SIX
TO CELEBRATE

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

A Guide to Historic New York City Neighborhoods

Staten Island Cemeteries
Staten Island

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The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

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STATEN ISLAND CEMETERIES

In its early history, New York City was home to an array of small burial sites. In the early 19th century, Manhattan was rapidly transforming into a bustling city, leading to the 1830 passage of an ordinance forbidding burials south of Canal Street. Small churchyard, private and non-sectarian cemeteries continued to be built north of Canal Street until 1847, when the New York State Rural Cemeteries Act was passed to encourage the construction of suburban cemeteries. These Romantic-style cemeteries were fashionable in the mid-19th century as retreats from city life, with pleasant landscaping and air-purifying trees. These cemeteries functioned not only as places of burial, but also as the precursor to major public parks. Two of New York City's grandest cemeteries were designed and built in this style in what were then rural sections of the city: Green-Wood in Brooklyn (established in 1838) and Woodlawn in The Bronx (established in 1865).

After the Rural Cemeteries Act was passed, the greatest concentration of suburban cemeteries was built on the border of Brooklyn and Queens in Newtown Township, dubbed the "city of the dead." In fact, by 1893, roughly 1.5 million people had been buried in 24 cemeteries of varying religious and non-religious affiliations, covering 2,000 acres of land there. In addition to being on the outskirts of the city, Newtown and the surrounding area were also attractive for the development of cemeteries since a provision of the Rural Cemeteries Act mandated that individual cemetery organizations be limited to no more than 250 acres in one county. Thus, this rule was circumvented through the purchase of larger parcels that stood within both Brooklyn (Kings County) and Queens (Queens County).

While much of the city was rapidly expanding and many of its small burial grounds were transformed for other uses, especially in Manhattan, Staten Island remained largely rural. This relative lack of development pressure allowed Staten Island's small burial grounds to remain. From the 17th century well into the 19th century, family farms occupied much of Staten Island, especially in the south. Within the confines of these farms, "Homestead Graves" or family burial grounds were established. These were some of the first community cemeteries on Staten Island, and many of today's cemeteries are still named after the families whose homestead burial grounds were sold for public use. In Staten Island, cemeteries did not discriminate against different races and cultures. At Fountain Cemetery, for example, members of many prosperous African American families, some born into slavery on Staten Island and subsequently freed, are buried there. Another unique aspect of many Staten Island cemeteries is the large amount of granite grave stones, which were quarried in the aptly named Graniteville neighborhood.

Many of the 13 accessible and four inaccessible cemeteries covered in this brochure became abandoned, vandalized or used as dumping grounds in the 20th century. Founded in 1981, the Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries of Staten Island (FACSI) has restored and maintained 11 of these hallowed spaces throughout the borough to date. This vital work includes landscaping and tree work, restoration and placement of grave markers and the production and installation of signage to identify the cemeteries. The organization also keeps archives of photographs, burial lists and cemetery documents, as well as transcribes obscure burial records and makes them available to the public via the Richmond County Genealogy website. In addition to respecting the lives of those buried at these sites, FACSI's important work allows these cemeteries to reclaim and maintain their rightful place as a unique, beautiful and historically significant part of Staten Island's physical fabric.

Long before Ellis Island (established in 1892) became a hub for immigrants seeking to settle in the United States, officials would inspect newcomers onboard their vessels in the harbor. Those who were determined to be ill were sent to Staten Island for treatment. The New York Marine Hospital, or "Quarantine," was a 20-building complex just south of today's St. George Terminal. The hospital sought to protect the city from immigrant-borne infectious diseases, such as yellow fever, typhus, small pox and cholera. The hospital, in operation from 1799 to 1858, could hold as many as 1,500 people at a time. Shanty towns cropped up on the north shore of Staten Island, housing healthy relatives awaiting the return of loved ones. Hospital patients who died were buried in several locations, two of which are known today to be at the intersection of Central Avenue and Hyatt Street in St. George (pictured on this page) and within the Silver Lake Golf Course, where a monument to the gravesite is located near the clubhouse (pictured

on opposite page). These two sites do not have extant grave markers, and are not discernible as cemeteries. However, they are very significant both due to the tens of thousands of people buried in mass graves here, and the important link they provide to New York City's history as a gateway for millions of immigrants from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

The hospital had been established by the state, the land taken by eminent domain, thus leading to much resentment by Staten Island residents. The hospital, considered a blight on this rural farming community, endangered those who lived here, with deadly outbreaks of yellow fever occurring periodically. These epidemics became more common in the 1840s and 1850s, when immigration increased due to huge numbers of Irish famine victims arriving in the city. It was at this time that locals began campaigning to destroy the hospital. On September 1, 1858, the local board of health resolved that the hospital should be destroyed, and that very night, locals torched the hospital to the ground. The act was spearheaded

by John Thompson and Ray Tompkins, a prosperous landowner whose grandfather, Daniel, was Vice President of the United States under James Monroe (Tompkinsville was also named after him). It is believed that the hospital administrator, Dr. Richard Thompson, negotiated to spare the Female Hospital, where the 60 patients on the grounds were relocated during the fire. Authorities generally turned a blind eye. The following evening, the rest of the campus was destroyed by a second fire. There were no casualties, though the two leaders were put on trial. Judge Henry Metcalfe, who lived near the hospital and had a relative who was a victim of yellow fever, acquitted both men.

In 2003, the State of New York began an eight-year process of locating and reinterring the cemetery, exhuming a portion of one of the Marine Hospital gravesites when work began on a new courthouse complex in St. George. Once the cemetery was exhumed, the remains were housed at Moravian Cemetery until April 27, 2014, when FACSI and the American Irish Legislators Society of New York State conducted a memorial reinterment service for the permanent entombment of these immigrants, more than 150 years after their tragic deaths.

Legend of designations

National Historic Landmark:	*NHL*
National Register of Historic Places—District:	*NR-D*
National Register of Historic Places—Property:	*NR-P*
New York City Historic District:	*NYC HD*
New York City Individual Landmark:	*NYC IL*
New York City Interior Landmark:	*NYC INL*

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STATEN ISLAND CEMETERY
established 1847
TRINITY CEMETERY, established 1801
FOUNTAIN CEMETERY, established 1863
VAN STREET CEMETERY, established 1889
(entrance adjacent to 1652 Richmond Terrace, West New Brighton)

This seven-acre site is home to four cemeteries, all established in the 19th century. Currently, Staten Island, Fountain and Van Street Cemeteries are owned by the Staten Island Cemetery Association. Trinity Cemetery was abandoned in 1954 to the City and taken over by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation in 2003. FACSI, which maintains all four of the cemeteries, has marked them as Staten Island / Trinity Cemetery and Fountain / Van Street Cemetery. The entire site is believed to have originally been a Native American burial ground, but the first recorded burial was in Trinity Cemetery in 1802. This site has historical ties to the Revolutionary War. On the grounds of what would become Fountain Cemetery, a skirmish took place between the New Jersey Colonial Army and the British, who established a fort on the grounds of what would become Trinity Cemetery. The British Army docked their ships at a nearby ferry terminal.

Staten Island Cemetery was the first non-sectarian cemetery on the North Shore of Staten Island and was, therefore, named after its location rather than after a religious institution or family. The cemetery was established in 1847, when the state began to encourage the creation of small, non-sectarian cemeteries to accommodate

the influx of immigrants of various faiths. Prior to 1847, the land was owned and farmed by Joseph Ryerrs, who was born into slavery on Staten Island. When he was freed in 1825, he purchased this property and established a family cemetery that would later become a plot in Staten Island Cemetery. Within the combined Staten Island and Fountain Cemeteries, there are hundreds of Civil War veterans and approximately three dozen War of 1812 veterans. The largest standing monument in Staten Island Cemetery is that of James Horner, a "Hawkins Zouave" soldier in the Civil War. A Zouave was a title for light regiments originating in France in 1831 and adopted in America during the Civil War. The Zouaves were characterized by their double-time march, the way they loaded their rifles (lying down, rather than standing), and their North African style uniform, which included baggy pants, short open-front jackets and sashes.Trinity Cemetery was associated with Trinity Chapel, constructed in 1800-02 as an adjunct to the Church of St. Andrew with the aid of Trinity Church in Manhattan. The chapel was destroyed by fire in 1952, but the cemetery had fallen into disrepair long before, around 1914, with only one subsequent burial in 1963. Members of some of Staten Island's early families are buried here.

The other side of the site is occupied by Fountain and Van Street Cemeteries, both non-sectarian. Fountain Cemetery was established in 1863, the same year that its namesake, Henry Fountain, passed away.

Fountain had been a Captain in the War of 1812 and owned the popular Fountain House Hotel, which abutted the land that became Fountain Cemetery. The hotel hosted illustrious guest speakers, such as abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass and opera star Jenny Lind. At the time, the surrounding neighborhood was prosperous. Waterfront and maritime industry flourished,

and there was a public ferry dock across the street. The cemetery was instantly successful due to its proximity to Manhattan, whose prohibition of new burial sites drove many to purchase plots at Fountain, which featured large family plots to cater to wealthy clients. Some of these are surrounded by fences and identified by stone markers. After the Civil War, Fountain became a popular cemetery for veterans. In fact, the Grand Army of the Republic paraded here yearly from Manhattan. By the 1930s, it was mostly filled, but during the Great Depression, families stopped paying assessment charges. The cemetery was officially abandoned to the City in 1954. In 1981, a group of descendants reconstituted the old cemetery association, rejoining the property with the New York State Division of Cemeteries. In 2003, FACSI began restoring the cemetery, which is in remarkable condition. In addition to the hundreds of obelisks, monuments, grave stones and plot posts still standing, the cemetery has retained most of the original piping around the family plots, a feature largely removed from other cemeteries in the 1950s to allow easier access for maintenance. The Van Street Cemetery section of Fountain Cemetery was purchased for $1 in the 1880s, and is laid out with single rows of graves. At roughly one acre, the cemetery was full within 30 years.

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Lake Cemetery
established 1834
*(Forest Avenue between Willowbrook
Road and Bayonne Bridge
Expressway, Graniteville)*

Silvie Cemetery
established 1885
*(adjacent to 36 Willowbrook Road,
Graniteville)*

These two adjoining cemeteries, both non-sectarian, make up about three acres within a residential neighborhood. Lake, originally established by the Old Clove Baptist Church, was a largely working-class cemetery. It is the final resting place of Staten Island's third Borough President, Calvin D. Van Name, as well as hundreds of veterans from the Civil War through World War II. Among these are several African American veterans, including members of the Buffalo Soldiers, who were the first African Americans to enter France during World War I. Another noted veteran is Emeline Earl, the only woman from Staten Island to serve in the Civil War. In 1885, the Silvie Funeral Home purchased a large tract of property from Lake Cemetery and resold the graves to its clients, many of whom were deemed unworthy to be buried in Catholic cemeteries (non-baptized infants, unmarried women who died in childbirth and those who committed sins according to the church, for example). The practice of purchasing property from other cemeteries was outlawed in New York State in the 1950s, at which point Silvie would combine with Lake to become one cemetery. From 1979 until very recently, the site was abandoned and used as a homeless encampment and dumping ground for trucks to unload debris. It is currently owned by the Reconstituted Lake Cemetery Association, with FACSI in charge of maintenance. As part of this effort, FACSI replaced many stolen or lost grave markers and restored many existing ones. The site remains an active cemetery, with its most recent burial in 2003.

This two-acre, non-sectarian cemetery was the sister cemetery to Lake, as the two were both established by the congregation of Old Clove Baptist Church. The cemetery commands a lovely sloping site right along a major road, making it very visible and accessible. Over time, five different Baptist churches have managed and operated the cemetery. Currently, the Willowbrook Park Baptist Church keeps the deed on the property, while FACSI performs all necessary maintenance. In 2014, the church is working to raise the funds needed to fix the cemetery's retaining wall. A large number of ship captains were buried at Hillside, and several large plots within the cemetery were purchased by the Italian and Polish Social clubs that operated for immigrant support. The old granite quarry that supplied much of the stone for Staten Island's grave markers, and gives the Graniteville neighborhood its name, was located directly behind Hillside Cemetery.

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Merrell Cemetery
established 1784
*(Merrill Avenue and Richmond
Avenue, Bulls Head)*

Established as a homestead burial ground of the Merrell and other associated families, this cemetery is approximately one acre in size. The cemetery is located on Merrill Avenue, which, despite the different spellings, is named after the same family. The Merrell Cemetery Association holds the deed for the cemetery, but FACSI restored and continues to maintain the site.

Sylvan Cemetery
established 1690
(Glen Street and Victory Blvd, Travis)

Ridgway Cemetery
established circa 1760 *(Victory Blvd and Glen Street inside Sylvan Cemetery, Travis)*

Similar to Hillside Cemetery in its sloping, roadside location, Sylvan Cemetery is believed to have been a Native American burial ground. The site is significant as one of the oldest extant cemeteries on Staten Island, established by European settlers in the 17th century as the Cannon Family Burial Hill. It was the final resting place of some of Staten Island's most prominent families, and it is also rumored that British soldiers from the Revolutionary War were buried here. In 1781, the cemetery was opened to the public. A century later, in the 1880s, the site was in severe decline, and by the 1930s, it had been entirely abandoned. A survey done in 1923 found 235 gravestones or markers representing just over 250 individuals still visible on the landscape. DCAS took the site in the 1950s and it has been owned by the Parks Department since 2003.

The Ridgway family, one of the oldest on Staten Island, had a large farm in Travis that included a family burial ground. One of the last descendants of the family was Matthew Bunker Ridgway (1895-1993), a United States Army General during World War II and the Korean War (during which he resurrected the United Nations war effort), and a decorated hero who was recognized with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1986. In the 1980s, a developer illegally built a large structure on the site of Ridgway Cemetery. FACSI notified the General, but by the time he was engaged in the issue, the burial ground had already been obliterated. In 2013, FACSI moved the remaining gravestones to nearby Sylvan Cemetery, where a plaque and enclosure commemorates them.
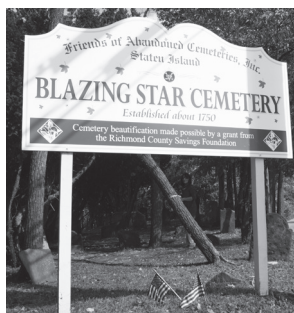
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BLAZING STAR CEMETERY
aka Sleight Family
Graveyard, established
1740
(Arthur Kill Road by Rossville Avenue, Rossville) — NYC IL

The Blazing Star Cemetery, also known as the Sleight Family Graveyard or Rossville Burial Ground, was one of the first homestead graveyards in Staten Island. The earliest grave markers, many of which are made of brownstone, date to around 1750. Members of prominent early Staten Island families are buried here, including that of Peter Winant (sometimes spelled Pieterse Wynant), who was born in Brooklyn in 1663 and died in Staten Island in 1758. His father, Peter Winant Sr., was one of a group of men who made the first permanent European settlement on Staten Island in 1661. Today, the cemetery has been restored and is maintained by FACSI. The cemetery's peaceful location, adjacent to the Arthur Kill waterway, is described in the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) designation report for the property: "There is no railing enclosing the cemetery or any architecture to detract our attention from the silent mood that prevails over these grounds...Here amid the passing seasons a bit of history stands recorded."

Adding to the site's already evocative atmosphere is another graveyard of sorts within the waterway adjacent to and visible from the cemetery, the Arthur Kill "ship graveyard." This was the former location of a mooring slip where the Blazing Star Ferry ran between Staten Island and New Jersey. Beginning in the 1930s, the Witte Marine Equipment Company operated a ship salvage and resale business on the Rossville shoreline, where an unknown number of historic ships was left to decompose. There are various theories as to why so much equipment has not been dismantled or scrapped. Whether it is due to an overflow of ships coming in or whether the company's owner, John J. Witte, intended to leave them as a historical record, today this tableau of marine ruins is much appreciated by artists, photographers and history buffs. The site is today run by the Donjon Marine Company (the successor to the Witte Marine Company), which discourages visitation for safety reasons, making the view from Blazing Star all the more special.

FOUR INACCESSIBLE CEMETERIES

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JOURNAY CEMETERY
established circa 1800
*(inside Bloomingdale Park at Carlton
Boulevard and Halpin Avenue, Woodrow)*

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This small family homestead cemetery is located within the wood of Bloomingdale Park. Roughly 30 people were buried here, but only a small number of downed headstones have been located.

The Richmond County Poor Farm was established in 1829 to improve social and health care services to the poor and otherwise dependent, who exchanged labor for room and board. When Staten Island became a borough of New York City in 1898, the City took over the property and renamed it the New York City Farm Colony. In 1915, the Farm Colony merged with Seaview Hospital across Brielle Avenue. After the United States government passed the Social Security Act in 1935, the

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COLONY MEADOW
former New York City Farm
Colony, established 1829
*(Walcott Avenue between Fields and
Washington Avenues, Willowbrook)*
NYC IL

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numbers of residents in poorhouses like this one steadily declined. The Farm Colony finally closed its doors in 1975. Some of the property was handed over to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation in 1982, and the remaining 70 acres, along with the Seaview Hospital campus, were designated a historic district by the LPC in 1985. Over the years, the Farm Colony has been neglected, its buildings crumbling and vandalized.

Located at the northwest corner of the Farm Colony is the Potter's Field, which was in use by the Farm Colony until as late as the 1970s. No complete cemetery burial logs survive, but FACSI is currently in the process of establishing a burial list using funerary records. Most Farm Colony residents were buried in group interments, as there was little money for individual burials. It is believed that there are areas of the site where amputated limbs from patients at Seaview Hospital were buried in mass graves, as well. In 2014, a plan was unveiled to repurpose and develop the Farm Colony as an age-restricted retirement community, incorporating some of the historic buildings, which will be restored. FACSI was engaged in conversations about the redevelopment plans, at which time the Potter's Field was renamed "Colony Meadow." The site is quite large, but only one gravestone is extant. The cemetery landscape will be restored, thus respecting its occupants and the history of the Farm Colony. A proposed future entrance to Colony Meadow will be on Walcott Avenue.

"Forgotten Acre" is the final resting place of approximately 1,000 Merchant Marines World War I veterans. These men are believed to have died en route to or from service in Europe while in quarantine at the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Clifton (now the Bayley Seton Hospital). In 2011, the Ocean View Cemetery restored the site, righting grave markers and clearing stray branches and weeds. On Veteran's Day of that year, flags were placed at each grave to honor those buried here about a century ago. FACSI runs controlled visits of the site periodically, but it is not accessible to the public.

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"FORGOTTEN ACRE," FORMER U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE HOSPITAL established 1895-1930 *(inside Ocean View Cemetery, Oakwood)*

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OLD CLOVE BAPTIST CEMETERY established 1802 *(corner of Richmond Road and Clove Road, Concord)*

Established as a burial ground of the Clove Baptist Church (formed in 1809 and abandoned in the 1840s), this site is quite small at roughly 100' x 50' in total size. There are approximately 50 burials. FACSI installed a sign to mark the cemetery's location at the southwest corner of Richmond Road and Clove Road, but the site is overgrown and the grave markers are not visible from the intersection.

NEW JERSEY

Staten Island Ferry

Upper New York Bay

Richmond Terrace

Silver Lake Park

Castleton Avenue

Bay Street

Verrazano-Narrows Bridge

Fort Wadsworth

Clove Road

Clove Lakes Park

Kill Van Kull

Targee Street

Staten Island Expressway

Forest Ave

Goethals Road North

Lower New York Bay

Midland Boardwalk & Beach

High Rock Park

Willowbrook Park

W Shore Expressway

Victory Boulevard

Freshkills Park

Staten Island Railway

Hylan Boulevard

Neck Creek

La Tourette Park

Great Kills Park

Richmond Avenue

Great Kills Harbor

Arthur Kill

Arden Woods

Arden Avenue

Amboy Road

Hugenot Avenue

Rossville Avenue

Blue Heron Park Preserve

Bloomingdale Park

Wolfes Pond Park

Page Avenue

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Miles

Conference House Park