



PHOTOS BY TOM ALLEN—THE WASHINGTON POST

id family, at right, walk through the Howard Chapel cemetery outside y line to visit their ancestors. The family can trace its roots in upcounty ove, and members have been caring for the cemetery grounds, below.

# aces Family Local Heritage



## Howard Chapel Site Is Part Of Hidden Black History

By MICHAEL H. COTTMAN  
Washington Post Staff Writer

**T**he 100-year-old gravestones in the weathered cemetery on Howard Chapel Road just outside Brookeville are faded by time, but as Mable Thomas walked across the earth where her ancestors are buried, her memories of the stories she was told about them as a child were strong and clear.

"We were told about our ancestors who were led away in slavery," said Thomas, who visits the family cemetery often. "We were told about our great-grandmother who was bought out of slavery by her husband, a free man; a grand-uncle who was sold into slavery before the Civil War and came back. We're just trying to keep our history alive."

Thomas's family—the Howards and the Hollands—trace their roots in upcounty Montgomery to the early 1800s. Their story is one of determination, persistence and preservation of family unity, even though the family is spread across the United States and Canada as a result of slavery.

The Howard Chapel cemetery—and the nearby deteriorating houses that sit on what was once family-owned property—is one of 150 African American historical sites in Montgomery County recently documented in a study by the Lincoln Park Historical Foundation/Society.

The cemetery is included in a map of the sites, which were largely compiled by Anita Neal Powell, 48, founder and president of the grass-roots historical society. The society operates from her home in Rockville's historically black Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Compiling the map was necessary, Powell said, to preserve the African American heritage and locate the many lost and overlooked historically black communities of Montgomery County.

Powell, who works for the federal government, spent five years compiling the sites, using a \$3,400 grant from the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission. Montgomery County government printed the map.

Powell and family members hope the county will designate Howard Chapel cemetery and the surrounding land a historic site.

County officials say the p decision could be made by t ell also would like to see sev historical recognition from t

"This area is unique becau Railroad-Canada connection Powell said. "When I think o I think of a lily-white area, b den black communities here,

"If we didn't have this his the significance of this cemet

Because of sympathetic ( County served as an Undergr point to Canada and other d that included Sandy Spring a locations in the county. The was the network of safe h slaves seeking freedom in the War.

Sites listed on the map in churches, parks and schools i county from Poolesville to B historic black district in Che Colored School in White O: