



Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation  
P.O. Box 3707  
Reading, PA 19606

## **BCAGP POSITION STATEMENT**

Date: March 3, 2021

RE: Duke Realty proposal to move Kemp Family Burial Ground in Maxatawny Township

To: BCAGP Board of Directors and Membership, Kemp family descendants, Maxatawny Community Coalition, and all interested parties

Duke Realty, based in Indiana, has proposed to build a warehousing area on properties that include the historic Kemp Family Burial Ground in Maxatawny Township. Their plans involve moving the site to a yet to be determined local cemetery.

The situation regarding the removal of the Kemp Family Burial Ground remains fluid as a group of descendants have petitioned Orphans' Court with regards to its July 2020 decision to allow such removal. The descendants will plea that due diligence was not accomplished, as no descendants were identified, and the site was not abandoned as accused by Duke in the original hearing. The Court has now put a stay on its previous decision supporting the action.

Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation (BCAGP) seeks to express its position as to the removal or reinterment of the graves. In terms of the Court proceedings, BCAGP has provided the descendants our newsletter link with a list of dates from back issues of Grave Happenings, that clearly demonstrate that our association has worked at the site in question multiple times since 1995.

Our Mission Statement states that BCAGP strives to preserve and maintain historic graveyards in Berks County. In accordance with that, the association strongly believes that the Kemp Family Burial Ground should remain intact at its present location, protected from vehicular traffic and with continued access by descendants and caregivers. We find from several sources that a slave, Hannah, is also buried at the site, most likely with either an unscribed field stone or no grave marking. From our recent experiences with ground penetrating radar in similar sites, we note that because of disturbances to the location, from ground hogs or other disruptive activities, there is the possibility that no graves may be conclusively identified.

If the site is ordered by the Court to be removed we strongly recommend a complete archaeological examination by trained, experienced personnel. We hope that the receiving cemetery will allow the entire site to be moved, including the brick perimeter walls and ornate wrought iron gate. The placement of tombstones and footstones should be exactly as they are currently, with repairs and restoration as needed. Access by interested parties should be fully granted.

BCAGP has no intention of being financially involved in any litigation by the descendants, by Maxatawny Community Coalition, or any other organized parties. Our goal is to preserve and maintain the site by the best means available.