

CLUES TO THE PAST



Times Photo

LOOKING FOR A GRAVE. The late Harry Dashiell of Princess Anne, right, is shown in this late 1960s photograph as he watched Robert Lord, left, and David Grier dig for the grave of Gov. Levin Winder on part of the governor's plantation, Bloomsbury, in Somerset County. For decades Dashiell and Grier searched for the grave of Winder who died in 1819.

Mystery surrounds lost grave of Gov. Winder

By BRICE STUMP
Daily Times Staff Writer

In the late 18th and early 19th century, Maryland's Gov. Levin Winder of Somerset County was lauded by his contemporaries for his statesmanship and leadership, especially for the governor's stance in keeping the British at bay during the War of 1812.

Gen. Winder, as he preferred to be addressed, had his plantation, Bloomsbury, near Venton which, according to tradition, was a showplace with a spacious lawn and extensive garden, brick walks and even fountains surrounded by favorite plants and trees of the Colonial period.

Numerous support buildings which may have included a blacksmith shop, dairy, ice house, smoke house as well as homes for his 57 slaves were part of the tobacco economy which supported daily operations on the 840-acre planation along the Little Monie Creek.

Winder was born and married into the most prominent families in Maryland history. Political achievements were paramount to gentlemen of Maryland, and Winder took his place as the state's 14th governor in 1812.

Upon his death on July 1, 1819, Winder, a Mason and past grand master of Grand Lodge of Maryland, was given a lengthy and expensive funeral by fellow Masons in Baltimore.

Ironically, lauded and respected so much in life, Winder's material legacy has virtually disappeared.

His stately home has vanished, nothing remains of the manicured gardens and the plantation has been divided. Worse, Winder's grave, as well as that of his wife, Mary Stoughton Sloss and an infant daughter has been lost for almost a century.

For almost the same number of years a handful of individuals have pursued the mystery of locating the lost Winder graves. Winder is one of two governor's whose grave locations have been lost. The resting place of Gov. John Henry who served in 1797 and who was tied to the Winder family through marriage, is unmarked in a field along the Nanticoke River south of Vienna. Winder's grave is believed to be somewhere on the Bloomsbury Plantation.

For decades the late Princess Anne attorney Harry Dashiell searched for the graves, but failed to find them. Prior to Dashiell's death in 1975 the search was shared and continued today by Salisbury businessman David Grier and Princess Anne historian Shirley Richards.



Times Photo

Gov. Levin Winder

Maryland's 'forgotten patriot'

By BRICE STUMP
Daily Times Staff Writer

While Gov. Levin Winder is virtually an unknown name today, he lives with distinction in the annals of Maryland history.

Winder was born at the family estate on Rewastico Creek near Quantico, in what is now Wicomico County, on Sept. 4, 1757.

Winder studied law, but at the age of 20 he was a 1st lieutenant in the Fifth Company, Smallwood's First Maryland Battalion of the Flying Camp in January 1776. By December of that year he was a captain, 1st Maryland Regiment, and a held the rank of major, 4th Maryland Regiment in 1777.

While fighting in the Battle of Camden in 1780, according to the *Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature*, he was taken prisoner, and exchanged in 1781 and served as a lieutenant colonel, 2nd Maryland Regiment in that same year.

Winder was transferred to 1st Maryland Regiment and discharged in 1783. He was commissioned as a major general, 2nd Division of the Maryland Militia in 1794.

On May 13, 1790 Winder, then 33 married Mary Stoughton Sloss of Somerset County. Through his wife he inherited a portion of Bloomsbury, an 840-acre plantation along the

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With new technology and resources unavailable to Dashiell, new clues have been found that may bring the search to a conclusion.

What follows is the first in a six-part series about the almost century-old search for the Winder graves and history of the family and the Bloomsbury Plantation.

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It began simple enough. In the early 1940s Princess

Anne attorney Harry Dashiell and resident Alice Mae Beauchamp were doing research on Anna Ella Carroll, a Somerset County resident influential in the course of the Civil War. They came across some information on Levin Winder, a Maryland governor who served during the War of 1812, and the attorney wanted to know more.

Dashiell came back to the Winder topic several weeks later and a few minutes of reading launched

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him on a project of a lifetime which became an obsession that was to end in failure and frustration.

For 25 years the late Dashiell spent thousands of hours and even thousands of dollars in pursuit of one goal — finding Winder's unmarked grave. Since Dashiell's death in 1976, the cause has been taken up by Salisbury businessman David Grier and historian Shirley Richards of Princess Anne, who continue the search for the elusive grave of Gov. Levin Winder.

Winder is one of two Maryland governors whose graves have become lost. Ironically the other governor, John Henry, who lived on a plantation south of Vienna on the Nanticoke River, was also related to Winder. Coincidentally Henry lived next to the Lewis Farm in Dorchester County and Winder's grave is thought to be on land now known as the Lewis Farm on Little Monie Creek near here.

Just narrowing the search has been a task for history buffs as almost a dozen places throughout the western side of Somerset County have been suggested as the burying place for Winder and his family.

The story of how the grave became "lost" may start just days after Winder's death.

During the summer of 1819, Winder was in Baltimore consulting doctors on the treatment of an apparent liver ailment, and died.

In 1865 Rider Henry Winder, a relative, wrote about the governor's death: "After prolonged illness he died, of liver complaint, in the City of Baltimore, having been taken thither by his friends for the benefit of enlarged medical advice, gentle exercise and change of air. I went for him in a steamer chartered for the purpose — the first steamer that ever entered the waters of Somerset. He retained his reason to the last; and his bearing under his sufferings and the approach of death, was edifying. One of his last utterances, I think the

last, was a direction to his faithful house servant, Horace, to 'give his love to the people,' meaning his colored people."

It appears Rider Henry Winder was in Baltimore and came to Bloomsbury by steamer to take the former governor to the city for medical aid.

In his *History of Freemasonry in Maryland*, author Edward T. Schultz wrote: "It is thought the remains of Brother Winder were deposited in a vault in the First Presbyterian graveyard, corner of Greene and Fayette streets, and that they were afterwards removed to the family burying ground on the family estate 'Monie Creek,' two miles from Princess Anne where the grave is pointed out to visitors."

An obituary in the *Baltimore Patriot*, July 3, 1819 contains a notation that hints Winder's body was being held, and not necessarily buried: "After the ceremony yesterday, in the entombing of the remains of General Levin Winder, the R.W. Grand Lodge retired to

the lodge room and passed ... resolutions ..." It was not unusual for bodies to be "entombed" at large churches waiting for removal by family members to what was often the family burying ground on the estate of the deceased or in their own church cemetery.

It is a matter of historical fact that \$20 was paid to Issac Newman, from Winder's estate, for "bringing the deceased from Baltimore." Newman, a neighbor and friend of the Winders in Somerset County was a boat captain and is buried on the adjoining farm. Could his boat have been the steamer that went to Baltimore with Rider Henry Winder on board to get the deceased and take it to Somerset County?

Newman, by 1839, also owned the famed Teackle Mansion along with ten acres in Princess Anne. For almost a century traces of a legend survive claiming that Winder was buried in a metal casket. It is on this thread of tradition that investigators have placed their hopes of ever finding the grave.

No record of Winder's burial at his home has ever been found in church records.

What is known is that none of the three suspected graveyards on the Bloomsbury estate are marked with tombstones. Within a few years of Winder's death his family left Somerset County and the graveyard was apparently left for others to attend.

Dashiell concentrated his search on two farms that were once part of the Bloomsbury estate and are side by side. The farm with the site of the Winder house is today owned by Samuel Langford Anderson. Separated by a ditch, the adjoining farm is owned by farmer Donald Wilson of Venton, and it is on his property, often referred to as the Lewis Farm, that the graveyard of the Winder family is said to be located.

At first Dashiell thought the graveyard would be close to the

main house on the plantation and began searching the grounds near the site of the Winder house ruins.

In a letter written in 1948, Dashiell wrote that a graveyard was said to have existed between the house and the creek, in a grove of trees, but he was unable to find any indication that it was indeed a cemetery. He did not pursue an investigation of a slave graveyard, also said to be on the Bloomsbury estate, confident that the Winders were not buried there.

Despite a natural temptation to insist that the graveyard was near the main house, Dashiell was swayed to another site, and another farm, in his hunt for the elusive grave.

In the second of this six-part series the approximate location of the graveyard is pinpointed. Dashiell is confronted with multiple mysteries as decades of research yield various interpretations.