



1. **Potter's Field**

- The use of invaluable land for people of lesser status has ancient roots.
- Origin- Matthew 27:3-8: A remorseful Judas returns thirty pieces of silver to the Hebrew priests. As the silver is blood money and therefore unclean, it is used to bury indigents. The land purchased to do so had been used as a source for potter's clay. The harvesting of the clay constituted a sort of strip mining, which left the land not viable for agriculture.
- Note undulating landscape caused by the absence of vaults. Without vaults, the pressure of the soil causes the coffin to collapse and the earth above the coffin sinks, causing a depression.
- Even headstones shift or sink.
- In Oakhill Cemetery, there appears to be no family plots, except for the Burris plot. This is a much later burial.
- Generally speaking, there are few markers. Those who had not the means to purchase a plot for family members, generally did not have the means to purchase markers.
 - Often, children and infants are interred at corners because they require less room.



2. Mays Vault

- The information concerning the Mayes family is very convoluted.
- The vault was originally purchased for \$300.00 in 1927. This was a very expensive purchase.
- Despite this, the use of the vault does demonstrate a general assimilation to European American burial practices.
- Traditionally, African Americans were buried in social groups.
- Even when buried in the same grounds as whites, their graves are often set apart in some way.
- In plantation cemeteries, some burials were buried at an angle off of the East West axis.
- Some burials were marked with broken pottery.
- Most graves would aligned on an East West axis, or as close to this as possible.
- This is typical of Christian burials and ensured that the deceased could rise up and meet Jesus who would come from the East on Judgment Day.
- Many African burial grounds were unmarked. This is not due solely to the expense of markers.
- The use of crude field stones to mark interments were used by many poor white persons.

- Instead African Americans didn't mark, because of an underlying belief that there is always room for one more.
- It is much more common to see natural markers such as flowers- irises and daffodils.
- *The notes below seem to contradict. All can truly be said about the family in the vault is that there was a lot of emotional drama involved in the burial process. To use any of the notes below, more research must be conducted.*
- *August- Cornelia Mays wanted to move her son as his wife had remarried. Wife threatened to move the son's body.*
- *Sept. 1934 placards not on crypts yet due to Cornelia's bad health. Cornelia Mays wanted son to stay there.*
- *April 13, 33 Cornelia Mays gives permission to place granddaughter in mausoleum.*
- *July 26, 1961- Ola Turner only survivor. Justin Mayes was listed on mausoleum, but this was incorrect name.*
- *Justin Mayes is not buried here. I believe another cemetery, but the notes cut off.*

5 Cornelia Mayes- purchaser, mother. Not present at the time his remains were placed. Outlived husband and son. - Died 2/14/1936 of Bronchiectasis at age 75 in Hopkinsville, KY. Born in KY. Widower. Female.

4 Alphonso P. Hughes, granddaughter "little"- child
Died 4/10/1933 in Louisville at age 14 of Tuberculosis & Meningitis. Interred 4/12/1933. Single. Male.

6 Julia L. Hughes - Died 2/28/1945 of Sudden Heart Attack and Myocarditis at age 59 in French Lick, IN.

3 Alphonso M. Settle
Name is Alphonso Mayes Settle. Died 3/10/1954 at age 61 of Nephritis in Hopkinsville, KY. Widower.

7 Flossie Mayes N, granddaughter
Died 7/15/1961 at age 72 in Hopkinsville KY. Single.

2 Frank Mayes Senior, father
Frank Mayes Senior, father
- Died 8/23/1926 at age 67 of Brights Disease in Hopkinsville, KY. Married. Born in KY. Comment on record says "in vault Aug 25 to May 26 1928".

8 Ola Mayes Turner S
Died 2/27/1962 at age 78 in Hopkinsville, KY (cause of death says "Shipped In").

1 Frank Mayes Jr., son

- Died 12/17/1932 at age 45 of Shock from Burns -
Myocarditis at St. Mary's Hospital.

The table above represents the interments in the vault.



3. George W. Edmonds

- He was born in Vanderburgh County, Knight Township, Indiana on August 13, 1890.
- He attended Carver Elementary and Clark High School in Evansville, Indiana and graduated in the spring of 1910.
- He entered Indiana University that fall.
- With 9 others, founded Kappa Alpha Psi.
- Many African-American students rarely saw each other on campus and were discouraged or prohibited from attending student functions and extracurricular activities by white college administrators and fellow students.
- African-American students were denied membership on athletic teams with the exception of track and field. The racial prejudice and discrimination encountered by the founders strengthened their bond of friendship and growing interest in starting a social group.
- The fraternity has over 150,000 members with 700 undergraduate and alumni chapters in every state of the United States, and international chapters in the United

Kingdom, Germany, Korea, Japan, the Caribbean, Saint Thomas, Saint Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Nigeria, and South Africa.

- After he returned home for the summer of 1911, his father became ill with pneumonia and died.
- George, being the eldest son, became head of the family, which prevented his return to school.
- With the new responsibility of supporting a family, George took a job with the area coal mines and worked with the coal mines and railroads until he died of pneumonia in June of 1962.



4. Point out the use of photographs in the area.

- These markers show a movement towards less formal representation to a more personal approach.
- They offer more description of who the person was.

5. Note that we are in the lowlands.

- Also point out just how far we are from the original interments.



6. Ernest Tidrington, “The Boss of Baptisttown” AKA “Boss Teddy”

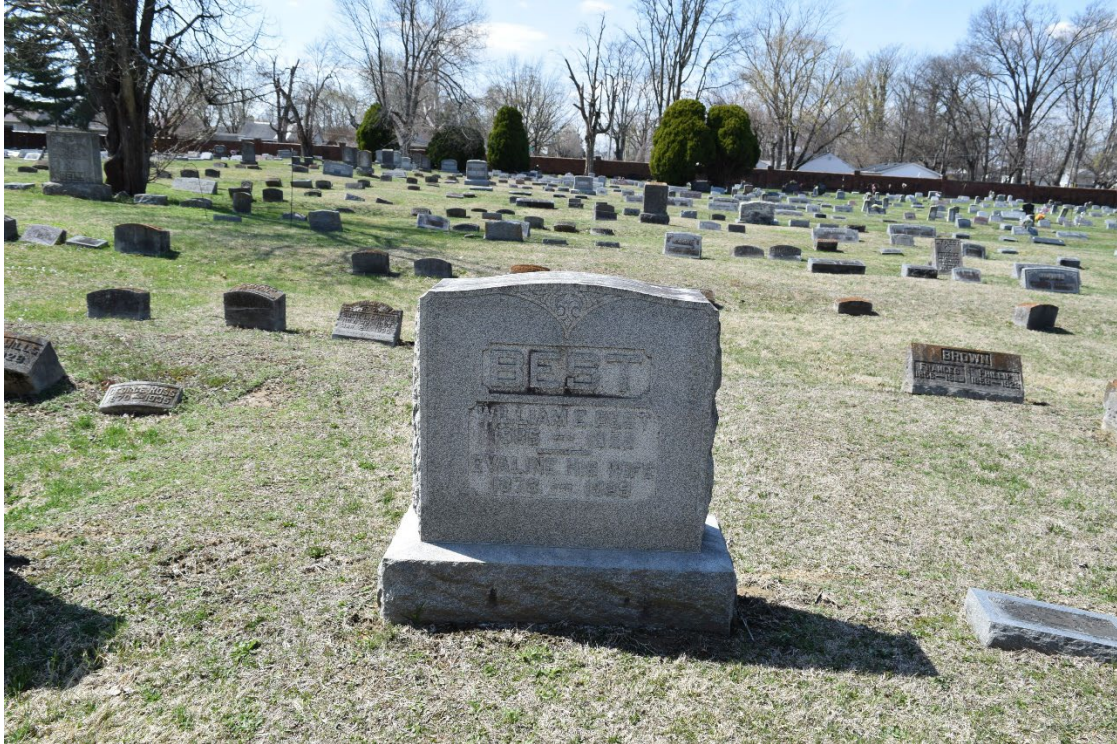
- The marker and manner of burial is most similar to the white interments of the surrounding burials.
- Originally from Clarksville, Tennessee Tidrington came to Evansville as an infant.
- He was educated in the local public school.
- Tidrington began his career as a janitor at the Clark Street High School.
- At one time vote buying and vice flourished in the black belt of Evansville, Indiana which carried the name of “Baptisttown.”
- The Baptisttown area constituted the political seventh ward and was commonly known as “The Bloody Seventh.” The area derived its name from the many fights that broke out in almost every black precinct in the seventh ward on election day.
- Tidrington did not stay in his humble position for long.
- It was noted that he was a very articulate and persuasive speaker.
- Many of his success stemmed from this gift, as well as the act of buying and selling votes.
- Tidrington received money from white politicians and in turn paid African American voters to cast ballots for those politicians.
- Through this practice, Tidrington gained many positions and power.
- At the height of his power, Tidrington held control over African American citizens as well as white.

- At the time of his death, he was Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias of Indiana and an active member of the Elks.
- Tidrington became deputy sheriff under Sheriff Barnes.
- Under Mayor Heilman, he rose to the position of Rodman in the city engineer's office.
- Tidrington also worked for a time at the Postal Department in St. Louis, MI.
- In due course, he climbed to a position in Washington D.C., as a clerk in the congressional library.
- For a period Tidrington returned to Evansville, where he accepted a job as a city detective under the first Bosse administration.
- Eventually he moved to Indianapolis for a position as Assistant Head Custodian and Engineer of State Property during the administration of Governor Goodrich.
- In 1921, Tidrington applied for admittance to the Vanderburgh County law bar and his case was referred to committee.
- The committee failed to report on time, so the judge admitted Tidrington.
- The bar association appealed this decision.
- The case eventually went to State Supreme Court, where it was upheld.
- Tidrington practiced law in Evansville and was associated with Rudolph O'Hara.
- It was during this period that he was viewed as the Boss of Baptisttown.
- During this period, it was said he could control 2,500 to 3,000 votes at will.
- Tidrington was also reported to have had the influence to have people's employment terminated and to even have them driven out of town, for disobeying his political demands.
- Eventually, this would lead to his end.
- Big Tidrington, at the age of 47, died in January of 1930, when he was killed by a political enemy at the corner of that is now Lincoln and Governor streets.
 - That enemy was Luther Bell, an African American pool hall operator, who was also 47 years old at that time.
 - Bell is located a few rows away from Tidrington in the cemetery.
 - Bell used a 12-gauge double barrel shot gun and walked towards Tidrington's parked car from the rear.
 - The shots hit from the rear of car, through the glass, and hit Tidrington in the head and neck. Tidrington's wife sustained minor injuries.
 - Tidrington had previously threatened to throw Bell out of town over differing political views.



7. **J.D. Rouse**

- He replaced McFarland as pastor of Liberty Baptist church in 1882.
- He was a former slave.
- He started his career as a custodian at Kraft.
- He was born in Henderson but later raised in Evansville.
- His family relocated, like many other former slaves, in 1865.
- Liberty Baptist was organized June 13, 1865 in a small brick building at Chestnut and Canal streets.
- As African Americans continued to migrate to Evansville, they primarily settled around the church.
- The area became known as "Baptistown."
- The church provided leadership in the religious, social, and political life of the city's black community.
- In 1886, the church was destroyed by a cyclone, just after the parish had paid it off.
- Rouse, who was then pastor, and the congregation rebuilt the church in seven months for \$7,000.

**William Best**

- He attended Cornell and Alfred Universities as well as Indiana State Teacher's College.
- He was the principal of Governor High School.
- He was a member of NAACP
- In his lifetime, Best was at odds with Tidrington.
- Perhaps this is why Tidrington accused Best of immoral behavior and having illicit affairs with his students.
- No proof was presented, and Best was exonerated. (Knowing Tidrington's reputation, it is likely that all was fabricated).



8. Anthony Starke

- Starke is the name he used to enlist for Civil War.
- He was born Andrew Stubbins in Kentucky.
- We are not sure why he used the name Starke, but if his age of death is correct, it is likely he lied about his age to enlist at the age of 12 or 13.
- At his death he was a widower and a father to a daughter and three sons. (I think all but one are also buried at Oak Hill).
- Starke died 10/23/1934 of senility.
- In his life, he was a member of Wagner Colored Post GAR.



9. Dr. George Washington Buckner 1855-1943

- He was born a slave in Greenburg, KY where he started his life in a one-room cabin with a dirt floor.
- He lived at Stanton Plantation with his step-father, invalid mother, and many other children.
- It is said that the master at Stanton Plantation was not wealthy enough to provide for the slaves.
- Buckner was presented as a gift to the son of the plantation master, “Mars” Dickie Buckner, who later died in childhood.
- The death of Mars and the invalid state of Buckner’s mother, later encouraged Buckner to pursue an education in medicine.
- At the age of ten, Buckner was freed.
- He pursued an education at Freedman’s school.
- In 1870, Buckner lived in Louisville and worked as a servant for a white family.
- He went on to become one of the first black teachers in Green County, KY.
- He later graduated from Terre Haute State Normal School.
- After this, Buckner relocated to the Evansville Area and taught in Evansville, Washington, and Vincennes.
- He went on to become the principal of Independence School.

- As mentioned before, Buckner was inspired to pursue a career in medicine, and attended Eclectic Medical College in Indianapolis, IN.
- He returned to Evansville in 1890 where he practiced medicine for 53 years.
- It is said that Dr. Buckner was continuously in the library.
- In addition to medicine and education, Dr. Buckner was interested in politics.
- He was a Democrat and edited the “Colored Folks” column in the Democrat newspaper.
- In 1913, he was appointed as Foreign Minister to Liberia by President Wilson.
- He was forced to resign in 1915 due to bouts of African fever.
- His memorabilia from his time in Liberia is curated in the Evansville Museum.
- Just before his return, Dr. Buckner lost his first wife, Estella White, to tuberculosis in 1889.
- He later married Anna Cowan, with whom he had five children.
- An active citizen, Buckner was a trustee of Alexander Chapel AME church.
- He also helped establish the Cherry Street Black YMCA.
- A leader in the United Brotherhood of Friendship
- Throughout his life, Dr. Buckner was a student of psychology.
- He was particularly interested in that “philosophy relates to the mental and bodily tendencies of the African race”.

10. Point out the road that divides the white interments from those of the African Americans.

- This line is distinct and there is no mingling of the two sections.
- The white burials are newer, which shows that the burials of the African Americans were placed
in the back of the cemetery, far from the contemporary burials of European Americans.



11. Dr. S.S. Dupee

- Like many other African Americans in this cemetery, he was born in Kentucky.
- He went on to graduate from Fisk University and then Howard University and began his practice in New York City.
- He returned to Evansville and during the years of 1899-1913 he practiced medicine.
- He was described as a "very successful colored physician".
- When his white contemporaries describe his "miraculous skills" it was said, "It's a pity Dupee is a colored man."
- He was independent politically, once a republican, bull mooser, & democrat.
- He held strong ideas about education and assimilation.
- He truly believed that by bettering selves, African Americans could be accepted by whites.
- He was also a fan of Booker T. Washington's ideals.
- In his life, he spoke against most preachers naming them "scalawags".
- In his view they were illiterate, dramatic, and perpetuated African American stereotypes.
- During his life he founded the Knights of Tambor.
- Dupee's prominent career but cut short by early death in 1912 by appendicitis at age of 41.
- For some reason, he was not interred until April of 1913.



Near here there are Masonic symbols on a stone.

- There was a separate Masonic Lodge for African Americans

McFarland, Rev. Green (No Marker)

- He was the first African American pastor of Liberty Baptist church.
- He replaced the first pastor, who was a white man, Colonel Woods.
- replaced by J.D. Rouse
- His service was influential. McFarland Baptist Church was named in his honor. McFarland

14. Moving to the older African American section, speak about the American Civil War

- During the Civil War, African American soldiers were eager to enlist in the Union Army.
- They were anxious to join the fight against slavery.
- Celebrated abolitionist Frederick Douglass was a strong advocate of this, believing that this would prove their right to citizenship and the vote.
- These soldiers served in artillery and infantry and performed noncombat support functions that sustain the army. These roles included carpenters, chaplains, cooks, guards, laborers, nurses, scouts, spies, steamboat pilots, surgeons, and teamsters.

- African American women, who could not formally join the army, served as nurses, spies, and scouts.
 - The most famous was Harriet Tubman, who scouted for the 2d South Carolina Volunteers.
 - Although initially reluctant to commission African American officers, the Union government eventually commissioned eighty.
 - Eighteen African American soldiers were given the Medal of Honor for their heroic service.
 - By the war's end, there were at least 40,000 African American casualties, the majority caused by disease. By the end of the Civil War, roughly 179,000 black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy.
- Baptist is said to be the first and only large church built entirely by African Americans.



12. Richard Suggs

- Colored Calvary
- Died 10/25/1932 at age 84.



13. William Berry

- Colored Troops
- Died on 10/17/1894 at age 48.



14. John Ingram

- US 118th US Troops,
- Died on 11/11/1890 at age 64.



15. Washington Posey

- US 118th US Troops
- Died on 12/1/1890 at age 63.



Photo 16. James Ambrose “Uncle Jim”

- Born as a slave in about 1813 near Lexington, KY.
- He lived on a plantation owned by one of Kentucky’s most prominent citizens, John J. Crittenden.
- Crittenden had been a hero in the War of 1812
- Served as a U.S. Senator and was elected governor in 1848
- Crittenden County is named in his honor
- Work as a deckhand on a paddle-wheeler that plied the river from Louisville to St. Louis.
- After several years, Ambrose decided to flee for freedom.
- One day in St. Louis he ran away and joined a wagon train heading for the gold fields of California.
- In San Francisco, he found a job on a merchant ship sailing for Australia.
- He remained in Australia for several years and there he undertook to educate himself.
- Eventually he began working his way around the world.
- Shortly after the Civil War broke out, he learned that African Americans were being accepted in the Army, so he returned to the United States, joined the US Colored Troops and fought in many skirmishes.
- After the war, he settled in Evansville. So far as anyone knew, he had no family.

- He was frugal and accumulated an estate valued at several thousand dollars that he left to young man named James Holloway, whom he often spoke as his adopted son.
- He died in his sleep in his home located in an alley behind Governor St. on the morning of September 5th, 1892 at the age of 79 years.
- More than 80,000 pennies along with other donations were collected to place a marker here by Newburgh Elementary students.