

FRIENDS OF FREDRICK DOUGLAS CEMETERY NEWSLETTER



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HISTORY

Fredrick Douglas Cemetery is located at 1421 Wilkes Street in Alexandria, Va.

This cemetery dates, back to the early 1800s. This historic burial place was named after the great activist Fredrick Douglas soon after his death in 1895. There are well over 2000 African Americans buried here with several hundred being born into slavery and then freed.” Two hundred are children some which were stillborn and some who only lived very short lives while here”. Records indicate that of 2000 buried here only between six to seven hundred headstones are present



INTRODUCTION

This is the Friends of Fredrick Douglas newsletter. This will be a quarterly Newsletter to keep all Stakeholders and the public informed of the scope of work and progress being made at The Douglas Cemetery.



CURRENT SITUATIONS

Flooding is a very serious problem. Water damage and neglect of this cemetery are very present. Since 1998 several buildings have been built adjacent to these grave sites. There has been one apartment building and one building of condominiums have been erected on this site. (see pictures below). As a result of water damage, some of the headstone markers have fallen- down and some have sunken into the ground and others are not accounted for. As a kid, we would cross vegetation that had grown. However, on occasion, other groups or just everyday people would help clean it up.



If you would like to locate a loved one that you think may have been buried at Douglas or would like to help! Please call 301-503-5154

REVIEW

6 years ago my mother told me that we had family members buried in The Fredrick Douglas Cemetery.” I thought my mother had lost her mind.” My mother passed away on Mother’s Day 2018 and 6 months after that I was driven to find out if and where my family member’s headstones were located. What I found was very disturbing, to put it mildly. Vegetation had grown everywhere, and the water from flooding after it would rain turned the Cemetery into a lake where ducks would land and float around some of the headstones. I started to ask questions prior to doing my research I wanted to know when these problems first appeared on the city radar screen and behold it wasn’t until I brought it to their attention. I would ask questions and could not get a correct answer to any of these issues from some city officials, it was bad. I was asked “how did you find out about Fredrick Douglas Cemetery. My reply was what difference does it make? Then I spoke to a family member who stated that “We are Stakeholders” and any information that we request should be answered and not causally dismiss family members.

LET IT FLOW

So much of our History has been forgotten and so many of our loved ones paved the way for us that, I felt it was part of my duty to help restore their final resting place. The Last known burial took place there in 1975. The City was just awarded a \$500.000 grant to bring Fredrick Douglas Cemetery up to par. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/news-citywide/2022-07-08/city-of-alexandria-notes-state-financial-support-for-city-projects-in> Work is just getting started but we have The Friends of Fredrick Douglas and several other groups along with Stakeholders taking part in this worthwhile endeavor to bring dignity to our history and burial places.



THE LOOK AHEAD

In our upcoming issues we will cover the following topics:

- Timeline and Project updates
- Preservation
- Research and Documentation
- Current Updates on Douglas

REFERENCES

If you would like more information on Fredrick Douglas Cemetery and other historical black landmarks, please go to one of the following websites:

<https://AlexandriaAfricanAmericanHallofFame.com>

<https://www.alexandriava.gov> (look under Douglas Cemetery)

<https://alextimes.com/2021/11/thefightto-preserve-douglas-cemetery/-Oliva>

<http://www.socialresponsibility.org>

<https://blackcemeterynetwork.org/> , BCN

Anderson, alextimes.com November 26, 2021. Matthew Torres, WUSA9News, August 31, 2021, concerns growing over flooding at the historically Black cemetery in Alexandria <https://www.wusa9.com>

Also <https://Findfamilyroots.com/cemeteries October2021>. Douglas is a member of the National Black Cemeteries Org.



CONTACT

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