



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY CEMETERY INVENTORY REVISITED

### BURIAL SITE INFORMATION

Name: <b>Wood Cemetery</b>	Inventory ID: <b>325</b>
Alternate name:	
Address: <b>5101 River Road, Bethesda</b>	
Website:	
GPS coordinates: Latitude: <b>38.963960</b>	Longitude: <b>-77.100601</b>
FindaGrave: <a href="https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2667816/">https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2667816/</a>	

### BURIAL SITE TYPE

Category: ☐ Religious ☐ Community ☒ **Family** ☐ African American ☐ Other:

### BURIAL SITE EVALUATION

Setting/location description: <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Urban</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Wooded</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
General condition (See conditions sheet): <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>None</b>	
Is there a formal entrance? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	Accessibility: <input type="checkbox"/> Inaccessible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>By foot</b> <input type="checkbox"/> By car
Is cemetery active (recent burials)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	Is there a cemetery sign: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>
Is cemetery being maintained? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> (If yes, note caretaker's name below)	
Are there visible markers? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	Approximate number of burials/visible markers:
Date ranges:	
Description: (markers, materials, arrangement, landscaping/vegetation, fence, paths and roads, etc.)	
• <b>The burial area is now a grass lawn surrounding a condominium.</b>	
• <b>There are two presumed burials; Nelson Wood and his wife, Mary Ann Wood</b>	
• <b>5 cedar trees and vinca are located on the wooded knoll between the burial area and the right-of-way</b>	

### BURIAL SITE CONTACT

Name: <b>Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission</b>	
Relationship to burial site: <b>Manager</b>	Advocacy contact: <b>Jamie Kuhns, History Specialist</b>
Address: <b>9500 Brunett Avenue</b>	
City: <b>Silver Spring</b>	State: <b>MD</b>
ZIP Code: <b>20901</b>	
Phone: <b>301-650-4362</b>	

### BURIAL SITE SURVEYOR

Name: <b>Amy and Paul Rispin</b>	Survey Date: <b>5/25/2018</b>	Time spent: <b>10 min</b>
Photographer: <b>Paul Rispin</b>		

### COMMENTS

Suggestions for follow-up:
Safety issues, invasive vegetation removal, fence removal/restoration, signage, trash, erosion, vandalism:
Anything of significance about this cemetery?
• <b>Only known family burial ground of former slaves who formed a black community on River Road near the District of Columbia line after the Civil War</b>

### SOURCES

Cite sources used and resources available:
• <b>"The Forgotten African American Community of River Road" by Kathan, Rispin and Whitley, April 3, 2017 at the Little Falls Watershed Alliance website</b>
• <b>"Tracing a Bethesda, Maryland, African American Community and its Contested Cemetery" Washington History Journal, Fall 2017 Vol. 29. Number 2</b>



## Wood Family Cemetery History

Mary Ann and Nelson Wood were married in the District of Columbia in 1865. The 1870 census for Montgomery County shows Nelson Wood (blacksmith from Virginia) and his wife, Mary A., living next to Hilleary and Richard Ball, on land overlooking the Georgetown–Rockville Pike. The Ball family were blacksmiths who serviced the horses on the local stage lines along the pike and presumably they employed Nelson Wood. Subsequently, John and Matilda Counselman conveyed two acres of land along River Road in Bethesda to Nelson Wood in 1873 (LEBP 11 F 282). The land lay at the southern tip of the Counselman plantation, an area which might have been the location of the plantation's slave quarters – and Mary Ann might have been returning to the area where she was originally born and raised. The 1879 Hopkins Atlas shows Nelson Wood settled among seven black landowners on both sides of River Road near the junction of the Counselman and (nearby) Loughborough plantations. Just up River Road is a blacksmith shop at the location of the Willett family's Spinning Wheel Inn and Tavern near the Willett Branch. Perhaps Nelson Wood was employed there from 1873 onward.

A 1941 Bethesda Journal interview with Mrs. Mary Ellen Bopp of 5300 Saratoga Avenue, Bethesda, noted that Mary Ann Wood, the wife of Nelson Wood and mother to five Wood offspring, had been a slave of John Counselman, and when young had been loaned out to Charles Shoemaker, a Quaker farmer of German descent. "Mary Ann was a slave owned by the Councilman family who lived on a farm which is now the site of Kenwood. At the end of the Civil War, Mary Ann was freed and the Councilman family gave her a piece of land on River Road. She worked for [Mrs. Charles Shoemaker] from the time she was a young girl until she was too old to work." (Interview by Mrs. J. Reed Bailey. Bethesda Journal, August 22, 1941)

According to census records the Woods had six children living at home in 1880. By 1900, Mary Wood, then 52 years old, is listed as head of household, apparently Nelson Wood's widow. It had been customary throughout the nineteenth century for local residents to be buried on their own land and Nelson Wood would have been buried in a family plot near their home. On February 26, 1905, Mary Ann Wood died leaving one sister and five sons to mourn her loss. The funeral was on February 28, from her own residence. (Evening Star, Monday Feb. 27, 1905) and she would have been buried next to Nelson's grave.

In 1917, the Deets and Maddox Atlas shows several of Mary Ann's and Nelson's children living on plots subdivided from their parents' original two acres. Son Frank Wood owned the northernmost plot (L222F165). The Wood family burial plot was on this land as shown in subsequent land records.

In 1929, Frank and Lillie Wood deeded their land to daughter Margaret Ann Wood, granddaughter of Mary Ann and Nelson Wood and educator in the Montgomery County public schools (L 478 F 220). In 1952, when all of the Wood family holdings were surveyed for subdivision, a small family cemetery was drawn in the northeast corner of Margaret Ann's lot (Maddox and Hopkins, May, 1952). That corner butted up against the Smith Court subdivision and the MNCP & PC land, which later became the route of Little Falls Parkway. The corner is marked with a stone and a pipe. In February, 1961, Margaret Ann Wood sold her land to Martin and Margaret McCarthy (L2823 F651). In 1963, the McCarthys combined that lot with the adjacent Smith Court lots into one parcel, which became the site of the Kenwood Condominium at 5100 River Road (Plat 7248, November 14, 1963).

Today the site of the Wood family burial plot is under a grassy area on the condominium grounds against the wall of the condominium swimming pool. Just nearby in the right-of-way of Little Falls Parkway is a quiet area shaded by five cedar trees and carpeted by vinca. Since the years when the cemetery was established, the vegetation could have flourished beyond the original family burial plot, or this quiet shaded area could once have been used by the family for additional burials.

Additional details can be found in

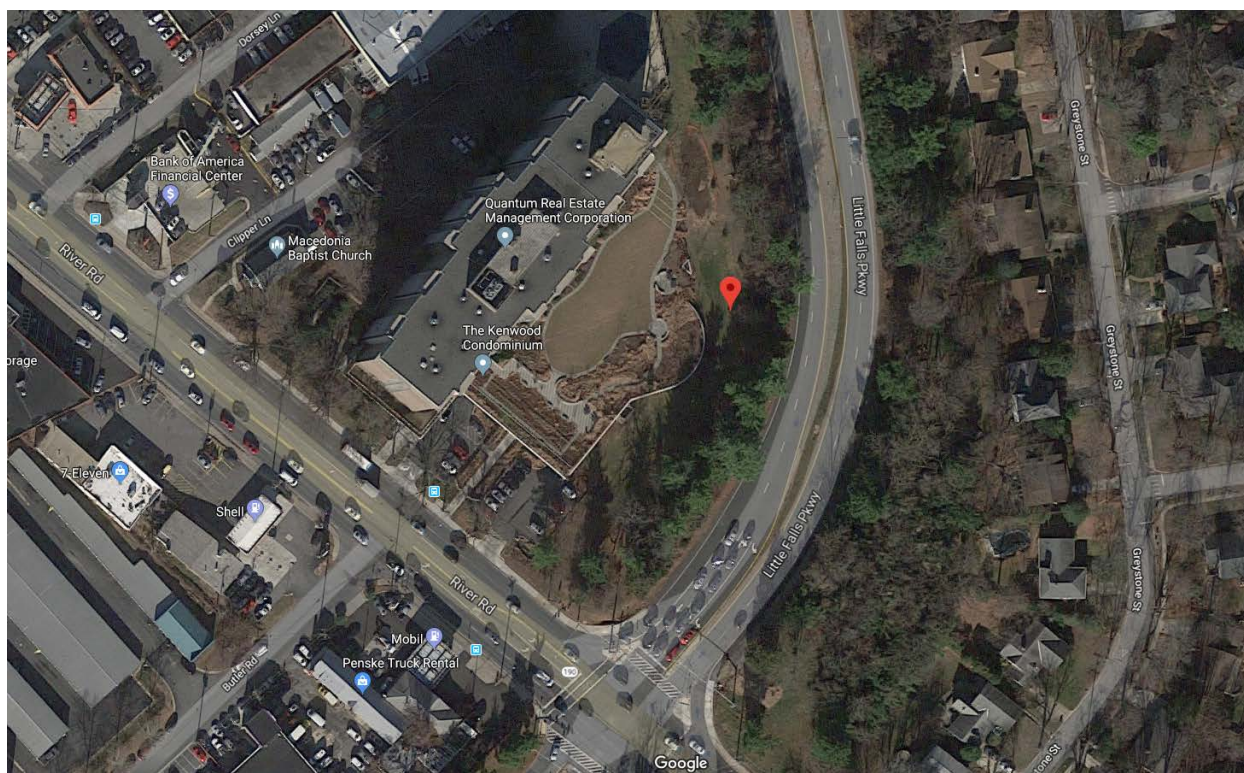
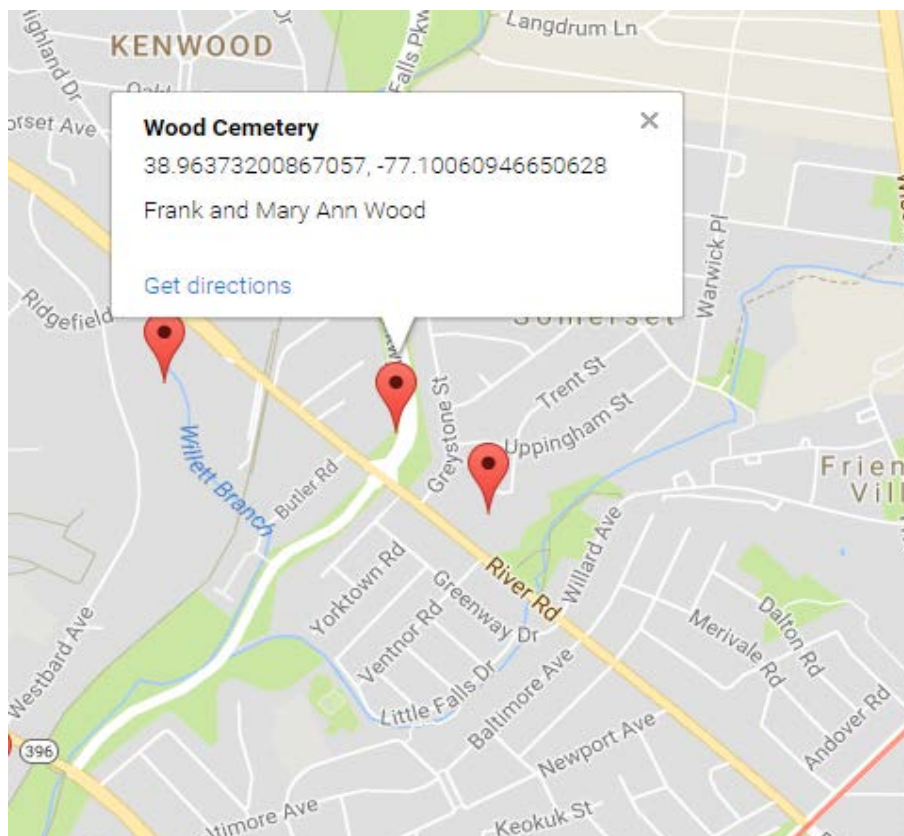
"The Forgotten African American Community of River Road" by Kathan, Rispin and Whitley, April 3, 2017 at the Little Falls Watershed Alliance website

"Tracing a Bethesda, Maryland, African American Community and its Contested Cemetery" Washington History Journal, Fall 2017 Vol. 29. Number 2



The 1952 plat for subdivision of the Nelson Wood Estate (May, 1952, Maddox and Hopkins) shows a cemetery at its northeast corner, at the boundary with the MNCP&PC land which later became the route of Little Falls Parkway. Margaret A. Wood, granddaughter of Nelson and Mary Ann Wood, had been deeded this land in 1929 by her parents Frank and Lillie Wood (Liber 478 Folio 220) and sold it in 1961 to Martin McCarthy (L2823 F 651). In 1963, McCarthy combined that lot with the lots of adjacent Smith Court into the parcel that became the Kenwood Condominium at 5100 River Road. This area is now fully grassed over and lies next to the fence for the swimming pool of the Condominium. However, between the cemetery location and Little Falls Parkway, on the right-of-way of the parkway is a quiet level area shaded by at least 5 cedar trees, with vinca growing underfoot. The vegetation could have gone beyond the original family burial plot or this quiet shaded area could have been used by the family for additional burials.

A slave named Mary Ann from the nearby Counselman plantation, worked for Mrs. Charles Shoemaker, a member of the Shoemaker clan of German Quakers, who were truck farmers nearby. After the Civil War, she continued to work for the Shoemaker family. In 1873 she married Nelson Wood, a blacksmith from Virginia, and they obtained two acres of land along River Road from the Counselman family (Nov. 4, 1874 Liber EBP 11, Folio 282). Mary Ann died in 1905 and appears to have been buried at home Feb. 28, 1905 (Evening Star, Feb. 27, 1905, page 5). Nelson Wood had died between 1880 and 1900 and presumably was also buried in the family burial plot.





## Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory Photograph Log

Cemetery Name: Wood Family Cemetery		Inventory ID: 325
Photographer: Paul Rispin		Date: 5/25/2018
Time	Photo No.	Description and direction you are facing (Ex: detail of wall around Carr plot facing North)
9:20 am	1	Entrance to cemetery from River Road, facing north-east
	2	Approach to cemetery through parking lot, facing north-east
	3	Panoramic from west to north to east
9:23 am	4	Panoramic from east to south to west



**1. Entrance to cemetery from River Road, facing north-east**





**2. Approach to cemetery through parking lot, facing north-east**



**3. Panoramic from west to north to east**



**4. Panoramic from east to south to west**