

CAMP DOUGLAS.  
*Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation*  
A Chicago Story That Must Be Told

Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation  
Report of Archaeological Excavation  
May 18-26, 2016





## **Introduction and Acknowledgement**

Beginning May 18, 2016 an investigation at the John J. Pershing Magnet School site, South Calumet Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street in Chicago, represented the sixth excavation at this location.

Dr. Michael Gregory, DePaul University, managed this excavation with the same professionalism, enthusiasm and leadership as with previous excavations. Archaeologist Joseph Wheeler, U.S. Forest Service, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie again participated. Dr. Safurat Giwa, Principal of Pershing, provided outstanding continuing cooperation to make the project a success. Programs were conducted for the third and seventh grade students of the school during the excavation.

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.

Special thanks to CDRF board members Phil Grinstead, Roy Malone, Dean Rodkin, and Bernard Turner for devoting so much of their valuable time to on-site activities during the excavation. Special thanks to Andy Irvine and for their contribution in back filling units at the end of 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. The Chicago Fire Department Truck 11 and Engine 14 watered the site after back fill was complete and grass seed added.

Extra special thanks to the thirty-nine volunteers who participated in the excavation. This outstanding team included:

ERIKA ARREOLA, MARI BARNES, THOMAS BERLANGERO, CHRIS BRINK, CARLA BROOKE, ERIC CAMPBELL, THOMAS COYNE, WAYNE ETHERIDGE, COLLEEN FAHEY, MARLISA FEIN, CHRISTINA FLOE, TOMAS GORMAN, NICHOLE GRINBARG, ANNA HAUK, CAROLYN HAUK, ERIC HAUK, HEATHER HICKEY, ANDREW IRVIE, PETER IRVINE, ELISSA ISAIS, DONALD JONES, LISA JONES, LINDA KELLER, LAURA LAUDADIO, KRISREN LOPEZ, IAN MCKITTERICK, ASHLEY PURPURA, REX ROBINETTE, RHONDA ROBINETTE, DEAN RODKIN, PETER SHUKSTOR, CAROL SOMMERS,

NICHOLAS SOMMERS, GINGER STANCIEL, AUREN STANCIEL, THOMAS SUHS, JEANNE SYLVESTER, JOSEPH WHEELER, MARGIT WILLIS,

Of special note, Chris Brink, Nichole Grinbarg, and Margit Willis have participated in five of the six excavations on this site. Laura Laudidio has participated in four.

It is with regret that we have learned that Dr. Michael Gregory will no longer be affiliated with De Paul University. Michael's future plans are uncertain at this time. He will continue as a member of the CDRF Board of Directors and will remain in charge of future archaeological investigations. Unfortunately, the facilities of De Paul will not be available to the Foundation.

Michael will retain control of Camp Douglas artifacts. They will likely be housed at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.

David L. Keller  
Managing Director  
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation  
[www.campdouglas.org](http://www.campdouglas.org)  
June 10, 2016

## **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 largest military installation in Illinois and 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.

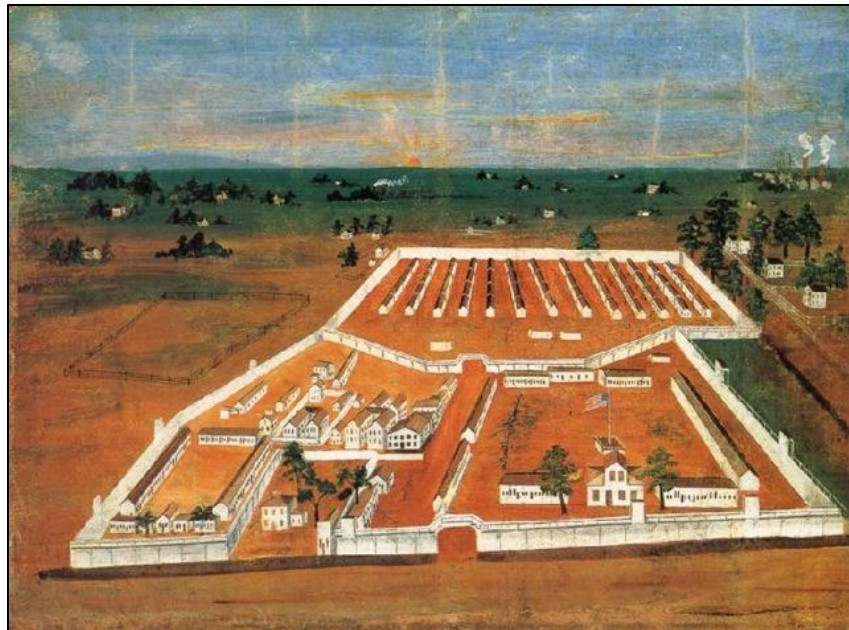


Figure 1, Camp Douglas, 1864, Oil in canvas, Albert Meyer, Chicago History Museum

## **Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation (CDRF):**

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 ten 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 portion of the camp located east of King Drive.

In 2013 CDRF and Dr. Michael 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, which is the owner of the Griffin Funeral home property, and the Chicago Public Schools was quickly obtained and Dr. Dan Joyce, Kenosha Civil War Museum, completed the ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey at Pershing and the Griffin Funeral Home in July 2013. The 2013-2016 excavations were on Prisoners Square of Camp Douglas as shown in Figure 2.

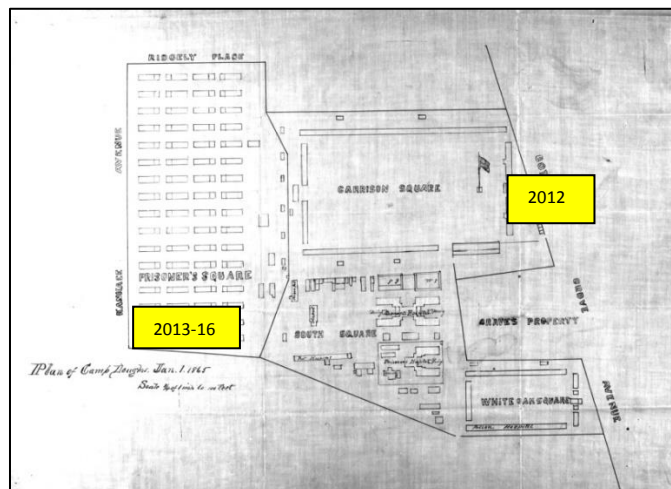


Figure 2, 2012-2016 excavation sites

The first Civil War military artifact, a Cap Badge "B" (Figure 3,) was located the final day of the fall 2014 excavation. The badge is 1 inch high made of stamped brass and had evidence of a pin attached to the back. The item was confirmed as being issued by the Union army beginning in 1863 and authenticated by archivists at the American Civil War Museum (Museum of the Confederacy), the Kenosha Civil War Museum, and Civil War cap expert Mike McAffe.

The artifact was located at the Camp Douglas level (approximately 100 cm below the present ground surface).



Figure 3, Cap Badge "B"

The summer 2015 excavation produced the Union button (Figure 4).



Figure 4, Military button ¾" diameter. Right, back after cleaning

Other important military finds during this excavation included rubber blanket grommets (Figure 5):



Figure 5, Grommets

Of extra special note was the discovery of a series of clay pipes at the Camp Douglas level (Figures 6, 7, and 8)



Figure 6, 7, Left, Devil and his fiddle (Diable fantaisie). Right, Devil like character. Both identified as Nole pipe company molds, Leon, France 1808-1920

Figure 8, Floral design. Similar to Louis Fiolet/ St. Omer

These discoveries led to additional off-set excavations in fall 2015. The most significant discovery at that time were .58 caliber Minie' balls (Figures 9 and 10)



Figure 9, October 11, 58 cal. Minie' ball



Figure 10, Minie' balls and glass

Evidence of additional military artifacts as well as civilian artifacts, likely relating to Camp Douglas, warranted further excavation in the area.

### Excavation:

The excavation was laid out by Dr. Gregory on Tuesday, May 17. 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.

Lay out of the site can be seen in Figure 11

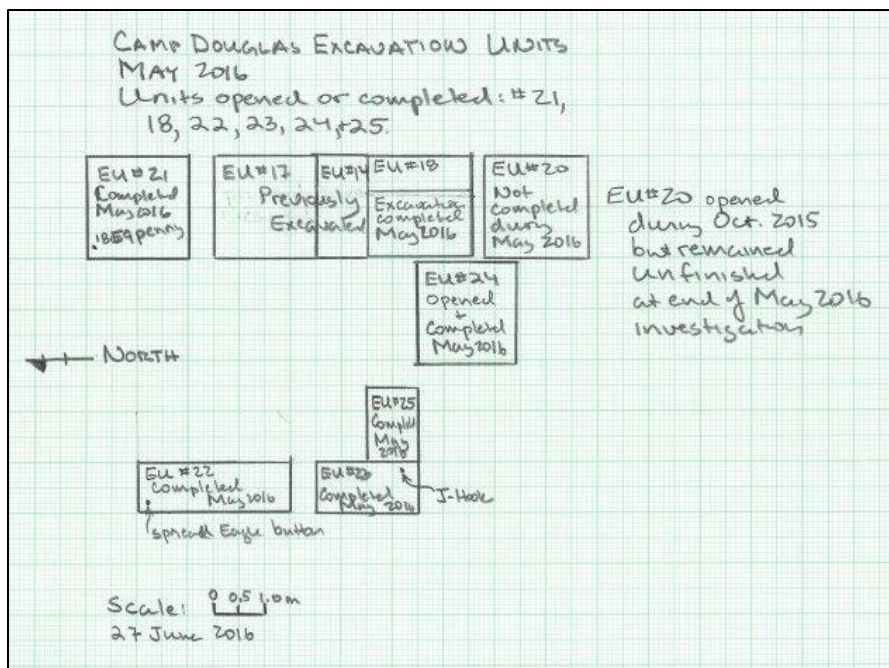


Figure 11, site map

EU Nos. 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25 were either opened and completed during May 2016, or were simply completed having been opened during October 2015. EU No. 20, was opened during Oct. 2015; however, we did not complete its excavation during May 2016. On the map,

Excavation began Wednesday, May 18. Volunteers arrived beginning at 8:30. Upon arrival volunteers were signed in and given a general briefing on Camp Douglas by David Keller and Dean Rodkin and specific instructions and assigned to a unit by Dr. Gregory. 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 DePaul University, 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.

Each day volunteers worked from approximately 8:30 am until 3:30 pm with a lunch break of at least 45 minutes. Several days work continued until as late as 6:00 pm. Water and snacks were provided by CDRF.

Weather throughout the excavation was sunny to partly sunny, cool with strong wind on several days.



Rest room facilities were provided by Pershing School during the week. Chicago Fire Department Engine 19, Truck 11 and Ambulance 4 located at 3421 S. Calumet provided rest rooms during the weekend.

The objective of the excavation was to investigate the entire fenced area with emphasis on the sand level where Camp Douglas was built. The sand layer was approximately 75-100 centimeters below the surface.

The previous excavations removed deposits by 10 centimeter levels down to the Camp Douglas occupational layer. In fall 2014, more rapid excavation using both shovels and trowels was completed to the Camp Douglas level. All soil was screened through one-quarter inch hard ware mesh screen, and any artifacts found were retained and removed according to usual protocol. This allowed the excavation to concentrate on the Camp Douglas level. This process has continued to be used.



Figure 12, Screening



Figure 13, General view looking SW.



Figure 14, General view looking east



Figure 15, Excavation looking NW

During the excavation, CDRF provided information on the Foundation's program to have the Camp Douglas site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This information included fact sheets and FAQ's on Camp Douglas and the Register.(Figures 16, 17 and 18).

Community members and VIP's were invited to visit the site and discuss the National Register. Response from the community and VIP was positive.

**SUPPORT CAMP DOUGLAS ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places that are worthy of preservation. Camp Douglas trained over 40,000 Union Soldiers from Illinois, including some of the first African American Union Soldiers, and was also one of the largest prisons holding Confederate prisoners during the war. This was a very significant location during the Civil War, and was a microcosm for the larger social changes that were taking place during the time period.

Camp Douglas, through the work of the Foundation, is an important archaeological resource and should be protected.

Listing in an area on the National Register does not in any way have an adverse effect on private ownership of property in the designated area.

For more information, and to register your support, see the CDRF website at [www.CampDouglas.org](http://www.CampDouglas.org).

This effort is supported by:  
Bronzeville Community Development Partnership  
Bronzeville Historical Society  
Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Committee  
Bronzeville Visitors Information Center  
Stephen A. Douglas Association

**Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation**  
A Chicago Story That Must Be Told  
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**History In Your Neighborhood**

Camp Douglas, the Civil War Military base and prison for Confederate prisoners, was located here in Bronzeville between 1861 and 1865.

To properly recognize the importance of this historic facility, you can assist the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation in making certain that Camp Douglas is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

See the reverse of this piece for more information about how you can help.





Figure 16, door hanger distributed in the residential community

**CAMP DOUGLAS RESTORATION FOUNDATION**

**HISTORY IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

The Civil War Military camp and prison for Confederate prisoners was located here in Bronzeville between 1861 and 1865.



The Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation has been providing information and educational material on the camp for since 2010. Over this period, the Foundation and De Paul University have conducted seven archaeological excavations on the site. During these excavations military artifacts attributed to Camp Douglas have been discovered.

To properly recognize the importance of this historic facility, you can assist the Foundation in making certain that Camp Douglas is listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**.

Listing on the National register **does not, in any way, have an adverse affect on private ownership of property in the designated area.**

See the reverse of this to see how you can help.

Figure 17, Community Information sheet

**CAMP DOUGLAS RESTORATION FOUNDATION**  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES APPLICATION**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- **What is the National Register of Historic Places?**
  - In short, the National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places that are deemed worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.
- **Why does Camp Douglas qualify for a listing when there are no standing structures left?**
  - Criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places includes:
    - Property associated with events, activities, or developments that were important in the past.
    - Property that has the potential to yield information through archaeological investigation about our past.
  - The Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation and DePaul University have conducted seven archaeological investigations on the area of Camp Douglas between 2012 and 2016, and have found significant Civil War military artifacts from and evidence of the camp, which was the largest military installation in Illinois during the Civil War.
  - Camp Douglas trained over 40,000 Union Soldiers from Illinois, including some of the first African American Union soldiers, and was also one of the largest prisons holding Confederate prisoners during the war. This was a very significant location during the Civil War, and was a microcosm for the larger social changes that were taking place during the time period.
- **What is the result of the listing?**
  - Listing in the National Register of Historic Places provides formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state. Results include:
    - Becoming part of the National Register Archives; a public, searchable database that provides a wealth of research information
    - Encouraging preservation of historic resources by documenting a property's historical significance
    - Offers opportunities for Federal Grants and possible State and Federal tax benefits
    - Network with other historic property owners, tour historic areas, or chat with preservationists through Conferences, Workshops, and Preservation Organizations
- **What does this listing mean to property owners in the listed area?**
  - **Listing on the National Register of Historic Places places no obligations on private property owners. There are no restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.**
  - The listing does not automatically invoke local historic district zoning or local landmark designation, but rather creates and opportunity to showcase the history of the community while still allowing economic progress.

Figure 18, National Register FAQ



Figure 19, Briefing VIP's Michael Gregory Center, Bernard Turner left

Excavations, again yielded military artifacts including a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch Union button (Figure 19), haversack J hook- no photo available, and numerous un-fired percussion caps (Figure 20)



Figure 19, Union button 3/4/ inch



Figure 20, Un-fired percussion cap

Located at the Camp Douglas level were a number of clay pipe fragments and a 1859 US penny (Figure 21).



Figure 21, US 1859 penny

While not relating to Camp Douglas, the most unique artifacts discovered was a leather horse license from the City of Chicago dated 1908 (Figure 22).



Figure 22, Horse license 1908

Thursday, May 26 and Friday May 27 was devoted to closing the site. Special thanks to. Andy Irvine, Joseph Wheeler, and Dr. Gregory, who, after finishing mapping and profiling units, completed back filling .

### **Educational Activities**

On Monday, May 23 Roy Malone, Dean Rodkin and Bernard Turner conducted a special program for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at John J. Pershing Magnet School. This program, was an adaptation of the Reader's Theatre presented earlier. After the class room program, students

visited the site where they received an orientation. The program, presented to approximately 60 students was a success

During recess and before and after school students were encouraged to view the site and to discuss activities with CDRF board members.



Figure 23, Students discussing Camp Douglas during their free time.

### Headquarters and Administrative Matters:

A headquarters tent was occupied at all times by a member of CDRF. This allowed for interaction with community members, other visitors, and orientation of volunteers.



Figure 24 Site Headquarters looking SW

Water and snacks as well as “Camp Douglas---DIG IT!” t-shirts were provided by CDRF. Lunch was available at a variety of locations within walking or driving distance of the site.

Safety was a concern with first aid available to volunteers. In addition, Chicago Fire Department Ambulance 4 was located approximately one block south of the site and a map to the nearest medical facilities was on site. There were no injuries, incidents, or illnesses during the excavation.

Site security, as with all prior excavations was excellent. Each night some equipment was placed in units and all units were covered by plywood for reasons of safety. The plastic fence that surrounded the site was secured by zip-ties. At no time during any excavations was there any attempt to tamper with any of the site or the units.

Personal safety and safety of vehicles was also excellent. At no time was anyone bothered at the site. Community members were welcoming, curious, courteous, and friendly. Many community members shared stories, photographs, and maps of the area and the area’s history.

### **Excavation Results and Future Activities:**

Again, the excavation was a success from a scientific, educational, and public relations perspective. Features in excavated units and the presence of evidence of Camp Douglas warrant additional excavation on the site.

While there is ample evidence that additional military and non-military Camp Douglas artifacts is available at this site, subsequent excavations are anticipated to be narrowly focused and smaller in size.

Energies in the near future will be to investigate additional sites identified, including private lots and back yards volunteered by members of the community and an open yard at Olivet Baptist Church 31<sup>st</sup> and King Drive.