



Burial Sites Inventory Annual Update



Brian Crane, Archaeologist, Historic Preservation, brian.crane@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-563-3402



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



Jason Sartori, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy, jason.sartori@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2172

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The Historic Preservation Program will present the second annual update to the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory to the Planning Board for adoption.

Overview

Staff will present modifications made to the Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory since May 2020 along with a summary of activities carried out as part of the burial sites program in the past year.

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 2020 for the Planning Board’s adoption.

Montgomery County recognizes the significance of cemetery 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 webportal](#).

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.” 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 GIS 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

Efforts to refine and improve the information contained in the Burial Sites Inventory are constantly ongoing. This includes the Historic Preservation Office responding to information or inquiries brought to the Planning Department by members of the public and through ongoing research by staff. Revisions to the Burial Sites Inventory are shown in Attachment A. Revisions to the Inventory made since last year include:

- 1 site was changed from an approximate location to a known location based on a review of the record;
- 1 site was changed from a known location to an approximate location based on a review of the record;
- 3 sites were added to the inventory based on new information;
- The locations for 6 sites were changed based on new information or a review of existing information; and,
- 7 administrative changes were made (updates to name, historic status, new information forms, and attribute fields).

Administrative changes included updating the names of three cemeteries to better reflect the history of the sites. New attribute fields for Cemetery Name and ID Number were added to the Sensitive sites redacted table. These fields were populated for colonial and later cemeteries. Consultation is ongoing with the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs about content for these fields for earlier indigenous burials. As required by the Burial Sites Guidelines, property owners were notified in writing by certified mail about substantive changes to Burial Sites Inventory records on their property.

Historic Preservation Staff are working with IT Staff to migrate the burial sites inventory to Hansen in order to better integrate burial sites data in a single system that is sustainable for the long term. The current inventory consists of information stored in 3 places: a GIS database, volunteer generated pdf information forms, and additional information in an Microsoft Access database. Staff have integrated the information from the GIS attributes and volunteer forms in a single relational database in Access. This relational database will act as the blueprint for a version within Hansen. As part of this migration, staff created a new information form that will allow updated information to be displayed via MCATLAS. Staff are in the process of generating new information forms and will eventually complete them for all cemetery records.

Guidelines for Burial Sites

In May 2019, the Planning Board also approved a set of Guidelines for implementing the Burial Sites Inventory and for conducting reviews of preliminary plans for parcels including burial sites. Staff do not recommend any revisions to the Guidelines at this time.

Burial Sites Program Activities and Initiatives

Ongoing Burial Sites Inventory activities include:

- **Ongoing project related consultation:** Staff are engaged in consultation on projects including preliminary plans, mandatory referrals, and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 undertakings. In the past year, staff attended consulting party meetings and reviewed archaeological technical reports and a draft programmatic agreement for MDOT SHA's managed lanes expansion project for the Beltway and I-270. Coordination for the Managed Lanes project involved collaboration with representatives of the Cabin John Citizens Association and Friends of Moses Hall concerning the potential impacts of the project on the Morningstar Tabernacle #88 Cemetery in Gibson Grove.
- **Responding to public inquiries and concerns:** We are regularly contacted by members of the public with questions about cemeteries in the inventory or with inquiries about cemeteries not yet in the inventory.
- **Master Plan for Historic Preservation:** Staff are working on identifying archaeological and cemetery sites that may merit consideration for addition to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. This has involved reaching out to potentially interested public groups within the county about their interests and concerns. Staff has also worked to identify and correct GIS data errors within the Master Plan data, especially with respect to the overlap between Master Plan sites and cemetery sites.
- **2020 Summer Intern:** During the summer of 2020 historic preservation had a preservation graduate student intern, Kate Simpson. Her work focused on completing archival research and fieldwork focused on developing a typology of headstones in Montgomery County cemeteries and identifying potential material sources and stone

cutters. This work helped lay a foundation for future evaluation of cemetery sites for listing in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation as well as providing a context for evaluating historic preservation work done within county cemeteries required either by approval of preliminary plans or historic area work permits.

- **Outreach and Education:** Conducting outreach and educational programs for Planning Department Staff, for agencies of Montgomery County Government, state agencies, regional archaeologists, and the public. The Maryland Historical Trust has reached out to staff about creating a new state-wide inventory of burial sites. A Fall 2020 virtual workshop was held with Dr. Alexandra Jones, Founder of Archaeology in the Community. Dr. Jones partnered with the Historic Preservation office to train volunteers in the use of photogrammetry to virtually record head stones in a way that allows recovery of worn or hard to read inscriptions. Grave marker inscriptions provide valuable information for genealogists and descendants as well as for historic preservation planners, but are at risk for loss from erosion. The training is intended to help crowd source recordation and virtual preservation of these fragile resources for future generations.
- **Preservation and Interpretation of Indigenous sites and history.** There are no indigenous people's sites on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, but there are several significant burial sites listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places that are candidates. In addition to consulting with the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs regarding what information to share about pre-colonial indigenous burials within MCATLAS, staff have initiated conversations with the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs about the possibility of adding indigenous sites to the Master Plan.
- **Predictive Model and Enslaved Persons Burial Sites:** We know that potentially large numbers of burial sites associated with enslaved African American people in Montgomery County are missing from the inventory. Currently there are only 17 known burial sites in the Montgomery County inventory thought to have been associated with people held in slavery. We are using the information in the inventory to help better understand the locations and settings for historic cemeteries in an effort to better predict where we might find others.
- **Identification Pilot Study:** HP staff are working on identifying practical, non-invasive techniques for finding the 71 approximate burial sites in the inventory. In addition to conducting archival research (primarily deed research) and archaeological reconnaissance, staff are developing proposals to partner with contractors, volunteers, and other community resources to use human remains detection dogs and geophysical survey (primarily ground penetrating radar and magnetometer survey) to potentially identify missing sites and pinpoint approximate sites.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Board **ADOPT** the Updated Burial Sites Inventory.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Burial Sites Inventory Change Log

Attachment A: Draft Burial Sites Inventory Change Log

Date	Cemetery	Revision	Basis for Change
6/5/2020	HP-279 Ball Family	Moved	Historical research
6/5/2020	HP-62 Awkard	Moved, changed to known	Deed research
6/12/2020	HP-107 Mt Calvary	Moved	Site visit/GPS
7/21/2020	HP-220 Wood Family	Changed to known	Based on form, visible in aerial photo. Other Wood family shown as known probably should be approximate.
1/15/2021	Multiple	New information forms	In progress for whole inventory
2/9/2021	HP-251 Beckwith	Moved, changed to known	Deed research. moved after resident notified in writing
2/9/2021	HP-13 Beechmont	Moved, changed to known	Deed research. moved after resident notified in writing
4/29/2021	HP-336 Elton Farm Road	Added as a sensitive redacted location	MP historic site form information. Location redacted over concern from property owner of past attempts of unauthorized access.
1/21/2021	HP-254 Bowie	Change to reflect MP historic status	Review of files.
3/5/2021	HP-174 Howard Family	Change to reflect MP historic status	Review of files.
4/27/2021	HP-105 Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 of the Ancient United Order of Sons & Daughters, Brothers & Sisters of Moses Cemetery	Change name and address	Information from newly formed Trustees of the cemetery.
4/28/2021	HP-38 Hickman Family/Edward's Ferry	Change to reflect MP historic status, and change to known	Locational Atlas Site
4/27/2021	HP-319 Hill Farm Cemetery	Update name to Hill Farm Cemetery	Based on historical research
4/19/2021	HP-231 Lee Family Cemetery	Moved location	Based on historical research
4/19/2021	HP-337 Rezin Bowman Farm Cemetery	New approximate location	Based on MP form and research
5/12/21	HP-338 Dwyer Family Cemetery	New approximate location	Based on Parks Department historical research.
5/14/21	HP-310 Grif-Conway-Jackson Cemetery	Changed name to reflect families interred	Review of Burial Sites Form
5/14/21	HP-325 Wood Family Cemetery	Changed to approximate	Review of files.