

November 12, 2021

Kenneth L. and Sarah K. Ramsey
6915 Harrodsburg Road
Nicholasville, Kentucky 40356

RE: Cemetery at Kearney Ridge Boulevard; Fayette County, Kentucky
CRA Project No. K210288
Contract Publication Series 21-311

Dear Kenneth L. and Sarah K. Ramsey:

Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. (CRA), was contacted by Kelly Ramsey, on behalf of Kenneth L. and Sarah K. Ramsey, in regard to a reported cemetery located on the overall property at 2671 Kearney Ridge Boulevard, Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky. A 1971 Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) planning map depicted a cemetery with four graves on the property, and it was unclear if the graves had been relocated to a different cemetery when nearby I-75/I-64 was constructed. However, according to the KYTC grave relocation agent, there are no records of the KYTC relocating a cemetery from that area (Amy Ishmael, personal communication 2021). Historic and modern maps did not depict a cemetery at the location, and a cemetery was not shown at the location in an online cemetery GIS published by the Lexington Public Library. The names of the individuals interred in the cemetery were unknown, as were the dates of interment. The total number of graves and size of the cemetery were also unknown, although the 1971 map depicted the cemetery as containing four graves and measuring approximately 8 m (25 ft) north to south by 4 m (13 ft) east to west.

Kelly Ramsey requested that CRA first conduct a field reconnaissance to determine if a cemetery was present on the property, and then, if a cemetery was present, to determine the full size of the cemetery. If a cemetery was present, it was anticipated that the cemetery would need to be relocated prior to sale of the land. The following details the results of archaeological fieldwork and archival, genealogical, and deed research conducted for this project. Appendix A presents the legal description of the Kearney Ridge Boulevard property, and Appendix B presents the parcel map depicting the property location.

Fieldwork

The initial fieldwork was conducted on July 7, 2021, and consisted of a field reconnaissance to identify the cemetery location. Additional fieldwork was conducted on July 27 and 29, 2021, and again on August 9 and 10, 2021. During the initial fieldwork, a search was conducted of the georeferenced location of the cemetery as it was depicted on the 1971 map, but no gravemarkers were identified. However, what appeared to have been two uninscribed fieldstone gravemarkers were identified approximately 20 m (66 ft) from the georeferenced location. These consisted of slabs of limestone that appeared to have been set upright into the ground, but they could not be confirmed as gravemarkers. The area was later subjected to mechanical excavations with a backhoe equipped with a smooth bucket to determine if graves were located in the vicinity of the possible gravemarkers, but none were identified. This area was determined to not be the location of the cemetery shown on the 1971 map.

An additional and more thorough search of the georeferenced cemetery location was conducted, and one possible gravemarker base was identified just beneath the vegetation within the overall georeferenced cemetery location. The mechanical excavations conducted in the georeferenced area revealed two displaced gravemarker bases (one headstone base and one footstone base), but it was unclear where they had originally been positioned. No inscribed gravemarkers were recovered. The mechanical excavations later revealed four graveshafts in the general location of the georeferenced cemetery from the 1971 map (Figure 1). At least two of the graves appeared to have been adult-sized and one was infant-sized; one was of an indeterminate size because only a small portion of it was exposed. Mechanical excavations extended out from the identified graves at least 8 m (25 ft) in all directions to ensure that there were no additional graves present. A total of four graveshafts were identified, along with the two displaced gravemarker bases. Once the cemetery boundaries were fully delineated, the identified graveshafts were covered with plastic sheeting and the excavated sediments were backfilled.

Deed, Archival, and Genealogical Research

Deed, archival, and genealogical research were conducted on July 26 and 28, 2021, and consisted of research at the Fayette County Clerk's Office in Lexington, Kentucky, and online through the subscription website ancestry.com. The online searches focused primarily on nineteenth-century census records and published family trees. The Lexington Cemetery was also contacted.

The archival, deed, and genealogical research indicated that the property on which the cemetery was located was owned by the William Skillman family during the nineteenth century. William Skillman was born circa 1798 in Virginia, and he married Martha A. Grigg (born circa 1812) in 1831 in Sussex County, Virginia. They had moved to Fayette County, Kentucky, by 1840. In the 1840 census for Fayette County, the household of William Skillman consisted of 17 individuals, including 9 slaves.

William and Martha Skillman had at least seven children together between 1833 and 1845, two of which died in infancy and childhood, three of which died as young adults, and two who lived well into adulthood. The children consisted of Frances Ann (born 1833, died 1849), Eliza J. (born 1835, died 1859), Martha, (born 1837, died 1854), Richard I. (born 1839, died 1847); Charles G. (born 1842, died 1932), James W. (born 1844, died 1845), and Sarah/Sallie (born 1845, died 1906). Martha (nee Grigg) Skillman died in 1845 at the age of around 33 years old. Her son, James W., died that same year at the age of around 1-year-old, and these deaths were followed by William and Martha Skillman's 8-year-old son, Richard I., in 1847. William Skillman died in 1857.

Frances Ann Skillman married William W. Allen and they had one child together, daughter Fannie Ann Allen in 1849. Frances (nee Skillman) Allen died in 1849, but her daughter lived to adulthood. Eliza J. Skillman was married to John Higgins and they had at least three children before her death in 1859; all of her known children lived to adulthood. Martha Skillman married a man with the surname Risk, but no other information about their marriage was identified. She died in 1854 at the age of 17 years old. Charles G. Skillman was married to Alice Felix in 1866. They had at least four children together, but had moved to Scott County, Kentucky, by the time the 1880 census was recorded.

Sallie (also referred to as Sarah) Skillman was married to Robert K. Byrnes (born in 1842; surname also spelled Byrns, Burns, and Burnes) in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in February 1866. It is unclear where they were residing when the 1870 census was recorded. In the 1880 census for Sandersville, Fayette County, Kentucky, Robert Byrnes was listed as a 39-year-old farmer, and residing in his household was his 34-year-old wife, Sally S., and their two daughters, 13-year-old Lulie B., and 7-year-old Matty L (USBC 1880).

Kearney Blvd Cemetery

Legend



Georeferenced Cemetery Location



Georeferenced Cemetery Location

Google Earth

Figure 1. Aerial image of georeferenced cemetery location.

300 ft



In a deed for the property containing the cemetery that was dated November 27, 1886, a master commissioner's sale was executed that conveyed an 85-acre tract to Robert K. Byrnes for \$703.53. The party on the first part consisted of the children and grandchildren of William and Martha (nee Grigg) Skillman: Charles G. and Alice Skillman; Sallie (nee Skillman) and Robert K. Byrnes, Fanny W. (nee Allen) and James Kimbrough; Robert W. and Minnie Higgins; Mattie (nee Higgins) and Sullivan Tanner; and Robert W. Higgins as guardian of Florence Higgins and Eliza Higgins (infants under the age of 14 years old). It was noted in the deed that this was the same tract that was allotted to the late Mrs. Catherine Ann (nee Skillman) Evans, who was the sister of William Skillman. Catherine Evans may have received the property from her late brother's estate after his death in 1857. Reserved from the conveyance was "...for the benefit and use of the descendants and relatives of William G. Skillman, deceased, the family burying ground, located on said premises in the garden in the place about 60 yards more or less from the dwelling house and covering an area of 40 by 25 ft in extent..." (Fayette County Deed Book 77:163).

Robert K. and Sallie (nee Skillman) Byrnes received the 85-acre property containing the cemetery in 1886, and they may have been residing on the property, possibly in the Skillman family home, at the time it was deeded to them. However, in the 1900 census for Fayette County, they were residing on South Broadway Street in Lexington. In the 1900 census, Robert Byrnes was listed as a 60-year-old grocery dealer, and residing in his household was his 61-year-old wife of 40 years, Sallie (also spelled Sally). Sallie (nee Skillman) Byrnes died while visiting her daughter, Lulie (nee Byrnes) O'Bear in Los Angeles, California, on March 24, 1906. Her body was transported to Lexington, Kentucky, for interment in the Lexington Cemetery on March 31, 1906.

Robert K. Byrnes purchased a large lot in the Lexington Cemetery that measures 20 ft by 16 ft and holds nine burial plots (Figure 2). Sallie S. Byrnes was interred in one plot, and Robert K. Byrnes, who died on August 17, 1917, was later interred beside her. The plat map provided by the Lexington Cemetery also shows four Skillman graves in two plots in the overall larger family lot, none of which are marked on the surface with gravemarkers or other monuments. The graves of Robert and Sallie Byrnes are marked by individual gravemarkers, and there is a large family plot marker with the surname "Byrns" on the side facing the graves of Robert and Sallie Byrnes, and the surname "Skillman" on the side facing the four Skillman family graves. The Lexington Cemetery provided additional information about the Byrnes family plot, which consisted of interment records (Figure 2). The graves of William G. Skillman (died April 7, 1857; aged 89 years old), Martha G. Skillman (no death date or age listed, other than "adult"), James W. Skillman (died January 5, 1845; age listed as "child"), and Richard I. Skillman (died April 2, 1847; aged 8 years old) were all listed as having been "removed from County, 4 miles on Georgetown Pike" and were interred in the Lexington Cemetery on May 10, 1906.

The property containing the previously unknown cemetery was owned by Robert K. Byrnes until his death in 1917, after which it passed to his daughter, Lulie (nee Byrnes) O'Bear. She sold it to T. K. Skinner in 1919, and he sold it to M. Wilson that same year. Wilson owned the property until he sold it to Guy Rankin in 1929. The estate of Guy Rankin owned the property when the 1971 KYTC map was created that showed the cemetery with four graves. Kenneth and Sarah Ramsey purchased the property in 1973 and were never aware of a cemetery on the property (Kelly and Kenneth Ramsey, personal communication 2021).

Based on the above information, it is possible that the relocation of the four graves depicted on the 1971 KYTC map occurred in 1906, but because Lulie (nee Byrnes) O'Bear did not reside in Kentucky (she appears to have lived in California her entire adult life), she may not have considered to tell Skinner that a cemetery had once been located on the property when it was sold to him, and this information was lost over time. Two displaced gravemarker bases were identified during the archaeological fieldwork. It is possible that the gravemarker bases were more easily observed on the property during the twentieth century and, not knowing for certain if a cemetery was present, the more recent landowners (i.e., Skinner, Wilson, and Rankin) assumed the gravemarkers represented an *in situ* cemetery.

20'			
		Robert K. Byrnes	
		Aug. 17, 1917	74
Richard Skillman (x) Apr. 2, 1897			
William Skillman Apr. 1, 1857		Sallie S. Byrnes	
Martha Skillman & (x) Jas. W. Skillman Jan. 5, 1845		Mar. 31, 1906	60

Figure 2. Byrnes plot at the Lexington Cemetery (image provided by Lexington Cemetery).

Name Skillman, William G.		Age 89	
Section J	Lot 131	Grave	
Late Residence			
Interred	May 10, 1906	No. 15978	
Remarks: Removed from County, 4 miles on Georgetown Pike. Died April 7, 1857			
Name Skillman, Martha G.		Age Adult	
Section J	Lot 131	Grave	
Late Residence			
Interred	May 10, 1906	No. 15979	
Remarks: Removed from County, 4 miles on Georgetown Pike			
Name Skillman, James W.		Age Child	
Section J	Lot 131	Grave	
Late Residence			
Interred	May 10, 1906	No. 15980	
Remarks: Removed from County, 4 miles on Georgetown Pike. Died January 5, 1845			

Name Skillman, Richard L.		Age 8	
Section J	Lot 131	Grave	
Late Residence			
Interred	May 10, 1906	No. 15981	
Remarks: Removed from County, 4 miles on Georgetown Pike. Died April 2, 1847			

Figure 3. Skillman family interment records (image provided by Lexington Cemetery).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The information provided by the Lexington Cemetery indicated that the graves of William Skillman and his wife, Martha Skillman, along with their young children, James W. and Richard I. Skillman, all of which died during the 1840s and 1850s, were relocated to the Lexington Cemetery following the death of Sallie S. (nee Skillman) Byrnes, in 1906. Based on the Lexington Cemetery records, the original family cemetery was located approximately 4 miles from Lexington along Georgetown Road, which was in the general vicinity of the cemetery that was depicted on the 1971 KYTC map.

The results of the archaeological fieldwork identified two displaced gravemarker bases and four graveshafts. At least two of the graves at the cemetery appeared to have been adult-sized and one was infant-sized; one was of an indeterminate size because only a portion of it was exposed. The grave sizes could correlate to the ages of the Skillman family graves that were relocated (i.e., two adults, one child, and one infant), which could indicate that the graveshafts identified during the fieldwork were what remained of the four graves that were relocated in 1906. However, it is also possible that the four identified graves represent a different group of Skillman family members or others who made use of the property as a cemetery. No excavations were conducted into any of the identified graveshafts and, at this time, it cannot be confirmed that the four graves were those of the Skillman family that were relocated to the Lexington Cemetery in 1906.

Because it is unclear if the four graves represent the Skillman graves that were relocated in 1906, it is recommended that the graves be treated as an *in situ* cemetery until this can be confirmed or refuted through archaeological relocation. The relocation should be conducted by archaeologists who are trained in the excavation and identification of human remains. Graves from the mid-nineteenth century in this region often contain poorly preserved human skeletal and dental remains, and identification of such remains may be difficult. Also at issue here is, if the four graves are those of the Skillman family members that were relocated in 1906, that the previous relocation may not have been as thorough as how this type of work is conducted today. Grave relocations at that time (until at least the 1960s) typically consisted of excavating into an existing grave, retrieving whatever portions of a body that were easily accessible or could be easily collected within the existing clothing or coffin lining, and leaving behind smaller, loose human remains, such as hand and foot bones, along with cervical vertebrae.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Alexandra D. Bybee, RPA 11813

Principal Investigator

Appendix A. Legal Description

EXHIBIT A
Ramsey Property

Being all of Lot 4 (22.35 acres), as shown on the Non-Building, Consolidation, Corrected Amended and Easement Minor Record Plat of the Ramsey/Sullivan Property 2825, 2851, 2871 Georgetown Road, and 2501 Spurr Road, of record in Plat Cabinet M, Slide 824, in the Fayette County Clerk's Office, to which plat reference is hereby made for a more particular description, being designated as 2671 Kearney Ridge Boulevard.

Appendix B. Parcel Map

Controls

- Available Layers
 - ☒ Parcels
 - ☒ Parcel Numbers
 - ☒ Yearly Sales
 - ☒ Neighborhood Associations
 - ☒ Neighborhoods
 - ☒ Urban Service Area
 - ☒ Agricultural Value Properties
 - ☒ Tax Exempt Properties
 - ☒ Lexington Downtown Mgmt. Dist.
 - ☒ Courthouse
 - ☒ Council Districts
 - ☒ Precincts
 - ☒ Schools
 - ☒ Zoning
 - ☒ Overlay
 - ☒ Roads
 - ☒ Address Numbers
 - ☒ Lakes & Rivers
 - ☒ Aerial Photos

Show Scale

Additional Options

38°06'43.67N, 84°31'09.77W (38.1121, -84.5194)

View as: Diagonally | Google Earth | Bird's Eye | Google Maps & Street View

Reports

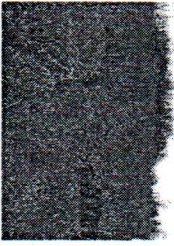
Parcel: 38182670 (Click for Card)

Property Class	F
Taxing District	02
Acreage	22.35
Physical Address	2671 KEARNEY RIDGE BLVD RAMSEY KENNETH L & SARAH 6935 HARRODSBURG RD NICHOLASVILLE, KY 40356
Owner	
Fair Cash Value	\$1,341,000
Agricultural Land Value	\$11,800
Agricultural Total Value	\$11,800
Taxable Value	\$11,800
Improvements on Parcel	0
Total Improvement Area (sq ft)	0

Two most recent parcel sales

Date	Price	Qual	Valley
09/04/1973		U	30

Photo Preview (Click Photo to Enlarge)



Website last updated June 17, 2016
GIS Maps last updated April 14, 2016

Parcel List

Legend

Measure