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Verdier Mausoleum Conservation

The Verdier mausoleum is located in Laurel Grove South Cemetery. The structure is constructed of a brick and mortar barrel vault and a marble slab door. The mausoleum is the only one of its kind in Laurel Grove South Cemetery and represents an ante-bellum, Victorian Era, African-American barrel vault mausoleum.

Conservation of the structure was determined a priority as it was deemed in danger of loss in 2003. The front façade was failing and showing signs of brick and mortar failure as well as differential settlement. The marble lintel piece was fractured and resting on the marble slab door. The parapet wall on the front façade had numerous loose bricks and the half-circle marble marker was loose with no mortar present. The door jambs around the marble slab were also damaged and two pieces of marble from the right side of the door jamb were found during excavation. The side façade walls had lost a couple of courses and the roofing system was non-existent. Extensive debris accumulation had built up upon the roof promoting vegetative growth. A small tree had taken root on the barrel vault and was causing massive damage. The barrel vault also has two vents at the apex of the roof near the front and rear walls. The vents were allowing water entry into the structure.

Excavations near and around the site produced evidence of a slate roofing system on masonry substrate. On the rear side of the front parapet wall a line of moss and lichens provided an outline of the original roof pitch. Several bricks were salvaged during excavation and returned to the structure.

Located in the front of the mausoleum is an obelisk with three epitaphs carved with the names of three Verdier's. It was also noted that Verdier had been spelled Verdere on the half-circle marble stone and Verdier on the remaining four epitaphs. The half-circle marble stone has the inscription of "Robert Verdere/ Family Vault" with flower relief and on the reverse side "Sacred/ to the memory of Hon. / Daddy Benus".

The marble door epitaph inscription is, "Sacred/ to the memory of/ Mrs. Elizabeth Verdier/ born in Charleston, So. Ca. May 12th 1810/ she departed this life June 15th 1866/ Aged 56 Years 1 Month and 3 Days. /space/ Fling to the headless winds, / or on the waters cast_/ Their ashes shall be watched/ and gathered at the last.

On the East façade of the obelisk is the epitaph of Robert Verdier, " Sacred/ to the memory of/ Robert Verdier/ A member and/ Deacon of the First/ African Baptist/ Church./ He was much beloved/ with his

church and/ very faithful in the/ discharge of his duty/ he was born/ January 4th 1812/ he departed this life/ March 25th 1864./ He leaves an affectionate/ wife to mourn her loss.

On the North façade is an epitaph for Ceaser Verdier, "Sacred/ to the memory of/ Ceaser Verdier/ who was a member/ and a Deacon of the/ First African Baptist/ Church/ He was very faithful/ in the discharge of/ his duty and was very/ much beloved with/ his church/ he departed this life/ March 3rd 1864/ Aged 45 years. / He leaves an affectionate/ wife to mourn her loss.

On the South façade of the obelisk is the inscription of William Verdier, "Sacred/ to the memory of/ William Verdier/ who was born/ October 30th 1831 and/ departed this life/ June 14th 1855.

Conservation of the structure consisted of removing the debris from the roof and extracting the root system of the tree that was growing in and dismantling the brickwork. The front façade wall was braced and the failed brick work was removed the brick work was reset with new mortar along with the marble door jamb on the right and the brick piece door jamb on the left. The cracks behind the half-circle were filled in with mortar. The damaged brickwork from the tree roots was also relayed. The loose courses of brickwork on the rear of the front façade were relayed. The half-circle marble stone was reset with mortar. Three courses on the side facades were relayed and the rubble fill was relayed. The entire structure was re-pointed with new lime mortar.

The roofing system was constructed of recycled period slate tile from another site. The tiles were dimensioned and squared before installation. The slate was laid with a lime masonry membrane and cooper nails for fastening. The vents were re-engineered utilizing a custom "hidden vent" design. The roof was capped with a copper ridge-cap with a slate patina.

The marble markers, ledgers, and obelisk were thoroughly rinsed with water, washed with Kodak's photo-flo, and thoroughly rinsed on an overcast day.