

MAP OF
ZION Cemetery

Being described as follows:
from a point 330ft. North of SW Corner of NW 1/4
of NE 1/4 of Section 12 Tp. 29 S. R. 18 E. and
Run E. 420 feet thence N 315 ft thence West 210ft.
thence South 105 ft. thence West 210 thence
South 210 feet to point of beginning.

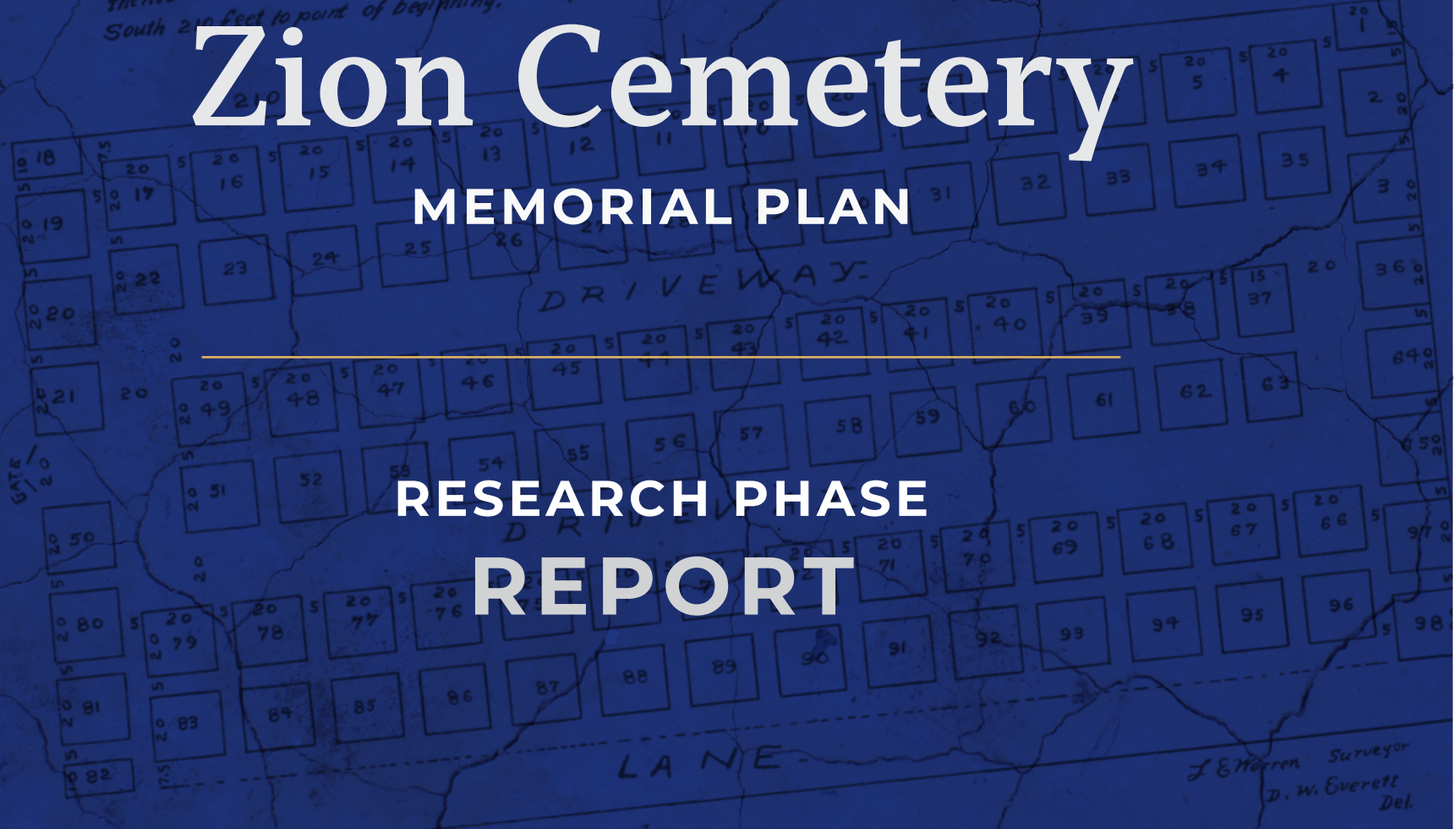
Potters field

Zion Cemetery

MEMORIAL PLAN

RESEARCH PHASE REPORT

885ft. to Sec. Line
210
FLORIDA AVE.



J. E. Warren Surveyor
D. W. Everett
Del.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Restoring Memory

The legacy of Zion Cemetery did not end when Robles Park Village was constructed over this hallowed ground. Founded in 1901 and rediscovered in 2019, special care and consideration must be given as to how to share this sacred and historical space with future generations.

The history of this site, the stories told through the archaeological reports, and the oral history preserved through local historians all paint a picture of a space deserving of remembrance and honor.

Zion is more than a forgotten cemetery, as it stands to tell the history of Tampa and the roll African Americans played in this history. There is another important story that also must be told and that is of the nefarious deeds that led to Zion being nearly erased from memory.

Sadly, Zion is not the first cemetery to be lost and later found. Through the journeys taken by other communities to honor their sacred spaces, now rediscovered, we hope to find inspiration to create a legacy to honor the rich history of this place and the lives of those who will now be allowed to rest in peace.

Regards,

New Robles Park Development Team



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF ZION CEMETERY

Archaeologist Summary¹

This report on archaeological work at Zion Cemetery is submitted to the Zion Cemetery Archaeological Advisory Committee. Archaeological investigations at Zion Cemetery were carried out by Cardno, on behalf of the Tampa Housing Authority (THA), between June 22, 2020 and July 3, 2020. Zion Cemetery was the first African American Cemetery in Tampa, founded in 1901, but it was later built over and erased from maps in the mid-twentieth century. An apartment complex and several other buildings have been constructed on top of it. The apartment complex that covers part of the cemetery is Robles Park Village, a THA housing complex in Tampa, Florida. In June 2019, after learning that Zion Cemetery may still contain human burials beneath the buildings at Robles Park Village, THA contracted Cardno to confirm whether or not graves still exist on the property. THA also created an Archaeological Advisory Committee to oversee and guide the archaeological work.

Since September 2019, Cardno has conducted a series of Ground Penetrating Radar surveys to find out if graves still exist at the former site of Zion Cemetery. Ground Penetrating Radar uses pulses of radio waves, like a Doppler weather radar, to detect and create images of objects that are buried underground. By scanning the Robles Park Village property in the area of Zion, Cardno found images that suggested there were at least 127 graves still buried at the property. Cardno then created a detailed work plan with the Archaeological Advisory Committee, to guide follow-up archaeological excavations, which are the subject of this report.

The excavations were conducted to confirm the presence of intact human graves, and definitively find the cemetery boundaries within modern-day Robles Park Village. The excavations were also designed to look for areas where burials may have been removed in the past. Recent reports from a 1930s eye-witness account described the removal of some of the graves during the 1930s. This archaeological work attempted to find out whether or not human graves have been removed from the cemetery in the past.

Cardno used a specially trained equipment operator and small hydraulic excavator to carefully strip away the grass, sidewalks, and modern soils that covered the grave sites at Zion. At a depth of approximately three feet, archaeologists were able to see and precisely document the location of grave shafts. Grave shafts are rectangular areas of differently colored soil that are left behind not by the coffin itself, but by the hole that is dug to bury the coffin. Grave shafts are evident at a shallow depth, well above the actual human burials that lie at the bottom of grave shafts.

Using this technique Cardno was able to physically find the extreme eastern edges of the cemetery and prove that there were no other graves that extended into Robles Park Village beyond the eastern edge of the known cemetery boundary. During the process, Cardno archaeologists carefully dug down using hand tools and standard professional methods to confirm that coffins were still intact. Furthermore, after this work, Cardno recommends that the gravesites detected by Ground Penetrating Radar were not seriously disturbed by the buildings placed on the cemetery; the cemetery remains in a favorable state of preservation. The excavations at another portion of the cemetery proved that approximately nine individual graves have been removed, probably just as the eye-witness, Eunive Massey, observed during the 1930s. Our results from tests on adjacent land parcels suggest that the area of removed graves may be much larger in the rest of Zion cemetery outside of Robles Park Village.

In the immediate future, we recommend that the demolition of buildings is carefully planned, observed by archaeological monitors, and any newly discovered gravesites are recorded during that process. We also recommend that utilities and public Rights of Way within Zion are dealt with in coordination with the City of Tampa. Furthermore, when and if the parts of Zion that are currently under different landownership are brought together under the Preservation and Maintenance Society, we recommend that additional archaeological work is carried out in the parcels outside of Robles Park Village before the final creation of a permanent memorial space.

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

Old Colored Cemetery

Branhilda Richardson Knowles Memorial Park



Location

Deerfield Beach, FL

Cemetery

1897

Memorial Dedication

2019

Funding

\$1,000,000 for land purchase, \$400,000 for design and construction & \$3,000 grant from Broward County.

History

Inspired by Arlington Cemetery, this 3.3 acre park has been named after Richardson-Knowles, a Deerfield midwife who delivered many in Deerfield's African American community through most of the early 20th century. After being used as a cemetery, the private property was sold and grave markers were removed. When a 69 unit townhome project was proposed for the lot, an archaeological survey required for its approval uncovered 20 areas of human remains. It is estimated that 300 people were buried on this land between 1897 and the 1950s.

Features

Park consists of three parklets each with a unique focal piece to set it apart. The first parklet includes a statue of a woman representing Branhilda Richardson-Knowles. The second park features the "Tree of Life Monument" in honor of those buried on the site. The final parklet includes a veteran's memorial dedicated to the veterans buried on the site.

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

Contrabands & Freedmen Cemetery

**Location**

Alexandria, VA

Cemetery

1864

Memorial Opening

2014

Websitealexandriava.gov/FreedmenMemorial**Funding**

City of Alexandria, VA, Federal Highway Administration, Virginia Department of Transportation, grant from Save America's Treasures, a public-private partnership between the National Park Service and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

History

Rededicated on May 12, 2007 this cemetery honors the forgotten burial place of approximately 1,800 freedmen. The cemetery was founded originally in 1864 to bury freedmen and black union soldiers. In 1865, black soldiers who had been buried on the site were moved to the Soldier's Cemetery at Alexandria National Cemetery. The cemetery fell into disrepair last appearing on maps in 1939. With little above ground evidence of the cemetery remaining, a gas station was built on the property in 1955. More than 30 years later historical research revealed the presence of the cemetery. Ground penetrating radar confirmed the presence of graves on the site. This memorial is part of the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Features

Memorials on this site include a statue in the center of the park called "The Path of Thorns and Roses" depicting the fight to escape slavery. Walls covered in bronze plaques bear the names of those buried in the cemetery.

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

Freedmen Cemetery

**Location**

Dallas, TX

Cemetery

1861

Memorial Opening

1992

Website

dallascityhall.com/departments/sustainabledevelopment/historicpreservation/Pages/freedman_s_cemetery.aspx

Funding

\$2M for the memorial (1992). Of this \$210,000 came from city funds while the rest was raised privately.

History

Built on land that was established as a burial ground for Dallas' early African American population in 1861 the site represents what remains of the once-thriving North Dallas community which from 1861 until the 1970's housed the largest segregated African American enclave in Dallas. In the 1940' black graves were paved over as the expressway was being rebuilt. In the 1980's during the rebuilding of the Central Expressway over 1,500 graves were discovered and reburied. It is estimated that as many as 10,000 were buried in the original cemetery up until the 1920s. This memorial commemorates the significant contributions made by African Americans towards the growth and development of Dallas.

Features

Entrance with statues of freed African American slaves by sculptor David Newton.

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

African Burial Ground National Monument

**Location**

New York, NY

Public Opening

2007

Websitenps.gov/afbg**Funding**

\$3M fund federally approved by president George H. Bush

History

Home to one of the largest and earliest sites associated with 18th century slavery in the United States. In 1990 the GSA began construction on an office tower when excavations on the site uncovered skeletal remains. By 1992, 390 burials had been discovered despite the opinion of archaeologists, knowing of the burial site, but believing that previous development would have erased any remains. In total 419 remains were discovered. In addition to the memorial, there is an interpretive center located on the site on the first floor of the Ted Weiss Federal Building.

Features

Multiple pieces of artwork are used throughout this memorial. These include a 38' x 7.5' silkscreen mural representing imagery and symbols pertinent to 18th and early 19th century. A sculpture tilted "Africa Rising" pays homage to the African Burial site, the transport of Africans to America, their bondage and struggle for freedom. The memorial includes a 25-foot curved granite monument wall and burial mounds

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

Civil Rights Memorial

**Location**

Montgomery, AL

Memorial Opening

1989

Website

splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial

Funding

No information available

History

Created as a contemplative place to remember the Civil Rights Movement, to honor those killed during the struggle, to appreciate how far the country has come on its quest for equality, and to consider how far it has to go. The memorial was created by Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Features

Memorial includes a circular black granite table inscribed with the names of the martyrs and history of the civil rights movement. Water flows from the center of the table radiating out over the marble slab. Behind the table is a wall that includes Martin Luther King Jr's paraphrase of Amos 5:2 "We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Includes the Memorial Center home to exhibits, a 56-seat theater, classroom for educational activities, and the Wall of Tolerance.

SIMILAR PROJECTS & ANALYSIS

Portsmouth's African Burying Ground

**Location**

Portsmouth, NH

Memorial Opening

2015

Website

africanburyinggroundnh.org

Funding

In 2009 the estimated construction costs were \$1.0-1.2 Million. \$100,000 Urban Development Action Grant was awarded in 2010. The remainder of the funds appear to have been raised through private contributions.

History

Originally an active burial ground in the 1700's the area was located within the underdeveloped outskirts of Portsmouth. Over time the burying ground was paved over and its memory faded. In 2003 remains of 13 individuals were discovered under Chestnut Street during an infrastructure project. This burying ground has been determined to be the only known African Burying Ground in all of New England that dates to this era. The African Burying Ground Committee was founded in 2004. The design for this park is intended to stand in honor of those forgotten.

Features

The project includes several art pieces including an entry statue representing the first enslaved African recorded at Plymouth and on the other side a figure representing all that came after. A ceremonial burial cover is adorned with the Sankofa symbol and serves as a seal to the underground vault where remains will be re-interred. Eight life-sized community figure representing the collective community of Portsmouth coming together to acknowledge and pay homage to the burial ground.

OTHER MEMORIALS

Memorial Name, Location, Year	Website	Analysis
Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum Savannah, GA 1996	rmgilbertcivilrightsmuseum.com	Three floors of informative historic photos, documentaries and interactive exhibits documenting the city's Jim Crow era and Civil Rights movement.
Robert Russa Moton Museum Farmville, VA 1939	motonmuseum.org	5 acres, is a museum and not an actual memorial burial site, but does include a tour of the inside.
Belated Remembrance of an African-American Cemetery Charleston, SC 2008	N/A	Includes two stone slabs engraved with some of the site's history, but neglects to inform how the cemetery itself was lost.
National Civil Rights Museum Memphis, TN 1991	civilrightsmuseum.org	Has beautiful story telling exhibits that traces the history of the civil rights movement in the United States from the 17th century to the present.
National Memorial for Peace and Justice Montgomery, AL 2018	museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial	Provides a sacred space for truth-telling and reflection about racial terrorism and its legacy. Has memorial for African Americans that have been lynched from 1877 to 1950's.

OTHER MEMORIALS

Memorial Name, Location, Year	Website	Analysis
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Birmingham, AL 1992	bcri.org	Offers a museum with beautiful pictures and statues of the civil rights history of Birmingham, AL.
DuSable Museum of African American History Chicago, IL 1961	dusablemuseum.org	Offers amazing story-telling exhibits and tours, they recently created a virtual tour of an exhibit this year, about the March on Washington.
Reginald F. Lewis Museum Baltimore, MD 2005	rflewismuseum.org	This museum includes a large selection of African American art and photography.
WEB Du Bois National Historic Site Great Barrington, MA 2006	duboishs.org	This site is about 5 acres, with self guided tours on wooded trails are monuments telling the story of WEB Du Bois on a tour of his ancestral home.

ZION INTERVIEW SYNOPSIS

From the Community²

The following are suggestions as to how Zion should be honored in the future based on interviews between Fred Hearn and Robles Park residents.

What should be done with this cemetery?

Zion "should be used as an educational tool. There should be some sort of learning center that teaches black history about their history and heritage."

"There should be some sort of marker or landmark to recognize those who have died there"

"There should be some type of plaque that lists the names of all the people in the graves that they could find."

Zion grounds should include a proclamation by local authorities stating that from this date forward that "we recognize the value of all those bodies that was placed...that dirt was placed upon."

There should be an annual recognition for those buried in Zion so that they are never again forgotten.

The cemetery should be a memorial site and recognized by people in the community.

"I would want it to be represented in a nice way because their grandchildren would want to know. You know, that's their heritage."

The history of those buried in Zion needs to be told.

Grave site needs to be honored.

"Graveyards are sacred and you are not supposed to mess with a graveyard."

Who has the responsibility to make this situation right?

"It should not only be the government but the private sector should come in and help"

"Tampa Housing Authority should kick-in some money."

"Foundations should come in"

"The government from each level from Tampa to Hillsborough County to the state the federal"

Whoever owned that land first (and allowed cemeteries to be built over).

The government

From the Community - *Continued*

How can Zion help to protect other black burial grounds?

Zion needs to tell the story of what was found in the community and help others identify if there could be a forgotten black cemetery in their community. How do you begin to identify if there is a cemetery in your community? What are the lessons learned here and how can they be applied elsewhere?

People should talk to their family members to figure out where their relatives were buried because that can lead to finding other cemeteries hidden in plain sight.

We must find a way to educate our youth and everyone about black burial grounds.

General Quotes from Interviews

“The reason they should do it is to show that all life matters. So their life mattered not only when they was living but it should matter also when they dead.”

“Everybody want to know, to trace, their landmark to where they come from.”

“We always value anyone. We value anyone. No matter what color, what race...We value because God created us all in His image.”

ZION CEMETERY HISTORY

Memory Timeline³

The following are highlights from a comprehensive history of the Robles Park housing development and the Zion Cemetery compiled by Fred Hearn.

Feb. 20, 1901 –

Hillsborough County Surveyor L. E. Warren files Doby's Zion Cemetery land claim, with 98 plots that are 20 ft. across and 5 ft. apart, just south of a potter's field. The Tampa Bay Times reports that Doby pays \$100.00 for what becomes the Zion Cemetery land.

1905 –

An African American teenager is buried "north of city limits" in what becomes Zion Cemetery (Tampa Bay Times, 13A June 23, 2019)

1907 –

Doby sells the Zion Cemetery for \$300 to the black-owned Florida Industrial and Commercial Company

1910 –

Zion Cemetery is mentioned for the first time this year in official death records. The record states that 26 people are buried there this year (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 3E)

1911 –

The highest number of burials on record in a single year at Zion Cemetery occur this year (119 – some accounts report 117).

CONTINUED ———>

1916 –

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) reports that in the 1890s Minister L. G. Caro (1839-1916) is a founder of Tampa's Greater Bethel Baptist Church. He is buried in the Zion Cemetery in 1916.

1923 –

In December a Tampa Daily Times article lists Zion in a story about prominent cemeteries (Tampa Bay Times June 23, 2019)

1926 –

On January 28 this year Alice W. Fuller of Los Angeles sells Zion for \$1 to Tampa Developer H. P. Kennedy

1929 –

The Tampa Bay Times on September 8, 2019 reports that Kennedy, who serves on the Tampa City Council for eight years, seeks property-tax relief on the Zion Cemetery property at 3700 N. Florida Avenue (Tampa Bay Times Sept. 8, 2019)

1929 –

According to the Tampa Daily Times in February Kennedy obtains approval to build a five-story storefront at 3700 N. Florida Avenue on Zion Cemetery property. The storefront Kennedy builds on Florida Avenue hides Zion from public view.

Memory Timeline - *Continued***1929 –1931 –**

A Sanborn Insurance Map makes no reference to a cemetery at Florida and Virginia Avenues, named or unnamed (Tampa Bay Times June 23, 2020)

1930s –

Zion Cemetery is owned now by Kennedy and Hewitt Walker (Tampa Bay Times June 23, 2019)

1930s –

Eunive Massey remembers The entrance to the cemetery is moved from Florida Avenue to Ruth Avenue just to the south, she tells the Times (Interviewed by Fred Hearn & Associates LLC July 7, 2020) (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

1933 –

Massey tells the Tampa Bay Times she remembers some graves are exhumed this year from Zion Cemetery but she does not know how many. All the headstones are removed this year (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

Sept. 28, 1949 –

The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) Board of Directors discusses the proposal to build “1500 additional housing units within the next two years. One of these proposed sites became Robles Park Village (THA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Sept. 28, 2020)

CONTINUED →

1951 –

In November Paul Smith Construction Company, under contract by the THA, unearths three children caskets on the south east corner of Ruth and Morgan Streets, site of the future Robles Park Village Public Housing Development. The city tells news reporters then that the bodies had been moved in 1925: there are records for 13 caskets being removed from Zion Cemetery. THA Board meeting minutes do not indicate any action by the board on the matter and construction continues for the new development that becomes Robles Park Village Public Housing for white residents (Tampa Bay Times Aug. 25, 2019)

Apr. 1953 –

Robles Park Village opens (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

Oct. 1954 –

The 67-building Robles Park Village for white residents only is officially dedicated (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

July 1962 –

Resident Efren Vega, Jr. tells the City of Tampa that he finds human remains while digging a hole for burying trash in his backyard.

Memory Timeline - *Continued***June 23, 2019 –**

The Tampa Bay Times announces that it finds death certificates for 382 people buried at Zion Cemetery between 1913 and 1920 – far more than the 13 deceased people's bodies it finds.

June 2019 –

The Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) registers Zion land as a historic cemetery site with the State of Florida (Tampa Bay Times July 1, 2019)

June 28, 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times announces that Florida State Sen. Janet Cruz (D-Tampa) and Florida Senate Minority Leader Audrey Gibson (D-Jacksonville) begin drafting legislation to form a state-wide task force to identify unmarked African American cemeteries in Florida (Tampa Bay Times June 30, 2019)

August 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that the Tampa Housing Authority begins the process of moving all 29 families living in the five buildings erected on the Zion Cemetery footprint (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

Aug. 31, 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that ground-penetrating radar detects what appears to be more than 120 coffins, oriented east-west in rows, at Zion Cemetery. The radar cannot penetrate through five Tampa Housing Authority apartment buildings on the property, located in the 200 block of Stratford and E. Kentucky Avenues. It is believed that additional coffins may exist there.

CONTINUED ———>

Sept. 26, 2019 –

The THA announces during a Zion Cemetery Archaeological Committee meeting that archaeologists soon will begin digging at the Zion Cemetery section of Robles Park Village in search of anomalies that well could be coffins buried beneath the land there. The THA announces that first (within 90 days of this meeting) all residents living in the area that will be examined will be moved from Robles Park. The THA will relocate them in their properties at other sites or issue them Section 8 Housing Vouchers to select housing at sites of their choice.

Sept. 28, 2019 –

Pastor Byron Pressley of the First Mt. Carmel AME Church in East Tampa presides over a memorial service for the souls of those who are buried at the Zion Cemetery.

Oct. 5, 2019 –

FPAN's Rebecca O'Sullivan tells the Tampa Bay Times that she has reviewed and certified 742 death certificates that list Zion as the burial place.

Oct. 5, 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that Sunstate Wrecker Services Owner Dennis Creech and General Manager Tony Huffman recently learn that some of the business's land along North Florida Avenue is part of Zion Cemetery.

Memory Timeline - *Continued***Oct. 20, 2019 –**

Archaeologists find 127 caskets on 2 ½ acre cemetery by this date at the Zion Cemetery. Some 800 death records list Zion Cemetery as the place of these burials.

Oct. 20, 2019 –

Cardno, Inc. uses ground-penetrating radar to show disturbances to the soil around approximately 10 percent of the caskets at Zion Cemetery, suggesting that bodies may have been exhumed from there.

Nov. 2019 –

Archaeologists announce that ground-penetrating radar uncovers 17 casket-like figures on property that now is home to Sunstate Wrecker Services towing lot (Tampa Bay Times August 30, 2020, p. 4E)

Dec. 19, 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that Cardno announces it has detected the existence of at least 55 probable caskets and three other anomalies that could be caskets on property owned by Sunstate Wrecker Services.

Dec. 31, 2019 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that it begins the investigation that leads to the rediscovery of the Zion Cemetery in September 2018.

Jan. 8, 2020 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that restaurateur Gonzmart says in a press release that a survey of his land on Florida Avenue by T2 Utility Engineers reveals the existence of anomalies and what appear to be caskets on his property.

Jan. 11, 2020 –

An editorial in the Tampa Bay Times commends restaurateur Gonzmart of the Columbia Group for announcing that the 115 graves found on his Florida Avenue property will be preserved as part of the Zion Cemetery memorial project (Tampa Bay Times Jan. 11, 2020)

Jan. 17, 2020 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that a 1962 newspaper clipping indicates that a homeowner living on the Zion property discovers what appears to be bones while digging in his yard.

Feb. 21, 2020 –

The Florida Senate votes to set aside \$50,000.00 for a memorial at the Zion Cemetery site. The City of Tampa also commits \$50,000.00 toward the project and Hillsborough County considers making a similar contribution.

Feb. 28, 2020 –

State Senator Janet Cruz (D-Tampa), Senate Minority Leader Audrey Gibson (D-Jacksonville) and State Senator Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg) support passage of an amendment to Senate General Appropriations Bill SB 2500. This legislation sets aside \$50,000.00 each for memorials at the Zion Cemetery site and for the Ridgewood Cemetery.

Mar 2020 –

The Tampa Bay Times reports that the last of the 29 families living on land that once is Zion Cemetery move from Robles Park Village .

GROUND PENETRATING RADAR RESULTS

Zion Cemetery Map



Cardno (October 2020). Zion Excavation Report, Figure 21 GSSI GPR Results – Key to GPR Grid Locations. Tampa, FL

REFERENCES

- 1 Eric Prendergast RPA, Kelsey Kreiser RPA, Lucy D. Jones, Rebecca O'Sullivan RPA, Erin McKendry RPA, and Jeffrey Moates RPA (2020). Archaeological Investigation of Zion Cemetery. Tampa, FL: Cardno
- 2 Fred Hearn (July 2020). Tampa Heights/Zion Cemetery/Robles Park SANKOFA Memory Timeline. Tampa, FL
- 3 Fred Hearn (November 2020). Zion Cemetery Community Interview Synopsis. Tampa, FL

COLOPHON

Prepared for the Tampa Housing Authority
by Baker Barrios Architects and Property Markets Group.

Report outlining the findings of the Research Phase for
Development of the Zion Cemetery Memorial.

NEWROBLES PARK.COM
BAKERBARRIOS.COM
PROPERTYMG.COM
THAFL.COM

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