April 25, 2012

From: Garrett Fesler, OHA/Alexandria Archaeology
Re: Update on Stage 2 Archaeological Survey of Fort Ward Park

As of April 21, 2012 (exactly one month of fieldwork), the Alexandria Archaeology field crew has completed archaeological survey of approximately 18.25 acres, which equates to approximately two-thirds of the park project area (see Map 1). Thus far, the five-person crew has excavated approximately 550 shovel test holes, with approximately 80 percent of them yielding artifacts. It is anticipated that 250 to 300 more shovel test holes will be excavated in order to complete the archaeological survey.

Roughly 1,500 artifacts have been recovered from the ~450 positive shovel test holes. However, a considerable amount of the artifacts relate to recent activity at the park such as soft drink bottle glass and other picnicking debris. These "park-related" artifacts will be mapped and counted, but not used in the historical analysis of the park's previous residents and activities.

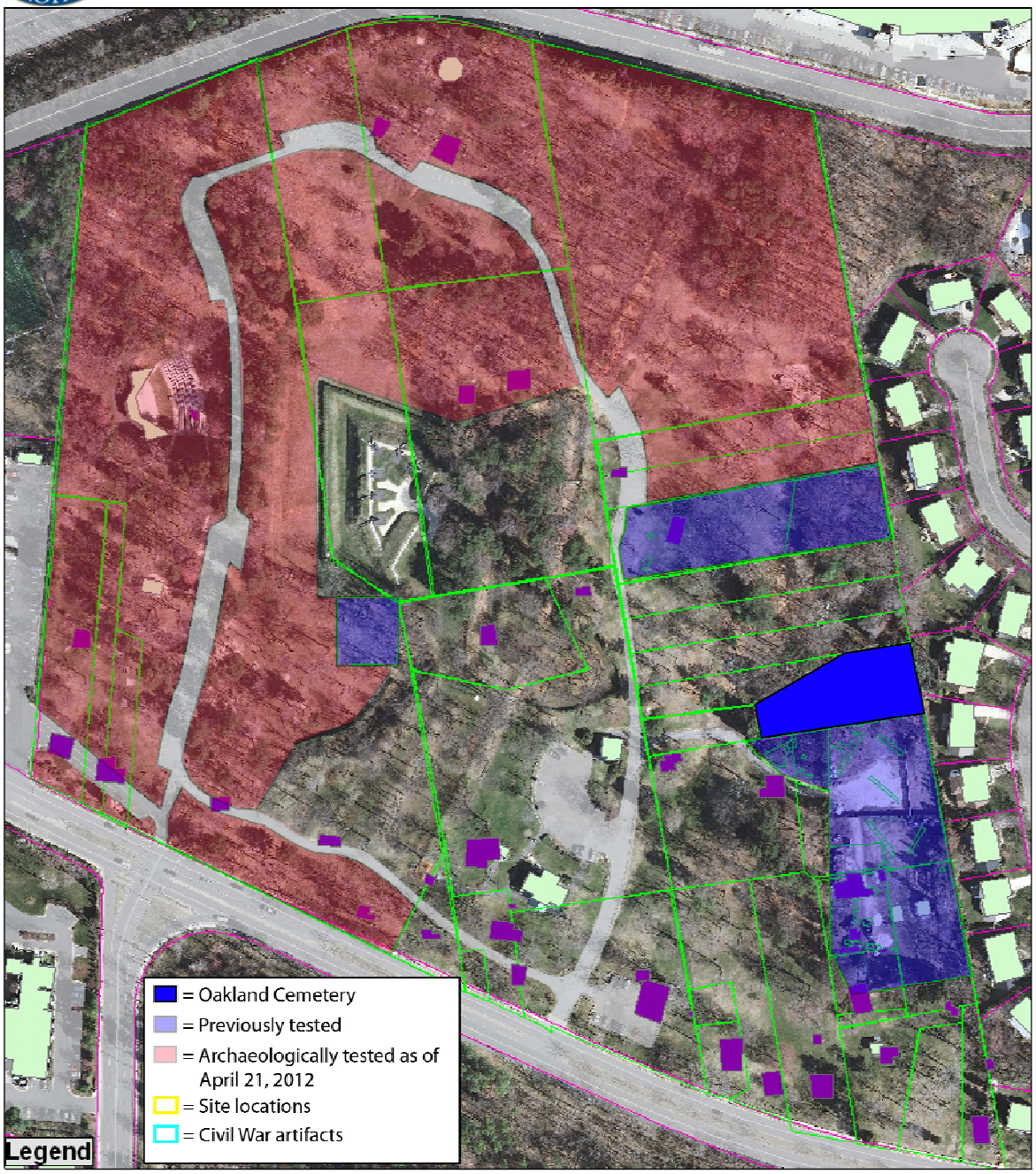
Based on preliminary analysis of the findings, the archaeological crew has identified at least six artifact concentrations (i.e. Areas of Interest) that warrant additional archaeological investigation (Map 2). In each of these "Areas of Interest" archaeologists have found higher amounts of historic artifacts such as container glass, ceramics, brick, nails, and window glass.

Approximately 125 of the artifacts recovered so far pertain to the Civil War, such as Minie balls, bullets, lead shot, military equipment, clothing fasteners, and one uniform button. Additional testing may occur in these areas in an attempt to identify specific Civil War activities such as tents or huts occupied by the soldiers that manned the fort.

A small number of stone tools and pieces of chipped stone indicate that American Indians periodically camped on the property long prior to European settlement of the area. None of the prehistoric artifacts have been complete enough to identify a specific era when they were made. Nor have the prehistoric artifacts been found in any noteworthy concentrations that would indicate a specific site worth investigating further.

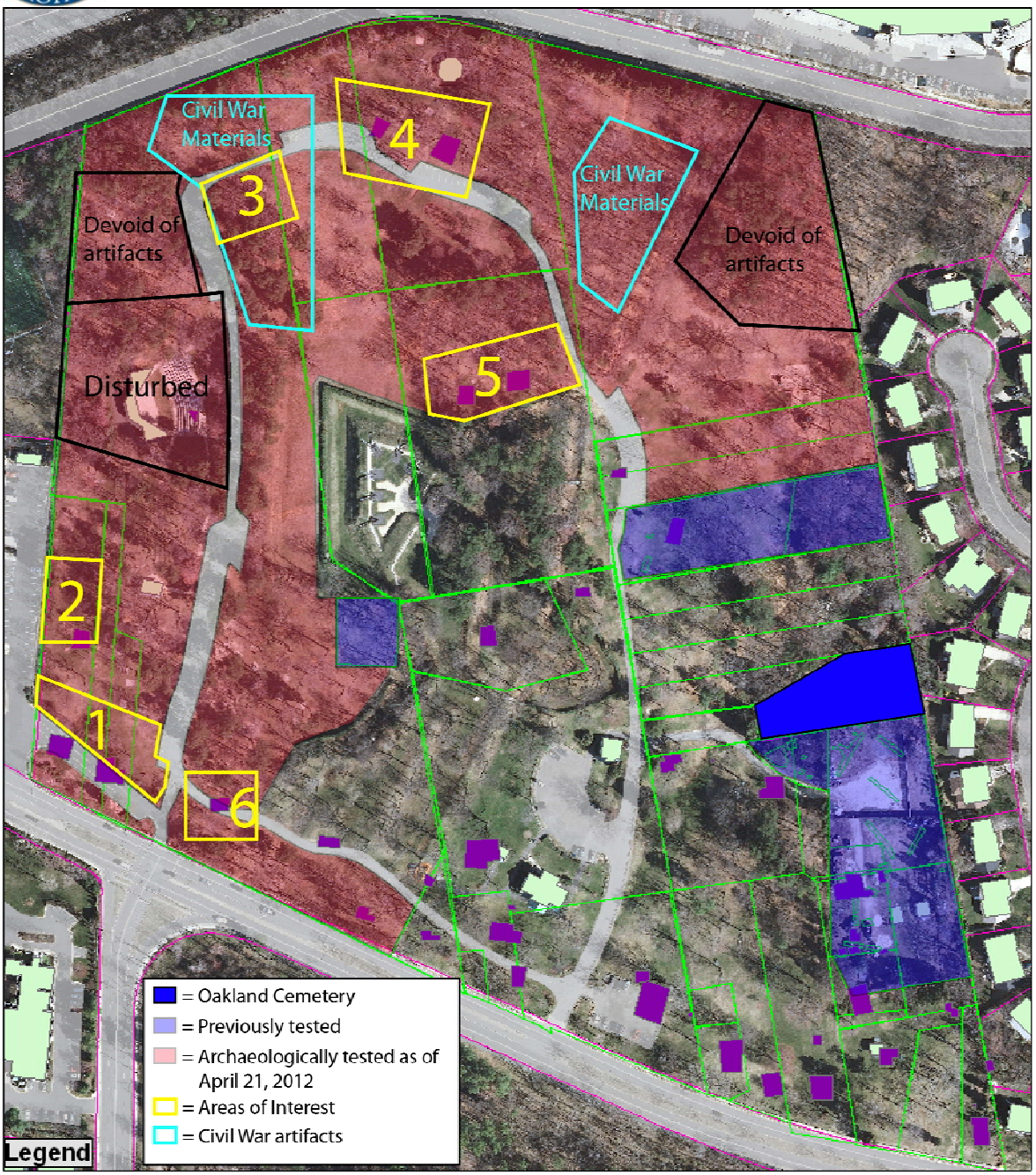
A brief summary of the findings in each Area of Interest is provided below. These areas cannot be more fully investigated unless another phase of funding is provided. More intensive archaeological testing would focus on assessing each site, with a particular emphasis on each site's archaeological integrity and research potential. A site's integrity refers to how well the artifacts and buried soil strata are preserved in the ground. Research potential is an assessment of what kinds of new information could be learned from a site. Archaeological integrity and research potential are closely interrelated: sites that are in good condition usually have better research potential than poorly preserved sites.

105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3217
Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia
Phone: 703/746-4399 e-mail: archaeology@alexandriava.gov fax: 703/838-4691
www.AlexandriaArchaeology.org



Map 1. The area of Fort Ward Park that has been archaeologically investigated as of April 21, 2012, is depicted in red.

105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3217
Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia
Phone: 703/746-4399 e-mail: archaeology@alexandriava.gov fax: 703/838-4691
www.AlexandriaArchaeology.org



Map 2. Locations of Areas of Interest and concentrations of Civil War-related artifacts at Fort Ward Park as of April 21, 2012.

105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3217
Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia
Phone: 703/746-4399 e-mail: archaeology@alexandriava.gov fax: 703/838-4691
www.AlexandriaArchaeology.org

Area of Interest 1:
This artifact concentration is located in the extreme southwest corner of the park in the vicinity of the former Peters and Lewis family homes (see Map 2). The artifacts from this area primarily consist of glass container fragments, ceramic fragments, as well as nails and other iron artifacts. Most of the nails are ordinary wire nails, but some of them are "square" nails that were in common use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The north side of the Lewis dwelling may still exist in the ground, but most of it, and all of the Peters dwelling were removed when the entrance road to the nearby school was built. Additional testing will be needed to ascertain what might remain of the Lewis building and to assess the archaeological integrity of the yard area to the north of the Lewis and Peters houses.

Area of Interest 2:
A second area of interest is situated in what would have been the backyard of the Peters property, in direct proximity to a second building on the Peters lot (see Map 2). Here archaeologists recovered a sizeable amount of domestic debris—ceramics, glass, nails, etc. within an area approximately 120 ft. by 140 ft. in size. These materials appear to date to the early twentieth century and are contemporaneous with the Peters occupation of the lot. Interestingly, the abundance of household materials suggests that the building here served as a dwelling and not simply an outbuilding (shed or garage) to the main house. Additional testing is warranted for this site, especially in light of the surprising amount of household artifacts collected from the site so far.

Area of Interest 3:
The third area of interest—approximately 115 ft. by 140 ft. in size—is located inside the corner of the loop road to the north of the northwest bastion of the fort (see Map 2). A significant amount of household artifacts—ceramic fragments, glass container fragments, nails, window glass—suggest that a structure may have once stood at this location in the first half of the twentieth century. A structure is not shown here on any historic maps or aerial photos found to date, so we are quite curious to determine the meaning of this discovery. Based on the sequence of ownership, the materials could have been generated when James Jackson owned the property from 1894 to 1925, or during Garnett Ashby's tenure as owner from 1925 to 1938. Additional archaeological investigation will be needed to flesh out this undocumented possible house site.

Area of Interest 4:
Archaeologists encountered a concentration of glass, ceramics, nails, and other debris in the vicinity of the former location of the Javins family house (see Map 2). Portions of the site may have been impacted by construction of the loop road. Nevertheless, the site area is worthy of additional testing.

Area of Interest 5:
Artifacts—ceramics, container glass, nails, and other iron objects—are concentrated in and around the former location of two buildings, both belonging to the Craven family in the early twentieth century (see Map 2). Two of the brick piers for the easternmost building are visible on the surface. The site is located on a slope, and because of this, a substantial amount of erosion

has occurred which seems to have depleted the archaeological record causing some of the artifacts to possibly wash down slope. More testing is necessary to assess the full condition of the site.

Area of Interest 6:
A concentration of artifacts was encountered in the immediate vicinity of the former location of a structure that once stood near Braddock Road (see Map 2). The loop road may have impacted most, if not all, of the house footprint, meaning that an assessment of the condition of the archaeological resource is of paramount concern.

Civil War Concentrations of Artifacts:
Systematic metal detecting has been conducted in concert with the shovel testing. So far two areas have yielded the majority of the Civil War artifacts. One area is located along a former trench that extended from the northwest bastion of the main fort to an earthen battery (see Map 2). Approximately 75 artifacts related to the use and occupation of Fort Ward were found in this area. The artifacts consist mainly of dropped or spent lead bullets, one tunic button (New York regiment), and other military hardware.

A second concentration of Civil War materials is located to the west of a large rifle trench that extended off the northeast bastion of the main fort (see Map 2). There are fewer bullets among the finds in this area. Of the approximately 50 Civil War-related artifacts in this area, the majority relate to horse equipage and other similar types of hardware. Perhaps this is a clue that animals were stabled or staked in this area of the fort.

As the project moves forward, we have been able to identify areas of the park where there are little or no significant archaeological materials. In particular, the land surrounding the amphitheater was disturbed from construction and does not contain anything of archaeological value. The slope immediately to the north of the amphitheater was not affected from any construction or grading activities; however it is largely devoid of artifacts. The northeast corner of the park—largely wooded—contains very few archaeological artifacts. After analysis of the findings is completed at the end of the project, we expect that additional areas will be identified that do not contain significant archaeological evidence.

The archaeological crew will now focus on the southeast quadrant of the park in order to complete the survey. Based on historic maps, we expect that this portion of the park will be the most complicated and produce a large amount of data (see Map 1). The field crew schedule is from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Monday through Friday. We welcome visitors to drop by any time during a work day to visit with the crew, ask questions, etc. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Garrett Fesler at 703.746.4399 or via email at garrett.fesler@alexandriava.gov