April 4, 2012

From: Garrett Fesler, OHA/Alexandria Archaeology
Re: Update on Stage 2 Archaeological Survey of Fort Ward Park

As of April 2, 2012, the Alexandria Archaeology field crew has completed archaeological survey of approximately 6.5 acres of Fort Ward Park. This equates to approximately 20 percent of the 32-acre park. Fieldwork began on March 21, 2012, with a partial crew, and became full-strength beginning on March 27, 2012. The crew has been working on the western side of the park, primarily to the west of the loop road, although a small portion has been examined in the northwest corner of the park to the east of the loop road.

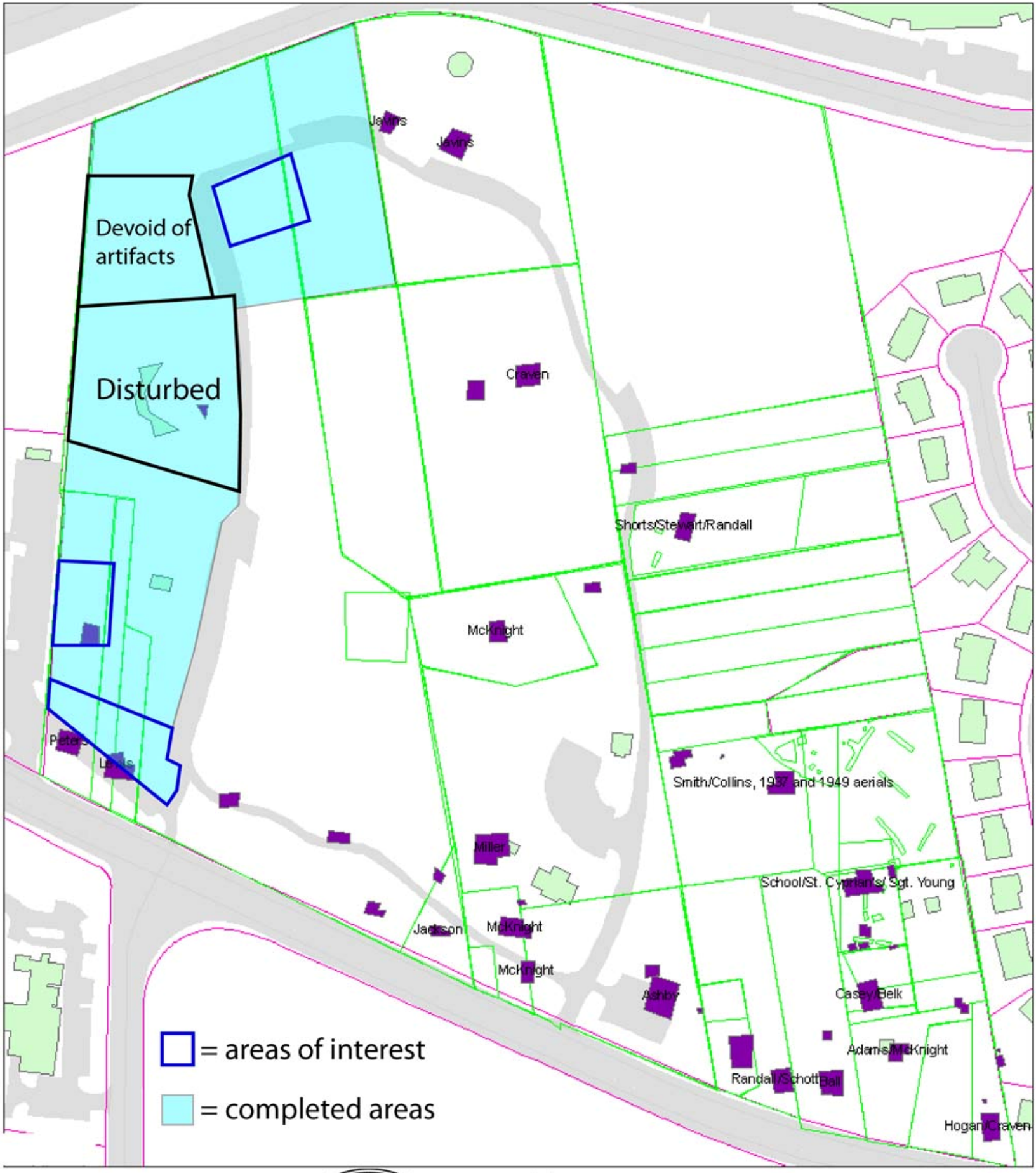
Approximately 325 test holes have been excavated, with approximately 225 of them yielding artifacts. One of the challenges for this survey is to distinguish between materials that have been strewn throughout the park over the past several decades and those that pertain to significant historical activity that pre-dates the park.

Thus far, we have identified three areas that contain significant amounts of artifacts and warrant additional archaeological investigation. One of these "areas of interest" is located in the extreme southwest corner of the park in the vicinity of the former Peters and Lewis family homes. The artifacts from this particular area primarily consist of glass container fragments, ceramic fragments, as well as a few nails and other iron artifacts. The north side of the Lewis dwelling may still exist in the ground, but most of it, and all of the Peters dwelling were removed when the entrance road to the nearby school was built. Additional testing will be needed to ascertain what might remain of the Lewis building.

A second area of interest is situated in what would have been the backyard of the Peters property, in close proximity to a second building on the Peters lot. Here archaeologists recovered artifacts such as ceramics, glass, and metal objects within an area approximately 120 ft. by 140 ft. in size. These materials appear to date to the early twentieth century.

The third area of interest—approximately 115 ft. by 140 ft. in size—is located inside the corner of the loop road to the north of the northwest bastion of the fort. A significant amount of household artifacts—ceramic fragments, glass container fragments, nails, window glass—suggest that a structure may have once stood at this location in the first half of the twentieth century. A structure is not shown here on any historic maps or aerial photos found to date, so we are quite curious to determine the meaning of this discovery. Based on the sequence of ownership, the materials could have been generated when John Jackson owned the property from 1894 to 1925, or during Garnett Ashby's tenure as owner from 1925 to 1938. Additional archaeological investigation will occur to more fully understand this third area of interest.

As was expected, the land surrounding the amphitheater was disturbed from construction and does not contain anything of archaeological value. The slope immediately to the north of the amphitheater was not affected from any construction or grading activities; however it is largely devoid of artifacts.



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CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VIRGINIA

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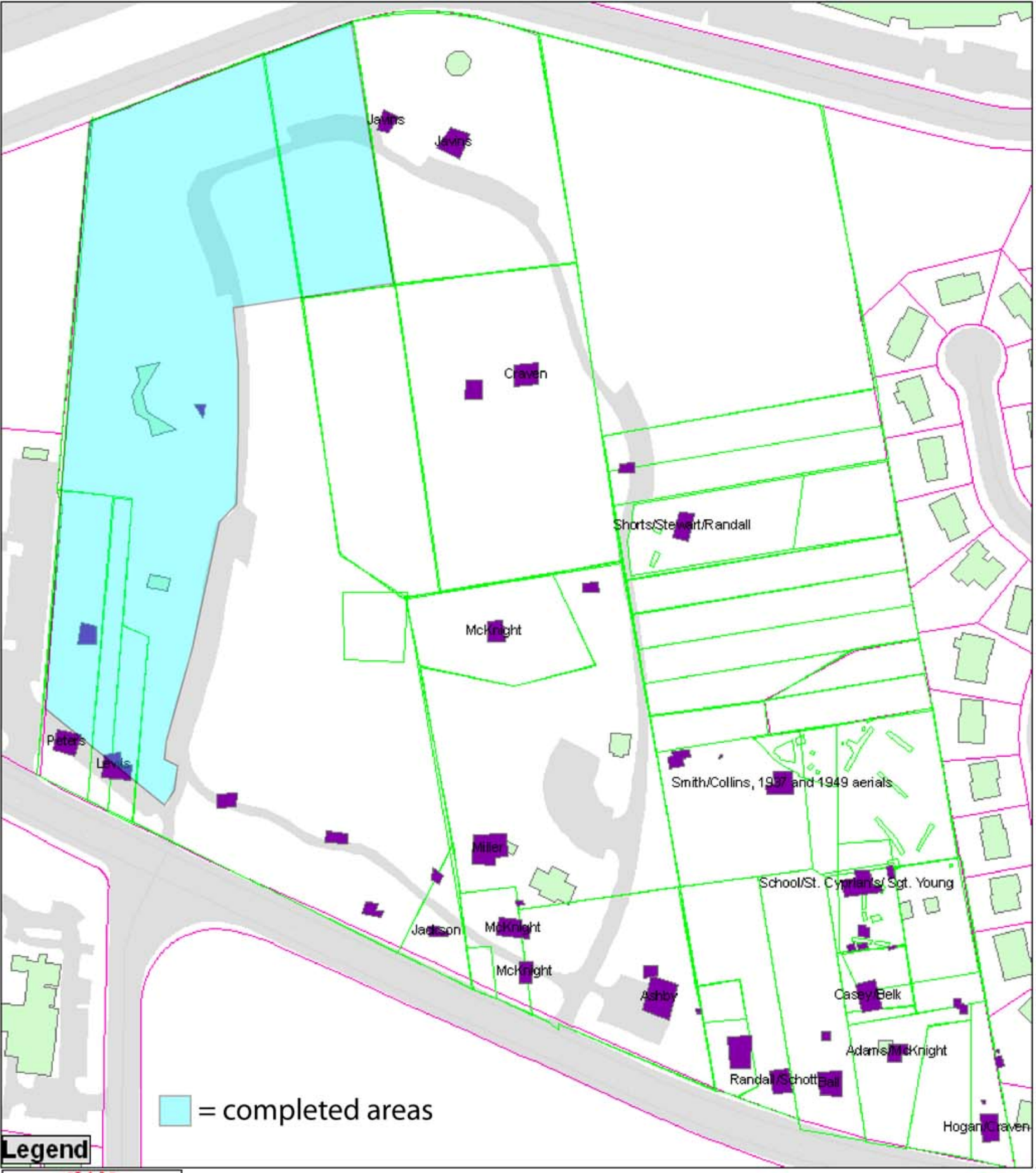

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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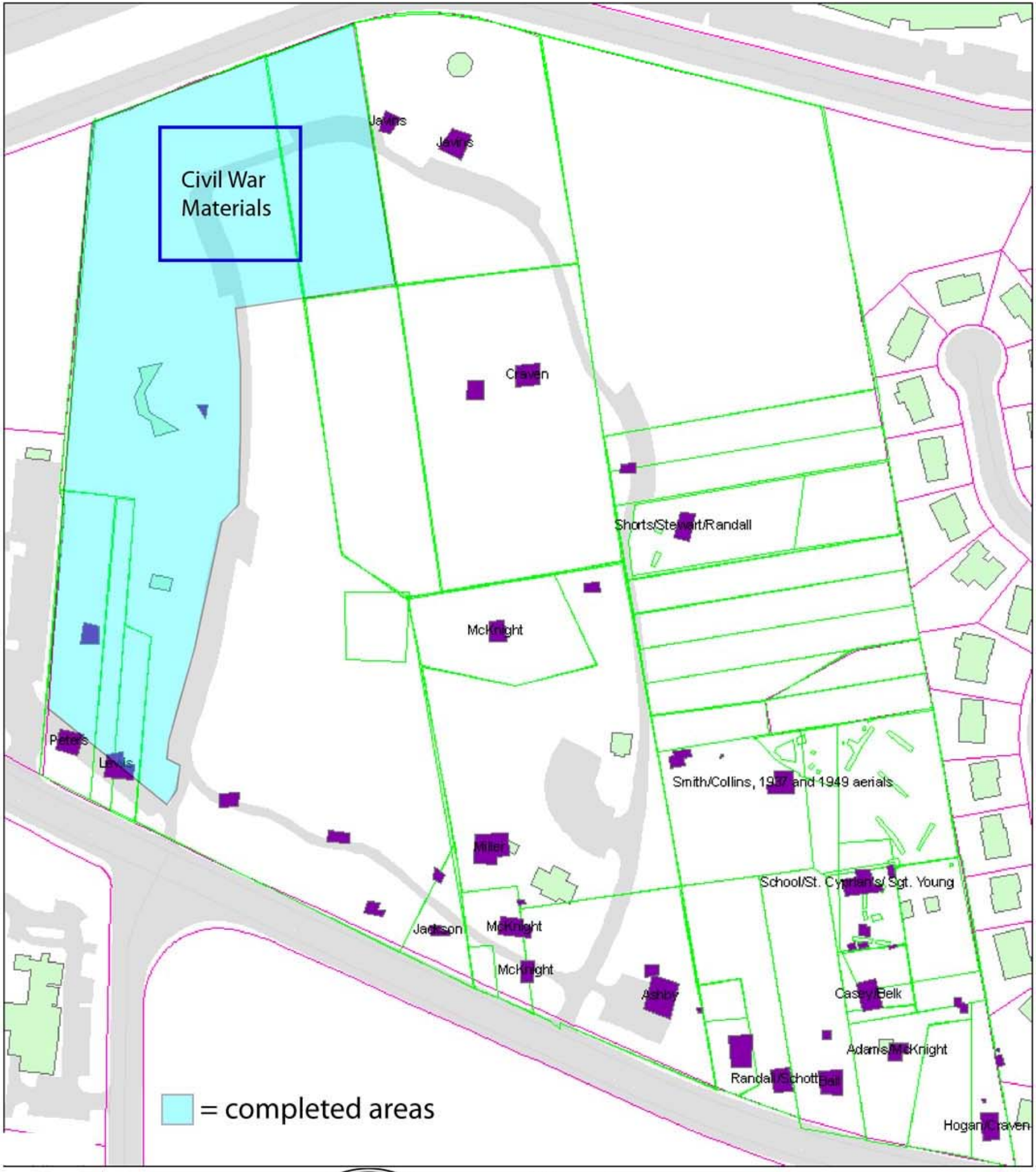

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