

DUMFRIES' HIDDEN CEMETERY

by Lee C. Lansing Jr.
Dumfries Town Historian

In the beginning, this was not intended to be a hidden cemetery — it was located beneath some majestic trees in an open field ~ then nature took over.

In the early 1940's, a talk with the Reverend Hinkle Shumate of the Dumfries Methodist Church made us aware of this burial ground. Investigation revealed a grove of large trees, in a circular pattern of about fifty feet in diameter, surrounded by open fields. Several graves marked with common field stones, in an irregular pattern made up the interior area under the tree growth. One grave, we remember, contained an oak board on which was painted the name of the deceased, their dates of birth and death.

Time has changed the site until today, we find an undergrowth pattern around the periphery of the older trees — of approximately one-hundred and fifty feet consisting of dense foliage ~mostly briars. This was caused by the dumping of debris and failure to cut back sprawling growth. *gl*

In the winter of 1862, in the same or adjacent location to the Dumfries Hidden Cemetery, records show that a large Rebel force were camped at this location - and about one thousand of them died and were buried there. It is probable that some could have been located in what is now the Interstate 95 right-of-way, from this location to the Fort on Grayson's Hill.

To quote from a letter written by Col. Thomas Clarke of the 29 th. Ohio Volunteers, in Jan. 19, 1863, from Dumfries -

" I have been out this morning to take another turn through the old burying ground in the woods. I found one grave as late as 1846, but generally they have been scarcely any buried here since 1820. though sometime about 1750 it seems to have been a frequent burying place for some distance about here, but in another part of the yard, where the brush had been cut-out. The new graves were thick, the head boards bore the name and Reg't. that the sleeper belonged-to. I found a Texas Reg't, quite numerous, as also some from NC, SC and Alia Texas soldiers must have been numerous here last winter or else the climate was very fatal to them, as there is another lot of them buried about a mile from this place, on the heights where our Forts now stand. I, 11 bet their Secesh friends will have to work some if they ever remove them, as our Large Fort, with heavy embankments is right on them".

(This fort is the earthwork adjacent to the Two-Million gallon Water Tank on Grayson's Hill.)

This page was written on Wed. 7, July 2004, after a meeting at the subject cemetery with the Rev. Larry E. Craddock and Chris Bohne, of the Prince William County Public Schools and Lee Lansing, Dumfries Historian. The finding of an Oak tree of more than three feet in trunk size - in the area north of the Hidden Cemetery prompted this discussion, and investigation.

Lee Lansing, Dumfries Historian
Subject; Dumfries Hidden Cemetery

THE QUANTICO CHURCH DUEL

Compiled by: Lee C. Lansing, Jr.

Place: "Behind the Quantico Church"

Time: Dawn, September 4, 1765

Featured players:

John Scott, son of James and Sarah (Brown) Scott, of Westwood Plantation, Prince William County.

John Baylis, magistrate, Prince William County, Vestryman of Quantico Church, a relative by marriage of Thomas and Richard Blackburn of Rippon Lodge, Prince William County.

A black slave, kitchen help at Westwood Plantation (name not recorded).

Colonel Cuthbert Bullitt, husband of Helen Scott, owner of Mount View (on the heights above Possom Point).

Sarah (Brown) Scott, wife of the Reverend James Scott and mother of John Scott.

Plot: Due to an argument between Sarah Scott and a kitchen slave, the reason not known, the slave was pushed into the kitchen fireplace during a roaring fire. The slave died soon thereafter as a result of burns. John Baylis, magistrate upon learning of the incident, traveled to Westwood to investigate. As a result he arrested Sarah Scott for murder, transported her to the jail in Dumfries where she spent the night. She was taken to court where a verdict of self-defense was issued. This was the underlying reason for John Scott to feel his honor had been soiled.

Compilers note: All of the persons involved in this incident were in some way either members of the Quantico Church or were a group of "so called" friends involved in the affairs of the Dumfries and Prince William County area, many with ties by marriage.

If one carefully reads the minutes of the Dettingen Parish records 1745-1802, one will find much dissension and infighting in purchases, legal actions, care of the poor, and allocations of bastard children. It might seem that illicit sex was the order of the day with prominent citizens receiving the benefits of their assigned labors until they reached a majority.

The Duel: The aforementioned actions by Colonel Baylis stirred much dissension in the community and prompted John Scott to post rather vicious broadsides upon the courthouse door; soon others did the same, both pro and con, until a challenge was issued by John Scott. Seconds were drawn; a place and time was arranged by correspondence, much maligning each party, as well as friends and onlookers.

At the appointed time John Scott and his second, Cuthbert Bullitt, arrived to confront John Baylis and his second, Nathan Skipworth White. Weapons were inspected and Cuthbert Bullitt made an attempt to placate the principals, but in the process a shoving match ensued with an accidental discharge of a weapon placing a slug in the groin area of John Baylis shattering the hip joint at the pelvis. His friends, realizing the grave condition of John Baylis, loaded him into a farm wagon and proceeded posthaste northward to Rippon Lodge to obtain help from the Blackburn family. All accounts of this phase make no mention of obtaining medical help while in Dumfries. Upon reaching Rippon Lodge, John Baylis was beyond medical help, after bouncing over the ruts of Kings' Highway, and he was laid upon the floor of the great room where he expired.

Comment: This short account of a formal fight between two persons was acceptable in that period in Colonial Dumfries (1765). Additional information may be had from "Virginia Genealogies", under the Scott family pp. 589-610. While this is a somewhat biased account in that the data came from the Scott viewpoint, other sources such as the Prince William County Court Order book for the period, oral history and newspaper stories may lend a different light on the subject.

Many years ago, while I was in the building business, long before I had thoughts of Dumfries, I was constructing a residence on Kings' Highway (Pen-Daw) and required a well digger. I hired a black man named Greyson and his brother, who evidently lived near Mine Road in Dumfries. Lud was the "bottom man" and his brother, quite a kidder, worked the windless to raise the muck from the hole. While eating our lunch one day, the brother, in a kidding mood, raised the subject of ghosts and said that Lud had, on occasion come out of the hole in a hurry when he thought that one had entered the hole with him. He told me that he would not walk down Mine Road after dark. This meant nothing to me at the time, as I did not know the location of Mine Road. However, in answer to my query I was told that a duel had taken place, many years before, in what is now a cemetery and that the ghost of a "high official" who had been shot, wandered about at night. Questions asked of current Mine Road residents indicate that the story is forgotten.