VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The archaeological investigation of the four parcels at Fort Ward was guided by four primary goals. The first three goals focused on issues concerning graves: 1) locate and confirm the presence of human graves in the maintenance yard, the Old Graveyard, and the Jackson Cemetery, and assess the usefulness of GPR as a method to identify grave locations; 2) delineate locations of all graves in same areas; 3) map all identified graves. The larger purpose of these three goals is to develop methods for identifying unmarked graves on the property. The final goal is a bit broader in scope: 4) locate, record, and evaluate sites of the African American schoolhouse, church, and other structures that were present in the survey areas into the middle twentieth century and test for other cultural resources using various archaeological methods.

Let us briefly summarize the findings for each of the four goals and from them make recommendations for future stages of archaeological investigation.

Goal 1: Locate and confirm the presence of human graves and assess the usefulness of GPR as a method to identify grave locations.

A total of 22 graves have been identified in the project areas: 16 in the Old Graveyard, four in the Jackson Cemetery, and two in the maintenance yard. Nineteen of the 22 graves are unmarked. The three marked graves belong to Virginia Fitzhugh and W.E. Javins (Old Graveyard) and Clara Adams (maintenance yard). The unmarked grave adjacent to that of Clara Adams almost certainly is that of her husband Robert Adams. The displaced gravestone of Cornelia Spence in the Old Graveyard was located closest to Grave 13.

Fourteen of the 36 GPR anomalies (n=39 percent) positively identified graves. Among the 22 false positive GPR anomalies, 12 of them were triggered by subsurface irregularities such as tree roots or dislodged soil. Ten of the investigated GPR anomalies signaled intact sterile soil (i.e. a location with no visible soil intrusion). The fact that the GPR did not “find” the marked grave of W.E. Javins is especially troubling (see Figure 47).

Soil type and soil conditions, as well as vegetation have a significant impact on the accuracy of the GPR findings. For example, the success rate of the GPR in the Jackson Cemetery—an area with few trees and a relatively thin layer of sandy soil overlying subsoil—produced markedly better results (4 out of 7 accurate anomalies) than in the maintenance yard (2 out of 10 accurate anomalies) where a multitude of tree roots are present. GPR performs better in sandy soils as opposed to compacted clay, and in areas with dense vegetation the reliability of the findings is questionable (William Hanna, personal communication, February 14, 2012). As occurred along the north

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19 Moreover, oral history accounts indicate that upwards of a dozen burials were located in the northern portion of the maintenance yard, and none of these purported burials were identified by GPR or during field testing. This includes the grave of Amanda Clarke, reportedly located in the northeast corner of the maintenance yard area.

20 The accuracy rate is improves if the “grave-like” feature in Test Unit 16 is taken into account.
boundary of the maintenance yard, GPR will pick up large tree roots—even those that have long ago decayed—as significant soil anomalies.

The fact of the matter is there is no foolproof method for identifying unmarked graves without physically excavating. Clearly GPR is not foolproof—it was fooled at least 20 times for this project. The only way to positively identify an unmarked human grave is to remove the upper layers of soil down to the level of subsoil so as to reveal the soil discolorations of grave shafts (see Plates 8, 12, and 14). To identify every single grave at Fort Ward Park would involve the systematic removal of all the topsoil across the entire property, a gargantuan and impossible task.

The outcome of the use of GPR for this project demonstrates that this type of testing as conducted by a trained professional is a valuable tool for detecting human graves, but it must be used in conjunction with intensive archaeological testing and other field methods. GPR testing alone is not enough. By focusing the GPR testing in specific locations where graves are predicted by documentary or oral history data, this limits the extent of the field investigations to areas that are feasible for follow-up archaeological testing. In these cases, it is important to recognize that graves may be present anywhere that has not been verified by archaeological investigation, unless the area has been previously disturbed to such an extent that no graves could be extant.

Recommendations:

Full examination of the maintenance yard, the Old Graveyard, and the Jackson Cemetery—either by systematically stripping off the topsoil or comprehensive hand testing—will need to be accomplished in future stages of archaeological study at Fort Ward Park. The locations of graves are suspected to exist in several additional places on park property. GPR testing could be employed usefully in these locations where background research and/or oral testimony indicate a high possibility for graves.

Goal 2: Delineate the boundaries of clusters of graves or individual graves in same areas.

The full boundaries of the Old Graveyard and Jackson Cemetery remain unknown, although the western extent of the Old Graveyard appears to be established as indicated by the absence of graves within a 30 ft. wide expanse to the west of Burial 11 (see Figure 42). Additional graves may be present to the east and south in the Old Graveyard, and perhaps even to the north near the boundary with the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. More graves also may be located in the Jackson Cemetery, particularly between the three clustered graves and the outlying one 50 ft. to the north (see Figure 48). Furthermore, graves could be present in all the areas in the maintenance yard that were not archaeological examined during this project, especially in the northern half of the maintenance yard (see Figure 46).

Recommendations:

Further archaeological testing is needed for the entire Jackson Cemetery so as to ensure that all graves are identified within its bounds. Further archaeological testing also will be necessary in the Old Graveyard, in particular to the north, south, and east from the existing 16 burials in order to confirm the full boundaries of this cemetery. As addressed under Goal 1, more graves are likely to be present in the northern half of the maintenance yard, and archaeological testing will be needed in order to identify them.
Goal 3: Map all identified graves utilizing City surveyors who can place precise locational information on city base maps of the property.

All identified graves and archaeological features were surveyed by the City and digitized into a GIS database. This data is now integrated into the City GIS system as a layer. It is important to note that the identities of some of the graves are known: Virginia Fitzhugh, W.E. Javins, and Clara Adams. Although unmarked, Robert Adams’ grave is next to his wife’s, as reported. Based on the presence of her gravestone, Cornelia Spence also is interred in the Old Graveyard, perhaps in Grave 13. The identities of the other 14 graves in the Old Graveyard and the four graves in the Jackson Cemetery are not known.

Based on the dates on the surviving grave markers, individuals were interred in the Old Graveyard over the course of several decades from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. All the graves are oriented on the same axis, approximately 45 to 55 degrees west of north, a strong clue that this distinctive grave placement practice was considered the norm at this particular location. All 16 identified graves in the Old Graveyard adhere to this pattern.

The orientations of the graves in the Old Graveyard appear to differ from that of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery immediately to the north. The headstones in the Oakland Cemetery are oriented on an east-to-west axis; like in the Old Graveyard, most of the inscriptions on the headstones face to the east. The earliest identifiable headstone in the Oakland Cemetery is for Maria Blackburn and dates to 1925. When comparing the two cemeteries, there are two distinctive differences that are apparent: all the graves in the Old Graveyard are oriented differently than the graves in the Oakland Cemetery, and the dateable stones in each cemetery do not overlap in time. Virginia Fitzhugh was interred in the Old Graveyard in 1918 and the first dated headstone in the Oakland Cemetery dates to the mid-1920s, a gap of at least five years. These two factors alone strongly suggest that the cemeteries were not in operation at the same time, nor were they interrelated in any way.

At least six graves have comparatively small dimensions among the 16 identified graves in the Old Graveyard, a clear indication that children were buried here. Interestingly, there are no indications that the Old Graveyard was in use when St. Cyprians Chapel was in operation between 1926 and 1942, as evidenced by the Spence (d. 1892), Javins (d. 1907), and Fitzhugh (d. 1918) grave markers. The Old Graveyard seems to predate the use of the nearby property as a church.

In the Jackson Cemetery all four identified graves probably were adults. The graves here are oriented on an east-to-west axis, as was common in a Western burial tradition. The question to resolve is why there is a 50 ft. separation between Burial 15 and the others (see Figure 48). Is Burial 15 just an outlier, or are there more graves in the

21 Marked gravestones in the Old Graveyard span from 1892 to 1918.
22 The marker for J.W. Terrell may date to 1923, but the inscription is worn and difficult to read. J.W. Terrell shares the marker with his wife Burney Terrell, who died in 1930.
23 The Oakland Baptist Church formally acquired the cemetery property in 1929, but began using the parcel as a burial ground several years prior to that.
24 The length of the four burial shafts spanned from 5.6 ft. to nearly 8.0 ft.
gap between? The answer to this question may hinge on fleshing out information about the relationship between the Jackson family and William Carpenter who purchased a burial plot in the Jackson Cemetery in the mid-1920s.

A question remains regarding graves in the maintenance yard on Amanda Clark’s land. The graves of Clara and Robert Adams are confirmed, but former resident Lee Thomas Young recalls the presence of perhaps a dozen headstones to the north of the Adams’ graves, headstones not part of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. GPR and subsequent testing failed to identify any graves in the north maintenance yard, which leaves the question of their whereabouts an open issue.

Recommendations:

As additional graves are identified at the Fort Ward Park, we strongly recommend that they should be added into the City GIS system.

Goal 4: Locate, record, and evaluate sites of the African American schoolhouse, church, and other structures that were present in the survey areas into the middle twentieth century and test for other cultural resources through standard shovel testing, metal detection, and mechanical trenching.

In addition to the graves, archaeologists identified other potentially significant cultural resources during the course of the archaeological investigation. The most noteworthy findings are the 22 ft. by 22 ft. foundations for the main dwelling on the Shorts House Lot, as well as evidence of additions to the main structure (see Figure 39). A portion of the School/Chapel/Young residence was uncovered in the maintenance yard area, probably an addition built prior to Lee Thomas Young’s acquisition of the property in the late 1940s (see Figure 28). A privy pit likely associated with the Casey family and located near the south boundary of the maintenance yard was partially excavated (see Figure 31 and Plate 6). A small, widely scattered assemblage of artifacts dating to the Civil War was found while metal detecting the Old Graveyard and to the south of the Shorts House Lot, but no concentrations were found to indicate long-term or intensive activity. No American Indian archaeological resources were identified during this investigation.

Recommendations:

The western half of the Shorts House Lot has high archaeological potential, as well as the lot containing the School/Chapel/Young residence. Further archaeological testing is warranted in both locations, guided by specific research questions. The lot once owned and occupied by the Casey family in the southwest corner of the maintenance yard (including the partially excavated privy) retains moderate archaeological potential. Additional archaeological investigations in this area should focus on research questions pertaining to the Casey family and later occupants the Belk family.

**Management Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to conduct archaeological fieldwork in some of the most sensitive areas within Fort Ward Historical Park—the maintenance yard, the Old Graveyard, and the Jackson Cemetery—in order to identify locations of graves and the limits of cemeteries. Additionally, archaeological investigation in these three areas, as well as in the Shorts Home Lot, focused on locating and evaluating the sites of an African
American schoolhouse/church and the earliest known African American home on the property. The findings also are expected to help guide future planning at Fort Ward Park.

There are six different levels of archaeological potential that can be applied to specific areas within each parcel (Figure 49):

1. Those areas that contain human graves represent the locations with the highest level of significance and can be considered Sacred Areas. Three Sacred Areas have been identified: the entire Old Graveyard, the Jackson Cemetery, and the graves of Clara and Robert Adams located on a lot once owned by Amanda Clark in what later became a City maintenance yard (see Figure 49). The first two Sacred Areas require more archaeological work to firmly establish their boundaries.

2. The north half of the maintenance yard is deemed an Unconfirmed Grave Area, the only designation of this sort in the four project areas. Further archaeological investigation is needed in this area to confirm the presence of graves, which would then elevate it to a Sacred Area.

3. The western two-thirds of the Shorts House Lot as well as the immediate area around the School/Chapel/Young residence are designated as areas with High Archaeological Potential.

4. A small area in the southwest corner of the maintenance yard is demarcated as having Moderate Archaeological Potential due to the presence of archaeological remains related to the use of the lot by the Casey family, and later the Belk family.

5. The eastern one-third of the Shorts House Lot and the southeast quadrant of the maintenance yard are both judged to be areas with Low Archaeological Potential.

6. Small zones within each parcel are labeled as Cleared, meaning nothing of archaeological significance is present in these particular locations.

Each of the six different levels of archaeological potential triggers varied levels of archaeological treatments and protections (Table 9). These levels range from no further archaeological action in those areas that have been identified as void of any significant archaeological features to thorough archaeological hand testing in some locations with high archaeological potential. For areas that have not been cleared, any planned undertaking that involves ground disturbance must be preceded by the recommended level of archaeological investigation, except for those areas with low archaeological potential. Within areas with low archaeological potential, an archaeologist must be on hand to monitor any ground disturbing activity, but this can take place concurrently with the project and does not require archaeological treatment in advance (see Table 9). The recommendations for each of the four parcels are discussed in detail below.

A. Maintenance Yard

The topsoil in most of the maintenance yard retains very limited archaeological value. However, even with all the disturbances that have occurred here, the underlying ground surface remains intact, meaning significant subsurface features—postholes, pits, foundations, graves, etc.—can still be present. Based on the archaeological findings in the maintenance yard in combination with background research, the north half of the
Figure 49. Zones of archaeological potential within the four survey parcels.
Table 9. Levels of archaeological potential and the corresponding treatment and preservation measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archaeological Potential</th>
<th>Treatment/Preservation Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Area</td>
<td>Hand testing and/or closely monitored mechanical stripping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconfirmed Grave Area</td>
<td>Closely monitored mechanical stripping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Archaeological Potential</td>
<td>Hand testing only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Archaeological Potential</td>
<td>Closely monitored mechanical stripping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Archaeological Potential</td>
<td>Monitor ground disturbance activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleared</td>
<td>No further archaeological action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The maintenance yard is an especially sensitive area due to the possibility for human graves and therefore is considered an Unconfirmed Grave Area (Figure 50). Aside from the trenches and test units dug in this area that proved to be void of any significant archaeological features, no ground disturbance should occur until the area has been archaeologically mechanically stripped. Consideration should be given to treating and interpreting this area as a Sacred Area without further excavation unless the goal is developed for identifying every grave location.

The approximately 90 ft. by 150 ft. area surrounding the School/Chapel/Young residence retains high archaeological potential and additional investigation should occur to locate additional foundations and other significant archaeological materials (see Figure 50). The area in the extreme southwest corner of the maintenance yard—roughly 50 ft. by 90 ft. in size—has moderate archaeological potential and monitored mechanical stripping must occur prior to any ground disturbances therein (see Figure 50). The southeast quadrant of the maintenance yard is judged to have low archaeological potential, thus an archaeologist must monitor ground disturbing activity when it occurs.

**B. Shorts House Lot**

Two mitigation measures are advised for the Shorts House Lot (Figure 51). The area to the west of the ravine (approximately the western two-thirds of the parcel) possesses high archaeological potential and therefore any ground disturbing activity must be preceded by intensive hand testing. The eastern one-third of the parcel that includes the ravine and its eastern side has low archaeological potential (see Figure 51). Ground disturbance in this area must be monitored by an archaeologist.

**C. Old Graveyard**

The entire Old Graveyard is considered a Sacred Area, although some portions of the parcel have been cleared during the fieldwork phase of this project (Figure 52). We strongly recommend that no ground disturbing undertakings should be planned for this area. Furthermore, in order to identify the full boundaries of the Old Graveyard and the overall number of graves therein, an additional stage of archaeological testing should be considered. We are confident that the western extent of the graveyard is known, but the location of the north, south, and east boundaries have yet to be determined (see Figure 52).
Figure 50. Zones of archaeological potential in the maintenance yard.
Figure 51. Zones of archaeological potential in the Shorts House Lot.
Figure 52. Zones of archaeological potential in the Old Graveyard.
D. Jackson Cemetery

Like the Old Graveyard, the Jackson Cemetery is a Sacred Area (Figure 53). No disturbances should be planned for this area. Further archaeological testing will be needed so as to identify the total number of graves and to allow for the cemetery to be properly fenced and protected, particularly given the 50 ft. distance between the main cluster of graves and the one outlier to the northwest (see Figure 53). Because of the close proximity of this area to the Fort Ward glacis, the methods for additional testing in the Jackson Cemetery should be considered carefully.

Figure 53. Zones of archaeological potential in the Jackson Cemetery.
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