

STATIONS FOR REFLECTION

North Public Grounds & Mayor Maynard Jackson Jr.

North Public Grounds is the final resting place of Atlanta's first African American mayor, civil rights leader Maynard Holbrook Jackson Jr. Jackson started his career serving as a lawyer for the National Labor Relations Board. He served two terms as mayor (1974–1982, and 1990–1994), and while in office he pushed for the expansion of public works projects, increasing minority business participation, and improving race relations in the city. Jackson's burial in the previously segregated North Public Grounds mirrors his life work, crossing a final color line at Oakland Cemetery.

Potter's Field

This large pauper's burial ground was established in 1866 and it occupies about 5.7 of Oakland's 48 acres. Among the estimated 7,500 persons interred in this section, many were some of Atlanta's poorest residents, along with unknown or unidentified dead. The majority of those buried in the section were African American, although archaeological investigations in the 1970s suggest that not all of those interred were from the pauper population, and that this area also contains a number of graves of Atlanta's 19th-century middle class. This may have been due to Oakland selling out of family lots in 1884, leaving no better option to those who wished to be buried in the cemetery. Many of the graves would have originally been marked by "grave goods", such as shells, bottles, broken china, broken plaster of paris figurines, and medicine bottles.

Lion Square & Confederate Memorial Grounds

Oakland Cemetery's most centrally located area is the final resting place of approximately 7,000 Confederate and 16 Union soldiers. The Confederate Obelisk was completed in 1874, and the Lion of Atlanta in 1894. While early Confederate monuments were erected to honor the dead, motivations for their installation changed as white Southerners fought against Reconstruction efforts and moved to reinforce white supremacy. Monument construction spiked in the early and mid-twentieth century during periods of tension over civil rights and opposition to racial equality. Whatever the original intention, these monuments came to represent Lost Cause Ideology, which ignores slavery as the central cause for the Civil War and denies the emancipation of four million enslaved African Americans as its most important outcome. The history of these monuments is not static in time, and they accrue meaning with each generation. Today, there is a larger conversation about what Confederate monuments represent within the context of our current society, and what the future should hold for these artifacts. Georgia law prohibits the removal or obscuring of Confederate monuments.

Women's Comfort Station

The Women's Comfort Station was constructed in 1908 as a segregated restroom facility for Oakland Cemetery. The structure is constructed primarily of brick, including two layers of "common brick" that would have been produced locally. Brickmaking has a long and often fraught history in Georgia, and it was Black brickmasons that drove the bulk of brick production both before and after emancipation, and well into the twentieth century. Convict leasing forced thousands of Black men into this labor field, many of whom had been jailed for arbitrary reasons during the oppressive years of Jim Crow. This building also tells the story of one of Oakland Cemetery's first female employees, Ida Borders, who maintained the WCS as its attendant. As an African American woman, Borders could not expect to use the facilities she managed.

Historic African American Burial Grounds

In 1866, the city of Atlanta set aside this 3.5-acre section of land for African Americans to buy burial plots. Many of Atlanta's most notable citizens are buried in this section. These men and women founded historically black colleges, established places of worship, opened businesses, and created social organizations to serve Atlanta's African American community. They confronted discrimination and institutionalized racism in their efforts. Legal segregation at Oakland Cemetery ended in 1963 when the City of Atlanta banned segregated public facilities. Prominent residents of this section include Atlanta realtor and educator Antoine Graves, Bishop Wesley John Gaines, who founded Morris Brown College; Rev. Frank Quarles, the founder of the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary (precursor to Spelman College); and Carrie Steele Logan, who founded the first orphanage for African Americans in Atlanta.

Slave Square

In 1852, the Atlanta City Council ruled that African Americans were to be buried in a segregated section at the rear of Oakland Cemetery. Most, though not all, of the African Americans buried in this section were enslaved, and the area came to be known as "Slave Square." The first recorded burial was for a 14-year-old boy named John on February 10, 1853. By the beginning of the Civil War, more than 800 people had been buried in Slave Square. By 1877, the cemetery had expanded and the burial lots surrounding Slave Square that had been set aside for white Atlantans were full. The Atlanta City Council ordered that the bodies and bones of the African Americans interred in Slave Square were to be removed to the "colored pauper grounds" to make room for more white burials. After this occurred, the lots in Slave Square were sold to white families for \$50 or more.

JUNETEENTH REMEMBRANCE WALK

JUNE 18, 2020 | OAKLAND CEMETERY

Cemeteries are spaces for the living to mourn the dead and reflect on that grief. Cemeteries are also places of peace and quiet tranquility. We recognize that the horrifying events over the last few weeks, months, years, and centuries have caused trauma to our minds, bodies, and spirits. On June 18, we invite the public to walk Oakland's grounds for an hour of silent reflection and remembrance.

