

HO-829

The Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park (Pet Cemetery)

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

All material is property of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Last Updated: 04-25-2013

HO – 829
The Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park
7239 Washington Boulevard
Elkridge, vicinity

Located along the eastern side of US Route 1, Washington Boulevard south of Elkridge, MD, the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, is comprised of nearly 8 acres of land. The site contains no building or structure other than the low wall of stone that bounds the Park along Washington Boulevard. The property serves as a private cemetery for pet animals. While no longer actively selling plots, the Park remains open for visitors of lost pets; including people of significance such as former Maryland Governor William Donald Schaffer. The conditions of the property are generally fair to poor.

The significance of the Edward Gross and Abraham Watner Property, more commonly known as the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, is in its association with the development of US Route 1 and its cultural indicators for the role of pets in American society. The site illustrates the way residential properties were turned into commercial ventures by their owners, relying on the accessibility offered by US 1, the so-called "Main Street" of the East Coast. Similarly the property's location on the elevated ground formerly a part of Wesley Grove Methodist Camp area. The site is across the street from a large cemetery for human beings, and down the street a little ways from All Saint's Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Maryland. The property is representative of the culture's fascination with the care of animals, in life and in death. As such, the property is somewhat associated with events making contributions to the broad patterns of our history.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. HO - 829

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic The Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park

other

2. Location

street and number 7239 Washington Boulevard not for publication

city, town Elkridge, MD 21075 X vicinity

county Howard

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

name The Bonheur Land Company

street and number 7239 Washington Boulevard telephone Unknown

city, town Elkridge state MD zip code 21075

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Howard County Courthouse liber 1463 folio 245

city, town Ellicott City tax map 37 tax parcel 107 tax ID number 176765

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: _____

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<u> </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> funerary	<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> government		<u> </u> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry		
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape		
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture		
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
		<input type="checkbox"/> social		
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
			<u> 0 </u>	

7. Description

Inventory No. HO -829

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

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

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Located along the eastern side of US Route 1, Washington Boulevard south of Elkridge, MD, the Edward Gross and Abraham Watner Property, more commonly known as the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, is comprised of nearly 8 acres of land. The site contains no building or structure other than the low wall of stone that bounds the Park along Washington Boulevard. The property serves as a private cemetery for pet animals. While no longer actively selling plots, the Park remains open for visitors of lost pets; including people of significance such as former Maryland Governor William Donald Schaffer. The conditions of the property are generally fair to poor.

COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION

The Edward Gross and Abraham Watner Property, also known as the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park is a fairly level site and contains no buildings. While there is a historic house, dating approximately to the 1930's, located very near the pet cemetery (appearing to be on cemetery land), it is in fact on a separate parcel of land.

Access to the Park is made from Washington Boulevard by way of a would-be (but in reality slightly off) center drive that continues to the back, or eastern most boundary of the property. The one-lane drive is a dirt path and in rough condition. General automobile parking for visitors is very limited near the front of the cemetery, and is really more like a wide space to the drive. The neighboring parcel owners also share the entrance to the Park. There is a spur of the drive that runs parallel to Washington Boulevard and extends to the southernmost corner of the original Wesley Grove plat plan, where the circa 1920 garage and two later houses stand.

Adjacent to the property line along Washington Boulevard there is the property's only structure: a low stone wall that is roughly three stones in width, running the length of the property (on this side only) and gently increasing in height as it moves toward the center opening. The wall is constructed of natural, possibly local, granite that is gray and mottled in color. The stones of the outer two wythes have stones set with what appear to be natural angles, oriented upward, giving the wall a scalloped and uniform design. Near the center of the larger combined parcel there is a large semi-circular curve in the wall with the opening gateway of about 12 feet at its center. The opening may be secured with a simple, double swinging, wire metal gate. These modest swinging gates have the words "Rosa Bonheur" and "Memorial Park" located along the top rail of each gate panel. The outside hinges of the metal gate are fixed in the solid masonry piers that are the aesthetic focus to the historic stone wall. Each pier is square in plan, and somewhat tapered in shape as it extends nearly a foot above the height of the adjacent wall. The piers are crowned with decorative meditative sculptures.

There is a large evergreen plant/tree located in the circular bay of the stone entranceway. Otherwise the park has numerous deciduous trees and shrubs. These plantings and others at the Park do not suggest a formally designed landscape. The animal graves are scattered throughout the 8 acre (plus or minus) site. There are no raised head stones. All markers are flush with the earth's surface. There are plastic flower bouquets and stuffed animals on some of the graves.

8. Significance

Inventory No. HO - 829

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Funerary</u>

Specific dates	N/A	Architect/Builder	unknown
Construction dates	Circa 1936		

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.)

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, is in its association with the development of US Route 1 and its cultural indicators for the role of pets in American society. The site illustrates the way residential properties were turned into commercial ventures by their owners, relying on the accessibility offered by US 1, the so called "Main Street" of the East Coast. Similarly the property's location on the elevated ground formerly a part of Wesley Grove Methodist Camp area. The site is across the street from a large cemetery for human beings, and down the street a little ways from All Saint's Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Maryland. The property is representative of the culture's fascination with the care of animals, in life and in death. As such, the property is associated with events making contributions to the broad patterns of our history.

NARRATIVE HISTORY

The subject property, Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, is historically associated with events making contributions to the broad patterns of our history by virtue of, among other things, its association with the development and use of US 1 (also known as: Washington Blvd., the Washington Road and following the Baltimore Washington Turnpike.) Historically the route between Baltimore and Washington dates back two centuries. The road that would become the Baltimore Washington Turnpike predated the "Residence Bill" of July 16, 1790, that established the national capital, "The Territory of Columbia."

Originally constructed under the 1704 Act requiring 24 foot cart paths, the first section of the road was constructed in 1741 connecting Baltimore and Elkridge. By 1749 the road continued to Georgetown and the banks of what is now referred to as the Potomac River. According to many period accounts, maintenance was always a concern. During the turnpike movement of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, several different turnpike companies tried to construct a successful turnpike. Only one company succeeded in 1820. Their success was short lived, as the State of Maryland condemned the road in 1865.

In 1906 the State responded to the public's request for rebuilding the roadway and State Route 1 was officially born. The military used the road heavily during WWI and in 1918 and 1919 the road was laid in concrete and expanded by twenty feet in width. In 1925, State Route I became part of US 1, the so-called "Main Street" of the East Coast, from Fort Kent, Maine to Key West, Florida.

The development of US 1, as well as many other roadways during the early twentieth century, occurred in response to the culture's acceptance and increased use of the automobile. Few inventions have had as great and as widespread an impact as the automobile.

The National Park Service (NPS) reports:

"By 1920, more than 300 cities had roadside camping facilities for motorists and more than one million people used them. Streets and highways were quickly built or modernized and a uniform numbering system for highways was introduced in 1925. In 1930 nearly 27 million cars were registered. The production, sale, repair, and servicing of cars provided work for millions."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. HO - 829

Howard County Land Records, Howard County Courthouse, Ellicott City.

State Department of Assessments and Taxation Records, State of Maryland. Baltimore, MD.

P.A.C Spero & Company and Louis Berger & Associates. "Historic Highway Bridges in Maryland: 1631- 1960: Historic Context Report," MD State Highway Administration, MD State Department of Transportation, Baltimore, MD, 1995.

A History of Road Building in Maryland. State Roads Commission of MD, Baltimore, MD, 1958.

G.M. Hopkins, C.E. Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Baltimore including Howard County, Maryland. Philadelphia: 320 Walnut Street, 1878.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property approximately 8 Acres

Acreage of historical setting approximately 91.58 Acres

Quadrangle name Savage Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale: 1: 24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Map 37, Grid 23, Parcel 107

See map with parcel identified.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Kate Mahood, Architectural Historian		
organization	Mahood and Associates, LLC	date	March 1, 2004
street & number	510 Pafel Road	telephone	410-266-5608
city or town	Annapolis	state	MD

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
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. HO - 829

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

With the Great Depression the tourist industry and related businesses were nearly cut in half between 1929 and 1932. The businesses that were successful during these difficult times were often ones that appealed to the smaller number of tourists on the road and maintained a smaller scale operation. As economic times improved later in the 1930's and onward, roadside advertising became commonplace. Fanciful buildings, grand colorful signs (often humorous in language), and huge, over-sized sculptures of trademark characters and animals offered highly visible attractions for the passing motorist. All aimed to incline the traveler to stop, pass some time, and of course spend some money. These distinctive architectural and landscape features created a roadside or highway culture that, in part, gives context for understanding the history of many commercial and residential properties along Route US 1, including its run through Howard County.

The subject property, as a pet cemetery, not only fulfills the desire of pet owners to bury their animal(s) as if human, it is also a bit of an anomaly, or oddity, or at least a curious place. Not unlike the fanciful roadside buildings common during this period, the spirit of this place is also very entrepreneurial. It was created as a private business, yet sited adjacent to cemeteries for human beings. While it may be interpreted as fulfilling a religious need for people, it also communicates a sense of 'kitsch' or a touch of humor or amazement to the passing visitor. It is a pet cemetery. The business capitalized on the property's accessible location along busy US Route 1 attracting both users of their services, as well as curiosity seekers and travelers of the famed road.

While there is a historic house, dating approximately to the 1930's, located very near the pet cemetery, it is in fact on a separate parcel of land, as evidenced by both the State Department of Assessments and Taxation Tax Map, as well as the historic subdivision plat from the site's earlier development in 1917 (with revisions in 1920). Both parcels, as well as a third with an older garage structure, are identified on the Wesley Grove Development Map #2, as drawn by J.L. Barnes, Engineer.

The earlier development of the subject property by Wesley Development in 1917/1920 illustrates an entrepreneurial spirit to capitalize on the development of the roadway. Part of a large parcel, (acreage unconfirmed, on both sides of US Route 1) deed research confirms the parcels, known as "Lots 1 - 15 and 51 - 65," on the associated subdivision map, were sold or leased to varied people over the years. The corresponding plat, copy attached, outlines as many as thirty-six (30) parcels sold or to be sold by the Wesley Development. But by May 8, 1936 most of the property was owned by Mr. Edwin Gross and Mr. Abraham Watner. It seems these people were behind the creation of The Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park. By 1937 the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, Inc. is the owner of over 13 lots. (liber 159/ folio 15). This parcel remains in its current form.

The cemetery holds upward of 22,000 graves for cats, dogs, birds, and an elephant. For a time, it even offered plots for humans who wanted to be buried with their pets. Rosa Bonheur also established a pet crematorium in 1991.

Deed research as well as look at the local newspaper indicates that over the years the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park was less than financially successful and laden with legal troubles. The property went in and out of Bankruptcy before finally being sold to the "Bonheur Land Company" (Liber 4163/folio 245).

Newspaper articles published over the years chronicle the stories of abuse, neglect, and fraud that are connected to the behavior of the Cemetery's more recent owner, Mr. William Green, from 1978 to 1997. Lawsuits were filed and Mr. Green convicted of various offenses, before the property was conveyed to the Bonheur Land Company in 1997.

Of the noted lawsuits, one involved testimony from Maryland's former governor, William Donald Schaffer, regarding the mistreatment of the body of his deceased Black Labrador dog, Willie II. (Willie II is featured with Mr. Schaffer in his official portrait.) The civil suit alleged Mr. Green's staff documented that Mr. Shaffer's dog was "kicked, stomped and bashed" before the burial. The lawsuit with 16 other Maryland residents alleged Mr. Green delivered to them "...wrong ashes, or never delivered grave markers for

**Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form**

Inventory No. HO - 829

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

which they paid hundreds of dollars." (The Baltimore Sun, December 24, 1996) Ultimately Mr. Green received a suspended term probation for his convictions.

The case also spurred consideration for establishing laws to govern pet cemetery owners, in 1997. The cemetery reopened by the Bonheur Land Company in May of 1998, and revised their policy to no longer allow human burials there. Since then, the Bonheur Land Company has closed the cemetery again.

The property speaks to the nature of "mom and pop" businesses that were common in the first half of the twentieth centuries across the country and especially along such historic roadways. It also speaks to the value people attach to the lives of their pets, and the cultural changes that have lifted pets from being perceived as "personal property," to a higher standing as "family members." When considered in the context that American's now spend upward of \$ 23 Billion dollars per year on pets, this site is associated with events making contributions to the broad patterns of our history.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of
Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. HO - 829

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

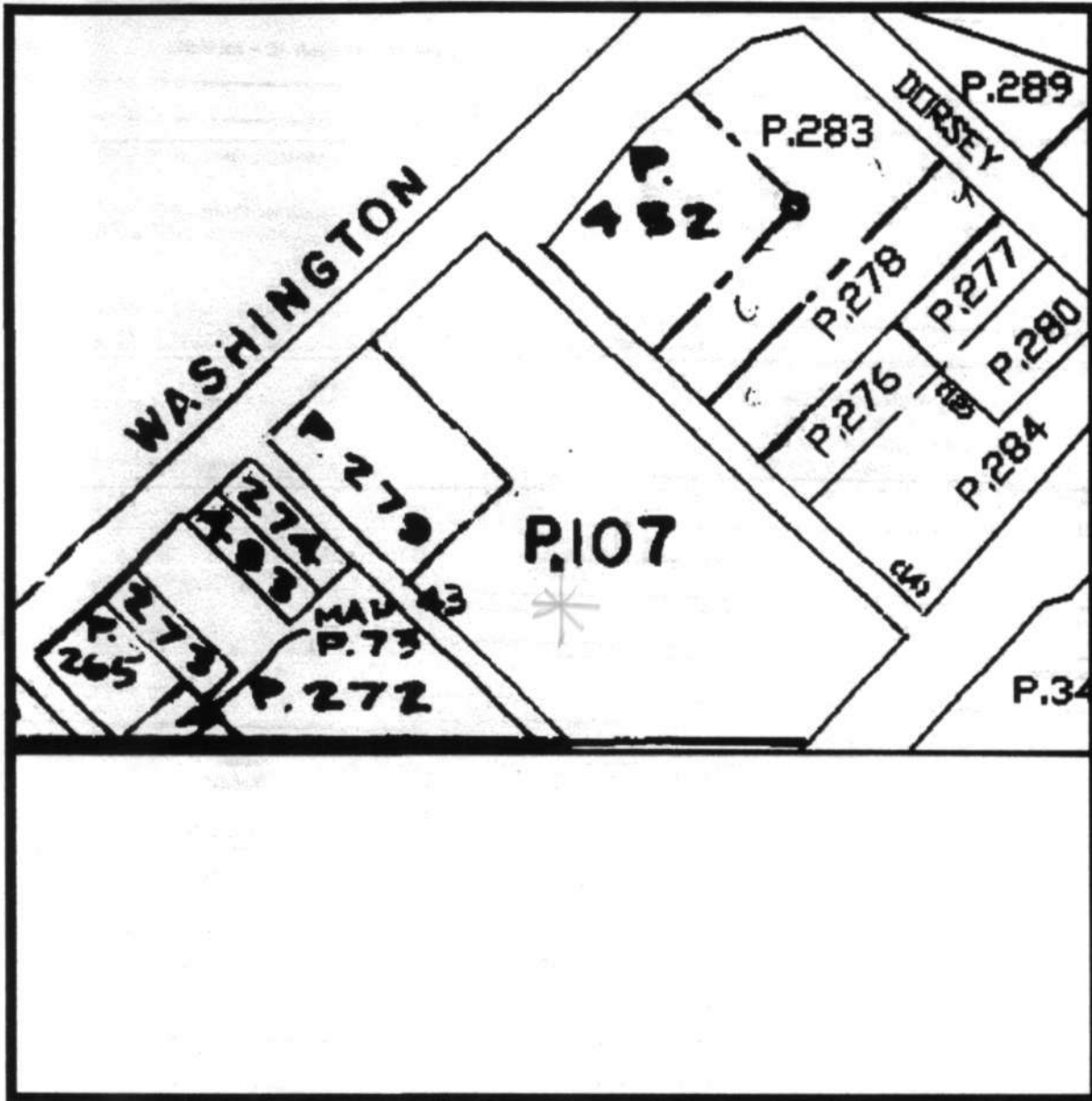
Stein, Charles Francis, Jr. Origin and History of Howard County Maryland. Baltimore: The Howard County Historical Society, 1972.
Martinette Map of 1860.

Consumer Insight Magazine, "How much do Americans spend on their Pets?" December 2000.

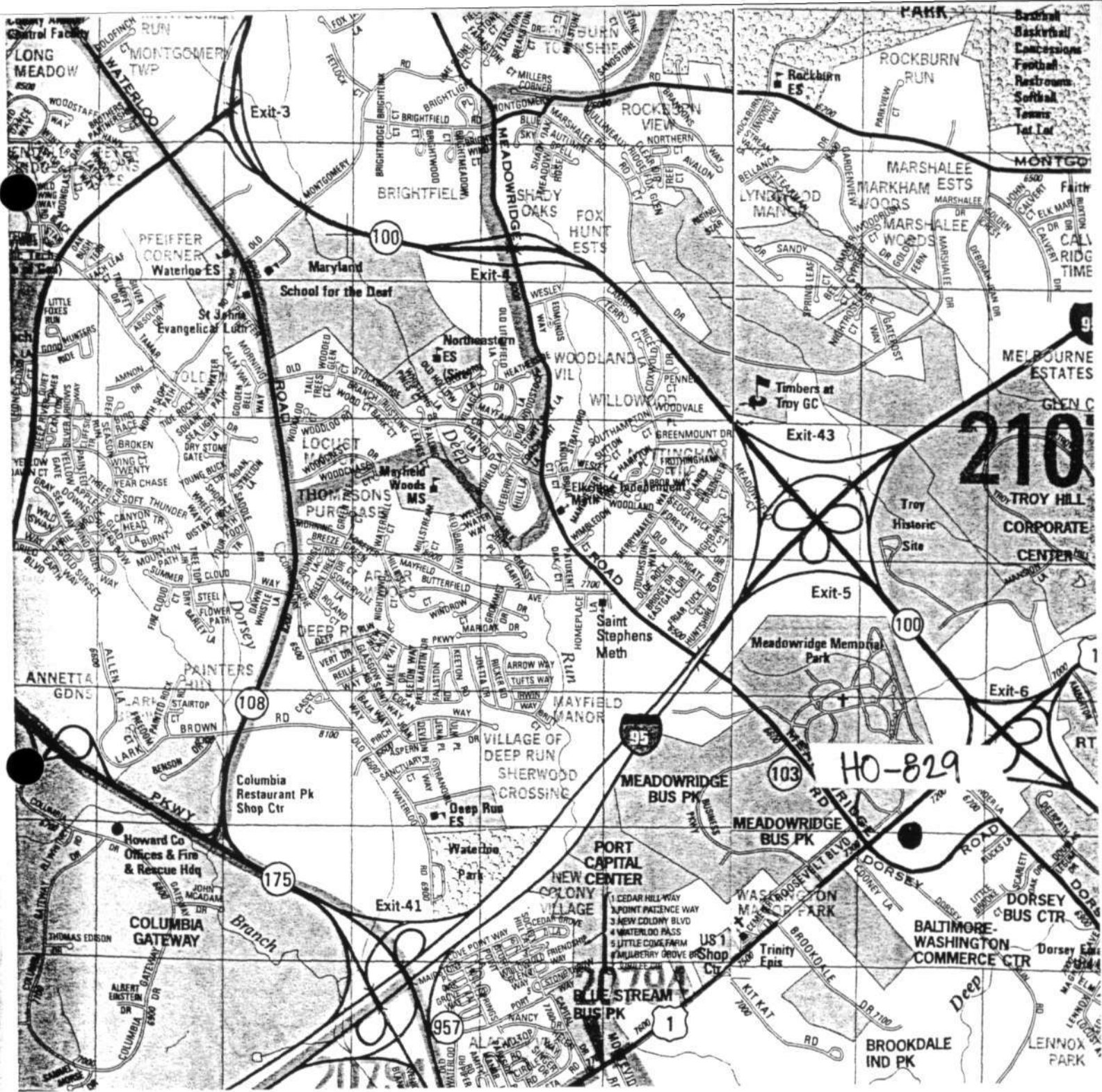
HO-829

	Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation HOWARD COUNTY Real Property Data Search	Go Back View Map New Search
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

District - 01 Account Number - 176765



Property maps provided courtesy of the Maryland Department of Planning ©2001 - 2002.
 For more information on electronic mapping applications, visit the Maryland Department of Planning web site at
www.mdp.state.md.us/webcom/index.html



HOWARD COUNTY - ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR PILG GRANT

MARCH 2004

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 7239 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD, ELKRIDGE, MD

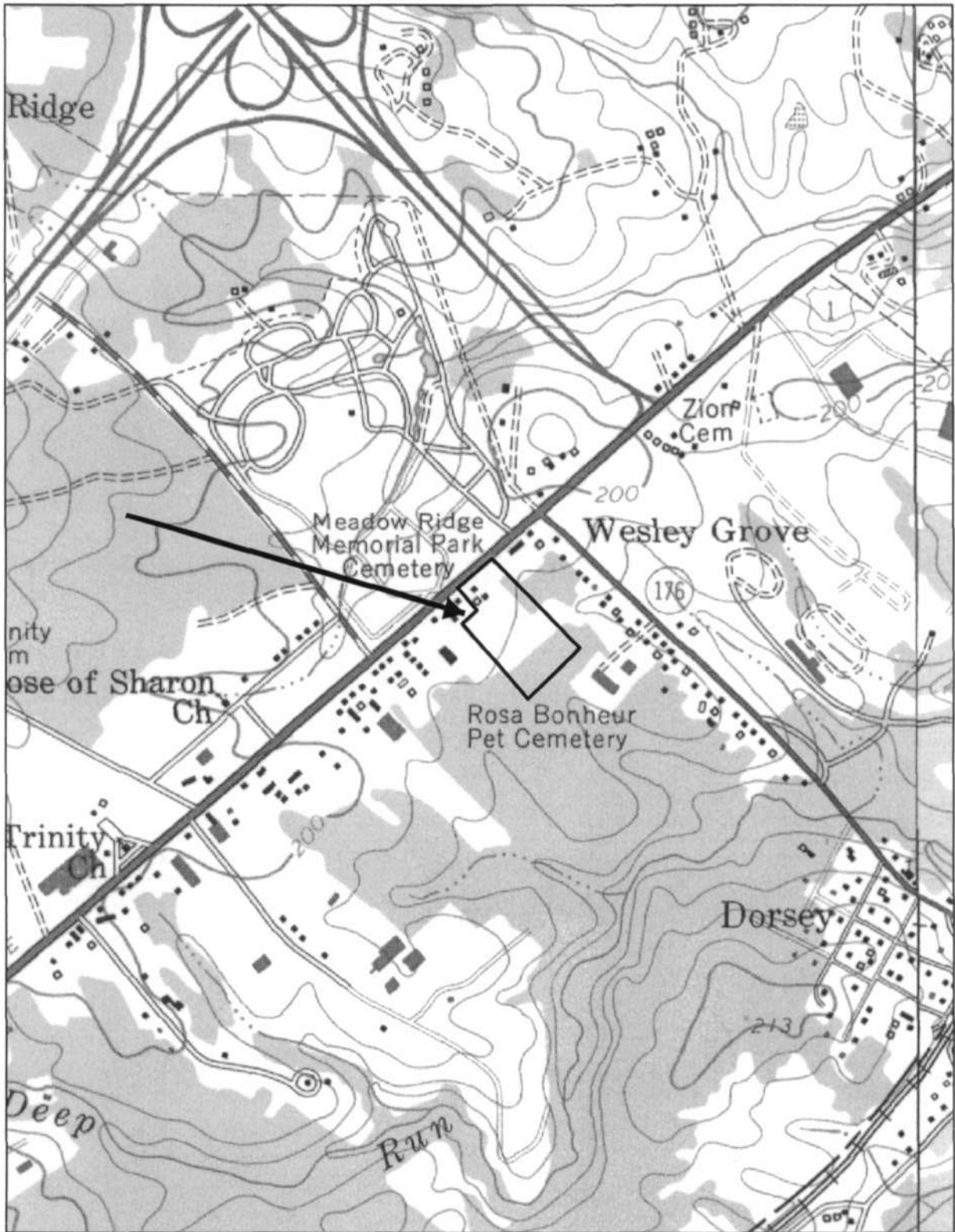
PROPERTY INVENTORY NUMBER: HO - 829

ADC'S HOWARD COUNTY STREET MAP BOOK

SCALE: 1" = 2,000 FT.



HO-829
The Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park
7239 Washington Boulevard
Savage Quad

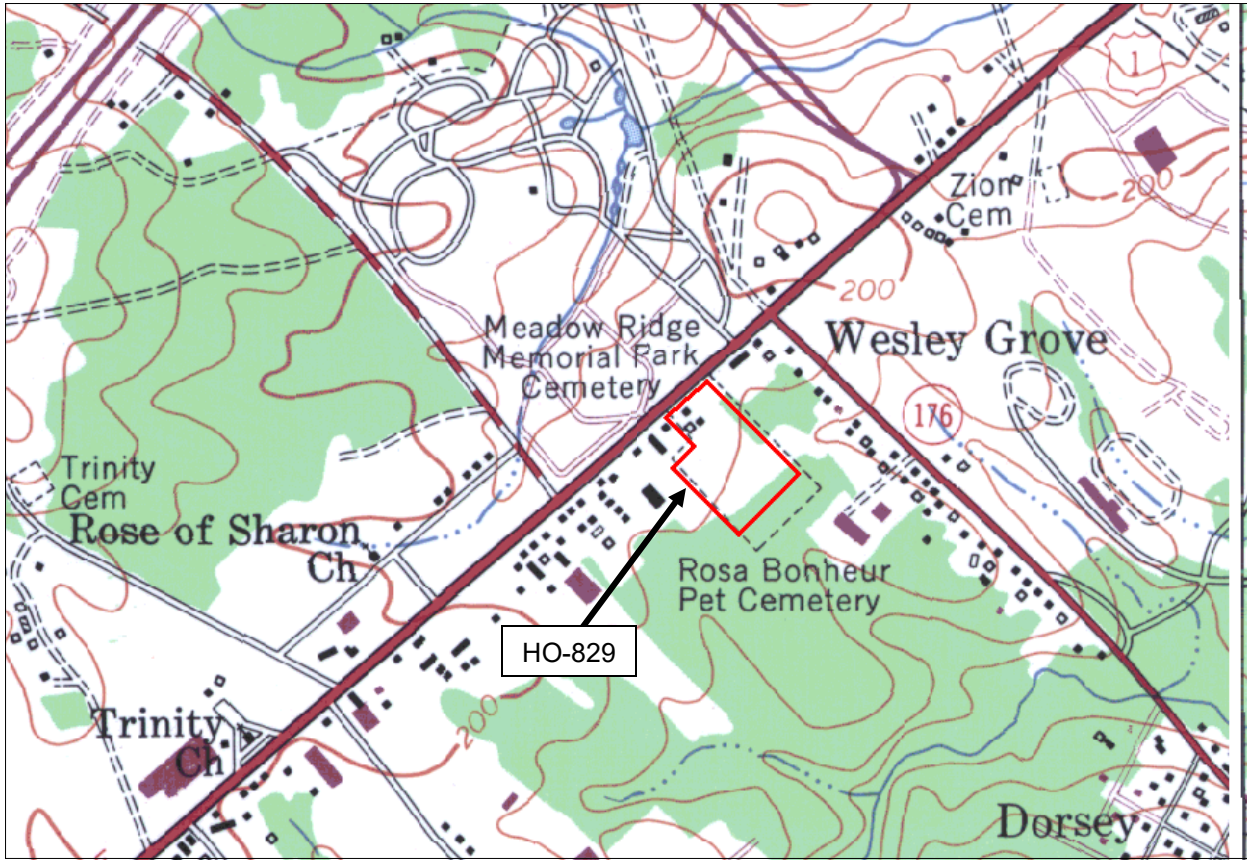


HO-829

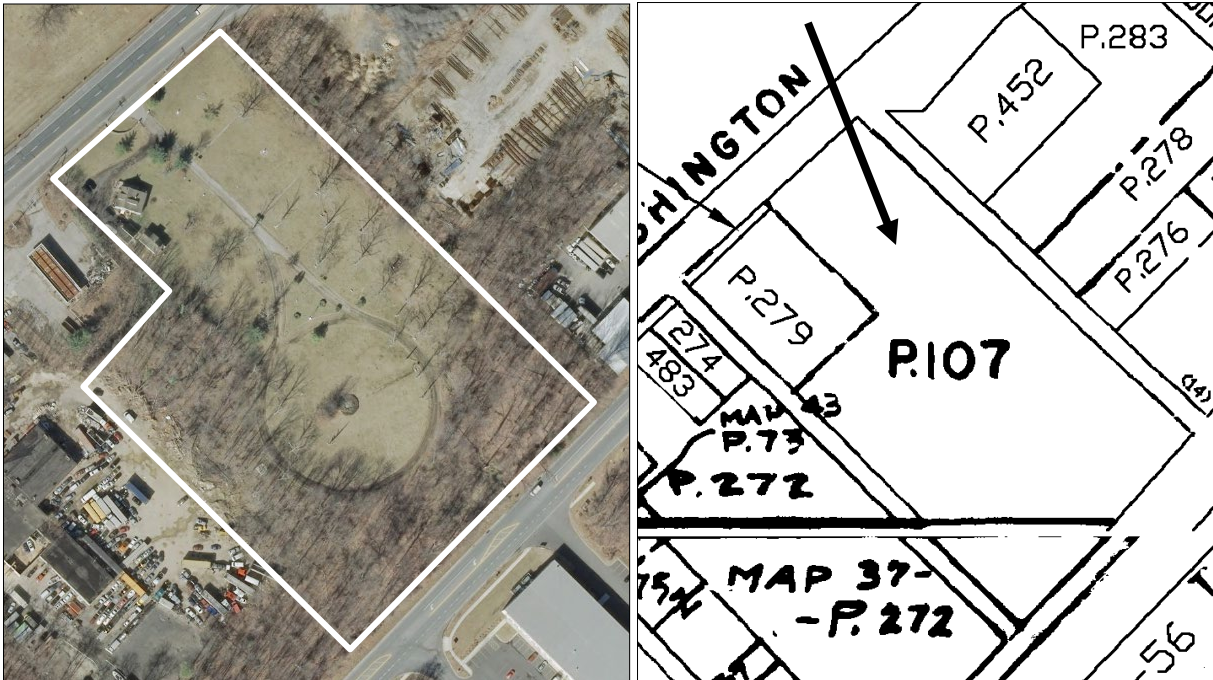
Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park (Rosa Bonheur Pet Cemetery)

7239 Washington Boulevard (US 1), Elkrige

Savage 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle 1957, Photorevised 1966 and 1974



National Web Map Service 6" Orthophoto Map, c. 2010 Tax Maps 37 and 43. Parcel 107 (on map 37)



MHT GIS 12/27/2012 JKC



R. S. BONHEUR MEMORIA

H O-829

Edward Gross and Abraham Watner Property

Howard County

View Looking North

Negative W/MC54PO

Kate Mahood

Feb. 2004