



Oakland Cemetery

A BRIEF HISTORY

When Shreveport was first laid out in 1836, the need for a cemetery was among the first considerations of the Shreve Town Company. The first cemetery was known as the Fannin Street Cemetery. Its use began almost as soon as the town came into being. Shreveport, in the 1830s, was an exceedingly inhospitable place with a rough constituency of pioneers and little law enforcement. The combination proved a fertile one for the Grim Reaper and, within only a decade of its establishment, the cemetery was filled nearly to capacity.

On March 30, 1847, a much larger, City Cemetery was established on 10 acres located two blocks west of Common Street, on what was then the very 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.

Burials officially ceased in the Fannin Street Cemetery in 1851 and, following the Civil War, it was decreed by City Hall that all graves in the Fannin Street Cemetery be moved to the new City Cemetery. City Cemetery was renamed Oakland Cemetery around 1905, and is now the city's oldest and, arguably, most important landmark.

Very few burials have taken place at Oakland Cemetery in the last seventy years. No more plots are sold at Oakland, as all of the space in the cemetery was purchased long ago. The cemetery is owned and maintained by the city, but the grave plots are owned 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 nearly as 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 Milam Street side of the cemetery. Victims of other yellow fever epidemics (1853, 1858, and 1867) are also buried here.

Shreveport's first Jewish cemetery, which opened in 1858, is also found here at Oakland. One acre in the north corner of the ten here present 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 unchanged cemeteries of this 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

Mayors of Shreveport

Beall, Joseph Clinton (1813-1867), fifth mayor
Boarman, Alexander John (1839-1916), sixteenth mayor
Crain, Lawrence Pike (1818-1859), sixth mayor
Crowell, Moses Hodge (1826-1875), twenty-first mayor
George, Dr. William Walton (1807-1865), second mayor
Gooch, John Lee (1828-1877), fourteenth mayor
Howell, John N. (1807-1882), fourth mayor
Jones, John William (1822-1895), eleventh mayor
Landrum, John Morgan (1819-1861), eighth mayor
Levy, Samuel (1835-1883), twenty-third mayor
McKellar, Reuben Neil (1855-1933), thirtieth mayor
Shivers, William Rabun (1819-1871), twentieth mayor
Tally, Martin (1803-1876), eighteenth mayor
Vinson, Richard Tucker (1842-1904), twenty-eighth mayor
Ward, Samuel J. (1834-1906), twenty-fifth mayor

note: a half-dozen other early mayors of Shreveport are believed to be buried at Oakland but, if so, their graves are unmarked.

Notable Political Figures

Boarman, Alexander John (1839-1916), US Representative from LA & US Judge
Daniel, John Reeves Jones (1802-1868), US Representative from NC
Hodge, Col. Benjamin Lewis (1824-1864), Confederate Representative from LA
Jones, Roland (1813-1869), US Representative from LA
Land, Thomas Thompson (1815-1893), Justice of LA State Supreme Court
Landrum, John Morgan (1815-1861), US Representative from LA
Leonard, Albert Harris (1839-1917), US District Attorney for LA; founder of The Times
Seay, William Austin (1831-1888), US Ambassador to Bolivia
Williamson, Col. George McWillie (1829-1882), US Minister to Central America
Young, Col. John Smith (1834-1916), US Representative from LA

Notable for Various Reasons

Bodenheimer, Jacob (1808-1865), first Jewish settler in NW Louisiana
Cane, Mary Batchelder (1812-1902), first female settler in Shreveport
Clark, Amanda Arnett (1840-1902), notable philanthropist, born a slave
Crain, Lawrence Pike
Egan, Dr. Bartholomew (1795-1879), Surgeon General of Louisiana during Civil War
Foster, Lt. Claiborne Lee, Unusual monument
Hodge, Col. Benjamin Lewis (1824-1864), A Confederate hero of the Battle of Shiloh
Lafayette, Robert Logan
Levy, Capt. Simon
Marks, Col. Leon Dawson (1829-1863), A Confederate hero of the Siege of Vicksburg
McCune, Annie (1844-1920), "Shreveport Madam"
Morris, Thomas Henry
Nolan, James V. (1844-1891), A Confederate hero of the Battle Mansfield
Sale, Richard Dudley
Sewell, Rufus
Smith, Dr. Dickerson Alphonse (1871-1925), first black physician in Shreveport
Sterritt, Martha Bowie (1791-1861?), sister of Alamo hero Jim Bowie
Taylor, Richard, Jr. & Zachary II (both d.1863), sons of Gen. Richard Taylor, grandsons of Pres. Zachary Taylor, nephews of Con. Pres. Jefferson Davis
Williamson, Isabel Butler (1832-1866), great-granddaughter of Martha Washington and step-great-granddaughter of George Washington
Wilson, Charles H. (1858-1894), first Shreveport police officer killed in the line of duty
Woodruff, Eugene Augustus
Yellow Fever Mound

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 V. Mayre, 1790-1860); one veteran of the Seminole Wars (Dr. William M. Turner, 1812-1884); at least a dozen veterans of the Mexican War; approximately a dozen veterans of the Spanish-American War; and, a handful each of veterans of World Wars I and II, both of which occurred after the cemetery's period of greatest usage had passed.

Others

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 after whom city streets are named found their last rest at Oakland Cemetery. Being the only public cemetery from 1847 to 1894, 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 52131
Shreveport, LA 71135

www.oaklandcemeteryla.org
www.myspar.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.