

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CEMETERY INVENTORY

Survey ID 271

Cemetery name Clipper Family Cemetery

Alternate name(s) Stonecutters Cemetery

Address (or direction from nearest intersection) Between River Rd. & C + O Canal. Just west of Partnership Rd.

ADC Map Page 26 Grid A-9 (vic) Town Seneca

Type Family Association Free black  
 Religious \_\_\_\_\_ Enslaved \_\_\_\_\_  
 Private \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ Prehistoric \_\_\_\_\_

Setting Forested Rural \_\_\_\_\_ Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Condition Good Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Poor \_\_\_\_\_

Negative Impacts (vandalism, dumping, neglect, encroachment, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate no. of burials 30+ Date range of burials ? - 1905

Description (markers, materials, arrangement, landscaping, fence, paths and roads, etc) 1 mi. west Riley's Lock

Located in forested area access about 1/4 mi north of C + O Canal to path. <sup>at mile 24</sup> 2 headstones w/ hand-carved inscriptions found, ~~all~~ <sup>4</sup> displaced propped against trees. About 25 ~~stones~~ <sup>artificial</sup> stones found. Some w/ footstones. Most are Seneca Sandstone.

Surveyor(s) A. Brockett Survey date 11.19.05  
Photographer 11 Date 11.19.05 Photo no. \_\_\_\_\_

Current owner Seneca Creeke State Park  
Address/Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Status \_\_\_\_\_ Locational Atlas ID \_\_\_\_\_ National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
Master Plan ID \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

UTM N 39° 4, 197. W 77° 21, 767

Additional sources of information: - MCHS Library files: Cemeteries + Clipper family + churches

John Clipper worked as stonecutter at the Seneca Quarry Mill. He <sup>built a house</sup> ~~owned property~~ adjacent to canal for himself, wife Martha & their 10 children.

See over for transcriptions

271 CLIPPER FAMILY CEMETERY  
SENECA CREEK STATE PARK  
SENECA.





N39° 4.197'  
W77° 21.767'

271 CLIPPER FAMILY CELESTIAL  
SENECA CREEK STATE PARK  
SENECA.

# Germantown hunters find old cemetery in park

by Tracy L. Glisson  
Staff Writer

It was two years ago when Mike Seydin first discovered the graves.

Scouting a remote stretch of Seneca Creek State Park near North Potomac, Seydin and his rifle had gone in search of doves. What he found was a scene that occupies his thoughts and efforts to this day: 15 headstones, each sharply carved in sandstone, most worn illegible with the passing of time.

For the inhabitants of the small cemetery, Seydin's discovery meant the possible restoration of their burial site. For the Germantown man, who emigrated to this country from Iran 10 years ago, each smooth stone revealed his own reflection.

"This was very interesting to me," Seydin said. "These people were newcomers like me, people still exploring this country."

"I'd been to the site enough times, I knew I never had to go back. But something kept making me go. And I'll keep going until something is done for them."

According to Barbara Sieg, co-chair of the Legislative Committee of the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, more than 300 historic burial places are registered in the county, and some dozen more are stumbled upon each year. While most bearing headstones have fallen into disrepair, Sieg says their loss is more than one to their descendants.

All of Maryland suffers the historical consequences, she said.

"Our most important history can be found in little cemeteries," Sieg said. "A grave site can tell us who lived in a place and how, and in many cases the nature of their work and deaths."

"What I'm hoping to do is get both local citizens and Annapolis representatives to acknowledge that this is a significant piece of Montgomery County history," Sieg added. "And for them to acknowledge people like Mr. Seydin, who doesn't want to destroy this significant site, nor see it destroyed."

Fascinated with the faint inscriptions on the stones from the moment he happened upon them, Seydin found that discovering the graves themselves would prove far easier than finding help in saving them. It would be two years of dead-ends and run-arounds to state agencies before Seydin ran across an August Gazette story on an unmarked gravesite in Darnestown. A handful of phone calls later, the race to restoration was on.

Barbara Sieg is one such interested party. As co-chair of the coalition, Sieg spends her days in Annapolis lobbying for the dead: this month, two of the coalition's bills will pass into state law, one recommending the establishment of a cemetery preservation board in each county.

"We're hoping to serve as an eventual clearing house for information," said Sieg, who hopes to visit the Seneca site this month. "To tell people how to access various agencies, including genealogical societies and restoration services. Oftentimes, it can take a lot of money to preserve a historic burial site, so we can point people in the right direction. And the first step always begins with the property owner."

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See **Cemetery**, page A-24

## CEMETERY

Continued from page A-20  
site is news to them, their aid in its preservation is a priority.

"He's certainly uncovered something here," said park assistant manager Barbara Garner, who noted the park's 15,000 acres often reveal a historic landmark. "We always do what we can to respect the dead, be it working with volunteers, using our equipment and offering supervision, or giving materials and staff time."

"The history of Maryland parks is just as important as its geography. In fact, state parks have a long history of contributing to historic preservation — often in tandem with local historical societies."

According to Jane Sween, research librarian at the Montgomery County Historical Society, its genealogical group has no record of the Seneca burial site.

Nonetheless, it holds a file on two of the legible names in the cemetery: John and Martha Clipper.

The son of a Virginia couple who died in slavery, Clipper moved with wife Martha to the area and built a house next to the C&O Canal, about a mile north of Seneca Creek, where they raised 10 children.

Before his death in 1903, and Martha's in 1905, Clipper worked as a stonecutter at the Seneca Quarry mill, shaping the stones that were loaded on canal barges and mortared into the Smithsonian Castle and the old Pension building in Washington.

"While the writing was inscribed by hand," Seydin said, "all the headstones in the site have blade marks where they've been cut by machines."

As the pieces of a two-year puzzle come together for Seydin, both

the historical society and the preservation coalition are making plans to visit the site, to discover each of its inhabitants and restore the area. The park service has offered assistance.

"Maybe they can put up a plaque with an explanation — who these people were and what they did, maybe a little fence," said Seydin, now an electrical engineer and an American citizen.

"That's all anyone can do now anyway."

"But the most important thing is to register the site so these people aren't lost forever. A lot of Americans act like they've lived here a thousand years, but some of these graves are a hundred years old, and parts of America history aren't even that old."

"If nobody cares enough to do something about this place, this is a part of that history that will disappear forever."

271  
CLIPPER FAMILY CEMETERY  
SENECA CREEK STATE PARK  
SENECA

# Hunter finds old cemetery in Seneca Creek Park

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Bob Roller/GAZETTE

Mike Seydin and Melvin Bonomo, both of Germantown, were hunting in Seneca Creek State Park when they came across an old graveyard.

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FAMILY CEMETERY - Not on Atlas

6-1996

Head North from Eileys Lock

20 <sup>minute</sup> walk on towpath  
mud, bike <sup>dismount</sup> sign

40 paces before — <sup>stone</sup> marker for path same side as sign

go up hill — transcontinental phone line

20 paces before sign — go left

graveyard of 4 headstones — family c1903

~~JACKSON BASIL~~

JACK CLIPPER d 6-19-1903

MARTHA CLIPPER d 6-30-?

JOHN CLIPPER d 7-30-?

BASIL JACKSON

2<sup>nd</sup> week in July  
Send topo map of area

near canal mile 24

28 stones counted

more depressions

11/19/05

~~map 25/K-0/9~~

VIC: 26 A-0/9

Seneca Creek S.P.

Tschiffely Mill Rd

or Eileys Lock Rd

Clare Cavicchi

File notes from

conversation with Nadey Bennett

she visited 1996

271

CLIPPER FAMILY CEMETERY  
SENECA CREEK STATE PARK  
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