For immediate release

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Note: Interviews are available with MPT Digital Studios Producer Amy Oden.

MPT Digital Studios’ web-exclusive series **A Maryland Mystery Lady**
chronicles surprising discovery made in Prince George’s County

*Latest forensic and medical analysis used to solve decades-old mystery*

**OWINGS MILLS, MD** – Maryland Public Television (MPT), in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), has produced a four-part series titled **A Maryland Mystery Lady** as part of MPT Digital Studios’ ongoing “The Dig” series.

Created by award-winning producer Amy Oden, the MPT web-exclusive content is now available for viewing at [mpt.org/digitalstudios/thedig/](http://mpt.org/digitalstudios/thedig/).

The series follows MDOT SHA Chief Archaeologist **Dr. Julie Schablitsky** and the **St. Paul Church** community as they unearth a metal burial vault in the abandoned Simon Hill African American cemetery in Hyattsville in Prince George’s County. At first, they thought by the appearance of the vault it contained the remains of a prominent man. It was, in fact, a perfectly preserved woman.

The story began in 2017, when Dr. Schablitsky was called by a developer’s civil engineer and told that his client had purchased a parcel of land from the state, which had at one time included Simon Hill cemetery. Since burials are often left behind even after cemeteries are moved, it was imperative to determine if human remains had been left at the site, find the descendants who buried their ancestors at the cemetery, and rebury the remains with dignity.

“I was shocked when Julie called me, but I’m glad she did. It was important to find out who our mystery lady was and give her back her name and identity,” said Rev. Jerome Fowler, St. Paul Church historian and founding family member.

Dr. Schablitsky’s team eventually found more than 70 burials at the site, including the woman perfectly preserved in the burial vault. The SHA team partnered with **Dr. Dana Kollmann** at Towson University’s Archeology and Forensic Science Lab to analyze the majority of the cemetery remains. They also worked with the **Maryland State Anatomy Board** to analyze the woman’s remains, eventually locating her identity through the use of DNA sampling and genealogical research.
“She had been left behind and lost for decades,” said Dr. Schablitsky. “The airtight vault preserved not only her body but her DNA. We know who she is now.”

All of the human remains found at the former cemetery site were excavated and relocated to Maryland National Memorial Park in Laurel for proper burial.

“Public television is uniquely positioned to tell this type of story,” explained Oden. “MPT is embedded in many Maryland communities, and these ties are invaluable on projects such as this, in which we collaborate over longer periods of time. We worked with SHA and St. Paul Church for more than a year, and we were privileged to witness and relay this important Maryland story about family heritage and history.”

Additional MPT Digital Studios web-exclusive content is available for viewing at mpt.org/digitalstudios/.

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**About MPT**

Launched in 1969 and headquartered in Owings Mills, MD, Maryland Public Television is a nonprofit, state-licensed public television network and member of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). MPT’s six transmitters cover Maryland plus portions of contiguous states and the District of Columbia. Frequent winner of regional Emmy® awards, MPT creates local, regional, and national television shows. Beyond broadcast, MPT’s commitment to professional educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through year-round instructional events and the super-website *Thinkport*, which garners in excess of five million page views annually. MPT’s community engagement connects viewers with local resources on significant health, education, and public interest topics through year-round outreach events, viewer forums, program screenings, and phone bank call-in opportunities. For more information visit [mpt.org](http://mpt.org).