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CECIL WHIG/Matt Given

Wayne McKinney, left, of Concord, Calif., Helen McKinney of North East, Michael McKinney of Elkton, and property owner Gordy Mann of Elkton, stand near gravestones in the McKinney family cemetery near Elk Neck.

McKinneys seek recognition for historic family cemetery

By Kozbi Simmons
Whig Staff Writer

Seven generations of McKinneys interred at McKinneytown Cemetery make the burial ground a special place for the North East family.

But it's not only a noteworthy locale for McKinney descendants.

Ed Cairns, chairman of the Cecil County Historic District Commission, said places of such historic significance can benefit an entire community.

"Historic places are educational for one thing, so they

become useful in educating school children and others who are interested in history," he said. "They're also a tourist attraction, so they're economical — they bring income to the county. And, generally, property designated as historic increases in value and benefits the owner, too."

The cemetery on McKinneytown Road could soon be one of those places officially listed as "historically significant." If Helen McKinney gets approval by the county commissioners after filing the paperwork this month, her family's cemetery will join the Cecil County

Register of Significant Historic Places.

The McKinney family reunion began restoring and researching the half-acre graveyard in 1960. McKinney and her son spent about 10 years discovering that every person buried there — some without markers — were related.

Now, the money left over from the family's reunion treasury, and some donated when McKinney's husband died, has gone to restore the land. A new fence was completed this week.

After discovering so much, she knew the place would be

worthy of the county registry, which accepts places of historic significance that are at least about 50 years old. The first McKinney was buried there in 1811, the last exactly 100 years later.

"There are so many descendants here," she said. "Their ancestors are buried there and they don't know it. Maybe it might get some of them interested in genealogy. All their descendants live in and around North East.

"But it's also important because the people in that area have watched over that cemetery for any number of years."