

# the Preservationist

Fall 2007

## Cemeteries: Keeping the Past Alive

by Susan Soderberg



*Leaman tombstone in the Trinity Methodist Church Cemetery, Germantown.*

Burial grounds are sacred places. They mark where our ancestors lie, commemorate the special, and memorialize the unique, but they are also primary sources that can tell us about birth and death dates, where a person lived, who was related to whom, and social customs surrounding death and burial.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when Montgomery County was still frontier or at least very rural, when people died they were buried on the property. Almost every farm had its own burial ground. In towns and urban areas, the dead were buried on church or town property in churchyards or graveyards. As cities and towns grew, these places for the dead grew overcrowded and at the same time people began to realize that decaying matter spread disease. So, the burial grounds had to move outside the city.

Official cemeteries were established outside cities and towns beginning in the 1830s. These were either voluntary associations or private, often for-profit, corporations. The organization would purchase the land then sell burial plots, keeping a trust fund for future upkeep. Sometimes these cemeteries were created as parks, landscaped with exotic trees and flowers and having wandering paths, benches and gazebos creating a pastoral atmosphere for the “contemplation of death and life.”

As family farms were sold and older members went to their own rest in one of the new cemeteries, many family burial grounds were lost to the ravages of nature, or, sometimes, to the bulldozer. In 2003, a group of volunteers recognized the invaluable legacy that these burial grounds had to offer and created the Montgomery Cemetery Coalition. The group was awarded a Historic Preservation Grant from the Historic Preservation Commission in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Dozens of volunteers spread out through the county to document known burial grounds and discover ones previously

thought to have been lost. The information was systematically collected using a survey form, photographed, located on a map and entered into a database. Instrumental in this project were Anne Brockett, Project Coordinator, and members of Peerless Rockville and Historic Takoma. The Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory is now available online through the website of the Montgomery Department of Planning, Historic Preservation Section at [www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/education/cemeteries.shtm](http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/education/cemeteries.shtm). (Thanks to Amanda Molson, Historic Preservation Intern, for getting the inventory online.)

The project sets a baseline of information so that policies can be developed and educated actions can be taken to address the upkeep of these 269 sacred spaces surveyed across the County. Listed alphabetically by town or by cemetery name, survey forms note location, condition, history and where to find any additional information. The final project report provides recommendations for the preservation of these unique resources, suggesting a “Watch List” for the most endangered cemeteries, a cemetery register to establish criteria for evaluation, and a cemetery commission to serve in an advisory role.

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### Contacts and references for more information on cemeteries include:

- The cemetery project: Ann Brockett, [a\\_brockett@hotmail.com](mailto:a_brockett@hotmail.com)
- Burial site laws and regulations: the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~mdcpmb/coalition01.htm>
- History of cemeteries: *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, by Charles David Sloane

# Historic Preservation News and Notes



*Hyattstown Mill.*

## **Featured Public Historic Site HYATTSTOWN MILL 14920 HYATTSTOWN MILL ROAD, HYATTSTOWN**

The site of the Hyattstown Mill is much older than the building, a mill having existed at this ideal spot where a major roadway crosses a major waterway since the late 1700s. When Little Bennett Creek failed to provide enough power to run the mill, due in large part to new mills upstream, operators installed steam-powered roller machinery around 1905. Following a devastating fire in 1918, the Hyattstown community assisted in the reconstruction of the mill using materials from the nearby Price's Distillery. The Volstead Act, bringing national prohibition, having put an end to their production.

The setting of the mill is picturesque, with its meadow, picnic grounds, and sculpture garden. Around the outside of the mill are works in ceramics, welded steel and found metal, wood in carved and assembled configurations and carved stone. The area affords exhibitors an opportunity to locate their art in a rustic and attractive wooded setting.

## **Emancipation of Slaves in Maryland to be Celebrated November 3**

Maryland was the first of the "slave states" to free the enslaved people within its boundaries. It did this in the Bill of Rights of a new state constitution, passed by public vote and put into law on November 1, 1864.

The Emancipation of Slaves in Maryland will be celebrated on Saturday, November 3, at three different sites with a variety of activities. At 10 AM there will be an Underground Railroad hike on the Underground Railroad Experience Trail from Woodlawn Manor to Sandy Spring. A shuttle van will carry people back to Woodlawn. The Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery at 18524 Brooke Road in Sandy Spring will be open from 11:00 AM to 4 PM with lunch by Ribs-on-the-Run and entertainment. Oakley Cabin, 3610 Brookeville Road in Brookeville, will be open from 12 noon to 4 PM with tours of the Cabin, reenactors and refreshments. A program will be presented at 2 PM at Oakley Cabin. Parking is at Longwood Recreation Center at 19300 Georgia Avenue between Olney and Brookeville and a shuttle bus will carry people to the Cabin. For information call 301-563-3400.

## **New Supervisor of Historic Preservation Office**

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Office has a new Supervisor: Scott Whipple. Mr. Whipple has been selected to fill the position previously held by Gwen Wright (who is currently Acting Director of the Planning Department). He is very well-qualified for the position, having worked at the Maryland Historical Trust for the last seven years as Administrator of Local Preservation Programs. In that position, he has advised and guided historic preservation commissions throughout Maryland. Before joining the Trust, he worked for the National Park Service, for several associations in their legislative affairs offices, and for a U.S. Senator. Mr. Whipple has a Masters degree in Historic Preservation from George Washington University. As soon as he settles in, he will be contacting many of the preservation organizations in the county to set up introductory meetings and hear ideas and input for the future direction of the historic preservation program.

## the Preservationist

The Preservationist is the official publication of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: 301-563-3400. Statements herein do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Commission. Created by the Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A, Montgomery County Code) the Commission is responsible for identification, designation, and regulation for purposes of protection, preservation, continued use, and enhancement of sites and structures of historical, archeological, architectural, or cultural value. Commission members are appointed by the Montgomery County Executive and confirmed by the Montgomery County Council.

### Commission

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Historic Preservation Supervisor Scott Whipple

Requests to be on the mailing list and content information should be directed to the Commission.

# Fire Protection and Historic Resources

by Timothy Duffy  
Historic Preservation Commissioner

It's always disturbing when historic properties are lost to fire, but it's a great tragedy when lives are lost as well. Sadly, the county suffered such a loss in May, causing the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission to consider what might be done to help reduce possibilities of such tragedies in the future.

One of the most effective measures is also the cheapest and easiest: installation of smoke alarms. Approximately 95% of county households have at least one; unfortunately some houses least likely to have them are older properties. Newer homes typically are built with smoke alarms, but they weren't used when most historic properties were constructed and haven't been added to some older properties.

This is a particular concern since wood in older houses is drier than in newer ones, with older wood potentially kindling fire more easily, and developing and spreading fire more quickly. Also, residents of some older properties are long-time owners with less ability to detect and react to fires than younger residents. We hope all homes lacking smoke alarms have them installed soon, with the need particularly great for residents who are elderly, infirm, have mobility impairments, or have young children.

Fortunately, any resident may receive a free smoke alarm and home safety evaluation by calling Montgomery County's Fire & Rescue Service at 240-777-2476. Alarms should be installed on every level of the home and be located inside or adjacent to bedrooms. It's also important to replace batteries as they run down. My alarms beep when batteries are low, ensuring I replace them when needed. Additional information is available on Fire & Rescue's website at: [http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/fire/rescue/Press/PR\\_details.asp?PrID=3580](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/fire/rescue/Press/PR_details.asp?PrID=3580)

Another potential fire hazard is old wiring, especially if it's not copper. Sometimes old wiring isn't properly grounded, its shielding can be worn, and it can be overworked by our modern electronic devices. Owners of historic resources are reminded that tax credits are available for preservation work.



Oakley Cabin (since restored) after arson in 1986.

In my view, fire-prevention work helps preserve historic resources and owners are encouraged to seek preservation tax credits for this work. Owners are especially encouraged to obtain a free smoke alarm if their houses have none.

Note: In 1986 the Historic Preservation Commission ruled that when a building that is on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation is destroyed by fire, the site remains on the Master Plan.

# Calendar

## Exhibits

**October 16 to February 24:** *Winter Pastimes* explores the joys, and stresses of the winter season over the past 200 years. Beall-Dawson House, 111 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville. 301-762-1492. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

**November 14 to March 29:** *Germantown*. This exhibit focuses on the history of this crossroads town and how it has adapted over the past 160 years to different modes of transportation. Waters House, 12535 Milestone Manor Lane, Germantown. Wednesdays and Saturdays 10 AM-4 PM and by appointment. Call 301-515-2887. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

## October

**10 & 24** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

**18** *Patrick & Me: A Personal Journey on the Underground Railroad*, lecture by Anthony Cohen, 7 PM Sandy Spring Museum. Free. 301-774-0022.

**26** *In Search of Ghosts: Ghost Walk in Rockville*. Five tours starting at 7:30 PM Beall-Dawson House, 111 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville. Call 301-762-1492 to register. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

## November

**14** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

**17** Walking Tour of Germantown with Historian and Author Susan Soderberg. Registration required. \$. 301-515-2887, 301-340-2825

## December

**2** Holiday Tree Lighting at the Waters House. 4:30-6:30 PM. Santa arrives on a horse-drawn wagon. Waters House, 12535 Milestone Manor Lane, Germantown. Call 301-515-2887. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

**5 & 19** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

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