

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-11

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 7, 2023

To recognize and honor the Mount Zion-Female Union Band Society Cemeteries as sacred sites of national significance as they celebrate their 215th anniversary in February 2023.

WHEREAS, the Mount Zion-Female Union Band Society Cemeteries date back to the month of February 1808, when the Dumbarton Street M.E. Church purchased the Old Methodist Episcopal burial ground;

WHEREAS, the church's congregation at that time was 50% black and was a mix of both freed and enslaved persons;

WHEREAS, in 1816, black members of the church separated and created Mount Zion Methodist Church;

WHEREAS, in 1832, a group of free black women created a society, the Female Union Band Society, that pledged to care for one another "in sickness and in death";

WHEREAS, in 1842, the Society purchased a plot of land adjacent to the Old Methodist Episcopal burial ground and established a secular burial ground for African-Americans;

WHEREAS, the tiny 8-by-8-foot cemetery holding vault served as a temporary stop for slaves during their journey to freedom on the Underground Railroad;

WHEREAS, in 1879, Mount Zion Methodist Church leased the burial site from Dumbarton Street M.E.;

WHEREAS, around 8,000-10,000 people are estimated to be buried in the 2 plots known as the Mount Zion-Female Union Band Society Cemeteries;

WHEREAS, the Mount Zion-Female Band Union Cemeteries have survived and remain the oldest remaining African-American cemeteries in Georgetown and greater Washington, D.C.; and,

WHEREAS, the Cemeteries were added to the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites in 1975 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "The Mount Zion-Female Union Band Cemeteries Ceremonial Resolution of 2023".

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Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes the Mount Zion-Female Union Band Society Cemeteries as priceless parts of our city's heritage and power illustrations of resilience, sacrifice and community during a time of profound segregation.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.