



HILL HAVURAH AT CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY **– FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

What are the key elements of a traditional Jewish cemetery?

A traditional Jewish cemetery is typically owned by a Jewish community or a Jewish group, and has some kind of barrier around it demarking it as a cemetery for Jews. Usually, there would be a rule that only Jews can be buried there, although sometimes there are interfaith areas out of the formal boundaries of a Jewish cemetery. Such a cemetery also would not have other religious symbols or ceremonies held on site, and there would usually be no food, fun, or other activities that emphasize the living. Bodies are also buried in simple fashion, without embalming or cremation.

How would burial at Congressional Cemetery differ from these elements?

There are a number of ways in which Congressional Cemetery differs from a traditional Jewish cemetery. For congregants involved in the conversations about Congressional, all of these differences are part of what makes it attractive – including, as discussed below, the fact that it is an active and vibrant place with many ongoing activities. At the same time, the Cemetery can accommodate all key elements of Jewish burial, including the quick timetable required. Jewish burial homes in the area have worked with Congressional Cemetery (CC), and there have been a number of Jewish funerals there.

- CC is formally owned by the Christ Church. However, it is separately administered on an entirely secular basis, and there is no interaction with the Church in arranging burial or any other part of the process.
- CC has a chapel that has Christian iconography. However, CC itself is non-denominational, and people of many faiths are buried there. Upon request and with sufficient notice, the Staff covers iconography when the Chapel is being used.
- CC allows groups to purchase plots near each other, but a group may not erect any formal barriers demarking a section of the cemetery.
- People of many faiths are buried in CC. People buried there may also choose to be cremated.
- CC is an active cemetery. For example, CC has a separate group of “K9” members – people who pay an annual fee to be able to let their dogs run free there. The K9 program is a critical part of CC’s budget. That said, CC is often closed to dogs for funerals and other events, including from 9-3 every Saturday. CC also hosts many

other events, such as John Philip Souza's birthday party (he's buried there), Halloween events, movie nights, and much more.

How would Hill Havurah plots at CC work?

First, an initial group of members would purchase plots at CC. All of the interactions will be directly between members and CC – Hill Havurah will play no direct role. After we have made sufficient effort to let everyone who wants to be part of this group join, families would move ahead with purchasing the initial set of plots. As noted in our proposal, we hope this will include purchasing a separate Geniza plot.

CC also accommodates double burials in single plots, so a couple could purchase one plot for both (one is buried beneath the other).

After this initial round, we would have a Havurah webpage devoted to Congressional Cemetery. The page would provide information about this effort, and who to contact at if a member is interested in purchasing plots near the initial set. It would also list any members who have purchased plots who are interested in selling them. And it might also one day list members interested in purchasing plots if available – assuming we reach a point where there are no more plots otherwise available in the specific area we choose.

This site could also inform members of all the places where Havurah members are buried, including places beyond Congressional Cemetery should we choose.

How did you select the specific area in the Cemetery where the group will buy plots?

Cemetery staff initially identified three areas they thought we might be interested in. While there is a fair amount of open space as you walk around the Cemetery, it is deceiving because many plots have been purchased but are not yet "filled."

On further investigation, Cemetery staff concluded that only one of the areas has a sufficient number of available sites near each other. Fortunately, it is also the best of the three areas, as it is in the middle-price range (\$7,750), and is near one of the cemetery "intersections" – which will make it relatively easy to access by vehicle for those who might not be able to walk. The specific location is circled on the attached map showing the Cemetery and prices for each area.

What if HH members want to choose another area of the Cemetery, including an area where plots are less expensive?

Nothing about this plan at all impacts choices Hill Havurah members may make about where to be buried, in Congressional Cemetery or elsewhere. And if a group of members wanted to choose an additional area to be buried together, again nothing would prevent that.

In what ways could we identify the plots as belonging to members?

Several ideas have come up for identifying Hill Havurah members:

- People could choose to put some kind of Havurah insignia on their headstones, perhaps the one of the logos we have used elsewhere such as this:

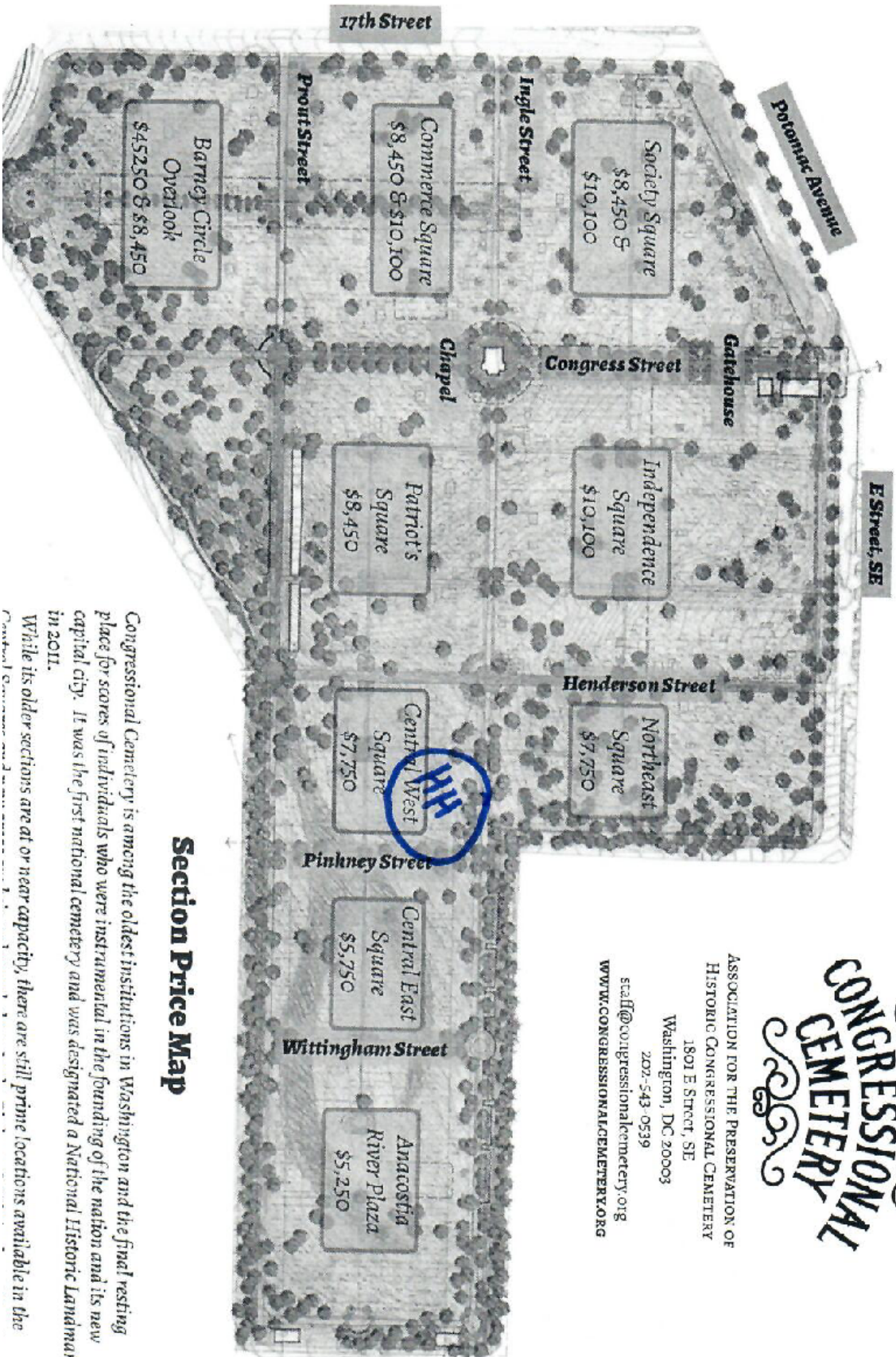


- There could be some kind of list and/or map on the Havurah webpage of members and where they are buried (which, as noted, could include Congressional Cemetery and elsewhere)
- If we ultimately have a Havurah headstone for a Geniza, we might put some kind of list and/or map of Havurah members there (that list would of course change over time).

How would a Geniza work?

A group of the initial participants in this effort are discussing funding a separate plot which would be dedicated for the Geniza. HH could decide later if it wanted to fund a headstone.

The Cemetery charges approximately \$100-\$200 each time a plot is opened up, which is what we would need to do when we want to deposit materials there. So if the Havurah decided to do a sacred texts burial, that would be the cost. The cemetery is responsible for digging in the plot and we would arrange for it to be filled right after texts are deposited. We could use it in this way as frequently – or infrequently – as we choose.



CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY

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