

PUBLIC SUMMARY

Archaeological Evaluation and Resource Management Plan for Episcopal High School Faculty Housing, 1200 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria, Virginia (44AX200)

John Milner Associates, Inc. (JMA), was retained by Episcopal High School to conduct an archeological investigation on a 0.67-acre (.27 hectare) area on its campus prior to construction of new faculty housing. The investigation consisted of limited background research, a shovel test survey, and a metal detector survey. The Phase I investigation identified archeological Site 44AX200 that consists of a scatter of Civil War artifacts associated with a camp, but earlier and later artifacts are also present.



Shovel testing

Forty-six shovel tests were excavated within the project area. The location of the proposed residences and associated parking area is disturbed. The natural soil sequence along the existing driveway is also disturbed.

Site 44AX200 is a multi-component historic site dating from the eighteenth- through early twentieth-centuries. The most intensive occupation was during the Civil War, when the site was part of the larger Federal encampment in the vicinity of the Virginia Theological Seminary. Several

relic-hunters, when interviewed, reported searching the project area and vicinity in the past, but recollect only finding artifacts in the near vicinity of the new residences. The Phase I investigation confirms this observation.

Unknown units of the Federal Army camped on the high school grounds. This occupation resulted in a sparse scatter of Civil War artifacts across the landscape. The occupation was present in the area where the proposed residences are to be located, but only in one small area. The camp was most likely a summer camp, where the soldiers lived in tents. No features were found that would have suggested a winter encampment. Plowing throughout the nineteenth and possibly into the early twentieth century has resulted in a lack of site integrity. Artifacts dating throughout the occupation are mixed in a plowzone. Because Site 44FX200 lacks stratigraphic integrity and intra-site patterning could not be identified, this site is not considered eligible to the National Register of Historical Places.



Metal detection.

At 2:00 a.m. on May 24, 1861, eight Federal regiments crossed the Potomac River and took up positions in Virginia. During the initial occupation of Virginia, Alexandria was brought into national attention when it was learned that James W. Jackson, a citizen of Fairfax County, and Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, United States Army, had been killed after Ellsworth removed a secessionist flag hoisted above the Marshall House, owned by Jackson. Each man became a martyr for his cause: Ellsworth died suppressing rebellion, and Jackson died defending his private property and the flag of his new country. Jackson was the first civilian Confederate casualty of the war.

Alexandria was recognized for its important role in regional transportation. The roundhouse and yards of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad (O&A) were located in Alexandria's west end. Federal authorities recognized the strategic value of the O&A Railroad for supporting a Federal advance on Richmond. The line traversed Fairfax County on its way from Alexandria to Manassas Junction; controlling this line became of paramount importance.

Initially, Federal troops occupied Arlington Heights and the City of Alexandria and began erecting fortifications to defend Washington. The Federal Army would stay for the remainder of the war. The Civil War had a tremendous impact on Alexandria and vicinity. These impacts were especially felt on the west side of the city in the vicinity of the Theological Seminary.

The Virginia Theological Seminary was approved by the general convention of the Episcopal Church in 1817. It was established in 1823 at St. Paul's Church in Alexandria, but soon moved to a house at the corner of King and Washington Streets because of the increase in enrollment to 14 students. By 1827, the need for more space dictated a move to a newly acquired 59-acre parcel located approximately three miles west of what was Old Alexandria. The first

buildings were constructed on the new seminary grounds between 1827 and 1835. This land was partially cleared, had some forest and meadow, and included a brick house and outbuildings, and another house. After the Seminary purchased the land, these houses became the faculty residences. In 1839, the Seminary purchased a 100-acre parcel of land from William Alexander and his wife. This land is where the Protestant Episcopal High School was built.



Episcopal High School button.

The Seminary's faculty was from the north and financial support came from both the north and the south. During the 1860-1861 semester, half of the student body was from the north; these students left the Seminary to return to their homes and join the Union Army. Only one professor and seven students remained. Finances became a serious problem, and the remaining professor and students left the campus. Classes were conducted at a professor's home in Staunton, Virginia, from 1862 until the war ended.

In June 1861, the campus and buildings of the Seminary and the high school were commandeered for a hospital and campground for Federal troops. Tent camps were set up, and barracks and other buildings were erected on the Seminary grounds. Seminary buildings and professors'

houses were broken into, property stolen, and a great deal of damage inflicted.

The Seminary was occupied by the troops of Kearny's Division in autumn of 1861 through the winter of 1862. Other troops using the Seminary grounds included the 8th and 19th Maine, and the 121st, 137th, and 186th Pennsylvania. Fort Ward is located just to the north of the Seminary, and Fort Worth is just to the south. A series of infantry trenches and field artillery positions, west of the Seminary, connected the two forts.



Minié ball.

Site 44AX200, dating to the eighteenth-through early twentieth-centuries, measures approximately 325-by-75 ft., but the east, north, and west boundaries are not clearly identified. The Civil War component is likely to extend further in these directions. The most intensive occupation was during the Civil War, when the site was part of the larger Federal encampment in the vicinity of the Theological Seminary. Several relic hunters were interviewed and report searching the project area and vicinity in the past.

The Federal units occupying the site are unknown, but this occupation resulted in a sparse scatter of Civil War artifacts across the landscape. Artifacts dating to early periods were also found, but along with artifacts associated with the Episcopal High School, these artifacts are interpreted as the result of the accidental loss or field scatter

(disposal of trash in agricultural fields), but not occupations.

The subsurface testing and metal detection recovered 130 artifacts. The pre-Civil War occupation is represented by a 1774 Virginia halfpenny. Presumably, this artifact is associated with an as yet unidentified eighteenth-century occupation or with the ca. 1805-1839 Elizabeth Parke Custis Law tenure.

Civil War ammunition included .64 caliber round balls, .577/.58 caliber Minié balls, and various pistol bullets. Additionally, one .58 caliber Williams Type I cleaner was found.

During the war, three types of Williams's bullets were made. Their intended function was to remove powder residuals from the rifle bore before the gun became fouled. Civil War ballistic tests indicated that the Williams bullets were efficient in keeping the bore clean and were as accurate as the standard issue projectile. It is not clear if the Williams bullets Types I-III carry chronological implications other than the introduction of Type III in 1863. The Williams cleaner found at 44AX200 is a Type I. This version of the Williams cleaner has a nipple/plug on its base which held a zinc washer. Upon firing, the intent was that the explosion would force the expansion of the zinc washer, in effect scouring out the rifle barrel.



1774 Virginia halfpenny.

Packages of ammunition contained 10 rounds each. Until 1864, Union-made packages included one or more Williams Type bullets. Initially, the ratio was 1 to 9, but by 1863 it had increased to 3 to 7. The paper used as wrappers for cartridges containing Williams bullets was sometimes dyed red or blue in order to make the “cleaners” more readily identifiable



Minié ball, William’s cleaner, and round balls

Minié balls were also found. These .577/.58 caliber projectiles were used in rifle muskets. The rifle musket is a shoulder arm approximately 56 inches long, muzzle-loaded, and primed by a percussion cap. The rifle musket was highly accurate, due to a manufacturing process whereby evenly spaced spiral grooves were cut into the rifle bore. When fired, the grooves would cause the projectile to spin, resulting in a truer flight to the target. The Civil War and the decade preceding it saw the development and eventual abandonment of the rifle musket. By the end of the Civil War, advances in breech-loading weapons and metallic cartridges enabled faster loading speeds and essentially rendered the use of the rifle musket obsolete.

The .64 caliber round balls would have been used in Model 1842, .69 caliber, smooth-bore muskets. The use of a ball of a smaller caliber than the bore was needed, because the ball was wrapped in a cloth to facilitate loading and to reduce windage (space between the bullet and the barrel) when the gun was fired. Because of these factors, smooth-bore muskets were not accurate.

The Model 1842 musket was produced at the Springfield, Massachusetts, and Harpers Ferry, Virginia, Federal armories; it was the standard gun used by the military between 1844 and 1855 and was the first to use a percussion cap system. A large number were kept by state militia units. Although these weapons were common throughout the war, they saw extensive use in 1861 and 1862. At the battle of Gettysburg, at least eight Federal regiments were still armed with smooth-bore muskets.



Cone protectors.

Two types of rifle muskets were issued in greater numbers than any other. The United States Model 1855/1861 .58 caliber rifle musket and the British Model 1853 .577 caliber Enfield rifle musket were the most

common shoulder arms used during the war. The Model 1855 rifle musket was also manufactured at the Federal armories at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and Springfield, Massachusetts. From adoption until 1865, the Springfield armory and 20 government subcontractors produced over 700,000 Model 1861 rifle-muskets.



Watch key.

Both the North and the South were active importers of firearms during the Civil War. Arms dealers in Great Britain were principal players in the arms trade and they supplied an estimated 900,000 pattern 1853 Enfield .577 caliber rifle muskets to the combatants. The arms were copies of the standard issue English infantry weapon; however, independent arms manufacturers supplied the Enfield rifles exported to North America. The Enfield Model 1853 was attractive, because the gun used the same ammunition as the American-made .58-caliber rifle musket. The slight difference in bore diameters of each weapon, less than .003 caliber, was not considered a hindrance.

Concomitant with the development of the rifle musket were advances in the projectiles shot from them. In order for the projectile to fly true, there could be no windage within the gun. If the projectile does not fit into the bore tightly, the bullet will move through the gun bore unevenly, resulting in an inaccurate trajectory. In 1849, French military officer Captain Claude Minié developed a cylindro-conical (i.e. cylinder topped by a cone) projectile having three grease grooves around the body and an iron plug inserted into the projectile's base. Refinements in the design led to the dropping of the iron plug when it was realized that a cone-shaped hollow cavity in the projectile's base would create the same expansion of the projectile when fired. Upon firing, the hollow basal cavity would expand, forcing the projectile into the rifling, and thus eliminating windage. The resulting projectile form is the classic Minié ball, probably the most common artifact of the Civil War. The projectiles were rolled in paper cartridges with their powder charge. Packages of ammunition contained 10 rounds. Included within the ammunition packages were percussion caps.

Other artifacts associated with the Civil War occupation include two General Service Eagle "I" buttons and a shoulder scale attachment, one canteen spout fragment, and two gun cone protectors. The cone protectors were made by the soldiers, and consist of lead from a bullet, reshaped to cover the cone, which held the percussion cap on the firing mechanism of their rifles. These field-made cone protectors were intended to keep moisture and dirt out of the cone and torch-hole and reduced ignition malfunctions.

Also found were two pieces of carved or shaped lead and two pieces of melted lead. These artifacts reflect the activities of soldiers in camp. Often soldiers spent their idle time melting or modifying lead ammunition.

Ten non-military clothing artifacts (nine buttons and one belt buckle) were found and include three artifacts bearing Episcopal High School designations. Two of these artifacts were cloak buttons and the third was a twentieth-century belt buckle. The buttons show a Maltese cross in the center with the letters “EHS” above. Flanking the cross on either side is a row of ivy. Beneath the cross is the letter “V”, presumably for Virginia. The buttons are from a school uniform which was adopted in the 1850s. It is not known when the uniform was discontinued. The remaining six buttons

include a large flat button that may date to the Colonial period and five buttons that date to the early to mid-nineteenth century.

The metal detector survey resulted in the recovery of a variety of other artifacts both identifiable and unidentifiable. In addition to the 1774 Virginia halfpence, five other coins were found ranging from 1837 to ca. 1930. Other miscellaneous finds include a pocket watch, pocket knife and a watch key bearing the likeness of an angel playing a lyre.



Episcopal High School buckle and button.