

Kiawah Homes



Kiawah Homes is a housing complex built during WWII to serve the swelling ranks of workers arriving in Charleston for the war effort. During the 18th and 19th century, however, the 10 acre parcel was one of several small, truck farms located on the Neck of the peninsula.

Mary Swadler¹ owned a large property including the current 10 acres and a wedge of land extending all the way to King Street. After her death, one of her creditors obtained a judgment for 1807 pounds sterling against her estate, and her holdings were sold on November 2, 1795. **Thomas Simons** was the highest bidder for 39.5 acres of her Neck property at 525 pounds sterling (Lots 2-12).²

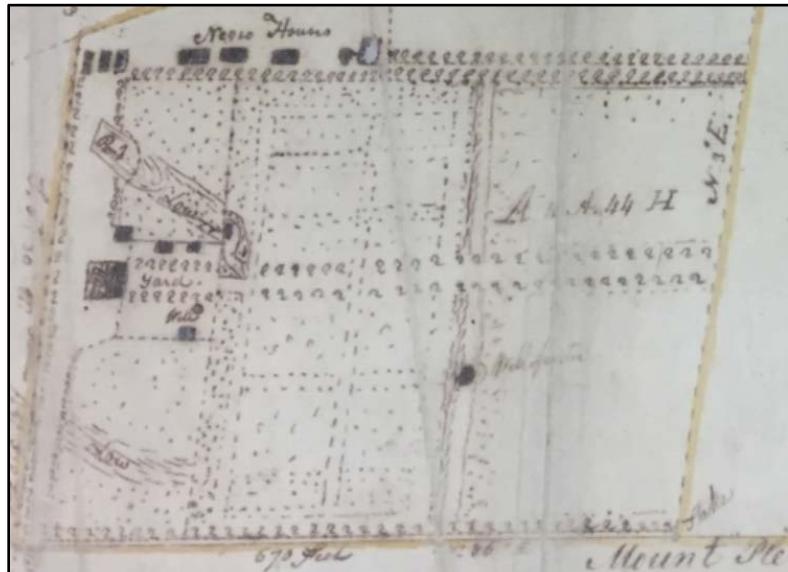
¹ Mrs. Swadler died on December 31, 1794, according to a January 1, 1795 obituary mention.

² Deed book R6, page 335

Mr. Simons, who had been a successful factor and business partner of Theodore Gaillard, Jr., died on May 10, 1805.³ An auction was held on July 2, 1805 to liquidate his property and pay his debts. In preparation for the sale, a new plat was drawn in

1805 showing the “Cottage Farm” divided into 9 lots which would be sold to several different buyers. In addition to bearing the first recorded name for the farm, the new plat contains two interesting details.

First, despite the deteriorated condition of the 1795 plat, structures were shown on the far western lot (Lot 1) that was not sold to Mr. Simons, yet *no buildings* were represented on the portion Mr. Simons bought. However, by the time the 1805 plat was drawn, a house and garden were shown. Therefore, Mr. Simons must have had the farm built between 1796 and 1805. The 1805 plat indicates that the farm was not just a simple tenant farm, but a somewhat sophisticated farming operation. The 1805 plat shows a main house and several small buildings ringing a yard behind the house. Beyond the yard, a long path lead to the fields, and shrubbery or trees lined the parcel. Along the



³ Mr. Simons left a widow, Ann, and their daughters, Mary and Susannah.

northern edge of the property was a row of thee “Negro Houses.”

No details about the house at Cottage Farm are known to exist, but an ad for the sale of Simons’ property said the farm had a “convenient Dwelling.”⁴ Also, something about the quality of the farm might be gleaned from what was happening on the other parcels. For example, immediately after Lot B was sold off at the auction of Mr. Simons’ land, its new owner added a three-story house on a high brick foundation and six fireplaces, two pantries, dry cellar, piazzas all around and outbuildings and fruit trees; all the buildings had been erected in 1805 and 1806.⁵

Second, the 1805 plat also showed one burial ground, between Lot B and Lot C near the northern edge.⁶ No burial ground had been indicated on the 1795 plat, perhaps suggesting that the spot was used for burials of those who worked on the farm. Given the wealth of the Simons family, the burial ground was almost certainly not used to family members.

Theodore Gaillard, Jr., the former business partner of Mr. Simons, bought the 10.44 acre piece of the Cottage Farm that included the farm house, yard, slave houses, and dependencies.⁷ He paid \$4707.31, and the sale was recorded on October 21, 1805.⁸

Mr. Gaillard kept the farm for a few years before he resold it to **William Drayton** for \$5000 on May 9, 1809.⁹ Mr. Drayton also held the parcel only briefly before reselling it. An advertisement for the 10 acre farm on March 3, 1810,



⁴ Charleston Courier, June 19, 1805, at 4

⁵ May 31, 1816

⁶ Deed book Q7, page 178

⁷ William Walton paid \$2074 for Lots H and I at the same auction. Deed book Q7, page 154. James Simons bought Lots B and C for \$4614.07. Deed book Q7, page 329

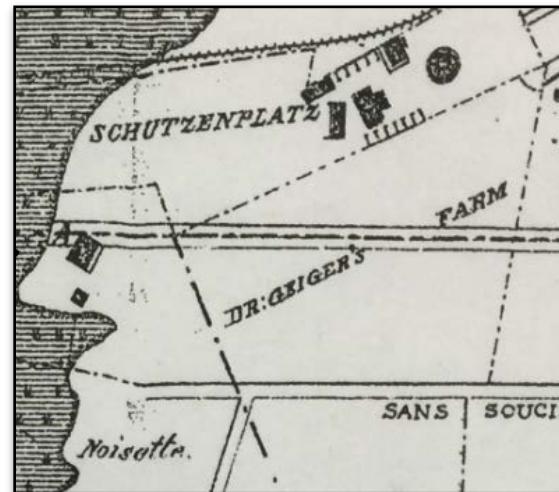
⁸ Deed book Q7, page 237

⁹ Deed book Z7, page 84

described the land as being “[a] valuable FARM on Charleston Neck, adjoining Mr. Jacob Martin’s, . . . [and] upon it are a Dwelling House, Kitchen, Wash House, and several other buildings.”¹⁰ In March 1810, **Jacob Martin**, already the owner of Mt. Pleasant (an adjacent farm), increased his holdings when he bought the 10.44 acre Cottage Farm for \$4660.72.¹¹

On March 1, 1842, Samuel Wilson (as a trustee for Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Martin) sold the combined Martin’s Farm (the Cottage Farm of 10.44 acres and the Mt. Pleasant Farm of 55 acres) for \$5500 to **Alfred B. and Rebecca Stoker**.¹² The Stokers lost the two properties in 1850 at a judicial sale. An advertisement appeared on January 30, 1850, for the court-ordered sale for “All that TRACT OF LAND known as the Mount Pleasant and Cottage farm, situate on Charleston Neck.” On February 4, 1850, Dr. **David Geiger**¹³ bought both the Cottage Farm (10.44 acres) and Mt. Pleasant (55 acres) at a public auction for \$4500 to foreclose the debts of the Stokers.¹⁴

The Geigers were the first owners to hold the house for any length of time. Dr. Geiger appeared in the November 1850 with his life living at an unspecified location on the Neck, but otherwise consistently lived on Ashley Avenue near Doughty Street. Nevertheless—and despite being a doctor—Dr. Geiger frequently appeared in records as a planter. It is unknown how active a role Dr. Geiger played in running two farms; no references have been found to the Cottage Farm during his ownership, and the Cottage Farm and Mt. Pleasant were collectively referred to as the Geiger Farm. Part of the Geiger Farm was leased to tenant farmers, but whether the leases included the Cottage Farm is not known. In 1854, a plat was prepared showing



¹⁰ Charleston Courier, March 3, 1810, at 3.

¹¹ Deed book B8, page 212

¹² Deed book Y10, page 473

¹³ David Geiger was born in 1806; married Elizabeth Horlbeck; and died on July 5, 1875. He is buried at St. Johns Lutheran Church in Charleston.

¹⁴ Deed book D12, page 590

the shape of the Cottage Farm; no buildings were shown but whether the plat had ever meant to display any features of the land other than its shape is unknown.¹⁵ Likewise, in a maps of the peninsula drawn in 1883, Dr. Geiger's Farm is clearly shown, but no buildings were represented, even though buildings were specifically drawn at the German Rifle Club (the Schutzenplatz) and Sans Souci.

When he died in 1875, and the land was received by his widow, Elizabeth N. Geiger. When Mrs. Geiger died, her executrix, Emma Julia Fricken (nee Blum), sold the Cottage Farm to **Benjamin F. Simmons**¹⁶ (shown) at an auction on May 24, 1892, for \$6300.¹⁷ The portion of the Geiger Farm that had been

Mt. Pleasant sold for \$10,000 to Otto Tiedeman, and the two properties were divided for the first time since 1810.¹⁸

According to an ad for the sale, the Cottage Farm had a burial ground of 30 by 50 that was being reserved.¹⁹ A circumstantial case can be made for the addition of the burial ground by the Geigers. None of the previous owners reserved any interest in the graveyard or even access to it. Even the earlier graveyard (shown on the 1805 plat) did not prompt any concern when the land was sold. The interest in keeping the graveyard is unexplained; Dr. Geiger was a well-to-do farmer who lived on Ashley Avenue (the site of MUSC)



¹⁵ McCrady plat 6839

¹⁶ Mr. Simmons was born in Orangeburg in 1812 and died on September 11, 1895.

¹⁷ Deed book N21, page 193

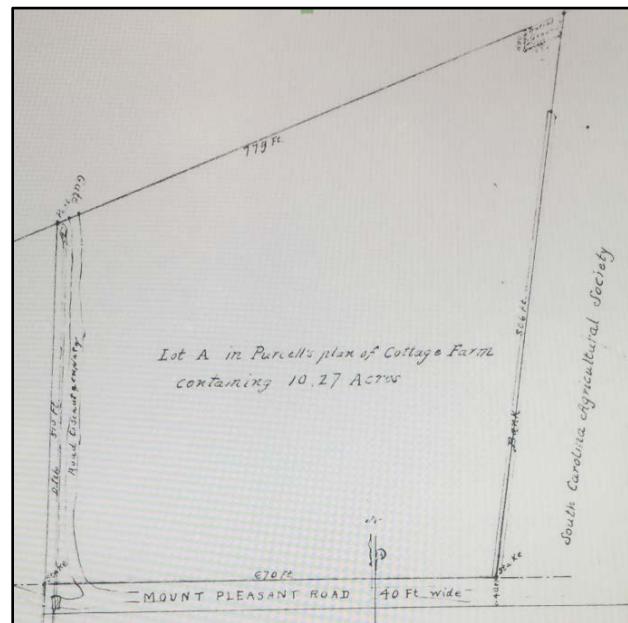
¹⁸ "In the Real Estate Field," May 25, 1892, at 8

¹⁹ Charleston News and Courier, May 5, 1892, at 5

today) and is buried with his wife at St. John's Lutheran Church. In any event, the small lot was pared out from the rest of the property, and its subsequent ownership will be addressed below.

Mr. Simmons seems to have used the Cottage Farm as rental property and built a house on the corner in the 1890s for one of the tenants. He leased the whole 10 acres of the Cottage Farm to William H. Croghan for five years (starting on August 9, 1893) for \$320 a year. By that time, the original farm complex of 1805 seems to have been gone. As part of the deal, Mr. Simmons agreed to build a house on the property and a brick cistern. The lease specified that Mr. Simmons would build a brick cistern and cottage on the premises of exact description: “[T]he entire amount of said cash to be paid by [Mr. Simmons] shall not exceed that sum of [\$1050].” The residence was to be “one wooden cottage of two stories height, to have a pitched roof covered with tin, two chimneys and to have three rooms on the first story and two rooms on the second. The Building to be supported on not less than nine brick pillars each pillar to be thirteen inches by twenty inches square, and to be six feet in height above the ground and the first story of said Cottage shall be at least ten feet in height.”²⁰

The resulting house is perhaps shown in the background of a 1921 photograph taken from Darlington Avenue. In an 1892 plat drawn of the adjacent Mt. Pleasant Farm tract, there were no buildings shown on the Cottage Farm. A house was included in the Mt. Pleasant tract, but the surveyor might not have ever planned to show existing buildings on the Cottage Farm; the surveyor did, however, specifically make the presence of the tiny graveyard at the northeast corner of the Cottage Farm. Similarly, in a 1907 plat of a nearby tract, there were no



²⁰ Deed book L21, page 645

buildings shown on the Simmons Tract, while house was drawn marking the location of a house on a more distant lot further north.²¹

The house was apparently an unnumbered house until 1920, then 949 Rutledge Avenue until 1922, and then 945 Rutledge Avenue. It was apparently used as a rental, not for anyone who worked at the adjacent farm.²² (Information about the earliest occupants of the house are unknown; the city limits stopped at Mt. Pleasant Street, so information about the house was not included in early city directories.)

Mr. Simmons died in 1895, but just before his death, he disposed of some of his Uptown farm lands to his children. He gave his daughter, Carrie Ruth Simmons, the Cottage Farm (minus the graveyard that he had not received himself from Mrs. Geiger) on January 12, 1895, for her lifetime, then to her children.²³

During WWII, the federal government began a push to build hundreds of units of housing for those who were coming to Charleston to fill jobs at the Navy Yard and otherwise work in the war effort. The federal government condemned almost all of the Boylston Tract in United States of America v. 9.95 acres of land; Carrie S. Boyleston;²⁴ and Carolyn B. Hopkins, et al. The government paid \$17,412.50, and took ownership on October 21, 1942.²⁵ The parcel shrank from 10.44 acres due to the family's having already having sold off one small piece at the corner (2204 Mt. Pleasant Street) and built a farm house (1301 Rutledge Avenue), so the corner was not included.²⁶

The housing complex was built starting in May 1942 on the Boylston Tract²⁷ during World War II and was assigned to the Charleston Shipbuilding and Drydock Co., a shipbuilding company, for its employees. Its sixty-four housing units

²¹ McCrady plat 2694

²² Occupants included contractor Thomas G. and Florence Wegmann (1920-22); L. Roberts (1923); pipefitter Z.D. and Lucille Tylee (1924-25); J.H. James (1927); George LeTrace (1928); C.S. Ward (1929-30); T. McG. Smith (1928-30); A.E. Eidson (1931); W.H. Syrett (1931); Howell C. Hinson (1932); James C. Loper (1932-34); and F.J.W. Till (1934).

²³ Deed book Q22, page 10

²⁴ Carrie Simmons-Boylston was born on February 4, 1872, and died on July 30, 1962.

²⁵ Deed book T43, page 60

²⁶ Deed book E268, page 383 (the plot is shown on Plat X-70). The North Charleston Sewer District owns the tiny corner at the northwest for a pump station that it acquired later.

²⁷ "Kiawah Project Work Is Started," Charleston News and Courier, May 28, 1942, at 10

opened in 1942 and was 100% occupied in 1942 by workers at the Charleston Shipbuilding and Drydock Co. plant.²⁸ It was just one of several housing projects being quickly built that would provide thousands of residences for the people drawn to Charleston to work at the Navy Yard and in associated businesses.

The United States (through the Public Housing Administration) sold its housing complex to the Housing Authority of Charleston in 1968.²⁹ The new owner agreed to maintain a “low-rent use” for 40 years.

In 1969, the federal government allocated the money to build a twelve-story building on the rear of the property to house 200 low-rent apartments for the elderly. Lawsuits were filed against the project and another one on Cannon St., claiming that the placement of the buildings was deliberately done to maintain racially segregated neighborhoods. Those suits were resolved in August 1970. In January 1971 bids were finally opened, and the federal government balked at the costs. In March 1973, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the City continued to bicker over the budget. Meanwhile, costs were escalating while allocation from the federal government remained steady. In August 1973, officials suggested that the plans be scrapped. The plug was finally pulled later that month, and the original buildings were left in place.³⁰

The buildings were erected in the 1940s an extremely simple fashion. The rectangular homes had eaves of only one inch, asbestos siding, and simple front porches.

Architecturally, the houses were just a step up from Monopoly houses. However, in 2007 the houses were remodeled to help them fit into the reviving neighborhood. Lindbergh &



²⁸ “Bids on Housing to Be Due Jan. 6,” Charleston News and Courier, Dec. 31, 1942, at 9

²⁹ Deed book R57, page 338

³⁰ John A. Alston, “Low Rent Project Shelved,” Charleston News and Courier, at B4

Associates, the architects, reworked the buildings by adding Arts & Crafts details.³¹

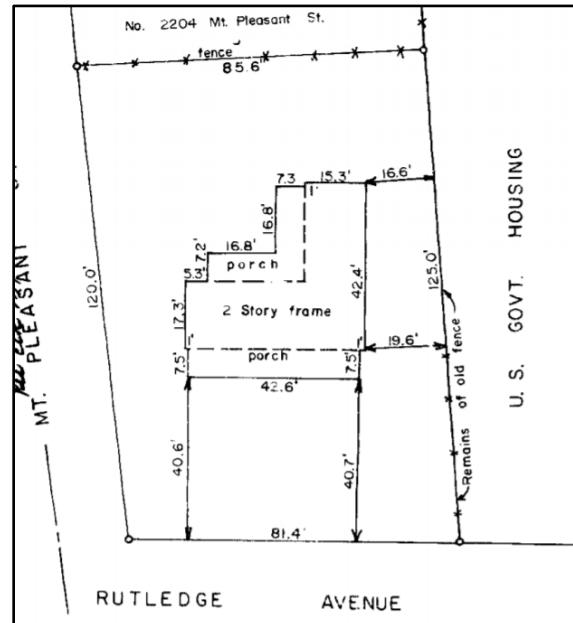
1301 Rutledge Ave.

Most likely Mr. Simmons had already built the house in the 1890s for one of his farm's tenants. Because the house already existed, the corner lot was not condemned by the federal government for WWII housing.

After Carrie (by then Mrs. Walter P. Boylston)³² died on July 30, 1962, her nine children³³ agreed to sell the corner lot (85 feet on Rutledge Ave. and 120 feet deep)³⁴ to G.S. Carter, Sr. for \$10,500 on September 14, 1962.³⁵ Mr. Carter tore down the old farm house and built The Carterette Apartments. The first ads for the new apartments appeared in June 1964 and described the apartments as "[j]ust completed."³⁶ He gave the property to his son, G.S. Carter, Jr., on March 19, 1975.³⁷

When the younger G.S. Carter died, his estate sold the apartments to Katherine I. Thrash for \$320,000 on May 8, 2000.³⁸ The current owner, Argonaut Investments LLC, bought the apartments for \$799,000 on May 30, 2006.³⁹

2204 Mt. Pleasant Street



³¹ "Face-lift adds bit of pizazz to public housing project," Charleston Post and Courier, Nov. 12, 2007, at B1

³² Walter Presley Boylston of Blacksville was born on August 4, 1869; married Carrie Simmons on June 1, 1898; and died on July 12, 1933.

³³ Their children were Clifton L. Boylston, Dorothy K. Golson, Ruth B. Fountain, Walter P. Boylston, Alan S. Boylston, Grace B. Davis, Carolyn B. Hopkins, F. Lee Boylston, and William L. Boylston.

³⁴ Plat N-167

³⁵ Deed book Y78, page 375

³⁶ Charleston News and Courier, June 20, 1964, at 10B

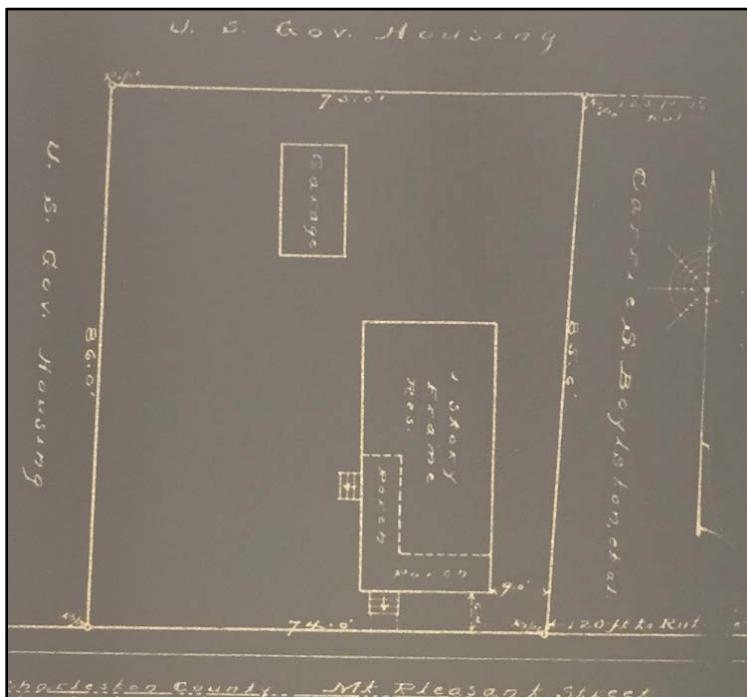
³⁷ Deed book J106, page 134

³⁸ Deed book B347, page 825

³⁹ Deed book A585, page 797

The house seems to have been a rental starting by 1930 when it was still known as 104 Mt. Pleasant Street.⁴⁰ In 1935, there was an ad for 104 Mt. Pleasant St., one door west of Rutledge Avenue, which was a four-room bungalow with a garage.⁴¹

In the Sanborn maps of 1954, there was a one-story wooden building with front and side porches as well as an adjacent, 18 by 37 cinder block store. The store was completed on March 18, 1947.⁴² The store was Carpenter's Grocery (1947), Webber's Food Store (1954).



A plat was drawn in 1946 already showing a small, one-story house with a porch on two sides. Following a lawsuit among the Boylston family, Mamie Lee Ilderton bought the small house on February 4, 1947, for \$2200.⁴³ Ms. Ilderton sold the property, including some business equipment, to Louise E. Webber for \$12,500 on February 26, 1951.⁴⁴ Ms. Webber sold the property along with equipment to H.L. Alexander on March 12, 1952,

for \$5500 and the assumption of a mortgage.⁴⁵ His wife, Anne C. Alexander, then got the property when he died on July 9, 1978. About ten years later, Mrs. Alexander sold the property for \$89,000 to Mrs. Dudley W. Wilson on December 6, 1988.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ It was vacant in 1929. Occupants included auto mechanic E.L. and Della Harbeson (1930-31); C.T. Parler (1934); James Viard (1938); Harmon Camp (1957).

⁴¹ Charleston Evening Post, Jan. 26, 1935, at 12

⁴² Charleston News and Courier, Mar. 9, 1947, at 7B

⁴³ Deed book R41, 499 (plat included) (shown)

⁴⁴ Deed book N53, 305

⁴⁵ Deed book B55, page 37

⁴⁶ Deed book B180, page 456

Mrs. Dudley lost the house because of a tax delinquency, and Aug 7, 1995 sale, and Raymond and Cheryl Dilley purchased it at a tax auction for \$1800.⁴⁷ On November 7, 2000, Mr. and Mrs. Dilley sold the property back to Mr. Dudley Wilson for \$30,000. The deed said the building was formerly known as 104 Mt. Pleasant Street.⁴⁸

The store has operated as Sammy's Corner Store since at least July 2011. The adjacent house at 2204 Mt. Pleasant St. was a two-story building in November 2007.

Cemetery

The small graveyard at the extreme northeast corner of the Cottage Farm has an oddball quirk in its title. When the rest of the Cottage Farm was sold by Mrs. Elizabeth Geiger, Mr. Benjamin F. Simmons' deed expressly reserved the 30 by 50 foot graveyard to Mrs. Geiger. At no point did the Simon and Boylston families ever acquire that tiny parcel.

The land was auctioned off in 1993 for the failure to pay the taxes on it. But, when the county had tried to contract the owners and gave notice of the impending sale, the county mistakenly thought that the graveyard had passed to the Boylsts. It had not. Instead, the deed given after the tax sale incorrectly described the graveyard as having been a piece of a different piece of Uptown property which had been bought by Mr. Simmons. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that no one from the Simmons-Boylston family would have responded to the notice since they had never owned it at all. And, it is also not surprising that no one from the Geiger family stepped up to pay the delinquent taxes since the county never even attempted to give them notice.

Unaware of that problem, the graveyard was included in a regular tax auction on September 7, 1993, and the Forfeited Land Commission bought the 30 by 50 foot graveyard.⁴⁹ The Commission resold it to Larry Greene for \$155.41 on April 1, 1996.⁵⁰ The tax collector sold the graveyard to Ernest Simmons for \$500 at

⁴⁷ Deed book Y277, page 742 (recorded Dec. 19, 1996)

⁴⁸ Deed book D358, page 164

⁴⁹ Deed book C251, page 483 (not recorded until December 1994)

⁵⁰ Deed book G267, page 630

a tax sale on October 4, 1999.⁵¹ The new owner met a similar fate, and the tax collector sold the graveyard to Daniel Limited Partnership following a public sale on November 5, 2001, for \$3000.⁵² The partnership sold the graveyard to Barbara J. Ward for \$1800 on April 13, 2006.⁵³ Ms. Ward sold the graveyard to Colin J. Green for \$200 on October 31, 2006.⁵⁴ Finally, on June 23, 2017, Mr. Green sold the graveyard to C. Kyle Cosper for \$5000.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Deed book T361, page 163 (not recorded until January 9, 2001)

⁵² Deed book E436, page 41 (not recorded until February 10, 2003)

⁵³ Deed book T579, page 314

⁵⁴ Deed book W603, page 916

⁵⁵ Deed book 647, page 537