

# Ellsworth Cemetery

*A historic cemetery in Carroll County, Maryland, serving the African American residents.*

## Points of Contact:

### Websites:

- Main site: <https://ellsworthcemetery.org>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100067421190864>
- Community Foundation of Carroll County <http://wearecarroll.org/>
- Donation link at CFCC site: [https://carrollcf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit\\_id=1261](https://carrollcf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1261)

### Individuals:

- Thomas Greul, Patriotic and Veteran chairman, Knights of Columbus Council 9127 (St. Bartholomew Parish, Manchester), tomgreul@comcast.net, 410-596-1176
- Audrey Cimino, previous Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Carroll County, acimino2021@gmail.com
- Diane Boettcher, Researcher, diane.boettcher@gmail.com, 813-629-9334
- Jacqueline Dorm, Advisor and family member, jldorm@yahoo.com

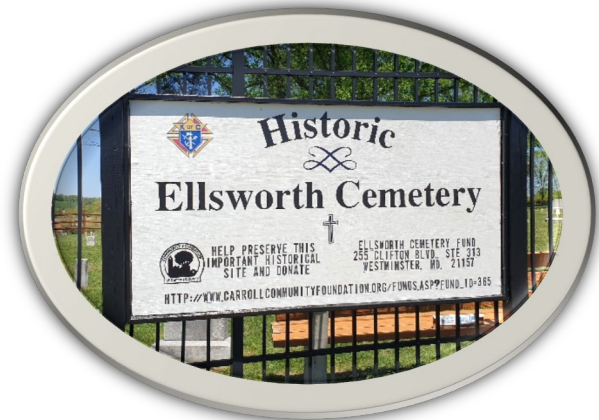
## Summary:

Established in the late 1870s by prominent members of the African American community of Westminster, the historic Ellsworth Cemetery is the final resting place for many prominent Black residents of Carroll County. Over the years, the cemetery has fallen in and out of repair, with various agencies taking care of the maintenance of the grounds. Subject occasionally to vandalism and/or neglect, about 100 headstones mark gravesites.

The Community Foundation of Carroll County owns the cemetery and administers a Field of Interest Fund to restore and maintain the grounds. Since 2013, members of a local Knights of Columbus chapter volunteer to maintain the grounds, along with help from local businesses and Scouting organizations.

A grant in 2020 from the State of Maryland is providing funding for the continued mapping of the cemetery as well as restoration of the memorials. Ground-penetrating radar identified 182 unmarked graves. In April of 2022, grant funding covered the cost to remove several large and rotting trees. These trees were not stable and would have caused significant damage to the remaining headstones if they fell. We are planning to install Maryland-native landscaping in the future. In the spring of 2023, the remaining grant funding covered the cost of professional restoration of many headstones.

In June of 2023, the City of Westminster approved the annexation of the cemetery.



## Needs

### Information:

Our greatest need in 2023 is for members of the Westminster community to **share information** they may have about the burial sites and the people of Ellsworth. Using ground-penetrating radar, we have located many unmarked grave sites. However, the unmarked graves may never have had markers, or the markers have been destroyed. Families may have recorded information in family bibles or have memories of visiting loved ones at Ellsworth Cemetery.

### Funding:

As with any major undertaking, funding will be required for professional work to be done. Some headstones still require professional restoration. We anticipate the need for additional funding to cover these expenses. Additionally, a fund has been established to provide for the perpetual care of the cemetery when the current volunteers are unable to continue performing ongoing maintenance.

## History

### Establishment in 1876

Ellsworth Cemetery was created on December 21, 1876, when seven African American Union Army Veterans filed Maryland Articles of Incorporation to provide a burial place “for the Colored residents of Westminster, Maryland”. Reuben Walker, David Ireland, William Massey, William Adams, Lewis Dorsey and Samuel Bowens, the incorporators, all participated in the bloody Civil War Campaigns of 1863, 1864, and 1865. They recognized Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, a friend of Abraham Lincoln who was the first Union Officer to die in the Civil War. The ground on which the Ellsworth Cemetery stands was sold to the group by the Estate of Elias Yingling for the sum of one dollar on June 11th, 1894.

The cemetery was located just outside the city limits of Westminster, possibly due to regulations or customs prohibiting the burial of African Americans within the city. The Westminster Cemetery, the main cemetery for the town, had covenants that prohibited the burial of African Americans, although some enslaved people are buried with their enslavers.

Racially restrictive covenants were common in cemeteries across the United States. One estimate is that as late as 1953, 90% of cemeteries had such regulations and covenants. In 1969, a federal court struck down these restrictions as being in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (Terry v. Elmwood Cemetery).

While we believe five of the six men who established the cemetery are buried there, research is ongoing to provide documentation. Mr. David Ireland is likely buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

### 1876-1950

We have records of approximately 170 burials from 1876 to 1950 when the cemetery was active and closely associated with the Union Street Methodist Church.

### 1950-1983

Interments slowed significantly during this time. Most of the approximately 30 burials from this period were close family members of people already interred. For example, Elmer and Harvene Charms Myers are buried next to her brother and sister-in-law, Jesse and Edna Mae Bruce Charms.

## 1983-2000

We have no records of any interments during these years. The cemetery had fallen into disrepair and was generally considered to be “full.” As early as 1940 and again in 1963, reports of cleanup and restoration efforts appeared in the local press. In the 1990s, the Union Memorial Baptist Church maintained the cemetery, with assistance from local Scouting organizations and the State Police.

In the late 1990s, members of Branch 7014 of the NAACP were recruited and organized by Mr. George Murphy to care for Ellsworth. Mr. Murphy worked at Liberty High School and was a cemetery restorationist. He was passionate about the Veterans buried in this small, nearly forgotten cemetery.

The Ellsworth Cemetery Company was re-established as a non-profit to administer and maintain the cemetery. That instantiation of the company has since been disbanded.

## 2000-Present

In 2001, the cemetery became active once again. Relatives of those who had passed away decades before were buried at Ellsworth. Mr. George Murphy continued to maintain the cemetery and advocate for Ellsworth.

In 2013, a fund was established under the Community Foundation for Carroll County to support the repair and maintenance of Ellsworth. At this same time, members of the local Knights of Columbus council began work to maintain the cemetery. After many years, Mr. Murphy was unable to continue the physical labor of mowing and clearing the cemetery.

In early 2020, the Community Foundation was awarded a \$65,000 grant from the State of Maryland for the restoration of the Ellsworth Cemetery. Those funds are administered through the Maryland Historical Trust.

Ellsworth Cemetery is active again, with recent burials serving the local community. Plots that are not already owned are administered through the Foundation. Funds from plot sales will be used for the maintenance of Ellsworth.

## People buried at Ellsworth Cemetery

Records indicate about 320 burials, although this number is not confirmed. The ground penetrating radar identified 182 unmarked sites. These sites are now marked with crosses made from white rebar.

The earliest burial marker is for Mrs. Jane Thompson and is from 1862, which predates the formal establishment of the cemetery. While the race of every person interred cannot be definitively known, the cemetery was established by and for African American residents.

Approximately 40% of the graves have markers.

### Earliest Grave Marker (Jane Thompson)

Mrs. Jane Thompson was born on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1792, and was married to Mr. Samuel Thompson. She is buried near her husband, their granddaughter, and her family. Their marker is one of four large obelisks at Ellsworth.



### Another Early Grave Marker (Claressa Harden)

Ms. Claressa Harden was born in May of 1828, the enslaved daughter of Mr. William and Elizabeth (Squirrel?) Harden. Her enslaver, Mr. Francis Haines, died in September of 1858. In his will, he bequeathed her, as his property, to his widow, Mrs. Polly Haines. Further, his will manumitted her at the time of his widow's death. Mrs. Haines died in 1863. Ms. Harden may have been married to William Massey in early 1866. She died later that year.

### Oldest Internments (Nick Paroway & William Harden)

Two men buried in Ellsworth lived to over 110 years old. Nicholas Paroway was born before the Revolution and died in 1876. Mr. Paroway's obituary was reprinted as far away as London, England. William Harden was also born before our Nation. He died in 1879, at the age of 110 years old.

### Veterans

Our current best information is that 25 Veterans are buried at Ellsworth. We have located the grave sites for at least 19 of the 25 prior service members.

A total of 17 Civil War Veterans are buried at Ellsworth, along with six (6) World War I Veterans and two (2) World War II Veterans.

Private Jacob Lytle was enslaved at the time of his enlistment. In accordance with an agreement struck with the Maryland Governor, his enslavers were paid \$300 in compensation for his manumission to enlist.

Many of the Veterans were buried in unmarked graves. They are entitled by law to headstones provided by the Veterans' Administration (VA). The ordering and installation of these headstones is part of the restoration project.

In May of 2022, eleven headstones were installed for the Veterans. Nine headstones marked Civil War Veterans and another two marked World War I Veterans.



*John Wesley Cole served in Company F, 4th Regiment Infantry, US Colored Troops.*

## Previous Press Coverage

### Videos:

- Carroll County Media Center, Rededication Ceremony, May 26, 2018: <https://youtu.be/PAb3DGum1VE>
- WBAL-TV 11 Baltimore, Ellsworth Cemetery has historical significance in African-American community, February 20, 2019: <https://youtu.be/MhzGiJMwybE>
- WBAL-TV 11 Baltimore, FORGOTTEN GRAVES discovered in Ellsworth Cemetery, February 24, 2020: <https://youtu.be/LEjXuxVG-k0>
- The Catholic Review, Civil War Era Historic Ellsworth Cemetery Restoration, January 29, 2021: <https://youtu.be/iFU-e0l-1E>
- National Cemetery Administration, Ellsworth Cemetery USCT Headstone Dedication, Sep 7, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJkzeilWmYU>
- WMAR News, Securing the future of Ellsworth Cemetery, Feb 23, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-853FQDhwc>
- WMAR News, Ellsworth Cemetery to become part Westminster, June 13, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr0gSoWk\\_94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr0gSoWk_94)
- WBAL-TV 11 Baltimore, Town annexes cemetery in order to make much-needed repairs, June 14, 2023: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VTbzHt5B\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VTbzHt5B_I)