

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. 30-25

## 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Higgins Family Cemetery

other

## 2. Location

street and number 5720 Arundel Avenue \_\_ not for publication

city, town Rockville x\_ vicinity

county Montgomery

## 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association, Inc

street and number c/o Knowles Little, Treasurer, 9109 Scott Drive telephone

city, town Rockville state MD zip code 20850

## 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Land Records liber 654 folio 365

city, town tax map GQ63 tax parcel Lot P7 BI 6 tax ID number 04-00079913

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: HCPHA and Peerless Rockville files

## 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing <span style="margin-left: 20px;">Noncontributing</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<u>27</u> <span style="margin-left: 20px;"><u>1</u></span> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
				<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>

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## 7. Description

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### Condition

excellent       deteriorated  
 good             ruins  
 fair               altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Higgins Cemetery is a small burial ground located on Arundel Avenue, near the intersection of the B&O Railroad line and Twinbrook Parkway, and about three blocks east of the Rockville Pike and two blocks south of the Twinbrook Metro station. The graveyard is located on a 1/3 acre parcel in an area now known as Spring Lake Park. The cemetery lot runs 120 feet along Arundel Avenue and is surrounded on the remaining three sides by one-story buildings with blank walls facing the cemetery. Between the cemetery and the building to the south is a five foot wide alley established when Spring Lake Park was subdivided in 1891.

There are 27 known burial markers associated with the cemetery. A tally of the markers follows. The exact number of burials in the Higgins Cemetery is not known. There are at least twelve graves and may be as many as 30. Additional markers were uncovered as recently as 2004.

Known burials in Higgins Family Cemetery are the following:

James Higgins, (1733-1816)  
Luraner Becraft Higgins, wife of James (1744-1819)  
James Becraft Higgins (1772-1848)  
Mary Eleanor Wilcoxon Higgins, wife of James B. (1784-1845)  
Luraner Higgins Knowles (1811-1883)  
George Knowles, husband of Luraner H. (1805-1881)  
Mary L. Knowles (1873-1874)  
Darius M. Higgins (1824-1869)  
Daisy Mannakee (1870-1885)  
Horatio H. Higgins (1817-1884)  
Mary E. Higgins Gott (1812-1891)  
Eliza Higgins (1802-1887)

The earliest known burial in the cemetery is James Higgins, who died in 1816. He was followed by his wife Luraner who died in 1819. The most prominent marker in the cemetery is a large sandstone monument dating from 1866. A former resident of the area, now deceased, recalled an obelisk top stone on this monument, but to date neither this piece nor a photograph has been found.<sup>1</sup> This marker memorializes James and Luraner Higgins, and their son James Becraft Higgins, and his wife Mary Eleanor.

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Harmon to Eileen McGuckian, conversations in the 1990s.

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## Marker Tally

### Contributing Resources

- 1 monument, sandstone--Higgins Family, inscription below
- 9 headstone bases
- 2 headstones, in storage—George Knowles, Darius M Higgins, inscriptions below
- 2 inscribed footstones- "G.K." on site and "M.L.K." in storage
- 1 probable footstone
- 12 unmarked stones in southwest quadrant

### Non-Contributing Resources

- 1 DAR marker, 2002

## Inscriptions

### 1.Higgins Family Monument<sup>2</sup>

#### *Side I*

Sacred to the Memory of  
James Higgins  
Born 1732 Died 1816 Aged 84  
His wife Luraner  
Born 1744 Died 1819 Aged 75  
James Becraft Higgins  
Born 1773 Died 1848 Aged 76  
His wife Mary Eleanor  
Born 1783 Died 1845 Aged 62

#### *Side II*

I know that my redeemer liveth  
He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live

#### *Side III*

And to their children  
and childrens children.

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<sup>2</sup>Transcribed 1936 by Maude Wilson Betts, with her grandmother, Roberta B. Higgins, in files of Higgins Cemetery Association. Note that the birthdate for James Becraft Higgins and death date for his wife, Mary Eleanor, are at variance with other sources.

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*Side IV*  
Erected  
HIGGINS  
1866

## 2. Darius M. Higgins

Darius M. Higgins  
BoRN May 12, 1824.  
Died Feb. , 1869  
[Stone broken in two parts in the middle of the above line]  
He that Overcometh the same shall be clothed  
in white raiment and I will confess  
his name before my Father and before this  
angels. Rev 3.5

## 3. George Knowles

Sacred to the Memory of my husband  
GEORGE KNOWLES  
Born Jan. 16, 1805,  
Died Nov. 30, 1881  
Aged 76 Yrs, 10 Mo's, 14 Ds,  
He was a Good Citizen, a Kind Neighbor, a Trusted friend, a devo  
ted Husband and Father. And above all an humble Christian

In 2002, the Chevy Chase Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a small bronze marker at the base of the sandstone monument in the center of the graveyard to commemorate James Higgins, Revolutionary War soldier.

The third generation represents most of the burials thus far identified in Higgins Cemetery. One burial was that of Luraner Higgins, a granddaughter of James Higgins, who married George Knowles. When the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opened in Montgomery County in 1873, the train stop on their land was known as Knowles Station; the name later changed to Kensington. Other burials include grandchildren and great-grandchildren of James Higgins.

Most of the gravestones are composed of marble and were carved by professional monument makers. A few footstones include initials to match the headstones. Toward the southwest corner of the cemetery lot, near the grave of Eliza Higgins, archeologists and clean-up volunteers found a row of several small

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stones that may mark the graves of Higgins slaves. Two stones, markers for Darius Higgins and George Knowles, have been placed in storage nearby for safekeeping.

For almost all of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Higgins Cemetery was neglected and its ownership was unknown or disputed. By the 1980s, it had become so overgrown with volunteer trees and other plant material that it was increasingly used as a place to dump household trash and landscaping debris. Beginning in 1997 and continuing through 2005, volunteers cleared off and removed from the site approximately 12" of trash, debris, trees, and brush. With the assistance of archaeologists, arborists, and volunteers of all ages, they identified older plant materials such as day lilies, burning bushes, and boxwoods that would be retained or replanted. A cross walking path of Seneca gravel was added in 2009. In 2004, the Higgins Family Cemetery was recorded in the Montgomery Cemetery Inventory, identified as Site #37.<sup>3</sup>

Today, Higgins Cemetery presents an oasis of settlement and agricultural history amidst a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century light industrial setting. Its boundaries (as shown on the 1927 plan and by recent archaeology) take up most of the parcel. Remaining of the Spring Lake Park subdivision are elements of the 1891 street plan, six small residential buildings (now in office or light industrial use), and Higgins Cemetery. The lack of sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and modern amenities continue to evoke the comfortable atmosphere of what was once a vibrant semi-rural community.

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<sup>3</sup> Earl M Dunn, surveyor, 11-11-2004. Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory Project, Peerless Rockville, Historic Takoma and the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, 2006.

## 8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates 1816-1891

Architect/Builder

Construction dates

Evaluation for:

National Register

Maryland Register

not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Associated with a prominent local family, the Higgins Family Cemetery survives as a reminder of the early settlements and farms that once lined the main road between Georgetown and Frederick, now known as Maryland Route 355 and the Rockville Pike. Burials include Revolutionary War soldier James Higgins and his wife Luraner, as well as George and Luraner Higgins Knowles, whose farm included the current Town of Kensington. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cemetery was abandoned and vandalized, but in recent years the resource has been rescued and protected by the local preservationists and the Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association.

James Higgins (1733-1816) purchased land on tracts known as Dann and The Addition, beginning in the 1760s.<sup>4</sup> With the assistance of slaves, James and his wife Luraner Becraft Higgins (1744-1819) cleared the land, built a house and necessary outbuildings and grew crops for sale as well as for their own use. In 1777, Higgins, aged 43 with a wife and ten children, enrolled as a private in the Montgomery County Militia. James served in the Fifth Company of the Lower Battalion of the militia. When peace came, he returned to farm what is today considered south Rockville. James and Luraner Higgins had a total of twelve children. The couple was buried on the farm. Presumably the slaves they owned were also buried in the family cemetery.<sup>5</sup>

An 1851 plat is the earliest known map that shows the graveyard. The Higgins property is Lot 1, being 175 acres, and bisected by the Georgetown Turnpike Road (Rt 355). The Higgins dwelling house is also depicted on the plat.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Information and much of the text in this section is from the Master Plan for Historic Higgins Cemetery of 2001, prepared by M. Edward Shull and Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> Eleanor Cunningham et al, "A Farm, A Neighborhood and a Cemetery: The History of the Higgins Family..." *The Montgomery County Story*, 48:4 (November 2005) p84. Census records and inventories record 10 to 15 slaves owned by the Higgins family, p93.

<sup>6</sup> Higgins Family Cemetery plat, 1851. Peerless Rockville Archives. One of James Higgins' great grandsons, Hillary O. Higgins, joined with Lucretia Beall to finance and perhaps operate the "ordinary" business known in the 1850s and 1860s as "Higgins Old Stand." Today "Higgins Tavern" on Georgia Avenue near Olney is designated in the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation as site # 23/105. *Maryland Historical Society, Vol. 82 of MS.596 (box 35) 1856-63.*

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In 1866, 50 years after James Higgins' death, his descendants erected a large sandstone monument in the family cemetery. The marker memorializes James and Luraner Higgins, and their son James Becraft Higgins, and his wife Mary Eleanor. The 14,400 square foot parcel of land was expressly reserved as the family graveyard in the Montgomery County Land Records in 1867.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1880s were buried landowners of what is now the Town of Kensington. Luraner Higgins (1811-1883), a granddaughter of James Higgins, and her husband, George Knowles (1805-1881). When the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad opened in Montgomery County in 1873, the train stop on their land was known as Knowles Station; the name later changed to Kensington. Other burials include grandchildren and great-grandchildren of James Higgins. Dates of death range from 1869 to 1891. The total number of burials may be as few as twelve or as many as 30.

In 1891, the farm was further subdivided into a development known as Spring Lake Park. The Higgins farmhouse and the cemetery were reserved on separate parcels, the cemetery lot being about one-third acre.<sup>8</sup> A long period of neglect began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The family commissioned a survey of the cemetery lot in 1927. The plat, prepared by C.J. Maddox, shows Lot No. 7 Block No 6 Reservation for Family Burying Ground. The plat identifies eight burials. In the center is shown James Higgins, 1866. In the northwest corner are six graves: Luraner and George Knowles, D. M. Higgins, Daisy Mannakee, Horatio H. Higgins, and Mary E. Gott. And in the southwest corner is the grave of Eliza Higgins. The plat further shows eleven "box bushes" arranged in a near rectangle inside the perimeter of the plot.<sup>9</sup>

By the 1930s, Montgomery County sold the parcel for back taxes and ownership was in doubt. The graveyard was overgrown and became a dumping ground for trash and debris, and the house was razed several decades later.

In 1997, Peerless Rockville organized a working group of comprised of representatives of Peerless Rockville, the Kensington Historical Society, two chapters of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, two Higgins heirs, and neighbors of the cemetery. The group resolved ownership through the court and incorporated the Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association, Inc. The non-profit group took title of the cemetery in 1999.

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<sup>7</sup> Deed EBP Liber 4, Folio 374 and confirmed by subsequent deeds CKW Liber 654, Folio 365 (1937).

<sup>8</sup> Plat JA 21, Folio 30, Land Records of Montgomery County, 1891, Spring Lake Park.

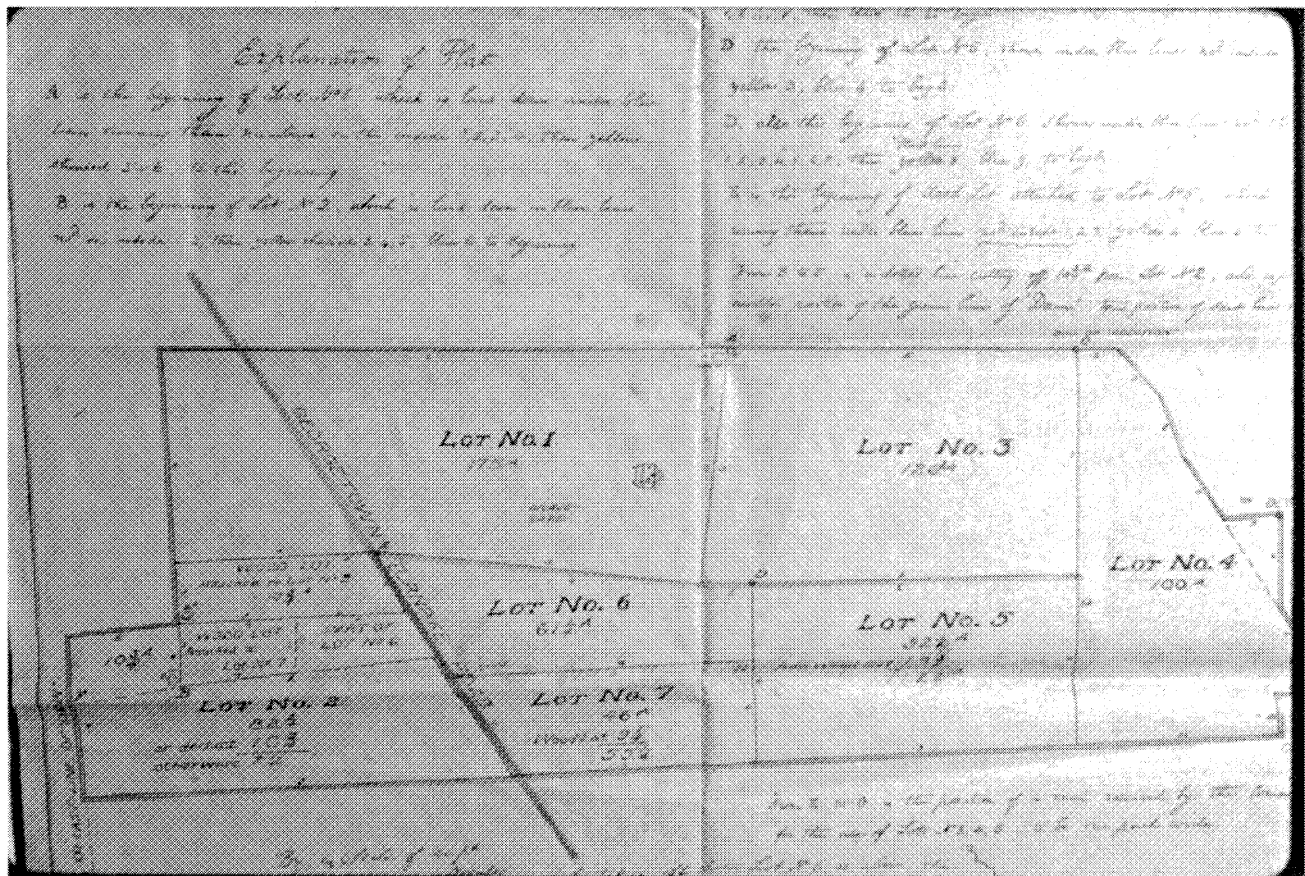
<sup>9</sup> C J Maddox. Survey of Higgins Cemetery, 1927. Peerless Rockville Archives.

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1851 plat, showing Lot No 1 with graveyard and Higgins residence  
Source: Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Assn

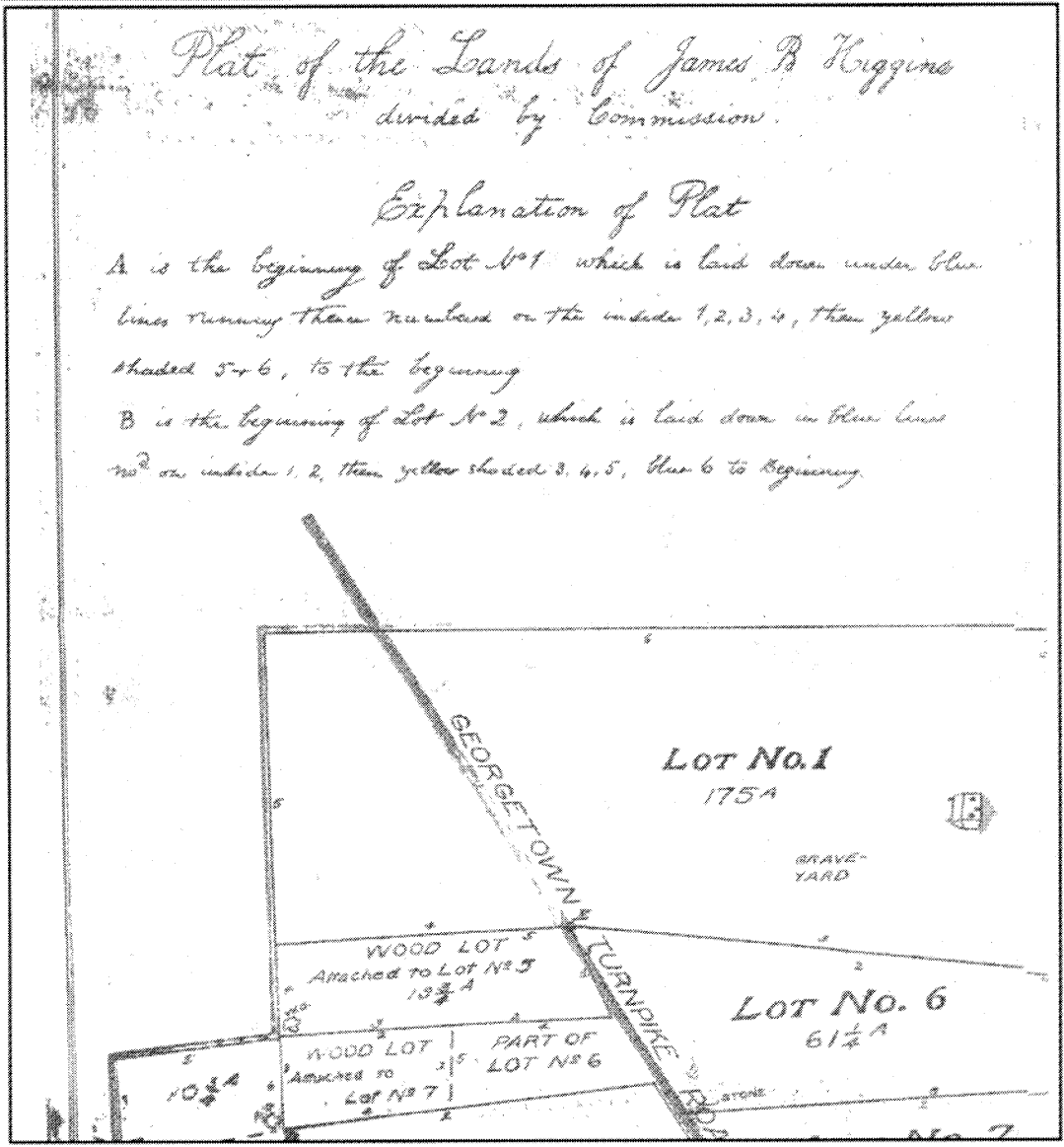


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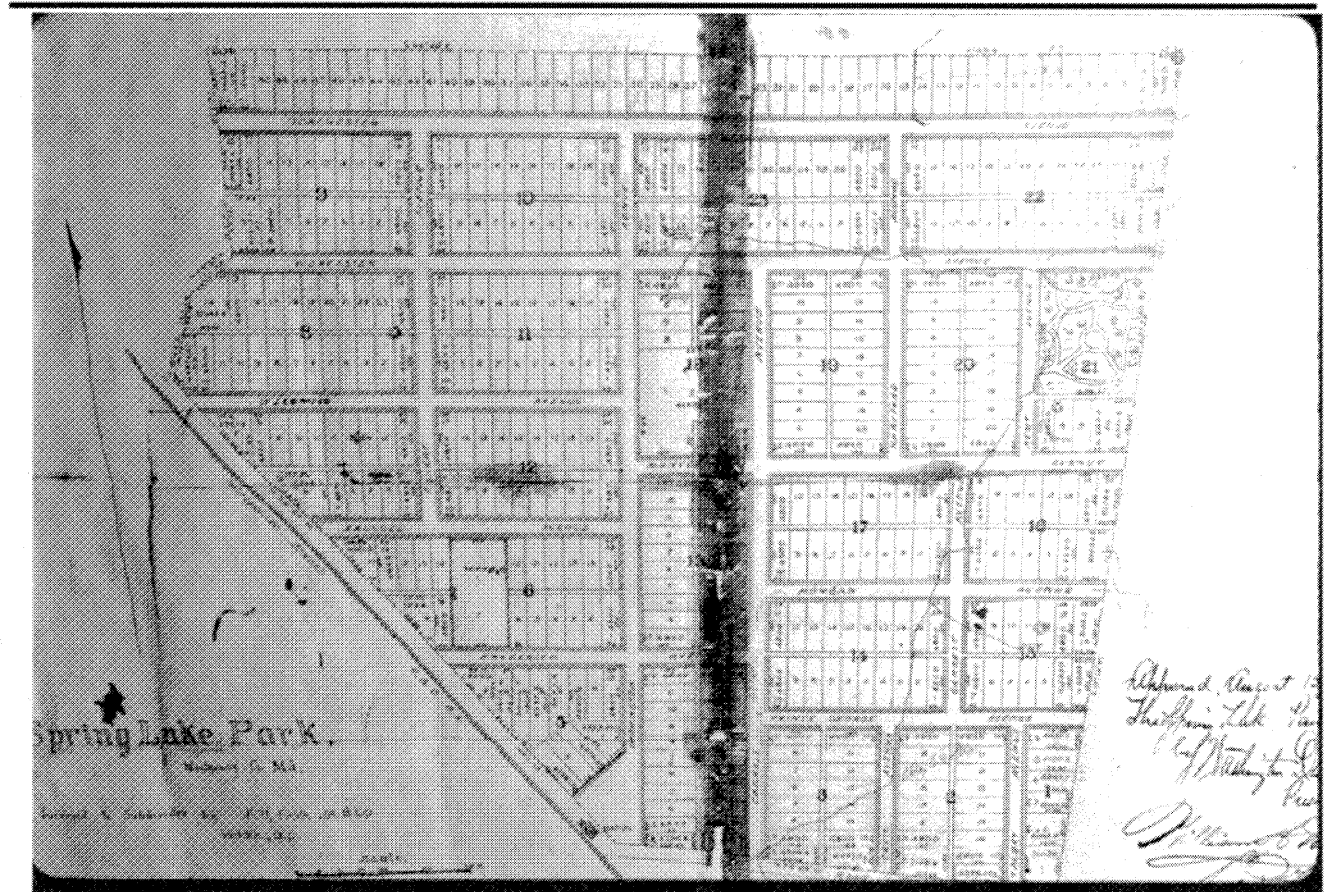
Detail of 1851 plat, Higgins Family Cemetery identified as GRAVEYARD.

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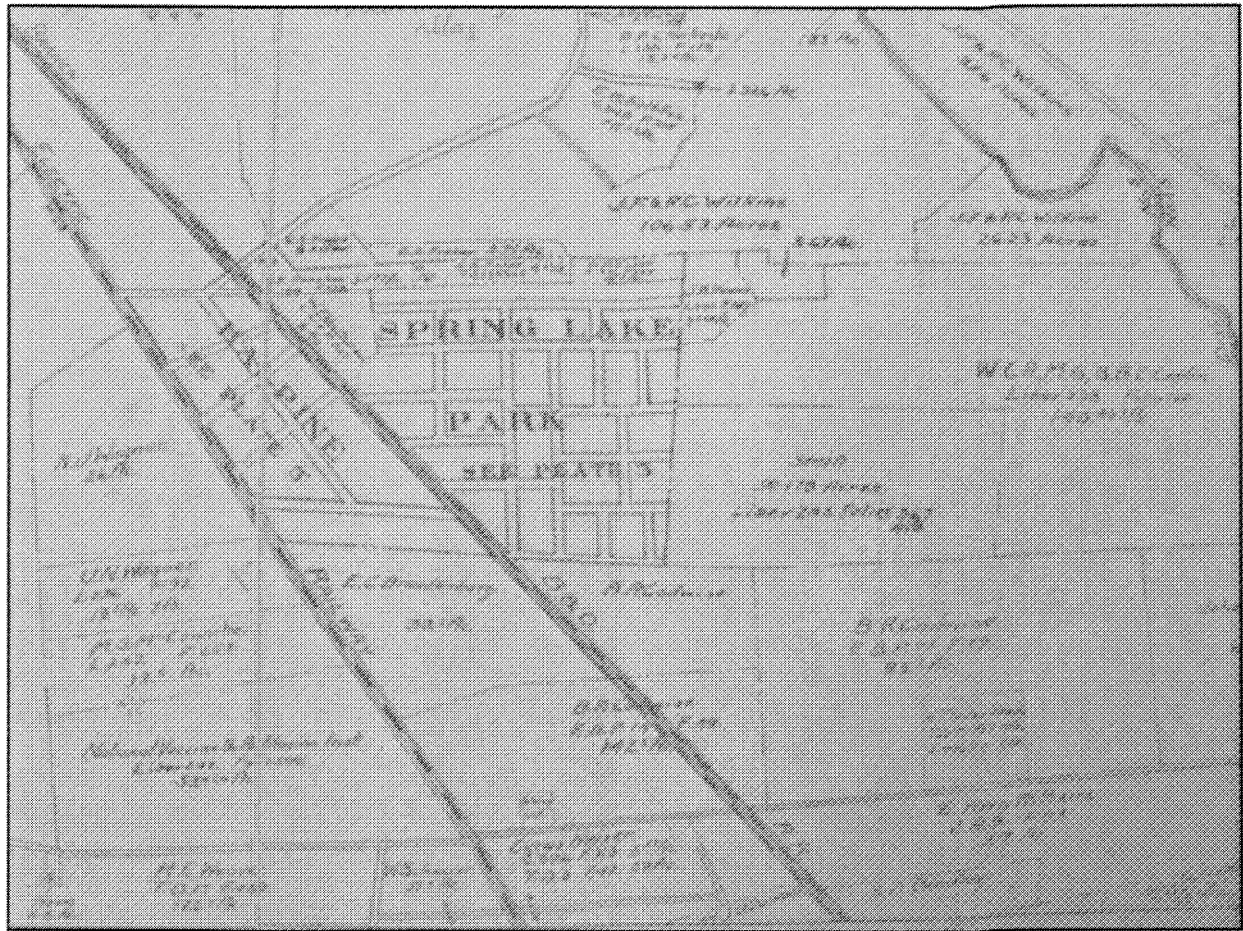
Spring Lake Park subdivision plat, 1891. Plat JA 21, Folio 30.  
Source: Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Assn

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1916 Deets and Maddox plat, showing Spring Lake Park lying along B&O rail line, with the trolley line far left, running along the Rockville Pike. Source: Peerless Rockville Archives







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View of cemetery looking toward southwest corner, with headstone bases in foreground, sandstone marker background.

Source: Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association, 2005 photograph

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View southwest with row of stone markers (foreground), and headstone base for Eliza Higgins (background).  
Photograph, Clare Lise Kelly, 7-30-2009

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Higgins Family Monument (center) with DAR plaque (lower left)  
Photograph, Clare Lise Kelly, 7-30-2009

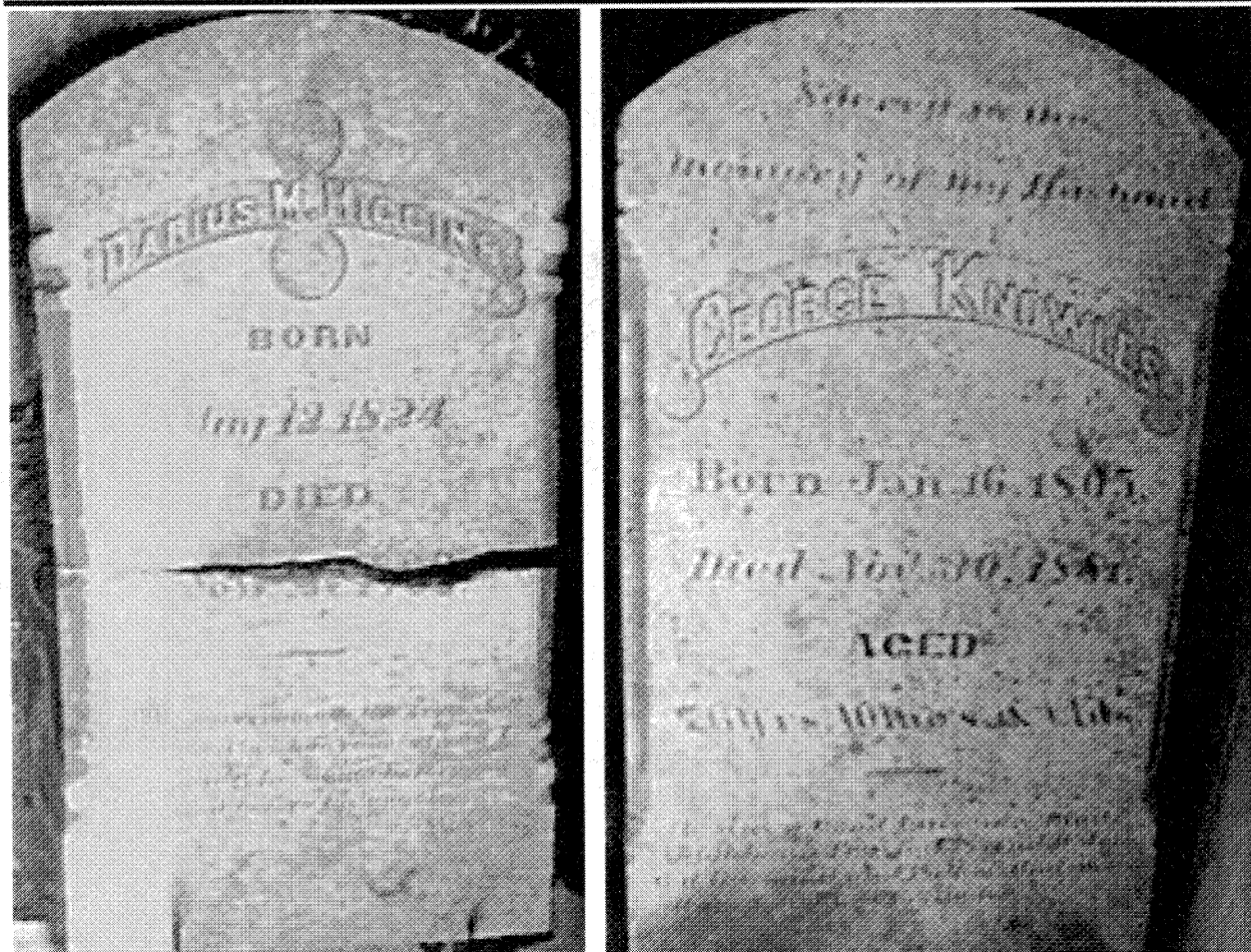


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Higgins Family Cemetery Gravestones: Darius Higgins (left) and George Knowles (right)  
Source: Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association <http://mysite.verizon.net/kqhlhiggins/>

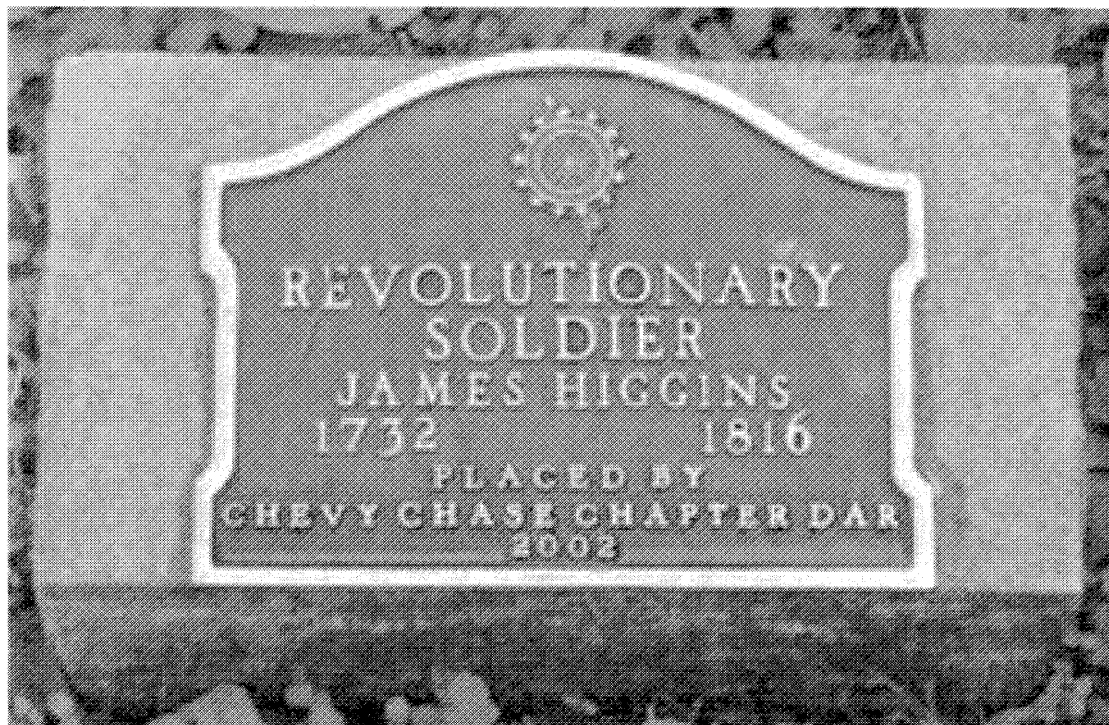
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DAR plaque honoring James Higgins, Revolutionary War soldier

Source: Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association <http://mysite.verizon.net/kalhiggins/>

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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See attached.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 14,400 sq ft

Acreage of historical setting \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale: \_\_\_\_\_

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Verbal boundary description and justification

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Clare Lise Kelly, M-NCPPC, and Eileen McGuckian, Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Assoc.	date	July 2009
organization		telephone	301-563-3400
street & number	8787 Georgia Avenue	state	MD
city or town	Silver Spring		

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Maryland Department of Planning  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cunningham, Eleanor W., Carol R. DuVall, and Eileen S. McGuckian, "A Farm, A Neighborhood, and a Cemetery: The History of the Higgins Family and Spring Lake Park", *The Montgomery County Story*, Vol 48, No. 4 (November 2005).

Deets and Maddox real estate map, 1916.

Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association website  
<http://mysite.verizon.net/kglhiggins/>

Higgins Cemetery Newsletters, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009.

Higgins Cemetery plat, 1851, Peerless Rockville Archives.

Maddox, C. J., Survey of Higgins Cemetery, 1927.

Montgomery County Land Records, Plat JA 21, Folio 30, 1891, Spring Lake Park. F R Fava surveyed and platted, August 15, 1891.

Peerless Rockville, Historic Takoma and the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Burial Sites, *Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory Project*, 2006. Montgomery County Historical Society Archives.

Shull, M. Edward and Higgins Cemetery Historic Preservation Association, Inc. "Master Plan for Historic Higgins Cemetery of 2001", financed in part by a grant from the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission.