Silent Histories
An Exhibit Guide

Through the lens of Freddie Herpin, an award winning staff photographer of the Opelousas Daily World for the past 15 years, these photographs blend the past of yesterday, the reality of today, and the future of tomorrow.

Cemeteries featured in the exhibit:

Agulliard or Savoie Cemetery–Savoie Community (St. Landry)
Located in the back of a field, you'll find a few recent grave that are well kept. The older part of the cemetery is not maintained. As with most, graves are crumbling and headstones broken and scattered.

Collins Cemetery–Big Cane (St. Landry), La.
This is two cemeteries in one--a small family plot on top and an Indian mound underneath, sitting in a pasture undisturbed in a grove of trees. Trees are down and animals have made their home in the grove. This is only one of a very few that hasn't been vandalized.

Hundley or Prudhomme Cemetery–Prudhomme City (Acadia), La.
Located on the edge of Miller's Lake in a grove of trees, many graves have been vandalized and headstones taken by people who fished the lake. Today, markers are scattered and cattle roam the area.

Sacquette or Bihm or Lower Waxia Cemetery–Waxia (St. Landry), La.
Established in 1845 by Jacob Bihm, it was once overgrown and unkept. It’s history tells of epidemics, mass burials, and Cypress markers. Due to the efforts of the Bihm family, it is one of the prettiest in the parish. Camellias, lillies and other flora abound.

McBride Cemetery–Palmetto (St. Landry), La.
This abandoned cemetery is lost in a patch of woods and you have to know where you are going to find it; even though the parish road runs within 20 feet of it. What headstones that are there, are misplaced by the trees and iron crosses mark unknown graves. This at one time, was the local cemetery for the Village of Palmetto.

Jules Cemetery–Lanse Aux Paille (Evangeline), La.
This once lost cemetery in the middle of a rice field has been restored. It is now surrounded by planned landscaping and many cedar trees. A small chapel has been built there also.
Mt. Olivet Cemetery—Whiteville (St. Landry), La.
Located in a pasture in a fenced-in grove of trees. It is being restored at present. Located there at one time also was a Baptist Church.

Bethel Methodist Ch. or Whipp Cemetery—Garland (St. Landry), La.
A small church stood there at one time. It was served by a circuit rider. The grass is kept mowed but the graves and the headstones need major repair before they are lost.

St. Andrews Catholic Cemetery—Plaisance (St. Landry), La.
In use today. Iron crosses with French inscriptions tell of earlier times while rows of children’s graves tell of their short lives. The old and the new blending together in the rural area.

Bertrand or Pitre #2 Cemetery—Prairie Ronde (St. Landry), La.
An active cemetery with rounds well kept but the work of vandals is evident. Brick graves have crumbled beyond repair and forgotten. Flags mark the veterans from the previous war.

St. Rose Cath. Mission—Dubuisson (St. Landry), La.
Once lost in trees and underbrush, it has been cleaned up and maintained. Many graves are lost but broken bricks or markers and crumpled ornate fencing is found on the banks of the bayou.

Old Morrison Cemetery—Barbreck (St. Landry), La.
On the banks of Bayou Boeuf amid cow trails and the remains of iron fencing, lie several headstones in the vines and grasses. None are standing and those there are broken, misplaced, and many missing pieces.

Unknown Black Cemetery—Washington (St. Landry), La.
On the old Offutt Plantation along side a gully, this cemetery has been almost totally destroyed by vandal and cattle. Little is known about this one at this time.

Rideau or Godeau Cemetery—Palmetto (St. Landry), La.
Overlooking Petit Prairie Bayou, only a couple of graves remain. It is kept clean but one wonders how many other graves are there.

Burleigh Cemetery—Big Cane (St. Landry), La.
Parts of this one were destroyed and pieces they found were put back together. Examples of fencing and unusual head stones grace this roadside spot.

Mt. Vernon Cemetery—Garland (St. Landry), La.
Overgrown and needing cleaning, this is another in a stand of trees with farmland all around. Trees are down, headstones are broken or displaced and animals have tunneled under some of the slabs. Contacts have been made with some of the families and cleanup is getting underway.

Pitre #1 Cemetery—Prairie Ronde (St. Landry), La.
Small roadside cemetery in a pasture. Ornate fencing and markers here. Does have some crumbling brick graves. Unique find is the concrete box tomb that has a fence across the middle with ½ in two different pastures.

South Bend Cemetery—Bayou Sale (Iberia), La.
Although this is not in Imperial St. Landry, This roadside cemetery of Pre-Civil War era is almost totally destroyed by vandals. Efforts to restore were done and vandals returned. Of all the unique tombs or crypts, this is what remains.

1. Title Panel
2. Broken headstones in unkept section of cemetery
3. Grave house circa 1890 built over two graves to protect from vandals, animals, and the elements
4. 9 graves sites on top of an Indian Mound
5. CSA Veteran with name missing. Daughter and baby buried alongside
6. Example of growths (Fungus, mold, etc.) that can destroy the tombstone with time
7. Groupings of families in an enclosed area or those buried next to each other can sometimes be a missing link in a search for ancestors. Here, 5 families are grouped together
8. Tombstone that is almost unreadable due to the elements and trees
9. An unmarked grave that was not identified and family members are now gone. A new marker (2001) replaces the iron cross that marked two brothers buried on top of one another
10. Many examples of ornate iron fencing in the cemeteries. Note the Blackjack Vine, common in this area, on the fence. The leaves in the ironwork stands for Eternal Plenty
11. This headstone fallen from its base starts to sink due to its weight. Many times headstones may be found just under the ground surface if you look. Probing is a technique used to locate the stones
12. One of the many figurines or ornaments adorning gravesites. This one is found on a child's grave.

13. Example of ornamental iron fencing. Many of these old fences have been taken and then resold. Many times, we only find a post left.


15. Childen’s graves that remind us of Typhoid and Yellow Fever Epidemic.

16. As the lake rises, graves are covered. How many lost to the lake?


18. An unmarked grave in the woods in a lost cemetery.

19. Once a small family cemetery. Now, a reminder of what once was.

20. Graves destroyed by vandals; cemetery by Hurricane Lili.

21. One of the many houses on graves found in the area.

22. Forgotten under a tree with religious figurines watching over the grave.

23. Fraternal or civic emblems found on many headstones.


26. Decaying brick tomb. Vandals or person buried was moved?

27. Design of the iron cross helps to date burial. French transcription.


30. Headstone soon to be lost.

31. Downed Woodmen of the World Marker. Gate missing from fence.


33. Taw Paw Flat—another clue in your search for ancestors.

34. Trees planted next to child's grave.

35. Adornments left by devoted family members.

36. Results of vandalism.

37. Family mausoleum that contained cypress coffins that has been destroyed by vandals. Unseen in one of the openings is a human rib. During Hurricane Lili it was under 4 feet of water.

Stranger, stop and cast an eye,
As you are now, so once was I,
As I am now, so you shall be.
Prepare for death and follow me.