

Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Investigation: The 2025 Field Season at Oaklawn Cemetery

Executive Summary

by Kary L. Stackelbeck, Phoebe R. Stubblefield,
Ryan J. Peterson, and Amanda L. Regnier

*Based on contributions by: Alex Badillo, Debra Green, Jennifer Haney, Brenda Nails-Alford,
Ryan J. Peterson, Amanda L. Regnier, Douglas D. Scott, Kary L. Stackelbeck, and Phoebe R.
Stubblefield*

May 2026



Key Takeaways

- The 2025 season yielded additional evidence of trauma victims and further understanding of the spatial distribution of burials in Section 20 of Oaklawn Cemetery.
- New Excavation Block K encompassed eleven (11) previously mapped graves and 80 newly documented graves, all of which were unmarked.
- The investigative team exhumed nine (9) burials and recovered the remains of two (2) additional individuals with gunshot wounds who are potential victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre—Burials 186 and 199.
- Among the now-eight confirmed gunshot victims recovered in Section 20, five display evidence of multiple gunshot wounds. Three (3) individuals were struck with bullets of multiple calibers.
- The decedent in Burial 199 displays evidence of a perimortem gunshot wound, but his remains also show signs of healed trauma from prior injuries caused, in part, by embedded shrapnel.
- Beyond the trauma victims and C. L. Daniel, twenty-seven (27) other individuals are considered of interest because they partially meet the profile criteria developed for this investigation and have not yet been ruled out as potential Massacre victims.
- Burial 227 consists of a single simple wooden casket that contains the remains of an infant interred with an adult male. This is the second example of this non-traditional burial practice; the first (Burial 124) was recovered in 2023. It is not uncommon for an infant to be interred with an adult female—particularly if both died in childbirth. But an infant being interred with an adult male is unusual.
- Confirmation of the identities of the exhumed individuals requires the support of potential descendants from across the country to participate in the DNA and genetic genealogical investigation by Intermountain Forensics (IMF). This process led to the previous successful identification of C. L. Daniel (Burial 3). The potential surnames and places of interest for ten other Burials of Interest have been announced by IMF.
- Sixteen grave shafts have been partially documented under the fence along the western side of Section 20 in Oaklawn Cemetery. It is presently unclear if they represent intact burial features that extend beyond the cemetery.
- Additional archaeological excavations and forensic examinations are proposed to: 1) demonstrate comprehensive recovery of likely Massacre victims buried in Oaklawn Cemetery; and 2) document and recover burials that may exist outside the western fenceline.

Introduction

This executive summary presents some of the most critical results of the archaeological and forensic research conducted in support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Investigation during the 2025 field season in Oaklawn Cemetery. An exhaustive account of the collective results of the 2025 excavations and specialized analyses are detailed in a forthcoming technical report (Stackelbeck, Stubblefield, and Regnier np).

This research was conducted between October 13-November 21, 2025 by an interdisciplinary team of specialists from the Oklahoma Archeological Survey (OAS) at the University of Oklahoma (OU), C. A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory (University of Florida), Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., Oklahoma Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, University of Tulsa, San Diego State University, and University of Oklahoma (among others) with support from—and on behalf of—the City of Tulsa and community members. This work is an extension of previous phases of the investigation as coordinated with the north Tulsa community in various public meetings between July 27, 2019 and June 21, 2022. A fuller discussion of that process is found in Stackelbeck, Stubblefield, and Ellsworth (2022:1-2) and on the City’s website dedicated to the investigation: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/1921graves>.

From the outset of the re-opened investigation to locate Massacre victims, several locations were identified as potential targets within Oaklawn Cemetery based on the limited available historic records and oral historic accounts, including the: Sexton Area; Original 18 Area; and two different Clyde Eddy Areas (Figure 1). Over the course of several previous mobilizations, the investigative team utilized remote sensing, the extraction of soil core and auger samples, test excavations, and/or block excavations to systematically examine subsurface deposits at each of these locations. The results of these prior efforts are presented in three comprehensive technical reports (Stackelbeck and Stubblefield 2022; Stackelbeck, Stubblefield, and Regnier 2024; Stackelbeck, Stubblefield, and Regnier 2025) and various meetings, presentations, and press conferences that are archived on the City’s website (<https://www.cityoftulsa.org/mayor/1921-graves-investigation/>) and Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/1921Graves/>).

Key findings from previous phases of the investigations as they pertain to the 2025 fieldwork:

1. The DNA and genetic genealogical team, working closely with his descendants, successfully identified Burial 3—exhumed in 2021—as that of World War I veteran Private C. L Daniel, an historically documented 1921 race massacre victim. His remains were exhumed in 2021 from the Original 18 Area.
2. Six gunshot victims were successfully located and documented: Burials 27, 42, 135, 157, 194, and 195.
3. Characteristics of Burial 42 resembled those expected for Eddie Lockard (Stubblefield 2024). This burial, however, is two rows to the west and two plots north of the position of his headstone. Section 20 of Oaklawn Cemetery has undergone substantial artificial landscape alteration (Green et al. 2022; Stackelbeck and Maggard 2022:81-83), a circumstance that facilitates erroneous replacement of headstones as suspected for Burial 42. This calls into question who is interred in the grave shaft that is associated with Mr. Lockard’s headstone.

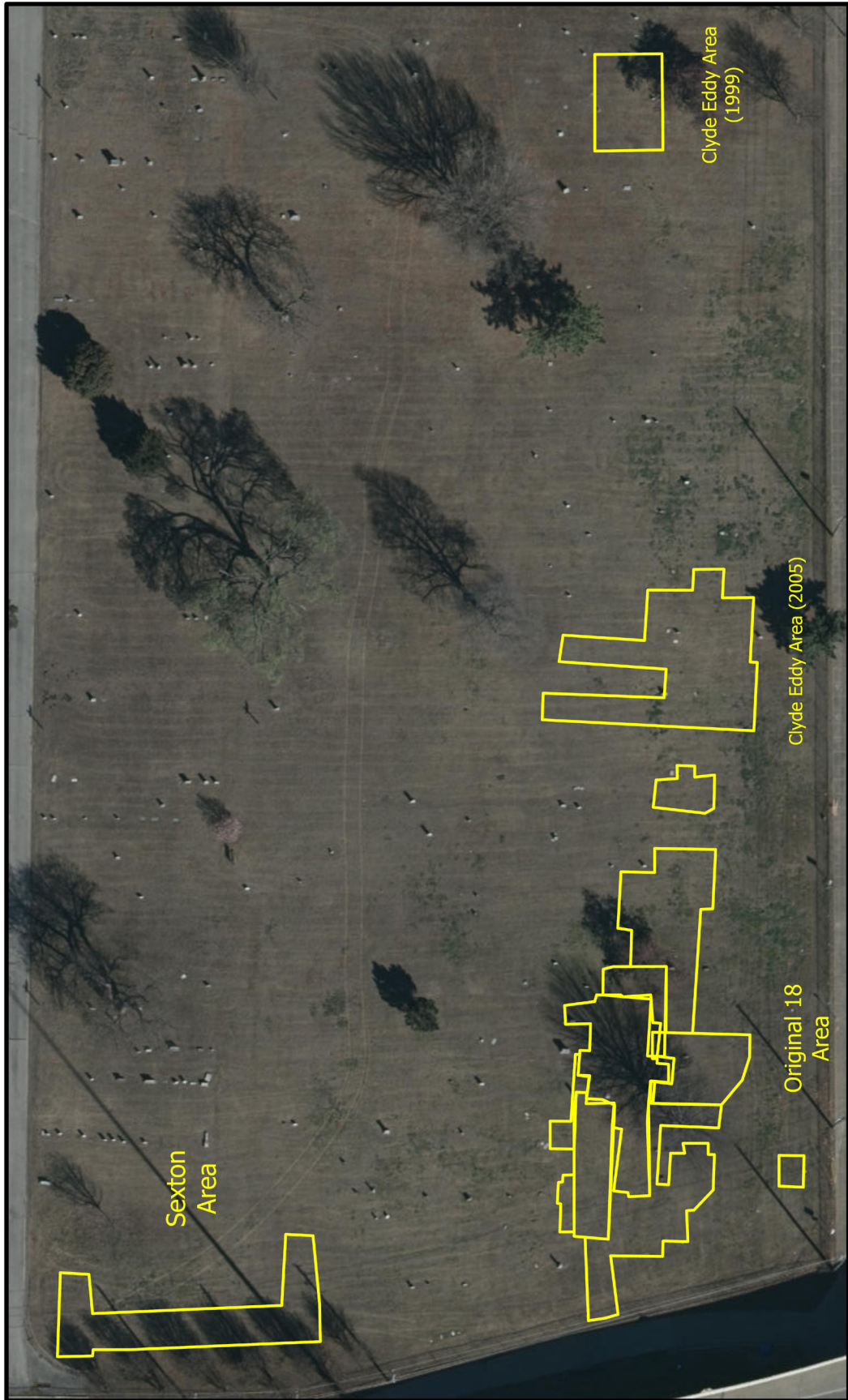


Figure 1. Aerial image showing extents of previous investigations in Oaklawn Cemetery during the 2019-2024 field seasons.

4. Two geophysical anomalies thought to be associated with Clyde Eddy's eyewitness account of a trench (Brooks and Witten 2001; Snow 2001; Witten et al. 2001) have now been archaeologically examined. Neither location yielded evidence of a trench-style mass grave feature. However, the team remains open to the possibility of locating such a feature, which may yet be revealed by further block excavations.
5. The 2024 excavations revealed a series of grave shafts that extend up to and perhaps under the fence that acts as the western boundary for the cemetery. These westernmost burials were mapped but were not otherwise investigated further during the 2024 field season.

The completion of the 2024 season and subsequent DNA analysis brought the number of burials of interest to 29, including six (6) definite and one (1) possible gunshot wound victims (Figure 2). However, we have not yet recovered the number of adult male trauma victims who are expected to be buried in Oaklawn based on death certificates and other limited records.

2025 Field Season

The 2025 archaeological excavations were conducted under the direction of Kary Stackelbeck (OAS) and Ryan J. Peterson (Stantec). Nine sets of recovered remains were examined in the on-site forensic laboratory under the direction of Phoebe Stubblefield. The DNA analysis is under the direction of Daniel Hellwig (IMF) and Alyssa Ellis (IMF) is the Tulsa Genealogy Project Manager.

Using the results of the earlier efforts we proposed and completed expansions of the excavation area to increase the likelihood of encountering other individuals who fit our target profile—adult male trauma victims buried in unadorned wooden caskets. Burials 42 and 194 (and perhaps 195) were interred in repurposed shipping crates, which supported expansion of the search parameters to include other forms of simple wooden containers that can function as burial vessels.

New Excavation Block K was completed between October 13-November 7, 2025 (Figure 3). This excavation block includes portions of the 2024 Block F. Block K encompassed 11 previously mapped graves and 80 newly documented graves, all of which were unmarked. We also documented areas that were void of burials, indicating the southern extent of several of the westernmost rows in Section 20 (Figure 4).

Eighty-five total graves were examined to varying degrees during the 2025 field season (see Figure 3). Individuals were exhumed from nine graves, specifically: Burials 186, 187, 197, 199, 227, 234, 235, 240, and 272 (see Figure 3). Burial 227 contains the remains of two individuals: an adult male and an infant. On-site forensic examinations of the exhumed individuals concluded on November 21, 2025.

Summary Observations of Burials of Interest

Excavations in Blocks A-K have resulted in the documentation of at least 273 graves in Section 20 of Oaklawn Cemetery (see Figure 4). Thirty-six (36) individuals in the burial population are of interest because they fit at least two of the characteristics from our target profile: 1) evidence of trauma; 2) male; and 3) interred in a simple wooden burial container (Figure 5). This target profile does not preclude consideration of other individuals as potential victims, but it provides our team with a historical framework to differentiate those burials that are most likely to be potential Massacre victims and warrant exhumation and forensic analyses.

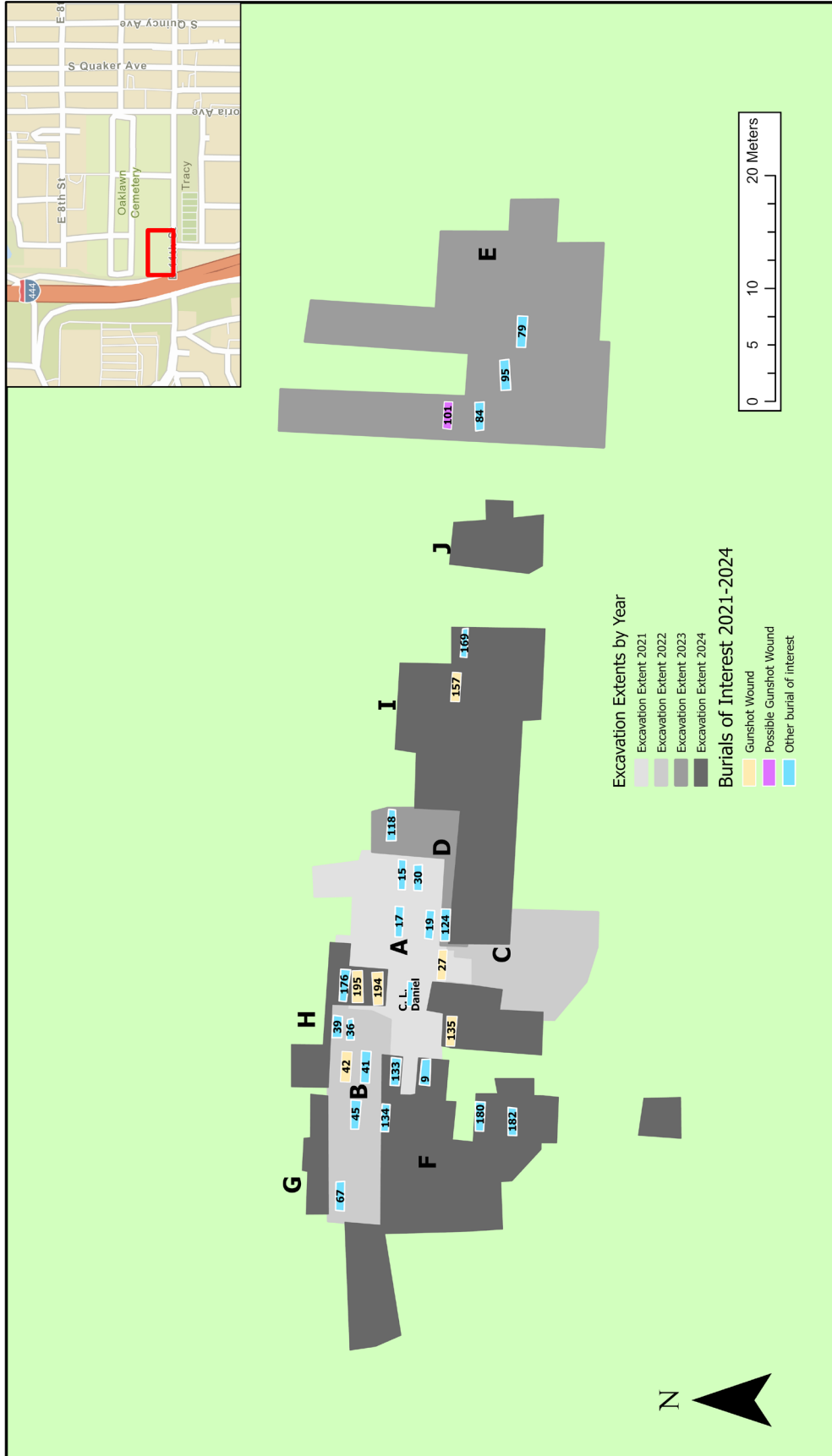


Figure 2. Distribution of burials of interest as located during the 2021-2024 phases of the investigation.

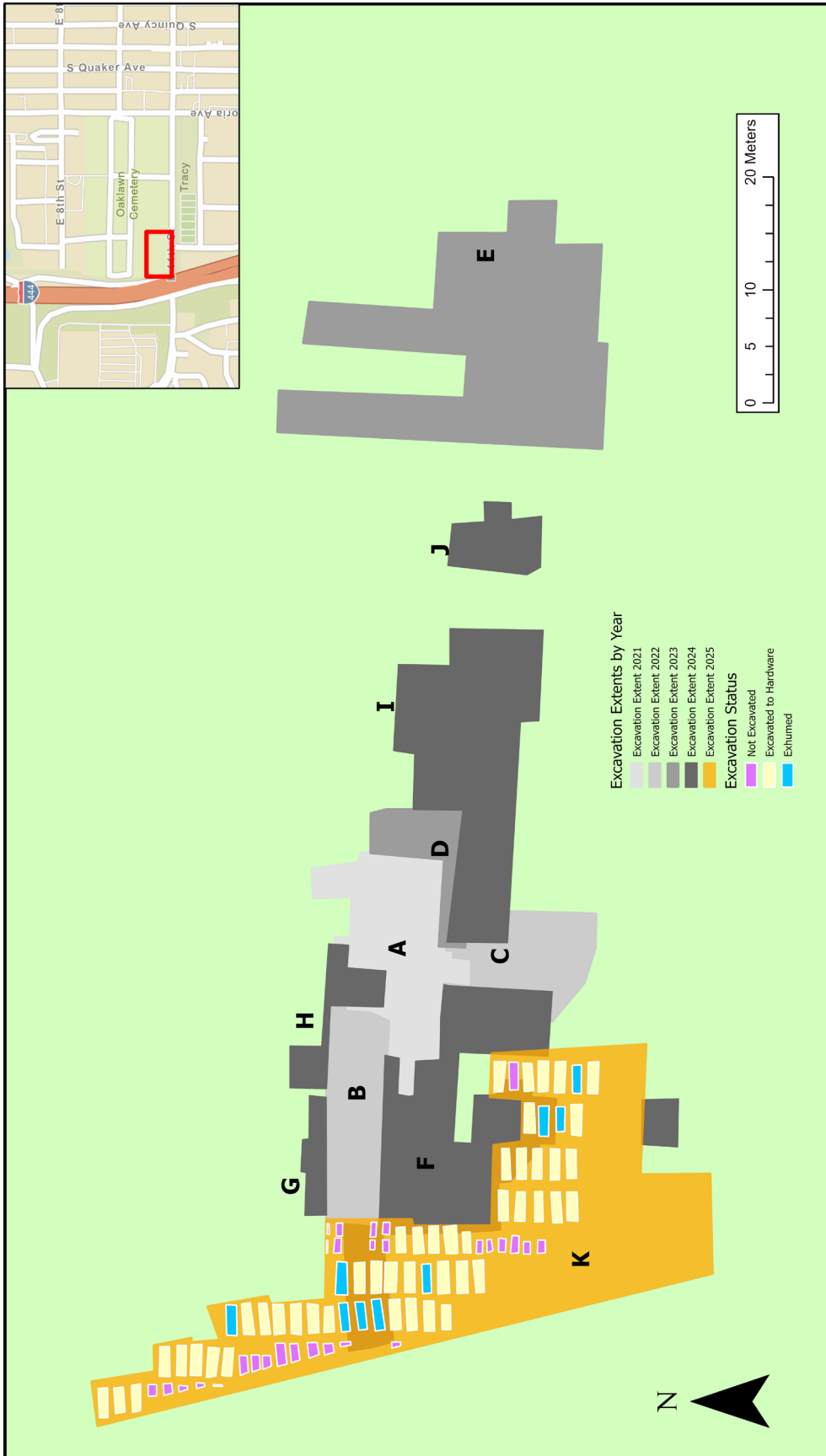


Figure 3. Distribution of graves in Excavation Block K investigated during the 2025 field season.

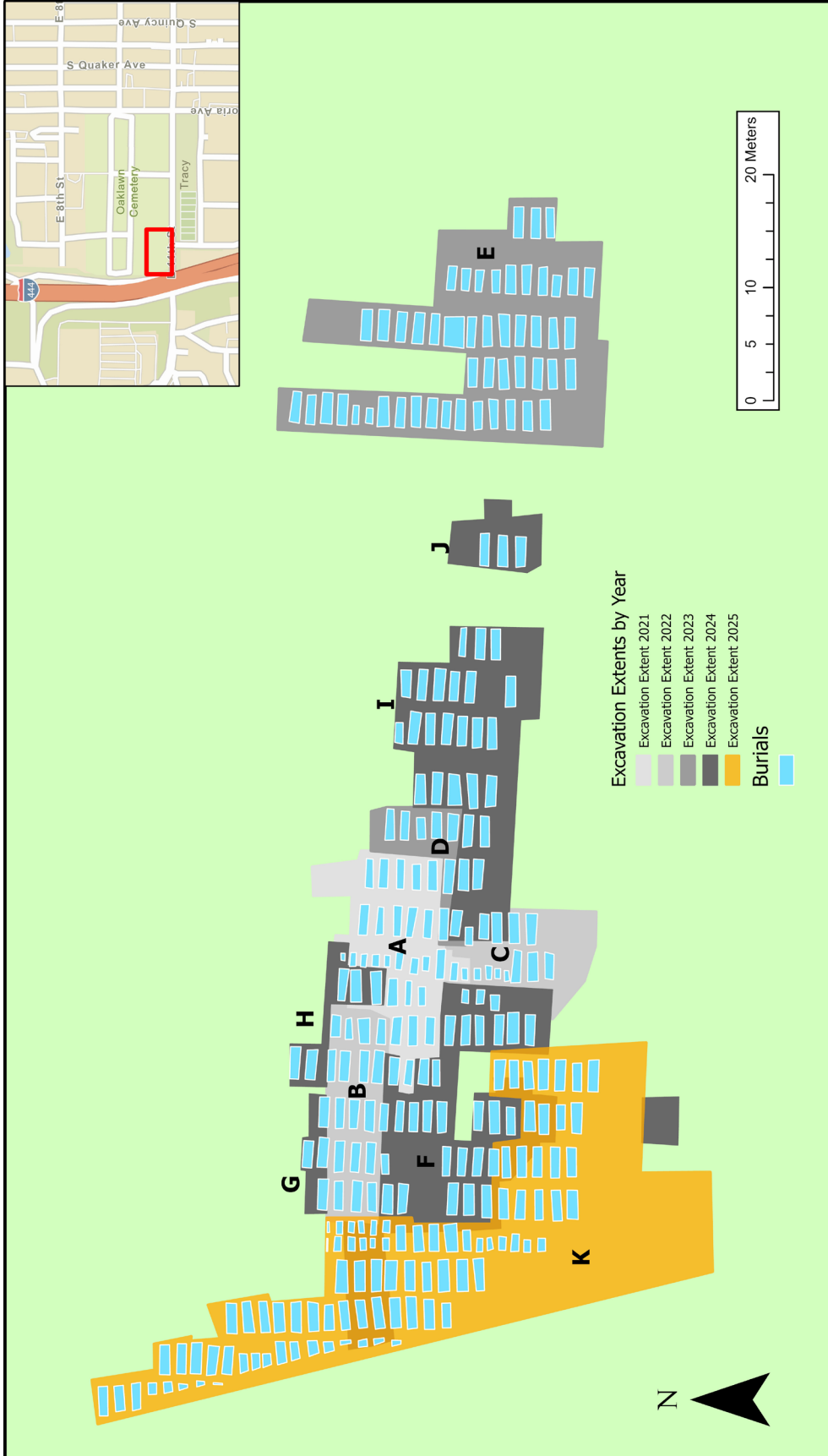


Figure 4. Distribution of all burials documented by the 2021-2025 phases of the investigation.

Burials of Particular Interest from 2025 Season

The following descriptions of individual burials of particular interest from the 2025 season draws from the archaeological descriptions provided by Stantec, osteological evaluations conducted by the forensic team, and specialized analysis of the recovered bullets, which appear in the forthcoming technical report.

Burial 186:

- The individual in Burial 186 was an adult male gunshot victim. The forensic team recovered small lead fragments and buckshot (Figure 6) from his remains. The buckshot had been deformed by impact and likely “struck at a medium to high velocity” (Scott 2025).
- The recovery of buttons and fragments of textile (Figure 7) suggest that the victim was clothed at the time of burial.
- He was buried in a simple wooden casket.



Figure 6. Lead shot (Catalog 1771) and lead fragments recovered from the gunshot victim in Burial 186 (photograph courtesy of Douglas Scott).

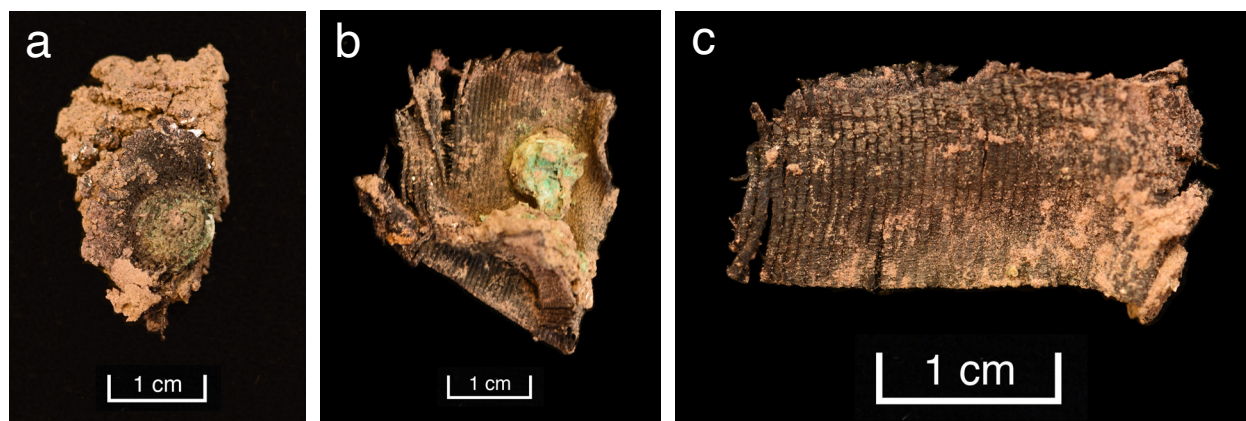


Figure 7. Fragments of textile and buttons recovered from Burial 186: (a) Catalog 1765 and (b,c) Catalog 1766.

Burial 199:

- The individual in Burial 199 was an adult male who suffered a gunshot wound from a nominal .38-caliber bullet (Figure 8a,b) that displays damage consistent with “a medium to high velocity impact in a soft media” (Scott 2025). Scott (2025) notes “(t)he bullet was likely fired from a smokeless powder cartridge.”
- Beyond his perimortem wounds, this individual shows signs of previous injuries caused, in part, by embedded shrapnel (Figure 8c).
- He was buried in a simple wooden casket.
- Several elements of his remains display evidence of postdepositional movement due to water infiltrating the casket at a point when soft tissue was still present.



Figure 8. (a-b) Lead, round nose .38-caliber bullet (Catalog 1655) and (c) lead fragment (probable shrapnel) (Catalog 1656) recovered from the gunshot victim in Burial 199.

Burial 227:

- Burial 227 consisted of a simple wooden casket that contained the remains of two individuals: an adult male and an infant positioned between his legs.

- This is the second such case recovered in Section 20 by this investigation. The other case is Burial 124, which was recovered in 2023.
- It is not unusual for an infant to be interred with an adult female—particularly if both died in childbirth. Indeed, we have documented cases like this in Section 20 of Oaklawn (e.g., Burial 4). However, an infant being interred with an adult male is unusual.
- Burials 124 and 227 are immediately adjacent to gunshot victims—Burials 27 and 199, respectively (see Figure 5). Neither of the adults in Burials 124 or 227 show signs of trauma based on the forensic examinations.
- Several fasteners were recovered from this burial (Figures 9 and 10). The position of these objects within the burial suggests that the adult may have been at least partially clothed and the fetus was perhaps wrapped in cloth.

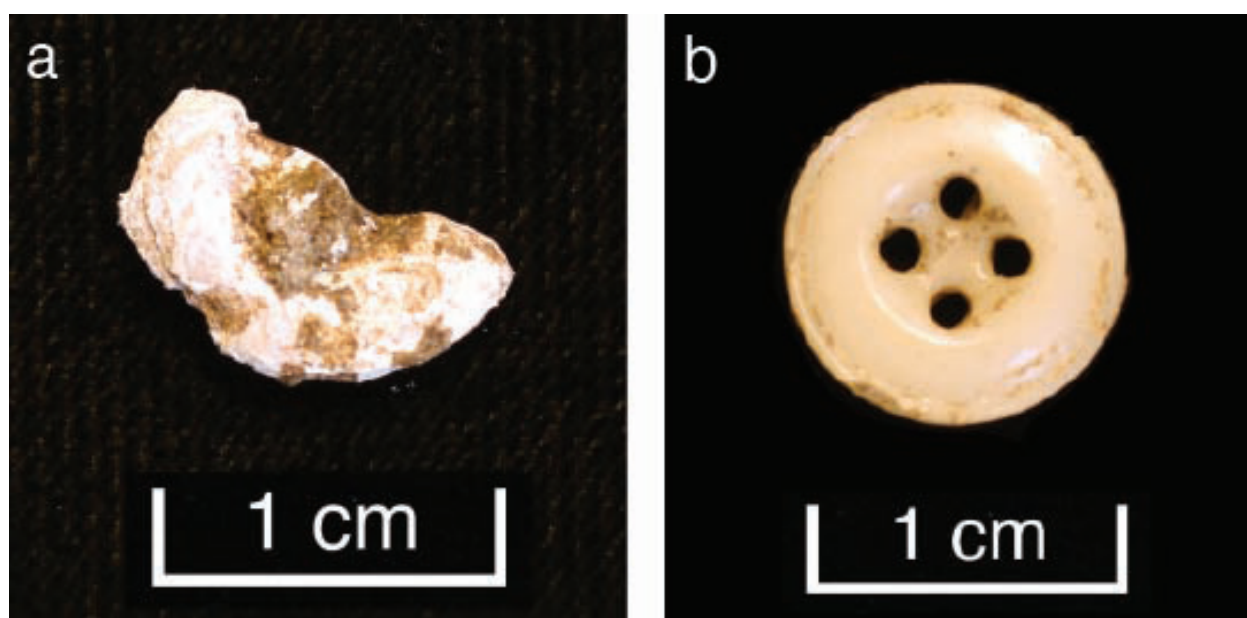


Figure 9. (a) Shell button (Catalog 1644) and (b) ceramic Prosser button (Catalog 1654) recovered from Burial 227.



Figure 10. Safety pins (a,b) Catalog 1753 and (c) Catalog 1754) recovered from the same vicinity as the infant remains in Burial 227.

Relevant Observations from the 36 Burials of Interest Recovered To Date:

- Two additional gunshot wound victims, Burials 186 and 199, brought the total number of definite gunshot wound victims recovered to date to eight (the other six were Burials 27, 42, 135, 157, 194, and 195).
- Five individuals suffered multiple gunshot wounds (Burials 27, 135, 157, 194, and 195).
- One individual—Burial 101—displayed metallic particles suggestive of a possible gunshot wound.
- All 36 individuals of interest were males.
- All were buried in simple wooden containers, including 32 unadorned rectangular caskets, one unadorned six-sided coffin, and three crates (perhaps repurposed shipping containers).
 - Observations of the construction style and variability in dimensions of the simple caskets suggest non-commercial, local production. Many appear to have been built to suit the size of the decedent.
 - Seven caskets appeared to have been too small for the decedents they contained—or nearly so—including Burials 3, 17, 19, 45, 95, 157, and 182 (and perhaps Burials 84, 124, 180, and 272).
 - Three other containers—those of Burials 135, 194, and 197—displayed the opposite phenomenon; they were too large for their respective individuals.
- Beyond C. L. Daniel, 10 of these individuals have genetic genealogical profiles for which potential surnames and areas of interest have been announced by the Inter-Mountain Forensic (IMF) team, including Burials 15, 17, 41, 45, 84, 135, 169, 180, 182, and 194. DNA analysis is on-going for the remaining individuals and additional profiles are expected.
- All 36 individuals of interest were interred in the relict stream channels that run along the western and southern boundaries of the cemetery in the New Potter’s Field portion of Section 20, which was established sometime prior to 1917.
- Several burials recovered during the 2025 season displayed some degree of postdepositional dislocation of remains—likely due to a combination of coffin collapse and water infiltration of their containers. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced for Burials 199 and 272.
- Among the burials of interest, all but Burial 15 is buried with his head to the west. Burial 15 is oriented with his head to the east.

Proposed Next Steps

Taking the above findings into consideration, we propose to expand excavations at Oaklawn Cemetery (Figure 11). We have not yet recovered the number of gunshot victims and burn victims that are expected to be buried in Oaklawn based on death certificate data. Two (2) burn victims have yet to be recovered. Block L will target areas along the southern fenceline that have not yet been explored through previous excavations (Figure 11). This effort will allow us to thoroughly examine the lead provided by burial eyewitness, Clyde Eddy (Brooks and Witten 2001; Snow 2001; see also Stackelbeck and Green 2024). Block M will entail excavation of the area immediately to the west of the western fenceline of Oaklawn Cemetery (Figure 11). This block will encompass the 16 grave shafts that were partially exposed in the 2024 and 2025 field seasons

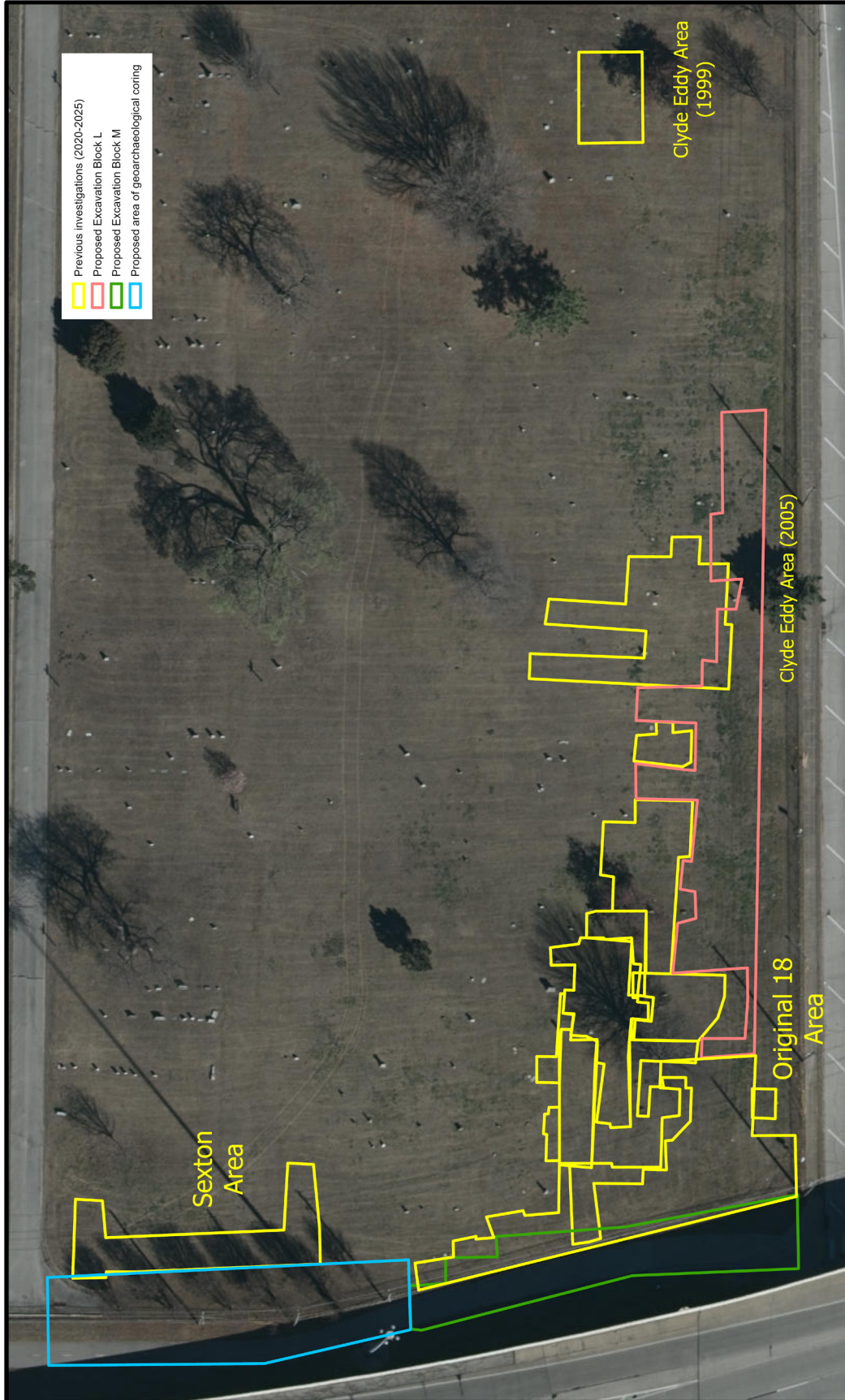


Figure 11. Aerial image displaying areas of previous investigations, the proposed Blocks L and M, and area of proposed additional geoaerchaeological coring.

along the western fenceline (see Figures 3 and 4) and any other graves outside the fenceline in this vicinity. In addition, we propose to extract and examine soil core samples west of the Sexton Area, where test excavations were initially completed in 2020 (Figure 11). Pending the results of analysis of the soil cores, it may be necessary to expand Block M to the north to further explore the potential for intact burials.

The process of excavation, in situ documentation, exhumation, on-site forensic analysis, and extraction of samples for DNA and genetic genealogical analyses in Blocks L and M will be consistent with previous phases of the investigation. However, all intact burials exposed in Block M will be exhumed and reinterred within the fenced boundaries of the cemetery, regardless of their status as possible victims of the Massacre until or unless other permissible final resting places are otherwise determined by their next-of-kin.

This proposed work will coordinate with the recommendations of the memorialization committee led by Ms. Brenda Nails-Alford, to conduct reburials of exhumed individuals and marking of exposed burials. This effort should include replacement of existing markers removed for protection during the excavations, as well as enactment of the memorialization committee recommendations

References Cited

Brooks, Robert L. and Alan H. Witten

2001 The Investigation of Potential Mass Grave Locations for the Tulsa Race Riot. In *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, pp. 123-132.

Green, Debra, Leland Bement, and Greg J. Maggard

2022 Chapter 4: Landform History of Oaklawn Cemetery. In *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2020-2021 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volume I*, pp. 45-80. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

Snow, Clyde

2001 Confirmed Deaths: A Preliminary Report. In *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, pp. 109-122.

Stackelbeck, Kary L., and Greg J. Maggard

2022 Chapter 5: Original 18 Area Excavation Results. In *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2020-2021 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volume I*, pp. 81-94. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

Stackelbeck, Kary L. and Phoebe R. Stubblefield (compilers)

2022 *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves*

Investigation: The 2020-2021 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volumes I and II. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

Stackelbeck, Kary L., Phoebe R. Stubblefield, and Scott Ellsworth

2022 Introduction. In *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2020-2021 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volume I*, pp. 1-4. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

Stackelbeck, Kary L., Phoebe R. Stubblefield, and Amanda Regnier (compilers)

2024 *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2022-2023 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volumes I and II*. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

2025 *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2024 Field Season at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volumes I and II*. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.

Stubblefield, Phoebe R.

2024 Chapter 5: Report of Osteological Investigations, in *Archaeological and Forensic Research in Support of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Graves Investigation: The 2022-2023 Field Seasons at Oaklawn Cemetery, Volumes I*, pp. 103-240. Report submitted to the City of Tulsa by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in collaboration with the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology. Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, Oklahoma.