

An aerial photograph of a wooded area in Washington, DC, with a green overlay indicating a specific 300-acre site. The map shows surrounding streets and landmarks like the Washington Monument and the US Capitol. The title 'Crestwood' is written in a large, green, serif font across the top of the map.

# Crestwood

300 ACRES  
300 YEARS

DAVID SWERDLOFF

*The story of a DC neighborhood  
and its uncommon connections  
with the history of Washington*







A modern street grid superimposed on the cover's 1867 map shows where the old roads and structures would be located in relation to today's Crestwood.

"Washington West Quadrangle" topographic map, 2011 (*U.S. Geological Survey*), superimposed on "Topographical sketch of the environs of Washington, D.C." by Nathaniel Michler, 1867 (*Library of Congress Geography and Map Division*).



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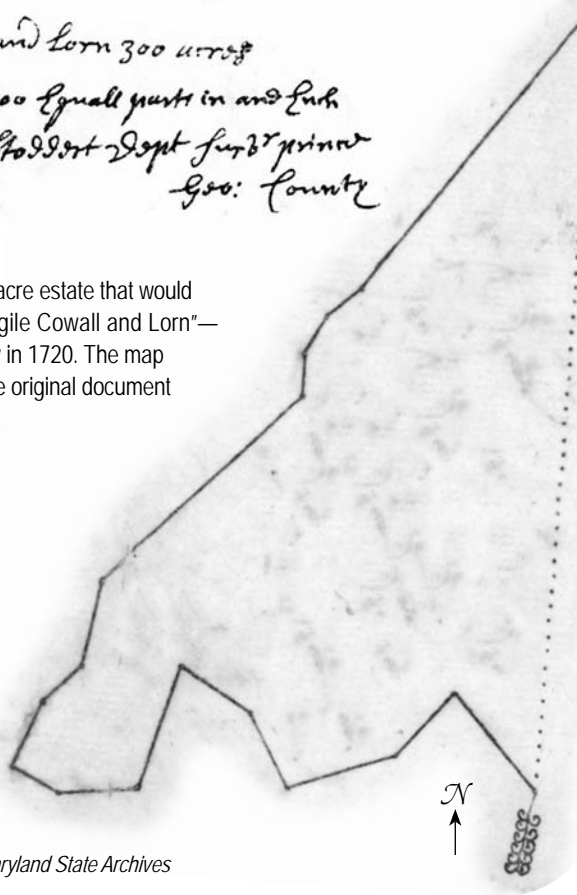
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August the 24th 1720

Argile Cowall and Lorn 300 acres

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James Stoddert Deput sur<sup>r</sup> printed  
Geo: County

The first map of the 300-acre estate that would become Crestwood—"Argile Cowall and Lorn"—drawn as part of a survey in 1720. The map has been rotated from the original document so that north is at the top.



Source: Collection of the Maryland State Archives



# INTRODUCTION

The first map of what would become Crestwood was drawn in 1720. Remarkably, those 300 acres still largely define the community nearly 300 years later.

From the very beginning, people traveled to or through this piece of land because of its natural features. The first visitors were Native Americans attracted by streams with prolific runs of fish, forests full of walnuts and game, and hillsides with mineral deposits they used for tools and spearheads. Starting in colonial times, newcomers took advantage of a creek that could turn mill wheels, a setting well suited for recreation, and land that could be cleared for crops and cattle. Today's residents are thankful that this natural world endures to provide tranquility in the middle of a bustling city.

But the shady retreat we now call Crestwood has also been a good vantage point for observing history. U.S. presidents passed by. Civil War skirmishes took place within earshot. Protesters tramped through during the first significant march on Washington. "Suburbs" were developed outside the city center. Property owners brought four cases to the U.S. Supreme Court. Tensions in Europe led to a bombing in the neighborhood. Landmark events from emancipation to integration were reflected in the community.

Crestwood also has links to the construction of the U.S. Capitol, the founding of St. Elizabeths hospital, the establishment of an urban national park, the escape attempt by D.C. slaves aboard *The Pearl*, and decisions made by the diplomats, activists, business leaders, cabinet officials and members of Congress who lived here.

To help preserve the neighborhood's heritage, here is the story of Crestwood. We will encounter unusual places and personalities as we explore these 300 acres and 300 years—and find uncommon connections with the history of Washington.