

# THE LAND OF MARIA SYPHAX AND THE ABBEY MAUSOLEUM

By

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**Maria Syphax**

It was the year 1866 when Maria Syphax's oldest son, William, presented a memorial on behalf of his mother to the Government's Committee on Private Land Claims asking for confirmation of title for a tract of land, part of the Arlington estate, in Virginia, granted to her by George Washington Parke Custis.<sup>1</sup>

George W. P. Custis died on October 10, 1857. His daughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis, the wife of Robert E. Lee, inherited a life interest in the Arlington estate.<sup>2</sup>

Four years after the Lees inherited Arlington the Civil War began. On August

5, 1861 the United States Congress approved "an act for the collection of direct taxes in insurrectionary Districts within the United States and for other purposes." This was enacted so that certain lands in some insurrectionary districts should be charged with taxes, and that these lands should be sold for nonpayment of the tax charges. The following amendment was added on February 6, 1863: "At any such sale of any tracts, parcels or lots of land, which might be selected under the direction of the President for Government use for war, military, naval, revenue, charitable, educational or police purpose at said sale be bid in by the Commissioners appointed under the said act under the direction of the President for and struck off to the United States."

The President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, in pursuance of the law, appointed John Hawxhurst, William J. Boreman, later replaced by A. Lawrence Foster, and Gillet F. Watson as tax Commissioners within and for the State of Virginia.

On January 6, 1864 Abraham Lincoln ordered and directed the Virginia Commissioners to bid and have struck off to the United States the following described tract of land.

"THE ARLINGTON ESTATE, late occupied by Robert E. Lee, bounded as follows: North by the land of Ross, East by the Potomac River, South by the land of James Roach, Johnson and Guy Henry, West by the land of Elliott, Columbus Alexander and John Tucker containing eleven hundred acres more or less."

The 1860 State of Virginia land book value for the Arlington estate was \$34,100.00. The United States Government paid \$26,000.00 for the estate on January 11, 1864.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Harris, the Senator from New York and Chairman of the Committee on Private Land Claims, presented the bill S-321 for the relief of Maria Syphax before the Senate on May 18, 1866. The motion made by Mr. Harris proposed to release and confirm to Maria Syphax, her heirs and assigns, a piece of land in the southwest corner of the Arlington estate consisting of seventeen acres and fifty-three hundredths of an acre upon which she had been living since 1826.

In his presentation to the Senate, Mr. Harris made the following statement, "Maria Syphax, a mulatto, was once the slave of George W. P. Custis. Mr. Custis at the time she married, about forty years ago, feeling an interest in the woman, something perhaps akin to a paternal instinct, manumitted her, and gave her a piece of land. It had been set apart to her and it has been occupied by her and her family for forty years. Under the circumstances, the Committee thought it no more than just, the Government having acquired title to this property under a sale for taxes, that this title should be confirmed to her." The bill was read a third time and passed.<sup>4</sup>

The bill S-321 next came before the House of Representatives on June 8, 1866. Mr. Thayer represented the Committee on Private Land Claims. He began by relating an interesting anecdote regarding the Syphax name. He said that "although the name Syphax was a strange and unusual one it is not the first time it appears in the history of human affairs. It will be remembered as the name of an unfortunate Numidian King who forsook his alliance with Rome and joined with that of Car-

thage which resulted in his defeat and capture, and his being led in chains through the streets of Rome.

“The modern Syphax, the Syphax of the present bill, although of African descent like the royal Syphax of yore is a much humbler personage. The former was born a king, the latter a slave, Maria Syphax’s parents were the servants of Martha Washington. They were passed by devise to her grandson George W. P. Custis in 1802. The case as it stands is simply this, these parties have no written title to their estate. Of course it was not customary for masters to give written titles to those who had been their slaves. But Maria Syphax has a possession extending through a period of forty years, founded upon a parol gift from the master who manumitted her, and all that the Government of the United States is asked to do is to release its title acquired by a tax sale, and to confirm her in her just possession.” The bill was read and passed on its third reading.<sup>5</sup>

On June 11, 1866 the act for the relief of Maria Syphax was approved,<sup>6</sup> and on the following day it was signed by President Andrew Johnson.

The title to the land was not recorded in the Alexandria County deed book until May 6, 1875. It read:

“An Act for the Relief of Maria Syphax

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled. That the title to a piece of land being a part of the Arlington estate, in the county of Alexandria, in the State of Virginia, upon which Maria Syphax has resided since about the year Eighteen hundred and twenty-six, bounded and described as follows, to wit: Beginning at the intersection of the South line of said Arlington estate with the center line of a small run, said point of intersection being about one-fourth of a mile from the southwest corner of said Arlington estate, running thence westerly along said South line seven chains and forty links, thence in a northeasterly direction on a line making an angle of thirty-five degrees with the South line, twenty-two chains and thirty-eight links thence at right angles in a Southeasterly direction fifteen chains and sixty-seven links to the said South line of the Arlington estate, thence westerly along the said South line of the Arlington estate nineteen chains and ninety-two links to the place of beginning containing seventeen acres and fifty-three one hundredths of an acre of land be the same more or less, and the same is hereby released and confirmed unto the said Maria Syphax, her heirs and assigns.”<sup>7</sup>

A most interesting document in connection with the title was also recorded:

“United States of America

Department of State

To All to Whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

I certify that hereto annexed is a true copy of an act of Congress approved June 12, 1866, entitled “An Act for the relief of Maria Syphax.” In testimony whereof, I, Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State of the United States, have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the seal of the Department of State to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this twenty-seventh day of May A. D. 1873, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the ninety-seventh.”<sup>8</sup>

Maria Syphax’s seventeen and a half acres were a part of the patent granted by

Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia, to Robert Howson in 1669. His patent of six thousand acres extended from Hunting Creek, south of the City of Alexandria, along the Potomac River to the north boundary line of the Arlington estate, the patent being about two miles wide.

John Alexander purchased the Howson patent the year it was issued. Alexander's great-great-grandsons, Robert and Gerard, sold their tracts of land lying north of Four Mile Run to John Parke Custis in 1778. Custis chose to live on Robert's estate and named it Abingdon. The remains may still be seen on the grounds of the Washington National Airport.<sup>9</sup>

John Parke Custis (Jackie) was the son of Daniel Parke Custis deceased. His mother was Martha Dandridge Custis who married George Washington in 1759. Washington adopted her two children, Martha and John.

Jackie Custis married Eleanor Calvert, the daughter of Benedict Calvert of Mount Airey, Maryland. They had four children. Custis was twenty-eight years old when he died from camp fever while serving as an aide to Washington during the American Revolutionary War. George and Martha adopted the two youngest grandchildren, Eleanor "Nelly" Custis, two and a half years old, and her six month old brother George Washington Parke Custis. The two older girls Elizabeth and Martha were raised by their mother who subsequently married Dr. David Stuart in 1783.<sup>10</sup>

George W. P. Custis celebrated his twenty-first birthday while living at Mount Vernon on April 30, 1802. As the sole male Custis heir he was now eligible to claim his inheritance under the primogeniture law. He took legal steps to take possession of his father's estate. The estate consisted of fifteen thousand acres in the State of Virginia.

Following the death of his grandmother Martha Washington, during the same year, he decided to live on the eleven hundred acre tract (Arlington) his father purchased outright from Gerard Alexander in 1778. In order to do this it was necessary to arrange a settlement with his mother who had dower rights in the estate.<sup>11</sup>

A document filed in the Fairfax County Courthouse dated August 19, 1802 established the terms of the agreement with his mother. She released her widow's lifetime share of her dead husband's property to her son and the fifty-seven slaves assigned to her as dower. "He agreed to provide during her lifetime an annual annuity of Seventeen Hundred and Fifty Silver Dollars, money of the United States."<sup>12</sup> He also received from the estate of Martha Washington her Custis slaves.

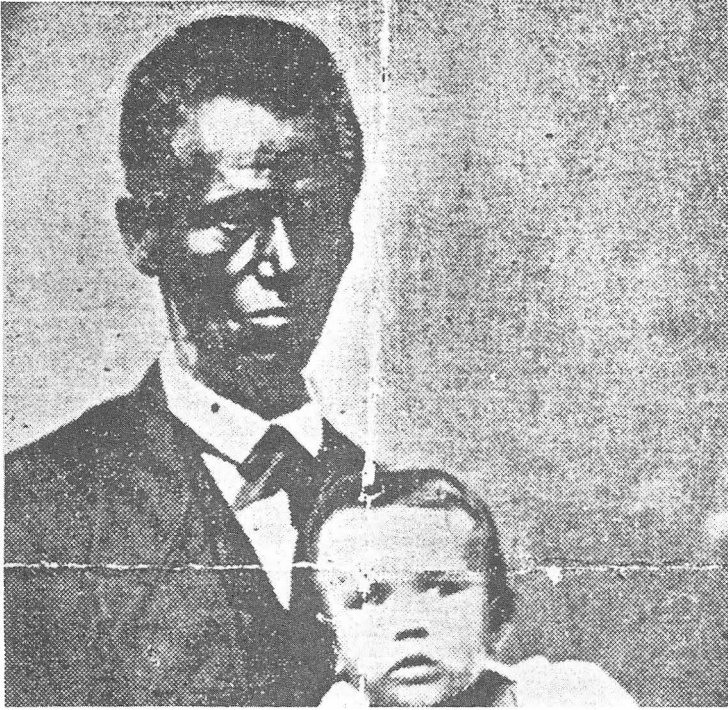
Custis first occupied a four room brick cottage near the Potomac River. He immediately began building his new home which he named Mount Washington. Several years later he renamed it Arlington. He thought Mount Washington was becoming too common a designation. In 1804 he married Mary Lee Fitzhugh of Alexandria.<sup>13</sup>

Airy Carter was one of Martha Washington's house servants. Airy's daughter Maria was born in 1803. Maria was raised on the Arlington Estate. When she was eighteen years old she married Charles Syphax.

Charles Syphax was a slave of George W. P. Custis. His duties were confined to serving meals in the mansion house. His father, William Syphax, was a free negro, and an itinerant preacher who lived in Alexandria.<sup>14</sup> According to Mrs. Mary G.

Hundley, a great-great-granddaughter, he changed his name from Anderson to Syphax when someone told him he looked like an African General who fought with Hannibal during the Punic Wars.

Charles and Maria's ten children were: Elinor, 1823; William, 1825;<sup>15</sup> Cornelius, 1831; John, 1835; Austin, 1836; Shaulter, 1840; Colbert, Ennis, 1844; and Maria.<sup>16</sup>



**Charles Syphax  
Holding his grandchild William**

To date manumission papers on Maria and her first two children, Elinor and William, have not come to light in the Alexandria County archives. There are in the newly bound Arlington County Free Negro Register, 1847-1861, two entries that can be found for Cornelius and Austin. On Pages 125 and 127 Maria's two sons have been recorded in 1853, by George W. P. Custis, as having been born free.

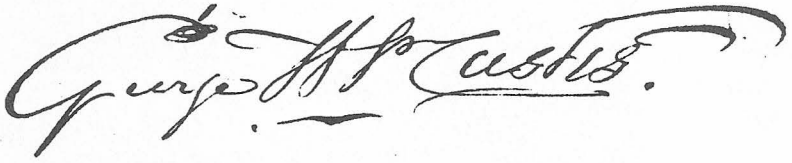
The following letter conclusively supports without a doubt the preceding information.

"Arlington House  
December 6, 1853  
My Dear Mr. Berry

Please give the Bearer of this, Cornelius Syphax, The Book or Books to which I am entitled as a Justice of the Peace for the County of Alexandria & State of Virginia

and you will very much oblige

Dear Sir - Yr. Obedient Servant

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George H. Custis." The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Cornelius - 5.10 scar on the middle of forehead 22 yrs. I certify that the two lads, Cornelius & Austin Syphax were born free

Signed

A second handwritten signature in cursive script, identical to the one above, reading "George H. Custis." It is also written in dark ink on a light background.

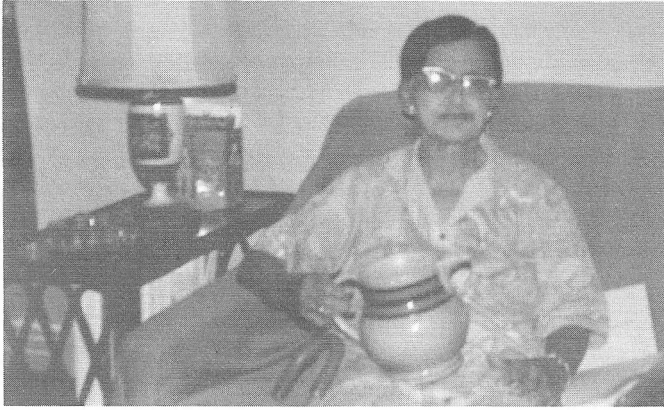
Charles Syphax did not receive his freedom until Custis died in 1857. His will of March 26, 1855 freed all his slaves.

" . . . . . the said emancipation to be accomplished in not exceeding five years from the time of my decease."<sup>18</sup>

Beginning with William Syphax, the oldest son of Maria and Charles, many Syphax descendants have distinguished themselves in the fields of education and politics.

At the age of eleven William attended private schools in Washington and Alexandria. He had a long and eventful career. He began working for the Interior Department as chief messenger. He was appointed a copyist in 1851, and promoted to a clerkship in 1885.

William took a prominent role in many enterprises for the advancement of negroes in the City of Washington which encompassed social, educational and religious lines. He was one of the founders of the Civil and Statistical Association in 1850. The Association's aim focused on the education, moral and financial advancement of the Negroes in Washington. He also sponsored and secured the incorporation of Columbian Harmony Cemetery in 1889. For twenty years he was a deacon of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church beginning in 1857. Syphax became the first President of the Board of Trustees of the Colored Public Schools in Washington. He served from 1868-71. He did much to lay the foundation of the present school system in Washington.<sup>19</sup> On October 31, 1902, a school on Half Street, between N and O Streets, Southwest, was dedicated and named in his honor.<sup>20</sup> It is hoped that the District Government will change its mind about razing it in the near future.

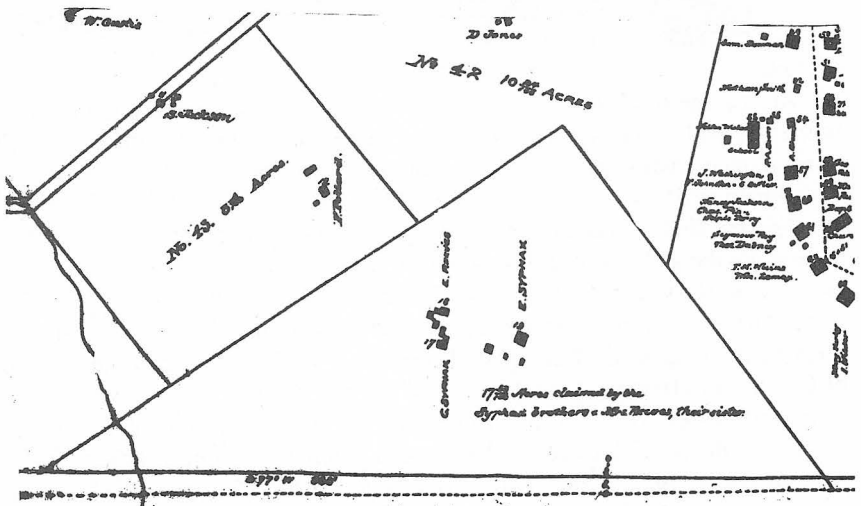


Mrs. Mary G. Hundley holding an 1860 Pitcher which belonged to her great-grandmother Maria Syphax

The last will and testament of Maria Syphax, marked with her X, was dated September 29, 1885. She appointed William to carry out her verbal wishes concerning the division of her land, on which she was living, for her remaining children and granddaughter. Her husband Charles had predeceased her in 1869.

Her will gave two acres in the northwest corner of the seventeen and a half acres to William or he could select any two acres in another part of the estate. Maria's granddaughter whom she raised was to be given the parcel of land her mother would have received.<sup>21</sup>

Maria lived on the land granted to her by George W. P. Custis until her death in 1886. Her funeral was held at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Arlington.<sup>22</sup>

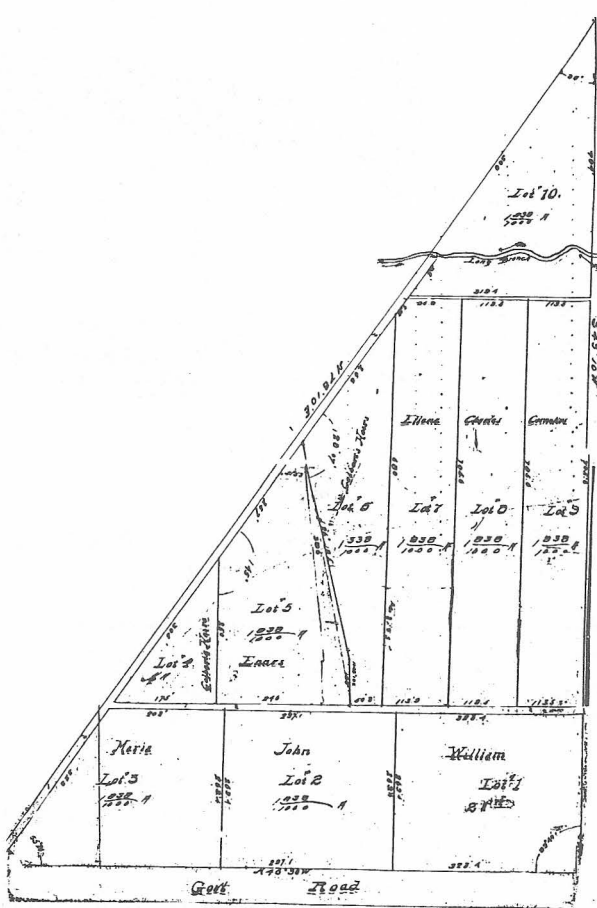


Excerpt from the updated U. S. Corps of Engineers Map of Arlington Estate 1888 from a Survey made in 1868 as directed by General Charles Howard.

William Syphax died on May 11, 1891. His property of two acres went to his son William B. Then on September 8, 1892 John Syphax conveyed his Lot #2 to William B.<sup>23</sup>

A Chancery suit between heirs and devisees of Maria Syphax took place in the Alexandria Circuit Court on March 7, 1900. The Court decreed in the case of William B. Syphax against Mary M. Syphax and others that nine of the lots surveyed and partitioned should be conveyed to the parties to whom the lots were apportioned and allotted with all appurtenances belonging to the land specially with the right of way over, and the use of all the roads, laid down on the plat.

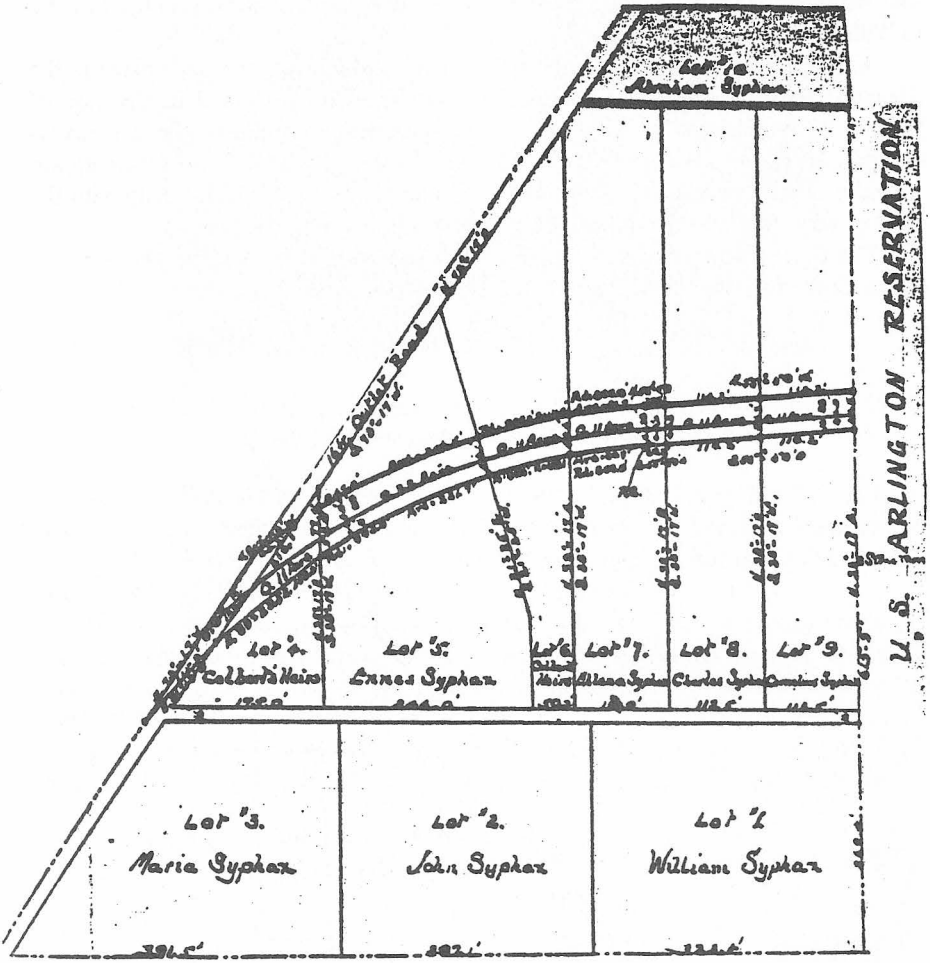
The Court further ordered that Lot #10 should be sold. Abraham W. Syphax, son of Cornelius, was the highest bidder. He paid \$422.50.<sup>24</sup>



SYPHAX ESTATE 25  
May 22, 1899

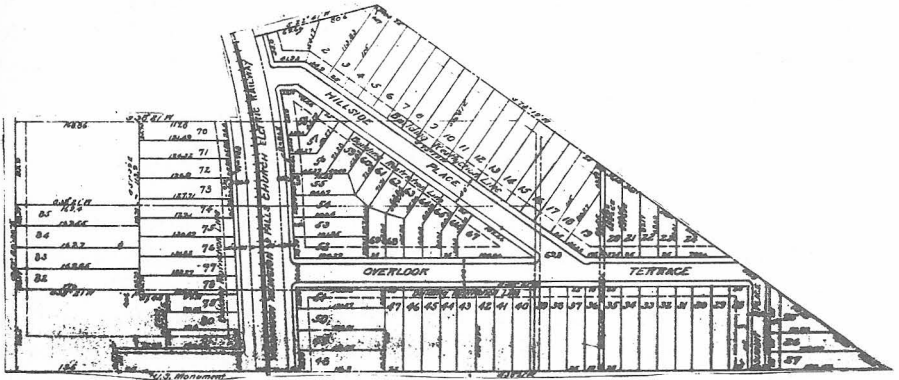
In 1906 the Washington, Arlington, Falls Church Railway Company purchased land from the owners of lots, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the Syphax Estate.<sup>26</sup>





1906 Plat Showing Right of Way Required  
by the W. A. & F.C. Ry. Co.

Early in 1980 Abraham W. Syphax began buying as much land as he could from family members for a proposed subdivision. In 1909 he had a survey made which included lots 7, 8, 9, 10 and part of 6. He had the property subdivided into lots and building sites with streets and alleys. The lots were numbered from 1-85 inclusive. Mr. Syphax was unable to include fifteen lots, numbered 40-51 and 79-81 in his subdivision since he was unable to get clear title to lot 9 which was jointly owned by other members of his family. The subdivision was dedicated on April 28, 1910.<sup>27</sup>



### A. W. Syphax Subdivision

A Chancery suit was filed by Syphax in the Alexandria County Courthouse against owners of lot 9. The case was held on February 25, 1911. The Court decreed that he was the owner and proprietor of the excluded fifteen lots. In order to get clear title Syphax had to buy out the other owners. Syphax described these lots as being near the wooden "Syphax" Railway Station.<sup>28</sup>

Active selling of the subdivision continued until 1920. After that no further sales are recorded in the County deed books.

In addition to the activities of A. W. Syphax in creating and selling his subdivision other members of the family disposed of their lots as follows; Mima Maria Frost who had married Albert Ritchie sold lot 3 to S. H. Thompson, Jr. of Alexandria in 1904.<sup>29</sup> Robert E. Syphax divided lot 4 and sold half of it to Lillie May Carter in 1924.<sup>30</sup> The northern half of lot 6 was sold by Charles S. to Colbert S. Syphax in 1904.<sup>31</sup>

Ennis Syphax's will dated 1905 provided for his wife Emma to remain on their land for her natural life. Thereafter lot 5 would be divided among their children, Robert E., Ennis G., Charles F., Park C., William B., Wesley H., Selena and Emma M. On July 12, 1930 William conveyed his right, title and interest of his share to his sister Selena.<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of World War II the United States Government condemned all of the Syphax Estate, except where the Abbey Mausoleum stands, for war purposes.

The owners filed suit against the Government for compensation for the loss of their land and buildings. The Government settled with the owners in 1943-4 by

either paying cash<sup>33</sup> or finding them acceptable housing in the area. The homes that were removed were two-story white frame houses with front and back porches.

Mrs. Beatrice Ritchie, of Arlington, whose husband was the son of Mima Maria Frost Ritchie, and one of the families moved off the land, said that the Syphax private graveyard was in the vicinity of where the swimming pool has been built on the grounds of Henderson Hall. Those reinterred in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery, 4001 Suitland Road, Suitland, Maryland were Charles, Marcella, Shaulter, Ariana, Maria, Cornelius, Archie and Austin.<sup>34</sup>

## HENDERSON HALL

Henderson Hall was established in 1943 to provide housing for approximately 1200 Women Marine Reserves assigned to duty at the Headquarters United States Marine Corps located at the Navy Annex building east of the base. The temporary buildings constructed to last about fifteen years are still in use today except for the building that housed the women. It has been replaced by Keith Hall now the Bachelor Enlisted Quarters. Future plans call for replacing all existing buildings within the next fifteen to twenty years, said Sergeant Sylvia Gethicker, Editor of the Henderson Hall News, and Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of Public Affairs of the Battalion.

The Women's Reserve Unit was discontinued in 1946. Henderson Hall provides personnel support facilities for both men and women assigned to Headquarters Battalion.

The Marine Security Guard Battalion was established in 1967 to provide administrative personnel and logistic support to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, located at the Navy Annex, and to other Marine personnel in the National Capital Region.

Henderson Hall is the smallest Marine Base, 21.4 acres, in the world. It was named for Commandant Archibald Henderson. The decommissioned bell located on the grounds was once on the USS Terror (1895), and on the USS Henderson (1917). Total cost \$200,000.

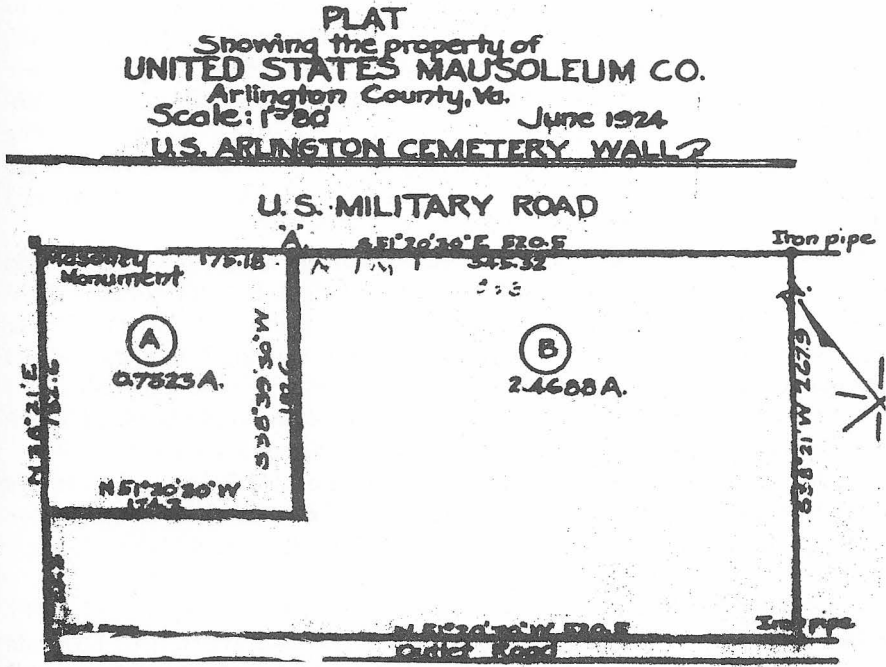
## ABBEY MAUSOLEUM

The Abbey Mausoleum sits back from the United States Military Road of Henderson Hall, on 0.7323 of an acre of ground, adjacent to Marine Corps buildings. The outline of the semi-circular driveway, almost covered with grass and hardly recognizable, swings under the portico entrance. The gray granite walls portray the somber appearance of a building long forgotten and obviously neglected in its remote and inaccessible corner.

Newspaper articles written in 1969 and 1976, describe the vandalism perpetrated within the Mausoleum's sacred walls. For some years the broken glass over the front door allowed pigeons to roost and fly in and out of the building. In the fall of 1983 it was brought to the attention of the Mausoleum's Court appointed special receiver, Frank B. Tavenner, an attorney. Mr. Tavenner had the openings boarded up and the pigeons are gone, those who flew in and out and the dead

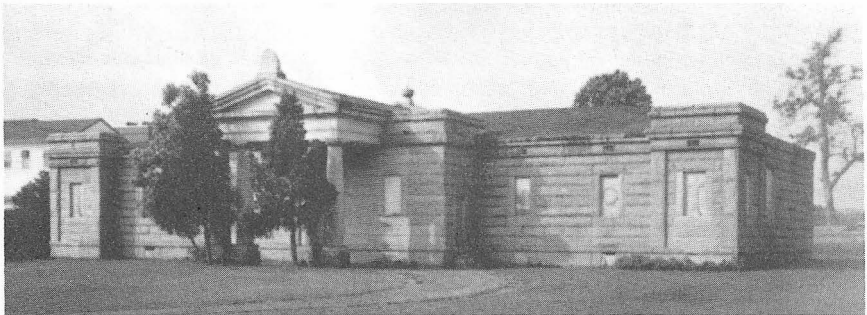
ones on the floor at the entrance.

The Abbey Mausoleum is surrounded by Henderson Hall Marine Base, Ft. Myer, and the Arlington National Cemetery. It is on the north corner of the former William B. Syphax property identified on the Syphax Estate Survey as lot 1 and 2 which he sold to John D. Normoyle, of Alexandria, in 1901.<sup>35</sup> On June 23, 1924 Normoyle and his wife sold these lots to Frederick J. Rice, of Washington, D. C. Rice divided the lots into sections A and B.<sup>36</sup>



On July 19, 1924, Rice and his wife, conveyed section A to the United States Mausoleum Company, a corporation. The company's trustees were Frederick J. Rice and Harry B. Caton.<sup>37</sup>

The Mausoleum was dedicated on the 26th of March 1926.<sup>38</sup>



Picture taken by Robert E. Abbott

The Mausoleum was built by the Stone Mountain Granite Corporation of Atlanta, Georgia. The exterior walls are of Georgia granite. The interior walls and floor are white marble. All the screens, gratings, and doors are of heavy bronze. The windows are leaded stained glass. The Abbey contains 50,193 square feet with 594 crypts and sixty niches. It was built to have indefinite life with the minimum of care and maintenance.

Because of financial difficulties the United States Mausoleum Company, was dissolved in 1928, and the property was sold at public auction for \$20,000.00 to the Stone Mountain Granite Corporation. The special commissioners for the sale, appointed by decree of the Arlington County Circuit Court for this purpose were J. Randall Caton, Jr., Spencer E. Bomar, Carl Budwesky and Claude Thomas. Subsequent to the decree the Stone Mountain Granite Corporation assigned in writing "all its right, title and interest in the property by virtue of the sale to James Colliflower and Edwin P. Hinkel." The property was then conveyed to Colliflower and Hinkel.<sup>39</sup>

The Abbey Mausoleum, Incorporated, of Arlington County, Virginia, was formed by a group of businessmen from Washington, D. C., with James E. Colliflower as President. These businessmen invested a total of \$40,000.00 of their personal funds to complete the construction of the building before they would sell any burial spaces.

Frederick J. Rice sold Section B to the Corporation for \$4,000.00 on March 28, 1928. This section of land had not been dedicated as burial ground.

Abbey Mausoleum, Inc. issued Certificates of stock. The known Certificates for 100 shares each are: #1 James E. Colliflower; #2 Dr. Oscar Wilkinson; #3 A. Schumacher; #6 B. Bain; #7 E. P. Hinkel; #8 Frank Stewart; #9 Martin Hysong; #10 Fred Rice.

The Abbey Mausoleum was incorporated under the laws of Virginia in 1928 by James Colliflower, B. Bain, E. P. Hinkel, Jr., Oscar Wilkinson, Jess C. Love and Martin Hysong, who organized the corporation for the purpose of selling burial places.

The directors abandoned the corporation and all its assets on January 1, 1957. The trust fund that was set up under the sales agreement was to provide money to maintain the Mausoleum. The money was held in trust by the Bank of Washington, and consisted of approximately \$17,000.00. Out of the sale of each crypt \$30.00 went into the fund. Total crypts sold were 444; unsold 150; total occupied originally 348; presently occupied 245; 103 having been removed. There are sixty cremation niches with seven vacant.

Richard H. Helmtoller, Acting Chairman Pro-Tem, made a Report on the Abbey Mausoleum to the crypt holders on March 10, 1962, which stated that burials continued to take place up to 1960. There was one in 1957, three in 1959 and two in 1960. His report also contained the following:

"There seems to be two opposing groups at present among crypt owners - the first comprising a few, want to sue the original corporation or someone for breach of contract. The second and larger group is interested in the crypt owners forming a private non-profit corporation, with a view to taking over the property and Trust Fund and making some definite arrangements for perpetual maintenance, or, at

least be in a position to make their own decision regarding preservation or disposition of the property.

About two years ago a committee representing a large number of crypt owners was formed. This group is interested in the formation of a non-profit corporation and taking the necessary legal steps to secure a Charter. If this can be accomplished, there would be no more corporate taxes on the property, and also the committee proposes to select a bank to act as trustee to assure perpetual care."

An Equity suit was held in Arlington County Circuit Court, June 6, 1963, the Complainant being Major General Colby M. Myers, Retired. He represented a class of individuals and/or their heirs and assigns who had a common question affecting their rights and were seeking common relief. This suit was against the Abbey Mausoleum, defendant, who had failed to file its annual report as required by the Code of Virginia under title 13.1-91, and had been abandoned by its officers and directors now deceased.

The complainants were desirous of taking over the Abbey Mausoleum under the authority of the Court and organizing a non-profit organization, issuing stock to crypt holders, and the funds so realized were to be placed in trust for the perpetual maintenance of the Mausoleum and to preserve it in proper dignity for the burial of the dead.<sup>40</sup>

In Major General Colby M. Myers' letter of March 30, 1965 to Mr. J. B. Boone, Sr., a crypt owner, of Arlington, Virginia, he referred to his earlier letter of June 4, 1964 concerning the upcoming hearing in regard to the receivership petition which was to be held on June 18, 1964.

He reported that "Judge McCarthy, of the Arlington County Court, Virginia, acted favorably on our petition last June 1964. However, despite the best effort of Mr. Frank B. Tavenner, the attorney who has been working in our behalf, we have been unable to recruit any qualified bank, individual, or organization to assume the job of receiver. It appears to me that we have reached an impasse with little hope for favorable action which would perpetuate the Abbey Mausoleum. Mr. Frank B. Tavenner, Attorney, 815 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20005, has the pertinent records pertaining to The Abbey."

On March 3, 1966 Frank B. Tavenner was appointed special receiver for the Abbey Mausoleum. The following excerpt is taken from Court papers which are on file with the Equity Suit in Arlington County Courthouse -

"It is adjudged, ordered and decreed that Frank B. Tavenner is hereby appointed special receiver of the real estate and assets described in the Bill of Complaint filed in this cause known as the Abbey Mausoleum and also assets consisting of certain unsold crypts, and the said receiver is hereby authorized and required to take charge of the real estate and assets of the corporation wherever situated, to carry on the business of the corporation, to wit: selling crypts, to call upon the Bank of Washington for such sums of money as necessary to repair the building to prevent water damage, to keep the lawn in repair and to keep the property in good repair, but said sum shall not exceed \$2,000.00 per year without special Court permission and said special receiver shall deposit all monies received by him in a special account and shall not mingle said funds with any other funds; that said special receiver is to insure all

buildings on the real estate against fire, wind, storm and exposure with some reputable insurance company in the State of Virginia and all such policies of insurance shall name the receiver as beneficiary thereof, that the said special receiver is further empowered and authorized to pay the necessary taxes assessed against said real estate when they become due and payable until further order of this Court, and said special receiver shall further report and render an itemized account of all his receipts and expenditures every three months until further order of this Court.

Said special receiver is further authorized to estimate the value at which the land, building and improvements described in the Bill of Complaint are assessed upon the land books of Arlington County and if such evaluation is excessive he is authorized to take such legal steps as may be necessary to secure a reduction of such for the purpose of taxes.

The said special receiver is to determine if unsold crypts have any market value and to receive offers to sell same."<sup>40</sup>

The sale of crypts by the Abbey Mausoleum Corporation has been recorded in Arlington County Grantor Deed Book A, from 1928-1943.

The following persons are listed: J. Walter Fewkes, William L. Newsom, George W. Trowbridge, Harriet L. Scribner, Thelia Osgood, Wilbur R. Turner, Porter J. McComber, Rufus F. Pitzer, Antoinette Covert, S. E. Miller, 1928; Mrs. Walter A. Warfield, J. William Castle, Jessie G. Beall, Charles R. McCrea, (Mrs.), George Teeple, 1929; Harriet L. Scribner, Louise P. Dunkin, Florence Curry and others, Walter T. Weaver, 1930; Herman C. Kupper, and others, Henry A. Johnson, 1931; F. Lo Bianco, Annie H. Ogden, Harry B. Caton, J. B. Kinnear, Lewis A. Crusan, Reuben A. Crusan, 1932; Edward C. Wells and others, Carrie B. H. Mebane, 1933; Mary C. Earle, 1934; M. Esther Mayher, Laura E. Cunningham, (Mrs.), Mrs. Mary C. Earle, Clarence C. Benedict, 1935; Mrs. F. L. Mockabee, 1938; Albert H. Smith and others, 1942; Victor R. Messall, 1943. Based on the number of crypts reported to have been sold perhaps this is only a partial list. However no other record was found.

While it is reputed that the Abbey Mausoleum was the resting place of the legendary Sam Houston, who played a leading part in Texas' fight for independence from Mexico, it is not true. Sam Houston was born in Rockbridge County, Virginia, in 1793. He died in Huntsville, Texas in 1863,<sup>41</sup> and is buried there in Oakwood Cemetery.<sup>42</sup>

Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland died at age eighty on July 18, 1942, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. His funeral service was held at the Washington Cathedral. He was buried at the Abbey Mausoleum.<sup>43</sup> Sutherland, a United States Senator from Utah, was appointed a Supreme Court Justice by President Warren G. Harding in 1922. He retired January 5, 1938.<sup>44</sup> His daughter, Ethel Bloedorn, the widow of Dr. Walter A. Bloedorn, told the author that she never heard of her father being moved out of the Abbey Mausoleum.

Senator J. Hamilton Lewis, of Illinois, died on April 9, 1939. He served as Senator from 1913-1918, and again in 1931--1938.<sup>45</sup> His body was removed from the Mausoleum.

The Arlington tax records for 1983 indicate the County assessed the Abbey

Mausoleum at \$266,400.00.

Ironically, the land which was returned to Maria Syphax by the United States Government was condemned for war purposes in the early 1940's. The exception to this was, of course, the Abbey Mausoleum. Perhaps the Government will find a use for this property also?

### SYPHAX GRAVE SITES

When the Sheraton National Motor Hotel was to be built on the corner of Columbia Pike and South Orme Street, the graves, estimated to be as many as 900 which surrounded the former I.O.O.F. Stevens Lodge #1435, had to be removed. Park C. Syphax tended these graves. Included in those who were reinterred in Coleman Cemetery located on Collingwood Road off Ft. Hunt Road, Alexandria, were Ennis and Emma Syphax.

In the records of Arlington National Cemetery, Section 18, area of Patton Drive, Hobson and Clayton, are Roy H. Syphax, Section 2, 1959; Ennis Gray Syphax, 1946; and Caroline, 1944, his wife.

In 1959 the following Syphaxes were reinterred at Harmony Cemetery, 7101 Sheriff Road, Landover, Maryland. They were moved from Arlington.

Maria, 1937; Lewis, 1954; Nelly, 1960; Bismarck, 1978; Addison, 1932; Bertha, 1922; Christine, 1952; William, 1918; Frances, 1934; Mary, 1956; Colbert, no date; Cordelia, 1905; Douglas, no date; Fanny, no date; Mary, 1930; Mary, 1913; William, 1891; Charles, 1954; Mary, 1956; William, 1950; Robert, 1941.



## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, p. 2612.
- <sup>2</sup> *Alexandria Will Book #7*, p. 267.
- <sup>3</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 9 X-Z*, p. 171-3.
- <sup>4</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, p. 2673-4.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3051-2.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3126.
- <sup>7</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book C4*, p. 11-12.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Dorothea E. Abbott, "The Hunter Family and Its Connection With Arlington County", *Arlington Historical Magazine* (1982), p. 36-37.
- <sup>10</sup> Eleanor Lee Templeman, *Arlington Heritage*. The author, 1959, p. 12.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.
- <sup>12</sup> Fairfax County *Deed Book 1 A-T*, p. 62-64.
- <sup>13</sup> Murray H. Nelligan, *Old Arlington*. Washington, National Capital Parks, 1953.
- <sup>14</sup> *Journal of Negro History* (Oct. 1935), p. 448-9.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> "Some Black History in Arlington County", *Arlington Historical Magazine* (1973), p. 11-17.
- <sup>17</sup> Letter G.W.F.C. to Berry, Lloyd House, Alexandria.
- <sup>18</sup> *Alexandria Will Book #7*, p. 267.
- <sup>19</sup> *Journal of Negro History* (Oct. 1935), p. 455-57.
- <sup>20</sup> Evelyn Reid Syphax, "William Syphax-Community Leader", *Arlington Historical Magazine* (1977), p. 42-44.
- <sup>21</sup> Maria Syphax - Arlington County *Will Book 10*, p. 155.
- <sup>22</sup> Evelyn Reid Syphax, *op. cit.*
- <sup>23</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book N4*, p. 504.
- <sup>24</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 105*, p. 376-8.
- <sup>25</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 102*, p. 140.
- <sup>26</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 113*, p. 289-96.
- <sup>27</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 124*, p. 14-16.
- <sup>28</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 127*, p. 481-483.
- <sup>29</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 110*, p. 360.
- <sup>30</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 207*, p. 204.
- <sup>31</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 134*, p. 79.
- <sup>32</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 315*, p. 136-7.
- <sup>33</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 627*, p. 535, 539; 628, p. 88; 631, p. 170.
- <sup>34</sup> Lincoln Memorial Cemetery Records.
- <sup>35</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 104*, p. 277.
- <sup>36</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 207*, p. 582-3 Plat.
- <sup>37</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 207*, p. 586.
- <sup>38</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 238*, p. 220.
- <sup>39</sup> Arlington County *Deed Book 273*, p. 266.
- <sup>40</sup> Equity suit #13805, Arlington County Courthouse.
- <sup>41</sup> *The World Book*, v. 9, p. 365.
- <sup>42</sup> Final Placement; Permanent Addresses Reference.
- <sup>43</sup> *N.Y. Times* July 19 and 20, 1942.
- <sup>44</sup> Who Was Who Reference.
- <sup>45</sup> *Notable Names in American History; Who Was Who in America.*