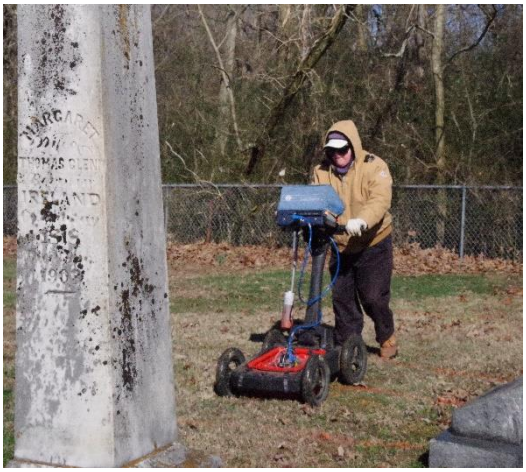
Geophysical survey at St. Patrick Cemetery, Old Section

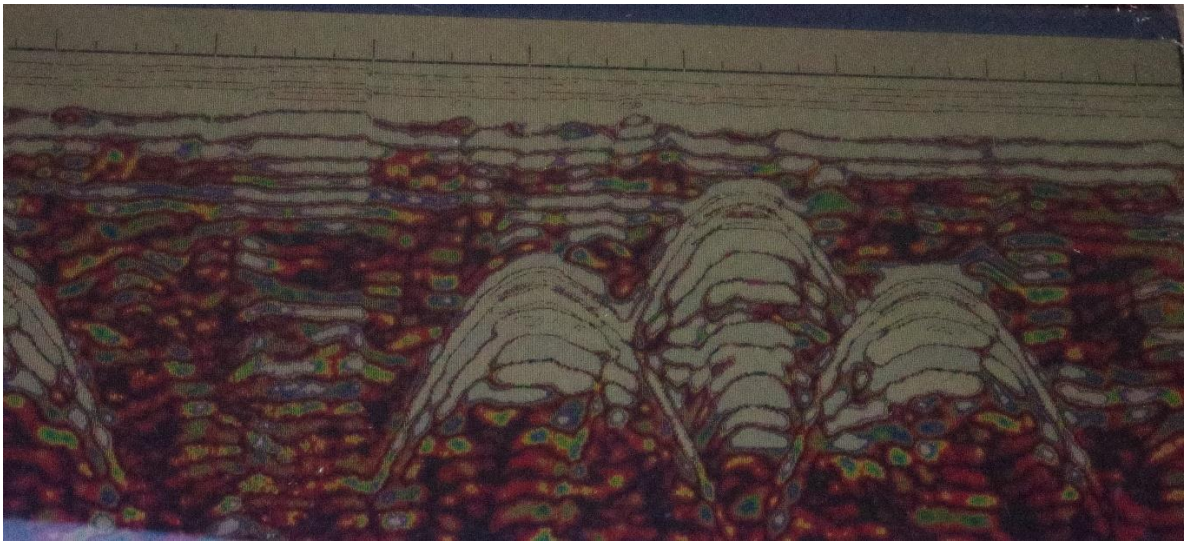
Michael Bradley and Tommy Hooper
February 10, 2019

A geophysical survey using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) was conducted by GeoModel Inc on Friday, February 8, 2019 at the old section of the Saint Patrick Cemetery. The survey was conducted to determine the location of unmarked graves. The oldest tombstones in the cemetery date to 1858, but older graves are likely to be present and markers have been displaced and lost or destroyed through the years. An inventory was conducted in the 1950's identified about 220 burials based on the death records in the Parish that did not have tombstones in the cemetery. The survey located about 95 graves that are currently unmarked.



Matt Turner with GeoModel Inc. used the non-invasive GPR to identify grave locations by detecting coffins, vaults, or even disturbed ground, and excavation features. In some parts of the Old Section, the survey could determine that the ground had been disturbed, but individual graves could not be distinguished.

Ground-penetrating radar uses high frequency radar signals that are transmitted into the ground. The radar signals are reflected from subsurface structures. The results are transmitted to a computer screen and displayed as a series of lines that vary as the signal reflects from subsurface features such as a coffin, vault, or disturbed ground. The image below shows the effects of the radar signal reflecting from a series of unmarked graves in the cemetery.



The graves located by the GPR survey were marked on the ground with orange paint and survey flags were later placed on the graves. Temporary markers were placed to aid in maintaining the location of the of the graves and in constructing a map of the old cemetery.