

JIM.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CEMETERY INVENTORY

Survey ID 262

Cemetery name Darne Family - (DARNSTOWN)

Alternate name(s) JAMES Sorenson

Address (or direction from nearest intersection) Rts 108 & 112

ADC Map Page 27 Grid B-3 Town Darnestown

Type

Religious _____

Family _____

Private _____

Other Public

Association

Free black _____

Enslaved _____

Ethnic Euro-American

Prehistoric _____

Setting Rural Urban Suburban Forested Other _____

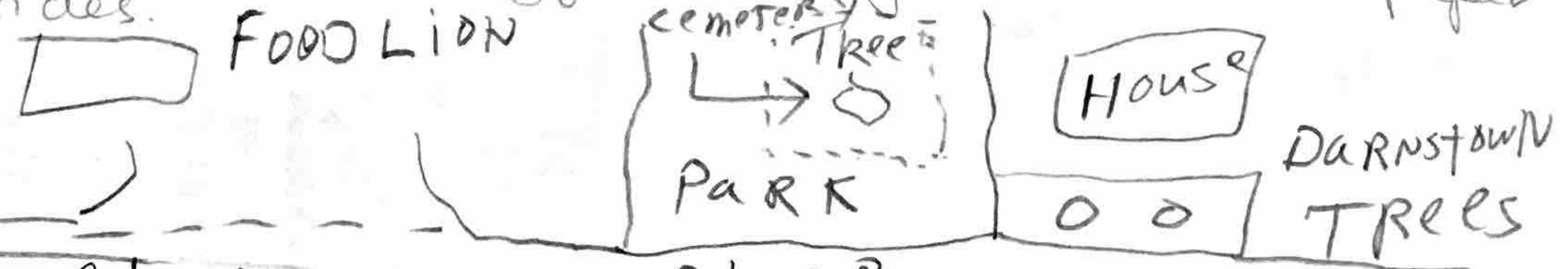
Condition Excellent Good Fair Poor

Negative Impacts (vandalism, dumping, neglect, encroachment, etc) NOW M-NCPPC DARNSTOWN SQUARE PARK - CONTACT JAMES SORENSEN - 301-840-5848

Approximate no. of burials 15-20 Date range of burials 19th CENT

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

No stones, archaeology done. Janet has newspaper articles.



Surveyor(s) Janet Sorenson Survey date 7-25-2004

Photographer _____ Date _____ Photo no. 301-840-5848

Current owner M-NCPPC 8787 Georgia Ave Silver Spring

Address/Phone No. 301-495-7600 MD20903

Historic Status Locational Atlas ID _____ National Register

Master Plan ID _____ Other _____

UTM N 39.04321° W 076.99404° Waypoint (129) A

Additional sources of information:

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DARNESTOWN CEMETERY
NEXT TO 14101 DARNESTOWN RD.
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GAITHERSBURG GAZETTE

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Wednesday, February 23, 1994

Cemetery may lie in development's path

by Sara Green
Staff Writer

Are members of Darnestown's founding family and Civil War soldiers buried on land slated for luxury homes and a small commercial center?

At least one elderly resident and several other residents who have spent years researching the question think so, although no formal records exist.

What will happen to the graves, if they are there, is part of a problem that is being played out throughout the state as rural, poorly documented, abandoned cemeteries become part of prime developable land, said Barbara Seig. Seig is a preservation activist and a leader with the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, Inc., an Ellicott City-based group working to change state law.

The property's owners, the Landow Co., a Bethesda-based firm led by Nathan Landow, the former chairman of the Maryland State Democratic Party, have been trying to develop an 11-acre site near the intersection of Route 28 and Seneca Road for years. They sparked the anger of many residents in 1987 when they tore down two circa 1820 log cabins near the site that were considered the oldest structures in Darnestown.

Rick Griffin and Nancy Houston are two Darnestown residents who believe up to 60 people, including Union soldiers from the 27th Indiana and 10th Vermont Regiments, along with black area residents and the daughter of William Darne, may be buried not far from the site of the former Esworthy Garage, which also stood near the log cabins.

Today the site's most prominent features are two rare and large trees the community is trying to preserve.

"It's been very frustrating. I would have felt that by now we would have come up with at least a name for this cemetery," said Griffin, who has

(Please see CEMETERY, A-14)



Photo by Bill Ryan

Darnestown resident Greg Clemmer displays what has been determined to be a casket handle. This, plus eyewitness statements, indicates an old cemetery might lie on land slated for development.

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Cemetery

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 spent several years researching military, church and land and historical society records in Rockville and Annapolis, along with Houston and other residents.

So far some of the strongest evidence comes from the recollections of elderly residents and a casket handle found at the site.

Charles Clark, 85, a retired electrician, moved to Darnestown in the mid 1930s and remembers Ace Esworthy building his gas station about 50 to 70 feet in front of about six grave stones, Clark said.

"It was an old, old cemetery. I don't think there had been any interments there for some time," Clark said. He believes his memory of the graves' placement is strong enough to identify their general location today.

Clark also said Esworthy simply removed the stones and used them as building materials in the garage, something others also have noted.

Howard Carter, who recently died, lived close by. In a 1987 video interview with Griffin, Carter, then in his 80s, stood behind the garage site and talked about the burials he witnessed and the headstones he remembered standing there.

Once, there were "night doctors," or grave robbers, who removed one body, which was rumored to be used for medical research, he said in the tape.

The last burial took place sometime during World War I, and the stone said "Green," Carter recalled in the videotape.

"I think it was so strange there was nothing in the deeds, but everybody knew it. Why put it in the deeds?" said Nancy Houston, another resident who has researched the history of the area and failed to find any formal record of the cemetery or who might be buried there.

"People in those days had a different attitude," Houston said.

According to Seig, a lot of farm land included family cemeteries, "but what happened is that the title companies have dropped those deeds from the land records," and most title searches do not go back farther than 50 years.

Houston said Esworthy, now dead, told her he thought there were members of the Darne Family buried behind his garage which was next to his home, one of the two log cabins.

Cecilia Darne Beall, the daughter of William Darne the man who

State legislation proposed to protect unmarked graves

by Sara Green
 Staff Writer

"Very frankly many state's attorneys look the other way," when the question of building on an abandoned, unmarked cemetery comes up, said Barbara Seig.

Seig is a leader with the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, Inc., a statewide group fighting for the passage of the Burial Sites Protection Legislation of 1994 in the Maryland legislature.

The four Senate bills, S.B. 761, 762, 763 and 764, would set up local advisory boards to serve as the focal point for preserving burial sites, would authorize cemetery access to interested groups and families, and would prohibit selling or trading artifacts and remains, among other things, Seig said.

Senate Bill 763 would also permit local governments to make use of community ser-

vice volunteers in maintaining old graveyards, with the permission of property owners, she explained.

Today, "we don't have much to require builders to do anything," Seig said.

Under current law, a grave can be moved and reinterred with the approval of the state's attorney for each county and with a health department permit, she said.

But much development occurs without anyone knowing about it, Seig added.

In 1992 the group tried to stop construction on St. Mary's Cemetery in Ellicott City, the early 1800s burial site of the Carrolls, one of Maryland's founding families.

The state's attorney there said he had no authority to act and "only after backhoes desecrated the bodies did he step in and issue a permit for those bodies to be removed. It was a mess," Seig said.

sion, and found what an area undertaker later identified as a casket handle, with the date 1895 etched on it, about 75 to 100 feet behind the garage foundation. The date probably refers to a patent issued for the handle or the casket, he believes.

There are at least two methods for finding graves, including radar, which costs about \$1,000 a day, or soil resistivity, a less costly technique that uses electrically charged rods to determine changes in soil density, said Jim Sorensen, an archeologist for the county parks department.

"It all comes down to a question of money and time," Sorensen said.

But it is also not clear, what, if anything, the Landow Co. would do about locating the graves or preserving or moving them if they are found. Company officials are aware of the concern for the graves, Griffin and James Schooley, a vice president with the Greater Darnestown Civic Association, said.

Landow has tentatively agreed to set aside a small piece of land near Route 28 and the old trees for a public park, a site that probably includes many of the graves, although no offer has been put in writing, Schooley said.

The Landow's residential and commercial plans for the property will be discussed at the

According to Seig, state law, developed in the 1880s to prevent grave robbing, is unclear.

"The law doesn't say that in so many words that it is illegal to build on a cemetery, it just says you can't remove remains without approval from the state's attorney. There is no way building on top of a cemetery is legal . . . but it is done every day," Seig said.

The problem in Darnestown is that no organized group has so far agreed to accept the responsibility for finding the graves or maintaining them and there is no consensus about what should be done.

"My personal opinion is the property (around the graves) should be set aside" and the graves preserved and not moved, said Janet Parrish, the president of the 35-member Darnestown Historic Society. The group believes a cemetery exists at the site, but has not gone beyond that point, she said, noting its funds are limited.

The other organized area group, the Greater Darnestown Civic Association, has no position on the cemetery, said its president, Bruce Deppa.

"There must not be any living relatives who care about this cemetery, if there is a cemetery . . . or they would be there," Deppa said.

Houston thinks a park with a memorial is appropriate. "I would

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two log cabins.

Cecilia Darne Beall, the daughter of William Darne, the man who owned hundreds of acres of area land and for whom Darnestown is named, died in the 1880s. She is not buried at the Darnestown Presbyterian Church at the intersection of Route 28 and Turkey Foot Road, something Houston finds odd, since Beall was quite affluent.

Could she be buried near the old Esworthy garage? Houston is not sure.

In the spring of 1988, Greg Clemmer, another Darnestown resident, walked the property with the Landow family's permis-

The Landow's residential and commercial plans for the property will be discussed at the association's next meeting to be held, March 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Darnestown Presbyterian Church at the intersection of Route 28 and Turkey Food Road.

Company officials did not return the Gazette's repeated phone calls.

County law does not cover the graves unless the land is part of a designated historic site, and this site was rejected for designation in 1987, said Gwen Marcus, the county planning board's historic preservation commission coordinator.

said.

Houston thinks a park with a memorial is appropriate. "I would hate to see these people disturbed. Let them rest in peace," she said, noting there are graves in her own back yard, which does not bother her. "But I would not like to have my cellar dug among them," she added.

Griffin has stronger feelings. The Landow Co. "should do the right thing. It's called showing respect," he said.

"I think we should pass along to future generations our respect of our forefathers. This thing can become real ghoulish real fast," Clemmer added.

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14 gravesites discovered in Darnestown

by Sara Green
Staff Writer

They think the 14 graves lie almost exactly where Howard Carter said they were.

Carter, a long-time Darnestown resident who died several years ago, was filmed by his neighbors in 1987 as he stood in a field off Route 28 near Seneca Road talking about "the night doctors," men who stole bodies from graves for medical research.

On Monday, an archaeologist, three community volunteers, a backhoe operator and two other workers carefully scraped away the soil to discover evidence of the graves in a one-acre portion of the field, ending one chapter in a frustrating historical probe several residents started nearly a decade ago.

The residents' concerns grew as building plans by Landow & Co., the property's owner, developed.

State law requires that builders get permits to move graves if human remains are
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Graves

(Continued from page A-1) found during construction, but does not require that landowners search for undocumented, abandoned cemeteries like the Darnestown graveyard on their property.

"Hopefully, everybody is happy," said Ed Otter, the archaeologist hired by Landow after several residents and the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites Inc., a lobby group, pressed for the investigation.

The discovery "should make the historians happy. The fact that we found (the graves) not on the building lots, that should make the builder happy," Otter said.

The 14 graves were found in two strips, 10 in one area and four in another about 30 feet away. The site is about 30 feet behind a concrete slab that is all that remains of Esworthy's gas station, a business operated by Ace Esworthy, a long-time resident and former County Council member.

A small, narrow piece of marble

and several pieces of quartz and schist, a soft rock, were also found near the top of the graves, Otter said. They could be grave markers or something else, including pieces of homes that were torn down near the graves, he explained, adding that none were carved.

In June, evidence of two other graves containing an infant and an adult were found in an adjoining home site east of the area excavated on Monday that is part of Seneca Highlands, a residential project.

All of the land is owned by Landow & Co., a Bethesda-based builder who plans to construct homes and a shopping center on land surrounding the area where the 14 graves were found.

The two graves will not be disturbed, said Nathan Landow, the firm's president. He has not decided if the sites will be marked and noted on a protective covenant in the land records or if they will be added to the three-quarter-acre plot with the 14 grave sites, which is slated for a park.

What will happen at the park and who will own it is not clear.

"You mean Poltergeist Park?" said Nathan Landow, repeating the name several times during an interview Tuesday.

Landow officials have suggested leaving the graves unmarked within the park, which has already been deeded to the county parks board.

"If they haven't accepted (the deed), we are unaware of it," Landow said. On Thursday, the county Planning Board approved the plan for another residential portion of Seneca Highlands with conditions requiring Landow maintain the site's storm water management pond, protect a large butternut tree on the site, and build several sidewalks.

Otter said he dug test trenches around the grave sites and is "as comfortable as we can be" that no more graves will be found on building sites.

He used a bulldozer to carefully strip 5-foot wide trenches, about 18 inches deep, on parts of the site that had been identified by elderly area residents.

He found a pattern of darker grave-shaped discolorations in the red clay, caused by backfilling

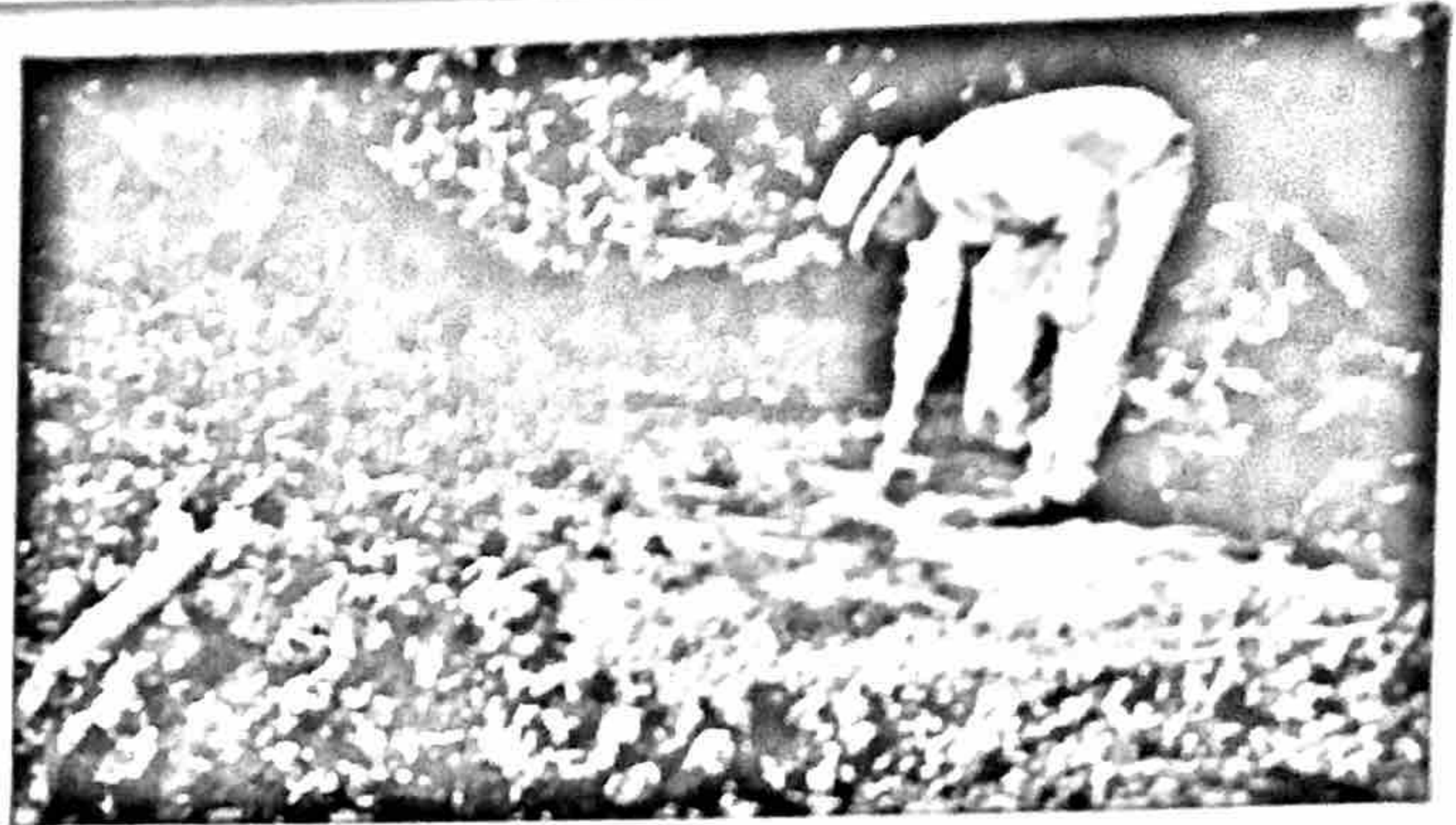


Photo by Bill Ryan

Archaeologist Ed Otter searches for evidence of graves at a site on Route 28 and Seneca Road.

graves. The human remains and coffins, if any still exist, would be buried much deeper and were not being sought, Otter said. The "staining" in the ground from the backfill "can persist for very long" periods and is an accepted technique for identifying grave sites, he explained.

For example, archaeologists used stains to locate 300-year-old grave sites in St. Mary's City, he added.

Residents think this Darnestown cemetery dates from the Civil War to the World War I era.

At least one resident, Rick Griffin, had suspected that about 50 people were buried on or very close to Landow's property.

About 20,000 Union troops camped in the area in 1861. Many died of disease, Griffin said. Unfortunately, the war records only say "buried at Darnestown," which could mean nearby Darnestown Presbyterian Church, or another abandoned cemetery of about 100 graves at Routes 118 and 28 that is now a single-family home community, he added.

"It's frustrating" said Griffin. "I hope the Carter [Department] they found nothing."

and spent years in archives in Annapolis, Baltimore and Rockville trying to prove the cemetery existed.

Otter did not use another, newer grave identification technique, ground penetration radar, at the Landow site because the discarded metal in the ground from the old automobile repair shop would confuse the readings, Deppa said.

Instead, Otter relied on the recollections of residents, including Carter.

But some mysteries remain. Mabel Vincent Dean, a descendant of William Darne, Darnestown's founder, told Bruce Deppa, the president of the Greater Darnestown Civic Association, her mother always said the family was buried at the property, although she had no specific details.

Another long-time resident, Charles Clark, 85, told the Gazette that Esworthy simply removed the cemetery's head stones and used them to build the garage's foundation.

On Monday, workers drilled the

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Darnestown Founders' Kin Buried At Rt. 28 Site, Specialist Now Says

By Louis Aguilar
Washington Post Staff Writer

An archaeologist hired to determine whether land in northern Montgomery County is the site of a long-neglected cemetery has reversed his earlier opinion and now says two descendants of the founders of Darnestown are buried there.

Archaeologist Ed Otter said further analysis of a dig he performed last month revealed evidence that Elizabeth Gassaway Darne and her 2-year-old daughter, Mary Darne, were buried there in the mid-1800s.

"I have essentially laid my reputation that these are graves," Otter said. "One of the things about archaeology is nothing at first is very apparent."

The property along Route 28 north of Seneca Road is owned by Nathan Landow, former Maryland Democratic Party chairman. The graves are not located where Landow plans to build houses and a small commercial center.

Landow said markers will be placed at the two burial sites. "We just want the rumors put to rest. We will continue to cooperate with the Darnestown citizens, and we will have respect for the dead," he said.

Landow paid \$10,000 for the dig

to settle claims made by many Darnestown residents that his property was used as a burial ground from the mid-1800s until World War I. The land was once owned by William Darne, and members of his family lived there until about 1820, residents said.

During the dig, Otter found two areas of discolored soil that were close together. One was about six feet in length and the other was three feet, he said.

"When I first found them, I was a little uncertain," Otter said. "The size of the stains are somewhat smaller than usual grave sites. But when I looked back at the records, I learned the mother and daughter had died during the time period we are dealing with," he said.

Otter said there is a possibility the site may not be graves, particularly since the Darnestown church has grave markers for the mother and daughter.

"Either I have the wrong people or the markers were moved," he said. "What I found . . . can be a pretty bizarre tree root. But at this point, it is my professional opinion these are graves."

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Washington Post

Mon. June 13,
1994

UPDATE ON THE NEWS

The Mystery Remains in Darnestown

The mystery lingers over whether the former Maryland Democratic Party chairman owns a long-lost Montgomery County cemetery, even as clues are unearthed.

An archaeologist has found evidence of 16 graves on land owned by Nathan Landow in Darnestown, in northern Montgomery. The evidence was found in two digs underwritten by the wealthy developer.

The excavations, which cost about \$10,000 each, have not diminished the suspicions of many Darnestown residents about what lies under 18 acres along Route 28 just north of Seneca Road.

Landow began building the first of up to 18 homes and possibly a small retail center last month, but members of the Greater Darnestown Civic Association still say that as many as 60 graves may be there, including those of a Civil War troop and descendants of the founding family of Darnestown. The land, in the middle of town, was once owned by William Darne, and members of his family lived there until about 1820.

"We still don't know if we will get all the answers," said Bruce Deppa, head of the civic association. "We feel as though the two previous digs have vindicated our beliefs."

Landow counters that although there are still too many rumors and not enough evidence, he doesn't have plans for another dig.

For years, Darnestown residents and Montgomery historians have compiled scattered references to an unspecified cemetery in town used from the mid-1800s until World War I. But no county land records mention a single grave on the site.

The residents once hired a dowser—a person who uses a divining rod to find underground materials. Using a bent coat hanger, the dowser claimed to find multiple burial sites.

This year, Landow agreed to hire an archaeologist to seek a scientific answer. The archaeologist determined there are 16 graves there—all on a part of Landow's parcel away from the area that will be developed.

Landow was chairman of the state Democratic Party for more than three years before resigning in 1992 to raise money for the Clinton presidential campaign.

— Louis Aguilar

I-95 Speed Loophole

■ Three years ago, the U.S. Census Bureau declared that Fredericksburg, Va., was now an urbanized area—an act that could have consequences for drivers on Interstate 95.

The new designation was made because Fredericksburg and the surrounding area grew to more than 50,000 people during the 1980s, according to the 1990 Census. The designation made Fredericksburg eligible for additional federal transportation money and gave it a marketing tool to help persuade companies to locate in the city.

But the designation could have less pleasant consequences for drivers. Federal law allows a 65 mph speed limit on interstate highways in rural areas but requires a limit of 55 mph in urbanized areas. Thus, the Census Bureau declaration was bad news for drivers accustomed to zipping from Northern Virginia to Richmond at 65.

But what bureaucracy can do, it also can undo. And that 65 mph speed limit is safe for now.

The reason is a loophole in the 55 mph requirement, said Joan Morris, of the Virginia Department of Transportation, which maintains I-95. Federal law allows a 65 mph limit in an urbanized area for a stretch of highway of seven miles or less with three or fewer exits. Fredericksburg has three exits—for Routes 17, 3 and 1—in less than seven miles.

"Because we had leeway, it stayed at 65," Morris said.

— D'Vera Cohn

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LAPUBESTOWN CENTER
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Washington Post, Oct 24, 1994