

# Grave cleaning workshop unites public, past



Volunteers learn proper cemetery preservation techniques during workshop at Magnolia Cemetery. Ben Twingley/btwingley@pnj.com

Hana Frenette, pnj.com 10:14 p.m. CDT September 18, 2015



(Photo: Hana Frenette/hfrenette@pnj.com)

Dozens of historic cemeteries are scattered throughout Pensacola — some with grave markers dating back to the early 1800s, and some with no grave marker at all.

The Florida Public Archeology Network, UWF, and John the Baptist Church partnered together for a grant project titled "By These Hands; Vernacular Marker's of Pensacola's Historic African American Cemeteries" that offered a variety of informative lectures and workshops to the public this weekend, in hopes of preserving Pensacola's history for the generations to come.

On Friday morning, Sarah Miller and the FPAN held a cemetery marker cleaning workshop inside the shaded Magnolia cemetery on the corner of A and Brainerd streets.



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[\(http://www.pnj.com/story/news/2015/09/18/court-employee-says-mold-caused-chronic-illness/72410074/\)](http://www.pnj.com/story/news/2015/09/18/court-employee-says-mold-caused-chronic-illness/72410074/)

Miller stressed the importance of not using bleach, flour or shaving cream as a way to clean the markers.

"You need to use things that are cleaner than the gravestone to clean it, like soft brushes — don't use metal of any kind," Miller said.

The FPAN provided small spray bottles of the National Park service endorsed biological solution D2 for the 20 workshop members to clean the gravestones with, along with soft bristled brushes and toothbrushes.

"My grandfather is buried here so I have a really vested interest in the cemetery," Linda Wright, steward for the Magnolia and A.M.E. Zion Cemetery across the street, said.



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(<http://www.pnj.com/story/news/2015/09/17/pine-forest-student-kind-act/32557893/>)

Wright was raised in the surrounding community and has helped to clean the gravestones in the two cemeteries many times over the years, prior to the project.

After the cleaning, at 1 p.m., participants moved locations to watch historic masonry specialists work on the vernacular-style monument for Spencer Bibb at Montgomery-John the Baptist Cemetery on the corner of 8th Avenue and Cross Street.

Only a handful of people were present for the conservation effort in the vastly empty seeming cemetery lot.

Theodore Morrison Jr. stood next to the marble grave stone for Mariah McQueen near the edge of the cemetery. A large oak tree was growing from the center of the crib style grave.

Morrison was looking at his great grandmothers grave for the first time, feeling the weathered marble and soil she was buried beneath.



PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL

Pensacola man helps dress freaks on 'American Horror'

(<http://www.pnj.com/story/entertainment/2015/09/15/pensacola-man-helps-dress-freaks-american-horror-story/72335360/>)

"I had no knowledge of my great grandmother, except that she was listed as my father's mother," Morrison said.

Morrison drove down from Nashville on Thursday after receiving a call from Mike Thomin at the FPAN about his great grandmother's grave.

"I really wanted to be here for this, and to touch, see and feel the presence of my ancestors," Morrison said.

Thomin was working on a research project as a graduate student in the Public Histories Program at UWF that involved the Montgomery-John the Baptist Cemetery and Mariah McQueen grave site. After using a combination of old archives and Ancestry.com, Thomin discovered Morrison was McQueen's living grandson and reached out to him.

"Ultimately I was able to positively identify who she was because of the sons that were listed on her grave marker," Thomin said. "It was hard to figure out who they were because only their initials were listed, but I was able to find a census record from 1900 in North Carolina, where Mrs. McQueen was living, that listed the sons full names."

Morrison had been searching for more information about his family and great grandmother for quite some time, but hit a roadblock until Thomin bridged the gap with his research project, offering information on her sons, the places she lived, and her employment.

Finding out more information has become exciting and addicting, Morrison said.

"I'm coming back. I'm going to bring my wife and kids back here," Morrison said. "It's really amazing just to see the thought put into this burial site for my great grandmother."

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