

*North Royal Townhomes, 333 North Royal and 316 Princess Streets, Alexandria, VA*

Archaeologists conducted a documentary study and archaeological evaluation of the contiguous parcels at 333 North Royal Street and 316 Princess Street, Alexandria, VA, for the proposed North Royal Townhomes. Alexandria Archaeology believed the parcels may have been used as a place of worship and cemetery by local Catholics during the last quarter of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century, and that graves could be present. Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century maps show the project area was located along Ralph's Gut/Oronoco Creek, a marshy tributary of the Potomac River. The land was filled by 1863 and the first structure built by 1879. Because Ralph's Gut/Oronoco Creek cut through the project area, the land would have been ill-suited for use as a cemetery prior to being filled. Although two unsubstantiated twentieth-century sources indicate Catholic mass may have been secretly conducted at this location, neither mentions a cemetery. It was illegal to practice Catholicism in Virginia until 1785, leaving a period of ten years before St. Mary's Church was established. While Catholics may have begun to bury their dead in the city during that period, the location is unknown and it is unlikely to have occurred in the project area.