

CHATBY NECROPOLIS

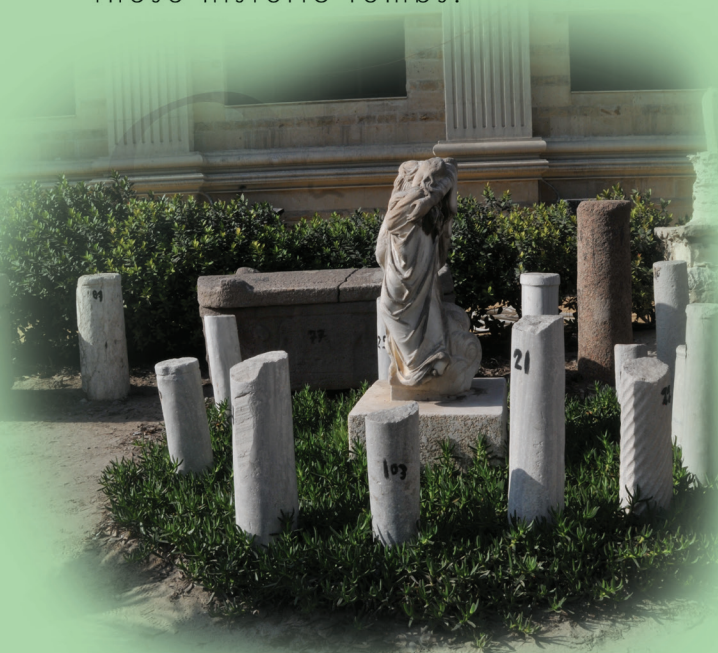
The primary burial site evidently belonged to a wealthy, but unidentified, family. It featured two stone sarcophagi in the shape of a funeral bed with cushions on which the dead were placed.

Over the centuries, the necropolis spread as space was needed for the newly deceased elite. By the third century BCE, the site was used by the general public and numerous *loculi* covered with doorway style *loculus* slabs were added to accommodate the masses of Alexandrians who would find their final resting place in these historic tombs.

The decoration of the cemetery combines masonry and zone style. The walls of the anteroom are decorated with six engaged Doric half-columns, with plain lower sections and fluted upper sections. Between the engaged columns is a frieze with an intricate framework surrounded by pseudo-windows to create the illusion of a real wall. The open courtyard also had engaged columns on three walls and was decorated with colors and painted with birds and garlands that hung between the columns.

Although many of the original features have been lost to the sea and the elements over time, the Chatby Necropolis remains a symbol of the ancient city and the final resting place of its earliest inhabitants.

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Chatby Necropolis

In the ancient eastern quarter of Alexandria, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, lies the Chatby Necropolis, which was accidentally rediscovered in 1893. The oldest necropolis in the city, it probably served as a resting place for the deceased since the fourth century BCE. These rock tombs are the oldest example of Alexandrian-style burials.



Today, the Chatby tombs lie above ground and exposed to the elements. At their inception, however, they were underground burial vaults. To reach them, visitors must descend several steps which lead to the main burial site. The garden of Chatby Necropolis is littered with statues and funerary monuments which are reminiscent of a cityscape which has long disappeared under the development of the modern city.

The tombs are of a simple and elegant design typical of the Hellenistic period. The doorway of the main tomb leads into a hall, which in turn leads into a second hall and then to an open courtyard. East of the courtyard is a doorway leading to the burial chamber. A corridor leads from the central courtyard to the doorway of each tomb. On the east side of the courtyard is a *prostas*, or reception hall, for performing funerary rituals. During the ceremony, the sanctified bodies of the deceased were placed in the *oikos*, or vestibule, often featuring an altar used for religious sacrifices. Inside one of the tombs, a number of vessels containing human ashes were found.

