



to disperse under the weight of many forces—the attack on African American civil rights and economic power in the wake of Reconstruction; the physical destruction of Jackson Ward; the demise of de jure segregation, which opened burial grounds in the city proper to African Americans—East End deteriorated.

When a small band of volunteers began working at the cemetery in the summer of 2013, it had all but disappeared from

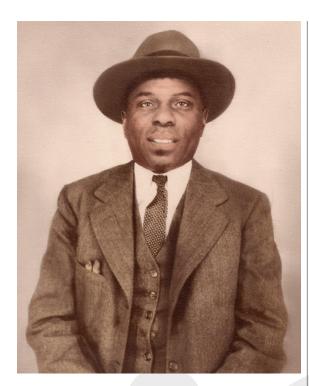
view. In the place of an immaculate, formally laid-out burial ground stood a sixteen-acre forest, nearly impenetrable in parts. English ivy, an invasive species, had taken over, climbing the trees and thickening over time, blanketing the thousands of graves so completely that only the tallest headstones peeked through here and there. Some families with loved ones buried at East End had struggled mightily to maintain their plots over the years, carvingsmall islands out of the overgrowth; others could no longer find their way in the tangle of vines.

By spring 2020—when our on-site work was disrupted first by COVID, then by the cemetery's new owner—volunteers led by the Friends of East End had reclaimed roughly ten acres of the burial ground, almost entirely by hand. To date, more than 3,300 grave markers have been uncovered and documented; at least that many unmarked graves have been found.



People

African American Richmonders from all walks of life are interred at East End. There are lawyers and letter carriers, ministers and midwives, bankers and barbers, teachers and tobacco stemmers. There are cooks, laundresses, waiters, and porters. Farmers, drivers, grocers, and tailors. But people's professions tell only part of the story. Within the confines of Jim Crow, East Enders founded churches, created mutual aid societies, and joined fraternal organizations. They were deacons and trustees, officers and presidents, secretaries and sextons. And soldiers too-more than one hundred veterans are buried at East End (to view the Survey of Veterans' Markers, please visit friendsofeastend.com/about/). Their stories, and thousands more still waiting to be discovered, shed new light on our collective past and allow us to write a truer, more inclusive history of our city and our country. »



William H. Banks Sr.

A man of great faith, William Henry Banks Sr. was devoted to his God and family. He served faithfully as chairman of the Diaconate Ministry of Mount Tabor Baptist Church for over 20 years until his death. As chairman, he oversaw the relocation of the church from 23rd and Selden Streets to its current location on Fairmount Avenue in Richmond. He was also civically engaged and served as a member of the Deacons Conference of Richmond and Vicinity and as a member of the Fairmount Beneficial Club, which helped community members in need. He raised chickens to help feed his neighbors and would host Sunday dinner after church for the community.

He was employed during his adult life by P. L. Lorillard Tobacco Company in Richmond. During the mid-1900s, as a young man, he was selected as the first and only African American delegate to attend a session of Congress on behalf of the company and to represent it at the White House meeting that

Rosa D. Bowser

1855-1931

The most famous of those buried at East End. Rosa D. Bowser was a pioneering educator, writer, and civic leader. Born January 7, 1855, to Henry and Augusta (Hawkins) Dixon of Amelia County, she graduated from the Richmond Colored Normal School in the early 1870s at age 17. Her 1879 marriage to James Herndon Bowser was cut short by his untimely death from consumption in 1881.

Mrs. Bowser became president of the Virginia State Teachers Association in 1890. Five years later, she founded the Richmond Woman's League to raise funds for three Black women convicted of murdering a white woman in Lunenburg County; the women were eventually acquitted. A committed reformer until her death, Mrs. Bowser played an active role in a host of organizations geared toward social and racial justice. She died at home on February 7, 1931. Her only child, Oswald Barrington Herndon Bowser, a noted physician, is buried in the same plot.



followed to discuss legislation for which the company was lobbying.

As a little girl being reared by my maternal grand-mother and grandfather, he taught me how to register to vote, exercise the franchise, conduct business, and interact successfully with the white community, among many other life lessons and survival skills during the Jim Crow era. —Excerpt of a biography by Brenda Holmes Edwards, Deacon Banks's granddaughter



Dr. Richard F. Tancil

ca. 1852-1928

Born into slavery in Fauquier County, Dr. Richard F. Tancil moved with his family to Alexandria after Emancipation and went on to graduate from Howard University in 1882 with a degree in medicine.

According to a biography by Susan Mitchell, Dr. Tancil's great-granddaughter-in-law: "Soon after graduation from medical school. Dr. Tancil moved to Richmond with his new bride [Mary Dade Lane, a school teacher to assume the position of assistant superintendent of the Central Asylum. Following two years of practice at that institution, he established what would become a successful general medical

practice in Richmond's Church Hill neighborhood. He was active in Republican politics and served as a member of the State Executive Committee. He was a Mason, a Knight of Pythias, and a member of the Baptist church. He was instrumental in founding the following professional organizations: Old Dominion Medical Association. National Medical Association, Medical and Chirurgical Society of Richmond, and the Richmond Hospital Association. He founded two small banking institutions: the Nickel Savings Bank and the Star National Bank. He also established a memorial society called the Memorial Burial

Ground Association, and an insurance plan known as the People's Relief Association of Virginia, Church Hill.... Along with John Mitchell Jr., William Washington Browne, and Maggie L. Walker, he was active in the Richmond streetcar boycotts of 1903–04 to protest the new Jim Crow laws....

"Dr. Tancil died from renal failure in Richmond in March 1928, less than six months after the death of his wife. He was buried next to her and their daughter Mary at East End. His headstone was carved with the poignant epitaph 'Well Done.' A simple description of an exceedingly useful, and inspiring life."

The Dichmond Diggs



Hezekiah F. Jonathan

ca. 1859-1913

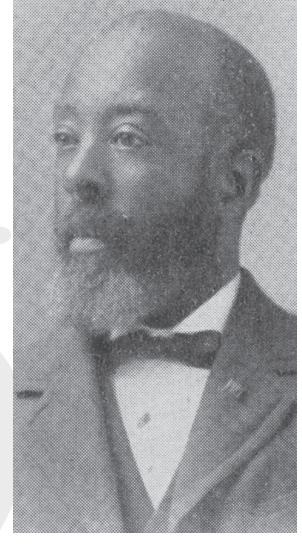
A prominent merchant—the Richmond Planet described him as "one of the best known colored men in the State"—Mr. Jonathan owned and operated a fish business at 120 N. 17th Street and served as a senior officer in the Knights of Pythias. He was born to free people of color in Henrico County (his father, Alexander Jonathan, is also buried at East End) on the cusp of the Civil War. He married Cora G. Robinson of Cincinnati, and the couple settled in an "attractive residence at 5th and Duval streets, which has been handsomely furnished . . . within the peaceful confines of Jackson Ward," according to their 1895 wedding announcement in the Planet. Mr. Jonathan served as vice president of the Mechanics' Savings Bank until shortly before his sudden death in 1913 at the age of 52. Mrs. Jonathan outlived her husband by 21 years and is buried alongside him at East End.

William Custalo

ca. 1840-1907

William Custalo was a lifelong Richmonder and for many years the proprietor of Custalo House, a well-known bar and restaurant at 702 E. Broad, the same spot where the National stands today. (Sadly, due to disrepair, the Custalo House crumbled to the ground in 1908 "with a rumble and roar that could be heard and felt for blocks around." according to the Richmond Planet.)

The son of free people of color—Josephus, a blacksmith, and Mary— Mr. Custalo married Nancy Bacchus, who is buried alongside him at East End; the couple had no children. On an 1870 Freedman's Bank record, his occupation is listed as "cooper," a maker of barrels, a common 19th-century trade. While serving as an officer in the coopers' union, Mr. Custalo and other prominent members of the Republican Party "steered the interracial Madison Ward Assembly" toward candidate for the House of Representatives William H. Mullen, according to



historian Peter Rachleff in *Black Labor in Richmond*. Mr. Custalo's early and close associations with men of different races, combined with his other civic activities, may have contributed to his considerable success as a restaurateur.

He was a member of Second Baptist Church and of numerous social orders, including the Masons and the Knights of Pythias, and sat on the board of the Mechanics' Savings Bank, founded by *Planet* editor John Mitchell Jr.

pposite: The Richmond Planet This page: New York Public Library Digital Collections



Henry Williams

ca. 1832-1915

According to the testimony of his younger sister Patsy Lee, Henry Williams was born James Henry Ferguson (ca. 1832) at Roselawn, the plantation of Benjamin Green, whose home still stands today on Three Chopt Road. He was sold at a young age—he himself said he was "stolen"—and eventually ended up in Louisiana, near the town of Waterproof, on the Mississippi River. In July 1863, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at Milliken's Bend, a month and a half after the famous battle of the same name. After the war, he lived much of his life in Mississippi and in Memphis before making his way back to his birthplace. He died three years later in 1915.

Daniel Webster Washington

1880-1962

Daniel Webster Washington was born on November 25, 1880, to Van and Virginia (Green) Washington in Richmond; all three are buried at East End. In 1907, Mr. Washington married Emma J. Randolph, a schoolteacher; they lived a good portion

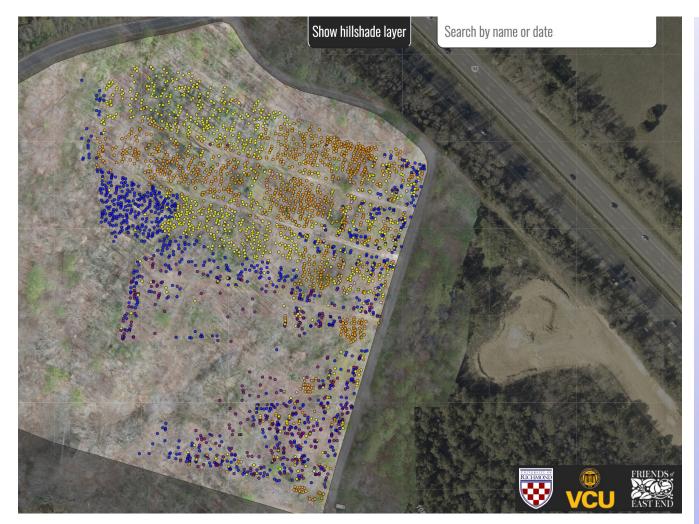
(an area that includes the neighborhoods of Ginter Park, Bellevue, and Laburnum Park). From the available census records. they seem to have had only one child, lames R. Washington, born in 1923. Mr. Washington was a postman all his life until his retirement at age of their lives in Northside 70. According to a 1949

Richmond Times-Dispatch article, he was well known in the neighborhoods for his traditional and harmonic use of a whistle to announce the daily delivery of mail. He passed away on February 21. 1962. Mrs. Washington preceded him in death by five years and is buried at Evergreen.



Trudy Gail Terrell Receives Letter From City's Last Whistling Postman Daniel W. Washington Delivered Mail to Her Grandmother 40 Years Ago

Opposite: National Archives and Records Administration. This page: Richmond Times-Dispatch



Digital map

Created by the East End Cemetery Collaboratory—a learning community composed of faculty and staff from UR and VCU and members of the Friends of East End—the map pinpoints the locations of grave markers using GIS technology and drone imagery. As of September 2020, nearly 3,250 markers had been mapped, with points indicating their precise positions in the cemetery.

» dsl.richmond.edu/eastend



Archive

Another project of the Collaboratory, the East End Cemetery Archive brings together a wide range of primary sources—portraits, death certificates, marriage records, draft registration cards, obituaries, newspaper articles, and more—and data drawn from the cemetery itself, such as GPS coordinates, gravestone photographs, and written descriptions of markers and plots. It is linked to the spatial map of the cemetery, memorial records on Find A Grave, and eastendcemeteryrva.com.

» search.eastendcemeteryrva.com

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Gone Before.

A large crowd attended the funeral of Mrs. V. A. Smith, Friday, May 27, 1910, at the First Baptist Church. Rev. W. T. Johnson, D. D. delivered a most impressive sermon. Mrs. Mildred A. Cross sang, "I would not Live Always", with a charming sweetness and Mrs. W. T. Johnson rendered in a most pleasing manner another selection.

another selection.

The casket was of the couch design, which opened entirely and the heliotrope color and cream satin trimming presented a magnificent appearance. Many resolutions from the several organizations of which she was a member were read.

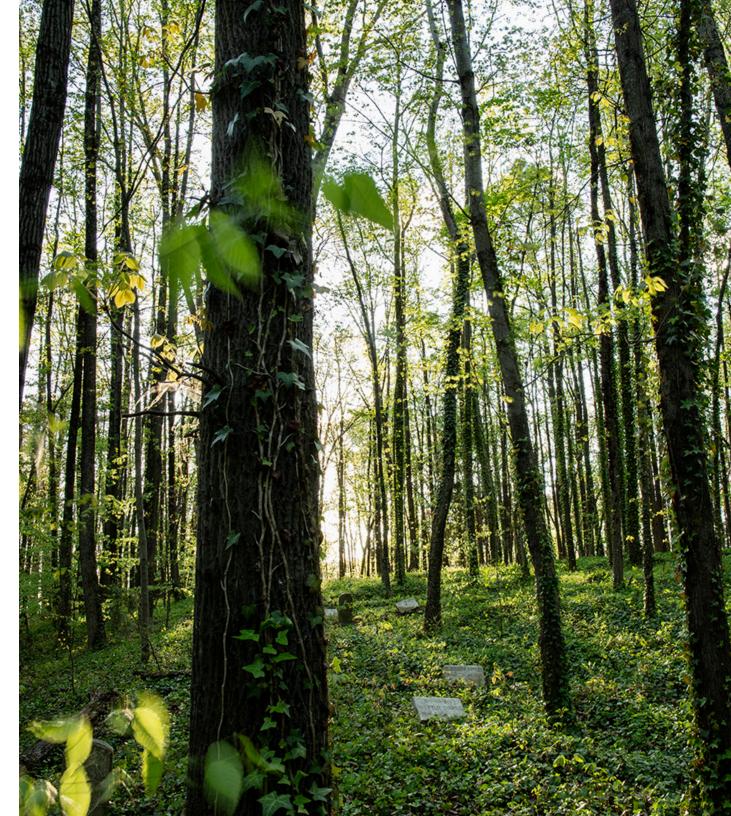
Much sympathy was expressed for the bereaved husband, Major John G. Smith, who had done all in his power for his faithful partner in life who had gone the way of all the earth.

Funeral Director W. Isaac Johnson officiated.

Above: World War II draft card for Bennie Crossan (1904–1962). Left: Obituary for Virginia A. Smith (1863–1910), from the *Richmond Planet*, 4 June 1910.

Seek Find

Respectful exploration of East End Cemetery is encouraged. In these pages you'll find opportunities to acquaint yourself with this sacred burial ground. Please take care not to touch any gravestones, markers, or burial mementos and keepsakes, and be mindful of where you step. PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN PALMER



Find the gravestones of at least five people who served in the military. How do you know you have found a veteran's marker?

PFC
US ARMY
WORLD WAR I
JAN 10 1896
MAY 31 1985

What is the earliest dated marker you can find?

3

What is the latest dated marker you can find?

Find a gravestone of a person over 90 years old.



5

Find a gravestone of a person under 10 years old.

Find a grave with

Find a grave with a conch or clam shell.



7

Find a homemade gravestone. What makes you believe it is homemade?

8

Find a footstone with engraved initials.



9

Find a gravestone that has your first, middle, and/or last name.

10

Find a gravestone with two hands shaking.



engra

Choose five markers and calculate how long each person lived. What is the significance of the time period? What was taking place at the time in Richmond? In Virginia? In the U.S.? In the world?

Find a marker with the letter *Z* or *O*.

13

Find a marker made of something other than marble or metal.

14

Find a gravestone with an engraved flower or leaf.



15

Find multiple gravestones all belonging to one person. How many are there? What text is listed at the bottom of each gravestone (for example, employer, church, family relations, etc.)?

16

Find a gravestone with the symbol or name of a fraternal order. Some examples: Odd Fellows (GUOOF), Knights of Pythias, Elks (IBPOEW).



17

Find a headstone that marks the grave of a member of the Independent Order of St. Luke or National Ideal Benefit Society.



18 Find a marker that tells about someone's life accomplishment. What was it?

Find a gravestone with an etched animal.



20 Find a marker from the 1800s and from each decade of the 1900s.

21

Find a gravestone in the shape of a heart.



Find the graves of:

- a. William H. Banks
- **b.** Rosa D. Bowser
- C. Dr. Richard F. Tancil
- **d.** Hezekiah F. Jonathan
- e. William Custalo
- **f.** Henry Williams (no marker, buried in Ferguson plot)
- g. Daniel W. Washington

TAG US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO SHARE YOUR FINDS!



O @friendsofeastend



@eastendcemetery project



@friendseastend



Additional resources

Web

EAST END CEMETERY: A Place & Its People

eastendcemeteryrva.com

EAST END ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

friendsofeastend.com/east-end-oral-history-project

FRIENDS OF EAST END CEMETERY

friendsofeastend.com

PLANNED DESTRUCTION: A Brief History on Land Ownership, Valuation and Development in the City of Richmond and the Maps Used to Destroy Black Communities

storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/600d5cb0e0454b1a809da6d4f31db8ca

RICHMOND CEMETERIES

richmondcemeteries.org

THE RICHMOND PLANET

virginiachronicle.com

VIRGINIA UNTOLD: The African American Narrative

virginiamemory.com/collections/aan/

Print

BLACK LABOR IN RICHMOND, 1865–1890

By Peter Rachleff

DEATH & REBIRTH IN A SOUTHERN CITY: Richmond's

Historic Cemeteries By Ryan K. Smith

HIDDEN HISTORY: African American Cemeteries

in Central Virginia By Lynn Rainville

PROUD SHOES: The Story of an American Family

By Pauli Murray

REARING WOLVES TO OUR OWN DESTRUCTION:

Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782–1865 By Midori Takagi

THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS: The Epic Story of

America's Great Migration By Isabel Wilkerson



