REVISED Panel #1: Boone Cemetery
(November 14, 2023, FINAL Version from HPC)

Benjamin Councill, Sr., once owned the land historically associated with the Boone Cemetery. He probably inherited the land from his father, Jordan Councill, Sr., upon the latter’s death in 1838. The Councill family and others from interrelated families were among the earliest burials. People enslaved by these families prior to the American Civil War were also buried here. As was the practice throughout the United States before the 1960s, this cemetery was segregated, with Black people buried in the eastern part and White people buried in the western portion. At times, a fence separated the two sections.

By the 1880s, locals treated this area as the town cemetery, even though it remained on privately owned land. Overcrowding became an issue in the 1930s. By the 1950s, the cemetery was rarely used for new burials as both Black and White residents developed new burial spaces outside of Boone’s downtown. In 2015, the Town of Boone acquired both sections and has since made improvements to provide for the cemetery’s long-term preservation.

Resting here are many of Boone’s civic and cultural leaders, elected officials, and veterans of the nation’s wars, including those who fought on both sides of the Civil War. The Boone Cemetery remains a sacred space for reflection on the lives and history of those interred here.

[215 words]

[Aerial image of Boone Cemetery from ca. 1907] Caption: Detail crop showing the Boone Cemetery from the northwest, circa 1907. Image courtesy of the Historic Boone Collection, Digital Watauga Project. [21 words]
REVISED Panel #2: A Divided Cemetery  
(November 14, 2023, FINAL Version from HPC)

The stones at your feet mark the fence line that once divided Black and White burials in the Boone Cemetery. Slavery formally ended in 1865, but widespread racial segregation, including at burial sites like the Council Cemetery, remained common in the United States until the 1960s. During that period, locals usually called the cemetery’s eastern section the “Colored Cemetery” and the western portion the “City Cemetery.” Cemetery trustees and town officials maintained the western part but often neglected the eastern portion.

In 1898, civic leaders erected a fence fully enclosing the White portion. Town officials installed a second fence in 1958 and took over maintenance of the privately owned western section. The Town of Boone acquired both sections in 2015 and removed the fence that physically and symbolically divide the cemetery.

Although more than 265 known burials in the White section are usually marked with formal memorials, most graves in the Black section went unmarked or were designated with fieldstones or other temporary markers, most of which have been lost or displaced. Today, only four original headstones remain, not including the replacement markers for three Union soldiers buried here in 1865.

In 2016, a ground-penetrating radar survey located nearly 200 unmarked graves in the Black section, each of which is now designated by a flat fieldstone. Although these particular graves remain unidentified, the names of those known to be buried here are recorded on the large memorial installed by the Junaluska Heritage Association in 2017. [245 words]

[Aerial image of Boone Cemetery, circa 1950] Caption: Aerial image of Boone Cemetery from the northeast, circa 1950. Image courtesy of the Palmer Blair Collection, Digital Watauga Project. [20 words]
REVISED SIGN #1: Boone Cemetery Rules
(November 14, 2023, FINAL Version from HPC)

- The Boone Cemetery is owned by the Town of Boone.
- The cemetery is open to the public year-round from dawn to dusk.
- Desecration of gravesites in any form is a violation of North Carolina law.
- Visitors are reminded that this is sacred space and not an area for recreation or sport.
- Be respectful of other visitors.
- Grave markers are unstable, old, heavy, and fragile.
  - Do not sit, stand, climb, or lean on any grave marker.
  - Do not attempt to perform a “rubbing” of a gravestone.
  - Do not attempt to clean grave markers.
  - Children must be supervised at all times.
- Do not remove or disturb grave goods including flags, flowers, small stones, or artifacts left by mourners.
- Pets are prohibited.
- For additional information, contact the Boone Town Manager at (828) 268-6200.

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1 This draft closely follows the previous proposal for a sign on a post (as opposed to a third interpretive panel) that would be mounted outside the cemetery gates.