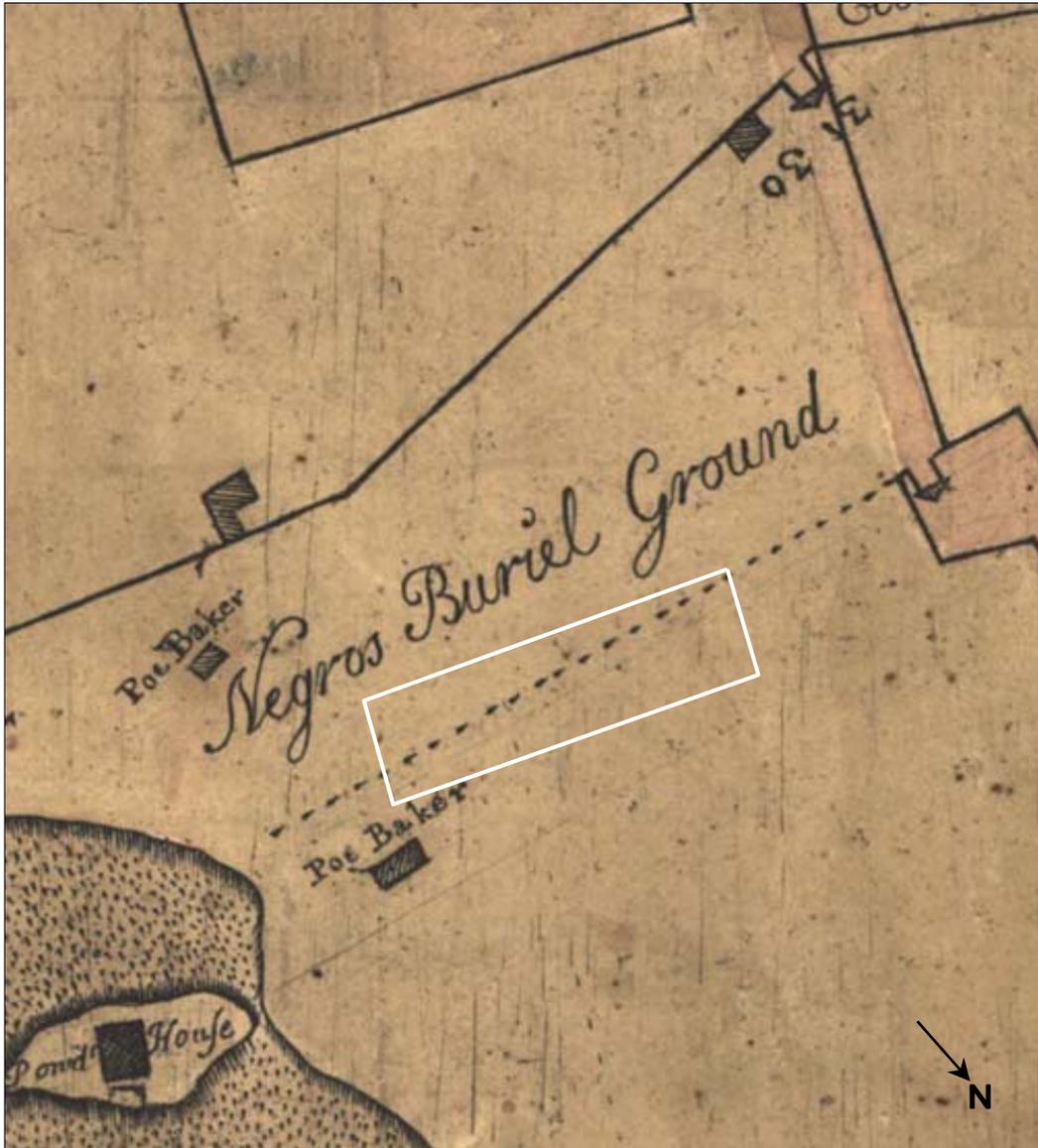


**NEW YORK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND
ARCHAEOLOGY FINAL REPORT
VOLUME 1**

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*Cover art: Detail of Maerschalk Plan (Francis Maerschalk, 1754) with an overlay showing the location of
the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Library of Congress.*

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PROLOGUE

In 1992 I received a phone call from my friend and colleague, Dr. Michael Blakey, who at the time was on the faculty at Howard University. He was calling to ask me to head up the archaeological component of the African Burial Ground Project. I had mixed emotions: I was flattered and excited but also found the challenge frightening. Would I be able to handle the responsibility for a site important to my discipline of anthropology but also to the African-American community of New York, my city, the city in which I was reared?

I came to archaeology later in life than many of my contemporaries, starting graduate work at City University of New York in the late 1970s. Some of my earliest experiences in the field were at sites associated with 19th-century African-American communities, including Brooklyn's Weeksville (investigated by Burt Salwen) and the oystering community at Sandy Ground, Staten Island (investigated by Robert Schuyler). These projects helped turn attention within archaeology to the presence of African Americans in New York. As my training continued, it became clear to me that to obtain a greater understanding of Africans in New York and in the Diaspora in general, it would be advantageous to conduct archaeological research in Africa.

While teaching as an adjunct in the Anthropology Department at City College, I had the good fortune of befriending Mpiwa Mbatha, a Zulu who taught sociocultural anthropology. He sparked my interest in the emergence of the Zulu kingdom in the 19th century, and with help from him and others I was able to spend nine months in Swaziland conducting regional survey. My research was part of a general critique of then-current theories of the rise of the Zulu kingdom, and the settlement data contributed to a revised picture of social upheaval. In the newer thinking, the Zulu kingdom was part of a series of responses to havoc in the interior of southern Africa caused by late 18th century European penetration spearheaded by an illegal trade in captive Africans. My research allowed me to integrate issues of settlement analysis, the political economy of racism, and forms of domination and resistance, all being discussed by historical archaeologists at that time.

Dr. Blakey's invitation would allow me to continue investigating the hidden and marginalized histories of the African Diaspora, participate in an increasingly important sub-field within American archaeology, bring the themes of domination and resistance to a new set of data, and to work with my people. It was also a time, the 1990s, when archaeologists in North America increasingly worked closely with descendant communities, in part because of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. I knew that the African American community of New York City had been instrumental in shaping the project's direction. And I knew, in ways that I suspected others did not know, about the complexity of this community and about the damage caused from having our history hidden from us.

Growing up in the South Bronx, I was taught in elementary school during the late 1940s and early 1950s that I was fortunate to live in New York City and not in the south, because black folks were enslaved in the south but were “free” in the north. This “fortune” was belied when I looked around the school and saw no teachers or administrators, let alone principals, who were people of color. The only people of color were black women working in the lunchroom and one black man who was a maintenance worker. Almost all of the students were of African descent, and a few were Puerto Rican. I never knew if we were supposed to be oblivious to this disjuncture, or to accept secondary status and be thankful that we lived in the north.

Our received vision of Africa was no different. I remember being shown a cartoon of loincloth-clad African men with bones in their noses and negatively exaggerated lips and eyes, holding spears and dancing around two white men with pith helmets in a pot of boiling water. The message was clear: I was fortunate to have been descended from Africans who were brought to New York and “saved” by Lincoln, rather than left in the “jungles” of Africa with those cannibalistic “savages,” my ancestors. It was painful to be black in New York City and subjected to an educational system that taught us that Africans had no history until Europeans rescued us from ourselves.

On the other hand, I had parents and grandparents who instilled black pride in my brother and me, and demonstrated to us that we *did* have a history beyond, and in spite of, captivity in the United States. They taught us about our own family, in particular my great-grandfather, Christopher J. Perry I, who in 1884 founded Philadelphia’s first black newspaper, the Philadelphia Tribune. They introduced us to the achievements of W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson, Sojourner Truth and other black leaders who were not part of the New York City school curriculum.

I received another lesson in African Diaspora history in 1963, when I heard Malcolm X speak about the link between Africa and African-Americans at a Black Muslim rally on 125th Street (or 25th Street, as it was known to young, streetwise black youth). During his speech a listener taunted him: “I ain’t left nothing in Africa!” Malcolm replied, “You left your mind in Africa.” I understood Malcolm’s reply to mean that Europeans had attempted, through coercion and control, to remove African Diaspora peoples from their African heritage, history, and identity. Since that time, I have drawn strength from the memory of Malcolm’s passion and commitment as I delved into the relationship between Africa and the African Diaspora. I resolved to learn the truth about African people in Africa and the Diaspora and to challenge the Euro-centric conceptions of who we were and what our history had been.

In 1991, I was a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York’s Graduate Anthropology Program, specializing in archaeology. At that time there were only three postdoctoral-level archaeologists of color in the United States (Warren Barber, Theresa Singleton and Laura Henley Dean). Late one night I was awakened by a knock at the door of my South Bronx apartment. Errol Maitland, my friend and former City College student, and an acquaintance from the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, had come to discuss the newly rediscovered African Burial Ground. They urged me, as a black archaeologist, to become involved in the project. I was deeply immersed in my doctoral dissertation

and despite my commitment to the principles embodied in the project, I could not dedicate the time and effort it would require. I recommended that they contact Dr. Blakey. When I received Blakey's phone call in 1992, however, I committed to joining the project as soon as I had completed my Ph.D. In 1993, Howard University took control of the project, and in 1994 I became the Associate Director for Archaeology.

I knew that I could not accomplish such a daunting and important task without capable, dedicated colleagues. Early in my association with the project, I attended an interfaith service at the African Burial Ground site. I stood on the sacred ground that held my ancestors, and asked them for help and guidance in retelling the lost histories of their



Egunfemi Adegbolola, Chief Alagba of New York, commemorating the ancestors in a Yoruba ceremony at the African Burial Ground. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

lives. I soon received a response as, one by one, the colleagues I asked to join the team accepted what I see as a calling from the ancestors.

I feel proud and privileged to have been asked to be a part of a multidisciplinary research undertaking aimed at telling the world the story of the ancestors. I am committed to the African Burial Ground Project both as a member of the descendant community and as a member of the academic community, and there are very few people in that zone of overlap. I stood and still stand with my feet in each world: this project, with all its stresses rewards, has allowed me to be whole.

The significance of the African Burial Ground extends beyond its importance to the African-American community. The history of this cemetery and of those buried here speaks to the complex history of the United States, with all its diverse populations, and to an even larger, world history. Understanding is diminished when African people, women, and subaltern or working class communities are marginalized; their omission from our collective historical consciousness has negative implications for all.

Warren R. Perry
New Britain, Connecticut
February 2006

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The Howard University Archaeology Team is grateful to the community members and the church, civic, and cultural organizations that paid close attention to the African Burial Ground Project over the years. Their support made this work possible, and their questions helped us to sharpen our inquiry.

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Dr. Blakey helped us to clarify and share the archaeological findings by organizing a series of multidisciplinary Sankofa Conferences, sponsored by Howard University and the College of William and Mary, that brought together the project's geographically dispersed research teams and other scholars of Africa and the African Diaspora. We wish to thank all of the participants, particularly Selwyn H.H. Carrington, Alan Goodman, Fatimah Jackson, Mark Mack, Edna Greene Medford, and Leslie Rankin-Hill. Kofi Agorsah, Augustin Holl, Bob Paynter, and Chris DeCorse helped formulate and refine archaeological issues. Chris Moore, Grey Gundaker, and T. J. Davis, among others, shared their insights on historical questions raised by the archaeological findings.

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Dr. Sherrill Wilson, Director of the New York African Burial Ground Project's Office of Public Education and Interpretation, shared her considerable knowledge of New York's African American history, helped broaden the research by pointing out important sources, opened her library to us, provided the roster on escapee advertisements, read early drafts of the report, and ensured that our findings were brought to thousands of schoolchildren and the wider public.

Meta Janowitz shared her knowledge of Dutch New York and of the 18th-century stoneware that was so ubiquitous at the African Burial Ground site, discussed archaeological issues, read early drafts of several chapters, and generally provided good cheer in the New York laboratory.

The archaeological investigation was begun by the late Edward S. Rutsch of Historic Conservation and Interpretation, and we thank him for first proving that graves were still intact at the African Burial Ground and for assembling the field team. Obviously, without the field records no analysis would have been possible. We thank Field Director Michael Parrington, Brian Ludwig, and the entire field staff, along with members of the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team, for their efforts in conducting and recording the excavations under difficult conditions. Special thanks go to Margo Schur and the other site artists who carefully drew each burial; and to Dennis Seckler for the photographs. Margo also assisted us by answering questions about field recording procedures. Initial laboratory processing of burial related artifacts was under the direction of Linda Stone and subsequently Gary McGowan of JMA. Charles Cheek was in charge of the analysis of the non-burial component of the 290 Broadway site, and we thank him for generously sharing early drafts of his site report and answering our questions as we proceeded with our analysis.

Numerous local libraries and archives yielded resources for our analysis. We thank the staffs of the following for helping us track down materials and answering our questions: the New York Public Library and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; the New-York Historical Society; the New York State Archives; the Brooklyn Public Library; the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society; the Municipal Archives of the City of New York; the Trinity Church Archives; and the John Street Methodist Church.

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human remains. Ann F. Budd, Department of Geology, University of Iowa, provided identifications of coral specimens from the African Burial Ground. John Boyd of the U.S. Customs Service Federal Crime Laboratory performed spectrograph analysis on the silver pendant. Michelle Gilbert guided us through the literature on adornment in Ghana. Fatimah Jackson, Kofi Agorsah, Muhammad Hatim, and Sylviane Diouf provided information about Islamic burial practices. Cheryl LaRoche answered questions about the conservation of artifacts from the burials. Jason Narvaez and Jennifer Arnett provided technical advice on report graphics.

Howard University provided technical staff for digitizing the site map. We thank Robert Bethea for overseeing the initial digitizing, and technicians Percival Taylor and Marques Roberts, who, along with Ruth Mathis and Iciar Lucena Narvaez, patiently refined, double-checked, and corrected the base mapping.

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This report has benefited greatly from the careful critiques of the members of the Advisory Review Board: Diana DiZerega Wall, Theresa Singleton, and Frank McManamon. We are grateful for their excellent suggestions. The interpretations offered herein, along with any errors or omissions, remain our own.

.....

Howard University gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the African Burial Ground Project directors, under the leadership of Dr. Michael L. Blakey, and the editors, authors, research team members, and research consultants for their contributions to the Archaeology Final Report. A tremendous debt of gratitude is owed to the three members of the Advisory Review Board, jointly appointed by the U.S. General Services Administration and Howard University, for the excellence and professionalism of the critiques they provided for the several iterations of this report.

Mr. David Austin, coordinator of duplicating services, College of Arts and Sciences, was responsible for copying and binding the report.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Jean Howson, Leonard G. Bianchi, and Warren R. Perry

This report is one of three disciplinary reports on the African Burial Ground Project. One report focuses on the skeletal biological analysis of the remains recovered from the site (Blakey and Rankin Hill 2004). A second report focuses on the documentary history, from a Diasporic perspective, of Africans who lived and died in early New York (Medford 2004). The present report, consisting of four volumes, presents the archaeological research on the African Burial Ground. General background on the African Burial Ground project is presented in the beginning of the skeletal biology component report (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2004). Here we provide background information that is specifically relevant to the excavated site, the archaeological fieldwork undertaken in 1991-92 (its planning, personnel, extent, duration, termination, etc.), and the analysis and disposition of non-skeletal material from the excavation.¹

First, we review briefly the history of the project (from a regulatory standpoint), list the questions posed in the research design for archaeology, and explain the organization of this report. The subsequent sections provide a description of fieldwork, with a summary of burials recovered, and a discussion of laboratory procedures and methods. The impact of the September 11, 2001 attack on World Trade Center (where the archaeological laboratory was housed) and the decision-making and logistical efforts that went into the reburial of archaeological collections in October 2003 are described.

1.A. Project background and organization of the report

The site, the Section 106 process, and the Memoranda of Agreement

The African Burial Ground is located in lower Manhattan, New York City and County. The portion of the cemetery that has been investigated archaeologically is located on Block 154, which is bounded on the north by Duane Street, on the south by Reade Street, on the west by Broadway, and on the east by Elk Street (Figure 1.1). It lay within the proposed construction site for the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building, part of the Foley Square Project of the General Services Administration (GSA). During the planning process for the construction undertaking, GSA addressed a series of environmental regulatory issues, and retained the services of an engineering firm, Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Among the tasks performed under that contract was archaeological research, pursuant to the

¹ The site included historic archaeological components that were not related to the cemetery. A separate report on the history, archaeological excavation, and analysis of these components is in preparation by John Milner Associates for the General Services Administration (Cheek 2003).

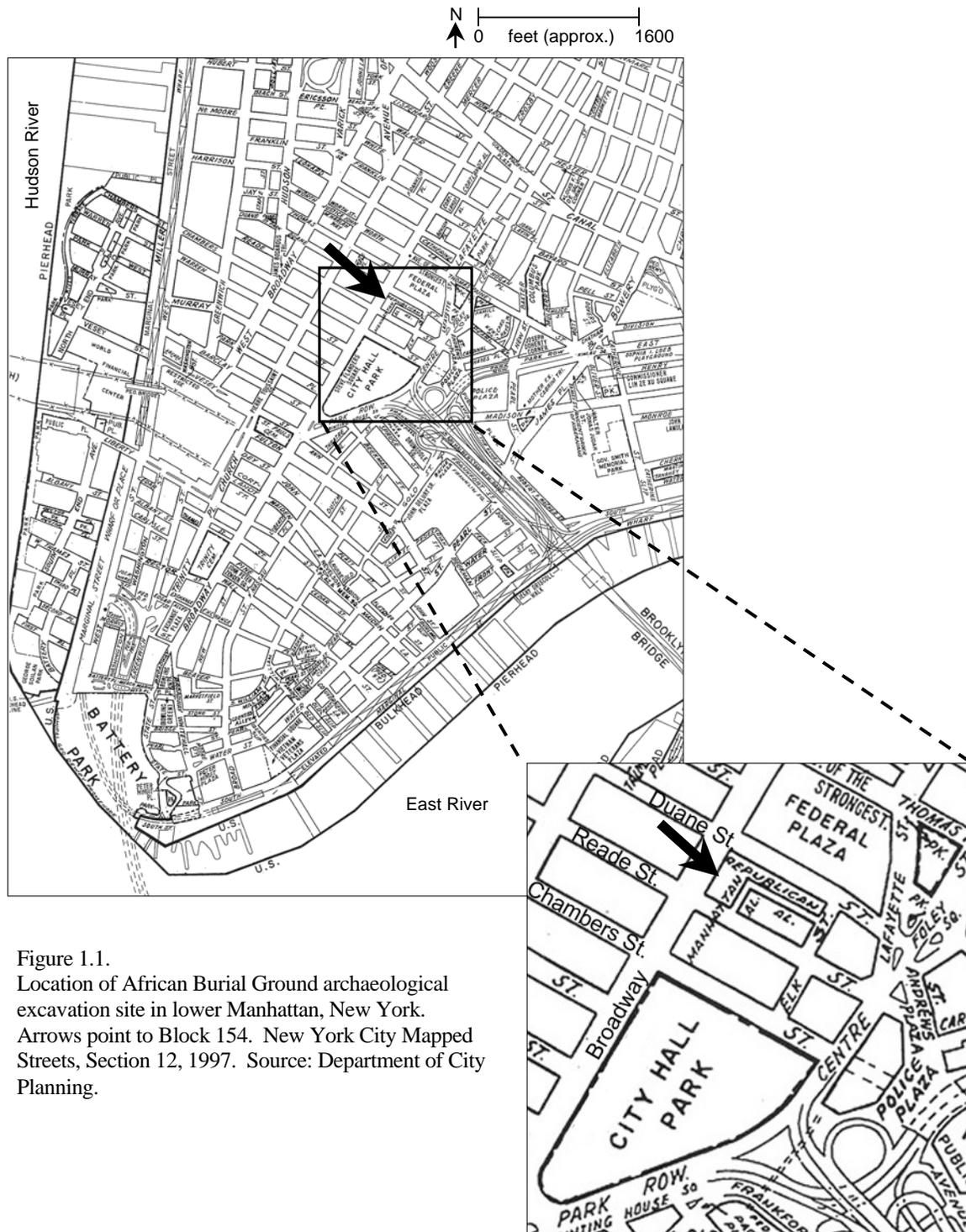


Figure 1.1.
Location of African Burial Ground archaeological
excavation site in lower Manhattan, New York.
Arrows point to Block 154. New York City Mapped
Streets, Section 12, 1997. Source: Department of City
Planning.

instructions and intents set forth by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The firm hired a cultural resources sub-consultant, Historic Conservation and Interpretation (HCI), in 1989, and HCI prepared a “Stage 1A” documentary study in order to determine the potential for archaeological resources within the Foley Square project areas, including Block 154 (Ingle et al. 1989).²

That background study, which was incorporated into the Foley Square Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, indicated the possible presence of remains associated with the African Burial Ground within the project’s footprint, and recommended a limited program of archaeological testing.³ In brief, while much of the block was thought to have been thoroughly disturbed by several phases of building construction, three areas were thought to have been left undisturbed or minimally disturbed: the alignment of Republican Alley (an alley that had been laid out in the late 18th century and never built upon), former Lot 12, and portions of former Lots 20/20½/21 (Figure 1.2). These three areas were targeted for archaeological testing. Even though preservation potential was considered fairly low, it was argued that any extant remains of the cemetery would be highly significant and eligible for the National Register.

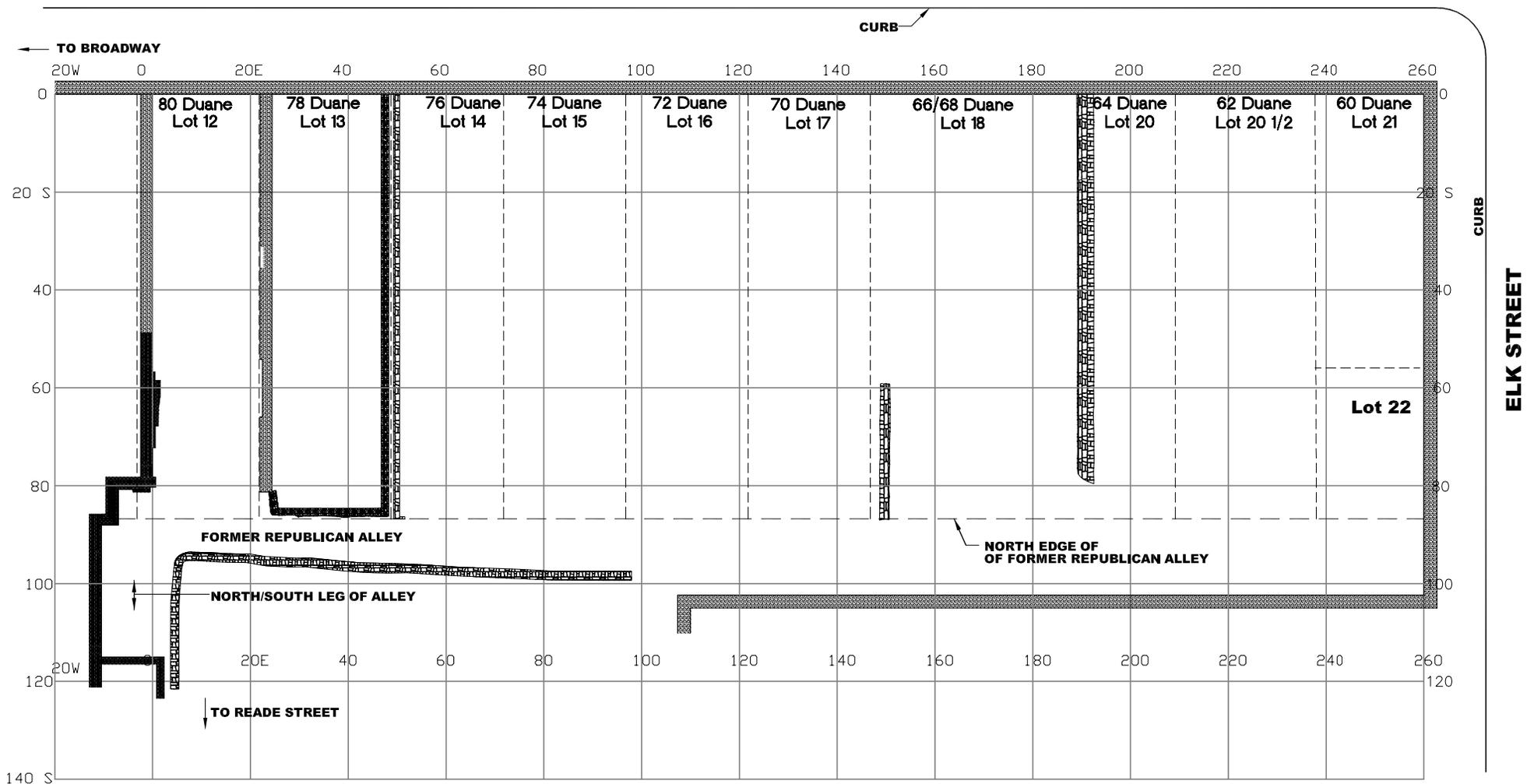
A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and GSA in March of 1989. The MOA stipulated that archaeological investigations would be conducted at the project area in accordance with a research design (to be prepared by GSA with consultation) that would establish categories of historic significance; that if archaeological materials were found they would be evaluated and treated in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Documentation* (48 FR 44734-37) and the *Section 110 Guidelines*, in conformance with the research design and for purposes of Section 106 compliance; that such features and materials would be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; and that GSA, with consultation, would determine appropriate levels of mitigation.

Though the MOA was in place, archaeological fieldwork failed to proceed within the usual phased framework, in which testing designed to determine the extent and integrity of resources would have been followed by evaluation and consultation on mitigation or avoidance. The full horizontal and vertical extent of the intact graves was never determined in a “testing” phase. Rather, when archaeological testing conducted by GSA’s consultant HCI and Interpretation beginning in May of 1991 revealed the presence of intact burials at the rear of Lot 12, GSA adopted full archaeological excavation as the mitigation strategy. At first, it was assumed that only a small area would contain intact graves, but ultimately graves were found to extend from the former north-south leg of Republican Alley to the eastern extent of the project site. The initial documentary

² A second component of the Foley Square Project was the new Federal Courthouse, located on Block 160 several blocks east of the 290 Broadway site. The Courthouse archaeological investigation resulted in excavation of the Five Points Site (Yamin 2000).

³ Other potential resources identified in the “IA” report included remains associated with 18th-century potteries and with residential development dating to the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Subsequent archaeological research on the non-burial components of the 290 Broadway site is detailed in a separate report (Cheek 2003).

DUANE STREET



LEGEND

- FORMER PROPERTY LINE
- + SITE GRID
- ▨ BURIED FOUNDATION

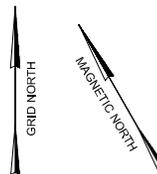


Figure 1.2
 Plan Of Archaeological Excavation Area Showing
 Former Property Lines And Alley In Relation To Streets
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

research, as well as analysis of subsequent test borings, had failed to adequately determine the full depth of fill – as much as 25 feet in the eastern area at Elk Street – covering the original site. This fill had protected hundreds of graves, and the discovery of this level of preservation came as a surprise.

Mitigation through full data recovery continued to be pursued up until July of 1992, when, in the face of mounting public pressure, the field excavations were shut down by GSA. In the meantime, an amendment to the MOA was signed in December of 1991 by the Advisory Council, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and GSA. This amendment stipulated, in part: preparation of a Research Design by GSA's consultant, HCI; that burial excavations would continue once field safety issues were addressed; that GSA, in consultation with the Council, LPC, and Interested Parties, would determine the appropriate level of analysis of the human remains; that GSA, in consultation with Interested Parties and the City of New York, would ensure the respectful and dignified treatment of all human remains recovered; that human remains would be reburied; and that GSA would commemorate the cemetery with a memorial, develop exhibit space in 290 Broadway, and produce a video documentary on the project. The General Services Administration remained, and still remains, the agency responsible for compliance with Section 106 and implementation of the MOA as amended.

Ultimately, the field excavations were halted prior to the preparation of an acceptable research design – partly because of the lack of such a document – at the end of July, 1992 (for background on the political struggles surrounding the burial excavations, see Chapter One of the Skeletal Biology Report [Blakey 2004]). By that time, HCI had been replaced as GSA's archaeological consultant by John Milner Associates (July 1, 1992), and biocultural anthropologist Dr. Michael Blakey, then of Howard University and currently of the College of William and Mary, had consulted at the site and participated in GSA's public meetings. Portions of the project site had had all burials removed, while in others graves were either known still to be in place or were presumed to be (see Chapter 3 below for a discussion of site conditions before, during and after the project). The footprint of the 34-story office tower had been completely excavated, while the "Pavilion" area, the proposed site of a smaller structure, had not. Thus, due to the timing of the cessation of excavation, construction of the main tower building could proceed.

Research design

In late 1992 Blakey was appointed Scientific Director of the African Burial Ground Project and in 1993 Howard University received a contract to conduct the post-excavation research. A research design prepared by Howard University and John Milner Associates (JMA) was accepted by GSA, after comments had been received from consulting agencies (the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation), in the spring of that year. This document covered both the African Burial Ground and the non-Burial Ground components of the 290 Broadway project site. It stated that the African Burial Ground meets two of the Evaluation Criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places: Criterion "a" (association with the broad patterns of our history) and Criterion "d" (having the potential to yield

important information about the past) -- and indeed, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark in April 1993 (see Howson and Harris 1992, reproduced in Appendix A). A finding of “No Adverse Effect” was not possible even with full archaeological data recovery, since both Criteria “a” and “d” were cited. Partial mitigation of the adverse effects of the construction of 290 Broadway was to include programs of data analysis, curation, and education.

The research design listed numerous research questions to be addressed in the data recovery program. It specified the following for the non-skeletal archaeological analysis (pp. 41-47):⁴

- What spatial variation can be seen in burial types in the African Burial Ground and what cultural explanations can be offered for this variation?
- What taphonomic forces have acted upon the cemetery and how have they affected the skeletal data base?
- What can be learned about the distribution of different types of coffins, coffin size differences, coffin decoration, and coffin manufacturing techniques?
- What cultural and temporal information can be obtained from the study and analysis of artifacts found in grave pits and in coffin fills?

These questions and many others are addressed in subsequent chapters of this report. In addition to goals of the research design, however, the project team has had a complementary agenda that emerged from the process of public engagement. Four topics of overarching concern to the community were identified during this process: 1) The cultural background and origins of the burial population; 2) the cultural and biological transformations from African to African-American identities; 3) the quality of life brought about by enslavement in the Americas; and 4) the modes of resistance to enslavement. Our archaeological analyses ultimately are designed to provide information relevant to these issues. They are addressed as appropriate throughout this report as described in the following section.

Report organization

Our approach begins with due attention to and respect for the individual graves that archaeologists excavated during 1991 and 1992. There were no mass graves at the African Burial Ground, and few were shared by more than one person. The “making of the African Burial Ground” involved funeral after funeral, carried out for individuals by their survivors one by one, week after week, year in and year out. In keeping with the Howard University team’s respect for the gravity of excavating such a cemetery archaeologically, the disinterment of each individual grave at the cemetery is described in Volumes 2 and 3 of this report. By providing basic information on how each burial was found, what the grave contained, the condition of the remains, the age and sex of the

⁴ Beyond posing these questions, the bulk of the research design for archaeology described field methods (after the fact) and outlined methods for specific materials analysis. It should be noted that none of the authors of the current report participated in the preparation of the Research Design.

individual, and whether and how it overlapped with other graves, a partial and admittedly inadequate reconstruction of the original interment is made possible.

Volume 1 is organized as follows. The remainder of *Chapter 1* describes the fieldwork (including a list of burials excavated) and laboratory methods, the impact of the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the reburial of archaeological materials. *Chapter 2* provides historical background and context. It comprises two parts: first, a document-based chronological history of the burial ground (including its origin, the development of its surrounds, and its closing); and second, a comparison of documentary evidence about African funeral practices in New York and in the African Diaspora. In *Chapter 3* we describe the archaeological site as such, including the original landform, post-cemetery development of the parcel, the condition of the graves, and the limits of excavation. Next, *Chapter 4* presents our methodology for arriving at temporal groupings of the graves that were excavated at the site, from early to late. Before turning to each temporal group, *Chapter 5* presents an overview of the mortuary population, burial practices, and spatial arrangement of the African Burial Ground, as observed through the archaeological investigation. Attention is paid to the use of coffins, grave orientation, body position, co-interment, shrouding and clothing the dead, and the presence of personal adornment and other items in association with the dead. *Chapters 6 through 9* cover the chronological groupings of burials, providing overviews of the town of New York, population figures, and discussions of the material culture and spatial arrangement of burials. Selected unique and unusual graves from each group are described. *Chapters 10 through 14* deal with specific categories of mortuary material culture: coffins, pins and shrouding, clothing, adornment, and other burial items. Throughout the chapters, we address interpretive themes of social identity, enslavement and resistance to bondage, mortuary practice and spiritual and cultural agency, and the role of the African Burial Ground in creating and sustaining a community. *Chapter 15* provides a conclusion. All appendices are in Volume 4.

1.B. Archaeological fieldwork

Archaeological testing commenced in May 1991 in Lot 12 (Figure 1.2). A backhoe was used to excavate test trenches within the front portion of the lot and within the former footprint of Republican Alley, where African Burial Ground graves were considered most likely to have survived. Human remains, which subsequently were determined likely to be from the eastern half of Burial 1 and from other disturbed burials in the area, were discovered during excavation of “Trench D” within Republican Alley in June. At that time machine excavation of the immediately surrounding area was halted until GSA decided to proceed with hand excavation of burials and arrangements for appropriate site preparation, including the shoring of the excavation perimeter and construction of an access ramp, could be made. Subsequently, fieldwork proceeded with a combination of machine-aided clearing and hand excavation, and shelters were constructed to protect the exposed graves and the excavators, and these temporary structures were heated and lighted once fieldwork progressed into the winter months (Figures 1.2 through 1.5). As each successive shelter was constructed (they were progressively more substantial), it



Figure 1.3.
Backhoe clearing adjacent to temporary
archaeological excavation shelter early in the
fieldwork.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 1.4.
Excavation shelter erected to allow night and
winter work.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 1.5.
Archaeologists working under lights. Teams of
two worked on each burial excavation, and the
density of the graves made for close quarters
inside the shelters.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 1.6.
Construction of the 290 Broadway Federal
building proceeded during the archaeological
fieldwork. The archaeological excavation
shelter is visible at the rear. The view is
toward the southeast.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

was designated with a letter from “Structure A” to “Structure G” (hence many of the field records including artifact bag labels included a structure letter).

HCI conducted the field excavations through the end of June 1992, when JMA assumed the project as GSA’s new archaeology consultant. Most of the burial ground field staff was retained, including Site Director Michael Parrington. Excavation personnel are listed in the acknowledgements.

No member of the Howard University archaeology team participated in the fieldwork at the site, although members of the skeletal biology staff did so for brief periods. The lack of continuity of personnel between the fieldwork and analytical phases of research is common in public archaeology, and can result in loss of information. Every effort has been made to minimize such loss in the current project. Procedures followed for excavation of burials have been reconstructed from records kept by HCI and JMA, with the aid of the description contained in the 1992 Research Design. In addition, we consulted with various members of the field staff regarding methods, both during the period when our staffs overlapped at the laboratory, and later during the preparation of this report.

Procedures

Survey and mapping

A site grid was established aligned with the street grid and property lines. The north-south base line (0’ East) was the west edge of Lot 12, along the interior (east) side of an extant concrete wall. The east-west base line (0’ South) was located where the north-south line intersected the front edge of Lot 12, along Duane Street. Drawings and maps were plotted with reference to east and south coordinates on this grid, and all horizontal measurements were taken in feet and tenths of feet.

A site datum designated “A” was established with an elevation measured at 27.50 feet above mean sea level (Sandy Hook). A series of sub-datum points was used throughout the excavations. Grid coordinates were recorded for some, and for each the depth below the site datum was recorded (Appendix B). All depths recorded in the field for burial features were taken from these sub-datum points, and therefore can be converted readily to absolute elevations relative to sea level. Vertical measurements in the field were taken in feet, tenths, and hundredths. Depths recorded on the field drawings and forms simply needed to be subtracted from the elevations of the datum points listed for each burial. All elevations referred to in this report are absolute elevations, not excavation depths.

Clearing

Clearing of the massive amounts of fill and building material overlying the graves was accomplished by machine (excavators and backhoes). In some areas this task resulted in damage to graves, discussed in Chapter 3 below. Once overburden was removed to a level believed to be just above burials, or once burial outlines or tops of coffins were

exposed, hand clearing commenced. In some areas, historic features post-dating the burial ground were encountered prior to graves, and were excavated first or in conjunction with adjacent burials (see the report on the 290 Broadway non-burial site component in Cheek 2003). The need to construct excavation shelters and shoring facilities, safety issues, and of course the construction activity for 290 Broadway that was carried on simultaneously with the archaeological fieldwork, complicated the excavation strategy. Building construction access ramps, perimeter walls, and underpinning for adjacent 22 Reade Street caused delays and damage during clearing of burial ground areas. As each shelter was built, or in some cases when it was dismantled, graves located beneath its sills had to be identified and excavated.

In general, the site was cleared for archaeological excavation from west to east, beginning with the rear of Lot 12 and the north-south leg of Republican Alley. As the months of fieldwork progressed, GSA identified a "Critical Area" for priority excavation, that being the footprint of the tower building. This area was cleared more speedily by machine than the westernmost area had been, in order to provide quicker access for the archaeological team. There is no question that site clearing was accomplished under less than optimal standards from the point of view of archaeological investigation. The pressure to move forward with building construction forced compromises with the scientific program, such that historic features above the level of the graves were often stripped, and the opportunity to examine the site carefully for remnants of the original ground surface was lost. It is probably no accident that the only portion of the site for which an extant 18th-century cemetery surface was identified was the first area excavated, the north-south leg of Republican Alley. Here, the upper few feet of fill were mechanically removed, but lower layers of fill were excavated by hand with shovels.

In parts of the site (Lot 12; the westernmost section of Republican Alley; Lots 201/2 and 22), numbered Excavation Units (5- or 10-foot squares) were opened. When excavation of these units revealed burial outlines, the burial excavation proceeded separately from the rest of the unit. Non-burial excavation units are described in a separate report (Cheek 2003).

Burial identification and numbering

When a presumed burial was discovered or soon after, it was given a number. Burial numbering was consecutive. All records and objects related to the burial used this number, including recordation forms, artifact boxes and bags, and wrapped skeletal remains. A total of 435 burial numbers were assigned during the fieldwork at the African Burial Ground, but there were not this many actual interments. Some of the contexts referred to by these numbers subsequently were determined not to be burials, or were determined to be parts of other burials. Also, some of the burials excavated contained no surviving human remains. This was due either to complete decay or, as appears to be the case for at least two graves, the coffin was placed in the ground empty or remains were removed in the past. Table 1.1 summarizes the cases with no human remains. The total number of graves identified was 424, and the total number of individuals for whom any skeletal remains could be inventoried numbered 419. All burials that could be identified

as such, whether or not human remains had survived, were included in the archaeological analysis to the extent possible (e.g., they were considered in the stratigraphic, spatial, and chronological analyses, and in the distributions of artifacts where such survived). In a few interments, Burials 301, 329, 391, and 420, skeletal analysis revealed the presence of remains from more than one individual within a burial context.

Table 1.1.	
Assigned burial numbers	
with no discrete human remains associated	
Burial Number	Explanation
62	Remains were determined to be from Burial 76.
74	No remains extant (empty child coffin?).
92	Remains were determined to be from Burial 96.
129	No remains extant (burial with empty coffin - adult size, hexagonal).
139	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
140	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
141	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
145	No remains extant (burial with empty coffin - adult size, hexagonal).
206	No remains extant (infant coffin).
220	No remains extant (infant coffin).
231	No remains extant (infant coffin).
232	No remains extant (infant coffin).
233	No remains extant (infant coffin).
261	No remains extant (adult coffin, disturbed).
269	Remains were determined to be from Burial 293.
296	No remains extant (infant coffin) (a tooth bud was later found in the laboratory).
359	No remains extant (partial coffin).
360	No remains extant.
378	Burial left in place in 1992.
381	Burial left in place in 1992.
401	Coffin remains only, determined to be from Burial 352.
407	Determined not to be a burial.
409	Determined not to be a burial.
411	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
421	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
422	Possible coffin remains only, no human bone.
423	Grave with coffin identified but no human remains exposed <i>in situ</i> , left in place in 1992.
426	Grave with coffin identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
429	Grave with coffin identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
430	Grave with coffin identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
433	Burial left in place in 1992.
434	Burial left in place in 1992.
435	Burial left in place in 1992.

Basic burial data is contained in Appendix C. A list of the excavated burials is provided in Table 1.2, located at the end of this chapter, which should be used along with Figure 1.7 (the Site Plan, located at rear of this volume); a full description of the disinterment of each burial will be found in Volumes 2 and 3.⁵

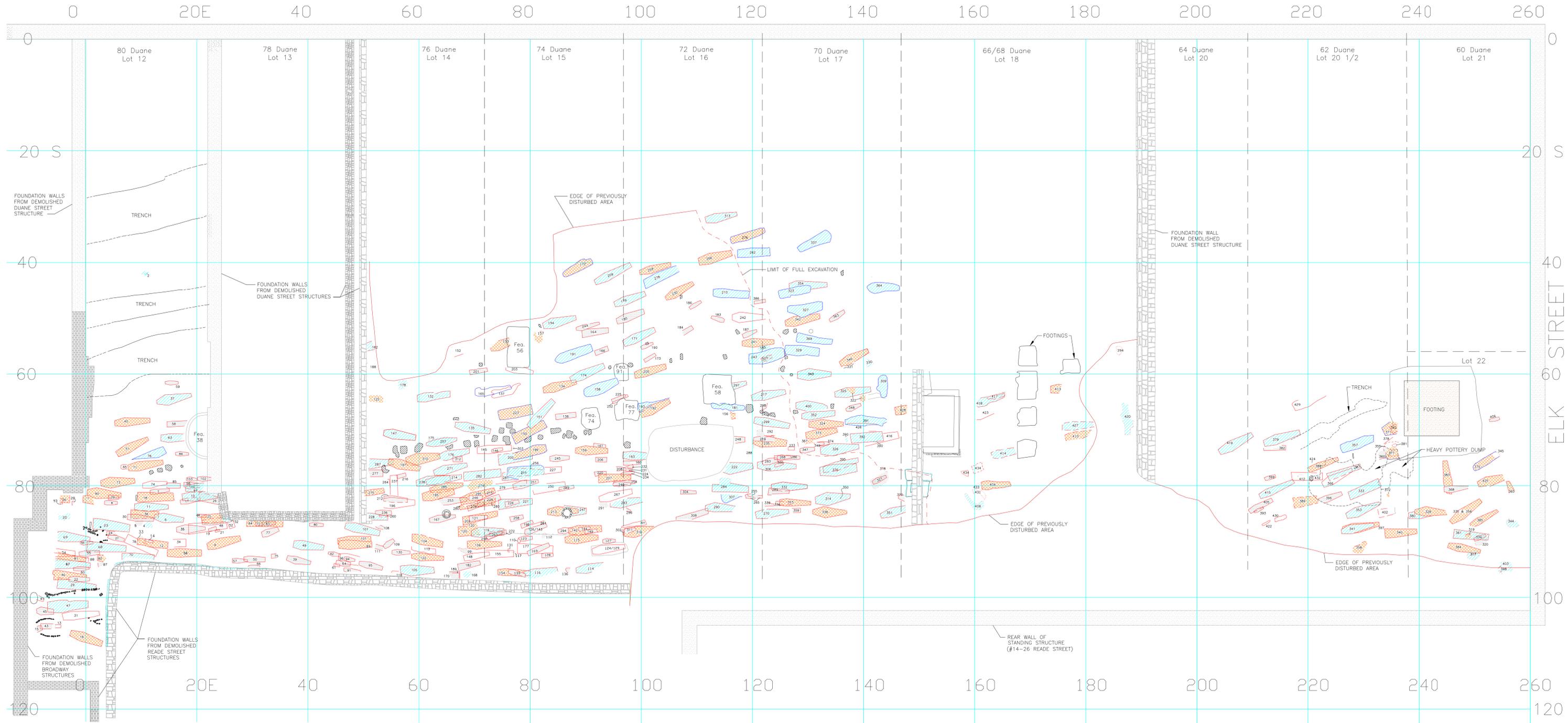
In addition to the burial number, a Catalog Number was assigned during field excavation. The catalog number is also a consecutive number that in theory provides a way to differentiate specific field contexts, such as stratigraphic levels, from one another. However, at the African Burial Ground only one catalog number was used for each burial, so that the material from the grave shaft fill, coffin remains, material from within the coffin, skeletal remains, and all samples taken had the same number. The only possible record, then, of where within a burial context any given item or sample came from might be the label on the bag or box used in the field to collect the material, or on field drawings that depicted specific items that were then bagged or boxed separately with specific labeling. Usually the information retained on containers was sufficient to determine which materials were from the grave shaft, which from within the coffin, etc., but there was no way to efficiently track these proveniences in a database when first brought to the lab, nor were all containers sufficiently labeled for us to determine exactly where items or samples were collected. For instance, since all nail bags had the same number for any given burial, we could not distinguish coffin nails from any “extra” nails found in the grave or shaft. Likewise, if shell was found in the grave shaft and also on or in a coffin, we could not readily determine which shells were from which location. Since grave shafts were excavated as single units with just one catalog number, there was no way to determine whether diagnostic artifacts were from the upper part of the shaft, alongside the coffin, or beneath the coffin.

Excavation of burials

Where visible, grave shafts were delineated on the ground and then excavated in full in a single layer until a coffin lid or bones were encountered. The grave shaft fill soils were screened through ¼-inch wire mesh, and notes indicate that sometimes the soil was water-screened (there is no general record of which burials were wet screened or how they were selected). Typically, a team of two excavators worked on each burial through to completion, though in some cases teams were switched in the course of a burial or extra excavators were recruited. When a coffin lid or evidence of a wood coffin outline was encountered, elevations were taken, and sometimes it was drawn and/or photographed (see description of recording below). Where feasible, wood samples were taken (though in many cases, the only recoverable “wood” samples consisted of wood-stained soil). Excavators endeavored to leave coffin sides and all coffin nails in place during the excavation of the skeletal remains. Additional wood samples were taken from the sides and finally the bottoms of coffins where feasible.

⁵ The site maps used in this report include the 19th-20th century lot lines and numbers for Block 154. The individual lots were identified in the Stage 1 research in order to trace development of the block over time; the lots were subsumed within a larger tax parcel at the time the project commenced. The former lot boundaries are useful, however, for understanding the excavation strategy and differential preservation, and for locating archaeological site areas.

DUANE STREET



- Coffin
- No Coffin
- Adult Male
- Adult Female
- Adult Undetermined
- Infant / Subadult
- Post Holes

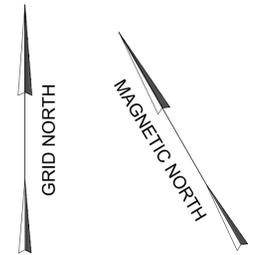


Figure 1.7
 New York African Burial Ground
 Archaeological Site Plan
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

Usually skeletal remains were visible at the same level as coffin lid remains. One excavator began working to expose the cranium while the second began trying to locate the femurs. Once the general disposition of the remains was established, the standard order of excavation was legs and arms, chest, hands and feet, and finally the facial and pelvic areas. Soil from among the bones was screened for artifacts, though normally artifacts were identified during excavation of the bones and left in place until they could be recorded *in situ* along with the skeleton.

Field assessments were conducted by the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT), a team of physical anthropologists based at Lehman College hired by GSA's consulting archaeologists. Assessments included condition of remains as well as preliminary evaluations of age, sex, and pathologies. Once each burial was fully exposed, one of the MFAT specialists performed an assessment of the physical remains. In some cases the MFAT team members assisted with excavations as well. MFAT personnel are listed in the acknowledgements.

All bones were left in place for recordation, then were removed individually and wrapped (at first using newspaper, but in July of 1992 acid-free paper was adopted by the JMA field team) and packed in boxes. Once the skeletal remains were removed, the remaining grave shaft fill was excavated and screened. All human remains were brought directly from the site to Lehman College laboratories in the Bronx for storage. Artifacts found with burials in direct association with skeletal remains (i.e., all except coffin remains and grave shaft fill contents) were packed in bags or small containers and sent to the project conservators (see below). Shaft fill artifacts and coffin remains (nails and wood) were bagged and sent to the HCI laboratory facility (until July 1992) or to a storage space provided by GSA.

Soil samples were taken from the grave shaft fill soil (as a "control" sample), the coffin lid area, the stomach area, the thoracic area, the pelvic area, and the sacrum. Not all of these samples were taken from all burials. Thoracic samples were added to the field protocol in late May of 1992. The control samples were taken so that 1) soils could be tested for plant remains, providing information on the historic landscape, and 2) to obtain pH levels and observe any insect remains in the soil, as aids to understanding bone condition.⁶ The other samples were taken so that macro-botanical, palynology, and parasitology analyses could be conducted to provide potential information about the diet and health of the deceased and about plants that might have been used in mortuary practices.

Specific locations of control samples were generally not recorded, and it is often not known for individual burials whether these were taken from above, below, or alongside the coffin or skeleton, although the date of the sample, if recorded, can inform us as to

⁶ Neither testing of pH levels nor insect identification was undertaken. Chemical analysis was deemed unfeasible because too much time had passed from initial collection to the time subcontracting was under way. Insect remains were not identified in the soil analysis conducted thus far, but their study through future analysis of retained light fractions may be possible if specific questions about decomposition need to be addressed (none were posed by the current research team).

whether it was taken before or after the skeleton was exposed and recorded. When cataloging samples, bag labels (which were somewhat inconsistent) provided the only information on sample locations. Samples were sent from the field site to HCI or JMA laboratory facilities for storage.

Certain in-field conservation procedures were designed to minimize damage to human bone and artifacts that occurred once they were exposed to the air. Very fragile bones, including frequently those of infants and young children, were “pedestalled” during excavation, i.e. soil surrounding them was left in place and removed as a block. If soil showed signs of bacteria microbes, a mild biocide (70% ethanol) was applied to the pedestal. In a few cases a consolidant, a polyvinyl acetate (PVA) emulsion was used as a consolidant for long bones. In some instances, field notes indicate that wet paper towels were placed on skeletal remains to keep them moist during excavation and recording of the burial, but it is not known whether this was standard procedure. Artifacts that were particularly fragile were frozen along with surrounding soil. Plastic was first placed over the bone, then dry ice was applied to the artifact and the block, when frozen, was lifted out and transported to freezers in the laboratory facility. There is no list of items for which dry ice was used, though some cases are described in the field records for individual burials and are noted in the descriptions in Volumes 2 and 3 of this report.

Fieldwork was halted on July 29, 1992, and GSA decided to preserve remaining graves at the project site rather than excavate further. However, at that time sixteen burials had been identified in the ground but not removed, some of which had the skeletal remains partially exposed. These burials were covered with vermiculite and soil pending GSA’s decisions, in consultation with the project archaeologists, as to whether they would be removed or left in place. Excavation of eleven partially exposed burials was resumed in September 1992, and their skeletal remains were removed for analysis.

Field recording

As at any archaeological site, field recording varied with the individual excavators. At the African Burial Ground, there was also an evolution in recordation standards: the first burials recovered were not always drawn adequately, for example, and field forms specifically designed for burial removal were adopted part way through the project. On the other hand, later in the field project some burials had only the minimum data recorded on the site forms, with no additional notes.

Each burial was recorded on its own forms and drawings, and individual drawings were then transferred to site maps. The maps were sometimes, but not always, clear as to superposition of burials. Usually the stratigraphic relationships among groups of overlapping burials were not mentioned in the excavators’ notes, which focused on the individual burial. There are no extant field notes taken by the archaeologists who supervised burial excavations, which might have discussed overall site stratigraphy. Soil descriptions were sometimes, but not always, provided on field forms, but the grave shaft fill soil was not differentiated from the coffin in-fill and the surrounding soil matrix is rarely described.

Forms

Forms were completed for every burial excavated, but several different forms were adopted over the course of the project. Examples of forms used by HCI, JMA, and MFAT are provided in Appendix D. The field forms are retained in the project archive; HCI and JMA forms also were transcribed into a database and are available in the digital archive. Up until mid-April of 1992, each burial was recorded on both a “Provenience Sheet” and a “Burial Form”. The Provenience Sheet also provided a grid for a sketch, and in many cases the excavators produced here a rough sketch of the grave outline, the coffin top, or even the skeletal remains. A “Burial Checklist” was added in April of 1992. This form listed all possible samples and whether they were taken, and included specific information on how associated artifacts were stored. Unfortunately, the “Provenience Sheet” was discontinued, and while most information was contained on other forms, some items were no longer recorded, including soil descriptions and opening sketches.

MFAT field assessment forms provided an overall descriptive assessment of the condition and position of remains, as well as listing individual skeletal elements with presence/absence and condition. These forms also included preliminary sex, age, “race,” and pathology assessments.

Drawings

A scaled plan drawing was made for each burial *in situ*, after skeletal remains had been exposed and cleaned, prior to removal (see Volumes 2 and 3 for drawings). Early in the fieldwork, each excavator prepared his or her own burial plan drawings. Subsequently, crew members with particular ability were assigned work as field artists with responsibility for the *in situ* drawings. One artist/archaeologist in particular, Ms. Margo Schur (now Margo Meyer of the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University), executed drawings of exceptional quality and detail. In addition to the final burial drawings, in some cases opening sketches or detail sketches were drawn by excavators, most often on the field forms as noted above. Occasionally schematic drawings of coffins were executed. Field drawings were at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot (with only a few exceptions).

For most burial drawings, individual skeletal elements and other items (coffin remains, artifacts in some cases) were plotted vertically as well as horizontally. As noted above, vertical measurements were taken from a series of site sub-datum points, and were in hundredths of feet. Depths below datum for skeletal remains were typically taken at the cranium, shoulders, elbows, innominates (hipbones), sacrum, knees, ankles, feet, and central vertebrae. Vertical measurements also were taken typically for the top and bottom of the coffin (either wood remains or nails) and for some artifacts found with skeletal remains. The complete list of field drawings is included in the project database.

As noted, individual burial drawings were traced onto larger site maps, also at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot. In the western part of the cemetery skeletal drawings were traced, but later in the excavation (i.e. further east) only grave-shaft and coffin outlines were traced onto the maps. The earliest of these maps also show depths below datum points and give descriptions of soils intervening between graves, but most do not. A problem with the site maps is the difficulty in resolving issues of superposition: it is not always possible to tell which burial underlay which when more than one interment overlapped. In some parts of the site, maps were made of broad areas prior to excavation of graves, showing suspected grave shaft outlines, surrounding soil, coffin stains where visible. These are useful for reconstructing some of the soil descriptions for burials and for checking burial relationships. Unfortunately, the text on the surviving copies of these maps is mostly illegible (see section 1.D below).

Photographs

Field photographs were taken of each burial, *in situ*, at the African Burial Ground. Redundant sets of 35-mm slides and black-and-white negatives were produced. Each photograph has a menu board with the burial number and date, a trowel pointing to grid north, and a range pole marked in feet. In some cases, detail photographs were also taken of particular artifacts or skeletal elements *in situ*. The complete list of field photographs is included in the project database. Photographs were retained in the archaeological laboratory (see below) and used for site analysis.

1.C. Laboratory processing and analysis

A laboratory facility for non-skeletal material was provided by GSA at the World Trade Center in September of 1992, following the close of fieldwork.⁷ Prior to that, artifacts from the burials had been stored at HCI's facility in New Jersey, with the exception of items that were found in direct association with skeletal remains, including pins, buttons, beads, textile fragments, jewelry and other metal objects. These had been sent to the South Street Seaport's laboratory in lower Manhattan. Conservator Gary McGowan of that museum conducted initial conservation where necessary; he later became JMA's laboratory director at the World Trade Center. Material stored at the Seaport and the HCI facility was brought to the new laboratory in September of 1992.

The laboratory was staffed and directed by JMA, which was responsible, under the terms of its contract with GSA, for the processing of all collections from the Foley Square Project. When the Howard University Archaeology Team began work on the project in 1993, JMA continued to conduct the laboratory processing. Warren Perry of Central Connecticut State University was appointed Associate Director for Archaeology for the Howard team in 1996, and took over supervision of the processing along with Laboratory

⁷ Collections from excavations at both of the Foley Square sites -- the Broadway block (Block 154, including burial and non-burial contexts) and the Courthouse block (Block 160, the Five Points Site) -- were processed and analyzed at the 6 World Trade Center facility. For the Five Points Site see Yamin 2000.

Director Leonard Bianchi. Jean Howson, a member of the research team, was added as a Co-Director of the laboratory in 1998.

The African Burial Ground archaeological analysis required different procedures and a separate database from those being developed for the rest of the Foley Square Project, which were of necessity more geared to the extremely artifact-rich Courthouse (Five Points) Site. The burial ground assemblage was relatively small in size, and artifact categories were completely different because of the mortuary context. For example, domestic artifact categories (e.g., “food preparation” or “health and hygiene”), along with the myriad functional, typological, and stylistic sub-categories used for a large domestic assemblage were irrelevant to the analysis of burials and burial-related artifacts. The burial ground procedures had to be designed to ensure that individual graves or components of graves could be distinguished from others, or grouped for various kinds of analysis; to ensure that everything from each grave could ultimately be reunited; and to ensure that only those items meant to accompany the deceased were re-interred with the remains. Moreover, we deliberately chose not to assign broad functional categories to artifacts, since we wished to remain open, and leave our assemblage open, to interpretation. Eventually, a number of the tasks originally assigned to JMA were transferred to Howard University, including completion of African Burial Ground artifact inventories and samples processing. Procedures were overhauled so that all collections made during the excavations, and all records associated with them, could be accurately tracked. An easily accessible database using a standard commercial application was deemed adequate for our tracking and data management needs, rather than the complex and proprietary database developed by a JMA sub-consultant for the Five Points site.

Procedures

Provenience controls

As noted, a single catalog number was used to label all material from any given burial, whether from the grave surface, shaft fill, coffin, or coffin interior, including all soil samples. This kind of lumping is highly unusual in archaeological practice. Since analysis and, importantly, eventual reburial required differentiation of all of these kinds of excavation contexts, a plan was developed by the Howard University Archaeology Team to assign numbers to all items and samples in the collection that would serve as indices to more precise provenience. The catalog numbers were retained, and extensions added as listed in Table 1.3. Our goal was to prevent further loss of provenience information as processing progressed.

The need for adequate provenience controls for the collection was related to the need for an adequate database with which to record collections information. With the catalog numbers assigned, it would be possible to track artifacts and samples for individual burials and to retrieve information on similar contexts for all burials. The database is described in a subsequent section.

Artifacts that were directly associated with skeletal remains were not physically labeled with provenience indicators. These items were slated for eventual reburial, and were not physically altered in any way other than to stabilize them.⁸ JMA laboratory staff did label artifacts from grave shaft fill contexts, which were not expected to be reburied, except for kiln waste, kiln furniture, and items less than approximately one inch in size. Labels were written in black ink, and include the site number (6980), catalog number (without extension), and burial number. Items with and without labels are retained in polyethylene bags with full catalog numbers written on the bags, as are soil samples.

Extension	Explanation
-B	("Burial") This extension was used for the skeletal remains themselves and for all items believed to be in <i>direct</i> association with skeletal remains. Examples are pins, buttons, or beads.
-CL	("Coffin Lid") This extension was given to items that were recorded as being on the coffin lid. Examples are tacks, pieces of shell.
-CH	("Coffin Hardware") Designates iron nails, tacks and other hardware that clearly came from the coffin of the deceased. Discrete lots (bags) of nails were given consecutive letters, as in -CHA, -CHB, -CHC in order to retain all possible provenience information. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag.
-CW	("Coffin Wood") This was used for wood samples or soil scrapings from wood stains that clearly came from the coffin of the deceased. Discrete lots (bags) of wood were given consecutive letters, as in -CWA, -CWB, -CWC in order to retain all possible provenience information. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag; individual bags sometimes indicated whether the sample was from the lid, sides, or bottom.
-GF	("Grave Fill") This was used to designate material that was in the grave shaft fill soil, rather than in direct association with the skeletal remains or placed inside the coffin.
-S	("Soil Sample") This was used for all soil samples from a burial. Discrete soil samples were given consecutive letters, as in -SA, -SB, -SC to reflect soil taken from different places within a burial. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag; individual bags typically indicated where the sample was from. Soil samples that were processed by flotation were in turn given an "L", "H", or "U" as well, to designate light fraction, heavy fraction, or unfloted sub-sample (thus -SAL, -SAH, -SAU).

Cleaning, conservation and storage

Project conservators were Gary McGowan and Cheryl LaRoche of JMA. Conservation procedures for each category of material are described in appropriate artifact chapters below (Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14), and in a draft report prepared by JMA.⁹

Typically, conservators examined and cleaned only those items that were recovered from within coffins or in direct association with skeletal remains (these items came to be

⁸ The single exception was a silver pendant that was sampled to determine metallic content. See Chapter 13.

⁹ The report (LaRoche 2002) was made available for use by the Howard University team during our analysis.

referred to as “burial artifacts”), though they oversaw the processing of grave shaft and coffin materials as well. In addition, the conservators examined a selection of wood samples from coffins. Many of the wood samples (apparently the best ones from each burial) along with other organic samples were stored in freezers when first brought in from the field.¹⁰ The freezers and their contents were brought to the World Trade Center laboratory in September 1992.

“Burial artifacts” were placed in inert polyethylene boxes with inert packing and many were placed in display cases in the laboratory once stabilized. Items that were not on display were kept in metal storage cabinets.

Items from grave shaft fill contexts and coffin remains were cleaned, sorted and bagged by material (wood, glass, metal, ceramic, faunal), and placed in cardboard storage boxes. Bags were of polyethylene, and tyvek tags were placed in each bag indicating burial number and material. Ceramics, nails, and glass were washed in a weak non-ionic detergent solution and rinsed in plain water, then cleaned with a soft-bristle brush. For shell, adhering soil was soaked in a 50% ethanol solution and removed.

Inventory

All artifacts examined by the project conservators (i.e., those found in direct association with skeletal remains) were inventoried by them and entered into a conservation data table (this was ultimately converted to Microsoft Access and merged with the artifact inventory data table currently in use). Coffin hardware and material from grave shaft fill soils were identified and inventoried by Howard University laboratory staff under the direction of Leonard Bianchi. Bianchi also re-examined and further described artifacts that had been inventoried by the conservators. Animal bone from grave shaft contexts was examined and inventoried by JMA sub-consultant Marie Lorraine Pipes. All inventories are contained in Appendix E. Stoneware from grave shafts was further examined and sub-consultant Meta Janowitz made a more detailed inventory (Appendix F).

Unique artifacts that came from contexts in direct association with skeletal remains (typically those treated by conservators) were given consecutive arbitrary numbers (“point numbers”) within each provenience which can be appended to the catalog number and allow reference to unique items. For example, individual unique artifacts from Burial 6 have the catalog numbers 219-B.001, 219-B.002, 219-B.003, etc. These numbers do not necessarily correspond to the numbers assigned by conservators, because the latter were given to groups of artifacts rather than individual items, and in many cases the archaeologists wished to further differentiate the items and describe them in greater particularity. (In some cases, groups of identical items still share a number). Whenever possible, burial artifact “point numbers” assigned in the field were used as the artifact numbers for the inventory.

¹⁰ Many boxes of wood samples were not frozen, and these consisted in large part of soil with wood fragments, probably scraped off as samples during excavation.

Soil samples

Many hundreds of soil samples were taken during field excavations, and three different teams were involved in analyzing them (Appendix G contains the methods and results of the various reports). Some of the samples from burial contexts were processed by William Sandy of HCI from December 1991 through July 1992 (a total of 428 samples). These samples were from coffin lids and interiors, stomach, and pelvic areas. A drum flotation device was used. Heavy and light fractions were sorted, and inventory and analysis was underway as of the end of June 1992, when HCI was replaced by JMA as GSA's consulting archaeological firm. Bone fragments recovered in heavy fractions were sent to the Lehman laboratory (those later determined to be animal bone rather than human were returned to the New York laboratory for faunal analysis). Artifacts from heavy fractions and bags containing the light fractions were stored at the World Trade Center laboratory along with the other collections from the excavation and were inventoried subsequently by Howard University laboratory staff.¹¹

The hundreds of soil samples that were not floated by HCI, including all control samples, were stored at the World Trade Center laboratory. These were inventoried by Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff. Soil that had not been screened at all in the field was screened in the laboratory through ¼ mesh in order to recover artifacts and human bone. Human bone was sent to the skeletal biology team at Howard University, and artifacts were inventoried. Under the direction of the Howard University archaeologists, all as-yet unfloted soil samples were next divided into two parts, one for flotation and one to remain unfloted for other types of analysis. The “-U” (unfloted) portions were typically less than one liter in size. If a sample was too small to partition, it was retained unfloted. The inventory was updated to indicate the splitting of samples. JMA retained New South Associates to complete the flotation of all soil samples.

New South Associates was also retained for macrobotanic, palynology, and parasitology pilot studies. The samples used in the pilot studies were selected by Howard University's Project Scientific Director Blakey. No parasite data was preserved in any of the samples studied. However, both macrobotanical and pollen studies proved useful in identifying species of plants from coffin lid and pelvic contexts. The Howard University Archaeology Team decided to pursue both macrobotanical and pollen analyses for a larger sample of burials. Individual soil samples (some already floated) were selected by the Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff during the spring and summer of 2003. The samples were selected using several criteria, specifically site location, age and sex of the deceased, hypothesized period of interment, and confidence in the sample provenience. Our aim was to obtain an accurate sub-sample of the burial population along all of these parameters. Leslie Raymer of New South Associates performed the

¹¹ Sandy analyzed and inventoried 43 of the samples that he had floated (i.e. he “picked” or sorted and then identified botanical remains from the light fractions). This inventory was not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and no copy is known to exist (Sandy, personal communication, 2003). The fractions selected subsequently by Howard University for analysis were therefore re-inventoried by New South Associates.

macrobotanical study, and Pat Fall (Arizona State University) and Gerald Kelso performed the pollen study. Data are incorporated into the analysis presented in the body of the report, specifically in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 14. Information on the current disposition of the soil samples is provided in Table 1.7 at the end of this chapter.

Records

Database

Archaeological analysis requires integration of data on artifacts with data on archaeological contexts. The database designed for the archaeological component of the African Burial Ground project includes a number of data tables that contain un-coded information on individual burials, artifacts, and samples and can be linked by burial number or by catalog number. The basic burial, artifact, and photography log tables originally created by JMA in dBase were subsequently converted to Paradox and substantially altered and enlarged by the Howard University Archaeology Team's laboratory staff, and finally were converted to Microsoft Access in 2003 during the final phase of analysis. Key tables in the current database are listed in Table 1.4, and their structures are explained in Appendix H. The database will be available along with all project records at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black History in New York.

Table	Contents
ABGCAT	Provenience catalog for the Broadway site, including all burial and non-burial contexts. This is a list of catalog numbers and all of the provenience data they represent (features, burials, dates of excavation, excavators, etc.)
ABG_DPTS	Locations and elevations of temporary sub-datum points used in the field.
addfaun	Inventory of animal bone from grave shaft fill contexts.
ARTPHOTOS	List of photographs of artifacts taken in 1998 (destroyed 9/11/2001).
burial4	Basic data on each burial.
Coffinsize	Coffin dimensions for each burial.
conbur3	Inventory of all artifacts that were directly associated with skeletal remains, coffin hardware, and material (other than floral and faunal remains) from grave fill contexts.
DRAWINGS	List of all numbered drawings from the Broadway site.
NewPinTable	List of straight pins from burials by location.
NOTES	Transcribed information and notes from burial excavation field forms.
PHOTOBKS	List of photographs of <i>in situ</i> burials.
PHOTOLOG	List of photographs taken in the field and of conserved artifacts.
SHELLFLOR	Inventory of shell and seeds from burial contexts.
Stoneware	Inventory of local stonewares from grave shaft fill contexts.
SOILSAMP	Inventory of all soil samples with information on processing to date.
TOTWOOD	Inventory of wood samples from coffins.

Artifact photographs

Selected artifacts (typically items conservators referred to as “burial artifacts” that had been found in direct association with skeletal remains, excluding coffin wood and hardware) were photographed by staff of John Milner Associates during laboratory processing and analysis from 1992 through 1995. Some were photographed before, during, and after conservation treatment. In addition to 35mm slides and black-and-white negatives, microscopic digital photographs were produced for a few items to aid in identification (e.g., textile/hair fragments and wood samples).

A second set of artifact photographs, consisting of 35mm slides and black-and-white negatives, was taken during 1997 at the World Trade Center laboratory by John Milner Associates staff. Only one set of the slides and one set of negatives were produced. Neither was recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

In the summer of 2001, GSA planned reburial of skeletal remains and “burial artifacts,” prompting production of a third and final set of 35mm photographic slides. This was considered necessary because in the opinion of the Howard University Archaeology Team the previous sets of artifact photographs were inadequate as a record of the items that could serve future research and exhibit purposes once the materials themselves were reburied. Preparations for the reburial were rushed (though ultimately the planned August 17, 2001 date was cancelled) and little time was allowed for the final inventory and photo-recording of artifacts. The services of photographer Jon Abbott were secured, and he produced a full set of high-quality color slides, though typically just one or two shots for each item.

Finally, prior to the 2003 reburial, digital photographs were taken of a large subset of the artifacts from direct burial contexts. The high-resolution digital technology now available (through Jon Abbott) made it possible to produce numerous digital images of each artifact, from several angles. These are now available for future research. An example is produced in Figure 1.8. Artifact photographs are included in the project archive, which will be housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York.

Note on artifact photographs in this report: Artifact photographs reproduced herein include images from 35mm slides as well as digital images. In some cases the ruler placed in the photographic frame to provide scale (there were at least three separate rulers used during the various photo sessions) is visible in its entirety, but in most of the close-up photographs only the tick marks on the ruler are visible. The smallest tick-mark interval on the rulers is 0.5mm unless otherwise noted. In some photographs this interval is all that shows, while for others the 1mm, 0.5cm, and 1cm ticks are also visible. We have left the rulers in the images, but rather than label the tick marks on each, we have provided the size of the photographed item or items in the caption. Where no single dimension was measurable, we have stated the ruler interval in the caption.



Figure 1.8.
Example of a digital photographic series of an artifact (Burial 366, Catalog # 1830.002).
Photographs by Jon Abbott. The images shown here are from low-resolution copies; high-resolution digital images are part of the project archive.

Replicas

In August 2003, shortly before the planned reburial, archaeologists from the National Park Service (within their capacity as consultants to GSA on the future Interpretive Center for the African Burial Ground) solicited bids for replication of artifacts. Only items that had been found in direct association with the deceased, and among these only items that were sufficiently intact to possibly be used in interpretation, were included in the assemblage targeted for potential replication. Colonial Williamsburg was contracted to prepare replicas, and selected a limited sub-set based on their resources and expertise (Table 1.5). Full recordation of the items was completed by the specialists who made the replicas. Due to the timing of preparations for the re-interment, these items were not photographed digitally.

Insufficient time remained to solicit subcontractors to replicate the remaining artifacts, or record them for replication, prior to the reburial. However, photographs and descriptive information can be used as the basis for future replication of additional artifacts. Some artifacts were not given priority for replication because they are types that can be represented by virtually identical, and readily obtainable, examples. This is the case for the beads and the coins. An example of one of the replications, copper alloy straight pins, is shown in Figure 1.9. Several replicas were made of each item selected.

Burial	Items
6	1 large button (plain face), Catalog # 219-B.008
10	1 button, Catalog # 234-B.004
12/14	12 straight pins, Catalog # 253-B.001, .002, .003 and Catalog # 274-B.001, .002, .003
71	1 finger ring, Catalog # 813-B.004
147	7 small rings, Catalog # 892-B.004
158	cuff links, 1 pair, Catalog # 903-B.001
181	2 buttons, Catalog #s 967-B.005 and .006
211	cuff link or button face, enameled, Catalog # 1186-B.001
214	1 button, Catalog # 1191-B.002
238	cuff links, 1 pair, Catalog # 1224-B.001
250	1 button, Catalog # 1239-B.002
254	1 silver pendant, Catalog # 1243-B.001
310	1 paste ring (with glass insets), Catalog # 1486-B.001
313	1 button, Catalog # 1516-B.001
371	2 cuff link faces, enameled, Catalog #1875-B.001
392	4 buttons, all with Catalog # 2039-B.002
398	1 finger ring, Catalog # 2061.001
403	1 button, Catalog #s 2067-B.003
405	1 button, Catalog # 2071B.001
415	1 button, Catalog # 2097-B.004

Figure 1.9 (below).

a. Copper alloy straight pin as recovered in the field. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

b. Replicas of African Burial Ground pins created by artisans at Colonial Williamsburg. Photograph by Rob Tucher.

a.



b.

1.D. September 11, 2001

The African Burial Ground archaeological laboratory in the sub-basement level of 6 World Trade Center was left partially intact following the collapse of the towers and other surrounding buildings on September 11, 2001. In October 2001, in advance of demolition of the damaged structure, the General Services Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinated efforts to recover material from the laboratory. A salvage team entered the facility and retrieved many boxes of artifacts and surviving documents. The degree of retrieval is considered remarkable, considering the overall damage to the space; however, some artifacts and documents were not salvaged. Categories of materials that are known to have been lost are enumerated in Table 1.6. Individual items that were lost (but had already been inventoried) are identified in the artifact inventory, Appendix E.

Archaeological materials that were salvaged were decontaminated, re-bagged in some cases (original bags were retained, however, and kept with the materials) and re-boxed by a GSA contractor. Records that were salvaged (namely the slide and photo negative collections) were also decontaminated and placed in new binders. A new laboratory was set up at 1 Bowling Green in New York. Upon the resumption of archaeological work by the Howard University team in 2003, the boxes were examined and some errors made by the decontamination team when labeling the new bags were noted and corrected.

Fortunately, as of July 31, 2001, items that had been selected by GSA at that time for reburial had been packed and shipped off site (to Artex, an arts handling firm with facilities in Landover, Maryland). These included the artifacts thought to have been placed directly with the deceased in each burial, and thus all such items were saved. However, some of the materials left behind in the laboratory and later lost on September 11 belonged to categories of material that were subsequently added to the reburial plans (see below), such as coffin remains and excess soil from samples. Therefore, when ultimately reburied on October 4, 2003, some individuals were missing materials that had been recovered from their original graves, typically coffin remains (nails and wood).

Also fortunate was the storage of all original individual burial field records at the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University. Copies of these records were in the World Trade Center lab (they were not salvaged after September 11) and a set was also kept at GSA's New York offices, but the original documentation of the excavations of burials, especially the excavators' notes and *in situ* drawings, is invaluable.

Table 1.6.		
Items not recovered after World Trade Center collapse, September 11, 2001		
Category	Material lost	Comments
Artifacts and samples		
Coffin wood	Burials 26 through 50; Burials 126 through 175; All samples stored in freezer	Bags had been inventoried; freezer samples had been damaged by mold prior to 9/11.
Coffin hardware	Burials 76 through 125; All items set aside for x-rays	These items had been inventoried.
Artifacts from grave shafts	Burials 76 through 125; tobacco pipe fragments from all burials	Only ceramics had been inventoried.
Artifacts from uncertain proveniences	All burials	Items lost were those set aside during the selection and packing of reburial artifacts in July 2001.
Soil samples	Burial 42; Burials 51 through 53 and 58 through 63, except for control sample heavy and light fractions; Burials 70 through 126; Burials 172 through 175 except for control sample heavy and light fractions; Burial 219; Burials 315 through 319 except for control sample heavy and light fractions	Samples that had been pulled from the shelving for any reason and set aside were not salvaged. Numerous control samples were off-site at New South Associates on 9/11/01.
Faunal remains	Burials 1 through 25; Burials 76 through 125; Burials 326 through 350	Includes shell and animal bone
Floral remains	Inventoried seeds from all burials	Seeds had been quantified but not identified
Grave markers	Cobbles from burials in southwest area of site; headstones from Burials 18, 23, 47.	Only 9 cobbles that had been boxed along with Burial 13 artifacts were salvaged.
Records and documents		
Maps	Site maps on mylar; <i>In situ</i> and detail bead drawings for Burial 340	Photocopies (poor quality) of most of these were stored off-site. The lost set had mark-ups for CADD editing.
Photographs	Color slides of artifacts taken in 1998; 35mm black-and-white negatives of artifacts; Black-and-white large-format negatives of artifacts; One set of <i>in situ</i> color slides of Burials 1 through 57.	Artifact slides were stored at OPEI, which was located in the same building; materials housed there were not salvaged.
Inventories	Paper copy of conserved artifact inventory with all hand-written notes taken during packing of reburial artifacts, July 2001; manuscript original of coffin hardware inventory; preliminary flotation sample inventory.	This artifact inventory was annotated to indicate which items had been packed for reburial and sent to Artex.
Research files	Four file drawers of reprints for comparative research	Material compiled by JMA and Howard staff

1.E. Reburial

The Memorandum of Agreement entered into by GSA, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission stipulated that human remains and “burial associated artifacts” were to be re-interred. As plans were developed for the re-interment that took place in October of 2003, decisions had to be made as to exactly what materials were included in this mandate. Of course, the skeletal remains were always intended to be reburied, although small samples of bone were retained for future analyses. Confusion about artifacts arose, however, because the phrase “burial artifacts” had been used early on in the conservation laboratory to refer only to those items that had been placed in direct association with the deceased. Project conservators had estimated that there were 500 such items. Yet the coffin remains themselves (wood and hardware) were also clearly “burial associated.”

More problematic were items found in grave shaft fill soils. Since over most of the site there was no remnant of the original ground surface (see Chapter 3 below), there was no way of determining whether artifacts in the soils had at one time been placed on a grave.¹² For the most part, material found in the shafts of graves is believed to have been present in the soil matrix used to fill the graves at the time of the interment. Thus it is material that lay strewn on the surface or in shallow deposits covering the ground when the grave was originally dug. Some of this material represents a thin, scattered deposit of common 18th-century refuse, including glass and ceramic sherds, bits of brick and nails, fragments of animal bone, and so forth. In one area of the site there was a good deal of animal bone thought to be waste material, perhaps from a nearby tannery. But by far the most ubiquitous class of grave shaft material is stoneware kiln debris (sherds from broken pots, kiln waste, and kiln furniture). The latter material is basically “industrial waste” from pottery kilns that stood on the burial ground in the 18th-century (see Chapters 2 and 4 below).

In the end GSA made a decision to exclude artifacts that were found in grave shaft fill from reburial. This decision was arrived at after discussions among representatives of the public (who attended public meetings on the subject), GSA, the Howard University research team, and the National Park Service (in its role as consultant to GSA on the future Interpretive Center and disposition of the collection). Our reasoning was that these materials were not deliberately placed with the deceased, do not represent actions on the part of mourners, and lacked spiritual meaning at the time of interment. In fact, most of those who entered the discussion felt that these items represent depredations on the cemetery that occurred during the period of its use. Other parties expressed interest in the future research potential of the materials and in their potential use in interpretive programs, and believed they should be excluded from reburial for these reasons as well. It should be pointed out, however, that some in the descendant community had a differing opinion on this matter, feeling instead that the presence of these materials in the sacred

¹² In some cases, artifacts appeared to excavators to be directly on the coffin lid, and when such items are thought *possibly* to have been placed there deliberately they have been included in the reburial.

ground of the cemetery over the past two to three hundred years had in fact imbued them with a spiritual essence by virtue of their close contact with the remains of the ancestors (Mrs. Ollie McLean, personal communication).

What does the non-skeletal retained collection currently consist of, how is it organized, and where is it stored? Table 1.7 summarizes the retained artifact collections and their disposition as of this writing. All material is bagged in plastic, labeled according to catalog number and burial, and boxed according to burial. The boxes were transferred to the custody of the Army Corps of Engineers, acting as GSA's technical representative, on February 27, 2006. Following processing at the Corps' St. Louis facility, the collection will be returned to New York to be housed at the Schomburg Center for Research on Black History and Culture.

Table 1.2, the list of excavated burials, follows Table 1.7.

Table 1.7.			
Artifact categories, counts, and current disposition			
Category	Approximate count	Notes	Current status
Artifacts other than coffins recovered in direct association with skeletal remains	1,628	Includes over 1,200 fragments of straight pins from shrouds or clothing; buttons; jewelry; beads; and other items such as coins and pipes).	Reburied at the site, in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Coffins:			
Coffin furniture, nails, and screws	14,057		Reburied at the site, in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Coffin wood samples	529		Reburied at the site, in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Artifacts recovered from grave shaft fill soil	24,000	This category includes small sherds of glass, brick, animal bone, shell, and fragments of iron. Its largest component, however, is 18,366 ceramic pieces, mainly waste material from the potteries that were in operation immediately adjacent to the excavated part of the cemetery.	Transferred to Army Corps of Engineers, February 2006.
Soil Samples	1,200	Two or more soil samples were taken from each burial, usually from the coffin lid, the interior or stomach area, and an outside sample for comparison.	Half-liter sub-samples of unfloated soil and all light fractions were transferred to Army Corps of Engineers, February 2006. All remaining soil has been reburied at the site.

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B001	adult	20	25	female?	2	82.5	9.13
B002	adult	27	42	male	11	43.5	
B003	adult	25	35	male	2	107	
B004	adult	30	40	male	11	86.5	
B004A	adult	20	25	male?	11	86.5	
B005	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	9	86.5	8.17
B006	adult	25	30	male?	15	87.5	6.98
B007	subadult	3	5	undetermined	15	80.5	7.29
B008	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	5	82.5	6.58
B009	adult	35	45	male	25	89.5	5.44
B010	adult	40	45	male	20	82.5	6.04
B011	adult	30	40	male?	12	83.5	6.73
B012	adult	35	45	female	12	89.5	6.13
B013	Remains appear to belong with Burial 43.				-5	103.5	6.37
B014	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	12	89.5	6.1
B015	subadult	11	18	undetermined	-5	103.5	7.27
B016	adult	50	60	female	0	107	6.03
B017	subadult	4	6	undetermined	20	83.25	4.94
B018	adult	35	45	female?	12	81.5	4.53
B019	subadult			undetermined	20	81.5	6.36
B020	adult	45	50	male	0	85	8.68
B021	subadult			undetermined	20	87.5	6.42
B022	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	-1.5	96.5	6.97
B023	adult	25	35	male	8	87.5	5.48
B024	subadult	3	6	undetermined	5	87.5	7.88
B025	adult	20	24	female	20	87.5	6.07
B026	subadult	8	12	undetermined	20	83	3.74
B027	subadult	1.4	2.8	undetermined	5	88.5	6.73
B028	subadult			undetermined	-2	83	8.58
B029	adult	35	45	male?	0	97.5	3.92
B030	subadult	7	11	undetermined	10	86	5.48
B031	adult	14	16	undetermined	-1	103.5	6.47

¹³ Low and high ages reflect the range of possible ages determined by the skeletal biological team. Blanks indicate age range could not be determined from the remains. To be consistent with the skeletal analysis, in this table “infant” includes individuals calculated as 6 months of age or less; “subadult” includes those over 6 months and under 15 years of age. Age calculation is described in Chapter 4 of the Skeletal Biology Report. For sex, a question mark indicates probable assignment. Grid coordinates (see the Site Map, Figure 1.x) are in feet, and elevations are feet above mean sea level (Sandy Hook) for the highest skeletal element (or coffin remains if no skeletal elements present).

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B032	adult	50	60	male	23.5	86.5	5.74
B033	adult			undetermined	10	87.5	5.48
B034	adult			undetermined	15	87.5	6.02
B035	subadult	8	10	undetermined	15	87.5	6.08
B036	adult			female	-5	87.5	8.17
B037	adult	45	55	male	20	65	7.44
B038	adult	12	18	female	10	86	5.18
B039	subadult	5	7	undetermined	40	81.75	4.69
B040	adult	50	60	female	10	65	7.88
B041	adult			undetermined	-11	99.5	7.57
B042	infant	0	2	undetermined	45	91.5	4.92
B043	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	-7	105	6.42
B044	subadult	3	9	undetermined	21.5	85.5	5.54
B045	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	-5	103.5	6.77
B046	adult			female?	0	95.5	5.27
B047	adult	35	45	male	0	103.5	6.42
B048	adult			undetermined	20	87.5	4.89
B049	adult	40	50	female	40	87.5	3.76
B050	subadult			undetermined	30	87.5	5.81
B051	adult	24	32	female	10	75	8.58
B052	undetermined			undetermined	25	87.5	4.69
B053	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	0	87.5	7.85
B054	adult			undetermined	-4	92	7.63
B055	subadult	3	5	undetermined	0	92.2	7.65
B056	adult	30	34	female	17	87.5	5.64
B057	subadult	0.88	2.16	undetermined	25	87.5	5.27
B058	subadult	3.5	4.5	undetermined	15	65	7.42
B059	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	15	65	6.58
B060	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	-1	95	7.73
B061	undetermined			undetermined	45	87.5	5.53
B063	adult	35	45	male	15	70	7.12
B064	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	45	92.5	5.25
B065	infant	0	0.49	undetermined	10	75	8.58
B066	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	25	93.5	5.23
B067	adult	40	50	male	0	94	7.28
B068	adult	21	25	male	3.5	91	5.93
B069	adult	30	60	male	-3.5	89	6.53
B070	adult	35	45	male	10	92.5	5.98
B071	adult	25	35	female	10	75	7.86
B072	subadult	1	2	undetermined	34	87.5	6.29

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B073	adult	20	30	female?	10	79	7.28
B074	No remains extant.				15	80	5.73
B075	infant	0	0	undetermined	34	92.5	5.99
B076	adult	25	55	male	10	75	8.33
B077	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	35	88.5	5.26
B078	adult	16	19	undetermined	10	91	4.31
B079	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	6	82	7.88
B080	subadult			undetermined	40	87.5	3.61
B081	adult			female	-3	93	6.93
B082	adult	18	25	female	3	93	6.03
B083	subadult			undetermined	31	87.5	5.53
B084	adult	17	21	female	35	87.5	4.45
B085	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	15	80.5	6.79
B086	subadult	6	8	undetermined	18	74	7.89
B087	subadult	4	6	undetermined	3	94	6.88
B088	undetermined			undetermined	-4	93.5	6.36
B089	adult	50	60	female	48	90.5	4.8
B090	adult	35	40	female	4	81.5	6.81
B091	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	48	95	4.95
B093	adult			undetermined	-3	85	6.98
B094	subadult			undetermined	47	92.5	4.75
B095	subadult	7	12	undetermined	51	94.5	4.85
B096	adult	16	18	male	47	94.5	5.33
B097	adult	40	50	male	20	81	6.73
B098	subadult	1	2	undetermined	20	81	6.23
B099	subadult	6	10	undetermined	70	91.5	4.92
B100	subadult			undetermined	20	80.5	5.44
B101	adult	26	35	male	49	88.5	4.32
B102	subadult	1.33	2.67	undetermined	20	79.5	5.93
B103	subadult			undetermined	20	79.5	5.83
B104	adult	30	40	female	61	89.5	3.89
B105	adult	35	45	male	60	95	4.37
B106	adult	25	35	female?	71	90.5	3.85
B107	adult	35	40	female	48	90	3.94
B108	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	53	87	5.4
B109	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	54	90.5	4.32
B110	infant	-0.17	0.17	undetermined	78	90	5.33
B111	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	53	91.5	4.87
B112	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	82.5	89	4.52
B113	adult			undetermined	60	91.5	3.62

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B114	adult	45	50	male	91	94.5	3.79
B115	adult	25	35	female	89	89.5	3.81
B116	adult	45	55	male	81.5	95.5	3.64
B117	infant	0	0	undetermined	77	91.5	4.14
B118	adult			undetermined	55	94.5	4.18
B119	adult	35	45	male	72	88.5	3.79
B120	adult	25	34	female	70	88.5	3.54
B121	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	70	86	4.19
B122	adult	18	20	female	61	93	3.53
B123	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	80	89.5	4.04
B124	adult			undetermined	95	91.5	5.09
B125	adult			female?	52	64.5	3.96
B126	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	80.5	88	3.4
B127	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	95	90	3.71
B128	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	83	92.5	3.45
B129	Empty coffin.				95	91.5	4.54
B130	subadult	1	2	undetermined	56	92	3.27
B131	subadult			undetermined	76.5	91.5	3.83
B132	adult	25	30	male	61.5	64.5	4.01
B133	subadult	1	2	undetermined	78	96	4.06
B134	adult	40	50	female	85	62.5	2.23
B135	adult	30	40	male	70	70	2.81
B136	subadult			undetermined	86.7	95	4.09
B137	adult	25	35	undetermined	75	63	3.86
B138	subadult	3	5	undetermined	86	67.5	4.13
B142	adult	25	30	female	90	88	4.05
B143	subadult	6	10	undetermined	80.5	88	3.11
B144	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	90	88	3.8
B145	Empty coffin.				74	73.5	4.93
B146	infant	0	0	undetermined	74.5	73.5	4.72
B147	adult	55	65	male	56.5	70.5	3.88
B148	adult	12	18	undetermined	70	91.5	3.27
B149	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	90	88	3.85
B150	adult	20	28	female	80	70.5	4.43
B151	adult	35	45	male	83	67.5	3.84
B152	undetermined			undetermined	67	55.5	1.9
B153	adult			female?	74	54.5	1.48
B154	adult	25	29	female	75	95.5	3.43
B155	adult			undetermined	75	92	3.14
B156	adult	30	60	female	115	66.5	2.35

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B157	adult			female?	81.5	53.5	1.87
B158	adult	20	30	male	92	63	2.17
B159	adult	25	35	female	90	73.5	3.43
B160	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	98.5	73	3.1
B161	subadult			undetermined	90	74.5	
B162	adult	35	45	male	51.5	55	2.31
B163	adult	18	24	male?	99	74.5	2.18
B164	subadult	8	13	undetermined	91	52.5	1.47
B165	adult			undetermined	73	62.5	
B166	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	92.5	55.5	2.1
B167	subadult	8.5	12.5	undetermined	65	86.5	2.56
B168	adult			male	68.5	95.5	4.87
B169	subadult	5.5	9.5	undetermined	81	91.5	2.67
B170	subadult	7	11	undetermined	65	96	4.33
B171	adult	44	60	male	99.5	53.5	1.05
B172	adult	25	35	female	88	40.5	1.61
B173	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	101	57	0.55
B174	adult	17	18	male	90	60.5	2.31
B175	adult	24	28	male	64.5	72	4.44
B176	adult	20	24	male	65.5	74.5	3.1
B177	adult	30	60	undetermined	80	91.5	2.23
B178	adult			male	57	62	4
B179	adult	25	30	male	98	46.5	-0.3
B180	subadult	11	13	undetermined	97.5	50	0.12
B181	adult	20	23	male	115	66	2.23
B182	subadult	7.5	12.5	undetermined	69	94	3.81
B183	subadult	0.63	1.13	undetermined	113.5	50	0.33
B184	subadult	1	1.5	undetermined	108.5	52	0.44
B185	adult	21	23	male	122	54.5	0.85
B186	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	110	47.5	0.09
B187	subadult	1.5	4	undetermined	119.5	52.5	0.94
B188	adult	26	32	undetermined	52.5	58.5	3.85
B189	adult			undetermined	65.5	95.5	3.42
B190	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	100.5	55	0.57
B191	adult	25	30	male	87.5	56.5	1.83
B192	adult	40	60	female	101.5	67	
B193	adult	30	48	male	101.5	65.5	
B194	adult	30	40	male	84	50.5	0.95
B195	adult	30	40	female	63	81.5	
B196	adult	20	24	undetermined	56	83	4.14

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B197	adult	45	55	female	57.5	76	4.05
B198	subadult			undetermined	80	86.5	3.61
B199	adult	30	40	female	80	73.5	3.39
B200	adult			male	77	75.5	3.57
B201	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	70.5	59.5	3.25
B202	adult	12	18	female?	70	85.5	3.4
B203	adult	12	18	undetermined	77	59	4.04
B204	adult			female?	98	77.5	3.81
B205	adult	18	20	female	102	59.5	0.41
B206	No remains extant.				93	75.5	3.31
B207	adult	25	35	female?	95	78.5	3.76
B208	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	96	77	3.7
B209	adult	40	50	male	94	42	0.43
B210	adult	35	45	male	116	46	0.22
B211	adult			male?	79.5	77	3.93
B212	subadult	4.5	5.5	undetermined	55	82.5	3.85
B213	adult	45	55	female	85.5	84.5	3.93
B214	adult	45	55	male	63.5	79.5	4.84
B215	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	72.5	81.5	4.57
B216	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	57	78.5	4.47
B217	adult	17	19	male	122.5	64.5	1.34
B218	subadult	0.5	3.5	undetermined	73	89	3.48
B219	subadult	4	5	undetermined	122	71.5	2.2
B220	No remains extant.				92	78	3.75
B221	adult	30	60	male	77	83.5	3.55
B222	adult			male?	118	76.5	0.24
B223	adult	25	35	female	76.5	66.5	2.69
B224	subadult	0.5	1.33	undetermined	97	77.5	2.39
B225	subadult	0.5	1.25	undetermined	95.5	64.5	
B226	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	77	83	3.69
B227	undetermined			undetermined	84	77	4.22
B228	adult			male?	55	86	4.2
B229	subadult	6.75	11.25	undetermined	72	83.5	4.22
B230	adult	55	65	female	106	45.5	0.73
B231	No remains extant.				97	77.5	2.9
B232	No remains extant.				97	77.5	2.41
B233	No remains extant.				127	73	1.84
B234	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	96.5	77.5	2.24
B235	adult	28	42	female	123	71.5	1.44
B236	subadult	4	5	undetermined	53.5	84.5	3.86

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B237	undetermined			undetermined	55.5	80	4.11
B238	adult	40	50	male	62	78.5	3.43
B239	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	70	83.5	3.8
B240	subadult	0.88	2.66	undetermined	95.5	79.5	2.73
B241	adult	55	65	female	121	54.5	-0.18
B242	adult	40	50	female	117	49.5	-0.3
B243	adult	40	50	male	121	57.5	0.1
B244	subadult	5	9	undetermined	90	51.5	0.88
B245	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	85.5	75	3.55
B246	subadult	0.5	2.9	undetermined	70	82.5	3.77
B247	adult	35	49.9	male?	90	84.5	3.69
B248	subadult	14	15	undetermined	118.5	71.2	1.14
B249	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	87	81	4.16
B250	adult			undetermined	84	80.5	4.07
B251	subadult	12	14	undetermined	79	79.5	3.73
B252	subadult	1	2	undetermined	95.5	64.5	
B253	subadult	13	15	undetermined	65.5	82.5	4.02
B254	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	97.5	79.5	2.08
B255	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	117.9	79.3	1.81
B256	adult	40	60	male	79	77.5	2.82
B257	adult	30	40	male	64.5	72.1	3.21
B258	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	78	85.5	3.21
B259	adult	17	19	female?	102	40.5	0.47
B260	undetermined			undetermined	53.5	84.5	3.89
B261	No remains extant.				80	87.5	3.5
B262	adult	15	17	male?	120	38.5	-0.31
B263	subadult			undetermined	74	88.5	3.2
B264	adult			undetermined	55	80	4.15
B265	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	120	82	1.74
B266	adult	25	35	female	113.5	38.5	-0.59
B267	adult			undetermined	94	82.5	4.09
B268	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	125.5	74.5	0.4
B269	n/a			n/a			
B270	adult			male	123.5	84.5	1.44
B271	adult	45	57	male	65	76.5	3.7
B272	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	74.5	88.5	2.8
B273	undetermined			undetermined	52.5	81.5	4.27
B274	Remains appear to belong to Burial 280.				70	79.5	3.55
B275	adult			female?	50	81	3.36
B276	adult	20	24	female	118.5	35.5	4.99999

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B277	subadult			undetermined	51	77.5	4.01
B278	adult	45	55	male	103	42	-0.34
B279	adult			undetermined	75.5	76.5	3.32
B280	adult			female?	70	83	2.8
B281	adult			male?	75	79.5	3.78
B282	adult	32.5	42.5	male	71.5	77.5	3.35
B283	subadult	0.33	0.67	undetermined	123	76	1.16
B284	adult	21	28	male	115.5	80.5	2.09
B285	adult	20	30	female	64	80.5	3.57
B286	subadult	4.4	8.5	undetermined	126	75	0.61
B287	adult	18	20	male	53	73.5	3.63
B288	adult			undetermined	120	74.5	1.61
B289	subadult	5	9	undetermined	125	81	1.73
B290	adult	45	55	male	114	84	2.32
B291	subadult	3	5	undetermined	94	82.5	4.01
B292	adult			undetermined	121	72.5	1.93
B293	adult			male?	94	82.5	3.55
B294	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	86.5	88	4.19
B295	adult	30	50	female	70	82	2.59
B296	infant	0.5	2.9	undetermined	98	84	4.2
B297	adult	30	40	male	117.5	62.5	0.04
B298	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	123	66.5	1.99
B299	adult	40	50	male	123.5	68.5	1.32
B300	infant			undetermined	125.5	76	0.82
B301	adult			undetermined	100.5	86	4.17
B301a	undetermined			undetermined	100.5	86	
B302	adult			female?	99.5	88.5	3.96
B303	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	76.5	73.5	
B304	subadult	3	5	undetermined	109	81.5	1.97
B305	infant	-0.33	0.33	undetermined	122	57	-1.11
B306	adult	28	44	male	125	76.5	0.1
B307	adult	45	55	male?	115.5	82.5	2.02
B308	subadult			undetermined	109	84.5	1.31
B309	adult	20	25	male	143.5	62	1.89
B310	adult	44	52	female	60	75.5	2.49
B311	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	99.5	88.5	3.41
B312	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	67	75	3.38
B313	adult	45	55	male	114.5	31.5	-1.5
B314	adult	40	50	male	134	82	
B315	adult	30	40	female	127	83	1.41

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B316	adult	18	20	female	99.5	88.5	3.02
B317	adult	19	39	male?	220	91.5	2.21
B318	subadult	7.5	14	undetermined	144	78	1.95
B319	adult			female	249	88.5	2.25
B320	subadult	2	4	undetermined	251.5	90	1.73
B321	subadult	1	2	undetermined	143	79.5	0.39
B322	adult			female	140	64.5	2.47
B323	adult	19	30	male	128.5	45	
B324	adult	25	35	female	132	69	1.83
B325	adult	25	35	male	137.5	63.5	0.89
B326	adult	45	55	male	135	73.5	
B327	adult	35	45	male	129	48.5	
B328	adult	40	50	female	241	84.5	
B329	adult			male	128.5	56	
B329.1	adult			undetermined	128.5	56	
B330	adult	28	58	male	140	58.5	0.72
B331	adult	30	35	undetermined	137	58	0.52
B332	adult	35	40	male?	126	80.5	0.67
B333	adult	45	55	male	230.5	81.5	1.14
B334	subadult			undetermined	251	89	1.63
B335	adult	25	35	female	248	84.5	0.36
B336	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	125.5	83	0.68
B337	adult	40	50	male	130	37	-0.67
B338	adult	33	65	female	133.5	84.5	0.69
B339	subadult			undetermined	123	83	1.39
B340	adult	39.3	64.4	female	236.5	88.5	0.27
B341	adult			male	229.5	87.5	1.26
B342	adult	25	35	female?	129	50	-0.73
B343	adult	19	23	male	130	59.5	-0.02
B344	adult	25	35	male?	255	87.5	0.84
B345	adult			undetermined	254	74.5	0.52
B346	adult	50	70	female	138.5	57.5	-0.25
B347	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	130	73.5	0.97
B348	subadult	1	2	undetermined	138	66	1.62
B349	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	132	72	1.64
B350	undetermined			undetermined	133.5	82	1.18
B351	adult	50	60	male	145	84.5	0.39
B352	adult			male	131	67.5	1.47
B353	adult	24	34	male	230	84.5	1.13
B354	adult	35	45	male	129.5	44.5	-1.16

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B355	adult			undetermined	235	74.5	3.19
B356	subadult			undetermined	248	84.5	-0.01
B357	adult	45	65	male	228.5	72	-0.31
B358	adult			female?	230	89.5	1.93
B359	No remains extant.				127.5	84.5	1.47
B360	No remains extant.				235	75.5	0.24
B361	adult	33	57	male	249	88.5	0.77
B362	adult			undetermined	235	69.5	-0.81
B363	subadult	1	2	undetermined	135	49.5	-0.35
B364	adult	25	35	male	143.5	44.5	-0.23
B365	adult			female	257.5	79.5	-0.06
B366	adult	34	62	undetermined	224	78	0.73
B367	adult	25	35	female?	130	72	2.08
B368	subadult	10.5	13.5	undetermined	246.5	80.5	0.86
B369	adult	40	50	male	131	54	-0.21
B370	subadult	2	4	undetermined	146.5	82	0.79
B371	adult	25	35	female	235	69	-2.88
B372	adult	25	35	female	235	81	1.91
B373	adult	45	60	female	132	70.5	-0.97
B374	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	132.5	72	1.36
B375	adult	16	18	female	253	74.5	-0.4
B376	adult	45	65	male	134.5	77	0.45
B377	adult	32.6	57.8	female	235	75.5	-0.44
B378	undetermined			undetermined	235	75.5	-0.28
B379	adult	30	40	male	215	71.5	0.16
B380	adult	40	60	male	241	85	0.51
B381	undetermined			undetermined	235	75.5	-0.68
B382	subadult	4	5	undetermined	215	71.5	0.17
B383	adult	14	18	female	245	79	-0.76
B384	adult	25	45	female	248	91.5	0.59
B385	adult	40	60	female	251.5	86	0.83
B386	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	121.5	48	0.37
B387	adult	34	44	male	227	78	-0.25
B388	adult	29	57	female	222	75.5	-0.38
B389	adult			female	220	82	1.87
B390	adult	25	35	male	140	71.5	1.41
B391	adult	16.5	19.5	male	140.5	68	1.69
B392	adult	42.5	52.5	male	140	71.5	1.04
B393	infant	-0.17	0.17	undetermined	211	84	2.54
B394	adult	16	25	undetermined	185	59.5	-0.59

Table 1.2.
List of excavated burials with age, sex, and location¹³

Burial	Age Category	Low age	High age	Sex	Grid East	Grid South	Elevation
B395	adult	43	53	male	135.5	76.5	-1.11
B396	subadult	6.5	8.5	undetermined	224	82.5	1.43
B397	adult	30	40	female	229	87	0.51
B398	adult	25	35	undetermined	255.5	93	0.67
B399	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	213	78	-0.08
B400	adult	25	35	male	130	65.5	2.09
B402	adult			undetermined	235	84.5	1.06
B403	adult	39	65	male	255.5	93	1.12
B404	adult			female	165	79.5	
B405	subadult	6	10	undetermined	211.8	83.9	2.22
B406	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	253.5	68.25	0.02
B408	adult			male?	158	79.5	0.5
B410	adult			female	178	69.5	1.05
B412	infant	0	0	undetermined	218.5	78.5	2.1
B413	adult	50	70	female	175.5	62.5	0.97
B414	adult	39	59	male	165	74	0.97
B415	adult	35	55	male	215	81	1.81
B416	adult			undetermined	142	71.5	1.28
B417	subadult	9.5	14.5	undetermined	165	64.5	1.14
B418	adult	30	55	male	163	64.5	0.86
B419	adult	48	62	male	206.5	71.5	0.4
B420	adult	35	45	male	186.5	69.5	0.63
B422	No remains extant.				212.5	86.5	2.22
B423	Remains left in place.				162	67	0.74
B424	adult			undetermined	220	76	-1.07
B425	adult			female	253	79.1	0.35
B426	Remains left in place (presumed adult).				141	69.5	1.52
B427	adult	16	20	male?	179	69.5	0.28
B428	adult	40	70	female	147.5	66.5	1.57
B429	Remains left in place (presumed adult).				215	64.5	
B430	Remains left in place (presumed adult).				215	84.5	
B431	adult			undetermined	162	79.5	0.48
B432	adult			undetermined	220	78	-0.89
B433	Remains left in place.				160.5	79.5	
B434	Remains left in place.				155	79.5	
B435	Remains left in place.				205	84.5	2.64

CHAPTER 2. DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE ON THE ORIGIN AND USE OF THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

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This chapter presents an overview of the African Burial Ground from two complementary points of view. Part one examines documentary evidence about the origin of the cemetery and the development of its immediate surrounds. It covers the mid 1600s to 1795, and includes a chronology of property transactions, petitions, surveys, ordinances, and key events directly relevant to the cemetery's use. Maps of New Amsterdam/New York are reproduced in this chapter.

Part two takes a comparative tack. It examines documentary evidence about African funerals in New Amsterdam/New York, along with evidence about burial practices in the black Atlantic world when the African Burial Ground was in use.

2.A. Origin of the African Burial Ground

The African Burial Ground is the only cemetery for Africans known to have existed in Manhattan until the eve of the Revolutionary War, yet it left little impression in public and private documents of the day. Indeed, it is all but invisible before 1713, when the first known reference to African burials on public land appeared in a proposal written by the Anglican chaplain John Sharpe. Africans were first brought to New Amsterdam/New York in 1625. Where, between 1625 and 1713, did they bury their dead?

There are three places where members of colonial Manhattan's black community would have been laid to rest during the 17th century: in plots set aside on family or syndicate farms, in the town burial ground, or in congregational yards. Rural family cemeteries in upper Manhattan, New Jersey, and Long Island had burial plots for enslaved Africans in the 18th century, but 17th century examples of this practice are not known (Kruger 1985:545-551). Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who had the single largest slaveholding in New Amsterdam, may have permitted burials in the chapel yard at his *bouwerie*, the Dutch word for a plantation or a farm. Stuyvesant erected the chapel for his neighbors and tenants, and paid the Dutch minister Henricus Selyns 250 guilders a year to conduct Sunday evening services there (Christoph 1984:147-48). In use from approximately 1660-1687, the chapel was located near what is now the west side of 2nd Avenue at about 10th Street, within the yard of St. Mark's Church (Stokes 1915-28(4):202). The Dutch West India Company, New Amsterdam's commercial landlord, may have allowed burials near the camp for Africans who fed the lumber mill on the Sawkill (Saw River). Situated near present-day 74th Street, the camp was far from the public burial ground at the island's southern tip, where the town took shape around a fort built with African labor (Figures 2.1 and 2.2).



Figure 2.1.
Detail from the Manatus Map, a depiction of New Amsterdam in 1639, with a mark (“F”) showing the camp (near present-day 74th Street) where the Dutch West India Company housed African workers. The unnamed mapmaker provided the earliest known cartographic reference to slavery in New York. Source: Stony Brook University Library Map Collection.

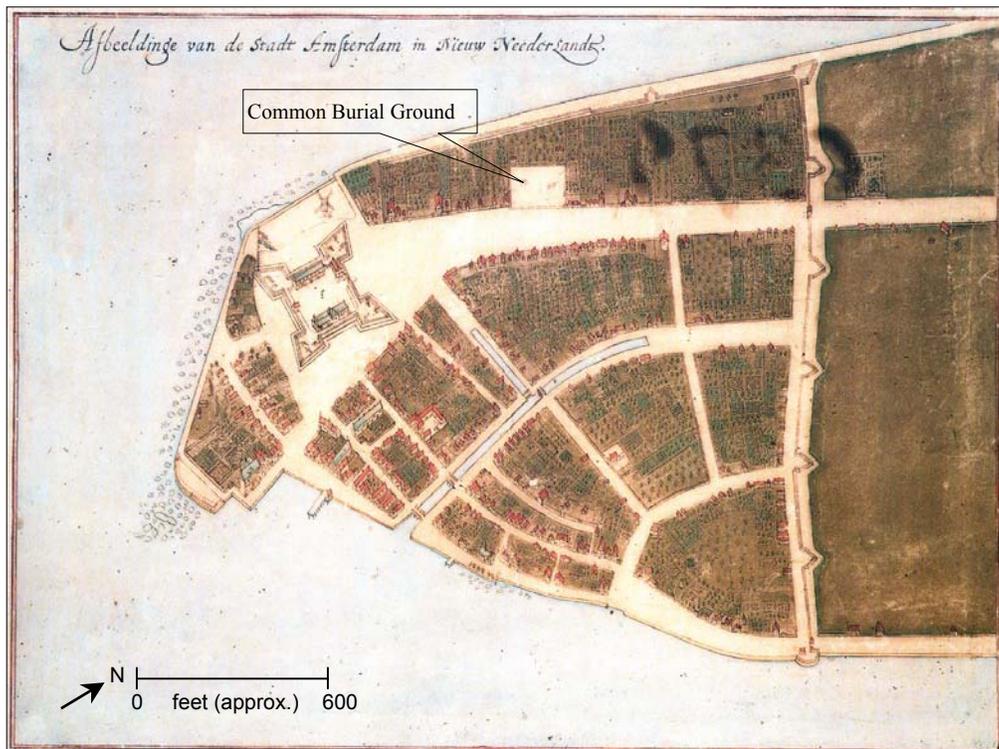


Figure 2.2.
The Castello Plan, cartographer Jacques Cortelyou's street grid of New Amsterdam in 1660, shows the common burial ground on the west side of the wagon road (Broadway), mid way between the fort and the wall (Wall Street). Source: Cohen and Augustyn (1997:38).

New Amsterdam/New York's public burial ground, in use from approximately 1649 to 1676, was located on the west side of present-day Broadway, near present-day Morris Street.¹ A second public cemetery was opened on the same side of the road, just north of the town wall (present-day Wall Street). It began operation after the cemetery established under the Dutch West India Company ceased to be used.

The second public cemetery, which is still in existence today (Figure 2.3), was integrated into the yard of Anglican Trinity Church. After opening its doors in 1697, Trinity Church banned the burial of Africans in the cemetery outside. The Vestrymen

Ordered, That after the Expiration of four weeks from the dates hereof no Negroes be buried within the bounds & Limits of the Church Yard of Trinity Church, that is to say, in the rear of the present burying place & that no person or Negro whatsoever, do presume after the terme above Limited to break up any ground for the burying of his Negro, as they will answer it at their perill [Trinity Church Vestry Minutes, October 25, 1697].



Figure 2.3
View of Trinity Churchyard, October 2005. Photograph by Rob Tucher.

The ban implies that Africans had been using the town cemetery during the 17th century. If so, Africans, or the men and women who held Africans in bondage, would have had to find another burial site after the cemetery came under Trinity's wing. Trinity Church did not take over the northern end of the town burial ground until April 1703. It is possible that burials of Africans in the north yard continued until then (Cannan 2004:3).²

Did the Reformed Dutch Church and other congregations open their graveyards for the burial of Africans prior to, or after, Trinity Church issued its ban? The officially sponsored Dutch Church had a wide reach in New Amsterdam's multiethnic, multi-religious community. Town residents, including Africans, were married and baptized by its clergymen, and attendance at its services was open to people of non-Dutch descent (on African marriages and baptisms, see Goodfriend 1984, 2003 and Swan 1995; on the

¹ New York Colony, Patents Liber 2:20; New York County, Deeds Liber 12:85, 90 and 13:102.

² Trinity Church's archivist suggests that there may have been unrecorded burials of black Anglican communicants during the 18th century (Phyllis Barr, personal communication). Burial registers are not extant prior to 1777, and churchyard headstones, which are used to document burials at Trinity, may not have been provided to blacks.

ethnic make-up of Dutch Church members, see Goodfriend 1992:16). The Dutch Church oversaw the upkeep and use of the town cemetery. It collected fees for the rental of the pall, straps, benches, and boards, and for tolling the bell for the dead. At the behest of the church, city officials reminded the town's two gravediggers to keep a register of "all who die and are buried" (Minutes of the Burgomasters, February 25, 1661, in Fernow 1907:77-78), but these registers, and any precursors, apparently are not extant. The proportion of the African population interred in the town cemeteries during the 17th century is therefore unknown. A new Dutch Church with an adjoining yard was opened in 1694 on Garden Street. If the Dutch Church on Garden Street permitted burials of Africans after the Trinity ban, the practice did not persist through the following century. An examination of Dutch Church burial records, extant for 1727 through 1804, turned up only five burials of Africans, and only one, Susannah Rosedale's in 1729, was *opt de kirkhoff*, "in the churchyard" (Reformed Dutch Church 1727-1804).

Other congregations held religious services during the Dutch period, but they utilized private homes or the church in the fort until establishing sites of their own (Rothschild 1990:44). In 1688, the town's Huguenot community erected a building for the French Church (Église du Saint Esprit). From 1688 until 1804, the French Church performed marriages, baptisms, and funerals, but no burial records of Africans are listed in its register (French Church of New York 1968). Among the smaller congregations, a group that includes the Lutherans, who erected a church in the early 1670s, the Quakers, whose first meeting was recorded in 1681, and the Jews, who had a cemetery by 1683 and a synagogue by 1695 (Goodfriend 1992:84), few burials of blacks were recorded.³

Burials of unfree Africans in congregational cemeteries would have been at the request of the slaveholder. A rough sense of the congregational affiliations of slaveholding households at the end of the 17th century can be had by linking data on slaveholding with tallies of congregational rolls. Working with figures from the 1703 census, when the black population numbered 799, historian Joyce Goodfriend (1992:76) found that Manhattan's Dutch households held 45% of the town's unfree Africans, the English held 40%, the French held 13%, and the Jews held 2%.⁴ Based on a sample of 61 slaveholding households for which the actual church affiliation of the household head can be determined, Anglican parishioners were well represented in the town's slaveholding ranks. Anglicans held slightly more than half (81 out of 156) of the Africans in the sample (Table 2.1). Even if other denominations did allow burials of Africans, it is likely that the closing of Trinity's churchyard to blacks would have had a noticeable impact.

³ There were only two burials of Africans recorded at Trinity Lutheran Church in the 18th century: a free African woman named Mareitje van Guinea, in March 1745, and an illegitimate mulatto child, Abraham Beeling, in October 1747 (Stryker-Rodda 1974:84-85). Moravians buried just two Africans in their cemetery in the 1770s (Moravian Church 1752-1890). German-language records of Christ Lutheran Church include burials from 1752-63 and 1767-73, but these have not been translated. The United Lutheran Church burial records from 1784-1804 were not examined for the present study. For information on Protestant church records, see Macy 1994, 1995, and 1996.

⁴ Official counts of New York's black population are presented in 2.D.

Table 2.1.
Church affiliation of a sample of New York City slaveholding households, 1703

Church affiliation	Number of households	Black Males	Black Females	Black Male Children	Black Female Children	Total Blacks
Huguenot	11	6	19	4	2	31
Reformed Dutch	17	20	15	6	3	44
Anglican	33	27	32	15	7	81
Total	61	53	66	25	12	156

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909) and Rothschild (1990:185-204). To obtain church affiliation, households with blacks in residence, identified in the 1703 census, were matched with names of church members from Rothschild's list.

There is no record of the establishment of a cemetery for Africans after the 1697 ban was issued, or after the northern end of the town cemetery was transferred to Trinity's jurisdiction in 1703. It is likely a cemetery already existed, the one now known as the African Burial Ground.

The African Burial Ground was located in a low-lying area on the undeveloped reaches of the town.⁵ The spine of high ground that present-day Broadway would follow lay to the west. The *vlacht* or "flat" of the town Common, where indigents and criminals would be housed after 1736, was on the south. The lower end of Kalch (also "Collect" or "Fresh Water") Pond lay to the east/northeast.

The area was situated between the town and the outlying parcels the Dutch West India Company conveyed during the 1640s to Africans granted conditional freedom.⁶ The parcels formed a loose arc around the top of Kalch Pond and the Cripplebush (thicketed, swampy wetlands) that accompanied the pond's western outlet across Manhattan to the North River, one of the names by which today's Hudson River was known. Domingo Antony's twelve-acre parcel, granted July 13, 1643, anchored the eastern leg of the arc to the wagon path that would become the Bowery Road. His land, located below present-day Canal Street, extended west to the "Fresh Water or swamp." The opposite leg of the arc rested on Simon Congo's farm, granted December 16, 1644. Congo's eight-acre parcel was centered on present-day Varick Street. One of seventeen African land grants located on the northwestern side of the Cripplebush, his farm angled downward from present-day West Houston to Charleton Street, between present-day Avenue of the

⁵ The present-day state of knowledge about the geographical coordinates of the African Burial Ground during the 17th and 18th centuries is based, in part, on the documentary evidence presented in this chapter. Only a portion of the cemetery was excavated in 1991-92. The archaeologically excavated portion is discussed in Chapter 3.

⁶ Eleven African men petitioned the New Netherland Council for release from servitude to the Dutch West India Company. The petition, granted February 25, 1644 (New Netherland Council Minute 184, translated in Scott and Stryker-Rodda 1974:212-13), made freedom of the men and their wives contingent upon the annual remittance of a tax and assistance, when requested, with public works projects and civil defense. The Company granted conditional freedom to some of its other African workers. Several slaveholding individuals manumitted Africans as well. On the legal rights and privileges of black New Yorkers under Dutch rule, see Higginbotham 1978:105-108; Goodfriend 1978; Moore 2005; Swan 1998.

Americas (Sixth Avenue) and Hudson Street. The approximate locations of the farms are shown in Figure 2.4 (for descriptions of the parcels and their subsequent conveyances, see Stokes 1915-28(6):73-76, 123-24).

Peter Stuyvesant relocated some of the African farmers in 1659-60, a period of heightened anxiety about the possibility of attack from Native Americans. In keeping with a policy to safeguard settlers on outlying parcels (see Stokes 1915-28(4):202-203), Stuyvesant recalled that he had “ordered and commanded” the Africans “to take down their isolated dwellings for their own improved security [...and] to establish and erect the same along the common highway near the honorable general’s [Stuyvesant’s] farm.” At least nine Africans were granted parcels “in true and free ownership” aside the common highway (Bowery Road) that edged Stuyvesant’s land.⁷

The Dutch traveler Jasper Danckaerts referred to the African farms in a journal entry penned October 6, 1679. When describing the changing political geography of 17th century Manhattan, Danckaerts overestimated the liberty Africans had about where they could live:

We went from the city, following the Broadway, over the *valley*, or the fresh water.⁸ Upon both sides of this way were many habitations of negroes, mulattoes and whites. These negroes were formerly the proper slaves of the (West India) company, but, in consequence of the frequent changes and conquests of the country, they have obtained their freedom and settled themselves down where they have thought proper, and thus on this road, where they have ground enough to live on with their families [Danckaerts 1679-80 (1913:65)].

Europeans as well as Africans held land in and around the African Burial Ground. To understand how Africans used the land, our primary aim, requires knowing how the activities of other town residents encroached upon it. Two 17th-century land grants to Dutchmen, Jan Jansen Damen and Cornelis Van Borsum, are now known to have overlapped the cemetery. The Van Borsum patent encompassed the majority of the burial ground, and by the mid-18th century the parcel came to be known as the “Negroes Burial Ground.” The cemetery eventually overlapped the south edge of the Damen grant as well. Van Borsum’s land would become conflated not only with the African Burial Ground but also the town Common, both in the popular imagination and in the official record of property conveyances and deeds. Figure 2.4 highlights the geographical relationships between the African farms and the Damen and Van Borsum parcels.

⁷ Among this group were Christoffel Santome, Solomon Pieters, Francisco Cartagena, Assento, Willem Antonys, Groote Manuel, Manuel Sanders, Claes the Negro, and Pieter Tamboer. Stuyvesant’s confirmation of the replacement lots, issued April 1665, was translated by Charles Gehring from the original held at the New York State Archives, Albany (typescript provided to the authors).

⁸ The “Broadway” Danckaerts followed would likely have been today’s Bowery Road. At the time of his journey, the road that became present-day Broadway had not been laid through the patchwork of African and European farms situated north of Fresh Water Pond and the wetlands to the west.

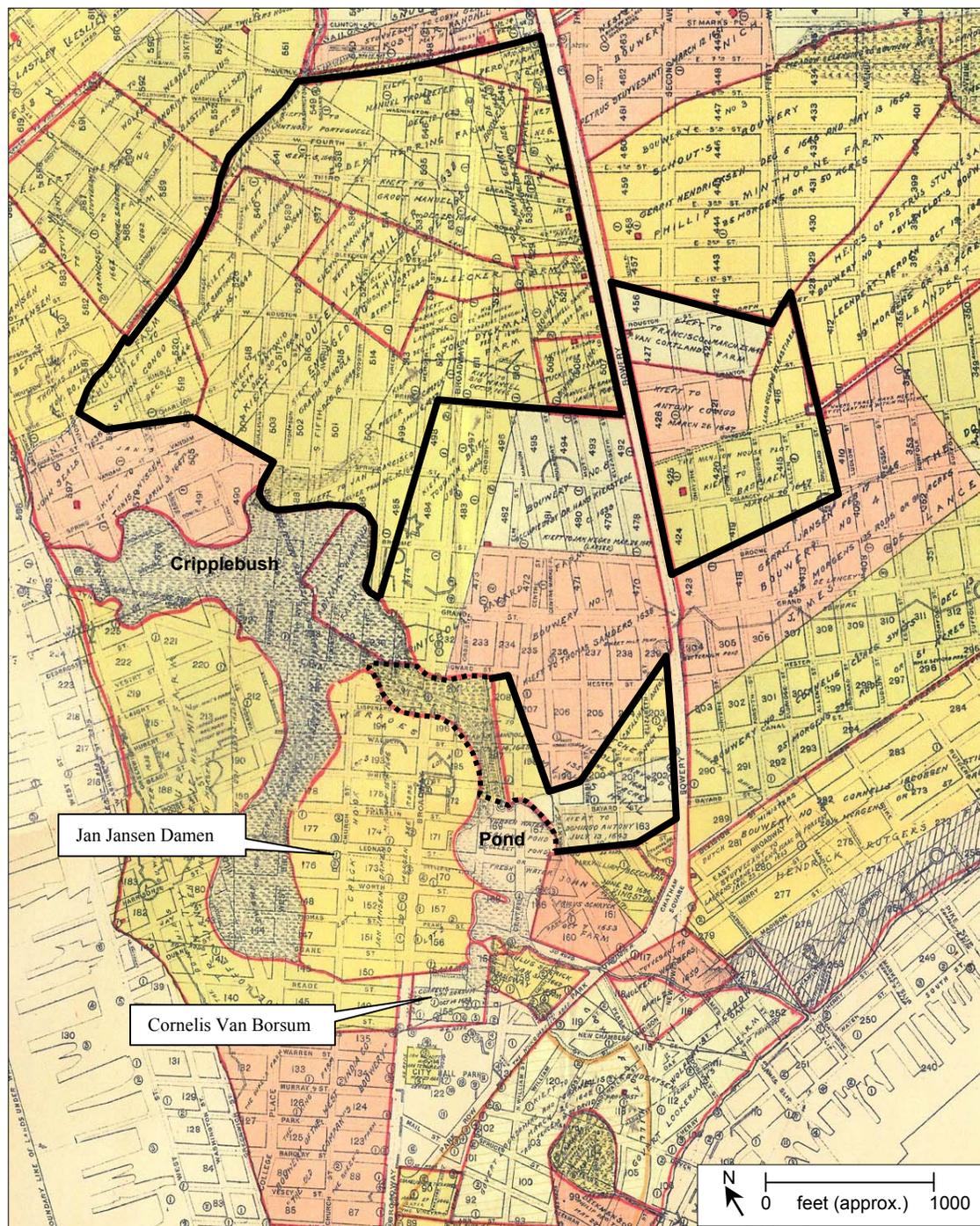


Figure 2.4.
Detail from a map of Dutch-era land grants, superimposed on a Manhattan street grid (circa 1835), showing the approximate locations of patents issued to African men and women (the areas inside the heavy black lines), Jan Jansen Damen, and Cornelis Van Borsum. The map, prepared by R. H. Dodd from translations of the original ground briefs, alludes to the features of the 17th century landscape—the pond, the swamps and wetlands, the wagon roads—to which these outlying parcels were oriented. The African farms formed a loose arc around the northern side of Fresh Water Pond and the Cripplebush to the west. The Damen and Van Borsum lots were situated south of the Cripplebush, and west of the pond. The African farms were subsequently re-conveyed to Europeans. Source: Stokes (1915-1928(6):Plates 84B-a and 84B-b). On the creation of the map, see Stokes (1915-28(2):355-57).

Jan Jansen Damen received a patent from the Dutch West India Company in March 1646. According to the ground brief, Damen had been in possession of the parcel for about ten years (Stokes 1915-28(6):82-3). Called the Kalck (Calk) Hook Farm (for the hilly spit of land that pushed into the western side of the pond), the parcel extended westward from the pond to the approximate alignment of present-day Church Street. It extended northward from present-day Block 154 just south of Duane Street to Canal Street.

Damen died circa 1651. Sometime before 1662 (Stokes 1915-28(6):82), the land was ordered to be partitioned into four quarters, and in 1671 Jan Vigne, the son-in-law of Damen's wife, came into possession of the southeastern piece (referred to as Calk Hook Lot #2; New York County, Deeds Liber 25:110). Vigne's piece overlapped the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 3). A nephew, Gerrit Roos, took control upon Vigne's death in 1689, and when Gerrit died in 1697, his son Peter became the executor of Vigne's property (New York County, Wills Liber 5-6:263 and Liber 7:465). Wolfort Webber purchased the property in 1708. By 1725, Anthony Rutgers had acquired, it along with Calk Hook Lots #1 and #3. The Rutgers heirs would continue in ownership through the 1790s, by which time burials were located along the southern portion of the property (for a history of the Rutgers family, see Crosby 1886). During the Rutgers' tenure, several buildings abutting the burial ground would be constructed, and Great George Street (later Broadway) would be extended northward along the cemetery's western edge.

Cornelis Van Borsum acquired his patent from Governor Colve in October 1673 (Figure 2.5). The grant was made in recognition of Van Borsum's wife, Sara *Roeloffse* or Roeloff (Roeloff was her father's given name), who had rendered service as an Indian interpreter. The parcel was described as

a certain small parcel of land situate on the Island of Manhattan about north-west from the Windmill, beginning from the north end of the road which runs toward the Kalckhook, broad in front on the road or west side, 24 rods; in the rear on the east side, the like 24 rods; long on each side as well along the Kalckhook as on the south side, 44 rods each [Stokes 1915-28(6):123].

Based on the description, the parcel covered approximately 6.6 acres. Using as a guide the street grid shown in Figure 2.4, the area extended eastward from Broadway to approximately Centre Street. The northern boundary was just south of Duane Street. The southern boundary ran, roughly, along Chambers Street.

Sara Roeloff had seven living children, including grown sons and daughters, by her first husband, surgeon Hans Kiersted. She would have an eighth child with Van Borsum, and after his death in 1682 would remarry once again, to Elbert Stouthoff (for biographical information on Roeloff, see Totten 1925:210-212; Janowitz 2005). Roeloff had a pre-nuptial contract with her third husband that enabled her to retain ownership of her property (Narrett 1992:77-79). On her death in 1693, she left her estate to her children, and named as executors her son Lucas Kiersted and sons-in-law Johannis Kip and

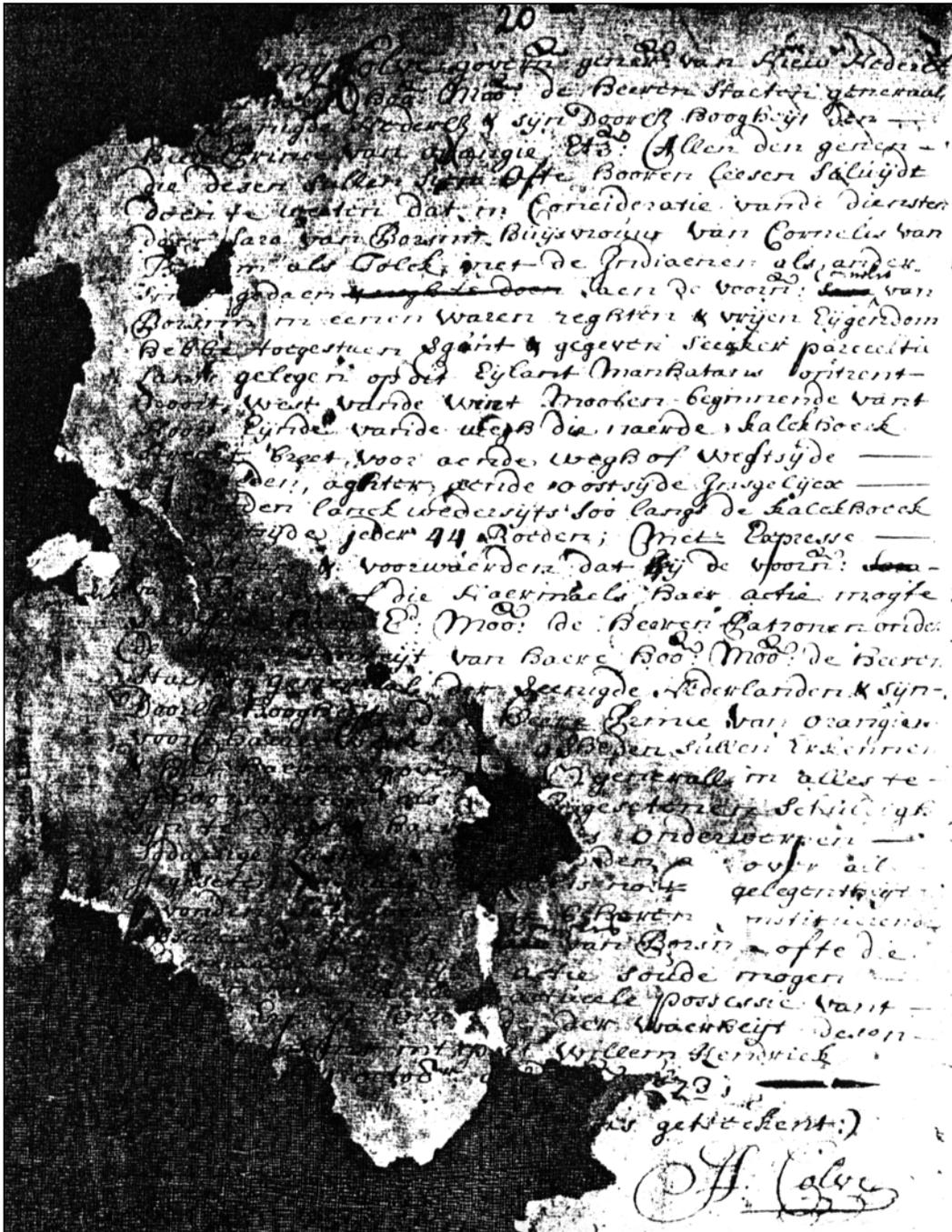


Figure 2.5.
The Van Borsum Patent, issued in October 1673 under Governor Colve's signature, describes the boundaries of an outlying parcel that came to be known as the African Burial Ground. The patent was damaged in a fire at the New York State Archive, Albany, in 1911. Source: New York State Archives, Colonial Manuscripts (Vol. 23, 20-433).

William Teller (New York County, Wills Liber 5-6:1-6). In 1696, Governor Fletcher would grant a confirmation deed for the land to these three as trustees of the estate (New York State, Patents Liber 7:11). Johannis Kip's eldest son Jacobus would petition the city in 1723 to have the land surveyed, but there is no clear evidence of any development of it around that time. A piece of the land near the southeast corner was leased for a stoneware pottery sometime around 1730. From 1745 to approximately 1760, a palisade cut across the bottom of the patent, eliding the southern portion with the town Common behind the wall. By 1765, five houses had been built along the east side of Broadway, within the patent, and were being occupied or leased out by the heirs.

Why and when members of colonial Manhattan's African community began interring their relatives and friends on the undeveloped edge of the town is not known. Our conjecture is that free and enslaved Africans might have begun appropriating Common land for use as a burial ground during the 1640s, when the first African farms were established, or perhaps during the 1660s, when some of the African lot holders were moved to the road alongside Stuyvesant's bowery. The first interments might have been limited to the core African farm families, but a more inclusive cemetery might have developed as members of the town's steadily expanding African population sought a burial place under the control of their own community. It is reasonable to assume that the families who were the farms' proprietors were influential in overseeing the burial ground. As African farms passed into European hands, and New Amsterdam was renamed New York, use of the burial ground would have continued.⁹

Although the area would be granted to Europeans by the third quarter of the 17th century, we hypothesize that its Dutch deed holders, and the English colonial government, would have abided African burials on land that was inconvenient for residential development and undesirable for agricultural use. Approval in practice, if not in law, of an existing African cemetery would have solved the problem the Trinity Church ban might have caused. It also would have been consistent with the racial segregation upon which slavery in Britain's mainland American colonies came to depend.

In summary, there is no known date for the origin of the African Burial Ground, and no evidence that explains how its location was chosen. We know that it was in existence by 1713, and believe that a need for it must have arisen by 1703 at the latest. We also know that the land that would become the African Burial Ground was in close proximity to some of the farms granted to Africans during the mid 1600s. Spatial proximity alone, however, cannot be taken as proof that the burial ground was established during the time Africans held these lots. Much of the land was granted to Sara Roeloff's husband in 1673, but neither the ground brief nor the 1696 deed of confirmation mentions the cemetery. None of Roeloff's heirs questioned the presence on their property of an African cemetery, though they knew of its existence—legal documents of the day

⁹ Africans held the rights and interests in their farms for varied spans of time, as Stokes' (1915-1928(6):73-76, 123-24) biographies of the parcels attest. Domingo Antony's farm was conveyed in August 1668 to Augustine Hermans. The duration of Simon Congo's tenure is unclear.

identify the heirs as claimants and proprietors of the “Negroes Burying Ground.” Despite the language of the law, the cemetery was a place where Africans held sway.

2.B. Documentary chronology of the African Burial Ground, 1650 - 1783

Since its archaeological excavation in 1991-92, the African Burial Ground’s history has been recounted often, in all manner of media.¹⁰ That history, however, has been reconstructed through a very limited set of public and private documents, and often inferences based on scant evidence have been made. To clarify the sources of information that anchor the archaeological analysis presented in this report, a two-part chronology of documented events, laws, and transactions that affected the use of the cemetery is provided.

1650. This is the hypothetical date for the origin of the African Burial Ground. Land grants to Africans began in the 1640s. The Damen patent, which skirted the northern edge of the burial ground, was issued in 1646.

1673. The Van Borsum Patent, which covered much of the area of the African Burial Ground, was issued under the signature of Governor Colve.

1697-1703. Anglican Trinity Church assumed management of the town cemetery and banned burials of Africans in it.

1704. French Huguenot Elias Neau, with financial support from the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, organized a school for enslaved Africans (Butler 1983:166-69). Enslaved and free black New Yorkers put literacy to a variety of uses, including petitioning the municipal government for assistance in protecting African graves, and acquiring land for a new cemetery (see entries for 1788 and 1795).

1712-13. In April of 1712, an armed insurrection of enslaved Africans resulted in six suicides and twenty-one executions (Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, June 23, 1712, in O’Callaghan and Fernow 1853-87(5):341-42; Scott 1961). The Common might have been used for the executions, and the dead might have been buried in the African Burial Ground. In the following March, John Sharpe of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts mentioned African burials in his “Proposals for Erecting a School, Library and Chapel at New York.” He noted that Africans were “buried in the Common by those of their country and complexion without the office [of a Christian minister], on the contrary the Heathenish rites are performed at the grave by their countrymen” (1712/13 [1880:355]). He was almost certainly referring to funerals in the African Burial Ground, though the exact portion of the ground then in use cannot be

¹⁰ The Office of Public Education and Interpretation for the project retains huge files of articles, books, and the many films and videos that have told the story of the cemetery and its rediscovery. Official documents such as the National Historic Landmark nomination (Appendix A), and the Designation Report for New York City’s landmark historic district, provide synopses of the documentary research.

determined. The Common covered the area of present-day City Hall Park to Fresh Water Pond.

1722. The Common Council passed a law regulating the burial of “all Negroes and Indian Slaves that shall dye within this corporation [located] on the south side of the Fresh Water” (New York City Common Council, Minutes [hereafter MCC] 1675-1776(3):296).¹¹ The law stipulated that the enslaved had to be “buried by Day-light,” on penalty of 10s., payable by the slaveholder.

1723. The Common Council appointed a committee to assist Alderman Jacobus Kip (the son of Johannes Kip and grandson of Sara Roeloff) in surveying the Van Borsum patent (MCC 1675-1776(3):335). Care was to be taken by the committee to preserve the width of Broadway as it was extended northward, through the patent. Kip’s need for a survey may have been related to Anthony Rutgers’s purchase of Lot #2 of Calk Hook Farm. That lot abutted the Van Borsum patent on the north, with the boundary running diagonally across present-day Block 154.¹² Perhaps there was some question about the exact location of the boundary between the two patents. It is more likely, however, that the extension of Broadway northward to Rutgers’s land required an exact survey.

1730. Two plans of the town circa 1730, each based on a survey conducted by James Lyne, show little development in the area near the burial ground. The Lyne - Bradford Plan, published in 1731 (Figure 2.6), labeled the Common, the ropewalk along the west side of Broadway (“Great George Street”), and the powder magazine on a small rise between the main Fresh Water Pond and a smaller pond or swamp to its south (the “Little Collect”). Also depicted, but not labeled, were a building on the east side of Broadway, south of the burial ground, and a building on the northern part of the Common. The latter building was identified as a pottery on the Carwitham Plan printed in 1740 (Figure 2.7). The parcel of land containing the pottery was apparently in the possession of Abraham Van Vleck (Sara Roeloff’s granddaughter Maria had married Van Vleck in 1710). Van Vleck probably leased it to William Crolius, listed in the city as a freeman potter in 1728. This area (on the south side of present-day Reade Street to the east of Elk, Block 153)

¹¹ Here and in other restrictive legislation, both “Negroes” and “Indians Slaves” are referred to. There is no reason to suppose that enslaved Native Americans would not have used the same burial ground as Africans, yet no distinctive forms of burial attributable to Native Americans were identified during the archaeological excavation in 1991-92. Although burial practices of Native Americans during the “contact period” are not well known, evidence indicates that Munsee-speaking Lenape Delaware buried their dead in immediate proximity to their settlements, and exhumed and re-buried the bones of their kin when settlements were moved (Cantwell and Wall 2001:97-103). Apparently the typical burial position for these groups, and for Iroquois, was flexed. By the time the African Burial Ground was in use, head-to-west burial with an extended supine position was practiced (Wray and Schoff 1953:57-59; Nelson 2000). The African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Team compared the skeletal sample with Native American DNA, dental morphology, and craniometrics, but none of these statistical analyses pointed to Native American ancestry. If native individuals were buried in the excavated portion of the cemetery, there was insufficient evidence to identify them by their biological characteristics. The biological evidence generally pointed to African origins if any origin was estimable.

¹² Rutgers acquired one of the Calk Hook lots in 1723 and two more in 1725. The latter two were probably Lot #s 1 and 3 (Crosby 1886:84; Stokes 1915-28(6):82).

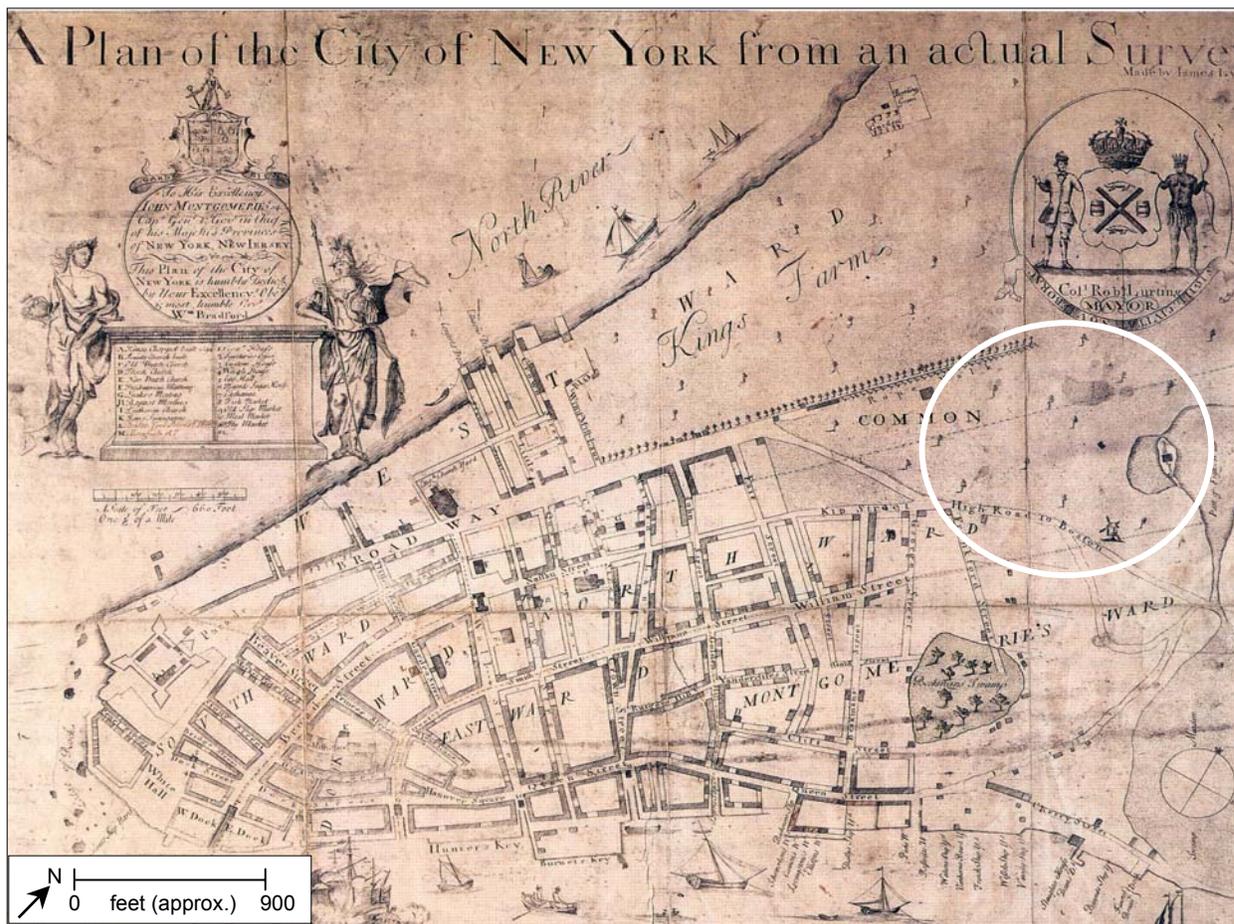


Figure 2.6. The Lyne - Bradford Plan, printed by William Bradford in 1731 from a survey made by James Lyne, depicts New York in 1730. The African Burial Ground is not identified on the map, which Bradford marketed at 4s. 6d. The cemetery's immediate surrounds show little development. The structure encircled on the detail at the right was the Crolius Pottery. The large structure on the Common adjacent to the ropewalk has not been identified. The dashed line parallel to the ropewalk is a ward boundary. Source: Cohen and Augustyn (1997:54).

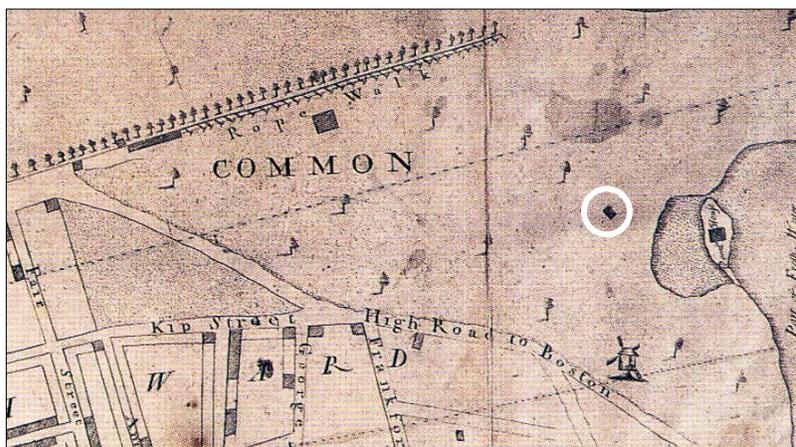




Figure 2.7.
The Carwitham Plan, named for its engraver John Carwitham, was based on James Lyne's survey. Printed in London in 1740, the Carwitham Plan provides more details than the Lyne - Bradford Plan. The arrow on the upper left points to the Crolius Pottery, located just south of the ponds, in what was probably the southeastern part of the African Burial Ground. Source: Cohen and Augustyn (1997:56).

was probably not used for burials after this date, if it had been previously.¹³ The pottery may have begun disposing of kiln waste within the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground around this time (see Chapter 4). Only the pottery operation, and its waste disposal practices, would have constituted a clear encroachment.

1731. A smallpox epidemic in the city claimed the lives of approximately 50 African New Yorkers, and 79 Africans were listed in the bills of mortality published in the *New-York Gazette* in August through December. The *Gazette* sorted whites by congregational affiliation, and noted that eight of the town's congregations had cemeteries (*New-York Gazette*, November 15, 1731). Blacks were listed separately and, presumably, were interred in the African Burial Ground. In mid November when the municipal codes were renewed, the Common Council placed two more restrictions on burials of enslaved Africans (see entry for 1722). To ensure that African funerals were not a pretext for insurrection, the master of the deceased slave was made responsible for vetting the attendees and limiting their number to twelve, excluding the gravedigger and "the Bearers who Carry the Corps." Pawls and pawl bearers were also banned (MCC 1675-1776(4):88-89). A pawl, or pall, was a large, typically sumptuous cloth spread over the coffin (or the corpse) during the funeral procession. Pallbearers held up the hem. Given that palls were usually rented from churches, prohibiting palls at black funerals turned a sign of Christian burial into a prerogative of whites.

1732-35. The first cartographic reference to a "Negro Burying Place" appeared on a hand-drawn plan of the city, circa 1732-1735. Mrs. Buchnerd's Plan (Figure 2.8) situates the burial ground on the southwest side of the swamp below the Fresh Water pond. It is likely this is the same part of the Common referred to by John Sharpe when he mentioned burials conducted by Africans.

1736. The city erected an almshouse on the Common, at the approximate location of present-day City Hall. This was the beginning of the transformation of the Common into a site for public institutions (Hall 1910; Harris et al. 1993; Hunter Research 1994; Epperson 1999).

1741. A "great conspiracy" of Africans was thwarted and its perpetrators brought to trial (Lieutenant Governor Clarke to Duke of Newcastle, and to the Lords of Trade, June 20, 1741, in O'Callaghan and Fernow 1853-1887(6):195-98); Horsmanden 1744[1971]). Thirty of the convicted Africans were executed on the Common (thirteen by burning at the stake and seventeen by hanging), as were four of the Europeans. The executions were memorialized on the Grim Plan, a depiction of New York in 1742-44 set down in 1813 (Figure 2.9). The Africans might well have been interred at the African Burial Ground, if interment was allowed.

1745. The town erected a cedar-log palisade wall, and part of the Van Borsum patent (along the south side) was within it, part without. After this time, it is presumed that the

¹³ The location of the kiln was traced back from later property records and maps.

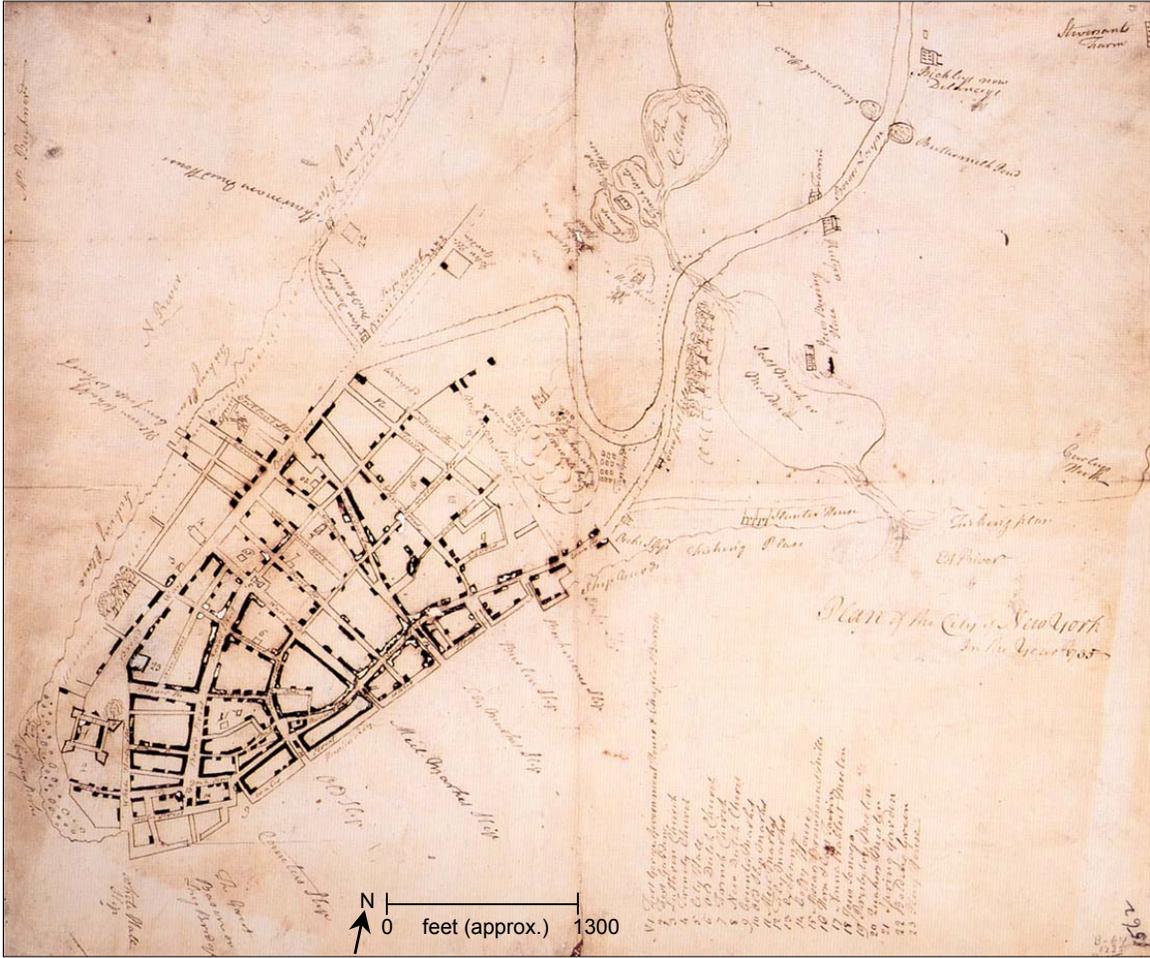
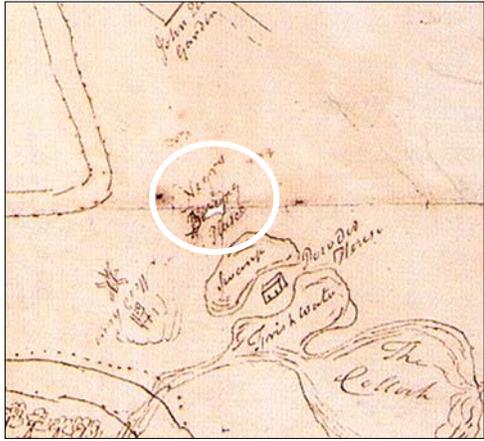


Figure 2.8. Mrs. Buchner's hand-drawn Plan of the City of New York in the Year 1735. The words "Negro Burying Place" are legible on the central fold of the manuscript, adjacent to the "swamp" on the south side of the Collect (near the top of the full sheet shown above, and circled at right). This was the first time the cemetery was labeled on a map. Source: Cohen and Augustyn (1997:61).



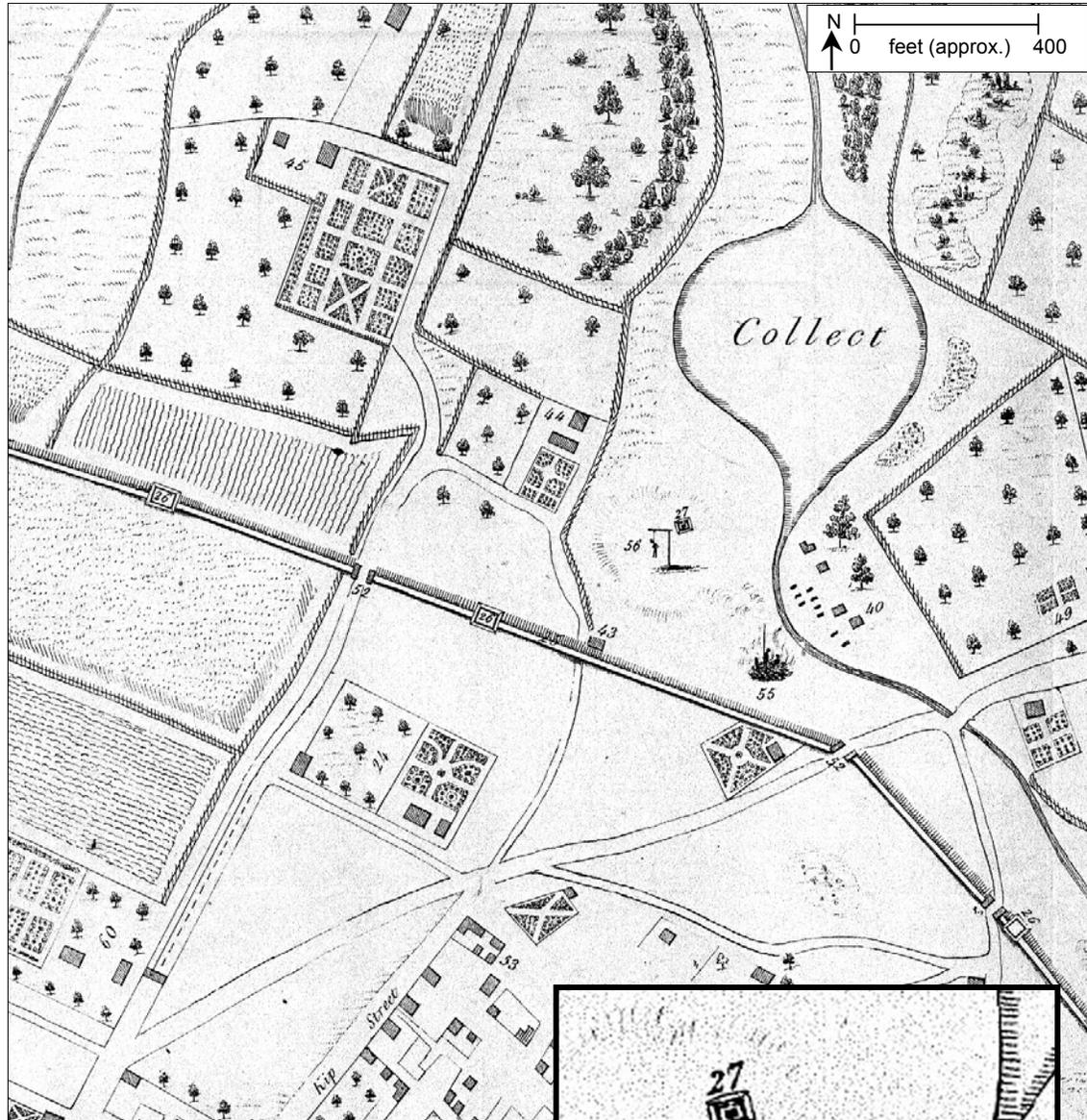
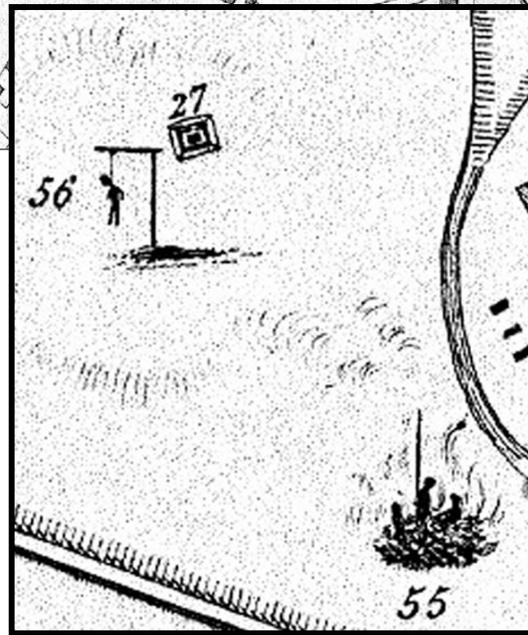


Figure 2.9.
Detail from New Yorker David Grim's recollection of the city in 1742-44, showing two of the punishments meted out to Africans convicted of conspiring to set fire to the town. The stake at which some of the conspirators were burned (no. 55) is set across from a tannery (no. 40). A box representing the powder house (no. 27) is near the scaffold where the gibbeting took place (no. 56). Northwest of the scaffold are the Remmey & Crolius Pottery (no. 44) and the neatly laid gardens of the Rutgers estate (no. 45). Grim labeled the small building to the southwest of the scaffold (no. 43, abutting the palisade) as the Corselius Pottery. Source: Map Division, New York Public Library.



African Burial Ground would have been restricted to the area outside (i.e., to the north of) the wall. When the palisade was dismantled is unclear, but city plans from circa 1760 onward do not show it. While the wall stood, access to the burial ground from the town would have entailed passing through one of the palisade gates.¹⁴

1753. In August, John Teller, Jacobus Stoutenburgh, and Maria Van Vleck petitioned the Common Council for “Some lands belonging to this Corporation in Exchange for the Negroe burying place, as also for a small Slip of Land on which a Pott house &c are built” (MCC 1675-1776(5):416). The land offered to the city was probably the portion of the patent that fell within the palisade wall, making it ripe for corporation encroachment or even confiscation.¹⁵ If the wording of the request is taken to mean that part of the land Teller and company tried to swap had been used for burials, then the total area of the cemetery contracted following the wall’s construction. The Council deferred consideration of the petition, and no further mention of it was made in the Minutes until 1760.

1754/5. The “Negros Burial Ground” was labeled clearly on the Maerschalk Plan surveyed in 1754 and published in 1755 (Figure 2.10). Also shown on the map are the town palisade wall, potteries at the presumed northeast and southeast corners of the burial ground, a structure on Broadway, and a dashed line running southwest to northeast from that structure toward the northern pottery. This line may represent a fence along the southern boundary of the Calk Hook Farm, possibly marking the northern limit of the burial ground (see Chapter 4). The structure on Broadway may have been a gatehouse to the Rutgers estate located to the north, or a house that Anthony Rutgers was leasing out.

1757. A small burial ground (“the length of two Boards”) was laid out on the Common, on the eastside of the almshouse, for the abject poor who resided within (MCC 1675-1776(6):85). The almshouse cemetery was situated south of the southern boundary of the Van Borsum patent, but because the southern extent of the early African Burial Ground is not known, there is a *possible* overlap between the two cemeteries. Also in this year a jail was built east of the almshouse, and a barracks went up along the south side of present-day Chambers Street east of Broadway (Hunter Research 1994; Hall 1910). The construction in this area may have disturbed African Burial Ground graves.

1760. The Common Council and the children of Maria Van Vleck came to an agreement regarding “three Lotts of Ground Contiguous and adjoining to the Negroes Burying place on part of Which said Lotts, their Father [Abraham Van Vleck] Built a Potting House pot

¹⁴ David Grim, in notes jotted in November 1819 on the back of the plan he drew (Figure 2.9), identified the logs as cedar and put their length at fourteen feet. He situated one of the palisade’s four gates at present-day Broadway near Chambers Street (Stokes 1915-28(4):591; Hall 1910: 389).

¹⁵ We postulate that the portion of the patent on the south side of the palisade was in the *de facto* possession of the city, though not, as it would turn out, in its legal possession. The map evidence indicates that the first pottery works (circa 1730) stood *outside* the palisade’s line-of-march. Another building, presumed to be part of the works, was located *inside* the wall on the city plan surveyed in 1754 (see Figure 2.10). It is possible that Van Vleck had the latter built for the Crolius pottery works in the 1740s or early 1750s.

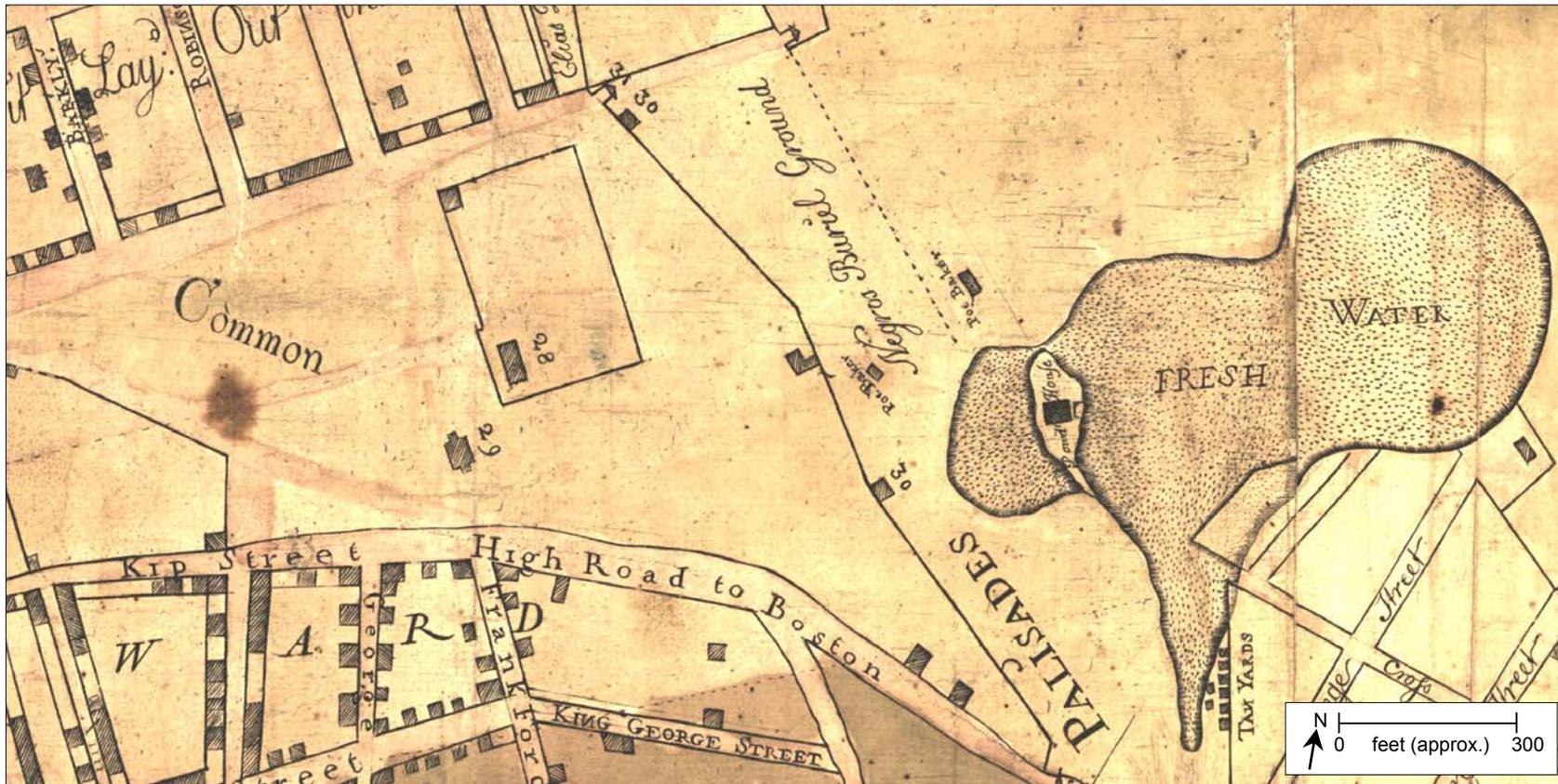


Figure 2.10.

Detail from the Maerschalk Plan, surveyed by Francis Maerschalk in 1754 and published by Gerardus Duyckink in 1755. The “Negros Burial Ground” is clearly labeled to the southwest of Fresh Water Pond and north of the Common and the palisade wall. The dashed diagonal line corresponds to the approximate northern boundary of the Van Borsum patent, and probably also of the African Burial Ground, and may represent a fence. The “Common” is today’s City Hall Park, with Broadway running along its west side. By this date, houses had gone up along the west side of Broadway as far north as the Palisade. The almshouse (no. 28) and a powder house (no. 29) stood on the Common. The unidentified building that hugs the south side of the palisade is presumed to be a part of the pottery works on the opposite side of the fence. Source: Library of Congress.

oven and Sunk a Well Supposing at that Time the said Lands were his property” (MCC 1675-1776(6):238). It is likely this parcel was separated from the majority of the Van Borsum patent by the palisade wall built in 1745, which may account for the city’s unexplained possession, although there may be a missing transaction. Under the agreement, the city leased the land (a 100’ x 100’ plot) to Van Vleck’s daughters for a period of nineteen years. Thus, land that originally may have been within the African Burial Ground was taken over for a pottery factory, came to be considered city property, and was re-conveyed by lease to the Van Borsum heirs.

Circa 1765. Isaac Teller (one of the claimants to the land) built three houses along Broadway within the Van Borsum patent, near present-day Chambers Street. At the time there apparently were two other houses on Broadway to the north of Teller’s buildings.¹⁶ All of the buildings may have encroached on the African Burial Ground. Although the burial ground’s original western limit is not known, there is no reason to think it did not extend to Broadway. Teller built a fence around an unspecified portion of the African Burial Ground, and charged a fee for entering its gate (see Chapter 4). By the 1760s, it is likely no burials occurred within 100 feet of Broadway, the depth of a typical lot.

1767. The Rutzer Map of this year (Figure 2.11) did not identify the African Burial Ground. It depicted the houses along Broadway that would have occupied the burial ground’s western edge, as well as a diagonal line that may have marked the northern boundary and may represent a fence. Three structures, all of unknown function but possibly associated with the potteries, stood along the north side of this line, two near Broadway and one near the swamp south of Fresh Water Pond. The barracks was located south of present-day Chambers Street. Numerous buildings occupied the eastern/southeastern perimeter of the African Burial Ground. The physical area available for interments was becoming increasingly constrained by this time.

1773. Trinity Church established its own small “Burial ground for the Negro’s” on a lot bounded by present-day Church Street, Reade Street, and West Broadway (Trinity Church Vestry Minutes, September 15, 1773; Bancker, Plans, Box 3, Folder 81). Records of burials in this cemetery, located a block to the west of the African Burial Ground, are apparently not extant. The cemetery was in use through mid August 1795, after which Trinity’s vestrymen arranged to have it surveyed into lots. Within two years the lots had been leased out (Cannan 2004:4).

1775. The Bridewell, an institution for the incarceration of debtors and vagabonds, was built west of the almshouse, near the present-day southeast corner of Chambers Street and Broadway. Again, this construction may have disturbed graves belonging to the early African Burial Ground.

¹⁶ According to testimony entered before the New York State Supreme Court of Judicature in 1812 (Smith v. Burtis) and 1813 (Smith v. Lorillard), Teller had one brick and two wood houses put up between 1760 and 1765. Two more houses were said to have fronted Broadway to the immediate north of Teller’s buildings: the Ackerman house (next door to Teller), and the Kip house (next door to Ackerman, near present-day Broadway and Reade Street). For the case testimonies, see Johnson 1853-59(9):174-185; (10):338-357).

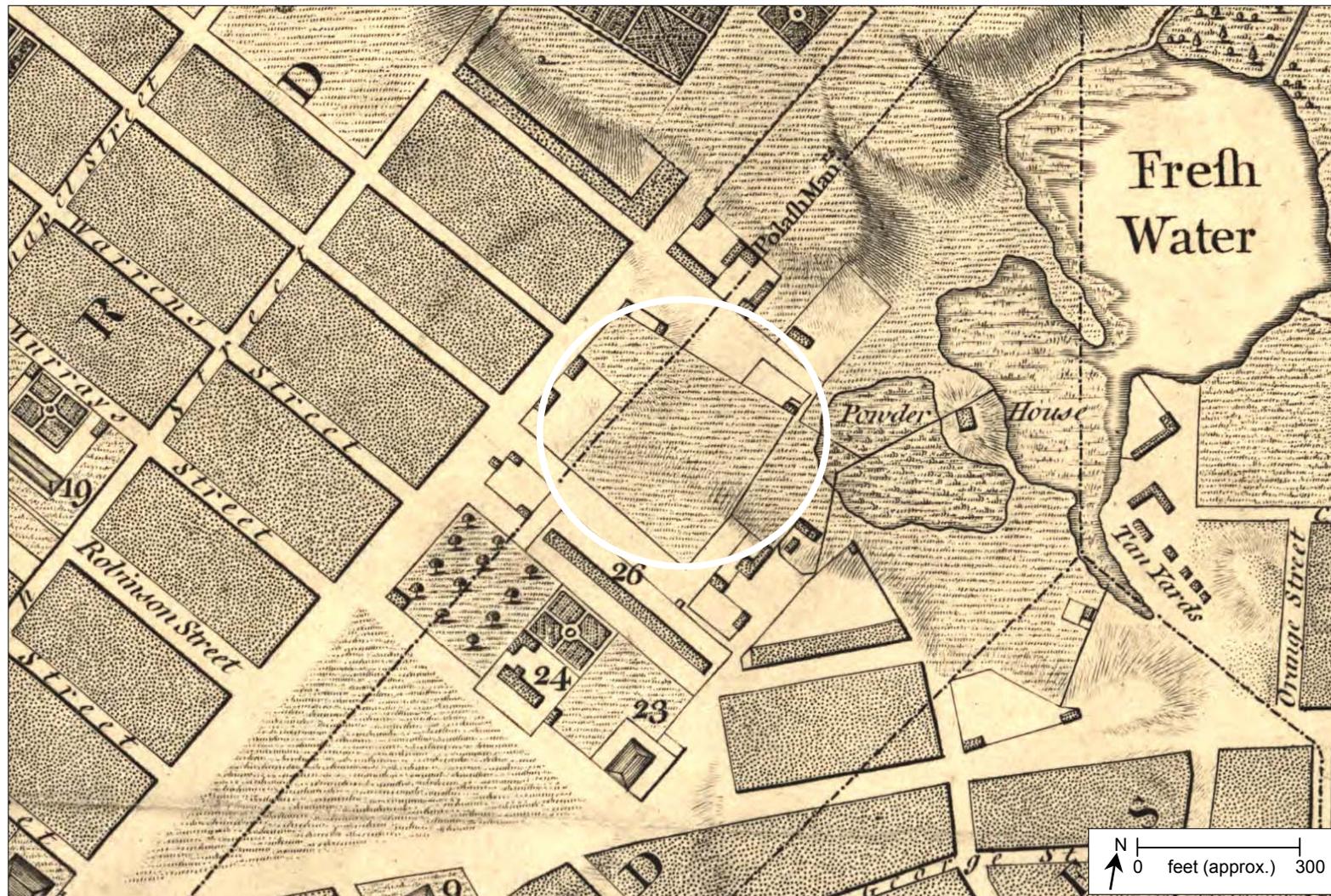


Figure 2.11. Detail from the Ratzel Map, 1767, surveyed by Bernard Ratzel. The general location of the African Burial Ground is circled. The hachures indicating relief suggest the contours of the hillside sloping down from south to north through the area. Note structures on Broadway properties on the west side of the burial ground, the pottery buildings on the southeast, the barracks (no. 26) to the south, the almshouse and gaol (no. 24 and no. 23) below the barracks, and the diagonal line that may have marked the northern boundary of the Van Borsum patent. Source: Library of Congress.

1776-1783. British forces took New York and occupied the city for the duration of the war. They pulled down the houses Teller had built circa 1765, along with the fence (Johnson 1853-59(10):335). They also buried deserters and prisoners of war behind the barracks on the Common (British Headquarters Papers, Provost Weekly Returns 1782-1783; Stokes 1915-28(3):927). These burials probably were limited to the southern portion of the African Burial Ground (Figure 2.12), within present-day Chambers Street and between Chambers and Reade Streets. Some of them may have been shallow, with bodies “thrown into the ground in a heap” (Fitch 1776-1777 [1954:149]). No mass graves were found in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. During the war, the city’s population swelled with Africans in search of



Figure 2.12.
Detail from the British Headquarters Map, 1782, that depicts the area behind the barracks used for interments by the occupying British forces during the Revolution. This area (just inside the circle used to identify the general location of the African Burial Ground) is stippled with crosses, a convention the mapmaker used to represent congregational as well as common burial grounds. St. Paul’s churchyard, in the lower left corner, is also stippled with crosses. Source: Map Division, New York Public Library.

freedom. It is assumed that those who died while in the city would have been buried in the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 9). When the British evacuated, thousands of blacks accompanied them.

2.C. Closing of the African Burial Ground, 1784 - 1795

The return of peace and the boom in development following the war spelled the demise of the African Burial Ground. Within a very short period, from the mid 1780s to the mid 1790s, the African Burial Ground would be ever more constricted, so that, finally, burials could no longer take place there. Free and enslaved African-Americans kept a close eye on the burial ground, and responded rapidly to its declining fortunes by mobilizing their own and the city's resources.

1784. In response to a petition from Henry Kip and the other Van Borsum patent holders, the Common Council appointed a committee in September to lay out and regulate streets through the parcel (MCC 1784-1831(1):81). Clearly, Sara Roeloff's heirs were making plans to develop their property. The committee dragged its heels, and Kip petitioned it again, in mid November 1787 (MCC 1784-1831(1):338).

1787. With the survey into lots of the Calk Hook Farm (Figure 2.13), parts of the northernmost area of the African Burial Ground may have ceased to be used. Houses were not built on these lots immediately, but it is possible a fence, or perhaps survey posts marking the outlines of the lots, discouraged burial in this area (see Chapters 3 and 4).

1788. Public exposure of the unsavory world of nocturnal grave robbing at cemeteries used by blacks and the poor created an uproar that spilled from the February pages of the popular press to the April city streets, where citizens mobbed doctors accused of desecrating the dead. Free and enslaved blacks had petitioned the Common Council in mid February to stop physicians from carrying African corpses to the dissecting table at the municipal hospital, located on the west side of present-day Broadway near Duane Street (Papers of the Common Council, Petitions, February 14, 1787/88).¹⁷ Two days later, a free man of color detailed the horrid practice in a letter printed in the *Daily Advertiser*. Another letter disclosed that a private cemetery on Gold Street, made available for African interments by Mr. Scipio Gray, had been looted, too. Gray had been forced to remain inside his home while physicians ransacked the grave of a child in the nearby ground (*Daily Advertiser*, February 16 and 28, 1788). The cemetery may have belonged to Anglican St. George's Chapel, identified on a 1789 plan that depicts New York on the eve of the development boom (Figure 2.14).

¹⁷ The men wrote on behalf of a burial ground "assigned for the Use of your Petitioners," a description that may best fit the Trinity Church African cemetery at the corner of Church and Reade Streets (see entry for 1773). Bodies were also disinterred from the African Burial Ground and the almshouse cemetery on the Common, as letters published in the *Daily Advertiser* during February, and recollections of the city's cadaver-seeking medical men, make clear (see Heaton 1943; Ladenheim 1950; Humphrey 1973).

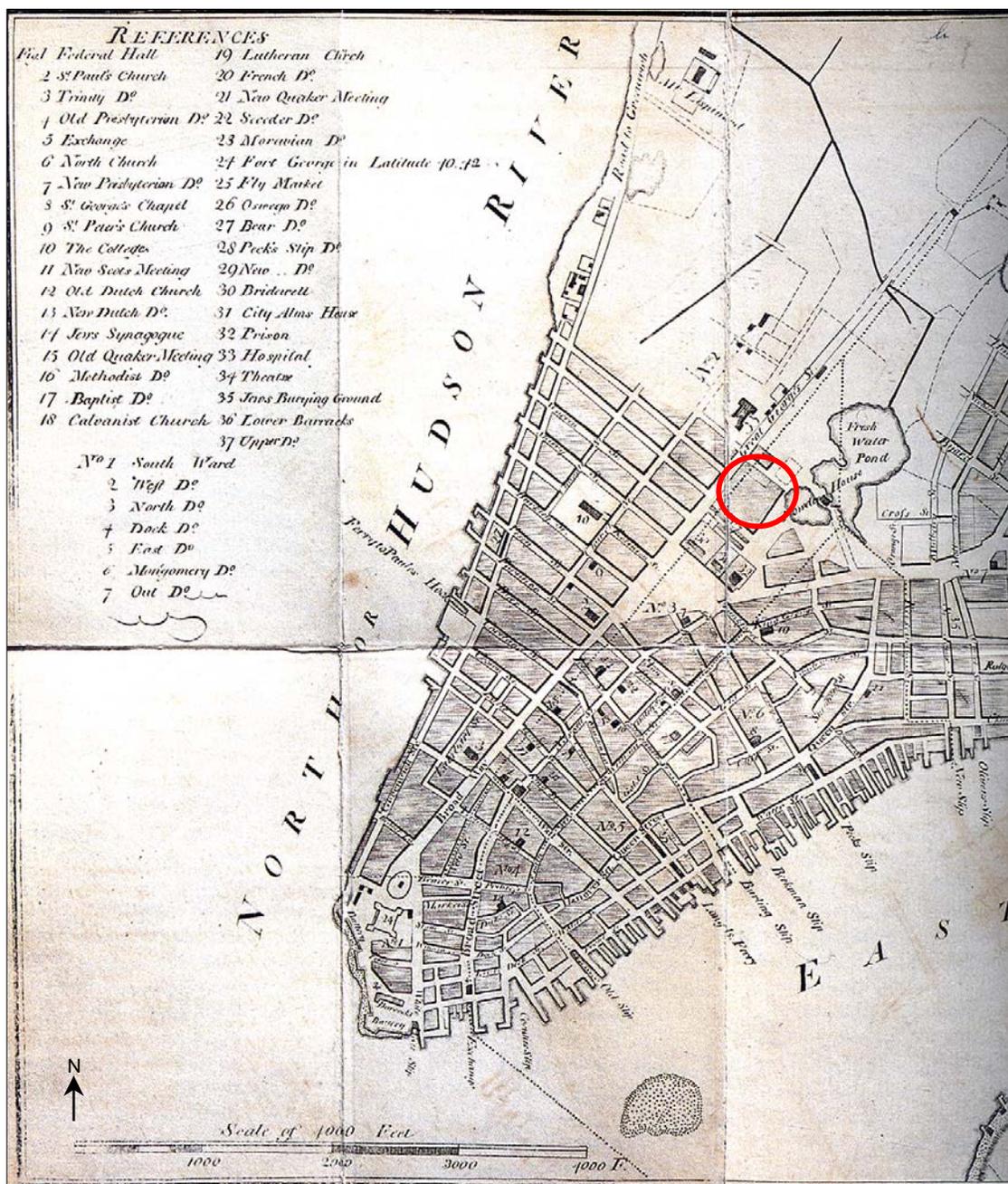


Figure 2.14
Detail from the Directory Plan of 1789, drawn by surveyor John McComb, Jr., for the annual directory of city residents published during New York's brief stint as the federal capital. The plan depicts the city on the eve of the development boom that led to the closing of the African Burial Ground (the cemetery's general location is circled). The Gold Street cemetery Mr. Scipio Gray made available for African burials was near Anglican St. George's Chapel (no. 8), located several blocks southeast of the African Burial Ground. Source: Cohen and Augustyn (1997:93).

1794. On October 27, the Common Council read “a Petition from sundry black men in this City praying the Aid of this Board in purchasing a Piece of Ground for the interment of their dead” (MCC 1784-1831(2):112).¹⁸ The petition was referred to a committee, which reported back the following year.

1795. The survey and division into lots of the Van Borsum patent made inevitable the complete closing of the African Burial Ground (Figure 2.15). Property disputes amongst the heirs notwithstanding, lots were rapidly sold off and development would begin soon after the partition. Haggling between the heirs and the city over the transfer of rights and titles to the strip on which Chambers Street east of Broadway would be laid was resolved in June of the following year (MCC 1784-183(2):252-53).

Meanwhile, the Common Council committee charged with locating land for a new African cemetery reported on April 7 that a proper spot had been found on Chrystie Street in the Seventh Ward, on a parcel that had been part of the Delancey estate. The committee recommended that the city contribute £100 toward the purchase of the parcel, described as four contiguous lots, at 100' x 25' per lot, available for £450. The committee also recommended that the deed to the ground be held by the city in trust for its users (MCC 1784-1831(2):137). On June 22, the Common Council read into the Minutes a petition from Isaac Fortune and other free men of color who requested legal standing to manage the affairs of the Chrystie Street cemetery (Figure 2.16). Fortune and his fellow petitioners informed the Council that they had organized a mutual aid association called the African Society but had been unable, under state law, to incorporate as a religious organization. The petitioners described their involvement in arranging for the purchase of the Chrystie Street parcel from Samuel Delaplaine, declared their intention to make improvements on it, and asked for the right to collect the burial fees and exercise the privileges held by managers of other burial yards. The Common Council granted the request (MCC 1784-1831(2):158-59).¹⁹

It is not known how long African-American New Yorkers maintained their connection to the African Burial Ground. Once private houses and businesses began to be built, and landfill covered the ground surface, surely the community was severely constrained from even visiting graves. Yet during the opening decades of the 19th century, free blacks came to reside in the relatively inexpensive housing along the streets that had been laid through the cemetery and its immediate surrounds. The concentration of black households within the area was evident by 1810, as historian Shane White (1991:171-179) has shown (see Chapter 9). The neighborhood was also home to the early independent black churches, where many African-American New Yorkers invested their spiritual energies and organizational acumen after the African Burial Ground had closed.

¹⁸ The words of the petition were not read into the Minutes, and the petition itself is apparently not extant—a search of the Common Council Papers held at the Municipal Archives of the City of New York came up empty-handed. Though it is not possible to find out whether the petition carried any signatures, it is likely that some of its writers were the founding members of the African Society, which petitioned the Common Council eight months later regarding the management of the African cemetery at Chrystie Street.

¹⁹ Two months later, the process of closing down the Trinity Church African cemetery got underway when the Vestrymen made plans to survey and divide the ground into lots (see entry for 1773).

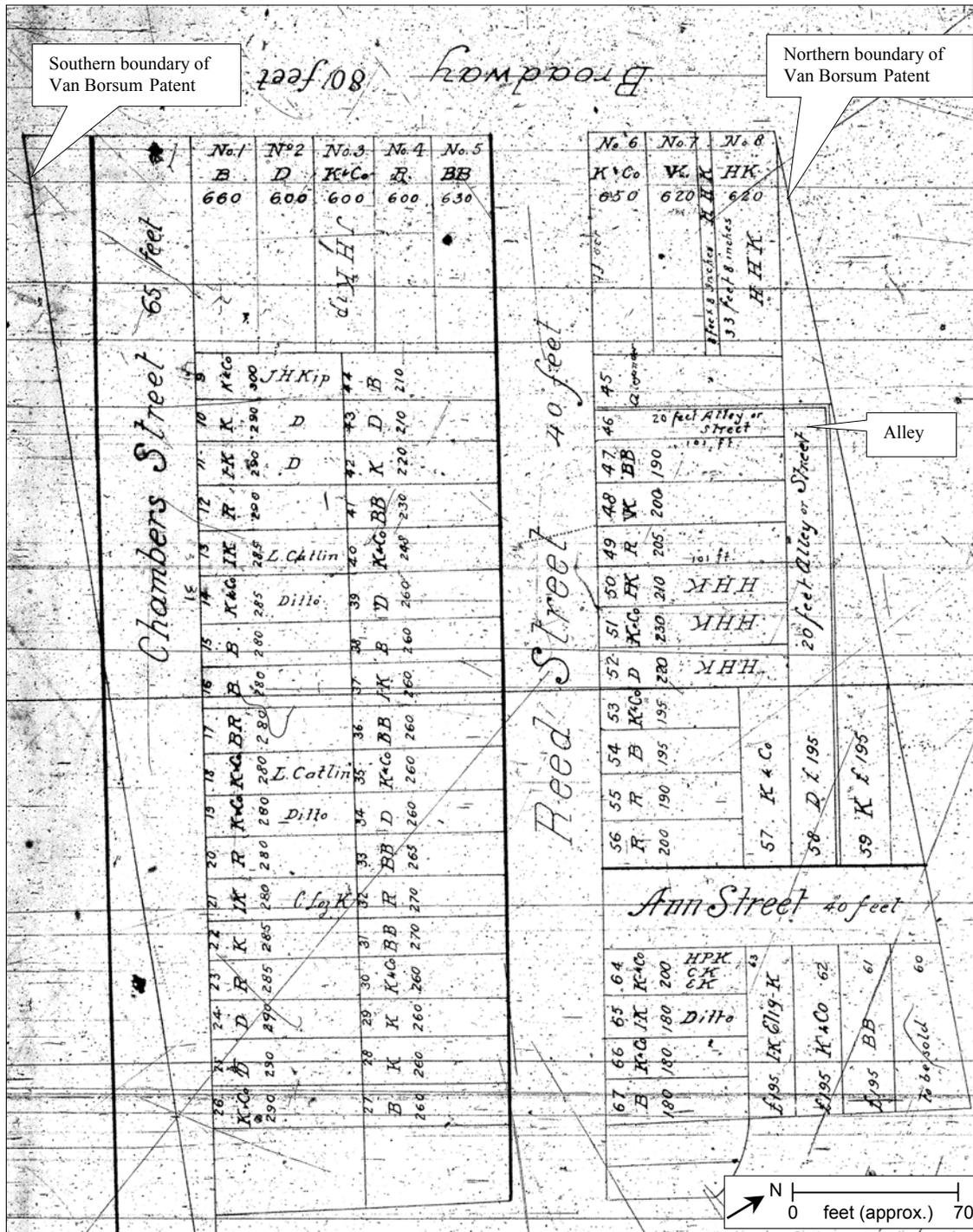


Figure 2.15. Detail from a 1795 surveyor's map showing the locations of the lots assigned to Sara Roeloff's heirs. For example, *D* stood for lots that would have fallen to the Tellers (descended from Rachel Kiersted), *F* for those of the Van Vlecks (descended from Catherine Kiersted), *B* for Daniel Denniston (whose wife descended from Lucas Kiersted). The alley laid out from Reed Street to Ann (later Elm/Elk) Street would be shifted slightly and come to be called Republican Alley. Source: New York County Register's Office, Deeds (Liber 195:405, Filed Map 76J).

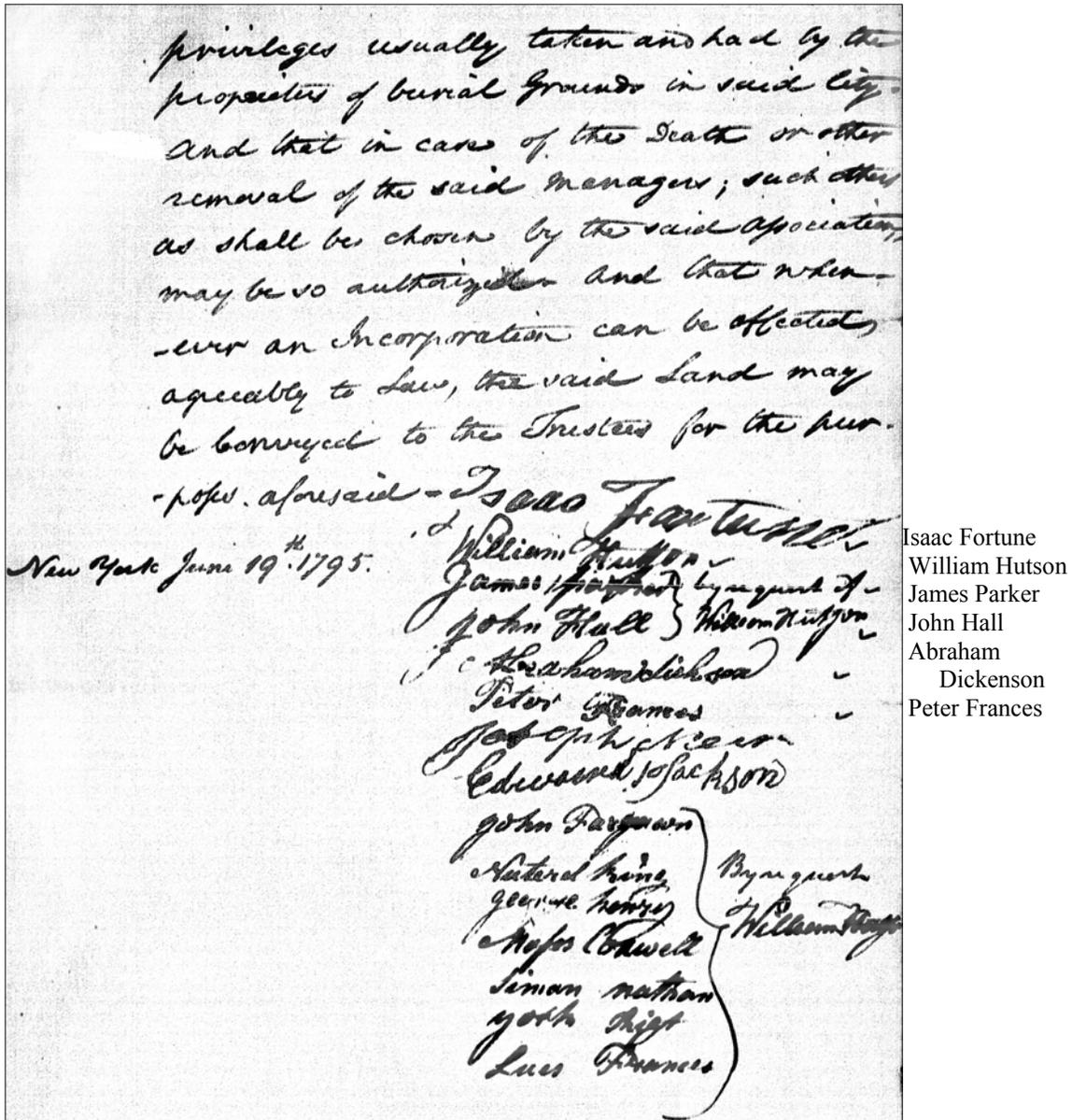


Figure 2.16. Detail of a petition submitted in June 1795 to the municipal government from the African Society, requesting that six of its members be granted legal standing to manage a cemetery established on Chrystie Street for black New Yorkers. The names of the proposed managers are marked with a check. Source: Municipal Archives of the City of New York, Papers of the Common Council, Petitions (Isaac Fortune, June 19, 1795).

The land where the African Burial Ground sat would see several more phases of development over the next two hundred years. With the exception of property deeds and surveyor's plans, traces of the cemetery would become increasingly scarce. When the cemetery was unearthed in 1991-92, most New Yorkers were wholly surprised. The African Burial Ground's period of use, which might have lasted a century and a half, had to be examined anew, as did the lives and labors of the New Yorkers who reposed there.



Figure 2.17.
Detail from the Taylor - Roberts Plan, 1797, drawn by city surveyor Benjamin Taylor and engraved by John Roberts, showing the newly-laid street grid that crossed the African Burial Ground at the end of the 18th century. Source: Rothschild (1990:30).

2.D. African funeral practices in New Amsterdam/New York

The spatial relationship between the African Burial Ground and the city changed radically during the 18th century. As New York's population rose and its economy expanded, the built environment advanced northward, bringing private homes, factories, municipal institutions, and pleasure gardens to the cemetery's surrounds. The interplay between urban development and population growth would leave a mark in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground, particularly in regard to the distribution of graves. The concerns of those who looked to the cemetery as a place of repose for their relatives and friends would also leave a mark in the excavated burial ground.²⁰ But black New Yorkers' efforts to care for their dead did not enter the documentary record until late in the day, as seen in the chronology of events that affected the cemetery's use. And while documentation about the African Burial Ground is rather thin, it is considerably more substantial than the paper trail on funeral practices in 17th and 18th century black New York.

No eyewitness accounts of how Africans buried their dead in New Amsterdam/New York have come down to us. No domestic ledgers or personal diaries have come to light that tell us whether household heads customarily footed the funeral bills of the Africans who resided in Manhattan homes. A handful of records touch on burial logistics and labor, but these records date to the first half of the 18th century. Among them, as noted, are the Rev. Sharpe's remark of 1713 about Africans conducting "Heathenish" graveside rites, and city ordinances from 1722 and 1731 that restricted the hour and size of African funerals and banned the use of palls. Cabinetmaker Joshua Delaplaine's daybook rounds out the list. The daybook has entries for thirteen slaveholders who purchased coffins for African men, women, and children between 1753 and 1756 (see Chapter 10).

These writers were tight-fisted with narrative detail. John Sharpe, for example, omitted the sights and sounds of the graveside rites. He did not mention how long the rites lasted or note whether they varied in relation to a person's age, sex, or manner of death. Nor did he reflect on how the rites orchestrated the expression of private grief, strengthened or attenuated attachments between the living and the dead, or transformed the once-living person into constituent qualities, forces, or parts. Sharpe lived in a Manhattan made nervous by the anticipation of conspiracies and revolts. So, too, did the city officials who envisioned a world in which the funerals of unfree Africans would be small in size, short on pomp, and finished by sundown. Whether large processions, cloth-covered corpses, and nighttime burials had been the norm when the restrictions were enacted is unclear. Delaplaine's daybook provides a glimpse of the monetary side of mid 18th century funerals, but it does not reveal whether colonial Manhattan's slaveholders typically paid for coffins for the African dead.

Although the experience of death and the organization of interment cannot be teased from the documentary record, population histories assembled by the African Burial Ground

²⁰ Chapter 5 provides an overview of the mortuary program that entered the African Burial Ground's archaeological record. Chapters 6 through 9 track the interplay between the mortuary program, the built environment, and the African population through the 18th century.

History Team indicate that funeral practices in black New Amsterdam/New York were part of an Atlantic world of enormous complexity and scope. To help clarify the material signatures left by those who interred the individuals in the archaeologically excavated portion of the cemetery, we draw on two core aspects of the History Team’s report. One aspect concerns documentary evidence on the origins of the city’s African community. The other aspect concerns documentary evidence about the care of the dead in central and western Africa and the Caribbean, the primary regions that furnished the workers on whom white New Yorkers relied.

Population

Black New Yorkers formed a critical mass during the colonial era and in the decades immediately following the Revolutionary War. The numbers in Table 2.2 make it clear that this was a community sizeable enough to fill a cemetery. Blacks constituted over 14% of the city’s population at the end of the 17th century, fully 20.9% in 1746, and a low of 7.9 % just after the Revolution.

Table 2.2. Black population of New York County, 1698 - 1800²¹	
Year	Population
1698	700
1703	799
1712	975
1723	1,362
1731	1,577
1737	1,719
1746	2,444
1749	2,368
1756	2,278
1771	3,137
1786	2,107
1790	3,092
1800	5,867

“What proportion of the city’s black population was enslaved during the 17th and 18th centuries and what proportion was free?” is a question that has been asked often. Free blacks were not counted separately from the enslaved until the first Federal census of 1790. White (1991:153) suggests that there were probably “never more than 100 free blacks in New York City during the colonial period.” Historian Christopher Moore (personal communication) has suggested that following the restrictive British colonial legislation of the early 18th century most if not all of those in families that had been free or “semi-free” under the Dutch simply left New York. The count for 1790, which reflects post-Revolutionary War demographic changes, includes 1,036 free and 2,056 enslaved blacks. The count for 1800 includes 3,333 free and 2,534 enslaved blacks.

Manhattan’s black workforce was always ethnically diverse, but the pools that supplied it shifted during the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. Members of New Amsterdam’s black community were taken from captured Portuguese and Spanish privateers bound for the Caribbean, and from Dutch ships that plied the lanes linking New Netherland to Brazil and West Central Africa (Medford 2004:11-24). After the onset of British rule in 1664, the routing of people from West Central Africa to New York via the Caribbean continued. Direct importation from western Africa also got underway. Profit-seeking city merchants sometimes cast a wide net to fill their shares of the hold. During the

²¹ Source: Foote (1991:78) and White (1991:26), except 1703, which is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909). The count of black male city residents was recorded incorrectly in a version of the 1703 census (see the tables reproduced in Green and Harrington (1932:95), and the miscount—resulting in a figure of only 630 total blacks for that year—has often made its way into the literature.

1690s, for example, several hundred Africans were brought to New York from Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Africa. Another 117 Malagasy captives reached New York in 1721 (Medford 2004:52-54). As the 18th century advanced, the commercial networks that brokered the slave trade reached deeper into the African interior and spread farther along the coasts. Five key areas in western Africa funneled adults and children into colonial Manhattan's homes, shops, and industrial yards: the Senegambia, Sierra Leone-Liberia, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, and the Niger Delta (Medford 2004:60-73).

The two maps in Figure 2.18 call attention to the discrepancy between the magnitude of the 18th century slave trade and the dearth of European knowledge about African lives. That era's educated Europeans were avid readers and writers of travel accounts, and European publishing houses marketed multi-volume compendia of cultural, historical, and geographical lore from around the globe. Information about Africa collected by Arabic-language geographers also reached European centers of learning during the 18th century, but as historian Philip Curtin (1964:9-27) explains, few principal works were known, and the heyday of Arabic scholarship on Africa had already ended by the time Europeans began trawling for African labor.²² European merchants, scientists, and missionaries who recorded observations about African societies seldom ventured far from the shorelines and navigable rivers where captives were embarked. The interiors that supplied the trade were relatively unknown.

The Africa that Europeans described had a mix of religions (animism, Christianity, Islam), a range of polities (including hierarchically organized kingdoms), and various methods of reckoning descent. Political and religious offices and authorities were intricately entwined, and mutual aid associations were organized around age, gender, and occupation (see Medford 2004: 35-50, 61-80, 123-138). Africans also had a wide array of understandings about the reciprocities that bound the living and the dead.

Burial logistics and labor

Europeans who visited central and western Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries took note of typical burial places. Journal keepers and letter writers recorded that Africans were laid to rest in cemeteries located on the outskirts of homesteads and settlements, under house floors, and in the churchyards Christian missionaries established in African political and economic metropolises (Medford 2004:48-49, 174-182).

European visitors also took note of how the dead were treated. The treatment of the dead encompasses a range of activities that get underway when a death occurs. These activities—announcing the death, preparing the body for burial, selecting a burial site and digging a grave, transporting the body to the cemetery and conducting graveside rites, marking and visiting the grave—provide the framework for our review of burial logistics and labor. Though the review touches briefly on documentary information from Africa,

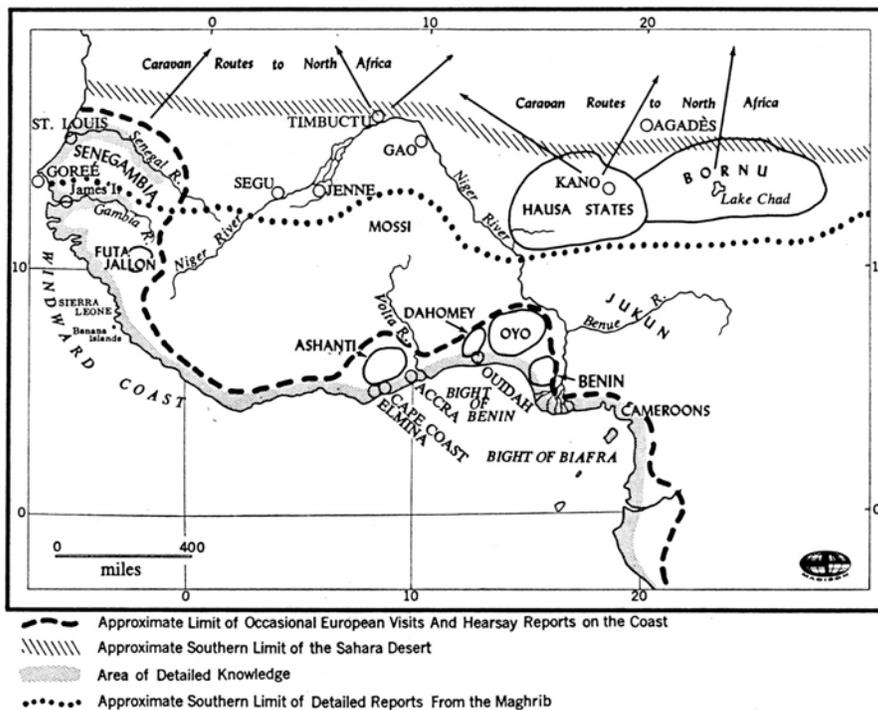
²² On the political twists and turns of the production of knowledge about Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries, see Mudimbe (1988) and Appiah (1992).



Figure 2.18.
a. Sources of captives from Africa, 18th century (left).

b. Limits of European knowledge of Africa, 18th century (below).

Source: Curtin (1964:7, 21).



- Approximate Limit of Occasional European Visits And Hearsay Reports on the Coast
- //// Approximate Southern Limit of the Sahara Desert
- Area of Detailed Knowledge
- Approximate Southern Limit of Detailed Reports From the Maghrib

the Caribbean, and the antebellum American south, it is mainly concerned with raising questions about the everyday forms of oppression black New Yorkers faced when they laid their relatives and friends to rest. Accoutrements and actions on which the archaeological excavation of the African Burial Ground sheds light are identified in boldface type. These include burial attire (in the form of winding sheets, shrouds, and street clothes), personal adornment and other possessions, coffins, grave digging, the placing of goods in the coffin and on the surface of the grave, and grave markers.

Announcing the death

How news of a death traveled in black New York during the 17th and 18th centuries is not known, but chances are good that it would have spread quickly without the aid of the licensed funeral inviters that many white New Yorkers employed.²³ Manhattan was geographically compact when the African Burial Ground was in use, as the maps reproduced in the first half of the chapter attest. Although Africans were residentially dispersed rather than clustered in a handful of neighborhoods or homes, the city was only a mile wide by a mile and a half long. Enslaved men, women, and children traipsed through its streets and alleys, and greeted one another at its markets and wells. Men gathered in the morning at the foot of Wall Street to be hired out for the day. Men and women visited their families and friends on Sundays, and drank and danced at night in private homes (Medford 2004:138-152). The expanding network of neighborhood chapels mapped by archaeologist Nan Rothschild (1990:43-56) eventually became a conduit for funeral news: the number of Africans attracted to Christian services and catechumen classes increased as the 18th century advanced.

Preparing the body for burial

Washing and laying out the dead was women's work in many colonial American communities. In rural areas, women, singly or in groups, performed these services as a mark of respect for the deceased, the family, and the community. Often these women were midwives as well. This arrangement endured for varying lengths of time—African American women prepared the body for burial well into the 20th century in some pockets of rural America (Rundblad 1995; Roediger 1981:169). In urban centers like New York, African women probably also would have washed and laid out their community's dead when the burial ground was in use.

African men's participation in preparing the body for burial did not enter the 17th and 18th century documentary record. Given that Islam was probably a part of the religious

²³ Funeral inviters went door-to-door to notify mourners about when and where to pay their respects. During the 17th century, funeral inviters performed their duties under the watchful eyes of the Reformed Dutch Church as well as the town—inviters were instructed to comport themselves in a civil manner (Minutes of the Burgomasters, March 4, 1661, in Fernow 1907:80-81); obtain and renew annually a license (April 18, 1691, MCC 1675-1776(1):217); and attend to the funerals of the poor without charge (April 22, 1691, MCC 1675-1776(1):221). During the first half of the 18th century, inviters were authorized to charge 8s. for announcing the death of a child, 12s. for a person between the ages of twelve and twenty, and 18s. for an adult (MCC 1675-1776(4):101).

repertoire of 18th century black New York (see Medford 2004:114), it is likely that washing and laying out the dead was not solely a female domain. In Islamic tradition, men wash and cover men, and women wash and cover women.²⁴

Generation as well as gender might also have been a consideration for black New Yorkers who prepared the bodies of friends and relatives visited by death. Two examples illustrate how these fundamental organizing principles can be entwined when preparing the body for the grave. Among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, where Islamic and traditional practices overlap, a male friend, a son, or a senior wife past her childbearing years attends to a dying man. After death, the man's male friends, assisted by his granddaughters, wash his corpse in fresh water and daub it with oil (Jackson 1989:69). The Muslim dead in the Sakalava area of Madagascar are washed and covered by close male or female kin, "with the exception of parents whose grief is too great" (Feeley-Harnik 1991:33).

Many of the individuals interred at the African Burial Ground would have had family and friends who could discuss and perhaps help furnish appropriate burial attire, be it a **winding sheet, a shroud, or street clothes**.²⁵ Yet surely some of the graves held people whose preferences were unknown because their stay in the city had been too brief to make deep social ties.

Europeans noted that in Africa the dead were wrapped in cloth. Accounts from the 1700s refer to cloth-wrapped corpses among the Wolof of the Senegambia region, and among a range of coastal and inland peoples in the geographical precursors of modern-day Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Angola, and the Congo (Medford 2004:175-179). For those who followed the teachings of Islam, the prescribed wrapper would likely have been made from unstitched white cloth (Barratt 2005:181). Sugar cane planters in Barbados did not mention whether their African workers were cloth-wrapped or clad in everyday clothing when interred (Handler and Lange 1978:185). White winding sheets, sometimes supplied by women like Fanny Kemble, were used in parts of the antebellum American south. Kemble had been importuned "for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a winding-sheet" for a neighbor (Foster 1997:196; Roediger 1981:169).

Did personal adornment and other possessions remain with the deceased or were they removed when the body was washed and covered? According to a late 18th century account of burials in Jamaica, the African dead were arrayed with their jewelry—"all the trinkets of the defunct are exposed in the coffin" (cited in Brathwaite 1981:9). The deceased were interred in their jewelry and clothing in parts of the Gold Coast (Medford 2004:176). Probate records for 17th and 18th century white New Yorkers indicate that

²⁴ For a discussion of Islam among Africans in colonial America, see Gomez (1998:59-87).

²⁵ Winding sheets and shrouds were integral to English and Dutch burials during the period when the burial ground was in use. These two coverings are not always differentiated in documents of the day. A length of fabric wound around the body and fastened with pins or hand-tied knots was sometimes called a winding sheet and sometimes called a shroud. A shroud also referred to a particular type of ensemble that might include a loose-fitting, long-tailed shirt or chemise, a cap, and "a small piece of cloth to cover the face" (Barratt 2005:180-181; Earle 1896:305).

jewelry was typically bequeathed to descendants and heirs rather than placed with the dead.

Was the use of **coffins** widespread in black New York? As with the preparation of the body, decisions about a coffin would have mobilized the deceased's kin, friends, and neighbors, either to ensure that a slaveholder provided what was "customary" or to help raise cash for accouterments Africans considered proper and correct.²⁶ Joshua Delaplaine was one of many artisans a coffin-seeker could call upon. Black cabinetmakers like William Miller might have been approached for coffins—Miller is known in the annals of the African independent church movement for having opened his Cross Street home in 1795 for planning meetings of black Methodists who broke away from the John Street Methodist Church (see Walls 1974). Enslaved Africans also might have made coffins. Carpentry and coopering were two of the trades in which New York's black workers were clustered (Foote 1991:41-44; Medford 2004:103-121). Boards cut from cedar and pine could be had from lumber yards like the one Thomas Shreve, a carpenter and joiner, kept near William Walton's warehouse on Hunter's Key (*New-York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*, June 3, 1754).²⁷

Coffin burials for Africans in Barbados and the French West Indies entered the documentary record at the end of the 18th century, by way of plantation work logs and eyewitness descriptions (Handler and Lange 1978:191; Delpuech 2001). Reports and recollections about coffin burials of Africans in the American south also date from the end of the 18th century (Roediger 1981:169). A coffin carried through the streets of New Orleans in the late 1700s had six white ribbons attached to its lid; the end of each ribbon was held by a girl dressed in white (Foster 1997:196). European travel accounts place coffin use in western Africa in the early 1700s, decades before Delaplaine's daybook was filled in. The accounts suggest that coffin burials were becoming common in parts of the Gold Coast and in the city-states of the Niger Delta during the 18th century. In the Loango region of central Africa, 18th century reports indicate that coffins were made from woven thatch or grass (Medford 2004:176-178). Coffin burial appears to have become typical in England and the Netherlands by the end of the 17th century, and perhaps in colonial Manhattan as well (Gittings 1984; Litten 1991; Earle 1896:297; Talman 1968:13; Singleton 1909:253-55).

²⁶ Official voices entered the decision-making process when death pushed Africans in the direction of men like city coroner John Burnet. At an inquest Burnet attended on March 20, 1758, the jurors were unable to discover the identity of the African whose case they heard; among the man's possessions were seven Spanish dollars, a pair of silver cuff links, a silver ring, a pair of wrought metal buttons, and an old key (Case no. 60, Burnet 1748-58 [2004:82]). Whether the man was buried in a coffin did not enter the record, but municipal arrangements for burying strangers would have come into play. When black residents of the almshouse died, the wardens apparently were responsible for providing a coffin, as suggested by Joshua Delaplaine's daybook (see Chapter 10).

²⁷ Newspaper advertisements placed by New York City artisans are used throughout this report. Unless otherwise noted, such advertisements are from Gottesman (1938).

Selecting a gravesite and digging the grave: New York's African sextons

Did each funeral party select its own gravesite and supply its own gravedigger? Or did a handful of men routinely undertake these tasks, thereby serving as de facto caretakers of some, perhaps all, portions of the African Burial Ground?

In New Amsterdam/New York's public cemeteries and private churchyards, **grave digging** was centralized rather than ad hoc: gravediggers, acting under the auspices of city officials and congregational governing boards, charged a standardized fee for clearing the surface and breaking the ground. In 1703 when the city granted Trinity's Vestrymen the right to operate the town cemetery situated on the north side of the church, the Common Council set the fee schedule at 1s. for the grave of a child under age twelve, and 3s. for the grave of a person age twelve and over (Stokes 1915-28(4):443).

Churchyard gravediggers sometimes doubled as sextons (church officials in charge of property), a role that conferred community and congregational esteem. In addition to breaking the ground, sextons typically oversaw the ringing of the death bell and the rental of funeral equipment such as palls and boards. Sextons also helped organize funeral processions and sometimes officiated at the grave.²⁸ The centrality of the gravedigger-sexton to the material and spiritual sides of interment figured in New York's municipal code. Gravediggers, as mentioned in the chronology entry for 1731, were excluded from the headcount when the Common Council capped the size of African funerals at twelve.

The names of Manhattan's black gravedigger-sextons did not enter the documentary record until the years immediately after the American Revolution, a period when the city's churches were slow to groom black leaders (Hodges 1999:180-183) and to make provisions for the burial of black communicants. Five African-American gravedigger-sextons who mobilized resources to ensure the safety and dignity of their community's dead might have dug graves or officiated at interments at the African Burial Ground during the 1780s and 1790s. Among them are Scipio and Virgil Gray (they may have been brothers, or father and son), who resided at 47 Beekman Street, near the intersection of Beekman and Gold adjacent to Anglican St. George's Chapel. It is likely that Scipio Gray was a gravedigger for the congregation, and that the lot he made available for African interments during the height of the grave-robbing scandal was part of St. George's yard (see the chronology entry for 1788). Virgil Gray was listed as St. George's under-Sexton in the 1794 city directory.

African Society member Lewis Francis—his name appears at the end of the list on the petition reproduced in Figure 2.16—was the first known gravedigger at the new African cemetery on Chrystie Street (see the chronology entry for 1795). The Chrystie Street cemetery, which became the final resting place for black city residents immediately after the African Burial Ground had closed, was eventually ceded to St. Philips Church,

²⁸ In Manhattan's 17th century Dutch community, the funeral inviter (*aanspreker*) typically took on these tasks (Talman 1968).

Manhattan's first black Anglican congregation. Francis served as one of St. Philips' churchwardens (St. Philips Church 1986:18, 90).

Peter Williams, Sr., who in 1795 helped lead the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church, was a gravedigger for the John Street Methodist Church. Williams used the fees he earned from grave digging to buy his own and his family's way out of bondage from the John Street congregation, which had purchased Williams in 1783 (John Street Methodist Church, Accounts 1783-1795). When the A.M.E. Zion Church erected a permanent meetinghouse in 1801 at Church and Leonard Streets, it provided burial vaults for its members. Samuel Day, a sexton at Mother Zion, as the church was known, helped oversee the vaults, which were rapidly filled. Between 1801 and 1807, there were some 150 interments annually there (Duffy 1968:219; for information on Samuel Day, see New York Death Libers, Vol. 1).

Direct linkages between the African Burial Ground, the African Society, and the African independent church movement are likely, but it should be kept in mind that securing burial space would have been a key concern long before the names of black church leaders and community activists entered the documentary record. It should also be kept in mind that a "commitment to the dead" (Wilf 1989:512) was not unique to black New York. African Americans in Philadelphia, Newport, Charleston, and Richmond also established benevolent associations and independent churches with the explicit goal of providing their communities a proper place for burial (see Nash 1988; Wilder 2001; Kuyk 1983).

Transporting the body to the cemetery and conducting graveside rites

Given the location of the African Burial Ground, some form of procession was probably customary from early on. Did members of the procession congregate at the house where the deceased had lived? How large was a typical funeral party? Recall that the 1731 amendment to the ordinance governing black funerals set a quota for the attendees but excluded the bearers from the count. Did the number of bearers increase after 1731 to exploit the loophole in the law? Was the body transported to the cemetery in a handbarrow or a horse-drawn cart, or did the bearers shoulder the coffin on a bier or a board through the city streets and, circa 1745-1760, one of the palisade gates? Did the cortege proceed to the African Burial Ground in silence, or with prayers, shouts, dancing, and song? In Boston in 1723 a black funeral "zig-zagged across town and into the night," an "adaptation of meandering funeral corteges common in West Africa" (Desrochers 2002:648). African funeral processions in the late 18th century Caribbean and in the antebellum south were large, song filled, and slow moving (Handler and Lange 1978:186-191; Roediger 1981:170). In Jamaica, bearers raised and lowered the coffin. In Antigua, they danced a reel (Medford 2004:180).

Oppression affected the scheduling as well as the size of African funerals. Night funerals were common in both the colonial and the antebellum eras: after toiling for others from sunup to sundown, Africans used the night as their own (see Roediger 1981). Night funerals would have provided opportunities for geographically distant kin and friends to

attend the graveside rites. Prior to the banning of night funerals in New York in 1722, black city residents may well have buried their dead at dusk or after dark. Whether sundown became a typical time for holding black funerals after 1722 is unclear.

Did the mourners place any **goods in the coffin or on the surface of the grave**, such as food and drink, utensils and crockery, or flowers and herbs? Expensive mats decorated the surface of 18th century graves in parts of Sierra Leone-Liberia. Objects reminiscent of a person's life were placed atop graves in Gold Coast locales; mourners returned to the grave to care for the objects. Offerings of food and drink, and personal belongings such as tobacco and pipes, were placed on graves in some Niger Delta regions (Medford 2004:176-77). Direct historical evidence for grave offerings exists for Jamaica. During the late 1680s, enslaved Africans in Jamaica supplied the corpse with "bread, roasted fowles, sugar, rum, tobacco, & pipes" (Handler and Lange 1978:199). An African-American folk belief prevalent in parts of antebellum rural Georgia held that "the last objects touched by the deceased" should be placed on his grave lest his spirit retrieve them from his house. A variant of the belief was recorded in 1980 among the Kongo of Central Africa (Thompson 1983:134).

Marking and visiting the grave

Were **grave markers** used to memorialize the dead? Simple stone slabs like the ones at Trinity Churchyard (see Figure 2.3) were common in 18th century Christian cemeteries in rural and urban America, but whether headstones were typically provided for churchyard burials of blacks is not known. In 1798 in Barbados, the manager at Newton Plantation requested a small stone marker for the grave of one of the plantation's "much-valued slaves" who had been interred in an Anglican churchyard. Such requests were rare (Handler and Lange 1978:203, 175-78).

Did the deceased's family and friends return to the cemetery to visit the grave, either on their own time, or by absconding from work? Were post-interment rites conducted?

In Jamaica during the last half of the 18th century, Europeans noted that Africans heaped dirt on the month-old graves of their dead. Known as "covering" the grave, the practice was one of many post-interment rituals that involved returning to the cemetery to care for the grave and the spirit of its occupant (Handler and Lange 1978:203-204). Philip Madin's 1779 account of his journey through the West Indies calls attention to the consequences of neglecting post-interment rites. Madin learned from a Barbados planter that the departed husband of an African woman had troubled her dreams because a graveside ritual had been delayed (cited in Handler and Lange 1978:205). Large, noisy Sunday gatherings in Philadelphia's African cemetery were cause for complaint during the 18th century (Nash 1988:13-14). Barbados-born Africans were said in 1789 to be "superstitiously attached to the burial places of their ancestors and friends" (Handler and Lange 1978:209).

In sum, only a fraction of the funeral customs in the black Atlantic world entered the 17th and 18th century documentary record. While there is no doubt that burial practices in

black New York drew on deep and varied African roots, using written documents to identify the epicenters of these practices is a difficult task. Funeral customs in captive-sending areas in the interiors of West Central and West Africa were largely unknown to cultural outsiders.

Archaeologists who study African Diaspora communities have long grappled with uneven documentary records (see Posnansky 1999; Jamieson 1995; and Samford 1996). Yet the archaeology of the African Diaspora is far more than a search for material signs of African ethnic identities. Contemporary archaeologists seek to understand how the experiences of Africans in the Americas differed from the experiences of other newcomers. In the words of archaeologist Theresa Singleton (1999:17): “To ignore the consequences of forced migration, enslavement, legalized discrimination, and racism misses the very essence of how African Americans created their world and responded to that of the dominant culture.” If the challenge for archaeology is “to pry open places where the material world can inform the analysis of these complexities,” then the New York African Burial Ground is an especially important site. It was the setting for a rite of passage (burial) that connected the desires of the living to the treatment of the dead in America’s urban north, where the pervasiveness of slavery during the colonial and early federal periods is only now coming to wide public attention.

CHAPTER 3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Jean Howson and Leonard G. Bianchi

This chapter focuses on the archaeological site as such. We discuss the original landscape in the vicinity of the historic African Burial Ground, and then turn to the 1991-92 excavation site, which was a much smaller area, and show its location superimposed on historic maps. We look at physical impacts to the African Burial Ground that occurred during the active life of the cemetery, and then summarize the development of the site over the two hundred years between the closing of the cemetery and its rediscovery. Damage sustained to the site during the archaeological project is described. We then discuss overall site stratigraphy, the condition of the graves, and preservation factors.

3.A. The landscape, the site, post-cemetery development, and site preservation

The historic landscape

It is small wonder that New Yorkers of the late 20th century were unaware of the presence of the African Burial Ground beneath the densely developed lower Manhattan civic and commercial district (Figure 3.1). The modern topography in the vicinity barely suggests the original landform. The cemetery was on uneven terrain that sloped down from the flat of the common on the south, the “spine” of Broadway on the west, and “Pot Baker’s hill” on the southeast to the “Little Collect” pond or swamp (Figure 3.2; the landform is also visible on the Ratzel Plan, Figure 3.7). Depictions of the land surrounding the Collect Pond show undulating terrain, with high bluffs -- presumably the Calk-Hook itself (the shell or chalk hill from which the farm and the pond got their original name) -- on the north (Figure 3.3).

Today, a vestige of the original slope can be seen along Elk Street, with a decrease in elevation of approximately 20’ from Chambers Street to Duane Street (Figure 3.4). In the period of the African Burial Ground this slope would have been much steeper. We now know that the bottom of the hill was approximately twenty-four feet lower in elevation than it is today—at sea level. “Pot Baker’s Hill” has been leveled and Chambers Street’s elevation has changed little. The historic and current elevations of the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark are discussed in the National Historic Landmark Nomination (Appendix A).

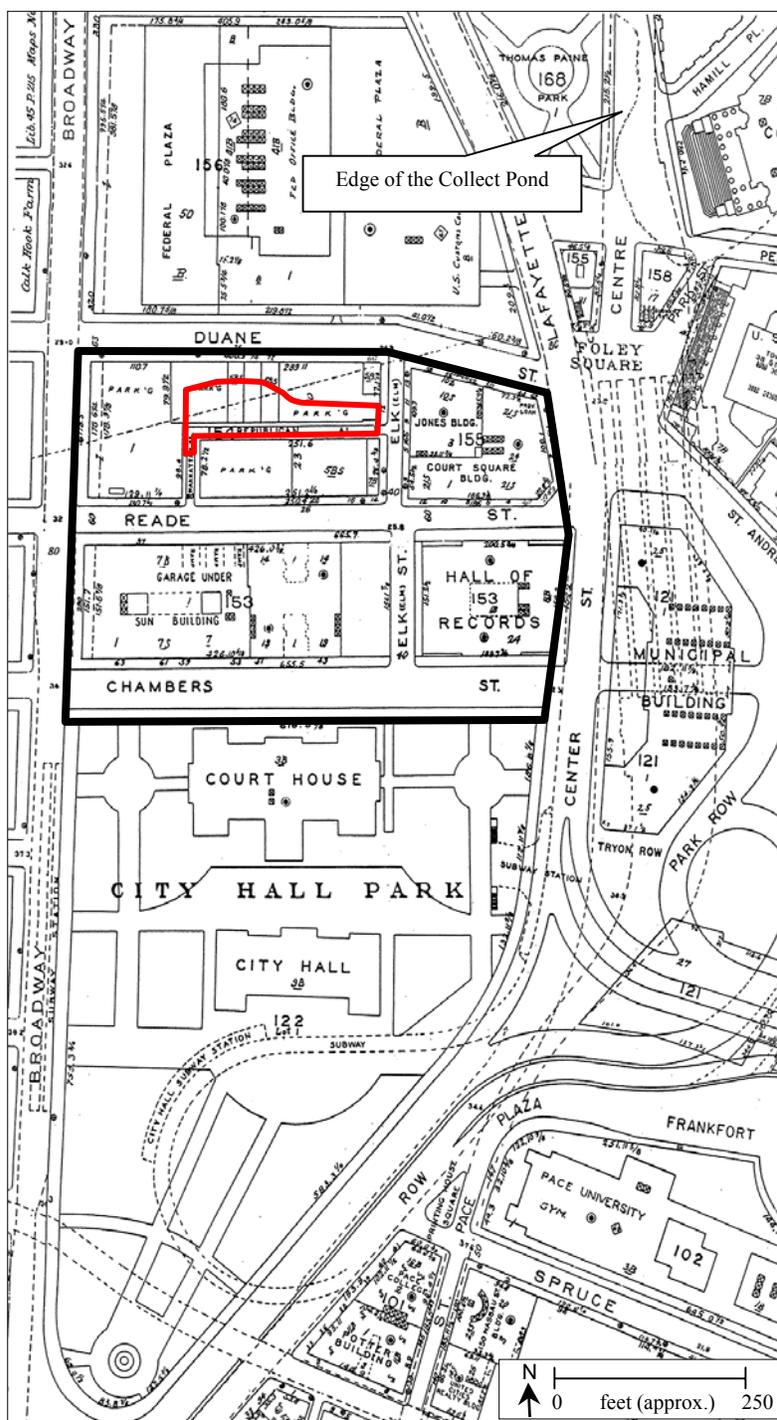


Figure 3.1. Sanborn Map (Manhattan Land Book 1984-85) of New York's civic center area, encompassing the historic African Burial Ground at the time of the initial cultural resources investigation in 1989. Most of Block 154, bounded by Broadway and Duane, Read, and Elk Streets, was covered by parking lots. The map shows the historic "Calk Hook Farm" (labeled in upper left corner) and its southern boundary running diagonally from Broadway across the block. The historic edge of the Collect Pond is shown at the upper right. The small portion of the cemetery that was excavated in 1991-1992 is outlined with a red line within the boundary of the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark (outlined with a thick black line). New York City's designated "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District" encompasses a larger area that includes all of City Hall Park as well as Foley Square. Source: New York Public Library.

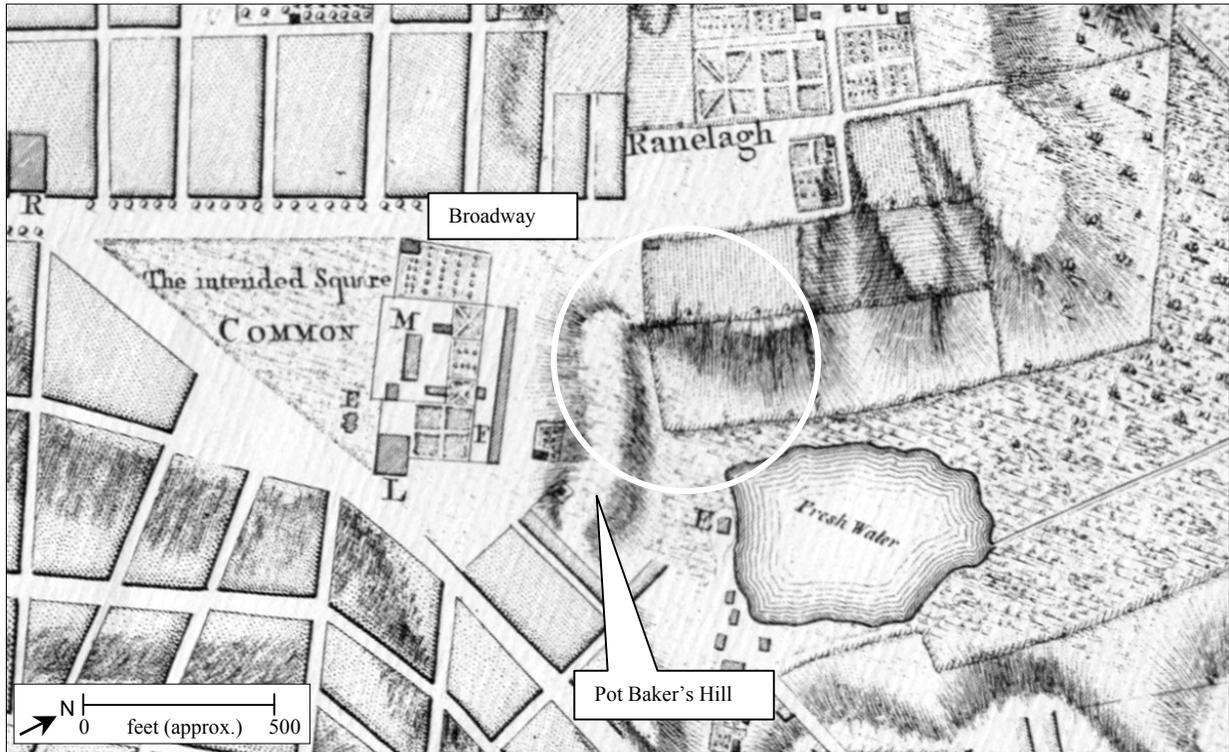


Figure 3.2.

Detail from cartographer John Montessor's plan (1766) showing the topography in the general location of the historic African Burial Ground (circled in white). Hachures show downward sloping north of "Pot Baker's Hill" and from west to east, beginning about 250 feet east of Broadway, toward Fresh Water Pond. "E" denotes the Powder House, "F" the soldiers barracks, "L" the Gaol, "M" the Almshouse/Workhouse, "R" St. Paul's. Ranelagh was a public pleasure garden. Source: Library of Congress.



Figure 3.3.

A 1798 watercolor of Collect Pond and vicinity, attributed to Archibald Robertson (American, 1765-1835). The view (to the south) is rather bucolic and idealized considering the industries such as tanneries that lined the shore. Source: Edward C. Arnold Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 3.4.
An October 2005 view of the slope on Elk Street within the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark, looking south toward City Hall Park. Photograph by Rob Tucher.

The hillside may not have been ideal for farm fields,¹ but animals grazed on the Common and may have been a nuisance at the cemetery. The pollen data (see Appendix G) registering the African Burial Ground landscape suggest that the flora was dominated by grass with some insect-pollinated herbs, such as relatives of goosefoot, chicory, asters; members of the pea sub-family; and, probably, some ragweed. Land clearance and tree removal on Manhattan and in the surrounding region are registered among the average total tree pollen percentage, but it does not appear that there were trees actually within the portion of the cemetery that was excavated. The northeastern edge of the African Burial Ground would have been marshy – note the proximity of the small “Swamp” depicted on Mrs. Buchnerd’s plan (Figure 2.8); this body of water was also called the “Little Collect” on historic maps. Pollen analysis suggests that the marsh itself did not extend into the excavated portion of the cemetery, though sedge pollen may indicate intermittently wet conditions in low spots. Anthony Rutgers and his heirs drained the low-lying portions of their Calk Hook Farm during the 18th century, reducing the size of the Collect and “Little Collect” ponds (Stokes (1915-28(3):540, 965-66). It is likely this action affected the drainage of the ground within and at the edge of the cemetery. As the swampy ground

¹ Pollen analysis (Appendix G) identified a small quantity of cereal-type pollen grains, but indicated that the African Burial Ground site had probably never been farmed.

surrounding the Little Collect became drier, the area used for interments may have been extended to the northeast.²

The archaeological site in relation to the historic cemetery

“How much of the African Burial Ground did the archaeologists excavate?” is a question that has been asked often during the course of this project. The maximum historic extent of the cemetery is not known, and the maps in Chapter 2 show its general location rather than its precise boundaries. Broadway (a road leading northward from town that would be called Great George Street in the early 18th century) may have formed the western edge of the cemetery. When houses were built along the east side of that thoroughfare (in place by the 1760s), the west side of the cemetery would have been truncated. To the north, the boundary between the Van Borsum patent and the Damen patent/Calk Hook Farm may have been maintained, with burials limited to the south side of the line throughout much of the cemetery’s life – this will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Eastern and southern limits are more problematic. The pottery manufactories would have hemmed in the burial ground on the east starting in the second quarter of the 18th century, but earlier than that interments may have extended along the south side of the pond. Municipal use of the northern part of the town common, now City Hall Park, would have “pushed” the cemetery northward in the same period, with the palisade constructed in 1745 forming an effective southern boundary, at least while it was in place (until approximately 1760).³

It is possible the cemetery grew in area during its early period (whether in the 17th or early 18th century), and then constricted during the second half of the 18th century as various kinds of development encroached. With this constriction, the density of interments and the superimposition of graves within the remaining ground would have increased.

The excavated site was located in the north part of the cemetery along the Van Borsum patent/Calk Hook Farm boundary. In Figures 3.5 through 3.7, the outline of the African Burial Ground archaeological excavation is superimposed on 18th century maps which we

² The Collect was fed by deep springs. In the early-to-mid-18th century it teemed with fish and its water supplied households as well as industrial yards. The pond was surveyed in 1801, two years before it began to be drained (see Stokes 1915-28(1):Plate 58A), but the contours of the adjoining meadowlands and swamps had shifted by then. Rutgers started draining the swamp in 1733-34, to the consternation of nearby tanners who complained that the lowering of the pond’s water level had compromised the water supply in their manufacturing yards.

³The boundary given for the National Historic Landmark was partly based on historic documentation, but was partly drawn with reference to the likelihood of preservation in the blocks surrounding the archaeological site. The southern extent of the cemetery was never clearly established for the NHL, and later excavations at the north end of City Hall Park and on Chambers Street revealed the presence of graves near the north foundation of the Tweed Courthouse and at the perimeter of the northern part of City Hall Park. The cemetery probably extended further south than the NHL boundary.

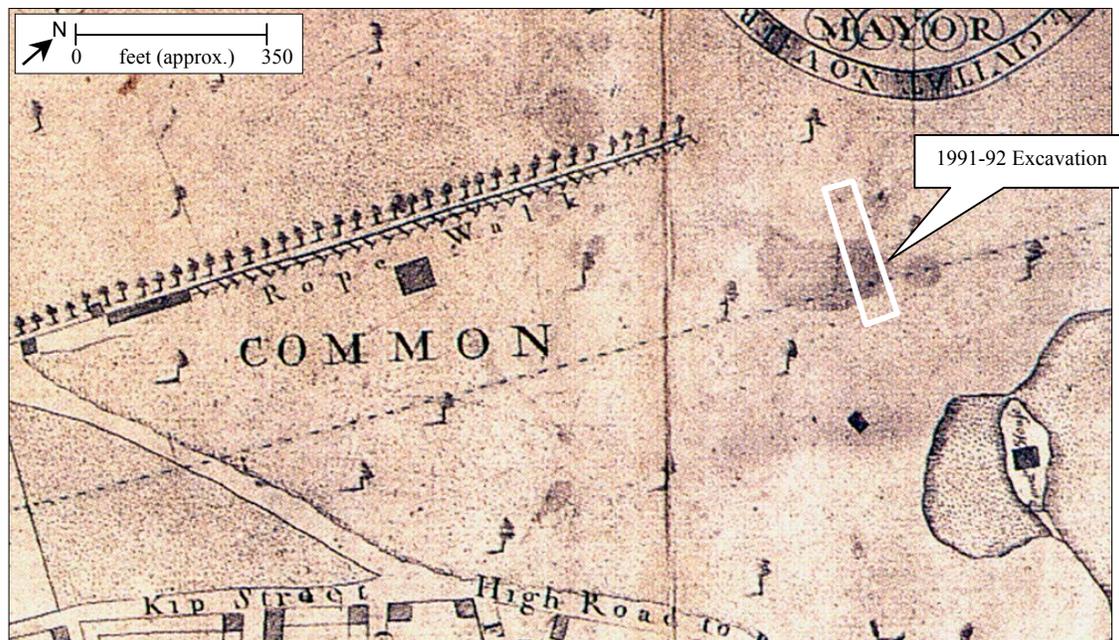


Figure 3.5.
Site location overlaid on Lyne-Bradford Plan (1730). (Scale: 1 inch = approx. 350 feet.) The ropewalk (shown lined with trees) is the alignment of present-day Broadway. The dashed north-south line that runs through the excavation site represents the boundary between the North and West Wards of the city.

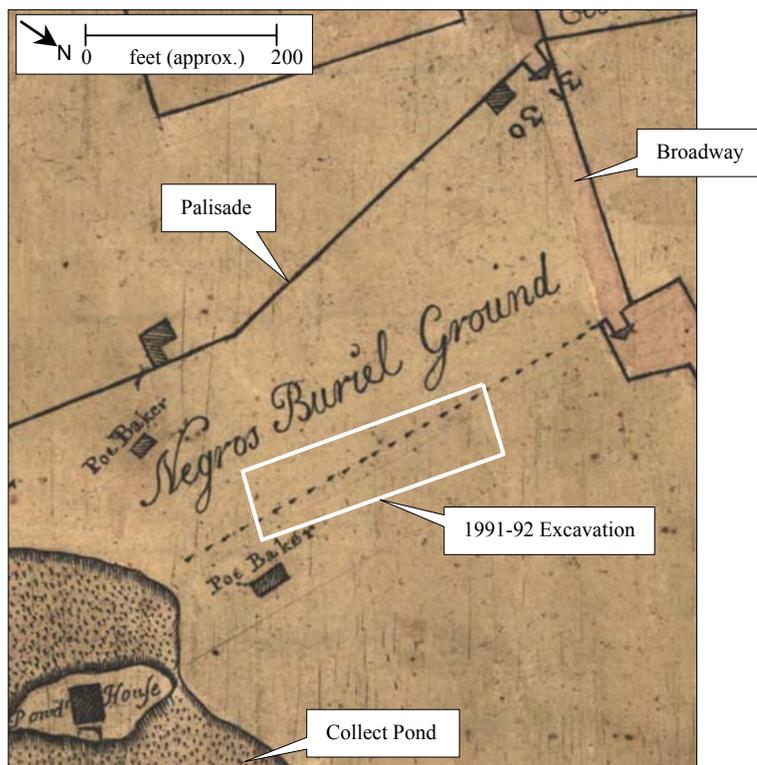


Figure 3.6.
Site location overlaid on the Maerschalk Plan (1754). The dashed line crossing the excavation site may represent the boundary between the burial ground and the Rutgers Calk Hook Farm at the time the map was made. The area containing excavated graves spanned this line. (Scale: 1 inch = approx. 200 feet.)



Figure 3.7.

Site location overlaid on the Rafter Map (1767). The solid line crossing the excavation site may represent the boundary between the cemetery/Van Borsum patent and the Calk Hook Farm at the time the map was made. The area containing excavated graves spanned this line. The dashed-dotted line parallel to Broadway is the ward boundary.

have already seen in Chapter 2. As can be seen from these figures, the excavation site was in a portion of the cemetery that remained “available” for interments throughout the 18th century – that is, it did not see construction of private houses and industries, military structures, or public buildings, as did the perimeter area. The only known structure within the excavation site that dates to the life of the cemetery (other than the graves themselves) was the fence that apparently ran along the boundary between the Van Borsum patent and the Calk Hook Farm.

The archaeological site thus sampled a part of the historic African Burial Ground where interments continued to take place until the subdivision and development of the property by the Barclay and Kip families (1787 and 1795 respectively) and the final closing of the cemetery. And, because the overall area that could be used for interments was constricting due to surrounding development (the potteries, the palisade, the barracks, public buildings, and houses) we believe that the archaeological site included a part of the cemetery that would have been intensively used during the second and third quarters of the century. We also posit, however, that it included a part of the cemetery (to the north of the Van Borsum patent/Calk Hook Farm boundary) that was only used during the final quarter of the century, and thus is less densely packed with graves. This argument is taken up in Chapters 4 and 9.

The total area designated a National Historic Landmark is approximately seven acres, and the Van Borsum Patent comprised approximately 6.6 acres. The area investigated archaeologically covered 27,000 square feet of Block 154, and the portion where burials were excavated comprised about 9,500 square feet. Using 6 acres as a low-end estimate of the historic expanse of the African Burial Ground, the excavated area containing burials may represent just 3.6 percent of the original cemetery. The number of graves excavated within the archaeological site was 424. If we were to assume that the density of burials was similar over the whole of the African Burial Ground, six acres could have accommodated over 11,600 burials. Based on the density encountered within the excavated portion, it is estimated that an additional two- to three hundred graves were left unexcavated on Block 154, within the “Pavilion” site (now the reinterment and memorial site) alone. As noted, the excavated site has both a portion of the cemetery that was very densely used and a portion that was relatively thinly used, so there is room for error in either direction.

Another way to estimate the total number of people buried in the African Burial Ground is to attempt to project the total number of Africans who might have died in the city during the years of the cemetery’s use. This is problematic since while we do have census data for blacks for some years, we do not have any data on death rates. Bills of mortality available for Philadelphia in the period 1767-1775 indicate an average of 75 burials of Africans per year; this represented about 7 burials for every 100 blacks per year, a rate about 50% higher than among whites (Nash 1988:34). If a similar death rate applied to New York, about 219 blacks would have been buried in 1771 based on that year’s census count of 3,137. If we use this same death rate for each census year, and smooth the rate of population growth (or decrease) between the census years, the numbers of deaths of Africans in New York would be calculated at 14,010 for the period 1698 to 1795.⁴ This number is close enough to the estimate of 11,600 based on area to allow for a general estimate of 10,000 to 15,000 for the cemetery as a whole. Using the estimates based on area, the 419 individuals that are represented by skeletal remains would be a 3.61 percent sample of a mortuary population spanning a 100 to 150-year period. Using estimates based on projecting numbers of deaths from population statistics, the 419 individuals would be a 2.97 percent sample.

Impacts to graves during the cemetery’s use

It is impossible to know for certain all of the times and places graves would have been disturbed over the life of the burial ground, especially since the date of its inception and its full geographical extent (particularly on the south and east sides) are not known.

Known and likely impacts are summarized here.

⁴ Neither a constant death rate nor a smooth population trend is historically likely, of course. Disease may have created spikes in the death rate, and importations would have caused fluctuations in the rate of population growth. The period of the British occupation during the war saw both a swollen black population and increased deaths. It is also very likely that infants and especially newborns were consistently under-counted in the census (as well as in the mortality bills). Infants also may be under-represented in the burial ground due to poor preservation. If the total number of blacks who died in New York is estimated at 30 percent higher in order to include “missing” infants, then the total population of the African Burial Ground may have been well over 15,000.

- The development of the pottery industries would have been the first major impact. It is not known whether the stoneware potteries located east of the excavated site stood within the original burial ground. If so, their construction surely would have destroyed existing graves. We do know for certain that pottery waste was dumped on the cemetery, because such a dump was encountered in the eastern part of the site.
- The construction of dwellings (with associated gardens, fences, and outbuildings) is likely to have disturbed graves. The locations of 18th-century dwellings – on Broadway and possibly on the east side of the cemetery at the stoneware potteries – were outside the area excavated archaeologically.
- The construction of municipal and military facilities in what is now City Hall Park during the 18th century may have impacted the southernmost graves. This area is south of the excavated site.
- The construction and maintenance of the town palisade probably disturbed graves along its alignment. The palisade was located to the south of the excavated site.
- The interments of prisoners in the southern part of the ground by the British army during the occupation may have disturbed or destroyed existing African burials. Again, this impact was probably to the south of the excavated site.
- The archaeological excavation revealed that tannery waste (i.e., cattle bone, hoof, and horn) was dumped in the northern part of the cemetery while it was active.
- Graves were robbed for cadavers in the 1780s.

It was not unusual in the 18th century for cemeteries to be encroached upon by construction and intrusions by animals. The African community may have suffered these depredations largely in silence, though protests may have gone unrecorded. Efforts to protect the burial ground from depredations were not documented until the most egregious of the encroachments – the exhumation of newly interred bodies for dissection – caused a public outcry (see Chapters 2 and 9). In the case of intact coffins that proved empty, body snatching by medical students may be an explanation, and two individuals, in Burials 323 and 364, were probably reburied after dissection (see descriptions in Volume 3 and discussion in Chapter 9 below). By and large, however, within the small portion of the cemetery that was excavated archaeologically, severe disturbances to burials appeared to date to later periods, after the cemetery ceased to be used for interments.

Post-cemetery development

The earliest street and lot development and the fill

The African Burial Ground was subject to 200 years of building construction and demolition, street maintenance, and utility installation once interments ceased. The portion of the cemetery that was excavated survived not only the early development of

urban residential lots, but also much more massive later construction phases, due to three factors: 1) an alley was laid out in the 1790s through the middle of the block, and portions of this alley were relatively undisturbed subsequently; 2) some of the structures built on the lots had relatively shallow basements; and 3) most importantly, in the final years of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th century, the low-lying terrain of the African Burial Ground was covered with landfill to bring the area up to a level grade, thus protecting graves from later construction damage.

After the streets crossing the cemetery were mapped out (Table 3.1), and the Barclay land (part of the old Calk Hook Farm) and the Kip land (the old Van Borsum patent) were surveyed and subdivided into lots (see Chapter 2.C and Figures 2.13 and 2.15), the way was open for intensive residential and commercial development of the African Burial Ground. At this time, as we have seen in Chapter 2, African community leaders petitioned for and received a subsidy to purchase land and establish a new cemetery elsewhere.

Street	History
Duane Street	The segment of this street to the east of Broadway was called Anthony Street when it was mapped at the time of the Calk Hook Farm subdivision in 1787 (Figure 2.13). It was known as Barley Street at the turn of the century, and renamed Duane Street in 1809. Proprietors of abutting lots were ordered to “dig out and fill in” the street in 1795. Note: this street should not be confused with the later Anthony Street two blocks to the north.
Elk Street	Called Ann Street when mapped at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision in 1795 (Figure 2.15). Regulated in 1803, at which time it was called Elm Street.
Reade Street	Laid out in 1795 at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision (Figure 2.15). Formerly Reed Street.
Republican Alley	The alley was called Manhattan Place or Alley in the 19 th century. Laid out in 1795 at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision (Figure 2.15), though its position shifted south and west compared to the alley shown on the map. The proprietors of abutting lots were ordered to “fill up” the alley in 1803.
Chambers Street	In 1796 a triangular wedge out of the “Negros Burial Ground” (i.e. the southern edge of the Van Borsum Patent -- see Figure 2.15) was acquired by the city from the patent heirs for laying out this street to the east of Broadway (MCC 1784-1831(2):250).
See Hunter Research (1994) for details and sources for each street within New York’s African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District.	

During the period of its confiscation by the purchasers and developers of individual lots—a process that probably took a decade or more (at least from the 1787 survey of the Calk Hook until the 1795 survey of the Kip property)—the African Burial Ground may have witnessed an almost daily struggle on the part of the relatives and descendants of those buried there to maintain their ties to the place and the dignity of grave sites. There were doubtless many visible, marked graves at the time of initial development of some of the lots—evidence from the archaeological excavation indicates that markers such as

headstones or cobble outlines were used (see section 3.C). These would have been covered over, if not destroyed, in the first phase of lot development.

Reade and Anthony/Barley/Duane Streets were laid out perpendicular to Broadway, but since the property line between Barclay and Kip lands was not, an “extra” triangular piece of property remained through the middle of the block when the rectangular Reade Street lots were first laid out. An alley, later to be called Republican or Manhattan Alley, was laid out running north from Reade Street and turning at a right angle to run east-to-west behind the Reade Street lots, taking up a portion of the “extra” triangle and providing additional frontage to maximize the potential for building houses. But this still left a small “gore” of land on the north side of the alley, abutting the rear yards of the Duane Street lots. The pieces of the gore were all eventually purchased and consolidated with the Duane Street lots, but the alley remained in place through the 20th century. Burials survived beneath a portion of this alley.

What about the new building lots? The history of property transactions from 1787 on within Block 154 has received detailed scrutiny, though properties on blocks surrounding this one have not been researched in as much detail.⁵ The important issues for understanding the final years of the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground are 1) the timing of initial building construction on the new city lots and 2) the possible construction of a new fence at the rear of some Duane Street building lots, along the old Calk Hook Farm – Van Borsum patent boundary.

The excavated portion of the cemetery spanned the line between lots laid out in 1787 (on the north) and those laid out in 1795 (on the south). Did burials continue on the lots until houses were actually built, and when was that? Or did burials continue only in the southern area in the years between 1787 and 1795? The Barclays began to sell and lease lots on Duane Street after 1787, but documentary evidence indicates that Lots 12 through 17 were all developed (built on) in the period 1794 to 1799, with the first house within the excavated portion of Block 154 going up in 1794 on Lot 12 (Cheek 2003:Chapter 4). Thus it is possible burials continued over the entire area up until 1794. However, if a new fence was built along a stretch of the diagonal boundary line in order to demarcate the rear of Duane Street lots, it is possible those lots were off-limits for interments even before construction of houses began.

Houses on Lots 12, 15, and 16 were built earliest (Cheek 2003:Chapter 4). Damage to graves was caused when various types of pit features were dug in the rear parts of these lots (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

⁵ Preliminary research was conducted for the Stage IA background study on the site (Ingle et al. 1989). Subsequently, more detailed research on post-cemetery ownership and occupation of lots that were excavated was conducted by both Historic Conservation and Interpretation (by Jean Howson, Richard L. Porter, and Stephen Barto) and later John Milner Associates (by Thelma Foote and Reginald Pitts). Research relevant to the time periods represented archaeologically is presented in the report on the non-burial component of the 290 Broadway site (Cheek 2003).



Figure 3.8. (left)
Burial 153. A privy shaft at the rear of Lot 15 truncated the entire eastern part of the grave (bottom of photograph). The disturbed parts of the skeleton had been tossed aside and were found on the opposite side of the privy in a pile. Ruler is in feet and north is to right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 3.9. (right)
Burial 297. A privy shaft at the rear of Lot 16 truncated the entire western part of the grave (top of photograph), leaving only the legs below the knees and the eastern portion of the coffin. Scale shown is in inches. North is to right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

The earliest houses were not destined to last long. Beginning in the 1790s and into the first decade of the 19th century, the city undertook the filling in of the marshy areas around the Collect Pond, then of the pond itself, along with the grading of the hills in the area and the leveling of streets. Property owners were obliged to fill their own lots, as well as “regulate” (build up or dig out) the streets on which they fronted. Filling of the low-lying properties and streets on the African Burial Ground commenced in the 1790s. Duane Street property owners were required to build up the street in 1795, and Republican Alley was ordered to be filled up in 1803 (Hunter Research 1994:29-31, 55-56, 59-61). Once streets were leveled, the Common Council ordered “sunken” (low-lying) lots along them to be filled in (MCC 1784-1831(2):327-328). The pit and shaft features in the rear yards of Duane Street lots that had been built on before the filling were covered over and buried, just as were the graves of the African Burial Ground. Houses had to either be raised to the new street level or torn down and replaced. Once a lot was filled, building construction would begin at the new surface, and new building foundations and basements often extended only into the fill, not into the graves.

Fill encountered at the African Burial Ground archaeological site was approximately 13 feet deep on the west (behind Lot 12), and approximately 24 feet deep on the east near Elk Street, reflecting the original lay of the land. Some of this fill was from the time of initial leveling of the area (notably behind Lot 12, where it was sampled and could be dated on the basis of artifacts it contained), but much of the site also contained heavy

demolition fill from various demolition and rebuilding episodes over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Even these episodes failed to destroy hundreds of underlying graves, however, because they were so deeply buried.

Building construction in the 19th and 20th centuries

Maps from the 19th and 20th centuries depict the density of development on Block 154 (Figures 3.10-3.12). Every one of the lots that the Kip and Barclay families sold had structures on them before the middle of the 19th century – many had houses at the street front and at the back, along the alley.

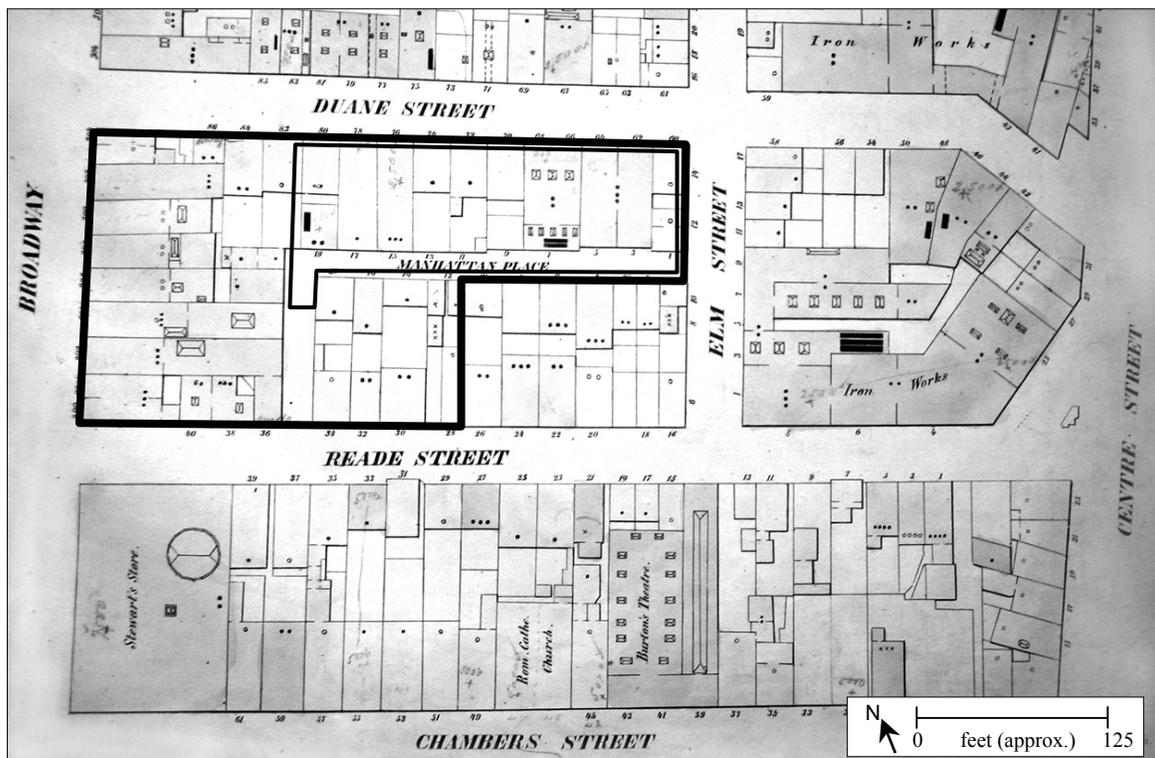


Figure 3.10. Detail from Perris Map of 1853. By the mid-19th century, every property that had been laid out in the 1780s and 90s had been developed, some having already seen successive building phases. Republican Alley was known as Manhattan Place at this time, and most of the lots that backed onto it had buildings at both front and rear. Elm (now Elk) Street had not been laid through to Chambers Street yet. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint. Source: New York Public Library.

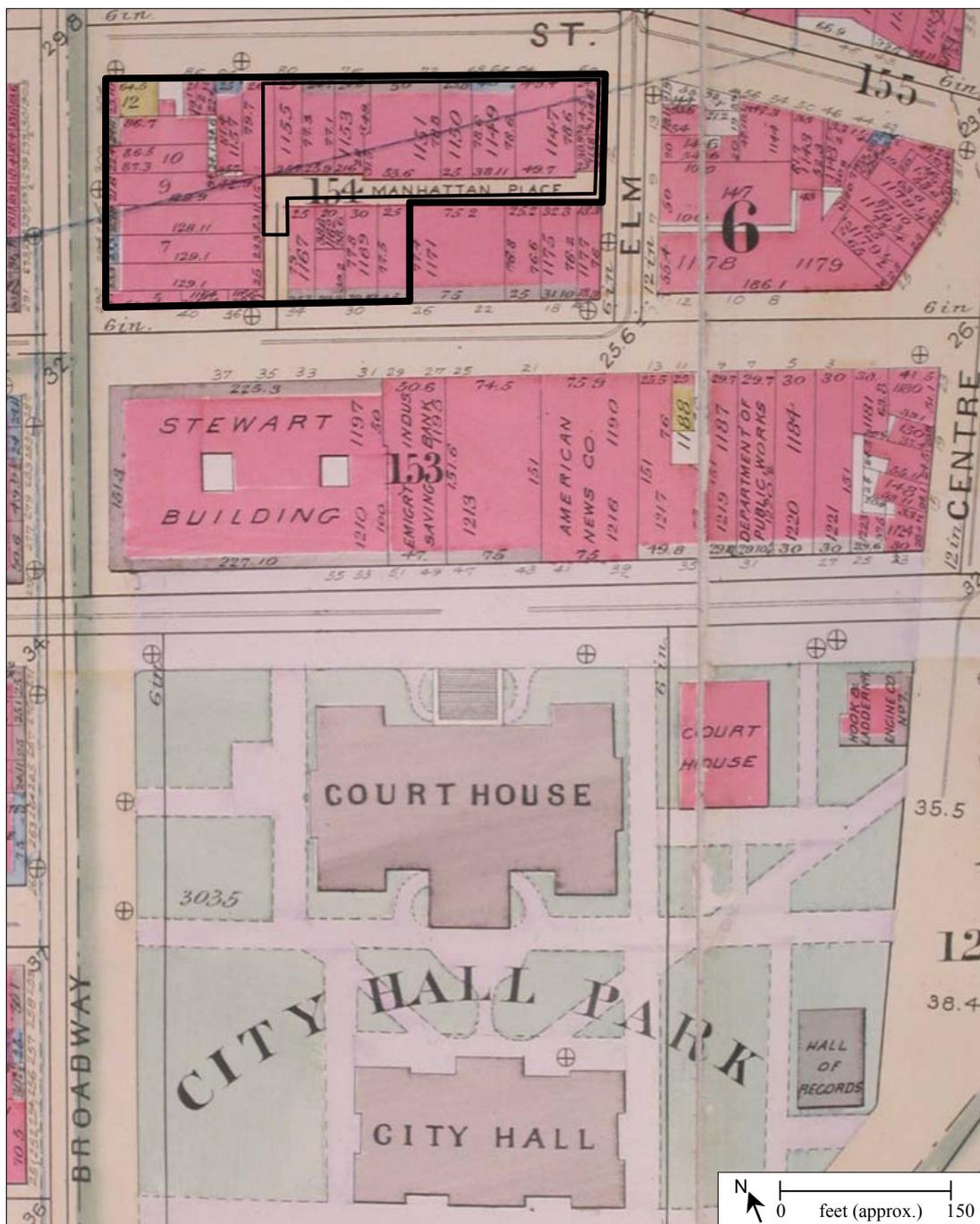


Figure 3.11. Detail from Robinson and Pidgeon Atlas (1893) showing late 19th-century development in the area of the African Burial Ground. The former boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm was shown running diagonally across Block 154. Brick structures that covered entire lots now characterized the blocks in the area, and the “Tweed” Court House, facing north onto Chamber Street, had been built in City Hall Park. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint. Source: New York Public Library.

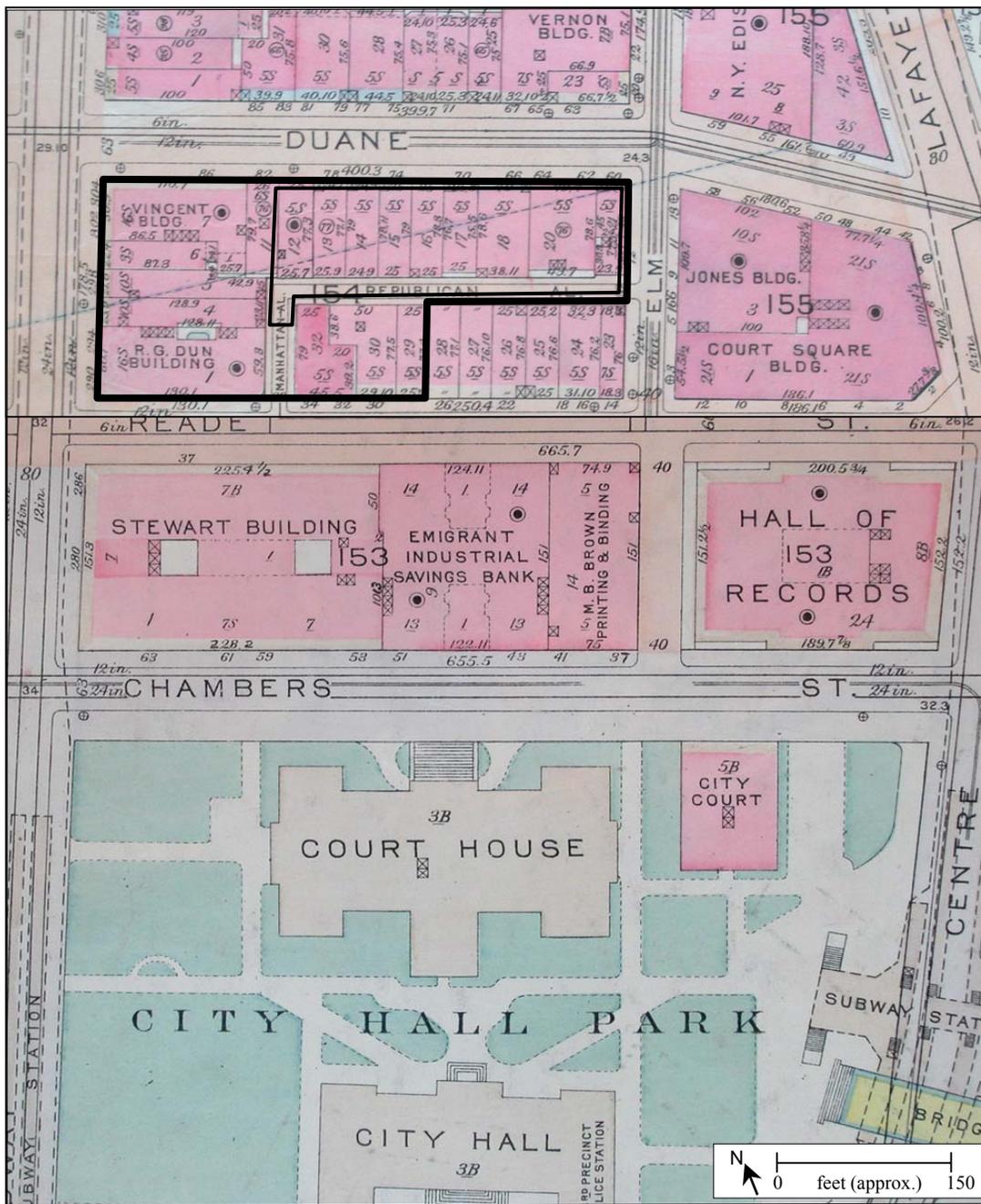


Figure 3.12. Detail from the Bromley Map (1934) showing development in the area of the African Burial Ground. The former boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm was shown running diagonally across Block 154. The 8-story Hall of Records, on block 153 on the east side of Elm (Elk) Street, was built on the leveled 18th century “Pot Baker’s Hill.” Because of the previous leveling, and the deep sub-basement of this building, it is unlikely any burials survive on the block. Burials may be extant beneath the “Jones” and “Court Square” buildings on Block 155 just across Reade Street, however, since this would have been a lower-lying area and the basements are not as deep. Buildings are discussed in the National Historic Landmark nomination (Appendix A.2 of this report), and in the designation report for New York’s African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint. Source: New York Public Library.

On some lots, successive buildings eventually obliterated all physical traces of the cemetery. This was true for all of the lots along Broadway, where the graves were not protected by deep fill and where large commercial structures had deep basements. We know from a newspaper reference that bones were removed during the 1845-46 construction of the A. T. Stewart Store on Broadway between Chambers and Reade Streets (New York Times, November 14, 1878). Lot 12 was in a part of the site where fill was relatively shallow, but it never had a building with a deep basement extending to the rear of the lot, so graves were intact in that area. The most recent structure on Lot 13 had a deep basement, and no graves were preserved within its footprint (Figure 1.7). Because of a combination of shallower basements and deeper fill to the east, buildings in Lots 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 ½ and 21 did not destroy all of the graves (see Appendix A for schematic cross-sections through the blocks within the National Historic Landmark showing the projected level of graves in relation to building basements). Graves were preserved in place within the alignment of Republican Alley along a short stretch of the north-south leg and behind Lots 12 through 15, but to the east of this all graves that once lay beneath the alley had been disturbed by the excavation of the foundation for 22 Reade Street.

Even though hundreds of graves were preserved beneath the alley or the lot fill, considerable damage was caused by successive building episodes and related excavations. The site map (Figure 1.7) indicates areas where historic excavations for structures such as foundation walls, footings, drains, or elevator shafts clearly disturbed or destroyed graves. Known burials that were damaged prior to the archaeological investigation are listed in Table 3.2. For ease of reference the historic lot numbers are used, but it should be remembered that the lots post-date and have no relevance for the African Burial Ground itself. “Feature” numbers are arbitrary consecutive numbers given to pits, privies, drains, footings, etc. that were encountered during the archaeological excavations. These are described in full in the report of the 290 Broadway non-burial component (Cheek 2003). Examples of graves damaged in the second or third phases of development at the site are shown in Figures 3.13 and 3.14. Table 3.2 lists only those graves where historic impacts resulted in removal of skeletal remains; compression also caused damage.

Lot/Type of feature	Impact
Lot 12	
Cistern	Truncated Burials 58 and 63
Lot 13	
Concrete Foundation	Truncated Burials 10, 97, 102
Stone Foundation	Truncated Burials 25, 26, 32, 52; damaged Burials 83 and 84
Lot 14	
Foundation	Truncated Burials 162, 188, 125, 287, 277, 275, 228.
Basement at front of lot	Disturbed Burials 152 and 178
Shallow pit (Feature 106)	Possibly damaged Burial 125

Table 3.2. (continued)	
Damage to known burials from historic development	
Lot/Type of feature	Impact
Lot 15	
Privy (Feature 56)	Truncated Burial 153; damaged Burial 203
Privy (Feature 77)	Damaged Burials 192, 193, 252, and possibly Burial 225
Pit (Feature 91)	Slightly damaged Burial 158
Brick drain (Feature 100)	Damaged Burial 213
Lot 16	
Privy (Feature 58)	Truncated Burial 297; damaged Burial 181
Lot 17	
Foundation	Damaged burials 351, 370, 428
Lot 18	
Foundation excavations	Damaged burials 410, 413, 420
Footing	Damaged burial 414
Elevator shaft	Damaged burials 417, 418, 423, 434
Broadway Lots	
Foundations	Damaged burials 15, 36, 41, 46, 54, 67, 81, 89, 93
Reade Street Lots	
Foundations, mid-block	Damaged burials 66, 70, 118, 168, 170, 189,
Foundation, 22 Reade St.	Damaged burials 308, 316



Figure 3.13.
Photograph of Burial 97. A concrete wall between Lots 12 and 13 obliterated the eastern half of the grave. The ruler is measured in feet and north is to the right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 3.14.
Photograph of Burial 213. A brick drain constructed some time in the 19th century extended down through the grave, removing a portion of the coffin and skeletal remains but leaving the rest of the burial remarkably intact. The ruler alongside the grave is measured in feet. North is to the right.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

3.B. Damage sustained during the project

Burial 1, the first grave discovered at the African Burial Ground, was uncovered during backhoe excavation of a test trench and was truncated by the machine. Subsequently, excavation proceeded so as to delineate burials, by identifying the outline of the grave shafts, prior to beginning their meticulous hand excavation. Nevertheless, numerous graves were partially disturbed during backhoe clearing of demolition fill over large areas. Such damage is noted in the burial descriptions contained in Volumes 2 and 3 of this report. It is worth noting that 30 of the 31 skulls that were considered to be “intact” for purposes of skeletal analysis were recovered among the first 100 burials excavated, which suggests that the quality of excavation suffered as pressure to speed the work increased.

Construction of 290 Broadway proceeded throughout the archaeological field project, and damage to the burials continued to be sustained despite the presence of the archaeological team. Excavations for massive footings in the eastern part of the site were responsible for the destruction of many graves. Four openings for these 10' x 10' footings were excavated along a north-south alignment, each disturbing a 15' x 15' area (one is shown on the site plan, Figure 1.7). Based on the density of burials in the southeast part of the site (an area that was not even fully exposed), it is likely that dozens of graves were destroyed by each of the footings. Construction in 1991 of a perimeter wall for 290 Broadway also destroyed or damaged an unknown number of graves along Elk Street and possibly also along Duane Street. Another large area was disturbed during construction activity in the rear part of Lot 16. The use of heavy machinery on the site caused damage to additional graves, though this is more difficult to assess.

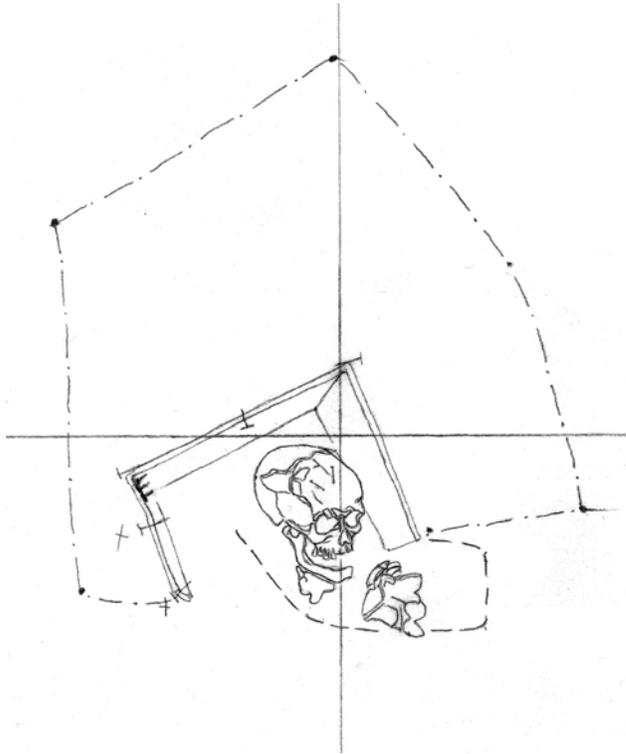


Figure 3.15.
In situ drawing of Burial 362, which was nearly destroyed by the installation of a massive concrete footing for the 290 Broadway building in February of 1992. The grave held a man of undetermined age. His cranium and a portion of the coffin were left relatively undisturbed. Numerous other burials were also damaged or destroyed by this footing and three others in the eastern part of the site. The scale is 1 inch = 1 foot. North is to the right. Drawing by M. Schur.

3.C. Overall Site Stratigraphy

As noted, clearing in most areas was done mechanically down to a level where graves were clearly visible, and sometimes to the very tops of coffins. It appears that pressure to speed the excavation often led to the disregard of deposits above this level. It is possible that historic-period development had already destroyed the earlier ground surfaces. But any historic surfaces that *may* have been extant beneath the fill may have been stripped in the interest of reaching the burials quickly. In some areas, stripping proceeded until the tops of coffins (readily recognizable from wood staining and *in situ* nails) were observed. This destroyed the opportunity for the archaeologists to examine most of the site for evidence of grave markers and items that had been deliberately placed on the tops of graves. The exception was the north-south leg of Republican Alley, where the surface of

some graves was present (Figure 3.16). This was the first site area excavated archaeologically, and was also the shallowest, requiring hand-excitation of upper layers; it is possible the excavators had the luxury of time to carefully look for old surfaces.



Figure 3.16.
Photograph of former
Republican Alley during
excavation, as the surface of
graves was revealed. View is
toward the south. Photograph
by Dennis Seckler.

Despite not having the original or 18th-century ground surface over the majority of the archaeological site, it is possible to get a sense of the lay of the land by looking at the recorded elevations of burials. The micro-topography of the portion of the cemetery that was studied archaeologically appears to have included a general northeast-tending slope, and possibly also “terrace” areas where the ground was flatter, and where burials were concentrated. Figure 3.17 is a schematic profile of the excavated graves from west (closest to Broadway) to east (at Elk Street). Concentrations of burials are seen at 50E to 100E, and at 110E to 145E. The apparent precipitate drop-off at 100E is the effect of the construction disturbance at the rear of Lot 16.

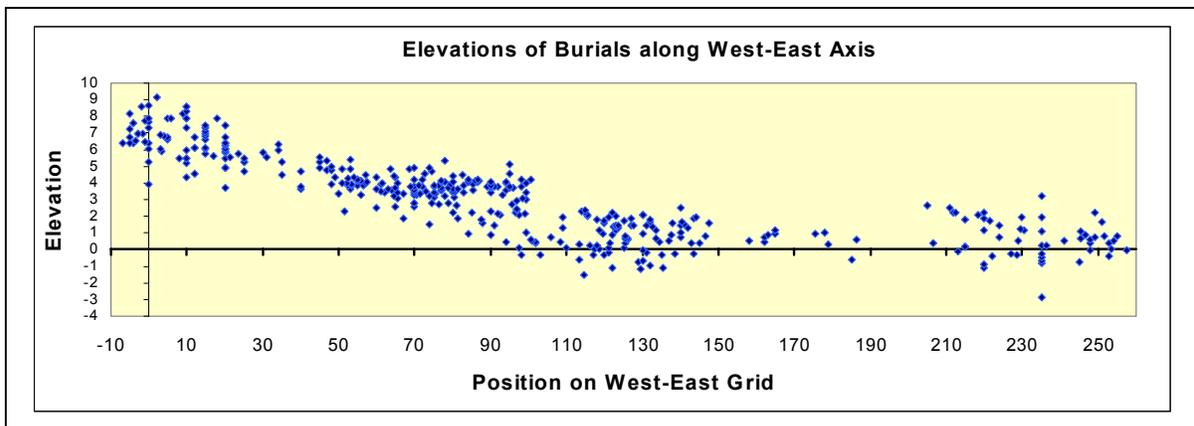


Figure 3.17.
Schematic diagram of elevations of burials (shown as diamonds) from east to west. Elevations are in feet above/below current sea level (measured at the highest point of the *in situ* skeletal remains). West is to the left. Grid line “0” on the West-East site grid is 280 feet east of Broadway. Differing scales along the X and Y axes exaggerate the variation in elevations.

When each African Burial Ground interment originally took place, the soil from the surface of the ground and from the grave shaft was removed and then re-deposited in the shaft. Thus material from the surface at the time of burial ended up mixed in with the fill in the grave shaft. In many cases, non-burial deposits surrounding or overlying the burials, but contemporary with the cemetery, are reflected in the contents of the shafts. For instance, some burials found in the area where the stoneware potteries were dumping kiln waste had large amounts of that waste in the grave shafts. In other cases, the grave shaft contents reflected the presence of a sparse sheet scatter of domestic debris (bits of glass, brick, smoking pipe, or ceramic), or of a fairly heavy deposit of animal bone and horn (probably waste material from a tannery). Materials present in the grave shafts can be used to reconstruct the 18th century ground surface deposits over the site area. For our purposes, this information is useful for dating graves, and for understanding the series of encroachments that affected the burial ground (see further discussion in Chapter 4).

Post-burial-ground features and deposits, which were located north of the cemetery or which overlay or cut into the cemetery deposits, were also excavated during the field project (Cheek 2003). Some of these represented distinct phases of use of Block 154. Cheek (2003) designated development Phases 1 through 6 for the site as a whole:

- Phase 1 – through 1787 – African Burial Ground and contemporary uses including the potteries
- Phase 2 – 1788 through 1803 – initial “urbanization”
- Phase 3 – 1799 through 1807 – the raising of Anthony-Barley-Duane Street
- Phase 4 – 1807 through 1890s – development
- Phase 5 – 1900 through 1990 – development [also the razing of structures in the 1960s in advance of an aborted civic center development project]
- Phase 6 – 1990 through 1992 – construction of 290 Broadway

The African Burial Ground cemetery was still in use during the first part of Cheek’s “Phase 2,” through 1795.

3.D. Condition of graves

Wet conditions at the African Burial Ground site were not a surprise, given the proximity of the Collect Pond and surrounding wetlands (the latter possibly at one time extending into the area of the cemetery). Moreover, many of the graves were themselves at or below modern sea level. During excavations, the water table often was high enough to flood burials, and it is assumed that fluctuating moisture levels affected them throughout the period of their interment, which in most cases would have been more than 200 years.

Preservation of both skeletal remains and artifacts was dependent on soil conditions. Project conservator Cheryl J. LaRoche described these as follows:⁶

⁶ The African Burial Ground project conservators were Gary McGowan and Cheryl J. LaRoche. This text is from an unedited draft report of conservation activities prepared by LaRoche.

The presence of naturally occurring alluvial clays with lenses of Cretaceous sands...contributed to the variety of environmental conditions... Many of the natural catalysts of artifact and skeletal deterioration were in these soils. Sand allowed water seepage, while the alluvial clay acted as a hydrophilic substrate, binding free water to the adjacent artifacts and skeletal materials. The wet, gelatinous consistency of [some of] the skeletal remains upon excavation was indicative of waterlogged conditions. The abundance of oxygen, inherent in alluvial clays, increased acidity (lowered pH), which broke down organic resins. Furthermore, this oxygenated environment encouraged the deterioration of ferric alloys through oxidation as the free oxygen was tied to the groundwater. Thus, iron preservation at the 290 Broadway Block was poor due, in part, to oxygenated conditions and electrochemical activity.

When a catalyst, such as oxygen, is depleted, the soil becomes anoxic, and agents of deterioration that are dependent on an oxygenated environment rapidly decline while there is a corresponding increase in anaerobic activity. This anoxic environment harbored anaerobic bacteria, which accelerated the rate of degradation of organic materials. Several artifacts exhibited blackened surfaces, evidence of metal sulfides produced by sulfate-reducing bacteria associated with anaerobic conditions. The microenvironment produced by the permeable sand lenses fostered its own unique degradation pattern. While these more permeable loci are less biologically reactive, they can be more chemically reactive. As one agent of deterioration diminished, another flourished [LaRoche 2002:17].

In addition, the chemical environment caused by decomposition of the human remains in each grave would have affected the preservation of items such as cloth or artifacts.

Soil chemistry was not tested during excavations of the graves or subsequently in the laboratory. Differential preservation conditions generally cannot be determined from burial to burial (unless obvious factors such as excessive moisture are mentioned in the notes), and this has implications for studying the distribution of burial artifacts. In other words, the presence or absence of burial items cannot be checked against preservation conditions. For graves where no artifactual material was recovered, the possibility of total decomposition should be considered. For example, pins were often noted in the field but not recoverable, and it is possible some were so decomposed that they were not distinguishable to the naked eye in the field. Similarly, recovered pewter and bone button fragments were very poorly preserved and it is not inconceivable that such items were not simply longer extant in some burials. Where field notes indicate that the preservation was poor, determinations as to the absence of burial artifacts (or skeletal elements, for that matter) should be qualified.

Post-interment animal activity (worm action and small mammal burrows) was noted in numerous graves. Changes in drainage caused by filling and construction over the centuries would have created fluctuations in moisture conditions, and such fluctuations themselves are very damaging. Pollutants from 19th and 20th-century use of the property that seeped through the soils may have altered the preservation environment of graves. Finally, the exposure of skeletal remains through excavation presented an immediate

danger of deterioration. Most importantly, if the bones were soft from moisture, drying would cause them to become friable.⁷ Field protocols for ensuring maximum stabilization of remains and artifacts are noted in Chapter 1.

All recorded observations of the in-field condition of individual graves are noted in the burial descriptions in Volumes 2 and 3 of this report.⁸ The condition of artifacts and products of decomposition noted during laboratory processing are discussed in the appropriate artifact chapters (Chapters 11 through 14).

3.E. Preservation assessment

Field records were reviewed for information pertinent to the likely presence or absence of artifacts in graves based on preservation factors, including damage sustained to burials, degree of disarticulation and disturbance, and whether excavation was complete. This is crucial to the analysis of artifact frequency distributions, which should only include burials for which the preservation of items was at least possible. A simple logic was applied, taking into account the fact that in an intact grave, artifacts might survive even where bone does not (recall the number of coffins, especially very small ones, with no extant human remains). Burials were assigned yes or no values depending on whether artifacts could be expected. For a small number of burials we also needed to take into account which part of a burial had survived. Pins were most frequently found on the cranium, so burials with missing crania but good preservation otherwise were noted. The “preservation” field in the burial data table contains a value for each burial as follows:

“y” = Overall preservation of grave is such that artifacts might be expected to have survived. Skeletal elements from the upper half of the body and/or the coffin outline with nails were found *in situ*.

“n” = Heavily disturbed or redeposited remains; or the upper body was missing due to truncation by later feature and no artifacts were found with lower body.

“y (no cranium)” = Otherwise intact grave where just the cranium had been truncated (cranial pins would be missing, but survival of other artifacts may be expected).

⁷ Conservation measures, such as consolidation of friable material with PVA (polyvinyl acetate), were sometimes taken in the field. Trained conservation staff was not always on hand during the fieldwork, however. The professional conservators subsequently indicated that the overuse of PVA sometimes caused soil to bind to bones and artifacts.

⁸ Field recording was highly variable. In general, recordation of the condition of the skeleton, element by element, was much better than that of the overall grave (notes on the observed condition of *in situ* skeletal elements were recorded on forms by the excavation staff of the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team and are retained in the project archive). For some burials, detailed notes were taken on the soil, moisture conditions, consistency and surface condition of the bone, wood, and artifacts, and damage from exposure. For others, little or no information on these factors was recorded.

“y (cranium only)” = Only the cranium was still in its apparent original burial location (pins may be expected, though other artifacts would be missing, since they rarely occur on the cranium).

“n (empty coffin)” = Human remains (and possibly artifacts) appear to have been removed from otherwise intact coffin. These are rare cases where it is believed decay cannot account for the lack of skeletal remains.

“n (not excavated)” = Artifacts were not found, but the burial was not fully excavated at the time the field project was halted, so their presence cannot be ruled out.

This artifact preservation assessment does *not* correspond to the cranial and post-cranial preservation value assigned to the skeletal remains for each burial (see Skeletal Biology Report, Appendix C, Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2004), which serve a different purpose. While some of the factors affecting bony preservation also apply to artifacts, others do not. For example, even where the preservation of skeletal remains was minimal, such as for many of the infants, coffins were clearly defined and preservation of any other artifacts that had been placed with the deceased might be expected. It is worth noting that in several cases of extremely disturbed remains, copper staining from pins or tiny pin fragments were nonetheless noted with the bone.

Discussions of artifact frequencies in subsequent chapters will indicate the total numbers of burials considered, based on the preservation assessments or other relevant criteria.

3.G. Graves remaining in place at the site

The field excavation was halted by the General Services Administration at the end of July 1992. Graves for which excavation was already underway at the time the excavation was halted were filled with vermiculite and soil was placed over them. Some of these were subsequently removed in October of 1992; others were left in place. At that time, only some areas had been fully excavated (i.e., all burials removed).⁹ The site plan (Figure 1.7) indicates the boundary line between the area that had been fully excavated and that which had not. It should be noted that between grid lines 110 East and 150 East, excavated burials seem to be equally dense on either side of this line. The excavation team, however, clearly indicated that the area eastward of the line had not been fully excavated, and that therefore additional burials might be present.¹⁰

Based on the distribution of burials in areas that were fully excavated, it is likely burials are present throughout most of the northern portions of former Lots 17, 18, 19, 20 ½, and

⁹ The field excavations were stopped *only* after all burials had been excavated within the entire footprint of the 290 Broadway 34-story tower. The redesign of the building thus only had to address the relatively minor “Pavilion” section.

¹⁰ The draft site plan was prepared by field personnel Brian Ludwig and Margo Schur under the direction of Field Director Michael Parrington. This plan was used to plot foundations, non-burial features, limits of excavation, site disturbances, and the site grid on Figure 1.7.

21 (one *possible* grave outline was noted in the northeastern part of the site prior to halting the excavation). This means that the current memorial site, in fact, contains an intact portion of the original cemetery, containing perhaps two to three hundred graves, beneath up to 25 feet of fill soil within the grass-covered enclosure.

CHAPTER 4. RELATIVE DATING

Jean Howson, Warren R. Perry, Augustin F. C. Holl, and Leonard G. Bianchi

This chapter describes the rationale and methodology for dividing the burial population into temporal groupings. It is emphasized that the chronological sequence developed here is a relative one, the dates assigned to each grouping approximate. Burials are assigned to broad temporal groups on the basis of 1) location and stratigraphy relative to non-burial features at the site; 2) artifacts found in direct association with the deceased or in the grave fill; 3) coffin type; and 4) stratigraphic relationships to other burials. In many cases, the several parameters support each other, strengthening the assignments, while in other instances evidence is ambiguous.

4.A. Site features relevant for chronology

Non-burial physical features within the excavated site that are relevant for understanding the cemetery's use over time include:

- the remains of fences that once crossed the site from southwest to northeast along the boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm (see Chapters 2 and 3);
- ditches found in Lot 12 that trend in the same direction as the fence;
- the scatter of animal bone and cattle horn core fragments that may represent waste dumping (possibly from tanneries) over a portion of the north part of the excavation site;
- the stoneware waste dump associated with potteries that stood on and/or adjacent to the cemetery.

The fence lines

Historic maps from 1754 and 1767 depict lines running diagonally from the southwest starting at Broadway to northeast across the area of the cemetery, along or very near the alignment of the Van Borsum patent's northern boundary as it would be established in the 1780s - 90s (see Figures 2.13 and 2.15). On the 1754 Maerschalk map (see Figures 2.10 and 3.6), the line is dashed and the "Negros Burial Ground" is clearly labeled to its south. The fact that the mapmaker depicted a line suggests, at least, that the boundary somehow was physically marked on the landscape. There may have been a fence dividing the Calk Hook Farm from the burial ground at the time, or perhaps a path ran along the boundary,

leading from the structure depicted on Broadway eastward to the “Pot Baker” near the Little Collect Pond. On the Ratzer plan of 1767 (see Figures 2.11, 3.7, and 4.1), a similarly-placed line runs along the south side of three buildings: the one on Broadway now shown with a second structure to its east and the presumed pottery building further east, now shown within a rectangular lot (which itself may have been enclosed by a fence). Again, the line extending east from Broadway may represent a fence, dividing properties on the Calk Hook Farm (some of which was developed and had presumably been leased) from land to the south that is depicted as undeveloped (the cemetery).

Further evidence for the existence of a fence in the 1760s comes from court records of 1812-13 relating to the ownership of the former cemetery. The heirs to the Van Borsum patent had the land surveyed in 1784, but arguments arose as to the legality of possession of certain parcels during the period following the War of Independence. Proceedings included testimony of a number of witnesses as to the boundaries of the burial ground or patent, and tenancy during the period from the mid 18th century through the 1790s. The summary of the case (Johnson 1853-59(10):355) reads in part:

[The plaintiffs] showed that in May 1768, J. Teller, their ancestor, entered into possession of a house which he had built two or three years before on the negro’s

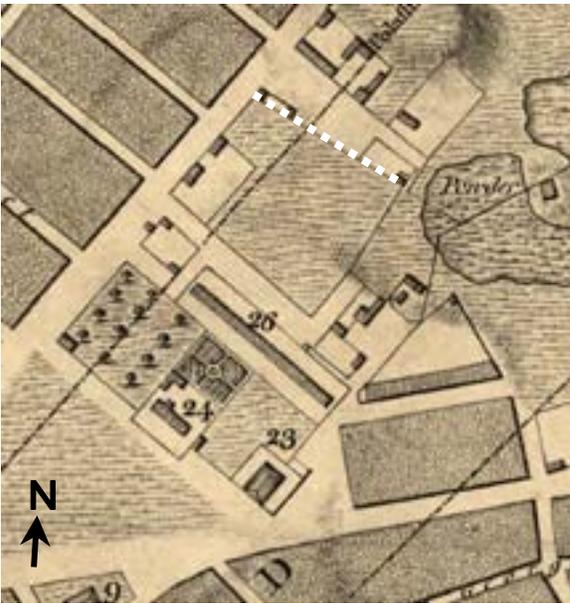


Figure 4.1.
1767 Ratzer Plan (see Figures 2.11 and 3. 7)
showing a possible fence along the north side of
the cemetery (dashed white).

burying ground, and which had, previously to his entrance, been occupied by his tenant. *That he had a fence enclosing the burying ground, and claimed it as his property, and pastured it, and kept the key of the gate leading to the ground, and took payment for the use of the ground, and that it was known and called by the name of his land and fence.* That he continued in possession until his death in June, 1775, and his family continued in possession afterwards, and until... the invasion of New-York in 1776; and that then the family left the city and retired into the country; and the British army took possession of the house and lot, and during the course of the war, and *while under the dominion of the British, the house and fences were destroyed* [emphasis added].

It is possible the Ratzer Plan depicts the fence that Teller had erected along the north side of the cemetery. It is doubtful the “Teller-phase” (circa 1765 to circa 1776) burial ground was fully enclosed; the Broadway lots and the northern boundary may have been fenced. Since the palisade, which once ran along the top of the rise on the south side of the burial ground, was no longer in place at the time of the Ratzer Plan, it is possible the cemetery

had spread southward again. We can only speculate on the placement of a gate – Broadway seems the most likely location, though access from behind the barracks or the through the potteries may have been possible.

Archaeological evidence for fence alignments takes the form of filled-in post holes. A series of these features was recorded within the excavated site, roughly along the alignment of the patent boundary (Figure 4.2). The irregularity in the pattern of recorded post holes, as well as the variation in profile among those that were excavated, suggests that more than one fence is represented.

One fence iteration may date to the period 1787 to circa 1800, when the building lots on Duane (then Anthony) Street were initially laid out and developed, as discussed in Chapter 3. If the 1787 partition of the Calk Hook lots on Block 154 was physically marked out in some way, with a fence or even just with posts, burials in this area would have been discouraged or prohibited. Lots 12 through 16 were initially sold off with rear property lines that ran diagonally along the “Negroes Burying Ground” boundary (as shown in Figure 2.13). From Lot 17 eastward, however, properties were consolidated with the triangular “gore” of ground to their rears before being sold as building lots, so there may not have been a 1787 fence behind these properties. It is also possible that a fence was put up only as construction actually began on the lots, which was not until 1794.

Moving back in time, the evidence cited above suggests that John Teller constructed a fence in 1765 or 1768. An earlier fence, the one possibly depicted on the 1754 map (Figures 2.10 and 3.6), might have been taken down sometime before Teller took possession. It is also possible John Teller’s fence was already partially in place when he came to live on the property, erected by a previous Van Borsum claimant or by the Rutgers to delimit their property to its north.

Finally, it is possible there was fence along the patent boundary earlier in the 18th century, though none is depicted on any map. In 1723 Jacobus Kip, one of the heirs to the Van Borsum patent, petitioned the Common Council to assist him in surveying the property (MCC 1675-1776(3):335). It is at least possible that he was successful in having the bounds of “his” land surveyed, and erected a fence to separate it from the Calk Hook Farm.

There is little doubt that the northern portion of the excavated cemetery was used differently than the portion south of the fence line. Interments in the northern area are sparse compared to the southern area, where intensive use and re-use resulted in a dense concentration of graves (see Figure 1.7). Other distinctions of the northern area include a higher frequency of domestic refuse in the soil matrix, evidence for a higher frequency of weedy plants, a more regular and more southerly orientation of burials, and the presence of most of the site’s coffin-less graves.

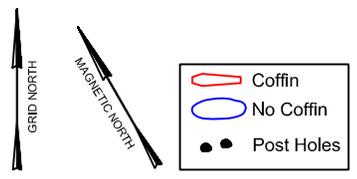
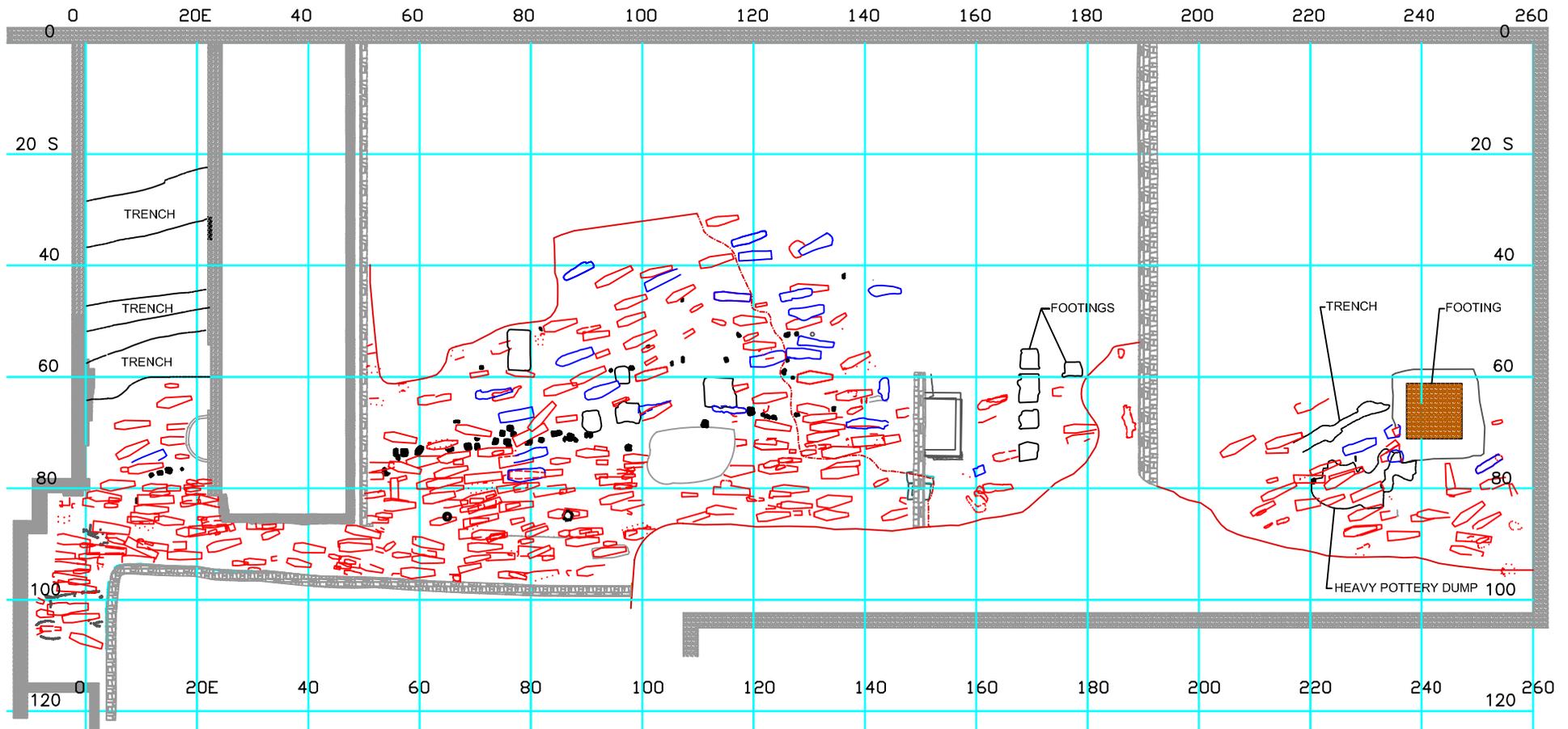


Figure 4.2
 Site Features and Burials
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

The domestic refuse that found its way into northern grave shafts includes ceramics that were common from the 17th century on, suggesting the northern area was used more than the south for scattered refuse disposal. There is also a slightly higher incidence of weedy taxa—aster relatives, goosefoot relatives, and chicory relatives—from analyzed burials in the northern portion of the excavated site (see Appendix G). There is no similar increase in ragweed-type, suggesting that the increases in the other weedy types were not caused by cultivation or continuous soil disturbance. Non-cultivated plants related to asters, goosefoot, and chicory are waste ground plants and may reflect the use of landfill containing these plants (see Chapter 3 on the filling of the Calk Hook lots) or perhaps the neglect of this property beginning with the British occupation.

Divergent non-burial land use aside, the graves themselves are distinct north of the fence line. The scarcity of burials in the northern area allows regularities in the horizontal placement of graves to emerge, so that it is possible to discern rows oriented roughly north-south, probably along contours in the hillside. In addition, at least in the western half of the northern area, graves are angled fairly uniformly south of grid west; burial orientation in the area south of the post-hole alignment is much more variable (see Chapter 5.B for a discussion of burial orientation). Finally, 21 graves without coffins were located clearly to the north of the fence line, out of the 32 coffin-less graves at the site (see Figure 4.2). Put another way, 33% of the burials that were clearly to the north of the line were without coffins, compared to only 4% of those that were clearly south of the line.

If we thus accept that the northern area represents a distinct pattern of use, the question is raised: how were the burials to the north of the post-hole alignment related temporally to fences? Were they interred:

- 1) before any fence was built, in which case interments were made here for a brief time (given their relative sparsity) early on and subsequently were restricted to the area of the Van Borsum patent to the south;
- 2) prior to the Teller phase, but while an earlier fence (possibly as early as 1723, and depicted in 1755) was standing, and thus deliberately outside the main cemetery;
- 3) during Teller's tenure, and thus deliberately outside the gated cemetery for which a fee was charged (circa 1766 through 1776); or
- 4) after the British destroyed the fence (i.e., during the occupation and after the war, 1776 through the development of the lots and the effective closing of the African Burial Ground?

Artifact analysis, discussed below, indicates that *at least some of the northern burials post-date 1760*. Since the low density of burials points to a limited period of use for the northern area, it is most likely datable to either the Teller phase or the post-1776 phase, or possibly to both. We believe the post-1776 hypothesis is best supported by the evidence, as discussed in Section 4.E and in Chapter 9.

The ditches

Physical boundaries may also be created by ditches. There were three southwest-to-northwest trending ditches recorded archaeologically within Lot 12 (Figure 4.2). According to Cheek (2003:Chapter 4) the fill in the ditches has been dated: the two northernmost contained material from the 1760s and later, and the southern one had artifact types from the 1780s and later. Cheek mentions several possible functions for the trenches, from drainage features, to dumping features, to boundary ditches or fence-post trenches. The northern ditch feature was some 9 to 10 feet wide, the middle one 3 to 4 feet wide, and each was 2½ to 3 feet deep. In cross-section, the middle ditch had a straight northern side, such as would be found in a “ha-ha,” a landscape feature meant to keep animals out of gardens. The southernmost ditch was 7 to 7½ feet wide and shallow, just 1½ to 2 feet deep, and it appears to have been open for a longer period of time than the others based on its fill layers.

If one or more of the ditches functioned as a cemetery boundary, this would mean that, during the period when the interments located northward of the fence line were being conducted, either the cemetery’s users or its putative property owners saw fit to mark its extent, or perhaps to protect it from grazing animals. No burials were located to the north of the southernmost trench within Lot 12. However, the alignment of this trench, if projected northeastward beyond Lot 12, falls within areas of the site that were not excavated, so it is not possible to determine whether any graves were located outside it.¹ As Cheek points out, the southernmost trench feature is the most likely candidate for a cemetery boundary. It is doubtful any of the ditches represents an early, pre-fence boundary, since there is no evidence that early burials extend this far north (see further discussion below).

Another possibility is that the trenches mark edges of or beds of roadways or paths that once led from Broadway eastward to the pottery kiln(s) located near the Little Collect Pond (see maps in Chapter 2).

Animal bone dumping

The frequency of animal bone and horn in grave shafts and in other excavated features (for the latter see Cheek 2003) has been plotted over space, and it seems clear that within one area of the site, between grid coordinates 135E and 195E to the north of the fence line, dumping of animal bone occurred at some period (Figure 4.3). The faunal remains in the dump include high relative frequencies of horn, hooves, etc., suggesting that this sub-area was used for waste from tannery operations (Appendix E). However, within this sub-area there are some interspersed graves with little or no animal bone.

It is possible the dumping area was very irregular, so that its edge might fall between adjacent graves. But another reasonable explanation for the pattern of presence-absence is that some of the burials here pre-dated the bone dump, while others were dug into it,

¹ Cheek (2003:Chapter 4) suggests that there were burials north of the alignment, but this is not apparent from the site mapping.

with the animal bones then back-filled into their grave shafts. For this small part of the site, then, it may be possible to date graves relative to one another according to the presence or absence of animal remains. If the dump represents a single event or a brief period of time, the interval of time between burials with and without bone may be small. The burials within the dump will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

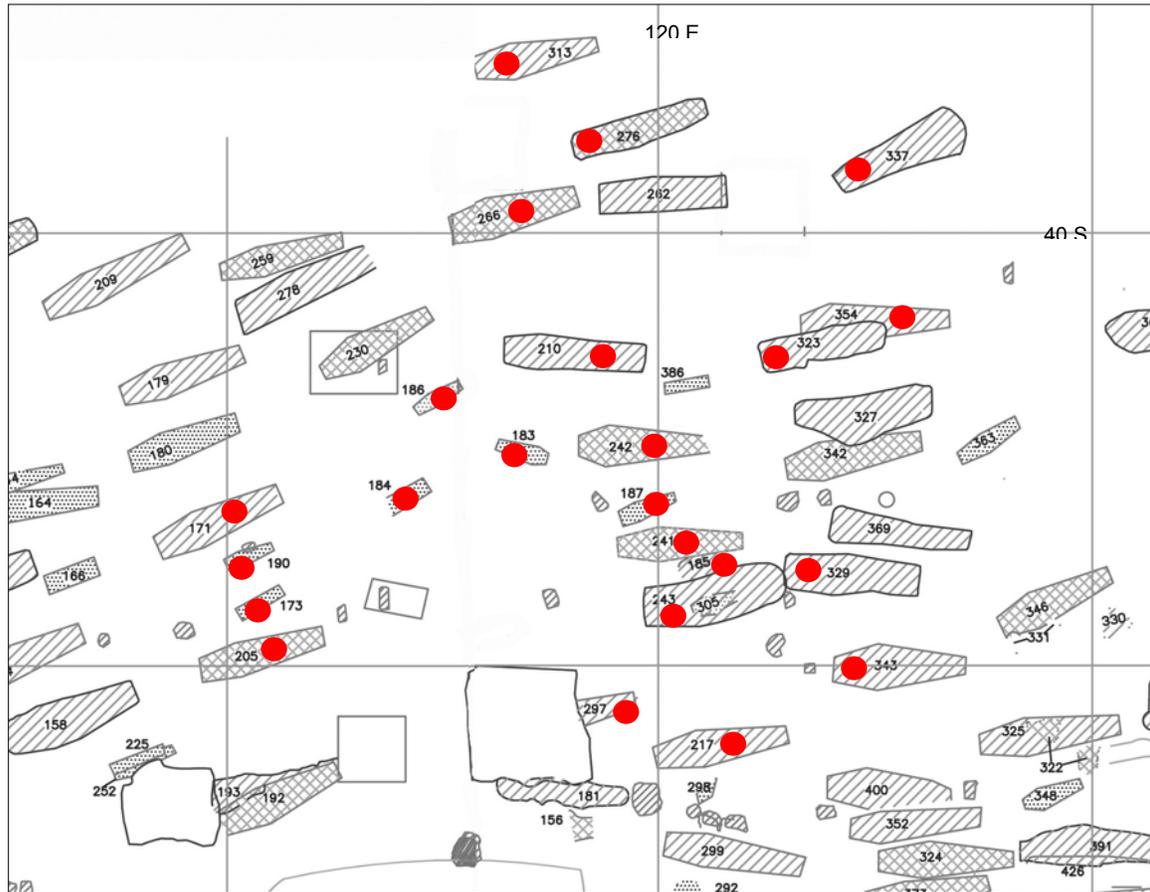


Figure 4.3.

Burials in the vicinity of the tannery dump in the northern part of the excavated site. Burials with significant cow hoof, horn, and bone material in the grave shaft are indicated with large dots.

Pottery waste dumping

Stoneware pottery manufacturers were located immediately adjacent to the excavated portion of the cemetery from the 1730s on, and for at least part of the period these industries used the area of the cemetery for dumping kiln waste (broken stoneware vessels, clay waste, and kiln furniture—see Appendix F). The ceramic material would have lain on the surface of the ground or in shallow pits. When graves were dug in these locations, the sherds were back-filled into the graves. Thus we hypothesize that in the areas where ceramics were ubiquitous (i.e., the dump areas), any grave shaft that did not contain these materials probably pre-dated the dump. In addition to the stoneware

operations, earthenware was being produced by the Campbell pottery, located just across Broadway from Block 184, during the 18th century. Redware waste sherds from this pottery were also scattered over the ground, though not concentrated in defined dumping areas.

Kiln waste was concentrated in the southeastern area of the excavated cemetery. The material may have been from either or both of the kilns that stood nearby (one to the southeast, and one closer by, near Duane Street). It should be remembered that the northeastern part of Block 154 was never fully excavated and may have contained pottery middens as well. A particularly dense dump, which appears to have been on the surface rather than in an excavated pit, was designated Feature 139 during fieldwork. It covered an irregular area that overlapped with several burials. A scatter of stoneware waste sherds and discarded kiln furniture came to be spread over a much larger area, however. Such material was recovered from grave shafts at the far west end of the site, though concentrations drop off markedly to the west of the 200E grid line. (It is likely at least some of the stoneware sherds recovered were from vessels that were in use, rather than kiln wasters.)

The commencement of the stoneware operation on “Pot Bakers Hill” (in the southeast part of the Van Borsum patent and to the southeast of the excavated site) can be placed as early as 1728, when it appeared on the Lyne survey (Figures 2.6 and 2.7). William Crolius, the presumed proprietor of the works, was registered in the city as a potter in 1728, though he had immigrated here by 1718 (see Janowitz and Cheek 2003). The second, northern kiln, associated with Crolius and/or Remmey, may date to somewhat later, probably circa 1740 (it was depicted on the Grim map, which was drawn in 1804 but represents 1742-44, and appeared on contemporary maps by the 1750s).

We do not know, however, when the potters dumped kiln waste material in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Analysis of the ceramic materials themselves suggests that very few kiln firings, perhaps even just one, are represented by the most concentrated dump (Feature 139; see Appendix F). This analysis also indicates that the wares here are dissimilar to those from other New York sites that date to after the Revolution. We consider it likely the dumping would have stopped during the period when Teller fenced the land. Therefore, we date the stoneware kiln dump to somewhere in the period from circa 1728 to circa 1765. Some burials in the southeast sub-area of the excavated cemetery are clearly datable to after the dumping began, since they were placed in the middle of the midden and their shafts were literally filled with sherds and kiln furniture. Others, with smaller amounts of stoneware waste in the shaft fill, were located outside the edge of the dense midden. In some cases, burials with little or no ceramic waste are thought to have been interred prior to the time of the heavy dumping.

The Campbell earthenware manufactory on Broadway, which produced redware vessels and pan tiles (roofing tiles), probably commenced operation in the late 1750s (John Campbell first appears in the records as a potter at age twenty in 1759; see Ketchum 1987:42-43). Frequencies of redwares in grave shafts are low, however, and no localized

dump area similar to those for stoneware or animal waste can be mapped within the excavated cemetery.² Dumping seems to have occurred within Lot 12 to the north of the graveyard, and the only burial with a high frequency of redware, Burial 313, is the northernmost excavated burial at the site. This burial can confidently be placed in time after the beginning of redware manufacture. Otherwise, only the presence of redware kiln furniture, pantiles, or kiln wasters can be used to place burials in the second half of the 18th century, and there are very few with such items in their shafts: Burials 185, 186, 213, 217, 242, 266, 276, 323, and 354.³ The absence of redware kiln items cannot be used as a *terminus ante quem* (date *before which* deposition must have occurred) to place burials in the first half of the century, since overall frequency is so low.

4.B. Artifact dating

Where possible, artifacts found in direct association with skeletal remains or coffins as well as artifacts from the grave shaft fill have been used to assign a *terminus post quem* (date *after which* deposition must have occurred) for a burial. A grave that, based on superposition, clearly post-dated a burial with dated artifacts was given that burial's TPQ (unless it had a later one of its own). It should also be remembered that if an interment cut into an earlier grave, an item that was recovered along with the later burial might actually have come from the earlier grave shaft. Since there is no way of determining when such mixing occurred, however, such items can only provide a TPQ for the later burial. Most of the graves that were disturbed through construction, either historically or recently, are not assigned TPQs due to the likely presence of intrusive material. Artifact-based TPQs are listed in Table 4.1.

Stoneware and redware kiln furniture have not been used as datable types in this analysis; the wares, which in themselves have wide time ranges, have instead been used as time-markers for the dumping from local potteries, which we choose to keep as a separate variable (see above).

Since so many burials had no datable items at all, and most datable artifacts from the African Burial Ground have very broad manufacture dates, only a few burials can be assigned on this basis alone to time periods. However, when combined with data on coffin shape, stratigraphic sequence, and relationships to other site features, the artifacts are helpful in developing the chronology.

² A non-burial feature in Lot 12, dated to the period 1760 to 1780, was filled with redware kiln debris (Cheek 2003).

³ Redware sherds identified as fragments of dishes, pots or bowls that may represent domestic refuse rather than kiln waste are *not* taken as proof the pottery was in operation at the time of their deposition.

TPQ	Artifact	Burials
1640	plain white delft	191
1660	Chinese export	192, 402
1670	slipware	9, 50, 57, 60, 67, 171, 194, 245, 414
1680	light blue painted delft	37, 63, 72, 158, 180
1680	white salt-glaze	25, 35, 55, 205, 268, 276, 278, 286, 419
1727	coin	214, 259
1740	agate ware	4A
1740	pipe	217
1740	Whieldon ware	297
1744	scratch blue	135, 328, 379
1750	Fazackerly palette delft	5, 30
1760	creamware	40, 172, 196, 224, 228, 236, 242, 266, 313, 323, 333, 337, 354, 362, 413
c. 1760	iron tacks	101, 176
c. 1770	buttons	6
1780	pearlware	1, 12, 14, 204, 207, 208, 241, 257

Many grave shafts contained artifacts that began to be manufactured in the 17th century (e.g., slipware or white delft), and are devoid of items that are clearly of later manufacture. However, over the southern part of the excavated cemetery, the distribution of artifacts overall was very sparse, and it is likely the absence of later artifacts reflects a relatively “clean” surface. When dealing with domestic sites, the absence of artifact types that were ubiquitous can be used to assign *termini ante quem* (dates before which depositional events occurred, or in other words *latest* likely dates) for archaeological deposits. However, artifact types, especially ceramics, that are normally ubiquitous on sites with domestic components, cannot be used in this way at the African Burial Ground. Though dwellings stood adjacent to the cemetery during the 18th century, associated domestic refuse may not have been quickly scattered over the area of the excavated interments. Thus the absence of creamware, a type imported in quantity in the 1760s, cannot be taken to mean that a burial pre-dated that decade (though the presence of creamware, of course, indicates the burial cannot have been made prior to its importation). Nor can the presence of creamware and the absence of pearlware bracket a burial within the 1760s-70s period, because there is no reason to expect pieces of ceramic to be present in the first place. If crockery were being deliberately placed on graves surfaces, as has been documented at African American cemeteries elsewhere, the presence/absence of datable types might be useful for dating. There is no evidence from

the African Burial Ground for this practice, since over most of the site the original surface was not present or had been mechanically stripped (for a possible instance of crockery placed on a coffin lid, see Chapter 14). The items providing the early TPQs listed in Table 4.1, for the most part ceramic types, all may have been in use well into the 18th century, and in some cases were still being manufactured. The fact that the graves in which they were found contained no later-manufactured items does not mean that they were early interments, though it does raise that possibility. In fact, however, graves believed to be the earliest in our sample based on other criteria typically contained *no* datable artifacts at all in the grave fill, which suggests to us that the ground was “clean” in the early years, with sparse accumulation of refuse material over time. It should also be noted that there were sixteen burials that we believe to be later than 1776 (based on other criteria) whose *only* grave-shaft artifacts were of types manufactured beginning between 1640 and 1744.

Items placed directly with the deceased (as opposed to being mixed into the shaft fill) also cannot be used to assign any date other than the *terminus post quem*. In the case of the African Burial Ground, items placed with or worn by the deceased included such things as beads datable only broadly to the 17th and 18th centuries, numerous buttons with broad manufacture dates, a pipe datable only broadly to the 18th century, and so forth. Fortunately, some items (buttons and coins) do have beginning manufacture dates that fall within the 18th century and these, along with similarly datable grave-shaft material, can be used to place some burials more precisely in time.

4.C. Burial stratigraphy and spatial patterning

Superimposed burials provide an opportunity to sequence interments from earlier to later, even without being able to date them. All burials that overlapped with others were organized into “series,” arbitrarily numbered groups where stratigraphic relationships could be examined. It is important to emphasize that the series we used for relative sequencing do *not* necessarily or even typically reflect *clustered* or *related* burials, which terms refer to burials that may have been intentionally placed in relation to each other. Many of the series included only a pair of overlapping burials, while a few, in the more densely occupied areas of the cemetery, comprised 20 or more graves. The term “isolates” was used to refer to burials that do not overlap with any others, and again, it is emphasized that a stratigraphically isolated burial was not necessarily spatially or socially isolated from others.

The relative positioning of overlapping burials within a series was reconstructed through analysis of field notes, drawings, site maps, and photographs. All recorded depths had to be converted to absolute elevations. Sometimes the order of interment was apparent upon first examination, especially when just two or three were involved, but in the more complex cases the sequence often had to be derived from multiple lines of evidence. While individual burial drawings are in the main excellent, stratigraphic relationships were only occasionally shown, with each burial recorded as though in isolation. A series of field maps, created during the excavations by tracing or transposing burial or coffin

drawings cumulatively onto larger sheets (at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot), was very helpful but not always conclusive as to the sequence of superposition of the most crowded burials. There are also a few maps drawn prior to excavation of graves within excavation shelters, which sometimes clarify relationships, but these exist only for a few locations. The field notes, which were recorded burial by burial, rarely address directly issues of stratigraphic relationships to other burials, and the descriptions of grave-shaft and overlying, underlying, and surrounding soils are somewhat sporadic. As is always the case when analyzing a site subsequent to the actual fieldwork, much time and effort had to be spent reconstructing the archaeological excavation before the virtual reconstruction of the original site could begin.

Reconstructed stratigraphic relationships were diagrammed for ease of analysis. Examples are reproduced in Figure 4.4, and the full set will be found in Appendix I, along with a list of the burials in each series analyzed. Prose descriptions of the stratigraphic relationships of each burial are in Volumes 2 and 3 of this report.

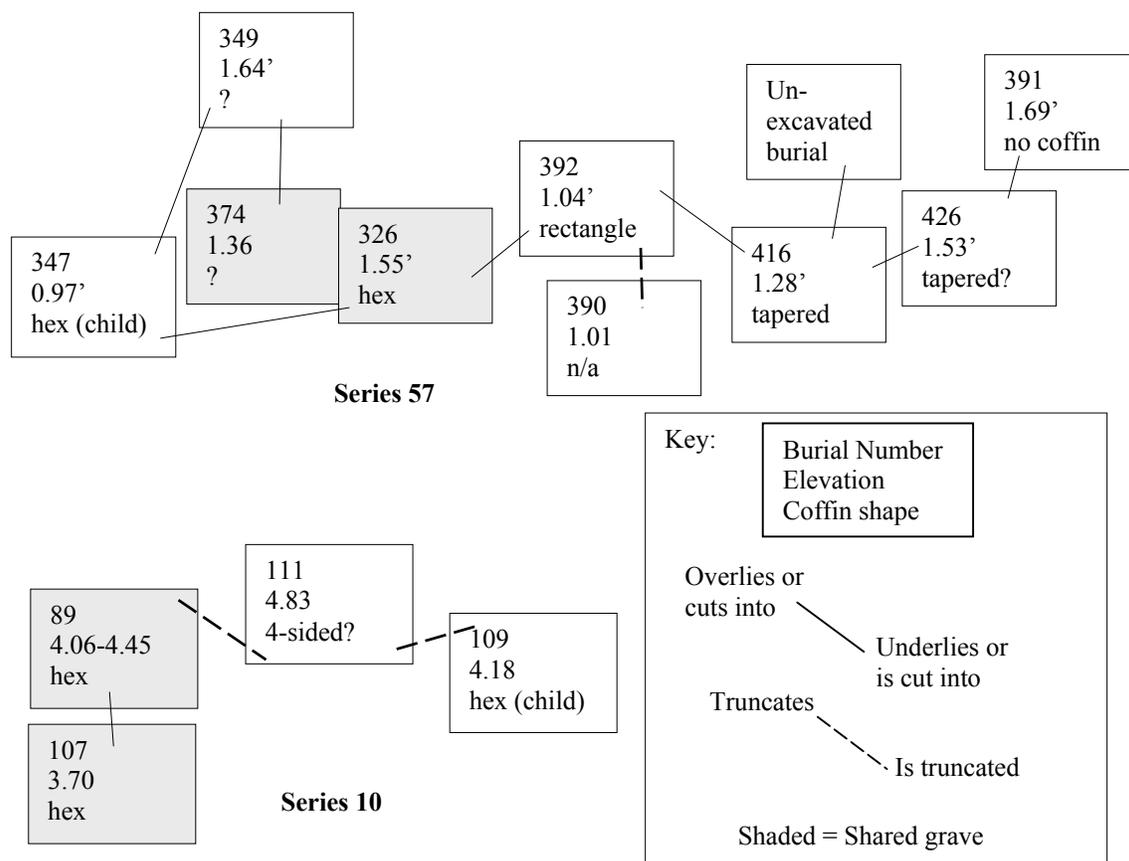


Figure 4.4. Examples of diagrammed stratigraphic series. The positions of the rectangles represent the relative positions of the burials (to the extent possible in a two-dimensional diagram).

The “earlier than” / “later than” order of interment arrived at through the stratigraphic and site map analysis does not, of course, provide information as to the span of time involved overall or the intervening time between individual burials, much less as to the absolute date of any interment. Inferences have been made for specific types of stratigraphic sequences, however: In cases where a later burial actually *truncated* an earlier one -- that is, destroyed all or part of the prior burial -- it is hypothesized that a relatively lengthy period intervened between the two. This is predicated on the assumption that the later interment in these cases showed a disregard for the earlier, either because the gravediggers had no knowledge of, or no concern for the preservation of, an existing grave. The truncation of one grave by another is not, in fact, all that common at the African Burial Ground, even though there are locations where burials are quite densely crowded.

The task of placing burials in chronological groups is complicated by a practice we believe to have been common at the cemetery, the placement of young children within, above, or in close proximity to adult graves (see discussion in Chapter 5). We recognize our own bias toward assigning child burials to the same temporal groups as the adults, but do not have a means to straightforwardly correct it.⁴

There is one group of cases where the elapsed time between a later disturbance and a burial or between superimposed burials can be better estimated. The degree of disarticulation of the disturbed burial can suggest how long it was in the ground before it was displaced. Sometimes it is clear that the remains were fully disarticulated prior to the disturbance, since bones were either placed in a neat pile or scattered. In these cases the minimum length of time necessary for full fleshy decomposition provides a minimum interval between events. This interval may have been approximately 2-3 years, though coffins, shrouds, and clothing may have reduced the decomposition rate somewhat (Rodriguez 1997:460-61).⁵

In other cases, the span of time encompassed by a stratigraphic sequence can be deduced only with reference to other factors, such as spatial considerations (e.g., apparent groups or rows) or to independent variables such as TPQs or relationships to other site features. Likewise, isolates can be temporally related to other burials only by reference to such variables. In this type of analysis, the danger of tautology must always be avoided: another variable can provide a hypothesized date range for one or more of the members of a stratigraphic series, but *only* if stratigraphic position has not been used to assign a date range to the variable. However, if stratigraphic position tends to co-vary with another trait, such as coffin shape or the nature of grave fill contents, then chronological distinctions are strengthened, and periodization becomes more feasible.

⁴ This bias is apparent when we look at the child/adult ratios for each temporal group (see Chapter 5).

⁵ Sometimes a later action displaced bones from an earlier burial, but *some* of the earlier bones remained articulated. Research at ossuary sites has led to the development of a sequence for skeletal element disarticulation, which helps us to recognize that remains that were displaced from original burial position might display partial articulation (Ubalaker 1974:28-31).

One factor that must be examined in relation to stratigraphy and especially to the assignment of isolates to strata is elevation. Site-wide, absolute elevation itself cannot be used to determine earlier and later burials. This is because the original ground surface of the cemetery sloped downward from the west, near Broadway, to the east, near the Collect Pond (see Chapter 3). Thus, most of the westernmost burials were originally at higher elevations than those in the eastern part of the site. It is only within limited areas that absolute elevation might be a clue as to sequence of interment. However, even this would presume that the ground surface in any given location remained constant over the life of the cemetery. Such a presumption is untenable. In fact, there is evidence that the ground surface in some places eroded away in the interval between interments, while in others it was raised. Given the uneven terrain, it is likely that the hillsides eroded and the flatter areas came to be covered over as the seasons passed. Hence the situation, not infrequent, where a burial has clearly been damaged by a later burial, but the earlier of the two has a higher cranial elevation than the later (for example, Series 10, in Figure 4.4). This means that an isolate burial cannot simply be placed temporally with others nearby that have similar elevations. Instead, its alignment, soil description, grave fill contents, and any other available evidence must be considered. In many cases, it was necessary to simply leave isolates in the default “Middle” Group (see below).

It should also be remembered that the depth below the ground surface of even the uppermost burials cannot be reconstructed in most cases. This is because a ground surface was intact in only one small area of the site, the western end of Republican Alley (see Chapter 3). Thus the depths of grave shafts relative to shifting surfaces cannot be used to gauge the likelihood that interments were from the same period. Where the ground surface was recorded, grave shafts apparently were no more than 2½ to 3 feet deep. It may be possible through further analysis, using this depth as the norm, to postulate changes in the ground surface at various locations in the cemetery where burials overlap.

The inability to use absolute elevation to reconstruct relative chronology does not mean that the use of the higher part of the cemetery and the use of the lower part coincided. In fact one or the other area may have been used first, and there are good historical arguments for either scenario. One or more other time-sensitive variables would have to co-vary with east-west coordinates in order to begin to test which area saw earliest use. No such covariance has been discerned in the data thus far.

4.D. Coffin shape

The African Burial Ground sample includes four-sided tapering, rectangular, and shouldered or “hexagonal”⁶ shaped coffins (Figure 4.5), and from the outset we considered the possibility that this variability is temporally diagnostic. The documentary and material record for change over time in coffin shape is confusing, but *in general*, a change from four-sided, tapering coffins to the shouldered variety is supported (Coffins

⁶ The term “hexagonal” was used throughout the analysis and in the database, but is perhaps technically a misnomer. The angled shoulder of these coffins was formed by bending a single side board, and can be slight or pronounced. See Chapter 10.

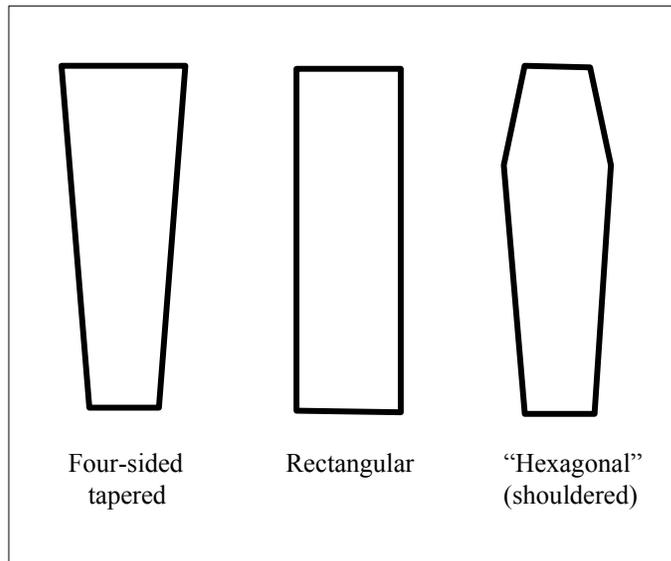


Figure 4.5.
Coffin shapes represented at the
African Burial Ground.

are discussed in Chapter 10). The preponderance of stratigraphic relationships at the African Burial Ground point to this sequence. The issue is complicated due to the large number of infants and young children interred here. It is very clear on the basis of burial stratigraphy and other dating factors that many very small coffins were made in the four-sided shapes (tapered or rectangular) throughout the period of the cemetery. Only the “full-sized” coffins were therefore considered candidates for temporal sequencing.

Four-sided, adult coffins at the cemetery were of two types, those that tapered toward the foot and those that were rectangular. Initially, both were grouped together as possible indicators of early burials. Subsequently, stratigraphic and artifact analysis produced contradictory evidence for this, and the rectangular-shaped, full-sized coffin, found in any case in only two burials, is now considered to be non-diagnostic.

There is evidence that four-sided-tapered and hexagonal coffins overlapped in time at the African Burial Ground. However, the tapered coffin type appears to provide the greatest degree of confidence for generating an early analytical cohort (see discussion of the Early Group in section 4.E).

Attempted seriation of coffins based on other characteristics, such as size, material, and construction details, has not been fruitful. None of the basic parameters of variation other than shape appear to be time-sensitive. One *possible* instance of change over time is decreased use of spruce, but the sample number is too small for confidence. See Chapter 10 for detailed data on African Burial Ground coffins.

4.E. Results of analysis: the chronological grouping of burials

The assignment of burials to temporal groups is presented in Figure 4.6 and in tables and figures at the beginning of Chapters 6 through 9. A complete list of burials that includes temporal assignments is in Appendix C; the burial descriptions in Volumes 2 and 3 include the temporal group assignments and the supporting evidence where appropriate. The Early Group and the Late Group are derived based on the analyses described in Sections 4.A through 4.D. The Middle Groups comprise all remaining burials, the majority of those excavated at the African Burial Ground, and within it a Late-Middle component is identified based on stratigraphic relationships and in some cases artifact dating. It is likely the Middle Group overlaps at one end with Early burials, and that the Late-Middle Group overlaps in time with the Late Group. It is emphasized that no burials are dated absolutely. In the following discussion we first address the Late and Early Groups, which are most clearly defined.

The Late Group

The Late Group (114 graves) was first postulated on the basis of burials' spatial and stratigraphic relationship to the post-hole alignment that is believed to represent the Calk Hook Farm/Van Borsum patent boundary. Eight of the northern-area burials have *termini post quem* of circa 1760 (creamware in the shafts), while two have TPQs of circa 1780 (pearlware in the shafts; see Table 4.1). It is posited on the basis of this and spatial patterning (i.e., relatively sparse burial distribution), that this area was in use relatively late in the life of the cemetery. But was it a 30-40-year span encompassing the Teller and post-war periods, or was it a shorter span limited to one or the other period?

Possible evidence for the use of the northern area during the Teller phase, 1765 to 1776, includes the presence here of most of the coffin-less burials. Those who buried their dead north of the fence may have included people unable to pay the "fee" that Teller was supposedly charging, who by extension also may have been unable to afford coffins.

Three kinds of evidence argue against the correlation of burial-without-coffin and Teller's imposed fees. For one thing, there are coffin-less burials in which the deceased were interred with objects of value, suggesting that those without coffins were *not* necessarily the poorest of the cemetery's population. Forty-three burials had items of clothing or jewelry (discounting problematic associations as discussed in Chapters 12 and 13) -- five of these were among the thirty-two coffin-less burials. These five include two with enameled cuff link or button faces and one with a set of matching gilt cuff links. It does not appear likely that extreme impoverishment correlates directly with coffin-less burial, though we note the small numbers in the sample. Second, in at least one case there an apparent row of coffin-less burials (Burials 223, 150, 199 and 211, approximately at grid line 75E) that *spans* the fence post alignment, suggesting that this type of interment was being conducted at a time when the fence was not standing (and thus no fees were being extorted by Teller). Finally, there is the simple fact that *throughout* the cemetery's use most African New Yorkers buried there were very poor, yet their survivors almost always managed to provide a coffin, either through the



Figure 4.6.a
Western Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

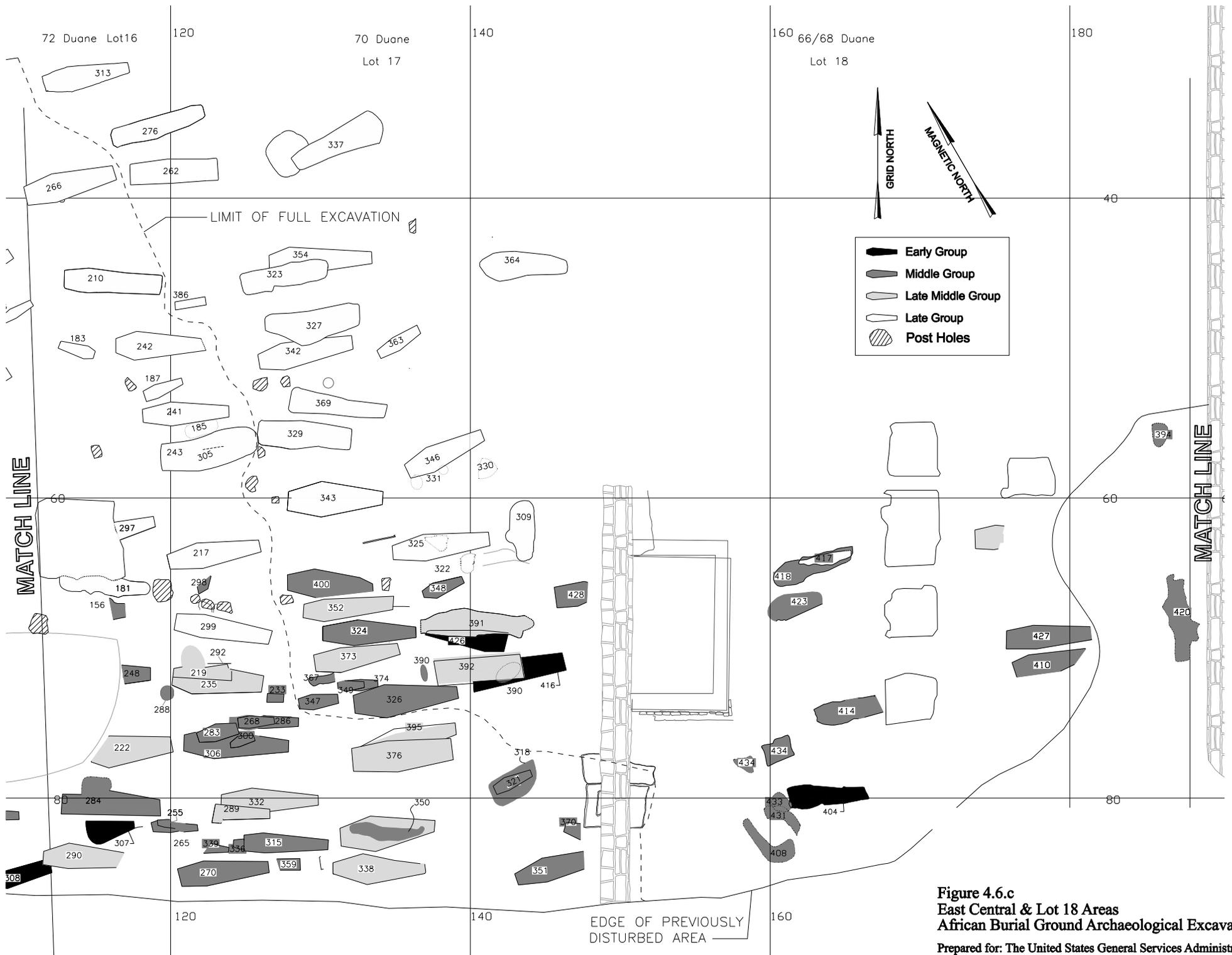


Figure 4.6.c
East Central & Lot 18 Areas
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

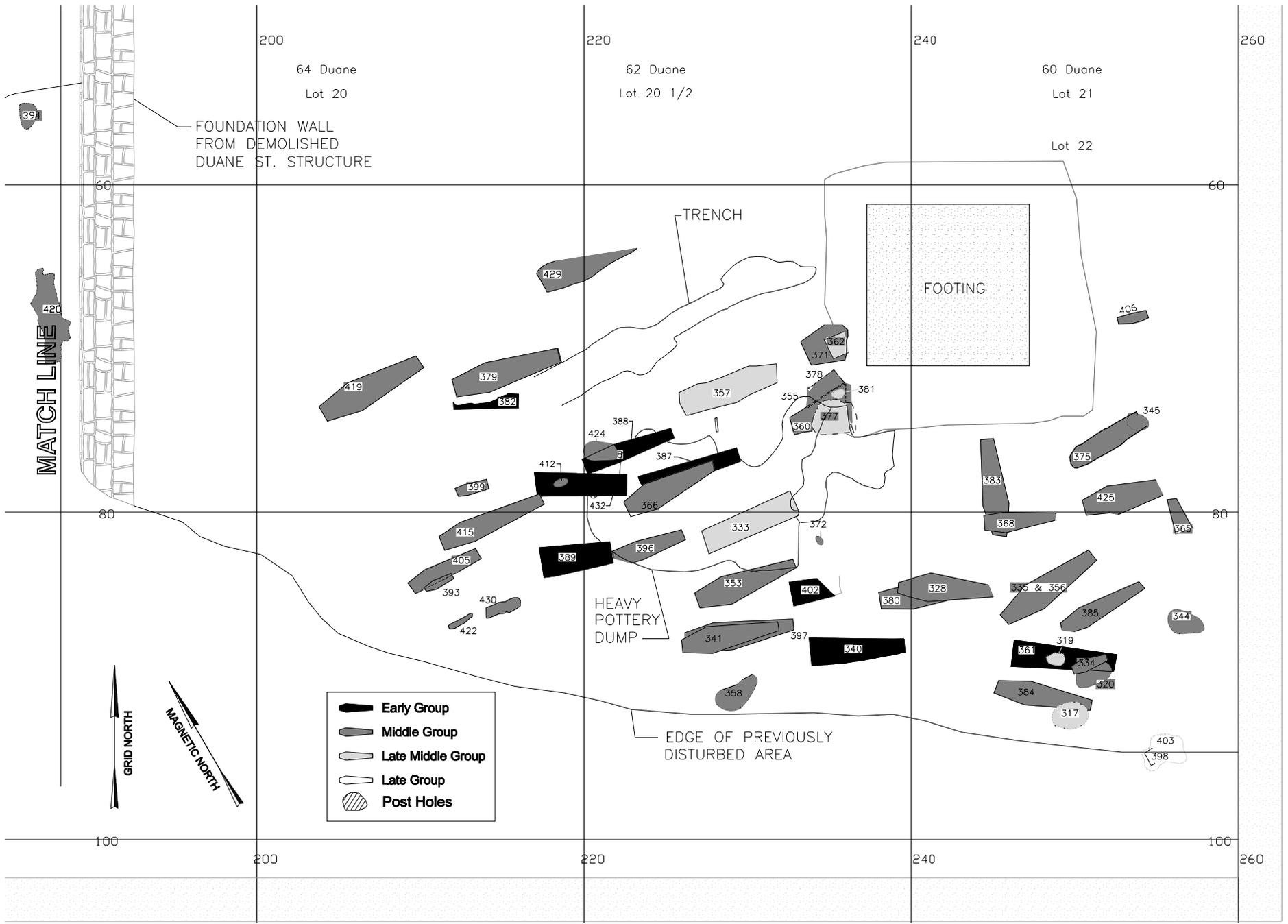


Figure 4.6.d
Eastern Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

household head (the “master” in the parlance of the time) or through contributions from kin and community. The provision of a coffin, we argue, was likely considered one of the very basic components of a proper burial (see Chapters 5 and 10). Why then, would poverty be marked by lack of coffins only during the Teller phase? It is possible, and perhaps likely, that the frequency of coffin-less interments north of the fence line has an explanation other than a purely economic one.

There is some circumstantial historical evidence for the use of the northern area only *after* 1776. Why, we might ask, would the Rutgers/Barclay family (proprietors of the Calk Hook land) allow burials on their property in the 1760s? They had leased out some of this property (apparently to potteries and a potash manufacturer), and structures stood on it adjacent to the burial ground. During the occupation, however, property boundaries were more easily ignored, and proprietors were subject to encroachment with little legal recourse. With the destruction of the fence, the Calk Hook property may have lain open for usurpation by cemetery users. It is possible, too, that British use of the southern part of the cemetery for barracks and other military uses, and for burying its army dead and prisoners (see Chapter 2), effectively “pushed” the African Burial Ground northward. The animal bone dump identified north of the fence also may be evidence that this part of the Calk Hook property was encroached upon during and after the war.

In summary, the burials to the north of the alignment of the patent boundary are assigned to the late cohort within the cemetery population. Though the actual time period – after circa 1765 or after 1776 – is not certain, though there are historical reasons to select the later date. In brief, the presence of most coffin-less burials to the north of the fence line can be linked to its use during the British occupation of New York. Demographic evidence supports this dating, a point taken up in Chapter 9.

In three cases, northern burials were truncated by other interments, and the bones were re-deposited in such a way as to prove that they were completely de-fleshed by the time of the second interment. These cases are Burials 76, 185 and 193. We do not know the precise length of time it would have taken for the bones to be completely disarticulated. All three were without coffins, which may have led to quicker decomposition.⁷ Assuming the northern area became available for burials in 1776 and was in use through at least 1787, the interval between superimposed burials could have been a maximum of 11 years. Decomposition may have taken only two to three years, so the assignment of even the disturbed burials to the late group is justified.

It is assumed that burials continued south of the fence line during the time the northern area was used, as there is no evidence (archaeological or historical) to indicate they did not. Those burials to the south of the fence line that have been placed in the Late Group

⁷ Burial 185 definitely was interred after the period of animal bone dumping, and there was much animal bone in its shaft fill. The waste material in the soil may have affected taphonomic conditions for Burial 185, causing an even speedier decomposition of the flesh. The presence of tanning materials, such as leather scrap and tree bark, would have increased preservation of flesh, but there is no reason to believe such materials accompanied the animal bones to the dump (Rodriguez 1997:463).

have been assigned on the basis of stratigraphy, spatial alignment, and artifacts. There are a number of burials, notably toward the western end of the excavated site, whose elevations are considerably higher than others in the immediate area. It appears the area saw a last phase of use after earlier graves had been covered over, possibly due to development on Broadway.

As noted, there are some cases where a row of interments appears to span the line of fence posts. Some such rows include burials whose grave shafts cut into postholes and thus clearly post-date at least one fence. Rows, of course, may include both pre-and post-fence burials, but where other factors suggest a burial is relatively late (e.g., it overlay several others), its location in a row with northern ones can support the dating.

The Early Group

We have seen that artifacts can provide dates after which burials must have taken place, but the lack of datable artifacts in most burials makes it impossible to know the earliest possible dates of interment. Analysis of coffin shape, stratigraphy, and relationships to the pottery dump, however, has led to the generation of an early grouping of burials comprising up to 51 graves.

The hypothesis that four-sided coffins at the African Burial Ground were earlier than hexagonal coffins (see Chapter 10) was tested by examining stratigraphic relationships. In 26 cases, graves containing four-sided, adult coffins were overlain or cut into by other graves, and in 10 cases, four-sided coffins were actually thoroughly truncated by later graves. Five burials with four-sided coffins were isolates, and one was an isolate except for a co-interred child burial. Only three graves with four-sided coffins, Burials 207, 392, and possibly 388, overlay other burials.

Burial 207, an adult grave with a tapered coffin, overlay numerous child and infant burials. Cleaning of the cranium of Burial 207 in the laboratory yielded a tiny piece of hand-painted pearlware, datable to the 1780s or later. Based on this sherd, which probably was in the soil matrix at the time of the original interment, Burial 207 appears to be a late interment.⁸

The burials with four-sided coffins were also examined in relation to other site features. *None* appear north of the fence line. Burials with four-sided coffins in the area of the stoneware dump were next examined. The grave shaft of one with a rectangular coffin, Burial 333, contained massive amounts of stoneware waste (from Feature 139) and thus must be placed later in time than the kiln dumping. It also contained a piece of creamware (dating it to after circa 1760). However, other four-sided burials within the

⁸ For purposes of the chronological analyses in Chapters 6 through 9, Burial 207 has been placed with the later group. There were disturbances in the immediate area, including above this burial. Because the sherd of pearlware was actually in the cranium, however, it seems prudent to assume it was not intrusive. If we were to consider it as intrusive and place Burial 207 with the Early Group, then all of the underlying subadult interments would also need to be assigned to the early group. This re-assignment would substantively alter the demographics of the earlier group. See Chapter 6 for further discussion.

vicinity of the dense kiln dump contained only small quantities of ceramic waste material relative to the midden density, and no other temporally diagnostic artifacts. These included Burial 340, an isolate burial with a tapered coffin, which had no stoneware in its grave shaft. The grave was located just to the south of Feature 139, and therefore outside the concentrated dump. However, it seems highly unlikely that *no* sherds would have found their way into the grave shaft if the dump was already in place here when the woman in Burial 340 was interred (shafts of other burials near the edges of the dump contained at least some stone wares).

Burials 387 and 389 had four-sided, tapered coffins and were located beneath burials with hexagonal coffins. They contained some ceramic waste, but no where near as much as their respective overlying burials or the midden itself. The field records are not specific as to where sherds were recovered within a given grave, but there is a possibility that the ceramics in these two burials came from the intruding later graves. Yet another grave with a four-sided, tapered coffin, Burial 388, contained much more kiln waste (over 400 pieces) than did Burials 387 and 389. Though Burial 388 did *not* have a later burial intruding into it, the area surrounding and overlying the grave was disturbed, so the possibility that the ceramics were intrusive cannot be ruled out. If the ceramics in their shafts were not intrusive, these burials suggest that the midden was formed during a time when four-sided, tapered coffins were still in use. In this case the lowered frequencies of stonewares in these graves may be due to the fact that their grave shafts were truncated and thus the sheer amount of fill sampled was greatly reduced, and/or to the fact that they are at the edges of the dense midden feature.

Burial 333 was distinct from all of the other burials with four-sided coffins in the southeast area of the site due to the huge amount of stoneware waste material in its shaft fill (over 3000 pieces) and the *terminus post quem* of circa 1760. Because of this, we considered whether rectangular coffins should be grouped together with tapered ones or considered separately. One other clearly rectangular adult coffin, that of Burial 392, appears to be a later burial, and in fact overlay a burial with a tapering coffin. Burial 432, also located in the southeastern part of the excavation (not far from Burial 333), also had an apparently rectangular coffin. Unfortunately, it was not fully excavated and there is no record of material from the grave with which to independently date the burial. Also, since excavation was incomplete, the coffin shape should be considered tentative.

If we tentatively identify tapering coffins as early, it does not follow that graves with six-sided coffins are all later than all of those with tapered coffins. It seems likely that for a number of years both styles would have been in use. Adjacent to the area of the dense stoneware midden there was one intact burial (Burial 384) with a hexagonal coffin, but *no stoneware at all* in the grave shaft. This burial may have pre-dated the midden, since otherwise we would expect at least a few sherds to have found their way into the grave shaft. In the excavated cemetery as a whole, there were 94 burials with hexagonal coffins where no stoneware was recovered. All of these except Burial 384, however, were located far away from the midden (the closest was Burial 351, about 80 feet to the west), and therefore the absence of the waste material cannot be used to place them earlier in time than the dump. The graves with tapered adult coffins that contained stoneware in

their shafts included the burials mentioned above that were located immediately adjacent to the midden and had later intrusions, as well as two that were far from the midden, Burials 404 and 416, both also disturbed by later interments.

Because there are tapering coffins in graves with stoneware, and hexagonal coffins in graves without it, we had to make a decision as to what to use as a temporal diagnostic. We can use *either* coffin shape, *or* the absence of stoneware, *or* a combination of both factors to identify the earliest graves. The preponderance of spatial and stratigraphic evidence supports the general use of four-sided, tapering adult coffins to identify early burials (questionable assignments are indicated in Chapter 6 below). For the analysis in this report hexagonal coffins are placed in the Middle Group or later. Burial 384 probably pre-dated the midden but is still placed in the Middle Group – it is probably among the earliest burials in that cohort, however, and it may in fact be contemporary with adjacent Early Group Burial 361.

In some cases, once the early adult burials were identified, other burials could be grouped with them. Child Burials 121 and 226, for example, were co-interred with Burials 202 and 221 respectively, and therefore have been placed in the early group (see Chapter 6). In other cases stratigraphic relationships point to early burials even where coffin shape is not determinable due to poor preservation.

The absolute dating of the early burial cohort is problematic. There is no firm date for the stylistic change to hexagonal coffins. The general absence of pottery waste may provide a *terminus ante quem* for the burials (a date before which they must have been interred), but as noted above we do not know when dumping began. Assuming that the potteries were in operation by 1728, and that they began dumping their waste on the burial ground shortly thereafter (though this cannot be verified), early-group burials are probably pre-1730 and/or from the very early period of the potteries.

Early burials are located in every area of the site except north of the fence line. It is therefore posited that there was no sequence of use from east to west (or vice versa) within the portion of the African Burial Ground excavated archaeologically. While this project appears to have exposed the latest portion of the historic cemetery, it may not have exposed the earliest area used. There is no way to date the earliest of the early burials excavated, though a general assignment to the early decades of the 18th century is safe, with the understanding that earlier interments certainly may be included. In terms of datable material, only a few sherds of imported ceramics (delft and Chinese porcelain, providing TPQs in the mid-17th century) were found in two of the Early Group burials; the remaining burials contained no datable items other than the local stoneware noted above.

The Middle and Late-Middle Groups

Having identified an early burial cohort on the basis of coffin shape, grave-shaft material, and stratigraphy, and a late cohort on the basis of artifact dating, site location (north of the fence), and stratigraphic/spatial relationships, the majority of burials (259 graves) was

assigned by default to a main, middle temporal group. These burials were then checked for *termini post quem* and analyzed stratigraphically, to pull out possible earlier and later subsets. In the main, an adult burial was assigned to the Late-Middle Group if it overlay others and especially if it truncated another burial. Child burials, more often than not found overlying adults, were considered for inclusion in the Late-Middle Group if they truncated underlying interments, or if they appeared to be associated with later adult burials, or, occasionally, if they were thought to be later based on overall stratigraphy. The stratigraphic series charts were used in assigning relative chronological placements. Isolate Middle Group burials were more difficult to assign, and were placed in the Late-Middle Group only if they appeared to be spatially related to others (for example were aligned adjacent and parallel) or had artifacts with beginning manufacture dates later than circa 1760. There are 60 graves that have been assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

It is emphasized that the Middle and Late-Middle cohorts of burials are, as groups, more strictly relative than are the early and late cohorts. There may be much overlap between the Middle and Late-Middle Groups in the dates of individual interments. Likewise, Late-Middle Group burials may overlap in time with the Late Group. Though some variables, such as orientation, and some artifact distributions show a distinction or perhaps a trend occurring between the two groupings, none is strong enough to be used as a temporal indicator.

For some purposes, the Middle Group can be seen as the “main” group rather than as a chronological cohort. Since it is presumed to include the broadest temporal span of interments (with early and late graves included inadvertently in the absence of temporal evidence) it can serve as a proxy “median” or “average” sample in terms of demography and material culture distribution. Thus, deviations from this average can be discerned and examined.

CHAPTER 5. OVERVIEW OF MORTUARY POPULATION, BURIAL PRACTICES, AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION

Warren R. Perry and Jean Howson

This chapter presents an overview of the archaeological evidence for population, burial practices, and spatial arrangements at the African Burial Ground. After providing a demographic profile of the population whose graves were disinterred, we turn to the overall evidence for burial practices, viewing the evidence from the site as the physical signature of the repeated performance of funerary ritual. Seven material aspects of mortuary practice are examined: coffins, grave orientation, body position, individual/co-interment, burial attire (shrouds, winding sheets, street clothes), adornment and other goods in direct association with the deceased, and grave marking. In subsequent chapters, we will look sequentially at the four temporal groups of burials, noting possible evidence for change over time. As will be seen, however, continuity overshadows change with regard to burial patterns.

5.A. *The mortuary population*

This section contains basic information on the age and sex profile of the mortuary population. Demographic data based on analysis of the skeletal remains are presented in Chapter 7 of the Skeletal Biology Report (Rankin-Hill et al. 2004). Here we provide basic information on the age and sex distribution within the excavated sample as a whole – the same information is presented for burials in each temporal group in Chapters 6 through 9.

Throughout this report, when referring to a specific individual, age is given in terms of an *age range*, from the lowest estimate to the highest estimate. However, there are several other ways to refer to age. There are three *age categories*: “infant” (six months old or younger), “subadult” (under approximately 15 years of age), and “adult” (15 years or older). This tripartite division is used, for example, when distinguishing between those who could be sexed using standard metric parameters (adults) and those who could not (subadults). A *composite “age”* was also derived for each individual, a single number reflecting the statistical age based on numerous parameters measured. For purposes of analysis, this age was used to assign individuals to *age groups*, so that the demographic distribution data can be presented more clearly and so that counts would be sufficient to discern any patterning of traits (such as pathologies). Age groups for subadults are in half-year increments for the first year of life and thereafter in one-year increments, while those for adults are in 5-year increments. Age groups are used in the age and sex distribution graphs here (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) and in Chapters 6 through 9.

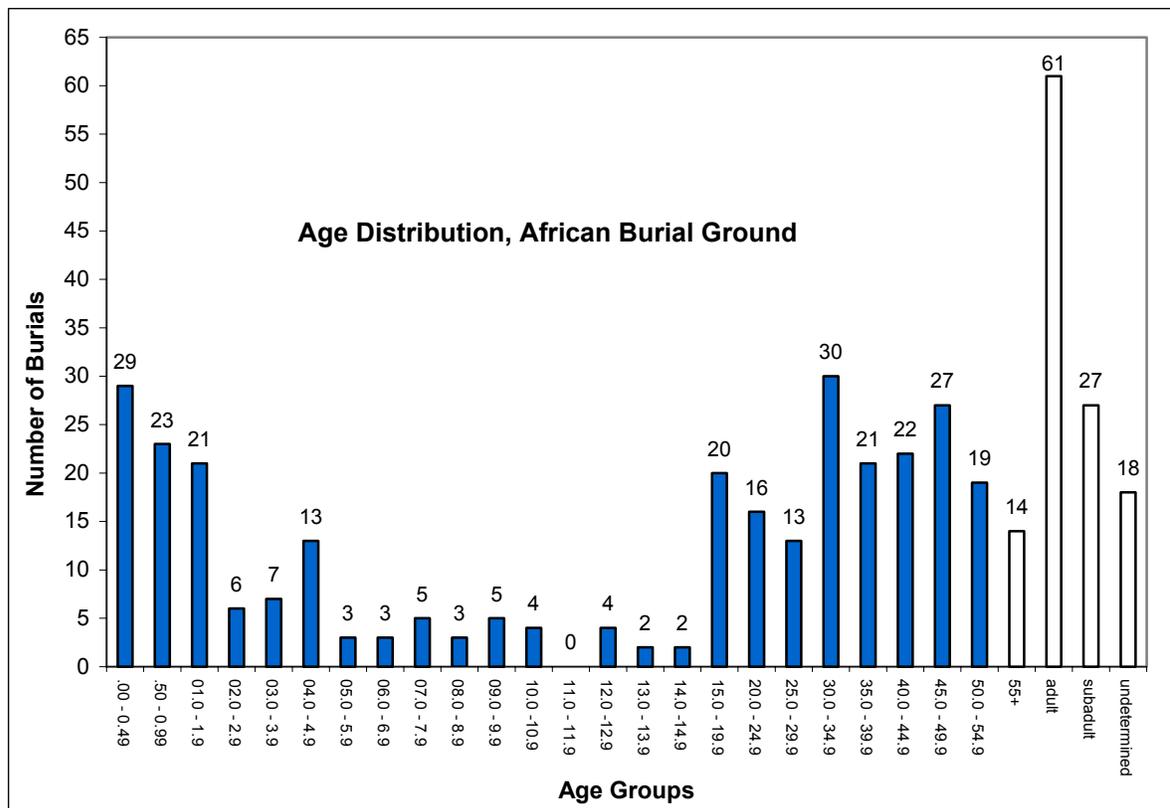


Figure 5.1. Age distribution. The white bars at the right are for individuals for whom a more precise age could not be determined.

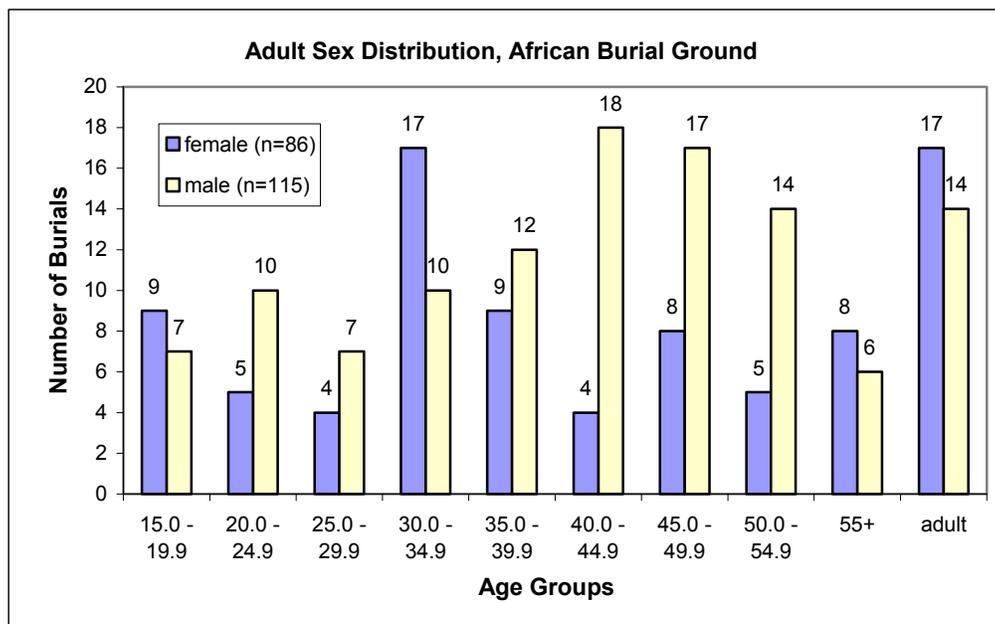


Figure 5.2. Adult sex distribution. The “adults” shown in bars at the right are for individuals identified as adults but for whom age could not be determined.

The individuals interred in the excavated portion of the cemetery represent the entire life cycle (Figure 5.2). Preservation of infants' and children's remains was probably not as good as preservation of adult remains, but the under-15 cohort (n=157) nevertheless represented 39.25% of those for whom at least an *age category* (if not an *age range*) could be determined (n=400). Unlike the burial ground for enslaved workers at Newton Plantation in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:285-87), the young were interred along with the old in New York's African cemetery.

Of "adults" (i.e., those approximately 15 and over) for whom sex could be determined, there were more men than women (Figure 5.2). This demographic may have to do with the area within the historic cemetery that was archaeologically excavated – as will be discussed in Chapter 9, the northernmost portion of the burial ground may have been in use during the British occupation of the city at the time of the Revolution, and it is possible more men than women were buried in that period. Additional discussion of the sex ratio in relation to the mortuary population is in Chapter 13 of the Skeletal Biology Report (Blakey et al. 2004b).

5.B. Burial practices

Figure 5.3 illustrates several of the aspects of burial practice that we discuss. The infant in Burial 226 was interred in its own coffin, but within the grave of Burial 221, a man between the ages of thirty and sixty. The coffins were placed with the heads to the west. The infant wore a strand of fired-glass beads that were probably made in West Africa, and copper-alloy straight pins apparently fastened the winding cloth.

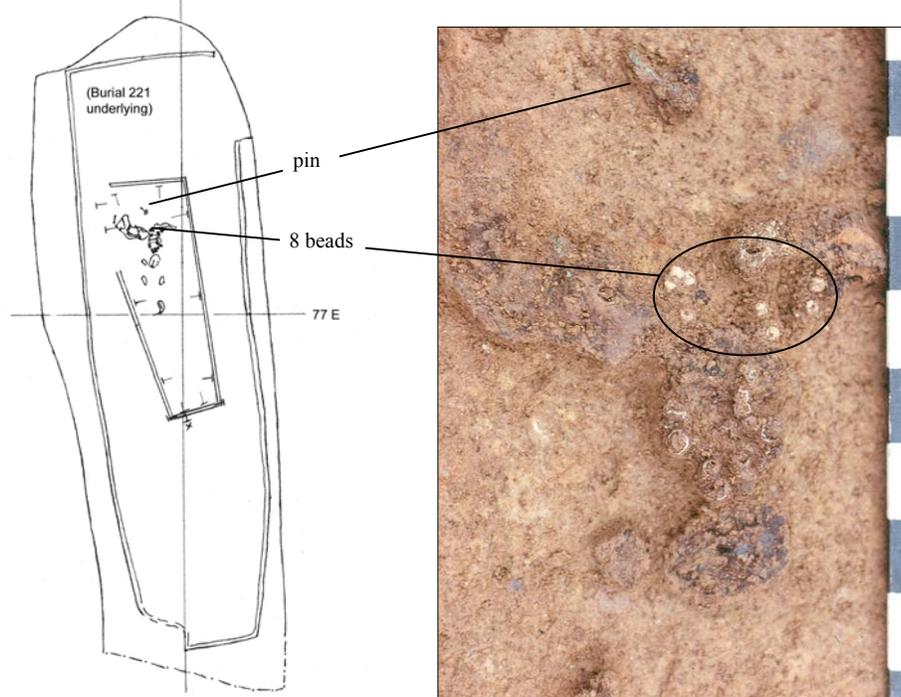


Figure 5.3. *In situ* drawing of Burial 226 atop Burial 221 (left), and photograph (right), showing the scant remains of the infant with a pin and eight fired-glass beads that were worn at the neck. Drawing by M. Schur photograph by Dennis Seckler.

The use of individual coffins, the head-to-west orientation, and shrouding are all typical of burials within the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. On the other hand, the shared grave and the adornment of the child with beads are unusual, for most of those interred here had separate graves and lacked personal possessions or adornment.

An extraordinary degree of homogeneity is found in four parameters of potential variability examined at the African Burial Ground. Coffin use, body orientation with head to west, and extended supine body position characterize the vast majority of interments. The preference for individual interment is also very evident, and even where graves were shared, separate coffins were normally provided. It is also very likely that shrouding was the norm -- though evidence of shroud fastenings in the form of pins was present in only half the graves, those without pins probably were wrapped. Variation emerges in evidence for clothing, personal adornments and other items recovered in direct association with skeletal remains, all of which were few and far between, and their stylistic and material range was limited. It is not possible to determine whether grave markers, which were preserved in very few cases, were typical. The spatial relationships among graves were variable, but not strikingly so, as though a limited syntax guided grave placement.

How do we explain the overall lack of variability at the African Burial Ground? Poverty can account for the limited presence of items placed with the deceased. The sumptuary aspects of funerary rituals and the disposition of the corpse, which might have signaled differing ritual programs and beliefs, were severely constrained. Other mortuary patterns are more surprising. Given the diverse geographical and ethnic origins of black New Yorkers during the 18th century, why do we not see more variation in a range of attributes?

The portion of the cemetery that was excavated may represent only a portion of the community. As we discussed in Chapter 3, we believe the excavations sampled only a small percentage of the graves in the historic cemetery as a whole. The excavated sample might represent only an ethnically or religiously distinct segment of the African population. Since the burials apparently span a long period of time, and since infusions of captive Africans both from the continent and via the Caribbean would have joined New York's black community periodically and sporadically during the 18th century, it seems unlikely that the sample includes only one distinct group. Still, this possibility should be kept in mind, despite the lack of clear material evidence, such as distinct burial positions or grave goods, or a cross or other religious insignia, to point to any specific ethnic or religious group. We also lack documentary evidence. Surviving church records, for example, do not provide an adequate profile of the Christian affiliations of New York's Africans, though to be sure the Dutch Church had black members from at least the 1640s, Elias Neau drew blacks to his school beginning in 1704, and Methodists and Moravians counted black members later in the century. Shipping records, which often cite only "Africa" or "Coast of Africa" as points of origin, are not specific enough to tell us the ethnic groups represented in the town's population (Medford 2004:90-92).

Another possibility is that the physical signature we are examining represents aspects of funerary ritual (i.e., digging of individual graves, coffin use, orientation) that were under the control of some sort of management, in which ethnically distinct types of graves were largely proscribed. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that the cemetery was ever regulated in this way. Gravediggers serving at the African Burial Ground, however, may have influenced the development of a general mortuary program.

Coffin burial

There can be little doubt that black New Yorkers considered coffins as a *sine qua non* of a proper burial. At the African Burial Ground there were 384 graves (some without extant human remains) where the presence or absence of a coffin could be definitively determined. Of these graves, 352 or 91.6% had coffins.¹ Coffins were provided for all age categories (Table 5.1). The use of a coffin was the norm during *most* of the period represented archaeologically, in *most* of the cemetery, as seen on the site plan (see

Figures 1.7 and 4.6). The wood used to make the coffins was generally inexpensive cedar, pine, or fir. Coffin hardware consisted almost exclusively of nails (see Chapter 10).

Coffin	Subadult	Adult	Undetermined	Total
Present	152	186	15	352
Absent	0	31	1	32

Considering the overwhelming frequency of coffins, it is worth exploring the possible circumstances in which coffin-less burials occurred. The adult burials without coffins may reflect the inability of the family of the deceased to afford a coffin or the refusal of an enslaved person's household head to provide it; or may be indicative of burial under some kind of special circumstance; or may represent a distinctive burial custom. The spatial distribution of burials without coffins is very skewed, as discussed in Chapter 4, with most occurring in the north part of the excavated cemetery, and this points to an explanation. We will further analyze the coffin-less burials, which appear to be from the latest period of the cemetery's use, in Chapter 9.

Head-to-west orientation

A burial orientation with the head to the west seems to have been one of the first mortuary practices to become standardized in the African Diaspora (Jamieson 1995:52). The African Burial Ground bears this out. Of 375 burials for which the orientation of the head can be determined (i.e., where enough of the skeletal remains were *in situ* -- in some

¹ At Newton Plantation cemetery in Barbados, another large burial place for enslaved Africans which overlaps in time with the African Burial Ground, only 29 of the 92 excavated burials had coffins, a much lower frequency (31%). Disturbances to the Newton burials made determination of presence/absence difficult, however (Handler and Lange 1978:191, 231-250). Coffin use at Elmina appears to belong to the 19th century (DeCorse 2001:101).

cases, only a small part of the skeleton was preserved, but the position of the bones is sufficient to determine how the body lay), 367 or 97.8% were placed with the head to the west. Figure 5.4 summarizes information about west-headed burials for which the angle of orientation could be measured in degrees west of “grid north.”²

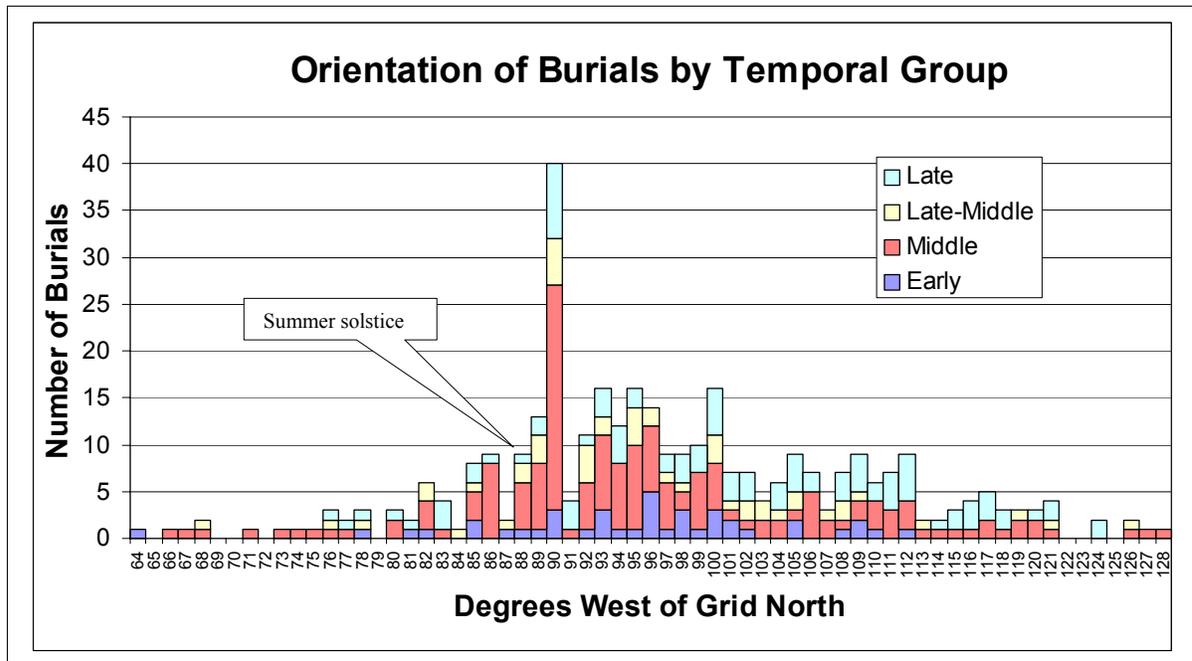


Figure 5.4.
Orientation of west-headed burials at the African Burial Ground.

Although the most frequent head orientation is at 90° west of grid north, head orientation of head-to-west burials ranged from 64° to 128° west of north. Fully two-thirds were angled at greater than 90° west of grid north, a skewing that can be seen on the site maps in Figures 1.7, 4.6, and in Chapters 6 through 9. This southward trend is most marked in the Late Group burials. Other orientations (not graphed) include head-to-east (n = 4), head-to-south (n = 3), and head-to-north (n = 1). These are discussed further here and in Chapters 6 through 9.

How was the orientation determined when a grave shaft was dug and the coffin (or coffin-less body) placed in it? Obviously cemetery users would have known which way was west, but the variability within the west-oriented graves is worth interrogating, especially since the African Burial Ground offers a unique opportunity to examine this

² “Grid north” is based on the grid that was used for the field excavations, which in turn is based on the alignment of the buildings and streets surrounding the archaeological site. It is 30° east of magnetic north. Burials in which the head can be presumed to have been in a westerly direction, but which were too disturbed for exact measurement of the angle, are not included in this table. Comparative archaeological examples are less uniform than the African Burial Ground. The Newton cemetery had 58 burials where orientation could be determined, and of these 38 had the head to the west, or 65%.

kind of patterning. Three possibilities were considered: 1) use of the path of the sun, at sunset in particular; 2) use of landmarks or physical features in the vicinity to orient burials; 3) alignment with neighboring graves.

1) Alignment to the path of the sun

Orientation with reference to sunset would account for variability because the sun sets at different points on the horizon over the course of the year (Figure 5.5 and Table 5.2).³

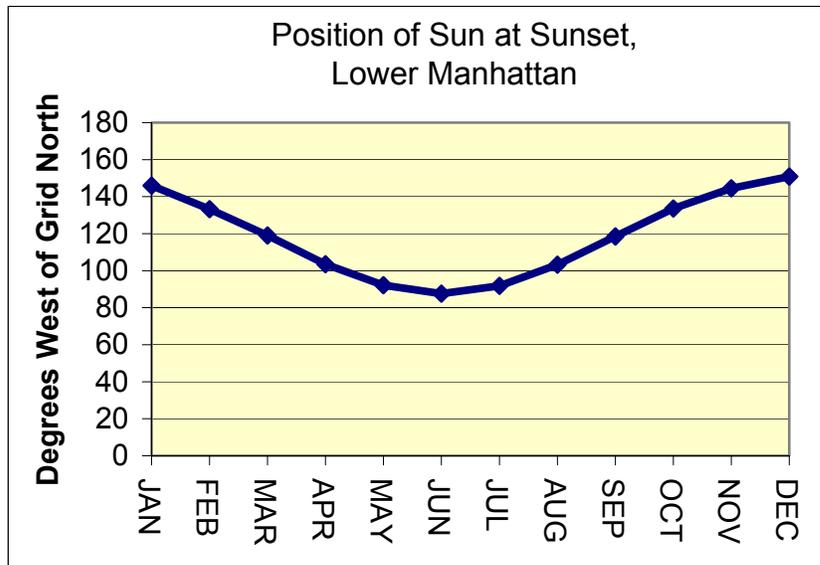


Figure 5.5. Position of the sun on the horizon at sunset in lower Manhattan over the course of a year, relative to the African Burial Ground site grid.

Jan.	145.98
Feb.	133.27
Mar.	119.02
April	103.48
May	92.14
June	87.59
July	91.78
Aug.	103.26
Sept.	118.53
Oct.	133.58
Nov.	144.48
Dec.	150.9
*Degrees west of grid north, using the 21 st of each month	

The 90° west-of-grid-north position, the most frequent orientation, corresponds to the position of sunset at either late May through mid-June or the first part of July. A total of 45.5% of burials are oriented to where the sun would have set from about mid-May to mid-August. The azimuth angle at the summer solstice is 87.59° west of our grid north (i.e., very close to our grid west). The burials oriented with the head further southward (33%) may correspond either to February through April or to August through October (no burials were oriented extremely southward, where sun set from approximately mid-November through early February). The rest of the measurable orientation angles fall northward of where sun set at the summer solstice.

The highest numbers of deaths among Europeans in colonial New York tended to occur during the “disease season” from

³ The source for this information is Gronbeck 2004. We used the 21st of each month to calculate sunset. The azimuth angles over the course of the year would not have changed noticeably over the past 300 years.

August to October. Eighteenth-century burial registers for New York's Reformed Dutch Church and Trinity (Anglican) Church have been tabulated by month as shown in Table 5.3. The peak death months overlap in both samples. The Dutch Church data are probably most reliable due to the large sample size.

Month	n	%	n	%
	Reformed Dutch		Trinity	
Jan	307	6.41	39	8.84
Feb	239	4.99	25	5.67
Mar	296	6.18	35	7.94
Apr	262	5.47	40	9.07
May	282	5.89	32	7.26
Jun	249	5.20	20	4.54
Jul	426	8.90	46	10.43
Aug	751	15.69	49	11.11
Sep	723	15.10	49	11.11
Oct	525	10.96	39	8.84
Nov	378	7.89	40	9.07
Dec	350	7.31	27	6.12
Total	4788	100.00	441	100.00

Klepp (1994:478) has shown, however, that in Philadelphia the pattern of seasonal mortality was quite different for Africans. There, while Europeans had higher death rates in summer and fall just as in New York (due to malarial and diarrheal diseases), for Africans it was late fall and winter that brought the highest mortality, probably due to respiratory ailments. It is possible that death rates for blacks in New York climbed in the winter as they did in Philadelphia.

The orientations at the African Burial Ground, however, suggest fewer burials in winter than in other months, and a high frequency of burials that, if sunset was in fact used as a guide, took place during the early summer. If burials were postponed during the winter, we would expect high frequencies in early spring when the ground first thawed, rather than early summer.

We suggest that if bodies were being oriented with reference to the sun, the actual path of the sun on the day of interment was not always, or even typically, used. The digging of the grave probably did not occur at the interment itself, but earlier in the day, so that where the sun set on the funeral evening would not have dictated the precise orientation. Instead, perhaps a convention based generally on sunset was used for westward orientation. The summer solstice is close to the peak in frequency (90°) seen at the African Burial Ground, and may have been a referent. Burials angled with the head well northward of the solstice (more than 5° off), numbering 22, seem anomalous, but may have been summer interments for which the path of the sun was estimated.

The season of death can also be addressed through pollen data that has been analyzed for a small set of burials, though these data are themselves quite problematic, as discussed in Appendix G. Table 5.4 lists possible season of interment for fourteen graves based on pollen and head orientation. There is broad general agreement in most cases, but for Burials 147, 151, 192, 210, and 415 the two possible lines of evidence appear to diverge.

Burial	Possible season(s) of interment based on pollen analysis	Orientation (degrees west of grid north)	Possible season(s) of interment based on angle of sunset
6	June through August	91	May-July
45	June to September	86	June
115	June to September	94	May-early August
147	Fall	81	June
151	June to September	138	October-November or February-March
155	June through August	92	May
192	May through August or Fall	116	March-April
194	May to September	104	April or August
207	June through August	93	May
210	Fall	88	June
270	June to September	97	April-May or July-August
366	Summer or Fall	118	March or September
392	May through August or June to September	Head to east	
415	Fall	99	late April or early August

2) Alignment to physical features

Variability might be accounted for by use of different physical features for different interments. Such features may have included a fence, a street, the slope of a hill, the palisade, or even visible buildings such as the Almshouse, pottery factory, or dwellings. The spike in orientation at 90° west of our “grid north” at first may seem surprising, since the archaeological site grid can have had no meaning for those using the cemetery. But the site grid corresponds to the street grid, and one street, Broadway, had been laid out during the 18th century. Therefore, it is believed that at least some burials were aligned with reference to the physical landmark of Broadway. That is, in order to place burials on an east-west axis, they were placed perpendicular to Broadway, which was used as a convenient north-south axis. Broadway was laid out northward along the west side of the burial ground in 1723, and was shown on the Lyne – Bradford Plan surveyed in 1730, and on all subsequent maps (see Chapter 2 chronology entries for 1723 and 1730 and Figure 2.6). It is also possible that some of the 90° west-oriented burials, using a similar “short-hand” reckoning of the east-west axis, were aligned with later buildings in the immediate vicinity, which themselves would have been aligned with the street.

The burials with orientations similar to that of the patent boundary line may have been aligned with a fence or a road or path that paralleled it. The number of graves located to the north of the projected fence line that appear to share that boundary’s general southwest-northeast alignment, especially noticeable in the area to the west of the 110 East grid line, is intriguing considering our hypothesis that these graves are post-fence.

Either the fence was in fact still in place when these graves were dug, or the burials were oriented to something else, either the sun (in which case the interments were in Spring or Autumn) or another feature. As noted in Chapter 4, the ditches visible at the westernmost end of the site in Lot 12 also shared a similar southwest-northeast alignment. It is possible they represent the remains of another boundary or roadway leading from Broadway along the south edge of the Calk Hook Farm, and that this was eyed when aligning graves west-to-east. Finally, as we also noted in Chapter 4, these graves may have been arranged in “rows” along the contours of the hillside, and their orientation may simply reflect the direction of the slope.

Burials in the southeast portion of the excavated cemetery also may have been oriented with reference to the town palisade, a prominent feature from 1754 to 1760. The palisade raked southwest to northeast just south of this portion of the ground (see Figure 2.10).

3) Alignment to neighboring graves

Many burials may have been aligned with reference to the nearest known or visible graves. This seems most likely in cases where burials were simultaneous or very close in time and/or were marked and were of individuals for whom some kind of close relationship was being acknowledged or expressed. Well-marked graves may have been visible for many years and thus could be used for orienting nearby burials. Pairs and groups of parallel graves are noted in Chapters 6 through 9.

If several burials, unrelated to each other or to existing clusters of graves, were being conducted at one time (perhaps in the space of one or two days) it is quite possible a gravedigger would have made the graves parallel and near to one another for convenience. This may have occurred at the spring thaw, if burials of those who died in the coldest part of winter had been postponed.⁴ Likewise, deaths during an epidemic may have occasioned the preparation of several graves at once. Noël Hume (1982:36-37) has proposed this as an explanation for precisely parallel adjacent graves at Carter’s Grove, reasoning that if graves were *not* simultaneous there is little likelihood gravediggers would be able to make them so perfectly aligned.

It should also be remembered that if particular individuals had responsibility for digging graves, change in this personnel could account for variation. The possibility of orienting burials to other features or to the sun would still apply, with the reference point selected by the gravedigger. If the sunset was used, variation in types of grave shaft should not correspond to variation in orientation. If a physical feature selected by the gravedigger was used, however, we might expect grave shaft “style” or shape to co-vary with orientation. Analysis of grave shafts by shape has not been attempted but is suggested for future research.

⁴ We thank Robert Paynter for suggesting this as a possible explanation for burials in apparent parallel alignments.

Supine extended body position

Of 269 burials at the African Burial Ground for which the position of the body could be definitively determined, *100% were supine*, i.e., the deceased had been laid on their backs. For 211 of these supine burials, the position of the arms and hands has also been determined (Table 5.5). When excavated, the hands were usually resting on the pelvis or upper legs of the deceased (44%). The next most common arm/hand position was at the

Table 5.5. Arm position	
Arm Position	Number of Burials
resting on pelvis	93
both at sides	48
r. at side, l. on pelvis	9
l. at side, r. on pelvis	8
both flexed at sides	7
crossed right over left	3
crossed left over right	6
l. flexed, r. at side	1
r. flexed, l. at side	1
right at side*	7
left at side*	4
right flexed*	3
left flexed*	4
left on pelvis*	2
over head	1
crossed over chest	1
other**	7
indeterminate	6
*other arm indeterminate	
**flexed and lying across the body in various positions	

sides (22.7%), though in some of these burials the person may have been placed with the hands resting on the pelvis, and they later fell to the sides. Arm positions in general were consistent with what would be expected for a wrapped/shrouded corpse (see below).

Not surprisingly, leg position is much less variable. In nearly all cases, the legs were extended straight down from the hips. In two cases, the ankles were crossed, and in a few burials one or both legs were slightly bent at the knee. These individuals may have been laid in the coffin with bent legs. Alternatively, the shifting of the coffin during interment may have caused the bending.

Data on head position has been collected, but is not believed to be diagnostic, because given the supine position of the body the head would have rolled to one side or the other, back or forward, during interment or decomposition.

The supine extended body position is so uniform at the African Burial Ground as to constitute, along with coffin burial and orientation, part of an accepted mortuary program. This position was

typical of European Christian burial, but supine extended burial was just one of a wide range of positions used in African societies from which captives were taken (Handler and Lange 1978:198, 318 n. 28). Other Diaspora examples, however, show a similar preference for the supine extended position.

Shrouding

Cloth was seldom recovered at the African Burial Ground, and fragments were preserved only when in association with metal artifacts. In the absence of cloth or any evidence for clothing, shrouding or clothes without durable fasteners may be inferred. Small copper alloy straight pins with wire-wound heads were observed in and/or recovered from 210 burials, representing approximately 65% of those burials that appeared to have adequate

preservation for pins to have survived (n=325).⁵ This may be an under-representation of the total number of burials that originally contained pins, because where preservation was especially poor or the burial was disturbed, these fragile items may have been lost. Pins may have been used to fasten cloth in which the deceased was wrapped or partially wrapped, but it should be remembered that they might also represent clothing fasteners, especially for women. In most cases, young children and infants appear to have been more fully wrapped, while many adults had pins on the cranium only. Pins are present in all age groups, but they were observed in a higher percentage of children's graves than adults. Pins and shrouding are discussed further in Chapter 11.

Shrouding was documented at Elmina prior to the introduction of coffin burial in the 19th century (DeCorse 1992:183), but is not in evidence at the Newton Plantation cemetery in Barbados. Handler and Lange hypothesize that most enslaved Africans were buried clothed (1978:185), though shroud pins or winding cloth may not have survived to enter the archaeological record.

Individual interment, shared and clustered graves

The overarching mortuary program as performed at the cemetery called for individual interment. Shared graves are exceptional, though they appear in all temporal groups. By shared, we mean burial *in the same grave* (see Figure 5.3), rather than burial in close proximity. There were 26 shared or possible shared graves. In some of these cases, the individuals were apparently interred at the same time. In other cases there may have been an interval after which a second burial was placed in a grave shaft already in use. Family relationships can only be hypothesized at this point, though future DNA analysis may confirm consanguinity in some cases. A mother-child relationship can be assumed with some confidence in the cases of Burials 335 and 356, where the woman cradled the newborn in her arm and Burials 12 and 14, the infant had been placed on the woman's torso. In other cases we are reluctant to assume parent/child relationships, since other types of relatives may have been seen as appropriate to share the grave.

The shared or possibly shared graves are listed in Table 5.6. Most involve infants or children buried together (n=11) or with an adult (n=12 or 13). In many other cases, we believe individuals were placed deliberately in relation to each other though not in the same grave. Among these, one pattern is of infants and young children being placed above or immediately adjacent to the graves of adults (see site maps, Chapters 6 through 8, and Volumes 2 and 3). Examples of these grave clusters are Burials 29, 46 and 22; Burials 67 and 60; Burials 96/94 (a shared grave), 42, 61 and 64; Burials 101 and 108; Burials 280, 295, 215, 229, 239, and 246; and Burials 300, 306, and 283.

⁵ All burials were assessed for the likelihood of artifact preservation (see Chapter 3). The burials without pins from which the cranium was missing are not included in the total burial count here, since pins are most often found on the cranium. However, two burials without crania that did contain pins, Burials 67 and 81, are counted in the total. Six severely disturbed sets of remains had pins or pin staining: Burials 20, 131, 175, 189, 303, and 319; these are included in the total. However, two burials for which there was no way to assign pin fragments to an individual due to redeposition, Burials 398 and 403, are excluded from the count.

In a number of cases, an infant was found interred at the foot end of an adult's grave, overlapping and/or offset to one side, its coffin parallel. These burials, representing Early, Middle, and Late Middle temporal groups, include Burials 46 and 22; Burials 67 and 60; Burials 69 and 53; Burials 90, 79, and 8; Burials 101 and 108; Burials 159, 161 and 206; Burial 177 and 128; and Burials 250 and 249.⁶ The adults in this type of burial included three men, two women, one probable woman, and two whose sex could not be determined; they were all approximately thirty years old or older.

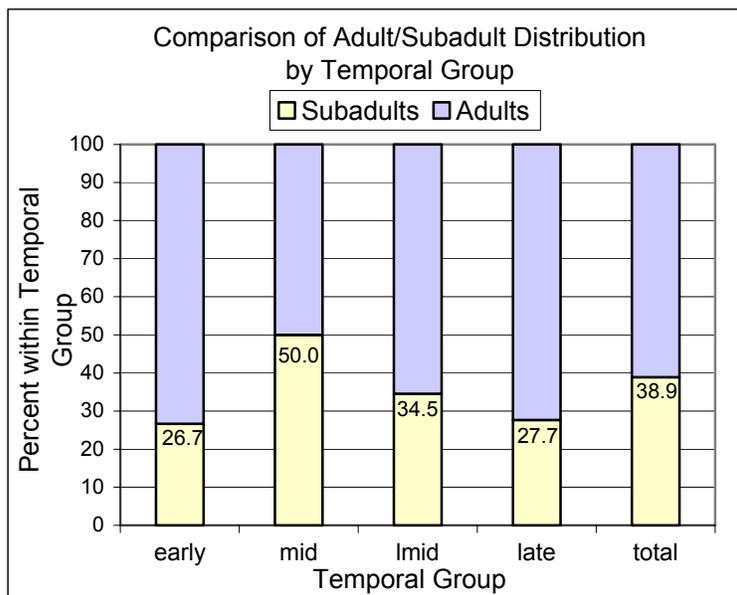
Table 5.6.					
Shared graves and possible shared graves at the African Burial Ground					
Burials	Map Location	Comments	adult/child	children	adults
Burials 12 and 14	S89.5/E12	Woman aged 35 to 45 with a newborn. The infant appeared to have been in its own coffin, but within the coffin of the woman. Late Group. Interred at the same time.	x		
Burials 25 and 32	S87/E20	Woman in early 20s stacked atop a man 50 to 60 years old, both in hexagonal coffins. Middle Group. The woman had suffered trauma, and had a musket ball lodged in her ribcage. Possibly interred at the same time.			x
Burials 72, 83, and 84	S87.5/E34	Possible shared grave. Two very young children placed above a young man 17 to 21 years old. Burials were disturbed by a later foundation. Early Group.	x	x	
Burials 79 and 90	S82/E5	Possible shared grave with an infant placed above the foot end of a burial of a woman in her late 30s. Soil intervened. Middle Group. The woman's coffin was hexagonal, the child's tapered. Not buried at the same time.	x		
Burials 89 and 107	S90/E48	Possible shared grave. A woman in her 50s placed above a woman in her late 30s, both in hexagonal coffins. The top coffin was offset to the south, but apparently in the same grave; possible interval between burials. The younger woman had a cylindrical red bead near her ear. Late-Middle Group.			x
Burials 94 and 96	S94/E47	An infant centered precisely above a young man 16 to 18 years old. Both in hexagonal coffins. Middle Group. Possible interval between interments. These burials were part of a cluster with additional child burials.	x		
Burials 121 and 202	S86/E70	A child 2 ½ to 4 ½ years old placed atop an adolescent (a probable female) 12 to 18 years old. Both were in tapered coffins. Early Group.		x	

⁶ These cases are all located in the western half of the site, though this distribution is not considered significant since the eastern half of the site was never fully excavated. Burials 177 and 128 are placed in the Early and Middle Groups respectively, but the child may still have been placed deliberately at the foot of the earlier adult grave.

Table 5.6.					
Shared graves and possible shared graves at the African Burial Ground					
Burials	Map Location	Comments	adult/child	children	adults
Burials 126 and 143	S88.5/E80.5	Two children, one 3 ½ to 5 ½ and one 6 to 10 years old, shared a single coffin, with the younger child placed atop the elder. The coffin was hexagonal and deep in construction. Middle Group.		x	
Burials 142, 144, and 149	S88/E90	A woman of 25 to 30 years with an infant/newborn and a child of 6 to 12 months placed directly atop her coffin. The woman's coffin was hexagonal and the two babies' four-sided. Middle Group.	x	x	
Burials 146 and 145	S73.5/E74	An infant under six months old in a coffin, placed atop an empty adult coffin. Located along south side of post-hole alignment. Late-Middle Group.	x?		
Burials 159 and 161	S73.5/E90	An infant or young child placed adjacent to the coffin (near the foot end) of a woman 25 to 35 years old. The grave may also be shared with Burial 206, another infant or child grave adjacent on the opposite side. All in coffins, the woman's hexagonal, the children's rectangular. Middle Group.	x		
Burials 225 and 252	S64.5/E95	An infant between 6 and 15 months old placed above a child of 1 to 2 years. Both in four-sided coffins. The upper coffin was offset slightly to the north. Late Group.		x	
Burials 226 and 221	S83.5/E77	An infant of 2 months or less placed atop a man of 30 to 60 years, both in tapered coffins. The infant had a string of fired-glass beads at the neck. Early Group.	x		
Burials 255 and 265	S82/E120	Two infants, one less than 2 months old and one 6 to 12 months old, in coffins placed one atop the other in a shared grave. Poor skeletal preservation. Middle Group.		x	
Burials 263 and 272	S88.5/E74	Infant burials placed one atop the other in the same grave. Both were in four-sided coffins. Probable Early Group based on stratigraphy.		x	
Burials 268 and 286	S75/126E	Infant of 6 months or less, placed above a child between 4 and 8 years old. Both in coffins, probably hexagonal. Middle Group.		x	
Burials 219 and 235	S71.5/E123	Possible shared grave. A child 4 to 5 years old placed above a woman of 28 to 42, apparently in the same grave shaft but with an interval of time between interments. Both in coffins. Late-Middle Group. Severe disturbance to the grave from construction.	x		
Burials 293 and 291		An adult man (age undetermined) and child 3 to 5 years old may have shared a grave. The burials were disturbed by a later grave, and some skeletal remains of the adult and those of the child were displaced into the later grave shaft.	x		
Burials 311 and 316	S88.5/E99	An infant 3 to 9 months old placed in the corner of the grave of a woman 18 to 20 years old. The woman's coffin was hexagonal, the infant's tapered. Late-Middle Group. <i>Not</i> buried at the same time.	x		
Burials 314 and 338	S82/E134	Possible shared grave, with a man of 40 to 50 years and a woman 33 to 65, side-by-side, both in hexagonal coffins. Late-Middle Group.			x

Burials	Map Location	Comments	adult/child	children	adults
Burials 318 and 321	S79.5/E144	Possible shared grave. Bones of a child 7 to 14 years old, apparently in place, within the upper part of the grave of a child 1 to 2 years old. Possibly isolated from other burials.		x	
Burials 320 and 334	S89/E251	Possible shared grave. Child of 2 to 4 years and another young child, in immediately adjacent, aligned coffins. Middle Group. Disturbed by construction.		x	
Burials 326 and 374	S75.5/E135	An infant of 3 months or less was placed adjacent to left side of a man of 45 to 55 years, near the head, in the same grave shaft. They appear to have been buried at the same time. Middle Group. Both in coffins.	x		
Burials 335 and 356	S84.5/E248	A woman 25 to 35 years old and a newborn, buried together in a hexagonal coffin. Infant lay within the woman's flexed right arm. Middle Group.	x		
Burials 341 and 397	S87.5/E229	A man of undetermined age and a woman 30 to 40 years old. The man's coffin had been placed atop the woman's, in a shared grave. Middle Group. Cuff links were found with the man; the woman's teeth were modified by distal chipping.			x
Burials 393 and 405	S84/E211	An infant or newborn placed with a child 6 to 10 years old. Both in narrow coffins of undetermined shape. Middle Group. <i>Not</i> buried at the same time.		x	

There is an “excess” of children in the main Middle Group, but there is no reason to believe that child mortality was greater in the middle of the time period represented at the site than in other periods. We believe more children appear in the middle grouping because children's burials from the later periods of the cemetery were placed in, above, or near existing graves from earlier periods, but these children's burials cannot be



otherwise distinguished as later. The early group's low frequency of child burials is probably due to reduced preservation. Thus, the subadult age profiles broken down by period (Chapters 6 through 9) must be considered provisional.

Figure 5.6.
Adult/subadult distribution by temporal group.

Another type of cluster includes several child burials in close proximity to each other, such as Burials 98, 100, 102 and 103; and Burials 224/231/234 (a shared grave), 232, 254 and 240. The latter type of spatial grouping may reflect the setting aside of specific locations for child burials at particular times during the cemetery's history, or deaths of numerous children in short spaces of time, such as in an epidemic.

There were no mass graves, where a number of individuals were stacked in a single large opening at one time. Such would have been expected only in the case of epidemics, war, or mass executions. Though *all* of these events occurred during the period the cemetery was in use (see Chapters 6 through 9), there is no evidence of mass interments within the area excavated. Such graves may exist elsewhere within the cemetery, but the evidence in the excavated burial ground clearly shows that New Yorkers living under slavery called attention to the uniqueness of each individual when they buried the dead.

Only in the northern cemetery area were *most* burials spatially separate from others. We think this lower density of graves reflects a shorter period of use, as discussed in Chapter 4. But it may also represent a response to demographic shifts during the Revolutionary War and its aftermath. Fewer co-interments (shared graves and deliberately proximal graves) and a rise in graves spaced in rows may have been a gravedigger's respectful solution to two kinds of predicaments: a spate of burials on a single day or in a short span of time; an increase in burials of recent arrivals without relatives or friends in the cemetery. The special circumstances of Late Group of burials are explored in Chapter 9.

Individual burial, then, did not mean isolated burial. Though actual shared graves are relatively uncommon, most burials overlap or are within a foot or two of others. Although we do not know whether the management of the African Burial Ground was centralized or dispersed, as explained in Chapter 2.D, there is no reason to suppose that it was not African-controlled. In this scenario, we should expect burial grouping. In order to conduct a systematic spatial analysis, one needs to devise a spatial syntax that can help organize the material; the key tactic is the search for patterns. Burials occurred in chronological sequences, and were more or less isolated or arranged in larger concentrations, into clusters, and finally into more or less discrete groups, sets, or pairs.

There was a range of opinion among the researchers regarding our ability to define burial groups and sub-sets, but because it is unlikely that people buried their family and neighbors in a geographically random way, we consider the existence of groupings almost certain. We have tried to recognize them archaeologically or at least to present the site data in a manner open to interpretation by others. Spatial analysis is one way to let the burial ground, as we encounter it archaeologically, "speak" to us of its use and of the historic community. To the extent that viewers (whether archaeologists or others who encounter the site records) perceive spatial relationships among interments, ideas can be generated about how the ritual space was constructed over time, and about social relationships among the deceased. We raise additional possibilities about the internal geography of the excavated cemetery in section 5.C.

Clothing, personal adornment, and other items

Distinguishing between “grave goods” and items of clothing/personal adornment that can be categorized as dressing the dead is problematic. The dressing of the deceased can be seen as one aspect of their preparation for their new state of being, and therefore in a sense the distinction is moot. Items that cannot be categorized as clothing or adornment but are likely goods meant to guide, equip or accompany the deceased in the world of the dead, such as tools, items for personal use, or talismans, might include a knife, a smoking pipe, a piece of coral or shell, or an item held in the hand or placed around the neck.

Items other than pins found in direct association with the skeletal remains included buttons, beads, rings, cuff links and other miscellaneous jewelry, and remnants of cloth, shell, smoking pipes, knives, metal, coins, and possibly floral tributes. Any of these items may have been the personal property of the deceased, and any of them may have had symbolic or spiritual significance. Clothing, adornment, and other miscellaneous items placed with the dead are described in Chapters 12, 13, and 14. Clothing fasteners were reliably associated with 34 burials, other adornment items with just 13. Other kinds of objects (not considered clothing or jewelry) were found with equally small numbers of burials. It is certain that some items placed with burials were not preserved, particularly those of cloth, wood, or plant materials.

Thus it appears that street clothes or adornment and/or the placement of grave goods in the grave was *not* considered a necessary component of the mortuary “program” as typically enacted at the African Burial Ground. We hasten to point out, however, that dressing the dead or including items in the grave certainly may have been an integral part of death ritual performed for particular individuals.

Grave markers

In the part of the African Burial Ground where the old ground surface was recorded, at least some of the graves were marked with stones. In addition, one coffin (in Burial 194) had a vertical post attached to its headboard, presumably meant to extend above the ground surface to mark the grave. The presence of marked graves suggests that the cemetery was visited, perhaps for the performance of “second funerals” or periodic post-interment rituals, and that subsequent graves could have been sited with reference to the marked ones.

The stone grave markers were of two types, rectangular slabs placed vertically near the head of the grave, and rows of small cobbles arranged so as to outline a grave or possibly a group of graves. The preservation of the markers indicates that these graves were covered over with fill while their surfaces were still intact.

Since markers were found in the one area where their preservation was possible, we think it is likely such markers were also used elsewhere at the cemetery. Archaeologists who were present during the mechanical clearing of the site did not observe grave markers,

and it is possible they had been removed during the early phases of development and filling of the property.



Figure 5.7.
Burials at the southwest corner of the excavated cemetery that were marked with cobbles at the surface. This style of grave marking has been observed throughout the African Diaspora over a broad temporal span (Thompson 1983:137; Vlach 1978:139-45).
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 5.8.
Excavated grave of Burial 18 with stone marker in place at its west (head) end. Arrows point to the coffin outlines of Burial 7, cutting into the north profile, and Burial 11, at the lower left. Both of these graves lay above the coffin in Burial 18.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 5.9.
Vertical slab of stone found above Burial 47 and the line of cobbles along the north side of the grave. The stone and cobbles were designated "Features 1 and 2" during the excavation. Photography by Dennis Seckler.

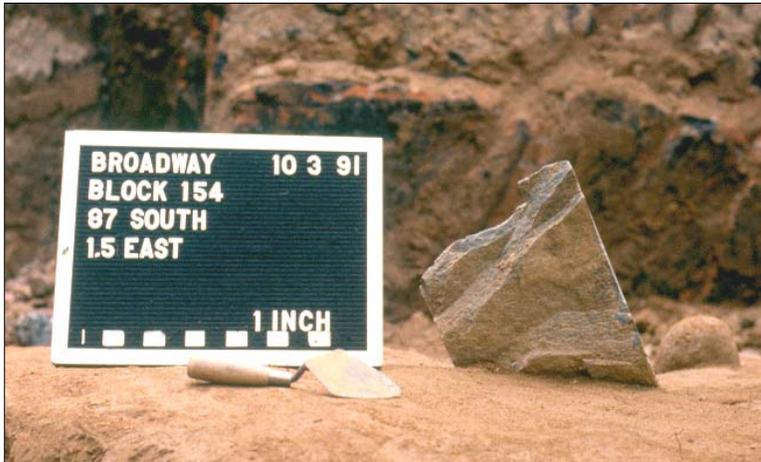


Figure 5.10.
Stone that appears to have been a marker for Burial 23. North is to right. At the time the photograph was taken, Burial 23 had not been defined, and the stone had been removed when the grave was excavated and recorded. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 5.11.
View of larger excavation area with the same stone shown in Figure 5.10, in relation to nearby lines of cobbles. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

5.C. Additional observations on internal geography

Graves were not distributed uniformly across the archaeologically excavated burial ground. From a bird's eye view of the site (represented by the site maps in Figures 1.7 and 4.2), at least three spatial patterns or features are visible: areas of relatively dense and relatively sparse graves; possible rows of graves; and, in the less-densely used areas, grave spacing.

As discussed in Chapter 4, graves in the portion of the cemetery to the north of the alignment of postholes were relatively sparse compared to the area to the south. This is probably attributable to a shorter period of use. But within the area south of the former fence line, there are also areas that were more densely packed with graves than others. In Chapter 3 we hypothesized that the original topography may account for this, with the flatter areas used more than the slopes (see Figure 3.17). It is also possible, however, that the densest areas of the excavated cemetery had a sociological basis, with social, ethnic or religious groups using particular corners of the burial ground repeatedly to bury their

140E. It is possible some of these rows extend all the way to the southern edge of the site. In this case, it is possible that rows of graves were in place prior to the use of the area north of the fence line, and were extended northward after the fence was demolished. Chapter 9, on the Late Group of burials, takes up the question of rows and grave siting.

In places where there were adjacent graves with few or no superimposed burials, such as in the rows, a kind of spatial syntax is hinted at, with burials spaced deliberately apart. This will be taken up further in Chapter 7.

Was there any patterning of graves by age or sex? There are a few places where numerous children's and infant's graves seem to cluster, usually with one or more adult graves included. One cluster is beneath Burial 207, mentioned in Chapter 4 and discussed further in Chapter 6; others are discussed in Chapter 7. Sex distribution is skewed, with a preponderance of men in the northern part of the cemetery (see Chapter 9). Otherwise, men, women, and children are distributed more-or-less evenly across the entire excavated site, relative to overall density.

Distinctive women's graves in the southeastern area of the site

There is one area, in the far eastern part of the excavated site, where distinctive women's burials were found.

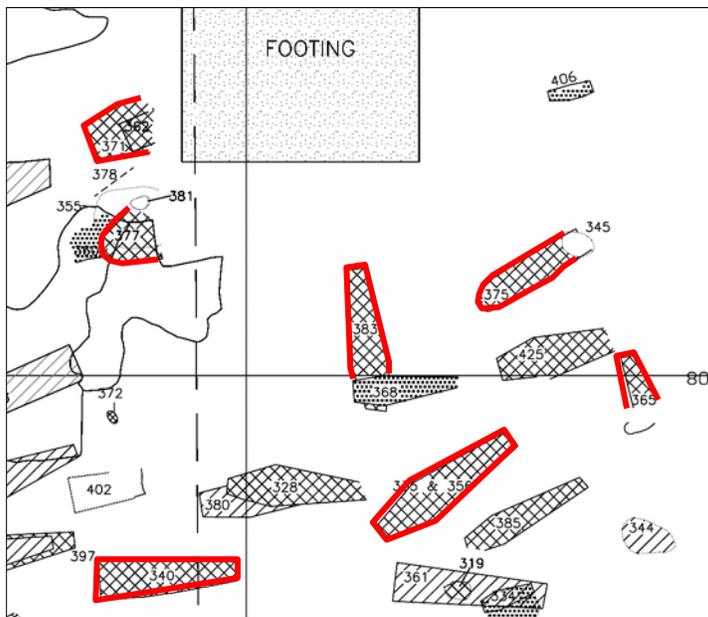


Figure 5.13.
Detail from site plan (Figure 1.7)
showing locations of distinctive
women's graves in the southeast
corner of the excavated site.

Middle Group Burials 383 and 365 were highly unusual in that they were oriented with their heads to the south rather than the west. The two burials were ten feet apart. No age could be calculated for the woman in Burial 365; the young woman in Burial 383 was determined to be between fourteen and eighteen. Burial 365 was truncated, with only the legs, feet and portion of the left hand remaining, though these elements were articulated.

It is unlikely that the entire burial had been displaced into a north-south orientation, since a grave shaft outline was recorded and the extant portion of the coffin appeared intact. Upon the lid of the coffin an oyster shell and an artifact made from shell and metal were found (see Chapter 14).

Burials 371, 375, and 377 were of women with no coffins and unique personal effects. Although the Middle Group grave of Burial 371 (Figure 5.14) had been partially destroyed by construction of a massive concrete footing in February 1992, the surviving portion (the upper body) was relatively intact. The grave, which held a woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, had a remarkably straight-sided shaft, which tapered toward the head end. The grave was considerably deeper than others excavated in this area, and another grave had been dug into it, well above the woman's remains. Two turquoise enamel cuff link faces, each decorated with a squat, white-and-pink V and two dots, were found beneath the woman's left upper arm. Given their location, and the lack of a connecting shank or link between them, it is unlikely that they fastened a shirtsleeve. These items were unique within the assemblage from the cemetery; how they were worn or used is not known (see Chapter 13).

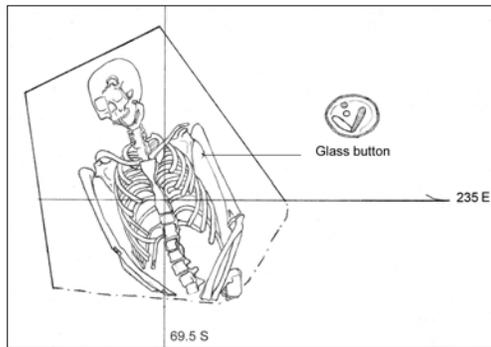


Figure 5.14.
In situ drawing, Burial 371. Remains are shown here at a scale of 1 inch = 2 feet. The button or cufflink faces were 14mm x 11mm. Drawing by W. Williams.

The only other coffin-less grave assigned to the Middle Group was Burial 375, also of a woman. The sixteen-to-eighteen-year-old woman in this grave had been buried with her arms crossed above her head, a unique position at the African Burial Ground (Figure 5.15). The east end of the grave had been disturbed by construction activity (though the feet appear missing in the photographs and drawings, foot bones were present when archaeologists exposed the burial).

The idiosyncratic arm position suggests that no winding sheet wrapped the arms at the time the woman was placed in the grave – bearers may have carried the corpse by the arms and legs. A ceramic ball with a copper alloy band encircling it, surrounded by an organic stain, possibly representing cloth or leather, was found at the right hip, adjacent to the right femur head (Figure 5.16). The object is described in full in Chapter 14.

Figure 5.15. (left).
In situ photograph of Burial 375,
with arms crossed above head.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

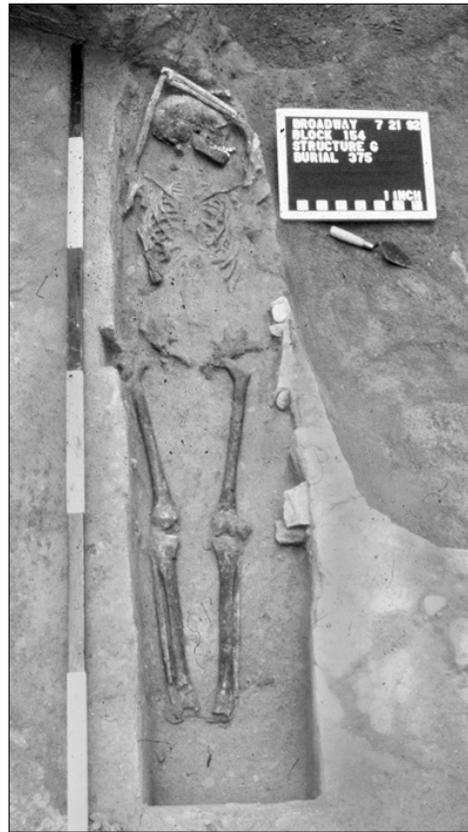
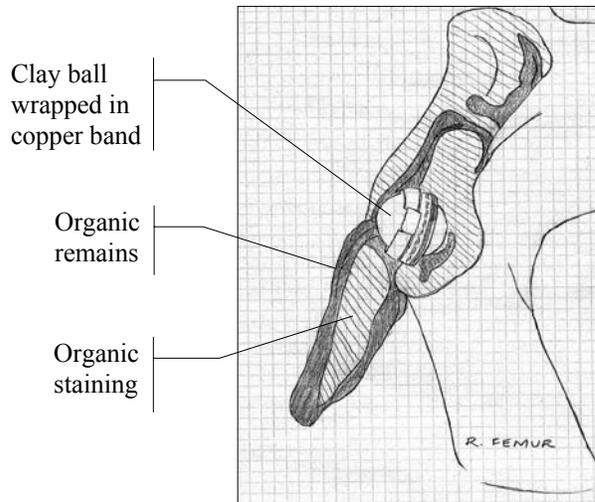


Figure 5.16. (below).
In situ drawing of artifacts at the hip of the
woman in Burial 375. Drawing by M. Schur.



Burial 377, assigned to the Late-Middle Group, held the remains of a woman thirty-three to fifty-eight years old who had three rings at her throat, possibly with a bit of associated thread (these items were never received in the laboratory but were documented in the field – see Chapter 13). This woman also had been buried without a coffin though possible wood staining was noted above and below the skeletal remains. Excavators suggested that boards might have been placed above and below the body, though the residue could have been from the coffin of a prior burial that was disturbed by Burial 377. A substance excavators believed to be red ochre was observed on the possible wood remains, and on the head, ribs, and scapulae.⁷

The presence of three burials of women in coffin-less graves close to one another and with distinctive personal effects is noteworthy. Most burials without coffins are of men, and are in the Late Group, mainly in the northern part of the excavated site. The graves may be incorrectly assigned to the Middle temporal groups, belonging instead with the majority of other coffin-less burials in our Late Group, though the stratigraphic position of Burial 371 argues against this.

⁷ Red ochre (a pigment made from iron oxide) was used by Native Americans from the early Archaic (the Lamoka period in New York, circa 4500 years ago), was a component of elaborate burial sites of the Orient peoples (circa 3000 years ago) on Long Island, and continued to be used into late prehistoric and historic times. Recent scholarship has explored the possible symbolic significance of the color red among Native Americans. See Cantwell and Wall 2001:69-70; Ritchie 1965.

The final distinctive woman's grave in this area of the site, Burial 340, had a coffin, was oriented with the head to the west, and lay in the typical position, supine and extended with the arms at the sides. Burial 340 was nevertheless unique, and is one of the most extensively described interments at the African Burial Ground. It held a woman between thirty-nine and sixty-four years who had been buried wearing a strand of beads and cowrie shells at her hips and a bracelet of beads on the right wrist (Figure 5.17), as well as an unused smoking pipe. The coffin was four-sided and tapered toward the foot, and though located near the pottery midden the grave pre-dated that feature and is placed in the Early Group.

Most of the beads were found in a line that circled once around the woman's hips, though most of the beads were recovered from the sides. A total of 112 glass beads were ultimately recovered, along with one amber bead and seven cowries (nine cowries were recorded in the field, but one of the cowries was later found to be a fragment of bone). Another cowrie was not recoverable and may have been an impression of a shell in the soil (LaRoche 1994a:19). The waist beads varied in color. With the exception of two specimens with adventitious decoration, the beads were simple, drawn types (see Chapter 13 for descriptions).



Figure 5.17.
In situ photograph of the pelvic area of Burial 340 during excavation, showing beads. The top arrow points to one of the cowries, the bottom arrow to the strand of alternating blue-green and yellow beads at the right wrist. See Chapter 13 for a drawing and additional photographs of the individual beads recovered. North is to right. The ruler is measured in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Excavators originally believed that some of the beads (a line of tiny, alternating blue-green and pale yellow beads) were worn on the woman's right wrist, but later decided that all beads were probably from the strand at her waist because no hand or wrist bones underlay the *in situ* beads. Yet the interpretation of the distinct strand of alternating blue-green and yellow beads as a bracelet is compatible with its location beneath extant hand/wrist bones, and seems much more plausible than their interpretation as part of the waist beads. There were 15 of the yellow beads and 26 of the blue-green beads recovered, 15 of which were found aligned and in an alternating pattern (the others were scattered in the general pelvic area).

Eleven straight pins were found in place, most on the cranium, suggesting the woman had been shrouded. A kaolin pipe bowl and joining stem were recovered from beneath the woman's pelvis (this item is described in Chapter 14). The pipe had not been smoked. The skeletal remains from Burial 340 were poorly preserved, which accounts for the wide range of the woman's estimated age. Her incisors had been altered to hourglass and "peg" shapes.

One other woman's grave in the same small area should be mentioned here: Middle Group Burial 335 belonged to a woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years old with an infant (Burial 356) held in the crook of her arm. This is the only burial in the excavated sample where an infant was so placed (in Burials 12 and 14, another woman-with-infant, the infant was in its own coffin).

We consider it possible that the proximity of these distinctive women's graves to one another was deliberate, which in turn raises the possibility that a special area of the cemetery existed for women who shared one or more kinds of social distinction. There is no way to know whether any such distinction was negative or positive, or whether it was formalized in the management of the cemetery or tacitly agreed upon by the women's mourners or the community.

5.D. Conclusion

It is likely that one of the most important things enslaved people did on their "own" time was participate in wakes, funerals, and grave-site gatherings. Funeral labor involved preparation and transport of the body, digging the grave, participation in funerary rituals, closing and marking the grave, and whatever subsequent actions were necessary to maintain proper relations with the dead and among living relatives. In all of this, Africans acted for themselves and each other, stealing their own labor from those who purported to own it. Labor also extended to the work needed to obtain the necessary accoutrements of proper burial. The coffin was a key component. Even when household heads or the almshouse wardens supplied them (see Chapter 10), such a custom can be viewed as the result of struggles over the terms of bondage rather than as a paternalistic gesture. Typical accoutrements appear to have also included, at a minimum, the shroud or cloth with which to wrap the body or the limbs and chin, with or without pins (see Chapter 11).

Other material goods found with the deceased also can shed light on how Africans acted on their own account. When a person was buried wearing jewelry or clothing, or with other objects that were theirs in life, a claim was made about the inalienability of their possessions. Those possessions were likely obtained through own-account activities. Africans in colonial New York, including those who were enslaved, created opportunities to earn money of their own to purchase small luxuries. Goods within easy reach may have been vended on the sly, or fenced at well-known taverns, the proceeds spent on personal items—or personal items may themselves have been stolen goods.⁸ The burial of possessions took them out of circulation and fixed them to the deceased, symbolically defying a system that denied property to, and defined as property, an entire people.

The richness of the non-material aspects of African funerals (rituals that do not enter the documentary or archaeological record) is lost to us. But based on the material record, it is reasonable to propose that an insistence upon the full humanity of the deceased might well have been at the spiritual and political heart of burial at this cemetery. Most individuals were buried without any personal goods, some even without a coffin, yet the digging of an individual grave for each of the deceased, care in the orientation of the grave, and the placement of each body in a specific position (supine and extended) and probably wrapped, bespeaks a degree of attention and respect accorded to all.

The acts of interment that we are able to witness at a historical distance speak most importantly of the individual's relationship to others—to family but also to a larger community. The “conformity” that the record implies should be seen in this context. We think the cemetery provided a way for a community to form, through communal performance of a fundamental rite of passage. If via the archaeological record we are seeing mainly the shared aspects of mortuary behavior, then we have a remarkable window on a critical historical process. It is possible the common burial practices that are so evident within the excavated site took root during the beginning years of the burial ground, perhaps even earlier, when New Amsterdam's first Africans were interred in the West India Company's common cemetery. Since the African Burial Ground subsequently would have been one of the few sites where black men, women and children could act communally and on each other's behalf, it would have been a key place and institution for the continual incorporation of diverse newcomers into the fold.

⁸ Laws passed to stifle the enterprise of bondsmen and bondswomen provide a glimpse of some of the revenue-generating projects Africans undertook after work or on their masters' time. Africans were banned from selling independently grown crops and livestock, gathered fruits, home-made commodities and crafts such as soap, and oysters gathered from beds in New York waters. Colonial Manhattan's unfree African workforce encompassed the skilled as well as the unskilled. Africans labored in city homes and on nearby farms but also in the warehouses, workshops, and markets that provisioned a bustling port. African blacksmiths, coopers, cord-makers, brewers, butchers, and tailors may have profited from their skills, as suggested by legislation forbidding Africans to hire out as day laborers without their masters' consent. On own-account economic activities of New York's Africans see the History Report (Medford 2004:119-121; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:181-82. Some of the restrictive legislation that gives us a glimpse of economic activities includes colony-wide laws (New York Colony 1691-1775(1):157, 761-767, 845; (2):679-688; and city ordinances (MCC 1675-1776(1):232 and (4):497-98). The variety of occupations of Africans is learned from sale and escapee advertisements and from the censuses of 1703 and 1790.

CHAPTER 6. THE EARLY GROUP

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

Burials are assigned to the Early Group on the basis of coffin type, relationship to site features, and stratigraphy (see Chapter 4; problematic assignments are noted below). Burials placed in this group appear to pre-date the use of the eastern part of the cemetery by nearby pottery factories, in place circa 1730, for dumping of kiln waste. Absolute dating is not possible, however. For convenience, we give the Early Group a hypothetical end date of 1735.

A sketch of the town and its population precedes the tabulation of the Early Group mortuary sample. The material culture and spatial distribution of the burials are then discussed, followed by a description of unique and unusual interments.

6.A. *The town*

New York grew considerably during the first four decades of the 18th century, but the burial ground was still outside the developed portion of the town. The southern shore of the Fresh Water (or Collect) Pond was considered the edge of the town proper.¹ The northern extent of development at the end of the period was at present-day Park Row and Franklin Street on the east side of present-day Broadway, and at present-day Liberty Street on the west side of Broadway (see the Lyne-Bradford Plan in Figure 2.6). The “Negros Burying Place,” as it was labeled on Mrs. Buchnerd’s hand-drawn plan of the town in 1735 (Figure 2.8), was in the northern part of the Common. The Common traditionally was open space that townspeople could use for pasture and for digging sod and burning lime, though the latter activities were barred in the area south of the Collect in the first quarter of the 18th century. The town used the Common as a parade ground for troops, for celebrations and bonfires, and for executions. The municipal powder house was built in 1728 on a small island between the Collect and Little Collect, just east of the African Burial Ground.²

A number of churches had been established in New York by the end of our early period, some of which had African members, but it appears they were not burying blacks in their cemeteries. In addition to the Dutch Reformed, Anglican, French Huguenot, Lutheran,

¹ This is reflected in laws of the time, which typically state that provisions apply to the area south of the Collect or Fresh Water. As noted in Chapter 3, the pond was fed by deep springs and was used by the general public for fishing and for drinking water, and later would be used by private industries such as tanning.

² See historical summaries of the vicinity of the African Burial Ground in each chronological period in Harris et al. 1993; for detail on specific structures in the area throughout its history see Hunter Research 1994.

and Quaker churches and the Jewish synagogue established in the 17th century, by 1728 there were two additional Anglican and Dutch Reformed congregations, as well as Baptist and Presbyterian churches, all located within the town proper (Rothschild 1990:47). French Huguenot Elias Neau had begun a school for Africans in 1704.

Regulation of the activities of enslaved people grew extremely restrictive in this period. English roll-back of the margin of freedom allowed under Dutch rule culminated in 1702 with *An Act for Regulating Slaves* (New York Colony, Laws 1691-1775(1):519-21), and from then on both the colonial government and New York’s Common Council continued

from year to year to legislate social control over blacks, enslaved and free. The 1702 law was renewed in 1705 and again in 1719.

Table 6.1. Sources of imports of enslaved Africans into New York Colony, 1701 to 1726³		
Year	From the West Indies	From the Coast of Africa
1701	36	
1702	165	
1703	16	
1704	8	
1705	-	24
1710	-	53
1711	-	55
1712	-	77
1714	53	
1715	17	38
1716	19	43
1717	68	266
1718	447	70
1719	104	
1720	81	
1721	76	117*
1722	106	
1723	82	
1724	61	
1725	54	59
1726	180	
	1348	822
Total number: 2395		
* “Entered from the Coast of Africa but found afterwards to have been from Madagascar”		

Enslaved people were brought to New York City directly from Africa and via the Caribbean. For New York Colony as a whole, the importations in the period of the Early Group are listed in Table 6.1. There is no way of knowing how many of these captives and which ones remained in the city of New York, but the preponderance of those who had spent time in the Caribbean was probably reflected in the town’s enslaved population. It is also likely that the importations directly from Africa resulted in intermittent infusions of African-born individuals into the local community, since town residents would have had a ready opportunity to acquire captives at the docks.

Tensions between Africans and Europeans flared with the 1712 Rising (Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, June 23, 1712, in O’Callaghan and Fernow 1853-87(5):341-42; Scott 1961). African-born captives (along with diverse others) appear to have played a role in the insurrection, and participants are thought to have used African practices to bind each other’s loyalty. It is possible those executed were interred in the African Burial Ground, though authorities may have kept some of the bodies from burial as a further retribution for the uprising (as would be the case in the executions of 1741). No burials that appear to have been mangled or otherwise buried inauspiciously were

assigned to the Early Group.

³ Source: “Account obtained from the collector of the customs,” December 16, 1726, in O’Callaghan and Fernow 1853-87(5):814.

The revolt led to the colony’s most restrictive and punitive legislation to date, *An Act for Preventing Suppressing and Punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves* (New York Colony, Laws 1691-1775(1):761-67). It reiterated the 1702 law and added clauses meant to reduce interaction between free and enslaved Africans, and to prevent ownership of property by free “Negro, Indian, or Mullato” persons. It curtailed manumission by setting high bond prices (though the latter were removed in 1717).

Table 6.2.
Deaths of Blacks, August to December, 1731

Date	Black deaths	Blacks deaths from smallpox
Aug. 23		
Sept. 6	6	3
Sept. 13	8	7
Sept. 20	6	4
Sept. 27	7	6
Oct. 4	14	10
Oct. 11	9	8
Oct. 18*	12	
Oct. 25		
Nov. 1	7**	
Nov. 8***	0	
Nov. 15	2	
Total when smallpox reporting ceased	71	
Nov. 22	4	
Nov. 29	1	
Dec. 5	1	
Dec. 13	0	
Dec. 21	2	
Total reported	79	

*Cause not specified from this date on, though the report indicates “most of smallpox.”
 **Includes last 2 weeks.
 ***The Gazette reported that no new cases of smallpox had appeared in the lasst week.
 Source: New-York Gazette, Aug. 23-30 through Dec. 13-21 1731.

Restrictions were placed on African funerals as well (see Chapter 2). Some of the archaeologically recovered burials in the Early Group might have been interred during the years after night funerals (1722) and large corteges and pall-draped coffins (1731) had been banned.

Some might also have been interred in 1731, when a devastating smallpox epidemic struck New York. This is the only time for which bills of mortality listing blacks were published. Of 79 deaths reported, at least 50 were probably from the disease. As shown in Table 6.2, in any given week the maximum number of deaths never rose above 14. Implications for burials at the African Burial Ground are discussed in section 6.C.

6.B. The population

Census

Census figures for Africans in this period are contained in Table 6.3. The sex ratio fluctuated, from a preponderance of men and male children in 1703, equalizing in 1712, more women than men in 1723, and back to near parity in 1731. We have interpreted the increasing numbers of girls and women as indicative of the growing demand for domestics as the European residential population grew.⁴ The number of children per woman was approximately one throughout the period. The proportion of the population that was labeled as “Negro,” “Black,” or “Slave” (note that this category

included Native Americans) stayed fairly stable at around 18% throughout the period.

⁴ For discussions of overall demographic patterns, see Rankin-Hill et al. 2004 (Chapter 7 of the Skeletal Biology Report).

Table 6.3.
Black population by age and sex, 1700-1731

Year	Adults		Children		Age for children	Label in census
	(male)	(female)	(male)	(female)		
1703	298	276	124	101	<16	“Negroes”
1712	321	320	155	179	<16	“slaves”
1723	408	476	220	258	not given	“Negroes and other slaves”
1731	599	607	186	185	<11	“blacks”

Source: Green and Harrington (1932); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).

Mortuary sample

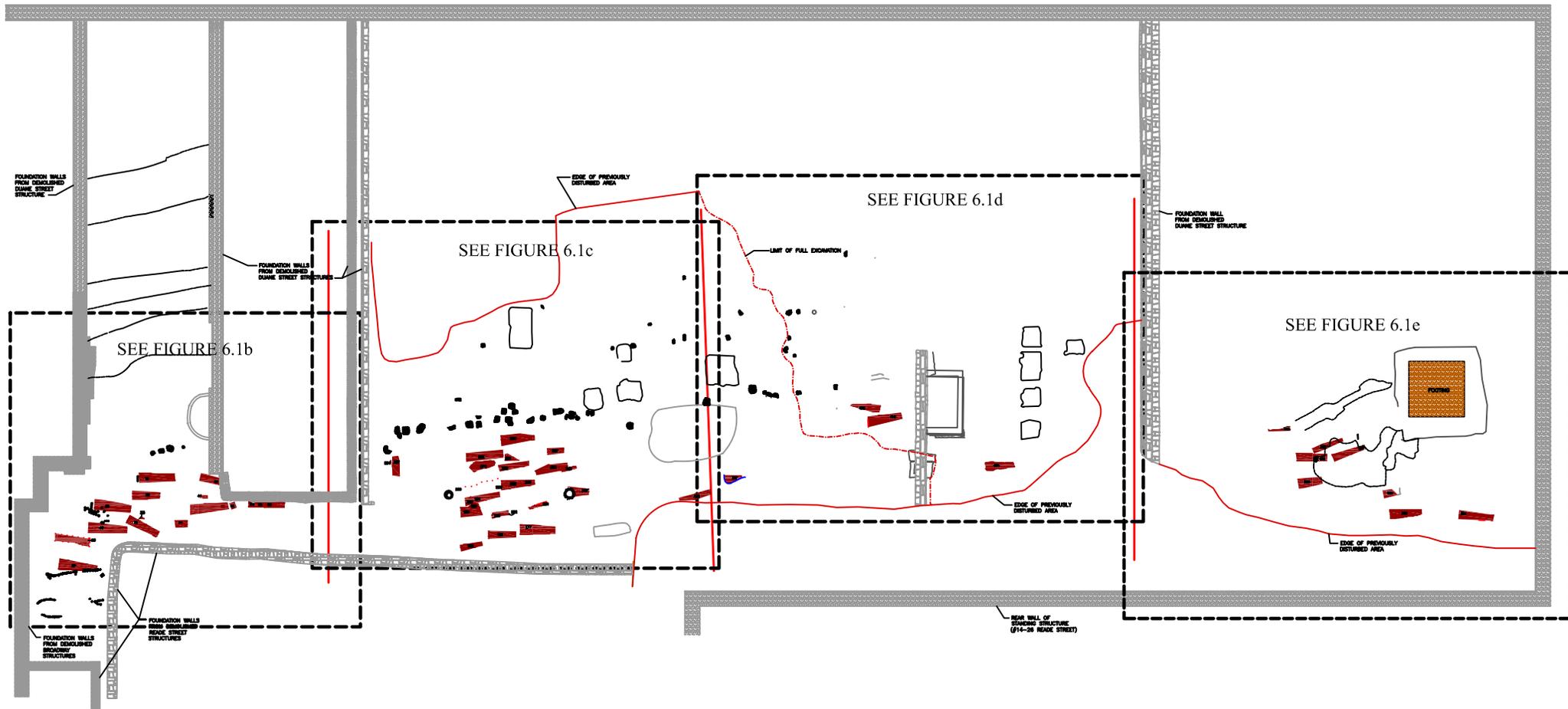
Early Group burials, numbering 51, are listed in Table 6.4. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. An asterisk indicates a problematic assignment, such as where the coffin shape was not determined but stratigraphic considerations point to early burial. The distribution of Early Group graves at the excavated site is shown on Figures 6.1a-e following the table. Age and sex profiles are graphed in Figures 6.2 and 6.3.⁵

Table 6.4.
Early Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B018	35	45	female?	93	12	81.5	y	tapered
B023	25	35	male	85	8	87.5	y	tapered
B026*	8	12	undete	78	20	83	y	four-sided
B029	35	45	male?	82	0	97.5	y	tapered
B033			undete	93	10	87.5	n	Re-deposited bones
B034			undete		15	87.5	n	rectangle?
B038	12	18	female	90	10	86	y	tapered
B044*	3	9	undete		21.5	85.5	y	four-sided
B048			undete	97	20	87.5	y	tapered
B052			undete	18	25	87.5	n	rectangle
B068	21	25	male	87	3.5	91	y	tapered
B072*	1	2	undete	90	34	87.5	y	rectangle
B078	16	19	undete	64	10	91	y	tapered

⁵ Aging and sexing methods are described in Blakey et al. 2004a (Chapter 4 of the Skeletal Biology Report).

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B083*			undete	95	31	87.5	y	rectangle
B084	17	21	female	89	35	87.5	y	four-sided
B088			undete	81	-4	93.5	n	unident.
B120	25	34	female	93	70	88.5	y	tapered
B121	2.5	4.5	undete	98	70	86	y	tapered
B155			undete	92	75	92	n	four-sided
B177	30	60	undete	88	80	91.5	y	tapered
B182	7.5	12.5	undete	102	69	94	y	tapered
B200			male	98	77	75.5	y	four-sided
B202	12	18	female?	108	70	85.5	y	tapered
B221	30	60	male	96	77	83.5	y	tapered
B226	0	0.17	undete	105	77	83	y	tapered
B227			undete	96	84	77	n	four-sided
B237			undete	183	55.5	80	n	four-sided?
B247*	35	49.9	male?	90	90	84.5	n	unident.
B249*	0.67	1.33	undete	101	87	81	y	tapered
B250			undete	98	84	80.5	y	four-sided
B261	no skeletal remains				80	87.5	n	unident.
B263			undete	105	74	88.5	y	tapered
B264			undete		55	80	n	unident.
B272	0.25	0.75	undete	100	74.5	88.5	y	four-sided
B279			undete	99	75.5	76.5	n	four-sided
B280			female?	96	70	83	n	four-sided
B281			male?	90	75	79.5	y	four-sided
B282	32.5	42.5	male	96	71.5	77.5	y	four-sided
B307*	45	55	male?	88	115.5	82.5	y	no coffin
B308			undete	109	109	84.5	y	four-sided
B340	39.3	64.4	female	94	236.5	88.5	y	tapered
B361	33	57	male	85	249	88.5	y	tapered
B382*	4	5	undete	110	215	71.5	y	four-sided
B387	34	44	male	109	227	78	y	tapered
B388	29	57	female	112	222	75.5	y	tapered
B389			female	100	220	82	y	tapered
B402			undete	100	235	84.5	n	tapered
B404*			female	96	165	79.5	n	tapered
B416			undete	101	142	71.5	y (no cranium)	tapered
B426			undete		141	69.5	n (not excavated)	tapered?
B432			undete	90	220	78	y	rectangle?



 Early Group Burial

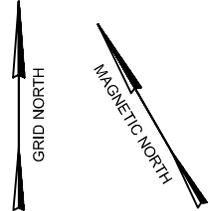


Figure 6.1.a
 Excavated Early Group Burials
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

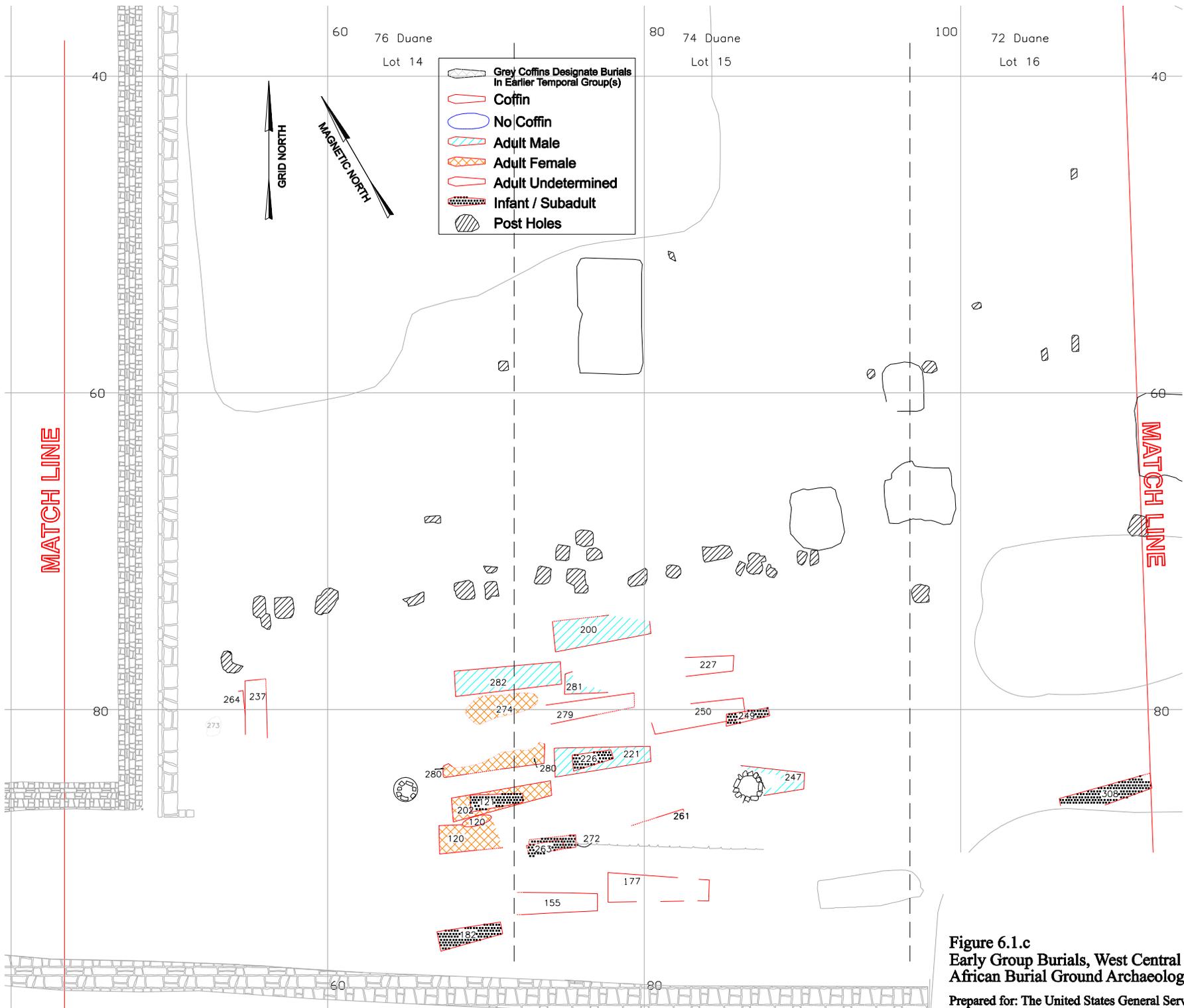


Figure 6.1.c
Early Group Burials, West Central Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

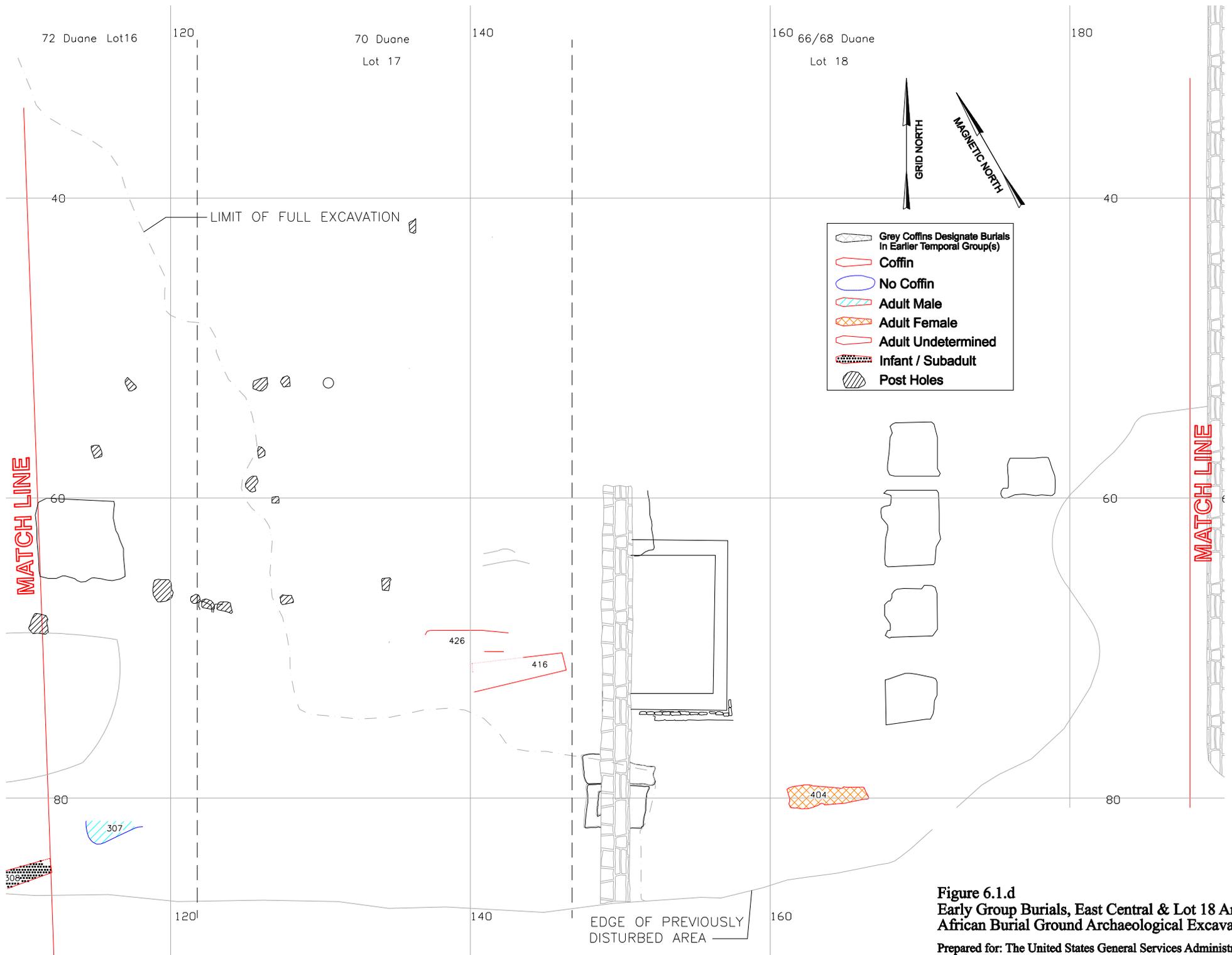


Figure 6.1.d
Early Group Burials, East Central & Lot 18 Areas
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

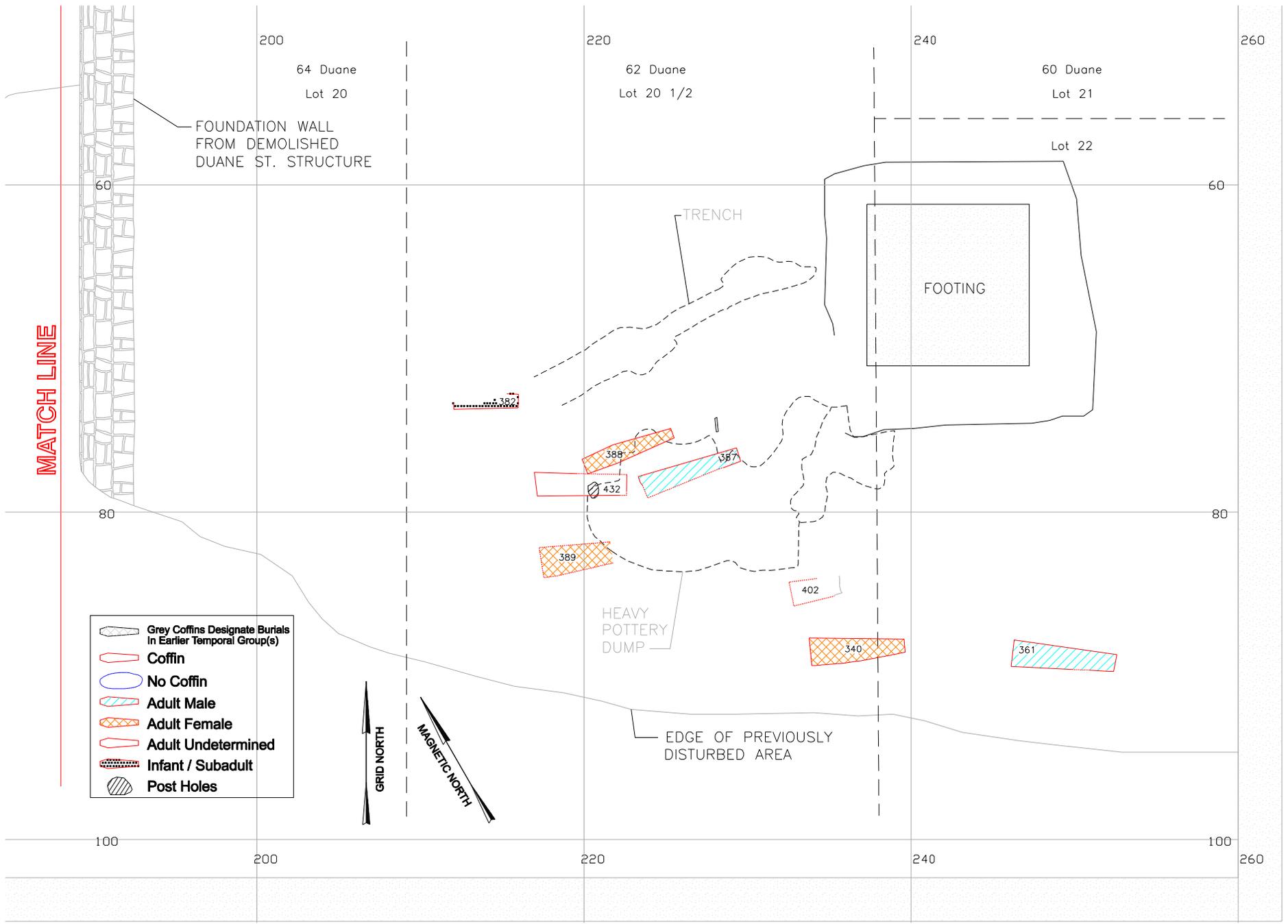


Figure 6.1.e
Early Group Burials, Eastern Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

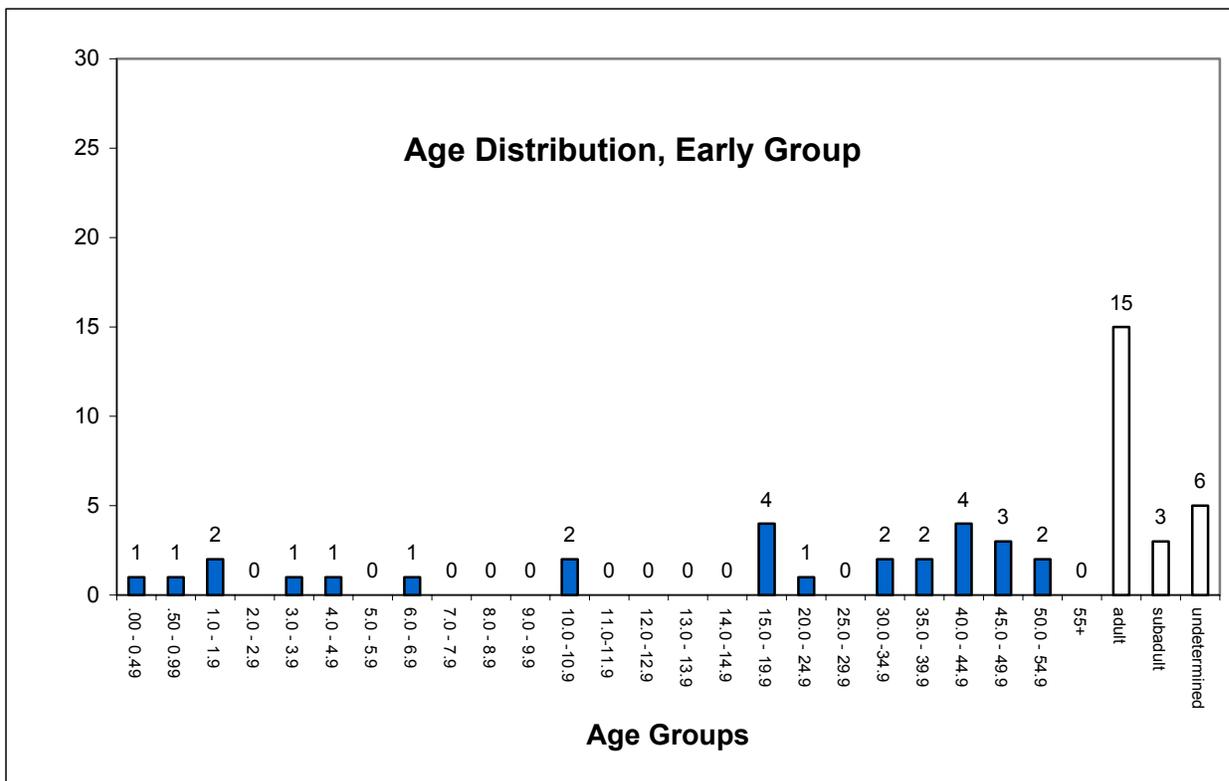


Figure 6.2. Age distribution, Early Group. White bars are individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

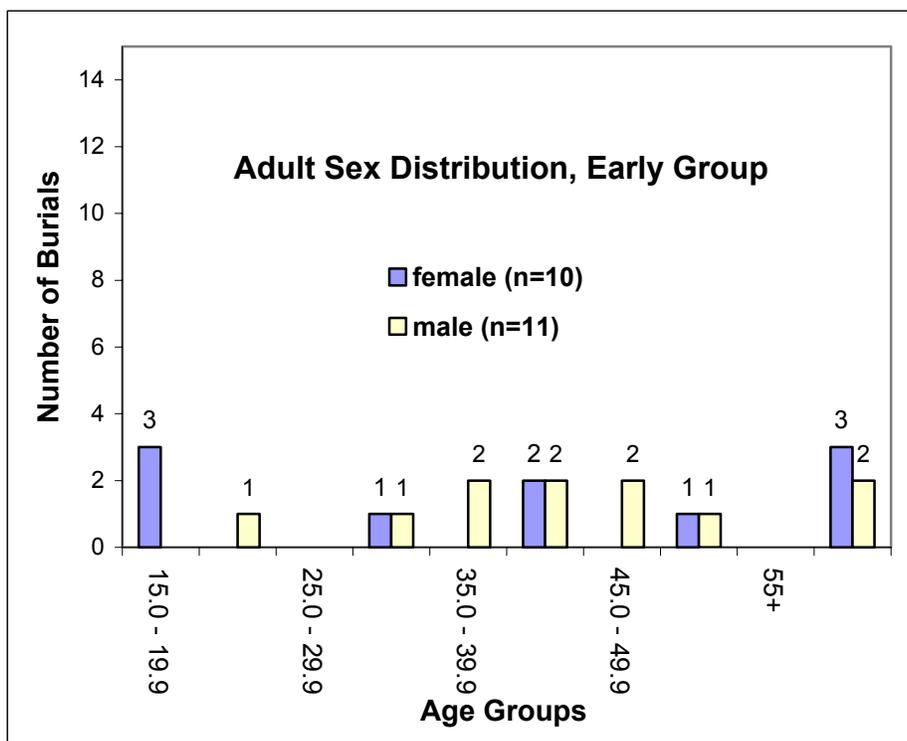


Figure 6.3. Adult sex distribution, Early Group.

The small number of subadults ($n = 6$, or 13% of the group) can probably be attributed to poor preservation, but other possibilities should be considered. Infant and child mortality may have been lower for some reason in these years, but this is highly unlikely. It is possible that a separate area of the African Burial Ground was being used for children in the Early Group, though there is no clear evidence of this. Moreover, in two cases a toddler and an infant were deliberately buried with adults. While we cannot extrapolate a general rule from these examples, they at least suggest that children were not segregated in death. Still, inauspicious deaths of infants or stillbirths may have required different types of burial or burial elsewhere, so this possibility cannot be ruled out. In section 6.D a hypothetical alternative assignment of a concentration of child burials to the Early Group is discussed.

6.C. *Mortuary material culture*

Early Group burials were all in coffins except for Burial 307. It is possible that other burials without coffins have not survived from this period, since the length of time in the ground and the possibility of disturbance from later interments would have affected preservation. As noted, early coffins by definition were four-sided and tapered toward the foot. Very few of the early burials had items in the coffin with the deceased, but again poor preservation due to the extended length of time in the ground may be a factor in the low frequency of burial artifacts. It is possible that decomposition claimed all trace of some pins, buttons, or cloth in some of these burials.

Thirteen individuals had copper-alloy straight pins. The pins were mainly on the crania, with some in the neck area. Only one person, the infant in Burial 226, had a pin in another area of the body (the innominate or hip). The exception is in keeping with the overall findings on pin placement: young children were most likely to have been wrapped and pinned all along the body (see Chapter 11). Burial 361 had a pewter button that might have fastened a shirt collar. Burial 250 also had a button, of copper alloy, that was found in the pelvic area along with an iron mass and a bead, suggesting a talisman or memento rather than clothing. A textile pseudomorph (a corrosion product that permeated the fibers and replaced them, creating an exact replica) was recovered from Burial 121, the only evidence of cloth from the Early Group. It is likely most individuals were shrouded.

Most of the beads recovered at the African Burial Ground belong to this period: two of the individuals at the cemetery who were buried wearing strung beads, Burial 340 (112 beads at the waist and wrist) and Burial 226 (8 beads at the neck), are in the Early Group, and a single bead was found with an adult of undetermined sex in Burial 250. Since beads are unusual in graves at this cemetery, their presence in three Early Group interments is significant. The beads recovered with the infant in Burial 226 are unusual for yet another reason: they were characteristic of West African manufacture (see Chapter 13.C). The bead from Burial 250 was recovered from the central part of the coffin, possibly near the pelvis, in association with an iron mass, a pewter tack, and a copper-alloy button. The beads are discussed in Chapter 13.

6.D. *Spatial distribution*

In this section and the corresponding sections of Chapters 7 through 9, we discuss burial distribution and spatial groupings that we have discerned. No attempt is made to discuss the location of each individual burial. Early Group burials were distributed over the entire site from east to west (Figure 6.1a-e). They were missing from the area north of the fence line, which we believe was not in use until the final quarter of the 18th century (see Chapter 9). All but two Early Group burials were interred with their heads to the west, and all were laid supine.

A concentration of burials that are assigned to the Early Group occurred in the western part of the excavated site, extending from the north-south leg of former Republican Alley eastward to the alley behind Lot 13. The distribution of the concentration was relatively loose, and the concentration itself may well be “false” because building construction obliterated so much of this part of the cemetery. The most clearly defined concentration within the Early Group is located approximately between grid coordinates E65 and E90. We refer to this as the middle concentration. The third area considered is the far eastern part of the excavated site. It is likely that early burials originally extended to the west and north of this area but were either destroyed or not excavated archaeologically. The eastern group is treated separately here because these burials are in a defined area that subsequently became a dump for pottery waste material.

Between the middle and eastern concentrations, from grid coordinates 110E to 160E, there were only five Early Group burials. However, excavations were not complete in the area north of grid line 75S and east of grid line 130E, and it is possible additional early interments are still in place. Also, based on the stratigraphic relationships reconstructed in the vicinity, the area south of grid line 75S and between grid 130E and 150E may have been eroded or leveled at some time in the past, resulting in a loss of early burials that may have been situated on the hillside. Graves that were placed here subsequently, however, survived.

Burial orientation in the Early Group was uniformly west-headed with one exception, Burial 237/264 (probably a single individual—see section 6.E). The distribution of precise orientation angles within the west-headed early burials differs from that of later groups (Figure 5.4). There is no peak frequency at grid west (90° west of grid north) as there is for later groups. The most frequent orientation ($n = 5$ burials) is at 96° west of north, but the rest of the graves were fairly evenly distributed at more northerly and more southerly orientations.

The western concentration

The western early concentration (shown on Figure 6.1b) includes thirteen to fifteen burials: Burials 18, 23, 29, 33, 34, 38, 48, 68, 72, 78, 83, 84, 88, and possibly 26 and 44.

Burials 18 and 23 are notable because grave markers associated with them were recovered archaeologically. As we saw in Chapter 3, this is the part of the site where the

early ground surfaces were preserved beneath the fill. The grave markers consisted of flat, squared stones that appeared to have been placed upright at the heads of the graves.

The flat, rectangular stone associated with Burial 18 was still in place, vertical and perfectly aligned with the grave and coffin (Figure 5.8). The deceased was between thirty-five and forty-five years old, probably a woman (the sex could not be determined with full certainty due to the deterioration of the bones). Other than the coffin nails and a remnant of coffin lid identified as red cedar, no other artifacts were recovered from the burial. No engraving was observed on the stone. Had the stone ever been engraved, some trace might have survived since the stone was covered with soil rather than exposed to the air. The stone was not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center, and it was never measured or identified as to type of stone or geologic provenience.

The stone that is thought to be associated with Burial 23 (Figures 5.10 and 5.11) was askew, but otherwise appeared to have been in place at what turned out to be the head of the grave. A line of cobbles, also possibly marking the grave at the surface, was recorded just to the south (see Figure 6.1b). Burial 23 held a man between twenty-five and thirty-five years old. This burial and the adjacent Burial 68 (of a man between twenty-one and twenty-five) had virtually identical coffins, probably from the same coffin-maker (see Chapter 10).

Burial 38, which held a young woman between twelve and eighteen years of age, may have belonged to a grave grouping that included Burials 18, 23, and 68. The cluster also may have included Burial 78, which held the remains of an individual of undetermined sex, between sixteen and nineteen years of age. Burial 78, however, was distinct in that it had a much more northerly orientation than the others. Indeed, it was the most northerly-skewed of the head-to-west burials from the site. Burials 33 and 34, very partial and disturbed burials (possibly representing a single individual), may have been originally part of the group, but their condition makes assignment to the Early Group tentative.

The presence of grave markers raises the possibility that later interments were deliberately placed with reference to these early graves. Therefore, *burial groupings that span time periods* must be considered, not only here but also in other locations at the site where surface markers might once have been present but did not survive archaeologically. Figure 6.4 shows burials from all temporal groups, and should be compared to Figure 6.1b.

Burials 24 and 27 (young children) are assigned to the Middle Group, but might have been positioned deliberately between Burials 23 and 78 (center left in Figure 6.4). Burial 27 had a very northerly orientation, as though it were aligned with Burial 78. Burials 53 and 55 may have been placed deliberately among existing, Early Group burials as well.

Later burials overlying Burials 18 and 38 included Burial 7 on the north side of Burial 18 and Burials 11, 5, 6 and 30, which clustered above Burial 38 (upper center in Figure 6.4). All of these later burials

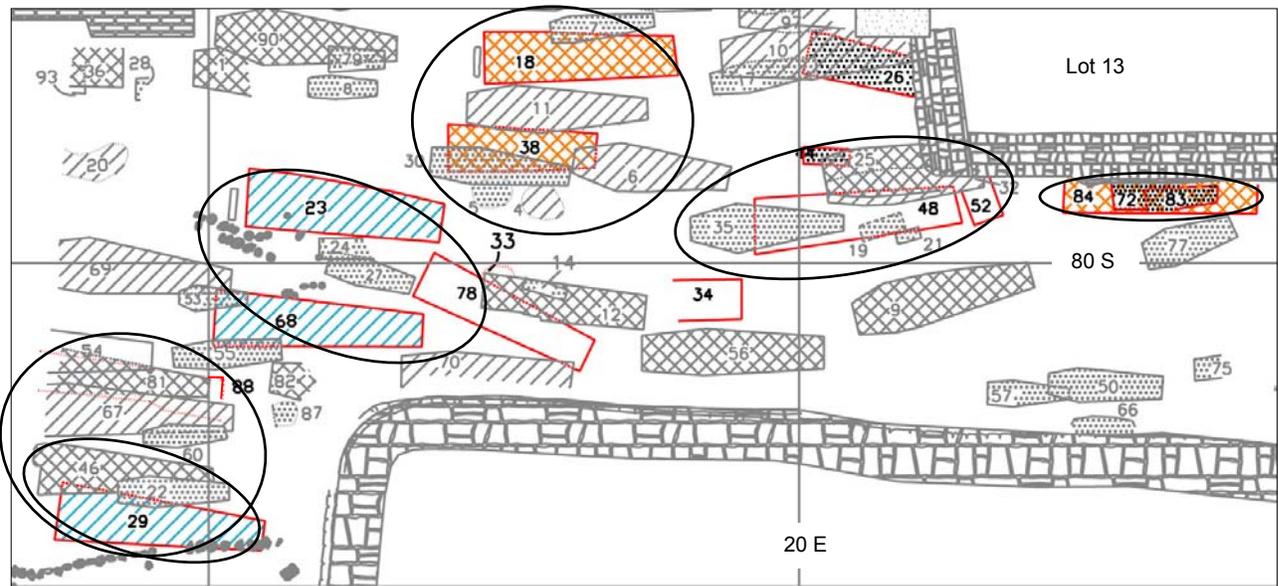


Figure 6.4.
Detail (5W to 35E) of the southwestern portion of the site plan (Figure 1.7), showing all temporal groups. Early Group burials are shown in color. Possible clusters mentioned in the text are circled.

may have been added to a group anchored by the early burials 18 and 38. Burial 6, however, which is off-set to the east of the others, is assigned to the Late Group and may have been aligned with other late interments rather than with underlying early graves.

Burials 54, 81, 67, 60, 46 and 22 may have been deliberately placed above Early burials 29 and 88 (at left in Figure 6.4). Burial 29 held a man between thirty-five and forty-five years of age; Burial 88 held an individual of undetermined sex and age. Prior to uncovering Burials 22, 46, and 29, excavators had recorded a line of small cobbles, which ran east-west just south of the burials. The line was three to four feet above the Burial 29 coffin. The grave marker may be associated with Burial 29 (or alternatively with Burial 47 to the south; the latter association was assumed in the field), or may have formed a boundary marker between two grave groups. It is possible Burial 46 was deliberately placed next to the man in the marked Burial 29, and that Burial 22, a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years in age, who was interred later, was deliberately placed immediately above the two without disturbing them at all.⁶

An apparent cluster of burials at the southwest corner of Lot 13 (in the upper right corner of Figure 6.4) includes burials from our Early and Middle temporal groups. Burials 25 and 32 (described in Chapter 7) were placed above Burials 44, 48 and 52, and Burial 35 overlay the west half of Burial 48. Highly disturbed graves of young children or infants, Burials 19 and 21, were also found with the cluster, though perhaps these were interred later.

⁶ See the burial descriptions in Volumes 2 and 3 for additional detail and alternative sequences for all burials.

Of course, the intensive re-use of the cemetery in this area may account for the overlapping graves, and the interpretation that perceived groupings were deliberate, spanning long time periods, is tenuous. Still, the stone and cobble grave markers provide added support for such an interpretation.

The middle concentration

Approximately between the east-west grid coordinates 65E and 90E a concentration of early burials has been identified (shown on Figure 6.1c), comprising Burials 120, 121, 155, 177, 182, 200, 202, 221, 226, 227, 250, 261, 263, 272, 279, 280, 281, and 282. “Gaps” in the overall distribution of burials that *may* have been caused by construction disturbance lie to the east and to the west of this concentration, but nevertheless it appears to be real. In general, the middle cluster has a coherence to it, attributable to a fairly regular arrangement of graves with little variation in orientation.

The significance of the concentration is a matter of conjecture. One possibility is that the distribution simply reflects the topography of the cemetery. This area was apparently relatively flat, forming a small “terrace” on the hillside that sloped down toward the east. Burials continued to be concentrated in this general area in later periods. Figure 3.17 shows the distribution of burial elevations across the site, and the “flat” area between approximately 50E and 100E is apparent.

We do not discount, however, the possibility that this group represents ties of kinship, religion, or ethnicity. No common attributes other than burial orientation, time period, and burial location left behind any trace, a function, perhaps, of the general lack of preserved material culture.

The burials include 12 adults and just 5 children,⁷ but early child and infant graves may not have survived. In several cases, co-interment of children with adults was suggested by the arrangement of burials. The most likely pairs are Burials 121 and 202, Burials 226 and 221, and Burials 250 and 249.

Burial 121, which held a child between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old, was buried above the twelve-to-eighteen year old in Burial 202, identified as a probable female (Figure 6.5). The two burials either were interred at the same time or Burial 121 was deliberately placed within the Burial 202 grave at a later date. The coffins were essentially aligned, the child’s centered atop the adult’s. The grave shaft of another early burial, Burial 202, was directly adjacent to the north of the grave shaft of Burial 120, and though the two did not share a grave and were aligned slightly differently, it is possible this placement was deliberate, also. Burial 120, which held a woman between twenty-

⁷ One burial in the cluster, Burial 261, consisted only of coffin remains and no skeletal remains were recovered. Burial 126/143, representing a later interment of two children in the same coffin, truncated the majority of Burial 261. The excavators of Burial 261 believed that all three individuals were interred in the same grave shaft, and in fact the coffins seem to have been oriented exactly parallel to each other. It seems clear, however, that Burial 261 pre-dated Burial 126/143, and there was apparently no effort to preserve the former when the second burial took place.

five and thirty-four years old, was disturbed when a later grave was dug (Burial 119), at which time long bones from Burial 120 were placed in a small pile against the south side of the Burial 202 coffin (Figure 6.6).



Figure 6.5.
In situ photograph of Burial 121, which held a child, within the grave shaft of Burial 202. The Burial 202 coffin outline is barely discernible to the left of the child's coffin. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Figure 6.6.
In situ photograph of displaced bones from the woman in Burial 120. They had been disturbed when a later grave was being dug, and the gravedigger had placed them in a small, neat pile alongside the coffin of neighboring Burial 202. North is to right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

The infant in Burial 226 was interred atop Burial 221, which held a man between the ages of thirty and sixty. It is possible that Burial 226 had a grave shaft of its own within that of Burial 221, in which case it was interred at least slightly later in time. Alternatively, Burial 226 was interred at the same time as Burial 221, and the soil distinction was the result of the decay of Burial 226. The infant, as noted in section 6.C, was buried wearing a strand of fired-glass beads that were probably made in West Africa.

Burials 250 and 249 may also form a deliberate pair; in this case, however, the infant (Burial 249) was placed above the foot of the adult's coffin, slightly to one side. Burial 250 held an adult of undetermined age and sex; the infant in Burial 249 was between six and sixteen months old.

It is also possible that the infants in Burials 263 and 272 were placed deliberately near the woman in Burial 120. The only other child, between seven-and-a-half and twelve-and-a-half, was in Burial 182; the grave was separate from any adult's.

The above cases indicate that burial of young children within or adjacent to the graves of adults was preferred by the period when the Early Group was interred. As discussed in Chapter 5, we have identified this as a mortuary practice that was common, though not universal, at the African Burial Ground. The relationships between the young woman and child in Burials 121 and 202 or between the man and the infant in Burials 226 and 221 can only be guessed at. However, we interpret these co-interments as evidence that burial with some kind of kin was preferred, however "kin" might have been defined.

As in the western concentration, the possibility that grave clusters spanned time periods was explored. Where early graves were truncated and partially destroyed by later interments, we are less inclined to posit a deliberate grouping. Burials 120, 155, 261, 279, and 280 were all partially destroyed by later burials. Burial 227 was truncated on the west, probably during the interment of Burial 256, from the femur heads up, but the skull had apparently been replaced within the coffin, suggesting a measure of regard for the earlier burial.

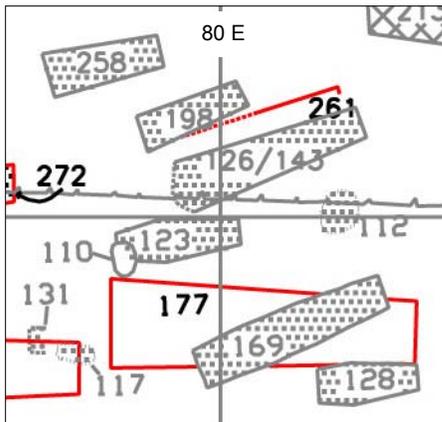


Figure 6.7.
Detail (90S/80E) of site plan (Figure 1.7) showing later child burials near Early Group Burial 177.

Only Burials 250 and 177 were left undisturbed by later interments. Burial 249 lay immediately above the southeast corner of Burial 250, and the two have been discussed above as a possible paired interment. Burial 177 was overlain by two later children's graves with hexagonal coffins (Burials 128 and 169), and a string of other children's graves (including Burials 123, 126/143, 198, and 258) lay to its north (Figure 6.7). Highly disturbed children's remains also lay nearby (Burials 110, 112, 117, and 131), probably from the latest period of the cemetery. It is impossible to know whether this concentration of children's graves had any reference to the early Burial 177 or other early graves nearby.

An anomaly and a possible burial cluster: Burial 207

We noted in Chapter 4 that Burial 207, which held a probable woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, was anomalous in that the coffin was apparently of the tapering shape even though the grave appears to be late. The Late Group assignment of the burial is based on a single tiny piece of pearlware found in the soil within the cranium, and on its position overlying numerous child burials. Field records indicate that the top of the burial was somewhat disturbed, and we consider the possibility that the pearlware sherd was introduced into the cranium through silting of soil from an overlying midden.

It is possible to discern an east-west line of adult burials that includes Burial 207 and Early Group Burials 250, 221, 202, and 120 to its west (Figure 6.8). This possible alignment, along with the tapered coffin type and the possibility that the late artifact in the burial soil may be intrusive, point to a possible early assignment for Burial 207.

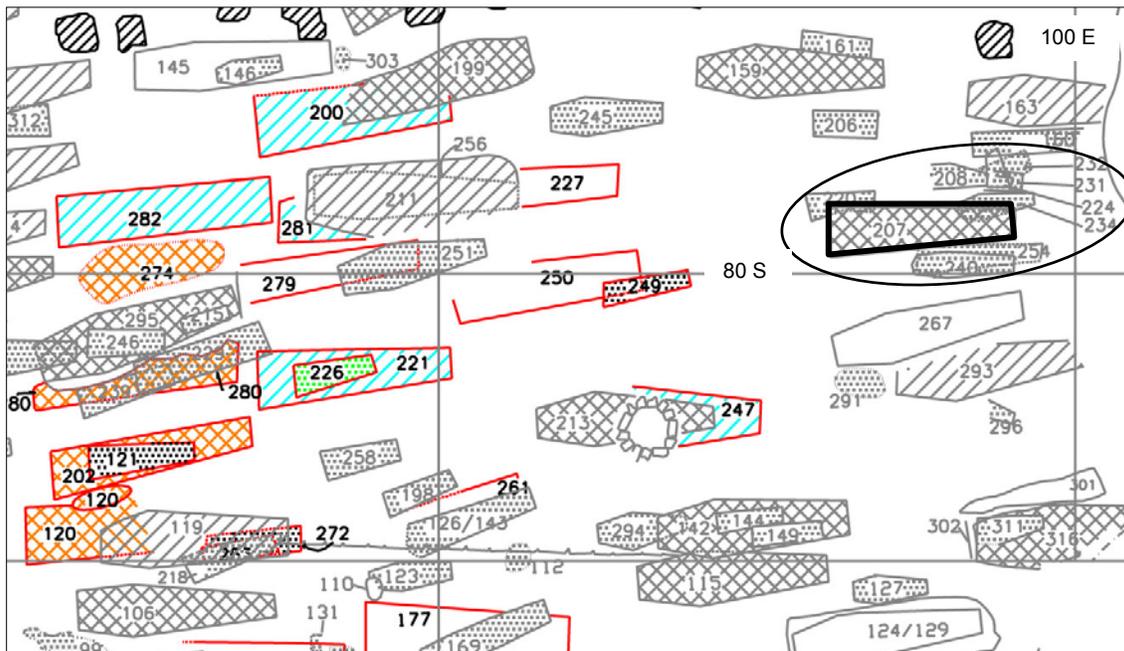


Figure 6.8.

Detail (73-92S/70-100E) of west-central portion of site plan (Figure 1.7) showing all temporal groups. Early Group burials are shown in color, with Late Group Burial 207 shown with coffin outlined in black. The cluster of children's burials beneath Burial 207 is circled.

The burials that underlay the edges of Burial 207 included Burial 220, Burial 232, the shared grave of Burials 224/231/234, Burial 240, and Burial 254. These were all graves of children and infants. Immediately to the east was a large area of construction disturbance that must have obliterated numerous additional graves.

If Burial 207 is actually from the early period, then all of the underlying children's burials also would be early. In this case, the mortuary demographic profile for the period could be modified to include seven additional subadults (with ages ranging from infancy

to four years), and their spatial concentration might point to a special, separate placement of at least some children within the cemetery (in an area that may have extended eastward where graves have been obliterated). Only one of these children had an associated artifact: Burial 254, a young child had a silver pendant at his or her neck (see Chapter 13).

There is one other piece of evidence that *may* point to an early date for Burial 207. Oak pollen made up seven percent of pollen types on the coffin lid, just nine tenths of a percent in the grave fill, and one and four tenths of a percent in the stomach of Burial 207. It is possible that the “grave fill” sample is from the later midden that overlay this area, but the “coffin lid” sample is derived from the original soil into which the grave was dug, with an early pollen spectrum in which oak was prominent (i.e., prior to the clearance of lower Manhattan; see Appendix G for the pollen analysis).

This alternative chronological interpretation of Burial 207 and surrounding graves should be considered when analyzing change over time at the cemetery. However, in this report we have assigned Burial 207 to the Late Group and place the children’s graves in the middle groups.

The eastern concentration

Seven early burials were identified in the southeastern corner of the excavation site (shown on Figure 6.1e), Burials 340, 361, 382, 387, 388, 389, 402 and 432. As noted, these do not necessarily represent an original concentration of graves, because the limited preservation and excavation in the eastern part of the site make it impossible to gauge the actual distribution. In this area, stoneware pottery waste was dumped on the surface of the cemetery beginning sometime after about 1730 (see Chapter 4). Some of the burials assigned to the Early Group here contain these sherds and pieces of kiln furniture, though not in the same high concentrations as later burials that were clearly dug into the midden. It is possible the waste material is intrusive into these graves from later dumping; alternatively, they represent interments that overlap in time with the dumping. Burials 387, 388, and 389 may post-date the beginning of the stoneware accumulation, and thus fall late in the early group. Each had stoneware within the grave shaft, though not the high volume of others to their south and east – they appear to have been at the edge of the dumping area (or else they were pre-dump but had debris mixed into upper layers through later disturbances).

The discernment of burial clusters in the eastern area is impossible due to the partial excavation. There is one *possible* north-south alignment of graves running from Burial 382 on the north southward through Burials 388, 387, 402, and 340, which might reflect a contour in the slope. Otherwise, the proximity of Burials 389, 432, 388, and 387 is noted as a possible cluster, with the latter two considered a pair. Burials 388 and 387 were nearly identical in terms of grave shaft shape and coffin style (see Chapter 10). Burial 388 was of an adult woman whose age could not be determined, Burial 387 of a man 34 to 44 years old.

6.E. *Unique and unusual burials*

There are many distinctive interments at the African Burial Ground, and most are described in this report in one place or another. Early Group Burial 340, for example, was described in Chapter 5. Here and in Chapters 7 through 9, burials that warrant special mention and/or are not dealt with elsewhere are described under this heading.

South-headed and coffin-less burials

To the west of the middle concentration (Figure 6.1c), there were two very poorly preserved interments identified as Burials 237 and 264, which are probably the remains of a single burial. This grave appears to have been oriented with the head to the south. Burial 237 consisted of partial remains, completely truncated above the pelvis. Burial 264 was immediately adjacent to the west and parallel, and consisted only of partial right leg bones oriented exactly the same way, and coffin wood remains.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, head-to-west burial was clearly the norm at this cemetery. The deceased was probably an adult, but sex and age could not be determined from the surviving bones. No artifacts other than coffin remains were found with the burial. The other south-headed burials at the cemetery are in the far eastern area and have been placed with the middle rather than the earlier temporal group. No explanation for the unusual orientation can be offered at this time. Although it is possible this was a Muslim burial, with the deceased originally placed on the side and meant to face east, the presence of a coffin makes such an interpretation less tenable.

Burials 307 and 308 were located to the east of the middle concentration, in a very disturbed part of the cemetery (Figures 6.1c-d). It is not possible to say with certainty that they are isolated from other early burials; this apparent spatial separation may be a function of the area's disturbance. They may have been aligned with each other, though the head of one was about three feet from the foot of the other. One, Burial 307, was buried with no coffin, and it was the only coffin-less grave in the Early Group. It had been truncated by a later interment, and contained only a cranium and right shoulder and arm. The remains were identified as those of a probable male between forty-five and fifty-five years old. It is possible he was a stranger and newly-arrived in the town and no one provided him with a coffin when he died; or, alternatively, that his survivors or his household could not afford a coffin.

The presence of the coffin-less burial and of the south-headed burial(s) in the Early Group raise questions about whether social characteristics or types of death left distinctive material signatures. The fact that these graves were located somewhat apart from the concentration in the middle area might lend support to an interpretation that the deceased were different in some way.

Burial 247: a secondary burial

Burial 247 is a possible early interment that lay immediately beneath Burial 213. The skeletal remains were identified as those of a probable man from thirty-five to fifty years old. The bones were completely disarticulated (with the possible exception of a few vertebrae), and had been placed in a small pile in the east end of the later grave of Burial 213. It appears that the Burial 213 gravedigger removed and stacked the bones with care, as was also observed in the case of Burial 120, as noted in our discussion of the middle concentration. Excavators suggested that some remnants of the Burial 247 coffin might have been moved to surround the bones, as if to maintain an enclosed effect.



Burial 247 simply may have been an early grave that was inadvertently disturbed. But the later Burial 213 was so precisely aligned as to appear deliberate. This may have been a case of deliberate, rather than chance, secondary burial. (See Chapter 7 for a similar case from the Middle Group, Burial 175).

Figure 6.9.

In situ photograph of Burial 247. The bones had been placed at the foot of the grave, presumably at the time Burial 213 was interred. The position of the foot-end of the Burial 213 coffin (which had been removed when the photograph was taken) can be seen at the bottom of the photograph (where the label “B247” was placed). North is to the left, and the ruler is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Burial 404: empty coffin

Burial 404 was located in a very disturbed area at the rear of Lot 18, but excavators believed that the coffin was empty prior to the disturbance. Although the coffin had collapsed, it appeared to be complete. Drawings indicate it was probably four-sided, tapering toward the foot, although excavators notes state it was hexagonal. Disturbances were observed at the foot end, and also on the south side adjacent to the head of the coffin. Nails were recorded around the perimeter of the coffin, mainly at the bottom. Excavators emphasized that the coffin bottom was represented by the *in situ* nails as well as an “extremely thick” organic stain. It was their opinion that the body had been removed from the coffin at some time prior to its decomposition. Though we should keep in mind the possibility that the burial had been disturbed from above during a construction episode in the past, it is difficult to envision the complete removal of the remains while leaving the coffin relatively intact.

In this and other cases of empty coffins (from later temporal groups), there are two possibilities: the deceased were removed from their coffins after interment, or empty coffins were interred intentionally. The first possibility points to *at least* two scenarios: secondary burial and grave robbing. The second possibility (empty coffins interred intentionally) also points to at least two scenarios, one alluding to religious sensibilities and practices, and the other to deception and stealth. A ritual burial, with the coffin representing an individual whose body could not be recovered, is possible. A sham burial, to mark a death that did not occur, is also possible.

CHAPTER 7. THE MIDDLE GROUP

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Most burials in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground are placed in the main or Middle Group, by default, because they were not clearly assignable to earlier or later cohorts. Yet even though the temporal groupings are relative rather than absolute, it is likely that burials assigned to the Middle Group were indeed interred during the middle decades of the 18th century. For convenience, we describe the period of New York's history from approximately 1735 to 1760, when the cemetery would have been intensively used.

A sketch of the town and the development in the area of the burial ground is presented, along with an overview of the African population and the mortuary sample. The material culture and spatial distribution of the Middle Group burials are then discussed, followed by a description of some unique and unusual interments.

7.A. *The town*

The city was in an economic recession in the 1730s. Aside from the almshouse complex, begun in 1735 on the Common, construction in the area near the African Burial Ground was minimal. But the city's inexorable northward push soon resumed. Residential and commercial development proceeded up the west side of Broadway, to present-day Warren Street (at the southwest corner of the burial ground). Development on the east side of town extended even further north. The relative remoteness of the African Burial Ground also was reduced when the road along the east side of the Common (Park Row) was cut through to the Bowery, and Pearl Street was extended westward. Two pleasure grounds northwest of the cemetery, the Ranelagh Gardens and the Vauxhall Gardens, drew city residents beyond the settled edge of the town (see the Grim, Maerschalk, and Montessor Plans [Figures 2.9, 2.10, and 3.2], and Harris et al. 1993; Homberger 1994; Hunter Research 1994).

The Corselius/Crolius and Remmey pottery works were located in the eastern part of the Van Borsum patent by 1741. These pottery works shared space with the African Burial Ground, and at least one of them used a portion of the cemetery as a dump for waste material from the kilns. A palisade that spanned the width of the city was erected in 1745. It crossed the southern portion of the African Burial Ground and burials were probably restricted to the area north of its line-of-march. While the palisade stood, access from the town to the cemetery required passing through a gate.

The Common drew large crowds in 1739-40, and again in 1741. Thousands of whites and blacks turned out to hear evangelist George Whitefield preach in 1739-40 at the height of a surge in religious enthusiasm called the Great Awakening (Burrows and Wallace 1999:157-58). Protestant churches during this time were reluctant to accept Africans, but the evangelicals called for the baptism and humane treatment of captives. There is no evidence that the enslaved Africans of New York embraced evangelical Protestant faith as a result, though some contemporaries would suggest that Africans were spurred to insurrection in 1741 by the preaching (see Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:192-193). The churches of New York did have black congregants, though few in number, during the middle decades of the 18th century. Only three burials of blacks were recorded, one in the Dutch Reformed churchyard in 1729 (a free black woman) and two in the churchyard of Trinity Lutheran in the 1740s, one of a free black woman and one of an illegitimate “mulatto” child (Reformed Dutch Church 1727-1804; Stryker-Rodda 1974:84-85).

A year after Whitefield’s visit, crowds assembled again to watch the executions of thirty enslaved Africans and four Europeans convicted of conspiring to burn the town. The Panic or “Conspiracy” of 1741 centered on a series of fires set during late March and early April. A grand jury concluded that the alleged arsonists were part of a wider network involving the city’s black population and a handful of European ringleaders. Over 200 people were arrested, with the aid of testimony coerced under threat, extricated through torture, or purchased through cash rewards. Underground activity involving the participation of both blacks and poor whites was exposed, highlighting the ability of people on the margins of society to move about, meet clandestinely, frequent taverns, plan and launch criminal actions, organize clubs, and forge unions with free persons.¹ Thirteen of the convicted Africans were burned at the stake and seventeen were hung. The hangings took place near the powder house at the south end of the Fresh Water pond, the burnings a bit further to the southeast (Figure 2.9). It is not known when and where the executed were buried. The corpses of some of those who were gibbeted were left in chains to rot (see Lepore 2005:170-171), the desecration of the corpses constituting both an added punishment of the convicted and a warning to the community.

Did city residents gather on the Common to celebrate Pinkster, the Dutch holiday of Pentecost (English Whitsuntide)? The holiday was marked in New Netherland from at least the 1640s. By the second half of the 18th century, Africans in New York colony and New England held distinctive celebrations, using town commons, for Pinkster and Negro Election Day, respectively. These festivals involved large gatherings for drumming,

¹ The events have been variously interpreted as a trumped-up conspiracy and subsequent “witch-hunt,” the actions of a theft ring that were prosecuted over-zealously, a true conspiracy but one that was limited in scope, or a proletarian “revolutionary conspiracy, Atlantic in scope” (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:177-179). The records of the events caution us, in any case, about separating the African community from other ethnic groups too absolutely: overlapping social and economic networks among African, Native American, Spanish, English, and Irish New Yorkers were revealed by the investigation. The primary source is Daniel Horsmanden’s *Journal*, published in 1744 (see Lepore 2005). For analyses of the conspiracy, see Stokes 1915-28 (4):569-575; Szasz 1967; Launitz-Schürer, Jr. 1980; Davis 1985; Foote 2004; Lepore 2005.

dance, food, drink, and lampooning typical of carnival. There is no documentary evidence for large-scale celebrations of black Pinkster in New York City.²

Legal restrictions on the economic pursuits of bondsmen and women were tightened in this period, thereby providing an unintended glimpse of how black New Yorkers sought to gain a foothold in the economy. In August 1740, for example, the Common Council passed a law restricting the marketing of produce, stating that

of Late Years great Numbers of Negros Indians and Molatto Slaves have Made it a common Practice of Buying, Selling and Exposing to Sale, not Only in houses, out houses & yards but Likewise in the Publick Streets Within this City, great Quantities of Boiled Indian Corn, Pears, Peaches, Apples and other kind of fruit which pernicious practice is not only Detrimental to the Masters Mistresses and Owners of such Slaves in Regard they Absent themselves from their Service: But is also productive of Encreasing if not Occasioning many and Dangerous fevours and other Distempers & Diseases in the Inhabitants in the same city [MCC 1675-1776 (4):497-98].³

Marketers who came into the city from the country and the Out Ward were exempted from the restriction and the penalty that accompanied it (public whipping or a 6s. fine payable by the slaveholder), so long as they had the permission of their legal master. The law refers not to the city's municipal markets, but to unregulated venues such as homes and streets where Africans bought produce for resale. Since it was already illegal to trade with enslaved persons without permission, the need for a special ordinance suggests there had been a noticeable lapse in enforcement.

7.B. *The population*

Census

The black population of New York grew substantially from the mid 1730s to the mid 1740s, census figures indicating a 42% increase. Children (defined as ten and under in 1737 and fifteen and under in 1746) account for the increase. Black residents numbered 2,444 in 1746. This was the 18th century high mark of 20.9% of the total population. The distribution by age and sex in four census years is shown in Table 7.1.

² For discussions of Pinkster in New York, see Lepore 2005:158-159; Hodges 1999:25, 221-223; Epperson 1999:94-96; Stuckey 1994; White 1991:95-106. In his novel *Satanstoe*, James Fenimore Cooper (1845[1912:66-79]) wrote a fictional account of a 1757 Pinkster holiday in New York City. The story locates the celebrations at the upper end of Broadway on the Common, with whites in attendance as spectators. Since no such public festival is recorded for the city, it is possible his story was based on oral tradition from the upper Hudson Valley area.

³ During the 18th century similar laws were passed in towns throughout the English colonies, reflecting widespread participation of the enslaved in local economies.

Table 7.1.						
Black population by age and sex, 1737-1756						
Year	Adults		Children		Age for children	Label in census
	(male)	(female)	(male)	(female)		
1737	674	609	229	207	<11	"black"
1746*	721	569	419	735	<16	"black"
1749*	651	701	460	556	<16	"black"
1756*	672	695	468	443	<16	"black"

Source: Green and Harrington (1932); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).
*Black adult males include 76 males over 60 in 1746, 41 males over 60 in 1749, and 68 males over 60 in 1756.

Imports of enslaved Africans into New York continued from both the Caribbean and Africa during the mid 1700s, although precise figures are difficult to reconstruct. It is possible that following the 1741 panic, when Africans from the Caribbean were implicated in the 1741 conspiracy, importation of captives directly from Africa increased.⁴ The sense among New York merchants was that the Caribbean colonies had been transporting troublesome captives to the northern colonies, and in fact there is evidence that seasoned insurrectionists from the islands played a role in the New York conspiracy (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:193-203). It is also possible that greater numbers of children, especially young girls, were brought to the city beginning in the 1740s due to greater demand for domestic labor and anxiety about insurrection by seasoned men. The preponderance of girls over boys and of adult men over women in the 1746 census probably reflects these market shifts. As noted in Chapter 13 of the Skeletal Biology Report (Blakey et al. 2004b), the local urban demand for girls would be satisfied via the direct African trade.

Mortuary sample

Nearly half of the burials excavated at the African Burial Ground are placed in the Middle Group (n=199). Burials are listed in Table 7.2 and shown on the site plan in Figures 7.1a-e. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. An entry of "n/a" in the coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed, displaced, or re-deposited so that coffin presence/absence could not be determined. The age and sex profiles for the mortuary sample are shown in Figures 7.2 and 7.3. The age profile carries a caveat: we noted in Chapter 5 that the frequency of child burials in this cohort is higher than that in the overall skeletal sample, and proposed that some of these burials may actually belong in the Late-Middle or Late Groups, though there is no way to so assign them.

⁴ Lydon (1978:378, 387-88) compiled data showing that 70% of captives brought to New York Colony prior to 1742 were imported from American sources, with the ratio almost exactly reversed subsequently, and his information from shipping records indicates a marked increase in the African trade in the late 1740s.

Table 7.2.
Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B003	25	35	male		2	107	n	n/a
B008	0	0.5	undete	101	5	82.5	y	hexagonal
B009	35	45	male	90	25	89.5	y	hexagonal
B016	50	60	female	67	0	107	y	hexagonal
B017	4	6	undete	89	20	83.25	y	hexagonal
B019			undete	108	20	81.5	Y	unident.
B021			undete		20	87.5	n	rectangle
B022	2.5	4.5	undete	90	-1.5	96.5	y	unident.
B024	3	6	undete	92	5	87.5	y	rectangle
B025	20	24	female	96	20	87.5	y	unident.
B027	1.4	2.8	undete	74	5	88.5	y	hexagonal
B030	7	11	undete	92	10	86	y	hexagonal
B031	14	16	undete	90	-1	103.5	y	hexagonal
B032	50	60	male	100	23.5	86.5	y	hexagonal?
B035	8	10	undete	93	15	87.5	y	hexagonal
B039	5	7	undete	82	40	81.75	y	hexagonal
B041			undete	66	-11	99.5	n	unident.
B045	2.5	4.5	undete	86	-5	103.5	y	hexagonal
B046			female?	86	0	95.5	y	unident.
B047	35	45	male	94	0	103.5	y	hexagonal?
B049	40	50	female	82	40	87.5	y	hexagonal
B050			undete	90	30	87.5	y	hexagonal
B053	0.25	0.75	undete	90	0	87.5	y	hexagonal
B055	3	5	undete	93	0	92.2	y	hexagonal
B056	30	34	female	90	17	87.5	y	hexagonal?
B057	0.88	2.16	undete	90	25	87.5	y	hexagonal
B066	0	0.16	undete	90	25	93.5	y	unident.
B069	30	60	male	82	-3.5	89	y (no cranium)	hexagonal?
B070	35	45	male	90	10	92.5	y (no cranium)	hexagonal
B073	20	30	female?	96	10	79	y	hexagonal
B074			n/a	97	15	80	n (empty coffin)	hexagonal
B075	0	0	undete	97	34	92.5	y	rectangle
B077	0.67	1.3	undete	110	35	88.5	y	hexagonal
B079	0.25	0.75	undete	90	6	82	y	tapered
B080			undete	88	40	87.5	y	hexagonal
B081			female	90	-3	93	y (no cranium)	unident.
B082	18	25	female	86	3	93	y (cranium only)	unident.
B085	0.25	0.75	undete	89	15	80.5	y	hexagonal

Table 7.2.
Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B087	4	6	undete	90	3	94	y (cranium only)	unident.
B090	35	40	female	90	4	81.5	y	hexagonal
B093			undete		-3	85	n	unident.
B094			undete	80	47	92.5	y	hexagonal
B096	16	18	male	71	47	94.5	y	hexagonal
B098	1	2	undete	90	20	81	y	hexagonal
B100			undete	90	20	80.5	y	hexagonal
B102	1.33	2.67	undete	90	20	79.5	y	hexagonal
B103			undete	86	20	79.5	y	hexagonal
B104	30	40	female	77	61	89.5	y	hexagonal
B111	0.67	1.33	undete	73	53	91.5	y	four-sided?
B112	0.25	0.75	undete		82.5	89	y	unident.
B113			undete	85	60	91.5	y	unident.
B114	45	50	male	100	91	94.5	y	hexagonal
B115	25	35	female	94	89	89.5	y	hexagonal
B116	45	55	male	100	81.5	95.5	y	hexagonal
B118			undete		55	94.5	n	unident.
B122	18	20	female	86	61	93	y	hexagonal
B126	3.5	5.5	undete	110	80.5	88	y	hexagonal
B127	0.67	1.33	undete	94	95	90	y	hexagonal
B128	0	0.17	undete	89	83	92.5	y	hexagonal
B129			n/a	97	95	91.5	n (empty coffin)	unident.
B130	1	2	undete	89	56	92	y	hexagonal
B133	1	2	undete	76	78	96	y	hexagonal
B136			undete		86.7	95	y	unident.
B142	25	30	female	95	90	88	y	hexagonal
B143	6	10	undete	111	80.5	88	y	hexagonal
B144	0	0.17	undete	99	90	88	y	four-sided
B148	12	18	undete	93	70	91.5	y	hexagonal
B149	0.5	1	undete	97	90	88	y	four-sided
B154	25	29	female	88	75	95.5	y	hexagonal
B156	30	60	female		115	66.5	y	unident.
B159	25	35	female	89	90	73.5	y	hexagonal
B160	3.5	5.5	undete	93	98.5	73	y	four-sided
B161			undete	83	90	74.5	y	rectangle
B163	18	24	male?	89	99	74.5	y	hexagonal
B167	8.5	12.5	undete	99	65	86.5	y	hexagonal
B169	5.5	9.5	undete	114	81	91.5	y	hexagonal?
B175	24	28	male		64.5	72	n	unident.
B189			undete	90	65.5	95.5	n	unident.
B206			undete		93	75.5	y	rectangle

Table 7.2.
Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B212	4.5	5.5	undete	85	55	82.5	y (no cranium)	hexagonal?
B213	45	55	female	93	85.5	84.5	y	hexagonal
B215	0	0.16	undete	111	72.5	81.5	y	four-sided?
B218	0.5	3.5	undete	105	73	89	y	unident.
B220			undete	95	92	78	y	tapered
B224	0.5	1.33	undete	86	97	77.5	y	four-sided
B231			undete		97	77.5	y	four-sided
B232			undete		97	77.5	y	unident.
B233			n/a	90	127	73	n	rectangle
B234	0	0.5	undete	107	96.5	77.5	y	tapered
B239	1.5	3.5	undete	109	70	83.5	y	tapered
B240	0.88	2.66	undete	90	95.5	79.5	y	hexagonal?
B245	2.5	4.5	undete	93	85.5	75	y	hexagonal
B246	0.5	2.9	undete	92	70	82.5	y	four-sided
B248	14	15	undete	90	118.5	71.2	n	unident.
B254	3.5	5.5	undete	96	97.5	79.5	y	unident.
B255	0	0.17	undete	90	117.9	79.3	y	hexagonal?
B256	40	60	male	93	79	77.5	y	hexagonal
B258	0	0.5	undete	104	78	85.5	y	four-sided
B260			undete	94	53.5	84.5	n	n/a
B265	0.5	1	undete	95	120	82	y	hexagonal?
B268	0	0.5	undete	96	125.5	74.5	y	hexagonal?
B270			male	97	123.5	84.5	y	unident.
B271	45	57	male	103	65	76.5	y	hexagonal
B275			female?	96	50	81	n	unident.
B277			undete	92	51	77.5	n	unident.
B283	0.33	0.67	undete	104	123	76	y	hexagonal
B284	21	28	male	86	115.5	80.5	y	unident.
B285	20	30	female	102	64	80.5	y	hexagonal
B286	4.4	8.5	undete	89	126	75	y	hexagonal?
B287	18	20	male	95	53	73.5	y (no cranium)	unident.
B288			undete		120	74.5	n	n/a
B291	3	5	undete		94	82.5	n	n/a
B292			undete		121	72.5	n	unident.
B293			male?	106	94	82.5	n	hexagonal
B294	0.5	1	undete	96	86.5	88	y	hexagonal
B295	30	50	female	110	70	82	y	hexagonal
B296	0.5	2.9	undete	68	98	84	n	unident.
B298	0.67	1.33	undete		123	66.5	n	unident.
B300			undete	106	125.5	76	y	hexagonal?
B301			undete	99	100.5	86	n	n/a

Table 7.2.
Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B301a			undete		100.5	86	n	n/a
B302			female?	99	99.5	88.5	n	n/a
B303	0.5	1	undete	100	76.5	73.5	n	n/a
B304	3	5	undete	90	109	81.5	y	tapered
B306	28	44	male	88	125	76.5	y	hexagonal
B310	44	52	female	99	60	75.5	y	hexagonal
B312	0	0.3	undete	94	67	75	y	rectangle
B315	30	40	female	88	127	83	y	hexagonal?
B318	7.5	14	undete	116	144	78	n	n/a
B320	2	4	undete	120	251.5	90	y	unident.
B321	1	2	undete	117	143	79.5	y	hexagonal
B324	25	35	female	90	132	69	y	hexagonal
B326	45	55	male	96	135	73.5	y	hexagonal
B328	40	50	female	88	241	84.5	y	hexagonal
B334			undete	111	251	89	y	unident.
B335	25	35	female	127	248	84.5	y	hexagonal
B336	0.5	1	undete	92	125.5	83	y	hexagonal?
B339			undete	86	123	83	n	unident.
B341			male	103	229.5	87.5	y	hexagonal
B344	25	35	male?		255	87.5	n	unident.
B345			undete		254	74.5	n	n/a
B347	0.5	1	undete	98	130	73.5	y	hexagonal
B348	1	2	undete	112	138	66	y	hexagonal
B349	0	0.5	undete	94	132	72	y	unident.
B350			undete		133.5	82	n	n/a
B351	50	60	male	106	145	84.5	y	hexagonal
B353	24	34	male	112	230	84.5	y	hexagonal
B355			undete		235	74.5	n	n/a
B356			undete	128	248	84.5	y	shared
B358			female?	126	230	89.5	n	unident.
B359			undete	95	127.5	84.5	n	unident.
B360			undete		235	75.5	y	unident.
B365			female	195	257.5	79.5	n	unident.
B366	34	62	undete	118	224	78	y	hexagonal
B367	25	35	female?		130	72	n	n/a
B368	10.5	13.5	undete	95	246.5	80.5	y	unident.
B370	2	4	undete	75	146.5	82	y	hexagonal?
B371	25	35	female	115	235	69	y	no coffin
B372	25	35	female		235	81	n	n/a
B374	0	0.25	undete	93	132.5	72	y	unident.
B375	16	18	female	120	253	74.5	y	no coffin
B378			undete		235	75.5	n (not excavated)	unident.

Table 7.2.
Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B379	30	40	male	109	215	71.5	y	hexagonal
B380	40	60	male	98	241	85	y	hexagonal
B383	14	18	female		245	79	y	hexagonal
B384	25	45	female	80	248	91.5	y	hexagonal
B385	40	60	female	121	251.5	86	y	hexagonal
B390	25	35	male	94	140	71.5	n	n/a
B393	-0.17	0.17	undete	119	211	84	y	hexagonal?
B394	16	25	undete		185	59.5	n	n/a
B396	6.5	8.5	undete	108	224	82.5	y	hexagonal
B397	30	40	female	100	229	87	y	hexagonal
B398	25	35	undete		255.5	93	n	n/a
B399	0	0.3	undete	106	213	78	y	rectangle
B400	25	35	male	85	130	65.5	y	hexagonal
B403	39	65	male	113	255.5	93	n	unident.
B405	6	10	undete	119	211.8	83.9	y	hexagonal?
B406	0	0.5	undete	280	253.5	68.25	y	hexagonal?
B408			male?		158	79.5	n/a	n/a
B409			n/a		184	88	n/a	n/a
B410			female	95	178	69.5	y	hexagonal
B412	0	0	undete		218.5	78.5	y	unident.
B414	39	59	male	112	165	74	y	unident.
B415	35	55	male	99	215	81	y	hexagonal
B417	9.5	14.5	undete		165	64.5	y	unident.
B418	30	55	male	106	163	64.5	y	unident.
B419	48	62	male	117	206.5	71.5	y	hexagonal
B420	35	45	male		186.5	69.5	n	n/a
B422			undete		212.5	86.5	n	unident.
B423			n/a		162	67	n (not excavated)	unident.
B424			undete		220	76	n/a	n/a
B425			female	107	253	79.1	n (not excavated)	hexagonal
B427	16	20	male?	91	179	69.5	y	hexagonal
B428	40	70	female	95	147.5	66.5	y	unident.
B429			undete		215	64.5	n (not excavated)	unident.
B430			n/a		215	84.5	n (not excavated)	unident.
B431			undete		162	79.5	n	unident.
B433			undete		160.5	79.5	n	n/a
B434			undete		155	79.5	n	no coffin

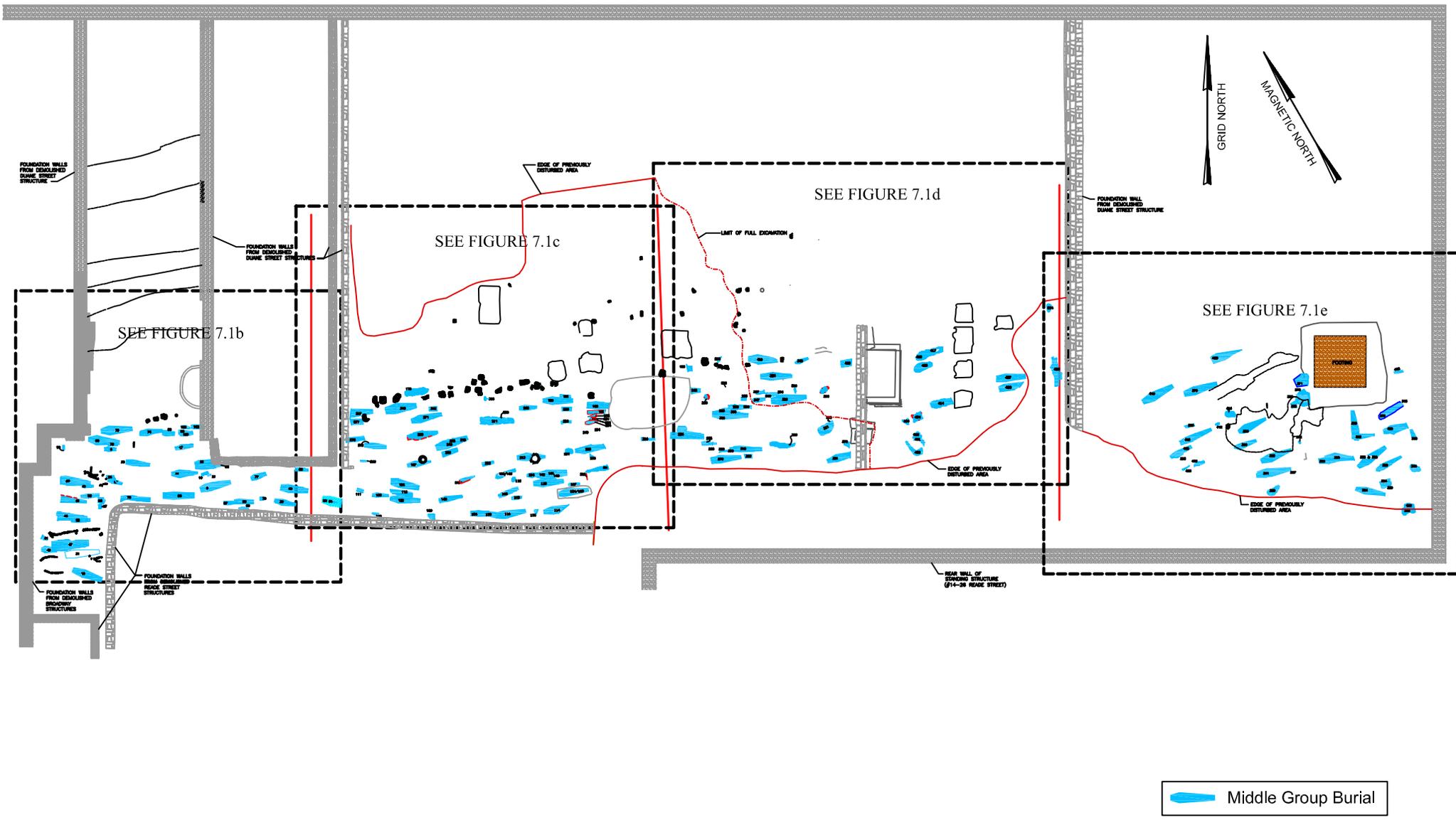


Figure 7.1.a
 Excavated Middle Group Burials
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

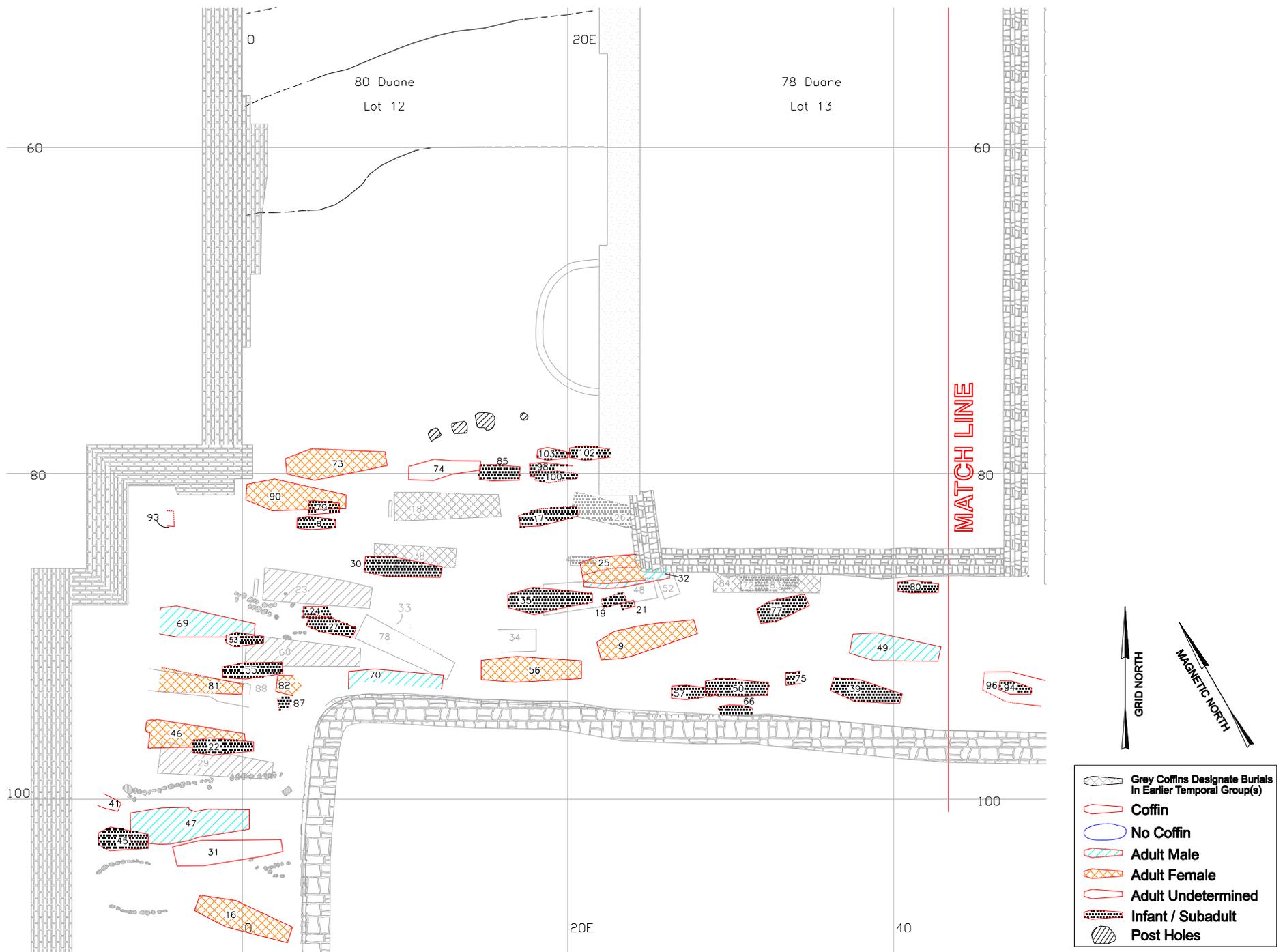


Figure 7.1.b
 Middle Group Burials, Western Area
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

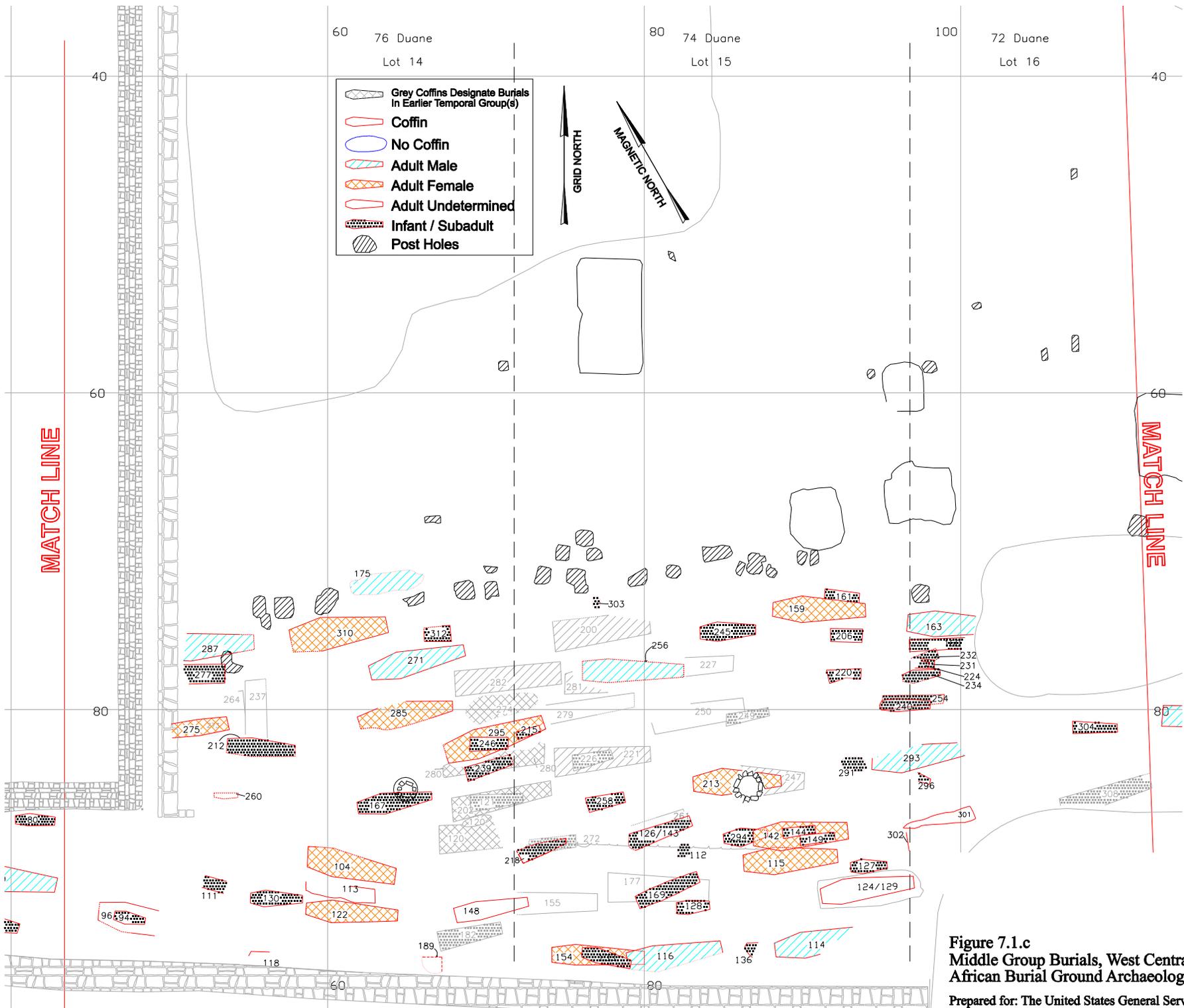


Figure 7.1.c
Middle Group Burials, West Central Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

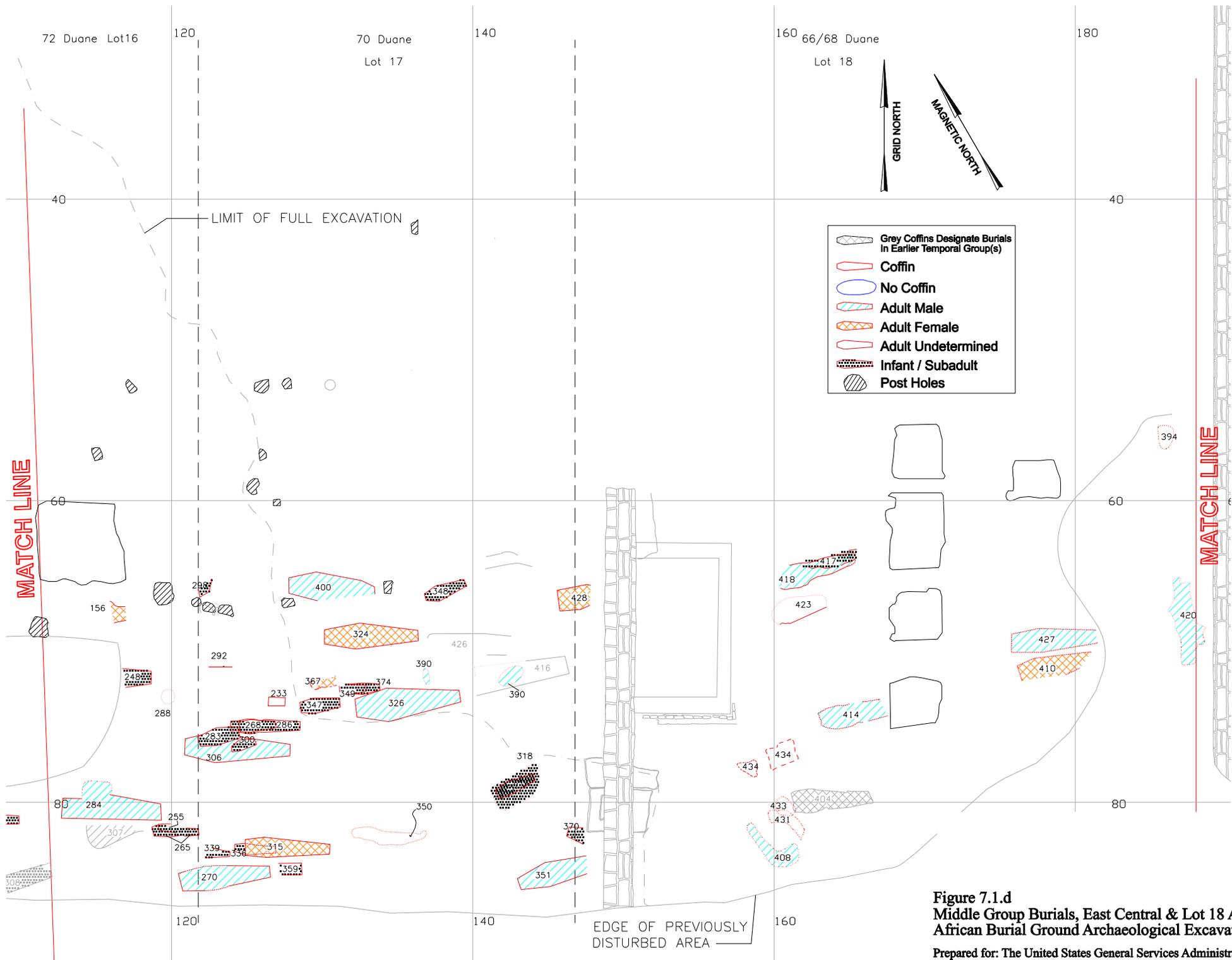


Figure 7.1.d
Middle Group Burials, East Central & Lot 18 Areas
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

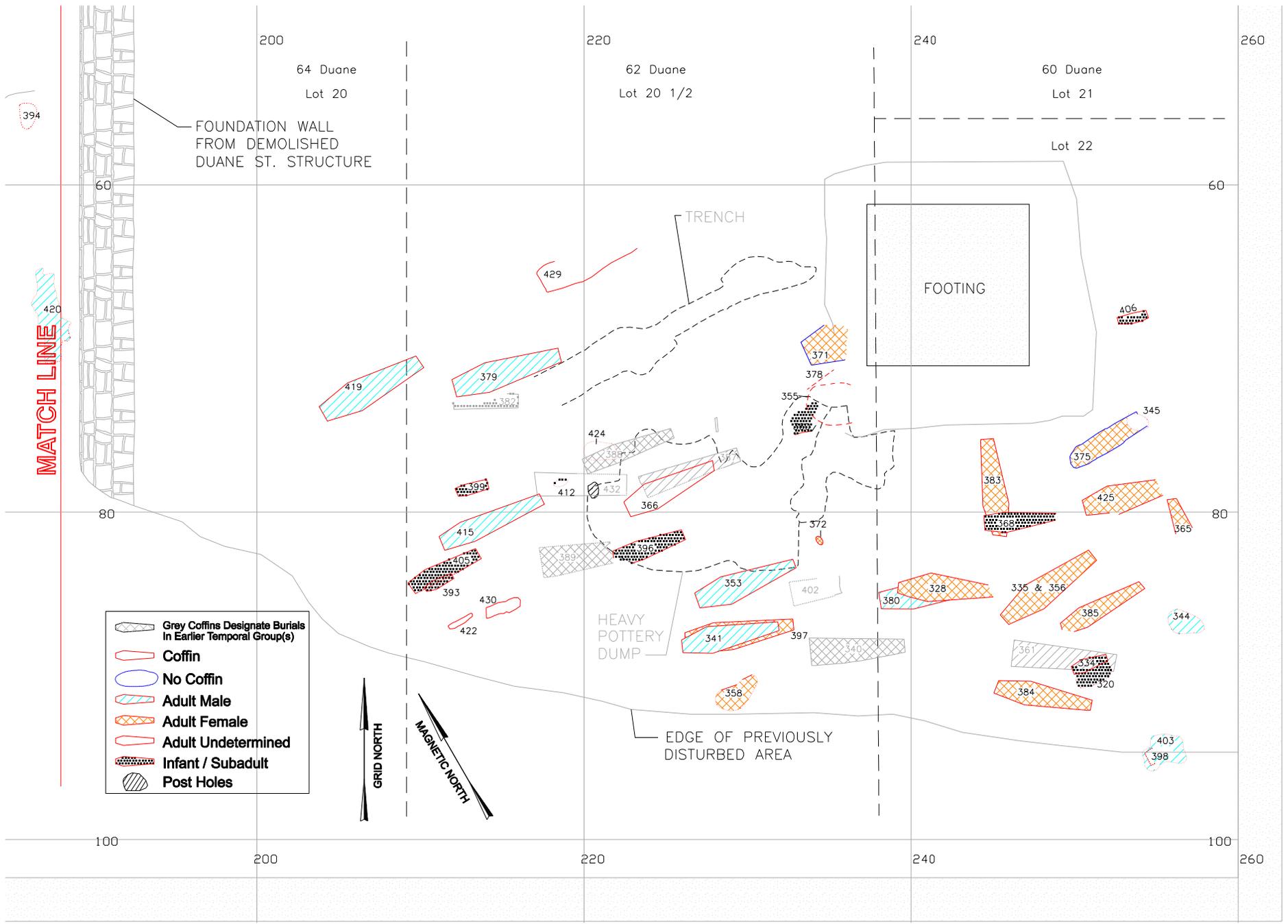


Figure 7.1.e
Middle Group Burials, Eastern Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

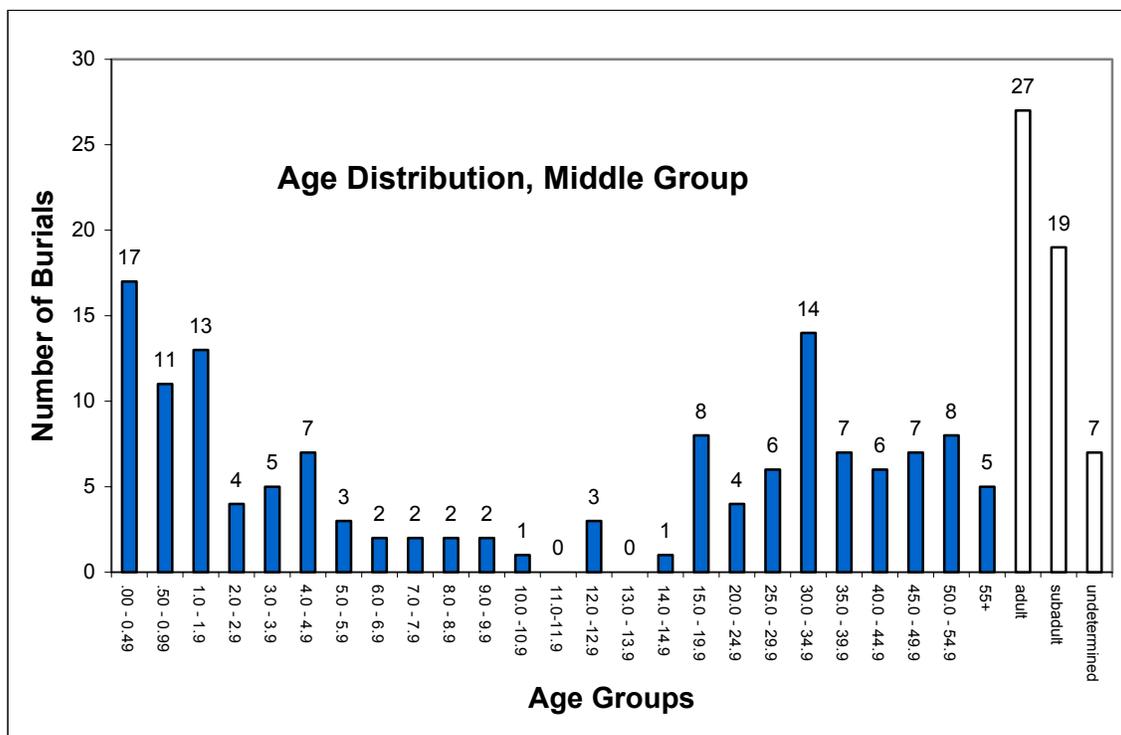


Figure 7.2.
Age distribution, Middle Group. White bars are individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

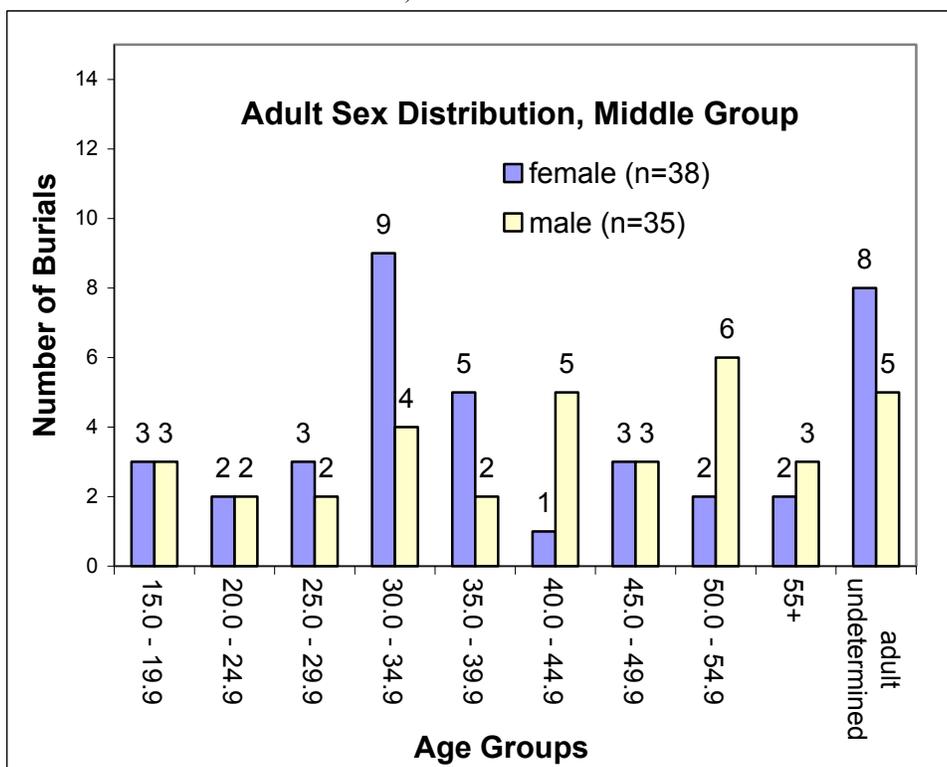


Figure 7.3.
Adult sex distribution, Middle Group.

7.C. Mortuary material culture

Adult coffins were hexagonal by definition for the Middle Group, while the smaller coffins for sub-adults (when identifiable) were hexagonal (33), rectangular (7), tapered (5), or uncertain but four-sided (7) in shape (see Chapter 10). There were 38 subadults buried in coffins for which shape could not be determined. Only three burials without coffins are assigned to the Middle Group, Burials 371, 375, and 434. While Burial 375 is placed in this group “by default,” there being no way of distinguishing it as either early or late, Burial 371 can be assigned with more confidence due to the fact that it was found two feet beneath another adult interment. Both of these coffin-less burials are located in the southeastern site area, and both had associated artifacts of particular note (see below). Burial 434 was never completely excavated.

Pins were found with 96 of the Middle Group burials, including 63 children (see Chapter 11). Eleven individuals from the Middle Group had evidence or possible evidence for clothing (see Chapter 12). These 11 represent only 7.9% of the 139 burials that had adequate preservation for such evidence. Two women (in Burials 22 and 213) had aglets (tiny metal tubes that enclose the ends of laces and cords), which probably indicate clothing or perhaps shrouds tied with laces. The men interred in Burials 326 and 415 clearly wore trousers, the first having a row of copper-alloy domed buttons indicating a trouser “fly” and the second having thirteen copper-alloy buttons at knees and hips, representing breeches. The remaining buttons were found singly or in pairs on five men, one woman, and one adult of undetermined sex. Cuff links were found at the left wrist of the man in Burial 341.

Jewelry (see Chapter 13) was scarce, with only four burials containing items that appear to have been worn as adornment. The woman in Burial 115 wore a ring with a plain band on the third finger of her left hand, and the woman in Burial 310 had a ring with blue glass insets, also on her left hand (it is not clear which finger). A third woman (Burial 371) had two enamel cuff link faces beneath her left upper arm. They had a turquoise ground and white-and-pink surface decoration. A young child had an exceptional item of adornment, a small silver pendant on a loop, similar to an earring, which may have been strung and worn at the neck. Glass beads from unknown contexts were recovered with Burials 428 (2 specimens) and 434 (1 specimen).

Other material culture from Middle Group burials included a small glass sphere associated with Burial 410, a small crystal cluster with Burial 55, and a quartz crystal with Burial 289; shells in the coffin of Burial 22 and on the coffin lids of Burials 348, 352, 365, and 387; and several nails that may have been deliberately placed in coffins. A clay ball (roughly the size of a marble) encircled with a decorative copper band was found with possible evidence for a cloth or leather pouch in Burial 375. This unique artifact is discussed in Chapter 14, along with the glass sphere and the crystals.

7.D. *Spatial distribution*

Burials assigned to the Middle Group were located throughout the excavated site except north of the fence line. For ease of discussion, the site is broken down into sub-areas, though these are defined more on the basis of preservation factors than spatial distribution of graves. The western area (Figure 7.1b) is west of grid line 45E, a line where a distinction can be seen between relatively sparse interments to the west and very dense burials to the east. This distinction may be the result of poor preservation to the rear of Lot 13, though topography probably played a role in the siting of graves, and there may have been a slope here that made it less desirable for interments (see Chapter 3). The west-central area (Figure 7.1c) extends from grid line 45E to grid line 110E. Burials are relatively dense within this sub-area, but the apparent sudden falling-off of burial frequency east of here is probably due to poor preservation, in particular because of a large construction disturbance at the rear of Lot 16. Again, we believe the original topography was important in the selection of gravesites, this sub-area having been relatively flat. The area east of Lot 16 between grid lines 110E to 150E is the east-central area (Figure 7.1d). Here burials are again quite dense, and this was probably another relatively level area within the cemetery. Further east, the rear of Lot 18 (Figure 7.1d) saw particularly heavy disturbance and is considered separately. Finally, the southeast area (Figure 7.1e) in and surrounding the pottery dump is discussed. We know that excavation was incomplete in the eastern part of the site, and burials once extended westward and northward of those exposed in this last area (i.e., there is a false appearance of a separate concentration here).

The distribution of burial orientations in the Middle Group burials is shown in Figures 5.4 and 7.1a-e. Overall, there were more southwesterly-oriented burials (relative to our grid) in this period than in the earlier group. It is possible the fence was present during part of our middle period, and that graves were oriented to it, but the town palisade, in place from 1745 through approximately 1760, may have been an even more notable landmark forming a roughly east-west axis by which to orient graves. It is also possible that more burials were oriented according to the position of the sun at sunset, due to stronger enforcement of the law restricting funerals to daylight.

It seems possible that the spatial syntax governing the placement of a grave included some standard of distance between individual interments. Even the graves of children are sometimes spaced apart from others, which suggests that at times the locations were selected not on the basis of familial/social relationships but on expedience and/or in reference to a spatial system (implicit or explicit) within which individual “plots” were appropriate. There were eight children’s graves in the Middle Group that appear to have been placed apart from other interments: Burials 39, 77, 80, 130, 258, 245, 304, and the double interment in Burial 126/143. In addition, Burials 128 and 169 were separate from others in the Middle Group; however, they overlay Early Group Burial 177 and deliberate placement with that adult cannot be ruled out. Gravediggers may have sited burials with reference to each other, leaving a certain minimum amount of space between, unless a particular relationship dictated that a grave should join or overlap an existing burial.

Overall, Middle Group burials were dispersed over much more of the excavated portion of the cemetery than were Early Group burials. It is possible that intervening areas between spatial concentrations of early burials were gradually “filled in” during subsequent decades. Though older locations were also reused, resulting in some superimposed burials, there appears to have been some effort to maintain the identity or integrity of early graves during the middle period. Thus, more than half of the early burials, including Burials 18, 23, 68, 29, 78, 34, 38, 48, 84/83, 182, 120, 202/221, 282, 200, 221/226, 177, 308, 416, 426, 404, 387, 388, 432, and 340, were left *undisturbed* by Middle Group interments, though some subsequently would be disturbed by Late Middle or Late burials.

The western area

Middle Group burials in the western part of the excavated site (Figure 7.1b) are found in several clusters. Some of the clusters include burials that are thought to belong to earlier or later temporal groups, as discussed in Chapter 6, and in order to illustrate this, Figure 7.4 shows burials from all temporal groups in this area of the site (compare to Figure 7.1b).

One cluster includes Burials 73, 90, 79 and 8 (top left in Figure 7.4). These are located at the rear of Lot 12, just south of the projected fence line that once marked the cemetery’s north side. Burials 73 and 90 were of women in their 20s and late 30s respectively, and the infants in Burials 79 and 8 may have been placed deliberately with the older of the two women. It is also possible that a later burial, Burial 1, which lay at a higher elevation and is assigned to the Late Group, was placed deliberately with these graves. The recorded stratigraphy suggests, however, that the surface of the earlier graves may have been covered over, obscuring their locations, before Burial 1 was interred.

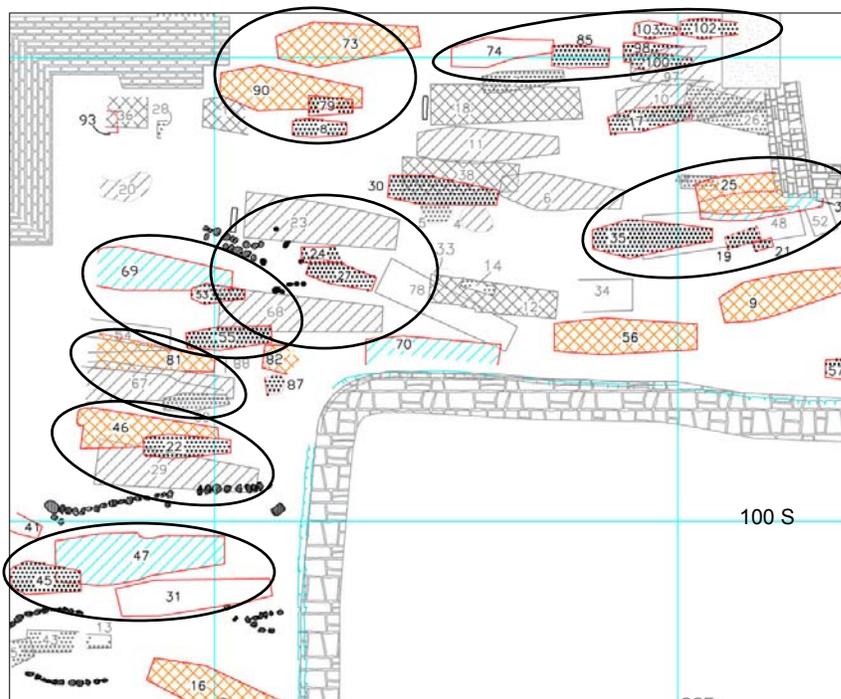


Figure 7.4.
Detail (5W to 25E) of the southwestern corner of the site plan (Figure 1.7) showing burials from all temporal groups. Middle Group burials are shown in color. Grave clusters mentioned in the text are circled.

To the east of this group, a second cluster can be viewed as a string or line of burials, running parallel to the south side of the projected fence alignment. These graves, which include Burials 74, 85, 98/100, 103 and 102 (top right, Figure 7.4), belonged to children or infants (though no remains were recovered from the child-sized coffin in Burial 74).

Burial 53 lay at the foot of Middle Group Burial 69, and this association well may have been deliberate, but the child's grave also overlay the head of an Early Group grave, Burial 68 (left center, Figure 7.4). Burial 55, likewise, was near the foot of Middle Group Burial 81 but also at the head of Early Group Burial 68. Clusters where Middle Group burials may be associated with earlier graves have been discussed in Chapter 6. These include:

- Burials 24 and 27, infant graves among earlier Burials 23, 68, and 78 (center, Figure 7.4);
- Burials 54, 81, 67, 60, 46 and 22, which may have been deliberately placed above early Burials 29 and 88 (left center, Figure 7.4);
- Burials 25 and 32 (described in section 7.D), 35, 19, and 21, placed above Early Group Burials 44, 48 and 52 (at right in Figure 7.4).

Also discussed in Chapter 6 were Burials 22 (of a child) and 46 (of an adult woman), which may have been placed deliberately with Early Group Burial 29, a probable male adult. Burial 46, while included here with the Middle Group, also may in fact be an early burial (its coffin shape is difficult to determine). The child, between two and four years old, was in a hexagonal coffin that had been placed so as to straddle the two underlying adult burials. An east-west row of cobblestones, three to four feet above the Burial 29 coffin, separated these three burials from other interments to the south. The cobbles, averaging about 0.3' in diameter, may have formed a boundary marker between grave groups. South of the line were Burial 47, of a man of thirty-five to forty years; Burial 31, of an adolescent; and Burial 45, of a child of two to four years. The man and the adolescent may have been placed in a single large grave, though this is impossible to determine with certainty. The child was buried later, its grave overlapping the head-end of the man's grave. A thin slab of stone was found oriented vertically above the upper-body portion of Burial 47, and was identified as a possible grave marker (see Figure 5.9).

To the south of Burials 103 and 98/100, Burials 17, 35, and 56 lay in what may have been a "row," fairly evenly spaced from north to south. It is not possible to determine whether this apparent alignment was deliberate. Each of these graves was adjacent to or overlay an earlier burial. Their spacing, and that of Burials 9, 77, 80, 49, 39, and the 57- 60 - 66 cluster, suggest the positioning of burials in "plots" as mentioned above for the Middle Group.

The west-central area

Several clusters can be discerned among Middle Group interments in this part of the site (Figure 7.1c). One cluster centers on Middle Group Burials 96/94, an adult and child in a shared grave, located within Republican Alley behind the southeast corner of the Lot 13

basement (Figure 7.5). Surrounding and overlying this grave were those of several more children, Burials 42, 64, 61, and 91. Their placement is suggestive of deliberate association with the double grave. (Though post-dating Burials 96/94 based on superposition, and placed in our Late-Middle temporal group, it is possible these children all belong together in the main, Middle Group). A final interment, Burial 95, actually truncated the entire eastern portion of Burial 96, suggesting that the earlier grave had been forgotten or was disregarded by the gravediggers by the time the later one was dug. Because of this, Burial 95 is placed in the Late Group for this analysis.

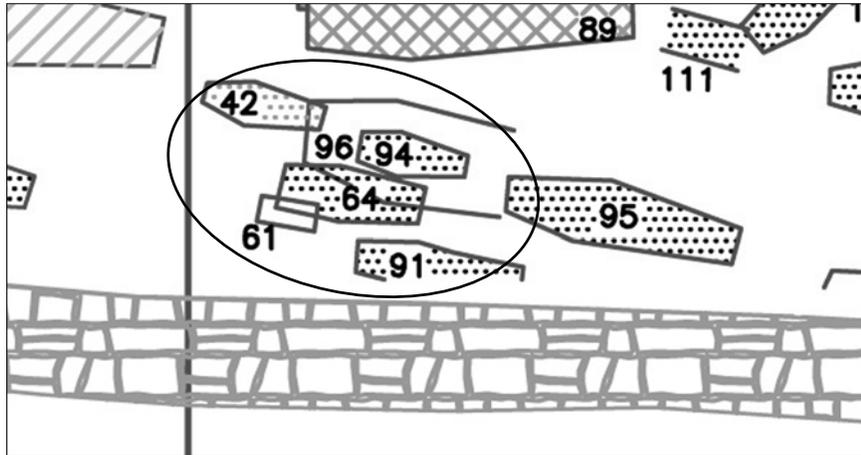


Figure 7.5.
Detail (41 to 55E/91 to 96S) of west-central area of the site plan (Figure 1.7) showing burials from all temporal groups. The cluster containing Middle Group Burial 96/94 is circled.

Another tight clustering of burials includes Middle Group Burials 215, 246, 295 and 239 (at left center in Figure 7.6). Burial 215 was placed in the same grave as Burial 295, though possibly slightly later. All of these overlay an earlier grave, Burial 280, and in turn were overlain by a later grave, Burial 229. Early Group burials are concentrated in this area of the cemetery, including several that had no superimposed interments, as though they had been deliberately kept undisturbed. Because of this, at first the placement of a cluster of later (Middle Group) graves immediately above Burial 280 seemed as though it might have been deliberate. However, the grave of Burials 295/215 truncated both the north side of Burial 280 and the western portion of another early burial (Burial 279), suggesting that the early burials either were *not* known or not considered at the time of the later interments. Instead, we suggest that it was Middle Group Burial 295 that “anchored” the cluster of children’s burials from the Middle Group and later.

Three graves, Burials 133, 154, and 116, are clustered together near the south edge of Republican Alley (bottom center, Figure 7.6); their association is the more striking due to the gap of several feet between them and their neighbors to the north. Burial 116 was of a man between forty-five and fifty-five, Burial 154 of a woman in her late twenties, and Burial 133 of a child of one to two years. The woman and child were buried after the man.

assignment is noted in Chapter 6, where we discussed the problematic temporal assignment of Burial 207. In any case, Burial 207 was clearly later than the children's graves it overlay. It is unusual at the African Burial Ground site for an adult grave to be above children's graves. The underlying graves may not have been known to the Burial 207 gravedigger. Alternatively, this adult may have been placed here on purpose, having had some relation to the children. A partially intact late child's grave (Burial 208) and disturbed adult remains from another adult grave (Burial 204) were found in positions overlying Burial 207 and the children's graves.

Burials 291, 293, and 296 may have formed another grave cluster (right center, Figure 7.6). Burial 296 consisted only of child-sized coffin remains, Burial 291 was displaced, infant bones, and Burial 293 held an adult, possibly male. A later grave, Burial 267, disturbed Burial 293 and presumably also the infant Burial 291.

The east-central area

Grouped burials, what we have been calling "clusters," are few in this part of the site (Figure 7.1d). One, with an adult and several children/infants, comprises Burials 306 (this contained the adult, a man between twenty-eight and forty-four years of age), 300, 283, 268, and 286 (see Figure 7.1d, lower left). The latter two burials are infants that appear to be in a shared grave and to have been here first, with Burial 306 coming later (not placed above the infant graves but adjacent to them), followed by the remaining two.

Children's graves also lay to the east of these burials, and it is possible the grouping actually extended eastward to Burial 326, which held a man who died at forty-five to fifty-five years of age. The man had filed teeth, as did the woman represented by a displaced cranium in nearby Burial 367. It seems likely these two individuals were originally interred in close proximity to one another. In the case of Burial 367, isotope and lead analysis pointed to African birth. Burial 374, which held an infant or newborn, was found within the grave of Burial 326, on the north side near the head. Other children's graves lay above and just to the west of Burial 374. These were Burials 349, 347 and 333 (the latter consisting only of a tiny rectangular box, with no extant human remains).

South of the Burial 306 cluster was an area crowded with graves, possibly representing another extended grouping (see Figure 7.1d). The burials include, on the west, Burial 284 (of a man in his twenties), on the south Burial 270 (of another man, age undetermined), and on the east Burial 315 (of a woman between thirty and forty years old). Graves of infants and children lay between, above, and beneath these. Burial 315 lay immediately above and perfectly aligned with the infant in Burial 336. Burial 339, partially destroyed by construction activity in this location, and the shared grave of Burials 255/265, lay in the midst of these others.

Other burials in the east-central area were apart from each other and from these clusters, suggesting, as noted, that gravediggers' mental template included an offset between plots.

The Lot 18 area

The rear portion of historic Lot 18 (Figure 7.1d) suffered disturbance from multiple 20th century construction features, including an elevator shaft and a series of concrete footings, and many graves were probably destroyed in this area. The area was never fully excavated, however, and presumably graves remain intact below and adjacent to those that were exposed by archaeologists, which numbered twelve. All were assigned to the Middle Group by default, except for Burial 404 which had a tapered coffin, and Burial 413, which had a piece of creamware (dating no earlier than 1760) in its shaft.

Due to the partial excavation and the degree of disturbance, an analysis of spatial patterning is not possible. It is possible that Burials 410 (of a woman of undetermined age who had a small amber-colored glass sphere in her grave) and 427 (of a young man in his late teens) were purposely placed adjacent to one another, as the graves were aligned and very close together.

The southeast area

As noted, colonial New York's mid-century palisade wall may have been used, along with the direction of sunset, to orient burials along a general east-west axis. This hypothesis is strengthened by the observation that head-to-west Middle Group burials in the southeastern part of the excavated cemetery (Figure 7.1e) have a strong southwesterly trend in orientation (as do Late-Middle burials in this area). This is where the palisade, oriented southwest-to-northeast, passed closest to the excavated site (no-doubt along the ridge of "Pot-Baker's Hill"), and here is where it would have been most prominent in the landscape as gravediggers worked. There were other non-burial site features excavated in this area that also raked southwest-to-northeast, including the pottery waste midden and a filled-in trench, designated Feature 163. It is possible that the trench, midden, and burials ran parallel to the original slope of the ground here, just as the palisade wall would have.

The one-foot deep trench's function is not known, and it may have been a natural depression. Artifacts within it do not allow firm dating, but included kiln waste (Janowitz and Cheek 2003). It separated Burials 419, 379, 429, and 382 (the latter assigned to our Early Group) from the rest of the burials in this area. This part of the site was never fully excavated, and it is likely many other interments are located to the north of the trench.

A few burials lay southeast of the stoneware dump (see discussion in Chapter 4), slightly lower in elevation than the burials that were within or at the edges of the dump, and contained no fragments of stoneware whatsoever. This loose grouping includes Burials 384, 320, and 334 from the Middle Group, along with Burial 361 from the Early Group (near lower right corner of Figure 7.1e). The complete absence of kiln waste from these graves is difficult to explain except by positing that they pre-date the dump. As discussed in Chapter 4.E, Burial 384 is problematic because although devoid of stoneware and aligned adjacent and parallel to early Burial 361, its hexagonal coffin suggests it is later

than its neighbor. Burial 384 and the side-by-side children's Burials 320 and 334, all may have been placed deliberately in association with the early grave.

Though there are several paired interments in the southeast sub-area, clusters are not discerned. Shown on Figure 7.1e (moving left to right), the pairs include Burials 393 and 405 (of an infant with a child of 6 to 10 years); Burials 341 and 397 (of a man and a woman); Burials 328 and 380 (a man and a woman both over forty years old, possibly interred together, though not at the same time); and Burial 335/356, of a woman with an infant cradled in her arm. A unique pair (not sharing a grave) was formed by Burials 383 and 368, the latter lying perpendicular to the former such that the heads overlapped (see below for more on Burial 383, a south-headed interment).

7.E. Unique and unusual burials

Burials 25 and 32: A violent death and a shared grave

The remains in Burial 25 were of a woman whose age was calculated as twenty to twenty-four. Lodged beneath her fourth left rib was a lead musket ball, slightly flattened (Figure 7.7). Her coffin had been placed atop that of an older man (aged fifty to sixty; Burial 32) and precisely aligned with it, so that a deliberate co-interment is postulated (Figure 7.8).



The bullet's point of entry cannot be definitively determined, though there was a large hole at the center of the shattered left scapula, and it is possible the woman was shot through her upper left back. Bone fractures suggest that she also had suffered a blunt-force trauma to the face; an oblique fracture of her lower right arm had resulted from twisting. A small trace of new bone around the fractures suggested that she lived for a short while after the fractures occurred (no more than a few days). The woman's skeleton showed scarring on each ulna (one of the two lower arm bones) where the muscles attached at the elbows, suggesting habitual activity using these muscles (see Wilczak et al. 2004 [Chapter 11 of the Skeletal Biology Report]).

Figure 7.7.
In situ photograph of musket ball lodged in ribcage of the woman in Burial 25. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

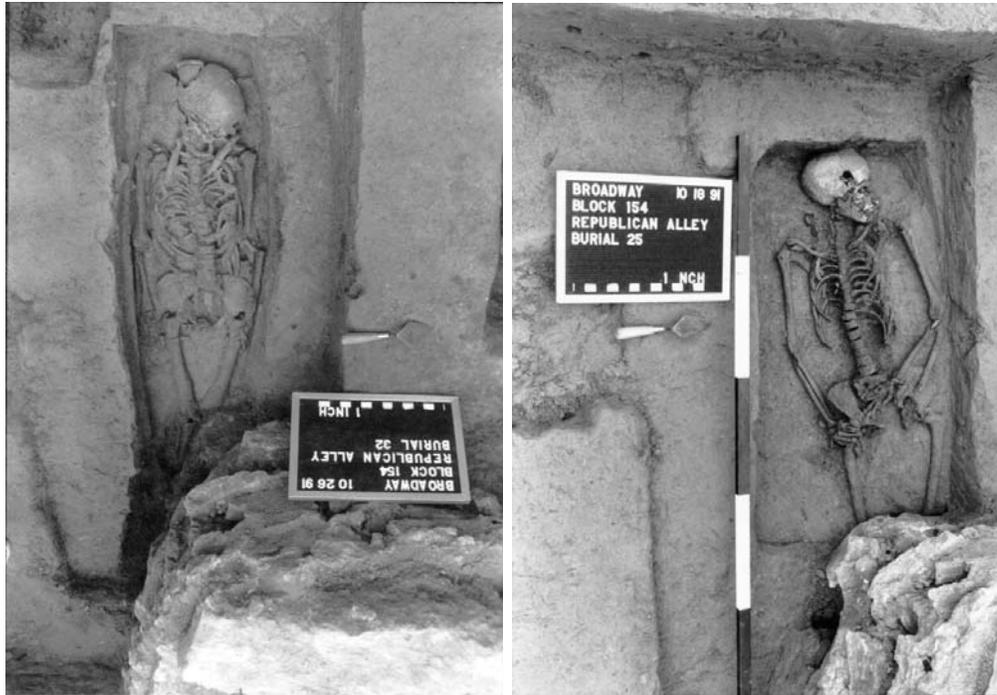


Figure 7.8.
In situ photographs of Burials 25 (left) and 32 (right). The burials may have shared a grave, and both were disturbed by the construction of a foundation wall on Lot 13. The heads are to the west. The ruler alongside burial 32 is measured in feet. Photographs by Dennis Seckler.

Burial 175: A secondary burial

Burial 175 consisted of bones found in the grave of Burial 257. Though completely disarticulated, the skeletal elements from Burial 175 were almost all accounted for, and were identified as those of a man between age twenty-four and twenty-eight. One possible scenario is of gravediggers coming upon the earlier grave, removing all of the bones, and then carefully replacing them atop the new coffin. Although the disturbance may have been accidental, another possibility is that these remains represent a deliberate exhumation followed by secondary burial. In this case, the bones may have been placed within the grave of a recently deceased relative.



Figure 7.9.
In situ photograph of Burial 175, bones placed atop the coffin of Burial 257. North is to right, and the ruler laid alongside the burial is measured in feet. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Burials 74 and 129: empty coffins

There were no human remains found in the coffin excavated as Burial 74. The grave was located in the far western part of the site, at the rear of Lot 12 (Figure 7.1.b). The shaft outline was rectangular in shape and the coffin was hexagonal, with its head to the west. It was approximately 4.5' long, suggesting that it had held a child. Nails were recorded *in situ* around the perimeter of the coffin, though only at the bottom. Since this coffin was of a probable child, it is possible the skeletal remains simply had decayed with no trace; however, judging by other child burials at the site, we expect that some teeth would have been preserved *in situ*.

Burial 129 also contained no skeletal remains. There were scattered adult skeletal remains (three teeth, an occipital fragment of the skull, and the distal end of a humerus) recovered from the grave fill soil, and excavators hypothesized that when Burial 129 was interred it completely displaced another burial (designated Burial 124). It is not possible to determine whether one or two burials are actually represented. The coffin lid recorded as belonging to Burial 129 was fairly well preserved, though, and it is difficult to envision how or why the remains were removed from within it and somehow scattered. The coffin was first drawn as four-sided, slightly tapered toward the foot (east) end; however, the final burial drawing represents the coffin as hexagonal in shape.

As discussed in Chapter 6, either the deceased were removed from their coffins after interment, or empty coffins were interred intentionally. Secondary burial and grave robbing are possible scenarios in the first case, while burial of an empty coffin might point to religious practice or to deception.

South-headed and east-headed burials

Burials 383 and 365, south-headed women's burials in the southeast area of the site, were discussed in Chapter 5. The orientation of the head of the infant in Burial 406, also located at the far eastern edge of site, was toward the east. The coffin shape was unclear: it appeared to be six-sided but the "shoulder" was not obvious. There is a possibility that the position of the infant within the coffin was not known to those who placed it in the grave, and thus that the unusual orientation was accidental.

Burials 142/144/149: a triple grave

In this grave, a woman between twenty-five and thirty years of age was buried along with two infants, one whose age was calculated at less than two months, and one thought to have been between six and twelve months old at death. The three were in separate coffins. The tiny coffins of the children, Burials 144 and 149, had been placed so as to both fit on the top of the woman's (Figure 7.10).

Either all three were interred at the same time, or the infants were buried together after the woman. In the other two instances at the African Burial Ground where a woman shared a grave with an infant (Burials 12/14 and 335/356), the infant had been placed within the coffin of the adult.



Figure 7.10.
In situ photograph of Burials 142, 144, and 149. The outlines of the individual coffins are indicated. The ruler alongside the woman's coffin is measured in feet, and north is to the right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

CHAPTER 8. THE LATE-MIDDLE GROUP

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

The Late-Middle Group comprises burials that have been distinguished from the main group because of stratigraphic relationships or because artifacts found with them are datable to the final third of the 18th century. It is possible that there is some overlap between the Late Middle and the Late Group, defined as post-1776. Nevertheless, in order to keep those burials that are most securely assignable to the later period (see Chapter 9) analytically distinct, we have separated out a Late Middle cohort, and for convenience use the start of the Revolutionary War as the end date. We use 1760 as an approximate beginning date for Late-Middle burials, though some overlap between the Middle and Late-Middle Groups is likely, since in many cases temporal group assignment is based solely on stratigraphic position. Relatively few burials (n=56) are assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

A sketch of the town and its population precedes the presentation of the Late-Middle Group mortuary sample. The material culture, spatial distribution, and some unique and unusual burials assigned to this group are then discussed.

8.A. *The town*

This period opens with the French and Indian or Seven Years War (1754-1763), over the course of which thousands of soldiers were quartered in the city and thousands of sailors manned ships in the harbor (for a description of the city in these years, see Burrows and Wallace 1999:165-222). New barracks to house the troops had to be constructed, and the buildings were sited in the northern part of the town Common just south of the African Burial Ground. The city's merchants prospered during and after the war. Following the war the growing trade of the port and the marketing of goods that began to flow to the colonies as a result of the Industrial Revolution in England fed the local economy and the fortunes of the local elite; artisans also benefited from a boom in construction during and after the war. The town continued its northward growth, though the fashionable families remained downtown.

Residential development along Broadway began to encroach upon the western side of the burial ground during these years. The town is best depicted on the Ratzer Map of 1767 (Figure 2.11) for the Late-Middle burial cohort. A composite map (covering the entire period 1730 to 1770) prepared for the book *Gotham* (Burrows and Wallace 1999:206) is also useful for locating streets, churches, and public buildings throughout the city. Isaac Teller (one of the heirs of the Van Borsum Patent) built three houses along Broadway near present-day Chambers Street sometime between 1760 and 1765, and two other

houses stood to the north of these. Teller's fence, reportedly with a locked gate, also went up in this period (see Chapters 2 and 4). Buildings that may have been associated with the Campbell pottery abutted the cemetery on the northwest along the property line; buildings that may have been part of the Crolius/Remmey pottery operation were further to the east, also along the property line. On the town Common just south of the burial ground a jail and a cemetery for the almshouse were erected in 1757; in 1775 the Bridewell went up. Although this part of town was no longer remote, it was still marginal in a social sense, what with the concentration of public institutions for the criminal, the homeless, the insane, and the impoverished, not to mention the place of execution.

As neighborhoods moved northward, churches also appeared in the northern precincts (see Rothschild 1990:25-80). Many churches had at least small numbers of black congregants by this time. An important development was the founding of the Methodist Church in New York, the first meeting of which was held in 1766 and a permanent home built in 1768. The Methodists welcomed blacks and were anti-slavery. The black membership in the beginning included small numbers of mainly enslaved men and women, but reports from the early 1770s suggest that the numbers of blacks who came to hear the Methodist preachers grew quickly (Walls 1974:39-40).

Complete segregation and restrictions on full participation by blacks within the churches was the norm, however. At John Street, as at the other churches, blacks sat in the loft and entered by a separate stair, and black members met in separate "Negro classes" led by white men (Walls 1974; John Street Methodist Church, 1785-90). Segregation extended to the churchyards. Burial records survive for this period for the Dutch Reformed, Anglican (Trinity as well as St. Paul's and St. George's Chapels), Lutheran (Trinity, Christ, and United), Moravian, Baptist, and German Reformed churches of Manhattan, and of those examined only the Dutch church recorded the burial of blacks in the 1760s -- just three individuals, and even for these the location of the burials is not known (Reformed Dutch Church 1727-1804). In 1773 Trinity (Anglican) Church's black membership was substantial enough to warrant some provision for burials, and the church established its own small African cemetery at the corner of Church and Reade Streets (just one block west of the African Burial Ground). Trinity also allowed the 1774 burial of an enslaved woman named Mary, arranged and paid for by her master Evert Bancker, at the "English" churchyard (Trinity), suggesting the occasional paternalistic gesture (House Expense Book of Evert Bancker, cited in Foote 1991:146; it is possible other blacks were interred in elite family vaults or plots as well, but there is no evidence for the general practice).

Importation of captives continued down to the eve of the Revolution, with the 1760s and 70s seeing the greatest volume of direct trade between New York and Africa. Doubtless a high proportion of African-born people entered the local black community (Lydon 1978:378-381). It was in March 1762 that merchant John Watts wrote that captives for the New York market "must be young the younger the better if not quite Children" (Watts 1762-1765). Two large shipments of captives direct from the continent, a total of

196 persons, arrived at the city docks in 1763 and at least 59 more African-born captives were recorded here between 1768 and 1772 (Lydon 1978:382-383).

8.B. The population

Census

After a slight drop from the 1740s to 1750s, the black population of New York City grew substantially again between 1756 and 1771 (Table 8.1). The 38% increase was accounted for mainly by adults, and by more women than men, with the adult sex ratio dropping to 85.9 in 1771.

The adult male category included 68 men over 60 years of age in 1756 and 42 over 60 in 1771. This absolute and proportional drop in elderly men may reflect natural attrition accompanied by increased importation of younger men. As a proportion of the city’s total population, blacks dropped to 14.3%, outstripped by accelerating European growth (presumably through both immigration and natural increase).

Table 8.1.						
Black population by age and sex, 1756-1771						
Year	Adults		Children		Age for children	Label in census
	(male)	(female)	(male)	(female)		
1756	672	695	468	443	<16	“black”
1771	932	1085	568	552	<16	“black”
Source: Green and Harrington (1932); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).						

Mortuary sample

The 60 burials assigned to the Late-Middle Group are listed in Table 8.2 and their distribution within the excavated portion of the cemetery is shown on the site plan in Figures 8.1a-e. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. An entry of “n/a” in the coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed, displaced, or redeposited so that coffin presence/absence could not be determined. Age and sex profiles are shown in Figures 8.2 and 8.3.

As explained in Chapter 5, we believe that subadults are under-represented in the age profile because children’s burials that might actually belong in the Late Middle Group were buried in, above, or near existing graves from earlier periods, and such children’s burials cannot be distinguished.

Table 8.2.
Late-Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B004	30	40	male		11	86.5	n	n/a
B004A	20	25	male?		11	86.5	n	n/a
B005	0.5	1	undete	90	9	86.5	y	unident.
B007	3	5	undete	105	15	80.5	y	hexagonal
B010	40	45	male	88	20	82.5	y	hexagonal
B011	30	40	male?	90	12	83.5	y	hexagonal
B013/43	2.5	4.5	undete	90	-7	105	y	four-sided?
B019			undete	108	20	81.5	y	unident.
B021			undete		20	87.5	n	rectangle
B042	0	2	undete	76	45	91.5	y	hexagonal
B054			undete	90	-4	92	n	unident.
B060	0.25	0.75	undete	95	-1	95	y	four-sided?
B061			undete	82	45	87.5	n	unident.
B064	0.38	0.88	undete	82	45	92.5	y	hexagonal
B067	40	50	male	88	0	94	y (no cranium)	unident.
B089	50	60	female	92	48	90.5	y	hexagonal
B091	0.67	1.3	undete	84	48	95	y	hexagonal
B101	26	35	male	78	49	88.5	y	hexagonal
B105	35	45	male	89	60	95	y	hexagonal
B106	25	35	female?	92	71	90.5	y	hexagonal
B107	35	40	female	93	48	90	y	hexagonal
B108	0.25	0.75	undete	68	53	87	y	hexagonal
B109	0.67	1.33	undete	126	54	90.5	y	hexagonal
B119	35	45	male	93	72	88.5	y	hexagonal
B123	0.67	1.33	undete	96	80	89.5	y	hexagonal?
B145			n/a	95	74	73.5	n (empty coffin)	hexagonal
B146	0	0	undete	102	74.5	73.5	y	hexagonal
B168			male	90	68.5	95.5	n	n/a
B176	20	24	male	103	65.5	74.5	y	hexagonal
B198			undete	113	80	86.5	y	four-sided
B216	0	0.16	undete	104	57	78.5	y	rectangle
B219	4	5	undete	87	122	71.5	y	unident.
B222			male?	95	118	76.5	y (no cranium)	hexagonal
B229	6.75	11.25	undete	108	72	83.5	y	unident.
B235	28	42	female	85	123	71.5	y	hexagonal
B238	40	50	male	102	62	78.5	y	hexagonal
B251	12	14	undete	101	79	79.5	y	hexagonal
B253	13	15	undete	96	65.5	82.5	y	hexagonal

Table 8.2.
Late-Middle Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B267			undete	105	94	82.5	y	hexagonal
B289	5	9	undete	89	125	81	y	tapered
B290	45	55	male	89	114	84	y	hexagonal
B311	0.25	0.75	undete	100	99.5	88.5	y	tapered
B314	40	50	male	97	134	82	y	hexagonal
B316	18	20	female	95	99.5	88.5	y	hexagonal
B317	19	39	male?		220	91.5	n	unident.
B319			female		249	88.5	n	unident.
B332	35	40	male?	92	126	80.5	y	hexagonal
B333	45	55	male	121	230.5	81.5	y	rectangle
B338	33	65	female	92	133.5	84.5	y	hexagonal
B352			male	100	131	67.5	y	hexagonal
B357	45	65	male	109	228.5	72	y	no coffin
B362			undete	119	235	69.5	y (cranium only)	unident.
B373	45	60	female	100	132	70.5	y	hexagonal
B376	45	65	male	98	134.5	77	y	hexagonal
B377	32.6	57.8	female	103	235	75.5	y	no coffin
B381			undete		235	75.5	n (not excavated)	n/a
B391	16.5	19.5	male	90	140.5	68	y	no coffin
B392	42.5	52.5	male		140	71.5	y	rectangle
B395	43	53	male	107	135.5	76.5	y	hexagonal
B413	50	70	female	95	175.5	62.5	y	hexagonal

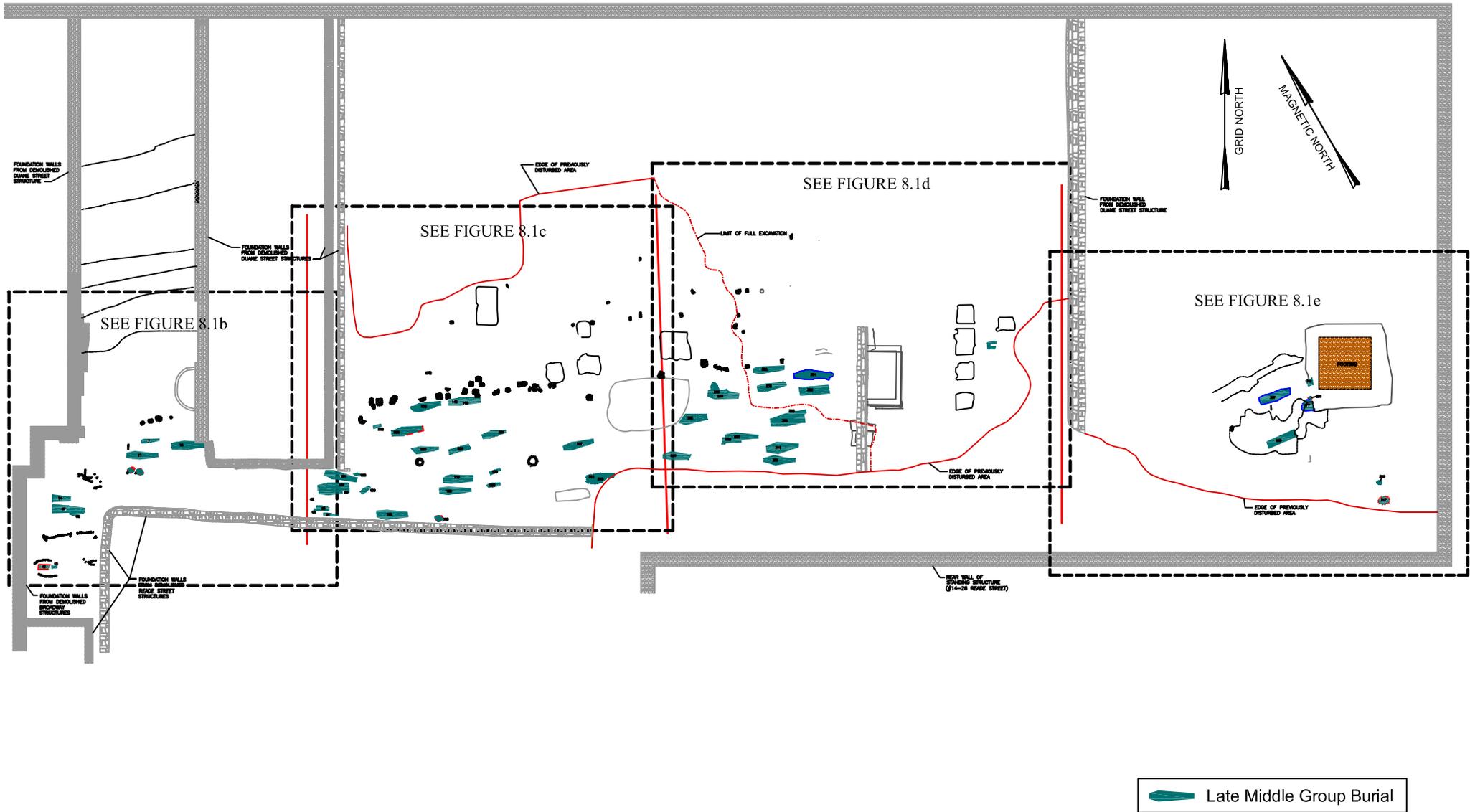


Figure 8.1.a
 Excavated Late-Middle Group Burials
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

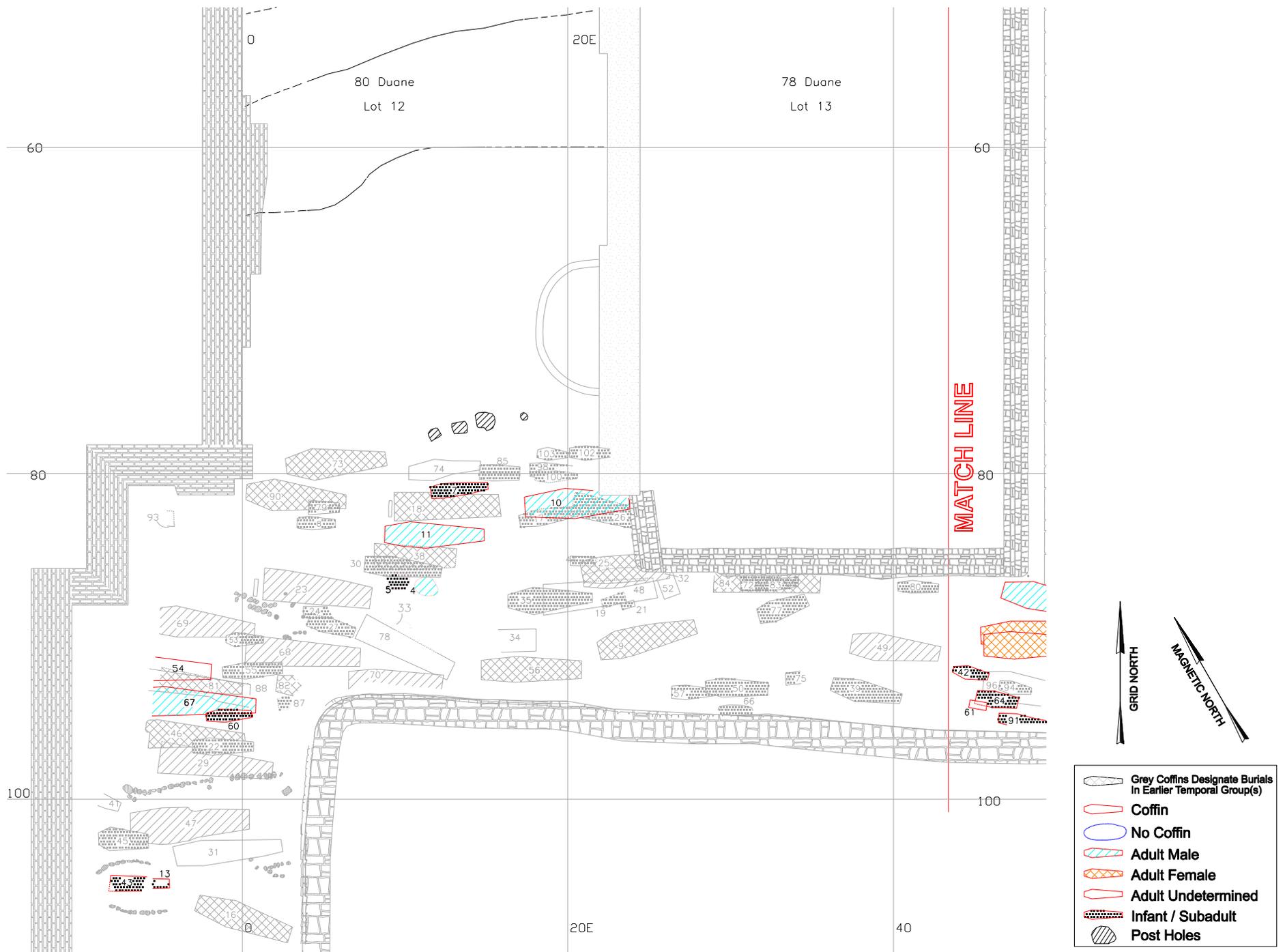


Figure 8.1.b
Late-Middle Group Burials, Western Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

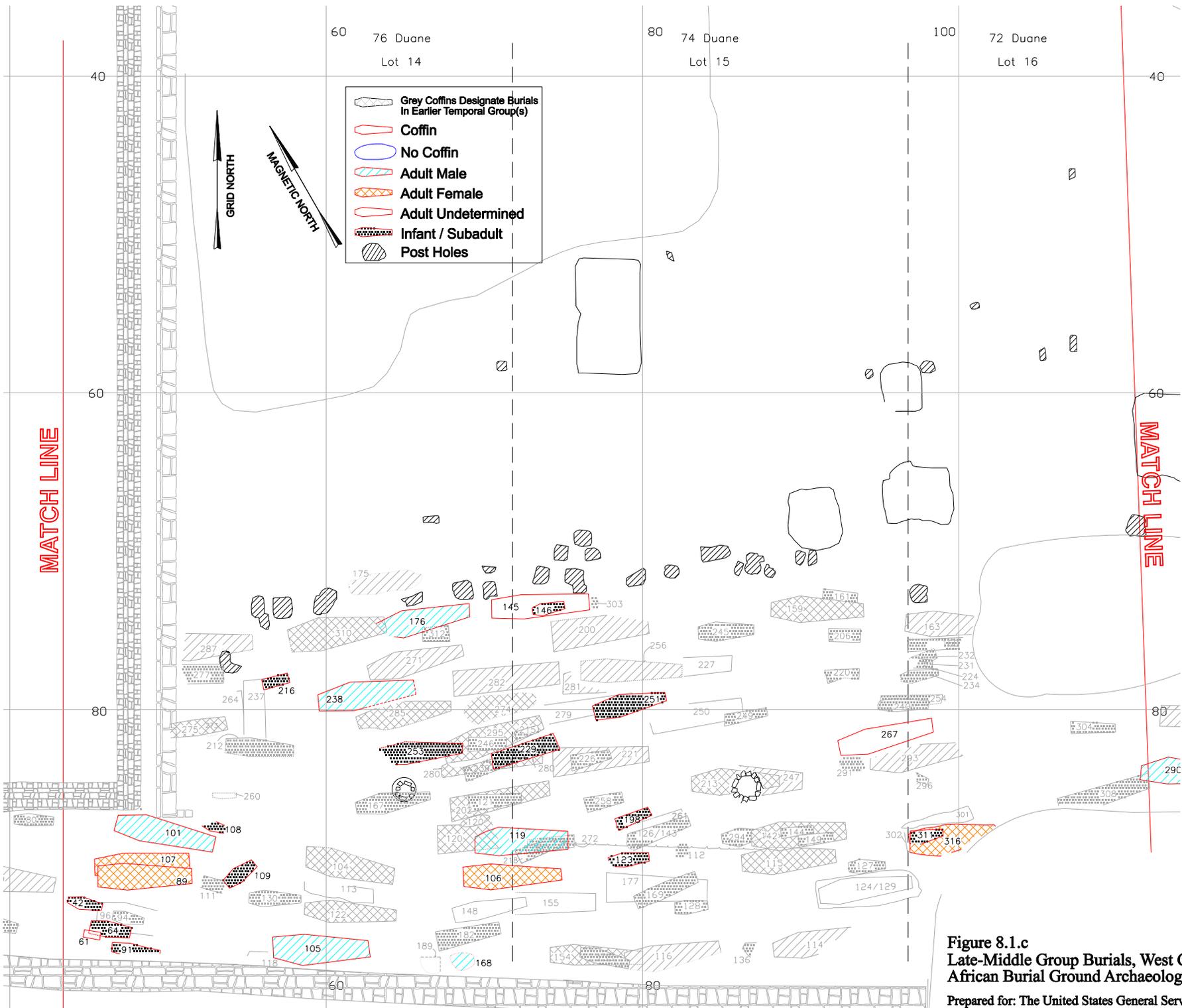


Figure 8.1.c
Late-Middle Group Burials, West Central Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

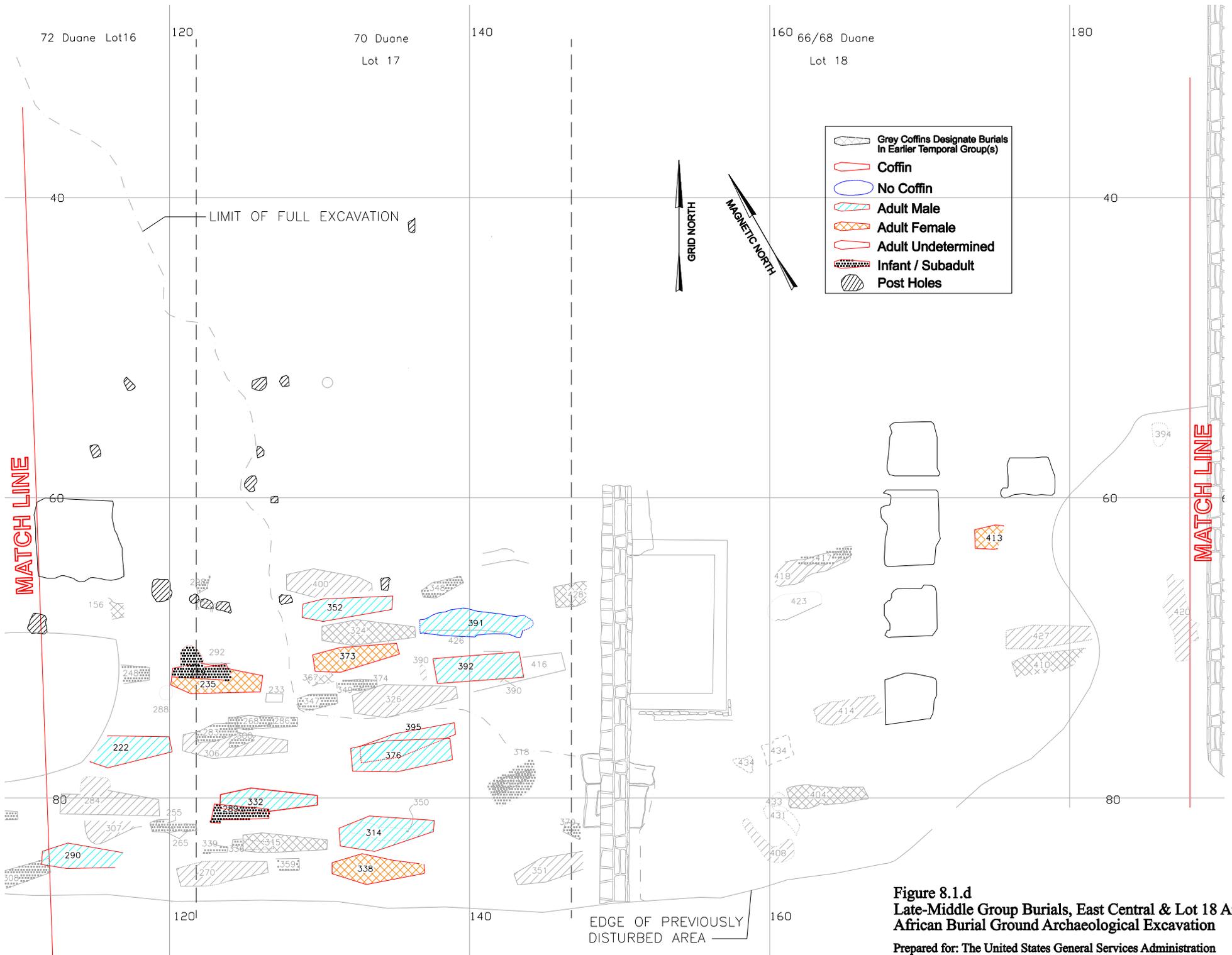


Figure 8.1.d
Late-Middle Group Burials, East Central & Lot 18 Areas
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

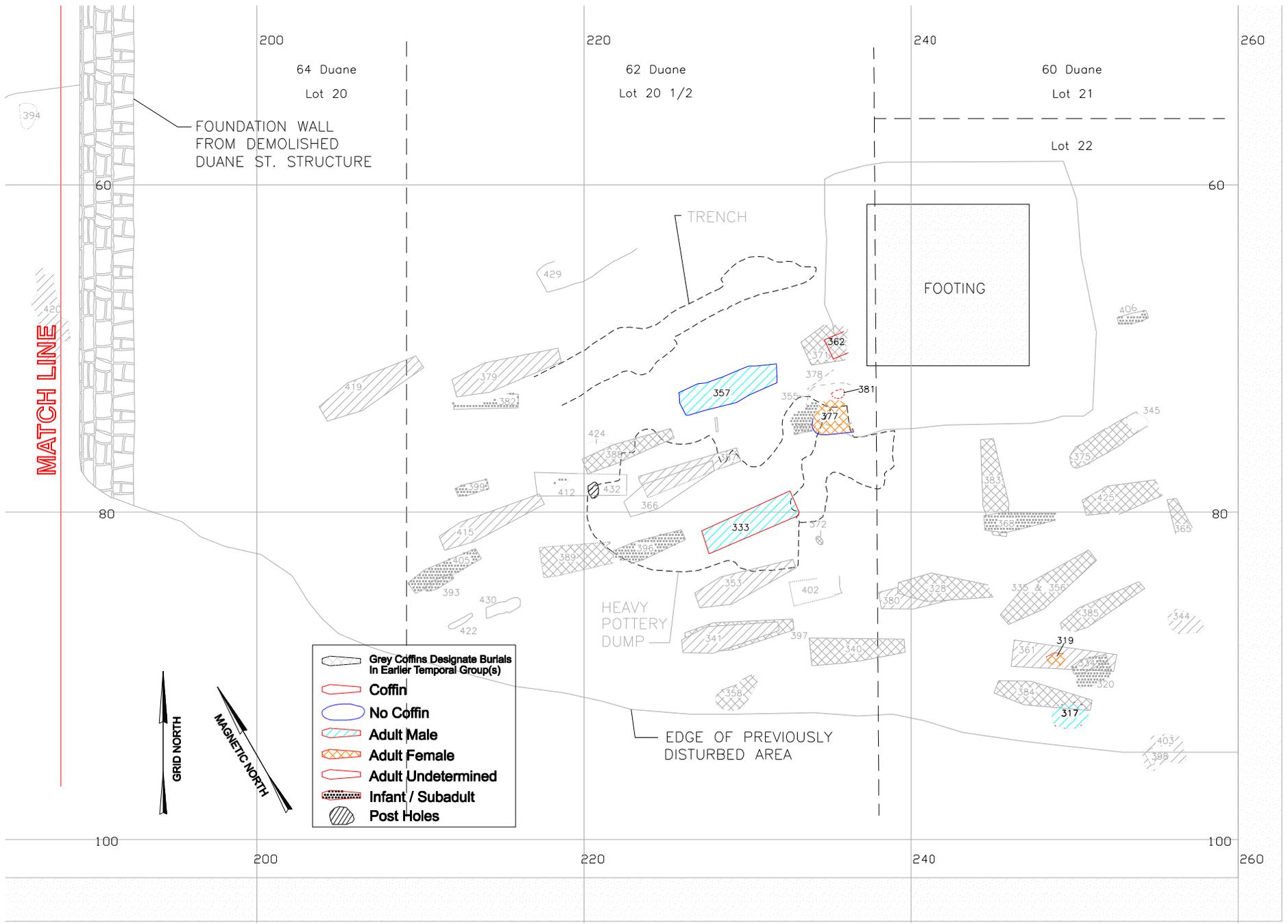


Figure 8.1.e
Late-Middle Group Burials, Eastern Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

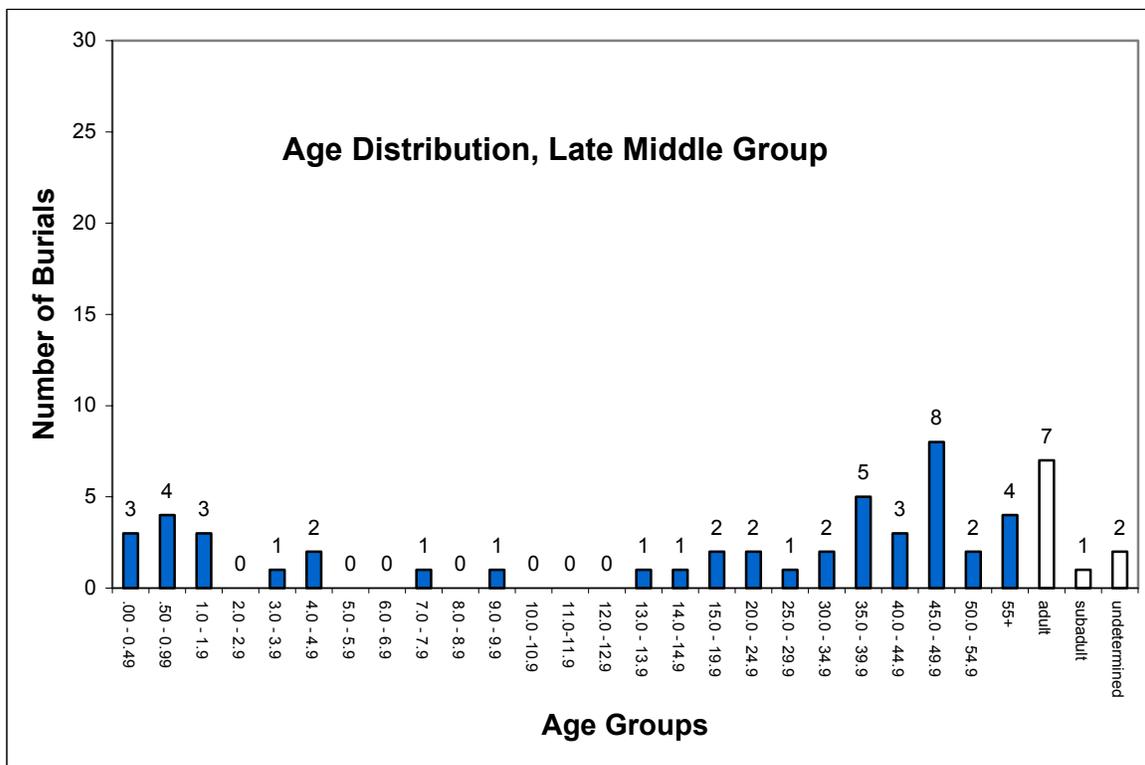


Figure 8.2.
Age distribution, Late-Middle Group. White bars are individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

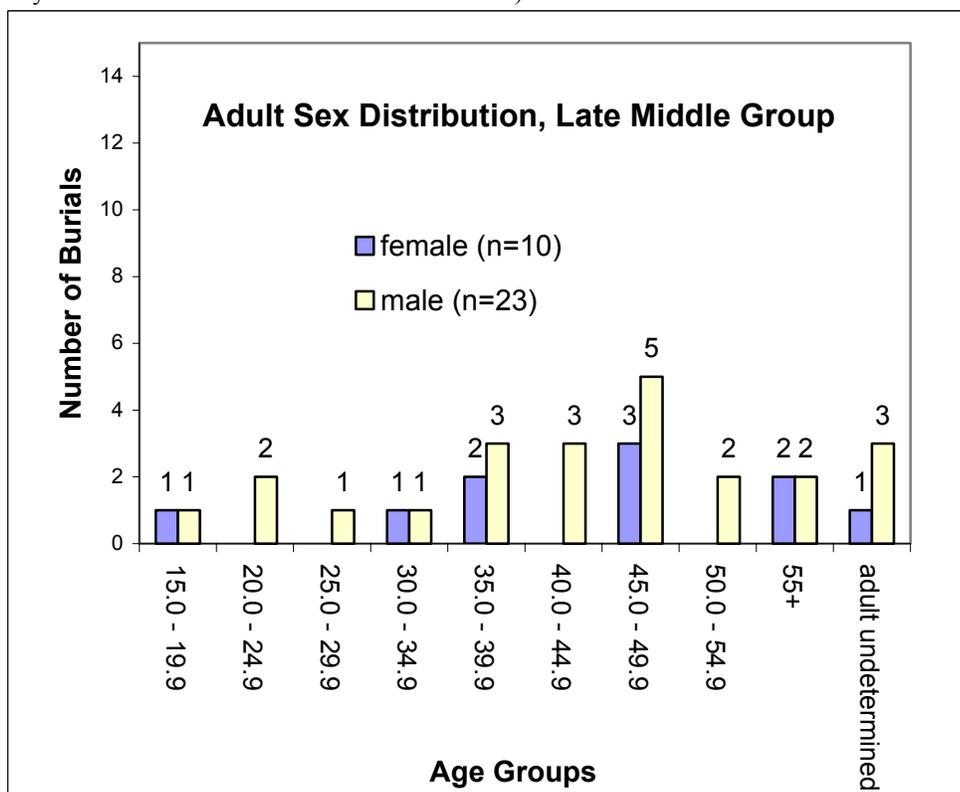


Figure 8.3.
Adult sex distribution, Late-Middle Group.

8.C. *Mortuary material culture*

Only three burials assigned to the Late-Middle Group were without coffins, Burials 357, 377, and 391. All three may in fact belong with the Late Group, which had most of the other coffin-less interments. However, lacking additional evidence such as stratigraphic superposition, spatial association, or late artifacts, we have kept them with the middle period graves, thus avoiding the tautology of placing them in the Late Group solely on the basis of having no coffins. It should be noted, however, that shifting these burials to the Late Group would enhance that cohort's distinctiveness (for example, two of the three are men, which matches the skewed sex distribution of the Late Group).

Coffins of adult burials in the Late-Middle Group were hexagonal except for those in Burials 333 and 392, which were rectangular. These were the only unambiguously rectangular adult coffins excavated at the site. Coffins of children and infants were hexagonal (9), rectangular (1), tapered (2), and four-sided but uncertain as to rectangular or tapered (1). Five were unidentifiable due to poor preservation.

Four of the five coffins at the African Burial Ground that were either clearly or probably decorated (in Burials 101, 176, 222, and 332) are assigned to the Late-Middle Group (the fifth, a possibly-decorated coffin in Burial 252, is assigned to the Late Group). This may reflect changing coffin style, and perhaps indicates that, by the third quarter of the 18th century, in some cases coffins were being displayed at the deceased's home or graveside. However, we stress the small number of decorated coffins and also would caution that some of these burials' Late Middle assignment *is based on the decorations themselves*: tacks forming the lid adornment were of a type manufactured in England beginning in the 1760s (see Chapter 10 for further discussion of coffins and hardware). All of the individuals in decorated coffins were identified as adult males or probable males. Burial 101 had a coffin with a heart-shaped design formed from tacks; the design has been identified as a possible Sankofa symbol. The coffin in Burial 176 had tacks edging the lid and six handles with back plates, each with cutout < > shapes. The coffin in Burial 222 also apparently had a tack design on the lid, though it was disturbed and could not be reconstructed. Burial 332 held a coffin with initials and a number formed in tacks. These coffins are illustrated in section 8.E and in Chapter 10.

Pins were found with 33 of the individuals in the Late-Middle Group, 73% of the 45 graves considered well enough preserved to expect them.¹ Men, women and children were among the 33. By contrast, only three (6%) of the graves, all of men, had clear evidence for clothing. Burial 10 contained thirteen copper-alloy buttons (eight whole; five with shanks only) in positions indicative of breeches and a jacket. Burial 238 had a bone button back that was recovered from the cervical vertebrae (neck) of its occupant, along with octagonal cuff links recovered from each wrist. Burial 333 had six bone buttons in the pelvic area. Burial 392 had eleven buttons, some in fragments and others associated with cloth; the positions of the buttons are indicative of breeches. This man

¹ In one burial that was considered to have very poor ('n') preservation potential, pins were recovered with the bone.

also had an octagonal cuff link face at the right clavicle (collar bone); the apparent mate was recovered in the laboratory when the cervical vertebrae were cleaned. The only other item of adornment found with a Late-Middle Group interment, the woman in Burial 107, was a single cylindrical red and green glass bead found during cleaning of the cranium in the laboratory; the bead may have been worn in her hair. Pins are discussed further in Chapter 11, buttons in Chapter 12, and the bead in Chapter 13.

8.D. *Spatial distribution*

For convenience, we will look at spatial distribution of the Late Middle burials using the same sub-areas we used for the Middle Group (the western, west-central, east-central/Lot18, and southeast sub-areas, Figures 8.1a-e).

Burial orientations, all head-to-west in the graves assigned to the Late-Middle Group, were at angles that overall were more similar to those in the Middle Group than to those in the Late Group. Late-Middle Group burials, like the rest of the Middle Group, often appear to be sited with some sense of an appropriate separation from other burials. Again, as in the Middle Group, even children's graves sometimes seem to have been dug several feet apart from others, as though such separation was part of a standard practice. Burials 5, 7, 109, 123, and 198 were all children's graves that were spatially separated from other graves in the Late Middle temporal group; still, their deliberate placement above or near burials we have placed with the earlier groups is possible, so the apparent isolation may be false. By this time the cemetery was becoming increasingly crowded, and the "filling in" of spaces between earlier graves had clearly commenced. Though Late Middle graves might be spatially separated from one another, they most often overlay or lay close beside earlier graves.

The western area

The western part of the site is shown in Figure 8.1b. Burials 67, 60, and 54, all adjacent, were placed above earlier burials from both the Middle and Early Groups, though there is no way to determine whether or not they were deliberately sited with reference to the earlier graves (the cluster is shown on Figure 7.4). Burial 60, which held a baby of three to nine months, may have been deliberately placed at the foot of Burial 67, the grave of a man between forty and fifty, though the two had separate grave shafts indicating the child was interred later than the man. Burial 54 was about one foot to the north of Burial 67, and held a second adult, though because it was truncated from the legs up no sex or age could be assigned. All three form a possible group.

Burials 4, 4A, 5, 7, and 11 also were placed above earlier graves, possibly deliberately. As we mentioned in Chapter 6, the early Burial 18 had a headstone and therefore the deliberate placement of Burials 7 and 11 above and adjacent to it should be considered likely (though a social relationship cannot necessarily be inferred). Burials 7 and 11 also "fill in" between two Middle Group graves (Burials 74 on the north and 30 on the south), suggesting the spacing of graves, though tight, was deliberate. The entire cluster of

graves from Burial 74 south to Burials 4/4A/5 appears as a roughly linear arrangement, the graves nearly parallel. Burial 6, too, offset somewhat to the east, may have been added later. It is possible to envision the deliberate re-use of this small area over time, with Burial 18 as the “anchor” marked by a headstone.

In the southwestern-most corner of the excavation was the grave of a child between two and four years old, Burial 13/43 (excavated as two separate interments and subsequently determined to represent a single burial). This grave was outlined with a double arc of cobbles, found *in situ* (see Figure 5.7). It seems likely the cobble grave marker was tended until such time as this area was covered over with fill. Based on general stratigraphy in the area, and the fact that its rather ephemeral surface marker was intact, Burial 13/43 has been placed in the Late Middle temporal group, though it could be placed in the Middle cohort instead. This corner of the site gives us a tantalizing glimpse of the type of surface markers that once may have been used throughout the African Burial Ground (see additional description of the area in Chapters 6.C and 7.C). As we noted in Chapter 3, historic development as well machine stripping during the project resulted in the loss of the original surface layer over the majority of the site.

The west-central area

Burials in the Late Group in the west-central site area are shown in Figure 8.1c. We noted in Chapter 7 that Burials 96/94, an adult and child in a shared grave of the Middle Group, were surrounded and overlain by later graves of several more children, Burials 42, 64, 61, and 91. We cannot determine how close in time all of the interments occurred, but place the latter four in the Late-Middle Group because of their stratigraphic relationship to the double burial. The entire cluster exhibits a relatively uniform orientation, slightly northward of grid west, suggesting the earliest grave may have been marked at the surface and the later graves deliberately aligned with it. The single adult, in Burial 96, appears to have anchored the grouping.

There was a “gap” or void in Late-Middle Group burials from approximately 55’ to 70’ Grid East and approximately 80’ to 95’ Grid South. Within the void was a smaller circular area without graves from any period (see Figure 1.7). The absence of burials there is intriguing. The circular arrangement of graves around a central void may allude to, or reproduce, a cosmogram. But it also may allude to former topography, such as a mound, that had been destroyed through leveling, with soil from the top of the mound scattered to become part of the overlying fill (on burials arranged around mounds at Newton Plantation, see Handler and Lange 1978:105-117).

On the west side of the void were Burials 108, 101, 107, 89, and 109. Burials 101 and 108 may represent a deliberate pairing of an infant with a man, though the excavation records do not clarify the relationship between the two grave cuts. Burial 101 had the coffin with the heart-shaped design on its lid; this burial held a man between twenty-six and thirty-five years of age. Burials 89 and 107 represent the possible shared grave of a woman in her fifties placed above a woman in her late thirties. The two hexagonal

coffins were essentially parallel and precisely aligned. They were just to the south of Burial 101, though oriented differently.

Northeast of the void, Burials 176, 238, and 253 appear to be “filling in” between Middle Group burials along a north-south row. The northernmost of these, Burial 176, appears to have been placed along the south side of the fence that once marked the northern boundary of the cemetery. Just to its east, Burials 145 (containing an empty adult coffin) and 146 (of an infant in a coffin) also seem to have been placed up against the fence line, though not due to crowding, since there was space to the south. It is possible the Middle and Late-Middle Group graves in the area were deliberately placed so as not to disturb early graves, Burials 200 and 282.

Burial 145 suggests one of three scenarios: a stolen cadaver, removal of the remains for secondary burial, or deliberate burial of an empty coffin for either religious purposes or for deception. The fact that the Burial 146 child coffin was placed atop the empty coffin argues against the body-snatching scenario. As we noted for the empty coffins of the Middle Group (see Chapter 7.E), there is no way to choose among possible explanations.

East of the void, Burials 119 and 106 were placed adjacent to each other, only a foot apart and parallel, as though a pair. An underlying early grave, Burial 120, was partially displaced when Burial 119 was interred, suggesting that the gravedigger was unaware of the previous burial, but bones from Burial 120 were set aside with some care rather than simply mixed with the shaft fill. Three other underlying interments, Burials 263, 272, and 218, were left intact by Burial 119.

The east-central area

Four pairs of graves are noted in the east-central area (Figure 8.1d): Burials 289 and 332, Burials 219 and 235, Burials 376 and 395, and Burials 314 and 338. Burial 289, which held a child between five and nine years old buried with a tiny quartz crystal, was placed so as to overlap with Burial 332, the grave of a man whose initials “HW” and probable age “38” were tacked on his coffin lid (see the illustrations in section 8.E and in Chapter 10). Burial 219 held a young child buried above a woman in her thirties, within the latter’s grave shaft.

Burials 376 and 395 were of men whose age ranges extended from forty-five and forty-three to sixty and fifty-three. The pair is placed in the Late-Middle Group because they appear to have been part of a north-south “row” of burials that filled in between existing Middle Group graves (see Figure 1.7 for the distribution of burials from all temporal groups in this area). This row may have extended all the way to the north edge of the site, but the interments north of the fence line are assigned to the Late Group. Burials 352 and 373 are part of this row. At the south end of the row are Burials 314 and 338, a pairing of a man between forty and fifty and a woman age thirty-three to sixty-five whose coffins seem to have been placed side-by-side and parallel, though in apparent separate grave shafts.

At the east edge of the east-central area, Burials 391 and 392 are somewhat problematic in their assignment. Both may in fact belong with Late Group burials. In the case of Burial 391 this is suggested by its lack of a coffin, but again, we have not used this variable alone to place interments in the last period. Burial 392 seems to have totally disturbed an underlying Middle Group burial (Burial 391), and thus the interments may have been separated by many years. However, this area was never fully excavated, and burial relationships are not clear-cut. It seems prudent to place both burials in the Late-Middle Group, with the caveat, rather than in the Late Group. Burial 392 will be described in section 8.E.

The southeast area

Two burials in the southeast area of the excavated site (Figure 8.1e) were assigned to the Late Middle period on the basis of artifacts recovered from the grave shaft fill (Burials 333 and 357), and two additional, disturbed burials were placed in this group on the basis of stratigraphic position (Burials 317 and 319).

Burials 333 and 357 were oriented identically to numerous Middle Group burials in the immediate vicinity. Two Early Group burials nearby were also parallel (Burials 387 and 388). The very strong alignment of all of these interments suggests the gravediggers used some constant feature to orient the openings, and/or, of course, that they were all purposefully aligned with each other. As noted in Chapter 7, a trench (Feature 163) with a similar orientation ran just to the north of these graves, and the trench itself may have provided the alignment, or it too may have followed another feature.

8.E. Unique and unusual burials

Decorated coffins

Coffin decorations that survived archaeologically were very rare at the African Burial Ground, but there were four (out of five overall) in the Late-Middle Group. Photographs and drawings taken during excavation show the coffin lids of Burials 101, 176, and 332 (Figures 8.4-8.8), but Burial 222, which had tacks that apparently formed a decorative lid pattern, was disturbed by vandals before the decoration was recorded.

Two of these burials held individuals that can confidently be identified as men (Burials 101 and 176), and the other two (Burials 222 and 332) held individuals that were very likely men as well. Calculated age ranges were twenty to twenty-four (Burial 176), twenty-six to thirty-five (Burial 101), and thirty-five to forty (Burial 332). Burial 222 could not be assigned an age range. Burials 222 and 332 were located just five feet apart, in the east-central part of the site. Burials 101 and 176 were not close by each other, but both were in the same general area, in the west-central part of the site. It is noteworthy that the men in Burials 101, 176, and 332 each had a child or infant buried either immediately adjacent to or above his grave.

The tack pattern on the lid of the Burial 101 coffin was first described as heart shaped, with unidentified designs within the outline of the heart. As discussed in Chapter 10, the interior decoration may be initials and a date of death. In this case, the upper portion, which would be the initials, has not been deciphered (the tacks displaced as the coffin wood rotted); the lower portion *may* have formed numerals for the year “1769.”



Figure 8.4. (left)
In situ photograph of coffin lid decoration formed of iron tacks in Burial 101. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Figure 8.5. (below)
Possible reading of the year “1769”
formed by tacks on the lid of Burial 101.

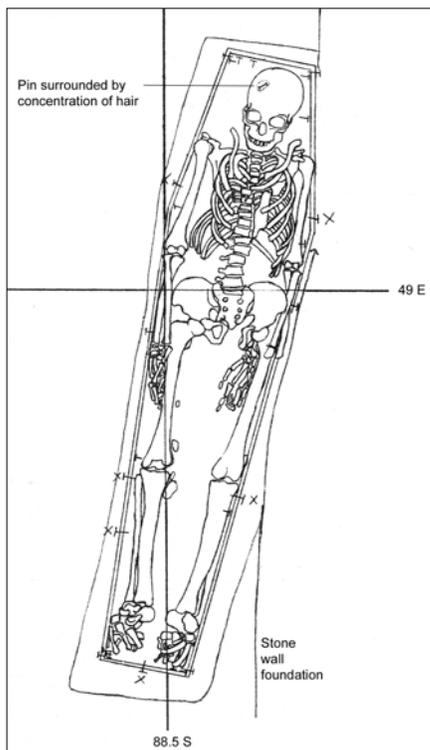
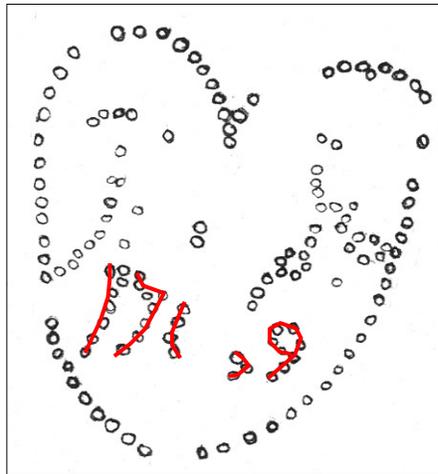


Figure 8.6. (left)
In situ drawing of Burial 101 skeletal remains.
Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet. Drawings by M. Schur.

The heart-like design has also been identified as a Sankofa symbol associated with Twi-speaking Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The symbol depicts a proverb, “Se wo were fi na wo sankofa a yenkyi” which can be translated as “It is not a taboo to return and fetch it when you forget.” It reminds people of the need to “[tie] the past with the present in order to prepare for the future” (Ofori-Ansa 1995:3).

Two straight pins, one on the cranium (with a small tuft of hair) and one in the chest area, were

found with the bones, but no other artifacts were recovered. Excavators recorded two possible bone button fragments on the left leg; no buttons were cataloged in the laboratory, however, and it is possible the observed pieces were simply fragments of the skeleton.

One of the man's incisors had been intentionally filed, a practice found in Africa and a possible indicator of his birth on that continent. Chemical analysis was undertaken in an attempt to determine whether the man had spent the early part of his life in Africa, but strontium isotope levels overlapped those of individuals from the cemetery population that are likely to have been born in New York (young children), while lead levels were low, close to those in other individuals with modified teeth. The man's nativity remains ambiguous.

Preservation of the skeleton was excellent (Figure 8.6) and several pathologies were observed, including signs of periostitis (bone scarring due to inflammation from bacterial infection or injury) on the cranium and legs; "saber shin" (suggesting he had treponemal disease); stress-affected muscle attachments at the elbows; conditions of the bones at the joints that indicated mild to severe arthritis; enamel hypoplasias on the teeth suggesting childhood nutritional stress; and severe molar caries with indications of likely abscesses and perhaps infections of the surrounding bone.

The coffin in Burial 176 was the only one excavated that had a full set of coffin handles, two on each side and one at each end (see Chapter 10 for illustrations and discussion). Its lid was decorated with iron tacks around the entire perimeter, spaced two inches apart—also unique within the excavated sample (Figures 8.7 and 8.8).



Figure 8.7. (left)
In situ photograph of excavation showing iron tacks edging the lid of the Burial 176 coffin. Six handles were also found. The ruler is measured in feet; north is to the right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Figure 8.8. (below)
In situ photograph of one of the Burial 176 coffin handles during excavation. The ruler is measured in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



The lid tacks and handles were recorded *in situ* during excavation. The only other artifact found in association with the remains was a straight pin fragment from the jaw/neck area. It is possible Burial 312, of an infant, was placed immediately adjacent to the Burial 176 grave, though the stratigraphic relationship is not clear.

Only one of the graves excavated at the African Burial Ground held a clue to the name of the deceased. This was Burial 332, where the coffin lid had been decorated with iron tacks forming the initials “HW” (“M” is an alternative, but perhaps less likely reading of the first letter) and a number, probably “38” (Figure 8.9). The number was probably the man’s age, which agrees closely with the age range calculated from skeletal analysis (thirty-five to forty). Thus far, documentary sources have not yielded any record of a man with initials H.W. who is likely to have been laid to rest at the African Burial Ground, but future compilations of the names of African New Yorkers or escapees from out of town may yet reveal a plausible identity.

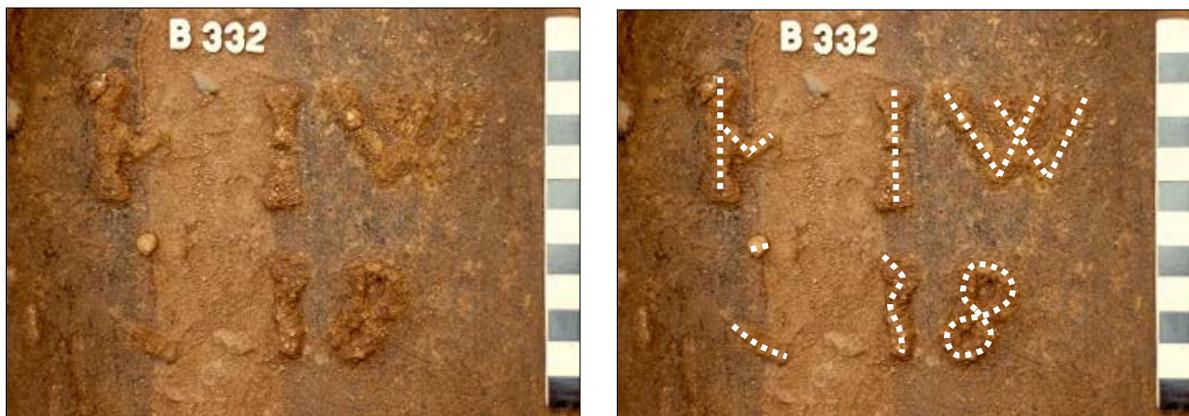


Figure 8.9. (above)

Left: *in situ* photograph of Burial 332 coffin lid decoration formed of iron tacks. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Right: reconstruction of initials “HW” and number “38.” The coffin lid had split longitudinally, severing the “H” and the likely “3.”



Figure 8.10. (right)

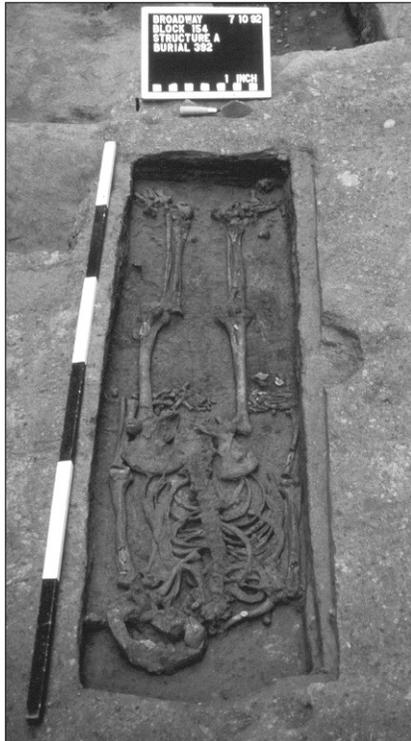
In situ photograph of “H W” (Burial 332) skeletal remains after removal of the coffin lid. The ruler is measured in feet, and north is to the right.

Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

There were just two items recovered from this burial other than the coffin and the skeletal remains (Figure 8.10). One straight pin and a lock of hair were recorded under the right side of the cranium; during cleaning of the thoracic vertebrae in the laboratory a curved copper-alloy object was recovered, adhering to a fragment of coffin wood. The latter may have been the remnant of an earring or a curved pin (see Chapter 13). As noted in section 8.D, a child of five to nine years old (Burial 289) may have been deliberately buried immediately above “HW.”

Burial 392

Burial 392 was one of just four interments in the excavated sample that was oriented with the head toward the east. It also contained a rectangular coffin, one of only two adult coffins that were clearly of this shape. One explanation for the east-headed orientation is that the symmetrical coffin was lowered into the grave without the bearers knowing which end was the head, though deliberate placement is also possible. The coffin was of unique construction among those recorded at this site, with at least two cross pieces nailed to the lengthwise boards of the lid (Figure 8.11).



The man in Burial 392 was buried wearing breeches, as evidenced by buttons found at the knees and hips (see Chapter 12). In addition, two octagonal cuff link or button faces were found in the neck/shoulder area. The skeletal remains were in poor condition, complete but crushed and very eroded. Three possible urinary stones were removed from below the hip, and possible healed fractures of the left kneecap and right ribs were also noted.

Figure 8.11.

In situ photograph of Burial 392. The ruler alongside the remains is measured in feet; north is to the right. Photograph by Stan Bottitta.

CHAPTER 9. THE LATE GROUP

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

Late Group assignments are based on the dating of artifacts from grave shafts, on stratigraphic relationships, and, most importantly, on burial location, as discussed in Chapter 4. Reasons to place this group in the period from 1776 to the close of the cemetery include the destruction of the fence marking the cemetery's north edge and likely usurpation of Rutgers property during the British occupation; and northward pressure caused by military uses of the ground to the south (for a fuller discussion, see Chapter 4). The frequency of coffin-less burials and the preponderance of men to the north of the fence post alignment is also best explained by the circumstances of the Revolutionary War and the British occupation of New York, as will be discussed in section 9.C.

The town and its population are characterized, and then the mortuary sample and related material culture are described, followed by a discussion of the spatial distribution of excavated graves and descriptions of some unique and unusual burials in this temporal group.

9.A. *The town*

The American War for Independence profoundly disrupted the city's streets, homes, and cemeteries. British troops took the city in the first months of the war and occupied it for seven years. Conflagrations, beginning with the Great Fire of September 1776, ravaged the downtown area, destroying huge swaths of the built environment. Public spaces were taken over for military use. Soldiers were billeted in barracks on the Common and in private homes appropriated for army use, including Isaac Teller's on the western side of the African Burial Ground. Thousands of prisoners of war languished in makeshift prisons and on prison ships, most of them perishing before hostilities ended. Loyalists from the hinterland relocated to the city, and over the course of the war refugees streamed into town (on New York in general during and after the war see Burrows and Wallace 1999:223-287; on the presence and role of Africans in the city in these years, see the African Burial Ground History Report [Medford 2004:204-215]; Hodges 1999:139-161; and Foote 2004:212-216).

Africans from New York and New Jersey escaped from households sympathetic to the patriot cause and joined the British forces in the months leading up to the war. They were responding to Lord Dunmore's proclamation freeing enslaved and indentured servants who supported the crown. During the occupation of New York City, thousands of blacks from surrounding areas and from distant colonies found their way to refuge

here. Those confiscated by the British from patriot households during the war were brought to the city, and Loyalist refugees brought their own enslaved Africans with them. The British used hundreds of African workers, mainly runaways, during the occupation, paying wages (or, sometimes, rum) for various types of labor. Housing was in seriously short supply, but some were billeted in “Negro Barracks” (appropriated buildings), several in the vicinity of upper Broadway (British Headquarters Papers, No. 10349). A “Black Brigade” had been organized when the British took the town, and Blacks brought in from other colonies joined its ranks. The “Black Pioneers” were commissioned in 1776 to serve as guards, pilots, spies, and interpreters to the Native Americans (Hodges 1999:147). Blacks were used mainly as teamsters, but also for cleaning the streets and in the fuel and ordnance departments; they rebuilt the infrastructure burned in the Great Fire, were used for foraging expeditions, and worked as pilots on harbor craft. Numerous opportunities for paid work were seized by Africans during this time, but harsh exploitation of the enslaved also characterized the occupation. Severe wartime shortages, especially of food, fuel, and lumber for building, made life in the city difficult for all.

By an agreement negotiated with Washington, when the British evacuated New York in 1783, the Blacks who officially left with them were inspected and registered. This was the famous “Book of Negroes” (British Headquarters Papers, No. 10427), listing some 3,000 men, women and children, many who testified that they had escaped from households in New York or other colonies and come to New York, or had served in the British forces during the war. Approximately 80% of the black refugees listed were from southern colonies, 20% from New York and New Jersey (Foote 1991:342-343). It is estimated that perhaps a thousand additional Blacks evacuated with the British in private vessels (Quarles 1961:172), for a total of approximately 4,000.

It is likely that most blacks who died during the occupation, whatever their residence or status, were buried in the African Burial Ground, though Trinity’s small “Negroes” cemetery on Church Street was probably available to church members, of whom there were many among Anglican loyalist families. Reportedly, many black refugees also joined the church (Hodges 1999:146-147).

Dissenting Christian denominations also were attracting black members. The John Street Methodist Church reported membership of 25 blacks in 1786, 70 in 1789, 135 in 1791, and 155 by 1795 (Walls 1974:40-46). After the war black churchgoers increasingly moved to separate from white congregations, where restrictions on their full participation as members and preachers continued unabated. A pivotal moment in the history of the black church in America was the formation in New York of a separate black Methodist meeting in 1795.¹ One of the galvanizing issues behind the separatist movement in this

¹ In the 1780s the John Street congregation had several “Negro Classes” with men and women separated, as was the church practice. Several of the men who would emerge as leaders of the black community and founders of a separate black congregation were in Class Number 31, and in Class Number 28 was Peter Williams, Sr., the church’s sexton and one of its gravediggers, who worked at John Street to earn his own freedom. Black Methodists met in a house on Cross Street in 1795. In 1801, they incorporated the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and erected their own chapel, with a burial ground as well as a vault, on Church Street (see Walls 1974).

and other churches was probably the demise of the African Burial Ground, which, we believe, had heretofore served as a focal religious institution in New York's African community.

A new soldiers' barracks erected at present-day Chambers Street and the use of the ground behind the barracks for a cemetery by the British (see Figure 2.12) would have constricted the African cemetery and possibly pushed it northward. Members of the city's African community might have appropriated the southern edge of the Rutgers Farm (the old Calk Hook Farm) for burials at this time. As discussed in Chapter 4, the British reportedly destroyed the fence that had marked the boundary between the burial ground and the Rutgers/Barclay property; that property may have been left un-leased, or held in uncertain possession, during the war. The houses within the Van Borsum patent were either destroyed or were occupied by various tenants, also in uncertain possession, during the war once Teller was removed (Johnson 1853-59(9):174-77).

The growth of the town in the decade following the war is reflected in the 1797 Taylor-Roberts Plan (Figure 2.17). Streets and building lots were laid out northward from Chambers Street and in 1787 the Barclays began selling off lots along Duane Street, on the northern edge of the African Burial Ground. Some time soon after, a new fence was probably constructed, once again delimiting the area Africans could use. Within seven years claimants to the Van Borsum patent were able to have the remainder of the cemetery land surveyed and sold in lots (see Chapter 2).

Depredations on the African Burial Ground from medical students seeking cadavers in the 1780s led to forceful protests from the city's African community leaders. Besides providing a window on the development of black leadership in the town, the protests revealed the vulnerability of what we believe was still the community's most important institution at the time, their cemetery. As explained in Chapter 2, at least one attempt was made to provide a more secure place of burial (Mr. Scipio Gray's plot on Gold Street), but that, too, was subject to depredation. Africans were particular targets of this practice, as attested by numerous newspaper accounts, and were the first to raise a public protest. Public anger against doctors was first aroused when a free African-American man's letter was printed in the *New-York Daily Advertiser* on February 16, 1788.² The author suggested that a law be passed prohibiting dissection of any but criminals so that "a stop might be put to this horrid practice here; and the mind of a very great number of my fellow-liberated, or still enslaved Blacks quieted." The closing of the letter is an intimation of rising concern on the part of the aggrieved African community. His next letter contained a less veiled threat: "students of physick" were warned that "their lives may be the forfeit of their temerity should they dare to persist in their robberies" (*New-York Daily Advertiser*, February 28, 1788). A group of free and enslaved black men also petitioned the Common Council to protect the graves of blacks (Common Council Papers, Petitions, 1788[87]). Black leaders thus pursued simultaneous strategies: appealing to the authorities and threatening to meet violence against the dead with

² The writer's name was omitted "for reasons," as the publisher stated, "which must be obvious to the author."

violence on the streets. A general riot that became known as the “Doctors’ Riot” erupted in April, showing that New Yorkers of European heritage were as incensed about grave robbing as Africans, and suggests that for people of all backgrounds the desecration of the dead was a particularly heinous crime.

9.B. *The population*

Census

African New Yorkers made up 14.3% of the population before the war, but were only 9.9% of the city total in 1790. This drop does not reflect a decrease in the black population, which was essentially the same in 1771 and 1790. Rather, European immigration accelerated following the war, their numbers increasing by 10,000.

Census figures for Africans are available for points in time bracketing the war years (1771 and 1786) and for 1790, which can be considered the eve of the African Burial Ground’s closing (Table 9.1). There was also one count taken during the occupation, in 1779 (Elliott Papers, cited in Hodges 1999:150). Fluctuations during the war years went unrecorded, however. We do know that three to four thousand blacks left with the British in 1783 and that most of them were from out of town. The 1779 count seems low; it may be inaccurate, or it is possible the numbers of fugitive/refugee Africans swelled after that year.

Year	Adults		Children		Age for children	Label in census
	(male)	(female)	(male)	(female)		
1771	932*	1,085	568	552	<16	“Blacks”
1779	Total: 1,951					“Blacks”
1786	males	females	No separate count of children.			“Slaves”
	896	1,207				
1790	free	enslaved	No count by gender or age.			“All other free persons” and “Slaves”
	1,036**	2,056				
<p>*Includes 42 men over 60. **Includes 678 living in free black households and 349 living in white-headed households. In 1790 about half of the enslaved (1170 persons) and about half of the free blacks living in white-headed households lived with merchants, artisans, or retail tradesmen (White 1991:7). Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909); White (1991:126); for 1779, Elliott Papers, cited in Hodges (1999:150).</p>						

In addition to the census figures, data on residential patterns of both enslaved and free blacks in New York are available. Shane White, by analyzing the census and city directories, has been able to locate most households where people of African descent lived (Figure 9.1). The extent of slaveholding in the early federal era is evident.



Figure 9.1.
Locations of free Black households (top) and slaveholding households (bottom) in New York in 1790. Arrows point to the location of the African Burial Ground. Source: White (1991:15, 172).

Numbers of free blacks in New York are difficult to reconstruct for the period before 1790. Since the number of enslaved persons in the 1786 census is roughly equal to the number of enslaved in 1790, it is possible the free blacks were counted with the white population in 1786. Many came to New York during the war as fugitives and stayed on. Others were the small number of free blacks whose families had been living in the city for many years, even generations. Free blacks were overwhelmingly concentrated in the Montgomerie Ward, especially along Fair, Gold, and Beekman Streets near St. George's Chapel, where Scipio Grey worked, and adjacent to which the African Free School was founded in 1789 (see Rothschild 1990:100-101).

There was a preponderance of black women over men in counts from both before and after the war. Child-to-woman ratios cannot be calculated except for 1771, when about one child per adult female was counted.

Mortuary sample

Late Group burials, numbering 114, are listed in Table 9.2. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. “N/a” in the coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed or redeposited so that coffin presence/absence was not determined. The distribution of Late Group graves is shown on Figures 9.2a-d. Profiles by age and sex are graphed in Figures 9.3 and 9.4. It is possible men predominate in this temporal group because they were more likely than women to remain in, or flee to, the occupied town, and because they were volunteers or conscripts in the British army.

Table 9.2.
Late Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B001	20	25	female?	94	2	82.5	y	hexagonal
B002	27	42	male		11	43.5	n	n/a
B006	25	30	male?	91	15	87.5	y	hexagonal
B012	35	45	female	83	12	89.5	y	rectangle?
B014	0	0.5	undete	89	12	89.5	y	shared
B015	11	18	undete	105	-5	103.5	n	unident.
B020	45	50	male		0	85	n	no coffin
B028			undete		-2	83	y	unident.
B036			female		-5	87.5	n	unident.
B037	45	55	male	102	20	65	y	hexagonal
B040	50	60	female	94	10	65	y	hexagonal
B051	24	32	female	118	10	75	y	hexagonal
B058	3.5	4.5	undete	93	15	65	y	rectangle
B059	0	0.25	undete	90	15	65	y	hexagonal
B063	35	45	male	91	15	70	y	hexagonal
B065	0	0.49	undete	90	10	75	y	hexagonal?
B071	25	35	female	102	10	75	y	hexagonal
B076	25	55	male	112	10	75	y	no coffin
B086	6	8	undete	91	18	74	y	hexagonal
B095	7	12	undete	76	51	94.5	y	hexagonal
B097	40	50	male	97	20	81	y	hexagonal
B099	6	10	undete	78	70	91.5	y	unident.
B117	0	0	undete		77	91.5	n/a	n/a
B125			female?	89	52	64.5	n	unident.
B131			undete	90	76.5	91.5	n	unident.
B132	25	30	male	98	61.5	64.5	y	hexagonal
B134	40	50	female	106	85	62.5	y	hexagonal
B135	30	40	male	100	70	70	y	hexagonal
B137	25	35	undete	100	75	63	y	unident.
B138	3	5	undete	98	86	67.5	y	rectangle
B147	55	65	male	81	56.5	70.5	y	hexagonal
B150	20	28	female	117	80	70.5	y	no coffin

Table 9.2.
Late Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B151	35	45	male	138	83	67.5	y	hexagonal
B152			undete	110	67	55.5	n	unident.
B153			female?	111	74	54.5	y	hexagonal
B157			female?		81.5	53.5	n	n/a
B158	20	30	male	111	92	63	y	no coffin
B162	35	45	male	109	51.5	55	n	unident.
B164	8	13	undete	97	91	52.5	y	tapered
B165			undete	108	73	62.5	y	no coffin
B166	0.5	1	undete	111	92.5	55.5	y	rectangle
B170	7	11	undete	90	65	96	y (no cranium)	unident.
B171	44	60	male	114	99.5	53.5	y	hexagonal
B172	25	35	female	118	88	40.5	y	no coffin
B173	0.25	0.75	undete	121	101	57	y	rectangle
B174	17	18	male	115	90	60.5	y	hexagonal
B178			male		57	62	n	n/a
B179	25	30	male	110	98	46.5	y	hexagonal
B180	11	13	undete	111	97.5	50	y	hexagonal
B181	20	23	male	86	115	66	y	no coffin
B183	0.63	1.13	undete		113.5	50	y	hexagonal
B184	1	1.5	undete	121	108.5	52	y	four-sided
B185	21	23	male		122	54.5	y	no coffin
B186	0	0.17	undete	124	110	47.5	y	hexagonal
B187	1.5	4	undete	112	119.5	52.5	y	hexagonal
B188	26	32	undete	95	52.5	58.5	n	n/a
B190	0.38	0.88	undete	112	100.5	55	y	hexagonal
B191	25	30	male	109	87.5	56.5	y	no coffin
B192	40	60	female	116	101.5	67	y	hexagonal
B193	30	48	male	109	101.5	65.5	y	no coffin
B194	30	40	male	104	84	50.5	y	hexagonal
B195	30	40	female	100	63	81.5	y	hexagonal
B196	20	24	undete	90	56	83	y	hexagonal
B197	45	55	female	77	57.5	76	y	hexagonal
B199	30	40	female	112	80	73.5	y	no coffin
B201	1.5	3.5	undete	101	70.5	59.5	y	rectangle
B203	12	18	undete	83	77	59	y	hexagonal
B204			female?		98	77.5	n	n/a
B205	18	20	female	108	102	59.5	y	hexagonal
B207	25	35	female?	93	95	78.5	y	tapered
B208	0.5	1	undete		96	77	n	unident.
B209	40	50	male	117	94	42	y	hexagonal
B210	35	45	male	88	116	46	y	no coffin
B211			male?	95	79.5	77	y	no coffin

Table 9.2.
Late Group burials

Burial	Low age	High age	Sex	Head angle	Grid East	Grid South	Preservation	Coffin
B214	45	55	male	99	63.5	79.5	y	hexagonal
B217	17	19	male	100	122.5	64.5	y	hexagonal
B223	25	35	female	101	76.5	66.5	y	no coffin
B225	0.5	1.25	undete	112	95.5	64.5	y	four-sided
B228			male?	85	55	86	n	hexagonal
B230	55	65	female	120	106	45.5	y	hexagonal
B236	4	5	undete	90	53.5	84.5	y	hexagonal
B241	55	65	female	94	121	54.5	y	hexagonal
B242	40	50	female	90	117	49.5	y	hexagonal
B243	40	50	male	105	121	57.5	y	no coffin
B244	5	9	undete	104	90	51.5	y	four-sided
B252	1	2	undete	115	95.5	64.5	y	hexagonal
B257	30	40	male	100	64.5	72.1	y	other
B259	17	19	female?	105	102	40.5	y	hexagonal
B262	15	17	male?	94	120	38.5	y	no coffin
B266	25	35	female	105	113.5	38.5	y	hexagonal
B276	20	24	female	108	118.5	35.5	y	no coffin
B278	45	55	male	116	103	42	y	no coffin
B297	30	40	male	106	117.5	62.5	n	unident.
B299	40	50	male	80	123.5	68.5	y	hexagonal
B305	-0.33	0.33	undete	109	122	57	y	hexagonal
B309	20	25	male		143.5	62	y	no coffin
B313	45	55	male	102	114.5	31.5	y	hexagonal
B322			female	99	140	64.5	n	n/a
B323	19	30	male		128.5	45	y	no coffin
B325	25	35	male	99	137.5	63.5	y	hexagonal
B327	35	45	male	98	129	48.5	y	no coffin
B329			male	85	128.5	56	y	no coffin
B329.1			undete		128.5	56	n	n/a
B330	28	58	male		140	58.5	n	n/a
B331	30	35	undete		137	58	n	n/a
B337	40	50	male	116	130	37	y	no coffin
B342	25	35	female?	104	129	50	y	hexagonal
B343	19	23	male	92	130	59.5	y	hexagonal
B346	50	70	female	117	138.5	57.5	y	hexagonal
B354	35	45	male	93	129.5	44.5	y	hexagonal
B363	1	2	undete	124	135	49.5	y	hexagonal
B364	25	35	male	90	143.5	44.5	y	no coffin
B369	40	50	male	83	131	54	y	no coffin
B386	0	0.3	undete	101	121.5	48	y	unident.



Figure 9.2.b
 Late Group Burials, Western Area
 African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

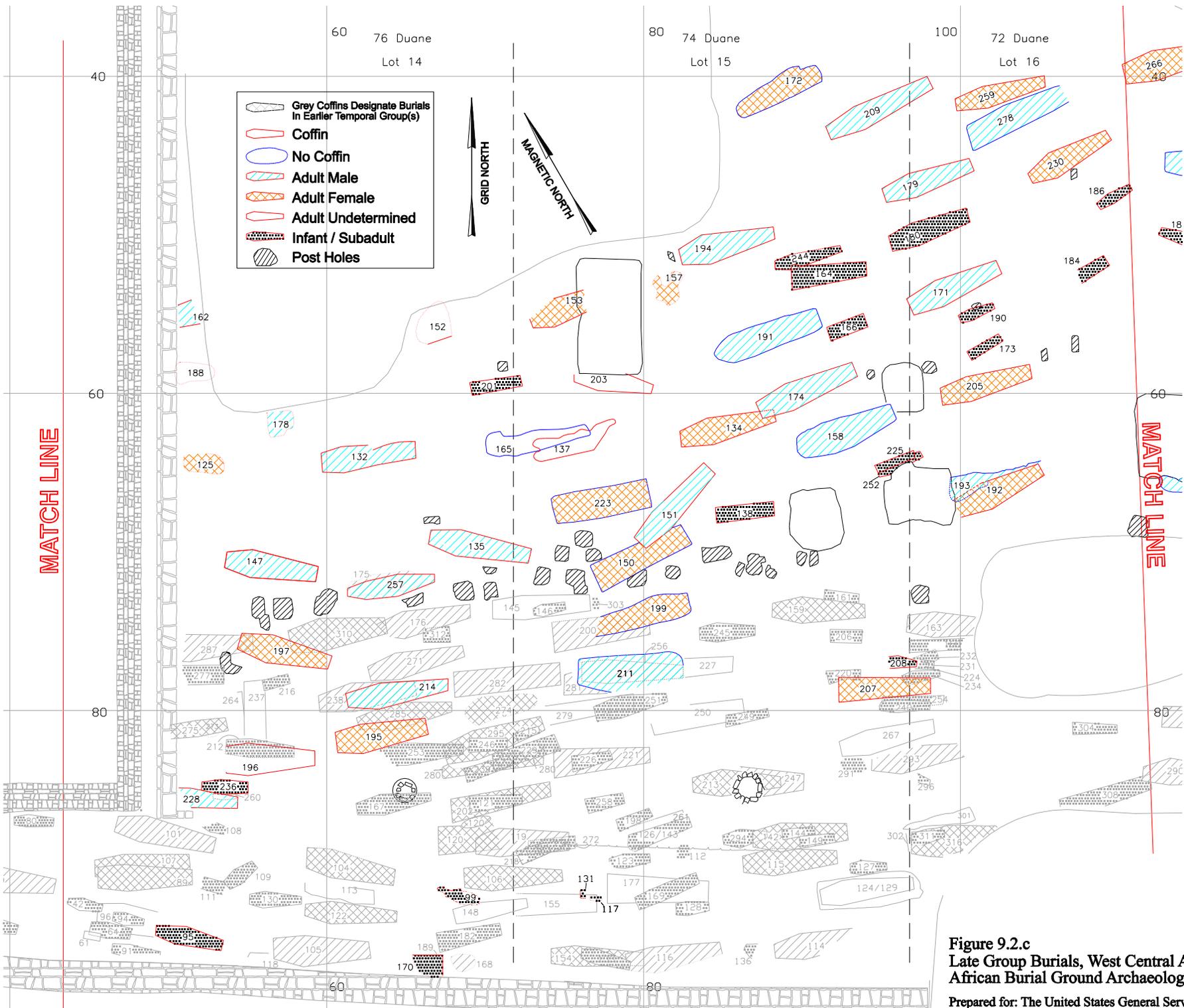


Figure 9.2.c
Late Group Burials, West Central Area
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

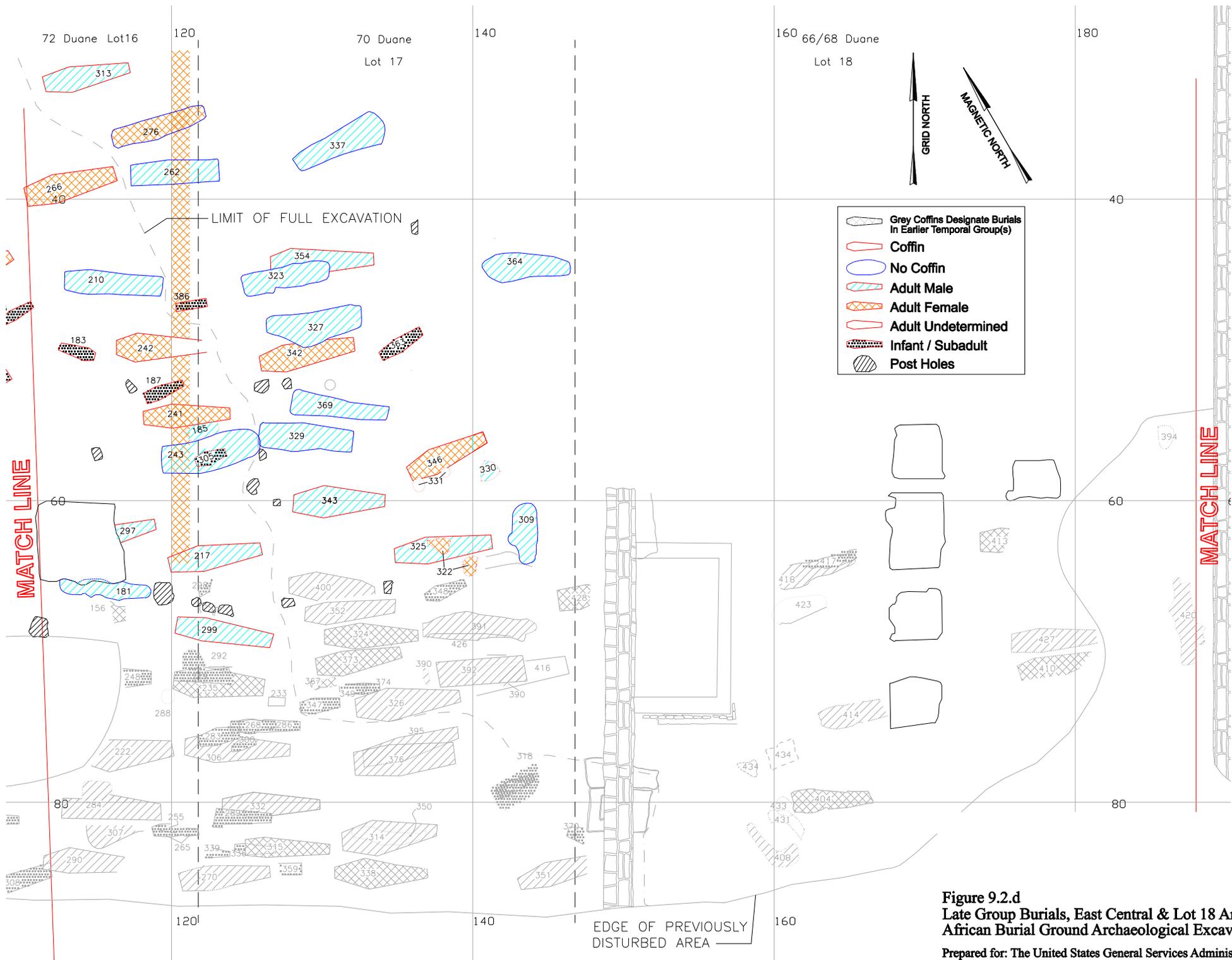


Figure 9.2.d
Late Group Burials, East Central & Lot 18 Areas
African Burial Ground Archaeological Excavation
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration

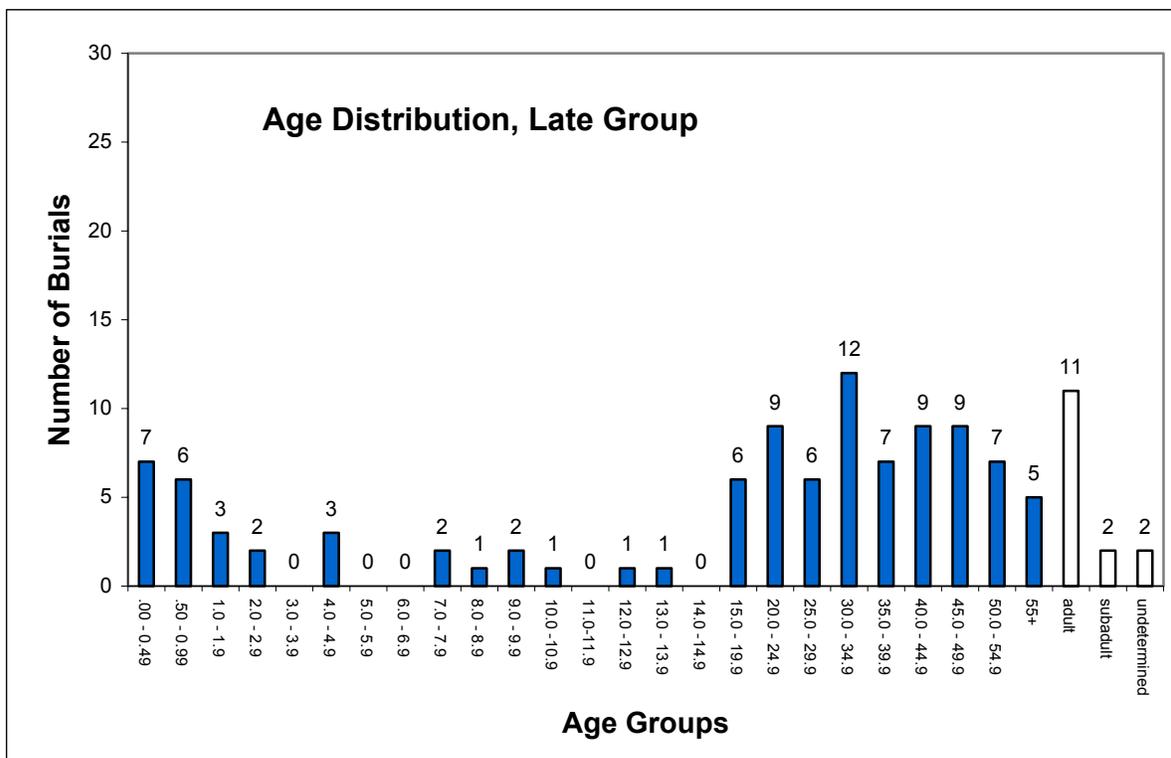


Figure 9.3.
Age profile, Late Group. White bars are individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

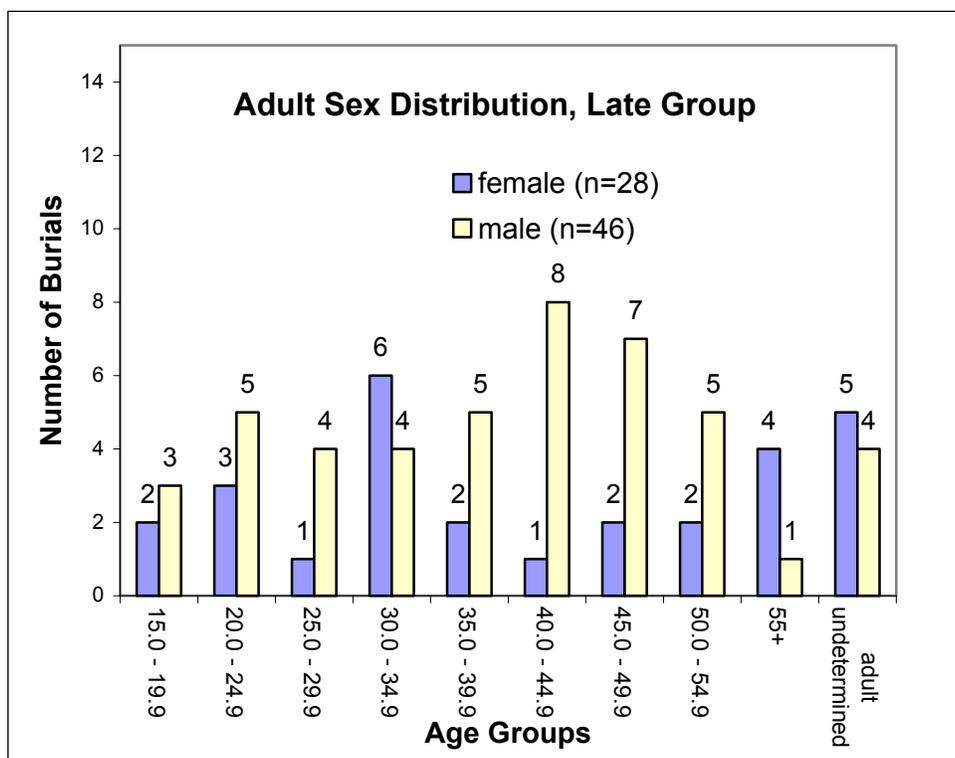


Figure 9.4.
Adult sex distribution, Late Group.

9.C. *Mortuary material culture*

Coffins and burials without coffins

Most graves without coffins, most of which fall to the north of the fence alignment, have been assigned to this last period of the cemetery's use. In Chapter 5 we suggested three possible explanations for burial without a coffin: 1) the inability of the family and friends of the deceased to afford a coffin or the refusal of an enslaved person's household head to provide it; 2) burial under some kind of special circumstance; 3) or adherence to a distinctive funeral practice.

A culturally distinctive funeral program may be the explanation for burial without coffins, but there is no evidence, either documentary or archaeological, to illuminate this possibility. Though coffins were not used in most African cultures of our period, there are no other features of the New York burials that point to specific cultural origins. For example, while we know that there were probably Muslims among New York's African population, and in strict adherence to Islamic law they would not have used coffins by choice, body orientation and the presence of personal items argues against Muslim practice. The other explanation based on distinctive funeral practice is that these were poor church members who were brought to the cemetery in a "parish coffin" – used to transport the deceased but retained by the church for repeated use. The growth in the late period of black Christian congregations, especially at the Anglican and Methodist churches, may support this explanation. Proper burial facilities were given priority by 18th century African American benefit societies and by early leaders of the black churches, including in New York, but whether a church coffin would have been seen as adequate is not known.

There is one obvious circumstance affecting the provision of coffins. The disruptions of the war caused shortages in supplies, particularly wood for fuel and building. Even obtaining sufficient scrap lumber to fashion a coffin for one's own kin might have been difficult. This explanation supports the dating of coffin-less burials to the period of the occupation.

We hypothesize that another special circumstance leading to coffin-less burial was not a lack of *means*, but a lack of *people* to see to these individuals' funeral arrangements. If the burials took place during the Revolution, the deceased may not have had time enough to form deep social bonds in the local community. They may have been soldiers, laborers in the employ of the British forces, or refugees, and they may have been in the city for only a short while. Typically when someone in the New York African community died, the provision of a coffin was considered a minimum standard of proper treatment. Even outsiders, in earlier periods, may have been afforded this minimum through the pooled resources of an established community (which took in escapees or transient free blacks), or, if enslaved, through their slaveholders who were obliged by custom to provide it. But during the war, with severe disruptions in community life and the huge influx of outsiders, we can imagine strangers dying with no people of their own and no local group able to take care of their funeral.

Age Group	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	Adult, undetermined	Tot.
Female		2		2	1					5
Male	1	4	2	1	1	3	4	1	2	19
Undetermined									1	1

The fact that the coffin-less burials are all of adults lends support to the idea that these burials held transients. Children were unlikely to be here alone, and therefore when a child died there was probably someone to see to its burial.⁴ The predominance of men in coffin-less burials also supports the interpretation: black soldiers and refugees who became laborers for the British would have been buried at the African Burial Ground.

This is not to deny the formation of families among Revolutionary War refugees in New York, for there is in fact evidence of this process. For example, the lists of blacks evacuated with the British in 1783 provide information on several marriages of men and women from distant places who met in the occupied city (Foote 1991:370-75; Kruger 1985:666-73). But many deaths must have occurred among those who had not yet had opportunities to find kin, acquire spouses, make friends, join a religious group, or otherwise form bonds with a local community.

The lumber shortage during the war cautions us against over-interpreting the structural niche of occupants of coffin-less burials. Even if families and friends were on hand and wished to provide adequate funerals, the means may not have been available. Still, we believe that the provision of a coffin for *most* of the deceased speaks to the efforts of mourners to provide that item even in the face of shortages. Burials without coffins may therefore represent individuals for whom less effort was made, because they were strangers or because the family's or household's means were too limited.

Despite the possible hindrances, there were three times as many Late Group burials with coffins than without (79 coffins). Hexagonal coffins are typical of the late period. Only three of the adult coffins with recognizable shapes were not six-sided: a tapered coffin

³ Two coffin-less burials of men (Burials 391 and 357) are in the Late-Middle Group (see Chapter 8), and these, too, may be from the period of the British occupation.

⁴ Poor preservation of child burials may also account for the lack of coffin-less children's graves recorded. Even with *no* dental preservation, the outlines of graves should have been discernable. Still, if excavation failed to turn up any evidence of either a coffin or skeletal remains it is possible no burial would have been recorded, and disturbances to the site may have obscured such graves beyond recognition. A number of infant's or small children's coffins contained minimal or no skeletal material; if a coffin aided preservation at least to some degree we would expect even less skeletal survival for coffin-less juveniles. The degree of skeletal preservation for individuals 15 and older does not appear to have been significantly affected by the presence of coffins.

(Burial 207), a possible rectangular coffin (Burial 12), and a possible eight-sided coffin with a two-piece headboard (Burial 257). Even among the children and infants, 12 out of 21 recognizable coffin shapes were hexagonal. One adult, in Burial 207, had a four-sided tapering coffin, the shape we have considered to be typical of the early period. While the presence of a sherd of pearlware in the soil within the cranium and the fact that the burial overlay many children's graves force us to consider it late, it is possible Burial 207 has been assigned incorrectly. Burial 12, which also had pearlware in the grave shaft fill soil, had a coffin for which it is difficult to determine the shape, though it appears to have been four-sided.

Other artifacts

Other types of material culture directly associated with Late Group burials included pins, jewelry, plain and decorative buttons and cuff links, and miscellaneous items including coins. Fifty-three percent (60 out of 114) of the Late Group burials had at least one pin. Shrouding was probably typical, though 16 individuals had some evidence of clothing (buttons, cuff links at the wrists, or an aglet). Little in the way of personal adornment was recovered from Late Group burials, as was the case for the excavated cemetery as a whole. A woman was laid to rest wearing a ring with glass insets (Burial 242), an infant with a glass and wire filigree ornament (Burial 186), and a young child with a string of black beads looped at the waist (Burial 187).

Sixteen of the 36 burials with clothing items that were clearly associated with the deceased were in the Late Group; more than half of the buttons recovered at the African Burial Ground were from Late Group burials. Particular types of clothing are suggested in Burials 6 (a jacket), 181 (trousers or breeches), 203 (breeches), and 259 (breeches). One man had cuff links at each wrist (Burial 158) and another was buried with an enameled cuff link face (Burial 211); a possible cuff link was recorded for Burial 181.⁵

The greater frequency of buttons and cuff links in later burials raise questions about the increased use of street clothes as burial attire (see Chapter 12). There is a caveat, however: since buttons have in some cases provided the rationale for placing burials in the Late Group (Burial 6, for example), a comparison of button/no button burials within and across temporal groups is suspect. In other words, there are probably burials that date to the late period but that have not been identified as late because they have no artifacts and are not assignable spatially or stratigraphically. Such burials would increase the frequency of button-less burials in the Late Group.

“Miscellaneous” items such as coins, shells, and pipes were also more prominent in Late Group burials than in burials from earlier groups (see Chapter 14). Since these items were not used to date burials, the comparative frequency is more likely to reflect actual mortuary practice than in the case of clothing fasteners. Ten individuals in the Late

⁵ Buttons, cuff links, and clothing are described in Chapter 12. All of the decorative buttons, and all of the cuff links, are considered as personal adornment and hence are also discussed in Chapter 13. The enamel cuff link face from Burial 211 is illustrated in the inventory in Chapter 13. Beads, rings, and pieces of jewelry made from metal and glass are part of Chapter 13, as well.

Group were interred with miscellaneous items. Two women (Burials 230 and 242) and one man (Burial 135) had coins on their eyes. A coin and a knife were found with another man (Burial 214). Iron tacks were found with a woman (Burial 197) and a young child (Burial 138); the infant in Burial 186 had a possible nail on the left side of its cranium. The man in Burial 147 was found with a cluster of small copper rings and pins next to his right arm. Two adults (Burials 158 and 165) had portions of pipes.

9.D. *Spatial distribution*

Orientation

In the later grouping of burials, more graves were angled southward relative to the site grid than in the earlier or middle groupings (see discussion of orientation in Chapter 5). The pattern may be evidence for a higher frequency of winter deaths, or reliance on physical features in the northern part of the cemetery (for example, terracing along the slope of the hill), or a more regularized approach to grave digging, such that once a grave was dug, other graves were aligned to it.

The fence post alignment was oriented at approximately 102° west of grid north. If the southerly trend of Late Group burials were construed as evidence of alignment with the fence, the hypothesis that these burials post-date the fence's destruction must be rejected. There remains the possibility that a path or road extended roughly parallel to the property line, leading from Broadway to the pottery buildings that stood near the northeast part of the cemetery. The trenches identified in Lot 12 (see Chapter 4) might be related to such an access road. Such an east-west feature could have been used to orient burials.

Rows

To a greater degree than elsewhere at the site, burials in the northern area appear to form "rows" with north-south alignments. These row-like alignments can be explained in several, mutually compatible ways. First, the alignments might reflect the lay of the land, lying more or less along parallel "terraces" on the sloping ground. This may be supported by the somewhat more regular orientation of graves. Second, the row-like alignments might indicate that the day-to-day management of the cemetery was becoming more regularized, so that a gravedigger sited graves, rather than the mourners themselves. Regularization of gravesites is also compatible with our idea that the northern area was used during the British occupation and contains many individuals from outside the local community. The grouping of graves in regard to known social ties such as kinship or residence would not always have been possible under the circumstances of war. Finally, the arrangement may reflect a pragmatic response to a heightened mortality rate. The war and the appalling health conditions in the town would have raised the death toll and possibly required several burials on a single day. Similarly, the yellow fever that plagued the city annually beginning in 1791 may have taken lives at a rate requiring that several graves be prepared at once.

Paired burials

A woman-infant co-interment, Burials 12 and 14, was found in a relatively separate location in the southwest part of the site (Figure 9.2b), and child Burials 225 (of a six-to-twelve-month-old) and 252 (of an eighteen-month old) form another pair in the northern area of the site (Figure 9.2c, at the east edge of former Lot 15). While there is no way to know, the pairs may have been victims of the yellow fever epidemics of the 1790s.

Burials 137 and 165 in the northern area of the excavated site (Figure 9.2c, straddling the line between former Lots 14 and 15) may have been placed together deliberately, since the two are spatially separate from other interments within an apparent row. Burial 137 was between twenty-five and thirty-five years old and of undetermined sex; Burial 165 was an adult for whom neither sex nor precise age could be determined. Burial 137, which had a coffin, overlay Burial 165, which did not; the later burial did not disturb the earlier, however.

Burials 243 and 305 are the only other likely paired burials in the Late Group (Figure 9.2d, on the line between former Lots 16 and 17). They were very unusual if in fact they were deliberately buried together: the infant (in Burial 305) was beneath the adult (Burial 243), a man between forty and fifty years of age.

Gendered space

We have noted that the predominance of men in the later burials and their greater frequency in coffin-less burials is to be expected due to the presence of soldiers and laborers during the British occupation. Do the coffin-less burials exhibit any spatial patterning by gender? There were three women's graves (Burials 223, 150, and 199) aligned roughly parallel in a north-south line at approximately 75E (Figure 9.2c, center). Other burials in this possible "row" include two to the north (Burials 137 and 165) for which sex could not be determined, and another to the south (Burial 211) identified as a probable male. A "row" of four men's graves lay to the east of the women, two in coffins and two without (Burials 194, 191, 174, 158, also Figure 9.2c). Another possible row of men's graves, mainly without coffins, lay somewhat further east (approximately at 130E; Figure 9.2d, within former Lot 17), and included Burials 337, 354, 327, 369, 329, and 343. (A woman's grave, Burial 342, intervened).

These rows of adjacent burials of the same gender are distinctive in comparison to the overall demographic distribution within the excavated site (Figure 1.7). The apparent non-random distribution of men may be related to specific historical circumstances. Men from the barracks, for instance, may all have been buried in a row if sickness claimed several lives in quick succession. Infectious and contagious diseases notoriously ravaged the troop barracks and prisons during the occupation. The cluster of women comprises only three individuals, so it may simply be the random result of normal day-to-day cemetery use. The possibility that gendered space within the cemetery had a religious basis should be considered, but there is no documentary or comparative evidence to provide hypotheses.

Isolated infants

No children were identified as having been buried without coffins, and while many adults came to the city from other geographical locales during the final period of the burial ground's use, children were likely to have had family members who could provide for their funerals. On the other hand, there were several spatially separate child burials in the northern part of the excavated cemetery, suggesting that these children's families may not have had their own places of burial within the cemetery. Detached child burials in the northern area include Burials 59 and 86, in the rear of Lot 12 (Figure 9.2b). Although interred in an apparent north-south row, the children are aligned to, but not clearly associated with any of the adult interments nearby. Burials 173 and 190 similarly appear to be aligned in a row but not definitely coupled with adult burials (Figure 9.2c, approximately 100E), and Burials 166, 187 and 386 may also fall into the category of "detached" child burials that may be associated with rows. It is possible, of course, that the children were placed near adults with some specific association within the apparent rows.

Even more isolated are Burials 201, 138, 183, 184, 186, and 363 in the west- and east-central site areas. Burials 183, 184, and 186 (Figure 9.2c-d) lay within the central part of Lot 16 where few burials were found, and it is possible disturbances obliterated nearby interments. But it would be unusual for these child burials to have better preservation than those of adults. Here is an area that may have been used specifically for the burial of children.

The area of the animal bone dump

Burials in the area where animal bone (mainly cow, likely tannery waste) had been dumped are shown in Figure 4.3. The faunal material found in each grave shaft in this area is inventoried in Appendix E. We examined the distribution of these graves in relation to the presence/absence of coffins and in terms of burial superposition to determine whether the tannery dump can provide a relative dating sequence in the area. There were 22 grave shafts containing significant amounts of cow bone, and these must have been dug after the dumping had occurred. Of these, 9 were adult burials with coffins, 6 were adult burials without coffins, and 5 were children's burials, the latter all with coffins. Thus both coffined and coffin-less burials occurred after the dumping episode(s). It is likely the tannery dump dates to some time during the occupation. Therefore, it is *possible* we have some burials that were placed within the dump area during the occupation (coffin-less) and some burials that were placed within the dump area after the war, during the mid-1780s (coffined). There were only two cases of burial superposition among those with tannery waste. In one case, two burials, coffin-less Burial 243 and coffined Burial 241, both truncated coffin-less Burial 185 – the coffined burial may be the latest. In the second case, a coffin-less burial (Burial 323) overlay a coffin burial (Burial 354), which argues *against* a coffin-less wartime vs. coffined post-war sequence within the dump. However, as we discuss in section 9.E, Burial 323 is a unique interment, one that probably occurred under inauspicious circumstances not related to the war, probably in the mid to late 1780s.

Area within Lot 17

A slight increase in the density of graves can be seen in the small area that was excavated eastward of grid line East120'. This is approximately the western boundary of Lot 17, surveyed originally in 1784 and available for lease after 1787, when the Barclay property was subdivided. It is possible this lot continued in use for burials after 1788 while those to its west did not, the latter having been fenced off (see Chapter 4). Another explanation for the increased overlap in burials is topography: this may have been one of those areas of flatter ground that was used more intensively than the slope. Because the central and northern portions of Lots 17, 18, 20 and 21 were not excavated fully, it is impossible to determine whether the concentration of burials in these eastern lots supports the idea that they were used for a longer period of time than Lots 12 through 16.

9.E. Unique and unusual burials

Burial 183: Head-to-east, possible painted coffin

Burial 183 was one of two excavated child burials with its heads toward the east rather than the west (the other was Middle Group Burial 406). The grave, located in the north-central part of the site, held a six-to-twelve-month old in a tiny-shouldered coffin. As noted, it was an isolate burial, with no apparent relationship to any other. Coffin wood preservation was excellent (Figure 9.5), and samples were identified as cedar and spruce. Excavators noted flecks of possible paint over the entire surface of the coffin lid and a concentration of orange/red color on the north side.⁶ Fifteen straight pins were recorded *in situ* in the burial, distributed the full length of the remains.



Figure 9.5.
In situ photograph of exposed coffin lid,
Burial 183. North is to the left,
and the ruler is measured in feet.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

⁶ Field records indicated that a sample was collected, but it was not brought to the attention of the conservators or inventoried by Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff. Consequently, the substance was never analyzed.

Burial 194: Wooden grave marker



A cedar board was attached to the head of the coffin in Burial 194. The vertical board was the remnant of a grave marker that would have extended to the ground surface, a unique find at the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 5 on other types of grave markers). The coffin, which was shouldered and made at least partly of cedar, held a man between thirty and forty years. His central incisors had been filed. Tooth modification is sometimes interpreted as a sign of birth in Africa, though tooth modification in Diaspora contexts should also be considered (see Goodman et al. 2004 [Chapter 6 of the Skeletal Biology Report]). Burial artifacts included a single copper-alloy button shank and an organic fragment, possibly a leather button cover, found near the head of the right femur. Pollen analysis suggested that flowers of the Liguliflorae family might have been placed on the coffin.

Figure 9.6.

In situ photograph of Burial 194 showing wood from the coffin bottom and the vertical board at the head end. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Burial 196: Displaced legs and an opened coffin

Burial 196 held the remains of an individual of undetermined sex whose calculated age range was from twenty to twenty-four. The western end of the grave shaft and the coffin had been disturbed, and the skeletal elements from the upper body, though all accounted for, were displaced and shifted eastward within the coffin. The leg bones were found as shown in Figure 9.7, as though the legs had been severed at the knees, with the tibiae and fibulae offset next to the femurs.

The state of the coffin in this burial may help explain the disposition of the bones. Coffin lid nails were found in place *only* at the foot corners; the other lid nails appear to have been removed: a small pile of nails was found alongside the north edge of the coffin, near the top, and another cluster of nails was removed from the corresponding area beneath the coffin. It is possible the coffin was opened and the lid replaced without the nails. The coffin may have been tipped on end some time after decomposition, causing the

bones to shift toward the foot. This *might* account for the position of the leg bones, providing the shifting followed at least partial soft-tissue decomposition.⁷

The possibility that the deceased had been dismembered at the knees prior to or after death is also considered, though no visible cut marks were noted by the skeletal biology team. The positions of the leg bones appear too precisely in tandem to have simply slid into this arrangement when the coffin was disturbed. It is also possible that the hands had been behind the deceased's back at the time of burial, which would point to possible execution.

The coffin bottom was of unusual construction (see Chapter 10). Instead of lengthwise boards, short crosswise-boards had been used, nailed from the bottom into the coffin sides. The unique coffin, possibly of ad hoc construction, along with the apparent opening of the receptacle some time after interment, the shifting of the remains, and the disconcerting leg position, suggest unusual circumstances surrounding the death and burial of the individual in Burial 196.



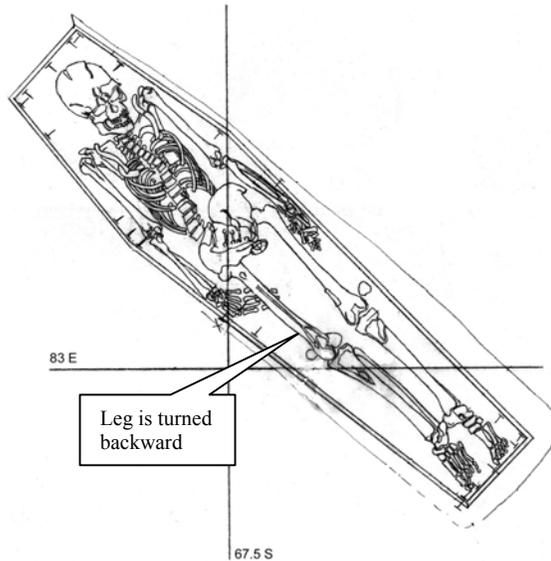
Figure 9.7.
In situ photograph of Burial 196. The ruler alongside the burial is measured in feet, and north is to the right. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

⁷ Ubelaker (1974:28-31) has analyzed frequencies of partial disarticulation, reflecting the strength of muscle or ligament attachments. His results suggest that

decomposition produces separation first at the major joints such as the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, and knee. Separation next occurs at the joints between the sacrum and pelvis, bones of the hand, lower leg and foot, radius and ulna, sacrum and fifth lumbar vertebrae, skull and first cervical vertebrae, the lumbar segments, first and second cervical vertebrae, skull and mandible, and the third to seventh cervical segments. The thoracic vertebrae, tibia and fibula, and bones of the feet are the last to become disarticulated [1974:28].

Burials with skeletal elements displaced: dismemberment and dissection

Like Burial 196, Burials 151 and 364 contained skeletons with bones placed in puzzling ways. Burial 151 held a man between thirty-five and forty-five years old. The coffin was oriented with the head well to the southwest, outside the typical range at the excavated cemetery. Excavators noted that the right leg was turned “backward.” It is possible the leg had been severed (before or after death) and placed in the coffin in this position. The man’s incisors had been filed to points. A single pin, found at the neck, was recovered from the burial.



Excavators noted that the right leg was turned “backward.” It is possible the leg had been severed (before or after death) and placed in the coffin in this position. The man’s incisors had been filed to points. A single pin, found at the neck, was recovered from the burial.

Figure 9.8. (left)
Drawing of Burial 151 *in situ*. North is to the right. Note the southwesterly orientation. Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet. Drawing by M. Schur.

The bones in Burial 364 were even more mystifyingly arranged. The remains were of a man between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, buried with no coffin. The right ulna and radius (the bones of the forearm) were found in the left lower leg area, end-to-end, where the tibia should have been, and the left tibia was rotated 180 degrees and placed at the inside of the left femur. The left arm bones were flexed at a sharp angle. The left foot overlay the distal end of the left fibula. The hand bones were found scattered in the torso area. Skeletal analysis revealed indirect evidence of a gruesome scenario: the left hand and possibly the right, as well as the forearms, had been severed near the time of the man’s death. Old cuts or abrasion of bone on the top of the left ulna and dark cut-marks consistent with a sharp blade on the top of the left radius might have been made just before or after death. Darkened blade cuts were also found on the distal (hand) end of the left radius. This cannot be a case of simple dismemberment, however. The left fibula was in its correct anatomical position,

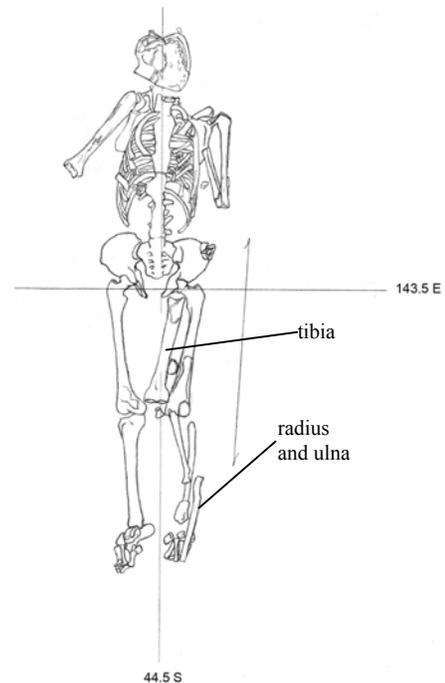


Figure 9.9.
Drawing of Burial 364 *in situ*. The vertical line to the right of the remains represents the edge of the grave shaft. North is to the right, and the scale is 1 inch = 2 feet. Drawing by W. Williams.

but the tibia was not, and the displaced, right lower-arm bones were not adjacent to each other but laid end-to-end.

One explanation for the position of the bones is that the remains represent a stolen cadaver (perhaps from the burial ground) that had been partially dissected and subsequently interred with the bones from the severed elements. We cannot know who performed the burial, but it is possible family and friends of the deceased, or other citizens among the many who decried the practice of dissection, retrieved the body and laid it to rest. Since we know that African New Yorkers assumed active vigilance over their dead (see section 9.A, and Chapter 2), it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that they made efforts to retrieve bodies, which then would have been afforded proper burial.



Figure 9.10.

In situ photograph of Burial 323 skeletal remains as found. The top of the skull was held in the man's arms. North is to the left, and the ruler is in feet. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

One other grave in the Late Group raises issues of the appropriation of bodies after death. Burial 323 held a man between nineteen and thirty years of age who had been subjected to post-mortem surgery in which the top of the skull had been sawn off. He had been placed in his grave with the top of his skull held in his arms upon his torso. Possibly his body had been obtained for dissection and perhaps the family or friends were able to retrieve the body and bury it. It is also possible that a coroner's inquest had been performed on the body, since sectioning of the cranium was typical of an autopsy in the 18th century (Sledzik and Micozzi 1997:488; for archaeological examples from Great Britain, see Chamberlain 1999). The position of the body, with the head to the east rather than the west, is very unusual (only four instances were recorded at the African Burial Ground), and supports the overall impression of inauspicious circumstances of burial. So, too, may the absence of a coffin.⁸

⁸ New York City coroner Thomas Shreve's 1771 petition to the Common Council for recovery of fees lists 20 inquests performed but does not indicate whether autopsies were undertaken. The petition does itemize extra fees incurred for burials, and Shreve charged for having to dig two graves himself. In only one case was there a charge for a coffin, implying that the others were buried without coffins (Papers of the Common Council, Petitions, Thomas Shreve, April 19, 1771).

CHAPTER 10. COFFINS

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with the assistance of Iciar Lucena Narvaez and Janet L. Woodruff

Coffin remains (wood and hardware) were by far the most ubiquitous artifacts recovered from graves at the African Burial Ground. In this chapter we report on the distribution of coffins among demographic and temporal groups and examine the historical context for coffin use. We then provide descriptive information on the shapes, sizes, material, construction, and decoration of coffins represented at the excavated cemetery. Finally, we describe the material remains that were recovered from coffins, and their treatment, identification, and quantification.

10.A. Presence/absence of coffins

As discussed in Chapter 5, the vast majority of the graves excavated at the African Burial Ground had coffins (Table 10.1; table includes burials for which presence or absence of a coffin could be determined, whether or not human remains were recovered). All of the children's graves had coffins. Of adults, 85.71% of our sample was buried in coffins. (See tables in Chapters 6 through 9 for coffin presence/absence by individual burial.)

Table 10.1. Coffin presence/absence by sex, age, and temporal group					
	Count			Percent	
	with coffin	without coffin	total	with coffin	without coffin
Sex and age					
Male	83	22	105	79.0	21.0
Female	74	8	82	90.2	9.8
Adult- sex undetermined	29	1	30	96.7	3.3
Subadult	150*		150	100.0	0.0
Sex and age undetermined	16**	1	17	94.1	5.9
Total	352	32	384	91.7	8.3
Temporal Group					
Early	48	1	49	98.0	2.0
Middle	174	3	177	98.3	1.7
Late-Middle	51	3	54	94.4	5.6
Late	79	25	104	76.0	24.0
Total	352	32	384	91.7	8.3
*Excludes two subadults that were inside adult coffins.					
**Includes one possible coffin.					

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 9, the presence or absence of a coffin co-varied with spatial location within the excavated site and with the age and sex of the deceased – this patterning suggests that coffin-less burial took place in the context of economic and social disruptions during the Revolutionary War and British military occupation of New York (1776-1783). Prior to this, coffin burial appears to have been the norm in the African community of New York.¹

In addition to the distribution of coffins by age, sex, and temporal group, we examined coffin presence/absence in relation to other types of artifacts. Burials with coffins were much more likely to have pins (66.5%) than those without coffins (20%).² It is possible that the presence of a coffin enhanced the preservation environment and therefore increased the survival of pins. However, a more likely explanation for the observed frequency distribution is that pins, like lumber for coffins, were in short supply during the war, and/or that refugees who died during the British occupation had no family to provide a shroud. As noted in Chapter 4, clothing and jewelry items were present in clear association with the deceased in six coffin-less burials, which argues against interpreting the lack of a coffin as strictly a function of poverty. Clothing and jewelry were actually somewhat more frequent proportionally in well-preserved coffin-less burials (6 out of 30 or 20%) than in well-preserved coffin burials (38 out of 284 or 13.4%). It is possible that in some cases the families of the deceased actually sold clothing or other items to pay for a proper funeral, *defined as including a coffin*. The co-variance of coffin absence and burial in clothing may support the idea that less investment was made in the preparation of the body for burial in these cases.

10.B. Coffin production and provision

Joiners, carpenters, and cabinetmakers typically built coffins in colonial and early-federal period American towns. These artisans were sometimes also “undertakers,” providing other funeral accoutrements in addition to the coffin, as well as various services.³ The

¹ Our specific historical explanation for coffin-less burial as well as our chronological sequence contrast with those advanced for Newton Plantation in Barbados. There, the earliest (17th century) rather than the later (late 18th and early 19th century) burials were without coffins, and change over time in mortuary practice, with increasing adoption of coffins due to European influence, is suggested (Handler and Lange 1978:162, 192-3). We do not know if any of the burials excavated at the African Burial Ground are as early as the earliest graves at Newton Plantation -- the earliest New York graves may have lain outside the excavated area. It is possible that, as in Barbados, 17th century African burials in New York were without coffins, but our data do not speak to this or to the issue of European influences on the use of coffins.

² Percentages are based on 326 burials (296 with coffins, 30 without) where coffin presence/absence could be determined *and* preservation was “y” – there were also pins in 5 coffin burials and 1 coffin-less burial with “n” preservation.

³ The more general term “joiner” referred to any woodworker. After about 1760, the term cabinetmaker came to refer specifically to men who made both furniture and coffins (Rauschenberg 1990:26). Upholsterers also served as undertakers though they did not build the coffins. Bells and palls for the procession; portable biers and coffin stools; decorations for the church; rings, scarves, and gloves to give out to mourners; and funeral foods and beverages are some of the items undertakers could provide. See Habenstein and Lamers (1981) on the history of American undertaking. The first “undertaker” to advertise

men who made and sold coffins in New Amsterdam/New York, and the enslaved and free laborers who worked in their shops, would have followed the artisanal traditions of their home countries and regions. Coffins were used commonly in Europe by the middle of the 17th century, and travelers' accounts from West Africa suggest their use there by the 18th century, though examples are known archaeologically only from the 19th century (Armstrong 1999:18). The ethnic backgrounds of coffin makers probably reflected the diversity of the town as a whole, and individual training and skill must have contributed to variation in coffin construction, so that coffin styles might be expected to vary from shop to shop. Still, based on historical and archaeological research, there was a very limited range of basic coffin styles used in the 17th and 18th centuries in the American colonies and in Europe.

As Julian Litten points out (1991:88), most specific information on English coffins prior to the 19th century has come from archaeological research and vault openings. Prints, drawings, paintings, sculpture, trade cards and advertisements also can provide details, and Litten (1991:89-90) provides information on early coffin shapes used in England based on such sources: gable-lidded coffins, four-sided and tapering toward the foot (i.e., trapezoidal) are depicted for the 14th through 17th centuries. This style was also used in 17th-century America, as proven at Carter's Grove (Noël Hume 1982). Gable-lidded, shouldered coffins are found in England from about 1575.⁴ Litten (1991:99-100 and Plate 11) states both that the latter were common from 1600 to 1675, and that gable-lidded, trapezoidal types "gave way" to shouldered, flat-lidded types during 1660-1675. In his sample, coffins from the period 1725-1775 were "almost without exception" of the flat-lidded, shouldered variety – what we term "hexagonal" in this report. Litten does not specifically discuss flat-lidded, trapezoidal coffins. It seems possible they were the less-expensive versions of the gable-lidded, trapezoidal style. It should be noted that Noël Hume had difficulty finding actual examples of gable-lidded coffins from the 17th century, and states (1982:38) that the "hundreds" of coffins he examined in London vaults had lids "made from a single, wide board," so the flat-lidded variety may well have been the more common. Noël Hume does not suggest dates for flat-lidded, trapezoidal types.

If the shift to shoulder-shaped, flat-lidded coffins was indeed virtually complete in England by 1725, we may surmise that English cabinetmakers setting up shop in New York after that date would have produced wares in this style. The trapezoidal (four-sided tapering), flat-lidded coffins found at the African Burial Ground may represent an earlier and/or less-expensive style, a simple style resulting from lack of up-to-date training, or a style preferred by non-English coffin-makers. As noted, where graves are superimposed, burials with four-sided, tapered coffins usually pre-date burials with hexagonal-shaped coffins, so the hypothesis that the style shifted from the former to the latter over time is

in colonial New York was a woman, Blanche White, who hailed from London and offered a range of services in 1768 (see the advertisement in Gottesman 1938:141-142).

⁴ A surviving early example of the shouldered gable lidded coffin in wood (Litten 1991, Color Plate 11) is the Easingwold, Yorkshire parish coffin, dated to circa 1645, which has metal braces straddling the gable ridge (it is not clear whether these are original, however). The gable is quite shallow.

supported. If non-artisans built coffins on an as-needed basis with minimal tools and expertise, a simple style without shoulder or gable may have resulted.

We know that at least in some cases the master of a household was expected to provide the coffin for an enslaved member (and probably also for free or indentured servants or other dependents). Blacks who died at the Almshouse (presumably free persons or enslaved persons who had been handed over to the Almshouse when their slaveholders died) also were provided coffins, at least during the 1750s. Surviving records of New York cabinetmaker Joshua Delaplaine, covering a period from 1753-1756, list coffins made at his workshop (Delaplaine 1753-56). Delaplaine worked for a variety of customers, from wealthy merchants to the Almshouse warden. Thirteen orders for coffins for “Negroes” were recorded (Table 10.2). A basic adult coffin cost 11 or 12 shillings, perhaps based on size. Charges for two children’s coffins were 4 shillings 6 pence and 5 shillings. The less expensive one was painted black; it may have been smaller in size.

Records from Charleston also indicate that coffins were frequently “blackened,” and that no other color was used to paint them (Rauschenberg 1990:38). The black paint apparently usually added a shilling to the cost of a coffin; screws and rosin added one or two shillings each; and an extra-large size increased the price by a shilling. Thus Christopher Fell’s bondwoman received the fanciest and most expensive of the “Negroes” coffins, at 14 shillings; it included screws, rosin, and paint.

Compared with other entries in the Delaplaine workshop’s records, the prices paid for most of the blacks’ coffins were at the very low end, reflecting the use of few embellishments and presumably the less-expensive woods. Handles, breastplates or other lid decorations, linings, and special wood increased the price for many of the coffins Delaplaine furnished for deceased whites. Examples include a child’s coffin 4’3” in length, covered and lined in Holland cloth and “trimmed with polisht nails” for £3.10; a coffin for a woman covered, fully trimmed, and lined with sasinet for £5; bilsted (liquidambar) coffins for children at 11 shillings lined and 7 shillings unlined; a man’s coffin covered and lined with a breast plate on the lid for £3.15; a child’s coffin lined and “struck with name & age” for 14 shillings; and a man’s coffin of bilsted with a heart, name, age, and date “struck” on the lid for £2.2. The term “struck” probably refers to forming the letters and numerals in nails or tacks.

At the very end of our period, the cost of a basic coffin had apparently risen slightly. A 1796 price list (Table 10.3) informs us that standard lengths, at 6-inch increments, were sold. Prices were set according to size, with the cost rising 1 shilling 6 pence per 6” of length up to 5 feet.⁵ A shilling was charged for putting on handles, sixpence for a breastplate (exclusive of the cost of these coffin furniture items themselves).

⁵ The coffin prices, from the *Cabinet-makers Philadelphia and London Book of Prices*, are reprinted in Rauschenberg (1990:34). Since we do not know the types of wood represented in either the Delaplaine accounts for “Negroes” coffins or the 1796 price list, we cannot be certain whether the price differential was due to inflation or to different materials, or to a change in the availability of wood.

Date	Person Placing Order	Description	Cost
Nov. 14, 1753	Joseph Ryal	“coffin for his negro boy”	10s
Jan. 22, 1754	Abraham Leffer[t]s*	“coffin for Jane a negro” (poorhouse)	11s
Mar. 27, 1754	Robert Livingston	“a large coffin for his negro”	12s
Apr. 30, 1754	Abraham Lefferts	“coffin for Mo[lly?] a negro”	11s
Aug. 6, 1754	Christopher Fell	“black coffin for his negro woman rozind & with screws”	14s
Dec. 20, 1754	Daniel Gomez	“coffin for his negro woman”	12s
Mar. 4, 1755	Caleb Lawrence	“coffin for his negro child”	5s
“	Robert Griffith	“coffin for his negro man”	12s
July 9, 1755	Christopher Fell	“coffin for a negro woman”	12s
July 19, 1755	Caleb Lawrence	“rough coffin for Joseph Castins negro”	9s
Aug. 12, 1755	Estate of Peter Vergerau	“coffin for negro woman w/screws”	13s
Aug. 27, 1755	Thomas Dobson	“coffin for his negro girl”	11s
Feb. 29, 1756	John Stephens	“black coffin for a negro child”	4s 6d
*Abraham Lefferts, one of the two city Church Wardens, placed numerous orders for coffins for the poorhouse, two of which were for deceased black inmates. Source: Delaplaine (1753-56).			

Coffin Length:	Price: (£.s.d)
2'	0.6.6
2'6"	0.8.0
3'	0.9.6
3'6"	0.10.6
4'	0.12.0
4'6"	0.13.6
5'	0.15.0
Above 5'	0.18.0
Above 5' of poplar, deduct:	0.3.0
Putting on handles	0.1.0
Putting on breast plate	0.0.6
Full trimming w/lace	0.1.6
Source: Rauschenberg (1990:34).	

The provision of a coffin may not always have been the duty of a household head. For some, maybe most, enslaved Africans, and for free persons, it might have fallen to family and friends to see to the coffin. The prices listed would have had to be paid to the woodworking shops, or else materials and labor would have had to be donated. Many blacks worked for and as cabinetmakers and carpenters in early New York, so their access to tools and materials may have been relied on.

In addition, participation in own-account economic activities would have afforded some the means of purchasing coffins outright. Also, as suggested in Chapter 2, the existence

of informal burial societies probably pre-dates the formal establishment, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, of mutual aid societies in New York. The primary benefit of such societies would have been provision of a proper burial, with a coffin.

10.C. Coffin variation at the African Burial Ground

Coffin shape

As shown in Chapter 4, coffin shapes at the African Burial Ground were shouldered (hexagonal), tapered (sometimes called trapezoidal), and rectangular. Many small and

Shape	Adult	Sub-adult	Undet.	Total
four-sided	8	16	1	25
four-sided?		4	1	5
tapered	20	13		33
tapered?			1	1
rectangle	2	15	2	18
rectangle?	3			3
hexagonal	109	54	2	163
hexagonal?	5	15		20
other	1			1
unident.	38	33	9	76
Total	186	150	16	352
See Table 10.1 for explanations of totals.				

poorly preserved examples are simply listed in the database as “four-sided” (i.e., though the shoulder bend could be ruled out, it could not be determined whether they were rectangular or trapezoidal). One exception (Burial 257) appeared to be eight-sided, the head comprised of two boards that came to a point. Many coffins that were poorly preserved were tallied as tentative (indicated by a question mark). Table 10.4 lists coffin shapes, including uncertain ones, by general age category.⁶

Some of the coffins had footboards that sloped outward toward the top. Fourteen of these were made note of and drawn in cross-section at the time they were excavated (a drawing is reproduced in the section on coffin construction), and examination of drawings

for *in situ* nail locations indicates there were at least five additional examples. This feature was found in coffins of both tapered and shouldered varieties, and in all time periods. It was probably a common variant. The sloped-foot coffins identified thus far were in Burials 23, 31, 40, 44, 48, 51, 68, 71, 100, 130, 145, 151, 241, 266, 299, 321, 354, 416, and 418.

There was no evidence of gable-lidded coffins at the African Burial Ground. Such coffins would have had a distinctive pattern of nails aligned down the centerline of the lid, as did those at the 17th-century Martins Hundred site in Virginia (Noël Hume 1982:38-39, 70), and either the head and foot boards would have been gable shaped or the lids would have had gable ends. Hexagonal, gable-lidded forms in North America seem to date to the 19th as well as the 17th century. Fourteen of nineteen identifiable coffin shapes from Philadelphia’s First African Baptist Cemetery excavation were gable-

⁶ Two subadults were buried inside adult coffins – the coffins are listed under the adult category in Table 10.4.

lidded (Parrington et al. 1989:144). Gabled coffins are more complex in construction, requiring additional boards and five-sided ends. We were particularly interested in determining whether any of the four-sided coffins we believe to be earliest had gable lids. Field drawings for all of the four-sided coffins from our sample were examined carefully for evidence of this form, but none was found. In the best-preserved and recorded examples (Burials 18, 23, 68, 78, 177, 202, 221, and 282—see drawings in Volumes 2 and 3), the head and footboards had straight-cut, top edges and no centerline nails were found. There is no evidence that head or footboards were shaped to fit a gable lid.

The identification of four-sided, tapering (trapezoidal) adult coffins as earlier than hexagonal coffins is based on analysis of archaeological data, mainly stratigraphic relationships.⁷ Information on changing coffin shape over time, though not conclusive, supports the use of shape to seriate the coffins, and of the trapezoidal variant to characterize the earliest group. Thus all adult coffins of the Early Group were, by definition, four-sided, mainly tapered, though two were identified as *possibly* rectangular and eight can only be characterized as “four-sided.” For later groups, adult coffin shapes (when clearly defined) were mostly hexagonal, with just four exceptions: two from the Late-Middle Group were rectangular; one from the Late Group was possibly rectangular; and one Late Group coffin (Burial 207) appeared to be tapered.

Coffins of children and infants were much more variable in shape than those of adults. The distribution of children’s coffins by age group is shown in Figure 10.1, and by temporal group in Figure 10.2. Coffins of young children were more variable in shape than those of older children (though numbers are small). Also, while hexagonal coffins were the most common shape for children in the Middle to Late Groups, four-sided varieties remained in use, accounting for 23.7% of the total. Based on these observations we suggest that children’s coffins were more likely to be made by families rather than purchased from workshops, hence a lack of the standardization seen in adult coffins. Coffins for the youngest children and infants were most likely to be homemade.

Coffin size

Coffin measurements (maximum length and width) were recorded in the field for most burials, but since we were only interested in tabulating sizes of whole coffins we used the final burial drawings to obtain length, width and head-to-shoulder measurements. This information is presented in Appendix J. The distribution of coffin lengths is shown in Figure 10.3. One question that we wished to address was whether coffins seemed to be constructed “to order,” in other words made-to-measure, for individuals or, alternatively, represented standard sizes built from a limited set of templates or kept in stock by coffin

⁷ As discussed in Chapter 4, we initially thought that all four-sided adult coffins might have been in use earlier in our sequence than the six-sided ones, but upon examination of the stratigraphic evidence the rectangular variant appeared to be used later as well.

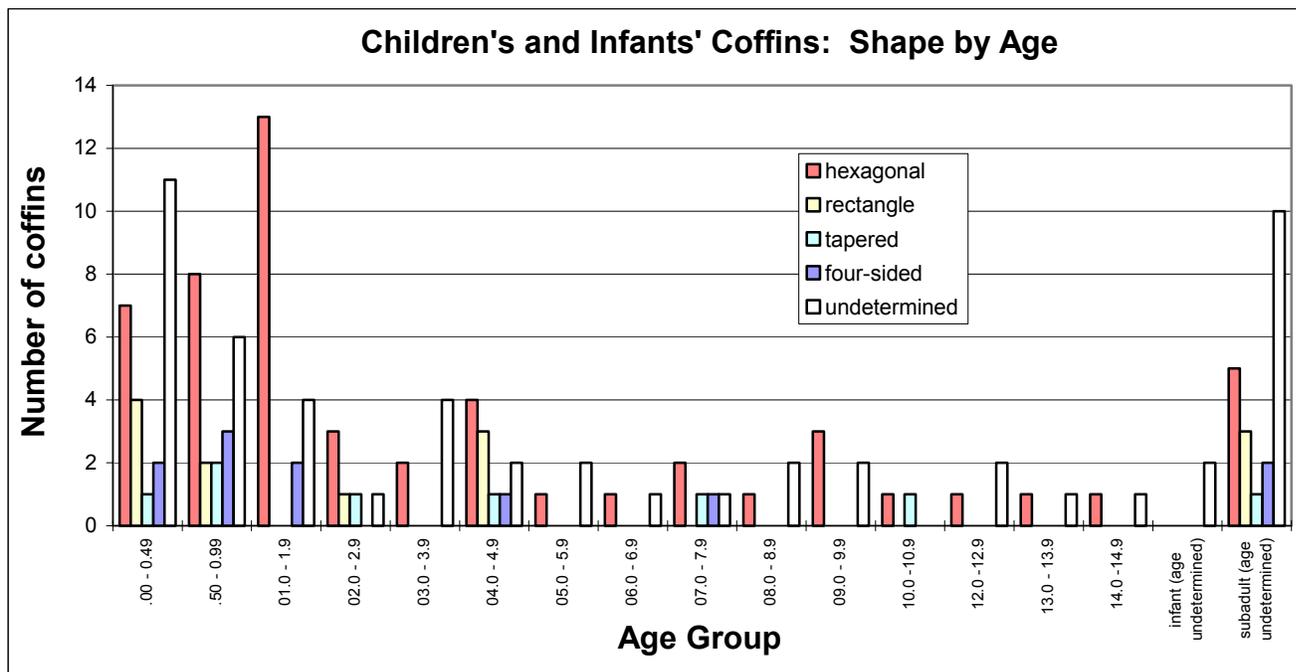


Figure 10.1.
Shapes of children's and infants' coffins by age bracket.

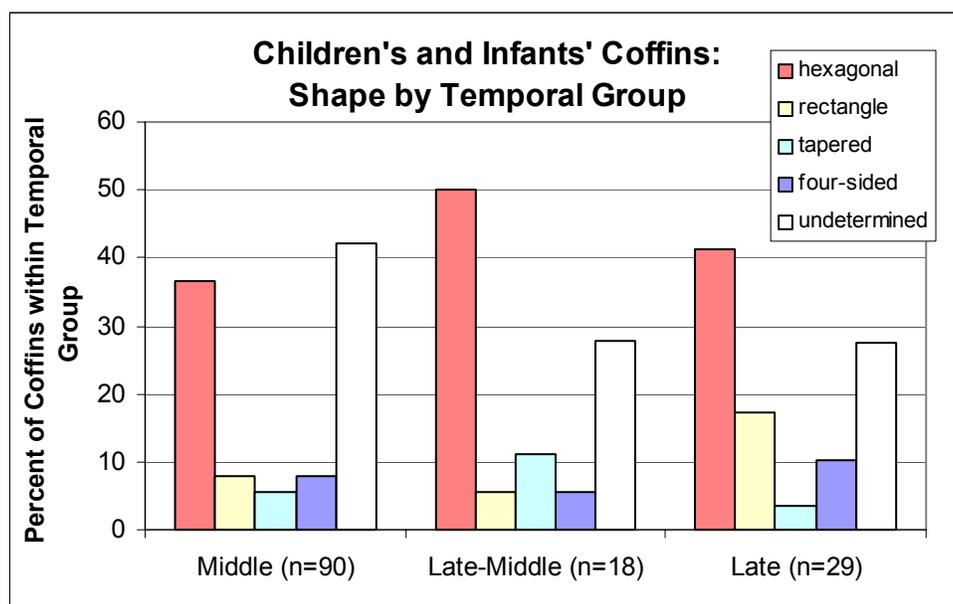


Figure 10.2.
Shapes of children's and infants' coffins by temporal group.

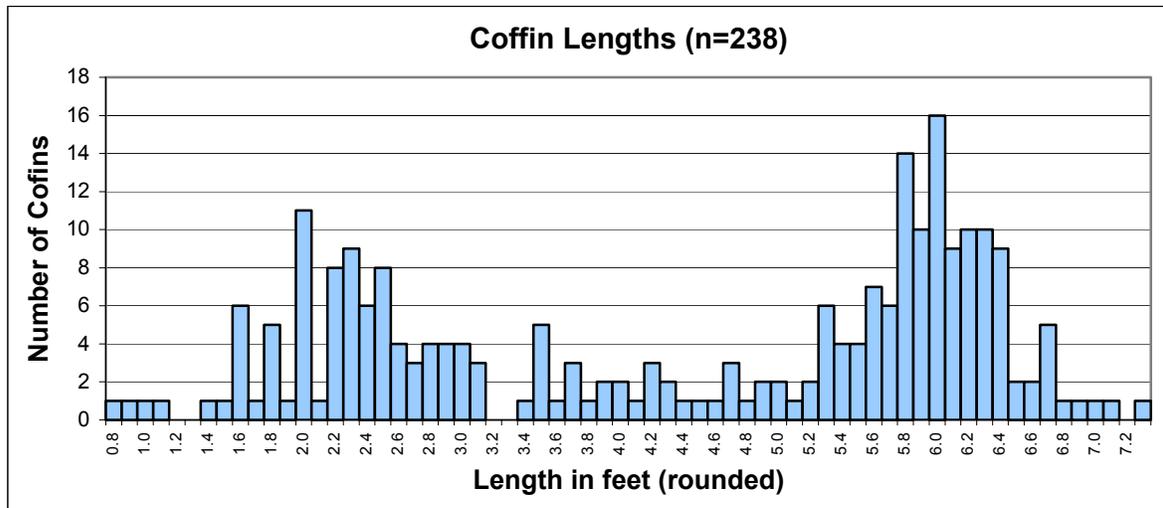


Figure 10.3.
Distribution of coffins by length. Includes only coffins that could be measured for length. Rounded to nearest 0.1 feet.

makers. There was a high degree of variation in coffin size, suggesting that either numerous templates were used and/or that coffins were built to accommodate the measurement of the deceased.

For 88 individuals with measurable coffins, stature could also be calculated (data supplied by Sue Goode-Null of the Skeletal Biology Team). Figures 10.4 and 10.5 show the relationship between stature and coffin size in two ways. The average difference between the calculated stature of the deceased and the coffin length was 0.52 feet, or approximately 6 inches. The average ratio of length to stature was 1.12, with a standard deviation of 0.1. The co-variance of coffin size and stature is clear. Yet, it can be seen that for individuals of approximately equal height, coffin lengths could vary by as much as a foot or more. For example, for 12 individuals whose height was calculated at approximately 5.6 feet, coffins were from .3 feet shorter to 1.3 feet longer than the deceased.

Due to the margin of error in calculating both stature and coffin length, we hesitate to draw conclusions about coffin production. However, we would suggest that the coffin-maker was told at least an approximate height, and built the coffin a few inches longer. For six-sided coffins, the closest template was probably used, while for four-sided shapes the wood may have been measured and cut without a template (see below for a discussion of coffin construction).

Coffin widths as measured in the field ranged from just under half a foot to over 2 feet. It is likely some “splaying” occurred during decay. There were 81 cases where coffins measured greater than 18 inches wide, and 7 where coffin remains measured 2 feet wide or more. The longest and widest coffin measured, from Burial 47 (at 2.3 feet wide by 7.3 feet long), is a case where it is possible the ground had shifted, displacing the sides. One

other “extra-wide” coffin, that of Burial 376, appears to have been built that way, and it is possible the man interred in it was heavy-set (Figure 10.6).

The ratio of length to width ranged from 1.6 to 6.4, increasing with the coffin length, though for coffins five feet long or longer, the length was typically between 3-5 times the width. The only outliers were the coffins of Burials 387 and 388 (Figure 10.7). These two were slightly tapered and exceptionally narrow, just under a foot wide though six feet long, and they were in adjacent graves. The same maker probably crafted both.

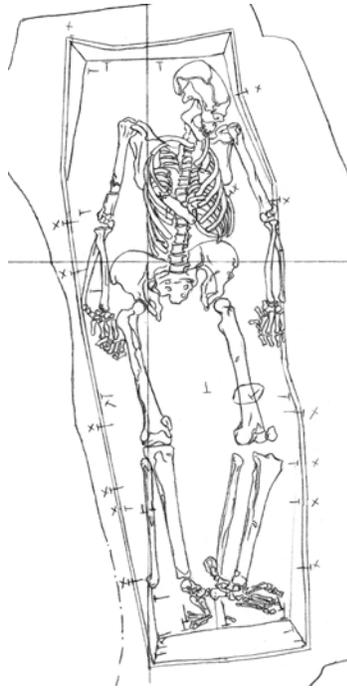


Figure 10.6.
Drawing *in situ* of Burial 376. The coffin was 3 feet wide at its “shoulder.” It held the remains of a 45 to 65-year-old man. Drawing by M Schur.

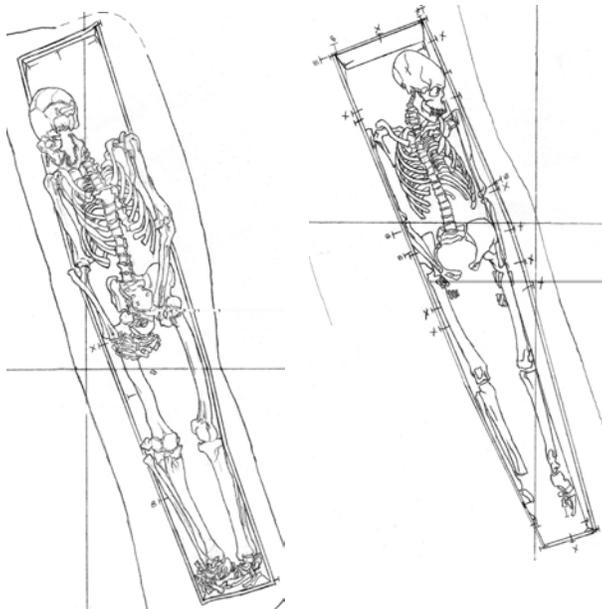


Figure 10.7.
Drawings of Burials 387 (left) and 388 (right), depicting unusually narrow coffins. The two graves were adjacent and precisely aligned. North is to right. Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet. Drawn by M. Schur.

Coffin wood

There were 104 coffins at the African Burial Ground for which at least one wood sample was identified in the laboratory. The number of coffins with each type of wood or combination of woods is listed in Table 10.5, with percentages shown in Figure 10.8, and all identified samples are listed by burial in Table 10.6 (located at end of chapter). Tables and figures follow showing the frequencies of woods by coffin shape and by temporal period.

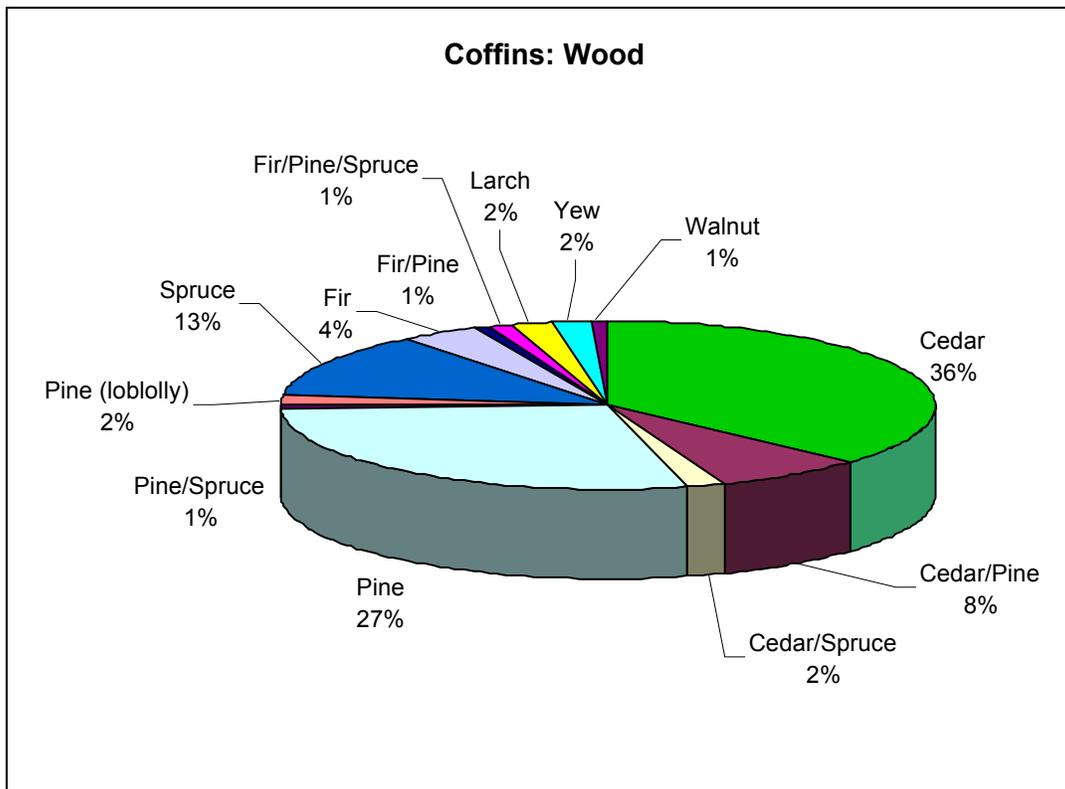


Figure 10.8.
Frequencies of identified coffin woods.

The most frequently identified woods were varieties of cedar. Since this wood is the slowest to rot of the soft woods, more samples of it may have been retrievable archaeologically, and its predominance may be due to sampling error. All coffins with identified samples were built of soft woods but one. Cedar, pine, and spruce were the top three woods in all time periods (Table 10.7). However, while all three were approximately equal in the Early Group, cedar and pine clearly predominated by the Middle Group, and in the Late Group cedar was the clear favorite, barring sampling error. Research on the relative availability of these woods over time would be needed to determine whether wood can be used as a temporal indicator. Coffins made of combinations of different woods made up similar proportions of the sample in each temporal group, suggesting that expediency dictated the selection.

Table 10.5. Categories of coffin wood		
Category	Sample identifications	Number of Coffins
Cedar	Cedar	31
	Red Cedar	3
	Cedar, Red Cedar	1
	Eastern Red Cedar	1
	Cedar, Eastern Red Cedar	1
	White Cedar	1
Cedar/Pine	Cedar, Eastern White Pine	1
	Cedar, Pine	3
	Cedar, Red Pine	1
	Cedar, Pine, Eastern White Pine	2
	Red Cedar, Eastern White Pine	1
Cedar/Spruce	Cedar, Spruce	2
Pine	Pine	12
	Eastern White Pine	6
	Red Pine	8
	Red Pine?	1
	Pine, Red Pine	1
	Sugar Pine, Pine	1
	Loblolly Pine	1
	Pine, Loblolly (Soft Pine)	1
Pine/Spruce	Pine, Spruce	1
Spruce	Spruce	9
	White Spruce	3
	White Spruce, Red (Eastern) Spruce	1
Fir	Fir	3
	Balsam Fir	1
Fir/Pine	Fir, Eastern White Pine	1
Fir/Pine/Spruce	Eastern White Pine, Scots Pine, White Spruce, Fir	1
Larch	Larch	2
Yew	Yew	2
Walnut	Black Walnut	1

The one hardwood coffin identified, from Burial 290, was of Black Walnut. There was no other distinguishing feature of the coffin, and there were no artifacts found in association with the deceased other than a single straight pin on the cranium. It is perhaps significant that the deceased was a man between forty-five years and fifty-five years old, one of the older individuals in the sample population. The burial is assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

Table 10.7.
Number of coffins of each wood by temporal group

Wood category	Early	Middle	Late Middle	Late
Cedar	6	15	4	13
Pine	4	14	3	8
Spruce	5	5	1	2
Cedar/Pine	2	2	1	3
Cedar/Spruce	1			1
Pine/Spruce		1		
Pine (loblolly)			1	1
Fir	1	1	1	1
Fir/Pine			1	
Fir/Pine/Spruce				1
Larch			1	1
Yew		2		
Walnut			1	
Total	19	40	14	31

Table 10.8.
Number of coffins of each wood by age category

Wood Category	Adult	Sub-adult	Infant	Un-determined
Cedar	24	13	1	
Pine	16	11	1	1
Spruce	11	2		
Cedar/Pine	7	1		
Cedar/Spruce	1	1		
Pine/Spruce		1		
Pine (loblolly)	1	1		
Fir	4			
Fir/Pine	1			
Fir/Pine/Spruce	1			
Larch	2			
Yew		2		
Walnut	1			
Total	69	32	2	1

Larch (also called tamarack) was identified in only two coffins, from Burials 97 and 101, both later in our sequence and both of men. One, in Burial 101, was one of the very few decorated coffins at the African Burial Ground (see below).

The woods used for adult and children's coffins were similar (Table 10.8). The only two made of yew (a tough but flexible softwood) were children's coffins, while the other infrequent woods (fir, larch and black walnut) were all in adult coffins.

Table 10.9 shows the distribution of woods by coffin shape. The rank order among the top three woods is essentially the same, but it was mainly the hexagonal coffins that used combinations of woods, and the least frequent woods were all found in hexagonal coffins.

Table 10.9. Number of coffins of each wood by shape					
Wood Category	tapered	four-sided	rectangle	hexagonal	unident.*
Cedar	4	4		22	8
Pine	3		2	16	8
Spruce	4		1	6	2
Cedar/Pine	1		1	4	2
Cedar/Spruce	1			1	
Pine/Spruce				1	
Pine (loblolly)			1	1	
Fir				2	2
Fir/Pine					1
Fir/Pine/Spruce				1	
Larch				2	
Yew				1	1
Walnut				1	
Total	13	4	5	58	24
*Questionable cases for each shape, i.e., tapered?, hexagonal? etc., are counted as “unident.” in this tabulation.					

Coffin construction

Historical sources and analysis of surviving examples from opened vaults indicate the following construction method and details for plain, flat-lidded, shouldered coffins (Litten 1991:90-92 and personal communication 1999; Salaman 1997:150):

The coffin bottom and top were marked using a template and sawn.

The sideboards were soaked and while damp were “kerfed” on the inside at the shoulders with six or seven crosscuts sawn almost through the boards.

The head and footboards were nailed to the bottom.

The sideboards were bent around the bottom board and nailed (or sometimes screwed for strength) in place. The bottom, head, and footboards were set inside the sides.

The head of the coffin was 2 (or “a few”) inches wider than the foot.

Corners were butt-jointed.

The lid spanned the sides (thus the lid would have been larger than the bottom, which was inset).

The inside was sometimes coated with pitch to seal the joints.

Construction of the tapered and rectangular shapes would have followed the same steps, minus the soaking and kerfing of the sides, and probably would not have required a template. Surviving evidence such as nail locations and orientations from the majority of coffins at the African Burial ground appears consistent with this basic construction method. There were a few coffins, however, that deviated from the standard.

The coffins in adjacent Burials 23 and 68 were virtually identical, and had had the bottom board nailed into the sides rather than vice-versa, so that vertical nails pointed upwards (Figure 10.9). The coffins were four-sided, tapering toward the foot, the walls sloping outward at the top. Around the perimeter, vertical nails attached the lid to the sides, and there were four nails at each corner of the head attaching the sides to the headboard, and three at each corner of the foot attaching the sides to the footboard. These two coffins were probably from the same maker.

Our evidence points strongly to the use of single boards for lids and bottoms, but there were at least two exceptions. Eighteen inches is a width that, according to Noël Hume (1982:38), “would have posed no problem to colonial...sawyers.” As noted, however, 81 coffins were measured as wider than 18 inches. The use of narrower and presumably cheaper boards for lids and bottoms might be expected in these cases, but the boards would have to have been cross-braced. There was only one coffin (in Burial 352) in which the bottom had a batten nailed to it crosswise for support, and one coffin (in Burial 392) in which at least two crosspieces were nailed onto the lid (Figures 10.11 and 10.12). The apparent excess width of so many of the other coffins in our sample may be due to splaying, resulting in inaccurate measurement.

One uniquely constructed hexagonal coffin was found. For the coffin bottom of Burial 196, instead of a lengthwise board, numerous short crosswise boards had been used, and these were nailed from the bottom into the coffin sides (Figure 10.10). The lid and bottom were identified as pine, the sides as cedar. Several other coffins (in Burials 237 250 258, and 361) had the bottoms nailed from the bottom up into the sides, and while no cross-wise boards were preserved well enough to be noted in the field, it is possible these too had more than one board forming the coffin floor. Alternatively, this is simply a variant construction method, possibly with the bottom attached after the sides, head, and foot had been joined.

Finally, Burial 194 had the only coffin for which a wooden marker had been nailed to the headboard (Figure 10.13 and Figure 9.6).

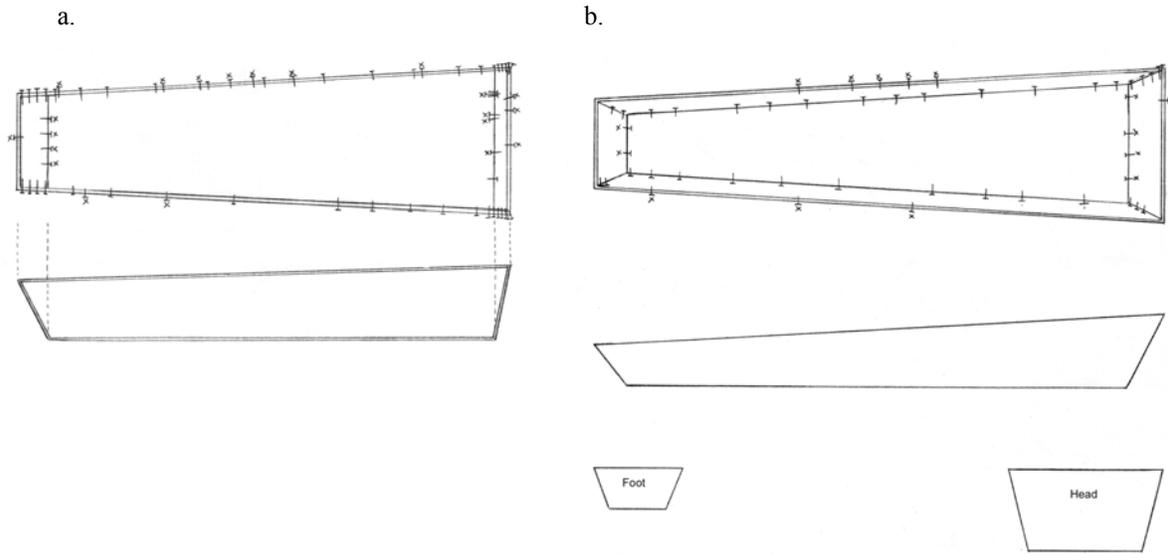


Figure 10.9.
Renderings of coffins in Burials 23 (a.) and 68 (b.). The coffin bottoms were nailed into the head and footboards from the bottom up. (Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet). Drawing by B. Ludwig.

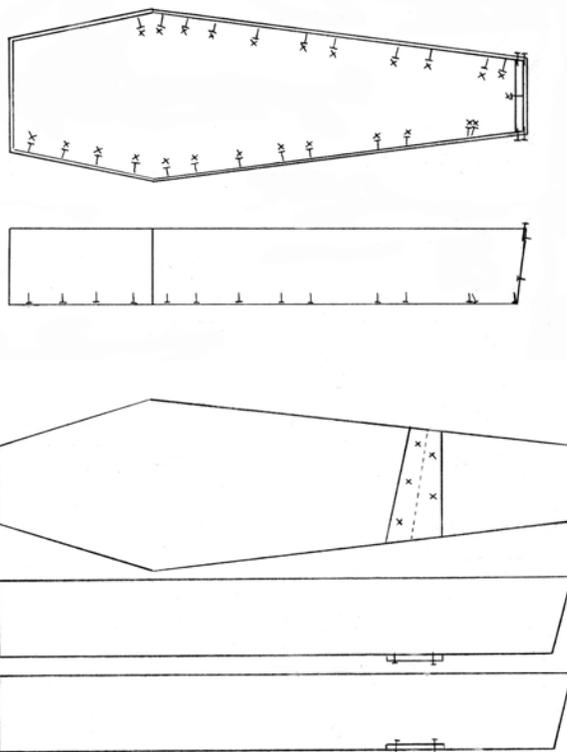


Figure 10.10.
Possible reconstruction of the Burial 196 coffin showing unusual bottom construction. Numerous boards had been nailed cross-wise. Reconstruction by B. Ludwig. (Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet).

Figure 10.11.
Possible reconstruction of the Burial 352 coffin bottom. The crosspiece may have been made of two butted boards. It was not possible to determine whether the piece was on the outside (center sketch) or the inside (bottom sketch) of the coffin. Reconstruction by B. Ludwig. (Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet).

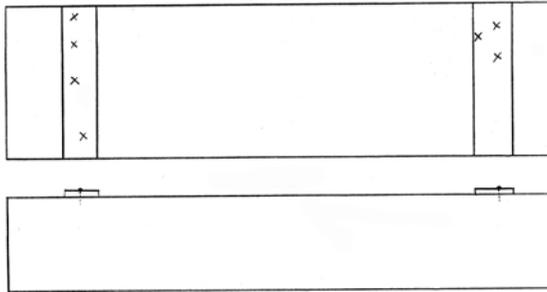
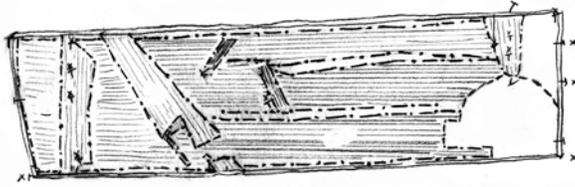


Figure 10.12.
Field sketch (top) and on-site reconstruction (bottom) of the lid of the coffin in Burial 392. Two cross-pieces were nailed to the top of the lid board or boards. Reconstruction by B. Ludwig. (Scale: 1 inch = 2 feet.)

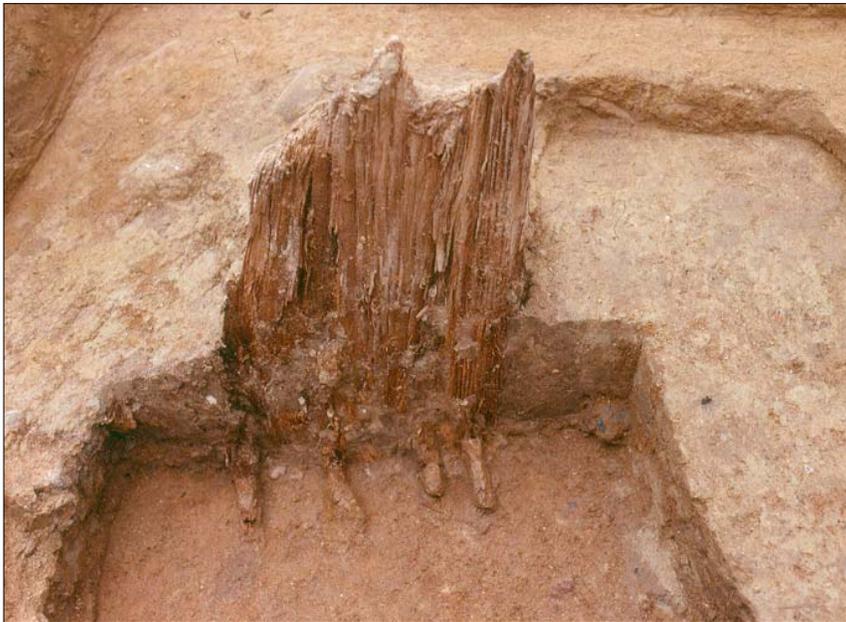


Figure 10.13.
Photograph of the board nailed to the head of the coffin in Burial 194. The board, a grave marker, was of cedar. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Nail locations

Nail locations based on drawings were recorded for a sub-set of coffins, those that were complete and had what appeared to be the best *in situ* recordation (Table 10.10 located at the rear of this chapter). Many nails were found at the corner joints of the coffins, as expected, since the strength of the box depended on these joints. There were also usually two or three (sometimes four) nails along the bottom of the footboard and headboard, attaching these boards to the bottom, as well as several along the sides.⁸ There were far fewer top nails than bottom nails, also to be expected since the lid added some support but mainly just had to be nailed shut.

The presence of horizontally oriented nails at the top of a coffin along its sides would indicate that the lid was inset and was nailed from the sides, while vertically-oriented nails would indicate that the lid was nailed from the top and therefore overlapped the edges of the side, head, and foot boards. The latter pattern reflects typical coffin construction as described above.

Coffins with inset lids are documented⁹, but no evidence of any beading or cleats that could have supported inset lids was found for coffins at the African Burial Ground. Therefore, burials where records showed horizontal and top nails were re-examined carefully. In some cases, close examination of *in situ* photographs led to the conclusion that all of the top nails were in fact vertical. In other cases, the horizontal nails in question did not appear at all in the photographs. Top nails were sometimes removed during excavation, and therefore were not present at the time the final burial photographs were taken and drawings rendered. The illustrators had to rely on the excavators' recollections of nail locations. We conclude that the depictions of lid nails on the *in situ* drawings are less reliable than those of bottom nails. The depicted orientations of nails that had been removed probably were not always accurate. It also is possible that some nails were never drawn at all, though the number of nails depicted in some drawings was greater than the number of nails counted in the laboratory (using nail heads to arrive at minimum numbers -- Appendix J lists all burials with minimum nail counts from the laboratory inventory).

⁸ A study of a sample of seven coffins for which nails were recorded *in situ* at a small late-18th to early 19th-century rural family cemetery in Delaware also indicated clearly that the majority of nails were used at the head and foot (LeeDecker 2001:6).

⁹ Inset lids are recorded for expensive, lead-lined, triple-shell coffins. Describing the inner coffin of typical surviving triple-shell coffins in vault and intra-mural graves in England, Litten (1991:101) notes that the lids were recessed, supported by a length of beading that was glued and tacked around the upper inner sides. At the College Landing site in Williamsburg, it was concluded from nail placement that the coffin lids were "attached with nails placed horizontally into the six sides" but no discussion is offered regarding the specific construction method or whether the lids would have been inset (Hudgins 1977:64). The burials, all thought to be of African Americans, were dated from 1790 to 1820 based on the machine-cut nail shanks.

Screws

We know that the use of screws in coffins added to the cost (by about a shilling at mid-century), so an attempt was made to examine the distribution of these hardware items. Unfortunately, the severe corrosion of all coffin hardware made the identification of screws difficult, especially in the field during excavation – there were only three burials in which screws were recorded on the field drawings (Figure 10.14). In the laboratory, some screws were identified through visual inspection after minimal mechanical cleaning, but numerous items that could not be clearly identified as either nails or screws were set aside for X-rays and were lost when the laboratory was destroyed. Screws were recovered and identified from 31 coffins, and there were possible screws from one other. Their distribution is presented in Table 10.11. Coffins of young children and men and women of all ages are represented. Almost all of the coffins where screws were used were hexagonal, doubtless because extra strength was needed at the joints due to the bent sideboards. The only Early Group coffins with screws were from Burials 72 and 83, but this shared grave had been disturbed by a foundation and the screws, which lacked specific provenience, might have been intrusive, or the burials might be incorrectly assigned to the Early Group. The lack of screws in early burials is probably attributable to the lack of hexagonal coffins. As noted above, tapered coffins of the Early Group generally had more nails at the joints, and a change in joinery accompanying the change in style is suggested.

In most cases only a single screw was identified, and numerous nails were also present in every case. Although we are likely to have missed screws due to poor preservation and the loss of information from items that were never X-rayed, African Burial Ground coffins were clearly built mainly with nails. Screws were apparently usually employed on an as-needed basis during coffin construction rather than being used, per order, instead of nails. The few screws that were recorded *in situ* were at the corner joints (Burials 225 and 321), or at the top and oriented vertically to attach the lid (Burials 286 and 321)

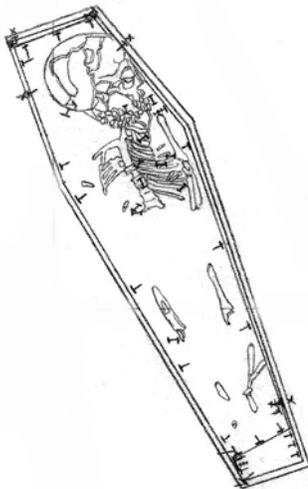


Figure 10.14.
Example of a coffin with screws recorded *in situ*.
The drawing is of Burial 321, which held the remains of a child one to two years old. One screw attached the right side to the foot board and two others attached the left side board to the bottom. North is to right, and the scale is 1 inch = 1 foot.
Drawing by W. Williams.

Table 10.11. Burials with coffin screws						
Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin	Number of screws*
B017	4	6	undete	mid	hexagonal	1
B022	2.5	4.5	undete	mid	unident.	1
B040	50	60	female	late	hexagonal	1
B072	1	2	undete	early?	rectangle	2 plus 4 shanks
B077	0.67	1.3	undete	mid	hexagonal	1
B083			undete	early?	rectangle	1
B086	6	8	undete	late	hexagonal	1
B089	50	60	female	lmid	hexagonal	3
B095	7	12	undete	late	hexagonal	1
B097	40	50	male	late	hexagonal	1
B100			undete	mid	hexagonal	3
B101	26	35	male	lmid	hexagonal, decorated	4
B122	18	20	female	mid	hexagonal	1
B135	30	40	male	late	hexagonal	1
B154	25	29	female	mid	hexagonal	1
B159**	25	35	female	mid	hexagonal, painted	2
B173	0.25	0.75	undete	late	rectangle	2
B186	0	0.17	undete	late	hexagonal	1
B187	1.5	4	undete	late	hexagonal	1
B225	0.5	1.25	undete	late	four-sided	2
B241	55	65	female	late	hexagonal	1
B268	0	0.5	undete	mid	hexagonal?	1
B284	21	28	male	mid	unident.	1
B285	20	30	female	mid	hexagonal	1
B286	4.4	8.5	undete	mid	hexagonal?	2
B300			undete	mid	hexagonal?	1
B315	30	40	female	mid	hexagonal?	1
B321	1	2	undete	mid	hexagonal	1
B341			male	mid	hexagonal	1
B346	50	70	female	late	hexagonal	1
B353	24	34	male	mid	hexagonal	1
B427	16	20	male?	mid	hexagonal	1
*Counts are minimums: fragments were counted if a head was present, or if a shank-with-point was present with no potentially corresponding head. 13 whole screws were recovered.						
**Burial 159 had 2 possible screws (no x-ray was taken prior to the items' destruction on September 11, 2001)						

The joints may have occasionally required screws for strength, for instance if warped boards were used. Another possible use for screws would have been to secure the lid temporarily, perhaps if the coffin was to be stored or for transporting it to the house of the deceased, where it could then be removed to place the body inside.

It is worth noting that the coffin in Burial 101, which had a decorated lid and would have been relatively expensive, had at least four screws (though their precise locations on the coffin are unknown), which may have further increased the cost; and that Burial 159 held a coffin that was painted and also had possible screws. Thus, the fancier the coffin the greater the likelihood the builder would use screws, perhaps reflecting a keener sense of overall quality of workmanship.

Coffin decoration

Coffin furniture refers to handles, corner and edge “lace,” breastplates, upholstery, and other decorative metalwork as opposed to hardware (nails and screws) used in constructing the box. Five coffins with decorative metalwork were found at the African Burial Ground. Two of these were problematic due to recordation problems or disturbance. One hexagonal coffin, in Burial 252 (from the late period and located north of the fence line), may have had a small breastplate on the lid; this item was recorded in the field but never accessioned in the laboratory. A small iron disc was recorded along with the possible breastplate, and was inventoried in the laboratory but not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center. One possible tack and several nails were also recorded roughly aligned lengthwise down the center of the coffin lid; it is possible these attached the breastplate to the wood. The grave contained the remains of a very young child between one and two years old. In Burial 222, assigned to the Late-Middle Group and holding an adult (probably a man) of undetermined age, excavators noted small iron tacks that they thought represented a lid decoration on the hexagonal coffin. The tacks were observed in place on the pelvis and right arm of the individual during excavation, but vandals disturbed the human remains, apparently scattering the tacks, and only four were recovered. They were identified as of cast iron, manufactured using a technique first patented in England in 1769 (see Lenik 1977).

Only three coffins with clearly decorated lids were recorded in detail, in Burials 101, 176, and 332. All three were in men’s graves assigned to the Late-Middle Group and are discussed in Chapter 8. Iron tacks formed the decorations, and as in Burial 222, the tacks appeared to be cast metal. In one case, Burial 176, the coffin also had handles. Each coffin is described more fully below.

Tacks were also recovered in association with Burials 138, 197, and 256 but do not seem to have represented decorations. A handle back-plate was recovered from Burial 90, though it is considered unlikely the coffin in this grave had handles (only one was found, and the edge of the burial had been disturbed, raising the possibility that the item was intrusive).

It is interesting that the African Burial Ground coffin-lid decorations were composed of iron tacks, rather than the brass tacks favored by Euro-Americans. In addition to iron being less expensive than brass, it may have been preferred for cultural reasons. Tinning would have “whitened” the tacks and made them reflective, so the possible significance of color or other visual quality should be considered (see Thompson 1983; Thompson and Cornet 1981).

Burial 101: the heart or Sankofa symbol

Burial 101 (see Chapter 8) was of a man in his early thirties, whose dental modifications and dental lead levels suggested possible African nativity, but whose strontium isotope levels pointed to possible birth in America (Goodman et al. 2004 [Chapter 6 of the Skeletal Biology Report]; see Handler 1994 on modified teeth). The coffin lid decoration or symbol measured approximately 45 cm wide and 48 cm long, and was positioned over the mid-section of the body (Figure 10.15).

The heart-shaped outline consisted of 51 domed, square-shanked iron tacks, with heads measuring 10 mm in diameter. The inner decorative elements were composed of smaller tacks, with heads approximately 6 mm in diameter. The tacks were described as “tinned or silvered, iron-headed tacks” when first exposed. All of the tacks appeared to be of one-part construction, and were of cast manufacture.

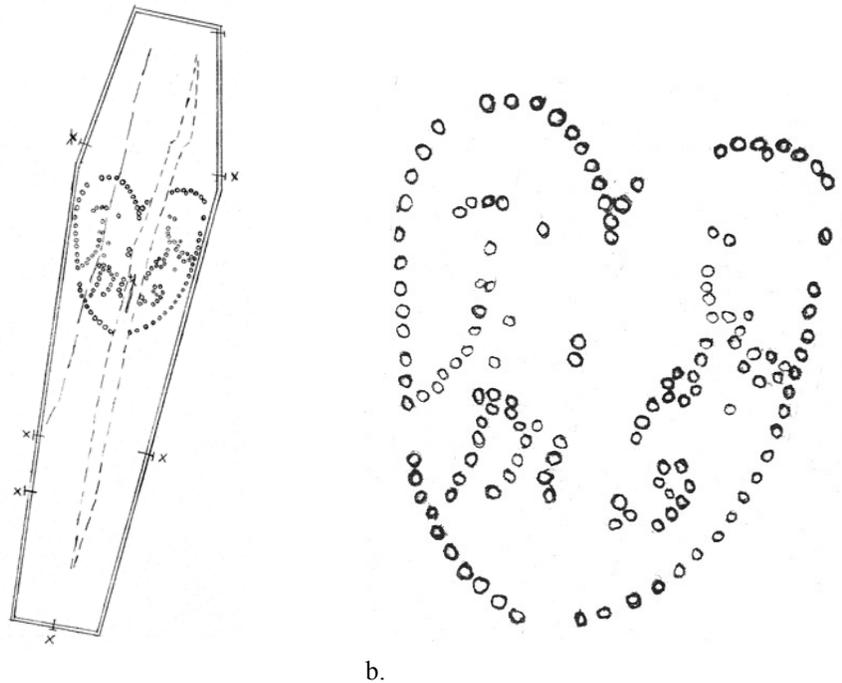


Figure 10.15.
a. *In situ* drawing of the lid of the coffin in Burial 101 (shown at a scale of 1 inch to 2 feet) – the lid had split longitudinally as shown.
b. Detail of the motif formed from tacks on the lid. Drawings by M. Schur. See Chapter 8 for *in situ* photograph.

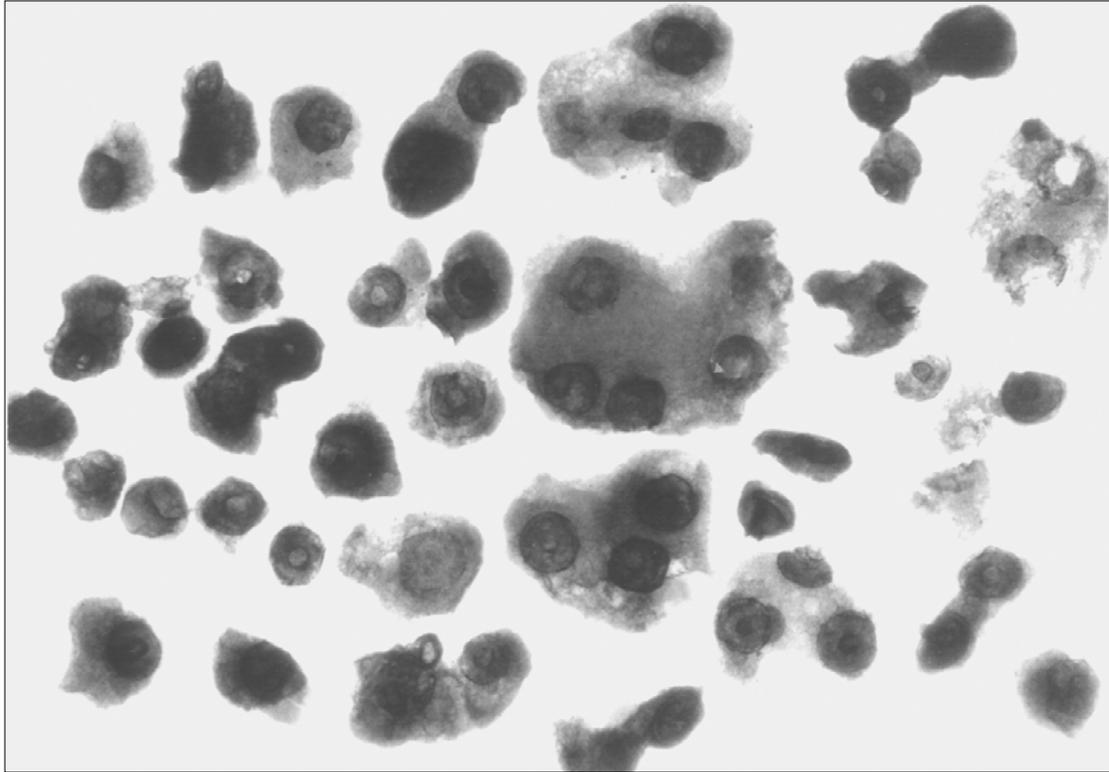
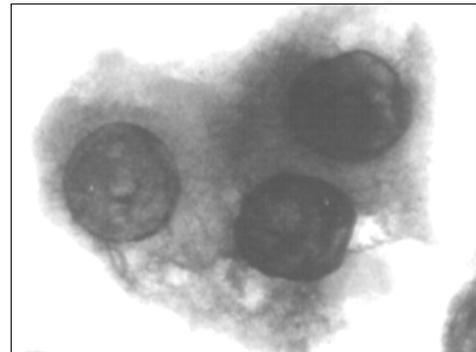


Figure 10.16.
X-ray of small tacks from the Burial 101 coffin lid decoration. Detail of three tacks that had rusted together at right. The circles at the centers of the tack heads are where the tack shanks had broken off. Diameter 6 mm. Exposure 30 sec./70K. Supplied by the W. Montague Cobb Anthropology Laboratory, Howard University.



As illustrated in Chapter 8, the interior portion of the decoration may have originally formed initials and an age or year. If so, the initials are indecipherable, but the year “1769” is a plausible reading for a date (keeping in mind that the lid had split longitudinally, possibly bifurcating a “6”). Alternatively, the interior design may have formed part of a non-alphanumeric device.

Coffins with heart motifs on the lids are not uncommon in colonial period and 19th-century contexts. They typically had initials or a name, and an age and/or year formed in tacks on the interior. As noted, Joshua Delaplaine made one such coffin for Samuel Hallet of New York in 1756. Samuel Hallet’s estate paid over £2 for his heart-decorated coffin, but since it was made of an expensive wood (liquidambar) we do not know how much the Burial 101 coffin, which was of larch, may have cost. Nor can we know who ordered the man’s coffin--his family and friends or the head of the deceased’s household;

or whether an African craftsman built it; or whether the deceased's mourners decorated it themselves. The heart shape may have had meanings for the mourners that were other than or in addition to those Europeans would have attributed to it. The heart has been interpreted as representing of the soul, for example, in West Central Africa (Denbow 1999), and the shape of a heart with interior scrolls has been identified as an Adinkra symbol -- "Sankofa" -- associated with Twi-speaking Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, as noted in Chapter 8.

Burial 176: handled coffin with tack-edged lid

Burial 176 held possibly the most expensive coffin of those excavated at the African Burial Ground. It was fitted with six iron handles (the only definitely handled coffin at the site) and in addition had iron tacks around the perimeter of the lid. The handles, of the inverted bale type with "ears" on each end of the back plates, were probably a matched set, though they were not all well enough preserved to confirm this. One that was X-rayed was decorated with facing < > cutouts between the posts (Figures 10.17-10.20). The handles were placed two on each side, one each at the head and foot.

We considered the possibility that the coffin was cloth-covered, a common embellishment by the 18th century, but no textile fragments adhered to the perimeter tacks, and it is likely they were simply decorative.

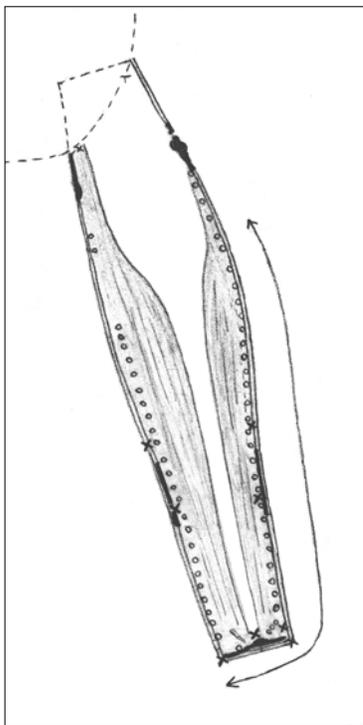
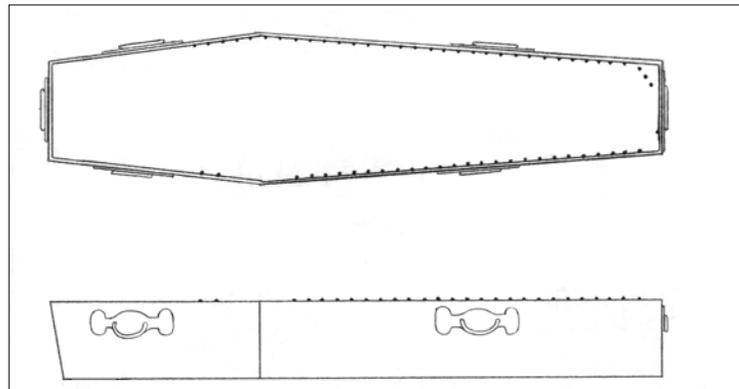


Figure 10.17. (left)
Drawing of the coffin lid in Burial 176 during excavation.
Drawing by B. Ludwig.

Figure 10.18. (below)
Reconstruction of coffin, top and side view, by B. Ludwig, based on field observation.



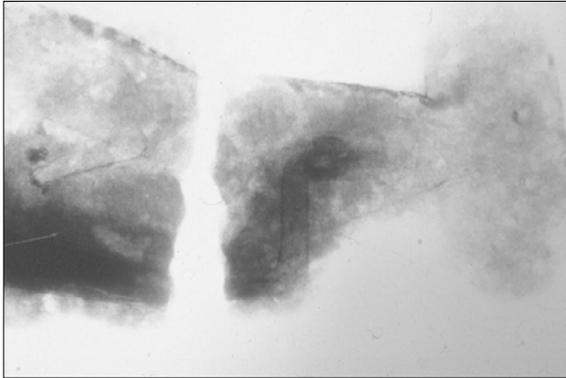


Figure 10.19. (left)
X-ray of coffin handle from Burial 176. The “ear” of the back plate with two screw holes is visible at right, and the bale handle can be seen to the left of this. One of the cutouts is visible on the piece at the left. Supplied by John Milner Associates.

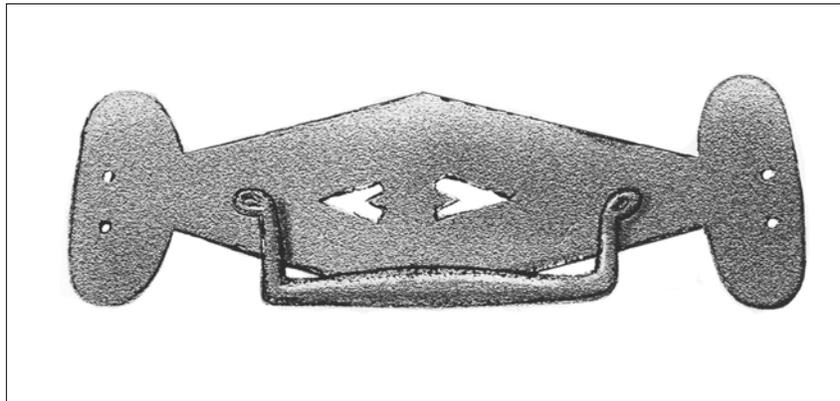
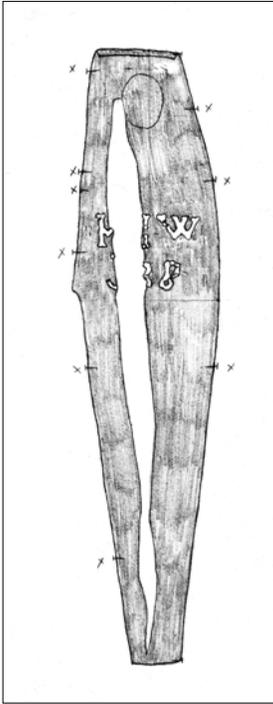


Figure 10.20.
Composite drawing of coffin handle based on the x-rays taken of the handles from Burials 176 and 90. Drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schultz. Length is 7.4 inches.

The reverse-bale type coffin handles were of hand-wrought iron. Conservators noted that the back plates had strike marks from the hand forging along the outer edges (visible in the X-ray), and score marks at the cutouts. The handles connected to the back plates with posts, and the plates were screwed into the coffin boards. A similar handle, with the “ears” and facing cutout design, was recovered from a disturbed burial context at the St. Anne’s Churchyard in Annapolis (Jones 2001:8).

Burial 332: “HW”

Unique at the African Burial Ground, Burial 332 held a coffin with a lid decorated in iron nails forming initials and a number (Figure 10.21). The grave was of a man whose presumed initials were “HW,” and who probably died at age “38” (see Chapter 8). The coffin was hexagonal in shape, and a sample of the wood was identified as Eastern Red Cedar. Its lid had split lengthwise, leaving a gap down the center and disturbing the lettering. The only artifacts in the coffin were a pin beneath the man’s skull and a curved pin or copper ring fragment in the chest area. Burial 289, of a young child, overlay the southwest part of Burial 332. The grave shaft outline indicates the latter was a separate interment, though it may have been deliberately placed above Burial 332.



Coffins with initials and age at death, like those with hearts, were not uncommon during the 18th and 19th centuries, and Delaplaine's records tell us that one for a child was made in New York in 1756 for 14 shillings.

The display of the deceased's identity on the lid suggests that the funeral ritual may have involved showing the coffin, either at the home, during the procession to the cemetery, or at the graveside.

Figure 10.21.

Drawing of the Burial 332 coffin lid as found during the excavation. The oval indicates where the skull was visible through the remnants of the coffin wood. See Chapter 8 for a photograph. Drawing by M. Schur.

Possible painted coffins

Coffins in Burials 159, 183, 213, and 313 were thought by excavators to have possible paint residue.¹⁰ Burial 159 was of a woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, assigned to the Middle Group. Her coffin was hexagonal in shape. The western portion of the lid was well preserved but had split down the middle lengthwise. When exposed, it appeared to have red paint adhering to the wood, which was photographed and sampled. Laboratory analysis (see section 10.D) suggested that the Burial 159 coffin may in fact have been painted, based on the presence of copper at the surfaces of the wood. It was not possible to determine the color of the original surface treatment. Documentary sources from both New York and Charleston suggest that the color typically used for coffins was black (see section 10.B).

The other coffins with possible paint also had observable reddish coloration adhering to wood. None were analyzed for pigment.¹¹ Burial 183, north of the fence line and assigned to the Late Group, held a child approximately a year old in a hexagonal coffin, who had been buried with the head to the east rather than the west. Samples of wood

¹⁰ The conservation report (LaRoche 2002:44) states that Burial 63 was also thought by excavators to have possible paint, but there is no mention of this in the field notes.

¹¹ According to the project conservators (LaRoche 2002:44), the possible paint from Burial 183 was not brought to their attention for analysis, and it is assumed this was the case for Burials 213 and 313 as well. Howard University laboratory staff likewise did not note any wood samples that had been labeled as possibly painted or that appeared to be painted. The sample identified as Red Cedar from Burial 213 was labeled as "Bag 1 of 2" but no second sample was ever located. The lid sample from Burial 313 was stored in the freezer and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

were taken and the south side board was identified as cedar, the north as spruce. The coffin lid was recorded as having flecks of possible paint over the entire surface, and a concentration of orange/red color on the north side. A wood sample was taken from the hexagonal coffin in Burial 213, the grave of a woman 45 to 55 years old, and was identified as red cedar. Excavators noted that a wood sample with possible red paint was also taken, but no such sample was inventoried or analyzed by laboratory staff. Burial 313 held a man of 45 to 55, buried in a hexagonal coffin. His grave was north of the fence line and is assigned to the Late Period. A sample of the coffin lid included what excavators thought was a possible paint stain, collected from the pelvic/femoral area; this sample was not identified or analyzed for pigment. A sample of wood was also taken from the coffin bottom and was identified as eastern white pine.

The decorated coffins represent an added funeral expense. If any of them were provided by slaveholders, they might be interpreted as instances of paternalism: valued household members (including free or enslaved servants and laborers) could be afforded special treatment in death, above and beyond the customary practice. But they might also speak to the ability of kin to pressure slaveholders into extra outlay. If, on the other hand, special coffins or accoutrements were donated or paid for by friends and kin of the deceased, they may reflect the special esteem in which the deceased was held or the status or aspirations of the mourners. In the case of Burial 101, the symbolic content of the decoration may have been primary, while for Burial 332 the identity of the deceased was emphasized. The Burial 176 coffin's decorated handles suggest fashion and expenditure and perhaps also special attention to the act of carrying the deceased to the grave. Their cutout decorations may have been simply a commonly available style for handles, or may have been somehow symbolic.

10.D. The coffin wood and hardware assemblage: condition, treatment, chain of custody

Wood

Coffin wood samples as well as samples of wood thought to be from grave markers were frozen upon recovery to preserve them for analysis. In addition, there were many bags of soil from the scraping of coffin stains, labeled as coffin wood, which often contained only slivers of wood or none (all wood samples are listed in Appendix E). Wood samples of all kinds were assigned consecutive catalog number suffixes ("CWA", "CWB", etc.; see Chapter 1). Often the bags indicated which part of the coffin (lid, bottom, sides) the sample came from, but many samples were not so labeled. Unless two bags were labeled identically, it was assumed that some distinction in provenience was represented by separate bags even when such a label was absent; therefore, separate bags from a burial were always retained. Analysis involved thawing of samples, preparation, and examination under a polarized-light microscope. The conservation report describes sample preparation as follows:

The largest and most robust pieces within each thawing episode were sampled first. For these samples, conventional sampling strategies were employed, including boiling the wood to facilitate taking samples or taking the required cuts directly from viable wood (Hoadley 1990). This was the method most frequently employed. The more fragile samples and some minute samples were infused with Primol WS-24 to facilitate sample taking and identification.

Due to the large number of samples collected, microscopic slides were not retained but photomicrographs of samples with clear distinguishing features were digitized for documentation using a digital imaging system [LaRoche 2002:43].

A total of 203 frozen wood samples from 133 burials was analyzed by JMA conservators, using comparative techniques. Often identifying morphological features were no longer extant or were degraded, and the wood could be identified only to the family or genus level rather than to species. Odor and the presence of residue were useful in some identifications (further description of the identification process will be found in LaRoche 2002:42). All of the identified wood samples are listed in Table 10.6.

No additional samples were analyzed by Howard University Archaeology Team staff. All wood samples stored in the freezer at the World Trade Center lab were lost on September 11, 2001. Most of the wood samples stored in boxes on the laboratory shelving (many of which consisted of scrapings from wood-stained soils) were salvaged; however, these samples were not considered likely to yield definitive identifications.

As noted (section 10.C), coffins in Burials 63 and 159 were identified as possibly having remnants of paint on the wood. Wood samples from these burials were examined microscopically, but no evidence of organic binders was identified and the samples were subsequently subjected to x-ray fluorescence to attempt to detect pigment. Procedures and results of the x-ray fluorescence analysis are provided in the conservation report (LaRoche 2002:44-48). The analysis was done at the U.S. Customs Laboratory using a Jordon Valley Applied Research x-ray fluorescent spectrometer Model EX 300. Wood samples with iron and copper staining from other burials, as well as control samples with no evidence of metallic staining, were used for comparative analysis. In addition, soil samples were tested in order to determine the extent to which wood surface discoloration might be a result of elements in the soil. Results indicate that the wood from the coffin in Burial 159 probably had some kind of surface alteration, based on the levels of copper present (higher than in soil samples, but lower than residue from copper artifacts). It should be noted, however, that a copper-alloy straight pin was recovered adhering to the wood where the pigment appeared to be best preserved. It seems possible the copper levels present in the wood sample may be distorted due to the proximity of corroded pins.

Iron hardware and coffin furniture

Coffin hardware was not among the material to receive treatment by project conservators. The bags labeled as “coffin nails” were examined by Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff in 1999. Every fragment was examined and enumerated as either

whole, head fragment, head and shank fragment, shank fragment, or shank with point. This enables a minimum nail count for every context, which then can be checked against the field drawing of *in situ* nails where available.

Nails were all of iron and hand-wrought. They typically were not measurable (whole nails that could be measured are listed in the inventory). Most nails were broken at the head and along the shaft, either while *in situ* or during recovery. Very small nails were often listed in the inventory as “tacks,” but these are not to be confused with the dome-headed and tinned iron tacks used for lid decorations.

Identification of screws was considered important because screws were more expensive than nails, and their presence may indicate a higher overall cost for the coffin (see discussion of coffin construction). Some screws were identifiable upon visual inspection. In other cases, where corrosion was too far advanced for identification, possible screws were set aside for X-rays. X-rays of unidentifiable items were only taken up to Burial 138. The remaining items that had been set aside remained on separate shelving when the laboratory was shut down in early 2000. These items were not salvaged after the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001.

Coffin handles and tacks consisted of corrosion products (rust) forming relatively amorphous masses. They were desalinated in deionized water baths but received no further conservation treatment. Some of the handles and tacks were x-rayed by project conservators working for John Milner Associates, and some additional tacks were X-rayed by Howard University staff. Many lumps of rust that were possible tacks, or that appeared to be tacks but could not be quantified, were set aside for X-rays along with the possible screws, and were lost in the World Trade Center collapse.

Handles with back plates numbered seven, but were broken into pieces in the course of removal from the soil. Though not all of them were well enough preserved for accurate description, based on the surviving pieces and x-rays it appears likely that all were of the same basic type and shape. Because the bags of nails from Burial 176 were not recovered from the World Trade Center, it is not known whether any screws were recovered.

Disposition

All coffin remains that survived the destruction of the World Trade Center lab were transferred to the General Services Administration for reburial. Where there were corresponding human skeletal remains, the coffin wood and hardware were placed in the new coffin along with the remains and any other artifacts. No samples of coffin wood or hardware were retained.

Table 10.6.
Burials with identified coffin wood

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin shape	Catalog#	Sample Location	Wood
B006	25	30	male?	late	hexagonal	00219-CWA	lid/side	Eastern White Pine
B011	30	40	male?	lmid	hexagonal	00267-CWA through CWD	bottom	Cedar
B012	35	45	female	late	rectangle?	00253-CWA	lid	Cedar
B015	11	18	undete	late	unident.	00286-CWA	unspecified	Red Pine
B017	4	6	undete	mid	hexagonal	00357-CWA	lid	Yew
B018	35	45	female?	early	tapered	00310-CWA	lid	Red Cedar
B022	2.5	4.5	undete	mid	unident.	00344-CWA	bottom	Pine
						00344-CWB	unspecified	Pine
B023	25	35	male	early	tapered	00383-CWA and CWB	unspecified	White Spruce
						00383-CWC	unspecified	Red (Eastern) Spruce
B025	20	24	female	mid	unident.	00353-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B027	1.4	2.8	undete	mid	hexagonal	00378-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B029	35	45	male?	early	tapered	00381-CWA1	side	White Spruce
						00381-CWA2	unspecified	White Spruce
B034			undete	early	rectangle?	00427-CWA	bottom?	Fir
B035	8	10	undete	mid	hexagonal	00458-CWA	unspecified	Red Pine
B036			female	late	unident.	00459-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B037	45	55	male	late	hexagonal	00460-CWA	lid/side	Cedar
B038	12	18	female	early	tapered	00461-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B040	50	60	female	late	hexagonal	00489-CWA	unspecified	Eastern White Pine
B041			undete	mid	unident.	00525-CWA	lid	Sugar Pine
						00525-CWB	lid	Pine
						00525-CWC	bottom	Pine
B046			female?	mid	unident.	00605-CWA	unspecified	Fir
B047	35	45	male	mid	hexagonal?	00619-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B049	40	50	female	mid	hexagonal	00641-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B050			undete	mid	hexagonal	00649-CWA	interior	Spruce
						00649-CWB	lid, bottom	Pine
						00649-CWC	unspecified	Pine
B054			undete	lmid	unident.	00726-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B057	0.88	2.16	undete	mid	hexagonal	00796-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B058	3.5	4.5	undete	late	rectangle	00797-CWA1	bottom	Red Pine
B063	35	45	male	late	hexagonal	00805-CWA	bottom	Cedar
						00805-CWB	side	Pine
B064	0.38	0.88	undete	lmid	hexagonal	00803-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B067	40	50	male	lmid	unident.	00810-CWA	unspecified	Eastern White Pine
						00810-CWB	unspecified	Fir
B068	21	25	male	early	tapered	00807-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B069	30	60	male	mid	hexagonal?	00808-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B070	35	45	male	mid	hexagonal	00812-CWA	unspecified	Cedar

Table 10.6.
Burials with identified coffin wood

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin shape	Catalog#	Sample Location	Wood
B071	25	35	female	late	hexagonal	00813-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B077	0.67	1.3	undete	mid	hexagonal	00820-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B082	18	25	female	mid	unident.	00825-CWA	unspecified	Red pine
B083			undete	early?	rectangle	00826-CWA	unspecified	White Spruce
B085	0.25	0.75	undete	mid	hexagonal	00831-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B089	50	60	female	lmid	hexagonal	00830-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B091	0.67	1.3	undete	lmid	hexagonal	00834-CWA	unspecified	Eastern Red Cedar
B094			undete	mid	hexagonal	00837-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B096	16	18	male	mid	hexagonal	00839-CWA2	unspecified	Eastern White Pine
B097	40	50	male	late	hexagonal	00840-CWA	unspecified	Larch
B101	26	35	male	lmid	hexagonal	00843-CWA1	unspecified	Larch
B107	35	40	female	lmid	hexagonal	00850-CWA	unspecified	Fir
B108	0.25	0.75	undete	lmid	hexagonal	00851-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B109	0.67	1.33	undete	lmid	hexagonal	00852-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B122	18	20	female	mid	hexagonal	00867-CWA	unspecified	Eastern White Pine
B126	3.5	5.5	undete	mid	hexagonal	00871-CWA	lid	Spruce
B128	0	0.17	undete	mid	hexagonal	00873-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B130	1	2	undete	mid	hexagonal	00875-CWA	unspecified	Eastern Red Cedar
						00875-CWB	unspecified	Cedar
B137	25	35	undete	late	unident.	00882-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B147	55	65	male	late	hexagonal	00892-CWA	all	White Cedar
B153			female?	late	hexagonal	00898-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B159	25	35	female	mid	hexagonal	00905-CWA1	unspecified	Cedar
						00905-CWA2	unspecified	Red Pine
B171	44	60	male	late	hexagonal	00931-CWA	lid	Pine
						00931-CWB	side	Spruce
B174	17	18	male	late	hexagonal	00940-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B177	30	60	undete	early	tapered	00946-CWA	lid	Eastern White Pine
B182	7.5	12.5	undete	early	tapered	00970-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B183	0.63	1.13	undete	late	hexagonal	00971-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
						00971-CWB	side	Spruce
						00971-CWC	side	Cedar
B186	0	0.17	undete	late	hexagonal	00987-CWA	lid	Spruce peg
B189			undete	mid	unident.	01015-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B194	30	40	male	late	hexagonal	01109-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
						01109-CWD	post	Cedar
B195	30	40	female	late	hexagonal	01151-CWA	unspecified	Red Cedar
B196	20	24	undete	late	hexagonal	01150-CWA and CWE	side	Cedar
						01150-CWB	lid	Pine
						01150-CWC	lid	Eastern White Pine
						01150-CWG	bottom	Pine
B200			male	early	four-sided	01165-CWA	unspecified	Cedar

Table 10.6.
Burials with identified coffin wood

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin shape	Catalog#	Sample Location	Wood
B202	12	18	female?	early	tapered	01171-CWA	unspecified	White Spruce
B206			undete	mid	rectangle	01180-CWA	unspecified	Red Pine
B208	0.5	1	undete	late	unident.	01182-CWA	bottom	Cedar
B212	4.5	5.5	undete	mid	hexagonal?	01189-CWA	unspecified	Yew
B213	45	55	female	mid	hexagonal	01190-CWA	unspecified	Red Cedar
B214	45	55	male	late	hexagonal	01191-CWA	unspecified	Balsam Fir
B221	30	60	male	early	tapered	01206-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B228			male?	late	hexagonal	01214-CWA	bottom	Cedar
B236	4	5	undete	late	hexagonal	01222-CWA	bottom	Loblolly (Soft Pine)
						01222-CWB and CWC	side	Pine
B237			undete	early	four-sided?	01223-CWA	lid	Red Pine
B242	40	50	female	late	hexagonal	01229-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B244	5	9	undete	late	four-sided	01231-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B246	0.5	2.9	undete	mid	four-sided	01234-CWA	bottom	Cedar
B247	35	49.9	male?	early?	unident.	01236-CWA	lid	Cedar
						01236-CWB	bottom	Eastern White Pine
						01236-CWE, CWG, CWI, CWJ	lid	Pine
B259	17	19	female?	late	hexagonal	01249-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
						01249-CWB	unspecified	Pine
B263			undete	early	tapered	01257-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B265	0.5	1	undete	mid	hexagonal?	01261-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B268	0	0.5	undete	mid	hexagonal?	01264-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B270			male	mid	unident.	01266-CWA	lid	Cedar
B272	0.25	0.75	undete	early	four-sided	01268-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
B277			undete	mid	unident.	01274-CWA	lid	Eastern White Pine
						01274-CWB	bottom	Cedar
B283	0.33	0.67	undete	mid	hexagonal	01302-CWA	bottom/lid	Red Pine
B290	45	55	male	lmid	hexagonal	01324-CWA	unspecified	Black Walnut
B306	28	44	male	mid	hexagonal	01474-CWA	unspecified	Spruce
B310	44	52	female	mid	hexagonal	01486-CWA	bottom	Red Pine?
B313	45	55	male	late	hexagonal	01516-CWA	bottom	Eastern White Pine
B315	30	40	female	mid	hexagonal?	01519-CWA	lid	Cedar
						01519-CWB and CWC	bottom	Cedar
B316	18	20	female	lmid	hexagonal	01521-CWA	lid	Cedar
B328	40	50	female	mid	hexagonal	01589-CWA	unspecified	Red Cedar
						01589-CWB	lid	Red Cedar
						01589-CWC	side	Cedar
B333	45	55	male	lmid	rectangle	01613-CWA	bottom	Loblolly Pine
B340	39.3	64.4	female	early	tapered	01651-CWA and CWB	side	Eastern White Pine

Table 10.6.
Burials with identified coffin wood

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin shape	Catalog#	Sample Location	Wood
						01651-CWC and CWE	bottom	Red Cedar
						01651-CWD	lid	Eastern White Pine
B342	25	35	female?	late	hexagonal	01660-CWA	unspecified	Pine
B354	35	45	male	late	hexagonal	01742-CWA	unspecified	Eastern White Pine
						01742-CWB	side	White Spruce
						01742-CWC	lid	Fir
						01742-CWD	unspecified	Fir
						01742-CWE	unspecified	Scots Pine
B363	1	2	undete	late	hexagonal	01825-CWA	bottom	Cedar
B384	25	45	female	mid	hexagonal	01955-CWB	bottom	Red Pine
						01955-CWC	side	Red Pine
B388	29	57	female	early	tapered	02008-CWA	lid	Red Pine
						02008-CWB	lid	Pine
B392	42.5	52.5	male	lmid	rectangle	02039-CWA	unspecified	Cedar
						02039-CWB	side	Pine
B402			undete	early	tapered	02066-CWA	lid/side?	Spruce
						02066-CWB	lid	Cedar
B415	35	55	male	mid	hexagonal	02097-CWA	bottom	Cedar
B419	48	62	male	mid	hexagonal	02104-CWA	side	Spruce

Table 10.10.
Coffin nail locations

Burial	Nail Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
B023	31	63	0	13	21	9	12	8	BVL drawing used
B040	16	29	0	1	15	0	7	6	BVL drawing used
B044	16	20	0	9	11	0	0	0	drawing 1042
B045	2	11	0	0	8	3	0	0	
B048	13	22	0	0	16	0	2	4	
B049	17	17	0	4	12	0	0	1	
B050	18	18	0	4	4	0	4	6	
B053	3	16	0	2	10	1	0	3	
B055	21	22	0	12	10	0	0	0	
B056	21	19	2	8	5	2	1	1	12 top horiz. nails questionable
B057	17	26	3	0	15	1	6	1	
B059	11	13	0	4	3	0	4	2	drawing 1047 and photo
B064		17	2	0	11	0	2	2	
B068	35	49	0	9	21	6	8	5	
B071	43	44	2	0	24	1	9	8	BVL and MS drawings used
B073	14	14	0	2	10	0	2	0	
B077	9	20	0	4	11	0	1	4	counted 2 bottom nails at foot as corner nails
B078	17	25	0	4	7	0	7	7	see photo
B085	12	14	4	0	6	0	3	1	
B086	9	8	0	0	2	0	3	3	1 nail on cranium, 1 nail by r. foot
B090	9	16	0	5	9	0	0	2	see photo
B094	20	28	2	3	9	0	7	7	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B100	10	13	0	4	3	0	1	5	
B101	32	27	2	6	9	0	4	6	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B106	6	15	2	0	10	0	2	1	1 nail on coffin floor
B107	5	28	0	12	10	0	2	4	
B115	34	22	0	5	10	0	5	2	
B121	16	14	0	2	8	0	2	2	
B122	28	31	0	4	14	0	5	8	used cross-section drawing
B123	30	13	0	1	9	0	2	1	1 nail outside coffin wall?
B127	7	11	0	2	2	0	3	4	
B128	4	16	0	1	10	0	2	3	
B130	7	20	1	2	8	0	5	4	top horizontal nail not visible in photo
B133	13	12	0	1	8	0	2	1	

Table 10.10.
Coffin nail locations

Burial	Nail Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
B134	13	24	0	3	9	0	6	6	
B135	8	21	2	3	10	0	3	3	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B138	4	24	0	6	8	0	8	2	see photo
B145	26	33	0	8	14	0	6	5	BVL drawing used
B146		18	0	4	10	0	3	1	
B147	20	20	0	3	15	0	0	2	1 nail on coffin floor
B148	19	27	5	2	7	0	5	8	top horizontal nails not visible in slide; 1 nail by l. radius, 1 nail by distal l. femur
B149	17	19	5	0	8	0	3	3	
B151	16	27	0	1	16	0	6	4	BVL and MS drawings used
B159	19	17	0	0	15	0	2	0	
B216	13	15	2	0	13	0	0	0	
B217	27	14	0	0	11	1	0	2	2 nails near cranium on coffin floor
B218	3	12	2	3	3	0	2	2	
B221	6	20	0	5	2	8	2	3	1 vertical nail in middle of coffin lid, 1 nail by R. shoulder on coffin floor
B225	15	16	1	2	3	1	5	4	Horizontal top nail visible in photo; includes 2 corner joint (head) screws
B226	1								
B230	36	30	4	6	17	1	1	1	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B235	4	35	0	11	9	8	5	2	
B236	23	20	2	0	14	0	1	3	1 nail near cranium on coffin floor
B238	24	25	0	8	8	0	4	5	
B239	27	12	3	0	6	0	3	0	MS drawin used
B241	21	23	0	3	18	0	2	0	
B242	14	22	0	4	10	5	1	2	
B245	38	20	0	6	9	0	4	1	4 scattered nails on coffin lid in drawing
B254	9	19	0	1	10	0	4	4	
B266	6	40	0	10	16	0	5	9	
B268	11	16	0	5	2	2	2	5	
B282	17	16	0	2	0	6	5	3	
B294	16	18	0	2	9	2	3	2	
B295	39	27	0	5	19	0	1	2	

Table 10.10.
Coffin nail locations

Burial	Nail Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
B299	59	39	0	7	20	3	3	6	
B306	20	23	0	5	12	1	3	2	
B310	6	32	2	3	18	1	5	3	top horizontal nails and vertical bottom nail not visible in slide; 1 nail near left foot
B311	2								
B312	3	17	0	3	2	2	3	7	
B314	35	26	0	3	13	0	7	3	
B315	27	16	0	4	9	1	1	1	plus 1 nail near left elbow on coffin floor
B324	1	15	6	0	8	0	1	0	plus 1 nail near right ribs on coffin floor
B332	3	29	0	9	12	0	5	3	Note: nails were missing from laboratory inventory
B334	15	17	0	0	11	0	1	5	MS drawin used
B335	9	38	5	7	17	0	4	5	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B336	12	9	4	1	1	0	0	3	
B340	37	47	11	13	6	5	5	7	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
B342	22	43	5	4	24	3	5	2	
B346	28	27	1	0	14	5	5	2	
B347	17	18	0	1	10	0	5	2	
B353	6	55	0	15	26	0	7	7	see photo
B354	15	37	0	7	16	0	7	7	
B361	14	14	0	1	2	10	1	0	
B366	29	37	0	11	12	2	6	6	
B376	63	28	0	10	9	2	0	7	
B379	23	31	0	7	12	1	6	5	see photo
B380	29	44	4	9	24	1	3	3	top horizontal nails not visible in slide
B381		8	0	1	4	0	2	1	
B387	11	8	0	1	3	0	3	1	
B388	17	30	5	11	6	0	6	2	top horizontal nails not visible in photo; 2 nails on coffin floor near feet
B389	9								
B390		7	1	4	0	0	1	1	top horizontal nail not visible in photo; 1 nail outside coffin, 2 on coffin floor

Table 10.10.
Coffin nail locations

Burial	Nail Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
B392	29	21	2	4	7	0	4	4	top horizontal nails not visible in slide; 4 nails scattered on coffin floor; 7 vertical nails on lid cross boards
B397	39	41	0	10	20	0	7	4	4 nails scattered on coffin lid
B399	24	27	2	4	12	1	4	4	MS drawing used; top horizontal nails oriented outward (displaced?)
B415	19	31	0	11	12	0	4	4	MS drawing used
B419	14	20	0	8	9	0	2	1	MS drawing used

CHAPTER 11. PINS AND SHROUDING

Jean Howson

with the assistance of Shannon Mahoney and Janet L. Woodruff

It is our assumption that for those interred at the African Burial Ground preparation of the body included some form of covering, whether winding sheet, shroud, or clothing. Where remnants of such dressing has not survived, we cannot know how the body was treated, though it seems most likely these cases had cloth that had been wound about the corpse or sewn or tied shut. Due to preservation conditions, textile and fiber fragments recovered from graves at the African Burial Ground were only found in association with metal artifacts (pins, buttons, coins, jewelry, nails).

Other than coffin remains, the most common artifacts recovered from graves were copper-alloy straight pins. These were always referred to in the field records as “shroud pins.” Pins, however, may have been used to fasten clothing (especially for women), or to fasten a strip of cloth used to tie up the chin of the deceased. An attempt has been made to analyze the placement of the pins on the body to better decide whether a winding cloth, some other type of burial garment, or clothing is indicated. This chapter focuses on pins; other clothing items are discussed in Chapter 12.

11.A. A profile of the burials with pins

As noted in Chapter 5, pins were found in 64.6% of the burials in which their preservation was feasible. A total of 834 pins was recorded overall, from 210 burials.¹ It is likely the actual frequency was greater, assuming that pins were originally present in many of the extremely disturbed burials and that some pins had decomposed beyond recognition. In many cases the pins could not be recovered due to their advanced decomposition, but often even when no actual fragment remained, the telltale green stains were present and recorded (either prior to removal of the skeleton or during cleaning of the bone).

Tables 11.1 and 11.2 (at the rear of this chapter) provide a basic profile of the burials with pins. We look at age, gender, and at pin use over time, then turn to the actual placement of pins on the body.

¹ Pins were very fragmentary at the time they were inventoried (see section 11.C on condition and laboratory methods). The number 834 is the number of pins represented based on field and laboratory recording, rather than pin fragments that were recovered and eventually reburied, which numbered 1,232.

Table 11.1. Presence of pins by age category and sex		
Age/Sex	Number of burials with pins	Percent of age/gender category²
female	53	71.62%
male	45	47.87%
adult undeter- mined	9	52.94%
Total adults	107	58.2%
Infants up to 6 months	22	71.05%
Children 6 months to 15 years	81	78.57%
Total subadults	103	73.6%

Sex, age, and time

The distribution of pins was skewed along age and gender lines. Children and infants were more likely to have pins than adults, and women more likely than men. It is possible that clothing is represented by some of the pins – women’s clothing was more likely to use them than men’s. This will be discussed further when we turn to pin placement.

The overall frequency of burials having at least one pin changed little from the Middle Group on (Table 11.3). The lower frequency of Early Group burials with pins is attributable both to the probability that these goods were less abundantly available in the early 18th century and to reduced preservation. If we look at the distribution of burials with pins by sex and age over time, we also see little appreciable change. Burials of women were consistently much more likely to have at least one pin than those of men.

The numbers of pins in adult burials, rather than their presence/absence, exhibit a different pattern, however (Table 11.4). In the Early and Middle Groups, more of the pins were found with women’s burials, while in the later temporal groups slightly more of the pins were found with men than with women. The preponderance of men in the Late Group burials accounts for the distribution in that group, but the Late-Middle burials may point to a change over time in burial attire.

² Totals used to calculate percentages do not include burials for which *neither* age nor sex determination can be made; burials that were completely re-deposited remains; burials where empty coffins were discovered; burials without pins that were missing the cranium. See Table 11.3 for counts.

Table 11.3. Burials with pins by age, sex, and temporal group															
	Early			Middle			Late Middle			Late			Total		
Sex/age	n*	w/ pins	%	n*	w/ pins	%	n*	w/ pins	%	n*	w/ pins	%	n*	w/ pins	%
female	8	5	62.50	32	23	71.88	10	8	80.00	24	17	70.83	74	53	71.62
male	10	4	40.00	26	13	50.00	18	9	50.00	40	19	47.50	94	45	47.87
adult undete.	5	2	40.00	6	4	66.67	2	1	50.00	4	2	50.00	17	9	52.94
infant	1	1	100	18	14	77.78	3	2	66.67	6	5	83.33	28	22	78.57
subadult	11	3	27.27	67	48	71.64	15	13	86.67	21	17	80.95	114	81	71.05
Total	35	15	42.86	149	102	68.46	48	33	68.75	95	60	63.16	327	210	64.22

*Includes burials with adequate preservation to expect pins, plus burials with “n” preservation from which pins nevertheless were recovered.

Table 11.4. Pin frequencies by sex and temporal period		
	Percent of total pins	
Temporal Group	women	men
Early	70.97	29.03
Middle	77.57	22.43
Late Middle	41.18	58.82
Late	45.28	54.72

Analysis of pin placement

Table 11.2 (at the rear of this chapter) lists burials with pins in four body areas. This information helps us to understand the function of pins, and ultimately sheds light on how the living mourners prepared the body for burial.

Those who prepared the very youngest for burial apparently wrapped them in cloth, then fastened the cloth with numerous pins (Figures 11.1 and 11.2). This seems counterintuitive: complete shrouding would have required little cloth to wrap the smallest children and infants, so why the need for pins at all? We hypothesize that pins had ritual meaning beyond fastening. This meaning may have had to do with protecting the very young or with ensuring adequate means to make a spiritual passage. Without knowing

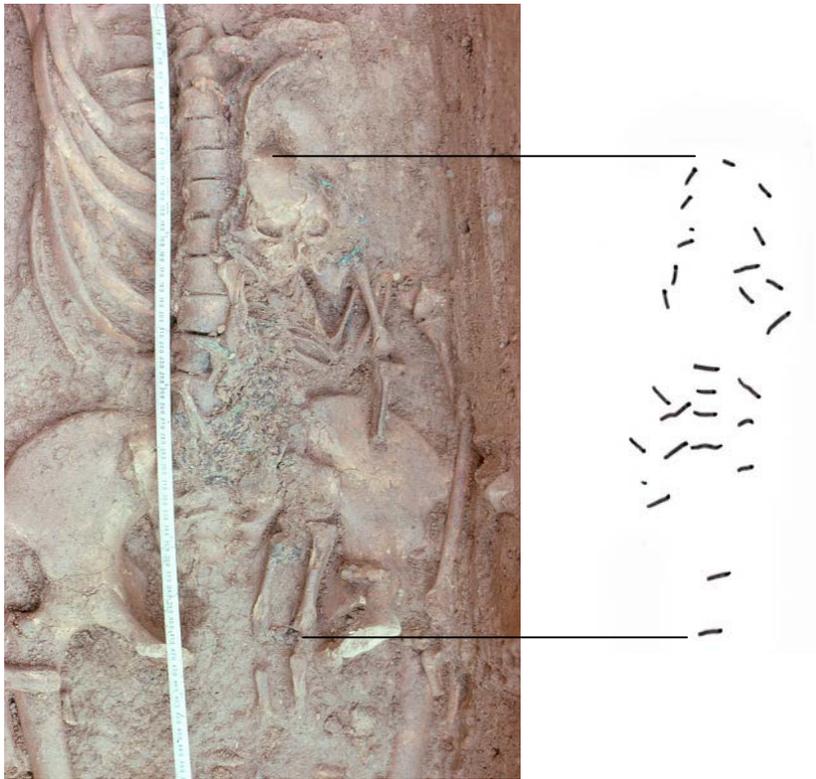
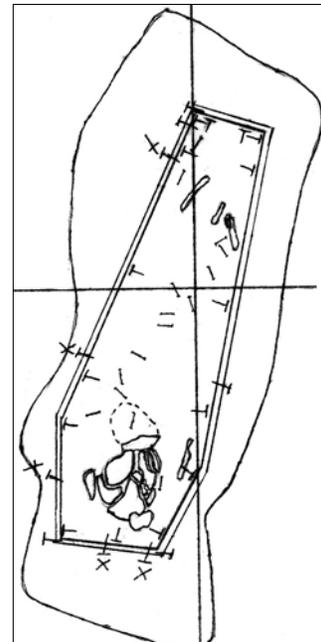


Figure 11.1.
In situ photograph of Burial 14 (left) and excavator's drawing of pin locations prior to removal (right). Burial 14 was of an infant no more than six months old who shared a grave with a thirty-five to forty-five-year-old woman (Burial 12). The bones of the woman can be seen in the photograph, with the infant's remains superimposed. The pins encircled the infant's skull (at top) and extended down to the knees. (Scale: 1 inch = 1 foot.) Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Figure 11.2 (right).
In situ drawing of Burial 183, which held an infant between eight and sixteen months old. This burial was one of just two infants that had the head to the east rather than the west. Pins were found in place along the center of the remains from the skull (at bottom of drawing) down the length of the body. North is to right. (Scale 1 inch = 1 foot.) Drawing by M. Schur.



pin, and the social and spiritual connection to the deceased embodied in this ritual moment. A purely utilitarian interpretation (as shroud fasteners) in the burials of children is inadequate. By extension, all of the pins used in shrouding may have had ritual meaning as well as being functional as fasteners.³

Burials with pins *only* on the cranium include 28 adults and 15 subadults. Burial drawings show the precise locations on the crania in many cases, and the pins were typically on the top of the skull or near the ear. The presence of pins on the cranium has been taken to be diagnostic of shrouding in other archaeological contexts (e.g., Hudgins 1977; Hunt 1994:92). It is possible, however, that pins found only at the head represent a piece of cloth used to secure the chin rather than a complete shroud. In cases where cranial pins are absent, chin cloths simply may have been tied. The securing of the jaw was necessary because it would otherwise fall open when the corpse was laid out supine. Richardson (2000:19) records that in traditional English practice, prior to the onset of rigor the eyes would be closed, then the mouth, which would be secured either with the band of a shroud cap or with “a bandage passing under the chin and tied at the top of the head.” According to Litten (1991:72) the chin tie was removed if a tied cap was put on. The tying of the chin was typical in English practice in the 18th century, and chin cloths could be purchased ready-made along with a shroud (Litten 1997:48). Any strip of cloth would have been sufficient, however.

Tying the chin may have been a typical part of the process of laying out the dead among both white and black New Yorkers, but pinning the chin cloth suggests a variant practice. If, on the other hand, cranial pins reflect the special arrangement of the shroud so as to expose the face, it is possible that for these deceased individuals the face was meant to be in view at some point during the funeral proceedings, perhaps during a wake.

About equal numbers of African Burial Ground men (14) and women (12) had pins *only* on the cranium, but the distribution by age is skewed toward adults aged thirty or over. Children’s chin cloths may typically have been tied rather than pinned. Tying rather than pinning also may have been dictated by religious observance, as in Muslim shrouding. If the cranial pins indicate arrangement of the shroud so as to show the face, such a practice may have been reserved mainly for older individuals.

There were a number of burials with pins that also had possible evidence of clothing. For example, a child (Burial 22) and two women (Burials 213 and 342) had aglets (small copper-alloy “tubes” that cover the ends of laces) as well as pins. In these cases the aglets may represent clothing (see Chapter 12) or the ties of shrouds. The locations of the aglets on the body were not provenienced in the field because they were indistinguishable from pins. The aglet in Burial 213 was determined to be from the left parietal.

Other burials with evidence for clothing that also had pins include one of a man with a jacket (Burial 6) and three adults with apparent knee breeches (Burials 203, 259, and

³ In his early study of African-American burials from College Landing, Carter Hudgins (1977:71) similarly noted that “[t]he placement of pins and location of the stains assumed a pattern that indicated cultural significance rather than random occurrence.”

415). Thirteen adults with miscellaneous buttons or button fragments that may represent clothing also had at least one pin. There are several possible reasons for the presence of both pins and buttons:

- Individuals were both clothed and wrapped. Four of the people buried with both pins and buttons (Burials 325, 353, 385, and 415) had pins only at the cranium or cranium and jaw. Only one of these had clear-cut evidence for clothing, Burial 415; perhaps preparation of this man’s body included securing the jaw with a chin cloth, which was left in place at burial.
- They wore buttoned undergarments beneath their shrouds. Bone buttons, likely to represent undergarments were found with Burials 37, 171, 257, 313, 353, and 385.
- They were clothed rather than wrapped and some of their clothing was pinned.
- Their buttons were not from clothing but rather were worn on a string or placed in the hand as a memento or talisman at the time of burial.

Some adults had pins on the head, torso, and extremities. These cases, like those of children with pins along the body, probably indicate winding sheets that may have been pinned along their length.⁴

Table 11.5.
Number of burials with pins in
four body areas, by sex

	Pins on Cranium	Pins on Jaw/Neck	Pins on Torso	Pins on Extremities
female	29	10	26	9
male	25	7	12	7

*Only adults for whom gender could be definitely determined are included.

While pin distributions by sex on cranium, jaw, and extremities were comparable, more than twice as many women than men had pins on the torso area (Table 11.5). This is consistent with the hypothesis that in some cases pins represent clothing fasteners rather than shrouds. Pins were used more often than buttons to fasten women’s clothing in the 18th century (Figure 11.3; see Chapter 12.B). Of the adults with pins *only* on the torso, six were women and three were men.

11.B. Pins and shrouds in 18th-century New York

Mass-produced in the period of the African Burial Ground cemetery, straight pins would have been available at shops, at the markets, and no doubt from peddlers, and they also could have been obtained by women and girls who did the sewing in European

⁴Litten (1991:59) cites this practice for English shrouding in the 15th century, but does not trace its history.



Figure 11.3.
Detail from “Jersey Nanny”
(mezzotint) by John
Greenwood, American, 1748.
This depiction of a working-
class woman shows two items
of clothing fastened with pins.
The scarf or shawl is pinned at
her throat; her short gown,
which wraps across her torso, is
pinned on the left side of her
chest. Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston. Source: Kidwell
(1978:52).

households. Cloth for shrouds or winding sheets may have been considered, along with the coffin, a *sine qua non* of proper burial. As we noted in Chapter 2, there is scant evidence, but wrapping the dead in some manner was practiced in at least some of the African cultures to which captives brought to New York belonged. There is no documentary evidence for provision of cloth by New York’s household heads as there is for coffins, though such a custom may have developed. Alternatively, like pins, cloth would have been available to blacks through several other means: purchase at the many shops that dealt in cloth in the 18th century, or from peddlers with such wares; recycling from the deceased’s or a relative’s household; or through appropriation that would have come under the heading of “theft.”

Litten (1991:57-84) describes shrouding in 15th- through 19th-century England, relying for the most part on information gleaned from sculptures, drawings, and paintings; Richardson (2000:20-21) draws on folklore and on illustrated funeral invitations to provide a picture of traditional practices. The winding sheet was commonly used for burials in post-medieval England, and the custom would have come to New York with European colonists. In English (and more widely European) practice, a winding sheet consisted of a rectangular length of cloth that enclosed the corpse, tying above the head and below the feet. The edges of the sheet, about three times the width of the corpse and six inches longer at both head and foot, were fastened by either stitching or pinning, and each end was tied with a strip of cloth. Illustrations from the 16th through 18th centuries show English corpses wrapped in generous widths of material with gathered ends. In some cases, the illustrations show that the fabric was pushed back to reveal the

deceased's face; otherwise the winding sheet completely concealed the corpse. In Europe and among European colonials, specific garments called "shrouds," as opposed to winding sheets, came into fashion in the 18th century. These somewhat resembled an open-backed nightshirt with a tie at the feet. The shroud had a drawstring tie at the neck, rather than above the head, and sleeves with drawstrings or tapes at the wrists. A fabric cap complemented the dress. Men and women seem to have been dressed for the grave in similar, if not identical, fashion.

Blanche White, who advertised as an undertaker in New York in 1768, sold "shrouds and sheets" (Gottesman 1938:142), suggesting that these were two different items, the former probably a garment as distinct from a winding sheet. There was probably no difference between the sheets used for bedding and those used for winding sheets, at least among the poor. Household mistresses may have offered old bed sheets for use as shrouds by enslaved and free servants, while using heirloom linens or purchasing new sheets or garment shrouds for their own family members.

In the North American colonies there was no regulation of the type of cloth used for shrouding; linen and wool would have been most common.⁵ Lengths of cloth, like wood for a coffin, would have represented no small expense for bereaved family and friends, and it was probably impossible to provide the flowing or repeatedly-wrapped shrouds that are depicted on the well-to-do in early European sculptures and prints. A proper Muslim shroud, too, requires yards of cloth, consisting of three large pieces for a man and five for a woman, but the expense of so much cloth would have been prohibitive for the poor. Enslaved Africans would have adopted their mortuary rituals to the constraints they faced.

Surviving records from funeral suppliers do not detail the colors of cloth used for shrouds or winding sheets, but in most cases, illustrations appear to show white or pale fabrics dressing the dead (see Litten 1991:57-84). Antebellum accounts from the American South suggest that enslaved plantation laborers usually used white cloth to wrap their dead (Roediger 1981:169). Muslim shrouds are always supposed to be white, but colors used in the 17th or 18th centuries in the areas of Africa from whence New York's captives came were not recorded.

11.C. The pin assemblage and associated cloth

Pins recovered from graves at the African Burial Ground were very uniform. Almost all were fragmentary (if not already broken *in situ*, they usually broke when handled). Those that were whole or were in pieces that could be measured were just under to just over one inch long. Only five whole pins were present at the time of the Howard University inventory of the assemblage. Examples of recovered pins are shown in Figure 11.4. (A

⁵ In the late 17th century, the English Parliament passed *The Act for Burying in Woollen*, which prohibited the use of linen or other fabrics as burial garments (in order to protect the woolen industry). Well-to-do families sometimes flouted this law, and considered the fines imposed as one of the costs of a funeral (Litten 1991:74). The act remained in effect until the early 19th century in England.



photograph of the replicas of pins that were created for the African Burial Ground by artisans at Colonial Williamsburg is in Chapter 1.)

Figure 11.4.
Pins, copper alloy.
Burial 12, Catalog # 253-
B.001, .002. The bottom pin
is 2.2 cm in length.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Cloth was normally recovered along with larger metal artifacts such as buttons or coins, but was also recovered with pins from a few of the burials. The identified textiles are of linen and cotton. Burials with textile remnants associated with pins or aglets (rather than buttons or cuff links) are listed in Table 11.6 (see Chapter 12 for textiles associated with buttons). Also included in this table are textile fragments that were associated with metal items (coins, for example) that would have aided preservation but where buttons or cuff links were absent. The fragments listed in Table 11.6 may represent shrouds, but some might also be from clothing. One man, in Burial 415, had clothing represented by numerous buttons, but is included because we know he also had cloth pinned on the cranium (Figure 11.5). Examples of textiles from possible shrouds are shown in Figures 11.6 and 11.7.



Figure 11.5. (left)
Pin with fabric. Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.
This burial held a man buried in clothing, but
also with this pin and cloth on the cranium.
Recovered during laboratory cleaning of the
skeletal remains. The ruler is measured in .5
mm. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 11.6. (right)
Textile, unidentified, woven.
Burial 104, Catalog # 847-B.003.
Length 5 mm. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 11.7.
Textile from a possible shroud
that had adhered to a coin.
Burial 230, Catalog # 1216-B.002.
The coin is 22 mm diameter.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Table 11.6.		
Textile fragments recovered (not in association with buttons)		
Burial/ Catalog #	Type of fragment	Comments
Burial 22 #344-B.004	linen	Plain weave, partially mineralized. A single aglet was recovered from this burial.
Burial 18	unidentified possible textile	Found in soil adhering to left parietal during cleaning of remains; not conserved
Burial 46 #605-B	unidentified	found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved
Burial 71 #813-B.003	unidentified	textile associated with pin; not listed in conservation report
Burial 104 #847-B.003	unidentified	not listed in conservation report
Burial 109 #852-B.002	linen	
Burial 121 #866-B	unidentified	pseudomorph (exact replica of textile formed by corrosion products)
Burial 136 #881-B.002	linen	
Burial 156 #901-B	fiber, unidentified	found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved
Burial 169 #926-B.001	cotton	
Burial 180 #960-B	fiber, unidentified	found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved
Burial 219 #1200-UNC	unidentifiable	provenience unclear
Burial 225 #1211-B.004	unidentified	not listed in conservation report
Burial 230 #1216-B.002	Unidentified	Adhering to either side of a copper-alloy coin
Burial 252	Unidentified	Impression of cloth noted in field records, not recovered
Burial 363	Unidentifiable	Single fiber from cranium
Burial 389 #2023-B.002	unidentifiable	
Burial 415 #2097-B	unidentified	Recovered with pin during cleaning of cranium in laboratory (not conserved)

Recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody

During excavation, pin recovery was not always possible due to the state of decomposition of these fragile items. When recovered in the field, the pins or pin fragments were placed in small plastic containers or bags and brought to the project laboratory. In the laboratory, conservators noted that pins were mineralized and highly fragmented, often consisting only of corrosion product. The pins were desalinated and batch-treated with a corrosion inhibitor, vacuum-impregnated with the acryloid B-72, and stored in polyethylene boxes. The exact location of each pin within a burial (e.g., cranium, vertebrae, etc.) was either not recorded on the field containers or this information was not retained after laboratory staff re-boxed the items.

These pins were inventoried and a few examples photographed by laboratory personnel. They were re-examined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel during laboratory analysis in 1998-99 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted (head and shank, shank, or shank with point). Final, high-quality photographs of representative pins were taken by Jon Abbott in August 2001. At that time, the pins were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The pins were re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at Artex in 2003, and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

In many cases pins were within soil pedestals adhering to skeletal remains when they were removed from the ground. When such pins were recovered during cleaning of the bones at the Howard University Cobb Laboratory, they were placed in polyethylene bags and were labeled according to which skeletal element they came from. These pins were not treated by conservators. They were retained at the Cobb Laboratory and shipped to the New York laboratory in 2003, where they were inventoried by Howard University Archaeology Team staff. In September 2003 they were re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers and placed in coffins for reburial.

The low rate of textile survival is due to the soil conditions at the site. Textile and fiber fragments were recovered in association with some pins during field excavation, preserved by copper salts associated with the degradation of the copper alloy. Only the more robust fibers and textile fragments were cleaned in the laboratory. Of the possible shroud fragments, three were identified as linen and one as cotton. In some cases pseudomorphs (corrosion products that permeated the fibers and replaced them, creating an exact replica) of cloth were recovered. Pseudomorphs from Burials 121 and 135 were examined and photographed microscopically. Another possible pseudomorph from Burial 186 was investigated with scanning electron microscopy, which indicated mineralized wood but was inconclusive as to the presence of textile or fiber.

In two cases, fibers brought to the laboratory were identified as rodent hairs (these are not included in the list above).

Methodology

Pins were examined visually, some under magnification. Pin fragments were recorded in the artifact inventory as head and shank, shank, or shank with point. This allows for counting minimum numbers of pins for each burial in cases where they were not noted in the field and shown on field drawings. Pins were counted as follows: all pins recorded *in situ* were counted for the analysis of pin placement. Where field recording was not precise or pins were recovered during laboratory cleaning, an inventoried pin fragment was counted as one pin only if it included the pinhead, or was the only fragment from a burial location, or had the point and no fragment with a head present.

Pin placement within a burial was recorded in the database where possible. This information was obtained from field records and drawings or, in the case of pins from pedestalled remains, from the skeletal laboratory staff, who were careful to label pins according to skeletal element.

Manufacture and dating

The pins found at the African Burial Ground were copper alloy, drawn with wire-wrapped heads, some with a tinned surface visible. These were typical manufactures of the African Burial Ground period. Wrapped-head pins were common by the beginning of the 17th century and until the early 19th century (Noël Hume 1969:254). The pins, therefore, do not provide specific dating for burials.

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B001	20	25	female?	late	1	0	0	0	0	y
B005	0.5	1	undete	lmid	1	6	12	0	0	y
B006	25	30	male?	late	3	0	3	0	1	y
B007	3	5	undete	lmid	3	0	3	0	0	y
B008	0	0.5	undete	mid	0	1	0	0	1	y
B012	35	45	female	late	1	1	1	0	0	y
B014	0	0.5	undete	late	4	4	14	4	0	y
B016	50	60	female	mid	1	0	1	0	0	y
B017	4	6	undete	mid	2	1	2	1	0	y
B019			undete	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B020	45	50	male	late	0	0	0	4	0	n
B022	2.5	4.5	undete	mid	2	0	3	0	0	y
B023	25	35	male	early	1	0	0	0	0	y
B024	3	6	undete	mid	1	0	5	0	0	y
B027	1.4	2.8	undete	mid	2	4	7	0	0	y
B030	7	11	undete	mid	0	2	3	0	0	y
B031	14	16	undete	mid	3	0	11	0	0	y
B032	50	60	male	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B035	8	10	undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B037	45	55	male	late	1	0	5	1	0	y
B038	12	18	female	early	1	0	0	0	0	y
B039	5	7	undete	mid	2	1	4	3	0	y
B040	50	60	female	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B043	2.5	4.5	undete	mid	3	0	0	0	0	y
B046			female?	mid	0	1	0	0	0	y
B049	40	50	female	mid	4	0	0	0	0	y
B053	0.25	0.75	undete	mid	4	0	1	1	0	y
B055	3	5	undete	mid	2	0	2	0	0	y
B056	30	34	female	mid	2	0	3	0	0	y
B057	0.88	2.16	undete	mid	0	1	0	0	0	y
B058	3.5	4.5	undete	late	2	0	0	0	1	y
B059	0	0.25	undete	late	1	1	4	0	0	y
B060	0.25	0.75	undete	lmid	1	3	1	0	0	y
B063	35	45	male	late	1	0	0	0	0	y
B064	0.38	0.88	undete	lmid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B065	0	0.49	undete	late	3	3	0	0	0	y

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B067	40	50	male	lmid	0	0	6	0	0	y (no cranium)
B071	25	35	female	late	0	0	1	0	2	y
B072	1	2	undete	early?	0	3	2	0	0	y
B073	20	30	female?	mid	2	1	1	1	0	y
B075	0	0	undete	mid			4		1	y
B078	16	19	undete	early	1				0	y
B079	0.25	0.75	undete	mid	4	0	4	0	0	y
B081			female	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y (no cranium)
B082	18	25	female	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y (cranium only)
B084	17	21	female	early	0	3	0	0	0	y
B085	0.25	0.75	undete	mid	0	0	2	0	0	y
B086	6	8	undete	late	1	0	0	0	1	y
B087	4	6	undete	mid	3	0	0	0	0	y (cranium only)
B089	50	60	female	lmid	0	0	2	0	0	y
B090	35	40	female	mid	2	0	1	0	0	y
B091	0.67	1.3	undete	lmid	0	3	2	0	0	y
B094			undete	mid	1	0	3	0	0	y
B095	7	12	undete	late	1	0	1	0	0	y
B097	40	50	male	late	5	0	0	0	0	y
B099	6	10	undete	late	0	1	1	0	0	y
B101	26	35	male	lmid	5	0	1	0	0	y
B102	1.33	2.67	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B103			undete	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B104	30	40	female	mid	0	1	0	1	1	y
B107	35	40	female	lmid	0	0	2	0	0	y
B108	0.25	0.75	undete	lmid	0	1	3	0	0	y
B109	0.67	1.33	undete	lmid	1	1	1	0	0	y
B111	0.67	1.33	undete	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B112	0.25	0.75	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	4	y
B115	25	35	female	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B116	45	55	male	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B119	35	45	male	lmid	1	1	1	0	0	y
B121	2.5	4.5	undete	early	2	0	0	0	0	y

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B122	18	20	female	mid	0	2	4	0	0	y
B123	0.67	1.33	undete	lmid	3	2	6	0	1	y
B126	3.5	5.5	undete	mid	2	0	1	0	0	y
B127	0.67	1.33	undete	mid	0	3	6	2	1	y
B128	0	0.17	undete	mid	1	4	2	0	1	y
B130	1	2	undete	mid	1	0	1	0	0	y
B131			undete	late	1	0	0	0	0	n
B133	1	2	undete	mid	3	3	2	0	0	y
B134	40	50	female	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B136			undete	mid	0	0	1	0	3	y
B143	6	10	undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B144	0	0.17	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	4	y
B146	0	0	undete	lmid	3	4	1	0	0	y
B147	55	65	male	late	0	0	4	0	0	y
B148	12	18	undete	mid	4	1	1	0	0	y
B149	0.5	1	undete	mid	2	0	1	0	0	y
B151	35	45	male	late	0	1	0	0	0	y
B153			female?	late	1	0	4	0		y
B154	25	29	female	mid	3	0	3	2	0	y
B159	25	35	female	mid	2	1	8	0	0	y
B160	3.5	5.5	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B166	0.5	1	undete	late	3	0	5	0	0	y
B167	8.5	12.5	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B169	5.5	9.5	undete	mid	3	0	0	0	0	y
B171	44	60	male	late	0	0	5	0	0	y
B173	0.25	0.75	undete	late	0	1	3	0	0	y
B174	17	18	male	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B175	24	28	male	mid	0	0	0	0	1	n
B176	20	24	male	lmid	0	1	0	0	0	y
B177	30	60	undete	early	1	0	0	0	1	y
B179	25	30	male	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B180	11	13	undete	late	0	3	3	0	0	y
B183	0.63	1.13	undete	late	1	2	7	5	0	y
B186	0	0.17	undete	late	4	1	3	0	0	y
B187	1.5	4	undete	late	1	0	0	0	1	y
B189			undete	mid	0	0	0	1	0	n
B190	0.38	0.88	undete	late	0	3	5	0	1	y
B191	25	30	male	late	0	0	0	2	1	y

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B192	40	60	female	late	1	0	3	0	0	y
B195	30	40	female	late	0	0	0	1	0	y
B196	20	24	undete	late	0	0	1	0	0	y
B199	30	40	female	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B201	1.5	3.5	undete	late	0	0	1	0	0	y
B203	12	18	undete	late	0	0	1	0	0	y
B205	18	20	female	late	1	1	3	0	3	y
B210	35	45	male	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B213	45	55	female	mid	2	1	1	0	0	y
B214	45	55	male	late	0	0	0	1	0	y
B215	0	0.16	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B216	0	0.16	undete	lmid	0	0	4	0	1	y
B219	4	5	undete	lmid	1	0	1	0	0	y
B221	30	60	male	early	2	0	0	0	0	y
B225	0.5	1.25	undete	late	1	1	1	1	0	y
B226	0	0.17	undete	early	4	1	1	0	0	y
B229	6.75	11.25	undete	lmid	0	1	0	0	1	y
B230	55	65	female	late	0	1	1	0	0	y
B235	28	42	female	lmid	0	0	1	0		y
B236	4	5	undete	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B239	1.5	3.5	undete	mid	1	2	1	0	0	y
B241	55	65	female	late	0	0	5	1	0	y
B242	40	50	female	late	0	0	1	0	0	y
B244	5	9	undete	late	1	0	0	0	0	y
B245	2.5	4.5	undete	mid	2	1	0	0	1	y
B252	1	2	undete	late	3	1	1	1	0	y
B253	13	15	undete	lmid	0	0	1	1	0	y
B255	0	0.17	undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B257	30	40	male	late	4	2	3		0	y
B259	17	19	female?	late	0	0	0	0	1	y
B265	0.5	1	undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B266	25	35	female	late	0	0	0	1	0	y
B268	0	0.5	undete	mid	0	1	2	0	0	y
B281			male?	early	2	0	0	0	0	y
B283	0.33	0.67	undete	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B289	5	9	undete	lmid	1	1	2	0	0	y
B290	45	55	male	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B294	0.5	1	undete	mid	3	0	3	1	0	y

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B295	30	50	female	mid	2	0	0	1	0	y
B299	40	50	male	late	2	0	0	0	0	y
B300			undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B303	0.5	1	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	2	n
B305	-0.33	0.33	undete	late	1	0	0	0	1	y
B311	0.25	0.75	undete	lmid	5	2	0	0	1	y
B312	0	0.3	undete	mid	3	3	0	9	0	y
B313	45	55	male	late	1	1	1	0	0	y
B315	30	40	female	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B316	18	20	female	lmid	1	0	3	0	2	y
B319			female	lmid	2	0	4	0	1	n
B320	2	4	undete	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B321	1	2	undete	mid	2	2	7	1	0	y
B325	25	35	male	late	1	0	0	0	0	y
B328	40	50	female	mid	1	0	4	1	0	y
B332	35	40	male?	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B334			undete	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B335	25	35	female	mid	5	3	4	0	0	y
B336	0.5	1	undete	mid	0	1	1	0	0	y
B338	33	65	female	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B340	39.3	64.4	female	early	8	2	2	0	0	y
B341			male	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B342	25	35	female?	late	1	1	1	0	1	y
B343	19	23	male	late	0	0	1	0	0	y
B346	50	70	female	late	3	0	1	1	0	y
B348	1	2	undete	mid	0	0	2	0	0	y
B351	50	60	male	mid	1	0	1	0	0	y
B352			male	lmid	2	1	0	0	0	y
B353	24	34	male	mid	2	1	0	0	2	y
B356			undete	mid	5	8	1	1	2	y
B360			undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	y
B361	33	57	male	early	3	0	1	0	0	y
B362			undete	lmid	4	1	0	0	0	y (cranium only)
B363	1	2	undete	late	2	1	3	4	0	y
B368	10.5	13.5	undete	mid	0	0	1	0	1	y
B369	40	50	male	late	1	0	0	0	0	y

Table 11.2.
Burials with pins and pin locations

Burial	Age low	Age high	Sex	Temporal group	Cranium	Jaw/neck	Torso	Extremities	No provenience	Preservation
B370	2	4	undete	mid	2	0	1	0	0	y
B373	45	60	female	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B374	0	0.25	undete	mid	5	2	0	2	0	y
B375	16	18	female	mid	0	0	1	0	0	y
B376	45	65	male	lmid	2	0	6	0	0	y
B380	40	60	male	mid	0	0	0	2	0	y
B382	4	5	undete	early?	0	0	0	0	1	y
B383	14	18	female	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B385	40	60	female	mid		0	1	0	0	y
B388	29	57	female	early	3	0	0	0	1	y
B389			female	early	2	0	0	0	0	y
B393	-0.17	0.17	undete	mid	5	4	0	3	0	y
B395	43	53	male	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B396	6.5	8.5	undete	mid	1	2	1	1	0	y
B397	30	40	female	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B398	25	35	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	1	n
B399	0	0.3	undete	mid	7	1	0	1	0	y
B400	25	35	male	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B403	39	65	male	mid	1	0	0	0	0	n
B405	6	10	undete	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B406	0	0.5	undete	mid	5	0	5	2	1	y
B412	0	0	undete	mid	0	0	0	0	7	y
B413	50	70	female	lmid	1	0	0	0	0	y
B414	39	59	male	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B415	35	55	male	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B417	9.5	14.5	undete	mid	0	1	0	0	0	y
B419	48	62	male	mid	2	0	0	0	0	y
B427	16	20	male?	mid	0	0	0	1	0	y
B428	40	70	female	mid	1	0	0	0	0	y

CHAPTER 12. BUTTONS AND FASTENERS

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This chapter discusses the evidence for clothing supplied by the buttons, cuff links, and aglets associated with the deceased. It begins with an overview of the burials from which these items were recovered. It then focuses on what black New Yorkers wore during the 18th century, and how clothing and buttons were acquired. The assemblage is then described. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, and findings about manufacture, origin, and age. A synopsis of the material and stylistic range of the assemblage is provided in the typology. The inventory is organized by individual burial, a format that best conveys how the fasteners were used.

12.A. Burials with buttons, cuff links, and aglets

The preservation environment at the African Burial Ground favored durable items, and cloth and clothing did not survive except in tiny fragments that adhered to metal objects. Only a handful of textile fragments were recovered (see 12.C). More conspicuous were the fasteners clothing left behind. These included buttons, cuff links, and aglets, tiny tubes that encased the ends of lacings and cords typically used on caps, shirts, and gowns. One possible grommet was also recovered.

Clothing fasteners made from metal, bone, and wood were found in direct association with thirty-three individuals, about 8.8% of the burials in the archaeologically excavated portion of the cemetery.¹ Another nine individuals had tenuous connections with clothing fasteners. The characteristics of the burials are summarized in Table 12.1. Cases with problematic proveniences are marked with an asterisk.

The burials listed in Table 12.1 do not provide an even-handed guide to 18th century street clothes—three quarters of the entries pertain to men. Nor does the table provide an even-handed guide to the clothes people were interred in. Drawstrings, tapes, and ties fastened 18th century street clothes in black New York, but shirts, trousers, and gowns with fabric fasteners are not represented in the archaeological record at the African Burial Ground. Straight pins also fastened street clothing, particularly women's wear. Women, as noted in Chapter 11, had a higher frequency than men of pins in the torso area of the body, a difference that may hint of bodices beneath, or in lieu of winding sheets and shrouds. In addition, some of the buttons and cuff links were recovered from contexts that point to non-clothing use.

¹ The total used here of 376 burials includes those for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and *in situ* skeletal remains could be clearly determined; the most highly disturbed burials are not counted.

Table 12.1.
Burials with buttons, cuff links, and aglets

Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Items	Location in grave
6	25 - 30	male? ²	late	8 buttons (5 whole copper alloy, 2 with anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum
10	40 - 45	male	lmid	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole, 5 shanks only)	7 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg
22	2.5 - 4.5		mid	Aglet	Not recorded
*32	50 - 60	male	mid	1 pewter button fragment	Unknown; button not recorded in field records
37	45 - 55	male	late	1 bone button	At left wrist
158	20 - 30	male	late	2 pairs gilt copper-alloy cuff links, circular shape ³	At wrists
171	44 - 60	male	late	2 bone buttons; 1 copper-alloy button ring	Bone buttons at right scapula and right femur; button ring at sternum
174	17 - 18	male	late	2 pewter buttons	lumbar vertebrae and right innominate
181	20 - 23	male	late	7 buttons (3 copper-alloy; 4 copper-alloy-and-bone w/ impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; location of cuff links unknown.
191	25 - 30	male	late	1 copper-alloy button	Left ilium
194	30 - 40	male	late	1 copper-alloy button shank	Near right femur
203	12 - 18	undetermined	late	8 wood-and-copper-alloy buttons; possible leather covers	At the knees, wrists, and pelvic area
211	adult	male?	late	1 enamel cuff link face	On the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin
213	45 - 55	female	mid	aglet	Left parietal
214	45 - 55	male	late	1 copper-alloy button; fragments from 3 shanks and 1 wood button	Copper-alloy button near right shoulder; 2 shanks in pelvic area; shank and wood button in soil near head
238	40 - 50	male	lmid	1 bone button, 2 pair octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	Button at cervical vertebrae; cuff links at each wrist
*243	40 - 50	male	late	1 copper-alloy button	Beneath the skull, in re-deposited soil (no coffin)
250	adult	undetermined	early	1 copper-alloy button	Possibly near pelvis
257	30 - 40	male	late	3 bone buttons	1 button from left acetabulum; 2 found during screening of soil

² A “?” indicates that the assignment is probable.

³ A “pair” of cuff links—two faces (or crowns) linked together—fasten a sleeve. One “cuff link” (a single face) is insufficient. A properly fastened shirt would have sported a “set” of cuff links—two matched pairs, one pair per sleeve.

Table 12.1.
Burials with buttons, cuff links, and aglets

Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Items	Location in grave
259	17 - 19	female?	late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, and 5 shanks)	4 at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis
*271	45 - 57	male	mid	2 copper-alloy domed buttons	Found on the screen
*276	20 - 24	female	late	1 copper-alloy button	Above right rib area in soil that was likely re-deposited (no coffin)
*278	45 - 55	male	late	1 copper-alloy button	Unclear, probably from soil matrix in fill (no coffin)
313	45 - 55	male	late	3 bone buttons; possible copper-alloy button ring	Coffin floor beneath top of the head; possible button ring from among left ribs
325	25 - 35	male	late	1 gilt copper-alloy button	Left upper sacrum
326	45 - 55	male	mid	4 copper-alloy domed buttons	In pelvic area and between tops of the femurs, near the hands
333	45 - 55	male	lmid	6 bone buttons	Pelvis
341	adult	male	mid	1 pair octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	Left radius
342	25 - 35	female?	late	aglet	Not recorded
353	24 - 34	male	mid	1 bone button	Next to left sciatic notch
361	33 - 57	male	early	1 pewter button (missing from laboratory)	Above right scapula/humerus
366	34 - 62	undetermined	mid	1 copper-alloy button	At right wrist
368	10.5 - 13.5		mid	1 possible grommet, copper alloy	At throat.
*371	25 - 35	female	mid	1 metal button; 2 turquoise enamel cuff link faces	Button appears to be intrusive to the burial; cuff link faces beneath left humerus
379	30 - 40	male	mid	1 copper-alloy domed button, 1 possible leather button	Pelvic area (innominate and left ulna)
385	40 - 60	female	mid	2 bone buttons	Right rib area
*387	34 - 44	male	early	Cuff link or button fragment	Provenience unknown
392	42.5 - 52.5	male	lmid	11 bone-backed buttons; 2 octagonal cuff link faces	4 at right knee, 3 at left knee, 3 adjacent to right hand, 1 adjacent to left hand; 1 cuff link at right clavicle, 1 at cervical vertebrae
*398	25 - 35	undetermined	mid	1 octagonal cuff link face	In disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear
*403	39 - 65	male	mid	2 copper-alloy buttons (1 domed, 1 flat); 2 pewter buttons	In disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear
405	6 - 10		mid	1 white metal button	Below right wrist on pelvis
415	35 - 55	male	mid	13 copper-alloy domed buttons (14 recorded in field)	4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, 2 at sacrum

Aglets were the least visible of the clothing fasteners recovered from the individuals interred in the burial ground. Small in size and few in number, aglets were also the least informative about burial attire. Only three aglets were recovered, one from a young child (Burial 22, a Middle Group interment) and two others from adult women (Burials 213 and 342, Middle and Late Group interments). The aglets from Burials 22 and 342 were not provenienced in the field. The aglet from Burial 213 was located on the left parietal (the cranium) and a few strands of hair had adhered to it. Whether the aglet enclosed the end of a lace on a woman's cap is unclear.

Unlike aglets, buttons were numerous, stylistically varied, and though associated almost exclusively with men, provided considerable detail about the types of attire in which the dead were laid out.

Ten individuals appear to have been interred in pants or breeches that buttoned at the hips, or at the hips and the knees (Burials 10, 181, 203, 259, 325, 326, 379, 392, 415, and possibly 174). With the exception of the young people in Burials 203 and 259, the wearers of pants and breeches were men. Burials 203 and 259 were Late Group interments. The former held a twelve-to-eighteen-year old of undetermined sex. The latter held a seventeen-to-nineteen-year old identified as a probable woman. Because the degree of confidence in the identification was not the highest, it is conceivable that Burial 259 held a slender young man clad in knee breeches. But the idea of a young African woman remaking herself by manipulating everyday dress is not far-fetched (for examples of enslaved Africans in colonial Boston and New York suspected by their owners of intending to pass for the opposite sex, see Greene 1944:141 and White 1991:126; for a white New York woman who sought to obtain work on a privateer by dressing as a man, see Foote 2004:202).

Two men probably wore jackets, as indicated by buttons in the torso area of the body. The jacket buttons from Burial 10 (Late-Middle Group) formed a seven-member set of matched, polished faces. The jacket buttons from Burial 6 (Late Group) also made a striking display: the set included one polished and four gilt faces in different sizes bearing a range of impressed designs, including upright fowl anchors (see 12.C, Button Type 6).

Cuff links—two buttons linked together—fastened shirtsleeves during the era when the burial ground was in use. Cuff links were found with six individuals but only in three cases were the cuff links positioned near the wearer's wrists. The men in Burials 238 (Late-Middle Group) and 158 (Late Group) each had a set of cuff links. Just one pair was recovered from the man in Burial 341 (Middle Group), though its location at the wrist also suggests a shirt was worn. It is possible a second pair was not preserved, or that the man had only one pair when interred. The two turquoise enamel cuff link faces associated with the woman in Burial 371 (Middle Group) might not to have been used to fasten a garment. They were located beneath her left upper arm. The probable man in Burial 211 (Late Group) had a turquoise enamel cuff link face on the right clavicle, immediately adjacent to the chin. The man in Burial 392 (Late-Middle Group) also had a cuff link face on the right clavicle; a possible mate was recovered in the lab when the

cervical vertebrae were cleaned. Whether the cuff links from Burials 211 and 392 fastened a shirt with, say, a generous front overlap or a center front is unclear.

Eighteenth-century shirtsleeves were also fastened with buttons, as were shirtfronts and shirt necks. Buttons recovered from the ribs of the probable woman in Burial 259 suggest her knee breeches were topped with a shirt. A bone button and a possible button ring were recovered near the scapula and sternum of the man in Burial 171 (Late Group). This man may have been interred in a shirt that fastened at the neck.

The bone button from Burial 171 may have been covered with fabric or thread, as suggested by the lack of staining associated with a metal cap. This kind of button sometimes fastened 18th century undergarments (see 12.B), particularly when its size was relatively small. In addition to Burial 171, bone buttons that may have had fabric or thread covers were associated with seven other interments. Some of these buttons were located in areas that hint of under drawers (the left sciatic notch of the man in Middle Group Burial 353; the pelvis of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 333; the left acetabulum or hip joint of the man in Late Group Burial 257). Other examples were located in areas that hint of a gown (the ribs of the woman in Middle Group Burial 385) and shirts (the cervical vertebrae of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 238; the left wrist of the man in Late Group Burial 37). Whether shirts that fastened with covered buttons were street clothes or undergarments in the eyes of their wearers, or in the eyes of the mourners who prepared shirt wearers for burial, is not known. The three bone buttons with the man in Burial 313 (Late Group) were located on the coffin floor beneath the top of the head. Their use as clothing fasteners is doubtful. They might have decorated a hat or been part of a hairstyle (for hat and hair decorations, see Chapter 13).

Some of the buttons (Burials 6, 10, 181, 259, 325, 326, and 415) and cuff links (Burials 158, 238, 341, and 392) would have ornamented as well as fastened clothing. The items were either decorated with gilt or impressed designs, or were arrayed in eye-catching ways. Seven of the ten men interred with what we consider decorative buttons and cuff links were from the Late-Middle and Late Groups. These men were apparently part of a broader trend. As shown in Table 12.2, the proportion of men with durable clothing fasteners increased with each successive temporal group.

	Early	Middle	Late- Middle	Late
Total men*	10	35	19	39
Men with clothing items**	1 (10%)	5 (14.3%)	4 (21.0%)	13 (33.3%)
*Totals include burials with likely preservation (code “y” or “y no cranium”).				
**Burials where clothing items were not clearly associated with an individual’s skeletal remains are not included (see Table 12.1).				

Although the small size of the sample exaggerates the rise of male burial attire with durable fasteners, the rise itself, even if less robust than it appears, is not especially remarkable from an economic view. As we explain in 12.B, the availability of consumer goods like clothing, buttons, and cuff links increased rapidly after the mid 1700s.

Still, the proportion of Late Group men with buttons and cuff links is striking because some of these items clearly fastened street clothing rather than undergarments/shrouds. It is impossible to determine precisely how many men were interred in street clothes. The quandary derives, in part, from the difficulty of differentiating outerwear from undergarments on the basis of button cover and button size. But it also derives from the multiple lives buttons led. For example, some buttons in Late Group burials of men may have been accessories rather than fasteners, such as the buttons beneath the head of the man in Burial 313. Other possible accessories include the bone button and button ring found at the scapula and sternum of Burial 171, which might have been worn on a string necklace, and the bone button at the left wrist of the man in Burial 37, which might have been part of a bracelet.

Even if we had a more precise sense of where to draw the line between under and outer garments, we have no way of knowing whether street clothes constituted the deceased's best outfit, or simply the garments he had on when he died. Men who were buried in the clothes they had on when they died may not have had a circle of kin and neighbors who could supply a shroud or a winding sheet. Street clothes may therefore represent makeshift burial attire—a practical response of community members to the circumstances of death rather than to the economic wherewithal of the deceased per se. Data on coffin-less burials lend support to the idea of street clothes as the burial attire of unusual circumstances. Evidence for clothing was slightly more frequent in burials of men without coffins (see Chapter 10). Coffin-less burials were prominent in the Late Group, when the Revolutionary War and its aftermath disrupted the city.

Some of the buttons recovered in association with skeletal remains may have been talismans or mementos rather than fasteners or jewelry. The likeliest candidate is the copper-alloy button from Early Group Burial 250. It was recovered near the pelvis, in conjunction with a small iron mass and a large glass bead.

12.B. Clothing and fasteners in historical context

The clearest view of how Africans in 18th century Manhattan dressed comes from the *New-York Gazette* and the rival weeklies that issued from the city's print shops. Government printer William Bradford established the *Gazette* in 1725. Within the next two decades three of his former apprentices, John Peter Zenger, Henry DeForeest, and James Parker, started publications of their own (Hildeburn 1895). Their newspapers, and those that followed, brokered New York's commercial world. They carried shipping news, business correspondence, notices of public auctions and private sales, lists of imported and domestic goods, and, as the century progressed, an expanding roster of appeals for the capture of workers who fled from bondage. A command of insider knowledge about the lives of unfree laborers was a key feature of the appeals (White 1991:116-120). In addition to clothing and adornment, writers described linguistic proficiency and workplace skills, elemental signs of status manipulated by runaways, confidence men, and ambitious members of the public at large (Waldstreicher 1999).

An “endless procession of tow cloth shirts and trousers, buckskin breeches, and beaver hats” made its way through Manhattan’s world of print (Hodges and Brown 1994:xxxii). Waistcoats and jackets were also part of African men’s attire. African women typically wore a petticoat (a skirt) and a short gown, an over blouse to present-day eyes. Figures 12.1 through 12.3 illustrate the construction and silhouette of these loose-fitting staple garments, which also clothed workers of European descent.

Although utilitarian garments changed relatively little during the 18th century, they varied in texture and color, particularly in urban areas like New York. African men who escaped from Manhattan households between 1732 and 1783 wore breeches cut from a range of durable fabrics, as indicated by the advertisements gathered in Table 12.3, located at the end of the chapter. The coarse, German-made osnaburg linen so ubiquitous in the plantation colonies (Earle 1894:175) outfitted Andrew and York, breeches-wearing New Yorkers who fled from bondage in 1733 and 1749. Breeches were also made from firmly woven worsteds and long-napped shags, sturdy woolen fabrics available in blue, green, red, scarlet, and yellow, along with somber brown and black. The old, red quilted petticoat that Fanny wore in 1758 may have been kin to the one pictured in Figure 12.3. Sal (1766) had a blue version. Suck’s was black on one side and light-colored on the other (1761). Petticoats and short gowns were striped in blue, red, purple, black, and green.

Domestic and imported linen mingled with woolens and cottons produced overseas. Solids and stripes abutted checks and prints. Hector (1750) wore a coarse linen shirt and trousers with a twilled-woolen Kersey pea jacket lined in red. Pompey’s checked shirt was patched and his trousers were striped (1763). Pleasant’s brown short gown was lined in white and her petticoat was cut from red moreen, worsted cotton or wool with a wavy or watered surface (1781). A flowered red-and-green flannel petticoat and a blue, cloth jacket outfitted an unnamed fourteen-to-fifteen-year-old girl (1780).

Familiarity with the clothing Africans wore was not difficult to come by in 18th century Manhattan. Europeans and Africans typically lived under the same roof and often worked alongside one another in homes, shops, warehouses, and industrial yards (Foote 2004:72-75). And while there is a fragmentary quality to the evidence from newspaper advertisements, in general black New Yorkers had meager, long-suffering wardrobes, as did working people everywhere (Kidwell and Christman 1974:19-21). A comparison of three women highlights some of the gaps. Jenney may have layered her clothing for warmth after deserting the home of carpenter John Bell in December 1737. She owned two petticoats and two waistcoats, jacket-bodices that closed at the front with laces, pins, or buttons (on the construction of women’s waistcoats, see Baumgarten 2002:120). Hannah, prosecuted in 1716 for stealing a silk muslin handkerchief, a bit of calico, and enough Bristol stuff to make a petticoat and a gown, testified that her mistress had not provided her with anything to wear (cited in Goodfriend 1992:122). In contrast, the African woman George Clarke purchased in 1723 did not want for clothes. Nor did she want for a new pair of stockings and shoes. Contention centered on the provision of two blankets, which Clarke’s secretary had been obliged to supply after the seller had refused (letters of Isaac Bobin, 1718-1730, cited in McKee 1935:121-122).



Figure 12.1
Men's everyday breeches with fall fronts over the center fly. From left to right: linen cotton (1765-1785), cotton velvet (1785-1825), and yellow "nankeen" cotton (1785-1815). Colonial Williamsburg Collection. Source: Baumgarten (2002:124).



Figure 12.2 (left)
Working woman's striped linen wool petticoat (1770-1820) topped by a high-waisted short gown made from cotton linen (1800-1820). Colonial Williamsburg Collection. Source: Baumgarten (2002:119).



Figure 12.3 (above)
Quilted petticoat (1770-1775) made in New York by Margaret Bleeker Ten Eyck. Colonial Williamsburg Collection. Source: Baumgarten (2002:159).

Cloth and clothing were vexed issues for many, perhaps all, colonial Americans. Not only was fabric one of the most expensive consumer goods, it crisscrossed social boundaries the rich and the wellborn found it increasingly difficult to control (Breen 2004:148-192). Domestic cloth production varied regionally in response to shifting

agrarian regimes and non-importation movements (Ulrich 1998:6-7; White and White 1995a:165-168). Yet the output of home spinners never kept pace with the demands of a growing, fashion-minded population. Nor did the output of shop-based swinglers (flax cleaners) and weavers like those Obadiah Wells hired for his spinning factory on Mulberry Street, near the Fresh Water Pond (*New-York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*, May 8, 1766 and December 31, 1767; *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, May 4, 1772). Finished cloth was the preminent import during the 18th century (Figure 12.4).⁴ It accounted for over one third to one half of the annual expenditure on manufactured goods imported from Great Britain (Shammas 1982:267; Breen 2004:62).

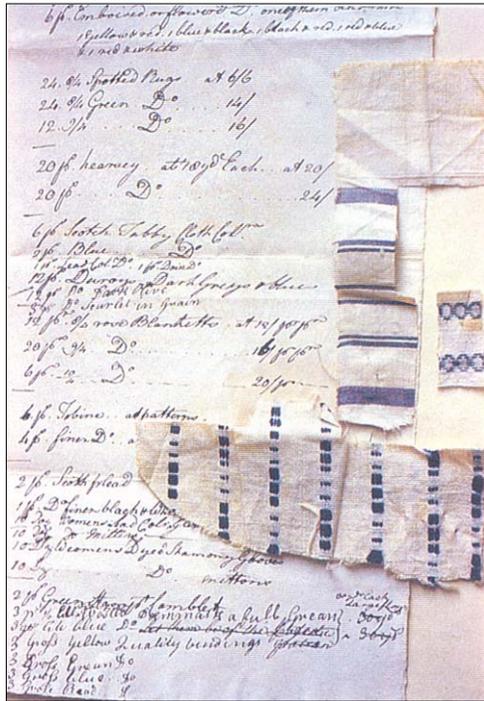


Figure 12.4
A New York City merchant's order for textiles from England, with swatches of linen (tobine) attached, 1746. Source: Montgomery (1984: plate D-11).

A mid-century surge in lower-priced textiles brought a wide variety of imported fabrics into the hands of ordinary people and, to a lesser extent, of the working poor. City dwellers were well entrenched in the empire of goods. Among the textile cargoes auctioned in Manhattan in mid April 1732 were Spanish cloth, Holland linen, English

damasks, Indian cherryderries (similar to gingham), striped and flowered Persians (thin, soft silk used for coat lining), China taffetas, and garlicks (linens) from Silesia. Printed calicoes and durants, glazed woolen stuffs touted for their endurance, were available, also, along with buttons, thread, and a few parcels of haberdashery (*New-York Gazette*, March 27, 1732).

New York lawmakers did not follow South Carolina's 1735 lead in prohibiting African workers from wearing fancy, colorful fabrics. But disquiet about the appearance of blacks lodged in a few Manhattan homes. Historian Shane White (1991:199-200) explains that some New Yorkers of European descent suspected smartly dressed Africans of having a larcenous and insubordinate bent. Dry goods were peripatetic in 18th century Manhattan, as was the city's workforce. Cloth and clothing shifted from warehouses, shops, and home linen cupboards to tavern-based fencing operations, and rates of

⁴ Cloth and clothing also dominated British trade with western Africa, as noted in Chapter 13. B.

prosecution for theft and the keeping of disreputable drinking establishments rose in tandem as the century advanced (see Greenberg 1974:138-140). Africans, in turn, deserted their posts, sometimes with a master's or a mistress's clothing in tow.

Eighteenth-century attire was not always easy to parse. Consider, for example, the garments Sarah (1732) had. Her wardrobe included a suit (a term usually reserved for a complete outfit cut from the same cloth), a petticoat, and three waistcoats, two made from homespun and the third from striped sateen silk. *Homespun* and *silk* evoke separate worlds, one marked by frugality and the other by wealth. Yet these commonplace words were unstable signposts for the fabrics they named. Textile terminology and fiber content varied from place-to-place. *Homespun*, for English speakers, described cloth that was un-milled and coarsely woven, but in American usage *homespun* meant *homemade*. The quality of homemade cloth reflected the skills of the sorter, the carder, the spinner, the washer, and the weaver. Its texture ranged from coarse to fine, and it attired housewives as well as servants and the enslaved (Ulrich 2001:84-93; Baumgarten 2002:78, 114-115).

Sateen silk was ambiguous, too. *Sateen* denoted a cotton textile with a shiny, satin-like face. *Satin* was a twilled silk. *Silk* was sometimes blended with wool. Sarah's owner, merchant Joseph Reade, may have been hedging his bets about whether her striped waistcoat had been cut from the genuine article or a lower-priced imitation, but he did not claim that she had lifted her clothes (for 18th century fabric terminology, see Montgomery 1984 and Cunnington et al. 1960).

Like all clothing worn during the 18th century, Sarah's garments were sewn by hand. She may have cut and stitched them herself. Sarah worked as a domestic, as did many of the women interred at the African Burial Ground; and Reade said that she was handy with all kinds of housework. She probably sewed the family linens. Sheets and undergarments (shifts, drawers, nightshirts) were typically made at home (see Kidwell and Christman 1974:25).

Ready-made garments supplemented the apparel women stitched in parlors and kitchens. Some of the ready-made items black New Yorkers wore were geared to sailors and soldiers (Kersey pea coats, wide-legged trousers, regimental attire). Other items were marketed to the public at large (men's shirts and waistcoats, women's cloaks and quilted petticoats, knee-length woolen and cotton stockings). Whether imported from England or locally produced, ready-made clothing often "bore the mark of a second-class product" (Kidwell and Christman 1974:31). Unlike bespoke suits and gowns, ready-made garments were not cut and draped with a particular person in mind. The generalization holds for leather breeches, which were the province of specialized tailors like John Baster. Like many ambitious artisans who hung out their signs in Manhattan, Baster sought patronage from gentlemen who wore custom-fitted leather breeches for leisure and sports (see Baumgarten 2002:125). But "all sorts" of breeches could be had at Baster's shop opposite the Old Slip Market. The phrase was a tailor's deft way of conveying his willingness to supply ready-made items for workingmen (*New-York Gazette*, October 5, 1761).

Despite its loose fit, utilitarian attire registered a few fashion trends. The waistlines on women's short gowns migrated upward toward the end of the 1700s—the short gown pictured in Figure 12.2 has a high or “Empire” waist (on the design and construction of the short gown, see Kidwell 1978). Necklines and bodices continued to be fastened primarily with drawstrings made with cords and tapes (Figure 12.5).⁵ Leather and cloth breeches rode low on the hips. After 1730, breeches acquired a fall or flap front over the center fly, which increased the number of buttons needed to keep the breeches in place (Tortora and Eubank 1998:232).



Figure 12.5.
Self-enclosed casing for a drawstring, on a gown with set-in sleeves (1800-1810). Colonial Williamsburg Collection. Source: Baumgarten (2002:152).

Buttons

Attention to appearance included buttons as well as clothes. The writers of runaway advertisements noted the color, size, and placement of buttons on men's attire and remarked when buttons were missing from a garment, or when alternative fasteners were used. Pompey (1763), for example, was bereft of buttons—apparently his linsey-woolsey double-breasted jacket had none. Tom's striped jacket was tied with pieces of fabric tape (1777). Charles (1762) and Jack (1762) had waistcoats that fastened with silver cord. Hanibal's brown short jacket closed with hooks and eyes (1758).

While the runaway advertisements lack the visual clarity of a salesman's sample card (Figure 12.6), they highlight one of the ornamental contributions buttons made to everyday clothing. Practical fasteners doubled as adornment by playing upon color contrasts. White and yellow metal buttons fastened brown, blue, and red jackets, surtouts (overcoats), and waistcoats (Jasper, 1758; Jack, 1773; Cain, 1780; Tony, 1780; Jack 1762; Prince, 1761). Yellow and gilt buttons enlivened blue and scarlet coat lapels (Louis, 1777; Tom, 1781). A blue coat sported buttons covered with silver thread (Norway, 1768).

Metal buttons and cuff links also carried eye-catching designs. A gold button with a “basket” motif fastened the old red officer's coat Adam (1782) wore. The motif may have resembled the cross-weave stamped on the metal-capped bone buttons from Burial 181, or on the sample attached to the salesman's card (middle column, second row from bottom). Eleven of the breeches' buttons from Burial 259 were ridged. Three of their

⁵ Only one woman listed in Table 12.3 had buttons on her clothes. The buttons were bright yellow, and they fastened a long-sleeved blue cloth jacket (Peg, 1781). References to buttons on short gowns are scarce, suggesting that buttons were atypical (Kidwell 1978:56). An example of a short gown fastened with pins can be found in Chapter 11.



Figure 12.6.
Example of a salesman's
sample card, circa 1780, for
buttons made from pinchbeck, a
copper alloy that retains its
polish. Source: Albert and Kent
(1949:392).

goods store, or a specialty shop. Henry Whiteman, a brass button maker who served his apprenticeship in Philadelphia, prospered in mid 18th century New York. Ten years after gaining a foothold in Manhattan's lively garment sector, Whiteman supplied buttons at wholesale and retail prices under a Buttons and Buckles sign (*New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, September 17, 1750; *New-York Gazette*, October 13, 1760). Edward Andrews, a London-trained cutler, carried a choice assortment of buttons for gentlemen, ladies, and others (*New-York Gazette and the Weekly Post-Boy, Supplement*, May 18, 1752). Braziers like Thomas Yates and William Scandrett offered sundry kinds of buttons and cuff links at reasonable rates (*New-York Gazette*, November 19, 1759 and April 16, 1764).

stylistic kin appear on the card (column one, second row from top; column two, fourth row from bottom; column three, third row from bottom).

Not all button faces, of course, were designed for the light of day. Buttons covered with thread and cloth joined the ranks of undergarment fasteners in the decades after 1650 (Cunnington and Cunnington 1981:16). Although a variety of undergarments were available for men as the 18th century progressed, the routine use of ready-made and custom-fitted underwear within and across occupational groups is not known. Men's under drawers are a case in point. Cut full from plain-weave cotton or woolen flannel, under drawers fastened with fewer front buttons than breeches, and lacked the flap over the center fly. But long-tailed shirts tucked into trousers often performed the work of under drawers. Under waistcoats and undershirts also added warmth to men's attire. Based on examples from costume collections, the latter were cut like outer shirts and fastened with a covered button at the neck, or with covered buttons down the front (see Baumgarten 1992). Workingwomen's undergarments consisted of a chemise or a slip beneath a petticoat and a gown. The chemise and the slip typically fastened with tapes, strings, or ribbons (Tortorra and Eubank 1998:236).

Ready-made clothing would have come with buttons already attached, but home sewers and ordinary consumers in need of fasteners might have scrutinized the wares in a peddler's sack, a market stall, a dry



Figure 12.7.
Gold octagonal cuff links on an infant's shirt
sleeve (1730-1760). Colonial Williamsburg
Collection. Source: Baumgarten (2002:159).

Popular styles of buttons and cuff links could be had in a range of materials and sizes. Burials 238, 341, and 398 had copper-alloy versions of the gold octagonal cuff links shown in Figure 12.7.

Buttons were also recycled. For example, the bone buttons from Burial 313, which may have been covered with fabric or thread, might originally have been button backs that were modified or reused. Recycling, modification, and functional substitution—using a readily available item to perform the task of an item that has become scarce—were a commonplace of African and African Diasporic life

during the 17th and 18th centuries (see Posnansky 1999:31-33). Personal adornments were modified and recycled, too, as explained in Chapter 13.

12.C. The button/cuff link/aglet assemblage and associated cloth

The assemblage included 133 buttons or portions of buttons, 3 aglets, and one grommet or eyelet from a clothing fastener. Cuff links were also recovered, including 2 sets (2 pair of linked faces) and 3 single pairs (two faces only). Materials represented among the clothing fasteners included copper alloy, pewter, bone and wood.

Recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody

Almost all the buttons and cuff links were recovered during the field excavation of the burials. A few were found during cleaning of skeletal remains in the laboratory (the pewter button from Burial 174; bone-backed buttons and bone button fragments from Burials 181, 238, and 257; copper-alloy buttons associated with Burials 379 and 387; a possible button ring from Burial 313; a cuff link remnant from Burial 392). In some cases, items were identified as button or cuff link fragments only after initial cleaning (the shanks from Burial 10; the button ring from Burial 171; a copper-alloy button from Burial 276; a cuff link crown from Burial 379). All of the aglets were recovered in the field but were identified as pins at the time. They were recognized as aglets only after research on 18th century clothing had been conducted, and the archaeological literature had been searched for examples of clothing artifacts from the period when the burial ground was in use.

Several items were recorded in the field but were missing from the laboratory at the time the Howard University Archaeology Team came on board. Among the items logged as

“missing” were the cuff links from Burials 181 and 387, and the pewter button attributed to Burial 361.

Textiles were found in association with a number of the metal clothing items, as listed in Table 12.4. Conservators noted a textile impression in association with the bone-and-copper-alloy buttons from Burial 181. Subsequent examination indicated that the metal faces of these buttons were impressed with a cross-weave design; remnants of the design are shown in the inventory (photograph of Catalog # 976-B.002). Field notes on Burial 6 indicated possible textile fragments had adhered to the cranium but none were recovered.

Bone buttons were generally very stable. They were cleaned and treated with a barrier coating. Metal buttons were normally desalinated in de-ionized baths and mechanically cleaned with a scalpel, then vacuum impregnated with BTA and B-72. The cuff links from Burials 238 and 341 were treated with a 1% solution of formic acid to loosen and soften the corrosion products, then cleaned a second time in de-ionized water. The aglets were treated the same as the pins. Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of photographs.

Table 12.4. Textile and leather fragments associated with clothing fasteners		
Burial/ Catalog #	Type of fragment	Comments
B10 # 234-B.012	wool, plain weave	Location not recorded, but the fragment would most likely have been attached to a button.
B22 # 344-B.004	linen	Location not recorded. An aglet and pins were recovered with the burial. The linen fragment may have been part of a shroud.
B194 # 1109-B.002	organic matter	A fragment of organic matter, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with a copper-alloy shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.
B203 # 1174-B.001 to .008	leather button covers	Eight wooden buttons were evidently covered in leather.
B259 # 1249-B.002- .004; .006; .011; 012; .017; .019; .021-.024	wool, linen, and possible leather	Woven fine wool fragments were associated with some of the breeches buttons. One of these had a well-preserved buttonhole. Conservators identified linen fragments, but did not record which buttons these fragments were associated with. Wooden buttons appeared to have leather covers.
B278 # 1275-UNC.001	textile (missing)	Conservators noted a textile fragment attached to the back of a copper-alloy button, but it was not handed over to the Howard University Archaeology Team.
B326 # 1854-B.009	organic matter	Field records state that a small fragment of cloth as well as a bit of possible hair had adhered to one of the buttons. A small fragment of unidentifiable organic material was cataloged (not photographed), but was not identifiable

Table 12.4. Textile and leather fragments associated with clothing fasteners		
Burial/ Catalog #	Type of fragment	Comments
B371 # 1875-B.002	wool, weave not determinable	Fragment was associated with an iron button that appears to have been intrusive to the burial.
B379 # 1906-B.001	possible leather button cover	The preserved remains of one of the buttons (# 1906-B.001) may have been from a leather cover or, alternatively, from the outer portion of a wooden crown.
B392 #2039-B.001-.003; .006; .007; .011; .012	wool, fine weave with an S-twist; one of the fragments included a buttonhole	Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. One from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole, 1 mm wider than the associated button.
B403 # 2067-B.004	textile, simple weave, black color	It is not clear whether the cloth fragments were associated with particular buttons.
B415 # 2097-B.003; .005; .007; .008	wool buttonhole fragment; wool fragment attached to coffin wood; possible leather	Due to a laboratory processing error it is not now possible to identify the specific button associated with the wool buttonhole. Another woollen fragment was attached to coffin wood.

Buttons, cuff links, and aglets were re-examined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel during 1998-99 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted. John Abbott took final high-quality photographs of the buttons and cuff links in August 2001. At that time, the assemblage was packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The assemblage was re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003, and then transshipped back to New York. Items that National Park Service staff selected for replication were sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study; these included buttons and cufflinks from Burials 6, 10, 181, 214, 250, 313, 392, 403, 405, and 415.

Items not selected for replication were sent to Jon Abbott for digital photography in September 2003. A series of high-quality digital photographs was taken from many angles for each individual item, allowing for future analysis. All clothing-related items were placed in coffins for reburial in October of 2003.

Typology

Here we categorize the types of clothing fasteners represented in the assemblage. The types are based on materials employed in the manufacturing process (organic, metallic, or composite) and structural attributes. An attempt will be made to correlate these types

with those represented in the following published sources: Noël-Hume (1969); South (1964); Hinks (1988); Cotter (1968); Stone (1974); and Olsen (1963). Other attributes may be more important for understanding button acquisition and use, for instance the number of parts (which may reflect cost/expense of manufacture), decoration, the potential for re-use and modification, durability and longevity, cost, and availability of specific imports. We note these attributes in the inventory where possible.

The key characteristics of the buttons and cuff links are summarized in the typology in Table 12.5. Due to the small quantity of aglets and cuff links recovered, no attempt was made to ascribe these objects to particular types.

Type 1: Bone backs or molds for thread covered buttons

Type 1 buttons are flat disks cut from animal bone with a single, centrally located drilled hole. The preferred raw material appears to have been the wide, flat, rib bones from large mammal species. Sections of these bones were easy to secure, thereby preventing movement during the cutting process. The button blanks were cut and the hole drilled at the same time by the use of specially designed metal bits that were outfitted on a hand or powered drill press (see the Diderot illustration of a mid 18th century French manufacturer in Albert and Kent 1949:28). With the use of more refined bits, this process would also form the offset rim on the back face for the attachment of a metal cap. It should be noted that once the button and hole were finished, the button blanks could be used “as is,” while those that were not finished or considered defective could be put to an alternative use. Also called a “thread-back” button, these types of fasteners could be used either plain faced with a thread shank or with a cloth or thread covering that was sewn directly onto the garment (Figure 12.8; Albert and Kent 1949:44-45). Small diameter sizes, in the range of 9-15 mm, were worn on waistcoats or shirts, while larger sizes, measuring 16-29 mm, were intended for coats. It is assumed these types of buttons were of low cost and easy to manufacture.

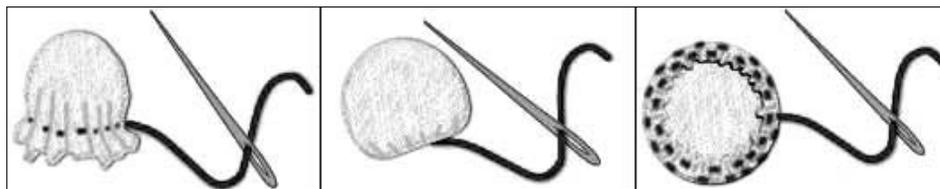


Figure 12.8.
Diagram showing the process for covering a button blank or button ring with cloth. Source: Dupuis (2003).

A total of nineteen buttons of this type were recovered from eight burials at the African Burial Ground: Burials 37, 171, 238, 257, 313, 333, 353, and 385. None of the examples in the collection were decorated and no textile remains were recovered in association with any of the buttons. In most cases these were the only type of button found with the individual. They were not used in conjunction with metal caps.

Type 2: Copper-alloy rings for thread or cloth-covered buttons

Type 2 buttons are composed of small copper-alloy rings manufactured of drawn wire and covered by thread or cloth. The ends of the wire were apparently braised together to form a 10-12 mm diameter ring. Also known as Dorset buttons, this type of button was made in England in the 17th century; production continued into the mid-19th century (Albert and Kent 1949:90; Luscomb 1967:57).

Two buttons of this type were recovered at the African Burial Ground, from Burials 171 and 313. None of the examples in the collection contained the thread covering, nor were any textiles found in association with the buttons.

Type 3: Composite button, wood with a non-metallic covering and copper-alloy wire loop shank

Type 3 buttons are composed of a wooden body, a metal shank, and possibly a cloth or leather covering that was sewn over the button face. The buttons are cut from fine-grained hardwoods, such as apple, yew, or boxwood that are lathe-turned into long dowel-like rods. Individual buttons blanks are then sawn from the dowel's end. A single central hole is drilled through the wooden disk (Albert and Kent 1949:26). On the examples recovered from the African Burial Ground, the front face of the button contained a circular recessed area, evidently required to secure and provide space for the copper-alloy wire shank. Finally, the button's face and the exposed ends of the shanks were covered with leather or cloth. Painting or staining the button a dark color was an alternative surface treatment. These buttons measured approximately 16 mm wide.

To prevent the shank from pulling through the button face, the wire loops were attached and held in place in a variety of ways. In some of the specimens recovered from the African Burial Ground the ends of the shank appear to have either been splayed or twisted; in others the ends were crimped to form a wider protuberance or, possibly, a piece of wire was wound around the ends of the shank. Beyond the use of pin shanks (a wire that is pushed through the body of the button and is looped back to form a shank), the type of shank observed at the African Burial Ground has not been detailed in the literature on button manufacture.

A total of 23 buttons of this type were recovered from five burials (Burials 10, 194, 203, 214, 259, and 379) at the African Burial Ground.

Type 4: Composite button with a stamped metal cap and bone back with single hole for a copper-alloy wire loop shank

Type 4 buttons consist of a die stamped, copper-alloy sheet-metal cap, usually decorated, covering a bone back and a fastener composed of a copper-alloy wire loop shank. The bone backs were finely turned on both sides with a single, central hole, a concave front, a convex back, and a well defined offset rim. The loose fitting wire loop shanks were placed within the concave space between the cap and front of the button back prior to the

cap's attachment. There was some variation in the shape of the wire loop shank: in one example from Burial 181 (Catalog # 967-B.006) the exterior portion of the shank appears round in cross-section, while the ends of the shank (within the space between the front and back of the button) were flattened and splayed outward. The caps are decorated by either die stamping or repoussé and subsequently gold plated. This type of button was manufactured throughout the 18th century according to Albert and Kent (1949:29).

Four buttons of this type were recovered at the African Burial Ground, all from Burial 181. No textiles were found in association with any of the bone-backed buttons.

Type 5: Bone-backed buttons with multiple perforations (originally composite buttons with stamped caps)

Type 5 buttons are very similar to Type 4 buttons, the main difference being the manner in which the button was attached to the garment. As originally designed, the button was manufactured with a die stamped, copper-alloy, sheet metal cap, usually decorated, that was fitted over a bone back. The back was finely turned on both sides with a concave front and convex back and a defined, offset rim on the back. Each of the specimens contained four drilled holes and a shallow central impression on the back, which is produced during the manufacturing process. In contrast to the Type 4 loop shank set in a single hole, the holes in the Type 5 back are laced with thread, catgut, or wire to form a shank.

Only the bone backs were present in the burial ground assemblage. There was a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples. It is possible that the buttons' metal components had been removed and the bone backs reused as simple sew-through buttons. Alternatively, all trace of the metal caps had decomposed beyond recognition. No other components of these buttons, such as pieces of metal caps or wire shanks, were present in the assemblage. This was a common button type during the 18th century.

A total of ten buttons of this type were recovered at the African Burial Ground, all from Burial 392. Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. A wool fragment from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved, thread-finished buttonhole.

Type 6: Cast two-piece all metallic buttons

Type 6 buttons consist of a cast, two-piece button with the crown cast around a separate, wire-looped eye in a raised or cone-shaped boss of metal. This type also includes specimens in which the loop shank was braised directly to the button's back. The crown face was usually flat or slightly convex, occasionally with a beveled or cupped back edge. In most specimens any marks derived from the manufacturing process had been removed as a result of the back being hand filed or machine spun. In the latter method individual buttons are set in a collet or chuck, a device used for holding cylindrical objects in a lathe, and spun at a high speed while a hand-held chisel is employed to cut and trim excess metal castings from the back and boss (Olsen 1963:552). This type of button was

usually covered with cloth or decorated with a variety of motifs produced during the manufacturing process. Decorated buttons without cloth covers were also given a high polish or, alternatively, were plated with gold or tin.

A total of 35 buttons of this type were recovered at the African Burial Ground from a total of 13 burials (Burials 6, 10, 181, 191, 243, 250, 259, 276, 278, 325, 366, 403, and 405).

Two of the buttons of this type found with Burial 6 were decorated with anchors and gilt. As described in the inventory, the two specimens did not match, though based on their locations they are believed to have adorned a jacket or coat. Anchor buttons were used on British naval officers' uniforms from 1774, and may have been more generally available in New York just before, during and after the Revolution (see Troiani 2001:9-10 for illustrations of British naval officers' anchor buttons). Because buttons were often obtained separately clothing and were typically recycled, we do not identify this man as a naval officer based on his burial in a jacket bearing two anchor buttons. The motifs may have signaled his occupation, whether as a sailor or a member of the navy, but they also may have been chosen for aesthetic or other reasons.

Type 7: Cast three-piece all metallic buttons

Type 7 buttons are dome shaped all-metal buttons composed of separately cast fronts and backs. The two halves are joined or braised at a high temperature with the aid of a fluxing agent. Prior to joining the two portions a separate wire loop eye (the third piece) is inserted through a single hole in the back plate and braised or set in place. Distinctive characteristics of this type of button are the presence of an additional small hole(s) on the button's back. These openings allow the heated, expanding gases within the hollow space to escape during the braising process, which would prevent the two halves from joining. This type of button was usually decorated during the casting process, or, as was the case for some specimens from the African Burial Ground, the entire button was gilded.

A total of 24 buttons of this type were recovered at the African Burial Ground, from Burials 10, 181, 214, 271, 326, 379, 403, and 415. Seventeen of the buttons were in matching sets found with the two individuals in Burials 326 and 415. Evidence of gilding was preserved on buttons in Burial 415.

Table 12.5.
Button types recovered at the African Burial Ground

ABG Type	Noel-Hume/ South type	Hinks type	Olsen/Cotter type	Stone type	Notes	Description
Organic buttons						
Bone backs or molds for thread covered buttons						
1	15 (1726-1865)	9A1w waistcoat or shirt, 9A1c coat (1680-1810)	Non functional button blank	Cat. 1-Type 1	found in 1770-1780 contexts	Cut, flat disk with a single central hole, with or without turning marks and off-set rim on at least one faces, small diameter for waistcoat or shirt – 9-15mm, large diameter for coat – 16-29mm
Composite buttons						
Copper-alloy ring for thread covered buttons						
2	Not listed	9B1 (1750-1840)	Not listed	Class V, SA T1 (?)	Post-1750 manufacture in England	Copper-alloy ring with soldered ends – provides framework for thread or cloth covering – shirt button
Composite button with a non-metallic cap, wood back, and copper alloy wire loop shank						
3	Not listed	With single hole type 9A2 – but states single hole was not functional	Not listed	Class V, SA (?)	Hinks (1988:89) notes that wood buttons were found on inexpensive clothing	Turned and cut wood disk with a single central hole, circular recessed area on one face, copper alloy wire shank held in place with a wire flange or crimped end; possibly covered with leather or cloth, may also be painted or stained a dark color
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, bone back, and copper alloy wire loop shank						
4	4 (1726-1776)	5B3 (1750-1810)	Type B variant 1700-1790	Class III, SA	found in c.1784 contexts (Hinks 1988:125-126)	Stamped sheet metal cap, usually decorated, with bone back, finely turned on both sides with a single central hole, concave front and convex back, offset rim. Wire loop shank: exterior portion of shank appears round in cross-section, while the ends of shank (within the space between front and back of the button) are flattened and splayed outward – Shank is loose fitting.

**Table 12.5.
Button types recovered at the African Burial Ground**

ABG Type	Noel-Hume/ South type	Hinks type	Olsen/Cotter type	Stone type	Notes	Description
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, with perforated (4-hole) bone back						
5	3 with cap (1726-1776)	5B2 (1750-1810)	Type B (1700-1790)	Class III, SA		Bone back, finely turned on both sides with four holes, concave front and convex back, also has an offset rim. No shank, cap has been removed so as to be used as a simple sew thru.
Metal Buttons						
Cast 2 and 3-piece all metallic buttons with wire loop shank						
6	Types 7, 8, 9, and 11 (1726-1776). Type 11 also occurs in mid-19 th century	Type 2 - 1690s –to early 19 th century	Type C, D, and E (1750-1812)	CI, SD		Cast 2-piece button - crown cast around a separate wire looped eye in a raised or cone-shaped boss – mold marks have been removed by the back being hand filed or machine spun
7	Types 2 and 6 (1726-1776).	Type 3 - 1680s –1770s	Not listed	CII, SA		Cast 3-piece button - cast front and back, flux joined after a separate wire loop eye is inserted through back plate – shank is either braised or loose, w/o holes (1 or 2) on back
Sources: Noel-Hume (1969); South (1964); Hinks (1988); Cotter (1968); Stone (1974); Olsen (1963).						

Button/fastener inventory by individual burial

Burial 6

Eight buttons were recovered from Burial 6, a Late Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between twenty-five and thirty years old. Five of the buttons were evidently attached to a coat or jacket in which the individual was buried, but as Figure 12.9 illustrates, they did not form a matched set. These buttons were, for the most part, dissimilar in decoration and manufacture. The two buttons with anchor motifs did not match.



Figure 12.9.
Buttons from Burial 6
associated with a man's
coat or jacket.
Top: Catalog #'s 219-
B.001, .004, and .003.
Bottom: Catalog #'s
219-B.002 and .008.
Largest button is 26 mm
diameter.
Photograph by Jon
Abbott.

Button 219-B.001 was made of cast copper alloy that had been gilded on each side; it had an applied wire loop shank (Figure 12.10). The 17 mm diameter button was decorated with an upright fowl anchor device on a plain ground. Both the centrally located device and the gilding were well preserved. In finely executed detail, the anchor's rope extended down from the left side of the ring, passing behind the end of the left stock (a guide to anchor terminology is in Figure 12.12). It then looped first to the right, passing in front of the shank, and then to the left, passing behind the shank. The rope continued to the left, passing in back of the bill of the left fluke, then looped to the right below the anchor's left arm and crown. Finally, it passed behind the center-point of the right arm, ending with a short section of rope that extended down from the anchor's right bill.

Button 219-B.002 (Figure 12.11) was comparable to the previous example in terms of manufacture, decoration, and preservation. This button, however, was of heavier construction and had a larger loop shank and a more concave back. The primary differences between the two buttons were in the details of the anchor design, in particular the use of a chain rather than a rope. Overall, the upright fowl anchor on the second



Figure 12.10. (left)
Button, copper-alloy, gilt.
Burial 6, Catalog # 219-B.001
Diameter 17mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.11. (right)
Button, copper-alloy, gilt.
Burial 6, Catalog # 219-B.002
Diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

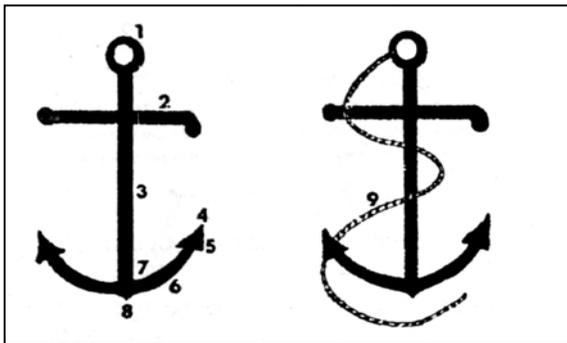


Figure 12.12.
Diagram of anchor device. Source: Luscomb
(1974:32)

Upright anchor (left), upright foul anchor (right)

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1 ring | 6 arm |
| 2 stock | 7 throat |
| 3 shank | 8 crown |
| 4 bill | 9 rope |
| 5 fluke | |

button, while just as detailed, was slightly larger in scale, and covered more of the button's face. Another minor difference was the distance between the top ring and the shank, which in the second button was negligible. The layout of the "chain" in relation to the anchor was essentially identical to button 219-B.001.

Button 219-B.003 was a 17 mm copper-alloy disc with a wire shank fastened to the back during the casting process (Figure 12.9, top row, right). The ends of the loop shank were set in a cast boss of metal and the back had been spun and cut. The gilt button evidently contained a central decoration on a plain ground, but due to corrosion no elements survived.

Button 219-B.004 was also a 17 mm copper-alloy fastener with a wire shank attached during the casting (see Figure 12.9, top row, middle). The lack of cut marks on the back seemed to indicate the button had not been spun. However, the metal boss surrounding the ends of the shank had been hand trimmed or filed in the area adjacent to the long axis of the shank, leaving a mound of metal along one side. The button did not appear to have been decorated beyond a possible high polish.

Button 219-B.008 (see Figure 12.9, bottom row, right), the final whole button, was of cast copper alloy and was found on the sacrum. The 26 mm diameter button, one of the collection's largest, was manufactured with an alpha loop shank, and appeared to have had a stamped decoration on its face. Not only was this button comparable in size to most of the coins recovered from the burial ground, there appeared to be some design elements on the face that were similar to coins of the 18th century. Poor preservation, however, makes it impossible to determine if a coin was converted into a button or a coin die was used to strike the decoration.

Portions of at least three pewter buttons were recovered from the burial (twelve fragments, Catalog # 219-B.007). Field notes indicated that a pewter fragment was located on the sacrum. However, the exact size, shape, and type of manufacture of the pewter buttons could not be determined due to their fragmentary state. Field notes indicated possible textile fragments adhered to the cranium but none were recovered.

Burial 10

Thirteen buttons were recovered from Burial 10, which held a forty-to-forty-five-year-old man. The burial is assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Seven buttons found on the torso apparently fastened a coat or jacket (Figure 12.13). One button was located at the right foot. An additional five buttons were inferred from wire shanks (unique objects unassociated with the coat buttons) recovered from the lower right leg. The shank fragments likely represented the remnants of composite buttons constructed of organic materials, such as wood or bone, and metal. In contrast to Burial 6, the coat buttons recovered from Burial 10 formed a matched set.



Figure 12.13.
Buttons from Burial 10
associated with a man's
coat or jacket.
Catalog #s 234-B.001 –
234-B.007.
Button diameters 17
mm.
Photograph by Jon
Abbott.

The coat buttons were cast copper-alloy with a copper-alloy wire alpha loop shank applied during manufacture. All of the buttons measured 17 mm in diameter and, with the exception of a slightly beveled edge, all were undecorated and had evidence of a polished face. The conservators' notes stated that the buttons were possibly tin plated on the front surface. The backs of these buttons were turned and had lost the upper, rounded portion of the eye shank.

Button 234-B.013 was a domed two-part copper-alloy button with a copper-alloy shank cast in place. Recovered from the area of the right foot, the button measured 16 mm in diameter and while the face was corroded, the button did not appear to have been decorated (Figure 12.14). The front had a ground edge.

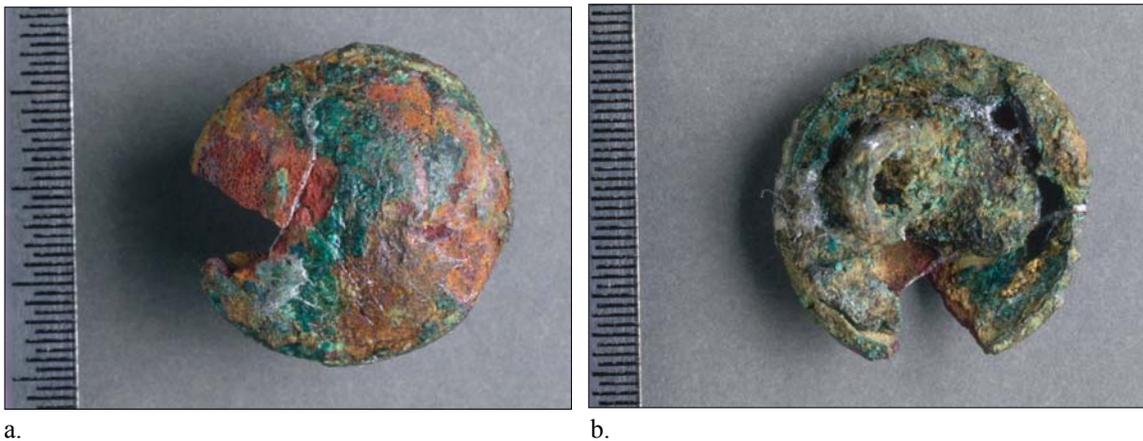


Figure 12.14. (a. face, b. back)
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 10, Catalog #234-B.013.
Diameter 16 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The five copper-alloy wire shanks recovered from the right leg were identified in the field as “eyelets.” The lack of any corresponding “hooks” would indicate the items (Catalog #s 234-B.008 – .012) were probably the shank portions from composite buttons, which presumably, were covered with cloth. The ends of each shank were either bent flat or splayed outward; this would have prevented the shank from pulling through the front of the button. One shank had a tight twist at the end, resembling a continuous loop (Figure 12.15, Catalog #234-B.010). Other well-preserved examples of this type of button shank were found with Burials 259 and 379.

The conservation inventory listed a cuff link fragment, but no such item was present when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work. It is likely the item was actually one of the buttons or button shanks. A textile fragment (Catalog # 234-B.012; Figure 12.17), identified as plain weave wool, was recovered and though no provenience was recorded, it is likely the fragment was associated with one of the buttons.



Figure 12.15. (left)
Button shank, copper alloy.
Burial 10, Catalog # 234-B.010.
Length 11 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.16. (right)
Button shank, copper alloy.
Burial 10, Catalog # 234-B.008.
Length 11 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.17. (left)
Textile fragment, plain-weave wool.
Burial 10, Catalog # 234-B.012.
Length 20 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 22



Figure 12.18.
Aglet, copper alloy.
Burial 22, Catalog # 344-B.003. Length 11 mm. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

A single aglet was recovered from Burial 22, a Middle Group interment of a young child between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old. The item was not noted during excavation and its location on the body is not known. The aglet may have been mistaken for a pin; three pins were recorded clearly *in situ* on the torso, with an additional one on top of the skull. A tiny fragment of linen was also recovered from the burial.

Burial 32

A fragment from a cast, one-piece pewter button was recovered from Burial 32, a Middle Group interment of a man between fifty and sixty years of age. The size and shape of the button (Catalog # 420-UNK.002) could not be determined. There was no mention or depiction of the button in the field records.

Burial 37

A turned bone button with a drilled center hole was recovered near the left wrist of the forty-five-to-fifty-five-year-old man in Burial 37, a Late Group interment. The 13 mm button (Figure 12.19) apparently had been covered with cloth or thread and had a thread shank, an assessment based on the absence of staining typically found on bone buttons that had copper-alloy metal caps (see Burial 181 for an example).



Figure 12.19.
Button, bone.
Burial 37, Catalog # 460-B.001.
Diameter 13 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 158

A pair of round gilt copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the twenty-to-thirty-year-old man in Burial 158, a Late Group interment. The pair from the left wrist (Catalog # 903-B.001) is shown in Figure 12.20. It matched the pair from the right wrist (Catalog # 903-B.002). The cuff links measured 17 mm in diameter and had cast U-shaped shanks, possibly diagnostic of the 17th century or the first half of the 18th century (Noël Hume 1961:383). With the exception of the gold plating and a possible raised edge, there were no discernable decorative elements.



Figure 12.20.
Cuff links, copper alloy, gilt.
Burial 158, Catalog # 903-B.001.
Face diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 171

Three buttons, two made from animal bone and one represented by a copper-alloy button ring, were recovered about the body and within the coffin from Burial 171, a Late Group interment of a man between forty-four and sixty years of age. The bone buttons each had a single, central drilled hole. The larger of the buttons (Catalog # 931-B.002) was found beside the right femur. It measured 22 mm in diameter and was turned on both sides with a relatively wide offset rim (Figure 12.21). The offset rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this button type from Burial 181.



Figure 12.21. (left)
Button, bone, turned.
Burial 171, Catalog # 931-B.002.
Diameter 22 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.22. (right)
Button, bone, turned.
Burial 171, Catalog # 931-B.001.
Diameter 10 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The smaller bone button (931-B.001), from the right scapula, measured 10 mm in diameter and was a less “finished” object. In addition to being turned only on one side, leaving a rough, natural surface (the inner wall of the bone), the edge of the button was left untrimmed from the cutting tool (Figure 12.22). The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone buttons indicated they were thread or cloth-covered, and attached with a thread shank. The edges of the sewing holes, particularly on the smaller button, were worn and abraded. It is possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by removing the metal cap or by reusing buttons that had lost their shanks.

The remains of a copper-alloy ring were found on the sternum. The ring (Catalog # 931-B.003) may have functioned as the frame for a thread or cloth button (Figure 12.23). The curved fragments were identified initially as shroud pins. The smaller of the bone buttons may have fastened a shirt collar, but the locations of the buttons do not point strongly to a particular item of clothing.



Figure 12.23.
Button ring, copper alloy.
Burial 171, Catalog # 931-B.003.
Interior diameter approximately 12 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 174

Burial 174, another Late Group interment, held a man between seventeen and eighteen years of age. Two highly degraded pewter buttons (Catalog #s 940-B.001 and 940-B.002) were recovered during the cleaning of the skeletal remains at the Cobb Laboratory, Howard University. The buttons were located on the lumbar vertebrae and the right innominate. The exact size and shape of the buttons could not be determined due to the fragmentary nature of the items, and there were no identifying attributes to suggest method of manufacture. Based on their locations, they may have fastened breeches.

Burial 181

Burial 181, a coffin-less burial assigned to the Late Group, held a man between twenty and twenty-three-years old. Six buttons—three made from copper alloy and three made from copper alloy and bone, were recorded *in situ* (Figure 12.24). A seventh button, also a bone-and-copper-alloy composite, was recovered in the laboratory, but the provenience is unknown. In addition, laboratory records indicate that copper-alloy cuff links attributed to this burial were treated by the conservator but subsequently noted as

missing. No cuff links were mentioned in the field notes or depicted on field drawings, and none were found in the laboratory when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

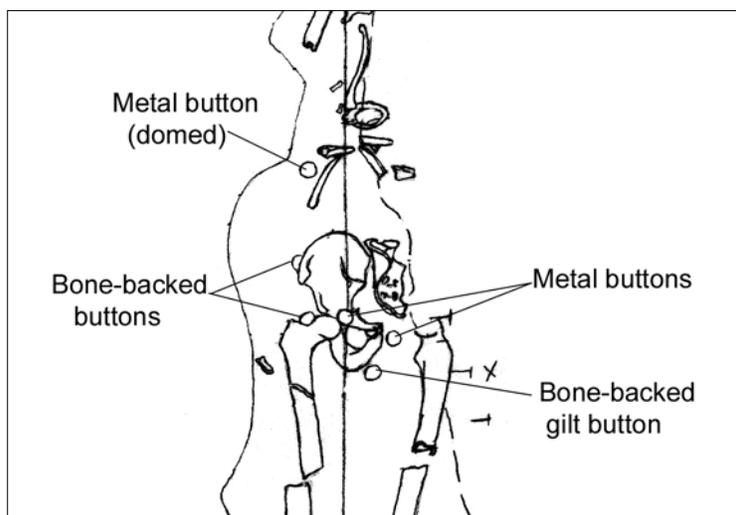


Figure 12.24.
Detail of the disturbed Burial 181 with buttons in the pelvic area. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot. *In situ* drawing by M. Schur.

The three metal buttons (Catalog #s 967-B.001, .008 and .009) varied in manufacture and size. Button 967-B.001 (Figure 12.25) was a cast one-piece copper-alloy button that evidently contained zinc and nickel. It had a spun back and a drilled shank. The relatively flat disk, found at the head of the man's right femur, measured approximately 20 mm in diameter. The button appeared to have been decorated but no design elements were identified due to the extensive corrosion.



Figure 12.25.
Button, copper alloy with zinc and nickel.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.001.
Diameter 20 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Button 967-B.008 (Figure 12.26), also from the pelvic area, was a slightly concave, cast disk of copper alloy with zinc and nickel. It measured 29 mm in diameter. The button had an applied loop shank and the back was evidently spun. There were no decorative elements on the button's face.



Figure 12.26.
Button, copper alloy with zinc and nickel.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.008.
Diameter 29 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Button 967-B.009 (Figure 12.27) was the front portion of a copper-alloy domed button with a stamped decoration. The button, which measured approximately 22 mm in diameter, was probably of a cast, two-piece construction, with a braised or flux-joined seam. No remains of the button's back or the shank were recovered in the field. The cast, central decoration was located within a circular recessed area, 13 mm wide, and appeared to have had an overlapping scalloped design, possibly representing the petals

from a stylized Tudor Rose. The back of the object contained a large, off-center mass of metal. The untrimmed mass was evidently a part of the manufacturing process.

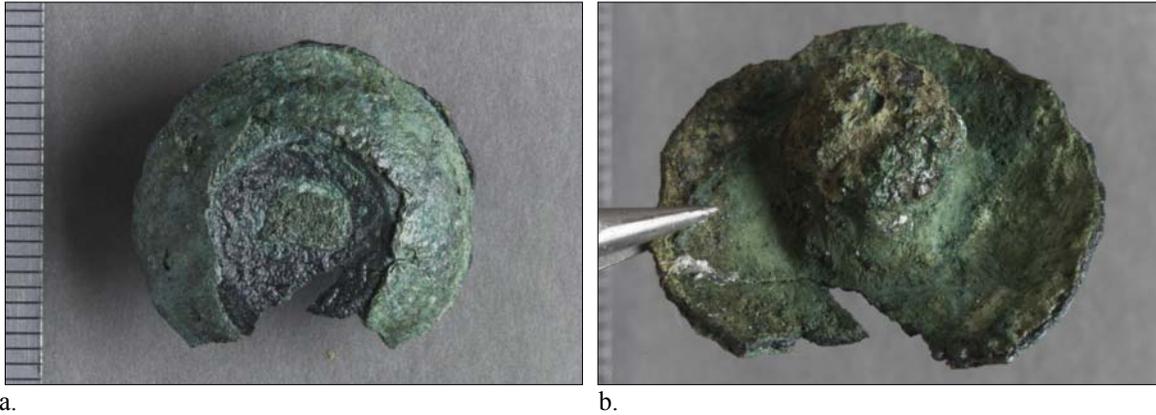


Figure 12.27 (a. face, b. back)
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.009.
Diameter approximately 22 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The four composite buttons had stamped copper-alloy faces and turned bone backs with looped copper-alloy wire shanks (Catalog #s 967-B.002, .003, .005, and 006; Figures 12.28-.31). All of the items appeared to have been decorated with repoussé or impressed designs. The best-preserved button (967-B.002, Figure 12.28) bore a simple cross-weave pattern finished with gold plating. The design was discernable on fragments of the metal cap and was also impressed on small fragments of soil that adhered to the button.

Buttons .002, .003, and .006 measured approximately 25 mm in diameter, though they would have been slightly larger with the thin, sheet metal caps in place. The bone backs for these three examples were identical in type of manufacture. Concentric turning marks and a narrow, offset rim were evident on each side of each button back. There was a slight concavity to the button back's inner surface, while the opposing surface was convex. Each had been stained by the decomposition of the copper-alloy caps.

Button 967-B.005 (Figure 12.30) was slightly smaller in size than the other composite buttons. This example measured 16 mm in diameter. Portions of the front cap were in place, as well as a complete copper-alloy loop shank. While the button face appeared to have been decorated, no design elements or any evidence of gilt were preserved.

The composite buttons from Burial 181 yielded some interesting manufacturing details. Unlike the flat bone discs found on other burials, the front side of the bone button back was concave to provide a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. In one example (Catalog # 967-B.006) the ends of the wire loop shank were flattened (Figure 12.31). The shank's ribbon-like shape may have served the purpose of making the end of the shank wider and therefore less likely to pull out. This is in contrast to the "sew-through"

portion or eye of the shank, which was formed of rounded wire. Placement of the ends of the wire shank through the bone back preceded the attachment of the metal cap. These examples do not appear to have had metal back plates.



Figure 12.28.
Button, copper alloy with bone back.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.002
Diameter 25 mm.
Note remains of the button's cap and impressions of criss-cross pattern to the left of the bone back. Fragments of the impressed and gilded decoration on the cap and impressed onto the soil fragment are present in the upper left portion of the photograph.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Figure 12.29.
Button, copper alloy with bone back.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.003
Diameter 25 mm
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.30.
Button, bone and copper alloy.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.005.
Diameter 16 mm.
Note the repoussé (raised impression) decoration on the preserved fragment of the cap. Fragment is attached to the end of the shank, which rests against the front, concave side of the bone disc. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.31. (a. back, b. detail of flattened shank)
Button, bone and copper alloy.
Burial 181, Catalog # 967-B.006.
Diameter 25 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Although Burial 181 was disturbed, the button locations in the pelvic area of the skeletal remains are suggestive of trousers. The four matched, composite specimens may have fastened the trouser front. The two flat metal buttons may also have been from this garment. The domed button was found slightly further up the torso area, and may not have fastened the trousers.

Burial 191

Burial 191, a Late Group interment of a man between twenty-five and thirty years old, contained one copper-alloy button. Located at the left ilium, the button measured 17 mm in diameter and was cast in one piece with a loop shank (Figure 12.32). While the back of the flat disc appeared to have been spun, the front face had a few raised features that suggest the button was decorated. In particular, the raised, wavy lines are suggestive of a crown and/or shield, design elements found on contemporaneous coins.



Figure 12.32.
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 191, Catalog # 1081-B.001.
Diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 194

A single copper-alloy button shank was found near the head of the right femur of the thirty-to-forty-year-old man in Burial 194, a Late Group interment. An organic fragment, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with the shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.

Burial 203

Burial 203, a Late Group interment, held an individual between twelve and eighteen years old. The skeletal remains offered no clear indication of the individual's sex, but the material and positioning of the button fragments recovered with the individual were typical of 18th century knee breeches, suggesting that Burial 203 was a young man. Field records depict buttons at distinct locations on the individual: at the knees, the wrists, and the pelvic area.

The button fragments from Burial 203 represented a total of eight separate wood buttons, which had copper-alloy wire shanks and evidently had been faced with leather (Catalog #s 1174-B.001 to 1174-B.008). Field notes refer to fourteen buttons, which were depicted on the *in situ* drawing. The discrepancy in count between the field staff and the laboratory staff may have stemmed from counting displaced fragments as individual buttons (Figure 12.33; note the bottom right specimen fragmented into two layers). In general, the shank portions of the buttons were less well preserved than the crowns.

The eight buttons were identical in terms of manufacture and material. Based on an overall assessment of the recovered fragments, the wooden button disks measured approximately 13 to 15 mm in diameter and appeared to have been manufactured from a fine grained wood species.



Figure 12.33.
Buttons, wood with leather, copper-alloy shanks.
Burial 203, Catalog #s 1174-B.001 to .008.
Diameter 13-15 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

While the button stock was evidently lathe turned and subsequently cut into thin disks, there were no surviving features of this process on the face or back of any of the buttons. Unlike the turned bone discs used for button backs (for example Burial 181), which had a concave front side to allow space for the ends of the wire loop shank, these buttons had a circular, shallow recessed area on the button face. The recessed area provided a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. The loop portion of the shank would have been on the button's flat back.



Figure 12.34. (left)
Button, wood, front view.
Burial 203, Catalog # 1174-B.
Scale in mm.
Note the recessed area on the front of the face: the hole for the shank had apparently been enlarged by wear.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Figure 12.35. (right)
Button, wood, back view.
Burial 203, Catalog # 1174-B.007.
Scale in mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



The copper-alloy wire shanks from these buttons were poorly preserved, as noted, and no complete shanks were recovered. Based on the best-preserved example (Figure 12.36), the ends of the wire shank were tightly twisted but not splayed, thus raising the question of how they would have been held in place. It is possible that the ends of the shanks were missing due to corrosion. It is also possible that a piece of wire had been wound around the end of each shank to prevent it from pulling through the central hole. An example of this type of shank was found with Burial 379.



Figure 12.36.
Detail of copper-alloy button shank fragment.
Burial 203, Catalog # 1174-B.
Scale in mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The eight composite wood and metal buttons were apparently finished with a small piece of material, identified as leather by the conservators. The material covered the recessed face of the wood disc and was probably tightly sewn over the back of the button, as illustrated in Figure 12.8. While the wooden disc buttons did not have the overall green staining associated with copper-alloy covers on bone discs (as in Burial 181), the rust

present on many of the fragments may indicate the wood button was capped with a thin sheet of poorly-preserved iron based metal.



Figure 12.37.
Button, wood?
Burial 203, Catalog # 1174-B.
Diameter 14 mm (scale in mm).
Photograph by Jon Abbott.
Note the corroded ends of the copper-alloy shank.

Burial 213

One aglet was recovered from Burial 213, a Middle Group interment of a woman between forty-five and fifty-five years of age. The aglet was found on the left parietal with hair adhering to it (field records identified it as a straight pin). The presence of an aglet on the skull may indicate lacings on a cap, or a shroud drawstring. Alternatively, it may have been displaced from the collar area. Note that the aglet recovered from Burial 22 may also have been located on the skull.



Figure 12.38.
Aglet, copper alloy (with hair adhering).
Burial 213, Catalog # 1190-B.001.
Length 15 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 214

Burial 214 was assigned to the Late Group. It held a man between forty-five and fifty-five years old. Artifacts recorded *in situ* included a copper-alloy button back (1191-B.002) near the right shoulder, several button shank fragments, a straight pin, and a coin and a knife handle (the latter items are described in Chapter 14).

The button back was from a 21 mm-diameter domed button of two-piece construction, with a braided wire shank. The ends of the wire loop shank appear to have been flattened or crimped prior to the attachment of the button's front face (Figure 12.39). Two degraded copper-alloy shank fragments (1191-B.004), possibly from button .002, were also recovered, but their provenience is unclear. Two iron shank fragments were also recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from the pelvic area (Figure 12.40). A third shank fragment and the remains of a wooden button, Catalog #s 1191-SBH.001 and 1191-SBH.002, respectively (not pictured), were recovered from a flotation soil sample taken from the head area.

The location and fragmentary nature of the clothing-related artifacts from Burial 214 was the result of a later trash pit that affected the central part of the grave shaft, disturbing the pelvic area.



a.



b.

Figure 12.39. (above: a. front view, b. back view)
Button back, copper alloy.
Burial 214, Catalog # 1191-B.002
Diameter 21 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.40.
Button shank, iron?
Burial 214, Catalog # 1191-B.004
Scale in mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 238

Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment, held a forty-to-fifty-year-old man with a set of cast copper-alloy cuff links, one pair found on the right radius (# 1224-B.001) and the other pair beneath the left radius (# 1224-B.002; Figure 12.41). The cuff links were octagonal in shape with flat faces and backs and a small rear lip. The faces measured 15 mm across and each had a cast, flat shank with a drilled eye. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 16 mm in length. The apparent raised semi-circular design or letter, which may be due to corrosion, was located adjacent to one end of the shank. A possible maker's mark was noted on the back of one of the faces (# 1224-B.001), but is not visible in the photograph.



Figure 12.41. (a. front, b. back).
Cuff links, copper alloy.
Burial 238, Catalog # 1224-B.001 (bottom) and .002. (top)
Diameter 15 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Figure 12.42.
Detail of decorative motif
on cuff link faces from Burial 238.

The four faces had identical decorations (Figure 12.42). Along the outer edge were two narrow octagonal bands. The outermost band was decorated with what may have been an egg-and-dart motif, or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose, while the inner band was undecorated. The center had a circular band with a decoration that repeats the design of the octagonal band. The innermost circle appeared to be stippled.



In addition to the cuff links, a very small single-hole bone button was recovered overlying the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae. The turned button measured 8 mm and appeared to have had an offset rim (Figure 12.43). The lack of any metallic shanks from the burial or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone button indicates this was a cloth or thread-covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.



Figure 12.43.
Button, bone.
Burial 238, Catalog # 1224-B.003
Diameter 8 mm.
Photograph by John Abbott.

Burial 243

Burial 243 was a Late Group, coffin-less interment of a man between forty and fifty years of age. A single button (Figure 12.44) was recovered from beneath the upper part of the man's skull. The copper-alloy button was cast, with an applied shank, and measured 27 mm in diameter. The loop portion of the shank was missing. While the button was heavily corroded and fragmentary, there was a hint of a raised, annular edge decoration. Based on the location of the item, the relation of this burial to other grave cuts, and the presence in the grave shaft of household and industrial waste material, including glassware, ceramics, tannery and slaughter house debris, the artifact was probably the result of secondary deposition.



Figure 12.44.
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 243, Catalog #1230-B.001.
Diameter 27 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 250

Burial 250, an Early Group interment, held an adult of undetermined sex and age. A copper-alloy button (Catalog # 1239-B.001) and a small iron mass (Catalog # 1239-B.003) with a large black glass bead (#1239-B.004, described in Chapter 13) were found in the central portion of the coffin interior, possibly near the pelvis. The copper-alloy button (Figure 12.45) measured 20 mm in diameter and had a braided shank, although the



Figure 12.45.
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 250, Catalog # 1239-B.002.
Diameter 20 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

loop portion of the shank was missing. With the exception of a small raised nipple centered on the face, the button was undecorated. Another item, originally identified by conservators as a highly degraded pewter button, was subsequently identified as a tack associated with the iron and glass object. Field recording was minimal for this burial; the precise location of the button, and its association with possible clothing, is impossible to reconstruct. While the button may have fastened a burial garment, the apparent juxtaposition of the objects in this burial suggests a possible alternative function, such as a memento or talisman.

Burial 257

Burial 257 held a man between thirty and forty years old who was interred with the Late Group. Two whole bone buttons were found in the process of screening the grave fill. Field notes state that one of the buttons was originally located in the sacrum area. A portion of a third bone button was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the left acetabulum (hip joint). The two whole buttons (1246-B.001) and the portion of the third button (1246-B.002) are shown in Figure 12.46.



Figure 12.46.
Buttons, bone.
Burial 257, Catalog # 1246-B.002 (fragment on left) and .001 (two whole buttons on right).
Diameter 12 – 13 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

All three buttons were cut from animal bone and measured between 12 and 13 mm in diameter, with worn or minimal turning marks and no evidence of an offset rim. The lack of offset rims and metal components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone, suggest that these buttons were cloth- or thread-covered with thread shanks. It is also possible they were button backs that were never made into buttons, or

that the shanks and covers had been removed. The buttons may have fastened undergarments, but the lack of good provenience information precludes assignment to particular garments or speculation about other ways the items may have been used (such as strung).

Burial 259

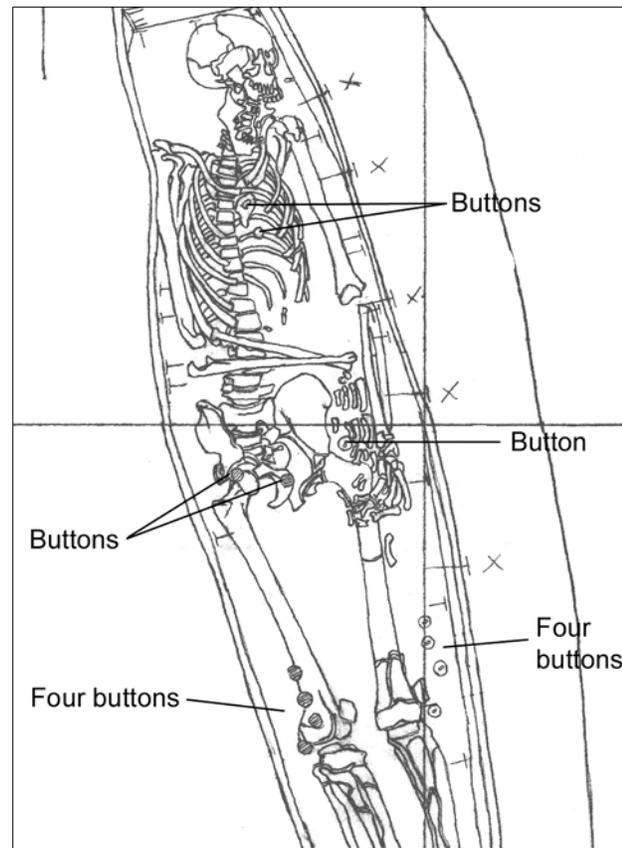
Burial 259 was a Late Group interment of a seventeen to nineteen year old identified as a probable woman. Eighteen buttons or parts of buttons were recorded *in situ* with the skeletal remains (Figure 12.47). There were four buttons with an identical face design aligned along the end of each femur, just above the knees, and three more of the same buttons were found in the pelvic area (Catalog #s 1249-B. 9, .10, .13 [which includes two specimens], .17, and .19-.23).

Two smooth-faced buttons and a button shank were also found on the ribs (Catalog #s 1249-B.11 and 12). Three more button shanks were recorded on the vertebrae and two on the pelvis (Catalog # 1249-B.016).

The button locations at the hips and knees indicate the individual was buried wearing breeches. The two buttons on the ribs may have been from a shirt.

Figure 12.47.
In situ drawing of Burial 259 showing button locations. Drawing by M. Schur. Scale: 1 inch = 1 foot.

Ten of the copper alloy breeches buttons are shown in Figure 12.48. The ones that had been lying face-down on the coffin floor (all on the left side of the body -- Figure 12.47) had wood adhering to their faces. The buttons measured 18mm in diameter and were of cast copper alloy, with a parallel, ridged decoration with milled impressions. The buttons were subsequently spun and finished with tin plate (Figure 12.49). The copper alloy wire shanks were cast in a high cone shaped boss (Figure 12.50).



Portions of two of the buttons on the ribs, identified as metal in the field, were recovered and subsequently were identified by project conservators as leather with woolen fibers

adhering. They were apparently made of wood, possibly with leather covers (Figure 12.51). The five copper-alloy shanks recorded separately in the field represent five additional buttons, which also may have been made of wood that did not survive. Based on the shank morphology, the ends would have extended through the button and were crimped or tied off with a wire to create a flange, so as not to pull through the button face (Figure 12.52; also see Burials 203 and 379 for comparative examples).



Figure 12.48.
Burial 259.
Buttons, copper alloy with parallel ridged and milled decoration. Top: Catalog #s 1249-B.9, .10, .13; Middle: Catalog #s .17, .19, and .20; Bottom: Catalog #s .21, .22 and .23. One additional specimen (Catalog # .5) not pictured. Diameter 18 mm. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.49.
Button, copper alloy, tin plated.
Burial 259, Catalog # 1249-B.013.
Diameter 18 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.50.
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 259, Catalog # 1249-B.01.
Photograph showing boss and wire loop shank.
Total boss/shank length is 8 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.51.
Burial 259, Catalog #s 1249-
B.011 and .012.
Diameter 16 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.52.
Button shanks, copper alloy.
Burial 259, Catalog # 1249-
B.016
Length 10 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Woven textile fragments and leather adhered to several buttons, and to the coffin wood where buttons had lain against the bottom board (Figures 12.53 and 12.54). Several of the textile fragments were not identified, but those associated with the breeches buttons were of wool. There were also fragments of linen, labeled as “from buttons” (Catalog # 1249-B.3), but conservators did not record which buttons they were associated with.



Figure 12.53.
Textile from Burial 259, retrieved from coffin
wood sample. Catalog # 1249-CWB.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

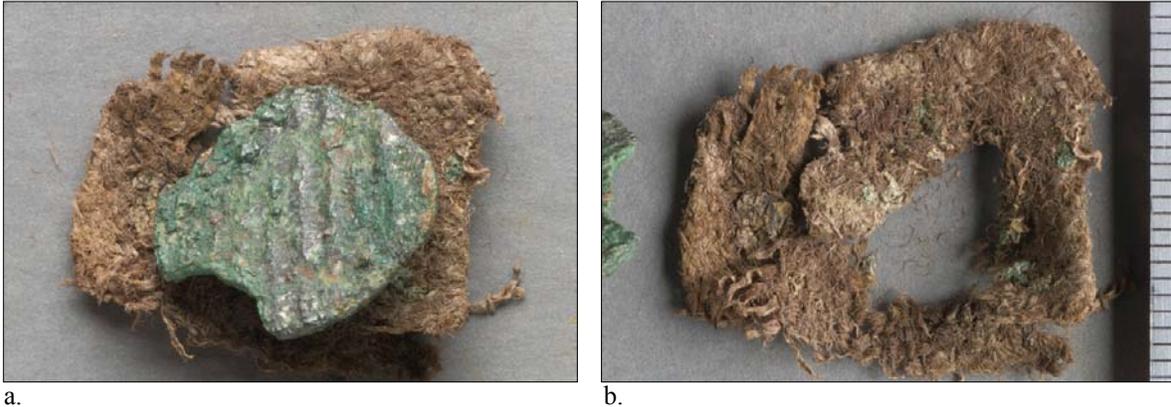


Figure 12.54.

Button and textile, copper alloy and wool.

Burial 259, Catalog # 1249.017. The button was removed from associated cloth to show the buttonhole, which did not appear to have been top stitched (compare to the example from Burial 415). The ruler at right is measured in millimeters. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 271

Burial 271 was assigned to the Middle Group. It held a man between forty-five and fifty-seven years old who was interred in a coffin with a hexagonal shape. Two copper-alloy domed buttons, each with an outside diameter of 14 mm, were recovered from the screen during excavation. The first button was of one-piece, solid cast construction with a high shank (Catalog # 1267-UNK.001). The second button consisted of small fragments of the dome, which appeared to have been decorated, and a portion of the shank (Catalog # 1267-UNK.002). Because the items were found in the screen, it is impossible to state whether or in what way they were directly associated with the man's remains.

Burial 276

Burial 276 was a Late Group, coffin-less interment of a woman between twenty and twenty-four years of age. While no artifacts were directly associated with the individual, the grave shaft contained a relatively heavy secondary deposit of industrial waste from nearby tanneries/slaughter houses and ceramic manufacturers. Also in the grave shaft were faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics and glassware from the second and early part of the third quarter of the 18th century. The field notes referred to a possible coin recovered from slightly above the body, near the woman's right rib cage. Upon closer inspection, however, this item was identified as a button (Catalog # 1273-UNC.001). It was of cast copper-alloy and measured 20 mm in diameter, with a curved face and an applied loop shank. The conservators treated seven fragments from the button's face, some of which were gilded. The button did not appear to have functioned

as a clothes fastener or to have been deliberately placed with the woman, but was present in the grave's back fill due to re-deposition.

Burial 278

This Late Group, coffin-less interment held a man between forty-five and fifty-five years old. The association of this burial with a cast, copper-alloy button was problematic. The button was cataloged in the laboratory, but its provenience was not recorded in the field. While there were no artifacts directly associated with this individual, the grave shaft contained a secondary deposit of material including faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics from the second and early part of the third quarter of the 18th century.

The button (Catalog # 1275-UNC.001) was a cast, copper-alloy disk that measured 16 mm in diameter. It had a slightly curved face and an applied loop shank. The majority of the shank was missing. The conservator's notes stated that the back of the button exhibited gold plating and was associated with fabric. No cloth fragments were in the collection handled by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

Burial 313

Three buttons manufactured from animal bone and another possible one represented by a small copper-alloy ring, were recovered about the body and within the coffin of Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between forty-five and fifty-five-years old. The three bone buttons, each with a single, central drilled hole, were found lying on the coffin bottom at the top of the man's head. Two measured 22 mm in diameter (Catalog # 1516-B.001), while a third (Catalog # 1516-B.002) measured 13 mm in diameter. The smaller example was identical in manufacture to the two larger buttons. Turning or cut marks were visible on both sides of each button. One of the larger specimens had a narrow offset rim (Figure 12.55), but the rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this type found with Burial 181.



Figure 12.55.
Button, bone, with offset rim.
Burial 313, Catalog # 1516.001 (1 of 2)
Diameter 22 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of staining on these bone buttons indicated they were covered with cloth or thread, and probably attached with a thread shank. It is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused.



Figure 12.56.
Button, bone
Burial 313, Catalog # 1516.002.
Diameter 13 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The copper-alloy items (not photographed) identified as fragments of a possible button ring were initially cataloged as three curved straight pin fragments. They were found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal remains, in soil among the left ribs.

The location of the bone buttons near the top of the cranium suggests they did not function as clothing fasteners. There is no way to know whether the possible button ring represented a clothing fastener.

Burial 325

A single copper-alloy button was found on the left upper sacrum of Burial 325, a Late Group interment of a man between twenty-five and thirty-five years old. The button's copper-alloy loop shank was found in two pieces on the lower right sacrum. Both the button disk and the two shank fragments were designated Catalog # 1577-B.001. The cast button measured 22 mm in diameter. It is possible the face was decorated with a bust or human figure in portrait (Figure 12.57). The face was gilded, while the back was spun flat, with a braided loop shank. Field records indicate that unidentified organic material was associated with the

objects, but none of the material was recovered.



Figure 12.57.
Button and shank fragments, copper alloy.
Burial 325, Catalog # 1577-B.001.
Diameter 22 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

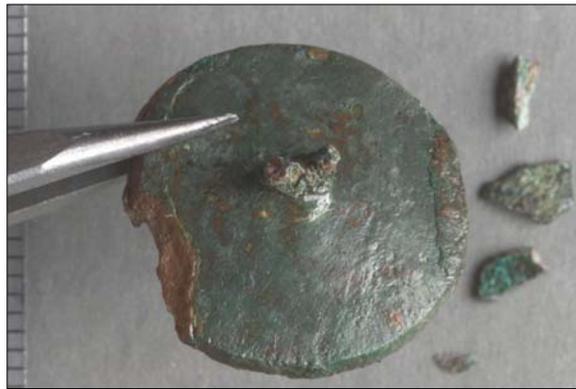
Burial 326

Four buttons (Catalog #s 1584-B.001, .002, .003, and .006) were recorded in association with Burial 326, a Middle Group interment of a man between forty-five and fifty-five years old. (In addition to the buttons, three lead buckshot (size: 3mm) were recovered in association with the man's remains.) All of the buttons were made of copper alloy with a cast, hollow domed construction. Two measured 19 mm in diameter (Catalog #s 1584-B.001 and .002, Figures 12.58 and 12.59), the other two 23 mm (Catalog #s 1584-B.003 and .006). They were all found in the pelvic area and between the tops of the femurs, near the hands. The larger pair was poorly preserved, but appeared to have been ovoid in shape. The button locations suggest either trousers or sleeve links.

On the best-preserved item, one of the two 19 mm buttons, the loop shank was of drawn wire manufacture and was braised on the button's back (Figure 12.59).



a.



b.

Figure 12.58. (a. face, b. back).
Button, copper alloy, cast hollow-dome.
Burial 326, Catalog # 1584-B.001.
Diameter 19 mm. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.59. (left).
Button, copper alloy, hollow-dome (back view).
Burial 326, Catalog # 1584-B.002
Diameter 19 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Items 1584-B.003 and .006 consisted of three fragments from two apparently oval, cast copper alloy buttons (Figure 12.60). The items were manufactured in at least two parts and were domed. No decoration was apparent on any of the pieces. It was not possible to determine the manner in which the shanks had been attached. The pieces from Catalog # .006 had undergone mending by conservators in the lab, but were separated at the time of the final inventory.



Figure 12.60.
Button face, cast copper alloy.
Burial 326, Catalog # 1584-B.006.
Mended diameter 23 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Field records state that a small fragment of cloth as well as a bit of possible hair had adhered to one of buttons. A small fragment of unidentifiable organic material was cataloged (Catalog # 1584-B.09; not photographed), but was not identifiable. Finally, an intrusive, steel ball bearing (1 mm diameter) was recovered.

Burial 333

Six bone button discs were found in association with Burial 333, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between forty-five and fifty-five-years old. The discs were positioned on and around the pelvic region. Three had outside diameters of 11 mm, two of 13 mm and one of 20 mm (Figure 12.61). (The original catalog listed four at 13 mm and one at 11 mm.) The center holes measured 2 to 3 mm in diameter.



Figure 12.61.
Buttons, bone.
Burial 333, Catalog # 1613-
B.001 (top left), .002 (top
right), and .003.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

All of the buttons had been cut from animal bone and had a center drilled hole and worn or minimal evidence of turning marks on one or both sides. A possible narrow offset rim was present on one of the smaller buttons (Figure 12.62). The edge, however, did not follow along the entire circumference of the button and it was likely a fault that occurred in the cutting of the button blank. The absence of offset rims and metal components such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining, indicated the buttons had originally been covered with cloth or thread, and probably had thread shanks.



Figure 12.62.
Button, bone.
Burial 333, Catalog # 1616-B.001.
Diameter 11 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 341

Burial 341, a Middle Group interment, held a man of undetermined age. A pair of cast copper-alloy cuff links was found on the distal left radius (Catalog # 1652-B.001). The cuff links had an octagonal shaped design, but the flat, possibly untrimmed crowns appeared circular when viewed from the back (Figure 12.63). Unlike the octagonal cuff links from Burial 238, these lacked a rear lip, and they were slightly larger in size. The crowns measured 18 mm across and had cast, flat shanks with hand-drilled eyes. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 18 mm in length.



a.



b.

Figure 12.63. (a. front, b. back)
Cuff links, copper alloy.
Burial 341, Catalog # 1652-B.001.
Diameter 18 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The faces had identical decorations. Along the outer edge was a narrow octagonal band decorated with an egg-and-dart motif or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose. The central portion of each crown consisted of a circular band with a decoration that repeated the design of the octagonal band. Within this circular band was a circular area, apparently stippled.

Burial 342

Burial 342, a Late Group burial, held the remains of a woman twenty-five to thirty-five years old. A copper-alloy aglet (in two pieces) was identified in the laboratory, but its location within the burial is not known. Two straight pins were recorded *in situ* during excavation, one on the cranium and one on the left lower arm, and two pins were accounted for in the lab. It is possible, however, that one of the pins identified in the field was actually the aglet. No decoration was visible on either of the fragments. However, as is evident from the photograph in Figure 12.64, the object was constructed of rolled sheet metal and the ends of the tube were slightly wider than the mid-section.



Figure 12.64.
Aglet, copper alloy.
Burial 342, Catalog # 1660-B.0012.
Scale in .5 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 353

Burial 353, a Middle Group interment, held the remains of a man between twenty-four and thirty-four years old. Fragments of a turned bone button were recorded *in situ*, next to the left sciatic notch. Due to wear and/or corrosion, the exact diameter of the button (Catalog # 1723-B.003) could not be determined. The button had a single, centrally located drilled hole. The lack of any metal shanks in the burial or evidence of metallic staining on the button indicates it was a cloth or thread covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.

Burial 361

Burial 361 was an Early Group interment of man between thirty-three and fifty-seven years old. A pewter button was recovered with this burial, from just above the right scapula/humerus. It was given a number in the field (361.1) and was cataloged when first accessioned in the laboratory, but subsequently was noted as missing. The item was never located or examined by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

Burial 366

Burial 366 was a Middle Group interment of an adult between thirty-four and sixty-two years of age whose sex could not be determined. The deceased had been buried with the hands over the upper thighs. A single one-piece button was recorded *in situ* on the right wrist (Catalog # 1830-B.001). It was 20 mm in diameter, of copper alloy, with an applied alpha loop shank (Figure 12.65). A narrow plain band along approximately 50% of the button's preserved edge may have been decorative, or may have been untrimmed excess from the casting process.

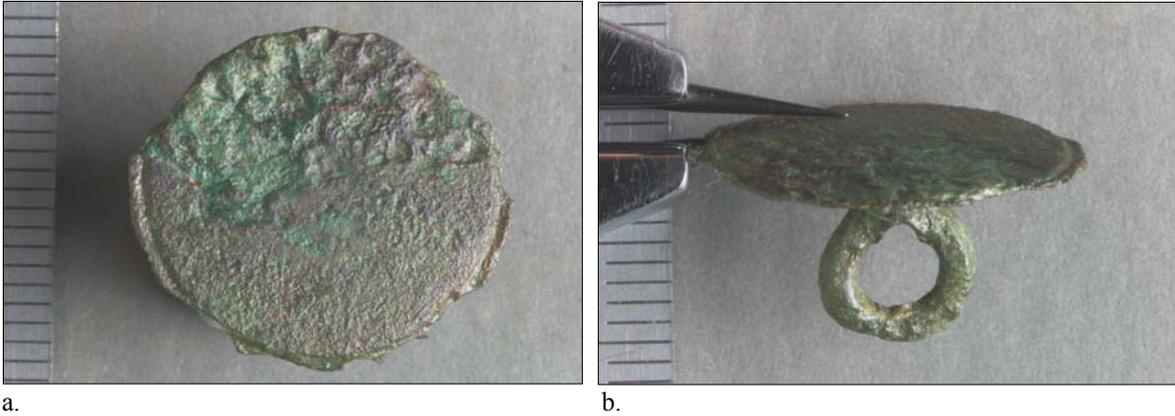


Figure 12.65. (a. face, b. side view with shank)
Button, copper alloy with applied loop shank.
Burial 366, Catalog # 1830-B.001.
Diameter 20 mm.
Photograph by John Abbott.

Burial 368

Burial 368, which held a child ten and a half to thirteen and a half years old assigned to the Middle Group, was found with a small (11 mm diameter) ring just below the chin, at the throat. This item was tentatively identified as part of a fastening of some kind or a grommet. It was of sheet copper alloy, rolled over.



Figure 12.66.
Possible grommet, copper alloy (*in situ*).
Burial 368, Catalog # 1868-B.001.
Diameter 11 mm.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Burial 371

Burial 371 is assigned to the Middle Group. It held the remains of a woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age who was interred without a coffin. Two button or cuff link faces of copper alloy decorated with enamel (a turquoise background and white-and-pink surface decoration) were found beneath her left humerus. The items, which we categorize as adornment rather than clothing fasteners, are described and illustrated in Chapter 13.

A metal button was also recovered from Burial 371, but its location within the grave was not noted in the field records. The domed, stamped, circular iron disc was 12 mm in diameter and had a 2 mm central hole (Figure 12.67). A small fragment (broken into pieces) of rust-encrusted textile, identified as wool with an undeterminable weave, was found adhering to the button face. The button (possibly used for upholstery) is evidently lacking the pin shank and appears to be of a type manufactured in the second quarter of the 19th century (Noël Hume 1974: 90-91). Based on the lack of provenience and the high degree of disturbance to Burial 371, the button is considered to have been intrusive.



Figure 12.67.
Button, iron, with associated textile fragment.
Burial 371, Catalog # 1875-B.002.
Diameter 12 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 379

Burial 379, which held a man between thirty and forty years old, was also assigned to the Middle Group. Field notes stated that following the removal of skeletal remains a bone button with a copper-alloy shank was found below the distal end of the left ulna. The item (Catalog # 1906-B.001) was subsequently identified in the laboratory as a leather button, possibly a backing (not photographed). Based on comparable items from Burial 259, the preserved remains may have been the leather covering, or the outer portion of a wood button with a copper-alloy loop shank. The shank (Catalog # 1906-B.002) was well preserved (Figure 12.68). It was made of copper alloy wire, which was then shaped by hand. The inside surface of the loop had been flattened, as had the joined ends. The ends of the 10-mm long shank, which would have extended through the button disc, are slightly wider than the shaft and may have been hand crimped or possibly wound with wire to create a flange that fastened the shank.



Figure 12.68.
Loop shank, copper alloy.
Burial 379, Catalog # 1906-B.002.
Length 10 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

A second button (Catalog # 1906-B.003), of entirely different manufacture, was found during laboratory cleaning of the right innominate. It was an undecorated two-piece copper-alloy domed button with a soldered loop shank extending through the back of the button. The front face of the button measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 12.69). Most of the back portion of the button was not preserved, but conservators treated the loop shank. The ends of the wire shank, attached before the front and back button sections were joined, were splayed outward.



Figure 12.69.
Dome button, copper alloy.
Burial 379, Catalog # 1906-B.003.
Diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 385

Burial 385, a Middle Group interment of a forty-to-sixty-year-old woman, had two tiny bone buttons. One came from the coffin floor between the right first rib and third thoracic vertebra and the other came from loose sand examined after removal of the right ribs. The buttons (both Catalog # 1964-B.001) were of turned bone and measured approximately 8 mm in diameter. Each of the buttons had a single drilled hole with very little evidence of turning on either side (Figure 12.70). The lack of offset rims and metallic components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining, indicates they were probably cloth or thread covered fasteners, attached with a thread shank. Such buttons are typical of undergarments. As noted for previously described

burials, it is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by the removal of the metal cap or by reusing a button that lost its shank.



Figure 12.70.
Buttons, bone.
Burial 385, Catalog # 1964-B.001.
Diameter 8 mm (whole specimen).
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 387

Burial 387 was an Early Group burial of a man between thirty-four and forty-four years of age. A fragment of a cast copper-alloy cufflink or button was recorded in the laboratory, from an unknown provenience within this grave. It was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. The item cannot be associated definitively with the remains in Burial 387, due to the lack of field provenience and possible mixing from Burial 366. Excessive corrosion made it impossible to obtain the item's overall dimensions or observe manufacturing details.

Burial 392

Eleven buttons, some in fragments, were recorded *in situ* with Burial 392, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between forty-two and fifty-two years of age who was buried with his head to the east in a rectangular coffin (Figure 12.71). Four well-preserved bone button backs, with associated cloth, were found adjacent to the outside of the right knee (all Catalog #s 2039-B.002; Figure 12.72), and three that were poorly preserved were found on or under the left knee (Catalog #s 2039-B.005, .006, and .008; Figures 12.73 and 12.74). Another three were located adjacent to the right hand, Catalog # 2039-B.010 (Figures 12.75 and 12.76), and 2038-B.011, and one more one was found near the left hand (Catalog # 2039-B.009, Figure 12.77). The button backs from the right hand were 2.1 to 2.2 cm in diameter, while the others examples measured 1.5 to 1.6 cm. One octagonal copper-alloy cufflink face (Catalog # 2039-B.004) was recovered from the right clavicle, and a highly degraded portion of a second face was found in the laboratory when the cervical vertebrae were cleaned (not shown).

The locations of the bone button backs suggest the deceased was laid to rest in pants or breeches, and the possible links at the shoulder may have fastened a shirt at the neck.

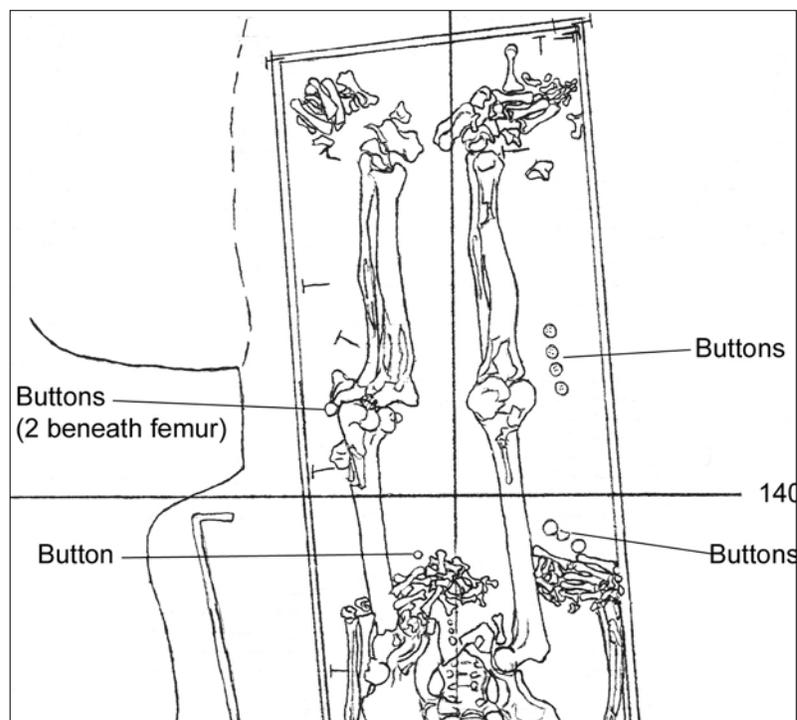


Figure 12.71
Detail of Burial 392 with
buttons at knees and hips.
North is to the right, as is
the convention throughout
this report. This burial
was oriented atypically,
with the head to the east.
Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot.
In situ drawing by M.
Schur.

The bone discs were cut and turned and each had four drilled sew-through holes. A slight central indentation on each was probably the result of the manufacturing process. There was a slight variation in the location of the drilled holes. In the best-preserved examples, the backs had a slight convex dome with a narrow offset rim; the front faces were concave to allow space for threading. The presence of a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples (Figure 12.72), possibly metallic staining, suggests that they may once have had metal caps. No metal components, such as caps, were preserved. Nor were any fragmentary remains noted in the field records.



Figure 12.72.
Buttons, bone.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-
B.002.
Diameter 16 mm
Photograph by Jon Abbott.
Selected for replication.



Figure 12.73. (left).
Button, bone.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.008.
Diameter 21 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Figure 12.74. (right).
Button, bone.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.005.
Diameter 21 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.75 (left)
Button, bone.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.010 (one of two).
Diameter 21 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.76. (left).
Button, bone (mended).
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.010 (one of two).
Diameter 21 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.77.
Button, bone.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.009.
Diameter 16 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. One from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole (Figure 12.78). The button hole, which measures approximately 1 mm wider than the buttons, does not appear to have been edged or finished with thread (for an example of a finished button hole see Burial 415). The project conservators recognized that the fiber had an s-twist.



Figure 12.78.
Button hole, wool.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.001.
Width 33 mm; button hole is 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The cast copper-alloy cufflink face (Figure 12.79) found at the right shoulder appears to have had loop shank that was cast in place. The face measured 16 mm in diameter and the cufflink's face appears to have had an impressed, centrally placed decoration. A narrow, undecorated band was evident along the edge of the preserved portion of the cufflink. Most of the shank was missing, as was the link. The cufflink may have been used as the top button on a shirt.

Figure 12.79.
Cuff link, copper alloy.
Burial 392, Catalog # 2039-B.004.
Diameter 16 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Burial 398

Burial 398 consisted of re-deposited human remains from an adult between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age. Among other items, including nails, nail fragments, straight pin fragments and a ring, was a portion of a button or cufflink. Another button, found to the north of the main concentration of bone, was noted and mapped, but was cataloged with Burial 403.

The copper-alloy cuff link (Catalog # 2061-UNK.003) had an octagonal-shaped face with a cast design consisting of a series of circular impressions, possibly stars, within narrow octagonal bands around a circular central decoration. Additional fragments included portions of a copper-alloy wire link and possibly the remains of a loop shank (Figure 12.80).



Figure 12.80.
Button or cuff link, copper alloy.
Burial 398, Catalog # 2061-UNK.003.
12 mm at widest part.
Photography by Jon Abbott.

Burial 403

The remains in Burial 403, from a man between thirty-nine and sixty-five years old, were fragmentary and damaged as a result of construction activity at the site during the field program. Items recovered with this interment were scattered among the skeletal remains, and it is not clear whether the items were in direct association with the deceased. Two buttons were photographed and drawn *in situ* before being collected in the field, but three buttons were mentioned in the field notes. Later, four buttons were cataloged in the laboratory. It is likely the fourth button was one that was noted in the field records for Burial 398 (see above).

Two of the buttons were of pewter with a high tin and lead content. They were of cast construction, had applied loop shanks, and measured 23 mm in diameter (Catalog # 2067-B.001, Figure 12.81).

A third button (Catalog # 2067-B.002) was plain, of cast copper alloy with a flat face and a loop shank set in a low boss, 22 mm in diameter. The back of the button appears to have been spun (Figure 12.82). The fourth button (Catalog # 2067-B.003) was an undecorated, copper-alloy cast domed type, of two-piece construction, with a brazed

shank and soldered seams; it measured 17 mm diameter (Figure 12.83). This button's back had two small holes and appeared to have been gilded.

In addition to the buttons, fragments of black cloth with a simple weave were recovered, though it is not clear whether these were associated with particular buttons (Catalog # 2067-B.004, Figure 12.84).

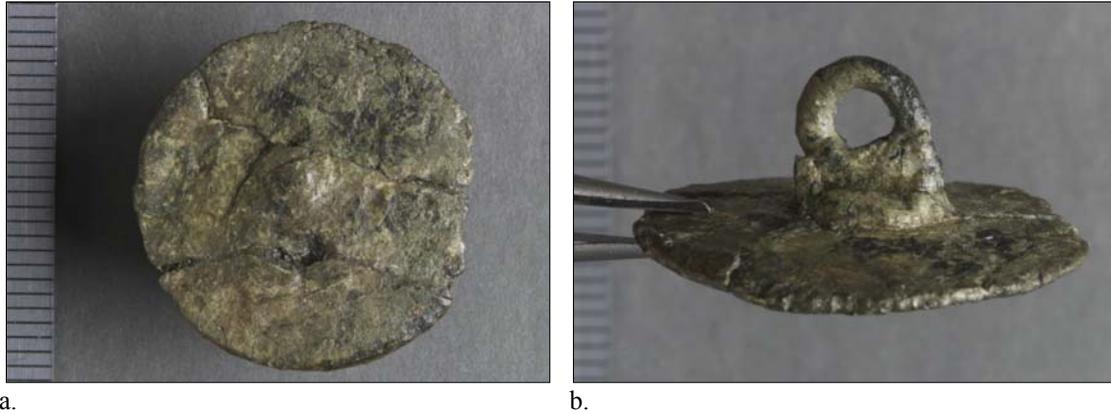


Figure 12.81. (a. front, b. side view)
Button, pewter.
Burial 403, Catalog #2067-B.001 (one of two).
Diameter 23 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

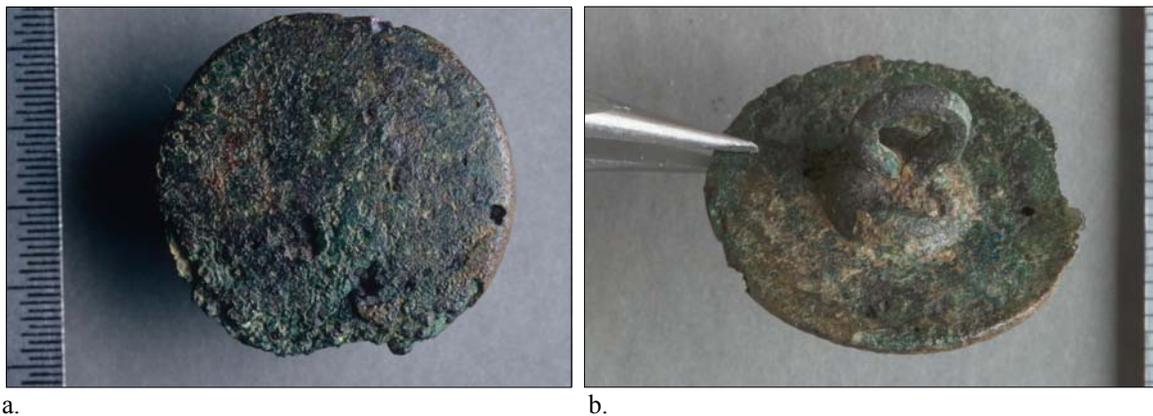


Figure 12.82. (a. front, b. back)
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 403, Catalog #2067-B.002.
Diameter 22 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

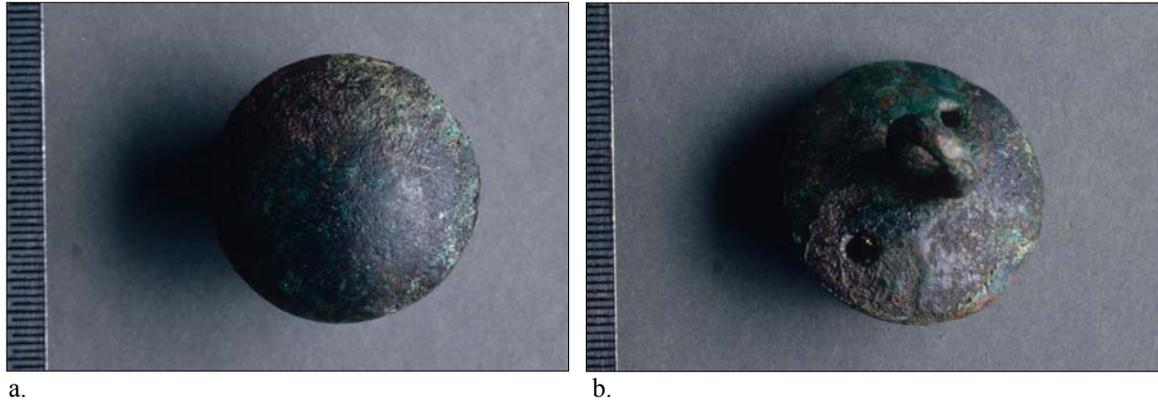


Figure 12.83. (a. front, b. back)
Button, copper alloy, cast 2-piece.
Burial 403, Catalog # 2067-B.003.
Diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.84.
Textile.
Burial 403, Catalog #2067-B.004.
Scale is in .5 mm
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 405

Burial 405 held the remains of a six-to-ten-year-old child. A single button was recorded *in situ* below the right wrist and was identified in the laboratory as a Britannia large button made of spun white metal with an applied copper-alloy loop shank. The face measured 30 mm in diameter (Figure 12.85). The placement and size of the button

suggest it did not function as a fastener for clothing. It may have been a talisman or item of adornment, perhaps worn on a string, as a bracelet, or placed in the hand of the deceased.



Figure 12.85.
Brittania button, spun white metal with copper-alloy shank.
Burial 405, Catalog # 2071-B.001.
Diameter 30 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 415

The thirty-five-to-fifty-five year-old man in Burial 415, a Middle Group interment, was buried wearing knee breeches, possibly of woolen cloth, and apparently with a fall or drop flap in front. The field drawing of the remains showed fourteen buttons in locations consistent with breeches of this style: four over the left knee, four outside the right knee, two above and on the proximal left femur, and two above and on the proximal right femur (Figure 12.86). Two additional buttons were noted as located beneath the sacrum. There is, however, a discrepancy between the field count of fourteen and the number of buttons (thirteen) that were inventoried in the lab. It is likely the field number was inaccurate due to a button having been broken and counted as two.

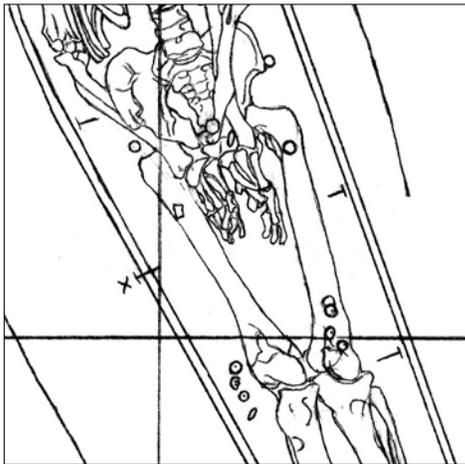


Figure 12.86.
Detail of Burial 419 drawing, buttons at knees and hips.
Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot.
In situ drawing by M. Schur.

Though each button was labeled and its exact location (and the elevation of selected items) recorded in the field, this information did not follow individual pieces through the laboratory conservation process, and there is no way now to know with certainty what buttons, which were not of identical manufacture and size, were at each location on the body.

Ten of the buttons (all Catalog # 2097-B.004) were hollow cast and measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 12.87). Two holes were present in backs (from which heated gasses could escape during manufacture). The face and back of each button were joined, with a hollow center and a separate wire loop shank that was braised to the back. Remnants of the gilding process was observed on some of the buttons, but no other decoration was apparent.

The three remaining buttons were of similar manufacture, but lacked the back holes. Two (both Catalog # 2097-B.006) measured 23.5 mm in diameter (Figures 12.88 and 12.89). One of these was broken, and may account for the fourteenth button mentioned in the field records. The final button inventoried (Catalog # 2097-B.003) measured 18 mm (Figure 12.90). It had a remnant identified by conservators as leather adhering to the back, and a fabric fragment was also processed in association with the button (Figure 12.91).

Wool cloth was recovered with one of the buttons, but due to a laboratory processing error it is not now possible to determine to which specific button it belonged. The cloth was in two layers, one to which the button attached and one containing a sewn finished buttonhole (Figure 12.92 has a detail of the button hole).



Figure 12.87. (a. front, b. back)
Buttons, copper alloy.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-
B.004.
Diameter 17 mm.
Photography by Jon Abbott.

a.



b.



Figure 12.88. (left).
Button, copper alloy
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.006.
Diameter 23.5 mm.
Photography by Jon Abbott.

Figure 12.89. (right).
Button, copper alloy.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.006.
Diameter 23.5 mm.
Photography by Jon Abbott.





a.



b.

Figure 12.90. (a. front, b. back)
Button, copper alloy with leather.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B-003.
Diameter 18 mm
Photography by Jon Abbott.



Figure 12.91
Textile.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.007.
Scale is in .5 mm.
Photography by Jon Abbott.



a.



b.

Figure 12.92.
Textile, wool.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.005.
a. Fabric to which button was sewn, left, fabric with button hole, right. Width of piece on right: 21 mm.
b. Detail of buttonhole finished with lighter colored thread. Photography by Jon Abbott.

Another fragment of textile was recovered adhering to coffin wood (Figure 12.93). This may also have been from clothing, though the presence of a shroud cannot be ruled out (there were pin fragments found at the cranium).



Figure 12.93.
Textile, wool.
Burial 415, Catalog # 2097-B.005.
Width of fragment: 17 mm.
Photography by Jon Abbott.

Table 12.3.						
Clothing worn by enslaved persons who escaped from New York City households						
First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
The database of escapee advertisements was created by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation for the African Burial Ground, primarily from the compilation in Hodges and Brown (1994).						
Sarah		11/14/1732	24 about	f	callico suit, striped satten silk waistcoat, 2 homespun waistcoats, petticoat	
Andrew	Saxon	10/1/1733	man	m	linen osnaburg breeches, old coat, shirts w/cross on left breast	
Johnsey		8/26/1734	25	m	homespun jacket, pair of trowsers, speckled shirt	
Jenney		12/19/1737	14-15	f	birds-eyed waistcoat, darkish pettycoat, callico waistcoat w/lg. Red flower and broad stripe	
Jupiter		1/14/1740	25 about	m	cargey coat and jacket, pair yellow leather britches, good shoes and stockings	
Galloway		10/27/1740	21	m	dark grey homespun jacket, lined; linen breeches; new shoes	
Andrew		6/22/1747	man	m	blue cloth waistcoat, green breeches	
Wan		6/6/1748	25 about	m	white pea jacket lined w/blue, osnaburg shirt, sailor's trousers, a pretty old hat and shoes	
York		5/29/1749	17 about	m	blue and white streaked woolen jacket, coarse osnaburg shirt, old hat, coarse osnaburg breeches	
Bolton		9/4/1749	30 about	m	very ordinary	
Simon		11/21/1748	man	m	blue cloth great coat	
Sam		10/16/1749	27 about	m	homespun coat, short trousers	
Phoebe		8/13/1750	45 about	f	uncertain	
Hector		10/8/1750	man	m	light colored Kersey pea jacket lined w/red, osnaburg shirt, trousers, shoes, stockings	
Crook		6/8/1752	22 about	m	brown homespun jacket, homespun shirt, blue flowered handkerchief on head, no hat, barefoot	
Lewis	Francois	11/5/1753	man	m	white linen shirt, brown yarn stockings, lt. Brown cloth breeches w/silk kneebands, yellow cloth jacket w/gilt buttons	large sq. brass shoe buckles, gilt jacket buttons
Jeremy		3/3/1755	about 21	m	2 blue coats, turn'd up with red, silver laced hat, sundry other clothes	
Anthony		3/3/1755	about 18	m	darkish bearskin coat, Lt. Cloth jacket, breeches, blue jacket, red breeches, castor hat, sundry other clothes	brass buttons
Holliday		10/27/1755	25 about	m	homespun Kersey jacket, felt hat, shoes and stockings	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Venture		1/12/1756	boy	m	blue watch-coat, pair of buckskin breeches, striped waistcoat w/metal buttons, very dirty old homespun shirt, mixed hose, shoes w/ large buckles	
Pompey		5/31/1756	14 about	m	blue sailors jacket, striped homespun jacket underneath, old brown cloth breeches, old hat and cap	
Titus		7/26/1756	29-30	m	olive jacket, black breeches, white stockings, half-worn pumps	
Duke		8/30/1756	man	m	speckled shirt and trousers	
Reick		5/9/1757	man	m	leather breeches, striped woolen trousers and shirt, yellowish vest, old shoes, no hat	
Charles		5/30/1757	23 about	m	osnaburg shirt and trousers, blue jacket without sleeves, castor hat, blue cloth coat, red vest, everlag breeches, several shirts	
Claus		7/4/1757	35 about	m	light col. Silk camblet coat, lined w/shalloon, flowered stuff waistcoat lined w/same, wash-leather breeches almost white w/washing, light col. Worsted stockings, pr. Homespun blue woolen stockings, 2 pr. Shoes, Garlix shirt, more	big brass shoe buckles, brass knee buckles
Rose		11/21/1757	35-36	f	striped homespun joseph, old red cloth petticoat, white yarn stockings, old shoes	
Hanibal		1/2/1758	young	m	brown short jacket w/hooks and eyes, black and white striped homespun double-breasted jacket, leather breeches, old wig and hat	
Jasper		5/8/1758	man	m	brown forest cloth coat, blue waistcoat, leather breeches, all w/flat pewter buttons, old hat, broken yarn stockings, old shoes	
Fanny		7/3/1758	woman	f	small black silk hat, lg. Cross barred blue and white striped stuff gown, old red quilted petticoat, bundle of other things	
Ohnech		7/24/1758	28	f	homespun stole, petticoat, blue short cloak, white cap	
York		7/24/1758	man	m	old shoes, blue, red worsted plush breeches, old trousers, check shirt, blue jacket, small cropt hat w/yellow worsted ringing around	carved shoe buckles

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Frank	Francosis	9/13/1758	40 about	m	a short blue sailor's jacket, and trousers, a checked shirt and old hat	
Jack		1/29/1759	man	m	brown Pea-jacket, a blue under one, a pair of buck-skin breeches	
Fanny & child		10/1/1759	(child)8 mon.	f	red and white striped Cotton Gown, a striped blue and white Petticoat , and a cap without any border	
Harry		12/31/1759	man	m	old green jacket and a white one under it, a cap and woolen ribbed stockings	iron collar around his neck (not visible without exam)
Pompey		2/18/1760	man	m	white coat, ozenbrigs shirt, cloth trousers	
Glasgow		3/17/1760	about 18	m	blue great coat, plain white swan-skin jacket, pair of trousers, pair of Lt. Blue stockings joined in the middle, new pair of shoes	
Tom		6/30/1760	14 or 15	m	osnabrigs shirt and trousers, deep blue broad cloth jacket, the fore-parts lined in two colors.	
Suck		2/26/1761	about 20	f	homespun short gown with different colored stripes, a blue and white handkerchief, a quilted petticoat, one side light coloured the other side Black,	
Prince		2/26/1761	man	m	Brown bearskin pea jacket double breasted lapel, lined with light coloured cloth, a short double breasted red waistcoat brass buttons, a pair of cloth	
Lens		6/18/1761	17	f	homespun Josey and pettycoat, no shoes or stockings	
Windsor		7/23/1761	about 23	m	brown frock livery coat with yellow collar, white shirt, waistcoat, black shag breeches, speckled stockings, new shoes, gold lac'd hat; new beaver hat	
Charles	Roberts	4/29/1762	28 or 30	m	2 or 3 coats or suits, dark brown cloth coat (worn)dove colored cloth or fine frize, light blue-gray summercoat of grogam, camblet, ... (other)	Waistcoat with silver cord
		8/19/1762	about 30	m	light colored cloth pair of breeches, jacket with flash sleeves, long striped trowseres, check shirt w/ chitterstrings	wears rings in his ears
Tom		8/26/1762	man	m	Lt. Brown sagathee coat, crimson waistcoat, breeches, Lt gray stockings, white shirt, felt hat, stockings	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Jack		9/9/1762	man	m	blew surtout coat w/yellow buttons, black knit breeches, black stockings, check shirt	
Jack		9/23/1762	13 or 14	m	white shirt, black stocking breeches, white waistcoat, Lt. Brown stuff waistcoat w/dirty silver cord, no sleeves, black stocking waistcoat, black castor hat, no shoes or stockings.	
Pero		9/30/1762	19	m	white jacket, strip'd trowsers, a hat, but no shoes	had bobs in his ears
Salvavus		10/14/1762	about 22	m	Lt. Blue double breasted jacket, lined white flannel, Lt. Colour'd breeches, oznabrig shirt	
Joe		12/23/1762	24	m	brown coat with red lining, red double breasted vest, thicksett breeches, felt hat	
Siro		1/7/1763	man	m	brown coat, green jacket. Leather breeches, blue stockings, shoes but on the top and sew'd up again	
Lucretia		3/5/1763	woman	f	black petticoat, white apron, speckled handkerchief, blue waistcoat, laced cap, blue shot cloak	
		7/28/1763	man	m	oznaburgh jersey, petticoat	beads round her arms and neck
		7/28/1763	man	m	oznaburgh frocks, trowsers	
		7/28/1763	woman	f	oznaburgh frocks, trowsers, brown cloth jacket without sleeves	
Pompey		8/15/1763	20	m	check shirt with white patch, linsey woolsey double breasted jacket- no buttons, red cap, long striped trowsers, no shoes, linen neckcloth	has a hole in each ear
Tom		8/18/1763	30	m	red waistcoat faced with white, gray coat faced with red	
Wall		8/25/1763	40	m	red coat, manchester velvet jacket, thread stockings, new shoes	
Baptist		9/1/1763	about 40	m	good cloaths, green striped jacket, holland skirts,	
Sam		9/29/1763	about 30	m	narrow brimmed hat cock'd on one side, Lt. Brown coat, short shirts, scarlet breeches, black worsted stockings	pewter buckles
Lester		10/27/1763	about 40	m	white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, home-spun shirt	
Caesar		10/27/1763	about 18	m	white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, home-spun shirt	
Isaac		10/27/1763	about 17	m	white flannel jacket and drawers, leather breeches and home-spun shirt	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Mingo		10/27/1763	about 15	m	white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers and home-spun shirt	
Hannah		2/9/1764	about 19	f	green jacket, old home-spun petticoat, red and white handkerchief about her neck, men's shoes, old black crape gown, old flowered apron , check one	
Harry		9/20/1764	man	m	Lt. coloured double-breasted jacket, coarse white linen shirt, short wide trowsers, half worn shoes	steel buckles and a scotch bonnet
		11/8/1764	man	m	new blue jacket , new stockings and shoes without any buckles	
		11/8/1764	man	m	new blue jacket and breeches, new stockings and shoes without any buckles	
Pegg		12/13/1764	about 40	f	red cloak, white hat, pair of men's shoes, callico gown, [a variety].	
Cate		6/27/1765	woman	f	striped home-spun petticoat, double purple and white callico, short gown, old stuff shoes without stockings	
Sharp		7/4/1765	about 20	m	blur sailor's jacket, checked shirt, oznabrigs trowsers, old beaver hat (cock'd), pair of old shoes, no stockings	
Toby		7/11/1765	about 21	m	brown fustian jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers and an old beaver hat	
John		1/16/1766	about 30 years	m	good castor hat, ozenbrigs shirt, black crape caravat, brown bearskin great coat, cloth upper jacket lined with red striped linsey, green napt, possesses one white shirt, stockings,	figure brass buttons, square steel buckles
Sal		4/24/1766	about 28	f	purple calico gown, striped cotton short ditto, purple and white calico Joseph, old plain gown, blue quilted petticoat, green pettistone ditto, etc.....	
Bill		5/1/1766	about 20 or 22	m	old red cloth jacket, home-spun trowsres	iron collar
Charles		6/26/1766	man	m	brown jacket, blue short waist coat underneath, pair of trowsers, sailor's round hat	
John	Baptist	10/8/1768	about 45 to 50	m		has holes in each ear for earrings
Norway		8/1/1768	about 33	m	a blue coat with silver thread buttons, reddish mix'd color cloth waistcoat, white plush breeches	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Spier		12/10/1770	about 15	m	blue cloth coat, short white ditto under it, old knit yellow breeches, shoes stockings, hat sewn up all around	
Syme		3/18/1771	about 24	m	old thickset coat, old beaver hat, old watch coat, other olds cloaths	
Bristol		9/2/1771	about 15	m	tow-cloth jacket, trowsers, oznabrigs shirt, barelegged	
Cato		10/19/1772	about 22	m	ozenbrigs shirt, jacket trowsers, new felt hat, shoes stockings	
Philis		1/4/1773	woman	f	Lt. coloured calimaco gown, check apron, black silk cloak, black peelong bonnet	
Jack		1/11/1773	about 33	m	brown double-breasted short Forrest Cloth Jacket, plain brass buttons, lined with red baize, red baize under jacket, leather breeches, blue yarn.....	
Dick		1/11/1773	19	m	beaver hat (smartly cocked) new Lt. coloured coat and green cuffs, buckskin breeches, ribbed stockings (mixed colour)	silver buckles
Prince		10/13/1774	20	m	brown thickset suit, band on his hat, his hair tied up behind	silver loop button, large tupee before
John	Rattan	12/8/1774	about 33	m	Lt. coloured cloth coat, blue cloth waistcoat and breeches	
Joseph	Low	11/27/1775	man	m	possesses several suits of good cloaths	
Daniel		2/5/1776	about 9	m	old brown surtout coat, cotton check shirt	
Prince		7/15/1776	about 21	m	blue cloth jacket, white home-spun shirt, trowsers	
James		7/22/1776	man	m	old gray bearskin short coat, check shirt, linen breeches, worsted stockings	
Caster		8/19/1776	about 35	m	white linen trowsers, tow shirt, pair of old shoes,	brass buckles
Tom		9/9/1776	about 50	m	pair of brown tow trowsers, striped woolen shirt, felt hat half worn, new shoes waistcoat four parts-brown/white	buckles
York		10/14/1776	about 19	m	old brown cloth jacket w/ plain yellow metal buttons, red cloth collar , brown cloth waistcoat w/ small yellow metal buttons, check shirt, trowsers	shoes w/ yellow buckles, old round hat w/ gold ed.

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Will		11/11/1776	19	m	white linen jacket w/ sleeves, blue cloth breeches, white stockings, and a hat half worn; Has knapsack full of clothes; possesses broad cloth coat etc....	
Ned		11/13/1776	about 12	m	blue under jacket, whiteish wilton coat, new blue duffle trowsres, check shirt whiteish stockings	
Fortune	Brookman	12/9/1776	about 20	m	red plush waistcoat, snuff coloured long trowsers	
Caesar		1/6/1777	about 30	m	wears a dirty looking cloth coat with buttons of the same colour, round hat with high crown, wears boots in wet weather; has a variety of clothes	set of silver shoe and knee buckles of open work
Loui		3/3/1777	about 20	m	short blue coat lapelled w/ yellow metal buttons, white waistcoat and breeches, white flannel trowsers, good shoes, stockings, white shirt,	white cap bound with red
Joe		4/28/1777	young fellow	m	green cloth coat, waistcoat leather breeches	
Sam		5/19/1777	about 28	m	property of the heirs of the late Widow Hester Weyman	
Chess		5/26/1777	about 20	m	blue coat breeches, fond of dress	
Pompy		6/2/1777	about 17	m	red jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, shoes, stockings, jockey cap	
Frank		6/14/1777	18 or 19	m	brown coat with a cape, old black breeches, may alter his dress: 2 check shirts, pair of trowsers	
Dick		7/28/1777	man	m	dark gray coat, jacket, white and check shirts, sundry strip'd trowsers, red and white striped jacket	
Jerremy		8/4/1777	about 25	m	black breeches & stockings, white cloth coat w/ []d buttons, beaver hat	silver buckles in his []
Fortune		8/18/1777	about 23	m	osnaburgh Trowsers, spotted flannel jacket	
Tom		9/22/1777	about 14	m	striped jacket, trowsers, check shirt, no shoes or stockings, jacket tied with pieces of tape in place of buttons	
Bet		10/20/1777	woman	f	homespun pettycoat, callico short gown	
Peter		11/3/1777	about 13 or 14	m	suit of brown fustian, suit of claret coloured fine cloth 2/3rds worn, round hat, several pair stripped trowsers, etc...	
Alick		1/3/1778	about 15	m	check shirt, reddish coloured jacket, onzaburg trowsers, leather cap	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
		1/24/1778	about 13	m	red coat (turned up w/green), green trousers, blue jacket, coarse hat with gold band	stone buckle
Diona		5/16/1778	18	f	blue striped waistcoat, blue petticoat, black hat, short red cloak w/ ermine on the fore part	
Jem		5/16/1778	about 14	m	hat, brown vest and trousers	
Phillis		6/6/1778	about 25	f	black and white striped wooly jacket and petticoat and white bonnet	
Hannah		8/1/1778	about 14	f	ozenbrig petticoat and shift, brown and blue short gown and an old green bonnet	
Belinda		2/12/1780	about 21	f	brown jacket, red petticoat, white handkerchief, high cap	
Robert	Kupperth	3/29/1780	about 19	m	old regimentals	
Tom		4/15/1780	about 15 or 16	m	had on a brown thicksett jacket and osnaburg trousers, old round hat shoes and stockings	
		5/3/1780	14 or 15	f	had on flowered red and green flannel petticoat and blue cloth jacket	
York		5/20/1780	about 12	m	short brown waistcoat, check shirt, woolen trousers nearly white, blue cap	
Toney		6/17/1780	boy	m	brown sailor's jacket, striped Holland trousers, check shirt and a bound hat	
Cain		7/5/1780	about 26	m	brown short coat, w/white metal buttons, brown waistcoat, white breeches, cock'd hat, black silk handkerchief about his head; has sundry other wearing apparel	
Tom		8/5/1780	about 16	m	thicksett jacket, and osnaburgh trousers	
Scip		9/2/1780	about 14	m	check shirt, pair of striped trousers	
Fortune		9/2/1780	about 18	m	small round hat bound w/ silver lace	
Jenny		9/6/1780	about 14	f	black callimanco coat, white linen wrapper and cap; carried all clothes with her	
Rose		9/20/1780	woman	f	green fluff petticoat, a red & white callico short gown, red silk handkerchief, black sattin bonnet	
Will		10/18/1780	about 17	m	blue jacket [] up with red, canvas pair of breeches	silver plated buckle
Bob		11/1/1780	about 12	m	onzaburg frock , red jacket	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Tony		12/13/1780	22	m	short blue coat, white metal buttons, striped jacket, long pair of blue trowsers	
Sim	Sampson	1/27/1781	about 18	m	white jacket, black hat w/red ribbon, pair of boots, long blue and white trowsers	
Pleasant	Queen Ann	3/3/1781	woman	f	red moreen petticoat, brown short gown w/ white lining, pair of brown ribbed stockings	
Prussia		3/21/1781	about 21	f	had a quantity of cloaths with her	
Tom		5/2/1781	boy	m	brown cotton jacket, black velvet Jockey cap, blue breeches, shoes and stockings	
Charles	Macaulay	5/5/1781	about 16 or 17	m	old red jacket, white flannel one under it, pair of white fearnought trowsers, a sailor's round hat	
Pameila		6/27/1781	18	f	short purple callicoe gown, pink petticoat	
Duff		5/30/1781	boy	m	red waistcoat, check shirt, osnaburgh trowsers, no shoes, nor hat	
Luce		7/21/1781	about 28	f	homespun short gown and petticoat	
Sarah		7/25/1781	about 19	f	white short gown and a cotton petticoat	
York	Revers	7/25/1781	about 21 or 22	m	brown coat with red cuffs and collar, and osnaburgh trowsers	
Jack		7/25/1781	about 12	m	blue coat faced with red	
Jane		8/15/1781	about 19	f	two Lt. coloured callico short gowns, black callimanco skirt and old stuff shoes	
		8/25/1781	boy	m	coarse round hat, small striped jacket w/out sleeves, check shirt, pair of Russia [...] trowsers open at foot	
Mattis		8/25/1781	about 22	m	three check shirts, osnaburgh trowsers and frock, pair of mottled nankeen breeches patched on the Rt. Knee, striped jacket, round hat.	
Jacob		9/1/1781	near 14	m	red jacket, osnaburgh trowsers, check shirt, no hat or shoes	
Jack		9/1/1781	14	m	check shirt, trowsers	
Bristol		10/3/1781	about 14	m	homespun linen shirt and trowsers	
Diana		10/10/1781	about 14	f	short red callico bed gown, osnaburgh petticoat, blue handerchief (sic)	
James	Herbert	10/10/1781	34	m	brown jacket	
Tom	Whit[en]	10/10/1781	23	m	green jacket	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Peg		11/17/1781	18	f	blue cloth jacket w/ long sleeves (in the form of a riding dress) w/ bright yellow buttons	
Tom		12/8/1781	boy	m	long scarlet coat, double lapelled w/ gilt buttons, red jacket, double breasted, white breeches, grey worsted ribbed stockings, strong shoes, cap	white metal buttons
Cudjoe		1/5/1782	boy	m	blue jacket, trowsers	
Rachel		1/9/1782	woman	f	dark callicoe short gown, homespun petticoat without cloak or hat	
Polly		1/9/1782	13	f	off without shoes, stockings, and wore a blue baize frock	
Jane		2/9/1782	about 15	f	pale green callimanco petticoat, red short gown, scarlet cloak with hood	
Lissa		2/13/1782	about 24	f	brown short gown, brown serge petticoat, blue short cloak unbound with a cap to it; possesses 2 callico long gowns, other...	
Charlottee		3/6/1782	19	f	white gown and petticoat	
		3/13/1782	boy	m	black super-fine broad cloth coat, waistcoat, black silk breeches & stockings, beaver hat with crape around it	
Tom		3/23/1782	boy	m	suit of morning	
Joe		4/20/1782	man	m	blue short jacket, straw hat	
James		4/24/1782	16 or 17	m	cap [red, Lt. coloured] short brown coat, white dimity jacket, homespun linen trowsers	
Phillis		5/15/1782	woman	f	brown strouding jacket, black shirt, cheque apron, blue stockings, men's shoes	
Bacchus		6/8/1782	about 12	m	white jacket, striped trowsers, no shoes or hat	
Caesar	Augustus	6/15/1782	man	m	regimental blue coat w/ red collar, red waistcoat, linen trowsers, round hat	
Jack		6/15/1782	about 15	m	blue and white striped linen jacket. Pair of parson's grey board cloth trowsers, white homespun linen shirt, small round hat	
David		7/17/1782	13 or 14	m	scarlet waistcoat and trowsers	
		7/27/1782	about 24	f	shift and under petticoat	
		8/3/1782	13 or 14	f	white short gown, black calimanco skirt, no cap, black bonnet	pair of ear bobs in her ears

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Tony		8/17/1782	24	m	short Lt. coloured wilton coat, callico jacket, pair long brown silk trowsers, pair new shoes, round black hat	
Adam		8/17/1782	19	m	wore an officers old red coat faced with white, gold basket button, brown jacket and trowsers	
John	Jackson	9/25/1782	about 22	m	Lt. coloured Fustian jacket, waistcoat, breeches, cock'd hat, green and red short outside jacket, pair of black silk breeches	
Peter		10/2/1782	boy	m	white linen shirt, white cloth waistcoat without sleeves, striped Holland trowsers	
Cato		10/12/1782	boy	m	blue short jacket, linen with green, and long linen trowsers	
Jack		10/16/1782	10	m	coarse white shirt, trowsers, old light brown cloth jacket, round hat, without shoes or stockings	
Jack		10/16/1782	boy	m	blue waistcoat, striped jacket, canvas trowsers, grey stockings, without a hat	
		10/26/1782	about 13	m	check shirt, oznabrig trowsers, old red coat w/ black collar and cuffs	
London		10/30/1782	14	m	white wollen waistcoat, breeches, and a shirt	
Billy		1/13/1783	about 20	m	common dress of a sailor, viz, a blue jacket, pair of blue trowsers, round hat, check shirt	
Nancy	Blond	2/15/1783	woman	f	green baize wrapper, light coloured petticoat, bundle of other clothes	
Seth		3/15/1783	about 14	f	red baize jacket, petticoat, high heel'd shoes	
EBB		4/9/1783	18	m	brown coat (French fashion), grey cloth coat, black breeches, large brimed bound hat	
Duff		4/28/1783	boy	m	brown jacket, new fustian trowsers, new wool hat	
Jack		5/10/1783	about 23	m	check shirt, blue waistcoat, blue coatee w/ red cape, long white trowsers, white stockings	
Cesar		6/14/1783	about 26	m	Lt. coloured cloth waistcoat, no sleeves, white metal hole buttons, pair of jean breeches, shoes stockings, half worn white hat	
Poll		6/14/1783	about 13	f	red cloath (sic) petticoat, Lt. Blue short gown, home made	

First name	Surname	Ad date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other adornment
Luce		6/29/1783	about 30	f	green striped fluff gown (washed), dark blue moreen petticoat, gauze cap, pink ribbons, no hat, dark purple callicoe gown	
Jack		7/9/1783	b/w 11 and 12	m	osnaburg shirt, tow trousers	
		8/16/1783	little boy	m	blue coat w/ red cuffs and collar, fustian trousers, with buttons all down the sides	
Lucy		8/13/1783	about 28	f	2 short gowns, 2 petticoats, 1 striped bottom short gown, yellow ground callicoe, black petticoat, one green	
Venus		8/13/1783	5 or 6	f	tow cloth frock	
Madlane		10/3/1783	about 12	f	striped woollen rapper, dark blue petticoat w/ white flowers, bare footed	
Thomas		11/3/1783	man	m	blue sailors jacket, green under waistcoat, whitish woollen or oznabrig trousers	
Kate		10/22/1783	woman	f	callico short gown w/ blue and yellow horses, carriages & soldiers, several caps w/ long ears	
Cuffey		11/5/1783	man	m	brown surtout-coat	
Johannis		11/5/1783	man	m	blue & white striped linen jacket, with shoes and stockings	
Flora		11/12/1783	44 or 45	f	generally wears striped homespun; may be in black	
James		11/12/1783	about 21	m	wears dark brown; may be in black	
Hector		11/19/1783	18	m	round hat, short coatee (Lt. Colour), cloth waistcoat, watch-coat w/velvet cap, coating pair of trousers (grey), white stockings	
Stepney		12/6/1783	20	m	green short coat, blue under waist-one, buck-skin breeches w/ blue surtout-coat	
Prince		12/6/1783	17	m	blue cloth trousers, reddish sailor's jacket, dk brown great coat	
Sarah		12/17/1783	30	f	callicoe short gown, black shirt, black hat trimmed w/ edging; took number of good clothes	
		12/24/1783	13	m	blue short jacket, trousers of the same cloth	

CHAPTER 13. BEADS AND OTHER ADORNMENT

Barbara A. Bianco, Christopher R. DeCorse, and Jean Howson

In this chapter we take the measure of the beads and other personal adornment recovered in association with skeletal remains. We begin with a profile of the burials with adornment, and then consider where and how the items were acquired. Each of the assemblages inventoried in the chapter—beads, cowries, rings and other jewelry—is then described in detail. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, descriptive typologies and findings about manufacture, origin, and age.

13.A. A profile of burials with personal adornment

With the exception of a handful of cowries and a piece of amber, the adornment from the African Burial Ground consisted of factory-made goods. The beads, buttons, cuff links, finger rings, and other ornaments found with the deceased would have been priced modestly in their day. The prominence of copper alloy and simple monochrome glass places the assemblages at the lower end of the ready-to-wear jewelry market. Business in this sector was brisk when the African Burial Ground was open: the supply of inexpensive jewelry increased in volume and variety in every major colonial American city during the 1700s, as did the supply of jewelry crafted with precious metals and stones (see Fales 1995:63-78). London imports and locally-made merchandise were advertised in the weekly press, typically with the enthusiastic but perfunctory prose Manhattan silversmith Daniel Fueter used: “Articles too numerous to mention, all extremely Cheap” (*New-York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 10, 1763; for Manhattan jewelry advertisements, see Gottesman 1938:29-83).

Very little of this ever-expanding stock in trade found its way to the graves of Manhattan’s African workers. Adults were interred with personal adornment during all periods of the African Burial Ground’s archaeologically documented use, as were infants and young children. Still, burials with adornment are uncommon—they are the anomaly, not the norm. Only twenty-five individuals, some 6.7% of the excavated burials, were directly associated with adornment.¹ Among them are two infants, two young children, nine women, eleven men, and one probable adult of undetermined sex and age. Another five individuals had tenuous links to adornment. Table 13.1 summarizes the particulars; problematic cases are marked with an asterisk.

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and *in situ* skeletal remains could be determined clearly. The most highly disturbed burials are not included.

Table 13.1.
Burials with personal adornment

Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Items	Location in grave
6	25 - 30	male? ²	late	8 buttons (5 copper alloy, 2 w/ anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum
10	40 - 45	male	lmid	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole; 5 w/ shanks only)	1 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg
71	25 - 35	female	late	ring	On third finger of right hand
107	35 - 40	female	lmid	bead	Found during laboratory cleaning of cranium, near ear
115	25 - 35	female	mid	ring	On the third finger of the left hand
158	20 - 30	male	late	2 pairs gilt copper-alloy cuff links, round shape ³	At wrists
181	20 - 23	male	late	7 buttons (3 copper alloy; 4 copper-alloy-and-bone w/ impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 buttons on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; cuff links not provenienced)
186	0 - 0.17		late	glass and wire ornament	On the cranium
187	1.5 - 4		late	beads (22)	12 found beneath pelvic area, 10 while screening soil
211	adult	male?	late	1 turquoise enamel cuff link face	On the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin
226	0 - 0.17		early	beads (8)	At throat (beneath mandible)
238	40 - 50	male	lmid	2 pairs octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	At wrists
242	40 - 50	female	late	paste ring	On the middle finger of the right hand
250	adult	undetermined	early	bead	Central part of coffin interior, possibly near pelvis
254	3.5 - 5.5		mid	cast silver pendant	Found during laboratory cleaning below mandible
259	17 - 19	female?	late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, 5 shanks)	4 at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis
310	44 - 52	female	mid	paste ring	Found during laboratory cleaning of left hand
325	25 - 35	male	late	1 gilt copper alloy button	Left upper sacrum
326	45 - 55	male	mid	4 copper alloy domed buttons	In pelvic area and between tops of femurs, near the hands
*332	35 - 40	male?	lmid	curved copper alloy object (possible earring)	Found during laboratory cleaning; attached to coffin wood near thoracic vertebrae
340	39.3 - 64.4	female	early	beads (112) strung with cowries (7)	Around hips and right wrist

² A “?” indicates that the assignment is probable.

³ A “pair” of cuff links—two faces linked together—fastened a sleeve. A single cuff link face was insufficient; a single face is half a pair.

Table 13.1.					
Burials with personal adornment					
Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Items	Location in grave
341	adult	male	mid	1 pair octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	At left radius
371	25 - 35	female	mid	2 turquoise enamel cuff link faces w/ motif	Beneath the left humerus
377	33 - 58	female	lmid	3 copper-alloy rings (missing from lab)	At throat
*387	34 - 44	male	early	cuff link or button fragment	Provenience unknown
392	42.5 - 52.5	male	lmid	2 octagonal copper-alloy cuff link faces	1 at right clavicle, 1 at cervical vertebrae
*398	25 - 35	undetermined	mid	1 octagonal cuff link face; 1 ring	In disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear
415	35 - 55	male	mid	13 copper alloy domed buttons (14 recorded in field)	4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, 2 at sacrum.
*428	40 - 70	female	mid	beads (2)	Unknown; found during screening of grave fill soil.
*434	undetermined	undetermined	mid	bead	Found in soil to west of bones.

It may seem unusual that so few of the dead were adorned when many of the living seem to have embellished themselves in small but memorable ways. Historians who have studied fugitive slave advertisements published during the 18th century call attention to scores of city dwellers accessorized with panache. Earrings, bracelets, and buckles added a finishing touch to the clothing Africans wore in Manhattan, Philadelphia, and Charleston; buttons gussied up hats. Hair, perhaps the most personal and distinctive adornment of all, was sculpted, plaited, tufted, and queued. Less frequently noted, but not out of place in an era of peruke-wearing men, were wigs and toupees (White 1991:185-206; Smith and Wojtowicz 1989; Windley 1983; White and White 1995b).

Yet whether adornment was more widespread among the living than among the dead is unclear. Mentioned in the advertisements are items that would not have survived at the African Burial Ground, including handkerchiefs, ribbons, lacing, and fabric bands. The disparity is formidable. Roughly a third of the adornment recorded in the list (Table 12.3) of Africans who escaped from New York City households between 1732 and 1783 was made with perishable material, and rarely did a person have adornment of more than one type.⁴

⁴ None of the women did. Seven of the ten adornment-wearing women listed in Table 12.3 had “perishable only” items, as did ten of the forty-two adornment-wearing men. Three women and twenty-five men had “durable only” adornment. Seven men had a mix of durable and perishable goods. Not all advertisements included descriptions of the clothing and jewelry black city residents wore and took with them when they fled from bondage. Table 12.3 is limited to advertisements that describe clothing and jewelry. It thus represents a subset of the advertisements published in 18th century New York newspapers.

Missing from the advertisements, however, are the adornment worlds of the very young and the middle-aged. Africans who fled from Manhattan households typically were in their late teens and their twenties (White 1991:122-124), a pattern illustrated in Table 12.3. Only 3 of the 205 entries feature infants and young children: an eight-month-old child and its mother escaped in the autumn of 1759; a five-to-six-year-old girl headed into the city's Revolutionary War-torn streets in August 1783, as did a little boy. The little boy's fustian trousers had buttons all down the sides but neither the infant nor the girl appears to have had an adornment to their names. The upper end of the life cycle is better represented than the lower end but not appreciably so. Decorations are scarce in this cohort as well: just one of the eight adults with "about 40" or more years of age had adornment, a man named Tom whose new shoes were fastened with buckles. Most of the individuals listed in the roster had no adornment of any kind, and thus were not unlike their deceased neighbors and kin.

Even so, there is little reason to suppose that burials with adornment held people who were more beloved or better off economically than their contemporaries. It is true that the African Burial Ground served many people for whom the cost of small luxuries was dear.⁵ It is also true that the possessions of the poor seldom stayed in place for long. Objects owned by the poor "[migrate] under the pressure of debt" (Stallybrass 1998:196-199). In colonial Manhattan's African community adornment migrated for still another reason: individuals on the run reconfigured their accessories for expediency and disguise. Pompey no longer had earrings when he fled from bondage in 1763; Claus absconded in 1757 with a bundle of things, including a flowered stuff waistcoat lined with shalloon and likely fastened with decorative buttons. But adornment wearing is a matter of inclination as well as circumstance. Not everyone chooses to wear adornment, even in communities where people and possessions are less likely to roam.

The types of adornment from the burial ground were narrow in range. For instance, decorations for the feet come up short when the cemetery population is compared to the African public at large. By the 1750s Africans in colonial Manhattan were wearing shoes fastened with buckles of brass, silver, steel, pewter, and stone, a reference to crystal, or perhaps to paste, metal jewelry with glass insets held by a "bezel," in the form of a groove or a flange. Bits of leather and fragments of metal that hint of footwear were not recovered in the field or the laboratory. The reasonable inference is that shoes were held back from the grave.

Decorations for the head come up short, too, but headwear typically took the form of perishable hairstyles and perishable hats with ribbons and bands. Consequently, neither the decisions nor the decision makers are etched sharply enough to discern where community-wide sensibilities bumped up against individual tastes. Some hairstyles may have harbored durable items like the glass bead from Burial 107. Prior to interment the hair of the deceased may have been dressed and groomed (for representations of hair and

⁵ Archaeologist Barbara J. Heath (1999) examines how "small luxuries" were acquired. We use the phrase here and in 13.B consider the question she poses. Own-account economic activities are discussed in the African Burial Ground History Report (Medford 2004:119-121).

hats in African art, a key source of knowledge about African adornment in the past, see Seiber and Harriman 2000).

Although the adornment from the cemetery was not as varied as the adornment seen on Manhattan streets, its expressive sweep was arguably the same. If adornment can be likened to a language, a system of symbolic communication akin to speech, then it spoke in a babble of tongues during the period when the African Burial Ground was in use. It conveyed considerable information as well, from evocations of a remembered Africa to subtle mockery of European pretensions (see White 1991:196-199). This communicative intricacy reflected the complexity of the city. Colonial Manhattan was a crossroads on the commercial map and its shops and homes had an international cast. After 1703, newcomers outnumbered the native born and no particular nationality, ethnicity, or religion held sway (Butler 2000:9). As the century progressed, members of the black community hailed from an ever-widening swath of a continent that hundreds of African societies called home.

Two notes on terminology may be of help before moving on to the individual profiles. “Button” is used more restrictively than in Chapter 12. Here it refers to decorative buttons recovered alone (Burial 325) and *en masse* (Burials 6, 10, 259, 326, and 415). Plain, serviceable buttons may have spruced up a collar or personalized a cuff, or perhaps dangled from a string at the neck or the wrist. Burials with plain buttons are not included in the adornment profile because any aesthetic value these buttons held for their wearers is not apparent from the grave.

Second, “personal adornment” and “personal decoration” are used interchangeably though only the latter was a commonplace phrase three hundred years ago. “Jewelry” and “ornament” stand in as well. The qualifier “personal” is sometimes omitted but always implied because it best describes the domain in which the items belong. A consideration of the formidable gear attached to a necklace recovered from another African Diaspora cemetery of the period may clarify the distinction we seek to make. The necklace from Burial 72 at Newton Plantation, Barbados, held one large agate, seven cowries, fourteen glass beads, twenty-one dog canines, and five vertebrae from a bony fish—an array linked to the practice of divination (see Handler 1997 and Handler and Lange 1978:125-130). There are no counterparts to that necklace at the African Burial Ground (compare LaRoche 1994b:12). Adornment worn for personal pleasure is by no means culturally insignificant, however. As we explain in the discussion that follows the profiles, the adornments from lower Manhattan connected their wearers both to the wider African community and to the constraints and possibilities of the times.

Infants and young children with personal adornment

Eight opaque yellow beads characteristic of African manufacture were found at the throat of the infant in Burial 226 (Bead Type 14; see Figure 5.3).⁶ The infant had its own coffin

⁶ The characteristics of each Bead Type are summarized in Table 13.3. Illustrations of beads from each type follow the table.

but shared the grave of an adult man. The grave is placed in the Early Group of excavated burials (see Chapter 6).

Twenty-two black beads, drawn and cut from glass made in Europe, encircled the hips of the one-and-a-half-to-four-year-old child in Burial 187 (Bead Type 6). This child's grave was in the northern part of the cemetery and is assigned to the Late Group, post 1776. The grave appears to have been placed next to or between the graves of adults (see Chapter 9).

A cast silver pendant that may have been attached to a string and worn as a necklace was found with Burial 254, a Middle Group interment that held a child between three-and-a-half and five-and-a-half years old.⁷ The pendant, which rested at the child's neck, was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the skeletal remains. Burial 254 was directly beneath the coffin of another young child of less than two years of age; the two youngsters appear to have been placed together in an area crowded with burials.

A glass and wire filigree ornament was found on the cranium of the infant in Burial 186, a Late Group interment. Although seemingly aligned with adult burials to the north, Burial 186 is one of a handful of spatially isolated infant burials.

Adults with personal adornment

The woman in Burial 340 wore two strands of beads assembled primarily from a mix of European-made glass in shades of blue and yellow (Figure 13.1). The smaller of the two strands, a bracelet with forty-one glass beads, was draped around her right wrist. The larger strand encircled her hips; it held seventy glass beads, one amber bead, and seven cowries. These two strands account for all of the cowries from the African Burial Ground and approximately 76% of the beads (112 of 147 specimens), including half of the bead types represented (Bead Types 1-4, 7-9, 12, 15). Burial 340 is assigned to the Early Group. The woman it held was between thirty-nine and sixty-four years old when she died. In addition to her jewelry, she was interred with other items, including an unused tobacco pipe (see Chapter 5).

Two other adults each had a single bead. Burial 250, an Early Group burial of an adult of undetermined sex and age, had a large spherical bead of opaque black (Bead Type 11). The bead was recovered from the central part of the coffin, possibly near the pelvis, in association with an iron mass, a pewter tack, and a copper-alloy button. The thirty-five-to-forty-year-old woman in Burial 107, a Late-Middle Group interment, had an opaque redwood bead with a transparent green core (Bead Type 5). The bead was recovered near her ear during the laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

Adults were laid to rest with their rings as well as their beads. Four copper-alloy finger rings, two of which had glass ("paste") insets of seemingly identical design, were associated with women from three temporal groups. The forty-four-to-fifty-two-year-old

⁷ Illustrations of the metal jewelry are located in the inventory at the end of 13.E.

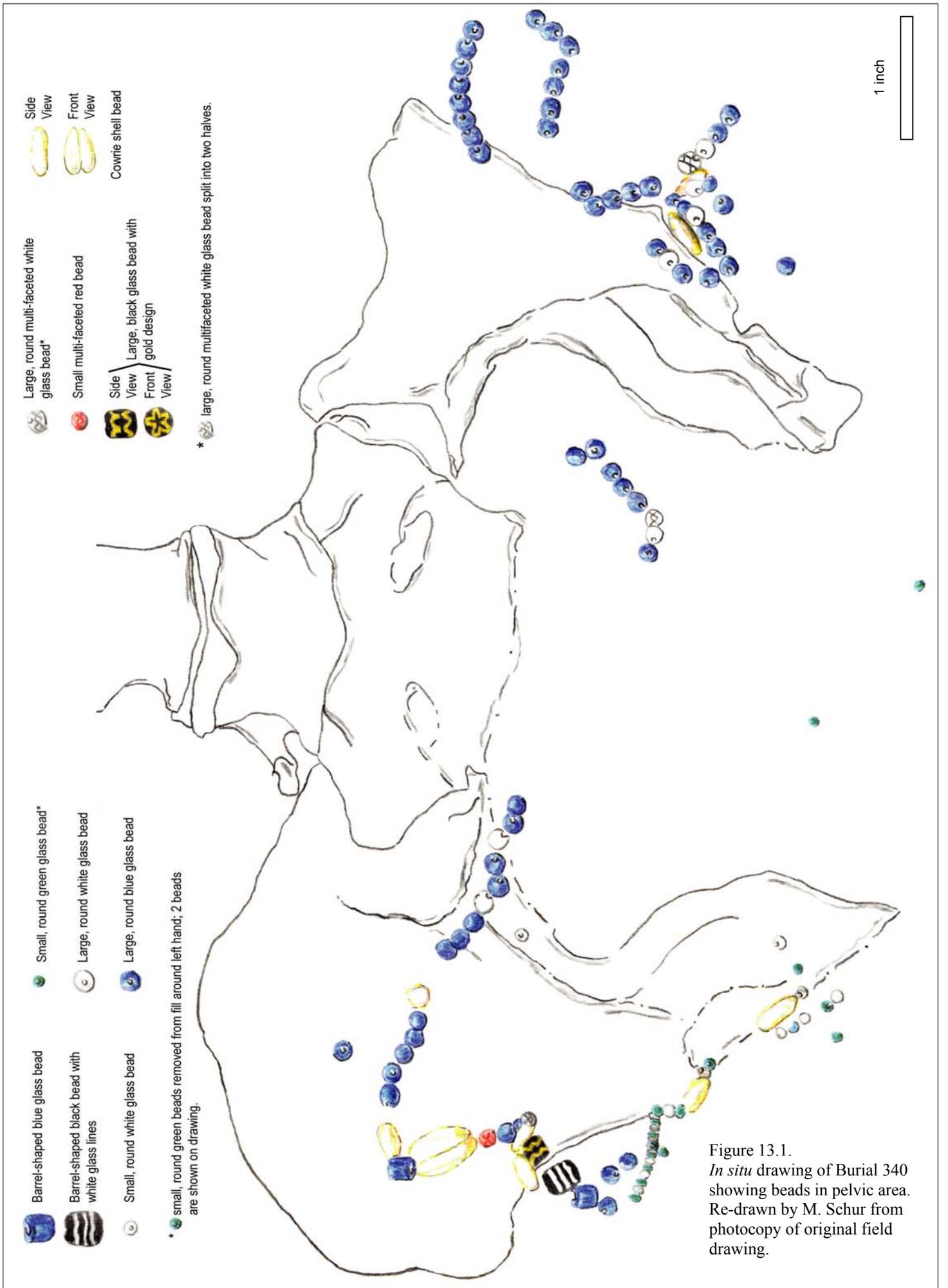


Figure 13.1.
In situ drawing of Burial 340 showing beads in pelvic area. Re-drawn by M. Schur from photocopy of original field drawing.

1 inch

woman in Burial 310 wore her paste ring on her left hand, although the exact finger placement is unknown. The ring was recovered in the laboratory, minus its central inset, which is thought to have been missing at the time of interment. Burial 310 is assigned to the Middle Group; the grave appears to have been placed along the south side of the fence that once traversed the site. The paste ring of the forty-to-fifty-year-old woman in Burial 242 was found on the third finger of the right hand. Coins were placed over her eyes; pins found in her lumbar region and sternum are suggestive of clothing. She was buried in what appears to be a north-south row of graves situated north of the fence line; her grave is assigned to the Late Group, post 1776.

The twenty-five-to-thirty-five-year-old women in Burials 115 and 71 wore rings with plain bands, the former on the third finger of the left hand, the latter on the third finger of the right hand. Pin fragments on the cranium of the woman in Burial 115 point to shrouding; her grave is assigned to the Middle Group. Pins near the hips of the woman in Burial 71 hint at clothing. Burial 71 is assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

One woman (Burial 337, a Late-Middle Group interment) had three copper-alloy rings that lay side-by-side near her throat (Figure 13.2). One of the rings had a small fragment of hair or fiber attached to the bottom. The material may have been from a string of some sort. If that was the case, then the rings might have been part of a necklace. The woman in Burial 337 was between thirty-three and fifty-eight years old. Whether she was interred in a coffin is unclear. Excavators noted deteriorated material, possibly remnants of a coffin lid and floor, above and below the skeletal remains. A substance excavators believed to be red ocher was observed on the possible wood remnants.

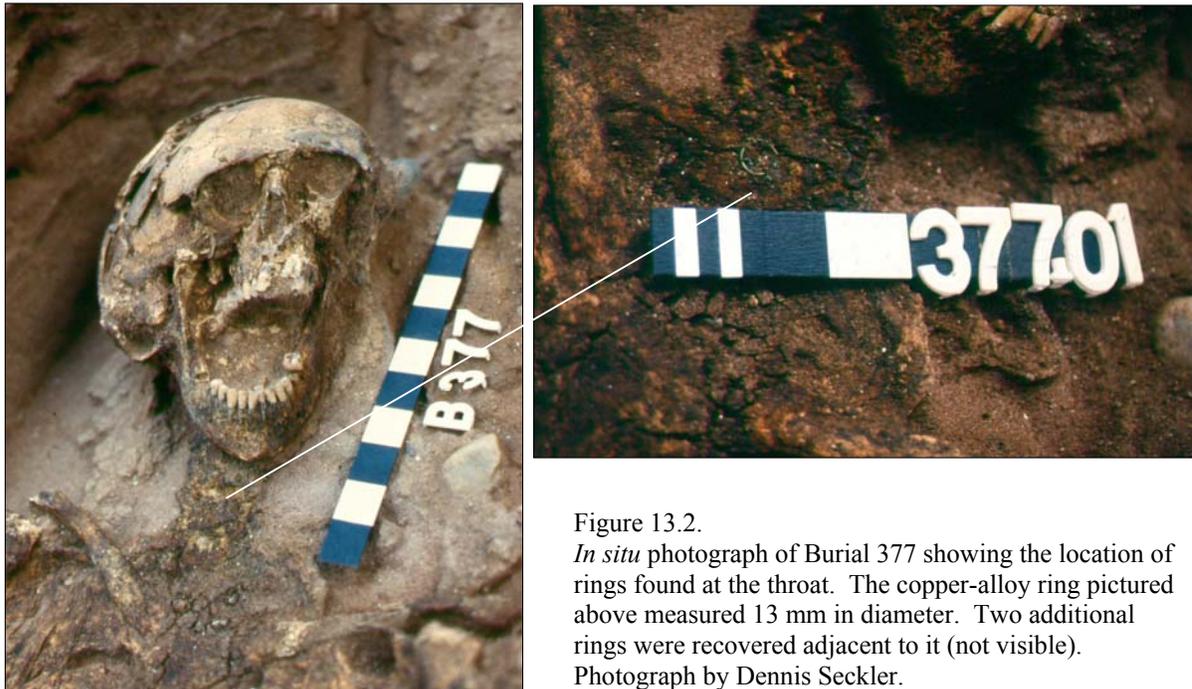


Figure 13.2.

In situ photograph of Burial 377 showing the location of rings found at the throat. The copper-alloy ring pictured above measured 13 mm in diameter. Two additional rings were recovered adjacent to it (not visible).

Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Decorative cuff links were found with six individuals interred during the same era as the women with rings. Some of the cuff links, called “sleeve buttons” or “links of buttons” during the 18th century, came in plain and fancy versions. Others were no longer attached to their mates. Still others were missing the shanks that would have been soldered to their backs when the items were new. The two turquoise enamel faces recovered from Burial 371 were decorated with a squat, white-and-pink V that straddled two like-colored dots. This burial, which is assigned to the Middle Group, held a twenty-five-to-thirty-five-year-old woman interred without a coffin; the cuff link faces were found beneath her left upper arm. The turquoise enamel face recovered near the chin of the individual in Burial 211 was undecorated. This individual, probably a man, also was interred without a coffin, directly over another grave, in what appears to be a north-south row of Late Group burials, post 1776.

Three men had octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cufflinks with impressed designs.⁸ One pair was recovered near the left wrist of a man of undetermined age who occupied Burial 341, which is assigned to the Middle Group. This man’s coffin was directly atop the coffin of a woman with whom he may have shared a grave. Two pairs were found near the wrists of the forty-to-fifty year old man in Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment. Another Late-Middle Group interment, Burial 392, held a forty-two-to-fifty-two-year-old man with two cuff link faces, one near the right shoulder and another near the cervical vertebrae. Buttons and fibers indicate that he was clothed when interred; unlike most burials, the head was oriented to the east. In addition, a pair of round, gilded copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the twenty-to-thirty-year-old man in Burial 158, another coffin-less burial from the Late Group.

Seven individuals were apparently laid to rest in jackets, shirts, and breeches fastened with a mix of decorative buttons, primarily cast copper alloy but also pewter and wood. Button faces ranged in style—two had anchor motifs; others were domed, smooth, ridged, and gilded—but the buttons worn by particular individuals did not always match. The domed buttons belonged to men from the Middle Group (Burials 326 and 415). Another man, a Late-Middle Group interment, had smooth-faced buttons (Burial 10), as did a probable woman (Burial 259) and a probable man (Burial 6) whose graves are assigned to the Late Group. The latter two individuals also had buttons in other styles, including buttons with ridged faces (the woman) and anchor motifs (the man). Two other Late Group burials also had decorative buttons. The man in burial 325 had a single gilt copper-alloy button (Burial 325). The buttons recovered from the man in Burial 181 came in different materials as well as styles. Four of the buttons had turned bone backs and copper-alloy fronts decorated with repoussé or impressed designs.

Problematic cases

Artifacts with ambiguous provenience are not uncommon on archaeological sites, and the adornment assemblages have their share. A whitish tan bead characteristic of African manufacture (Bead Type 13) was found in soil to the west of the bones from Burial 434, a

⁸ The cuff links and buttons referred to here and in the next paragraph are illustrated in Chapter 12.C.

Middle Group interment that was only partially excavated when fieldwork ceased. The age and sex of the burial's occupant could not be determined. Grave fill from Burial 428, another Middle Group interment, yielded two gray beads with facets (Bead Type 10). This burial held a woman between forty and seventy years of age. A third burial from the Middle Group, Burial 398, was found in re-deposited soil that contained a copper-alloy ring and fragments from a copper-alloy cuff link with an octagonal shape. The remains of the deceased, an adult between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, were heavily disturbed by the construction of a retaining wall during the archaeological excavation of the site.

There is one case in which cuff links were recorded in the laboratory but not in the field. Laboratory records indicate that a fragment of a cast copper-alloy cufflink or button from an unknown provenience was attributed to Burial 387, an Early Group interment of a man between thirty-four and forty-four years of age. The item was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Finally, a curved piece of copper alloy, identified tentatively as either a remnant of an earring or a bent pin, was attached to a fragment of coffin wood recovered from Burial 332, a Late-Middle Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between thirty-five and forty years old. It was found in the laboratory when the thoracic vertebrae were cleaned. More distinctive than the object is the mark on the coffin, "HW38," which is discussed in Chapter 10.

Problematic cases are not reflected in the count of burials with personal adornment. Had the problematic cases been included, the total would still form too modest a base to support meaningful inferences about consumer preferences or aesthetic trends.

Discussion

Of all the objects associated with the individuals interred at the African Burial Ground, adornment would seem to be the special preserve of the self. Shroud pins, coffins, and grave markers are the stuff of cemeteries. Adornments, in contrast, are personal effects that presumably kept company with their wearers prior to death. Moreover, adornments may have been among the most meaningful of the personal effects that New Yorkers living under slavery used or owned. Unlike clothing, which slaveholders supplied, the grace notes fell to Africans themselves.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that black New Yorkers enlisted their adornments to redress constraints slavery placed on their day-to-day lives. Newspapers of the period call attention to the deployment of adornment in pursuit of freedom. On view at the African Burial Ground, with the infants and young children in Burials 186, 187, 226, and 254, is another foundational project adornment supported: the shoring up of intergenerational ties.

Manhattan's compact homes and episodic commercial economy made an inauspicious framework for African childrearing. Africans resided in every municipal ward during the

1700s, but they typically worked apart from their compatriots and kin. Slaveholdings were small—singletons and pairs were the norm; turnover among owners was high; and family members were scattered when sold within the city and its surrounds (Kruger 1985:128-259; Medford 2004:138-143; White 1991:88-92). Information about how parents cared for children who lived at a remove is difficult to come by. Weekend and workday visiting, and the gifts that enlivened it, was a key strategy for maintaining intergenerational attachments in the plantation colonies of Virginia and South Carolina (Morgan 1998:498-558). Visiting and gift giving would also have connected the families city dwellers formed. Yet black family visiting went largely unnoticed in white Manhattan unless truancy was involved (on New Yorkers who ran away to visit relatives, see White 1991:134-139). The things adults routinely give to infants and young children—food, names, stories, spiritual instruction, physical care—went unnoticed, too, as did occasional gifts like a silver pendant, a piece of filigree, a necklace, and a string of beads looped at the waist.

The relationship between the adult givers and the child receivers did not come down to us. Among the possibilities are fictive kin, relatives created by cultural convention rather than the circumstances of birth. Also unknown are the events that prompted the gift giving, and the material burdens the givers incurred. Only the lines of exchange are intact. They tell of emotional and material investments in children within a community where the likelihood of seeing children mature was uncertain.

Instances of adult-to-child gift giving in the archaeological record of 18th century slavery are unusual, both in mainland America and farther afield. In addition to the four youngsters at the African Burial Ground, a child with a bead necklace was uncovered in the African portion of a cemetery shared by the Nagel and Dyckman families, Dutch homesteaders with adjoining farms in Washington Heights, now a part of upper Manhattan (Bolton 1924:203-204). A burial site in the Chesapeake held an infant interred with a string of small white beads (Hudgins 1977:70). No adornments were recovered with the infants and young children laid to rest at Newton Plantation; interment practices at this Barbados cemetery were selective, however, and relatively few infants and young children were buried there (Handler and Lange 1978:285-87).

Although material endearments deepened ties among peers, the gifting of jewelry to friends, sweethearts, and spouses is not accessible from the burial ground. Unlike the young adornment wearers, the adults did not leave behind any telltale evidence about the hands that brought personal decorations into their lives. Neither did the items the adults had. Buttons and cuff links destined for clothing could have been received as gifts, along with rings and strung or single beads. Conversely, all of the items could have been self-acquired, including the finger rings with plain bands (Burials 71 and 115) that connote matrimony to 21st century American eyes. Africans who lived three hundred years ago saw rings in a different light (see Herbert 1984:23-31). So, also, did colonial Americans of European descent (Fales 1995:23-41). Because the custom of wearing wedding rings was not universally common among the latter, there would have been little reason to pressure enslaved Africans to solemnize their unions with rings.

Men and women configured their worlds when they wore adornment, not just when they gave it away. Accessories reserved for festive occasions helped separate work from leisure, a role that clothing played (White 1991:195). Adornment worn everyday also put a stamp on the routines and rituals in which adults engaged. The waist beads from burial 340 exemplify the everyday category, albeit with a twist: they would have been hidden beneath the wearer's clothes, if not in Manhattan, than in parts of Ghana and Nigeria, where women used waist beads to apportion the public and private sides of their lives. Waist beads doubled as foundation garments. But rather than reshaping a woman's figure, like girdles or corsets, waist beads helped conceal it from view. The garment (typically a wrapper or an apron) that covered a woman's hips was tucked around the beads, which functioned as an "under" belt to keep the garment secure. Waist beads were removed from time-to time for restringing but otherwise stayed in place. They were visible to people who lived in emotional and physical proximity to the wearer, such as a husband or a sweetheart, and the women with whom she bathed and groomed (for the etiquette of waist bead concealment and display among the Akuapem of Ghana, a group whose kingdom dates to the beginning of the 1700s, see Gilbert 1993:126-127).

Whether the waist beads from Burial 340 were worn daily beneath a gown or a petticoat is impossible to know. Still, the beads are a point of contact with the gendered dimensions of the world black New Yorkers created. Historians of black life in 18th century Manhattan have pieced together male-to-female population ratios and patterns of labor (Kruger 1985; White 1991). The Skeletal Biology Team has reconstructed male and female mortality trends (see Blakey et al. 2004b [Chapter 13 of the Skeletal Biology Report]). Evidence on how Africans construed manhood and womanhood is harder to find. Women's subjective understandings about femininity and comportment are particularly elusive, not only for Manhattan but also for the regions from which captives came. The images and associations that made waist beads meaningful to women with dissimilar backgrounds and experiences are elusive as well (for present-day images among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, see Drewel and Mason 1998:80-81).

While some adornment wearers drew on their homeland fashions, others looked to their friends. Thomas de Voe, a chronicler of the city's public markets, called attention to stylistic camaraderie among black youths and men who showed off their dance moves at Catharine Market, an eastside food-selling venue established in 1786. A dance contingent from Long Island favored neatly tied queues and improvised wigs. The signature look of a group from Tappan, New Jersey, centered on plaited forelocks bound with tea lead, a thinly hammered lead alloy named for the tea boxes it lined (De Voe 1862[1969:341, 344-45]). De Voe did not describe the decorations black bystanders wore, but sorting out the influences and sizing up the trends would have been more difficult in the city than in its less congested surrounds.

Matters of style are no better documented on the African side of the Atlantic than in New York. Beads and metal jewelry were available throughout the Atlantic world, as we show in 13.B, and adornment wearers in western Africa were inveterate recyclers of local and imported goods. Yet the canon of knowledge observers built during the 17th and 18th centuries makes a poor fashion gazetteer. It highlights the coasts rather than the

hinterlands that provisioned New York's African labor force (see Curtin 1964:11-27 and Figure 2.18). Its sociological sightlines are limited as well. More often than not what dazzled European visitors and African artists of the day were the accoutrements of the privileged and the sumptuary systems that underwrote the expansion of African states (on the use of art to advance statecraft in 18th century Benin, see Ben-Amos 1999).

Observers like the Reverend Willhelm Müller illustrate the extent of the documentary gaps. During his stay in the Gold Coast kingdom of the Fetu, Müller noticed the adornments of the general public as well as of the elite. Ordinary men who lived in the shadow of Fort Frederiksborg, where Müller served as chaplain from 1662 to 1669, wore "poor-quality beads" or cowries around their necks, and copper or iron rings on their arms and hands. Ordinary women plaited their hair "elegantly" and sometimes "[hung] just one large blue bead in it." A string of "common beads," and "perhaps an elegant little cord woven from bark," encircled their legs, arms, and necks. Cowries were becoming widely available during this period but were not used as adornment among the Fetu elite. Wealthy men and women ornamented themselves with gold and precious stones (Müller 1673, translated in Jones 1983:203-207).

Because only a small fraction of the era's adornment styles entered the historical record, the beads and other jewelry from the African Burial Ground are unreliable guides to their wearer's ethnic roots. Yet these items are not bereft of identifying detail. They belong to an era when Africans in geographically far-flung places were using mass-produced goods to organize everyday desires and circumvent the inequities that troubled their lives.

13.B. Personal adornment in historical context

Personal adornments like those found at the African Burial Ground were highly portable and widely circulated, both in the Atlantic world and in mainland North America. Most, if not all, were available in New York City as well. We look briefly at the traffic in adornment along the west African coast, where the majority of Africans sent directly to New York from the 1660s onward were embarked; in the Caribbean, where Africans were transshipped to North American ports; in mainland America, where trade was oriented to Native American populations; and finally, in the city of New York.

Because the African Burial Ground provided a resting place for black New Yorkers during the 17th and 18th centuries, our temporal focus is confined to the high tide of Atlantic trade. This period witnessed enormous change in the material worlds of the regions from which captives were taken: monetary standards, sumptuary codes, and consumption patterns were reconfigured as European and African powers vied for control of labor and goods. Commerce and consumption on the American side of the Atlantic changed dramatically, too. Economic expansion in the decades after 1680 drew colonial Americans into the consumer revolution then sweeping through the Netherlands, Britain, and France. By the mid 1700s, "material goods appeared with increasing frequency at cheaper prices among far more consumers than ever before" (Butler 2000:154). Understanding how adornment from an African cemetery in lower Manhattan is

entangled with Atlantic commerce is important because African labor produced much of the plenitude that 17th and 18th century consumers enjoyed.

Glass beads formed the largest portion of personal decorations imported to western Africa, with “many billions landed in barrels, cases, and casks” along the Guinea Coast (Alpern 1995:22). Venice was the main center of European bead production, though bead making also thrived in the Netherlands from the late 16th through the mid 18th centuries (Bart 1988, Karklins 1974, Sleen 1963). Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, and France had glass bead industries as well.

Prior to the heyday of European mercantile imperialism, glass beads from Egypt, South Asia, and Spain reached western Africa via trans-Saharan trade routes. So, too, did beads made of carnelian and other precious stones. The trans-Saharan traffic in exotic glass and stone beads was supplemented by local production and benefited primarily the political elite (Insoll and Shaw 1997:15-16; Ogundiran 2002:432-436). For the West African public at large, the mass availability of glass beads coincided with the boom in Atlantic commerce.

To be sure, glass beads and jewelry such as silver chains and metal rings represented only a small percentage of the overall value of European imports. Cloth and clothing dominated the European-West African trade “from start to finish” (Alpern 1995:6).⁹ Yet the sheer volume of personal adornment was nonetheless enormous, and it grew in amount and range as the 18th century progressed.

Imports of personal decorations varied regionally, as did imports of cowries and metal, two other materials from which adornments were made. Cowries may have “touched the daily lives of [ordinary] individuals” more profoundly than other Atlantic imports (Ogundiran 2002:440; Gregory 1996). Cowries underwrote secular and sacred exchange in an ever-expanding shell-money zone that eventually extended from the Bight of Benin to the Mali Empire, where the monetization of cowries took hold in the context of trans-Saharan trade. The amount of cowries in western Africa escalated dramatically with the shifting of primary supply routes from land to sea. Between 1700 and 1790, the British and Dutch cartels that dominated the maritime trade moved more than 25 million pounds by weight of cowries—over 10 billion individual shells—into West African ports (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:58-61). The contours of regional supply and demand on the eve of the boom are shown in Table 13.2, which focuses on cowries and adornments carried under England’s flag.

⁹ The dominance of textiles is evident in Eltis’s (2000:300) snapshot of merchandise shipped from London aboard crown vessels to West and West Central Africa between 1662 and 1713. Textiles were by far the most important import, accounting for 55% by value for the combined regions of the Guinea Coast, followed by metals (18%), cowries (6%), personal decorations (6%), containers (4%), guns and gunpowder (4%), spirits (2%), luxury goods (1%), and miscellaneous items (5%). Alpern (1995) provides information on the following categories of goods: cloth (Indian and European), clothing (especially kerchiefs, hats and caps), linens, un-worked or semi-processed metal, metal containers and other metal wares such as tools and utensils, firearms, beads, coral, cowries, spirits, tobacco, glassware, ceramics and paper.

Table 13.2.
Adornments and cowries imported into Africa by region, 1662-1713¹⁰

	Upper Guinea	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central	Windward Coast	Total
Value (£ sterling) of personal decorations imported into Africa	12,700	4,600	6,700	13,000	900	100	38,000
Percent of imports to each region represented by personal decorations	27%	1%	8%	14%	1%	not calculated	6%
Value of cowries	400	3,900	38,300	800	0		43,400
Percent represented by cowries	1%	1%	44%	1%	0		6%

Africans refashioned imported commodities into goods used for personal display and official regalia as well as food production and market exchange, activities that extend and intensify social life. Un-worked and semi-processed metal fed a millennia-old industry attuned to shifts in material availability and consumer demand (Herbert 1984:9-11).¹¹ African smiths recast iron bars into farm implements, household utensils, and bangles. Brass and copper *manillas*, open-ended bracelets imported by the millions to West Africa beginning in the 15th century, were worn as jewelry but also melted down to make plaques, weights, and measures (Alpern 1995:13). Thin sheet brass was especially prized in Benin, as Captain Thomas Phillips learned during his stopover in Whydah in 1694; the sheets were cut up to make bracelets and bands for adorning the neck and the limbs (cited in Handler and Lange 1978:156). Bracelets recovered archaeologically from pre 19th century contexts at Elmina on the Gold Coast were likely produced from white metal and iron wire and rods acquired from overseas (DeCorse 2001:135).

Glass beads shipped from Europe were also reworked in African locales. The melting, grinding, polishing, and drilling of imported glass beads pre-dates the Atlantic trade, as archaeological finds from Mali and Nigeria attest (DeCorse 1989; Insoll and Shaw 1997; Ogundiran 2002). Although the history of African glassmaking is not well understood, several different industries of unknown ancestry are represented in West Africa, including one involving the firing, in clay molds, of chipped and powdered glass (Lamb 1976, 1978; Wild 1937). Glass from the Atlantic trade came to be used as raw material in the manufacture of powder-glass beads (DeCorse 2001:137). Powder-glass beads were recovered at the African Burial Ground with Burials 226 and 434.

The presence in colonial Manhattan of glass beads characteristic of West African manufacture calls attention to the movement of adornment *from* Africa *to* the Americas. This aspect of the material culture of Atlantic slavery is not well charted. Some Africans

¹⁰ Source: Eltis (2000:300) adapted by Ogundiran (2002:430).

¹¹ Frank McManamon, who kindly reviewed a draft of this report for the National Park Service, contributed to our phrasing of this point.

arrived in the Americas with adornment, but how often this occurred and whether the items were brought from home or acquired en route is unclear. Captors were not squeamish about confiscating the belongings of the captured, as indicated by the disheartening spectacle William Hugh Grove observed in 1732 in a Virginia port: “The Boyes and Girles [aboard the slave ship were] all Stark naked; so Were the greatest part of the Men and Women. Some had beads about their necks, arms, and Wasts, and a ragg or Piece of Leather the bigness of a fig Leafe” (cited in Baumgarten 2002:132). Shippers were not averse to parceling out adornments stowed on board. In 1796, the women on a slaver anchored in Carlisle Bay, off the southwest coast of Barbados, wore necklaces strung with glass beads acquired, apparently, from the crew. General William Dyott, who described the scene, learned from the ship’s master that new-stringing the beads was the women’s “chief employment” (cited in Handler and Lange 1978:147).

That 18th century merchants were not always able to off-load their adornment cargos in African ports is confirmed by the salvaging of the British slaver *Henrietta Marie*. A cache of glass beads was recovered from the hold of the ship, which sank off Key West in 1701 during the last leg of its London-Calabar-Kingston route (African-American Archaeology Newsletter 1997:9).

Yet Africans crossed the Atlantic as sailors, not just as commodities enchained below deck. Black seafaring took root in the emerging Anglo-American maritime world of the second quarter of the 17th century. The presence of enslaved and free black seamen in North American ports and plantation roadsteads increased steadily after 1740, as did the number of black New Yorkers who fled from bondage in sailor guise (see Table 12.3, entries from 1748 to 1783). By 1803, black men filled approximately 18% of American seamen’s jobs (Bolster 1997:2-9). Ships and boats provided a “porous boundary” across which “goods, ideas, individuals, and aesthetics” flowed (Bolster 1997:7). During their travels black seamen may well have acquired strings of beads or cowries, which could have been sold, exchanged, or given as gifts upon return to port.

European-made glass beads, buttons, cuff links, and copper-alloy rings were imported to and available for sale in the circum-Caribbean colonies of Britain, Holland, Spain and Portugal during the 17th and 18th centuries. Captives who ultimately were transported to New York may have acquired adornments in the Caribbean. Avenues for acquisition of adornment included own-account economic activity, such as marketing produce, processed foodstuffs, and livestock.

Personal decorations produced in European factories circulated widely in mainland North America. Glass beads and metal and paste rings akin to those found at the African Burial Ground are documented on colonial-era sites ranging from Upper Michigan and upstate New York to southern Florida (see Deagan 1987; Karklins 1992; Quimby 1966; Smith 1965; Stone 1974; Wood 1974; Wray and Schoff 1953). French, Spanish, English, and Dutch trading cartels and colonial agents used adornments in conjunction with other commodities to negotiate “favored” trading partnerships with Native American populations. Native Americans, in turn, drew on such items to reconfigure status relations and spheres of influence amongst themselves.

Imported and locally made jewelry was plentiful in New York City. Silversmiths who apprenticed in Europe and in the mainland British colonies crowded Manhattan, as did specialist jewelers who worked in enamel and set gems (Fales 1995:66-70). Silversmiths made large and small wares for wealthy patrons and the general public, sometimes acting as jobbers for retailers, sometimes operating retail stores of their own, often with a jeweler on site (Barquist 2001:25). Charles Oliver Bruff, a Maryland-born silversmith's son, employed two jewelers, one from London and another from Paris. Enameled cuff links, brass buttons, earrings, hair jewels, and "all sorts of silver smiths work" could be found on the shelves of his Maiden Lane shop (*New-York Mercury*, January 3, 1763; *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, May 25, 1772).

Personal adornment was sold in general emporiums as well as specialty stores. The account books of merchant Samuel Deall record necklaces, earrings, and beads sold in 1758 (Deall 1757-1766). The price of a "bunch" of black beads, perhaps like those found with Burial 187, was 2 shillings and sixpence. Beaded necklaces—it is not known whether of glass or metal—ranged in price from 1 to 17 shillings, while earrings suitable for children sold from 1 shilling and 10 pence to as much as £1.4 for fine red drop clusters. Deall's emporium on Broad Street was typical of its time, stocking clothing, foodstuffs, house wares, light construction materials, and "all elements of ornamentation for person and home" (Arthur 1985:37).

Although Africans are not likely to have patronized establishments like Deall's or Bruff's, some of the less expensive adornments merchants and craftsmen carried would have made their way into smaller retail venues. "Cheap sales" and auctions of overstocked merchandise lowered retail prices, and small-scale vendors such as peddlers would have bought inexpensively and sold with a modest mark-up. Stocks of stolen goods also circulated in the city, and peddlers were accused of trafficking in ill-gotten wares (on merchants and peddlers, regulatory legislation, and the disposal of overstocks, see Matson 1998:131-134, 139-140, 158).

Personal adornment may also have been received as gifts from the households where Africans toiled, but unlike clothing, jewelry was not customarily given to enslaved household members.

In summary, personal adornment could have been acquired in Africa, along the routes by which Africans reached New York, or in the city itself. Glass beads circulated throughout the Atlantic world. Metal and paste rings were traded in Africa and the Americas, and sold in Manhattan stores. A silver pendant would have been available in a city shop or market stall or as part of a peddler's stock. Enamel cuff links were imported and locally produced. And while cowries never played a visible role in the Native American trade, all manner of items were bought, sold, and fenced at the docks and taverns that comprised the "waterfront economy" (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:181-182).

Considering the poverty of most who were interred at the African Burial Ground, the outlay of even one or two shillings for adornment would likely have been a considerable expense. Holding on to an adornment for a long period of time may have been difficult as well. But however hard-won or precariously held, the beads and other adornments recovered with the deceased were treated as inalienable possessions at the end of their wearers' lives. Why these objects were removed permanently from circulation rather than passed along to one of the mourners is impossible to know. It is unlikely that a single explanation exists. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of the twenty-five individuals directly associated with adornment would have varied. So, too, would the sensibilities of the neighbors and kin who laid these individuals to rest.

13.C. The bead assemblage

The bead assemblage from the African Burial Ground includes 146 glass beads and 1 amber bead. The majority of the glass beads were likely produced in Venice (Murano), but nine glass beads were produced using distinctive firing methods associated with West African manufacturing techniques. The glass beads fell into two structural categories: simple beads made from a single, undecorated layer of glass (144 specimens, or 99%), and complex beads with adventitious decoration (2 specimens, or 1%). Three different production methods—winding, drawing, and firing—were represented.

The color and diaphaneity of the glass beads ranged from opaque black (22 specimens) to opaque and translucent yellow, light gold, and whitish tan (30 specimens). Transparent blue (58 specimens) and translucent blue green (26 specimens) beads predominated. The African Burial Ground bead assemblage, however, does not support hypotheses about color preference at the collective level (see Stine et al. 1996) because the majority of the beads were recovered from a single burial.

Bead sizes ranged from very small (diameters of 2.2-2.3 mm for the black beads from Burial 187) to medium (the powder-glass beads from Burial 226 were approximately 4.5 mm in diameter; most of the blue and light gold beads were in the 5-7 mm range), and large (the opaque black bead from Burial 250 was 13.6 mm in diameter).

Recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody¹²

Almost all the beads were recovered in the field during careful scraping of soil from skeletal remains. Ten beads from Burial 187 were found when screening the soil. The bead from Burial 107 was recovered in the laboratory when the skeletal remains were cleaned.

The majority of the beads were vitrified and glassy. Most beads exhibited signs of glass disease, surface corrosion, pitting, or frosting. The beads were cleaned with a dry brush

¹² Conservation information for the three assemblages discussed in this chapter was obtained from John Milner Associates (see LaRoche 2002:29-39).

to remove the soil but not the weathered surface, a corrosion product that represents the deteriorated original surface, and hence the dimensions of the once-healthy glass.

Porous, flaking, and friable surfaces of six beads from Burial 340 were impregnated with acryloid B-72 to prevent further loss of surface detail. All other beads were left untreated, although five beads from Burial 340 were sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for SEMS/ED elemental analysis. The analysis was undertaken to determine the relationship between chemical composition and corrosion pattern. Test results indicated that the beads were composed primarily of soda, lime, and silica, with varying levels of magnesium and other trace elements. Visually identical glass beads with different patterns of corrosion had different chemical formulations.

The beads were inventoried and discussed by conservator Cheryl La Roche (1994a, 1994b) for John Milner Associates. The assemblage was then reexamined for the Howard University Archaeology Team by archaeologist Christopher R. DeCorse at Syracuse University (Fall 1998, Spring 1999, Summer 2001). Syracuse University returned the beads to the New York laboratory during the summer of 2001. Jon Abbott took a final set of photographs in August 2001. At that time, the beads were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The beads were re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003, and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Methodology, definitions

DeCorse examined the beads under magnification of 10x-20x with strong light. The descriptive data recorded for each bead included:

MANUFACTURE: The primary technique(s) used in the creation of the bead, such as winding, drawing, and firing (see Karklins 1985, 1993; Kidd and Kidd 1983).

STRUCTURE: The arrangement or relationship of the parts of a bead. Structure refers to gross physical characteristics, such as the number of layers or applied decorative elements, not to the chemical or physical characteristics of the glass. Following Karklins' terminology (1985), two structural categories are represented in the assemblage: **SIMPLE** beads, made from a single, undecorated layer of glass, and **COMPLEX** beads, simple beads with adventitious decoration.

SECONDARY MODIFICATION: The alteration of the shape, color, or opacity of a bead through reheating, tumbling, grinding, cutting, and kindred techniques. Beads were modified both at the place of manufacture and long after they left the factory floor.

Determination of when modification took place is sometimes impossible. Some secondary modification techniques, however, can be correlated with particular manufacturing sites.

Venetian manufacturers used several techniques of heat rounding to alter cylindrical drawn beads to spherical, oblate, and barrel shapes. The *a speo* method, introduced in the 18th century, was one method. It was accomplished by reheating beads on a specially designed fork or a speo placed near the door of an oven. Karklins (1993) has identified several diagnostic features on beads altered using this method. These attributes include tangs or tails of glass where the more viscous surface of the glass flowed downward. In other cases beads fused together while on the *a speo*. Drawn beads that show evidence of having been broken apart at the ends, or beads that are fused together with their perforations in perfect alignment, were heat rounded by the *a speo* method. Some of the Type 2 beads have many of these attributes. Some Type 2 beads also have marks within their perforations that may be indicative of the *a speo* method. Beads modified using this technique which do not have any of these attributes would appear the same as other heat rounded beads, and it is often difficult to differentiate these technique on individual beads. All produce similar results, and subsequent polishing, use wear, or weathering obliterates differences. Hence, while all of the Type 2 beads may have been rounded using the *a speo* technique, no clear indications are present on some of the beads.

Drawn beads were also rounded using other methods during the 18th century. Before 1817 beads were rounded by placing them in a large pan with a mixture of sand and wood ash, or plaster and graphite (Karklins 1985:88). The pan was then heated over a charcoal fire and the mixture continuously stirred.

SHAPE: The profile of the bead. Shape implies nothing about the size or contour of the perforation, the relative length of the bead, or the manufacturing processes represented. An effort has been made to use terminology that is clear in casual reading but precise in relation to the attributes represented. For this reason, some terms popular in common usage, such as "barrel shaped" and "donut," have been retained.

SPHERICAL beads have shapes approximating a sphere, mathematically defined as an approximately round body in which the surface is equidistant from the center at all points. Few beads are precisely spherical; the term is used to indicate shapes that are clearly round.

OBLATE beads have profiles that are circular to ellipsoidal.

GLOBULAR beads have a semispherical or ellipsoidal aspect but are irregular or non-symmetrical in cross section. Beads of this shape include specimens such as drawn beads that have been heat rounded or cooked.

CYLINDRICAL beads always have clearly circular cross sections along their entire length, the sides of the beads being parallel to the line of the perforation. The term is used for beads with the very regular, straight profiles often associated with drawn beads that have not been heat altered.

TUBULAR beads are often cylindrical but lack the very regular, parallel surfaces characteristic of drawn or molded beads. The term "tubular" should not be

conflated with the terms "tube" or "tube beads," which have been used to describe drawn beads.

BARREL SHAPED beads have a circular cross-section, widest in the middle, decreasing in a regular way to flat or semi-flat ends. The side profiles of these beads appear as arcs that intersect planes at each end.

CONICAL beads have profiles that decrease in a regular line from one end to the other.

FACETS are intentional planes on the surface of a bead produced by grinding, molding or marvering.

DECORATION: A wide variety of decorative techniques are employed in bead manufacture. Only two beads examined in the African Burial Ground assemblage were decorated. These are types 9 and 12. In each case, the decoration consists of adventitious decoration on a wound bead. The Type 9 bead is an opaque back bead with a trailed decoration of gold foil. The Type 12 bead is opaque black with traces of a trailed (possibly opaque white) decoration. Both types are typical of Venetian manufacture.

COLOR: Colors should be regarded as approximate rather than absolute. Color is an ephemeral characteristic, often appearing slightly different under different viewing conditions. Individual perceptions may also result in different readings. The minute size of some of the decorative components also makes precise color determination a challenge. In addition, color is often variable even on specimens of similar age from the same factory. Prior to the twentieth century, manufacturing techniques were not precise and slight color variations might result. Post-production weathering through use or burial in an archaeological site creates additional variation.

DIAPHANEITY: Each color is preceded by its diaphaneity, which is opaque, translucent, or transparent. Opaque glass is impenetrable to light. Translucent glass transmits light but diffuses it so that objects on the other side are indistinct. Transparent glass allows objects on the other side to be clearly viewed. In recording this attribute an attempt was made to determine the bead's original character.

LUSTER: The appearance of the bead's surface in reflected light. In contrast to color and diaphaneity, this attribute often reflects post-manufacture use wear, weathering, and modification. Two luster types are used to describe the beads from the African Burial Ground: **SHINY** (smooth and bright) and **DULL** (not shiny).

SIZE: Length and diameter are given for each bead, or a range for each dimension if a type is being described. Measurements reflect the maximum length or width. Generalized categories of length such as short, standard, and long, defined in terms of specific length to width ratios, are not used.

Manufacture, age, origin

As noted, the majority of the beads in the assemblage were likely produced in Venice. They are almost entirely simple monochrome beads that have comparatively wide temporal and geographic distributions, and that have been documented on a wide variety of archaeological sites. They are completely consistent with, though not restricted to, the African Burial Ground's historically documented period of use. Notably absent are distinctive 19th century bead types, including the products of Bohemia.

The significant exceptions are one amber bead (Type 15) from Burial 340 and nine powder-glass beads of likely West African origin, one from Burial 434 (Type 13) and eight from Burial 226 (Type 14).

Amber beads were traded in Africa as well as in Europe (Alpern 1995:23; Dubin 1987:101). British Customs House ledgers indicate that amber beads were also shipped to New York (Breen 2004:62). It is possible that the Burial 340 amber bead, which is translucent red in color with fourteen worn or polished facets, originated in Africa. However, no exact parallels to the Burial 340 bead are known from African or European archaeological contexts.

The powder-glass beads are simple in structure. Type 13 (from Burial 434) is opaque whitish tan in color and cylindrical in shape, with a slightly off-center perforation through the length of the bead. The eight examples of Type 14, all from Burial 226, are oblate to donut-shaped. The original color is difficult to determine but it was probably opaque yellow. While similar in manufacture to the bead from Burial 434, the Type 14 beads are smaller and more regular in appearance and were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, are also regular and were likely produced or drilled after the beads were fired. Both the Type 13 and Type 14 beads were covered with an opaque tan or whitish brown patination on the surface and were very degraded and friable, exhibiting pitting and cracking. The beads have a granular appearance under magnification. Multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points indicates the heterogeneity of the original microstructure.

While there is some evidence for indigenous glass manufacture in West Africa, fired glass beads from Ghana, as well as other areas, relied on the reuse of imported European glassware, beads, and bottles. Using this technology, glass fragments are pounded into a fine powder that is placed into fired clay molds. These molds have small recesses at the bottom into which thin reeds or cassava (manioc) stems are placed. During firing the stem burns away, leaving a perforation through the bead. Firing, known ethnographically, is done in small domed ovens or kilns made of clay. After removal from the mold, the beads are shaped and smoothed by grinding. While this fired glass technology is found in other world areas, notably Mauritania, the characteristics and archaeological context of the Burial 226 and 434 beads make Ghana their likely place of origin.

Using a variety of molds, different colors of glass, and imported beads, African glassmakers were able to produce beads with a wide variety of elaborate shapes and decorations. For example, placing layers of different colored glass into the mold might produce bands. Stripes were made by carefully inserting lines of colored glass down the sides of the mold. Intact European beads were also incorporated into decorations (for illustrations of elaborately decorated powder-glass beads, see Francis 1993 and Liu et al. 2001). This industry continued into the present century and, indeed, our understanding of the technology is known primarily through observations of 20th century craftsmen.

Beads characteristic of African glassmaking techniques are virtually unknown in American contexts. The only other example uncovered thus far is from the Newton Plantation Burial Ground in Barbados (Handler 1997). Produced using the same technology as the bead from Burial 434, the Newton bead is similar in shape but larger in size. It is possible that other beads made with powdered glass have been uncovered in archaeological sites in the African Diaspora but that their distinctive characteristics have been unrecognized.

The presence of powder-glass beads in a colonial New York setting is also exciting from an Africanist perspective. Only limited finds of such beads have been recovered in well-dated African archaeological contexts, including a handful of examples from southern Ghana (DeCorse 2001:137-138). Even in African locales where fired glass beads were produced, European beads predominate on archaeological sites. The African Burial Ground beads thus provide information on the age of this particular bead-making technology. Excavated examples from Elmina occurred in early 18th through 19th century contexts.

Typology

The types of beads recovered from the African Burial Ground are defined in Table 13.3 and illustrated in Figures 13.4 through 13.16. The inventory in Appendix E describes each bead in full. The typology DeCorse created is specific to the African Burial Ground assemblage (for the application of taxonomies developed by Kidd and Kidd and Karklins, see LaRoche 1994a and 1994b).

Table 13.3. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground

Type	Description	Burials/Count	Diameter	Length
Glass Beads: Drawn				
1	Drawn; simple; heat rounded; oblate, occasional examples more barrel-shaped; surfaces dull; translucent yellow; typically have heavy opaque white to yellowish brown patination that obscures actual color; surfaces degraded and pitted, typically more degraded at ends.	Burial 340, 15 beads	2.8-3.3 mm	1.7-2.8 mm
2	Drawn; simple; heat rounded, some examples have attributes associated with the <i>a speo</i> technique, such as protuberances, tails, and off center perforations; spherical to oblate, occasional examples globular or more barrel-shaped; dull to shiny, transparent blue; minor to moderately pitted, some chips and scratches, some examples have lunate scars.	Burial 340, 58 beads	4.8-7.3 mm	3.8-7.0 mm
3	Drawn; simple; heat rounded; oblate/ donut-shaped; dull, translucent blue-green; degraded, very pitted.	Burial 340, 26 beads	2.9-3.5 mm	1.9-2.5 mm
4	Drawn; simple; heat rounded; oblate; dull, opaque black; some scratches, minor pitting; small chip at aperture.	Burial 340, right side, 1 bead	6.3 mm	5.6 mm
5	Drawn; compound; slightly heat rounded; cylindrical; opaque redwood on transparent apple green core; large chip at one end	Burial 107, 1 bead	3.2 mm	7.7 mm
6	Drawn; simple; oblate, donut-shaped to tubular; generally dull, but some examples are more shiny; opaque black, some appear translucent dark reddish amber under strong light and this may be color of all examples; moderately degraded with more wear on ends; pitted; many bubbles present in glass.	Burial 187, 22 beads	2.2-3.3 mm	1.3-2.6 mm
Glass Beads: Wound				
7	Wound; simple; truncated cone; dull; translucent light gold; opaque white patination; weathered and pitted. In all examples the top of the cone has been broken off after manufacture and it may represent intentional secondary modification by the user(s); flake scar is covered with same patination as the rest of the bead.	Burial 340, 6 beads	5.8-6.6 mm	4.7-5.4 mm
8	Wound; simple; faceted; color obscured by heavy opaque patination, probably colorless or transparent amber; heavy opaque brown patination layer; has parallels from Elmina.	Burial 340, 3 beads	3.3-5.9 mm	5.5-6.2 mm
9	Wound; complex; barrel; dull; opaque black, appears dark amber under strong light; gold foil wave pattern on each end; gold foil has worn off in places, scratches, some pitting, two large flakes at one end.	Burial 340, 1 bead	6.1 mm	6.1 mm

Table 13.3. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground

Type	Description	Burials/Count	Diameter	Length
10	Wound; simple; faceted with eight pressed facets; dull, transparent light gray; pitted.	Burial 428, 2 beads	8.6-9.6 mm	7.8-8.1 mm
11	Wound; simple; spherical; dull to shiny; opaque black; some pitting and weathering of surface.	Burial 250, 1 bead	13.6 mm	10.7 mm
12	Wound; complex; barrel-shaped; opaque black; three wavy lines around circumference; very pitted; line decoration has completely weathered away leaving grooves; traces of very degraded glass (possibly patination) suggest color of line decoration may have been opaque white.	Burial 340, 1 bead	8.6 mm	8.9 mm
Glass Beads: Fired				
13	Fired; tubular or cylindrical in shape with a slightly off center perforation through the length of bead, with roughly trapezoidal cross section; opaque white, with tan or whitish brown patination on surface; some pitting and cracking of surface. Bead has a granular appearance under magnification. Original microstructure was heterogeneous as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points.	Burial 434, 1 bead	6.3 mm	3.7 mm
14	Produced by firing glass powder and likely produced in Ghana. Oblate to donut shaped. The original color is difficult to determine but it was probably opaque yellow. While similar in manufacture, and also in the weathering represented, to the fired bead in Burial 434 they are much smaller and regular in appearance and they were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is also possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, are also regular and were likely polished or drilled after the beads were fired. As in the 434 bead, the beads have a granular appearance under magnification. Original microstructure was heterogeneous as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points.	Burial 226, 8 beads	4.0 – 4.8 mm	2.7 – 3.8 mm
Non-Glass Beads (Amber)				
15	Amber; bead; fourteen facets; dull, transparent red; wear or polishing has rounded edges of facets; internal cracks and bubbles; surface pitted, some shipping; damage at apertures; drilled perforation shows traces of cutting.	Burial 340, 1 bead	4.8 mm	4.3 mm



Figure 13.3.
Bead Type 1, bottom two rows, diameters 2.8-3.3 mm.
Bead Type 3, top three rows, diameters 2.9-3.5 mm.
All are from Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

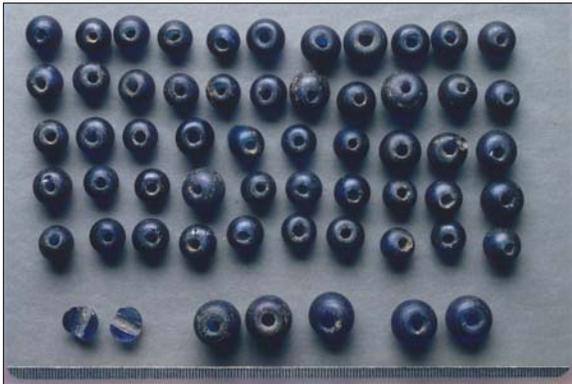


Figure 13.4.
Bead Type 2, diameters 4.8-7.3 mm.
All are from Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.5.
Bead Type 4, diameter 6.3 mm.
From Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.6.
Bead Type 5, length 7.7 mm.
From Burial 107.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.7.
Bead Type 6, diameters 2.2-3.3 mm.
All are from Burial 187.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.8.
Bead Type 7, diameters 5.8-6.6 mm.
All are from Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.9.
Bead Type 8, diameters 3.3-5.9 mm.
All are from Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.10.
Bead Type 9, left, diameter 6.1 mm.
Bead Type 15, right, diameter 4.8 mm.
Both are from Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.11.
Bead Type 10, diameters 8.6-9.6 mm.
From Burial 428.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.12.
Bead Type 11, diameter 13.6 mm.
From Burial 250.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.13.
Bead Type 12, length 8.9 mm.
From Burial 340.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.14.
Bead Type 13, diameter 6.3 mm.
From Burial 434.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.15.
Bead Type14, diameters 4.0-4.8 mm.
All are from Burial 226.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

13.D. *The cowrie shells*

The cowrie shells were observed during excavation of Burial 340 and were recorded *in situ* (see Figure 13.1). Although nine cowries were recorded on the field drawing prior to removal of the skeletal remains, one of the cowries was later found to be a fragment of bone. Another cowrie was not recoverable and may have been an impression of a shell in the soil (LaRoche 1994a:19). It is not known which of the cowries depicted on the drawing were among the seven cowries that comprise the assemblage.

The shells became friable when exposed to air. Application in the field of polyvinyl acetate adhesive as a consolidant caused soil to adhere to the surface of the shells, as shown in Figure 13.16.



Figure 13.16.
Cowrie shell, length 16 mm, from Burial 340. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Information about conservation and treatment is not available. The cowries were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. They were then re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003 and transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Information about the identification of the cowries is not available. They might well have originated in the Maldives, a group of atolls in the Indian Ocean that supplied the cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) that dominated the Atlantic trade. Cowries thrive in warm, shallow lagoons. In addition to the Maldives, cowries are harvested along the East African coast, offshore of Mozambique and Zanzibar. Shells from the same species that are harvested in different time periods show no discernable difference (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:7-9).

13.E. The rings and other jewelry

This portion of the African Burial Ground adornment assemblage consists of eleven items: five copper-alloy finger rings (three plain bands and two bands with glass insets); a cast silver pendant with a pear-shaped dangle; a glass and wire filigree ornament; three cuff link faces covered with turquoise enamel (one plain; two with designs); and one curved fragment of copper alloy, perhaps from an earring or a pin.

Recovery, condition and treatment, definitions, chain of custody

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn *in situ* prior to removal. The exceptions were the silver pendant from Burial 254, the paste ring from Burial 310, and the curved copper-alloy object from Burial 332; these were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

The three rings from Burial 377 are not included in the assemblage count. The rings, along with cervical vertebrae, were freeze-dried in the field and removed intact after photographs were taken. The rings were not cataloged in the laboratory and appear to have been lost prior to accessioning by conservators. The items were not located when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

The condition of the items in this assemblage ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

The plain finger rings were inspected visually and identified as copper alloy based on the corrosion products present. The term “copper alloy” is used because the precise admixture of various alloys is highly variable and is not considered particularly diagnostic of date or place of manufacture.

The paste rings were desalinated. The paste ring from Burial 310 was stable enough to undergo mechanical cleaning. The paste ring from Burial 242 was too fragile for cleaning; it was reassembled but not restored. Both rings were vacuum impregnated with BTA, a corrosion inhibitor, and then coated with acryloid B-72.

The pendant was grayish white and not readily recognizable as silver, despite the telltale signature of the corrosion product, which was pale, white, and waxy. The pendant was brittle, most likely from intergranular corrosion deep within the alloy. Surface layers at the lower portion of the dangle were disrupted and discontinuous. The pendant was mechanically cleaned under a microscope to remove the silver chloride crust. The damaged portion of the dangle was repaired with a B-72 adhesive. The entire pendant was then treated with Acryloid B-72. Elemental analysis *via* X-ray fluorescence indicated the presence of silver. To determine the percentage or “grade” of silver, a 0.5-mm sample of the inner plane of the upper ring was removed for testing with emission spectrophotometry. The spectrograph analysis was conducted by John Boyd of the U.S. Customs Service and utilized a Jarrel Ash Standard Varisource Emission

Spectrophotometer. The content of the sample was found to be 94 to 100% silver, well within the range for “pure” silver, a designation reserved for items with a silver content of 92.5% and above.

The glass and wire filigree ornament from Burial 186 was not treated. No information is available on treatment of the undecorated turquoise-colored enamel cuff link face. The two decorated enamel faces were mechanically cleaned and impregnated with acryloid B-72. Project conservators theorized that the pink surface decoration and the turquoise background had faded, respectively, from red and blue. Given the lack of devitrification, there is little reason for supposing that the faces were untrue to their original colors (Emily Wilson, Conservator of Archaeological Materials, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, personal communication).

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of the rings and other jewelry, with certain items photographed before, during, and after conservation treatment. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which the items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. The items were re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003.

Jewelry earmarked for replication was sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study. Items not selected for replication were sent in September 2003 to Jon Abbott for digital photography. Abbott photographed each item from different angles, thus permitting analysis without access to the items themselves.

Items seconded to Colonial Williamsburg were returned to New York in September 2003 and, along with the rest of the assemblage, were placed in coffins for reburial.

Manufacture, age, origin

Personal adornments made and sold in colonial America did not typically carry a maker's mark (Fales 1995:23), and the rings and other jewelry from the African Burial Ground are no exception. Undecorated pieces are especially difficult to date precisely. Place of origin cannot always be pinned down. Comparative archaeological and documentary evidence indicate that the items in this assemblage are consistent with 17th and 18th century wares.

As noted in 13.B, plain copper-alloy rings had a wide geographical distribution in mainland North America. So, too, did copper-alloy rings with glass insets. Consumer demand for inexpensive jewelry ensured a profitable market for paste, and the ranks of European producers and American retailers swelled as the 18th century advanced

(Newman 1981:228; Fales 1995:48-51). Table 13.4 highlights European spheres of influence at North American sites where rings with insets identical to the rings from Burials 242 and 310 have been found.

Table 13.4. Paste rings with central and side insets from North American archaeological contexts		
Sites	Time period	Reference
Santa Rosa Pensacola, Florida (Spanish occupation with French trade links)	1723 - 1752	Smith (1965:97)
Seneca/Iroquois sites in western New York (Rochester area)	1730 - 1814	Wood (1974:102)
Fort Michilimackinac, Michigan (late French/ British occupation)	ca. 1750 - 1781	Stone (1974:123-128)
St. Augustine, Florida (Spanish)	18 th century	Deagan (1987:125)

The cast silver pendant from Burial 254 has no counterpart in artifact collections from European trading posts and Native American encampments with 18th century dates. The lack of a twin is not for want of commerce in silver. From the 1750s to the 1830s silver jewelry lubricated the fur trade in upstate New York and in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi regions (Karklins 1992:93). Fur from the north and the west passed through colonial Manhattan; silver ornaments made by city artisans retraced some of the routes taken by the pelts. Daniel Fueter, for example, received a commission for two sets of silver medals intended for Native American chiefs; engraved with a view of Montreal, the medals commemorated the French and Indian Wars (Fales 1995:57). The extent to which Manhattan artisans were involved in the production and import of silver for Native American consumers is not well documented, however. The output of Philadelphia workshops is far better known (see Gillingham 1936).

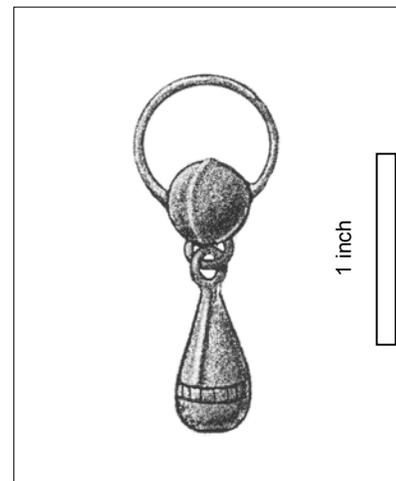


Figure 13.17.
Reconstruction of silver pendant from Burial 254. Drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schulz.

The pendant may have been made with the general customer in mind. Its pear shape was a perennial favorite among colonial American jewelry wearers (Fales 1995:47). In contrast, Native American consumers prized dangles in other styles. The simplest style, known as a “tinkling cone,” was cut in a conical shape from flat sheet silver (Fredrickson 1980:43, 46). An example of a cast dangle worn as a nose ornament can be seen in Bartoli’s 1796 portrait of Seneca Chief Cornplanter; the dangle is gently hooked (illustrated in Karklins 1992:79). Pear-shaped dangles may have become popular among Native Americans in the New York region during the 19th century, when Iroquois artisans

took up the silversmith trade. A dangle from a collection of Iroquois silverwork owned by the Rochester Museum and Science Center offers a close match to the African Burial Ground pendant (see the illustration in Van Horn 1971:64). The collection dates to the second half of the 19th century and was assembled near Rochester.

Enameled jewelry was fashionable during the 18th century, although much of it was acquired ready-made from overseas. Prior to the influx of continental-trained jewelers in the mid 1700s, silversmiths in colonial America used enamel for inscriptions but few artisans would have mastered the techniques needed for more intricate work (Fales 1995:62). Charles Dutens was among the first wave of enamel specialists to ply the trade in Manhattan. He worked out of his lodgings on the lower end of Broad Street and supplemented his income by teaching French (*New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 4, 1751). The enterprising Charles Oliver Bruff burnished his adornment business in 1763 by hiring a London-trained artisan who understood every kind of “enamel’d work in the jewellery way” (*New-York Mercury*, January 3, 1763). Two years later Captain Jacobson sought to cash in on the vogue for enameled cuff links by selling a shipment of London-made goods (*New-York Mercury*, April 29, 1765).

Decorative motifs enlivened plain enamel. Consumers from different social circles sometimes favored the same design. The color and shape of the motif on the enamels from Burial 371 are echoed on a pair of enamel cuff links recovered from debris at a New York City Revolutionary War encampment. Along with the squat V and the two dots (shown in Figure 13.27), the faces from the British encampment bear an additional mark, apparently scratched on.¹³ The encampment cuff links are said to show “the familiar emblem of Masonry” (Calver and Bolton 1950:227), an attribution based, perhaps, on the resemblance of the V to a drawing compass or a carpenter’s square rule, two of the core “jewels” or badges of office around which lodge governance is organized.

Masonic symbols were a part of the public culture in urban America by the middle decades of the 18th century. The Broad Street tavern kept by Samuel Fraunces carried “the Sign of the freemason’s arms” when put up for public auction in 1767 (*New-York Journal or the General Advertiser*, December 17, 1767). Widely available pattern books provided silversmiths and engravers with the official vernacular of designs for the silver badges of office and the silver medallions lodge members commissioned for personal use (Hamilton 1994:4-5, 126). Colonial merchants stocked drinking glasses decorated with Masonic tools. On occasion, Masons in Boston, Charleston, New York, and Philadelphia paraded through the streets with their bright silver regalia and unblemished white aprons conspicuously displayed (Bullock 1996:52-56).

Yet the visual language of American Freemasonry has little in common with the motif on the enamels from the African Burial Ground. Craft symbols replicated on badges and medallions made during and after the 18th century are larded with realistic detail (see illustrations in Hamilton 1994:134-145 and Fales 1995:138-139). Small-sized items like

¹³ As of this writing, the encampment cuff links, pictured in black-and-white in Calver and Bolton (1950:225), have not been located in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

enameled buttons show compasses with hinges and tapered legs, and square rules with discernable measuring lines (see Ertrell 1973:Plate 6 and Houart 1977:51).

Free men of color were unwelcome in the Masonic brotherhoods that formed in colonial American cities after 1730. Enslaved Africans like Caesar, Prince, and Cuffee were ineligible for membership. These men, African New Yorkers who financed their nighttime junketing by stealing goods, dubbed themselves “Free Masons” in 1736, “in imitation” of the members of Manhattan’s Masonic society. Court Recorder Daniel Horsmanden did not mention whether the threesome speculated about universal wisdom and ethics when making the rounds of dram shops and tippling houses. He mentioned instead that their burlesque was “very ill accepted” among *bona fide* lodge brothers, learned gentlemen who met semi-secretly in expensive public taverns and favored a restrictive application of fraternal ideals (see Horsmanden 1744[1971:67, fn. Q]).

The first Masonic lodge for men of African descent, led by Boston artisan Prince Hall, received a charter in 1784 (Wallace 2000:183-184). The African Lodge of New York, Boyer Lodge no. 1, was established in Manhattan in February 1812, after the burial ground had closed (see Williamson 1929).

Inventory



Figure 13.18.
Ring, copper alloy, plain.
Burial 71, Catalog # 813-B.004
Convex outside and inside band surfaces. 1.5
cm inside diameter; whole (mended).
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.



Figure 13.19.
Ring, copper alloy, plain.
Burial 115, Catalog # 858-B.001
Convex outside and inside band surfaces. 1.8
cm inside diameter.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.20.
Ring, copper alloy, plain
“Burial 398” (redeposited fill soil), Catalog
#2061-B.001
Convex inside and outside band surfaces. 2.1
cm inside diameter. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.



Figure 13.21.
Ring, copper alloy with glass insets.
Burial 242, Catalog # 1229-B.001
Cast metal construction. Three faceted blue
glass insets at each side. Colorless central
glass inset is worn on face. The ring band and
face were cast as one unit. Center inset is 0.6
cm diameter, blue-glass insets 0.3 cm. Ring
portion was mineralized corrosion product.
Band diameter is not measurable. Photograph
by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.22.
Ring, copper alloy with glass insets.
Burial 310, Catalog # 1486-B.001
Cast metal construction. Three faceted blue
glass insets at each side, one missing. Central
glass inset missing. The ring band and face
were cast as one unit. Blue glass insets are 0.3
cm diameter. Inside band diameter is 1.5 cm.
Found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal
remains. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.



Figure 13.23.
Jewelry/ornament, copper alloy and glass
Burial 186, Catalog # 987-B.001
Appears to be a hand-shaped glass disk (plate or flat bottle glass) that was set in a wire filigree frame or base. Disk approximately 1 cm diameter. Textile and textile impressions associated. Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.24.
Pendant, silver.
Burial 254, Catalog # 1243-B.001
Cast silver. Upper portion has slightly twisted metal hoop 1.6 cm wide and 0.9 cm long attached to a sphere 0.9 cm in diameter. A jump ring is attached to the bottom of the sphere, from which hangs a pear-shaped dangle. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.



Figure 13.25.
Fragment of earring or pin, copper alloy
Burial 332, Catalog # 1608-B
Object curved or bent and attached to wood.
Recovered during cleaning of thoracic vertebrae.
Inside diameter approximately 0.8 cm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



Figure 13.26.
Jewelry/possible cuff link or button face, enamel
Burial 211, Catalog # 1186-B.001
Oval turquoise enamel face, originally on a
copper-alloy backing. 1.4 cm x 1.1 cm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.



Figure 13.27.
Enameled cuff link faces
Burial 371, Catalog # 1875-B.001
Enamel face on copper-alloy back. The faces
are 1.4 cm x 1.1cm.
Background: turquoise; decorative motif: white
and pink. Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Selected for replication.

CHAPTER 14. COINS, SHELLS, PIPES, AND OTHER ITEMS

Warren R. Perry and Janet L. Woodruff

This chapter describes an array of items—coins, shells, pipes, nails and tacks, crystals, unique objects, botanical remains—that do not fit neatly into artifact assemblages organized around function and use, or material, manufacture, and age.

The first part of the chapter provides a profile of the burials with these items. The items are described in detail in 14.B. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, findings about manufacture, origin, and age. Burials with possible floral tributes are discussed in 14.C.

14.A. Burials with coins, shells, pipes, and other items

Twenty-six individuals, approximately 7% of the excavated burials, were directly associated with coins, shells, pipes, and other items.¹ Three other individuals had items for which provenience is considered tenuous. The burials are listed in Table 14.1. Burials where the association was problematic are denoted with an asterisk.

Eleven of these burials have been assigned to the Late Group, three to the Late-Middle Group, nine to the Middle Group, and three to the Early Group. The items may have been personal possessions and/or were placed with the deceased by friends and relatives. Examples of similar objects and placements from Africa and the African Diaspora will be discussed in 14.B.

Nearly half of the graves included here were considered to be from the post-1776 period of the cemetery. Although the numbers are small overall, there is some suggestion of a shift in practice toward people being buried with items such as coins, knives, or pipes. As explained in Chapter 9, Late Group burials probably occurred during the period of the British occupation of New York, when fugitives from distant places (including the city's hinterland and colonies further south) made their way to the town; or from the period following the war, when the town's population probably included many relocated/displaced persons. We therefore consider it possible that burial practices from the later years of the cemetery reflect diversity based on regional differences.

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and *in situ* skeletal remains could be determined clearly.

Table 14.1.
Burials with coins, shells, pipes, and other items

Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Items	Location in grave
*15	11 - 18	undetermined	late	metal fragment from an ox shoe	Above right leg (next to builder's trench); association with burial unclear
22	2.5 - 4.5		mid	shell	Adjacent to left clavicle
48	adult	undetermined	early	knife	Location not recorded
*55	3 - 5		mid	calcite crystal	Found during cleaning of skeletal remains
135	30 - 40	male	late	2 copper coins, mica schist fragment	1 in left eye socket, 1 on right shoulder; mica schist found during cleaning of remains
138	3 - 5		late	4 metal tacks	1 at coffin headboard, 1 at right foot; 2 unknown (found during cleaning of skeletal remains)
147	55 - 65	male	late	cluster of small copper-alloy rings (7) and pins (4)	Between right humerus and ribs
158	20 - 30	male	late	pipe bowl fragment	Adjacent to right femur
165	adult	undetermined	late	pipe stem and bowl	Near left arm
186	0 - .17		late	unidentified iron object (possible nail)	Left side of the cranium
197	45 - 55	female	late	tacks	2 in area between the ankles; 3 from unrecorded location
214	45 - 55	male	late	coin, knife	Coin and knife near left forearm
217	17 - 19	male	late	peach pit	On coffin lid.
230	55 - 65	female	late	2 coins (1 with textile fragments attached)	1 above left mastoid process; location of other not recorded
239	1.5 - 3.5		mid	nail	Near right side of head
242	40 - 50	female	late	2 coins	Eye sockets
289	5 - 9		lmid	quartz disc	Unknown; found during cleaning of skeletal remains
310	44 - 52	female	mid	tacks	Between lower legs
*313	45 - 55	male	late	2 coins (missing from lab)	Beneath the head (excavation notes altered)
328	40-50	female	mid	broken pot	Coffin lid
340	39.3 - 64.4	female	early	pipe	Beneath the pelvis
348	1 - 2		mid	shell with nail	Coffin lid
352	adult	male	lmid	shell with iron object	Coffin lid
365	adult	female	mid	shell and metal object	Coffin lid
375	16 - 18	female	mid	clay ball with copper-alloy band, surrounded by cloth or leather	Right side of right femur/pelvis
376	45 - 65	male	lmid	coral	Coffin lid
387	34 - 44	male	early	oyster shells	Coffin lid
405	6-10		mid	shell and nail	Found during cleaning of cranium
410	adult	female	mid	glass sphere	Not recorded; found during cleaning of skeletal remains

14.B The coin/shell/pipe/other item assemblage

Recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody²

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn *in situ* prior to removal. The crystal cluster from Burial 55, the quartz crystal from Burial 289, and the amber-colored glass sphere from Burial 410 were recovered during cleaning of the skeletal remains. The condition of the items ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of some items, including the ox shoe from Burial 15, the coins, the clay ball from Burial 375, smoking pipes, and the rings from Burial 147. However, due to their multivalent nature, some of the items described here were not immediately recognized as deliberate placements, and were afforded less attention. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final, high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which most items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. Some artifacts were left in New York at the World Trade Center laboratory, and were lost on September 11, 2001.³ The items stored at Artex were re-inventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003, and returned to New York that September, where they were placed in coffins for reburial the following month.

Coins

Copper-alloy coins were found in direct association with four individuals: two men (Burials 135 and 214) and two women (Burials 230 and 242).⁴ All of the burials with

² John Milner Associates supplied information about conservation and treatment (see LaRoche 2002).

³ Unless otherwise noted, all artifacts were recovered and reburied in the coffins of the individuals with whom they were originally associated. Artifacts that were lost from the World Trade Center will be noted in the text.

⁴ Another coin was recovered from a disturbed context, apparently construction fill, within the grave shaft of Burial 259, a Late Group interment of a young adult, probably a woman, aged seventeen to nineteen years. This coin was similar to those recovered from the four burials mentioned. It was not re-interred and has been retained with the grave shaft fill artifact collection. Yet another coin was noted in the grave shaft of Burial 276, a coffin-less Late Group burial of a woman between twenty and twenty-four years, well above the level of the human remains; however, the laboratory did not catalog a coin from this burial. An inventoried copper-alloy button from an uncertain context was probably misidentified as a coin in the field notes. This item was not included with burial artifacts because it did not appear to be associated with the deceased; furthermore, it was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. Finally, a coin was mentioned in field notes for Burial 328, in disturbed soil that could not definitely be associated with the interment. This coin was cataloged as part of the non-burial-ground assemblage and was destroyed

copper coins were from the Late Group, and all were adults with ages estimated between thirty and sixty-five years. The African Burial Ground sample is small, but the fact that coins were found exclusively in Late Group burials of older adults suggests that the custom of placing coins on the eyes of the dead may have been adopted toward the latter part of the 18th century, and reserved for individuals at the upper end of the life cycle.

In addition to the coins found in these four burials, two silver coins may have been observed in association with Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between forty-five and fifty-five years old. However, no coins from this burial were brought to the conservation laboratory, and the section of the original excavation records describing the coins and their location was erased. The records may have been altered because no coins were present; on the other hand, the erasure may have been intended to conceal their discovery. *In situ* drawings and photographs do not depict coins in association with Burial 313.

All of the recovered coins were of copper alloy and were severely worn and corroded, with surface features no longer visible to the naked eye. Initial identifications were based solely on coin diameters. None of the coins was pierced. Coins were desalinated and mechanically cleaned with care in case surface features were extant. They were examined by eye and under magnification, but no features were perceptible. One of the coins from Burial 135 was examined further, as we explain.

The thirty-to-forty-year-old man in Burial 135 appeared to have been laid out with a copper coin over each eye. One coin (Catalog #880-B.001) was found *in situ* in the left eye socket (Figure 14.1) and the other coin (Catalog #880-B.002; Figure 14.2) lay above



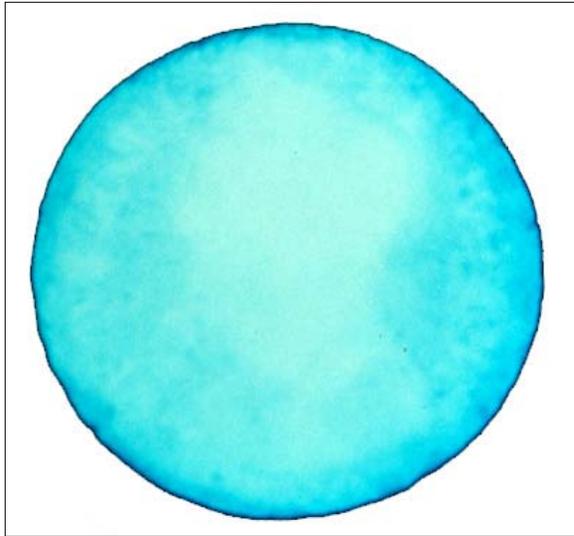
Figure 14.1. (left)
In situ photograph of Burial 135, showing copper coin (Catalog #880-B.001) in left eye socket. Scale is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Figure 14.2. (right)
Coin, copper George II halfpenny.
Burial 135, Catalog #880-B.002.
Diameter 30 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



along with the rest of that collection on September 11, 2001. It was identified in the 290 Broadway inventory as a George II halfpenny.

the right shoulder, and probably had fallen from the right eye socket. Excavators noted that cloth and hair were preserved on the coins. The coin from the left eye was X-rayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 14.3) and surface features (e.g., the left-facing profile) were identified as those of a George II halfpenny, dating between 1727 and 1760. The other coin was too degraded to identify, but may also have been a George II halfpenny. The coins were approximately the same size and were both of stamped manufacture. This grave also contained a fragment of mica schist that appeared to have been a deliberate inclusion within the burial (see the “Other items” section).



a.

b.

Figure 14.3.

a. X-ray of coin from Burial 135. Copper George II halfpenny, obverse. Catalog #880-B.001.

Diameter 30 mm. The left-facing profile and legend are faintly discernible on the surface of the excavated coin. X-ray by Metropolitan Museum of Art, supplied by John Milner Associates.

b. Example of a 1749 George II halfpenny from the numismatic collection at the University of Notre Dame Libraries. Source: Jordan (1998).

The forty-five-to-fifty-five-year-old man in Burial 214 had a single copper alloy coin situated between his left pelvic area and forearm. The coin (#1191-B.003; Figure 14.4) was cast rather than stamped and its identification as a George II halfpenny is qualified at best. It differed in size from the two coins in Burial 135. A knife handle found with the coin is discussed in the “Other items” section.



Figure 14.4.

Coin, copper alloy.

Burial 214, Catalog #1191-B.003.

Diameter 23 mm.

Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Burial 230 held a woman between fifty-five and sixty-five years of age who was interred with two cast copper-alloy coins of markedly different sizes. The larger coin (Figure 14.5) measured 29 millimeters in diameter, and was found just above the left zygomatic arch, having probably slipped from her eye during or after her interment. The smaller coin (Catalog # 1216-B.001) measured 22 millimeters in diameter, and its exact provenience was not recorded in the field notes. Fragments of textile had adhered to

either side of this coin. The coin may have slipped from the right eye into her burial garb, or it may have been inside a pocket or a cloth purse buried with the woman.



Figure 14.5.
Coin, copper.
Burial 230, Catalog #1216-B.003.
Diameter 29 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

The two cast copper coins associated with the woman in Burial 242 had retained their positions at her eyes. The coin from her right eye measured 27 mm in diameter (Figure 14.6; Catalog #1229-B.001) and the one in her left eye measured 26 mm (Figure 14.7). The woman was between forty and fifty years of age when she died. She wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her right hand (see Chapter 13).



Figure 14.6. (above)
Coin, copper, from right eye.
Burial 242, Catalog #1229-B.001.
Diameter 27 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Figure 14.7.
In situ photograph of Burial 242, showing a copper coin in the left eye socket (Catalog #1229-B.002) and immediately beneath right eye socket (Catalog #1229-B.001). Scale is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Copper pennies and halfpennies were probably the most common denominations circulating among captive Africans and other poor and marginalized people. The economic activities that enabled African New Yorkers to acquire clothing, ornaments, or extra food involved not just barter of services or goods, but also outright purchase with exchange of currency.

The coins found at the African Burial Ground appear to have been common issues circulated in colonial New York after 1729. The only definitively identified coin, the British George II halfpenny from Burial 135, was produced in large quantities from 1729 to 1754. George III halfpennies, similar to the George II coin, were minted from 1770 to 1775.

The placement of coins with the dead is known from various western ethnohistoric contexts. In Europe and its North American colonies, corpses were sometimes buried with coins meant as fares across the River Jordan (Coffin 1976:76). This practice appears to have been adapted from the Greek tradition documented in Virgil's *Aeneid*, of placing coins in the mouths of the deceased as payment to Charon, the ferryman who conveyed souls across the River Styx to their postmortem domain. Coins were placed on the eyes of the deceased in England and other European countries well into the 20th century (Roberts 1989:194-195). The placement was usually attributed to a need to hold the eyes closed for aesthetic reasons, but was probably rooted in the traditional belief that unless their eyes were weighted firmly shut, corpses would look for someone to accompany them into death (Coffin 1976:97; Richardson 2000:19; Frazer 1886:71).

Some African-American burial practices included the placement of coins (or coin analogues) with the deceased. The custom of burying the dead with coins was observed in excavated cemeteries with 18th and 19th century contexts, including St. Anne's churchyard in Annapolis, Maryland, and the First African Baptist Church cemetery in Philadelphia (Jones 2001; Parrington et al. 1989). Eight individuals at the latter cemetery had coins; most were found near the heads of the deceased (Parrington et al. 1989:75). No coins were found (in the eyes or elsewhere) in 18th century burials excavated at Newton Plantation in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:201, 318), but evidence exists from other areas of burial with coins in more recent times. For example, excavation at a cemetery for enslaved Africans on Montserrat uncovered at least one burial that included a single "metal disc [that] may have acted as a token or fee for the return of the deceased's spirit to Africa" (Watters 1994:64). As at the New York African Burial Ground, coins were placed on the eyelids, in the hand(s) or pocket, scattered inside the coffin, or left on the grave surface. West African Ashanti burials observed in the 20th century included parcels of gold dust "tied in the loincloth of the dead" (Habenstein and Lamers 1963:218), a finding that is not inconsistent with the African Burial Ground coins that appeared to be pocketed. A pierced silver coin, probably worn on a string, was noted in at least one burial in the 19th century Cedar Grove cemetery in Arkansas (Rose 1985:75); this coin appeared to have been a protective amulet worn during life. As in European-American cemeteries, coins at the African Burial Ground may have served dual, multivalent purposes: both the pragmatic (closing of the deceased's eyes) and the spiritual.

Shells and coral

Many of the grave shafts at the African Burial Ground held fragments of clam and oyster shell in the soil matrix, but in some burials, whole or partial shells were observed in positions suggesting deliberate placement in the grave. Burials in which the shell inclusions seemed deliberate were Burials 22, 348, 352, 365, and 387 (although the provenience of the latter was problematic).

The mechanical excavation, as well as recent and historical construction at the African Burial Ground, obliterated the surfaces of many graves, including those that may have offered insights into spiritual practices of 17th and 18th century Africans in New York. The material that can be clearly associated with the burials, however, dovetails neatly with some West and West Central African practices as well as those known from the Diaspora (see Vlach 1978; Thompson 1983). The shells at the African Burial Ground may have been placed as symbols of the deceased's passage through water to the spirit world and to represent his or her new identity as an ancestor. Clams and oysters were native to the waters surrounding New York, and the shells would have been easily acquired for placement on coffins.

A fragment of local hard-shell clam was found in Burial 22, a Middle Group burial of a child between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old. The shell's position near the left clavicle (Figure 14.8) may indicate that the shell was strung and worn as a necklace,

much like the adornment on the infant and child in Burials 226 and 254 (see Chapter 13). The shell fragment was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.



Figure 14.8.
Burial 22 *in situ*, showing
fragment of hard-shell clam
above the left clavicle.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Three coffins had lid artifacts that consisted of both a shell and a piece of iron, which appeared to be deliberate placements. A clamshell fragment and an iron nail were recovered from the lid of Burial 348, a Middle Group interment of a child between one and two years old. The objects lay slightly to the left side of the hexagonal coffin near the shoulder break, corresponding to the child's upper torso area (Figure 14.9). The shell lay atop the nail, covering it completely. Both artifacts were lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.



Figure 14.9.
In situ photograph of Burial 348 coffin lid, showing clamshell fragment (catalog #1702-CL) near coffin's left shoulder break. Excavators found an iron nail (Catalog #1702-CL.002) beneath the shell. Scale is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Burial 352, a man of undetermined age assigned to the Late-Middle Group, had a whole oyster valve (Catalog #1719-CL) with an iron nail (Catalog #1719-CLA) on his coffin lid. This pair of artifacts was recovered from the coffin lid above the torso, much like the similar combination from Burial 348, which was located just a few feet to the east of Burial 352. This pair of artifacts was also destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Burial 365, the Middle Group grave of a woman of undetermined age, had another permutation of shell-and-iron-artifact assemblage on her coffin lid (Figure 14.10). In this case, the iron artifact was clearly not a nail, and instead of lying underneath the oyster shell, it curved around and nearly enclosed the shell. This oyster shell was of a different (although unidentified) variety than most of the oyster shells recovered from the African

Burial Ground. This burial is further notable: in contrast to most of the burials at this site, the woman's head was oriented to the south rather than the west. This woman's skeletal remains may have been displaced (see Chapter 7). The shell and iron piece were both lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.



Figure 14.10.
Detail of *in situ* photograph of shell and iron artifact from coffin lid of Burial 365. Scale is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

The Early Group Burial 387, of a man between thirty-four and forty-four years, may also have had shell on the coffin lid, but the provenience is less certain. Field records referred to the presence of oyster shell, including whole upper and lower valves, without

specifying location in either text or drawing. Photographs of the coffin lid *in situ* show a whole oyster shell above the left femur. The shell was cataloged at the laboratory, but lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Another shell and nail were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 405, a Middle Group grave of a child between six and ten years. The artifacts were both associated with the cranial bones, although labeling did not indicate whether they were found together or separately.

Unlike clam and oyster shell, coral was exotic to New York harbors.⁵ Five specimens of coral were identified at the African Burial Ground, but only one appeared to have been deliberately included with a burial. It was recovered from the distal femoral area of Burial 376, a Late Middle Group interment of a man between forty-five and sixty-five years old. The specimen (Figure 14.11) was particularly large and may have been placed on the coffin lid at the time of burial. In keeping with the hypothesis that relics of the

ocean may have been associated in multivalent fashion with Africa, the Middle Passage, and the spirits of the ancestors (Thompson 1983:135-38; Thompson and Cornet 1981:197-98; Vlach 1978:143), the coral's place of origin became a clue to its spiritual, as well as archaeological, meaning.



Figure 14.11.
Coral, *siderastrea sidereal*.
Burial 376, Catalog #1895-B.
Weight 190 g. Scale is in inches.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

In 1997, the coral specimen was examined by a series of researchers. The first investigator, Alan Harvey, Ph.D., Curator of Invertebrates at New York City's American Museum of Natural History, could not identify the species, as the sample was badly degraded and had lost its morphological structure. Subsequently the coral was analyzed by Steven D. Cairns, Ph.D., Curator of Stony Corals at the Department of Invertebrate Zoology at the New York Aquarium. He identified the genus, but species remained undetermined. On Dr. Cairns' advice, the coral specimen was sent to Ian G. Macintyre, Ph.D., Sedimentologist and Research Specialist in the Department of Paleobiology of the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. Dr. Macintyre suspected that the coral may have been a fossil specimen when it was buried; thus he recommended that it be examined by Ann F. Budd, Ph.D. Dr. Budd is a Fossil Coral Taxonomist and Professor of Geology at the University of Iowa. Dr. Budd

⁵ Several cowry shells, also exotic to New York waters, were included in the strand of beads encircling the waist of the woman in Burial 340. They are discussed in Chapter 13.D.

performed a thin section microscopy, which required that only a small sample of the coral be sacrificed, and determined that the coral was *Siderastrea sidereal*, an Atlantic species found mainly in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and Bermuda. It occurs in a lesser degree along the Brazilian coast, in the Gulf of Guinea, and along the coast of West Africa. Since the analysis, the coral specimen has gone missing and may have been destroyed in the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Pipes

Smoking pipes were found in direct association with skeletal remains in Burial 340, and in two cases that were less clear-cut (Burials 158 and 165).⁶



Figure 14.12.
Pipe, clay.
Burial 340, Catalog #1651-B.134.
Bore diameter 6/64".
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

A whole, unused clay pipe was found in Burial 340, an Early Group interment of a woman between thirty-nine and sixty-four years of age. The pipe (Figure 14.12) was placed within her coffin, beneath her body at pelvis level.

Although the pipe was unused, its surface was rough in places. Its form is comparable to those of British pipes of the 18th or early 19th centuries.⁷ The pipe may have been a personal possession, but because it was unused, it may have been included as a talisman or a memento. The pipe was reburied with the woman's skeletal remains in October 2003. In addition to the pipe beneath her hips, the woman in Burial 340 was laid to rest with strands of glass beads around her right wrist and around her waist (see Chapter 13).

Burial 158 held the remains of a man twenty to thirty years old, assigned to the cemetery's Late Group. He was buried without a coffin, and a piece of a pipe bowl marked "IW" (Figure 14.13) was found adjacent to his right upper leg. Because only part of the bowl was present, this artifact may not have been a deliberately inclusion; however, the fragment could have been placed with the man because of the mark, suggesting that the lettering may have had some significance. Furthermore, the fragment

⁶ Fragments of pipes were found in the grave shaft fill of 72 additional burials, and are considered likely to have been present in the soil matrix rather than placed deliberately in the shaft. Their presence in the soil suggests they may have been placed on some other burial at some point in time during the cemetery's use, but it cannot be determined with which individual they were originally associated. These items are listed in the artifact inventory in Appendix E. Most were lost in the World Trade Center collapse.

⁷ Because pipes of this style spanned such a long period of manufacture, the pipe was not considered temporally diagnostic. Other evidence in this burial indicated that the grave was among the cemetery's Early Group; therefore, it is assumed that the pipe dated to the early side of this broad temporal range.

was positioned such that it may have been held in the hand at the time of burial. Six additional pipe stem and bowl fragments (with bore diameters between 5/64" to 7/64") were recovered from the grave fill in this burial. All of the pipe fragments were presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. The man was buried wearing a matched set of gilt copper-alloy cuff links (see Chapter 12).

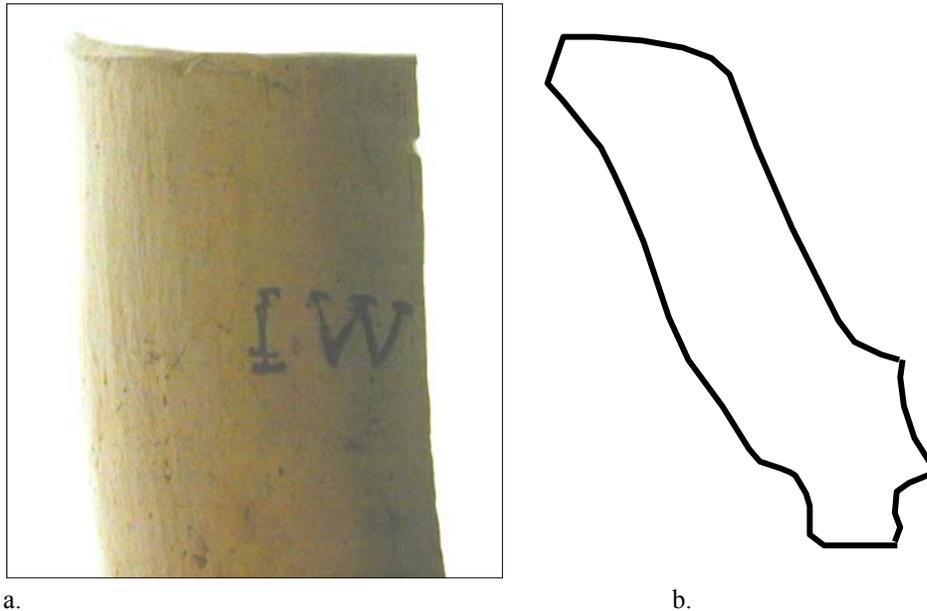


Figure 14.13.
a. Pipe bowl, clay; detail showing 'IW' mark. Burial 158, Catalog #903-GF. Bored at 5/64".
Photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse.
b. drawing of bowl shape.

Burial 165, a coffin-less Late Group burial of an individual whose age and sex could not be determined, contained an articulating pipe bowl and stem fragment, bored at 4/64", near the left forearm (Figures 14.14 and 14.15). This pipe was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. Like the other pipes in direct association with burials here, this pipe appeared to be unused. The reason it was placed with the deceased is not known.

Unused pipes were found in burials at Seville Plantation village in Jamaica dating between 1670 and 1760, as well as in burials at the African settlement in Elmina, Ghana (Armstrong 1999:181; DeCorse, personal communication). Handler (1998) encountered at least one incidence of an undisturbed 18th century burial in Barbados in which whole, unused pipes were placed at the chest and pelvis. It is noteworthy that in all of these cases the pipes in the burials had yet to be smoked.

Pipe smoking was probably very common among African New Yorkers of both sexes. The habit can sometimes be identified archaeologically by the presence of pipe notch dentition—worn areas created by clutching a pipe stem between the upper and lower



Figure 14.14. (left)
In situ photograph of clay pipe stem and bowl
near the left forearm.
Burial 165, Catalog # 919-B.
Scale is in inches.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Figure 14.15. (right)
Pipe stem and bowl, clay.
Burial 165, Catalog # 919-B.
Bore diameter 4/64".
Photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse.



teeth. Pipe notches were noted in some individuals excavated at the African Burial Ground, though not in the three with whom pipes were apparently buried.

Clay smoking pipes were ubiquitous throughout the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were mass produced in both England and the Netherlands, shipped overseas, and sold inexpensively throughout the colonies. Tobacco was smoked in West Africa by the late 16th century, and millions of pipes were shipped there as well during our period, mainly from Dutch suppliers but also from England and Rouen (Alpern 1995:26-27). Dutch pipes predominate in West African archaeological assemblages dated before the 19th century (DeCorse 2001:164). Doubtless there were smokers among the captives brought to New York, as well as among those born in the Americas.

Pipes can be dated by shape, decoration, and makers' marks (and statistically by bore diameter if large numbers are in the sample).⁸ The pipes recovered from Burials 158, 165 and 340 were typical of the 18th century and were all probably of English manufacture, but exact dates and makers cannot be assigned.

The pipes and pipe fragments recovered in association with skeletal remains and from grave shaft fill were examined by Christopher R. DeCorse at the World Trade Center laboratory in 1998. Specimens that were possibly diagnostic or that were found in direct association with skeletal remains were brought to Syracuse University for further analysis. A complete inventory was made, and diagnostic pieces were photographed.

⁸ Stem bore diameters of fragments from all contexts yielded a mean date of 1764. See Appendix E.

Subsequently, the pipes were returned to the World Trade Center laboratory, and those that were clearly in direct association with skeletal remains were prepared for reburial in August 2001.⁹ These were shipped to the Artex facility in Landover, Maryland, at that time. They were placed in coffins and reburied in October 2003.

Other items

The historical contexts for acquisition of copper alloy pins, buttons, and personal adornment items are discussed in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. These contexts pertain to the pins and small rings found with Burial 147, the banded ball found with Burial 375, and the glass sphere found with Burial 410. Each of these items or components may have been obtained through typical channels of purchase, gift, recycling, or appropriation, then reused and recontextualized, either by the deceased during their lifetime or by whoever prepared the body for burial.

The identification of some objects as talismans either belonging to the deceased or bestowed upon them at death is speculative but reasonable. Bundles or caches of pins, buttons, crystals, smooth stones, and other items excavated at domestic sites have been interpreted by archaeologists as conjuring items, medicinal or protective charms, or other *minkisi*-type religious paraphernalia of African derivation (see Brown and Cooper 1990; Kelso 1984; Patton 1992; Russell 1997; Wilkie 1997; Leone and Fry 1999; Paynter et al. 2005; for an introduction to African systems of divination, see Peek 1991). Such caches may have been intended to identify the deceased, communicate with the spirit world, or as offerings to ancestors and spirits.

Burial 147, in which a bundle of pins and tiny rings were found together, poses the strongest argument for this practice, although other burials may have contained non-surviving organic items placed with spiritual intent, as well as surviving materials not obviously recognizable as spiritual in intent. The identification of such items is complicated by their contexts: common household items were reused and imbued with meanings not envisioned or deciphered by manufacturers or slaveholders. The practice remained hidden to European eyes, but surely was discernable to Africans.

Clay ball with copper-alloy band

Burial 375 contained a small ceramic ball (presumably a marble) with an embossed copper-alloy band wrapped twice around its circumference (Figure 14.16). It is one of the most interesting and unusual artifacts found at the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 5 for a photograph of the burial and an *in situ* drawing of the object). This Middle Group grave held the remains of a woman between sixteen and eighteen years old. She had been placed directly in the ground with no coffin, with her arms crossed

⁹ Pipes from grave shaft fill contexts remained in the laboratory, but were not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

above her head and her legs extended. At her right hip was a mass of cloth or leather containing the ball. The soil immediately surrounding the object was not sampled. The omission makes it impossible to ascertain whether the ball was part of an assemblage of material that included botanical, faunal, or mineral elements. Such assemblages are

usually contained within bundles, bags, or other wrappings, and are well known in African American ethnographic and historical accounts. No comparable artifact has been documented in the literature.¹⁰



Figure 14.16.
Sphere with band, ceramic and copper alloy.
Burial 375, Catalog #1886-B.001.
Diameter 17 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Cluster of rings and pins

Burial 147 was a Late Group grave of a man between fifty-five and sixty-five years old, buried with a group of straight pins and small copper-alloy rings (Catalog #0893-B.004) between his right humerus and ribcage (Figure 14.17). Four pins, three of which were

precisely aligned along the arm bone, and fourteen rings were counted during excavation; many of the observed fragments were too deteriorated to remove, and it is probable that many of the pieces were not collected. Although the field drawing clearly shows fourteen rings, conservators recovered only enough fragments to reconstruct an arbitrary seven rings, each measuring 11 mm in diameter (Figure 14.18). The fragments were stabilized chemically and by mounting on a linen backing (LaRoche 2002).



Figure 14.17.
Detail from *in situ* drawing of Burial 147, showing three pins aligned along the inside of the right humerus, an adjacent pin on the and a cluster of copper-alloy rings between the upper arm and the ribcage. Scale: 1 inch = 6 inches. Rings measured 11 mm in diameter. Drawing by M. Schur.

¹⁰ Spheres have been recovered from African American archaeological sites such as the W.E.B. DuBois birthplace in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Paynter et al. 2005), although the copper banding is unique to this artifact. The 20 mm diameter ceramic marble from the DuBois site was of a type produced in Europe in the 18th century, and may have been chosen for its “magic” or spiritual properties

At the time of burial, the rings were probably enclosed in a cloth pocket or sack pinned to the sleeve of the man's burial garment (see Chapter 11 for a discussion of shrouding). The group of pins and rings is considered a possible talisman or conjuring bundle of

some kind.¹¹ No soil samples were collected from this part of his body; thus it could not be determined whether textile fragments or botanical remains were a part of the cache.

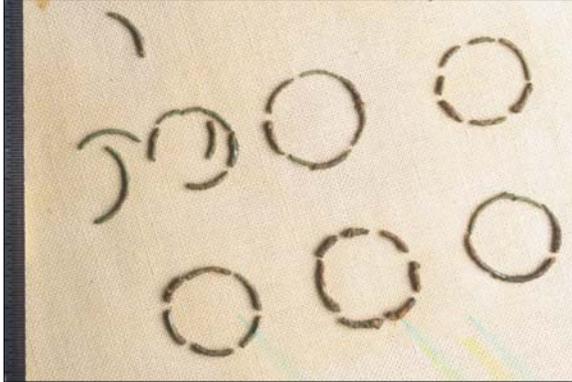


Figure 14.18.
Rings, copper alloy.
Burial 147, Catalog # 0892-B.004.
Diameter 11 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Concealing amulets on the body was (and is) a documented practice in many African cultures and in the Diaspora. Handloff (1982:186-189) noted the practice both historically and at the present in the Ivory Coast, including a reference to protective bracelets worn on the upper arms. During the 19th century Asante warriors wore armbands called *kapo*, which were akin to *bansare* armbands worn in spiritual practice (McCaskie 2000).

Glass sphere

A tiny, amber-colored glass sphere (Figure 14.19) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 410, a Middle Group burial of a woman of unknown age. The exact location of the sphere was not recorded. The object was not perfectly spherical, and may have been from a piece of jewelry, although no evidence of a setting was noted with this burial.



Figure 14.19.
Sphere, glass.
Burial 410, Catalog #2082-B.001.
Diameter 3.44 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

¹¹ The assemblage calls to mind a “luck ball,” well documented in African-American contexts (Hyatt 1935:799, Puckett 1926:229-234). Luck balls have been common forms of conjuration for many years, and are well known among present-day Africans and African-Americans as well (Handloff 1982:186-87, 189).

Knives

Two individuals, from Burial 214 and Burial 48, had parts of knives in association with their remains.

Burial 214, a Late Group grave of a man between forty-five and fifty-five years, held a bone or antler and iron knife handle about 8.5 centimeters long in close association with a single copper coin (see description and photograph of coin). Both artifacts were recovered from his left pelvic area or forearm, perhaps indicating that they were enclosed in a pocket (Figures 14.20 and 14.21). Douglas Armstrong's excavation of house-yard burials at Seville Plantation in Jamaica also found an example of a man, presumed to

have been a captive plantation worker, buried with a knife in his left hand, perhaps similar to the placement of the knife in Burial 214 (Armstrong 1999:181; Armstrong and Fleischman 1993).

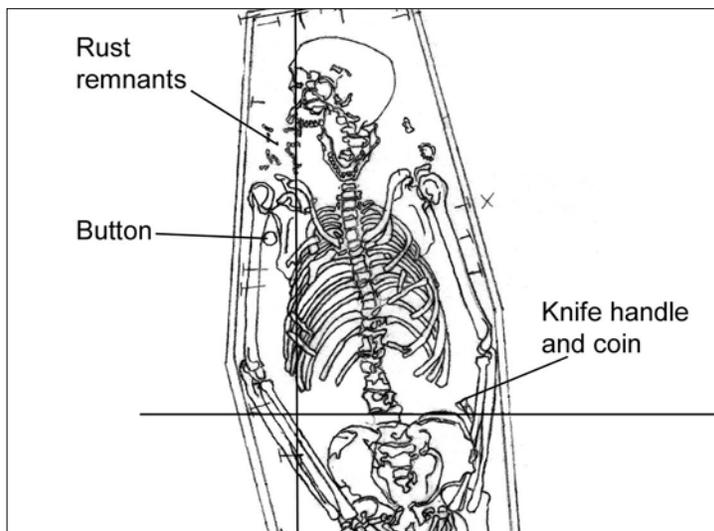


Figure 14.20.
In situ drawing of Burial 214 showing artifact locations. North is to the right. Scale: 1 inch = 1 foot. Drawing by M. Schur.



Figure 14.21.
In situ photograph of knife handle (Catalog #1191-B.005) and coin (Catalog #1191-B.003) from the left pelvic/forearm area of Burial 214. The coin is visible above the right side of the knife handle, lying on a fragment of coffin wood. Scale is in inches. Photograph by Dennis Seckler.



Conservators did not treat the knife handle, as it had been collected and sent to the laboratory along with the coffin nails. The handle was of bone or antler, the shank of iron (Figure 14.22).

Figure 14.22.
Knife handle, bone or antler and iron.
Burial 214, Catalog #1191-B.005.
Length 85 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.



A knife blade was found in association with Burial 48, an Early Group grave of an adult of undetermined age. It was originally identified as a probable nail, but the X-ray revealed a likely blade (Figure 14.23). The item was not salvaged following the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Figure 14.23.
X-ray of knife blade, iron.
Burial 48, Catalog # 620-CHC.
Shown actual size.
Provided by John Milner Associates.

Calcite crystal, quartz disc, and mica schist fragment

Laboratory personnel found a very small calcite crystal (Figure 14.24) while cleaning the skeletal remains from Burial 55, a Middle Group interment of a child between three and five years. The crystal was forwarded to the conservation staff, then to the American Museum of Natural History, where Mr. Sydney Horenstein identified it as non-local calcite. The nearest sources of similar crystalline calcite are north of Kingston, New York, or west of the Delaware River. It is also possible this crystal originated elsewhere,



perhaps outside of North America. It is not possible to know whether the item was placed with the deceased or contained in the grave fill soil.

Figure 14.24.
Crystal cluster, calcite.
Burial 55, Catalog # 0792-B.003.
Width 3.5 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

A quartz disc (Figure 14.25) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the remains in Burial 289, a Late-Middle grave of a child between five and nine years. Because the disc was found in direct association with the skeletal remains, it was probably deliberately placed in the child's grave. According to laboratory technicians, the stone appeared to have been cleaved rather than flaked; however, the flat, round shape may be the result of intentional modification rather than natural occurrence. Small stone or ceramic pieces were sometimes shaped into discs for use as game pieces; such items have been recovered archaeologically from colonial-era sites with an African presence, including the Broad Street site in New York City (Wall 2000) and the Isaac Royall House in

Medford, Massachusetts (Royall House Association 1994). Alternatively, the disc may have been from a piece of jewelry, perhaps like the glass and wire filigree ornament found with the infant in Burial 186 (see Chapter 13).



Figure 14.25.
Disc, rose quartz.
Burial 289, Catalog # 1321-B.004.
Diameter 7 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

A small mica schist disc was recovered in the laboratory from within the soil pedestal of Burial 135, a Late Group interment of a man between thirty and forty years of age. The circular piece measured 6 mm in diameter. Although it was very small and its exact provenience was not recorded, the disc may have been a game piece or perhaps a “flash” placed for its reflective quality symbolic of water. In addition to the mica disc, Burial 135 held two copper coins, which were probably set over each eye. The multivalent secular-plus-spiritual purposes of the coins on the eyes reinforce the possibility that the mica disc may have been intended to attract the attention of African spirits.



Figure 14.26.
Disc, mica schist.
Burial 135, Catalog #880-B.
Diameter 6 mm.
Photograph by Jon Abbott.

Crockery

A large piece from a salt-glazed stoneware vessel with a blue spiral design was found on the lid of the hexagonal coffin in Burial 328, a Middle Group burial of a woman between forty and fifty years of age. The portion of the site where she was interred was apparently cleared by backhoe to the tops of coffins, damaging them and compromising the 18th century-era ground surface. Nonetheless, this vessel fragment appeared to have been deliberately placed on the coffin lid, approximately level with the shoulder break. This area would have been directly over the woman's upper torso. There is abundant ethnohistorical, ethnographic and archaeological evidence for this practice from West and West Central Africa (see Agorsah, Blakey and Perry 1999:5-7; David 1992:197; DeCorse, 1999:148; DeCorse 2001:101, 155, 157, 189; Denbow 1999:405) and from mainland North America (Deetz 1999: 206-210; Jamieson 1995:49-51; Schuyler

1972:26; Brown 2001:90; Gundaker 2001:130; Thompson 1983:184; Thompson and Cornet 1981:76-94, 182-85; Vlach 1978:139-145).



Figure 14.27.
In situ photograph of vessel fragment, stoneware.
Burial 328, Catalog #1589.
North is at the top.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

Sherds from similar pots with identical designs were common in the grave fill and in the industrial features throughout the southeastern portion of the African Burial Ground. Therefore, we are reasonably certain that the pot was produced by the Crolius-Remmey potters on Pot Bakers Hill (see Plates F.21 and F.29 in Appendix F). The stoneware pot

from Burial 328 was missing at the time of the final African Burial Ground artifact inventory; it was not included in the analysis of the local stoneware from grave shafts and was never photographed in the laboratory.

As mentioned, a copper-alloy coin was recovered from a disturbed context within this burial (see footnote 4). A fragment of kiln furniture was also found in the burial, lying directly on the lumbar vertebrae.

Nails and tacks

Nails and tacks that did not appear to be from coffin construction were found with four individuals: Burials 138, 186, 197, and 310. The individuals represented in these burials had all been buried in coffins, and their interments spanned the Middle, Late-Middle, and Late temporal groups. Three of the burials with non-coffin nails and tacks were of infants or young children, and two were of relatively older (within this population) women.

Burials 197 and 310, both women in their forties or fifties, were buried in overlapping coffins adjacent to or crossing the projected fence line. The field drawing for Burial 310, a Middle group interment, illustrates seven tacks¹² between the proximal tibiae, loose but not widely scattered. Four tacks were identified in the laboratory, cataloged, and ultimately reburied with the woman's remains. Six other iron artifacts, listed as possible multiple tacks, were set aside to be X-rayed, but were lost on September 11, 2001. The woman in this grave also wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her left hand (see Chapter 13), and was positioned with her right arm crooked as though holding a child, although no other skeletal remains were present in the grave.

The field drawing for Burial 197, a Late Group interment, showed two small round iron objects placed rather precisely between the ankles. Laboratory personnel cataloged three possible tack fragments, which were lost on September 11, 2001, and thus not X-rayed for definitive identification; it is presumed that these three fragments included the two from the ankles.

Burial 138, a Late Group interment of a child between three and five years, held four tacks scattered throughout the coffin: one at the headboard, one at the right foot, and two found during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

An iron artifact, tentatively identified as a nail, was recovered from the left side of the cranium of Burial 186, a Late Group interment of a neonate or very young infant. The nail was in a provenience inconsistent with the coffin's construction (although it could have become displaced during the coffin's decomposition). The infant's head was also adorned with a glass disc set in a filigree of copper alloy (see Chapter 13).

¹² The exact count was uncertain because several iron pieces, believed to have been tacks, had rusted together into an unidentified mass. This accumulation was slated to be X-rayed, but was lost on September 11, 2001.

Conservation treatment was limited to desalination and, in some cases, X-rays. After this processing, the tacks were forwarded to the Howard University laboratory.

Ox shoe

An iron mass later identified as a partial ox shoe or horseshoe was recovered from a somewhat unclear provenience in Burial 15, a Middle Group burial of a child or adolescent between eleven and eighteen years old. The artifact was found adjacent to the remains of the right leg; however, this grave had been disturbed and the skeletal remains truncated by later foundation construction, and the artifact lay at the interface between the grave and the construction trench (Figure 14.28), making the association of individual and artifact tentative at best.

Conservators cleaned the artifact in deionized water and removed some corrosion with a petroleum-distillate sequestering agent. X-rays revealed the item more clearly (Figure 14.29). The drawing based on the X-rays (Figure 14.30) depicts a morphology that is consistent with either an ox shoe or a horseshoe. It is similar to examples of horseshoes dating to the 17th through mid 18th centuries (Noël Hume 1969:238) and to ox shoes recovered from Revolutionary War encampments in the New York area (Calver and Bolton 1950:218-19). One of the rectangular holes still contained a hand-wrought nail.



Horseshoes are a frequent component of grave surface decoration, and examples are known from African-American contexts in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to this association with the grave, horseshoes are commonly used as “lucky” devices among Europeans and European-Americans as well as African-Americans.

Figure 14.28. (left)
Ox shoe, iron (adjacent to trowel handle at left side of photograph). North is to the right.
Burial 15, Catalog #0286-UNC.001.
Photograph by Dennis Seckler.

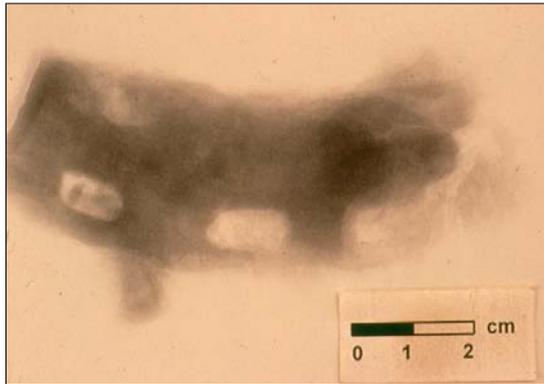


Figure 14.29.
X-ray of ox-shoe, Burial 15, Catalog
#0286-UNC.001.
Provided by John Milner Associates.

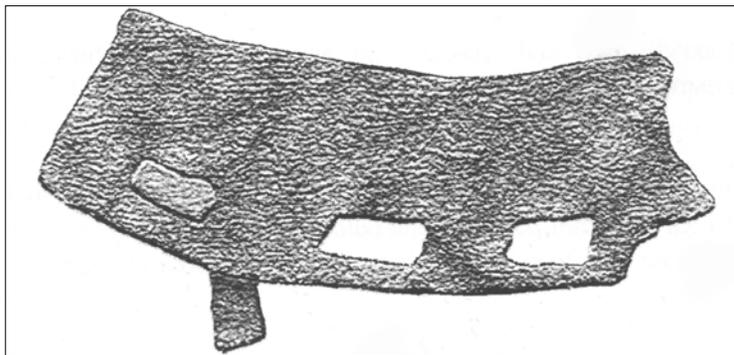


Figure 14.30.
Drawing of ox shoe, Burial 15.
Length is 3.5 inches.
Drawing by C. LaRoche and R.
Schultz.

Peach pit

Excavators recovered a peach (*Prunus persica*) pit from the coffin lid of Burial 217, a Late group grave of a young man between seventeen and nineteen years old. The pit was collected in a wood sample and not noted in the field records, so excavators may have mistaken it for part of the coffin wood.

The pit was probably a deliberate inclusion rather than intrusive. It is unlikely that peach trees grew on the site during its tenure as a cemetery, since neither the pollen nor macrobotanical analyses turned up any other evidence of this species at the site. The grave fill shows no evidence of household dumping in the immediate vicinity, and the pit was directly upon the coffin lid.

Peach pits are a common component of African American conjuration bundles. Their use has been documented in the southern U.S. (Puckett 1926:437; Ruppel et al. 2003:326).

14.C. Possible floral tributes

Results of the analyses of pollen and macro-plant remains from selected soil samples are presented in Appendix G. Here we summarize the possible evidence for flowers having been placed in graves as a component of funerary observance, based on the presence of pollen from flowering species. Table 14.2 lists the burials for which such evidence is

considered. Macro-plant remains (seeds) recovered from flotation or in the field have not been analyzed as possible evidence for flowers.¹³

Burial	Age (years)	Sex	Group	Pollen evidence (Appendix G.2)
45	2.5 – 4.5	undetermined	mid	Pollen of throw-wax, Queen Anne’s Lace, honewort.
115	25 – 35	female	mid	Honewort.
151	35 – 45	male	late	Honewort.
194	30 – 40	male	late	Chicory-type (<i>Liguliflorae</i>) pollen. This bouquet may have been gathered at the cemetery itself.
210	35 – 45	male	late	Honewort.
270	adult	male	mid	Honewort.
392	42.5 – 52.5	male	lmid	Honewort.

Several burials contained honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*) pollen in the stomach soil samples. The variety that grows in the New York area is not widely utilized for medical purposes; therefore it is most likely evidence of floral tributes placed in or on the coffins. Honewort may have grown wild at the burial ground and could have been gathered there.

Burials that contained high relative percentages of honewort pollen included Burial 45 (a Middle Group grave of a very young child), Burial 115 (a Middle Group grave of a woman between twenty-five and thirty-five years), Burial 151 (a Late Group grave of a man between thirty-five and forty-five years), Burial 210 (another Late Group grave of a man between thirty-five and forty-five), Burial 270 (a Middle Group burial of an adult man whose age was not determined), and Burial 392 (a Late Middle burial of a man in his early forties to early fifties who was laid head-to-east in a rectangular coffin, wearing breeches and possibly a shirt).

Honewort flowers between June and September, which suggests that these burials took place during the summer months. Most were of men who were middle-aged for their time. It is possible there was a preference for inclusion of flowers in the burials of older men.

Burial 45, a Middle Group interment of a child between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old, contained an assortment of pollen species that included honewort, thorum wax (*Bupleurum rotundifolium*), and several genera of carrot family (*Apiaceae*) pollen,

¹³ Seeds that were observed and recovered during excavation (as opposed to those recovered by flotation) were never identified as to plant species—they were lost in the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Pollen was analyzed for soil samples from only 28 graves, including 62 total samples from coffin lid, stomach-area, and control samples. Distinct spectra between control and either lid or stomach-area samples was considered as possible evidence that plants had been placed with the deceased (or had been ingested). A full explanation of the methods and results of palynology is in Appendix G.2.

which probably included Queen Anne's lace (*Datura carota*). These species are all flowering plants that grow wild in the New York City vicinity. Based on the flowering season of the plants represented here, the child probably died during the summer.

Burial 194, a Late Group grave of a man between thirty and forty years, contained a comparatively high level of chicory-type (*Ligulaflorea*) pollen in the soil samples taken from the stomach and lid areas. The pollen may have been associated with the consumption of chicory leaves, which resemble dandelion greens, shortly before death. However, since plant pollen is associated with flowers rather than leaves, it seems more likely that it represents a floral tribute, perhaps gathered at the cemetery and placed on the coffin at burial.¹⁴ Chicory-type plants are common wildflowers that inhabit a range of areas and soil conditions that were probably present at the site. If the pollen recovered was from a floral tribute, the deceased most likely was buried sometime between May and September, when this species normally blooms. This burial is also notable for the cedar plank attached to the coffin headboard as a grave marker (see Chapter 9).

¹⁴ It is assumed that coffins were already sealed when they arrived at the burial ground; thus, if the plants were gathered at the site, they must have been placed *on* rather than *in* the coffin. The high pollen content in the stomach area may have been from grains that filtered downward as the coffin and soft tissue decomposed.

CHAPTER 15. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco

The African Burial Ground, located in lower Manhattan, New York City and County, proved to be the largest excavated African cemetery from colonial America, and contained the largest sample of human skeletal remains ever studied from any African Diaspora cemetery, anywhere. The total number of graves identified in the excavated portion of the cemetery was 424, and the total number of individuals for whom skeletal remains could be inventoried numbered 419.

The area investigated archaeologically during 1991-1992 represents but a fraction—less than 4%—of the cemetery's estimated original extent. Although the maximum footprint of the New York African Burial Ground is not known, the total area designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993 is approximately seven acres, nearly 305,000 square feet. In contrast, the portion of the archaeological site where burials were excavated encompassed about 9,500 square feet. The site was located on Block 154, bounded on the north by Duane Street, on the south by Reade Street, on the west by Broadway, and on the east by Elk Street. Block 154 is now home to the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building and to a small, publicly accessible part of the cemetery where unexcavated graves are protected. The publicly accessible area is where the re-interment of the excavated remains was held in October 2003. This area memorializes all of the men, women, and children laid to rest at the African Burial Ground.

For much of the colonial period, New York City had a higher proportion of Africans in its population than any other urban center except Charleston, South Carolina. Nearly all African city residents lived under enslavement until after the Revolutionary War. Most would likely have been interred in the African Burial Ground, which was in use until 1795. While no documentation about the cemetery's opening has come to light, the African Burial Ground may have originated as early as the middle of the 17th century and no later than the beginning of the 18th century; it may have contained 15,000 or more graves.

The occupants of the graves that were excavated archaeologically constitute a large sample but cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the entire cemetery population. Further archaeological excavation that could provide information about the majority of the individuals once interred in the entire African Burial Ground is not likely to be undertaken. Additions to the thin documentary record on the African Burial Ground may someday come to light, but for now, the skeletal and non-skeletal remains from the excavated site provide a unique window on Manhattan's African community during the colonial and early federal periods.

Here we summarize the key archaeological findings presented in this report. We revisit the research agenda and the archaeological methods used to address it. We then review the findings and their implications and identify topics for future study.

Ancestors, descendants, and the research agenda

Howard University's New York African Burial Ground Project is a bioarchaeological investigation conducted by multidisciplinary teams of archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians with expertise on Africa and the African Diaspora. Inaugurated in 1993 under a contract with the U.S. General Services Administration, the Project's investigation of the cemetery is an outcome of public intervention.

Archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians are accountable to their peers and professional associations but also to their "ethical" clients—the people whose lives we study and the descendant communities our studies impact. Members of the descendant community and their allies were steadfastly committed to ensuring that the skeletal remains uncovered at the site were treated respectfully and re-interred with dignity, that African-American scholars were appointed to direct the scientific study, and that the realities of enslavement in colonial Manhattan be brought to wide public attention.¹ Howard University's New York African Burial Ground Project owes much to the vigilance of African-Americans and others who wanted to learn the truth about their urban predecessors and to recover a history that has been hidden for centuries. Their intervention was a crucial and deciding factor in how the Project's research agenda was designed and implemented.

Four overarching topics of concern to the descendent community were identified during public hearings. These topics included the cultural and geographical origins of the men, women, and children whose remains were uncovered at the cemetery; the quality of their lives under captivity; the ways they resisted enslavement; and the transformation from African to African-American—in other words, the ways they made new identities and formed new communities.

The language of this report as well as its scope and substance addresses the concerns of the descendent community. The African-American descendant community is multi-dimensional and ideologically heterogeneous. Even so, all felt that the term "slave" was insulting and outdated, and expressed a strong preference for the use of "captive Africans" to describe the individuals laid to rest at the African Burial Ground. The term "captive African" differs substantially from the word "slave." "Captive" used as an adjective rather than a noun avoids denoting the condition under which people lived as if it were their entire identity. As a mark of respect for the African-American community, whose members have the greatest right to speak for the black population of New

¹ The New York African Burial Ground Project has an Office of Public Education and Interpretation that informs and involves the public in the scientific research. Based in New York City, the office is supported and operated under the auspices of the U.S. General Services Administration. It was headed until September 2005 by Dr. Sherrill Wilson.

Amsterdam/New York, the researchers under Howard University's auspices refer to the ancestors with a phrase their descendants have chosen.

Location and dating of the excavated site

Standard archaeological methods were used to turn the material record into information that might speak to the research agenda. Our first methodological task as historical archaeologists was to sort out the spatial and temporal dimensions of the excavated site. This involved systematizing the excavation and laboratory records, reconstructing the stratigraphic position of each grave, and charting the development of the cemetery during and after its use as a burial ground (Chapters 1, 2, and 3; the site map, Figure 1.7).

The historic African Burial Ground was situated at the edge of the Collect Pond, on the once-northerly outskirts of New Amsterdam/New York.² Farms owned by Africans and Europeans were established in the area in the 1640s. The cemetery may date back to that time. Though graves in the excavated portion may span much of the cemetery's period of use, it is not possible to determine whether the earliest generations of captive Africans who labored in colonial Manhattan were interred within the excavated site.

The excavated site, which was in the northern part of the historic African Burial Ground, overlapped a former fence line that once separated the Van Borsum patent from the Calk Hook Farm; these two parcels of land were granted to Dutchmen during the second half of the 17th century. By the mid 18th century, the Van Borsum patent had come to be known as the "Negroes Burial Ground."

The excavated site, and the cemetery as a whole, was dramatically impacted by several phases of development, civic and private, industrial and residential. The excavated site included a portion of the cemetery that was very densely used and a portion that was relatively thinly used (south and north of the fence line, respectively). It is possible the cemetery grew in area during its early period, and then contracted during the second half of the 18th century as various kinds of development encroached. After 1730, factories such as the Crolius and Remy pottery; institutions such as a military barracks, an almshouse and a jail; and residential construction including houses, fences, and outbuildings encroached upon the cemetery. With this encroachment, the density of interments and the superimposition of graves within the remaining ground would have increased.

After 1795, intensive, full-scale development covered the area, damaging or destroying some of the graves while bypassing others. Mechanical stripping of the site down to grave shaft outlines or, worse, the tops of coffins themselves resulted in further loss of the original ground surface during the construction of the 290 Broadway Federal Office

² The location near water may have held spiritual significance for some of the African people who used the burial ground. In some coastal West African and West Central African communities, cemeteries were associated with bodies of water where spirits reside (Ferguson 1992, 1999; Medford 2004:150-152, 196; Samford 1994; Thompson 1983:135-38; Thompson and Cornet 198:197-98).

Building in 1991. This may have obliterated irreplaceable material evidence of early African American burial practices.

Relative and absolute dating of the graves was complicated by the paucity of material culture found in direct association with the skeletal remains and from within the grave shafts. We therefore used a combination of factors to establish relative temporal groups. Burials were assigned to one of four groups based on physical features (fence lines and concentrated areas of pottery waste), artifact dating, burial stratigraphy and spatial patterning, and coffin shape (Chapter 4).

The Early Group (n=51) includes adults with four-sided coffins that tapered toward the foot and the children associated with the adults. Many of the graves underlay, and some were truncated by, ensuing burials. Early Group burials seem to pre-date the heavy dumping of kiln waste from nearby potteries, which were in operation by 1730.

Most burials (n=259) lacked strong evidence for earlier or later assignment, and thus were placed in a Middle Group (n=199) or Late-Middle Group (n=60). Stratigraphic relationships, and occasionally artifacts from grave shafts or coffins, were the primary criteria for inclusion in the Late-Middle Group. Since temporal assignments are based on relative factors, the list of burials in the middle groups cannot be considered definitive or absolute. This holds especially for children. The higher proportion of children in the Middle Group probably indicates that some of these children's graves should be assigned to the Late-Middle Group or even to the Late Group. But there is no way to sort out which ones.

Assignment to the Late Group (n=114) was based on location north of the former boundary fence (which apparently stood until the British occupation of the city during the Revolutionary War) and/or the presence of artifacts with *termini post quem* of similar or later dates; in a few cases, stratigraphic relationships to other burials was a determining factor. The removal of the fence is used to date the Late Group.

Burial practices within the excavated site

Our second methodological task was to examine patterns in burial practice for the site as a whole as well as within and across each temporal group (Chapters 5 through 9). What was typical and what was unusual in how African New Yorkers interred their community's dead? Seven aspects of burial practice were examined: coffin use, grave orientation, body position, individual versus co-interment, burial attire, the presence of adornment and other possessions or goods, and grave markers. In addition, we also looked at the cemetery's internal geography. Were the graves of men, women, and children arranged in configurations or distributed evenhandedly? Was there any patterning along gender or generational lines?

Four of these variables showed remarkable homogeneity regardless of the deceased's age, sex, or temporal group assignment. These include coffin use (91.6%), body orientation with the head to the west (97.8%), extended supine body position (100%), and individual

burial. Only two coffins contained more than one individual, and relatively few grave shafts were shared.

We think shrouding of the dead may also have been typical. Small, copper-alloy straight pins with wire-wound heads were among the most numerous artifacts recovered in direct association with the deceased—only coffin remains (Chapter 10) outnumbered pins. Straight pins were observed in and/or recovered from half of the burials. In the absence of cloth or any evidence for street clothes, winding sheets or shrouds without durable fasteners may reasonably be inferred (Chapter 11).

The case for grave markers as a typical burial practice is unclear. Grave markers were observed in the southwest corner of the excavated site, an area where the original ground surface was still intact. Grave markers took the form of smooth stone cobbles (arranged on the ground in lines and in one case an arc, so as to demarcate a grave or possibly groups of graves) and of rectangular stone slabs (placed vertically at the heads of the graves). Since such markers were found in the one area where their preservation was possible, we think it is likely that markers were used elsewhere at the cemetery. It is likely that a vertical wood post attached to the headboard of a coffin marked a grave in the northern part of the site; presumably, the post extended above the ground.

Relatively few individuals appear to have been buried in street clothing (indicated by the types and locations of buttons and cuff links directly associated with the skeletal remains). Personal adornment and other goods were also unusual. Among the items recovered were glass beads (nine of which were likely manufactured in western Africa); finger rings and metal jewelry; and coins, shells, pipes, and unique objects such as a small ceramic ball with an embossed metal band. It is also possible that floral tributes had been placed in a few of the graves (Chapters 12, 13, and 14).

Most burials were placed within a foot or two of neighboring graves but the internal geography of the excavated site was not uniform. In addition to shared grave shafts, there were several locations where burials appeared either to have been clustered together or placed in possible rows.

The shared or possible shared grave shafts (n=26) held two (but sometimes three) individuals, typically infants or young children (n=11) or an infant or a child with an adult (n=12 or 13). In some cases, the individuals in shared or possible shared grave shafts appear to have been interred at the same time; in other cases there may have been an interval after which a second burial was placed in a grave shaft already in use.

Burial clusters encompassed individuals from different age groups (infants and young children interred near adults) as well as child burials and, occasionally, pairs of adults. Possible rows of graves (aligned roughly north-to-south) were easiest to discern in the northern part of the site, although some of these apparent rows may have extended all the way to the site's southern edge.

In the northern part of the site, where graves were not as crowded as elsewhere, burial practices as well as the demographic profile were somewhat distinct. There was a preponderance of men, and almost all of the coffin-less burials were here. Clothing fasteners were more frequent, as were goods such as coins, knives, and pipes. We think that burial practices in this area reflect both a shorter period of use and a response to the demographic displacement and social privation that accompanied the Revolutionary War. There was a large influx of fugitive Africans during the British occupation, followed by a mass exodus after the British troops decamped. With the exception of the northern part of the site, the graves of men, women, and children were distributed more or less evenly across the excavated space.

Differences in burial practices for men and women were not observed. While men were more likely than women to have been buried without coffins, we attribute this to the increased presence of men during the Revolutionary War. Buttons were more typically associated with men, but since workingwomen's clothing from that era seldom fastened with buttons, it is not possible to state that men were more likely to be buried in street clothes. Pollen representing possible floral tributes was identified with more men than women but the sample is too small to generalize from. The two south-headed burials for which sex could be determined held women; the east-headed burials held either men or children.

Burial practices for adults and children differed in some ways. All children had coffins, (except for one infant who was buried in the arms of a woman), even in the northern part of the site where numerous adults had none. The shapes of children's coffins appear to have varied throughout the site's entire time span; in contrast, adult coffins were more uniform once the shoulder-shaped variety was adopted (from the Middle Group on). One possible explanation is that children's coffins were more likely to be made by families rather than purchased. Pins are present in all age groups but they were observed in a higher percentage of children's graves than adults' graves. Many adults had pins on the cranium only, which was much less common proportionally for children. Some infants had pins along their entire bodies, and a purely functional explanation is unlikely. It is possible pins had a special role in the ritual preparation of the bodies of youngsters.

Buttons were not found with children, but, as was the case with women, some pins may have fastened children's clothes. Adornment was just as likely to be found on children as on women (beads and rings) and men (decorative buttons and cuff links). Glass beads, a silver pendent, and a glass and metal filigree ornament were recovered with young children and infants. Unlike adults, children could not have obtained adornments on their own; children's adornments were gifts from adults, whether bestowed in life or at death.

Individuals and communities

Variation in burial practice at a public cemetery in use for a century or more is not unexpected, particularly in a cemetery serving an urban community that continually absorbed newcomers from a wide range of cultures and places. Yet the scope of variation

at the African Burial Ground was narrow. Viewed from the excavated site, a typical or “proper” burial in African New Amsterdam/New York entailed a coffin large enough to hold a supine, extended body that was probably covered with a shroud and placed head-to-west in a grave of its own.

We had assumed that a “proper” burial would have multiple configurations because no documentary evidence about municipal or outsider oversight of the cemetery came to light. Municipal codes enacted during the 1720s and 1730s specified the time and size of black funerals but carried no stipulations about coffin use, grave orientation, burial attire, or the positioning of the corpse. No evidence that white New Yorkers played a role at the gravesides in the African Burial Ground has been found (Chapter 2).

It seems, however, that black New Yorkers may have arrived at a provisional consensus about how to deal with death early on.³ The consistency in the archaeological record suggests that a model of a proper burial was in place by the time the graves in the excavated portion of the cemetery had been interred. Conformity can be seen in the context of the individual’s relationship to family and to the larger community. Funerals were communal and public expressions of loss, transformation, and restoration, and the cemetery provided a space where such rituals could help to forge a developing African American identity.

It is clear, though, that the concept of a proper burial was elastic enough to accommodate the expression of individuality. Consider, for example, four distinctive interments in the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Each of the individuals (in Burials 340, 22, 101, and 147, one from each of our temporal groups), had a coffin, was probably shrouded, had been laid with the head to the west, and was in a grave of his or her own. Each also had skeletal indicators of work, illness, or nutritional stress that remind us of their likely common lot as captive laborers in an 18th-century city.⁴ Each, however, was buried with distinctive items.

Burial 340, an Early Group grave of a woman between thirty-nine and sixty-four years old, was buried with an African-style strand of beads around her waist. Her molecular genetic affinities point to West Africa, and her incisors were modified, suggesting African nativity—but skeletal evidence suggests a later life of hard labor and possible nutritional stress. Though skeletal preservation was generally poor, the bones showed several pathologies, including scarring on the femurs where the muscles attached and hypertrophy (the enlargement of an area of bone probably caused by repeated stress) on the scapulae and ulnae (shoulders and lower arms). Moderate osteoarthritis affected the hip and the vertebrae of the neck and lower back, and there was possible evidence of anemia in the cranial bone.

³ The author thanks Grey Gundaker for articulating the idea of a “provisional consensus” with reference to burial practices.

⁴ The Howard University Skeletal Biology Team provided information on skeletal pathologies and on genetic and chemical analyses.

This woman's distinctive African-style adornment seems to bespeak her commitment to her cultural ancestry.⁵ Women's waist beads, associated as they are with femininity, sexuality, and female friendship, are recognizable as a form of adornment that had a wide geographical spread in western and central Africa.

Burial 22, a Middle Group grave of a child between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half years old, was found with a shell (clam, of a species native to New York waters) located above the left collarbone. Perhaps the shell was placed in the coffin by mourners for its association with water, to mark the ritual transformation of the child's status via an analogy between crossing through water and crossing from life to death. The use of shells in this manner is known from Africa and the African Diaspora. The child in *Burial 22* was probably born in New York, and strontium isotope levels measured in the teeth support this assumption, falling within the narrow range of the other young children in the sample tested. During his or her short life, the child suffered from an infection or an injury that left scars on the bones of the lower and upper limbs.

The shouldered coffin that held the child straddled two underlying adult burials, one of a woman (*Burial 46*) and the other of a probable man (*Burial 29*). The child and the adults were part of a cluster of graves bordered by a row of white cobblestones, apparently water-smoothed rocks. This style of grave marking has been observed throughout the African Diaspora over a broad temporal span. The relationship of the child to others in the community probably guided the placement of the grave within this cluster.

Burial 101, of a man in his early thirties, was assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Lead levels in his teeth were consistent with African birth, while strontium isotope levels overlapped the ranges of both American and African birth. Preservation of the skeleton was excellent, and several pathologies were observed, including bone scarring due to inflammation from bacterial infection or injury on the cranium and legs. The muscle attachments at the man's elbows were enlarged from stress, mild to severe arthritis affected his joints, layers of his teeth indicated that he experienced nutritional stress in childhood, and cavities were severe (he probably had abscesses and perhaps infections of the surrounding bone). The tibiae were malformed in a way called "saber shin," suggesting he had yaws.

⁵ Although there appears to have been a substantial break in the continuity of waist bead wearing in the African Diaspora, waist beads have in recent years become fashionable among some African-descendent women in the United States as a way of reclaiming and proclaiming their African identities. A similar practice may be the African-American "nation sack," a bundle or bag of varied materials worn on a string around a woman's waist. A nation sack is intended to protect the wearer rather than to ornament her. It worn beneath the clothing and is seen only occasionally by close female kin, never by men.

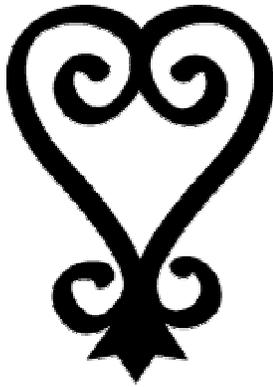


Figure 15.1.
One version of the West
African Sankofa symbol.
Source: MacDonald
(2001).

This man's coffin lid was decorated with a heart-shaped design formed of tinned or silvered iron tacks with an interior pattern formed of smaller tacks.⁶ Heart-shaped decorations may not have evoked the same meanings for Africans as for Europeans. The coffin design may have called to mind the Sankofa symbol (Figure 15.1) that originated with the Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast; the symbol refers to of the need to remember one's ancestors (Chapter 8).⁷ If the mourners who interred the man in Burial 101 viewed the heart-shaped decoration as a Sankofa symbol, then the design on the coffin lid would provide evidence of the portability of expressive culture and its importance to cultural survival. The multivalence of a familiar sign provided the opportunity to incorporate an African symbol into a funeral observance.

Burial 147, one of the Late Group graves, held the remains of one of the oldest individuals in the excavated sample, a man between fifty-five and sixty-five years old when he died. His arm and leg bones had scarring from infection or injury, and the sites of muscle attachments were enlarged from repeated stress. Moderate to severe osteoarthritis affected all of the major joint complexes and the spine. Porous bones of the cranium and eye orbits suggested nutritional stress in childhood, possibly anemia, and childhood nutritional deficiencies were also recorded in his teeth (hypoplasias).

The man was buried with a cluster of small copper-alloy wire rings between his upper right arm and chest. Pins that were aligned precisely along his right upper arm indicated that cloth may have been attached in that location, possibly enclosing the rings—perhaps an armband or underarm pouch. The rings may have been part of a conjuring bundle of some kind, which would have been concealed on his person in life. This elderly man may have had powers that were offered to or sought out by others in the community. His conjuring apparatus went with him to the grave, perhaps pointing to a close association of the items themselves with the practitioner. The location of the burial, in the northern part

⁶ Iron tacks may have been chosen for this coffin based on the symbolic importance of iron in some African cultures (Puckett 1926:218, Thompson 1983:52-61) and in African-American conjuration (Puckett 1926:208, 230, 237, 252, 277, 478).

⁷ James Denbow offers another interpretation of the Sankofa/heart shape. His study of heart-shaped designs on tombstones dating to the early 20th century in the Loango coast of West Central Africa found that the "heart" was perceived as the location of "the soul of the inner body, called *mwela* [...] manifested physically by the breath" (Denbow 1999:412). Thus, Denbow saw the heart shape as representing the soul of the deceased. Perhaps the symbol was recognized (though differently) by both West and West-Central Africans. As Fennell (2003:23-24) noted, symbols become widespread through cultural contact, and cultures assign nuances of encoded meaning to them. However, Denbow also cites earlier sources that considered the soul to be contained in the head, and represented heads as "cruciform and helioform" (Denbow 1999:413). The "heart" as a two-lobed, pointed-base figure does not necessarily represent the concept as it would have been expressed in the 18th century Loango region.

of the cemetery, suggests that he died during or after the Revolution, and it is possible he was one of the many refugees who came to the city during the war.

Ancestors, cultural roots, and the transformation of African to African American identities

Characteristic of today's African American sensibility is the apparently straightforward query, "Who are your people?" This question asks both "Where did you come from?" and "How do we relate to one another?" The abhorrent circumstances under which people were separated from their families and homelands complicates the search for origins and cultural roots of African-descendant people throughout the Diaspora. The multidisciplinary African Burial Ground Project has developed new lines of data, and a host of questions, about the origins of early African New Yorkers, through historical research, preliminary genetic and craniometric data, and archaeological analysis.

As noted, the project's History Report (Medford 2004) highlights the scope of the trade in captives and the range of societies from which the burial ground population derived. The Skeletal Biology Report (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2004) has examined the physical remains of the ancestors for indications of their places of origin. Their research found a range of probable birthplaces, from the continent of Africa to the Caribbean to New York. The archaeology has been less specific in its investigation of roots. But what we do observe in a number of instances is that even if today we cannot read specific places in Africa from the material record, we can read that people were declaring to one another that their people were African.

Although none of the objects associated with distinctive burials precisely answers the question of origins, the mobilization of material culture is a thread that appears to run through the temporal groups. It would not be surprising if materials and associations that held particular significance in Africa continued to be important to African people in New York. The deceased may have been people newly captured from Africa (possibly in Burials 340 and 101), a child born into captivity in New York (Burial 22), or second- or third-generation African-Americans whose forbears maintained and transmitted African cultural practices despite, or as a respite from, the brutality of their lives in North America (the elderly man in Burial 147). The material from these graves clearly points out that at least some of the African people of 18th-century New York remembered and honored their ancestral traditions.

Future research

The archaeological excavation of the New York African Burial Ground has opened a window on how Africans under slavery cared for their dead in a key center of colonial America's urban north. It makes sense, then, to design research agendas around the findings the burial ground's archaeological record has brought to light. Future research might focus more deeply on how African New Yorkers used the burial ground for community purposes of their own. Several lines of investigation show promise of

providing a fuller grasp of the cemetery as a setting for reshaping social ties within and across generations:

1) The connections among individuals interred in close proximity, be it within the same grave shaft or within a burial cluster. Genetic analysis of the remains might reveal kinship or home-place ties between the individuals in these graves. Such information, if coupled with data on nutrition, disease, and physical trauma, might yield a more fine-grained picture of the biocultural experiences that marked kin, compatriots, or friends whose graves were clustered together.⁸

2) Rural-to-urban migration during the Revolutionary War and its immediate aftermath. During the 1700s, the promise of freedom pulled Africans from near and far to New York City, but the movement of blacks into Manhattan accelerated during the British occupation. A systematic look at documentation relevant to Africans on the move after 1776, along with a close examination of the bioskeletal signatures of Late Group burials, might furnish insights into the social/regional roots of the burial patterns and material culture in the northern part of the cemetery.

3) The social and material production of a “proper” burial in the independent black churches that provided burial facilities after the African Burial Ground had closed. How was the “proper” burial of the 17th/18th century reconfigured in the liturgies and in the burial yards and vaults of the city’s 19th century black churches? Were the accouterments, logistics, and divisions of labor that comprised a “proper” burial altered during periods of heightened social suffering, such as the yellow fever or cholera years? Using the African Burial Ground as a baseline might offer a more sophisticated grasp of how a rite of passage is remade when the organizing structures in the world around it have changed.

We suggest a new look at one of the key stories of early African American history in New York, the founding of the A.M.E. Zion and St. Philip’s Churches. It should make a difference if one imagines, as we do, that the African Burial Ground provided an institutional basis as well as founding personnel for the churches. The African Methodist and Episcopal churches might have had a century and a half worth of African and then African-American religious philosophy and ritual practice upon which to build.

More generally, the information obtained from the African Burial Ground archaeological investigation adds significantly to an ever-growing database on the historic material culture of the African Diaspora. It is hoped that the findings reported here will be useful to a large research community. For example, changing ritual practices of African descendant people and the symbolic dimensions of their material culture should continue to be interrogated through African eyes. Symbols, especially those used by oppressed

⁸ We assume that African people buried at the cemetery formed families—quite simply, the birth of children would have begun families, and however strained the logistics of maintaining ties, family relationships would have built exponentially.

populations, are not necessarily accessible to outsiders; the multivalent aspect of symbolic practices enables divergent meanings to be cloaked. Historical archaeologists, with input from historians, anthropologists, and folklorists, continually explore new ways to recognize and interpret symbols used by African-Americans. Fresh examination of objects and their associations should continue to be fruitful, and it is hoped that items recovered at the African Burial Ground will become part of this broader project.

The archaeological data from the New York African Burial Ground should continue to be analyzed within a worldwide context. This site did not exist in a historical, geographic, or cultural vacuum. As important as the African Burial Ground is, the excavated site offers but a glimpse of African life in a cosmopolitan center of colonial American. The burial ground adds to a growing multidimensional perspective Africans during the 17th and 18th centuries, but it bears closer comparison to other sites in Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean.

The African Burial Ground will not be forgotten again. This is due as much to the keen interest of African descendants in their community's material past as to the insights and data compiled here. The research offers new avenues for teaching and learning about the people of the African Diaspora and for hearing their long-stifled voices. We hope this report, along with the Skeletal Biology Report and the History Report, will inspire and educate both academics and the public. We also hope to engage students, colleagues, and the public in a broader examination of the African-American past and to create inclusive histories that transform our views of the past, the present, and the future. Creating inclusive histories involves breaking down boundaries between the academy and African-American descendant communities so that we all can learn from oral history, apply African-American perspectives on material culture, and create memorials that honor the long history of the African Diaspora.

EPILOGUE

Warren R. Perry

The African Burial Ground has become a symbol of the strength, spirit, and agency of African descendant people in New York over nearly four centuries of exploitation and inequality. The site has attracted tens of thousands of visitors and is the focus of deeply felt reverence by many people in the United States, Africa and throughout the African Diaspora.

The Rites of Ancestral Return culminated in New York City on Friday, October 3 and Saturday, October 4, 2003. Four individual coffins, representing the men, women, boys, and girls among the ancestors, were brought in a procession up Broadway to the African



Mother Delois Blakeley heads the procession of the coffins from Wall Street to the African Burial Ground. Photograph by Sherrill D. Wilson.

Burial Ground Memorial Site. The event was both a funeral and a celebration, and the ceremonies were exhilarating as well as profoundly solemn. An overnight vigil marked the ancestors' last hours away from their rightful resting place.

Dr. Michael Blakey and the Institute for Historical Biology at the College of William and Mary, which he now heads, invited African Burial Ground Project staff and researchers to attend a Friday night reception in the Presidential Suite at the

Millennium Hilton Hotel. Following this event, several members of the Howard University research teams returned to the site to pay final respects to the ancestors before the next day's re-interment ceremonies.

It was nearing midnight when we arrived at the memorial site. It had been a long and emotionally charged day, but each of us felt drawn to spend a last few personal moments with the ancestors, remembering them not as the subjects of scientific research but as living people who had endured lives of pain and struggle, love and sadness, strength and meaning.

Most of the day's attendees had left by this time. Among those who remained were several members of the descendant community who had spoken out and advocated for the ancestors since the early 1990s, among them Queen Mother Delois Blakely, Queen Mother Jordan, and the Chief Alagba Egunfemi Adegbolola. The night had gone chill

and the spotlights had gone out, but the descendants that remained seemed to draw light and heat and sustenance from the presence of the once-forgotten ones who were returning to their rightful place.



Wooden coffins, hand-carved in Ghana, held the ancestors' remains for reburial at the African Burial Ground. Photograph by Anne and Jon Abbott.

We offered our farewell to the ancestors and turned to leave, passing by the memorial site and the platform on which many of the descendants still clustered. As we walked up Elk Street, a young man ran up from behind. Mother Blakely had sent him to ask for elders for the naming ceremony. "Would we come back to participate?" the young man asked.

Our first impulse was to offer a polite excuse and continue on. It was cold, we were tired, and

the morning's observances were but a few hours away. But the voices of the ancestors resounded in our heads:

*Were we not cold?
Were we not tired?
Did we not wish for home and rest?*

We could not refuse this summons, on the eve of their reburial, and we returned to the site, where Dr. Michael Blakey, as the project's Scientific Director, was to be named in the African tradition. We spoke in low voices, which could not have been overheard: "I am cold," and at that moment a blanket was offered; "I am tired," and a chair appeared almost from thin air. We felt as though the ancestors had acknowledged our sincerity in returning to the vigil and favored us with respite from our discomforts.

It has been a tremendous privilege to work for the African Burial Ground Project. "Privilege," in this case, is not to be confused with "ease." In many ways it has been one of the most difficult projects we will ever conduct. It was also one of the most spiritually rewarding. We have been blessed to be offered the opportunity to share a fraction of the ancestors' experiences: the hard work, the setbacks, the pain of loss. We also have been blessed by the strength and sense of purpose that comes from building a cadre of committed workers. Much as the ancestors built new social networks, cultures, and identities for themselves, the people who have worked and fought for the African Burial Ground have shared deep bonds. The ancestors inspired us to keep moving forward through our tribulations and to keep in mind that our commitment was to honor their courage, strength, and dignity.

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