

Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation

Report of Saineghi Archaeological Excavation

October 29-31, 2017

April 19-26, 2018

May 9-16- 2019





Introduction and Acknowledgement

During earlier excavations at the John J. Pershing Magnet Schools Dr. Michael Gregory manager of CDRF excavations was approached by Anthony and Anila Saineghi, 3223 S. Calumet Avenue suggesting that the foundation conduct an excavation in their garden which was abutted 3224 ML King Drive.

This was the first opportunity for CDRF to conduct an excavation on private property. After several discussions with Anthony the dates of October 29-30, 2017 were selected. After a successful excavation in 2017, two subsequent excavations were conducted April 19-26, 2018 and May 9-16, 2019. These three excavations are outlined in this report.

Archaeological specific equipment and supervision was provided by Dr. Michael Gregory.

. Special thanks to the following volunteers who supported these event: ADTI ACHARYA, CHRIS BRINK, CARLA BROOKE, MEGAN CLARK, JEFF DAVIDSON, PAGE DAVIDSON, COLLEEN FAHEY, CHRISTINA FIORE, TOM GORMAN, MO GREEN, NICHOLE GRINBARG, RYAN GROSS, LOREN HARRIS, MIKE HUMPHREY, MICHAEL JANISE, KRIS KERKMAN, COLIN KINDGREN, MORGAN KRAUS, CAITLIN LAMB, ANDREW LEITH, LAURA LAUDADIO, DAN McDONELL, IAN MCKITTERICK, MICHAEL NELSON, JOEL POND, MARY PRUSNICK, M.PRUSNICK, JASON REINHOLZ, JOSIAN REINHOLZ, STEPHANIE REINHOLZ, ABBY SIMS, BEN WALBRUN, MARGIT WILLIS, SANDI WISENBERG, and BEN ZUWARSKI.

We were pleased to have a number of visitors to the site including Mo Green and Loren Harris from the office of Senator Tammy Duckworth and Sherry Williams, Bronzeville Historical Society joined us for the excavation.

Extra special thanks to Anthony and Anila Saineghi who were very gracious hosts. Tony provided a fire pit for the volunteers and Anila's lentil soup was a highlight of the digs. Break and bathroom facilities were also provided by the Saineghis. Their next door neighbor was very understanding of our disruption. In 2018, their southern neighbor was also very helpful. He permitted screening on the concrete slab next to the units. This allow for nearly the entire site to be excavated. There remained on space at the current site the possibility of excavation below the paving stones west of the garden. This was accomplished in 2019.

Due to limited space only one unit three meters by one meter was excavated to approximately one meter deep in 2017. A variety of artifacts from Bronzeville period and a Minié ball from Camp Douglas were discovered.

The additional excavation was took place in April 2018. The objective of this work was to excavate three off set units to the original unit of 2017. Two were one meter by three meters and one three meters by three meters.

Excavation in May 2019 was under the brick patio on the western edge of the backyard site.

David L. Keller
Managing Director
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation
www.campdouglas.org
June 18, 2019

Camp Douglas Background:

Camp Douglas was located between 31st Street, 33rd 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.

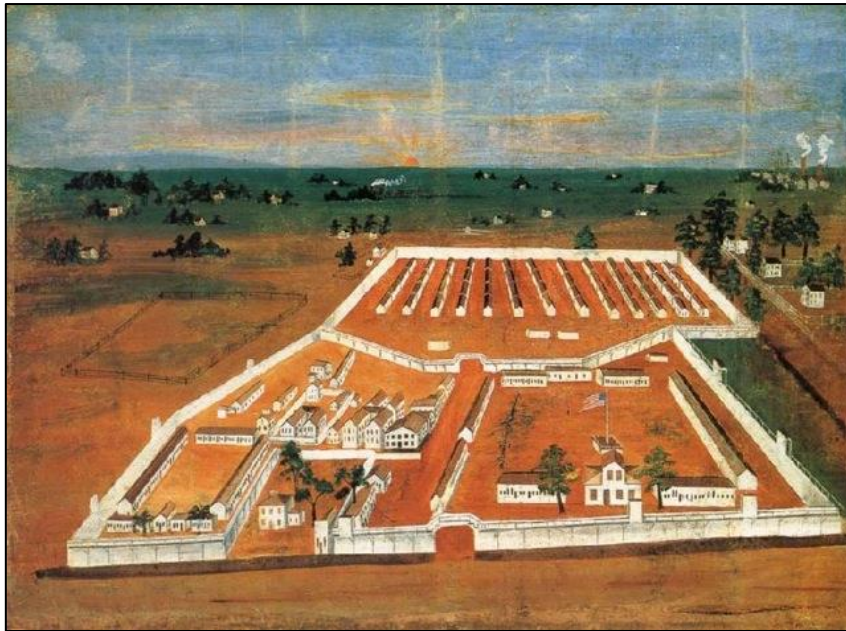


Figure 1, Camp Douglas, 1864, Oil in canvas, Albert Meyer, Chicago History Museum

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 eight 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.

Background and Planning of the Excavation:

This excavation was the first on private land. Others between 2014 and 2016 were on property of the Chicago Park District and a Chicago Public School.

Unfortunately, the primary land owner on the site of Camp Douglas, Draper and Kramer, is exceptionally uncooperative thus, limiting investigations to that 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 2013-2019 excavations were on Prisoners Square of Camp Douglas as shown in Figure 2.

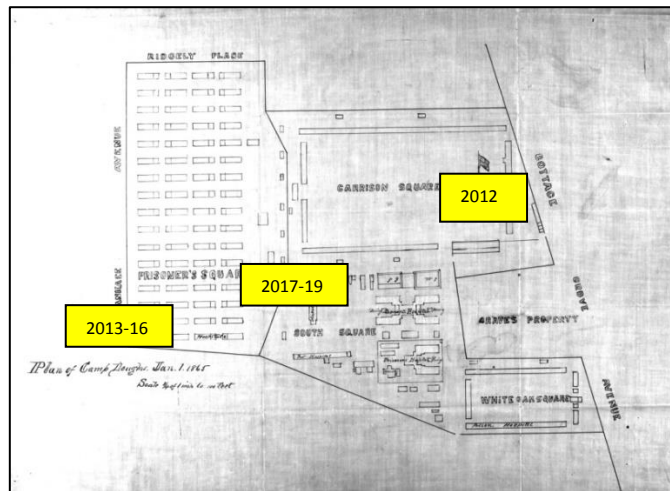


Figure 2, 2012-2016 excavation sites

Directly across the street east from Pershing School and the first property north of the Griffin Funeral Home is the Saineghi property at 3223 S. Calumet. This property would have been near the eastern edge of the most eastern barracks of Camp Douglas. The residence was built in 1880 with no change to its footprint since. The garden is on the rear of the property abutting 3224 ML King Drive. The garden was approximately 25 feet wide and nine feet long. The remainder of the back yard (25 feet by 30 feet) was occupied by a concrete patio bricks and back porch of the home.

Conduct of Excavation:

The excavation was laid out by Dr. Gregory on the first day of each excavation. As the property was fenced, no additional security was required. Excavation began immediately. The unit consisted of top soil that had been used as a garden. A small apple tree had been removed from the center of the unit by the present owners. 2019 excavation required the removal of bricks on a patio that had been construction several years earlier.

All participants were required to sign an “Exculpatory Agreement and Waiver of Claim” with the Saineghi’s, and CDRF. There were no incidents reported during any of the excavations.

It was very important to return the private property to its original condition. Figure 3 is the site before 2017 excavation and Figure 4 is after completion and backfill. The excavation unit was on the south half of the garden (top in photographs).



Figure 3, Site prior to excavation



Figure 4, Site after excavation and backfill

At each excavation, volunteers worked from approximately 8:30 am until 3:30 pm with a lunch break of at least 45 minutes. Final days were limited to final mapping of the unit and backfill. This was accomplished by Dr. Gregory and a few volunteers.

Weather throughout the excavation was seasonably cool with some rain that did not significantly delay the work.

The objective of the excavation was to investigate the entire unit with emphasis on the sand level where Camp Douglas was built. The sand layer was approximately one meter below the surface. Once the sand level was reached, the objective was to demonstrate the integrity of the Camp Douglas. Due to time constraints, excavation was conducted rapidly to the Camp Douglas level with all levels of earth screened, photographed and mapped.



Figure 5, Initial opening of unit



Figure 6 Excavation and screening Day 1

Initial excavation identified a sand layer at level four. Excavation was slowed until it was determined, by probing, that the sand layer was probably a result of disruption from construction of the building or patio adjacent to the unit.



Figure 7, Level four mixed sand



Figure 8, Mapping level four

After the mixed sand layer was identified, removal continued. Due to space limitations small hand screens were used. (See Figure 10)



Figure 9, Artifacts removal



Figure 10, Hand screening

2017, Day 2 provided access to the Camp Douglas level with the removal of additional artifacts.



Figure 11, Final mapping level 5



Figure 12, Artifacts removal



Figure 13, Boiler of toy train engine



Figure 14, Carter's traveling ink well



Figure 15, Bowman Dairy Milk Bottle



Figure 16, Ceramic doll



Figure 17, Camp Douglas level



Figure 18, Minié Ball-Day 2

The 2017 excavation was an unqualified success. The Camp Douglas level had excellent integrity as the discovery of the Minié Ball was a major surprise. With only one small unit excavated, finding Civil War artifacts was considered to be extremely unlikely.

The April excavation began April 19 and was completed April 26 with 24 volunteers participating. Figure 19 shows the layout of both excavations.

← ML King Drive

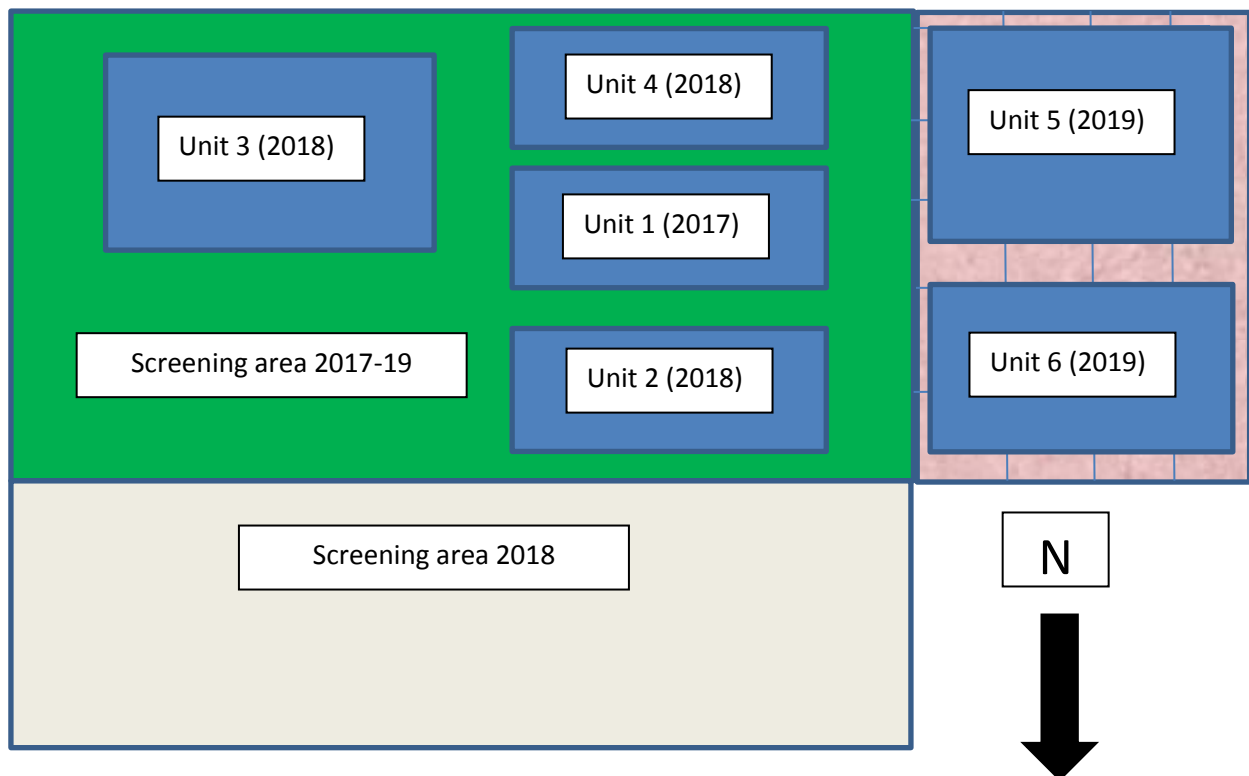


Figure 19, Excavation area

Excavation consisted of quick removal of soil to the Camp Douglas level. All material removed was screened and artifact collected for cleaning and identification later. Upon approaching the Camp Douglas level and for any unusual features careful excavation was conducted with trowels.

It was interesting to note that artifacts from the Bronzeville period were much less in Units 2, 3, 4 than in Unit 1. There was no explanation for this fact.

At level 1 of Unit 2 a half dime was located (see photograph in Figure 20). This coin was in circulation during the Civil War. It was no longer made in 1965 and taken out of circulation in the 1870's. It is likely from Camp Douglas and was disturbed and raised to a higher level by disruption of the site.



Figure 20, Front and back of 1854 one half dime



Figure 21, Prosser Buttons found Unit 2 Level 3

At level 22, 23, & 24 in Unit 3 a feature was identified that appeared to be a footing for a post supporting a barracks.

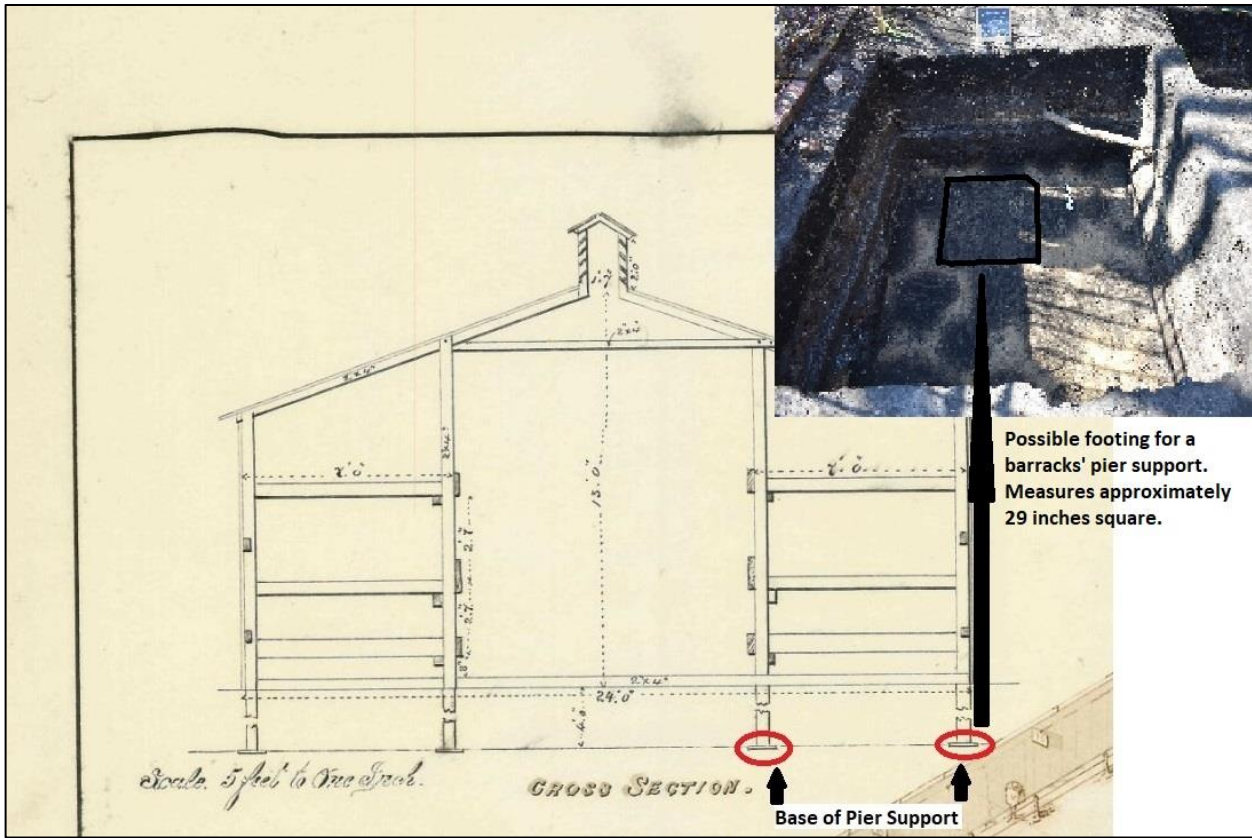


Figure 22, Possible Footing of Barracks

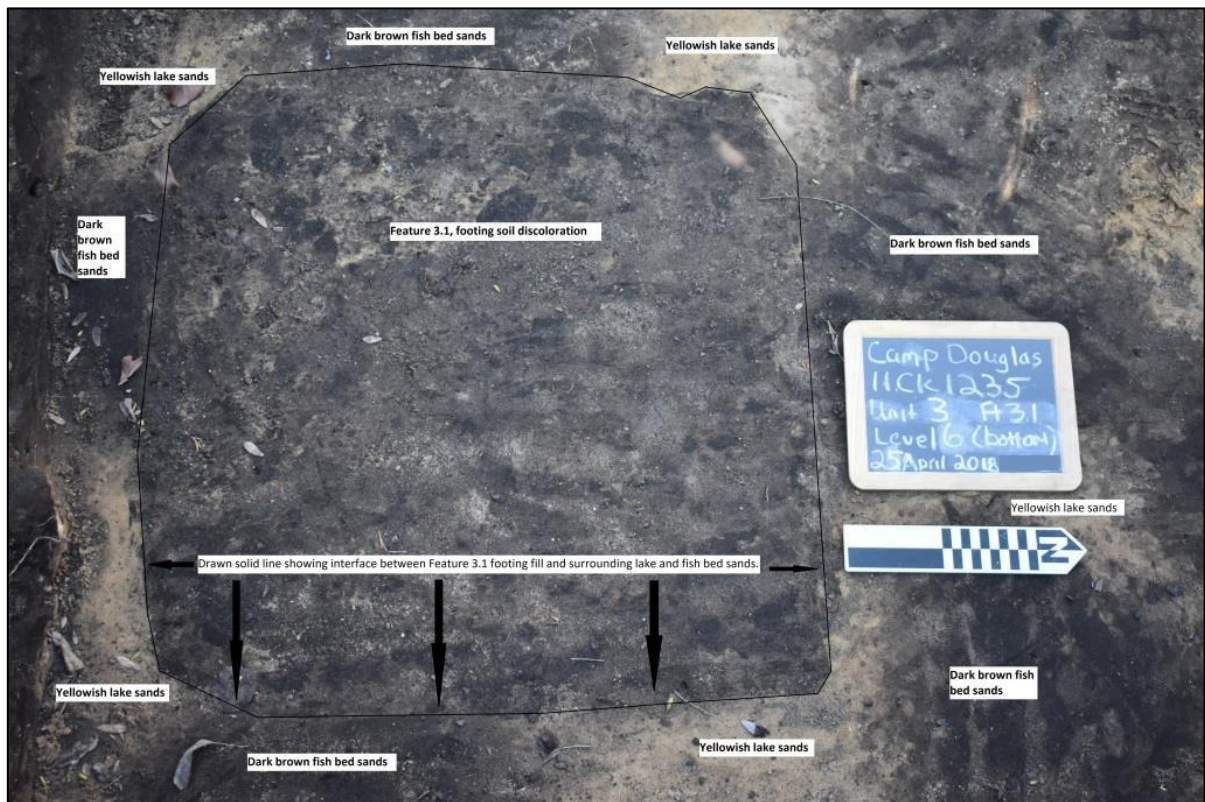


Figure 23, Detail of Footing of Barracks

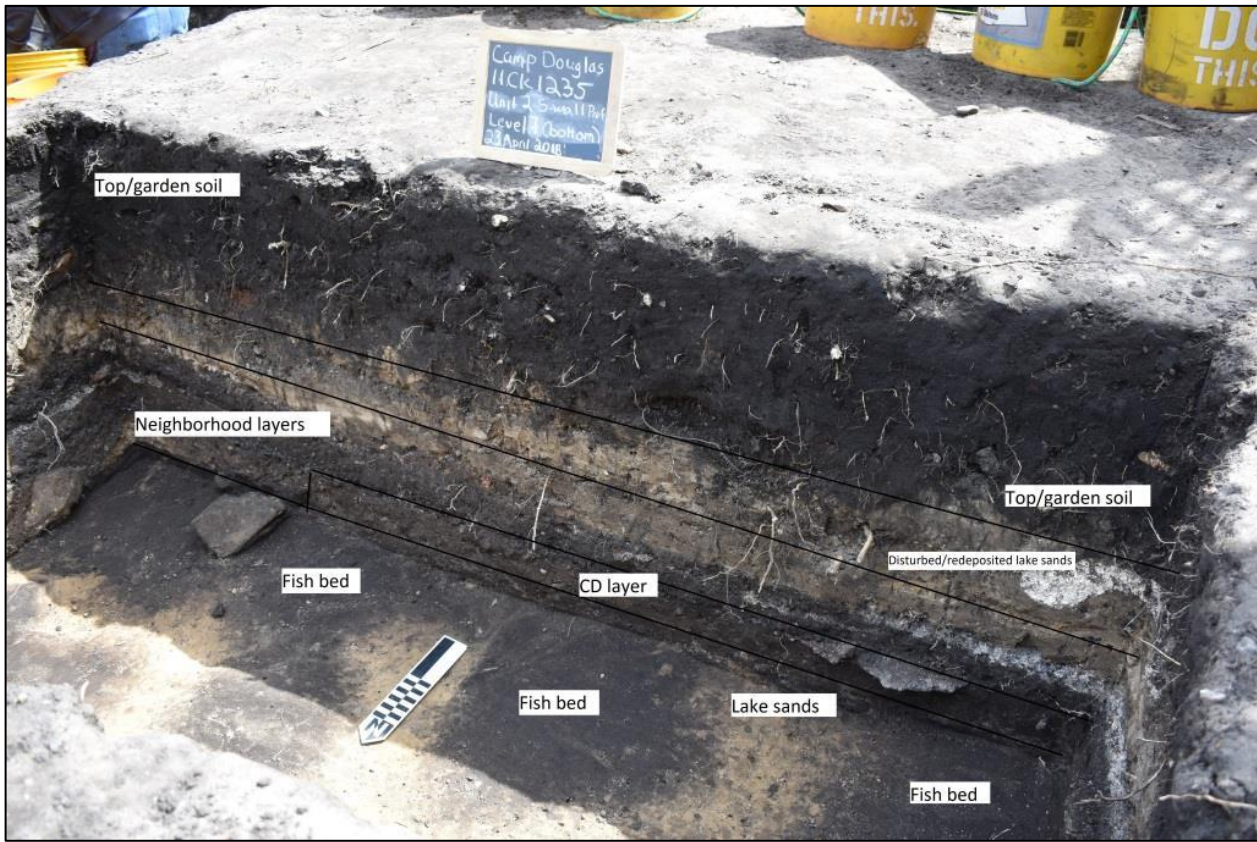


Figure 24, Detail of Unit 3-Footing of Barracks

In 2018 CDRF obtained ArcGIS maps superimposing 1864 and 1865 official drawings of the camp on satellite images. The 1864 camp drawing shows no buildings at the site. By January 1985 a series of three rows of barracks were added including one on the site. Special thanks to Eric Creighton and Laura Laudadio for developing these important map overlays.



Figure 25, Unit 3 & M. Gregory



Figure 26, Screening



Figure 27, Unit 3 Level 2



Figure 28, Unit 2 Level 4-5



Figure 29, Unit 3 Barracks post feature

Excavation in 2019 in Units 5 and 6, measuring 2 meters by 2.7 meters extended between 74 and 82 cm below the surface. This was slightly higher than the Camp Douglas level in other units. Artifacts were found, however, less than other units this is attributed to the closeness of these units to the house where a conscious effort may have been made to keeping the area cleaner.

Shown in Figure 30 are the patio bricks that were removed to layout Units 5 and 6. Figure 31 shows Units 5 and 6 opened.

As shown in Figures 22-24 and 29, a major objective of the excavation was to locate additional barracks footings. Unfortunately, none were found in Units 5 and 6.



Figure 30, Unit6 5 & 6 before excavation



Figure 31, Unit6 5 & 6 opened

A major find was discovered in Unit 5. At approximately 60 cm below the surface a Cast Block I button (Figures 32 1nd 33) was found. This depth was above the Camp Douglas level. It is believed that the button was disturbed and the item displaced to a higher level. This artifact has been confirmed to be manufactured in the Confederacy and was commonly found on outer coats of Confederate soldiers. It is the first confirmed Confederate item discovered on the site of Camp Douglas. Other items including clay pipes, toothbrush and other buttons are attributed to the prisoners but not confirmed as a Confederate manufacture and wide use by the Confederate Army.



Figure 32, Front Cast Block I button



Figure 33, Front Cast Block I button

Figure 34 shows Unit 5 at the approximate depth of the location of the Cast Block I button. Figure 35 is screening of Units 5 and 6.



Figure 34, Unit 5



Figure 35, Screening Units 5 &6

Completion of the excavation of units 5 and 6 nearly exhausts excavation sites at this location. The area labeled Screening Area 2017-19” in Figure 19 could provide a final unit for excavation at this site.

CDRF currently contemplated conducting future excavations on land controlled by the City of Chicago. Local parkways and the median strip of Martin Luther King Drive are being considered.