

Oakland Cemetery



Stone Mountain Cemetery



Analytical Overview: Cemetery Tourism at Oakland Cemetery

Introduction

This analysis examines the revitalization, preservation, and tourism promotion efforts at Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, aiming to draw parallels and propose strategies for enhancing the City of Stone Mountain's Cemetery. Oakland Cemetery, established in 1850 and located less than a mile from Downtown Atlanta in the Grant Park neighborhood, is Atlanta's oldest public park. Originally six acres, it has expanded to 48 acres over time. This study will dissect the attributes and initiatives of Oakland Cemetery to derive actionable insights for Stone Mountain's Cemetery.

Preservation and Management

Owned by the City of Atlanta, Oakland Cemetery's preservation, events, and tourism activities are managed by the Oakland Cemetery Foundation, established in 1976. The foundation was created the same year the cemetery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, aimed at revitalizing and maintaining the cemetery. While the City of Atlanta retains ownership, the foundation plays a crucial role in the cemetery's upkeep and preservation.

Sections and Landmarks

Within its 48 acres, Oakland Cemetery is divided into several notable sections:

- 1. Initial Six Acres (1850):** Contains the oldest graves.
- 2. Jewish Flat and Jewish Hill:** Located in the southern portion, dedicated to Jewish burials.
- 3. Confederate Burial Grounds:** Central area with approximately 7,000 unknown Confederate soldiers.
- 4. Historic African American Burial Grounds:** Area for enslaved and free African American burials.
- 5. East Hill (1866):** An expansion acquired post-Civil War.
- 6. Greenhouse Valley:** Site of Atlanta's first greenhouse.
- 7. Potter's Field and Bell Tower Ridge:** The latter is the cemetery's highest point, featuring a bell tower.

A visitor center outside the cemetery gates offers tours, souvenirs, restrooms, and information about the cemetery.

Tourism and Community Engagement

Oakland Cemetery attracts approximately 105,000 annual visitors through various programming initiatives. These include:

- **Guided Tours:** Available on weekends and some Wednesdays, covering general and specialized topics.
- **Self-Guided Tours:** For visitors who prefer exploring independently.
- **Private Events and Weddings:** The cemetery can be booked for personal events.
- **Community Activities:** As Atlanta's oldest park, it hosts jogging, walking, picnics, festivals, art exhibits, and Halloween tours, fostering a sense of community.

Comparative Analysis and Recommendations for Stone Mountain Cemetery

Established in the same year as Oakland Cemetery (1850), Stone Mountain's Cemetery shares historical significance but spans only 14 acres. It features sections for Confederate and African American burials. Despite its smaller size, it holds potential for enhanced public use and tourism.

Recommendations Based on Oakland Cemetery's Success:

- 1. Form a Dedicated Group:** Establish a foundation or committee to fund, preserve, and promote tourism in the cemetery.
- 2. Guided and Self-Guided:** Tours: Develop and offer both types of tours to educate and engage visitors.
- 3. Wayfinding Signage:** Implement clear signage to help visitors navigate the cemetery.
- 4. Programming and Events:** Encourage activities that create a sense of place, such as festivals, art exhibits, and historical tours.

By adopting these strategies, Stone Mountain's Cemetery can enhance its role as a public space, increase tourism, and preserve its historical significance.