

**A Report on the Investigation and Restoration of the Green
Level Cemetery at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management
Area, Prince William Co., Va.**

Jeff Irwin

2/23/2015

Abstract

The Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area, managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), is an important public land resource with recognized value as a conservation and recreation area. The land, preserved through a unique partnership between the Prince William Conservation Alliance, the United States Marine Corps and the VDGIF, contains important habitat for native floral and faunal species as well as hunting and fishing areas open to the public. The land also includes a potentially rich culture history with clear evidence of historic occupation beginning in the 18th century and extending well into the 20th. The work described here involves limited investigation and restoration of a historic plantation cemetery (archaeological site 44PW1957) as well as research into the general history of the property. The goal of this project is to encourage preservation of the abandoned cemetery and help ensure its survival in posterity while fostering an appreciation of the history it represents.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
List of Figures.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Background: Previous Recordation of the Green Level Cemetery.....	2
Project Planning.....	3
Summary of Work.....	3
Overview of Green Level History.....	5
The Green Level Cemetery (44PW1957).....	15
Summary and Recommendations.....	24
Appendix A: Prince William County Cemetery Survey, Ron Turner (2001).....	29
Appendix B: Prince William County Cemetery Survey, Justin Patton (2007).....	30
Appendix C: Epitaphs on French family headstones at Green Level.	31

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Merrimac WMA and Green Level Cemetery ("French-Green Cemetery" in legend) on Somerville USGS 7.5' topographic quadrangle, courtesy of Justin Patton.	1
Figure 2. One of the headstones originally uncovered by Turner in 2001 at the outset of the current study, shown here in 2012. In the current investigation this stone was only partially visible and was been revealed through raking and sweeping.....	2
Figure 3. Headstones set in wooden frames (2013). View southeast. Graves: (William French, Maria French, Susan French [left-right foreground], Elizabeth French [background]).	4
Figure 4. Survey plat from an 1834 deed dividing William French's estate.	9
Figure 5. Section of 1901 map showing the Green Level vicinity. The southernmost Kiewit property marks the core area of the historic farm and vicinity of the cemetery.	13
Figure 6. Bottle label from one of Kiewit's distillery products, an ostensibly medicinal "Holland Gin"...	14
Figure 7. A section of an 1937 aerial photograph with notable feature locations indicated: A=Reading house; B=cemetery.....	17
Figure 8. Sketch map of Green Level cemetery. Dashed oval indicates area recommended for further probing and vegetation clearing.....	18
Figure 9. Fieldstone marker inscribed with "C.T.T.".....	22
Figure 10. mall in-situ fieldstone marker.....	22
Figure 11. Sketch plat of graves and stone markers identified at the Green Level cemetery.	21
Figure 12. Selected headstones at the Green Level Cemetery (all French family): a. Susan A. (upper left); b. Maria Louise (upper right); c. Elizabeth (lower left); d. Anne M. (lower right).	23
Figure 13. Anne French headstone (left) and in-situ base, with adjacent, intrusive tree.	24

List of Tables

Table 1. Slave names recorded in probate records for Green Level.	10
--	----

Introduction

A historic, abandoned cemetery in Prince William County has been rediscovered, documented and partially restored. This report summarizes the results of recent efforts to investigate and improve the conditions of the Green Level cemetery, located on the Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area (WMA) (Figure 1). The cemetery project has been primarily coordinated by the Prince William

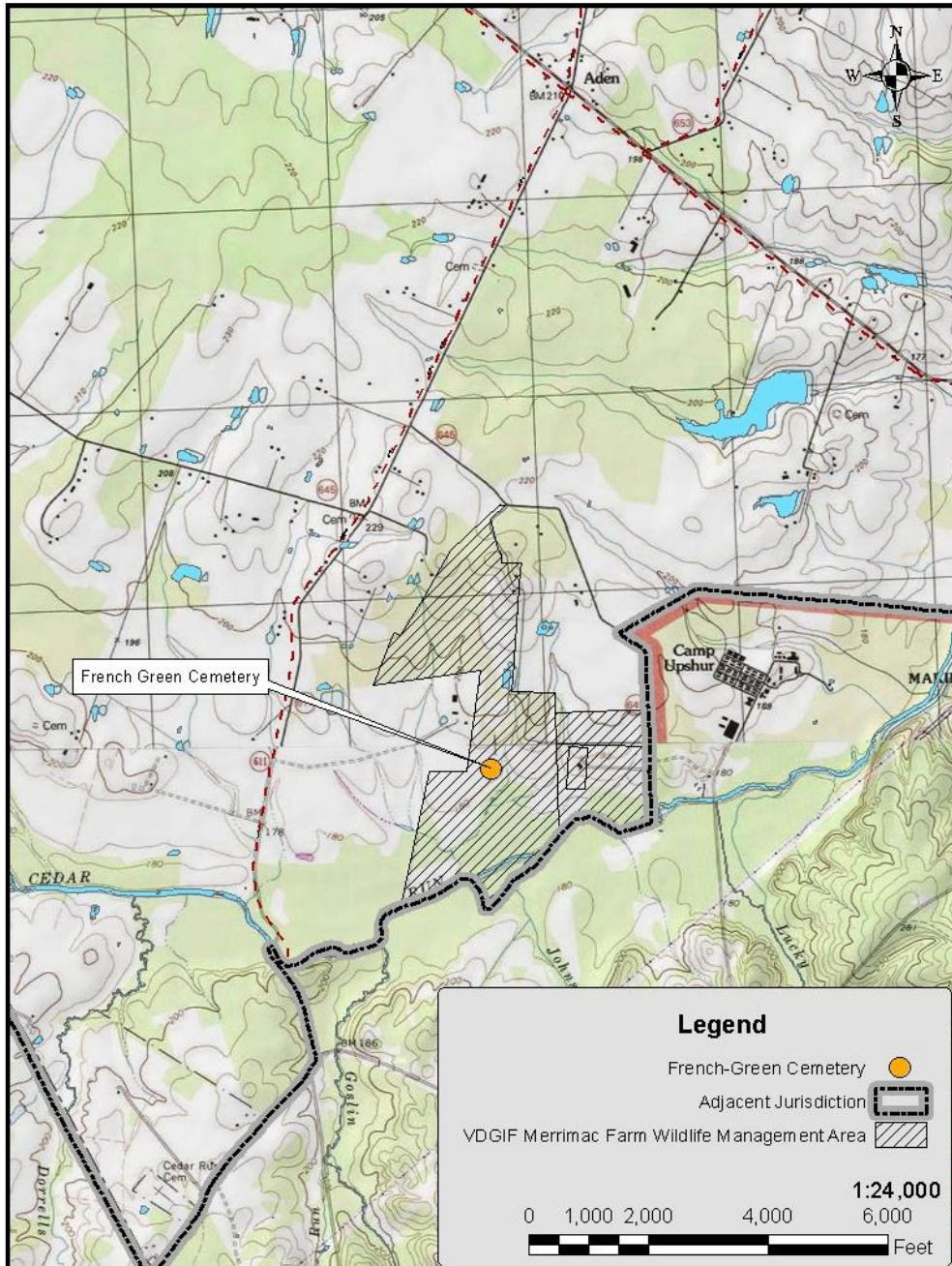


Figure 1. Map of Merrimac WMA and Green Level Cemetery ("French-Green Cemetery" in legend) on Somerville USGS 7.5' topographic quadrangle, courtesy of Justin Patton.

Conservation Alliance (PWCA) using volunteer labor and expertise. The PWCA has the support of the

owner and manager of the WMA, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The work has been conducted in accordance with a permit issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) under the Virginia Antiquities Act (DHR File No. 2012-1311).

Background: Previous Recordation of the Green Level Cemetery

Local historian Ron Turner first recorded the Green Level cemetery in local county records in 2001 (Appendix A). Commissioned by the Prince William County Historical Commission to document historic cemeteries throughout the county, Turner visited the site in the summer of 2001. Turner had been contacted by Ralph McDowell, conservationist and son of long-time property owner Lt. Col. Dean Noyes (Mac) McDowell. Ralph McDowell led Turner to the cemetery, where he found no stones visible (Ron Turner, personal communication 2013). During a second visit with McDowell about a month later, Turner discovered a few headstones using a small homemade probe. Turner uncovered four broken headstones (Figure 2) and one fieldstone but estimated as many as 50-100 additional graves were possibly present, despite a size estimate of only 70 x 70 feet. Turner recorded basic information from the headstones of William, Elizabeth, and Susan French (Appendix A).



Figure 2. One of the headstones originally uncovered by Turner in 2001 at the outset of the current study, shown here in 2012. In the current investigation this stone was only partially visible and was been revealed through raking and sweeping.

Several years after Turner, the cemetery was recorded by Justin Patton, Prince William County Archaeologist (Appendix B). County Archaeologist Justin Patton surveyed the cemetery in 2007 with Ron Turner, Bill Olson, and Kim Hosen. He estimated the size at 80 by 80 feet with approximate cemetery boundaries denoted by surface elevation changes (attributed to plowing), old fence lines, trees in linear order, and periwinkle ground cover. Based on headstones and footstones, Patton noted four confirmed and five possible burials in what he considered a poor-condition cemetery. Patton and others

observed greenbrier, red oak, cedar, walnut, and beech trees, and a raised soil berm. All headstones were broken and lying on the ground. Rodent (“gopher”) holes were noted at the northeast corner of the cemetery area.

Project Planning

Years after Turner’s visit and shortly after Patton’s visit, the McDowell farm was acquired by the state of Virginia and opened to the public as the Merrimac Farm WMA. Honoring the McDowell family’s goal of conservation, a partnership comprising the PWCA, the VDGIF and the Marine Corps Base Quantico led to the acquisition of the farm. Following the opening of Merrimac Farm, the PWCA led an effort to learn more about the Green Level cemetery, which lay largely unchanged since Patton’s visit in 2007.

Some general ideas about documenting and improving the condition of the cemetery was discussed at a May 24, 2012 meeting of the partners (VDGIF, PWCA, USMC) involved in management of the WMA. At this meeting, the parties engaged in an in-depth discussion about the cemetery and shared ideas and concerns regarding improvements to, and study of, the cemetery. Consensus was reached to pursue a project to study and improve the condition of the cemetery with the goal of enhancing the potential for historical interpretation and for long-term preservation.

Since the state of Virginia owns Merrimac Farm, the partners agreed that a permit under the Virginia Antiquities Act would be required before carrying out work that involved minor ground disturbance, e.g. probing and shallow hand excavation. A permit application was submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources on August 24, 2012 and a permit was received on August 29, 2012. Through amendment, the permit was extended to February 20, 2015.

Several episodes of fieldwork followed receipt of the permit. Fieldwork was conducted by two or three individuals with visits by PWCA members and other visitors to the WMA. The author served as the principal investigator and supervisor.

Summary of Work

Consistent with the stewardship orientation of both the VDGIF and the PWCA, several practical objectives were identified for the cemetery project. These objectives and the measures taken are summarized below.

- 1) **Improving general site conditions.** To minimize deterioration of the cemetery through continued neglect and to increase visibility of and access to the site, vegetation was cleared from the general vicinity of the graves and the overall landform. This included clearing of a dense shrub and ground layer vegetation cover. Weeds, shrubs, saplings and especially thick poison ivy and other vines were targeted for removal as were numerous fallen tree limbs. Vegetation was dragged off site. On the day of the initial planning meeting (May 24, 2012), the author and Bill Olson inspected the site with VDGIF Wildlife Biologist Ron Hughes and PWCA Executive Director Kim Hosen. After description of site clearing objectives and methods, Hughes and Hosen concurred that no significant impacts to native plants or wildlife habitat would result.
- 2) **Grave Location.** A key objective of the project involved identification of graves to assess the number of burials present and the dimensions of the cemetery. The primary method of locating graves involved probing the area around the marked and suspected grave locations, penetrating the ground surface no more than six inches, in order to locate any grave markers that remain

buried in a shallow context. Several marker fragments were identified in probing and were excavated by hand with a trowel and cleaned with brushes. All markers were found in shallow context, less than six inches below the ground surface. In a few cases, the in-situ basal portions of broken headstones and footstones were found through probing. Headstones and headstone fragments were invariably broken and slightly or dramatically displaced from their original positions. In addition to probing, simple raking of leaf litter aided significantly in the identification of shallow depressions and at least three small in-situ fieldstone markers.

- 3) **Gravestone Repair.** Displaced and fallen stones were matched to bases by examining several pieces of evidence, including: names and initials, style of stenciling or typeface used in inscriptions, stone dimensions, and stone raw material. Where possible, headstone fragments were collected and aligned according to potential refits. In cases where stones had multiple fractures and could not be easily repaired, a wooden cradle of pressure-treated lumber custom fit to the headstone dimensions was laid on the ground surface above the grave. These frames allow the stones to remain above ground at the general location of their likely primary context (Figure 3). Re-erecting stones was accomplished for a few footstones and one headstone. Where an in-situ base and an unbroken upper portion of a footstone were found, the upper stone could be set on top of the buried base and supported with compacted soil or attached with a wood brace. Bill Olson, a local expert on historic cemeteries¹, has developed these minimally intrusive techniques of exposing, preserving and re-erecting headstones and footstones.
- 4) **Mapping and Recordation.** A sketch map was created showing the distribution of markers and marker fragments as well as other notable features of the cemetery setting. The cemetery site was recorded with the DHR as an archaeological site (44PW1957) and through the citizen cemetery recordation program.



Figure 3. Headstones set in wooden frames (2013). View southeast. Graves: (William French, Maria French, Susan French [left-right foreground], Elizabeth French [background]).

¹ Among other volunteer positions, initiatives and responsibilities, Bill Olson is on the Board of Directors for PWCA and is president of the local non-profit organization Historic Prince William. He is regularly active in and an expert on cemetery preservation throughout Prince William county.

Overview of Green Level History

The WMA is part of a tract of land and farm that was known as Green Level for nearly two centuries. The land that became Green Level, and at last Merrimac, was first organized under colonial settlement nearly 80 years after Jamestown's establishment through the Brent Town grant. The story of Brent Town is familiar fare in local history and shall only be touched upon here. Brent Town originated as a bold economic venture led by Nicholas Hayward, the son of a 17th century Virginia merchant and an investor in New World exploits spanning from "Virginia to the Hudson Bay".² With a vision to profit from the unsettled Stafford County backwoods, Hayward garnered the support of three men: Richard Foote (Hayward's brother-in-law), Robert Bristow, and George Brent. Foote and Bristow were England-based Virginia merchants and Brent was a Virginia surveyor, lawyer and Stafford County resident.³ The group of investors acquired a 30,000 acre tract between Broad and Cedar Run in 1687. After receiving the grant, Hayward received from King James II an assurance of religious tolerance in an effort to attract French Huguenot refugees to a safe New World community.

Despite Hayward's attempts to sell the concept in London, few people settled at Brent Town in the first few decades. Competition from other colonies (the Huguenots were enticed to Carolina) and Indian troubles contributed to continuation of an empty frontier. Iroquois raiding parties traversed the area as they followed the Shenandoah Hunting Path from the upper Potomac River to the falls of the Rappahannock. The Indian threat was substantial enough to merit erection of a blockhouse in the Brent Town area. This structure, located somewhere in the southwestern portion of the tract, may have been the only construction for many years.⁴ Indeed, while there were plans for an actual town, including one-acre town lots and 100 acre farm lots, it is doubtful that any were laid out.⁵ Harrison suggests that the proposed town remained "a mere name in the backwoods" and "dead in the hand" as the land passed through three generations.

By the 1730s, in lieu of a town, a rural community of small to moderate sized tobacco farms took shape.⁶ A survey map dated 1737, which marks the dissolution of the original 30,000 acre grant dividing it amongst inheritors, reveals a substantial number of residences.⁷ A total of thirty-nine houses are plotted

² Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William*. Prince William Historical Commission, Manassas, Va., 1987[1924], p. 177.

³ Of the four grantees, some were Virginia residents for part of their lives. Robert Bristow lived in the colony from about 1660-1677; Darlene L Hunter, "The Bristoe Tract: Rent Rolls, Map and History". *Prince William Reliquary* 4(3), 2004, p.81.

⁴ The location of this blockhouse is unknown, though speculative placement has it in the Foote portion of the Brent Town tract (VHLC) and/or on the "western boundary". Triplett T. Russell, "Hazelwood and Truro: The Foote and Colvin Families", prepared for The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Richmond, 1980. Following the Treaty of Albany in 1722, the Iroquois followed more westerly routes in their southern movements.

⁵ There is reference (Harrison, *Landmarks*, p. 179) to an allotment system of one acre for a house within town and 100 acres to farm outside town limits and a 1694 will for George Brent indicating ownership of six town lots and six hundred acres, though none were apparently laid out (Harrison, *Landmarks*, p. 192).

⁶ Hunter, "Bristoe Tract". Patrick L O'Neill, "Two Extraordinary Surveys: The 1737 Brent Town and 1824 Bristow Tract Maps," *Prince William Reliquary* 6(2):27-37, 2007. Donald Wilson, "The Brent town Survey of 1737," *Newsletter of the Prince William County Virginia Genealogical Society*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1983, p. 3.

⁷ Harrison, *Landmarks*, concludes that no "comprehensive occupation" of the Brent Town property occurred but does note the occupation of land by the Footes in their southern portion of Brent Town. The Foote residences are mapped on a 1759 map of the Prince William-Fauquier County line, the next available glimpse into this area, though

throughout or adjacent to the Brent Town grant, mostly along Cedar Run and its major tributaries (Figure 2).⁸ Twenty-two of the people identified in 1737 appear in local records prior to that date.⁹ Many of these persons appear on the tobacco tender list of 1724, suggesting settlement by tenants in rural Brent Town as early as the 1720s.¹⁰ None of the original investors actually settled on their lands, though the son of Richard Foote did bring his family from England to take up residence in the area.¹¹ Without a formal town, this rural community, and particularly Foote's presence, still constituted enough of a geographic identity to warrant establishment of a county courthouse at "a place called Brent Town belonging to Richard Foote" in 1742. The emergence of this tobacco-rich community also helped fuel the development of Dumfries as a port.¹²

By the late 18th century, the society of Brent Town quickly evolved into a rural frontier aristocracy as tenants were replaced by plantation owners. Several plantations, including Effingham (ca. 1765), Fleetwood (ca. 1775), Truro (ca. 1745), Park Gate (ca. 1740), Pilgrim's Rest (ca. 1790) and others were established throughout the old Brent Town grant lands. In this part of Virginia, these plantation owners were the wealthiest and most well educated men. They were political leaders, militia officers, lawyers, professionals, as well as planter and mill owners, a local gentry class. Many members of this late 18th century gentry hailed from the Chotank area and local lore suggests they brought to Brent Town a "tidewater civilization".¹³

Of these Brent Town plantations, Green Level was one of the earliest, ca. 1750. The land may have been occupied by a tenant named William Roberts in the 1730s.¹⁴ A plantation was most likely established when the Helm family acquired land from the Hayward portion of the Brent Town tract. The land appears to have been acquired by Thomas Helm ca. 1742. Following Thomas' death in 1762, his son Lynaugh owned the plantation for two and half decades. Lynaugh figured prominently in Prince William County as a member of the local gentry, a militia officer, a judge, sheriff and member of the Committee of Safety.¹⁵ He was a Captain in the county militia. Whether the Helms built a new house or acquired and adapted a previously built tenant's house is unknown. Some of the Brent Town plantation houses grew from early log buildings to larger framed houses.¹⁶ Eventually, Green Level featured a two-story

they do not appear on the 1737 map. Bertrand Ewell, "Survey of the Fauquier-Prince William Boundary Line, April 14, 1759," online at <http://eservice.pwcgov.org/library/digitalLibrary/>.

⁸ An additional nine houses are on the 1737 map but are actually outside of the Brent Town grant.

⁹ Greg Mason, trans., *Prince William County People, 1701-1800, A Name Index to Landowners, Soldiers, Voters, Tithables, Petitioners, Laborers, and Slaves of Colonial, Prince William County, Virginia* (RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia, 2012).

¹⁰ Greg Mason, "A List of Tobacco Tenders from the South Side of Potomack [Creek] to Ye Lower End of Overwarton Parish [Stafford County], 1724", 2011. A few names listed in 1724 have earlier references in county records. Of two areas named in the Stafford County tobacco tithables, all of these 1724 references are included in the list for precincts between Aquia and Quantico. Hunter, "Bristoe Tract", p.81, concludes that the Robert Bristow tract was rented "from the beginning". Land sales occurred around the time of the 1737 survey and even before. For example, land that became Pilgrim's Rest was sold by Richard Foote III in 1730. William T. Frazier and George W. Pohill, Jr., *Nomination of Pilgrim's Rest for listing on the National Register of Historic Places*, 1988.

¹¹ Pamela Myer Sackett, "From Outpost to Courthouse: Plotting Brentsville," *Prince William Reliquary* (2003):26.

¹² Sackett "Plotting Brentsville" argues that Brent Town helped promote Dumfries to prominence and influenced the location of two courthouses in the county. Dumfries was the closest port and trading center for Brent Town.

¹³ Harrison, *Landmarks*, p. 186.

¹⁴ The residence of William Roberts is represented in the 1737 survey map in the vicinity of later deeded lands constituting Green Level. Unfortunately little information survives regarding Roberts and this early period. He is listed on a 1741 voting list but is otherwise scarce in county records.

¹⁵ T. Triplett Russell and John K. Gott, *Fauquier County in the Revolution* (Fauquier County, American Bicentennial Commission, Warrenton, Va, 1977).

¹⁶ Houses at Fleetwood Plantation and Hazelwood House at Truro Plantation both had houses with multiple periods of construction. W. Brown Morton, "Fleetwood", Virginia Historical Commission Survey Form, File 76-8 (1959);

manor house in the traditional passage and parlor style.¹⁷ Thomas or Lynaugh likely named the estate “Green Level” as it appears in documents involving their family as early as 1788.¹⁸ The cemetery at Green Level was most likely established under Helm family ownership, though no Helm graves have been positively identified and Thomas Helm is buried in Fauquier County.

Lynaugh Helm’s probate records suggest a fairly substantial farm, albeit one with limited technology.¹⁹ In addition to 1,000 acres of land, Helm’s farming operation included a large amount of livestock (53 horses, 63 sheep, 47 hogs) but a fairly short inventory of agricultural tools and equipment. Technologically, Helm’s tools seem simplistic as he had no plows, only 16 hulling, weeding and grubbing hoes. Such labor-intensive trappings provide a late expression of the 17th to early 18th century hoe husbandry prevalent in the Chesapeake region.²⁰ The importance of tobacco at Helm’s Green Level is highlighted by its use as currency in Laugh’s will as he bequeathed pounds of the leaf to his children. By this era, tobacco had long served as the dominant cash crop in Virginia but it was near its end as soils were depleted and market prices fluctuated.²¹ The labor supporting Green Level agriculture appears in Helm’s inventory as the fifteen slaves who lived and worked at the plantation.

Helm’s household belongings, revealed in his probate inventory, befitted a member of the local gentry. Furnishings in the manor house included a walnut desk, walnut and cherry tables and chairs, six beds, and a mahogany clock. A large silver service set, as well as tea sets, china and pewter tableware, and cooking equipment testify to social entertainment at the Helm residence. Other items included a modest library, two spinning wheels, and various personal goods.

After Lynaugh Helm’s death in 1789, Green Level passed quickly through the hands of a pair of owners before returning to a Helm family connection. Laugh’s widow, Hester, and their son, William, sold the farm to John Chelsey in 1802. By 1811, Edward Fitzhugh owned and lived at the farm. Through these transactions, Helm’s holdings were divided into at least two parcels with different owners.²² Ultimately, however, Green Level was reconstituted by William French, who was Lynaugh Helm’s grandson. Lynaugh Helm’s daughter Elizabeth “Betsy” married William French’s father, Stephen French and the two were married at Green Level in 1790.²³ French began to acquire at least some of the property

Bethlehem Club, *Prince William: The Story of its People and its Places* (Manassas, Va.: Housekeeping Club, 1941); Russell, T. Triplett, “Hazelwood and Truro: The Foote and Colvin Families”, prepared for The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (Richmond, 1980).

¹⁷ Edward D. Fitzhugh advertisement in Alexandria Gazette, November 8, 1813, in Ronald Ray Turner, Prince William County Virginia Newspaper Transcripts 1784-1860 (Manassas 2000:152).

¹⁸ Correspondence between Lynaugh’s son, William Helm, and the Governor of Virginia from the late 18th century indicates Green Level, Va. as Helm’s place of residence Green Level, Va. Governors Executive Papers, Beverly Randolph, William Helm letter, Library of Virginia, October 1st 1789 Box 2, Folder 12 Accession #4028, transcribed by Ronald R. Turner, available at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

¹⁹ Prince William County Will Book H:197-198, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1797.

²⁰ Aubrey C. Land, The Tobacco Staple and the Planter’s Problems: Technology, Labor, and Crops. *Agricultural History* Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), pp. 69-82.

²¹ Avery Odelle Craven, *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860*. University of South Carolina, 2007.

²² At least two tracts of land are known to have been purchased, originating from the old Hayward portion of the Brent Town tract. Some 485 acres were purchased in 1818 and 253 acres were acquired from the Effingham estate in 1825. An additional 376.5 acres had been acquired at some point bringing the William French estate to 1102 acres at the time of his death. From Wilson (2011), the earliest acquisition may have dated to the early 1800s.

²³ Stephen French lived nearby on his own estate, which is represented in an estate inventory, PWC Will Book P, pp.173-175, 1842. In the 1830 census, Stephen French is head of household of an estate. U.S Census of 1830 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

in 1818, eventually acquiring 1102 acres.²⁴ It is the graves of William French and his immediate family that are most conspicuous at the Green Level cemetery today.

The French family tenure at Green Level lasted a few decades though for William it was brief. William French and Martha L. Taylor married in 1814 and had four daughters (Elizabeth, Susan, Maria, and Martha) and two sons (William T., and Stephen).²⁵ William died suddenly in 1826 at the age of 33. A local lawyer, planter and trustee for the town of Brentsville, William was, like his grandfather, another member of the local elite.²⁶ Following William's death, the family continued to reside at Green Level. Three of the girls (Elizabeth, Maria Louise, and Susan) died young and were all buried at Green Level between 1845 and 1851. While cause of death for Maria is unknown, Elizabeth and Susan died of consumption.²⁷ William's estate was settled over the course of several years and divided among his widow and six children by 1834, the final debt payments being made in 1831.²⁸ The distribution of the farm is preserved in a plat (Figure 4).²⁹ Thereafter the parcels were sold, the last ca. 1850, including the dower portion, where the cemetery, and the manor house were located.

The French family farm, as glimpsed from probate records, was a fairly substantial estate. A large number of livestock are recorded e.g. nine horses; 32 cattle, 60 sheep, and 51 pigs. A long list of farming tools are listed as well. Farming at Green Level under French's tenure was likely considerably different from the Helm era. While Helm practiced hoe husbandry, French joined the revolutionary practice of plowing, apparently with some vigor. The 1826 probate inventory lists some 17 ploughs and associated gear, suggesting French's acceptance of major changes in farming technology, including deep plowing and various innovations in plow design.³⁰ The crops encouraged by these plows were likely more diverse than the tobacco focus of previous decades. As early as 1811, before French acquired the farm, the value of Green Level for growing grains, including Timothy hay, wheat, rye, or corn, was advertised with no mention of tobacco. By the 1820s under William's French's hand, the shift to grain farming was well established.

²⁴ From Wilson, "History", 2011, the earliest acquisition may have dated to the early 1800s. At least two tracts of land are known to have been purchased, originating from the old Hayward portion of the Brent Town tract. Some 485 acres were purchased in 1818 and 253 acres were acquired from the Effingham estate in 1825. An additional 376.5 acres had been acquired at some point bringing the William French estate to 1102 acres at the time of his death.

²⁵ February 22, 1814, Martha L. Taylor, m. 22 Feb. 1814. Henkle, p.51. Wertz, Mary Alice, *Marriages of Loudoun County, Virginia 1757-1853*, Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc, Baltimore, 1985, p.51. William T. French, was the first born child of William and Martha. Born in 1815, William T. lived in Stafford County in 1850 and relocated to Kentucky after 1854. U.S Census of 1850 [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. John Cheshire Application File #1292, Military Bounty Land Scrip (Entry 4), File Location 13W3/4/18/5 Box 69, Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. William T. had at least one child (Howard Royal French) who was born at Green Level in 1847 (Certificate of Death, Commonwealth of Kentucky, Montgomery Co. September 11, 1917).

²⁶ William's trusteeship is documented in *Prince William: The Story of its People and its Places*, 1988 (1st edition, 1941). The Bethlehem Good Housekeeping Club, Manassas, Va, p.113. His status as a lawyer is indicated by the title "Esq." in his daughter's obituary, see Maria Louise French, *Richmond Whig*, October 2, 1845. For genealogical research on the French family, including early immigration, see <http://www.frenchfamilyassoc.com/FFA/>.

²⁷ Susan's cause of death is inscribed on her headstone; Elizabeth's consumption is noted in *Death Notices from Virginia Newspapers, 1841-1853*, see RDW, 5 Mar 1851, p.3 and RE, 4 Mar 1851, p.2 (Index to Death Records of Prince Wm Co., Va. Abstracted).

²⁸ Wilson, 2011.

²⁹ *Prince William County Land Cases Book III:349-360*, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1834.

³⁰ Craven, "Soil Exhaustion".

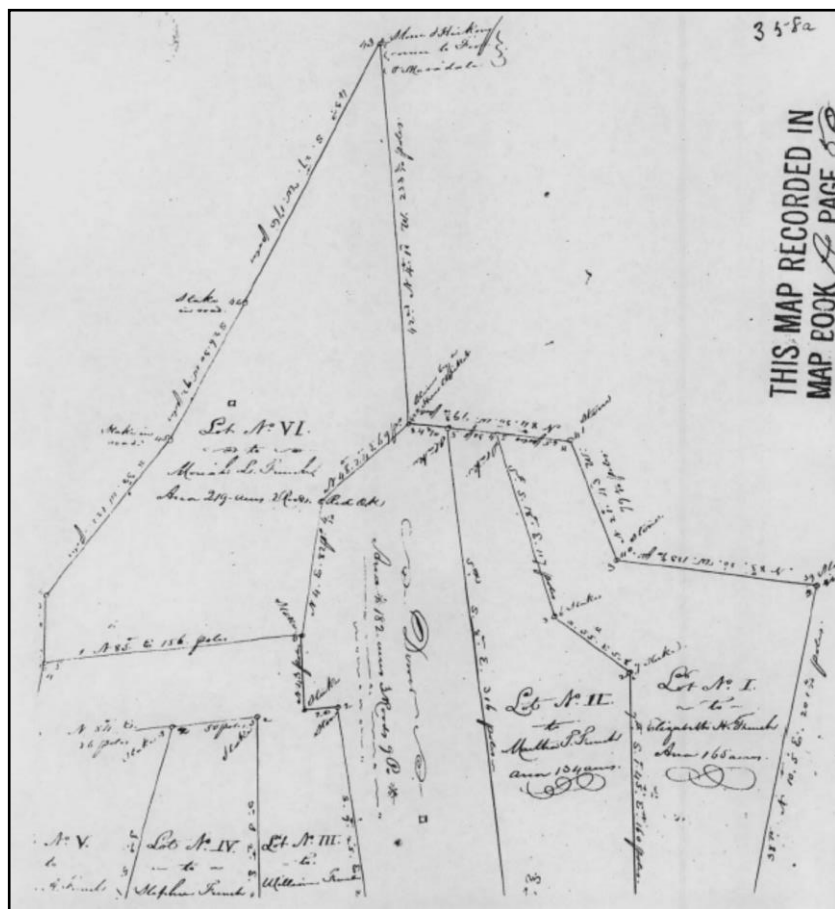


Figure 4. Survey plat from an 1834 deed dividing William French's estate.

The inventory of William’s estate contains a long list of furniture, kitchen ware, and other household possessions. Furnishings are a bit different and more modern than Helm’s, particularly a sofa, carpeting and window shades. Notable personal items included quilting tools, a library, including books on law and the history of the French Revolution, and paintings by Mrs. French.³¹ The inventory also mentions a “school room” at the estate.

While the list of material possessions for William French is lengthy, the major portion of the estate value of \$6334.30 comprised slaves who lived and worked at Green Level. The number of slaves at the farm peaked during the French tenure. Compared to 15 in Lynaugh Helm’s probate inventory, in 1826, 25 individuals were recorded in French’s estate. By 1831, that number had dropped to 19.³² The names of some of the slaves who lived and worked at the plantation survive in probate records, providing an opportunity to compare the names of slaves held at Green Level across a few decades and two owners (Table 1). Importantly, though William French was Lynaugh’s grandson, there was a multi-year span between their respective ownership. The sale of the property and dissolution of Lynaugh’s estate likely divided the slaves in several directions, a pattern greatly destructive to slave families as there was little

³¹ PWC Will Book N, p. 365-6, 1831.

³² The 1820 and 1830 census both counted 21 slaves at Green Level and a second inventory of the William French estate in 1831 identified 19 slaves.

regard for keeping family members together.³³ One instance of a slave’s lengthy residency at Green Level is a woman named Penny, a domestic servant whom Lynaugh bequeathed to his daughter in his 1789 will. Nearly three decades later, a slave woman named Penny is listed in William French’s 1826 estate inventory. It is possible that Penny found herself back at Green Level living with the daughter of Elizabeth Helm.

Table 1. Slave names recorded in probate records for Green Level.

1797 (Lynaugh Helm Inventory)	1826 (William French Inventory)	1831 (William French Inventory)
Ben	Albert	Albert
Bob	Alexander	Alexander
David	Benjamin	Benjamin
Ephraim	Caleb	Caleb
Harry	Charles	Charles
Penny	Charlotte	Clary
John	Clary	Gerard
Kate	Gerard	Hester
Luck	Haywood	John
Moll	Hester	Jonathan
Moses	James	Lorinda
Nance	Jonathan	Lucinda
Old James	Joshua	Moses
Sinah	Lorinda	Penny
Young James	Lucinda	Roger
	Moses	Thomas
	Orange	Thornton
	Penny	Washington
	Roger	West
	Simon	
	Solemen	
	Thomas	
	Thornton	
	Washington	
	West	

By approximately 1852, it appears that the French family had left Green Level. William T., the eldest son, had moved his young family to Kentucky³⁴ and Martha T. had moved with her daughter Martha J. to Stafford County where the latter had joined her husband, Rev. L.J. Hansberger, who owned a farm called Ingleside.³⁵ Martha T. died in 1852 and was interred at Green Level cemetery, the last known interment.

During the French family term, there were actually two farms at Green Level. The main French household, likely the former Helm residence and possibly the house of former tenant William Roberts, was located close to Cedar Run and near the cemetery (Figure 4). The second farm occupied a tract of land called Mountain View, where a separate residence stood, near the road that led from Aden to Harrison’s Ford across Cedar Run (see Tract VI in Figure 4). In addition to the 1834 plat, both of these residences appear on a 1901 map (Figure 5). Little information survives on the original architecture of

³³ Donald M. Sweig, "Northern Virginia slavery: a statistical and demographic investigation" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1982).

³⁴ Death certificate, Howard R. French, Commonwealth of Kentucky, Bureau of Vital Statistic, 9/13/1917.

³⁵ Obituary, Martha L. French, Alexandria Gazette, October 15, 1852.

Green Level, which has long since vanished, though surviving buildings and structures from other nearby estates may offer some reasonable analogs for the kind of built environment that once characterized Green Level.³⁶ Minimally, a manor house and slave quarters were present.

After the French tenure, Green Level's character changed as the estate was partitioned and the 1,000 acre plantation that Helm and French owned began to evolve in multiple directions. The various parcels sold by William French's heirs are somewhat difficult to track in historic records but a partial history of the farm can be fashioned. During and after the Civil War, the core part of Green Level was likely owned by a member of the rural colony of New Jersey natives referenced in Union Army scouting reports from Bristoe and Catlett's Station. Multiple Union soldier accounts refer to a "Jersey settlement" or "Yankee Settlement",³⁷ established near Brentsville in the 1850s. One of these families, the Osmuns, acquired part of Green Level.³⁸ Presumably attracted to Prince William County's inexpensive farm land, these families found themselves in hostile territory during the war.³⁹ Following the Civil War, Green Level was rented for "use, occupation and profits" to a James R. Purcell, who became the defendant in a lawsuit due to his alleged delinquency in rent payments for several successive years: 1868-1874.⁴⁰

Around 1881, the core part of Green Level, i.e. the old dower tract and the Mountain View tract, was purchased by James Kiewit, whose business interests were notable, especially his operation of a distillery and bar room in Nokesville and a store in Independent Hill from the 1890s into the early 20th century.⁴¹ Born in Holland ca. 1837, Kiewit was a lumber dealer in the mountains of southwest Virginia before moving to Green Level with his Prussia-born wife, Marie.⁴² Kiewit's distillery products included 100-proof liquor and alcohol marketed as medicinal treatments, like the one shown in Figure 6.⁴³ The liquor business likely had its challenges, as indicated in an 1896 whiskey advertisement in which Kiewit

³⁶ The Effingham plantation neighbored Green Level and architectural elements survived well into the 20th century. Historic buildings and structures included slave quarters, a lye house, summer kitchen, weaving house, ice house, carriage house, barn and smokehouse; Frazier, William T., Nomination of Effingham for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, 1998. On file at Relic.

³⁷ U.S. Army records of activities at and around Brentsville during the Civil War include references to the Jersey Settlement. Report of Cpt. Andrew H. McHenry, 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry, U.S. War Dept., The War of the Rebellion, Series 1, Vol. 51, Chap. LXIII, p.216, <http://ehistory.osu.edu>. Report of Lt. George Maguire, 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry, U.S. War Dept., The War of the Rebellion, Series 1, Vol. 51, Chap. LXIII, p.216 and Vol. 46, Chap. LVIII, p.457-8, <http://ehistory.osu.edu>.

³⁸ Deed Book 23, p.82, 6/1/1854, Stephen French to Elisha Osmun. Several Osmun individuals, including Elizabeth, Joseph, Little C, Jonah, Jane, Rachel, Daniel, and children are listed in the 1850 census as born in New Jersey and residing in Brentsville specifically or in Prince William County.

³⁹ One Union soldier describes an encounter with a widow named Kline, who offered "papers" to prove her northern lineage (though her accent was sufficient evidence) and who conveyed that her sons were sent north for safety from the rebels. "To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Letters of Levi Bird Duff, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers", Levi Bird Duff, edited by Jonathan E. Helmreich. McFarland, 2009. Account from October 27, 1863, camp two miles east of Catlett's Station, p.151. The Van Pelt family, whose farm became part of the Manassas Battlefield, were also from New Jersey and suffered from the war. Blood in Bull Run: The Battlefield Today By Ray Brown, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management at Manassas National Battlefield Park; *Hallowed Ground Magazine*, Spring 2011.

⁴⁰ Lawsuit document transcribed by R.R. Turner, "Green Level Farm rent agreement 1 January 1868", at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

⁴¹ Olszewski, Ray. A Taste of Prince William County Wine History: Who Knew? Prince William Reliquary, 2006:5(3)51-59. According to Olszewski, Kiewit's business, which closed due to prohibition, was located in a two-story building across from the modern Samsky's Market and burned in the early 1990s.

⁴² U.S. Census: 1880, 84th District, Smyth Co., Va., p.10.

⁴³ Ron Turner, *Prince William County Virginia 1805-1955 Businesses*, Manassas, Va and miscellaneous images collected by Turner at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

noted his need for cash. At Green Level, Kiewit appears to have owned two residences, one at the old manor house near Cedar Run and the other to the north, close to the Mountain View tract (Figure 5).

Around the same time that Kiewit moved to Green Level, the Reading family acquired another part of the original plantation to become long-time residents. In 1881 Mary Reading, a native of New Jersey, purchased 171 acres in an eastern section of the estate subdivided after William French's death. She and her husband, Miller Reading, a union veteran of the Civil War, moved to Green Level.⁴⁴ Miller returned to Virginia after traversing much of the state from May 1864 to April 1865 with the 3rd Cavalry Regiment of New Jersey Volunteers, taking part in numerous engagements, including the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864. There were two houses associated with the Reading family in the Green Level area around the turn of the 20th century (Figure 5)⁴⁵. One of these houses, dating from the late 19th century, stands in ruins today on the eastern edge of Merrimac Farm along Deepwood Lane.

Green Level continued to change hands and purpose in the 20th century. The Kiewit family sold their property to the Hooe family ca. 1923. Thereafter it was purchased by the Readings ca. 1939/1940, who expanded their holdings of the former plantation to include the core area. While the name "Green Level" appears in a 1939 tax record for the Hooes, the absence of any value assessed for buildings suggests that at that time the old manor house and other buildings were gone.⁴⁶ All that remained was the cemetery. Shortly thereafter, the stone house and barn that still stand at Merrimac were built. In 1959, Green Level was sold by the Readings to Mac McDowell, who changed the name to Merrimac.⁴⁷ Following McDowell's death in 2001, his family helped ensure preservation of the farm in perpetuity as noted above.

After the French tenure, Green Level's ownership is less clearly associated with a single family. The various parcels sold by William French's heirs are difficult to track in historic records. Following the Civil War, Green Level was rented for "use, occupation and profits" to a James R. Purcell, who became the defendant in a lawsuit due to his alleged delinquency in rent payments for several successive years: 1868-1874.⁴⁸ Presumably, Purcell lived in the old manor house. Census records from 1870 suggest that tenant farmers were present on the farm as well.⁴⁹ Following Purcell's rental of the farm, some portion of Green Level is associated with the name Osmun. It remains unclear if Osmun owned the core dower area, but the Osmuns did own a small farm called Mountain View in the northernmost portion of Green Level.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ 1890 Veterans Schedules [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Eleventh Census of the U.S., Special Schedule, p.1, Supervisor's District 163, Enumeration District 112.

⁴⁵ Brown, Wm H., Map of Prince William County, Virginia, Compiled from U.S. Geological Survey and other data and corrected with the assistance of reliable residents of the County (Gainesville, Va., 1901).

⁴⁶ Prince William County Land Tax Brentsville District 1939, Ron Turner, Prince William County Virginia website, <http://www.pwcvirginia.com/index.htm>, 2014.

⁴⁷ Survival of the name "Green Level" into the 20th century is assumed but unknown. The name appears in the 1894 birth record of Mary Reading.

⁴⁸ Lawsuit document transcribed by R.R. Turner, "Green Level Farm rent agreement 1 January 1868", at

Figure 5. Bottle label from one of Kiewit's distillery products, an ostensibly medicinal "Holland Gin".

com.
Purcell and his wife along with five unrelated people, including three farm laborers and a merry family that follows Purcell in the census, with no real estate property, may be another
1/1854, Stephen French to Elisha Osmun.

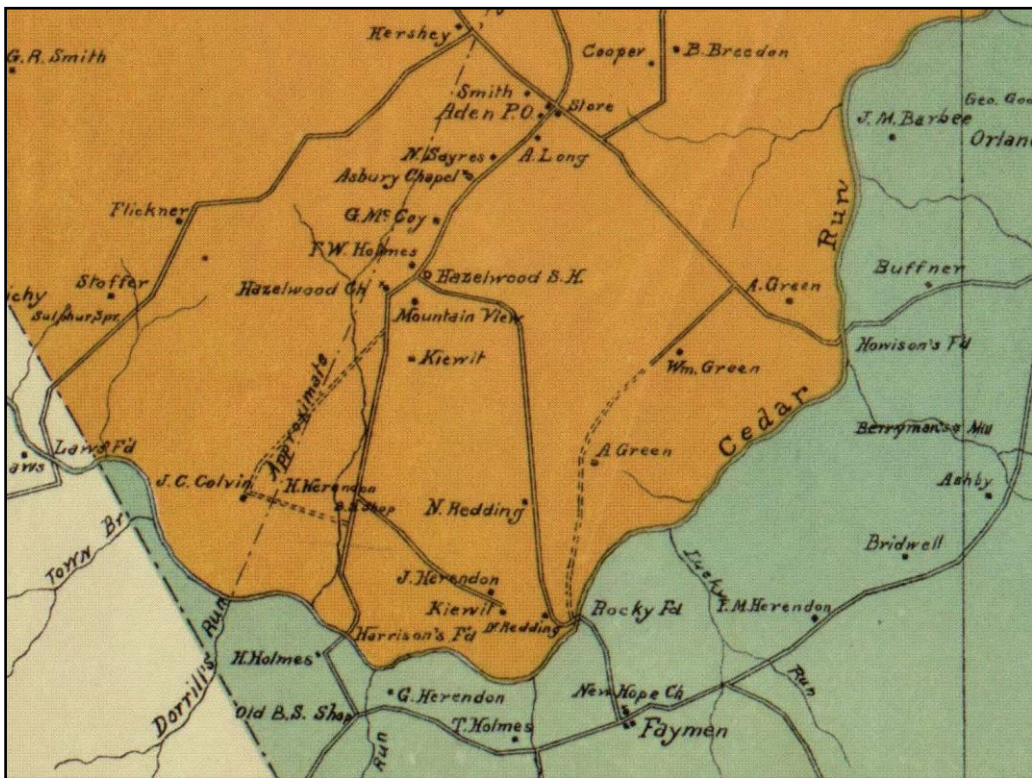


Figure 6. Section of 1901 map showing the Green Level vicinity. The southernmost Kiewit property marks the core area of the historic farm and vicinity of the cemetery.

After the French tenure, Green Level’s ownership is less clearly associated with a single family. The various parcels sold by William French’s heirs are difficult to track in historic records. Following the Civil War, Green Level was rented for “use, occupation and profits” to a James R. Purcell, who became the defendant in a lawsuit due to his alleged delinquency in rent payments for several successive years: 1868-1874.⁵¹ Presumably, Purcell lived in the old manor house. Census records from 1870 suggest that tenant farmers were present on the farm as well.⁵² Following Purcell’s rental of the farm, some portion of Green Level is associated with the name Osmun. It remains unclear if Osmun owned the core dower area, but the Osmuns did own a small farm called Mountain View in the northernmost portion of Green Level.⁵³

In ca. 1881 the property was purchased by James Kiewit, whose tenure is unknown but whose business interests were notable, especially his operation of a distillery and bar room in Nokesville in the

⁵¹ Lawsuit document transcribed by R.R. Turner, “Green Level Farm rent agreement 1 January 1868”, at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

⁵² The 1870 census lists Purcell and his wife along with five unrelated people, including three farm laborers and a domestic servant. The Perry family that follows Purcell in the census, with no real estate property, may be another tenant farmer.

⁵³ Deed Book 23, p.82, 6/1/1854, Stephen French to Elisha Osmun.

late 1890s (Figure 6).⁵⁴ Born in Holland ca. 1837, Kiewit was a lumber dealer in the mountains of southwest Virginia before moving to Green Level with his Prussia-born wife, Marie.⁵⁵ Kiewit appears to have had two houses at Green Level, one of which is likely the old Helm and French manor house (Figure 5).

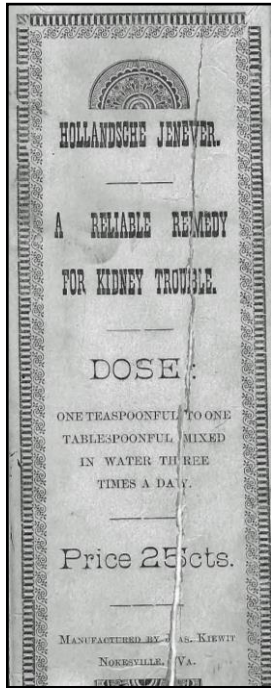


Figure 7. Bottle label from one of Kiewit's distillery products, an ostensibly medicinal "Holland Gin".

Around the same time that Kiewit appears to have acquired the core part of Green Level, the Reading family acquired another portion and became long-time residents. In 1881 Mary Reading, a native of New Jersey, purchased 171 acres in the eastern portion of Green Level. She and her husband, Miller Reading, who was a union veteran of the Civil War, moved to Green Level.⁵⁶ The Readings may have been attracted to the "Jersey settlement" or "Yankee settlement", a rural concentration of families that included the Osmuns, who settled in the Brentsville area in the 1850s.⁵⁷ There were two houses associated with the Reading family in the area (Figure 5).⁵⁸ One of these houses, which appears to date from the late 19th century, stands in ruins on the eastern edge of the WMA along Deepwood Lane.

Green Level continued to change hands and purpose in the 20th century. The Kiewit family sold the core portion of Green Level to the Hooe family in 1923. Thereafter it was purchased by the neighbor Reading family in 1939. In 1959 the property was sold by the Readings to Lt. Col. Dean Noyes (Mac) McDowell, who changed the name to Merrimac. Following Lt. Col. McDowell's death in 2001, his family helped ensure preservation of the farm in perpetuity. After years of collaboration by a group of partners including the VDGIF, the Prince William Conservation Alliance, and Marine Corps Base Quantico, the farm was acquired by the VDGIF.

Land Use History

The history of land use at Green Level involves significant alteration of the natural landscape. Beginning in the early 18th century, a series of forces impacted forests in the Prince William County area, including logging for the charcoal iron industry, tobacco farming, row crop agriculture, pastures,

⁵⁴ Kiewit's distillery products included 100 proof liquor and alcohol marketed as medicinal treatments like the one shown in Figure 8; Ron Turner, *Prince William County Virginia 1805-1955 Businesses*, Manassas, Va and miscellaneous images collected by Turner at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

⁵⁵ U.S. Census: 1880, 84th District, Smyth Co., Va., p.10.

⁵⁶ Eleventh Census of the U.S., Special Schedule, p.1, Supervisor's District 163, Enumeration District 112.

⁵⁷ U.S. Army officers' records of activities at and around Brentsville during the Civil War include references to the Jersey Settlement, e.g. United States. War Dept.. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union And Confederate Armies*. Series 1, Volume 46, In Three Parts. Part 1, Reports., Book, 1894; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph142230/> : accessed December 14, 2013), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department, Denton, Texas. Several Osmun individuals, including Elizabeth, Joseph, Little C, Jonah, Jane, Rachel, Daniel, and children are listed in the 1850 census as born in New Jersey and residing in Brentsville specifically or in Prince William County. Several New Jersey births were in 1848, indicating a recent move to the area.

⁵⁸ Brown, Wm H., 1901, *Map of Prince William County, Virginia*. Compiled from U.S. Geological Survey and other data and corrected with the assistance of reliable residents of the County. Gainesville, Va.

abandonment and erosion.⁵⁹ The forest at Green Level likely succumbed to tobacco hoe agriculture as early as the Roberts tenancy in the 1730s. Subsequently, during Helm's tenure, creation of livestock pastures, more tobacco fields and farm buildings required removal of the old growth hardwood forest and tilling of the soil. By 1813, "a very sufficient portion of wood land" still stood though it was advertised as a valuable commodity in the form of "good rail & board timber, and fire wood".⁶⁰ A couple of decades later, with William French's investment in ploughing techniques, an increasing amount of ground was turned at Green Level.

Some anecdotal illustration of the scale of landscape level impacts of early farming is available. The well-known story of the town of Dumfries' port closure due to rapid siltation of Quantico Creek in the mid-18th century serves as testimony to the power of early tree clearing by axe and fire and the turning of soil by hand.⁶¹ An account from 1835 of a tract of land neighboring Green Level describes a bleak landscape indeed, the land having "been ravaged of all its timber, and for the most part 'ploughed down to be barren,' by an unmerciful course of cultivation, under a numerous tenantry, for upwards of 70 years."⁶² A few decades later, a Union officer scouting near the town of Brentsville in the vicinity of Green Level, described the land as about 95 percent cleared and the rest grown up with pine, red and black oak.⁶³ Our first photography of the Green Level area comes with a 1937 aerial image wherein the landscape is largely deforested (Figure 7).⁶⁴ By the mid-20th century, the farm consisted largely of pastures.⁶⁵

Today, forest once again covers most of the land at Merrimac Farm, containing a patchy mix of hardwoods and pine with an aggressive mid-story of red cedar. Non-native shrub and grass species dominate small abandoned agricultural fields and other open areas. A long-term management goal for the VDGIF is reduction in the prevalence of invasive species such as Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*).

The Green Level Cemetery (44PW1957)

Setting

The cemetery location is somewhat unremarkable, though careful study of the terrain and vegetation suggest the history of the immediate landscape. On otherwise level ground thickly covered by a young mixed hardwood forest with an aggressive cedar component, the cemetery hardly stood out at first glance prior to this project. Indeed, even those familiar with its location might occasionally walk past the cemetery unknowingly, particularly during the summer months when weeds, saplings and vines conspire to combine the forest into one green monotonous scene. The most notable sign of the cemetery

⁵⁹ David A. Orwig and Marc D. Abrams. Land-use history (1720-1992), composition, and dynamics of oak-pine forests within the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of northern Virginia. *Canadian Journal for Research*, Vol. 24:1216-1225 (1994).

⁶⁰ Fitzhugh, 1813.

⁶¹ Gottschalk, L.C., "Effects of Soil Erosion on Navigation in Upper Chesapeake Bay", *Geographical Review*, Vol. 35(2) (1945):219-238.

⁶² Hunter, Darlene L., The Bristoe Tract: Rent Rolls, Map and History, *Prince William Reliquary* 4(3):81-88, 2004).

⁶³ Report of Captain Andrew H. McHenry, Thirteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, Chapter LXIII, p. 161. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Vol. 51, eHistory at The Ohio State University, <http://ehistory.osu.edu> (accessed December 15, 2013).

⁶⁴ The 1937 aerial imagery is available online from the PWC Mapper, Prince William County Mapper XM, <http://gisweb.pwcgov.org/webapps/CountyMapper> (2012).

⁶⁵ Personal communication with Anne Schafer McDowell, 2013-2014.

is a thick groundcover of periwinkle that has undoubtedly expanded beyond the immediate burial locations.

With careful study, the cemetery appears as a small, low hummock owing to the loss of soil surrounding the little grave plot through centuries of farming. As noted by Patton, the edges of the cemetery are cut most markedly along the northern, western and southern boundaries by plow lines. Its relationship to the plow is marked not coincidentally by a plowshare found on the ground surface in the northern area of the cemetery.⁶⁶ The cause of this subtle island effect can be seen in a 1937 aerial photo where the cemetery is marked by a small stand of trees in an expanse of bare ground (Figure 8). Several large descendants of these trees stand at the cemetery today in contrast to the surrounding younger trees. For decades after the plow was set aside, the cemetery stood unprotected in a cow pasture and the grave markers were disturbed by cattle (Anne McDowell Schaeffer, personal communication 2013). During the late 20th century, the forest gradually consumed the cemetery.

Cemetery Layout

Based on the results of probing and marker recovery, the alignment of identified graves and the presence of some depressions, the general cemetery layout can be estimated, though the exact number of graves and precise historic cemetery dimensions cannot be unequivocally represented. The cemetery is now known to contain at least four rows of graves (Figures 9 and 10). The maximum number of identified graves in any row is four, though these rows may extend up to 80 feet in length, allowing for several more in each row. The dimensions of the cemetery are conservatively estimated at 80 (north/south) by 100 (east/west) feet, approximately 8000 ft². This represents less than one fourth of the original area set aside for a cemetery in 1850 when $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of the dower portion of the French estate was reserved for a graveyard.⁶⁷

At the outset of our investigation, only two rows of graves were clearly discernible through the presence of broken and mostly buried markers and depressions. The eastern and westernmost rows were identified as evidence of graves was revealed through vegetation clearing and probing. As it now stands, to the immediate north, west and south the edge of the plough-induced hummock terminates fairly abruptly and additional graves are unlikely. To the east, the landform gradually slopes towards a remnant fence line. It had been assumed throughout most of the current investigation that the row containing Elizabeth French's grave was the easternmost row. Based on a slight slope of the landform, we are fairly confident that the row containing Anne French's grave amounts to an eastern boundary. In addition to the sloping land, this row corresponds with the presence of large hardwood trees that likely mark the cemetery informally.

Grave Identification

A total of eight graves were located and a ninth interment was indicated by a displaced fieldstone marker. In addition, several other graves are considered likely. A handful of unmarked graves may be indicated by depressions though some of these lack distinctive linear form and the ground surface is generally irregular. At the outset of the investigation, three graves were known by the presence of fragmentary, displaced headstones previously recorded by Turner in 2001. Graves are oriented traditionally in an eastward facing direction with headstone inscriptions facing east. The French graves were set consistently at an unusually long span, roughly nine feet.

⁶⁶ The plowshare, which was left on the ground surface where it was found, is embossed with "Oliver 48DS".

⁶⁷ Wilson, 2011.

Each of the positively identified graves is described below and correlated with Figures 8 and 92. See Appendix C for a transcription of headstones 1-6:



Figure 8. A section of an 1937 aerial photograph with notable feature locations indicated: A=Reading house; B=cemetery.

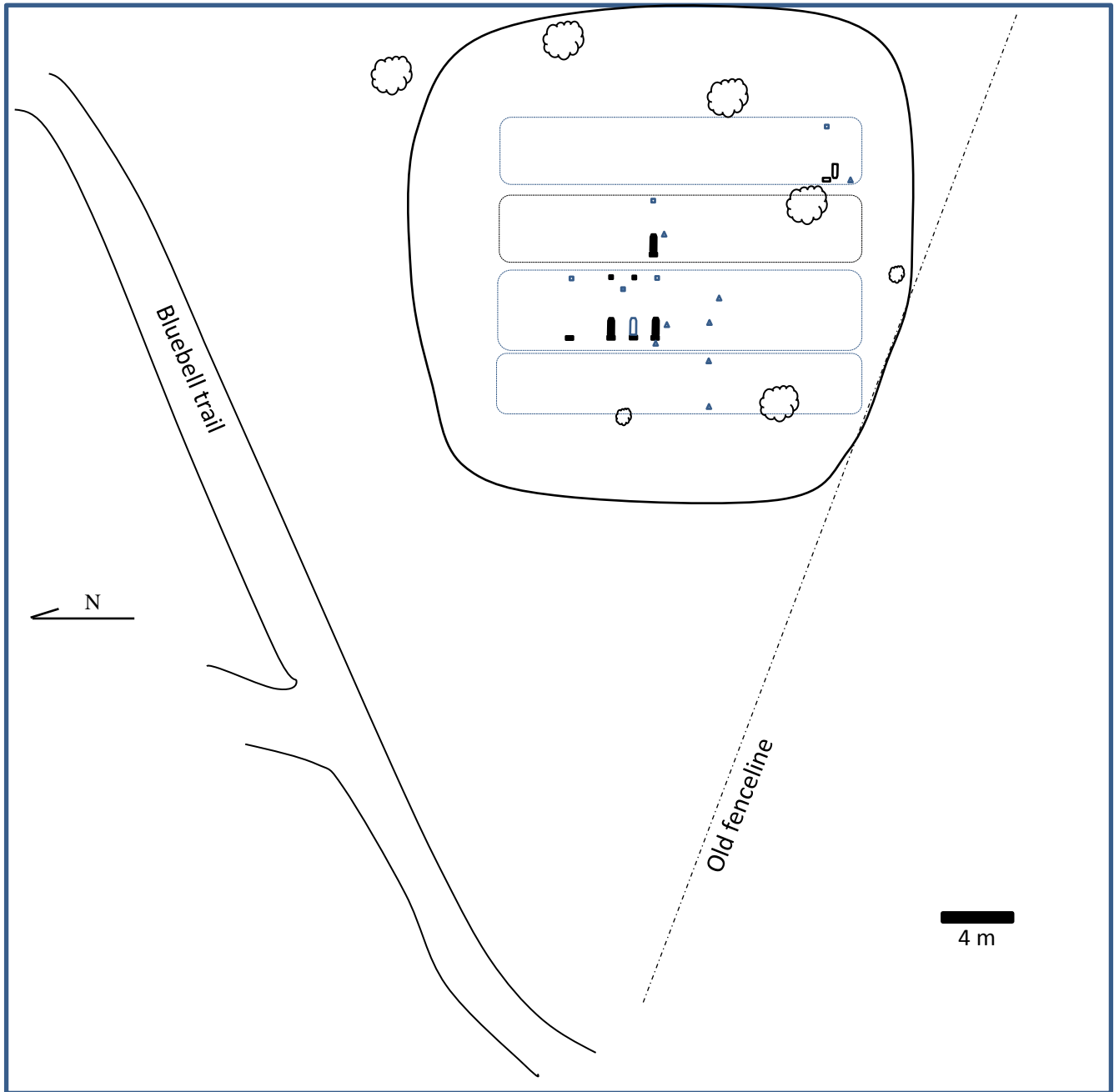


Figure 9. Sketch map of Green Level cemetery. Dashed oval indicates area recommended for further probing and vegetation clearing.

- 1) Martha French—A complete but displaced and buried marble footstone inscribed “M.F.” was found in probing, roughly nine feet east of a large in-situ broken headstone base barely exposed at ground level. Despite extensive probing, only small fragments of the headstone were recovered. The small broken headstone pieces were aligned and placed in a custom sized wood frame and laid over the grave. The footstone was set in the ground in alignment with the broken in-situ base and the footstone of William French to the immediate south. The position of this burial next to William and the initials on the footstone are taken as evidence of Martha’s grave. While the

headstone remains elusive, the width of the basal portion suggests it may have been the largest marker in the cemetery.

- 2) William French—A large marble tablet headstone with a full inscription for William French was found broken and lying on the ground surface, partially buried in the duff layer. The broken edge of the stone matched the in-situ headstone base adjacent to Martha's headstone. William's footstone inscribed with "W.F." was found in-situ, sunken and leaning roughly nine feet to the east. The footstone was raised slightly and set vertically in its original position. The broken headstone pieces were aligned and placed in a custom-sized wood frame and laid over the grave. William's headstone was previously identified by Turner.
- 3) Maria Louise French—Both the inscribed marble headstone and footstone ("M.L.F.") for Maria Louise French were found through probing. Both were completely buried just below the periwinkle and duff layer and were previously undocumented. The headstone base was found in-situ and matched with the fracture on the headstone. Headstone fragments were aligned and placed in a custom wood frame and laid over the grave. The footstone was set in alignment with neighboring stones for William and Susan French.
- 4) Susan A. French—The marble headstone for Susan French's grave was previously documented by Turner (2001) and was found partially buried in the duff. It was matched with an in-situ marble base. Susan's footstone was found to be in-situ, in rough alignment with William's footstone. Like the latter, Susan's footstone had sunken and was leaning forward. The footstone, inscribed "S.A.F.", was raised and reset and the headstone fragments aligned in a wood frame. Immediately adjacent to Susan's marble headstone base is a low in-situ red sandstone marker. It is assumed that this served as a temporary marker placed at the time of Susan's interment with the marble marker being set sometime thereafter following its production and delivery.
- 5) Elizabeth French—Elizabeth French's marble tablet headstone was found in association with a depression in a row separate from her parents and sisters. The headstone is the most severely fragmented and pieces were found partially buried and dispersed in a small area. At least part of this stone was previously seen in site visits. The multiple pieces of Elizabeth's headstone were collected and aligned in a frame. An in-situ basal portion of the headstone was identified and matched with a broken edge of the above-ground elements. The broken footstone for Elizabeth's grave, marked "E.H.F." was found through probing, buried and lying about nine feet to the east from an in-situ basal portion. The in-situ base of the footstone was found and the upper portion reset in the ground over the base. A couple of broken pieces of red sandstone were found lying on the ground near Elizabeth's grave.
- 6) Anne M. French—Both the headstone and footstone for Anne French were discovered in a shallow buried context after the base of the headstone was found while clearing vegetation. This grave is situated on the eastern edge of the cemetery and is clear evidence of a fourth row. Anne's headstone is the only one without a break above its original fracture just above ground level. The footstone is intact and was found lying in a shallow context. Because the headstone can be directly connected to the in-situ base, a brace was applied, making this the only large marble headstone that now stands fully erect at the cemetery. A small oak tree that had wedged against the in-situ headstone base was removed prior to reconnecting the headstone.
- 7) C.T.T. This small tablet-shaped broken fieldstone marker was found lying on the ground surface near the headstone of Susan French. Naturally shaped, the stone is similar to a few other pieces found in the graveyard and to three pieces of in-situ fieldstone (see #4 and # 8). This is the only fieldstone that is inscribed. The initials "C.T.T." are neatly cut (Figure 12). While the name indicated is unknown, it may be noteworthy that William's wife Martha's maiden name was Taylor.
- 8) The only marked interment in the western-most row was discovered after removal of downed tree debris and cutting of vegetation. Raking in an area that appears to have some linear depressions revealed two small red sandstone fieldstone markers. These stones are simple, uncut, eroded red sandstone remnants (Figure 12). Each is only a few inches wide, extending a few inches above

the ground surface. The pair is clearly aligned E/W and rest roughly seven feet apart. This unidentified grave may be indicative of how graves other than those of the French family were permanently marked in the cemetery.

- 9) The last grave positively identified in our work at the cemetery appears to be the infant son of Anne and Stephen French. A short, thick rectangular unmarked red sandstone marker adjacent to Anne French's headstone was discovered in the removal of tree debris and greenbrier. This marker likely memorializes the infant son (David Briggs French, d. 1842) of Anne and Stephen French.⁶⁸

Headstone Composition, Form and Style

Among the formal (non-fieldstone) headstones identified, there is minor variation in morphology and stylistic embellishment. Each of the five formal headstones, all French family graves, is a large rectangular marble tablet. The average length of the above-ground portions of the headstones is 54 inches, with William's the longest at five feet.⁶⁹ Headstone crowns display different shapes, including a simple arch or rounded-top, a rectangular or squared cut, and a more elaborate pointed arch with subtle curvilinear shoulders (Figure 12). Each marker features a weeping willow tree stylistic emblem in the upper portion of the stone face. The tree is typically framed by either obelisks or a gravestone scene with two headstones or a headstone and footstone with a mound in-between.

The five large headstones at Green Level are noteworthy in their representation of a limited timeframe and presumably a single supplier. Four of the stones may have been produced and acquired in a short amount of time. Although William French died in 1823, his stone was not purchased until after his daughter Susan's death. In her will she bequeathed estate funds inherited from her father to provide "as much money as will purchase marble tombstones" for her sister Maria Louise and her father William's graves.⁷⁰

With the purchase of these three stones after Susan died in 1846 and the death of Anne French only a month after Susan, four of the French headstones may have been acquired at roughly the same time. The similarity of some stones, e.g. Susan's and Maria's (Figure 12a and 12b), is noteworthy in this respect. Unfortunately, no maker's marks identifying the mason have been observed on the stones.

The willow trees on French headstones reflect sentiment as well as larger cultural patterns. The use of the willow as a symbol of mourning originated in the early 1800s and occurs in colonial cemeteries in New England and Britain.⁷¹ Deetz argues that the willow reflects the "secularization of religion" and a trend towards more standardized and less personalized memorialization in the 18th century.⁷² Considering that the willow as a decorative element had likely become a standard feature on commercially available stones by the mid-19th century, the Green Level stones reflect access to markets as well as religious beliefs and family emotion. Nonetheless, while the French family stones were cut from the standard marble stock and the symbols chosen from a limited menu of popular styles, the minor variation described above combined with the memorializing epitaphs on some graves make each stone unique.

⁶⁸ Binning, Margaret B., compiler, *Index to Death Records of Prince William County, Virginia, Abstracted*, (Manassas, Va., RELIC, Bull Run Library Va, 2013).

⁶⁹ As noted earlier, Martha's stone may have been larger.

⁷⁰ Susan French, Will book P, p.276, 1847.

⁷¹ Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz, Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries. *American Antiquity* 31(4):502-510,1966.

⁷² Deetz, James, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archeology of Early American Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1977.

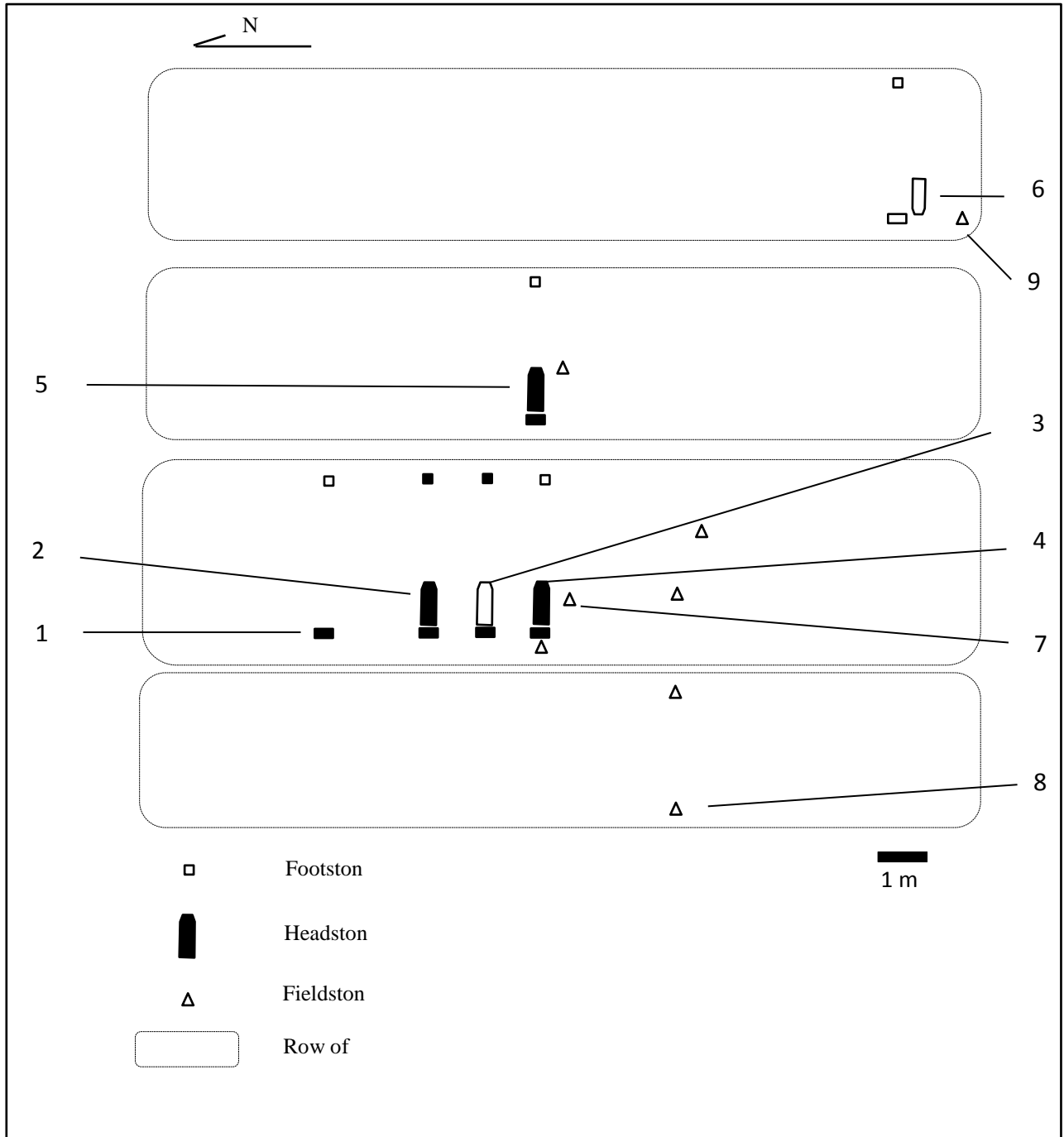


Figure 9. Sketch plat of graves and stone markers identified at the Green Level cemetery.



Figure 10. Fieldstone marker inscribed with "C.T.T.".

The willow trees on French headstones reflect sentiment as well as larger cultural patterns. The use of the willow as a symbol of mourning originated in the early 1800s and occurs in colonial cemeteries in New England and Britain.⁷³ Deetz argues that the willow reflects the “secularization of religion” and a trend towards more standardized and less personalized memorialization in the 18th century.⁷⁴ Considering that the willow as a decorative element had likely become a standard feature on commercially available stones by the mid-19th century, the Green Level stones reflect access to markets as well as religious beliefs and family emotion. Nonetheless, while the French family stones were cut from the standard marble stock and the symbols chosen from a limited menu of popular styles, the minor variation described above combined with the memorializing epitaphs on some graves make each stone unique.

While the marble stones are the most conspicuous at the cemetery, historically they may have been in the minority. At least four confirmed fieldstone markers were identified in the cemetery and at least a few additional fieldstone fragments, roughly tablet shaped, were found in probing or observed on the ground surface. The material is consistently ferruginous sandstone that is native to the general area, though not the immediate site of Green Level. Referred to locally as “red stone”, this rock occurs near



Figure 11. mall in-situ fieldstone marker.

Brentsville and was quarried historically.⁷⁵ It can be observed in several historic buildings and structures across the county.

⁷³ Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz, Death’s Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries. *American Antiquity* 31(4):502-510,1966.

⁷⁴ Deetz, James, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archeology of Early American Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1977.

⁷⁵ Use of red stone for grave markers at Green Level likely dates to the 18th century. It was used in court house construction in 1822. In 1888, the opening of the “Red Stone Quarry” near Brentsville was announced “with a working force of about one dozen hands” *Alexandria Gazette* 05 Apr 1888.

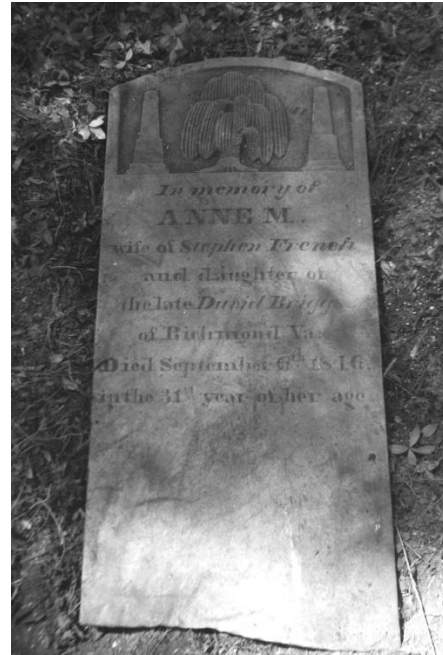
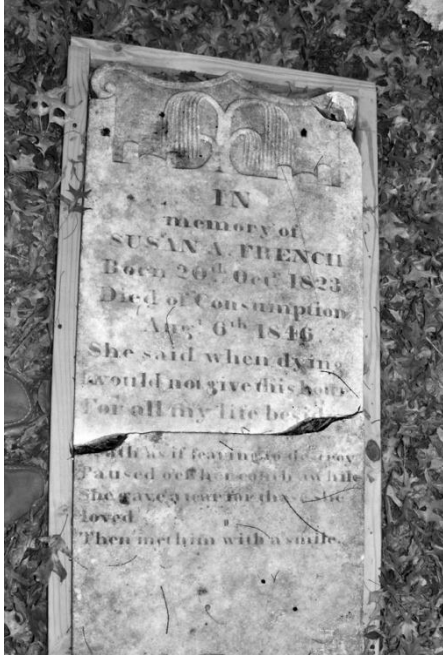


Figure 12. Selected headstones at the Green Level Cemetery (all French family): a. Susan A. (upper left); b. Maria Louise (upper right); c. Elizabeth (lower left); d. Anne M. (lower right).

Marker Repair

As noted above, most of the grave markers at Green Level are broken and restoration is precluded by multiple fractures in several cases. Most of the marble footstones found were complete and all were set in alignment with their respective headstones. Two of the marble footstones were found broken (Susan and Elizabeth). While Elizabeth's stone was simply reset atop its in-situ base with enough soil to support it, Susan's footstone was bracketed to its in-situ base with a wooden brace. With the exception of Anne French's stone, the large marble headstones were treated as described above, by raising them above ground in customized wooden frames. Through the use of a wood bracket placed just below ground surface, Anne French's headstone is the only one re-established in an upright position on its in-situ base (Figure 15).



Figure 13. Anne French headstone (left) and in-situ base, with adjacent, intrusive tree.

Summary and Recommendations

After a long period of abandonment and deterioration, the Green Level cemetery at Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area has been rediscovered and at least partially restored. The abandonment of this small rural plantation graveyard likely occurred in the late 19th century, sometime after the French family tenure. Throughout much of the 20th century, the cemetery lay dormant and forgotten in the middle of farm fields and pasture. Large marble headstones cracked and fell, eventually consumed by

shallow soil and periwinkle and leaf litter in a forest. In the early 21st century, the cemetery was recorded with the aid of property owner Ralph McDowell. And in the investigation summarized here, the cemetery has been documented, graves discovered and stones recovered and brought back above ground.

Our investigation revealed important basic information about the cemetery, expanding on previous efforts. Roughly 80 by 100 feet, the cemetery stands today on a modest low hummock in a broad forested floodplain north of Cedar Run. Four rows of graves have been identified. Nine burials are confirmed. Identities of six of those burials are known, all members of the French family. While the immediate family of William and Martha French is most conspicuous owing to several large marble tablet headstones and matching footstones, others buried at the cemetery may include extended French family, and possibly some of the Helm family that lived at Green Level for decades in the 18th century. The location of slave burials at Green Level remains unknown.

The cemetery condition has been greatly improved. The site is clearly noticeable and will serve as a landmark for visitors to Merrimac Farm hiking along the Bluebell Trail. A substantial amount of groundcover and midstory growth was removed, enhancing visibility of the cemetery and the distinctive bed of periwinkle on the forest floor. Erection of several footstones and exposure of the headstones in wooden frames greatly enhances the visibility of the small, historic graveyard as well.

Regular maintenance of the cemetery is recommended. This work should not require a permit as it will not involve ground disturbance. The PWCA is well positioned to coordinate volunteer-based maintenance and clean-up projects.

In addition to maintenance of the cemetery, archaeological survey of the WMA may be warranted to evaluate the potential for material evidence of the Green Level plantation.

Bibliography

“Red Stone Quarry”, *Alexandria Gazette*, April 5, 1888.

Bethlehem Club, *Prince William: The Story of its People and its Places* (Manassas, Va.: Housekeeping Club, 1941).

Binning, Margaret B., compiler, *Index to Death Records of Prince William County, Virginia, Abstracted*, (Manassas, Va., RELIC, Bull Run Library Va., 2013).

Binning, Margaret B., compiler, *Prince William County Historic Sites, an Index*, (Manassas, Va., RELIC, Bull Run Library Va., 2012).

Brown, William H., *Map of Prince William County, Virginia*, Compiled from U.S. Geological Survey and other data and corrected with the assistance of reliable residents of the County (Gainesville, Va., 1901).

Brown, Ray, “Blood in Bull Run: The Battlefield Today By Ray Brown, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management at Manassas National Battlefield Park”, *Hallowed Ground Magazine*, Spring 2011.

Craven, Avery Odelle, *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860* (University of South Carolina, 2007).

Deetz, James, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977).

Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz, Death’s Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries, *American Antiquity* 31(4):502-510, 1966.

Fitzhugh, Edward D., “Land for Sale”, *Alexandria Gazette*, November 8, 1813.

Frazier, William T., Nomination of Effingham for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (On file at Relic, 1988).

Frazier, William T. and George W. Pohill, Jr., Nomination of Pilgrim’s Rest for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. (On file at Relic, 1988).

Gottschalk, L.C., “Effects of Soil Erosion on Navigation in Upper Chesapeake Bay”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 35(2) (1945):219-238.

Harrison, Fairfax. *Landmarks of Old Prince William*. Prince William Historical Commission, Manassas, Va., 1987[1924].

Duff, Levi Bird. *To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Letters of Levi Bird Duff, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Edited by Jonathan E. Helmreich. McFarland, 2009.

Ewell, Bertrand, “Survey of the Fauquier-Prince William Boundary Line, April 14, 1759,” online at <http://eservice.pwcgov.org/library/digitalLibrary/>.

Governors Executive Papers, Beverly Randolph, William Helm letter, Library of Virginia, October 1st 1789 Box 2, Folder 12 Accession #4028, transcribed by Ronald R. Turner, available at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>.

Hunter, Darlene L., The Bristoe Tract: Rent Rolls, Map and History, *Prince William Reliquary* 4(3):81-88, 2004.

Land, Aubrey C., "The Tobacco Staple and the Planter's Problems: Technology, Labor, and Crops," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), pp. 69-82.

Mason, Greg, trans., *Prince William County People, 1701-1800, A Name Index to Landowners, Soldiers, Voters, Tithables, Petitioners, Laborers, and Slaves of Colonial, Prince William County, Virginia* (RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia, 2012).

Mason, Greg, trans., *A List of Tobacco Tenders from the South Side of Potomack [Creek] to Ye Lower End of Overwarton Parish [Stafford County, 1724]*. Transcribed from "Virginia Colonial Papers, Folder 52, Library of Virginia, Miscellaneous Reel 612. (RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia, 2011).

McAllister, J.T., *Virginia Militia in the Revolutionary War: McAllister's Data* (McAllister's Publishing Co., Hot Springs, Va., 1913).

Morton, W. Brown, "Fleetwood", Virginia Historical Commission Survey Form, File 76-8, (1959).

O'Neill, Patrick L., Two Extraordinary Surveys: The 1737 Brent Town and 1824 Bristow Tract Maps. *Prince William Reliquary* 6(2)(2007):27-37.

Orwig, David A. and Marc D. Abrams, "Land-use history (1720-1992), composition, and dynamics of oak-pine forests within the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of northern Virginia", *Canadian Journal for Research*, Vol. 24 (1994):1216-1225.

Patton, Justin, Cemetery Register and Survey Form, Prince William County Historical Commission, online at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com/index.htm> (2007).

Prince William County Land Cases Book III:349-360, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1834.

Prince William County Will Book H:197-198, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1797.

Prince William County Will Book N:365-6, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1831.

Prince William County Will Book P:173-175, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1842.

Prince William County, Will book P:276, Bull Run Library, Manassas, Virginia, 1847.

PWC Mapper, Prince William County Mapper XM, <http://gisweb.pwcgov.org/webapps/CountyMapper> (2012).

Russell, T. Triplett, "Hazelwood and Truro: The Foote and Colvin Families", prepared for The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (Richmond, 1980).

Russell, T. Triplett and John K. Gott, *Fauquier County in the Revolution* (Fauquier County, American Bicentennial Commission, Warrenton, Va, 1977).

Sackett, Pamela Myer, From Outpost to Courthouse: Plotting Brentsville. *Prince William Reliquary*, Vol. 2(2) (2003):25-36.

Sweig, Donald M., "Northern Virginia slavery: a statistical and demographic investigation" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1982).

Turner, Ron, *Prince William County Land Tax Brentsville District 1939*, file online at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com/index.htm>, 2014.

Turner, Ron, Cemetery Register and Survey Form, Prince William County Historical Commission, online at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>, 2001.

Turner, Ron, Prince William County Virginia Newspaper Transcripts 1784-1860, Edward D. Fitzhugh advertisement in Alexandria Gazette, November 8, 1813, in Ronald Ray Turner, Prince William County Virginia Newspaper Transcripts 1784-1860 (Manassas 2000:152).p.152. online at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>, 2000.

Turner, Ron, Prince William County Virginia 1805-1955 Businesses, online at <http://www.pwcvirginia.com>, 1999.

U.S. Census of 1820 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

U.S. Census of 1830 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

U.S. Census of 1850 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009.

U.S. Veterans Schedules of 1890 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com, Operations Inc., 2005.

U.S. War Department. The War of the Rebellion, *A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, the *Official Records*, <http://ehistory.osu.edu>, accessed 2014.

Wilson, Don, History of property title, Merrimac Farm. Manuscript on file at Relic, 2011.

Wilson, Donald, "The Brent town Survey of 1737," Newsletter of the Prince William County Virginia Genealogical Society, vol. 2, no. 6, 1983, p. 3.

Wertz, Mary Alice, *Marriages of Loudoun County, Virginia 1757-1853*, (Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., Baltimore, 1985).

Appendix A: Prince William County Cemetery Survey, Ron Turner (2001).

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
CEMETERY REGISTER FORM

Cemetery Name: French - Green Level

Tax Map # N38° 37.439 W077° 32.485

Location: Merrimac Farm

Property Owner:

Address:

Classification: Municipal Religious Family Civil War Private

Status: Abandoned Maintained not in use Currently used

Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Approximate size: 70ft x 70ft

Approximate Number of Burials: unknown

Markers: Tombstone Fieldstone Unmarked Other

Earliest Known Burial Date: Latest Burial Date:

Surnames Listed on Markers:

Susan A. French born 20 October 1823, died of consumption 6 August 1846

In Memory of William French who died suddenly 13 May 1826, age 33 years, foot stone W. F. 1826

In Memory of Miss Elizabeth French born at Green Level, Prince William County Virginia 13 September 1819, died 26 Feby 1851

Comments: The cemetery is about 300 yards from an old house ruins in a grove of old oak and cedar trees. The tombstones have broken off their bases and lying on the ground. They are completely covered with periwinkle that had to be removed to read the stones. In all we uncovered 4 tombstones and 1 field stone but many more graves are visible, perhaps as many as 50-100.

Surveyed by: Ron Turner

Date: summer 2001

Appendix B: Prince William County Cemetery Survey, Justin Patton (2007).

Prince William County Historical Commission
Cemetery Register and Survey Form

Cemetery Name: French-Green level

GPIN: _____

Location: Merwin Farm

Property Owner: _____

Address: _____

Latitude and Longitude: _____

Classification: Municipal Religious Family Civil War Private

Status: Abandoned Maintained, Not In Use Currently Used

Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Approximate size: 80 ft. x 80 ft. _____ acres

Approximate Number of Burials: 4 confirmed (H/F stones) 5 poss. late

Markers: Tombstone Fieldstone Unmarked Other _____

Earliest Known Burial Date: 1846 Latest Burial Date: unknown

Surnames Listed on Markers: UF 1826; SUSAN FRENCH 1823-1846;

William French 1824-1859

Comments: possible greenhouses ^{road} side, wooded P&P's

Revised term. Each: All headstones are broken from their bases and lying in the ground. Grapes are at the northeast corner of the cemetery. ^{over}

Surveyed by: JP, RT, Tall Olson, Kim ROSES

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Date: 12/04/2007

Photographs: Yes (Digital) or Print / No

Appendix C: Epitaphs on French family headstones at Green Level.

William French

In memory of William French who died suddenly 13th May 1826, aged 33 years. Be ye also ready for in such an house as ye think not the son of man cometh.

Maria Louise French

In memory of Maria Louise French. Born 16th Jan 1826. Died 12th Oct 1845. Tis even thus, tis even thus. With all that's good below, The brightest, fairest, loveliest are always the first to go. A little while they dwell with us the spread the wings w___ not seen and seek their home above.

Susan A. French

In memory of Susan A. French. Born 20th Oct. 1823. Died of Consumption. Aug 6th, 1846. She said when dying: I would not give this hour for all my life beside as if fearing to destroy. Paused o'er her couch awhile. She gave a tear for those loved. Then met him with a smile.

Elizabeth French

To the sacred memory of Miss Elizabeth French, born at Green Level ___ 13th September 1819, died 25th Feby 1851. ___ the king ___ the best in company of buried kindred ___ with her ride and friend ___ and the dear old ___ be it Only ___ essence ___ these thine ashes: keep them safe with careful love and let the ___ be holy and thou that passes by revere the waiting dead.

Anne M. French

In memory of Anne M., wife of Stephen French and daughter of the late David Briggs of Richmond Va. Died September 6th 1846 in the 31st year of her age.