



Ashley Nunn, 62, left, and his mother, Gertrude Rogers Nunn, 87, walk their family property on Eubanks Road in Chapel Hill on Friday. Gertrude Nunn says her family's land should be considered part of the Rogers Road community.

STAFF PHOTO BY HARRY LYNCH

Waste plans battle boundaries

Orange wants to unburden historic area, but no one agrees on its borders

By **JESSE JAMES DECONTO**
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CHAPEL HILL — Emily Eidenier Pearce wrote the book on Rogers Road.

And not even she is sure where to draw the boundaries of the historic Rogers Road community.

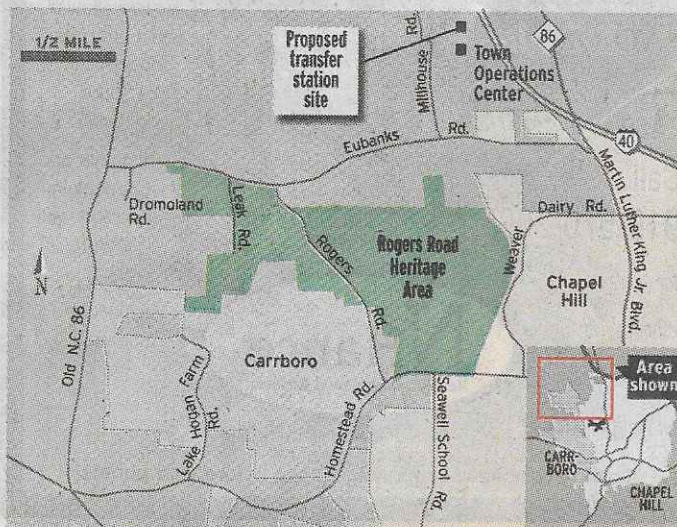
Pearce, a UNC doctoral student, spent the past year researching the history of the African-American community that grew at the northern edge of Chapel Hill after the Civil War. Her book comes just as town and county leaders need to know exactly where the boundaries lie.

The stakes are high.

Rogers Road residents have long accused local government leaders of environmental racism, even filing a federal complaint. A potential garbage depot for collecting and shipping the county's trash from their neighborhood would add another insult.

The Orange County commissioners already decided not to put the transfer station on the site of the current landfill because Rogers Road residents have endured odor, noise, ver-

PROXIMITY OF POSSIBLE TRASH TRANSFER STATION TO THE ROGERS ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD



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An exhibition titled "We're All Family Here: Preserving Community Heritage in the Rogers Road Neighborhood of Chapel Hill" is on display at UNC's Wilson Library until Aug. 31. The library will host a panel discussion on the exhibit at 5 p.m. June 25. For more information, go to www.lib.unc.edu/spotlight/2009-rogers_road.html.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Orange County Board of Commissioners will receive a preliminary report on the Millhouse Road site's suitability for a solid waste transfer station at 7 tonight at the Southern Human Services Complex, 2501 Homestead Road in Chapel Hill.

min and traffic for 37 years.

Instead, they were focusing on land west of Carrboro at an asking price of \$3 million and about \$300,000 a year in extra hauling costs. But Chapel Hill Mayor Kevin Foy recently suggested an 8-acre triangle off Millhouse Road a mile northeast of the current landfill. The town-owned

site could save money that could go toward water and sewer lines for Rogers Road.

County staff and consultants say the site's location close to Interstate 40, a railroad, and other major town and county facilities would make it efficient and environmentally friendly. The staff wants the commis-

sioners to ask the Chapel Hill Town Council for a formal offer this week.

Officials note that Millhouse Road lies outside the boundaries of two neighborhood maps developed by town and county task forces. But Rogers Road and Millhouse residents

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have united against the site.

'All like one family'

"We all were a community over there on Rogers Road and Eubanks and Millhouse," said Gertrude Rogers Nunn, 87, who lives on 10 acres south of Eubanks Road, cut off from Rogers Road by the landfill property. "We were all like one family."

Pearce's book notes a long connection between the black Nunn family, which once owned 200 acres south and east of Millhouse Road, and the white Blackwood family, whose Irish ancestors immigrated to the area in the 18th century. But the Nunn family have sold nearly all of their land north of Eubanks Road.

"Millhouse Road is definitely part of the story," Pearce said. "It really depends on whether you're looking at it historically or ... in a contemporary sense."

Multiple maps

In June 2007, nearly 30 residents gathered to define the neighborhood boundaries. The goal was to determine where to install new infrastructure as compensation for three decades of hosting the county landfill.

They broke into three groups, each coming up with a different boundary. One group agreed with a map created by Chapel Hill for its Rogers Road Small Area Planning Task Force, which limited the area to 330 acres south of the landfill between Rogers Road and the railway. Another group favored a much larger area numbering thousands of acres between N.C. 86 and Old N.C. 86, defined as "the original family areas extending back to slavery."

In the end, Orange County's Historic Rogers Road Community Enhancement task force drew two maps, with one area targeted for improving infrastructure, and a larger one to define the Rogers Road Heritage Area.

But even the heritage map was a compromise, excluding all the land north of Eubanks Road,

much of which had once been owned by farmer Samuel Nunn or worked by slaves of the Blackwoods or the Hogans whose children settled near Rogers Road.

"That map was shoved down my throat," said Nelo Jones, a member of both task forces and great-great-granddaughter of farmer Morris Hogan, the son of a slave and her master. "Now, they're using that as justification to exclude Millhouse Road as part of the historic area."

Chapel Hill Town Council member Bill Strom, who led the Rogers Road planning task force, said the map was intended to help control development along Rogers Road.

"I don't know what would have happened if someone had asked us to define the historic neighborhood," Strom said.

Likewise, former County Commissioner Moses Carey, who led the enhancement task force, steered the group toward a narrow focus.

"The Board of County Commissioners was interested in the area impacted by the landfill over the past 30 years," he told task force members July 17, 2007.

Opponents of the Millhouse Road site say that's precisely why it ought to be excluded.

From 1972 to 1995, the county operated an unlined landfill north of Eubanks Road and west of Millhouse Road on former Blackwood land. Starting back in 1991, as the county was planning to expand the landfill, Cecil Griffin, who lives off Millhouse Road in a predominantly white neighborhood, led a group called Stop Eubanks Area Landfill. It failed to keep the current landfill from opening south of Eubanks Road in 1995, and last month, Griffin was back in front of the commissioners, demanding that they scrap plans for the Millhouse trash depot site.

"Officials are not willing to impose on any other members of the community but us," he said. "Our neighborhood battles with government dumping on us will continue as long as I live. What a fate!"

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