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An Early Black Cemetery on York Street

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An Early Black Cemetery on York Street

Abstract
Many are familiar with William H. Tipton, a well-known local photographer who recorded iconic views of the town, battlefield, and monuments surrounding Gettysburg. What many people may not know is that Tipton built a house in the early 1900s right on top of Gettysburg's first African-American cemetery. [excerpt]

Keywords
Gettysburg, William H. Tipton, AME Church, Battle of Gettysburg, York Street Cemetery, Black Community, Jack Hopkins, Abraham Brian, Clara Diggs, Lloyd Watts, Goodwill Cemetery, Lincoln Cemetery

Disciplines
African American Studies | Cultural History | History | Social History | United States History

Comments
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Tipton, a well-known local photographer, who recorded scenic views of the Gettysburg Battlefield. He is buried in a house in the early 1860s atop one of the main roads to the battlefield.

Below the house at 311 York Street was a cemetery of about 500 bodies. According to historian Betty D. Myers points out in her book, “The Battle of Gettysburg’s black community,” early cemeteries were established on public land for the purpose of establishing a cemetery.

In 1850, 1855, and 1872 show the cemetery on the east side of the Battle of Gettysburg, Andrew Schrock is shown and was the owner of the property where the school was located at St. James Lutheran Church of Gettysburg. The school was burned and buried. In 1866, Jack Trapp, from Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg), was the owner in the York Street Cemetery. In 1866, the cemetery was in full operation from about 1828 until the establishment of the Gettysburg College in the late 1860s. For this reason, Gettysburg College now owns the property.

When William Tipton broke ground for his new two-story brick house on York Street, he disturbed dozens of graves. The graves were visible across the street, remember that “had the grave been dug in a box, the back of the stone & dry when dry was hoisted.” This illegal desecration of the young soldiers of the Union Army in the York Street Cemetery.

Paul’s A.M. Church is Gettysburg’s oldest African American church. Among those whose stones recorded were Abraham Allen, a well-known black soldier who died in the Civil War. Clara Dodge, a black resident of South Washington Street whose property was excavated in 2007 are.archaeology next to her home was Walter W. Linn, and John Redding, all var. of the Great War, and Victor and Valentina Watts, the parents of Lloyd F. Watts who was a prominent member of Gettysburg’s black community.

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As his mother reports: “I was a small child when my father was buried in the York Street Cemetery. I do not know which part of the cemetery he was buried in, but I am told that he was buried in someone’s backyard.” This is why the York Street Cemetery is not as well known to many.

Recently, the congregation of St. Andrew’s Church, the predecessor of Gettysburg College (now Gettysburg College) in the late 1860s. For this reason, Gettysburg College now owns the property.

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