

NOTES H19.1 JOSEPH JOHN ALSTON (CHATHAM JACK)

Following removal of the rock wall in June 2018

Photos at the end of this document

NOTES ON REMOVAL OF CEMETERY WALL JUNE 2018

In June of 2018 neighbors of the St. Julia's Catholic Church reported to CCHA that the stone wall around the Joseph John Alston cemetery had been removed with large equipment and the stones piled some distance away. Contact with the church was made immediately to let them know that the removal was inappropriate and illegal and that steps needed to be taken to protect the gravesites. Many attempts were made to discuss a possible resolution, but no satisfactory discussions were held until February of 2019, when a new priest was in place and Alston descendant Steve Brooks met with him and other church officials. Brooks was satisfied that the new priest, Father Julio, would see that the wall was rebuilt using the original stones. No progress had been made in that direction as of October 2019 when CCHA volunteers surveyed and mapped the cemetery to help guide placement of the reconstructed wall. The survey team was led by professional archaeologist, Linda Carnes-McNaughton. She was assisted by Kirk McNaughton, Jim Wiggins and Bev Wiggins. Two site visits to the cemetery were made—on 10 Oct and 12 Oct 2019. Notes from those visits and communications with Father Julio and David Daughton, who was identified as the church's manager for the wall reconstruction, follow.

NOTES ON CEMETERY MAPPING 10 OCT and 12 OCT 2019

By Linda Carnes-McNaughton, archaeologist

I sat down after lunch and did a comparison of markers we mapped in the field to those on the Cemetery Census list. I think I have most of those we found accurately labeled (thanks to the close ups on the CC page, but of course we did not relocate # 22 the Quartz marker, and #23 is the large fieldstone you remembered but was no longer in situ. And then #18 marker with a simple B, I did not get into my notes. We have more that are not on the census list as well...at least two more fieldstone markers (if they truly are, we plotted them in, one was clearly embedded into the soil in the SE corner cluster). The other one could be aberrant. So guess we leave it for now.

We both realize this graveyard has been compromised so I figure we are lucky to get as much as can and consider it a WIN. Here are some thoughts to share with David Daughton [project manager for restoring the wall] and the priest [Father Julio]:

1. Based on aerial photography and GIS mapping the stone wall was originally 100 ft on all four sides and generally laid out in grid north (the perimeter is 100 ft outside edge of wall). Four metal fence posts were driven into the ground to mark the four corners and then tied with pink flagging tape streamers. The erosion fence was taken down as it was collapsed and obstructing mapping the perimeter. Pink pin flags were used to outline each section of the wall footprint.
2. Using the detailed photographs from various canvassers, it appeared to have been roughly 2 to 2.5 ft wide at the base and varied in height from 3.4 to 4.0 ft tall. The most intact sections appeared to be about 4 ft at its best. Some collapse had occurred prior to the wall being removed.
3. The perimeter wall was a dry-laid stone construction (not mortared) and composed of local fieldstones (meta rhyolite). Some photographs taken by cemetery canvassers can be used as a guide for

the reconstruction. Its height was mainly designed to keep cattle out but also low enough to see over the wall into graveyard as you approach it.

4. The four-hour mapping project relocated approximately 23 graves, mostly marked. Two graves previously recorded in the most recent cemetery census (#22 #23) were not relocated because the fieldstone marker had been taken up and removed when the wall was removed. Two other graves, not previously marked, were plotted in and appear on the map now. Both are fieldstones markers with no inscriptions. One linear depression (a possible unmarked grave) was also noted on the map on the north side of marker #5.

5. Two marble markers are on the ground and broken in half (#14 and #20). These need to be professionally mended and reinstalled in the area where the base is now (pin flagged).

6. A two color system was used to designate headers (pink flags) and footers (orange flags) in an effort to match footstones to headstones. This was mostly successful.

7. A scaled map (1: 20 ft) was drawn to capture the current graves and other features of this historic cemetery. This map is for file purposes and to accompany field photographs.

8. A few bricks were noted on the surface in the western half of the graveyard and it is unclear if they were used as surrounds on some graves, but were now scattered. A few pieces of iron (agricultural in purpose) were also noted on the surface. In addition, two large pieces of granite curbstone were mapped in the graveyard and appear to be intrusive. I am not sure if they mark later graves or once marked corners or what their exact purpose may have been but they appear more "recent" in origin (drill holes evident).

9. Other notes appear on the field map and three groundhog holes were also seen (fresh too). It is recommended that no soils be removed from the graveyard in order to maintain what remains of the original integrity of the landscape. Some fill dirt can be brought in to fill rodent holes and level out soil loss in front of a few markers (#8). It is recommended that stump killer be placed on the stumps instead of ripping them out which will also remove more original ground and could disturb unmarked graves.

10. An examination of aerial photos and those by canvassers indicated an entry (gap in the stone wall) once existed on the western side of the graveyard. Since the wall was removed prior to this field work, we could not confirm or see any evidence of that. Still it's logical to place an entry on the most level part of the graveyard (western side) and not the southern sloping area.

Feet

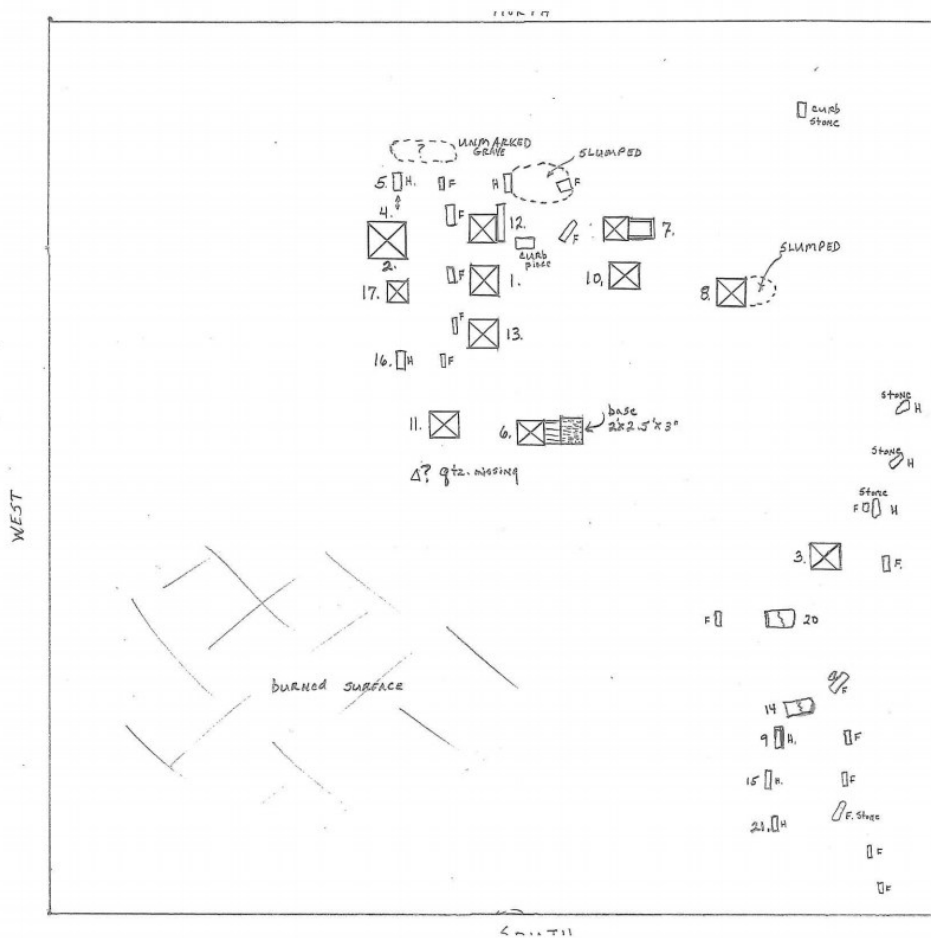
0 20

= Cemetery
Census
Numbers

4
N
EAST

OUTER EDGE OF
OLD STONE WALL
100 Ft.
INNER Edge of Wall
95-96 Ft.

F = Footer
H = Header
C = curly brace



Key

1. Alston, Ann Maria (Alston) (b. abt 1794 - d. 25 Jun 1852)
2. Alston, Eveline (Alston) (b. 29 Feb 1806 - d. 11 Nov 1891)
3. Alston, Fanny Ann (b. 5 Mar 1831 - d. 12 Jun 1864)
4. Alston, Gideon (b. 9 Sep 1806 - d. 24 Dec 1855)
5. Alston, Infant (b. Unknown - d. 1880) Infant daughter of G.P. and R.L. Alston
6. Alston, John J. [Jones] (b. 17 Mar 1792 - d. 18 Sep 1842)
7. Alston, Joseph J. (b. 15 Mar 1767 - d. 29 Apr 1841) [Chatham Jack Alston]
8. Alston, Joseph J. Jun (b. 17 Feb 1814 - d. 28 May 1842)
9. Alston, Junius A., [Jr.] (b. 21 Mar 1875 - d. 30 Aug 1876)
10. Alston, Martha [Kearney] (b. 22 Feb 1771 - d. Jun 1852)
11. Alston, Nathaniel M. [Macon] (b. 15 Dec 1801 - d. 2 Jun 1856)
12. Alston, Philip K. [Kearney Dawson] (b. 25 Dec 1811 - d. May 1852)
13. Alston, R. P. (b. Unknown - d. 2 Jul 1872)
14. Alston, Robert P. (b. 22 Jan 1871 - d. 24 Aug 1876)
15. Alston, Saltar Lloyd (b. 23 Jun 1872 - d. 3 Sep 1876)
16. Gregory, Sallie Alston (b. 23 Jul 1860 - d. 23 Sep 1862)
17. Gregory, Sallie E. (Alston) (b. 15 Aug 1840 - d. 22 Feb 1862)
18. Unknown, B. (b. Unknown - d. Unknown)
19. Unknown, B. (b. Unknown - d. Unknown)
20. Unknown, Baby (b. Unknown - d. Unknown)
21. Unknown, Baby (b. Unknown - d. Unknown)
22. Unknown, Unknown (b. Unknown - d. Unknown) grave marked by quartz fieldstone
23. Unknown, Unknown (b. Unknown - d. Unknown) grave marked by a large fieldstone

EMAIL TO FATHER JULIO AND DAVID DAUGHTON 15 OCT 2019

Dear Father Julio and David--

Thank you both for welcoming our little team of cemetery researchers on Thursday and for allowing us to return to finish up our work on Sunday. In the two visits, Linda, our archaeologist leader, led us through the procedure used to map all of the visible graves and markers in the cemetery. There could be additional graves but the only way to determine that would be to hire a firm to use ground penetrating radar, and even that could be inconclusive. As long as the interior of the cemetery is protected, it doesn't really matter that we don't know where all of the graves might be. We may need to come back later to fill in details on the map that Linda has prepared, but that work should not interfere with your progress on rebuilding the wall.

One thing we found during mapping was that two of the fieldstone markers previously photographed in the cemetery have disappeared. One was a small quartz stone and we know its approximate location relative to other markers. It was probably removed by someone who did not recognize it as a grave marker. The other was a large fieldstone marker. It is possible that the large stone is the one now on the west side of the cemetery under some of the fenceposts that are lying there. Please keep track of that stone until we can examine it closely to see if it might be the missing grave marker. If it is, we might be able to tell from photographs where it should be replaced.

We left our flags in place to mark the locations of head and foot markers. The bricks and other random rocks can be removed at some point, but let us be sure that we have all of the markers accounted for when that work begins, please.

I'm pasting below Linda's notes/recommendations about the cemetery. She notes the research done to determine, as best we can, the dimensions and features of the original wall. Hopefully, that information will guide your reconstruction. She also recommends steps to preserve what is left of the integrity of the interior. For example, she says that filling in depressions to level the site would be better than removing soil or pushing it around. The latter would be more likely to disturb graves. See her #9 below for more info.

As Linda notes, we used four of your T-posts to mark the four corners of the exterior dimensions of the cemetery. We hope that you will work with that footprint. Where grave markers are close to the wall, it will be necessary to provide some kind of protection so that they are not accidentally damaged. We hope that this information will be useful to your rebuilding efforts. I will send a separate email with additional information and some photographs. Please let me know what else might be useful to you. Linda will be away for ten days beginning Friday, so if you have questions for her, please get them to her right away.

I will send some attachments in separate emails.

Thank you for working with us to preserve as much of the cemetery as possible.

Beverly Wiggins

Linda's notes (see above) were attached.

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Jim and Beverly Wiggins

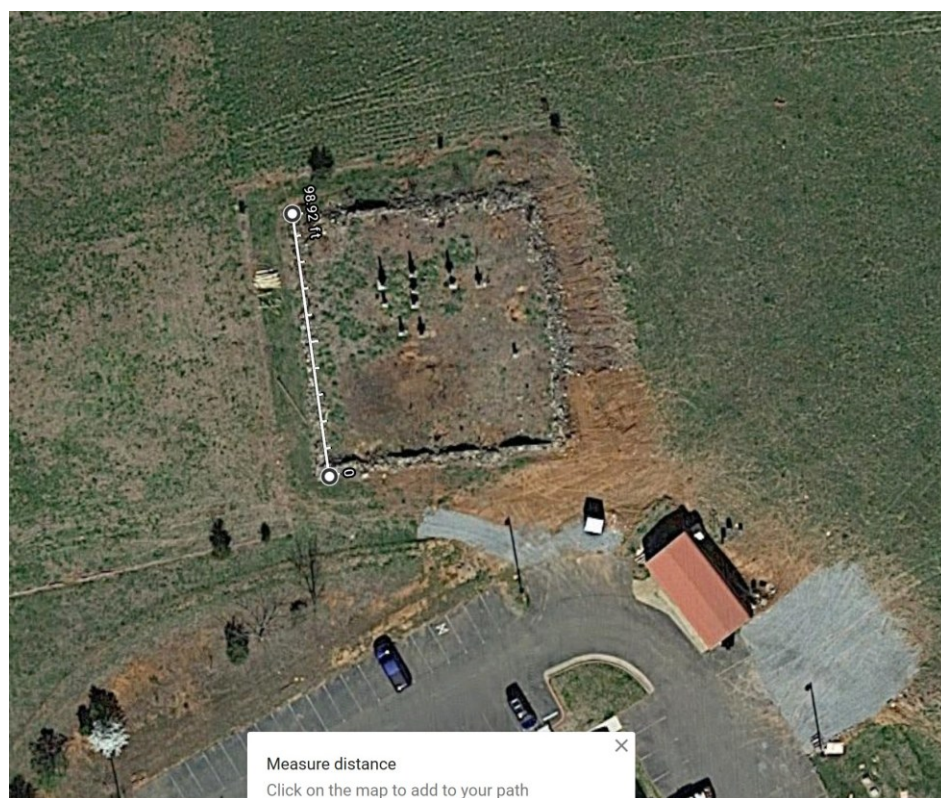
FAILED EFFORT TO HAVE THE WALL REBUILT

In 2021 the St Julia's Parish contracted with someone to rebuild the wall around the cemetery per the agreement with descendants. However, the contractor simply moved the rocks and soil, which had been piled at the edge of the property since the wall was removed, around the perimeter of the cemetery, an unacceptable outcome.

The Church's efforts to find an affordable way to reconstruct the wall were unsuccessful.

Subsequently, an agreement was reached between the Parish and descendants that alternative fencing could be used around the cemetery, and that stones from the original wall would be used to build planters and other landscaping features within and around the cemetery. A metal fence was erected in 2022, but as of June 2026, the reuse of the stones from the wall has not been accomplished.

GIS photo circa 2017 before wall removed.



Aerial photo from 2025 Chatham GIS.



Photos of cemetery wall in place:



Taken 2010 by Barbara C. Pugh showing original wall



Taken 2016 by Connie McAdams showing original wall



Taken 2016 by Connie McAdams showing original wall

Photos after wall removal



Taken 13 June 2018 by Beverly B. Wiggins showing removal of wall



Taken 13 June 2018 by Beverly B. Wiggins showing days after removal of wall



Taken 10 Oct 2019 by Beverly B. Wiggins after mapping the site



Taken 21 Feb 2021 by Beverly B. Wiggins after rocks from the wall were pushed back into place around the cemetery perimeter.



Taken 4 Nov 2022 by Beverly B. Wiggins after a metal fence was erected inside the perimeter of the dumped stones from the original wall.