

The Race Riot Artifact Assemblages: Insights into the Pre-Fire, Fire, and Post-Fire Contexts

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For those of you who did not hear the earlier paper in this session, this paper is the second of three papers on the archaeology of the Race Riot Site—an archaeological site consisting of burned remains of five houses destroyed by mob action during the Springfield Race Riot of August 14-16, 1908. The previous paper, presented by Chris Stratton, summarized the historical context of the riot, and the archaeological excavations conducted at the site in the summer and early fall of 2019. This paper will introduce the wide range of artifacts collected during those investigations, and the third and final paper following this presentation will discuss the significance of the investigations.



With the fieldwork completed by early summer 2020, our focus has shifted to the processing of the artifacts and report production. All artifacts have now been washed, inventoried, and the report is progressing.



Archaeologists study artifacts and artifact assemblages. Although individual artifacts are often significant and of interest to the archaeologist, it is the *collection of artifacts* as a whole, from a single *context* that is generally of most research value, as they convey information relevant to a specific *time* and *place*. These collections of artifacts are referred to as an *artifact assemblage*.

Archaeologists use the term “feature” in reference to non-portable artifacts such as pits and structures. These “archaeological features” often contain large artifact assemblages.



Middle Woodland pit (100 A.D.)

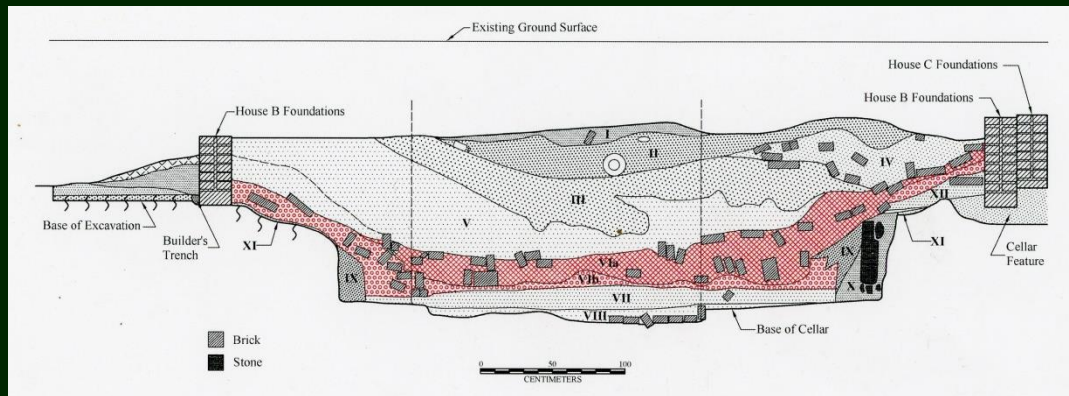


1840s house basin

The earliest artifacts from the excavations were recovered from a small cellar that pre-dated the platting of the neighborhood and construction of the houses destroyed in 1908. This Pre-House component (one pre-dating the construction of the existing houses and dating from the late 1820s or 1830s) was represented by a small cellar located beneath the later remains of Houses B and C. This cellar was probably abandoned in the later 1830s or very early 1840s. These two ceramic vessels were recovered from the small section of the cellar that was excavated.

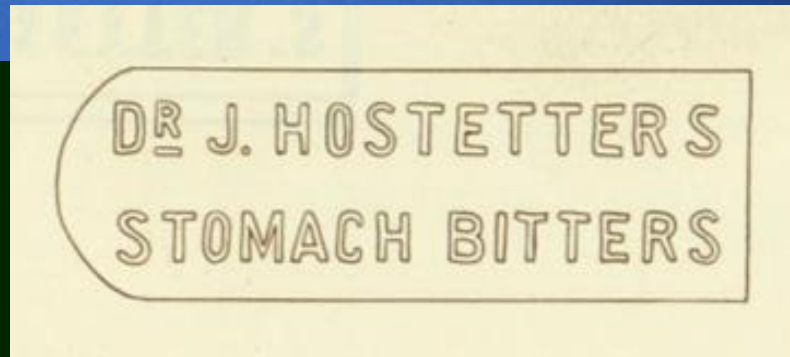


With each of the five houses investigated, the artifact assemblages were divided into several components that correlated with Pre-Fire (1845-1908), Fire (August 1908), and Post-Fire (September 1908-circa 1915) contexts.



Top: Photograph (top) and sectional drawing (bottom) of House B profile through cellar illustrating Pre-Fire (below the red zones), Fire (red zones), and Post-Fire (above the red zones) contexts.

Pre-Fire deposits were generally subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late components. This image documents the *primary vessels* from the Early-Middle Pre-Fire context of House E (deposited circa 1845-1870) by the widow Smith and her family.



More common were *secondary vessels* (left) which are small fragments of discarded items. Although secondary vessels represent a small percentage of the whole item, they have great interpretive value. Similarly, a wide range of *small finds*, such as this Parian Madonna (right) were also recovered from the Early Pre-Fire Component of House E.



Plate from House C illustrated with the CALEDONIA Pattern, produced circa 1829-61.



Parian figurine of Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus from circa 1860 . These fragments were recovered from a midden associated with House E, and deposited by the Smith family.

The Late Pre-Fire components date from the later nineteenth century extending up to riots in August 1908, and were generally associated with Black tenants that occupied the houses from circa 1880 to summer 1908. The assemblages differ considerably in character from the earlier domestic components.



Late Pre-Fire *primary vessels* from House E.

Late Pre-Fire artifacts include a range of items with greatly differing messages: Salvation Army lapel pin (left) and opium pipe bowl (right)—both from the Late Pre-Fire deposits of House A.



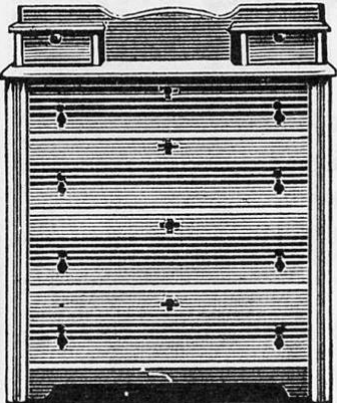
The Fire deposits were deposited on the evening of August 14 and/or early morning of August 15, 1908 and represent the contents of the house in use by its occupants at the time of the riots. This is a table setting recovered from the Fire deposits of House B.



Fire deposits from House A included a variety of items believed to have been located in a bedroom, and included medicine bottles, a tumbler, and a vase—all in varying degrees of damage due to the fire.



Of special interest to our research was the Fire deposits of House E. It was in House E that the charred and burned remains of both a trunk and dresser were uncovered, and their contents have been of great interpretive value.



72503

Bureaus and Dressers.

72550 Bureau, antique finish, four drawers, no mirror; height, 3 ft. 7 in.; width, 3 ft. 1 in.; weight, about 75 pounds.
Price, complete.\$5.00

A good line of dressers to go with iron beds.

Canvas Covered Trunks.



No. 21631

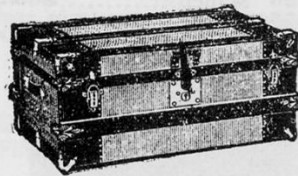
No. 21631 An Unquestionable Bargain. Square Trunk, with heavy iron bottom. Painted canvas covering, heavy and strong, as well as neat in appearance. This trunk has hardwood slats on top and body, and is protected with heavy malleable iron clamps and bumpers.

28 inch.....	\$2.50	32 inch.....	\$2.95
30 inch.....	2.75	34 inch.....	3.25



The contents of the trunk included a wide range of small finds (jewelry, dominoes, poker chips, rubber balls, hair combs, slate writing styluses), clothing, multiple books, and even an insurance policy.

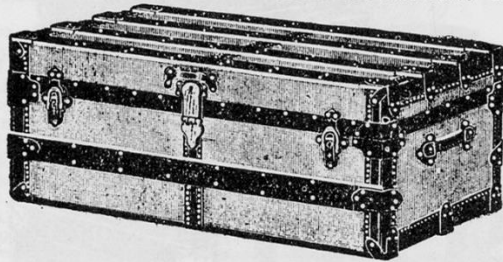
Canvas Covered Stateroom Trunks



No. 21633 Iron center band, steel trimmings. Made to go under berth of any steamship. This is a very convenient trunk for short journeys; japanned iron trimmed; bumpers, clamps, and corner shoes; large flat steel key, lock, side

No. 21633
pockets, and set up tray.
28 inch.....\$3.00
30 inch..... 3.25

32 inch.....\$3.50
34 inch..... 3.75



No. 21635 Leather bound brass excelsior lock steel trimmings, covered tray. Cheapest leather bound trunk made, canvas duck covered, edges bound with heavy leather, and leather center band, best steel bumpers, clamps, corner shoes, valance clamps, hinges, etc., excelsior lock, full covered tray, linen lined throughout

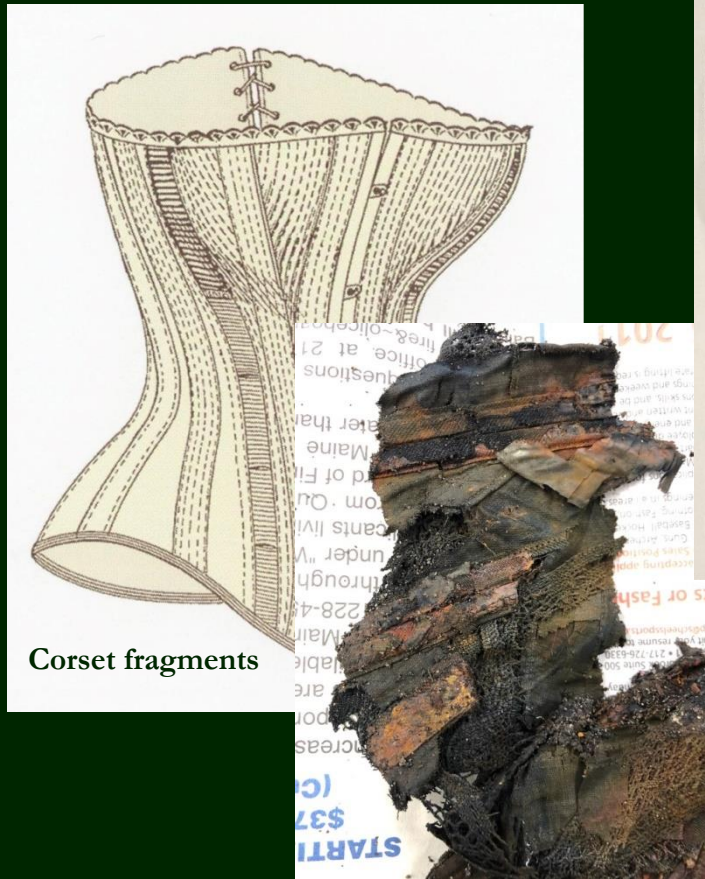
30-inch.....\$6.25 34-inch.....\$7.25
32-inch..... 6.75 36-inch..... 7.75



Among the items in the trunk was this finely-made, bone china demitasse cup and saucer, manufactured by the Rosenthal Company of Bavaria (Germany) sometime between 1896 and 1907.



In the trunk was a wide variety of clothing fragments and buttons—representing numerous clothing-related items, including a corset and shoes.



Corset fragments



Remnants of a shoe



Charred remains of several books and a newspaper were also found in the trunk. This is a fragment of the book entitled *The Mechanics' and Laborers' Ready Reckoner* (which was originally published in 1847).



THE MECHANICS'

AND

LABORERS' READY RECKONER.

CONTAINING

WAGES BY THE DAY, BOARD BY THE WEEK.
WAGES BY THE HOUR, FORMS OF
WAGES BY MONTH, FORMS OF
WAGES BY THE YEAR, FORM OF
CONTRACT FOR BUILDING

NEW YORK.

PUBLISHED BY C. P. HUI
104 Nassau, corner of Ann

20 WAGES BY THE DAY.

Table 23. — \$1.50.

Showing the rate of wages
from 1-4 to 6 days, at \$1.50 a
per day, or \$9.25 per week.

Days.	Dols.	Cts.
1/4	40 1/2	
1/2	81 1/2	
3/4	1 21 1/2	
1	1 62 1/2	
1 1/4	2 03	
1 1/2	2 43 1/2	
1 3/4	2 81 1/2	
2	3 25	
2 1/4	3 65 1/2	
2 1/2	4 06 1/2	
2 3/4	4 46 1/2	
3	4 87 1/2	
3 1/4	5 28	
3 1/2	5 68 1/2	
3 3/4	6 09 1/2	
4	6 50	
4 1/4	6 90 1/2	
4 1/2	7 31 1/2	
4 3/4	7 71 1/2	
5	8 12 1/2	
5 1/4	8 53	
5 1/2	8 93 1/2	
5 3/4	9 34 1/2	
6	9 75	

Table 24. — \$1.60.

Showing the rate of wages
from 1-4 to 6 days, at \$1.60 a
per day, or \$10.12 1/2 per week.

Days.	Dols.	Cts.
1/4	42 1/2	
1/2	84 1/2	
3/4	1 26 1/2	
1	1 68 1/2	
1 1/4	2 11	
1 1/2	2 53 1/2	
1 3/4	2 95 1/2	
2	3 37 1/2	
2 1/4	3 79 1/2	
2 1/2	4 22	
2 3/4	4 64	
3	5 06 1/2	
3 1/4	5 48 1/2	
3 1/2	5 90 1/2	
3 3/4	6 32 1/2	
4	6 75	
4 1/4	7 17 1/2	
4 1/2	7 59 1/2	
4 3/4	8 01 1/2	
5	8 43 1/2	
5 1/4	8 86	
5 1/2	9 28 1/2	
5 3/4	9 70 1/2	
6	10 12 1/2	

This is the remains of three similarly sized books with identical covers—potentially suggesting a three-volume set. Unfortunately the subject matter of these three books is unknown.



Although the subject matter of the three books is unknown, one of the books had a signature across its top apparently indicating its owner—a Jeff Sammack [?]. Unfortunately, no information has been found regarding Mr. Sammack or the Sammack family in Springfield.



One of the more intriguing class of artifacts from the trunk was its *jewelry*. The jewelry included multiple brooches, a collar stud, several sets of cufflinks, and a 14-carat gold wedding ring.



Toys recovered from in the trunk included small pressed wood dominoes, and three small rubber balls.



This advertising pocket knife was found in close proximity to, if not within, the trunk. It was a promotional item for the *Broderick and Bascom Rope Company*, a St. Louis firm that was established in 1876. The firm manufactured “wire rope.”



BRODERICK & BASCOM ROPE CO.,
—MANUFACTURERS OF—

**“PATENT STEEL”
ROPE.**

THE MOST DUR-
ABLE ROPE
MADE.

IT HAS NO
EQUAL.

AND ALL GRADES OF
Iron and Steel Ropes and Street-Railway Cables
ST. LOUIS, MO.

The contents of a small marble-topped dresser were also recovered from House E Fire deposits..



Unlike the trunk, the artifacts within the dresser consisted predominately of the remains of fabric garments—garments that appear to represent predominately women's clothing.



Embroidered blouse



Sheer blouse



Over 1,200 fragments of fabric were recovered from the trunk and dresser. These fragmentary remains have been sorted into individual fabric items representing individual garments, household linen, and other personal accessories (such as a handkerchief and an umbrella).



Co-author sorting fabric remains by individual item. Over 42 individual fabric items were identified in the combined fabric assemblage from House E. This assemblage represents one of the more complete inventories of a young Black woman's clothing during the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

Type	Dresser	Trunk
Clothing	17	18
Accessory	0	3
Household Linen	0	3
Indeterminate	0	1

Clothing Category	Dresser	Trunk
Overwear	0	4
Outer garment	10	9
Undergarment	7	4
Indeterminate	0	1



Example of a bodice (Textile 16) recovered from the dresser.



Example of a sheer shirtwaist (Textile 5) from the dresser.



Example of a similar, albeit embroidered shirtwaist (Textile 6) from the dresser.



A nearly whole stocking (Textile 15) from the dresser.

63c FOR 3 PAIRS
ALLOVER LACE LISLE STOCKINGS, EXTRA
VALUE.

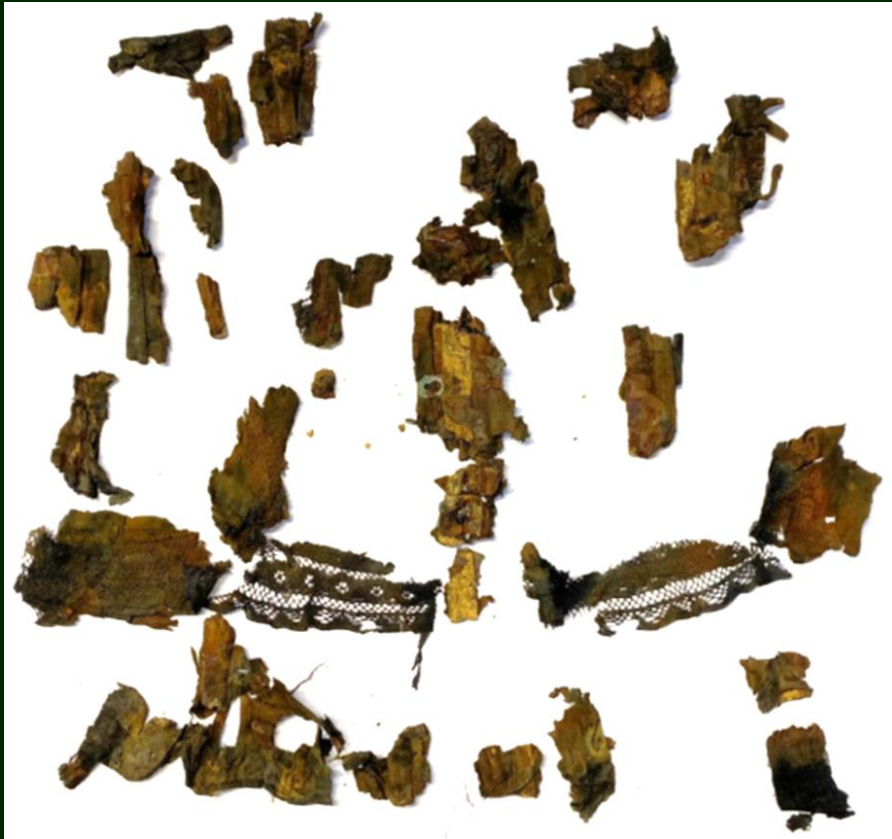
No. 16K2432
This stocking is an
allover lace stocking,
made from the very
finest lisle. The sole,
heel and toe are extra
reinforced. The stock-
ing is lace to within
about 5 inches of the
top, so that you do
not have to fasten the
garter into the lace of
the stocking but have
a good firm top to
fasten it to. Sizes,
8½, 9, 9½ and 10.
Do not forget to
state size wanted.
Price, 3 pairs for **63c**
If by mail, postage
extra, per pair, 1
5 cents.



Fragments of an older style, silk taffeta skirt with horsehair braid trim (Textile 22) recovered from the trunk.



Fragments of a corset (Textile 29) recovered from the trunk.



Fragments of a vest and drawers (Textile 30) from the dresser.



STS.

46c FOR 2 GARMENTS

EXTRA SIZE VEST, FOR LARGE OR STOUT WOMEN, LONG SLEEVE AND HIGH NECK.

No. 166052 This vest is made from good cotton, fine and light in weight. It is worn by a great many women at all seasons of the year. Very elastic and fashioned at the waist so that it will fit snugly, long sleeves which are shaped at the wrist to fit properly. Buttons part way down the front with a three-button effect, finished at the neck with mercerized tape. Color, pure white. Size, 7, 8 and 9, to fit bust from 42 to 45 inches.

Price for 2 garments, 46c

Have you given us a try?

If by mail, postage extra, each, 6 cents.



Fragment of a duster (Textile 19) recovered from the trunk.



Fragments of a wool suit vest (Textile 24) recovered from the trunk.



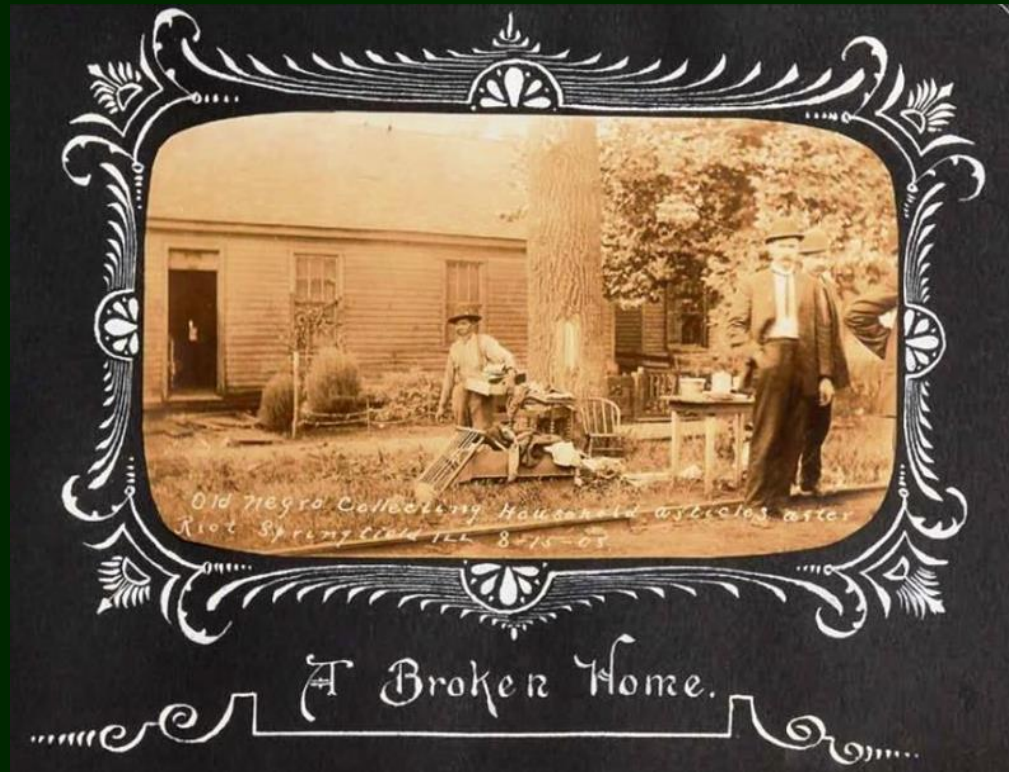
Other non-clothing items in the trunk included fragments of a handkerchief (Textile 37; left), a patchwork quilt (Textile 39; right), and hand towel (not shown). The quilt appears to have been unfinished (lacking a backing).



As presented here, a wide range of artifacts were recovered from the excavations at the Race Riot Site. These artifacts have great research potential in that they give voice to the *people* that occupied these houses at various points in time—particularly to the rather anonymous individuals that occupied these houses during the riots of August 1908—and that is the topic of our next paper, to be presented by Floyd Mansberger.



Questions Or Comments?



Email Contact: fmansberger@comcast.net

Facebook Coverage of Project: **Fever River Research**

Reports and PowerPoint Presentations: IllinoisArchaeology.com

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