# NPS Form 10-900 United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration

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Bulletin, How to Complete the National	Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If an eable." For functions, architectural classification, ma	
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(Enter "N/A" if property is	not part of a multiple	property listing	
2. Location Street & number: Roughly houses along Gay Street City or town: Harrisonb Not For Publication: N/P	urg State: Virginia (	County: Independent Cit	
3. State/Federal Agency	Certification		
As the designated authority	y under the National H	listoric Preservation Act	, as amended,
I hereby certify that this <u>1</u> the documentation standard Places and meets the process	ds for registering prop	erties in the National Re	egister of Historic
In my opinion, the property I recommend that this prop- level(s) of significance:	perty be considered sig	mificant at the following	
Applicable National Regist		local	
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Signature of certifyin	g official/Title:		Date
Virginia Departme	nt of Historic Resour	ces	
State or Federal agen	cy/bureau or Tribal	Government	
In my opinion, the proj	perty meets d	oes not meet the Nation	al Register criteria.
Signature of commen	ting official:		Date
Title:		State or Federal	

Newtown Cemetery Name of Property

_	4. National Park Service Certification	
	I hereby certify that this property is:	
	entered in the National Register	
	determined eligible for the National Register	
	determined not eligible for the National Register	
	removed from the National Register	
	other (explain:)	
	Signature of the Keeper	Z - L7 - U5  Date of Action
	5. Classification	
	Ownership of Property	
	(Check as many boxes as apply.) Private:	
	Public – Local	
	Public – State	
	Public – Federal	
	Category of Property	
	(Check only one box.)	
	Building(s)	
	District	
	Site	
	Structure	
	Object	

Harrisonburg, Virginia County and State

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me of Property		Harrisonburg, Virg County and State
Number of Resources within (Do not include previously liste		
Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	1	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
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Newtown Cemetery	Harrisonburg, Virginia
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7. Description	
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.) NO STYLE	
Materials: (enter categories from instructions.) Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: M	Marble, Granite, Limestone; METAL:

#### **Narrative Description**

Bronze; CONCRETE

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

Newtown Cemetery, located in northeast Harrisonburg, is a well-tended 3.9-acre lawn cemetery in Newtown, the historic African American neighborhood in the city. The site is the only African-American cemetery in Harrisonburg, and served as a focal point for the emancipated community that was established during Reconstruction on farmland once part of Hilltop Farm (DHR No. 44RM498). It has served the community since 1869. The four parcels that comprise Newtown Cemetery are situated on a northwest-trending slope of the plateau that bounds the city on its eastern side. Individual parcels purchased by Newtown Cemetery Trustees between 1869 and 1920 are divided by now-closed alleys that were connected to major streets in the neighborhood. The cemetery is one block south of the Lucy F. Simms School (DHR No. 115-5035), a Virginia Landmarks Register- and National Register-listed property, and five blocks west of U.S. Route 11. Not associated with a specific church, Newtown Cemetery has continuously served as a place of rest for community members since its origins and contains the burials of over 900 individuals, a number of whom were emancipated slaves. An independent trustee organization has overseen its management since the beginning. A one-story, ten-foot by ten-foot, cinderblock maintenance shed is the only non-contributing building on the site.

#### **Narrative Description**

Site Evolution

The oldest parcel of the cemetery, purchased in 1869, is found in the northwestern corner by the intersection of Kelley and Sterling streets. This section consists of 0.64 acre. The cemetery increased in size as land and funds became available. Two parcels were purchased in

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the south at different times (1898, 1907), which together cover 1.64 acres. The most recently acquired parcel (1920) is the northeastern part of the cemetery, covering about 1.21 acres. Alleyways bring the total area to 3.9 acres. The deeds for both the 1898 and 1907 sales refer to crops of wheat and barley that would be harvested by the seller, further identifying the parcels as farm land at the edge of town.

#### Setting

The nominated property is bounded by three streets – Sterling (western boundary), Kelley (northern boundary), Hill (eastern boundary) – and an unnamed alley (southern boundary). The north section of the cemetery is divided north-south by an extension of Simms Avenue; the south section is bounded on the north by an east-west extension of Effinger Street. The Simms and Effinger graveled and grassed extensions once were alleyways and reflect the development of road infrastructure in Newtown. Both were vacated by the City in 2007, when they became the responsibility of Newtown Cemetery. Hilltop Farm was located one-quarter mile to the northeast, and 1937 aerial imagery of Harrisonburg reveals a farm road that led from what is now Hill Street, directly to this area through farmland.

#### Design and Landscape

Newtown Cemetery is an example of a town cemetery and a lawn cemetery, as described in the National Register Bulletin, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*. A town cemetery is one whose "creation and continuity reflect the broad spectrum of the community's history and culture." A lawn cemetery "deemphasized monuments in favor of unbroken lawn scenery, or common open space." The gently sloping site is mostly open space with neatly trimmed grass and is divided into an irregular grid by the former alleys that cross it from east to west and north to south. Trees are clustered in roughly the center of the cemetery while the remainder of the site consists of open space and orderly rows of burials.

Three entrances provide access to the cemetery. The closed alley from Kelley Street (that once was an extension of Simms Avenue) borders the oldest section on the east. The alley that once was the extension of Effinger Street opens to both Hill Street on the east and Sterling Street on the west. The Kelley Street entrance is a concrete curb and gutter opening into the cemetery; it is marked with two concrete-topped non-contributing brick pillars on either side. The gravel and grass alleyway is bounded on both sides by a concrete slab and gutter configuration. Adjoining the cemetery on the eastern side of the alley is a concrete slab sidewalk. Both the alleyway and sidewalk terminate at the intersection with the Effinger Street extension, but the concrete gutter and curb continue west onto the Effinger Street alley. That alley, also graveled, runs the east-west width of the cemetery and is marked by a granite headstone monument at the Hill Street entrance. Reading "Newtown Cemetery Est. 1868," it was erected in the recent past by community members Gary D. Martin Sr. and Arnold and Mary Washington Martin. The Sterling Street entrance is marked by a pair of cement-topped brick pillars that match those at the Kelley Street entrance.

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Vegetation found in the cemetery today includes sugar maples, black maples, hackberry, and northern white-cedar, as well as some ornamental plantings. Periwinkle and English ivy are found most commonly in the northwestern and southwestern parcels of the cemetery. A large sugar maple in the southern section has grown around at least one headstone, which may have been placed against the tree by a caretaker after it was dislodged from its base. Names or other markings on the marble stone are not visible.

The agricultural history of the property is seen in the stumps of large trees that are found in the south section running perpendicular to the former extension of Effinger Street, at the point where it intersects the extension of Simms Avenue. Based on historic aerial imagery, these trees followed an old fence marking a parcel boundary. Such imagery also shows trees that were standing in the past and have been since removed from the oldest parcel. A large depression near the corner of Sterling and Kelley Streets most likely represents a tree removal. The 1907 deed for one of the southern parcels stipulates that the new owners would allow the previous owner to chop down and take two locust trees from the property.

A single-story, ten-foot by ten-foot, non-contributing, cinderblock maintenance shed stands near the intersection of the extensions of Simms Avenue and Effinger Street. In good condition, it has wooden gable ends and a galvanized steel roof. This small structure, well-maintained and painted white, is unobtrusive yet easily accessed in this setting.

#### Organization of Burials

Newtown Cemetery is organized according to sections and rows that are documented in records maintained by the cemetery trustees. On the western side of the cemetery, the sections are aligned with the original parcels (1869, 1898). The eastern side between the Simms Avenue alley and Hill Street is comprised of the two parcels purchased last (1907 and 1920) and is its own section. By tradition, individual and family plots are sold to owners who decide on the style and type of marker. Currently, there are 683 standing headstones and upwards of 120 depressions that may represent unmarked graves. Over 900 individuals are buried in the cemetery. Most headstones are oriented east to face the rising sun.

The oldest dated headstones (mid-1870s) are found in the northwest section. The most recent burials (present day) are largely found in the northeast section. Also in the northeast section, parallel to Hill Street, are several rows of military burials, with veterans from World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as retired military personnel. A non-historic flagpole (non-contributing object) that flies the American flag is found in this section, along with sunken flag holders for military holidays. Contemporary burials primarily occur in the northeast section, where the largest area of unused plots is found.

Headstone styles include tablet (basic, shouldered, domed, and stylized), lectern, capstone (with bronze cap for veterans), and obelisk. The most common materials are marble, granite, and concrete, with some earlier stones made from limestone. Symbolic motifs are both religious symbols in the Christian tradition (cross, crown, Bible, wheat sheath, praying hands,

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angel, eternal flame, Last Supper) and decorative elements (lilies, ivy, sunrise, leaves, star, flower, leaved branch, geometric design, heart, Mason, draped cloth). More recent graves without headstones still retain the metal identification markers placed by the funeral home. There are no crypts, mausoleums, or historic cemetery furniture such as benches or stools.

What are believed to be unmarked graves have been found in every section of the cemetery but are most prominent in the northwest and southwest sections adjoining Sterling Street. While the depressions vary in width, most conform to the size of at least one grave shaft and fall in line with a row of standing markers. For some, there is a recognizable vegetation change from lawn grass to slightly denser, greener growth overall. At this juncture, it is not known whether these burials ever had markers, or ones that did not last, or ones that fell over and were buried over time by the deposition of eroded soil. At some unmarked sites, probing suggests the presence of a stone lying beneath the soil at varying depths, depending on the location of the depression on the slope.

Family plot markers, the large majority of which are found in the south section, are made of a number of materials, including concrete, iron, marble, granite, and limestone. Some are engraved with surname initials. A few plots are demarcated by low metal pipe or chain fences attached to metal posts in the four corners. Many families have placed granite or marble family markers within the plots.

The members of the Board of Trustees of Newtown Cemetery have been diligent caretakers, retaining the integrity of the place and the organization. For almost 150 years – from Reconstruction through the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras until today – the Trustees, who were recognized as caretakers in the first deed, have shepherded the cemetery, maintaining its central role in the Newtown Community.

Significant historical local and regional figures are buried here: Lucy F. Simms, Ulysses G. Wilson, and George Newman, trailblazing African American educators; Roberta Webb, community childcare leader; Elon Rhodes, first African American Harrisonburg City Councilman; and Ambrose Dallard, businessman of the Reconstruction era. The cemetery is known, however, as a place of identity for Harrisonburg's African American community.

Newtown C		burg, Virginia
rtame of Froport	ounty and c	rialo
8. State	tement of Significance	
	able National Register Criteria x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Re	gister
X	A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution broad patterns of our history.	n to the
	B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
	C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or meth construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic vor represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lain individual distinction.	alues,
	D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistorhistory.	ory or
	a Considerations  ex" in all the boxes that apply.)	
	A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes	
	B. Removed from its original location	
	C. A birthplace or grave	
Х	D. A cemetery	
F E	E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure	
F	F. A commemorative property	
	G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years	

Newtown Cemetery Name of Property		Harrisonburg, Virginia County and State
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from in ETHNIC HERITAGE:	instructions.) <u>AFRICAN AMERICAN</u> -	
Period of Significance		
Significant Dates 1869		
Significant Person (Complete only if Crite N/A	rion B is marked above.)	
Cultural Affiliation N/A		
Architect/Builder N/A	· _ -	

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Newtown Cemetery, a historically African American cemetery situated northeast from the downtown area of the City of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American because of the cemetery's role in the development of Harrisonburg's historically African American community, Newtown. The property meets Criteria Consideration D because its primary significance is derived from association with historic events and patterns of development. The cemetery represents several important elements of the African American experience in Harrisonburg, with a period of significance that begins with its establishment in 1869 during the Reconstruction Era and continues through 1964, representing the traditional fifty-year mark for properties where significant historic activities continue into the recent past. The origins of the cemetery represent the difficulties African Americans in the South had to overcome in the pursuit to establish free communities after the Civil War. Moving from Reconstruction through segregation, the cemetery exemplifies the segregated nature of the Newtown community from the rest of the city. As was typically the case for Southern cities during the era of segregation, the mostly-black community of Newtown was marginalized—literally and figuratively—in its relation to the majority white community of Harrisonburg. Adding to the community's struggle as a minority population during segregation, beginning in the late 1950s and though the early 1960s, city officials initiated urban renewal projects, which razed some dwellings in the Newtown neighborhood and uprooted many residents. While the Newtown Cemetery reflects the hardships of this African American community, it also represents the self-sufficiency and resilience of its members. Buried in this cemetery are individuals who greatly influenced not only the lives of those in the Newtown community, but also impacted the City of Harrisonburg and the larger regional discourse. As an active cemetery, Newtown Cemetery continues to connect the current community to the memory of the individuals buried there and the history of Newtown and the area's extended African American community.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Reconstruction - Origins of the Cemetery (1869)

In 1860, the U.S. Census for Harrisonburg enumerated 1,024 whites and 390 African Americans (277 enslaved and 113 free) in the city, reflecting a rather sizable free black community for a city this size.<sup>2</sup> After the Civil War, the African American population began to rise steadily as formerly enslaved people from mainly Rockingham County, but also other nearby counties, began to settle in the northeast section of the city, known as Newtown. In a period when property ownership was difficult for African Americans, one of the first tracts of land purchased by

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African Americans in Zirkle's Addition—an area of farmland at the city's edge opened to residential development—were three lots that today comprise the oldest section of the Newtown Cemetery. This purchase by the original cemetery trustees is a testament to the necessity of African Americans in Newtown to establish their own cemetery during the Reconstruction Era, and coincides with the steady arrival of African Americans to the community. Through the formation of this cemetery, the trustees developed a communal resting place for the people of not only Newtown but for other African Americans in Harrisonburg and the surrounding Rockingham County area.<sup>3</sup>

The cemetery was first recognized in land transaction records, when Jacob Zirkle and his wife Nancy deeded the land for the first section of the cemetery—today's northwest section—to the Cemetery Trustees on May 18, 1869. In this transaction, the trustees purchased the three lots—48, 49, and 50—of Zirkle's Addition for \$250, with \$150 dollars cash in hand and the rest of the money due by May 18, 1870. The deed laid out the wishes of the trustees and their goal in purchasing this land "to be held by them as a graveyard for all persons of color who shall or may come in and become part owners of the ground here in after mentioned by the purchase of them." The trustees' words clearly establish that the cemetery, from its creation, was to be a shared place for the Newtown community and all people of color.<sup>5</sup>

This purchase also points to the power and advantages whites had over African Americans in business practices during the Reconstruction Era. While the first section included three lots, the total area of the land was less than one acre. However, deed records indicate that white families purchasing three lots of a similar size in Zirkle's Addition received rather different treatment. For instance, a white man, Morris Keller, also purchased three lots of comparable size and was charged \$175.25 total and only \$58.90 cash in hand.<sup>7</sup> The testimony of Charles Douglas Gray in the Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction further supports the likelihood that the trustees may have experienced unfair treatment during their acquisition of the cemetery's original lots. As a previous resident of Hilltop Farm, a portion of which later became part of Newtown, Gray's testimony indicates that during this period, property ownership was rather difficult for African Americans in Harrisonburg. Gray stated that immediately after the Civil War, "They [white citizens] do not like negro families to settle in the neighborhood if they can prevent it," however, as he continued his testimony, Gray indicated that such resentment began to dwindle as whites sought black citizens for hiring as cheap labor. According to Gray, "...we can have the best peasantry in the world by securing the negro in all his civil rights," a clear indicator that while many whites in Harrisonburg grew more tolerant of the presence of African Americans, they were less interested in making life easy for them."8 However, exceptions to this attitude did exist and can be found in the actions of the local United Church of Brethren and Mennonite churches as well as the Freedmen Bureau, all of which supported efforts by blacks to obtain land in Rockingham County (see Zenda/Long's Chapel [DHR No. 082-5264]).

As skilled and un-skilled laborers, the original trustees, George Hermon, Squire Pollard, Jessie Banks, Stephen Hughes, and Harrison Green would have been men of modest means, making this communal payment of \$225, a large sum that signifies the importance these men placed in the establishment of a black cemetery. Although two of the original trustees, Squire Pollard and

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Jessie Banks, were charter members of the John Wesley Methodist Church, whose members would later form the Historic African American Kelley Street United Brethren in Christ Church, there was no one religious denomination connected to the establishment of the cemetery. <sup>10</sup>

The difference in the development of the Newtown Cemetery and the Zenda Cemetery at Long's Chapel (DHR No. 082-5264) underscores further that the founding of the Newtown Cemetery was the result of community members' efforts. Zenda, also a historically African American community, developed about eleven miles northeast of Harrisonburg after the Civil War. Although several individuals, including the Dallard family and educator Lucy Simms, connected the two communities, the cemetery at Long's Chapel originated from and was operated by the Church of the Brethren. Long's Chapel, as a member of the Linville Freemason Circuit, also received sizable donations from the Freemasons, especially from the Harrisonburg Circuit. Newtown, on the other hand, did not follow any of these trends. There is no evidence to indicate that the cemetery in Newtown received donations or was affiliated with any religious denomination or charitable organizations. Rather, it appears that the creation and development of Newtown Cemetery began as an independent community effort.

#### Growth in the Segregation Era

While the initial establishment of the cemetery reflected the needs of the community circa 1869, the growth of the cemetery over the years coincided with Newtown's growth. The City of Harrisonburg annexed the Gray farmland in 1870, but because of segregation, Newtown developed on the fringe of Harrisonburg, away from the predominately white sections. During the era of segregation, both the African American population and Newtown Cemetery increased. By 1880, the African American population of Harrisonburg grew to 997, more than doubling in twenty years. <sup>13</sup> In November 18, 1898, the Trustees of the cemetery bought the second parcel of land for the cemetery in order to meet the burial needs of this growing community. This second plot, comprising one acre situated south of the original lot, was purchased from R.S. Switzer and Leannah Switzer for \$100 cash in hand with a remaining \$200 to come in four equal annual installments. <sup>14</sup>

Within a decade of this second purchase, the trustees found the opportunity to acquire another parcel of land. That addition to the cemetery was recorded June 11, 1907, and was situated directly east of the second section. The trustees purchased this parcel from C.L. Rogers and his wife Alice Rogers for a total of \$225.56 with \$100 cash in hand. The deed stipulated that Rogers be allowed to harvest a crop of barley, indicating the agricultural activity that continued adjacent to Newtown as the city developed.<sup>15</sup>

By 1920, the African American population of Harrisonburg reached approximately 1,200. The continuing increase coincides with the purchase of the fourth parcel of the cemetery. <sup>16</sup> On August 2, 1920, the trustees purchased the final section of the cemetery. This purchase from Bessie Gray and her husband H. Peyton Gray, consisted of Lot Nos. Two, Four, Six and Eight

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from the Hill Top Addition to the City of Harrisonburg.<sup>17</sup> At \$1500, the trustees paid \$500 cash in hand with the remainder divided into annual payments of \$250.

Not only does this growth of the cemetery parallel the increase in the city's African American population, but it also reflects the continual development of Newtown's infrastructure from 1869 to 1920. During this period the trustees increased the cemetery's size through four separate transactions, purchasing lots as the land was incorporated into the City of Harrisonburg. Formerly farmland historically belonging to the locally prominent Gray family, the land that became Newtown slowly transformed into a residential area. The cemetery began with the development of Zirkle's Addition in 1869; however, situated on the outer limits of the addition, the cemetery did not expand until the city's infrastructure reached the surrounding lots of land. The cemetery reflects these alternations to the infrastructure of Newtown, demonstrated in the Simms and Effinger Streets extensions that run through the cemetery. The cemetery slowly came together as this area became part of the City of Harrisonburg.

#### Cemetery and the Community

Although it is unclear when the name Newtown became the main identifier for the black community in northeastern Harrisonburg, records indicate its use soon after the establishment of the community. Local historian Ruth Toliver believes the name originated from some of the initial founders of Newtown, former slaves Rueben and Ambrose Dallard, as "Newtown" was a common label given to areas where free blacks settled after the Civil War. While the community's name existed around the time of the cemetery's origins, newspapers and city records referred to the cemetery only as a "colored cemetery" until the early 1900s. The 1920 deed is the first to reference the cemetery's connection to Newtown; the deed identifies the trustees as "Trustees of the Colored Peoples Cemetery commonly known as Newtown Cemetery in Harrisonburg, Virginia." Although it appears that the local residents referred to the cemetery as "Newtown Cemetery" prior to 1920, it is around this time that sources begin to refer to the cemetery by its modern name. This is also when sources reveal the cemetery to be a central feature of the Newtown Community.

#### Military Burials

Over the years, the Newtown Cemetery developed as a significant location in the celebration of Memorial Day. Although unclear as to when the community first turned to the cemetery as a gathering place for memorial programs, the earliest record appears in 1932. An article in the *Harrisonburg Daily News Record* that year announced a public memorial service would be held by the American Legion at the "hut"—a gathering place for blacks at that time—on Wolfe Street, which would be followed by a motorcade to the cemetery in order to decorate the graves of the soldiers, closing with a firing squad salute.<sup>23</sup> A similar procession of ceremonies continues to this day in order to honor over 100 veterans buried in the cemetery. In the northeast section, parallel to Hill Street, are several rows of military burials, with veterans from World War I,

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World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as retired military personnel. Additionally, elsewhere in the cemetery are the graves of two confirmed United States Colored Troops (USCT). One burial is that of Pvt. John Cooper (1839-1902), a Civil War veteran who served in the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Co. K of the USCT, which participated in the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign (June 1864-March 1865). Cooper enlisted in February 1865 in Baltimore and mustered out in San Antonio, Texas, in January 1867. The other grave is that of James Cochran, who served in the 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry (Col), Co. H of the USCT. Cochran enlisted on January 5, 1863, and mustered out with the rank of Sergeant in Boston, Massachusetts. Local oral tradition holds that there is one other United States Colored Troops buried in the cemetery (James Goodloe); however, research has yet to confirm the same.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Noted Burials**

An additional component to Newtown Cemetery's significance as a community centerpiece is the large number of locally influential African American leaders buried there. Those of note include the founders of Newtown, Ambrose (1832?-1915) and Rueben Dallard (1832?-1906). Former slaves from the nearby Riverbank Plantation, Reuben Dallard came to Harrisonburg soon after the Civil War and purchased some of the initial lots of land in Zirkle's Addition. Both Reuben and Ambrose were carpenters by profession, building several of the homes in Newtown. They emerged early on as respected leaders in the community.<sup>25</sup>

A majority of Newtown's noted burials were educational leaders in Harrisonburg's and Rockingham County's African American community. George Ambrose Newman (1855-1944), born free, moved to Harrisonburg in 1875 to serve as principal of a "colored school" that was replaced by the Effinger Street School. From 1876 to 1908, Newman held the position of principal for twenty-eight years at the Effinger school, spending a large amount of his time educating his teachers, conducting workshops and seminars, and working to ensure teachers were prepared to pass the state examinations. <sup>26</sup> William Nelson Pendleton Harris (1881-1977) also had a large impact on the education of African-Americans in Harrisonburg. Through his efforts and leadership, in 1926 Effinger received from the Commonwealth of Virginia its junior high school accreditation (1926), its high school accreditation (1929), and its senior high school accreditation (1931). Harris served as the principal of Effinger School until it closed in 1939, when he then became the first principal of the new segregated African American school, Lucy F. Simms (see below). When he retired in 1951 as principal of Lucy F. Simms, Harris had spent thirty-four years as an educator.<sup>27</sup> Another individual of note is Ulysses Grant Wilson, half-brother of Lucy F. Simms. Wilson was a teacher, principal, and historian of African American education in the Shenandoah Valley. He received his educated at Hampton Institute and taught in the local segregated school systems from 1882 to 1915, ending his career at Effinger Street School.<sup>28</sup>

Also buried in the cemetery is Elon Rhodes (1922-2006), the first African American elected to the Harrisonburg City Council, where he served from his election in 1976 until 1992. Rhodes was also the first African American to serve on the City's School Board. In addition to these

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posts, and membership on several other commissions, Rhodes served as a Trustee to Newtown Cemetery for many years, and served as a leader in the Newtown community.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most-well-known individual buried in the Newtown Cemetery is Lucy F. Simms (1857-1934). Simms was born into slavery around 1857 on the Gray family's Hilltop plantation, land that later became Zirkle's Addition and home to the Newtown community. 30 Simms began teaching at the age of 17, leaving the area from 1874 to 1877 to attend the Hampton Institute, making her a classmate of Booker T. Washington.<sup>31</sup> After graduating, Simms returned to the area and taught for about a year at Zenda, a community in Rockingham County established by blacks after the Civil War. She then moved to Harrisonburg and began teaching for the city. The first school where she taught was located inside a church; the school then moved and became the Effinger School. Simms continued to teach until the end of the 1934 school year, although she had been in poor health for some months prior. Simms passed away on July 10, 1934, and was buried in the Newtown Cemetery. Through her fifty-six years as an educator, it is estimated that Simms taught three generations in many of Harrisonburg's African-American families, with an estimated number of 1,800 students.<sup>32</sup> Simms's funeral "was the most largely attended colored funeral ever held in Harrisonburg" up to 1934, with a majority of the city's African American community and a large number of white citizens in attendance.<sup>33</sup> The City of Harrisonburg named its new segregated African-American school, which opened in 1938, the Lucy F. Simms School in remembrance of the community's beloved educator. <sup>34</sup> As many of the buildings associated with the life of Lucy Simms are no longer standing, her grave is an important landmark for people in the community. In 2011, Lucy F. Simms was recognized by the Library of Virginia as an "African American Trailblazer in Virginia History." In order to preserve her memory, community donations made it possible for the current trustees of the cemetery to place a new headstone at Simms's grave in 2014, in order to ensure that visitors could honor the beloved Lucy Simms.<sup>36</sup>

#### Urban Renewal in the Early 1960s

After overcoming the struggles of Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era, Newtown Cemetery felt the effects of urban renewal in the 1960s. Harrisonburg Urban Renewal Projects VA-R-4 and VA-R-16 affected over thirty-two acres of land in the Northeast section of Harrisonburg, including the historically African American section of Newtown. During this period, city streets in the community were widened and paved, an activity that impacted the western side of Newtown Cemetery. Based on aerial photographs, by 1966, Sterling Street was twice as wide as it had been in 1951. While it does not appear that any burials were disturbed by the widening, since that time the street abuts one grouping of headstones in the southwest section of the cemetery.

#### Archaeological Resources

Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia

County and State

In addition to the identified graves, roughly 120 depressions have been documented through a recent cemetery survey. While these are found throughout the cemetery, they are concentrated on the western side and especially in the northwest section where the oldest burials are found. Efforts to identify the depressions as graves using aerial photographs and earlier inventories have met with some success. However, a 1966 survey by the Daughters of the American Revolution indicates that many graves were already unmarked at that time, and the intervening 50 years has seen the loss of additional headstones.<sup>38</sup>

Non-invasive study methods such as ground penetrating radar are needed to gain a better understanding of burial locations in the areas where depressions are concentrated. Additional research into early cemetery records may also assist in identification. While the cemetery may not currently meet National Register Criterion D, field work indicates that future archeological studies in this section could be extremely beneficial in understanding the early history of Newtown Cemetery.

N	ewt	own	Cem	etery
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Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia
County and State

#### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### **Bibliography**

#### **Primary Sources**

Dedication of the New Marker for Miss Lucy F. Simms Final Resting Place, flyer created by the Northeast Neighborhood Association. Harrisonburg, Virginia, June 22, 2014.

Langhorne, Orra. *Southern Sketches From Virginia* (1881-1901. Edited by Charles Wynes. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1964.

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#### **Newspapers**

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#### **Secondary Sources**

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Newtown Cemetery	Harrisonburg,	Virginia
Name of Property	County and State	
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	d. National Register Bulletin 41, <i>Guidelines for and Burial Places</i> . Washington, DC: U.S.	
Siegrist, Phil. Captured by Zenda: A Study of Rockingham County. EMU May 14, 199 University Special Collections, Harrison	77. Unpublished paper in James Madison	
of Union Veterans of the Civil War; (Na	890) Enumerating Union Veterans and Widows ational Archives Microfilm Publication M123, f Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National	
Toliver, Ruth. Keeping Up With Yesterday. F	Published by Author, 2009.	
Wayland, John. Historic Harrisonburg. Harr	risonburg, Virginia: C.J. Carrier Co., 1990.	
Previous documentation on file (NPS):		
preliminary determination of individual previously listed in the National Regist previously determined eligible by the designated a National Historic Landmarecorded by Historic American Building recorded by Historic American Engine recorded by Historic American Landson	National Register ark ngs Survey # eering Record #	
Primary location of additional data:		
X State Historic Preservation Office		
Other State agency		
Federal agency		
X Local government		
X University X Other		
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Newtown Cemetery			Harrisonburg, Virginia
Name of Property			County and State
	*	ric Resources, Richmond, ourg-Rockingham Historic	· · ·
VA; James Madison Uni	versity, Harrisonburg,	<u>VA</u>	
Historic Resources Surv	vey Number (if assigr	ned): _DHR No. 115-5129	
10. Geographical Data			
Acreage of Property	3.9		
Use either the UTM syste	em or latitude/longitud	le coordinates	
Datum if other than WGS (enter coordinates to 6 de	S84:ecimal places)		
1. Latitude: 38.453182	Longi	tude:-78.858938	
2. Latitude:	Longi	tude:	
3. Latitude:	Longi	tude:	
4. Latitude:	Longi	tude:	
Or UTM References Datum (indicated on USO	GS map):		
NAD 1927 or	NAD 1983		
1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	

Newtown Cemetery	Harrisonburg, Virginia
Name of Property	County and State

#### **Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundaries correspond to the tax parcels recorded as 033 12-20 by the City of Harrisonburg as shown on the attached *Location Map* and *Tax Parcel Map*. The nominated property is bounded by three streets – Sterling (western boundary), Kelley (northern boundary), Hill (eastern boundary) – and an unnamed alley (southern boundary) that separates the cemetery from a row of houses fronting on Gay Street. The north section of the cemetery is divided by an extension of Simms Avenue; the south section is bounded on the north by an east-west extension of Effinger Street.

#### **Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundaries parallel the legal boundaries of Newtown Cemetery, which evolved through the purchase of four parcels between 1869 and 1920. The boundaries encompass all of the known historic resources associated with the cemetery as well as its setting within a traditionally African American neighborhood.

11. Form Prepared By				
name/title:Dr. Carole Nash, Mary Ann Mason, and Ruth Toliver organization:Assistant Professor James Madison University, JMU Intern with Department of Historic Recourses, and Local Historian				
street & number: Department of Integrated Science and Technology and Department of				
History, James Madison University				
city or town: Harrisonburg state: VA zip code: 22801				
e-mail: nashcl@jmu.edu				
telephone:540-568-6805				
date: September 1, 2014				

#### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

#### Newtown Cemetery

Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia

County and State

#### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

#### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Newtown Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Harrisonburg

County: Rockingham State: Virginia

Photographer: Dr. Carole Nash Date Photographed: June 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 8: Newtown Cemetery, Lucy F. Simms Grave

View: Shows headstone at grave of Lucy Simms

Photo 2 of 8: Newtown Cemetery Entrance Marker

View: Shows Newtown Cemetery entrance marker; located at the Hill Street entrance on the east side of the cemetery.

Photo 3 of 8: Newtown Cemetery facing Northwest from Sterling Street

View: Facing northwest from Sterling Street, the image shows portions of the northwest and northeast sections of the cemetery, as well as Effinger Street running through the center of the cemetery.

Photo 4 of 8: Newtown Cemetery facing South, with Simms Avenue Extended View: Facing south, this image taken from the northern side of the cemetery shows Simms Avenue dividing the northeast and northwest sections of the cemetery with the southern section in the background.

Photo 5 of 8: Newtown Cemetery, South Section facing Southwest

View: View of the cemetery's south section, facing southwest.

Photo 6 of 8: Newtown Cemetery, Northeast Section, Flag Pole and Military Burials View: Northwest portion of the cemetery depicting main location of military burials.

Date: Photographed June 2014

Photo 7 of 8: Newtown Cemetery, looking West from Hill Street to Sterling Street

#### Newtown Cemetery

Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia

County and State

View: Looking west from Hill Street toward Sterling Street, showing the northeast and northwest sections of the cemetery.

Photo 8 of 8: Newtown Cemetery, Graves and Tree in Northwest Section View: Northwest section of the cemetery, facing northwest to intersection of Kelley and Sterling Streets.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement**: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, National Register Bulletin 41, *Guidelines for Evaluating* and Registers Cemeteries and Burial Places Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior 1992): 3, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Chronology of African American History in Harrisonburg," *Undocumented Deeds Collections*, in James Madison University Special Collections, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A History of Newtown Cemetery (Harrisonburg, VA), project Conducted by Dr. Douma's Historic Preservation Class (James Madison University, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Rockingham County Court House Deed Book 20, pg 180.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Rockingham County Court House Deed Book 20, pg 180.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Rockingham County Court House Deed Book 1, pg 3; The deed records of Garrett King Deed Book 1 pg 1, and Jonas Lowenback Deed Book 1, pg 57 also support this claim of unequal land pricing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Congress (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1866).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> 1870 and 1880 census records, acentery.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> "One Hundredth Anniversary of the John Wesley Methodist Church," church program, in *Undocumented Deeds Collection*, James Madison University Special Collections; Ruth Toliver, *Keeping Up With Yesterday* (Published by Author, 2009) 75; Phil Siegrist, *Captured by Zenda: A Study of an African American Community in Rural Rockingham County* (EMU May 14, 1997), unpublished paper in James Madison University Special Collections.

Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia

County and State

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> "Harrisonburg -Rockingham Historical Society Newsletter, African American Communities in Rockingham County Winter 1992, Vol 14 No. 1 pg 2" in *Undocumented Deeds Collection* (James Madison University Special Collections); David Glovier, *Pictorial History of the Virginia Conference; the Church of the United Brethren in Christ from 1800 to 1946, and the Evangelical United Brethren Church from 1946, at which time the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church united to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1800-1964* (Staunton, Virginia: McClure Printing Co., 1965)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Phil Siegrist, Captured by Zenda.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Kristie Lynn Kendall , "The Stereotypes Do Not Apply": Reconstruction the African American Community of Newtown in Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1945-1965, Honors Thesis (James Madison University, 2008) 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Rockingham County Courthouse Deed Book 67, pg 236.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Rockingham County Courthouse Deed Book 88, pg 433.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Kendall, 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Rockingham County Court House Deed Book 117, pg. 508

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> John Wayland, 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Orra Langhorne, *Southern Sketches From Virginia (1881-1901)*, edited by Charles Wynes (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1964) 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ruth Toliver, Keeping Up With Yesterday, 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Rockingham County Court House Deed Book 117, pg 508.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> During this period, newspaper records begin to feature articles that note Newtown Cemetery outside of obituaries. For example a July 22,1927, *Daily News Record* articles notes that students at Effinger School partook in a beautification project at the cemetery. It is also soon after this that the cemetery began to play an important role in Memorial Day ceremonies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> "Colored Memorial Rites Sunday Afternoon Harrisonburg," *Daily News Record*, May 17, 1932, pg 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Special Schedules of the Eleventh Census (1890) Enumerating Union Veterans and Widows of Union Veterans of the Civil War (National Archives Microfilm Publication M123, 118 rolls); Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ruth Toliver, *Keeping Up With Yesterday*, 19 -20.

#### Newtown Cemetery

Name of Property

Harrisonburg, Virginia

County and State

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "George Ambrose Newman," The Harrisonburg- Rockingham Experience: African American Education During Segregation, published online at <a href="http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/gnewman.html">http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/gnewman.html</a>. Accessed July 19, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "W.N.P. Harris (1881-1977)," The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Experience: African-American Education During Segregation, published online at <a href="http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/harris.html">http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/harris.html</a>. Accessed July 19, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "U.G. Wilson," The Harrisonburg –Rockingham Experience: African American Education During Segregation, published online at <a href="http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/ugwilson.html">http://www.heritagecenter.com/Web\_Pages/Museum/Collection/blackedu/ugwilson.html</a>. Accessed September 9,2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> "A Man of Commitment," *Daily News Record*, April 10, 2006.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Bassford, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Teachers' Burial: Lucy Simms Funeral Most Largely Attended Colored Rites Ever Held Here," *Daily News Record*, July 14, 1934, pg 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> "Beloved Teacher Dies: Lucy F. Simms Taught Here for 56-Years- Funeral Service Friday," *Daily News Record*, July 11, 1934, pg 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> "Teachers' Burial: Lucy Simms Funeral Most Largely Attended Colored Rites Ever Held Here," *Daily News Record* (July 14, 1934) 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> "Nielsen Awarded Contract to Build Colored School," *Daily News Record*, June 30, 1938.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> "Lucy Frances Simms," *African American Trailblazers in Virginia History*, Library of Virginia. Published online at <a href="http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/trailblazers/2011/simms.htm">http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/trailblazers/2011/simms.htm</a> . Accessed August 30, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Dedication of the New Marker for Miss Lucy F. Simms Final Resting Place, flyer created by the Northeast Neighborhood Association (June 22, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Kendal, 56.

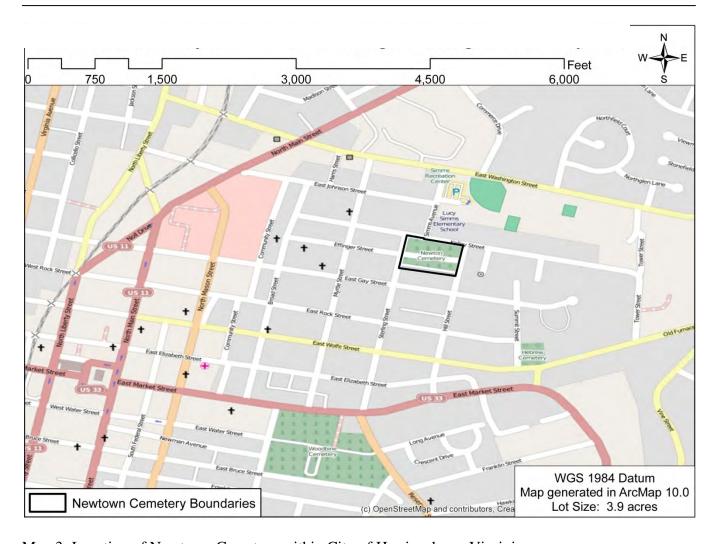
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> "Rockingham County Virginia Tombstones by Cemetery," The Heritage Museum: Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society. Published online at <a href="http://www.heritagecenter.com/cemeteries/cem/cem324.html">http://www.heritagecenter.com/cemeteries/cem/cem324.html</a>. Accessed June 2014.

### **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Newtown Cemetery
Name of Property
Harrisonburg, Virginia
County and State
,
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs and Maps



Map 3: Location of Newtown Cemetery within City of Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Coordinates:

Latitude: 38.453182 Longitude:-78.858938

### **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Newtown Cemetery
Name of Property
Harrisonburg, Virginia
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs and Maps



Map 1: Sketch Map of Newtown Cemetery.

### Non-Contributing Resource:

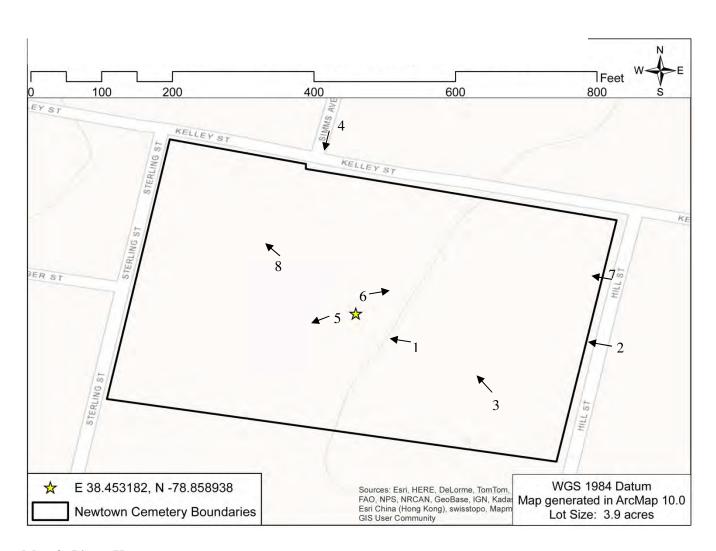
1. Maintenance Shed (Building)

### **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

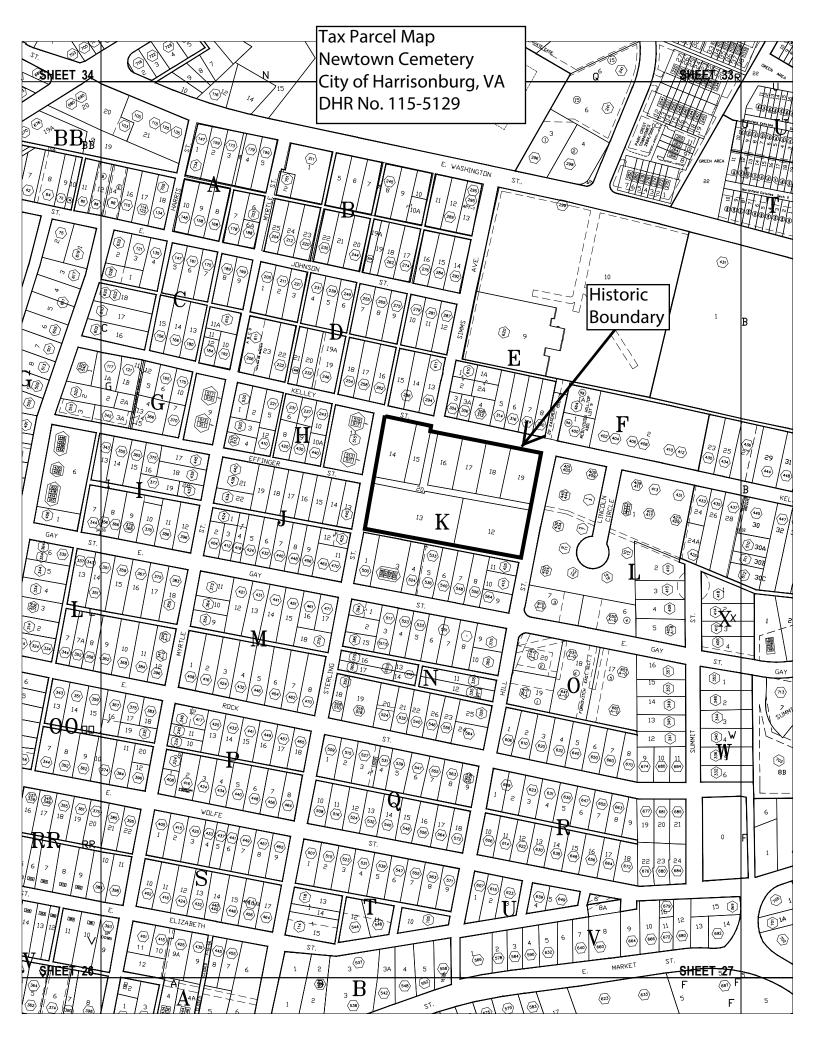
# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Newtown Cemetery	
Name of Property	
Harrisonburg, Virginia	
County and State	
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)	

Section number Photographs and Maps



Map 2: Photo Key.



















# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION	
PROPERTY Newtown Cemetery NAME:	
MULTIPLE NAME;	
STATE & COUNTY: VIRGINIA, Harrison	burg
	DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/21/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/17/15
REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000014	
REASONS FOR REVIEW:	
COMMENT WAIVER: N	2 17 18
ACCEPTRETURNREJECT	Z / / / DATE
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:	
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Historic Fire	101 NP
page. /antenna	
RECOM./CRITERIA	
REVIEWER DI	SCIPLINE
TELEPHONE DA	TE
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments	Y/N see attached SLR Y/N
If a nomination is returned to the	nominating authority, the

nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

330 Kelly St H. burg Va 22802

Low 11/12/14 Newtown Cometey

Dear Sire I am in favor of Newtown Cometony being nominated to the National Regester of Historic Places. This will help to seneour some of the history of northeast Harvenberg Black Community.

Positive history is welever.

Mark Lehmon "MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY ...." ROMANS 15:13 NIV

Mark Lehman 330 Kelley St H-burg Va 22862

RICHMOND VA 230

10 NOV 2014 PM 6 L

Dept. of Historia Resource

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Va. 23221

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

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# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Julie V. Langan Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323 Fax: (804) 367-2391 www.dhr.virginia.gov

December 19, 2014

Mr. Paul Loether Chief, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Programs National Park Service 2280 National Register of Historic Places 1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W. Washington D.C. 20005

RE: Newtown Cemetery, City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Dear Mr. Loether:

Molly Joseph Ward

Secretary of Natural Resources

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Newtown Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places. Submitted for your review, the nomination has been considered, and approved, by the State Review Board and the Virginia SHPO has recommended it for listing. Any letters of comment or objection have been copied at the end of the nomination material, along with any FPO notification letters.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct phone line is 804-482-6439.

Sincerely,

Lena Sweeten McDonald National/State Register Historian

Enclosures

Western Region Office

962 Kime Lane