

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park



Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

LOCATION

Borough of Staten Island
3201 Amboy Road

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is the only extant, non-sectarian cemetery in New York City that was founded by and for African Americans at a time when discrimination and segregation excluded them from other cemeteries.



Entrance to Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

c. 1935

Courtesy Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc.

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Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

3201 Amboy Road
Staten Island

Designation List 541 LP-2682

Opened: 1935

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island
Tax Map Block 4475, Lot 300

Building Identification Number (BIN): 5060906

Calendared: March 19, 2024

Public Hearing: May 21, 2024

On May 21, 2024, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Five people testified in support of the proposed designation, including both the President, Brandon Stradford, and the Secretary, Lynn Cuffee, of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc., Board of Directors; Kamillah M. Hanks, New York City Council Member of District 49 and Chair of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions; and representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy and Historic Districts Council. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission also received eight letters in support of designation, including letters from two members of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc., Board of Directors; a joint letter

from New York City Council Members David M. Carr of District 50, Joseph C. Borelli, Minority Leader, and Kamillah M. Hanks; and letters from representatives of the Richmond County Black and Minority Chamber of Commerce; the Negro Leagues Baseball Grave Marker Project; the Commandment Pillar, an Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation in Harlem; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; and an individual. The Commission received no written submissions in opposition to the proposed designation.

Summary

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park at 3201 Amboy Road in the Oakwood Heights neighborhood of Staten Island is historically significant as the only extant, non-sectarian cemetery founded by and for African Americans in New York City. Opened in 1935, the park-like setting of the 14.88-acre site memorializes Black heritage and honors generations of African Americans who are buried there.

The cemetery was founded by Rodney Dade, a prominent Harlem funeral director, who saw the need to provide a dignified setting for African American burials when there was discrimination and segregation at other cemeteries. He partnered with Benjamin Diamond, a successful Harlem businessman, and Frederick A. Bunn, an attorney and president of nearby Ocean View Cemetery.

The founders formed a cemetery corporation with a board of directors that included prominent Harlem citizens, such as funeral directors, ministers, and “public-spirited men who sensed the growing need of just such an artistic development.”¹ One of the first directors was Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., pastor of Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church.

The corporation purchased a northeastern lot that had been part of the original acreage of Ocean View Cemetery and had already been designed by J. Wallace Higgins (1873-1956), a New Jersey civil engineer and landscape architect. The memorial park opened with its first burials on June 10, 1935.

The design followed the 20th-century memorial park model with an emphasis on the natural topography accessed by gently curving roadways. Most of the burial markers are flat monuments dotting the open grassland and placed beneath

sheltering trees. When built, the memorial park also incorporated the latest engineering and landscape features with modern watering and drainage systems. Today the cemetery retains its original acreage, roadways, and now-mature landscaping. It is also experiencing a renewed effort to expand services and to improve the condition of its office building and grounds.

The impressive monument to the park’s namesake, Frederick Douglass, was dedicated in 1961. Angus McDougall (1906-1978) designed the bronze relief, regarded as New York City’s first sculptural monument to the prominent abolitionist and orator. The eight-foot tall granite monument sits on a rise near the entrance to the cemetery.

Thousands of African American people are buried at the cemetery. They represent many walks of life and include important figures from the Great Migration, the Civil Rights struggle, professional sports, and the Harlem Renaissance. Among them are the jazz and blues singer Mamie Smith (1883-1946); trumpeter Tommy Ladnier (1900-1939); and professional baseball player Sol White (1868-1955), who played with both white and Black teams. Educator Joanna Berry Shields (1884-1965) is also buried at the cemetery. She was one of the founders of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in 1908, the first Black sorority in the country.

The cemetery office building, located along the northern edge of the property, was constructed between 1947 and 1955. In 1961 it was enlarged to its present size, incorporating a chapel, office, restrooms, garages, and a small apartment for a caretaker.

The Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is a historically significant 20th-century cemetery established by and for African Americans, offering the same services and facilities to everyone. It continues to preserve the important stories of the communities it serves and occupies a special place within New York City’s social and cultural history.

Description

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is a rectangular lot of 14.88 acres located at the intersection of Amboy Road and Montreal Avenue in the Oakwood Heights neighborhood of Staten Island. It is within an area of 20th-century cemeteries located between Amboy and Arthur Kill roads.

The main entrance to Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is at the northeast corner of the lot. It is set back from Amboy Road with a paved area that is flanked by planting beds. An iron gate, fence, and signage mark the entrance.

The historic wrought-iron picket fence with squared iron posts, each topped with a ball finial, extends along the Amboy Road property line. The historic fence also extends about 60 feet along Montreal Avenue where it meets a chain link fence.² Farther along Montreal Avenue is the service entrance near the cemetery's office building. The western boundary abuts a residential subdivision and the southern boundary has no fence.

Visible from the street looking beyond the entrance is the 1961 monument to Frederick Douglass set on a slight rise. The monument is an eight-foot tall granite shaft with a low relief bronze sculpture of Frederick Douglass affixed to the upper half.³ It sits on a low rough-faced stone plinth encircled by three rows of cast-stone pavers approximately 18 inches square.⁴ Surrounding the Douglass monument are upright burial markers, including one for the grave of Rodney Dade, the founder of the cemetery.

Landscape architect and civil engineer James Wallace Higgins's plan features gently curving paved roadways along the outer edges of one large

irregular oval shape that is oriented east to west and around a second smaller more regular oval toward the southeast corner of the cemetery.⁵ In addition, one narrow-paved road connects the North and South drives near the center of the cemetery. There are also unpaved roads that extend toward the west.

Most of the burial plots both inside and outside the ovals and along the perimeter are generally organized in north-south rows except the large plots that encircle the Douglass monument and the curving rows of plots just east of the monument. The largest burial plots are contained inside the ovals. The names of the major roadways as noted on the landscaping drawing are North, South, Maple, Oak, and Douglass drives.

The cemetery is organized into large sections labeled alphabetically from A to I, generally moving east to west.⁶ Section markers that remain are located at the C, E, F, H, J, M, and N areas. These are stamped eight-inch diameter painted metal disks that are mounted on metal poles.

The remaining row (range) markers are flat marble rectangles approximately eight inches by ten inches, each with the row number inscribed on top. These are found throughout the cemetery, particularly in the E section.⁷

Most of the burial markers are flat, raised slightly off the ground, contributing to the open vistas and park-like setting. The early Rules and Regulations noted upright markers were allowed for larger plots.⁸

The roadways are paved with chip seal or a similar material and follow the original landscape plan for circulation. Newspaper articles described the park's roads as macadam, or packed crushed stone. Heavy metal grates, seen in historic photographs, remain in place at the sides of the roads.

The landscape plan drawings that are on file at the cemetery office do not include existing or proposed plantings. The memorial park's large deciduous trees are primarily Oak and Maple and

may have pre-dated 1935. The rest of the landscaping consists of grass, shrubs, and commemorative evergreen trees that have been planted at individual burial lots over the years.⁹

Office Building

Along the northern edge of the cemetery is the cemetery's office building, accessible from both North Drive and from a service gate along Montreal Road. The gable-end section was built between 1947 and 1955.¹⁰ By 1961 it had been enlarged to its present size, incorporating office space, a chapel, restrooms, garages, and a small apartment for a caretaker.

The building's main facade faces south with its primary entrance at the base of a central two-story tower that extends forward of the building. The tower is flanked by the original one-story section with a shallow gable roof on the east (right) side and a two story section with a flat roof on the west (left) side. The tower's cladding is a cementitious brick veneer (Brickote). The cladding along the rest of the front and at the sides of the building is an artificial stone veneer (PermaStone). The rear of the building is a smooth stucco finish. A flat frieze board sits below the eaves above the first story and at the roofline. Window openings have brick sills.

A masonry landing at the tower leads to the entry consisting of a wood double-leaf door with multi-lights in the upper half. It is within a Colonial Revival wood surround with fluting on the sides and a frieze with profiled cornice trim. On each side of the tower at the first story are two narrow window openings. There are wood louver openings on three sides at the tower's second story. The pyramidal tower roof with composition shingles ends in flared eaves.

The one-story front-facing gabled section to the east (right) has a central entry with a double-leaf door and is flanked on each side by a single window opening. Above the entry and windows is an intermediate eave. The composition shingle gabled

roof extends along the length of this part of the building. There are two windows and two garage openings along the east side.

The two-story section to the west (left) of the tower has a flat roof and a projecting intermediate eave between stories at the front and side. The front facade has a single window opening at each story. Along the side is a single door and single-window openings at each story.

The rear of this side has two window openings at the second story. The extension of this section is a utilitarian flat-roofed garage with two vehicular openings.

Alterations

Alterations include the installation of a new main entrance gate assembly after the removal of the wrought iron picket gates, brick posts with ornamental caps, and low brick walls topped with wrought-iron picket fencing. A free-standing sign mounted on metal posts was added at the entrance. A flagpole was placed at the Douglass monument circle. The small island to the northeast of the small oval appears removed and the island just beyond the small oval toward the west is now connected and used for burials.

Sections of roadway are capped with asphalt paving. The unpaved roadways at the western end are overgrown with vegetation and a number of section and row markers have been lost over the years. There is also an added dirt service road that connects South Drive to the southern boundary of the lot.

Office Building Alterations

The office building retains most of its 1961 design and materials. The gable end's half-timbering has been either covered up or removed, with aluminum clapboard in its place; the small narrow windows in the first story of the tower have been infilled with rock-like material; roll-down metal security gates or metal grilles cover all windows and doors; and a single doorway at the rear of the gabled section has

been infilled. Windows and doors have been replaced and soffit cladding and security lights have been added. Attached to the rear of the building is a makeshift utilitarian shed in poor condition with a slightly sloped roof, aluminum siding, and a large plywood out-swinging door.

History and Significance

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

History and Early Development of Staten Island

Like all of New York City, Staten Island was home to Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years. It is unknown what they called themselves at the start of this long period, but at the time of European contact, these groups were Lenape or Delaware who spoke Munsee. Their present-day descendants are members of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, the Delaware nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Shinnecock Nation, and the Unkechaug Nation.¹¹

Staten Island has many documented Indigenous Peoples habitation sites, particularly along the east and south sides of the island. In 1922, the early-20th-century archaeologist Reginald Pelham Bolton (1856-1942) identified the Oakwood area as ‘Shawcopshee’ an Indigenous place name for Great Kills Harbor.¹² More recently, archeological reports of the Oakwood area documented a large campsite several blocks north of the cemetery.¹³ Both Amboy and Richmond roads were Indigenous trade routes and as such are visible reminders of the long history of the island before colonization by the Dutch and the English.¹⁴

The English Governor Francis Lovelace made the final ‘purchase’ of Staten Island from Indigenous Peoples in 1670. While Europeans viewed these contracts as purchase agreements, scholars have noted that Indigenous Peoples did not perceive them the same way, recognizing them more as temporary tenancies.¹⁵ Nevertheless Lovelace awarded land patents to the Colonial European settlers.

It was during that time in 1675 that the Frenchman Jacques Guyon acquired a large 178-acre parcel along Amboy Road, then part of the King’s Highway, and named the area Oakwood.¹⁶ Across Amboy Road where the 20th-century cemeteries would eventually be developed, Daniel Lake and Joseph Holmes received a land grant in 1701.¹⁷ These relatively flat tracts of land were typical of those that extended along Staten Island’s southeast side of the island, providing land for the colonists and their laborers, enslaved or free, to raise crops and to graze cattle on the cleared acreage.

As was common before 1827, homesteaders enslaved Africans and African Americans to work their farms. Daniel Lake, Jr., and his family enslaved one person in 1790 and three in 1810. The Holmes family at the same time enslaved nine workers. The longstanding Guyon homestead just east of Amboy Road enslaved between four and nine people during the same years, as documented in the census records.¹⁸

The area that became Frederick Douglass Memorial Park appears on an 1844 map showing an orchard or cultivated field along Amboy Road and forest farther west.¹⁹ Thirty years later a Mrs. Guyon owned the lot, shown with a small L-shaped building near Amboy Road and a secondary road leading west across the property toward Richmond Town.²⁰ By 1906-07, the building’s footprint and roadway were no longer evident and the lot was identified as part of Ocean View Cemetery, established in 1900.²¹

Staten Island Cemeteries

Staten Island has been an important location of burials from prehistoric times to the present.²² Even into the early decades of the 20th century, when Frederick Douglass Memorial Park was established, there were still large areas of undeveloped land. There are more than 75 documented historic-era burial sites and cemeteries on Staten Island.²³ Many are still active, while others are closed. Still others

have been reclaimed and the land used for new developments.

The burial grounds and cemeteries on Staten Island include a variety of types, including Indigenous cultural sites, Colonial homestead sites, public and private non-sectarian cemeteries, and those associated with various organizations or religions. Typically, Africans and African Americans were usually either buried in separate areas or excluded altogether.

From the time of the first European settlers to the 19th-century, it was common for families to bury their dead, including free and enslaved workers, on their rural property. As such, there are about six homestead burial sites that remain on Staten Island, although many no longer retain grave markers.²⁴

Until the early 19th century, publicly owned non-sectarian public graveyards were common. Land was usually set aside by the town for burial of its citizens.²⁵ As the 19th century progressed a new type emerged, the incorporated private non-sectarian cemetery. These typically took advantage of a bucolic setting that might appeal to prospective buyers. These cemeteries, like Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, were supported by selling burial plots.

Another type of cemetery is one associated with a house of worship.²⁶ This type is often adjacent to the religious building or on property owned by the religious institution. The extant Rossville A.M.E. Zion Church Cemetery in Sandy Ground, Staten Island, a New York City landmark, provided this kind of option for African Americans.²⁷

As the population of New York City grew, Staten Island became an attractive location for cemeteries, particularly after New York City banned burials in Manhattan as the city grew progressively north.²⁸ In the Oakwood/Richmond area of Staten Island the open acreage between Amboy and Arthur Kill roads became a desirable location with its slight rise in elevation, always a consideration for

cemeteries. The area was (and is) within walking distance to the local railroad station.²⁹

The incorporated nonsectarian Ocean View Cemetery that dates from 1900 is one of the largest on Staten Island. Its main entrance is south of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park on Amboy Road. It includes within its boundaries the former St. Agnes Cemetery, Valhalla Memorial Park (1925-1940), and the Merchant Marine Cemetery (1901-1937). Once much larger, it used to include the lots that are today's United Hebrew and Mount Richmond cemeteries and Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.³⁰

Discrimination in New York City Cemeteries

For hundreds of years New York City cemeteries with white burials have excluded or marginalized Indigenous Peoples, Africans, African Americans, and other distinct groups such as Chinese Americans.

Before and after the years of enslavement, African Americans were relegated to separate burial grounds or later into separate sections of mainstream non-sectarian cemeteries. This occurred for centuries from the Colonial period through the Civil Rights movement. These practices sometimes followed local laws, but also reflected unwritten practices of society at large.

Several Colonial-era cemeteries illustrate where African Americans were permitted to bury their dead. Homestead cemeteries that included burials of enslaved Africans and African Americans located their graves in a separate area with few markers. The Joseph Rodman Drake Park and Enslaved People's Burial Ground in the Bronx, a New York City Landmark, is an example of this kind of discrimination.³¹

The 'Negros Burial Grounds,' a significant African burial ground was located outside New York City's Colonial boundary.³² Despite laws forbidding Black people to congregate, even for funerals, the archeological evidence reveals the respect and honor afforded the dead. This burial ground had been

forgotten and built upon for years, but is now protected and interpreted as part of The African Burial Ground and The Commons Historic District, a New York City landmark.³³

Another example, but less well known, is the African Burial Ground in Harlem. It had been originally established as part of the Dutch Reformed Church in the late 1600s and later became the non-sectarian ‘Negro Burying Ground’ located at 126th Street and First Avenue. Burials continued there until the 1880s when the cemetery property was paved over, developed, and forgotten.³⁴

There are several Staten Island African American cemeteries. One is the very early Fountain Burial Ground (1750-1820), now an empty lot.³⁵ Many non-sectarian cemeteries remained segregated after the 1827 emancipation of enslaved persons in New York State. Cherry Lane Cemetery (1850-1950), also known as the ‘Old Slave Burying Ground,’ is now beneath a shopping mall.³⁶

Citizens Union, later called Mount Pleasant Cemetery, was founded by an African American undertaker, Alexander Duncan, in 1851. Located in Weeksville, Brooklyn, a free Black community, it closed in 1872 with burials transferred to Cypress Hills Cemetery.³⁷ This cemetery appears to be the first founded by and for African Americans in New York City. Frederick Douglass Memorial Park appears to be the second, and today, the only extant cemetery established by and for African Americans.

The city’s large cemeteries like Green-Wood, Cypress Hills, and Cemetery of the Evergreens maintained separate burial spaces specifically for African Americans.³⁸ For example, the pre-Civil War Freedom Lots within Green-Wood cemetery were originally known as public ‘Colored Lots’ in 1840. This was an affordable choice where over a thousand African Americans are buried.³⁹

As noted in a newspaper article in 1890, “In this city, except in isolated instances, the color line is strictly drawn at the grave.... the bodies of blacks

may not be interred in the same section of certain cemeteries with those of whites.”⁴⁰ These racist practices continued into the 20th century, as reported in the *New York Age* when Frederick Douglass Memorial Park opened in 1935.

This high cost (of dying) has been particularly harsh on the Negro; for aside from the steadily increasing prices of graves... more and more cemeteries are either closing their gates to its dead altogether, or segregating them in the least attractive sections of the grounds.⁴¹

Several instances of fashionable cemeteries barring Black people surfaced in the newspapers.⁴² An example in New York State related the incident of a Black World War I veteran who was refused burial at the nonsectarian Ferncliff Cemetery in Greenburgh, New York, not far from White Plains. He was allowed to be buried at Silver Mount in Staten Island where Blacks were routinely interred, but the family was offered and accepted a plot at Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.⁴³

This kind of discrimination often occurred during the first half of the 20th century in non-sectarian memorial parks due to deed restrictions. Modeled after suburban residential developments that often included restrictions on who could buy a house, memorial parks likewise sometimes restricted who could be buried there. “Most modern memorial parks included racial-exclusion clauses in their deeds.”⁴⁴

The lack of acceptable burial locations for African Americans became more apparent as the 20th century progressed. New York City’s Black population increased dramatically with the Great Migration when many people moved from the southern states to northern cities.⁴⁵ The racism intensified and extended to all areas of life, including where one could be buried. As a result, African

Americans in New York City, and elsewhere, became more empowered as their numbers grew, affecting the city's "...political, economic, and cultural life."⁴⁶

"Forced separation even after death, has thus led to the development of a new Negro enterprise."⁴⁷ This was the period when Frederick Douglass Memorial Park was founded.

Establishment of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park was established as a non-sectarian cemetery for the African American communities, where everyone would be treated to the same services and facilities.⁴⁸ In a letter to a plot owner, the president of the Board of Directors noted:

Our cemetery is non-sectarian and non-segregated. We do not keep any records as to race, color, or creed. However, most of our burials are of Afro-Americans. The cemetery had its beginnings due to segregation in other cemeteries; thus, we have more Afro-Americans who were the main ones being segregated against.⁴⁹

From the beginning, the founders wanted to continue the vision and inspiration of the 19th-century editor, orator, abolitionist, and statesman, Frederick Douglass (1817-1895).⁵⁰

In newspapers and cemetery documents, the creation of the cemetery is credited to the collaboration of three men: Rodney Dade, a prominent Harlem funeral director, Benjamin Diamond, a friend of Dade and a resourceful businessman, and Frederick A. Bunn, an attorney who specialized in cemeteries.

Rodney Dade (1874-1956) was a successful undertaker in Harlem during the 1930s working out

of his Gothic-Revival funeral home on Seventh Avenue.⁵¹ He was a particularly enterprising businessman who was considered one of the top two undertakers in Harlem.⁵² He graduated from Howard University's medical college and worked as a physician before transitioning into the mortuary business. Dade experienced firsthand the inequities African Americans experienced at many desirable New York City cemeteries. He and his clients had been sent to side gates and offered only the least desirable plots.⁵³

Dade partnered with Frederick A. Bunn (1875-1942) who was president of Ocean View Cemetery in Staten Island.⁵⁴ Bunn had developed sections of Ocean View Cemetery into Valhalla Memorial Park for Scandinavian communities and Mount Sinai Memorial Park, the section that would later be sold to Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.⁵⁵ At the time of his death in 1942, Bunn's obituary claimed he was an "expert in cemetery law and design" and had planned Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, becoming its first president of the Board of Directors.⁵⁶

Benjamin Diamond (1890-1957) was an administrator and sales executive who was a well-known business consultant and longtime friend of Rodney Dade. He was one of the founders of Harlem's newspaper, *The Daily Citizen*, and had been associated with cross cultural efforts to improve the community for many years.⁵⁷ He assisted Dade with the formation of a stock corporation for the future cemetery.⁵⁸

A promotional pamphlet identified the cemetery as "The Only Colored Burial Park in New York City and Destined to be the Most Beautiful of its Kind in the United States." Its mission was also included. "It is the purpose of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park to lessen sorrow by creating around death an atmosphere of beauty and inspiration."⁵⁹

The pamphlet also emphasized that the Board of Directors be composed of "...Colored men

of known integrity and high business standing, inspiring public trust and confidence.”⁶⁰ The newly formed cemetery tapped prominent Harlem citizens, many of whom were funeral directors and ministers, including the highly influential Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church. A newspaper article noted that this first governing board consisted of “Public-spirited men who sensed the growing need of just such an artistic development.”⁶¹

The corporation for Frederick Douglass Memorial Park purchased the 14.88-acre lot from Mount Sinai Memorial Park on May 10, 1935.⁶² Mount Sinai had previously purchased the same lot in 1929 from Ocean View Cemetery. Most of the landscape with roadways, plot layout, and drainage had been designed by 1929 and constructed by 1930.⁶³

One month after purchasing the lot, Frederick Douglass Memorial Park opened June 10, 1935 with the burials of two men from Harlem. An article in *The New York Age* about the opening noted that the cemetery would be “Controlled by Negroes” and that an important option was offered to New York City for lower-priced burials than what was available elsewhere.⁶⁴

The cemetery’s entrance gates and fence along Amboy and Montreal roads enclosed the gently curving roadways within. According to the rules and regulations, the larger grave plots allowed upright memorial markers, but the small plots were to be marked with horizontal stones, all of Barre granite.⁶⁵ Section E closest to the gates was the first to receive burials.

As a convenience to Harlem’s population, the Memorial Park established its offices on 125th Street in Manhattan. During its early years many African Americans from Harlem used the park’s facilities as the preferred choice for burial.⁶⁶

Cemetery Landscape Design

Until the early 19th-century, most cemeteries consisted of an unimproved town lot that received the burials. As these cemeteries became undesirable due to crowding and the generalized fear of disease, towns began to establish rural cemeteries beyond the urban centers.

One of the earliest non-profit, private, rural cemeteries was established by New Haven, Connecticut, in the mid 1790s. It provided permanence and security with its purchased plots within sections for “...various religious congregations, Yale College, the poor, Negroes and strangers.”⁶⁷ The area for African Americans was along the fence, separated from the central area.

The New Haven Burying Ground was organized on a geometric grid with the introduction of a central roadway at the entrance and tree-lined pathways.⁶⁸ Later as the type developed with Mount Auburn near Boston and Green-Wood in Brooklyn, extensive landscaping, winding pathways, artistic monuments, and garden furniture created a more Picturesque character common during most of the 19th century.⁶⁹

In the early years of the 20th century, the modern cemetery, or memorial park, became popular. Like the contemporary residential suburban subdivisions, the memorial park capitalized on open spaces with curving roadways, footpaths, and plantings. Instead of dense landscapes of scattered upright tombstones, the new modern memorial parks encouraged, and sometimes required, flat gravemarkers that supported the idea of peaceful repose within the park. These markers de-emphasized the visual impact of the burial plots and allowed the landscape to dominate the experience. These modern cemeteries often replaced the word cemetery with park in the name to highlight the ideals of the beauty of nature and artistic installations.

This approach was popularized by Forest

Lawn in Glendale, California where these ideals were first implemented in 1917 in a flamboyant way by Hubert Eaton.⁷⁰ On a more modest scale, Frederick Douglass Memorial Park exhibits the memorial park model in its design approach.

Design of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

James Wallace Higgins (1873-1956), a landscape architect and civil engineer, designed the 14.88-acre lot as part of his larger 1929 plan of Ocean View Cemetery. His approach incorporated the ideals of the 20th-century modern memorial park model.

The park plan emphasized the landscaping qualities of the site, an important component of the marketing that referred to the natural beauty of the cemetery. At Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, the open undeveloped pastoral quality was in stark contrast to the urban density of Manhattan.

The practical aspects of the design that reflected the latest 20th-century innovations and modern approach were noted in an article about its opening in *New York Age*.

Macaddam (sic) roads, underground drains, shrubs, lawns, every section with a water system, nothing has been spared to make the Frederick Douglass a ...tribute to the dead free from any watery graves.... every grave includes perpetual care in its original purchase price.⁷¹

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park illustrates the ideals of the modern park cemetery with its country setting, its open vistas, winding paths, low-lying grave markers, and complementary vegetation. Like the earlier 19th century cemeteries, it was a place to visit, walk, contemplate life and death, and pay homage to one's loved ones and community.

A 1937 advertisement in the *New York Amsterdam News* displayed a photo of the cemetery entrance and proudly noted:

The modern park-plan cemetery with perpetual care, where there is created around every grave an atmosphere of lasting beauty and inspiration. Single graves small and large plots, may be purchased at low prices by the payment of small monthly installments. Why wait until the Angel of Death knocks at your door to provide a final resting place for yourself and family?⁷²

The cemetery was identified as “ultra modern,” a place that would “lessen sorrow by creating around death an atmosphere of beauty and inspiration.”⁷³

James Wallace Higgins (1873-1956) was a New Jersey civil engineer and landscape architect who is best known for his work designing the model city of New Orange at today's Kenilworth Park, New Jersey. His ambitious plan for a new city in 1898 included the Rahway Valley Railroad, as well as civic buildings, factories, and housing for 60,000.⁷⁴

Cemetery Office Building

As a convenience to Frederick Douglass Memorial Park visitors and its staff, a small building with restrooms and garage space was constructed on the grounds between 1947 and 1955.⁷⁵ In 1960, the cemetery contracted with local Staten Island architect James Whitford, Jr. for plans, specifications, and supervision for a substantial addition and remodel to the original building.⁷⁶ The project included new cladding, a central tower, and a two-story addition. The alteration provided a small chapel, a reception area, restrooms, a caretaker's apartment, and garage space. The project was completed in time for the installation of the Frederick Douglass monument in

1961.

James Whitford, Jr. (1906-1976), with an architecture degree from New York University, was also responsible for many Staten Island's homes, office buildings, and churches. He also worked professionally on the borough's Children's Zoo, and the restoration of historic Richmond Town.⁷⁷

Frederick Douglass Monument

The modern memorial park model emphasizes not only the natural world, but also traditional installations crafted by skilled artists. From the park's inception and naming, Rodney Dade wanted to incorporate a special artistic memorial to Frederick Douglass.

Known as the Prophet of Freedom, Frederick Douglass was the most important 19th century African American and one of the most significant and inspiring writers, orators, and abolitionists in the country. During the 1930s, he was memorialized in New York City with schools and buildings named after him, but this monument in the cemetery was the first of its kind in New York City.⁷⁸

The bronze relief was designed by English-born Angus McDougall (1906-1978) whose specialty was portrait heads on commission.⁷⁹ The eight-foot tall granite monument for the sculpture was designed and fabricated by Wegenaar Monuments, located on Amboy Road. The impressive monument to its namesake was dedicated May 28, 1961.⁸⁰ For the occasion the cemetery issued a commemorative booklet recounting its history illustrated with photographs.⁸¹

Festivities for the dedication included speeches about Frederick Douglass and the memorial park along with choral selections by the Abyssinian Baptist Church choir. Hortense James-Jones, president of the cemetery's Board of Directors and Ruth Whaley, President of the City's Board of Estimate, unveiled the monument. Reverend William Epps, pastor of Staten Island's Saint Phillip's Baptist

Church, also participated in the ceremony. He was active in the NAACP and CORE and elected to the cemetery's Board of Directors in 1964.⁸²

Hortense James-Jones was the secretary in charge of the office from the cemetery's opening in 1935. By 1958, she was the president of the Board of Directors and stayed in that role until at least 1981. She directed its everyday operations through the years and planned the dedication ceremony of the unveiling of the Frederick Douglass monument.

Although the cemetery still maintained its office in Harlem until 1983, local people on Staten Island became more involved in its operation after the 1960s.⁸³ By this time, more Staten Islanders were being buried in the cemetery as the population of the island increased after the construction of the Verrazanno Narrows Bridge in 1959.

Notable Gravesites

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park was an attractive and economical choice for many New York City African Americans. Advertisements emphasized the many choices of grave plots and its convenient location on Staten Island. Many people who were buried there in the early years lived in Harlem, but records show that in later years, all five boroughs were represented.⁸⁴

The earliest grave markers in the cemetery are located near the entrance. One example is Melvin Gaillard, a young Harlem man who died when he was 16 years old. His parents were born in the South during the late 19th century. His father was a laborer and mother a housewife.⁸⁵ His story is similar to many others from New York City's Black communities whose families came north looking for better jobs and opportunities during the Great Migration.⁸⁶

Civil Rights activists were among those buried within the cemetery. One of them is the Rev. Dr. John Wallace Robinson who died in 1941. He became the second pastor of St. Mark's Methodist

Episcopal Church, known as the “Cathedral of Negro Methodism.” He oversaw the construction of the church building on Edgecombe Avenue, today located within the New York City Dorrance Brooks Historic District.⁸⁷ Born in Kentucky, he was active in the 1930s advocating for a federal anti-lynching bill and working on Mayor LaGuardia’s committee that addressed the economic and social conditions in Harlem.⁸⁸

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s included a number of prison uprisings due to racial tensions. One of the most notorious was at the New York State Attica Correctional Facility in September 1971. After the uprising was contained, six of the inmates who had been killed were buried at Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, four on September 25, 1971, and two on October 1, 1971. Their funeral was part of a large public demonstration in Brooklyn that culminated in the inmates’ interment in the M section.⁸⁹

Included in the cemetery are several notable singers and musicians. The jazz singer Mamie Smith (1883-1946), “Queen of the Blues,” was buried in an unmarked grave. The inscription on her monument that was placed in 2014 reads...” By recording ‘Crazy Blues’ in 1920, she introduced America to vocal blues and opened the recording industry to thousands of her African American brothers and sisters.”⁹⁰ As such, she is regarded as a pioneer who paved the way for others during the Harlem Renaissance.⁹¹

Also notable is Tommy Ladnier (1900-1939), an accomplished jazz trumpeter during the 1920s and 1930s. He is considered by many as second only to Louis Armstrong. Originally from New Orleans, Ladnier performed locally but also toured Europe with bandleaders Sam Wooding and Noble Sissle.⁹²

Sol White (1868-1955), also known as “King Solomon White,” is today considered one of the founding fathers of Black baseball, a pioneer who

paved the way for Jackie Robinson. He was not only a professional baseball player on white and Black teams but was also a historian who wrote the *History of Colored Base Ball* in 1907. He was inducted into the Cooperstown Baseball Hall of Fame posthumously in 2006.⁹³

Both Sol White and outfielder Elias Brown (1896-1926), who is also buried at the cemetery, were inducted into the Negro Baseball Hall of Fame. Elias “Country” Brown played with seven teams from 1918 to 1933, including the Bacharach Giants in the 1926 Colored World Series.⁹⁴

Lifelong educator Joanna Berry Shields (1884-1965) was one of the founders of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in 1908 at Howard University, the first Black sorority in the country. She graduated cum laude in sociology and mathematics, taught for many years in the southern states, and later taught high school in the Bronx. Active in many civic and community organizations, she served on the Mayor’s Committee on Human Rights and the Consumers Protective Committee.⁹⁵

The cemetery memorializes and celebrates Black heritage and honors not only those who were well-known in the public realm, but also generations of everyday African Americans.

Conclusion

Frederick Douglass Memorial Park is a significant 20th-century cemetery. It was founded as a response to discrimination, designed as a modern memorial park, and continues to offer the same facilities and services to everyone.⁹⁶

In reviewing significant African American cemeteries in the northeast United States, Frederick Douglass Memorial Park stands out as a modern cemetery founded by an African American 90 years ago.⁹⁷ Its park-like grounds memorialize the heroic and everyday stories from the Civil War, reconstruction, share cropping, the Great Migration, and the struggle for Civil Rights and social justice.

As noted in The African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act of 2022, these cemeteries are “...integral components of the heritage of the United States.”⁹⁸

Rodney Dade, the founder of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park wanted “...a modern park-like burial place, quiet and peaceful, conceived in beauty, with care and maintenance endowed for all eternity, a monument to progress in human relations.”⁹⁹

Endnotes

- ¹ “Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, A 53-Acre Cemetery In Staten Island To Be Controlled By Negroes,” *The New York Age*, June 22, 1935, 12. According to a review of the deeds, the acquired acreage in 1935 was the same as today’s 14.88-acre lot, not 53 acres as reported in the newspaper. Richmond County Clerk’s Office, Liber 775, Pages 15-18. The conveyed lot was identified as Section C of Ocean View Cemetery, dated 1912 by J. Wallace Higgins. A copy of the Section C drawing is on file at the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park office.
- ² Remnants of a pipe rail fence are adjacent to the chain link fence in some areas along the north lot line.
- ³ The shaft is 42 inches wide and about ten inches deep; the plinth is about nine inches high.
- ⁴ The outer diameter of the circle of pavers is approximately 30 feet.
- ⁵ The major roadways are approximately 18 feet wide.
- ⁶ Similarly, the cemetery opened sections for burials moving from east to west. The 1935 drawing of the lot shows the J section with no burial plots, likely reserved for the park’s future office building. Today it is used for burials near the office.
- ⁷ Many of the earliest burial sites are also in the E section along the North Drive just to the right as one enters the gate into the cemetery.
- ⁸ Leaflet on file at the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park office, “Rules and Regulations,” n.d.
- ⁹ “Rules and Regulations” Rule # 10: “All plantings, if approved by the Cemetery, must be at the head of the grave...” Similar to other cemeteries, Cedar trees are popular since they are slow-growing and long-lived.
- ¹⁰ The date range is based on the U. S. Department of the Interior, U. S. Geological Survey, *Arthur Kill Quadrangle, New York-New Jersey*, 1947 and 1955 Maps. Photographs of the one-story stucco building before the addition date to 1958 and are on file at the cemetery office.
- ¹¹ Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Aakawaxung Munahanung (Island Protected from the Wind) Archaeological Site Designation Report (LP-2648)* (New York: City of New York, 2021), prepared by Amanda Sutphin, Jessica Striebel MacLean, and MaryNell Nolan Wheatley, 6.
- ¹² Reginald Pelham Bolton, *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1922), 156, as cited in Linda Stone, *Report on Phase IA Archaeological Documentary Research in Advance of Sanitary and Storm Sewer Construction, Wilson Avenue East, Eltingville, Staten Island, New York* December 1994, 10-11; Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Springer, 2013), 52.
- ¹³ Greenhouse Consultants, Inc., *Stage IA Archaeological/Historical Sensitivity Evaluation of the 3295 Amboy Road Project, Borough Of Richmond, New York*, November 1995, 4.
- ¹⁴ Reginald Pelham Bolton, 105-111.
- ¹⁵ While Indigenous Peoples’ signatories were included in these documents, scholarly interpretations of early land contracts between Europeans and the Munsee-speaking people suggest that the Indigenous Peoples participants likely viewed them more as easements or tenancies rather than a sale. Anne-Marie Cantwell, “Penhawitz and Wampage and the Seventeenth Century World They Dominated,” from Meta F. Janowitz and Diane Dallal, eds., *Tales of Gotham: Historical Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Microhistory of New York City* (New York: Springer, 2013), 7–30, cited in LPC, *Aakawaxung Munahanung (Island Protected from the Wind) Archaeological Site Designation Report (LP-2648)* (New York: City of New York, 2021), prepared by Amanda Sutphin, Jessica Striebel MacLean, and MaryNell Nolan-Wheatley, 22, n. 64.
- ¹⁶ “Staten Island Families” *Staten Island Advance*, September 25, 2018.
- ¹⁷ Frederick Skene, *1907 Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, Showing the Colonial Land Patents from 1668-1712*; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People: A History 1609-1929, Vol. II* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930), 981-983, 987-988.
- ¹⁸ Northeast Slavery Records Institute Records (NESRI), <https://nesri.commons.gc.cuny.edu/dashboardresult/?CountyBoro=Richmond&Locality=southfield> for Richmond County, town of Southfield.
- ¹⁹ United States Coast Survey, *Map of New York Bay and Harbor and The Environs, 1844*, David Rumsey Map Collection. <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/workspace/handleMediaPlayer?qvq=&trs=&mi=&lunaMediaId=RUMSE>

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²⁰ F. W. Beers, *Atlas of Staten Island, New York*, 1874 Section 20, in the collection at Staten Island Historical Society.

²¹ *Borough of Richmond, Topographical Survey (1906-1913)*, Sheet 61, June 1911; Carolee Inskip, *The Graveyard Shift: A Family Historian's Guide to New York City Cemeteries* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2000), 130.

²² Prehistoric burial sites have been documented on Staten Island that date from the PaleoIndian Period more than 12,000 years ago. Nan A. Rothschild, Amanda Sutphin, H. Arthur Bankoff, and Jessica Striebel MacLean, *Buried Beneath the City: An Archaeological History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 22. Also, See LPC *Aakawaxung Munahanung (Island Protected from the Wind) Archaeological Site Designation Report (LP-2648)*, 13.

²³ This number is an estimate; some are not documented, some have combined, and others have changed boundaries and locations over the years. Patricia M. Salmon, *Realms of History: The Cemeteries of Staten Island* (New York City: Staten Island Museum, 2006), 5. Also Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries in Staten Island. <https://www.nygenweb.net/richmond/facsi/index.html>

²⁴ Patricia Salmon, 21.

²⁵ David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 39-40; The Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery of Port Richmond is the oldest known public cemetery on Staten Island for north shore families dating from 1705. Later it became associated with the church. LPC, *Reformed Church on Staten Island, Sunday School Building, and Cemetery (LP 2384)* (New York: City of New York, 2010), prepared by Gail Harris; Mary French, *New York City Cemetery Project* <https://nycemetery.wordpress.com/>

²⁶ Many African Americans who belonged to the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church were buried in the churchyards. At least 12 cemeteries associated with an AME church were or are located throughout the five boroughs. Elizabeth D. Meade, *Prepare for Death and Follow Me: An Archaeological Survey of the Historic Period Cemeteries of New York City*, (City University of New York: Dissertation, 2020), 111-131 and Appendix.

²⁷ Sandy Ground is associated with the free Black community of oystermen and their families who settled at Sandy Ground in the mid-19th century. The grave markers date from the 1860s to the late 20th century. LPC, *Rossville A.M.E. Zion Church (LP-1399)* (New York: City

of New York, 1985), prepared by Shirley Zavin.

²⁸ By 1852, burials were not allowed below 86th Street and no new cemeteries were allowed to be created in Manhattan. Elizabeth Meade, 47.

²⁹ The elevation varies from approximately 50 to 80 feet above sea level. Today's Metropolitan Transit Authority's Oakwood Heights station is located several blocks to the east of Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.

³⁰ Patricia Salmon, 117-118 for Ocean View-The Cemetery Beautiful, its official name.

³¹ LPC, *Joseph Rodman Drake Park and Enslaved People Burial Ground (LP-2674)* (New York: City of New York, 2023), prepared by Michael Caratzas.

³² Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island: 1498-1909* Vol. 1, (New York:), 1755 Map, Plate 34.

³³ LPC, *The African Burial Ground and The Commons Historic District (LP-1901)* (New York: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Gail Harris, Jean Howson, and Betsy Bradley.

³⁴ <https://nycemetery.wordpress.com/>

³⁵ Fountain Burial Ground is next to the railroad tracks along Old Town Road. Steven Lee Myers, "Unearthing Early Cemeteries, New York Turns Up Politics," *New York Times*, May 23, 1993, 33. See also Friends of the Abandoned Cemeteries in Staten Island.

³⁶ Carolee Inskip, 37-38. It was later associated with the African A.M.E. Zion Church on Forest Avenue in Staten Island.

³⁷ It closed due to financial difficulties. <https://nycemetery.wordpress.com/>

³⁸ Meade, 130; Recently Green-Wood cemetery has restored their "Freedom Lots" section where African Americans of limited means were buried during the 19th century. It is located adjacent to a side service gate and had been left in disrepair until it was recently restored.

³⁹ The burials at Green-Wood in the segregated Freedom Lots (1840-1978) reflected the poverty of many African Americans, but those who could afford better lots were buried in its main sections in the 19th and early-20th centuries. Jeff Richman, Green-Wood Historian, e-mail June 6, 2024.

⁴⁰ "Where the Color Line Exists," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 7, 1890, 3; "Color Line in Maspeth Cemetery," *The New York Amsterdam News*, September 8, 1926, 8.

⁴¹ *New York Age*, June 22, 1935, 12.

⁴² For example, Ida B. Wells spoke out against a Chicago cemetery that advertised on streetcars that it was for Caucasians only. *The Chicago Defender*, Mar 19, 1910.

⁴³ “Denied Right To Burial in ‘White Plot’,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, Nov 28, 1936, 13.

⁴⁴ David Charles Sloane, 162.

⁴⁵ Jared Day, “Great Migration,” Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City, 2nd Ed.* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 550. The population in New York City in 1900 was between 60-70,000. By 1930, it was 627,000. The increase in the African American population occurred primarily in Harlem, but also in the South Bronx and the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Discrimination led to the organization and incorporation of a cemetery (Burr Oak) in Chicago for “colored citizens.” “Business Created by Discrimination,” *New Journal and Guide*, July 5, 1930, 2.

⁴⁸ Lynn Cuffee, Secretary of Board of Directors, provided invaluable research assistance at the cemetery office and was instrumental in locating many primary documents that were reviewed for this report.

⁴⁹ Letter on file at cemetery office from H. E. Jones to a prospective plot buyer. June 20, 1969.

⁵⁰ Frederick Douglass is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, New York, his hometown.

⁵¹ He died April 28, 1956, in Sydenham Hospital in Harlem. *New York Amsterdam News*, May 5, 1956. He and his family are buried at Frederick Douglass Memorial Park. Dade’s funeral home at 2332 Seventh Avenue is now demolished.

⁵² “Two Outstanding Morticians of Harlem-Rodney Dade and Mrs. Mamie L. Anderson-Pratt. *The New York Age*, January 21, 1933, 7.

⁵³ Rodney Dade and his family are buried at Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.

⁵⁴ “Mr. Frederick A. Bunn, President of Valhalla Burial Park, Opens Jewish Memorial Park,” *Brooklyn Life and Activities of Long Island Society*, June 22, 1929. Copy at cemetery office. He also established Mount Sinai Memorial Park.

⁵⁵ Mount Sinai Memorial Park owned the property from 1929 until 1935. Richmond County Clerk’s Office; Liber 677, page 572.

⁵⁶ “Services to Be Held Tonight for Frederick A. Bunn, 67,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 4, 1942, 7.

⁵⁷ “Benjamin Diamond, Businessman, Dies,” *New York*

Amsterdam News, July 20, 1957, 22.

⁵⁸ *26th Anniversary Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc., Unveiling of Frederick Douglass Monument, May 28, 1961 Commemorative Booklet.* They formed a business corporation, Fre-Dou.

⁵⁹ *Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Perpetual Care Park Plan*, nd.1, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶¹ *The New York Age*, June 22, 1935, 12.

⁶² Richmond County Clerk’s Office, Liber 775, pages 15-18. It is unclear if Mount Sinai Memorial Park ever used the lot for any burials before purchase by Frederick Douglass Memorial Park.

⁶³ A landscape drawing of Ocean View Cemetery that includes Mount Sinai by J. Wallace Higgins, dated October 16, 1929, is on file at the cemetery office. Construction notes are on file at the cemetery office.

⁶⁴ *New York Age* June 22, 1935; “Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Fills Long-Felt Need,” *The New York Age*, July 30, 1949, 8. In 1949 the cemetery remained affordable.

⁶⁵ “Rules and Regulations,” nd.

⁶⁶ *Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Ledger Book, Volumes 1-21, 1935-1971.*
<https://fromthepage.com/statenislandmuseum/frederick-douglass-memorial-park-ledger-books>

⁶⁷ David Charles Sloane, 32.

⁶⁸ David Charles Sloane, 32-34, 49

⁶⁹ These were ‘garden of graves’ cemeteries that incorporated extensive displays of trees, shrubs, flowers, etc. Structures such as gatehouses, chapels, mausoleums, memorials, and other installations, also contributed to the overall aesthetic.

⁷⁰ Sloane, 159-171. Inscribed on a large monument at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California.... “Dr. Hubert Eaton revolutionized the cemeteries of America with the memorial-park plan, which he originated.” “Hubert Eaton, 85, Developer of Famed Forest Lawn, Dies,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1966, 3.2

⁷¹ *New York Age* June 22, 1935. Despite the 53 acres repeated in the newspapers, the lot appears to be the same as it was when purchased in 1935.

⁷² *New York Amsterdam News*, July 24, 1937.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ He continued much of his civil engineering work with

railroads and tramways while maintaining a New York City office at 70 East 45th Street in Manhattan.

⁷⁵ U. S. Geological Survey, *Arthur Kill Quadrangle, New York-New Jersey*, 1947 and 1955 Maps.

⁷⁶ Signed contract for professional services on file at the cemetery office dated June 27, 1960 signed by James Whitford.

⁷⁷ *The Voice of Westerleigh*, Newsletter of the Westerleigh Improvement Society, May 1978. He was the third generation of Whitford architects on Staten Island. Obituary, newspaper clipping, in cemetery office archives.

⁷⁸ Advertisement in *New York Amsterdam News* about the monument's dedication. May 20, 1961.

⁷⁹ "Cemetery to Erect Monument to Frederick Douglass," *The Dayton Forum*, January 12, 1940, 6; "26th Anniversary Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc.," May 28, 1961, n.p; Angus McDougall had studied sculpture in Boston, Italy, and the Royal College of Art before becoming a sculptor, and was a designer for the Steuben Glass company.

⁸⁰ "Frederick Douglass Monument Slated to Be Unveiled," *The Mississippi Enterprise*, April 8, 1961, 1.

⁸¹ Commemorative Booklet on file at the cemetery office.

⁸² "Rev. Epps On Douglass Park Board," *The New York Amsterdam News*, April 11, 1964, 40. CORE is the Congress of Racial Equality, founded in 1942, and NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, founded in 1909.

⁸³ *New York Amsterdam News*, October 8, 1983, Ad.

⁸⁴ See previously mentioned ledger books at the cemetery office.

⁸⁵ United States Census, 1930. The first two burials noted in a newspaper article about the opening of the cemetery were David Martin and David Green, both from Harlem; *New York Amsterdam News*.

⁸⁶ <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration>

⁸⁷ LPC, *Dorrence Brooks Square Historic District (LP-2651)*, (New York: City of New York, 2021), prepared Sarah Moses and Theresa C. Noonan, 37.

⁸⁸ "Dr. J. W. Robinson, Retired Pastor, 70," *New York Times*, November 28, 1941, 23.

⁸⁹ "Bodies of Two Attica Convicts are Buried in Cemetery on S. I.," *New York Times*, October 2, 1971, 19; "Oppressed bury their Attica dead," *Prisoners Solidarity Committee*, September 30, 1971.

⁹⁰ Inscribed on her gravestone located in Section 'H.'

⁹¹ Daphne A. Brooks, "Crazy Blues Sparked a Revolution for Blues Women Fans," *New York Times*, August 10, 2020.

⁹² Catherine Ladnier, *Tribute to Tommy Ladnier*; Manuscript on file at Landmarks Preservation Commission.

⁹³ Ryan Whirty, "Respect for Baseball Legend Sol White," *Staten Island Advance*, May 4, 2014.

⁹⁴ <https://www.seamheads.com/NegroLgs/player>, Accessed May 8, 2024.

⁹⁵ "Joanna B. Shields, AKA Founder Dies in New York," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, February 27, 1965, 7.

⁹⁶ The 53-acre Eden Cemetery near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is comparable to Frederick Douglass Memorial Park. It was founded in 1902 as a response to discrimination with a similar mission of providing services and facilities to African American communities. It also continues as an active cemetery today. <https://www.tclf.org/eden-cemetery>

⁹⁷ Many significant burial grounds that have previously been recognized are less than five acres, date from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and are associated with enslaved people. See the National Register of Historic Places and the Cultural Landscape Foundation's survey and website. <https://www.tclf.org/search-results?keys=African+american+cemeteries>

⁹⁸ The African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act of 2022. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3667>

⁹⁹ *26th Anniversary Frederick Douglass Memorial Park, Inc.*, Unveiling of Frederick Douglass Monument, May 28, 1961 Commemorative Booklet.

Findings and Designation

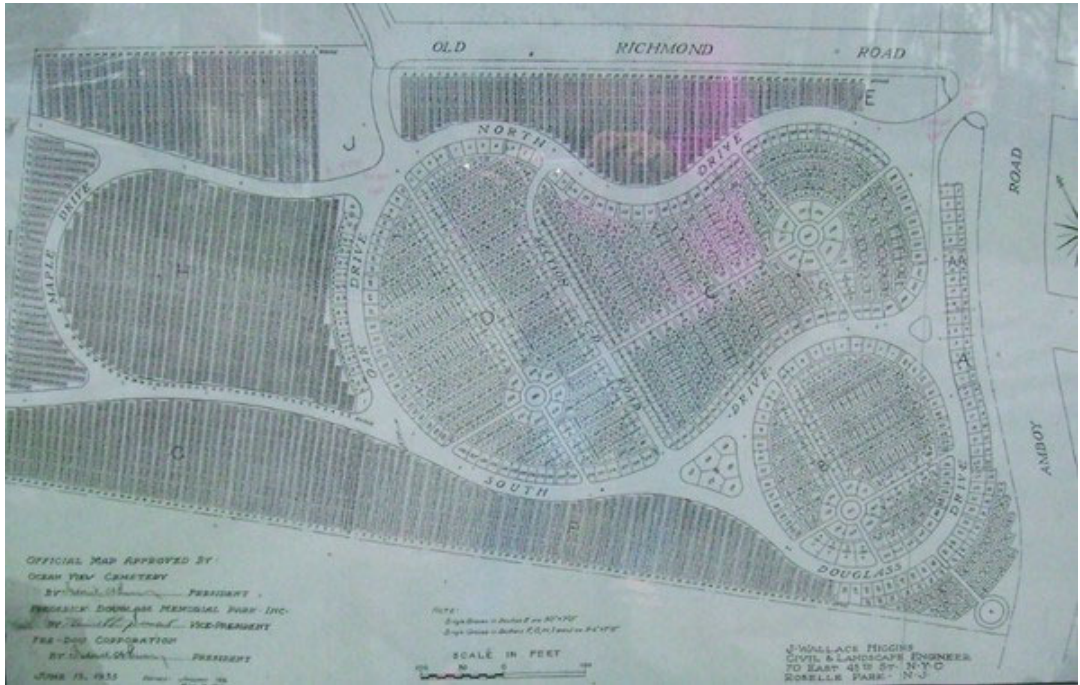
Frederick Douglass Memorial Park

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this memorial park and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, state, and the nation.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Frederick Douglass Memorial Park and designates Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 4475, Lot 300 as its Landmark Site, as shown in the attached map.



View looking west toward the Frederick Douglass monument
LPC, June 2024



Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Cemetery Archives, 1935



Aerial View looking north, Google Maps, September 2022



Frederick Douglass monument
Cemetery Archives, 1961



Frederick Douglass monument
LPC, June 2024



View north toward office building along Oak Drive
LPC, June 2024



View west along South Drive
LPC, June 2024



**View southeast from
Section C-D Road**
Cemetery Archives, 1935



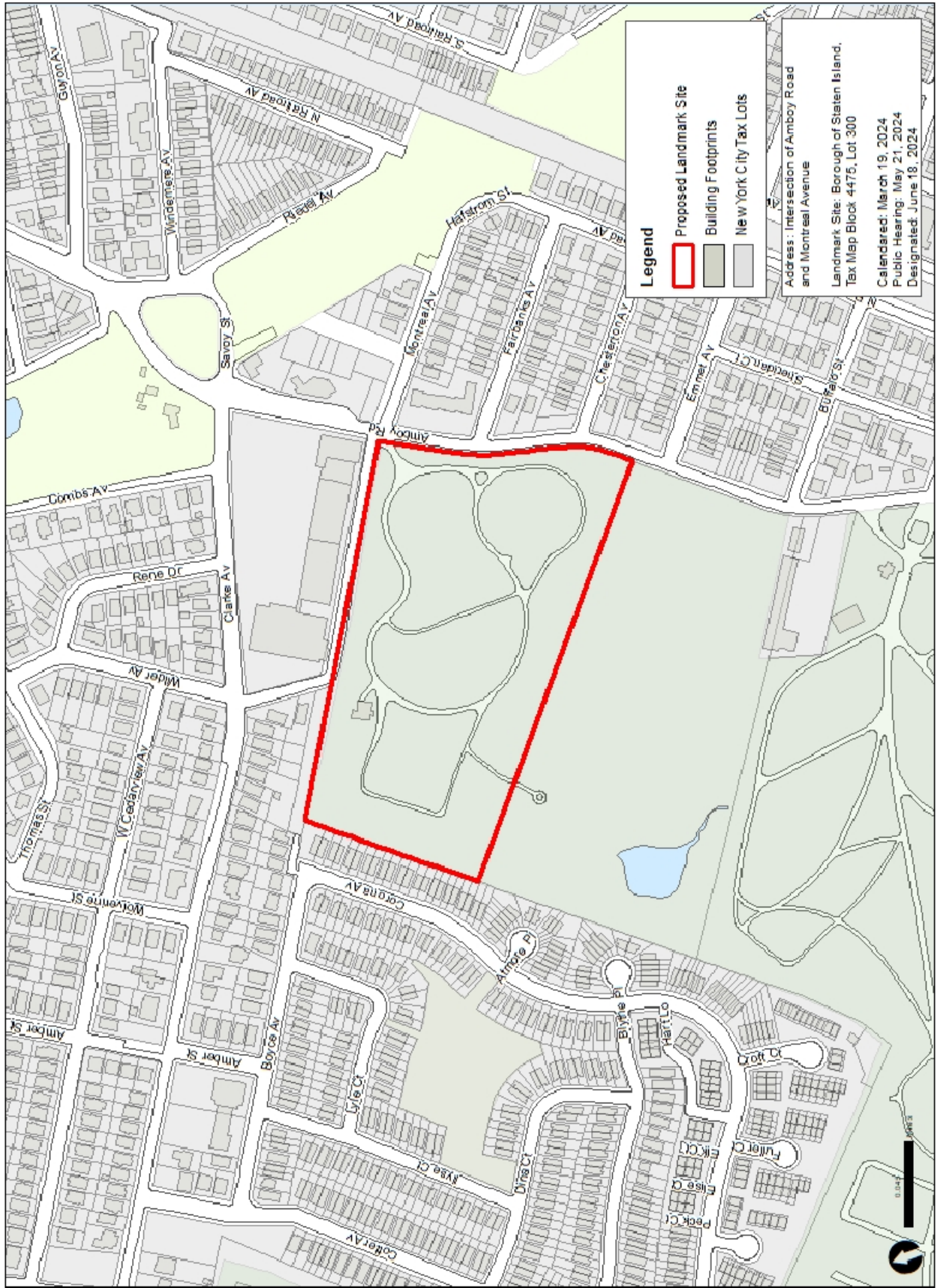
**Same view looking
southeast**
LPC, June 2024



Office Building
Cemetery Archives, 1961



Office Building
LPC, June 2024



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 22-v1, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, SE, Date: 6.18.2024