



Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Rehabilitation

Community Conversation:

Project Status and Archeological Findings Update

April 2017





Meeting Rules

- Turn off or put on vibrate all electronic devices
- Meet new people
- Stay on topic
- 'Ponder' (think) before you speak
- Listen for new information
- Be mindful of how much time is used to express your thoughts
- Respect the viewpoints of others (listen to their truth)
- Identify ways to continue the conversation



Meeting Rules



- Questions from community members should be written on **white** index cards
- Ideas for commemorative component should be written on **purple** index cards
- All notecards should be submitted to meeting facilitators for discussion after presentation is completed
- Save questions until presentation is concluded – a 10-15 minute Q&A will follow
- If time allows, we will break into small groups for additional discussion



Meeting Goals



- Briefly review Oakwood Cemetery and project background, archeological findings, constraints, community and professional input
- Discuss components of draft report and recommendation to move forward
- Provide information for upcoming community outreach process for commemorative and interpretive component



PARD's role in municipal cemeteries



- Management and maintenance of 5 sites:
 - Oakwood and Oakwood Annex Cemeteries
 - Austin Memorial Park Cemetery
 - Evergreen Cemetery
 - Plummers Cemetery
- PARD took over full operation of cemeteries in Spring 2013

Historic Overview

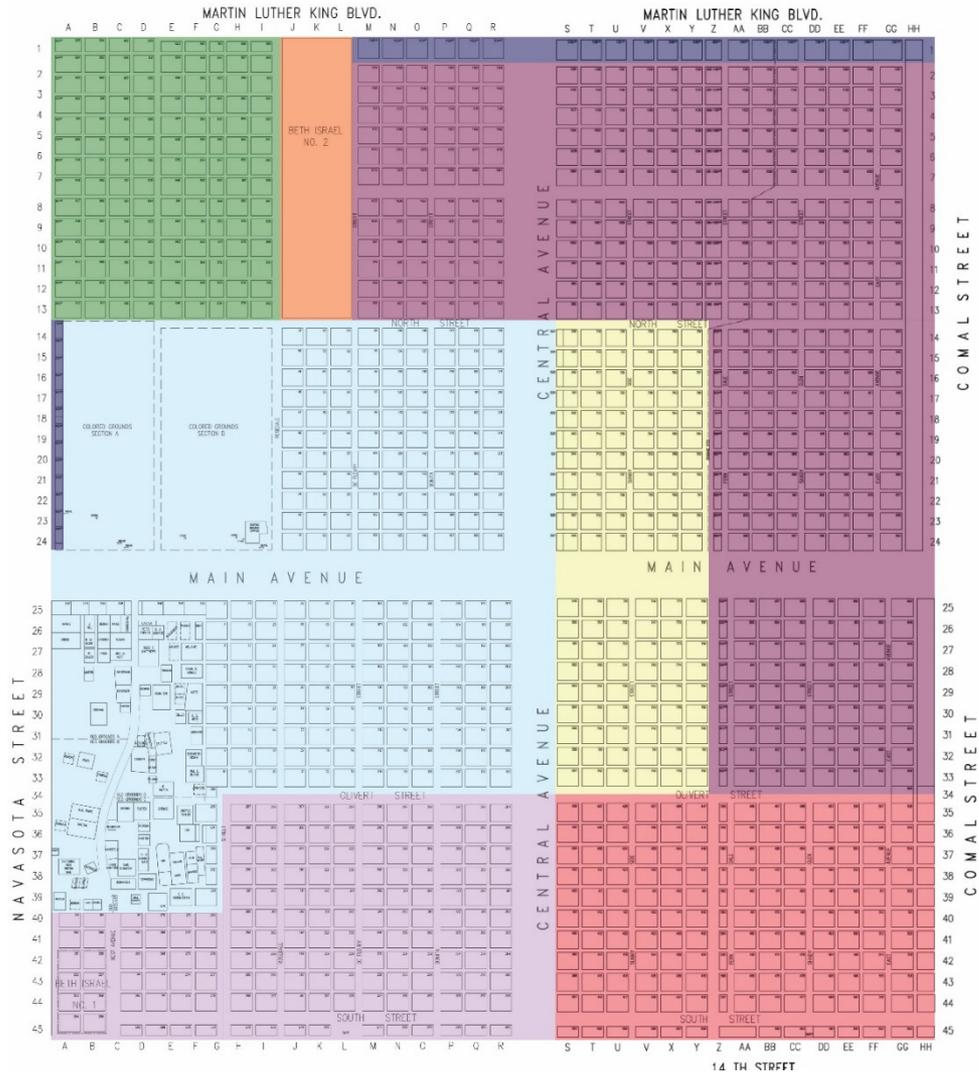
- Earliest burial possibly enslaved person killed near Bastrop in 1839
- Earliest recorded burial in 1841
- State property from 1839-1856
- Oakwood Chapel, 1914
- National Register Property and City of Austin Historic Landmark
- 40 acres
- 23,000 burials
- Receives approximately 40 burials a year
- Lots sold out by early 20th century



Figure 3. Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, 1873. Hand-colored lithograph published by J. J. Stoner, Madison, Wisconsin, with addition of arrow showing location of city cemetery (Library of Congress)



Oakwood Cemetery Development



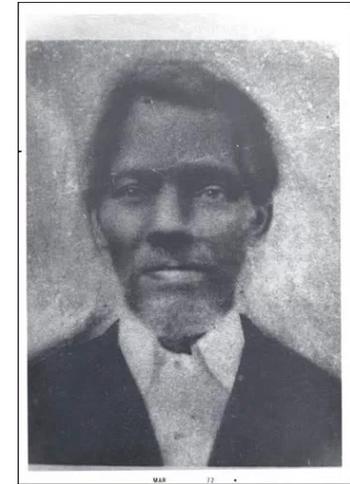
- Pre-1866
- 1866 Addition
- 1875 Addition
- 1885 Addition
- 1889 Addition
- 1892 Addition
- 1900
- 1910 Addition



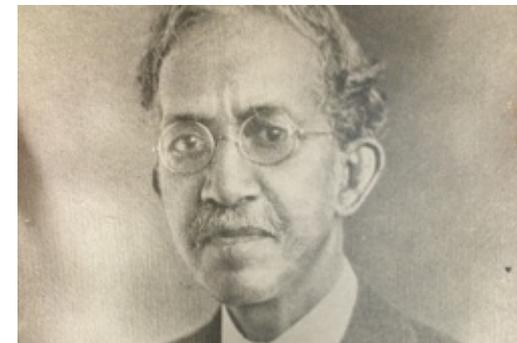
Segregated section for People of Color



- Entire cemetery relatively informal until 1859, when the mayor designated three sections, including a section for people of color
- Approximately 1,200 people were buried in the section designated for people of color between 1859-1880.
- Burials include:
 - Jacob Fontaine (1808-1898)
 - EH Carrington (1847-1919)
 - L.C. Anderson (1853-1938)
 - Everett Givens (1888-1962)



Reverend Jacob Fontaine



Laurine Cecil (L.C.) Anderson

Development and Master Plan

- Chapel to maintain historic function and be programmed as community space and visitor center
- Historic Cemeteries Master Plan calls for better interpretation of cemetery history including section for people of color

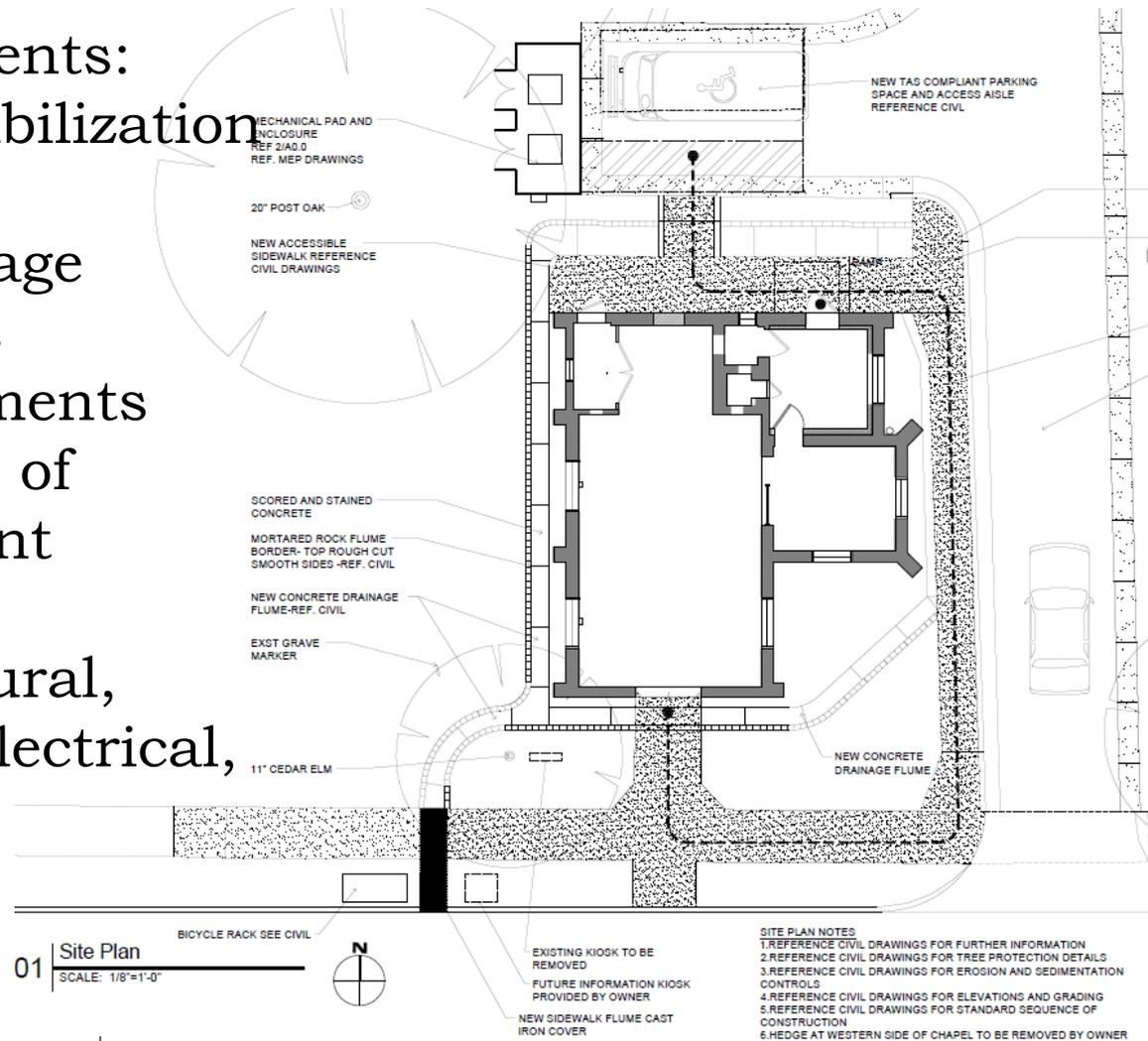




Chapel Rehabilitation

Project Components:

- Structural stabilization of foundation
- Surface drainage improvements
- ADA improvements
- Rehabilitation of single-occupant restroom
- Full architectural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rehabilitation



Chapel Rehabilitation



Antiquities Permit:

- Archeological monitoring
- Documentation of burials and cultural resources
- Procedures for discovery of remains
- Bioarcheological analysis
- Production of project report

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

July 15, 2016

Josh Haefner
Hicks & Company
1504 West 5th Street
Austin, TX 78703

Re: Project review under the Antiquities Code of Texas
COA Oakwood Chapel Restoration, Travis County, Texas
Texas Antiquities Permit Application #7709

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your Antiquities Permit Application for the above referenced project. This letter presents the final copy of the permit from the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the state agency responsible for administering the Antiquities Code of Texas.

Please keep this copy for your records. The Antiquities Permit investigations requires the production and submittal of one printed copy of the final report, a completed abstract form submitted via our online system, two copies of the tagged PDF final report on CD (one with site location information & one without), and verification that any artifacts recovered and records produced during the investigations are curated at the repository listed in the permit. The abstract form may be submitted via the THC website (www.thc.state.tx.us) or use url: <http://xapps.thc.state.tx.us/Abstract/Login.aspx>. Additionally, you must send the THC shapefiles showing the boundaries of the project area and the areas actually surveyed via email to archeological_projects@thc.state.tx.us.

If you have any questions concerning this permit or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Lillie Thompson at 512/463-1858. The reviewer for this project is Tiffany Osburn, 512/463-6096.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William A. Mark".

for
Mark Wolfe
Executive Director

MW/lft

Enclosures

Cc: Kevin Johnson, City of Austin



GREG ABBOTT, GOVERNOR • JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIR • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS • 78711-2276 • P 512.463.6100 • F 512.475.4872 • www.thc.state.tx.us



Site discoveries



Figure 7: Burial stains in Blocks B and C; facing west from eastern edge of Blocks B and C.



Figure 3: Burial stains in tower room of chapel, facing east.



Figure 5: Headstone uncovered in scraping Block A north of chapel.



Figure 1: First headstone discovered north of the chapel.

Site discoveries



Figure 13: Solarized amethyst glass stopper from Block C.



Figure 15: Stoneware base with maker's mark.

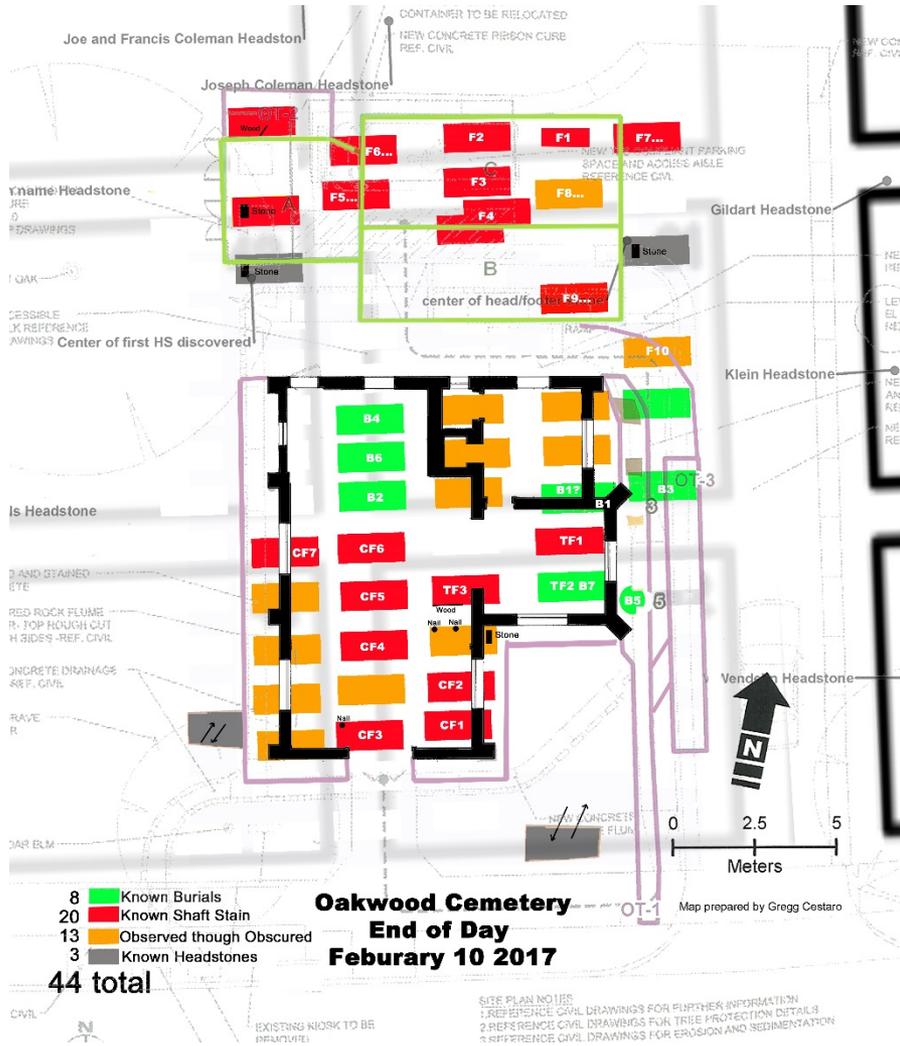


Figure 6: Iron horse shoe



Figure 1: Assorted Keys

Site discoveries



Constraints and Challenges



- Moving or raising the chapel is infeasible because the process would cause significant damage to the graves underneath the building
- The Oakwood Cemetery and Chapel are COA Historic Landmarks
- The structural beams extend deeper into the soil than the top levels of some discovered burials
- The Chapel has received past renovations, previously disturbing interior soils
- Some burials extend underneath the building grade beams and cannot be exhumed safely

Constraints and Challenges



- Limited documentation of burials from this time period exists
- Legal and regulatory guidance from Antiquities Code and Texas State Health and Safety Code
- Burials should be addressed quickly to ensure protection and safety
- Construction and demolition are underway, building is vulnerable to water infiltration
- Construction delay results in increased costs
- Costs for exhumation, redesign and adjustments to proposed construction



Precedent

- African Burial Grounds, Lower Manhattan, NYC
- Dallas Freedman's Cemetery
- First Street Cemetery, Waco



Project goals



- Engage in dialogue with the community
- Restore dignity to the burials through commemoration and interpretation
- Return to the rehabilitation project as expeditiously as possible

Community engagement



- Notification to local clergy:
Saturday, March 4
- Media release and press
conference: Tuesday, March 7
- Community Conversation on
Oakwood Cemetery Chapel:
Saturday, March 25
 - **an open feedback period extended from
March 25-April 7*
- 2nd Community Conversation
meeting: Tuesday, April 11, 2017
 - **an open feedback period on the draft
report will extend from April 11-April 21*



Options to move forward



1. Discovered burials could be exhumed from their current locations inside the Chapel and reinterred within Oakwood Cemetery with appropriate grave markers in close proximity to the chapel.
2. Burials could remain intact underneath the Chapel, and separated by a suspended wood floor with crawl space. These design changes to the project would remove the immediate impact to the soils above the interior burials.

PARD recommendation is based on:



- Community feedback to date
- Professional archeological and regulatory recommendations
- Time constraints and financial feasibility
- Precedent cases
- Interpretive value of bioarcheological analysis

Discussion of feedback



- Community input
- Professional opinion



Aspects of exhumation



- Selective redesign to minimize impact to interior and exterior burials
- As many burials as possible will be exhumed, but structural and safety limitations to some indicated burials exist
- Full documentation in bound archeological report
- Reinterment together in close proximity to chapel in coordination with PARD Cemeteries Division
- Marking of all reburied or newly discovered gravesites with headstones
- Interpretive commemoration on-site (public process)



Commemorative Public Process



- “Interpretation, Commemoration, Reclamation”
- Facilitated by PARD Cultural Center staff
- Public process to commence in late Spring
- Seeking recommendations for a memorialization ceremony and interpretive components of burial discoveries



Commemoration Public Feedback



- Ideas should reflect: “respect, honor, dignity, beauty, light and truth.”



- “...memorialize remains individually, by exhibit or monument”
- “...solicit the support of a local church or churches to perform burial rites.”



Schedule and Next Steps

- Collect feedback on staff report and recommendation for 10-day period (until 4/21)
- PARD will issue notification of decision to proceed week of 4/24
- Public meeting for commemorative process will follow – sign up to be notified

Questions & Answers



Small Group Breakout



- If time allows, additional discussion at the following areas:
 - TABLE 1: Share general feedback and thoughts for commemoration
 - TABLE 2: Provide input for additional outreach or notification (“who is not here?”)
 - TABLE 3: Learn about archeological process and construction project

Feedback and Questions



PARD Project Contact:

Kevin Johnson

kevin.johnson@austintexas.gov

512-974-9506

PARD Historical Resources Contact:

Kim McKnight

kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov

512-974-95478

PARD Cemeteries Contact:

Tonja Walls-Davis

tonja.walls-davis@austintexas.gov

512-978-2320

PARD Media Contact:

John Nixon

john.nixon@austintexas.gov

512-974-2464

www.austintexas.gov/oakwoodchapel

