AN 18TH-CENTURY FAMILY CEMETERY
SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

Archaeological excavations of a small family cemetery in Sussex County, Delaware were sponsored by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). The site was located on U.S. Route 13 (Lower Paris Road) between Georgetown and St. Jones.

The cemetery was located on property within the state-owned right-of-way, and it had been unmarked and forgotten since its acquisition by the State of Delaware in 1951. The cemetery was a small family burial plot that was used during the late 18th century, possibly between 1775 and 1799. The cemetery contained a few individuals representing the entire range of the human life cycle, from infants and a young child to elderly individuals in their 70s or 80s. Among the adults, there were three males and three females.

Located on a low ridge of well-drained soil, the site is typical of rural family burial grounds used from the Colonial period to the mid-19th century. Western Europeans traditionally buried their dead in community burial grounds close to churches. However, the practices of the American colonists were less formal, and funerals and burials may have taken place at any time. The individuals were buried in graves that were partly filled with sand to the west and then left as they were. Following practices that date from the beginning of the Christian era, all of the individuals were buried in simple coffins that included wooden headstones.

Archaeological analysis determined that the individuals were of European ancestry and provided general information regarding the quality of life in the late 18th century. None of the skeletons provided any indication of the cause of death, however, several dental diseases were apparent among the adults in the population. Teeth were quite heavy, apparently the result of a diet of unsanitary or tasty foods.

FIELD EXCAVATION

This cemetery was unexpectedly discovered during investigation of a patio foundation. Full excavation of the cemetery required the use of excavation methods and techniques approved by the archaeologist. The excavation also involved the use of excavation methods and techniques approved by the archaeologist. All of the bones would be tested and curated. The geosites were examined in situ using a variety of techniques, including sample processing and analysis. A total of two skeletons were recovered from the site. The skeletons were examined in situ using a variety of techniques, including sample processing and analysis. All of the bones would be tested and curated. The geosites were examined in situ using a variety of techniques, including sample processing and analysis. A total of two skeletons were recovered from the site. The skeletons were examined in situ using a variety of techniques, including sample processing and analysis. All of the bones would be tested and curated. The geosites were examined in situ using a variety of techniques, including sample processing and analysis.