Cemetery Identification and Delineation Study
Albert Long Park Property

LOCATION > Rockingham County, Virginia

DATE > APRIL 2016

PREPARED FOR >
Timmons Group

PREPARED BY >
Dutton + Associates, LLC

1937 Plat of the “Eiler” Farm. Source: Rockingham County Clerk of Courts
CEMETERY IDENTIFICATION AND DELINEATION STUDY
ALBERT LONG PARK PROPERTY

ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

Between March 28 and April 1, 2016, Dutton + Associates, LLC (D+A) conducted an identification and delineation survey of an unmarked cemetery at the site of the proposed Albert Long Park in Rockingham County (County), Virginia. The project area is located at the northwest intersection of Indian Trail Road (Route 620) and Spottswood Trail (Route 33). The identification and delineation survey was undertaken at the request of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District (Corps).

The study consisted of background research focused primarily on the ownership of the property and references to use of the property as a cemetery. In addition, research focused on family names recorded from gravestones located within the project area in an effort to identify possible relationships and or references to the cemetery and its name.

In conjunction with background research, D+A archaeologists completed fieldwork associated with identification and delineation of a possible cemetery. Fieldwork was informed by background research, as well as recollections of former and adjacent property owners, and the previous recovery of gravestones along a former fence line. Mechanical removal of topsoil was undertaken under the direction of an archaeologist in three areas of the property: 1) the area along the former fence line where the gravestone markers were previously identified and recovered; 2) an area on the crest of a landform where former property and adjacent property owners had indicated a cemetery once existed and where the gravestone had been moved from; and 3) an area just down slope of the crest of the landform mentioned above, where examination of the 1937 aerial of the property suggested the possible presence of a cemetery.

Area 1

Mechanical removal of soil in the area along the former fence line where gravestones were recovered by construction crews (Area 1) did not reveal the presence of human burials. Additional gravestone marker fragments, however, were recovered during testing and their position appeared to confirm an earlier property owner account that the gravestones were removed from up the hill and placed up against a fence. No other features were identified or cultural material recovered from Area 1 with the exception of the identification of a single fence post, which still contained the wood post. Given the lack of archaeological data at Area 1, it is D+A’s opinion that no further archaeological study of Area 1 is warranted.

Area 2

Mechanical removal of soil on the crest of the landform (Area 2) similarly did not result in the identification of human burials or other cultural features or artifacts.
Area 3

Mechanical removal of soil in Area 3 resulted in the identification of approximately 38 individual burials. All burial features are oriented roughly east-west and are slightly down slope on the eastern side of the landform facing Massanutten Mountain. Other features associated with the unmarked cemetery include a fence line and possible evidence of the locations of at least 12 wooden or fieldstone markers that are no longer or only partially present.

Cemetery Association and Potential Significance

Archival research yielded little information as to the identity of the cemetery and its occupants. As noted in Chapter 3 of this report, deeds and plats for the property going back to the Civil War did not identify or otherwise delineate a cemetery on this parcel. The lack of legal recording of the cemetery supports a conclusion that the cemetery was not legally charted or platted and was likely associated with an informal group of individuals who shared the same interests or connections in some way.

Cemeteries and graves, including properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, typically do not qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) unless they meet certain special conditions. Although not substantial, the documentary record does not indicate that the identified cemetery meets any of the criteria for listing in the NRHP. The cemetery does not appear to be uniquely representative of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns or our history (Criterion A). There are numerous extant cemeteries from the nineteenth century in Rockingham County and some with earlier associations. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the cemetery is associated with a significant individual or individuals either in the local community or the broader region as whole (Criterion B). There is no remaining evidence demonstrating distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction that represents the work of a master or possess high artistic value (Criterion C). The potential for archaeological excavation of the burials to recover important new information about the history of Rockingham County and its inhabitants is not present (Criterion D). Archival research indicates that at least some of the burials are associated with families of European decent, likely German, who migrated south to the Shenandoah Valley in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were from established and financially secure families. They do not appear to be associated in any way with underrepresented or documented populations in the county. While little is known of the occupants of the cemetery, traditional archaeological research questions such as gender, ethnicity, general health, possible cause of death, and age will reveal little new information about the Rockingham County community. The names, occupations, and family relationships of the individuals buried in the cemetery will likely never be known.

Further, the cemetery is not associated with any existing eligible historic property or district and based upon available documentation and archaeological data is likely representative of a small congregational cemetery that served its congregants for the better part of the nineteenth century before falling into disuse.
Therefore, it is D+A’s opinion that the identified cemetery within the project parcel does not meet the criteria for listing in the NRHP. It is recommended that the County coordinate any future actions relative to relocation of the cemetery with the local courts in accordance with the applicable sections of the Code of Virginia. D+A also recommends that the gravestones located in Area 1 be removed to an area of safe keeping until a final decision regarding the cemetery is reached, and that the gravestones from Areas 1 and 3 be kept with the burials, although not attributed to any specific burial feature.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Between March 28 and April 1, 2016, Dutton + Associates, LLC (D+A) conducted an identification and delineation survey of an unmarked cemetery at the site of the proposed Albert Long Park in Rockingham County (County), Virginia. The project area is located at the northwest intersection of Indian Trail Road (Route 620) and Spotswood Trail (Route 33) (Figures 1-1 and 1-2). The identification and delineation survey was undertaken at the request of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District (Corps).

The presence of the cemetery had been suggested by the discovery of several gravestones that were located during the removal of a fence line within the project area. Preliminary research conducted by the County indicated that no cemetery was recorded in the project area, and interviews with former landowners and long-time residents suggested that the gravestones had been moved from another location within the property boundaries and placed along the fence line by a previous landowner during the mid-twentieth century. An earlier visual inspection of the property by D+A archaeologists did not result in the observation of surface features such as depressions that are sometimes associated with burials.

Figure 1-1. Detail of project location shown in red. Source: NGS topo.
Figure 1-2. Aerial view of project area shown in red. Source: Google Earth 2016
2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The cemetery identification and delineation survey was undertaken in order to confirm the presence or absence of human burials on the property, the extent and configuration of identified burials, and associated burial features. In addition, background research to identify the cemetery, its ownership, and names of interred individuals was also undertaken. The background research, field reconnaissance, and field survey methodologies are summarized below.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

D+A conducted pertinent background research with the following goals:

- Establishing property ownership through time; and
- Identifying historic and cartographic references to the cemetery, its location, and occupants.

Background research took place in the Rockingham County Courthouse, the Rockingham Public Library, as well as the traditional state archival repositories including the VDHR, the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the Library of Congress, and other online repositories of archival materials deemed appropriate.

FIELD SURVEY

In order to conduct the cemetery identification and delineation survey, a small backhoe with a smooth edge, 4-foot wide blade was used to mechanically remove the topsoil in order to locate any subsurface features in an effort to determine if burials were present within the project area. Prior to the removal of top soil, archaeologists excavated judgmental shovel tests in the area proposed for excavation in order to document soil stratigraphy and depth of topsoil. Following documentation of soil stratigraphy, the topsoil was mechanically removed under the direction of an archaeologist. Exposed soil surfaces were flat shoveled, trowel cleaned as appropriate, and inspected for evidence of subsurface cultural features. Identified features and or artifacts were marked and mapped in planview only. No features were excavated as part of this effort and any cultural material encountered was recorded but not collected.

VDHR VCRIS site forms were completed for all identified cultural resources, 50 years of age or older identified during the survey and are include as an appendix to this report.
3. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

The property on which the cemetery is located was purchased by Rockingham County from Indian Trail Farm LLC in 2013; at which time the property consisted of 74.45 acres. Indian Trail Farm owned the property since 2003 when it was acquired from Charles and Doris Heatwole. The Heatwole’s had owned the property since 1951 when they acquired it as a 93 acre parcel from E.L. Klingstien following the breakup and subdivision of a larger property. When Klingstein assumed the property in 1947, it totaled 365 acres, including land on the east side of Keezletown (Indian Trail) Road. Prior to 1947, the property went through a number of transfers, many as a result of default and/or investment sales throughout the Depression of the 1930s. A plat of the property was drawn in 1937 as part of a Special Commission sale by the county, at which time there was no notation or evidence of the cemetery on the property (Figure 1).

![Figure 3-1. 1937 Plat of the “Eiler” Farm. Source: Rockingham County Clerk of Courts](image)

Between the 1870s and 1931, the property remained as a 337 acre parcel owned by a single family, the Eilers. It appears that Alfred Peter (A.P) Eiler acquired the property in several acquisitions throughout the 1870s; although the Eiler family was present in the region before that, including owning and running a mill (Figure 2), and may have held claim to at least a portion of the property earlier. Between the five documented transfers of land that comprise portion of the 337 acre property to A.P Eiler between 1871 and 1892, there was no mention of the cemetery, or any known association to the Albrights or Sheets’, the two family names identified on gravestones within the burial plot. Nor did any of the grantors of property to A.P. Eiler include the Albrights or Sheets. The various parcels were transferred to Eiler by his brother.
James Eiler, Daniel Shiflet, George Nicholas, and David Wampler, all of which are shown in the general vicinity on the 1885 atlas of Rockingham County. None of these individual properties or the property as a whole could be traced back further due to the majority of land records prior to the Civil War having been burnt.

Figure 3-2. Map of Rockingham County, 1875. Depicting Eiler’s Mill.
Land and property records shed little light on the history of the cemetery, other than revealing that several of the gravestones date to the period during which A.P. Eiler owned the property on which they were found. Additional research was conducted into those names associated with the gravestones and property; however, this effort revealed little insight into the history, association, or explanation of the cemetery.

A.P. Eiler was born in 1843 in Rockingham County near Peale’s Cross Roads and enlisted in the infantry during the Civil War. Following the war, he returned home and married, acquiring the property on which the cemetery is located between the 1870s and 1890s. He owned the property until 1920 at which time he sold it to his nephew Fox D. Eiler and moved to Harrisonburg City. During his time on the farm, A.P. Eiler was a faithful member of the Cross Roads (Massanutten) Presbyterian Church across the road, and upon his death in 1925, willed $3,500 to the church. There were no documented connections between the Eilers and the Albrights or Sheets.

In 1874, the Massanutten (Cross Roads) Presbyterian Church was located across Indian Trail Road from the cemetery property, where there remains a church today (Figure 4). As early as the 1870s, there is reference to the “Manse” of the Cross Roads Presbyterian Church across the street from the church, on land adjacent to and just south of Eiler’s house. It burned in 1899 and was replaced with a home that still stands along Indian Trail Road. There was no documentation to believe the Manse property ever extended as far into the fields as the cemetery.
Located cattycornered from the cemetery property, on the southeast corner of the intersection is the Peale House, the family for which the intersection and community of Peale’s Crossroads is named. Although the intersection seems to have been a thriving cross roads community with a tavern and other businesses since the mid-eighteenth century, the Peale’s appear to have come in the early-nineteenth century and run a tannery in the vicinity. The current Peale Home was built in the 1840s at which time it has been noted they owned additional land across Indian Trail.
Road, perhaps in the vicinity of the cemetery property; however, this could not be confirmed due to burnt records.

Research was also conducted into the Albright and Sheets families for which gravestones have been identified. The Albright family came to Rockingham County in the eighteenth century and was a modestly well-to-do family. John, for whose stone was found, was a farmer living in the Ashby region of Rockingham County. By the 1880 census, he was living in the household of Elijah Argabright and noted as “feable”. When he died, his last will and testament stated that he should be buried with all expenses paid out of his estate. Much of the estate was left to his “friends” Noah and Elijah Argabright, indicating there was not a familial relationship.

Research into the Sheets family revealed some interesting information. The one stone with a Sheets family member in the cemetery is that of “Azzh….” Daughter of John and Mary, born 1854 and died 187(4) or (9). The only similar reference to an “Azzh…” Sheets in the census is Asa Sheets, living in the household of John Sheets (86 years old) and Mary Sheets (45 years old) in Harrisonburg City in 1870. Asa is identified as 16 years old which aligns with the 1854 birth date on the gravestone, however is noted as a male. This appears to be the right family, as John and Mary are buried together at the Keezletown Cemetery with death dates that would confirm their ages. Interestingly John died in 1871, and Mary not until 1906, indicating that while Asa died after her father, she was buried in a separate plot than the one in which her father and mother would eventually be buried. Also in the Keezletown Cemetery are Mary and Rebecca, sisters of Asa; however, both of these individuals lived into the 1920s and 1930s.

The Sheets and Albrights appear to be only distantly related, with Polly, the daughter of Catherine Albright, marrying a Samuel Sheets in 1836. Polly Sheets is identified as being well to the north of the cemetery location, and is likely associated with “Azzh…” and John and Mary Sheets, although the relationship between Polly and them is unclear. No further connections or associations between the Sheets and Albrights were found.

Other names and properties depicted on the 1885 Atlas were also investigated with little success. “School 20” could not be found in any available histories or records. The building depicted is in approximately the same location as where the church Manse is known to have been suggesting that there may be some relation between the two. Besides A.P. Eiler, the nearest noted property resident is Peter Bontz. Peter Bontz is not listed in the U.S. Census for 1870 or 1880 and no further information is known.

Attempts to establish religious affiliations of the Albrights and Sheets also proved elusive. There is no mention in John Albright’s last will and testament suggesting his religious affiliation, nor is there any mention in county records of the same. There are later members of the Albright family, however, who are buried in the Linville Church of the Brethren Cemetery, although there is no indication that John Albright was a member of the German Baptist Brethren. Similarly, members of the Sheets family, contemporary with “Azzh” are buried in the Trinity Lutheran Church Cemetery but again, there are no direct references to “Azzh’s” specific religious affiliation if any.
4. FIELD SURVEY RESULTS

Following conversations with Rockingham County representatives and reviewing available property documentation, D+A identified three discrete areas on the property for testing: 1) the area where the grave markers were discovered during construction, 2) the area which the previous property owner and adjacent property owner accounts suggested that they grave markers had been removed from decades earlier, and 3) an area where the 1937 aerial photograph suggested a surface feature, represented by a change in vegetation, was present (Figure 4-1).

![Figure 4-1. View of three areas identified for inspection for a possible cemetery.](image)

**AREA 1**

The first area tested was the section of the former fence line where the grave markers had been initially found by construction crews. Following excavation of judgmental shovel tests to determine soil stratigraphy, the backhoe was used to mechanically remove the topsoil in the area around the two gravestones that remained *in situ* where they had been uncovered during grading associated with removal of the fence. Topsoil was removed from an area measuring approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) around the markers and the subsoil was cleaned with flat shovels and trowels and examined for soil color changes indicative of grave shafts (Figure 4-2). Soils in the area consisted of reddish brown (5YR4/3) sandy clay loam plow zone over yellowish red (5YR5/6) sandy clay. The topsoil contained some roots, consistent with brush present adjacent to the fence line. The average depth of the plow zone was approximately 34 centimeters (1.1 feet), however, this varied due to previous grading in the area. No features other than a post hole with a portion of a wooden post still in place were identified.
Gravestones

Gravestone markers recovered from Area 1 by construction crews during initial clearing of the fence line include one for Elizabeth Albright and one for John Albright, who died in the years 1873 and 1881, respectively (Figure 4-3). Two additional marked gravestones were identified in the same area and were left in situ. One of these was broken in several places, making the first name of the decedent illegible, but she is identified as the daughter of John and Mary Sheets and died in 1879 (Figure 4-4). The second differs from the others found in the project area in that unlike the marble used for the other markers, this marker appears to be a natural fieldstone and is more crudely carved (Figure 4-4).

In addition to the previously identified gravestones, eight (8) more fragments of gravestones were identified along the fence line during soil removal. Examination of the markers suggested that they were lying flat on the ground surface and did not appear to have been dug into place, which is consistent with the descriptions provided to the county. Some fragments exhibited evidence of writing but none contained sufficient data to identify additional names or dates of interments (Figure 4-5).
Elizabeth
Daughter of
John Albright
Born
Aug. 26, 1787
Died
Feb. 16, 1873

John Albright
Died
October 6, 1881
Aged
84 yr 7mos. 9 days

Figure 4-3. View of John and Elizabeth Albright’s gravestones recovered from Area 1.
-Azzh-??
Daughter of
John & Mary Sheets
Born
May 14, 1854
Died
Jan 8, 1879
Aged
18 Yrs. 7 mos. 25 days

S-M—(Samuel?) (natural stone, crudely modified)
Died -0
1835?

Figure 4-4. View of “Azzh” Sheets and unknown fieldstone marker recovered from Area 1.
Figure 4-5. View of gravestone markers uncovered during excavation of Area 1.

AREA 2

The second area investigated was at the crest of the landform directly uphill from where the markers had been placed along the fence line. In order to determine if burials were present in this area, D+A archaeologists monitored the mechanical excavation of topsoil in several trenches at the top of the knoll where the cemetery location had been described by a previous property owner and adjacent property owner. A total of 5 trenches, ranging from 33.5 meters (110 feet) to 54.8 meters (180 feet) in length and approximately 2.4 meters (8 feet) in width were excavated. The plow zone in this area ranged in depth, but was approximately 30 centimeters (1 foot) deep. The plow zone consisted of reddish brown (5YR4/4) sandy clay loam and the subsoil generally consisted of yellowish red (5YR5/6) sandy clay with some areas exhibiting compact sand or hard pan soil (Figure 4-6). No evidence of burials or other cultural features were identified in this area.
AREA 3

The third area investigated was the location where a small rectangle appears on a 1937 aerial photograph, which had been geo-referenced by Timmons Group. GPS coordinates were used to determine this location, which, once scaled, appeared to be a rectangle measuring approximately 90 feet north-south by 45 feet east-west (Figure 4-7).
Topsoil was removed from this area in trenches oriented roughly north-south in order to maximize the ability to locate grave shafts as these are frequently oriented east-west. The soil was consistent with that in the trenches that had been placed at the crest of the landform, with similar variation in the texture of the subsoil as some areas exhibited compact clay and others had sandy clay subsoil.

Shortly after removal began, two features were exposed. Once cleaned and fully visible, the features were consistent with graves shafts (Figure 4-8). The features were rectangular in shape and measured approximately 0.9 meters (3 feet) by 2.1 meters (7 feet) with fill consisting of deep reddish-brown (2.5YR4/4) clay mottled with strong brown (7.5YR4/6) sandy clay. The features were oriented east-west, consistent with burials (Figure 4-9).
FIELD SURVEY RESULTS

Figure 4-8. General view of soil removal and delineation of burials in Area 3.

Figure 4-9. Detail view of grave shaft features identified in Area 3.
Topsoil removal continued in the surrounding area in an effort to locate additional graves and to delineate the boundaries of the cemetery. As the topsoil was removed, surfaces were examined and trowels and flat shovels were used to identify soil color changes. As features were exposed, pin flags were used to mark the corners of burial features, as well as any other soil anomaly. In some places, fieldstones were located in the topsoil. While they were not in situ, the stones were placed in the location where they had been found. In other areas, small fragments of white marble grave markers were found. These were also left in place.

Topsoil removal continued until a buffer with no features was present in all cardinal directions. The boundaries that had been estimated based on the 1937 aerial photograph appear to be accurate, as several fence post holes around the perimeter of the burials were identified, indicating that during part of the time the cemetery was in use, it was enclosed by a fence that measuring 80 feet north-south by 38 feet east-west. Post holes varied in form with some including both the post hole and post mold while others just exhibited the post mold suggesting they were either driven or perhaps later repairs (Figures 4-10 and 4-11).
A total of 38 burials were identified. In some areas, burials appear to be cut by others and at least one soil color anomaly appears to be a burial, but could not be determined conclusively. Each burial was demarcated by placing a ca. 9 centimeter (3.5 inch) nail at each corner of the grave shaft and string was used to mark the boundaries. The location of each burial was drawn on a measured site plan and GPS coordinates taken for each corner of the cemetery (Figure 4-12).

Archaeological evidence shows that the interments were laid in roughly three rows. The density of burials was greater in the northern portion, with 22 of the burials placed in the northern half of the cemetery. In the center of the cemetery, there are also several gaps of 1.5 meters (5 feet) to 3.0 meters (10 feet) between groupings of interments. While the burials appear to have been placed in rows, there is some slight variation in their orientation; however all of the burials are generally laid east-west.

From the size range among the burials, it appears that infants to adults are represented (Figure 4-13). The width of the burials also varies, but the limited investigation does not provide insight into whether this indicates a difference in burial practices (coffin or shroud burial) or if this is a function of the age or size of the individual (Figure 4-14).
Figure 4-12. Plan view of identified cemetery in Area 3.
Figure 4-13. View of possible infant burial.

Figure 4-14. View of narrower burial shaft suggesting possible shroud burial.
Gravestones

One possible gravestone was identified in Area 3. The marker was very similar in material and inscription as the fieldstone marker recovered along the fence line in Area 1. The marker was roughly carved and appeared to have had some form of whitewash applied at some point in the past (Figure 4-15). While not clear, there is a possible death date of 1841 that appears partially visible.

![Figure 4-15. View of fieldstone grave marker recovered from Area 3. View of full marker at left and detailed view of marker at right with legible inscription highlighted in photo.](image)

In addition to the burials and fragments of fieldstone or markers that were present in the topsoil, several areas containing gravel sized stone were noted during fieldwork (Figure 4-16). These consisted of linear concentrations that may represent internal dividers within the cemetery used to demarcate groups of individuals or may be decorative features.

Once the cemetery delineation and mapping were complete, the area where burials were located was covered with heavy black plastic which was anchored with sandbags and soil (Figure 4-17).
Figure 4-16. View of linear gravel features that may represent family plot boundaries.
Figure 4-17. View of site protection measures post identification and delineation.
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In April 2016, D+A archaeologists conducted a cemetery identification and delineation survey on property owned by Rockingham County and the site of the proposed Albert Long Park. The study was requested by the VDHR and the Corps as a result of consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations 36 CFR Part 800.

The study consisted of background research focused primarily on the ownership of the property and references to use of the property for a cemetery. In addition, research focused on family names recorded from gravestones located within the project area in an effort to identify possible relationships and or references to the cemetery and its name.

In conjunction with background research, D+A archaeologists completed fieldwork associated with identification and delineation of a possible cemetery. Fieldwork was informed by background research, as well as recollections of former and adjacent property owners, and the recovery of gravestones along a former fence line. Mechanical removal of topsoil was undertaken under the direction of an archaeologist in three areas of the property: 1) the area along the former fence line where the gravestone markers were previously identified and recovered; 2) an area on the crest of a landform where former property and adjacent property owners had indicated a cemetery once existed and where the gravestones had been moved from; and 3) an area just down slope of the crest of the landform mentioned above, where examination of the 1937 aerial of the property suggested the possible presence of a cemetery.

AREA 1

Mechanical removal of soil in the area along the former fence line where gravestones were recovered by construction crews (Area 1) did not reveal the presence of human burials. Additional gravestone marker fragments, however, were recovered during testing and their position appeared to confirm earlier property owner account that the gravestones were removed from up the hill and placed against a fence. No other features or cultural material were identified or recovered from Area 1 with the exception of the identification of a single fence post, which still contained the wood post. Given the lack of archaeological data at Area 1, it is D+A’s opinion that no further archaeological study of Area 1 is warranted.

AREA 2

Mechanical removal of soil on the crest of the landform (Area 2) similarly did not result in the identification of human burials or other cultural features or artifacts.

AREA 3

Mechanical removal of topsoil in Area 3 resulted in the identification of approximately 38 individual burials. All burial features are oriented roughly east west and are slightly down slope on the eastern side of the landform facing Massanutten Mountain. Other features associated with

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1 Identification and confirmation of one grave shaft feature was inconclusive and is noted on the plan as such.
the unmarked cemetery include a fence line and possible evidence of the locations of at least 12 wooden or fieldstone markers that are no longer or only partially present. Identified fence posts indicate that a combination of both excavated and driven posts were used at various times throughout the history of the cemetery suggesting the fence was repaired at some point in the past. There did not appear to be any evidence of multiple repairs to individual posts. Areas of gravel that may be related to the layout of the cemetery are present, as are fragments of limestone fieldstones and white marble that appear to be associated with the burials.

Of the identified burials, eight (8) appear to be children or young adults based on the size of the grave shaft only. Two burials cut earlier burials suggesting that there had been a sufficient amount of time passed since the earlier burials for their precise locations to be lost and unknown at the time of the new burials. No other evidence of disturbance to the burials was noted and no cultural material was observed or recovered during the mechanical removal of top soil in Area 3.

Cemetery Association and Potential Significance

Archival research yielded little information as to the identity of the cemetery and its occupants. As noted in Section 3 of this report, deeds and plats for the property going back to the Civil War did not identify a cemetery or otherwise delineate a cemetery on this parcel. The lack of legal recording of the cemetery supports a conclusion that the cemetery was not legally charted or platted and was likely associated with an informal group of individuals who shared the same interests or connections in some way.

Similarly, research did not reveal any property associations with either the Albright or Sheets families, although Polly Sheets is listed as a nearby property owner in the 1880s and she was the daughter of Catherine Albright, who was the sister of John and Elizabeth, both of whom are believed to be buried in the cemetery.

While not substantiated in the documentary or cartographic record, the archaeological and documentary evidence is not inconsistent with the cemetery being used by a small congregation of Brethren or Mennonites from the second quarter of the nineteenth century up through the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was not uncommon for Amish, Brethren, and Mennonite congregations to meet for worship in homes, mills or barns rather than in separate church buildings (Kraybill 2010). With several mills located in the vicinity of Peale’s Crossroads, it is possible that a small congregation established a meeting and one of the congregants owned the parcel on which the cemetery is located, making it available for members use as a burial ground. The presence of simple gravestones with little or no ornamentation is also consistent with burial customs of such traditional groups who often placed simple gravestones in family order or in rows in chronological order of death (Kraybill 2010).

National Register Eligibility

Cemeteries and graves, including properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, typically do not qualify for listing in the NRHP unless they meet certain special conditions. Although not substantial the documentary record does not indicate that the identified
conclusions and recommendations

The cemetery does not appear to be uniquely representative of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns or our history (Criterion A). There are several extant cemeteries from the nineteenth century in Rockingham County and some with earlier associations. Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the cemetery is associated with a significant individual or individuals either in the local community or the broader region as whole (Criterion B). There is no remaining evidence demonstrating distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction that represents the work of a master or possess high artistic value (Criterion C). The potential for archaeological excavation of the burials to recover important new information about the history of Rockingham County and its inhabitants is not present (Criterion D). Archival research indicates that at least some of the burials are associated with families of European decent, likely German, who migrated south to the Shenandoah Valley in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were from established and financially secure families. They do not appear to be associated in any way with underrepresented or documented populations in the county. While little is known of the occupants of the cemetery, traditional archaeological research questions such as gender, ethnicity, general health, possible cause of death, and age will reveal little new information about the Rockingham County community. The names, occupations, and family relationships of the individuals buried in the cemetery will likely never be known.

Further, the cemetery is not associated with any existing eligible historic property or district and based upon available documentation and archaeological data is likely representative of a small congregational cemetery that served its congregants for the better part of the nineteenth century before falling into disuse.

Therefore, it is D+A’s opinion that the identified cemetery within the project parcel does not meet the criteria for listing in the NRHP. It is recommended that the County coordinate any future actions relative to relocation of the cemetery with the local courts in accordance with the applicable sections of the Code of Virginia. D+A also recommends that the gravestones located in Area 1 be removed to an area of safe keeping until a final decision regarding the cemetery is reached, and that the gravestones from Areas 1 and 3 be kept with the burials, although not attributed to any specific burial feature.
6. REFERENCES

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Virginia W.P.A. Historical Inventory Project
7. VCRIS FORM

(Awaiting VDHR Approval)