

Boxes of hummus to be used in school lunches are stored in one of the walk-in refrigerators at the Montgomery County Public Schools Nutritional Facility.

PHOTOS BY DAN GROSS/THE GAZETTE

spending from campaigns in competitive states, the races bring in reporters, field workers and others who stay in hotels and eat at local restaurants, leaving money in the state, he said. Studies also have shown non-battleground states tend to have lower voter turnout, Eberly said. But state Democrats and Republi-

star phone banks, calling North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania, said Maryland Democratic Party spokesman Matt Verghese. That is not counting the estimated hundreds of Marylanders who volunteer each weekend in neighboring See BLUE, Page A-10

Vandals destroy historic cemetery

■ Site had just been restored as an Eagle Scout project

BY TERRI HOGAN
STAFF WRITER

Vandals recently struck a cemetery dating back more than 200 years, leaving the Boy Scout who had recently restored it filled with rage.

For his Eagle Scout project, Justin Stine, 18, wanted to restore the Riggs family cemetery, nestled in the woods off Bordly Drive near his Brookeville home.

Because it had fallen into disrepair, Stine, along with a crew of fellow scouts, friends and family, spent two full days removing dead trees and brush, installing wood chips, restoring a gate and building two benches.

Stine, a member of Troop 264 of Brookeville and a senior at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, capped off his work with a hand carved wooden sign that he attached to the gate. His District Board of Review is scheduled for Oct. 19, marking the final step in becoming an Eagle Scout.

On Sept. 30, a neighbor, who had helped Stine with the restoration proj-

ect, rang his doorbell and informed him that the cemetery had been vandalized. Stine said he dropped what he was doing and immediately went to the site, finding nine out of ten tombstones smashed, and a marker tipped over. A hole had been kicked in the gate, and the vandal had attempted to pull out the gateposts, which Stine had cemented into the ground.

"I was devastated," he said. "I fell to my knees, and tears started streaming down my face. I was so angry that someone would come in and destroy this

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PHOTO FROM JUSTIN STINE

The Riggs family marker was knocked over, and nine out of ten tombstones in the cemetery were broken by vandals a few weeks ago. The cemetery had been completely restored by Justin Stine for his Eagle Scout project.

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CEMETERY

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wonderful piece of history. I have never seen that kind of vandalism in my entire life.”

Based on the fresh dirt, he suspects the damage had been done just days before it was discovered. He thinks the “weapon of choice” was another tombstone, which was pulled completely out of the ground.

He filed a police report, and is waiting to hear back from the detective. Officer Rebecca Innocenti, a spokeswoman for county police, said there has not been an arrest made in the case.

While planning his project, Stine enlisted the help of local historian Leonard Becraft to learn the history of the cemetery. Becraft introduced him to another resource: the Coalition for the Protection of Maryland Historical Burial Sites.

The Coalition recently honored Stine for his efforts with its Periwinkle Award, “for the outstanding restoration of a cemetery.”

Becraft, who has been a member of the coalition for more than 10 years, said that cemeteries such as this one are being vandalized all over the state.

“It’s very sad,” Becraft said. “Vandalism to these cemeteries happens often—it’s just a problem with remains not tended to, but I don’t know what can be

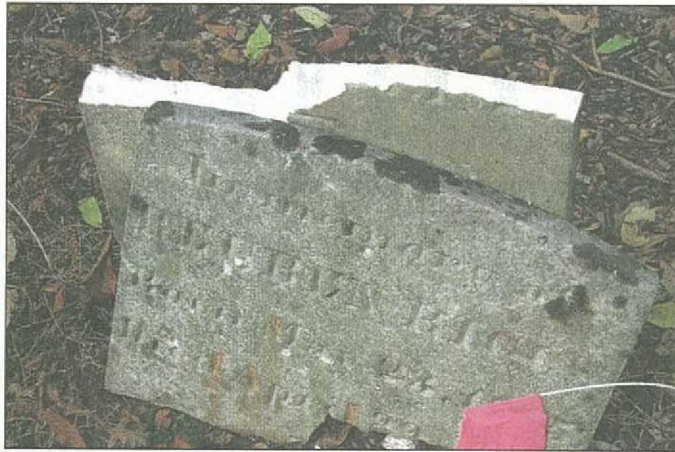


PHOTO FROM JUSTIN STINE

One of nine tombstones in the Riggs family cemetery that was recently vandalized. The cemetery had been completely restored by Justin Stine as his Eagle Scout project.

done about it.”

Becraft introduced Stine to Coalition member Robert Mosko, owner of Mosko Cemetery Monument Services. Mosko estimated the damage to the cemetery to be about \$12,000.

Mosko, who was an Eagle Scout himself, has offered to repair the tombstones with a special epoxy and mortar, at no cost. Because all the pieces are still there, he likened it to assembling a jigsaw puzzle.

“As a member of the Coalition, a business owner and an Eagle Scout, I couldn’t sit back and leave the cemetery that way after Justin had worked so hard to restore it,” he said.

Through his research, Stine

discovered that the cemetery is part of Pleasant Hill, ancestral home of the Riggs family, which founded the Riggs National Bank in Washington, D.C. John Riggs bought the land in 1751. His son, Samuel, inherited the property.

The bodies of four of his 12 children lie in the cemetery. William Riggs, the great-grandson of John, died in 1906. He was the last member of the family to be buried in the cemetery.

Police ask anyone who may have information regarding the vandalism to contact the Fourth District Station at 240-773-5500.

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