Introduction

At the corner of 12th and Dixie, east of Tech’s football stadium, used to lie an old, abandoned cemetery called Burntstand. In 1966, President Everett Derryberry decided to move this cemetery. This study used archival research to determine the methods Tech used to remove all the bodies from Burntstand Cemetery and relocate them to other cemeteries. The study highlights the people and institutions involved in this process as well as the difficulties that arose during the planning and execution of it. Finally, we discuss the implications of this research for those planning projects of this type and scale in the future.

Findings

- The land containing the cemetery used to be located along a major land route between Kingston and Carthage completed in 1901. An inn was located at the site, and when it burned, the area became known as “Old Burnt Stand Place.”
- TN Tech purchased the deed from Jere Whitson in 1930. Over the course of time, the deed was misplaced, and a replacement had to be provided by Whitson’s family on his behalf for Tech to move Burntstand Cemetery.
- TTU President Everett Derryberry initiated the relocation project in February 1966, placing his trusted administrator Leonard Crawford in charge. It was completed in May 1969.
- Jordan Antle, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Real Estate Division, in Nashville sent Crawford stacks of maps and drawings from his own relocation project, in which he moved 96 cemeteries located within the J. Percy Priest Reservoir before it was flooded. Tech’s Engineering Department used these documents as a prototype for their mapping of Burntstand Cemetery.
- The archivist, Tennessee Tech’s website, and Special Collections. These included personal letters, memos, invoices, legal documents, maps, and photographs from the time of the relocation.

Methods

- The bulk of our data was retrieved from primary sources that were stored in the TTU Archives and Special Collections. These included personal letters, memos, invoices, legal documents, maps, and photographs from the time of the relocation.
- The archivist, Tennessee Tech’s website, and the sign placed at the original location of Burntstand Cemetery also provided a few useful details.
- We took away key details from each primary document to create a timeline of the events that took place during the relocation project and to discover the names of the key people involved. We were also able to gather information on the costs of the project and determine where each body was relocated.
- We traveled to each site of relocation and took several photographs of each. We then compared these photographs to those from the time of the relocation (if applicable) to find the matching graves.

Discussion

- Though the main purpose of this research was to highlight a little-known part of Tech’s past, the processes Tech used could serve as a blueprint for other organizations that are looking into a cemetery relocation project of this size and scale.
- The authors are engineering and psychology majors, which allowed us to place more emphasis on the technical and interpersonal aspects of this process.

Limitations

This event took place in the 1960s in the State of Tennessee, therefore those that would like to use it as a prototype for their own relocation projects should be aware that these processes may be outdated or may not apply in their state.

References

2. Burntstand Cemetery Collection, Box 1, Folder 2, 1966. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
9. Special Collections.

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