

**ZION CEMETERY BURIAL REGISTER  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**

**1896-1974**

**REGISTER and INDEX**

*Processed by:*

Betty Jean Thomas

Memphis/Shelby County Public Library  
and Information Center  
2002

Microfilm Accession Number: 1714

**MICROFILM ONLY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Zion Cemetery Register and Index, 1896-1974, were loaned to the Tennessee State Library and Archives in July 2003, for microfilming. After filming, the register and Index were returned to the Memphis/Shelby County Public Library and Information Center.

There are no restrictions on the use of the materials for individual or scholarly purposes, and photocopies may be made for such use. However, for commercial use or use that may constitute a copyright infringement, please contact the holder of the original materials for permission.

## **ZION CEMETERY HISTORY**

Zion Cemetery, the oldest traditionally African American cemetery in Memphis, is the final resting place for many outstanding men and women whose accomplishments and achievements have contributed greatly to the development of this city. For example, Georgia Patton Washington was the first African American female medical doctor in the state of Tennessee; Morris Henderson, affectionately called "Uncle Morris," was one of the most influential and progressive ministers in the history of Memphis. Thomas F. Cassels was an outstanding lawyer who served in the Tennessee General Assembly representing Memphis and Shelby County, 1881-1883.

Zion Cemetery is a 15 acre property located along the north side of South Parkway East between Dunnavant and Willett near Pillow Street. The site is characterized by rolling hills and large Oak and Magnolia trees which landmark the cemetery and commemorate its historic heritage. For many years the landscape was carefully maintained and well kept. However, in the past 50 years neglect replaced diligent management practices, and the property suffered from vegetation overgrowth.

The United Sons of Zion Association, an African American fraternal organization, purchased the property on which the cemetery is located in 1873. Zion Cemetery was started in 1876 by Rev. Morris Henderson. After Rev. Henderson's death in 1877, members of the Zion Association formed the Zion Cemetery Company and purchased the cemetery. Shares were passed down to descendants of owners through the years to the last owner, George Christian. His widow, Mrs. Eva Alcorn Christian, deeded the property to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church which set a goal to completely restore Zion Cemetery to its historic acclaim. Work was begun to clear and remove undesirable trees and vegetation and to construct a network of fences to protect the property. In February of 1990 Zion Cemetery was entered on the National Register of Historic Places, and on December 24, 1991, it was incorporated as Zion Christian Cemetery, Inc.

## **ZION CEMETERY REGISTER INDEX**

The index to the Zion Cemetery Register lists the names of over 22,000 people buried in Zion Cemetery, but exactly how many is not known. Two burial registers were kept. One covering the period between 1876 and 1895 was lost or destroyed. This register would have listed the thousands believed buried in Zion during these years—including 1878 Yellow Fever victims. The second register covers the period from 1896 to 1974 and is the basis for this index.

The Zion cemetery register was given to Memphis/Shelby County Public Library an Information Center by the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church when restoration was begun on the cemetery.

Mrs. Betty jean Thomas indexed the 1896-1974 burial Register to prepare the names for entry into a database. Mrs. sue Evrard entered the records into the computer to make this valuable reference tool available in printed form. Proof-reading was by Mrs. Betty Blaylock and Miss Joan Cannon.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to these volunteers for their dedication and for the hundreds of hours they devoted to this work.