



ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY RECLAMATION INITIATIVE

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The Odd Fellows Cemetery Reclamation Initiative (2009-present) is an evolving, long-term research, design, and engagement program that addresses the potential for a deteriorating cultural landscape to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the social lives of the communities that surround it. It represents a collaboration between the University of Tennessee, the City of Knoxville, and the communities of East Knoxville.



Context: Odd Fellows is a 6-acre cemetery in East Knoxville established in the 1880s by multiple African-American fraternal community organizations, all of which disbanded in the 1930s. Over time vegetation became overgrown and approximately 90% of the estimated 6000 markers have been lost. Sporadic clean-up efforts have done little to curb the ongoing deterioration. Currently without ownership, the cemetery reflects the neglect and disenfranchisement of the community and visually exhibits a lack of pride.



In 2008 Katherine Ambroziak began working with the Knoxville ReAnimation Coalition. The KRC is a grass roots organization in East Knoxville that focuses on educating and creating social wealth among Knoxville's African-American communities through projects that illuminate and valorize its past achievements. The KRC has been continuously involved with the reclamation program since its inception.

The program proposes a community-focused rehabilitation that directly addresses the negative physical and social influences affecting the area and offers the community a safe, engaging, and respectful environment to rediscover its heritage. Through a series of public workshops, Ambroziak and the KRC identified key objectives: to develop an interactive memorial landscape that promotes the unique cultural heritage embodied in the cemetery, to make the grounds safe, easier to navigate, and easier to maintain, to continue to involve the community in the planning, design, and future activities, and to make the cemetery a place of pride for the community. Working with the KRC, the city, and student and community volunteers, Ambroziak developed various research, design, and service-learning projects that investigate the opportunities and implications of these objectives.

Primary research and design are explored through a wide range of academic courses and co-curricular activities with students both in the College of Architecture and Design and throughout the university. Primary courses where themes of diversity, cultural responsiveness, shifting perspectives, and civic engagement were explored include a special topics seminar, *Spaces of Memory*, and advanced graduate and undergraduate studios where the cemetery served as a case study and focus of a service-learning module. Important products of these courses include a series of "nonce ritual" designs (culturally appropriate activities that promote active and healthy memory building) and the design, fabrication, and installation of Civil War Veterans memorial markers. Students also participated in community activities and conversations as part of an effort to build empathy and recognize diverse perspectives.

Beyond the classroom, the program progresses through on-site community engagement. Since its inauguration in 2009, the project has enjoyed the support of over 2000 community and student volunteers in activities that include on-site research and analysis, program studies, ceremony design and performance, and design implementation.

Important for all curricular and volunteer activities is that they start with an orientation discussion about the history of the cemetery - its establishment by community fraternal and sororal organizations, the political and economic events that led to their disbanding and the loss of ownership of the cemetery, the two political moves for urban renewal that targeted the minority communities in east and north Knoxville during the time of the Jim Crow laws, and then the steady support and reinvestment back into the community, often by local grass-roots organizations. Structured reflection is centered around issues of social justice, economic impact, importance of public space, and civic responsibility.



ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY RECLAMATION INITIATIVE ODD FELLOWS HERITAGE PARK MASTER PLAN

Odd Fellows Cemetery and Potters Field are two historically important and culturally relevant cemeteries in East Knoxville, Tennessee. The burial grounds hold over a century-and-a-half of stories by persons whose families still reside in the area, but these sacred landscapes have lost their contemporary bearing. Currently without ownership, they reflect the neglect and disenfranchisement of the community and visually reveal an absence of pride. The Odd Fellows Cemetery Reclamation Initiative is a community-oriented engagement program that seeks to restore community memory and pride by engaging participants in a process of restoration and design of a memorial landscape.

Concepts for a master plan to vision the redevelopment of the cemeteries into a heritage park were generated through community discussion at four public workshops between 2011 and 2012. The award-winning master plan proposed a program that included the demarcation of the sacred grounds, a sequence of public spaces for gathering, rest, and storytelling, accessible memorial walkways, sustainable landscapes that include rain gardens and a continuous dry creek bed, and a system for locating known burials to define the fabric of the cemetery. Ongoing academic research and community engagement activities have taken strides to bring this community vision to fruition.

Fred & Rosalee Oakley Award / The Association for Gravestone Studies 2016. Religious Art and Architecture Merit Award for Religious Architecture, unbuilt work / Faith & Forum Magazine and the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture 2012. AIA Award of Merit / AIA East Tennessee Design Awards 2012.



A PUBLIC REALM

1. MLK Plaza (open parcel on Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave)
2. Caretaker's Plaza (open parcel on Bethel Ave)
3. "Kyle Street Corridor" (collection of spaces on Kyle Street between Kenner and Bethel)
4. Obelisk Plaza and Memorial Wall (location for list of names)
5. Kenner Street Plaza (at intersection of Kenner and S Kyle)
6. Bethel Avenue Seniors Plaza (Eastport entry adjacent to New Salem Baptist Church)
7. "Cemetery Wall" (demarcating all perimeter edges)

B MEMORIAL WALK & SECONDARY PASSAGES

1. Accessible pedestrian path links Eastport entry near senior housing to "Shade Garden" in Dr. Walter Hardy Memorial Park
2. Dry Creek Bed and Rain Gardens help direct path of water through the cemeteries
3. Additional routes crossing cemetery areas linking north and south neighborhoods

C CEMETERY LOCATION GRID & "EBENEZER STONES"

1. Memorial Wall helps visitors locate where persons are buried
2. "Ebenezer Stones" reference Biblical stone of healing and restoration; grid marking location parcels in the cemeteries; stone landscape elements serving as art-in-the-park

2012 MASTER PLAN: AREAS OF FOCUS FOR CEMETERY DESIGN

The master plan offers a comprehensive strategy that integrates the various needs of the community and physical landscape.

Opportunities to strengthen the identity of the **public realm** include the incorporation of a series of primary gathering spaces along the main north-south vehicular artery (S Kyle St) and the demarcation of the entire cemetery perimeter.

The inclusion of a linear sequence of **dry creek beds** and **rain gardens** as preventative strategies against future erosion is paralleled by a continuous accessible **memorial walk**, connecting residents of the new senior housing on the south-east of the cemetery to the public park in the north-west. The opportunity for the seniors to engage the landscape and park also promotes the building of social networking systems.

The proposed **cemetery location grid** and **memorial wall** will help visitors identify and locate persons buried in the cemeteries, supporting individual contemporary mourning and public visitation.

ILLUMINATION OF ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY: CONSTELLATION OF A COMMUNITY'S HISTORY



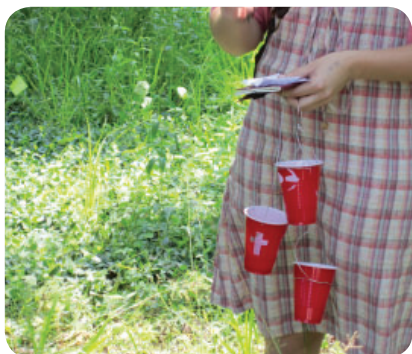
The Illumination of Odd Fellows Cemetery was a performance of lights that served to introduce the program and its objectives to the community. Staged by community and student volunteers during the day, the clean-up and laying out of 1000 luminary bags were a curiosity for passers-by. As dusk approached, the lights began to modulate the space, bringing focus to the limits of the burial grounds and the individuals there interred. By nightfall, we were struck by the new landscape. The dilapidated ground had completely disappeared and in its stead was a new constellation of a community's history.

The Illumination served to demonstrate how simple interventions and activities can profoundly affect the identity of public space.

The first Illumination of Odd Fellows Cemetery introduced the Knoxville Reanimation Coalition to the community and celebrated our coming together. Participation by students in ARCH 372 joint studio. 2009. Illumination of the Community Passage celebrated the opening of the first segment of built pathways and the 500 volunteers who had contributed to the effort. Community event supported by Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero, included spiritual singer and community testimonies. 2013. The Emancipation Tribute honored all persons buried in the cemetery who were alive during the time of slavery. This event was celebrated in conjunction with the Eighth of August Jubilee, sponsored by Beck Cultural Exchange Center. Field study to locate stones performed by local high school students participating in ProjectGRAD (inner city, predominant minority); staging for the event performed by community and university student volunteers; reading of names performed by local community leaders. 2016.



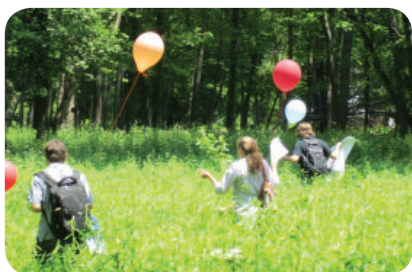
CULTURAL AND SITE-SPECIFIC ACTION: THE NONCE RITUAL



Site-specific ceremonies and constructed memorial activities give participants the opportunity to engage with the cemetery both as individuals and as members of a larger collective.

As part of an academic study focusing on place and memory, students were asked to design new “rituals” that could support community celebration and reflection. The objective of the assignments was to consider the potential to develop cognitive and emotional relationships with the landscape through action. The rituals were enacted in the cemetery where community members could observe and sometimes participate in the contemporary devotion.

Designed activities explored by students in special topics seminar, Spaces of Memory, 2011-15, 2017. Studies have informed community engagement activities, especially with youth and senior participants.





PLANTING CEREMONY: MEMORY CELEBRATION

As part of our mission to support contemporary commemoration in Odd Fellows Cemetery, university students joined members of the Tate/Kemp family to participate in a planting ceremony designed to honor their Great-Aunt Mildred Tate who is buried in the cemetery but whose burial location is not known. The ceremony combined two motives - one functional (leveling a sunken grave) and one memorial-based (using axiomatic symbolism), bringing together the profane and the sacred to heighten our understanding of the site.

The opportunity with the ceremonial planting is that blooming flowers will have a long term seasonal presence in the cemetery, serving as a temporal cenotaph for visiting family.

Ceremony design grew from research published in "Surrogate Stones: The Development of Nonce Ritual in Odd Fellows Cemetery" in Works Archive, proceedings of the Third Annual Architecture, Culture and Spirituality Symposium. 2011. Participation by local family and students in advanced level Diploma Thematic Studio. 2013.

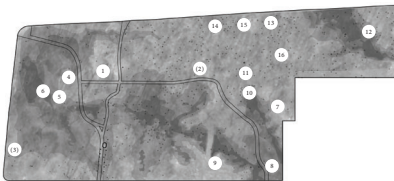


CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL: VETERANS MEMORIAM



CIVIL WAR VETERANS HONORED
IN ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY AND POTTERS FIELD

ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY
(COLLECTION OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES)



The *Civil War Veterans Memoriam* demonstrates architecture's capacity to serve as an agent promoting community activism. The small scale interventions work in the realm (expanded field) of social justice enacted in open public space.

The purpose of the memoriam is to highlight and bring attention to the standing headstones of African-American Civil War veterans in the cemetery. The original headstones stand as a visible reminder of the pride and hope of brave men, but many are worn and the information they bear is often illegible. The memoria restate and clarify the text. They also provide a permanent sleeve to hold the American flag used to celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the war (observed spring 2015) and for future Veterans Day remembrances. The memoria specifically supports the community's desire to promote contemporary commemoration and acknowledge the unique culture exhibited in the cemetery.

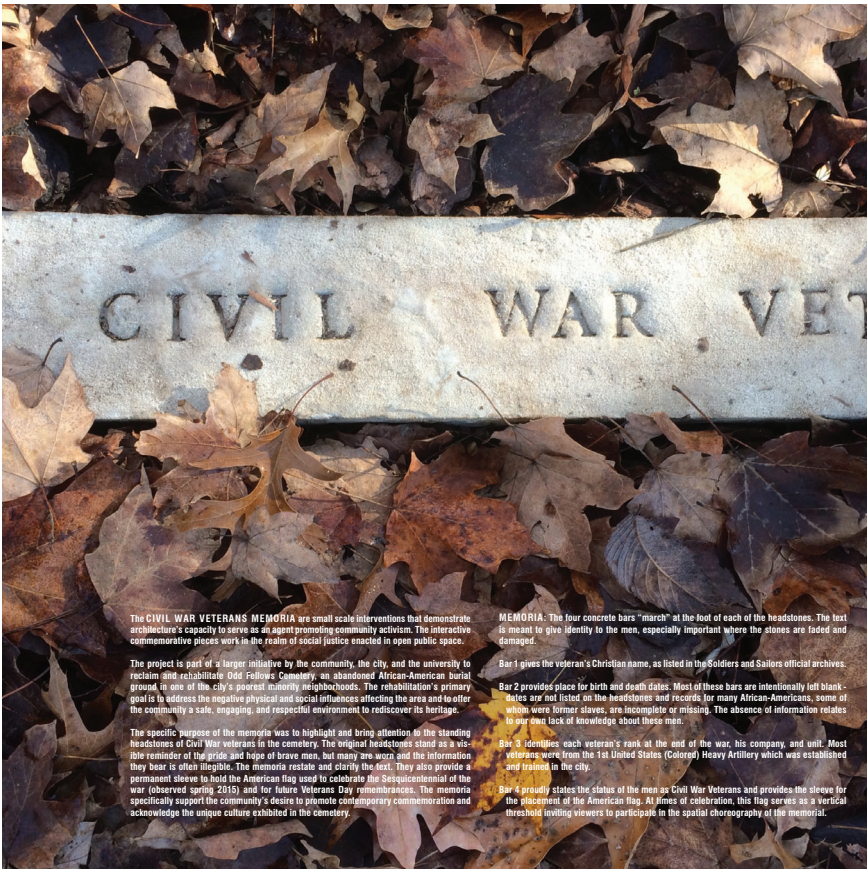
Design, fabrication, and installation of the memoriam was conducted as a service-learning component of an advanced level Diploma Thematic Studio; KRC participated in design reviews and selection; student volunteers assisted with installation; community event attended by over 500 visitors.

Published in Shaping New Knowledges, Architecture in an Expanded Field: From Interiors to Landscapes, Proceedings of the ACSA Annual Meeting, University of Washington. 2016



CIVIL WAR VETERANS MEMORIA

Contemporary markers designed and fabricated to honor African American Civil War Veterans during the City's Sesquicentennial Celebration
- Odd Fellows Cemetery



The CIVIL WAR VETERANS MEMORIA are small scale interventions that demonstrate architecture's capacity to serve as an agent promoting community activism. The interactive commemorative pieces work in the realm of social justice enacted in open public space.

The project is part of a larger initiative by the community, the city, and the university to reclaim and rehabilitate Odd Fellows Cemetery, an abandoned African-American burial ground in one of the city's poorest minority neighborhoods. The rehabilitation's primary goal is to address the negative physical and social influences affecting the area and to offer the community a safe, engaging, and respectful environment to rediscover its heritage.

The specific purpose of the memoria was to highlight and bring attention to the standing headstones of Civil War veterans in the cemetery. The original headstones stand as a visible reminder of the pride and hope of brave men, but many are worn and the information they bear is often illegible. The memoria restated and clarified the text. They also provide a permanent sleeve to hold the American flag used to celebrate the Sesquicentennial of the war (observed spring 2015) and for future Veterans Day remembrances. The memoria specifically support the community's desire to promote contemporary commemoration and acknowledge the unique culture exhibited in the cemetery.

MEMORIA. The four concrete bars "march" at the foot of each of the headstones. The text is meant to give identity to the men, especially important where the stones are faded and damaged.

Bar 1 gives the veteran's Christian name, as listed in the Soldiers and Sailors official archives.

Bar 2 provides place for birth and death dates. Most of these bars are intentionally left blank. Dates are not listed on the headstones and records for many African-Americans, some of whom were former slaves, are incomplete or missing. The absence of information relates to our own lack of knowledge about these men.

Bar 3 identifies each veteran's rank at the end of the war, his company, and unit. Most veterans were from the 1st United States (Colored) Heavy Artillery which was established and trained in the city.

Bar 4 proudly states the status of the men as Civil War Veterans and provides the sleeve for the placement of the American flag. At times of celebration, this flag serves as a vertical threshold inviting viewers to participate in the spatial choreography of the memoria.



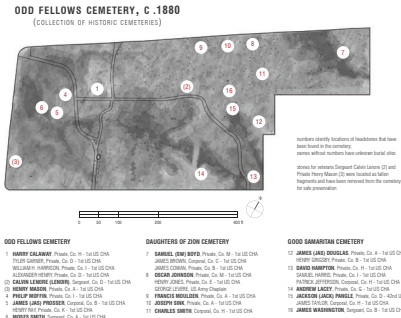
SESQUICENTENNIAL EVENT: The Civil War headstones, with the memoria, were visited during the Sesquicentennial Event in early spring 2015. Docents dressed as 1st United States Colored Heavy Artillery soldiers explained the role of the unit in the war. American flags were placed at each veteran's headstone, held by Bar 4 of the memoria, which identified the person as a veteran of the war.

DESIGN: The work was the product of twelve architecture students and was conducted as an introductory study in a studio course that focused on architectural ritual and engagement. Teams of students proposed designs which were reviewed by faculty, peers, and community members. The favored design was refined and fabricated for each of the fourteen veterans whose headstones currently stand in the cemetery.

The design is composed of four concrete bars with inscribed text that gives identity. The tops of the bars were coated with powdered glass to reinforce one of the goals of the reclamation - to take something that is worn and neglected and reveal its true beauty. The glass references the discarded bottles found during the cemetery. The transformed nature of the powdered glass reflects sunlight and brings strong attention to the markers.

The bars are placed to measure a human step and are meant to encourage visitors to walk toward the historic headstones. Some visitors stand at the foot of the memorial and view all the pieces in composition. Others feel invited to march between the bars, to approach the headstone and kneel down at the final bar to pay their respects. Note that the memoria does not mark the position of the veteran's body underground, which has usually on the opposite side of the headstone. The memoria, located on the left-side of the headstone, is for the visitor and symbolizes his or her current participation in contemporary commemoration.

FABRICATION: The assignment specified the use of concrete as a material because of its versatility and because of how it complements materials already in use in the cemetery. Production efforts needed to be simple and easily replicated by unskilled volunteers. (Markers may be replicated in the future for veterans who fought in other wars.) Students used reclaimed wood for the form-work and laser-cut chipboard for the lettering. The wet concrete was coated with sand-blasting glass and a simple brass grommet was used for the sleeve. All materials can be purchased at local hardware stores and can be assembled with simple tools.



INSTALLATION: The memoria were installed by the studio design students and also by other volunteers from the college and community. Many of these volunteers had participated in previous research or service activities for Odd Fellows Cemetery; for others, this was their first introduction to the rehabilitation and reclamation project.



RECOGNITION BY THE COMMUNITY: One of the primary objectives of the Memoria Project was to bring attention to the headstones of the Civil War veterans. On the day following our initial installation, we found red carnations placed on several of the memoria. This was testament that the work had been recognized by the community and that they, in turn, were offering their respects.



DEDICATION CEREMONY: After the initial installation (and prior to the Sesquicentennial Event for which the memoria were designed), the class held a dedication ceremony. We were joined by several members of the community who have been active in the rehabilitation efforts.

The dedication was conducted as a scripted, closed ceremony in which each attendee played a part. Community members served as primary narrators for specified dialog; students acted to "punctuate" each script role by marking the bars with a pastel chalk line, tacitly acknowledging their own dedication.



CEMETERY WALL: DEMARCATON STUDIES

Design-build studies engage students with the community and promote the development of civic pride. When focused on issues of environmental justice, they give a new voice to advocacy and instill responsibility in the greater community.

A materials exploration course at the university asked students to develop designs for the cemetery wall, an integral component of the master plan concerned with the public realm. Students reviewed conceptual proposals and criteria with the design team and members of the community and constructed two prototype walls in the adjacent Dr. Walter Hardy Memorial Park. These walls served as the focus for the program's fourth community meeting where students presented the constructs to the public and explained how the designs fulfilled objectives relating to constructibility, durability, and opportunities for individual and community engagement.

Design, fabrication, and installation of the prototypes by students in special topics seminar, Methods and Tactics of Materials and Construction. 2012. Students also led the community discussion at the fourth public workshop, allowing them to gain experience in community design and hearing feedback on diverse perspectives.



MEMORY WORKS_ ACADEMIC VENUE: CARDINAL POINTS



Cardinal Points serves as a commentary on contemporary perception and physiological responses to historical places of memory. The installation was conceptualized as a spatial satire investigated through interpretive material processes focused on reproduction and authenticity. Motivated by the forgotten landscape of an abandoned local cemetery, the installation translates the formal, repetitive structure of the burial grounds as a spiritual typology that runs the risk of fading and ultimately being discarded. Comprised of nine repetitive white-on-white reproduced screen-prints and a single shrine artifact, the primary goal of the installation was to create, through a crafted simile, an authentic experience that is comparable to the original but distinctive for its new contemporary place location.

The notion of mechanical reproduction first came about as a reference to the perceptual condition of the headstones themselves which, lining rows of the cemetery ground, already display the characterization of repetitive copies. Through repetition, burial stones lose their individual identity and contribute to society's inability to connect on a personal level. The reproductive processes practiced through the development of the installation similarly relate, transforming lives into patterns of letters and numbers through physical and digital acts of material transcription (rubbing, digitizing, processing, screen-printing, framing, hanging, observing, reflecting). Using white ink on white paper, the effect was not just to transform the original image of the headstone, but to virtually erase it, bringing it closer to the essence of the actual perceived condition of cemetery engagement. The objective was to consider whether, with the erasure of the substantive object, it would be possible to actually heighten the aura, the ghostly apparition or the soul of the material.

Exhibited at the Art + Architecture Building at the University of Tennessee. 2013. Presented as "Cardinal Points: A Crafting of Memory in Installation Design" at the Architecture, Culture and Spirituality Symposium. 2017.



MEMORY WORKS_ ON-SITE ENGAGEMENT: CARDINAL POINTS



Cardinal Points (on-site) exhibition is a sister installation to an exhibit with the same name that was designed for the Art + Architecture Building in 2013. The original exhibit investigated issues of perceptual erasure and experience authenticity with a focus on the material culture of Odd Fellows Cemetery and the interpretive processes of headstone rubbing and screen printing. This second exhibition suggests another form of rediscovery by working and displaying rubbed "facsimiles" on-site in order to raise awareness and celebrate the material culture generally overlooked in the community's peripheral experience.

Cardinal Points (on-site) was collaborative project with Project GRAD volunteers. During the service hours, the inner-city high school students investigated the cemetery landscape and identified fallen stones of interest. (There are over 400 fallen or fragmented stones in the 6-acre burial ground.) They performed two transcription tasks – a traditional rubbing with Pellon fabric and charcoal and rubbing via an aluminum foil encasement.



Design based on nonce ritual in Spaces of Memory special topics seminar. 2017. Engagement activity with Project GRAD, an inner-city college preparatory program. Stone rubbings maintained on site for six months, visible from the main length of the Community Passage. 2017.



CEMETERY SURVEY: CEMETERY DATA MAPPING



The lack of information regarding commemoration was a targeted concern for many residents who participated in the pre-design workshops. There are currently no comprehensive databases or plot maps that describe the burial patterns. As part of our effort to claim at least what remains, we initiated a cemetery survey activity that has been performed by community volunteers and students. The work they do gives us valuable information about the physical composition of the cemeteries and, when the data is complete and made public, it will support the community in contemporary mourning.

The Cemetery Survey offers on-going opportunities for community groups and students to contribute to the project with on-site research. The research began as simple field studies with pencil, paper, and measuring tools. With involvement from the university's Department of Anthropology and the Anthropology Graduate Student Association, it has now evolved into a process of digitally collecting and georeferencing data to develop an interactive survey map of the current material culture.

Research skills introduced to community youth through the Girl Scouts, the YWCA After-School Program, and Emerald Youth Just Lead Program; at the university, this initiative has become a recurring service component of several Chancellors and University Honors courses.





ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS: COMMUNITY PASSAGE

Community Passage is a design proposal that addresses issues of accessibility and landscape stabilization in the cemetery. Over the first two summers of the project, small teams of faculty and students worked on site to research, survey, and stake out potential routes that allow internal passage through the cemetery. Our research was based on both measurable data and empirical observation. Field notes focused on haptic experiences, sound qualities, temperatures, and potential axial alignments with featured monuments. Student researchers and volunteers were also involved in the construction of earthen berms (approximately 2500 linear feet) which now serves as a temporary walkway and long-term base for a future hardscape memorial walk. The berm is a permanent change to the landscape that allows safe and immediate access to the cemetery.

Incoming freshman students participating in the university's Center for Leadership and Service Ignite Serves program are introduced to the cemetery and community through the Community Passage project. Program volunteers represent approximately 3% of the entire incoming class each year. Through other events such as the Martin Luther, Jr. Day of Service and multiple student groups that volunteer through the year, it is estimated that approximately 5% of the entire undergraduate population at the university have gained exposure to the community and culture through service-oriented actions. 2013-present.

