

Tech's Buried History: Burntstand Cemetery

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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.



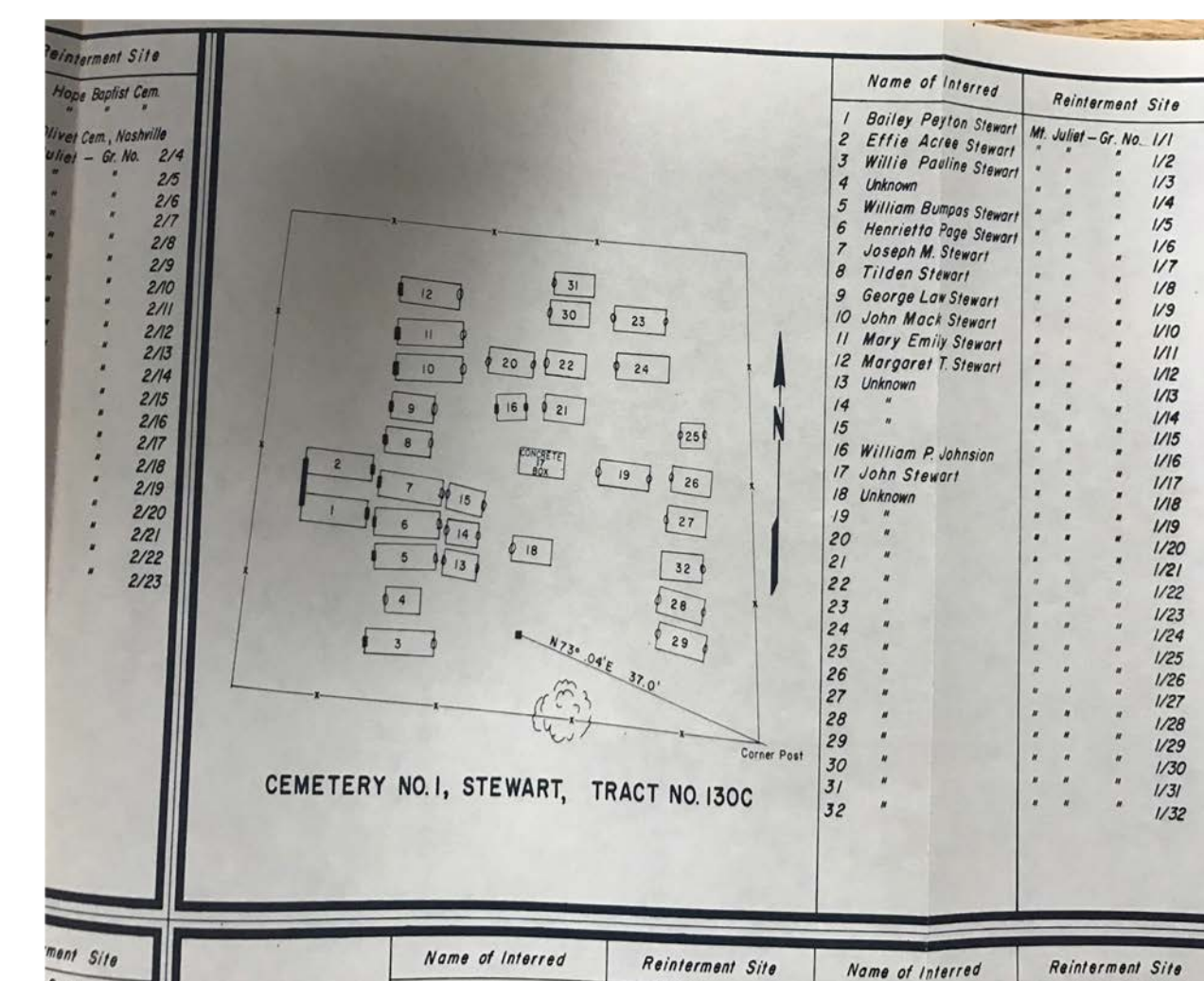
Original State of Burntstand Cemetery
(Burntstand Cemetery Collection, Box 2. 1967-69. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.)

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.

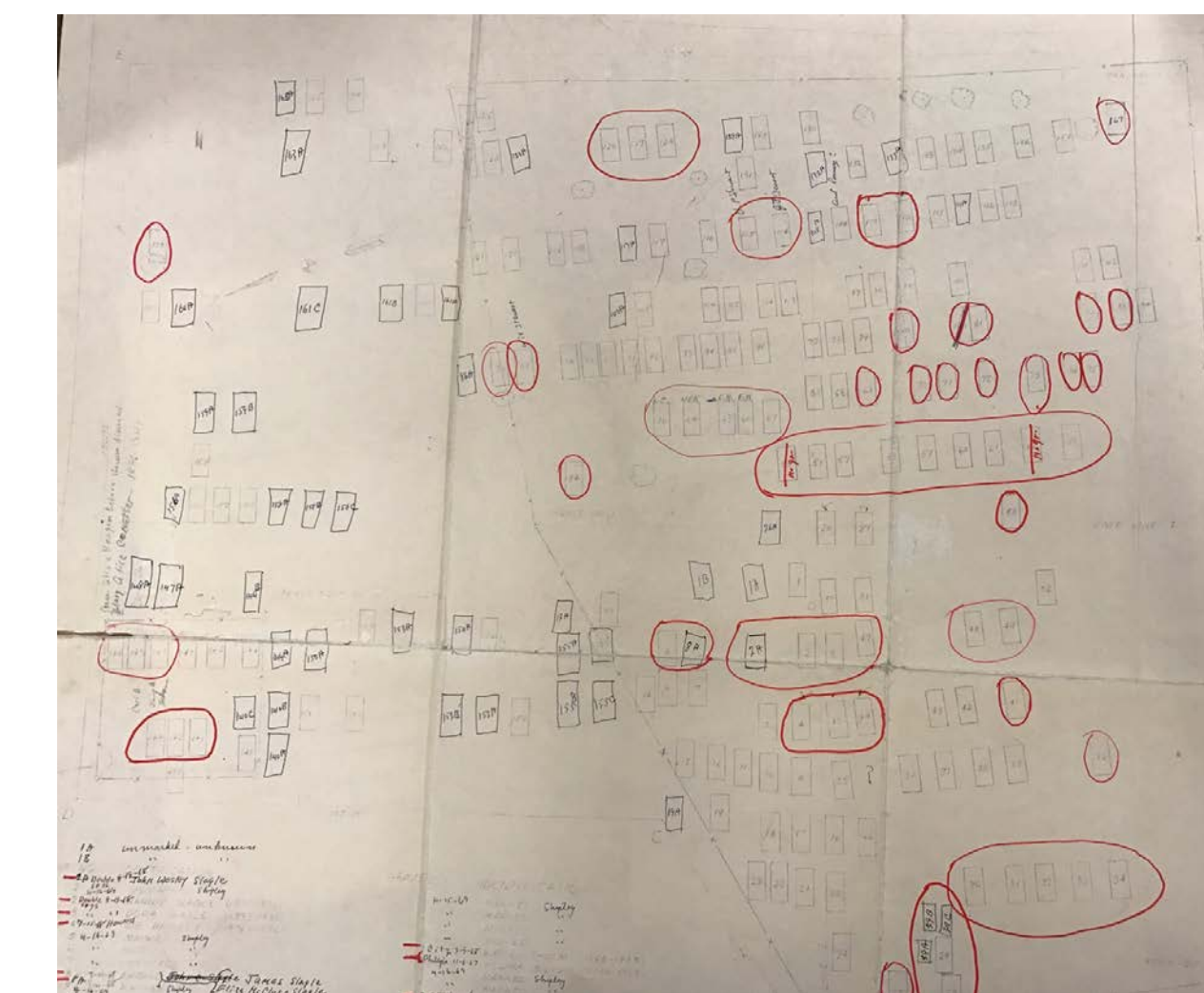
Findings

- The land containing the cemetery used to be located along a major land route between Kingston and Carthage completed in 1801. An inn was located at the site, and when it burned, the area became known as "Old Burnt Stand Place."¹⁰
- TN Tech purchased the deed from Jere Whitson in 1930.⁸ 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.⁹
- TTU President Everett Derryberry initiated the relocation project in February 1966, placing his trusted administrator Leonard Crawford in charge.⁶ It was completed in May 1969.⁵
- 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.²



Map from Antle's J. Percy Priest Relocation Project (Burntstand Cemetery Collection, Box 3, Folder 2. 1966. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.)

- Antle gave Crawford a series of steps for the relocation process, all of which Crawford followed:
 - Survey the burial grounds, make a map, and identify those buried if possible.
 - Contact next of kin for identified deceased, advertising in newspapers if necessary.
 - Purchase another site for relocation.
 - Secure permission to move the graves from the State Board of Health. (cont.)



Map of Burntstand Cemetery by Tennessee Tech Engineering Department (Burntstand Cemetery Collection, Box 1. 1966-69. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.)

- Have the Court condemn the property if someone objects to the relocation.⁶
- Crawford let the next of kin determine which funeral home would rebury their loved ones and the cemeteries in which they would be buried.⁶
- For the bodies that could not be identified, a plot was purchased at nearby Shipley Cemetery for their reburial, and TN Tech had to go to court to condemn the property in order to move these graves.⁶
- The final decree was made on February 8, 1969 by Judge Scott Camp of the Putnam County Chancery Court that Burntstand Cemetery was "unsuitable for use as a proper resting place for the dead."³
- TN Tech hired Hooper and Huddleston Funeral Home, Inc. to relocate all the unknown bodies to Shipley Cemetery. The cost of this process and the trust fund that was set up for the care of Shipley Cemetery amounted to \$31,200.⁷
- Burntstand Cemetery Numbers:
 - Original Estimate: 75-100 graves¹
 - Graves located: 166⁶
 - Monuments Identified by Engineering Department: 43⁶
 - Total Bodies Moved: 211⁵
 - 8 Sites of Relocation⁴
- Interesting fact: One family of 5 was reburied twice – once in the old part of Shipley Cemetery and again in the new part of Shipley Cemetery TN Tech purchased. The family requested that 50 spaces be reserved for descendants of their late relatives. This cost TN Tech an additional \$525.⁷



The "unknowns" in Shipley Cemetery

(Burntstand Cemetery Collection, Box 2. 1967-69. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.)



The "unknowns" in Shipley Cemetery today.

(Photo by authors)

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 to 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

- Antle, Jordan. Letter to Leonard Crawford. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 1. March 30, 1966. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 3, Folder 2. 1966. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Burntstand Cemetery Final Decree. Putnam County Chancery Court. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 1. February 8, 1969. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Cemetery File with List of Cemeteries and Prices of Graves. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 2. 1969. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Crawford, Leonard. Memorandum to President Everett Derryberry. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 2. May 5, 1969. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Crawford, Leonard. "Relocation of the Burntstand Cemetery" Draft. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 2. 1969. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Invoice from Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home, Inc. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 2. May 20, 1969. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- President's Papers*, RG 9, Box 268, Folder 10. 1938. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- Replacement Jere Whitson Deed. *Burntstand Cemetery Collection*, Box 1, Folder 2. August 25, 1967. Recovered from Tennessee Tech University Archives.
- "Walton Road - Old Burnt Stand" Road Sign. Located March 2017 on the campus of Tennessee Tech University.