

C.C. RJM
D.N
WDC
File ✓



Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins
6150 Chebucto Road
Halifax, NS
B3L 1K5

Simpson McLeod
Supervisor of Real Estate
Development and Planning Department
City of Halifax
P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, NS
B3J 3A5

January 11, 1993

Dear Mr. McLeod,

As requested, enclosed is a copy of the report regarding the Seaview African United Baptist Church archaeology excavation. This is a preliminary report. The final report will be finished in late January or early February and I will send you a copy at that time. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call me at 425-8705.

Sincerely,

Katie Cottreau-Robins
KCR

Heritage Research Permit A1992NS25

EXCAVATION OF THE SEAVIEW AFRICAN UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH,
AFRICVILLE

Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins
Private Consultant

January 1993

Acknowledgements

There are several people and agencies to thank for the success of this project. I am grateful to the Department of Economic Development for complete financial support. My thanks to the Technical University of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Parks Service for the loan of equipment, lab space, photography and conservation services. Special thanks to Frank Eppell of the Faculty of Architecture at TUNS, for providing me the opportunity to participate in this exciting project.

Thanks to the Africville Genealogy Society, particularly Irvine Carvery, for his support and helpful historical input. I am very grateful to Dave Williamson and the student volunteers from the Halifax West archaeology classes, and from Saint Mary's University Anthropology Department, whose efforts contributed greatly to the excavation of the trenches. Finally, tremendous thanks to crew members Ken Lee and Euan Mathieson for their steady enthusiasm, hard work and useful suggestions.

Introduction

In 1991, Economic Development Minister Tom McInnis announced the realignment of the planned roadway to Richmond Terminal and Canadian National Railway's proposed Intermodal Yard, known as the Pier 9 Access Road. Mr. McInnis stated that the roadway would be moved onto CN property in the area of Seaview Park, formerly the community of Africville. The road as it will be constructed, including its landscape buffer, will encroach on the site of the Seaview African United Baptist Church.

In an effort to preserve the memory of Africville, as well as protect the integrity of Seaview Park, the provincial government agreed to fund the research, design and construction of a church replica to be built close to the original site. A consultation committee was formed consisting of various government representatives and individuals from the Africville Genealogy Society and the Technical University of Nova Scotia. It was decided by the committee that the first item to be addressed in the Seaview Church Project was the archaeological excavation of the church site.

The following is a report of the findings as a result of a 4 week excavation of the site in October and November 1992.

Historical Background

Africville was a black community settled around 1848 (Clairmont: 37). It was located in the north end of Halifax not far from the shore of the Bedford Basin.

A church congregation was officially established in Africville in 1849 and it remained the primary and central institution in the community (Ibid: 39). For the first 50 years social life revolved around the church. Church events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals drew together all members of the community. Of special significance in this regard was the Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday described by a resident as follows:

They went into the church singing spirituals, around four or five o'clock in the morning when the sun came up, and did not come out till three p.m.... People, including Whites, used to come from miles around to the sunrise service, sometimes from Truro and New Glasgow and usually from Preston and Hammonds Plains (Ibid: 40).

There were 2 churches in the history of Africville. The early church was built near the southern boundary of the community west of Gottingen Street, and burned in 1916.

Immediately after this event the residents of the community requested that City Council approve the lease of a section of City owned property for the construction of a new church (Ibid: 43). This second church was built close to the Basin along Campbell Road, which was the main road through the settlement.

The second church was the focus of this archaeological investigation. This is the church that the community remembers and associates with specific memories.

The Seaview African United Baptist Church, as it was known, was razed along with the rest of the settlement in the 1960's when the City decided to relocate the community. The residents tried to save their homes and church. Almost everyone was against relocation. Nevertheless, demolition of all buildings proceeded. Today the community of Africville is Seaview Memorial Park.

Recommended reading for the story of Africville:

Africville Genealogy Society, ed.

1992 The Spirit of Africville. Formac Publishing Company, Ltd., Halifax, NS.

Clairmont, Donald

1987 Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community. Canadian Scholars Press, Toronto, Ont.

Methodology

Considering that structural information uncovered as a result of the excavation of the Seaview Church would be used in the design of the replica, locating and uncovering the foundation of the church was our primary objective.

The location of the church was determined prior to excavation by archival research, examination of city maps, aerial photographs and through personal communication with former residents of Africville, Irvine Carvery and Linda Mantley.

A 14 metre east-west baseline was set up along the south boundary of the site which was 17.83 metres directly north of the first set of railroad tracks (See Figure 1). After the site was cleared of surface trash and shrubbery, a contour map was completed, using survey equipment, and the location of the baseline tied into established CNR benchmarks.

It was decided that long trenches excavated by shovel and trowel would be the most effective method of locating foundation. Therefore, Trenches A (9m x 1m) and B (7m x 0.5m) were opened up in an area we thought most likely to expose evidence of the foundation. After excavating up to 50 centimeters below surface without any results, Trenches A and B were abandoned.

A thorough walking survey of the site proved to be very helpful. A few edges of foundation slabs, hidden by thick grasses, were found just above the ground surface. Once these were discovered, 4 additional long trenches, C, D, E and F, were set up. Trench C ran 13.6m x 1.20m north-south and Trenches D, E and F ran 11m x 1m perpendicular to Trench C (See Figure 1).

Quickly foundation sections and other features appeared. All but one section of foundation, a corner feature in Trench C and F, had been uprooted and pushed over during demolition in the 1960's. The foundation sections often covered the entire width of the trench. It was at this time that the student

volunteers were extremely helpful. For 2 days we had groups of 25 or more individuals, excavating fill and soil from the trenches.

The north end of Trench C and the east ends of Trenches D, E and F were shovel tested only in an effort to save time. These areas were unproductive. In general, excavation proceeded normally and the usual standard methods of recording were employed.

Features

Several features were uncovered during the excavation, 3 fragmented walls, a foundation corner piece, chimney, and 2 foundation window moulds.

The foundation wall running north-south, Wall 1, was uncovered in Trench C (See Figure 1). The south end of this wall was exposed above ground in the southern end of the trench. The north end was uncovered as part of the corner area excavated in the northern section of Trench C and the western section of Trench F. From this broken and toppled line of foundation, we determined the north-south dimension of the church to be 12.2 metres. It was also established that this wall was the west wall of the Church, because of heavy evidence of the west wall chimney in the trench and later because of the corner feature orientation. The composition of the foundation is a mixture of concrete, sherds of glass and ceramic, shells and pebbles.

Foundation Wall 2 represents the south wall of the church and it was uncovered in Trench D. Again, the foundation is pushed over and fragmented. In this trench there is an iron rod running through a foundation slab, no doubt put in for support during construction.

Wall 3 is represented in Trench F. Sections of the north foundation wall of the building were exposed in this unit which extends into Trench C.

Unfortunately, evidence of the east foundation wall was never found. The area of the site where it would have been located was completely levelled sometime ago and used as a road.

The foundation corner feature, as previously stated, was uncovered in the northern area of Trench C and the western

area of Trench F (See Figure 1). This was the only relatively undisturbed section of the foundation still in its original position. The composition of the feature was the same as the other foundation segments. Its width was 23 centimeters and its depth below surface was 60 centimeters. This feature was significant because of its condition and because it gave us the orientation of the structure. We established that the rest of the building was definitely east of this point.

All foundation segments showed impressions of wood on the surface, therefore indicating that wooden moulds were constructed and the concrete poured into them to form the walls. The concrete was also poured directly on to the earthen floor.

The west wall chimney was uncovered in Trench C, specifically 2.5 metres from the south end of the trench. There was a tremendous brick debris zone in this area and it extended 2-3 metres north. The debris zone was also picked up in Trench E which suggested that the building was bulldozed from a westerly direction. After collecting the chimney liner fragments and piecing it together we determined the dimensions of the square chimney to be 28cm x 28cm.

The 2 foundation window moulds were exposed in Trench E. One mould had fragments of the wooden frame and metal screen still attached. These moulds were significant because when measured (61 cm high and 91 cm long) and compared to photographs of the church, we were able to determine the east-west dimension of the church (19.2m) and verify the north-south dimension (12.2m). It was also determined through measurements that the foundation was at least 1.52 metres in height, 91 centimeters below ground and 61 centimeters above ground.

Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy of the site was similar from trench to trench (See Figure 2). After removal of the sod layer, concrete would appear at a depth of 5-8 centimeters below the surface. As stated, on occasion the concrete was exposed above ground.

Beneath the sod, Lot 1, was Lot 2 which consisted of a medium brown loam with some brick and small rocks. Below this and below the concrete was Lot 3, a moist, black loam. This layer was labelled the "heavy debris zone", because of its concentration of wood, red roofing shingles, window glass, chimney liner, brick, stove pipe, nails, spikes and other artifacts such as bottle glass, ceramics, gloves, a sign/banner, wire coat hooks and marbles.

Lot 3 clearly was a record of the time of demolition and helped determine the sequence of events. First, the church superstructure was knocked down and debris filled the basement. Then the foundation walls were pushed in falling over the rubble.

Lot 4 was below the debris zone and consisted of a coarse grey/brown soil with rocks and occasional evidence of the concrete basement floor and concrete footings.

Lot 5 represented the sterile layer and consisted of a hard packed, orange/brown soil. All the lots, except Lot 5, produced artifacts. Lot 3 yielded the highest artifact content. When examining the artifacts from each lot, the high disturbance of the site is reinforced. The trenches had an average depth of 70-85 centimeters below sod.

Artifacts

In total 2266 artifacts were collected, cleaned and analyzed from the Seaview Church site. Five hundred and twenty two of these artifacts, which represent all the artifact types from the site, were catalogued. The remaining 1744 were discarded.

The following is a brief descriptive summary of the artifacts collected. They have been sorted according to material type. Analysis was completed by crew members Ken Lee and Euan Mathieson.

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED IN JANUARY 1993

Conclusions

In conclusion, the primary objective of this project, which was to locate and expose the foundation of the Seaview Church, was fulfilled. In doing so, many structural details concerning the foundation were recorded (ie. dimensions, composition, width, depth and window size). Hopefully, this information will be useful to those responsible for designing the replica.

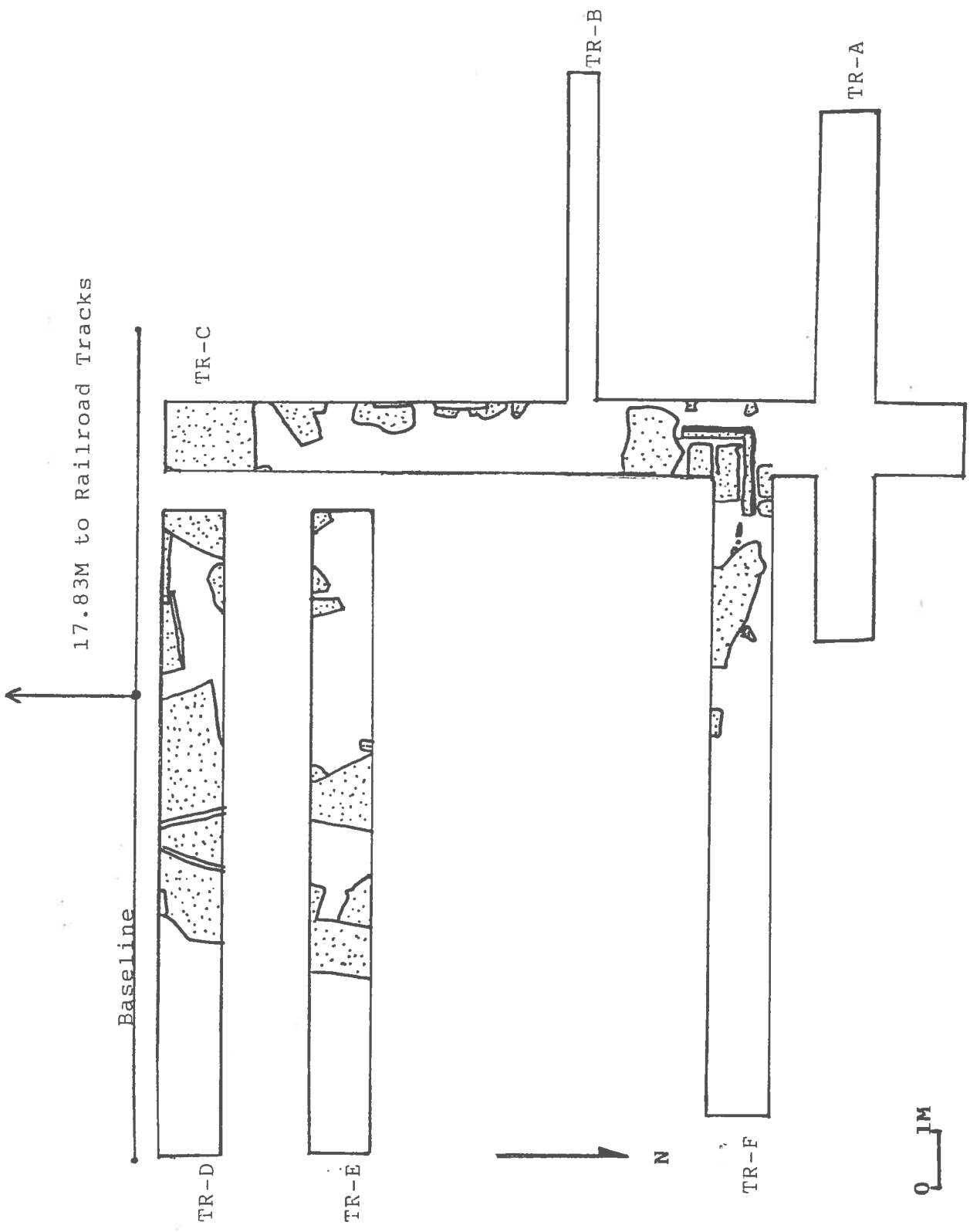
There were 2 additional benefits which resulted from the excavation. First, a fair size collection of artifacts that illustrate activities associated with the church, were collected and are now available for display. Second, there is now a permanent record of the structural base of the church. This was important to record even though the building was only constructed at the time of World War I, because immediately following completion of excavation and final recording, a backhoe removed the south wall and part of the west wall to make room for the new access road. Therefore, the southern half of the site has been totally wiped out.

The stratigraphy and artifacts clearly illustrate the events that occurred on the site - the demolition and deposit of structural remains underneath toppled, bulldozed concrete foundation. The mixture of artifacts ranging from the 18th-20th century throughout the site, reflect the fill that has been dumped and dragged across the area over the years since the building has been torn down.

Finally, I hope the former residents of Africville will enjoy the information and artifacts that have been collected from their church. This is a major concern because ultimately this event is for them as is the construction of the replica.

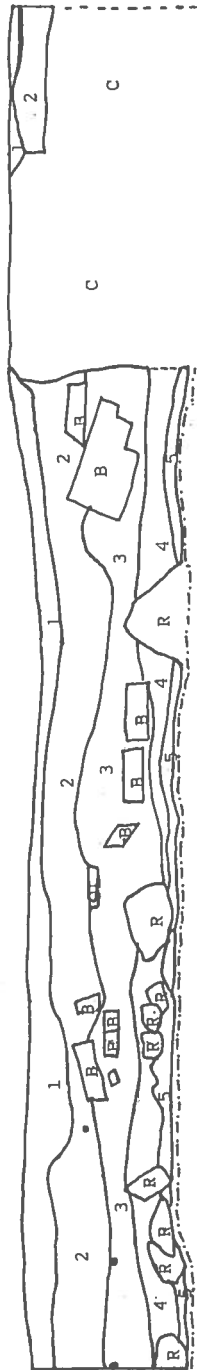
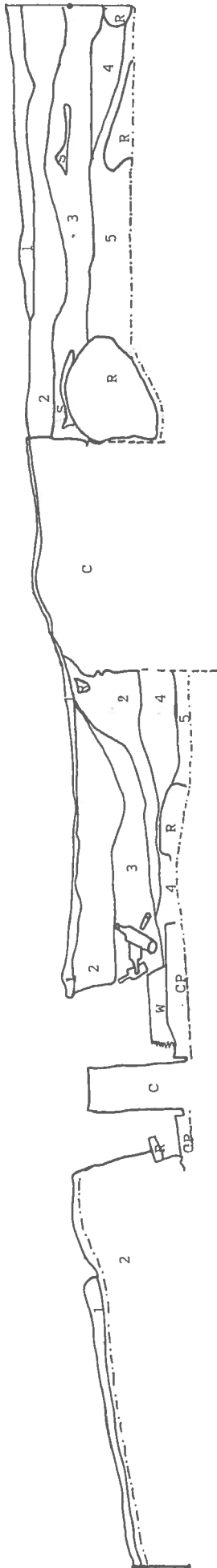
The replica is scheduled to open in July 1993, the 10th anniversary of the Africville Reunion Weekend and the forming of the Africville Genealogy Society. It promises to be an exciting and ceremonious event.

Figure 1
BeCv:20 Seaview African United Baptist Church
Site Map - Uncovered Foundation



November, 1992

Figure 2
BeCv:20 Seaview African United Baptist Church
East Wall Soil Profile, Trench C



0 1M

November 1992

References Cited

Clairmont, Donald

1992 "Africville: An Historical Overview" in
The Spirit of Africville. ed., Africville
Genealogy Society, Formac Publishing Company,
Ltd., Halifax. pg 36-50.

Bibliography

Africville Genealogy Society, ed.

- 1992 The Spirit of Africville. Formac Publishing Company, Ltd., Halifax, NS.

Brooks, Bob

- 1960's Collection of photographs (Africville),
Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, NS.

Clairmont, Donald

- 1987 Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community. Canadian Scholars Press,
Toronto, Ont.

Davis, Stephen and C. Lindsay, R. Ogilvie, B. Preston, ed.

- 1991 Archaeology in Nova Scotia 1987 and 1988.
Curatorial Report No. 69, Department of
Education, Halifax, NS.

Fladmark, Knut R.

- 1978 A Guide to Basic Archaeological Field Procedures.
Department of Archaeology, Publication No. 4,
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.

Kimber, Stephen

- 1992 "Taking Back the Neighbourhood." in Canadian Geographic Magazine. Vol. 112, No. 4, The Royal
Canadian Geographical Society, Vanier, Ont.

National Film Board of Canada, producers

- 1989 Remember Africville. Film. National Film Board
of Canada, Atlantic Centre, Halifax, NS.

Sanders, Charles R., ed.

- 1989 Africville: A Spirit that Lives On. Co-published by the Art Gallery of Mount Saint
Vincent University, The Black Cultural Centre
for Nova Scotia, Africville Genealogy Society
and the National Film Board of Canada, Atlantic
Centre, Halifax, NS.