

Promised Land

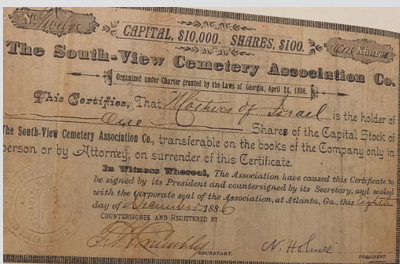
*A Tour of Atlanta's historically
African-American Cemeteries and the
graves of Civil Rights Pioneers*

Atlanta's Civil Rights history is diverse, bringing together people from all walks of life who forged ahead, using their unique skills, in their own ways, to seek equality for all Black Americans



South-View Cemetery

South-View Cemetery is the oldest non-eleemosnary (non-charitable) African-American cemetery in the United States. In February 1886, nine leaders of the African American community; Jacob McKinley, George W. Graham, Charles H. Morgan, Albert Watts, John Render, John H. Towns, William M. Allen, and Annis Turner (the first sexton) met in the basement of the Friendship Baptist Church and started a burial ground, "for the interment of people who may die in the city of Atlanta...and do all the things necessary in laying out, beautifying, and improving the same to make it a fit resting place for the dead."



Dignified burial had been a challenge for the Black community. Originally buried at the segregated city cemetery (today Oakland Cemetery) the original "slave square" was relocated to the potter's field with the city's indigent burials to make more space for the burial of white citizens. When Oakland was full, Westview Cemetery opened and the city placed a provision on their charter that a segregated portion called Rest Haven, named after abolitionist Bishop Gilbert Haven, would be set aside for African American burials. Rest Haven was not maintained from its inception. The poor conditions at the time of Sterling Watts' burial, father of South-View founder Albert Watts, in 1885, just a year after Westview cemetery was established prompted the decision to open South-View.

They purchased 25 acres of land on McDonough Road for \$3500. Partnering with local undertakers, notably David T. Howard (South-View's first president, #17), within a month there had already been a dozen burials. The cemetery grew quickly as stockholders invested in the new venture, and by 1921 had a downtown office located at 123 Auburn Avenue in the Atlanta Mutual Insurance Company Building. By 1954 the city had grown substantially and encompassed the cemetery, and operations were moved to a new administrative building (see photo, below from the 75th anniversary in 1961).

Shortly following the 75th anniversary of the cemetery, South-View would gain national attention when it was chosen as the resting place for slain civil right leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He would rest there for several years before his remains were moved to the newly established King Center. Today, South-View remains a key part of Atlanta's African-American community with 300-400 new burials annually, with more than 80,000 members of the African American community calling South-View their final resting place.



Lincoln Cemetery

Originally founded as Fairview Cemetery in 1925, Lincoln Cemetery became an important fixture of African- American community in northwest Atlanta. Fairview, like South-View began as an investment. One of the most significant early investors was Theodore "Tiger Flowers (#20). The first African-American middleweight champion, Flowers lived in a mansion off Simpson Road, not far from the cemetery. The mansion was replaced by Fire Station #16 in 1963, the first fire station in the city to be desegregated.

The area around the cemetery would boom in the mid-20th century with new neighborhoods, starting with nearby Collier Heights, established in the late 1940s. These neighborhoods sought to solve the problem of overcrowding and racially restrictive covenants that limited where African-American citizens could live in Atlanta. Collier Heights, in particular, was marketed to middle class families, with homes designed by Georgia's first African-American architect J.W. Robinson (#12). This neighborhood would become central to the Civil Rights movement and where many of Lincoln's permanent residents, including Ralph David Abernathy (#8) lived and worked. The popularity of Collier Heights led to shifts in the demographics of the surrounding area, and the establishment of African-American businesses, hospitals, and other institutions.



Part of Lincoln Cemetery was formerly Lincoln Country Club, the first African-American country club in the United States, founded in 1927. Lincoln Country Club was a 9-hole course that also featured dinner, dancing, a private bar, as well as a small casino. Alfred "Tup" Holmes (#23) learned to golf at Lincoln, but was frustrated as an increasingly successful golfer unable to play on any of Atlanta's public courses. In 1955 he successfully won a legal battle to desegregate Atlanta's golf facilities. His son, Dr. Hamilton E. Holmes (#11) would go on to desegregate the University of Georgia and Emory Medical School.

Lincoln, in many ways, embodies modern cemetery trends of the mid-20th century featuring a community mausoleum, columbarium, and memorial park-style burials with flat markers. Though South-View had much history in the community, many African Americans embraced Lincoln as their final resting place, due to its central location in the neighborhoods where they made their homes.



Ballot Box

John Wesley Dobbs

1882-1961

South-View Cemetery

1



Ruby Parks Blackburn

1901-1982

Lincoln Cemetery

2

A.T. Walden

1885-1965

Lincoln Cemetery

3



Clarence Bacote

1906-1989

Lincoln Cemetery

4

Grace Townes Hamilton

1907-1992

South-View Cemetery

5



Dreamers

John Lewis
1940-2020

Southview Cemetery

6



Hosea Williams

1926-2000

Lincoln Cemetery

7

Ralph David Abernathy

1926-1990

Lincoln Cemetery

8



C.T. Vivian

1924-2020

Westview Cemetery

9

William Holmes Borders

1905-1993

South-View Cemetery

10



Educators

Hamilton E. Holmes
1941-1995
Lincoln Cemetery

11



12

J.W. Robinson
1921-2008
Lincoln Cemetery

Ruby Smith Robinson
1947-1965
South-View Cemetery

13

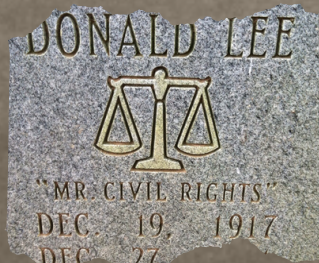


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Benjamin E. Mays
1894-1984
Morehouse College
Originally, Westview Cemetery

Donald Lee Hollowell
1917-2004
Westview Cemetery

15



Industrialists

Alonzo Herndon
1858-1927

South-View Cemetery

16



17

David T. Howard
1849-1935

South-View Cemetery

Herman Russell
1930-2014

South-View Cemetery

18

HERMAN JEROME RUSSELL
DEC. 23, 1930
NOV. 15, 2014



19

Jesse Hill Jr.
1927-2012

South-View Cemetery

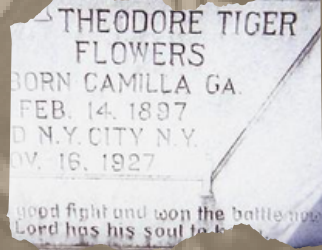


Major League

Theodore
"Tiger" Flowers
1895-1927

20

Lincoln Cemetery



21

Henry "Hank" Aaron
1934-2021
South-View Cemetery

Alfred Fountain "Tup"
Holmes
1917-1967
Lincoln Cemetery

22



Reformers

Joseph E. Boone
1922-2006
Lincoln Cemetery

23



Dorothy Lee Bolden
1923-2005
Lincoln Cemetery

24

James Orange
1943-2008
Greenwood Cemetery

25



Martin Luther King Sr.,
(1899-1984) & Alberta
King (1904-1974)
South-View Cemetery

26



George Alexander Towns
1870-1960
South-View Cemetery

27



Soul Food

Evelyn Frazier

1912-2007

28

South-View Cemetery



Robert Paschal

1908-1997

29

Westview Cemetery



James Paschal

1920-2008

30

Westview Cemetery

