

**Historical Archaeology
and the
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Project,
Springfield, Illinois**

Mansberger, Floyd, Christopher Stratton, and Christina Wresch

2000 *A Cultural And Historical Resources Study for the Proposed Site of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.*

In early 2000, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency began planning for the construction of a new presidential library and museum complex to commemorate the life of Abraham Lincoln, the nation's sixteenth president, and one of Springfield's favorite citizens. The site for the proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum complex was a three-block area located in Springfield's downtown commercial district within sight of the Old State Capitol (Blocks 1, 2, and 12 of the Original Town Plat, City of Springfield). In compliance with both Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 707 of the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act, it was the responsibility of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to assess the impact of the proposed construction activity associated with the Lincoln Presidential Library on the historic resources within the proposed project area. As the project area was located within an urban environment—and completely encapsulated by the built environment (buildings and pavements), a traditional Phase I archaeological survey was not possible. In an effort to assess the proposed construction activity on the potential below-ground subsurface resources within the project area, the IHPA contracted with Fever River Research to conduct a literature search to identify potential archaeological resources that might be expected within the project area. This report, which summarizes the results of the literature search, also presented an historical context for the early settlement of Springfield as well as a predictive model for potential archaeological sites within the three-block project area. Subsurface archaeological investigations (consisting of a hybrid Phase I survey and Phase II testing strategy) were recommended for each of the three individual blocks within the greater project area.

Floyd Mansberger

2001 Phase II Archaeological Testing of the Proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (Block 12, Original Town Plat, Springfield).

In mid-March 2001, Fever River Research conducted Phase II archaeological testing of the proposed location of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in downtown Springfield (North Half, Block 12, Original Town Plat, City of Springfield). At the time of the fieldwork, the entire project area (consisting of the north half of the block) was an asphalt covered surface parking lot. Over a two-day period, four backhoe trenches were excavated across the north half of the block in areas though most likely to yield information regarding the potential

integrity of the underlying cultural deposits. These test trenches documented the presence of extensive fill deposits overlying the original (circa 1820s) ground surface (which was 3' to 5' below the existing surface). Several early nineteenth century features (including a cistern, well, a large rectangular pit, stone foundations, and several distinctive middens) were encountered at this time. One of the middens encountered consisted of a concentration of redware waster sherds, kiln furniture and burned brick associated with the John Ebey pottery. Based on these investigations, the north half of the block was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and Phase III archaeological mitigation was recommended.

Floyd Mansberger

2001 Phase III Archaeological Mitigation of the Proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (Block 12, Original Town Plat, Springfield) (Fieldwork Only).

Over an intensive three-week period in early April 2001, Phase III archaeological research was conducted at the site of the proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (North Half, Block 12, Original Town Plat, City of Springfield). During the course of these investigations, two large blocks were stripped of their overburden to expose the underlying archaeological features. As the Phase II research had indicated, although a large section of the four lots located in the project area had been disturbed by the construction of several later nineteenth century commercial structures with basements (such as the Chatterton Opera House), large sections of the project area remained undisturbed. The Phase III archaeological investigations documented a wide range of early to late nineteenth century features that included numerous privy pits (associated with both residential and commercial structures), cisterns, wells, structural foundations, and distinctive middens. The earliest features (including a well, small earthen cellar, privy pits, and midden) appear to document a small urban house site from the late 1820s and 1830s. Potentially associated with this house was a distinctive midden representing discard from a redware pottery. One particular redware sherd had "1831" scratched into it. Archival evidence suggests that this pottery and kiln waste was from the John Ebey pottery. A second, and just as distinctive, early midden (consisting of a dense concentration of blue shell edge dinner plates and marked "Adams") was also found during these investigations. This distinctive artifact concentration probably was associated with the early Jabez Capps occupation, as Capps was one of Springfield's early merchants. Additionally, remains of both Simeon Francis' residence and his adjacent newspaper office building (including the physical remains of the press foundations) were recovered. Francis was the founder and editor of the *Sangamo Journal*—one of Springfield's early newspapers. The artifact analysis and report preparation phase of this project was only recently funded, and a final report on the results of this research is not anticipated until late 2008.

Floyd Mansberger

2001 Phase II Archaeological Testing of the Proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum (Block 1, Original Town Plat, Springfield) (Fieldwork Only).

In late October 2001, Fever River Research conducted Phase II archaeological testing of the proposed location of the Lincoln Presidential Museum (Block 1, Original Town Plat, City of Springfield). Although the south half of Block 1 had been disturbed by the construction of early twentieth century buildings with deep basements, the north half of the block appeared to have been less disturbed and the potential to contain significant subsurface deposits in this area was thought to be high. With this in mind, four backhoe trenches were excavated within the asphalt-covered parking lot located on the north half of the block. These test trenches documented the presence of fill deposits of varying depth overlying the original (circa 1830s) ground surface. Along the eastern edge of the block, this ground surface was located immediately below the thin asphalt pavement. These backhoe trenches exposed a distinctive, artifact-rich, domestic midden containing substantial amounts of wood ash and dating from circa 1830 through the 1840s. The quality and diversity of the artifacts suggested the presence of a relatively well-to-do family. Besides this distinctive midden, several structural foundations, an early cistern, a small cellar, and at least one privy pit were documented. Based on these investigations, the north half of the block was determine eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and Phase III archaeological mitigation was recommended.

Floyd Mansberger

2002 Phase III Archaeological Mitigation of the Proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum (Block 1, Original Town Plat, Springfield) (Fieldwork Only).

During the late winter and early spring 2002, Phase III archaeological research was conducted at the site of the proposed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. During the course of these investigations most of Lots 1 and 2 was stripped of its overburden exposing a variety of subsurface features. Although archival research has not been finalized, it appears that the early domestic (and potentially commercial) midden identified during the Phase II archaeological investigations on Lots 1 and 2 was deposited by John Williams and his family. Williams, an early merchant in Springfield and partner with Elijah Iles (one of the town's founders), may have occupied Lots 1 and 2 during the 1830s. Stone house foundations, a well, numerous privy pits, and an early drainage system document the early domestic component at this site. Additionally, the archaeological excavations documented several middle to late nineteenth century commercial and light industrial (blacksmithing) activity areas. Several distinctive, double-vaulted, privy-like features were found associated with the blacksmith shop. Williams was a typical entrepreneur of the period and dappled in a great variety of enterprises, including leather manufacture. There is some thought that these pits may have been associated with the processing of hides. The artifact analysis and

report preparation phase of this project was only recently funded, and a final report on the results of this research is not anticipated until late 2008.

Floyd Mansberger

2003 *A Cultural And Historical Resources Study for the Proposed Site of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Parking Garage, Springfield, Illinois.*

Previously, a cultural resource assessment of Blocks 1, 2, and 12 of the Original Town Plat had been conducted by Fever River Research to assess the impact of the proposed construction of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library on potential subsurface archaeological resources (Mansberger, Stratton, and Wresch 2000). These original plans called for the construction of an underground parking garage on Block 2 of the Original Town Plat. Subsequent plans were developed for the construction of the parking garage on the adjacent Block 2 of Ninian Edwards Addition to the Original Town Plat. In compliance with both Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 707 of the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act, it was the responsibility of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to assess the impact of the proposed construction activity associated with the Lincoln Presidential Library's parking garage on the historic resources. As the project area was located within an urban environment—and completely encapsulated by the built environment (buildings and pavements), a traditional Phase I archaeological survey was not possible. In an effort to assess the proposed construction activity on the potential belowground subsurface resources within the project area, the IHPA contracted with Fever River Research to conduct a literature search to identify potential archaeological resources that might be expected within the project area. Upon completion of the literature review, subsurface archaeological investigations (consisting of a hybrid Phase I survey and Phase II testing strategy) were recommended. Over a three-day period in July 2003, ten backhoe trenches were excavated in the area thought most likely to yield information regarding significant subsurface features. These test trenches documented the presence of fill deposits of varying depth overlying the original circa 1830s ground surface. At least 15 privy pits, multiple cisterns, two wells, and several house foundations were documented by this fieldwork. Based on the literature review, it would appear that these features were associated with early domestic as well as commercial components. Besides merchant class housing, the literature search documented the presence of an early public or boarding house (the Farnsworth House) in the project area. Based on the Phase II testing, several of these features appeared to date from the 1830s to 1840s period, and the site was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Phase III archaeological mitigation was recommended.

Floyd Mansberger

2003 Phase III Archaeological Mitigation of Archaeological Resources within the East Half, Block 2, Ninian Edwards Addition to the City of Springfield (Fieldwork Only).

During the months of September and October 2003, Fever River Research conducted Phase III archaeological mitigation on the proposed site of the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum's parking lot (East Half, Block 2, Ninian Edwards Addition). This proposed parking lot was located immediately north of the original central business district and, by the 1840s was the location of two dwellings (each occupied by a prominent merchant class family) and a large commercial structure occupied by the Farnsworth House—which was a boarding and/or public house catering to the better-class, albeit transient visitors the newly established state capitol was drawing to the community. As part of this work, the greater part of five city lots were stripped of overburden, and a wide variety of subsurface features exposed and excavated. During the early years of the twentieth century, one of these lots had had a large commercial building constructed upon it. This building—which had no basement—had encapsulated the earlier nineteenth century cultural deposits. Upon excavation, the foundations of the early house and suite of early to middle nineteenth century features were completely exposed. Unfortunately, the construction of several early twentieth century houses (with basements) had disturbed the front half of the other lots. Although the preservation of the earlier deposits were impacted on the front of these other four lots, the rear half of the lots exhibited good integrity and a wide variety of mid- and rear-yard features were exposed and excavated. Of particular interest were a couple of privy pits (with excellent bone preservation) that appear to have been associated with the occupation of the Farnsworth House. These features document the complexity of the combination residential and commercial neighborhoods common during the early to middle nineteenth century. The artifact analysis and report preparation phase of this project was only recently funded, and a final report on the results of this research is not anticipated until late 2008.

Floyd Mansberger

2004 *A Cultural And Historical Resources Study for the Proposed Site of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Parking Garage (Part II), Springfield, Illinois.*

Previously, a cultural resource assessment of the east half of Block 2, Ninian Edwards Addition to the City of Springfield was conducted by Fever River Research to assess the impact of the proposed construction of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's parking garage on potential subsurface archaeological resources (Mansberger 2003). The original plans called for the construction of the parking garage on the east half of the block, but subsequent plans were developed for the expansion of the parking garage on the adjacent west half of the block. In compliance with both Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 707 of the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act, it was the responsibility of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to assess the impact of the proposed construction activity associated with the Lincoln Presidential Library's parking garage on historic resources. As the project area was located within an urban environment—and completely encapsulated by the built environment (buildings and pavements), a

traditional Phase I archaeological survey was not possible. In an effort to assess the proposed construction activity on the potential belowground subsurface resources within the project area, the IHPA contracted with Fever River Research to conduct a literature search to identify potential archaeological resources that might be expected within the project area. This report summarizes the results of the literature search as well as presents a predictive model for potential archaeological sites within the half-block project area. Subsurface archaeological investigations (consisting of a hybrid Phase I survey and Phase II testing strategy) were recommended and carried out during a two-week period in March and early April 2004. Upon removal of asphalt and gravel parking lot overburden, a relatively thin historic midden overlying an intact nineteenth century ground surface was encountered throughout almost the entire area investigated. Additionally, several subsurface features (including at least 33 privy pits, one cistern, several trash pits, and the brick foundation walls of an early nineteenth century dwelling) were documented. Based on the Phase II testing, several of these features appeared to date from the 1830s to 1840s period, and the site was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Phase III archaeological mitigation was recommended.

Floyd Mansberger

2004 Phase III Archaeological Mitigation of Archaeological Resources within the West Half, Block 2, Ninian Edwards Addition to the City of Springfield (Fieldwork Only).

Beginning in mid-March and continuing through early June 2004, Fever River Research conducted Phase III archaeological mitigation on the proposed site of the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum's parking lot (West Half, Block 2, Ninian Edwards Addition). The project area is located immediately north of the central business district, and was originally the location of several early houses of Springfield's merchant class. The construction of several commercial buildings and their associated parking lots during the early years of the twentieth century encapsulated the earlier nineteenth century cultural deposits. As part of this work, the greater part of four urban lots was nearly completely stripped of overburden exposing a wide variety of domestic features. Foundations of three pre-Civil War houses, several ancillary outbuildings, and multiple privy pits were excavated. These features document the transition of the neighborhood from one dominated by upper class, single-family residential dwellings, to a combination of working class multi-family residential and commercial buildings. The artifact analysis and report preparation phase of this project was only recently funded, and a final report on the results of this research is not anticipated until late 2008.