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## Rebuilding along the Rappahannock: The Methodologies of Urban Archaeological Survey in Fredericksburg and Beyond

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### Cover Page Footnote

Acknowledgements: First and foremost, thanks to Brad Hatch and Kerry Gonzalez for organizing this volume and allowing this paper to be included in this important roster of Fredericksburg articles. The studies presented here reflect the hard work of dozens of historians and archaeologists from several firms, all who have added important information to our growing knowledge of Fredericksburg's past, including Dovetail and CRI. Most importantly, thank you to the Center for Historic Preservation and Department of Historic Preservation staff at the University of Mary Washington. Their decades-long commitment to Fredericksburg history, and educating future preservationists, is the reason many of us got into the field and stuck around to see how the story turns out....

# Rebuilding along the Rappahannock: The Methodologies of Urban Archaeological Survey in Fredericksburg and Beyond

Kerri S. Barile

*Geographic preferences on suitable habitation spots have not changed for millennia. Whether it is access to water or transportation routes, the presence of good soil and other raw materials, avoidance of flooding or other natural issues, cultural significance, or just an area's beauty, places that were used and reused by Native Americans were often later subsumed into historic towns and then the core of developing cities. This repeated reuse creates a complex archaeological record. The methodologies used to explore the urban environment are therefore intrinsically different than for rural areas, especially at the Phase I level. This article examines how archaeologists identify sites in the urban arena. Using Fredericksburg, Virginia, as the backdrop, the types of Phase I methodologies used in urban areas are explored; five case studies highlighting successful surveys are then presented. The goal is to illustrate ways to maximize the potential for uncovering intact deposits in an often clustered and chaotic urban environment.*

*Les préférences géographiques quant aux lieux d'établissements appropriés n'ont pas changé depuis des millénaires. Qu'il s'agisse de l'accès à l'eau ou aux voies de transport, de la présence d'un bon sol et d'autres matières premières, de l'évitement des zones inondables ou d'autres problèmes naturels, de l'importance culturelle ou simplement de la beauté d'une région, les lieux qui ont été utilisés et réutilisés par les Autochtones sont souvent devenus des villages coloniaux, puis le centre de villes en développement. Cette réutilisation répétée crée un tissu archéologique complexe. Les méthodologies utilisées pour explorer l'environnement urbain sont donc intrinsèquement différentes de celles des zones rurales, en particulier lors d'interventions de phase I. Cet article examine comment les archéologues identifient les sites dans l'environnement urbain. En utilisant Fredericksburg, Virginie, comme toile de fond, les types de méthodologies de phase I utilisées dans les zones urbaines sont explorées; cinq études de cas mettant en lumière des prospections concluantes sont ensuite présentées. Le but est d'illustrer les moyens de maximiser le potentiel de découverte de sites intacts dans un environnement urbain souvent dense et chaotique.*

The urban landscape is multifaceted and nuanced. Cities continually evolve, and the built environment is adapted to changing social needs, technological innovation, and natural and cultural impacts. All of these modifications leave behind a complex and layered archaeological signature. The older the city, the more intricate the archaeological record.

Fredericksburg, Virginia, settled along the Rappahannock River in the 1680s and formally established as a town in 1728, has a long and varied history (FIG. 1). The workplace of many and the home of even more, the city has grown and evolved over time. Once a thriving river-front port, a decline in river transport, the arrival of the railroad, changes in the agrarian economy, and the eventual development of the automobile all had profound effects on its physical matrix. Moreover, repeated flooding of the same river that once brought it economic success wreaked havoc on buildings and supplies. The most intensive and sudden changes,

though, occurred during the Civil War. Two battles were fought within the urban core, and the city changed hands between Confederate and Union occupation over a dozen times (O'Reilly 2006). The consequences of troop engagements, looting, army occupation, and years of residential trauma left the city destitute and the building stock in ruins (FIG. 2). Though the city went through repeated cycles of decline, it survived and eventually thrived. The archaeology of the city tells these tales, and the complexity of its past is mirrored in its archaeological remains.

## Survey at Urban Sites

In his 1962 article, *Problems of Urban Archaeology*—written when urban archaeology was in its infancy—B. Bruce Powell (1962: 582) states: “Archaeology in the concrete jungle presents problems not found in other, more blessed locations.” From his experiences



Figure 1. View of Fredericksburg, Va. (E. Sacshe and Company 1863; courtesy of the Library of Congress.)



Figure 2. Civil War-era destruction along Caroline Street in Fredericksburg (c.1862-1865). (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

working at Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, Powell details four areas in which urban archaeology presents distinct challenges: costs, equipment, public relations, and training. Specifically referring to the latter, Powell (1962: 582) posits that “no matter what our academic background, very very few of us are prepared for all the things found underground in a modern city.”

While this article was written almost 60 years ago, the issues that Powell raised are still distinct concerns when digging in urban arenas today. This is particularly true for site identification in an urban environment, as standard archaeological methodologies for identifying sites are often not conducive to use in an urban setting. Successful site identification in most urban locations is predicated on extensive archival research to understand expected complex stratigraphy, opening larger areas to expose layered deposits, and the development of a more detailed context for exposed resources in order to thoroughly understand their significance and integrity in relation to nearby sites.

Due to the “layer cake” nature often encountered on urban sites, wherein each lot was reused repeatedly over time, the field methodology selected to explore subsurface matrices at the Phase I level and open larger areas varies. In most cases in an urban environment, though, the use of a backhoe often results in much greater success than shovel testing or standard test unit excavations due to the ability to open larger areas, remove modern overburden, and complete both diachronic and synchronic analyses of urban deposits concurrently with minimal ground disturbance.

This methodology is currently being employed successfully in many urban areas across the country, such as the long-running urban study and public outreach programs in Boston, New York, Charleston, Philadelphia, Alexandria, and San Antonio; for a small sample, see Charleston Museum (2019), City of Alexandria Virginia (2019), City of Boston (2019), City of San Antonio (2019), Digging I95 (2019), and NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (2019). However, despite the growing awareness of successful approaches to urban sites, in many other urban areas the repeated use of inappropriate field methodolo-

gies on some urban projects continues, where practitioners rely on standard shovel testing and a “one size fits all” approach. This leaves archaeologists struggling to penetrate dense modern deposits, as well as holes in the data that lead to incorrect evaluations. At times, the use of less thorough methodologies is due to budget constraints, limited time frames, unavailable staff, or restrictive legislation; in the preponderance of cases, however, it is the use of static methodologies designed for radically different geographical, geological, and occupational settings that causes these issues. Through these actions, urban deposits are regularly lost, to the detriment of the knowledge of area history and prehistory.

Discussions like this, on best practices in archaeological field techniques, are not new. Archaeologists have debated proper field methodologies for decades, presenting arguments on appropriate field approaches in scores of settings (Burke et al. 2008; Burger et al. 2004; Hester et al. 2009; Lees and Noble 1990). The parallel thread running through most of these works is that methodologies are both goal and site specific. While state guidelines on archaeological survey, testing, and data recovery encourage a myriad of field approaches, especially at the Phase II and III levels, strategies for Phase I identification projects tend to be more static. This is so despite repeated publications describing the success of a numerous methodologies at the Phase I level, selected based on area conditions; e.g., Deagan (1981), Sullivan et al. (2007), Sundstrom (1993), and Wandersnider and Camilli (1992). To present an argument for the use of the backhoe as an excellent Phase I tool in urban settings, this article discusses five case studies of survey projects in downtown Fredericksburg. This discussion is not designed to revolutionize urban archaeology or to argue for a paradigm shift in urban survey, but to highlight best practices through a brief examination of urban archaeology in Virginia. The discussion is followed by case studies of Fredericksburg sites wherein maximum data were obtained through archival research and the use of a backhoe during field excavations. It should be noted that while the presence of precontact sites in urban environments is an important facet of the larger archaeological picture, this article will focus on

identification of historical sites to thoroughly delve into a single category for analysis.

### Archaeology of the Urban Realm in Virginia

As archaeologist James Davidson (2004: 75) stated: "The name of a city may remain fixed throughout its existence, but much of what a city is—both physically and culturally—is fluid and constantly shifts over time." This idea of constant change has been noted in cities throughout Virginia, the United States, and, indeed, the world. To understand both how a city morphs through time and, more importantly, why it changes, archaeologists are beginning to expand their studies in urban locales.

Because of the dynamic nature of urban environments, the field of urban archaeology has been slower to develop than its rural counterparts, especially in the Middle Atlantic and the South. For example, archaeology had been conducted at large plantation-house museums in Virginia throughout the 1930s, including notable excavations at Mount Vernon, Gunston Hall, and Stratford Hall. The exception to this, of course, was the archaeology conducted at Colonial Williamsburg from 1926 onward. The initial goal of that work was to provide architectural historians with information on the late 18th-century appearance and layout of the town and the individual lots to guide rebuilding efforts (Brown and Samford 1994: 231–246). Most excavations undertaken during the first part of the 20th century were on rural plantations and shared many similarities. These excavations were "marked by the assumption that investigations into the architectural remains of a dwelling led to an understanding of domestic behavior in the past" (Brandon and Barile 2004: 3). Often the digs did not go beyond the main house, and they focused on the large estates of some of Virginia's most elite families. This form of "non-urban" archaeology continued throughout the rest of the 20th century, with formal programs established at Monticello, Jamestown, Poplar Forest, etc.

The first urban archaeology department in Virginia not based on restoration was established by the City of Alexandria in 1977 (Shephard 1999). As a reaction to the rapid

development overtaking their community, city officials in Alexandria enacted a comprehensive archaeological ordinance and hired professional archaeological staff to oversee the execution of the new regulations. Excavations have been ongoing in the city for four decades, allowing the team to move beyond single-site analysis to larger city-wide investigations, primarily using the core/periphery model. This model examines changes to the internal structure of a city brought about by large-scale economic modifications, such as industrialization and variations in the distributions of wealth and access to goods across an area (Cressey et al. 1982).

Outside these few arenas, the number of urban archaeological sites that have been explored in Virginia is relatively low when compared to suburban and rural sites (Shephard 1999: 337). The focus of urban archaeology has remained primarily on sites slated for redevelopment rather than sites with high research potential (Samford 1996: 68). This is especially true in larger communities, such as Richmond, Norfolk, and most of northern Virginia.

Although limited archaeology has been conducted on Virginia urban deposits, researchers and the general public have come to understand the immense data potential of America's urban areas. The limited excavations conducted in the state have begun to shed light on daily life in Virginia cities two centuries ago. Virginia had only six communities that could be viewed as urban landscapes in the 18th century: Alexandria, Norfolk, and Williamsburg each had a population over 1,000, while Yorktown, Richmond, and Fredericksburg were just under that figure (Samford 1996: 67). In the 19th century the number of urban areas grew, as rapid industrialization and constant population growth pushed development to western areas of the state, including towns such as Roanoke, Charlottesville, and Winchester. Excavations in such communities have only begun to explore the larger urbanization themes of settlement patterns, socioeconomic stratification, commercialization, industrialization, ethnic diversity, consumer behavior, neighborhood development, public sanitation, and burial practices (Shephard 1999: 337).

In Fredericksburg, relatively few excavations were completed in the urban core prior to about 2000. These earlier urban digs were conducted in association with planned development and rehabilitations, most of which were directed by the Center for Historic Preservation at what is now the University of Mary Washington (UMW). Excavations completed include limited research into the parking lot adjacent to the visitors' center on Caroline Street in the late 1980s, excavations in Market Square in 1991, investigations surrounding the masonry wall at the Masonic Cemetery in 1992, and the removal of interments near St. George's Church in the late 1990s (Sanford 1992; Sanford et al. 1992).

While these investigations are notable, the general paucity of archaeology in downtown Fredericksburg prior to the turn of the 21st century has precluded researchers from examining macro-scalar questions. These include questions concerning settlement and land-use patterns, such as "how cities grew, how space was divided in terms of commercial, residential, and public areas, what strategies were used to compensate for space shortages, and what was considered desirable urban land" (Samford 1996: 66–67). For this reason, the use of the proper field methodology in urban environments is imperative.

### Urban Phase I Methodologies

The successful achievement of a thorough understanding of urban life through archaeological remains starts at the beginning: site identification. Many sites in Fredericksburg and other urban areas have been recorded based on the knowledge of local citizens, as the locations of significant previous occupations have been passed down through generations. While oral histories are a critical component in locating urban sites, the data are often presented on a broad scale, such as, "a colonial tavern once stood on this block." This bounds the site information within a general geographic area, but does not pinpoint the exact location of contributing elements, such as foundations, privies, outbuildings, and fences. Moreover, the information has no chronological ties to aid in the analysis of the changing urban landscape. Given this, it is extremely important to include sites recorded based on

colloquial knowledge in any analysis, but ground truthing leads to a more thorough understanding of the data.

Across the eastern United States, the most prevalent methodology for site identification is the systematic shovel test survey; see e.g., Sundstrom (1993). This method has proven to be adequate for locating sites across most terrains; the project goal of locating sites through an economical medium is often met. The practice involves laying out a grid across a survey area, often with 50 ft. or 15 m intervals; the distance and measurements vary depending on the state standards and archaeological practitioner (English measurements will be used in this article, as specified by Virginia state archaeological guidelines). Shovel test pits (STP) are excavated across the grid to assure systematic coverage. Shovel tests can be circular or square, usually with a minimum diameter of 15 in. The goal is to explore an area to locate features, artifacts, and ecofacts denoting the presence of past human occupation. Soils are screened through 0.25 in. mesh, and all retrieved cultural remains are analyzed.

While this methodology has proven to be extremely successful for undeveloped areas, it has severe limitations in an urban environment for numerous reasons. First, many urban lots are paved or contain an extant building, thus precluding standard shovel testing. Similarly, the reuse of urban areas and especially modern landscape treatments and filling often leave a thick overburden that is challenging to penetrate using a standard spade. In addition, urban development occurred on a vastly different scale than suburban or rural development, with more resources located in a closer proximity to one another, thus, even close-interval shovel testing has the distinct possibility of missing significant deposits.

Lots in urban settings were also reused repeatedly, leaving behind excessive "noise" in the soil, such as jumbled, out-of-context building debris; the narrow window of a shovel test cannot adequately provide the opportunity to determine whether the features/artifacts are in context. This same reuse of lots often left layered sites, and shovel testing may offer a limited understanding of the diachronic nature of urban development, unlike larger excavation windows. Lastly, the

intensive multigenerational use of parcels results in a plethora of deposits, and shovel testing on standard or close-interval grids may not provide the flexibility to target specific occupation areas that may shed light on under-researched themes and topics.

To address these issues, the most fruitful approach to urban survey relies on extensive archival research followed by backhoe trenching/stripping and then evaluation of the results in their local context (see regulations presented in guidelines for many East Coast urban localities, such as City of Alexandria, Virginia [2019]). During archival research, site-specific data is collected through the compilation of a chain of title and an examination of numerous other archival sources, including tax records, census data, agricultural records, insurance documents, newspapers, and historical maps and photographs. Many Virginia cities, including Fredericksburg, have extensive collections of historical maps available to help understand the changing landscape. Specifically, records associated with 18th- and early 19th-century Mutual Assurance Society insurance policies and late 19th- and early 20th-century Sanborn Map Company city maps provide incredible data on all aspects of a community, including streets, buildings, util-



Figure 3. Marking the locations of backhoe trenches at the Fredericksburg Hardware Store site. Trench locations were based on archival research. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2007.)

ities, and public land. Places such as Fredericksburg were also documented by extremely accurate community mapmakers during development and expansion of the town, and particularly during the Civil War. Related to this, photographs taken during the war and in subsequent years are invaluable for understanding changes to the street system, building materials, and lot use.

The data obtained during the archival research are critical to the development of a field approach. Georeferenced overlays showing past occupations in relation to the modern landscape highlight areas that have the potential to contain significant intact deposits. The same data can also point out areas that have been repeatedly modified, especially in recent decades, resulting in a lower potential for containing intact resources. Archaeologists can use these overlays to select areas for study, thus increasing potential survey success.

In the field, the overlays are translated to the study area through use of a handheld global-positioning system unit, a transit or total station, or by the traditional method of pulling measuring tapes. The presumed locations of former buildings or features on the site are marked with pin flags, stakes, or spray paint to establish targets for subsurface study (FIG. 3). This action also helps to identify areas where historical data suggest that occupation did not occur, highlighting places to perform subsurface survey aimed at understanding the natural soils and geographic conditions of an area. These areas are also excellent places to test the accuracy of the archival data.

Once study locations are identified, backhoe trenches are excavated to uncover the subsurface matrix. Both toothed and smooth-bladed backhoe buckets may be used, depending on the nature of the site. To reduce costs, some urban excavations rely on city-owned backhoes and drivers. This also creates a strong private/public partnership and investment in the dig. All excavations are monitored by qualified archaeologists working closely together with the backhoe driver to carefully investigate the site (FIG. 4).

While the physical parameters of each trench will vary based on field conditions (e.g., the presence of buildings, trees, sidewalks, and utilities), most trenches measure approxi-



Figure 4. Excavating a backhoe trench at the Fredericksburg Riverfront Park; trench location based on archival data. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2013.)

mately 3–6 ft. in width, between 15 and 50 ft. in length, and up to 5 ft. in depth (or other depths to comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration and local safety standards) depending on the research questions and the locations of the trenches and deposits uncovered during the work (the examples in this article present cases for various trench parameters). Trenches can also be stepped to permit deeper depths. STPs and test units can then be used to enlarge the results as needed. Geophysical studies, such as ground-penetrating radar, may also be used to augment the backhoe work. These studies can provide data on the presence/absence of features and anomalies, but the readings can often be quite confusing in an urban setting due to the repeated reuse of areas and the presence of modern utilities; e.g., Ratini et al. (2018). As such, geophysical studies are a tool to add to ground truthing in urban environments rather than being the sole exploratory method.

Selection of the locations for backhoe trenches and additional subsurface studies are guided by the contextual background of the urban environment under study. Research questions may focus on specific-use topics for which the archaeological database contains a paucity of information, such as slave quarters, specific industries, or sites occupied by important individuals or associated with a notable event, or they can highlight certain temporal

periods, such as the earliest occupation of an area or other periods for which archaeology can shed light on people with few historical written records. The use of contextual comparisons—wherein archaeological data discovered at one site are viewed against the data at other digs and that discovered during archival research and architectural analysis—is especially important for selecting deposits for Phase II archaeological testing, data recovery, or preservation in place.

Together, the use of archival research followed by careful backhoe excavation and contextual analysis can uncover an incredible amount of information on the urban landscape. Opening larger areas can allow for the concurrent exploration of multiple occupation periods and help decipher the complex evidence of repeated rebuilding and reuse that is often the hallmark of urban development. Similar to the benefits of historical archaeology elsewhere, broadening the research basis also allows for an examination of an area's past beyond what is stated in the written record. Servant and slave quarters, kitchens, stables, work areas, and other sites may not be recorded in the records, but leave a significant archaeological signature. Proper archaeological methodology can elucidate the history of groups rendered silent in written records, but the complexity of urban environments requires a nuanced field approach to tease out this evidence; e.g., Cusick (1995) and Hodder (2003). The following sections highlight five Fredericksburg projects for which this methodology has proven to be extremely successful (FIG. 5).

### Fredericksburg Train Station Sites (44SP0687 and 44SP0688)

One of the earliest uses of this method in Fredericksburg was the 1991–1992 train station excavation. The cultural and physical landscape of Fredericksburg changed dramatically with the arrival of the railroad in January 1837. The Richmond Potomac & Fredericksburg (RF&P) line came through the southern end of town, cutting off the lower segment of the community. Originally an at-grade facility, in 1927 the rail was raised to avoid an increasing number of accidents due to the proliferation of

the automobile in the first decades of the 20th century (Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. 2014). America's car-focused culture led to a decline in rail usage in the mid-20th century, leaving behind a set of little-used tracks and an abandoned rail station. It was not until the early 1990s that the area was revived through the development of a new commuter rail system, the Virginia Rail Express (VRE).

The creation of a VRE stop in Fredericksburg required modifications to the two blocks immediately south of the rail station, one to become the location of a drop-off facility and handicapped parking and the other to become a large parking lot to cater to commuters. Historically, these were known as Blocks 48 and 49 (Sanford et al. 1992) within the city's

historic grid. As part of project compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act due to the involvement of the Federal Railroad Administration, archaeologists from the Center for Historic Preservation at what was then Mary Washington College (now UMW) conducted an archaeological survey of both lots in the winter of 1991–1992. As the work was undertaken by a multidisciplinary preservation organization, one based in a holistic preservation educational department, the archaeological team recognized the importance of archival research and a thorough grasp of the historical built environment before any soil was excavated. Work thus focused first on an understanding of the use and appearance of the lots, followed by sub-

surface investigations using backhoe trenches augmented by test units.

The history of the two blocks begins like much of this portion of Fredericksburg; the lots were owned in the mid-18th century by notable entrepreneur Roger Dixon and his wife, Lucy. The Dixons purchased dozens of lots on speculation in what was then "lower Fredericksburg," recognizing that the growing town would expand beyond its original small nucleus to the north (Felder 1982). The Dixons sold the blocks to clockmaker Thomas Walker in 1771. While Walker did not live on the lots, records suggest that at least two tenant houses were on the site by the end of the 18th century (Sanford et al. 1992: 20). As land in this area became more developed going into the 19th century, Walker's heirs subdivided each block into several parcels, selling each off over a 20-year period. Both blocks were the locations of multiple tenant dwellings in the first half of the 19th century; after the arrival of the RF&P in 1837 these dwellings were sought by railroad employees who wanted to live near their place of employment (Sanford et al. 1992: 24). With the Civil War came great destruction to the lots due to their location near the strategic rail corridor. Most of the extant dwellings were damaged, some beyond repair.

After the war, the area changed from residential to industrial, capitalizing on the now-open nature of the blocks and their location near the rebuilt railroad tracks. The blocks were the site of John Tayloe's wood and coal lot from 1869 through 1889, at which time the business was destroyed by fire (Sanford et al. 1992: 25). Rather than rebuild, Tayloe sold the land to Edgar Young and William Smith, who constructed an excelsior mill on the eastern block closer to the river; the western block was redeveloped with tenant houses once more, as well as a lumberyard (FIG. 6). This land pattern remained unchanged until the 1930s, when the RF&P purchased both blocks and eventually demolished the buildings, leaving the blocks empty for decades.

Prior to archaeological fieldwork, data obtained during the historical and architectural research were mapped out to understand the evolution of the lots. Archaeologists then used these data to pinpoint areas for exploration. Work commenced with the excavation of 30–40 ft. long backhoe trenches designed to "cut

through" the potential locations of the several 18th- and 19th-century tenant houses once located on both blocks. Archival research and overlays suggested that these areas had the greatest potential for preservation, as the centers of each block were the locations of numerous industrial facilities and 20th-century warehouses, and their construction may have disturbed data-bearing soils. The trenches then informed the excavation of 3 × 3 ft. test units placed strategically to explore the subsurface data potential of the exposed features and surrounding soils. In total, the team excavated five long backhoe trenches, each measuring between 40 and 50 ft. in length, and 28 test units (Sanford et al. 1992) (FIG. 7).

Archaeological study found evidence of three centuries of occupation on both blocks, including many areas in which historical features intruded upon one another, highlighting the repeated reuse of these urban lots. The "artifact-laden soil layers offer a tremendous diversity of information about people, activities, and landscapes" (Sanford et al. 1992: 59). Among the findings were foundations of at least six tenant houses, a well, and many other landscape features (FIG. 8). By targeting areas designated, based on the archival research, as both significant in terms of historical context and having a high likelihood of containing intact deposits, the team's results allowed the VRE project to move forward while protecting intact archaeological remains for the future. Specifically, Block 48, near the river, was filled and leveled to protect the archaeological remains rather than mechanically excavated. The southern edge of Block 49, along Frederick Street, was left undeveloped, as the archaeology proved that the remains from 18th- and 19th-century life in this area were intact. The archaeologists recognized that little comparative contextual data for these types of sites existed in the city; preservation in place was recommended.

Beyond the success of the excavation itself, the train station dig—as well as many other studies conducted by the Center for Historic Preservation—had another important impact on Fredericksburg archaeology. Work conducted there helped generations of future researchers, architectural historians, and archaeologists learn to work together to continue the philosophy of holistic study of urban

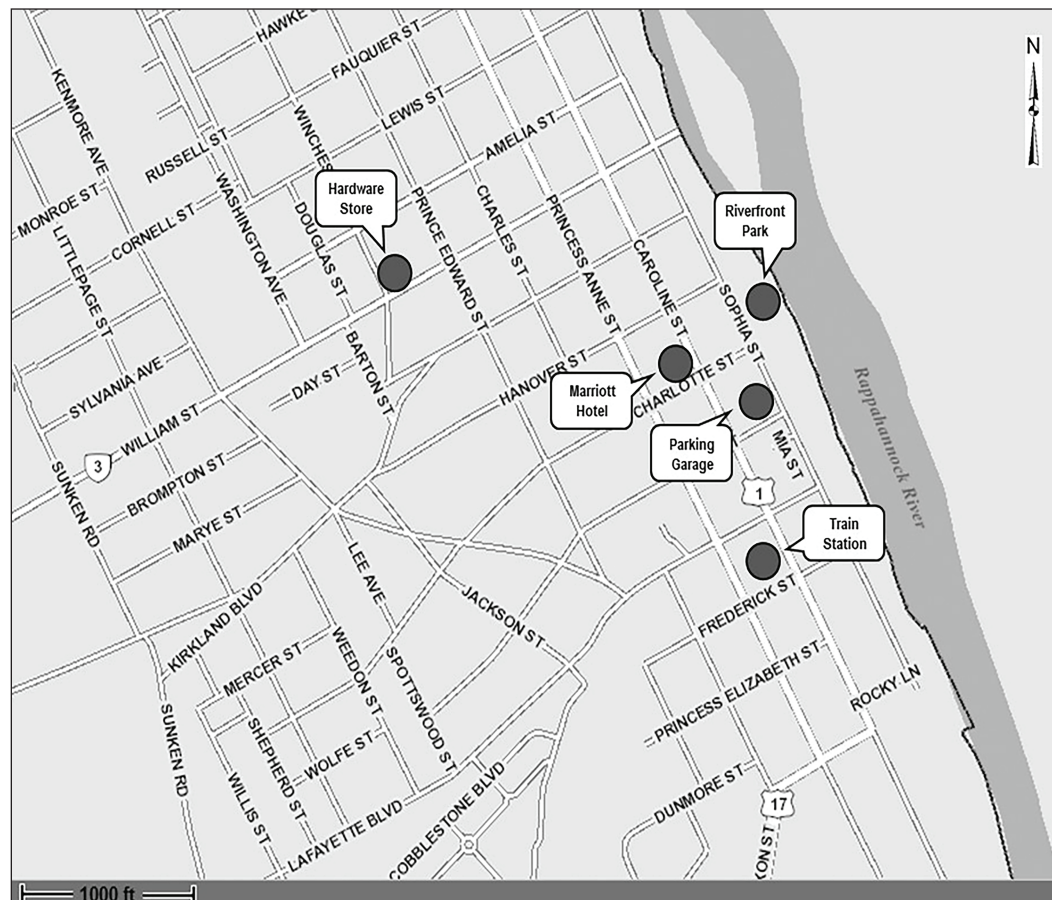


Figure 5. Map showing the locations of the five sites discussed in this article. (Base map: City of Fredericksburg GIS Base Map; map by Kerri S. Barile, 2020.)

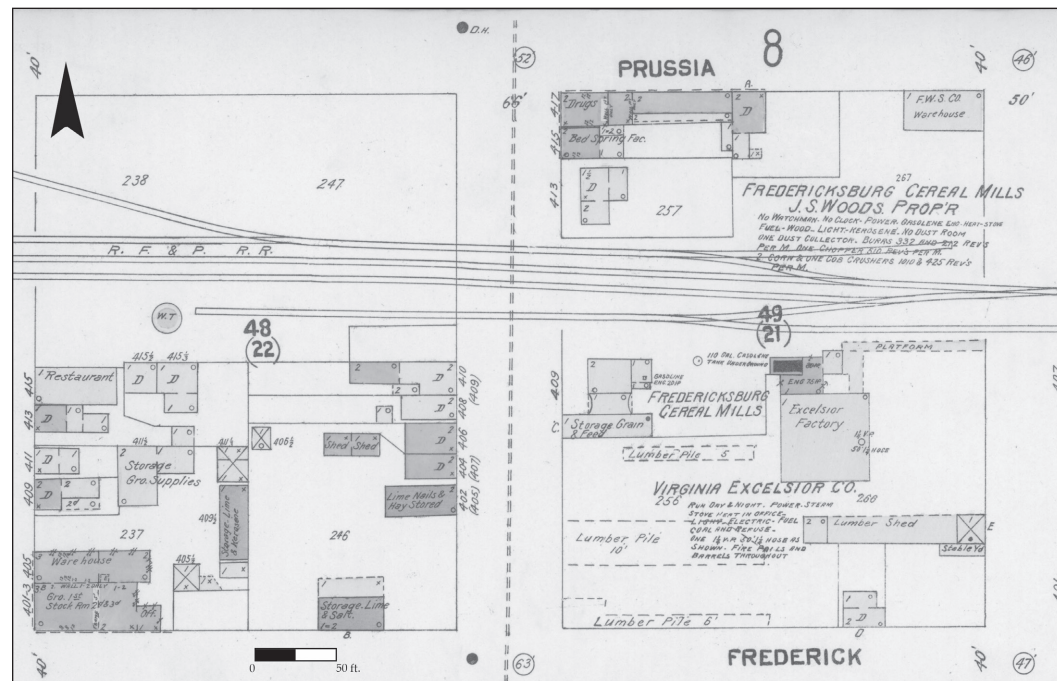


Figure 6. Sanborn map of the Fredericksburg Train Station site from 1902. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress; modifications by M. O'Donovan, 2020.)



Figure 7. View toward the southeast of the Fredericksburg Train Station excavation area, showing the linear backhoe trenching along Sophia and Frederick streets. (Photo by the Center for Historic Preservation, 1992.)

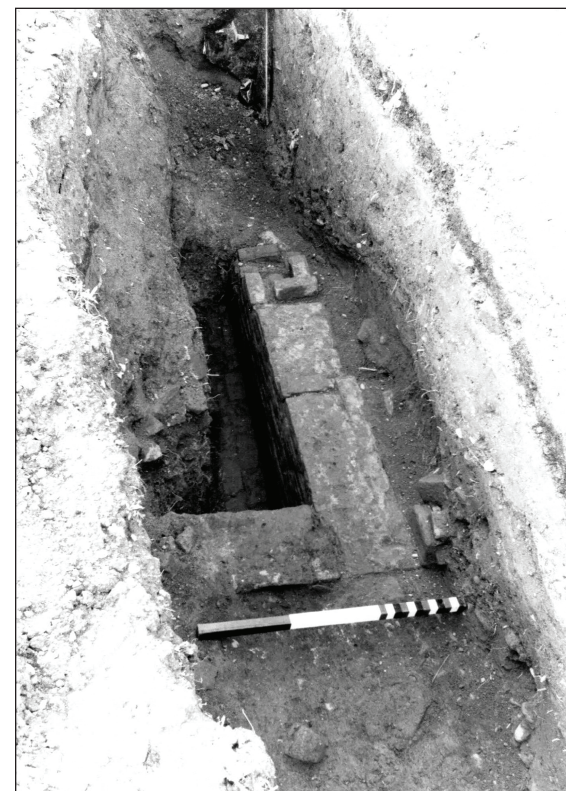


Figure 8. Foundation uncovered during the Fredericksburg Train Station excavation. (Photo by the Center for Historic Preservation, 1992.)

resources. While interdisciplinary studies have been a hallmark of historical archaeology since its founding, the level of effort provided by the subfields involved in this project was evenly distributed, and the results of all aspects of study were continually revisited based on the ongoing work. The center fostered repeated and daily teamwork among numerous preservation disciplines, recognizing that various skillsets render more thorough and nuanced evaluations of the tangible past. Scores of preservation professionals working in the region today continue to follow this core philosophy, one that is highlighted in the remaining four examples below.

#### Marriott Site (44SP0612)

In 2006, developers planned to construct a new Courtyard by Marriott hotel on a paved parking lot at the corner of Caroline and Charlotte streets in heart of the downtown

core. As a condition of the rezoning application and a project proffer, the City of Fredericksburg requested that archaeological studies be completed on the lot prior to development. Fredericksburg-based Dovetail Cultural Resource Group was brought in to complete the work. Recognizing that the lot was one of the earliest settled parcels in the city and based on adherence to the UMW holistic preservation philosophy, the team first conducted extensive archival research on the area to understand the development history of the lot. This was followed with backhoe trenching, contextual analysis, and subsequent data recovery.

Historical research revealed that the first recorded occupation of the property was likely residential. Around 1752, Roger Dixon either reused the existing dwelling or built new when he opened a mercantile shop on the site, one of the largest stores in Fredericksburg. This is the same Roger Dixon who once owned the train station lots discussed above. Dixon closed his store in 1770, and a hostelry business was begun on the lot in 1771, when Jacob Whitely opened his tavern on the site. Whitely was only in operation for two years, however, as he sold the lot to William Herndon in 1773 (Barile et al. 2008: 48). Herndon renamed the business

the Indian Queen Tavern and ran the establishment, off and on, for the next five decades (FIG. 9). The Indian Queen, later known as the Indian Queen Hotel, was the largest tavern in Fredericksburg for many years. It hosted scores of notable civic events, such as museum displays and balls, had a first-class restaurant, and was the site of countless gatherings. Among the patrons were some of the most important names of the 18th century, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame). The tavern and several of its outbuildings burned to the ground in 1832 (Barile et al. 2008: 54–55).

After lying empty for several years, the Indian Queen lot was divided into several smaller plots. The area to the west near the corner of Princess Anne Street and Charlotte Street became home to the Hope Iron Foundry. The eastern half of the lot was split into four



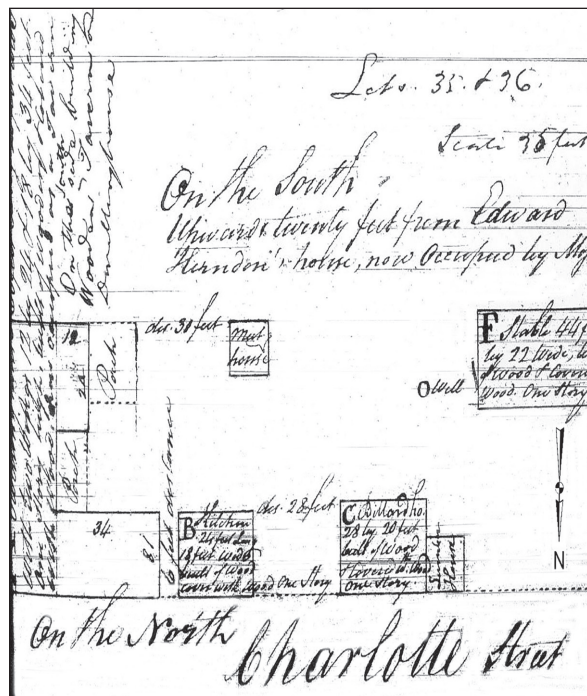


Figure 9. Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia policy map for the Indian Queen Tavern at the Marriott site, 1796. (Courtesy of the Central Rappahannock Regional Library.) Not to scale.

narrow lots that faced Caroline Street. Three residences were built at 616–620 Caroline Street (see Sanford [this issue] for additional information on the dwelling and servants' quarter once at 618 Caroline Street). The corner lot was established as a commercial business, first home to Pritchard and Thornton's Carriage Shop and later to Cassiday's Pharmacy (Barile et al. 2008: 56, 64). In 1967, the City of Fredericksburg purchased the land for a parking lot and demolished all remaining aboveground elements on the property.

Knowing the complex history of the lot, the archaeologists used the archival data to create a series of georeferenced overlays showing the different occupation episodes there; most of the overlays were created by hand, given the relative infancy of geographic-information system use in archaeology at the time. The team then used measuring tapes to locate built resources and spray painted the footprint of each element on the parking lot pavement. After pavement cutting, a backhoe was used to explore areas that were targeted

as having the highest potential to contain intact soils.

A total of seven backhoe trenches and two 3 × 3 ft. test units were excavated across the parking lot (Barile et al. 2008). Artifacts and intact historical features were identified in all seven excavated trenches and both test units, reflecting the data conveyed by the archival research. The use of backhoe trenches allowed the team to identify the presence of remains across the site, including historical occupation levels that were more than 4 ft. below the ground surface. The importance of the archaeological data, though, was not in confirming the building-related archival research, but in exposing a distinct urban trend in previous development wherein historical elements were left at least partially in situ when a lot was reused. Many features overlapped one another (FIG. 10). All architectural elements in the area had been truncated at the ground surface to remove the aboveground portions of each resource prior to leveling out the parking area in 1967. This action resulted in an abundance of intact subsurface remains from centuries of reuse, some periods of which were scantily represented in the archival record. The artifacts were also an integral component for understanding the agency of past occupants beyond just the buildings they occupied.

Because of the high degree of preservation within the lot, and based on a contextual evaluation of other recorded sites in the area, Dovetail recommended that the site had the potential to reveal even more information about the area's historical occupation. The contextual analysis suggested that no 18th-century commercial enterprises or taverns had been recorded in the area. Moreover, the site contained a slave quarter, and this would be the first quarter excavated archaeologically in the city—an incredible fact, given that almost 50% of the population was enslaved prior to the Civil War (Stanton 1997: 127). Using these data, the team embarked on a two-month-long Phase II/III excavation. Work concentrated primarily on a 35 × 55 ft. area near the center of the parking lot, where archaeologists excavated 27 units to expose intact features and



Figure 10. Rear wall of the carriage shop found at the Marriott site, using excavation guided by archival research and map overlays. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2006.)

learn more about site occupation (Barile et al. 2008). During this work, Dovetail found layers of foundations and features across the entire excavation area. This evidence, spanning three centuries of occupation, included: (1) part of the foundation of an early to mid-18th-century building; (2) the rear section of the ca. 1773–1832 Indian Queen Tavern; (3) a rear work area associated with the Indian Queen; (4) a late 1830s servant/slave quarter built over both the 18th-century building and the tavern (it was occupied by both enslaved individuals and paid servants at various times); (5) an 1840s brick alley wall; and (6) an early 20th-century

porch stoop (FIG. 11). Over 75,000 historical, and even prehistoric, artifacts were retrieved during the project, representing occupants of varying social status, race, ethnicity, gender, and professions.

The Marriott dig was important for many reasons. Not only was it the first large-scale archaeological study in the downtown area in years, but it also highlighted the fact that modern changes do not preclude the presence of intact subsurface remains. Through the use of a phased approach, one that began with archival research and then digging, the work opened the door for a dozen archaeological projects in the subsequent decade and commenced a dialogue on the need for archaeological surveys on other development projects in the city. This project, and the ones that came after it, were the impetus for the development of an archaeological ordinance in the city—an ordinance that was recently passed unanimously by City Council.

#### Riverfront Park (44SP0069-1)

The success of the Marriott Project proved that significant archaeological resources may exist throughout Fredericksburg, even on lots that have been subsequently redeveloped or paved over. With these data in mind, in 2013 city officials elected to complete an archaeological survey of the proposed Riverfront Park along Sophia Street. For historical residents—and the Native American groups who came before them and have continued to inhabit this area—the Rappahannock River was a vital part of everyday life, providing a navigable waterway, food supply, and recreational venue. Knowing this, city staff looked beyond the manicured grass and parking lots that covered the 2.5 ac. park to seek answers about what was beneath.

The first formal archaeological study of the riverfront was conducted by Charles Troup in 1981 (Troup 1982). He performed a series of augur tests and STPs within the lots that were slated for the park, but found that this area was composed of fill. He said that any notable archaeological sites were gone, the result of erosion and modern disturbances. However, Troup's methodology, the use of auguring and STPs with limited archival research and small testing holes, did not provide adequate infor-

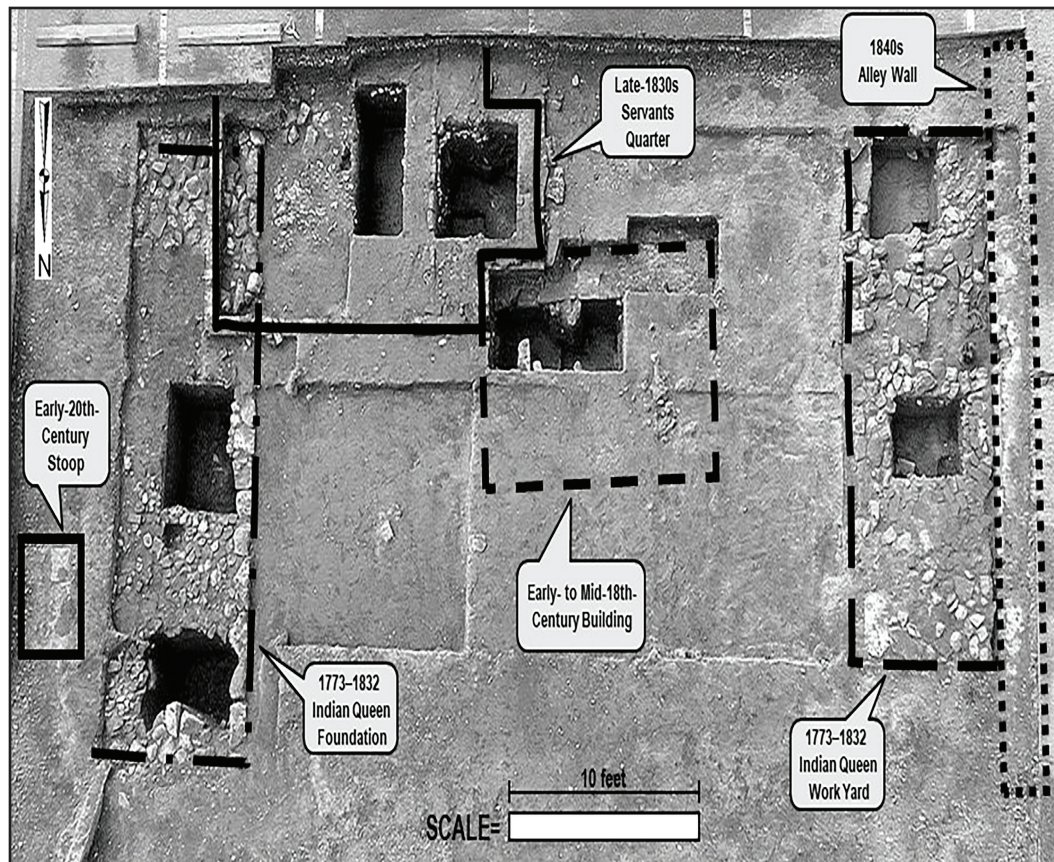


Figure 11. Plan of the Marriott site showing hundreds of years of layered history. (Figure by Kerri S. Barilie, 2006.)

mation with which to render an informed assessment of the archaeological potential throughout the area. To evaluate Troup's results, the city hired Dovetail to conduct a Phase I survey of the park area.

Using the Marriot model of urban identification level survey, the Dovetail team first completed extensive archival research. This was followed by the creation of overlays, targeted fieldwork, and contextual evaluations to compare the site to contemporary sites in Fredericksburg and other residential and industrial sites in order to provide recommendations for future work. The results varied significantly from Troup's 1981 findings.

The archival research confirmed that the Riverfront Park area has been occupied for hundreds of years. Spanning the mid-18th through the mid-20th centuries, the area contained no fewer than 14 buildings, including

dwellings, as well as privies, fences, gardens, and many other features (Barile et al. 2014). Among the more notable historical resources were: (1) the Rowe-Goolrick House at 607 Sophia Street, one of the earliest residential dwellings built in the city and home to two mayors of Fredericksburg. It was demolished in 1973 to create a parking lot (FIG. 12); (2) the Prince Hall Lodge at 609 Sophia Street, built in 1920 by notable Fredericksburg builder Peck Heflin and converted into an African American fraternal lodge in 1971; and (3) Ferneyhough's Ice House, established in the early 19th century as Fredericksburg's first public ice house and demolished around 1905 (see Barile and Maroney [this issue] for additional information on this enterprise). Archival research also revealed the intensive Civil War activity in this area. The Rowe-Goolrick House, like many buildings in Fredericksburg,

was used as a hospital during the December 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg, and numerous earthworks were constructed along the riverfront area to help protect soldiers guarding the river (Hatch et al. 2016).

The Dovetail Phase I survey began with the excavation of 12 backhoe trenches and 4 test units placed in areas with the potential to contain intact remains and/or that had the ability to shed light on soil conditions across the parcel (FIG. 13). After georeferencing historical data on building locations onto the parcel, the team commenced field excavations. The foundation of Ferneyhough's Ice House was found 3 ft. below the ground surface and it appeared to be intact (Barile et al. 2014: 53). In addition, the foundations of another eight buildings were identified, as well as stone walls and other landscape features (FIG. 14). Trenches purposefully placed in areas that had not been developed during the historical period, as expected, contained no cultural remains. This data confirmed the methodology used here and also provided an abundance of information on the natural stratigraphy of the riverfront parcels.

The results of the Phase I survey proved that the project area contains numerous segments of land that are highly sensitive archaeologically, as well as several areas that are disturbed or covered in extensive fill. All of the information was acquired in less than one week—results that would not have been possible without intensive archival research, backhoe excavation to quickly remove modern disturbance, and a comparison of the archaeological record with the cultural and regional context to gain a preliminary understanding of the significance of the features. The information was pulled together to render a map showing areas of archaeological sensitivity within the proposed park. These data were presented to the park designers and during park planning archaeologically sensitive areas were avoided to the greatest degree possible. For those that could not be avoided, archaeologists from Dovetail returned to the park in 2015 and 2017 to conduct additional research (Blondino et al. 2017; Hatch et al. 2016), and additional excavations were completed in the winter of 2018–2019 to recover data from any areas that could not be preserved in place.



Figure 12. Historic American Building Survey photo looking north along Sophia Street in the 1930s. Today, this area is devoid of all buildings and the location of the proposed Riverfront Park. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

Work at the Riverfront Park provided a direct comparison of standard STP/auguring survey with archival research/backhoe survey. The former was completed on the parcel in 1981, and it was determined based on that data that the parcels had limited potential for intact sites. The same parcel was studied 20 years later using urban-appropriate methodologies and with a dramatically different outcome, resulting in the identification of extremely significant deposits that reflect 300 years of history.

#### Fredericksburg Hardware Store (44SP0585)

While the use of extensive archival research followed by backhoe trenching has proven to be extremely successful on numerous urban sites in and around Fredericksburg, there is one notable limitation—digging under extant buildings. This issue was highlighted by excavations at the Fredericksburg Hardware Store site. The Fredericksburg Hardware Store, a local institution, was established in the mid-20th century in an existing building on the 500



Figure 13. Modern aerial view of the Riverfront Park with overlays showing former building locations, completed prior to fieldwork to guide excavations. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2013.)



Figure 14. Foundation of a brick duplex at 717-719 Sophia Street in the Riverfront Park area, identified through backhoe trenching. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2013.)

block of William Street and became a staple establishment of the downtown core. In the early 2000s, Silver Companies, owner of the land, decided to demolish the hardware store to develop a series of townhomes. As with previously mentioned excavations, Silver elected to pursue cultural resource studies prior to development knowing the importance of the hardware store to the local community. Work included extensive archival research, an architectural analysis of the hardware-store building, and archaeological survey of the parking lot to the east of the store.

Located at the corner of William and Winchester streets, the parcel was originally outside Fredericksburg's 1728 grid, but was enveloped by the expanding city in 1759. The first building constructed on the lot was built around 1796 by George Spooner (Barile et al. 2007: 9). It was likely a tenant house that remained in use for several decades. Over the next 50 years, the block was also used as a brickyard, a lumberyard, and for stoneware production (see Krofft and Nasca [this issue] for additional information on the stoneware kiln). In 1849, then-owner Samuel Alsop built a large brick warehouse on the southwest corner of the block. This "store and lumber house" measured 80 × 40 ft. Other businesses were established on the remainder of the lot in the postbellum years, including the City Park Hotel, Hilldrup Livery Service, Murdaugh Pickle Works, and Boulware & Sons Hardware Shop (Barile et al. 2007: 9-18).

A devastating fire destroyed most of the building stock on this block in 1914. Hilldrup, by then an auto-based moving company and taxi service, purchased Alsop's 1849 brick warehouse, which was still standing after the fire. Hilldrup and Boulware & Sons eventually merged, expanding the building on the corner of William and Winchester. The Fredericksburg Hardware Store, previously located farther east at the corner of William and Princess Anne streets, purchased the Hilldrup/Boulware complex in 1955 (Barile et al. 2007: 24). It continued to expand the building until it spanned the entire length of Winchester Street (FIG. 15). The hardware store closed in 2005.

Archaeology was completed on the parcel's parking lot in the winter of 2007, when the hardware store building was still standing. Using the archival research, the locations of the previously extant buildings were overlaid on modern maps and aerial images, and their locations were identified in the field based on these data (FIG. 16). Six backhoe trenches were placed in areas where historical features were expected (Barile et al. 2007). Architectural remains of previous occupations were encountered in four of the six trenches. It appeared that all buildings and landscape features were demolished for the construction of later buildings, although vestiges of the features remained below ground. Furthermore, all but one trench displayed evidence of the 1914 fire,



Figure 15. The Fredericksburg Hardware Store building prior to demolition. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2007.)

which burned the entire lot. Archaeological remains of the City Park Hotel, original Hilldrup Livery complex, and first Boulware & Sons hardware store were found.

After the cultural resource study, the Fredericksburg Hardware Store was demolished and construction began on the planned townhomes. In 2012, Dovetail received a call from representatives of Silver and the City of Fredericksburg—they had found something within the footprint of the hardware store building; thousands of fragments of stoneware littered the surface. These deposits were beneath an early 20th-century addition to the hardware store and inaccessible for over 100 years. Upon analysis, it was concluded that the stoneware assemblage represented a significant deposit of wasters from the Marshall-Bell kiln, in operation on the lot in the 1830s (Krofftt et al. 2014). A salvage excavation was immediately organized and archaeologists representing half a dozen Fredericksburg institutions participated in the dig. Led by Dovetail, the team included, among others, the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., the University of Mary Washington, George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation, the Fredericksburg Area Museum, the City of Fredericksburg, and the National Park Service

(FIG. 17). Together, the group recovered tens of thousands of stoneware sherds that had been hidden under the building. An exhibit was put together by the Fredericksburg Area Museum in conjunction with local potters to share the important data with the public.

The findings at the Fredericksburg Hardware Store site revealed that the results of archaeological survey can be limited by access, especially in an urban environment. Historical sites are often sealed under buildings, parking lots, and roadways. Despite the best laid plans, all components of a site may not be accessible, and extrapolation of data may be needed to fully evaluate sites.

### Sophia/Wolfe Street Parking Garage

Like the Fredericksburg Hardware Store site, archaeological work at the Sophia/Wolfe Street Parking Garage site highlights the importance of the use of correct methodology during urban digs, regardless of the findings. At the corner of Sophia and Wolfe streets in the historic core of downtown Fredericksburg, the lot was selected by the City of Fredericksburg in the mid-2000s as the site of a new multistory parking deck. Prior to construction, the parcel contained a paved parking lot. The city elected to complete archaeological studies prior to ground disturbance to ensure that no intact archaeological sites would be disturbed. Cultural Resources Inc. (CRI) performed the work in 2004.

Historically, the parking garage lot was one of the earliest parcels in Fredericksburg. The original town ferry was at the foot of Wolfe Street, and the oldest building in the city, Thornton's Tavern, is across the street from the garage lot. Henry Willis built two one-story, frame warehouses on the lot in 1740, but they were likely located on the western half of the lot, closer to Caroline Street than Sophia Street (Cooke et al. 2005: 25). Although Willis sold the buildings in the late 1740s, they remained in use until the late 18th century. Two additional warehouses, also wood frame and one story in height, were added to the lot by the turn of the 19th century. A small dwelling was constructed on the lot facing Sophia Street around 1822; it was dismantled by 1850 (Cooke et al. 2005: 35).

After the Civil War, impermanent activities on the site continued, with several businesses

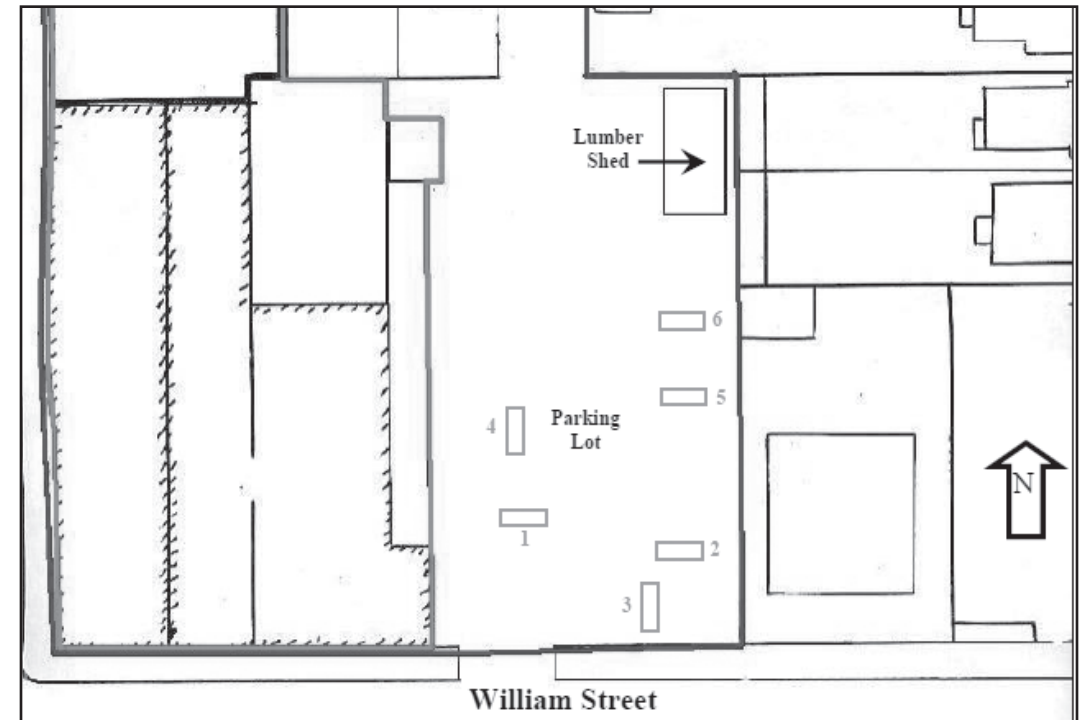


Figure 16. Location of the backhoe trenches placed in the parking lot of the Fredericksburg Hardware Store site. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2007.) Not to scale.

and buildings coming and going. It was the site of a sawmill in the 1870s (FIG. 18), a coal and wood yard in the 1890s and 1900s, and a lumberyard in the 1910s. The lumberyard, operated by J. W. Masters, contained one warehouse, but no other buildings (Cooke et al. 2005: 41–42). It remained in operation until the 1950s. The lot to the west that fronts Caroline Street became the site of the seven-story Executive Plaza building in 1970, and the eastern half of the parcel was paved for use as an associated parking area.

Using the archival research and overlays of the historical locations of the warehouses, dwelling, and sawmill once on the lot, CRI excavated four 50 × 8 ft. trenches to locate evidence of previous lot use (Cooke et al. 2005). The wider trench width was selected knowing the ephemeral nature of wood-framed warehouse remains, with the wider trenches offering a broader horizontal exposure to identify structural posts. The backhoe trenches were augmented with the excavation of three 3 × 3 ft. test units. During the work the archaeologists found no artifacts or features. It was



Figure 17. Salvage excavation to uncover the stoneware fragments buried under the Fredericksburg Hardware Store building. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2012.)

determined that the lot, which once sloped down from west to east toward the river, was greatly altered during construction of the Executive Plaza parking area. The entire area was first scraped, and soils were intermixed, and then soil from the western half was distributed across the eastern half (FIG. 19). This resulted in three strata in all backhoe trenches and test units: pavement atop a 2.5–3 ft. thick 1970 construction zone, over natural sterile subsoil (Cooke et al. 2005: 66).

While the archaeological results were negative for cultural deposits, the methodology employed at the Sophia/Wolfe Street Parking Garage project area allowed the team to closely examine the taphonomic factors that led to a cultural void in the center of the historic core. The same data would not have been as readily



Figure 19. View to north of a backhoe trench dug during the Sophia/Wolfe Street Parking Garage study; Executive Plaza building in background. (Photo by CRI, 2005.)

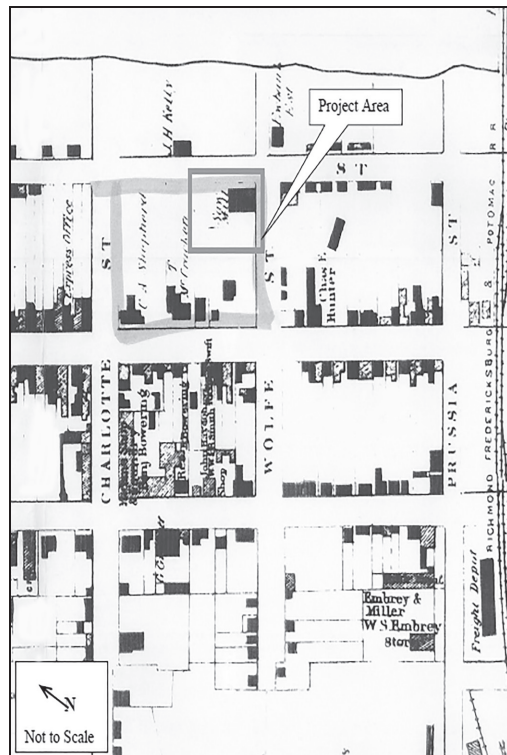


Figure 18. Map of Fredericksburg showing the location of the Sophia/Wolfe Street Parking Garage site excavation area, 1878. (Cook et al. 2005).

obtained through standard shovel testing or auguring, leaving research questions unanswered.

### Summary

Urban environments, by their nature, are transient. Unfortunately, “over time, the physical processes of construction, demolition, rebuilding and filling can seriously compromise or even destroy a site” (Samford 1996: 77). However, previous excavations of the urban landscape have proven how important the recovery of archaeological remains from inner-city venues can be, in places “altered to accommodate modernization and changing urban needs” (Young 2000: 2). The importance of archaeological study in Fredericksburg is paramount, as much of the city’s earliest fabric has been covered by later development. Despite these improvements, though, vestiges of earlier times can be found across the urban core. Archaeologists need to use the appropriate methodology to find them.

Since the early 1990s, successful projects in the city have used an alternative methodology to understand parcel occupation and changes over time. While intensive archival research is often not required as a component of archaeo-

logical Phase I surveys, conducting this research at the outset of an urban survey is required. The pattern of site abandonment and rebuilding is different on urban sites than on rural sites, rendering research a requirement, e.g., Kent (1990). Through a careful analysis of past use, including activities that left traces on the subsurface record, archaeologists can determine the areas with the highest probability to contain intact deposits before entering the field. This allows for a more targeted field approach. Historical data overlaid on modern cartographic images highlights areas for backhoe trenching, including areas where historical finds are expected, and also where they are not, in order to provide background data. Systematic shovel testing, while an exceptionally appropriate technique for open areas, is not often a suitable field method for urban environments due to its limited scope, small footprint, and inability to provide data on complex urban settings for making informed decisions for future work.

Through the use of archival research and backhoe studies, field results can be compared to other sites in the city to identify deposits that have the greatest potential for shedding light on unknown facets of history, thus allowing urban archaeologists to meet one of the greatest goals of historical archaeology—giving voice to people of the past. Powell predicted in 1962 (Powell 1962: 583) that, “[a]s our cities become more and more involved in urban renewal, and as the public recognition of the loss of historical values becomes more vocal, more of us will be called on to dig in city sites.” It is hoped that a more nuanced dialogue on the methodologies used to explore these sites will help achieve the goal of adding insights into past cultures and past lives through archaeological inquiry.

### Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thanks to Brad Hatch and Kerry (Schamel) González for organizing this issue and allowing this article to be included in this important roster of Fredericksburg articles. The studies presented here reflect the hard work of dozens of historians and archaeologists from several firms, including Dovetail and CRI, all of whom have added important information to the growing

knowledge of Fredericksburg’s past. Most importantly, thank you to the Center for Historic Preservation and Department of Historic Preservation staff at the University of Mary Washington. Their decades-long commitment to Fredericksburg history and educating future preservationists is the reason many of us got into the field and stick around to see how the story turns out.

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