

Carroll Yesteryears  
9 February 2020  
Relocated Cemetery Spurs Memories of Family  
By Mary Ann Ashcraft

In 1965 the Maryland State Roads Commission (SRC) ran into a snag when constructing a new road between Westminster and New Windsor. The planned route (now Route 31) would destroy a 100-year-old black cemetery not far outside Westminster officially named “Cobblers Branch.” Unofficially it was called “Toop Cemetery” for the Toop family that lived nearby. The SRC was legally bound to move it.

The plan called for exhuming the 10 known individuals and reintering them in nearby Western Chapel Cemetery. Headstones revealed the burials represented eight different surnames including Toop. Ultimately, the remains and gravestones were placed at Strawbridge United Methodist Church outside New Windsor, but that is part of a Toop story that began many years before.

African Americans with the surname Toop (also spelled Tupe and Toup) have lived at the northern end of Wakefield Valley since at least the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—some originally enslaved, some free. Six slaves with the name Toop appeared in a will made by David Shriver, Sr., before he died in 1826. Shriver’s large farm lay very near present-day Route 31. There is a headstone in the Shriver Family Cemetery for Charlotte Toop, wife of Elijah, who died in 1833 at the age of 21; she and her husband probably belonged to one of David’s descendants.

Numerous other records of the Toops appear in Carroll County throughout the 1800s. In 1852, Thomas Toop, once a Shriver slave, married Nancy Johnson who came from Virginia. In 1859 Ann Bruce apprenticed her 12-year-old son Samuel Joseph Toop to Augustus Shriver until the age of 21. He would have joined other African Americans working for Augustus who owned David Shriver’s farm at that time.

During the Civil War four young men with the surname Toop/Tupe volunteered to fight for the Union as members of the United States Colored Troops. Carroll County was well-represented in the U.S.C.T. by free blacks as well as slaves who could join the army with the permission of their owners.

In 1868 Augustus Shriver deeded half an acre of land to Thomas and Nancy Toop—land along the old road connecting Westminster to New Windsor. The Toops had buried their young daughter Ellen in the nearby cemetery some years before. Most likely they already had a house there and the deed simply made everything official.

When Thomas died in 1903 at the age of 84, the *Democratic Advocate* reported he “had been an invalid for fifteen years and in all that time his wants were supplied by the family of the late Augustus Shriver, to whom he belonged. His remains were interred in the Shriver burying ground Wednesday, where all their servants are interred. Thomas was greatly esteemed by both

white and colored for his high character. Nearly all members of the Shriver family attended his funeral. Thomas leaves a wife [Nancy] and seven children.

The land deeded to Thomas and Nancy stayed in the family until 2003 although the cemetery disappeared in 1965. A few gnarled apple trees visible along the shoulder of Route 31 were the only indication of where the Toop Cemetery once stood.

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County. She is indebted to Jeff Duvall and Samuel Riley for their help researching this article.*

*Image credit: Carroll County Times*

NOTICE

Intention of Maryland State Roads  
Commission to Move Certain Graves

Whereas the State Roads Commission of Maryland, in its contemplated improvement to Maryland Route 31 from Westminster Bypass to Avondale, under the provision of Right of Way Project C1-385-2-741, finds it necessary to acquire a portion of the property of B. F. Shriver Company which is located on the north side of Maryland Route 31 approximately halfway between Westminster and Avondale in Carroll County, and

Whereas, there is presently situated within the area to be acquired for said improvement to Maryland Route 31, a burying ground containing several grave sites and markers. The following names are enscribed thereon—

Charles Pye	died 1890
Eliza Pye	died 1868
Charles Pye	died 1861
William H. Sanders	died 1868
Ellen Toop	died 1857
Mary E. Elder	died 1863
Priscella Brown	died 1850
Mary Clark	died 1873
Lydia Parawa	died 1872
Hannah Woodyard	died 1869 and

Whereas, the State Roads Commission of Maryland will, at its expense and in a decent and reverent manner, exhume and reinter or cause to be exhumed and reinterred in the Western Chapel Cemetery, located at Western Chapel, Maryland, all the remains found in said burying ground, except in those cases where descendants may come forward to claim any of said remains for reinterment in places of their own choice, in which event the State Roads Commission of Maryland will fully reimburse said persons for all reasonable costs so incurred.

Therefore, by means of this notice to be published for three (3) weeks in this newspaper, any persons desiring to claim any of said remains are notified to make such claims in writing to the Commission's District Right of Way Chief at 4 Locust Street, Frederick, Maryland, on or before Tuesday, August 20, 1965, after which date the Commission will proceed with the reinterment of said remains as above outlined.

All necessary permits and clearances for these reinterments have been or will be obtained from the State's Attorney for Carroll County and the Carroll County Health Department.

MARYLAND STATE ROADS COMMISSION  
H. THOMAS SUMMERS, Chief  
Right of Way District 7

8-5-3t

*Image caption: This notice for relocation of the Cobblers Branch/Toop Cemetery appeared in the Carroll County Times on August 12, 1965. Note that the burials included members of eight African American families who lived in the area during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*