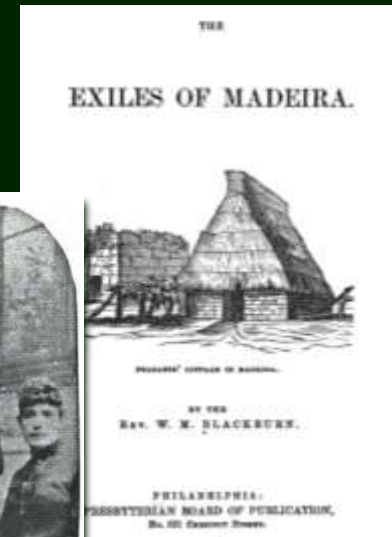


Middle Nineteenth Century Portuguese Immigrants in Springfield, Illinois: Context and Project History

by
Christopher Stratton
and
Floyd Mansberger

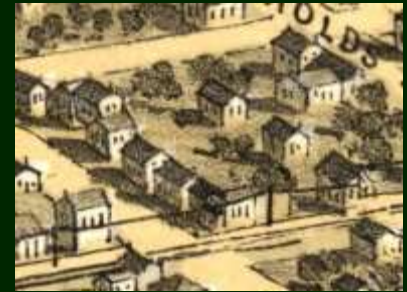


Society for Historical Archaeology
Annual Conference
Lisbon, Portugal
January 3-7, 2023



The following session will include three presentations:

1. A brief historical context of the project area and the archaeology undertaken there (presented by Christopher Stratton).



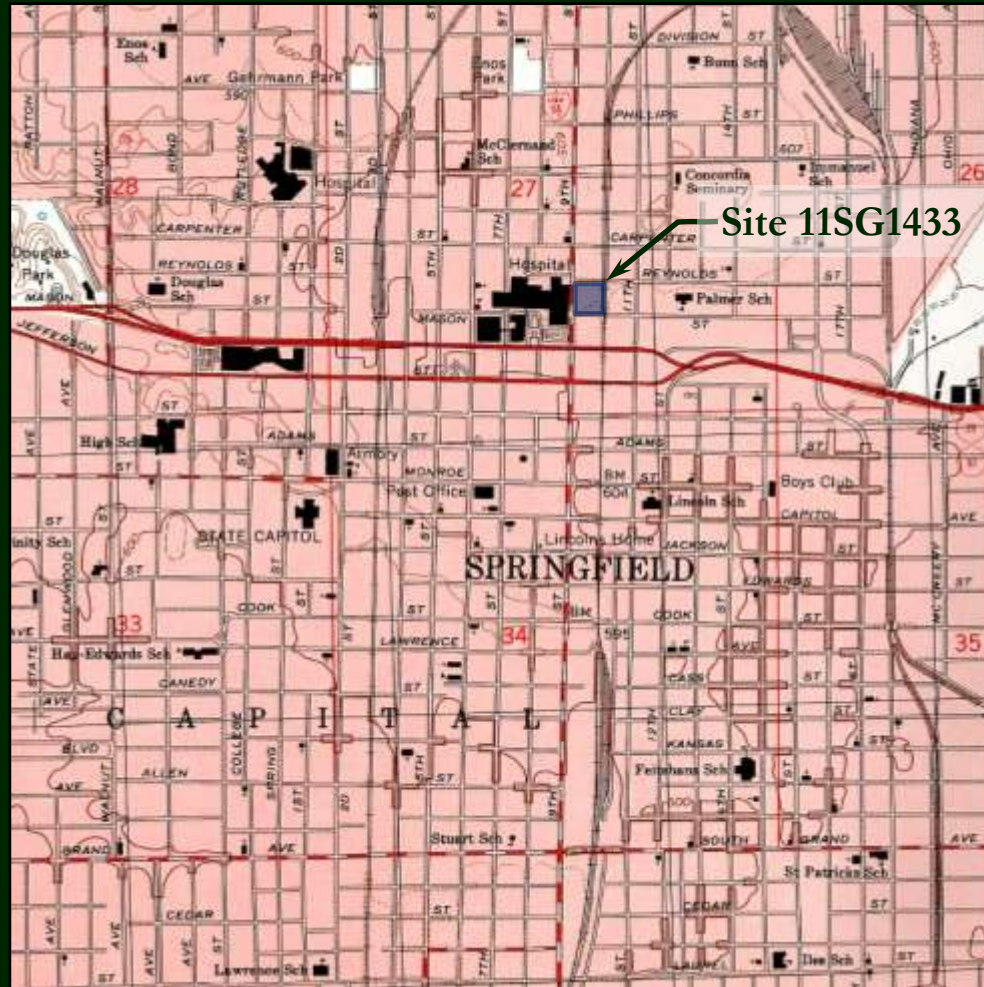
2. Results of fieldwork and summary conclusions (presented by Floyd Mansberger).



3. Preliminary analysis of faunal remains (presented by Dr. Terrance Martin).



Site 11SG1433 is located a short distance north of the central business district in Springfield, Illinois. The site, as defined, covers the city block bound by Ninth, Tenth, Mason, and Reynolds streets.



Four lots within Site 11SG1433 were subject to archaeological mitigation. The mitigation was driven by two separate construction projects: the Carpenter Street Underpass, which was the first component of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project; and a Medical Office Building for St. John's Hospital.



Madeira had a significant sugar industry early in its history, but by the middle sixteenth century the island's economy primarily was structured around wine production. Madeira's rugged geography necessitated extensive terracing and an intricate irrigation system (called *levadas*) for commercial agriculture to be undertaken.



View from Cabo Girão, on the island's south coast, looking east. Note the terracing, which extends right up to the sheer cliff overlooking the Atlantic (Hutcheon 19XX:)



The Curral das Frieras ("Pen of the Nuns"), showing hammock bearers on trail in foreground and the terraced village in the valley below (Hutcheon 19XX:)

Madeira's rugged geography also limited the ability to develop a road network suitable for wheeled vehicles, and communities primarily were connected by trails. This resulted in some unique means of transportation, including by hammock and by sledge, as shown below in illustrations from 1821. These traditional methods of transportation on the island persisted into the early twentieth century.



Usual manner of travelling by hammock (Combe 1821).



Oxen pulling a cask of wine on a sledge (Combe 1821).

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church was the most influential cultural institution on Madeira. Wealth and political power were concentrated in the hands of a small minority. Most of the population were peasants, who made their living as laborers or farmers. Historic illustrations of these different classes, from 1821, are presented below.



Priests in different attire (Combe 1821).



Members of the *Camera*, or Senate (Combe 1821).



Nuns of the Order of Mount Carmel (Combe 1821).



Peasant couple, both wearing traditional Madeiran style of dress (Combe 1821).



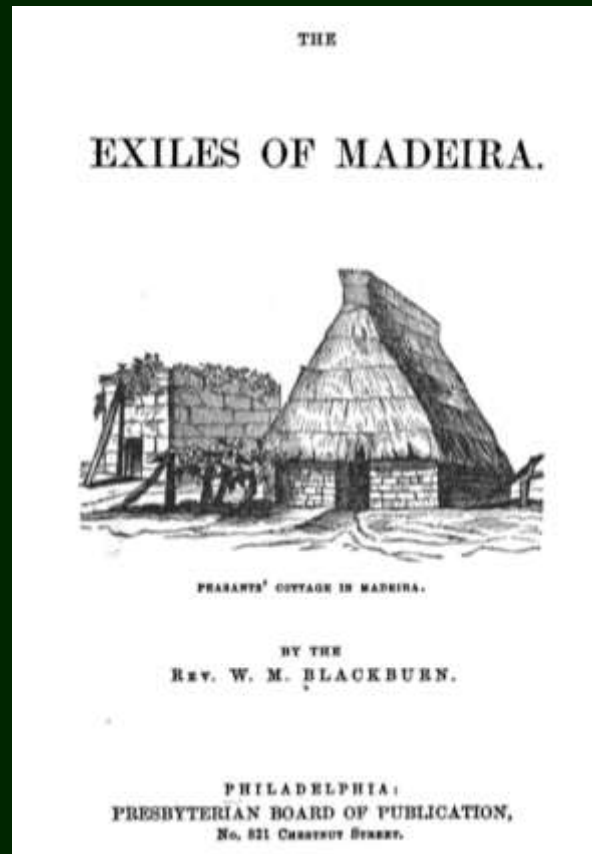
Interior of rural peasant cottage (Combe 1821).

Presbyterian missionary Dr. Robert Kalley arrived in Madeira in October 1838. Through his philanthropic works and proselytizing, Kalley converted an estimated 5,000 Madeirans to Presbyterianism. This ultimately caused a backlash from local Catholic authorities, causing the exodus of hundreds of converts, beginning in August 1846.



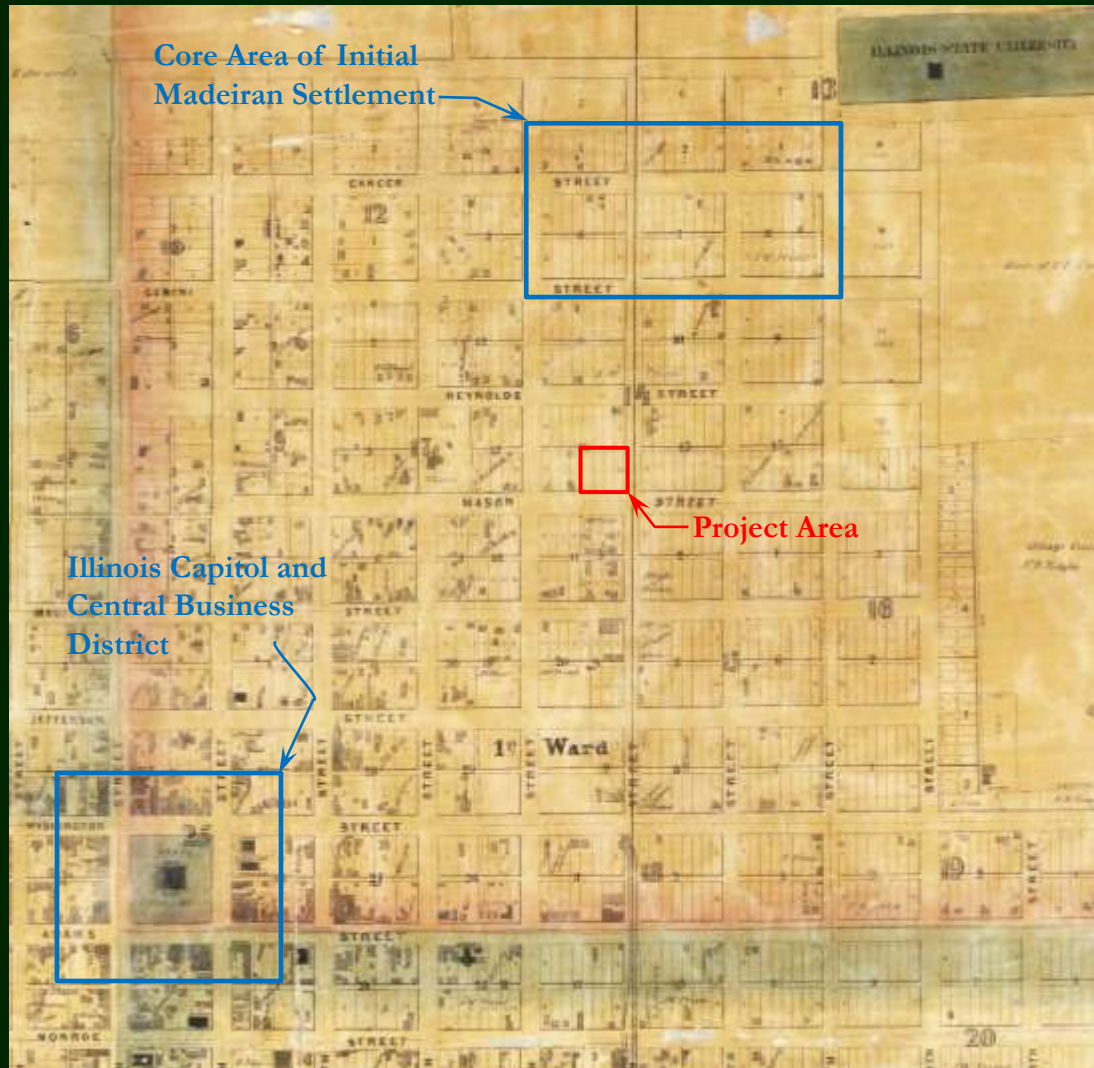
Dr. Robert Kalley (1809-1888)

The Madeiran Presbyterians first found shelter in the British West Indies and later in the United States. Knowledge of their plight was disseminated by Presbyterian groups in the United States and resulted in invitations for the exiles to settle in the communities of Jacksonville and Springfield in central Illinois.



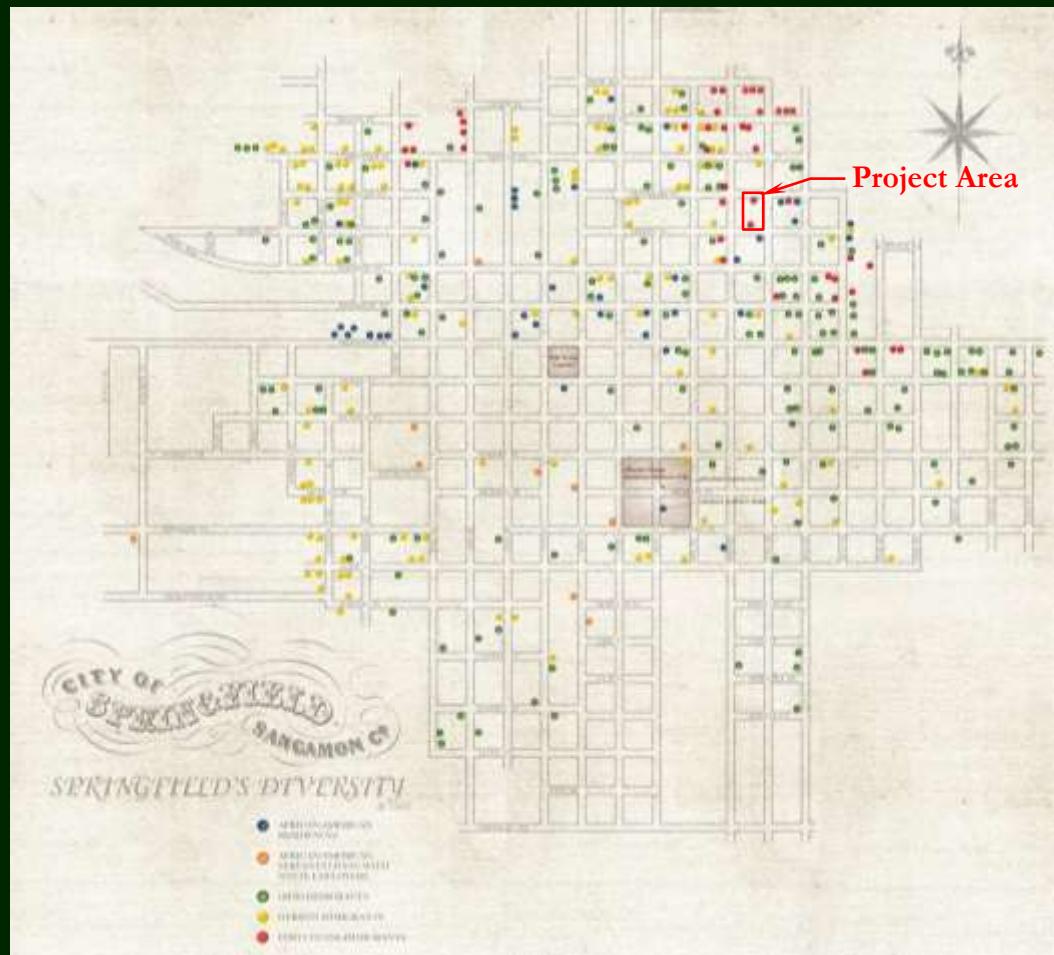
Cover page to one of the tracts detailing the plight of the Madeiran exiles.

The Madeiran exiles were invited to settle in Springfield in 1848. They initially settled on the city's northwest side, which was lightly developed at this point in time.



Detail of an 1854 map of Springfield, Illinois, showing the northwest quadrant of city. The State Capitol and central business district appear at lower left.

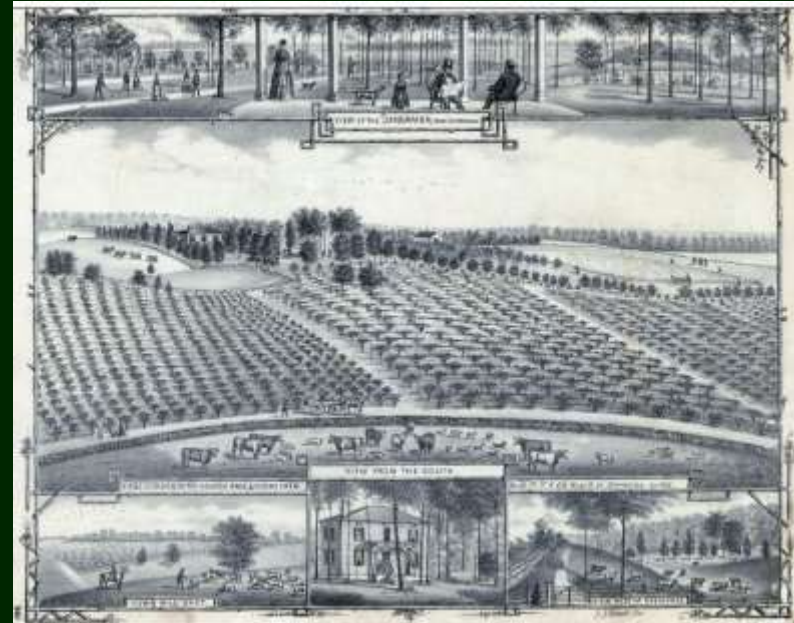
By 1860, the Portuguese had expanded out from their initial area of settlement in Springfield. However, they were still concentrated on the city's northwest side, as shown in the map below. The map illustrates ethnic diversity within Springfield circa 1860. The red circles indicate the locations of Portuguese households. Unfortunately, the map is not comprehensive and provides only partial information on the four lots investigated.



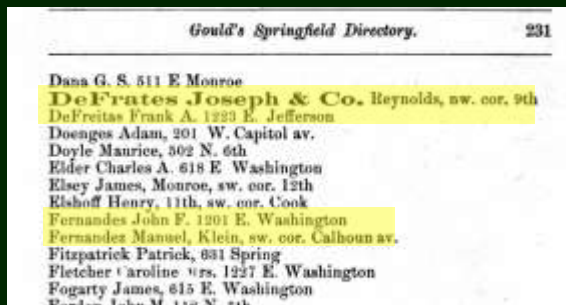
The Portuguese in central Illinois maintained their cultural identity through their churches and social organizations. They entered a wide variety of businesses and trades in Springfield. A number took up farming in the rural environs of the city.



First Portuguese Presbyterian Church, built in 1882 on the corner of Seventh and Reynolds streets (Barker 1890)

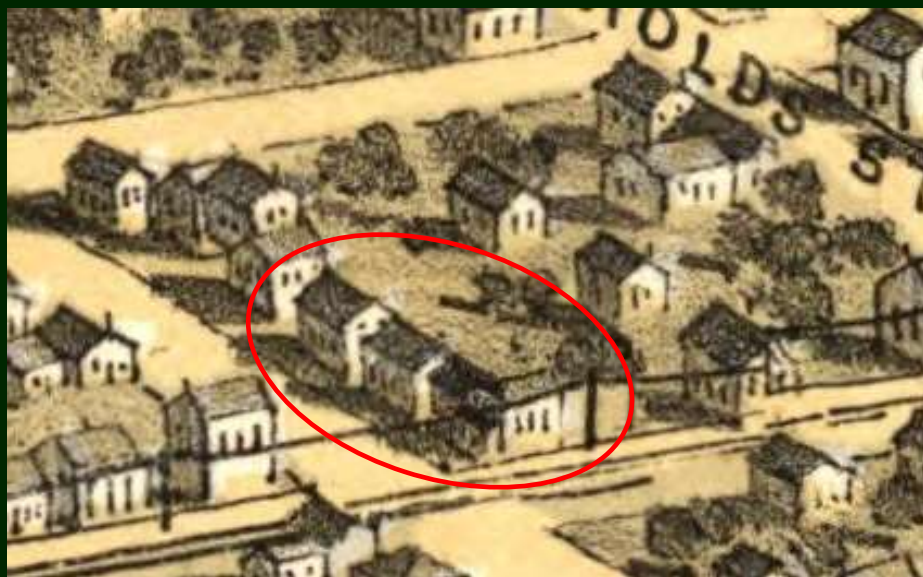


DeGouvia Farm, located six miles north of Springfield (Brink et al. 1874:106).



The Portuguese were especially prominent in the grocery trade in Springfield in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Several such grocers are highlighted in the business listing at left (*Springfield City Directory* 1880).

The four lots investigated were located on the Lots 13-16, Block 14 of Wells and Peck's Addition, along the 900 block of East Mason Street, and were developed in the middle to late 1850s by Portuguese immigrants. Houses were built on Lots 13-15, while a store building was constructed on Lot 16. These properties are illustrated on the bird's-eye views below, which date from 1867 and 1873.

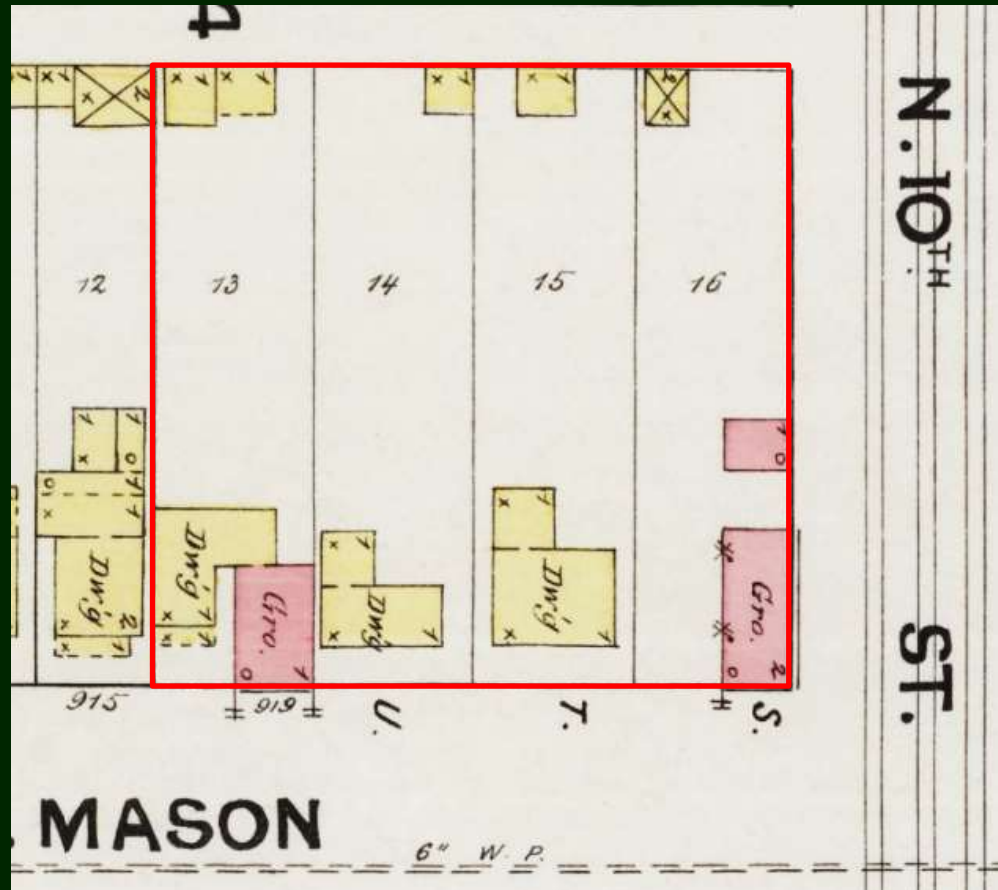


1867



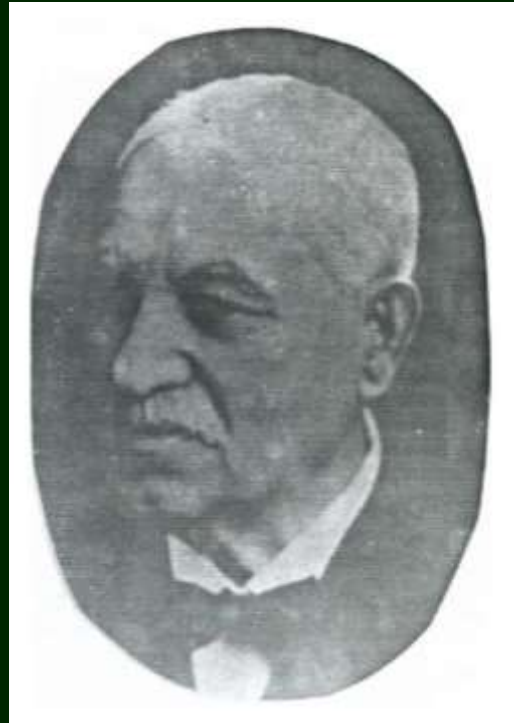
1873

Project area in 1890 (outlined red), as illustrated by a Sanborn fire insurance map. This is the earliest Sanborn map to cover the area.



(Sanborn-Perris 1890:12).

Lot 13 was developed by Antonio Fortado Mendonsa, who was born in Michico, Madeira in 1797. He and his family arrived in Springfield in 1849-50. He purchased Lot 13 in November 1853 and eventually built a house there, which he occupied until his death in 1878. Antonio's son, John F. Mendonsa, succeeded him as owner of the property and retained ownership until 1909. Around 1886-7, John Mendonsa built a brick addition onto the old family home, from which he operated a grocery.



JOHN F. MENDONSA,
A full line of Groceries.
All kinds of Stock Feed always
on hand at the Lowest Prices,
also Flour and Feed.
919 E. MASON ST.


Business listing for John F. Mendonsa
(*Illinois State Register*, 9 June 1907, p. 34).

Portraits of Antonio (left) and John F. (right) Mendonsa (Allers and Gochanour 1984:189)

The house on Lot 14 appears to have been constructed by Joseph Gomes, a Portuguese laborer (and later grocer), in 1854. He lived there for only short time before selling the property in 1855 to Conrad George, an absentee landlord who rented out the house to tenants, most of whom were native-born Americans. John F. Mendonsa owned Lot 14 for a brief period, between 1904-1909.

A NEW FANCY HOUSE FOR SALE.

I WISH to sell my house and lot situated on the north side of Mason street, lot 14, block 15.— The house has been built about one year, is very substantial and convenient, contains two rooms, two closets and a hall. I will sell it very low if application be made soon.

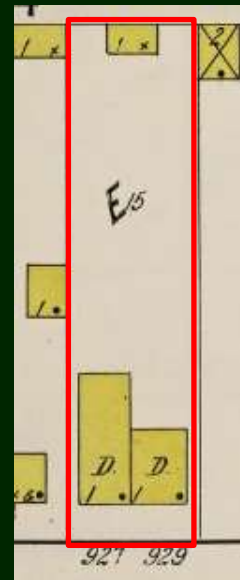
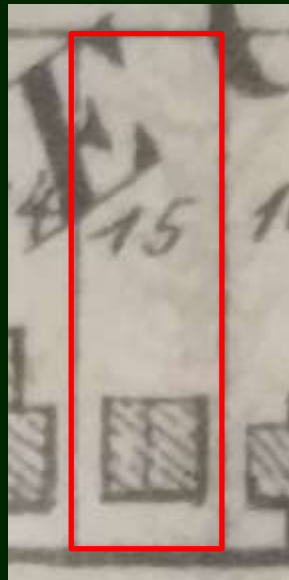


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JOSEPH GOMEZ.

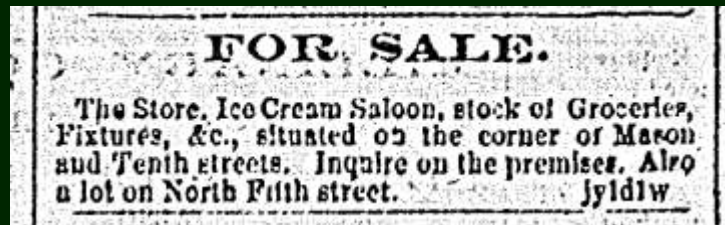
Advertisement for the sale of Joseph Gomes' "new fancy house" on Lot 14 (*Illinois State Journal*, 16 April 1855, p. 3). The advertisement references Lot 15 of Wells and Peck's Addition, but this is believed to be a typographical error as Gomes is not known to have owned a Lot 14 on Block 15 of the addition.

Lot 15 was developed by Joseph Rodrigues (later changed to Roderick), who was born in 1826 on Madeira and probably arrived in Springfield in the early 1850s, as part of the second “wave” of Portuguese immigration to the city. He likely constructed the house on Lot 15 in 1859 [**double check this**], following his marriage to Clara Mendonsa, who was the daughter of Antonio Mendonsa. From the beginning, the residence Lot 15 appears to have been a double house, or duplex. Joseph Rodrigues and his family resided in the west half of the dwelling, while Mary Ferreira occupied the east half.



Maps from 1876 (left) and 1917 (right) illustrating duplexed character of the house on Lot 15 (Bird 1876; Sanborn 1917).

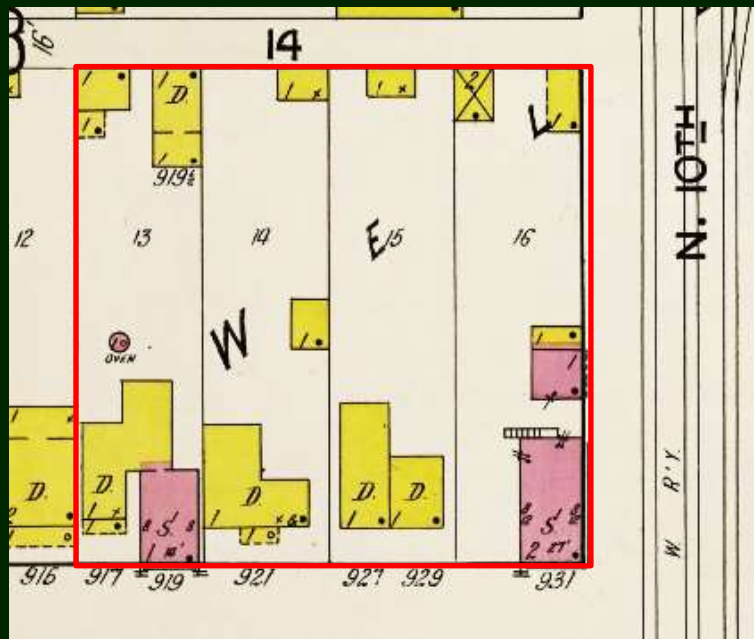
Lot 16 was developed by the Mendonsa family in the late 1850s, or early 1860s. They built a frame commercial building there, which was used for several different purposes until it was destroyed by fire in January 1871. A new two-story brick store building was constructed on the same site. It operated as grocery at different points in time by John F. Mendonsa, Manuel Mendonsa, Manuel Vierra, and Joseph and John Fernandes, all of whom were Portuguese.



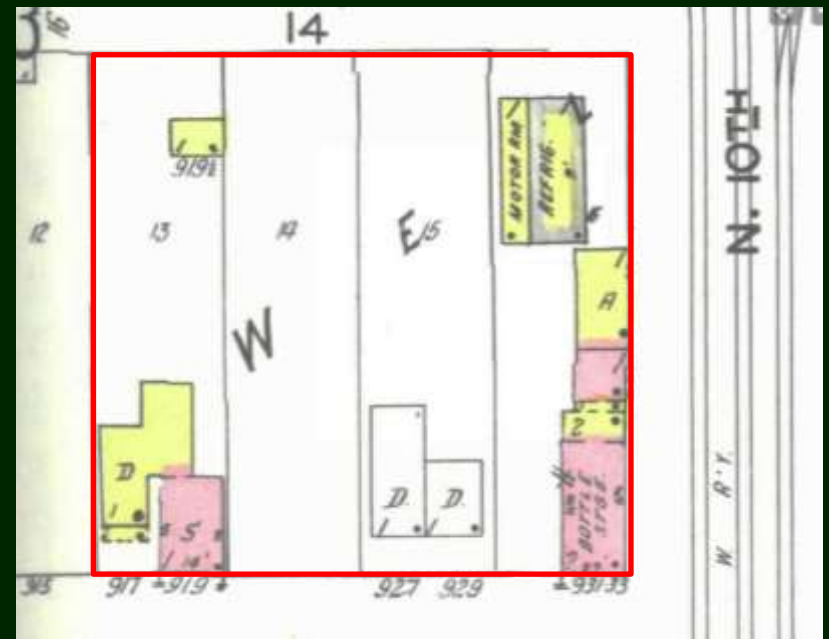
Sale advertisement from 1868 for the store building on Lot 16 (*Daily Illinois State Journal* 3 July 1868, p. 4).

[add business advertisement for the Fernandes brothers, which I think Floyd has a copy of]

Sanborn fire insurance maps illustrating conditions in the project area in 1917 and 1952. By 1917, none of the four lots were occupied by Portuguese.



1917



1952

Extent of excavation on the four lots, by project. The area highlighted in red was investigated for the Carpenter Street Underpass project, while that in green was done for St. John's Hospital Medical Office Building Project. The wedge of ground in between (highlighted in blue) was not to be impacted and was not excavated.



Phase II investigations for the Carpenter Street Rail Project were conducted in the fall of 2014. A large portion of Lot 16 and the east half of Lot 15 were stripped off. Features were identified and sampled. Findings resulted in Site 11SG1433 being determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

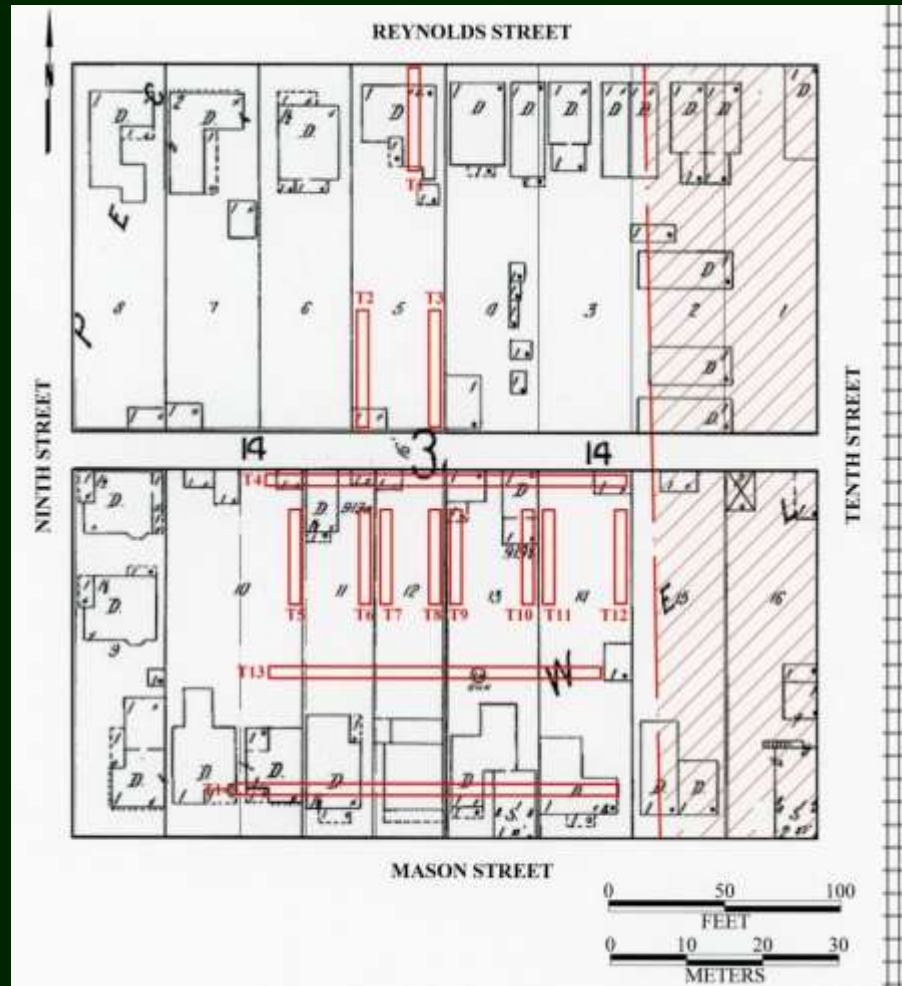


Line of privy shafts exposed on Lot 15.



Excavation of the east halves of the same line of privies.

August 2016 Phase II testing of St. John's Medical Office Building Project.



Initial Phase II testing of St. John's MOB project area began in August 2016. Lot 13, Lot 14 and W1/2 Lot 15.



Phase II testing determined that archaeological integrity was good, with a number of subsurface features being exposed. Three lots, with good integrity, were identified as having an association with the early Portuguese settlement in the neighborhood—determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



Left: Detail view of Features A-B-C-D, north end of Test Trench 9 (looking south), Medical Office Building (MOB) Project Area. Right: Nineteenth century toys recovered from the surface of Feature A (Test Trench 9) (Actual size).



Mitigation St. John's MOB Project began in April 2017 with large block excavation on Lots 13, 14, and W1/2 of Lot 15



Followed by feature excavation for St. John's Hospital.



Dense feature concentrations...



Mitigation of Carpenter Street Rail project in Fall 2018. E1/2 Lot 15 and, Lot 16.

Mitigation of four urban lots, Lots 13, 14, 15, and 16.

