

## Physical Investigations into Litchford Cemetery Conclude on Site of old UAHS



A member of the archaeological team reviews the site of the Litchford family cemetery, with concrete footers from the science wing visible.

As demolition work has continued on the old Upper Arlington High School this summer, so have investigations into the Pleasant Litchford family cemetery site.

Pleasant Litchford was a master blacksmith who had been enslaved in Virginia. After buying his own freedom and settling in the area that is now Upper Arlington, he built a successful business and purchased the land that is now home to the high school as well as Northam Park and Tremont Elementary School. Among Mr. Litchford's many contributions to the area were establishing a school for African-American children and being a founding member of the historic Second Baptist Church, which provided an important voice in the anti-slavery movement.

Following his death in 1879, Mr. Litchford's land was divided up between his heirs. Decades later, in the 1950s, the school district took legal action to acquire the piece of land that was home to the family cemetery in order to build a high school. Approximately 30 bodies were exhumed and moved to other cemeteries in the area.

In early 2017, a book by local authors Diane Kelly Runyon and Kim Shoemaker

Starr called *Secrets Under the Parking Lot* raised concerns that some of those laid to rest in the Litchford cemetery may have been left behind.

In August 2020, an archaeological team began investigating the site of the cemetery, which was located near the science wing of the old high school. That team found one fully intact grave with a complete set of remains, along with two partially exhumed graves and three fully exhumed graves.

This summer's investigative work happened in two phases. In late June/early July, archeologists conducted another search around the perimeter of the science wing. This search allowed the team to look more closely at the earth right up next to the foundation of the building and to investigate areas in which a search dog had alerted. During this work, the archeologists found another partially exhumed grave that contained bone fragments.

In mid-September, the science wing was demolished and the team of archeologists and K9 specialists returned to the site to search the part of the cemetery that had been covered by that section of the building. During two

days of work, no additional graves were located. The team and descendants of the Litchford family agreed that this brought to a close the phase of physical investigations at the site.

Moving forward, the former cemetery site will become a park-like setting for all UAHS students, staff, families and community members to enjoy as a place for reflection and relaxation. The district will continue to work with the descendants of the Litchford family and community volunteers to design signage and historical displays.

### 2021-22 SCHOOL DATES

**End of First Trimester (Grades K-5)**  
Monday, November 1

**General Election Day: No School for Students; Staff Report Per Schedule**  
Tuesday, November 2

**Thanksgiving Break**  
Wednesday, November 24-Friday, November 26

**End of Second Quarter and First Semester (Grades 6-12)**  
Friday, December 17

**Winter Break**  
Monday, December 20 - Friday, December 31

**No School for Students; Staff Report Per Schedule**  
Monday, January 3

**No School for Students and Staff; Martin Luther King Day**  
Monday, January 17

**Elementary Early Dismissal (Grades K-5) for Parent - Teacher Conferences**  
Thursday, January 27

*Dismissal at 11:05 am; no lunch service*

**For the full 2021-2022 school year calendar, visit:**  
[www.uaschools.org/calendars.aspx](http://www.uaschools.org/calendars.aspx)