

TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

Margaret Lane Cemetery Master Plan



Developed by
Hillsborough Cemetery Committee
Adopted September 2017

Background

Called at various times the Colored Cemetery, the Old Slave Cemetery, and the Margaret Lane Cemetery, this burial ground predates the Civil War. The Margaret Lane Cemetery is bordered by Occoneechee Street to the east, Margaret Lane to the north, and Hillsborough Avenue to the west. It comprises town lots 233 and 234, making it a little less than two acres in size.

Originally, the cemetery was used as the final resting place for enslaved persons and employees associated with the Jones and Ruffin families as well as members of the Faucette family. The oldest recorded burial at the cemetery took place in 1852 (the grandfather of Henderson Faribault, name unknown). The earliest known gravestone belonged to Dinah Thompson, an enslaved woman who died in 1859. Her marker, a slate slab, was destroyed by vandals in 1987. After the Civil War, the cemetery continued as a burial ground for African-Americans. By the early 20th century, the hillside was covered with professionally made gravestones, brick markers, fieldstones, wooden markers, and family plots surrounded by ornate ironwork fences made by Stewart Iron Works of Cincinnati, Ohio.

During the 1917 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, a bill passed to allow the Hillsborough Board of Aldermen to disinter the burials, relocate them to a new site, and then sell the property. A newspaper article stated that “the colored people of Hillsboro were very much disturbed about the bill passed ... to remove the bodies in the colored cemetery there and sell the site.” Consequently, State Senator Bennehan Cameron successfully called for the act to be repealed.

By 1931, the cemetery had reached its capacity. African-American families moved out of the neighborhood, and the cemetery fell into disrepair. Clyde Whitted, whose cousins were buried here, remembered it smelled of honeysuckle and “was like a wilderness. The weeds were high and dense.” Tombstones were broken off at their bases and stolen. Some tombstones reappeared throughout the community as paving stones. One was found in a cellar supporting a water pipe.



A 1973 survey of the cemetery reported finding 11 remaining tombstones, only four of which were intact and standing. One of the few surviving gravestones belongs to Daniel Whitted (1865-1895). The 1880 census reveals that 15-year-old Daniel and his cousins worked at the J. Y. Whitted & Company tobacco manufacturing plant in Hillsborough.

Pictured here are the children of Daniel Whitted.

A legal dispute over ownership of the cemetery occurred in 1985. Seven years prior, a quitclaim deed was filed by former Hillsborough Mayor Lucious Cheshire, Jr. and former Town Attorney Lucious Cheshire, Sr. on behalf of All Saints Anglican Orthodox Church. A citizen researching zoning matters found the Cheshires' quitclaim deed during the summer of 1985. Following discovery of the claim, members of the town board — believing the property to be the town's — filed suit against the Cheshires to establish town ownership. Another quitclaim deed was filed to establish ownership by the church, but the town was ultimately recognized as the property owner in court. A grassroots movement to maintain the cemetery's public status accompanied the aforementioned legal action.

In November of 1985, the Town of Hillsborough established the Margaret Lane Cemetery Committee. Inaugural committee members included Louise Evans, Walter Faribault, Jack Payne, Evelyn Poole-Kober, William Price, Mary Sanford, Alice Wilkerson, Boots Whitted and Clyde Whitted. Over the course of two years, the committee members and other dedicated volunteers oversaw a massive renovation of the cemetery. Underbrush was cleared and fallen headstones repaired and reerected. A search for the names of those buried here began. On All Saints Day in 1987, the cemetery was rededicated with hymns sung by church choirs in what was called "a pageant of honor and good will." Louise Evans, a soloist from Mount Bright Baptist Church, sang "Amazing Grace" at the ceremony in honor of her grandmother, Polly Turner, who is buried in the cemetery.

Research and preservation continues. In 2006, an onsite investigation produced a map of the locations of unmarked graves. In 2011, a brick memorial preserving three recovered gravestones was erected in the northwestern corner of the cemetery. In 2014, the work and mission of the Margaret Lane Cemetery was subsumed by the newly formed Cemetery Committee, an advisory board of the Town of Hillsborough.

Suggested sources for further reading:

Town of Hillsborough Margaret Lane Cemetery Archives (Please contact the Planning Department to request access)

Ryan, Elizabeth Shreve. *Orange County Trio: Hillsborough, Chapel Hill, and Carrboro, North Carolina, Histories and Tour Guides*. Chapel Hill Press, Inc., 2004.

The Preservation Fund of Hillsborough. *Hidden Hillsborough: Historic Dependencies and Landscapes in a Small Southern Town*. Eno Publishers, 2017.

Eliza Mayo Payne (1872-1936) is reported by family members to be buried in Margaret Lane Cemetery. Her parents were George Mayo and Fannie Chavis Mayo. The Mayo and Chavis families were among the free black families in Hillsborough listed in the 1850 census. Eliza Mayo was the third of seven children and married Dave Payne. They lived in Durham. Eliza and Dave Payne had a son, David William Payne.



The Durham Morning Herald reported that on Sunday, Nov. 2, 1987, an estimated 100 people gathered to celebrate the rededication of the Margaret Lane Cemetery. Prior to the ceremony, landscaping improvements were made and gravestones were repaired — the largest stone being the Hill family's 1900 obelisk that had been knocked over and broken. Townspeople and descendants of the buried attended. Mayor Frank Sheffield thanked the volunteers who worked to preserve and restore "this sacred and historic spot in our community."

Pictured in this Durham Morning Herald photograph are descendants of George W. Hill visiting his newly restored gravestone during the cemetery's rededication in 1987.



Mapping the Margaret Lane Cemetery

In 2006, the Town of Hillsborough worked with archaeologist John W. Clauser Jr. from Of Grave Concerns Inc. to locate unmarked graves in the Margaret Lane Cemetery. Mr. Clauser probed the site and located and mapped 151 graves including the three marked graves. He believes that 170 graves may be present. He produced a report of his findings and developed a map for the cemetery. His report is attached to this document as Appendix A.

Master Plan Priorities

In the summer of 2017, the Hillsborough Cemetery Committee — in coordination with the town public space and stormwater divisions — developed a list of recommended improvements for Margaret Lane Cemetery. The recommendations are detailed in this master plan and are intended to guide future spending decisions.

Recommendations

- Improve Occoneechee Street entrance for accessibility by installing a longer culvert, regrading and widening access area
- Relocate interpretive sign to the Occoneechee Street entrance to be easily accessible from the street
- Raise the existing gravesite markers by lifting, placing sand beneath, and resetting at a height that will not conflict with mowing operations
- Maintain the existing trees and grounds using best practices for landscape management
- Remove and replace diseased cherry tree at northwest corner
- Investigate options for establishing healthy ground cover on the north facing bank beside West Margaret Lane
- Install three Butler-style benches in black. Place one bench at southwest corner near the family plot, one at the northwest corner near the brick memorial, and one along the north property line, visible from the Occoneechee Street entrance
- Investigate the well site to see if missing gravestones are present
- Research history of wrought iron fencing surrounding cemetery
- Update the brochure maps with any new findings
- Update the town website to include detailed description of Margaret Lane Cemetery history, maps and master plan

A site plan showing the recommended improvements is included in this document.

Photographs of Margaret Lane Cemetery



Occoneechee Street Entrance and Wayfinding Sign



Occoneechee Street Entrance Brick Pillars



George Hill Obelisk



Stone Monument



Well



View of Margaret Lane Cemetery

Photographs of Margaret Lane Cemetery



Johnson Plot



Brick Monument



Northwest Corner



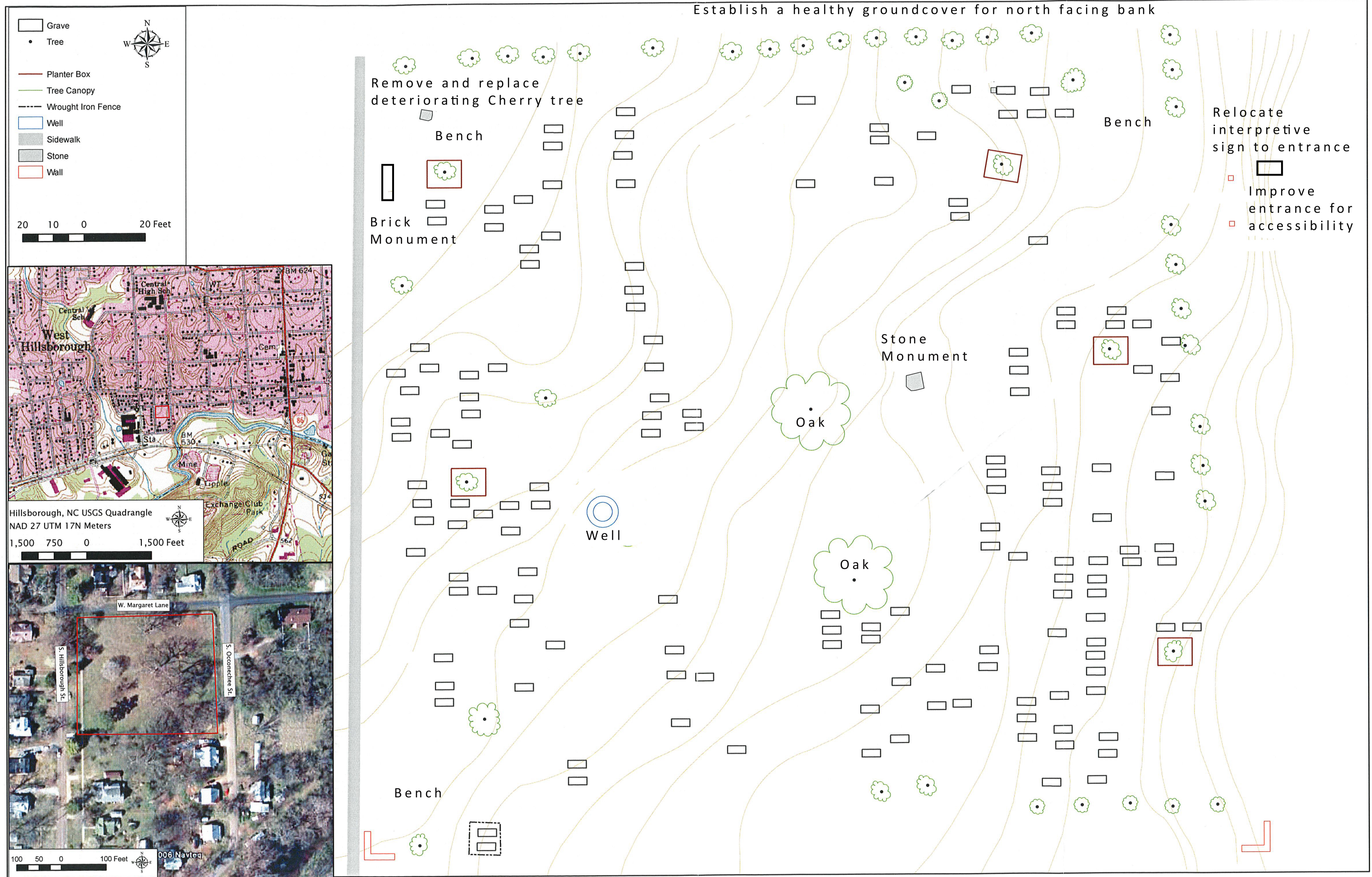
Southwest Corner



Marked Grave



Oak Tree



Appendix A

MAPPING THE MARGARET LANE CEMETERY

31OR575

Hillsborough, North Carolina

2006

of grave concerns, inc.

1523 Hanover Street – Raleigh, NC 27608
Telephone (919) 839 0501

Abstract

Of Grave Concerns, Inc. conducted an archaeological survey of the Margaret Lane Cemetery, Hillsborough, North Carolina, in 2006. The survey included probing and visual inspection for surface indications of graves. One hundred marked and unmarked graves were located and mapped as a result of this project.

List of Figures

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Figure 1 | Cemetery Corner Markers and Entrance Posts |
| Figure 2 | Memorial Marker |
| Figure 3 | Cemetery Rededication Marker |
| Figure 4 | General View of Cemetery with Flags in Place |
| Figure 5 | George W. Hill Marker |
| Figure 6 | Mary Williams and Wily Johnson Markers |

Introduction

The Town of Hillsborough and Of Grave Concerns, Inc. entered into an agreement on December 2005 to locate and map unmarked graves in the Margaret Lane Cemetery (31OR575). The project was funded through a grant from a Federal Historic Preservation Survey and Planning Grant through North Carolina Office of Archives and History and funds from the Town of Hillsborough with the cooperation of the Orange County Environment and resource Conservation Department.

Project personnel Included John Clauser, Principal Investigator, Ms Kimberly Harrison and Mr. Sid Becker, field technicians. The principal investigator was on hand during all field operations. The cemetery was mapped using a total station laser transit.

The Margaret Lane Cemetery is located on the west side of Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina. The cemetery is bounded on the east by Occoneechee Street, the north by Margaret Lane, the west by Hillsborough Street and the South by a residential area. The land slopes to the east at an increasing angle as it approaches Occoneechee Street. The environment is artificially landscaped with mowed grass ground cover, planned plantings and three very large Oak trees which seem to be survivors of an early cemetery plan. There are three grave markers in place. A wrought iron fence encloses two of the graves. Two modern memorial markers, bronze plaques mounted to unfinished stone blocks, have been added in the recent past. Two decorative brick corner markers help to delineate the southern extreme of the cemetery.

Background

The Margaret Lane Cemetery was established prior to 1885 when it first appears in the written record. Local oral tradition places the date to at least 1852 and, perhaps even earlier when it was established "as a burial place for local slaves and their families" (Memorial Marker on site). The cemetery was reported as nearly full in 1918 with numerous grave markers and Brick vaults. The last recorded burial occurred in 1913. The cemetery fell into disrepair and was heavily overgrown in the nineteen eighties when the town took possession and began regular landscape maintenance. A town committee was formed to oversee care of the cemetery in 2004.

The committee has been quite active since its inception collecting aerial photographs, documents and even a 1987 sketch map of the cemetery. There has been an active program of planned ornamental plantings. The goal of the cemetery committee appears to be one of improvement without imposition--providing a pleasant atmosphere without undue development. The result is a park-like area with proper respect and reference to those buried there.

Methods

An archaeological survey with limited subsurface testing was conducted to determine the area covered by the cemetery and locate as many graves as possible. While the field methods utilized do not guarantee locating all the graves present, they represent a reasonable and prudent effort and meet present professional standards. The combination of surface inspection and controlled probing is approximately eighty per cent effective. This percentage compares favorably with methods such as ground penetrating radar, proton magnetometer and soil resistivity methods. The only method 100% successful is complete excavation. Excavation is neither recommended nor warranted at the Margaret Lane Cemetery.

The cemetery area was visually inspected for surface indications of burials: head and foot markers, visible depressions in the soil and grave mounds for example. Graves were marked at the head and foot by pin flags. Grave locations were mapped to scale and the resulting map was inspected to determine a pattern. Blank spaces in the pattern were then re-inspected and probed using a ¼ inch steel probe to locate a grave pit. If a grave was located in this manner, it was marked with pin flags and added to the map. Only burials that were positively identified were mapped. If there was any question about the presence of a burial, the location was not recorded.

Mapping and relative elevation measurements were originally an alidade and plane table, stadia rod and tapes. The site was resurveyed with a total station laser transit when problems with the original map were discovered. Absolute elevations were established with reference to a topographic map supplied by the town. Most measurements were recorded in English units (feet), as that is the prevailing system used when the cemetery was used. Metric notation was only used when calculating UTM position. These locations were recorded with a hand held Garmin 60CSx GPS unit. Standard reading error was +/- eighteen feet.

Results

One hundred fifty one graves were located and mapped including the three marked graves. Since, as previously stated, the field methods utilized are not 100% accurate, 170 graves is a more likely measure. Oral tradition suggests that there may be as many as 300 graves in the cemetery. There is certainly enough room for that number of graves. While the actual number of graves may vary 170 is a reasonable estimate.

Topographic variations indicate the remains of an early road or path across the cemetery. The path begins between the two brick pillars on Occoneechee Street and runs diagonally to the southwest (see topographic map). The presence of graves within the limits of the path suggests that this is a later addition to the cemetery.

UTMs were recorded at each of the corners of the cemetery:

Northwest corner	3993822N/670220E
Southwest corner	3993739N/670216
Southeast corner	3993307N/670204E
Northeast corner1	3993834N/670300E

Conclusions

The Margaret Lane Cemetery is an important historic resource for Hillsborough. Development, "restoration" or "rehabilitation" project should be approached with extreme caution. This is a case where the less done, the better the results. The large open area set off by the large trees is pleasant and usable as a passive recreation area. The remaining three grave markers are evidence of the presence of burials.

The displaced markers are problematic. They should remain at the cemetery, but should not be placed over a grave unless the location can be positively verified. They should be installed upright to prevent more accelerated deterioration, but in an area which evidences the relocation. Displaced marker bases should be relocated in a similar manner. The goal should be maintenance and enhancement without imposing our ideas of correctness on a different culture.

Future activity should concentrate on documentary and oral tradition research. Interviews with elderly informants are important and should be conducted as soon as possible. Documentary research should continue apace. Additional names of those buried in the cemetery might be located. Period photographs might be found which could locate the displaced stones. The more evidence gathered about the cemetery the better. The archaeology is completed for all intents and purposes. The only codicil is that archaeological clearance be obtained prior to any ground disturbing activities. This clearance may consist of simple consultation, or may involve excavation.

Displaced Stones

W.O. Parker
Jan. 20, 1870
Oct 21, 1931

Gone But Not Forgotten
Love Never Faleth

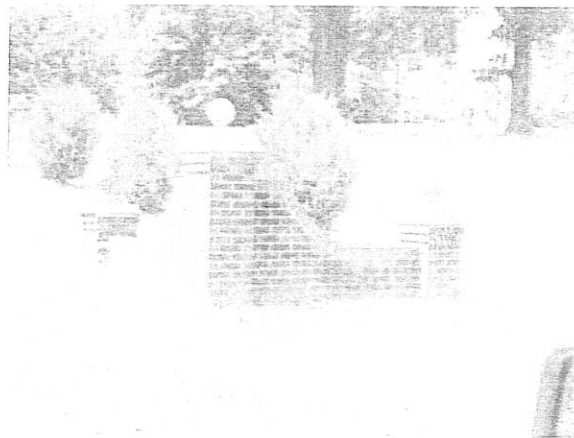
Daniel Whited
Born
Oct 10, 1865
Died
Aug 20, 1896

Job 16:19

Figure 1: Architectural Features



Gate Pillars



Southeast Corner



Southwest Corner

Figure 2: Memorial in Center of Cemetery

Margaret Lane Cemetery

The Names Of Persons Hereon Are Known To Have Been Buried At This Sacred Site.
[Due To Varying Circumstances, The
Exact Location Of Most Of Their Graves Is Not Known. Names Subsequently [Discovered May Be Placed By
Town Authorities On This Plaque Or Another [Appropriate Marker

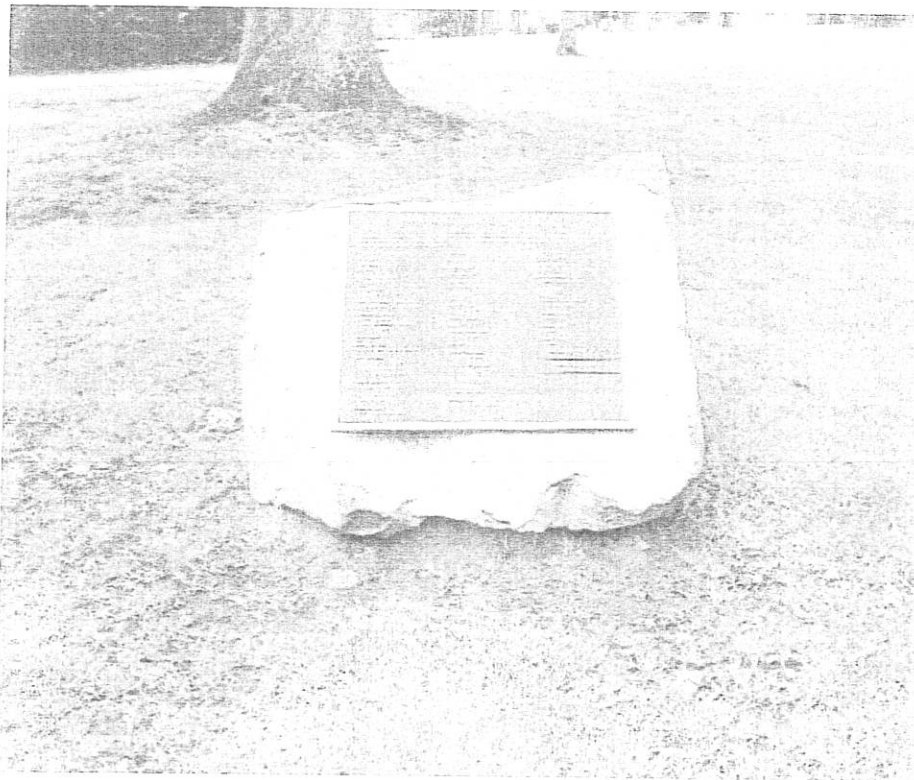


Figure 3: Memorial In Northeast Corner Of Cemetery

Margaret Lane
Cemetery

Before 1852 to 1931

Well before the Civil War this sacred site was set aside as a burial place for local slaves
[and their families.

It remained active until the nineteen thirties

Dedicated 1987



Figure 4: General Cemetery View
Pin flags in Place



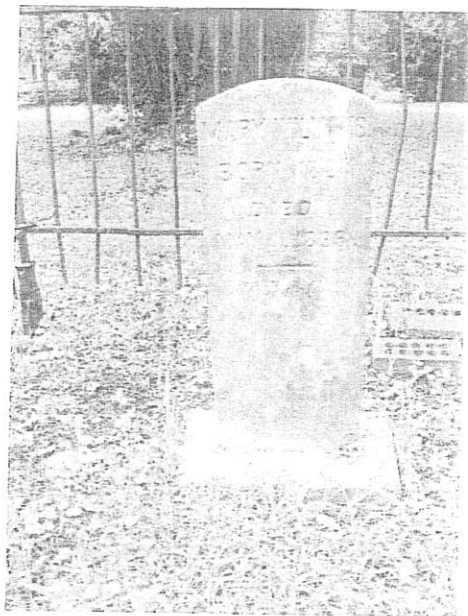
Figure 5

George W. Hill
Born
Jan. 8, 1844
Died
Apr. 23, 1900
None Knew thee But to Love thee
Gone But Not Forgotten



Figure 6






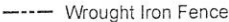




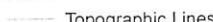

Graves in Southwest Corner
Wrought Iron Fence



Mary Wil-
liams
Born 1821
Died
May 1, 1899
At rest



My Husband
Wily Johnson
Died
May 4, 1898
Aged 55 Years

-  Grave
-  Tree
-  Stand Pipe
-  Planter Box
-  Tree Canopy
-  Wrought Iron Fence
-  Well
-  Sidewalk
-  Stone
-  Wall
-  Topographic Lines
-  Path



20 10 0 20 Feet

