

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Magnolia Cemetery  
**OWNER:** Magnolia Cemetery Association  
**APPLICANT:** Lacey Telge for Magnolia Cemetery Assoc  
**LOCATION:** 816 Montrose Boulevard

**AGENDA ITEM:** C.2  
**HPO FILE NO.:** 14L298  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** May-19-2014  
**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Aug-28-2014

**SITE INFORMATION:** Tract 15B, Abstract 1, J Austin Survey, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Magnolia Cemetery, located at the intersection of Montrose Boulevard and Allen Parkway, was established in 1884 by members of First German Methodist Church of Houston (later known as Bering Memorial Methodist Church) for use of its congregation. The original name of the cemetery was Magnolia Graveyard. Burials were opened to nonmembers of the church in 1892. With more than 3,800 interments today, Magnolia Cemetery Corporation operates as a non-profit perpetual care cemetery insuring proper care and maintenance for all future generations.

The cemetery originally extended north to the south bank of Buffalo Bayou. When the City of Houston paved Allen Parkway in 1929, all cemetery property north of Allen Parkway was ceded to the city. Today, the cemetery is walled off from the heavy traffic along Montrose Boulevard and Allen Parkway, giving it a park-like setting.

While the burials in Magnolia Cemetery are a good mix of solid, hard-working citizens, the most well-known is Gus Sessions Wortham, co-founder of American General Insurance. Wortham told his friends that he hand-picked his last resting place so he could "keep an eye on things," alluding to the business at American General, which is located adjacent to the cemetery.

Magnolia Cemetery meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Magnolia Cemetery is located at 816 Montrose Boulevard at the intersection of Montrose Boulevard with Allen Parkway. It is walled off from the heavy traffic along Allen Parkway, giving it a park-like setting. In this pastoral setting, people use Magnolia's tree-lined oval drive for exercise and the two park-like sitting areas to relax and meditate.

The cemetery was established by members of the First German Methodist Church of Houston (later known as Bering Memorial Methodist Church) on November 20, 1884, for the exclusive use of members of the church. Bering Memorial Methodist Church does not show any record of the Cemetery's connection to it in their records. The original name was Magnolia Graveyard.

The original trustees of the cemetery were the Reverend William Knolle, of First German Methodist Church; August Bering and his brother Conrad Bering (for whom Bering Memorial Methodist Church was named and who are buried in Glenwood Cemetery); Joseph Issac; Charles Beneke; Jacob Bader; Henry Stabe; R. H. Roco; Charles Zink; F. Bonewitz; and George Henrichsen. Burial lots were priced according to location at \$50, \$35, and \$20.

The city's 1-plus citizens in 1840 included some four hundred Germans. Most German immigrants in Houston initially settled in predominantly German neighborhoods, but soon integrated with Anglo-Americans, Irish, Jews, and French. Their religious life included home worship, and the Methodist families of August and Conrad Bering, along with their brother, Charles, held private services in their parlors to read the Bible and pray before attending church on Sunday.

The Methodists already had a long history in Texas, since 1815 when the first ordained Methodist minister preached here. The increasing number of German immigrants presented a special challenge to Texas Methodists – the need for a foreign-language ministry. The first German Methodist Church was organized in Galveston in 1846, and by 1855 eleven appointments had been made to a new German district, publishing their own newspaper, *Der Deutsche Christliche Apologet*. The *Texas Anzier* was also published in the German language, as well as the *Texas Volksblatt* (“people’s page”).

The cemetery was officially registered when, on March 4, 1886, the Secretary of State of the State of Texas issued Charter No. 75842 to the Magnolia Cemetery Company.

The first two burials were that of John P. Steiner and Arthur Steiner on November 13, 1884. Approximately two months later, a ten acre tract, which included the original graveyard, was purchased from August and Conrad Bering. The Berings, two of the original trustees, arranged for the cemetery to acquire the tract from them after they had purchased it from Joseph Barton and his wife. Both transactions were in the amount of \$1,350.00. The property extended northward from what is now West Dallas Avenue to the edge of Buffalo Bayou. Joseph Barton was later interred in the cemetery on Lot No. 50, Section B.

On February 8, 1892, August Bering, George Henrichsen, Conrad Bering, C.H. Beneke, Ernest Fuchs, and William J. Frederick applied for and received an amendment to the charter to extend the privileges of membership to churches other than the First German Methodist Church of Houston. The value of the ten acre tract at this time was estimated at \$5,000.00. By 1900, over 500 interments had occurred at Magnolia Cemetery.

In 1929, the City of Houston paved Buffalo Drive. Buffalo Drive, now called Allen Parkway, extended west from downtown Houston across the northern portion of the cemetery property. Due to lack of funds, the cemetery could not pay the paving assessments for its portion, and a compromise between the city and the cemetery was arranged. In order to pay the paving assessment, the cemetery ceded to the City of Houston all of the cemetery's property from north of Buffalo Drive to the south bank of Buffalo Bayou. At a special meeting of Magnolia Cemetery on June 20, 1929, the deed to the City of Houston was signed.

The cemetery's application to operate as a non-profit corporation was approved on September 5, 1939. The affidavit accompanying the approval stated the property and improvements would be used as a public cemetery and for no other purpose. By 1939, the cemetery had accommodated 2200 interments.

By 1970, with 3,663 interments, a majority of the cemetery lots had been sold. The money was used for the care and maintenance of the grounds and gravesites. A majority of the lot sales had occurred many years ago and the original lot owners were deceased so that the lot ownership was in second or third generation successors. As a result, dues for these lots became more and more difficult to collect. Because of lack of funds, the cemetery was in a general state of disrepair. Photographs in *Our Ancestors' Graves: Houston's Historic Cemeteries* show Magnolia in an unkempt condition and without the circular drive.

In an effort to keep Magnolia Cemetery operating, the trustees decided that to have additional burials on purchased lots, all fees had to be current. Many of the remaining lot owners and their successors decided not to use their spaces. Some vandalism has occurred over the years, the most notable when decorative items from the sitting area in the middle of the cemetery were taken.

The Cemetery trustees realized the need to establish a permanent cemetery maintenance fund administered on a perpetual care basis. The south 1.01 acres of Magnolia Cemetery, bordering on West Dallas Avenue, had been reserved and withheld from lot sales. On September 21, 1970, this 1.01 acre tract was sold to the American General Corporation and a perpetual care fund for the cemetery was established. In 1973, the north end of the cemetery was also sold to American General. Magnolia Cemetery has an endowment fund to manage operational expenses and occasionally receives aid from American General, whose founder Gus Wortham now has a prominent mausoleum on the north end of Magnolia Cemetery. Currently, with more than 3,800 interments, Magnolia Cemetery Corporation operates as a non-profit perpetual care cemetery insuring proper care and maintenance for all future generations.

While the burials in Magnolia Cemetery are a good mix of solid, hard-working citizens, the most well-known of current-day families is that of Gus Sessions Wortham, co-founder of American General Insurance and civic leader. He and his wife, Elizabeth Lyndall Finley, are both buried at Magnolia in an impressive mausoleum. As Gus Wortham prepared to turn over his business to a new management generation, he emphatically told his successors that he expected them to uphold his traditions. He had told his friends that he hand-picked his last resting place so he could "keep an eye on things," alluding to the business at American General.

Family continuity can be seen in the management of Magnolia Cemetery through the Board of Directors. William H. Bammel was listed as a member of the Cemetery's Board of Directors in 1892. He was followed by his son, Charles William Bammel, who in turn was followed by his son, William E. Bammel, Sr. The current president, William E. Bammel, Jr., continues the tradition, making Bammel family involvement over 100 years.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Beverly, Trevia Wooster. *At Rest: A Historical Directory of Harris County, Texas Cemeteries (1822-2001) Including Burial Customs and Other Interesting Facts, With a Listing of Past and Present Communities, Funeral Home and Monument Companies* (Revised Edition, 2001, Tejas Publications & Research, Houston).

Houghton, Dorothy Know Howe with Barrie M. Scardino, Sadie Gwin Blackburn, and Katherine S. Howe. *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824-1914* (Rice University Press, Houston, 1991).

Johnston, Marguerite. *Houston: The Unknown City 1836-1946* (Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1991).

*Magnolia Cemetery of Houston* "a complete listing of all persons interred in this cemetery from founding date to January I, 1994." (Trustees, Houston, 1994).

Milburn, Douglas with Photographs by Paul Hester. *Our Ancestors' Graves: Houston's Historic Cemeteries* (Houston Public Library, Houston, 1980).

Beverly, Trevia Wooster with A. Hardy Roper, William E. Bammel, Jr., and Elmer Telge, Application for Official Historic Texas Cemetery Marker for Magnolia Cemetery, February 23, 2002.  
Author: A. Hardy Roper, appended by William Bammel, Jr.

Deed from Joseph Barton & Wife to August & Conrad Bering, as filed on January 9, 1885;

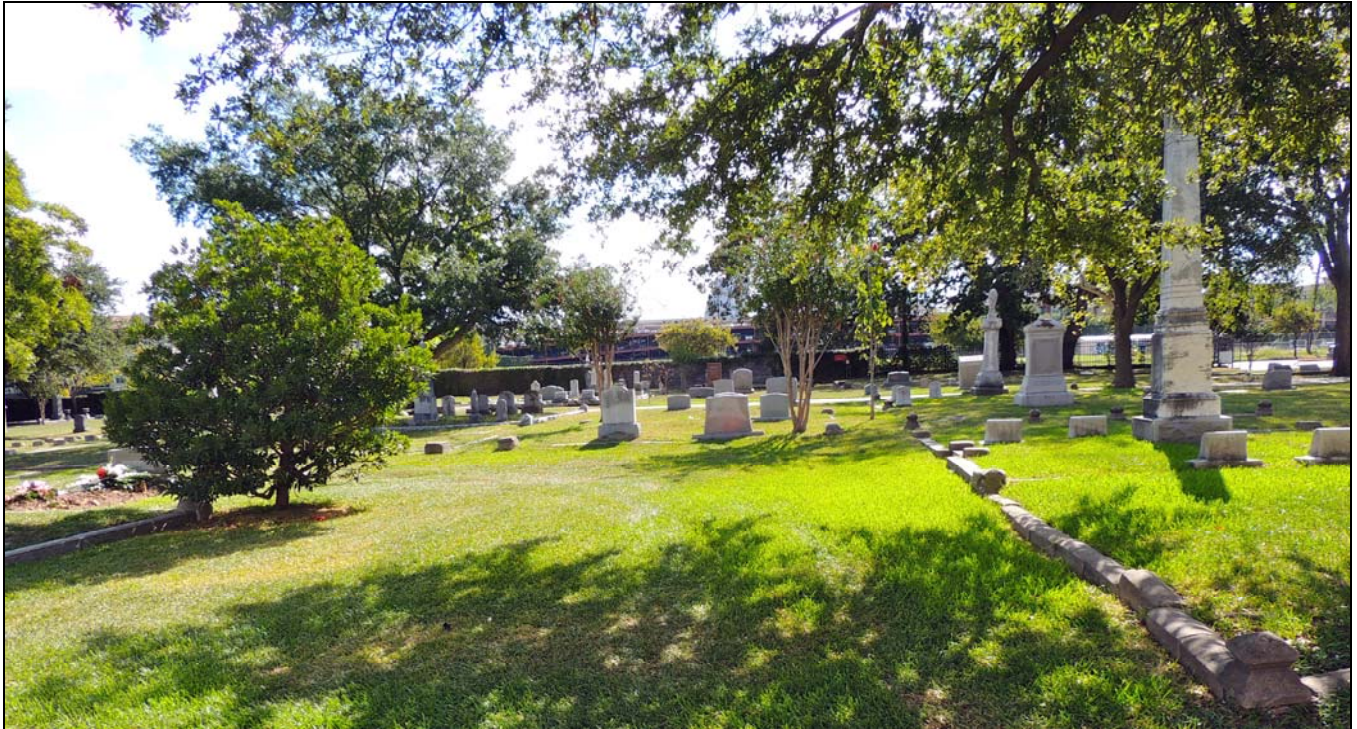
Conveyance from August & Conrad Bering to Magnolia Cemetery, as filed on May 28, 1886; and

The Bering Promissory note.

*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by the Historic Preservation Department, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*



**EXHIBIT A  
MAGNOLIA CEMETERY  
816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD  
PHOTOS**



**EXHIBIT A**

**MAGNOLIA CEMETERY  
816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD  
PHOTOS (CONTINUED)**

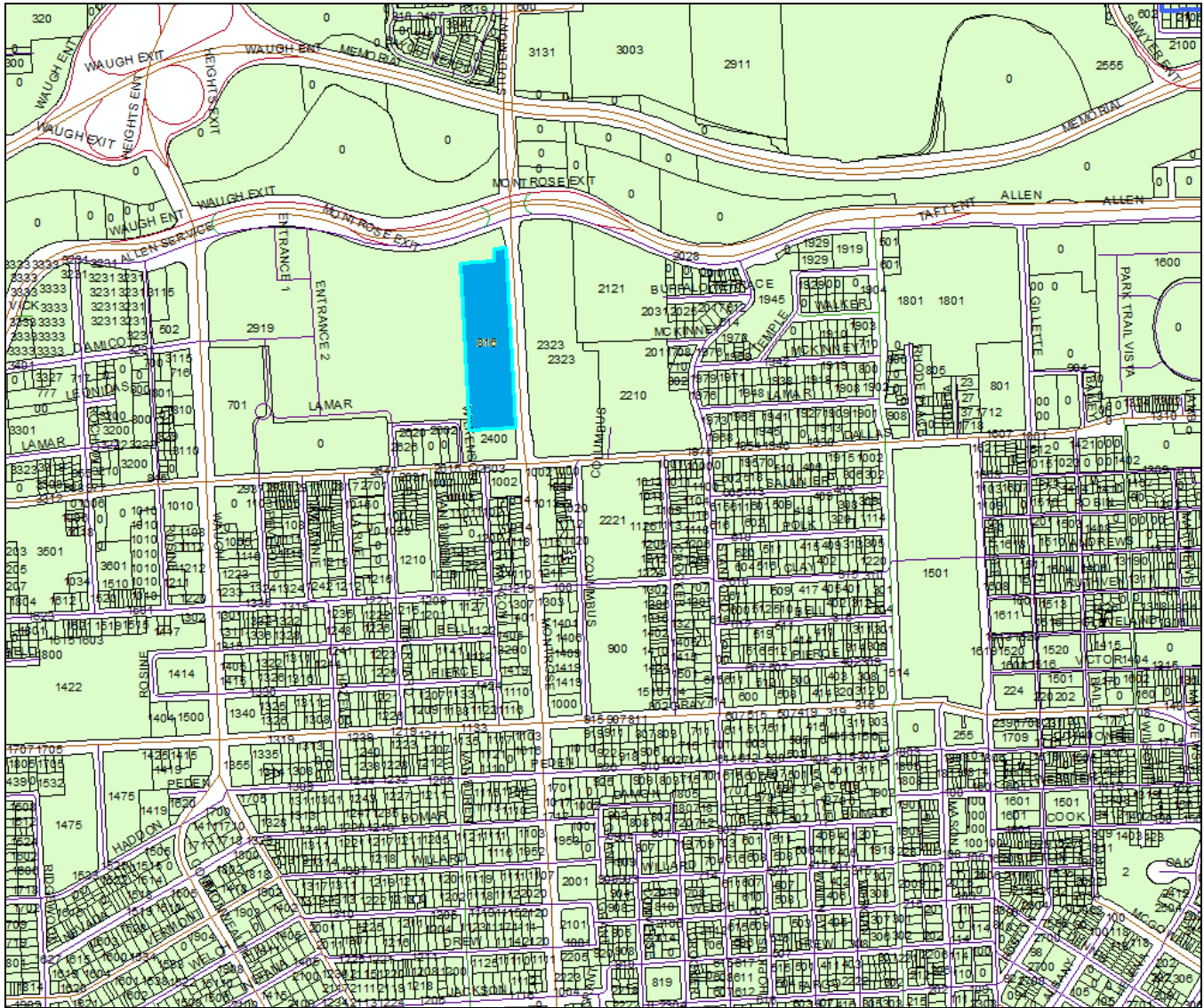


# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## EXHIBIT B MAGNOLIA CEMETERY 816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD MAP





**EXHIBIT C  
MAGNOLIA CEMETERY  
816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD  
CEMETERY PLAN**

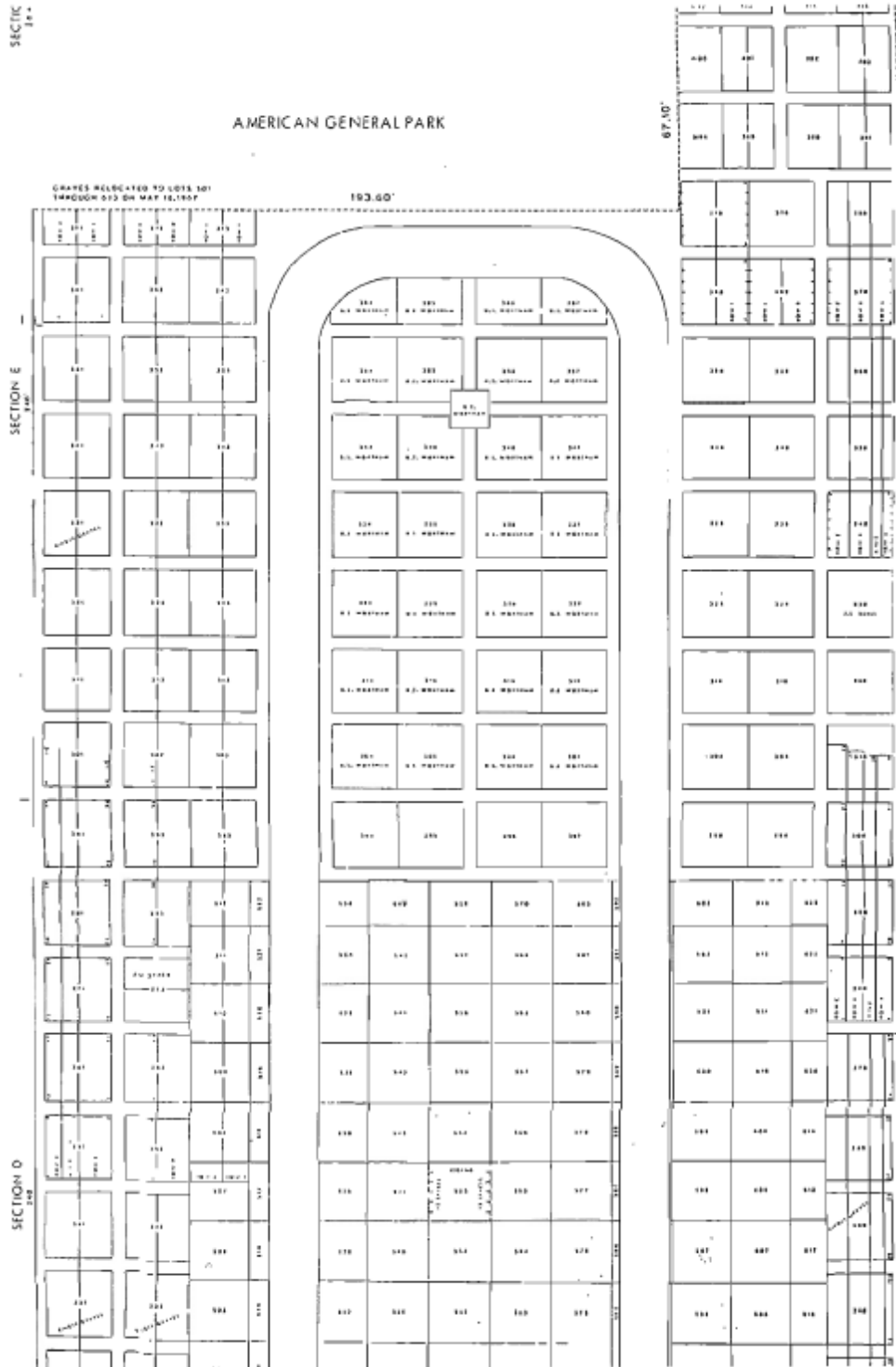


# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## EXHIBIT C MAGNOLIA CEMETERY 816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD CEMETERY PLAN (CONTINUED)

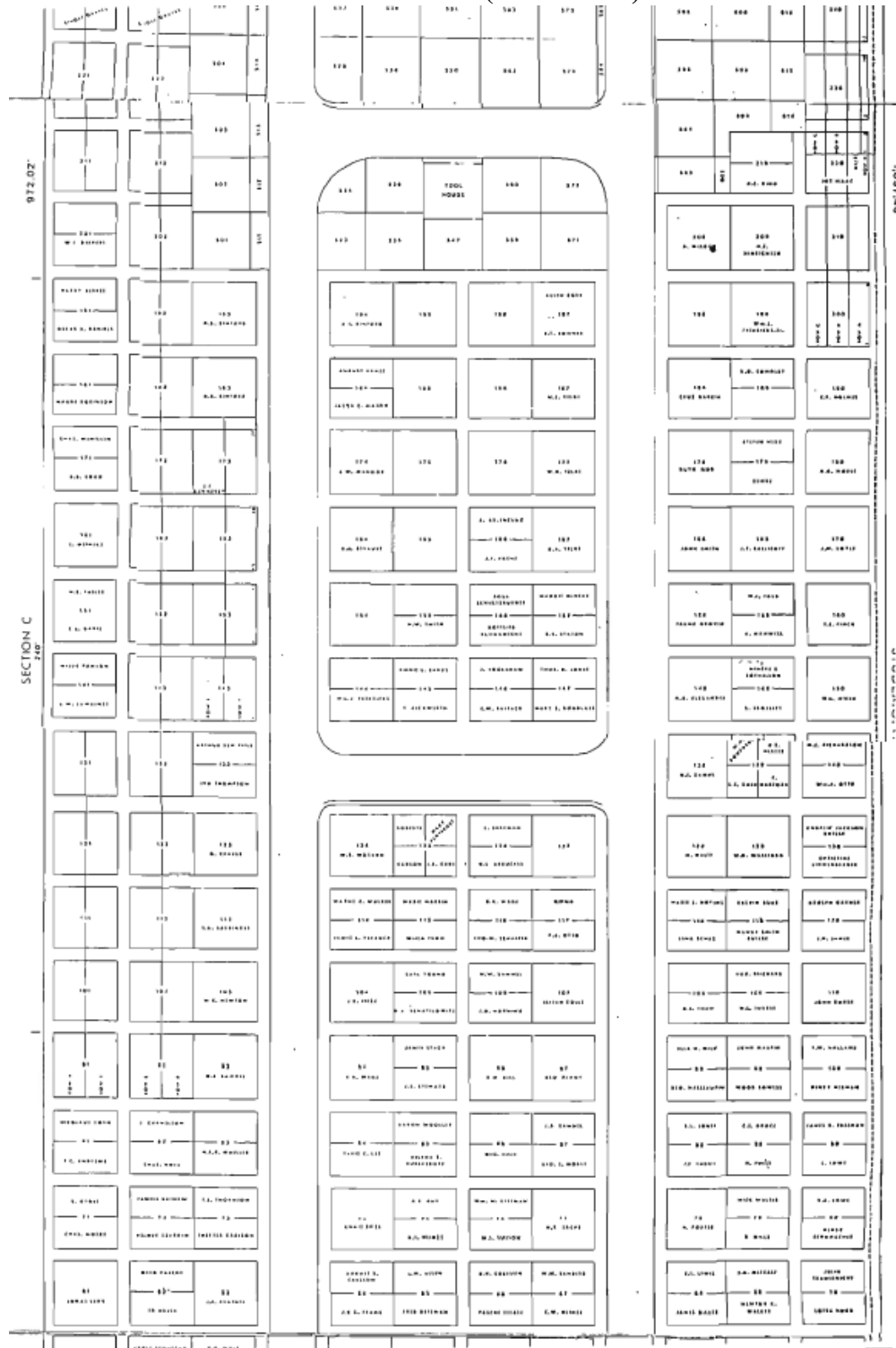


# CITY OF HOUSTON

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Planning and Development Department

## EXHIBIT C MAGNOLIA CEMETERY 816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD CEMETERY PLAN (CONTINUED)



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Archaeological & Historical Commission

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## EXHIBIT C MAGNOLIA CEMETERY 816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD CEMETERY PLAN (CONTINUED)



**EXHIBIT D**  
**MAGNOLIA CEMETERY**  
**816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD**  
**PROMINENT INTERMENTS**

*Rev. William A. Knolle* and his family were living in Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas when the 1880 Census was taken (p g. 263C). Then age 35, born in Prussia, his occupation was listed as Preacher M.E. On this census was also his wife, Dorothea (Dora) G., 36, also born in Prussia. The children were all born in Texas, namely a son, William, 13 “going to College;” sons, Charlie, 9; Robert, 7; daughter Ida, 5; a third son, Alfred, 3; and a second daughter Pearl who was 1 year old. Shortly afterwards he came to Houston and was pastor of the First German Methodist Church of Houston by 1884 when Magnolia Cemetery had its first burial. Rev. Knolle and his wife, Dorothea, are buried in Section B, Lot No. 28. Burial date for Dorothea was 30 Dec 1902; for Rev. Knolle, 07 May 1911.

*Jacob Bader* is not shown on either the 1870 or the 1880 Harris County census. The nearest possibility might be that of John Baer, 35, school teacher born in Prussia.

*Charles Beneke* is shown on the 1880 Harris County Census, pg. 104C, as 34 years old born in Germany, occupation carpenter. With him is his wife Mary, 25 who was born in Texas of parents who were first generation German immigrants. They were living in the household of Charles and Mary Ginke, possibly Mary Beneke's parents. Nine Beneke family members are buried in Section B, Lot No. 26.

*The Bering Brothers, August and Conrad.* The John and Margaret (Reisse) Bering family sailed from Bremen on August 13, 1846, on the Ship *Friedrich*, landing in Galveston on October 24, 1846. Planning to go to the Fisher-Miller Grant they found that no schooner was available to take them to the port of Indianola. Instead they took the steamer *Sprata* headed for Houston but ran aground on a sand bank at Morgan's Point. Arriving in Houston they tried to hire oxen to go on to their destination. Several stories about the oxen are given. 1) the death of the oxen, 2) the ox cart broke down, and 3) the oxen did not understand the commands given in German and would not move. The family became prominent in Houston history. The brothers founded the first lumber yard in Houston under the name of A. Bering and Bros. They later divided the business with Conrad taking over the sash and door business under the name of Bering Manufacturing Company. The eldest daughter, Louisa, married Henry Stabe (qv); Theodore L. Bering became a newspaperman and worked for several newspapers, including the *Houston Post*; Charles H. Bering was a carpenter and formed D.H. Bering & Co. (carpenters and contractors) at the corner of Prairie and Milam streets; Louis Bering was a hardware merchant in business in Galveston in 1874. There were other children as well. August Bering was also director of the First National Bank in Houston for 32 years, from 1876 to 1908. His daughter, Mary Magdaline Bering married Henry William Cortes, partner in the well-known firm of Bering-Cortes. John and Margaret (Reisse) Bering's family extended to 45 grandchildren and 86 great-grandchildren. The Bering family is buried at Houston's Glenwood Cemetery.

*F. Bonewitz* appears on the 1880 Harris County Census, pg. 307C, as Fred Bonewitz, age 43 born in Prussia. His occupation is that of a Railroad Car Inspector. With him are his wife, Ricka, 39, also born in Prussia. All their children were born in Texas: Henrietta, 17; Frederick, 12; Fannie, 11; Mary, 5; Lydia, 3; Gertrude, 2; and a son, 4 months. Fred Bonewitz, Sr. was buried in Magnolia Cemetery on 02

Nov 1889 in Section B, Lot No. 34; Mrs. Bonewitz and several children are also interred in this same location.

*George Henrichsen* is not found on either the 1870 or the 1880 Harris County census. There may be a listing in the Houston city directories of this time period which could be a stepping stone to further research.

*Joseph Issac*. 1880 Harris County Census, E.D. 85, Houston, Pg. 304A Joseph Issac, age 33, b. Switzerland, Carpenter; parents both b. Switzerland Wife , Caroline, 30, b. Texas; parents both b. Prussia . Daughter, Elizabeth, age 5, b. Texas. \* shows father b. Switzerland; mother , Prussia. Daughter, Carrie, age 1, b. Texas. \* shows same for parents' birth places. Joseph Issac was buried on 20 May 1930 in Section B, Lot No. 45, beside his wife, Caroline, who was buried on 11 Apr 1918. Three other family members are also buried here.

*Rufus H. Roco* served as Secretary for the Magnolia Cemetery Company. The very early minutes are written in German. While the records indicate that R.H. Roco owns Lot 35, in Section B, he does not show to be buried at Magnolia Cemetery. His wife, Fredericka was interred 26 Aug 1885, and there are several other family members buried there as well.

1870 Harris County Census, Written page 10, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, Houston Dwelling/Family No. 70175. Rudolph Roco, 36, Retail Grocer, and wife Fredericka, 35. He was born in Prussia, she in Texas. Children Carrie, 8, and Oscar, 4, both born in Texas.

1880 Harris County Census, Pg. 120D. Rufus H. Roco, 47, b. Prussia; Shoemaker; parents both b. Prussia. Wife, Fredericka, 44, b. Prussia; parents both b. Prussia. Daughter, Carrie, 19, b. Texas. Both parents b. Prussia; Son, Oscar, 14, b. Texas. Both parents b. Prussia; Son, Base, 9, b. Texas. Both parents b. Prussia. Daughter, Tara TELSPAR, age 2, b. Texas; Both parents born Prussia.

*Stabe/Staub/Stube/Stahe*. Henry Stabe was born 28 Nov 1830 near Hesse Cassel, Germany. On 17 Mar 1855 he married Louisa Bering (born 22 Mar 1834 in Hofgeismar, Hesse Cassel, Germany, the first daughter and third child of Anna Margaret Riese and John Bering, and sister to August and Conrad Bering.) Henry Stabe was one of Houston's First Undertakers. (Wall & Staub. 1117-1119 Prairie Avenue; 1897-98 Houston City Directory) He died 19 Feb 1903, several weeks after the death of his wife Louisa on 24 Jan. Henry and Louise Stabe and 9 other members of the family are buried in Glenwood Cemetery (0:10). Their family is listed as *Stahe* on the 1870 Census, pg. 601.

*Charles Zink*. 1870 census also show Charles Zink, 48, carpenter b. Prussia with wife, Mary, 50, born Hessen-Castle along with others in the household (#315 on pg. 569) from Wurtenburg, Bavaria and Prussia. Aside from the black servants, the others were adults of varying occupations which may indicate a boarding house. A Mrs. Mary Zink~ was buried in Section B, Lot No.6, on 17 Sep 1895. A Carol Zink~ was buried in the same lot in 1902.

**EXHIBIT E**  
**MAGNOLIA CEMETERY**  
**816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD**  
**VETERAN BURIALS**

## **Veteran Burials**

On April 16, 2005 Magnolia Cemetery received its designation as an Historic Texas Cemetery. A ceremony and reception was held on the cemetery grounds to commemorate the occasion. In addition to the civil war veterans below, Magnolia is also the resting place for veterans from the Spanish American War, World War I and World War II. It is our desire, over time to highlight more of the brave heroes of these other wars, as well as the lives of those who contributed to the beginnings of our city on the bayou.

HENRY KITE (August 20, 1834 – December 14, 1908) Plot C-152-4  
Private, Co. A, 12th Texas Infantry

NATHAN BRAGG FULLER (October 2, 1849 – January 1, 1920) Plot C-151  
Private, Co. A, Houston Battalion, Texas Infantry

ERNEST HEINZE (1831 – March 10, 1899) Plot B-075  
Musician, 2nd Texas Infantry Musician, 26th Texas Cavalry

FREDERICK BONEWITZ (June 16, 1837 – February 9, 1889) Plot B-034  
Artificer, Kellersberg's Corps of Sappers and Miners

SIMON FREDERICKSON (1832 – November 12, 1894) Plot D-212-1  
Private, Edgar's Battery, Texas Light Artillery

WILLIAM B. JAMES (October 22, 1839 – July 17, 1911) Plot B-048 N½  
Private, Co. C, 4th Texas Cavalry

GEORGE W. ELLIS (January 29, 1845 – January 2, 1927) Plot B-086  
Private, Co. B, 26th Texas Cavalry

## **Burial Information**

### **Brazos Valley DAR Efforts**

In 2012, Magnolia Cemetery was contacted by the Brazos Valley DAR about their possible volunteer efforts to support the cemetery. The DAR has spent countless hours documenting and surveying the cemetery in order to support retention of historical records for future use in perpetuity. Thanks to this effort, Magnolia is in the process of creating a database that will be available via this website and will hold information about each burial in the cemetery along with photographs of markers should they exist.

**EXHIBIT F  
MAGNOLIA CEMETERY  
816 MONTROSE BOULEVARD  
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION SIGN MARKER**

*Number:* 13117

*Marker Title:* Magnolia Cemetery

*Address:* 816 Montrose Blvd.

*City:* Houston

*Subject Codes:* graveyards

*Year Marker  
Erected:* 2002

*Designations:* na

*Marker  
Location:* 816 Montrose Blvd.

*Marker Size:* Historic Texas Cemetery

*Marker Text:* On these grounds in 1884, Henrietta Steiner buried family members John P.W. and Arthur Steiner. A few days later, several members of the First German Methodist Church Of Houston established Magnolia Cemetery for the exclusive use of church members. The Magnolia Cemetery Company applied in 1892 for an amended charter, extending membership privileges to others. Trustees deeded a portion of unused cemetery land to the City of Houston in 1929 to provide right-of-way for Buffalo Drive, now Allen Parkway. In the early 1970s, the group sold another unused part of the land to neighboring American General Insurance Company. This land was later converted to park space that, with the Gus S. Wortham mausoleum, helps create a contemplative environment for visitors and area citizens. In 1984, Magnolia Cemetery became a perpetual care facility, operating as a nonprofit corporation. Among the more than 3,800 persons interred here are veterans of most U.S. wars, including the Civil War. Many descendants of those buried here are active in preserving their families' resting place. Historic Texas Cemetery - 2002

*Cemetery  
Number:* HR-C005

*Cemetery  
Name:* Magnolia Cemetery

*Other Names:*

*City:* Houston

*County:* Harris

*Directions:* 816 Montrose Blvd

*Date  
Designated:* 2002-07-09 00:00:00

*Recording  
Information:* document number V851558

*Size:* 6.0184 acres

*Number of  
Graves:* 3000

*Dates of  
Burials:* 1884 to present