

CHAUX VIVE

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Recommendations for the St. Nicholas Cemetery Patoutville, LA



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Above: Representative condition of several historic tombs in Patoutville Cemetery.

The St. Nicholas Cemetery in Patoutville, Louisiana (hereafter referred by its common name of Patoutville Cemetery) was founded in the late nineteenth century and features a range of above ground tombs from simple brick tombs to the grand stone tomb of the Patouts. The cemetery is still the site of burials today, including the construction of new tombs. Many of the older tombs have fallen into disrepair, resulting in concerns that they tombs may be demolished. Efforts are currently underway to identify descendents.

After a site visit conducted on December 5, 2006, Chaux Vive makes the following recommendations for the continued preservation of the cemetery. First of all, Chaux Vive applauds the current efforts that have been undertaken in this direction, and emphasizes they must continue in the future.

As restoration and preservation efforts will necessitate a number of changes to the site. While hopefully many of these changes will be welcome, such as a family undertaking the restoration of a tomb, some will undoubtedly be less than desirable, such as the demolition of a tomb. Therefore, the documentation of the site is of utmost importance. The photographs, notes, letters, and other documents will create the ultimate resource on the Patoutville Cemetery, not only for families of those associated with the cemetery, but any individual interested in the local history and genealogy.

The first step for the newly created group must be to create a preservation plan for the site that outlines its goals for the continued care and maintenance of the site. The preservation plan should include the following elements:

Develop a classification system for each tomb. The system should identify each tomb terms of historical and architectural significance (e.g. a burial of a historically significant tomb, a tablet with unique ornament) as well as the overall condition of the tomb. This system will focus preservation efforts on those tombs that are in desperate need of attention.

For example, the Patout tomb is architecturally and historically significant, but is in good condition and does not necessitate major intervention at this time. But, the tomb of Dugleon Louviere not only houses the remains of a locally significant historical figure, it is also in extremely poor condition and has been threatened with demolition. Therefore, the Louviere tomb should receive attention before the Patout tomb. By examining every tomb in the cemetery for significance as well as condition, restoration funds can be prioritized.



Above: New concrete pads in the cemetery

Create treatment options that retain the historic character of the cemetery. With the creation of set treatment options, a tomb owner can execute work compatible to the historic character of the site. An established set of treatment options will allow tomb

owners to feel less overwhelmed by providing a set plan for the restoration of their tomb. These recommendations can also encompass any new construction that is taking place at the cemetery, to prevent inappropriate new tombs or encroaching on historic plots.

For example, several tomb owners are opting to destroy the last remnants of their heavily deteriorated historic tombs and installing a concrete slab in its place. If this practice proliferates, the Patoutville Cemetery will take on the appearance of a modern cemetery that is nothing more than a memorial to concrete. If salvaging the tomb is not an option, at least create an option to the concrete. By encouraging tomb owners to construct brick pads, perhaps even out of the bricks from their historic tombs, the site will retain its links to its historic past. Furthermore, the concrete pads can trigger drainage problems for the site, as well as hazards to adjacent tombs during construction that can be minimized through the construction of brick pads.

Encourage the use of appropriate materials and techniques. The character of the historic tombs in Patoutville Cemetery necessitates using the right materials. These materials are usually the materials the tomb was originally constructed with, as compared to later repairs and interventions. Specific material recommendations can be found in the *St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 Guidelines for Preservation and Restoration* created by the University of Pennsylvania Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. They are available online at www.noladeadspace.org.

For example, historic tombs constructed before about 1900 routinely used a mortar and stucco



Above: Damage done to the historic brick by the application of an inappropriate stucco



Right: A tomb that may require demolition if the owner does not restore it

created from mix of sand and lime. Modern mortars and stuccos have added a cement component to the mix. While cement is appropriate for concrete blocks and other modern materials, it is inappropriate for the soft historic bricks that comprise the majority of these tombs. A cement based mortar or stucco will accelerate the decay and deterioration of the softer historic bricks, causing flaking, powdering, and additional damage. An example of a typical preservation plan for a historic tomb follows.

Encourage community involvement in the cemetery. The local population associated with the cemetery has the greatest connection to the site. Whether it's through familial ties to those buried within or simply the familiarity of always seeing the cemetery as part of their daily routine, the local community is a shareholder in the future of the cemetery. Encourage local involvement through activities and fundraisers, as well as volunteer projects, such as having local scout troops or volunteers clean preselected tombs. By “working” on the tombs, the local community will become an active component of the preservation.

For example, a volunteer project undertaken at St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 utilized a number of tour guides. They spent the day scrubbing and limewashing tombs. From that day forward, the tour guides kept a close eye on the site, especially of the tombs they had worked on. They became protective of the tombs and site, preventing any act of desecration during their watch.



The Domingues Tomb, Patoutville Cemetery, Patoutville, LA

Representative Preservation Plan for the Domingues Tomb:

Document: Before work begins, photograph each elevation and the roof of the tomb with high quality high resolution digital photographs or archival quality standard photographs. Take detail shots of any significant historical or architectural details as well as any areas of significant damage or loss. When work is completed, replicate the previous shots with the same photographs of the tomb at its present state.

Stucco/Mortar Repairs: Remove any loose and flaking paint with a paint scraper. Do not use the metal scraper on any stone or tablet. Scrub the entire tomb down with water and a soft bristle scrub brush to remove accumulated dirt. Remove any loose or detached stucco. If an area of detached stucco retains any key information, such as the name carved above the vault opening, reattach the stucco through grout injection. If stucco removal has exposed underlying bricks, remove any dirt, loose mortar, invasive vegetation and the like from the mortar joints. If necessary, repoint with a soft lime based mortar mix of one part lime to three parts masonry sand. Patch the areas of missing stucco with a mix of one part lime to two parts masonry sand. Give the new patches the same appearance as the historic stucco. Fill any cracks with the same 1 lime: 2 sand stucco mix. Allow the stucco to cure. Paint the exposed stucco with a limepaint in a color to be chosen by the tomb owner.

Stone/Tablet Repairs: Clean accumulated dirt and staining with a soft bristle scrub brush and water applied at low pressure. If staining persists after several attempts to clean, contact an architectural conservator for further advice. If the stone appears to be flaking, spalling, or sugaring, a consolidant may have to be applied by an architectural conservator. Ensure the tablet or stone is well adhered to the tomb to prevent falling or theft.

Metalwork Repairs: For extant ironwork, remove any scaling or rust with metal finish pads and wire brushes. Clean with acetone. Paint the ironwork with an oil based paint designed for metal. Apply at least one coat of primer and two coats of paint in the color chosen by the tomb owner. Ensure any metalwork is in no danger of falling or theft.

Supplies

The majority of the basic tools needed for cemetery preservation are available at hardware and building supply stores. Even the drug store can supply items like scrub brushes or sponges. A basic supply list includes:

- Hoses
- Spray nozzles
- Scrub brushes (soft, natural bristle or white nylon for stone and stucco; metal for cleaning metal)
- Toothbrushes / Denture brushes (for detail work such as lettering on a tablet)
- Scrapers
- Paint brushes
- Metal sanding pads

Chaux Vive recommends purchasing lime and limewash from Virginia Lime Works:

Virginia Lime Works
P. O. Box 516
Monroe, VA 24574
434.929.8113
www.virginialimeworks.com

Virginia Lime Works is an excellent source for lime, sand, and limewash. They can create custom mixes of stucco and mortar, called “Mix & Go”, for cemetery restoration work. By supplying pre-mixed bags of materials, the chances are greater the right materials will be used for the work. They can also create custom colored limewashes and limepaints.