

**Archaeological Excavations at the
Peters and Lewis Homesteads
Fort Ward Park
4301 W. Braddock Rd.
Alexandria, Virginia**

**By
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Foreword

The City of Alexandria is built upon its past. The ground beneath modern Alexandria is a record of this past and contains an array of archaeological sites, features, and artifacts. Recognizing the importance and uniqueness of these historic resources, the City of Alexandria established a formal archaeology program in 1977.

Alexandria Archaeology, a division of the Office of Historic Alexandria, City of Alexandria, Virginia, is dedicated to preserving and studying the City's rich archaeological heritage. We seek to foster within residents and visitors a connection between the past and present by sharing our interpretations of Alexandria's history. We do this in many ways – in our Alexandria Archaeology Museum on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Arts Center, through lessons based on archaeological sites and collections, at events throughout the City, and through partnerships with the community. The Alexandria Archaeology Publications Series is another way we make history accessible and is composed of papers on aspects of research conducted under the auspices of Alexandria Archaeology. The authors include historians, archaeologists, students, and Alexandria Archaeology volunteers. Editing of the papers has been kept to a minimum. Publications vary in tone and level of technicality depending on the intended audience.

Each publication began with a question about the past. Each conclusion gets us closer to understanding early Alexandria. We are pleased to share the papers within this series – including professional conference papers, background documentary studies, student course papers, and volunteer research papers – to professionals and public alike.

This research paper was developed to supplement research in advance of redevelopment of this parcel within Old Town, Alexandria.

Eleanor Breen, PhD, RPA
City Archaeologist
2021

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1. Introduction

The City of Alexandria, Virginia, contains 566 acres of parkland. One of its most popular and heavily visited parks is the 43.46 acres at Fort Ward Park located at 4301 Braddock Road, in the northwest quadrant of the city. The central 36.5-acre central portion of Fort Ward Park encompasses a Civil War-era fortification and a small museum. As well as historic resources related to the Civil War, the park also contains a host of archaeological sites related to an African American community that was founded on the property after the Civil War and continued as a neighborhood until the creation of the park in the 1960s. Known as “The Fort,” over the years the community included nearly two dozen homes, a schoolhouse that later became a chapel and then a residence, and several burial grounds. African Americans, some formerly enslaved, owned most of the properties at The Fort, and the enclave formed an important place where African American families established roots that lasted through several generations until the early 1960s when the City gradually acquired the land to create Fort Ward Park, in many cases through coercion and intimidation.

The Fort community expanded and contracted over time, just like any neighborhood. What remained consistent was the ownership and occupancy of much of the land by African American families: Adams, Shorts, Jackson, Javins, Peters, Lewis, Ashby, McKnight, Miller, Craven, Terrell, Randall, Wanzer, Casey, Belk, Bethea, Hogan, Ball, Clark, Hyman, Wood, Thomas, Johnson, and others. To better understand the community, researchers have divided the park into 35 research lots, each with its own sequence of ownership and use (Figure 1). The present study primarily addresses Lots 32, 33, and 34, properties initially owned by the Jackson family, and later sold and occupied by the Peters and Lewis families.

2. Background History of the Peters and Lewis Sites

Before the Peters and Lewis families acquired Lots 32, 33, and 34 at The Fort neighborhood, the properties belonged to the Jackson family as Research Lot 31 (see Figure 1). So, the history of these lots begins with James and Catherine Jackson.

A. James and Catherine Jackson Family

In 1894 James F. Jackson purchased 11.5 acres of land that encompassed the western half of what is now Fort Ward Park (Fairfax County Deed Q-5:466-468, 1894) (Figure 2). At the time of purchase, the 11.5 acres were vacant. The Jackson family built a house fronting on West Braddock Road and established a small cemetery, located approximately 400 ft. to the north from the house, tucked up on the sloping rampart of the Civil War fort (see Figure 2). In 1913 James and his wife Catherine (Kitty) Jackson sold John H. Peters 0.75 acres of land located in the southwest corner of their 11.5 acres (Research Lot 32) (Fairfax County Deed R-7:539, 1913). Nearly a decade later in December 1922 the Jacksons sold a 0.25-acre lot to Peters immediately to the east of the original lot (Research Lot 33) (Fairfax County Deed B-9:593-594, 1922). A couple of weeks later the Jacksons sold a 0.25-acre lot to Frank Lewis, this one adjacent to the Peters lot from two weeks previous (Research Lot 34) (Fairfax County Deed A-9:573-574, 1922) (see Figure 1).

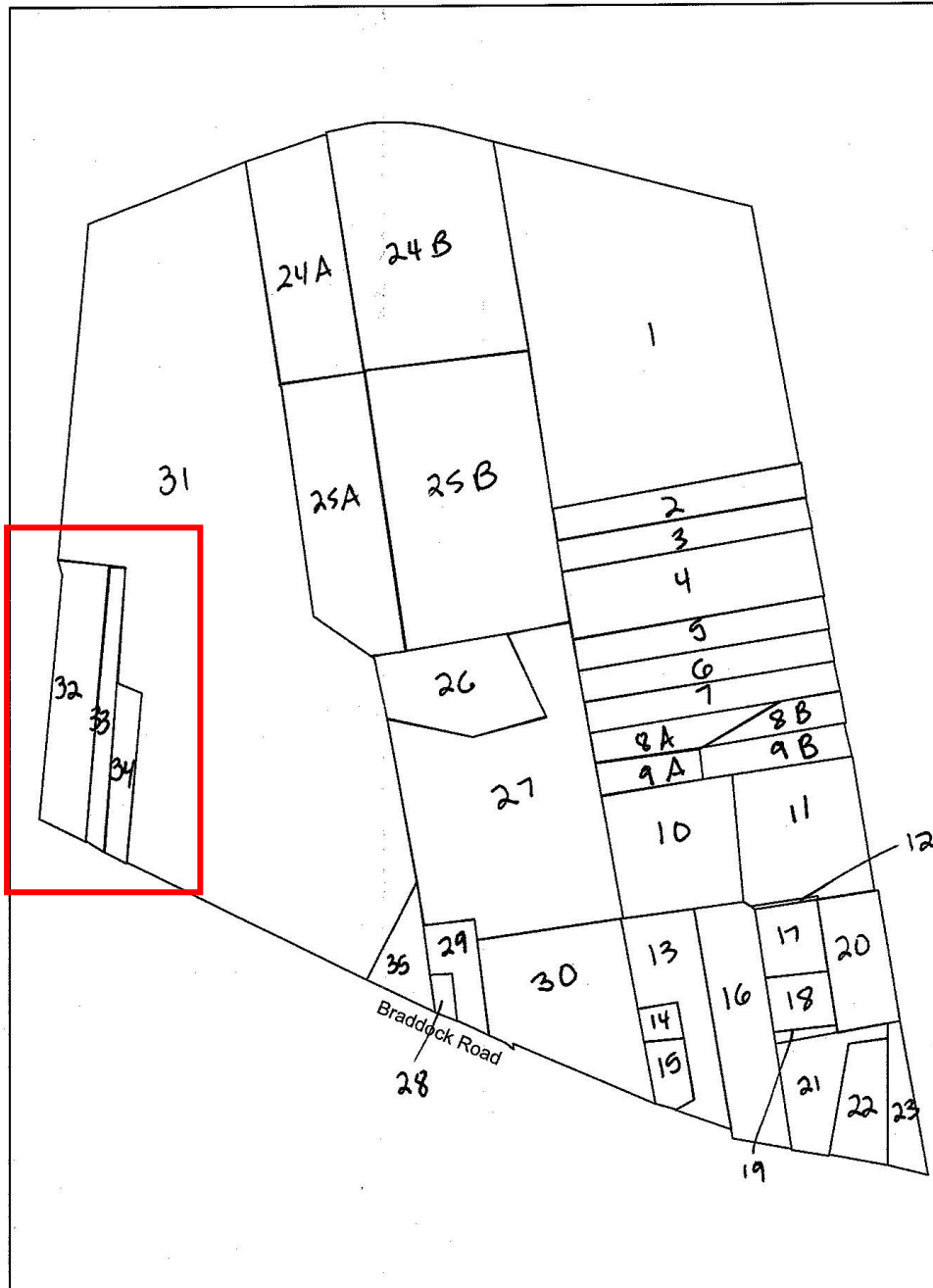


Figure 1. Research lots at Fort Ward Park.

Both James and Kitty Jackson died in 1923, and their property at Fort Ward eventually passed to a grandson, Garnett Ashby, in 1925. Ashby subsequently sold most of the Jackson land in the late 1920s to George Garrett, a developer (Moon 2014:67-68). Thus far, no evidence has been uncovered to indicate that the Jackson family put the 1.25 acres to use (aside from farming) prior to selling the parcels to the Peters family and to Frank Lewis.

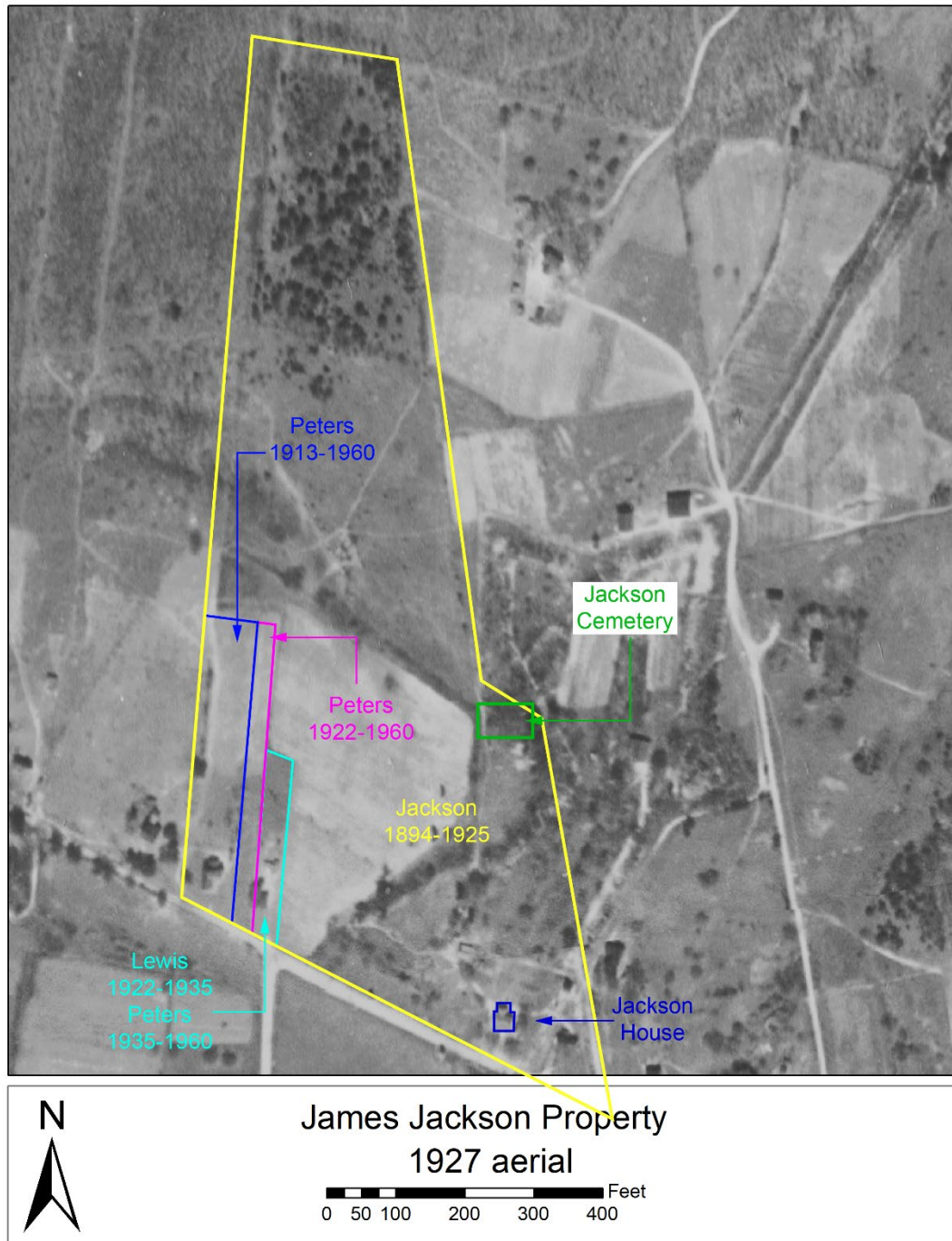


Figure 2. James Jackson property at The Fort neighborhood, 1927 aerial photograph.

B. John and Ella Peters Family

Around the year 1910 John Henry Peters and Ella Ashby Butler Peters began living in the Fort Ward neighborhood. The couple had married two years previously in 1908 when both were in their latter 20s. A decade earlier in 1898, Ella's parents Samuel and Susan Ashby purchased 1.66 acres of land at The Fort and settled into a house there (Fairfax County Deed D-6:267-268, 1898; Moon 2014:59-60). Ella Ashby was living with her parents at The Fort when the census taker called in 1900 (1900 Federal Census, "Ella Ashby"). The Ashbys kept the 1.66-acre

property in the family until 1961 when the City of Alexandria strong-armed them to sell it to the city (Moon 2014:238-239, 242).

John Peters' journey to Fort Ward was more circuitous than his wife's. John was one of eleven children born between 1870 and 1894 to Josephine Sanctuary Peters and her husband James Montgomery Peters. The life story of Josephine and James M. Peters is not directly connected to The Fort (only their son John H. Peters and his family resided there), but theirs is a fascinating, and quintessentially American tale of perseverance.

Bl. Josephine Sanctuary Peters (1849-1949)

Josephine Sanctuary was born in 1849 in Germantown, Pennsylvania (Find a Grave, "Josephine Peters"). As a teenager it is believed that she ended up living with James M. and Martha S. Steele on a 376-acre farm called "Maple Spring" (later dubbed "Bellwood") located outside Haymarket, Virginia, in Prince William County (Wood and Rabinowitz 2003:146-147; Cavanaugh 2020; NPS 2022). Exactly how Josephine came to live with the Steeles remains indeterminate. In fact, no primary sources have been identified yet to directly link Josephine Sanctuary to James M. and Martha S. Steele.¹ In an interview late in her life, Josephine explained that she came to "Manassas" as a "nursemaid" at the age of 14 (which would be approximately 1863/1864), and soon thereafter the home was shelled, but "none of the family was hurt" (*Evening Star* 1949b).² All secondary accounts of Josephine Sanctuary indicate that she was white, of European descent. However, throughout her life, federal census takers from 1880 to 1940 designated her as either Black, "negro," or mixed race (i.e., "mulatto"). Because of miscegenation laws in Virginia, almost certainly Josephine maintained her identity as non-white to protect the legality of her marriage to James M. Peters, a Black man; and to protect him from prosecution.

Prior to Josephine's appearance, the Steeles had acquired the Maple Spring property in 1859, purchasing it from William Ball (Prince William Chancery 1872-003, 1872-010). The property had been on the market as early as 1853, formerly owned by William B. Tyler (1799-1851) and offered for sale by his widow (*Alexandria Gazette* 1852). Information is slim on the origin of the Steele family, but evidence suggests that James M. Steele (1807-1864) hailed from Pennsylvania, and that Martha S. Evans Steele (1813-1896) came from Maryland. (Find a Grave, "James M. Steele" "Martha S. Evans Steele"). The Steeles did not reside at Maple Spring when the federal census taker called in 1860. Indeed, at that time he noted the property as "uninhabited" (1860 Federal Census, "John B. Grayson"). A short time later, they took up residence.

James M. Steele died suddenly in January 1864, leaving Martha to care for their three children alone: Robert, Arabella (Belle), and Gilbert, all minors at the time. Steele's death may have been what prompted Josephine Sanctuary to come to live at Maple Spring. After the Civil

¹ Martha's middle initial may have stood for "Sanctuary," thus an indication that this was her maiden name. If so, Josephine may have been related to Martha Steele. Some researchers describe Josephine as an "orphan," again suggesting that the Steeles took her in because of a prior association with her.

² No major Civil War battles were fought in Haymarket, but both armies circulated in and around the town frequently. Skirmishes did take place in Haymarket in June and October 1863, which may be the source of the shelling that Josephine recalled (Townsend 2011:30)

War, Martha struggled to pay off the large mortgage on the farm. The situation eventually ended up in chancery court (Prince William Chancery 1872-003, 1872-010). By 1870 Martha and her two sons were living in Harford, Maryland, never to return to Prince William County (1870 Federal Census, “Martha Steele”). However, Josephine Sanctuary did not join them in Maryland, having married James M. Peters in 1867.

B2. James Montgomery Peters (1843-1923)

By all accounts, James M. Peters was born into slavery in 1842 or 1843 in Loudoun County, Virginia.³ Family histories indicate that he lived and worked at the Woodland plantation owned by Landon Carter II and inherited by his son Edward Landon Carter in 1858 upon his father’s death (Rootsweb 2004; Carter Will 1858). Woodland was located approximately one mile to the northwest of Sudley Springs, adjacent to Gum Springs Road, on the north bank of Bull Run in Loudoun County, Virginia. As told by James’ son, Montgomery Peters, his father got wind from his older brother John, also enslaved at Woodland, that the Carters planned to sell him. James immediately packed a bag, had his mother prepare some food for his journey, and headed off in the middle of the night along Bull Run until it fed into Cub Run, where he stole into the back of a passing wagon headed toward Fairfax. Apparently, James was familiar with Alexandria from prior visits there hauling timber, so he headed that way and got a job cutting wood for railroads outside of town (Wood and Rabinowitz 2003:113; Johnson et al. 1995:29-30). Soon thereafter, a recruiter asked if he wanted to join the army. His answer, according to his son years later was, “that was exactly what he wanted to do” (Johnson et al. 1995:29).

Exactly when James made his escape from Woodland plantation is not known.⁴ However, given his intention to reach Alexandria, a known safe haven for escaped slaves, he likely set out after the war had started seeking sanctuary as a contraband. Edward L. Carter had only just recently taken over the ownership and management of Woodland plantation in 1858, and his decision to sell some of his enslaved workers may have been prompted by the turmoil caused by the war just down the road at Sudley Springs. In June 1860 Edward L. Carter enslaved 11 people at Woodland plantation, including an 18-year-old male (likely James Peters), and a 30-year-old male (likely his older brother John Peters) (1860 Slave Schedule, “Edward L. Carter”).⁵ After the war John Peters settled nearby in Loudoun County and began farming on his own (1870 Federal Census, “John Peters”).

James M. Peters enlisted in the United States Colored Troops on June 17, 1863, at Mason’s Island, Virginia at the age of 20 (*Colored Troops Military Service Records*, “James Peters”).⁶ The next day Peters turned 21. He joined Company E of the 1st U.S. Colored Infantry

³ Accounts differ on the year of his birth, but his death certificate indicates that James M. Peters was born on June 18, 1842 (*Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912-2014*, “James Peters”)

⁴ On his service record Peters is categorized as a free man as of April 19, 1861 (*Colored Troops Military Service Records*, “James Peters”). The reason this was noted in Peters’ file was because Congress equalized and provided back pay for Black soldiers in June 1864; before then, white soldiers were paid more than Black soldiers. Apparently, true, or not, Peters claimed that he was a free man prior to April 19, 1861, and therefore he received back pay to June 1863 when he had enlisted (National Park Service, n.d.).

⁵ John Peters’ date of birth as gleaned from later censuses puts his year of birth at or near 1830 (1880 and 1900 Federal Census, “John Peters”)

⁶ Mason’s Island is now known as Roosevelt Island, located in the Potomac River just to the south of Georgetown.

Regiment as a private for a period of three years. At the time he was described as 5'7¼" tall, with a dark complexion, and a large scar on his neck. He listed himself as a farmer and indicated that his mother was living at the time in Prince William County, Virginia. Whether or not she continued to be enslaved by the Carter family is not known, although the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued six months earlier, and notably, Juneteenth took place in Texas two days later, on June 19, 1863. James and John Peters' mother may well have been listed under Edward L. Carter's ownership in 1860 as a 48-year-old female (1860 Slave Schedule, "Edward L. Carter").⁷

Peters had a more than eventful three years of military service, seeing action during the siege of Petersburg and Richmond in 1864, including at the Battle of the Crater in Petersburg in late July, New Market Heights in September, Fair Oaks in October, and he finished out the war in campaigns in North Carolina in 1865. He was injured at the Battle of Fair Oaks, suffering unspecified wounds. Interestingly, according to his bi-monthly paystubs, Peters was not present with his regiment between November 1864 and February 1865, presumably because of the injuries he sustained at Fair Oaks. By March 1865 he had recovered enough to rejoin his unit in North Carolina. Peters also eventually lost sight in one eye after the war, stemming from damage he sustained from smoke on the battlefield at Petersburg (National Park Service, n.d.). He was discharged from the USCT in late September 1865 at Roanoke Island, North Carolina (*Colored Troops Military Service Records*, "James Peters").⁸

Some accounts indicate that James and Josephine first met prior to his service in the USCT (Cavanaugh 2020). However, the timing of their movements up to 1865 suggests otherwise. By the time Josephine Sanctuary had begun working at the Steele's farm in 1863 or 1864, James Peters was in Alexandria or had begun military duty in June 1863. After the war, Peters returned to the area around Sudley Springs. At that time, he was employed as a plasterer's assistant, and then took a job as a farm laborer, possibly working for Martha Steele on her farm outside Haymarket, Virginia (Johnson et al. 1995:29-30; Reeves 2003:133). According to later census data, James and Josephine Peters claimed to have gotten married in 1867 (1900 Federal Census, "James Peters"; Moon 2014:24). Curiously, in 1870 James was living with his older brother John, and the census taker made no mention of Josephine. Nor was Josephine living with Martha Steele in Maryland (1870 Federal Census, "Martha Steele"). Because the relationship and marriage between a Black man and a white woman was not recognized as legal, the family may have purposely not made mention to the census taker in 1870 of her presence. That also may explain why there is no apparent official record of their marriage.⁹

By 1880, James and Josephine Peters were raising three young daughters and living on a small farm located a short distance to the northeast of Groveton, and less than a mile to the west from the Stone House, a prominent landmark in both the battles of First and Second Manassas

⁷ In 1870 John Peters' household did not include an adult woman other than his wife Susan, suggesting that his mother was not alive (1870 Federal Census, "John Peters"). Edward L. Carter, the former owner of James and John Peters and their mother apparently did not return to Woodland after the war. Carter found himself living in the household of William Skillman in 1870 in Loudoun County, and died a year later in 1871 (1870 Federal Census, "Edward Carter"; Virginia, Death Registers, 1853–1911, "Edward L. Carter").

⁸ A photograph of James Peters in his later years is published in Moon 2014:24.

⁹ Lacking a marriage license, Josephine was unable to receive pension payments after James died (Pension Files, 1890; Cavanaugh 2020).

(1880 Federal Census, “James Peters”). They rented the property from John Cross, a Union sympathizer, and eventually purchased 2 acres in 1883 (Wood and Rabinowitz 2003:146-147). As the story goes, James Peters built the family’s house by salvaging and moving the nearby Groveton schoolhouse, a building that had been badly damaged during the war and abandoned. Peters converted the former schoolhouse into a two-room dwelling, some 18 ft. by 24 ft. in size (ibid.; Reeves 2003:133). Over the years the Peters expanded their holdings, eventually exceeding 100 acres (Reeves 2003:133). Their family grew as well. Between 1870 and 1894, Josephine gave birth to possibly eleven children, eight of whom lived into adulthood, including their eldest son John H. Peters. James M. Peters died in 1923 at the age of 80 (Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1923). Josephine continued to live under the care of her daughter Dovie Peters Brooks until 1949 when she died at the age of 100 (*Evening Star*, 1949a, 1949b).

B3. John H. Peters (1881-1964) and Ella Ashby Butler Peters (1882-1978)

John H. Peters was born on June 28, 1881, in Prince William County, Virginia, the first son to his parents, James and Josephine (U.S., *World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*, “James Henry Peters”; U.S., *World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942*, “John Peters”). By 1900, the 20-year-old John H. Peters was living with his parents near Manassas and working as a farm laborer, most likely on his father’s farm (1900 Federal Census, “John H. Peters”). Eight years later in 1908 John Peters married 26-year-old Ella Ashby Butler.¹⁰ At the time, Ella had two small children from a previous marriage, four-year-old Clifton Butler and two-year-old Reginald W. Butler.¹¹ How exactly John and Ella came to meet remains unknown, but evidently John pulled up stakes in Prince William County and relocated to Alexandria where Ella was living at the time. Historian Krystyn Moon has noted that W.J. Peters, an African American man, owned acreage on the south side of Braddock Road across from The Fort in the 1880s and 1890s, a possible connection to John H. Peters (Moon 2014:51)

According to the 1910 Federal census, John H. Peters and his wife Ella Ashby Butler Peters lived at The Fort neighborhood, probably in Ella’s parents’ house while her parents resided in a house on the grounds of the nearby Theological Seminary (1910 Federal Census, “John Peters”).¹² The Peters household consisted of John and Ella, her young sons Clifton and Reginald from her previous marriage, two-year-old Edith Peters, and newborn John Peters Jr. At the time John Peters Sr. was employed as a “coachman” (i.e., a driver or chauffeur) for a private family, likely one of the directors at the Theological Seminary, and Ella Peters worked as a laundress from her home (ibid.).

In 1913 John Peters formally purchased a 0.75-acre lot at The Fort from James and Kitty

¹⁰ A marriage certificate has not been located for John Peters and Ella Ashby Butler Peters; however, a date of their marriage can be gleaned from the information collected by the federal census taker in 1910 (1910 Federal Census, “Ella Peters”)

¹¹ The identity of Ella Ashby’s first husband remains unknown, although tangential evidence suggests his name as Edward Butler. If so, he may be the man fitting that description in the 1900-1930 Federal censuses. Reading between the lines of movements over the years this Edward Butler was 21 years old, single, and living in Alexandria in 1900 with his mother. By 1920 he had married Blanche Masterson three years earlier. The 1930 census indicates that Edward Butler’s first marriage occurred around 1901 which would fit the timeline for having fathered two children with Ella Ashby in 1904 and 1906 (1880-1930 Federal Censuses, “Edward Butler”).

¹² In 1910, Samuel Ashby and his family lived next door to one of the teachers, and later the headmaster at Episcopal High School, Archibald R. Hoxton (1910 Federal Census, “Samuel Ashby”).

Jackson for \$112.50 (Fairfax County Deed R-7:539, 1913) (Table 1). A year later John and Ella Peters took out a \$300 mortgage on the property which they likely used to complete the construction of a house on their newly acquired property (Fairfax County Deed 176:556-558). In 1919 the Peters acquired 2.0 acres to the west of their lot (Fairfax County Deed O-8:466-467), and a year later added another 5.86 acres attached to it (Fairfax County Deed 201:569). In 1922 the Peters purchased a 0.27-acre lot from the Jackson family immediately adjacent from their original property, and in 1935 they added a 0.25-acre parcel that belonged to the heirs of Frank Lewis (and contained a dwelling) to increase the total acreage they owned to 9.13 acres by the mid-1930s (Figure 3; see Table 1).

Table 1. Land transactions involving John H. and Ella Peters.

Date	Grantee	Grantor	Deed	Acreage
12/18/1913	John H. Peters	James F. Jackson et al.	FC R-7:539	0.75
7/20/1914	Angus McDowell Tr. et al.	John and Ella Peters	FC 176:556-558	
12/19/1919	John Peters	T.F. Dodd et al.	FC O-8:466-467	2.00
11/1/1920	John Peters	T.F. Dodd et al.	FC 201:569	5.86
12/2/1922	John H. Peters	James F. and Kitty Jackson	FC B-9:593-594	0.27
2/8/1935	John H. Peters	Joseph and Norris Lewis	FC R-11:558-559	0.25
12/9/1935	John H. Peters	Magdaline Lewis and Lloyd Whiting	FC Z-11:315-316	*
6/1/1944	Commonwealth of Virginia	John and Ella Peters	FC 438:526-529	3.09
3/1/1960	Ascension Academy	John Peters		4.77
3/5/1960	City of Alexandria	John H. and Ella Peters	FC 509:122-124	1.27

* This deed applies to the same property above

In 1920 John Peters worked as a chauffeur at the Seminary School and Ella Peters continued to take in laundry (1920 Federal Census, “John Peters”). According to his 1918 draft card, John Peters drove for Dr. Angus Crawford, the dean of the Theological Seminary (*U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*: John Henry Peters, 1918). The Peters household must have been busy with their six children in residence, ranging in ages from 1 to 16 years old. As mentioned above, along with a growing family, the Peters had expanded their footprint of land to more than 8 acres by the early 1920s (see Table 1). With that expansion, the Peters built several farm buildings on their new holdings, situated immediately to the west of their home (Figure 4). Based on an examination of an aerial photograph taken in 1927, a large building, probably a barn, stood to the west of the Peters home, surrounded by other outbuildings (see Figure 4).

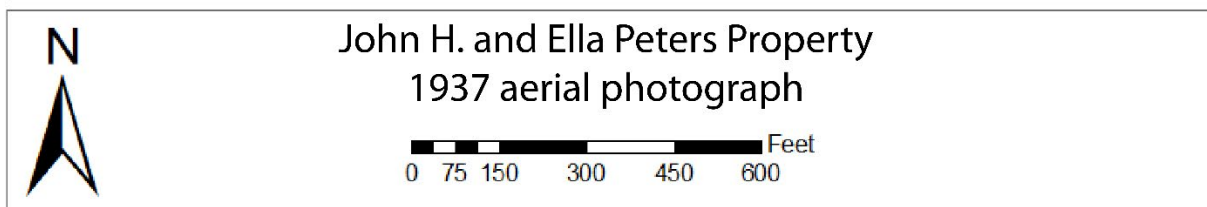
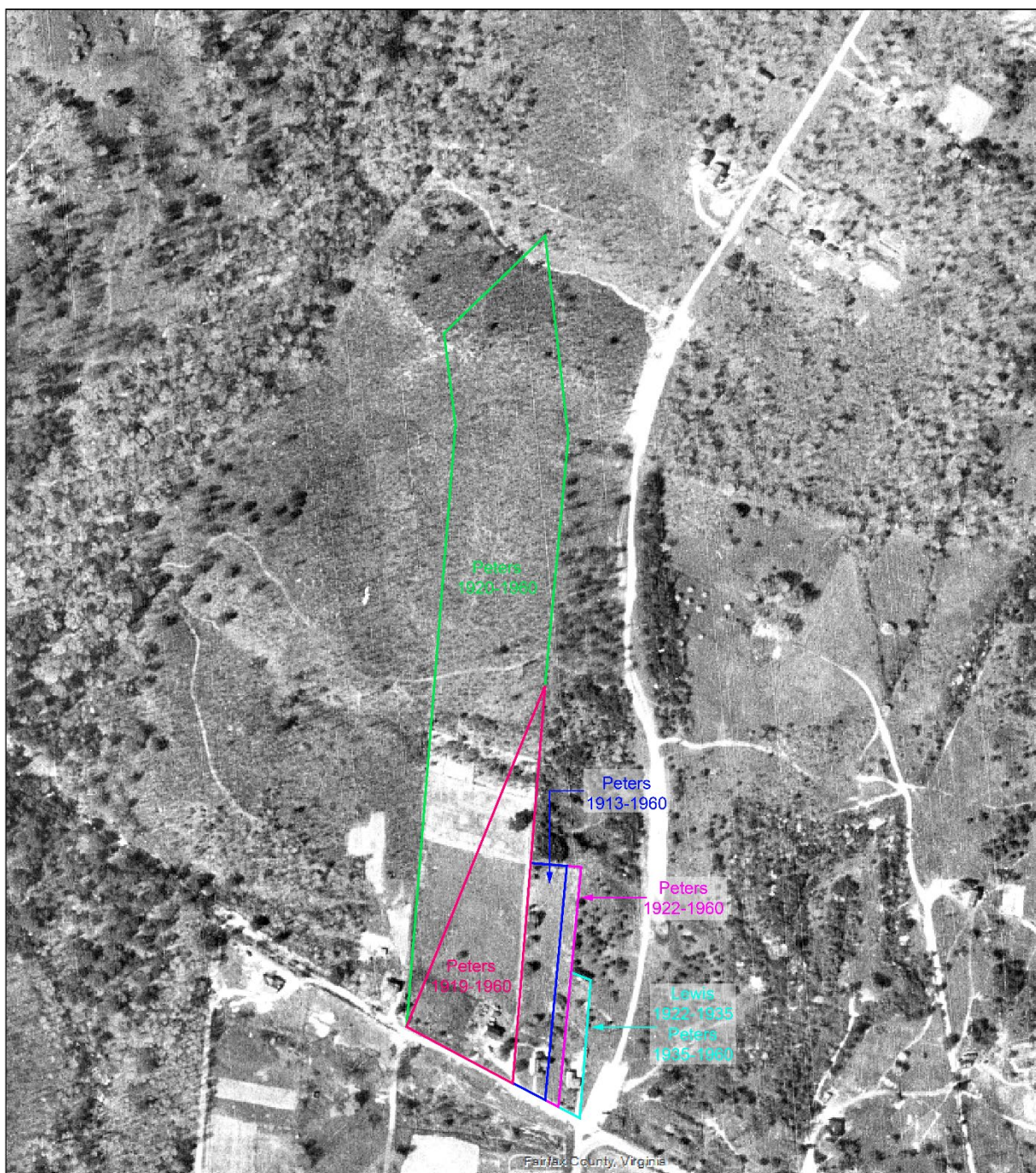
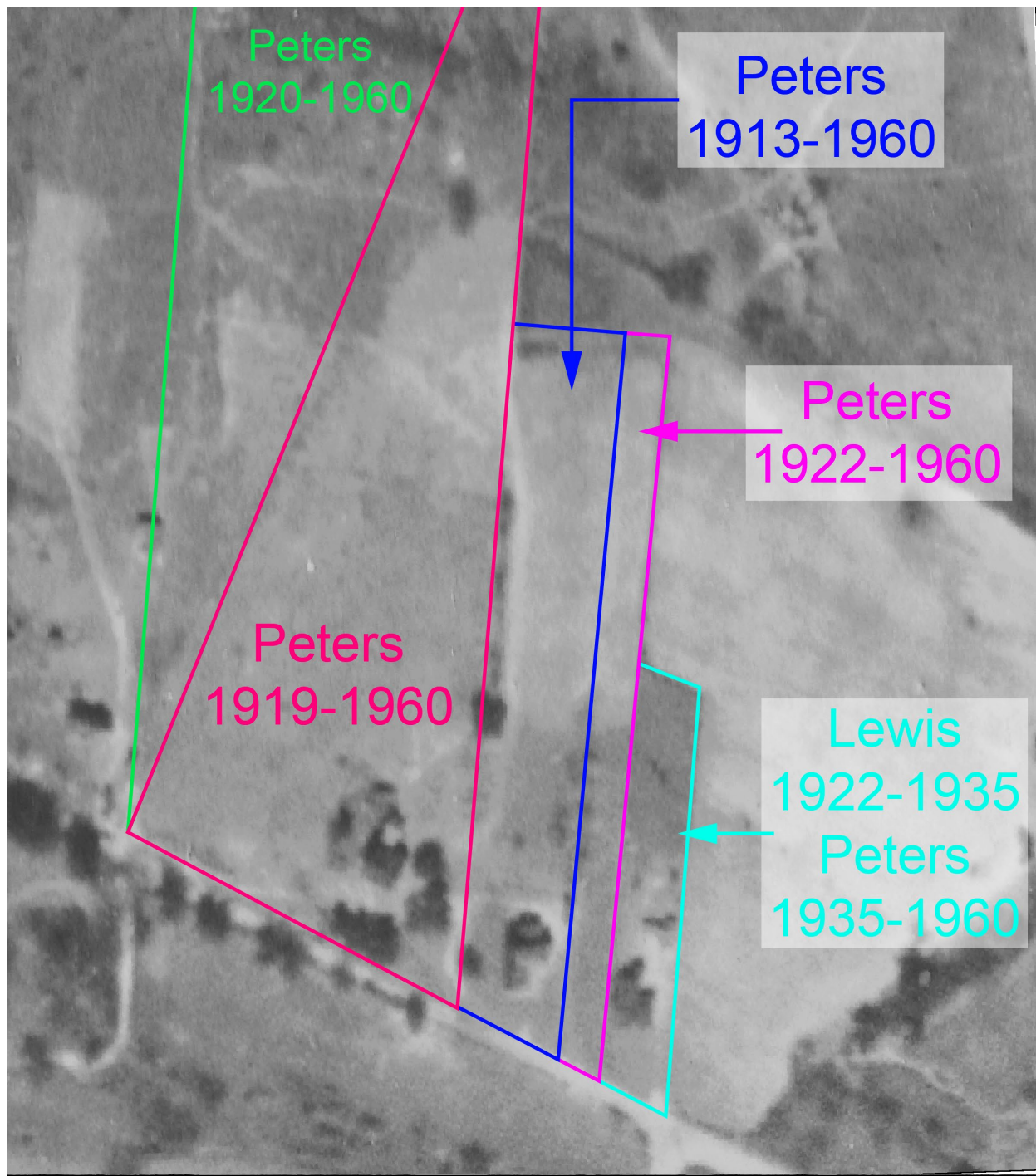


Figure 3. Peters land acquisitions between 1913 and 1935, 1937 aerial photograph.




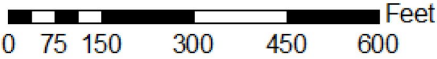

 John H. and Ella Peters Property
 1927 aerial photograph

 Feet
 0 75 150 300 450 600

Figure 4. Peters land, 1927 aerial photograph.

By 1930 Mr. Peters worked as a janitor at the Seminary along with his son John Jr. Mrs. Peters no longer took in laundry. By this time Clifton and Reginald, Ella's two sons, were now adults and living elsewhere, as was their oldest daughter Edith. The 20-year-old John Jr. continued to live at home, along with his brothers Fred (age 16), George (age 11), and his little sister Juanita (age 2). The two boys attended school. The census taker valued their home and land at \$5,000 and noted that their property was not considered to be a farm, perhaps because it was not the primary source of income for the family (1930 Federal Census, "John Peters").

By 1940 John Peters worked as a janitor for a private household (again, probably at the Theological Seminary), and Ella Peters and their daughter Edith were keeping house. The rest of their children, even 12-year-old Juanita apparently was not residing with them, possibly living away at school (1940 Federal Census, "John Peters"). This time the census taker categorized their property as a farm, perhaps because John and Ella were now in their late 50s and may have been transitioning to using their property as a small family farm. Community members remember regularly getting fresh milk from Peters family, indicative that the family cared for at least one cow on their property, and probably other livestock and animals (Moon 2014:193-194). Based on the order of visitation in the 1940 Federal census, an African American couple, James and Malinda Bethea lived in the property formerly belonging to Frank Lewis's heirs and acquired by the Peters in 1935 (1940 Federal Census, "James Bethea").

In 1941, John Peters Sr. received a building permit to build a frame house with five rooms on the property (Moon 2014:49). A review of aerial photographs suggests that the Peters built the new dwelling to the west of their house and the barn, on property now occupied by the St. Stephens & St. Agnes Middle School (Figure 5). Indeed, the 1949 aerial photograph, as well as topographic maps made in 1945 and 1951 depict five potential dwellings on Peters property (Peters 1-4, Lewis), suggesting that the Peters built two new dwellings on the other side of their barn, probably not concurrently, but over the course of a few years (see Figure 5). Also, by 1949, another structure can be seen standing on the back of the Peters original lot (Peters 4), a likely shed or outbuilding. By the late 1950s, this building appears to have been converted into living space as shown on a 1958 topographic map that the Peters rented it out.

In 1950 both John and Ella were in their late 60s and no longer actively employed. Twenty-two-year-old Juanita lived at home with them, working as a file clerk with the Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C. (1950 Federal Census, "John H. Peters").¹³ The census taker that year walked along West Braddock Road from east to west and recorded five households along this stretch of the road, Dwelling Units 251-255, presumably all five belonging to John and Ella Peters, and forming a small enclave of African American residents (Figure 6). The census taker first recorded James and Malinda/Matilda Bethea who lived in the house that had once belonged to the Frank Lewis heirs, this was Unit 251 (1950 Federal Census, "James H. Bethea").¹⁴ The Peters continued to reside in their home, Dwelling Unit 252. William and Helen Hundley and a lodger Harold Mines occupied the next household, Unit 253, which probably was located in the rear of the Peters' lot, or possibly in the barn (1950 Federal Census,

¹³ According to the City directories, Juanita continued to live with her parents throughout the 1950s, most likely acting as a caregiver (City Directories, 1822-1995, "Juanita Peters").

¹⁴ The Betheas were long-time residents, having resided in this same house in 1940 when the census taker had passed through (1940 Federal Census, "James Bethea").

“William Hundley”). Amos and Beatrice Turner and their daughter Selina lived to the west in Unit 254 (1950 Federal Census, “Amos B. Turner”). Finally, Benjamin and Denny Figgins [Feggins] and their two small sons Otis and Willie lived in Unit 255 (1950 Federal Census, “Benjamin Feggins”) (see Figure 6).

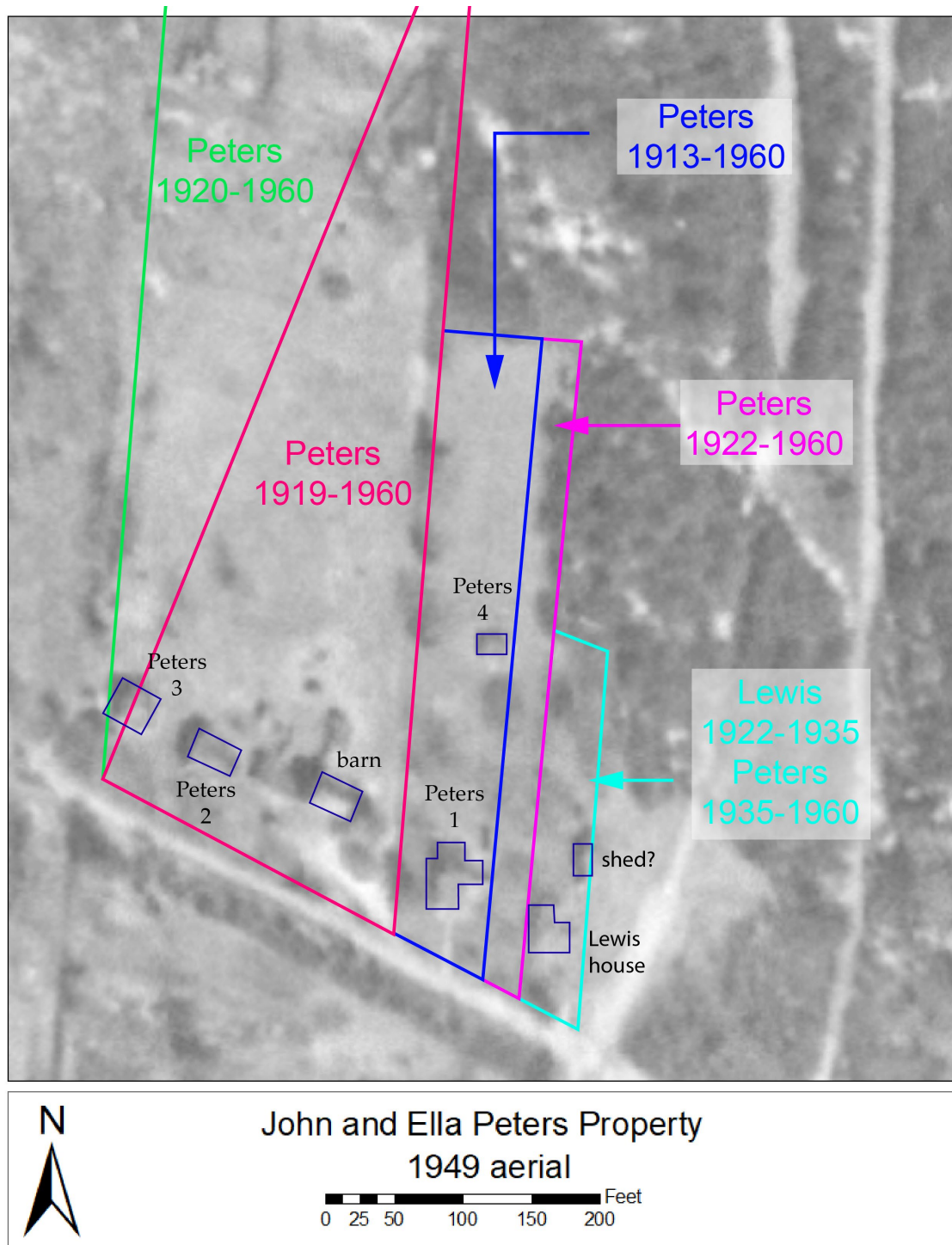


Figure 5. Standing structures on Peters land, 1949 aerial photograph.

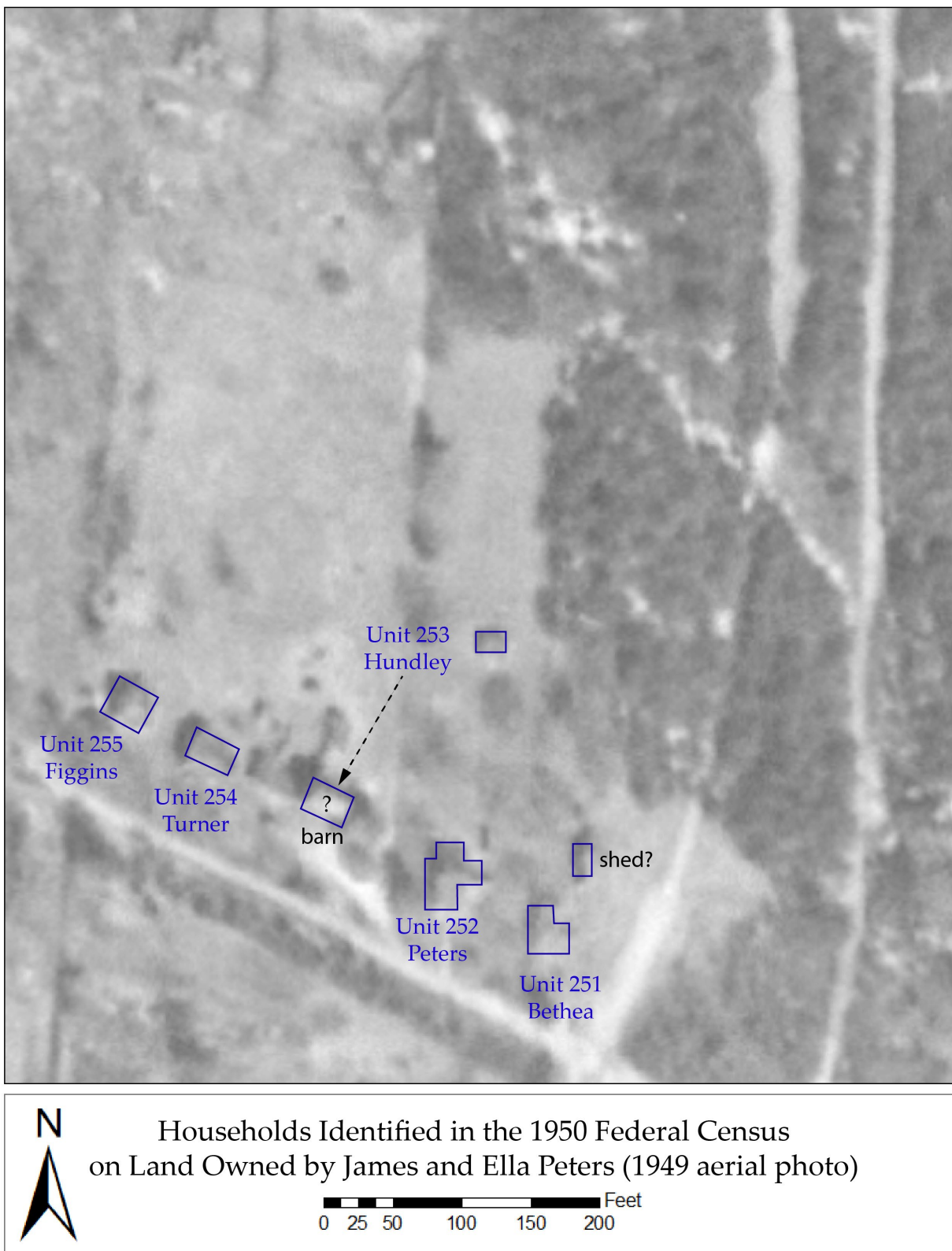


Figure 6. Households on Peters' Land (1950 Federal Census).

City directories exist for this section of Alexandria for 1953-1954, and 1956-1968, allowing for yearly snapshots of the households on the Peters property, with street addresses of 4325/7, 4329, 4415, and 4421 W. Braddock Road (Drembus and Cartwright 2009) (Figure 7). After having begun negotiations in 1958, by late 1960 the Peters sold the western section of their property (4.77 acres) to the Ascension Academy (later St. Stephens & St. Agnes Middle School) for a new school and sold the remaining acreage (1.27 acres) to the City of Alexandria to incorporate into Fort Ward Park (Moon 2014:239, 242; Fairfax City Deed 509:122-124). By 1961 all the dwellings the Peters family had once owned had been razed.

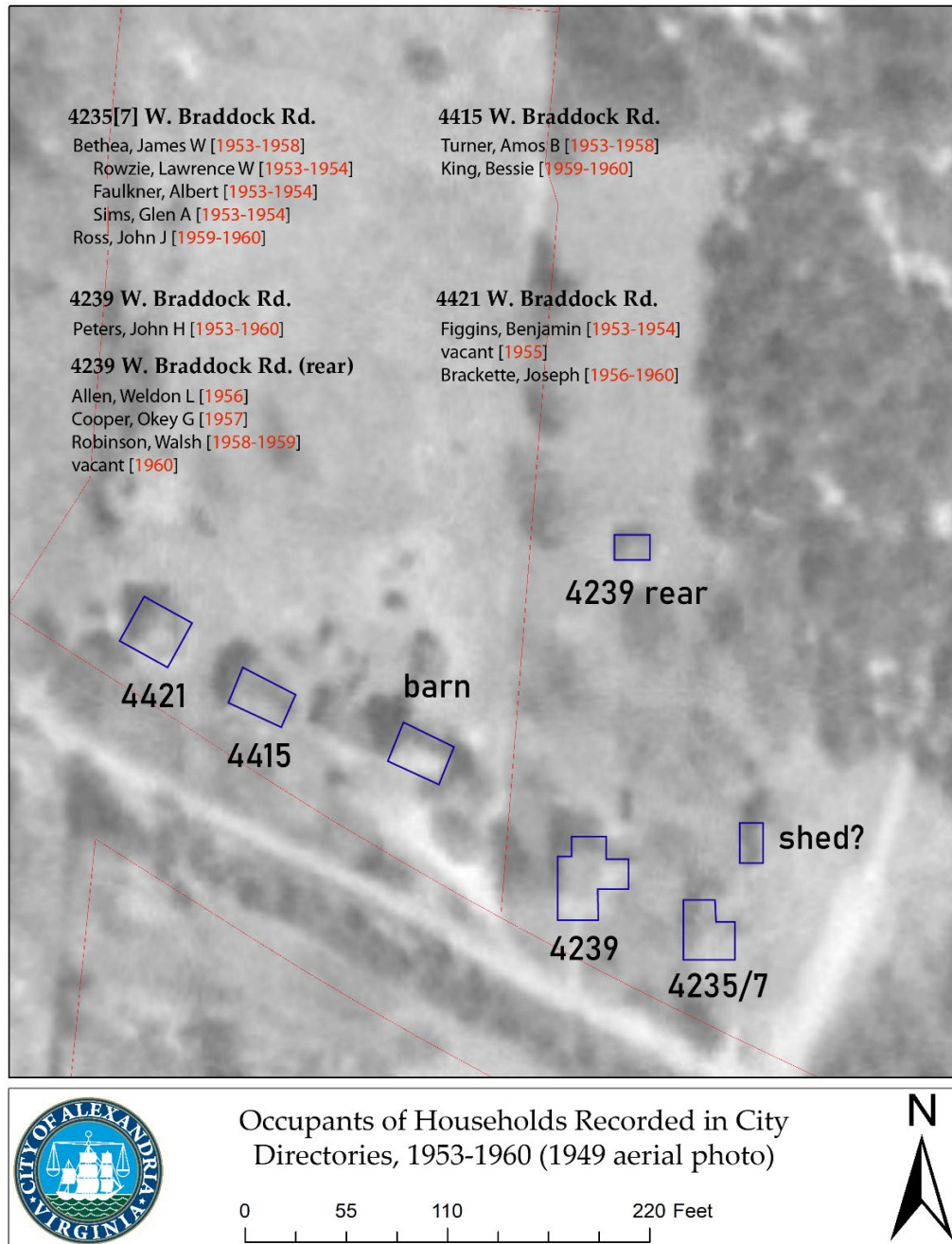


Figure 7. Occupants and Addresses (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

4325/7 W. Braddock Rd.

The James Bethea family lived at 4325/7 W. Braddock Rd. (the former Frank Lewis house) beginning at least by 1940 until 1958. Over time, the street address for the property changed from 4325 to 4327, but both represented this property. In the latter years, John J. Ross lived in the house in 1959 and 1960 (see Figure 7) (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

4329 W. Braddock Rd.

Next door, the Peters continued to reside at 4329 W. Braddock Rd. throughout the 1950s until selling their property and moving to 121 Madison St., NW in Washington D.C. by 1961 (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

4329 W. Braddock Rd., rear

Beginning in 1956, the Peters began formally renting out a small dwelling located on the rear of their lot (see Figure 7). They have been doing this earlier than in 1956, but its occupancy was not recorded in the city directory prior to that. According to City directories at the time, the dwelling was substantial enough that the three tenants who rented it from 1956 to 1959 had phone service and full utilities. This rear unit remained vacant in 1960 and was torn down shortly thereafter (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

4415 W. Braddock Rd.

The Amos Turner family resided at 4415 W. Braddock Road between 1953 and 1958. Later, after the Turners vacated the premises, Bessie King lived in the house in 1959 and 1960 until the property was sold to Ascension Academy (see Figure 7) (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

4421 W. Braddock Rd.

The Benjamin Figgins family lived at 4421 W. Braddock Rd. between at least 1950 and 1954. The house was vacant in 1955 and then occupied by Joseph Brackette and his family between 1956 and 1960 (see Figure 7) (Drembus and Cartwright 2009).

John H. Peters died on December 15, 1964, at the age of 84. Although living in Washington D.C. at the time, the family held services for him at Meade Memorial Episcopal Church in Alexandria. He was buried at Lincoln Memorial Cemetery in Suitland, Maryland, just over the line from Washington D.C. (*Evening Star*, 1964a). Ella Peters died on June 11, 1978, at the age of 96, and like her husband the family held services for her at Meade Memorial, and she too was buried at Lincoln Memorial (*Evening Star*, 1978). The only member of the Peters family to die while John and Ella Peters owned property and resided at The Fort was their son George Peters, a veteran of World War II, who was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in 1953 (Death Certificate, "George L. Peters"; *Evening Star*, 1953). The remaining six Peters children died between 1961 and 2010, after the Peters family had dispossessed themselves of the property at The Fort (Table 2) (*Evening Star*, 1961, 1964b, 1979; *Washington Post*, 2010). As adults, most of the Peters' children had relocated to Washington D.C.

Table 2. Members of the John H. and Ella Peters household.

	Children	Birth & Death Dates	Place of Death or Burial
John Henry Peters		(1881-1964)	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
Ella Ashby Butler Peters		(1882-1978)	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
	Clifton A. Butler	(1904- 1979)	Montclair, New Jersey
	Reginald W. Butler	(1906-1964)	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
	Edith Peters Ray	(1908- 1986)	in DC*
	John Holman Peters	(1909-1997)	in DC**
	Fred R. Peters	(1914-1961)	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
	George Peters	(1919-1953)	Arlington National Cemetery
	Juanita Ella Peters	(1928-2010)	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery

* Edith Ray's estranged husband George Ray Sr. died under tragic circumstances in 1956 and is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Washington, D.C., but we have not located Edith Ray's place of rest (Find-A-Grave, "George Ray"; *Evening Star* 1956; District of Columbia Court of Appeals Decisions, 1989).

** John H. Peters' funeral was held at Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. on November 28, 1997 (Family Tree, Ancestry.com, "John H. Peters Jr.")

C. Frank Lewis [Joseph Brackett] Family

In 1922, Frank Lewis purchased a small 0.25-acre lot (40 ft. by 272 ft.) from James and Catherine Jackson for \$75 (Fairfax County Deed A-9:573-574, 1922) (see Figure 3). By 1927 a house stood on the lot. In 1930, Lewis was living on Leesburg Pike in Falls Church, apparently in a house that he owned and valued at \$2,500 (1930 Federal Census, "Frank Lewes"). He rented his property at The Fort to Ben and Ella Scarborough and their two daughters for \$20 per month (1930 Federal Census, "Ben Learborough"). Lewis was killed in 1932, still residing on Leesburg Pike at the time of his death. His adult son Joseph Lewis and his daughter Magdalene Lewis Whiting sold the 0.25-acre property to next door neighbors John and Ella Peters in 1935 (Fairfax County Deed R-11:558-559; Z-11:315-316).

C1. Frank Lewis [Joseph Brackett] (1891-1932) and Willie Mae Carter Brackett Lewis Henry (1898-1994)

Joseph Brackett was born in 1891 in Culpeper County, Virginia, to Samuel and Lucinda Brackett (1900 Federal Census, "Joe Brackett").¹⁵ Joseph's father Samuel Brackett was a blacksmith born in the mid-1840s in Albemarle County, Virginia (1900 Federal Census, "Samuel Brackett"). His wife Lucinda Lewis was born in 1861 in Rappahannock County, Virginia, to parents French and Mary A. Lewis (Culpeper Marriage Register, 1878). By 1870 the family had relocated to Culpeper County (1870 Federal Census, "Juairda [Lucinda] Lewis"). Samuel Brackett married Lucinda Lewis in 1878 and together they raised about a dozen children (Culpeper Marriage Register, 1878; 1900 Federal Census, "Samuel Brackett"). In 1900, the

¹⁵ Only later as an adult did Joseph Brackett identify himself as Frank Lewis, taking his mother's maiden name for a surname.

Bracketts were doing well, they owned their own home outright, and seven of their nine living children resided with them, as well as Lucinda's widowed mother Mary Ann Lewis (1900 Federal Census, "Samuel Brackett") (Table 3).

Unlike his older siblings, young Joe Brackett received an education and learned how to read and write (1910 Federal Census, "Joe Brackett"). He was living at home in 1910, but the family's fortunes had changed dramatically due to the death of his father. The newly widowed Lucinda was raising six of her children alone (including four-year-old twin girls) while working as a laundress; instead of owning their home, she now rented a dwelling next door to her mother (1910 Federal Census, "Lucinda Brackett").¹⁶ Exactly why Lucinda and her mother were not living under one roof is not known.

On September 17, 1913, Joseph Brackett married Culpeper native Willie Mae Carter (Culpeper Marriage Register, 1913). Willie Mae was born in 1898 in Culpeper, Virginia, the second of seven children born to Sallie Carter (Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, "Willie Mae Henry") (Table 4). Her mother Sallie Carter was born in 1878 to Hamp and Louisa Carter in Culpeper, Virginia (Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912-2014, "Sally Carter"). Beginning as a young adult, Sallie Carter worked as a cook and a housekeeper for white families in the neighborhood, something she did for the entirety of her life (1900 Federal Census, "Sally Carter"). The paternity of Sallie's children remains something of a mystery. Of the seven Carter children, the possible identity of a father is known for three of them, including Willie Mae.¹⁷

Table 3. Genealogy of the Samuel and Lucinda Brackett family.

	Children	Birth & Death Dates	Place of Death or Burial
Samuel Brackett	Married: 22 May 1878	(ca. 1845-ca. 1906)	unknown
Lucinda Lewis Brackett		(1861-1932)	Culpeper, Virginia
	Matilda	(1877)	unknown
	Mary	(1879-1880)	Culpeper, Virginia
	Edward Brackett	(1882-1925)	Culpeper, Virginia
	Wealthey Saunders	(1888-1911)	Elizabeth, Pennsylvania (TB)*
	Evaline	(1888)	unknown
	Florence Fletcher	(1893-1916)	Braddock, Pennsylvania (TB)

¹⁶ Mary Ann Lewis apparently owned the house she occupied in 1910, suggesting that she had been the owner in 1900, but Samuel Brackett was deemed the head of the household, and thus given the credit of ownership.

¹⁷ A man named Edward Turner is listed as Willie Mae's father on her marriage certificate (Culpeper Marriage Register, 1913). This Edward Turner was born in 1876, the son of Lewis and Lucy A. Turner, who not incidentally were living next door to Hamp Carter, Sallie's father, in 1880 (1880 Federal Census, "Hamp Carter" "Lewis Turner"). Sallie Carter and Edward Turner likely knew one another and grew up together in the same neighborhood.

	Joseph Brackett (Frank Lewis)	(1891-1932)	Falls Church, Virginia
	Ethel	(1894)	unknown
	Calcer Brackett	(1896-1957)	Culpeper, Virginia
	Margaret Brown	(1906-1935)	Culpeper, Virginia (TB)
	Elizabeth Bryant	(1906-before 1974)	unknown

* (TB) indicates a death from tuberculosis.

Table 4. Genealogy of the Sallie Carter family.

	Children	Birth & Death Dates	Place of Death or Burial
Sally (Sallie) Carter		(1878-1957)	Culpeper, Virginia
	Rosa Jackson	(1893-1957)	Culpeper, Virginia
Edward Turner	Willie Mae Brackett Lewis Henry	(1898-1994)	Alexandria, Virginia
	Carroll Carter	(1901-1985)	Big Stone Gap, Virginia
	Mary	(1904-)	unknown
Sam Carter	Gertrude Polanco	(1906-1982)	Culpeper, Virginia
James Pleasant	James Carter	(1915-1957)	Culpeper, Virginia

In 1910, a 12-year-old Willie Mae Carter was living with her mother Sallie Carter in a rented house on Commerce Street in Culpeper, Virginia (1910 Federal Census, “Willie Carter”). Along with Willie Mae, the widowed Sallie Carter was raising four other children ranging in age from 14-year-old Rosa to three-year-old Gertrude (see Table 4). Sallie and Rosa worked as cooks for a private family (1910 Federal Census, “Sallie Carter”). The census taker in 1910 marked Sallie Carter as a widow, although a record of her marriage has not been found.

When Joseph Brackett married Willie Mae Carter on September 17, 1913, the couple already had a son together they named Joseph, born on February 7, 1913, and Willie Mae was pregnant with their second child, a girl born on January 14, 1914, named Magdalene (Affidavit, Willie Lewis Henry, 1935). According to the marriage certificate, Joseph Brackett worked at a bowling alley (Culpeper Marriage Register, 1913). A later divorce decree indicates that the young couple stayed together for three years, and then parted ways, suggesting that they were informally separated by 1916 (Virginia Divorce Decree, 1923).

By 1920, the Brackett family of four was widely dispersed. In 1920 Frank Lewis (no longer using his given name, Joseph Brackett) was renting a house at the Theological Seminary in Alexandria and working as a cook at the school. Lewis lived with his second wife, Leaner Lewis, who also cooked at the Seminary. They shared a household with four other kitchen staff (1920 Federal Census, “Frank Lewis”). As Joseph Brackett, he was still married to Willie Mae Carter; they did not formally divorce until 1923 (Virginia Divorce Decree, 1923). Perhaps his

marriage to Leaner prompted Brackett to create a new identity, one that used his mother's maiden name, Lewis.

Exactly where Willie Mae Brackett and her two children were living in 1920 is not clear.¹⁸ In 1920, Willie Mae's 7-year-old son Joseph Brackett may have been living with his uncle Edward Brackett and his family in Culpeper, although the census taker categorized young Joe as Edward Brackett's son instead of his nephew (1920 Federal Census, "Joe W. Brackett"). In 1920, a six-year-old child named Madeline Lewis was "boarding" in the household of James M. and Phoebe A. Brook in Washington, D.C. along with three other unrelated young girl boarders (1920 Federal Census, "Madeline Lewis").¹⁹

On December 18, 1922, Frank Lewis purchased the small 0.25-acre lot at The Fort from the Jackson family, bordering on John and Ella Peters' property (Fairfax County Deed A-9:573-574, 1922) (see Figure 3). Through his job at the Seminary School, Lewis may have learned of the availability of the property, perhaps from John Peters himself who worked at the Seminary as well and had purchased a lot adjacent to Lewis's lot from the Jackson family two weeks earlier (Fairfax County Deed B-9:593-594, 1922). Leaner Lewis is not mentioned in the deed, nor could she be found in any historical records in relation to Frank Lewis or Joseph Brackett. The lot was vacant when Lewis purchased it; and a house had been built by 1927, but exactly when Lewis lived there between 1922 and 1930 is not known.

On June 25, 1923, Willie Brackett was granted a divorce in Culpeper County from Joseph Brackett on the grounds of desertion (Figure 8). According to the divorce certificate, Willie was living in Culpeper, and the last known whereabouts of Joseph was in Alexandria. Sometime in this same period Willie Mae Brackett married Wilmer B. Henry in Alexandria and gave birth to their first daughter Marie Elizabeth Henry in January 1924 (Fairfax, Virginia Birth Record, 1924, "Marie Henry"). Two more children followed, John Wilmer Henry in 1925, and Corrine Idella Henry in 1927 (Fairfax, Virginia Birth Record, 1925, "John Wilmer Henry"; Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912-2014, 1966, "Corrine Henry"). The Henrys resided in the Seminary neighborhood off King Street and N. Quaker Lane where Wilmer had grown up (1930 Federal Census, "Willie Henry"; Bah 2020). In the 1960s the Henrys became one of the first families to relocate to a new housing development nearby at Woods Place, significantly improving their circumstances (*Evening Star*, 1964c).

¹⁸ Neither Willie Mae, her older sister Rosa Carter Jackson, or her mother Sallie Carter can be found in the 1920 Federal Census which suggests that they may have been living together somewhere and were overlooked by the census taker.

¹⁹ The Brooks seem to have operated a halfway house of sorts for young girls in their home for many years (1920 Federal Census, "James M. Brook"; 1930 Federal Census, "James Brooks").

Form 50-3-24-22-20M.

2154 Commonwealth of Virginia *Culpeper* 23 *00110*

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
 RECORD OF A *Absolute* DIVORCE GRANTED

Bed and Board, or Absolute

Date of Decree *June 25-1923*

Plaintiff *Brackett, Willie*

Residence *Culpeper Co. Va.* Age *32* Colored

Birthplace *Culpeper Co. Va.* Occupation *Servant*

Defendant *Brackett, Joseph*

Residence *Alexandria Va. (Last known address)* Age *34* Colored

Birthplace *Culpeper Co. Va.* Occupation

Date of Marriage *Sept. 17-1913* Place *Culpeper Co. Va.*

Sex of Plaintiff *Female* Time Lived Together *3 yrs.*

Cause *Desertion*

Number of Children *N.R.* Duration of Marriage *10 yrs.*
 (Time from date of Marriage to date of Decree)

Clerk of *C. J. Young*
Culpeper Co.

Send only Divorces from Bed and Board and
 Divorces from Bond of Matrimony

Figure 8. Divorce Decree between Willie Brackett and Joseph Brackett, 1923.

The records indicate that Frank Lewis and Willie Henry probably shared the custody of their two children by the mid-1920s, if not earlier. According to the 1930 Federal census, teenager Joseph Lewis Brackett lived with his father, and Magdalene lived with her mother (1930 Federal Census, "Joseph Lewes"; "Maggie Lewis"). Frank Lewis and his son Joseph, however, were not living at The Fort in 1930, but occupied a second property, this one located on Leesburg Pike near Baileys Crossroads in Falls Church and valued at \$2,500. Both father and son worked at a nearby high school, Frank as a cook and Joseph as a laborer (1930 Federal Census, "Frank Lewis"). Based on an interpretation of census records, Lewis rented his property at The Fort to Ben and Ella Scarborough and their two daughters for \$20 per month (1930 Federal Census, "Ben Scarborough"). Meanwhile, Willie Mae and Wilmer Henry, their three young children, and Willie's daughter Magdalene continued to live on Johnson's Lane in the Seminary neighborhood (1930 Federal Census, "Willie Henry"). In fact, at no point in time did the Henry family reside at The Fort or live on the Frank Lewis property, although they worshipped at the Oakland Baptist Church in Alexandria, and generations of family members lived in the Seminary neighborhood.

On February 3, 1927, Frank Lewis was involved in an automobile accident in Washington, D.C. that was serious enough that he received a possible skull fracture (*Washington Times* 1927; *Evening Star* 1927). The car that Lewis was driving collided with another vehicle at

the intersection of Fourteenth and T Street, NW. Aside from two newspaper blurbs, no other information has been found regarding this incident.

On the evening of September 14, 1932, a police officer shot and killed Frank Lewis at his Baileys Crossroads home. According to newspaper reports, in the late afternoon an unknown assailant had shot at Frank Lewis, and he had sought medical treatment for two minor flesh wounds at the Alexandria Hospital. Several hours later Officer Charles (Carroll) B. Runyon and Deputy Sheriff John Dowden arrived at Lewis's house to investigate the incident. Although Lewis presumably was the victim of a crime, not the perpetrator, under peculiar circumstances, Officer Runyon shot Lewis in the abdomen which killed him immediately (*Washington Post*, 1932a; *Evening Star*, 1932; *Washington Times*, 1932a; *Washington Post*, 1932b).

Runyon's explanation of what happened never was made clear. The facts that remained constant was that Lewis was shot outside in his yard, that a gun near his body had not been discharged, and that the other officer was inside the house at the moment of the shooting talking to Lewis's teenage son Joseph. Runyon first said he shot his gun in the air to frighten Lewis out of his hiding place in some bushes. Then he later admitted he shot at Lewis who supposedly was crouched in some bushes holding a gun (*Washington Post*, 1932a; *Evening Star*, 1932; *Washington Times*, 1932a; *Washington Post*, 1932b).

Fairfax Coroner C.A. Ransom performed the autopsy of Frank Lewis on September 17, 1932 (Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912-2014, "Frank Lewis," 1932). Someone had written on the back of Lewis's death certificate, "Was this accidental, suicidal, or homicidal?" Below that, in Ransom's script, he wrote, "Homicidal (shot by officer)" and issued a warrant charging Runyon with manslaughter (*Washington Post*, 1932a; *Evening Star*, 1932). Two days later a grand jury heard the case against Runyon (*Washington Post*, 1932b). The next day the *Washington Post* reported that the grand jury "ignored" the charges against Runyon and dismissed the case (*Washington Times*, 1932b; *Washington Post* 1932c). According to his death certificate, Frank Lewis was buried at the "Seminary," but his exact location is unknown (Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1912-2014, "Frank Lewis," 1932).

This was not the first time that Constable Runyon had been involved in a questionable death while on duty. In October 1931, near Dunn Loring, Virginia, Runyon was present when Melvin Stevens was shot while a group of men searched for a neighborhood sniper. The coroner determined that Stevens had been shot in the head accidentally at close range by one of the men in the search party, (a group that included the only law officer, Constable Ben Runyon²⁰), but none of the men admitted to the accident, continuing to claim that Stevens had been shot from a distance. However, the firearm that killed Stevens was a shotgun, which would have been lethal to that degree only from close range. Runyon was carrying his service revolver, so it is unlikely that he was the one that shot Stevens, but he likely knew who had (*Evening Star*, 1931a, 1931b, 1931c; *Washington Post*, 1931).

Three years after Frank Lewis was killed, his son and daughter sold the property at The Fort to John and Ella Peters for \$125.50 (Fairfax County Deed R-11:558-559, 1935; Z-11:315-316, 1935). Each of the siblings owned a one-half interest in the property. To formally establish

²⁰ Runyon sometimes used his middle name Benjamin rather than Charles or Carroll.

their ages and identities, their mother Willie Mae Henry testified that Joseph Lewis was 23 years of age, and that Magdalene Lewis was 21 years of age, explaining that their birth certificates had been destroyed in a fire around 1930 (Affidavit, Willie Lewis Henry, 1935) (Table 5). Rather remarkably, brother and sister Joseph and Magdalene had gotten married on the same day, November 7, 1933, in Arlington, Virginia, to two other siblings, Norris and Lloyd Whiting (Arlington County Marriage Register, 1933, “Joseph Lewis” and “Madeline Lewis”).

Table 5. Genealogy of Joseph Brackett [Frank Lewis] family.

	Children	Birth & Death Dates	Spouse (marriage)
Joseph Brackett (Frank Lewis)		(1891-1932)	1. Willie Mae Carter (1913-1923) 2. Leaner (1920)
	Joseph Lewis Brackett	(1913-1985)	1. Norris Whiting (1933-ca. 1940) 2. Mary Magdalene Day (1946-1977) 3. Mary Davis Barnes (1980-1985)
	Magdalene Lewis Whiting	(1914-1954)	Lloyd Whiting (1933-ca. 1940)

The marriage between Joseph Lewis Brackett and Norris Whiting did not last long. By 1940, Joseph was boarding with the Day family in Arlington, under his father’s name Frank Lewis, no less (1940 Federal Census, “Frank Lewis”). Norris Whiting would continue to live in the area, mostly in Washington D.C. and never remarried (1950 Federal Census, “Norris Whiting”). Joseph Lewis Brackett would later marry Mary Magdalene Day, initially crossing paths with her perhaps while rooming with the Day family in 1940 (Certificate of Marriage, 1946, “Joseph Brackette” “M. Magdalene Daye”).

Joseph Lewis Brackett entered the armed services in 1943, served in the signal corps, and was discharged in November 1945 (World War II Hospital Admission, 1945, “Joseph Brackette”). By 1950 he was living with his second wife Mary M. Brackette and working as a maintenance man for an apartment complex on Bashford Lane in Alexandria (1950 Federal Census, “Joseph Brackette”). Rather remarkably, between 1956 and 1960, Joseph Brackette lived at 4421 W. Braddock Road in one of the rental properties belonging to the Peters family (see Figure 7) (Drembus and Cartwright 2009). Towards the end of his life, Brackette divorced Mary Magdalene in 1977, and subsequently married Mary Davis Barnes in 1980 (Report of Divorce, 1977, “Joseph Brackette”; Marriage Return, 1980, “Joseph Brackette”). When Joseph Lewis Brackett died in 1985, he was buried at Quantico National Cemetery (Virginia, U.S., Death Records, 1985, “Joseph Lewis Brackett”).

After marrying Lloyd Whiting in 1933, Joseph’s sister Magdalene Lewis Whiting gave birth to a son Lloyd in 1934 (Alexandria, Virginia Birth Record, “Lloyd Whiting”). Her marriage did not last long, although the date of divorce is not known. Magdalene continued to live in the area and remained a fixture in the Seminary neighborhood until she died suddenly in 1954 in Washington, D.C. (*Evening Star*, 1954). She was a member of Oakland Baptist Church in Alexandria and was buried in that church’s cemetery.

3. Archaeology at the Peters and Lewis Sites, Research Lots 32, 33, and 34

In 2012 Alexandria Archaeology conducted an archaeological survey of Fort Ward Park. Archaeologists excavated more than 1,200 shovel test holes at 30 ft. intervals, followed by the excavation of more than one-hundred test units and test trenches in areas of interest (Figure 9). This type of testing helps archaeologists identify the locations of buried features such as building foundations, as well as concentrations of artifacts that indicate the locations of habitation and activity sites. The work in 2012 identified 29 sites occupied or used by members of The Fort community within the boundaries of the park (Figure 10). The Peters and Lewis homesteads were two of the properties that were identified during the 2012 archaeological survey, as Resources 1, 2, and 29 (see Figure 10).

Based on an examination of historic maps and aerial photographs, archaeologists knew that the locations of the two main dwellings—the Peters and Lewis houses—had been graded away when the neighboring school built a bus loop in the 1970s (Figure 11). With the sites of both main dwellings no longer extant, testing focused on the identification of outbuildings, activity areas, and the yardscape to the north of the main houses. To get a sense of the layout of the yards, archaeologists consulted several historic aerial photographs that indicated the possible locations of a small number of auxiliary structures arrayed throughout the yards.

On a 1927 aerial photo, two possible structures may have stood on the Peters lot; one along its western boundary line (1927a), and another just off the north end of the property (1927b) (see Figures 4 and 11). The image is blurry and difficult to interpret, and ten years later a more detailed 1937 aerial photograph does not show a possible structure at either location (see Figures 3 and 11). However, the 1937 aerial photo does depict a possible outbuilding along the western boundary of the Peters lot (1937a), as well as a likely outbuilding just to the north of the Lewis house (1937b) (see Figures 3 and 11). In a 1949 aerial photo, there is no question that a small dwelling stands approximately 130 ft. to the north of the Peters house (see Figures 5 and 11). Thus, for the four other possible auxiliary buildings, we had a low level of confidence for the three on the Peters lot, with the likelihood that they depict trees or other anomalous landscape features, not structures. The outbuilding north of the Lewis house (1937b), however, appears to represent a structure that stood there for several decades.

The potential absence of auxiliary buildings on the Peters lot might be explained by the fact that the family owned more than a half dozen acres of land immediately to the west which included a complex of barns and likely farm buildings (see Figure 5). This may have allowed the Peters family to maintain the yard north of their house as open land, rather than cluttering it up with service buildings such as garages, barns, stables, or storage buildings.

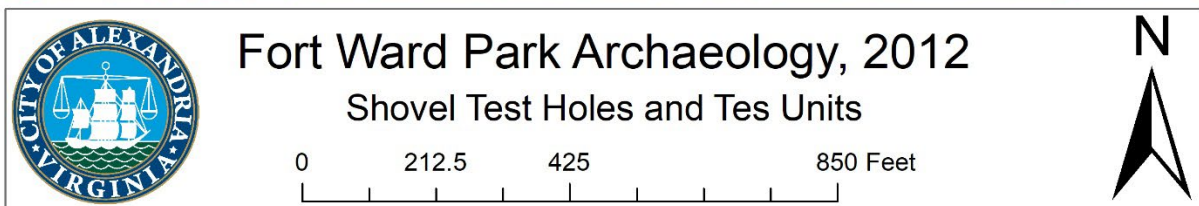


Figure 9. Locations of shovel test at Fort Ward Park during the 2012 survey.

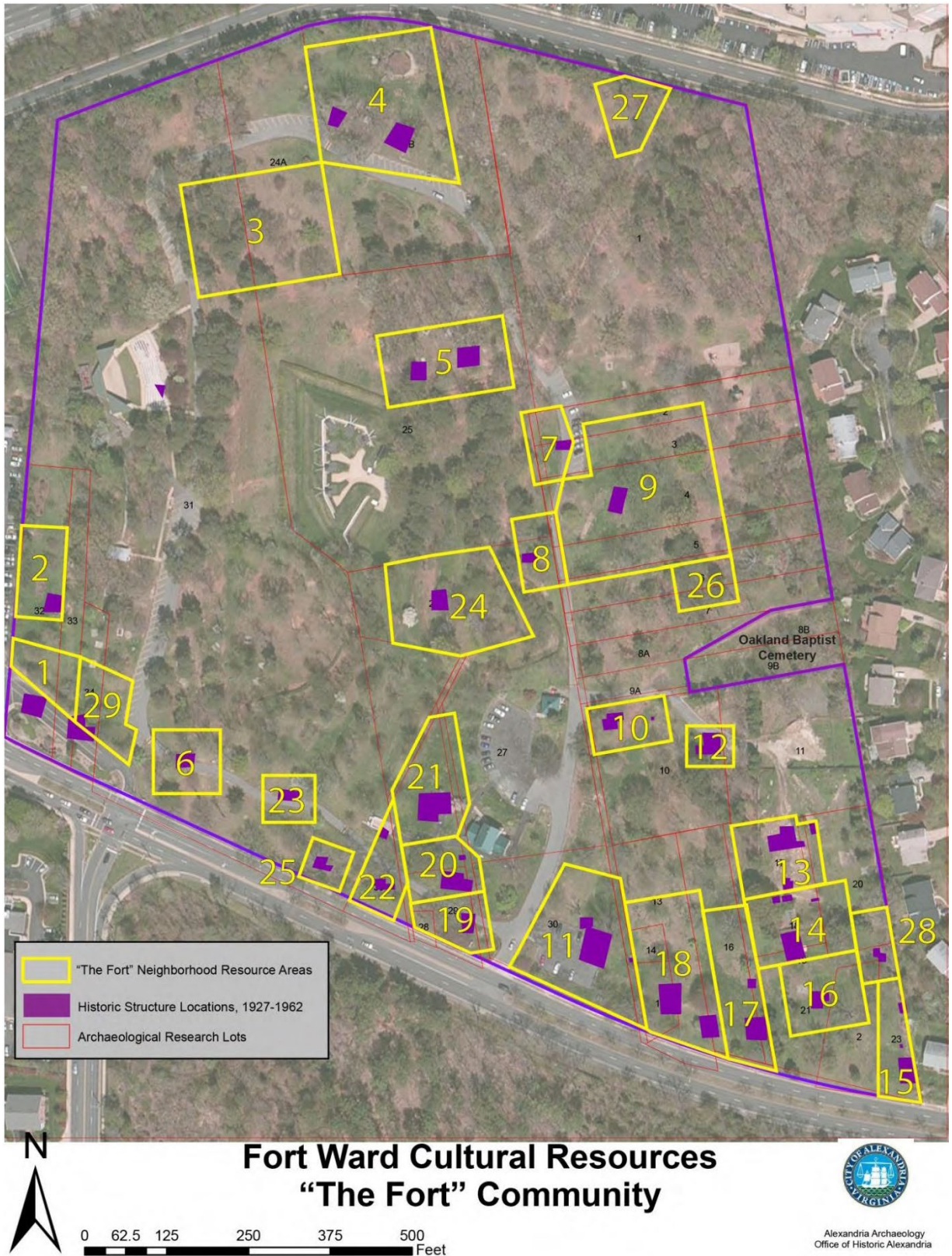


Figure 10. Map of identified Fort Community archaeological resources.

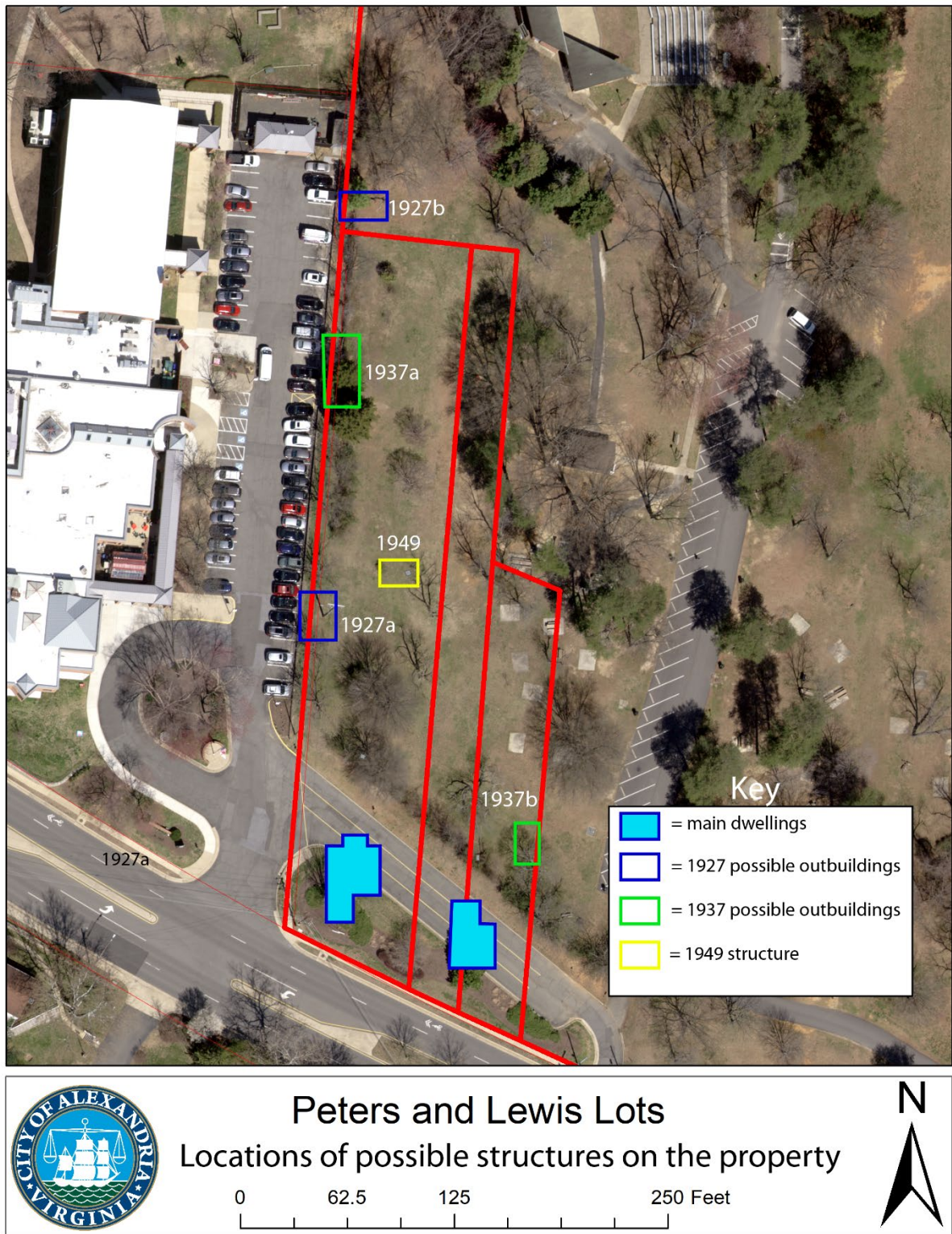


Figure 11. Locations of possible structures on the Peters and Lewis lots as derived from historic maps and aerial photographs.

A. Shovel Testing

Archaeologists excavated 105 shovel test holes at 30 ft. intervals within the bounds of the Peters and Lewis lots, as well as in the general vicinity of those lots, an area approximately 2 acres in size (87,120 square feet) (Figure 12). Eighty-eight of the shovel test holes produced a total of 664 artifacts (Table 6). Because of the setting, some of the artifacts date to park use after the Peters and Lewis families vacated the properties. By factoring out these intrusive artifacts from the totals (mainly coal and coal slag, plastic debris, and aluminum can fragments), there are 404 artifacts that could be attributed to historic activity; although no doubt some of these artifacts also pertain to park activity as well.

Table 6. Artifacts recovered from the shovel test holes at the Peters/Lewis Site.

Material	Count	Material	Count
Ceramic		Metal (continued)	
Ceramic, Earthenware	1	Iron Nail, wire (fragment)	32
Ceramic, Whiteware	33	Iron Spike (complete)	1
Ceramic, Porcelain	2	Iron, Misc. (fragment)	11
Ceramic, Yellow ware	1		
Ceramic, Stoneware	6	Miscellaneous	
		Bone (Animal)	7
Glass		Brick or Mortar (fragment)	47
Bottle (fragment)	108	Coal or Coal Slag (frag)	234
Container (fragment)	8	Drainpipe (fragment)	2
Cosmetic Jar (fragment)	1	Flowerpot (fragment)	7
Drinking Glass (fragment)	7	Mason Jar Lid liner (fragment)	2
Lamp Chimney (fragment)	11	Paving Stone (fragment)	1
Unidentified form (fragment)	26	Quartz (fragment)	1
Window Glass (fragment)	69	Shell (Oyster)	1
Metal		Plastic	
Aluminum Can (fragment)	9	General debris (fragment)	15
Copper alloy (fragment)	8		
Iron Hoop (fragment)	1	Wood	
Iron Horseshoe (complete)	1	Pencil	1
Iron Nail, cut (fragment)	9	Petrified Wood (fragment)	1

* Artifacts in yellow have been factored out of the analysis.

* Artifacts in teal are grouped as domestic artifacts.

* Artifacts in green are grouped as architectural artifacts.

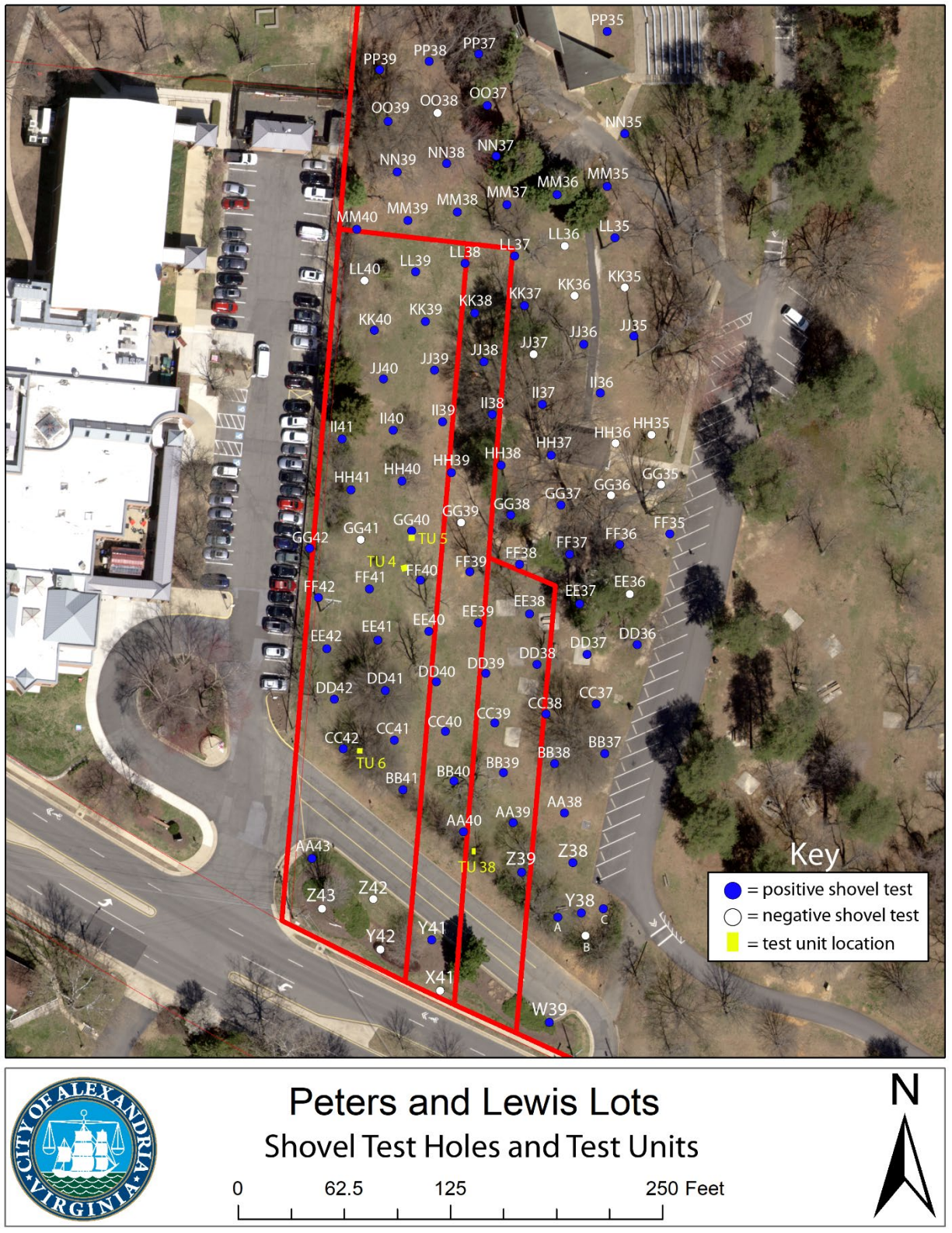


Figure 12. Locations of shovel test holes and test units at the Peters and Lewis lots.

Overall, the number of artifacts distributed across the project area is exceedingly sparse. The 404 artifacts recovered from shovel test holes within the approximately 2-acre (87,120 square feet) tested area amounts to an average of one artifact per 216 square feet of ground, hardly a wealth of data in relation to the space. Even when limiting the distribution quotient to the 237 artifacts recovered within the Peters and Lewis lots themselves (1.27 acres; 55,321 square feet), the distribution density is even lower at one artifact per 233 square feet. This lack of artifacts indicates that the families living on the two lots did not conduct intensive activities in the yard areas, at least activities that left an archaeological imprint.

Even with limited numbers, the distribution and concentration of certain types of artifacts can help to indicate places where different activities occurred. For example, a concentration of ceramic fragments may signify a location where domestic activities took place—cooking, eating, food preparation or storage. Container glass fragments—bottles, jars, and the like—also could indicate similar domestic activities; however, given the likelihood that park users have also used and broken glass bottles into the site is quite likely. Window glass, nails, and brick fragments in high concentrations can disclose the former locations of buildings.

Although based on a relatively low number of sherds ($n=43$), the distribution of ceramic sherds in shovel test holes indicates that most of them are concentrated in the original Peters lot, within an 80 ft. by 130 ft. area (Figure 13). Activity in the dwelling built on the back of the lot in the 1940s likely contributed to the ceramic assemblage, as well as debris that radiated out from the Peters' main house to the south. There is a light scatter of sherds to the north toward the amphitheater, but these do not appear to represent domestic activity, nor do the sherds concentrate around any of the possible outbuildings in that area (1927b or 1937a) (see Figure 13). Container glass has a similar distribution pattern as ceramics, but a wider range to the north, and to the east into the picnic area, as would be expected (Figure 14). There is also a small concentration of glass sherds in the southeast corner of the testing area, probably the result of a single broken bottle at that location (see Figure 14). The amount of container glass fragments in shovel test holes ($n=161$) far outpaces the ceramic sherds, which again is the likely result of much of it pertaining to park use and not the Peters or Lewis families.

Nails are sparse across the site ($n=42$), manifesting a small concentration to the south of the 1940s-era dwelling and possibly emanating from the possible outbuilding nearby (1927a) (Figure 15). One isolated test hole on the far north of the tested area produced 12 nails or nail fragments, probably associated with park-related construction activities. Window glass ($n=69$) formed a widespread area in the center of the testing area, mostly concentrated to the east of the restroom facilities and some of it in relation to the 1940s dwelling (Figure 16). On the other hand, almost all the brick fragments are concentrated in the yard behind the Peters and Lewis homes, but not in enough quantities to indicate the location of a masonry structure (Figure 17). None of the architectural materials indicate the location of a heretofore unknown outbuilding or structure, aside from the nails concentrated between a possible outbuilding (1927a) and the 1940s dwelling (see Figure 15).

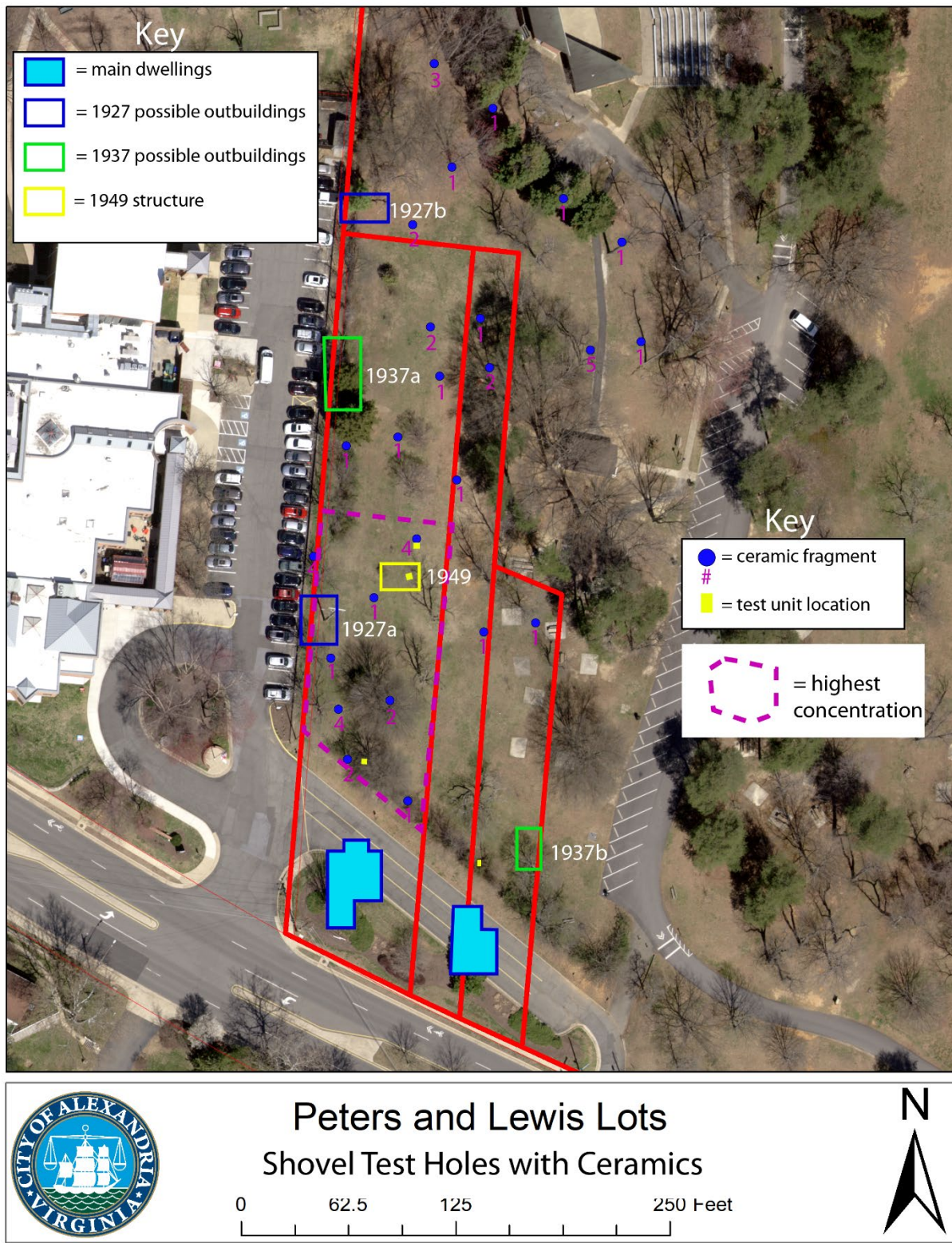


Figure 13. Distribution of ceramic sherds in shovel test holes.

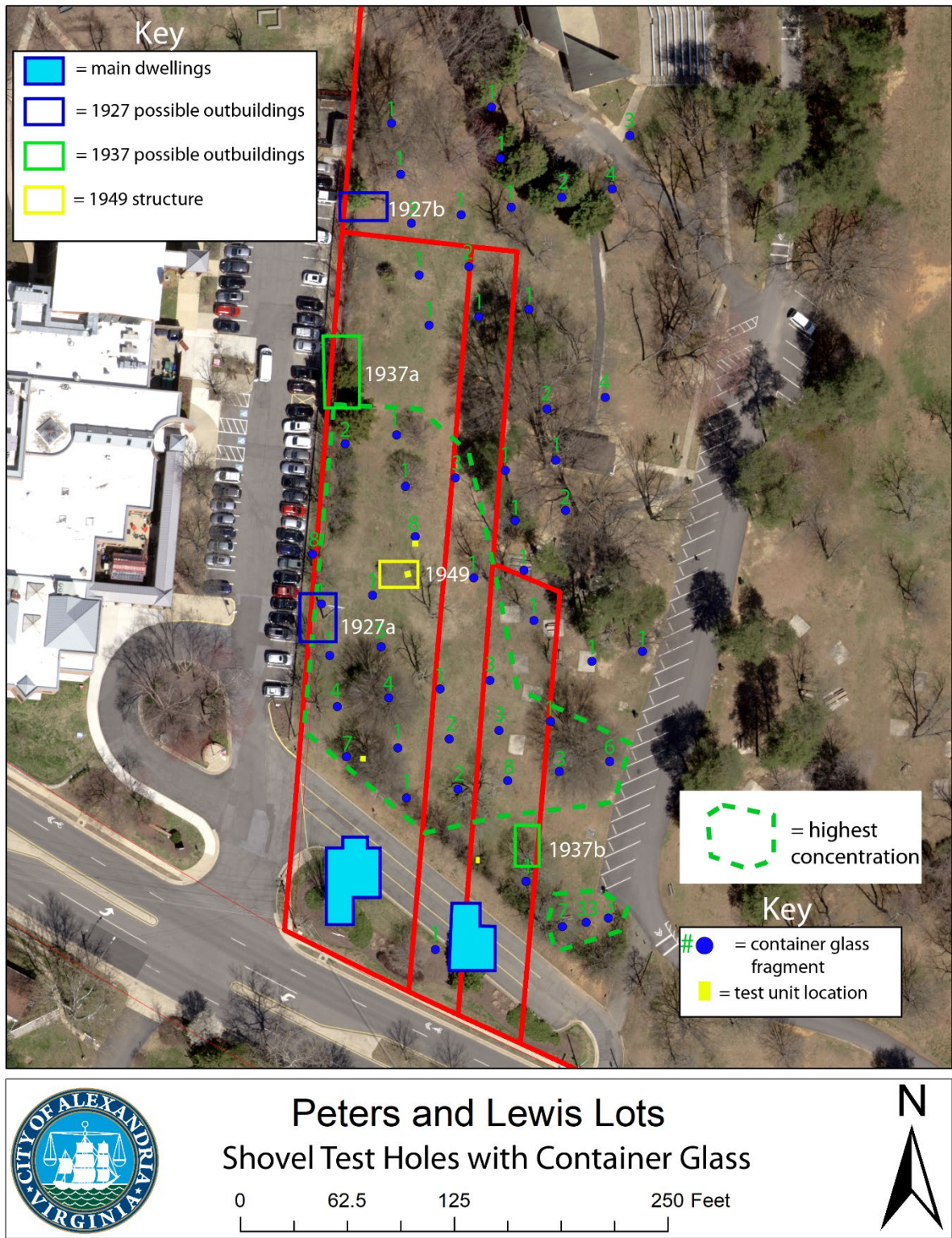


Figure 14. Distribution of container glass fragments in shovel test holes.

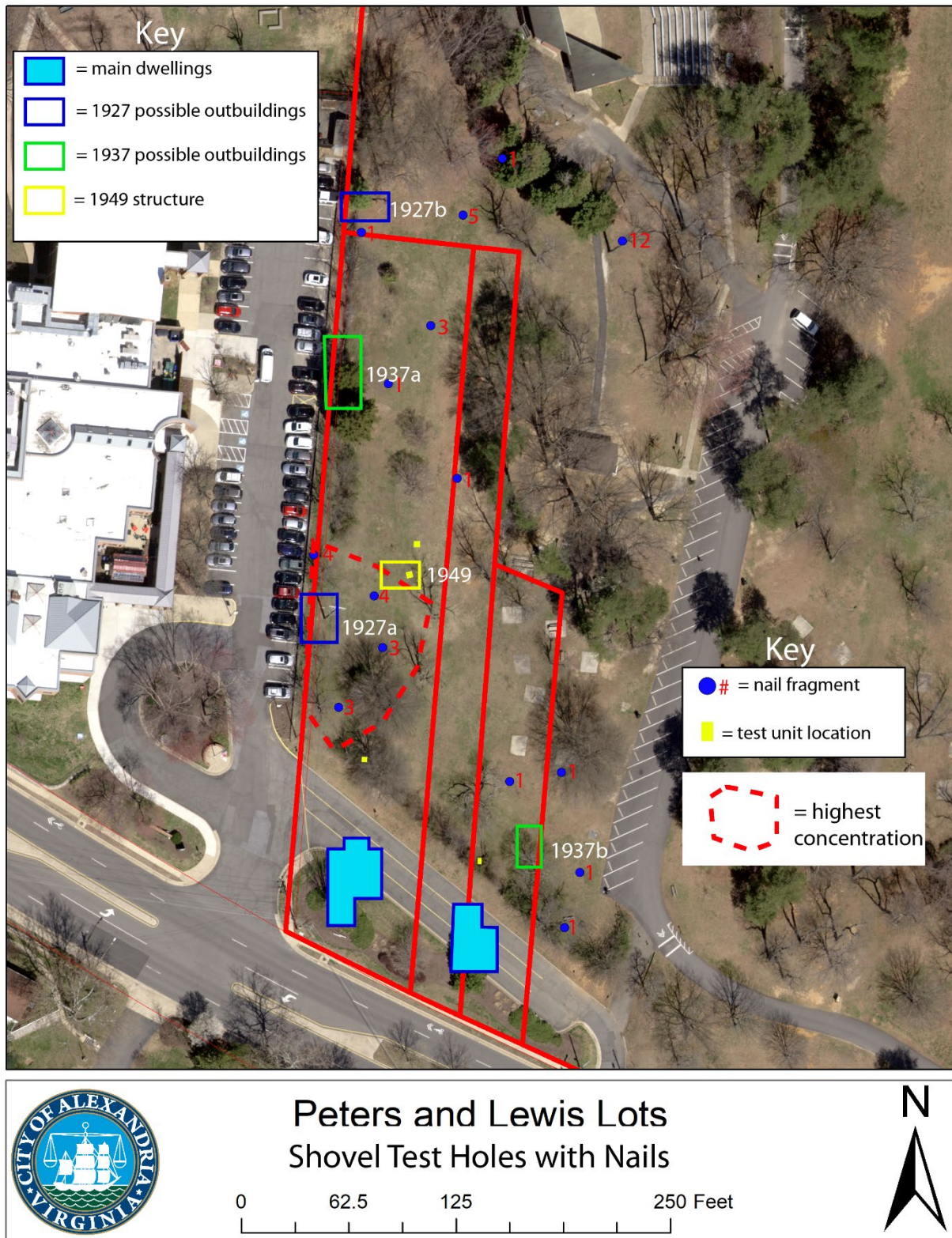


Figure 15. Distribution of nails and nail fragments in shovel test holes.

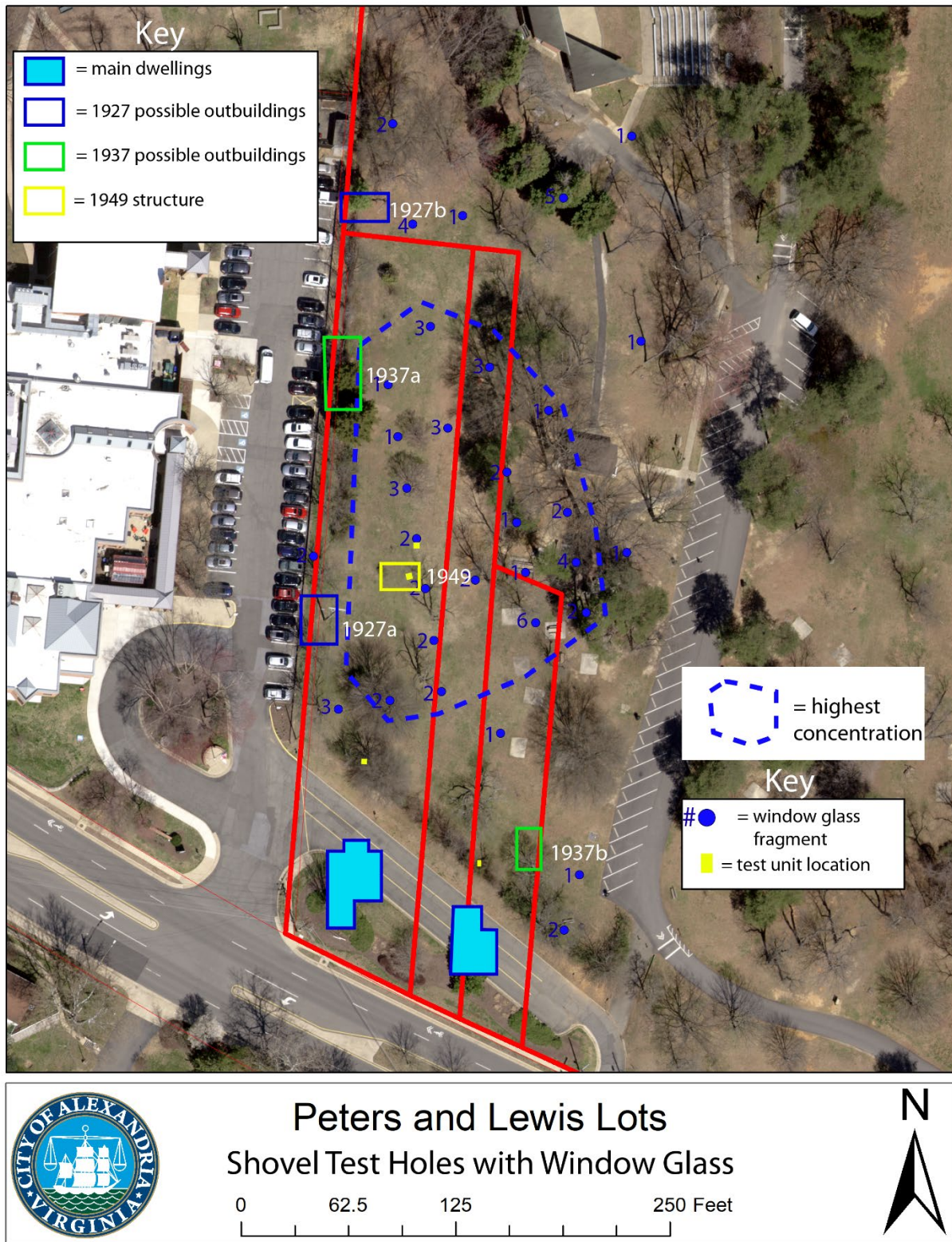


Figure 16. Distribution of window glass fragments in shovel test holes.

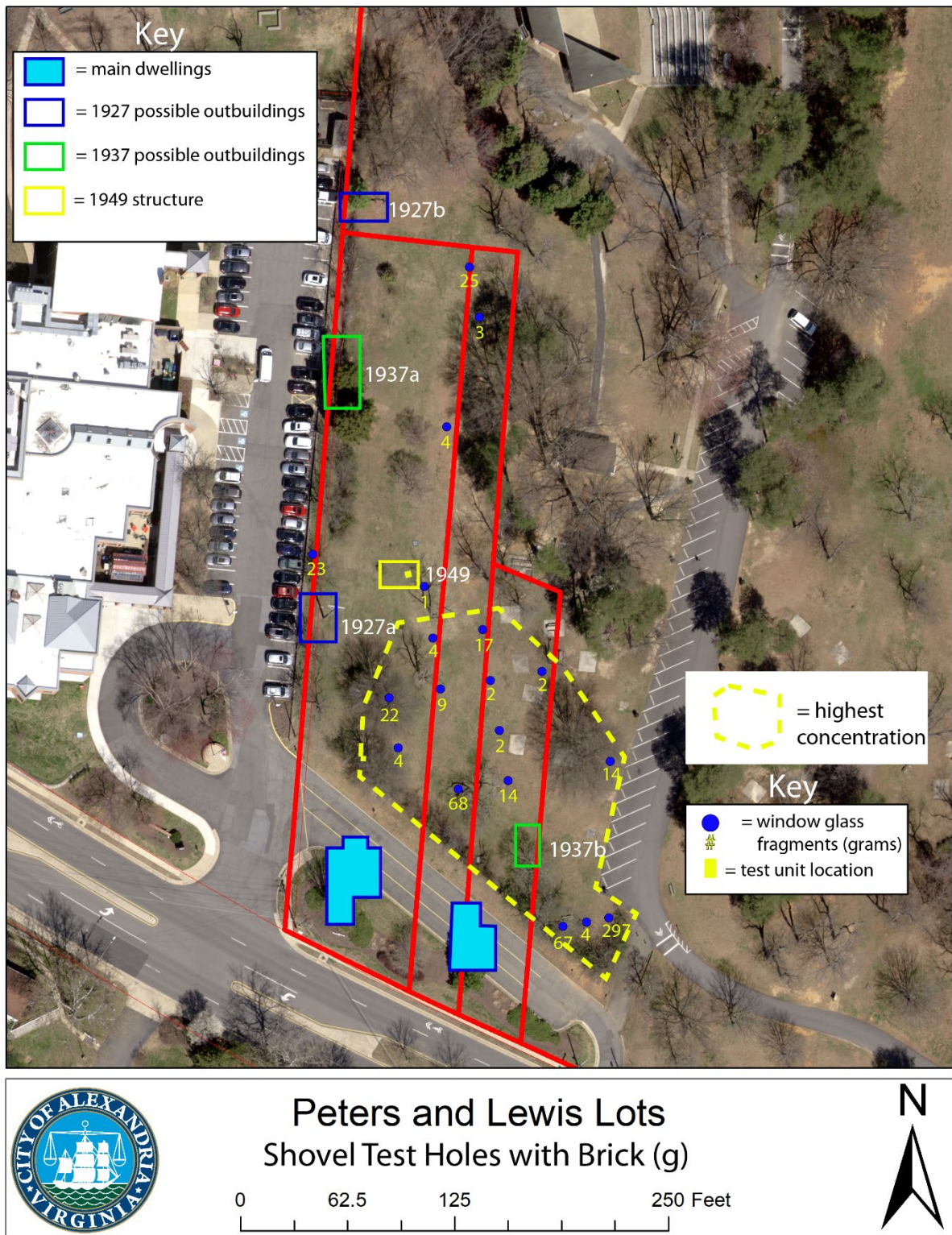


Figure 17. Distribution of brick as measured by weight (grams) in shovel test holes.

Based on the distribution of all the artifacts recovered from the 105 shovel test holes, the main concentration of historic materials spans the original Peters lot, some 90 ft. wide and 200 ft. from north to south (Figure 18). This area encompasses a yard space north of the primary Peters dwelling, and an area surrounding the location of a small dwelling that stood on the property from the 1940s to ca. 1960. This area should be considered a significant archaeological site and any proposed activities that might compromise the integrity of this area should be reviewed by Alexandria Archaeology.



Figure 18. Main artifact concentrations as defined by shovel testing.

Although the areas outside of the main artifact concentration were put to use over the years by the various residents who occupied the lots, the archaeological footprint they left behind does not denote particular outbuildings or activity areas there. The archaeological record in these areas is further complicated by the picnic area and restroom facilities located nearby. Historic maps and aerial photographs do reveal the likelihood of an auxiliary building to the north of the Lewis house (1937b) (see Figure 18). Although relatively few artifacts appear to be associated with this building, we believe the historic aerial photos provide enough contextual information to categorize the immediate area around the building as archaeologically sensitive. Any proposed activities that might compromise the integrity of this area should be reviewed by Alexandria Archaeology

B. Test Units

Archaeologists excavated four test units within the bounds of the Peters and Lewis lots (see Figure 12). Two of the units (Test Units 4 and 5) were placed in proximity to the backyard dwelling built in the 1940s. Archaeologists placed Test Unit 6 in the yard behind where the Peters dwelling once stood, whereas they positioned Test Unit 38 in a similar fashion in the yard behind the former location of the Lewis dwelling.

The four test units generated 1,054 artifacts (Table 7 and Table 8). As is common for domestic sites, the artifact assemblage is dominated by container glass fragments (n=195), iron nails (n=557), and to a lesser degree with brick fragments (n=43), coal and coal slag debris (n=81), and ceramic sherds (n=27) of various types (see Table 8). The container glass fragments, and the iron nails and nail fragments comprise most of the assemblage from the test units (n=71%). And ceramics are noticeably absent from the collection, accounting for only 2% of the assemblage.

Table 7. Total artifacts recovered from test units, per test unit.

Test Unit	Layer A	Layer B	Layer C	Total
4		67	54	121
5	97	125		222
6	632	61		693
38		18		18
Total	729	271	54	1054

Table 8. Total artifacts recovered from test units, type of material.

Material Type	Count	Material Type	Count
Aluminum	1	Glass	266
Bone	7	Iron	606
Brass	1	Mortar	1
Brick	43	Plastic	6
Clay Tobacco Pipe Fragment	1	Porcelain	5

Material Type	Count	Material Type	Count
Coal/Slag	81	Quartz	1
Coarseware	1	Shale	1
Copper	1	Shell	9
Drainpipe	1	Stoneware	2
Earthenware	19	Zinc	1
		TOTAL	1054

B1. Test Units 4 and 5

Test Units 4 and 5 were situated in close proximity to the likely location of the 1940s dwelling in the backyard (see Figure 12). The artifacts recovered from these two units represent the use and activity that took place in that building. Together the two units produced 343 artifacts, with the materials manifesting all the hallmarks of domestic activity—container glass (n=123), brick (n=29), coal (n=58), nails (n=23), and ceramic sherds (n=22). In fact, most of the ceramics from the four test units (n=27) were from these two units (n=22), again strongly supporting the presence of domestic activity.

No subsurface features were encountered in the two test units. The soil stratigraphy was similar in both units: a topsoil root mat (Layer A), a shallow pale clay loam (Layer B), and a yellowish tan compacted clay loam (Layer C). Layer D was a clay transition stratum that blended into a subsoil clay layer at a depth of 1.5 ft. below the surface. Layer D produced no artifacts (Plate 1).

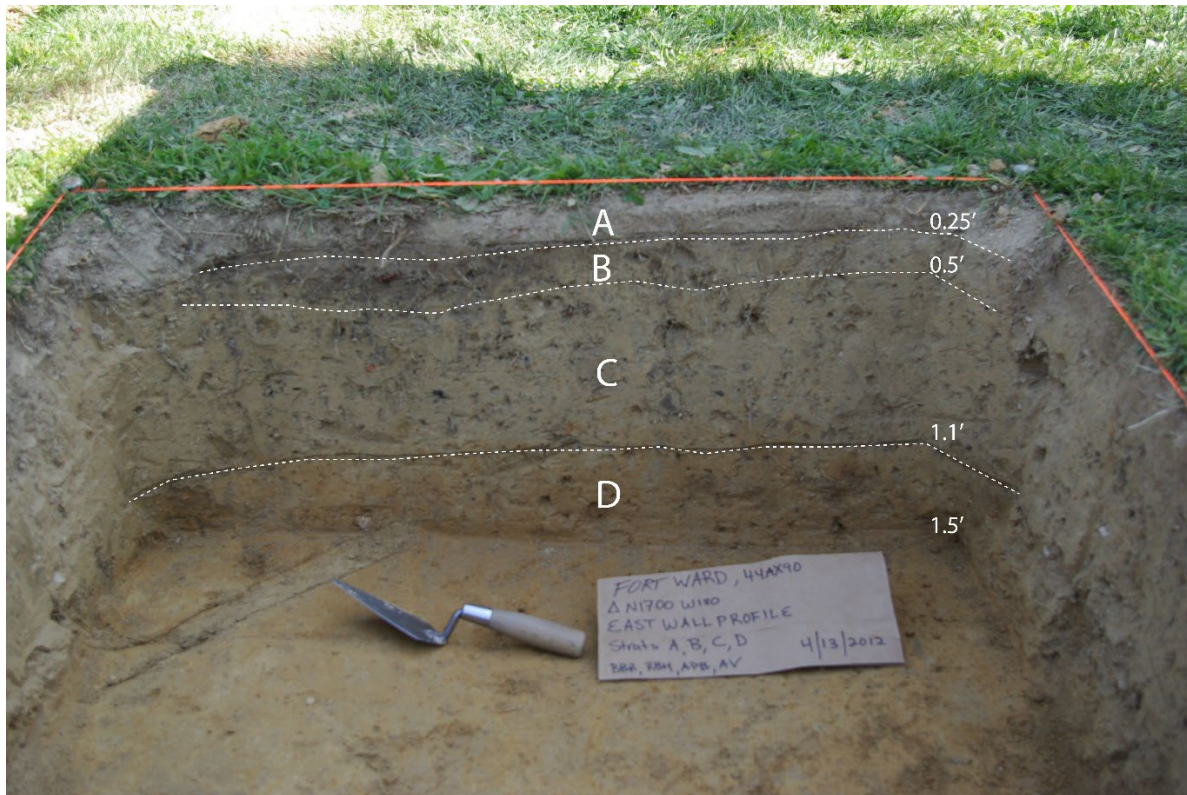


Plate 1. Side wall profile of Test Unit 4, facing east.

Test Unit 6

Archaeologists placed Test Unit 6 in the yard to the north of where the Peters house once stood to assess the yard behind the house (see Figure 12). The unit produced more than half of the artifacts from all of the four test units ($n=694$), with the vast majority of those being nail and nail fragments ($n=534$), and amongst those, 260 complete wire nails and 11 wood screws. The preponderance of wire nails and screws (all in the uppermost level, Layer A), particularly handfuls of clenched wire nails, suggests that they had been removed and collected at this spot, perhaps when one of the buildings was dismantled. Aside from the nails and screws in Layer A, the assemblage consisted of container glass fragments ($n=57$), and a small number of other materials such as brick ($n=14$), coal/slag ($n=22$), miscellaneous iron debris ($n=18$), and a very modest number of ceramic sherds ($n=5$). Indeed, the near absence of ceramics in this unit reiterates that this portion of the site did not experience domestic activity to any significant degree. The soil stratigraphy in Unit 6 consisted of three layers of clay loam that extended to a depth of 1.1 ft. below grade.

At the interface between Layers A and B in Test Unit 6, archaeologists noted a circular-shaped possible posthole feature, approximately 1.2' in diameter, and designated it as Feature 1. A bisection of Feature 1 proved it to be nothing more than a shallow hole, possibly a former tree hole (Plate 2). The possible feature also yielded a small number of nondescript artifacts ($n=11$).



Plate 2. View of Feature 1 in Unit 6, bisected, facing south.

At the interface between Layer B and C, archaeologists noted a concentration of burned brick bits (n=74) intermixed with charcoal and other potentially charred material (Plate 3). The feature did not have any edges to speak of but appeared as a difference of color and texture in the soil, suggesting that an episode of burning had occurred here. After troweling it down approximately 0.2 ft. in depth, the evidence of burning disappeared, and the area blended with the surrounding soil.



Plate 3. View of Feature 2 in Test Unit 6, an area of burned and crushed brick bits mixed with charcoal.

4. Summary

James and Ella Peters lived at The Fort for approximately half a century (ca. 1910-1960). Together they raised seven children who gradually moved off to pursue their own lives, some remaining in the local area, others moving out of state. The Peters lived at a time when segregation, white supremacy, and racism were the norm in Alexandria. Yet, by virtue of hard work, talent, and perseverance, James and Ella Peters acquired land at The Fort and literally created their own small enclave of homes that they rented out to African Americans. When the Peters sold the last remnants of their property at The Fort in 1960 to the City of Alexandria, they did so reluctantly, surely recognizing that it was an end to an era for the neighborhood.

Frank Lewis (Joseph Brackett) and his family's connection with The Fort neighborhood is considerably more tenuous than the Peters. When Lewis purchased his small lot in 1922, he may have had designs of settling at The Fort permanently. Although he had a house built on the

lot and may have occupied it for several years in the latter 1920s, by 1930 he was living elsewhere, and no other Lewis family members resided there after 1930 either. By 1935 the Peters owned the property, and records indicate that the Bethea family lived in the Lewis house from ca. 1940 to 1958. Therefore, the Bethea family left the most enduring archaeological imprint on this property, as it served as their home for nearly two decades.

Archaeologists were aware during the archaeological survey in 2012 that the footprints of the Peters and Lewis houses had been obliterated. Therefore, only the yard areas to the north of each house remained in place. The archaeological findings confirm that the yard spaces remain intact, although park uses have introduced additional artifacts into the archaeological record in this area, including bottle glass, charcoal, and other sundry materials. After winnowing out those artifacts that are likely related to park activity, the shovel testing survey produced 404 artifacts within a tested area of approximately 2 acres (87,120 square feet), meaning artifact density in this area is quite low at a rate of one artifact per 215 square feet. The distribution within the lots themselves is equally as low. Evidently, the Peters and other families who occupied these lots did not intensively use the yard areas; or if they did, the activities did not leave much of an archaeological imprint.

However, the findings from the shovel test holes and the four test units did confirm that a small dwelling stood on the main Peters lot, built sometime in the 1940s and occupied up until 1960. Moreover, in the southernmost sections of the lots (nearest to where the houses once stood) the number of artifacts does increase, as would be expected as material radiated out from the dwellings. Based on the archaeological findings, an area some 90 ft. by 200 ft. in size encompassing much of the main Peters lot and the location of a small dwelling should continue to be protected from ground disturbing undertakings. Furthermore, the likely presence of a small outbuilding located to the north of the Lewis house merits protection as well (see Figure 18).

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