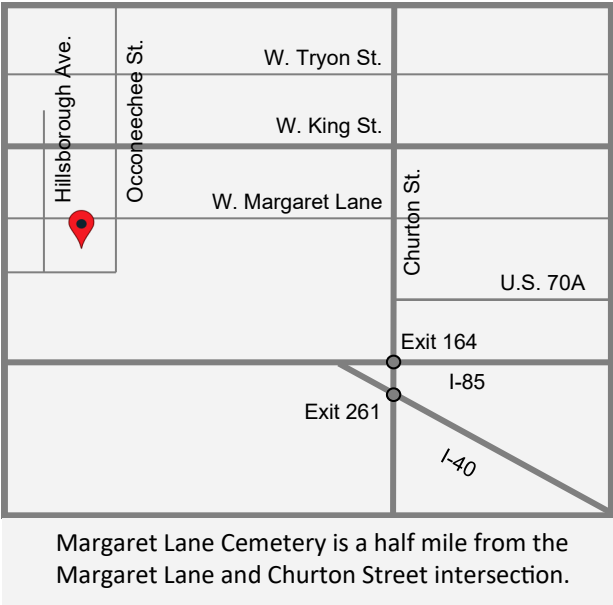


History

Margaret Lane Cemetery, sometimes called the Old Slave Cemetery, first appears in written record in 1885.

It is believed that Peter Brown Ruffin, a landowner and employer to the west of Hillsborough, bought the two 1-acre lots that comprise the cemetery from the town in 1854 as a burial ground for slaves belonging to his family and to the Cadwalader Jones family. Anecdotal evidence suggests that burials occurred here even earlier.

After the Civil War, the site continued as a Black cemetery.



Margaret Lane Cemetery

Margaret Lane Cemetery is owned and maintained by the Town of Hillsborough. The Hillsborough Public Space and Sustainability Division oversees grounds maintenance.

The cemetery is located on the south side of Margaret Lane. Gateposts mark the original entrance on South Occaneechee Street. Limited parking and a level, paved sidewalk are available for easier access on South Hillsborough Avenue.

The archaeological survey and site map were completed by John Clauser, with a grant from the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources and funding from the Town of Hillsborough.

To learn more or to provide information about the people buried there, contact the Public Space and Sustainability Division:

- 919-296-9481
- PO Box 429, Hillsborough, NC 27278
- www.hillsboroughnc.gov



TOWN OF
HILLSBOROUGH

Margaret Lane Cemetery



Before 1854 to 1931



Missing Markers, Other Threats

As decades passed, the cemetery became filled with numerous markers and brick vaults. By 1918, the cemetery was reported as nearly full.

After the last recorded burial, in 1931, the cemetery gradually became heavily overgrown and was vandalized. Most of the gravestones and monuments vanished. The town eventually took over care of the cemetery, assuming it was municipal property.

In 1978, a group seeking land to build a church discovered the town had no deed for the land. The group filed a quit-claim deed, which would confer ownership to the group if unchallenged for seven years. The town learned of the deed only a month before the deadline but was able to counter the quit-claim and preserve ownership of the site.

In 1987, the town restored Margaret Lane Cemetery. A rededication service was held Nov. 1 on the site. An appeal to the public supplied the names listed on the bronze memorial plaque presented then. That roster remains open, and a few more names have been added since.

On Dec. 4, 2011, the town unveiled a brick monument to preserve three headstones from unknown grave sites at the cemetery. A plaque above the markers states, “The grave sites for these markers are known only by God.”

Mapping the Cemetery

In 2006, an archaeological survey of Margaret Lane Cemetery located 151 graves. Surface inspection methods and selective probing were used, but no excavation.

Each grave now has been given two small stone markers that are flush with the ground (square at the head, round at the feet).

Less well-defined evidence from the survey suggests the total graves still detectable today may be as many as 170. Informal reports from the era when the cemetery was still active estimate perhaps 300 graves.

The road or broad path leading into the cemetery from South Ocooneechee Street (shown on the map) is virtually imperceptible today. The path begins between the two brick pillars and runs diagonally to the south-west. The presence of graves very close to this path suggests the path is a later feature of the site. The well that once served visitors to the cemetery has been filled and covered with stones.

Oak saplings were planted to perpetuate the natural legacy of a grove of oak trees that once stood.

