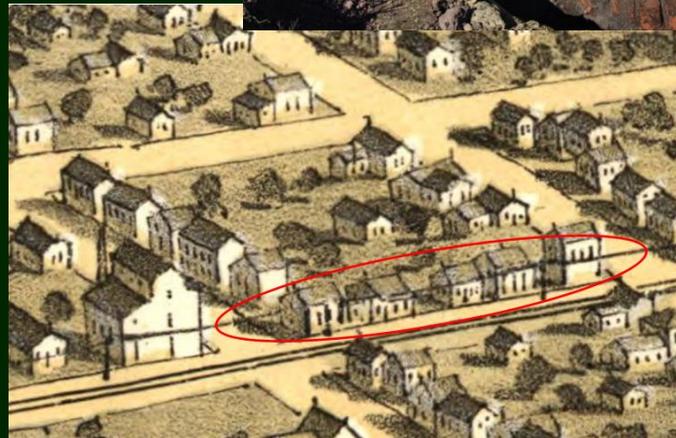


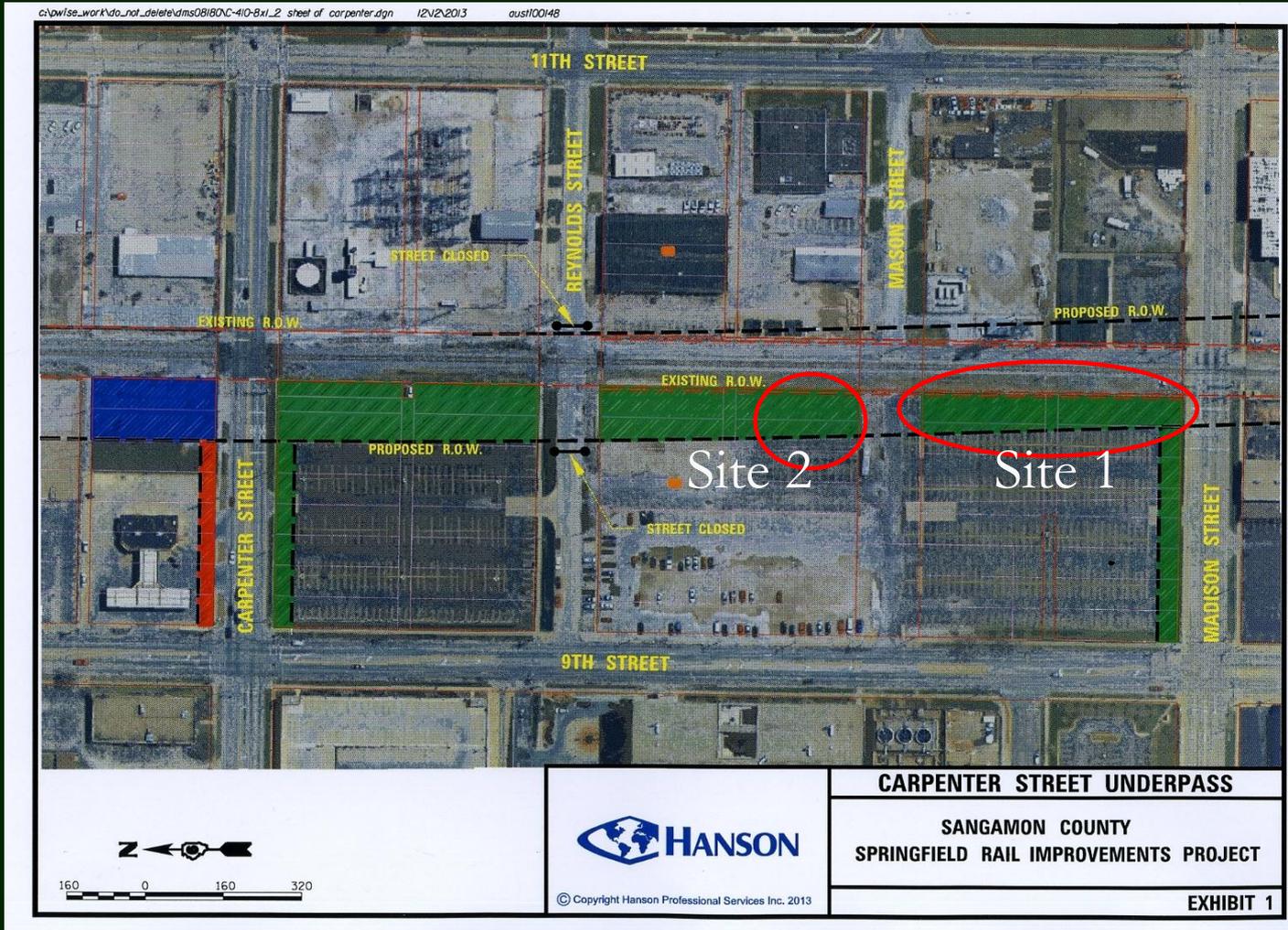
The Archaeology of Racial Hatred: The Springfield Race Riot of August 1908

by
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Conference on Illinois History
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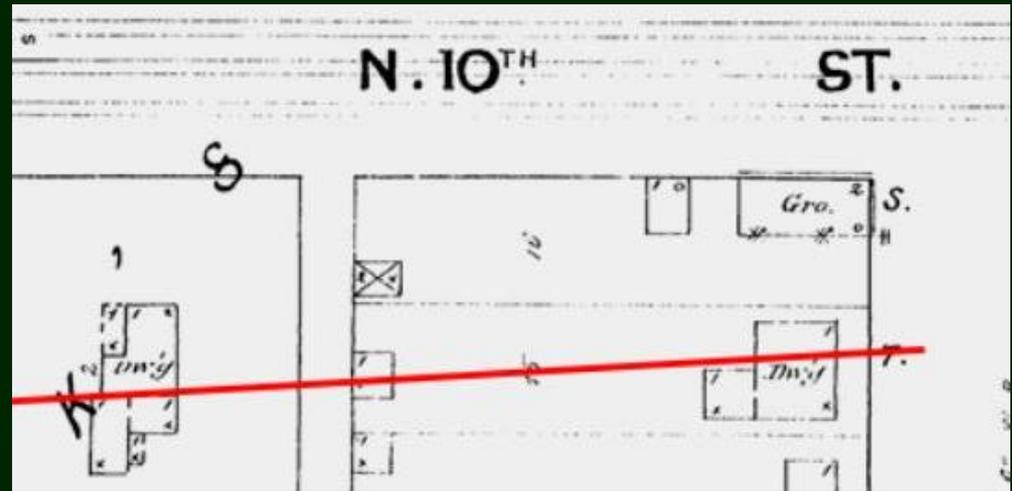
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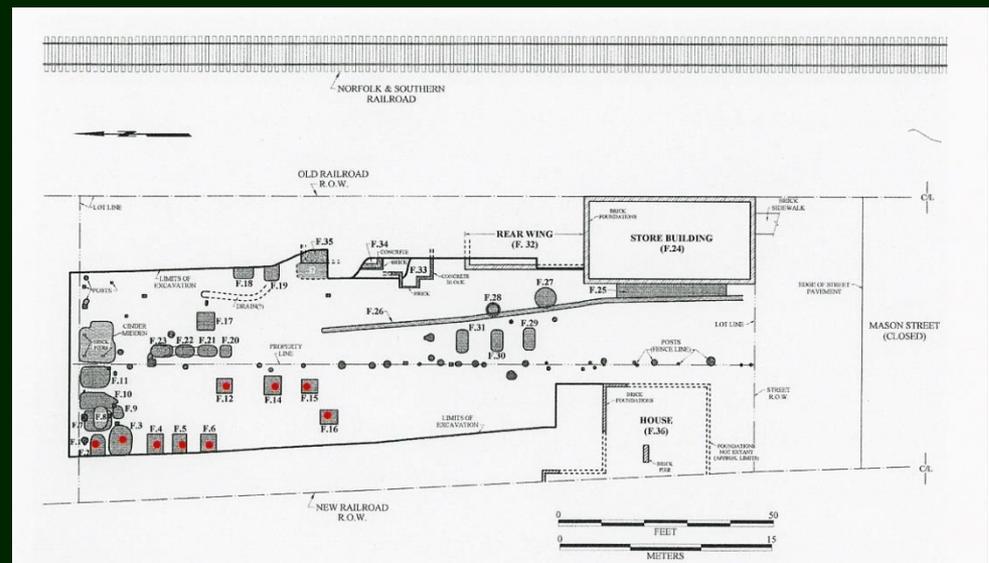
In consultation with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, it was determined that *Phase II archaeological testing* would be required in two separate areas within the Carpenter Street Project Area. The purpose of the Phase II testing was to determine if subsurface archaeological integrity was present in these areas, and/or if the sites were eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Phase II testing required the removal of the parking lot overburden to inspect for subsurface archaeological features.



The northern area, which was located north of Mason Street and identified as Site 2 (11Sg1433), was associated with the early Portuguese settlement of Springfield during the 1850s. Portions of two lots were stripped of overburden, exposing remains of a house (here labeled “Dw’g), a commercial grocery (labeled “Gro”), and a wide range of mid-yard and rear-yard features (including numerous privy pits). Those privy pits illustrated with a red dot on them (lower right figure) were partially excavated.



Detail of 1890 Sanborn map

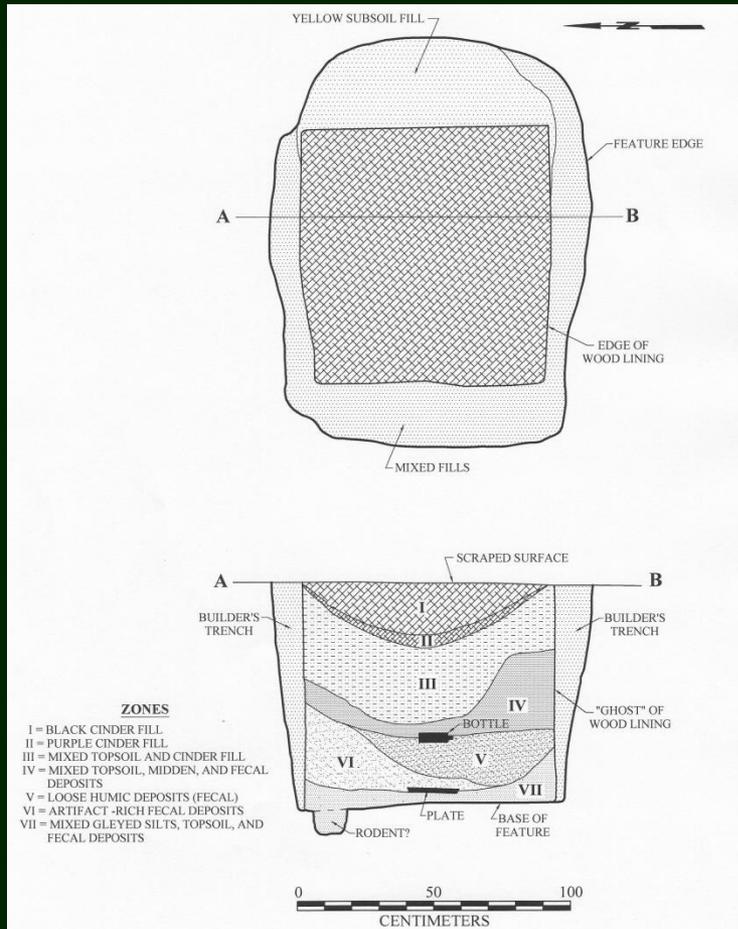


Archaeological base map of Site 2.

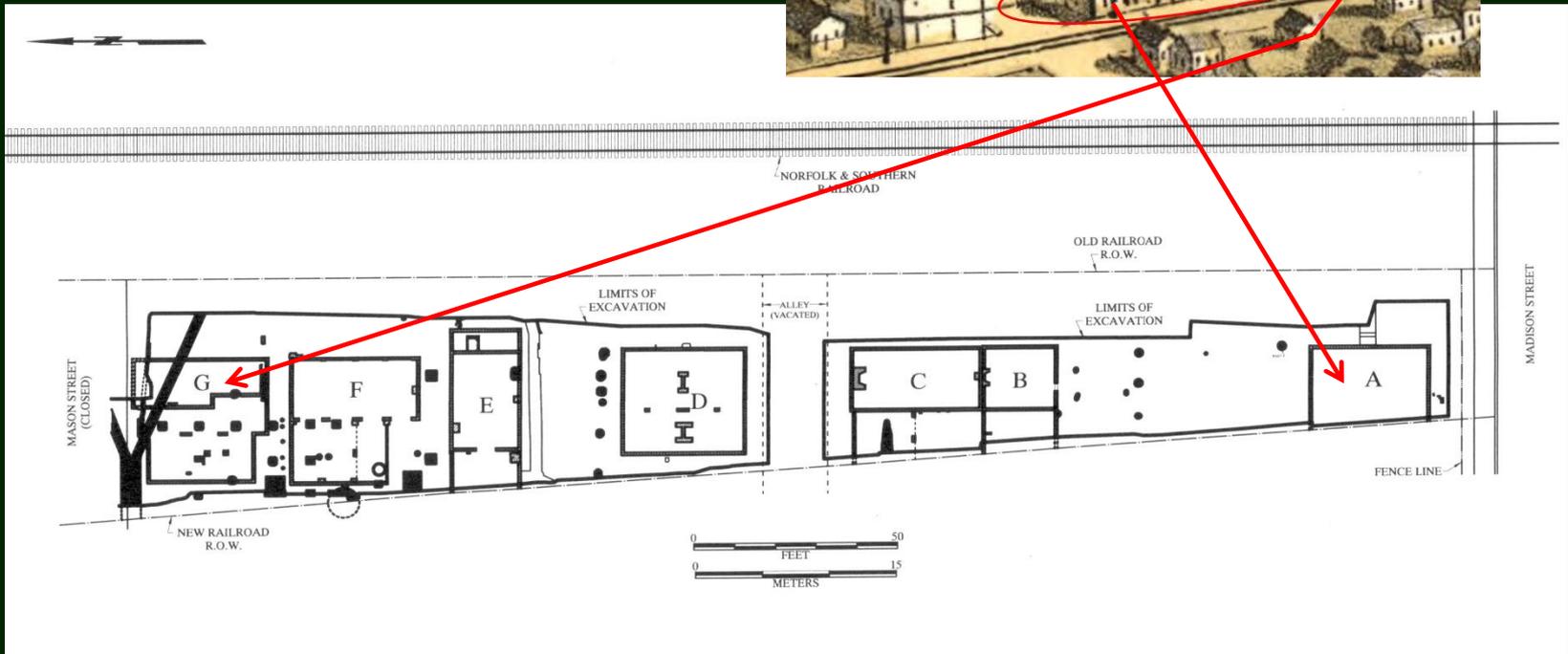
Nine of the features (all representing privy pits) were partially excavated to assess the age of the features, and their respective artifact content. Left: View of features after initial discovery. Right: During excavation.



The privy pits were mapped in plan view, half of each privy was excavated, and the profile of each privy pit was recorded. Each pit was then backfilled with clean sand. These pits were filled over multiple decades, with the earliest being filled in circa 1860 and the latest in circa 1950.



Intact resources were also found within the southern two-thirds of the project area (located between Madison Street on the south and Mason Street on the north) (Site 1; 11Sg1432). In this area, only the front of the lots once fronting Tenth Street were stripped, exposing the physical remains of seven nineteenth century houses. The rear yard activity areas associated with these houses lie to the west beneath the existing parking lot.



Views of Houses A (left) and B (right) during Phase II testing. House A appears to have been occupied by, among others, the Smith family at the time of the 1908 riot. The occupant of House B in August 1908 is unknown. Both houses were destroyed by fire in August 1908.



View of House C (left) and D (right) during Phase II testing. Both houses were destroyed by fire in August 1908.



View of one of the back-to-back fireplace foundations associated with House D.



Two views of House E (and associated brick walkway) during Phase II testing. This house was occupied by the Smith family for much of the nineteenth century. At the time of the 1908 riot, the house was occupied by M. Stoutmeyer. It, too, was destroyed by fire during the riot.



Looking west



Looking south

Houses A through E all exhibited physical evidence of having been destroyed by fire.



View of Houses F (left) and G (right). These two dwellings represent the last two houses to have been constructed along this section of Tenth Street. House G appears to have been demolished just prior to the riot (1906-early 1908). House F survived the 1908 race riot, persisting into the 1920s—albeit picked up and re-oriented to Mason Street. The archaeological integrity of both structures had been compromised by post-1920s construction activity.



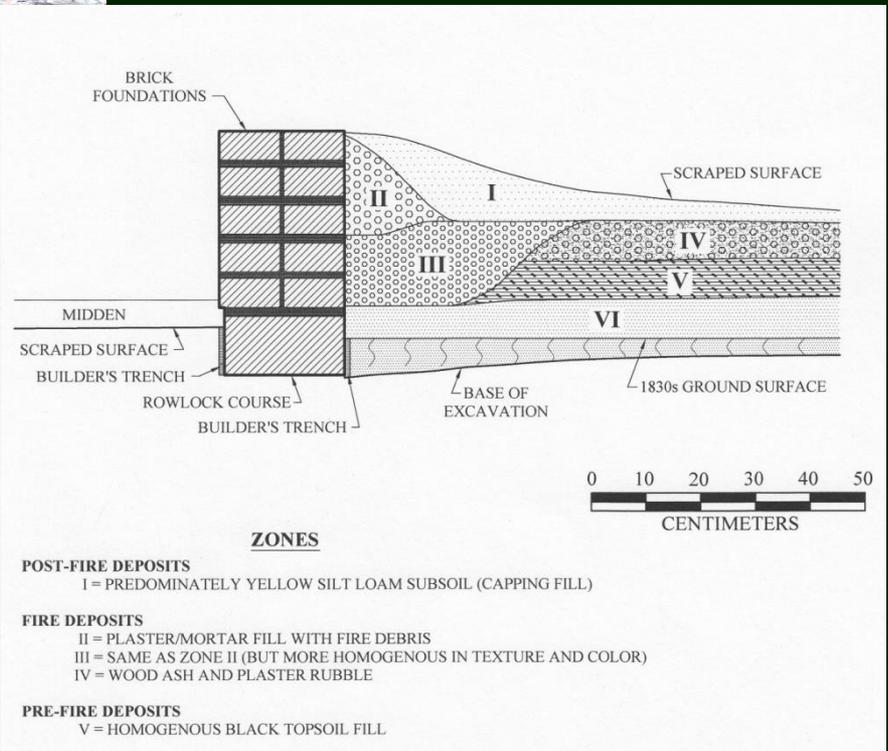
Fieldwork conducted in the fall of 2014 consisted of mapping the exposed features...



... followed by minimal testing (excavation) within each house to assess the depth of fill deposits, character of the artifacts present, and complexity of the resource. Fill depths varied by house, but pre-fire, fire (August 14, 1908), and post-fire deposits were apparent in all test units excavated.

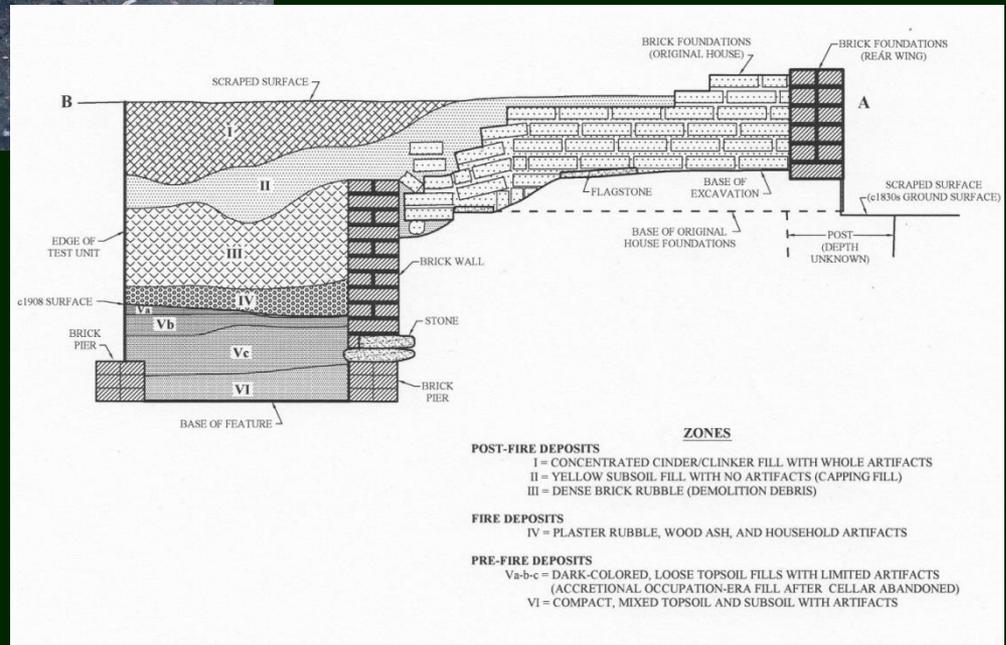


Shallow fill deposits of House A





Deep fill deposits of House B



A great number of artifacts were also recovered from the investigations. The artifact inventory and analysis has just been completed, and contains a detailed inventory of these artifacts and discusses them in terms of their context and interpretive value.

All artifacts removed from the field have been washed, inventoried, and re-bagged in archival plastic bags awaiting curation.



Artifacts direct from field (unwashed) (House A, Test 1)



Artifacts being inventoried (after initial washing and cross-mending).

Archaeologists study artifacts and *artifact assemblages*. Although individual artifacts can often be significant, to the archaeologist artifact assemblages (a collection of artifacts from a single *context*) often contain greater research value, as they convey information relevant to a specific *time* and *place*. Archaeologists use the term “feature” in reference to non-portable artifacts such as pits and structures. These “archaeological features” often contain large artifact assemblages.



The recovered archaeological assemblages from Site 1 (11Sg1433) and Site 2 (11Sg1432) are very different from one another, due to the differing contexts in which they were recovered. The assemblages from the Portuguese area (Site 2; 11Sg1433) were recovered primarily from abandoned residential privy pits, and consist of a wide range of restorable household items, discarded during a relatively short time period.—such as that presented in this example.



Primary artifacts from Feature 4, discarded circa 1890-1895

Primary artifacts from Feature 6 (a privy pit filled in circa 1910).



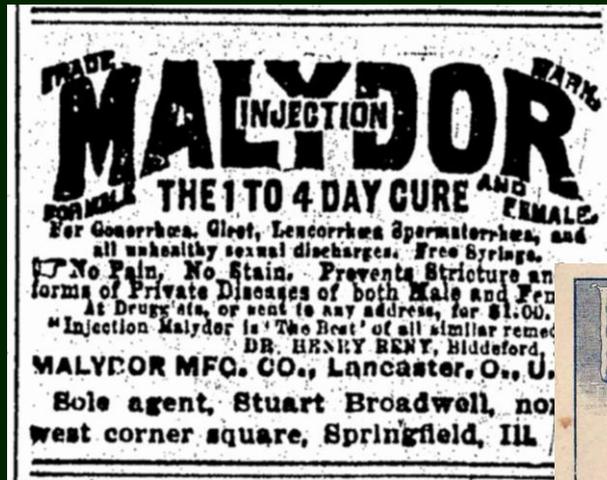
The contents of this privy is significant in that the materials are more-or-less contemporary with those recovered from the houses across the street which were destroyed by the angry mob in August 1908. The primary artifacts from this feature document a working class domestic component, albeit one associated with access to high-end French cognac, and a reverence for Abraham Lincoln.



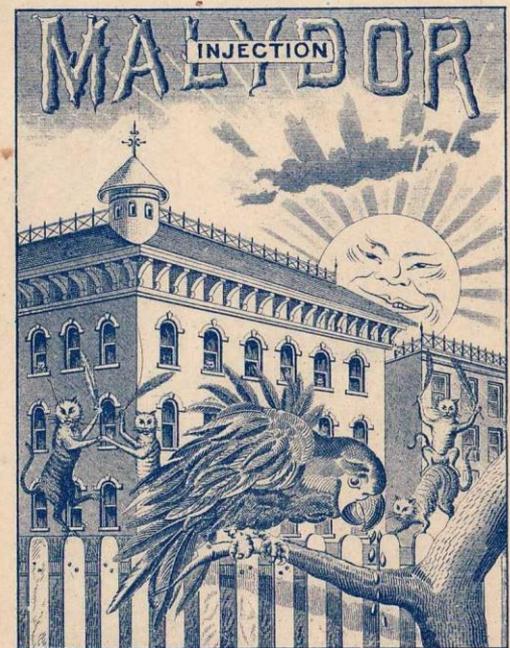
Shot glass and cognac bottle from 1889 Paris Exhibition.

Male occupant(s) from this site apparently suffered from a venereal disease...

A bottle from Feature 4 contained the injectable Malydor—a purported cure for gonorrhea and other venereal diseases.



This hard-rubber penile syringe (or applicator) was found in the lower fill deposits of Feature 5, and would have been used for the application of medicines to treat venereal diseases.



"I WISH I HAD LET THOSE CATS ALONE!"

THE GENTLEMEN'S FRIEND

FOR SALE BY ALL DRUGGISTS.



One data set of special interest from these privy pits is the faunal remains (bone) preserved within them—such as this assemblage of chicken remains (which documents the on-site butchering of a large number of both male and female mature birds).



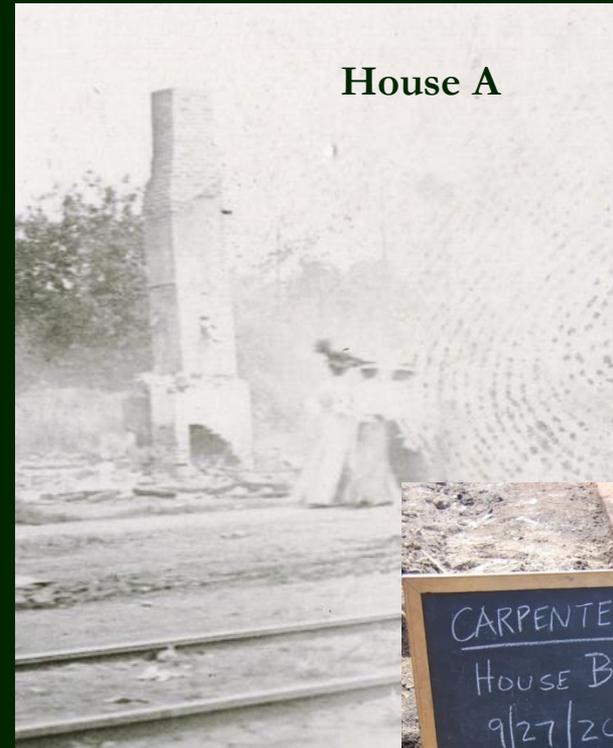
Feature 5

In contrast, the majority of those artifacts recovered from in, and around, the house foundations at Site 1 (11Sg1432) are considerably different, and represented predominately by a variety of small items that were deposited in accretional middens that developed over a period of time.



Early midden material recovered from around House E.

Besides these accretional deposits, fire-deposits dating from August 1908 were associated with several of the houses, and these deposits contained artifacts in use within that structure during that fateful August weekend. The catastrophic destruction of these houses resulted in the contents of the houses being burned and dropped in place, only to be covered up and left undisturbed for over 100 years. In essence, these houses are a crime scene and the fire deposits have the potential to tell us a considerable amount of information about the house occupants at the time of the fire, and their lifestyles.



Archaeological deposits associated with the August 1908 riot, and subsequent destruction by fire of the five houses, were also well documented, and include these fire-deposits from House A. These three images depict materials presumably in a back bedroom of House A at the time of the August 1908 house fire (Test 1).

Left: small vase (little to no fire damage)

Middle: partially melted medicine bottle and drinking glass

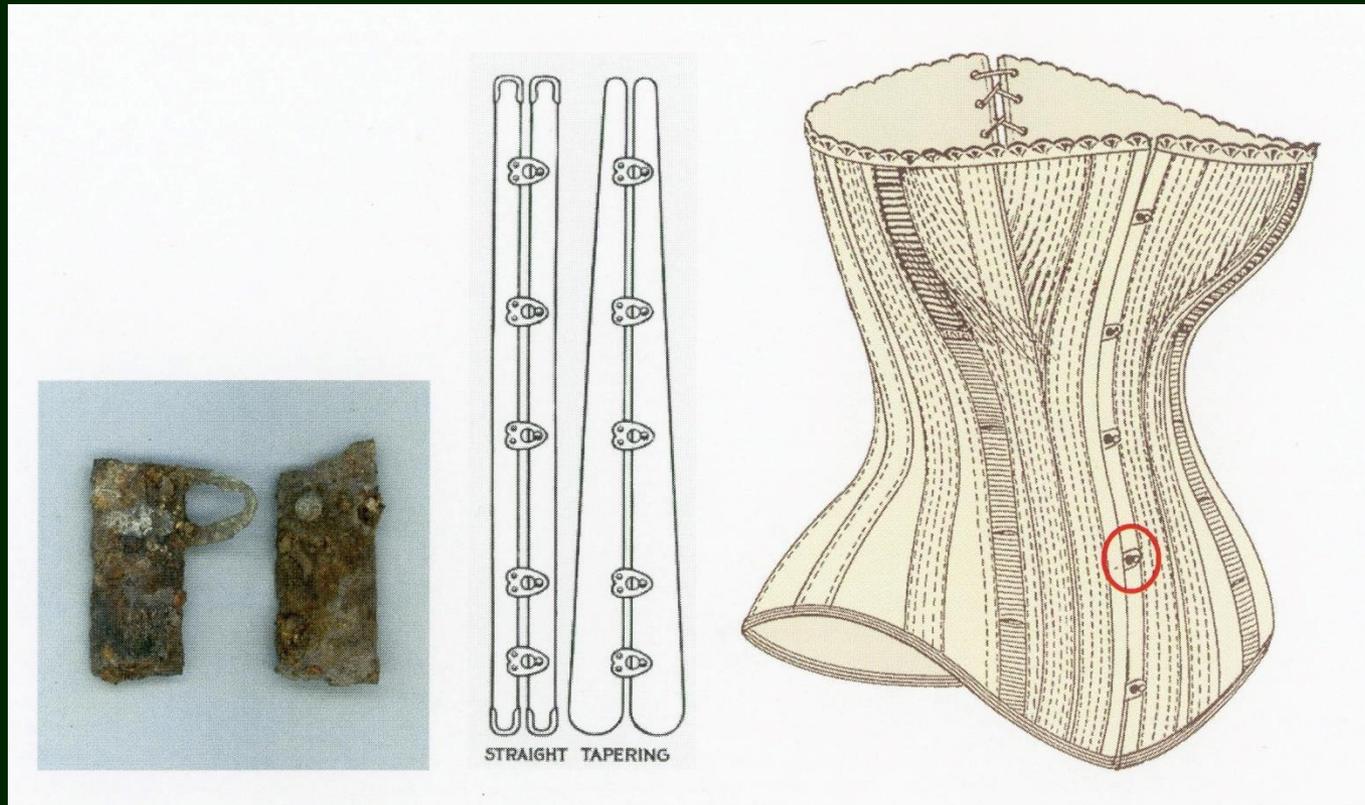
Right: fire smoked and broken wash basin



Unlike House A (which had a shallow crawlspace beneath it), House B has a substantial basement cellar beneath it. The cellar contains a wide range of artifacts directly associated with the 1908 occupants of that dwelling (including cups, saucers, bowls, plates, and platters). This is a fairly intact table setting recovered from House B. The artifacts suggest that the house may have been ransacked prior to the fire.



A variety of “small finds” such as these corset busks were also found in the immediate pre-fire deposits associated with House B. These items document the presence of women in the archaeological assemblage.



Other items believed to have been associated with women, from Houses D and E, included manicurist tools (left; a worked bone cuticle tool) and supplies (right; a potential nail polish jar lid manufactured for use by Dr. Parker Pray). Such items are not commonly recovered from early domestic working class residential sites.



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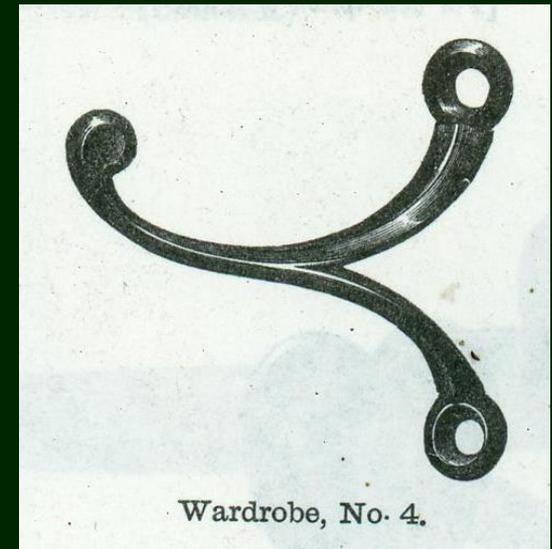
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Buttons from House C documented clothing associated with the operation of the City's street cars. These buttons were probably associated with clothes in the bedroom located on the second floor of the house—perhaps stored within a wardrobe. At this time period (1908), the vests associated with these buttons would have been worn by white men, as blacks had not yet been integrated into these jobs by that date. The presence of these buttons in this context is somewhat problematic, as there is no evidence of men with such jobs as living in this neighborhood at that time.



Wardrobe, No. 4.

Fragments of a wash-down Doulton *Simplista* toilet, dating from the 1880s, was recovered from House E. This is one of the earliest archaeological examples of a ceramic toilet that I have seen in Illinois.



Above: Fragments from House E. These are upside down, and represent the rim upon which the seat would rest. Right: Example of whole toilet.



This small bone cross (right) was recovered from the upper fire deposits of House D. This fret-sawn and drilled bone stylized cross is probably a rosary cross similar to the one illustrated here. These rosary crosses often held a small Stanhope in the center opening. The Stanhope was a small magnifying lens which contained an image. Although images depicted in Stanhopes—particularly those associated with rosary crosses—often were of a religious nature, they also included landscapes, famous individuals, and even erotica. This rosary cross suggests that one of the site occupants during the latter years of the house's occupation was practicing the Catholic faith.



The artifacts recovered from the investigations come from varied contexts, with each context having a different story to tell. The three artifacts illustrated here were recovered from separate contexts (all dating from circa 1900-10) during the Phase II testing. Each artifact tells a significant and unique story different from the previous one and emphasizes the varied and divergent stories (or “voices”) the archaeology is capable of documenting.

Left: Metal bust of Abraham Lincoln recovered from the base of Feature 6 (a privy associated with a Portuguese family).

Top Right: Example of a motorman 's (or electric street car driver) vest button similar to one recovered from fire deposits from House C (burned in 1908).

Bottom Right: Hand made bone cross recovered from fire deposits in House D (burned in 1908).

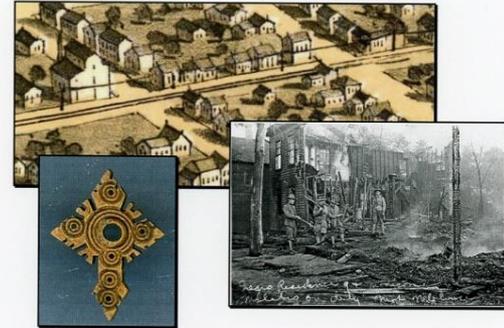


The Phase II testing for the Carpenter Street Project indicates that the subsurface integrity of these two sites is excellent, and that they both meet the standards for National Register eligibility under Criterion D (archaeology). Archaeology has the ability to contribute to our understanding of past lifeways in Springfield, and has both local and national relevance (or significance). On the local level, both sites can contribute to our understanding of the early settlement history of Springfield, and speak to the cultural diversity of the community in the 1840s-1860s.

Additionally, Site 1 (11Sg1432) is significant under Criterion A (social history) for its association with the 1908 Springfield Race Riot, which was a seminal event in the history of the city as well as of national importance due to its role in the foundation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This site has the ability to “give a new voice” to the victims of the dramatic events that transpired in mid-August 1908, and is a tangible link to the individuals that experienced that horrific August weekend firsthand.

The results of the Phase II investigations have been summarized in the report entitled *Results of the Phase II Archaeological Investigations of Sites 11SG1432 and 11SG1433 for the Proposed Carpenter Street Underpass, Springfield Rail Improvements Project, Springfield, Illinois*. This report was submitted in March 2016 and is accessible online. The results of the artifact analysis is being integrated into this report, and will soon be available online as well.

RESULTS OF PHASE II ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
OF SITES 11SG1432 AND 11SG1433
FOR THE PROPOSED
CARPENTER STREET UNDERPASS,
SPRINGFIELD RAIL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT,
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS



Fever River Research, Inc.
Springfield, Illinois

2016

Both sites have been backfilled, and fenced—awaiting completion of the Section 106 process. Left: Site 2 (11Sg1433). Right: Site 1 (11Sg1432).



Questions Or Comments?

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