

# BURIALS AT HAWSKEYE

A Case of Unintentional Discovery of Human Remains

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## INTRODUCTION

On August 11, 2014, construction workers on the site of a new home noticed human remains in the wall of the basement excavation. The property is designated as tax parcel 335-12.00-396 in Lewes, Sussex County, Delaware (Figure 1). The subdivision is known as Hawkseye. Lots are still available within the subdivision. Mostly these are former agricultural field with some wooded fringe around water features such as Pothooks Creek. This location is a small point of land that drops off to Pothooks Creek (Figure 2).

When the remains were spotted, the police were notified of the find, as required by law. The Delaware State Medical Examiner was then called. His assessment was that the remains were not of a recent criminal activity but were rather archaeological in nature. He then notified the State Historic Preservation Office.

At the same time the land owner was notified and he contacted Edward Otter, Ph. D. archaeologist to act as his representative. Representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office and Edward Otter were both on site that day. Some human remains were recovered and a plan was developed to protect the site from an immediate threat of rain. This allowed for more thoughtful planning about how to move forward with the process required by the law. The disposition of the discovered remains falls under Title 7 Chapter 54 of the code of Delaware.

The Hawkseye development is located within an area of Delaware known to have a long history of human presence. Native Americans have lived in this area for at least 12,000 years. When Europeans arrived in the area in 1632 the Lewes area was occupied by the Sicconese Indians. Archaeology has identified a number of Native American sites along the courses of Pagan Creek and Wolfe Creek. The Townsend site, about three quarters of a mile up Pothooks Creek has been subject to extensive excavation. Numerous pits and artifacts were recovered. The pottery has been used to define an archaeological type (Blaker 1950; 1963). Fifty eight Native American burials were found at that site (Stewart 1963). One feature contained artifacts of European manufacture and date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Omwake 1963).

Other archaeological sites also exist in the Hawkseye area. There are seven recorded archaeological sites within a half mile of the cemetery. Most of these were reported during broad area surveys and little is known about the age and size of the sites. The sites represent both historic and prehistoric occupation.

The Dutch were the first Europeans to settle this portion of Delaware. The fort they built in 1632 was destroyed by the natives and its exact location remains unknown. In 1663 Pieter Cornelius Plockhoy and 24 families landed in the hopes of building a utopian colony. A year later the English, commanded by Robert Carr, burned the colony leaving a single barn.

While the buildings and crops may have been destroyed, some people stayed on. English settlers moved in and by 1671 there were eleven households (Craig 1977). The creator of the list, Cornelius Wiltbank, is believed to have landed with Plockhoy. A list of landowners from 1682 lists 65 persons and by 1685 there were 129 (Proprietary Papers). By 1685 Europeans had spread themselves across the landscape with known residents on Rehoboth Bay, Indian River, the Broad

Kill River and beyond. The area that includes Hawkseye was historically known as Pasture Neck. Pasture Neck included at least 920 acres, as attested by deeds and was probably larger.

## FIELD DATA

Upon arrival in the field it was obvious that a large basement area had been excavated and that graves were visible in the east wall. Representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office had collected some human remains from within the excavation (Plate 1). Three graves were noted within the east wall of the basement excavation but no time was available to clean the walls to search for more. A large amount of back dirt from the excavation had been placed on the west and east ends of the excavation: the soil on the east end resting on area where graves are located (Plate 2).

It was agreed that the best course of action in the short term was to cover the wall in plastic to prevent erosion in a predicted rain (Plate 2). After the rain the plastic was removed and the walls cleaned in an effort to determine if any other graves could be identified. Only the three graves were noted and these were numbered Features 1, 2 and 3 beginning on the south end (Figure 3). No artifacts have been found on site. A metal detector did not locate any items either on the back dirt or at the exposed grave shafts.

Feature 1 was the widest burial. In profile the grave shaft was easily discernable (Plate 3). A pelvis, some vertebrae and long bone fragments were visible in the wall. Feature 2 had vertebrae showing (Plate 4). Skull fragments were found on the ground at this location and were collected by the State Historic Preservation Office personnel. The third feature had an unusual shaped shaft (Plate 5). A mandible was seen protruding from the burial and was left in place.

The top of feature 2 was partly uncovered with a shovel to determine the shape of the burial. It was found that the burial is generally rectangular in shape indicating an extended burial. The grave is oriented in a general east to west direction with the head at the west end (as indicated by the recovered skull fragments) in keeping with Christian burial practices (Plate 6).

As a Christian style burial it is clear that this burial, and by extension, the cemetery, is of the historic period rather than being prehistoric in age. The apparent lack of coffins is indicative of early burials, possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similar burials were found at the Patuxent Point site in Calvert County Maryland. At that site only half of the burials had coffins (King & Ubelaker 1996). The people believed to be interred at Patuxent Point were believed to be middling planters: land owning farmers. Recent work at Avery's Rest in Sussex County Delaware also encountered 17<sup>th</sup> century burials. Avery was a wealthy individual with influence in the courts. All of the burials on that site contained coffins. This raises the possibility that the Hawkseye burials, if they prove to not have coffins, were of lower economic means. Chemical analysis of the remains could be informative in this regards.



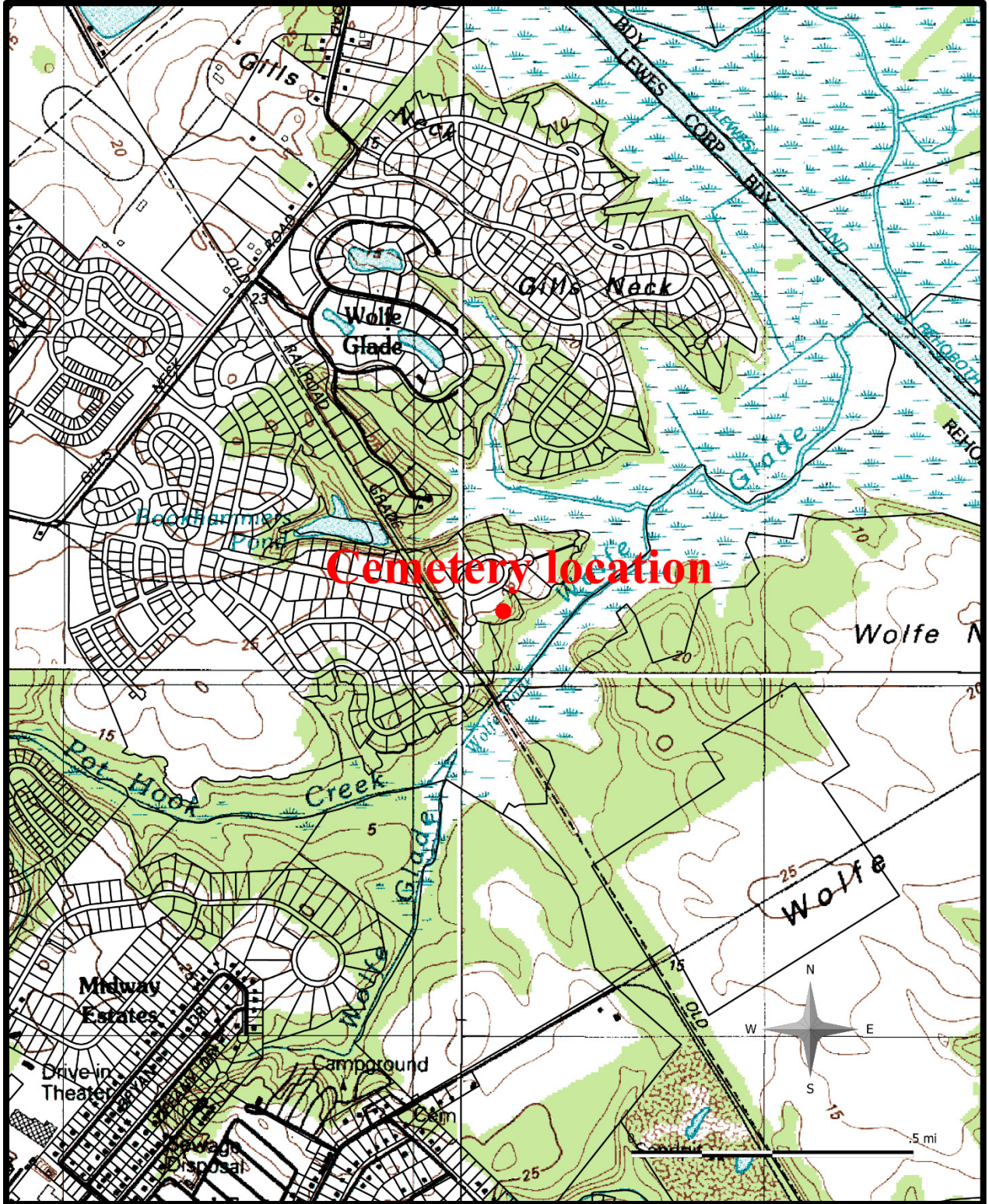


Figure 1. Cemetery Location. U.S.G.S Topographic Map Cape Henlopen, De.

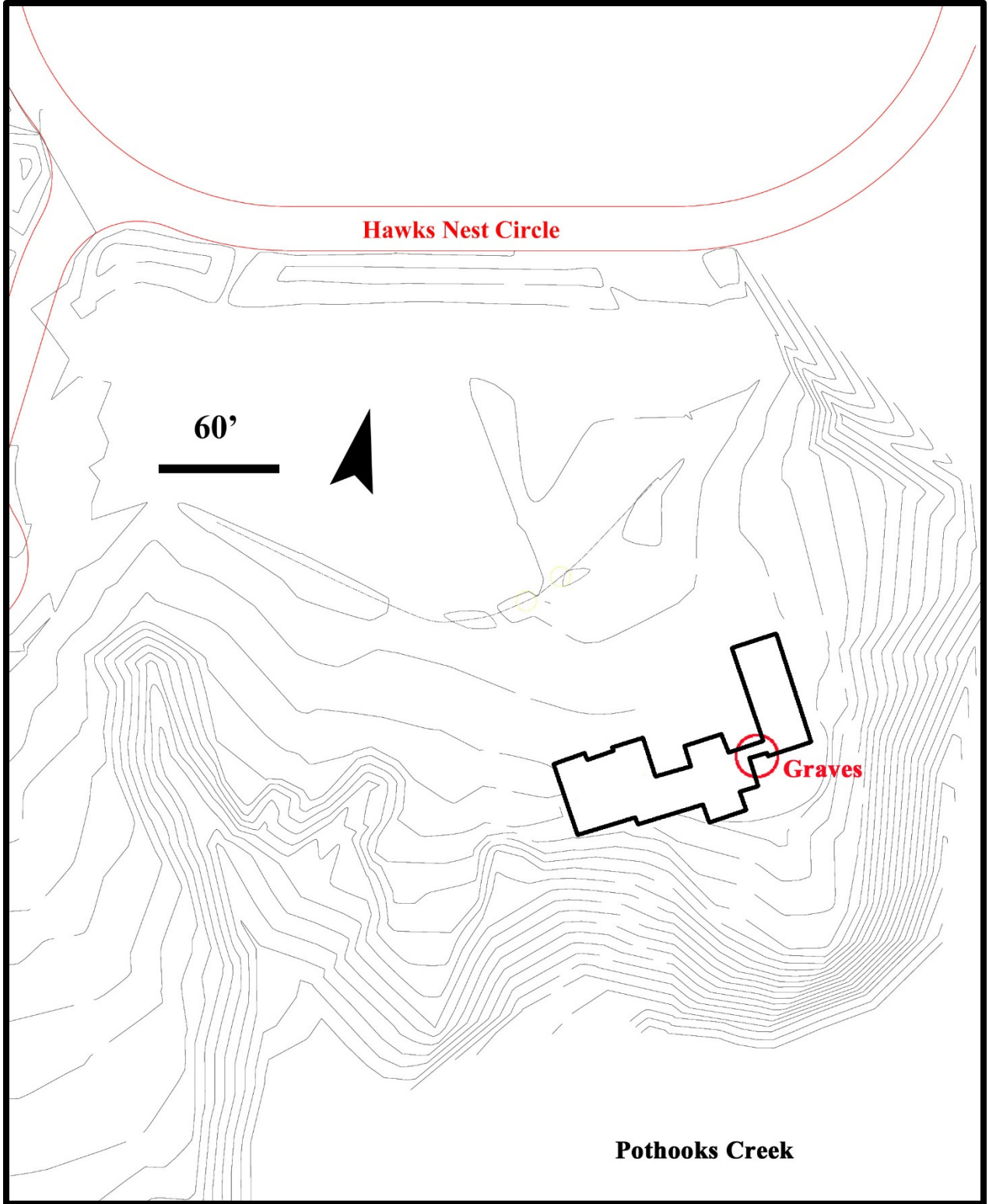
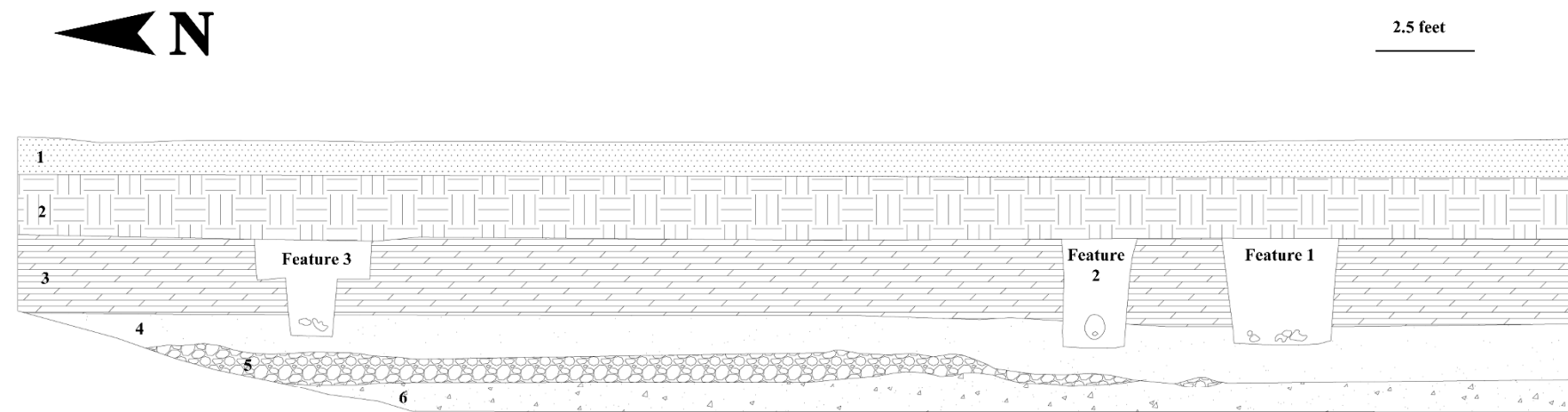


Figure 2. Site Layout





- 1: 10yr6/4 sand loam with roots
- 2: 10yr6/4 sand loam
- 3: 10yr6/6 sand loam with lamellae
- 4: 10yr5/6 silt loam
- 5: 2.5y7/2 sand with pebbles
- 6: 2.5y7/4 sand

Figure 3. Soil Profile of the east wall of the basement excavation

Leave blank



## OSTEOLOGICAL DATA

The human remains recovered to date include a badly broken skull, vertebrae and a long bone fragment. The skull and six vertebrae were found in association with Feature 2. A long bone fragment, a hip fragment, and a vertebra were recovered from a back dirt pile. The hip from the back dirt appears to be male. Since a hip is seen in Feature 1 and the pelvic areas in features 2 and 3 are believed to be in place, it is likely that at least one grave was removed and the remains are within the back dirt.

The recovered remains are being examined by Dr. Karen Rosenberg of the University of Delaware. The palate is intact and provides an impression of a Caucasian in its shape and jagged transverse palatine suture. The lower nasal margin is sharp, also. The jaw suggests a female. There is some shovel shaping of the incisors. While often seen as a marker of Native American remains it is not an exclusive trait and is found in other populations. The preponderance of the available evidence suggests someone of European descent.

## ARCHIVAL RESULTS

Archival research was conducted to ascertain whether any record exists concerning this cemetery and who might be interred there. Research was conducted at the Sussex County Courthouse and the Delaware State Archives. Land records, wills, orphans court documents were examined. The initial step was to construct a history of land ownership. All of the deeds and probate records associated with the land and individuals were read with the goal of locating any mention of the cemetery.

### Land History

Tracing land history is a process done from the present to the past using deed references. The Hawkseye development was land owned by J. G. Townsend & Company (Appendix I). In 1940 they acquired this parcel measuring 250 acres from Sussex Trust Company (328/113). The land had been owned by William H. Bookhammer who defaulted (322/375).

The Bookhammer house was west of the Junction and Breakwater Rail line (Figure 4). The area where the cemetery is located was wooded in 1937 (Figure 4). William Bookhammer purchased the land in 1913 from Joseph and Anna Willard (186/140), by which time the Willards had moved to Philadelphia (Federal Census). Anna Willard acquired the property from the heirs of Charles Gibbons in 1897 (126/119). Gibbons did not live on this property but there was a farm on the land (Figure 5). He is listed in the 1888 tax assessment as living in Pennsylvania. The deed to Anna Willard more specifically stated he lived in Philadelphia as does the deed where Gibbons purchased the land from Edward Burton in 1871 (82/53).

It appears that Edward Burton did live on the property. He is shown as the land owner on the Pomeroy and Beer's Atlas of 1868 (Figure 6). The house where Burton lived is indicated in the same location as the house that Gibbons, Willard, and Bookhammer owned. Edward Burton purchased the land in 1867 from William B. Wolfe of Philadelphia (75/434). William inherited the land from his mother Mary Wolfe and his father William Wolfe in 1854 (61/257). William B's mother is listed in the tax records from 1822, when William Sr. died, until 1856. It is possible the Wolfes lived on the tract as the 1848 Coast and Geodetic Survey map indicates a house on the property (Figure 7).

William, Mary's husband, inherited the property from his father Reece Wolfe Jr. in 1789. Reese Wolfe Jr. purchased the tract from the estate of Jacob Phillips in 1762 (9/151). Jacob Phillips purchased the land from Reese Wolfe Sr. who inherited the land from his father, Francis Wolfe, in 1757. Francis bought the land from Thomas Lawrence of Philadelphia in 1746 and Lawrence acquired the land in 1710 from William Burton (1/284). It is known from deeds that William Burton lived in Accomac County, Virginia although he and owned a number of tracts in Delaware. William Clark Jr. and Honor Bedwell, widow of William Clark Sr. signed the land over to William Burton who is listed as being of Accomack County, Virginia. William Clark Sr. acquired the land in 1689 from Martha Jacobs, widow of Albertus Jacobs (1/216).

In 1690 a resurvey of the land called Pasture Neck was recorded (Figure 8). Albertus Jacobs is shown on the portion that includes the Hawkseye area. Thomas Oldman and William Clark are also shown as having parts of the tract. In its resurvey configuration there was 920 acres of land. In 1693 Albertus Jacobs is recorded as buying this 920 acres from Thomas Oldman and William Clark (1/146). The land is identified in the resurvey as having been in part land that was granted to Abraham Clement and Otto Wolgast in 1674. Records in New York identify the land patented to Clement and Wolgast as being a 600 acre tract.

Otto Woolgast is known to have been at the Whorekill prior to 1674 and likely arrived with Cornelius Plockhoy in 1663. He was certainly there in 1672 when Thomas Jones from Somerset County Maryland attacked the settlement and helped himself to the goods of various people (Md Archives vol 65 pg 55).

In the reference of the transfer of land to Clark in 1688 the land is identified as having a house occupied by Edward Marshall. There were at least 2 Edward Marshalls, one died in May 1688 the other in 1696. In 1694 Edward Marshall was granted a four acre lot in the town of Lewes. Other mentions of Pasture Neck reference John Barker in 1688 when he is taken to court for stealing three head of cattle (Horle 1991: 600). In 1687 James Colle, a servant of Thomas Branscom, was found dead at Pasture Neck near Pot hooks Creek (Horle 1991: 448).

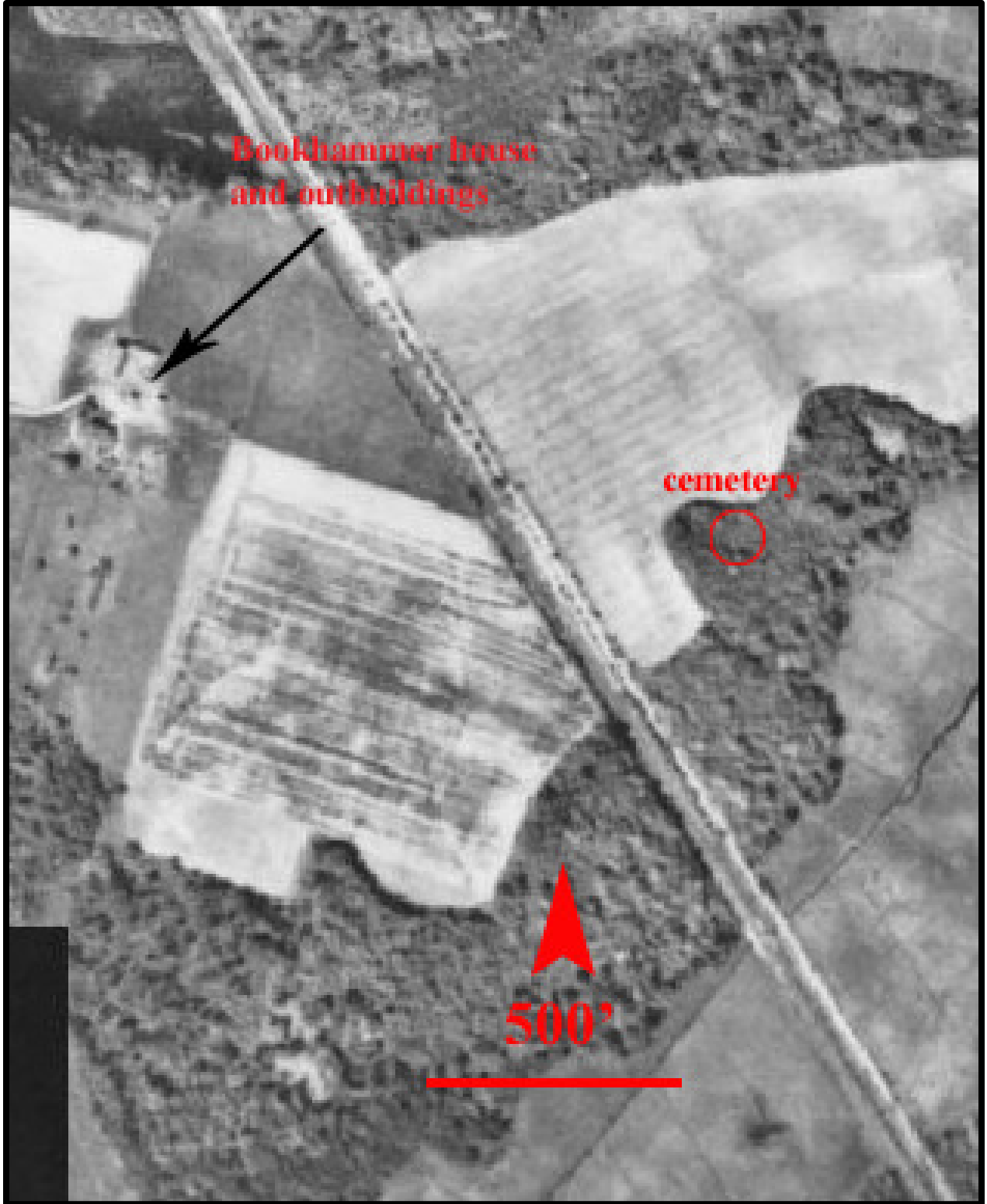


Figure 4. 1937 Aerial Photograph

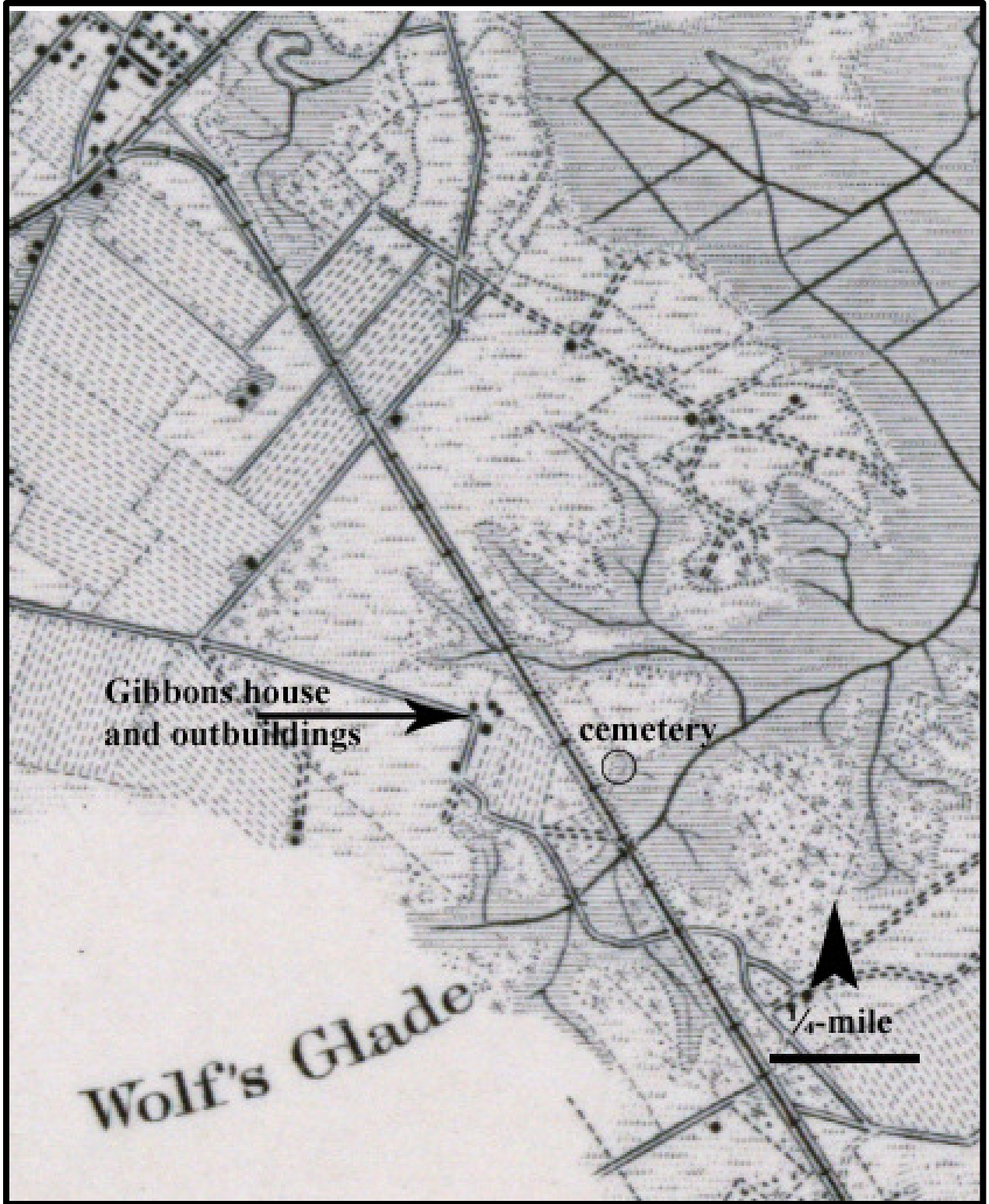


Figure 5. 1895 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Map



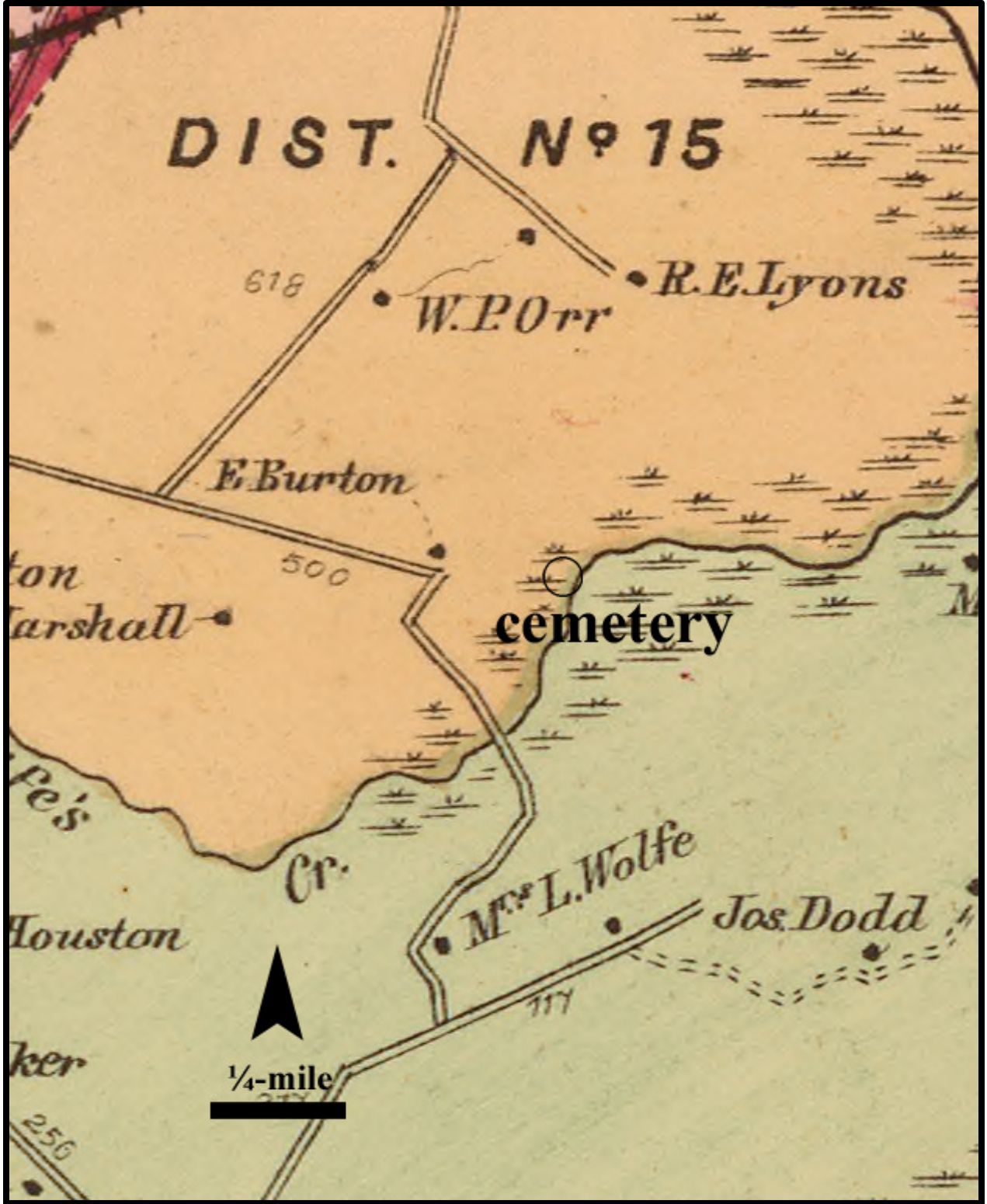


Figure 6. 1868 Beers Atlas of the State of Delaware, Lewis and Rehoboth Hundred



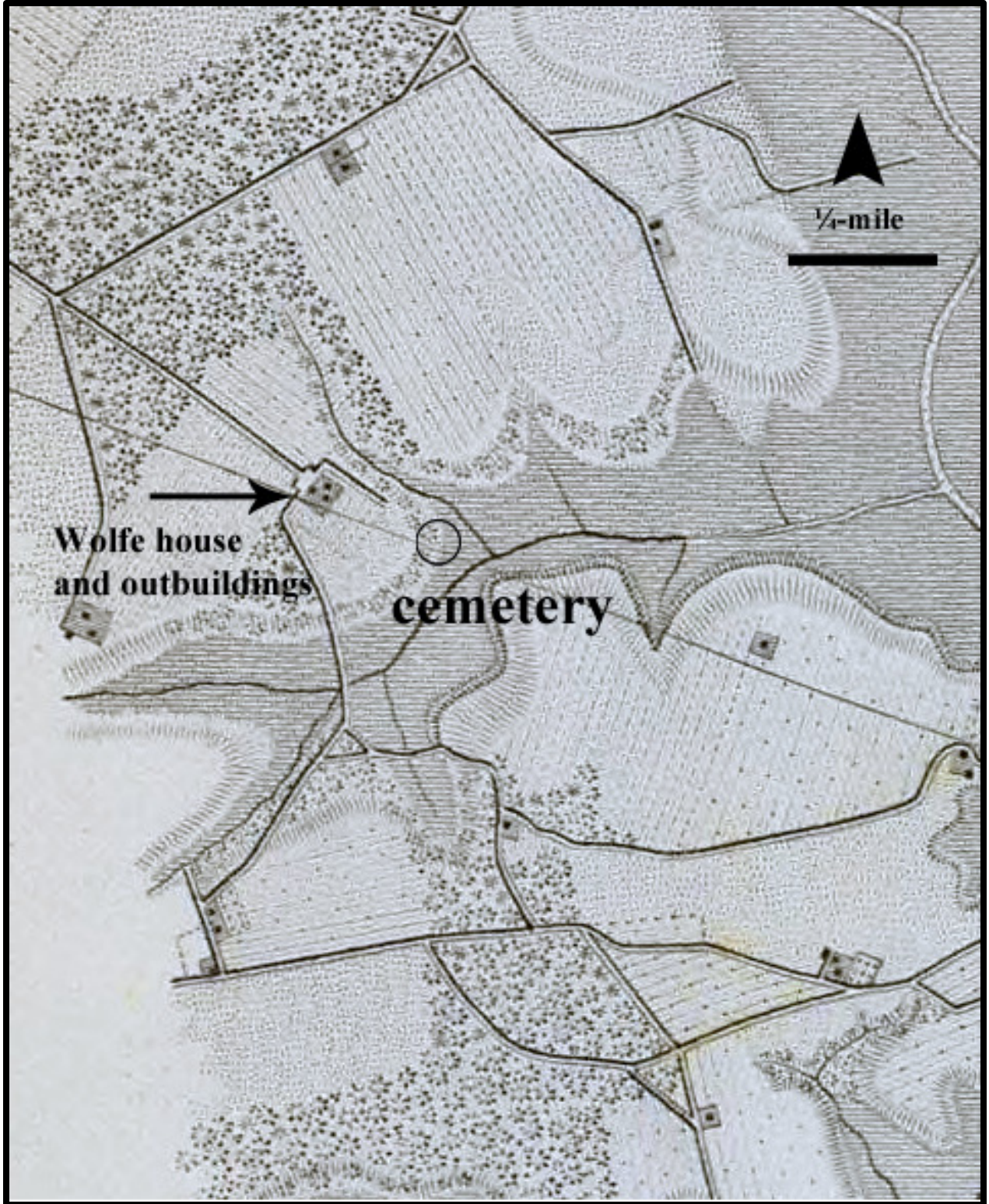


Figure 7. 1848 Coast and Geodetic Survey Map



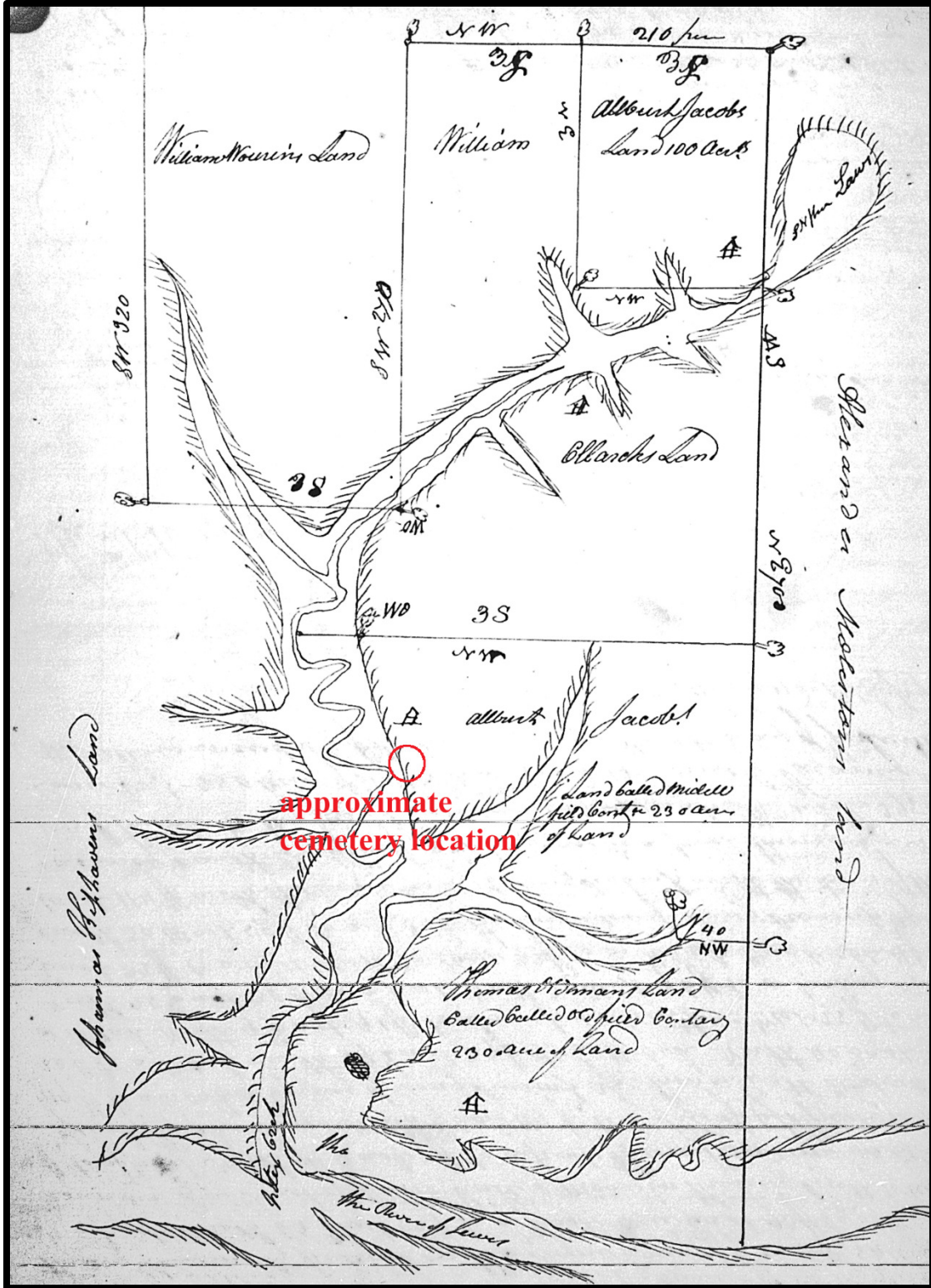


Figure 8. 1690 Map of Pasture Neck (Surveys and Warrants B p557)

William Clark owned many pieces of land and was constantly buying and selling property. William Burton also owned many pieces of land but apparently never resided in the area. His sons did take up residence on Long Neck. Thomas Lawrence lived in Philadelphia. It appears that the land was owned by people who lived elsewhere at least until 1746. It is not certain if Francis Wolfe lived on this tract or elsewhere but it is fairly certain that Reese Wolfe Jr. did live on Pasture Neck beginning as early as 1762.

The Wolfes owned this portion of Pasture Neck from 1762 until 1867 when Edward Burton bought the property. It seems that Edward Burton lived on the property as he is identified on the Beer's Atlas. He lived there less than 5 years and is the only family identified in the census records. He, his wife Harriet and daughter Eula all moved to North Murderkill Hundred. Charles Gibbons, the next owner beginning in 1871 lived in Philadelphia. The Willards may have lived on the land as did William Bookhammer. Considering the probably 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century age for the burials, the graves do not likely belong to any of the land owners.

## CONCLUSION

The discovery of a cemetery within the Hawkseye neighborhood has provided a series of challenges in attempting to identify the grave occupants. Archival research has failed to locate any mention of the cemetery. For a large part of the land history it was operated by tenant farmers with absentee landlords. The name Pasture Neck may be a reference to its early use as indicated by the cattle stealing reports found in the county records (Horle 1991).

It is not known where the members of the Wolfe family are buried. Many family members are buried in St. Peters in Lewes. The known graves are later in time. This likely reflects the increased use of stone markers during the nineteenth century. If the graves were members of the Wolfe family they would likely have coffins and potentially brick vaults that also became very common during the nineteenth century. For what it is worth, no cemetery is shown on the historic maps, in particular the Coast and Geodetic maps which often include such features.

All told, there is no information on which to identify potential individuals within the graves. The graves are clearly from the historic period based on the configuration of the graves. The available information suggests that these are Caucasians. The apparent lack of coffins would be consistent with graves dating to perhaps the 17<sup>th</sup> or early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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- United States Coast and Geodetic Survey  
1895 Delaware Entrance Coast Chart No. 124
- United States Federal Census

## PLATES



Plate 1. Original discovery





Plate 2. Excavated basement area with graves covered in plastic.





Plate 3. Feature 1





Plate 4. Feature 2





Plate 5. Feature 3



Plate 6. Feature 2 partly exposed from above



APPENDIX I: TABLE OF LAND OWNERSHIP

| Date       | Grantee               | Grantor  | Description  | Reference |
|------------|-----------------------|--|--|-----------|
| 10/10/1940 | J. G. Townsend & Co   | Sussex Trust Co  | 250 acres marsh and woodland<br>60 acres upland and marsh<br>Pasture neck n. side pothooks creek           | 328/113   |
| 3/18/1940  | Sussex Trust Co       | Edward Suthard, Sheriff<br>Land of William H. Bookhammer | 250 acres marsh and woodland<br>called Pasture neck<br>60 acres upland and marsh<br>n. side pothooks creek | 322/375   |
| 6/14/1913  | William H. Bookhammer | Joseph W. Willard & Anna Willard                         | 250 acres marsh and woodland<br>called Pasture neck<br>60 acres upland and marsh<br>n. side pothooks creek | 186/140   |
| 8/14/1897  | Anna M. Willard       | Joseph Neff et al, heirs of Charles Gibbons, Jr.         | 250 acres marsh and woodland<br>called Pasture neck<br>60 acres upland and marsh<br>n. side pothooks creek | 126/119   |
| 7/29/1871  | Charles Gibbons       | Edward Burton  | 250 acres north side pothooks creek  | 82/53     |
| 2/23/1867  | Edward Burton         | William B. Wolfe   | 250 acres of land and marsh  | 75/434    |
| 9/19/1854  | William B. Wolfe      | Henry Hall et al trustees<br>Estate of William Wolfe     | 240 acres<br>10 acres  | 61/257    |
| 1789       | William Wolfe         | Reese Wolfe  |  | Will      |
| 1762       | Reese Wolfe Jr.       | Jacob Kolloch executor<br>Will of Jacob Phillips         |  | 9/151     |
| 9/16/1757  | Jacob Phillips        | Reese Wolfe  | 250 acres called Pasture Neck  | 9/151     |
| 1754       | Reese Wolfe           | Francis Wolfe (father)                                   |  | 7/69      |
| 1746       | Francis Wolfe         | Thomas Lawrence  |  |           |
| 8/2/1710   | Thomas                | William Burton   | 250 acres called Pasture Neck  | 1/284     |
| 8/2/1710   | William Burton        | Honor Bedwell<br>Widow of William Clarke Jr.             |  |           |
| Feb 1702   | William Clarke Jr.    | William Clarke Sr.                                       | 250 acres called Pasture Neck  | 1/90      |
| 3/2/1698   | William Clarke        | Martha Jacobs  | 250 acres called Pasture Neck  | 1/216     |

|             |                                  |  |   |                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
|             |                                  | Widow of Albertus Jacobs   |   |                                  |
| 1697        |                                  | Court verification of title of land belonging to Albertus Jacobs, decd |   | 1/152                            |
| 1/4/1693    | Albertus Jacobs                  | William Clark & Thomas Oldman  | 920 acres   | 1/146                            |
| Before 1691 | Clark & Oldman                   | Abraham Clement & Otto Woolgast  | Resurvey land originally patented to Clement & Woolgast | Surveys & warrants pages 556&557 |
| 1688        | William Clark                    | Elizabeth Carter, widow of Otto Woolgast (remarried to William Carter) | Land next to Alexander Moleston                         | Horle page 443                   |
| 1674        | Abraham Clement<br>Otto Woolgast | Edmund Andross (patent)  |   | Surveys & warrants pages 556&557 |