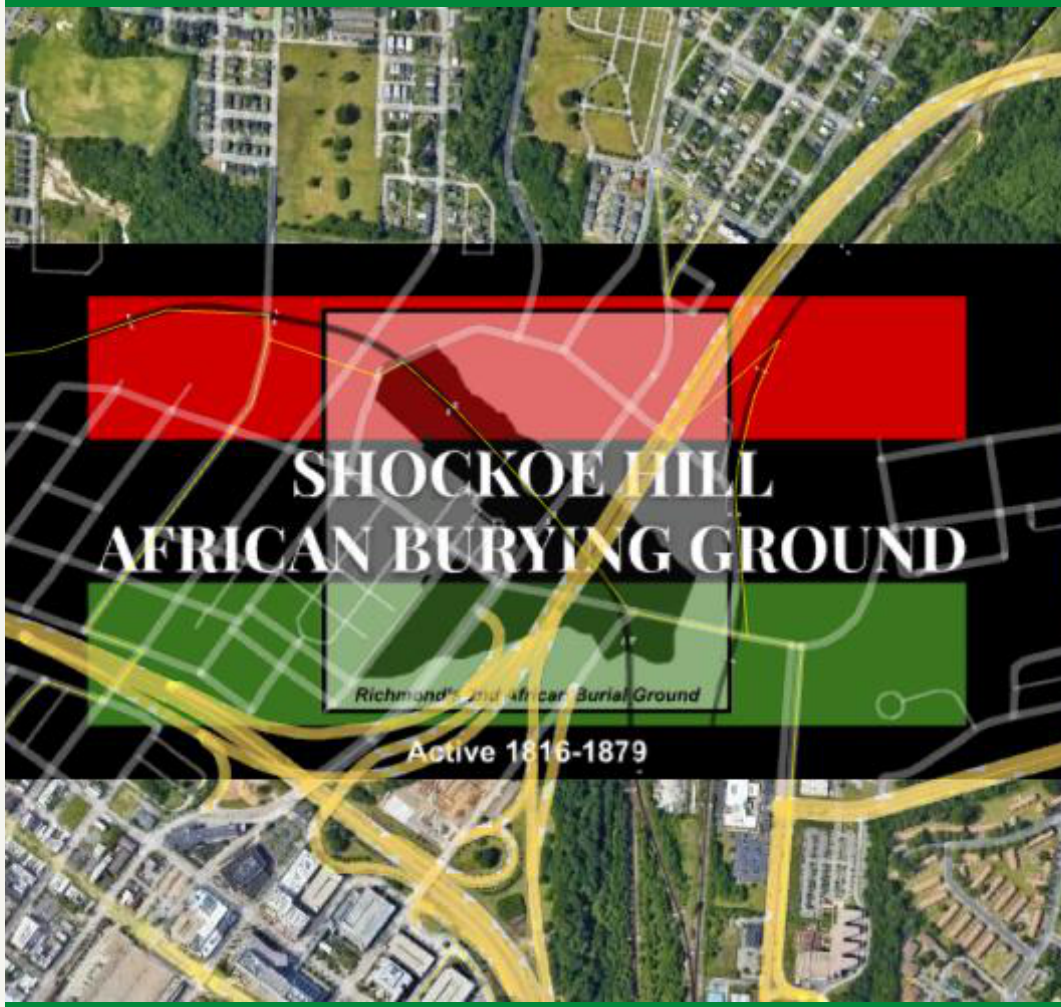
The Friends of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground extend acknowledgements and thanks for the contributions of the following:

- Ellen Chapman
- Kimberly Chen
- Chip Colwell
- Ana F. Edwards
- L. Daniel Mouer
- Ellen F. Robertson
- Levar M. Stoney
- Steve Thompson
- City of Richmond
- First African Baptist Church, Richmond
- Friends of Shockhoe Hill Cemetery
- Henrico County Public Schools, D. S. Freeman High School Center for Leadership - Students
- Historic Richmond
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Preservation Virginia
- Richmond Public Schools
- Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project
- University of Virginia Provost's Office
- The Valentine
- Virginia Commonwealth University, History Department
- Virginia Department of Historic Resources
- Virginia Union University

Contact

Lenora McQueen, shockoehillafricanbg@gmail.com



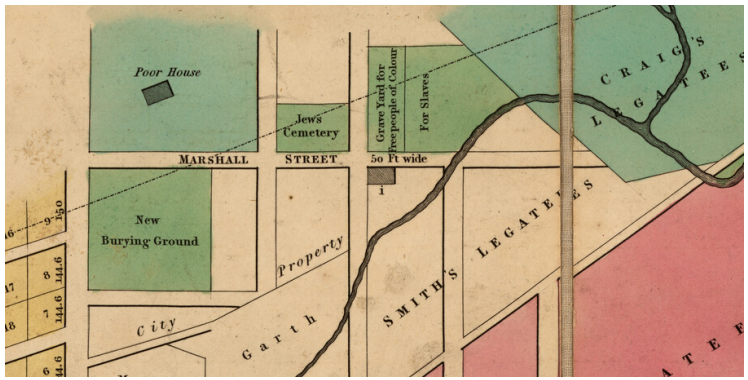
Historical Highway Marker Unveiling Ceremony

June 12, 2022, 2:30 PM

History of the site

The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground was established in 1816 by the city of Richmond, Virginia, for the internment of free people of color and the enslaved. The burying ground originally encompassed two acres at what is now the corner of Fifth and Hospital Streets (today's 1305 N. Fifth Street). It opened upon the closure of the "Burial Ground for Negroes" along Shockoe Creek (Richmond's first African Burial Ground), following protests by free people of color for a more respectful burying place.

The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground was active from 1816 through 1879, and over those decades it was continually expanded by the city, reaching up to 31 acres. With a conservative estimate of at least 22,000 burials of people of African descent, it may be the largest burial ground for free people of color and the enslaved in the United States.



The burying ground closed in 1879 due to overcrowded conditions, and afterward it was made to disappear from the visible landscape. That process was complete with the construction of an automobile service station on the grounds after 1960. Current threats to the burial ground include the DC2RVA passenger rail project and the proposed widening of Interstate 64.

In March 2022, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources recognized the burying ground as a contributing resource in the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District and added it to the Virginia Landmarks Register. The state historical highway marker unveiled today was sponsored by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Ceremony Program:

MUSICAL INTRODUCTION
Swansboro Elementary School Choir

WELCOME
Ana F. Edwards, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

OPENING PRAYER AND REMARKS
Rev. Dr. Rodney Waller, Pastor of First African Baptist Church

REMARKS
The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson, 6th District Councilwoman, Richmond City Council

The Honorable Levar M. Stoney, Mayor of the City of Richmond

Statement from Senator Mark Warner, by his representative

HISTORY OF THE SITE
Ryan K. Smith, History Department, Virginia Commonwealth University

KITTY CARY'S RESTING PLACE
Lenora McQueen, Descendant

REMARKS
Dr. Colita Nichols Fairfax, Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work, Norfolk State University and Virginia Board of Historic Resources

UNVEILING OF THE MARKER
Lenora McQueen

READING OF THE MARKER
Livi Booker, student, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School via Richmond Public Schools

REMARKS AND CLOSING PRAYER
Dr. Cleve V. Tinsley, Executive Director of the Center for African-American History and Culture, Virginia Union University