

**DELINEATION OF AN ABANDONED CEMETERY
CITY OF NEWNAN**

COWETA COUNTY, GEORGIA

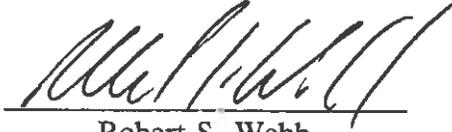
July 12, 1999

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July 12, 1999

Submitted to:

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R.S. Webb & Associates Project No. 99-125-001

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Pursuant to R.S. Webb & Associates' proposal (95-125-001p) to the City of Newnan dated May 28, 1999, an abandoned cemetery (hereafter referred to as the "Cemetery") was delineated, mapped and field marked. The study was conducted by Mr. Robert S. Webb (Principal Investigator) with the assistance of Ms. Mary E. Gantt (Co-Field Director), Mr. Doug Tilley and Ms. Summer Ciomek (Field Technicians) during the period of June 1 through July 6, 1999. Mr. Bobby Olmstead, a interested resident of Newnan, volunteered assistance during this period.

The Cemetery is located in Newnan, Georgia and covers an area of approximately 4.4 acres (Figure 1.1). The tract containing the Cemetery is bounded on the east by Farmer Street, on the north by C.J. Smith Park, on the south by private residences lining Washington Street and Cole Street, and to the west by undeveloped land (Figure 1.2). The Cemetery is accessible from Farmer Street and Cole Street.

The Cemetery is forested, but had been recently bush-hogged to clear undergrowth (Figure 1.3). The area supports a canopy of hardwoods, mostly oak, mixed with a few pines and cedars. Many of the trees are more than 75 years old. Several large oaks and cedars are probably more than 100 years old. There is little understory vegetation.



Map Source: 7.5 Minute USGS Quadrangles Newnan North (1965 PR 1982)
 and Newnan South (1965 PR 1973 and PI 1981)

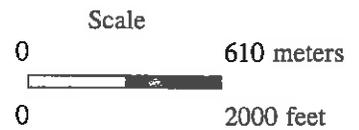


Figure 1.1 Project Area Location Map

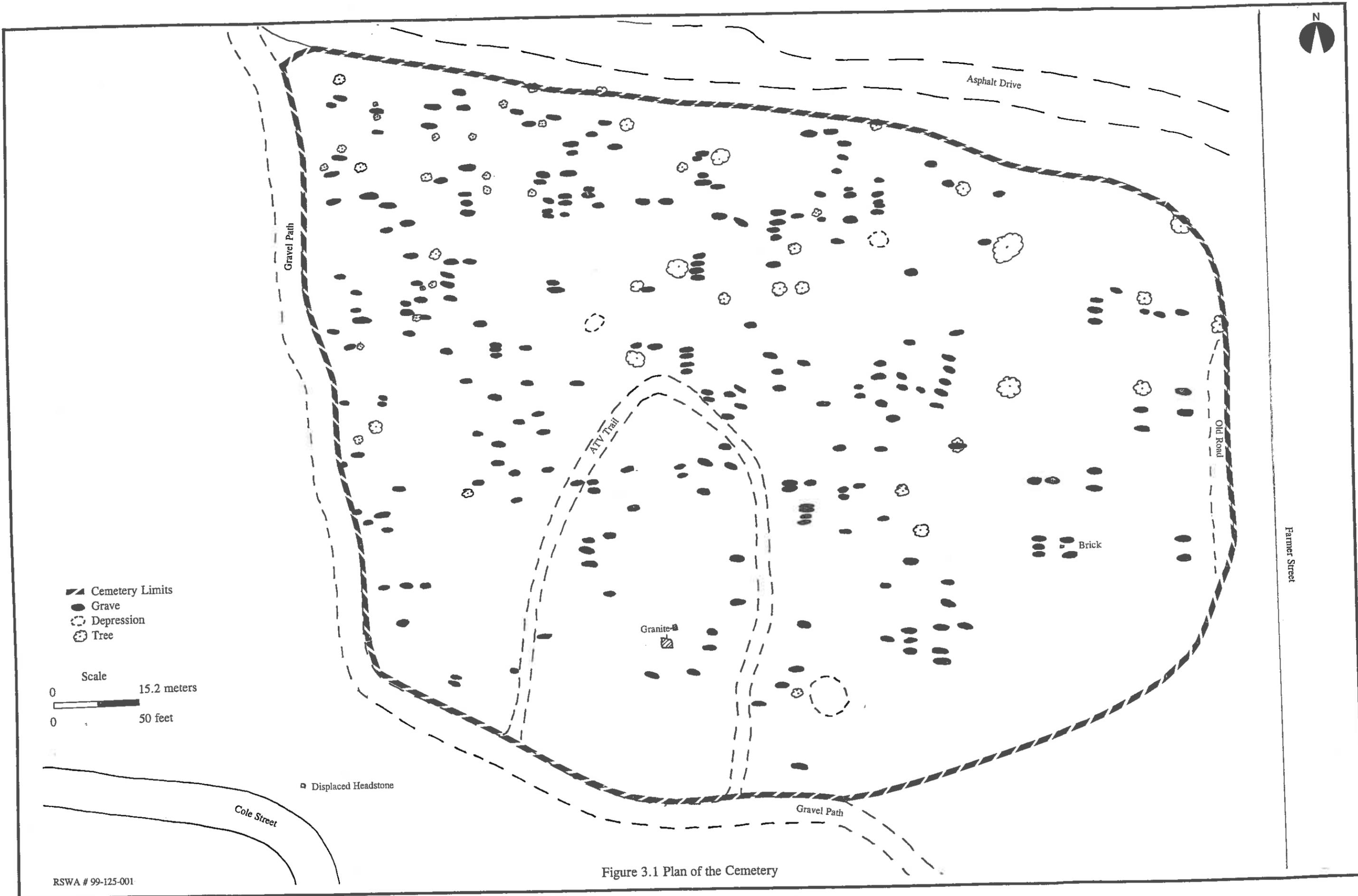


Figure 3.1 Plan of the Cemetery



Facing East



Facing North (Note ATV Trail in Center)

Figure 1.3 Selected Views of the Cemetery

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Archival Research

Research was conducted to estimate the approximate age of the Cemetery and to determine if historically significant individuals are known to be buried there. The research was conducted at the Coweta County courthouse in Newnan, the Male Academy in Newnan, the Georgia State Archives in Atlanta and the various resources of the University of Georgia Library in Athens. The following sources were examined:

- Historic and recent maps
- Early aerial photographs
- Coweta County histories
- Coweta County cemetery records
- Selected Coweta County deeds and plats

2.2 Cemetery Delineation and Mapping

Based on a tax map supplied by the City of Newnan (Figure 1.2), the tract containing the Cemetery covers approximately 5.7 acres. A more precise estimate of the Cemetery was made based on grave depressions and probing. In some locations, grave depressions were obvious. More often, surface litter was selectively removed to expose grave depressions. A four-foot tile probe was used to determine the length of obvious graves and the nature of questionable depressions. Probing was also used to search for graves in areas with no depressions. Probe intervals ranged from 1.0 to 10.0 feet along transects spaced 3.0 to 10.0 feet apart. The probe interval depended on tree locations, disturbances and the locations of obvious graves. The head and foot of each detected grave was marked with numbered pin flags. It is quite likely that some graves, particularly those of children, were not be detected. However, the extensive level of probe sampling across the Cemetery area was considered adequate to determine the limits of the Cemetery. The above techniques were used across the Cemetery and within a buffer zone of 30 feet from the outermost graves. The limits of the cemetery were marked in the field with red/white flagging tape.

The Cemetery boundaries, numbered grave locations and other internal features of the Cemetery (i.e., trees, stones, etc.) were mapped using a transit-based grid and foot tapes. The Cemetery was photographed from selected views.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Archival Research

In *Coweta County Cemeteries* (1986), there is a reference to an unknown cemetery on Cole Street. The cemetery location map has this cemetery in the general vicinity of the project area. A windshield survey of properties along Cole Street indicates that the only location likely to contain a cemetery is the current study area.

Other references to the Cemetery are vague and provide little useful information in terms of the Cemetery's age and the individuals who may be buried there. The 1826 Coweta County Land Lottery plats for Lots 25, 26 and 27 in the 5th District make no references to a cemetery in the study area. An 1826 map of the Newnan area commissioned by the Surveyor General, makes reference to a "Negro Cemetery" in the vicinity of the subject cemetery; however, the location is not clear and no boundaries can be established from this map. A 1919 Bureau of Soils Map indicates that Farmer Street was not a through street in the vicinity of the Cemetery at that time. Aerial photographs dating to 1942 and 1949 indicate that the subject Cemetery has had a thin forest canopy and clear understory since at least the 1930s. Mr. Bobby Olmstead (personal communications, June 1999) indicated that as a child he remembered the Cemetery being used as a "cow pasture" for the mill community associated with Newnan Cotton Mills. This description fits the vegetation signatures on the 1942 and 1949 aerial photographs. No direct references are made to a cemetery at the current study location in the deed research. There are 20th century deeds with references to "Cole" Cemetery and a "Coulored" Cemetery; however, these references can not be directly linked to the subject cemetery, because no historic plats with descriptive information are available. A 1994 plat of the adjoining Curtis Davis property (to the west) refers to the subject property as the "Newnan Cotton Mills Foundation Cemetery Tract." Mr. Olmstead and many of the visitors to the Cemetery referred to the subject property as a "slave cemetery" or a "slave and Indian cemetery."

3.2 Field Investigations

The Cemetery was delineated and recorded by R.S. Webb & Associates during the period of June 1 through July 6, 1999 (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). No formal cemetery boundaries (i.e., fences, stone monuments, elevated pads) were marked or observed during the current study. One head stone was located near Cole Street at the southwest corner of the study tract. Based on probing, surface inspection and distances to closest graves, it appears that this marker is displaced. It may mark a corner of the property rather than a grave.



Typical Grave Facing Northwest



Typical Grave Facing Southeast

Figure 3.2 Selected Views of the Cemetery Showing Typical Graves



Central Section of Cemetery Facing North
(Note large oak trees in background)



Along West Edge of Cemetery Facing North

Figure 3.3 Selected Views of the Cemetery Showing Examples of Vegetation



Gravel Path Along South Side of Cemetery Facing East



Cemetery From Asphalt Drive Facing Southeast

Figure 3.4 Selected Views of the Cemetery Showing North and South Boundaries

Based on the distribution of 249 grave depressions and possible grave depressions, the Cemetery measures 550 feet east-west by 350 feet north-south (4.4 acre). Other than the one displaced head stone, no other formal stone markers were observed. Several flat pieces of fieldstone suitable for grave markers were observed during the delineation. Only a few of these are associated with ostensible grave depressions. Most are either displaced head/foot stones or natural to the area.

No exotic ornamental plants were observed in the Cemetery, which would fit the profile of a 19th century slave or freed-man cemetery. *Vinca minor*, a common groundcover species in cemeteries, is present and flourishing. There are also some old cedar trees present along the south edge of the Cemetery. While isolated areas within the Cemetery may have been altered over the years, the numerous large trees scattered across the property indicates that the Cemetery has not been logged or cleared for an estimated 100 years or more. Thus the overall land use pattern of the project area generally fits its function as a cemetery.

Reviewing Figure 3.1, it is evident that nearly all of the grave depressions are oriented east-west, which is a historic Christian tradition. There are seven to eight loose clusters of grave depressions that are aligned in rows. These groups probably represent familial clusters. A number of areas across the Cemetery exhibit no grave depressions. Many of these areas show a level of ground disturbance that may mask grave depressions. In some cases, probing resolved this problem; however, the depth of disturbance or nature of the soils in some of these localized areas was such that graves could not be delineated through probing.

Given the size of the Cemetery, it is unusual that no standing head/foot stones are present (excluding the one displaced headstone near Cole Street). Several explanations are possible. Wooden markers may have been used instead of stone. This seems unlikely given the availability of fieldstone in the area. Another possibility is that the head/foot stones were displaced by animals during the "cow pasture" episode, or removed so the area could be more easily maintained during historic times. Whatever the case, there is only one cut headstone and a few scattered flat fieldstones that may have been used as headstones. Occasionally, a brick or brick fragment was found near a grave depression. Bricks were used in late 19th and early 20th century cemeteries as markers and as border stones.

4.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Management of the Cemetery Under Georgia Law

The Cemetery must be treated appropriately under Georgia Code Title 36, Chapter 72. This Code describes the required procedures for preserving and relocating cemeteries. R.S. Webb & Associates recommends that the Cemetery be preserved in place and protected from future impact. Georgia Code Title 36, Chapter 72, Section 5, Paragraph 5, specifies that a proposal for avoiding the cemetery is required to obtain a permit from the municipal or county authority where the cemetery is located. The following preservation plan is provided in anticipation of complying with the Paragraph 5 requirement.

It is recommended that the Cemetery and a buffer zone around the cemetery be preserved in place. The area recommended for avoidance and protection is the flagged cemetery boundaries plus a buffer zone of up to 30 feet. The proposed preservation area, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, includes most of the 5.7-acre tract containing the cemetery. It is recommended that the Cemetery preservation be left in a natural state. While it is not required under law that the owner of the property containing a cemetery maintain the cemetery, it is advantageous to keep the grounds mowed and clear of debris (e.g., household discard, beverage cans, etc.).

4.2 Management of the Cemetery under the National Historic Preservation Act

At present, treatment of the Cemetery under the National Historic Preservation Act (Public Law 89-665) is not anticipated. This Act is invoked under certain conditions when a project requires a federal action such as a permit, license or funding. The information provided in this section will be useful in managing the cemetery if the project requires a federal action in the future.

In 36 CFR Part 60.4, the National Historic Preservation Act provides criteria (through the National Register of Historic Places) for determining the significance of cultural resources. A federal bulletin, Historic Preservation Bulletin 41, is dedicated to the treatment of cemeteries under the National Historic Preservation Act. According to this bulletin, an abandoned cemetery may be considered significant under four conditions:

1) The cemetery is associated with a significant historical event: The Cemetery is not, according to local history, the site of any significant historic event. It may be one of the earliest cemeteries in the area, if the Cemetery is the "Negro Cemetery" identified on the 1826 Surveyor General's map of the Newnan area. Regardless, the Cemetery appears to be more than 50 years old and by definition, is a historic site.

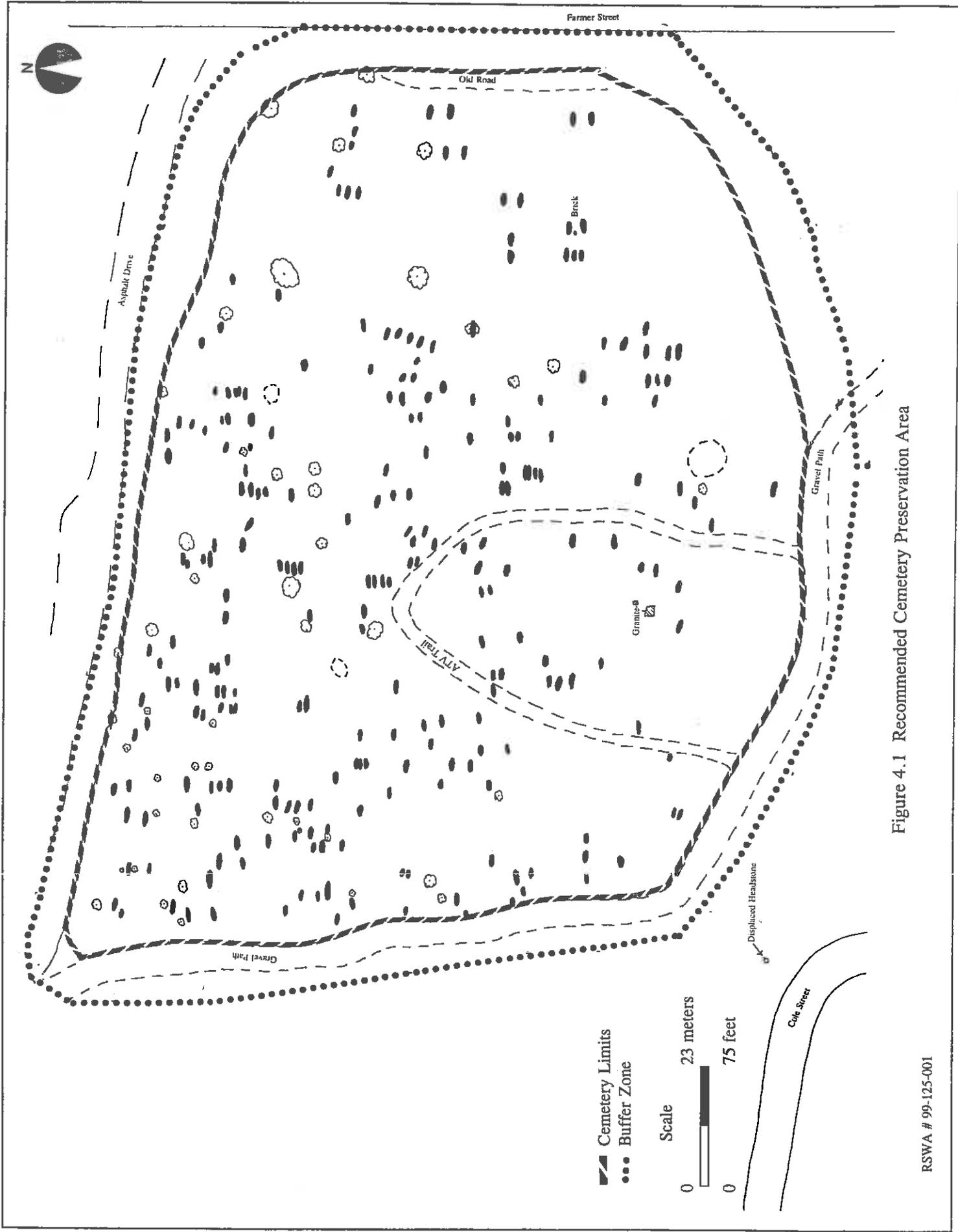


Figure 4.1 Recommended Cemetery Preservation Area

2) *The cemetery is associated with prominent historical persons or families:* Based on current knowledge, the Cemetery is not the resting place of people who necessarily influenced local history or the history of Coweta County. The problem here is that there is no way to identify the individuals buried in the Cemetery to determine if they exerted such influence.

3) *The cemetery exhibits distinctive characteristics of a particular period, type of construction or high artistic value:* The physical features of the cemetery and the internal structure of the cemetery exhibit no extraordinary craftsmanship or ingenuity. In fact, there is only one inscribed stone, and it is displaced.

4) *The cemetery is likely to yield physical information of historical importance:* Presumably one of the oldest cemeteries in the area, the Cemetery is likely to contain information on 19th century mortuary practices of the groups using the cemetery. Biological data (skeletal biology and pathology) on early settlers and or slave/freed-man populations may also be present if skeletal materials are well preserved. Again, a primary issue is that the identities of the groups using this facility are unknown.

Based on the above considerations, the Cemetery appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion 4 and possibly Criterion 1. If a federal action is required on the project, the preservation plan provided in Section 4.1 would be an appropriate means of treating the Cemetery.