

## OAK-HILL CEMETERY

### Staff Edit

1 In 1914, workers in the local lumber and turpentine industries organized under  
2 Deacon J.B. Anderson to form Mt. Zion Church in Haines City. Trustees of the  
3 church purchased this plot of land for “ten dollars and other valuable  
4 considerations.” Two years later, a small wooden church and cemetery were  
5 established on the site. In 1949, the church, now called the New Mt. Zion  
6 Missionary Baptist Church, moved to a larger site on North 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Burials  
7 continued at the cemetery until 1951. Separated from the church, the cemetery  
8 became known as “The Cemetery on the Hill” or “The Old Cemetery.” Many  
9 formerly enslaved people are believed to be buried at this sacred site, including  
10 Ethel Mae Coleman (1846–1931) and Willis Beal (1855–1930). Missing records  
11 and illegible headstones prevent definitive identification of many people interred  
12 here. Starting in the 1970s, the cemetery was cared for by the Downing family,  
13 who lived on the site of the former church. On August 16, 2016, the City  
14 Commission passed a resolution renaming the cemetery “Oak-Hill Cemetery” and,  
15 two months later, took over maintenance of all cemeteries in the city limits.

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