



30 September 2019

Mireille Vargas
Bold Development Group
50201 Governors Drive
Chapel Hill, NC 27517

Re: ESI Project HL197051
Riggsbee Cemetery Delineation
Chatham County, NC

Dear Mireille:

Environmental Services, Inc., A Terracon Company (“ESI”) conducted research and field investigations at the purported location of the Luke Riggsbee Cemetery, located on Parcel (PID) 0018892 (647 Lystra Road) in Chatham County, North Carolina.

Research

Prior to the initiation of field investigations, ESI conducted an examination of readily available deeds, census records, and other archival information in an attempt to determine the names of those interred within the small cemetery. A search of records on file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Office of State Archaeology (OSA) revealed that no cemetery had been previously recorded in this vicinity. A search of readily available historic maps of the project area also did not indicate the presence of a cemetery. According to a 1989 survey conducted by Gerald Oldham, the Luke Riggsbee Cemetery consists of five uncarved stones located 300 feet north of Lystra Road (<http://cemeterycensus.com/nc/chat/cem108.htm>).

Background research also included an examination of cemetery records on file at the North Carolina State Archives. The 2002 North Carolina Cemetery Survey record for the cemetery (identified as E33.4 by the Chatham County Historical Association [CCHA]) indicated that the cemetery had originally been recorded by Oldham in 1989 but had not been revisited by CCHA (Heiser 2002). The cemetery was described as 300 feet north of Lystra Road, across from Lystra Baptist Church.

The purported cemetery is located on the eastern edge of a 16.32-acre parcel currently owned by William Edwin Burgess, Jr. and described as the Dottie Burgess Estate (Parcel ID 0018892; Chatham County Deed Book [DB]1868 Page 859). A plat map from 2000 does not depict a cemetery. Dottie Bennett Burgess died intestate in 1993; her land was divided among children Walter Burgess, Jr., William E. Burgess, and Elizabeth Burgess Morton.

Dottie’s Father was Edward Carr Bennett (1877–1954). A 1947 deed from E.C. Bennett and his wife Veora granted Dottie and her husband Walter 30 acres (less one acre previously sold) in Williams

Township adjacent to Mt. Zion Church and Lystra Church, subject to a life estate for E.C. and Veora (DB J-S Page 167).

E.C. Bennett was granted 27.75 acres in 1925 by his siblings J. G. Bennett, Jr., Beulah Bennett, and widowed father J.C. Bennett (1849–1937), subject to his father’s life estate in the property (DB J-A Page 27). John C. Bennett was the son of Ansolet Riggsbee (1826–1892) and Alvin Bennett (1819–1862). It could not be determined when J.C. Bennett gained ownership of the land. His mother Ansolet died intestate in 1892; presumably her land was inherited by her children (including John) after that time. Ansolet’s father was Mark Riggsbee (1792–1865). Mark’s father (Ansolet’s grandfather) was Luke Riggsbee (1760–1838), purportedly buried in this cemetery.

Few deeds from or to Luke Riggsbee could be located. A deed dated 1797 from Hew [Hugh] Edwards to Luke Riggsbee references a 100-acre tract on Cubb Creek, adjacent to land owned by Luke Riggsbee, possibly the subject property. The 1790 census confirmed that Luke Riggsbee lived in Chatham County. A deed dated 1836 from Luke Riggsbee to his eldest son John E. Riggsbee (1787–1850) referenced a 75-acre parcel of land on Cubb Creek (DB A-D Page 370), likely part of the 1797 tract. It is possible that Mark Riggsbee inherited the property from his father or brother, and then willed it to his daughter Ansolet. The 1850 census indicates that Ansolet Riggsbee Bennett and her family lived next door to Mark Riggsbee in the general vicinity of the project area.

Many members of the Riggsbee and Bennett families are buried in the nearby Lystra Baptist Church cemetery. One acre of land was granted for the church in 1850 from Isaiah Riggsbee (DB A-Z Page 1); Luke Riggsbee’s brother. The first legible marked burial in this cemetery is dated 1864. Presumably any individuals whose deaths occurred prior to 1864 (and definitely prior to 1850) would not have been interred here.

Table 1: Luke Riggsbee Immediate Family Members

Name	Relationship	Born	Died	Burial Location/Comment
James Riggsbee	Father	1735	After 1835	Unknown*
Isaiah Riggsbee	Son of James	1778	1860	Isaiah Riggsbee Cemetery
Luke Riggsbee	Son of James, father of Mark	1760	1838	Unknown*
Elizabeth Riggsbee	Wife of Luke	1766	1850	Unknown*
John Riggsbee	Son of Luke	1791	c.1840	Unknown*
Ezekiel Riggsbee	Son of Luke	1791	c.1850	Unknown*
Mark Riggsbee	Son of Luke; Father of Ansolet	1792	1865	Likely Lystra Cemetery
Ansolet Riggsbee Bennett	Mother of J.C. Bennett	1826	1892	Likely Lystra Cemetery
Alvin Bennett	Husband of Ansolet	1819	1862	Richmond, VA (Died in Civil War)

**Unknown Burial Location; possible Luke Riggsbee Cemetery*

Results of Fieldwork

ESI archaeologists Melissa McKay and Terri Russ, and Terracon Staff Geophysicist Josh Lopez visited the purported cemetery location on 16 September 2019 (based on the coordinates recorded by the Chatham County Historical Association and the location shown on the Chatham County GIS Land Records Viewer). The purported cemetery location was on a slight side slope adjacent to a cleared transmission line corridor and adjacent to a spring. Several fieldstones were noted in the area along the edge of the cleared transmission corridor; however, these appear to have been pushed to the edge of the powerline corridor during vegetation management activities. None of the stones exhibited carving or modification suggestive of grave markers.

The crew utilized a ground penetrating radar (GPR) system to perform an upper profile geophysical survey of the area to determine the presence of any anomalies consistent with unmarked graves. Data was collected bi-directionally on approximately 5-foot spacing, with an approximately 8-foot depth of GPR signal penetration below the top of the existing surface. The area surveyed revealed no anomalies consistent with unmarked graves, which suggests that this area may not contain graves (or transmission line construction and maintenance had compacted or disturbed the soil to the point where the graves were no longer detectable).

Following completion of the field investigations, ESI contacted the Chatham County Historical Association (CCHA) to see if they had any additional information regarding the cemetery. Bev Wiggins, cemetery coordinator for the CCHA, was able to locate hand written notes from Gerald Oldham, who had visited the cemetery location in 1989. Although the cemetery was recorded on the North Carolina Cemetery Survey record as located 300 feet north of Lystra Road, the hand-written records indicated that the cemetery was located between the homes of William Burgess and Elizabeth Burgess Morton, approximately 25 yards from the road.

Given the discrepancy between the notes and the cemetery records, ESI made an additional visit to the property on 26 September 2019. Visual inspection of a thickly wooded area west of the William Burgess home and east of the former home of Elizabeth Morton revealed four to five depressions with adjacent uncarved fieldstones suggestive of graves. The GPR unit was used in an attempt to confirm the locations of the graves; however, the dense undergrowth prevented a clear reading. Regardless, the area appeared to match the notes from Gerald Oldham, who recorded five unmarked stones in the vicinity during his 1989 cemetery survey.

Conclusions and Recommendations

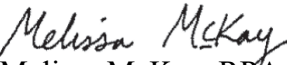
In summary, the area noted on the Chatham County GIS website as well as the North Carolina Cemetery Survey records as containing a cemetery is likely incorrect. Based on the handwritten notes of Gerald Oldham, made during his 1989 site visit, as well as field investigations conducted by ESI, it appears that the cemetery is located along the western edge of the parcel, and not the eastern edge of the parcel as previously thought. Luke Riggsbee is known to have owned this land from the late eighteenth century until his death around 1838; however, it is unknown whether his remains are interred in this area. Other possible interments include Luke Riggsbee's father James Riggsbee, who died sometime after 1835.




While the current investigation suggests the likely location for the Luke Riggsbee Cemetery, given the degree of vegetation in the area, it is possible that the cemetery boundaries extend outside of the area investigated. As such, there is a possibility that unmarked graves may be located outside of the area flagged for avoidance. In the event that unmarked graves are encountered during construction, *North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 70, Article 3* provides specific procedures to follow. If construction impacts to the known locations of marked or unmarked graves are planned and/or are unavoidable, ESI can advise the client regarding the disinterment and relocation of the remains under *North Carolina General Statute Chapter 65, Article 12* (Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries).

Sincerely,

Environmental Services, Inc.


Melissa McKay, RPA
Project Manager–Archaeology


Terri Russ, RPA
Department Manager–Archaeology

References

Cemetery Census.Com

2018 Luke Riggsbee Cemetery (E33.4).

<http://cemeterycensus.com/nc/chat/cem108.htm> Accessed 6 September 2019.

Heiser, Will M.

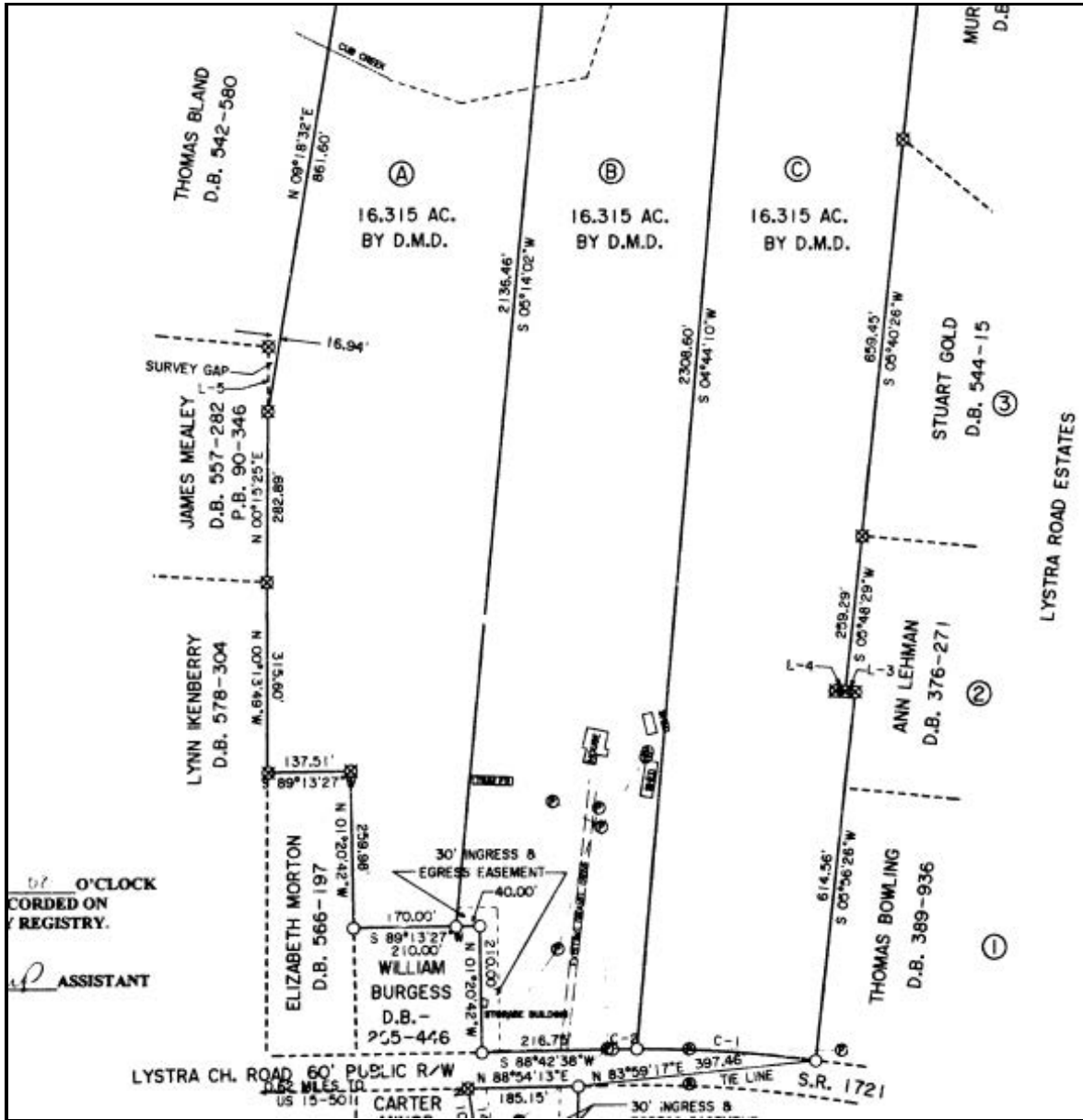
2002 *Luke Riggsbee Cemetery (E33.4)* North Carolina Cemetery Survey Form. Submitted by Chatham County Historical Association 23 July 2002. Form on file at North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

FIGURES



2019 Aerial Photograph

Original inspection location (purported cemetery) circled in red; cemetery location based on Chatham County GIS Land Records



Excerpt from Plat Book 2000 Page 2 Showing Parcel
 (cemetery location not depicted)



Archaeologist Melissa McKay Setting Up GPR Unit



View of Purported Cemetery Location, facing Northeast



View of Purported Cemetery Location, facing East
(field stones marked with pin flags for visibility)



View of Purported Cemetery Location, facing South along Transmission Corridor



View Towards Likely Cemetery Location, facing North from Lystra Road



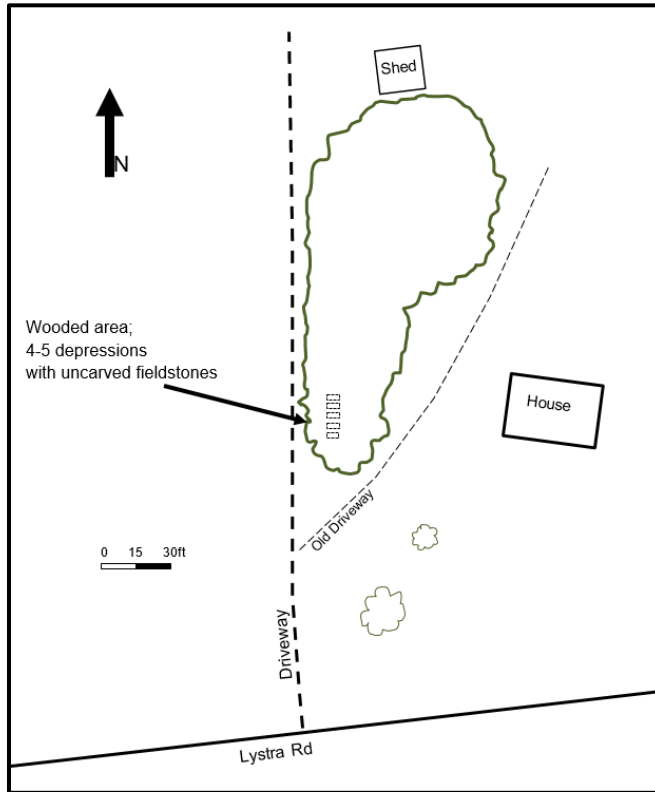
View Towards Likely Cemetery Location, facing West



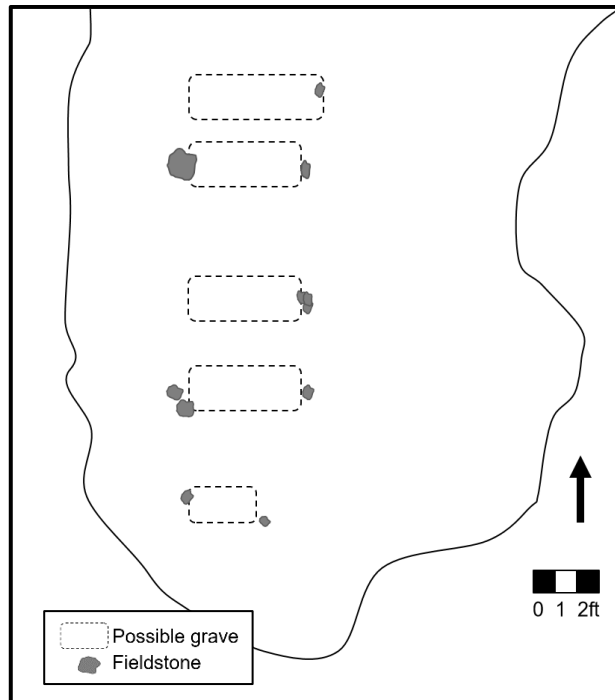
**View of Likely Grave, facing West
(pink flags denote likely grave)**



**View of Likely Cemetery Location, facing South
(pink flags denote possible gravesites)**



Sketch of Likely Cemetery Location
(Locations Approximate)



Sketch of Possible Graves
(Locations Approximate)



Areas Investigated