

**Dallas Landmark Commission
Landmark Nomination Form**

1. Name

historic: Freedman's Grave Yard
 and/or common: Freedman's Cemetery date: c. 1861

2. Location

address: SW corner of North Expressway/Lemmon Intersection
 location/neighborhood: North Dallas
 block: _____ lot: _____ land survey: _____ tract size: _____

3. Current Zoning

4. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	_____ museum
_____ district	_____ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	_____ agricultural	_____ park
_____ building(s)	_____ private	_____ unoccupied	_____ commercial	_____ residence
_____ structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	_____ work in progress	_____ educational	_____ religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public	Accessibility	_____ entertainment	_____ scientific
_____ object	Acquisition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	_____ government	_____ transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in progress	_____ yes: unrestricted	_____ industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other, specify
	_____ being considered	_____ no	_____ military	<u>Cemetery</u>

5. Ownership

Current Owner: City of Dallas, Temple Emanu-El Cemetery Association, FDIC
 Contact: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

6. Form Preparation

Date: 08/17/91
 Name & Title: Mamie McKnight, President
 Organization: Black Dallas Remembered, Inc.
 Contact: Same Phone: 670-4373

7. Representation on Existing Surveys

Alexander Survey (citywide) _____ local _____ state _____ national _____ National Register
 H.P.L. Survey (CBD) _____ A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ Recorded TX Historic Ldmk
 Oak Cliff _____ TX Archaeological Ldmk
 Victorian Survey _____
 Dallas Historic Resources Survey, Phase 1 high _____ medium _____ low

For Office Use Only

Date Rec'd: 9/6/91 Survey Verified: Y N by: BH Field Check by: BH Petitions Needed: Y N
 Nomination: Archaeological (Site) Structure(s) Structure & Site District

8. Historic Ownership

original owner: Trustees for the Freedman's Graveyard

significant later owner(s): See Attached

9. Construction Dates

original:

alterations/additions: 1978, 1984

10. Architect

original construction: n/a-

alterations/additions: n/a

11. Site Features

natural:

urban design:

12. Physical Description

Condition, check one:

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

unaltered

altered

Check one:

original site

moved(date _____)

Describe present and original (if known) physical appearance. Include style(s) of architecture, current condition and relationship to surrounding fabric (structures, objects, etc). laborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments and site details.

Freedman's Cemetery site is located in the city of Dallas, approximately 2 miles north of downtown Dallas, near the intersection of Lemmon Avenue and Central Expressway. As this cemetery's boundaries have changed over the years, this physical description addresses the entire cemetery in its complete size of four acres as well as the planned reinterment area.

The 1869 one-acre cemetery property is on land that is now within Emanu-El Cemetery and Lemmon Avenue (within Tracts B and C). The portion of this 1869 cemetery that is within Emanu-El cemetery is open green space; this land has a ground cover of grass and a number of mature trees, most of them post oak. The portion of this area that is now within Lemmon Avenue or its right-of-way is now covered with concrete or asphalt.

The 1879 four-acre cemetery property is loosely bounded by Lemmon Avenue on the north, Central Expressway on the east, Calvary Avenue on the south and Emanu-El Cemetery on the west, although portions of the 1879 cemetery area lie within Emanu-El Cemetery, Central Expressway and Lemmon Avenue (within tracts A, B, and C). Within this area, the portions of Freedman's Park (Tract A) and Emanu-El Cemetery (Tract C) are open green space with grass ground cover and many large post oak trees. Both areas have been cleared recently, so shrubs and other ground cover is minimal. Tract A has most recently been used as "Freedman's Park," a City of Dallas Public park. As such, the site contained swing sets, concrete benches and was maintained in an open manner. There were no fences or other types of enclosures around this site. The State of Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation has acquired a sliver of land within the park, adjacent to Central Expressway right-of-way for use in the current widening project for this road; this acquired land is approximately 3,000 square feet in size. The remaining areas of this 1879 cemetery property are below Lemmon Avenue and Central Expressway and are covered with concrete or asphalt (Tract B).

Tract D is the planned reinterment area for displaced burials within Central Expressway and Lemmon Avenue. This tract is bounded by the southern property line of the 1879 cemetery and Calvary Avenue on the north, Central Expressway on the east, land currently owned by the FDIC

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on the south, and Emanu-El Cemetery on the west. The most recent use of this land was residential (until the 1960's) and it has been cleared and now is vacant. The land is covered with grass, weeds, and other types of ground cover, and is mowed periodically. Such maintenance has not allowed trees or shrubs to grow, so the land is without significant vegetation. The original (or "old") Calvary Avenue lies within this tract, as well as the new Calvary Avenue.

Burials have been found in all areas of the designated Freedman's Cemetery. Over 1,200 identifiable graves have been located in the archeological survey completed by the State Department of Highways and Public transportation in Tract A. Over 130 have been found in the 3,000 square foot area in Tract B that was included in this effort; these burials and any others found in the Central Expressway right-of-way during construction of the widening project in Tract B will be reinterred in Tract D. No archeological work has been done in Tract C, so it is not known how many graves are in this area. Within Tract D, several graves have been located in the "Old Calvary Avenue" and a few in the New Calvary Avenue site.

13. Historical Significance

Statement of historical and cultural significance. Include: cultural influences, special events and important personages, influences on neighborhood, on the city, etc.

Freedman's Cemetery, established about 1861⁽¹⁾, dramatically represents the remnants of the once-thriving North Dallas community - a community which from the Civil War to the 1970s was the largest segregated African American enclave in Dallas and one of the largest in the country. Along with the Oak Cliff settlement, the North Dallas community emerged as the social, cultural and economic center of black life in Dallas. Today the cemetery remains an important reminder and symbol of the significant contributions made by African Americans toward the growth and development of Dallas.

Reduced significantly in size by various land transactions and development since the last recorded burial in 1925⁽²⁾, almost all physical, surface level evidence of interments in Freedman's Cemetery were removed and destroyed over the years. Located approximately two miles north of the Dallas County Courthouse at the intersection of Lemmon Avenue and Central Expressway, evidence seems to indicate that Freedman's Cemetery was laid out as a rural "Colored" burying ground prior to the Civil War.⁽³⁾ The first recorded land transaction occurred on April 28, 1869⁽⁴⁾ when Sam Eakins, "a trustee for the Colored people of the town of Dallas," acquired one acre from William H. Boales for \$25.00 for the purpose of "a burying ground for the free people of Color and his successors." On October 26, 1879, U.S. Bowles and Elizabeth Bowles sold an additional three acres for a "Freedman's Graveyard."⁽⁵⁾

The 1879 purchase of additional land for expansion of the cemetery to four acres was organized by a group of trustees: A.R. Griggs, Silas Pittman, A. Wilhite, Frank Read, A. Boyd, J. T. Watson and George English. Originally from Georgia, A. R. Griggs had been brought to Texas as a nine year old slave in 1859 by his owner, Green Griggs.⁽⁶⁾ After the Civil War A. R. Griggs, determined to obtain an education, studied to become one of the outstanding Baptist preachers of the nineteenth century. He served as the second minister of the New Hope Baptist Church (1875 - 1883). The church was founded in 1873 in the home of Mattie Rainey in the North Dallas community and was one of the first two black churches established near the small city of Dallas. St. Paul Methodist Church was also established in the area in 1873 under a brush arbor at Munger and Routh Streets, where its landmark church building remains today.⁽⁷⁾

Another trustee, Silas Pittman, was an early tradesman and landowner.⁽⁸⁾ For a time he was a packer employed by and owning stock in Sanger Bros. dry goods store. George English was a teamster who lived on Hall Street at Flora.⁽⁹⁾ A later cemetery trustee was Dock Rowen (1854 - 1932).⁽¹⁰⁾ A native of Jerusalem, he emigrated to South Carolina in the 1870s before moving to Dallas via Alabama. After moving to Dallas he opened a dry goods store on Elm Street near the Texas Central tracks and a grocery store on Juliette Street. In the 1910 City Directory⁽¹¹⁾ Dock Rowen was featured in a half page advertisement as being a dealer in Real Estate, Land Titles and Discount Notes. Rowen was also a stockholder in the Colored Fair and Tri-Centennial Exposition of 1901, which was held on land near Flora and Juliette Streets in North Dallas.

Following the Civil War, former black slaves and other freedmen - some newly arrived in Dallas County - settled in this rural area northeast of Dallas. Perhaps because of the proximity to the already established burying ground and as in similar settlements, families gathered near each other for safety, mutual support and assistance.

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As early as the 1870s blacks began to own property in the area northeast of Dallas which is now referred to as Freedman's Town. County records show that in 1872 J. H. Cole, a major landholder in the area, sold 13 - 1/2 acres to William Adam, a freedman, for \$337. A two acre lot was sold the same year to Lewis Moore, also a freedman, for \$35. Several other large landowners, including Maxime Guillot and H. H. Hall, had recorded the sale of small parcels of property to black men -lots where the latter would build houses and plant small gardens. The landowners allowed many to purchase property for as little as \$5.00 per acre, or if they were sharecroppers, had a lien placed on their crops for the inflated price of \$25 to \$30 an acre.⁽¹²⁾

In 1872, the Houston and Texas Central Railroad reached Dallas and was planned to extend northward to Sherman and Denison through what is now Richardson, Texas. These northbound tracks cut through the eastern side of the growing town of Dallas and the black community that had developed along the way. The railroad companies encouraged squatters along the railroads for cheap labor as an incentive for industries to locate in close proximity to the rails.⁽¹³⁾

In addition to the black community that developed near the cemetery, a small black enclave emerged near the railroad along Elm Street. These two settlements were joined by Stringtown, which identified the area "strung out" along the railroad tracks.⁽¹⁴⁾ In 1873 the black population in Dallas had reached 1,222 and constituted between 15 and 20 per cent of the city's population.⁽¹⁵⁾

Within a few years after land was purchased for Freedman's Cemetery, three more graveyards were established in the vicinity on property owned by East Dallas resident William H. Gaston.⁽¹⁶⁾ These burial places were Calvary, the Catholic grounds, bought in 1872; Trinity, now called Greenwood, acquired in 1875; and Emanu-El, for the city's Jewish community, established in 1881.

Atlases of the city dated 1886-1892 indicate that the city limits barely reached State Street in North Dallas. However, by 1912 the entire area, including the cemetery, had been annexed to the city.⁽¹⁷⁾ By that time, it was a thriving, self-contained and segregated community, with many schools and black-owned businesses, including a bank, hospital, retail and grocery stores, barbershops, a tailor and a newspaper. Other churches had also been founded in the community, including: Free Will Baptist on Hall Street, a Presbyterian Church on Central, Munger Avenue Baptist Church and Macedonia Baptist Church.⁽¹⁸⁾

Around 1905 a black entrepreneur and his wife, Valentine and Mary Jordan, approached Catholic Bishop R.J. Dunne asking that a school be opened to benefit children in the black community.⁽¹⁹⁾ Valentine was employed at Ursuline Academy and had observed the quality of education the sisters provided to children at that all white school. St. Peter's Church and the school, St. Peter's Academy, were erected in the southernmost area of the settlement of North Dallas. The school, which early on had boarding facilities, operated for nearly seventy-nine years (1908 - 1987).⁽²⁰⁾

Eventually described as being bordered on the south by Ross Avenue and Elm Street, on the east by Haskell, on the north by McKinney Avenue and on the west by Leonard Street, the North Dallas community continued to grow and thrive into the 20th century as a major mecca of

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African American life and culture in the United States.⁽²⁷⁾ The 1913 construction of the Knights of Pythias Temple at Latimer and Elm (a Dallas Historic Landmark) brought a greater concentration of black-owned businesses, institutions and professional offices to the community.⁽²¹⁾

In the 1920s North Dallas held the distinction of being the black cultural center of Texas and the Southwest and one of the jazz capitals of the world. Writers have compared the area around Hall and Thomas Street to the other centers of the nation's Black Renaissance of the 20s and 30s such as New York's Harlem, Fifth and Vine in Los Angeles, Beale Street in Memphis and Dowling Street in Houston.⁽²²⁾

However, by 1925 Freedman's Cemetery had ceased to be used for burials in the community. Although by 1905 the boundaries of the cemetery had been clearly defined, three large domestic tracts had been created to the north of it, possibly encroaching on earlier cemetery limits. These tracts were then subdivided in 1913, after which several houses were built. The cemetery was impacted again in the 1930s as land was being acquired along the railroad tracks for Central Expressway. This ultimate construction did require land that had burials on it.⁽²³⁾

By 1952 Central Expressway through Dallas had eliminated a large portion of this early black neighborhood. Streets in the area were rerouted, and through the years, right-of-way for streets on either side of the current cemetery site have been widened and graves have been covered. The completion of North Central Expressway on the route of the Central Railroad in 1952 had not only split the North Dallas black settlement in half, but eliminated much of it as well. The freeway's location to the west of the tracks places it over a portion of the original cemetery land, and a recent archaeological investigation has confirmed that a significant number of burials were covered over, if not removed.⁽²⁴⁾

The North Dallas Memorial Park Association was formed in 1922. No records of this organization have been found at this time. In 1965, a group representing some of the descendants of persons buried in the cemetery, signed an agreement conveying their interest in the cemetery to the City of Dallas. The agreement was signed the third day of May, 1965, by M.B. and Lucille Anderson, Harold and Sedalia Harden, Jane A. and Wright C. King, Lula Mae Anderson, Christabell L. Higginbotham, Ruby N. Stewart, Ruth Campbell, Duane and Ollie B. Mason, and Lenna E. Bright.⁽²⁵⁾

This agreement required the City of Dallas to maintain the area in a clean and neat manner, provide concrete benches and a chain link fence, and to erect a sign acknowledging the cemetery's active existence there from 1861 to 1925. The sign and the concrete benches were installed, but the fence has not been erected.

By 1987, only one legible stone marker remained on the cemetery site, with its inscription: *Emma, daughter of Mary McCune, born June 25(9), 1855, died May 5, 1903. Gone from our Home but not from our Hearts.*⁽²⁶⁾ Most of the area was leveled and filled numerous times during the years, so few signs identifying burials remain. Family histories reveal very few known burials in the cemetery. Those known to date are: Charlie Emory, Sallie Emory, and an

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infant, Mary Emory;⁽²⁷⁾ Mozella Rowen (1889 - March, 1912), Roy Rowen (1885 - 1913), Oscar Rowen (1886 - 1889), Angel Rowen (1893) - four days old;⁽²⁸⁾ Mack McCoy, a barber;⁽²⁹⁾ the parents and older brother of Mrs. Emily Hardin-Simmons;⁽³⁰⁾ and Mrs. Millie Benson-Johnson.⁽³¹⁾ Henry Miller, hanged for shooting a Dallas policeman in 1892, was reported in a local newspaper to have been buried at "the North Dallas Cemetery."⁽³²⁾

Through the years, citizens and preservation groups have voiced concern about additional intrusions into the cemetery. In 1987, the Dallas County Historical Commission corresponded with appropriate government entities about the graveyard following the discovery that utility crews working on the construction of the Cityplace project had unearthed and removed to an unknown location at least five graves from under Lemmon Avenue.⁽³³⁾ The Commission was also concerned about the impact that the impending widening of Central Expressway and the excavation for the second phase of Cityplace might have on the cemetery.

On August 13, 1989, Black Dallas Remembered, Inc., a local African American heritage and preservation non-profit organization, reopened the issue of the impact the proposed widening of Central Expressway would have on the cemetery by corresponding with local and state government entities.⁽³⁴⁾ In addition to written responses from several of the agencies, City Manager Richard Knight convened a meeting to present the proposed highway plan for Central.

Attending that meeting were Richard Knight, a member of his staff, Mamie McKnight, President of Black Dallas Remembered, Inc., and Frances James, Dallas County Historical Commission. During the meeting, plans for the proposed intrusion on the cemetery along the Central Expressway access road were disclosed. The City Manager suggested that a follow-up meeting be scheduled with Tom Anderson of the Park and Recreation Department, and other officials from the city and the State of Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT).

Following the initial meeting which included city staff, community representatives, State of Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT), staff and the Director of the Texas Antiquities Committee, a series of meetings were held. As a result, the Dallas Park and Recreation Board requested that the TDHPT conduct a formal archaeological investigation of Freeman's Cemetery. The investigation began in the summer of 1990. To date, well over 1,200 identifiable graves have been discovered, as well as fragments of grave markers. A commemoration of an unidentified individual reads: *How Much Light, How Much Joy, is Buried with a Darling Boy.*⁽³⁵⁾

In May 1990, the Texas Antiquities Committee voted to designate Freedman's Cemetery a State Archeological Landmark under the provision of the Antiquities Code of Texas.⁽³⁶⁾

The most recent discovery is a tombstone bearing the inscription: *Baby Bluit - 3 years old.* Research efforts are now underway to determine whether Baby Bluit was related to Dr. W. R. Bluit, founder and owner of the first black hospital in Dallas. It was revealed during a recent interview with the daughter of one of Dr. Bluit's associates that Dr. Bluit did have a child that died at an early age.⁽³⁷⁾

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As a result of a survey of the original boundaries of the cemetery by SDHPT, a large portion of the original four acres of the cemetery overlaps with Emanu El Cemetery. Evidence suggests that the densely buried graves throughout the cemetery were placed in regular rows facing east, and that wooden fences may have demarcated sections of the burying ground. The vast majority of graves were originally identified with wooden markers, often at both head and foot, which were either cut off or deteriorated. However, removal of pavement from Calvary Street, the presumed southern boundary of the cemetery, revealed broken stone gravemarkers used as pothole filler, beneath which were a significant number of intact graves.⁽³⁸⁾

Plans for the widening of Central Expressway call for the careful removal of all known burials in the 3,000 square foot strip of land on the eastern edge of the cemetery that will be needed for the freeway, and any other burials found under the freeway pavement that will be removed for the purpose of widening the freeway. Reinterments will be made on property contiguous to the present cemetery site.⁽³⁹⁾

14. End Notes and Bibliography

1. McDonald, William. Dallas Rediscovered. Dallas: Dallas Historical Society, 1978, p. 175
2. State of Texas, State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Historical Ownership Information for Freedman's Cemetery
3. Dallas Rediscovered, p. 175
4. Dallas County Deed Records Volume L, p. 240.
5. Dallas County Deed Records Volume 66, p. 475.
6. Banks, Melvin J. A Century of Faith. Dallas: New Hope Baptist Church, 1973, p. 13.
7. A Century of Faith, p. 13.
8. Dallas City Directories 1900, 1910, 1915, 1917, 1918, and 1924.
9. Dallas City Directory 1900.
10. Dallas County Deed Records Volume 750, p. 169.
11. Dallas City Directory 1910.
12. Dallas Rediscovered, p. 179.
13. Dallas Rediscovered, p. 181
14. Century of Faith, p. 11.
15. Dallas City Directory 1875.
16. Widener, Ralph W., William Henry Gaston: A Builder of Dallas, p. 18, Volume K, p. 547.
17. Bureau of Business Reserch, Atlas of Texas #80, p. 53.
18. Dallas City Directory, 1915.
19. A Century of Faith, p. 11.
20. Black Dallas Remembered, Inc., 1988 Heritage Calender.
21. Black Dallas Remembered, Inc., African American Families and Settlements of Dallas, Volume II, 1990, p. 21.
22. African American Families and Settlements of Dallas, Volume II, page 22.
23. Dallas Rediscovered, p. 181.

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24. SDHPT, Historical Ownership Information for Freedman's Cemetery.
25. Dallas County Deed Records Volume 577, page 0390 - City Secretary File No. 652850. Quit Claim Deed. No records of this transaction in the Centennial History of Dallas Parks.
26. Photograph of marker dated April 1987 in the personal files of Frances James.
27. Information provided by a descendant of Dr. Emerson Emory.
28. Bible records for the family of Dr. Robert Prince, great grandson of Dock Rowen.
29. Dallas Morning News article quoting Mrs. Louise Cowens, October 21, 1990.
30. Interview with Mrs. Emily Hardin-Simmons by Mamie McKnight, September 1990.
31. Family history material written by Mrs. Johnson's granddaughter, the late Ruth K. Johnson-Hickman.
32. Dallas Morning News article May 25, 1892.
33. Minutes of a meeting called by the Dallas County Historical Commission, May 1987.
34. Black Dallas Remembered, Inc., files.
35. SDHPT records.
36. Letter from the Texas Antiquities Committee dated May 22, 1990. Subsequent article in "Medallion" for November 1990. "Medallion" is the official newsletter of the Texas State Historical Commission.
37. Interview with Ethel Boswell-Darden in Chicago, July 1991 by Mamie McKnight. C. R. Boswell, Mrs. Darden's father, was a business associate of Dr. Bluit in Dallas.
38. SDHPT records.
39. SDHPT records.

15. Attachments

District or Site Map

Site Plan

Photos (historic & current)

Additional descriptive material

Footnotes

Other: _____

Designation Merit

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| A. Character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Dallas, State of Texas or the United States. | <u> x </u> | H. Embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, material or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation. | <u> </u> |
| B. Location as the site of a significant historical event. | <u> </u> | I. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on historic, cultural or architectural motif. | <u> </u> |
| C. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city. | <u> x </u> | J. Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar feature of a neighborhood, community or the city. | <u> x </u> |
| D. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social or historical heritage of the city. | <u> x </u> | K. Archaeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories or historic or prehistoric value. | <u> x </u> |
| E. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style. | <u> </u> | L. Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride. | <u> x </u> |
| F. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or specimen. | <u> </u> | | |
| G. Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city. | <u> </u> | | |

Recommendation

The Designation Task Force requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.

Further, the Designation Task Force endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Planning and Development.

Date: 9/1/90

Mamie McKnight

 Mamie McKnight, Chair
 Neighborhood Designation Task Force

Beth Hennessy

 Beth Hennessy, Urban Planner
 Historic Preservation