Archaeological Investigation of Fort Ward / "The Fort" 1961-2011

Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology
Fort Ward Stakeholder Advisory Group
October 12, 2011

Fort Ward Park

190 95 0 190 Feet

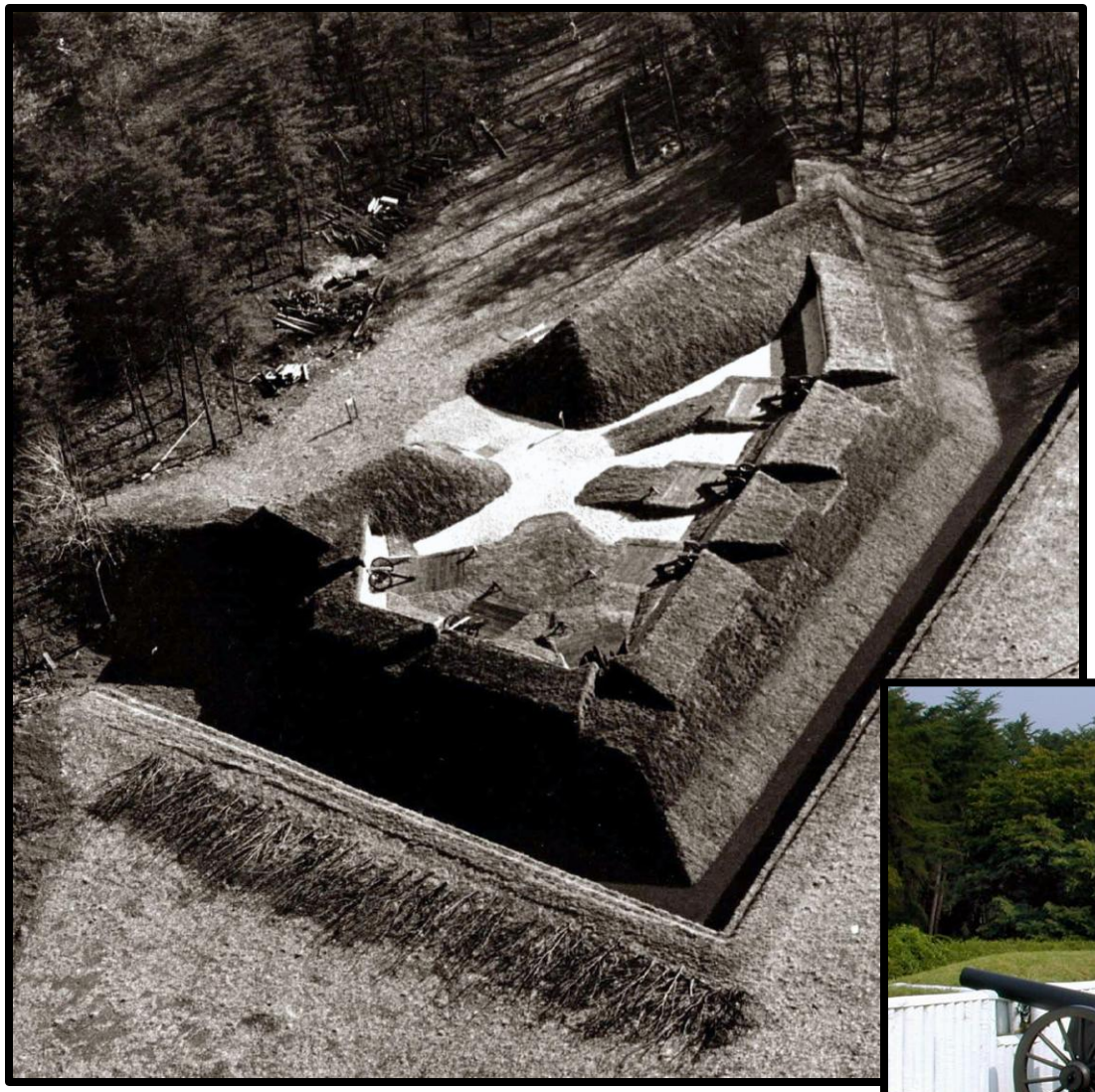
1927

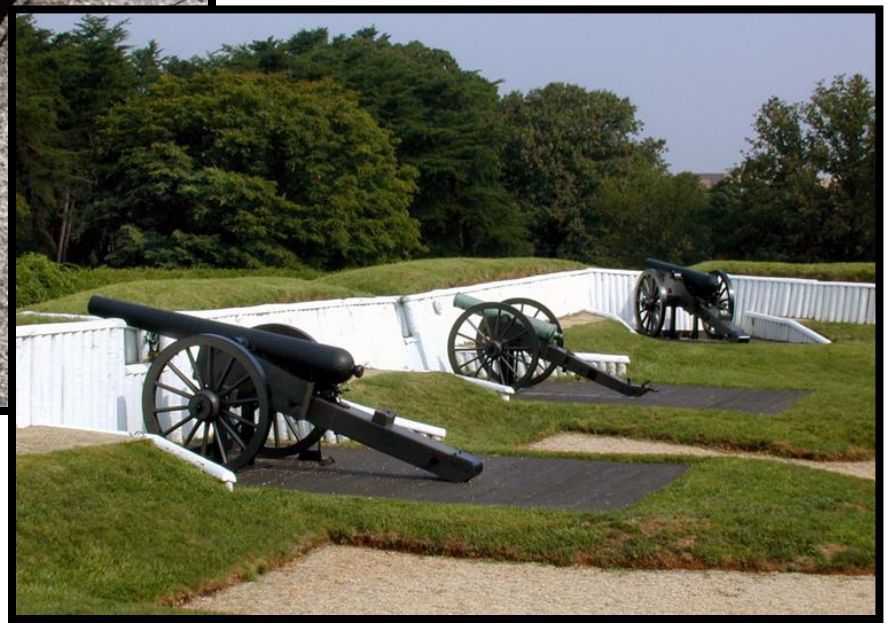
Fort Ward Park

200 100 0 200 Feet

2009

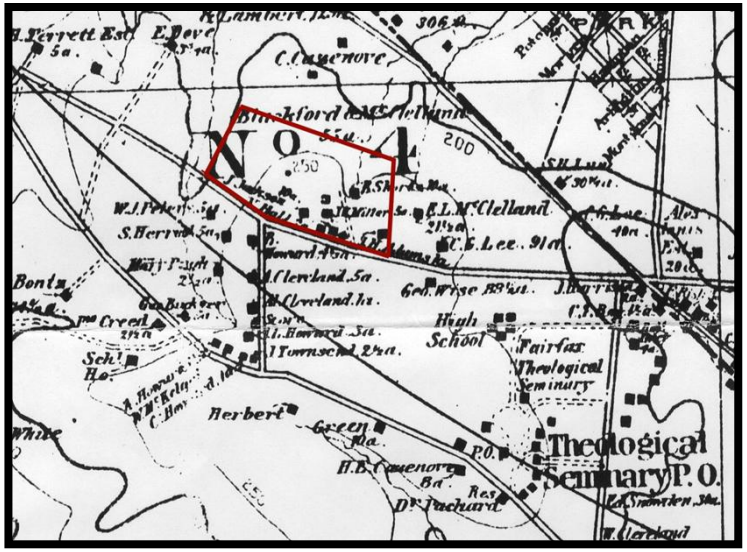
1961
Goal: Reconstruction of Northwest Bastion





1991
Goal: Investigations Beyond the Fortification

FT WARD
N 45 WO
CN 114 FT 9
JULY 5 1991


NO. 1
Theological Seminary P. O.

1991
Rediscovering “The Fort”

Oral History and Documentary Research

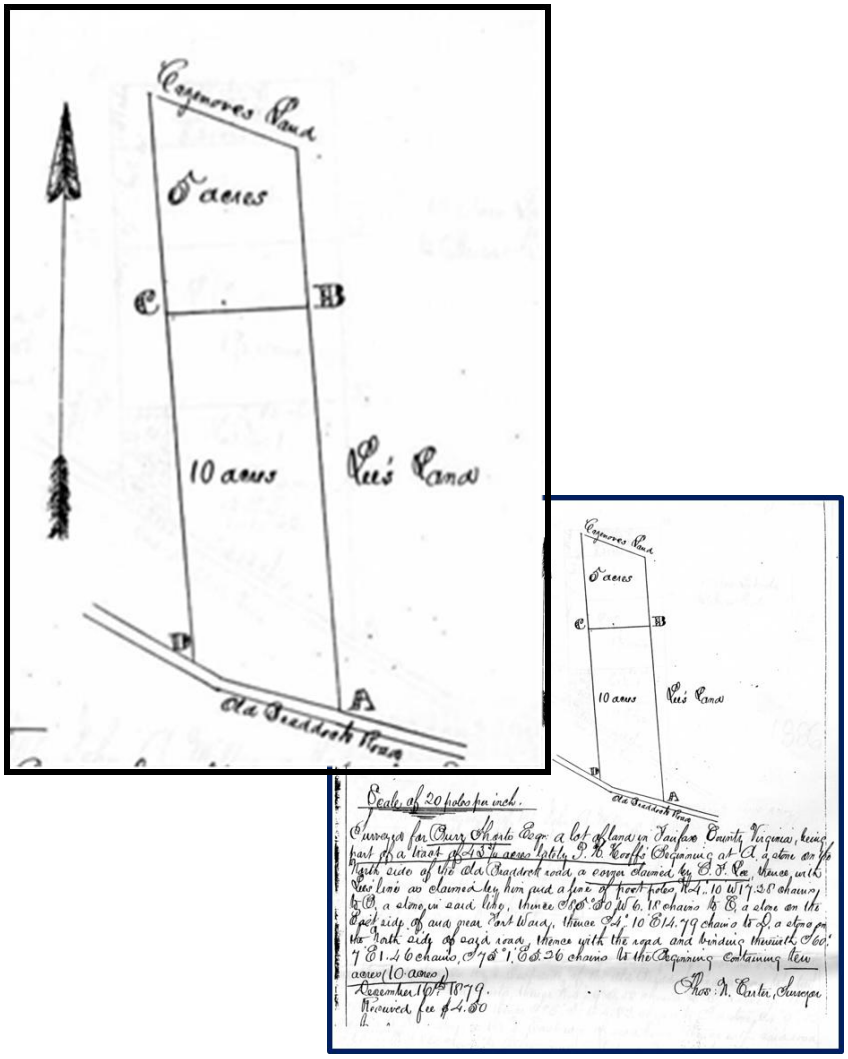
Alexandria Reflections

The Seminary Area and Macedonia

Mrs. Elizabeth Douglas

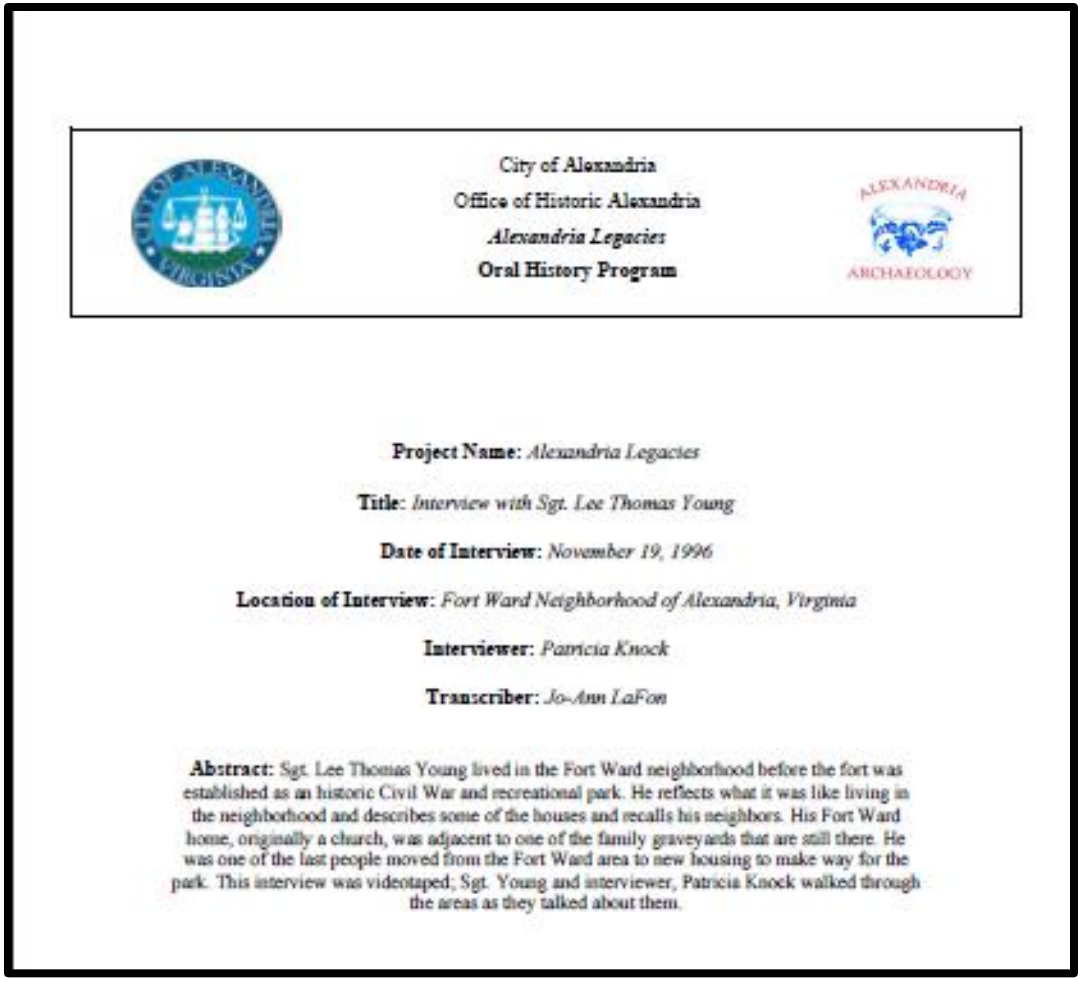
by Patricia I. Knock

Alexandria Archaeology · Oral History 2
Torpedo Factory Art Center, Studio 327
105 North Union Street
Alexandria, Virginia, 22314
703-838-4399/fax 703-838-6491



Survey of 10 acre parcel drawn for Burr Shorts in 1879

Research Continues 1990s—Web Site Postings 2000s



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program

Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies*

Title: *Interview with Sgt. Lee Thomas Young*

Date of Interview: *November 19, 1996*

Location of Interview: *Fort Ward Neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia*

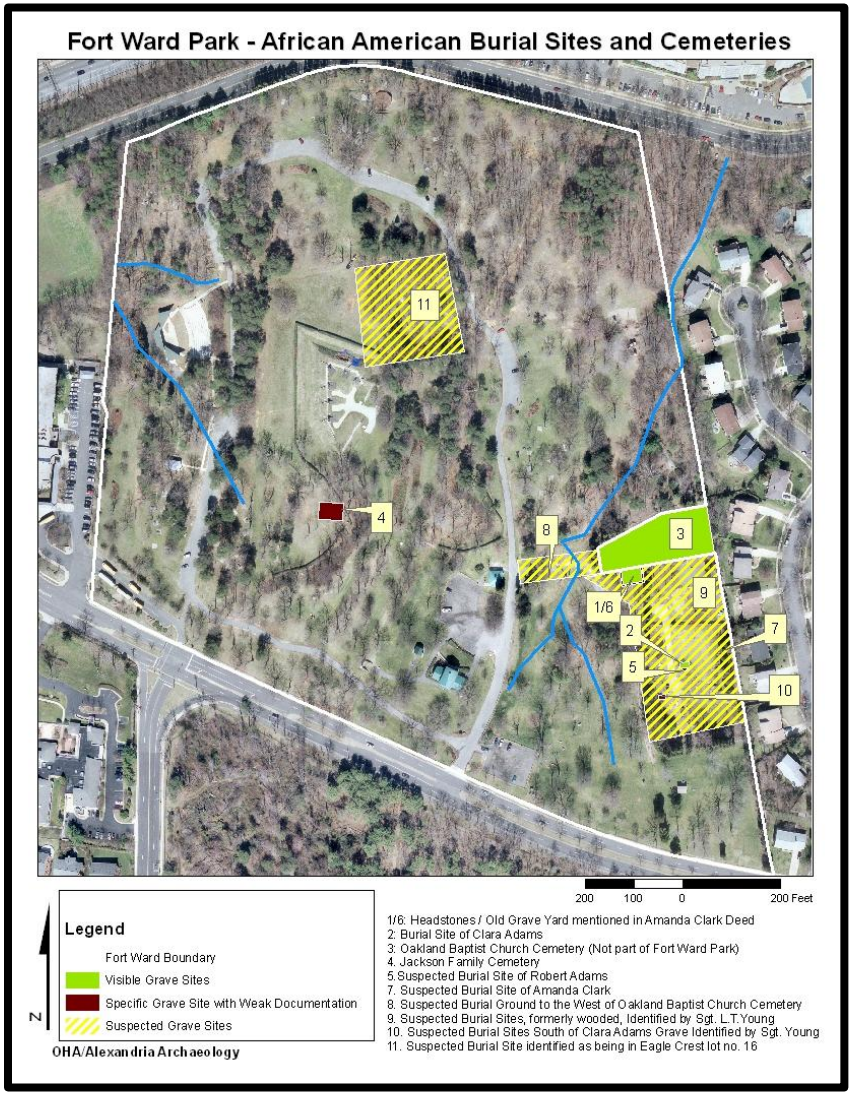
Interviewer: *Patricia Knock*

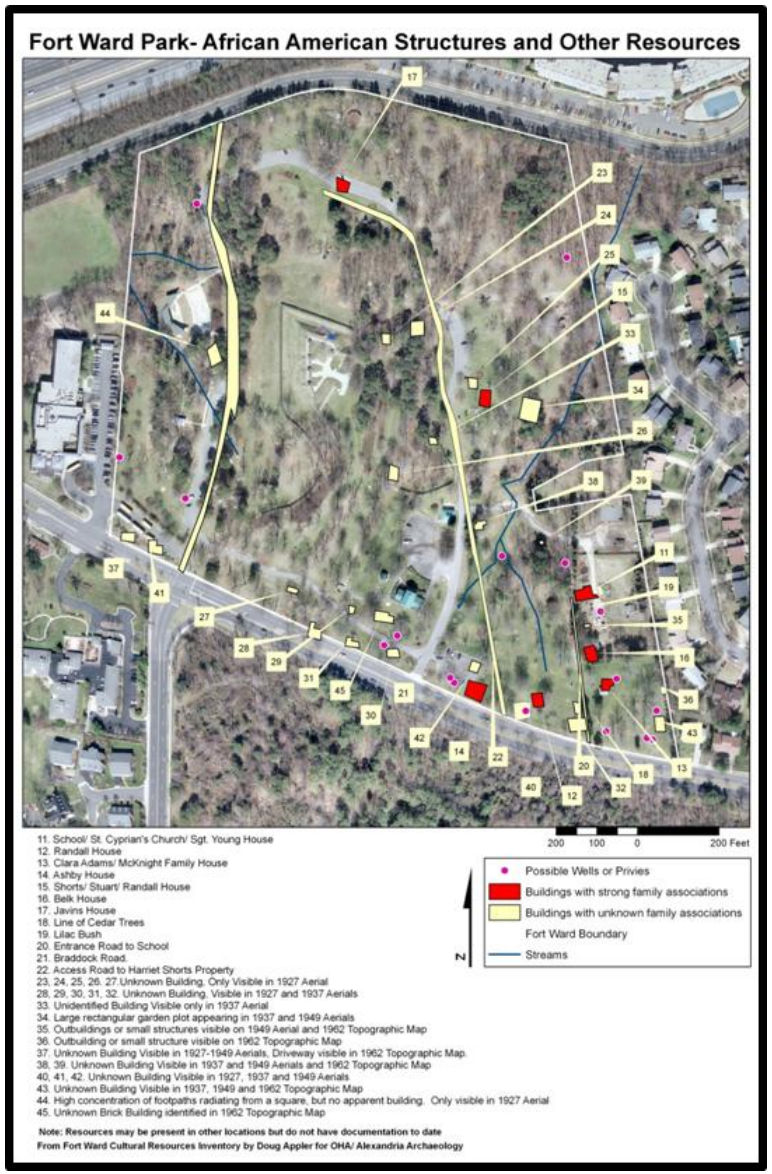
Transcriber: *Jo-Ann LaFon*

Abstract: Sgt. Lee Thomas Young lived in the Fort Ward neighborhood before the fort was established as an historic Civil War and recreational park. He reflects what it was like living in the neighborhood and describes some of the houses and recalls his neighbors. His Fort Ward home, originally a church, was adjacent to one of the family graveyards that are still there. He was one of the last people moved from the Fort Ward area to new housing to make way for the park. This interview was videotaped; Sgt. Young and interviewer, Patricia Knock walked through the areas as they talked about them.

Maydell Belk interviewed by
Alexandria Archaeology Volunteer Pat Knock
1994

2009
Goal: Inventory of Historic Resources





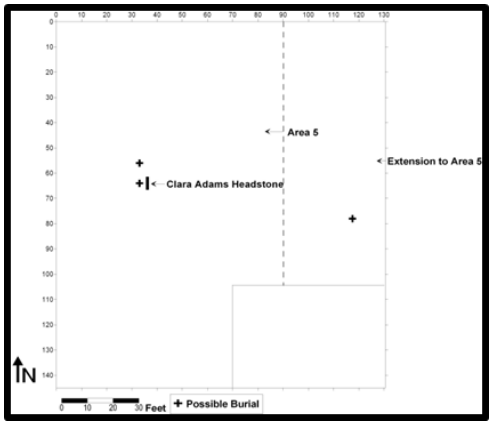
GIS overlay maps created to identify Known and potential resource locations.

Additional oral history interviews for information on schoolhouse/church and burial locations

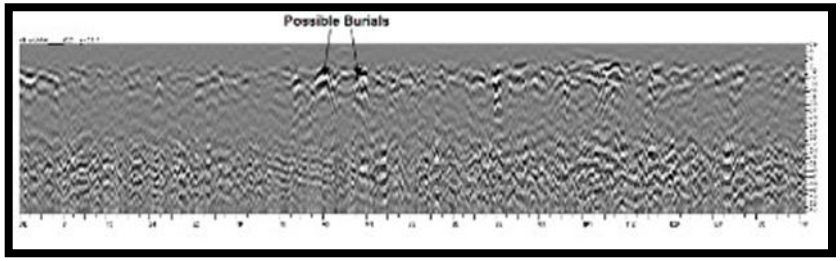
2010-2011
Stage 1 Archaeology Investigation

Goal 1:	Identify unmarked graves and test methods for locating burials through use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) and verification by traditional archaeological methods
Goal 2:	Identify other potentially significant resources through traditional archaeological methods
Goal 3:	Complete Stage 1 Inventory of Historic Resources

2010-2011 Goal 1: Identify Burial Locations and Test Methods

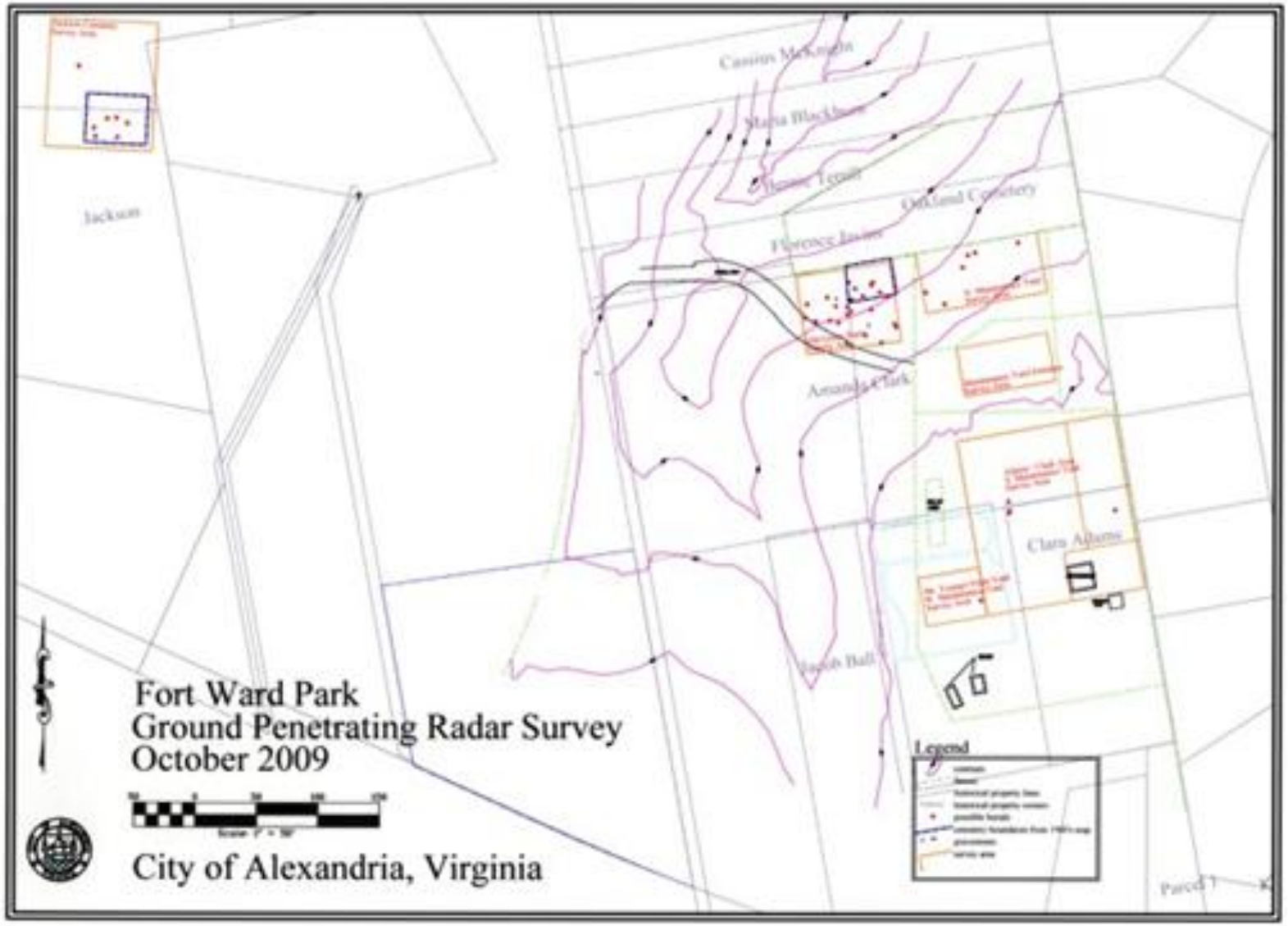


Ground Penetrating Radar Survey
Sarah Lowry, Consultant



Ground Penentrating Radar Survey Areas Fort Ward Park

OHA/Alexandria Archaeology



GPR Results: 38 Possible Grave Locations

Sources of Grave Information
To Verify by Archaeological Investigation

- GPR
- Documents
  - Amanda Clark's Will
  - 1960s City Engineer's Drawing
  - Eagle Crest Plat
- Oral History Accounts of Grave Locations
- Gravestones

Archaeological Methods for 2010-2011 Goals 1 and 2
To Verify/Identify Graves and Other Resources

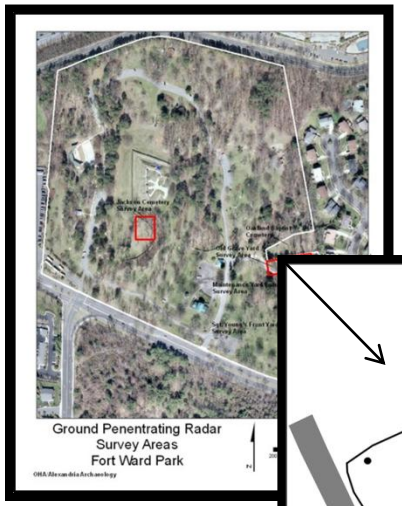
Shovel Testing

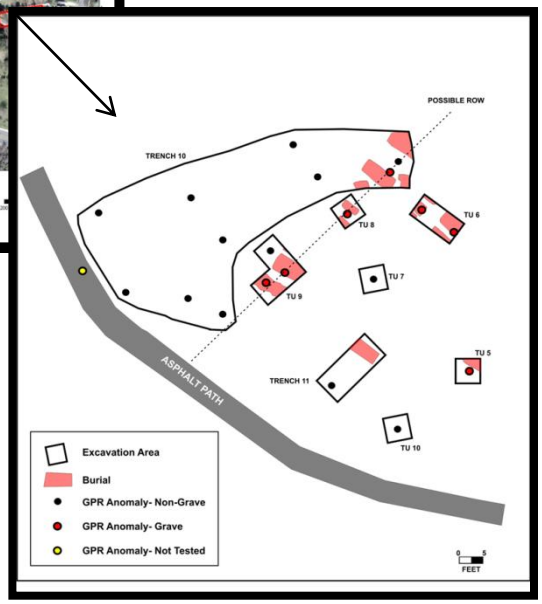
Backhoe Scraping Followed by Trowel Scraping

Metal Detection

Hand Excavation

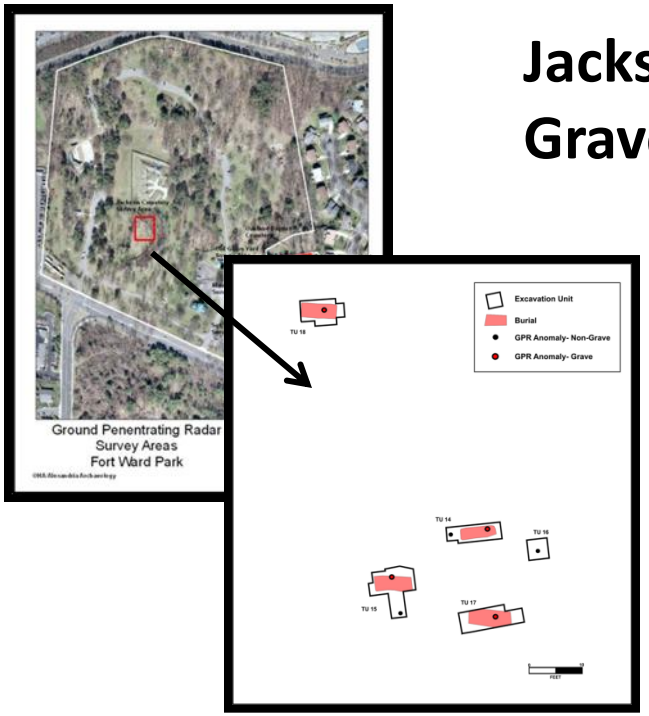
Old Grave Yard Area
Grave Verification





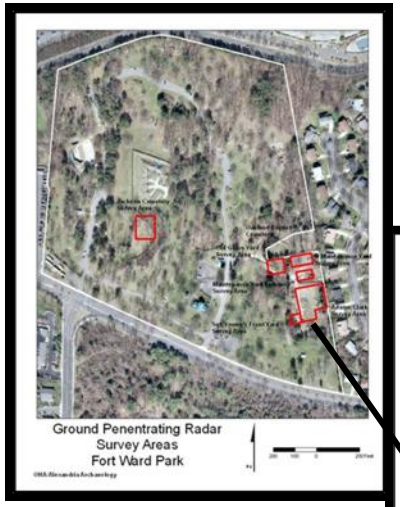
GPR Finds	21	
Positive		8
False	12	
Unexplored	1	
Add'l Graves From Exc.		8
TOTAL BURIALS		16

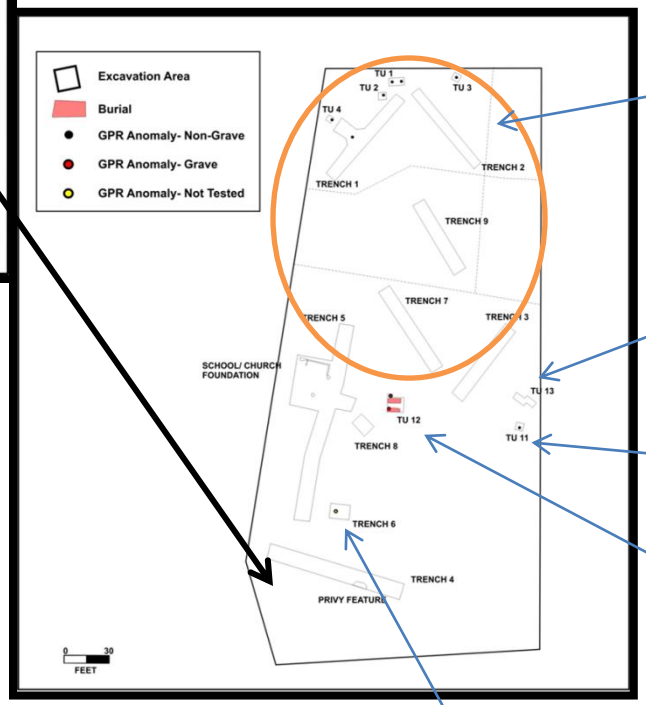
Jackson Cemetery
Grave Verification



GPR Finds	7	
Positive		4
False	2	
Other Feature	1	
TOTAL BURIALS		4

Former Maintenance Yard Area
Grave Verification





Grove of Trees Possible Grave Locations Based on Oral Histories
6 GPR Finds—0 Positive

Amanda Clark Possible Grave Location Based on Will
0 GPR Finds—1 Feature Found

1GPR Find—0 Correct

Clara and Robert Adams Graves
2GPR Finds—2 Correct

Gravestones Moved from Area Based on Oral History
1GPR Find—Unexplored; frozen ground

GPR Finds	10	
Positive		2
False	7	
Unexcavated	1	__
TOTAL BURIALS		2

Overall Results—22 Grave Locations Identified

19 Unmarked

3 With Gravestones

Verification of GPR Grave Locations

Percentage of Positive and False GPR Finds

Total GPR Finds Excavated	36	
Positives	14	39%
False	22	61%

Recommendations for Use of GPR

1. GPR has limited use. It is not 100 % accurate and results in both false positives and false negatives. Results vary dependent upon conditions. (39% overall accuracy; 57% in Jackson; 40% in Old Grave Yard; 20% in former maintenance yard)
2. GPR should not be used in wooded areas; tree roots cause false positives.
3. GPR may be useful as a first step in known cemetery areas, but verification by excavation is necessary.

Verification of Other Sources of Grave Information

Documents:

- Graves found in Jackson Cemetery location as shown on Eagle Crest plat.
- Graves found outside of both Old Grave Yard and Jackson Cemetery boundaries as shown on 1960s Engineering Drawing; boundary determinations needed
- Feature found in location of Amanda Clark's desired burial location; needs additional excavation

Oral History:

- GPR find to south of school church unexplored; needs additional excavation
- Robert Adams grave confirmed north of Clara Adams
- Graves present in Jackson cemetery
- No graves found to date in grove area north and east of the school/church; none associated with GPR finds; none in archaeological excavations; not all areas investigated

Gravestones:

- Virginia Fitzhugh, W. Javins, and Clara Adams burial locations confirmed in alignment to the east of their gravestones

Recommendations for Other Sources of Grave Locations

Documents:

- Continue research to examine all deeds and other records

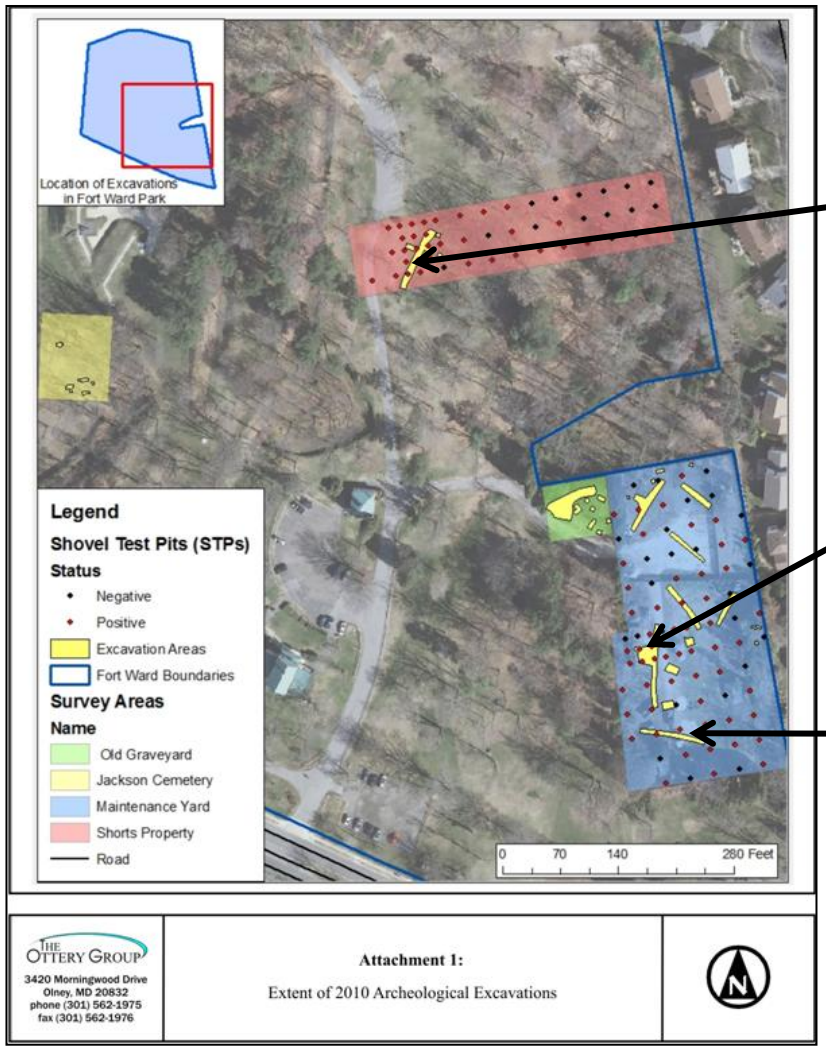
Oral History:

- Continue to interview individuals familiar with Fort Ward

Gravestones:

- No additional work. Only three gravestones in original locations

2010-2011 Goal 2: Locate and Identify Other Potentially Significant Resources



Excavation Results

Shorts Lot: Concentration of artifacts on western side; piers and foundations of chimney

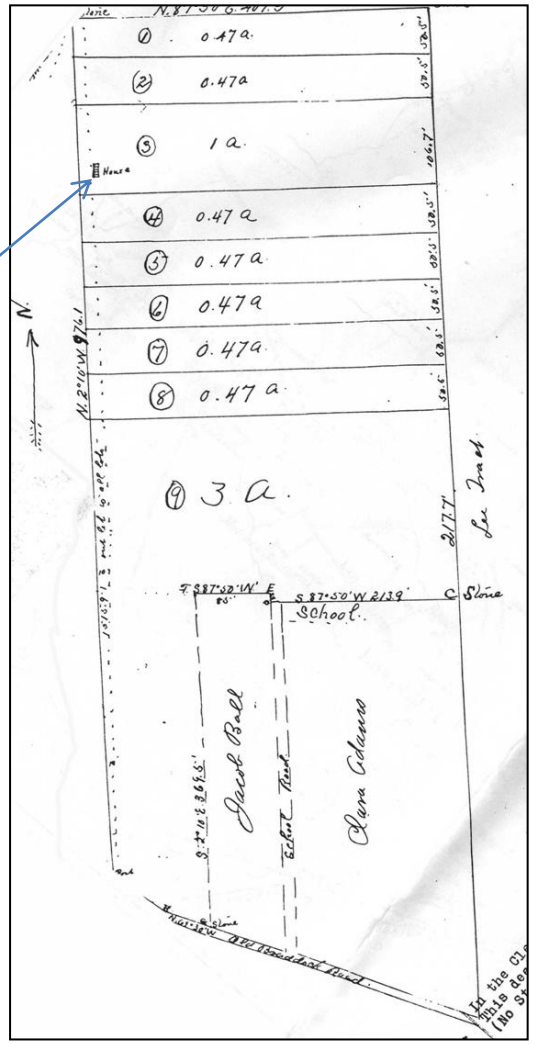
School/Church/Home: Concentration of artifacts; cinder block foundation of addition

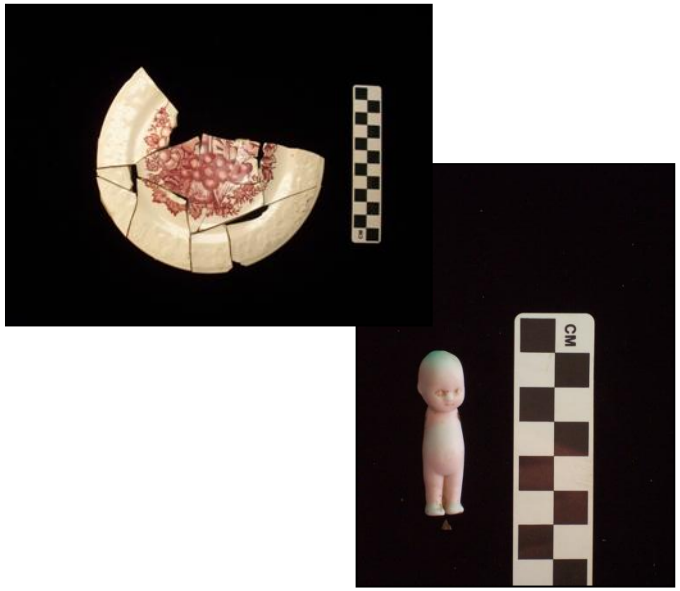
"Privy" in southwest corner

Artifacts associated with Civil War and late 19th-mid-20th century

Shorts' Lot Excavations

House





2011-2012 Stage 2A Fort Ward History & Archaeology Investigation

Goal 1: Complete historical research & oral history; write history report.
Goal 2: Identify graves & boundaries of Jackson Cemetery and Old Graveyard with machine & hand excavation methods.
Goal 3: Identify resource areas in park by conducting archaeological survey (shovel test pits (STPs),hand-excavated units etc.)
Survey includes:

- Re-investigation of Amanda Clark "grave" area given Stage 1 findings.
- Investigation of area south of school/church which once had gravestones (not complete in Stage 1).
- STPs in areas of Indian, Civil War, and African-American resources using a sampling strategy based upon GIS overlays, oral histories, documents, photographs.
- Investigation of additional grave areas based upon new oral histories and documentary sources.
- Additional investigation of school/church (west side) and Shorts home lot (if funds left from above).

Goal 4: Produce Stage 2 Archaeology Report with recommendations for further work.
Goal 5: Update Cultural Resource Inventory to delineate Resource/Sensitivity Areas & outline stewardship needs.

Stage 2B--Interim Drainage Project

Archaeology Stage 2/Interim Drainage

Goal 1: Identify graves and resources in proposed drainage alignment to insure protection.

Goal 2: Inform drainage plan so changes made to protect graves and resources

Archaeology Stage 2B Drainage/Interim Plan Results

½ coffin discovered under and near park access road

- Grave was not dug as deeply as those in Old Graveyard
- Grave probably cut into by park road post-1980
- Hexagonal coffin shape, but date of burial unknown

1 Dog burial discovered—unknown date

Total Human Graves Discovered to Date 23

Fort Ward Archaeology
Status Reports
October 12, 2011

Status: Archaeology Stage 1

	Submitted	Complete	Approved	Paid
GPR Report	x	x	x	$ 1,750
Archaeology Excavation Report	x			$ 21,910
	[2 drafts]			$ 8,734
Resource Inventory	x [Working Draft			

Funds Expended	$ 32,394
Funds Unexpended (Ottery Contract)	$ 13,101
Funds moved to Stage 2	$ 4,505
TOTAL STAGE 1	$50,000

Status: Archaeology Stage 2A

No funds expended	$75,000

Status: Archaeology Stage 2B—Drainage Improvements

	Submitted	Complete	Approved	Paid
Archaeology Excavation: Interim Plan		x	x	$ 16,880
Archaeology Report Interim Plan				

Funds Expended	$ 16,880
Funds Unexpended (Ottery Contract)	$16,880
TOTAL INTERIM PLAN	$33,760
Funds Remaining for Final Drainage	$41,240
TOTAL DRAINAGE ARCHEOLOGY	$75,000