



Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation  
Report of Archaeological Excavation  
May 14-22, 2014





## **Introduction and Acknowledgement**

In October 2013 CDRF sponsored an excavation of six units on the John J. Pershing Magnet School site at South Calumet Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street in Chicago. Results, especially in Unit 6, the most eastern unit, supported an additional excavation on the site.

Dr. Michael Gregory, De Paul University again managed the 2014 excavation with professionalism, positive leadership, good humor and an appreciation for the educational opportunity offered by the location. Andrew Leith, Field Museum, once more joined the team adding strong support in the management of the site

Dr. Safurat Giwa Principal of Pershing provided outstanding continuing cooperation to make the project a success.

Remaining funds from an earlier grant from the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation were used to finance the 2014 project. Clark Roofing of Broadview Illinois, again, provided necessary equipment, supplies and transportation for the project. Archaeological specific equipment was provided by De Paul University and CDRF.

With the support of Dr. Giwa, CDRF Board members Roy Malone and Dean Rodkin presented a special program for fourth grade students of Pershing. As with the third grade students who were involved in the October excavation, these students participated in a reading and reading comprehension exercise followed by hands on experience at the excavation site. Details of this program are contained in the body of this report.

Special thanks to CDRF board members Andy Irvine and Bernard Turner for devoting so much of their their valuable time to on-site activities during the excavation.

Again, thanks to the Chicago Fire Department for the use of rest rooms over the week end. Their interest in the project and support of our activities is appreciated.

In addition to CPS students, Prologue Schools once again had active participation in the excavation. These students were invaluable in the initial opening of four of the five units of this excavation.

A'Jonta Flourrony, a sixth grade student at Pershing, deserves special thanks. On Thursday, May 15, he asked to participate in the excavation as he had done in October. With his mother's approval, A'Jonta spent Saturday and Sunday at the site actively involved in all facets of the excavation.

Extra special thanks go out to the volunteers who participated in the excavation. Without these volunteers, this, or any excavation, would not be possible. The volunteers represented De Paul University, Loyola University, School of the Art institute, Field Museum, and other private individuals with an interest in archaeology and history. This outstanding team consisted of: JAMES AVGERINOS, MARGARET BAKER, RAYCHARD BAINES, CHRIS BRINK, KELLY CRISTIAN, EMLYS CREEK, TERA DOBBS, MYSTRIE DAVIS, MALIK DUNCEN, XAVIER EDDINS, A'JONTA FLOURRONY, RONDELL FREEMAN II, PATRICK GALLOWAY, TOM GORMAN, NICHOLE GRINSBARG, JACKIE HACKETT, JACK HART, LAZORIA HOWARD, KELLY HURUCHIYSER, JESSICA KALRIG, DAVID J. KELLER, KAMIL KOZIOL, LINDA KLUTZNICK, LAURA LAUDDADIO, ANDREW LEITH, ANDREW LISEC, JACKIE MANN, PATRICK MURPHY, JOSHUA ORTIZ, CAROL PADDOR, ERIC REGALBUTO, EUGENIA RUIZ, KYLE SCHIFFLER, PATRICK STRANGE, JANET TATENHORST, PETER TOMICIC, ALBERTO VELAZQUEZ, MARGET WILLIS, PHOEBE YATES, and NICHOLAS YORIE.

David L. Keller  
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June 5, 2014

## **Camp Douglas Background:**

Camp Douglas was located between 31<sup>st</sup> Street, 33<sup>rd</sup> Place, Cottage Grove Ave and Giles Ave on the near-south side of Chicago. The camp operated between 1861 and 1865 receiving and training nearly 40,000 Union soldiers, including African American troops. From 1862 through 1865 the camp also served as a prison camp housing nearly 30,000 Confederate prisoners during that time. Most of the last prisoners left the camp by July 1865 with the camp completely razed by December 1865. In years after the camp's existence nothing remains of its physical presence. Little, if any, acknowledgement of the camp exists today. Yet, Camp Douglas was the most significant physical facility in Chicago during the Civil War consisting of 60 acres of land and over 200 buildings. 66 of the building were barracks housing Confederate prisoners when the camp closed.

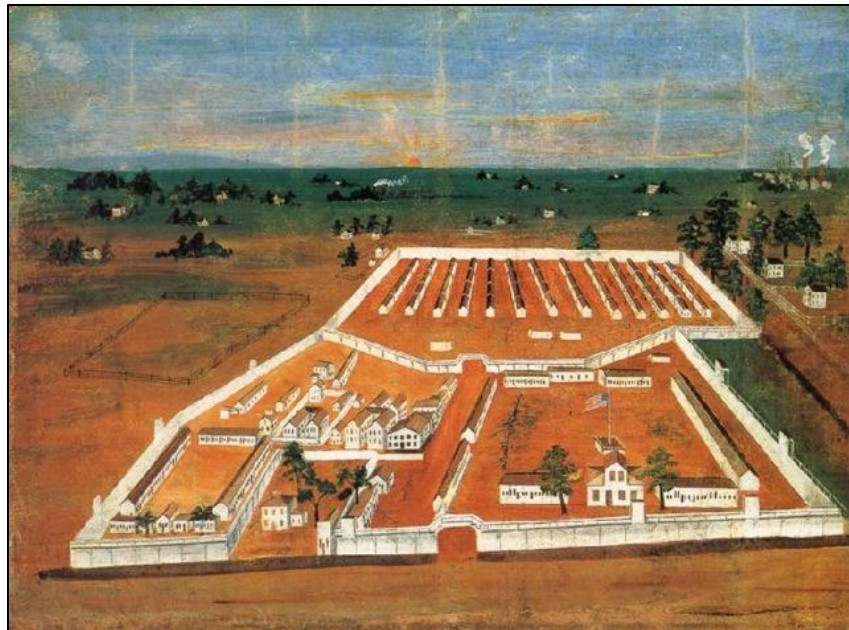


Figure 1, Camp Douglas, 1864, Oil in canvas, Albert Meyer, Chicago History Museum

## **Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation:**

The Foundation was incorporated July 2, 2010 as an Illinois general not-for-profit corporation. It is exempt under section 501(c) (3) of the IRS code.

### **Mission:**

To provide active leadership in the development, delivery, and preservation of educational and historic information regarding the Upper Midwest, especially Illinois and Chicago during the Civil War.

The Foundation is managed by a Board of Directors authorized at ten members with currently seven members; all serving with no compensation. David L. Keller is the non-paid Managing Director. Directors serve for a term of one year. There are no term limits on director appointments.

Specific information on the Foundation's activities can be found on the web site [www.campdouglas.org](http://www.campdouglas.org).

### Background and Planning of the Excavation:

In 2012, CDRF sponsored a successful excavation at Lake Meadows Park, 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and Rhodes Ave. (see Figure 2). At that excavation evidence of the foundation for the headquarters building and a portion of a clay pipe that dated to Camp Douglas were found. These two discoveries indicated that further excavations were warranted.

Unfortunately, the primary land owner on the site of Camp Douglas, Draper and Kramer, is exceptionally uncooperative thus, limiting further investigations to the western portion of the camp located west of King Drive.

In 2013 CDRF and Dr. Gregory determined that a noninvasive investigation of the open area of John J. Pershing Magnet School, 3200 S. Calumet, and the parking lot of the closed Griffin Funeral Home, 3220 S. King Drive was appropriate. Approval from Dr. Nancy Jackson, CEO, Prologue Schools, owner of Griffin Funeral home, and the Chicago Public Schools was quickly obtained and Dr. Dan Joyce, Kenosha Civil War Museum, completed ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey of five survey areas at Pershing and the Griffin Funeral Home (Figure 3) on July 28, 2013.

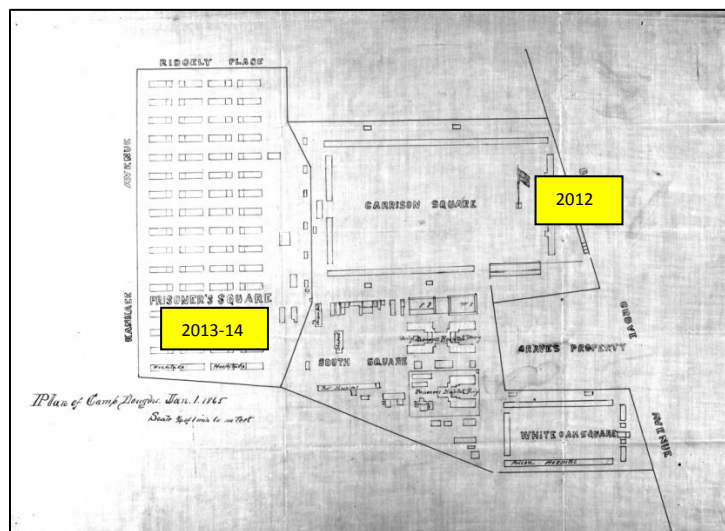


Figure 2, 2012, 2013, and 2014, excavation sites

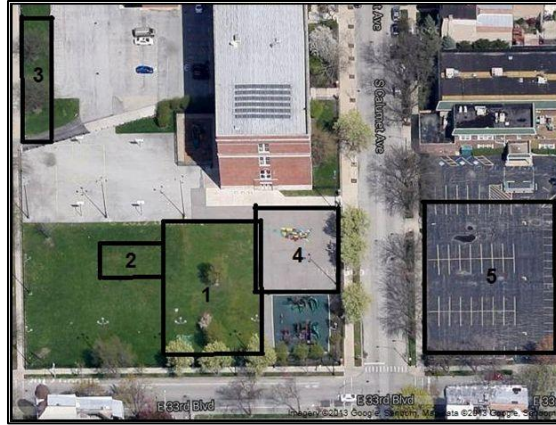


Figure 3, Pershing Sites

Based on the findings from the GPR information and a study of the 1912 and 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, site 2 of the Joyce report was selected for an excavation in October 2013. The 1912 map represented the likely first permanent build up on the site and 1950 reflected the configuration before urban renewal in the 1950's. Units to be selected would be located essentially in the back yards of houses shown on the 1912 map. It was believed that excavating units in this area would give the project the greatest possibility of finding evidence dating to the existence of Camp Douglas.

Artifacts found during the 2013 excavation, although not completely catalogued, as well as soil patterns in Unit 6, provided the best evidence of the Camp Douglas period. As a result, Dr. Gregory recommended that future investigations be conducted in Site 2 and the western edge of Site 1 just east of 2013 Unit 6 as shown in Figure 4.

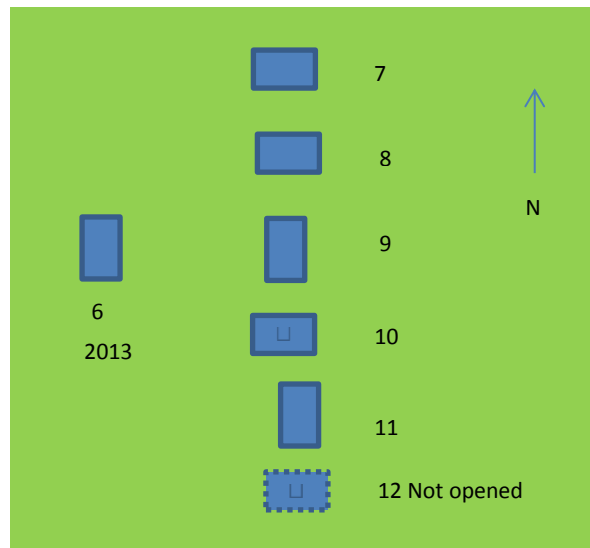


Figure 4, Site 2, 2014 Units 7 through 12 with Unit 6 from 2013

Unit 6 was believed to be near the intersection of one of the barracks buildings and the 25 foot wide street between barracks as seen is the drawing in Figure 5.

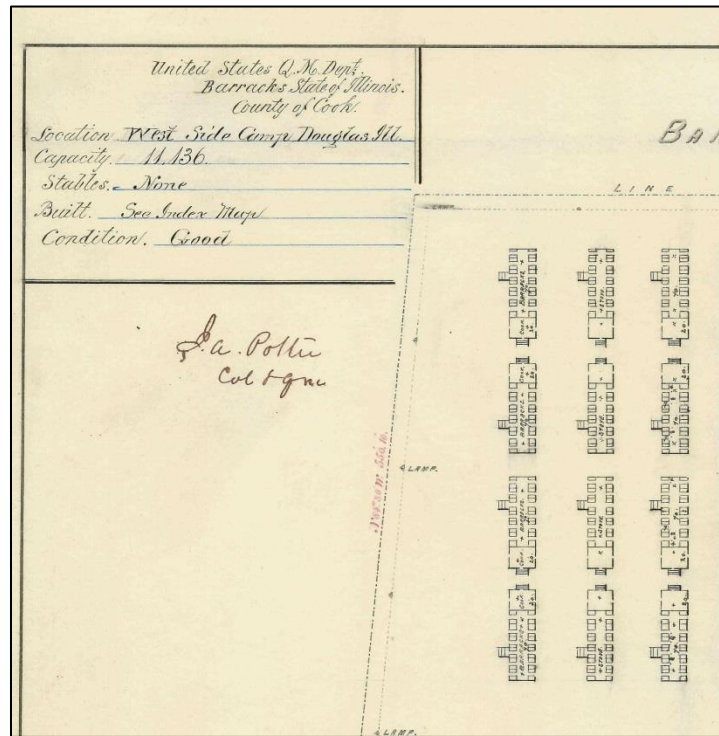


Figure 5, Col Potter drawing ca: 1864 of excavation site

### Conduct of Excavation:

The excavation was laid out by Dr. Gregory and David Keller on Wednesday, May 14. This layout provided for immediate excavation upon the arrival of volunteers on May 15.



Figure 6, Site from south-east

That afternoon, Andy Irvine, Clark Roofing and Director of CDRF, delivered material and equipment to the site. A fence was erected and material moved to the units.

Roy Malone provided an orientation to students of John J. Pershing Magnet School regarding the investigation. This orientation included written material describing the activity.



Figure 7, Initial layout of site with units inside fencing and headquarters to the left viewed from the west.

Figure 8, Initial layout by volunteers of Unit 10

Volunteers arrived at 8:00 am to begin the excavation. Upon arrival volunteers were signed in and given a brief overview by CDRF. They were then given specific instructions by Dr. Gregory and assigned to a unit. When possible, volunteers remained in their assigned unit team for their stay at the site. As work load dictated, Dr. Gregory reassigned volunteers to other units.

All participants were required to sign an “Exculpatory Agreement and Waiver of Claim” with CPS and CDRF. Medical evacuation routes, coordination with Chicago Fire Department ambulance service and on-site first aid was provided. There were no incidents reported during any of the excavations.



Figure 9, M. Gregory gives volunteer orientation May 15



Each day volunteers worked from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm with a lunch break of approximately 45 minutes. Saturday through Wednesday, because of weather problems, volunteers remained on site until as late as 7:00 pm. Water and snacks were provided by CDRF. Rest room facilities were provided by Pershing during school days. Chicago Fire Department Engine 19, Truck 11 and Ambulance 4 located at 3421 S. Calumet provided rest room facilities on Saturday and Sunday.



Figure 10, View May 17 looking south



Figure 11, View May 18 Unit 8

The objective of the excavation was to investigate the entire unit with emphasis on the sand level where Camp Douglas was built. Excavation in 2013 showed that the sand layer was only approximately 50 centimeters below the surface. This was much shallower than anticipated.



Figure 12, Unit 9 foreground. M. Gregory, center-left in baseball hat.



Figure 13, Unit 11 screening. A. Leith, archaeologist, field Museum on right with visiting Australians archaeologists

Typical excavation of the site consisted of excavation in 10 centimeter depths, after the removal of sod, using hand trowels and other small tools. All dirt was placed in buckets and then screened to uncover any additional artifacts. Each 10 centimeters was documented, mapped, and photographed with artifacts identified in each depth. As a result of the location

of the Camp Douglas level at the sand layer and the delays caused by weather, it was determined to remove material above 40 centimeters using shovels rather than trowels. The 10 centimeter levels would be respected and all material would be screened, with all artifacts retained. This would allow greater time to be spent at the Camp Douglas level in each unit.



Figure 14, Prologue School Students removing sod May 15



Figure 15, Unit 8 excavation May 15

Students from Prologue School participated on May 15. Their primary role was to open all units by removing and retaining sod. They then participated in the initial excavation of the units.

Four units were opened by early afternoon on Thursday, May 15. A light rain began to fall and the units were covered to avoid excessive wetness for subsequent days. With the rain persisting, the excavation was terminated by 3:00 pm.



Figure 16, Friday, May 16 rain out



Figure 17, Waiting, in vain, for rain to stop, May 16

On Friday, May 16 heavy rain and cold prohibited any excavation. In spite of the weather, over a dozen volunteers arrived before the work was terminated in mid-morning.

Friday was scheduled to include the participation of John J. Pershing Magnet School fourth grade students. A portion of the planned program was presented indoors. Outdoor activities

at the excavation were deferred until Monday, May 19. See the education section in this report below.

Weather was significantly improved for Saturday and Sunday, May 17-18. As a result, significant progress was made to catch up for lost time on Thursday and Friday. Even with significant work by volunteers, the project remained behind schedule. On Saturday, Unit 11 was opened making five units actively being excavated.



Figure 18, May 18 looking north Units 7 & 8



Figure 19, May 18 looking south east

Based on the work still to be completed, it was determined that Unit 12 would not be opened.

Work on Saturday and Sunday revealed a lack of continuity of the units running north to south. Unit 7 revealed a poured concrete feature between levels 2 and 3 (see Figure 20). Later it was discovered that this feature was found in Units 8 and 10. After reviewing 1969 photos of the area it was determined that this may be a foundation of a shelter house located on the site. However, the shelter appeared to be east of the units.

It was also noted in the photographs that the site had been covered by asphalt and used as playground. It is likely that gravel layers found during this excavation and the excavation in 2013 may have been the remains of the base for the asphalt.

Excavation of Unit 8 revealed unusual construction (see Figure 21). The northern half of the Unit at level 2 contained common bricks and the southern end paving bricks. Upon closer investigation, the paving blocks were not the usual cut stone blocks but a poor quality concrete in the shape of paving blocks. The purpose of this construction is unknown. A further study of this material will be made at the De Paul Field School as part of the cleaning, cataloging and dating of artifacts.



Figure 20, Unit 7 poured concrete



Figure 21, Unit 8 unique features

Unit 11, Figure 22, revealed another feature that did not fit any pattern in the five units. On the eastern edge of the unit was a brick foundation beginning at level 2. Sanborn Maps and other information of the area showed some sheds at this location in 1912. However, these sheds appeared to be primitive and would not likely have a substantial foundation. On the south end of the feature appeared to be a threshold of a doorway. This feature will be studied in greater detail off site.



Figure 22, Unit 11, brick foundation on right

Unit 10 appeared to contain a trash pit, including some burning of material estimated to be 1880's or 1890's base on artifacts found. Many of the glass bottles were intact and will be studied and dated later. Future study of this unit will assist in more accurately dating levels as artifacts were concentrated in the trash pit area.



Figure 23, Unit 10 1890's bottle. Unit contained trash pit



Figure 24, Unit 9, M. Gregory, final Mapping

On Monday, the fourth grade students visited the site for limited hands-on activities. Unfortunately, time did not permit the students to be actively involved in any excavation.



Figure 25, Unit 9 at Camp Douglas level

Dr. Gregory began final mapping of units on Tuesday, May 20. In Unit 9 (see Figure 25) he found discoloration in one corner of the unit that needed investigation. Excavating to level 4 and 5 uncovered buttons and ceramics from the Camp Douglas period were discovered. In

addition patterns in the soil suggested thin layers of ash that may have come from discarding ashes from camp heating and cooking stoves.

These factors suggest that a concentrated excavation of this Unit should be considered in the future.

Initial plans were to complete the excavation and begin back-fill on Monday, May 19. However, due to weather delays Dr. Gregory extended the excavation until at least, Tuesday. While a number of volunteers were not available for the extension, enough remained to complete the project.

Mapping and final data gathering was completed on Wednesday, May 21 and the site finally closed on Thursday, May 22. Special thanks to Andy Irvine for final back-fill and site clean-up



Figure 26, Closed site looking south

### **Excavation Results:**

Again, the excavation was considered a success from a scientific, educational, and public relations perspective

The archaeological significance of the excavation will be determined after the artifacts have been cleaned, cataloged and dated by students at De Paul University. Information obtained during the excavation will be analyzed by Dr. Gregory and documented in a detailed scientific report.

Based on the findings in Unit 9, it is likely that an additional excavation will be done in the fall 2014. In addition, locating a feature from the stockade fence would be significant in properly placing the Camp Douglas building on the current land. Much is known about the dimensions of Prisoners Square inside the stockade fence. The width of the streets surrounding the camp and the exact location of the stockade fence is crucial in accurate placement. Excavation near Giles Avenue may be warranted

Further space on the northern edge of the site, near 32<sup>nd</sup> Street may offer another possible site. De Paul University now has ground penetrating radar that may be used to re-evaluate that portion of the site.

### **Artifacts:**

A number of identifiable artifacts were found during the excavation. Unlike the excavation of 2013, few items could be immediately identified and dated.



Artifacts samples from  
Unit 10



Found: Sample Artifacts,  
Unit 8



Unit 10, Complete wine  
bottle, undated



## Educational Involvement:

CDRF Director Bernard Turner and Roy Malone again acted as primary liaison to Pershing.



Figure 27, B. Turner presents S. Giwa with CDRF gift  
October 1013

Prior to the 2013 excavation CDRF offered to present an educational program for students of Pershing as part of the excavation. With the concurrence of Dr. Giwa the program was developed.

A program was successfully presented to third grade students in October 2013.

This excavation the same program was given to the fourth grade students. Since all of the school (K-8) would be exposed to the archaeological excavation, a “Your Link to History” handout was prepared to be provided to all students explaining Camp Douglas and the archaeological project.

The program was to be between 30 and 45 minutes in length and consisted of the following steps:

1. Reading and reading comprehension: A booklet was created entitled “Guide for Young Archaeologists.” This booklet discussed archaeology, paleontology, fossils and artifacts. Students were expected to read and discuss the content with group leaders.
2. Word find game followed the reading. Here students were to locate words from the reading material in a word maze.
3. Simulated Dig: Students were introduced to plastic tubs filled with sand, artifacts, and fossils. They were given small shovels and rakes to search the sand. As they found objects they placed them on photographs of the items and discussed with the group leader if the object was old or new and why. This step introduced the

students to archaeological excavations, handling of artifacts and the evaluation of artifacts.

4. Excavation Site: Students were led to the excavation site and to one of the excavation units. The senior person on the unit, usually a trained archaeologist, explained what was being done and demonstrated techniques used to excavate the site. Actual artifacts were shown to and handled by the students. Students then had an opportunity to participate in the excavation by using trowels and brushes to dig in the unit or operate screening devices to remove sand and dirt from possible artifacts.
5. Follow up questions were provided to group leaders to review and summarize the activity with students.

On Friday May 16, a total of approximately 60 students were given the first three parts of the program in doors. This activity was supplemented by Dr. Gregory giving a presentation of the project. Unfortunately weather conditions did not permit them to participate in the visit to the excavation site.

On Monday, May 19, the students visited the excavation. Due to the size of the groups, actual participation in the excavation was impossible. As a result, they discussed the activities with Andrew Leith, Field Museum, and handled artifacts found on the site with CDRF. While not optimum, this substitute for the complete activity was successful.

### **CDRF Headquarters and Information Center:**

An information and communications area was established by CDRF. This facility consisted of two pop-up enclosure, tables and chairs. One enclosure contained snacks, water and provided a rest area for excavation participants

The second enclosure provided space for a headquarters for the excavation. This facility was established north of the excavation site between the site and the school. Written material, artifacts from the 2012 excavation, photographs, maps and other material were available for CDRF members to brief visitors. An "Extra" edition of *Camp Douglas News* was available as a hand out to visitors to describe the current project. In addition, the flyer "Your Link to History" was also available.

During the excavation a number of local residence and other visitors were greeted at the headquarters and provided with information by CDRF board members. Most visitors were accompanied into the excavation site by CDRF representatives.