

Historic Preservation Plan for the Chestnut Street Cemetery Apalachicola, Florida



Prepared under contract by:
James J. Miller, Ph.D., RPA
and
Jonathan G. Lammers
of
James J. Miller PHD LLC
Tallahassee, FL
jim@jimmler.com
for the Apalachicola Area Historical Society, Inc.
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Acknowledgements

Chestnut Street Cemetery has a valued place in the Apalachicola community. As with many older cemeteries, it requires ongoing maintenance, care and restoration. With the commitment to develop a historic preservation plan, City of Apalachicola and the Apalachicola Area Historical Society, manager, and have taken the first steps to evaluate the cemetery's needs and to explore solutions. The support of the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, and the State of Florida made this work possible, and is gratefully acknowledged.

Many people have offered advice, opinions, information and encouragement in this project, and have also, over the years, taught me about the special preservation needs of historic cemeteries. Thank you to Sharyn Thompson, Florida's premier cemetery preservationist and a long-time colleague. Her publications and conversations have provided guidance to me and others for decades. Sharyn visited the Cemetery during the project, provided a report of previous work (Appendix E), discussed preservation challenges, and helped place this plan in the context of a long-term program to care for Chestnut Street Cemetery. Margo Stringfield, of University of West Florida, Institute of Archaeology, visited along with Sharyn and addressed many specific concerns such as safety, caution in choosing and applying preservation treatments, organization and funding, and the development of resource teams to address areas like stonework, metalwork, vegetation and other cemetery resources. Thank you also to Susan Olsen, Director of Historical Services at The Woodlawn Cemetery in Bronx, NY, a National Historic Landmark. My association with Woodlawn has offered many opportunities to think about how best to manage significant historical cemetery elements, especially in terms of GIS mapping and recording, organizing, analyzing and supplying information comprising very large data sets.

The land survey of the cemetery was completed by Thurman Roddenberry of Thurman Roddenberry & Associates, Inc. Thurman worked many extra hours at the cemetery to compile an accurate and comprehensive survey of the monuments, lots, trees, fences, utilities and other elements. Without this work, this project would not have been possible, and I am grateful for his fine survey. Further examination of cemetery resources was carried out on a pro-bono basis by John Clyatt, President, and his crew, Curry Fulghum, Ron Droke and Sherry Grymko, from Pickett and Associates, Inc., of Bartow, FL. John's work was intended to explore and develop applications in the use of 3D laser scanning to record historic cemeteries. This is an exciting area of research, and I am grateful to be involved.

Special thanks to Richard Butgereit for GIS planning and assistance and for preparation of the comprehensive online cemetery map and the Story Map for interpretation. Making cemetery information available on mobile devices with geolocation has been a high priority for projects that we have completed together over several years. I am especially grateful to Jonathan Lammers, Preservation Planner, for help with field work, editing, and preparation of the final report, and for insights into clear communication and expression.

James J. Miller
Tallahassee, Florida
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Executive Summary

This Historic Preservation Plan for the Chestnut Street Cemetery in Apalachicola came about because of the desire of the community, specifically the City of Apalachicola (owner) and the Apalachicola Area Historical Society, to improve the appearance and management of this important historic property. The study was funded by a Historic Preservation Small-Matching Grant from the Florida Division of Historical Resources, and was completed under contract by James J Miller PHD LLC. The plan reflects not only the

specific grant requirements, but also the current state of information about the cemetery necessary to support planning and management activities.

At the beginning of the project, the 550 or so interments and memorials in the cemetery were represented by a hand-drawn sketch map and a spreadsheet. The initial task was completion of an accurate land survey of the cemetery and surroundings by Thurman Roddenberry & Associates, Inc. The results were converted to a Geographic Information System (GIS) format, and ArcMap software was used to refine, categorize and enhance cemetery data. The result has been a series of large and small scale maps containing associated data for interments, monuments, lots, cemetery fence, trees and utilities. These have been used to create online interactive maps and search applications, and to provide locational and summary information in the plan.

Over the course of six months or so, the fence, lots and monuments were individually documented and photographed and recommendations were developed for preservation treatments as appropriate. General photographs, one per lot or monument, are included in the plan, along with a map, in the Appendices. Summary maps and tables of lots, monuments and interments are also included in the text to provide a master inventory of cemetery elements.

Eleven monuments and one tree were identified and emphasized in the plan as requiring immediate attention, as they are at immediate risk of failure and present a danger to cemetery visitors and maintenance crews. There is also an immediate need to control mosquito breeding opportunities, as well as conduct a professional assessment of hazards posed by dead and damaged trees (see *Hazards Requiring Immediate Attention*). To establish and clarify the purpose of the preservation treatments recommended in the plan, a series of standards was created for each resource type. Typically, these establish minimum levels of treatment necessary to avoid damage and to stabilize objects. Treatments have not been recommended for the sake of appearance. Recommendations for preservation treatments were prepared for each lot and monument.

Recommendations were also offered for approaches to managing the cemetery over the long term, especially organizational structure, fund raising, building partnerships, developing teams with needed abilities, using volunteers and experts, accomplishing scheduled maintenance, and planning pedestrian, handicap and vehicle access.

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Introduction

In early 2014, historian and contract manager Mark Curenton contacted the author to inquire about the feasibility of a survey and preservation plan for Chestnut Street Cemetery. We met at the Cemetery along with representatives of the City Commission, the Apalachicola Area Historical Society, local cemetery families, and a reporter from the Apalachicola *Times*. There was general agreement that a preservation plan was a necessary and appropriate first step toward realizing the goal of upgrading and maintaining the Chestnut Street Cemetery, and we discussed the scope and the important elements as well as the process for applying for grant funds. A grant proposal was submitted by the City of Apalachicola to the Florida Division of Historical Resources and the grant was awarded in July 2015. A request for proposals was circulated, and in September 2015 James J Miller PHD LLC was selected to do the work.

Grant Proposal and Award

Grant S1628, “Chestnut Street Preservation Plan,” awarded to the City of Apalachicola, contained the following scope of work:

Identify preservation goals, relevant preservation treatments, implementation

strategies and restoration guidelines in support of a long-term approach to improving preservation of the cemetery elements and cultural landscape. It will be constructed as a guide and manual for upgrading and enhancing facilities and public access, for providing additional handicap access at least to interpretive elements, for restoring deteriorated and unstable elements, and for improving public access to cemetery information. The plan will address the various elements and features through use of the GIS map as an organizing tool, and identify treatment needs or recommendations. The purpose of the plan is to guide the cemetery's enhancement, public access and preservation over the long term consistent with proper preservation standards.

In Amendment 1 it was agreed that:

James J. Miller PHD LLC will develop a website related to the Chestnut Street Cemetery which will contain the preservation plan developed as part of the original contract, the digital map of the cemetery, and other elements as may be agreed on by both parties.

The executed contract called for three progress reports, a draft version of the plan by May 15, 2016 and a final version of the plan by June 15, 2016.

Purpose and Scope of the Plan

This historic preservation plan is the beginning of what is hoped to be a long-term and effective effort to restore and properly manage a significant community asset and an important historic resource. To place this plan in context, it is useful to consider all the steps typically recommended, and note what is in this plan and what are the future steps. There are many cemetery preservation guides published and also available over the internet. The *Michigan Historic Cemeteries Preservation Guide* is especially helpful, 2

and should be downloaded by anyone involved in the management of Chestnut Street Cemetery (King and others 2004). The authors provide three types of plans from simple to complex, depending on the abilities of the responsible institution (2004:11-12). The items already in place for Chestnut Street Cemetery, or accomplished in this plan are underlined:

Plan A provides only the basics to stabilize and document the cemetery. It includes

- Establish ownership and get permission
- Reconnaissance survey with a sketch map and photographs
- Basic cleaning of stabilization of grounds and stones
- Routine maintenance

Plan B adds

- Set short and long term goals
- Document cemetery features with detailed map and photographs
- Research cemetery history
- Repair all tombstones, fences roads and other features
- Plan preservation of landscape features

Plan C adds

- Form a citizens' group to help with fund raising, educating the public
- Repair artifacts
- Plan and implement long term maintenance goals
- Develop and implement tours, nature talks, genealogy and other outreach and volunteer programs

It is easy to see from the lists what steps are necessary to work on in the future. And, during the creation of the present plan, most of the future steps have been already been mentioned at the public presentation and in other conversations.

This historic preservation plan is not a cookbook for applying preservation treatments to the many

cemetery elements that need such attention. It is an overview of existing cemetery resources and their condition and a discussion of how to organize the long-term effort. In addition, the plan organizes cemetery information in useful ways, through maps, tables, search tools and access to preservation resources. The plan addresses how a small community can create a support organization relying on local as well as outside funding and expertise. The relationship between volunteers and qualified specialists is built into the plan, generally following the principles that most treatments require evaluation by experienced specialists, and that some treatments can only be done by experts with proper equipment and knowledge. Volunteers can provide valuable contributions under appropriate guidance, and can also be trained to increase their abilities.

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Another vital aspect of this plan is to identify hazards present within the cemetery that require immediate attention. These are almost universally leaning monuments that present a risk either to people or to cemetery resources. Such hazards are discussed below in the section entitled *Hazards Requiring Immediate Attention*.

Previous Work and Available Information

At the beginning of this project, Mark Curenton supplied digital and paper copies of information various people had been collecting and organizing for years. Mark also responded promptly and carefully to many questions throughout the project. Two documents were of special importance: a spreadsheet of all known interments with identifying numbers, and a hand-drawn map of unknown authorship and unknown age depicting each grave as a rectangle with those same identifying numbers. The hand-drawn map revealed the internal relationships between graves and the location of lots; however, the map was only schematic. That is, the location, size, orientation and relationship of graves did not accurately match the conditions on the ground.

Near the end of the project, Sharyn Thompson provided a copy of a 1988 assessment of the cemetery prepared by Lynette Strangstad entitled *Conditions Assessment Report Chestnut Street Cemetery Apalachicola, Florida* which is included as Appendix E. The document includes exceptionally relevant and valuable information about the cemetery, and about appropriate treatments. It is complementary to the present plan in providing professional advice about preservation of stonework, ironwork, brickwork and other cemetery elements that need attention. Until this report was found by Sharyn among her files, there was no local copy or knowledge that the assessment had been done nearly 30 years ago.

Land Survey

The lack of accurate location information made a land survey of the Cemetery all the more important. A list of requirements for the survey was created by Miller, and the Historical Society contracted with Thurman Roddenberry & Associates, Inc., of Sopchoppy, FL, to do the work. It was intended that the survey results include:

- Supervision by a registered land surveyor
- Survey grade horizontal and vertical control
- Setting permanent corner monuments around the property
- Generating contours of elevation
- Defining a permanent x-y grid in feet with a baseline at the southwest corner outside the cemetery boundary

The survey was also designed to generate a digital map in ArcGIS format, or in CAD format suitable for import into ArcGIS. The map would have the following elements:

- Show the perimeter fence with gates and posts.
- Show all marked and unmarked visible graves.
- Show the boundaries of all marked lots.
- Show all trees in the cemetery.

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- Show all other visible structures in the cemetery, such as the historic marker at the entrance to the cemetery and the “Chimney.”

GIS Mapping

At Chestnut Street Cemetery, and for cemetery studies in general, Geographic Information System (GIS) technology is a powerful tool. Based on a spatial representation of features, and with the ability to connect such points, lines or polygons to associated data, GIS can manage information about location, identity, condition, age, and change over time, among other factors. GIS can be used to support future preservation treatments as well as ongoing maintenance needs, and has also provided a new resource for interpretative products such as walking tours, genealogical research, online maps and data, and brochures. At the conclusion of the project, the GIS data will be available at a public website at ArcGIS Online, where it can be viewed as well as managed. While the Apalachicola Area Historical Society is obtaining its ArcGIS Online account where the maps will permanently reside, draft versions of the maps are available for review at two links:

<https://jjmdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=5fbaa855e2fd426ba7c91127515302a6>

<https://jjmdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c68fdc51e33d4ecea21f8308c38ab3cb>

The latter map requires authentication: user = chestnutst password = osprey98

By the time the land survey commenced, a project had been created in GIS including the hand-drawn map with a point feature for each numbered grave. The grave numbers were linked to the spreadsheet, making it possible to identify each numbered grave by the name of the interred. This information was supplied to the surveyor who was able to identify precise locations on the ground and link that information to existing data. The survey results became available in early January of 2016.

The Surveyor’s CAD file layers were converted to GIS layers. The CAD file provided accurate location information and some new attributes. The data was edited in GIS, providing a new master version. This now makes it possible to collect cemetery information within the data structure of the GIS, increasing the ease of finding and correcting errors, and allowing the use of powerful GIS tools for analysis and display of information.

The Cemetery Map

Creation of a cemetery map in GIS allows everyone appropriate access to a master set of information, all tied precisely to location. Conceptually, it overcomes the difficulty of not being able to see the forest for the trees. When each “tree” or element is located, described and evaluated individually in GIS, the nature of the “forest” is better understood. In GIS the cemetery has been broken down into its individual elements for identification and examination, then put back together as a whole. This is accomplished by mapping individual layers of related resources. The layers include:

- The perimeter fence showing gates, corner posts, gate posts and panels needing attention
- All interments, named and unnamed, that can be recognized by some cemetery feature

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- All monuments, whether representing one or multiple interments
- The borders or corner stones of all marked lots.
- All fences inside the cemetery, corresponding to lot borders
- All trees in the cemetery, as identified by the surveyor as to type, diameter and whether living or dead
- All other visible structures in the cemetery, such as the historic marker at the entrance to the cemetery and the “Chimney.”
- All utilities

- Elevation expressed as contours in feet above mean sea level
- Facilities such as sidewalks, steps and retaining walls
- Objects of special interest for interpretation.

Because the cemetery is large, and because there are so many mapped elements included, the complete cemetery map cannot be represented on a normal sized page and bound within the report. A sheet 36" x 48" is required to fit the whole cemetery at a legible scale, about 1:150. Digital copies in pdf format of various maps are included on a CD attached to the plan. This version can be displayed, enlarged up to 500%, converted to jpg or tif format, or printed full-size at a copy shop having the proper equipment. Several sheets are included to show all layers clearly. In addition to GIS layers of cemetery elements, the GIS also includes the hand-drawn map with numbered graves and an image version of Thurman Roddenberry's civil survey CAD output.

Most layers in the GIS map are accompanied by attribute tables, which are included with this plan as spreadsheets or in the report as tables. The spreadsheets can be filtered and sorted to organize data. As master versions, they can be used to generate subsets of interest, for example, all monuments that present a potentially dangerous condition, or all metal fences or monuments of a particular type. Such subsets can be exported to a new layer and mapped independently in GIS, or used as tables for reporting.

Online Interactive Map

While the online interactive map is already built and has been submitted for review and comment to the Historical Society, it is not yet permanently hosted, pending creation of an ArcGIS Online account by the Society. It will be hosted in two forms. The first is a walking tour in the Story Map format, with photographs and narratives about interesting cemetery elements. The current version uses the information and elements already selected and prepared by the Historical Society. The second format is a Web Application map that allows users to look up information associated with various features. Finally, when viewed on a mobile device, the location of the viewer can be shown along with the location of cemetery resources. This allows visitors or managers to find particular graves and to review information about features associated with those graves.

Terrestrial Laser Scanning

In an effort to test and develop the use of 3D scanning technology in the documentation of historic cemeteries, Pickett Surveying and Engineering of Bartow Florida kindly donated a day of digital data acquisition at the Chestnut Street Cemetery. The dense tree cover in some parts of the cemetery precluded the use of any airborne survey methods, and the project was completed using the RIEGL VZ6 400 3D Terrestrial Laser Scanner mounted on a tripod. Reference targets were placed within the cemetery, and provided control points to combine data collected at different instrument positions. The laser scanner relied on a narrow infrared laser beam to find the precise position of surfaces that reflected the signal. Millions of measurements were collected along with high-resolution digital photographs of target areas. When these were combined in the field with a laptop computer and after field work in post processing, a 3D representation of the cemetery was produced in *.las file format. This very large file was opened in Autodesk ReCap 360 software revealing a true color 3 dimensional model of the ground surface, the trees, the lot borders, the fences, shrubs, and other landscape features within and surrounding the property. With the software, it was possible to pan, zoom, orbit and fly through the image, to see the accurate spatial relationship among the visible cemetery features, to export screen shots from any location in any direction, and to take accurate measurements of features.

The image above shows a view of the north corner of the cemetery, where Avenue F intersects the alley on the right. The perimeter fence is visible along two sides. The view appears as though it were taken from above, although the survey instrument was always on a tripod about 6 feet above the ground. This view to the north shows the Asher, Menke and Witherspoon Lots, along with the adjacent unnamed lot

where the wood fence has collapsed. While this is a static view, scans were collected from a number of instrument positions, so each scene can be viewed from any direction to show the same objects from the any side or angle.

Although, this application of terrestrial laser scanning is in early development, the results were very promising. Compared to the GIS map and the associated data on monuments and interments, the 3D model contains massively more information than could ever be represented in a map using symbols and data categories. When the two tools are used together, they are complementary. Anyone with access to the data can explore the cemetery in great detail without having to be there in person. Cemetery managers and specialists can share the digital model and discuss more effectively the conditions cemetery and how treatments might be applied. At present, such LAS files are too large to be accessed online, or to share over the internet. So, it would not be feasible for everyone to have access to the model; however, exports from the model, such as the screen shot above, can be readily produced and shared widely. The potential of this technology will continue to grow, and more uses will be found for 3D scanning models of this type.

Public Presentation

In April 2016, as results of the planning effort were becoming more clear, a public presentation was arranged at the Apalachicola Area Historical Society. The event was announced by the local newspaper in an informative article, and well attended. GIS paper maps and PowerPoint slides were used to guide a discussion about results, next steps, ways to support preservation projects, and the need to adopt preservation principles.

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