

## Records summary 8-22

Union Baptist Church is the owner and maintains 2 of the most important African American Cemeteries in southern ,Ohio and 2 of the most important sites in Cincinnati. Union Baptist Cemetery 4933 Cleves Warsaw Pike is located on one of Cincinnati's hilltops in the Price Hill neighborhood, five miles west of downtown Cincinnati where the Union Baptist Church resides. The Board of Trustees of the Union Baptist Church purchased the land on August 31, 1865, and the deed was recorded on September 2, 1865 and United American Cemetery.

The United American Cemetery is located at 4732 Duck Creek in Madisonville with an entrance east of Kennedy Avenue. The 11.4 acres site contains approximately 5000 burials, including many unmarked graves.

The UA cemetery was founded by the United Colored American Association in 1888. The cemetery incorporated graves which had been previously located at a Colored Cemetery in Avondale which had been established in 1848. United Colored Association's early officers included Robert Gordon, a former slave who came to Cincinnati in 1847 and purchased his freedom and later became a wealthy coal dealer; Hartwell Parham an affluent tobacco merchant and father of William Parham- the first Black nominated to the Ohio State Legislature; and Wendell P. Dabney who founded and edited in one of first Black newspapers in the United States called Union.

The cemetery during the mid-1900 became increasingly neglected. Councilman Charles P. Taft, trustee of Spring Grove Cemetery was appointed to operate the cemetery. In 1968 he transferred the cemetery to the Union Baptist Church. There is no written account of a burial site in Madisonville for Blacks prior to the United American Cemetery. In the City of Cincinnati, Blacks were buried in Potter's Field alongside the Millcreek and

Avondale's Black Cemetery. United American cemetery is an active cemetery, and burials continue in some areas. No new burials are permitted in historic areas. Union Baptist has some graves available that are owned but not in use by family members. And both cemeteries are proceeding in tandem.

The cemeteries are in despair need of preservation and restoration of the sites and its records. Union Baptist Church has the collection of cemetery records for the 2 cemeteries dating back to the mid-1800. All of the documents are fragile paper documents. Some of the documents are in bounded books, notebooks, index cards, maps, with information like, birth, death, next of kin, cause of death and addresses of individuals buried in our cemeteries. Many of these individuals have made contributions to American beginning with Slavery, the Underground Railroad warriors and our Civil War Heroes. Educational and outreach materials and activities for the community must be developed so our citizens will be able to benefit from these historical gems for the next 100 years.

Over time these records have deteriorated, tattered and tore, some almost unreadable due to age, water/moisture damage and even soot from the coal furnaces in our old churches lace many of our documents. You can see and still smell of coal in 2020. Many of the records are just thrown into boxes in an unorganized fashion as groups of old paper scrapes. Presently these documents are exposed and not secure in a safe place at the church. Our forefather did a stellar job in keeping the records up to a point. The last 30 years, care for the records was way down on the list, just storage in a closet, like a keepsake. A second set of handwritten records were kept by the Cemetery Burial Caretaker Buddy Kinder. He used his set of records to make sure he was



burying individuals in the correct graves and to share with visiting families where their love ones were buried especially in unmarked graves. We are unsure if these records are accurate due to vandalism and a leaky roof and weatherization at the Union Baptist Church Cemetery administration building ,that is also in disrepair. These records were moved to the church in November 2019.This job of maintaining records became even harder due to environmental changes, movement and deterioration of graves in the cemetery over 200 years. even changes from wood to concrete boxes for caskets over time could change a grave. We have to use grave penetration probes to secure the location of a loved one, just one example.

The University of Cincinnati's Preservation Lab in the fall of 2019 was invited to Union Baptist Church to look at our cemetery records . They provide us with a brief overview directions /resources and some of the immediate steps that need to be taken. This visit was the start of gaining understand the significance of the task we had before us and the need to use professionals and new technology/media along this journey.

We must bring dignity to individuals /records of the souls buried in our cemeteries. Through this grant the community will be the Value Added, so that African American history, culture , contributions to the world can be shared. We must remember, educate and celebrate our ancestors through these rich records that we have been given the responsibility as stewards of care. We want to secure the final resting place for

Our task includes organizing over 50 thousand documents, copying, restoration, preservation, data entry ,cloud storage, physical storing and securing the records for the next 100 years. Digitation of records, Providing access to the public and sharing our "Dose of Cemetery" on the web. Incorporate maps or web - based opportunities for individuals to use when visiting the

cemeteries for any reason. Lectures ,walking tours and our collaboration with the state of Ohio in activities that are an integral part of the 250th year celebration of the Declaration of Independence in July 2026, Black History Month and Juneteenth Celebrations are spliced into the fabric of the scope of restoration and preservation work of our cemetery records..