



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 100-5752

1. General Information

District name(s): Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

Main Streets and/or Routes: Wilkes and Payne Streets (see more detail below)

City or Town: Alexandria

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: City of Alexandria

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: App. 53 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban x Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural _____

Briefly describe the district’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex comprises 13 individual, mostly contiguous cemeteries on 53 acres, with more than 35,000 burials to date. Although owned and managed by multiple entities, the complex is delineated as a cohesive cultural landscape on early maps and, perhaps more importantly, in the collective perception of city residents for more than two centuries. The complex is mostly bounded and organized internally by an established grid of streets that expanded as the City of Alexandria grew. Wilkes Street, which begins near the Potomac River about one mile to the east, continues between several of the cemeteries and ends at Alexandria National Cemetery within the complex. The eastern boundary of the complex is South Payne Street. The western boundary is primarily Hoeff’s Run, Holland Lane, and Jamieson Avenue. The northern extent of the cemetery complex is defined by a former railroad bed and bridge, now a road and vehicular bridge; a portion of this northern boundary is limited by the former Spring Garden stream that has become a drainage ditch over time. The southern boundary is the current city archives and fire training facility; formerly, this was the municipal incinerator and later a print shop. A sewage treatment plant completes the southern boundary. Beginning in the 1950s and particularly since the 1970s, the areas around the northern, eastern, and western boundaries have shifted from industrial (warehouses, factories, and railroad facilities) to almost exclusively residential with rowhomes, townhomes, and mid-rise or garden-style apartments, particularly when formerly industrial parcels are redeveloped.¹ The combined impact of urban renewal and redevelopment of industrial lots means that, when looking outward from the cemetery complex, the immediate vicinity reflects a design of the built environment and urbanization patterns dating from the 1950s through today.

The complex began at the edge of Alexandria in what was then Fairfax County within a large tract of land known as Spring Garden. The gridded streets of Alexandria extended toward the Spring Garden where they gave way to a series of lanes with less of a formal structure and narrower dimensions than the more urban streets within the city limits, probably to enable small farms or gardens to bring food to market. Today, while the primary east-west paths inside the

¹ *Southwest Quadrant Small Area Plan* Department of Planning and Community Development. City of Alexandria. June 1992 with 1996, 2005, 2010, and 2018 amendments. Pp. 1, 3, A1.

complex visually extend Wilkes, Gibbon, Franklin, and Jefferson Streets, only Wilkes Street remains as an actual street. The rest are closed off at the complex's eastern boundary.²

A sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) tree, designated a Bicentennial witness tree that is at least 250 years old, is located in Alexandria National Cemetery.³ The city arborist has also recorded information for at least eight other trees across the complex with state or national distinction because of their size or variety ranging in age from 160 to 300 years old.⁴ As a totality, the cemetery complex is a contemporary microclimate that helps to mitigate the heat island created by the impermeable surfaces in the surrounding urban built environment. It is ringed almost entirely with either densely planted trees or hedgerows.

Although not initially envisioned as a cohesive site, the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex became a geographically and historically distinct unit over time. In 1796, Alexandria established the first cemetery, Penny Hill, a public or municipal cemetery outside the city limits in then-Fairfax County.⁵ In 1806, four religious organizations (Christ Episcopal, St. Paul's,

Presbyterian, and Trinity United Methodist) collectively sought cemetery land when city officials sought to circumscribe burials within the city limits. In 1804, "An Act to remove nuisances, preserve health of the inhabitants, and for other purposes" stated "that from and after the passing of this law no burying ground shall be opened or allotted for the interment of human bodies within the limits of the corporation."⁶ Looking to their future needs, they purchased properties located about one-half mile to the northwest of Penny Hill. In subsequent decades, these five cemeteries were joined by other religious and civic institutions, including the first Jewish cemetery in Virginia (Home of Peace, in 1857), one of the first national cemeteries in America (Alexandria National Cemetery, founded in 1862 as Soldiers' Cemetery),⁶ two late nineteenth-century African American cemeteries (Black Baptist, founded in 1885, and Douglass Cemetery, founded in 1895), and others (see below for full list).

Although the term "Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex" has only been applied in contemporary times, earlier accounts reflect the public's view of the individual cemeteries as an entity. Periodic attempts have been made to coordinate maintenance and improvements, including an 1841 initiative by St. Paul's to seek "some permanent supervising control, seeming to be necessary, to insure safety, as well as protection from injury" and a later more general plea to beautify "the grave yards."⁸ There were suggestions throughout the years (never seeming to move much beyond the idea stage) to form one large cemetery or to erect one unified fence around all the properties.⁷ On a "bright Sunday" in May 1900, "the cemeteries were visited by throngs of people who were going and coming until after sundown."¹⁰ As a whole, the complex has fulfilled, and continues to fulfill, a vital cultural function for the city as a place of reflection, memorialization, and even recreation.

² A narrow driveway connects the flag lot of Agudas Achim to South Payne Street at Franklin Street.

³ Alexandria National Cemetery, NRHP Registration Form, VDHR File No. 100-138, Section 7 & 8, pg. 2.

⁴ City of Alexandria, Register of Notable Trees,

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/recreation/parks/registernotabletrees.pdf>. For the identification and placement of these trees within the complex, see

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1gEMF3Wb6GpWRqOYD3hCWBSn37_4&ll=38.80139245562145%2C-77.0566990777504&z=17

⁵ Land purchased by the city in 1795--"Minutes of the Alexandria City Council 1792-1800" cited in Wesley Pippenger, *Tombstone Inscriptions of Alexandria*, Volume (X), 1992, pg. 43 ⁶ *The Laws of the Corporation of the Town of Alexandria*, 1811, pg. 100.

⁶ National Cemetery Administration, Dates of Establishment: National Cemeteries & NCA Burial Sites,

https://www.cem.va.gov/facts/Dates_of_Establishment_1.asp ⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 26, 1841; March 24, 1866

⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 26, 1841; February 9, 1855; March 16, 1852; June 21, 1866 ¹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*,

May 14, 1900.

In 1915, the area was formally annexed into the City of Alexandria. What was once a rural hinterland in Fairfax County is now firmly within the boundaries of the City of Alexandria. Yet, despite its proximity to a major highway (U.S. I-95) and commuting routes (e.g., U.S. Hwy. Route 1 and Duke Street) and to significant and ever-expanding residential and commercial development, the Wilkes Street complex remains a quiet, timeless oasis for the souls buried within it and visitors today.

3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s): _____

Variety of styles reflecting the periods when the cemeteries were embellished with ornamentation, such as entrance gates, as well as when gravestones and other individual memorials were erected.

They include Classical/Greek revival, Egyptian Revival, Federal, Gothic, Romanesque, Second Empire. Later styles include Art Nouveau and Art Deco, as well as more recent graves that reflect stacked Niche burial practices in Latino culture.

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here:

U.S. Army Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, within Alexandria National Cemetery, designed the Superintendent's Lodge; stone carvers William Chauncey and his sons, and Charles Lloyd Neale designed tombstones and other funerary in Christ Episcopal, St. Paul's, Presbyterian, Methodist Protestant, Trinity Methodist, Home of Peace, Union Cemetery of the Washington Street United Methodist.

If any builders or developers are known, please list here:

N/A

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate):

First cemetery (Penny Hill) was established in 1796. The most recently established cemetery was Agudas Achim, in 1933. As noted below, the other eleven cemeteries were established between these two dates, at various times in the nineteenth century.

Are there any known threats to this district?

There are longstanding drainage issues along the northern edge of Douglass Cemetery that have resulted in standing water covering portions of that cemetery. The City of Alexandria is actively working to improve drainage in this area. The Black Baptist Cemetery adjacent to Hooff's Run and Holland Lane is vulnerable to erosion due to the steep slope of the current cemetery area. The western portions of the complex adjacent to the Black Baptist and Alexandria National Cemetery are designated as the African American Heritage Memorial Park by the City of Alexandria. The remaining surroundings are either residential or industrial and have, since the 1970s, been trending towards more residential.⁸ Continued urban encroachment could adversely impact the parklike setting of the complex. As a counter to these potential threats, it should be noted that all of the cemeteries are actively owned and managed, whether by government, private, or religious entities. There is not a risk of a condominium or other development being built within the properties' boundaries, but it is likely that additional development will take place on nearby areas.

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include

⁸ *Southwest Quadrant Small Area Plan*, Department of Planning and Community Development. City of Alexandria. June 1992 with 1996, 2005, 2010, and 2018 amendments. Pp. 1, A1.

prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district.

The complex is approximately 53 acres with more than 35,000 burials beginning in 1796 and continuing today.⁹ Stylistically, the graveyards contain a variety of monuments and memorials generally using typical motifs and methods appropriate to the period and place. No one cemetery individually nor the complex as a whole, with the exception of the National Cemetery, is architecturally distinguished nor of a uniform style or degree of workmanship. Instead, there are individual monuments, memorials, and gravesites that record specific styles and moments in American history. These are interspersed among otherwise “typical” markers, making the significance, as is common for an historic district, more based in its long use and representation of broad patterns as a whole rather than any singular component’s significance.

Generally, the gravestones follow the typical progression of the older stones being marble progressing through 20th century granite to a variety of later materials including concrete and “white bronze” (cast zinc). Equally, the more rounded form of early 1800s gravestones shifts to squarer ones with lighter interpretations of death. Technological advances from hand-worked softer stones, like marble, to machine-carved much harder stones, like granite, are also commonly present. Importantly, most of the cemeteries read as planned with organized layouts varying by cemetery owner. The internal layouts of each cemetery are generally rectilinear, although the Presbyterian and National Cemeteries include curved or circle driveways in their plans. The order within Black Baptist and Penny Hill cemeteries is not discernable, in part because many graves were originally marked with less permanent materials like wood or were not marked at all. Archaeology, ground penetrating radar, aerial photography and review of historical records have provided some, albeit incomplete, information about burial locations.¹⁰ Some features of historic interest include the following:

- The Second Empire superintendent’s lodge in Alexandria National Cemetery, which was originally designed by U.S. Army Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs in 1862. The original lodge was destroyed by fire in 1878; in 1887, the present lodge was built over the original walls using the original design and foundation.¹¹
- Receiving vaults in Methodist Protestant and Bethel cemeteries, where bodies were placed temporarily when the ground was too frozen to dig graves.
- Mausoleum at St. Paul’s Cemetery built for the Hooff family. The brick, barrel-vaulted tomb is similar to the Washington Family tomb at Mount Vernon, in keeping with the socioeconomic status of the Hooff family and Lawrence Hooff, Sr.’s friendship with George Washington.
- Fencing and Victorian-style gate, built 1903 with gold lettering reading “Presbyterian Cemetery 1809” surrounding the seven acres of Presbyterian Cemetery.
- Just outside the cemetery grounds, at the northeast corner of Wilkes and Payne Streets, one of the original boundary stones demarcating the District of Columbia (Southwest Stone No. 1)
- Hooff’s Run, a historic stream that runs north-south through the city, was a main navigable waterway in early Alexandria. A portion of the run adjacent to the cemetery complex underwent significant sewage work by the public utility AlexRenew, culminating in a rejuvenated African American Heritage Park that encompasses Black Baptist cemetery.

⁹ Estimate of number of burials from David Heiby, Superintendent, Presbyterian Cemetery & Columbarium, and historian, Gravestone Stories based on compilation by Wesley Pippenger, Find-a-Grave and modern burial documentation, and discussion with cemetery administrators and caretakers (personal communication, March 13, 2026).

¹⁰ Francine Bromberg and Steven Shepherd, [African American Heritage Park study]; Nadia Johnson and William Johnson, *Non-Invasive Geophysical Surveys: Douglass Memorial (44AX1040) and Penny Hill (44AX1034) Cemeteries, Alexandria, Virginia*, Rhea Project for Alexandria Archaeology, pp. 5-4 to 5-6.

¹¹ Alexandria National Cemetery, NRHP Registration Form, VDHR File No. 100-138, Section 7, pg. 1

- Hooff’s Run Bridge, the oldest surviving bridge in Alexandria, is seen from and is at the edge of the cemetery complex.
- The base of Appomattox, a statue of a Confederate soldier that stood at the corner of Washington and Prince Streets, at Bethel Cemetery. The United Daughters of the Confederacy, which owns the statue, removed it from public view in 2020 and relocated the base to Bethel Cemetery in 2022.¹²

Discuss the district’s general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The proposed district consists of 13 cemeteries, one public road segment (Wilkes Street from South Payne Street to its terminus in Alexandria National Cemetery), and one lane (Hamilton Lane) used for internal movement within the cemeteries. The variety of owners means that there is not one coordinated layout or plan for the complex, and this disarticulated but contiguous burial landscape is a defining feature of the complex. The borders generally conform to the roads of the original city street plan and lot divisions. Internally, the network of streets and lanes, as well as gates and walls around each cemetery have changed over time as new cemeteries were established and/or expanded and roads were closed off into cemetery lanes.¹³ For the period of time considered for a potential National Register nomination, the overwhelming setting of the area was defined by two major themes: transportation infrastructure and urban growth. Beginning with Penny Hill and continuing with the creation of later cemeteries, all were influenced by the larger urban environment of Alexandria -- specifically, that they were located *outside* the city but also reflected the composition of the population *inside* the city. Later proximity to major rail lines, railroad facilities, and transportation corridors (like Duke Street and Route 1) helped to keep the complex as distinctly bounded.

The primary entry to the complex is at the intersection of Wilkes Street and South Payne Street. Wilkes Street ends at the entrance to the National Cemetery. The existing stone curbing and brick sidewalk improvements currently distinguish this approach from others to the cemetery complex and dates to when the U.S. Army owned and maintained the right of way as a “gateway” to the National Cemetery.

The northern portion of the cemetery complex that is adjacent to Black Baptist, the National Cemetery, Trinity United Methodist, Christ Episcopal, and Douglass Cemeteries was historically close to several rail lines, railroad stations, and railroad workshops and a roundhouse around the time of the Civil War. The Kalorama Hospital,¹⁴ first documented in 1862, was located on the north side of the 1400 block of Wilkes Street and may have served railroad employees or Union soldiers or Black people who had come into Alexandria to escape slavery. The location is now a part of Douglass Memorial Cemetery.

The cemeteries within the complex, in chronological order of founding, are as follows:

- **Penny Hill Cemetery-44AX134** (1796). Created as a public or municipal cemetery, later used as a “potter’s field” for indigent Alexandrians. Owned and maintained by the City of Alexandria. Burials date from 1796 to 1976. Address: 714 South Payne.
- **Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery-44AX269** (1808). Owned and maintained by Christ Episcopal Church. First burial in 1808 through present, although burials are now infrequent. Address: 1501 Wilkes Street.

¹² James Callum, ALXnow, February 3, 2023.

<https://www.alxnow.com/2023/02/02/the-base-of-the-appomattox-statue-has-resurfaced-atop-confederategraves-in-alexandria/>

¹³ See, for example, the July 25, 1893, discussion by Alexandria City Council on a petition to connect Penny Hill to other cemeteries recorded in July 26, 1893, *Alexandria Gazette*.

¹⁴ Alexandria Gazette, December 1, 1862; History of Kalorama location, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/kalorama-hospital>; “Community: Diseases and Medical Care,” <https://www.alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/community-diseases-and-medical-care>

- **Presbyterian Cemetery and Columbarium-44AX272** (1809). Established by the Presbyterian Congregation of Alexandria, and now maintained in partnership with the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. First burial in 1809 (possibly 1803 before formal acquisition of the property for a cemetery) through present. Address: 600 Hamilton Lane.
- **Trinity United Methodist Cemetery-44AX270** (1809). Owned and maintained by Trinity United Methodist Church. First burial in 1809 through present, although burials are now infrequent. Address: 1503 Wilkes Street.
- **St. Paul's Episcopal Church Cemetery-44AX276** (1809). Owned and maintained by St. Paul's Episcopal Church. First burial in 1809. Address: 601 Hamilton Lane.
- **Methodist Protestant Church Cemetery-44AX139** (1836). Established by Methodist Protestant Church when parishioners broke off from Trinity United Methodist. Final burial, circa 1990. Cemetery now inactive and maintained by the City of Alexandria. Address: 1500 Wilkes Street.
- **Union Cemetery of the Washington Street United Methodist-44AX273** (1860). Now privately owned and maintained by James Click. First burial in 1860 (possible earlier interments moved to site) through present. Address: 1400 Wilkes Street.
- **Home of Peace Cemetery-44AX275** (1857). Owned and operated by the Hebrew Benevolent Society in affiliation with Beth El Hebrew Congregation. First burial 1857 through present, although burials are infrequent. Address: 701 South Payne Street.
- **Alexandria National Cemetery-44AX271; NRIS 95000106** (1862). Owned and maintained by the U.S. National Cemetery Administration under the Department of Veterans Affairs. First burial 1862, closed to interments with some specific exceptions. Address: 1450 Wilkes Street.
- **Black Baptist Cemetery-44AX136** (1885). Founded by the Silver Leaf Society of Alexandria, and now owned and maintained by the City of Alexandria within African American Heritage Park (44AX136). First burial 1885; final burial circa 1946. Address: 500 Holland Lane.
- **Bethel Cemetery-44AX277** (1885). Founded as the Bethel Cemetery Company and now privately owned by James Click. First burial 1885, currently active. Address: 1430 Wilkes Street, with "Little Bethel" at 750 Holland Lane within Union Cemetery.
- **Douglass Memorial Cemetery-44AX140** (1895). Founded as a nondenominational African American cemetery and honor to Frederick Douglass by the Douglass Cemetery Association. First burial in 1896, final burial in 1975. Maintained and partially owned by the City of Alexandria in partnership with Friends of Douglass Cemetery. Address: 1421 Wilkes Street.
- **Agudas Achim Cemetery-44AX274** (1933). Owned and operated by Agudas Achim synagogue. First burial in 1933, currently active. Address: 700 South Payne Street

Thus, through the early nineteenth century, most burials took place in churchyards or on private property, either marked or unmarked. With the establishment of the cemeteries in the Wilkes Street complex through the decades, Alexandrians had a range of choices based on religious and other connections. Several significant cemeteries outside the proposed historic district should be acknowledged. St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, about one mile to the east of the complex, was established in 1795; because it was outside the original city limits, it was not affected by the early eighteenth-century ordinances related to in-city burial grounds. Beginning in 1856, another option was the nondenominational Ivy Hill Cemetery (NRHP 100-0203), west of the city, whose terrain is reflective of the Rural Cemetery Movement. Several of the cemeteries are still active, and recent burials can be seen adjacent to those that are decades old and more.

4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

Taken as a whole, the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex reflects more than two centuries of American memorial styles and attitudes about death that evolved from the early republic to the modern day. Moreover, it reflects Alexandria's multi-varied history as a colonial port, home to many of George Washington's closest allies and advisors, slave-holding and -trading society, home to the third-largest free Black population in antebellum Virginia, U.S. Army-held Civil War logistics hub, New South manufacturing and commercial center, and suburb of the nation's capital. The men, women, and children buried across the complex reflect the history of the city to include veterans from every major war, beginning with the French and Indian War; mayors and other elected officials; religious leaders; and everyday Alexandrians who reflect the city's diverse racial, ethnic, and religious composition.

Alexandria was chartered by the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1749, when city leaders laid out a grid of streets that is still recognizable as Old Town Alexandria today. Churches and private residences maintained burial grounds of varying sizes within the city limits, many of which are known today but some lost to time.¹⁵ In 1796, city officials purchased land outside of the city for a graveyard, which possibly replaced an older such area closer to Hunting Creek. In 1804, the Alexandria Common Council passed a law disallowing the opening of "new burial grounds within the corporation," as noted above. Almost concurrently, Alexandria was suffering from a yellow fever outbreak. While there are no conclusive documents that link the epidemic to seek new burial areas outside the city, two associative factors may explain the decision: (1) the sheer number of bodies needing burial (approximately 175 between August and November 1803, according to one estimate) and (2) the belief at the time that the "miasmas" emanating from the bodies of yellow fever victims spread the disease.¹⁶

George Deneale, senior warden at Christ Episcopal Church, and Jonathan Swift, a leader in the Presbyterian Church, placed a notice in the Alexandria Gazette that "the subscribers having been appointed on behalf of four of the Religious Congregations in Alexandria...are desirous of receiving proposals from any person disposed to sell two acres..."¹⁷ It is unknown the number of responses to their proposal (they also stated "the lowest cash price will be attended to"), but the land ultimately purchased was about one-mile northwest of Penny Hill on what had been the Spring Garden Farm. In 1796, noted surveyor George Gilpin had subdivided the Spring Garden land into 128 lots, which were sold to individual investors with high hopes of creating a new residential area. However, economic decline (created in part by a weak banking system and fall in tobacco prices) meant Spring Garden never lived up to its hoped-

¹⁵ Mark Greenly, *Those Upon Whom the Curtain Has Fallen*, pp. 3-6.

¹⁶ Rev. James Muir, Appendix to *Death Abolished: A Sermon*, cited in "Introduction to Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex," *Gravestone Stories* (<https://gravestonestories.com/the-wilkes-street-cemetery-complex/>); M. Yablom, *The American Resting Place*, pg. 43.

¹⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 26, 1806.

for potential. Many lot-holders wanted to, or needed to, sell their properties, several of which became the first religious cemeteries in what is now the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex.¹⁸

Subsequent cemeteries were created by subdividing existing cemetery land (e.g., Home of Peace purchased land from the Union Cemetery of the Methodist Episcopal Church South) or by converting other private or municipal property to cemetery purposes (e.g., Methodist Protestant Cemetery, on original Spring Garden property but not used as a cemetery prior to the 1830s).¹⁹

As the extremely abbreviated summary below shows, the complex properties and graves within those properties reflect the history of Alexandria and, in many cases, of Virginia and the nation as a whole. The district is indeed a living chronicle of the history of Alexandria.

Colonial and Early Republic

Alexandrians played a critical role in the years leading to and culminating in the American Revolution. In 1774, the Fairfax Resolves, a document that inspired the Declaration of Independence, were approved by citizens at the courthouse at Alexandria. George Washington's Mount Vernon was south of the city, but he was a member of Christ Episcopal Church, owned a town home in Alexandria, and frequented many local businesses. Alexandria grew rapidly after the war, especially around the waterfront. It also had a new legal identity. When the location of the nation's capital was determined, Alexandria was included under the jurisdiction of the newly created District of Columbia, beginning in 1801.

Also of interest is the naming of the new streets. When Alexandria was laid out in 1749, streets were named in recognition of ties to Britain (King, Queen, Pitt, etc.) In contrast, Franklin and Jefferson Streets, as well as Hamilton Lane, were named for leaders in the formation of the new nation. Wilkes and Payne streets were named for John Wilkes and William Payne, an Englishman and an American respectively but both well-known at the time for their support of American independence, in contrast to the more British-oriented street names (King, Queen, Pitt, etc.) in the original city grid.

Cemeteries founded during this period were: Penny Hill (1796), Christ Episcopal (1808), Trinity United Methodist (1808), Presbyterian Cemetery (1809), and St. Paul's (1809).

Many of the participants in the Revolution and Early Republic years died pre-1804, i.e., when their burials took place within the city. However, the longest-lived among them were interred in the Wilkes Street Complex. They include Maj. Samuel Cooper (Christ Episcopal Church, 1840), a participant in the Boston Tea Party and a Revolutionary War veteran; Robert Allison (Presbyterian Cemetery, 1814), killed during the Battle of White House Landing in the War of 1812; and, most probably, Caroline Branham (Christ Episcopal, 1842), an enslaved woman who attended George Washington in his final moments.²⁰ A gravestone for the three small Pascoe children (Presbyterian, 1805 and 1807) reflects the high rate of child mortality at the time; it displays a skull and crossbones, considered a rare survival of colonial-era imagery that was more common in New England than Virginia.²⁶

Antebellum

Alexandria greatly expanded its population and commerce in the mid-nineteenth century. This growth included significant participation in the domestic slave trade that began with the establishment of a human-trafficking business by Isaac Franklin and John Armfield in 1828. In 1847, Alexandria's white elite pressed to "retrocede" the city back to

¹⁸ Thunderbird Associates, Inc. Evacuations at the Old Town Village Site, Corner of Duke and Henry Streets, Alexandria, Virginia: An Historical and Archaeological Trek through the 200-Year-Old History of the Original Spring Garden Development, Volume I, Report Prepared for Eakin and Youngentob, Alexandria, Virginia, August 1999.

¹⁹ W. Pippenger, *Tombstone Inscriptions*, Vol. 1, pg. 149 (Home of Peace), 123 (Methodist Protestant).

²⁰ "Caroline Branham, Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial website, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/arho/learn/historyculture/caroline-branham.htm>. ²⁶ Presbyterian Cemetery, pg. 9

the Commonwealth of Virginia from the District of Columbia.²¹ The city's free Black population grew during the first part of the century, peaking at 1,627 in 1840. Although still relatively sizable compared to other Southern cities, and still about one-half of the total Black population, that number of free Blacks declined until the Civil War. This was due in part to the 1847 retrocession of Alexandria from the District of Columbia to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Education, public gatherings, and other rights for Black people were severely curtailed under Virginia law, and many free Blacks moved into Washington or farther north.²⁸

Cemeteries established during the period were Methodist Protestant Church Cemetery (1836) and the Union Cemetery of the Washington Street United Methodist Church (1860). Both these cemeteries were established by their respective church leaders who broke from Trinity United

Methodist, reflecting national schisms within the Methodist denomination.²² The Home of Peace Cemetery, the first Jewish cemetery in Virginia, answered the need created by German Jewish immigration into the area.

Across the cemetery complex, notable graves of individuals active during this period include William Veitch (Trinity Methodist, 1856), the first man who cast a ballot for retrocession and the city's first mayor after retrocession took place; George Seaton (Union Cemetery of Washington Street United Methodist, 1881), a free Black builder and later member of the Virginia House of Delegates; and Isaac Eichbert (Home of Peace, 1914), an early leader of the Jewish community. Graves also include those of James Murray Mason (Christ Episcopal Church, 1871), a U.S. Senator who was a key author of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, and Joseph Bruin (Methodist Protestant, 1882), operator of a large slave-trading business on whose dealings Harriet Beecher Stowe drew to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²³

Another grave of renown is that of "the Female Stranger," buried in St. Paul's in 1816. Her name unknown, a long-held legend is that she was ill when she and her husband disembarked from a boat from the West Indies and took a room at Gadsby's Tavern. She died several weeks later. Her husband paid for a table-type tombstone, then left town without revealing her or his identity or paying off their significant debts.

Civil War and Reconstruction

Although initially supportive of remaining in the United States after the election of Abraham Lincoln, most white Alexandrians voted in favor of Virginia's secession in May 1861 following the bombardment of Fort Sumter and President Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops from the State Militias, including Virginia. The U.S. Army quickly occupied Alexandria, given its strategic defensive location across the Potomac River from the nation's capital. It became a key transportation and logistics hub, taking advantage of the river and rail lines that extended into other parts of Virginia. A significant number of white Alexandrians left the city and/or fought with the Confederacy. Black Alexandrians remained, as did white Unionists; they were joined by thousands of Black people escaping slavery and by white business people, hospital workers, relief agents, and others. The War Department established military encampments, warehouses, hospitals, and other operations in and around the city. After the war, the war-based economy collapsed, and the city had to navigate its way into the Reconstruction era.

One cemetery within the complex was established during this period, responding directly to the needs of war: Alexandria National Cemetery (1862). It should be noted that another significant cemetery, the Contraband and Freedmen's Cemetery, was created in 1864, as it became clear that Penny Hill could not accommodate the high mortality rate among Black freedom-seekers. This cemetery, while a vital part of Alexandria's history, lies outside the boundaries of the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex.²⁴

²¹ Michael Pope, *Hidden History of Alexandria, D.C.* ²⁸ Community: African Americans in Early Alexandria, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/community-african-american-life-in-early-alexandria>

²² "Being Southern in Position": The Division of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Alexandria. The Uncommonwealth blog, Library of Virginia, March 2, 2022

²³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Chapter VI.

²⁴ Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery NR Nomination, pg. 13

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprdstorage/opastorage/live/15/6794/41679415/content/electronic-recor ds/rg->

Notable graves of individuals active in this period include approximately 3,500 Union soldiers. This total includes at least 229 U.S. Colored Troops whose military (rather than civilian) burials were guaranteed through a protest organized by Black soldiers in December 1864.²⁵ Other burials across the complex include those of Samuel Cooper (Christ Episcopal, 1876), the highest-ranking general of the Confederate Army and son of Samuel Cooper of Boston Tea Party fame, and Wilmer McLean (St. Paul's, 1882), on whose farm the first Battle of Bull Run/Manassas was fought in 1861 and coincidentally owned the home in Appomattox, Virginia, where Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant in 1865.

“New South” and Jim Crow

Alexandria's economy grew slowly. The debt-ridden Alexandria Canal, which opened with great fanfare in 1843 to boost inland trade, finally closed in financial ruin in the 1880s. City leaders sought to boost economic development as part of the so-called New South, including encouraging the manufacturing of fertilizer, leather, bottles, and beer.²⁶ Positioning itself as the “Key to Dixie,” Alexandria also became a major railroad facility. At the same time, Alexandria leaders embraced Jim Crow laws and customs, resulting in segregated schools and other public places, voting restrictions, and unequal justice.

Cemeteries established during this period include Bethel Cemetery (1885), Black Baptist (1885), and Douglass (1895). Bethel is the largest cemetery in the complex. “Bethel” is a common name for cemeteries in the nineteenth century, and provided a spiritual connection without necessarily an affiliation with a specific house of worship. Notably, the third generation of the same family now owns this cemetery. As for Douglass and Black Baptist, on the one hand, their establishment counters the myth that Black civil participation went dormant as Jim Crow racism took hold in the city. Both cemeteries were founded by Black associations: the Douglass Cemetery

Association and the “Silver (Colored) Leaf Society of Alexandria” (possibly also connected with Shiloh Baptist Church).²⁷ However, disturbances in these two cemeteries, to include grading, filling, and development of a landfill on Black Baptist as late as the 1960s, also point to indifference or disrespect for two sacred places of Alexandria's African American community.²⁸

Burials during this period include two young men who were victims of racial lynching, Joseph McCoy (Penny Hill, 1897) and Benjamin Thomas (Penny Hill, 1899).²⁹ Although they lie in unmarked graves after burial by the city, they are memorialized on a corten steel monument at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. Other burials across the complex include Henry Strauss, Alexandria's first Jewish mayor (Home of Peace, 1908) and Lillian Edwards (Arlington National Cemetery, 1967), one of the few women who served in the U.S. Navy during World War I.

Mid-Twentieth Century to the present

Alexandria was once part of the District of Columbia, as mentioned above, and some Alexandrians worked and visited the nation's capital throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the increase in the size of the federal workforce, the proliferation of businesses and organizations established to service the federal government, and improved commuting routes, Alexandria and the rest of Northern Virginia truly became enmeshed in the larger Washington metropolitan region. As the civil rights movement grew, some Alexandrians joined in the struggle to

[079/NPS_VA/12000516.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/079/NPS_VA/12000516.pdf). A one-sentence mention in the Alexandria Gazette, December 29, 1862, also states that “Since the 8th of January last, there have been buried 197 Federal soldiers in the Penny Hill burying ground, near this place, and 724 in the Union cemetery.” Information about military burials in Penny Hill or Union has not been located elsewhere.

²⁵ Charles Joyce, “They Earned Free American Citizenship of Themselves and Their Race Forever,” Chapter V in African American Emancipation in an Occupied City.

²⁶ Ted Pulliam, *Historic Alexandria*, pg. 48

²⁷ Amy Bertsch, *A Closer Look at the Black Baptist Cemetery*, Alexandria Times, October 15, 2020.

²⁸ Francine Bromberg and Steven Shepherd, *African American Heritage Park Archaeological Investigations and Preservation Strategy*.

²⁹ Alexandria Community Remembrance Project: *The Lynching of Joseph McCoy; The Lynching of Benjamin Thomas*

Department of Historic Resources

Preliminary Information Form 11

3/6/2023

Rev. July 2020

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available

support such rights for all Alexandrians, while others tried to stop it. Recognition of the city's African American history, including in the Wilkes Street and other cemeteries, has been a significant development through the city's Office of Historic Alexandria and other public and private efforts.

The only cemetery established in the twentieth century in the Wilkes Street Complex was Agudas Achim (1933). The Agudas Achim congregation was created as an Orthodox place of worship by Jews from Eastern Europe, in contrast with mid-nineteenth century Reform Jewish immigrants from Germany.³⁰ Beyond the creation of new cemeteries and continued burials and maintenance, an historically significant aspect of this period is the twenty-first century restoration of Douglass and Black Baptist cemeteries. These projects were championed by community members, including descendants and members of Alexandria's Social Responsibility Group and the Society for the Preservation of Black History, in partnership with the City of Alexandria.³¹

Graves across the complex of individuals active during this period include those of William Weisband (Presbyterian Cemetery, 1967), a U.S. Army Signal Corps officer who was revealed to be a spy for the Soviet Union in the declassified VENONA intercepts; Leroy Bendheim (Home of Peace, 1967), a former mayor and state legislator; and Julius Campbell, Jr. (Bethel, 2019), one of the main subjects in the 2000 movie *Remember the Titans* about the early 1970s integration of Alexandria's high school football team. While the film glosses over some of the complexities of the event, its enduring popularity points to the historical legacy of many Alexandrians and other Americans to pursue justice and equality.

The complex remains an active, historically relevant gathering place. Alexandria National Cemetery hosts more than ten significant Veterans commemorative events each year, including volunteers placing flowers, American flags, and wreaths around all 4,229 tombstones on three separate occasions (Memorial Day, 9/11, and the third Saturday in December). Douglass Cemetery, for the last several years, has been the site of Juneteenth ceremonies. Home of Peace hosts a special Sabbath service between the Jewish High Holidays annually.

In sum, from the early eighteenth century to the present, the thirteen cemeteries located within Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex collectively reflect and symbolize the rich history of the city of Alexandria. Given its park-like sense of place and separation within a busy urban setting, even visitors without loved ones interred there express a sense of awe and connection to previous generations' triumphs and struggles. Although not the explicit intention of the original founders, the complex has united Alexandrians in life and in death in a unique American experience.

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³⁰ Susan and Shawn Dilles, *The Jewish Community of Northern Virginia*, pg. 23.

³¹ Friends of Douglass Cemetery newsletter, Vol. 1, Issue 1/

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- St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Cemetery, National Register of Historic Places application, DHR #100-0143
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- Thunderbird Associates, Inc. Evacuations at the Old Town Village Site, Corner of Duke and Henry Streets, Alexandria, Virginia: An Historical and Archaeological Trek through the 200 Year Old History of the Original Spring Garden Development

- “Trinity United Methodist Church Cemetery,” provided by Liz Williams
- Yalom, Marilyn. The American Resting Place: Four Hundred Years of History through Our Cemeteries and Burial Grounds

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: x Public\Local x Public\State _____ Public\Federal x

6. Applicant/Sponsor (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Ivy Whitlatch, Chair
 organization: Alexandria Archaeological Commission
 street & number: 1117 Prince Street
 city or town: Alexandria state: VA zip code: 22314
 e-mail: ivyeliz@comcast.net telephone: 703-517-2547



Applicant’s Signature: _____
 Date: 5-11-2026

• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Same as above
 Daytime Telephone: _____

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than applicant/sponsor listed above)

name/title: Paula Whitacre
 organization: Member, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
 street & number: 600 Fort Williams Parkway
 city or town: Alexandria state: VA zip code: 22304
 e-mail: paulatwhitacre@gmail.com telephone: 703-861-1615
 Date: 5-11-2026

7. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title: James Parajon, City Manager
 locality: City of Alexandria
 street & number: 301 King Street, Room 3500
 city or town: Alexandria state: VA zip code: 22314
 e-mail: citymanager.jamesparajon@alexandriava.gov telephone: 703-746-4300

**Captions--Maps and Photos of Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex, Submitted with PIF by Alexandria Archaeological Commission
DHR File No. 100-5752 May 2026**

MAPS (current-day and historic)

1. Base map overview of City of Alexandria within region, cemetery complex in red. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria.
2. Base map depicting cemeteries within the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex and surrounding area. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria
3. Aerial overview depicting cemeteries within the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex and surrounding area. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria
4. 1804 map drawn by George Gilpin with current-day street names labeled and area to become the complex delineated in blue. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria.
5. Circa 1864 map of Alexandria, with cemeteries shaded. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria, from Environs of Washington, National Archives, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/305582>
6. Aerial overview, 1937, depicting cemetery area within surrounding other land uses almost a century ago. Source: Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria.
7. Sketch map of Complex shows how establishment of cemeteries since 1796 have created a whole. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.

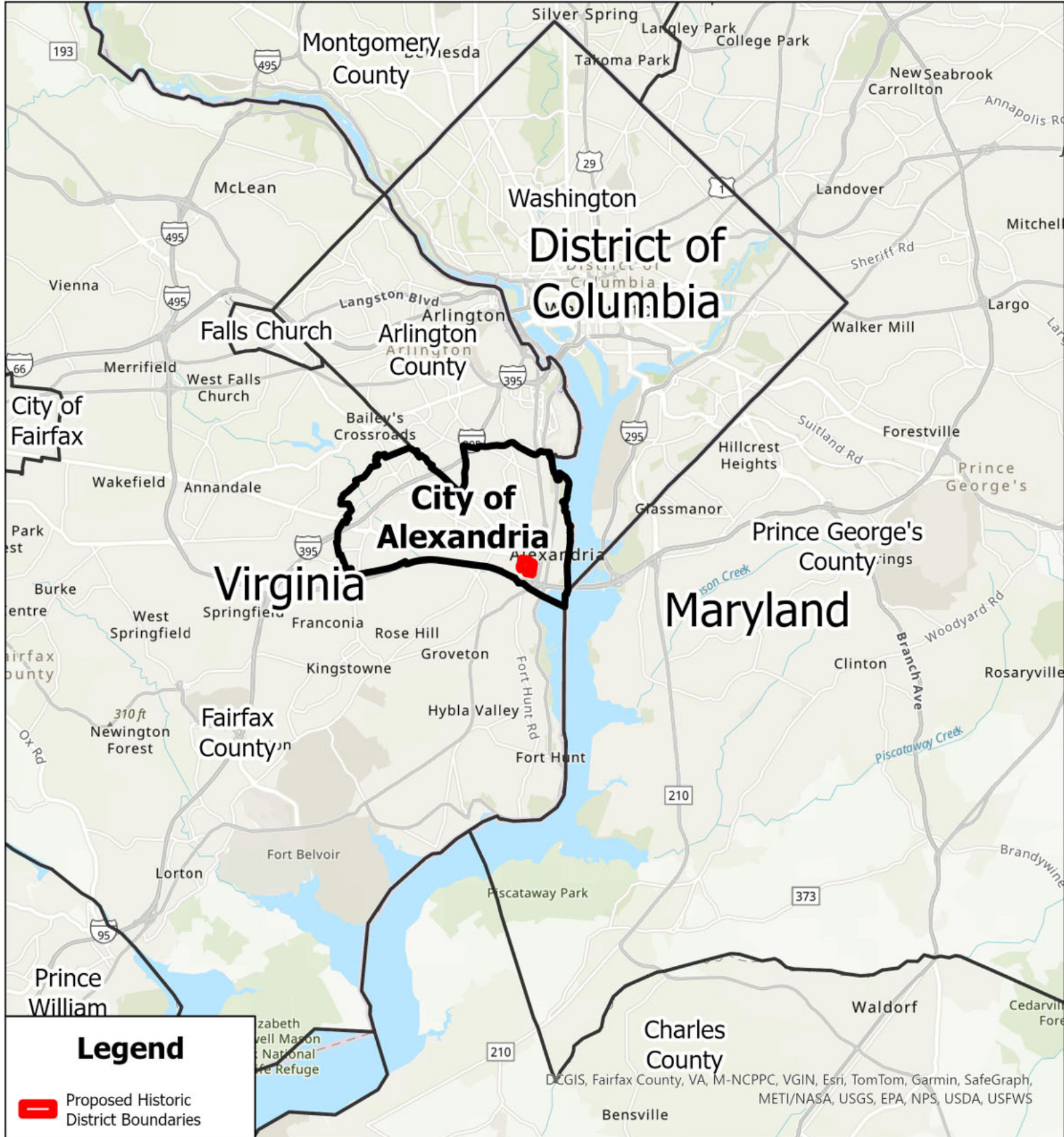
PHOTOGRAPHS (current-day and a few historic to show the overall landscape, as well as features as represented in cemeteries and tombstones)


1. Streetscape, on Wilkes Street looking west, ending at Alexandria National Cemetery. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.

2. Streetscape, on Wilkes Street looking south on Payne. District of Columbia Boundary Stone is in the yard behind white picket fence (yellow arrow). Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
3. Streetscape, on Wilkes Street looking west. Recent burials at Bethel Cemetery (on left). Methodist Protestant, Soldiers. Trinity United Methodist, Christ Episcopal, and Douglass Cemeteries also in view. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
4. Path between Trinity United Methodist and Christ Episcopal Church Cemeteries, looking north toward Jamieson Lane (formerly 19th and early 20th century railroad line and facilities). Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
5. Christ Episcopal Church cemetery, array of tombstones, with Douglass cemetery in the background (orange fencing around restoration). Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
6. Douglass Cemetery restoration project being undertaken by the City of Alexandria in former drainage area, with funding from the African American Cemetery and Graves Fund and other sources. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
7. Entrance to Alexandria National Cemetery, Superintendent's Lodge designed by Montgomery Meigs to the left. Brick sidewalk constructed by the U.S. Government in the 1890s. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
8. Looking north to what is now Alexandria National Cemetery, circa 1860s. Source: Library of Congress Prints & Photographs, <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.00660>
9. Funeral at Bethel Cemetery, 1927. Source: Special Collections/Local History, Alexandria Library
10. Bethel Cemetery, with old and recent burial sites side by side amid mature landscaping. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
11. View south from Hamilton Lane with Bethel, St. Paul's, Presbyterian cemeteries in view. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.

12. Methodist Protestant Cemetery with Alexandria National Cemetery behind it. Note different systems of organization and tombstone styles. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
13. Home of Peace entrance, looking from Bethel Cemetery. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
14. Presbyterian Cemetery entrance, gate erected in the 1870s. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
15. St. Paul's Cemetery entrance. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
16. Penny Hill, earliest (1795) in the complex, has no markers but archaeological work indicates where some burials were likely located. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
17. Agudas Achim cemetery, newest (1933) in the complex, with City of Alexandria facilities to its south. Note sidewalks placed between rows of graves. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
18. Black Baptist Cemetery. Only a few graves remain but the area has been restored as sacred space as part of African American Heritage Park. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
19. View from Black Baptist cemetery across Hooff's Run to Alexandria National Cemetery. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission.
20. Alexandria National Cemetery, with graves decorated as part of Wreaths across America. Source: Gerald Krueger, VFW Post 609.
21. Table grave of the "Female Stranger," St. Paul's Cemetery. Probably the most visited gravesite in the complex, with stones and other mementoes left by visitors. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
22. New and old lie side by side, as Niche, tablet, obelisk and other tombstones at Bethel Cemetery show. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission


23. Tombstone for Pascoe children with atypical (for Virginia) skull and crossbones at the top, Presbyterian Cemetery. Source: David Heiby, Presbyterian Cemetery.
24. Gravestone sculpted by William Chauncey, Presbyterian Cemetery. Source: David Heiby, Presbyterian Cemetery.
25. Gravestone sculpted by Charles Neale, Presbyterian Cemetery. Source: David Heiby, Presbyterian Cemetery.
26. Hooff Family Crypt, St Paul's Cemetery. Source: Kim Abraham, Alexandria Archaeological Commission



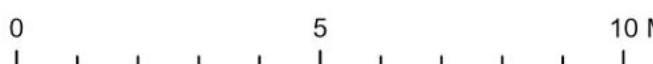


Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

Alexandria, Virginia





**Alexandria
Archaeology**

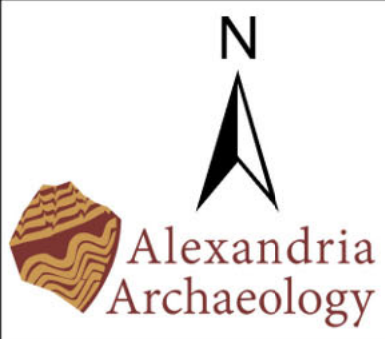


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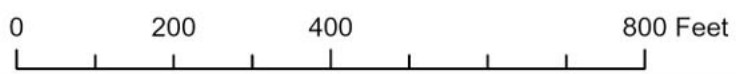


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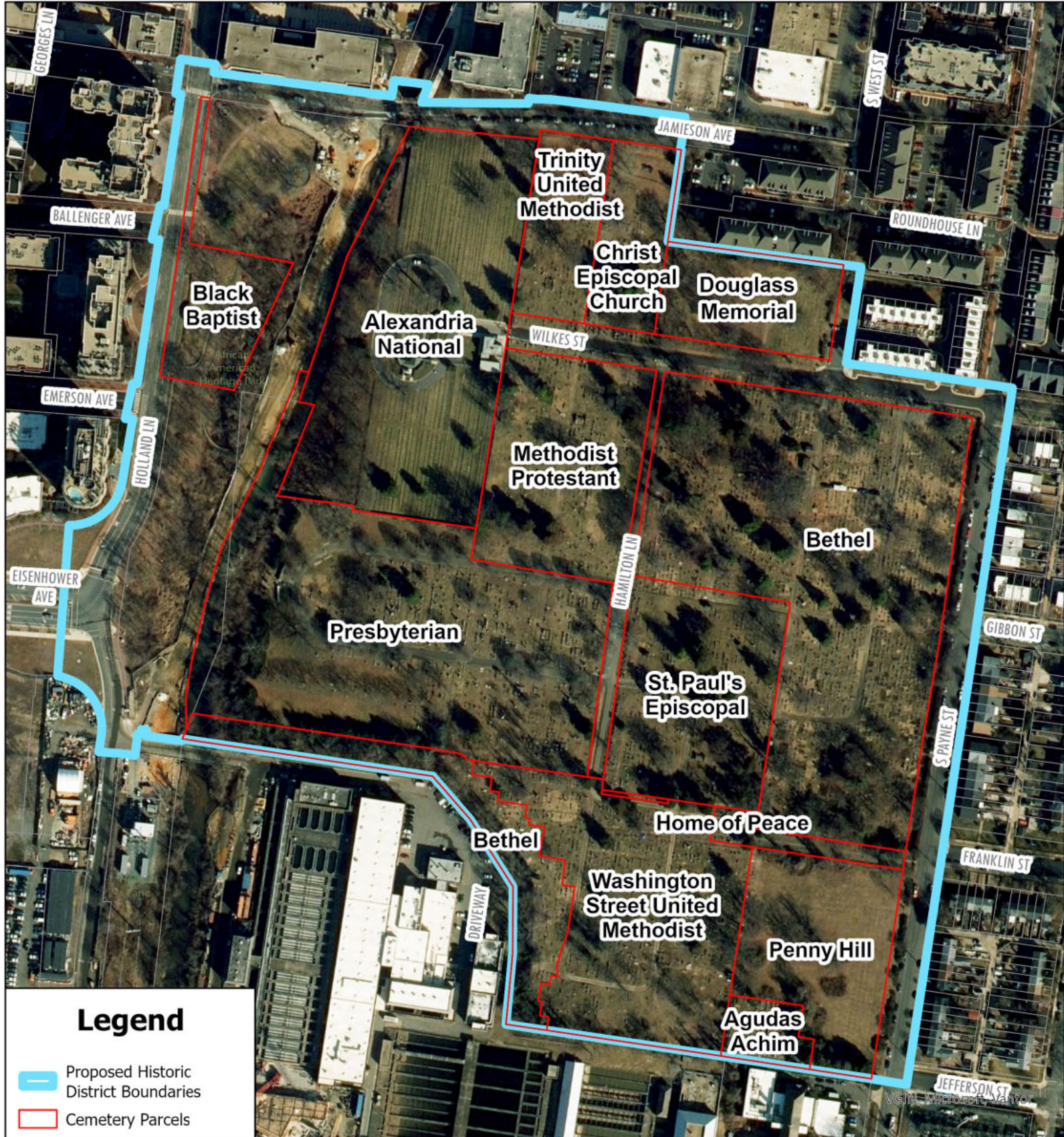
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-  Cemetery Parcels



Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex
Alexandria, Virginia



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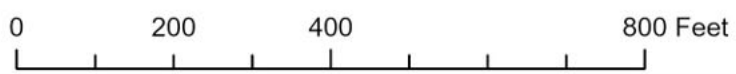
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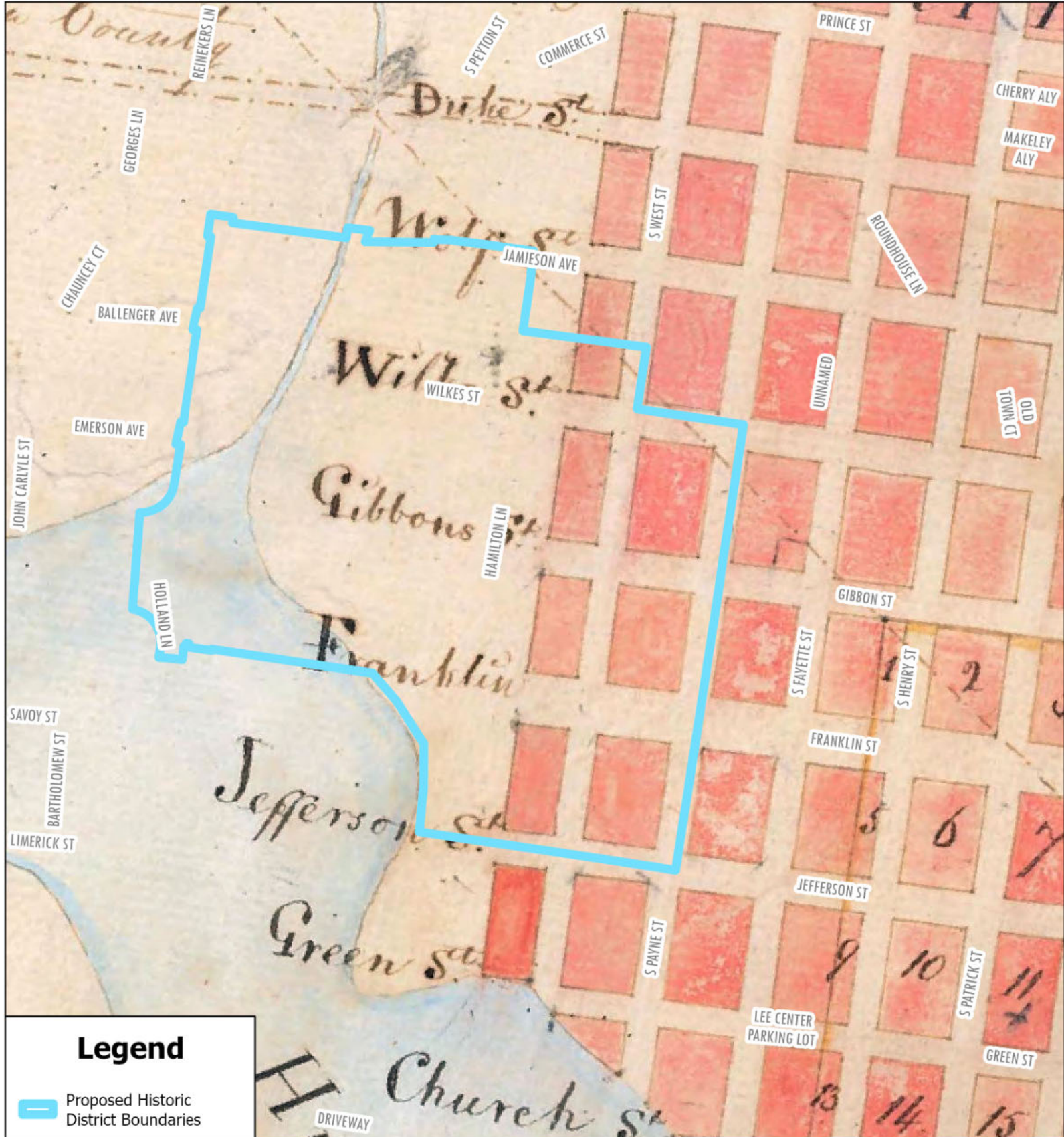
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- Cemetery Parcels

Alexandria Archaeology

Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

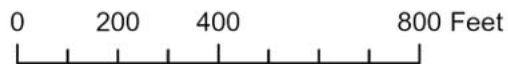
Alexandria, Virginia



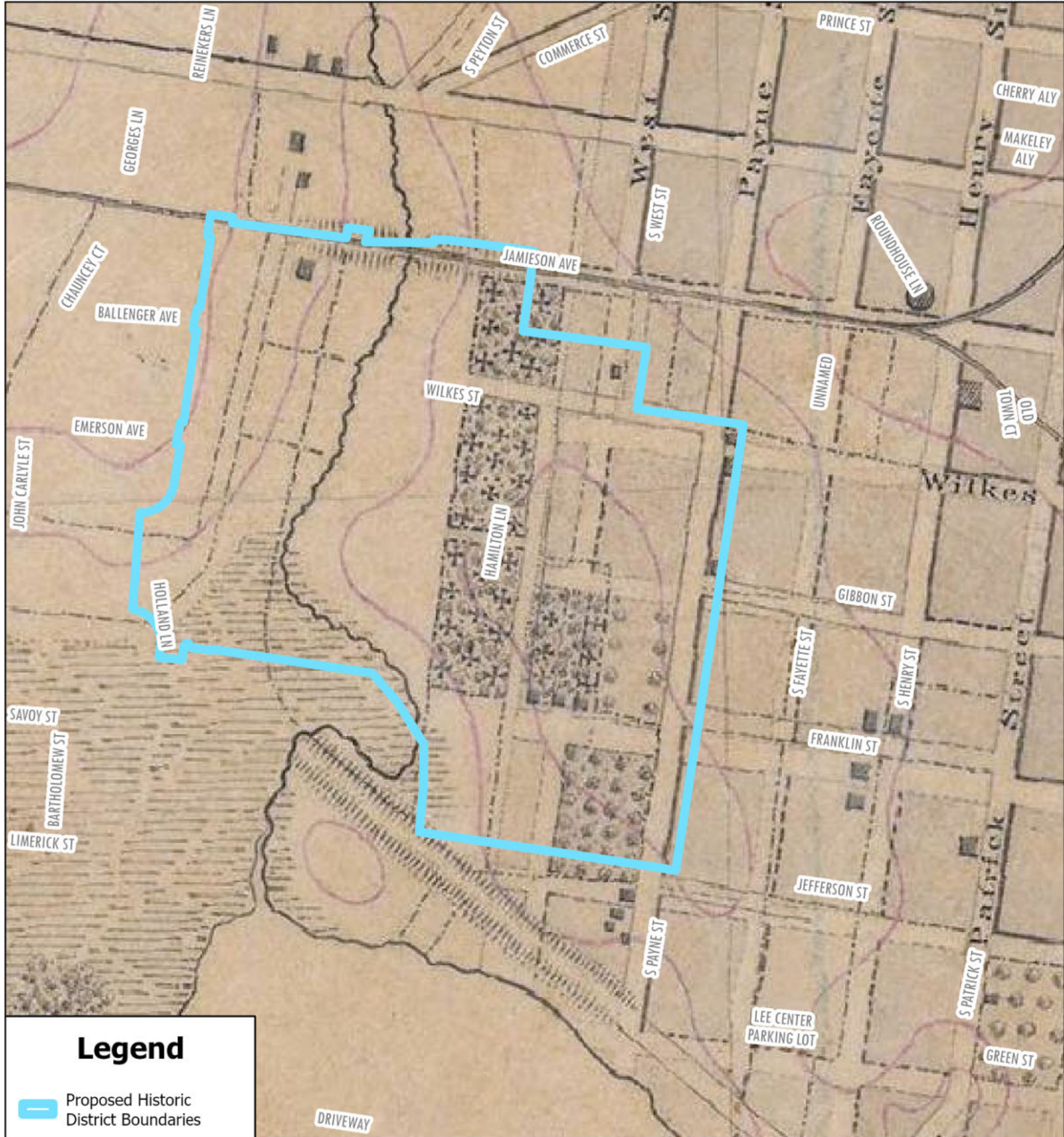


Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

1804 Fairfax County Deed Book E2:269
Alexandria, Virginia



Date: 3/23/2026



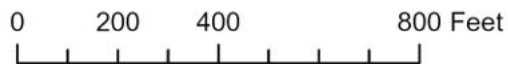
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 Proposed Historic District Boundaries

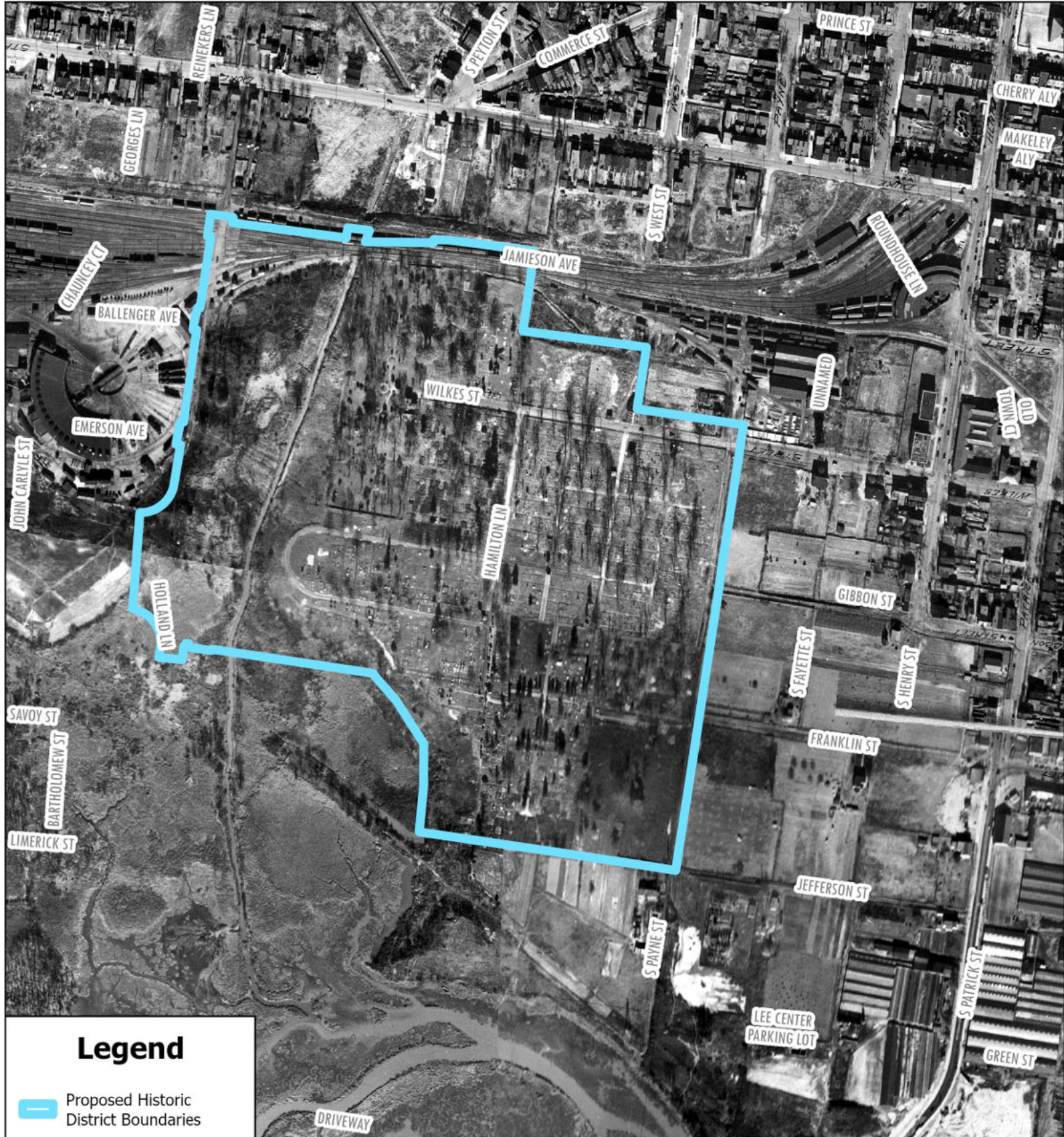



**Alexandria
Archaeology**

**Wilkes Street
Cemetery Complex**
1864 Environs of Washington
Alexandria, Virginia



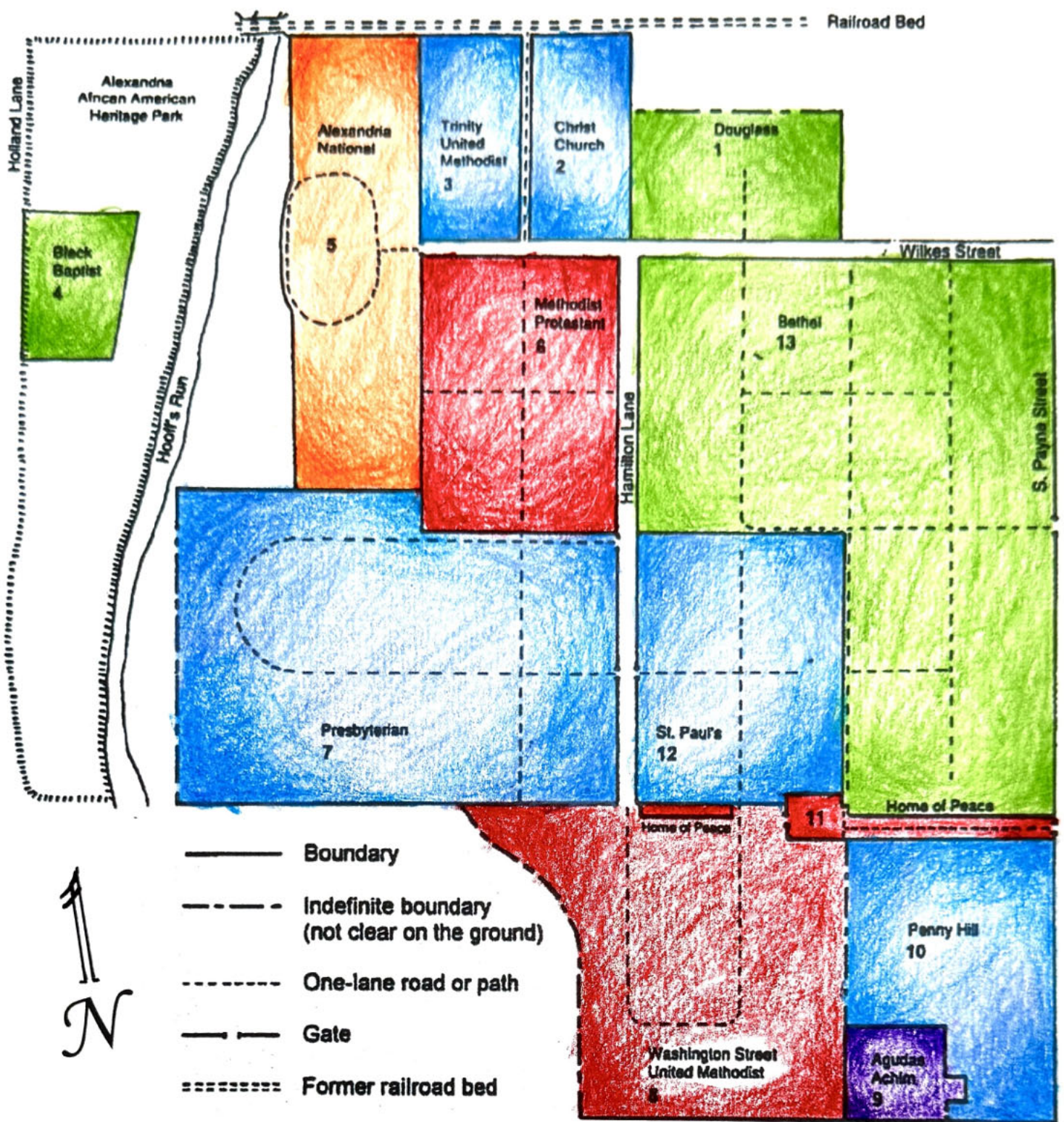
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Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

1937 Aerial Imagery
Alexandria, Virginia





Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex

Alexandria, Virginia

-Early Republic Era

-Civil War Era

-Antebellum Era

-Late 19th Century Era


-Twentieth Century Era










TRINITY
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
Est. 1774
CEMETERY
Est. 1808

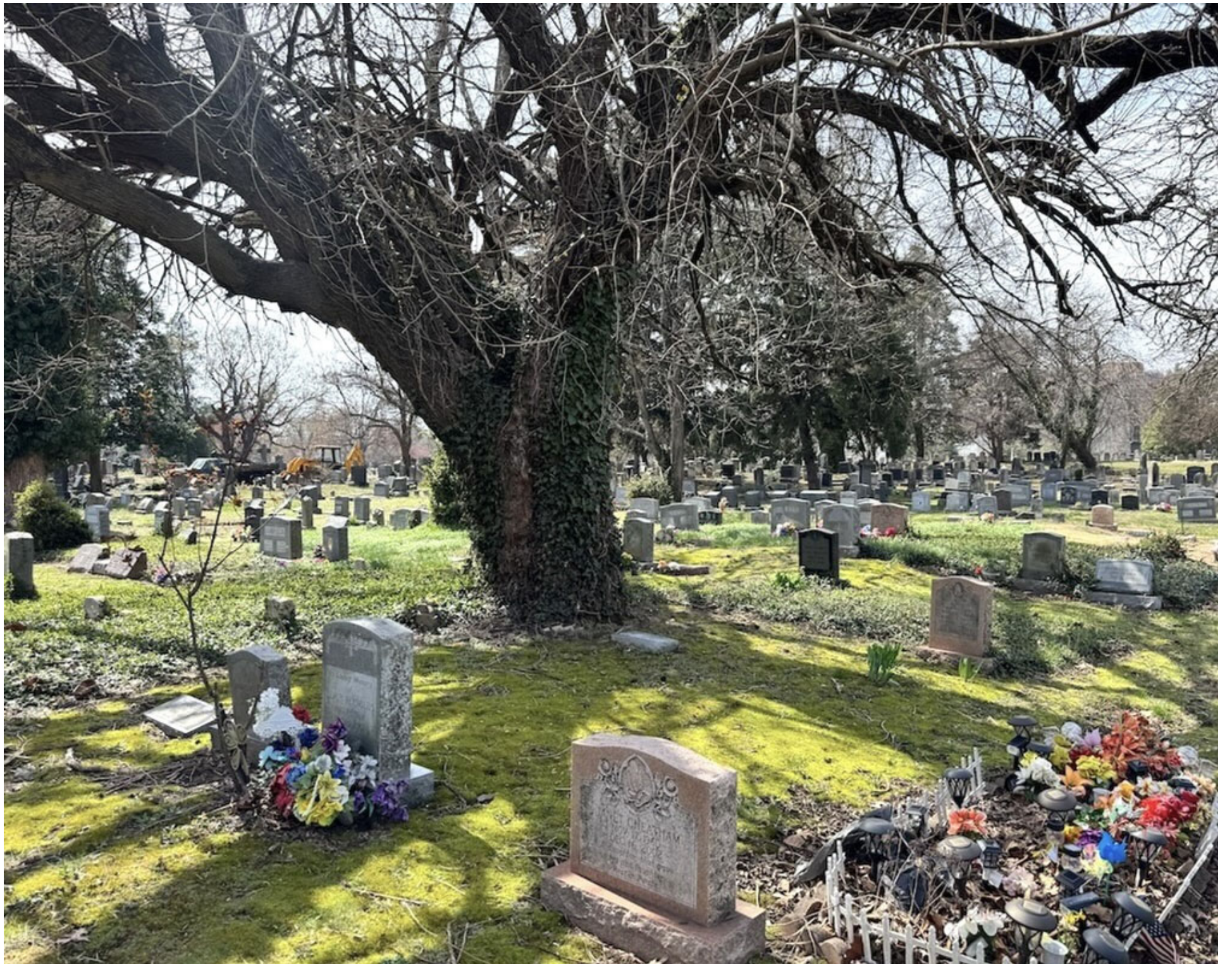






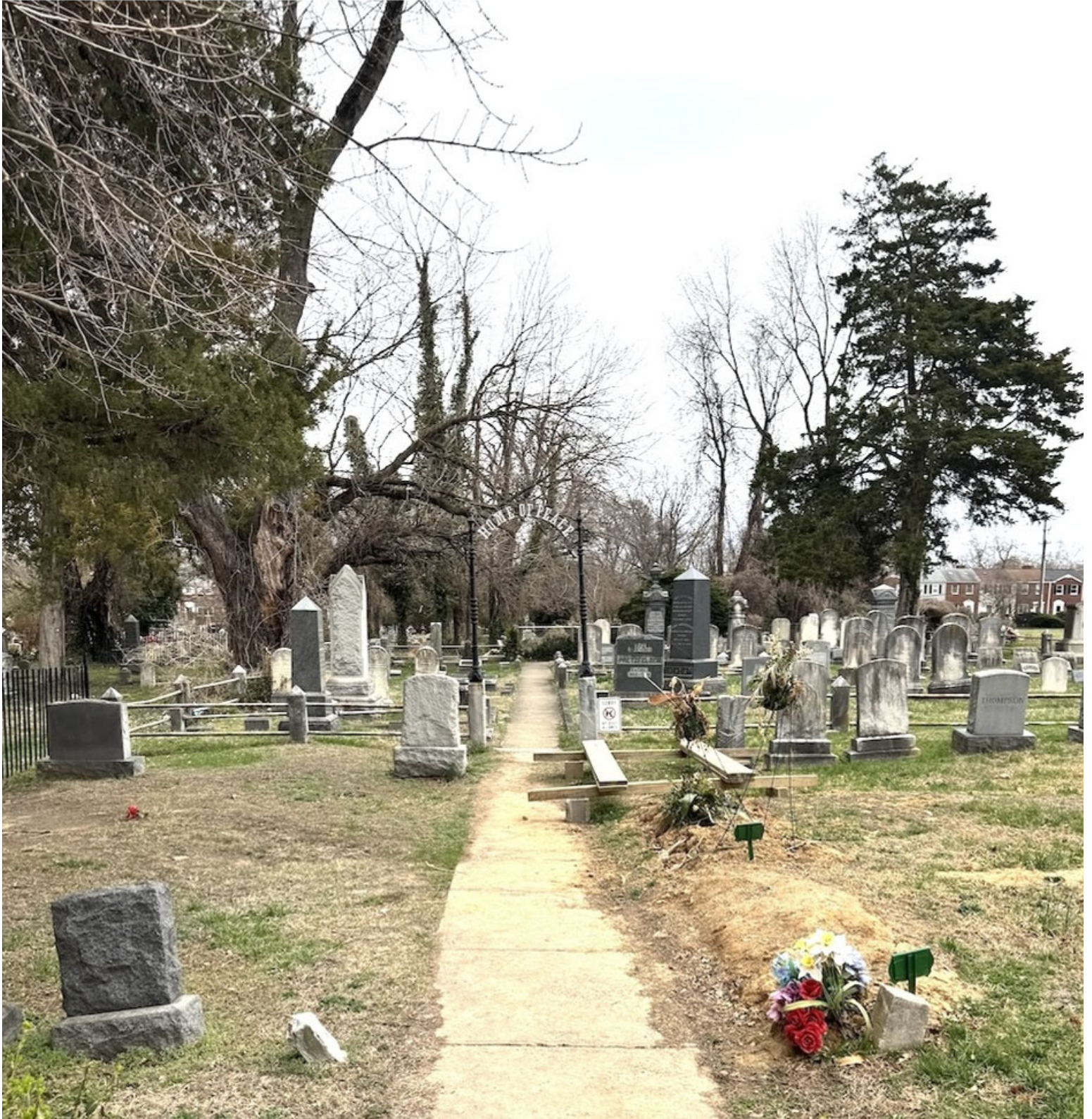


























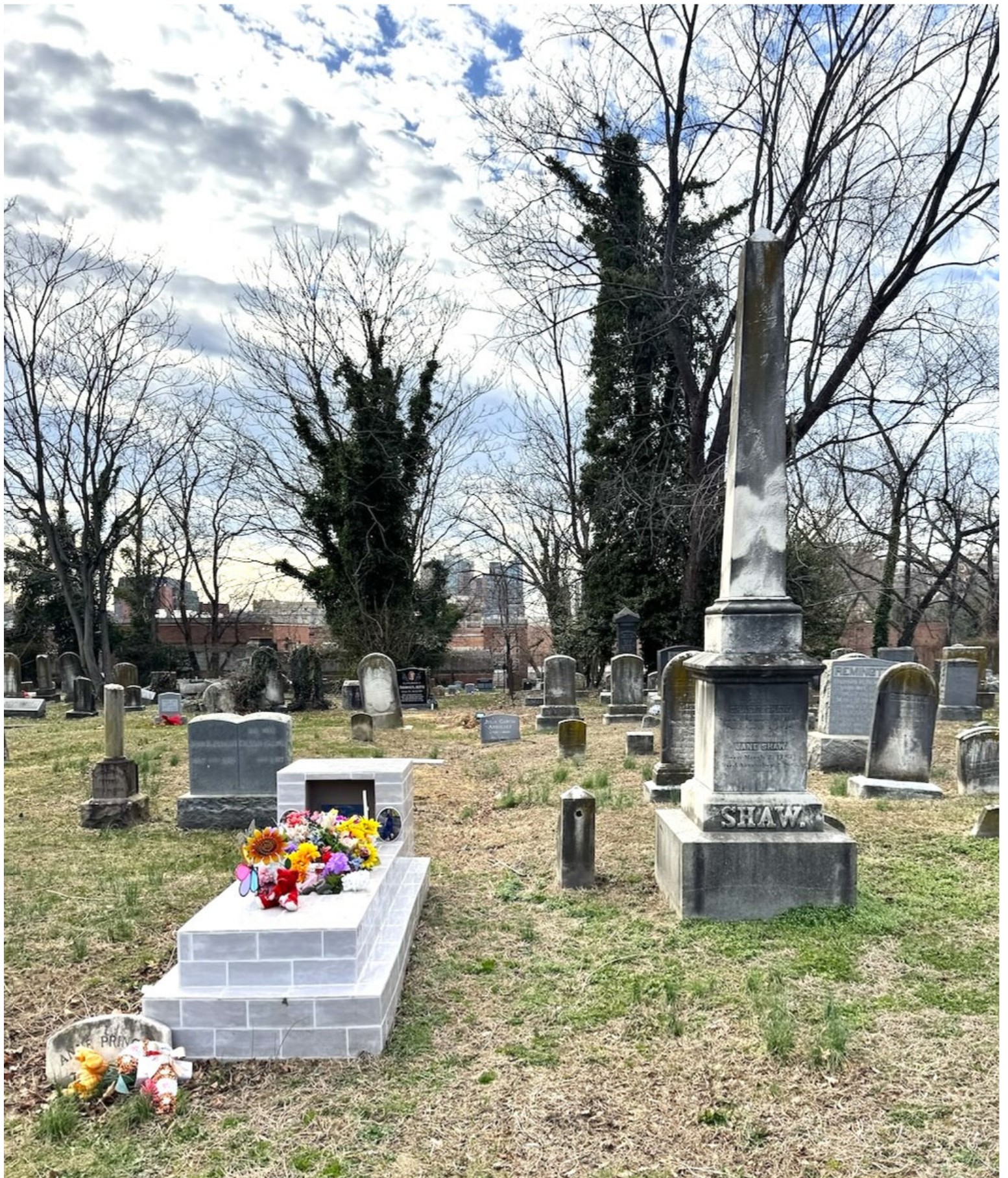
To the memory of a
FEMALE STRANGER
whose mortal sufferings terminated
on the 14th day of October 1816
Aged 23 years and 8 months.

This stone is placed here by her disconsolate
Husband in whose arms she sighed out her
latest breath and who under *God*
did his utmost even to soothe the cold
dead ear of death.

How loved how valued once avails thee not
To whom related or by whom begot
A heap of dust alone remains of thee
Tis all thou art and all the proud shall be.

To him gave all the *Prophets* witness that
through his name whosoever believeth in
him shall receive remission of sins
Acts 10th Chap 4th Verse



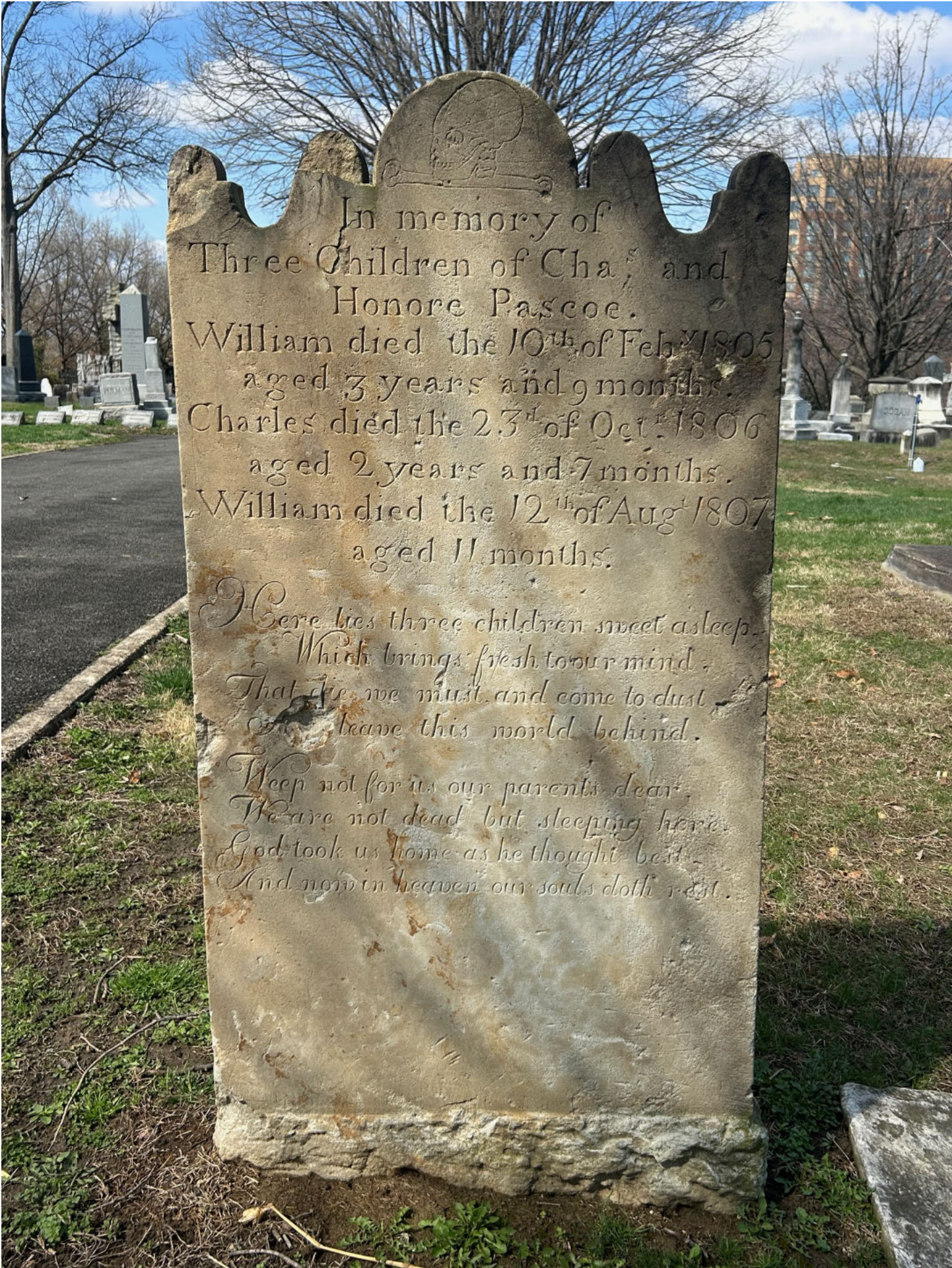


JANE SHAW
BORN [illegible]
DIED [illegible]

SHAW

PRINCE

REMNÉ



In memory of
Three Children of Cha^s and
Honore Pascoe.
William died the 10th of Feb^r 1805
aged 3 years and 9 months.
Charles died the 23rd of Oct^r 1806
aged 2 years and 7 months.
William died the 12th of Aug^t 1807
aged 11 months.

*Here lies three children sweet asleep
Which brings fresh to our mind
That we must and come to dust
And leave this world behind.*

*Weep not for us our parents dear
We are not dead but sleeping here
God took us home as he thought best
And now in heaven our souls doth rest.*



WILLIAM GREGORY,
BORN IN
KILMARNOCK SCOTLAND
MARCH 3, 1786,
DIED
JULY 13, 1875.



MY BELOVED HUSBAND

MY DARLING
MARY
MAY 1857

J. HAMMOND
BORN August 20th 1853
DIED August 11th 1921
You know how long I
loved you
You know how long I
loved you

HAMMOND.

NEALE

