

Grave Circumstance

By *Tom Chalkley, Harcourt Road*

Many Arcadians will be familiar with

the grave marker of four-year-old Filippo Marino (1899-1903) that stands beside the path in the Herring Run woods near the bottom of Tyndale Avenue. Recently a thoughtful passerby took the trouble to stand the little monument up and brush it off. It's obvious that the stone doesn't belong here in the woods. **Betty Mayes** tells me there used to be other gravestones piled here as part of a rubble fill. After neighbors complained, the city plowed soil over them.

All these stray headstones came from the St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery, the remnants of which still occupy a windswept hillside in the midst of the Clifton Park golf course. According to *The Very Quiet Baltimoreans*, the indispensable guide to Baltimore cemeteries, this modest plot—listed in the book as a “vanished cemetery”—used to hold many Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese immigrants. The entry notes, somewhat erroneously, that “little remains but a few stones around a small stand of trees,” and that “tombstones removed in the mid-1980s were reportedly dumped in Herring Run.” According to records at St. Vincent de Paul church, Filippo Marino was buried on Jan. 4, 1903. No word about his baptism or parentage—but that's not the end of the story.

Father Richard Lawrence, pastor at the church, snorted when I told him that the standard work on Baltimore cemeteries lists St. Vincent's graveyard as “vanished.” He told me to look all the way around the old polo pony barn that serves as a park utility building. Sure enough, I found about 30 gravestones, piled or laid flat in four distinct clusters, overgrown with weed trees and rough

turf. Many Italian names are represented among the stones, some of which have oval-shaped cavities where photographs used to be affixed.

*For the full, gruesome story of the St. Vincent de Paul cemetery, and other yarns about Baltimore cemeteries, see "Grave Circumstances," by Harcourt Road resident **Tom Chalkley**, appearing on the City Paper's website, at www.citypaper.com.*

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