

Historic name: Calvary Cemetery
Street & number: 1600 St. Julian Ave
City or town: Norfolk State: VA County: _____

Calvary Cemetery was established as a burial ground for the city of Norfolk's African American citizens on January 9, 1877. Calvary spans more than 68 acres. Over a century, African Americans in Norfolk, Virginia were interred at Calvary, as there were not other burial options available to African Americans in Norfolk until integration. Inscriptions document every aspect of Black society, including Doctors, Lawyers, Businessmen, Servicemen, and Laborers. Today, Calvary serves as both a place of remembrance and a remarkable chronology of the many important contributions made by Norfolk's African American citizens to the history of Norfolk, Virginia.

Persons interred within Calvary Cemetery over the years, largely because of past segregated policies, have included noted and less well-known African Americans who made great contributions as business owners, lawyers, pastors, community leaders, etc., to Norfolk's overall city history.

Thusly, Calvary Cemetery, as a historical resting place for African Americans, is a valuable and rich community treasure trove of persons who made their home in Norfolk and invites historical, artistic, and genealogical research of post civil war, segregation and present day interments.

Significantly, the New Journal and Guide, the African American newspaper requesting the historical designation of Calvary, has reported on and documented the people in Norfolk's African American community and their contributions and livelihoods since 1900. Our newspaper resource is available on digital files and microfilm to 1916 for use by researchers. The rich history of Calvary cemetery as the site and the final resting place of Mr. P. B. Young Sr., founder of The New Journal and Guide and his family members is intricately attached to the stories of these persons. Other notables include Rev. Richard Bowling, prominent Minister and Civil Rights activist, Mr. David Gilbert Jacox, noted Educator, Mr. Joseph Jordan Sr. father of this cities first African American City Council member, Mrs. Sarah Epps McKenzie, famed Operatic Singer, and many others.

Notable Burials

Rev. Oscar J Allen
Eugene H. "Ace" Bailey
Dr. Philip L. Barber
Elijah Barco
John W. Barnes
Charles Arnett Bibbins
Rev. Richard Hausber Bowling Sr.
Rev. Richard Hausber Bowling, Jr.
Dr. Robert Junius Brown, Jr.
William W. Brown, Jr.

Clarence Charles Bullock
Dr. David Wellington Byrd
Dr. John Winston Capps
Bishop Joseph Dixon Cauthen
Dr. Joseph W. Cauthen, Jr.
Dr. Wendell Collette
Annie Harper Davis
Walter L Davis
Bishop W.H. Dunn
M. R. Edmunds
William L. Epps
Edmond F. Etheridge
Dr. G. Hamilton Francis
James Duke Fulcher
Rev. R.K.D. Garrett
Dr. John Talmadge Givens
Dr. Isaac Givens
Dr. Alpheus B. Green, Sr.
Everette F. Hill
Rev. Adolphus Hobbs
Rev. Joseph Lawrence Hoggard
Dr. Julien Dabney Jackson
David Gilbert Jacox
Mattie H. Javins
Rev. David Jennings
Joseph A. Jordan Sr.
Emma V. Kelley
Dr. Alphonso N. Land
Walter Henry Land
Rev. Thaddeus D. Lee
Rev. William Mack Lee
Rev. John J. Mainor
Sarah Epps McKenzie
Willis E. Moore
Dr. James E. Mills
Dr. Eric G. Mitchell
Dr. Edward W. Murray
Dr. James E. Newby, Jr.
Richard (Ace) Parker
Oatrice Quillin
Rev. Dr. Thomas Euric Sears
David Smithey
Minnie L. Stokes
Dr. Frank Ryder Trigg

Dr. John Q. A. Webb
John B. Williams
Len Williams
Eleanor W. Young
Henry Cheatham Young
Plummer Bernard Young, Sr.
Plummer Bernard Young, Jr.
Undine Davis Young
Winfield F. Young

Department of Historic Resources
Nomination of Calvary Cemetery....additional questions
[May 2017]

1. What was located on the site before it became a cemetery?

Prior to becoming Calvary Cemetery, this area of land was private property owned by Thomas R. Ballentine. During the time of purchase, city records state that the land was located on Tanner's Creek, north of Princess Anne Road. Our records do not provide the specifics about how Mr. Ballentine used the land before he sold it to the city.

2. What is known about the Corporation that established the cemetery? The city of Norfolk in Virginia established Calvary cemetery.

Calvary Cemetery was established by the City of Norfolk, a municipal entity. In 1845 Norfolk was incorporated into a city. Prior to 1845, the city was known as the Borough of Norfolk. Historical records indicate that Norfolk officials formed the Joint Committee of Councils on Cemeteries, which included the Select Councils, Common Councils and other sub-groups to manage the affairs of its cemeteries.

3. How was the land acquired and who owned it prior to it becoming a cemetery?

In answer to a need for a larger area for internment of African Americans in the Norfolk community, 53 acres of Thomas R. Ballentine property was purchased by the city of Norfolk in 1877. On January 9, 1877, the city passed

an ordinance that named this land Calvary Cemetery and appropriated it to be used as a burial ground for Norfolk's African American residents and visitors. After the purchase of the larger property it was decided to name the original 14-acre cemetery West Point cemetery. In 1911 an additional 15 acres were purchased. Within its 68 acres Calvary Cemetery currently has in excess of 40,355 internments.

4. Is it known who designed or laid out the cemetery?

Specifics regarding design and land architect(s) of Calvary Cemetery has not been disclosed in my research. All improvements, conservation efforts, management of interments and groundskeepers were controlled by the Joint Committee of the Councils on Cemeteries, a group appointed by city officials.

5. Is there any relationship between this cemetery and the West Point Cemetery, the first African American Cemetery in Norfolk? Calvary Cemetery was born out of the need for a larger area for internment of African Americans in the Norfolk community as opposed to the 14 acres of West Point cemetery. Calvary Cemetery was established. 53 acres of Thomas Ballantine property were purchased by the city of Norfolk in 1877 and designated a cemetery, which they named Calvary cemetery. Within its 68 acres Calvary has in excess of 40,355 internments. West Point Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery also share an important connection because of their names. When it was established in 1873, West Point was initially named Calvary Cemetery. Despite the establishment of another cemetery in 1877 that was also named Calvary Cemetery, it was not renamed as West Point until 1885.

6. How did the City come to purchase it in 1911? *According to the Norfolk Landmark*, December 20, 1910, "Select Site for Cemetery" - Calvary Cemetery additional acreage was annexed between 1910 and 1911 to increase the cemetery size it was at purchase in 1877.

The recommendation of the committee appointed to select a site for a colored cemetery was adopted by the Councils. The Calvary Cemetery, Inc., will go out of the business of burying people and the city will purchase their twenty-three acres of grave yard for \$19,500 in 4 1-2 per cent bonds at par. The site immediately joins the old Calvary Cemetery owned by the city. It was bought by a private corporation, and converted into a burial place for colored people.

Also reported in The Ledger-Dispatch, December 20, 1910, "Hot Fight in Council Over the Cemetery" - Calvary Cemetery

The special cemetery committee of the Norfolk City Council decided to recommend that the city buy the Calvary cemetery annex for the burial purposes of the colored population of the city.

(1) The annex property was already developed for cemetery purposes, and the purchase of it will get out of the city's way a sharp competitor in the cemetery business.

(2) The cost of the maintenance of an annex to Calvary cemetery - the running expenses - will be the wages of two men less than at any other site offered.

(3) The colored people themselves want it purchased because of its convenience to them in walking to it, because the burials there will be less expensive to them, and because it will avoid separating their dead, they, many of them, having heretofore used Calvary cemetery for burial purposes.

7. Are there any artistic or unusual designs for any of the grave markers or monuments, or, are they typical of the designs represented in most cemeteries. The artistic designs in Calvary are typical designs represented in most cemeteries, however, two most unique are the oven tomb and the tree of life marker.

Friends of Norfolk's Historic Cemeteries restored the tomb of Father William H. Lewis, founder of Saint Paul CME Church. When Father Lewis died in 1882, he was interred a tomb that is the only one of its kind in Calvary

Cemetery. The "Beehive" or "Oven tomb" design allowed families to take full advantage of burial space on their lots by including individual underground vaults onto which caskets could be placed.

8. How does this cemetery compare to the other African-American cemeteries in Norfolk?

Paige/Mt. Olive Cemetery in the Berkley section of Norfolk is a privately owned/ now considered heir property where African Americans were buried in the early 1800s. In the Oakwood section of Norfolk there is a community burial section in front of Mt. Gilead Baptist church on Sewells Point road that is maintained by the church. Ownership of this burial ground is unknown. Other cemeteries in the city of Norfolk are on church property. These cemeteries are reliant on the community for upkeep and maintenance; the headstones are dirty, worn and weed-ridden and or broken. There is no existing perpetual care agreement only the discretion of the churches or community for care and maintenance, whereas Calvary Cemetery and West Point cemeteries are city owned and maintained.

In comparison to other burial grounds in Norfolk, Calvary Cemetery's 68 acres of land made it the largest available burial ground for African Americans during segregation. Another notable fact is that the Excelsior Band was popular for funerals. The Band played slow funeral music on the way to Calvary Cemetery, then party music on the way back in the New Orleans style.

Historic Calvary Cemetery history begins with Spanish-American War veterans interred on the same lot as U.S. Colored Troops who served in the Civil War. It spans the antebellum period, post-bellum period, post-Civil War era, Reconstruction & the Civil Rights era to present day. Norfolk's historically prominent African Americans are buried on these grounds. Calvary cemetery offers a tour highlighting the life of 30 Norfolk Notables including the personal servant to Civil War General Robert E. Lee.