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African Burial Ground National Monument

The African Burial Ground in New York is the country's first and biggest known African American cemetery with 18th-century slaves. It has been considered one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of our time. But it is more than that: it is the ultimate resting place of some of New York's first African and African American pioneers, despite being long buried and often abused. To honor and recognize the financial and physical contributions of enslaved Africans in colonial New York, an outdoor memorial, interpretive center, and research library were built and placed in this community. The African Burial Ground served as an important focus for African community identity (C. Moore, 2023).

What most stood out to me was that no more than twelve people were allowed in funeral processions or graveside rites, and interment was not authorized at night, which is the typical time for many African burial traditions. To go more than a mile from home, enslaved Africans were needed to get a written pass. For many, it was the distance between their Lower Manhattan houses and the cemetery. Another information that stood out to me was that archaeological digs have showed that the dead were buried separately, most in wooden coffins, arms folded or laid at their sides and orientated with heads to the west. Bodies were wrapped in shrouds and buried with objects like money, shells, and jewelry. The Burial Ground became overcrowded over time, with graves stacked three and four deep in some locations. According to some archaeologists, the cemetery housed 20,000 men, women, and children.

I believe the staff represented the topic or group of people in the African Burial Ground Monument in a respected form, as in how they spoke and dressed. They knew a lot about the background and history of everything that was presented to us. They explained it with details and gave a good representation of the history. I believe having a job like this requires a lot of knowledge and the staff had it all, they were filled with information and knowledge. They answered each question that were asked, by elaborating it with details and events.

During my visit, I learned that the African Burial Ground is of national relevance because of what it can teach us about the lives of Africans and African Americans in urban settings. The deceased and their property contribute to a fuller history of New York City in the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as what life was like for Africans in the city. The findings show the value of collaboration across anthropology, archaeology, and history. It also serves as a poignant reminder that slavery was widespread across the colonies. Its mission is to “promote understanding of related resources, encourage ongoing research, and provide interpretive opportunities and programs for visitors to better understand and honor the culture and vital contributions of generations of African and Americans of African descent to our Nation...” (C. Moore, 2023).

Sources

C. Moore, 2023. *African Burial Ground in History*. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://www.nps.gov/afbg/learn/historyculture/african-burial-ground-in-history.htm>