

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
AT  
FORT WARD HISTORICAL PARK  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA  
2010-2011

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# **ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT FORT WARD HISTORICAL PARK**

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## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

- **Locate and confirm the presence of human burials in the three survey areas, based on the results of the prior GPR survey. No excavation of, or disturbance to, human remains will occur**
- **Delineate the boundaries of clusters of burials or individual graves in same areas**
- **Map all identified burials utilizing City surveyors who can place precise locational information on city base maps of the property**
- **Locate and record sites of African American schoolhouse, church, and homes that were present on the site into the middle twentieth century through standard shovel testing.**

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## RESEARCH DESIGN

- Update 2009 *Fort Ward Inventory of Historic Resources*
- Conduct limited background research specific to addressing gaps in the inventory
- Revise GIS mapping based on information from archeological investigations and historical research

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Fort Ward Park

Stage One Archaeological Survey Areas



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## METHODOLOGY

- Shovel Testing: Excavation in a systematic grid pattern, generally using a sampling interval of at least 30 feet
- Metal Detection: Metal detection to identify Civil War activity areas
- Mechanical Stripping in trenches and/or scraped areas: Locations of graves and other archaeological features are identified by stripping off the topsoil and looking for evidence of human activity.
- Hand-excavated units: Hand excavation by natural soil levels

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## RESULTS – SHOVEL TESTING

- Shovel testing revealed a variety of artifacts dating after 1900
- Maintenance Yard had been graded and varying amounts of fill had been redeposited
- Short's Lot has been graded or heavily eroded, resulting in very thin stratigraphy
- Total of 942 artifacts recovered from STPs in Maintenance Yard and Short's Lot

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## Artifacts from the STP Survey by Category

| CATEGORY     | MAINTENANCE<br>YARD | SHORTS<br>PROPERTY |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Brick        | 27 (6.1%)           | 8 (1.6%)           |
| Nails        | 28 (6.3%)           | 43 (8.6%)          |
| Window Glass | 190* (42.9%)        | 218* (43.6%)       |
| Bottle Glass | 146 (33.0%)         | 177 (35.4%)        |
| Ceramics     | 30 (6.8%)           | 43 (8.6%)          |
| Other        | 21 (4.8%)           | 11 (2.2%)          |
| Total        | 442                 | 500                |

\*151 window glass comes from 1 STP



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## RESULTS – SURFACE EXCAVATIONS

- Approximately 7,854 square feet mechanically stripped
  - 5,542 square feet in Maintenance Yard
  - 915 square feet in Short's Lot
  - 1,397 in Old Graveyard
  
- Maintenance Yard had been graded and varying amounts of fill had been redeposited
  
- Short's Lot has been graded or heavily eroded, resulting in very thin stratigraphy
  
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## **North Maintenance Yard**

- 6 GPR hits
- 0 burials
- 6 GPR hits identifying roots

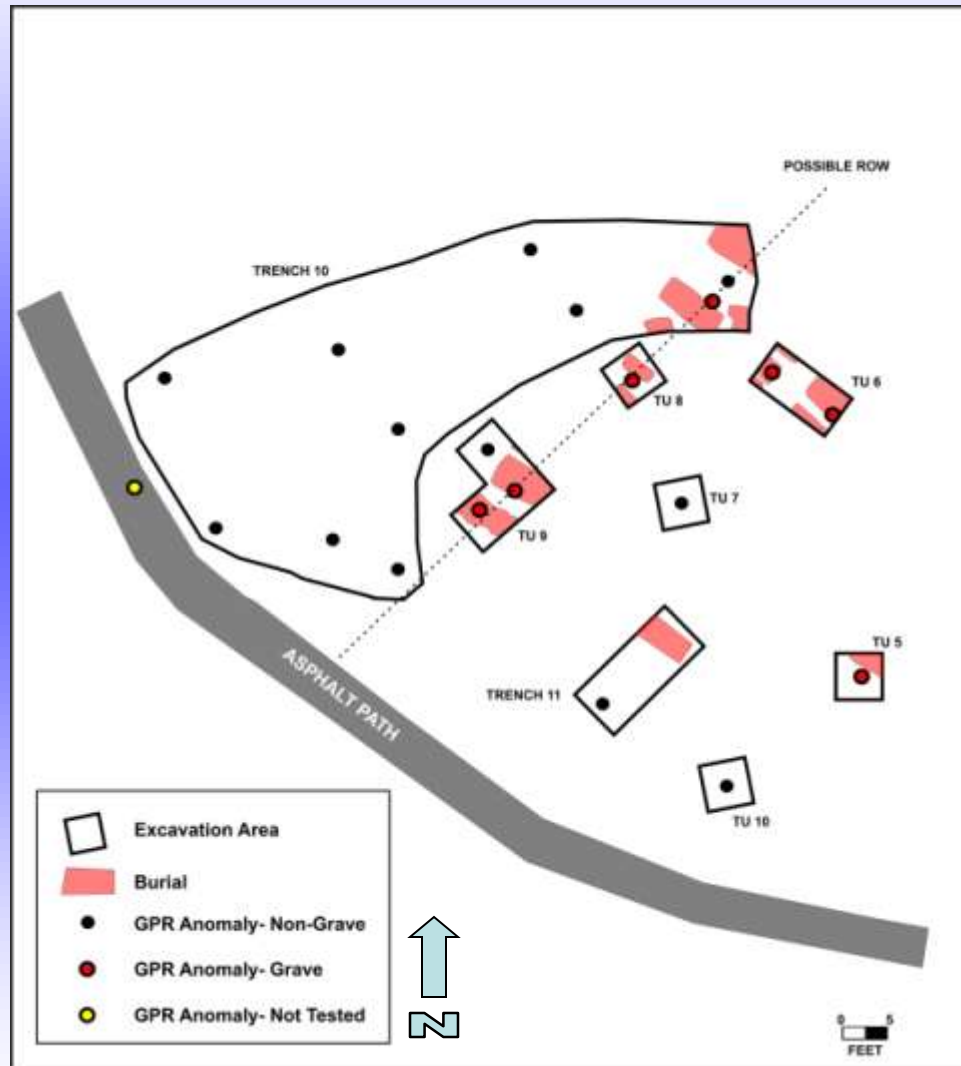
## **Maintenance Yard**

- 4 GPR Hits
- 2 burials identified by GPR
- 0 burials missed by GPR
- 1 GPR hit identifying unmodified soil
- 1 foundation not identified by GPR
- 1 row of structural piers not identified by GPR
- 1 privy feature not identified by GPR

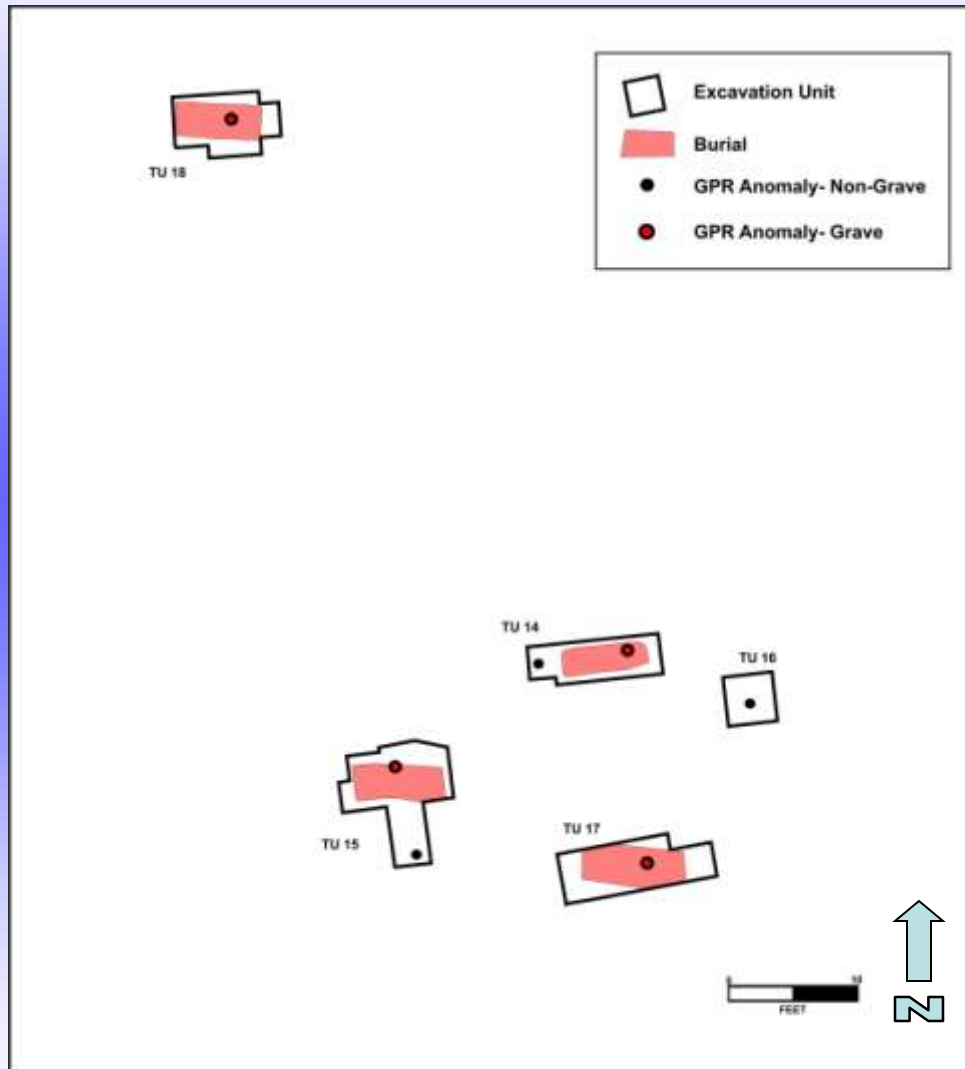
## **Old Graveyard**

- 21 GPR hits
- 8 burials identified by GPR
- 8 burials not identified by GPR
- 7 GPR hits identifying roots
- 5 GPR hits identifying unmodified soil

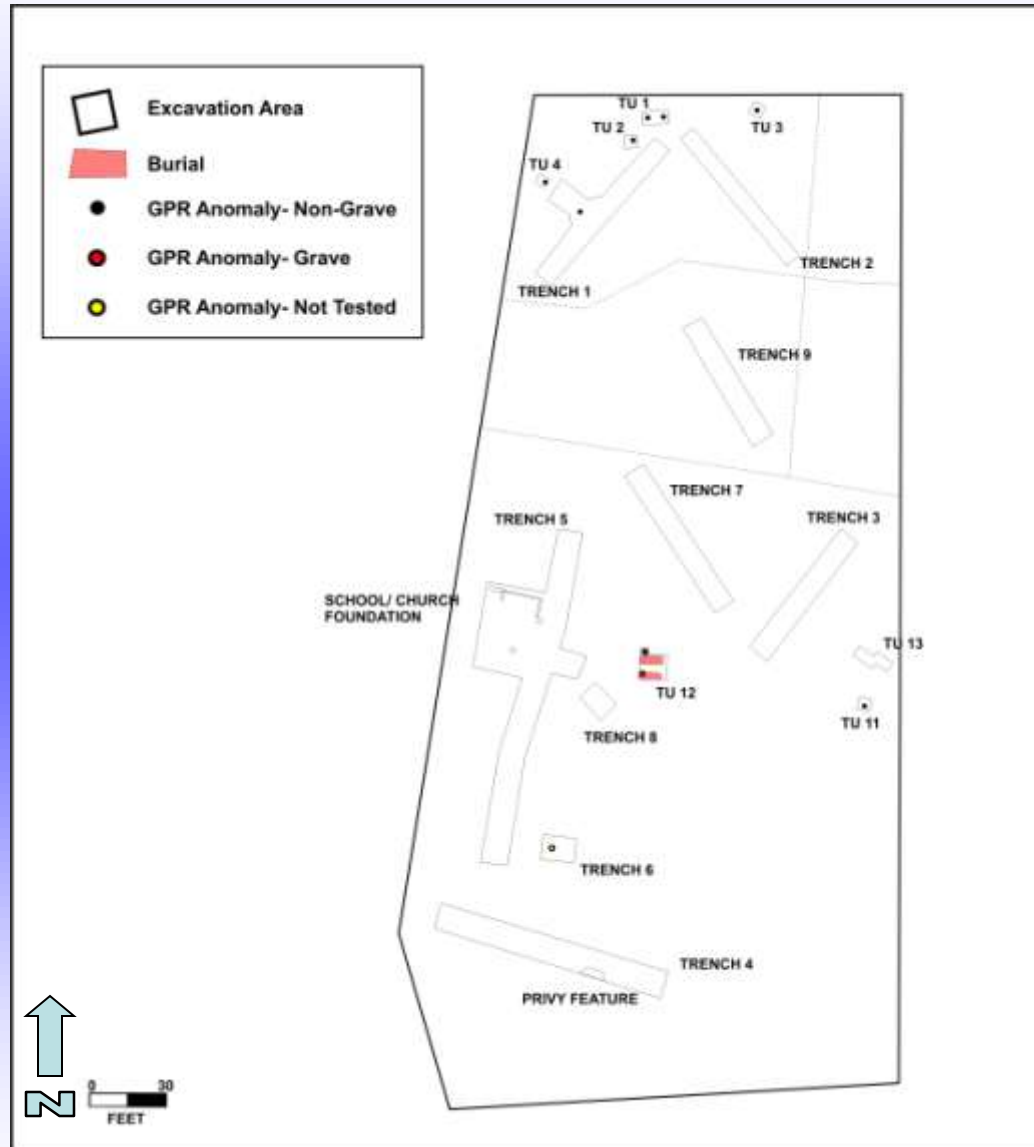
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## Jackson Cemetery

- 7 GPR hits
- 4 burials identified by GPR
- 1 non burial features identified by GPR
- 2 GPR hits identifying unmodified soil

## Summary

- 36/38 GPR hits investigated
- 25/36 GPR hits hand excavated
- 11/36 GPR hits in mechanically stripped trenches (all in Old Graveyard)
- 14/36 GPR hits identified as burials (8 in Old Graveyard, 4 in Jackson Cemetery, 2 in Maintenance Yard)
- 1/36 GPR hits identified as non-burial cultural features (Jackson Cemetery)
- 21/36 GPR hits were not associated with cultural features (58%) (13 tree roots (36%), 8 unmodified soil (22%))
- 8/22 burials identified were not associated with GPR hits (36%)

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## CONCLUSIONS

- Significant historical resources exist both above and below the ground at Fort Ward
- Archeological investigations have confirmed the presence of:
  - Unmarked burials dating to the early and mid-1900s
  - Buried structural features and artifacts related to the former school and at the former Short's property
  - Intact archeological resources that can yield important information on life at Fort Ward from ca.1860 to 1960
- Significance of the archeological resources relates to their direct association with the Civil War use and occupation and the subsequent establishment of residences, schools, and churches associated with African American freedmen and descendant families

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Development of management strategies for archeological and historical resources
- Continuation of historical research of Civil War and Fort Ward community development
- Identify areas where additional archeological resources exist at Fort Ward
- Use field methods such as
  - Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) for refining potential buried historic features or burials
  - Systematic shovel testing survey
  - Unit or block excavation
  - Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology for mapping resources
- Continue collaborations with Working Group, descendant family members, and other researchers to develop and refine understanding of life at Fort Ward