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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jack Neely, Aaron Jay. *The Marble City: A Photographic Tour of Knoxville's Graveyards.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999. 88 pp. $16.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-57233-036-8; $34.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-043-6.

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The Marble City is one of a growing number of publications that record the appearance and diversity of regional graveyards. This slender picture book is the result of a collaboration between a newspaper columnist (Neely) and free-lance photographer (Jay), who worked together for a Knoxville weekly and share an enthusiasm for local history. Neely also is the author of *Knoxville's Secret History* (1995), and in his eight-page introduction he comments that cemeteries are the best places to find "strong, tangible hints of the city's past." Yet, he notes, "Knoxvillians don't visit them regularly, following modern America's paradoxical attitude toward graveyards." He and Jay attempt to inspire some new interest.

Neely's introduction offers a general history of Knoxville's graveyards, beginning with accounts of Native American burial mounds and the establishment of the first permanent Euro-American graveyard, a turnip patch turned over to the city by Captain James White as a site for burials and a church. Today there are more than forty burial grounds in Knox County in various sizes and states of repair, containing slaves and slaveholders, paupers and professors, people of many religions, victims of plague and major disasters, and veterans of every war America has fought. Neely points out that these dead do not rest in any chronological or orderly fashion, but graveyards serve as a "nonlinear, often astonishing course in American history, and a testament to the diversity found in an urban community." A "nonlinear" selection of pictures from area graveyards make up the remaining fifty-five pages of the book. The images are accompanied by descriptive text, which samples such loosely organized themes as the accomplishments, era and diversity of the deceased and stylistic features of their markers.

Jay's sixty black-and-white photographs are clear and careful testimonials to the old stone monuments he captures, a project that required patient enterprise and the right light. Mostly focused on individual markers or monuments, they are well-displayed in the book, which was attractively designed by Todd Duren.

The book makes no pretext of being a comprehensive scholarly study. Lacking in footnotes, the text offers little indication as to exactly what sources were plumbed for its content. A handful of general book titles are listed in a bibliography and reference assistance at area libraries is acknowledged. There are no captions for the photographs. Like many books on regional cemeteries, the focus mostly rests on pictures and on biographical information about the dead, providing limited information about monument patronage, makers or reception. The authors might have increased the book's usefulness by including a map, or by listing cemeteries and their addresses as well as the location of pictured monuments.

Despite its opening assertion that cemeteries can be an important on-ramp to the study of history, the book does not provide as much evidence as it might have about the history of monument-making, stylistic preferences or the process of commissioning specific monuments. But the authors' goal clearly was not to create a definitive resource. Rather they sought to tweak our interest, and to encourage Knoxvillians to revisit their graveyards and explore their lessons.

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