A SELECTED

BIBLIOGRAPHY

of
PRINT MATERIALS

TO ASSIST WITH
RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE
RETENTION OF
WEST AFRICAN BURIAL CUSTOMS
IDENTIFIED IN
FLORIDA

AND ASSOCIATED
CULTURAL-GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

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A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY TO ASSIST RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION OF WEST AFRICAN BURIAL CUSTOMS IDENTIFIED IN FLORIDA AND ASSOCIATED CULTURAL/GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

This Bibliography offers a selection of printed materials that support the study, documentation and preservation of historic African American burial sites. It is organized by topics, such as African Identified Funerary Customs and Grave Decoration in the New World, Cultural Studies, Artisans, and African-based Burial Traditions in the Caribbean.

The works cited, most with annotations, include books, professional journals and popular newspaper and magazine articles, and unpublished works that contain information useful for understanding and interpreting African American cemeteries in Florida and other regions.

The Bibliography will be posted on the By These Hands website at FPAN.us/BTH in such a way that additional references may be added to the document. The goals are to expand the awareness of information available about African American cemeteries, and to continue to compile references about burial sites where African-based burial traditions have been identified.

AN INTRODUCTION AND GUIDE FOR THE DOCUMENTATION AND PRESERVATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES

An Introduction and Guide for the Documentation and Preservation of African American Cemeteries discusses methods for the identification and inventory of burial sites, and describes resources that can be consulted to compile the history of a cemetery. In addition, a case study, Saving an Historic Cemetery, details how an African American cemetery in Tallahassee was restored to dignity and grace by the efforts of community volunteers. I Have Memory. I Don’t Have Any Records is comprised of three oral histories, recorded in 1997, that illustrate the various types of information that can be obtained from informants.

The Introduction and Guide was produced through a Cooperative Agreement between The John G. Riley House Museum/Center and the Northeast Region Office of The National Park Service in 2007. It has been revised by the author for distribution to participants of the By These Hands Workshop.

Sharyn Thompson, Center for Historic Cemeteries Preservation
Grave Decoration, Markers, Burial Customs, and Funerary Rites


Burton, Orville Vernon. *In My Father’s House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community In Edgefield, South Carolina.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985:236-37. *A comprehensive study of both the black and white populations of Edgefield County, South Carolina from the ante-bellum period through post-Reconstruction. Discusses numerous issues that both communities are typically involved in. Specific information about African American funerals/burials is on pages 236-37.*


The African American Cemeteries of Petersburg, Virginia: Continuity and Change. *Research Series 55, Chicora Foundation, Inc.* Prepared for Virginia Department of Historical Resources and The City of Petersburg, Virginia, May 1999. *“This is not intended to be a comprehensive account of African-American history in Petersburg. Other writers . . . have documented the subject well up until about 1900 . . . Our purpose in this summary is to note the aspects of local history that related to cemeteries.” The 200 page report describes both the burying sites, and the extensive associated histories, that are located in Petersburg. Excellent example of how archaeological investigations and historical research support the preservation of cemeteries.*

Cohen, Henning. “Burial of the Drowned Among the Gullah Negroes.” *Southern Folklore*
This presentation focuses primarily on the evidence of West African burial traditions identified in the author’s study area.

“Black cemeteries spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a rural community in [Berkeley County] South Carolina were examined for creolized elements of West African ideology. The types of materials found on the contemporary black grave, as well as their arrangement, indicated a unique Afro-American conception of death and spirit . . . Black and white burials for the antebellum period were also analyzed. Indications of creolization for nineteenth century blacks was indicated by the use of markers of strongly West African design in conjunction with the European burial pattern.”

An in-depth study of the Gullah of South Carolina; includes discussion and analysis of funeral rites, grave decoration, religious beliefs. Uses contemporary sources that include letters, day books, and manuscripts to illuminate the roots of the cultural group’s history. The final chapter (259-322) addresses Gullah Interpretations of Christianity, Folk Religion in the Slave Quarters, and Gullah Attitude Towards Death and the Supernatural.


Comparison of Bakongo grave decorations with African American grave decorations in cemeteries in North Carolina. This article was reprinted in Last Miles of the Way, edited by Elaine Nichols, in 1989.


Discusses the segregation of burial grounds and churchyards in Narragansett, Rhode Island during 1720-1800, and describes how this spatial separation, and the lack of carved gravestones at the site, was used to reinforce the social positions of enslaved and owners.

The story of a community’s effort to locate, clean, repair, and finally, to rededicate Love Cemetery with a ceremony steeped in African tradition. The burying ground, located near the town of Marshall, in east Texas, provides a good example of how to reclaim a cemetery -- and the history of the people it holds -- from loss and neglect. The story also revolves around achieving racial and social justice for the descendants of those buried in Love Cemetery.


Georgia Writers’ Project, (Savannah Unit) Works Project Administration. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1940.

Information from field research and oral histories collected in coastal Georgia in the late 1930s. Among the earliest efforts to document the retention of African customs by studying a population in a concentrated area of coastal Georgia. The informants’ recollections of Africans who had lived in their communities, as well as the customs that they knew were based in Africa, are an especially interesting part of the book. Burial customs: 106-107, 113-14, 125, 130, 140, 143, 147, 155, 160, 165, 167, 174, 180, 182, 192; Burial at home: 62, 63, 77, 95, 113, 147; Possessions on grave: 58, 95, 117, 127, 130, 136, 147; Burial of stranger: 77, 113, 147; Funerals: 71, 76, 86, 87, 107, 113, 125, 127, 130, 140-41, 143, 150, 155, 180, 184, 194; Grave markers: 117; Graveyard dirt: 36, 42, 84, 93-94, 102, 125; Pennies on eyes, 140; Pennies on grave, 75; Settin-ups [wakes]: 67, 91, 106, 113, 118, 122, 125, 136, 143, 147, 160, 167, 192, 194.


Describes observations made in west Africa during the late 19th century; this article may be best-known for its drawing of a decorated grave often used to illustrate late 20th-century articles and books about African burial traditions (see Fenn, 1985:42-44, Fenn 1989:50, 57 and Vlach, 1978:138-147).


“A portrait of death and dying and a history of the funeral business in twentieth-century African America . . . investigation of the myths, rituals, economics and politics of African American mourning and burial practices.”


Describes the histories, above-ground tomb architectural styles, attendant funerary arts, and burial customs for New Orleans’s early cemeteries. Also addresses preservation efforts that were required for these sites in the 1970s. A brief discussion of tombs “owned and erected by slaves,” and of the Societies formed to build and maintain these tombs, is on pages 19-20. Mention of slave and free-people-of-color involved in iron work for cemetery decoration is on page 140. Examples of work executed by free-men-of-color, Prosper Foy and Florville Foy (marble cutters, sculptors, and tomb builders) are shown on pages 75, 76, 105, 106, 130.


The author spent five years studying the Gullah of the Georgia and South Carolina lowcountry. This book is her record of the daily life of the people who then lived on some of the more isolated Sea Islands, and of her interaction with many of them. She endeavored to trace the African customs that continue to exist in their daily lives. Includes descriptions of burial customs, grave decorations, funerals, with photographs.


Study of how the ethnicities and settlement histories of people in Texas are revealed by their cemeteries; includes discussion of various burial and grave decoration traditions.


The author defines the purposes of this book are “to reconstruct life in one slave community – All Saints Parish, Georgetown District, in the South Carolina Lowcountry – through . . . sifting of every kind of available record . . . to recreate the emotional texture of slave life . . . to examine the process of culture change in a slave community.” Includes descriptions of slave funerals in the community during the time period that was studied.


An Educator’s Guide to the McKissick Museum’s exhibition, Jubilation! Explains “Rites of Passage” such as baptisms, weddings, emancipation day, and funerals in southern African American communities.


Extensive article that describes the results of the author’s investigation into the social reasons for whites erecting commemorative markers for African Americans in pre- and post-colonial America. Includes photographs and a number of inscriptions taken from gravestones.


Scholarly study of African American cemeteries throughout regions of North Carolina; discussion of two men (Renial Culbreth and Issiah McEachin) who crafted markers at some of the burial sites; photographs of grave decoration and of various types of vernacular markers.


A detailed study of the various types of gravemarkers identified in North Carolina, many associated with the customs of the State’s immigrant groups. Discussion of progression of African slave graveyards to present-day African American cemeteries(36-41) and an extremely well-documented and photographed Chapter 6 (“The Living Vernacular,” pages 235-268) about African-based grave decoration, vernacular markers, and known and anonymous African American artisans who fashioned vernacular concrete gravemarkers in the mid-20th century. Impressive black & white photographs (by Tim Buchman) throughout the book.


Documents gravestone inscriptions that identify the deceased as slaves; presents the history of slavery
in the Colony — “Besides becoming a leader in the slave trade, Massachusetts was the first of the thirteen English colonies to legalize slavery: formal legislation of the institution was brought about by the Body of Liberties in 1641” — and includes black & white photographs of gravestones. This is, however, not a complete catalog of gravemarkers for slaves in Massachusetts, as the authors note: “In order to demonstrate the thesis of this essay, it was not felt necessary to locate or discuss every existing slave’s marker in Massachusetts.”

Milbauer, John A. “Folk Monuments of Afro-Americans: A Perspective on Black Culture.”
Discussion and interpretation of the author’s field observations in African American cemeteries, in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.

Mullin, Michael. Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992: 63-66, 70-71, 73-74, 137, 204, 323, 372. Scholarly work that includes primary resource research of colonial American and Caribbean burial grounds, funerary traditions brought by slaves from West Africa, attitudes of plantation owners towards burial rites practiced by slaves, observations of social stratification of slaves as expressed in various funeral practices. Includes an extensive bibliography concerning African-based culture and history from the colonial period in the American South and the Caribbean, with listings of collections housed at various libraries and archives, and of material from official records, plantation records, missionary papers, and newspapers (pages 385-403).

Nichols, Elaine, ed. The Last Miles of the Way: African-American Homegoing Traditions, 1890-Present. Columbia: South Carolina State Museum, 1989. A companion publication for the South Carolina State Museum’s exhibit Last Miles of the Way, about African American funeral and mourning customs, with the purpose of discovering how a cultural identity can be preserved through funerary rituals. Articles include “Last Miles of the Way” by Elaine Nichols (12-43); “Honoring the Ancestors: Kongo-American Graves in the American South by Elizabeth Fenn (44-50); “Archaeological Analysis of African-American Mortuary Behavior” by Cynthia Connor, and “Mourning and Burying the Dead: Experiences of a Lowcountry Funeral Director” by Herbert U. Glascoe. Many photographs, both vintage and contemporary, of funerals, cemetery markers, and grave decoration.


Pinckney, Roger. Blue Roots: African-American Folk Magic of the Gullah People. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1998:16, 54-55, 67-87, 95-96, 154-56. A collection of Gullah folklore by an African American author who grew up in Beaufort County, South Carolina. In addition to cultural and historical information, is Mr. Pinckney’s lament that the area, and its people, are being over-run by residential development and tourism. The chapter “A Familiarity With Spirits” (67-87) describes burial customs and beliefs. Discussions of ghost stories, visitations from the spirit world, grave decoration, and the uses of graveyard dirt, are scattered throughout the volume.

Well-research and documented discussion of the Gullah people and their African origins, including successive waves of forced slave migrations from west Africa, settlement in the coastal areas of the British colonies of Georgia and South Carolina, retention of many African skills and crafts through the generations (rice and indigo farming, basketry, music, etc.). Discussion of burial and funeral customs, and grave decoration is brief, and similar to other, earlier published materials. Comprehensive bibliography, photographs of grave decoration (figures 20-23).


Beautiful black & white photographs of churches and graveyards, with scenes of the various rites and ceremonies that accompany religious life for African Americans in the Delta. Of special interest are the hand-fashioned vernacular gravemakers.


Saxon, Lyle, Edward Dreyes, and Robert Tallant. *Gumbo Ya-Ya.* Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1987; originally published by Louisiana Library Commission, 1945. *Folklore of Louisiana,* much of it collected from informants in New Orleans during the 1930s-40s; Chapter 15, “Crazah and the Glory Road” (300-15) involves stories about African American burial and mourning customs; Chapter 16, “The Cemeteries,” (316-65) describes burial, funerary and mourning customs for both African American and other ethnic groups; other material about African American burial societies, wakes, cemeteries, burial practices, etc. are on pages 244-45, 569-70.


Results of a study conducted by Ann Tashjian when she observed markers, carved with iconography common during the early colonial period (1650+), in the section of Newport’s graveyard that had been reserved for slaves. “There is no evidence of African survivals, as in burial artifacts on the Georgia Sea Islands.” Using a 1903 map of the graveyard, Tashjian found 45 markers that remained in 1986, and photographed and copied the inscriptions of each.


Discussion of five west African groups and the retention of their traditions and philosophies in the United States, various Caribbean islands, and in Central and South America. Death imagery, 257-60, 268; Death shrines, 257; Graves, 117, 132-42, 182; Bottle trees over graves, 144-45; charms for persistence of spirit, 132; Embellished graves, 146-47, 151, 153, 157; Inverted objects on graves, 140; Lamps, pipes, or vehicles on graves, 139; last-used objects of dead on graves, 134; Seashells on graves, 135-38, 157; trees planted on graves, 138-39; White chickens on graves, 134-35; The Funeral on Cane River, 155; gravesites in Haiti, 132, 135-39.

Describes the continuities found in Afro-American art that are “possibly derived from the Congo-Angola section of Africa.” Thompson’s discussion of grave decoration at Sunbury, GA (pages 47-50) includes burial customs of the area and detailed descriptions of the grave markers made by Mr. Cyrus Bowen for his family’s cemetery.


Velt, Richard. “African-American Gravestones From Early New Jersey.” Newsletter of the Association for Gravestone Studies, 16:2 (Spring 1992):2-3. Concise article describing three gravestones found in New Jersey’s earliest burial grounds for Africans (or African Americans) with death dates prior to 1828. “It was not until 1828 that New Jersey enacted a law providing for the gradual emancipation of slaves . . . These three stones mark the final resting places of two men and one woman who lived in the transitional period between slavery and freedom.” With the article is a photograph of the earliest identified stone, for “Caesar an African” who died in 1806 at the age of 104 years.

Vernon, Amelia Wallace. African Americans at Mars Bluff, South Carolina. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993:37, 56, 157, 159, 230n31, 234n18. The author, a native of Mars Bluff, spent years recording interviews with the town’s elderly African Americans, and subsequently wrote their history. The material is especially interesting because it deals with South Carolina’s upland region, rather than the coastal area. The information includes first-person memories of night burials, grave decoration, burial/aid societies.


Walvin, James. Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1994:149-54, 169, 183. An account of colonial period slavery in Britain, North America and the Caribbean, providing descriptions and discussions about numerous aspects of how lives were lived under slavery. Two chapters, “Disease and Death” (135-54) and “Religion” (176-97) are especially pertinent to the study of African burial/funeral traditions. Pages 150-153, 169, 183 give accounts of mortuary practices in Virginia, Barbados, Jamaica, during the mid-17th century. Of interest is a photograph,
taken in an English churchyard, of the head and foot stones for Scipio Africanus, died 1720 -- his elaborately carved markers include typical iconography of the time – portraits and winged soul effigies, with African features.

Cursory commentary on African American burial traditions; early observation and recordation of these practices.

Article about African American cemeteries in St. Louis, Missouri and how the sites have fallen into disrepair because of attitudes of civic authorities regarding upkeep and financial support.


Briefly describes religious and funerary practices observed on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, in the early 1900s; photograph of “An Island Grave” following page 254.
Florida Cemeteries

Dethlefsen, Edwin S. “The Cemetery and Culture Change: Archaeological Focus and Ethno-

Hall, Robert L. “African Religious Retentions in Florida.” In The African American Heritage of Florida, edited by David R. Colburn and Jane L. Landers. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995:42-70. “This essay addresses the cultural distinctiveness of African Americans by placing spirit possession and ritual ecstatic dance at the heart of the controversy over African cultural survivals in the United States.” An abbreviated part of the essay (pp. 61-63) focuses on death, burial, and funeral rites, with the author describing the distinctions between death and “a proper burial” and between “burying” and “preaching the funeral.” Extensive notes and references are included.

Hamlin, Chris. “Pallbearer’s Unions: An Examination of the History of Benevolent Organizations With the Black Community and Their Modern Counterparts.” (no date). Copy housed at the Archaeology Institute, West Florida University. Historical overview of the history of various African American benevolent organizations in the Southern States, with an in-depth focus on Tallahassee, Florida’s Black Pallbearer’s Union and The Christian Society.

Historic Coconut Grove Cemetery: A Survey and Preservation Plan. A report prepared for The Coconut Grove Cemetery Association by Research Atlantica, 1992. Survey and preservation plan for Coconut Grove’s historic cemetery (funded by grant assistance provided by the Bureau of Historic Preservation, Florida Department of State) which is located in the city’s African American neighborhood. The cemetery was founded by black Bahamians, sometime between 1906-1913, who formed the Coconut Grove Colored Cemetery Association. Report includes a history of the community, with information from local informants, and a summary of associated field research conducted at Eleuthera, Bahamas.

Kenneson, Claude (compiler). Colored News of Tallahassee: A Walk Through Time, 1855-1995. Tallahassee: The John G. Riley House and Museum, no date. Death notices and obituaries, compiled from the separate “colored news” sections of early Tallahassee newspapers. Kenneson’s newspaper research is supplemented by his search of the Old City Cemetery for markers of the deceased. Although most investigations resulted in “no marker found,” there are occasional notes about markers that exist. The research confirms there has been a loss of gravemarkers at the site, but reclaims the names and stories of people buried there.

Ortiz, Paul. Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005:107-13. Chapter 5, “To See That None Suffer: Mutual Aid and Resistance,” includes information about African American organizations that formed to provide aid and burial assistance to community members. Numerous details about “these collective bodies [that] formed the bedrock of African American culture and society in Florida’s cities and towns,” as well as in rural areas of the state, were compiled from newspapers, church newsletters, city directories, etc. for this historic time period.

“Florida offers an excellent laboratory, in the tradition of county- and state-based strategies, for a close examination of the variations of slave experience and race relations patterns.”

Brief discussion (173-74) of funeral rites of slaves and how these were sometimes wrongly interpreted by Whites. On page 178, a drawing of a 19th-century burial with scaffold, pots, bottles, and other possessions of the deceased placed beneath (curated at Florida State Archives Photographic Collection). Chapter 6, “Religion and Community,” describes various African religious practices of slaves.


Records of burials for St. Augustine during the Second Spanish Period. Entries include the name, death or burial date, and place of burial of the deceased, whether the person was free or enslaved (with the owner’s name given), the skin color (mestizo or pardo/a, quadroon, Morena/a, octorrao), the age and name of known kin. Other information is often included: place of birth, where the person arrived from, the place of death, or the occupation – for example: “natural son of an Indian and a Black”; “native of the coast of Guinea”; “Caudillo of the Black Royalists of Santo Domingo”; “soldier in the Battalion of Free Morenos of Havanna”; died at the Royal Hospital of Our Lady of Guadalupa”.


Includes a history of Greenwood Cemetery (est. 1937) and its rededication in 1987, profiles and photographs of prominent African Americans buried at Greenwood, and lists of persons buried there during its 60 years (Name, Lot/Block/Section and death date). Compiled by Volunteers of the Greenwood Cemetery foundation and Riley Museum from various sources, including records of the Cemeteries Division, City of Tallahassee.


Field survey in thirty of Wakulla County, Florida cemeteries revealed that “folk” burial practices, or grave decoration, were often identical at both African American and White sites. The use of shells on mounded graves, wood head markers in the shape of human head-and-shoulders, and later, the placement of hand-fashioned concrete markers with impressed objects such as glass and shell, were common methods of marking graves.


A history of cemetery segregation from Tallahassee’s Territorial Period through the mid-20th century; the history of the development of Greenwood Cemetery, its decline and eventual reclamation and restoration by community members and the Greenwood Cemetery Foundation. The Appendices include photographs of the clean-up operations and the Rededication ceremony.
Cemeteries Archaeology

Report of the investigation of a small, unmarked cemetery in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina that was uncovered by earth-moving operations. Data suggest that this was the burial site of black individuals associated with the Hunt plantation during the antebellum and post-bellum periods. Death dates were estimated to be from c. 1840 to 1870. A total of 846 pieces of coffin hardware were recovered from the site, described and comparatively analyzed, and a history of the hardware developed. The artifacts were reburied following the study. Photographs of the material are curated at the Charleston Museum.

An excellent source of information about historical archaeology and cemeteries up to the year 1994. . . . indexed by key words, includes over 1,900 citations to scholarly research on cemetery sites dating from the 15th through the 20th century. Bibliographic references include archaeological survey and excavation reports; the physical and forensic anthropology of historical populations; the history of death, mourning, and burial; studies of grave markers and cemetery landscape; and the law and ethics of sepulchre, curation, and repatriation of human remains and funerary objects.


Results of the study of a cemetery in Alachua County, Florida, describing the difference in grave markers for African Americans and other groups in the community.

Dockall, Helen Danzeiser and Leah Carson Powell. “Burial Traditions of Rural African Americans from the Historic Phillips Memorial Cemetery.” Department of Anthropology, Texas A & M University, 1993 (?). Copy housed at the Archaeology Institute, University of West Florida.
“Abstract: Data recovered from the Albert J. Phillips Memorial Cemetery, an historic (1890s-1927) African-American cemetery from Galveston County, Texas provides insight into the burial customs of rural African Americans. Although the excavated portion of the site had been subjected to some destructive processes, an examination of the excavated and unexcavated portions of the cemetery allowed us to assess the degree in which it exhibited identifying characteristics of traditional African-American Cemeteries . . .”

“Abstract: Historical archaeologists have recently begun to explore the intersections of race, class, gender, and death in American society. This paper uses an approach to the material culture of death grounded in the reception theory . . . Grave markers from the African-American cemetery at Newport, Rhode Island, are considered as intersubjective texts with ranges of different meanings for different viewers . . . interpret[es] three time periods in Newport’s history ranging from 1720 to 1830; interpretations of textual similarities and differences in cross-cultural mortuary activities revolve around white paternalism, conspicuous consumption, and African-American strategies of resistance and assimilation.”

African American Grave Marker Artisans

Cyrus Bowens


Photographs and descriptions of markers made by Cyrus Bowens for his family’s burial plot in Liberty County, Georgia. The photos are especially significant because they were taken prior to 1955 by the book’s authors and show the markers in their original setting – the markers were subsequently moved to Ft. Frederica National Monument on St. Simon’s Island, Georgia, to protect them from weathering, theft, and vandalism.


Brief discussion of the importance of the Bowens gravemarkers to the heritage of African Americans in Georgia.


Detailed description of the gravemarkers made by Mr. Cyrus Bowens for his family’s cemetery.


Includes a photograph of the Bowens gravemarkers in their original setting, with detailed descriptions of their appearance.

William Edmondson


Discusses the limestone sculptures created by William Edmondson, including his gravemarkers intended for placement in Nashville’s African American Cemetery. Mr. Edmondson (c. 1874-1951) was the son of former slaves in Tennessee.


A discussion and analysis of William Edmondson’s 1930s gravestones compared with the statuary he carved. Assesses Mr. Edmondson’s contributions to American folk art within the historical and cultural contexts of the time and place where he lived his life; brief discussion of the Tennessee quarries that provided the material for his work.
Williams, Ed. “ ‘Death Mask’ Cemetery.” *Newsletter of the Association for Gravestone Studies*, 14:3 (Summer 1990), 2-4. (Originally titled “Cemetery Art,” this article was reprinted from *EnvironSouth*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (Fall 1985).

**Florville Foy**


Examples of work executed by free-men-of-color, Prosper Foy and Florville Foy (marble cutters, sculptors, and tomb builders) are shown on pages 75, 76, 105, 106, 130.

**Sebastian Hammond**


Born a slave between 1795 and 1804, in Frederick County, Maryland, Sebastian Boss/Boston Hammond (freed from enslavement in 1839) is one of the earliest documented black craftsmen in central Maryland. He carved headstones from the 1830s to c.1860, apparently quarrying most of the local greenstone from a site less than a mile from his home. The article, well-illustrated by black & white photographs of headstones carved by Mr. Hammond, includes Appendices that document the work paid for by customers, and the locations of his markers that have been identified.

**Isaac Nettles**


Newspaper article describing the life-mask gravemarkers created by Isaac Nettles. These markers are unique to the funerary art of the Southeast region, but may echo early practices of the Akan people located in present-day Ghana and Ivory Coast, who commemorated their dead with terracotta portraits (see Vlach, 1978:142 and R. F. Thompson, 1983:47).


Williams, Ed. “‘Death Mask’ Cemetery.” Newsletter of the Association for Gravestone Studies, 14:3 (Summer 1990), 2-4. (Originally titled “Cemetery Art” this article was reprinted from EnviroSouth, Vol. 9 No. 4, Fall 1985).
African-Related Funerary Traditions of the Caribbean

Discusses in scholarly detail the death, funeral, and burial traditions practiced by enslaved African and African-Jamaican peoples during the colonial period, with accounts from early historians, travelers, missionary society records, and plantation owner observations. Brathwaite follows with a discussion of “the African Matrix of Jamaican/Caribbean Folk Religion which provides further depth for interpretation of the funerary practices he documents.

An account of current-day Haitian beliefs regarding death, funerary traditions, and the honoring of spirits of the dead – most all of which have African precedents.


A comprehensive collection of Jamaican folklore; includes chapters “Duppy Tales” (35-53) and “Tales About Religion” (72-94). The Introduction (xix – xiv) discusses previous collections of folktales of Jamaica and the various contributions these have made to the Island’s folklife and culture.

Brief remarks about West African funeral rites observed in Barbados and Jamaica during the late 1600s. The chapter, “Death in the Tropics” describes the many causes of death for those living in these and other British-colonized Caribbean islands during the 17th century.

Forde, G. Addington. “Beliefs about Death, Funerals and Duppies.” *Folk Beliefs of Barbados*
A booklet by the Cultural Officer for Barbadian Folklore, with a brief, informative chapter about popular beliefs regarding the dead, their spirits, and graveyards, primarily among the Island’s African-Barbadian population. The author notes when the same or similar beliefs are held on neighboring islands.

Photographs of practitioners and rituals of three African-based religions (Palo Monte, Santeria, and Espiritismo) as practiced in the city of Santiago de Cuba, with well-written descriptions of present-day beliefs and customs, celebrations of the Congo Spirits of the Dead and rites associated with cemeteries. Detailed end notes for each chapter.

Hagedorn, Katherine J. *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santeria*. 
Includes brief discussion and descriptions of the mixing of Catholicism and Santeria symbols and beliefs in Havana’s Cementerio Cristobal Colon (Christopher Columbus Cemetery).


In-depth report of archaeological excavations and archival/ethnographic research in the island of Barbados. The main objective of the field work for the project was “to locate sugar plantation slave cemetery sites from which skeletal and artifactual remains could be recovered. Archaeological survey and testing focused on five plantations with histories extending deep into the slave period, and where strong oral and written evidence existed for slave cemeteries. This research, however, failed to discover traces of any cemetery or recover any contextual evidence of human remains.” Despite the fact that no slave cemeteries were found, the information detailed in the report incorporates “historical/archival and ethnographic research . . .[and consideration] of “historical and anthropological issues regarding unmarked Caribbean slave cemeteries.” Probably most pertinent for African American and African Caribbean cemetery studies are Chapter 3, “Cemeteries during the Slave Period: Whites, Slaves and the Newton Cemetery” (13-16) and Chapter 4, “Plantation Fields: Naming Practices, and the Negro Yard and Graveyard Fields (17-19). An extensive References section lists sources used in the archival and ethnographical research for the investigation.


This chapter of the book describes funeral rites as practiced by followers of Voodoo, though the author clearly states that, “It would be somewhat arbitrary merely to describe Voodoo funeral ceremonies without giving some attention to rites which, although apparently not linked with the cult of loa, nevertheless are always observed over every dead body no matter whether it is that of a Catholic, a fervent Voodooist or an uncompromising Protestant” Among the topics covered are precautions regarding a proper funeral, laying out of the dead, the burial, mourning, and cemeteries and tombs.


Scholarly work that includes primary resource research of colonial Caribbean and American burial grounds, funerary traditions brought by slaves from West Africa, attitudes of plantations owners towards burial rites practiced by slaves, observations of social stratification of slaves as expressed in various funeral practices. Includes an extensive bibliography concerning African-based culture and history from the colonial period in the Caribbean and American South. Perhaps most useful are the listings of collections housed at various libraries and archives. Includes material from official records, plantation records, missionary papers, and newspapers (pages 385-403).


Well-researched article about the beliefs of African-Jamaicans associated with death and burial rituals. The author notes that “Africans entering Jamaica naturally brought with them their native beliefs and rituals relating the death. The beliefs and practices of migrant peoples will normally under-go some changes due to contact with the new physical and social environments.
The position of enslaved peoples is especially vulnerable, due to their exposure to forces which attempt, with at least partial success, to control and remold them.” Topics addressed in the article include: the basic West African/Afro-Jamaican beliefs concerning death; slave funerals; Kumina funeral rituals; grave decorations; superstitions associated with death; death in folklore.

“This article explores the association between the cotton tree [Ceiba pentandra] and the spiritual realm in Jamaica and in other parts of tropical America . . .” Rashford includes an extensive discussion of the cotton tree as “the shrine of a sanctuary,” and relates the tree’s importance in various Jamaican religions such as Obeah and Myal. Article includes a list of published references.

Extensive article on the “cultural importance of the American calabash tree (Crescentia spp.) to Jamaicans, focusing on the way in which it is traditionally associated with the spiritual realm, i.e. its relationships to the world of spirits and to duppy birds.” Explores the use of the calabash tree as a grave marker, and the association of various bird species with the tree and graveyards.

The article includes discussion of the use of crotons as grave markers and its association with graveyards, and of the plant’s use in Jamaica’s traditional religious practices.

Discussion of the retention of the West African tradition of Dinki Mini, which includes dancing “on the final set-up on the ninth night, when the soul of the departed would be bade farewell.” The dances and songs of funeral celebrations are described in detail.

An account of colonial period slavery in Britain, North America and the Caribbean, providing descriptions and discussions about numerous aspects of how lives were lived under slavery. Two chapters, “Disease and Death” (135-54) and “Religion” (176-97) are especially pertinent to the study of African burial/funeral traditions. Pages 150-153, 169, 183 give accounts of mortuary practices in Virginia, Barbados, Jamaica, during the mid-17th century. Of interest is a photograph, taken in an English churchyard, of the head and foot stones for Scipio Africanus, died 1720 – his elaborately carved markers include typical iconography of the time – portraits and winged soul effigies, with African features.

Burial Records, Death Notices, Obituaries, Cemetery Locations


A compilation of all known cemeteries in the county, with names and vital statistics, taken from the grave markers of the deceased given when available. “No burial plot has been excluded intentionally from this book, but through lack of information or oversight, there will be cemeteries or individual graves omitted, regretfully.” African American cemeteries (with marker information) are listed as follows: Hammock Black Cemetery, near Dover Bluff (312); Slave Cemetery in Brown’s Neck (518); Cemetery Near Wayside (Slavery Time) – 10 or 12 unmarked graves of former slaves (527); Jefferson Cemetery – “several graves of Blacks” (540); Oak Grove Cemetery – Negro Section (588-590).


Documentation and Preservation

“This Preservation Brief provides preservation professionals, cultural resources managers, and historic property owners a step-by-step process for preserving historic designed and vernacular landscapes, two types of cultural landscapes.  While this process is ideally applied to an entire landscape, it can address a single feature such as a perennial garden, family burial plot, or a sentinel oak in an open meadow.  This Brief provides a framework and guidance for undertaking projects to ensure a successful balance between historic preservation and change.”

“The Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes provide guidance to cultural landscape owners, stewards and managers, landscape architects, preservation planners, architects, contractors, and project reviewers prior to and during the planning and implementation of project work.”


A booklet that includes a section describing slave burials and graveyards in the South Carolina Lowcountry (taken from plantation and traveler account of the time period). Discusses the role of archaeology in the preservation of African American cemeteries.

Provides a summary history of the African/African America presence in Georgia and “discusses some major cultural resources which have historical significance primarily to African Americans.” Includes discussion of the cemeteries and burial restrictions for slaves during the State’s colonial and ante-bellum periods.

“The creation of the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 provided the first national recognition for historic properties possessing State or local significance, and uniform standards for evaluating them . . . appreciation has evolved in both scholarship and public perception for
the important historical themes that graves, cemeteries, and other types of burial places and features can represent. The growing emphasis on the history of ordinary individuals, grassroots movements, cultural and designed landscapes, and various cultural groups has nurtured this evolution. At the same time, the identification, maintenance, and preservation of burial places is increasingly threatened through neglect, ignorance, and vandalism. This publication is intended to focus attention on these resources and provide detailed guidance on the qualities that render burial places significant representatives of our history worth of preservation.”


Provides basic information about the reason for recording cemetery markers, and the ways that it can be done; the booklet’s 12 pages provides a comprehensive beginning for this important work.


Revised edition of the first comprehensive book for conservation of gravestones. New material includes discussion of the importance of developing a preservation plan prior to beginning any restoration project.


Designed to assist individuals, organizations, and agencies interested in the preservation and protection of historic cemeteries. It suggests guidelines and methods for identification, survey, and documentation of burial sites and discusses preservation techniques that can be employed to stop or retard their deterioration. Appendices include information on the Florida Master Site File program, the National Register of Historic Places, statues that affect the protection of the state’s historic burial sites, and a bibliography of selected books and articles about cemeteries and graveyard in the southern United States.


A bibliography compiled to assist persons interested in the interpretation and preservation of historic African American and African Caribbean cemeteries. The publications listed concentrate on the historical and cultural aspects of burial and commemoration.


Explanation of the importance of documenting African American cemeteries, with information on ways to conduct surveys, take photographs, copy inscriptions, begin historical research in support of the burying site.


A comprehensive and well-organized guide for genealogy research of African Americans; includes chapters on how to document slave ancestors, ancestors during the Civil War and during Recon-
struction, and on “The Last African and the First American.” Special topics include Sources for Advanced Research in Slave Genealogy, Caribbean Ancestry, and A Further Note on County Courthouse Records.
African American & African Caribbean Gardens and Yards


______. “They Have Saturdays and Sundays to Feed Themselves: Slave Gardens in the Caribbean.” Expedition 2.2 (1990):24-33.


