

Appendix C – Howard Report

Thoroughfare Cemetery Report

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American Indian Researcher

At the request of Shawnee Elder woman Sheila Hansen, on May 16th, 2021, I made a site visit to the three cemeteries known as Scott, Fletcher-Allen, and Peyton. In attendance with me at my request to assist with this investigation was Ingrid Howard, P.E., D.GE, who is a Geotechnical Engineer and soil expert with the US Army Corps of Engineers and has a private company called IMH Engineering, PLLC. Also in attendance was Alex Zito, who holds a PhD in History, and his wife Kesia Zito. Kesia is a former attorney from Northern Virginia.

Upon arriving at the Fletcher-Allen cemetery, I was greeted by Harvey Washington, and his son Frank Washington. I also met several other members of this family. We surveyed the modern portion of the Fletcher-Allen cemetery and then moved into the cleared and well-manicured field to the south of it. This field is geographically a prominent knoll that gently slopes to the Northeast and Southwest. This is important because it is the tradition of American Indians that in most cases, they chose either plateaus that overlook valleys, rivers, streams, lakes, etc., or, if that were not available topographically speaking, they would choose the top of knolls and hills with grave placement usually on the Southwest side. This tradition is based on being buried to face the summer and winter solstice directions. A compass reading verified that this practice was followed in the choice of this cemetery location.



Modern Fletcher-Allen Cemetery



Open field area to the South of the modern cemetery

The Peyton and Scott cemeteries lie to the east of the Fletcher-Allen plot. Based on tradition and cemetery location, it appears the Fletcher-Allen was the first cemetery that was started in the early to mid-1800's and the Peyton and Scott cemeteries were then later started for other local families.

As we entered the open field area, I immediately noticed that along the north tree line edge, that there was a line of depressions in the ground spaced apart that followed the edge of the tree line. Some of these depressions in the ground had a rectangular shape. The depressions were usually 2-4" lower than the surface area around them. There was also a different color in the soil in the depressed areas in comparison to the surrounding areas. These areas were redder in color. Some of these rectangular depressed areas also show an absence of grass growing. It is possible some of these areas devoid of grass may be simply poor soil.



Examples of sunken rectangular areas devoid of grass

Another observation is that on top of some of these rectangular depressions, were deposits of broken shale. Throughout this area we did not encounter any surface shale deposits or outcrops. The shale lying on these depressed areas may have occurred as these graves were being dug the shale could have been on or just below the surface and broken as they dug down, or, when the holes were dug, they may have encountered shale at a deeper depth and removed it into a spoil heap that was used to cover the graves upon completion.

As we moved away from the tree line into the center of the field, I saw more individual areas that are visibly depressed. Some were rectangular in shape, while others were partial shaped. In this open field area, there appeared to be over twenty different depression areas. I did not see any headstones in the open field area.

Understanding now that this was potentially a large cemetery area, I ventured into the forested area that is to west of the open field area. As we walked into the forest, not more than thirty feet inside the tree canopy we began to find small field stones that were used as simple grave markers. I gently touched these stones to see if they were just lying loosely on the surface or were entrenched. I was not able to move these stones and they were firmly entrenched into the ground. One of these stones bares the distinct markings of an American Indian burial marker as the field stone was placed into the ground in a vertical manner as a "standing stone." This practice I have seen at multiple American Indian burial sites such as Bear Spirit Mountain, Gerrardstown and the Gananoque site in Canada. This standing stone was also made into the effigy of a bird face petroglyph. Upon close inspection of this glyph, I can see that there is clear evidence of the sandstone being carved to show the features of this bird face that include two eyes, eyebrows, an upper beak and a lower beak.

Below are photos of a couple of the headstones including a split photo of the bird face petroglyph head stone.



Carved or painted animal effigies are very commonly found in American Indian burial grounds. The artist in most cases would have used a deer antler or a harder local stone such as Basalt to “knap” or break off flakes and then peck into the rock the fine detail to create the image. Basalt scores an 8 out of 10 on the Moh's scale of rock hardness. They may have also imported Jasper which was used for making into petroglyphs as well as tools. It has a hardness rating of 6.5-7 on Moh's scale of rock hardness.

I also observed that there is a mixing of cultural practices in the burial methods at these sites. While the Christian tradition of placing a single headstone is demonstrated here, we also see the use of American Indian practices of aligning the cemetery sites with Summer/Winter solstice directions, the use of standing stones, and creating animal petroglyphs on the headstones. These people were honoring multiple cultural traditions during funeral procedures.

We explored these woods and determined that at the minimum, this cemetery site extended at least to the neighbor's construction fence to the north and that there were at least ten more potential burial sites inside of these woods as well. I also believe that there are potentially more burials behind the modern Fletcher-Allen cemetery that are also located in the woods behind it. Both locations warrant further archaeological research to identify these potential graves.

After surveying the forest area, we then moved over to see a single modern gravestone that Harvey Washington described as his deceased uncle. This single headstone is located close to the Peyton cemetery. I also noticed a field stone identical to the other field stone markers that was located near this modern grave marker that could be another burial.



Photo of the modern grave marker

We concluded looking at these markers and walked over to the Peyton cemetery. This cemetery is clearly marked, and each burial can be easily identified. Great care has been extended in the maintenance of this cemetery recently.

I also saw several spoil heaps left at different locations from when graves were dug into the soil and the removed soil placed into piles above the grave site at the time of the burials. I suspect there may be more burials outside of the fenced areas to the north, west and south of the established cemetery area. Further archaeological investigation should be undertaken.



Peyton Cemetery

Our last stop was to visit the Scott cemetery area that had recently been deforested. This area is suspected of having burials as well. Due to the stripping of the topsoil and attempted leveling by heavy equipment, it is impossible to now identify if there are any burials under the soil. Any head stones or depressions that could mark a burial site in the original condition of the soil has been either removed or greatly changed into an unrecognizable condition. To the northwest of this area near the county road are dump piles from the stripping of the soil. There are also scar marks in the soil of heavy equipment tracks that were scraping the soil after the tree removal. All tree stump holes were filled in by leveling as there are no tree root ball holes remaining. This was verified by our Geotechnical (soil) engineer.



Photos of the Scott Cemetery Area

Conclusion

The goal of this investigation was to determine if there are additional potential burials in addition to the established modern burial sites that have visible headstones marking each deceased person. I saw a lot of evidence of depressed areas that are potential burial locations. Some of these depressions were outlined in a rectangular shape where it was evident where it began and where it ended and measured in estimation to a human body length. Other depressions were partial in nature and may or may not be grave sites. I also feel that although there are three separate family cemetery areas, that these three cemeteries almost blend into each other in proximity.

In the early 19th century and in agreement by all these families that lived in this Thoroughfare locale, the area that the two hills are located at would be specifically designated and used as cemetery areas. As more people were buried, all three of these cemeteries moved toward each other thereby shrinking the distance between each cemetery. Over time, their descendants would build structures and introduce agriculture near the burial sites. The remaining simple headstones used in the 19th century that we found to mark a burial scream loudly to us that we are here, and there are many of us that need protection from being erased forever.

I hope to see further archaeological investigation where our team has brought to your attention these areas where potential burials are located. In the past, I have personally made use of geophysical testing methods such as ground penetrating radar (GPR) and electric resistivity (ER) testing at American Indian burial sites that successfully provided the scientific evidence that is needed for a definitive conclusion.

Regardless of the opinions of all involved, if there is just the potential of burials that need further investigation, we are obligated to find the correct answer before any further development can be allowed.

Thank you for allowing my team to be a small part of this investigation. I hope we provided some additional insights to the questions that are being asked about this location.

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About the author:

Matthew “Maasaw” Howard is a professional American Indian researcher that has located (15) American Indian ceremonial/burial sites ranging from Canada to Virginia. He is part Cherokee and part Tuscarora American Indian.

Matthew has published two books about American Indian burial and ceremonial practices. “Adonvdo Yona (Bear Spirit) Mountain, An Ancestral Awakening” was published in 2018. It won second place for “best new book” in the history category. “As I Rest, Let My Face Touch Heaven” was published in 2021. Matthew is also an expert at identifying American Indian rock art and rock structures used in ceremonial and burial practices. He often gives lectures at the local community level and has been a guest lecturer at several state archaeological society conventions producing the findings of his research.