



Montgomery County Planning Department  
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

## Montgomery County Burial Sites Inventory

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Historic Preservation ID: HP-062  
Name: Awkard Family Cemetery

Description:  
Reverend Elijah Awkard Family cemetery.

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Community:  Religious:  Family:  African American:

Other Site Type:

Number of Burials: 5+ Visible Markers:  Formal Entrance:  Cemetery Sign:  Active:

Earliest Year: 1880 Latest Year: 1883 Is the Site Extant?: Unknown

Is the Location Sensitive?:  Sensitive Contact: Sensitive Reason:

Location Confidence: Known Location Confirmed:

**Volunteer Forms and External Web Links (Montgomery Planning is not responsible for content. Links provided for informational purposes only)**

2006 Survey Summary:  
[https://mcatlas.org/filetransfer/HistoricPreservation/MCCI\\_Summaries\\_2004/MCCI\\_Summary\\_ID\\_062.pdf](https://mcatlas.org/filetransfer/HistoricPreservation/MCCI_Summaries_2004/MCCI_Summary_ID_062.pdf)

Montgomery Preservation, Inc.:  
[https://mcatlas.org/filetransfer/HistoricPreservation/Cemeteries/062\\_Awkard\\_Family\\_Beallsville/062\\_Awkard\\_Family\\_Beallsville\\_2018/062\\_Awkard\\_Family\\_Beallsville\\_2018\\_Survey.pdf](https://mcatlas.org/filetransfer/HistoricPreservation/Cemeteries/062_Awkard_Family_Beallsville/062_Awkard_Family_Beallsville_2018/062_Awkard_Family_Beallsville_2018_Survey.pdf)

FindaGrave.com:  
<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2478836>

Maryland Tombstone Transcription Project:

Other Website:  
<https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M;%2012-42-1.pdf>

Master Plan Historic Resource No.:

Historic Resource:

Confirmed by Planning Board:

Confirmation Date:

Site Survey Date:

Revision Date:

Yes

05/16/2019

10/06/2018

Site Surveyor Name:

Glenn Wallace

Data Originator:

Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Notes:

From Maryland Inventory of Historic Places Form M-12-42-11: "This small burying ground is located on a quarter-acre portion of the tract purchased in 1846 by Rev. Elijah Awkard, a free Black minister in the antebellum era. Before the Civil War he became one of the largest black landowners in Montgomery County. The nearby Methodist church in the Jerusalem community is named after him, and his descendants continue to live in the county."

**Technical information about the locational information shown in the online map.**

Public Display Scale:

Is there a Restriction on Sharing Information?:

1: 0

GIS Source Date:

GIS Source Datum:

Boundary Type:

10/15/2018

Point

Horizontal Accuracy:

GIS Data Source:

MCCIR 2018

Additional Information:

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Elijah Awkard's 1883 will reads in part:

"Item 3rd I give and devise unto my two grandsons, viz: Enoch Randall Awkward, son of "Lemuel Awkward" and Jeremiah Pervis Preston Awkward son of "Asbury Awkward, my farm or tract of land containing thirty seven acres of land, more or less, saving and excepting the burying ground on said land, and to contain one fourth of an acre of land, and to be reserved as a family burying ground, with a right of way through said tract of land to and from said burying ground, said burying ground is to be enclosed with a good and substantial pailing or post and fence, and and [sic] all the graves contained within said burying ground are to be properly marked etc., with slabs and particularly my dear wife whose grave is to be decently and properly attended to and the expense of the said fence etc. is to be paid for from my estate etc. and the said tract of land of thirty seven acres, minus the one fourth of an acre of land reserved for the said burying ground, is to be divided by a line from East to West as near as can be drawn to make a fair division of said land, into two lots, and the lot of land north of said line is to belong and be the property of my said grand son Enoch Randall Awkward, and the lot of land south of said dividing line is to be the property of my said grand son Jeremiah Pervis Preston Awkward, this is the lot of tract of land that was conveyed to me by a certain William Brewer and Mary R. Brewer his wife by deed bearing date on or about 9th day of Dec. 1846, containing thirty seven acres of land, more or less, to them the said Enoch Randall Awkward and Jeremiah Pervis Preston Awkward and their heirs and assigns in fee simple."

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Places (MIHP) Form lists five people interred in the cemetery:

1. Rev. Elijah Awkard Died Dec. 4, 1883 Aged 76 years, 8 months, 3 days
2. Annie Awkard Wife of Rev. E.Z. Awkard Died May 26, 1880 Aged 73 years, 2 months, 23 days
3. C. Awkard Aged 12 years
4. J. Awkard Aged 25 years
5. I. Awkard Aged 30 years"

Review of Awkard family census records from 1840-1870 suggests I Awkard is probably Israel Awkard, born ca 1851, died ca. 1881. J. Awkard could be Jeremiah (born ca. 1834) John W. (born ca. 1836) or James (born ca. 1855). The census records do not list a child with the first initial C, but there was a George W Awkard born ca. 1841; perhaps the apparent C on the gravestone is really a weathered G. The 1840 census notes an unnamed older woman living with the family between the ages of 55 and 100. It is possible that she, and other children of Elijah and Annie Awkard could have been buried in the family plot in addition to the 5 known graves.

The MIHP Form statement of significance reads:

"The Awkard family was one of the founders of the Big Woods community, and Elijah Awkard, one of the largest Black landowners before the Civil War in Montgomery County. His will -- written and probated in 1883 - RWC 6/347 - shows that Rev. Awkard purchased a tract in 1846 of 37 acres. Later it became the Big Woods community.

He purchased it from William Brewer. Upon his death, a 1/4 acre tract was set aside for a family burying ground as stipulated in the will, and the 37 acre tract divided by an east-west line into two lots. The northern-most lot went to his grandson, Enoch Randall Awkard, and the southern lot to his other grandson, Jeremiah Pervis Preston Awkard.

According to his will, Awkard owned two other larger tracts: one of 126 acres (minus a portion devised to the B & O Railroad) that he purchased from William and Mary Brewer in 1855; the other he purchased from James and Annie E. Trundle in 1855, consisting of 55 3/4 acres. Both tracts were to be sold at public auction and the proceeds divided among his heirs. The result is that Rev. Awkard owned 163 acres before the Civil War, making him one of the largest Black landowners in the

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county.

In addition to being a prominent landowner, Awkard was also a minister, and Elijah's Rest M.E. Church north of Poolesville was named after him, at the suggestion of his grandson who was pastor there for many years.

The cemetery is truly important since it marks one of the beginning points of the Big Woods community. Efforts will continue to be made to locate family photographs of the Awkards, but so far, none have been found.

The site is shown on the 1879 Atlas of Montgomery County of George Hopkins, and is identified as the residence of Rev. E. Awkard. Near to his home is the "school house", which was also the Mt. Zion Church. It stood at the site of the cemetery and no longer remains."

When George McDaniel visited and photographed the cemetery, 5 stones are clearly visible and upright. In a field visit in December 2022, the three small stones shown in McDaniel's photograph are still upright, but the two large stones belonging to Elijah Awkard and his wife Annie were lying flat, having come off their bases. A small possible unmodified fieldstone marker was also visible in January 2022.

Images:

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HP-062-001

Grave markers photographed by George McDaniel in August 1979.

Date

Photographer George McDaniel



HP-062-002

Small markers facing north

Date

01/11/2022

Photographer

Brian Crane



HP-062-003

Marker for J Awkard

Date

01/11/2022

Photographer

Brian Crane



HP-062-004

Fieldstone marker

Date

01/11/2022

Photographer

Brian Crane



HP-062-005

Markers; facing west

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane



HP-062-006

Headstone for Annie Awkard, died May 26, 1880

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane



HP-062-007

Headstone for Rev. Elijah Awkard, died Dec 4, 1883

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane



HP-062-008

Marker for C Awkard or possibly G Awkard (George W. Awkard)

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane



HP-062-009

Marker for J Awkard (Possibly Jeremiah,  
John W. or James Awkard)

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane



HP-062-010

Marker for I Awkard (Possibly Israel Awkard)

Date 12/13/2022  
Photographer Brian Crane

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MARKER ID

GIVEN NAME

FAMILY NAME

DEATH YEAR