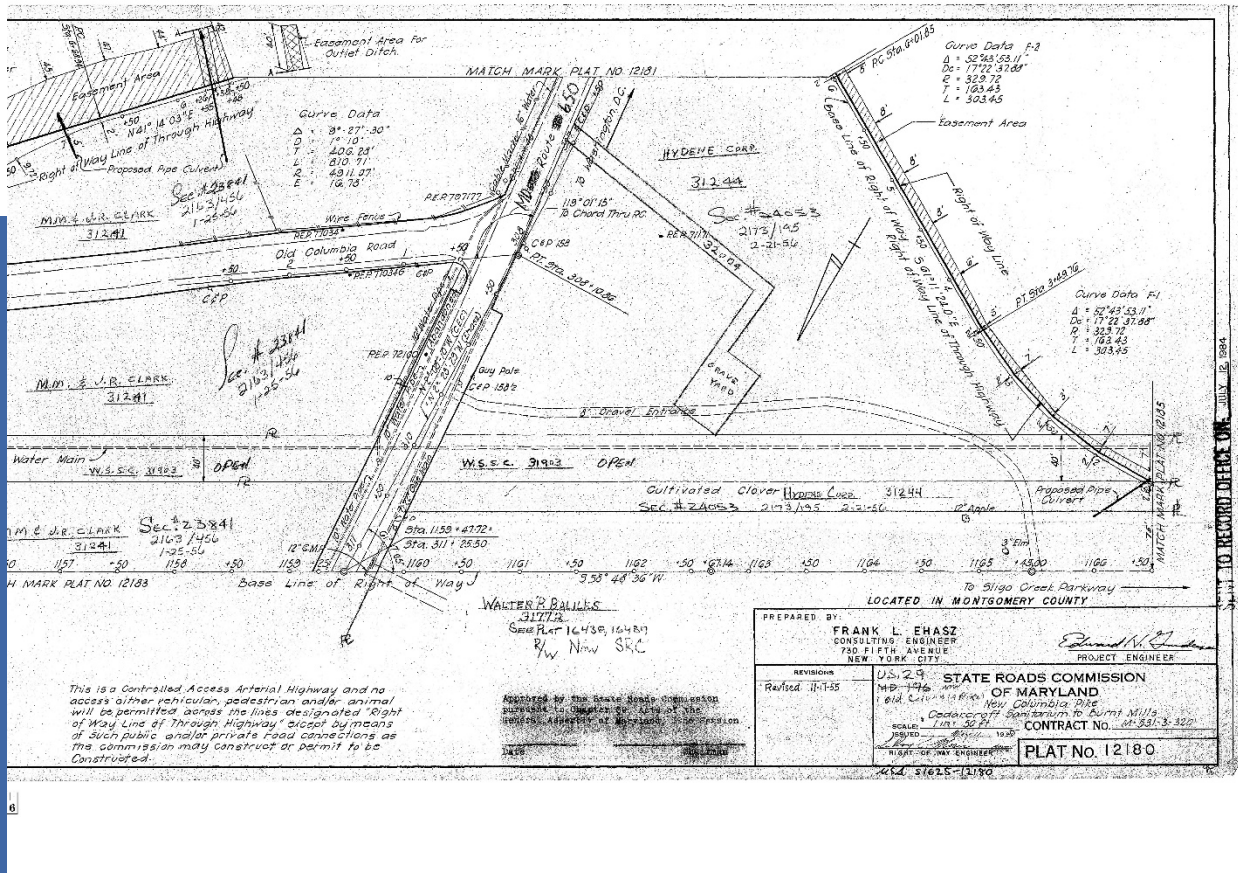


BURIAL SITES INVENTORY UPDATE 2025



Description

The Historic Preservation Program will present the sixth annual update to the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory to the Planning Board for adoption. This includes modifications made to the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory since May 2024 along with a summary of activities carried out as part of the burial sites program in the past year.



Brian Crane, Cultural Resources Planner III
brian.crane@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-563-3402

Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Supervisor
rebecca.ballo@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-563-3404

David Anspacher, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy
david.anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2191

SUMMARY

- Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the Updated Burial Sites Inventory.
 - 2 new sites were added to the inventory based on new information;
 - 1 known site record was moved to a new location based on historical research;

Planning Staff will provide a briefing on additional updates on compliance review, field visits, public outreach, and research.

Burial Sites Inventory Program

Review Basis

Section 33A-17, Annual Update to the Burial Sites Inventory

Lead Planner

Brian Crane

Staff Contact

brian.crane@montgomeryplanning.org,
301-563-3402

Date

May 29, 2025

Planning Division

Countywide Planning and Policy, Historic Preservation

Planning Board Information

MCPB

Item No. 4

Figure 2: 2025 Burial Sites Inventory Updates

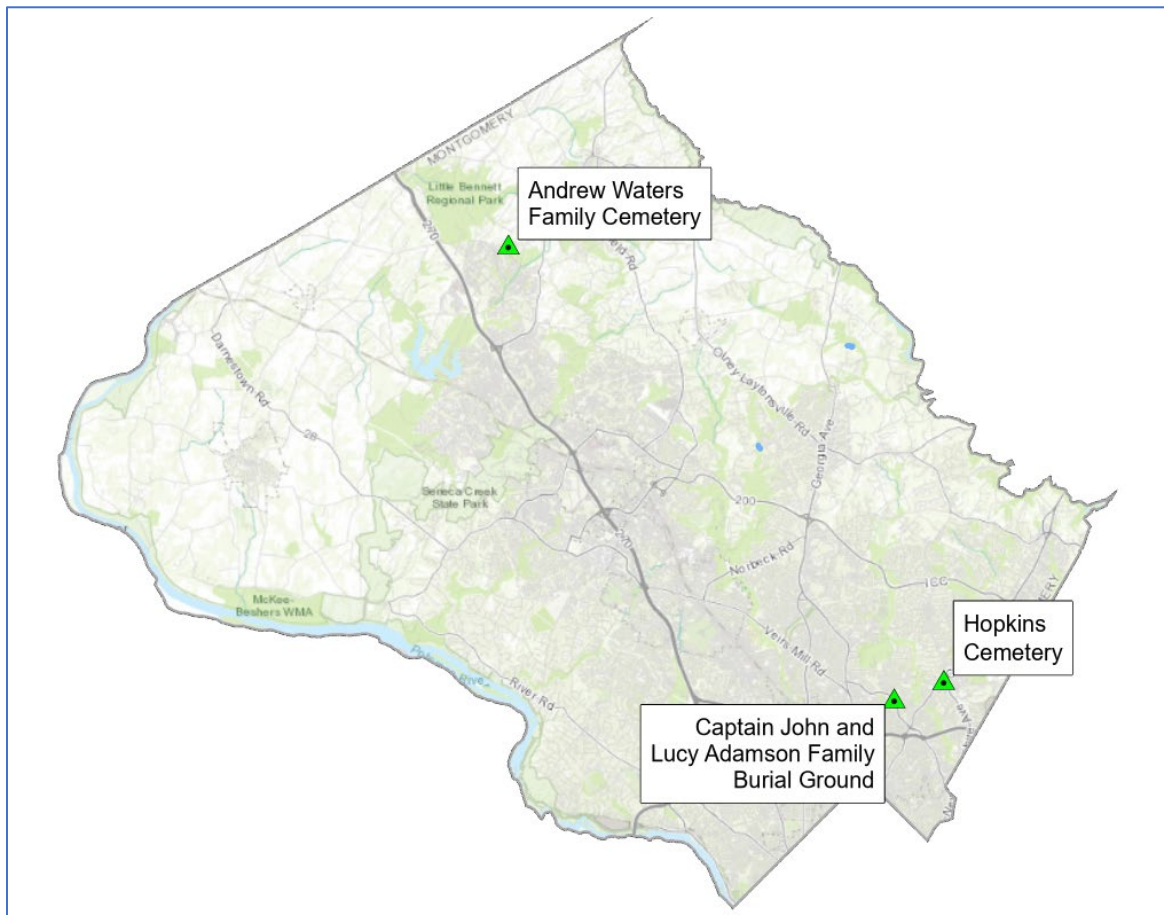


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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Montgomery County Guidelines for Burial Sites states that “The Planning Board’s designee will update the Burial Sites Inventory, including additions, revisions, and exclusions/deletions, as new information becomes available so that it reflects the most current and accurate information” and that “additions, revisions, and exclusions/deletions shall be presented to the Planning Board annually at a briefing.” This presentation includes the revisions to the inventory made since May 30, 2024, for the Planning Board’s adoption. This item also includes an update on Burial Sites Inventory program activities for the past year.

Montgomery County recognizes the significance of cemeteries and burial sites to the community. In 2017, the County Council passed two laws to help preserve and protect these unique and fragile resources. [Section 33A-17](#) of the Montgomery County Code requires the Montgomery County Planning Board to maintain an inventory of burial sites in the county and Montgomery County Ordinance 18-31 (2017) requires that all human burial sites be preserved and protected as a condition of the preliminary plan of subdivision review and approval process. Preservation of these unique archaeological resources will further protect the cultural heritage of Montgomery County. The Planning Board adopted the [Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory and Guidelines](#) on May 16, 2019. The Planning Department has made these data available to the public via the [MCAtlas web portal](#).

A burial site is defined in the ordinances as the “physical location where human remains were buried in the earth, or entombed in a mausoleum or columbarium. A burial site includes a cemetery, but does not include the sprinkling of ashes from cremated remains.” A columbarium is a place where ashes are buried or immured. The Burial Site Inventory is the list of burial sites officially adopted by the Planning Board, pursuant to Section 33A-17 of the Montgomery County Code (Planning Procedures). It is maintained and updated as needed by the Planning Department’s Historic Preservation Office and consists of a Geographical Information System data layer and associated documentation. The inventory and preservation of these unique archaeological resources will further protect the cultural heritage of Montgomery County.

The confidence and precision of burial sites in the inventory varies. Some sites are well documented, or clearly visible on the surface today, and their location was confirmed through field observation. Other burial grounds are known through oral or archival history sources, but the burials have been removed or the exact location is unknown. Sites in the inventory are divided into two broad categories:

- Known Sites: Confirmed in the field or through historical research
- Approximate Sites: Exact location and condition unknown

Staff may redact some locational data, consistent with the provisions of [Montgomery County Code 18-31](#), if there is reason to believe the site is at risk for damage from vandalism. A location considered sensitive or at risk will be represented by the boundaries of the lot within which it is located, but the location within the lot will not be displayed publicly.

BURIAL SITES INVENTORY REVISIONS

SUMMARY

Efforts to refine and improve the information contained in the Burial Sites Inventory are constantly ongoing. The Historic Preservation Office responds to information or inquiries brought to the Planning Department by members of the public and through ongoing research by staff. As required by the Burial Sites Guidelines, applicable property owners or managers were notified in writing by certified mail about substantive changes to Burial Sites Inventory records on their property.

Details of the revisions to the Burial Sites Inventory are shown in **Table 1**. Individual site forms are included in **Attachment A**.

Recommended Revisions (3 total) to the Inventory:

- Add 2 new sites to the inventory based on new information;
- Change the location of 1 known site record based on historical research;

Table 1: Revisions to the Burial Sites Inventory

ID Number	Cemetery	Type	Basis for Change
HP-157	Hopkins Family	Remap Known	Review of Deeds, ROW plat
HP-362	Captain John and Lucy Adamson Family	Add Approximate	Historical Research
HP-363	Andrew Waters Family	Add Approximate	Historical Research

DISCUSSION

The Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory, initially adopted by the Planning Board in 2019, represented the cumulative work of many volunteers carried out over more than 10 years. That work was extensive but not exhaustive. Ongoing research to improve the inventory has added 28 sites since 2019. Staff continually review files and conduct research, particularly on approximate sites to refine those locations and identify burial sites missing from the inventory.

Each year in May, the Planning Department briefs the Planning Board about changes to the inventory and other activities carried out as part of the Burial Sites Inventory program during the previous year. This annual report concerns three substantive changes since May 2024. Information forms for each site are included as attachments to this report.

The **Hopkins Family Cemetery** was included in the original inventory adopted by the board in 2019 in a location close to the historical location of the Hopkins family farmhouse. Review of deeds for the family farm show that the location of the graveyard is described in an 1878 deed Hopkins family heirs used to sell the farm: "then leaving said line and running to exclude a grave yard [sic]" (Maryland Land Records, Liber EBP19 Folio 229). The graveyard is also shown on a 1956 Highway plat for the intersection of Columbia Pike and New Hampshire Ave (Right of Way Plat 12180). This revision to the inventory remaps the cemetery to its correct location within the cloverleaf intersection of Columbia Pike and New Hampshire Ave. No information is available about whether the graves were moved at the time of highway construction in the 1950s.

The **Captain John and Lucy Adamson Family Burial Ground** was brought to the attention of Planning staff by a member of the public who had found references to it while doing historical research in University Boulevard area. The graveyard is referenced as a reservation for "1/2 acres of said land for a family grave-yard [sic] and a convenient right of way to and from the same." This reservation appears in 1855 (Liber JGH 5 Folio 2); 1912 (Liber 224 Folio 135) and 1955 (Liber 2074 Folio 440). The deeds do not specify the exact location, and this is no longer known. An approximate location was chosen by mapping the farm boundaries of the deeds referencing the cemetery, and then examining 1950s aerial photography for a likely right of way. An approximate location was chosen within the County right-of-way at Whittington Terrace and Caddington Ave. This is within the University Boulevard Corridor Plan Area and has been included within the plan's documentation.

The addition of the **Andrew Waters Family Cemetery** is based on a review of Maryland land records. It appears in deed reservations in 1898 and 1907 (EBP 33, Folio 115 and TD 2 Folio 274). There is no information about who may have been buried in the family plot. There is a marker for Andrew Jackson Waters at Clarksburg United Methodist Church cemetery raising the possibility that his grave may have been moved. His wife died after the farm was sold. Waters purchased the farm pursuant to a circuit court decision passed on October 24, 1874. The equity papers (for case 190) do not mention a cemetery, suggesting the graveyard dates between 1874 and 1898. An approximate location has been placed within county right-of-way of Fountain Drive within 200 feet of where the historical Waters family house stood according to historical maps.

BURIAL SITES INVENTORY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

BURIAL SITES CONTEXT SURVEY

Montgomery County Planning is enhancing the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory through a Burial Sites Context survey. This project will refine our understanding of the cemeteries in our inventory and help us better identify, appreciate, communicate about, and preserve potentially significant features or attributes of these sites. This effort represents our most significant project this year, and staff are being assisted by our cultural resources contractor, the Ottery Group.

Because no context for cemeteries currently exists for the county, we are unable to establish which cemeteries not included in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* should be added, nor what it is about those that are listed or included as a part of a larger listed property that may contribute to their significance. Without an understanding of significance and associated character defining features it is difficult to provide guidance to applicants for historic area work permits (HAWPs) or other compliance review projects about what changes may be compatible with the resource. The Burial Sites Context survey will provide the foundation for future updates to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The study is focusing on cemeteries established after the arrival of colonial settlers and more than 50 years ago except where cemeteries reflect important recent immigration trends or intersect developing historic contexts like the Asian American and Pacific Islander or LGBTQ contexts, countywide plans such as the 2023 *Rustic Roads Functional Plan*, or other research initiatives such as the Mapping Segregation project. Precolonial Indigenous sites are present in Montgomery County but would require an entirely different approach than is being employed at post-colonial sites, along with close coordination with Indigenous Maryland tribes before such work could be pursued. We are not recommending that the department begin this effort at this time.

Work began with a review of the existing literature on the history of cemeteries and an analysis of the existing inventory. This process led to the development of a classification of the burial sites in the inventory by type, period, and cultural affiliation.

Table 2: Burial Sites Classification

Class	Subclass	Description	Notes
Family	Possibly by socio-economic class	Generally small plots on family farms for immediate family and relatives.	This is the most common type of cemetery: there are 201 sites associated with individual families. These are sometimes expanded into broader community cemeteries if used for multiple generations. Sometimes referenced in deed reservations.
Religious	Possibly by denomination	Burial grounds for churches or other religious institutions.	114 cemeteries in the inventory are associated with places of worship.
Community		Graveyards developed to serve specific communities of people. Communities can be geographic or membership-based.	45 cemeteries are currently classified as “community” burial grounds.
	Neighborhood/extended families	Graveyards for specific areas.	May sometimes develop out of family or extended family plots.

Class	Subclass	Description	Notes
	Quarry Workers	Burial grounds located on large estates involved in quarrying.	Examples appear to include Clipper, Hill Farm, and Aqueduct/Rayner burial grounds. Each of those appears to include quarry workers and stonecutters.
	Military	Places for the burial of soldiers.	The region has several formal military cemeteries. None are in Montgomery County, but there are at least two places where Union soldiers were buried next to Civil War encampments or battlefield sites that were not used for burial places otherwise.
	Benevolent Societies	Established by benevolent societies to provide burial services for their members. All are African American, many closely associated with churches and schools.	6 sites, 5 classified currently as community cemeteries, 1 (Mt. Pleasant) classed as a church cemetery.
Enslaved Persons		Separate burial areas within farms/plantations for the burial of people enslaved in that place.	Possibly including those enslaved by multiple enslavers. The “Negro Burial Ground” in Chevy Chase might be such a place since its ownership changed, but the use as a burial ground was to be continued.
Pet Cemeteries		Institutional or commercial grounds for interring pets and their human owners	Aspin Hill and Sugarloaf Pet Gardens are examples.
Potter’s Field		Place designated by local government for the interment of the indigent poor	Poor Farm Cemetery is the sole example in the county
Commercial Perpetual Care Cemeteries		19 th to 21 st -century secular commercial establishments.	Sometimes founded as such, sometimes develop out of earlier religious cemeteries such as Rockville or Monocacy.

In addition to developing a classification of cemetery types, we have identified historical themes that will be used to frame research questions and evaluate sites for significance.

- Grief and Mourning
- Evolution of Cemetery Landscape Design
- Mining, Stonecutters and Local Monument Industry

- Epidemic Outbreaks
- Temporal Themes (Colonial Settlement, Early National Period, Antebellum, etc.)
- Church and Denominational Development
- Slavery and Abolition
- Early Free Communities of Color
- Fraternal Societies

Historic Preservation staff took the inventory/classification material and classified them according to discrete cemetery types as they relate to broader historical themes identified for this study as part of the context development phase. These form the kernel for cemetery specific contexts. Example contexts include cemeteries associated with African American benevolent societies that developed following the Civil War. These organizations provided crucial community support for new communities, and their associated cemeteries are often the sole surviving physical remains of these places. Another example includes the cemeteries specifically associated with stone cutters and quarry workers employed in the Seneca Sandstone quarries along the Potomac River. Similarly, some cemeteries may be significant for large numbers of particularly fine, locally produced markers made by master stone cutters. Other contexts include early family cemeteries, enslaved persons' burial grounds, and early rural cemetery movement cemeteries connected to the county's railroad suburbs.

Following completion of the documentary review, initial site classification and preliminary context identification, Montgomery County Planning selected 20 sites for field survey including a sample of the different type categories, periods, and cultural affiliations. Sites were selected based on a variety of considerations including types of cemetery features preserved, design style, size, location, and associated themes. The sites include some already listed on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* as well as others not on the Master Plan. Once candidate sites were identified, staff contacted property owners and managers to obtain permission to access the sites. While some property owners did not respond, or preferred not to participate in the study, 20 sites were selected for survey:

Table 3: Burial Sites Selected for Survey

Name	Description	HP Master Plan Status
Aspin Hill	Pet (and human) Cemetery	Individual
Awkard Family Cemetery	19 th -Century African American Family	No
Bethesda Meeting House	19 th -Century Religious	No
Bowie	19 th -Century Family	Individual
Button	Possible Enslaved Persons Burial Ground	Individual
Chilton Dyer	19 th -Century family	Locational Atlas
Cooke	19 th -Century family	No
Crabb Family	19 th -Century Family	Individual
Griffith (Edge Hill)	19 th -Century Family	Individual
Griffith (Retirement)	Early Family Cemetery	Individual
Hawlings River Chapel of Ease	19 th -Century Church	No

Name	Description	HP Master Plan Status
Hill Farm	Antebellum Quarry Workers	No
Howard Chapel	Post Civil War African American Church and Community	Individual
Jerusalem Mount Pleasant	Post Civil War African American Fraternal Society	No
Monocacy	Large Early 19 th -Century Religious and Community	District
Ricketts Family Cemetery	19 th -Century Family with all Fieldstone Markers	No
Sandy Spring Friends	Large 19 th -Century Religious	Individual
St. Paul Community Church	Post Civil War African American Church	Individual
St. Rose of Lima	Large 19 th -Century Religious	Partly Individual
Triadelphia	19 th -Century Community	Individual

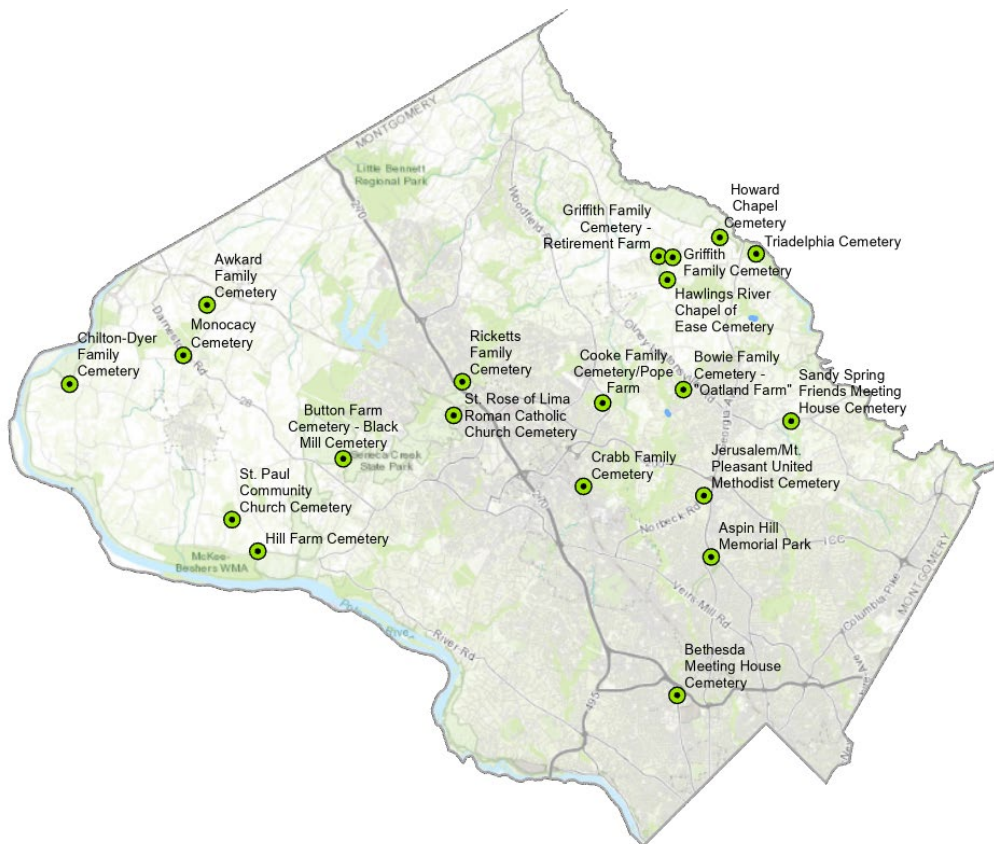


Figure 3: Sites selected for field survey as part of the burial sites context study

Field documentation includes a cemetery map, photographs, and where feasible, an inventory of markers and landscape features. Marker inventory includes the material of the stone, a description of the marker style, and inscription. As of the date of this report, fieldwork is complete, and Ottery is

preparing their technical report. With the knowledge gained from the detailed surveys staff will begin to elaborate the associated historical contexts and develop potential criteria for listing this resource type in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Staff will present the final completed context study to the Planning Board in December 2025 and the County Council in January 2026.

ONGOING PROJECT RELATED AND AGENCY CONSULTATION

Compliance Review: Staff continue compliance review on projects including development plans, mandatory referrals, and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 undertakings. Staff have worked with applicants to conduct archaeological investigations as appropriate for defining cemetery boundaries for development applications. Staff continued consultation related to the Morningstar Tabernacle 88 Cemetery for MDOT SHA's Op Lanes project to add managed lanes to the Beltway and I-270. Staff have also made themselves available to discuss public access plans with the Trustees of Morningstar 88 and the Friends of Moses Hall. Staff consulted with Gibson Grove AME Church concerning restoration plans as they relate to graves near the church.

Staff continue coordinating with the Bethesda Meeting House Foundation regarding planned improvements to the historic cemetery. The foundation has initiated Ground Penetrating Radar and other studies with a consultant. Staff are providing report review and technical direction as needed as this project moves forward.

Agency Coordination: Planning staff regularly consult with other county agencies about cemetery-related issues. Staff provided technical assistance to Rockville as they consider developing a new below-ground cultural resources program. Historic Preservation staff assisted the Planning Department in identifying potential comments to Maryland Senate Bill 105, Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons – Protection and Access. We recommended that The Maryland Historical Trust should have a seat as a voting member of the Commission under Section 5-1003(A) and that Montgomery Parks have an opportunity to comment. The Commission in its comments to the proposed legislation also recommended that the word “neglected” be defined as used in the bill.

Staff continued to provide Montgomery County Police with technical assistance regarding a cold-case missing person, probable homicide investigation at the Annington Master Plan Historic Site. Police suspect that the missing individual may be buried on the property, but historical records suggest the grounds may also include unmarked historical burials not yet included on the Burial Sites Inventory. Montgomery Police conducted forensic human remains detection dog work on-site, and Montgomery Planning followed up with Ground Penetrating Radar. Unfortunately, these efforts proved to be inconclusive.

FIELD VISITS

Historic Preservation Staff routinely perform field visits to cemetery sites in the Burial Sites Inventory to confirm or improve mapped locations and learn more about how small family, church, and community cemeteries are sited and laid out. Staff made 25 site visits to cemeteries on or under

consideration for listing in the inventory since the last inventory update in 2024. Staff have visited 126 sites listed in the inventory since the program was initiated in 2018, accounting for over 1/3 of the total sites. Staff will continue to visit and perform fieldwork at selected cemetery sites around the county in support of project review, master plan research and public outreach.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES AND OUTREACH

Planning staff are regularly contacted by members of the public with questions about cemeteries in the inventory or with inquiries about cemeteries not yet included. More than 40 individuals contacted the department more than 75 times in the last year about a range of cemetery sites and issues. Outreach efforts since the last update have included contacting property owners and land-management agencies about newly added cemetery sites through certified mail and responding to inquiries about these additions, as well as corresponding with community groups and descendants regarding questions they have about history or preservation.

Planning staff continue to assist descendants of those buried at the Union Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church cemetery in Potomac with plans to preserve potential cemetery related features on-site. This involvement began in the fall of 2022, when Historic Preservation staff were contacted by a descendant about the location of the Union Wesley Cemetery. Union Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Church was an African American church established in 1874. The church closed in 1920, and the last known burial occurred in 1944. The property was sold in the 1980s as part of a tax sale and has since become heavily overgrown as well as becoming the site of illegal dumping. Staff have been conducting cemetery feature mapping and ground penetrating radar survey work to create a basemap of the site that can be used as a part of future preservation plans. Staff will complete the map in coming months. A working draft of the basemap is shown in Figure 4.

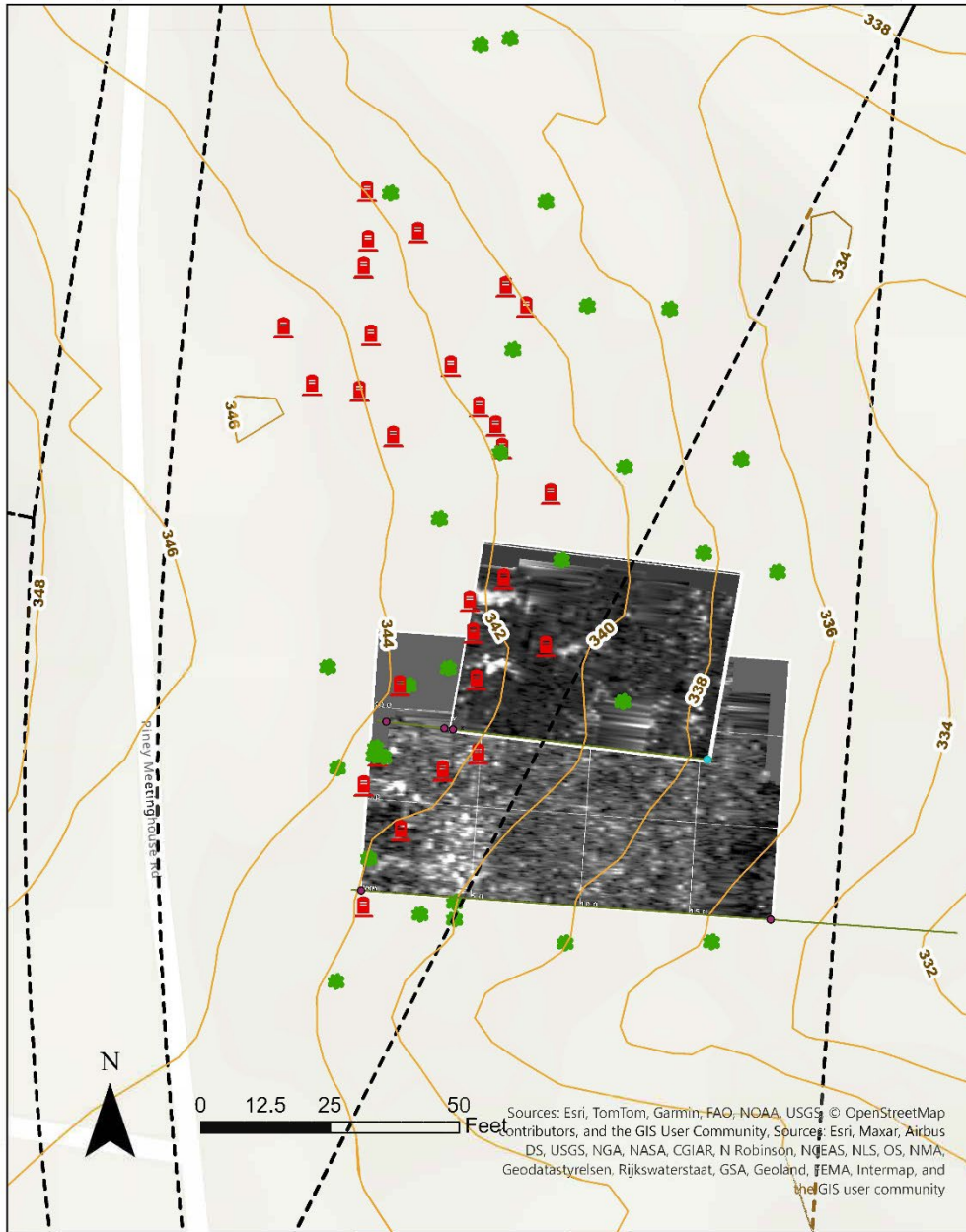


Figure 4: Map of Union Wesley Cemetery with partial GPR results, in progress. Probable grave markers are shown in red, trees in green. Property boundaries are shown as dashed lines.

GPR work is also ongoing at Jerusalem Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Norbeck adjacent to Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park. Along with a church, school and fraternal hall, the cemetery was part of the core of the African American community of Mt Pleasant with roots going back to 1862. The church is believed to date to circa 1885, and the first known burial occurred in 1891. Historical research indicates more than 300 individuals were buried there though only some 33 markers are visible. GPR mapping will help us understand how burials at the site were arranged.

Staff are continuing coordination with the Sugarland Ethnohistory Project (SEHP) and Montgomery College concerning archaeological investigations adjacent to the St. Paul Community Church Cemetery begun in 2024. The SEHP owns the grounds of St Paul's Community Church and cemetery historic site in Sugarland and adjoining property. Sugarland is an African American community that formed in the late 19th century. Montgomery College archaeologist Tara Tetrault has been working with SEHP to identify archaeological features associated with the community. Montgomery Planning is coordinating with SEHP and Montgomery College to conduct GPR survey adjacent to the cemetery to help address whether graves extend outside the marked cemetery boundary.

Staff has corresponded with Community members and descendants of those buried at Ash Memorial Cemetery in Sandy Spring answering questions regarding its history and providing information and links to community resources regarding preservation. Staff have facilitated introductions between Ash Memorial descendants and local preservation organizations who are assisting with the preparation of a cemetery map and a preservation plan (Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites and a local DAR chapter). Staff attended a community meeting on August 26, 2024, regarding concerns about encroachment at the cemetery. Members of the County Council and the Maryland Assembly also attended the community meeting.

Staff continued extensive engagement with community members in Germantown regarding the potential location of a cemetery associated with the Waring/Crawford Master Plan Historic Site. This engagement has been ongoing since 2022. Staff addressed questions from community members regarding historical background research staff performed in the area, and made recommendations for further work, including arranging a formal oral history interview with a Crawford family descendant who may have memories relevant to understanding the past landscape of the Crawford Farm and vicinity.

Staff gave a presentation at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology in New Orleans, LA in January 2025 on work related to our historic context study with a paper entitled "Decoding the Sepulchral Closet: Reading Between the Lines of Heteronormativity in Graveyards." SHA is an international professional archaeological organization focused on the archaeology of the modern world. The paper explored the significance of LGBTQ graves and memorialization. Staff presented this again to a regional National Park Service preservation group.

Staff continued to participate in Preservation Equity Roundtable discussions. The Roundtable comprises state and municipal preservation practitioners from across the country originally convened in 2023. Staff have contributed information about the role of equity in the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory and other initiatives of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation program. The group has recently changed its name to "Preservation for All."

ONGOING AND FUTURE RESEARCH

INVENTORY REFINEMENT

Research in the burial sites inventory program has found evidence for cemeteries not previously listed in a variety of sources: Maryland Inventory of Historic Places (MIHP) forms, archaeological site forms, plats, deeds, Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation plans, historical newspaper ads, death certificates, and USGS maps, in addition to physical evidence of undocumented cemeteries found through fieldwork. These site leads are currently under research and will be brought to the Planning Board when there is sufficient certainty regarding their location to warrant inclusion in the inventory.

Systematic review of plats and deeds present daunting logistical challenges because there are tens of thousands of pages of material to review. It is possible that machine learning techniques and other artificial intelligence software tools may be useful to find cemetery references on maps such as USGS maps, plats or NRIFSD drawings. Staff have initiated discussions with the Maryland State Archives examining whether gaining access to digitized copies of Maryland Land Records may be possible. Staff are also in dialog with archaeology computer experts around the world through Computer Applications in Archaeology, International (CAA) about potential analytical avenues. Brian Crane serves as the chair of the North American Chapter of CAA.

HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION DOGS AND GPR PILOT STUDY

In 2023, Staff initiated a pilot study to test the usefulness of Historic Human Remains Detection (HHRD) dogs in finding lost, unmarked graves. HHRD dog teams employ dogs trained for forensic investigations as part of recovery and police investigations and that have experience working on historic sites. A growing body of evidence shows that HHRD dog teams can detect historical graves. We are collaborating with Heather Roche of Bay Area Rescue Canines on a selection of three possible burial grounds. The HHRD work at all three sites was completed in 2024, and we have conducted ground penetrating radar to validate the results at two sites. Results suggest we may have succeeded in identifying the burial ground at the Moneysworth Master Plan Historic Site in Clarksburg, though the GPR results there were inconclusive. Work at one site on Isaac Walton League of America property suggests the site is not a burial ground, while the other site on the same property is not yet complete. We hope to test the method at other sites in the county this next year.

GROUND PENETRATING RADAR TRAINING

From December 2024 through March 2025, staff participated in an intensive online course in ground penetrating radar data interpretation taught by Lawrence Conyers. Dr. Conyers is a retired professor of archaeology at the University of Denver, the author of multiple books on the use of GPR in archaeology, and a leading pioneer in the field. Other students in the course included professional

archaeologists from all over the world. The knowledge gained from this work will help us to interpret GPR data collected in the field with a higher degree of confidence.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Burial Sites Information Forms