

# Where to Look for Cemetery Information

## Montgomery County, Maryland

By Tina Simmons, Eileen McGuckian, and Jane Sween, 2018, version 3

### Online Research

Many people expect that information about specific cemeteries will be found online. The most common sources of information on specific individuals and cemeteries are on **FindaGrave**, **BillionGraves**, and **Interment.net**. All of these should be considered with caution as much of the information can be inaccurate. Such inaccuracies include: the maiden name listed as the married name, misspellings, wrong dates, different spellings within the same record, and not recording all the information found on the tombstone. Often information has been submitted only for the individuals in one or more families, not for the entire cemetery. Information is often copied verbatim from someone else's records without fact-checking the information for accuracy.

The **Maryland Historical Trust** has an online site searchable by county, property name, or ID number. There are a limited number of cemeteries listed with their own ID numbers but sometimes historic homes will also mention family burial grounds on the property. Even with sites listed as "No documentation," information may be available in person in the MHT library in Crownsville.

Online searches should be done using several different browsers, not just Google. Try using various words and variations of words such as cemetery, cemeteries, graveyard, burial ground, interment, death, and died with the name of a town or county where you are searching for information. If a cemetery or town is made up of two words (i.e. Mount Calvary), put those words in quotation marks in your search. Search for both "Mount" and "Mt." as well as "Saint" and "St.". Common names such as Mount Calvary, Mt. Zion, Hope Chapel, Asbury, and John Wesley may be found for multiple cemeteries within the same county.

Interactive **map of African American Sites & Places in Montgomery Co.** (2016) includes some cemeteries

<http://mcplanning.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=e61b1c671fb741eba9ebd291a831fd4d>

**MEDUSA**, Maryland's Cultural Resource Information System, is the Maryland Historical Trust's online database of architectural and archeological sites and standing structures. The Maryland Historical Trust, home of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), is the official repository for the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP), which includes both architectural resources and archeological sites. The database includes records for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties in Maryland, determinations of eligibility (DOE) records, and records for properties in the Maryland Historic Preservation Easement program. <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/>

### Genealogical and Historical Societies

Local and county genealogy groups, historical societies, and preservation nonprofits are apt to have information about area cemeteries. They may have photographs, information in surname files for specific cemeteries, files for specific cemeteries, published books of cemetery inscriptions, or transcribed information about specific cemeteries from other sources. Check for old maps showing cemetery locations or old tax assessment map books. *(See MCHS library below)*

Inscription records for some Montgomery County cemeteries are available; the number is growing as interest rises. Currently known are Elijah, St. Mark's, Fisherman's, and John Wesley cemeteries in Montgomery County.

Members of **African American History & Genealogy Society (AAHGS), Montgomery County chapter**, meet monthly to help one another. See excellent resources page at <http://mctymd.aahgs.org> Other active chapters are in Prince George's County, Baltimore, Central Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

### **Libraries**

**Montgomery County Historical Society** (Montgomery History, or MCHS) in Rockville has family, individual, and specific cemetery files available for research. It holds maps, census records (including 1867-68 slaves and owners), vertical files, genealogy reference books, biographies, marriage licenses, and published Maryland county records. Pumphrey Funeral Home records (some 1910-13, 1929-46) are here, and family genealogy books, photographs and obituaries, as are a 1936-7 WPA survey of churches and community histories and surveys. Library hours Wed-Fri 10 am-4 pm and on Sat noon-4 pm. Genealogy Club members are often there on Fri 10 am-noon; call first 301-340-2974. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org) Cemetery and church records at MCHS include 3x5 index card files of names, burials, and churches, plus tombstone readings from 111 cemeteries and several funeral homes, including Snowden in Rockville. Newspaper clippings and abstracts from *The Montgomery County Sentinel* (1855-1969) contain obituaries and personal information. Look in Scharf and Boyd for names. See Family and Biographical files by surnames. Other Montgomery County references on pages 4-6.

The Jesus Christ Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS/Mormons) has family heritage centers in multiple Maryland locations. While most of their information is computerized, some branches have books with local information as well. The **Family History Center**, 10000 Stoneybrook Road in Kensington, is open Monday-Saturday; on almost every Monday from 9:30 am to 2 pm, a volunteer is available to assist with African American genealogy.

The **Maryland Room at Enoch Pratt Library** in Baltimore has information about cemeteries in various Maryland locations. The **Gold Star Collection in the Annapolis West Street library** houses books about areas all over the state. Some county libraries may have family, cemetery, or burial information including published genealogies on local families. They may have old maps showing cemetery locations.

The **Maryland Historical Trust** has an office and library in Crownsville on the grounds of Crownsville State Hospital. This library is accessible only by appointment but may contain additional cemetery information that is not contained in their online listings of historical properties and cemeteries.

### **Funeral Homes and Memorial Companies**

Staff in funeral homes and memorial companies may be familiar with small family cemeteries not known to others. Cemetery caretakers and gravediggers may work for multiple cemeteries and know of smaller sites. Additionally, older men who dug hand-dug wells often worked as gravediggers as well.

Funeral homes generally have a sheet or two with general and genealogical information about the deceased person, arranged by the date of service. It may include information about where they lived, length of time at that location, and cemetery and plot information. They may have a copy of obituaries, permits required, or correspondence with the family contact. Be aware that funeral homes may be happy to share information on a single individual but not for general research. We hope more local funeral homes will make their records available for researchers.

### **Religions**

Churches usually hold their own records of funerals and burials. The exception is when the church has closed; often records for closed churches are held by a major church office. In Baltimore can be found

the Roman Catholic Archdiocese archives, Episcopal Church records, and Maryland Methodist church records (at Lovely Lane Museum and Sharp Street Church). Be aware that churches may not be open to sharing their records.

The International Jewish Cemetery Project lists burial sites throughout Maryland. The Jewish Museum of Maryland has a database of burials in Baltimore Jewish cemeteries, funeral home records, and an obituary index from the *Baltimore Jewish Times*. The JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry is a database searched by surname.

### **Specialty Museums**

There are specialty museums around the state that have specific information. Examples are military museums such as one at Fort George G. Meade for cemeteries on their property, and Reginald Lewis Museum in Baltimore and Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis have African American cemetery information.

### **Organizations-Civic, fraternal, and military**

A number of organizations have published cemetery transcriptions. One of the most widely known is the Daughters of the American Revolution (**DAR**), where several Maryland chapters published cemetery transcriptions, most in the 1940s. Fraternal and civic groups also have transcribed cemeteries. Many military groups have published information on websites such as burial locations of veterans of specific wars or in specific states or counties.

For Montgomery County Revolutionary War information, see **SAR Patriot Grave Registry**

<http://william-smallwood.mdssar.org/PatriotGraves.htm>

### **Newspapers**

Newspapers may not contain much information on cemeteries in general unless they had been “re-discovered” or vandalized but older newspapers often wrote lengthy obituaries and contained notices of local residents’ deaths under segments about happenings within a certain community. They may have published notifications of Orphan’s Court updates on the deceased, creditors’ notices, and sales of property of the deceased. Check the **Afro-American newspapers** that covered Washington D.C. and Baltimore metro areas. MCHS library has abstracts of **Montgomery County Sentinel** obituaries.

### **Schools**

The **University of Maryland** has a large collection of different types of maps. The print collection is available in the Maryland Room in College Park but much is available online.

The largest collection of state, county, and local maps is found at **Johns Hopkins University** in Baltimore, in the Geographic Information System (GIS) area of the Eisenhower Library building on A-level. It is the most comprehensive collection of Baltimore City maps, atlases, and aerial photography found anywhere. Included are thousands of printed map sheets and digital images. All maps of Baltimore City, the State of Maryland, and places within are listed in the library’s computer catalog [Catalyst](#). Digital copies of maps, when not covered by copyright restrictions, are available for free downloading via the institutional repository [JScholarship](#).

### **Government**

Federal government sites such as the United States **Department of Agriculture** (USDA) and the Department of the Interior’s topography maps from various time periods are available through the U.S. **Geological Survey** (USGS). These topo maps mark quite a few cemeteries. USGS maps are available at the Montgomery County Historical Society library. The **National Archives** holds Freedman’s Bureau and Civil War records.

The **Maryland State Archives** (MSA) has computerized death certificates arranged by counties, a limited number of church funeral and burial records, published books of cemetery inscriptions for various cemeteries and cemeteries within a given county. They have administrative accounts relating to inventories and disposal of goods and property after a person's death, with or without a will. There are also a large number of newspapers accessible on their computers. The 1850, 1860, and 1870 census years included a "mortality schedule" listing individuals who had died within a year of when the census was taken. MSA's Legacy of Slavery collection at [www.mdslavery.net](http://www.mdslavery.net) features census records, runaway ads, certificates, of freedom, etc. The **Maryland State Law Library** in Annapolis has a large genealogy component and contains cemetery information. It also has access to old newspapers.

**County government Planning and Zoning offices** may have insight into what information is available in their county pertaining to burial sites. In several counties the Parks & Recreation Department is in charge of maintaining cemeteries.

*To determine Land Ownership:* **Maryland Assessment and Taxation's website** (SDAT) allows you to begin to track back deeds of an individual property, and the map view of the property may show the location of a cemetery. **Maryland Land Records**, available through Maryland State Archives at [www.mdlandrec.net](http://www.mdlandrec.net) allows free property deed searches under the names of grantors and grantees; you must set up a free password to search. Plat maps may show the cemetery location.

The **Montgomery County Archives** holds public records that are worth checking for mentions of burial grounds. Open part time and located at 8540 Anniversary Circle, Gaithersburg. 301-926-5002 <http://montgomeryhistory.org/montgomery-county-archives/> Finding aids available on line.

Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission has an excellent book for Prince George's County entitled *Historic Sites and Districts Plan*. The book includes information about various cemeteries and shows locations. In Montgomery County, see *Places from the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien*, a book that inventories historic sites and districts, and is now available online. Incorporated towns and cities have their own Planning and Zoning offices that deal with historical and cultural resources.

### **Utilities**

Check to see if Washington Gas, PEPCO, or BG&E know of any cemeteries located within their right-of-ways or easements.

### **Individuals**

Never overlook networking with individuals. Long-time residents, people with hobbies or occupations taking them into areas off the beaten track such as hunters, surveyors, road operations personnel, local archeologists, horseback riders, and fishermen are possible sources.

### **In the field**

Even going to a potentially known cemetery site may offer issues. Can you find ownership of the property to get permission to go there? Can you determine the cemetery boundaries? Is there vegetation indicative of a cemetery? Are there tombstones or fieldstones? Does each fieldstone represent a person's grave or do stones mark both the head and foot of a single grave? Has the area been probed for additional tombstones? Is the area conducive to other methods of testing such as ground penetrating radar or an archeological survey?

While there are a seemingly endless number of areas that can be searched for cemetery information, there is still no guarantee that positive results will result. There are times when "probable cemetery" may be the closest you can come or you may come across a cemetery with multiple tombstones that contain no information on who is buried beneath the ground.

## **Other Resources for Maryland cemetery owners, caregivers, and advocates in Montgomery County**

### **For African American Researchers:**

*History of the Nineteenth Century Black Churches in Maryland and Washington DC* (Nina H. Clarke)

*History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, MD 1872-1961* (Nina H. Clarke)

*Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County, MD* (George W. McDaniel)

*Northeastern Montgomery County Black Oral History Study* (Entourage, Inc.)

MoCo African American Hist. Map: Guide to AA Sites and Attractions (Lincoln Park Hist. Foundation)

*Community Cornerstones: Historic AA Churches in Montgomery County, MD* (Heritage Montgomery)

*Free African Americans of Maryland, 1832* (Jerry Hynson)

Deed abstracts, relating primarily to slaves (in manuscript notebooks at MCHS library)

Slave Census, 1867-68 (slaves and owners, at MCHS library)

*Maryland Freedom Papers*, volumes 1 and 3 (Jerry Hynson)

*The Underground Railroad: Authentic Life Narratives* (William Still 1872)

*The Genealogical Companion to Rural Montgomery Cemeteries* (Dona Cuttler)

### **General Research Sources:**

*Places from the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, MD* (Clare Lise Cavicci, on line at [www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic))

*A Rural Survey in Maryland* (Presbyterian Church, 1912)

WPA Church Records Survey for Montgomery County, MD, 1936-37 (at MCHS)

*A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, MD, 1776-1976* (MacMaster + Hiebert)

*Historic Graves of Maryland* (1902)

Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites [www.cpmbbs.org](http://www.cpmbbs.org) See Montgomery County cemetery map showing 273 known cemetery locations on Google Maps, both from the listings on FindaGrave.com and the MoCo Cemetery Inventory. Created by Glenn Wallace. Does not include sites without location information. <http://cpmbbs.org/county-pages/montgomery-county/>

Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/education/cemeteries.shtm>

Montgomery Preservation Inc. [www.montgomerypreservation.org](http://www.montgomerypreservation.org)

**Care of Cemeteries:**

National Park Service Bulletin #48 Preservation Briefs *Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*  
Lynette Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

**Other information and Assistance:**

Annotated Code of Maryland (State laws protecting Maryland burial sites) see [www.cpmbs.org](http://www.cpmbs.org)

Preservation Maryland [www.preservationmaryland.org](http://www.preservationmaryland.org)

Association for Gravestone Studies <https://www.gravestonestudies.org>

Archaeological Society of Maryland, Mid-Potomac Chapter <http://www.asmmidpotomac.org/>

Link to the Prince George's County cemetery manual:

[http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Cemetery\\_Preservation\\_Manual.htm](http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Cemetery_Preservation_Manual.htm)

Maryland Office of Cemetery Oversight <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/license/cem/>

African American Heritage Preservation Program grants [www.africanamerican.maryland.gov](http://www.africanamerican.maryland.gov)