

QUOIT CLUB 2021

**Shockoe
Hill Burying
Ground
Historic
District**

HISTORIC RICHMOND

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The Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District consists of the following:

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- The Hebrew Cemetery
- The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground
- The Powder Magazine Site
- City Hospital/Colored Almshouse Site

SHOCKOE HILL CEMETERY

Established 1822

SHOCKOE HILL CEMETERY

- After years of discussion, and recognizing that the public burial ground on and near the grounds of St. John's Church was nearing full capacity, the City of Richmond in 1820 set aside four acres on the northern edge of the City as a public burial space. Known then as the "New Burying Ground", the first burial occurred in April 1822.
- Shockoe Hill Cemetery eventually expanded to 12.7 acres.

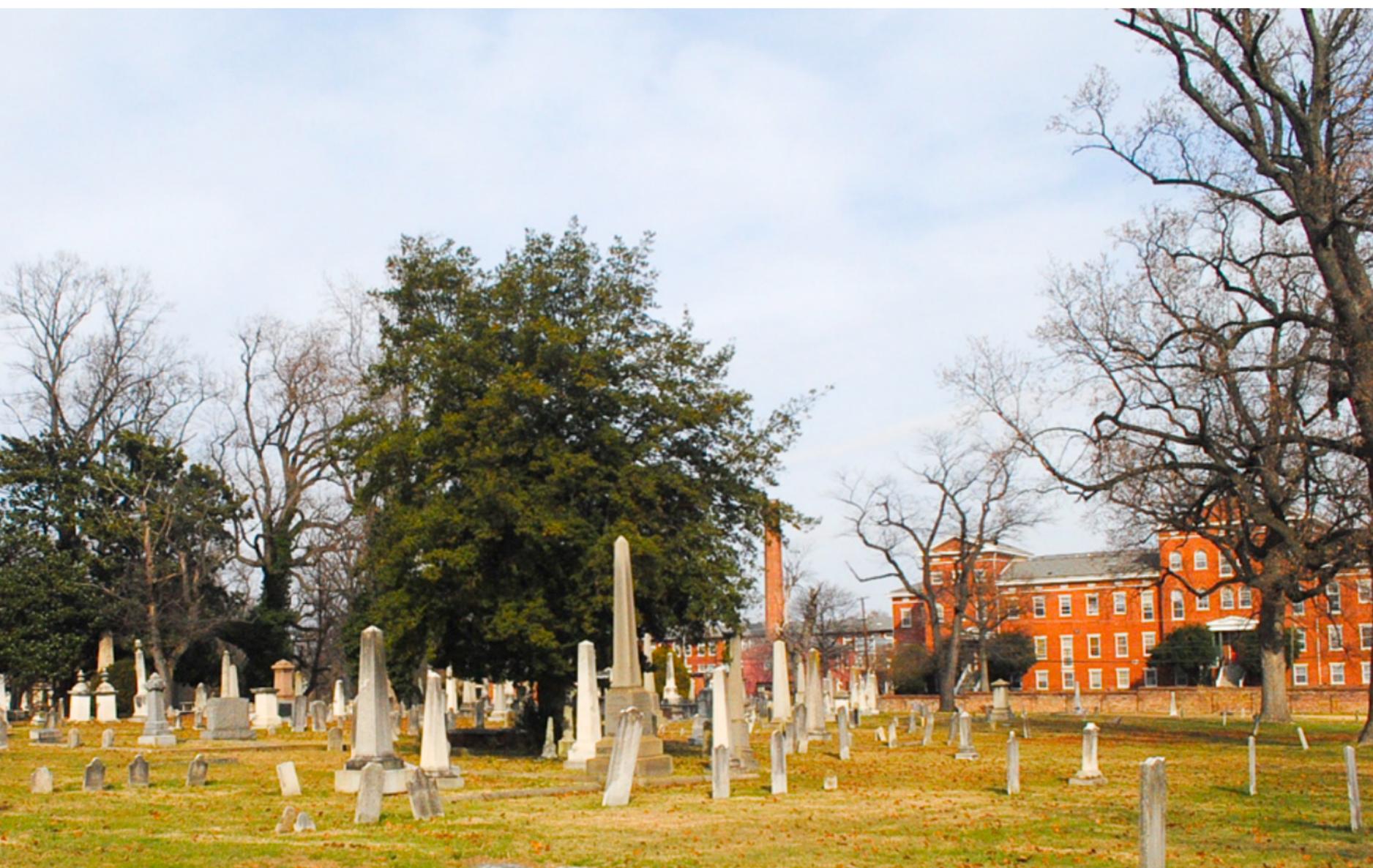
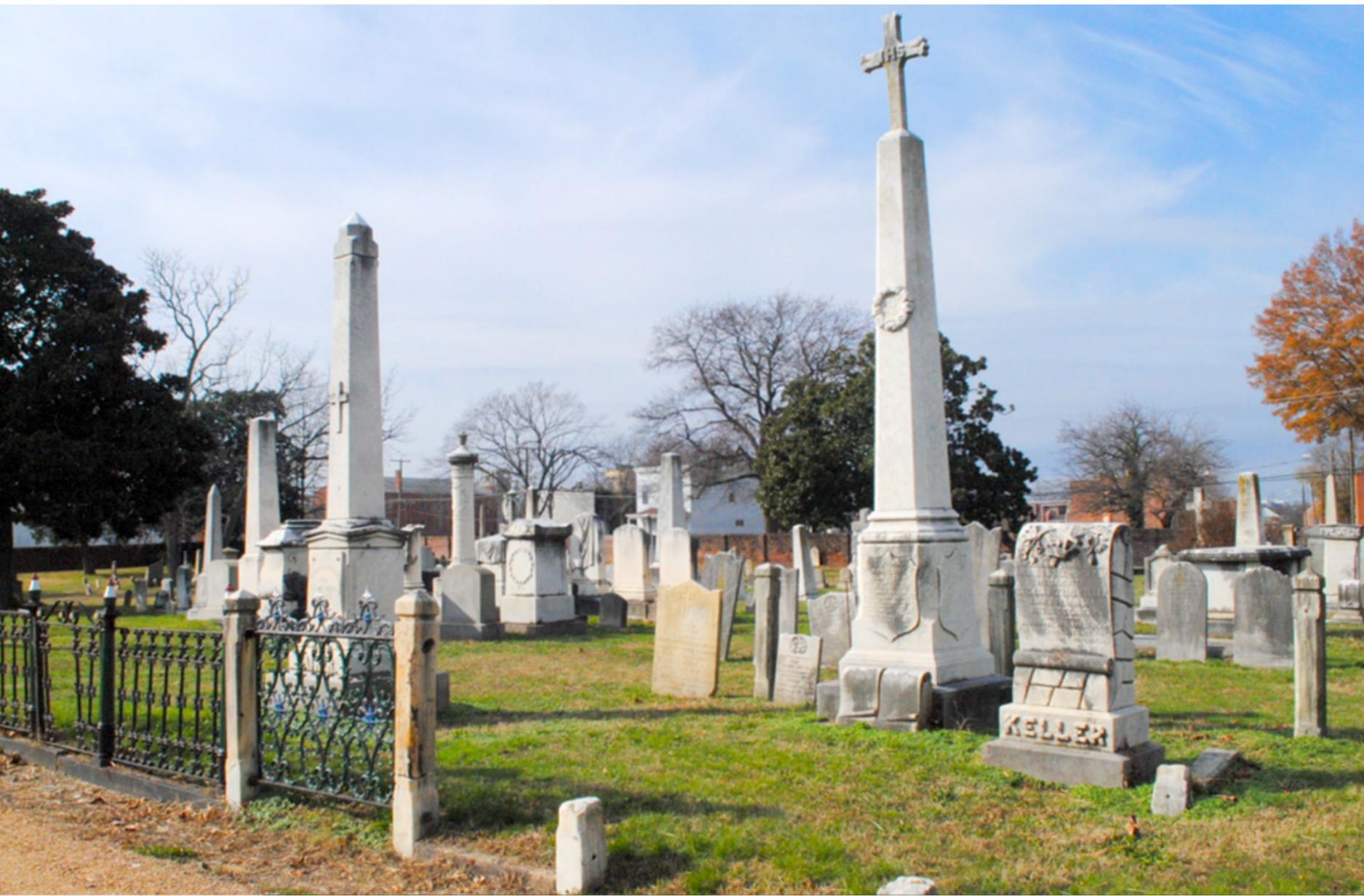
SHOCKOE HILL CEMETERY

- The Almshouse was built in 1860 and served as housing for the poor and a hospital during the Civil War, the first hospital to treat both Union and Confederate soldiers
- It is the final resting place of many known throughout the Commonwealth and the nation, including Chief Justice John Marshall, Governor William Cabell, Revolutionary War heroes Peter Francisco and James Gibbon, and Union spy Elizabeth Van Lew, to name but a few.

SHOCKOE HILL CEMETERY

- At least 1,300 military veterans are buried here, including several hundred who died of wounds or disease in and around Richmond during the Civil War. Also, more than 400 veterans of the War of 1812 can be found at here.
- Also, more than 400 veterans of the War of 1812 can be found at Shockoe Hill -- perhaps more than any cemetery in the country.

SHOCKOE HILL CEMETERY



HEBREW CEMETERY

Established 1816

HEBREW CEMETERY

- It is located on Shockoe Hill at Fourth and Hospital Streets, a site that was chosen in 1816 after the first cemetery of K. K. Beth Shalome, located on Franklin Street, was filled. (Over the 19th century, and especially at the turn of the 20th century, the Hebrew Cemetery expanded onto the grounds which had been used for burying people of color. It appears that at least a portion of the Hebrew Cemetery may have been literally raised by substantial amounts of fill that covered graves which are probably still intact.)

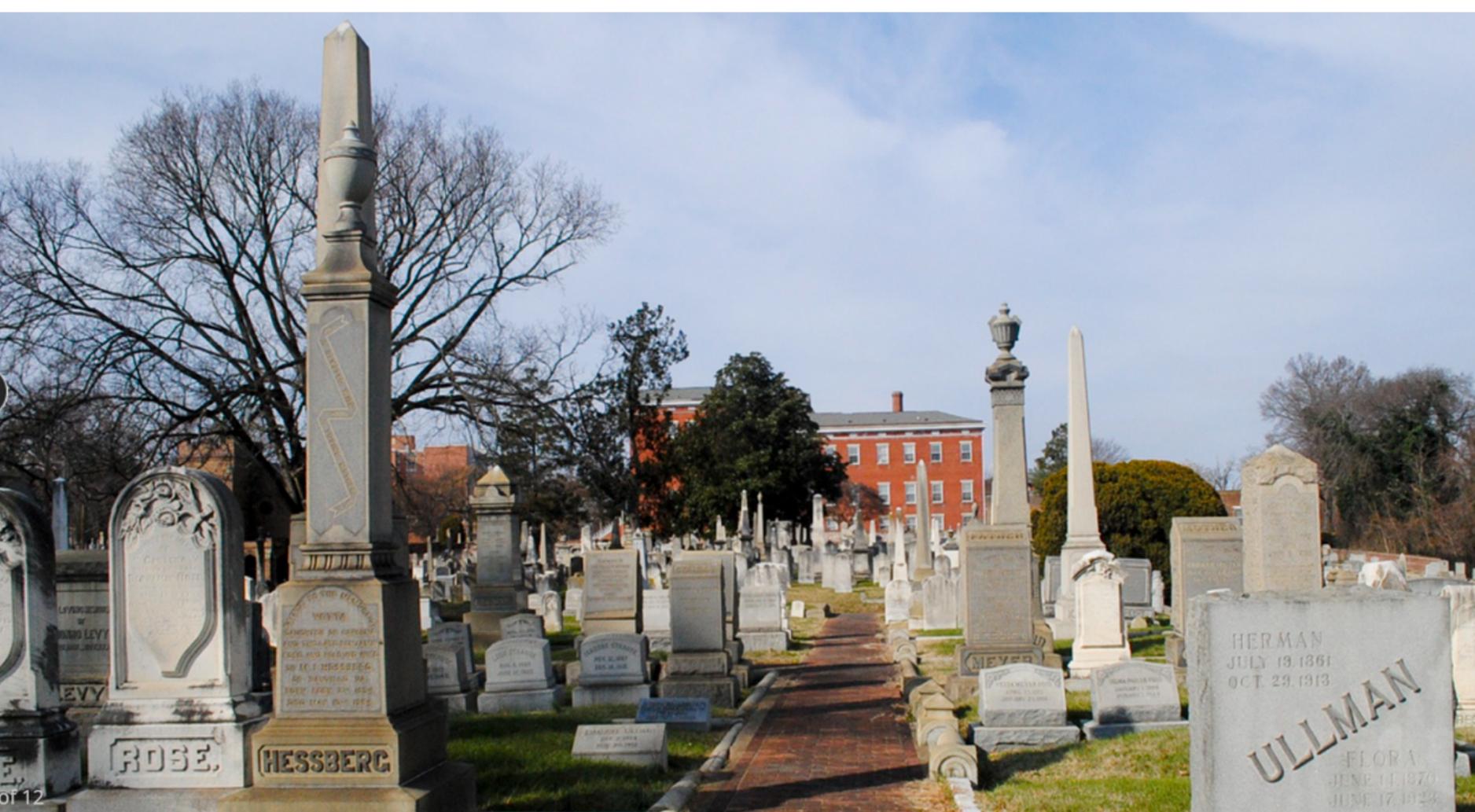
HEBREW CEMETERY

- The first to be interred at Hebrew Cemetery was Benjamin Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe, a merchant and one of the founding fathers of K.K. Beth Shalome, was chairman of the committee formed in 1816 to acquire a new cemetery for the congregation.

HEBREW CEMETERY

- During the first one hundred years of its history, Hebrew Cemetery was filled with a number of elaborate memorials to the deceased. Chest and table tombs, cradle graves and rustic tree monuments are found among the tall obelisks, broken columns and draped urns.
- Jewish symbols such as the Star of David and the hands positioned for the priestly blessing of the Kohanim are found on the gravestones, but there are also many symbols shared with the larger community, such as the weeping willow tree, lambs, doves and flowers.

HEBREW CEMETERY



**SHOCKOE HILL
AFRICAN
BURYING GROUND**

Established 1816

Last Burial 1879

Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground

- The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground is the site of the burial of at least 22,000 free and enslaved African American residents between 1816 and 1879 although the land on which those burials were interred are not indicated by signage.
- The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground was established because the original African Burying Ground in Shockoe Bottom had become intolerable from overuse, poor upkeep and its placement at the city's gallows site.

Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground

- In 1879, nine years after Reconstruction and the Federal occupation of Richmond ended, the City of Richmond closed the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground and began a series of actions that served to erase those graves: portions of the former Burying Ground were transferred to the Hebrew Cemetery, the construction of the Northside Viaduct to connect the north and south ends of Shockoe Valley by electric trolley, and the development of the Burying Ground by selling or leasing it to foundries and railroad facilities.

Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground

- It is known that some white persons were also buried here, including some paupers who died at the various almshouses that existed here, some felons who were hanged at the city's gallows here, and some prisoners of war who died in Libby Prison and other facilities.
- The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground has been labeled and called many different names.

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURYING GROUND



1816 Plan of the City of Richmond property situated at the Poorhouse overlaid on present day map. Red trapezoid is 1305 N. 5th Street which has been acquired by City, purple shadow is the full Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground.

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURYING GROUND



This view shows the original core portion of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground as it appears today. The small building is a former Sunoco gas station.



1888 Cook Image

The hilltop in the center of this image includes the original portion of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground as well as the expansion of the Ground down the slopes and onto the Valley Floor. In a detailed description of two burials in 1853 on that slope, Frederick Law Olmstead described the practice of excavating the graves in a sort of staircase of terraces so that graves could be placed on the slopes at appropriate depths without encroaching on earlier graves just downhill. This terracing and the walking paths connecting them are clearly evident in this image



1897 Cook Image

In this closeup detail the damage to the African Burying Ground from construction of 5th Street and the Northside Viaduct is obvious.

Nonetheless, it is also clear that much of the terraced ground still exists on the lower slope of the northeastern end of Shockoe Hill. The small building in the center of the image, at the north end of the Viaduct, sits very near where the abandoned Sunoco Station stands today.

Sources/ Further Reading

Preliminary Information Form, Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District

Friends of Shockoe Hill Cemetery

<https://shockoehillcemetery.org/>

The Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives

bethahabah.org/bama/

***Death and Rebirth in a Southern City:
Richmond's Historic Cemeteries***

by Ryan K. Smith

Sacred Ground Project

<https://www.sacredgroundproject.net/>