

FATHER DICKSON CEMETERY

845 S. Sappington Road
Crestwood, Missouri 63126

Walking Tour and Map

This cemetery stands as tribute to Father Moses Dickson's belief: "As individuals, and as a people, each of us can make a difference."

Learn about a wealth of black history through the lives of veterans from many American wars, members of the Masonic order, families lost in the 1915 River Des Peres flood, and victims of a 1916 hanging.

Come

Walk

Learn

Friends of Father Dickson Cemetery
P.O. Box 220612
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www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/stlouis/dickson/fdc.htm

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Monuments of St. Louis

Sappington Garden Shop

Sts. Clare & Francis Ecumenical Catholic Communion

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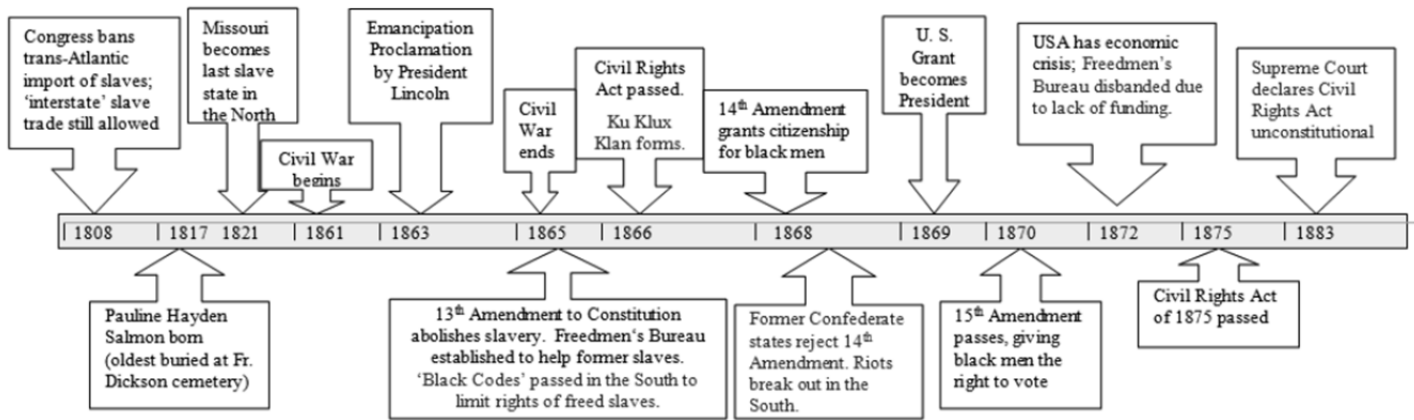
**The students of Julie Burchett (Webster Groves
HS & 2013 Peabody Teacher of the Year)**



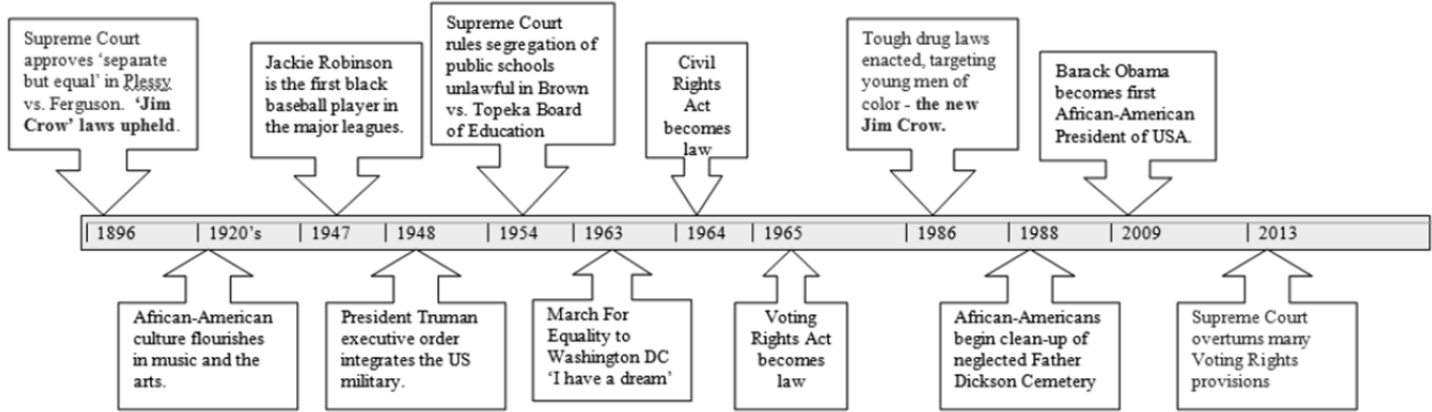
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Please watch your step!



AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORIC TIMELINE



Why Black History Matters

The cemetery was established in 1903 as a final resting place for African Americans due to the segregation of cemeteries. The oldest individual buried here was born in 1817; the last individual was interred in the early 1990's. The cemetery represents 167 years of African-American history. Much can be learned by hearing the life stories this tour will highlight. Either slavery, the aftermath of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, segregation, or the 1960's Civil Rights movement, touched each of these lives. Yet, whatever injustice each generation was subjected to, they found a way to endure, persevere and overcome. Stories of hard work, dedication to country, love of family, business success, leadership, community involvement and advancement of education, have all contributed to enriching not only the African-American heritage but also our greater American experience.

1

Eagle Scout projects at Grant's Trail

For his Eagle Scout project, Dustin Shawn Damron directed the development of the plantings along Grant's Trail in June 2010.

For his Eagle Scout project, Matthew Quinlivan developed the wood chip trail to the first six graves, and installed the signs and their posts. He designed the trail, assembled materials and volunteers, and directed the work in 2013.

2

The Ward Family

Simple concrete blocks, with etched metal plates tarred in place, mark the gravesites of what appear to be multi-generational members of the Ward family. Dates and names have long been eroded, making further research into this family's history nearly impossible. Nonetheless, we know this: these lovingly placed, homemade tombstones are a testament to this family's love and concern for each other.

3

Sophronia Burns Pickett 1903-1958

On Tuesday, July 8, 1903, a beautiful baby girl was born to Will and Mary Butler Burns, in Mississippi. They named their precious newborn daughter, "Sophronia", a name of Greek origin, meaning "wise" or "prudent". If she did possess such character traits as her name implies, they would serve her well as she was born at a time of many turn-of-the-century changes in her home state of Mississippi and in the nation.

Sophronia grew up a witness to hard, back-breaking work, two horrific world wars, a nation financially flat on its face and flaming racial discrimination. But her youth and hopefulness prevailed and she bravely made her way to St. Louis, Missouri, and married Willie Pickett making a life together.

In the spring of 1958, Sophronia suffered a serious stroke. She never recovered from her devastating stroke, and on Tuesday, July 8, 1958, the evening of her 55th birthday, Sophronia passed away.

4

Wattie S. Brown 1891-1958

Albert and Hattie (Stevens) Brown probably had no memories of slavery themselves, but they were undoubtedly the children of slaves. Both were born in Virginia but, by the time their son, Wattie, was born in 1891, they were living in Tennessee. Reconstruction and its aftermath meant a hard life for blacks, and an uncertain one. Like all parents, Albert and Hattie must have dreamed of a better life for their son.

Wattie appears to have managed that. At some point before his mid-20s, he moved to East St. Louis, IL. He certainly had some education at least, since we know he could read and write. We also know that some of the worst racial riots in U.S. history occurred in East St. Louis, in May and July 1917. White union workers on strike were enraged when the company replaced them with black workers. They beat and shot people to death, lynched them, – men, women and

children - burned down homes, shooting the residents as they tried to flee.

Wattie worked as a butcher for Swift & Co. Meatpacking when, in 1918, he was drafted for military service in the First World War. Sometime after the war, perhaps because of experiences in the riots, he moved to St. Louis, where he continued to work as a butcher in a meatpacking company. By the 1940 census, however, he owned a dry-cleaning business. Pretty prosperous, it seems, and no doubt it took determination and hard work to get there. He married Rose Brown somewhere between 1952 and 1955.

Married joy, sadly, was short lived. Wattie died of leukemia in 1958.

5

McKinley Amos 1914-1958

McKinley was born in West Point, Mississippi, the son of Anniebelle and Morris Amos. He served with the Army during WWII. At the time of his death at age 43, McKinley was listed as a railroad Pullman porter. Pullman Porters, in that moment of history, offered stable, respected employment for black men and a chance for advancement.

In fact, although we cannot say for certain, McKinley may have joined the porter's union. The Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) became the first all-black union led by A. Philip Randolph. The union became a vehicle for activism in African-American communities, providing a symbol of black advancement. It was a source of inspiration and a training ground for future civil rights leaders.

6

James "Papa" Holloway 1885-1956

James "Papa" Holloway was born June 4, 1885 (listed as June 6, 1892 on death certificate) in Scooba, Mississippi. He was a farmer who owned his own land. He could read and write. Mr. Holloway married Mary Holloway and together they had five

children: Edgar, Mayflower, Henderson, James and Geneva. By 1930 the family was living in St. Louis where Mr. Holloway worked as an ice and coal vendor. He died in St. Louis September 8, 1956 at the age of 64 (according to death certificate).

7

Charles Lee Watson 1897-1956

This unique tombstone not only includes an actual portrait of the deceased, but an engraving of the Masonic symbol. Charles had been a fireman (a skilled trade) in a brickyard and a member of the Masons. You might have heard about Freemasons as an organization of men who meet in Lodges and have secret handshakes. They have about 6 million members in the U.S. Freemasonry started in Europe in the 1600's among craftsmen who labored with stone. They developed a code of ethics that included ritual, symbol and morality. Initially masons were segregated by race and sex. Sometime around 1775, Prince Hall, a free black man founded the African Lodge. He was an abolitionist who lobbied for education for black children and was active in the "Back to Africa" movement. Masonry became less segregated as society became less segregated; while they are no longer racially segregated, they still do not welcome women.



8

Ralph Crews, Jr. 1920 - 1940

Ralph Crews was 19 years old when he passed away. Ralph had three older sisters two of whom were twins, Minnie and Mildred. His oldest sister, Yvonne Finney, lays at rest next to him.

Apparently, sports played a central role in Ralph's life, although African-Americans did not have many opportunities for recreational sports in the 1930's. All parks in St. Louis were segregated and only one main park, Tandy Park, was open to African Americans. At the time of his death, Ralph lived on LaSalle, nearly 4 miles from this park.

Ralph attended Vashon high school, established in 1927. When the first African-American high school in St. Louis, Sumner, began to suffer from overcrowding, black community leaders embarked on a mission to convince white politicians to build a new school building that would be equal to the amenities provided to whites at the time. Vashon High School was the result of their efforts.

As captain of the Vashon high-school football team, Ralph surely exemplified many of the character traits that leaders needed: diligence, perseverance, commitment, and confidence even when so many believed the African-American community was inferior.

Ralph's story was cut short in a tragic train accident. However, his personal greatest accomplishment- captain of the Vashon high-school football team is engraved on his tombstone and is a testament to a time when he endured, yet overcame.

9

Charles Cutts 1923 - 1951

Charles Cutts (also named as Charles Cotton) was born August 24, 1923 in Kirkwood, Missouri. In 1949 Mr. Cutts enlisted in the army and was assigned to Company A, 376th Engineer Construction Battalion, achieving the rank of Private First Class. The 24th Infantry Regiment was organized in 1869. All of the enlisted soldiers were black. In 1948, the U.S. armed forces desegregated by Executive Order, however the 24th Infantry

continued to be predominately African American. The 24th deployed to Korea shortly after the Korean War broke out in June, 1950. On May 10, 1951, Private Cutts died a “non-hostile death” aboard the naval hospital ship USS HAVEN (AH-12). He was awarded the Korean Service Medal, The United Nations Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Presidential Unit Citation and the Republic of Korea War Service Medal. Charles Cutts left behind a wife, Mamie Myles Cutts and a young daughter named Violet.

10

Jasper Pettit 1844 – 1931

According to most of the census records, Jasper Pettit (also spelled Pettitt, Petit) was born February 29, 1844 in Wayne County, Missouri. It appears that he was born a slave: his parents William and Annie Pettit were owned by Dr. John L Pettit, a prominent physician and slave owner in Wayne County. An 1850 slave role shows Dr. Pettit owned 18 slaves, 6 of them children between the ages of 2 and 8. Jasper Pettit was quite possibly one of those children.

Two months before the end of the Civil War, on February 21, 1865 at age 18 (according to military records), Jasper Pettit enlisted in Company E of the 3rd Regiment, United States Colored Heavy Artillery as a substitute volunteer enlistment for another man who had been drafted. He was discharged February 20, 1866 in Memphis, Tennessee.

The 1880 census lists a wife named Ada and 4 children, 3 daughters and a son, ranging in age from 1 to 11. He worked as a wagon driver and laborer at a blast furnace. He died on January 5, 1931 of pneumonia.



11

James Boyd 1872 - 1938

James Boyd was born in South Carolina, to Milton and Sina Boyd. The child of freed slaves, he knew the hardships of reconstruction, especially in southern states. As the U.S. entered the Spanish-American War, he enlisted and served as a cook in the 25th Infantry. The regiment saw harsh combat both in Cuba and the Philippine Islands. Boyd was badly wounded, and discharged honorably, in the Islands, on 10/30/1901. Blind in one eye, with limited sight in the other, he made his way back to the States and to the St. Louis area. Boyd married Vera Irwin, and worked as a "houseman and gardener" in Webster Groves, MO. There were stays at the U.S. National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (Danville, IL) in 1930-1934, when Vera may have been confined to a sanatorium. He died from cardiopulmonary disease at the St. Louis County Hospital.

12

Pauline Hayden Salmon 1817-1926



Although the importation of slaves was banned by Congress in 1808, it was not well enforced until after 1820. As a result, between 1801-1820 the number of slaves brought to America was the highest it had ever been. After the ban, children of slaves kept the institution of slavery self-sustaining. Perhaps Pauline was one of these children. Records show Pauline's birthplace as the West Indies, although the names of her mother and father were never recorded. One of the inherent tragedies of slavery was the fact that masses of black

people remain nameless in the historical record. At some time in her

109 years, Pauline was brought into the US. Eventually, St. Louis became her home, where she married and had at least two children. She is the oldest individual on record interred at Fr. Dickson Cemetery.

13

John Briggs 1880 – 1962

The African-American community knew and respected John so well that they considered him a real Kirkwood pioneer; they called him “Mister John Briggs”. He married Mary and they had John F. and Mary. He later married Mamie, fathering Adolphus, and also raised her daughter, Francis. John’s families got along well together, and he was a great provider for them via several businesses he owned. The talented Mr. Briggs was excavator, gardener, and chef. John dug many Kirkwood area basements with his horses and a slip (predated the bulldozer). He sent John F. to college; John F. later became a Tuskegee Airman pilot (the Red Tails) in World War II and had a long career in civil aeronautics. Old timers often stopped Adolphus to say “Your father was a wonderful man.”

14

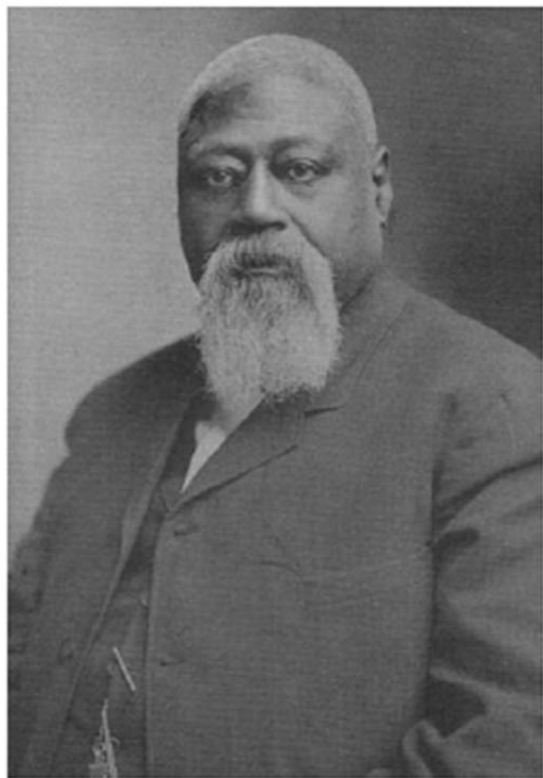
Thomas J Hill 1873-1975

Thomas served as the caretaker of the cemetery for many years until his death. He was of veteran of WWI and was discharged in 1918 at age 45. As caretaker, he dug many of the graves by hand and knew the location of each burial by memory. He lies at rest next to his wife, Ella.

15

James Milton Turner 1840-1915

Turner refused to accept the status of inferiority. In 25 years he rose from enslavement to freedom and statewide prominence. By age 31 he was appointed consul general to Liberia by President Grant. He was the first black Missourian at a U.S. diplomatic post. Born into slavery, he was purchased by his father and was sent to clandestine schools in St. Louis. (at the time, it was illegal to educate a black man) Later, he was admitted to Oberlin College Preparatory School. He was not able to complete his degree because his father died and he helped support his mother and sister. Turner served in the Union Army, participating in many skirmishes. After the war, he was appointed superintendent of schools where he established schools for freedmen in Missouri. He also aided African Americans migrating from the South that were passing through St. Louis.



16

Susan Paul Vashon 1838-1912

Susan was a distinguished teacher, school principal and community organizer of numerous groups for women and young people, but she is best remembered perhaps for her efforts during the Civil War, when she raised money and cared for wounded soldiers and black refugees. She married George B. Vashon and had seven children. After George's death she moved to St. Louis in 1882 with her surviving 4 children. Her children went on to hold respected positions in St. Louis. Vashon



High School was named in recognition of the Vashon's outstanding community achievements. Susan Paul Vashon is buried in Father Dickson Cemetery along with her son John B. Vashon.

John Boyer Vashon 1859-1924

John was the son of African-American abolitionist and educators, George Boyer Vashon and Susan Paul Vashon. In 1882, he came to St. Louis and took over as principal of Colored School Number Ten. Vashon spent the next 34 years working for the St. Louis public schools. He also helped organize a YMCA for African-Americans.

Madam C. J. Walker 1867-1919

The daughter of former slaves, Madam C.J. Walker, was born Sarah Breedlove in Louisiana. Her elder siblings were born slaves; Sarah was the first of her family to be born into freedom. She was orphaned at age 7. By 14, she married to escape the brutality of her brother-in-law. She had only one child, a daughter. After her husband died, she moved to St. Louis to join her four brothers, who had become barbers. There she developed a scalp condition which prompted her to explore

commercial and homemade products. She married Charles Joseph Walker, changed her name to Madam, and began marketing Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, which she said was revealed to her in a dream. For a year and a half, she and Charles sold products door-to-door in the South. She moved to Indianapolis and built a factory and school to train black saleswomen. These women became known as "Walker Agents" and built their ranks to 15,000.

Madam promoted and recognized educational advancements within her "Walker Agents". Her fame began when she donated a large amount of money to an African-American YMCA. Through her own achievement, she became the first female millionaire in the country. She moved to New York and continued her philanthropic and civil rights activism work there. Two years before her death, she held one of the first national meetings for business women in the country. She at the age of 51 and is buried in New York. Although a memorial to her is in Fr Dickson Cemetery. On her death, two-thirds of her fortune was donated to black charities. Her business continues to this day and can be found on the Web.

18

Eagle Scout Project

This bench and marker were developed and executed by Eagle Scout, Daniel Kelly, Troop 335 on September 7, 2011.

19

Father Moses Dickson 1824-1901

Moses Dickson was born a freeman and became an important African-American civil rights leader in the 19th century.

In late 1846, before the Civil war began, Moses Dickson organized a secret organization of black Americans for an armed struggle to end slavery in America, the Knights of Liberty, and a smaller sect, the Order of Twelve. There were at least 50,000 well armed men. As soon as these men were organized, Moses Dickson determined that a war was about to happen. Dickson turned the Knights of Liberty from open insurrection to underground action. During the Civil war, many of the Knights of Liberty fought with the union forces incurring many casualties. Dickson survived the war. He went on to become an ordained minister working with the legislature to found Lincoln University a Historic Black College/University (HCBU).



In 1872, he was appointed Elector-at-Large (a representative in the Electoral College) for the Grant presidency. He reestablished The International Order of Twelve: Knights and Daughters of Tabor. Later, he went on to become president of the Refugee Relief Board, helping relocate 16,000 former slaves. After campaigning against crimes against blacks, he died in St. Louis. His funeral was reported

to be one of the most elaborate St. Louis had ever seen. His memorial was erected by the International Order of Twelve in August of 1915.

Mary Elizabeth Dickson- Mother Dickson 1818-1891

Mary Elizabeth Butcher was born in St. Genevieve, Missouri to white, Roman Catholic parents. In 1846, she was left a widow in Galena, Illinois. She joined the A.M. E. (African Methodist Episcopal) church where she met and married Moses Dickson. They were married for 42 years and had a daughter, Mamie Augusta. She was held in great esteem and honored by the Order of the Twelve, and lies next to her husband under the monument dedicated to them both.

20

Mary Bell and Mary Owens

Fallen over and overgrown, this unusual gravestone was, for a long time, thought to be just another decaying tree branch. Several years ago it was discovered to be a grave marker, however no dates appeared anywhere on it and its original location remains a mystery. Exhaustive research was done in search of these individuals and their stories. A fascinating story was uncovered about not just two individuals, but five.



We know for certain there are four Mary Bells buried in Fr. Dickson cemetery:

One Mary Bell, born 1852 in Kentucky, may have been the slave whose freedom, records indicate, was petitioned by someone (possibly her parents?), at age two. A petition was made again in 1862 when Mary was 9 years of age. (Her "value" at that time was

listed at \$1000, about \$25,000 today, although most certainly Mary's value was priceless to her parents.) She was eventually freed by law and made her way to St. Louis where she worked as a cook until her death by a coal lamp explosion at age 64.

The next two Mary Bells, 1888-1930 and 1856-1935, respectively, have very little historical record on which to base a life story.

The last Mary Bell, 1896-1953, lived her entire adult life (36 years) in the State Hospital, records do not indicate why. Her husband, Tobe, appears to have remained devoted to her until death parted them.

Mary Owens, 1881-1954, must have had some connection to one of the Mary Bells, however, records were not sufficient to prove this. (Perhaps she was a volunteer at the State Hospital and befriended Mary Bell.) Although we don't know the circumstances, it is apparent that someone wanted to memorialize these two women together by this unique stone.

21

Henry Lewis 1886-1965

Henry "Steamboat" Lewis was the son of slaves, born July 1886. At age 29, he worked at the Ed Wilkinson Barber Shop in downtown St Louis. He worked there for 32 years, eventually taking over the shop in 1945. He was registered in the military for WWI but did not serve. At the time, he was the sole support of his mother and father. After 1952, he went into semi-retirement but continued to cut hair at the Anheuser-Busch brewery. During this time, he was also an entrepreneur, serving as a combination bartender and valet at high society events. Wealthy individuals sought his services as an organizer of fishing expeditions. He died in 1965 at age 79, survived by wife, Sarah. The origin of his nickname "Steamboat" could not be determined.

22

Copen & Bowman Families August 21, 1915

James Copen (46 yrs)	David Bowman (52 yrs)
Emma Copen (43 yrs)	Adeline Bowman (42 yrs)
Mary Copen (13 yrs)	Ruth Bowman (8 yrs)
Elizabeth Copen (9 yrs)	John Bowman (3 yrs)
Ethel Copen (7 yrs)	Bessie Westmoreland (3 yrs)

In August, 1915, a major storm developed over Texas and swept towards the Central States. In a matter of 18 hours, 7.4 inches of rain deluged St. Louis. Area rivers, especially the pre-channelized River Des Peres, rose very quickly, killing 11.

In 1915, most African-Americans lived in the crowded, low-lying central corridor known as Mill Creek Valley and the fringes of the downtown area. Although their population tripled from 1900 to 1940, where blacks could live did not. White homeowners often used restrictive deed covenants to hedge in the black community. Thus, of the 11 victims taken by the 1915 River Des Peres flood, 10 of them were black: the entire Copen Family, mother, father, three young daughters; and the entire Bowman Family, mother, father, a son and daughter and a granddaughter.

While the exact location of their gravesites is not known (no markers exist), the general location has been recorded.

23

Baby Heaven

Clifford

Charles Weatherford

Robert J Ward

Feb. 8, 1914-Feb. 9, 1914

Feb., 1916- May, 1916

1920-1922

Baby Heaven features not just a single person, or even just the few listed above, but many, many individuals. One of the few things we know about all of these precious souls is that they were most certainly loved by someone. Clifford, 1 day old; Charles, 4 months old; Robert, 2 years 9 months old - who died from influenza and malnutrition. Their parents were African-American, most probably young, most likely poor, and unable to afford any type of headstone for their lost little ones. They endured the worst suffering a parent is ever asked to bear.



For years, faded flowers, placed faithfully year after year by an elderly woman, are the only marker to indicate that her long departed, (but never forgotten) baby lies here. It has been estimated that up to 150 babies and children are buried, unmarked, in this small section.

In 2013 a local church purchased and dedicated the memorial and tree you see today.

24

John Monroe 1890-1946

John Monroe was born on October 28, 1890 in Kirkwood, Missouri. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1918. He was honorably discharged six months later. While he served, he was a Private in Company "A" in the 415th Resource Labor Battalion Quartermasters Corp regiment and fought in World War I. He was married to Alberta Monroe and lived at 823 Cornell Ave. Webster Groves, Missouri at some point. He died October 31, 1946.

25

Fred W. Mitchell 1919-1960

Fred W. Mitchell was born on June 4, 1919. He enlisted in the United States Army on February 12, 1942. He served as a Staff Sergeant in World War II with the 455th Quartermasters Corp and was discharged on July 31, 1943. Fred was married to Mary Mitchell and he died on December 2, 1960.

26

Ralph Raymond Steward ?-1938

Ralph Raymond Steward was part of the 806th Pioneer Infantry Regiment that was organized in July, 1918 at camp Funston, Kansas with black enlisted personnel as an Army Troop Unit. The unit was moved overseas in September, 1918 and served under the First Army in the French section. They participated in the following battles with heavy casualties. St. Mihiel 9/12/1918 to 9/16/1918 and Meuse-Argonne 9/26/1918 to 11/11/1918. The unit was returned to the United States in June 1919 and was demobilized in July, 1919 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Ralph died December 5, 1938.

27

Eugene Allen 1914-1961

Eugene Allen was born March 7, 1914 in Tupelo, Mississippi. He enlisted in the United States Army at Jefferson Barracks, MO in May 1944. He served as a Private First Class (PFC) in the 3120 Quartermaster Service Company until 6 months after the end of World War II in September, 1945. He was married and worked as a retail store manager after his time in the Army. He died in St. Louis, Missouri on May 19, 1961 at age 47

28

Demanseer Leon Davis 1920-1960

Demanseer Leon Davis was born on July 27, 1920 in Chicago, Illinois. He was a member of the United States Naval Reserve as a MOMM3, (Motor Machinist Mate 3rd Class) during World War II. He died in St. Louis, Missouri on December 21, 1960.

29

Aaron Sparks 1906-1935

Born May 22, 1906 – Died November 5, 1935.

Every Day I Have The Blues

Boy Scout Eagle Projects at Father Dickson Cemetery

For his Boy Scout Eagle project, John Hoffman from Troop 303 in Webster Groves, Missouri directed the restoration and improvements to nine veteran grave sites. This included straightening and leveling the tombstones, cleaning the tombstones, installing posts and marker signs at the grave sites, and researching and documenting the veterans to be included in The Walking Tour and Map Booklet. The project was completed October, 2015

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- Draft Registration Card – World War I
- Veterans' Headstone Application
- WWI WWII Korean War Casualty Listing
- Wayne County Missouri Slave Role,
- Regular U.S. Army enlistment card and register

Interviews:

- 8/18/2013 interview of Adolphus Briggs, son of John Briggs.
- 9/12/2013 interview of Ernest Jordan, President of Friends of Father Dickson Cemetery.

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Lindbergh High School
The Living Tree Care Company
Mary Queen of Peace Men's Club
Olive Chapel AME Church Kirkwood
The Principia
The Reliable Life Insurance Company
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St. Louis County Library
St. Louis Genealogical Society
Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri
St. Paul Saturdays
Saint Louis University High School
Saint Louis University
Sts. Clare & Francis
Unity Baptist Church of Kirkwood
Ursuline Academy
...and many, many others!

Thank you!

Friends of Father Dickson Cemetery
P.O. Box 220612
Kirkwood, MO 63122
314-822-8221
friendsoffather@aol.com
www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/stlouis/dickson/fdc.htm

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Monuments of St. Louis

Sappington Garden Shop

Sts. Clare & Francis Ecumenical Catholic Communion

**St. Louis County Library Special Collections,
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**The students of Julie Burchett (Webster Groves HS &
2013 Peabody Teacher of the Year)**

Suggested donation: \$2.00

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