



## News from Livingston County, N.Y.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Livingston County Historian Releases New Information on Poorhouse Cemeteries**

**GENESEO, N.Y., Nov. 14, 2023** - The Livingston County Historian's Office recently facilitated a non-invasive ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey at both Livingston County Poorhouse cemeteries in Geneseo. The survey revealed new data about the sites, including the locations of 75 unmarked graves.

At the New Poorhouse Cemetery, along Volunteer Road, the findings indicated 75 additional unmarked graves in two partial rows. The GPR also indicated a larger area that could be a layered or mass grave. These newly discovered graves are in addition to the existing row of 44 headstones, visible along the cemetery's western edge. The construction of Volunteer Road in the early 2000s does not appear to have directly impacted the cemetery.

The 75 unmarked graves have been marked with a flush metal disk stamped with "Livingston County Poorhouse Unknown Burial." According to county historian, Holly Watson, there could be at least 120 graves in the New Poorhouse Cemetery, which was active from about 1907 to 1940.

"We are grateful to be able to further recognize the Livingston County citizens who rest here," said Watson. "The markers help distinguish the site as a cemetery and remember its residents, even if we cannot be sure who the individuals are."

The Old Poorhouse Cemetery, behind the Three Bricks on Millennium Drive, was active from 1850 to about 1907. Due to the age of burials, the GPR technology could not definitively locate individual graves. However, the survey helped confirm the current boundaries of the cemetery and located several other underground features.

According to records at the County Historian's Office, there could be 350 Livingston County residents buried at the old cemetery site. There are about 130 headstones, most carved with only a number. The numbers correspond to individual names in a record book held at the County Historian's Office.

“While we wish we could locate each and every grave, it’s important to learn more about the Poorhouse Cemeteries,” added Watson. “We are grateful to add this new data to our extensive records so we can better understand the evolution of the County Poorhouse and the lives of its residents.”

The quality of GPR data is affected by factors such as soil type, terrain, and age of features. Ideally, an unmarked grave shows a unique subsoil disturbance pattern, usually four to six feet beneath the surface. If the burial is very old, the GPR operator may be able to recognize subsoil disturbance, but not be able to definitively locate individual burials.

Newly installed signs at each cemetery entrance also help designate and lend dignity to the sites. The County Historian’s Office is planning further improvements at both Poorhouse Cemeteries in the coming months, including resetting fallen stones and installing interpretive signs.

“Thank you to the Livingston County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator for their continued support of this significant work,” Watson said.

For more information about the Poorhouse Cemetery recent findings, [visit the Livingston County Historian’s website](#) or call (585) 243-7955.

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**About Livingston County:**

Founded in 1821, Livingston County, N.Y., is home to more than 61,000 residents in 17 towns located across 631 square miles of the Finger Lakes region.

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