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Chicora Foundation, Inc.

Memo

To: Mr. Eddie Yandle
From: Michael Trinkley, Ph.D.
CC:
Date: August 13, 2007
Re: Synopsis of efforts to locate burials on the Dawson's Park tract

Background

After the initial discovery of two burials¹ on the tract by construction workers and the recovery of those remains by the Lexington County Sheriff's Department, Chicora was requested to evaluate the discovery. Historical research was conducted (Trinkley and Hacker 2007), the skeletal remains were analyzed (Hacker and Trinkley 2007), a ground penetrating radar (GPR) study was conducted over a portion of the development tract with approximately 400 anomalies identified, and an effort was made to discover which of these anomalies might indicate human burials.

The historical research was successful in tracing the ownership of the property and identifying a variety of Drafts family members. It also revealed that in 1927 a reservation of the cemetery suggests that there was agreement that the cemetery was not more than ¼ acre in extent. Although no origin date can be inferred from the research, it is likely that the cemetery began after the property's purchase by David Drafts in 1881 and that the cemetery ceased being used sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s.² Thus, at the outside the cemetery appears to have been used for approximately 84 years.

The historical research was far less successful in identifying any known individuals buried in the cemetery, the anticipated number of burials, or the precise location of the cemetery.

Typically when there are existing markers, we hope to identify one or more names of known burials occurring after 1915 (when death certificates were first introduced). By examining the death certificates of known interments, it is possible to obtain the name of the cemetery. Then death certificates can be scanned in order to identify additional individuals attributed to that cemetery.

¹ The minimum number of individuals is based on the presence of skulls in two discrete locations. Burial 1 is more complete than Burial 2 (which consists only of a partial skull and one vertebra). Additional human remains were encountered scattered in the general area. None of these remains are conclusively from another individual, although it is likely that at least one additional individual is represented by these partial and widely scattered items (Hacker and Trinkley 2007).

² This terminal date is based on both oral history accounts (Rev. Carson Wise, personal communication 2007) and the death of Vera E. Hendrix (who was sympathetic to the black community) in 1965 and the transfer of the property to her sons (at least one of who is reported to have been very antagonistic to local blacks and prohibited burials). We assume that they may have assumed considerable control perhaps as early as 1953 when Vera sold the tract to her sons, retaining a life interest in the property (Trinkley and Hacker 2007:10).

In this case we were given a list of individual reported by the family to be buried in the cemetery. Last names included Anderson, Drafts, Holmes, Jones, Kinard, Perry, and Walker. We were able in most cases to identify familial relationships using genealogical sources. However, only two of the 28 names³ we examined had death certificates.

The two death certificates were for Frank Drafts (died 1933, certificate 18288, burial location Strothers) and his wife, Lillie B. Drafts (died 1939, certificate 10176, burial location Rawl). Based on both the list and on conversations with Rev. Carson Wise (personal communication 2007), we understood that both were buried together and they were buried on Mr. Yandle's property.⁴

Using this logic, then the cemetery on Mr. Yandle's property was called both Strothers and Rawls. Having two names for a property is not unheard of and we scanned the death certificates for both names. We found no other burials for Rawls Cemetery, although a number were identified for Strothers (Trinkley and Hacker 2007:Table 1). Those buried in Strothers Cemetery include a variety of last names, none (other than Frank and Lillie Drafts) directly related to the Drafts family, although several Rawls were buried in Strothers cemetery.

Subsequently, we have determined (Chuck Corley, personal communication 2007) that the Strothers Cemetery is not on Mr. Yandle's property, but rather is a portion of a burial ground also known as St. Pauls, situated at the end of Erwin Court, off Foxglen Road, about 1.9 miles northeast of the Dawson's Park tract.

This development leaves us with no names that can, with any degree of certainty, be associated with the cemetery on Mr. Yandle's property. It also leaves us with no information concerning the name of the cemetery – and thus no ability to scan for additional names. Even the name Rawl Cemetery fails to reappear in the scanned death certificates.

The burial of Frank and Lillie Drafts in the Strothers/Rawl Cemetery during the early to late 1930s also suggests that the cemetery on Mr. Yandle's property may not have been used by the Drafts long before oral history indicates. In fact, the shift from David Drafts' property to Strothers Cemetery appears to correlate with the sale of the property containing the cemetery by the Drafts family to Andrew Gates in 1927. Thus, it may be hypothesized that while the Drafts family reserved up to ¼ acre for their cemetery, as well as ingress and egress, they ceased using the cemetery about 1927 – meaning that the cemetery would have had an active life of only about 46 years.

Geophysical Investigations

An initial effort to use a penetrometer was largely unsuccessful because of the extensive ground compaction possibly caused by clearing and grubbing during construction. A ground penetrating radar (GPR) study was then conducted by General Engineering Geophysics of Charleston, SC. That work identified approximately 400 anomalies that were divided into two classes – those of typical appearance and those of a higher caliber with better definition. The latter were designated in the field by the addition of an "x" to the number.

At the conclusion of the GPR survey the individual anomalies were plotted by Carolina Surveying Services of Lexington.

³ While the original list, thought to be provided by Rev. Carson Wise to the Lexington County Coroner and/or Lexington County Sheriffs Department, is reported to contain more than 30 names, the copy faxed to Mr. Eddie Yandle by Lexington County was almost illegible and only 28 names could be identified. Efforts to obtain the original list from Rev. Wise have been unsuccessful.

⁴ We have tentatively called the cemetery on Mr. Yandle's property Drafts Cemetery. This name, however, has no historical basis, other than the reported association of the burial grounds with the Drafts' family.

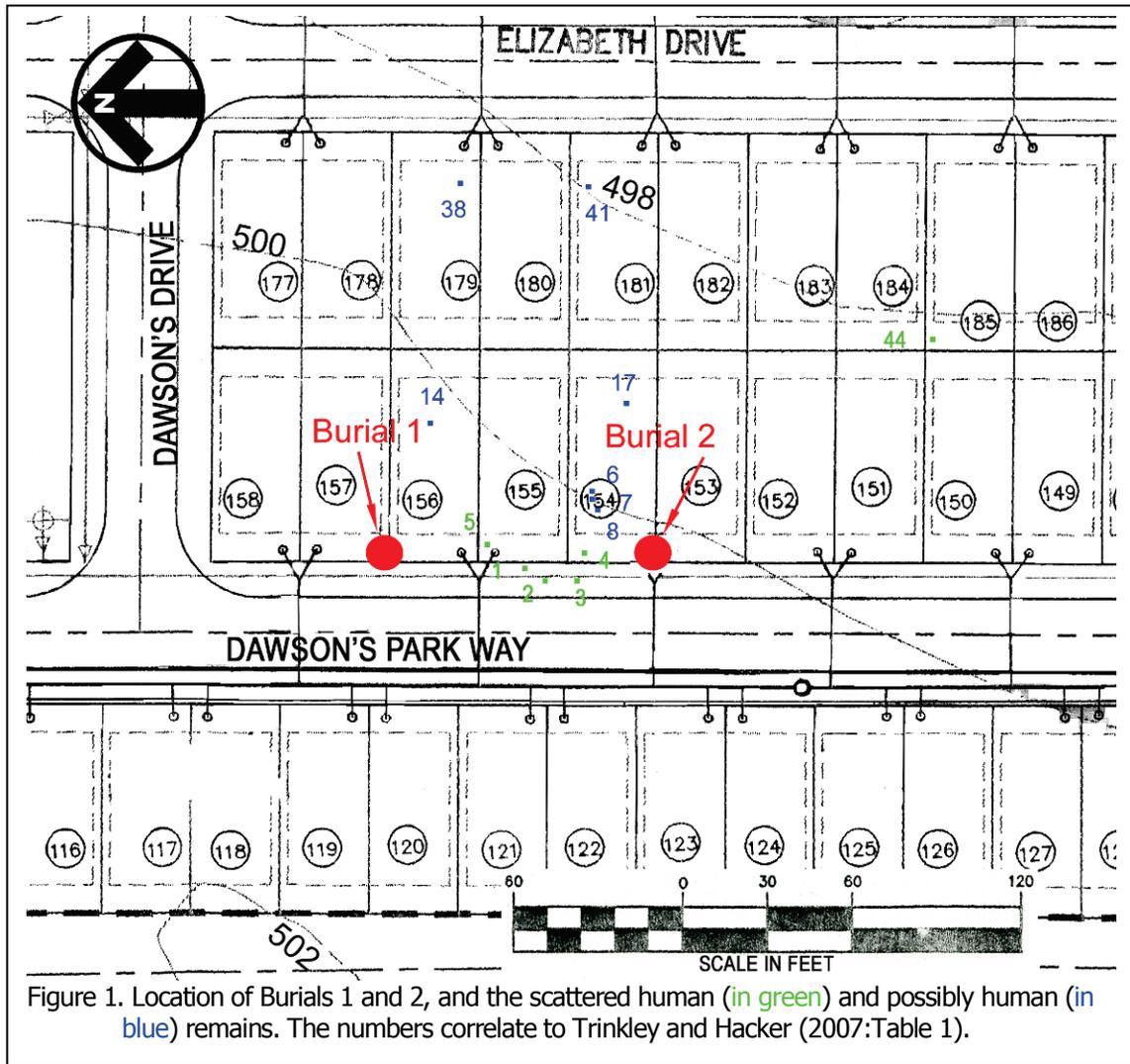


Figure 1. Location of Burials 1 and 2, and the scattered human (in green) and possibly human (in blue) remains. The numbers correlate to Trinkley and Hacker (2007:Table 1).

During this same period Chicora crews walked portions of the study tract flagging surface bone.⁵ These remains were also plotted. Of the 109 remains, only 13 were identified as human or possibly human during laboratory examinations (this represents 12%). These remains, and the original two burial locations, are shown in Figure 1. They appear to be densely clustered between the two identified burials, with the bulk of the definitively human remains in proximity to the roadway and its associated utility construction.⁶ No human or possibly human remains were identified to west, toward the adjoining property and very few remains were scattered to the north, south, or east. We believe this concentration of remains may be associated with the core of the cemetery and/or previous construction activities associated with the utility construction.

Unfortunately the clearest or most definitive anomalies do not appear to be so well concentrated. Instead, they appear to be scattered across the study area with no apparent pattern. Densities drop to the west and north, but this may be related to those areas being only sampled, rather than intensively

⁵ Not flagged was bone that was clearly not human (i.e., identifiable in the field through gross morphological characteristics as non-human) or that evidenced saw or cut marks (typically associated with the processing of food bone).

⁶ This would include the sanitary sewer, the storm water sewer, and public water lines.

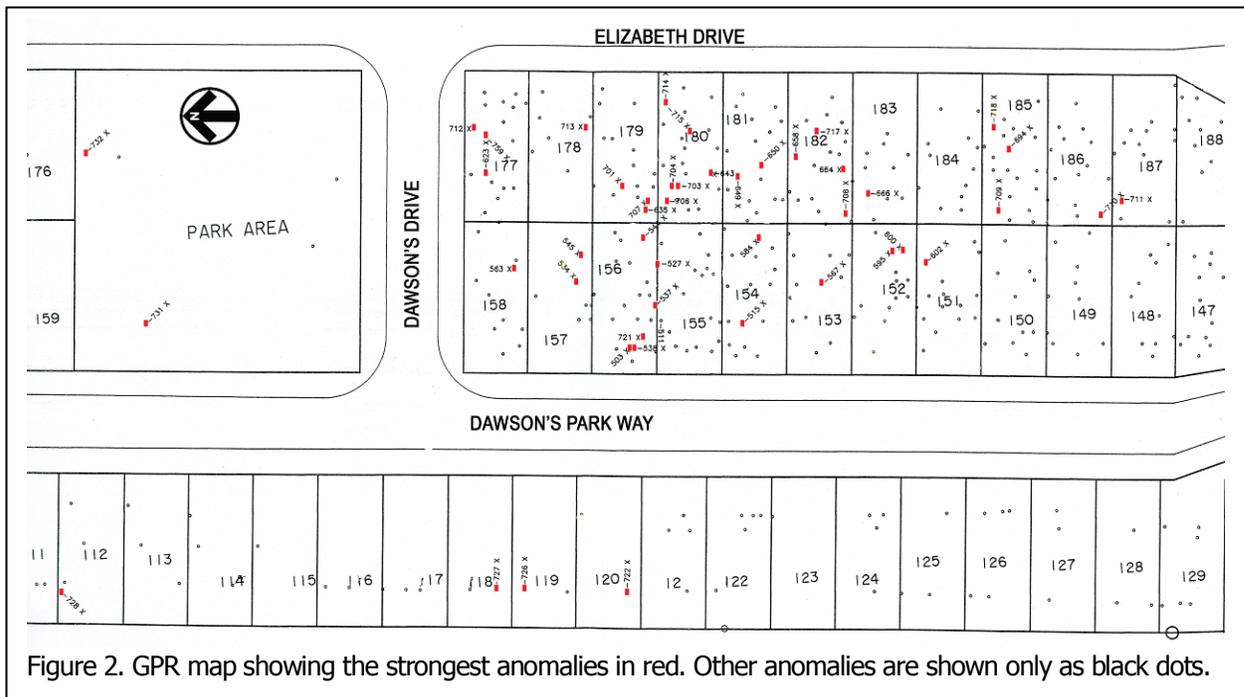


Figure 2. GPR map showing the strongest anomalies in red. Other anomalies are shown only as black dots.

examined as was the case with the core area of lots 147-158, 177-188. The locations of the 46 X-numbered (strongest) anomalies are shown in Figure 2.

One of the first observations possible from this map is that these "best" anomalies are not clearly clustered. Nor are they arranged in a series of clusters (except for 503 and 538 in lot 156 and 635, 703, 704, 706, and 707 in lots 179 and 180). Instead, they appear to be widely scattered throughout the area where the GPR was intensively used. Even the second tier anomalies do not appear clustered; rather they appear to be dispersed across the property.

In addition, we find no clustering in the vicinity of the two graves known to exist based on their recovery by the Lexington County Sheriff's Department (again, with the exception of the anomalies 503 and 538 in lot 156).

The arrangement of these anomalies is not what we would expect from a cemetery, even an African American cemetery, where there is tight clustering within kin groups.

Soil Stripping

In order to field check (or "ground truth") anomalies, arrangements were made to strip selected areas, focusing on specific anomalies. The goal of this work was to remove the upper 1 to 1.5 feet of A-horizon soil in order to expose subsoil. This would allow grave pits to be identified as distinct, rectangular, east-west, dark stains in the lighter colored subsoil. These stains are "relics" of the grave excavation and backfill process, coupled with the subsidence of the grave over time.

The soil removed from the grave is not placed back in the shaft in the same order as it was taken out. Instead, darker humus or A-horizon soil is mixed with the lighter soil. Clay, if present, will also be mixed with the sand. When the grave is backfilled, all of this excavated soil is jumbled together. The result is a distinct outline that is visible with cleaning. Although these stains will leach over thousands of years, archaeologists recognize these stains on both prehistoric and historic sites. They are typically encountered in cemetery contexts, showing the outline of the grave shaft. I have seen them on Daniels

Island (Berkeley County) at an early 19th century family graveyard, at Colonial Cemetery in Savannah, Georgia at an 18th and early 19th century city cemetery, at the Harts Bluff Cemetery on Wadmalaw Island (Charleston County), and at a small African American cemetery in Beaufort County. All of these locations have similar sandy soils and similar rainfall patterns (and thus leaching potential).

In addition, as the coffin collapses and the grave subsides, the resulting depression is gradually filled in with leaves and humic soil – further staining or darkening the soil. Figure 3 shows an example of grave stains from Harts Bluff on Wadmalaw Island.



Figure 3. Example of grave stains in the subsoil at Harts Bluff on Wadmalaw Island, Charleston County, South Carolina. The upper half of three coffins are seen in the photo as darker stains, each about 2 feet apart.

The four anomalies to be inspected were 534X, 718X, 846, and 882. These were located in different portions of the property in order to explore a range of soil conditions and anomaly characteristics. In addition, the western 1/3 of lot 158 was to be stripped, providing access to additional anomalies, including 563X.

This work was accomplished on July 31 and August 1 using a small track hoe with a cutting bar welded to the teeth on the bucket. This allowed the areas to be cleanly stripped, minimizing the time and effort necessary to clean the excavations to allow stains to be visible. Table 1 provides information on the size of the various excavations. In the case of the planned excavations we discovered that in each case the GPR had identified tree stains – some burned and some rotted – but no graves were identified in any of the stripped areas.

Because no grave stains were identified in the planned excavations, we opted to open additional ground. Some of these additional excavations were placed to expose known high quality GPR anomalies. Others were excavated to explore specific site areas. For example, Trench 7 was placed in

an area that had not received much attention, but where family members report graves (“toward the end of the wooden fence”). Trench 8 was placed to investigate an area which had up to this point received little GPR or other attention. Trenches 1-3 were placed to expose the area immediate around Burials 1 and 2.

Area	Size (in feet)
534X	6x15
718X	6x10
846	8x11
882	8x10
Lot 158	23x31
Trench 1 (537X)	6x50
Trench 2	7x44
Trench 3 (503X, 538X)	7x40
Trench 4	6x34
Trench 5	7x29
Trench 6	7x22
Trench 7 (729X)	6x44
Trench 8	6x39

As a result of this work a total of 2,978 square feet were opened. All of this work was confined to the Drafts tract known to contain the cemetery reservation. Although this parcel was 8¾ acres, only about 6 acres would have been outside the wetlands on the property. Thus, the 2,978 square feet represent just over 1% of the lot.

This work exposed seven high rated anomalies (representing 15% of these anomalies) and an additional 24 normal anomalies (representing about 10% of these GPR signatures). All of the anomalies, upon stripping, were found to represent tree stains. No graves were identified in any of the areas opened and examined by this work. Examples of stripped areas are shown below in Figures 4, 5, and 6. Photographs of all stripped areas are available in the Chicora files for this project.



Figure 4. Stripped area at 718X. The anomaly correlates to the dark tree stain in the center left of the stripped block. The photograph is facing east.



Figure 5. Trench 3, showing tree stains, view to the north.



Figure 6. Trench 7, showing tree stains, view to the north.

Summary

Although the historical research has confirmed that a cemetery was present on the western half of the Dawson's Park development, there is no clear evidence that the cemetery was used after the sale of the cemetery property by the Drafts family to Andrew Gates in 1927. Thus, the cemetery appears to have had a relatively short period of use, perhaps limited to 46 years.

No information has been presented to us or identified through our research that would identify with any certainty the names of individuals buried on the property. At least two individuals reputed to have been buried together on the property appear to be in Strothers/Rawls Cemetery instead. No death certificates have been identified that may relate to individuals reputed to be buried on the property. It has not been possible to identify a historic name for the property.

Although oral history accounts have reported the cemetery to range in size up to the entire 16 acres, this seems unlikely for a variety of reasons. It is unlikely when compared to the size of other African American cemeteries, including churchyard cemeteries, which are typically smaller. It is unlikely given the relatively low density of African Americans in Lexington County, suggesting a smaller population needing burial space. Much of the property was clearly cultivated by the Drafts family – making their use of it for burial unlikely. And it is unlikely when the short duration of the cemetery is considered. We can only confirm that, in 1927, individuals familiar with the property agreed that it was approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ acre in extent.

The ground penetrating radar study failed to identify any clear patterning of anomalies. The use of a penetrometer to identify graves was unsuccessful because of high ground compaction.

Stripping conducted to “ground truth” the anomalies opened about 1% of the total high ground area of the lot containing the cemetery reservation. This stripping explored 15% of the high quality anomalies and about 10% of the remaining anomalies. The anomalies identified by GPR were tree stains. No rectangular, east-west oriented stains were identified. In fact, no evidence of graves was found in any of the excavations, including those clustered around the area where Burials 1 and 2 were encountered by construction. Although no screening of the overlying A horizon soils was conducted, no human remains were encountered during the cleaning of the floors. The only features encountered were soil stains consistent with trees (some burned, others rotted).

Regrettably, we have had access to only fragments of the oral history. The only family member who consented to meet with us was Rev. Carson Wise. The various accounts collected by the Lexington County Sheriff’s Department have not yet been released. Nevertheless, we have been able to identify only very limited collaborative evidence for the oral history accounts. Some accounts have been demonstrated to be incorrect. An example is the belief that the Drafts family lost the cemetery in a tax sale. It was actually sold by family members. Other accounts are questionable – such as the reputed size of the cemetery and the number of burials. On the other hand, some accounts do receive support in the available record. For example, the analysis of the recovered skeletal remains does support accounts of family members being tall (Burial 1 is documented as having a stature of between 5’7” and 6’2”) and of the family intermarrying with whites (the skull of Burial 2 shows mixed ancestral traits).

It is our belief that the cemetery was small, both in size and in the total number of burials. The proximity of Burials 1 and 2 to the utility corridors and road construction, combined with the concentration of scattered human and possible human remains in that general area, suggest that the cemetery may have been inadvertently impacted by construction prior to the discovery of Burials 1 and 2. In spite of the efforts to locate additional burials through both GPR and stripping, none have been found.

In spite of the work done, it is impossible to rule out the discovery of additional graves at some future time.

We recommend that the remainder of Burial 2 be recovered. Since the exact location of the burial is not known, there is a significant chance of future disturbance and additional damage. It is also appropriate to ensure that all remains are reunited for appropriate reburial. Since the original excavation was backfilled, this will necessitate the removal (and screening) of the fill, cleaning the profiles in an effort to identify where the remainder of the coffin may be located, and the recovery of undisturbed human remains.

Chicora will maintain the remains in our possession, with the additional remains from Burial 2 as they are recovered, until arrangements are made for their reburial.

Sources Cited

Hacker, Debi and Michael Trinkley

2007 *Analysis of Human Skeletal Remains Discovered By Construction Activities, Drafts Graveyard, Lexington County, SC.* Research Contribution 476. Chicora Foundation, Inc., Columbia.

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2007 *Historical Research on Drafts Graveyard, Lexington County, South Carolina.* Research Contribution 474. Chicora Foundation, Inc., Columbia.