Oakland Cemetery

A BRIEF HISTORY

When Shreveport was first laid out in 1831, the need for a cemetery was among the first considerations of the Shreve Town Company. The first cemetery was known as the Farm Street Cemetery. In 1833, the site was purchased by the town for $250. All of the early cemeteries were small, serving the needs of a town that was just beginning to grow. By 1840, the town had grown to a size where a larger cemetery was needed.

On March 30, 1847, a large burying ground was opened on 10 acres located two blocks west of Common Street, on what was then the outer edge of the city. This new cemetery opened shortly after the land for it was acquired from Mary Bennett Cane and her father, Dr. Samuel Bennett.

Burial officially ceased in the Farm Street Cemetery in 1855 and, following the Civil War, it was deeded by City Hall to all graves in the Farm Street Cemetery be moved to the new City Cemetery. City Cemetery was renamed Oakland Cemetery in 1861, and is now one of the oldest and, arguably, most important landmarks.

Very few burials have taken place at Oakland Cemetery in the last seventy years. No more plots are sold at Oakland, all of the space in the cemetery was purchased long ago. The cemetery is owned and maintained by the city, but the gates are closed by the families of those buried here. Even the ground which appears empty is an illusion, for there are many unmarked graves at Oakland Cemetery and there are, therefore, very few spaces for new graves to be dug. It is believed that there are many unmarked graves here as marked ones.

About eight hundred victims of the great yellow fever epidemic of 1873 are buried at Oakland, most in a marked mass grave near the Milton Street side of the cemetery. Victims of other yellow fever epidemics (1833, 1858, and 1867) are also buried here.

Shreveport’s first Jewish cemetery, which opened in 1888, is also found here at Oakland. One acre in the north corner of the ten acre plot was purchased by the Hebrew Mutual Benevolent Association. Many pioneer merchants and businessmen can be found commemorated here.

Overall, the cemetery is the final resting place of thousands of ordinary citizens: white and black, Christian and Jew, free and slave, native and foreign born. Shreveport is their legacy. From their last resting place can be seen the skyline of Shreveport’s modern central business district - here they lie, right in the midst of it.

In 1893, a new cemetery consisting of 70 acres and called “Greenwood Cemetery” was opened. Since Oakland for all intents and purposes was “closed” at that time, we have a remarkable opportunity to preserve and explore one of the few remaining and largely unchanging cemeteries of the type in the entire country!

Oakland Cemetery was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 13, 1977.

Notable Persons Buried at Oakland Cemetery

Masters of Shreveport

Booth, Joseph Clinton (1813-1867), fifth mayor
Boorne, Alexander John (1839-1916), seventh mayor
Crain, Lawrence E. (1818-1895), ninth mayor
Cowell, Moore B. (1832-1875), twenty-third mayor
George, Dr. William Wallace (1809-1869), second mayor
Gough, John Lee (1828-1879), thirteenth mayor
Howell, John M. (1868-1882), twenty-fourth mayor
Jones, John William (1822-1868), eleventh mayor
Lamburn, John Morgan (1819-1861), eighth mayor
Lees, Samuel (1853-1888), third mayor
McKellar, Reuben Neil (1853-1902), thirteenth mayor
Miers, William Rinaldo (1819-1871), twelfth mayor
Tally, Martin (1803-1870), nineteenth mayor
Varnum, Richard H. (1813-1880), twenty-eighth mayor
Ward, Samuel J. (1834-1900), twenty-fifth mayor

Notable for Various Reasons

Broadhead, Jacob (1808-1863), first Jewish settler in NW Louisiana
Crosby, Mary Bachelier (1814-1902), first female settler in Shreveport
Clark, Amanda Arent (1849-1902), notable philanthropist, born a slave
Craner, Lawrence Pike
Egan, Dr. Bartholomew (1795-1879), Surgeon General of Louisiana during Civil War
Foster, Lt. Clara Lee, Unusual monument
Hodge, Col. Benjamin Lewis (1814-1901), Confederate hero of the Battle of Shiloh
Lafayette, Robert Logan
Leve, Capt. Simon
Marks, Col. Leon Dausonne (1825-1884), a Confederate hero of the Siege of Vicksburg
McCune, Atlee (1841-1901), “Shreveport Madman”
Morr, Thomas Henry
Nolan, James V. (1844-1910), A Confederate hero of the Battle of Mansfield
Oak, Richard Dudley
Sewell, Robert
Smith, Dr. Dickerson H. (1871-1925), first black physician in Shreveport
Stern, Martha Rowe (1791-1805), sister of Alma born Jim Brown
Terry, Zachary Taylor, nephews of Capt. Pres. Jefferson Davis
Williams, Isabell Bodine (1852-1864), great-granddaughter of Martha Washington; step-granddaughter of George Washington
Wilson, Charles H. (1836-1910), first Shreveport police officer killed in the line of duty
Woodruff, Eugene Augustus
Yellow Fever Memorial

Veterans

Approximately four hundred Confederate Veterans and approximately ten Union veterans of the Civil War are buried at Oakland. Additionally, the cemetery is the final resting place of at least one veteran of the War of 1812 (Maj. Robert E. Myricks, 1790-1869); one veteran of the Seminole Wars (Dr. William M. Turner, 1812-1904); at least five veterans of the Mexican War; approximately a dozen veterans of the Spanish-American War; and, a handful of veterans of World Wars I and II, both of which occurred after the cemetery's period of greatest usage had passed.

Notable Political Figures

Boorne, Alexander John (1839-1916), US Representative from LA & US Judge
Daniel, John Reeves Jones (1802-1868), US Representative from NC
Hodge, Col. Benjamin Lewis (1814-1901), Confederate hero of LA
Jones, Bokput (1813-1880), US Representative from LA
Land, Thomas Thompson (1815-1865), Justice of LA State Supreme Court
Landrum, John Morgan (1814-1883), US Representative from LA
Leonard, Albert Harris (1838-1910), US District Attorney for LA; founder of The Times
Seay, William Armin (1819-1880), US Ambassador to Bolivia
Williams, Col. George Willie (1806-1880), US Minister to Central America
Young, Col. John Smith (1805-1936), US Representative from LA

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Hundreds of others of significance to Shreveport and northwestern Louisiana history are buried here, including many of the leaders of early business, religious, and local political life. Dozens of city and parish officials and dozens of persons whose lives are memorialized here are noted in the history of Oakland Cemetery. Being the only public cemetery from 1847 to 1895, Oakland’s population is extremely diverse with every socio-economic, racial, and religious group in the area during the nineteenth century represented here.

For more information:

Oakland Cemetery Preservation Society
PO Box 2031
Shreveport, LA 71135

www.oaklandcemetery.org

The Oakland Cemetery Preservation Society

The mission of the Society is to preserve Oakland Cemetery as an historic asset and provide greater public access for learning and reflection. In cooperation with the City of Shreveport, the Society seeks the assistance of community volunteers to support preservation and restoration activities.

OCPS is a designated 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization.