



MEET THE PEOPLE

BURIAL 206 A Very Long Life

This woman of mixed African and European heritage stood 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 146 pounds. She was over 60 years old when she died, making her one of the oldest people buried at the Old Frankfort Cemetery.

Her bones tell the story of a long but physically challenging life. More so than many others buried in the Cemetery, corn-based products made up much of her diet. Gum inflammation or infection had weakened her tooth attachments, leading to the loss of 20 of her 32 teeth. Her remaining teeth had many cavities and abscesses.

In addition to her severe dental problems, she endured a great deal of back pain caused by osteoarthritis and compressed discs. Osteoarthritis is a chronic disorder that damages bone cartilage and surrounding tissues. It affects many women, beginning in their forties. Her back problems reflect heavy labor or lifting throughout her life; or age-related degeneration of her spine.

Her hexagonal coffin was made of cherry wood and late machine-cut nails. Her grave shaft had not been lined with stones.

She was one of the few buried wearing jewelry. She wore a necklace of 13 "faux jet" lozenge-shaped, faceted, black glass beads (see above, center). Beginning in the mid-1800s, "faux jet" jewelry of this sort was very fashionable. In style, shape, and size, her beads resemble jet "mourner's" beads. Necklaces made from jet, a gem-like mineral mined in England that resembles black amber, were referred to as "mourner's" beads after Queen Victoria's husband died in 1861.

Upon her death, her hands were placed on her pelvis. Swirled-head pins found near her skull and feet indicate that a family member had wrapped her body in a shroud and pinned it closed. The recovery of these types of pins and the black glass bead necklace indicates she died around 1835.

A diet based heavily on corn-based products and a grave shaft that was not stone-lined suggest Burial 206 was relatively poor during much of her life. The fact that she was buried wearing a "faux jet" necklace suggests that, for a time, she may have been better off financially.

Her grave was near the center of the Lower Area. Given the period of time in which she lived, it is likely she was a mother, but her bones are silent regarding how many children she bore. She was buried next to a three- to six-month-old infant. Was this her grandchild?

