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## Shades of gray

UT anthropologists illuminate plans for cemetery lighting

By **MATTHEW CHIARO**, [chiarom@knews.com](mailto:chiarom@knews.com)  
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Technology and history collaborated Wednesday at a 156-year-old Knoxville cemetery.

A group from the University of Tennessee's Archaeological Research Laboratory went to the Old Gray Cemetery on North Broadway and used radar equipment to survey land for the placement of new light posts.



The cemetery received a community development block grant from the city of Knoxville to place 12 light posts down the main drive, Old Gray Cemetery Executive Secretary Alix Dempster said.

The concern for the cemetery is making sure the light posts aren't put in the ground at a place where a grave exists but was left unmarked. UT project leader Nicholas Herrmann said his group used a ground-penetrating radar for a scanner to try detecting any disturbances below.

"We still have to process the data," Herrmann said. "In a few instances, we've seen more

evidence of pits."

Herrmann said the cemetery has good maps, but because it was established so long ago, the association wants to be certain before continuing with the project.

Herrmann said the radar could detect under ground between 6 and 8 feet.

"It's collecting constantly," Herrmann said.

Using the radar, the group tries to pick up pits, the edges of burial pits or the surface of a vault.

"We probably wouldn't be able to pick up skeletal remains," Herrmann said.

Older graves wouldn't have a vault, and wooden coffins wouldn't be as easy to detect, he said.

After the data is analyzed, Herrmann said a Geographic Information System software package would be used to pull the surveyed points together and make a map for the cemetery.

After a map is produced, the cemetery association can determine locations for light posts.

Dempster said she learned about using the radar detection from a college student visiting the cemetery.

"It's amazing the kind of classes that use Old Gray Cemetery for research," Dempster said. "It was just by happenstance that I found out about it."

According to the Old Gray Cemetery Association, the roads were originally placed so every gravesite was beside a carriage trail or walking trail. Those roads were eventually removed for more plots. The paved road in the cemetery now has gravesites close on both sides.

The Old Gray Cemetery has been the burial place for generations of families since its establishment in the middle 1800s. It's one of the oldest organized cemeteries in Knoxville.

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AMY SMOTHERMAN-BURGESS  
NEWS SENTINEL

University of Tennessee graduate student Palmyra Moore, left, surveys the Old Gray Cemetery in downtown Knoxville on Wednesday, along with Department of Anthropology assistant Desiree Ketteringham, middle, and Nicholas Herrmann, UT project leader.



AMY SMOTHERMAN-BURGESS  
NEWS SENTINEL

Project leader Nicholas Herrmann of the UT Department of Anthropology maps headstones at the cemetery. A group from the university's Archaeological Research Laboratory is surveying the cemetery for placement of new light posts.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### Old Gray Cemetery

- Established in 1850
- Dedicated in 1852 when lots were sold at a public auction
- Named after the English poet Thomas Gray
- Part of the Civil War Heritage Trail
- Who's buried there: several Confederate and Union Army veterans; Charles McClung, Knoxville's first surveyor; William G. Brownlow, former Tennessee governor and U.S. senator; Cornelius Coffin Williams, father of playwright Tennessee Williams; and 27 former mayors, among other notable people

Source: Old Gray Cemetery Association



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