

Dear USFS,

I am writing to express my concern for the possible destruction of historic properties, sites, and structures by your proposed logging project near Lake Tarleton. While some of the goals of the project, especially work to be done around Lake Katherine, seem beneficial, the extensive disruption of the area near Lake Tarleton seems unnecessary and destructive.

Over the past decade I have spent much time exploring the area along the historic Charleston Road, around which most of the logging project is located. I have written and spoken about the fascinating history of the area and the numerous historic remains, including cemeteries from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that pepper the area. Several years ago USFS archaeologists Jonathan Ruhan, Sarah Jordan, and Genevieve Everett each sought out my knowledge as they conducted research in the area.

Based on what documentation I've seen so far, I am deeply concerned that the logging project will cause irreparable harm and damage to those properties. I also fear that inadequate research went into locating and identifying cultural resources, although I have not been granted access to that research to say for sure. Last, considering that the USFS has not located at least one and possibly two cemeteries reported to be in the project area, I worry that the chance of their destruction, inadvertent or otherwise, is extremely high. The near total destruction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century family cemetery in the project area, known as the Lund Cemetery, was caused by a previous logging operation, so this fear has precedent.

**Irreparable damage to known historic structures** – Although the USFS Environmental Impact document states that “[N]o historic properties will be affected by the proposed project activities”, I cannot imagine that to be true based on the map locating proposed log landing sites. Log landings destroy everything at ground level and at least two landings, circled below in red and purple, appear to be directly on or near to numerous historic properties.



The log landing in purple appears to be directly on a historic cellar hole and stone wall, while the landing in red appears to threaten an area containing 3 cellar holes, wells, barn structures, remnant orchards, and numerous stone walls, and possibly even the location of a cemetery reported to be in the area.

In addition, little input regarding the historic significance of the area seems to have been solicited from local authorities. In speaking this year with the both the President and another member of the Warren Historical Society, I found out they were not even aware of the project, thus having had no input into its research or planning. In fact, by meeting directly with them late this winter, I was able to obtain additional detailed documentation not available in previous published sources.

The project area itself contains at least 15 separate cellar holes, plus barn structures, wells, stone walls and other cultural remains, including 1-3 documented cemeteries. If so little care was taken in locating the destructive log landings, there is reason to be skeptical of the claim that “no historic properties will be affected”.

**Inadequate research** – Three lines of reasoning lead me to think that the research might have been inadequate. First is the absence of local historical input, as mentioned above. Second, is that the project plans make note of one historic orchard to be enhanced for wildlife. Yet I know of at least 5 historic orchards or remnants in the project area. Surely, if one orchard is good for the wildlife, destroying the other 4 would be counterproductive. Third, although there is known to be a “lost” cemetery in the project area, no determined effort has been made to locate it to prevent its destruction. In fact, some of its most likely locations based on historical documents place it directly in areas slated for clear cutting and other intensive logging. As noted earlier, logging had flattened and nearly obliterated the other known cemetery in the project area, the Lund Cemetery. Another desecration of a cemetery is unconscionable. With no public access to the research cited by the USFS, how are we to have confidence in the assertion that “no historic properties will be affected”?

Because this documentation is not available, I spent several weekends this spring visiting some of the known remains to better assess the accuracy of the research completed. While I found some remains to be flagged, presumably for protection, others were not. In addition, I found numerous flagging that had simply fallen off the branches or trees to which they had been originally attached a few years ago, and were lying on the ground being rapidly covered with leaf litter.

**Lack of Effort to Locate Cemeteries** – I directed two teams of USFS archaeologists to the Lund Cemetery, which had been heavily-damaged in a previous logging operation. Both teams treated it with respect and care and wanted to mark it clearly for preservation. So I know the USFS is sincere in their desire to protect this resource. When the final surveys were being done, USFS archaeologists asked if I knew the location of the second known cemetery. I do not currently know the location, so could not help, but written remembrances recorded early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century give hints to its location. In addition, several members of the Warren Historical Society recalled landmarks and stories of “old timers” who saw the cemetery years ago. From the additional information recently obtained from the Warren Historical Society, as mentioned above, I received evidence of yet another cemetery in the project area not even mentioned by the archaeologists.

But this final survey team had only 3 days to both survey all the historic sites as well as search for pre-contact Native American material, a process requiring digging shovel test pits (or STPs) and searching for remains. This process takes time, and with at least 15 historic cellar holes plus the STPs, there simply wasn't enough time to even consider a search for the cemeteries.

In addition, although some names of the 19<sup>th</sup> century residents were known, I'm not aware of any additional deed research that has been done. This line of research could also provide clues to the location of the cemeteries. Again, more information was likely available both from historical societies and town archives.

In my opinion, thanks to its historical interest, it should be possible to mount a concerted effort to locate these cemeteries prior to the logging operation, and ensure their protection. Since no such effort has been proposed or contemplated within the project's published scope, it would appear that the short-term profit to be had from logging is taking precedence over the sanctity of human graves.

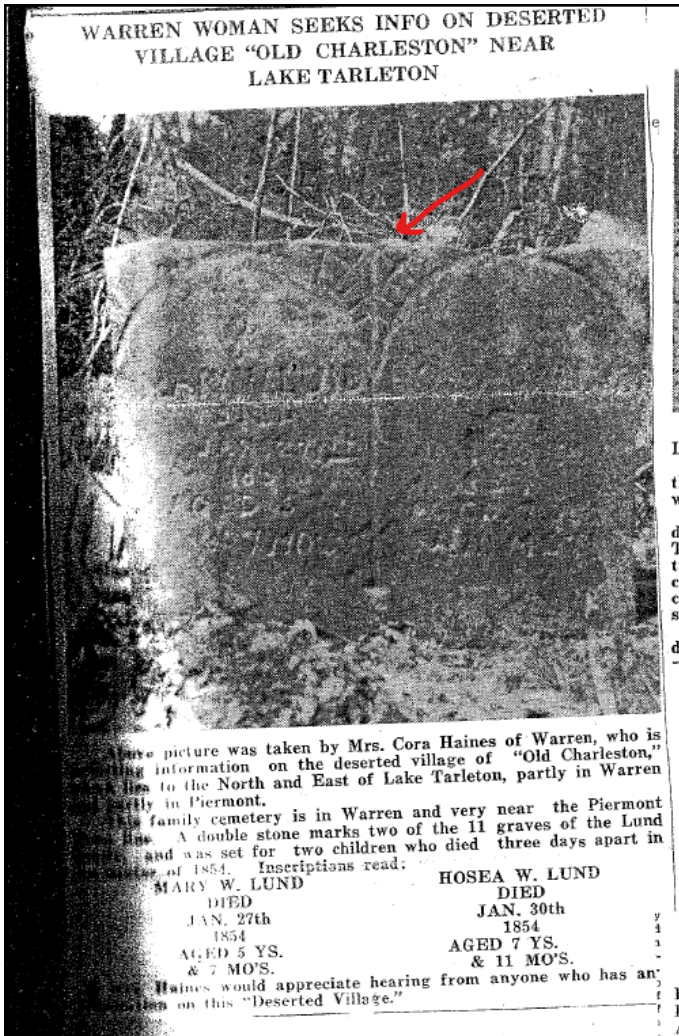
**Summary** – to ensure the USFS is doing the right thing, both legally and morally, the following steps should be taken prior to final approval of this project:

- 1) Remove or relocate the two proposed log landings identified above to ensure protection of existing cultural resources.
- 2) Provide documentation of the known historic sites for public review and show what steps are to be taken by the logging crews to preserve these irreplaceable remains.
- 3) Indicate why 4 historic orchards are not being protected or preserved for wildlife
- 4) Reach out to other stakeholders, in particular local historical societies for input.
- 5) Make a concerted, sustained, and conscientious effort, by ground surveys, deed research, and any other means available, to locate the "lost" cemeteries

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Photos:



Left: Historic photo (poorly copied from a newspaper article) of the famous double gravestone in the Lund Cemetery prior to its destruction in a previous logging operation. Right: Only identifiable remnant of the same stone when identified by USFS archaeologists in 2019. Note red arrows pointing to the same decorative carving.



One of several tags originally used to demarcate cultural resources that have since fallen to the ground and are being buried by leaf litter.



One of the many cellar holes to be found in these woods



Two supporting walls, most likely from a barn or other farm structure



Just one of the many well-constructed stone walls in the area.



Remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century orchard – still bravely producing apples.