

Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory

ID: 14

Name: Riggs Family Cemetery

Alternate name: BORDLEY'S CHOICE
~~AT PLEASANT HILL~~

Address: Adjoins the Central Union Mission Farm, 20501 Georgia Ave.
Access at

Town: Brookville

ADC Map Page 172 Grid G-13

Type

Religious
 Family (Riggs)
 Private
 Other

Association

Free black
 Enslaved (in or out (possible))
 Ethnic
 Prehistoric

Setting Rural Urban Suburban Forested Other

Condition Excellent Good Fair Poor OVERGROWN, TREES DOWN, FENCE DOWN

Negative Impacts (vandalism, dumping, neglect, encroachment, etc) GRAVE disturbed, 3ft deep, stones pulled up & missing

Approximate no. of burials 25 Date range of burials 1750 - 1870

Description (markers, materials, arrangement, landscaping, fence, paths and roads, etc.)

Sept. 11, 1751 - John Riggs, PLANTER PURCHASED 1000 ACRES TRACT of "Bordley's Choice" Rt. 97 + BARLEY DRIVE PAGE 247 Historic Homes of Mont. Co. - Roger Brooke Farquhar
REBUS Riggs - MAIN MONUMENT - B. JAN. 12, 1790 D. DEC 18, 1867 # Barb wire fence with wood/metal posts
CATHERINE Riggs - wife - B. 6/22/1811 D. 12/12/1893 * Chain link ornate fence
REUBEN Riggs B. 5/23/1775 D. 4/29/1829
SAMUEL - SON of GEORGE W. RIGGS + wife Elizabeth
Surveyor(s) B. 6/28/1808 D. 6/9/1893 Survey date 3/28/04 Wood board.

Photographer _____ Date 3/28/04 Photo no. _____

Current owner Camp Bennett Central Union Mission

Address/Phone No. 20315 PA Ave

Historic Status Locational Atlas ID 23/67 (removed) National Register (Eligible) local MP!
 Master Plan ID _____ Other _____

UTM GPS Coordinates (Center pt; Sam Riggs pt; slave? pt; Stone trees pt)

Additional sources of information: LEONARD A. BECRATT
2 LARGE SPRUCE TREES
3 CEDAR TREES
20 CATALPA TREES
REBUS G. Riggs B. 1835 - D. 1866
Photo Log:
① Overview
② Slave? grave
③ CAT: Riggs

Note: * Stones stuck in ground scattered throughout in cemetery
* Stone outcroppings on outside * 1 grave humanly excavated; others by groundhogs.

Adjoins Camp Bennett Central Union Mission

14 RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY BORDLEY ROAD BROOKVILLE

C.M.

N. Side Bordley Road

Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory

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Alternate name:

Owner of Bordley's Choice sold off back parcel to Elm Street Development. New houses on S. side of Bordley Rd. Cem. is on N. side of Bordley, just NE of ^{short} stone retaining wall. In freed area next to cornfield. Cond - poor

16 ~~to~~ known burials

1829-1906

one stone ^{fall} down, several against tree.

most are upright. Lots of ground hog/fox holes

14 RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY
BORDLEY ROAD
BROOKVILLE

Riggs Family Burying Ground near Central
Union Mission Farm - Brookville

I don't have much information about this
cemetery. I think it is located on the
back of what was Pleasant Hill, part
of Bodley's Choice, that belonged originally
to Samuel Riggs (of John). It adjoins
Mount Pleasant, now the Central Union
Mission Farm, which belonged originally
to Samuel's brother John Riggs.

I have snapshots of several stones:

Reuben Riggs born 1755 - died April 1829

Remus Riggs born 1790 - died Dec 1867

Catherine his wife born 1811 - died Dec 1893

Samuel Riggs (of John) is said to have been
buried at Pleasant Hill.

You can see the location of the cemetery from
Georgia Avenue. As you face the farm,
it is to the right of the lane, between
lane and the power line, and at the base
of those tall spruce trees, the tops of
which you can see from Georgia Avenue
(if you know where to look!)

{ Remus Riggs b. 12^{Jan} 1790 d. 18 Dec 1867
Catharine, his wife June 22, 1811 - Dec 12, 1893
Remus G. Riggs Nov 27, 1835 - Apr 19, 1866

William C. Riggs June 15, 1838 - Sep 25, 1906

Reuben Riggs b. May 22, 1775 - Apr 29, 1829

Slate marker - no info

Our brother Samuel P/o George W. Riggs and his wife
Eliza. June 28-1808 - June 9, 1883

Footstone - J.A.

4 slate markers

Remus Riggs Jan 25, 1853 - Oct 2, 1861

1 marker face down

2 slate marker

I don't know to whom the cemetery belongs.
Perhaps Sam Riggs could tell you.

The cemetery is overgrown with trees and bushes
and has been vandalized. I don't
remember whether there was a fence.

Sylvia K. Nash
20530 Georgia Avenue
Brookville, 20833
Tel: 774-4320

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RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY
BORDLEY ROAD
BROOKVILLE

**RIGGS (SAMUEL) FAMILY BURYING GROUND AT PLEASANT HILL,
BROOKEVILLE**

Directions: Route 97 North, Georgia Avenue. [A.D.C. Map: Montgomery, page 16, grid coordinates C-7.] Condition of cemetery: Unknown. Inactive cemetery. Earliest known death: 1807. Most recent death: 1906. Famous person interred: Samuel Riggs. Veterans interred: Revolutionary Vet and other wars vets. Records not transcribed. Author: John Beverley Riggs. Title: *The Riggs Family of Maryland*, pages 158-159. Publisher: The Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore, MD, 1939. Comments: Orndorff family removed and reinterred at Rockville Cemetery before 1912.

RIGGS FAMILY BURYING GROUND

Directions: Adjoins the Central Union Mission Farm, located among a grove of tall spruce trees. [A.D.C. Map: Montgomery.] Condition of cemetery: Overgrown and vandalized. Inactive cemetery. Earliest known death: 1829. Most recent death: 1893. Records not transcribed.

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RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY
BROOKEVILLE ROAD
BROOKEVILLE

OKNEY

The Gazette

Making

Montgomery released its grading period local school

Riggs Com.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2001 25 CENTS WWW.GAZETTE.COM



Darwin Weigel/The Gazette

Leonard Becraft and Cornelis deKlevit are worried that vandals or development will damage the gravesite of the well-known Riggs family.

Preserving the past for the future

Residents want to preserve Riggs family cemetery

by Terri Hogan
Staff Writer

Nestled away in a grove of towering pine trees in Brookeville lies a small family gravesite where members of the illustrious Riggs family were buried over 200 years ago.

Several community residents, along with a descendant of the Riggs family, want to make sure the site is preserved

and maintained.

After having remained undisturbed for decades, the graves have fallen victim to the recent development of the Brookeville Farms community. Although the site of the graves is designated as common area and is somewhat removed from the nearest home, there is a sharp contrast between what was once an isolated farm spawning 1,000 acres to the present-day subdivision of 64 new homes.

Because the construction on the extension of Bordly Drive is expected to begin this summer, what was once a secluded resting place will soon be subjected to increased traffic and increased vulnerability.

A rich history

In September of 1751, John Riggs of Anne Arundel County purchased the tract known as Bordley's Choice.

Although Thomas Riggs never lived there, he sent his five sons — Thomas, John, James, Samuel and Elisha — to establish the property that later became known as Pleasant Hill.

Samuel Riggs, born in 1740, married Amelia Dorsey in 1767 and built Pleasant Hill, the oldest Riggs family home in Brookeville.

Samuel Riggs, who fought in the American Revolution in Zadok A. Magruder's Montgomery County Militia,

See **Graves**, page A-13

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BORDLEY ROAD
BROOKEVILLE

GRAVES

Continued from A-1

had seven sons and five daughters. Following his death in 1814, his estate was divided among his sons. Some remained in Montgomery County, while others settled elsewhere.

Elisha Riggs, born at Pleasant Hill in 1779, founded Riggs National Bank in Washington, D.C.

Remus Riggs, the youngest son of Samuel, inherited Pleasant Hill and lived there until his death in 1867. His son William was the last of his family to be buried at Pleasant Hill. His daughters, Florence and Margaret, sold the property in 1913.

Several members of the Riggs family are buried at the family's gravesite, including Samuel and Amelia and many of their descendants.

Preserving the past

When Cornelis deKievit purchased his home in Brookeville Farms, he inquired about the area's history. After learning that several members of the Riggs' family were buried nearby, he set out to find the gravesites.

"I walked all over the community before I finally came across the gravesites," he said.

Although pleased to have located the burial sites, he was disturbed to see evidence of vandalism, including overturned headstones and what appeared to be digging.

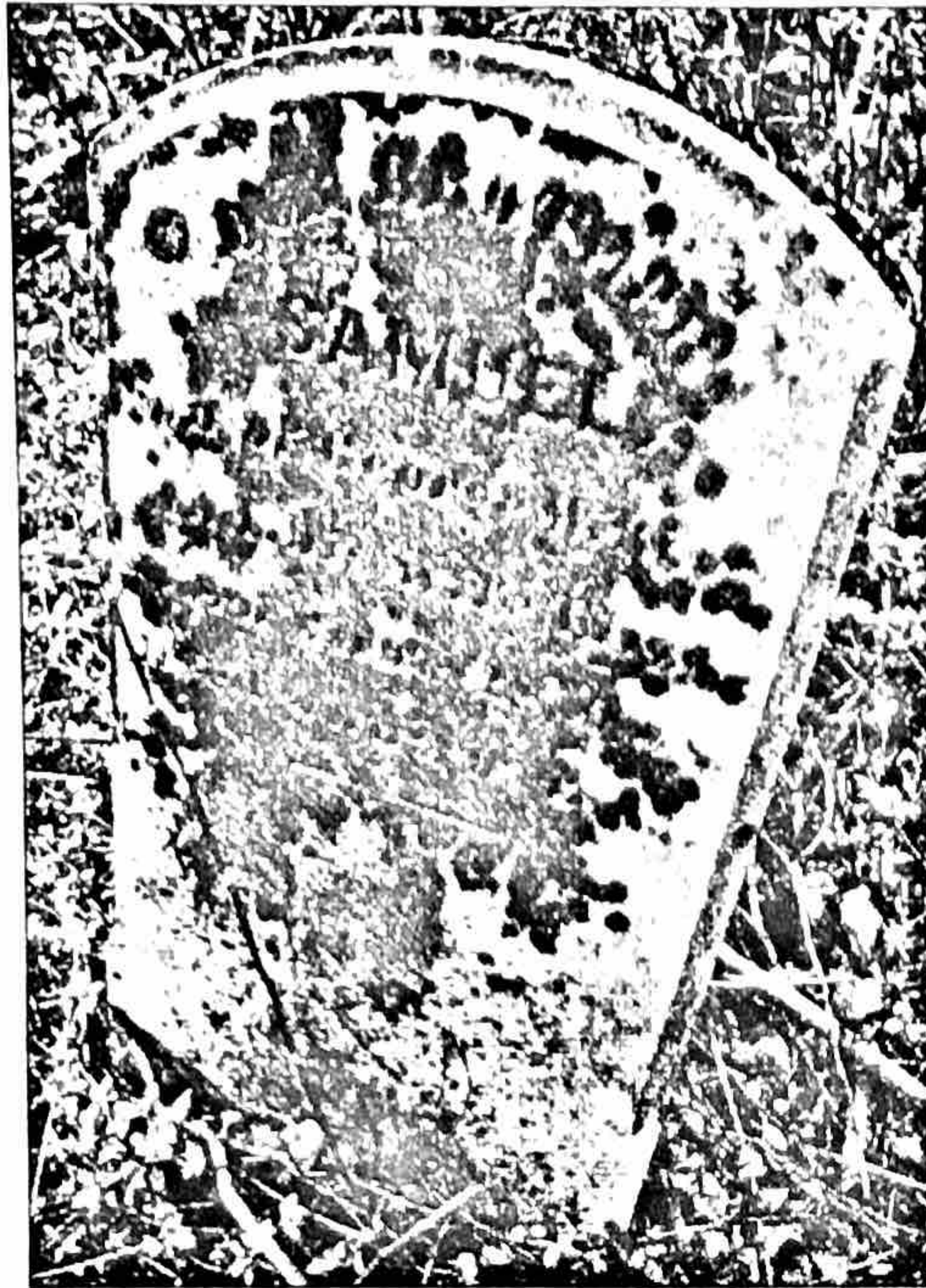
"I'm concerned that with nearby development that these monuments are in serious danger of being disturbed," deKievit said. "I believe that we should do what we can to preserve the site."

Local historian Leonard Becraft shares the concern of deKievit.

"I first saw this gravesite 25 years ago, and have been concerned about it and others nearby ever since," he said. "This is just too important to let bulldozers run over it."

Becraft, whose family lived at Greenwood, the property that adjoined Bordley's Choice, for several generations, fears that the area's historic integrity is being lost.

"The developers come in and change everything," he said. "The



A close-up of some of the old graves of the Riggs family on what is now the Brookeville Farms community. Some of the graves date back over 200 years.

Darwin Weigel/
The Gazette

only references to the past are Riggs Court and Bordly Drive, which they misspelled."

Samuel Riggs IV, whose great-great-great-grandfather Samuel and great-great-grandfather Reuben are both buried at Pleasant Hill, says that although he has no legal rights to the property, he hopes that it will be preserved.

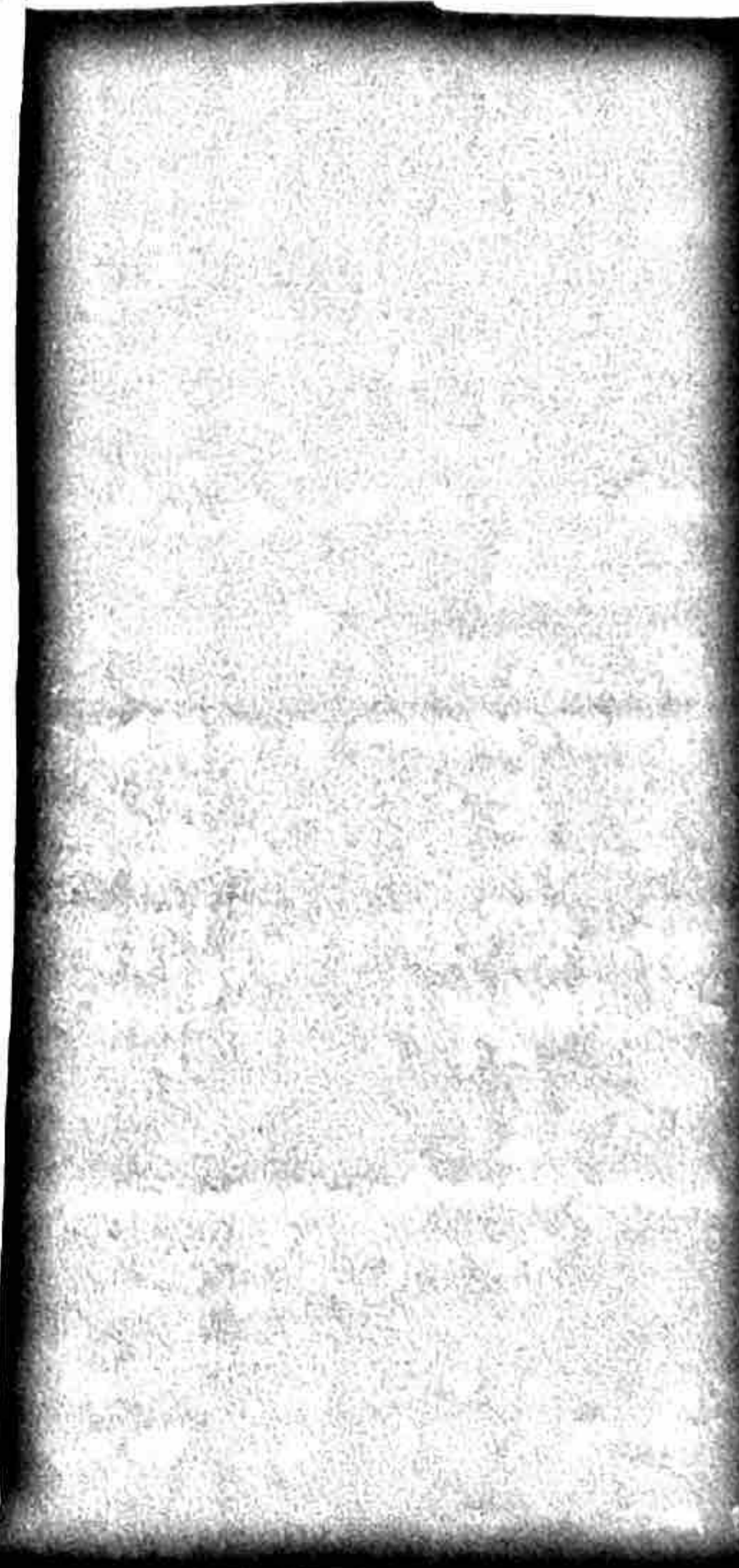
"It is important to preserve it because these were some of the earliest settlers in the area," Riggs IV said. "I have not been there in years, but I am upset to hear that someone has been digging up there. I don't care who is buried there, no one should disturb a cemetery."

Riggs IV, 81, maintains a wealth of knowledge about his ancestors.

Although some assumed that small, unmarked headstones might mark the graves of slaves, Riggs said that slaves would not have been buried at the same location as the family, although they were highly regarded.

He has a photocopy of his great-great-great-grandfather's will, bequeathing property, livestock and

miscellaneous possessions to his survivors, and stating that all of his slaves were to be freed once they reached a certain age.



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RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY
BORDLEY ROAD
BROOKEVILLE

Assuming responsibility

Unfortunately, because it is not on the Montgomery County tax map and has not been placed on the Historic Preservation Committee's Location Atlas, the county assumes no responsibility for preserving or maintaining the cemetery.

According to Michele Naru, a planner with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Pleasant Hill is part of the group of Olney sites that is currently going through the designation process.

"Because there is no remains of the building, the staff is recommending removal of this site of the Location Atlas," she said. "Any protections for the cemetery will be covered under Maryland laws."

Those laws protect all cemeteries from vandalism, unlawful removal of human remains, illegal looting and other desecrating acts.

Both deKievit and Becraft would like to see someone or some organization take responsibility for restoring and preserving the site.

DeKievit and fellow Brookeville Farms resident John O'Laughlin would like to see their homeowners association take on the project. DeKievit suggests clearing out the area and erecting an iron fence to

keep out vandals.

"Although there does seem to be interest, the association has not agreed to do anything yet," said O'Laughlin, the former homeowners association president. "However, I am personally very interested in doing something."

O'Laughlin does have some concerns, however, that raising awareness of the site may lead to further vandalism.

"We've had a lot of discussions about calling attention to it, because most people don't know it is there," he said. "However, I do think we need to do something, and I fear that we are running out of time this year because once the bramble grows in, there is not much we can do."

O'Laughlin said he has had discussions with Montgomery County, Pepco, who owns the right-of-way adjacent to the cemetery, and the Central Union Mission, whose property is adjacent.

"Basically, the county didn't want to negotiate with Pepco, and neither want the responsibility of maintaining the site," he said. "However, the folks at Central Union Mission said they were intrigued by it, and would be interested in working with us."

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RIGGS FAMILY CEMETERY
BORDNEY ROAD
BROOKEVILLE