Lost and Found: The Nexus of Cemetery Identification, Archeology, Urban Planning, and Community Involvement

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This Presentation

• I. The importance of cemeteries as significant places on our landscape.

• II. How do cemeteries become lost?

• III. How can we enhance pathways to identify lost cemeteries as part of the planning process?
The Importance of Cemeteries as Significant Places on our Landscape

• Focusing on cemeteries brings visibility to previously unmapped places, freedom colonies and their constituencies

• Walking tours of freedom colony cemeteries enable mapping, reconstruction of “place”
The Importance of Cemeteries as Significant Places on our Landscape

• Settlements and Cemeteries
  • Clear Creek Settlement & Cemetery in Jasper County, Texas
    • Descendants of those buried in Clear Creek lead tour
      • Herman Wright, splits time between Mount Union Settlement in Jasper County and Houston, TX
      • Gwen Bluiett, Magnolia Springs Settlement, Jasper County resident
  • Huff Creek Community, Jasper County, TX
  • Dixie Community, TX

• Annual homecomings and reunions times when diaspora return to help maintain cemeteries
Clear Creek: Previously Unmapped Settlement
Clear Creek: Previously Unmapped Settlement
Clear Creek: Previously Unmapped Settlement
Huff Creek Community Cemetery: Black History Overshadowed by Dragging Death
Dixie Community Cemetery & Descendants
How do cemeteries become lost?
“LOST” CEMETERIES
Ashley Lemke
Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Historic Cemeteries

- Endangered all over the U.S.
- Minority groups: even more susceptible
  - Systematic, institutionalized racism
  - Neglect
  - Segregation
  - Gentrification
  - Unique mortuary patterns
Historic Cemeteries

- Ignored, damaged, or “lost”

- Specific case study – historic cemeteries going “missing” from maps in Texas
"Missing" Cemeteries

- Known & marked on “historic” maps
- Later omitted from “modern” maps
“Missing” Cemeteries

TOP: USGS Liberty 15’ 1955

BOTTOM: USGS Liberty 7.5’ 1984
Data

• Over half of the THC maps were analyzed (n=245 out of 453)
• 123 no cemeteries
• 122 had one or more cemeteries
• 29 of these had missing cemeteries
• 36 total cemeteries “missing” from modern 7.5’ quads
Significant discrepancy

Leaves these “lost” cemeteries vulnerable

Every map with a missing cemetery had other cemeteries – only certain cemeteries went missing
Why did some cemeteries go missing?

- One case of destruction
- One case of relocation
- One case of flooding beneath Falcon Reservoir
- Other factors?
Why did some cemeteries go missing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>CONTRIBUTES TO MISSING CEMETERIES?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery Size</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery Location</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave Markers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery Segregation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cemetery Segregation

- Arlington National Cemetery wasn’t integrated until 1948
- Cemetery segregation was legal until 1968

All the cemeteries on historic maps pre-date cemetery integration (1887-1960)

Greenwood Cemetery, Waco
“Minority” Cemeteries

- Particularly African/African-American
- History of damage & destruction during construction projects
A Plan of the City of New York from an actual Survey Anno Domini M. C. C. L. V. I.

By T. Jefferys, F. A. C. A. City
Minority Cemeteries

- History of damage & destruction
- Often sites are located on historic maps after the fact
- Examples throughout Texas

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Lemke In Press

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“Lost” Cemeteries

Archaeological processes (preservation bias, taphonomy)

Anthropological processes (spatial segregation, structural racism)

Although “lost” to historic & archaeological records; may not be lost to local people and/or descendant communities
CEMETERY MAPPING IN TEXAS FREEDOM COLONIES

ANDREA R. ROBERTS, PHD
Texas A & M University
Assistant Professor, Urban Planning
Founder, Texas Freedom Colonies Project
How Do Freedom Colony Cemeteries Become Lost?

- Outmigration
- Low population
- No perpetual care
- Mutual aid societies dispersed
- Dispersed constituents, descendants
Texas Freedom Colonies

- 1865-1920
- Black Codes, violence, terror,
- Clusters of landowners (2%, 31%)
- Squatting, adverse possession
- Railroads, mills, “bottoms”
- Cemeteries, few structures remain in some settlements

“These were dispersed communities—"settlements," Southerners often called them—places unplatted and unincorporated, individually unified only by church and school and residents' collective belief that a community existed...“

Causes of Texas Freedom Colony Decline

- Great migration, violence
- Population loss
- Infrastructure projects
- Building integrity, demolition by neglect
- Deferred maintenance
- Invisibility, intangible heritage
Threats to Texas Freedom Colonies’ Cultural Resources: Growth, Disinvestment, & Ecological Destruction
Enhancing pathways to identify lost cemeteries as part of the project planning process
Human remains found during construction on mall property

Historic cemetery found on construction site of FBISD center

By Brooke A. Lewis  Updated 12:50 pm CDT, Tuesday, April 10, 2018


A grave mistake: Possible slave cemetery

Image 1 of 4
Inadvertent Lost Cemetery Discoveries in TX 1871-2018 (n=67 across 33 counties)

- Private Sponsor
- Government Sponsor (Federal)
- Government Sponsor (State)
The Regulatory Process as It Applies to Cultural Resources

• National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106

• Antiquities Code of Texas

• Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 711
Awarded National Trust for History Preservation: Cemetery & Settlement Atlas Planning Grant (2019)

- Expand technological, storage capacity
- Mobile upload survey, assessment
- Planning with descendants (community engagement)
Texas Freedom Colonies Project is an evolving, social justice initiative, which celebrates, researches, and documents historic Black settlements’ landscapes, heritage, & grassroots placemaking and preservation practice.

Founded 2014

Andrea R. Roberts, PhD, Founder

Affiliations at Texas A&M University – College of Architecture
Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
Center for Housing and Urban Development
Institute for Sustainable Communities
Center for Heritage Conservation
Texas Freedom Colonies Project is an evolving, social justice initiative, which celebrates, researches, & documents historic Black settlements’ landscapes, heritage, & grassroots preservation practice.

Record, Analyze Placemaking Stories & Planning Histories

Develop Evidence-Based Community Resilience Strategies through Participatory Research

Build Atlas & Database of Texas FC Locations
Welcome to the Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas (2.0)

Scroll down to learn how to use the Atlas.
Maps Locations, Stores “Feature Types, including Cemeteries”

- Freedom Colony Name
- Origin Story
- Alias
- County
- Nearest Major City
- Region (COG)
- Status
- Year Established
- Census 2010 Population
- Existing Features and Structures
- Additional Information
- Related Links
- Attachments

The Texas Freedom Colonies Project
Located Freedom Colonies

Freedom Colony Name
Tunis

Origin Story
Alias:
County: Burleson
Nearest Major City:
Region (COG): BVCOG
Legal Status:
Year Established:
Census 2010 Population:

Existing Features and Structures
USGS Feature Type: Populated Place
USGS Feature Name: Tunis
National Register:
Historical Marker:
Cemetery:
School:
Church:
Structure:
Site:
Park/Public Space:
Object:

Additional Information
Family Names:
Contact Email:

Related Links
Public History
Community History
Event Calendar

Attachments:
No attachments found
Zoom in...
The Texas Freedom Colonies Atlas 2.0: Crowdsources Cemetery History, Maps, Data

“Starting with the cemetery for names and working with digital newspaper archives, a working history of the community is beginning to emerge.”

Camptown, Washington County
Andrea R. Roberts, PhD
Founder, Texas Freedom Colonies Project
freedomcoloniesproject@gmail.com
Council of Texas Archeologists’ Lost Cemeteries Task

1. Identify steps to enhance desktop reviews
2. Prioritize “high-risk locations” of the state
3. Implementation via the Texas Historical Commission’s Archeological Sites Atlas
Enhancing Desktop Reviews

- Use of georeferenced historical maps
- Adding locations of "discovered" cemeteries to an accessible web-based GIS application (e.g., the Atlas)
Prioritizing Areas of the State

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2010 Summary File 1 population by census tract
Lost Cemeteries Task Force
Core Team

• GIS Specialists
• Historians, archeologists with expertise in identifying lost cemeteries using GIS-enabled historic records databases
• THC Archeology Division Representative
• THC History Programs/Cemeteries Representative
Task Force Advisors/Partners

- County Historical Commissions
- County Site Stewards
- Researchers
- Cemetery Preservation Advocacy Groups
- Urban planners
- Chairs of Area Councils of Government
Regional Councils of Governments

1. Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
2. South Plains Association of Governments
3. North Texas Regional Planning Commission
4. North Central Texas Council of Governments
5. Ark-Tex Council of Governments
6. East Texas Council of Governments
7. West Central Texas Council of Governments
8. Rio Grande Council of Governments
9. Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission
10. Concho Valley Council of Governments
11. Heart of Texas Council of Governments
12. Capital Area Council of Governments
13. Brazos Valley Council of Governments
15. South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
16. Houston-Galveston Area Council
17. Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
18. Alamo Area Council of Governments
19. South Texas Development Council
20. Coastal Bend Council of Governments
21. Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
22. Texoma Council of Governments
23. Central Texas Council of Governments
24. Middle Rio Grande Development Council

Regional Councils of Governments
24 Service Areas
(Governor's State Planning Regions, Chapter 391, Texas Local Government Code)

www.txregionalcouncil.org
Preservation is Interdisciplinary

- Archival research
- Archaeological investigations of cemeteries
- Anthropological understanding of mortuary customs

Reginald Moore, Old Imperial Farm Cemetery, Sugarland
Preservation is Collaborative

- Local & Descendant Communities
- Underrepresented sites in American history
- New legislation
Preservation is Participatory

- Project planning involving impacted communities should consider dispersed nature of black descendants of those buried
- Atlas, Mapping Tools that encourage public participation
  - Engagement
  - Crowdsourcing
  - National Trust Grant
Rebecca Shelton, Texas Historical Commission, Archeology Division

Jennifer McWilliams, Texas Historical Commission, History Programs, Cemetery Coordinator

Dr. Andrea Roberts, Texas A&M University

The Council of Texas Archeologists

All other members of the Lost Cemeteries Task Force