PUBLIC SUMMARY: A PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF 12 LOTS ON TAFT AVENUE AND DONELSON STREET AND ADJACENT STREAM RESTORATION AREA,CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

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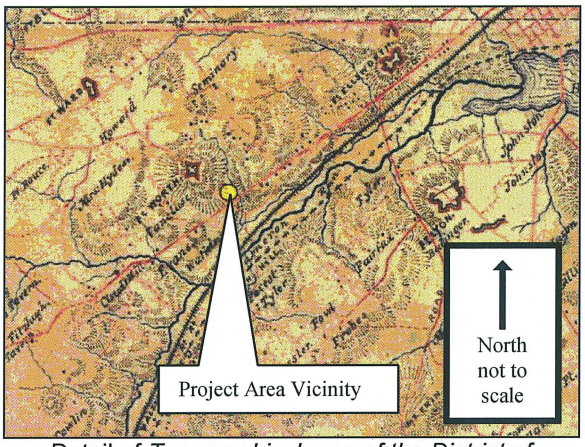
In November 2005 and March of 2007, Cultural Resources, Inc. (CRI) conducted a Phase I archaeological identification survey of 12 lots on Taft Avenue and Donelson Street and an adjacent streambed east of the developed lots in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Each lot contains a small dwelling constructed in the mid-twentieth century. The project area is bounded on the north, south, and west by private property and on the east by a stream and small park. The project area is north of Duke Street.

Several previously identified archaeological sites identified within a one-mile radius of the project provide an excellent context for Civil War activity in this region of Alexandria. Beginning in 1861, a systematic development of defenses of Washington D.C. took the form of the construction of large forts (Fort Worth, Fort Ellsworth, and later Fort Williams) on the upland areas surrounding the project area.

Sites 44AX191, 44AX195, 44AX199, and 44AX200, all located within a half mile of the project area on the upland areas overlooking and along current Duke Street, represent large Civil War activity sites associated with temporary encampments (such as Winter encampments) or defense network construction activity.

Site 44AX195, located southeast of the project area, recorded intact subsurface features associated with a camp of probably the 38th N.Y. Infantry Regiment, including a brick "Crimean Oven" feature, despite extensive modern construction activity. This provides a precedent for the recovery of intact Civil War era archaeological resources despite extensive modern construction and demolition.



Detail of *Topographical map of the District of Columbia and adjacent areas in Virginia*, showing fortifications (Anonymous 1864).

The archaeological investigations within the property employed the systematic excavation of 151 shovel tests at 25-foot intervals, a walkover examination, and a detailed metal detection survey. None of the shovel tests contained artifacts and no cultural features were identified. The metal detection survey resulted in the recovery of 23 artifacts and a number of modern items that were discarded in the field. Recovered artifacts included four Civil War-era Minie balls. The survey revealed severely disturbed soils throughout much of the project area, the likely result of

development of the lots during the mid-twentieth century. Archaeologists focused specific attention on an area at the southern edge of the property, where the Minie balls were recovered. No evidence of historic structural remains was observed on the ground surface. In addition, shovel testing in this area revealed severely disturbed soils, likely the result of landscaping when the existing homes were constructed.

The shovel testing in the house lot area revealed severely disturbed soils and multiple modern fill horizons. This included areas where underground oil and septic tanks existed. Intact soil profiles were found in only a small portion of the study area.

The stream restoration area adjacent to the Taft Avenue lots is an open, partially disturbed area featuring concrete culverts and modern storm water management additions. This intermittent drainage feeds Cameron Run approximately ¾ of a mile to the south of the project area.

Shovel tests excavated within the stream restoration area east of the Taft Avenue house lots revealed heavily disturbed contexts. Multiple graded fill layers were encountered, especially on the west bank of the stream. This is likely due to earlier stream restoration efforts.

The south side of the stream restoration area revealed eroded soils with large cobbles present. As the stream bed course has been altered, erosion throughout the project area is likely the result of a shifting stream bed, and previous related stream restoration efforts. The construction of a small playground located just north of the stream restoration area also contributed to the disturbed nature of the project area. Civil War related cultural material recovered within the stream restoration area included one fired lead shot, one Minie ball fragment, and several corroded metal fragments. Modern trash found within the project area (bottle glass, plastic, and aluminum) was recorded and discarded.

Due to the paucity of cultural materials that would indicate a Civil War era encampment, or other historic or prehistoric use of the property, and the disturbed nature of the project area, ***CRI recommends that no further work is required within the project area on Taft Avenue and Donelson Street, or the adjacent stream restoration area in the City of Alexandria, Virginia.***

Typical House Lot within the Project Area.

North Portion of Stream Restoration Area

South Portion of Stream Restoration Area Showing Modern Disturbance