



# Mount Peace Cemetery Added to the National Civil Rights Network

Mount Peace Cemetery, a historic burial ground, has recently been added to the National Civil Rights Network, a significant step in recognizing its historical and cultural importance. Established in 1900 in Lawnside, New Jersey, Mount Peace Cemetery is not just a burial ground, but a testament to the African American community's enduring struggle for equality and justice. The cemetery is the final resting place for numerous prominent African American leaders, educators, and activists who played pivotal roles in the Civil Rights Movement and the broader fight for racial equality.

The inclusion of Mount Peace Cemetery in the National Civil Rights Network underscores its role as a site of historical memory and reflection. Mount Peace Cemetery was founded by African Americans during the height of Jim Crow segregation when many cemeteries were exclusively whites-only.

This designation aims to honor the contributions of those interred there and to educate future generations about the sacrifices and achievements of African Americans in the quest for civil rights. The cemetery's addition to the network also ensures that it will receive the necessary preservation efforts to maintain its integrity and continue to serve as a place of learning and inspiration. This recognition is part of a broader effort to acknowledge and preserve sites that have been instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement. By highlighting these locations, the National Civil Rights Network seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of American history, one that includes the diverse narratives and experiences of all its people. Mount Peace Cemetery's inclusion is a reminder of the power of memory and the importance of honoring those who paved the way for a more just and equitable society.

Preserving African American cemeteries is an essential endeavor that connects us to the rich and often underrepresented heritage of African American communities, says Mount Peace Historian and Preservationist Dolly Marshall. These cemeteries serve as tangible links to the past, offering insights into the lives, struggles, and achievements of African Americans throughout history. Unfortunately, many of these burial grounds have faced disrepair, vandalism, and encroachment, largely due to systemic racism and economic disparities. By preserving and maintaining these sites, we honor the memory of those who came before us and ensure that future generations can learn from and appreciate their legacies.” The preservation process involves several crucial steps, beginning with thorough documentation and research. Identifying and recording the locations, historical significance, and condition of these cemeteries is paramount. This often requires collaboration with local historians, community members, and descendants of those interred. Additionally, employing ground-penetrating radar and other archaeological methods can help locate unmarked graves and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the site's layout. Once documented, efforts can shift towards physical preservation, including cleaning and repairing headstones, clearing overgrown vegetation, and installing protective measures to prevent further damage.

Community involvement and education are also vital components of preserving African American cemeteries. Engaging local communities in preservation efforts fosters a sense of ownership and pride in their heritage. Educational programs and public awareness campaigns, such as the African American Civil Rights Network can highlight the historical and cultural importance of these sites, encouraging broader support and funding for their maintenance. Furthermore, partnerships with historical societies, preservation organizations, and governmental bodies can provide the necessary resources and expertise to ensure these cemeteries are preserved for posterity. By working together, we can protect these sacred spaces and celebrate the enduring contributions of African Americans to our shared history.

