

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 3/7/07
NHP 5/3/07

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name West Point Cemetery, DHR File# 122-5181
other names/site number Potter's Field, Calvary Cemetery

2. Location

street & number 238 East Princess Anne Road not for publication
city or town Norfolk vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Norfolk City code 710 zip code 23510

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date 3/24/07
Signature of certifying official
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

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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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 3 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> objects
<u> 5 </u>	<u> 1 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Funerary Sub: Cemetery
 Monument Civil War statue

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Funerary Sub: Cemetery
 Monument Civil War statue

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 Other: Cemetery

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
roof _____
walls _____
other marble, granite, bronze, concrete, brick

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

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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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Local Black History
Civil War History
Reconstruction History

Period of Significance 1843-1920

Significant Dates 1873

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation African-American

Architect/Builder O'Rourke (mausoleum mason)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Norfolk State University Archives; Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 14 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
18	385442	4080201	18	385498	4079886	18	385346	4079932

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Tommy L. Bogger
 organization Norfolk Historical Society date August 10, 2006
 street & number P.O. Box 6367 telephone 757-823-2004
 city or town Norfolk state VA zip code 23508

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Nancy Johnson - Office of the City Manager
 street & number 1101 City Hall Bldg., 810 Union Street telephone 757-664-4242
 city or town Norfolk state VA zip code 23510

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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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

West Point Cemetery
Norfolk, Virginia

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Summary Description

West Point Cemetery is a 133 year old African American graveyard in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. Its fourteen acres are bounded on the east by a 10 foot high brick wall which separates West Point from the white Elmwood Cemetery. The western boundary ends at a chain link fence that parallels Armistead Avenue. The southern border is marked by row hedges which parallel Princess Anne Road, and the northernmost point narrows to 76 feet. The cemetery is characterized by a broad expanse of green lawn punctuated by clusters of headstones and monuments.

A cluster of 55 modest weather-worn headstones predates the 1873 establishment of West Point, and probably was used as a Potter's Field. A very significant grouping of headstones contain the remains of 58 black soldiers and sailors who served in the Civil War, and a monument honoring these veterans stands over their graves.

Numerous smaller clusters of headstones represent family plots. Some are enclosed by low lying brick, cement, or marble borders. The wide open spaces in the cemetery are attributed to the deterioration of wooden crosses which marked many of the earlier grave sites.

West Point Cemetery is considered a contributing site, and within its boundaries are the following resources individually noted: Potter's Field (contributing site), Civil War Graves (contributing site), Civil War Union Soldier Monument (contributing object), O'Rourke Mausoleum (contributing structure), and the West Point Cemetery entry sign (non-contributing object).

Detailed Description

Boundaries

West Point Cemetery is a 133 year-old African American graveyard in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. It is a triangular-shaped parcel of land located on a slight incline that covers approximately fourteen acres in downtown Norfolk. Its eastern boundary is a ten-foot high brick wall which separates West Point from the white Elmwood Cemetery, and stretches approximately 812 feet. The western boundary of the cemetery is enclosed by a 4½' chain link fence. The southern boundary parallels Princess Anne Road, and is 475 feet wide; while the northern-most point narrows to 76 feet. The irregularly-shaped cemetery is laid out in grids with avenues running from north to south and streets, some named after prominent African Americans, running from east to west. This city-owned cemetery, which was created for the burial of African Americans is not as elaborately landscaped as Cedar Grove and Elmwood cemeteries, and the monuments are fewer and far less grandiose than those in the cemeteries established for whites. Sycamore trees, pines, and oaks tower above the cemetery, and an assortment of evergreen bushes and occasional patches of ivy enhance the park-like atmosphere of West Point. A limestone graveled road forks at the entrance, where a simple wooden sign rising above a circular planting bed announces "West Point Cemetery." The fork which branches to the right parallels the brick wall and provides access to the northern part of the cemetery. The left fork leads to the southern and southwestern sections of the cemetery.

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Potter's Field

West Point is characterized by a broad expanse of green lawn with accompanying trees and shrubs punctuated by several clusters of headstones and monuments. A cluster of 55 modest, weather-worn headstones in section 27, Pinner's Garden pre-dates the 1873 formal establishment of West Point and sits on the highest ground. Weather and time have conspired to obliterate the etchings on most of the stones, but the earliest burial date deciphered is 1843, and at least three of the burials occurred in 1855. Many more of the remains probably date back to that year because a Yellow Fever epidemic swept through the town and carried away over two thousand souls. The modest headstones and the absence of family groupings among the 55 graves suggest that the section was an early burying ground for paupers; a Potter's Field.

Civil War Graves and Monument

Very unique to this African-American cemetery is Section 20 where the remains of 58 soldiers and sailors who served in the Civil War are reposed in three neat rows. Standing guard over the gravesites is a life-size bronze statue of a black Union soldier. The statue sits on a monument that has a steel-framed base covered with concrete. It is 13½' wide, 10½' deep, and stands 42" high. Lying on top of the base are three granite slabs. The bottom slab is 8' square and 16" high. The second and third slabs being successively smaller form a stair-step appearance. A 42" high rectangular block of granite sits on top of the slabs and serves as the base for the 13' granite column which supports the statue of the sentry. Section 20 is 113 feet deep and 37 feet and 4 inches wide. It is located on a slight incline and framed by 5 Sycamore Trees. The trees framing the monument have caused Section 20 to be erroneously identified by later generations as Sycamore Gardens. A much larger section northeast of the monument was officially designated Sycamore Gardens. Only two midsize Sycamore trees stand over that area today.

Mausoleum

There is one mausoleum in West Point and it was constructed of bricks and cement in 1876 by a mason who identified himself as O'Rourke. The badly deteriorated structure is 9 feet wide, and 12 feet long with columns at the 4 corners standing 10 feet high. It has 5 foot high iron doors, at the back and front and the city has posted a sign warning trespassers not to enter.

Examples of Family Plots and other Materials

In addition to the groupings of veteran and pauper headstones, there are numerous smaller clusters of stones representing families. They are made of marble, and occasionally there is a larger more ornamental stone bearing the family name. In a few instances, the family name is inscribed on an elaborately carved statue of an angel, as in the Bluford family plot. This particular family plot is also enclosed by a marble border measuring about 6" high and 6" wide. Several other family plots are enclosed as well, but most with bricks instead of marble. The Williams-Woods family plot is a typical plot measuring 18' by 18' and enclosed by a brick wall three rows in height.

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In addition to the marble upright stones, there are large slabs covering vaults dug into the ground. Some of these early vaults are made of brick masonry. There are at least four monuments which are made of metal and coated in gray to resemble stone, as in the left rear corner of the Williams-Woods family plot.

Most of the families who interred loved ones in West Point could not afford marble head stones, and perhaps used wooden crosses, evidence of their presence having long disappeared. Thus, the broad expanses of green lawn which characterizes West Point should not be interpreted to mean that there are numerous empty gravesites in the cemetery.

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Summary Statement of Significance

At the insistence of the black community, the city of Norfolk in 1873 designated an area west of the white Elmwood Cemetery as a burying ground for African-Americans. In 1885, black city councilman, and Union war veteran, James E. Fuller, proposed that the cemetery be named West Point, and the next year he asked his fellow council members to dedicate a section of the cemetery for the burial of black Union veterans. Norfolk had been a fertile recruiting ground for African-American soldiers during the Civil War and many local blacks distinguished themselves as soldiers and sailors. Therefore, the veterans decided to erect a monument in honor of their fellow comrades. It took over three decades of fund raising before the monument was completed in 1920. As the model for the soldier atop the monument, the committee chose Norfolk native, Sergeant William H. Carney of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. The West Point monument is a rare known monument in the South honoring black Union veterans of the Civil War as well as the Spanish American War.

A very unique aspect of West Point is the sacred ground that an appreciative African American community dedicated as the final resting place for those local heroes who served their country and their race as soldiers and sailors in the Civil War and Spanish American War. This example of blacks exercising political power during Reconstruction gives the cemetery significance in the areas of African American, Civil War, and Reconstruction History.

The Civil War

When federal policy allowed the Union army to enlist blacks, Norfolk was one of the few major cities in the South where blacks could be recruited because the area had been re-occupied by Union forces. After the Conscription Act of 1863 went into effect, northern recruiters flocked to Norfolk and offered bonuses of \$300 to blacks who were willing to serve as substitutes for white draftees. The large amount of money that local blacks received led to the establishment of a bank for freedmen in Norfolk and it served as a model for freedmen's banks in other cities.¹ In addition to local blacks serving in northern units, they enlisted in the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Regiments on the peninsula, and the 36th, 37th, and 38th Infantry Regiments which were organized in Norfolk and Portsmouth. About 1200 local blacks served. They distinguished themselves at the battles of Chaffin Farms, New Market Heights, Fair Oaks, Dutch Gap, and the sieges of Petersburg and Richmond. Many were cited for bravery and awarded medals.²

Reconstruction Politics

With their newly-acquired political power in the 1870s, Norfolk blacks began to assert themselves and insist that the city provide publicly-supported institutions for their community comparable to those that whites had. There was no city-owned burying ground for blacks; thus in 1873, the land now encompassing West Point Cemetery was designated as a burial ground for blacks and named Calvary Cemetery.³ The ordinance establishing the cemetery also authorized the "appointment of a black city resident as Keeper of Calvary Cemetery," and stipulated that revenue from the sale of lots was to be used to "enclose, embellish, and improve the land."⁴ However, more than a decade passed before any of the provisions were carried out. Thus, even though city ordinance had designated the burying ground as Calvary Cemetery, it continued to be known in the black community as Potter's Field.

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Foreseeing that a larger cemetery would soon be needed for Norfolk’s growing black population, the Norfolk City Council purchased 53 acres of Thomas Ballantine’s property northeast of the city and passed an 1877 ordinance rescinding the naming of the earlier burying ground Calvary, and designated the new property Calvary Cemetery. The cemetery established in 1873 continued to be known as Potter’s Field; however, because the name suggests that it was the resting place for paupers; many blacks with means preferred not to inter their loved ones there.⁵

Black city council member, James Fuller decided to rectify the situation in 1885 by proposing that the cemetery be named West Point, for it was located along the western side of the white Elmwood Cemetery. The council approved Fuller’s motion and it adopted his later motion that a section of West Point “...be dedicated as a special place of burial for black Union veterans...”⁶ Thus, Section No. 20 of West Point Cemetery was “donated to the Directors of the Union Veterans Hall Association for the burial of the members of the Grand Army of the Republic.”⁷

This example of black Norfolknians exercising their newly-acquired political power to acquire the cemetery gives West Point national significance because it is a manifestation of events that occurred throughout the South during Reconstruction. However, education was the number one priority of blacks and Councilman, James E. Fuller was responsible for the first school being built in Norfolk for blacks. Fuller’s school building no longer exists, and shortly after Reconstruction, African-Americans in Virginia and the South were disenfranchised, but West Point Cemetery continues to survive as a very important social institution for Norfolk’s blacks. Even though the ten-foot high brick wall separating West Point from the white Elmwood Cemetery is a dramatic reminder of the Jim Crowism that blacks experienced during the aftermath of Reconstruction, West Point allowed them to bury their dead with dignity. They also used the cemetery to gather for their annual Memorial Day observances, and they took casual strolls through the park-like setting in the warm weather months.⁸

The Civil War Union Soldier Monument

After the city granted land to the Veteran’s Association, the committee decided to have a monument erected in honor of their fallen comrades. Such an undertaking, however, entailed a lot of money and there was very little in the black community. Councilman James E. Fuller, the motivating force behind the erection of the monument was not deterred. Over a span of more than two decades, Fuller and others slowly raised money by selling pies, chicken dinners, and tickets for raffles and concerts. Before the Civil War dead had been properly honored, the Spanish-American War intervened and Norfolk blacks once again volunteered. By 1906, the committee had enough funds for the construction of the base of the monument. A plaque honoring the Spanish-American soldiers was attached to the base. James E. Fuller died in 1909, and he was interred at the foot of a great Sycamore tree. A host of churches, lodges, and civic and social groups operating under the leadership of the Norfolk Memorial Association continued the fund raising crusade until the monument was completed in 1920.⁹

William H. Carney

Several area black soldiers who served in local military units distinguished themselves and were awarded citations;¹⁰ nevertheless, the committee chose a Norfolk native who emigrated from the city prior to the Civil War for the honor of being the model for the statue which would be enshrined atop the memorial monument. William H. Carney and his family

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settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and he had planned to enter the ministry, but when Frederick Douglas issued the call for black volunteers during the war, Carney decided that he could best serve his God by serving his oppressed brothers.¹¹ He enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment and, probably because of the illegal schooling he received in Norfolk, he was promoted to sergeant. During the assault on Fort Wagner in Charleston harbor in July 1863, he picked up the regimental colors and pressed forward under heavy gunfire to the walls of the fort. Despite a severe wound in the thigh and a wound in the hand, he crawled forward and held the colors aloft.¹² When Union forces retired from the field, his comrades cheered him, for despite his wounds, he could proudly say “Boys, the old flag never touched the ground.”¹³ Sergeant William H. Carney is reported to have been the first of 16 blacks who were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for their heroics in the Civil War.¹⁴

The 35 years that it took to raise the money for the monument is a strong testimony to the black community’s determination and perseverance in seeing that the local men who had been a source of great pride in the community were appropriately recognized. The West Point Monument is also significant because it is the only known memorial in the South dedicated to African-American veterans of the Civil and Spanish American wars.

End Notes

¹Tommy L. Bogger, “The Slave and Free Black Community in Norfolk, 1775-1865” (Unpublished dissertation, University of Virginia, 1976), 297-300, and 309.

²Ibid. 301-03, and Frederick Henry Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, Vol. III: Regimental Histories (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), 1720.

³Cassandra Newby-Alexander, “Remembering Norfolk’s African-American Cemeteries.” (unpublished paper, no date), 8.

⁴Ibid., 9.

⁵Ibid., 11.

⁶Ibid., 13-14.

⁷Ibid., 14.

⁸For example of Memorial Day Observance, see Journal and Guide, June 4, 1921.

⁹Cited from West Point Monument Marker at West Point Cemetery.

¹⁰Bogger, “Slave and Free Black.” 202-03.

¹¹New Bedford, Mercury. Nov. 2, 1863.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴The Compass. Cemetery Ceremony will honor African-American Civil War Veterans, March 15, 2003.

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Parramore, Thomas et. al. Norfolk: The First Four Centuries. Charlottesville:
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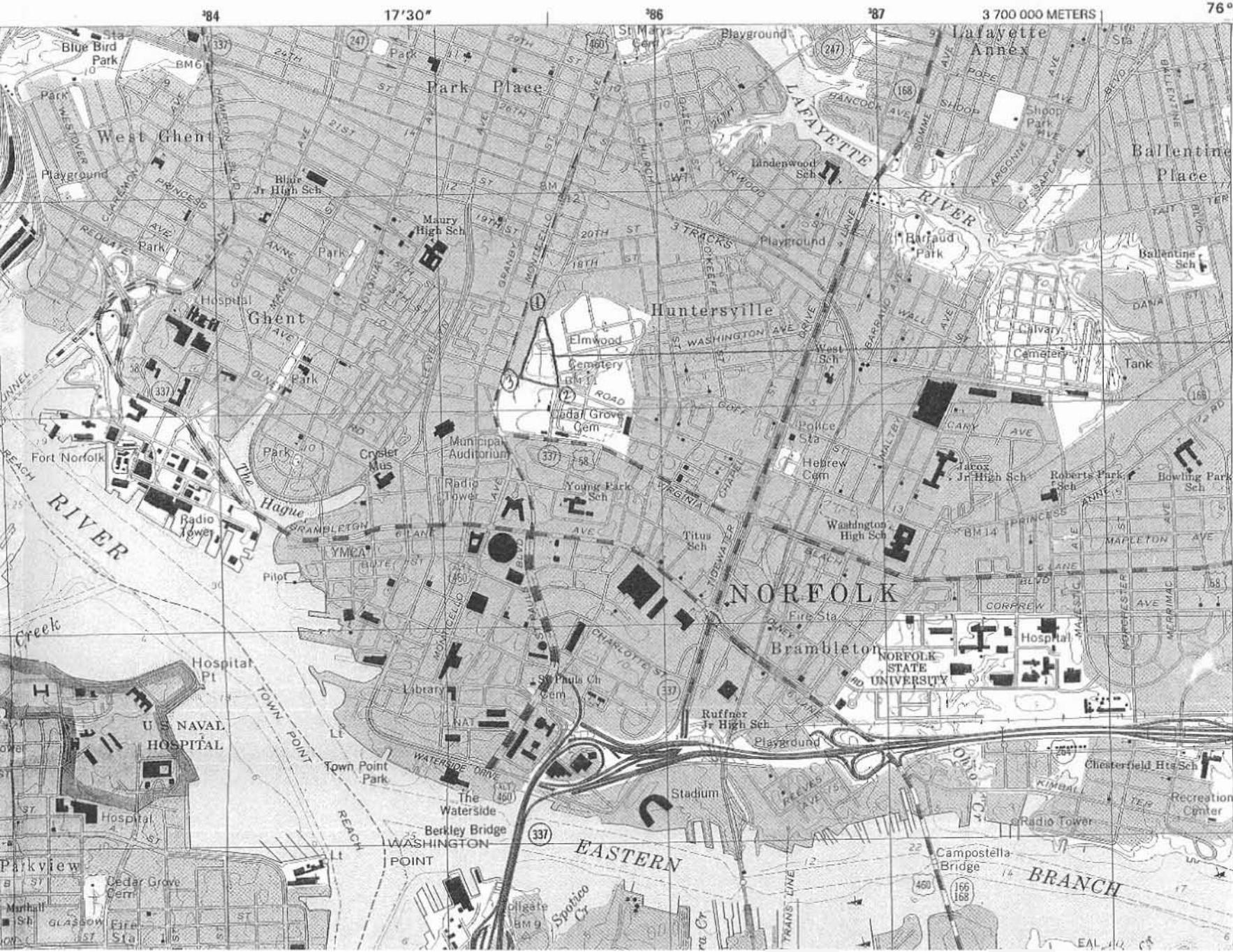
Verbal Boundary Description

West Point's eastern boundary is a ten-foot high brick wall which separates West Point from the white Elmwood Cemetery and stretches approximately 812 feet. The western boundary of the cemetery is enclosed by a 4½' chain-link fence. The southern boundary parallels Princess Anne Road, and is 475 feet wide, and the northern boundary narrows to 76 feet. See aerial map scaled at 1" = 125'.

Boundary Justification

The cemetery's boundaries were delineated by the city of Norfolk in the 1870s.

NORFOLK SOUTH QUADRANGLE
 VIRGINIA
 7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



WEST POINT
 CEMETERY
 #80 NORFOLK, VA
 122-5181
 UTM's
 1-18 385442E
 4080201N
 1 060 000
 METERS
 2-18 385498E
 40798061
 3-18 385346E
 40799321