

## ROBINSON FAMILY CEMETERY.

Location: Rockdale County near Union Grove.  
See page 144.

Recorded April 16, 1932.

Robinson, Luke, Rev.

In Memory  
of

Rev. Luke Robinson  
Was born June the  
22, 1781 ♀  
Died Feb. the 13  
1851.

Robinson, Luke, Rev.

Sept. 5, 1844 - April 25, 1893.  
Be ye also ready; for  
in such an hour as  
ye think not the  
Son of Man Cometh.

Four old uninscribed box tombs and several other  
unmarked graves.

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS

WAITS/WATES FAMILY SURNAME DEKALB COUNTY, GA.

RACE: BIA' BLACK

Mrs. Agnes WAITS      ROBINSON (a black cemetery)      broken head stone

Aline WAITS      birth - death 1930's ROBINSON ( a black cm.)

Andrew WAITS      Robinson ( a black cm.)

Mr. ARthur WEITS      Robinson ( a black cm.)

Benjamin WAITS      Birth -      child Robinson ( a black cm.)  
 Death -

Billie WATS      1950's Robinson ( a black cm.)

Crawford Waits      birth - death 1930's Robinson ( a black cm.)

Ella WAITS      birth - death 1930's Robinson ( a black cm.)

Flora Waits      birth - death - child- Robinson Cm. ( a black cm.)

Hattie Waits      "      " 1950's Robinson Cm.      "      "

Mrs. Hattie Waits      Mar. 5, 1958      "      "      "      "

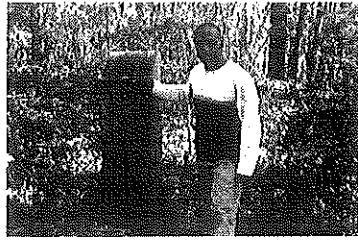
J.W. Waits      March 10 -?      "      "      "      "

William Waits      Birth      Death      1930's      '      "      "      "

WAITS/WATES FAMILY SURNAME      RACE: WHITE      DEKALB COUNTY, GA.

Mrs. L.E. WAITS      6-24-1869      WADE FAMILY CEMETERY  
 4-22-1928

subdivision. Flat Rock Cemetery is located near the intersection of Evans Mill and Lyons Roads in Lithonia. While the old road connected to the cemetery, today the cemetery is only accessible by walking up the hill. Waits has identified a number of families interred at Flat Rock who have celebrity descendants. He plans to contact these families to raise funds for the cemetery preservation. The Arabia Alliance is working with DeKalb County to purchase and protect this cemetery.



Johnny Waits stands by the grave of one of his ancestors who is buried at Flat Rock Cemetery.

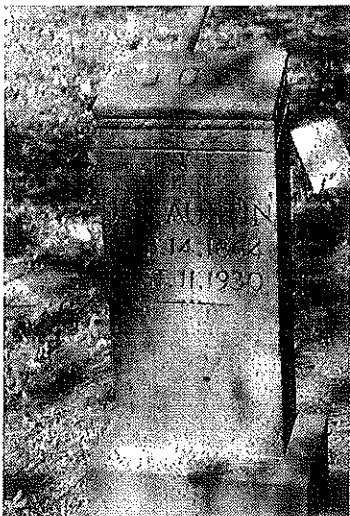
Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Both Lithonia One and Flat Rock Cemeteries are examples of a growing interest among African Americans to preserve the final resting places of their ancestors. Barbara Lester and Johnny Waits believe that their preservation efforts help to raise community awareness about Lithonia's African American past and provide important information to pass on to future generations.

## CARE AND NURTURING OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES

Christine Van Voorhies Neal, Archaeology Outreach Specialist  
Historic Preservation Division

Have you ever ridden along a highway, suddenly noticed a small group of tombstones on the weed-covered roadside, and wondered why it wasn't being taken care of? Or, did you grow up hearing stories about graves being "up on the hill" and now that a development is coming in, you question what will happen to them? Maybe you've gotten hooked on your family genealogy or the history of your community, and finding the location of your ancestors' graves is a top priority. What do you do?



The grave of Joe Austin is maintained by the Progressive Men's Club at the Wahoo Baptist Church and Cemetery in Gainesville.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

Many people have questions relating to old graveyards and recently a guidebook was published in Georgia to provide some of those answers. *Grave Intentions: A Comprehensive Guide to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*, by Christine Van Voorhies (presently Neal), was written to

answer the wide variety of questions most frequently asked about cemeteries. As the Archaeology Outreach Specialist at the Historic Preservation Division (HPD), I honed my expertise in cemetery preservation by researching and responding to questions from the public over the last five years. There are hundreds of historic cemeteries all across the state in need of restoration and protection with hundreds of people who are interested in some aspect of their care. To address these concerns, this book offers valuable advice on topics such as ownership and access to a cemetery, recording and commemorating graveyards, how to plan a clean-up or restoration project, repairing tombstones, ensuring protection from development or other impacts, funding for cemetery projects, and understanding the applicable Georgia laws.

*Grave Intentions* is an easy-to-read text for learning what to do and not to do with historic cemeteries. For example, chapter three suggests the general issues to be considered before any maintenance work begins, and then discusses when and how to proceed. Remember that throughout history, people have been buried in the manner their loved ones felt was meaningful, following family, cultural, and religious traditions of their time. The decorative items and plants placed on the grave—regardless of how those items might look today—were significant to them and should be respected today. In *Grave Intentions*, learn how to determine the difference between trash and grave decorations, and between weeds and purposeful plantings that should be left in place, in order to preserve this important part of the cemetery's history.



The gravestone of Willie F. Waits in Lithonia's Flat Rock Cemetery is hand-carved and made from concrete.

Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque

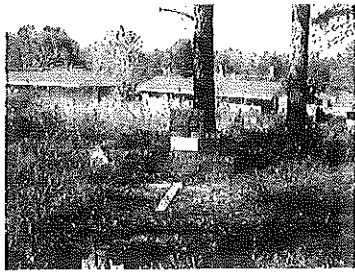
The book also has an extensive list of other good sources for expert advice, including publications, consultants, organizations, and websites. Additionally, the appendix of applicable Georgia laws is an essential reference when questions arise about access to cemeteries on private property, descendants' rights, and protection from development or vandalism. These laws are not well known, even among law enforcement officials and local government authorities, so having the text of the laws in hand to offer as information is a powerful tool when approaching the county or city about protecting a local graveyard.

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## RECLAIMING AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES IN LITHONIA

Lithonia's earliest European settlement began in 1840, when 100 people lived in a community called Cross Roads. During the next five years, the Georgia Railroad completed its line from Augusta to what later became Atlanta. By 1850, the population of Cross Roads increased to 250 residents, and in 1856 it was incorporated as Lithonia.

These early settlers were primarily farmers. Some, like Jacob Chupp, owned slaves and produced cotton until the 20<sup>th</sup>

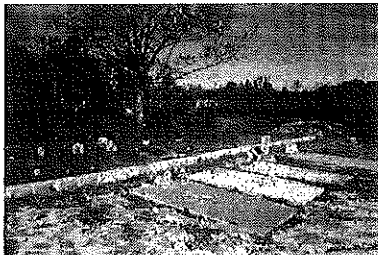


*This grave enclosure is made of red bricks with a cross on the headstone and grave. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

century. After the Civil War, Lithonia became a granite producer, and the first quarry opened in 1879. During the next ten years, skilled immigrants migrated to the area to work as stonecutters, and many African Americans left farms for jobs as laborers in the quarries. The Chupp family gradually sold parts of their land to the emerging quarries, and by 1929, the farm, and the final resting place of many African

Americans who were buried at the Lithonia One Cemetery, became the property of Davidson Mineral.

In 1971, when new owners were disposing of sections of the property that did not generate income, they deeded Lithonia One Cemetery to the Lithonia Civic League. This African American organization was founded to promote civic pride and to fight discrimination. Lucious Sanders, who died in 1993, was the community



*This family plot is surrounded by a concrete wall. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

leader of the Lithonia Civic League. Sanders served in World War II, and when he returned home, he started the first voter registration drive in DeKalb County. He fought for recreational facilities for the African American community in Lithonia, and was the first black member of the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Board.

Many African Americans lived in a community adjacent to the Lithonia One Cemetery known as Bruce Street. This community was established around 1895. Former slaves, farmers and quarry



*Some headstones are provided by African American funeral homes, such as Cox Brothers and Haugabrooks. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*



*Barbara Lester is the president of the Friends of Lithonia's African American Cemetery (FLAAC). While she is proud of FLAAC's community effort to clean the cemetery, she envisions a potential National Register nomination and a site in the Arabia Alliance heritage corridor. Photo by Jeanne Cyriaque*

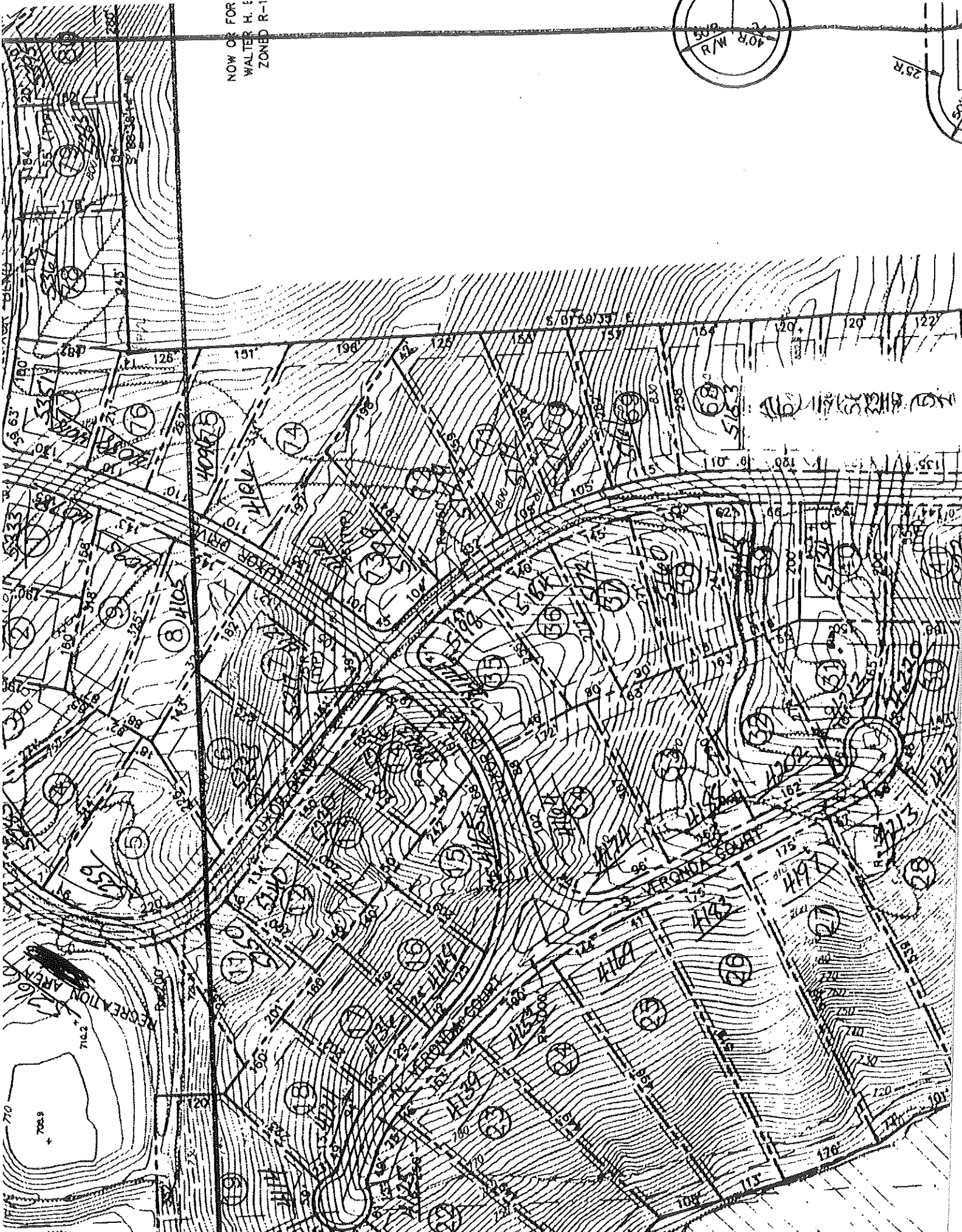
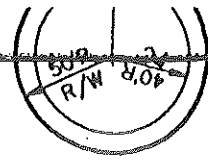
workers lived on Bruce Street. Union Baptist Church and the Yellow River School were Bruce Street community landmark buildings that faced the Lithonia One Cemetery. The first Yellow River School burned in 1935, and today only a granite shell remains of the school that replaced it in 1938. In the 1960s, an elementary school was built that is presently the DeKalb County Police Department Training Academy.

The Lithonia One Cemetery occupies 6.7 acres, and most of its boundaries, except for the southwest corner, lie in unincorporated DeKalb County. On the north border there is a community baseball field. The cemetery is accessible from Walker Road, where the police academy occupies the other side of the street. Walker Road is partially paved, and the remote sections are accessible from an unpaved, dirt driveway.

The Friends of Lithonia African American Cemetery (FLAAC) was formed to preserve the cemetery and develop a maintenance plan for its continued care. FLAAC cleared small trees, undergrowth and bushes in most of the cemetery. These volunteers, led by Barbara Lester, work diligently on weekends to remove debris and fallen leaves. Barbara Lester is a member of the Lithonia City Council. While FLAAC raised funds to clear the cemetery, they nurtured partnerships to assist them. FLAAC received assistance from the Georgia State University Heritage Preservation program. Students from the Historical American Landscapes and Gardens class provided a research report that FLAAC will use for future preservation initiatives. The research report contains information that can support a National Register nomination. FLAAC is working closely with the Arabia Alliance to ensure that Lithonia One Cemetery is a viable site in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area.

Kelly Jordan, chair of the Arabia Alliance, and Barbara Lester also visited the Flat Rock Cemetery in Lithonia. Johnny Waits and other descendants are in the early stages of preserving this African American cemetery, nestled on a hill adjacent to a new

NOW OR FOR  
WALTER H. E  
ZONED R-1







TYPICAL (

NOW OR FORMERLY  
WALTER H. BUNZ  
ZONED R-100

NOW OR FORMERLY  
KENNETH STRINGER  
ZONED R-100

NOW OR FORMERLY  
DEKALB COUNTY  
ZONED R-100

EXISTING  
LAKE

