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# Patuxent markers tell tale of the past

Joel Davis

**T**he Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission doesn't usually restore historic sites or perform research into the history of cemeteries.

Certainly Mike Grear, manager of the 4,400-acre Patuxent Watershed Recreation Area, did not expect to get involved in historic preservation, but one phone call changed all that.

"The whole thing started as kind of a serendipity thing," said Grear. "We got a call one day from a lady who wondered if we knew where her family burial plot was because she had been doing some research and thought it might be on WSSC property. Her name was probably Owens, but she never called back, which is unfortunate."

The unidentified woman gave Grear rough directions for finding the family cemetery, and find it he did. The site was overgrown, but clearly marked with a headstone reading "Owens," which leads Grear to think the woman was probably a relative.

"It was a family burial plot, but there was only the one headstone left in place," said Grear. "The way the land lies there, though, you can tell there are more graves around. We mowed the site and cleaned it up some, and we plan to maintain it on a regular basis from now on."

After finding the first cemetery site, on the Howard County side of the recreation area property, Grear began a search for others, intrigued at the possibility that there might be more such plots under his care.

"That whole process made us think that maybe there are more on our 4,400 acres," said Grear. "I talked to people who have been working here for a long time, and some who had retired, and some remembered some possible cemetery sites around."

Grear said the searches, which took place last spring and summer, were grueling because of the heat and the inaccessibility of the sites.

"We started literally poking around with pitchforks, very gently around where we thought there might be something, and sure enough, we found headstones," said Grear. "Some just had initials on them, but one at the second site had one with a full name and dates, and then at the third site we found

etry of Triadelphia, which was washed away by floods twice in its history before being inundated for good when the Brighton Dam was built in the late 1930s.

"We looked at some histories of the town, and names of some of the founders of the town and the names on some of the headstones match up," said Grear. "Also, the cemetery is located very near where the town of Triadelphia once was, and it would have been high up on the hill above the town. We know that people tend to build their cemeteries where they won't get flooded, and where the cemetery is seems like a good location for the town."

Grear said the third site was by far the most difficult to find and restore.

"We were crawling on our hands and knees to get there," said Grear. "We had to go through a bunch of briars and thorn bushes using deer trails and all to get there."

The site now is quite attractive, with the old, weathered headstones freshly cleaned up, the grass in the cemetery area mowed and a fence neatly encompassing the stones. Grear said maintaining the sites is no trouble at all.

"It's really no big deal," he said. "We just go out and mow the sites four times each summer, and pick up the stones if wind or kids knocks one over. We are in the business of preserving the quality of the water and the land here anyway, so a little historical preservation didn't seem too far out of our normal line of work."

Gwen Marcus, historic planner for Montgomery County, said she is grate-



Staff photo by David Hobby

ful to Grear and the WSSC for their work in finding and preserving the three cemetery sites, especially the Triadelphia site, which should become an official Montgomery County historical site soon.

After receiving a call from a woman researching her family past, WSSC officials checked the agency's 4,400-acre watershed property and has discovered three family cemeteries.

GRAVESTONE READINGS FROM THREE SITES

Triadelphia Cemetery:

---- "L.F.R."

---- "C.C.R."

---- "A.R.B."

---- "John C.

Son of

A. & H. Brown

Born July 3, 1849

Died Dec. 16, 1856"

---- "Holy Bible

Elizabeth

Wife of

James Brown,

Born May 20, 1804,

Died Mar. 4, 1889

-----  
Dearest Mother thou hast left us,  
We thy loss most deeply feel,  
Yet is God that hast bareft us,  
He can all our sorrows heal."

---- "Laura F.

Wife of

John W. Ridgely

Born Mar. 11, 1853

Died Oct. 20, 1879

Having finished life's duty,  
She now sweetly rests."

Triadelphia Cemetery (continued)

--- In memory of  
He is not  
Dead  
but  
Sleepeth  
*Urias Brown*  
Born Jany. 31, 1799  
Died Nov. 22, 1865  
In the 67 year of  
his age.

"Mark the perfect man, and  
behold the upright, for the  
end of that man is peace."

---- Holy Bible  
Sarah  
Consort of  
Urias Brown  
Born Mar. 17, 1802  
Died Jan. 15, 1878.

She was a kind and affectionate  
wife, a fond Mother and a  
friend to all.

---- Sacred  
to the memory of  
Mrs. Mary Clarke,  
who departed this life  
Feb. 15th, 1845,  
in the 71st year of her age.  
Formerly of Reisterstown  
Baltimore County.

*(Born 1794!)*

---- Temas R.  
Son of  
H. Brown  
Born  
Jan. 11, 1853  
Died  
Dec. 6, 1855

--- B

--- J.C.B.

Triadelphia Cemetery (continued):

----- In memory of our  
First Born  
by  
L.B./ A.R.  
Brown  
1887

----- In memory of  
Mrs. Sarah A. Heckrotte  
Died  
Jan'y 29, 1849  
In the 29th Year  
of her age.

A. Guddess, Maker, Ball

----- J.B.

----- A.S.

----- In Memory of  
Mrs. Nancy Snibly <sup>v</sup> (~~Spelling~~)  
died Nov. 28th, 1817,  
in the 22nd year of  
her age.

She shouted Hallelujah  
in Jesus, and said she  
was going home, and said  
weep not for me my \_\_\_ie  
\_\_\_ds weep not for me.

----- Henrietta  
Wife of  
Alfred Brown  
Died June 23, 1876,  
In her 54 year

Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep  
From which \_\_\_\_\_ ever \_\_\_\_\_  
to weep.

*born 1822*

*Secretary*

Triadelphia Town Site:

----- "Martha C. Brown"  
Died 9/9/1899

*Mar*  
^

----- "Ridgely" *J.W. and T.*  
Infant Son of  
Died July 1, 1886  
Aged 4 days

----- "JFB"

----- "John G.  
Son of I. & H. Brown"  
Born July 3, 1849  
Died Dec. 16, 1856

----- "A.H.B." or "A.R.B."

----- "L.F.R."

----- (Too worn out to read)

----- (Base Only)

----- "James Brown  
Born  
Dec. 22, 1803  
Died  
Jan. 18, 1881

Blessed are the dead which  
die in the Lord. From henceforth  
You saith the spirit that they  
may rest from their labours  
and their works do follow

Triadelphia Cemetery (continued):

---- "Infant"

---- "S.B."

---- "L.B."

---- Joshua Brown  
Born  
Jan'y. 31, 1811 .  
Died  
June 29, 1878 .

"An honest man's the noblest  
work of God."

---- "U. A. Lough  
Fred'k"

GRAVESTONE READINGS FROM THREE SITES

Supplee Lane Rec. Area Site:

---- "Owens"

GRAVESTONE READINGS FROM THREE SITES

Reservoir Road site: (just off our <sup>wssc</sup> property)

6-10 headstones total  
initials only  
(Slave Graveyard?)

---- "L.L. March, 1853"

---- "M.L."

---- "J.L. 1839"

---- "J.P.M. Died March, 1808" ~~WSSC~~

---- "N.W."



GRAVESTONE READINGS FROM THREE SITES

"Batson"

Pigtail/Dutton's Fields Site:

---- "L.A.B."

---- "Martin H. Batson

7/9/1811

8/5/1883"

*Aged 72 years and 22 days*

---- "S.F.B."

DRAFT

DRAFT

HISTORIC SITES PRESERVED BY  
PATUXENT WATERSHED STAFF

Restoration work has been completed on the three historic cemetery sites found on the WSSC's Patuxent Watershed property. The Owens' family plot has been cleared, trimmed, had fence line repaired and a new gate added. This site is located off of Supplee Lane in Prince Georges County. A second site (also a family plot) belonging to the Batson family, has also been rehabilitated with trimming, tombstones repaired and reset and a fence line added. This site is located off of Greenbridge Rd. in Howard County.


Finally, perhaps the most interesting and historically significant site, located in Montgomery County off of Triadelphia Lake Road, has also been restored through careful rehabilitation efforts. This large site is apparently the original cemetery for the Town of Triadelphia founded in 1809, destroyed by two major <sup>floods</sup> ~~floods~~ in 1868-9 and 1889 (Johnstown Flood) and finally inundated by the Triadelphia Reservoir created by the construction of Brighton Dam 1941-43. Here staff initially located approximately ten headstones; however, diligent search and careful surface clearing "unearthed" another 24 tombstones <sup>dating</sup> ~~dated~~ back to the mid/late 1700s. All 34 headstones and bases have been carefully repaired and reset. The area has been cleared, trimmed, reseeded and fenced. Historic Site signs will be erected and the site will be maintained annually along <sup>with</sup> ~~the~~ the Batson and Owens family plots sites.

Patuxent Watershed staff who played a major role in this significant cultural/historic preservation effort include:

Mr. Donald Whittaker, Crew Chief	Mr. Wayne Johnson, Maint. Worker II
Mr. Dennis Hubbard, Maint. Worker II	Mr. Norman Morris, Maint. Worker II
Mr. Lounge C. Powell, Maint. Worker II	Mr. Bob Howes, Maint. Worker II
Mr. Jeff Bell, Maint. Mech. <del>II</del>	Mr. Michael Grear, Watershed Manager

Attached are listings of the headstones' inscriptions found at the sites. It is a wonderful feeling to "rescue" these sites from the desecration and destruction they apparently suffered and save them for archeological, genealogical, cultural and historical preservation. Heirs are guaranteed access to these burial sites in perpetuity. Respect for our ancestors' peaceful internment will be provided.

-Stet-

  
Michael Grear  
Watershed Manager  
4/17/89