

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND CEMETERIES

EVALUATING CEMETERIES FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Overview

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. This also includes cemeteries. This packet focuses on the information required for evaluating cemeteries for potential listing in the National Register. Individual properties are assessed through a separate Information Packet.

To be listed in the National Register, a cemetery must have:

- **Significance:** Cemeteries must be significant for their history, design, association with a significant person, and/or for their ability to yield data.
- **Integrity:** Cemeteries must retain the important physical features from the time when they were important. If they have experienced too many changes and have lost their important historic features will not be eligible for listing. Integrity includes seven aspects: location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- **50 years of age or older**, generally.

Cemeteries must also meet Criterion Consideration D, which states that "a cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events." Meeting Criterion Consideration D makes listing cemeteries more difficult than other types of properties. However, by returning the following information, National Register staff at the Tennessee Historical Commission can help advise applicants on the potential eligibility of their property and the likelihood it will meet Criterion Consideration D.

Requirements for Evaluating Historic District Eligibility

The following information should be gathered and sent to National Register staff at the Tennessee Historical Commission.

Required

- Date the cemetery was established, and the date of the oldest known grave.
- Date of the newest grave in the cemetery.
- Information on whether the cemetery is active or closed.
- Information on any associated cultural/ethnic/religious groups (examples include White/European American; Black/African American; Jewish; Catholic; Baptist; Family Cemetery; Community Cemetery, etc.)
- Brief description of cemetery layout. For example, are the cemeteries arranged in rows, grouped by family plots, etc. Indicate if the cemetery includes sections segregated by race/ethnicity or religion. A map can be used in place of a written description
- Brief Description of typical materials and grave marker types. For example, are there limestone slabs, metal crosses, granite markers, hand-carved limestone markers, field stone, etc.
- Estimate the following:
 - Total number of graves
 - Number of graves predating 1800
 - Number of 19th Century Graves (1800-1899)
 - Number of 20th Century Graves (post-1899) that are more than fifty years old
 - Number of graves less than fifty years old
 - Number of unmarked graves
- Information on any buildings on the property, with the type of building and date of construction indicated. Note any major alterations. For example: Maintenance Shed, 1990; Cemetery Office, 1970. Mausoleum, 1940 and expanded with addition in 2000.
- A history of the cemetery explaining why it is important and should be listed in the National Register.
- Current photographs showing all areas of the property. Include general views of the cemetery, including history and non-historic sections, and representative individual gravestone. Do not include photographs of every stone but you can provide links to websites with more photographs, such as findagrave.com.
- Map or sketch plan showing the cemetery's location and layout. Indicate which sections are historic and which are non-historic. If the cemetery was historically segregated by race/ethnicity or religion, indicate which sections are associated with each cultural group. Indicate any important landscape features such as historic fence lines or gates.

Submission

Submission via postal mail is acceptable, but digital submission is preferred. There are two submittal options. If the materials are collectively less than twenty megabytes, the information may be sent via e-mail to.

The second option is to upload all the materials to a SharePoint folder. Please contact National Register staff for submittal instructions and link. There is no file size limit for this option.

Upon receipt, staff will evaluate whether the cemetery meets National Register criteria. They may request additional information or a site visit. A written eligibility opinion will be provided. Cemeteries that are found to be eligible are encouraged to proceed to the nomination phase.