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## New technology helps preserve the past

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By: Allison Toepperwein | Williamson & Bell County Bureau Chief

An Austin group is trying to keep a cemetery's legacy alive without disturbing its residents' final resting place.



[Save Austin's Cemeteries](#) is working on a preservation project at Oakwood Cemetery in East Austin. Oakwood was established on 40 acres near Navasota and 16th Street in 1839.

"We're in the process of doing some preservation work on [a] building [from] 1914. And unfortunately there are some graves around the outside of the building that we don't have any documentation for," Dale Flatt of Save Austin's Cemeteries said.

Save Austin's Cemeteries doesn't want to disturb any gravesites during the restoration process. So they enlisted [Yellow Rose GPR](#), an Arlington, Texas-based company, to help.

GPR stands for ground penetrating radar. It's a non-evasive method of mapping changes in soil sub structure. The GPR can scan up to 40 feet below the ground to determine what's buried there.

"Some of the other ones, the equipment is very expensive and hard to get a hold of. Typically you would do a soil scraping. But, we wanted something that was non-evasive," Flatt said.

The technology is used to find unmarked and forgotten gravesites by utilizing high tech computers, transmitters and receivers to emit radio waves into the soil and read the echo to map the substrate.

"The good thing is we can also tell them where underground gas pipes are and so forth so that when they do the digging they'll expect it," Yellow Rose president Ray McCoy said.

Yellow Rose GPR provides the scanning service free to small cemeteries and any sheriff's offices in Texas.

"If a sheriff's department feels that they could have a burial under a slab of cement or something like that, we can do a non-evasive and non-destructive scan very quickly and let them know if their lead is correct or not. That saves them a lot of time and a lot of money," McCoy said.

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