

DOUGLASS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

COMMUNITY HISTORY INITIATIVE



Telling History Together



Office of Historic Alexandria

DOUGLASS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

Douglass Memorial Cemetery at 1421 Wilkes Street was established in 1895 as a segregated, nondenominational African American cemetery. It was named in memory of Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), who died at his home across the Potomac River in Anacostia earlier that year.



Photo Credit: J Orisha

While the cemetery is no longer managed and maintained by the Douglass Cemetery Association, it has not been forgotten by the friends and families of those buried here.

PRESERVATION

Over 2,000 people were buried at Douglass, but fewer than 700 markers are visible today. Some are damaged or hidden. Others either had an impermanent wooden marker or no marker at all.

Drainage issues, standing water, and the current condition of the stones threaten the site's preservation.



1895

Death of Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) and establishment of Douglass Cemetery Association

1898

Cemetery purchased at auction by stonecutter William Chauncey

1896

First burial at Douglass

1915

Douglass becomes a part of Alexandria when land is annexed from Fairfax County

ORAL HISTORIES

In 2024, the collection of oral histories and research on the lives of those buried began. Oral histories can be viewed on the Online Oral History Archive.

Photo Credit: J Orisha



COMMUNITY HISTORY INITIATIVE

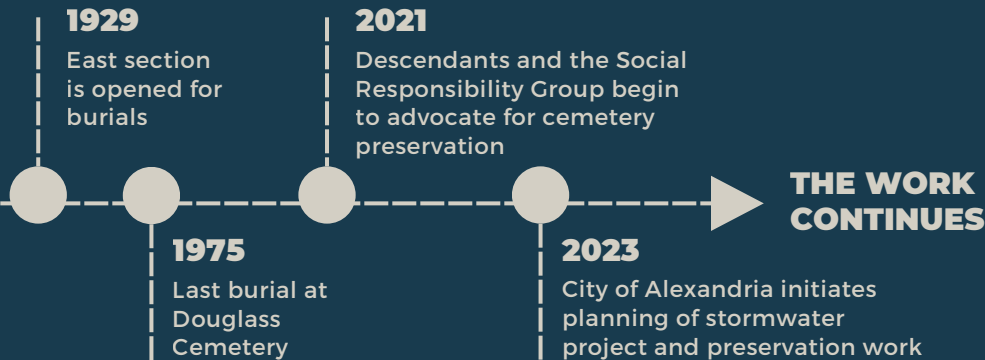
Stakeholders and descendants drive the research and preservation of the cemetery with support from City staff.

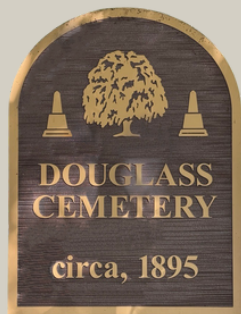
GOALS OF THE INITIATIVE



- Research and compile a list of people buried in the cemetery and their location, if possible.
- Mark and preserve the cemetery as a key site of African American history in Alexandria.
- Create resources to share with the public, including oral histories.
- Provide opportunities for descendants to reflect, learn, connect, and heal.

Photo Credit: Michael Johnson





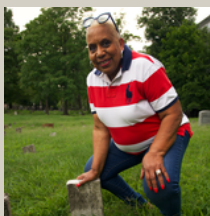
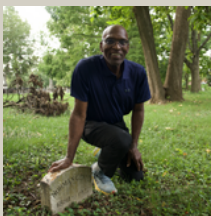
PROJECT PARTNERS

The Social Responsibility Group, Friends of Douglass Cemetery, and City of Alexandria are working together to find preservation solutions that are respectful and appropriate to the sensitive nature of the site.

LEARN
MORE



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SUPPORT
THE WORK



Photo Credit: J Orisha

