



Silent Ground: Burial Site of Enslaved African Americans

Text of Interpretive Marker

Beneath the quiet beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Graves Mill lies sacred ground that tells stories vital to the American experience. This is the resting place of enslaved African American men, women, and children who were forced to live, labor, and die here during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The earth here holds unspoken secrets: lives endured in bondage, grief carried in silence, and generations laid to rest without name or marker—a history too often silenced. No records were kept of their names, and their graves were not properly marked, yet this ground is sacred because of their presence. They were part of the fabric of this land, laboring under oppression yet holding fast to faith, family, and hope. Oral histories and historical research suggest that this site has ties to many families, including the Lindsays, Fields, Saunders, Blakeys, Carpenters, Hills, Sims, Finks, and Washingtons.

This ground is a testament to the labor of the enslaved who built this community, to resilience that defied oppression, and to the enduring presence of those who refused to be erased. Preserving these burial sites is an act of truth-telling—acknowledging what was hidden, honoring those who rest here, and making sure their stories continue. In life, these men, women, and children were denied freedom. In death, many were buried and remembered only through whispered prayers. But the earth remembers. The trees remember. The mountains remember. And now, we remember.

History is not only what is visible, but also what is buried. This site is a place of reverence. We honor the dignity of those laid to rest here, and we remember their suffering, strength, and spirit. We are our ancestors' echo, the voices they were never allowed to raise.

May this ground speak to truth, healing, and justice where silence once prevailed.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalms 34:18