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## **TWO SHELBY COUNTY CEMETERIES ADDED TO ALABAMA HISTORIC CEMETERY REGISTER**

The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) recently added Harmony Graveyard (“Helena City Cemetery”) and Harmony Cemetery to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register.

“The cemetery register is a prestigious listing of historic cemeteries in Alabama,” said Lee Anne Wofford, cemetery program coordinator. “The AHC considers the notable historic cemeteries in this register to be particularly worthy of preservation and appreciation, and therefore deserving of this special recognition.”

There are now twenty-one cemeteries in Shelby County listed on the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register, which features 368 cemeteries statewide.

Harmony Graveyard, commonly referred to as the Helena City Cemetery began as a burying ground for the Harmony Presbyterian Church, the first church constructed in the neighborhood that would become Helena. Sometime between 1886 and 1893, the church moved a short distance south to its present site. The church still owns the cemetery property and over the years, the city of Helena has purchased adjacent land. The earliest marked grave is that of Jones Griffin whose death occurred in 1836. This cemetery contains many prominent and important settlers who contributed greatly to Helena and Shelby County.

Located adjacent to the Harmony Graveyard is Harmony Cemetery, which has always been used as a burying ground by Helena’s African-American residents. The cemetery has fourteen grave markers with identifiable information and numerous unmarked graves, some marked only by rocks. According to local tradition, slaves, ancestors of slaves and men killed in the Mossboro mine explosion are buried here.

The Alabama Historical Commission administers the Alabama Historic Cemetery Program that gives aid to the general public, government officials, civic groups, and others in identifying, documenting, registering, and conserving Alabama’s historic cemeteries.

The Alabama Historic Cemetery Register officially recognizes and honors family and community cemeteries that were established at least 40 years ago.

Listing in the state cemetery register is an honorary designation imposing no restrictions on property owners. State law protects all cemeteries from willful desecration and destruction.

*To protect, preserve, and interpret Alabama’s historic places is the mission of the **Alabama Historical Commission**, the **State Historic Preservation Office**.*

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