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The Sam Goode Cemetery, Mecklenburg County, Virginia

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New South Associates completed the documentation and relocation of the historic African-American Sam Goode Cemetery in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. The cemetery is located on a point of land at the confluence of Butchers Creek and the Roanoke River (John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir) which is threatened by erosion and has been inundated during flooding. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers contracted New South Associates, Inc. to remove burials from the cemetery while Dale Tankersly, Funeral Director for the Farrar Funeral Home of South Hill, Virginia, was responsible for the reinterment of these remains. The archaeological contract is administered by the Savannah District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under the supervision of Julie Morgan. Kerr Reservoir itself is under the administration of the Wilmington District and its cultural resources are overseen by Richard Kimmel.

The Sam Goode Cemetery is named for the single legible marked grave in the cemetery, that of Sam Goode, who died in 1917. Located on the slopes of the point, a total of 99 graves had been identified during previous surveys by John Clauser from Of Grave Concerns and Richard Kimmel. The U S Army Corps of Engineers' acquisitions records for the property indicate that 120 graves were identifiable at the time the property was purchased by the federal government in the 1940s. The cemetery is informally arranged and indistinct; burials occur as segments of rows which follow the contours of the point on general north-south lines. Graves are marked with fieldstone head and foot stones and in a number of instances appear to be unmarked. Faint engravings can be discerned on some of these gravestones, but none are legible with the exception of that of Sam Goode. A total of 155 burials were identified and removed during the archaeological study.

Bill Henry is the project archaeologist in charge of the removal. The field research team included Alex Caton, Sean Norris, Laurie Griesmar, Greg Harmon, Nancy Esposito, and Matthew Kinne. Dr. Thomas A. J. Crist of Kise Straw & Kolodner serves as the Principal Investigator for the osteological component of the project, with Sean Norris performing the *in situ* evaluations of the remains and determining the basic demographic profile for each individual prior to relocation. Dr. Arthur Washburn conducted the dental anthropological analyses of the individuals.

There is little formal documentation for the cemetery. Archival research by historians Reg Pitts and Wade Catts of John Milner Associates reveals that the Goodes were African-American tenant farmers on the property in the late nineteenth century. The property at that time was known as Richland Farms and was owned by Colonel J. Thomas Goode, an European American. The 1880 census identified ten African-American families working as tenant farmers for Colonel Goode: Tazewell Goode, Shadrach or "Sherrick" Goode, Lewis Goode, Wilson Goode and Daniel Goode; two Lockett families: Tom and Charles Lockett; and the families of John Lewis, Noah Murphy and William Henry Jones. The tenant community at Richland Farms appears to have dissolved prior to World War I, a period in which many Mecklenburg African Americans sought better and more varied economic opportunities in northern cities.

While the African-American Goodes and their neighbors were evidently the users of the cemetery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of burials and archaeological findings point to a longer period of use. The cemetery appears to have come into existence as an antebellum African-American cemetery associated with a series of plantations which once occupied the point. This succession dates back to Richland Plantation, established in 1765 by Colonel Robert Munford III.

In 1782, Mumford was assessed for 93 enslaved African Americans (Simmons 1987:12); this number may have fluctuated through the years. A good number of these enslaved African Americans would have been housed in separate quarters some distance from the manor house. It is of note that the Munford family established a private cemetery for the use of the family, and it is possible that they would have allowed the enslaved Africans living on the plantation to establish a burial ground. The Munford plantation main house was located several hundred meters northwest of the Sam Goode Cemetery on the same landform which terminates at the point. The Munford family cemetery is located to the north of the main house along the road leading to the house.

In 1801, Munford's son William sold Richland Farm to Thomas Wilson, a farmer and storekeeper of Mecklenburg County. Wilson sold Richland Farm to Francis Watkins, Sr. of Prince Edward County in 1811. In that same year Watkins sold 588 acres including the location of the Sam Goode Cemetery to his son-in-law Samuel Lockett. Lockett soon moved himself, his wife Salina Ann Watkins Lockett, their children, and a large number of enslaved African Americans to their Richland Tract. Samuel Lockett became a prosperous tobacco planter, militia colonel and local politician. By 1840, he had 56 enslaved laborers cultivating over 1,200 acres.

Lockett's son Henry acquired the property in 1851, and in 1852 sold the property to James Whittice. According to the 1850 Census, Whittice was the owner of 15 enslaved African Americans. He would die without heirs in 1865 and Colonel John Thomas Goode would acquire the property at auction in 1869.

The occurrence of the names of former planters and landowners among those of the African-American tenant farmers suggests the formation of a stable African-American community. Lockett, Wilson, and Goode all appear as first or last names within the late nineteenth-century tenant community at Richland Farm. This suggests that the African-American tenant farmers living at the site at the time were likely the direct descendants of enslaved African Americans who were brought to this tract during the antebellum period. It appears that the cemetery came into existence in the nineteenth-century plantation era. Some of the descendants of the plantation communities appear to have continued to reside at Richland Farm after the Civil War and presumably continued to use the cemetery. Several of the Goode's would help to establish the Greenwood Baptist Church after 1886. However, Pitts and Catts note that the earliest marked graves in the church cemetery date to the 1930s. The Sam Goode cemetery is thus believed to have served the local African-American community from the early nineteenth century through circa 1917.

Archaeological evidence reveals the formation of the cemetery and its organization. The most recent graves appear to be at the southern end of the cemetery, the end of the point, directly

overlooking the Roanoke River/the Kerr Reservoir. While the preservation of skeletal remains in this area is poor, coffin hardware recovered from several interments indicate that these burials were made in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Moving farther away from the river, burials become older as well as less clearly identified. In this area, a number of burials dating to the antebellum era have been identified, based on diagnostic materials found with the remains. These artifacts include a military button dating to ca. 1812, other buttons manufactured in the 1850s, and a seated Liberty dime dated 1854. The latter had a hole punched in its top for wear as an adornment.

Other diagnostic artifacts include beads. One burial contained 93 blue seed beads, likely of Venetian manufacture, and of apparent early to mid-19th century manufacture. These beads were found in the neck region of an infant burial. A second infant burial yielded three hexagonal blue beads from the neck region. These beads were manufactured in Czechoslovakia in the mid nineteenth century and are drawn glass beads with twelve ground hexagonal corners. None of the burials removed contained material clearly dating to the Colonial period. It is possible that the Sam Goode Cemetery is one of two African American cemeteries on the property, one created once the limits of an earlier Colonial cemetery were reached.

The bead identifications were made by Alex Caton. Caton's (1997) MA thesis, *Beads and Bodies: Embodying Change in Bead Practices in Banda, Ghana*, notes that beads had a medicinal function, particularly in regards to preventing illnesses among children. She observes that:

Most women who owned medicinal beads note a difference between ones that prevent illness and madness, and ones that cure sickness. A woman known as a medicine woman showed me different treated beads that have different tasks An imported blue, faceted bead (most likely an old trade bead) is used to prevent illnesses associated with the chest. A string with black tubular beads is worn by a newborn, so that the mother will be able to have other children without illness. Another woman suggested that certain beads were worn to prevent convulsions and to keep evil spirits away (Caton 1997:32).

Caton's ethnographic research suggests that the beads identified at the Sam Goode Cemetery may have had similar medicinal associations.

Physical anthropology of the individuals unearthed at the Sam Goode Cemetery indicates that preservation varies considerably. Those located closest to the shore of the lake comprise only eroded long bone fragments and poorly preserved teeth, and in some cases individuals were represented only by dark stains in the soil. Interments located higher on the hill and thus farther from the water are better preserved, although they appear to be older than the burials found closer to the lake. The best preserved individuals include full dentitions and intact crania suitable for osteometrics, although none of the burials include observable pubic symphyses, the portion of the skeleton that provides the most accurate information regarding an individual's sex and age range at death. In general, erosion of the periosteal and articular surfaces of even the best preserved remains is extensive; consequently, opportunities to study the frequency and distribution of degenerative joint disease and other forms of pathology among this population sample are limited.

Forty of the individuals excavated at the Sam Goode Cemetery were sufficiently preserved to allow the project's physical anthropologists to conduct fairly complete cranial or dental analyses. Nine of these individuals were children under 16 years of age. Dental analyses indicate that the older adults buried at the site suffered from generally poor dental health, with extensive antemortem loss of both molars and premolars and advanced attrition (wear of the occlusal surfaces) of the remaining teeth. Even though many of the adults presented carious teeth, no dental restorations were present. The teeth of some individuals were so severely affected by caries that their pulp chambers were completely exposed. One adult presented an abscess of the maxillary left central incisor that was so severe that the resulting infection created a quarter-inch diameter circular perforation through the person's hard palate just below the right nasal passage. Every permanent tooth from another individual, a child aged 6-8 years at death, exhibits a linear surface enamel defect indicating an episode of severe metabolic stress from which he recovered several years prior to his death. None of the other eight children presented enamel defects.

Little evidence of disease or trauma was observed among the individuals relocated from the Sam Goode Cemetery. This was due in large part to the poor preservation of most of the burials. Some of the more interesting anomalies and lesions identified among these individuals included a congenitally unfused first cervical vertebra (atlas) from an 18-22 year old woman; a healed fracture of the right elbow in a woman over 40 years old, most likely the result of a fall upon an outstretched hand; and active, moderately severe periostitis of the tibiae and fibulae from a 25-30 year old woman. Examination of the relatively well-preserved remains of 69-year-old Sam Goode indicated that Mr. Goode was generally free of spinal degenerative joint disease, had very mild arthritis in both hips, and during life had lost all of his mandibular teeth except for his left third molar, which was extensively worn. Such antemortem tooth loss was typical of even the young adults buried at this graveyard, suggesting that this community suffered from a generally poor diet combined with chronic nutritional stress.

The Sam Goode Cemetery study will contribute to the understanding of the history of the cemetery as well as the African-American experience in the old South. Work is being performed as a relocation, and all analyses and documentation of both artifacts and skeletal remains were conducted in the field so that reburial could take place soon after removal. A project report will be prepared which presents the history of the cemetery as well as its ethnohistory and physical anthropology. When completed, the Sam Goode Cemetery project should shed greater light on the history and community of the cemetery and begin to bring identity back to its forgotten inhabitants.