ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	HIDDEN HISTORY: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND THE REDISCOVERY OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN POTTER'S FIELD IN HOPEWELL, VIRGINIA
	Kelly Marie Miles Pratt, Master of Professional Studies, Cultural and Heritage Resource Management, 2026
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The Berry Street Burial Ground is an African American potter's field located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Hopewell, Virginia. Poor documentation of the site led to the loss of data, including the geographic location, name of the burial ground, names of the interred, and the historical context. How do archival records, archaeological field observation, and community knowledge work together to interpret informal burial grounds such as this one? To answer this question, the project used a community archaeology approach focused on three methods: community engagement, archival research, and non-invasive archaeology. Ultimately, the project showed that no single research method provided enough data to understand the site on its own. Throughout the project there were archival gaps, limitations to field observations, and challenges surrounding community memory. Community knowledge provided the largest body of data, though it was not always readily available. While some memories were less clear, it was possible to strengthen these remembrances with newspaper articles, obituaries, death certificates, and

literature. Over time, the project revealed that remembering was relational. The story for the burial ground survived through community relationships, storytelling, place, records, and oral history rather than in one stable repository or archive. A community archaeology approach addressed archival silences by recognizing residents and descendants as partners in the research process and centering their knowledge as expertise. This community-guided, multi-method approach proved especially important for interpreting Berry Street and may be useful when researching other informal African American burial grounds or potter's fields.

HIDDEN HISTORY: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND THE REDISCOVERY OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN POTTER'S FIELD IN HOPEWELL, VIRGINIA

by

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Preface

For twenty years of my life, I lived a 15-minute walk from the Berry Street Burial Ground and never heard of its existence. At that time, I had no idea how important the location of my home was, placing me squarely in the middle of several historic African American neighborhoods. My family members, neighbors, teachers, preachers, and schoolmates from the 1980s-2000s would become informants and project participants 25 years later. It is these familial and social connections that positioned me to conduct this research in this community at this time. I grew up inside the geography of the project, but the project was hidden in plain sight. It is only with the help of Hopewell residents that the history of this site is finally being revealed.

Acknowledgements

This project was quite an undertaking that would have failed without the support of the people I consider my community. First and foremost, I thank my spouse, Colonel Pratt, and my adult children Aolani and Cyprus, for their patience and support while my life revolved around the Berry Street Burial Ground Project and my graduate thesis.

Thank you to the Arlington Heights Community of the 1920s through the 1960s for sharing your time and knowledge throughout this project. Thank you also to the broader Hopewell community for discussing this project, networking with me, attending community events, and sharing your knowledge. I am especially grateful to the members of the Elks Lodge history group in Hopewell, who helped shape the initial research direction, volunteered at community events, and supported this work throughout.

I thank my professor, Matthew Palus at the University of Maryland, for the many hours of video calls spent discussing thesis ideas, offering encouragement, reflecting on political changes affecting the CRM field, and providing guidance, research support, and valuable connections.

Thank you to the City of Hopewell and to Charles Bennett, Director of Economic Development, for offering me an internship when others were hesitant to do so. Charles gave me the freedom to shape a project that centered community voices and resonated deeply with me. He provided guidance, office space, access to Hopewell's historic records, and flexibility with my demanding work and academic schedule. I am also grateful that he helped make a paid internship possible through Virginia Career Works.

A special thank you to Ki'Asia Anderson who is the Career Coach for the Crater Regional Workforce Development Board. Ki'Asia managed a project that was likely outside the norm for her office with patience and care. She set up my payment account, conducted check-ins, shared resources and encouragement, and served as an important link between me and the City of Hopewell, helping to keep all parties accountable to the project goals.

I am deeply grateful to the mentors who shaped this work. At the University of Mary Washington, Christine Henry offered valuable guidance on community engagement. At the University of Maryland, Hannah Smith offered guidance on using Ground Penetrating Radar in marshy areas and contacting landowners. Hannah also provided contacts, support, and direction throughout the interim phases of the internship.

I am also thankful for researchers whom I had long admired and who became important voices in this project. Elvatrice Belsches, who is a co-founder of the Central Virginia African-American Genealogical and Historical Society, an author, and a researcher, generously shared her time through meetings, texts, and phone calls about community engagement and next steps for the project. Jody Allen, Associate Professor of History at Harrison Ruffin Tyler Department of History and former Director of the Lemon Project at William & Mary, offered thoughtful questions about land ownership, descendant-led preservation, and burial practices. She also encouraged me to practice self-care in community-based research.

I am also grateful to Viola Baskerville, current President of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Greater Richmond, Virginia Chapter, for agreeing on short notice to teach

a genealogy workshop for this project. Her willingness to step in made it possible for me to give something back to the community during this research.

This project depended on archives and repositories in Virginia and other states. I thank the Library of Virginia, Virginia Chronicle, the Department of Historic Resources, the City of Hopewell Clerk's Office, the Prince George County Clerk's Office, the Appomattox Regional Library System – Hopewell Branch, The Hagley Library (for DuPont archives), Dr. King Davis at the University of Texas (for Central State Hospital Archives), and the Prince George Regional Heritage Center.

A special thank you goes to Arielle McCollum, Carol Carr, and the entire Hopewell Farmer's Market team. They provided me with tables, tent weights, banners, chairs, tablecloths, clamps, and steady support during the farmer's market season. Arielle's thoughtful placement of my table kept the project visible and made public outreach far more effective.

Finally, thank you to everyone I have not named here. This project was truly a community effort; however community is defined, and it touched many lives. The research continues and this list grows longer every month. Thank you all for the help you have already given and for any support you may offer in the future as the hidden history of this African American potter's field continues to be recovered.

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Introduction

The Berry Street Burial Ground is an informal, poorly documented African American potter's field located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Hopewell, Virginia. The burial ground dates from the 1920s to the 1960s, a time when cemeteries in Virginia were segregated and civil rights activism was underway. As an informal burial site, it lacks visual landscape cues to remind people of the existence of the burials. Poor documentation of the site has led to a loss of data including the geographic location, name of the burial ground, names of the interred, and historical context. Identifying this information requires data from various sources. How do archival records, archaeological field observation, and community knowledge work together to interpret informal burial grounds that are poorly documented?

Research on the burial ground began as an internship requirement for my master's degree at the University of Maryland. Under the guidance of the Director of Economic Development for Hopewell (the Internship Supervisor), and funded by Virginia Career Works, I undertook an internship with the City of Hopewell from June 2025 to October 2025 to fulfill my degree requirement. Unless otherwise specified, all activities mentioned in this thesis took place at the direction of, and under the auspices of, the Director of Economic Development for the City of Hopewell. He provided me with the tasks of conducting archival research and engaging with Hopewell's African American community to identify the location of the Berry Street Burial Ground, determine the site boundaries, gather data regarding the historical context, and create a list of interred individuals. A secondary project was to assist a group of African American public researchers with digitizing and publishing a 700-page history of African American Hopewellians dating from the 1700s until modern times. This public history group also served as the initial

informants for burial ground research, providing lists of potential owners of the burial ground, a few names of people in their 80s and 90s who might have knowledge, and the name of the unofficial undertaker of the site: Deacon John (or Jack) Parham. They also provided some geographic areas where they thought interments might be located. This informant-provided data became foundational for all research. A large portion of the internship focused on this type of community engagement, which resulted in conversations and meetings that I took notes of or transcribed. These discussions were not meant to be released or published publicly; therefore, I took certain precautions such as obtaining verbal consent for participation in the project and identifying participants throughout the internship and research process using anonymized labels (examples: L02-descendant or R07-researcher).

Despite community input, research was complicated by the lack of an official name for the burial ground. For the purpose of the internship, I called the site the Berry Street Burial Ground. I chose this name because Berry Street is well known to those who resided in Arlington Heights from 1920-1960. While other streets near Berry Street have names that have changed over time, Berry Street's name has existed since at least 1915 and the incorporation of Hopewell as a city (Bryant 1915; Virginia General Assembly N.D.). Using this name for the project was not a renaming of the site, but rather something that made it easier to reference the site quickly in conversations, public communications, and reports. Only after learning the complicated naming history of the site did I realize that this decision to create a name during my internship potentially added to the naming confusion. It is important to note that this was always supposed to be a temporary name to be replaced once a historic name was revealed, once a descendant group chose a name, or once the city determined a name for the site. To date, there is no one name for this burial ground.

For this thesis, the site is referred to as the Berry Street Burial Ground, with the understanding that several unofficial names exist, and that the site could be officially renamed in the future.

Research methods for this project included archival research, community engagement, and field observation. The combination of these methods resulted in a community archaeology approach because local and descendant knowledge was required to guide research efforts, site identification, interpretation, and preservation planning. Archival research consisted of analyzing historic maps, land ownership deeds, newspaper articles and obituaries, death certificates, and literature. Community engagement encompassed large and small group meetings, city-wide events (farmer's market, Hopewell's annual Rivers and Roads Festival), and meetings and events that I coordinated with the City as part of the internship (genealogy workshop, final community meeting). Archaeological field observations in the form of surface-level reconnaissance were conducted at the culmination of research to identify the location of the burial ground. African American cemeteries are sensitive sites; therefore, I limited archaeological investigations to non-invasive methods.

This thesis consists of several sections meant to present the story of the search for this burial ground. The first two sections, A Note on Community and A Note on Terms will provide clarity regarding some specific vocabulary used in this document. After that, the background section will provide a brief overview of the history of the site. It is followed by a brief discourse on Reflexive Archaeology, which is a post-processual approach whereby archaeologists examine their own positionality, bias, and methods, and examine how these approaches impact the interpretation of the past (Hodder 2000). My writing will focus mainly on my positionality, how

my familial connection influenced community engagement, the resulting project guidance and adaptations to my research approach, and my changing role within the African American community. I will also explore certain challenges such as conflicting timelines, ethical responsibility and oral history concerns. Then, I will address the theories used during the research process, which includes community archaeology, archaeological reflexivity, slow archaeology, values-based heritage management, and civic engagement. Next, the methods section will discuss approaches to community engagement, archival research, non-invasive archaeology, and qualitative data analysis. Following the methods section, I present the results of all research efforts. Then, I will analyze the data and findings. Finally, I will end this thesis with a conclusion which summarizes the project data and provides answers to the thesis question.

A Note on Community

Community is a broad term and is often used to describe various groups in this thesis. There is the larger Hopewell community, the community of African Americans who lived in Arlington Heights from 1920-1960, the entire African American community of Hopewell, the public history group working on a book, etc. When possible, I made efforts to denote which group is being referred to. When no specific reference is made, the expectation is that I am talking about all the communities combined, i.e. all of Hopewell.

A Note on the Terms African American and European American

Today, individuals choose the terms by which they want to identify, but this was not always the case. In the 19th century, the term Colored was widely used in print and media, as well as when naming places (Lynch 2026; Parker et al. 2015). Negro was used during the early- to mid-20th century. During the Black Empowerment movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Black became the preferred term (Lynch 2026). The use of African American came about during the 1980s and persists until today (Lynch 2026; Parker et al. 2015). Just as with any community, individuals

have a right to choose how they are identified. Some Americans feel no connection to Africa, and are third, fourth, or even fifth generation Americans, so they prefer to be called Black. Others feel that all people with brown skin originated from Africa, and so they prefer to be called African American. While academia has certainly provided its own justifications and definitions for each term, it is important to recognize that individuals in any people group are unique. I prefer the term Black when referring to myself and others who trace their lineage to American enslavement. People of Color is a term I use to refer to any non-European Americans. There are other terms I use such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). During the course of the internship, I recognized that I was working with an older community who were accustomed to different terminology. I took their lead when referring to Black people in Hopewell. They preferred the term African American, so that is the term you will see used most often in this writing. Other terms such as Negro or Colored may also appear in this writing when referencing the content of news articles, obituaries, death certificates, and the names of certain locations. These names were in common use throughout various points in history, so any use in this writing is educational in nature, and not meant to insult, defame, or in any other way harm any person.

Additionally, I use the term European American instead of the commonplace term of white when referring to the majority population in Hopewell. Historically, Hopewell was successful because of the large number of immigrants who made their homes here. In the book *Making the American Dream Work*, the author states, "At one time at least twenty-three languages were spoken in Hopewell" (Lee 2008). These immigrants came from all over the world. For this reason, it seems more appropriate to refer to the white individuals in Hopewell as European

Americans. African Americans and European immigrants made the city what it is today, and their descendants live on, whether or not they recognize or know their heritage.

Historic Background

The history of the burial ground parcel is challenging to verify due to various factors. First, most early court records for Prince George County were destroyed by fire in 1782 by British troops during the Revolutionary War and again in 1864 by Union troops during the Civil War, making it difficult to trace land ownership during these time periods (The Library of Virginia 2012**)**. Second, subdivision names in Arlington Heights overlap, unintentionally leading to dual ownership of properties (see Table 1). Third, several areas of Prince George were annexed into Hopewell throughout the years, including the burial ground parcel. Researchers must often rebuild land ownership using alternative sources of information. Fourth, the informal nature of the burial ground resulted in few surviving headstones, limited obituaries, and difficulty locating records or individuals with lived memory of the site. Fifth, time limitations for the internship forced a prioritization of research methods with the highest potential to yield results. With additional time, the following history may be expanded in the future to allow for a more complete retelling of the site.

Tracing Land Ownership

The Berry Street Burial Ground is a little-known African American potter's field located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Hopewell, Virginia. Prior to the burial ground's existence, this parcel of land was originally part of Prince George County, which was formed from Charles City County by a statute adopted on August 28, 1702, to take effect on April 23, 1703 (Hopewell City Virginia History and Genealogy; The Library of Virginia 2012). Due to the destruction of records in 1782 and 1864, there are some gaps in the historic narrative for Prince George (The Library of Virginia 2012; Virginia Historical Society 1897). From 1864 to 1927, it was difficult

to find a complete chain of ownership for the land. An 1897 article on the subject states that, "The loss of these records baulks the antiquary and genealogist, and breaks the chain of discoverable title to all that large tract of country" (Virginia Historical Society 1897). Several records and deeds possibly connect the burial ground parcels and the Arlington Heights neighborhood to land where the Prince George Courthouse once resided. The documents include names such as Frog's Hole Bridge, Briggs' Farm, Fitzgerald tract, Courthouse tract, and Know tract (*Church History* N.D.; Deed of Bargain and Sale from Eliza C. Tate and N. H. Tate to Sallie Dey Shemwell 1928; Deed from Reuel V. Broyhill and Wife to R. W. Flaherty 1915; Deed from R. W. Flaherty to S. A. Morris Co.1915; Sivens 1921; Virginia Historical Society 1897). Hopewell community members also say that the courthouse used to exist in this area. Unfortunately, the one deed or document connecting these lands directly to the transfer of the burial ground parcels, also known as Lots 1-18, inclusive Block 7, could not be identified during the time period allotted for the internship and it is uncertain if these parcels were included in the areas encompassed by the original tract names.

The research picks up in 1924 with the first known burial for the site. Then, in 1927, Eliza C. Tate and her husband conveyed Lots 1-18, inclusive Block 7 to Sallie Shemwell (Deed from Eliza C. Tate and N. H. Tate to Sallie D. Shemwell 1927). The City of Hopewell annexed these lots, along with the Virginia Heights and Arlington Heights neighborhoods, from Prince George County in 1952 (Jennes 1952). A complication regarding overlapping subdivision names led to dual ownership of lots 1 through 18, inclusive, Block 7. These lots were owned by both Sally Dey Shemwell (Arlington Heights) and Charles B. Taylor (Washington Heights Annex) at the same time. In 1975, a series of court cases ensued to determine the owner and responsible party

for the back taxes on the property. Chancery Cause #4500 determined that Sallie Dey Shemwell (and not Charles B. Taylor) was the owner of the property (Hopewell Circuit Court 1975-A). The Chancery Cause shows at least 138 parcels of land plus Block "A" which the judge ordered to be escheated, that is taken from the original owner (due to death or some other cause) and returned to the local government (Hopewell Circuit Court 1975-B). A large majority of the land in the Arlington Heights, Virginia Heights, Washington Heights, and Washington Heights Annex areas were resold. This included Lots 1 through 18, inclusive, Block 7, Virginia Heights Subdivision. On September 5, 1975, this land was sold to E.S. Bonfanti for $4,000 (Hopewell Circuit Court 1975-C). One week later, Bonfanti sold the land to Samuel E. Campbell & John Inzaina, who were partners (E. S. Bonfanti to Samuel E. Campbell and John Inzaina 1975). The following day, September 13, Samuel E. Campbell and John Inzaina sold the land to Tommy C. Inzaina. Today, the City of Hopewell GIS property search site shows "Campbell SE or Tommy C. Inzaina" as the owners of the parcels where the burial ground is located.

Table 1: Reproduction of a table posted in the Hopewell Circuit Court Clerk's Office showing dual ownership and overlapping subdivision names

Dual Ownership Lots					
Virginia Hgts. / Washington Hgts. Annex					
Lot Numbers	**Block**	**Owner-VA Hgts.**	**Parcel No.**	**Owner-Wash. Hgts. Annex**	**Parcel No.**
7, 8, 15, 16	5	Stokes, Donald & Douglas	73-150	Shaver, Richard Builder	76-5
27, 28	5	Benito, Russ	73-160	Shaver, Richard Builder	76-5
5, 6	6	Benito, Russ	73-165	Shaver, Richard Builder (lots 5 & 8-12)	76-10
7, 8, 12	6	Benito, Russ	73-170	Shaver, Richard Builder	76-10
9, 10	6	Commonwealth of Virginia	73-175	Shaver, Richard Builder	76-10
9, 10, 11, 12	13	Jones, William	73-445	Jackson, Rudolph & Moses	76-25
19, 20	13	Jones, Leander	73-455	Jackson, Rudolph & Moses	76-25
6	14	Archie, Harry Lee	73-490	Hammad, Issa	76-35
11	14	Webb Homes, Inc	77-494	Hammad, Issa	76-45
16	14	Elder, George	73-495	Hammad, Issa	76-35
1, 2, 3	23	Shaver, Richard Builder	73-725	Dereski, Margaret F	76-35
Virginia Heights has the strongest legal claim.					

(The final statement, "Virginia Heights has the strongest legal claim," appears in the original table posted in the Hopewell Circuit Court Clerk's Office and is reproduced here as a part of that source, not as the author's legal interpretation.)

What's in a Name?

Historically, the neighborhood containing the burial ground went through several name changes. Survey maps in the 1900s show various portions of the neighborhood were subdivided as Virginia Heights (Bryant 1915), Arlington Heights (*Map of Arlington Heights* 1921), Washington Heights (Bryant 1915), and Washington Heights Annex (Tucker & Holmes and Taylor 1916). The area was part of Prince George County and was called Virginia Heights up until 1952 when various portions of the neighborhood were annexed to Hopewell. It is not clear how the areas converged over time to become one large neighborhood or how those changes impacted its name. Today, the Black community who lived there from the 1920s-1960s commonly refer to it as The Heights or The Hikes (due to a mispronunciation). Hopewell residents call the place Arlington Heights, encompassing all the previously mentioned plats of land. One of the thru roads in Arlington Heights is called Berry Street.

Physical Location

The burial ground is located roughly 365 feet southeast from Berry Street and more than 300 feet southeast of the nearest house, deep in a wooded area. It abuts a berm that was created when the City built a dump near the African American neighborhood of Delrose (historically called Rose Dale). The land is zoned R3 residential, is about .4 acres in size, and is located on private property currently owned by the Campbell or Inzaina family. Other than a single, uncarved headstone, there are no other aboveground indications of burials outside of two- to three-inch deep, evenly-spaced depressions caused by ground subsidence. Due to the lack of aboveground visual elements, the natural overgrowth, and the distance away from the road and the nearest homes, this location is not easily accessible or obvious to anyone exploring the forest. Thick,

thorny briars and fallen trees obscure burials and present a natural barrier against accidental discovery.

Burial Ground History

Prior to 1920, Hopewell had a Black undertaker named Thomas Brown. He lived in Petersburg and ran an undertaking business there and in several other cities. He set up a business in Hopewell in 1916, but it is not clear when he left the Hopewell area (Kneebone 2020). Records show that Brown was the owner of the People's Memorial Cemetery in Petersburg and focused his undertaking business on that site. This left Hopewell residents who could not afford that option, or who were unaffiliated with a church that owned a graveyard, little recourse for burial elsewhere (Kneebone 2020). At this time, cemeteries in Virginia were segregated, and the nearest *public* cemetery for Black people was the People's Memorial Cemetery in Petersburg. Barring access to an official local cemetery, people often buried their family members in their yards, in small graveyards, or in potter's fields (Rainville 2014).

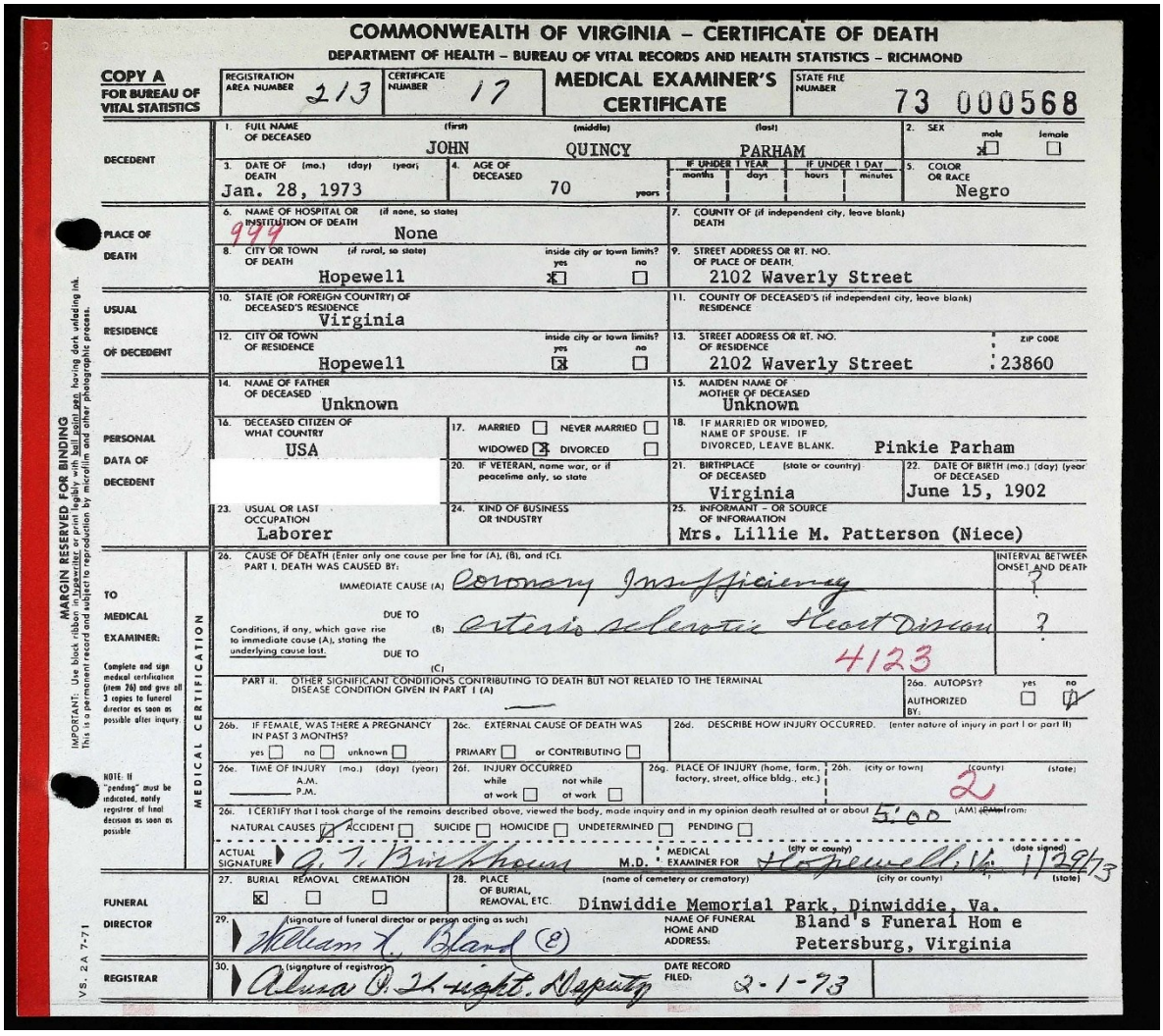
In the early 1920s, a local man named "Deacon" John Parham used the land surrounding Berry Street to bury people who could not afford burial in the People's Memorial Cemetery (Participant I01, city official, personal communication, March 6, 2025; Participant L03A local descendant, September 8, 2025). Currently, there is little information about John Parham. Community memories conflict regarding his marital status, business and home ownership, and status as an undertaker. What is sure is that Deacon Parham was a member of Friendship Baptist Church. The church history for Friendship Baptist mentions that the church was originally called Union Gospel Baptist but moved to a new location and changed its name during the 1930s. John Q. Parham was mentioned as one of the first ordained deacons for the church under its new name

(*Church History* N.D.). Arlington Heights community members who lived in the area from 1920-1960 agree that Parham lived in the last house on Waverly Street (at 2102 or 2103 Waverly St.) before the block was extended (Participant L03A, local descendant, September 8, 2025; Participant L04A, city council member, July 25, 2025). His name appears often in obituaries, along with other ministers and deacons from Friendship Baptist and other surrounding churches. While it is still unclear if John Q. Parham is the correct John Parham, it seems likely that this is the man who conducted burials at the Berry Street Burial Ground. Census records, a death certificate, and other documents also indicate that John Q. Parham lived at 2102 Waverly Street (See Image 1) (Parham, John Q. (Pinkie P.) 1959; United States. Bureau of the Census 1930; Virginia. Department of Health. Bureau of Vital Statistics and Health Statistics 1973). Parham was a widower for thirteen years after his wife's death. This may be why most individuals remember him as never having family. The process to match historical records to community remembrances is challenging, especially with unofficial burial sites such as the Berry Street Burial Ground.

Structural conditions such as segregated cemeteries, the absence of an African American public cemetery in Hopewell, and the cost and distance of burial in Petersburg functioned to exclude African Americans from the burial landscape in the Jim Crow South during the early twentieth century. Lack of access to affordable, local cemeteries and funerary services resulted in the creation of potter's fields or pauper burial grounds that were often secluded, minimally maintained, and vulnerable to disappearance from the visual and historical landscape. Archival records for the burial ground are limited. Historic maps and aerial maps do not show a burial ground existing in or near Arlington Heights, and Sanborn maps for the neighborhood do not

exist. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) provided a map with a potential burial ground indicated, but it was outside of the search parameters (see Map 1). Land deeds did not list any names identified by community members as being associated with ownership of the burial ground. Some historic maps in the Circuit Court records showed name changes to the neighborhood over time, as previously mentioned. Death certificates and newspaper obituaries exist but often do not list the burial ground by a single name, or they use variants of the neighborhood names listed above.

Image 1: John Q. Parham Death Certificate (courtesy of Ancestry.com)



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA – CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS AND HEALTH STATISTICS – RICHMOND

COPY A FOR BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

REGISTRATION AREA NUMBER: 213 | CERTIFICATE NUMBER: 17 | MEDICAL EXAMINER'S CERTIFICATE | STATE FILE NUMBER: 73 000568

DECEDENT

1. FULL NAME OF DECEASED: JOHN QUINCY PARHAM
2. SEX: male [X] female [ ]
3. DATE OF DEATH (mo.) (day) (year): Jan. 28, 1973
4. AGE OF DECEASED: 70 years
IF UNDER 1 YEAR: months / days — IF UNDER 1 DAY: hours / minutes
5. COLOR OR RACE: Negro

PLACE OF DEATH

6. NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION OF DEATH (if none, so state): 999 None
7. COUNTY OF (if independent city, leave blank) DEATH
8. CITY OR TOWN OF DEATH (if rural, so state): Hopewell — inside city or town limits? yes [X] no [ ]
9. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF PLACE OF DEATH: 2102 Waverly Street

USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEDENT

10. STATE (OR FOREIGN COUNTRY) OF DECEASED'S RESIDENCE: Virginia
11. COUNTY OF DECEASED'S (if independent city, leave blank) RESIDENCE
12. CITY OR TOWN OF RESIDENCE: Hopewell — inside city or town limits? yes [X] no [ ]
13. STREET ADDRESS OR RT. NO. OF RESIDENCE: 2102 Waverly Street — ZIP CODE: 23860

PERSONAL DATA OF DECEDENT

14. NAME OF FATHER OF DECEASED: Unknown
15. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER OF DECEASED: Unknown
16. DECEASED CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY: USA
17. MARRIED [ ] NEVER MARRIED [ ] WIDOWED [X] DIVORCED [ ]
18. IF MARRIED OR WIDOWED, NAME OF SPOUSE. IF DIVORCED, LEAVE BLANK.: Pinkie Parham
20. IF VETERAN, name war, or if peacetime only, so state
21. BIRTHPLACE (state or country) OF DECEASED: Virginia
22. DATE OF BIRTH (mo.) (day) (year) OF DECEASED: June 15, 1902
23. USUAL OR LAST OCCUPATION: Laborer
24. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY
25. INFORMANT – OR SOURCE OF INFORMATION: Mrs. Lillie M. Patterson (Niece)

TO MEDICAL EXAMINER:

Complete and sign medical certification (item 26) and give all 3 copies to funeral director as soon as possible after inquiry.

NOTE: If "pending" must be indicated, notify registrar of final decision as soon as possible

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

26. CAUSE OF DEATH (Enter only one cause per line for (A), (B), and (C).)
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (A): Coronary Insufficiency — INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH: ?
DUE TO
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to immediate cause (A), stating the underlying cause last.
(B): arteriosclerotic Heart Disease — ?
DUE TO
(C): 4123
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I (A)
26a. AUTOPSY? yes [ ] no [X] AUTHORIZED BY:
26b. IF FEMALE, WAS THERE A PREGNANCY IN PAST 3 MONTHS? yes [ ] no [ ] unknown [ ]
26c. EXTERNAL CAUSE OF DEATH WAS PRIMARY [ ] or CONTRIBUTING [ ]
26d. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED. (enter nature of injury in part I or part II)
26e. TIME OF INJURY (mo.) (day) (year) A.M. / P.M.
26f. INJURY OCCURRED while at work [ ] not while at work [ ]
26g. PLACE OF INJURY (home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.)
26h. (city or town) (county) 2 (state)
26i. I CERTIFY that I took charge of the remains described above, viewed the body, made inquiry and in my opinion death resulted at or about 5:00 (AM) ~~(PM)~~ from:
NATURAL CAUSES [X] ACCIDENT [ ] SUICIDE [ ] HOMICIDE [ ] UNDETERMINED [ ] PENDING [ ]
ACTUAL SIGNATURE: G. T. Brinkhaus M.D. MEDICAL EXAMINER FOR Hopewell, Va. (city or county) (date signed) 1/29/73 (state)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

27. BURIAL [X] REMOVAL [ ] CREMATION [ ]
28. PLACE OF BURIAL, REMOVAL, ETC. (name of cemetery or crematory): Dinwiddie Memorial Park, Dinwiddie, Va. (city or county) (state)
29. (signature of funeral director or person acting as such): William L. Bland (8)
NAME OF FUNERAL HOME AND ADDRESS: Bland's Funeral Hom e Petersburg, Virginia

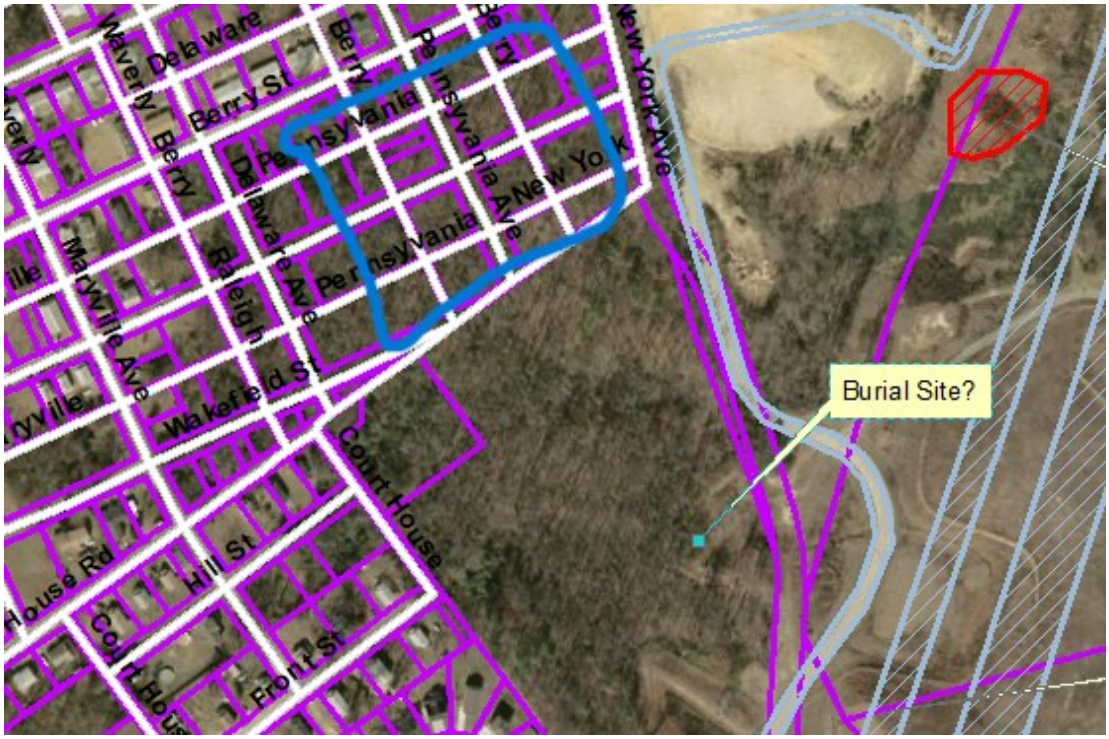
REGISTRAR

30. (signature of registrar): Alma D. Wright, Deputy
DATE RECORD FILED: 2-1-73

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING
IMPORTANT: Use black ribbon in typewriter or print legibly with ball point pen, having dark unfading ink. This is a permanent record and subject to reproduction by microfilm and other photographic process.

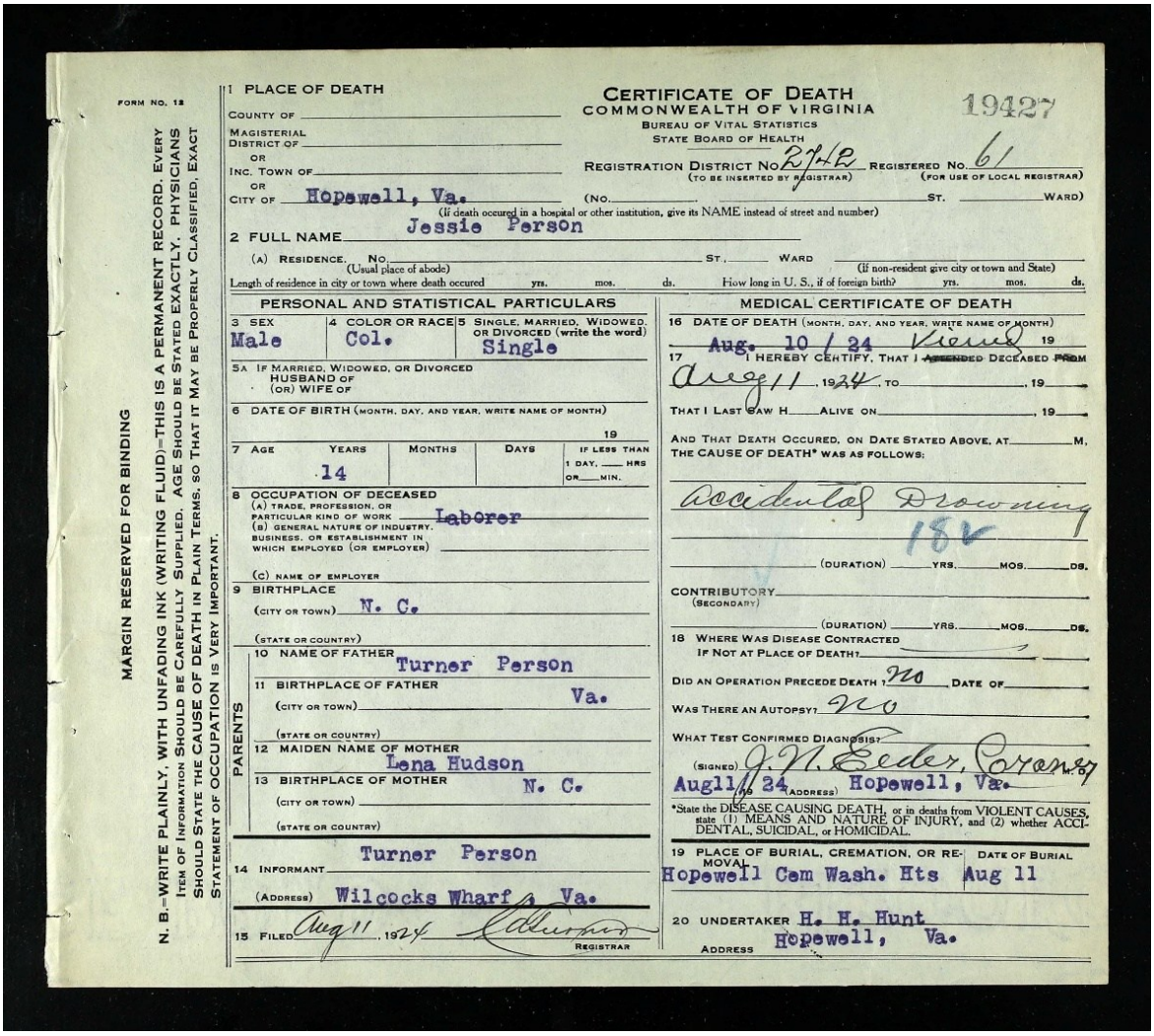
VS. 2A 7-71

Map 1: Section of a map showing the Berry Street Burial Ground Project search areas in blue (where the burial ground location was eventually verified), and a potential burial site indicated by DHR with the tag "Burial Site?" (courtesy of VA DHR)



The earliest record of the burial ground dates to 1924 by way of a death certificate for Jessie Person (See Image 2). Jessie was born about 1911 in North Carolina. His mother was Lena Hudson, and his father was Turner Person (Virginia. Bureau of Vital Statistics, State Board of Health 1924). In 1920, the Census shows a 9-year-old Jessie with his family, living in Rocky Mount, Edgecombe, North Carolina (United States. Bureau of the Census 1920). Between 1920 and 1924, the family moved to Prince George County. By the age of 14, Jessie was working as a laborer. The death certificate states that on August 11, 1924, he died by accidental drowning at 14 years old. His father, Turner Person was the informant for the death certificate, and his address was Wilcocks Wharf, Virginia. Jessie was buried in the Washington Heights Cemetery in Hopewell, Virginia on the same day as his death.

Image 2: Death Certificate of Jessie Person (courtesy of Ancestry.com)



FORM NO. 12

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

N. B.—WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK (WRITING FLUID)—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD. EVERY ITEM OF INFORMATION SHOULD BE CAREFULLY SUPPLIED. AGE SHOULD BE STATED EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS SHOULD STATE THE CAUSE OF DEATH IN PLAIN TERMS, SO THAT IT MAY BE PROPERLY CLASSIFIED. EXACT STATEMENT OF OCCUPATION IS VERY IMPORTANT.

1 PLACE OF DEATH
County of
Magisterial District of
or
Inc. Town of
or
City of Hopewell, Va.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

19427

Registration District No. 2712 (To be inserted by Registrar) Registered No. 61 (For use of local registrar)

(No. ____ St. ____ Ward)
(If death occured in a hospital or other institution, give its NAME instead of street and number)

2 FULL NAME Jessie Person

(A) Residence. No. ____ St. ____ Ward ____
(Usual place of abode) (If non-resident give city or town and State)

Length of residence in city or town where death occured ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds. How long in U. S., if of foreign birth? ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

3 SEX: Male
4 COLOR OR RACE: Col.
5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (write the word): Single

5A IF MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED
HUSBAND OF
(OR) WIFE OF

6 DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY, AND YEAR, WRITE NAME OF MONTH)

7 AGE: Years 14 | Months | Days | If less than 1 day, ____ hrs or ____ min.

8 OCCUPATION OF DECEASED
(A) TRADE, PROFESSION, OR PARTICULAR KIND OF WORK: Laborer
(B) GENERAL NATURE OF INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, OR ESTABLISHMENT IN WHICH EMPLOYED (OR EMPLOYER)
(C) NAME OF EMPLOYER

9 BIRTHPLACE
(City or town) N. C.
(State or country)

PARENTS

10 NAME OF FATHER: Turner Person
11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER: Va.
(City or town)
(State or country)
12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER: Lena Hudson
13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER: N. C.
(City or town)
(State or country)

14 INFORMANT: Turner Person
(Address) Wilcocks Wharf, Va.

15 FILED Aug 11, 1924 ____ Registrar

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

16 DATE OF DEATH (MONTH, DAY, AND YEAR, WRITE NAME OF MONTH): Aug. 10 / 24 Viewed 19

17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I ~~attended~~ Deceased from
Aug 11, 1924, to ____, 19____
That I last saw H____ alive on ____, 19____
And that death occured, on date stated above, at ____ M.
The cause of death* was as follows:

Accidental Drowning
18 Y

(Duration) ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds.

CONTRIBUTORY
(Secondary)
(Duration) ____ yrs. ____ mos. ____ ds.

18 WHERE WAS DISEASE CONTRACTED IF NOT AT PLACE OF DEATH?

DID AN OPERATION PRECEDE DEATH? No Date of

WAS THERE AN AUTOPSY? No

WHAT TEST CONFIRMED DIAGNOSIS?

(Signed) J. N. Eeder, Coroner M.D.
Aug 11 / 24 (Address) Hopewell, Va.

*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS AND NATURE OF INJURY, and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL, or HOMICIDAL.

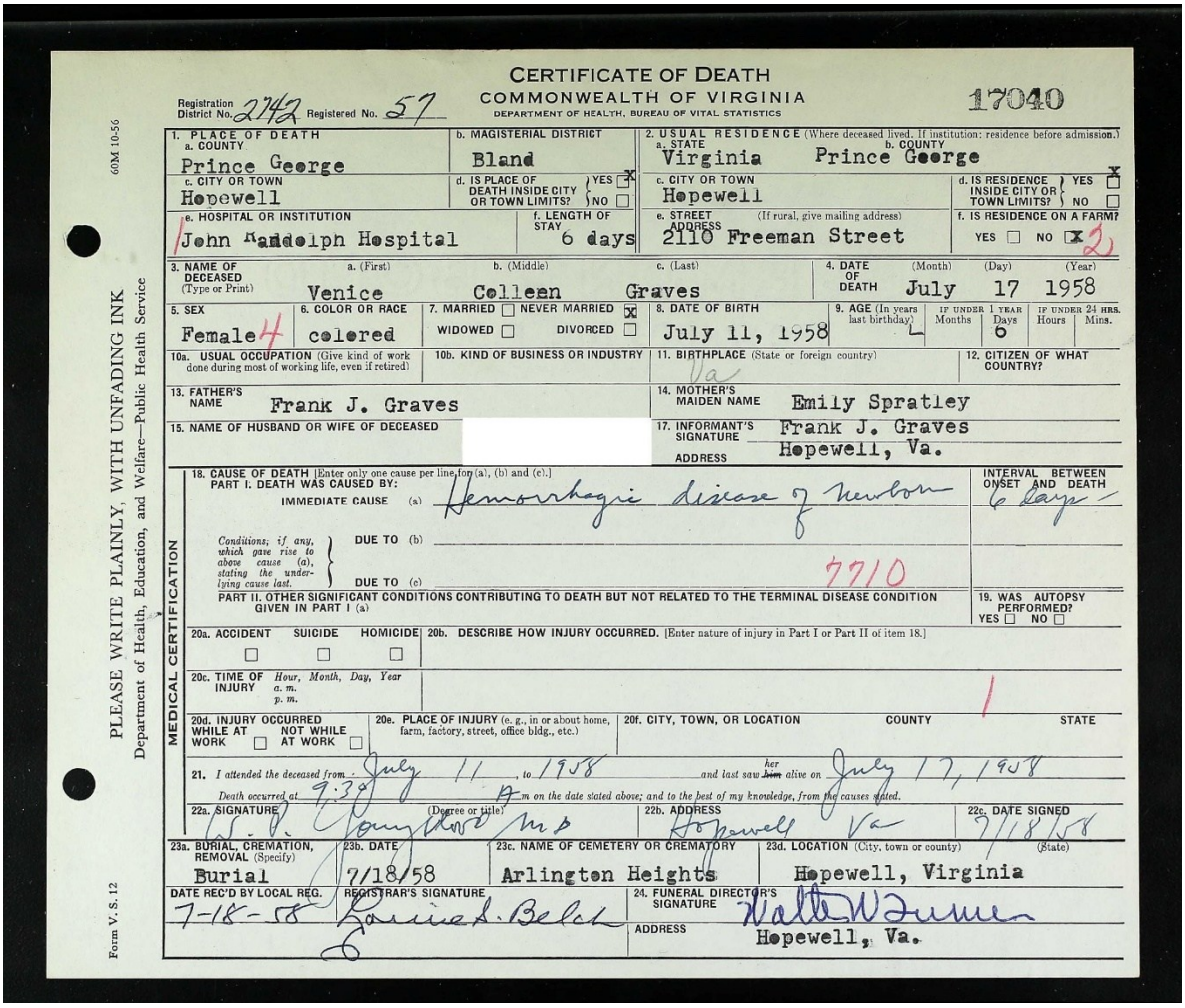
19 PLACE OF BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL: Hopewell Cem Wash. Hts — Date of Burial: Aug 11

20 UNDERTAKER H. H. Hunt
Address Hopewell, Va.

The last-known burial record was for Venice Colleen Graves (See Image 3). She was born on July 11, 1958, to Frank J. Graves and Emily Spratley, and died on July 17, 1958 (Virginia. Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics 1958). Venice spent all 6 days of her young life in John Randolph Hospital, bleeding to death from hemorrhagic disease of the newborn, also known as Vitamin K deficiency. With a simple injection of Vitamin K, Venice might have lived (Boston Children's Hospital 2005). This sad history of a child lost too young is all too common

for the Berry Street Burial Ground. More than half of the burials identified so far are children under the age of 18, and twenty-four of the deaths are babies under the age of one.

Image 3: Death Certificate for Venice Colleen Graves (courtesy of Ancestry.com)



CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Registration District No. 2742 Registered No. 57 — 17040

PLEASE WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—Public Health Service
60M 10-56
Form V. S. 12

1. PLACE OF DEATH
a. COUNTY: Prince George
b. MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Bland
c. CITY OR TOWN: Hopewell
d. IS PLACE OF DEATH INSIDE CITY OR TOWN LIMITS? YES [X] NO [ ]
e. HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION: John Randolph Hospital
f. LENGTH OF STAY: 6 days

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission.)
a. STATE: Virginia
b. COUNTY: Prince George
c. CITY OR TOWN: Hopewell
d. IS RESIDENCE INSIDE CITY OR TOWN LIMITS? YES [X] NO [ ]
e. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give mailing address): 2110 Freeman Street
f. IS RESIDENCE ON A FARM? YES [ ] NO [X]

3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print): a. (First) Venice b. (Middle) Colleen c. (Last) Graves
4. DATE OF DEATH: (Month) July (Day) 17 (Year) 1958
5. SEX: Female
6. COLOR OR RACE: colored
7. MARRIED [ ] NEVER MARRIED [X] WIDOWED [ ] DIVORCED [ ]
8. DATE OF BIRTH: July 11, 1958
9. AGE (In years last birthday): 0 — IF UNDER 1 YEAR: Months | Days: 6 | IF UNDER 24 HRS.: Hours | Mins.
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired)
10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY
11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country): Va
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY?
13. FATHER'S NAME: Frank J. Graves
14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: Emily Spratley
15. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE OF DECEASED
17. INFORMANT'S SIGNATURE: Frank J. Graves
ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

18. CAUSE OF DEATH [Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b) and (c).]
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a): Hemorrhagic disease of newborn — INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH: 6 days
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a), stating the underlying cause last.
DUE TO (b):
DUE TO (c): 7710
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I (a)
19. WAS AUTOPSY PERFORMED? YES [ ] NO [ ]

20a. ACCIDENT [ ] SUICIDE [ ] HOMICIDE [ ]
20b. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY occurred. [Enter nature of injury in Part I or Part II of item 18.]
20c. TIME OF INJURY Hour, Month, Day, Year a. m. p. m.
20d. INJURY OCCURRED WHILE AT WORK [ ] NOT WHILE AT WORK [ ]
20e. PLACE OF INJURY (e. g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.)
20f. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION COUNTY STATE

21. I attended the deceased from July 11, to 1958 and last saw her alive on July 17, 1958
Death occurred at 9:30 P m on the date stated above; and to the best of my knowledge, from the causes stated.
22a. SIGNATURE: [illegible] (Degree or title) M D
22b. ADDRESS: Hopewell Va
22c. DATE SIGNED: 7/18/58

23a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify): Burial
23b. DATE: 7/18/58
23c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: Arlington Heights
23d. LOCATION (City, town or county) (State): Hopewell, Virginia

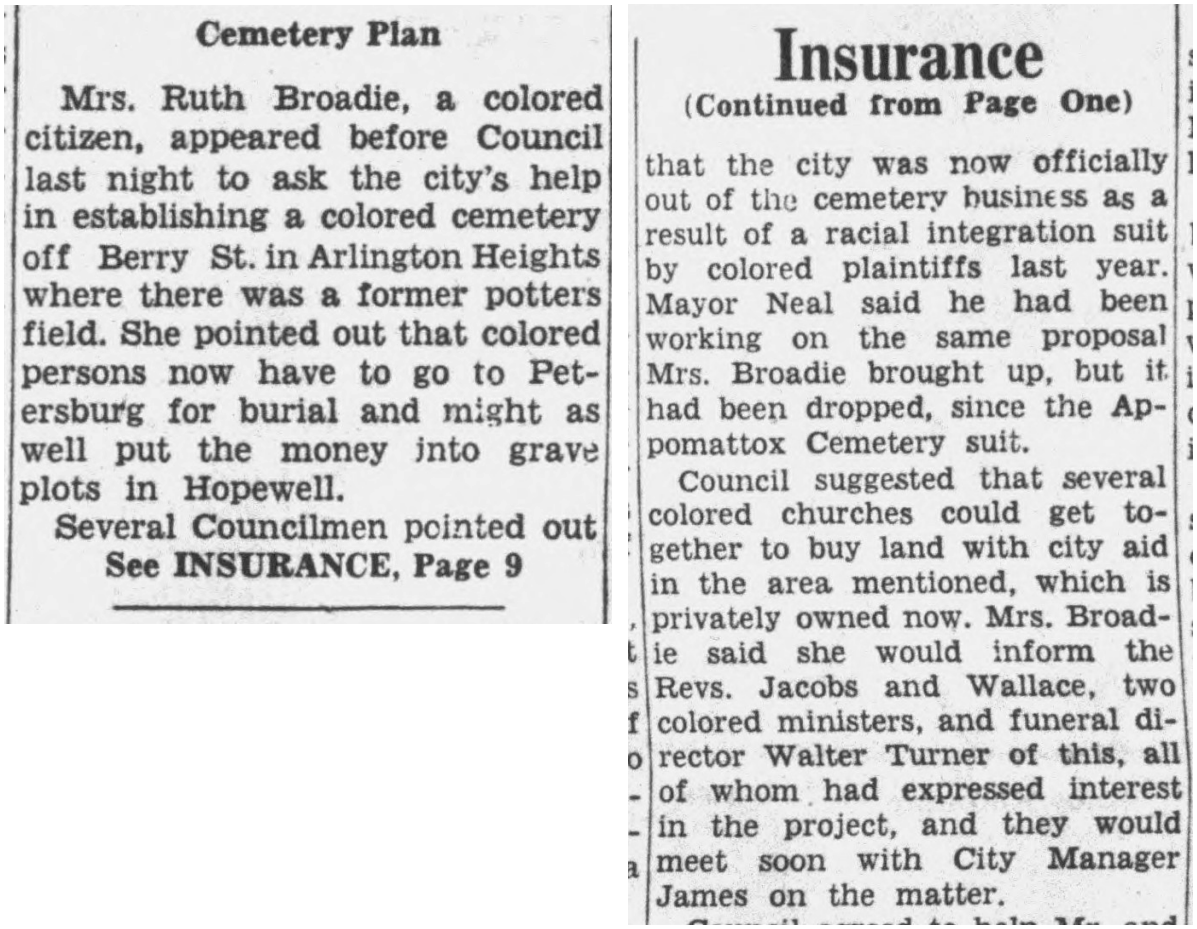
DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG.: 7-18-58
REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: Garnett Belch
24. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: Walter W Turner
ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

The last-known public mention of the burial ground exists in the Hopewell City Council meeting minutes from 1961. Ms. Broadie, a member of the African-American community, asked the City for help to turn the potter's field into an official cemetery (*Cemetery Plan* 1961). City Council denied outright help, suggesting that Ms. Broadie work with local Black churches to raise funds

(See Image 4). During the course of this research, there were no other records found (City Council records, newspapers, and deeds) which showed any progress towards Ms. Broadie's request.

After 1961, the burial ground seems to disappear from records and slowly fades from community memory. This cry for help from Ms. Broadie came at a pivotal time when the burial ground most desperately needed support, and the city, rather than offer this burial ground the same support that the City Cemetery had been receiving up until the 1960s, placed the burden on an already struggling community to provide the financial care needed for the site. This decision was the culmination of years of structural processes that served the purpose of erasing African-American history from both the visual and historical landscape of Hopewell. For example, for decades, African-American people were excluded from holding roles in City Council, the lawmaking body for Hopewell. European American people in the community could depend on the local government to provide full financial support for the segregated City Cemetery (Appomattox), as evidenced by the numerous newspaper articles about expenses and improvements (See Image 5). African-Americans did not have this same access to political power, monetary resources, or even public press coverage of the potter's field at Berry Street.

Image 4: Hopewell News article review of the City Council request by Ruth Broadie (courtesy of Hopewell News)



Cemetery Plan

Mrs. Ruth Broadie, a colored citizen, appeared before Council last night to ask the city's help in establishing a colored cemetery off Berry St. in Arlington Heights where there was a former potters field. She pointed out that colored persons now have to go to Petersburg for burial and might as well put the money into grave plots in Hopewell.

Several Councilmen pointed out

See INSURANCE, Page 9

Insurance

(Continued from Page One)

that the city was now officially out of the cemetery business as a result of a racial integration suit by colored plaintiffs last year. Mayor Neal said he had been working on the same proposal Mrs. Broadie brought up, but it had been dropped, since the Appomattox Cemetery suit.

Council suggested that several colored churches could get together to buy land with city aid in the area mentioned, which is privately owned now. Mrs. Broadie said she would inform the Revs. Jacobs and Wallace, two colored ministers, and funeral director Walter Turner of this, all of whom had expressed interest in the project, and they would meet soon with City Manager James on the matter.

Image 5: 1955 Hopewell News article regarding the expansion of the City Cemetery (courtesy of The Hopewell News)

City Cemetery Expansion Plan Is Discussed Here

Plans to expand the Appomattox Cemetery to 6,000 plots and raise the prices of graves and other cemetery facilities were discussed by the City Council last night following its regular session.

The City Council heard from City Engineer W. M. Altman on the proposed 2,100 grave expansion program for the city owned and operated cemetery on 21st Avenue. Mr. Altman told the council the plan calls for improvement of the area to the north of the present grounds.

The area for expansion is approximately three and a half acres in size and is bordered by 21st Avenue and Riverside Avenue. The proposed plan calls for repairs to the caretaker's house and also the improvement of the storage shed to take care of the cemetery equipment.

The expansion program will see an additional 14 rows of graves added to the present cem-

See CITY PLAN Page 12

City Plans

Continued From Page 1

etery facilities of some 4,000 graves.

Mr. Altman said today the present cemetery is approximately 40 percent occupied. "We still have quite a bit of room in the old cemetery but plans will be pushed to complete the expansion program," he pointed out.

Contractor

The contract for rough grading the three and a half acres will be let out to an area contractor, the city engineer stated. The city will undertake the project of landscaping the grounds.

The council took under advisement the proposed price raise in the grave plots during its post-meeting session in the office of the city manager.

The proposed figures are as follows (1) all graves, for adults $20 plus $30 for perpetual care, making a total of $50 per grave in the new section (Section B) $12 plus $30, total $42 for all graves in the infant section. (2) proposed new prices for opening in all sections of cemetery $35 for adults and $15 for infants. Also included are $35 for disinterment and $35 for reinterment for adults and $15 for disinternment and $15 for reinternment for infants.

The council studied the city's present figures and compared them to other cities. It will be the first of the year before such a price increase would go into effect according to city officials.

When thinking about African-American potter's fields in general, several questions arise: (1) What conditions led to the creation of this site? (2) What knowledge exists regarding the people interred in the burial ground? (3) Who maintains/maintained the burials? (4) Why did people forget about the site? Without addressing these questions, the burial ground is at risk of being forgotten. This is a form of erasure. As is the case with Berry Street, historic records are also impacted by these unfair systems, which has led to partial erasure of African American history in Hopewell. When archival records are difficult to find and access, or worse, do not exist, the usual methods for research and documentation are no longer sufficient. This is when a people-centered approach such as community archaeology becomes especially useful for understanding the site's history, significance, and heritage connections.

Theoretical Framework: Community Archaeology, Reflexivity, and Values-Based Preservation

Prior to conducting archival research, the main source of information for the burial ground was people. The primary informants included a small subsection of the African American community: those who resided in Arlington Heights from the 1920s-1960s. It was vital to engage this group to understand the significance of the burial ground. This is why I focused on values-based heritage management as a guiding framework for this research. Values-based management refers to a process for researching cultural resources that extends beyond traditional cultural resource management (CRM) methods which prioritize scientific data or CRM regulations. It recognizes that a site may have connections to scientific, historical, cultural, educational, and spiritual values, to name a few, and may hold significance to a variety of stakeholders. Adhering to values-based management requires centering descendant voices while engaging all stakeholders, considering the full landscape context, and taking part in decision-making processes which encompass the full breadth of values assigned to a cultural resource by all stakeholders (McManamon 2016).

Traditionally, CRM focuses on three major outcomes: avoidance, in situ preservation, or mitigation through data recovery (36 CFR Part 800). This process stops short of a more complete preservation which displays the full breadth of values, significance, and societal benefits which a site may offer to the public (King 2002; Little 2014; McManamon 2016). Additionally, traditional CRM happens on timelines which prioritize budgets over consultation and community collaboration (King 2013; Little 2014; McManamon 2016). When determining the significance of an unmarked (having no headstones or markers), undocumented (have little to no legal or

archival documentation) potter's field such as the one near Berry Street, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) considers the site's archaeological significance under Criterion D (U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service 1990). This process of evaluating for eligibility to the NRHP under Criterion D primarily focuses on the historical and scientific data that might be recovered from the site if it were systematically excavated (U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service 1990). If archaeologists and federal agencies allow arbitrary timelines and a primary focus on historical or scientific data to overwhelm their research efforts, they risk overlooking important values that stakeholders and descendant communities might reveal to them, ultimately presenting only a partially preserved and minimally interpreted cultural resource, thus shortchanging the general public. For Berry Street, the contexts of the neighborhood, and racial systems which impacted African American birth and burial practices all contribute to the full significance of the burial ground as a meaningful cultural resource for Hopewell. Also, descendant stories potentially identifying interred ancestors as African royalty provide another layer of cultural context connected to the International Slave Trade (Participant L07, local descendant, October 27, 2025). Taken out of those contexts, the burial ground loses much significance as an archaeological resource. The loss of these contexts, when looking at a wooded landscape devoid of headstones, fundamentally leads to an undervalued site that eventually disappears from community memory and from the physical landscape (Rainville 2014). To prevent the erasure of yet another African American burial ground, it was vital to approach this project with a values-based framework.

Meaningful discourse surrounding site values and historical context requires civic engagement: a democratic approach to values-based heritage management that prioritizes shared power and

collaborative decision-making (Little and Shackel 2007). For the archaeologist, this means that the project is no longer an item on a checklist of priorities for a company or a university. Instead, the project becomes a way of life—just as my project did for me. It was necessary for me to get involved in all aspects of community life to gain trust and provide reciprocal support. Civic engagement requires long-term effort, sustained relationships with communities, sharing of power, and collaborating to create interpretive and educational programming (Little and Shackel 2007; Little 2014). Through this process, the archaeologist builds trust and social capital.

In this more collaborative approach, the archaeologist and the community change together during archaeological research. A successful collaboration can provide alternative avenues for restitution and healing and may bring about social justice for African American communities (Schaepe et al. 2017; Flewellen et al. 2022). This project is a practice in community archaeology, which is a collaborative approach in which archaeologists work with descendants, residents, volunteers, and other local groups connected to a site. For Berry Street, community archaeology provided opportunities to address past injustices by making room for harmed communities to reclaim their history and their historic sites, take part in research and preservation processes, and be recognized as the experts on their own history (Flewellen et al. 2022; Little and Shackel 2007; Schaepe et al. 2017). Community archaeology was the foundation of the research design for the burial ground, where descendants and residents identified search areas, provided historical context, identified interred individuals and descendants, guided ethical decisions, and created future preservation goals. It is through this process of collaboration that archaeology can become relevant and meaningful to minority communities that have historically been excluded from the field, both as research collaborators and professional practitioners.

This is important because, historically, African American communities have been marginalized in the CRM field, ultimately leading to the erasure of their cultural heritage sites (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Flewellen et al. 2022; Rainville 2014). Sites of enslavement often prioritized European American voices over those stories of the enslaved (Battle-Baptiste 2011; McDavid 2002). Cemeteries faced desecration, vandalism, and disappearance (Rainville 2014). Historic sites were rarely acknowledged as significant and often did not qualify for the NRHP (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2020). These are all forms of erasure that invalidate African American cultural resources while uplifting European American resources. These unjust processes lead to distrust within African American communities (Blakey 1998). Additionally, silencing their voices leads to the visible loss of their cultural heritage sites from the landscape as developers destroy historic cultural sites, replacing them with office buildings and high-rise apartments (LaRoche and Blakey 1997). Building trust and collaborating with communities are not optional exercises. These processes are necessary to aid in ethical decision-making and to mitigate potential harm caused by researcher decisions: "archaeologists need to gauge negative impacts their work might have on communities because they have an ethical responsibility to mitigate those impacts" (Little and Shackel 2007, 38).

A values-based approach is important for defining why a historic site is important, and the process to define those values must include stakeholder and descendant voices to provide a more complete and more relevant historical context for the site (King and Adekola 2020). In the case of Berry Street, the lack of archival data made it impossible to fully document the burial ground without community and descendant knowledge. The governmental delay in officially

recognizing this space nearly led to the loss of most knowledge as community elders died over the decades leaving behind only a few people in their 80s and 90s to inform on the values and the historical context for this burial ground. Locating and building trust with that core group took time—time that was severely hampered by educational and institutional constraints.

From the beginning of the Berry Street Project, I knew that I needed a different approach: slow archaeology. The original project timeline was roughly three months long but was eventually extended to a total of five months. Three months was the length of the internship required by the university, while five months was the length of time allowed by Virginia Career Works for a paid internship with the City of Hopewell. Going into the project, I knew that anything under a year would not be enough time for cemetery or community-based research, especially during the summer (the growing season for cemetery flora). Community projects often take several years of hard work and dedication. With such a short timeline, I faced challenges like how to identify and reach the appropriate community, how to collaborate with both local government and city residents, how to overcome the locals' distrust of the government, and how to manage my full-time job while meeting university, government, and community timelines. Time constraints also hindered archival research. Even at the writing of this thesis, I am still identifying potential out-of-state archives and local researchers who may hold more information.

After the first two weeks of the internship, I realized that background research would take longer than expected due to a lack of past archaeological reports and limited archival data. At that point, I prioritized civic engagement and gathering African American cultural knowledge of the site over any onsite investigations of the burial ground to allow more time for archival research and

community outreach. Onsite archaeological survey methods, such as using ground penetrating radar, would have to wait. This realization naturally propelled me into a slow archaeology approach.

According to Flewellen, et al., "Slow archaeology provides a space where sharing archaeological expertise and protecting cultural knowledge is prioritized over the need to collect excavation data as quickly and efficiently as possible" (2022, 15). Throughout the project, I pushed against unrealistic institutional timelines. As this was an archaeology project, the temptation was to prioritize onsite investigations, especially since there is no known documentation of the cemetery and it lacks headstones (except for one). In the past, an archaeologist might have thought that the fastest way to determine cemetery boundaries and number of burials might have included shovel testing, trenching, or probing. These methods are invasive and may potentially disturb burials. The primary archaeological investigations for the Berry Street Burial Ground involved surface-level reconnaissance, GPS to map the visible boundaries, reviewing past LiDAR imagery to guide future research efforts, historic map analysis, archival research, and gathering community knowledge through shared memory. Prior to the start of the project, I planned to use ground penetrating radar (GPR), LiDAR, or electrical resistivity to aid in mapping the cemetery and determining its boundaries, assuming the community agreed to any of these practices. Once I engaged with descendants and stakeholders, I realized that budgets, timelines, community distrust and differing priorities would impact my ability to use these archaeological methods. Instead, the project required an even slower approach—a less technological approach—one that prioritized descendant voices and limited the number of outsiders who learned the location of the

burial ground (Caraher 2016). Ethically, I needed to be protective of the cultural heritage of my community. This included tempering my own personal educational goals as well.

Throughout the Berry Street Project, I struggled with the idea of writing a thesis. It seems unfair for an archaeologist to come into a community, harvest their data, publish an article about it, and then build his or her career while providing little to the community that made it possible (Atalay 2012). This process was complicated by the fact that this is my community. I live here. These are my friends, family members, and mentors. Unlike archaeologists in CRM firms, I cannot disappear once the work is over, if I make a mistake, or if something goes horribly wrong (Flewellen et al. 2022). I struggled—and still do struggle—with how to tell their stories. But then I realized that this research does not only encompass their stories. It also includes my own. And there is much to learn from an insightful first-hand glance into the challenges an African American archaeologist faced while conducting research within their own community and their own hometown (Battle-Baptiste 2011).

A reflexive approach seemed the best way to fully grasp how my existence influenced this research, how unrealistic timelines impacted progress (Flewellen et al. 2022), and what barriers arose during those short five months. Reflexivity in archaeology is defined as "the examination of the effects of archaeological assumptions and actions on the various communities involved in an archaeological process, including other archaeologists and non-archaeological communities" (Hodder 2000, 9). The archaeologist comes to a project with preconceived notions, bias, and educational experiences most likely influenced by colonial mentality, and their own personal history and experiences. All of these factors influence the choices they make, the methods they

use, and their approach to community engagement. It is the archaeologist's lens that often determines how a site is interpreted and who gets a seat at the table when consultation or collaboration begins. A brief look at the Indigenous communities in the United States reveals the issues that arise when local and descendant communities are left out of the archaeological process—these communities lose parts of their history, culture, and sacred sites. The same is true of most minority communities, including African Americans. This is why values-based heritage management and civic engagement is important. These theories recognize that stakeholder and community input is necessary when determining the significance and interpretation of a cultural resource. In the case of the Berry Street Burial Ground Project, reflexivity became an essential tool for evaluating how my own positionality influenced community relationships, research decisions, and timelines.

Reflexive Archaeology and Researcher Positionality

Reflexive archaeology examines the researcher's position to determine how that influences research processes and outcomes. For that reason, this section intentionally shifts to a more personal approach than the previous chapters. My experience across community, academic, municipal, and family roles directly influenced the project, shaping trust, access, ethics, pacing, and interpretation.

Researcher Positionality and Community Connection

During this internship, my community connection and familial background influenced access to information. Even though I present as a Black person, I was not immediately accepted. People were initially hesitant to listen to me at community events and were closed-mouthed during phone conversations even if they asked me to call them. From the outset of the project, I knew that the time period of research for the burial ground encompassed the time of my great grandparents', grandparents', and parents' lives in Hopewell. And from lived experience, I knew that I could not expect to be accepted simply because of the color of my skin. I needed a deeper connection.

The snowball effect for this research began initially because a woman at the farmer's market who recognized me (her family had been close to mine when I was a child) decided to get involved in this project. I credit her with the success of this project over such a short period of time. She voluntarily served as an entry-point into the community because we knew each other. Another time, I remember talking with a man on the phone who was hesitant to share information. He was an older gentleman, in his 90s. Due to his age, I thought he might have

known my grandfather, Francel Miles. When I mentioned Francel, this gentleman immediately began making family connections. Instead of talking about the project, we discussed the ways that we are connected. He talked about how upright my grandfather was and he said that Francel was a good man who helped people. I also learned that my cousin and this gentleman's son had a child who died as an infant. Once we made that connection, he and I talked for over an hour. He shared his snapshots from his life, including his political career and his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Then we talked at length about the burial ground, and he even shared parts of my own family history that I did not know. Only after these conversations did I learn that he was a descendant of the Berry Street Burial Ground.

Through these two early interactions, I learned that I needed to lead with my family history. Every time I called someone, met someone on the street, or led a community meeting, I started with, "Hello. My name is Kelly. My father was Nathan Miles (deceased) and my mother is Nancy Hoyle. My grandfather was Francel Miles (deceased). I'm working on a project to research an African American burial ground, and I wonder if you can help me." That usually led to very open and honest conversations about the burial ground and people who might be connected to that site. Often, things were shared in confidence, and I felt bound to hold that confidence. I will address this later.

Sadly, there were times (at the weekly farmer's market) when this connection was not enough or when people would walk away before I could even get past "Hello." At the Rivers and Roads Festival, an annual event in Hopewell, I asked my mom and a respected community member to join me for the four-hour event, hoping that people would see faces they recognize and be more

willing to listen. At this event, at least two European American people who started to walk away from me were brought back to our information table when my mother, an Irish American, recognized them as old high school classmates and engaged them in conversation. At the end of that interaction, my mother told the people about my project and directed the conversation to me so that I could inquire as to their knowledge of the burial ground. The other gentleman with me was an African American person of about 70-80 years old. He talked with almost every African American Hopewell resident in his age range who came by our table. At some points in the day, multiple people were gathered around him discussing the burial ground, talking about the old days, and making connections to my family. The Results section of this document will show that the Rivers and Roads Festival garnered more respondents than any of the other events and I believe it was partially due to the presence of these two individuals whose faces were known in the community.

Community Knowledge and Networks

After people came to understand my family heritage, they shared information such as who to approach with caution. They told me about people who took advantage of past research opportunities, people who acted as gatekeepers of information, and those with jobs in local government who might misrepresent this project (Participant LG01-B, local group, current and past residents, June 22, 2025). Not only did they provide information on the burial ground, but they also provided insight into social networks and helped me navigate complicated systems. For example, there was one researcher who was highly recommended by the European Americans, but the African American research community said this person was a barrier to accessing information (Participant LG01-B, local group, current and past residents, June 22, 2025). Due to these warnings, I adapted my approach when meeting with this person. Rather than solely relying

on researcher-provided information, I took steps to independently verify that data and continued to cross-reference it against archival sources and community knowledge.

Others in the African American volunteer community (including those involved on boards and committees in the city), warned me that some in government might try to misrepresent my internship, use me to promote their own agendas, or mislead the community in some way. These conversations happened often during farmer's market events. My personal skepticism combined with a knowledge of preservation laws and processes made me less likely to believe these statements. While I always operate with caution because heritage work is political, I also try to keep an open mind. Several questions guided my approach to these warnings: Could ignorance lead to a misunderstanding of the facts? Is there visible proof of wrongdoing or purposeful misconduct? While I did not completely dismiss community guidance, I did begin to understand that some individuals are also operating with limited knowledge, and they have their own biases. Since our local government is not the most transparent, and it has been embroiled in legal issues for the past few years, it makes sense that people were distrustful (Joffe 2023; The Robert Robb Group LLC 2024; Vazquez-Juarbe 2024). Even though I questioned some of the elders' biases, I constantly heard rumors regarding mishandling of money by city officials overseeing my internship. At nearly every farmer's market, someone approached me asking about funding for my position, where the money was coming from, if the city had a grant, and if I would be brought on long-term using grant funds. I could only tell them what I knew, which is that my role was temporary and it was being funded by Virginia Career Works—Not the City. While I was never sure of the situation, I proceeded with caution because my community thought this was a wise course of action.

Ethical Responsibility

Due to the immediate closeness that came through these new invisible bonds, I also felt an obligation to protect this community and their knowledge. I did not initially undertake this project lightly, knowing that community work requires accountability and ethical responsibilities. Working in my own community provided an even greater weight. I cannot leave this place if I "get it wrong." These family and friendship bonds placed an expectation on me, both internally and externally, to live and work with honor and respect, to finish what I started, and to complete ethical work. One of the most difficult ethical responsibilities was balancing strict academic and municipal time constraints to present the most accurate history of the site possible.

Conflicting Timelines

At the start of this project, there was a short timeline for an internship with the City. My school allowed for about two to three months during which time I was supposed to conduct research, engage with the city, and use archaeological methods to identify a potter's field of which no one knew the location, the name, or the names of those interred (or so I thought). As a side project, I was also supposed to help a local history group with publishing the first ever African American history book written about the everyday people in Hopewell over the past two-hundred years or so. The time constraint was the most difficult part of this project. In my community (the Black Christian community), there is a deep respect for elders. I could not rush them, interrupt them, or even tell them if they were wrong. And while I could not correct them, I had to accept corrections. These unspoken social structures impeded research and engagement for a while. I realized that even though I was part of the group, I was still the youngest member of the group (even at 44 years old) and that was often an impediment to engagement. It helped to talk with an

older person privately about our meeting goals and then have that person lead or at least start the conversation and then pass it off to me for project details. I depended on others in the group to redirect when conversation stayed off-topic for too long. Over time, I realized that the group had an unspoken order for conducting business, was led by religious spokespersons, and placed faith at the center of their interactions. At every meeting, we took time to circle up in prayer. Through this process, I learned the importance of listening and observing first, understanding their way of doing things, and then adopting and operating within their processes as much as possible.

Balancing educational timelines with City timelines and local community timelines was exhausting. In addition, I was working full-time and still caring for my family. My time was stretched thin trying to balance deadlines for all these entities while still adhering to limited archival hours. After three months, my internship expired. Through agreement with the internship funder, the City, and my school, the internship was then extended another 2 months. The extension helped, but five months later, at the writing of this thesis, I am still working with the history group to publish their book, working with descendants to figure out next steps for the burial ground, and continuing to conduct research. Community work is not bound by the same time constraints as academia or local governments.

Oral History Concerns

At the beginning of the project, I thought oral histories would be the best way to document community memory of the site. During the first month of the internship, I learned of the past negative experiences the community had with other research projects, so I reconsidered this approach while learning more about the situation. The group of local public historians shared that some members of the African American community participated in oral histories as part of a

project for the College of William and Mary. This was an oral history project that Dr. Hamada conducted with members of the African American community in Hopewell. According to the group, the college was supposed to offer informants the chance to review the transcripts and sign off on them, but that never happened. The group also indicated that they wanted copies of the interviews stored in a local archive, but they still do not have access to that data. I emailed the college to speak with the original researcher and ask about the data from this project. The college gave me an email for the initial leader of this project, but I received no response at that email address. Additionally, in Cultural Resources Assessment of Hopewell Virginia, a William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research report, it states that "The information gathered from interviews [for Dr. Hamada's project] is combined with primary source literature and photographs on a website (www.wm.edu/anthropology/hopewell)" (Monroe et al. 2009). The assessment states that this information is "archived at the Appomattox regional library" (Monroe et al. 2009). That website link does not work, and Dr. Hamada's project information is not searchable in the library's catalog [i.e. not publicly accessible]. I alerted the college to this situation. Unfortunately, a lack of transparency and/or open communication with the participants could have led to a misunderstanding of what information would be gathered, used, and made accessible, ultimately leading to distrust in the local community.

The book, *Making the American Dream Work*, was created through a City Council-sponsored project that required the author to record and publish oral histories of important African Americans in Hopewell. The author intended for copies of the oral history transcripts to be publicly available at the library, but when I requested a copy, the library staff were unaware of any oral history information from this book (Lee 2008). This may point to failing archival

systems, or a misunderstanding with the author. The group expressed concern about oral history projects, potentially unethical research practices, and restricted access to data. Later, after the internship was completed, a conversation with an interpreter at the Prince George County Regional Heritage Museum revealed yet another ethnography project with the African American community in Hopewell, this one organized through Virginia Commonwealth University in the 1970s. The researcher on that project, who was a student at the time, admitted that they did not know what happened to that research after the school completed the project. Taking these past experiences into consideration, it is understandable that the group was cautious regarding oral histories. While I initially planned to conduct oral history interviews with this group, I began to reconsider this decision due to the group's hesitancy.

After learning this information, I reconsidered how to proceed. The initial community informants seemed reluctant to engage in research resembling past projects in Hopewell, and my role with the City did not require it. Therefore, to avoid causing more harm to the group, I chose not to conduct formal oral history interviews and instead prioritized community-guided conversations. I focused on relationship-building and preliminary data-gathering, while leaving the option open for descendant-led or community-guided oral history projects in the future.

During the early months of the internship, I studied the City's approach to community engagement by shadowing my Internship Supervisor. He arranged the initial meetings with the public researchers at the Elks Lodge, and modeled the process for setting up meetings and conducting phone calls. When making phone calls, he explained the project, told the person

about me, and then requested their permission to share their information with, and arranged initial meetings.

For our first public meeting, he called a City Council member. He was polite, used the honorific title of councilor, explained the project, introduced me as the point of contact, and then invited the councilor to his office that same day. During this meeting, I took notes and asked questions, and my Internship Supervisor shared physical evidence I had found through archival research such as a 1950 map of the neighborhood. The councilor shared their remembrances of Berry Street, stories their grandfather told about the burial ground, information about Deacon Parham, and names of people I could follow up with. When they mentioned one name that the Internship Supervisor already had in his phone, he paused the meeting to call that person and set up another conversation. From this meeting, I learned to use titles for public officials, to use evidence as a memory aid, to honor the limits informants placed on sharing information, and to make immediate contact with other potential informants.

For our second public meeting, which was with the informant identified by the councilor, my supervisor allowed the informant to choose the terms. We drove to that person's house, took them to Berry Street and had them identify areas of significance, and then continued the conversation at a restaurant of their choice. This informant gave verbal permission for me to take notes and then shared their information so that I could contact them later. Through this interaction, I learned that the City's approach emphasized explaining the project, introducing the contact person, allowing the informant to set the meeting terms, visiting the site in question, and

gaining verbal approval to participate and share data. I also realized that the City expected repeated contact with informants for further engagement.

Prioritizing and Evaluating Evidence

There were moments when I had to decide what evidence to prioritize. My Internship Supervisor with the City sat in on an informal discussion at Rosa's Italian Ristorante and he was very moved with an informant's description of where the burial ground might be (Participant LG05, local group, locals, city official, Arlington Heights resident, August 15, 2026). Upon cross-referencing this data with a 1950s map, he noticed an area where Berry Street (a dirt road at the time) split around a small grove of trees, and he thought it was near the area that the informant stated could be the burial ground. I did not agree with his analysis, nor did I think the informant had first-hand information regarding the burial ground. Through other discussions, I learned that this person could not have first-hand information regarding the burial ground location and they could not indicate who had identified that location. When asked about the surrounding wooded areas which had been indicated by nearly all of the respondents, the informant stated that they were unsure and that the burial ground could be anywhere (Participant LG05, local group, locals, city official, Arlington Heights resident, August 15, 2026). This experience revealed that I should prioritize information which recurred throughout a majority of the data, and that those with first-hand knowledge or who lived on Berry Street would have more accurate information than those with second-hand knowledge or who lived on the periphery of the neighborhood.

Changing Roles

A few years ago, I began researching my paternal lineage and noticed that my grandfather had several brothers and sisters who died in infancy. No one in the family had ever discussed this

information and I wondered if they even knew about it. Fast forward to this project and I learned from the Arlington Heights community that my great grandmother lived in Arlington Heights. In the back of my mind, I wonder if I am a descendant of this burial ground. While I already had strong ethical guidance for interacting with the site and the African American community, I now hold even greater respect for the place (if such a thing is even possible) because my own family may be here. This leads me to wonder if archaeologists would make the same decisions for a historic site if their own family were directly connected to that space.

During the course of the project, I struggled with strict timelines that pushed me to move at a pace that was faster than what the informants desired. Ultimately, they set a more natural pace for the project—one that moves according to their work schedules, their availability, their desire to take a phone call or meet. Once I began identifying and communicating more regularly with descendants, I found my role switching. The descendants began pushing for action. They wanted to contact the private owners and demand site access. They wanted to begin meeting immediately to address the burial ground needs. I found myself cautioning them against extreme and forceful engagement with landowners and city officials before we tried following the appropriate legal routes for gaining site access and providing care for the burials. Now that the internship is over and I am working with the descendants as a private community member, the descendants are pushing me to move faster.

This section on reflexivity provided insight into the internal challenges I faced as a researcher. These cultural connections, biases, and ethical obligations were ever present throughout this internship, even if not addressed in later sections of this paper. The next section on methods will

investigate more concrete avenues of research which were just as influential as reflexivity in determining the internship's outcome.

Research Methods: Community Engagement, Archival Research, and Non-Invasive Archaeology

Several methods were used during this course of this internship to research, locate, and document the Berry Street Burial Ground. The primary method was community engagement. By centering this method, the project stayed true to a community archaeology approach where data obtained through community engagement informed all the other methods of research including archival research, onsite investigations, and qualitative data analysis. At the start of this internship, there were five objectives. First, identify the exact location(s) of the burial ground. Second, delineate the boundaries of the burial ground. Third, document the site. Fourth, create a list of burials. Fifth, engage the community to locate descendants. Accomplishing these objectives required every method identified in this section. Each of these methods had the potential to reveal relevant information, but how could the resulting data work together to form a picture of the burial ground during the 1920s to 1960s? How are archival records, archaeological field observation, and community knowledge integrated to identify informal burial grounds that are poorly documented? By combining community engagement, archival research, onsite investigations, and qualitative data analysis, I gathered verifiable data regarding the burial ground location, chain of title, names of interred individuals, names of descendant families, and the historical context for the site.

From day one, it was not clear what the City or local community knew about the site location. City officials desired to identify the extent and exact location of the burial ground, which became a constraint that guided the initial community engagement efforts. Research began with conversations with local elders to identify the depth and breadth of their knowledge regarding the

burial ground location, interred ancestors, and living descendants. These conversations provided limited site location or ownership data which resulted in two pathways for data research: map analysis to cross-reference elder knowledge with geographic locations, and deed research to identify and verify chain of title and burial ground location. Elders indicated general dates for both historic map investigations and deed research, which served as initial temporal guidance (Participant LG01-A, local group, mixed locals & past residents, March 18, 2025; Participant LG01-B, local group, mixed locals & past residents, June 17, 2025).

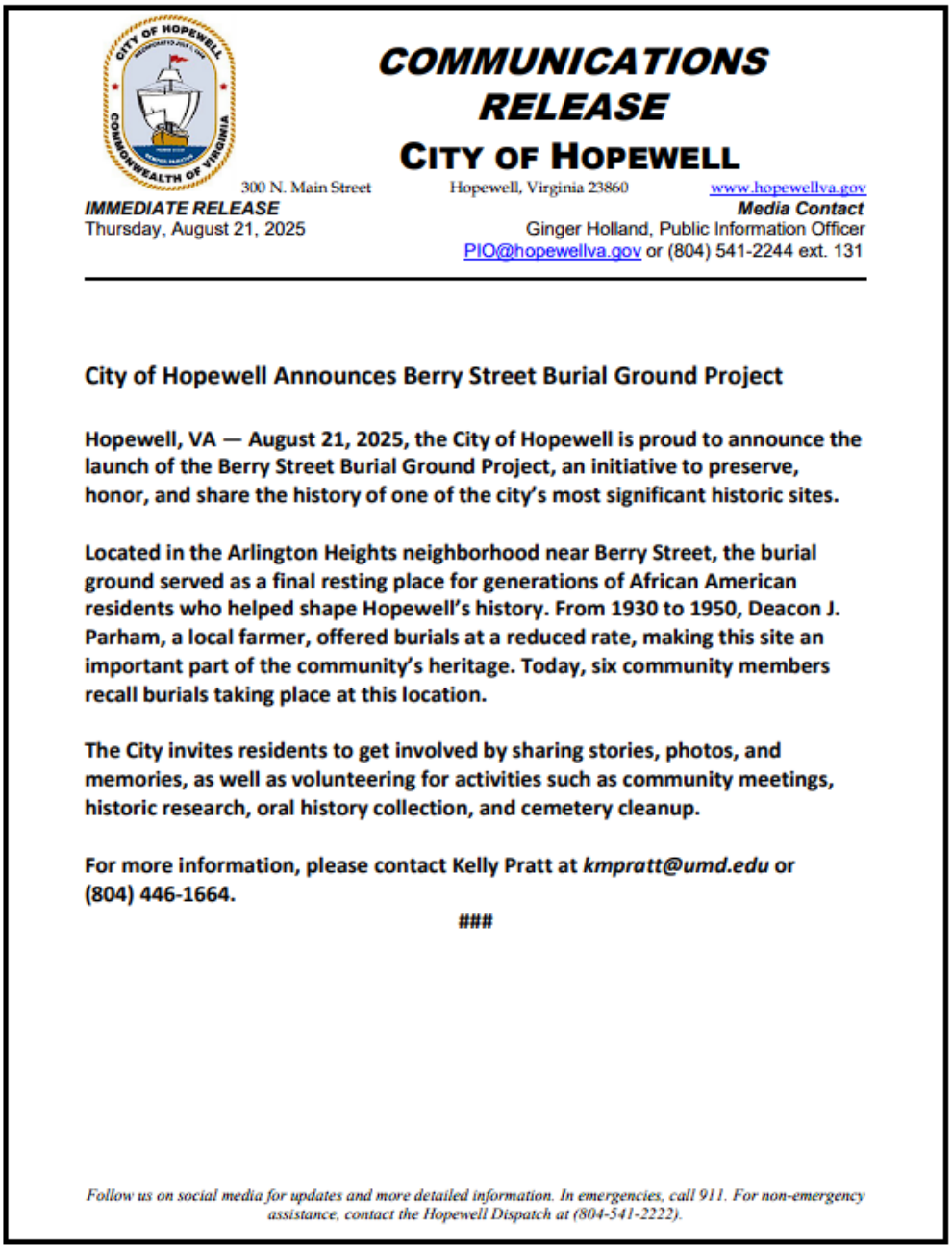
Community Engagement

For this project, community engagement was used to identify information relevant to the site location, burials, descendants, and historic context. The community engagement efforts took place in several major phases—1) initial conversations with a city-identified group of local elders; 2) public notices and social media posts (See Image 6); 3) tabling at local weekly and annual events; 4) one-to-one phone calls; 5) small group meetings; 6) city-wide community meetings. As this internship was sponsored by the City of Hopewell, city staff identified the initial group of locals for engagement, referred to in this paper as Participant LG01, local group, mixed locals & past residents. Through the process of snowball sampling, this original group identified new people to contact. Public notices, social media posts, and tabling events were used to recruit locals in addition to snowball sampling. Community engagement meetings took place at the Elks Lodge, the Appomattox Regional Library-Hopewell Branch, participants' homes, the Woodlawn Baptist Church, Rosa's Italian Ristorante, and in impromptu locations such as street corners in the downtown area or standing in line while shopping. Public events took place at the Appomattox Regional Library-Hopewell Branch, the farmers market in Downtown Hopewell,

and the Rivers and Roads Festival in Downtown Hopewell (See Image 7). Phone calls took place at the Hopewell City Hall and the researcher's home office.

Data from informal conversations, and group discussions or meetings was collected through handwritten notes. Information was assessed for relevance in real time through its association with predetermined subjects such as burial ground location, descendants, interred individuals, historical context, locals with information, and research topics of interest to the community. Phone call data was collected through real-time transcription and/or note taking via a computer word processor program. All information was recorded (using notes) regardless of relevance. After phone calls, data was reviewed for relevance according to the same criteria used for informal meetings.

Image 6: City of Hopewell Official Release (courtesy of the City of Hopewell)



COMMUNICATIONS RELEASE

CITY OF HOPEWELL

300 N. Main Street Hopewell, Virginia 23860 www.hopewellva.gov

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, August 21, 2025

Media Contact
Ginger Holland, Public Information Officer
PIO@hopewellva.gov or (804) 541-2244 ext. 131

City of Hopewell Announces Berry Street Burial Ground Project

Hopewell, VA — August 21, 2025, the City of Hopewell is proud to announce the launch of the Berry Street Burial Ground Project, an initiative to preserve, honor, and share the history of one of the city's most significant historic sites.

Located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood near Berry Street, the burial ground served as a final resting place for generations of African American residents who helped shape Hopewell's history. From 1930 to 1950, Deacon J. Parham, a local farmer, offered burials at a reduced rate, making this site an important part of the community's heritage. Today, six community members recall burials taking place at this location.

The City invites residents to get involved by sharing stories, photos, and memories, as well as volunteering for activities such as community meetings, historic research, oral history collection, and cemetery cleanup.

For more information, please contact Kelly Pratt at *kmpratt@umd.edu* or (804) 446-1664.

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Follow us on social media for updates and more detailed information. In emergencies, call 911. For non-emergency assistance, contact the Hopewell Dispatch at (804-541-2222).

Image 7: Farmer's Market Meeting (courtesy of Carol Carr)

(Faces of community members obscured to protect participant privacy.)

Follow up conversations or meetings were scheduled if people indicated they had more information, if they identified follow-up tasks for themselves, if they provided new information which redirected outreach to someone previously contacted, and if the researcher discovered new information that connected directly to someone previously contacted. An example of new information that might require additional conversations with people would be an analysis of death certificate data which identified potential living descendants. People were excluded from research if they identified as having no information or as not wanting to help. Community-provided data was analyzed to identify information regarding the burial ground location, descendants, historical context, interred individuals, and potential informants. This data was

analyzed to identify parcels for deed research, areas for archaeological investigations, contact information for living descendants, and names or other data for interred individuals. Throughout all aspects of research, community data was constantly cross-referenced with archival data and onsite investigations. Community data was also compared against itself in situations where memories conflicted or were vague. Through this process of cross-referencing, I could further identify relevant data and fill in archival silence.

All community engagement efforts were subject to constraints such as ethical expectations, aging informants, and lack of first-hand knowledge due to death. The African American community had some concerns regarding past researchers who did not follow expected protocols for oral history interviews or make the data publicly accessible to local residents. Because this research was conducted under the auspices of the City and relied on community-guided conversations rather than formal oral history interviews, I focused on verbal consent, secure data storage, limits on sharing, and data anonymization.

Archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to mitigate harm to the communities where they work, and this includes protecting living communities from the negative impacts of research (Atalay 2012; Little and Shackel 2007). Therefore, it was important to have ethical practices in place to protect project participants. I learned about two of the City's practices by shadowing my internship supervisor: verbal consent and limits on sharing. Due to the potential for harm, I added protections such as anonymization of data and secure storage. After the city-guided interactions, I was directed to move forward with the farmer's market outreach and to conduct more community engagement. Most interactions were conversations and small group meetings

with open discussions. Sometimes these meetings were scheduled, though most, like the farmer's market interactions, were unplanned. Whenever someone referred me to another informant, I followed my Internship Supervisor's previous example and asked for permission to contact people or to share information. As an additional step, I requested that the original referrer verify that they had permission to share names and phone numbers with me. Through a verbal agreement, I asked the referrers to contact the new informant prior to my call to ensure that they were expecting me and were willing to participate. Since this process placed the initial onus of consent on the referring community member, I cannot guarantee that they always followed through. Only once was someone surprised to receive a phone call from me. That is possibly due to the advanced age of the referrer who said that they could not talk to me because of their physical state and referred me to their son instead. For all conversations, I made every effort to follow the example set by my Internship Supervisor.

During public events, private meetings, and phone calls, I introduced myself, introduced the project, disclosed my connection to the City of Hopewell and the University of Maryland, and explained that the research was for my thesis. I also used community meetings and engagement events as opportunities to share research progress without sharing names of informants in an effort to maintain project transparency. If community members set sharing requirements on their data, then I adhered to those expectations. Sometimes, people instructed me not to share emails or phone numbers with others. Most people were surprisingly willing to participate after learning who my parents or grandparents were. All of them allowed me to take notes, even pausing or repeating information as needed. Often, people gave me their own hand-written notes, including lists of names, useful archives, and other remembrances. The majority of these conversations

took place in public places like the farmers market that had no expectation of privacy, and where any number of residents or non-residents could have been present. These environments were conducive to the sharing and transmission of information regarding the burial ground, and they led to the greatest amount of information for the project.

The notes from these public conversations were kept in a field notebook and then later transcribed into a word processing document on my personal laptop. That information was stored in a project folder that is password protected. As this is a community-based archaeological research project done under the auspices of the City, the data will not be destroyed. Instead, it has been coded and analyzed using inductive qualitative analysis, which will be discussed more in the Qualitative and Data Analysis section.

Throughout the research, accessing memory was a challenge for those locals with first-hand experience. First, the majority of those with that knowledge were deceased, leaving a small pool of elders to contact. Those who were living were between 80 and 95 years old. Most had lapses in their memories of the 1920s-1960s at some point during conversation. Physical ailments such as stutters, deafness, wandering attention span, and lack of mobility also hindered engagement of this group. These physical constraints impeded communication at times, necessitating multiple conversations to clarify or verify data from past conversations. Due to the age of the informants, outreach through digital technology was not useful. Accessing this group required word-of-mouth recommendations, introductions through second-party connections, and direct contact through phone calls and meetings. Since initial outreach began with city-based social media posts and newsletter emails, this particular group of locals did not learn about the project until I

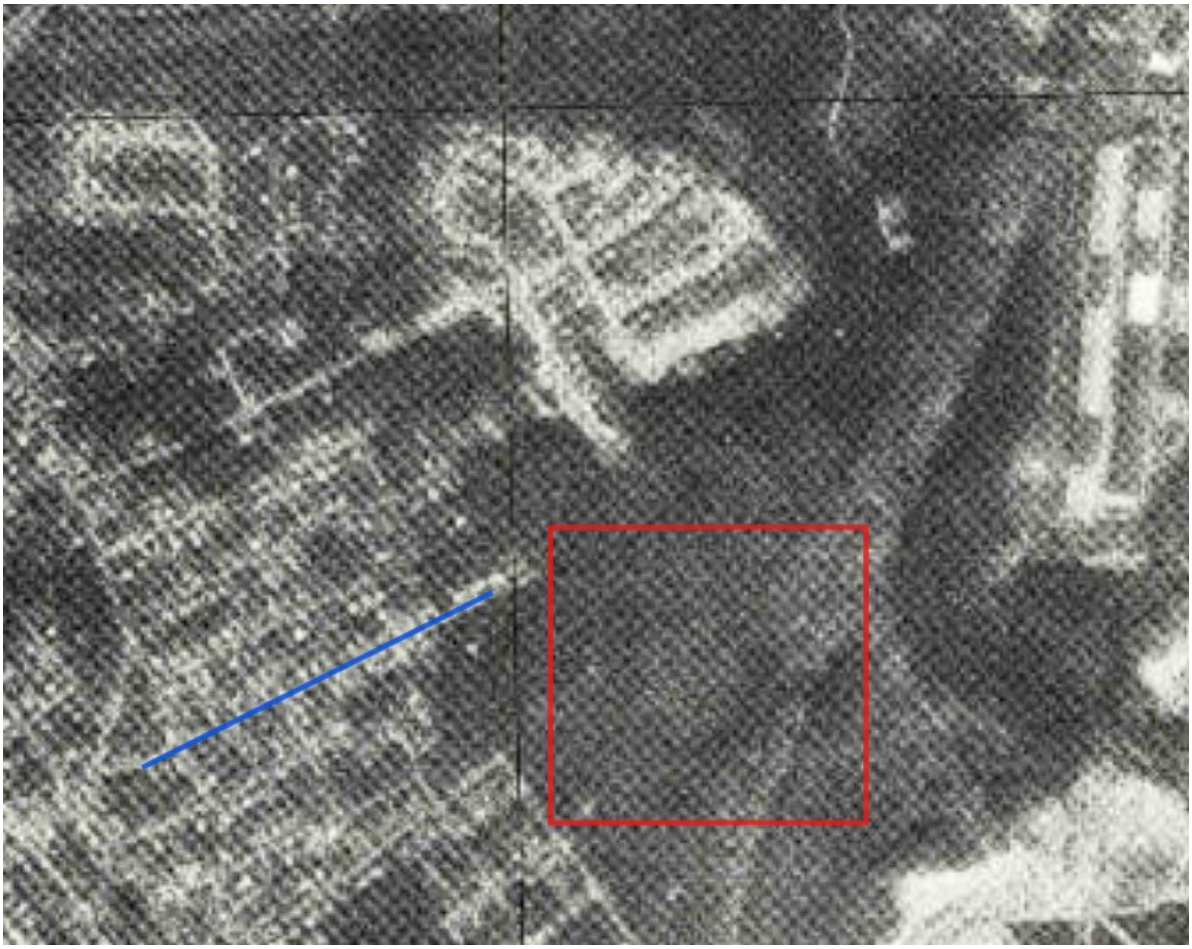
began public outreach at the farmer's market. Due to their advanced age, as well as some physical conditions, this group should be prioritized for any future oral history projects that the descendants or the City might plan to do.

Historic Map Research

Throughout the process of engaging with the community, I was also conducting archival research using a combined approach of searching through online death certificate databases, investigating online newspaper databases looking for obituaries or other cemetery references, and analyzing historic maps. Unfortunately, the maps did not yield as much information as expected. The first map resource accessed was the Sanborn maps located on the Library of Congress website and at the Library of Virginia. These maps revealed no data for the target location due to its rural geography, plus it was not annexed into Hopewell until 1952 (*Hopewell, Virginia* 1921; *Hopewell, Virginia* 1927; *Hopewell, Virginia Including Shenandoah and Crescent Hills* 1930). Several other sites such as Old Maps Online had maps that were not detailed enough to show Hopewell or Prince George, or that were outside of the historic period. This lack of data led to further research on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps where I discovered a potential ring of trees which could encompass the burial ground (See Map 2). One specific online map archive, Historic Aerials, had a 1950s map that presented potential geographic areas where a burial ground could be hidden from view (Historic Aerials 1953). Map data was evaluated to determine changes in land use, naming conventions, and path and road locations. Comparing this map information against community input regarding the suspected burial ground location(s), I identified the areas where the data points intersected. The resulting parcel list was too large for initial research, so I decided to start with the land that faced Berry

Street and then work back towards the deeper wooded areas. Using this process, I identified 42 parcels of land which provided the initial areas for deed research.

Map 2: USGS 1977 Map showing Berry Street (blue) and a possible ring of trees (red)



Deed Research

Using the City of Hopewell property search GIS site, QPublic, I recorded the parcel ID numbers, and the modern chain of title data for each parcel (See Map 3). Deed research began at the City of Hopewell clerk's office. The chain of title for the parcels was traced as far back as Prince George County ownership. Research continued at the Prince George County Clerk's office. I

traced the chain of title for all parcels back to the 1900s. Deed data was analyzed based upon a comparison with surnames, which the community identified during the first community engagement meetings. The deeds established parcel ownership but did not align with community remembrances. Therefore, it was necessary to return to the community for guidance on future parcels to research. During deed research, I discovered historic survey maps which displayed alternative names for the Arlington Heights neighborhood (Bryant 1915-A; Bryant 1915-B; Tucker & Holmes and Taylor 1916). These maps were analyzed and compared against previously researched historic maps to determine historical toponymy. That data was then applied as search filters for newspaper and death certificate research to identify individuals interred in the burial ground.

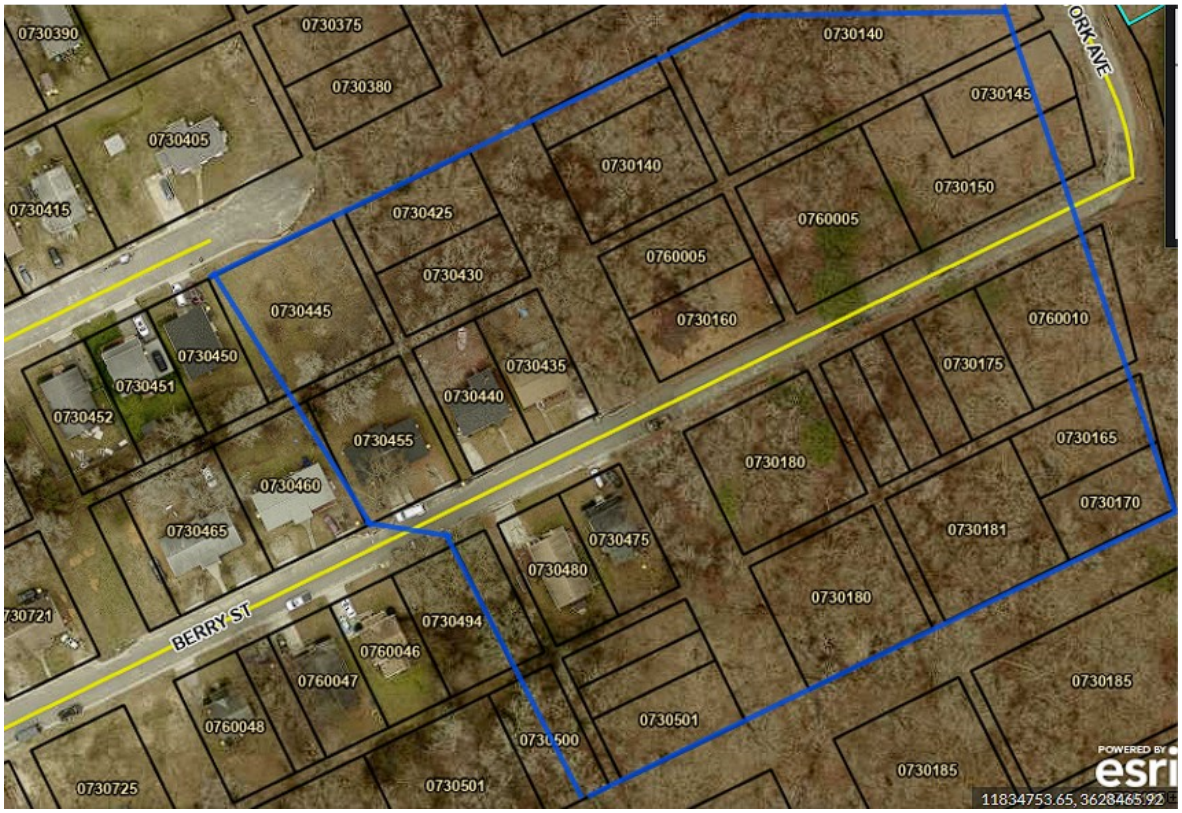
Escheatment

Escheatment is a process the government uses to return land to itself, usually used in cases when the land is abandoned, the owner died without heirs, or there are unresolved tax or ownership issues. Nearly all initial title searches for the 42 parcels in Arlington Heights included the escheatment process at some point in the chain of title. Escheatment lists were used in conjunction with community-provided data to identify surnames associated with burial ground ownership. The escheatment lists had insufficient parcel information. Due to this constraint, I chose to search historic newspapers for more data since Virginia law required, and still requires, public notice of escheatment (Commonwealth of Virginia 1960).

The completion of archival investigations exhausted the chain of title research for the initial 42 parcels, so I returned to the community to gather more data for future parcel identification. Once new parcels were identified, I followed these same procedures for researching them: Hopewell

GIS site (digital), Hopewell Clerk (in person paper and digital records at the courthouse), Prince George County Clerk (in person paper and digital records at the courthouse), Newspaper Search (digital), back to the community (in person conversations).

Map 3: City of Hopewell qPublic GIS image showing 23 of the parcels which were researched (Map image courtesy of the City of Hopewell)



Newspaper Research

Using community data, I initially searched the digital newspaper archives at the Appomattox Regional Library Hopewell Branch and Virginia Chronicle for any mentions of Berry Street, burial grounds, cemeteries, paupers' burials, potter's fields, indigent burials, and Deacon John Parham (the unofficial undertaker). These searches focused on the burial ground and obituaries

and sometimes revealed hundreds of pages to examine. The archives allowed for basic filtering by date, region, or newspaper name so these filters were applied to narrow results. Data from historic toponymy were also used to filter search terms for the burial ground. All resulting data was analyzed for relevance based on geographic location, date, and community memory. The obituaries and news stories found were downloaded to a computer, organized by subject matter, and then recorded into spreadsheets. Any data discovered was used to inform ongoing community engagement efforts, and to identify any potential descendants of those interred in the burial ground. Obituary information was cross-referenced with death certificate searches to support known data or discover new information.

Death Certificates

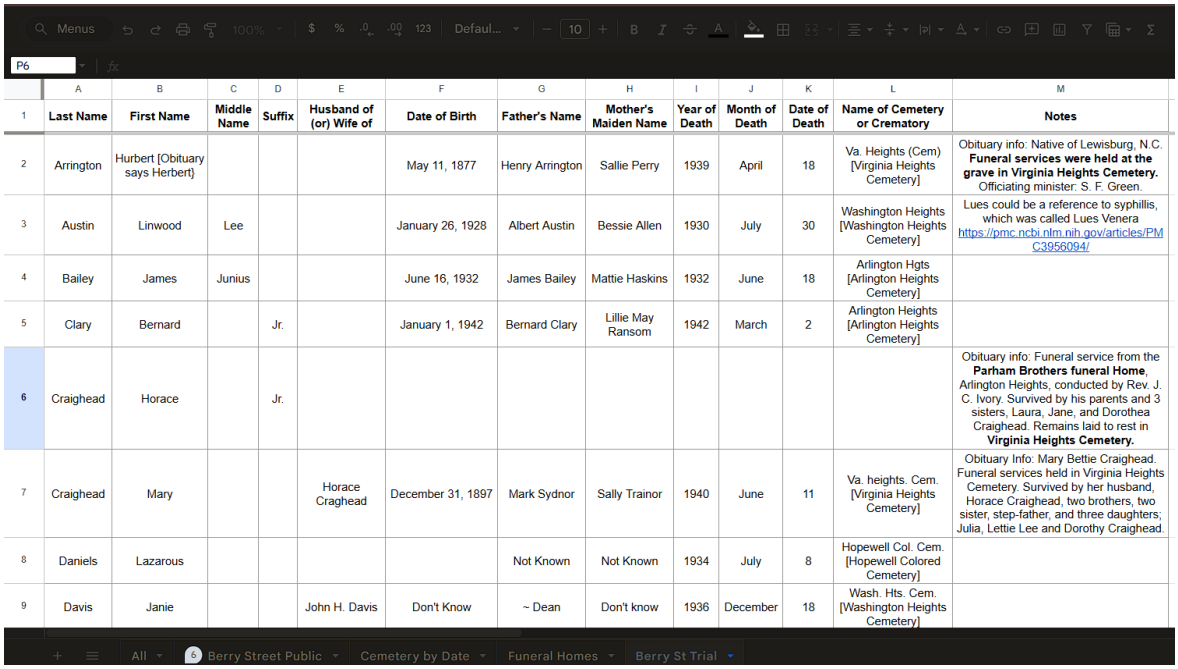
Since the burial ground held limited burial data and had no known burial records, I used death certificates to identify interred individuals. The main resource for death certificates was Ancestry.com. I filtered the search by using key terms such as surname, time period, ethnicity or race, cemetery name, city, and funeral home. Newspaper obituaries and death certificates were used alongside community knowledge to identify full names for those buried or potentially buried in the burial ground. In this process, community members guided archival research, and the archives, when present, supplemented community remembrance. Relevant data connected to the burial ground were then logged into an Excel spreadsheet. That spreadsheet was then shared with the local community in public meetings that took place during my internship with the City of Hopewell, and on my personal project website (See Table 2). The process to conduct searches for death certificates, newspaper articles, and community knowledge became a circular one:

1. Researching newspaper archives using search terms from maps and community members;
2. Filtering death certificate searches to locate supporting documentation for any previously identified data;

3. Recording any new information or search terms discovered through death certificate research;
4. Sharing data (from newspapers and death certificates) with community members to discover connections or new information;
5. Using newly identified information from death certificate research and community conversations to filter newspaper searches;
6. Recording any new information or search terms discovered through newspaper research;
7. Repeat Steps 2-6;

and so on until all efforts were exhausted or searching became unrealistic. For example, some death certificate searches, even with filters, returned over 30,000 pages to examine. This was an impossible task for one researcher. Those searches are ongoing though not truly feasible for the initial time constraints of this project.

Table 2: Partial listing from the Excel spreadsheet showing potential interred people



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	**Last Name**	**First Name**	**Middle Name**	**Suffix**	**Husband of (or) Wife of**	**Date of Birth**	**Father's Name**	**Mother's Maiden Name**	**Year of Death**	**Month of Death**	**Date of Death**	**Name of Cemetery or Crematory**	**Notes**
2	Arrington	Hurbert [Obituary says Herbert}				May 11, 1877	Henry Arrington	Sallie Perry	1939	April	18	Va. Heights (Cem) [Virginia Heights Cemetery]	Obituary info: Native of Lewisburg, N.C. **Funeral services were held at the grave in Virginia Heights Cemetery.** Officiating minister: S. F. Green.
3	Austin	Linwood	Lee			January 26, 1928	Albert Austin	Bessie Allen	1930	July	30	Washington Heights [Washington Heights Cemetery]	Lues could be a reference to syphillis, which was called Lues Venera https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3956094/
4	Bailey	James	Junius			June 16, 1932	James Bailey	Mattie Haskins	1932	June	18	Arlington Hgts [Arlington Heights Cemetery]	
5	Clary	Bernard		Jr.		January 1, 1942	Bernard Clary	Lillie May Ransom	1942	March	2	Arlington Heights [Arlington Heights Cemetery]	
6	Craighead	Horace		Jr.									Obituary info: Funeral service from the **Parham Brothers funeral Home**, Arlington Heights, conducted by Rev. J. C. Ivory. Survived by his parents and 3 sisters, Laura, Jane, and Dorothea Craighead. Remains laid to rest in **Virginia Heights Cemetery.**
7	Craighead	Mary			Horace Craghead	December 31, 1897	Mark Sydnor	Sally Trainor	1940	June	11	Va. heights. Cem. [Virginia Heights Cemetery]	Obituary Info: Mary Bettie Craighead. Funeral services held in Virginia Heights Cemetery. Survived by her husband, Horace Craighead, two brothers, two sister, step-father, and three daughters; Julia, Lettie Lee and Dorothy Craighead.
8	Daniels	Lazarous					Not Known	Not Known	1934	July	8	Hopewell Col. Cem. [Hopewell Colored Cemetery]	
9	Davis	Janie			John H. Davis	Don't Know	~ Dean	Don't know	1936	December	18	Wash. Hts. Cem. [Washington Heights Cemetery]	

Non-Invasive Archaeology

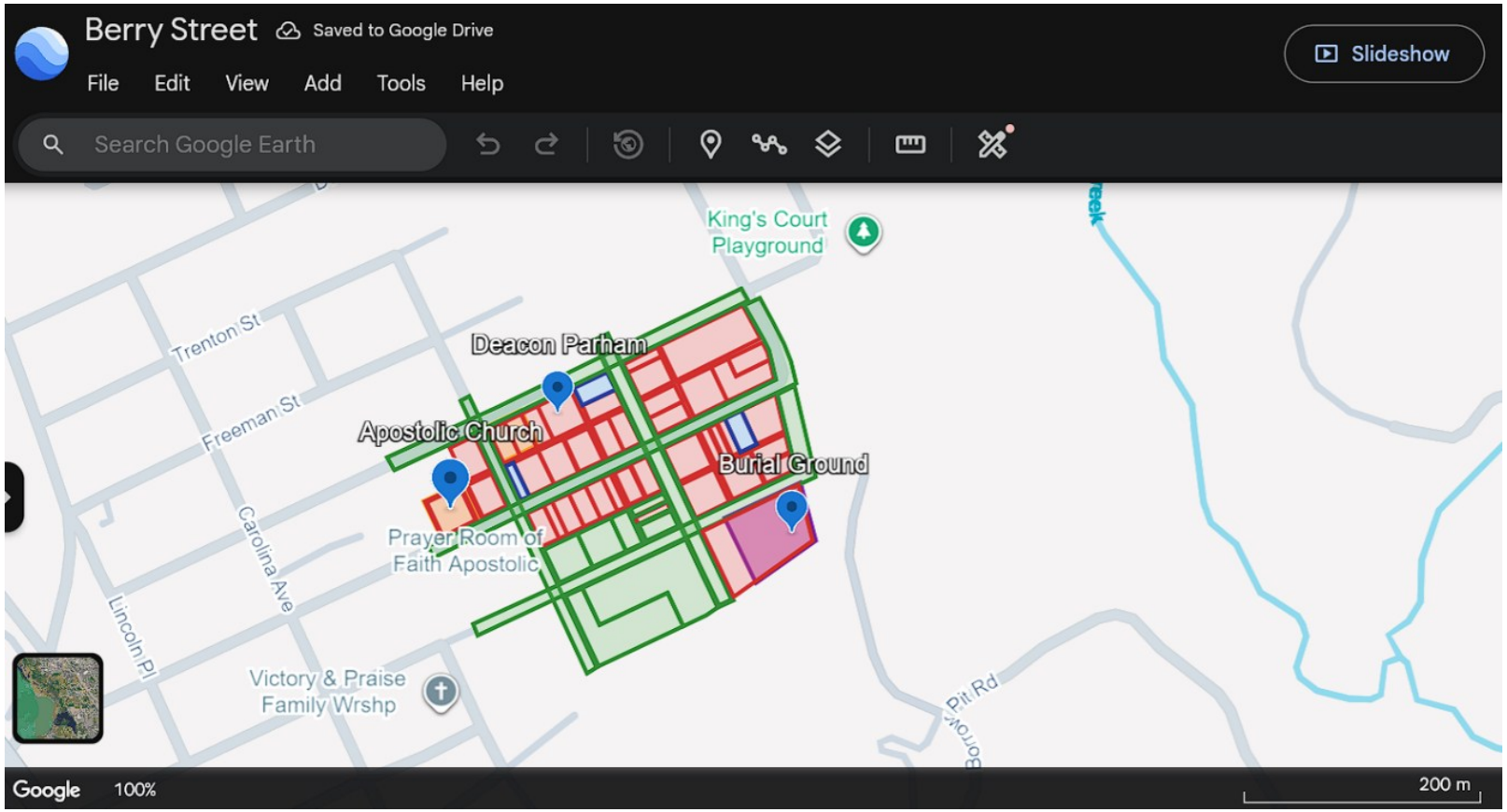
Due to the sensitive nature of the site, a historical burial ground having ancestral burial remains and potential cultural material, I chose non-invasive archaeological methods for delineating boundaries, identifying burials, and documenting the site. I wanted to avoid invasive methods because cemeteries are sacred places for many cultures. African American cemeteries have historically been disrespected by archaeologists, desecrated by ill-intentioned people, and destroyed by development (Blakey 2020; Orton 2016; Rainville 2014). Historically, onsite investigations did not include descendants, community members, or other stakeholders, creating a nationwide distrust between minority communities and archaeologists (Flewellen et al. 2022). While this is changing, the process takes time. "Increasingly, archaeologists are building upon these fruitful collaborations to come to new understandings of the past that are improved by cultural knowledge while also forging a more inclusive practice" (Flewellen et al., 2022, p. 7). It is important to collaborate with communities to ensure that any cemetery investigations meet the needs and requests of the descendants and stakeholders. For this reason, non-invasive archaeology was an integral part of the community archaeology approach at Berry Street. Archaeological decisions were strongly influenced by descendant concerns, the ethical need to avoid ground disturbance, and private property access limitations.

When considering archaeological methods to locate the burial ground, first, I worked with the African American community to identify potential areas in Arlington Heights where the burial ground might exist. Next, I contacted the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) requesting any archaeological data they have collected. Then, I cross-referenced the archaeological data, archival data, and community stories to identify which geographic areas to filter out during

onsite investigations. The data was evaluated based on if the land was under private ownership, city ownership, or state ownership. Privately owned land was removed from field investigations due to access constraints.

Without the full support of the City, it was not possible to access private property to clear away debris or overgrowth, or to conduct ground penetrating radar. This is not to say that the City did not support the project, but rather that they were not prepared for the cost and outreach that this project might require. Instead, my Internship Supervisor suggested that onsite investigations consist of pedestrian surveys where archaeologists and researchers walk the city right of way paths to search surrounding areas for signs of burials (See Map 4). Using Google Earth, I created a project site map to share with DHR staff and to indicate the areas for exploration (See Map 4 and Map 5). For site documentation, I used a GIS mapping program called SW Maps to log paths, artifacts, or other data. Since we had to stay on the city rights-of-way, I used the City's QPublic GIS site to identify city-owned or state-owned properties which could be investigated more completely. The entire data set was shared with DHR through email. DHR staff members and I walked the pre-determined pathways, staying on city-owned land. Due to land-ownership laws, we could not conduct a surface survey on privately-owned land, so I chose to observe these parcels from the city right of ways.

Map 4: Google Earth Berry Street Project showing city-owned land in green, state-owned land in blue, and privately-owned land in red.



Map 5: Project sites for DHR investigations overlaid on the 1955 Historic Aerials map (Map image courtesy of Historic Aerials)

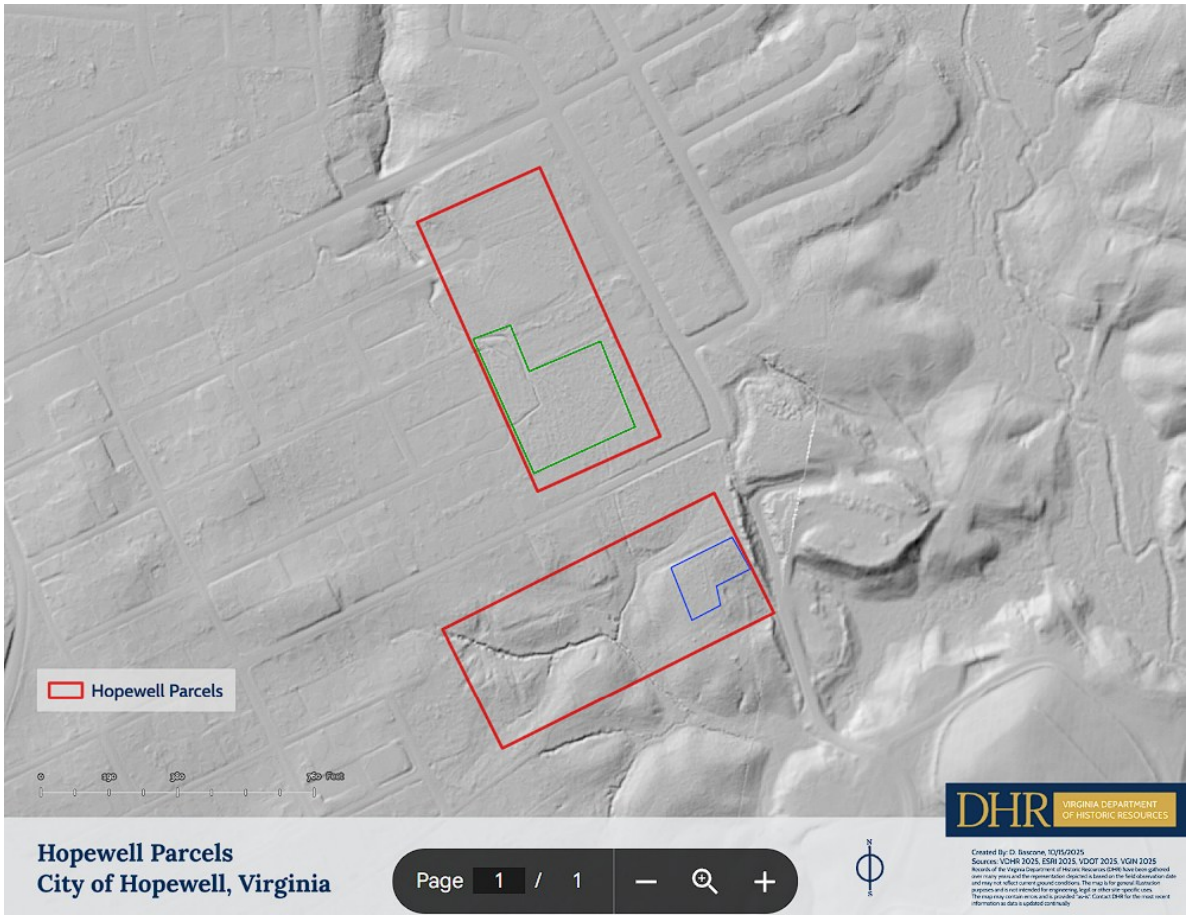
Curious residents approached us during the investigations, so I questioned them about the burial ground location. I used the information they provided to refocus our search in real time. The archaeology team searched for indications of burials such as ground depressions, headstones, or cultural items. I used the SW Maps app to map our travel path and record any observations. Due to site constraints, we chose to delay full site documentation until all stakeholders could be informed of the site and engaged in clearing and debris removal.

After the reconnaissance survey, I followed up with the DHR staff by email to share the GIS data from the site survey and to inquire about next steps for site documentation. The archaeologist provided a LiDAR map (light detection and ranging) which I cross-referenced with site observations (See Map 6). LiDAR data was then evaluated to identify geographic areas that aligned with site observations. I made note of both consistencies to share with DHR and of inconsistencies that need to be researched further. Then, with the permission of my Internship Supervisor at the City of Hopewell, I contacted the DHR office in Richmond, VA and scheduled an appointment to discuss their site documentation procedures. DHR required descendant permission to list the site publicly on their VCRIS site. Based on this constraint by DHR, I decided to schedule a meeting with descendants and concerned community members to discuss the next steps mentioned by DHR. Future research will continue after the community meetings take place.

I discussed ground penetrating radar with the City and with internship advisors (who are archaeologists) to determine if this was a feasible option for the site. Through talks with the City, I determined that GPR was not available at this time due to the costs and the limitations on

accessing privately-owned land. In the conversations with internship advisors, I concluded that GPR needed to be conducted during the winter or early spring, the ground needed to be cleared first, I needed to send letters to land-owners to request their permission and/or participation, and I needed to walk the land to determine if it is marshy or partially flooded prior to contacting a GPR company. Since this project took place in the summer and land-owners had not yet been contacted, I decided to postpone these steps for GPR.

Map 6: A 2025 LiDAR map shared by DHR indicating potential burial locations. The original search areas are in red. The confirmed burial ground is in blue. The potential secondary burial ground location is in green (courtesy of DHR)



Qualitative Data Analysis

Once the burial ground was discovered, I contacted descendants and other interested parties to update them. Since this took place at the end of the internship, there was little time for any other outreach or community engagement at the burial ground site. Instead, I pivoted to analyzing data from conversations, events, and meetings to glean whatever the data might reveal. During this process, there were three major data sets: one consisting of City of Hopewell program evaluation data where respondents had few open-ended questions, one consisting of city survey data where respondents had guided questions which allowed open responses, and the final data set included all information from correspondences, conversations, and meetings.

Initially, I had no predetermined goal for this data. It was important to keep an open mind regarding what these conversations might reveal about the burial ground, the local community, history, or whatever other topics were discussed. At the outset of coding, I thought I could use one set of themes across all three datasets. Once the process started, I realized that each group required slightly nuanced approaches.

Evaluation and Survey Data

Evaluations and surveys were coded in the same ways. Every response received the source ID *E* plus a number for evaluations, and *CM* plus a number for community meeting surveys. I also recorded the event name, date, response type (survey or evaluation), prompt, response, and theme that each response fit into. After coding the evaluations, I realized that the themes were determined by the questions and available responses, but the open-ended survey responses needed a different approach since respondents could write anything. Themes for the surveys developed naturally from the responses.

During the analysis of this data, I identified twenty themes: City Involvement, Communication Support, Documentation of Burials, Equal Treatment with other Cemeteries, Family Connection, Maintenance and Cleanliness, Markers or Monuments, Media or Outreach, Moral Obligation to Preserve, No Response, Permanent Protection, Public Visibility, Recognition and Memorialization, Recovery of Lost History, Research Support, Respect for those Buried, Tracking and Sharing Progress, Volunteering, Website or Public Information, and Willing (to volunteer). To determine quantities for use, I tracked the number of responses and number of respondents. One respondent could mention a theme multiple times across several responses. After initial coding, I realized several themes could fit within a broader category. This led to second-cycle axial coding where I grouped themes into broader categories which emerged naturally from the data after the initial coding. These categories were Preservation, Communication, and Involvement.

Communications and Meeting Data

All direct interactions (emails, phone calls, one-to-one conversations, small group meetings) were documented either through note taking or transcription. If a computer was available during conversations, they were transcribed in real time. Notes were taken by hand in a field notebook. Interactions were then organized into the following participant types: Local, Local Group, Researcher, Institutional. Local was used for one-to-one conversations with a local person. The local group type was made up of three or more people who are locals. Researcher indicates a one-to-one conversation with a fellow researcher. Institutional was used to refer to any one-to-one conversation including instructors or city staff. Each participant received an ID. In the case where there were multiple interactions with one participant, the conversations also received an ID Other information tracked included the date, location, role of the participant, and type of

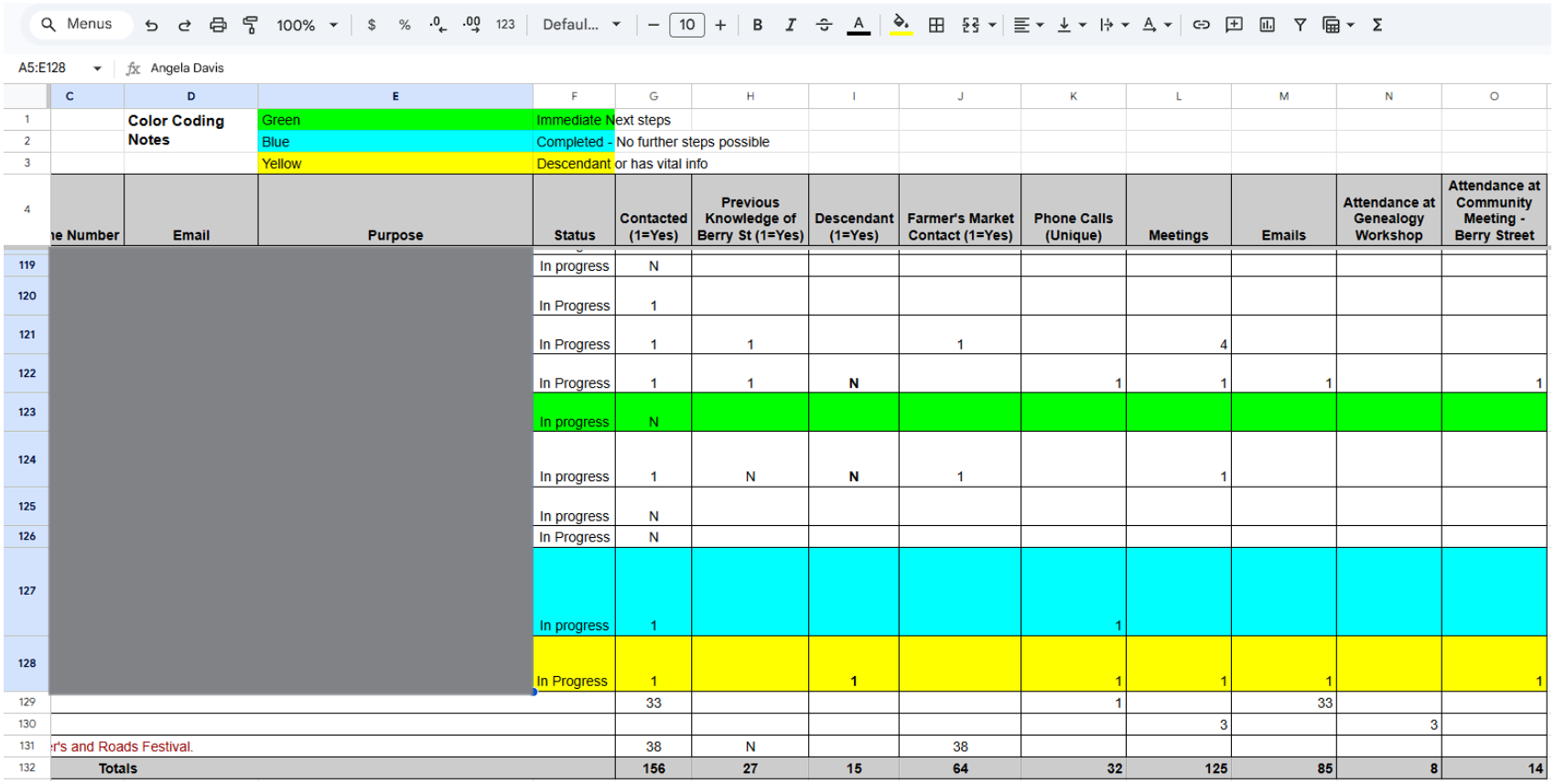
interaction. Data from each conversation was then analyzed for patterns. This information was logged in an Excel spreadsheet.

When analyzing data, I coded responses using inductive qualitative analysis, which is a process where there is no predetermined framework or lens to view the responses through. Instead, the responses determined the themes. After identifying themes, I extracted excerpts from conversations and recorded them in the spreadsheet on a different tab labeled Local Analytic Transcripts. On this tab, I recorded the Participant ID, Conversation ID, Source Type, Excerpt Type (paraphrase or quote), Theme, Keywords, and Notes (See Table 3). After extracting excerpts, I synthesized all responses into one summary per theme. This provided a general overview of community thought, feeling, or expectation regarding each theme (See the section on Analysis of Community Engagement Results).

Table 3: Sample Section of Coded Data Excerpts

Participant ID	Conversation ID	Source Type	Excerpt Type (Quote or Paraphrase)	Excerpt (1-3 sentences)	Theme	Keywords & Research Flags	Notes
I03	A	Email	Paraphrase	Not sure if they have any records but offered for me to look through an unorganized archive closet. We never could align our schedules to meet.	Barriers		informal archive, lack of structure, lack of organization
L07	A	Local conversation (Transcript)	Paraphrase	She called the department of conservation to get an idea of what was out there and to get a marker for it. She talked with Joanna Wilson Green on May 28, 2024, but never heard anything back from her.	Barriers	Joanna Wilson Green, 2024, barriers to preservation, threats to long-term preservation	informant probably meant Dept. of Historic Resources since that is where Ms. Wilson-Green works
LG04	A	Community Engagement Meeting	Paraphrase	Concern that land was possibly transferred due to illiteracy or inability to read legal documents.	Barriers	illiteracy, land transfer	structural vulnerability in land transfer process, affects African American families

Table 4: A sample of the Outreach Efforts spreadsheet (portions redacted) showing outreach totals and organization of data



	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1		**Color Coding**	Green	Immediate Next steps									
2		**Notes**	Blue	Completed - No further steps possible									
3			Yellow	Descendant or has vital info									
4	**ne Number**	**Email**	**Purpose**	**Status**	**Contacted (1=Yes)**	**Previous Knowledge of Berry St (1=Yes)**	**Descendant (1=Yes)**	**Farmer's Market Contact (1=Yes)**	**Phone Calls (Unique)**	**Meetings**	**Emails**	**Attendance at Genealogy Workshop**	**Attendance at Community Meeting - Berry Street**
119				In progress	N								
120				In Progress	1								
121				In Progress	1	1		1		4			
122				In Progress	1	1	**N**		1	1	1		1
123				In progress	N								
124				In progress	1	N	**N**	1		1			
125				In progress	N								
126				In Progress	N								
127				In progress	1				1				
128				In Progress	1		**1**		1	1	1		1
129					33				1		33		
130										3		3	
131					38	N		38					
132	**Totals**				**156**	**27**	**15**	**64**	**32**	**125**	**85**	**8**	**14**

Research Results: Community Knowledge, Archival Evidence, and Site Rediscovery

Community Engagement Results

Throughout the duration of the project, 156 individuals were contacted directly through phone calls, events, emails, or meetings as part of the work carried out through the City of Hopewell. I talked with 32 people on the phone (See Table 4). I sent out emails to 85 entities (including individuals, organizations, churches, private researchers, historians). Outreach occurred through city events like the weekly farmers market and the Rivers and Roads Festival which took place in Downtown Hopewell. At these events, I conversed with 64 unique individuals. There were 75 total interactions due to repeat attendance. The Rivers and Roads Festival accounted for nearly half of all event-based interactions (See Table 5).

Outside of the city events, I hosted two events as a part of the Berry Street Burial Ground Project: a genealogy workshop and a community meeting for the burial ground. The genealogy workshop was led by Viola Baskerville, President of the Richmond, Virginia chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS). This two-hour workshop took place on November 1, 2025. Eight people attended this event, including three new, previously unreached individuals. During this meeting, attendees were asked to fill out anonymous evaluations. Six of the eight attendees filled out evaluations.

The evaluations had five questions.

1. How would you rate today's workshop overall?
    1. Excellent
    2. Good

3. Fair
4. Poor

2. What did you find most useful or interesting?
3. Was there anything that could be improved for future workshops?
4. What other topics, workshops, or community events related to the Berry Street burial ground would you like to see offered?
5. Would you like to stay involved or receive updates?
    1. Yes (Provide contact information)
    2. No

Overall, five respondents thought the workshop was excellent. They enjoyed the handouts and data provided and wanted more workshops in the future. Respondents suggested that future workshops include laptops for public use and allow time for researching specific family members. Four people indicated that they wanted to be involved with the Berry Street burial ground project and to receive updates.

Table 5: Number of Community Contacts Made During 2025 for the Weekly Farmers Market and the Rivers and Roads Festival

Event Attendance					
Dates	August 21	August 28	September 4	September 13 (Rivers and Roads)	September 18
Attendance	9	11	11	35	9

A two-hour community meeting was held on November 8, 2025. There were 14 people in attendance, five of whom were descendants. During the meeting, I hosted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the project timeline from beginning to completion. Ten attendees provided feedback on the questionnaire. The questions were as follows:

1. What does the Berry Street Burial Ground mean to you or your family?
2. What stories or memories should be preserved about this place?
3. How would you like to see the burial ground honored or cared for in the future?
4. What role do you think the community should play in preserving this site?
5. What resources or support would help you stay involved in this project?

When asked about the meaning of the site, two people stated that it was important to preserve the graves, two stated that it was important to their family, and two thought the burial ground was important to the history and families of Hopewell. Locals provided data regarding the stories or memories that should be preserved:

- names and information about the interred,
- headstones and memorials to the deceased,
- oral histories and family connections,
- a compiled list of burials,
- general statements regarding the value of remembrance.

In the future they want to see the burial ground honored in the same way that the white cemeteries in Petersburg and Hopewell are honored. They want the site to be clean, documented, and respected. One person wants a roadside memorial for the site, and another wants to see more city involvement and support for the burial ground. Overall, respondents expressed a need for long-term preservation of the site, with ongoing maintenance, and public access. All respondents

indicated that the community had a role to play in preserving the burial ground. Two people indicated that community members should share stories of family members who are connected to the burial ground. One person indicated multiple times that communication was a primary concern, and that the community should be actively involved in talking with leaders connected to the Berry Street burial ground project. A respondent said the community should be involved with visitation, though they did not explain what this means. Another said that all people should be involved with the project. When indicating resources that might help them stay involved with the project, two people said it was important for people to be at all the meetings and be informed, three people said they would volunteer their time and efforts to help, two people indicated that city, state, or federal involvement was needed, and one person said that the burial ground needed a website.

Besides these specific meetings and events, there were several small group, informal meetings that took place at various locations. These interactions were not specifically documented and were tracked as separate categories from direct contacts. Some individuals appeared in both datasets (direct contacts and informal meetings), but the informal meetings were recorded separately due to their unstructured nature. There were 125 interactions which resulted from these meetings. Additionally, three meetings with a group of public historians and elders in the African American community provided the initial research direction for the project. This group identified burial ground owners, possible descendants, locations for archaeological investigations, and community members who might have more information. They also listed research topics of interest to them which run parallel to the burial ground research such as

unclaimed, deceased African-American patients of the Central State Hospital, or those women who served as midwives for the infants who died during birth.

Forty-seven people provided actionable information involving the following details:

- burial ground location and ownership,
- names of descendants,
- names of potential informants,
- neighborhood history and historical context,
- Deacon John Parham or other undertakers, and
- archives or professionals to contact.

While some community members offered to donate their personal collections to this project, no documents or items were taken from locals. All documents used in this research were discovered through archival research. Community outreach resulted in leads regarding burial ground location, descendants, informants, and neighborhood history, and those leads informed the research that followed (deeds, maps, fieldwork priorities, etc.).

Qualitative Data Analysis Results

During inductive qualitative analysis, I used data from 29 Locals, four Local Groups, nine Researchers, and four Institutional informants. This is not a comprehensive analysis of all responses provided by informants. Instead, I analyzed data until no new patterns were identified. Within some participant groups, there were multiple conversations. For interactions where meetings happened more than once, there were six Local, one Local Group, three Researcher, and one Institutional interaction.

It is important to note that some groups met multiple times because they could potentially influence how often a theme or idea occurs. For the qualitative analysis of this data, I did not take into account how many times a theme occurred. Instead, people's words were synthesized and attributed to “larger group thinking” in an effort to create a more holistic picture of community knowledge regarding the site and the historic context of the neighborhood, while also identifying wants and needs for preserving the site.

Thematic analysis revealed the following 20 themes:

- Barriers (to research)
- Burial Ground Location & Extent
- Burial Practices
- Community Knowledge
- Community Stewardship & Care
- Comparative Cemetery Experience
- Cultural Norms Around Death & Silence
- Disorganization & Informal Burial Practices
- Documented Burial Locations
- Family Connection to Burial Ground
- Funeral Home Use & Continuity
- Genealogical Knowledge
- Interpretive Context & Ethics
- Knowledge Loss Over Time
- Land Ownership & Tenancy

- Methodological Guidance
- Neighborhood Geography & Name Changes
- Possible Undocumented Burial Site
- Threats
- Willingness to Participate.

These themes were identified from a list of 445 quotes and paraphrases gathered during direct communications. This list is representative rather than comprehensive since analysis stopped once conversations began to reveal no new themes. Sometimes, the data demanded an expansion of a theme. For example, the Land Ownership & Tenancy theme began as land ownership. While analyzing excerpts from conversations, I realized that old Arlington Heights community members could nearly rebuild a street or even whole sections of the neighborhood by memory (providing surnames and home locations), but they were not aware if people owned their homes. This data was important for identifying any connections to the community-provided names of the burial ground owners. If I could locate one of those names and place them spatially in the neighborhood, then I could add their parcel of land to the deed research and pinpoint it for future reconnaissance surveys. Once a thematic pattern emerged in the excerpts where ownership was unclear, I expanded the land ownership theme to include tenancy. See the Analysis section for details about the synthesized excerpts.

Survey Thematic Results

Initial findings showed that there were seven responses in the Tracking and Sharing Progress theme, but further investigation revealed that only four people offered responses that fell within this theme. Those four people offered multiple responses throughout their replies to questions which pointed to Tracking and Sharing Progress as a major theme accounting for nearly half of

the replies. Even with only four people responding under this theme, this was still the highest-mentioned theme. The following themes were mentioned by three respondents: Public Visibility, Website or Public Information, Family Connection, and Markers and Monuments. Table 6, below, shows a breakdown of these themes according to how many times they were mentioned.

Table 6: Community Meeting High Count Themes

Theme	Number of Times Mentioned	Number of Respondents
Tracking and Sharing Progress	7	4
Public Visibility	5	3
Website or Public Information	4	3
Family Connection	4	3
Markers and Monuments	3	3

There were 20 themes identified from the survey responses. Table 6: Community Meeting High Count Themes also shows the top themes, each having at least three respondents and three mentions. Tracking and Sharing Progress had seven mentions across four respondents. Public Visibility had five mentions across three respondents. Website or Public Information had four mentions across three respondents. Family Connection had four mentions across three respondents. Markers and Monuments had three mentions across three respondents. The other themes had two or fewer respondents or mentions.

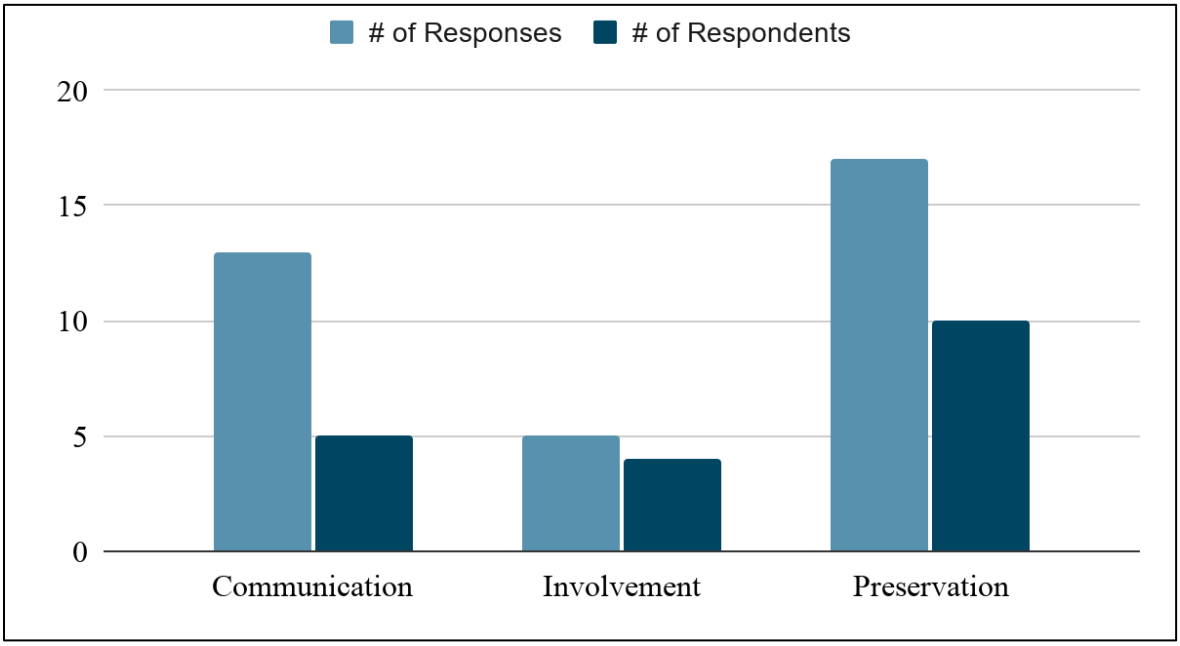
In Table 7: Second-Cycle Axial Coding, themes were separated into broader categories—Communication, Preservation, and Involvement. Five themes fit into the Communication category; ten themes fit into the Preservation category; four themes fit into the Involvement

category. Graph 1: Second-Cycle Axial Coding Results shows a comparison of the three categories. Preservation had the highest number of responses and respondents as compared to the other categories. Involvement had the fewest number of respondents and responses.

Table 7: Second-Cycle Axial Coding

Communication	Preservation	Involvement
Tracking and Sharing Progress	Family Connection	Volunteering
Public Visibility	Markers and Monuments	City Involvement
Website or Public Information	Documentation of Burials	Willing (to volunteer)
Media or Outreach	Recognition and Memorialization	Research Support
Communication Support	Respect for Those Buried	
	Permanent Protection	
	Maintenance and Cleanliness	
	Equal Treatment with Other Cemeteries	
	Recovery of Lost History	
	Moral Obligation to Preserve	

Graph 1: Second-Cycle Axial Coding Results



Historic Map Research Results

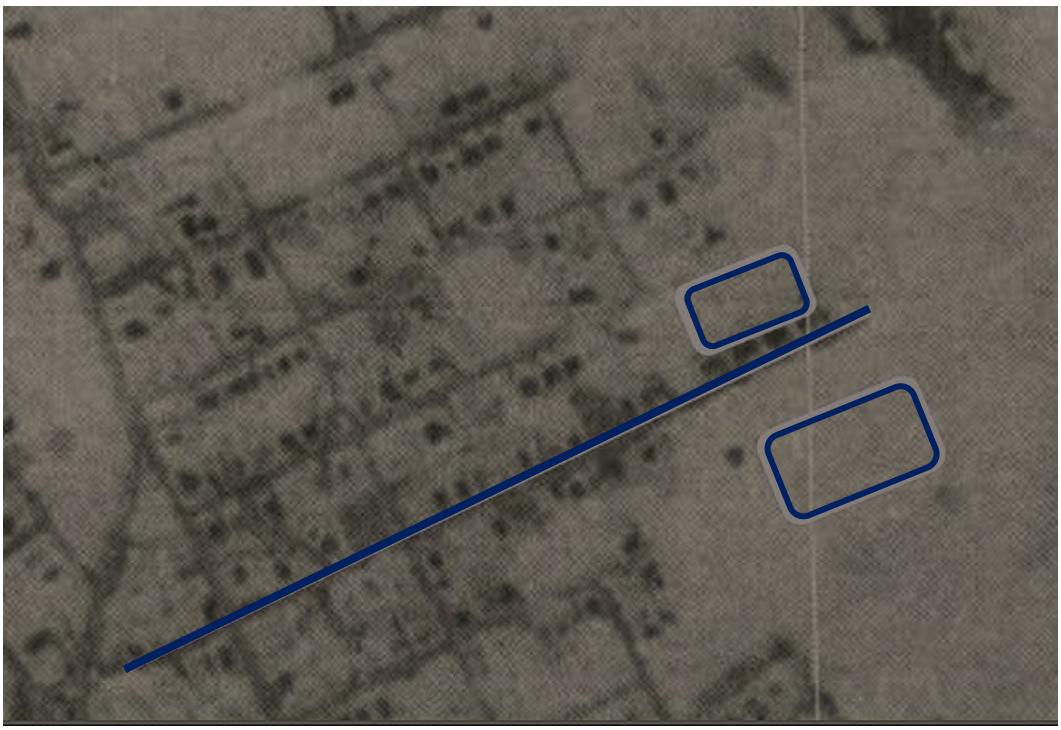
Map research began with Sanborn maps. After searching for maps from Hopewell, Prince George County, and Petersburg, none had the property that is now called Arlington Heights on them. Many historic maps did not include enough detail to show the specifics of the neighborhood. The USGS historic maps website held maps from 1894 (USGS 1894), 1943 (USGS 1943), 1946 (USGS 1946), 1952 (USGS 1952), 1969 (USGS 1969), 1974 (USGS 1974), 1994 (USGS 1994), 2010 (USGS 2010), 2013 (USGS 2013), 2016 (USGS 2016), 2019 (USGS 2019), and 2022 (USGS 2022). In addition, the City of Hopewell acquired a 1955 map from a historic aerial imagery archive (Historic Aerials 1955). Most of the maps showed little change in the Arlington Heights neighborhood until the late 1950s and again in the 1970s when new homes were built nearer to the site where locals indicated potential burials existed (USGS 1952; USGS 1974). The 1943 map (See Map 7) shows Arlington Heights at the time that the burial ground was in use. The 1955 map shows the neighborhood at the time when burial ground use was decreasing (See Map 8). The 1969 map shows new homes and neighborhoods, in purple (See Map 9). The 1974 map shows the area at the end of the burial ground's usage, once burials had shifted to official cemeteries (See Map 10).

Map 7: USGS 1943 map of Hopewell, Virginia. Clipping of the Arlington Heights neighborhood. The blue line indicates Berry Street. The blue bounding boxes are suggested locations for the burial ground.

Map 8: USGS 1955 map of Hopewell, Virginia. Clipping of the Arlington Heights neighborhood. The blue line indicates Berry Street. The blue bounding boxes are suggested locations for the burial ground.

Map 9: USGS 1969 map of Hopewell, VA. Preliminary to field survey. Prospective locations indicated in outreach and community meetings.

Map 10: USGS 1974 map of Hopewell, VA. Clipping of Arlington Heights neighborhood. The blue line indicates Berry Street. The blue bounding boxes indicate suggested burial ground locations.



Deed and Escheatment Research Results

At the beginning of the project, 38 parcels were identified as being in areas of significance associated with either the burial ground, or with the home or funeral home of Deacon John Parham. Deed research was conducted on 28 parcels. Deed histories or title chains were extended back to the 1900s wherever possible. Since the exact dates of use of the burial ground were unknown at the time deed research began, it was important to research a time prior to the 1920s which was the earliest identified burial date. Of the 28 parcels researched, 12 were impacted by the escheatment process. Since escheatment sometimes broke up the chain of ownership within families, it was important to identify if this process impacted either the burial ground or John Parham's land. The burial ground land was affected by escheatment in 1957 when Sallie D.

Shemwell's property and Charles B. Taylor's property (this was a dual ownership parcel) was escheated and sold at auction to E. S. Bonfanti (Hopewell Circuit Court 1975-C).

While deed research did not initially reveal indications of a burial ground on the other parcels, the surnames gathered, especially those taken from the large escheatment lists, were used in public outreach in an effort to identify people who owned land in the area and who might have more information about the burial ground. This list of surnames became useful at public events to help guide conversations and jog memories of elder residents.

Non-Invasive Archaeology Results and Rediscovery of the Burial Ground

In October 2025, a small search team conducted a reconnaissance survey on areas along both sides of Berry Street searching for indications of burial grounds. The team consisted of Ariana "Ari" Calos (Architectural Historian/Preservation Specialist at Virginia Department of Historic Resources), Michael Clem (Eastern Regional Archaeologist at Virginia Department of Historic Resources), and Kelly Pratt (cemetery preservationist and graduate student at the University of Maryland). A Hopewell city official was invited but did not come.

On the north side of Berry Street, strict land boundaries for private land, overgrowth, and lack of legal access allowed for limited searches along the city-owned access roads (See Image 8). At that time, it was not possible to search in the woods, so searches were kept to a single access road, and whatever was visible from the street. The search was not sufficient to reveal a burial ground location or any indications of burials such as ground depressions, headstones, or material culture.

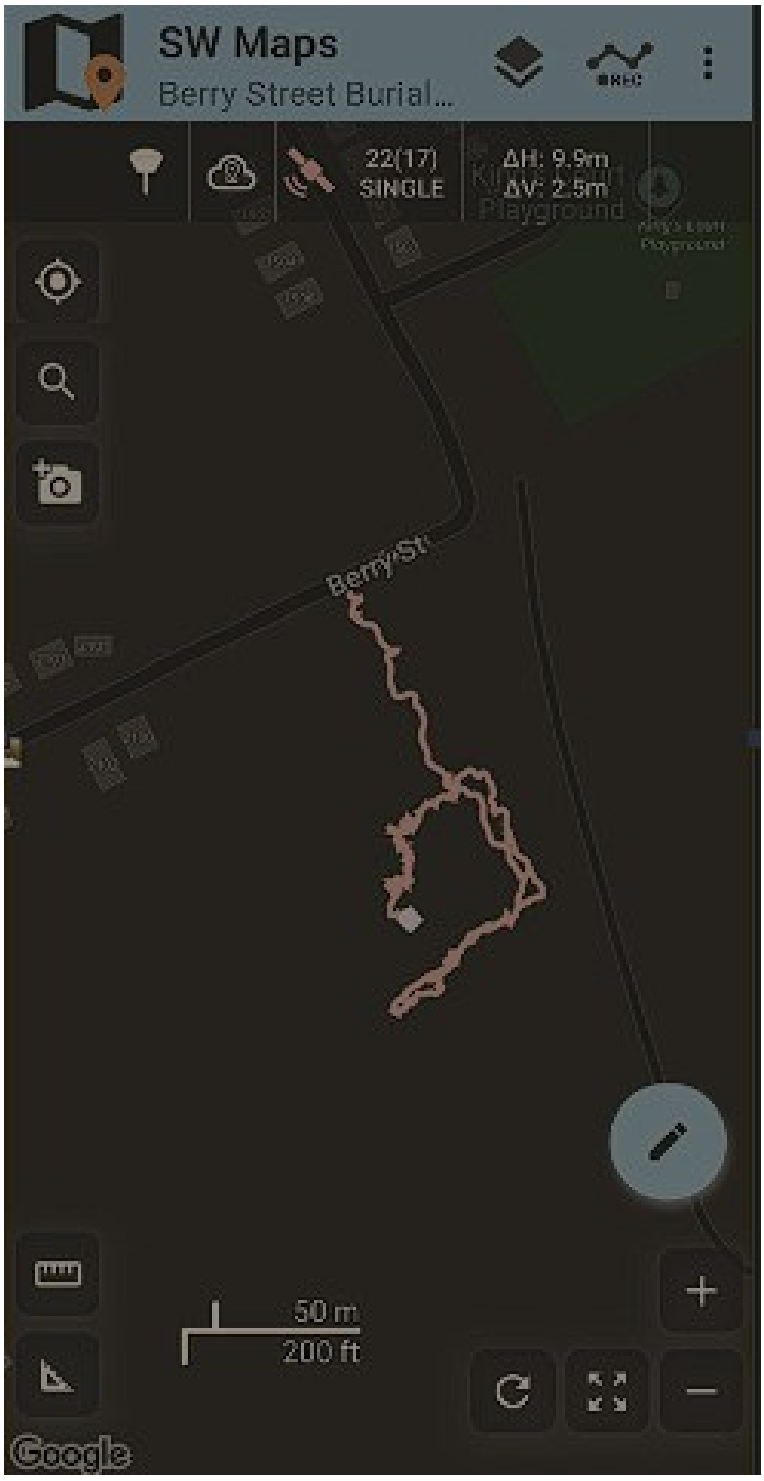
Image 8: Forested natural overgrowth along Berry Street (original work of the author)

A non-invasive reconnaissance survey was also conducted to the south of Berry Street, deeper into the woods (See Image 9). Some parcels in this area were city-owned, so the search team could cover more land. The investigation team kept to city-owned access roads around private properties, when possible, though fallen trees, thick briars, and inconsistent GPS access made this challenging. This search extended deeper than originally intended due to onsite community conversations, ultimately leading to the discovery of the burial ground. Due to natural overgrowth and part of the burial ground being located on private property, it was impossible to gather exact counts for grave depressions or to map the layout of the burial ground. During the survey, the team noticed evidence of human activity such as part of an old doll, pieces of curbing 2-3 feet long, concrete pieces about 6” square with metal rods protruding from them, a hand-

made concrete headstone, and an estimated 80 burials evidenced by ground depressions. The depressions were roughly the same length and width, spaced evenly apart, and laid out in rows and columns across the area.

A single headstone was visible at the head of one grave depression. It was cement, and hand-carved with a line across the top third of the stone. There was no identifying information on the stone for the deceased. Once the team discovered the headstone, I used a GIS app called SW Maps to map the location of the burial ground, tracing the steps of our team from the headstone, around the outer perimeter of the burial ground, and back out to Berry Street (See Map 11). Only one side of the burial ground was mapped in an effort to avoid private land.

Map 11: SW Maps real-time GIS mapping of path from the headstone (blue square), around the perimeter of the burial ground and out to the exit



Death Certificate and Obituary Results

Throughout the course of this project, tens of thousands of records were investigated across multiple digital repositories such as Ancestry, Family Search, and Find A Grave. Death certificates for more than 850 African Americans who died in Hopewell were identified. They were buried in 190 cemeteries located throughout Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Of these, 58 individuals were identified who are connected to the Berry Street burial ground. Table 8: Number of Death Certificates Per Cemetery Alias shows the various names possibly used for the Berry Street burial ground and the number of associated death certificates. Over 45 surnames were identified as being connected to the burial ground. Surnames such as Savannah, Jones, Williams or Harris were mentioned multiple times (See Table 9).

Table 8: Number of Death Certificates Per Cemetery Alias

Burial Ground Name	Number of Death Certificates
Arlington Heights Cemetery	9
Descendant Informed on Location	1
Potter's Field / Pauper Burial	2
Virginia Heights Cemetery	24
Washington Heights Cemetery	22

Table 9: Berry Street Burial Ground Surnames Mentioned Multiple Times

Surname	Number of Times Identified
Craighead	2
Farley	2
Gordon	2
Harris	3
Hill	2
Jones	7
Savannah	3
Williams	4
Wyche	2

Obituaries also provided information regarding burial location. Two obituaries provided names not originally identified through death certificates. Five obituaries verified and/or added to data identified through death certificates. For example, one death certificate stated a name of Hurbert, but the obituary provided the alternate spelling of Herbert. So far, between death certificates, obituaries, and descendant-informed death locations, there are 63 individuals identified as being buried at the Berry Street burial ground. It is important to note that one person was identified as being removed from Arlington Heights Cemetery and being reburied at East View Cemetery.

All of the death certificate and obituary information was compiled into a single spreadsheet for full searchability. When data was abbreviated on the death certificate, brackets [ ] were used to

provide the full names of locations, people, or other terms so that the document can be accurate during searches. I created a website for the Berry Street Burial Ground Project at https://www.aplaceforkp.com/berrystreet where I posted project information as well as a link to the spreadsheet of burials, which can be used for community research.

Analysis and Interpretation: Memory, Records, and Landscape Evidence

Archival Silences and Discrepancies

Archival records provided limited data regarding the burial ground location and the names of interred individuals. Sanborn maps did not include the Arlington Heights neighborhood, and historic maps (USGS and others) did not include the burial ground. None of the deeds researched included mention of a cemetery or burials on the property. Without exact knowledge of the location of the burial ground, deed research could only provide names of people who owned property in the area. These names were helpful to identify locals who might have information regarding the burial ground, but not with finding the location of the site. Due to the limited information available through deed research, it was necessary to rely on community knowledge as a primary source to identify potential burial ground parcels.

USGS maps indicated the locations of some official cemeteries such as the City Point National Cemetery or the Appomattox Cemetery. The National Cemetery is named as such on the 1969 USGS map but is only identified as 'Cemetery' or a large cross on other maps (USGS 1969). A cemetery to the northwest of the National Cemetery on the 1969 USGS map is just indicated with a large cross. It is the Appomattox Cemetery and is named as City Cemetery on the 1943 map (USGS 1943). Both the National Cemetery and the Appomattox Cemetery are labeled as 'Cem' on the 1952 USGS map (USGS 1952). The First Baptist Church of City Point Cemetery, an African American cemetery which existed since 1867, is not indicated on any of these maps. Neither is the Kippax Plantation Cemetery (late 1600s-1700s), the Methodist Cemetery (possibly 1750-1930), or Saint John's Episcopal Church Cemetery (mid-1800s-today). It is unclear why certain burial grounds were included on the historic maps while others were not. One

commonality is that the City Point National Cemetery and the Appomattox Cemetery were both city-recognized spaces, whereas church cemeteries and informal burial sites were not.

Concurrent with the search for the burial ground, I also explored archival sources for information corroborating community data. First, I searched for the location of Deacon J. Parham's home and funeral home. Second, I looked for the names of owners of the burial ground. The community was not certain about the name of Deacon Parham (John or Jack). Parham was a common name and there were many located in Hopewell, Petersburg, and Prince George. After looking through deeds, city directories, newspapers, and census records, I could not identify with certainty the correct John or Jack Parham. The community stated that Deacon Parham had no family, was never married, and lived alone. The closest Parham I found was John Q. Parham and he had a wife named Pinkie [or Pinky] (Virginia. Department of Health. Bureau of Vital Statistics and Health Statistics 1973). I still do not know who Deacon Parham was and research continues regarding him. It is also possible that the Arlington Heights community misremembered Parham's family association, or Parham was widowed for most of the lived memory of the informants. As for the burial ground owners, community members identified full names, surnames, and nicknames, none of which were supported through deed research.

The discrepancies with land ownership caused further challenges with research. Parcels which had multiple owners (one under the Arlington Heights subdivision, and one under the Washington Heights Annex subdivision) led to legal action to determine a clear chain of title so that taxes could be paid through the escheatment process. It is possible that these types of discrepancies happened throughout whole areas, making it difficult to fully trace the chain of

title. Additionally, Prince George had multiple courthouse fires, which increased archival silences.

In this case, the archival silences are representative of the challenges of researching African American burial grounds. Perhaps there were informal land ownership processes not officially documented. There were clearly differences in how the community defined land ownership versus how municipalities defined land ownership. Either way, the archives did not provide support to validate the African American community's remembrances of land ownership or to prove the burial ground location. The absence of burial ground data in the maps and deeds correlates to the visibility or lack thereof of the Berry Street burial ground. Whether purposeful or not, the archival silences are many and the result is the same: Without community help and onsite investigations, the burial ground would not have been found through archival research alone.

The data shows that a military cemetery and a city-owned cemetery were both documented on historic maps. They are both also mentioned often in news archives. Land additions, site improvements, and financial investments for these cemeteries are recorded routinely in the newspapers. Church cemeteries and informal burial grounds are usually mentioned in passing references such as obituaries. In Hopewell, burial grounds that are unofficial, or that do not have institutional support, are vulnerable to development due to their lack of official municipal recognition and visibility. Without public awareness around the locations of these cemeteries in Hopewell, they become unprotected, unrecognized in city planning and zoning processes, and at

risk of disappearance from the physical landscape. In the case of Berry Street, it was community members who held the majority of the information regarding the location and history of the site.

Community Knowledge

Throughout the project, community knowledge was used to direct research and to provide shared memory. The locals guided initial archival research and offered redirection when archival research proved insufficient. Where archival data provided gaps in the historical narrative, community knowledge bridged those gaps. At other times, community knowledge contradicted historical records or could not be verified. When this happened, it was necessary to lean on historic records, such as the case with John Quincy Parham, who most likely is the John Parham that everyone remembers even though he was married.

The weekly farmer's market was a strategic place to start engaging locals. It was held in the downtown area where most large city events happen. The entrance gate was just off of the bus route for the Petersburg Area Transit (PAT) bus, and the public library was across the street from the farmers' market. While it is not located near the burial ground, the site still proved to be useful for community gathering and knowledge sharing. During the events, locals identified people onsite who had information, gave me contact information, and shared stories of those interred in the burial ground. Over time, I realized that remembering was relational. At the first farmer's market I attended, an older woman stepped off the PAT bus, looked up and saw me, and called out across the street, "Is that Kelly?" After I approached her, we talked and I learned that she was a family friend from about twenty years ago. I had not seen her since I was a child, but I remembered her once she told me her name. That woman came over to my table, learned about my research, and then immediately called three other people over to talk to me.

Additionally, I used a list of surnames as an object to trigger memories, and to guide conversations (See Image 9). That woman, who struggled with her memory due to past brain surgery, found the list most helpful as a memory aid. She and other residents edited the list of surnames to identify descendants and people who might hold historical knowledge of the site. At the end of that day, I had spoken with nine individuals, had a list of people to contact, and had guidance regarding next steps for research.

From August to September, more people gathered, usually in small groups, to discuss the burial ground. As a group, they recalled more details, refined data, and pinpointed inaccurate or incorrect information. The interplay between people provided an opportunity for residents to analyze and compare memories, support their remembrances with lived experiences, and for the group to assist those individuals who had fading memories. In this way, relational remembering sometimes provided more consistent information than individual remembering. Through this process of relational remembering, I realized that older memories may not be lost. Sometimes people just need extra support and time to allow these memories to resurface. That support may come through memory aids and group storytelling (sharing of oral history). This experience shows that informal gathering allows for the freedom to interact in helpful and encouraging ways that may not be available in formal meetings or interviews.

Image 9: List of surnames used for outreach (courtesy of the City of Hopewell)

If your family name is on the list, we need your help. Please contact Kelly Pratt at 804-446-1664 for more information.

Andes
Ballas
Banks
Benito
Broyhill
Bryant
Burford
Campbell
Christian
Clary
Collins
Daly
Dereski
Derzeski
Ellis
Ferguson
Fitzke
Flaherty
Gilliam
Gornto
Hedgins
Jackson
Jones
Killebrew
Know
Leavensworth
Lee
Manigault
McDowell
Morse
Munt
Nye
Pappas
Patterson
Peterson
Rives
Sale
Shemwell
Spence
Stamoulis
Stokes
Stufano
Tabet
Takes
Talmage
Tate
Taylor
Temple
Tinsley
Wheeler
Williams

Locals also provided possible geographic locations for the burial ground. During three visits to Berry Street, locals identified three different locations. Some locals shared map images pinpointing the location of a single headstone that multiple people remembered seeing in the past. There were several reasons for the lack of clarity regarding the burial ground location. First, the landscape has changed over the past 70 years. Developers built homes where there were originally woods, gutters were installed in the streets which stopped neighborhood flooding, pathways became overgrown, buildings that were staples in the community were torn down, and dirt pathways were paved over and extended. New neighborhoods were even built nearby and connected to these extended roads, further impacting the landscape. Second, memories have faded with age. Many people with first-hand knowledge were children in the 1940s or 1950s. Lack of documentation through photos, archives, or literature meant location data was passed through oral retellings. As time goes by, these oral histories may become less prominent in conversation and people slowly begin to forget things like where the burial ground was located or who was buried there. These memories were not lost, only faded. This point was demonstrated through the farmer's market meetings when people suddenly could remember the neighborhood, the people, the history just from reading over a list of surnames. Third, the burial ground was an informal space. There were no fencing, signage or prominent monuments to mark the space on the visible landscape. Burials were not consistently marked with headstones. Often, there was no funeral or public gathering to honor the deceased, which meant that family members did not know where their family members were buried. The 'informalness' of the burial ground provided a scenario where the site was at risk of erasure from the physical landscape and from human memory. It is not the community memory that is lacking, but rather the informality of the space which lends itself to forgetting.

Knowledge of the Berry Street burial ground was preserved through informal modes of transmission such as oral communication. From the project's inception, I treated oral knowledge as reliable. I learned that even in cases where people forgot things or claimed to not know much, they still had valid details to offer. The difficulty was recognizing when community knowledge was factual and when it was a guess, inference, or hearsay (being second-hand knowledge). Community knowledge becomes more reliable as multiple people repeat or confirm what others have said. In the case where fewer people hold first-hand memory of a site, it becomes more vulnerable to loss, especially in situations where archival records are lacking. Though the alternative may also be true. When the keeping of history depends on oral retellings, and those who hold that knowledge cease to be, other less-informed people may fill that knowledge gap. It is possible for a well-meaning archivist or researcher to propagate a story of half-truths that eventually becomes "fact" because there are few records and no knowledgeable person to refute them. When local knowledge-holders are overlooked or pass away, and archives are silent, informal burial grounds become structurally vulnerable. For this reason, the results of the community engagement analysis are particularly important for setting the historic record straight.

Analysis of Community Engagement Results

Once direct conversational data underwent thematic analysis, the corresponding excerpts (quotes and paraphrases) were synthesized to create an overview of community knowledge, thoughts, and cultural practices in Arlington Heights. The most relevant results are listed below in alphabetical order according to the theme.

Barriers

Descendants stated that their efforts to contact the Department of Historic Resources to learn more about the site and to request a memorial marker for the site resulted in silence. This interaction is only one indicator of barriers to preservation and institutional silences which negatively impact African American historic resources. Local church leadership exposed structural barriers to research such as disorganized "closet" archives or church umbrella organizations transferring local historic documents to larger centralized, less accessible, overseeing agencies. Community members identified other barriers such as legal ambiguity and illiteracy which impacted land ownership for African Americans. Barriers to research for African Americans include gatekeepers who refuse to share or allow access to "public" research spaces, and the loss of African American oral histories conducted by multiple researchers throughout the years.

Burial Ground Location & Extent

Combined local memory points to an African American burial ground that dates from 1900s-1960s, located at the end of a neighborhood, back in the woods just off from Berry Street. Community remembrance positions the burial ground on both sides of the street in the wooded areas, and possibly even as far back as the King's Court Playground. A past City Council member shared memories of one part of the burial ground that is in the woods to the west of a commonly-used ATV path. Deacon John Parham, who owned the last building on Waverly Street before it tapered off into woods, buried people on land not far from his home and informal funeral home. At one time, some of the graves were marked by headstones, fieldstones, or cinderblocks (See Image 10). Red, yellow, or black ribbons were tied to trees to indicate burials. Over time, the grave markers disappeared, possibly through vandalism or theft, leaving behind

rows of evenly-spaced ground depressions as the only indications of burials. Around the 1960s and 1970s, new development in Arlington Heights threatened the burials, and possibly even uncovered some ancestral remains.

Burial Practices

To synthesize statements made regarding burial practices, community members noted that people were buried in handmade wooden boxes (not coffins). Children were buried in Christian gowns, or hand-made church clothes (suits or dresses). Due to financial constraints, families who could not afford burial at the People's Memorial Cemetery in Petersburg were forced to bury their loved ones in informal burial locations, leading to the burial ground located near Berry Street. Fraternal groups provided burial insurance to offset these expenses.

Image 10: The only visible headstone in the burial ground (original work of the author)

This insurance was a small fee that families paid which secured a burial location and headstone. One past mason said, "No one was rolling in money, but they would help one another. A mason [from a fraternal lodge] had a brother that had passed and he ended up with some masons from Petersburg giving a helping hand to bury his brother" (Participant L03-A, local, descendant, September 8, 2025). Those outside of fraternal organizations often had to fend for themselves. Deacon Parham offered a cheaper alternative to burials through a barter system which allowed people to pay what they could using money or goods. Families did not hold funerals in this area like they did at traditional cemeteries. Instead, a few men would haul burial boxes off into the woods with little fanfare. Occasionally, a small group would attend a burial, especially if a local church was involved. Due to the absence of legal burial systems, churches in the African American community served as the main archives for death data.

Community Knowledge

Community knowledge serves multiple purposes for this project. First, it provides data about connections between people and places which fills in archival gaps. Second, it provides informal avenues for research such as who might have information, who might be interred in the burial ground, or what topics to consider. Third, it offers insight into public perception of the burial ground, people connected to the burial ground, those who might be interred in the burial ground. Through community knowledge, the burial ground is placed within the societal and historical contexts of the lived experience of Arlington Heights locals.

While this knowledge is most important for understanding the significance of the burial ground, accessing it was not always easy. People needed memory aids such as the list of surnames used at the farmer's market to recall older memories. Historic map images, pictures of news articles or

death certificates, and seeing a familiar face from the Berry Street community sparked remembrance, even in one person who suffered memory loss after brain surgery.

During conversations, community members shared information about societal, historical, political, and religious contexts and structures which influenced their lived experience. Arlington Heights residents also provided data about people and their connection to places. This data also led to lists of contacts who may know something about the burial ground or those interred there, as well as future research threads. Without this information, it would have been much more challenging to find and verify connections between ancestors, descendants, and the burial ground. Additionally, community knowledge guided the research process and project ethics by revealing expectations for trust, community, educational opportunities, and access to research data.

Community Stewardship & Care

Community members practice informal care for their own family burials and those of their friends and neighbors. Common maintenance includes cutting grass and clearing away overgrowth or debris. To continue this tradition, locals wish to collaborate with the Keep Hopewell Beautiful organization to train volunteers in property cemetery preservation and clearing techniques, to carefully haul away trash, to remove natural overgrowth from the burials, and to document the burials and material culture findings. Descendants want to honor their ancestors through local programming, and a website built in collaboration with students from BrightPoint Community College. They want the site to be memorialized as "a Black historical site."

Comparative Cemetery Experience

Comparative cemetery experiences supported the idea of Berry Street as a distinct entity from formal burial grounds, lacking headstones, clear boundaries, signage, security, access, documentation, records, or public awareness of the location. Instead, Berry Street aligns with those informal cemeteries that often have fieldstones or missing headstones, ground subsidence leading to deep depressions as the only indication of burials, ambiguous ownership, and lack of protections or preservation strategies. Few people remember the location of this site and parts of it have disappeared from the landscape.

Cultural Norms Around Death & Silence

During the 1920s-1960s, African American families had clearly defined family roles. Parents were keepers of knowledge and rarely shared information about death or burial practices. Children were polite, did not ask many questions, and they stayed out of adult conversations. When they went outside to play, the adults cautioned them about the burial ground. Those adults that are in their 70s and 80s today, remember Arlington Heights as children living in the 1940s and 1950s. Deacon Parham was considered a scary man due to his closeness to death and his connection to the burial ground. The woods were a creepy place because they knew people were buried there, but they did not know exactly where. Parents sometimes told them stories of the burial sites or of deceased family members, but the children did not retain that information into adulthood. Some people remember stories of bodies of their brothers and sisters being displayed in the home for a day, dressed in their Sunday best, until Deacon Parham came to place them into a box and take them off into the woods. The adults did not like to talk much about death with their children, or anyone else. Even during this project, people admitted they had knowledge but refused to share it.

Disorganization & Informal Burial Practices

After Deacon Parham died, Walter Turner took over burials at the Berry Street burial ground. He had his own funeral home, the first official Black funeral home in Hopewell, which gave him access to burials through the city and the surrounding areas. One burial ground, located with a Baptist Church, was under his purview. When asked by a descendant if he [Walter Turner] could locate the burial of his mother, Walter Turner responded that it was too overgrown, and he did not know where she was buried (see Image 11).

Image 11: Old Turner funeral home, now named Bland. It is currently non-operational (courtesy of Google Maps, 2024)

Documented Burial Locations

This provides a stark contrast to the burials at Berry Street. These documented burials include information such as the name of the person who is buried, the location of the burial ground along with clear landmarks, information about security (fencing) and other nearby cemeteries.

Family Connection to Burial Ground

Community conversations revealed many descendants, all with knowledge of brothers, sisters, or cousins who died as children and were buried at Berry Street. Many of these children were twins who died at birth or not long after. Locals provided long lists of surnames which are still being researched.

Funeral Home Use & Continuity

Deacon Parham lived in the last house on Waverly Street. He either had a building that served as a funeral home or used a part of his own home for his funeral processes. Locals remember him burying people at Berry Street in the 1930s and 1940s. No one remembers if there were any laws that provided burial guidance which might have impacted burials such as the ones near Berry Street. By the 1950s, Parham was gone and Walter Turner was the official undertaker and owner of a funeral home on Arlington Street, the site of a former military fort. Community members recall that he worked for Central State and would pick up unclaimed bodies and bury them at Berry Street. People remember Walter Turner handling Berry Street burials from the 1950s-1960s, and they reported that he did not keep good records. At some point, Turner worked with a man with the surname of Tucker. Tucker had the ambulance and Turner had the funeral home. Sometime in the 1960s, burials at Berry Street stopped as people began to bury their loved ones at the Blandford Cemetery in Petersburg. At some point, a man surnamed Bland bought Turner's funeral home and just added his name to it: Turner Bland Funeral Home. Bland and Turner never worked together; they were not partners. Many years after Bland bought the funeral home, there was a disaster in the building which led to its closing. People are not sure where the burial records are though some think they are still in the building.

Genealogical Knowledge

Genealogical knowledge revealed previously unknown descendant names as well as surnames for future research. Conversations with locals revealed errors in historic documents and vital records which had previously provided barriers to locating family connections. It is through these conversations that descendants identified incorrect data and fixed it, resulting in the restoration of their documented lineage. Family narratives provided some context for family members buried at Berry Street and filled in archival gaps. Inconsistent archives continue to impact family-based genealogical research and to impede the vital work of connecting descendants to the Berry Street burial ground.

Institutional Burials

Some locals recall that Walter Turner had an agreement with Central State Mental Hospital to pick up unclaimed bodies and bury them at Berry Street. It is unclear if the individuals released from Central State were associated with the Arlington Heights neighborhood prior to their admittance to Central State. This area of research continues in an effort to identify another potential repository for burial ground data which might fill in the gaps at Berry Street.

Interpretive Context & Ethics

Researchers throughout the United States provided their challenges which impact cemetery research and preservation: lack of funding, limited descendant involvement, racial tensions, changing cultural attitudes around death, ethical concerns, trust issues, power dynamics, and new anti-diversity / anti-climate change politics [new as of 2025]. Throughout these conversations, several questions arose consistently: (1) What does descendant outreach look like when it's not being 100% led by a descendant? (2) What are the different communication mechanisms? (3)

How to get descendants to care? especially younger ones? (4) The mean age of those involved is 60+. How to reach the younger ones? (5) How to place importance on your own history and heritage? (6) How to reshape the narrative at times when we're being erased? Researchers engaged in cemetery research may be expected to provide their own answers to these questions at some point during their project.

Knowledge Loss Over Time

Specific details about the burial ground, or even proof of its existence, were mostly known to the residents of the Arlington Heights community. Today, knowledge holders for the oral history of Berry Street are now in their 80s and 90s, with the oldest known descendant being 94 years old. Through memory loss and death, the locals are slowly losing access to vital information regarding the location of the burial ground and the names of those people interred within. With few official records and even fewer living archives, it is ever-vital to document what descendants remember right now. When these knowledge holders are gone, so too will be their memories of the burial ground. One 80-year-old descendant stated, “If you didn't live in that area, you won't know. The people in King's Court wouldn't know because they weren't from that area. Older people from Arlington Heights are gone. No one knows anything about that area over there except for the Black folks who lived there. I just turned 80 years old and there's no one past me. I'm the first thing in line as far as the head of the family line. Our whole little section of people is gone" [Referring to the neighborhood of people that she named previously in the conversation.] (Participant L08-A, local, descendant, September 8, 2025).

Land Ownership & Tenancy

Many plats in Arlington Heights appear to have been originally owned by one white family. That family rented to African Americans for some time until the renters could afford to buy their homes. Military service provided one pathway to homeownership for some families. Unclear community memory, combined with structural documentation deficiencies regarding land acquisition and transfer, negatively influences research for the burial ground. Without a clear chain of title, it is difficult to trace ownership of the burial ground and of the home and funeral home that Deacon Parham rented or owned.

Limits to Preservation

The burial ground developed from an economic need for local and affordable burial places for Arlington Heights' African American community. While the initial need was born out of survival, the descendants still care about their ancestors and wish to honor them in death. Community members should not have been forced to choose between preserving their own lives and memorializing their lost loved ones, but that was the circumstance at the time. Now, their focus has shifted, and they want to recognize their ancestors in ways that express their familial importance and their humanity.

Methodological Guidance

Conversations with researchers provided methodological guidance for this project. Experts provided guidance regarding researcher networks, opportunities for collaboration, archives, funding sources, and community outreach and engagement ideas. They also shared thoughts about preservation and long-term maintenance. Through these conversations, researchers identified several reoccurring questions which are necessary to consider for all community-led

burial ground projects. Finally, many researchers provided insight and guidance on future thesis ideas in connection to the burial ground.

Neighborhood Geography & Name Changes

Institutions asked questions regarding annexation and the impact to communities over time. What data was lost? What role did annexation play in changing or reshaping cultural connections and practices? Some Arlington Heights locals remember the street names changing after annexation. These types of changes impact the ability to locate the burial ground, the funeral home, and Deacon Parham's home. It also negatively impacts lived memory as community members struggled to identify the exact locale of their homes or their past neighbors. This provides evidence for why public memory often did not align with maps. Locals described structural inequities such as environmental hazards, segregated burial locations, insufficient burial location data on death certificates, and physical erasure of Black homes over time.

Possible Undocumented Burial Site

One descendant remembered another undocumented burial site located just off of Arlington Road in Prince George County, Virginia. This site is about a 15-minute drive from Berry Street. Similar to Berry Street, it is only through community memory that this site's location remains "known." A future research project might include a comparative case study of this "newly discovered" site with Berry Street. During the initial community engagement phases for Berry Street, community members revealed at least 3 undocumented burial grounds in Hopewell and Prince George, as well as raised questions about the Spencer Family burial ground in Cavalier Square. These results suggest that institutional archives have failed to provide researchers with

complete access to burial ground and cemetery locations because these archives do not have that information; the community does.

Threats

Taken together, these responses show that development and lack of perpetual care have disturbed the burial ground. Throughout the years, people alerted the city to these threats, showing that the site still holds meaning in modern times. The City showed a lack of meaningful action to assist the community in protecting the burial ground, leading to more damage to the site and potential desecration of burials. A lack of documentation, larger community awareness, and zoning and building protections, caused not only physical harm to the burials, but emotional harm to descendants. Additionally, common footpaths and ATV paths may lead to inadvertent disturbance of graves, land erosion, and possible safety risks. Past actions such as mass ground disturbance to build the dump and to add drainage pipes may have desecrated burials. Systemic legal regulations which limited Black land ownership in the past led to the loss of informal burial locations such as the one at Berry Street. Community members want the city to be more educated about the historic sites in the city, and to protect them from development and encroachment.

Analysis of the Community Meeting Survey Results

When reviewing survey responses from the community meeting, I expected the informants, some of whom were descendants, to prioritize memorializing those buried in the burial ground over other options. In reality, Tracking and Sharing Progress ranked first. Out of a total of 20 themes, those in Table 5: Community Meeting High Count Themes ranked the highest. The top three themes all connect under the topic of communication. Ultimately, this data shows that descendants and community members mentioned communication more often than having

markers and monuments on the site, maintaining the site, or providing protections for the site. This is not to say that communication is the most important aspect of community work though. After reviewing the themes, I realized that each theme could be further refined into broader categories, leading to second-cycle axial coding. In Table 6: Second-Cycle Axial Coding, respondents made more suggestions relating to Preservation than they did for Communication or Involvement.

Graph 1: Second-Cycle Axial Coding Results show a different perspective. All the respondents provided comments about Preservation, as opposed to five respondents who provided comments related to Communication. Comments regarding Preservation were so varied, as seen in Table 6: Second-Cycle Axial Coding, that there was little duplication of themes, leading to the appearance that fewer people were interested in things like site security, honoring the deceased, or recovering the lost history of the site. This process shows the inherent challenges with various types of analysis.

The coding structure that a researcher chooses can influence analysis outcomes. Varying analytic structures could be used to reinforce researcher bias or to present misleading or incomplete information. For this project, it was important to view data in different ways to ensure accuracy of results. From thematic inductive analysis, I learned that communication in the form of Tracking and Sharing Progress is important to about half of the group. Through axial coding, I learned that Preservation, presented in various forms, is most important to the entire group. Since the Preservation category included so many themes, it could be difficult to identify a single preservation action to prioritize that would make a majority of the group happy. Alternatively, at

least half the group would be happy with any type of communication or sharing of information. Another important piece of information comes from the involvement category which has the lowest number of respondents and responses. While this project did not provide the opportunity to thoroughly investigate involvement in the form of volunteering or community members taking responsibility for research and site maintenance, the question of involvement came up often during the internship. These initial findings show that involvement in the form of volunteering, and the expectation of involvement from other entities (local government), are not a high priority. This may also prove to be a potential factor in the success or failure of long-term maintenance of the site.

Analysis of Community Event Evaluation Results

The majority of the evaluation questions at the Genealogy Workshop (the only community event sponsored by the researcher during this project) were not open-ended. These questions focused on overall satisfaction with the workshop, suggestions for improvement, and ideas for future workshops. Six of the respondents rated the workshop as overwhelmingly positive, meaning that it met their needs and/or expectations for the workshop. Most of the suggestions for improvement were requests for more workshops, for specific help with researching a single family member, or with having access to laptops during the workshop. Attendees did have access to laptops, but two attendees arrived late and might not have heard that announcement. I realized from the response that it is important to make announcements multiple times throughout the workshop to keep everyone informed and to avoid receiving negative feedback for something that was avoidable.

Comparing the evaluation and survey results, there is one area of overlap—volunteering. Out of the six evaluation responses, 50% said they would like to be involved through volunteering and 50% said they were undecided. From the survey results, 20% said they would be involved in meetings, events, or giving reverence to the deceased. There were some duplicate attendees at each event, and the documents were submitted anonymously, so there is no way to know if there is overlap in the responses for volunteering. Regardless, it is clear that a very low number of people are willing to volunteer, with a total of 5 people (assuming no duplicated responses) across both meetings.

This event was not directly related to providing answers for the burial ground. The results proved that attendees and descendants value workshops that will help them to identify family connections. I believe that researchers take something from communities when doing research (data, time, ideas), and it is important to give back in meaningful ways. While one event is not enough to support this supposition, the respondents expressed a desire for more of these workshops and provided specific suggestions for future genealogy workshops. This supports the idea that locals care about their family connections, desire to know more about their family history, and need help with conducting genealogy research. For this project, every effort should be made to continue offering community events which give back to the community in local ways.

Non-Invasive Archaeology Analysis

Deed research, map analysis, and community input could only provide information on where the burial ground was not located or on the potential geographic areas to investigate. Also, natural overgrowth in the woods made systematic survey impossible. Therefore, I chose to conduct a

non-invasive reconnaissance survey of the areas with the highest probability of having a burial ground. The reconnaissance survey was not effective on the north side of Berry Street due to the large number of privately owned lots and the overgrowth which blocked city-owned right of ways.

Surveys in this area elicited much public curiosity and people began to watch the team and drive by us slowly. In an effort to limit public curiosity, I approached a vehicle which was blocking the road to watch us and explained about our project. The gentleman in the vehicle was a property owner in the area and welcomed us to explore his property in the future. He also directed us to where he thought the burial ground would be—deep in the woods to the south of Berry Street, almost back to the old dump near the Delrose neighborhood. Another woman came over and joined the conversation. She verified what the gentleman said, so our team chose to investigate the south side of Berry Street but pushed deeper into the woods than previously planned (See Image 12).

We decided to walk the commonly used ATV trail because it allowed for unobstructed access to the back of the woods. After walking for about twenty minutes, I noticed a tree in the distance that had a large hole near the bottom of it (See Image 13). The hole seemed quite large, and I mentioned the tree to the group. The DHR archaeologist chose to leave the path and go investigate the tree. About ten feet off the path, he began to see indications of human use such as broken curbing. The rest of us followed when he began to see depressions in the ground. By following community knowledge of the residents and then looking for clues from the natural surroundings, we were able to locate the burial ground to the south of Berry Street. In this case,

community knowledge was essential to identify the burial ground, and the landscape provided support and guidance to refine that community knowledge.

Our investigative team owes much of the discovery of the burial ground to the landscape and the one tree with the hole in it. Without that tree, we would have walked past the burial ground or even turned around. It stood out in that forested area. The burial ground is not a one-hundred-year-old site, therefore the trees here are not that old either. While this tree does not fit the literal definition of a "Black heritage tree," it could possibly be a witness tree as we do owe it some thanks for standing as a silent witness to the injustice experienced by those buried in the surrounding forest (Odewale et al. 2026). Its role in the rediscovery of this site connects it to the landscape and the story of this burial ground.

Image 12: Picture of the burial ground taken by Kelly Pratt, October 14, 2025. Photo facing west. Depressions hidden by natural overgrowth (original work of the author)

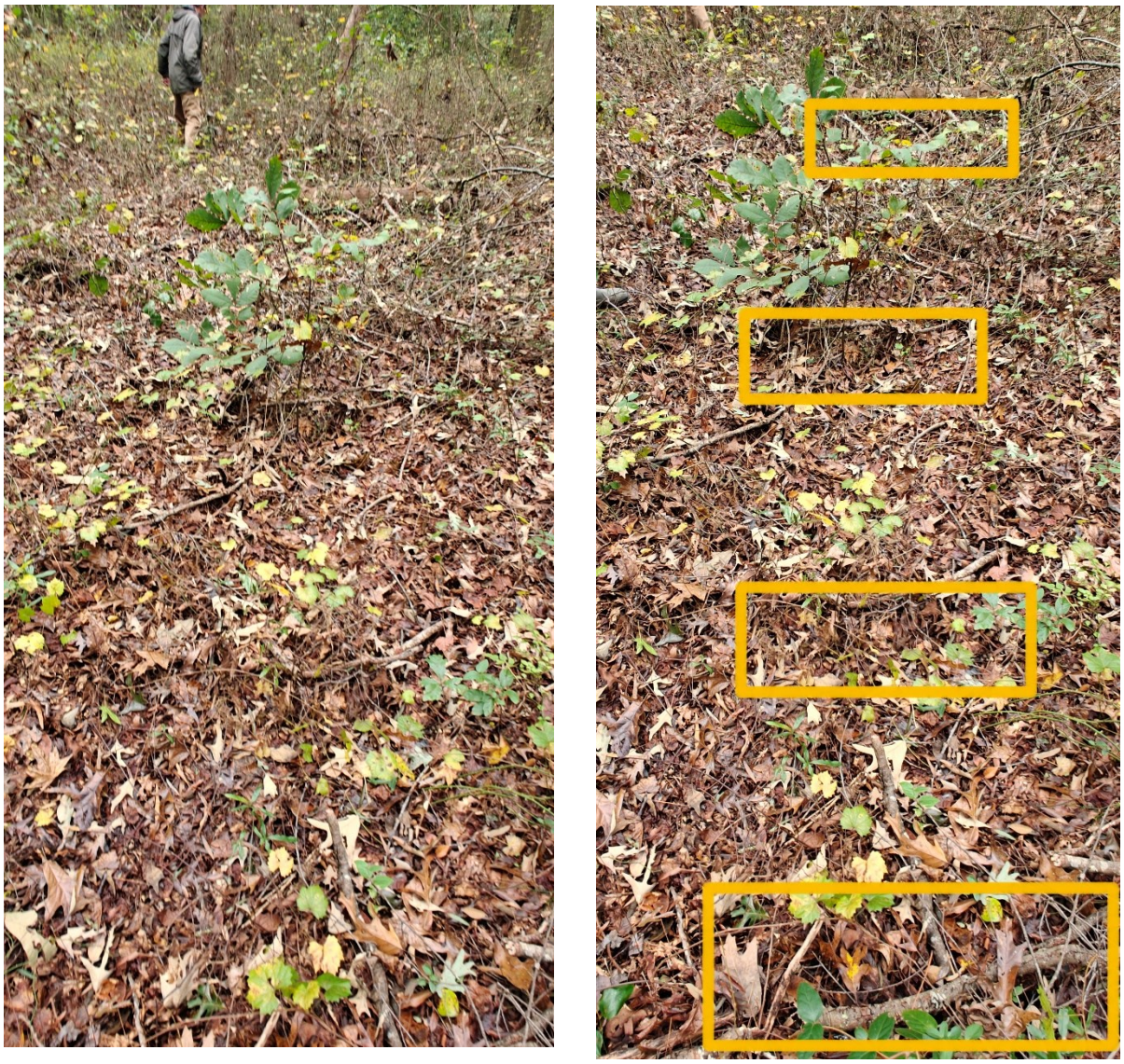
Image 13: Picture of the tree which led to the burial ground. Photo facing southwest (original work of the author)

Prior to finding the site, I had no idea if the burials would be laid out systematically or without order. Finding such an orderly burial site meant that Deacon Parham, the unofficial undertaker for the burial ground, either had some education in laying out proper burials, was influenced by other burial sites, or received some advice from professional undertakers. This is quite possible since Thomas Henry Brown, an African American undertaker opened a funeral home in Hopewell in 1916. Brown established the Hopewell Benevolent Beneficial Society (a burial

insurance agency), helped found the Sweet Home Church, worked at the DuPont Company as a labor agent, and was the impetus for the creation of a Black funeral directors group (Virginia Morticians' Association of McKenney 2021; Trinkley et al. 1999). Brown primarily buried people in the People's Memorial Cemetery in Petersburg, so he may have offered guidance to Parham, who focused his undertaking work in Hopewell. However Parham gained his education, the Berry Street burial ground is well-laid out (See Image 14).

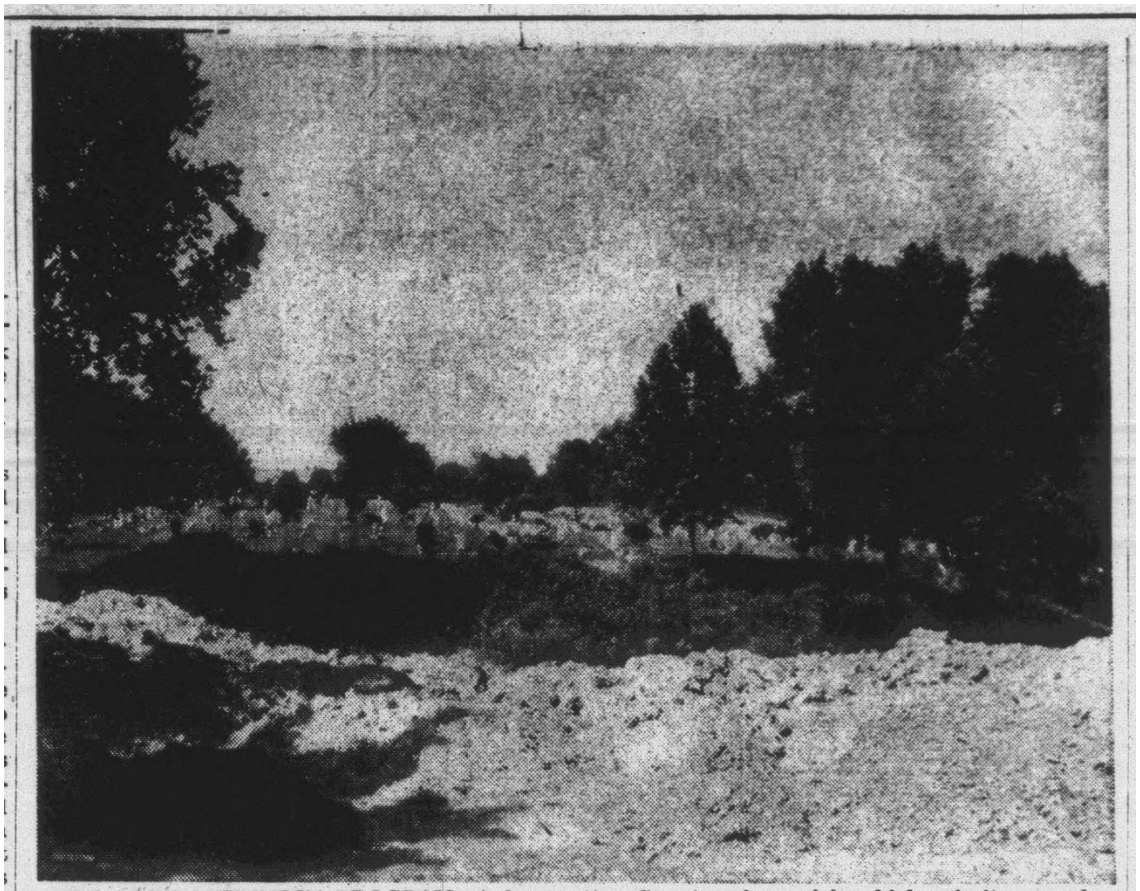
It was not possible to get a full count of burials, dimensions of burials, or measurements of the site due to overgrowth, and part of the burial ground being located on privately owned land. I talked with an archaeologist from the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) regarding the identification of potential burials of children. She stated that infant burials may not be visible in the physical landscape, especially since these children were buried in small wooden boxes and might even have been buried together in the case of twin deaths or the death of a mother and newborn baby. This can make calculating the number of burials challenging when there are no headstones to identify the interred. Therefore, there could be more burials on the site than what is visible through ground depressions. The DHR representative indicated that in these cases, they would take a count of the burials and then double that number to account for infant and adolescent deaths. That would result in about 160 burials at this location.

Image 14: Pictures showing one area of the burial ground. The image on the right shows depressions outlined in yellow (original work of the author).



Since the site is informal and the location was not well-known in the larger Hopewell community, there was no maintenance or perpetual care, no boundary fence, no signage, and no other indications of cemetery boundaries. The systematic layout of the site from the 1920s-1960s shows that the burial ground was initially created with intention, forethought, and care. While the burial ground was unofficial in the eyes of the City officials, it was a legitimate burial site for those in the community who could not afford burial in a Petersburg cemetery. Due to its informal status, the site lacked protections that it might have been afforded through City recognition such as site security, landscaping, maintenance, funding, and perpetual care of burial sites. City-recognized sites were constantly discussed in City Council meetings and newspaper articles (See image 15), adding legitimacy and longevity to those sites through archival documentation and public acknowledgement (*City Cemetery in Process of Being Enlarged* 1954; *City Cemetery Expansion Plan Is Discussed Here* 1955; *Many Improvements Being Made In Appomattox Cemetery Here* 1937; Staff 1954). Meanwhile, the informal nature of the Berry Street Burial Ground put it at-risk of erasure from the public landscape. Systemic support for city-recognized cemeteries was lacking for the burial ground, further widening the disparity between it and more official sites. These factors led to a historic site that is in danger from various factors such as development, vandalism, nature, and loss of public memory.

Image 15: $3,000 Appomattox Cemetery Expansion Planned. Hopewell News, Volume 28, Number 125, 25 June 1954 (courtesy of The Hopewell News)



TWO ACRE EXPANSION PROGRAM at Appomattox Cemetery is receiving high priority according to W. M. Altman, Jr., City Engineer. The tract of land in the foreground of this picture shows a portion of the ground that will be filled and graded in the $3,000 program. The project will increase the cemetery grounds 20 per cent according to the City Engineer. (Staff Photo)

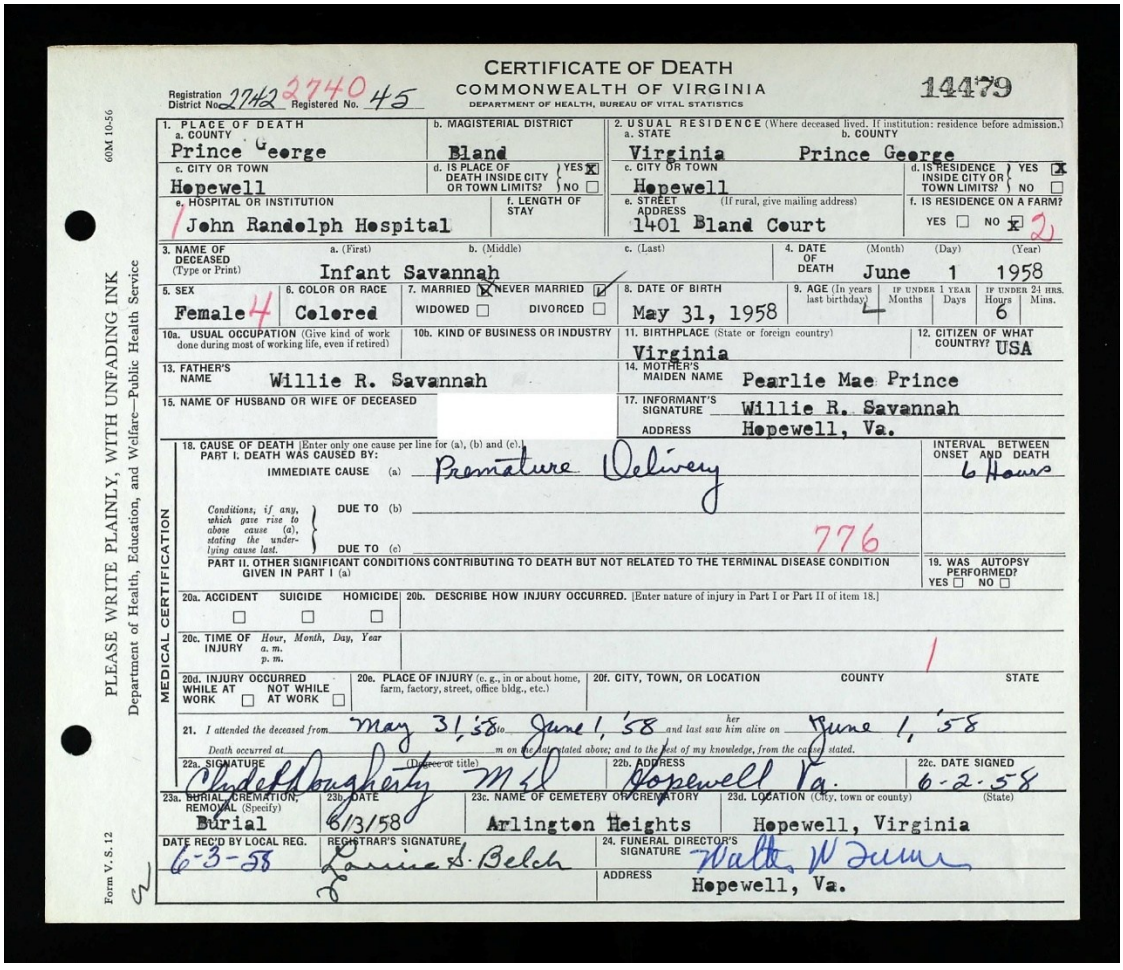
Death Certificate and Obituary Analysis

Obituary research was limited by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and archival newspaper data. OCR is the process of taking images or printed text and converting it into searchable data. For the city and state newspaper repositories, OCR data was often inaccurate, leading to improper spellings, omission of words or parts of words, or no data at all. Community members provided names of those interred in the burial ground and I attempted to locate obituaries in the newspaper archives. I also searched for known burial ground names, which provided a few obituaries. Additionally, full newspaper archives were not completely digitized leading to partial searchable data. Obituary research occasionally provided alternate spellings of names which could then be used to search for death certificates.

Ancestry and Family Search were useful tools for death certificate research. Both sites provided more than ten thousand death certificates to analyze, even using filters. Due to the informal nature of the burial ground, the naming conventions varied, making the search more difficult. More than fifty percent of the known burials for this site are infants. This speaks to a high mortality rate for children during the 1920s-1960s. "In 1916, the rate [infant mortality rate or IMR] for black infants was 184.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, 87% higher than the rate for white infants (99.0). In 1920, the black IMR was 43% higher than the white IMR" (Singh and Yu 2019). Twins may have presented with even lower survival rates. According to the old Arlington Heights community, there are many twins buried at Berry Street. Researching them was challenging. When twins died, they were sometimes not given first names. Words such as infant or baby were used as a first name along with the family surname. Searching by surname was sometimes ineffective, even with knowledge of the mother's and father's names. It was also easy

to overlook twin death certificates if both twins had the same name (Infant Jones), and died on the same day (See Image 16 and Image 17). It was necessary to scrutinize times of death, genders, causes of death, and any other identifying information to identify twins. This information also needed to be cross referenced against community knowledge. In some cases, I could only locate the death certificate of one twin. Usually, twins who were buried at Berry Street did not receive obituaries, or if they did, I could not find them. Several of the deceased in the burial ground are twins.

Image 16: Death Certificate for Infant Savannah (Female) 1958 (courtesy of Ancestry.com)



CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Registration District No. 2742 2740 Registered No. 45 — 14479

PLEASE WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—Public Health Service
60M 10-56
Form V. S. 12

1. PLACE OF DEATH
a. COUNTY: Prince George
b. MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Bland
c. CITY OR TOWN: Hopewell
d. IS PLACE OF DEATH INSIDE CITY OR TOWN LIMITS? YES X NO
e. HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION: John Randolph Hospital
f. LENGTH OF STAY: 1

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission.)
a. STATE: Virginia
b. COUNTY: Prince George
c. CITY OR TOWN: Hopewell
d. IS RESIDENCE INSIDE CITY OR TOWN LIMITS? YES X NO
e. STREET ADDRESS (If rural, give mailing address): 1401 Bland Court
f. IS RESIDENCE ON A FARM? YES NO X 2

3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print): a. (First) Infant b. (Middle) c. (Last) Savannah
4. DATE OF DEATH: June 1 1958
5. SEX: Female 4
6. COLOR OR RACE: Colored
7. MARRIED NEVER MARRIED WIDOWED DIVORCED
8. DATE OF BIRTH: May 31, 1958
9. AGE (In years last birthday): 4 — IF UNDER 1 YEAR: Months, Days; IF UNDER 24 HRS.: Hours 6, Mins.
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired)
10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY
11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country): Virginia
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? USA
13. FATHER'S NAME: Willie R. Savannah
14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: Pearlie Mae Prince
15. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE OF DECEASED
17. INFORMANT'S SIGNATURE: Willie R. Savannah
ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

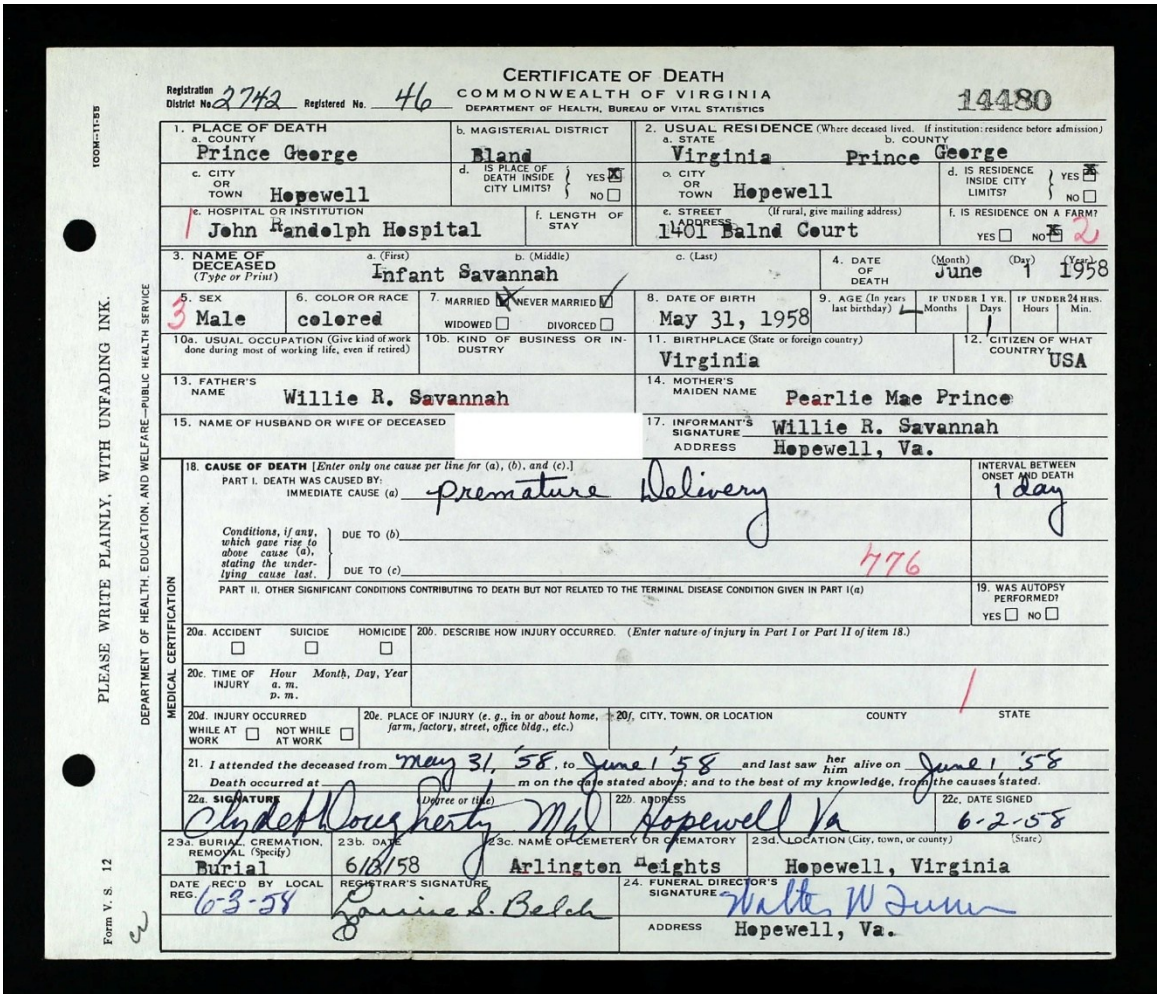
MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

18. CAUSE OF DEATH [Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b) and (c).]
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a): Premature Delivery — INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH: 6 Hours
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a), stating the underlying cause last.
DUE TO (b):
DUE TO (c): 776
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I (a)
19. WAS AUTOPSY PERFORMED? YES NO

20a. ACCIDENT SUICIDE HOMICIDE
20b. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED. [Enter nature of injury in Part I or Part II of item 18.]
20c. TIME OF INJURY Hour, Month, Day, Year a. m. p. m.
20d. INJURY OCCURRED WHILE AT WORK NOT WHILE AT WORK
20e. PLACE OF INJURY (e. g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.)
20f. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION COUNTY STATE

21. I attended the deceased from May 31, '58 to June 1, '58 and last saw her/him alive on June 1, '58
Death occurred at m. on the date stated above; and to the best of my knowledge, from the cause stated.
22a. SIGNATURE (Doctor or title): Clyde H. Dougherty M.D.
22b. ADDRESS: Hopewell Va.
22c. DATE SIGNED: 6-2-58
23a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify): Burial
23b. DATE: 6/3/58
23c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: Arlington Heights
23d. LOCATION (City, town or county) (State): Hopewell, Virginia
DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG.: 6-3-58
REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: Lonnie A. Belch
24. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: Walter W Turner
ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

Image 17: Death Certificate for Infant Savannah (Male) 1958 (courtesy of Ancestry.com)



CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

Registration District No. 2742 Registered No. 46 — 14480

1. PLACE OF DEATH: a. County: Prince George; b. Magisterial District: Bland; c. City or Town: Hopewell; d. Is place of death inside city limits? YES X NO; e. Hospital or Institution: John Randolph Hospital; f. Length of Stay: 1
2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where deceased lived. If institution: residence before admission): a. State: Virginia; b. County: Prince George; c. City or Town: Hopewell; d. Is residence inside city limits? YES X NO; e. Street Address (If rural, give mailing address): 1401 Baland Court; f. Is residence on a farm? YES NO X 2
3. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print): a. (First) Infant; b. (Middle); c. (Last) Savannah
4. DATE OF DEATH: June 1 1958
5. SEX: 3 Male
6. COLOR OR RACE: colored
7. MARRIED X NEVER MARRIED X WIDOWED DIVORCED
8. DATE OF BIRTH: May 31, 1958
9. AGE (In years last birthday): 1 — If under 1 yr.: Months; Days 1; If under 24 hrs.: Hours; Min.
10a. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired)
10b. KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY
11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country): Virginia
12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY? USA
13. FATHER'S NAME: Willie R. Savannah
14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: Pearlie Mae Prince
15. NAME OF HUSBAND OR WIFE OF DECEASED
17. INFORMANT'S SIGNATURE: Willie R. Savannah; ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

18. CAUSE OF DEATH [Enter only one cause per line for (a), (b), and (c).]
PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY:
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a): premature Delivery — INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH: 1 day
Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a), stating the underlying cause last.
DUE TO (b):
DUE TO (c): 776
PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE TERMINAL DISEASE CONDITION GIVEN IN PART I(a)
19. WAS AUTOPSY PERFORMED? YES NO
20a. ACCIDENT SUICIDE HOMICIDE
20b. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY occurred. (Enter nature of injury in Part I or Part II of item 18.)
20c. TIME OF INJURY Hour a. m. p. m. Month, Day, Year
20d. INJURY OCCURRED WHILE AT WORK NOT WHILE AT WORK
20e. PLACE OF INJURY (e. g., in or about home, farm, factory, street, office bldg., etc.)
20f. CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION COUNTY STATE
21. I attended the deceased from May 31, '58 to June 1 '58 and last saw her him alive on June 1 '58
Death occurred at m on the date stated above; and to the best of my knowledge, from the causes stated.
22a. SIGNATURE (Degree or title): Clyde H Dougherty M.D.; 22b. ADDRESS: Hopewell Va; 22c. DATE SIGNED: 6-2-58
23a. BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL (Specify): Burial; 23b. DATE: 6/3/58; 23c. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: Arlington Heights; 23d. LOCATION (City, town, or county) (State): Hopewell, Virginia
DATE REC'D BY LOCAL REG.: 6-3-58; REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: Louise S. Belch
24. FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: Walter W Dunn; ADDRESS: Hopewell, Va.

PLEASE WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK.
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE—PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
Form V. S. 12

Death certificate searches proved useful for identifying adults who are interred in the site. Searching by cemetery name (using all alternative names), neighborhood, undertaker, race, and various other factors often provided the names of people who are buried at Berry Street, but this process was long and arduous. After searching for months, I identified about 58 death certificates which might be connected to the site. The most limiting factor for this research was the lack of an official name for the burial ground plus unofficial burying practices at the time. Sometimes people buried on their land, or the person recording the death certificate just used Prince George

as the cemetery location. One descendant identified their brother as being buried in the site, but his death certificate indicates Prince George as his place of burial and the family as the undertaker. These generic terms could be useful for identifying other potential burials, but not without community knowledge to guide the search process. By locating death certificates of the interred, I was sometimes able to connect descendants to the burial ground who did not previously know they had a connection. This was successful to help with building the descendant pool.

The lack of a consistent name for the burial ground, societal naming conventions for infants who died during childbirth, inaccurate OCR data, and lack of complete newspaper archives all led to challenges with locating those people who were interred at the Berry Street burial ground. These systemic patterns, which are connected to informal burial patterns and cultural death practices, made it difficult to identify infants, to verify the correct burial ground location, and to locate obituaries for the deceased. Community knowledge proved vital to guide the search process and to verify findings. Just like Berry Street, it is possible that other informal African American burial sites dating to the early to mid-1900s may face similar challenges. While each site should be treated as unique, it is important to recognize patterns that may provide challenges and/or answers when researching informal burials sites.

Conclusion: Community Knowledge and the Rediscovery of Hidden History

The study of the Berry Street Burial Ground addresses the question of this thesis, which asks: how do archival records, archaeological field observation, and community knowledge work together to interpret a poorly documented burial ground? The answer is that no single approach could provide enough information to accomplish the goals of this research. Archaeological investigations helped to verify the location of the burial ground, archival research provided fragmented site information, and community engagement provided the largest body of data for this site. These three methods complemented each other by filling in archival gaps, supporting community knowledge, and informing on research areas for field investigations. Together, they made it possible to locate the burial ground, identify the deceased, locate descendants, and to begin the process of reconnecting families to their ancestors.

Community knowledge was the most important method for research. Hopewell residents provided information relating to the historical context, land ownership, burial ground location, descendants, interred ancestors, burial customs, expectations for care and preservation for the site, and guidance on research topics and relevant archives. This project revealed that remembering was relational. Memory did not rest in the mind of a single person nor did it exist within a single archive. Instead, it was accessed through conversations, family and community connections, local places, and memory aids like maps, death certificates, and surnames.

If researchers rely only on archives, they limit their ability to understand the full significance of the site or its meaning to any connected communities. Archives might provide tangible

information like location, landownership, and maps, but they do not capture the human component. Nor do they relay the intangible features. Archaeological investigations may only reveal fragments of data and only after community memory identifies research areas. Historic places like Berry Street must be documented and interpreted using all of these methods. For sacred sites and burial grounds, the community knowledge component may prove the most important method of research.

This research offers several broader lessons for similar projects, particularly the value of community archaeology. This approach requires that community knowledge be centered as evidence, while archival and archaeological data support and refine that knowledge. The research process should be iterative and responsive to local guidance, creating a cyclical process where the researcher consults with the community multiple times to share data, receive input and direction, and return to the archives for further research. Archival records may be incomplete or entirely absent, but these silences are not indicative of a lack of significance. When faced with archival silences and archaeological limitations, community members are essential in determining site significance.

"Through conducting community archaeology, the community is no longer the "research subject" but a partner in research" (Flewellen et al. 2022, 11). This research was shaped and guided by the Hopewell residents and burial ground descendants who provided authentic contributions to this work. In this sense, the research was not wholly my own. If given the chance to do this project differently, I would provide a way for people to have their name included as contributors to this written work. While all participants were anonymized for this

research, it would be an honor to offer more agency for them to determine how or if their name appears in this or future research.

Ultimately, this project shows how hidden history survives when formal records fail. The burial ground survived through storytelling, relationships, and place-based knowledge. Identifying the people buried there is imperative to further understanding the site's significance within the community. It is important to document the site to preserve the history, and to reconnect descendants to their genealogy and heritage. The family members buried in this cemetery deserve to have their dignity restored, to be remembered, and to be respected. The process of documenting the site also adds breadth and depth to Hopewell's historical record. Berry Street is not just a story about the rediscovery of a burial ground, it is the story of how memory, trust, and community knowledge work together to make rediscovery possible.

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