

Cemetery Delineation
John Wiltbank Cemetery CRS S00937.002
Lewes, Sussex County, Delaware

November 18, 2025

Prepared for:
Sussex County Land Trust
Daughters of the American Revolution, David Hall Chapter
And
Greater Lewes Foundation

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Abstract

Edward Otter, Inc. was engaged by Mike Rawl of the Greater Lewes Foundation to delineate the John Wiltbank Cemetery in preparation for installing a protective fence enclosure. The project is a collaborative effort involving the Greater Lewes Foundation, Sussex County Land Trust, the Colonel Hall Chapter of the DAR, the property owner, and Wiltbank descendants. Planned work includes vegetation clearing, gravestone cleaning and repair, fence installation, and placement of a historical marker. The cemetery is located on Sussex County Parcel 335-8.00-19.03, a 2.25-acre property just outside the Lewes city limits. Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs previously recorded this resource as CRS S00937.002. There are twelve known individuals interred in the cemetery based on the inscribed headstones. Two unmarked burials were identified during this delineation.

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Introduction

Edward Otter, Inc. was contacted by Michael Rawl of the Greater Lewes Foundation to conduct a cemetery delineation as part of a project to install a fence enclosure around the John Wiltbank Cemetery. Sussex County Land Trust, and The Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonel Hall Chapter, are collaborating with the Greater Lewes Foundation. Also participating are the property owner, Karen V. Truitt, and various Wiltbank descendants (Cape Gazette 2025). The planned work includes clearing brush and trees from the cemetery, cleaning and repairing gravestones, installing a fence enclosure, and placing a historical marker at the site.

The Wiltbank Cemetery is located on Sussex County Parcel 335-8.00-19.03, a 2.25-acre property situated just outside Lewes City limits (Figure 1). The cemetery lies at the end of a 400-foot-long private driveway, at coordinates 38.765909, -75.164526. Access is from New Road, heading southeast. The parcel contains the cemetery, a house, and a three-car garage.

Scope of Work

Cemetery delineation was conducted by Edward Otter, Inc. to determine the boundaries of the cemetery. Cemetery delineation through archaeological methods allows for the identification of grave shafts without disturbing human remains. While remote sensing techniques, such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR), are commonly used, there are limitations, particularly in wooded settings where tree roots can interfere with results. By carefully removing the topsoil, archaeologists can visually detect the tops of grave shafts, establishing the cemetery's limits. The burial ground is then mapped to scale, and flags or stakes are placed at its boundaries. These limits are intended to be recorded by surveyors in any engineering plans to ensure there are no unintended impacts to the cemetery when work is underway.

The delineation plan calls for stripping topsoil in areas outside the gravestones, while areas inaccessible to machinery are investigated using probes and hand tools. A mini-excavator with a clean-out bucket is used to carefully remove topsoil to a depth at which grave shafts, if present, would be visible. Excavated surfaces are then cleaned more thoroughly with flat shovels and trowels. If graves are identified, work continues twenty-five feet beyond the outermost burial until no additional graves are detected. A metal probe is used to locate subsurface brick crypts, vaults, covered gravestones, and other potential features. Positive probe tests are flagged and mapped, and these areas are hand-excavated using shovels, trowels, and brushes. No human burials are uncovered or otherwise disturbed during this work.

Edward Otter's scope of work did not include a complete search of archival records. The land history of the property, and genealogical studies of the Wiltbank Family have already been examined by various local historians and researchers. This existing research provides valuable background context and is therefore listed in this report.

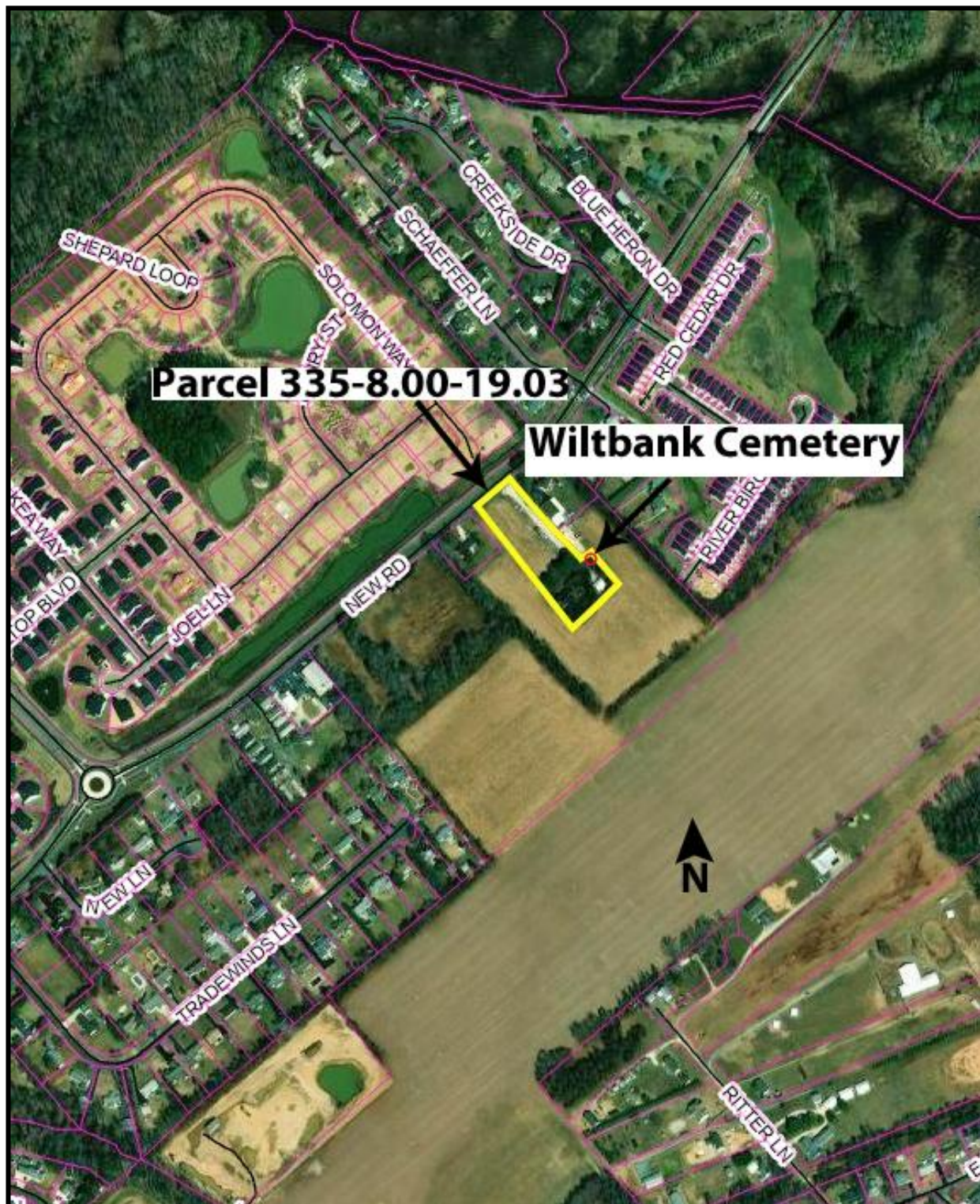


Figure 1. Cemetery Location; Sussex County Parcel 335-8.00-19.03

Previous Research

The Wiltbank family has been the focus of extensive research by historians, genealogists, and local scholars. The family is documented across a wide range of sources, including online databases such as Find A Grave and the Historic Lewes graves database, as well as genealogical compilations such as Moody K. Miles's *Miles Files*.

Early legal and land records appear in Craig W. Horle's *Records of the Courts of Sussex County, Delaware: 1677–1710* (1991) and in C. H. B. Turner's *Some Records of Sussex County, Delaware* (1909). J. Thomas Scharf included information about Wiltbank Family members and Lewes history in his *History of Delaware 1609–1888* (1888). Leon DeValilnger wrote about the family in *The Burning of the Whorekill* (1950). Dick Carter wrote about the Wiltbanks in his bi-centennial tribute manuscript, *The History of Sussex County* (1976). A comprehensive context on the Tower Hill region and connected families including the Wiltbanks can be found in Ralph W. Prettyman's *A History of Tower Hill: Revisited* (2019). Michael J. Rawl's *The First Settler of Lewes* (2024) provides history on the Wiltbank Family and mentions the John Wiltbank Cemetery. Archaeological investigations, such as Otter and Showell's *Phase I Archaeological Investigation: Knapp Farm on New Road, Lewes* (2022), also provide valuable background information for the Tower Hill area. Together, these works offer a rich foundation for understanding the lineage, landholdings, and historical significance of the Wiltbank family in Sussex County.

Cemetery Ownership

The John Wiltbank Family Cemetery lies within a tract known as Tower Hill, originating from a 400-acre patent granted to Daniel Brown in 1676 (Prettyman 2019). The tract was later divided into two 200-acre parcels along the line where New Road was eventually established—John Prettyman bought land to the north and Richard Paynter acquired the land to the south. The cemetery is located within the southern portion. Richard Paynter deeded this land to Isaac Wiltbank in 1704, and it remained in the Wiltbank family for generations (Prettyman 2019:199; Rawl 2024:43).

When John Wiltbank died in 1830, the property passed to his widow, Eliza Paynter Wiltbank, and their two minor sons, with Eliza's brother Samuel R. Paynter administering the estate (Otter & Showell 2022). John was the last family member buried in the Wiltbank Cemetery; His wife Eliza was interred at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lewes in 1857. The property left Wiltbank ownership after the death of John and Eliza's son, Alfred Stockley Wiltbank, in 1860. Alfred is buried near his mother at St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

Harbeson Hickman purchased the land at auction in 1863 during the administration of Alfred Stockley Wiltbank's estate (Deed 70/396). When Harbeson died in 1890, the property passed to his widow and minor children (Will Q16/40). In 1894, his son, Harry B. Hickman, came of age and received the land (Deed 120/262). Harry sold it to Timothy E. Townsend in 1902 (Deed 143/373), and Townsend sold it to Emma M. Wilson in 1911 (Deed 182/53) (Figure 2). Wilson conveyed the property to Frank and Martha Lawrence in 1938 (Deed 317/158), and they sold it to Thomas Best the following year (Deed 318/399). The land entered the Truitt family in 1957 when Alice B. Truitt purchased it by Deed 478/112. She transferred the land to William Edward Truitt in 1976 (Deed 774/183), and the current owner, Karen V. Truitt, acquired it in 1997 by Deed 2251/276. None of the deeds mention the cemetery. There are no recorded exclusions or exceptions to transfer related to the John Wiltbank Cemetery.



Figure 2. 1911 Emma Wilson Purchase from Timothy Townsend

Cemetery Delineation

An initial site visit was conducted in the summer of 2025 to assess current conditions. Drone-based aerial photographs of the cemetery were collected (Figure 3), although the dense summer tree canopy limited visibility. Even so, these recent images can be compared with earlier aerial photographs (Figure 4; Figure 5; Figure 6) to track the progression of vegetation at the site. Ralph Prettyman shared photographs from 1996, taken when the cemetery was still maintained and before the area became overgrown (Figure 7).

The delineation was conducted on October 11, 2025, by Dr. Otter and archaeological field technicians Max Kichline and Jill Showell. When the team arrived, the cemetery had been cleared of brush and was in noticeably improved condition. Work began with a surface inspection of the site. Nine headstones with corresponding footstones were documented (Figure 8). The headstones are oriented east–west with the footstones to the west, following the traditional Christian burial configuration. Eight headstones appear to be marble and one seems to be slate; all footstones appear to be marble. The stones are engraved on the outside face, with one headstone commemorating three individuals, one memorializing two individuals, and the others marking one person each. In all, there are twelve individuals represented by the headstone inscriptions. Dates of death range from 1791 to 1830.

The individuals marked within the cemetery are: John Wittbank 1792 (Figure 9); Mary Wiltbank 1795 (Figure 10); Ann Wiltbank 1801 (Figure 11); Ann's Infant Son 1801 (Figure 11); Ann's daughter, Comfort 1791 (Figure 11); Esther Wiltbank 1802 (Figure 12); Ann Hudson 1812 (Figure 13); Cornelius Wiltbank 1813 (Figure 14); Dr. Robert Wiltbank 1815 (Figure 15); John Cornelius Wiltbank 1829 (Figure 16); John and Eliza Wiltbank's first born Infant Son (Figure 16); John Wiltbank, 1830 (Figure 17).

Using a mini-excavator, excavation extended outward from the marked graves in all directions, piling the backdirt aside (Figure 18; Figure 19). The topsoil was carefully scraped to a depth at which grave shafts would be visible, if present. Care was taken to avoid disturbing tree roots, which can expose human remains. A probe was used in the cemetery interior to detect any subsurface gravestones or features.

Two unmarked burials, Feature 1 and Feature 2, were identified (Figure 20; Figure 21), and one marble chip was recovered which mended to a fractured corner of Ann Hudson's headstone. Two possible post molds were sectioned and excavated, but both proved to be tree root stains rather than cultural features. After excavation and probing were completed, the cemetery was mapped. Stakes were placed outside the boundaries of the delineated cemetery forming a rectangle 35 feet by 40 feet..



Figure 3. Aerial 2025



Figure 4. Aerial 2024 (Google Earth)



Figure 5. Aerial 2007 (Delaware CHRIS with CRS S00937.002 Marked)

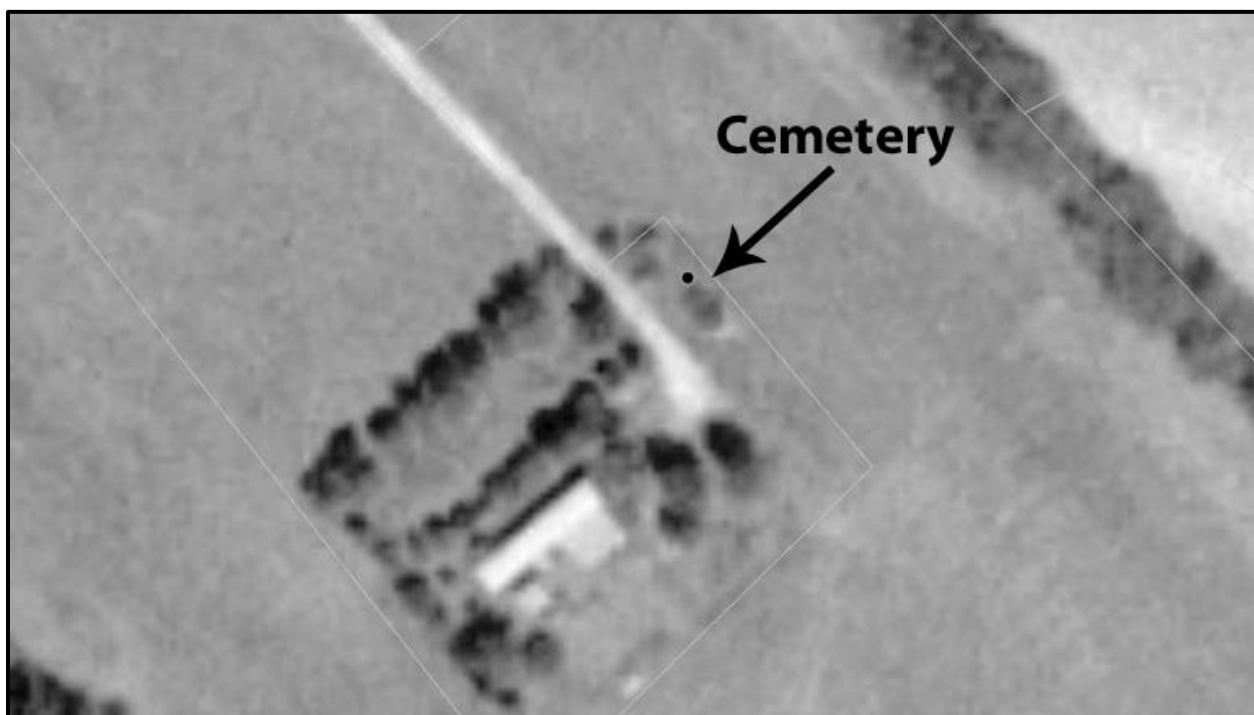


Figure 6. Aerial 1997 (Delaware CHIRS with CRS S00937.002 Marked)



Figure 7. Wiltbank Cemetery (Prettyman 1996)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The delineation identified nine headstones with nine corresponding footstones, as well as two unmarked burials uncovered during excavation. The cemetery appears to have been active from about 1791 to 1830. The area containing the known graves and markers measures roughly 20 by 20 feet. Stakes were placed approximately ten feet outside this boundary to guide future fence installation.

For ongoing maintenance, mechanical clearing should be avoided, as uprooting vegetation can inadvertently disturb human remains. Herbicides may be used to control overgrowth. Gravestones should be cleaned carefully: begin with plain water and a very soft brush, rinse and apply D/2 Biological Solution. This solution should not be rinsed off; it is left in place to react over time with sunlight, gradually removing biological growth. Reapply D/2 until the desired result is reached. This gentle approach will support the long-term preservation of the stones. Any broken or unstable gravestones should not be repaired or reset by untrained individuals. If repairs are desired, a qualified stone conservator who specializes in historic grave markers should be consulted to ensure preservation is done safely and correctly.

Fence placement at or outside of the corner stakes will not impact graves. There will be some room within the fence for maintenance or bench placement if desired.

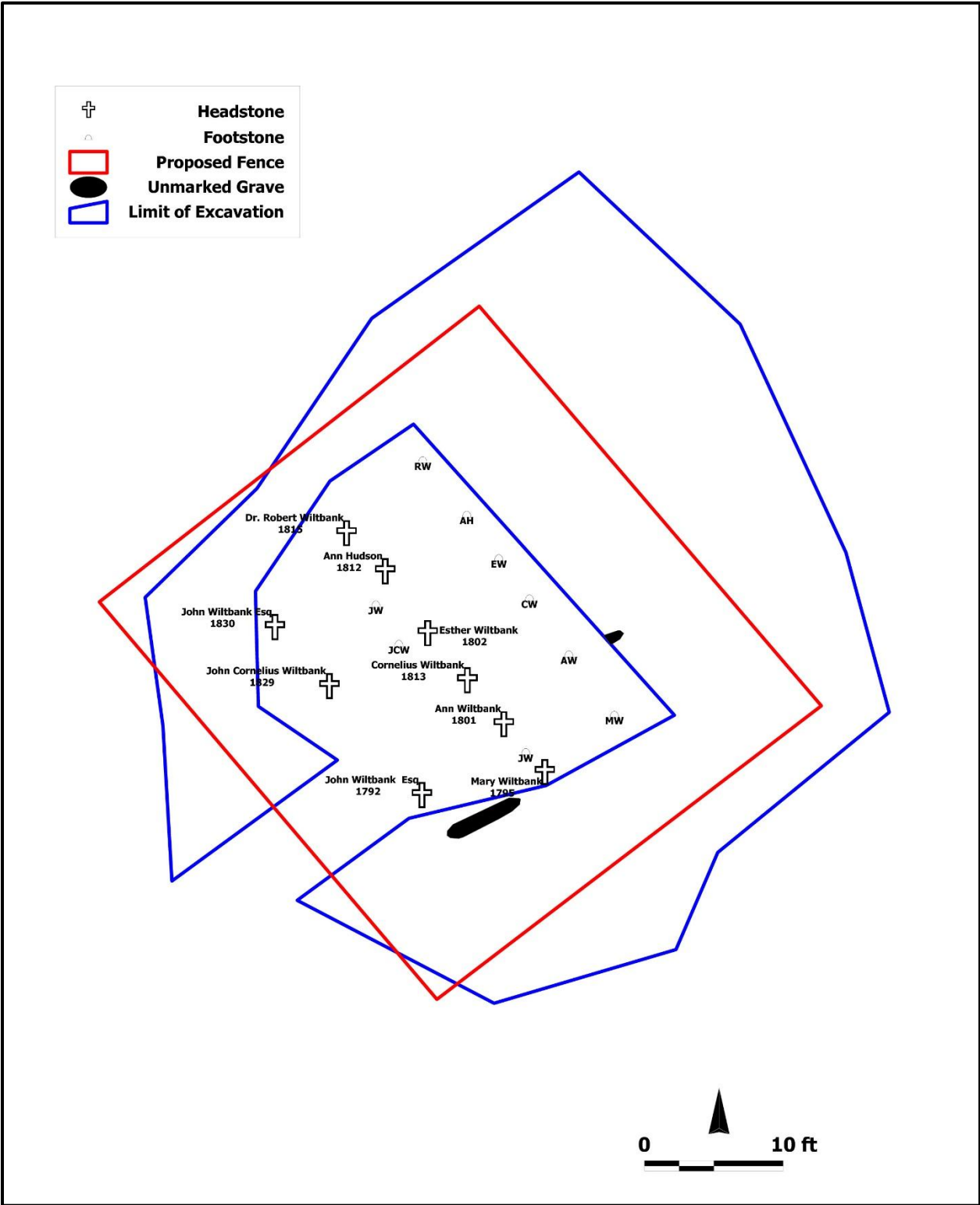


Figure 8. John Wiltbank Cemetery Map



Figure 9. John Wittbank Esqr departed this life 1792



Figure 10. Mary Wiltbank departed this life 1795



Figure 11. Ann Wiltbank 1801; Infant Son 1801; Daughter, Comfort 1791



Figure 12. Esther Wiltbank departed this life 1802



Figure 13. The Lovely Ann Hudson 1812 (Daughter of Cornelius and Ann Wiltbank)

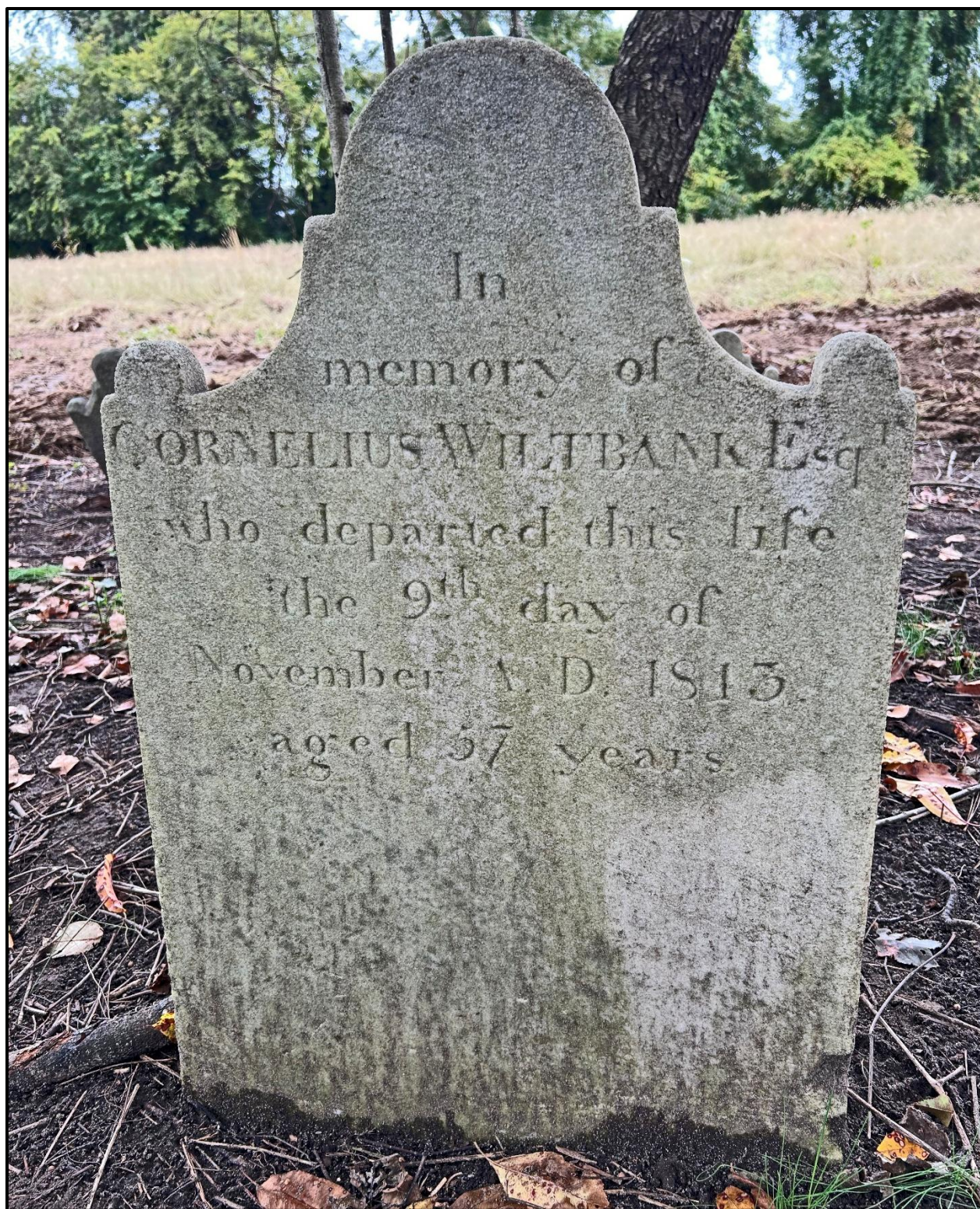


Figure 14. Cornelius Wiltbank Esqr departed this life 1813



Figure 15. Doctr Robert Wiltbank departed this life 1815



Figure 16. John Cornelius Wiltbank; Also, John and Eliza Wiltbank's first born infant son



Figure 17. John Wiltbank Esqr departed this life 1830



Figure 18. Excavation extended outward from the marked graves in all directions.



Figure 19. Excavation extended outward from the marked graves in all directions.



Figure 20. Feature 1, Unmarked Burial



Figure 21. Feature 2, Unmarked Burial

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APPENDIX I: QUALIFICATIONS OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Edward Otter, Ph.D., President and Principal of Edward Otter, Inc.

Education

2002	Ph.D. Anthropology/Archaeology Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.
1989	Master of Arts Anthropology/Archaeology Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.
1980	Bachelor of Arts Anthropology University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware

Capabilities

Over 40 years-experience in archaeology in the Middle Atlantic United States. Work during this period has involved precontact and historic sites at all levels of expertise from Field Crewmember to Principal Investigator. Responsibilities have included project design and implementation, field and laboratory supervision, artifact analysis, archival research, report writing, site interpretation to the public, field and classroom instruction, and faunal analysis.

Select Recent Projects

2021	Joshua Burton Cemetery Rehabilitation, Indian River Hundred, Sussex County.
2021	Cemetery Study St. George AME on Pilottown Road, Lewes.
2021	Delineation and Archival Study Robert Burton Cemetery at Angola, Delaware.
2020	Brittingham Farm Cemetery Relocation, Princess Anne, Somerset County, Maryland.
2019	Carlisle Church Cemetery Study, Dover, Kent County, Delaware.
2019	Delineation of Private C. S. Hall Cemetery, Frankford, Sussex County, Delaware.
2018	Delineation Vessels Cemetery, Robinsonville Road, Sussex County, Delaware.
2018	Delineation Prettyman Cemetery at Tower Hill, Sussex County, Delaware.
2018	Blackwater Presbyterian Church Study, Frankford Delaware.
2017	Cemetery Delineation and Archival Study Hall Family Baltimore Hundred.
2017	Cemetery Delineation and Archival Study New Ebenezer on Cedar Grove Road.
2017	Cemetery Delineation and Study, Hastings Family Delmar, Sussex County.
2016	Delineation and Archival Study James F. Baylis Cemetery, Long Neck Road.
2014/2015	Historic Cemetery Removal, Wolfe Family in Lewes, Sussex County, Delaware.