, and Sarah Fick, *The African-American Cemeteries of Petersburg, Virginia: Continuity and Change* (Chicora Foundation Research Series 55, Columbia SC, 1999) was largely conducted in Petersburg's Hustings Court, Petersburg's Siege Museum, and Richmond City's library. This was supplemented by "African-Americans in Petersburg: Historic Contexts and Resources for Preservation Planning, Research and Interpretation" (a 1994 report prepared by Mary Ellen Bushey, et. al. for the City of Petersburg under an earlier cost-share grant from the Department of Historic Resources). Additional research, conducted in the summer of 2007, utilized books, other nominations, and archival records in the DHR archives and volumes from local libraries pertaining to the histories of Petersburg and Virginia's African-Americans.

The study focused primarily on the cultural traditions revealed in these cemeteries, with an emphasis on the role of fraternal, secret, and benevolent societies in the black community. Cemeteries provide some of the only surviving records of these societies actions. Significant cemeteries bear witness to the practices of these societies use during the height of their prevalence in Petersburg (1818- ca. 1942). All of the cemeteries surveyed were found to be of one subtype, "Cemeteries situated outside the core of the city" (none were plantation, churchyard, or mass burial sites; the other subtypes known to exist in Virginia).

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For a cemetery to contain the necessary integrity, it must be proven to contain African-American burials from the period of significance. It has so far proven impossible to find such cemeteries that do not contain at least a few broken or displaced stones and fences, but this does not detract from the site's integrity. Rather, it reinforces the racial inequality that makes these cemeteries unique.

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the information presented in this form was found in Sarah Fick, *African-American Cemeteries of Petersburg: Continuity and Change* (Petersburg: the Chicora Foundation, 1999). This work represents an extensive research effort and survey conducted with the goal of nominating these properties for the National Register. Draft nomination forms were completed for the MPD, People's Memorial Cemetery, Little Church Cemetery, and East View Cemetery, but they were never submitted. The following is a synthesis of Fick's research and my own, as updated in 2007. Background of "free persons of color" found on pp. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> Petersburg's geographic history taken from Edward A. Wyatt, IV. *Along Petersburg Streets: Historic Sites and Buildings of Petersburg, Virginia*. (Richmond, Dietz Publishing Company, 1943), pg. 6-9. Fick, pp.9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Wyatt, pp. 6-9.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics from Bushey, Mary Ellen, Ann Creighton-Zollar, Lucius Edwards, Jr., L. Daniel Mouer and Robin L. Ryder, "African-Americans in Petersburg: Historic Contexts and Resources for Preservation Planning, Research and Interpretation" (Petersburg: Department of Planning and Community Development, 1994), pp. 22-24.

<sup>5</sup> Charles L. Purdue, ed., *The Negro in Va., Compiled by the Workers of the Writer's Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Virginia* (Winston-Salem, John F. Blair, 1994), p. 341.

<sup>6</sup> According to Luther Porter Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and property holding in Virginia, 1830-1860* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, Co., 1942), pp. 74, 92-94, most tobacco factories employed about equal parts men and women, with the women doing the stemming (stripping the stems from the leaves), and the men doing the "twisting" (forming the tobacco into a twist, so that it could be "prized," or compacted).

<sup>7</sup> Purdue, p. 348.

<sup>8</sup> Purdue, p. 347-9.

<sup>9</sup> Fick, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Purdue, 378.

<sup>11</sup> Charles L. Purdue, ed., *The Negro in Va., Compiled by Writer's Program of WPA in State of Va.* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Fick, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Wilkerson's history is available at their website, J.M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, "J. M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, Inc.: About Us: Our Story," [http://www.webfh.com/fh/aboutus/history.cfm?&fh\\_id=10691&s\\_id=881B6CD163802528920528CE02B145B6](http://www.webfh.com/fh/aboutus/history.cfm?&fh_id=10691&s_id=881B6CD163802528920528CE02B145B6), accessed June 16, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Fick, p. 25-28. Brown went on to form the African-American pride organization Race Advancement Association in 1928, an early, more moderate predecessor of other racial pride organizations. (Purdue, pg. 381

<sup>15</sup> St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, "Urban Burying Leagues," *The Book of Negro Folklore*, ed. Langston Hughes (New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1958) pp. 589-90.

<sup>16</sup> Veronica A. Davis, *Here I lay my Burdens Down: A History of the Black Cemeteries of Richmond, Virginia*. (Richmond, Deitz, 2003) pp. 43, 45-47.

<sup>17</sup> Helena Lind, "Mizpah Legend and History," [www.helenalind.com/mizpah.html](http://www.helenalind.com/mizpah.html), accessed July 26, 2007.

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<sup>18</sup> Instances of the City rezoning African-American cemeteries did not end in the nineteenth century. Two others, depicted on an 1877 map, were obliterated for the Pecan Acres development in the 1970's after they had fallen into disuse, Fick, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> This section is taken from Fick, pp. 15-25, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Purdue, p. 278.

<sup>21</sup> *Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Beneficial Society of Free Men of Color, of the City of Petersburg and the State of Virginia, as revised on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of August A.D. 1852* (Special Collections, VSU). These dates can also be found in Fick, p. 16. Purdue, 324.

<sup>22</sup> Drake, pp. 189-190.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> See Alrutheus A. Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington DC: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), p. 65, and Fick pp. 15-20.

<sup>25</sup> Drake, p. 589.

<sup>26</sup> David Charles Sloane, "The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History" (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Fick, p. 37; for a drawing of the different types of markers, see Figure 1.

<sup>28</sup> Fick, pp. 36-38 and Langston Hughes, "Introduction to the Book of Negro Folklore," p. viii.

<sup>29</sup> Barbra Rotundo, "A Modern Gravestone Maker: Some Lessons for Gravestone Historians," in *Markers* vol. 14: p. 105 and Ruth M. Little, "Afro-American Gravemarkers in North Carolina," in *Markers* vol. 6, p. 268.

<sup>30</sup> Fick, pp. 43-45.

<sup>31</sup> Fick, pp. 45-47.