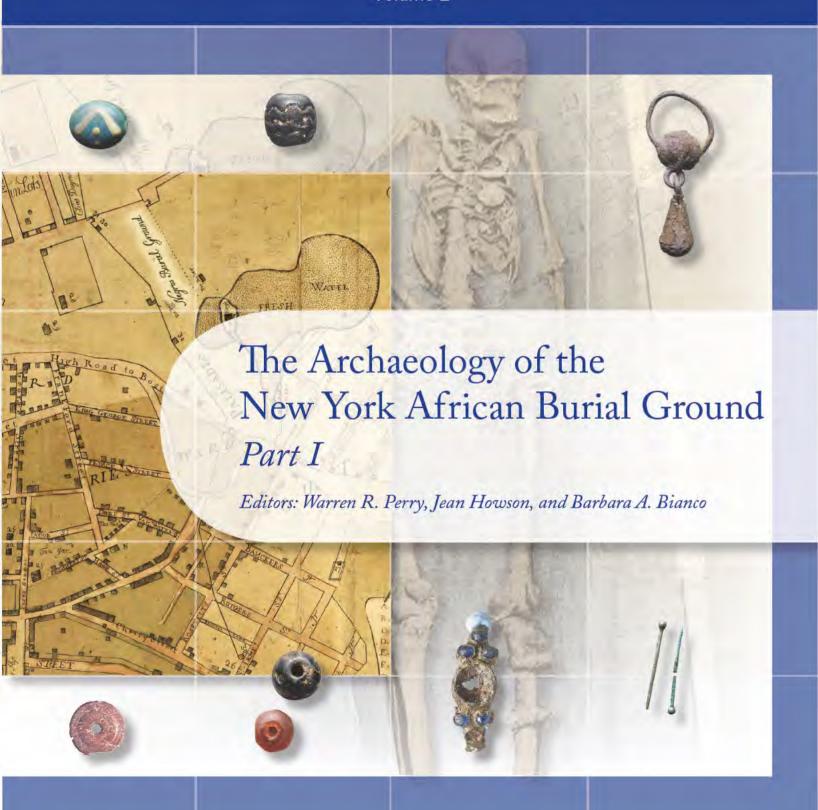


U.S. General Services Administration

THE NEW YORK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York Volume 2



THE NEW YORK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND:

Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York

Volume 2

The Archaeology of the New York African Burial Ground Part 1

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco Editors

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Foreword

In 1991, during the excavation phase for the construction of the Federal Building now seen at 290 Broadway, New York City, a cemetery was uncovered containing human remains of Africans-most were enslaved, some free-who lived, worked, and died under inhumane conditions in colonial New York. This discovery, the largest bioarchaeological site of its kind, sparked heightened public awareness of an African heritage in the northern states of colonial America. An outcome of this awareness was the public's desire for amending and correcting the history of colonial New York during that period to reflect more accurately the lives and culture of these forgotten Africans and people of African descent and their contributions and roles in economic development. Several initiatives, sponsored by the General Services Administration on behalf of the American people, were launched to accomplish this goal.

The initiative to conduct historical and scientific studies of the remains and artifacts excavated at the site was entrusted to Howard University. There, Dr. Michael L. Blakey, now at the College of William and Mary, designed and implemented a comprehensive, interdisciplinary research program—the New York African Burial Ground Project—to address questions in three main areas: history, archaeology, and skeletal biology. As scientific director of the project, he assembled an international team of scholars, professionals, graduate and undergraduate students, technical staff members, and cultural specialists for various parts of the study.

The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York serves as the culminating work of this project, reporting the research findings. This multivolume series covers broadly a contextualized historical perspective, details of the archaeological discoveries, and descriptions of the skeletal biology of the unearthed human remains. Each volume documents and validates the lives of African Americans' ancestors who lived and worked in colonial New York. Included in this work are detailed descriptions of the burials excavated, complete with drawings, figures, and tables, as well as a comprehensive appendix of the artifacts found within the burials.

Through the years of this project, membership of the research team changed, but the goal of the project remained constant, that of ensuring that the story of the origins, life, and death of the enslaved Africans of colonial New York would not be absent from the annals of world history.

O. Jackson Cole, Ph.D.

Howard University Executive-in-Charge of the African Burial Ground Project

James A. Donaldson, Ph.D.
Dean, Howard University College of Arts
and Sciences

Editorial Method

For the sake of consistency and because this was primarily an archaeological project, all three technical volumes of this series, *The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial*

New York, were edited according to the conventions of the same style manuals: the style guide of the Society for American Archaeology and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition.

Acknowledgments

The Howard University Archaeology Team is grateful to the community members and the church, civic, and cultural organizations that paid close attention to the African Burial Ground Project over the years. Their support made this work possible, and their questions helped us to sharpen our inquiry.

We gratefully acknowledge Dr. O. Jackson Cole (Office of the President) and Dr. James A. Donaldson (Dean, College of Arts and Sciences) for their efforts in the administration of the project. Also at Howard, Ms. Reba Brewington, Office Manager for the Cobb Laboratory, and Ms. Alma Kemp, Administrative Assistant in the Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, patiently fielded our questions, facilitated the sharing of information, and routed paperwork and files; Ms. Lori Sweet, Administrative Assistant, Office of the President, helped ensure that the transmission of the draft and final reports went smoothly.

We thank Contracting Officer Mildred Broughton and others on the New York staff of the U.S. General Services Administration for providing laboratory and office facilities, initially at the World Trade Center and later at 1 Bowling Green, and for their efforts in salvaging the laboratory after September 11, 2001. Nancy Brighton of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, on behalf of the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, acted as liaison between the research team, GSA, and advisory agencies; oversaw the transfer of the collections for reburial; and provided helpful comments on the draft report. The staffs of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation provided consultation to the GSA and commented on the draft report.

The archaeology team owes an enormous debt to the African Burial Ground Project's Scientific Director, Dr. Michael L. Blakey. His knowledge, leadership, generosity, encouragement, and resolve have been a mainstay over the years. We are profoundly grateful to all of the researchers from the Skeletal Biology Team (led by Blakey and Dr. Lesley M. Rankin-Hill) and the History Team (led by Dr. Edna Greene Medford), who helped shape our findings while sharing theirs as the project proceeded.

Dr. Blakey helped us to clarify and share the archaeological findings by organizing a series of multidisciplinary Sankofa Conferences, sponsored by Howard University and the College of William and Mary, that brought together the project's geographically dispersed research teams and other scholars of Africa and the African Diaspora. We wish to thank all of the participants, particularly Selwyn H. H. Carrington, Alan Goodman, Fatimah Jackson, Mark Mack, Edna Greene Medford, and Lesley Rankin-Hill. Kofi Agorsah, Augustin Holl, Bob Paynter, and Chris DeCorse helped formulate and refine archaeological issues. Chris Moore, Grey Gundaker, and T. J. Davis, among others, shared their insights on historical questions raised by the archaeological findings.

We thank the Institute for Historical Biology at the College of William and Mary for providing a second institutional home for the project. We especially appreciate Shannon Mahoney and Autumn Barrett for their research assistance, for answering our last-minute questions about the skeletal data, and for their superb efforts in facilitating the Sankofa Conferences.

Dr. Sherrill Wilson, Director of the New York African Burial Ground Project's Office of Public Education and Interpretation, shared her considerable knowledge of New York's African American history, helped broaden the research by pointing out important sources, opened her library to us, provided the roster on escapee advertisements, read early drafts of the report, and ensured that our findings were brought to thousands of schoolchildren and the wider public.

Meta Janowitz shared her knowledge of Dutch New York and of the eighteenth-century stoneware that was so ubiquitous at the African Burial Ground site, discussed archaeological issues, read early drafts of several chapters, and generally provided good cheer in the New York laboratory.

The archaeological investigation was begun by the late Edward S. Rutsch of Historic Conservation and Interpretation, and we thank him for first proving that graves were still intact at the African Burial Ground and for assembling the field team. Obviously, without the field records, no analysis would have been possible. We thank Field Director Michael Parrington, Brian Ludwig, and the entire field staff, along with members of the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team, for their efforts in conducting and recording the excavations under difficult conditions. Special thanks go to Margo Schur and the other site artists who carefully drew each burial and to Dennis Seckler for the photographs. Margo also assisted us by answering questions about field recording procedures. Initial laboratory processing of burial related artifacts was under the direction of Linda Stone and subsequently Gary McGowan of JMA. Charles Cheek was in charge of the analysis of the nonburial component of the 290 Broadway site, and we thank him for generously sharing early drafts of his site report and answering our questions as we proceeded with our analysis.

Numerous local libraries and archives yielded resources for our analysis. We thank the staffs of the following for helping us track down materials and answering our questions: the New York Public Library and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New-York Historical Society, the New York State Archives, the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, the Municipal Archives of the City of New York, the Trinity Church Archives, and the John Street Methodist Church.

Help with specific questions and analyses was received from a number of individuals. Mac Headley of Colonial Williamsburg shared his knowledge of colonial cabinetry and coffin making and pointed us to additional sources. Ed Howson answered questions about joinery. Emily Wilson of Colonial Williamsburg provided information on enameling. Douglas Ubelaker provided information and sources on the rates of decay of human remains. Ann F. Budd, Department of Geology, University of Iowa, provided identifications

of coral specimens from the African Burial Ground. John Boyd of the U.S. Customs Service Federal Crime Laboratory performed spectrograph analysis on the silver pendant. Michelle Gilbert guided us through the literature on adornment in Ghana. Fatimah Jackson, Kofi Agorsah, Muhammad Hatim, and Sylviane Diouf provided information about Islamic burial practices. Cheryl LaRoche answered questions about the conservation of artifacts from the burials. Jason Narvaez and Jennifer Arnett provided technical advice on report graphics.

Howard University provided technical staff for digitizing the site map. We thank Robert Bethea for overseeing the initial digitizing, and technicians Percival Taylor and Marques Roberts, who, along with Ruth Mathis and Iciar Lucena Narvaez, patiently refined, double-checked, and corrected the base mapping.

We thank Dean Susan Pease, Dean of the School of Arts and Science, and Michael Park, Chair of the Department of Anthropology, at Central Connecticut State University for providing release time for Warren Perry and for supporting his work on the project over many years. Janet Woodruff, of Central Connecticut State University's Archaeology Laboratory for African and African Diaspora Studies (ALAADS), has provided energy and advice as well as many hours of her own time. We thank Richard L. Porter of The RBA Group for understanding the importance of the project and making it possible for Jean Howson to contribute much of her time. Thanks also to RBA's Kathy Krumbine for help formatting front matter and appendices, and Ed Zeltmann, who prepared all of the site maps for the report.

This report has benefited greatly from the careful critiques of the members of the Advisory Review Board, Diana DiZerega Wall, Theresa Singleton, and Frank McManamon. We are grateful for their excellent suggestions. The interpretations and any errors or omissions, however, are our own.

Howard University gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the African Burial Ground Project directors, under the leadership of Dr. Michael L. Blakey, and the editors, authors, research team members, and research consultants for their contributions to the Archaeology Final Report. A tremendous debt of gratitude is owed to the three members of the Advisory Review Board, jointly appointed by the U.S. General Services Administration and Howard University, for the excellence and professionalism of the critiques they provided for the several iterations of this report.

Prologue

In 1992, I received a phone call from my friend and colleague, Dr. Michael Blakey, who at the time was on the faculty at Howard University. He was calling to ask me to head up the archaeological component of the African Burial Ground Project. I had mixed emotions: I was flattered and excited but also found the challenge frightening. Would I be able to handle the responsibility for a site important to my discipline of anthropology but also to the African-American community of New York, my city, the city in which I was reared?

I came to archaeology later in life than many of my contemporaries, starting graduate work at City University of New York in the late 1970s. Some of my earliest experiences in the field were at sites associated with nineteenth-century African American communities, including Brooklyn's Weeksville (investigated by Burt Salwen) and the oystering community at Sandy Ground, Staten Island (investigated by Robert Schuyler). These projects helped turn attention within archaeology to the presence of African Americans in New York. As my training continued, it became clear to me that to obtain a greater understanding of Africans in New York and in the Diaspora in general, it would be advantageous to conduct archaeological research in Africa.

While teaching as an adjunct in the Anthropology Department at City College, I had the good fortune of befriending Mpiwa Mbatha, a Zulu who taught sociocultural anthropology. He sparked my interest in the emergence of the Zulu kingdom in the nineteenth century, and with help from him and others I was able to spend 9 months in Swaziland conducting a regional survey. My research was part of a general critique of then-current theories of the rise of the Zulu kingdom, and the settlement data contributed to a revised picture of social upheaval. In the newer thinking, the Zulu

kingdom was part of a series of responses to havoc in the interior of southern Africa caused by late eighteenth-century European penetration spearheaded by an illegal trade in captive Africans. My research allowed me to integrate issues of settlement analysis, the political economy of racism, and forms of domination and resistance, all being discussed by historical archaeologists at that time.

Dr. Blakey's invitation would allow me to continue investigating the hidden and marginalized histories of the African Diaspora, participate in an increasingly important sub-field within American archaeology, bring the themes of domination and resistance to a new set of data, and to work with my people. It was also a time, the 1990s, when archaeologists in North America increasingly worked closely with descendant communities, in part because of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. I knew that the African American community of New York City had been instrumental in shaping the project's direction. And I knew, in ways that I suspected others did not know, about the complexity of this community and about the damage caused from having our history hidden from us.

Growing up in the South Bronx, I was taught in elementary school during the late 1940s and early 1950s that I was fortunate to live in New York City and not in the south, because black folks were enslaved in the south but were "free" in the north. This "fortune" was belied when I looked around the school and saw no teachers or administrators, let alone principals, who were people of color. The only people of color were black women working in the lunchroom and one black man who was a maintenance worker. Almost all of the students were of African descent, and a few were Puerto Rican. I never knew if we were supposed to be oblivious to

this disjuncture, or to accept secondary status and be thankful that we lived in the north.

Our received vision of Africa was no different. I remember being shown a cartoon of loincloth-clad African men with bones in their noses and negatively exaggerated lips and eyes, holding spears and dancing around two white men with pith helmets in a pot of boiling water. The message was clear: I was fortunate to have been descended from Africans who were brought to New York and "saved" by Lincoln, rather than left in the "jungles" of Africa with those cannibalistic "savages," my ancestors. It was painful to be black in New York City and subjected to an educational system that taught us that Africans had no history until Europeans rescued us from ourselves.

On the other hand, I had parents and grandparents who instilled black pride in my brother and me, and demonstrated to us that we *did* have a history beyond, and in spite of, captivity in the United States. They taught us about our own family, in particular my great-grandfather, Christopher J. Perry I, who in 1884 founded Philadelphia's first black newspaper, *The Philadelphia Tribune*. They introduced us to the achievements of W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson, Sojourner Truth, and other black leaders who were not part of the New York City school curriculum.

I received another lesson in African Diaspora history in 1963, when I heard Malcolm X speak about the link between Africa and African-Americans at a Black Muslim rally on 125th Street (or 25th Street, as it was known to young, streetwise black youth). During his speech, a listener taunted him: "I ain't left nothing in Africa!" Malcolm replied, "You left your mind in Africa." I understood Malcolm's reply to mean that Europeans had attempted, through coercion and control, to remove African Diaspora peoples from their African heritage, history, and identity. Since that time, I have drawn strength from the memory of Malcolm's passion and commitment as I delved into the relationship between Africa and the African Diaspora. I resolved to learn the truth about African people in Africa and the Diaspora and to challenge the Eurocentric conceptions of who we were and what our history had been.

In 1991, I was a doctoral candidate at the City University of New York's Graduate Anthropology Program, specializing in archaeology. At that time there were only three postdoctoral-level archaeologists of color in the United States (Warren Barber, Theresa Singleton, and Laura Henley Dean). Late one

night I was awakened by a knock at the door of my South Bronx apartment. Errol Maitland, my friend and former City College student, and an acquaintance from the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, had come to discuss the newly rediscovered African Burial Ground. They urged me, as a black archaeologist, to become involved in the project. I was deeply immersed in my doctoral dissertation and despite my commitment to the principles embodied in the project, I could not dedicate the time and effort it would require. I recommended that they contact Dr. Blakey. When I received Blakey's phone call in 1992, however, I committed to joining the project as soon as I had completed my Ph.D. In 1993, Howard University took control of the project, and in 1994 I became the Associate Director for Archaeology.

I knew that I could not accomplish such a daunting and important task without capable, dedicated colleagues. Early in my association with the project, I attended an interfaith service at the New York African



Egunfemi Adegbolola, Chief Alagba of New York, commemorating the ancestors in a Yoruba ceremony at the African Burial Ground (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial Ground site. I stood on the sacred ground that held my ancestors and asked them for help and guidance in retelling the lost histories of their lives. I soon received a response as, one by one, the colleagues I asked to join the team accepted what I see as a calling from the ancestors.

I feel proud and privileged to have been asked to be a part of a multidisciplinary research undertaking aimed at telling the world the story of the ancestors. I am committed to the New York African Burial Ground Project both as a member of the descendant community and as a member of the academic community, and there are very few people in that zone of overlap. I stood and still stand with my feet in each world: this project, with all its stresses and rewards, has allowed me to be whole.

The significance of the African Burial Ground extends beyond its importance to the African American community. The history of this cemetery and of those buried here speaks to the complex history of the United States, with all its diverse populations, and to

an even larger, world history. Understanding is diminished when African people, women, and subaltern or working class communities are marginalized; their omission from our collective historical consciousness has negative implications for all.

Warren R. Perry New Britain, Connecticut February 2006

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Jean Howson, Leonard G. Bianchi, and Warren R. Perry

This volume is one of three disciplinary volumes on the New York African Burial Ground Project. One volume focuses on the skeletal biological analysis of the remains recovered from the site (see Volume 1 of this series, Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground [Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009a]). Another focuses on the documentary history, from a diasporic perspective, of Africans who lived and died in early New York (see Volume 3 of this series, Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground: New York Blacks and the Diaspora [Medford 2009]). The present volume, consisting of three parts, presents the archaeological research on the New York African Burial Ground. General background on the New York African Burial Ground project is presented in the beginning of the skeletal biology component volume (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009a). Here we provide background information that is specifically relevant to the excavated site, the archaeological fieldwork undertaken in 1991–1992 (its planning, personnel, extent, duration, termination, etc.), and the analysis and disposition of nonskeletal material from the excavation.1

First, we review briefly the history of the project (from a regulatory standpoint), list the questions posed in the research design for archaeology, and explain the organization of this report. The subsequent sections provide a description of fieldwork, with a summary of burials recovered, and a discussion of laboratory procedures and methods. The impact of the September 11, 2001, attack on World Trade Center (where the archaeological laboratory was housed) and the decision-making and logistical efforts that went into the reburial of archaeological collections in October 2003 are described.

Project Background and Organization of the Report

The Site, the Section 106 Process, and the Memoranda of Agreement

The African Burial Ground is located in lower Manhattan, New York City and County. The portion of the cemetery that has been investigated archaeologically (the New York African Burial Ground) is located on Block 154, which is bounded on the north by Duane Street, on the south by Reade Street, on the west by Broadway, and on the east by Elk Street (Figure 1). It lay within the proposed construction site for the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building, part of the Foley Square Project of the General Services Administration (GSA). During the planning process for the construction undertaking, GSA addressed a series of environmental regulatory issues and retained the services of an engineering firm, Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, to prepare an environmental impact statement. Among the tasks performed under that contract was archaeological research, pursuant to the instructions and intents set forth by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The firm hired a cultural resources subconsultant, Historic Conservation and Interpretation (HCI) in 1989, and HCI prepared a "Stage 1A" documentary study in order to determine the potential for archaeological resources within the Foley Square project areas, including Block 154 (Ingle et al. 1990).2

¹ The site included historical archaeological components that were not related to the cemetery. A separate report on the history, archaeological excavation, and analysis of these components is in preparation by John Milner Associates (JMA) for the GSA (Cheek 2003).

² A second component of the Foley Square Project was the new Federal Courthouse, located on Block 160 several blocks east of the 290 Broadway site. The Courthouse archaeological investigation resulted in excavation of the Five Points Site (Yamin 2000).

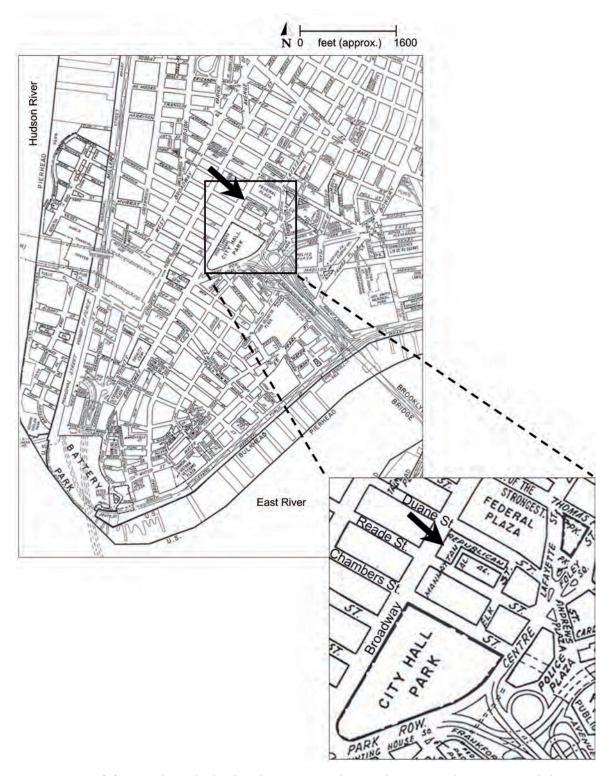


Figure 1. Location of African Burial Ground archaeological excavation site in lower Manhattan, New York. Arrows point to Block 154. New York City Mapped Streets, Section 12, 1997. (New York City Mapped Street: Section 12—Borough of Manhattan, New York County used with permission of the New York City Department of City Planning. All rights reserved.)

That background study, which was incorporated into the Foley Square Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, indicated the possible presence of remains associated with the New York African Burial Ground within the project's footprint and recommended a limited program of archaeological testing.³ In brief, although much of the block was thought to have been thoroughly disturbed by several phases of building construction, three areas were thought to have been left undisturbed or minimally disturbed: the alignment of Republican Alley (an alley that had been laid out in the late eighteenth century and never built upon), former Lot 12, and portions of former Lots 20/201/2/21 (Figure 2). These three areas were targeted for archaeological testing. Even though preservation potential was considered fairly low, it was argued that any extant remains of the cemetery would be highly significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and GSA in March 1989. The MOA stipulated that archaeological investigations would be conducted at the project area in accordance with a research design (to be prepared by GSA with consultation) that would establish categories of historic significance; that should archaeological materials be found, they would be evaluated and treated in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Documentation (48 FR 44734-37) and the Section 110 Guidelines, in conformance with the research design and for purposes of Section 106 compliance; that such features and materials would be considered eligible for listing in the NRHP; and that GSA, with consultation, would determine appropriate levels of mitigation.

Although the MOA was in place, archaeological fieldwork failed to proceed within the usual phased framework, in which testing designed to determine the extent and integrity of resources would have been followed by evaluation and consultation on mitigation or avoidance. The full horizontal and vertical extent of the intact graves was never determined in a "testing" phase. Rather, when archaeological testing conducted by GSA's consultant HCI beginning in

May 1991 revealed the presence of intact burials at the rear of Lot 12, GSA adopted full archaeological excavation as the mitigation strategy. At first, it was assumed that only a small area would contain intact graves, but ultimately graves were found to extend from the former north-south leg of Republican Alley to the eastern extent of the project site. The initial documentary research, as well as analysis of subsequent test borings, had failed to adequately determine the full depth of fill—as much as 25 feet in the eastern area at Elk Street—covering the original site. This fill had protected hundreds of graves, and the discovery of this level of preservation came as a surprise.

Mitigation through full data recovery continued to be pursued until July 1992, when, in the face of mounting public pressure, the field excavations were shut down by GSA. In the meantime, an amendment to the MOA was signed in December 1991 by the ACHP, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), and GSA. This amendment stipulated, in part, that a research design would be prepared by GSA's consultant, HCI; that burial excavations would continue once field safety issues were addressed; that GSA, in consultation with the ACHP, LPC, and interested parties, would determine the appropriate level of analysis of the human remains; that GSA, in consultation with interested parties and the City of New York, would ensure the respectful and dignified treatment of all human remains recovered; that human remains would be reburied; and that GSA would commemorate the cemetery with a memorial, develop exhibit space in 290 Broadway, and produce a video documentary on the project. The GSA remained, and still remains, the agency responsible for compliance with Section 106 and implementation of the MOA as amended.

Ultimately, the field excavations were halted prior to the preparation of an acceptable research design partly because of the lack of such a document—at the end of July 1992. For background on the political struggles surrounding the burial excavations, see Chapter 1 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground (Blakey 2009). On July 1, 1992, HCI was replaced as GSA's archaeological consultant by JMA, and biocultural anthropologist Dr. Michael Blakey, then of Howard University and currently of the College of William and Mary, had consulted at the site and participated in GSA's public meetings. Some portions of the project site had had all burials removed. In other portions, graves were either known still to be in place or were presumed to be in place (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of site conditions before,

³ Other potential resources identified in the "1A" report included remains associated with eighteenth-century potteries and with residential development dating to the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Subsequent archaeological research on the nonburial components of the 290 Broadway site is detailed in a separate report (Cheek 2003).

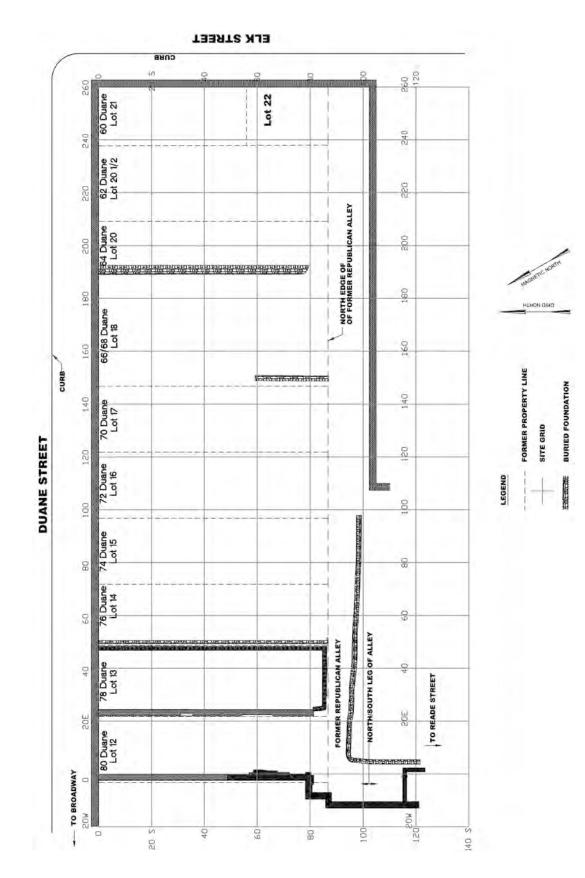


Figure 2. Plan of archaeological excavation area showing former property lines and alley in relation to streets.

during, and after the project). The footprint of the 34-story office tower had been completely excavated, but the "Pavilion" area, the proposed site of a smaller structure, had not. Thus, owing to the timing of the cessation of excavation, construction of the main tower building could proceed.

Research Design

In late 1992, Blakey was appointed scientific director of the New York African Burial Ground Project, and in 1993, Howard University received a contract to conduct the postexcavation research. A research design prepared by Howard University and JMA was accepted by GSA, after comments had been received from consulting agencies (the LPC and the ACHP), in spring of that year. This document covered both the New York African Burial Ground and the non-burialground components of the 290 Broadway project site. It stated that the New York African Burial Ground meets two of the evaluation criteria for listing in the NRHP: Criterion a (association with the broad patterns of our history) and Criterion d (having the potential to yield important information about the past)—and indeed, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in April 1993 (Howson and Harris [1992], reproduced in Appendix A, Part 3 of this volume). A finding of "No Adverse Effect" was not possible even with full archaeological data recovery, as both Critera a and d were cited. Partial mitigation of the adverse effects of the construction of 290 Broadway was to include programs of data analysis, curation, and education.

The research design listed numerous research questions to be addressed in the data recovery program. It specified the following for the nonskeletal archaeological analysis (Howard University and JMA 1993: 41–47):⁴

- What spatial variation can be seen in burial types in the New York African Burial Ground and what cultural explanations can be offered for this variation?
- What taphonomic forces have acted upon the cemetery and how have they affected the skeletal database?

- What can be learned about the distribution of different types of coffins, coffin size differences, coffin decoration, and coffin manufacturing techniques?
- What cultural and temporal information can be obtained from the study and analysis of artifacts found in grave pits and in coffin fills?

These questions and many others are addressed in subsequent chapters of this report. In addition to goals of the research design, however, the project team has had a complementary agenda that emerged from the process of public engagement. Four topics of overarching concern to the community were identified during this process: (1) the cultural background and origins of the burial population, (2) the cultural and biological transformations from African to African American identities, (3) the quality of life brought about by enslavement in the Americas, and (4) the modes of resistance to enslavement. Our archaeological analyses ultimately are designed to provide information relevant to these issues. They are addressed as appropriate throughout this report as described in the following section.

Report Organization

Our approach begins with due attention to and respect for the individual graves that archaeologists excavated during 1991 and 1992. There were no mass graves at the New York African Burial Ground, and few were shared by more than one person. The "making of the African Burial Ground" involved funeral after funeral, carried out for individuals by their survivors one by one, week after week, year in and year out. In keeping with the Howard University team's respect for the gravity of excavating such a cemetery archaeologically, the disinterment of each individual grave at the cemetery is described in Part 2 of this volume. By providing basic information on how each burial was found, what the grave contained, the condition of the remains, the age and sex of the individual, and whether and how it overlapped with other graves, a partial and admittedly inadequate reconstruction of the original interment is made possible.

Part 1 of this volume is organized as follows. The remainder of Chapter 1 describes the fieldwork (including a list of burials excavated) and laboratory methods; the impact of the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001; and the reburial of archaeological materials. Chapter 2 provides histor-

⁴ Beyond posing these questions, the bulk of the research design for archaeology described field methods (after the fact) and outlined methods for specific materials analysis. It should be noted that none of the authors of the current report participated in the preparation of the Research Design.

ical background and context. It consists of two parts: first, a document-based chronological history of the burial ground (including its origin, the development of its surrounds, and its closing), and second, a comparison of documentary evidence about African funeral practices in New York and in the African diaspora. In Chapter 3, we describe the archaeological site as such, including the original landform, postcemetery development of the parcel, the condition of the graves, and the limits of excavation. Next, Chapter 4 presents our methodology for arriving at four temporal groupings of the graves—namely, Early, Middle, Late-Middle, and Late Groups—that were excavated at the site. Before turning to each temporal group, Chapter 5 presents an overview of the mortuary population, burial practices, and spatial arrangement of the New York African Burial Ground, as observed through the archaeological investigation. Attention is paid to the use of coffins, grave orientation, body position, co-interment, shrouding and clothing the dead, and the presence of personal adornment and other items in association with the dead. Chapters 6–9 discuss the burials by temporal group, providing overviews of the town of New York, population figures, and discussions of the material culture and spatial arrangement of burials. Selected unique and unusual graves from each group are described. Chapters 10-14 describe specific categories of mortuary material culture: coffins, pins and shrouding, clothing, adornment, and other burial items. Throughout the chapters, we address interpretive themes of social identity, enslavement and resistance to bondage, mortuary practice and spiritual and cultural agency, and the role of the African Burial Ground in creating and sustaining a community. Chapter 15 provides a conclusion. All appendixes (A–J) are provided in Part 3 of this volume.

Archaeological Fieldwork

Archaeological testing commenced in May 1991 in Lot 12 (see Figure 2). A backhoe was used to excavate test trenches within the front portion of the lot and within the former footprint of Republican Alley, where African Burial Ground graves were considered most likely to have survived. Human remains, which subsequently were determined likely to be from the eastern half of Burial 1 and from other disturbed burials in the area, were discovered during excavation of "Trench D" within Republican Alley in June. At that time, machine excavation of the immediate surround-

ing area was halted until GSA decided to proceed with hand excavation of burials and arrangements for appropriate site preparation—including the shoring of the excavation perimeter and construction of an access ramp—could be made. Subsequently, fieldwork proceeded with a combination of machine-aided clearing and hand excavation, and shelters were constructed to protect the exposed graves and the excavators. These temporary structures were heated and lit once fieldwork progressed into the winter months (Figures 3–6). As each successive shelter was constructed (each was progressively more substantial), it was designated with a letter from "Structure A" to "Structure G" (hence many of the field records, including artifact-bag labels, included a structure letter).

HCI conducted the field excavations through the end of June 1992, when JMA assumed the project as GSA's new archaeology consultant. Most of the burial ground field staff was retained, including Site Director Michael Parrington. Excavation personnel are listed in the acknowledgments.

No member of the Howard University Archaeology Team participated in the fieldwork at the site, although members of the skeletal biology staff did so for brief periods. The lack of continuity of personnel between the fieldwork and analytical phases of research is common in public archaeology and can result in loss of information. Every effort has been made to minimize such loss in the current project. Procedures followed for the excavation of burials have been reconstructed from records kept by HCI and JMA, with the aid of the description contained in the 1993 research design. In addition, we consulted with various members of the field staff regarding methods, both during the period when our staffs overlapped at the laboratory and later during the preparation of this report.

Procedures

Survey and Mapping

A site grid was established aligned with the street grid and property lines. The north-south base line (grid coordinate 0 feet East) was the west edge of Lot 12, along the interior (east) side of an extant concrete wall. The east-west base line (0 feet South) was located where the north-south line intersected the front edge of Lot 12, along Duane Street. Drawings and maps were plotted with reference to east and south coordinates on this grid, and all horizontal measurements were taken in feet and tenths of feet.



Figure 3. Backhoe clearing adjacent to temporary archaeological excavation shelter early in the fieldwork (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 4. Excavation shelter erected to allow night and winter work (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 5. Archaeologists working under lights. Teams of two worked on each burial excavation, and the density of the graves made for close quarters inside the shelters (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 6. Construction of the 290 Broadway Federal building during archaeological fieldwork; the archaeological excavation shelter is visible at the rear. The view is toward the southeast (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

A site datum designated "A" was established with an elevation measured at 27.50 feet above mean sea level (AMSL; measurements per Sandy Hook, where sea level is measured for the New York City area). A series of subdatum points was used throughout the excavations. Grid coordinates were recorded for some, and for each, the depth below the site datum was recorded (see Appendix B, Part 3 of this volume). All depths recorded in the field for burial features were taken from these subdatum points and therefore can be converted readily to absolute elevations relative to sea level. Vertical measurements in the field were taken in feet, tenths of feet, and hundredths of feet. Depths recorded on the field drawings and forms simply needed to be subtracted from the elevations of the datum points listed for each burial. All elevations referred to in this report are absolute elevations, not excavation depths.

Clearing

Clearing of the massive amounts of fill and building material overlying the graves was accomplished by machine (excavators and backhoes). In some areas, this task resulted in damage to graves, discussed in Chapter 3. Once overburden was removed to a level believed to be just above burials, or once burial outlines or tops of coffins were exposed, hand clearing commenced. In some areas, historical features postdating the burial ground were encountered before the graves and were excavated first or in conjunction with adjacent burials (see the report on the 290 Broadway nonburial site component in Cheek [2003]). The need to construct excavation shelters and shoring facilities, safety issues, and, of course, the construction activity for 290 Broadway carried out simultaneously with the archaeological fieldwork complicated the excavation strategy. Building-construction access ramps, perimeter walls, and underpinning for adjacent 22 Reade Street caused delays and damage during the clearing of burial ground areas. As each shelter was built, or, in some cases, as it was dismantled, graves located beneath its sills had to be identified and excavated.

In general, the site was cleared for archaeological excavation from west to east, beginning with the rear of Lot 12 and the north-south leg of Republican Alley. As the months of fieldwork progressed, GSA identified a "Critical Area" for priority excavation, that being the footprint of the tower building. This area was cleared more speedily by machine than the westernmost area had been to provide quicker access for the archaeological team. There is no question that

site clearing was accomplished under less than optimal standards from the point of view of archaeological investigation. The pressure to move forward with building construction forced compromises with the scientific program, such that historical features above the level of the graves were often stripped, and the opportunity to examine the site carefully for remnants of the original ground surface was lost. It is probably no accident that the only portion of the site for which an extant eighteenth-century-cemetery surface was identified was the first area excavated, the north-south leg of Republican Alley. Here, the upper few feet of fill were mechanically removed, but lower layers of fill were excavated by hand with shovels.

In parts of the site (Lot 12, the westernmost section of Republican Alley, and Lots 20½ and 22), numbered excavation units (5- or 10-foot squares) were opened. When excavation of these units revealed burial outlines, the burial excavation proceeded separately from the rest of the unit. Nonburial excavation units are described in a separate report (Cheek 2003).

Burial Identification and Numbering

When a presumed burial was discovered or soon after, it was given a number. Burial numbering was consecutive. All records and objects related to the burial were assigned this number, including recordation forms, artifact boxes and bags, and wrapped skeletal remains. A total of 435 burial numbers were assigned during the fieldwork at the New York African Burial Ground, but there were not this many actual interments. Some of the contexts referred to by these numbers subsequently were determined not to be burials, or were determined to be parts of other burials. In addition, some of the burials excavated contained no surviving human remains. This was a result of either complete decay or, as appears to be the case for at least two graves, an instance in which the coffin was placed in the ground empty or remains were removed in the past. Table 1 summarizes the cases with no human remains. The total number of graves identified was 424, and the total number of individuals for whom any skeletal remains could be inventoried numbered 419. All burials that could be identified as such, whether or not human remains had survived, were included in the archaeological analysis to the extent possible (e.g., they were considered in the stratigraphic, spatial, and chronological analyses and in the distributions of artifacts, where such survived). In a few interments— Burials 199, 301, 329, 391, and 420—skeletal analysis revealed the presence of remains from more than one individual within a burial context.

Table 1. Assigned Burial Numbers with No Discrete Human Remains Associated

Burial No.	Explanation for Lack of Human Remains
62	Remains were determined to be from Burial 76.
74	There were no extant remains (empty child coffin?).
92	Remains were determined to be from Burial 96.
129	There were no extant remains (burial with empty coffin; adult size, hexagonal).
139	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
140	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
141	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
145	There were no extant remains (burial with empty coffin; adult size, hexagonal).
206	There were no extant remains (infant coffin).
220	There were no extant remains (infant coffin).
231	There were no extant remains (infant coffin).
232	There were no extant remains (infant coffin).
233	There were no extant remains (infant coffin).
261	There were no extant remains (adult coffin, disturbed).
269	Remains were determined to be from Burial 293.
296	There were no extant remains (infant coffin). (A tooth bud was later found in the laboratory.)
359	There were no extant remains (partial coffin).
360	There were no extant remains.
378	Burial left in place in 1992.
381	Burial left in place in 1992.
401	Coffin remains only; determined to be from burial 352.
407	Determined not to be a burial.
409	Determined not to be a burial.
411	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
421	Soil stain was determined not to be a burial.
422	Possible coffin remains only; no human bone.
423	Grave with coffin was identified but no human remains exposed in situ, left in place in 1992.
426	Grave with coffin was identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
429	Grave with coffin was identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
430	Grave with coffin was identified but no human remains exposed, left in place in 1992.
433	Burial left in place in 1992.
434	Burial left in place in 1992.
435	Burial left in place in 1992.

Basic burial data are contained in Appendix C, Part 3 of this volume. A list of the excavated burials is provided in Table 2, which should be used along with Figure 7 (the site plan); a full description of the disinterment of each burial will be found in Part 2 of this volume.⁵

In addition to the burial number, a catalog number was assigned during field excavation. The catalog number is also a consecutive number that in theory provides a way to differentiate specific field contexts, such as stratigraphic levels, from one another. However, at the New York African Burial Ground, only one catalog number was used for each burial, so that the material from the grave-shaft fill, coffin remains, material from within the coffin, skeletal remains, and all recovered samples had the same number. The only possible record, then, of where within a burial context any given item or sample came from might be the label on the bag or box used in the field to collect the material or on field drawings that depicted specific items that were then bagged or boxed separately with specific labeling. Typically, the information retained on containers was sufficient to determine which materials were from the grave shaft, which from within the coffin, etc., but there was no way to efficiently track these proveniences in a database when first brought to the lab, nor were all containers sufficiently labeled for us to determine exactly where items or samples were collected. For instance, because all nail bags had the same number for any given burial, we could not distinguish coffin nails from any "extra" nails found in the grave or shaft. Likewise, if shell was found in the grave shaft and also on or in a coffin, we could not readily determine which shells were from which location. Because grave shafts were excavated as single units with just one catalog number, there was no way to determine whether diagnostic artifacts were recovered from the upper part of the shaft, alongside the coffin. or beneath the coffin.

Excavation of Burials

Where visible, grave shafts were delineated on the ground and then excavated in full in a single layer until a coffin lid or bones were encountered. The grave-

shaft-fill soils were screened through ¹/₄-inch-wire mesh, and notes indicate that sometimes the soil was water-screened (there is no general record of which burials were wet-screened or how they were selected). Typically, a team of two excavators worked on each burial through to completion, although in some cases, teams were switched in the course of a burial or extra excavators were recruited. When a coffin lid or evidence of a coffin outline was encountered, elevations were taken, and sometimes the burial was drawn and/or photographed at this stage (see description of recording). Where feasible, wood samples were taken (although, in many cases, the only recoverable "wood" samples consisted of wood-stained soil). Excavators endeavored to leave coffin sides and all coffin nails in place during the excavation of the skeletal remains. Additional wood samples were taken from the sides and finally the bottoms of coffins where feasible.

Usually, skeletal remains were visible at the same level as coffin lid remains. One excavator began working to expose the cranium while the second began trying to locate the femurs. Once the general disposition of the remains was established, the standard order of excavation was legs and arms, chest, hands and feet, and finally the facial and pelvic areas. Soil from among the bones was screened for artifacts, although typically, artifacts were identified during excavation of the bones and left in place until they could be recorded in situ along with the skeleton.

Field assessments were conducted by the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT), a team of physical anthropologists based at Lehman College hired by GSA's consulting archaeologists. Assessments included condition of remains as well as preliminary evaluations of age, sex, and pathologies. Once each burial was fully exposed, one of the MFAT specialists performed an assessment of the physical remains. In some cases, the MFAT members assisted with excavations as well. MFAT personnel are listed in the acknowledgments.

All bones were left in place for recordation, then were removed individually and wrapped (initially using newspaper, but in July 1992, acid-free paper was adopted by the JMA field team) and packed in boxes. Once the skeletal remains were removed, the remaining grave-shaft fill was excavated and screened. All human remains were transferred directly from the site to Lehman College laboratories in the Bronx for storage. Artifacts found with burials in direct association with skeletal remains (i.e., with the exception of coffin remains and grave-shaft-fill contents) were

⁵ The site maps used in this report include the nineteenth-twentieth-century lot lines and numbers for Block 154. The individual lots were identified in the Stage 1 research in order to trace development of the block over time; the lots were subsumed within a larger tax parcel at the time the project commenced. The former lot boundaries are useful, however, for understanding the excavation strategy and differential preservation and for locating archaeological site areas.

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location

Burial No.	Age Category ^a	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
1	adult	20	25	female?	82.5	2	9.13
2	adult	27	42	male	43.5	11	
3	adult	25	35	male	107	2	
4	adult	30	40	male	86.5	11	
4A	adult	20	25	male?	86.5	11	
5	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	86.5	9	8.17
6	adult	25	30	male?	87.5	15	6.98
7	subadult	3	5	undetermined	80.5	15	7.29
8	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	82.5	5	6.58
9	adult	35	45	male	89.5	25	5.44
10	adult	40	45	male	82.5	20	6.04
11	adult	30	40	male?	83.5	12	6.73
12	adult	35	45	female	89.5	12	6.13
13 ^d					103.5	-5	6.37
14	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	89.5	12	6.10
15	subadult	11	18	undetermined	103.5	-5	7.27
16	adult	50	60	female	107	0	6.03
17	subadult	4	6	undetermined	83.25	20	4.94
18	adult	35	45	female?	81.5	12	4.53
19	subadult			undetermined	81.5	20	6.36
20	adult	45	50	male	85	0	8.68
21	subadult			undetermined	87.5	20	6.42
22	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	96.5	-1.5	6.97
23	adult	25	35	male	87.5	8	5.48
24	subadult	3	6	undetermined	87.5	5	7.88
25	adult	20	24	female	87.5	20	6.07
26	subadult	8	12	undetermined	83	20	3.74
27	subadult	1.4	2.8	undetermined	88.5	5	6.73
28	subadult			undetermined	83	-2	8.58
29	adult	35	45	male?	97.5	0	3.92
30	subadult	7	11	undetermined	86	10	5.48
31	adult	14	16	undetermined	103.5	-1	6.47
32	adult	50	60	male	86.5	23.5	5.74
33	adult			undetermined	87.5	10	5.48
34	adult		1.5	undetermined	87.5	15	6.02
35	subadult	8	10	undetermined	87.5	15	6.08
36	adult			female	87.5	-5 20	8.17
37	adult	45	55	male	65	20	7.44
38	adult	12	18	female	86	10	5.18
39	subadult	5	7	undetermined	81.75	40	4.69

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
40	adult	50	60	female	65	10	7.88
41	adult			undetermined	99.5	-11	7.57
42	infant	0	2	undetermined	91.5	45	4.92
43	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	105	-7	6.42
44	subadult	3	9	undetermined	85.5	21.5	5.54
45	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	103.5	-5	6.77
46	adult			female?	95.5	0	5.27
47	adult	35	45	male	103.5	0	6.42
48	adult			undetermined	87.5	20	4.89
49	adult	40	50	female	87.5	40	3.76
50	subadult			undetermined	87.5	30	5.81
51	adult	24	32	female	75	10	8.58
52	undetermined			undetermined	87.5	25	4.69
53	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	87.5	0	7.85
54	adult			undetermined	92	-4	7.63
55	subadult	3	5	undetermined	92.20	0	7.65
56	adult	30	34	female	87.5	17	5.64
57	subadult	0.88	2.16	undetermined	87.5	25	5.27
58	subadult	3.5	4.5	undetermined	65	15	7.42
59	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	65	15	6.58
60	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	95	-1	7.73
61	undetermined			undetermined	87.5	45	5.53
63	adult	35	45	male	70	15	7.12
64	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	92.5	45	5.25
65	infant	0	0.49	undetermined	75	10	8.58
66	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	93.5	25	5.23
67	adult	40	50	male	94	0	7.28
68	adult	21	25	male	91	3.5	5.93
69	adult	30	60	male	89	-3.5	6.53
70	adult	35	45	male	92.5	10	5.98
71	adult	25	35	female	75	10	7.86
72	subadult	1	2	undetermined	87.5	34	6.29
73	adult	20	30	female?	79	10	7.28
74 [®]					80	15	5.73
75	infant	0	0	undetermined	92.5	34	5.99
76	adult	25	55	male	75	10	8.33
77	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	88.5	35	5.26
78	adult	16	19	undetermined	91	10	4.31
79	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	82	6	7.88
80	subadult			undetermined	87.5	40	3.61

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
81	adult			female	93	-3	6.93
82	adult	18	25	female	93	3	6.03
83	subadult			undetermined	87.5	31	5.53
84	adult	17	21	female	87.5	35	4.45
85	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	80.5	15	6.79
86	subadult	6	8	undetermined	74	18	7.89
87	subadult	4	6	undetermined	94	3	6.88
88	undetermined			undetermined	93.5	-4	6.36
89	adult	50	60	female	90.5	48	4.8
90	adult	35	40	female	81.5	4	6.81
91	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	95	48	4.95
93	adult			undetermined	85	-3	6.98
94	subadult			undetermined	92.5	47	4.75
95	subadult	7	12	undetermined	94.5	51	4.85
96	adult	16	18	male	94.5	47	5.33
97	adult	40	50	male	81	20	6.73
98	subadult	1	2	undetermined	81	20	6.23
99	subadult	6	10	undetermined	91.5	70	4.92
100	subadult			undetermined	80.5	20	5.44
101	adult	26	35	male	88.5	49	4.32
102	subadult	1.33	2.67	undetermined	79.5	20	5.93
103	subadult			undetermined	79.5	20	5.83
104	adult	30	40	female	89.5	61	3.89
105	adult	35	45	male	95	60	4.37
106	adult	25	35	female?	90.5	71	3.85
107	adult	35	40	female	90	48	3.94
108	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	87	53	5.4
109	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	90.5	54	4.32
110	infant	-0.17	0.17	undetermined	90	78	5.33
111	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	91.5	53	4.87
112	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	89	82.5	4.52
113	adult			undetermined	91.5	60	3.62
114	adult	45	50	male	94.5	91	3.79
115	adult	25	35	female	89.5	89	3.81
116	adult	45	55	male	95.5	81.5	3.64
117	infant	0	0	undetermined	91.5	77	4.14
118	adult			undetermined	94.5	55	4.18
119	adult	35	45	male	88.5	72	3.79
120	adult	25	34	female	88.5	70	3.54
121	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	86	70	4.19

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
122	adult	18	20	female	93	61	3.53
123	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	89.5	80	4.04
124	adult			undetermined	91.5	95	5.09
125	adult			female?	64.5	52	3.96
126	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	88	80.5	3.4
127	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	90	95	3.71
128	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	92.5	83	3.45
129 ^f					91.5	95	4.54
130	subadult	1	2	undetermined	92	56	3.27
131	subadult			undetermined	91.5	76.5	3.83
132	adult	25	30	male	64.5	61.5	4.01
133	subadult	1	2	undetermined	96	78	4.06
134	adult	40	50	female	62.5	85	2.23
135	adult	30	40	male	70	70	2.81
136	subadult			undetermined	95	86.7	4.09
137	adult	25	35	undetermined	63	75	3.86
138	subadult	3	5	undetermined	67.5	86	4.13
142	adult	25	30	female	88	90	4.05
143	subadult	6	10	undetermined	88	80.5	3.11
144	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	88	90	3.8
145 ^f					73.5	74	4.93
146	infant	0	0	undetermined	73.5	74.5	4.72
147	adult	55	65	male	70.5	56.5	3.88
148	adult	12	18	undetermined	91.5	70	3.27
149	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	88	90	3.85
150	adult	20	28	female	70.5	80	4.43
151	adult	35	45	male	67.5	83	3.84
152	undetermined			undetermined	55.5	67	1.90
153	adult			female?	54.5	74	1.48
154	adult	25	29	female	95.5	75	3.43
155	adult			undetermined	92	75	3.14
156	adult	30	60	female	66.5	115	2.35
157	adult			female?	53.5	81.5	1.87
158	adult	20	30	male	63	92	2.17
159	adult	25	35	female	73.5	90	3.43
160	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	73	98.5	3.10
161	subadult			undetermined	74.5	90	
162	adult	35	45	male	55	51.5	2.31
163	adult	18	24	male?	74.5	99	2.18
164	subadult	8	13	undetermined	52.5	91	1.47

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
165	adult			undetermined	62.5	73	
166	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	55.5	92.5	2.10
167	subadult	8.5	12.5	undetermined	86.5	65	2.56
168	adult			male	95.5	68.5	4.87
169	subadult	5.5	9.5	undetermined	91.5	81	2.67
170	subadult	7	11	undetermined	96	65	4.33
171	adult	44	60	male	53.5	99.5	1.05
172	adult	25	35	female	40.5	88	1.61
173	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	57	101	0.55
174	adult	17	18	male	60.5	90	2.31
175	adult	24	28	male	72	64.5	4.44
176	adult	20	24	male	74.5	65.5	3.10
177	adult	30	60	undetermined	91.5	80	2.23
178	adult			male	62	57	4
179	adult	25	30	male	46.5	98	-0.30
180	subadult	11	13	undetermined	50	97.5	0.12
181	adult	20	23	male	66	115	2.23
182	subadult	7.5	12.5	undetermined	94	69	3.81
183	subadult	0.63	1.13	undetermined	50	113.5	0.33
184	subadult	1	1.5	undetermined	52	108.5	0.44
185	adult	21	23	male	54.5	122	0.85
186	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	47.5	110	0.09
187	subadult	1.5	4	undetermined	52.5	119.5	0.94
188	adult	26	32	undetermined	58.5	52.5	3.85
189	adult			undetermined	95.5	65.5	3.42
190	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	55	100.5	0.57
191	adult	25	30	male	56.5	87.5	1.83
192	adult	40	60	female	67	101.5	
193	adult	30	48	male	65.5	101.5	
194	adult	30	40	male	50.5	84	0.95
195	adult	30	40	female	81.5	63	
196	adult	20	24	undetermined	83	56	4.14
197	adult	45	55	female	76	57.5	4.05
198	subadult			undetermined	86.5	80	3.61
199	adult	30	40	female	73.5	80	3.39
200	adult			male	75.5	77	3.57
201	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	59.5	70.5	3.25
202	adult	12	18	female?	85.5	70	3.4
203	adult	12	18	undetermined	59	77	4.04
204	adult			female?	77.5	98	3.81

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
205	adult	18	20	female	59.5	102	0.41
206 [®]					75.5	93	3.31
207	adult	25	35	female?	78.5	95	3.76
208	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	77	96	3.70
209	adult	40	50	male	42	94	0.43
210	adult	35	45	male	46	116	0.22
211	adult			male?	77	79.5	3.93
212	subadult	4.5	5.5	undetermined	82.5	55	3.85
213	adult	45	55	female	84.5	85.5	3.93
214	adult	45	55	male	79.5	63.5	4.84
215	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	81.5	72.5	4.57
216	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	78.5	57	4.47
217	adult	17	19	male	64.5	122.5	1.34
218	subadult	0.5	3.5	undetermined	89	73	3.48
219	subadult	4	5	undetermined	71.5	122	2.20
220 [®]					78	92	3.75
221	adult	30	60	male	83.5	77	3.55
222	adult			male?	76.5	118	0.24
223	adult	25	35	female	66.5	76.5	2.69
224	subadult	0.5	1.33	undetermined	77.5	97	2.39
225	subadult	0.5	1.25	undetermined	64.5	95.5	
226	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	83	77	3.69
227	undetermined			undetermined	77	84	4.22
228	adult			male?	86	55	4.20
229	subadult	6.75	11.25	undetermined	83.5	72	4.22
230	adult	55	65	female	45.5	106	0.73
231 [®]					77.5	97	2.90
232 [®]					77.5	97	2.41
233 [®]					73	127	1.84
234	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	77.5	96.5	2.24
235	adult	28	42	female	71.5	123	1.44
236	subadult	4	5	undetermined	84.5	53.5	3.86
237	undetermined			undetermined	80	55.5	4.11
238	adult	40	50	male	78.5	62	3.43
239	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	83.5	70	3.8
240	subadult	0.88	2.66	undetermined	79.5	95.5	2.73
241	adult	55	65	female	54.5	121	-0.18
242	adult	40	50	female	49.5	117	-0.30
243	adult	40	50	male	57.5	121	0.10
244	subadult	5	9	undetermined	51.5	90	0.88

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation ^C
245	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	75	85.5	3.55
246	subadult	0.5	2.9	undetermined	82.5	70	3.77
247	adult	35	49.9	male?	84.5	90	3.69
248	subadult	14	15	undetermined	71.2	118.5	1.14
249	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	81	87	4.16
250	adult			undetermined	80.5	84	4.07
251	subadult	12	14	undetermined	79.5	79	3.73
252	subadult	1	2	undetermined	64.5	95.5	
253	subadult	13	15	undetermined	82.5	65.5	4.02
254	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	79.5	97.5	2.08
255	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	79.3	117.9	1.81
256	adult	40	60	male	77.5	79	2.82
257	adult	30	40	male	72.1	64.5	3.21
258	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	85.5	78	3.21
259	adult	17	19	female?	40.5	102	0.47
260	undetermined			undetermined	84.5	53.5	3.89
261 [®]					87.5	80	3.5
262	adult	15	17	male?	38.5	120	-0.31
263	subadult			undetermined	88.5	74	3.20
264	adult			undetermined	80	55	4.15
265	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	82	120	1.74
266	adult	25	35	female	38.5	113.5	-0.59
267	adult			undetermined	82.5	94	4.09
268	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	74.5	125.5	0.4
269							
270	adult			male	84.5	123.5	1.44
271	adult	45	57	male	76.5	65	3.70
272	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	88.5	74.5	2.8
273	undetermined			undetermined	81.5	52.5	4.27
274 ^g					79.5	70	3.55
275	adult			female?	81	50	3.36
276	adult	20	24	female	35.5	118.5	0.5
277	subadult			undetermined	77.5	51	4.01
278	adult	45	55	male	42	103	-0.34
279	adult			undetermined	76.5	75.5	3.32
280	adult			female?	83	70	2.8
281	adult			male?	79.5	75	3.78
282	adult	32.5	42.5	male	77.5	71.5	3.35
283	subadult	0.33	0.67	undetermined	76	123	1.16
284	adult	21	28	male	80.5	115.5	2.09

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
285	adult	20	30	female	80.5	64	3.57
286	subadult	4.4	8.5	undetermined	75	126	0.61
287	adult	18	20	male	73.5	53	3.63
288	adult			undetermined	74.5	120	1.61
289	subadult	5	9	undetermined	81	125	1.73
290	adult	45	55	male	84	114	2.32
291	subadult	3	5	undetermined	82.5	94	4.01
292	adult			undetermined	72.5	121	1.93
293	adult			male?	82.5	94	3.55
294	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	88	86.5	4.19
295	adult	30	50	female	82	70	2.59
296	infant	0.5	2.9	undetermined	84	98	4.20
297	adult	30	40	male	62.5	117.5	0.04
298	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	66.5	123	1.99
299	adult	40	50	male	68.5	123.5	1.32
300	infant			undetermined	76	125.5	0.82
301	adult			undetermined	86	100.5	4.17
301a	undetermined			undetermined	86	100.5	
302	adult			female?	88.5	99.5	3.96
303	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	73.5	76.5	
304	subadult	3	5	undetermined	81.5	109	1.97
305	infant	-0.33	0.33	undetermined	57	122	-1.11
306	adult	28	44	male	76.5	125	0.10
307	adult	45	55	male?	82.5	115.5	2.02
308	subadult			undetermined	84.5	109	1.31
309	adult	20	25	male	62	143.5	1.89
310	adult	44	52	female	75.5	60	2.49
311	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	88.5	99.5	3.41
312	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	75	67	3.38
313	adult	45	55	male	31.5	114.5	-1.5
314	adult	40	50	male	82	134	
315	adult	30	40	female	83	127	1.41
316	adult	18	20	female	88.5	99.5	3.02
317	adult	19	39	male?	91.5	220	2.21
318	subadult	7.5	14	undetermined	78	144	1.95
319	adult			female	88.5	249	2.25
320	subadult	2	4	undetermined	90	251.5	1.73
321	subadult	1	2	undetermined	79.5	143	0.39
322	adult			female	64.5	140	2.47
323	adult	19	30	male	45	128.5	

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
324	adult	25	35	female	69	132	1.83
325	adult	25	35	male	63.5	137.5	0.89
326	adult	45	55	male	73.5	135	
327	adult	35	45	male	48.5	129	
328	adult	40	50	female	84.5	241	
329	adult			male	56	128.5	
329.1	adult			undetermined	56	128.5	
330	adult	28	58	male	58.5	140	0.72
331	adult	30	35	undetermined	58	137	0.52
332	adult	35	40	male?	80.5	126	0.67
333	adult	45	55	male	81.5	230.5	1.14
334	subadult			undetermined	89	251	1.63
335	adult	25	35	female	84.5	248	0.36
336	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	83	125.5	0.68
337	adult	40	50	male	37	130	-0.67
338	adult	33	65	female	84.5	133.5	0.69
339	subadult			undetermined	83	123	1.39
340	adult	39.3	64.4	female	88.5	236.5	0.27
341	adult			male	87.5	229.5	1.26
342	adult	25	35	female?	50	129	-0.73
343	adult	19	23	male	59.5	130	-0.02
344	adult	25	35	male?	87.5	255	0.84
345	adult			undetermined	74.5	254	0.52
346	adult	50	70	female	57.5	138.5	-0.25
347	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	73.5	130	0.97
348	subadult	1	2	undetermined	66	138	1.62
349	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	72	132	1.64
350	undetermined			undetermined	82	133.5	1.18
351	adult	50	60	male	84.5	145	0.39
352	adult			male	67.5	131	1.47
353	adult	24	34	male	84.5	230	1.13
354	adult	35	45	male	44.5	129.5	-1.16
355	adult			undetermined	74.5	235	3.19
356	subadult			undetermined	84.5	248	-0.01
357	adult	45	65	male	72	228.5	-0.31
358	adult			female?	89.5	230	1.93
359 [®]					84.5	127.5	1.47
360 [®]					75.5	235	0.24
361	adult	33	57	male	88.5	249	0.77
362	adult			undetermined	69.5	235	-0.81

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
363	subadult	1	2	undetermined	49.5	135	-0.35
364	adult	25	35	male	44.5	143.5	-0.23
365	adult			female	79.5	257.5	-0.06
366	adult	34	62	undetermined	78	224	0.73
367	adult	25	35	female?	72	130	2.08
368	subadult	10.5	13.5	undetermined	80.5	246.5	0.86
369	adult	40	50	male	54	131	-0.21
370	subadult	2	4	undetermined	82	146.5	0.79
371	adult	25	35	female	69	235	-2.88
372	adult	25	35	female	81	235	1.91
373	adult	45	60	female	70.5	132	-0.97
374	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	72	132.5	1.36
375	adult	16	18	female	74.5	253	-0.4
376	adult	45	65	male	77	134.5	0.45
377	adult	32.6	57.8	female	75.5	235	-0.44
378	undetermined			undetermined	75.5	235	-0.28
379	adult	30	40	male	71.5	215	0.16
380	adult	40	60	male	85	241	0.51
381	undetermined			undetermined	75.5	235	-0.68
382	subadult	4	5	undetermined	71.5	215	0.17
383	adult	14	18	female	79	245	-0.76
384	adult	25	45	female	91.5	248	0.59
385	adult	40	60	female	86	251.5	0.83
386	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	48	121.5	0.37
387	adult	34	44	male	78	227	-0.25
388	adult	29	57	female	75.5	222	-0.38
389	adult			female	82	220	1.87
390	adult	25	35	male	71.5	140	1.41
391	adult	16.5	19.5	male	68	140.5	1.69
392	adult	42.5	52.5	male	71.5	140	1.04
393	infant	-0.17	0.17	undetermined	84	211	2.54
394	adult	16	25	undetermined	59.5	185	-0.59
395	adult	43	53	male	76.5	135.5	-1.11
396	subadult	6.5	8.5	undetermined	82.5	224	1.43
397	adult	30	40	female	87	229	0.51
398	adult	25	35	undetermined	93	255.5	0.67
399	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	78	213	-0.08
400	adult	25	35	male	65.5	130	2.09
402	adult			undetermined	84.5	235	1.06
403	adult	39	65	male	93	255.5	1.12

Table 2. Excavated Burials with Age, Sex, and Location (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category [®]	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^b	Grid South [©]	Grid East [©]	Elevation [©]
404	adult			female	79.5	165	
405	subadult	6	10	undetermined	83.9	211.8	2.22
406	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	68.25	253.5	0.02
408	adult			male?	79.5	158	0.5
410	adult			female	69.5	178	1.05
412	infant	0	0	undetermined	78.5	218.5	2.10
413	adult	50	70	female	62.5	175.5	0.97
414	adult	39	59	male	74	165	0.97
415	adult	35	55	male	81	215	1.81
416	adult			undetermined	71.5	142	1.28
417	subadult	9.5	14.5	undetermined	64.5	165	1.14
418	adult	30	55	male	64.5	163	0.86
419	adult	48	62	male	71.5	206.5	0.4
420	adult	35	45	male	69.5	186.5	0.63
422 [®]					86.5	212.5	2.22
423 ^h					67	162	0.74
424	adult			undetermined	76	220	-1.07
425	adult			female	79.1	253	0.35
426 ⁱ					69.5	141	1.52
427	adult	16	20	male?	69.5	179	0.28
428	adult	40	70	female	66.5	147.5	1.57
429 i					64.5	215	
430 i					84.5	215	
431	adult			undetermined	79.5	162	0.48
432	adult			undetermined	78	220	-0.89
433 ^h					79.5	160.5	
434 ^h					79.5	155	
435 ^h					84.5	205	2.64

^a Low and high ages reflect the range of possible ages determined by the skeletal biological team. Blanks indicate age range could not be determined from the remains. To be consistent with the skeletal analysis, in this table, "infant" includes individuals calculated as 6 months of age or less; "subadult" includes those over 6 months and under 15 years of age. Age calculation is described in Chapter 4 of Volume 1 of this series, Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground.

In the Sex column, a question mark indicates a probable assignment.

^c Grid coordinates (see the site map, Figure 7) are in feet, and elevations are feet above mean sea level (AMSL) for the highest skeletal element (or coffin remains if no skeletal elements were present).

Remains appear to belong with Burial 43.

[®] No remains extant.

This coffin was empty.

Remains appear to belong to Burial 280.

h Remains were left in place.

Remains were left in place (presumed adult).

packed in bags or small containers and sent to the project conservators (see below). Shaft fill artifacts and coffin remains (nails and wood) were bagged and sent to the HCI laboratory facility (until July 1992) or to a storage space provided by GSA.

Soil samples were taken from the grave-shaft-fill soil (as a "control" sample), the coffin lid area, the stomach area, the thoracic area, the pelvic area, and the sacrum. Not all of these samples were taken from all burials. Thoracic samples were added to the field protocol in late May 1992. The control samples were taken so that (1) soils could be tested for plant remains, providing information on the historic landscape, and (2) to obtain pH levels and observe any insect remains in the soil as aids to understanding bone condition.⁶ The other samples were taken so that macrobotanical, palynology, and parasitology analyses could be conducted to provide potential information about the diet and health of the deceased and about plants that might have been used in mortuary practices.

Specific locations of control samples were generally not recorded, and it is often not known for individual burials whether these were taken from above, below, or alongside the coffin or skeleton, although the date of the sample, if recorded, can inform us as to whether it was taken before or after the skeleton was exposed and recorded. During the cataloging of samples, bag labels (which were somewhat inconsistent) provided the only information on sample locations. Samples were sent from the field site to HCI or JMA laboratory facilities for storage.

Certain in-field conservation procedures were designed to minimize damage to human bone and artifacts that occurred once they were exposed to the air. Very fragile bones, including frequently those of infants and young children, were "pedestaled" during excavation—that is, the soil surrounding them was left in place and removed as a block. If soil showed signs of bacterial microbes, a mild biocide (70 percent ethanol) was applied to the pedestal. In a few cases, a consolidant, polyvinyl acetate (PVA) emulsion, was used for long bones. In some instances, field notes indicate that wet paper towels were placed on skeletal

remains to keep them moist during excavation and recording of the burial, but it is not known whether this was standard procedure. Artifacts that were particularly fragile were frozen along with surrounding soil. Plastic was first placed over the bone, then dry ice was applied to the artifact, and the block, when frozen, was lifted out and transported to freezers in the laboratory facility. There is no list of items for which dry ice was used, although some instances are described in the field records for individual burials and are noted in the descriptions in Part 2 of this volume.

Fieldwork was halted on July 29, 1992, and GSA decided to preserve remaining graves at the project site rather than excavate further. However, at that time, 16 burials had been identified in the ground but had not been removed; in some, the skeletal remains were partially exposed. These burials were covered with vermiculite and soil pending GSA's decisions, in consultation with the project archaeologists, as to whether they would be removed or left in place. Excavation of 11 partially exposed burials was resumed in September 1992, and their skeletal remains were removed for analysis.

Field Recording

As at any archaeological site, field recording varied with the individual excavators. At the New York African Burial Ground, there was also an evolution in recordation standards: the first burials recovered were not always drawn adequately, for example, and field forms specifically designed for burial removal were adopted only midway through the project. On the other hand, later in the field project, some burials had only the minimum data recorded on the site forms, with no additional notes.

Each burial was recorded on its own forms and drawings, and individual drawings were then transferred to site maps. The maps were sometimes, but not always, clear as to superposition of burials. The stratigraphic relationships among groups of overlapping burials were not usually mentioned in the excavators' notes, which focused on the individual burial. There are no extant field notes taken by the archaeologists who supervised burial excavations, which might have discussed overall site stratigraphy. Soil descriptions were sometimes, but not always, provided on field forms, but the grave-shaft-fill soil was not differentiated from the coffin in-fill, and the surrounding soil matrix is rarely described.

⁶ Neither testing of pH levels nor insect identification was undertaken. Chemical analysis was deemed unfeasible because too much time had elapsed between the initial collection and the initiation of the subcontracting work. Insect remains were not identified in the soil analysis conducted thus far, but their study through future analysis of retained light fractions may be possible if specific questions about decomposition need to be addressed (none was posed by the current research team).

Forms

Forms were completed for every burial excavated, but several different forms were adopted over the course of the project. Examples of forms used by HCI, JMA, and MFAT are provided in Appendix D, Part 3 of this volume. The field forms are retained in the project archive; HCI and JMA forms also were transcribed into a database and are available in the digital archive. Up until mid-April 1992, each burial was recorded on both a "Provenience Sheet" and a "Burial Form." The Provenience Sheet also provided a grid for a sketch, and in many cases the excavators produced here a rough sketch of the grave outline, the coffin top, or even the skeletal remains. A "Burial Procedures Checklist" was added in April 1992. This form listed all possible samples and indicated whether they had been collected; it also included specific information on how associated artifacts were stored. Unfortunately, the "Provenience Sheet" was discontinued, and although most information was contained on other forms, some items were no longer recorded, including soil descriptions and opening sketches.

MFAT field-assessment forms provided an overall descriptive assessment of the condition and position of remains and also listed individual skeletal elements, noting presence/absence and condition. These forms also included preliminary sex, age, "race," and pathology assessments.

Drawings

A scaled plan drawing was made for each burial in situ, after skeletal remains had been exposed and cleaned, prior to removal (see Part 2 of this volume for drawings). Early in the fieldwork, each excavator prepared his or her own burial plan drawings. Subsequently, crew members with particular ability were assigned work as field artists with responsibility for the in situ drawings. One artist/archaeologist in particular, Ms. Margo Schur (now Margo Meyer of the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University), executed drawings of exceptional quality and detail. In addition to the final burial drawings, in some cases opening sketches or detail sketches were drawn by excavators, most often on the field forms as noted above. On occasion, schematic drawings of coffins were executed. Field drawings were produced using a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot (with only a few exceptions).

For most burial drawings, individual skeletal elements and other items (coffin remains and, in some

cases, artifacts) were plotted vertically as well as horizontally. As noted, vertical measurements were taken in hundredths of feet from a series of site subdatum points. Depths below datum for skeletal remains were typically taken at the cranium, shoulders, elbows, innominates (hipbones), sacrum, knees, ankles, feet, and central vertebrae. Vertical measurements also were taken typically for the top and bottom of the coffin (either wood remains or nails) and for some artifacts found with skeletal remains. The complete list of field drawings is included in the project database.

As noted, individual burial drawings were traced onto larger site maps, also at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot. In the western part of the cemetery, skeletal drawings were traced, but later in the excavation (i.e., farther east) only grave-shaft and coffin outlines were traced onto the maps. The earliest of these maps also show depths below datum points and give descriptions of soils intervening between graves, but most do not. A problem with the site maps is the difficulty in resolving issues of superposition; it is not always possible to tell which burial underlay another when more than one interment overlapped. In some parts of the site, maps were made of broad areas prior to excavation of graves, showing suspected grave-shaft outlines, surrounding soil, and coffin stains where visible. These are useful for reconstructing some of the soil descriptions for burials and for checking burial relationships. Unfortunately, the text on the surviving copies of these maps is mostly illegible (see section on September 11, 2001).

Photographs

Field photographs were taken of each burial in situ at the New York African Burial Ground. Redundant sets of 35-mm slides and black-and-white negatives were produced. Each photograph has a menu board with the burial number and date, a trowel pointing to grid north, and a range pole marked in feet. In some cases, detail photographs were also taken of particular artifacts or skeletal elements in situ. The complete list of field photographs is included in the project database. Photographs were retained in the archaeological laboratory and used for site analysis.

Laboratory Processing and Analysis

A laboratory facility for nonskeletal material was provided by GSA at the World Trade Center in September 1992, following the close of fieldwork.⁷ Prior to that, artifacts from the burials had been stored at HCI's facility in New Jersey, with the exception of items that were found in direct association with skeletal remains, including pins, buttons, beads, textile fragments, jewelry, and other metal objects. These had been sent to the South Street Seaport's laboratory in lower Manhattan. The museum's conservator, Gary McGowan, conducted initial conservation where necessary; he later became JMA's laboratory director at the World Trade Center. Material stored at the Seaport and the HCI facility was brought to the new laboratory in September 1992.

The laboratory was staffed and directed by JMA, which was responsible under the terms of its contract with GSA for the processing of all collections from the Foley Square Project. When the Howard University Archaeology Team began work on the project in 1993, JMA continued to conduct the laboratory processing. Warren Perry of Central Connecticut State University was appointed associate director for archaeology for the Howard team in 1996 and took over supervision of the processing along with Laboratory Director Leonard Bianchi. Jean Howson, a member of the research team, was added as a co-director of the laboratory in 1998.

The New York African Burial Ground archaeological analysis required different procedures and a separate database from those being developed for the rest of the Foley Square Project, which were of necessity more geared to the extremely artifact-rich Courthouse (Five Points) Site. The burial ground assemblage was relatively small in size, and artifact categories were completely different because of the mortuary context. For example, domestic artifact categories (e.g., "food preparation" or "health and hygiene"), along with the myriad functional, typological, and stylistic subcategories used for a large domestic assemblage, were irrelevant to the analysis of burials and burialrelated artifacts. The burial ground procedures had to be designed to ensure that individual graves or components of graves could be distinguished from others or grouped for various kinds of analysis, to ensure that everything from each grave could ultimately be reunited, and to ensure that only those items meant to accompany the deceased were reinterred with

the remains. Moreover, we deliberately chose not to assign broad functional categories to artifacts, as we wished to remain open—and leave our assemblage open—to interpretation. Eventually, a number of the tasks originally assigned to JMA were transferred to Howard University, including completion of New York African Burial Ground artifact inventories and samples processing. Procedures were overhauled so that all collections made during the excavations and all records associated with them could be accurately tracked. An easily accessible database using a standard commercial application was deemed adequate for our tracking and data management needs and was used in lieu of the complex and proprietary database developed by a JMA subconsultant for the Five Points site.

Procedures

Provenience Controls

As noted, a single catalog number was used to label all material from any given burial, whether from the grave surface, shaft fill, coffin, or coffin interior, including all soil samples. This kind of lumping is highly unusual in archaeological practice. Because analysis and, importantly, eventual reburial required differentiation of all of these kinds of excavation contexts, a plan was developed by the Howard University Archaeology Team to assign numbers to all items and samples in the collection that would serve as indices to more precise provenience. The catalog numbers were retained and extensions added as listed in Table 3. Our goal was to prevent further loss of provenience information as processing progressed.

The need for adequate provenience controls for the collection was related to the need for an adequate database with which to record collections information. With the catalog numbers assigned, it would be possible to track artifacts and samples for individual burials and to retrieve information on similar contexts for all burials. The database is described in a subsequent section.

Artifacts that were directly associated with skeletal remains were not physically labeled with provenience indicators. These items were slated for eventual reburial and were not physically altered in any way other than to stabilize them.⁸ JMA laboratory staff did

⁷ Collections from excavations at both of the Foley Square sites the Broadway block—Block 154, including burial and nonburial contexts—and the Courthouse block—Block 160 and the Five Points Site—were processed and analyzed at the 6 World Trade Center facility. For the Five Points Site, see Yamin (2000).

⁸ The single exception was a silver pendant that was sampled to determine metallic content (see Chapter 13).

Extension	Provenience	Explanation			
-B	burial	This extension was used for the skeletal remains themselves and for all items believed to be in direct association with skeletal remains. Examples are pins, buttons, or beads.			
-CL	coffin lid	This extension was given to items that were recorded as being on the coffin lic Examples are tacks and pieces of shell.			
-СН	coffin hardware	Designates iron nails, tacks, and other hardware that clearly came from the coffin of the deceased. Discrete lots (bags) of nails were assigned consecutive letters, as in -CHA, -CHB, -CHC, in order to retain all possible provenience information. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag.			
-CW	coffin wood	This was used for wood samples or soil scrapings from wood stains that cleacame from the coffin of the deceased. Discrete lots (bags) of wood were give consecutive letters, as in -CWA, -CWB, -CWC, in order to retain all possible provenience information. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag; individual bags sometimes indicated whether the sample was from the sides, or bottom.			
-GF	grave fill	This was used to designate material that was in the grave-shaft-fill soil rather than in direct association with the skeletal remains or inside the coffin.			
-S	soil sample	This was used for all soil samples from a burial. Discrete soil samples were given consecutive letters, as in -SA, -SB, -SC, to reflect soil taken from different places within a burial. The letters were assigned in order of the date on the bag; individual bags typically indicated where the sample was from. Soil samples that were processed by flotation were in turn given an "L", "H", or "U" as well, to designate light fraction, heavy fraction, or unfloated subsample (thus -SAL, -SAH, -SAU).			

label artifacts from grave-shaft-fill contexts, which were not expected to be reburied, except for kiln waste, kiln furniture, and items less than approximately 1 inch in size. Labels were written in black ink and include the site number (6980), catalog number (without extension), and burial number. Items with and without labels were retained in polyethylene bags with full catalog numbers written on the bags, as were soil samples.

Cleaning, Conservation, and Storage

Project conservators were Gary McGowan and Cheryl LaRoche of JMA. Conservation procedures for each category of material are described in appropriate artifact chapters (Chapters 10–14) and in a draft report prepared by JMA.⁹ Typically, conservators examined and cleaned only those items that

"Burial artifacts" were placed in inert polyethylene boxes with inert packing, and many were placed in display cases in the laboratory once stabilized. Items that were not on display were kept in metal storage cabinets.

were recovered from within coffins or in direct association with skeletal remains (these items came to be referred to as "burial artifacts"), although they oversaw the processing of grave-shaft and coffin materials as well. In addition, the conservators examined a selection of wood samples from coffins. Many of the wood samples (apparently the best ones from each burial) along with other organic samples were stored in freezers when first brought in from the field.¹⁰ The freezers and their contents were brought to the World Trade Center laboratory in September 1992.

 $^{^9\,}$ The report (LaRoche 2002) was made available for use by the Howard University team during our analysis.

¹⁰ Many boxes of wood samples were not frozen, and these consisted in large part of soil with wood fragments, probably scraped off as samples during excavation.

Items from grave-shaft-fill contexts and coffin remains were cleaned, sorted and bagged by material—wood, glass, metal, ceramic, and faunal—and placed in cardboard storage boxes. Bags were of polyethylene, and tyvek tags were placed in each bag indicating burial number and material. Ceramics, nails, and glass were washed in a weak nonionic detergent solution and rinsed in plain water, then cleaned with a soft-bristle brush. For shell, adhering soil was soaked in a 50 percent ethanol solution and removed.

Inventory

All artifacts examined by the project conservators (i.e., those found in direct association with skeletal remains) were inventoried by them and entered into a conservation data table (this was ultimately converted to Microsoft Access and merged with the artifact inventory data table currently in use). Coffin hardware and material from grave-shaft-fill soils were identified and inventoried by Howard University laboratory staff under the direction of Leonard Bianchi. Bianchi also reexamined and further described artifacts that had been inventoried by the conservators. Animal bone from grave-shaft contexts was examined and inventoried by JMA subconsultant Marie Lorraine Pipes. All inventories are contained in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume. Stoneware from grave shafts was further examined, and subconsultant Meta Janowitz made a more detailed inventory (see Appendix F, Part 3 of this volume).

Unique artifacts deriving from contexts in direct association with skeletal remains (typically those treated by conservators) were given consecutive arbitrary numbers ("point numbers") within each provenience that can be appended to the catalog number and allow reference to unique items. For example, individual unique artifacts from Burial 6 were assigned Catalog Nos. 219-B.001, 219-B.002, 219-B.003, etc. These numbers do not necessarily correspond to the numbers assigned by conservators, because the latter were given to groups of artifacts rather than to individual items, and, in many cases, the archaeologists wished to further differentiate the items and describe them in greater particularity. (In some cases, groups of identical items still share a number.) Whenever possible, burial artifact "point numbers" assigned in the field were used as the artifact numbers for the inventory.

Soil Samples

Many hundreds of soil samples were taken during field excavations, and three different teams were involved in analyzing them (Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume contains the methods and results of the various reports). Some of the samples from burial contexts were processed by William Sandy of HCI from December 1991 through July 1992 (a total of 428 samples). These samples were from coffin lids and interiors and stomach and pelvic areas. A drum flotation device was used. Heavy and light fractions were sorted, and inventory and analysis was underway as of the end of June 1992, when HCI was replaced by JMA as GSA's consulting archaeological firm. Bone fragments recovered in heavy fractions were sent to the Lehman laboratory (those later determined to be animal bone rather than human were returned to the New York laboratory for faunal analysis). Artifacts from heavy fractions and bags containing the light fractions were stored at the World Trade Center laboratory along with the other collections from the excavation. These were subsequently inventoried by Howard University laboratory staff. 11

The hundreds of soil samples that were not floated by HCI, including all control samples, were stored at the World Trade Center laboratory. These were inventoried by the Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff. Soil that had not been screened at all in the field was screened in the laboratory through ¹/₄-inch mesh in order to recover artifacts and human bone. Human bone was sent to the Skeletal Biology Team at Howard University, and artifacts were inventoried. Under the direction of the Howard University archaeologists, all as-yet-unfloated soil samples were next divided into two parts, one for flotation and one to remain unfloated for other types of analysis. The "-U" (unfloated) portions were typically less than 1 liter in size. If a sample was too small to partition, it was retained unfloated. The inventory was updated to indicate the splitting of samples. JMA retained New South Associates to complete the flotation of all soil samples.

New South Associates was also retained for macrobotanic, palynology, and parasitology pilot studies. The samples used in the pilot studies were selected by Howard University's Project Scientific Director

William Sandy analyzed and inventoried 43 of the samples that he had floated (i.e., he "picked" or sorted and then identified botanical remains from the light fractions). This inventory was not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and no copy is known to exist (William Sandy, personal communication 2003). The fractions selected subsequently by Howard University for analysis were therefore reinventoried by New South Associates.

Blakey. No parasite data were preserved in any of the samples studied. However, both macrobotanical and pollen studies proved useful in identifying species of plants from coffin lid and pelvic contexts. The Howard University Archaeology Team decided to pursue both macrobotanical and pollen analyses for a larger sample of burials. Individual soil samples (some already floated) were selected by the Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff during the spring and summer of 2003. The samples were selected using several criteria, specifically site location, age and sex of the deceased, hypothesized period of interment, and confidence in the sample provenience. Our aim was to obtain an accurate subsample of the burial population along all of these parameters. Leslie Raymer of New South Associates performed the macrobotanical study, and Pat Fall (Arizona State University) and Gerald Kelso performed the pollen study. Data are incorporated into the analysis presented in the body of the report, specifically in Chapters 3–5 and 14.

Records

Database

Archaeological analysis requires integration of data on artifacts with data on archaeological contexts. The database designed for the archaeological component of the New York African Burial Ground project includes a number of data tables that contain uncoded information on individual burials, artifacts, and samples and can be linked by burial number or by catalog number. The basic burial, artifact, and photography logs originally created by JMA in dBase were subsequently converted to Paradox and substantially altered and enlarged by the Howard University Archaeology Team's laboratory staff. These tables were finally converted to Microsoft Access in 2003, during the final phase of analysis. Key tables in the current database are listed in Table 4, and their structures are explained in Appendix H, Part 3 of this volume. The database will be available along with all project records at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York.

Artifact Photographs

Selected artifacts (typically items conservators referred to as "burial artifacts" that had been found in direct association with skeletal remains, excluding coffin wood and hardware) were photographed by staff of JMA during laboratory processing and analysis from 1992 to 1995. Some were photographed before, during, and after conservation treatment. In addition to 35-mm slides and black-and-white negatives, microscopic digital photographs were produced to aid in identification for a few items, for example, textile/hair fragments and wood samples.

A second set of artifact photographs, consisting of 35-mm slides and black-and-white negatives, was taken during 1997 at the World Trade Center laboratory by JMA staff. Only one set of the slides and one set of negatives were produced. Neither was recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

In the summer of 2001, GSA planned reburial of skeletal remains and "burial artifacts," prompting the production of a third and final set of 35-mm photographic slides. This was considered necessary because, in the opinion of the Howard University Archaeology Team, the previous sets of artifact photographs were inadequate as a record of the items that could serve future research and exhibit purposes once the materials themselves were reburied. Preparations for the reburial were rushed (though ultimately the planned August 17, 2001, date was cancelled), and little time was allowed for the final inventory and photo-recordation of artifacts. The services of photographer Jon Abbott were secured, and he produced a full set of high-quality color slides, although typically just one or two photos were taken for each item.

Finally, prior to the 2003 reburial, digital photographs were taken of a large subset of the artifacts from direct burial contexts. The high-resolution digital technology now available (through Jon Abbott) made it possible to produce numerous digital images of each artifact, from several angles. These are now available for future research. An example is produced in Figure 8. Artifact photographs are included in the project archive, which will be housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York.

Artifact photographs reproduced in this report include images from 35-mm slides as well as digital images. In some cases, the ruler placed in the photographic frame to provide scale (there were at least three separate rulers used during the various photo sessions) is visible in its entirety, but in most of the close-up photographs, only the tick marks on the ruler are visible. The smallest tick-mark interval on the rulers is 0.5 mm, unless otherwise noted. In some photographs this interval is all that shows. In other

Table Name	Contents			
ABGCAT	Provenience catalog for the Broadway site, including all burial and nonburial contexts. This is a list of catalog numbers and all of the provenience data they represent (features, burials, dates of excavation, excavators, etc.).			
ABG_DPTS	Locations and elevations of temporary subdatum points used in the field.			
add faun	Inventory of animal bone from grave-shaft-fill contexts.			
ARTPHOTOS	List of photographs of artifacts taken in 1998 (destroyed September 11, 2001).			
burial4	Basic data on each burial.			
Coffin size	Coffin dimensions for each burial.			
conbur 3	Inventory of all artifacts that were directly associated with skeletal remains, coffin hardware, and material (other than floral and faunal remains) from grave fill contexts.			
DRAWINGS	List of all numbered drawings from the Broadway site.			
NewPinTable	List of straight pins from burials by location.			
NOTES	Transcribed information and notes from burial-excavation field forms.			
PHOTOBKS	List of photographs of in situ burials.			
PHOTOLOG	List of photographs taken in the field and of conserved artifacts.			
SHELLFLOR	Inventory of shell and seeds from burial contexts.			
Stoneware	Inventory of local stonewares from grave-shaft-fill contexts.			
SOILSAMP	Inventory of all soil samples with information on processing to date.			
TOTWOOD	Inventory of wood samples from coffins.			

photographs, the 1-mm, 0.5-cm, and 1-cm ticks are also visible. We have left the rulers in the images, but rather than label the tick marks on each, we have provided the size of the photographed item or items in the caption. Where no single dimension was measurable, we have stated the ruler interval in the caption.

Replicas

In August 2003, shortly before the planned reburial, archaeologists from the National Park Service (within their capacity as consultants to GSA on the future Interpretive Center for the African Burial Ground) solicited bids for replication of artifacts. Only items that had been found in direct association with the deceased—and among these, only items that were sufficiently intact to possibly be used in interpretation—were included in the assemblage targeted for potential replication. Colonial Williamsburg was contracted to prepare replicas; they selected a limited subset based on their resources and expertise (Table 5). Full recordation of the items was completed by the specialists who made the replicas. Because of the timing of preparations for the reinter-

ment, these items were not photographed digitally.

Insufficient time remained to solicit subcontractors to replicate the remaining artifacts or record them for replication prior to the reburial. However, photographs and descriptive information can be used as the basis for future replication of additional artifacts. Some artifacts were not given priority for replication because they are types that can be represented by virtually identical, and readily obtainable, examples. This is the case for the beads and the coins. An example of one of the replications, copper alloy straight pins, is shown in Figure 9. Several replicas were made of each item selected.

September 11, 2001

The New York African Burial Ground archaeological laboratory in the subbasement level of 6 World Trade Center was left partially intact following the collapse of the towers and other surrounding buildings on September 11, 2001. In October 2001, in advance of



Figure 8. Example of a digital photographic series of an artifact (Burial 366, Catalog No. 1830.002). The images shown here are from low-resolution copies; high-resolution digital images are part of the project archive (photographs by Jon Abbott).

demolition of the damaged structure, GSA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinated efforts to recover material from the laboratory. A salvage team entered the facility and retrieved many boxes of artifacts and surviving documents. The degree of retrieval is considered remarkable, considering the overall damage to the space; however, some artifacts and documents were not salvaged. Categories of materials that are known to have been lost are enumerated in Table 6. Individual items that were lost (but had already been inventoried) are identified in the artifact inventory, Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume.

Archaeological materials that were salvaged were decontaminated, rebagged in some cases (original bags were retained, however, and kept with the materials), and reboxed by a GSA contractor. Records that were salvaged (namely the slide and photo negative collections) were also decontaminated and placed in new

binders. A new laboratory was set up at 1 Bowling Green in New York. When the Howard University team resumed archaeological work in 2003, the boxes were examined, and some errors made by the decontamination team when labeling the new bags were noted and corrected.

Fortunately, as of July 31, 2001, items that had been selected by GSA at that time for reburial had been packed and shipped off-site (to Artex, an arts-handling firm with facilities in Landover, Maryland). These included the artifacts thought to have been placed directly with the deceased in each burial, and thus all such items were saved. However, some of the materials left behind in the laboratory and later lost on September 11 belonged to categories of material that were subsequently added to the reburial plans (see below), such as coffin remains and excess soil from samples. Therefore, when ultimately reburied on October 4, 2003,

Table 5. Items Selected for Replication

Burial No.	Items				
6	1 large button (plain face), Catalog No. 219-B.008				
10	1 button, Catalog No. 234-B.004				
12/14	12 straight pins, Catalog Nos. 253- B.001, 253-B.002, 253-B.003, 274- B.001, 274-B.002, and 274-B.003				
71	1 finger ring, Catalog No. 813-B.004				
147	7 small rings, Catalog No. 892-B.004				
158	cuff links, 1 pair, Catalog No. 903- B.001				
181	2 buttons, Catalog Nos. 967-B.005 and 967-B.006				
211	cuff-link or button face, enameled, Catalog No. 1186-B.001				
214	1 button, Catalog No. 1191-B.002				
238	cuff links, 1 pair, Catalog No. 1224- B.001				
250	1 button, Catalog No. 1239-B.002				
254	1 silver pendant, Catalog No. 1243- B.001				
310	1 paste ring (with glass insets), Catalog No. 1486-B.001				
313	1 button, Catalog No. 1516-B.001				
371	2 cuff-link faces, enameled, Catalog No. 1875-B.001				
392	4 buttons, all assigned Catalog No. 2039-B.002				
398	1 finger ring, Catalog No. 2061-B.001				
403	1 button, Catalog Nos. 2067-B.003				
405	1 button, Catalog No. 2071-B.001				
415	1 button, Catalog No. 2097-B.004				

some individuals were missing materials that had been recovered from their original graves, typically coffin remains (nails and wood).

Also fortunate was the storage of all original, individual burial field records at the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University. Copies of these records were in the World Trade Center laboratory (they were not salvaged after September 11), and a set was also kept at GSA's New York offices, but the

original documentation of the excavations of burials, especially the excavators' notes and in situ drawings, is invaluable.

Reburial

The MOA entered into by GSA, the ACHP, and the LPC stipulated that human remains and "burial associated artifacts" were to be reinterred. As plans were developed for the reinterment that took place in October 2003, decisions had to be made as to exactly what materials were included in this mandate. Of course, the skeletal remains were always intended to be reburied, although small samples of bone were retained for future analyses. Confusion about artifacts arose, however, because the phrase "burial artifacts" had been used early on in the conservation laboratory to refer only to those items that had been placed in direct association with the deceased. Project conservators had estimated that there were 500 such items. Yet the coffin remains themselves (wood and hardware) were also clearly "burial associated."

More problematic were items found in grave-shaftfill soils. Because there was no remnant of the original ground surface over most of the site (see Chapter 3), there was no way of determining whether artifacts in the soils had at one time been placed on a grave. 12 For the most part, material found in the shafts of graves is believed to have been present in the soil matrix that was used to fill the graves at the time of the interment. Thus, it is material that lay strewn on the surface or in shallow deposits covering the ground when the grave was originally dug. Some of this material represents a thin, scattered deposit of common eighteenth-century refuse, including glass and ceramic sherds, bits of brick and nails, fragments of animal bone, and so forth. In one area of the site, there was a good deal of animal bone thought to be waste material, perhaps from a nearby tannery. But by far, the most ubiquitous class of grave-shaft material is stoneware-kiln debris (sherds from broken pots, kiln waste, and kiln furniture). The latter material is basically "industrial waste" from pottery kilns that stood on the burial ground in the eighteenth century (see Chapters 2 and 4).

In the end, GSA made a decision to exclude artifacts that were found in grave-shaft fill from reburial. This

¹² In some cases, artifacts appeared to excavators to be directly on the coffin lid, and when such items are thought *possibly* to have been placed there deliberately, they have been included in the reburial.

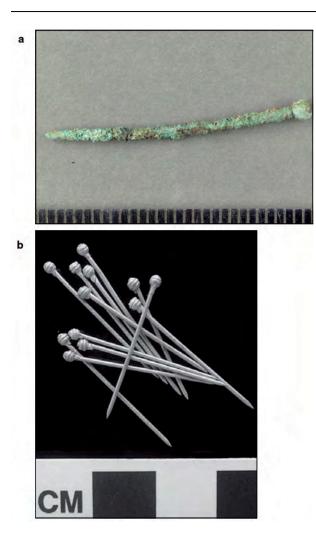


Figure 9. (a) Copper alloy straight pin as recovered in the field (photograph by Jon Abbott); (b) replicas of African Burial Ground pins created by artisans at Colonial Williamsburg (photograph by Rob Tucher).

decision was arrived at after discussions among representatives of the public (who attended public meetings on the subject), GSA, the Howard University research team, and the National Park Service (in its role as consultant to GSA on the future Interpretive Center and disposition of the collection). Our reasoning was that these materials were not deliberately placed with the deceased, do not represent actions on the part of mourners, and lacked spiritual meaning at the time of interment. In fact, most of those who entered the discussion felt that these items represent depredations on the cemetery that occurred during the period of its use. Other parties expressed interest in the future research potential of the materials and in their potential use in interpretive programs, and believed they should be excluded from reburial for these reasons as well. It should be pointed out, however, that some in the descendant community had a differing opinion on this matter, feeling instead that the presence of these materials in the sacred ground of the cemetery over the past 200-300 years had in fact imbued them with a spiritual essence by virtue of their close contact with the remains of the ancestors (Mrs. Ollie McLean, personal communication 2003).

What does the nonskeletal retained collection currently consist of, how is it organized, and where is it stored? Table 7 summarizes the retained artifact collections and their disposition as of this writing. All material is bagged in plastic, labeled according to catalog number and burial, and boxed according to burial. The boxes were transferred to the custody of the Army Corps of Engineers, acting as GSA's technical representative, on February 27, 2006. Following processing at the Corps' St. Louis facility, the collection will be returned to New York to be housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Table 6. Items Not Recovered after World Trade Center Collapse, September 11, 2001

Category	Material Lost	Comments		
Artifacts and samples				
Coffin wood	Burials 26–50 and 126–175; all samples stored in freezer.	Bags had been inventoried; freezer samples had been damaged by mold prior to September 11.		
Coffin hardware	Burials 76–125; all items set aside for X-rays.	These items had been inventoried.		
Artifacts from grave shafts	Burials 76–125; tobacco pipe fragments from all burials.	Only ceramics had been inventoried.		
Artifacts from uncertain proveniences	All burials	Items lost were those set aside during the selection and packing of reburial artifacts in July 2001.		
Soil samples	Burial 42; Burials 51–53 and 58–63, except for control-sample heavy and light fractions; Burials 70–126; Burials 172–175, except for control-sample heavy and light fractions; Burial 219; Burials 315–319, except for control-sample heavy and light fractions.	Samples that had been pulled from the shelving for any reason and set aside were not salvaged. Numerous control samples were off-site at New South Associates on September 11.		
Faunal remains	Burials 1–25; Burials 76–125; Burials 326–350.	This includes shell and animal bone.		
Floral remains	Inventoried seeds from all burials.	Seeds had been quantified but not identified.		
Grave markers	Cobbles from burials in southwest area of site; headstones from Burials 18, 23, and 47.	Only nine cobbles that had been boxed along with Burial 13 artifacts were salvaged.		
Records and documents				
Maps	Site maps on Mylar; in situ and detail bead drawings for Burial 340.	Photocopies (poor quality) of most of these were stored off-site. The lost set had mark-ups for CADD editing.		
Photographs	Color slides of artifacts taken in 1998; 35-mm black- and-white negatives of artifacts; black-and-white large-format negatives of artifacts; one set of in situ color slides of Burials 1–57.	Artifact slides were stored at the Office of Pubic Education and Information, which was located in the same building; materials housed there were not salvaged.		
Inventories	Paper copy of conserved artifact inventory with all hand-written notes taken during packing of reburial artifacts, July 2001; manuscript original of coffin hardware inventory; preliminary flotation sample inventory.	This artifact inventory was annotated to indicate which items had been packed for reburial and sent to Artex.		
Research files	Four file drawers of reprints for comparative research.	Material compiled by JMA and Howard staff.		

Key: JMA = John Milner Associates

Table 7. Artifact Categories, Counts, and Current Disposition

Category	Approximate Count	Notes	Current Status
Artifacts other than coffins recovered in direct association with skeletal remains	1,628	Includes over 1,200 fragments of straight pins from shrouds or clothing as well as buttons, jewelry, beads, and other items, such as coins and pipes.	Reburied at the site in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Coffins			
Coffin furniture, nails, and screws	14,057		Reburied at the site in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Coffin wood samples	529		Reburied at the site in coffins with human remains, October 2003.
Artifacts recovered from grave-shaft-fill soil	24,000	This category includes small sherds of glass, brick, animal bone, shell, and fragments of iron. Its largest component, however, consists of 18,366 ceramic pieces, mainly waste material from the potteries that were in operation immediately adjacent to the excavated part of the cemetery.	Transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, February 2006.
Soil samples	1,200	Two or more soil samples were taken from each burial, usually from the coffin lid, the interior or stomach area, and an outside sample for comparison.	Half-liter subsamples of unfloated soil and all light fractions were transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, February 2006. All remaining soil has been reburied at the site.

CHAPTER 2

Documentary Evidence on the Origin and Use of the African Burial Ground

Jean Howson, Barbara A. Bianco, and Steven Barto

This chapter presents an overview of the African Burial Ground from two complementary points of view. Part one examines documentary evidence about the origin of the cemetery and the development of its immediate surrounds. It covers the mid-1600s–1795 and includes a chronology of property transactions, petitions, surveys, ordinances, and key events directly relevant to the cemetery's use. Maps of New Amsterdam/New York are reproduced in this chapter.

Part two takes a comparative tack. It examines documentary evidence about African funerals in New Amsterdam/New York, along with evidence about burial practices in the black Atlantic world when the African Burial Ground was in use.

Origin of the African Burial Ground

The African Burial Ground is the only cemetery for Africans known to have existed in Manhattan until the eve of the Revolutionary War, yet it left little impression in public and private documents of the day. Indeed, it is all but invisible before 1713, when the first known reference to African burials on public land appeared in a proposal written by the Anglican chaplain John Sharpe (1881). Africans were first brought to New Amsterdam/New York in 1625. Where, between 1625 and 1713, did they bury their dead?

There are three places where members of colonial Manhattan's black community would have been laid to rest during the seventeenth century: in plots set aside on family or syndicate farms, in the town burial ground, or in congregational yards. Rural family cemeteries in upper Manhattan, New Jersey, and Long Island had burial plots for enslaved Africans in the eighteenth century, but seventeenth-century examples of this practice are not known (Kruger 1985:545–551). Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who had the single largest

slaveholding in New Amsterdam, may have permitted burials in the chapel yard at his bouwerie, the Dutch word for a plantation or a farm. Stuyvesant erected the chapel for his neighbors and tenants and paid the Dutch minister Henricus Selyns 250 guilders a year to conduct Sunday evening services there (Christoph 1984:147-148). In use from approximately 1660 to 1687, the chapel was located near what is now the west side of 2nd Avenue at about 10th Street, within the yard of St. Mark's Church (Stokes 1915–1928:4:202). The Dutch West India Company, New Amsterdam's commercial landlord, may have allowed burials near the camp for Africans who fed the lumber mill on the Sawkill (Saw River). Situated near present-day 74th Street, the camp was far from the public burial ground at the island's southern tip, where the town took shape around a fort built with African labor (Figures 10 and 11).

New Amsterdam/New York's public burial ground, in use from approximately 1649 to 1676, was located on the west side of present-day Broadway, near present-day Morris Street (New York State Archives, Albany, New York Colonial Manuscripts, Dutch Patents and Deeds 1630–1664, Patents Liber 2:20; New York County, Office of the Register, Deeds Libers, Libers 12:85, 90 and 13:102). A second public cemetery was opened on the same side of the road, just north of the town wall (present-day Wall Street). It began operation after the cemetery established under the Dutch West India Company ceased to be used.

The second public cemetery, which is still in existence today (Figure 12), was integrated into the yard of Anglican Trinity Church. After opening its doors in 1697, Trinity Church banned the burial of Africans in the cemetery outside. The Vestrymen

Ordered, That after the Expiration of four weeks from the dates hereof no Negroes be buried

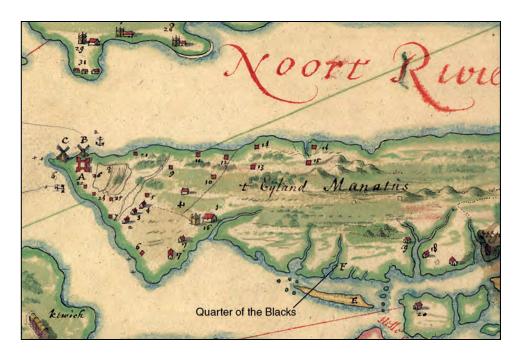


Figure 10. Detail from the Manatus Map, a depiction of New Amsterdam in 1639, with a mark (*F*) showing the camp (near present-day 74th Street) where the Dutch West India Company housed African workers. The unnamed mapmaker provided the earliest known cartographic reference to slavery in New York (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).



Figure 11. The Castello Plan, cartographer Jacques Cortelyou's street grid of New Amsterdam in 1660, shows the common burial ground on the west side of the wagon road (Broadway), midway between the fort and the wall (Wall Street) (I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).



Figure 12. View of Trinity Churchyard, October 2005 (photograph by Rob Tucher).

within the bounds & Limits of the Church Yard of Trinity Church, that is to say, in the rear of the present burying place & that no person or Negro whatsoever, do presume after the terme above Limited to break up any ground for the burying of his Negro, as they will answer it at their perill [Stokes 1915–1928:4:403, citing the vestry minutes of October 25, 1697].

The ban implies that Africans had been using the town cemetery during the seventeenth century. If so, Africans, or the men and women who held Africans in bondage, would have had to find another burial site after the cemetery came under Trinity's wing. Trinity Church did not take over the northern end of the town burial ground until April 1703. It is possible that burials of Africans in the north yard continued until then (Cannan 2004:3).¹

Did the Reformed Dutch Church and other congregations open their graveyards for the burial of Africans prior to, or after, Trinity Church issued its ban? The officially sponsored Dutch Church had a wide reach in New Amsterdam's multiethnic, multi-religious community. Town residents, including Africans, were married and baptized by its clergymen, and attendance at its services was open to people of non-Dutch descent (on African marriages and baptisms, see Goodfriend [1984, 2003] and Swan [1995]; on the ethnic make-up of Dutch Church members, see Goodfriend [1992:16]).

The Dutch Church oversaw the upkeep and use of the town cemetery. It collected fees for the rental of the pall, straps, benches, and boards and for tolling the bell for the dead. At the behest of the church, city officials reminded the town's two grave diggers to keep a register of "all who die and are buried" (Minutes of the Burgomasters, February 25, 1661, in New York Orphanmasters 1902:2:77–78), but these registers, and any precursors, apparently are not extant. The proportion of the African population interred in the town cemeteries during the seventeenth century is therefore unknown. A new Dutch Church with an adjoining yard was opened in 1694 on Garden Street. If the Dutch Church on Garden Street permitted burials of Africans after the Trinity ban, the practice did not persist through the following century. An examination of Dutch Church burial records, extant for 1727–1804, yielded only five burials of Africans, and only one, Susannah Rosedale's in 1729, was opt de kirkhoff, "in the churchyard" (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Burial Register of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New York, 1727–1804).

Other congregations held religious services during the Dutch period, but they utilized private homes or the church in the fort until they could establish sites of their own (Rothschild 1990:44). In 1688, the town's Huguenot community erected a building for the French Church (Église du Saint Esprit). From 1688 until 1804, the French Church performed marriages, baptisms, and funerals, but no burial records of Africans are listed in its register (French Church du Saint Esprit 1968). Among the smaller congregations, a group that includes the Lutherans, who erected a church in the early 1670s; the Quakers, whose first meeting was recorded in 1681; and the Jews, who had a cemetery by 1683 and a synagogue by 1695 (Goodfriend 1992:84), few burials of blacks were recorded.²

Burials of unfree Africans in congregational cemeteries would have been at the request of the slave-holder. A rough sense of the congregational affiliations of slaveholding households at the end of the seventeenth century can be had by linking data on slave-

¹ Trinity Church's archivist suggests that there may have been unrecorded burials of black Anglican communicants during the eighteenth century (Phyllis Barr, personal communication 1991). Burial registers are not extant prior to 1777, and churchyard headstones, which are used to document burials at Trinity, may not have been provided to blacks.

² There were only two burials of Africans recorded at Trinity Lutheran Church in the eighteenth century: a free African woman named Mareitje van Guinea, in March 1745, and an illegitimate mulatto child, Abraham Beeling, in October 1747 (Stryker-Rodda 1974:84–85). Moravians buried just two Africans in their cemetery in the 1770s (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Moravian Church Death Records, 1752–1890). German-language records of Christ Lutheran Church include burials from 1752–1763 and 1767–1773, but these have not been translated. The United Lutheran Church burial records from 1784–1804 were not examined for the present study. For information on Protestant church records, see Macy (1994, 1995, 1996).

Church Affiliation	Number of Households	Black Males	Black Females	Black Male Children	Black Female Children	Total Blacks
Huguenot	11	6	19	4	2	31
Reformed Dutch	17	20	15	6	3	44
Anglican	33	27	32	15	7	81
	61	53	66	25	12	156

Table 8. Church Affiliation of a Sample of New York City Slaveholding Households, 1703

Note: From U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909) and Rothschild (1990:185–204). To obtain church affiliation, households with blacks in residence identified in the 1703 census were matched with names of church members from Rothschild's list. Total

holding with tallies of congregational rolls. Working with figures from the 1703 census, when the black population numbered 799, historian Joyce Goodfriend (1992:76) found that Manhattan's Dutch households held 45 percent of the town's unfree Africans, the English held 40 percent, the French held 13 percent, and the Jews held 2 percent.³ Based on a sample of 61 slaveholding households for which the actual church affiliation of the household head can be determined, Anglican parishioners were well represented in the town's slaveholding ranks. Anglicans held slightly more than half (81 out of 156) of the Africans in the sample (Table 8). Even if other denominations did allow burials of Africans, it is likely that the closing of Trinity's churchyard to blacks would have had a noticeable impact.

There is no record of the establishment of a cemetery for Africans after the 1697 ban was issued or after the northern end of the town cemetery was transferred to Trinity's jurisdiction in 1703. It is likely a cemetery already existed, the one now known as the African Burial Ground.

The African Burial Ground was located in a lowlying area on the undeveloped reaches of the town.⁴ The spine of high ground that present-day Broadway would follow lay to the west. The *vlacht*, or "flat," of the town Common, where indigents and criminals

The area was situated between the town and the outlying parcels the Dutch West India Company conveyed during the 1640s to Africans granted conditional freedom.⁵ The parcels formed a loose arc around the top of Kalch Pond and the Cripplebush (thicketed, swampy wetlands) that accompanied the pond's western outlet across Manhattan to the North River, one of the names by which today's Hudson River was known. Domingo Antony's 12-acre parcel, granted July 13, 1643, anchored the eastern leg of the arc to the wagon path that would become the Bowery Road. His land, located below present-day Canal Street, extended west to the "Fresh Water or swamp." The opposite leg of the arc rested on Simon Congo's farm, granted December 16, 1644. Congo's 8-acre parcel was centered on present-day Varick Street. One of 17 African land grants located on the northwestern side of the Cripplebush, his farm angled downward from present-day West Houston to Charleton Street, between present-day Avenue of the Americas (Sixth Avenue) and Hudson Street. The approximate locations of the farms are shown in Figure 13 (for descriptions of the parcels and their subsequent conveyances, see Stokes [1915–1928:6:73–76, 123–124]).

would be housed after 1736, was on the south. The lower end of Kalch (also "Collect" or "Fresh Water") Pond lay to the east-northeast.

³ Official counts of New York's black population are presented in a discussion of African burial practices in New Amsterdam/New York.

⁴ The present-day state of knowledge about the geographical coordinates of the African Burial Ground during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is based, in part, on the documentary evidence presented in this chapter. Only a portion of the cemetery was excavated in 1991–1992. The archaeologically excavated portion is discussed in Chapter 3.

⁵ Eleven African men petitioned the New Netherland Council for release from servitude to the Dutch West India Company. The petition, granted February 25, 1644 (New Netherland Council 1974:212–213), made freedom of the men and their wives contingent upon the annual remittance of a tax and assistance, when requested, with public works projects and civil defense. The Company granted conditional freedom to some of its other African workers. Several slaveholding individuals manumitted Africans as well. On the legal rights and privileges of black New Yorkers under Dutch rule, see Goodfriend (1978), Higginbotham (1978:105–108), Moore (2005), and Swan (1998).

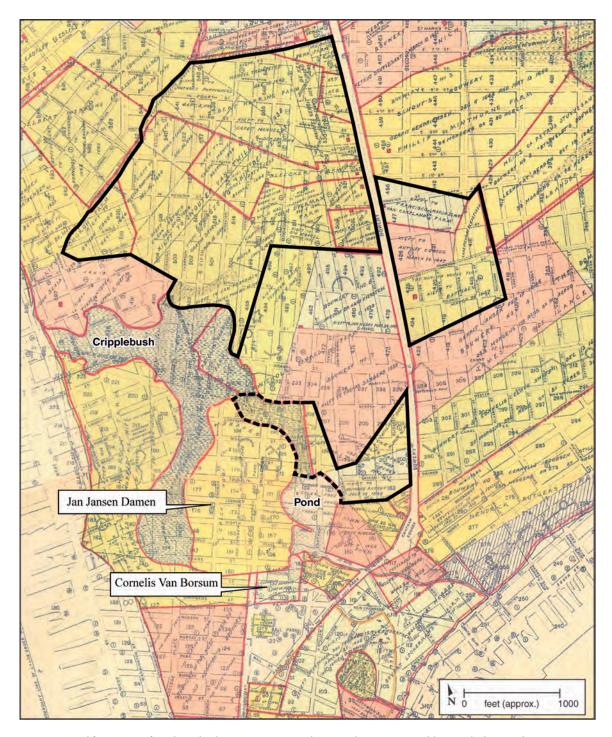


Figure 13. Detail from a map of Dutch-era land grants, superimposed on a Manhattan street grid (ca. 1835), showing the approximate locations of patents issued to African men and women (the areas inside the heavy black lines), Jan Jansen Damen, and Cornelis Van Borsum. The map, prepared by R. H. Dodd from translations of the original ground briefs, alludes to the features of the seventeenth-century landscape—the pond, the swamps and wetlands, the wagon roads—to which these outlying parcels were oriented. The African farms formed a loose arc around the northern side of Fresh Water Pond and the Cripplebush to the west. The Damen and Van Borsum lots were situated south of the Cripplebush and west of the pond. The African farms were subsequently reconveyed to Europeans (from Stokes 1915—1928:6:Plates 84Ba and 84Bb; on the creation of the map, see Stokes [1915—1928:2:355—357]).

Peter Stuyvesant relocated some of the African farmers in 1659–1660, a period of heightened anxiety about the possibility of attack from Native Americans. In keeping with a policy to safeguard settlers on outlying parcels (see Stokes 1915–1928:4:202–203), Stuyvesant recalled that he had "ordered and commanded" the Africans "to take down their isolated dwellings for their own improved security . . . [and] to establish and erect the same along the common highway near the honorable general's [Stuyvesant's] farm." At least nine Africans were granted parcels "in true and free ownership" aside the common highway (Bowery Road) that edged Stuyvesant's land.⁶

The Dutch traveler Jasper Danckaerts referred to the African farms in a journal entry penned October 6, 1679. When describing the changing political geography of seventeenth-century Manhattan, Danckaerts (1913:65) overestimated the liberty Africans had about where they could live:

We went from the city, following the Broadway, over the *valley*, or the fresh water. Upon both sides of this way were many habitations of negroes, mulattoes and whites. These negroes were formerly the proper slaves of the [West India] company, but, in consequence of the frequent changes and conquests of the country, they have obtained their freedom and settled themselves down where they have thought proper, and thus on this road, where they have ground enough to live on with their families.

Europeans as well as Africans held land in and around the African Burial Ground. To understand how Africans used the land—our primary aim—requires knowing how the activities of other town residents encroached upon it. Two seventeenth-century land grants to Dutchmen, Jan Jansen Damen and Cornelis Van Borsum, are now known to have overlapped the cemetery. The Van Borsum patent encompassed the majority of the burial ground, and by the mid-

eighteenth century, the parcel came to be known as the "Negroes Burial Ground." The cemetery eventually overlapped the south edge of the Damen grant as well. Van Borsum's land would become conflated not only with the African Burial Ground but also the town Common, both in the popular imagination and in the official record of property conveyances and deeds. Figure 13 highlights the geographical relationships between the African farms and the Damen and Van Borsum parcels.

Jan Jansen Damen received a patent from the Dutch West India Company in March 1646. According to the ground brief, Damen had been in possession of the parcel for about 10 years (Stokes 1915–1928:6:82–83). Called the Kalck (Calk) Hook Farm (for the hilly spit of land that pushed into the western side of the pond), the parcel extended westward from the pond to the approximate alignment of present-day Church Street. It extended northward from present-day Block 154 just south of Duane Street to Canal Street.

Damen died ca. 1651. Sometime before 1662 (Stokes 1915–1928:6:82), the land was ordered to be partitioned into four quarters, and, in 1671, Jan Vigne, the son-in-law of Damen's wife, came into possession of the southeastern piece (referred to as Calk Hook Lot No. 2; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber of Deeds, Liber 25:110). Vigne's piece overlapped the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 3). A nephew, Gerrit Roos, took control upon Vigne's death in 1689, and when Gerrit died in 1697, his son Peter became the executor of Vigne's property (Wills Liber 5–6:263) [New York County Surrogates Court 1893:297–298] and Liber 7:465 [New York County Surrogates Court 1893:457]). Wolfort Webber purchased the property in 1708. By 1725, Anthony Rutgers had acquired it, along with Calk Hook Lot Nos. 1 and 3. The Rutgers heirs would continue in ownership through the 1790s, by which time burials were located along the southern portion of the property (for a history of the Rutgers family, see Crosby [1886]). During the Rutgers' tenure, several buildings abutting the burial ground would be constructed, and Great George Street (later Broadway) would be extended northward along the cemetery's western edge.

Cornelis Van Borsum acquired his patent from Governor Colve in October 1673 (Figure 14). The grant was made in recognition of Van Borsum's wife, Sara Roeloffse or Roeloff (Roeloff was her father's given name), who had rendered service as an Indian interpreter. The parcel was described as

⁶ Among this group were Christoffel Santome, Solomon Pieters, Francisco Cartagena, Assento, Willem Antonys, Groote Manuel, Manuel Sanders, Claes the Negro, and Pieter Tamboer. Stuyvesant's confirmation of the replacement lots, issued April 1665, was translated by Charles Gehring from the original held at the New York State Archives, Albany (typescript provided to the authors).

⁷ The "Broadway" Danckaerts followed would likely have been today's Bowery Road. At the time of his journey, the road that became present-day Broadway had not been laid through the patchwork of African and European farms situated north of Fresh Water Pond and the wetlands to the west.

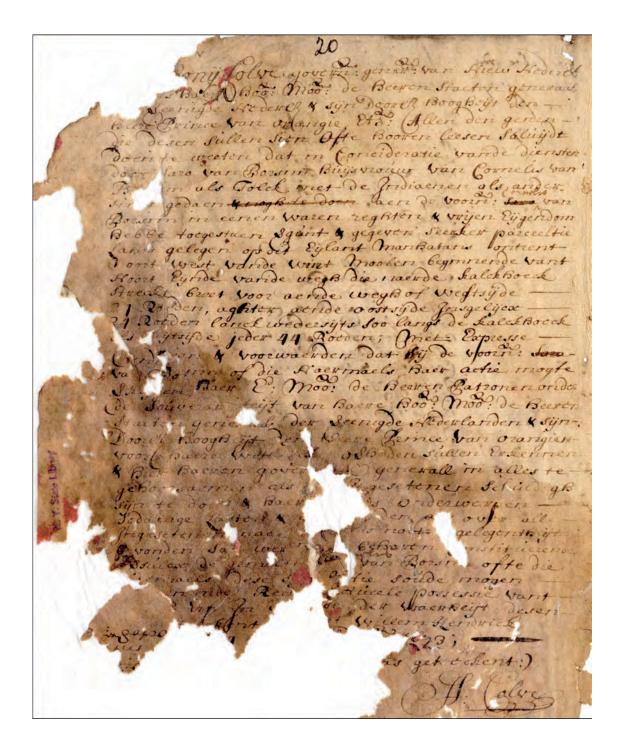


Figure 14. The Van Borsum Patent, issued in October 1673 under Governor Colve's signature, describes the boundaries of an outlying parcel that came to be known as the African Burial Ground. The patent was damaged in a fire at the New York State Library, Albany, in 1911. (New York State Archives; Series A1881-78, Dutch Colonial Administrative Records, 1673—1674, Vol. 23, 20—433.)

a certain small parcel of land situate on the Island of Manhattan about north-west from the Windmill, beginning from the north end of the road which runs toward the Kalckhook, broad in front on the road or west side, 24 rods; in the rear on the east side, the like 24 rods; long on each side as well along the Kalckhook as on the south side, 44 rods each [Stokes 1915–1928:6:123].

Based on the description, the parcel covered approximately 6.6 acres. Using as a guide the street grid shown in Figure 13, the area extended eastward from Broadway to approximately Centre Street. The northern boundary was just south of Duane Street. The southern boundary ran, roughly, along Chambers Street.

Sara Roeloff had seven living children, including grown sons and daughters, by her first husband, surgeon Hans Kiersted. She would have an eighth child with Van Borsum, and after his death in 1682 would remarry once again, to Elbert Stouthoff (for biographical information on Roeloff, see Janowitz [2005]; Totten [1925:210–212]). Roeloff had a prenuptial contract with her third husband that enabled her to retain ownership of her property (Narrett 1992:77-79). On her death in 1693, she left her estate to her children and named as executors her son Lucas Kiersted and sons-in-law Johannis Kip and William Teller (Wills Liber 5–6:1–6 [New York County Surrogate's Court 1893:225–227]). In 1696, Governor Fletcher would grant a confirmation deed for the land to these three as trustees of the estate (New York State Archives, Albany, Letters Patent, Patents Liber 7:11). Johannis Kip's eldest son Jacobus would petition the city in 1723 to have the land surveyed, but there is no clear evidence of any development taking place on it around that time. A piece of the land near the southeast corner was leased for a stoneware pottery sometime around 1730. From 1745 to approximately 1760, a palisade cut across the bottom of the patent, eliding the southern portion with the town Common behind the wall. By 1765, five houses had been built along the east side of Broadway, within the patent, and were being occupied or leased out by the heirs.

Why and when members of colonial Manhattan's African community began interring their relatives and friends on the undeveloped edge of the town is not known. Our conjecture is that free and enslaved Africans might have begun appropriating Common land for use as a burial ground during the 1640s, when the first African farms were established, or perhaps during the 1660s, when some of the Afri-

can lot holders were moved to the road alongside Stuyvesant's bowery. The first interments might have been limited to the core African farm families, but a more inclusive cemetery might have developed as members of the town's steadily expanding African population sought a burial place under the control of their own community. It is reasonable to assume that the families who were the farms' proprietors were influential in overseeing the burial ground. As African farms passed into European hands, and New Amsterdam was renamed New York, use of the burial ground would have continued.⁸

Although the area would be granted to Europeans by the third quarter of the seventeenth century, we hypothesize that its Dutch deed holders and the English colonial government would have abided African burials on land that was inconvenient for residential development and undesirable for agricultural use. Approval in practice, if not in law, of an existing African cemetery would have solved the problem posed by the Trinity Church ban. It also would have been consistent with the racial segregation upon which slavery in Britain's mainland American colonies came to depend.

In summary, there is no known date for the origin of the New York African Burial Ground and no evidence that explains how its location was chosen. We know that it was in existence by 1713 and believe that a need for it must have arisen by 1703 at the latest. We also know that the land that would become the New York African Burial Ground was in close proximity to some of the farms granted to Africans during the mid-1600s. Spatial proximity alone, however, cannot be taken as proof that the burial ground was established during the time that Africans held these lots. Much of the land was granted to Sara Roeloff's husband in 1673, but neither the ground brief nor the 1696 deed of confirmation mentions the cemetery. None of Roeloff's heirs questioned the presence on their property of an African cemetery, although they knew of its existence—legal documents of the day identify the heirs as claimants and proprietors of the "Negroes Burying Ground." Despite the language of the law, the cemetery was a place where Africans held sway.

⁸ Africans held the rights and interests in their farms for varied spans of time, as Stokes' (1915–1928:6:73–76, 123–124) biographies of the parcels attest. Domingo Antony's farm was conveyed in August 1668 to Augustine Hermans. The duration of Simon Congo's tenure is unclear.

Documentary Chronology of the African Burial Ground, 1650–1783

Subsequent to its archaeological excavation in 1991–1992, the African Burial Ground's history has been recounted often, in all manner of media. That history, however, has been reconstructed through a very limited set of public and private documents, and, often, inferences based on scant evidence have been made. To clarify the sources of information that anchor the archaeological analysis presented in this report, a two-part chronology of documented events, laws, and transactions that affected the use of the cemetery is provided.

ca. 1650: This is the hypothetical date for the origin of the African Burial Ground. Land grants to Africans began in the 1640s. The Damen patent, which skirted the northern edge of the burial ground, was issued in 1646.

1673: The Van Borsum Patent, which covered much of the area of the African Burial Ground, was issued under the signature of Governor Colve.

1697–1703: Anglican Trinity Church assumed management of the town cemetery and banned burials of Africans in it.

1704: French Huguenot Elias Neau, with financial support from the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, organized a school for enslaved Africans (Butler 1983:166–169). Enslaved and free black New Yorkers put literacy to a variety of uses, including petitioning the municipal government for assistance in protecting African graves, and acquiring land for a new cemetery (see entries for 1788 and 1795).

1712–1713: According to a letter from Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, dated June 23, 1712, in April of 1712, an armed insurrection of enslaved Africans resulted in 6 suicides and 21 executions (Brodhead 1853–1887:5:341–342; see also Scott 1961). The Common might have been used for the executions, and the dead might have been buried in the African Burial Ground. In the following March, John Sharpe of the Anglican Society for the Propa-

gation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts mentioned African burials in his "Proposals for Erecting a School, Library and Chapel at New York." Sharpe (1881:355) noted that Africans were "buried in the Common by those of their country and complexion without the office [of a Christian minister], on the contrary the Heathenish rites are performed at the grave by their countrymen." He was almost certainly referring to funerals in the African Burial Ground, although the exact portion of the ground then in use cannot be determined. The Common covered the area of present-day City Hall Park to Fresh Water Pond.

1722: The Common Council passed a law regulating the burial of "all Negroes and Indian Slaves that shall dye within this corporation [located] on the south side of the Fresh Water" (New York City Common Council 1905:3:296). 10 The law stipulated that the enslaved had to be "buried by Day-light," on penalty of 10 shillings, payable by the slaveholder.

1723: The Common Council appointed a committee to assist Alderman Jacobus Kip (the son of Johannis Kip and grandson of Sara Roeloff) in surveying the Van Borsum patent (New York City Common Council 1905:3:335). Care was to be taken by the committee to preserve the width of Broadway as it was extended northward, through the patent. Kip's need for a survey may have been related to Anthony Rutgers's purchase of Lot No. 2 of Calk Hook Farm. That lot abutted the Van Borsum patent on the north, with the boundary running diagonally across present-

⁹ The Office of Public Education and Interpretation for the project retains huge files of articles, books, and the many films and videos that have told the story of the cemetery and its rediscovery. Official documents, such as the National Historic Landmark nomination (Howson and Harris 1992, reproduced in Appendix A, Part 3 of this volume) and the Designation Report for New York City's landmark historic district, provide synopses of the documentary research.

¹⁰ Here and in other restrictive legislation, both "Negroes" and "Indians Slaves" are referred to. There is no reason to suppose that enslaved Native Americans would not have used the same burial ground as Africans, yet no distinctive forms of burial attributable to Native Americans were identified during the archaeological excavation in 1991–1992. Although burial practices of Native Americans during the "contact period" are not well known, evidence indicates that Munseespeaking Lenape Delaware buried their dead in immediate proximity to their settlements and exhumed and reburied the bones of their kin when settlements were moved (Cantwell and Wall 2001:97–103). Apparently, the typical burial position for these groups, and for Iroquois, was flexed. By the time the African Burial Ground was in use, head-to-west burial with an extended supine position was practiced (Kerry Nelson, e-mail to Historical Archaeology mailing list at Arizona State University, August 1, 2000; Wray and Schoff 1953:57-59). The African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Team compared the skeletal sample with Native American DNA, dental morphology, and craniometrics, but none of these statistical analyses pointed to Native American ancestry. If native individuals were buried in the excavated portion of the cemetery, there was insufficient evidence to identify them by their biological characteristics. The biological evidence generally pointed to African origins if any origin was estimable.

day Block 154.¹¹ Perhaps there was some question about the exact location of the boundary between the two patents. It is more likely, however, that the extension of Broadway northward to Rutgers's land required an exact survey.

1730: Two plans of the town ca. 1730, each based on a survey conducted by James Lyne, show little development in the area near the burial ground. The 1731 Lyne-Bradford Plan (Figure 15) labeled the Common, the ropewalk along the west side of Broadway ("Great George Street"), and the powder magazine on a small rise between the main Fresh Water Pond and a smaller pond or swamp to its south (the "Little Collect"). Also depicted, but not labeled, were two buildings, one on the east side of Broadway, south of the burial ground, and one on the northern part of the Common. The latter building was identified as a pottery on the Carwitham Plan, printed in 1740 (Figure 16). The parcel of land containing the pottery was apparently in the possession of Abraham Van Vleck (Sara Roeloff's granddaughter Maria had married Van Vleck in 1710). Van Vleck probably leased it to William Crolius, listed in the city as a freeman potter in 1728. This area (on the south side of present-day Reade Street to the east of Elk, Block 153) was probably not used for burials after this date, if it had been previously. 12 The pottery may have begun disposing of kiln waste within the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground around this time (see Chapter 4). Only the pottery operation—and its waste disposal practices—would have constituted a clear encroachment.

1731: A smallpox epidemic in the city claimed the lives of approximately 50 African New Yorkers, and 79 Africans were listed in the bills of mortality published in the *New-York Gazette* in August through December. The *Gazette* sorted whites by congregational affiliation and noted that eight of the town's congregations had cemeteries (*New-York Gazette*, November 15, 1731). Blacks were listed separately and, presumably, were interred in the African Burial Ground. In mid-November, when the municipal codes were renewed, the Common Council placed two more restrictions on burials of enslaved Africans (see entry for 1722). To ensure that African funerals were not a pretext for insurrection, the master of the deceased slave was made responsible for vetting the attendees

and limiting their number to 12, excluding the grave digger and "the Bearers who Carry the Corps." Pawls and pawl bearers were also banned (New York City Common Council 1905:4:88–89). A pawl, or pall, was a large, typically sumptuous cloth spread over the coffin (or the corpse) during the funeral procession. Pallbearers held up the hem. Given that palls were usually rented from churches, prohibiting palls at black funerals turned a sign of Christian burial into a prerogative of whites.

1732–1735: The first cartographic reference to a "Negro Burying Place" appeared on a hand-drawn plan of the city, ca. 1732–1735. Mrs. Buchnerd's Plan (Figure 17) situates the burial ground on the southwest side of the swamp below the Fresh Water pond. It is likely this is the same part of the Common referred to by John Sharpe when he mentioned burials conducted by Africans.

1736: The city erected an Almshouse on the Common, at the approximate location of present-day City Hall. This was the beginning of the transformation of the Common into a site for public institutions (Epperson 1999; Hall 1910; Harris et al. 1993; Hunter Research 1994).

1741: A "great conspiracy" of Africans was thwarted and its perpetrators brought to trial (Lieutenant Governor Clarke to Duke of Newcastle, and to the Lords of Trade, June 29, 1741, in Brodhead [1853–1887:6:195–198]; see also Horsmanden [1971]). Thirty of the convicted Africans were executed on the Common (13 by burning at the stake and 17 by hanging), as were 4 of the Europeans. The executions were memorialized on the Grim Plan, a depiction of New York in 1742–1744 set down in 1813 (Figure 18). The Africans might well have been interred at the African Burial Ground, if interment was allowed.

1745: The town erected a cedar-log palisade wall, and part of the Van Borsum patent (along the south side) was within it, part without. After this time, it is presumed that the African Burial Ground would have been restricted to the area outside (i.e., to the north of) the wall. When the palisade was dismantled is unclear, but city plans from ca. 1760 onward do not show it. During the time that the wall stood, access to the burial ground from the town would have entailed passing through one of the palisade gates.¹³

¹¹ Rutgers acquired one of the Calk Hook lots in 1723 and two more in 1725. The latter two were probably Lot Nos. 1 and 3 (Crosby 1886:84; Stokes 1915–1928:6:82).

¹² The location of the kiln was traced back from later property records and maps.

¹³ David Grim, in notes jotted in November 1819 on the back of the plan he drew (see Figure 18), identified the logs as cedar and put their length at 14 feet. He situated one of the palisade's four gates at present-day Broadway near Chambers Street (Hall 1910:389; Stokes 1915–1928:4:591).

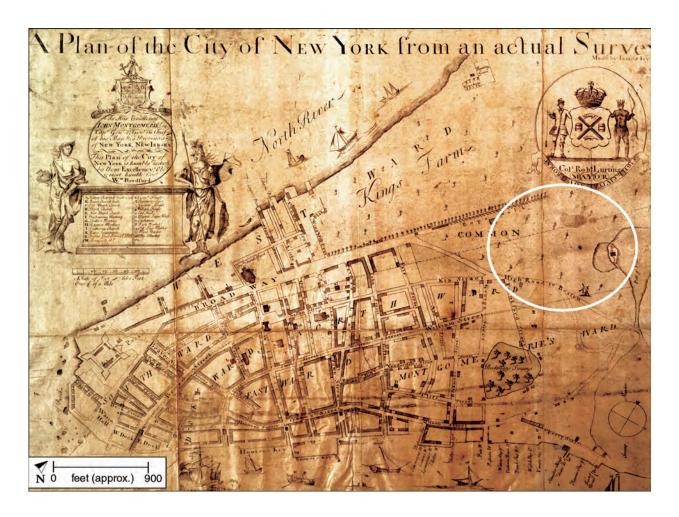


Figure 15. The Lyne-Bradford Plan, printed by William Bradford in 1731 from a survey made by James Lyne, depicts New York in 1730. The African Burial Ground is not identified on the map, which Bradford marketed at 4s. 6d. The cemetery's immediate surrounds show

little development. The structure encircled on the detail at the right was the Crolius Pottery. The large structure on the Common adjacent to the ropewalk has not been identified. The dashed line parallel to the ropewalk is a ward boundary (Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).



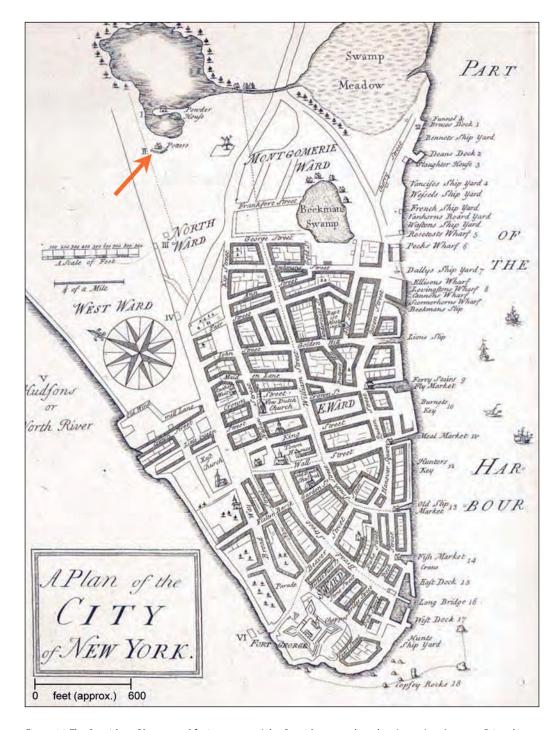


Figure 16. The Carwitham Plan, named for its engraver John Carwitham, was based on James Lyne's survey. Printed in London in 1740, the Carwitham Plan provides more details than the Lyne-Bradford Plan. The arrow on the upper left points to the Crolius Pottery, located just south of the ponds, in what was probably the southeastern part of the African Burial Ground (Viscount Coke and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate).



Figure 17. Mrs. Buchnerd's hand-drawn Plan of the City of New York in the Year 1735. The words "Negro Burying Place" are legible on the central fold of the manuscript, adjacent to the "swamp" on the south side of the Collect (near the top of the full sheet shown above, and

circled at right). This was the first time the cemetery was labeled on a map (I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).



1753: In August, John Teller, Jacobus Stoutenburgh, and Maria Van Vleck petitioned the Common Council for "Some lands belonging to this Corporation in Exchange for the Negroe burying place, as also for a small Slip of Land on which a Pott house &c are built" (New York City Common Council 1905:5:416). The land offered to the city was probably the portion of the patent that fell within the palisade wall, making it ripe for corporation encroachment or even confiscation.¹⁴ If the wording of the request is taken to mean that part of the land Teller and company tried to swap had been used for burials, then the total area of the cemetery contracted following the wall's construction. The Common Council deferred consideration of the petition, and no further mention of it was made in the minutes until 1760.

1754–1755: The "Negros Burial Ground" was labeled clearly on the Maerschalk Plan surveyed in 1754 and published in 1755 (Figure 19). Also shown on the map are the town palisade wall, potteries at the presumed northeast and southeast corners of the burial ground, a structure on Broadway, and a dashed line running southwest to northeast from that structure toward the northern pottery. This line may represent a fence along the southern boundary of the Calk Hook Farm, possibly marking the northern limit of the burial ground (see Chapter 4). The structure on Broadway may have been a gatehouse to the Rutgers estate located to the north, or a house that Anthony Rutgers was leasing out.

1757: A small burial ground ("the length of two Boards") was laid out on the Common, on the east side of the Almshouse, for the abject poor who resided within (New York City Common Council 1905:6:85). The Almshouse cemetery was situated south of the southern boundary of the Van Borsum patent, but because the southern extent of the early African Burial Ground is not known, there is a possible overlap between the two cemeteries. Also in this year, a jail was built east of the Almshouse, and a barracks went up along the south side of present-day Chambers Street east of Broadway (Hall 1910; Hunter Research 1994). The construction in this area may have disturbed African Burial Ground graves.

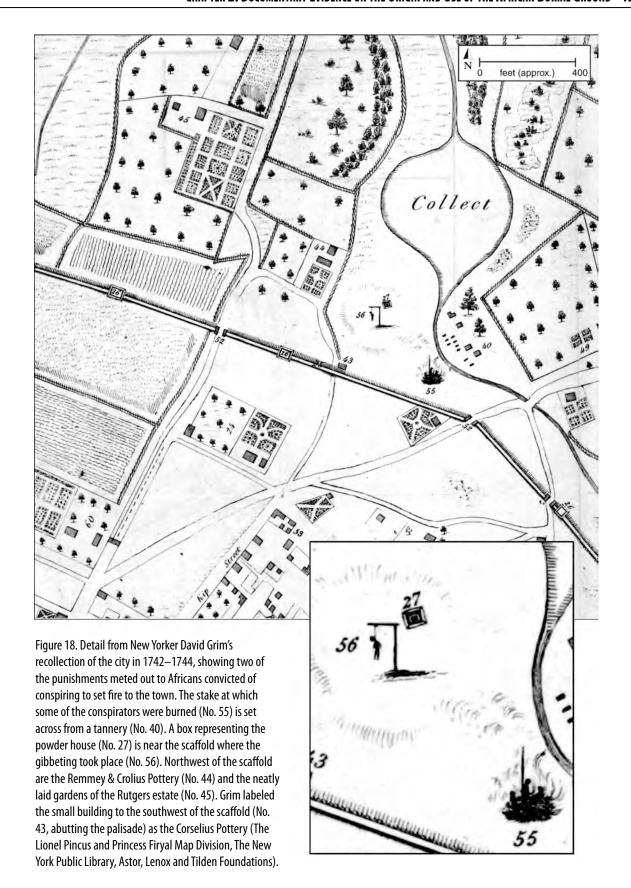
1760: The Common Council and the children of Maria Van Vleck came to an agreement regarding "three Lotts of Ground Contiguous and adjoining to the Negroes Burying place on part of Which said Lotts, their Father [Abraham Van Vleck] Built a Potting House pot oven and Sunk a Well Supposing at that Time the said Lands were his property" (New York City Common Council 1905:6:238). It is likely this parcel was separated from the majority of the Van Borsum patent by the palisade wall built in 1745, which may account for the city's unexplained possession, although there may be a missing transaction. Under the agreement, the city leased the land (a 100-by-100-foot plot) to Van Vleck's daughters for a period of 19 years. Thus, land that originally may have been within the African Burial Ground was taken over for a pottery factory, came to be considered city property, and was reconveyed by lease to the Van Borsum heirs.

ca. 1765: Isaac Teller (one of the claimants to the land) built three houses along Broadway within the Van Borsum patent, near present-day Chambers Street. At the time, there apparently were two other houses on Broadway to the north of Teller's buildings. ¹⁵ All of the buildings may have encroached on the African Burial Ground. Although the burial ground's original western limit is not known, there is no reason to think it did not extend to Broadway. Teller built a fence around an unspecified portion of the African Burial Ground and charged a fee for entering its gate (see Chapter 4). By the 1760s, it is likely no burials occurred within 100 feet of Broadway, the depth of a typical lot.

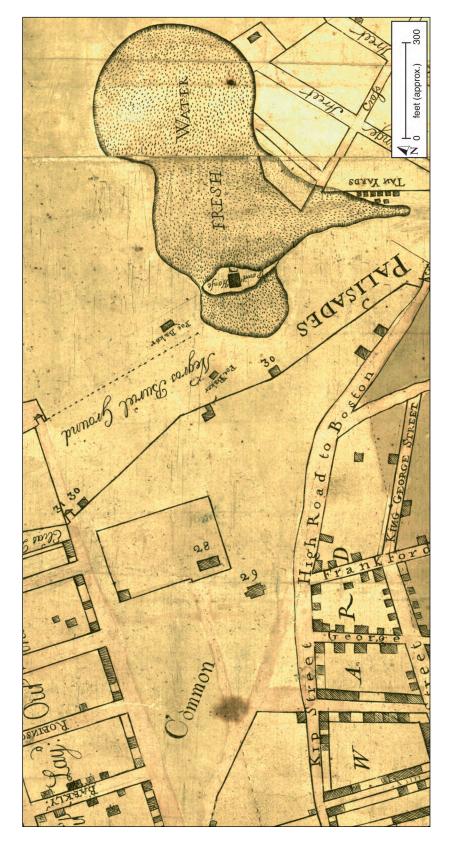
1767: The Ratzer Map of this year (Figure 20) did not identify the African Burial Ground. It depicted the houses along Broadway that would have occupied the burial ground's western edge, as well as a diagonal line that may have marked the northern boundary and may represent a fence. Three structures, all of unknown function but possibly associated with the potteries, stood along the north side of this line, two near Broadway and one near the swamp south of Fresh Water Pond. The barracks was located south of present-day Chambers Street. Numerous buildings occupied the eastern/southeastern perimeter of the

¹⁴ We postulate that the portion of the patent on the south side of the palisade was in the de facto possession of the city, though not, as it would turn out, in its legal possession. The map evidence indicates that the first pottery works (ca. 1730) stood outside the palisade's line-of-march. Another building, presumed to be part of the works, was located inside the wall on the city plan surveyed in 1754 (see Figure 19). It is possible that Van Vleck had the latter built for the Crolius pottery works in the 1740s or early 1750s.

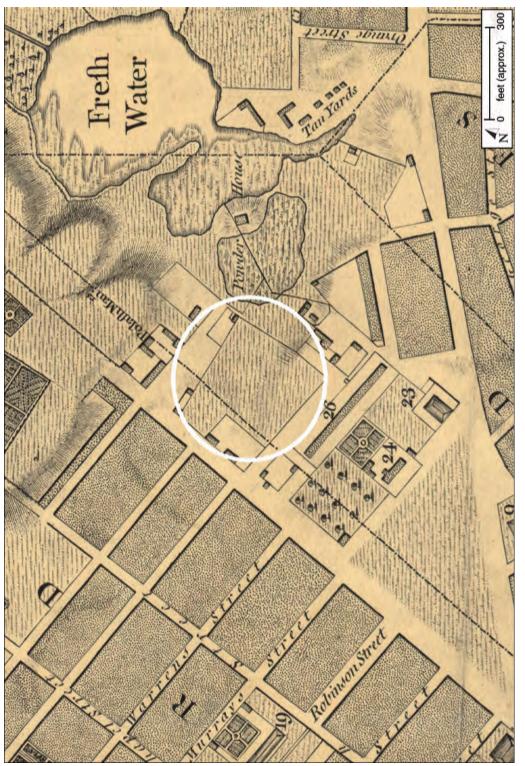
¹⁵ According to testimony entered before the New York State Supreme Court of Judicature in 1812 (*Smith v. Burtis*) and 1813 (*Smith v. Lorillard*), Teller had one brick and two wood houses put up between 1760 and 1765. Two more houses were said to have fronted Broadway to the immediate north of Teller's buildings: the Ackerman house (next door to Teller) and the Kip house (next door to Ackerman, near present-day Broadway and Reade Street). For the case testimonies, see Johnson (1853–1859:9:174–185, 10:338–357).



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southwest of Fresh Water Pond and north of the Common and the palisade wall. The dashed diagonal line corresponds to the approximate northern boundary of the Van Borsum patent, and along the west side of Broadway as far north as the Palisade. The almshouse (No. 28) and a powder house (No. 29) stood on the Common. The unidentified building that hugs the south side probably also of the African Burial Ground, and may represent a fence. The "Common" is today's City Hall Park, with Broadway running along its west side. By this date, houses had gone up Figure 19. Detail from the Maerschalk Plan, surveyed by Francis Maerschalk in 1754 and published by Gerardus Duyckink in 1755. The "Negros Buriel Ground" is clearly labeled to the of the palisade is presumed to be a part of the pottery works on the opposite side of the fence (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).



contours of the hillside sloping down from south to north through the area. Note structures on Broadway properties on the west side of the burial ground, the pottery buildings on the southeast, the barracks (No. 26) to the south, the almshouse and gaol (No. 24 and No. 23) below the barracks, and the diagonal line that may have marked the northern Figure 20. Detail from the Ratzer Map, 1767, surveyed by Bernard Ratzer. The general location of the African Burial Ground is circled. The hachures indicating relief suggest the boundary of the Van Borsum patent (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

African Burial Ground. The physical area available for interments was becoming increasingly constrained by this time.

1773: Trinity Church established its own small "Burial ground for the Negro's" on a lot bounded by present-day Church Street, Reade Street, and West Broadway (Trinity Church Archives, Minutes of the Vestry, September 15, 1773; New York Public Library, Special Collections, Gerard Bancker Plans 1770–1848, Box 3, Folder 81). Records of burials in this cemetery, located a block to the west of the African Burial Ground, are apparently not extant. The cemetery was in use through mid-August 1795, after which Trinity's vestrymen arranged to have it surveyed into lots. Within 2 years, the lots had been leased out (Cannan 2004:4).

1775: The Bridewell, an institution for the incarceration of debtors and vagabonds, was built west of the Almshouse, near the present-day southeast corner of Chambers Street and Broadway. Again, this construction may have disturbed graves belonging to the early African Burial Ground.

1776–1783: British forces took New York and occupied the city for the duration of the war. They pulled down the houses Teller had built ca. 1765, along with the fence (Johnson 1853–1859:10:335). They also buried deserters and prisoners of war behind the barracks on the Common (New York Public Library, Special Collections, British Headquarters Papers 1775–1783, Provost Weekly Returns, 1782–1783; Stokes 1915–1928:3:927). These burials probably were limited to the southern portion of the African Burial Ground (Figure 21) within present-day Chambers Street and between Chambers and Reade Streets. Some of them may have been shallow, with bodies "thrown into the ground in a heap" (Sabine 1954:149). No mass graves were found in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. During the war, the city's population swelled with Africans in search of freedom. It is assumed that those who died while in the city would have been buried in the African Burial Ground (see Chapter 9). When the British evacuated, thousands of blacks accompanied them.

Closing of the African Burial Ground, 1784–1795

The return of peace and the boom in development following the war spelled the demise of the Afri-

can Burial Ground. Within a very short period, from the mid-1780s to the mid-1790s, the African Burial Ground would be ever more constricted, so that, finally, burials could no longer take place there. Free and enslaved African Americans kept a close eye on the burial ground and responded rapidly to its declining fortunes by mobilizing their own and the city's resources.

1784: In response to a petition from Henry Kip and the other Van Borsum patent holders, the Common Council appointed a committee in September to lay out and regulate streets through the parcel (New York City Common Council 1917:1:81). Clearly, Sara Roeloff's heirs were making plans to develop their property. The committee dragged its heels, and Kip petitioned it again, in mid-November 1787 (New York City Common Council 1917:1:338).

1787: With the survey into lots of the Calk Hook Farm (Figure 22), parts of the northernmost area of the African Burial Ground may have ceased to be used. Houses were not built on these lots immediately, but it is possible that a fence, or perhaps survey posts marking the outlines of the lots, discouraged burial in this area (see Chapters 3 and 4).

1788: Public exposure of the unsavory world of nocturnal grave robbing at cemeteries used by blacks and the poor created an uproar that spilled from the February pages of the popular press to the April city streets, where citizens mobbed doctors accused of desecrating the dead. Free and enslaved blacks had petitioned the Common Council in 1787 to stop physicians from carrying African corpses to the dissecting table at the municipal hospital, located on the west side of present-day Broadway near Duane Street (Municipal Archives of the City of New York, Papers of the Common Council, Petitions, Free Negroes and Slaves of the City of New York, February 14, 1787).¹⁶ A free man of color detailed the horrid practice in a letter printed in the Daily Advertiser. Another letter disclosed that a private cemetery on Gold Street, made available

¹⁶ The men wrote on behalf of a burial ground "assigned for the Use of your Petitioners," a description that may best fit the Trinity Church African cemetery at the corner of Church and Reade Streets (see discussion in the entry for 1773). Bodies were also disinterred from the African Burial Ground and the Almshouse cemetery on the Common, as letters published in the *Daily Advertiser* during February and recollections of the city's cadaver-seeking medical men make clear (see Heaton 1943; Humphrey 1973; Ladenheim 1950).

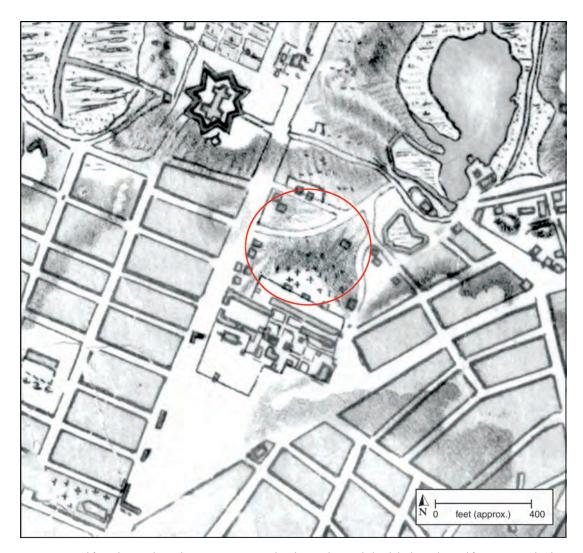


Figure 21. Detail from the British Headquarters Map, 1782, that depicts the area behind the barracks used for interments by the occupying British forces during the Revolution. This area (just inside the circle used to identify the general location of the African Burial Ground) is stippled with crosses, a convention the mapmaker used to represent congregational as well as common burial grounds. St. Paul's churchyard, in the lower left corner, is also stippled with crosses (The Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

for African interments by Mr. Scipio Gray, had been looted, too. Gray had been forced to remain inside his home while physicians ransacked the grave of a child in the nearby ground (*Daily Advertiser*, February 16 and 28, 1788). The cemetery may have belonged to Anglican St. George's Chapel, identified on a 1789 plan that depicts New York on the eve of the development boom (Figure 23).

1794: On October 27, the Common Council read "a Petition from sundry black men in this City praying the Aid of this Board in purchasing a Piece of Ground for the interment of their dead" (New York

City Common Council 1917:2:112).¹⁷ The petition was referred to a committee, which reported back the following year.

1795: The survey and division into lots of the Van Borsum patent made inevitable the complete closing

¹⁷ The words of the petition were not read into the minutes, and the petition itself is apparently not extant—a search of the Common Council Papers held at the Municipal Archives of the City of New York came up empty-handed. Though it is not possible to find out whether the petition carried any signatures, it is likely that some of its writers were the founding members of the African Society, which petitioned the Common Council 8 months later regarding the management of the African cemetery at Chrystie Street.

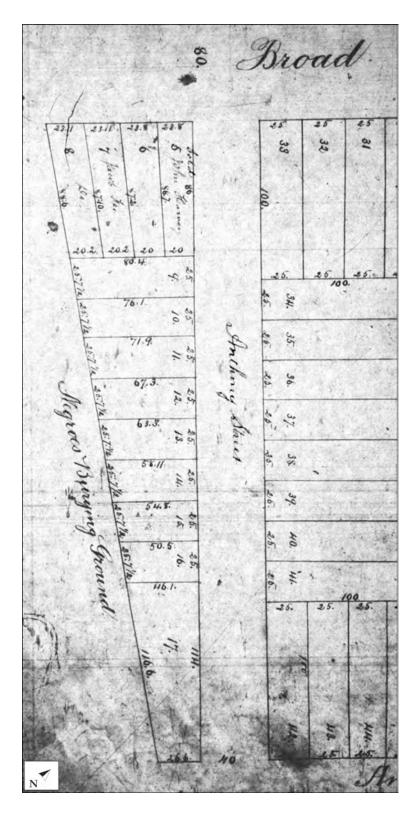


Figure 22. Detail from a 1787 surveyor's map showing the partition of the Calk Hook Farm into lots. The lots on the southern side of Anthony Street (present-day Duane), shown abutting the "Negroes Burying Ground," actually overlapped the cemetery's northern edge. Broadway crosses at the top of the map detail. Ann (present-day Elk) Street crosses at the bottom. Lot dimensions are shown in feet (courtesy of the Division of Land Records [Liber 46:140]).

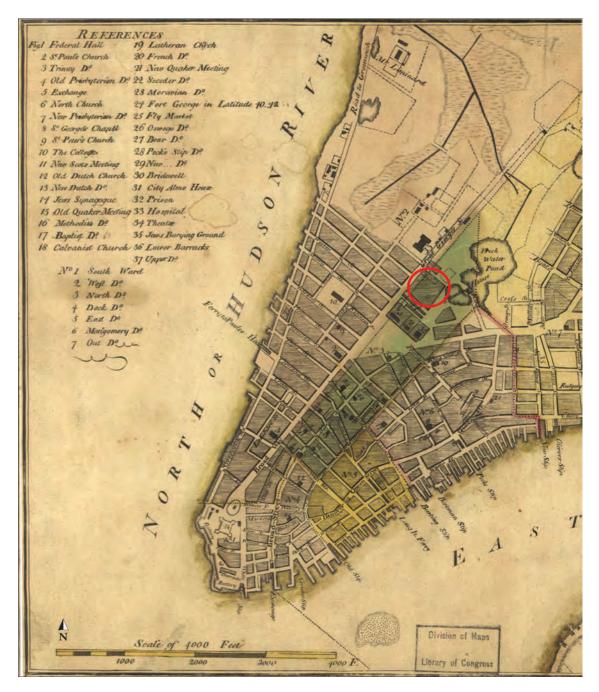


Figure 23. Detail from the Directory Plan of 1789, drawn by surveyor John McComb, Jr., for the annual directory of city residents published during New York's brief stint as the federal capital. The plan depicts the city on the eve of the development boom that led to the closing of the African Burial Ground (the cemetery's general location is circled). The Gold Street cemetery Mr. Scipio Gray made available for African burials was near Anglican St. George's Chapel (No. 8), located several blocks southeast of the African Burial Ground (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

of the African Burial Ground (Figure 24). Property disputes amongst the heirs notwithstanding, lots were rapidly sold off and development would begin soon after the partition. Haggling between the heirs and the city over the transfer of rights and titles to the strip on which Chambers Street east of Broadway would be

laid was resolved in June of the following year (New York City Common Council 1917:2:252–253).

Meanwhile, the Common Council committee charged with locating land for a new African cemetery reported on April 7 that a proper spot had been found on Chrystie Street in the Seventh Ward, on a parcel

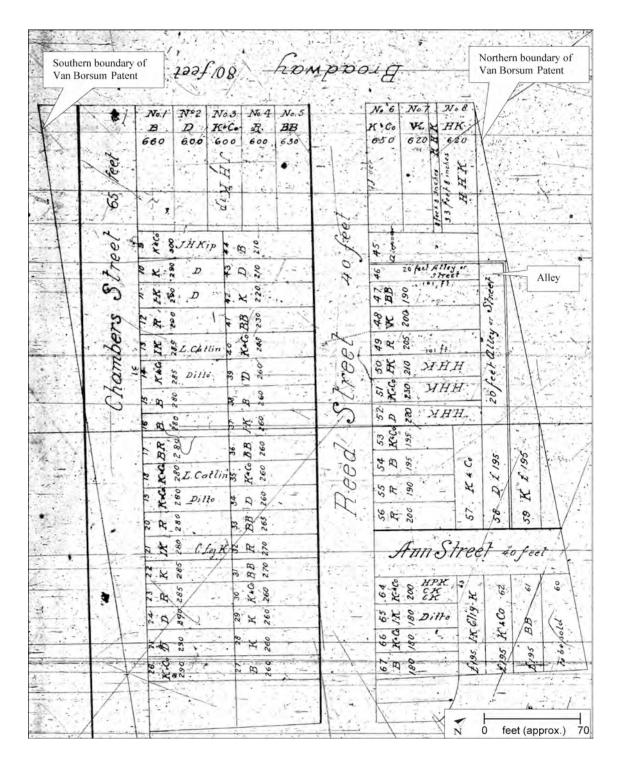


Figure 24. Detail from a 1795 surveyor's map showing the locations of the lots assigned to Sara Roeloff's heirs. For example, *D* stood for lots that would have fallen to the Tellers (descended from Rachel Kiersted), *F* for those of the Van Vlecks (descended from Catherine Kiersted), and *B* for Daniel Denniston (whose wife descended from Lucas Kiersted). The alley laid out from Reed Street to Ann (later Elm/Elk) Street would be shifted slightly and come to be called Republican Alley (courtesy of the Division of Land Records [Liber 195:405, Filed Map 76J]).

privileges usually taken and had by the properties of burial Grounds in said lity. and that in case of the Death or other removal of the said managers; such others as shall be chosen by the said appointion may be so authorized and that when ever an Incorporation can be effected, agreeably to Law, the vaid Land may, to the Trustees for the pur. William Hutson James Parker John Hall Abraham Peter Frances

Figure 25. Detail of a petition submitted in June 1795 to the municipal government from the African Society, requesting that six of its members be granted legal standing to manage a cemetery established on Chrystie Street for black New Yorkers. The names of the

proposed managers are marked with a check (courtesy New York City Municipal Archives; Papers of the Common Council, Petitions

that had been part of the Delancey estate. The committee recommended that the city contribute Ł100 toward the purchase of the parcel, described as four contiguous lots, at 100 by 25 feet per lot, available for Ł450. The committee also recommended that the deed to the ground be held by the city in trust for its users (New York City Common Council 1917:2:137). On June 22, the Common Council read into the minutes a petition from Isaac Fortune and other free men of color who requested legal standing to manage the affairs of

[Isaac Fortune, June 19, 1795]).

the Chrystie Street cemetery (Figure 25). Fortune and his fellow petitioners informed the Common Council that they had organized a mutual aid association called the African Society but had been unable, under state law, to incorporate as a religious organization. The petitioners described their involvement in arranging for the purchase of the Chrystie Street parcel from Samuel Delaplaine, declared their intention to make improvements on it, and asked for the right to collect the burial fees and exercise the privileges held by

Isaac Fortune

Dickenson

managers of other burial yards. The Common Council granted the request (New York City Common Council 1917:2:158–159).¹⁸

It is not known how long African American New Yorkers maintained their connection to the African Burial Ground. Once private houses and businesses began to be built and landfill covered the ground surface, surely the community was severely constrained from even visiting graves. Yet during the opening decades of the nineteenth century, free blacks came to reside in the relatively inexpensive housing along the streets that had been laid through the cemetery and its immediate surrounds (Figure 26). The concentration of black households within the area was evident by 1810, as historian Shane White (1991:171–179) has shown (see Chapter 9). The neighborhood was also home to the early independent black churches, where many African American New Yorkers invested their spiritual energies and organizational acumen after the African Burial Ground had closed. The land where the African Burial Ground sat would see several more phases of development over the next 200 years. With the exception of property deeds and surveyor's plans, traces of the cemetery would become increasingly scarce. When the cemetery was unearthed in 1991-1992, most New Yorkers were wholly surprised. The African Burial Ground's period of use, which might have lasted a century and a half, had to be examined anew, as did the lives and labors of the New Yorkers who reposed there.

African Funeral Practices in New Amsterdam/New York

The spatial relationship between the African Burial Ground and the city changed radically during the eighteenth century. As New York's population rose and its economy expanded, the built environment advanced northward, bringing private homes, factories, municipal institutions, and pleasure gardens to the cemetery's surrounds. The interplay between urban development and population growth would leave a mark in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground, particularly in regard to the distribution of graves. The concerns of those who looked to the cemetery as a place of repose for

their relatives and friends would also leave a mark in the excavated burial ground. ¹⁹ But black New Yorkers' efforts to care for their dead did not enter the documentary record until late in the day, as seen in the chronology of events that affected the cemetery's use. And although documentation about the African Burial Ground is rather thin, it is considerably more substantial than the paper trail on funeral practices in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century black New York.

No eyewitness accounts of how Africans buried their dead in New Amsterdam/New York have come down to us. No domestic ledgers or personal diaries have come to light that tell us whether household heads customarily footed the funeral bills of the Africans who resided in Manhattan homes. A handful of records touch on burial logistics and labor, but these records date to the first half of the eighteenth century. Among them, as noted, are the Reverend Sharpe's 1713 remark about Africans conducting "Heathenish" graveside rites and city ordinances from 1722 and 1731 that restricted the hour and size of African funerals and banned the use of palls. Cabinetmaker Joshua Delaplaine's daybook rounds out the list. The daybook has entries for 13 slaveholders who purchased coffins for African men, women, and children between 1753 and 1756 (see Chapter 10).

These writers were sparing with narrative detail. John Sharpe, for example, omitted the sights and sounds of the graveside rites. He did not mention how long the rites lasted or note whether they varied in relation to a person's age, sex, or manner of death. Nor did he reflect on how the rites orchestrated the expression of private grief, strengthened or attenuated attachments between the living and the dead, or transformed the once-living person into constituent qualities, forces, or parts. Sharpe lived in a Manhattan made nervous by the anticipation of conspiracies and revolts. So, too, did the city officials who envisioned a world in which the funerals of unfree Africans would be small in size, short on pomp, and finished by sundown. Whether large processions, cloth-covered corpses, and nighttime burials had been the norm when the restrictions were enacted is unclear. Delaplaine's daybook provides a glimpse of the monetary side of mid-eighteenth-century funerals, but it does not reveal

¹⁸ Two months later, the process of closing down the Trinity Church African cemetery got underway when the Vestrymen made plans to survey and divide the ground into lots (see discussion in the entry for 1773).

¹⁹ Chapter 5 provides an overview of the mortuary program that entered the African Burial Ground's archaeological record. Chapters 6–9 track the interplay between the mortuary program, the built environment, and the African population through the eighteenth century.

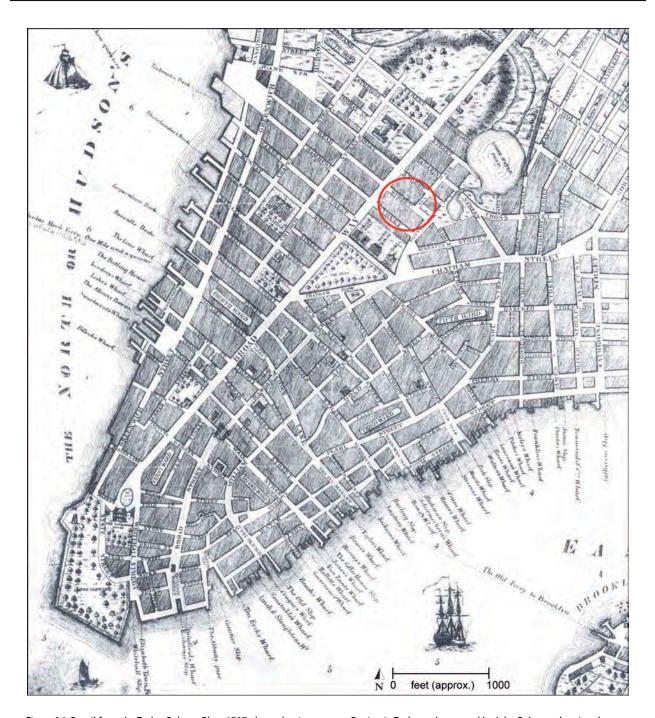


Figure 26. Detail from the Taylor-Roberts Plan, 1797, drawn by city surveyor Benjamin Taylor and engraved by John Roberts, showing the newly laid street grid that crossed the African Burial Ground at the end of the eighteenth century (The Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

whether colonial Manhattan's slaveholders typically paid for coffins for the African dead.

Although the experience of death and the organization of interment cannot be teased from the documentary record, population histories assembled by the New York African Burial Ground History Team indicate

that funeral practices in black New Amsterdam/New York were part of an Atlantic world of enormous complexity and scope. To help clarify the material signatures left by those who interred the individuals in the archaeologically excavated portion of the cemetery, we draw on two core aspects of the History Team's

work. One aspect concerns documentary evidence on the origins of the city's African community. The other aspect concerns documentary evidence about the care of the dead in central and western Africa and the Caribbean, the primary regions that furnished the workers on whom white New Yorkers relied.

Population

Black New Yorkers formed a critical mass during the colonial era and in the decades immediately following the Revolutionary War. The numbers in Table 9 make it clear that this was a community sizable enough to fill a cemetery. Blacks constituted over 14 percent of the city's population at the end of the seventeenth century, fully 20.9 percent in 1746, and a low of 7.9 percent just after the Revolution.

Table 9. Black Population of New York County, 1698–1800

Year	Population
1698	700
1703	799
1712	975
1723	1,362
1731	1,577
1737	1,719
1746	2,444
1749	2,368
1756	2,278
1771	3,137
1786	2,107
1790	3,092
1800	5,867

Note: From Foote (1991:78) and White (1991:26), except 1703, which is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909). The count of black male city residents was recorded incorrectly in a version of the 1703 census (see tables reproduced in Green and Harrington [1932: 95]), and the miscount—resulting in a figure of only 630 total blacks for that year—has often made its way into the literature.

"What proportion of the city's black population was enslaved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and what proportion was free?" is a question that has been asked often. Free blacks were not counted separately from the enslaved until the first federal census of 1790. White (1991:153) has suggested that there were probably "never more than 100 free blacks in New York City during the colonial period." Historian Christopher Moore (personal communication 2003) has suggested that following the restrictive British colonial legislation of the early eighteenth century, most, if not all, of those in families that had been free or "semi-free" under the Dutch simply left New York. The count for 1790, which reflects post–Revolutionary War demographic changes, includes 1,036 free and 2,056 enslaved blacks. The count for 1800 includes 3,333 free and 2,534 enslaved blacks (see Table 9).

Manhattan's black workforce was always ethnically diverse, but the pools that supplied it shifted during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Members of New Amsterdam's black community were taken from captured Portuguese and Spanish privateers bound for the Caribbean and from Dutch ships that plied the lanes linking New Netherland to Brazil and West Central Africa (Heywood and Thornton 2009a:9-12; Medford, Brown, Heywood, et al. 2009a:6-7). After the onset of British rule in 1664, the routing of people from West Central Africa to New York via the Caribbean continued. Direct importation from western Africa also got underway. Profit-seeking city merchants sometimes cast a wide net to fill their shares of the hold. During the 1690s, for example, several hundred Africans were brought to New York from Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Africa. Another 117 Malagasy captives reached New York in 1721 (Hershkowitz 2003). As the eighteenth century advanced, the commercial networks that brokered the slave trade reached deeper into the African interior and spread farther along the coasts. Five key areas in western Africa funneled adults and children into colonial Manhattan's homes, shops, and industrial yards: the Senegambia, Sierra Leone-Liberia, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, and the Niger Delta (Heywood and Thornton 2009b:29-34).

The two maps in Figure 27 call attention to the discrepancy between the magnitude of the eighteenth-century slave trade and the dearth of European knowledge about African lives. That era's educated Europeans were avid readers and writers of travel accounts, and European publishing houses marketed multivolume compendia of cultural, historical, and geographical lore from around the globe. Informa-



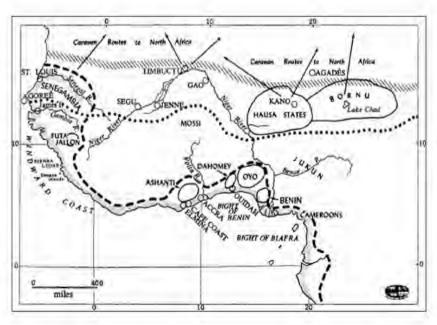


Figure 27. Europeans and Africans, 1700s: (top) sources of captives from Africa, eighteenth century; (bottom) limits of European knowledge of Africa, eighteenth century. (Curtin, Philip D. The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action 1780—1850, Volume 1. ©1964 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press.)

tion about Africa collected by Arabic-language geographers also reached European centers of learning during the eighteenth century, but as historian Philip Curtin (1964:9–27) has explained, few principal works were known, and the heyday of Arabic scholarship on Africa had already ended by the time Europeans began trawling for African labor. European merchants, scientists, and missionaries who recorded observations about African societies seldom ventured far from the shorelines and navigable rivers where captives were embarked. The interiors that supplied the trade were relatively unknown.

The Africa that Europeans described was characterized by a mix of religions (animism, Christianity, Islam), a range of polities (including hierarchically organized kingdoms), and various methods of reckoning descent. Political and religious offices and authorities were intricately entwined, and mutual aid associations were organized around age, gender, and occupation (see Heywood and Thornton 2009b:29–34; Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009a:65–70; Medford, Brown, Heywood, et al. 2009b:16–22; Medford, Carrington, et al. 2009:40–41). Africans also had a wide array of understandings about the reciprocities that bound the living and the dead.

Burial Logistics and Labor

Europeans who visited central and western Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took note of typical burial places. Journal keepers and letter writers recorded that Africans were laid to rest in cemeteries located on the outskirts of homesteads and settlements, under house floors, and in the churchyards Christian missionaries established in African political and economic metropoles (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:85–87; Medford, Brown, Heywood, et al. 2009b:22).

European visitors also took note of how the dead were treated. The treatment of the dead encompasses a range of activities that are undertaken when a death occurs. These activities—announcing the death, preparing the body for burial, selecting a burial site and digging a grave, transporting the body to the cemetery

and conducting graveside rites, marking and visiting the grave—provide the framework for our review of burial logistics and labor. Although the review touches briefly on documentary information from Africa, the Caribbean, and the antebellum American South, it is mainly concerned with raising questions about the everyday forms of oppression black New Yorkers faced when they laid their relatives and friends to rest. Accoutrements and actions on which the archaeological excavation of the New York African Burial Ground sheds light are identified in boldface type. These include burial attire (in the form of winding sheets, shrouds, and street clothes), personal adornment and other possessions, coffins, grave digging, the placing of goods in the coffin and on the surface of the grave, and grave markers.

Announcing the Death

It is not known how news of a death traveled in black New York during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but chances are good that it would have spread quickly without the aid of the licensed funeral inviters that many white New Yorkers employed.²¹ Manhattan was geographically compact when the African Burial Ground was in use, as the maps reproduced in the first half of the chapter attest. Although Africans were residentially dispersed rather than clustered in a handful of neighborhoods or homes, the city was only 1 mile wide by 1.5 miles long. Enslaved men, women, and children traipsed through its streets and alleys and greeted one another at its markets and wells. Men gathered in the morning at the foot of Wall Street to be hired out for the day. Men and women visited their families and friends on Sundays and drank and danced at night in private homes (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009a:70–76). The expanding network of neighbor-

On the political twists and turns of the production of knowledge about Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Mudimbe (1988) and Appiah (1992).

²¹ Funeral inviters went door to door to notify mourners about when and where to pay their respects. During the seventeenth century, funeral inviters performed their duties under the watchful eyes of the Reformed Dutch Church as well as the town—inviters were instructed to comport themselves in a civil manner (Minutes of the Burgomasters, March 4, 1661, in New York Orphanmasters 1902:2:80–81), obtain and renew annually a license (minutes of April 18, 1691, New York City Common Council 1905:1:217), and attend to the funerals of the poor without charge (minutes of April 22, 1691, New York City Common Council 1905:1:221). During the first half of the eighteenth century, inviters were authorized to charge 8 shillings for announcing the death of a child, 12 shillings for a person between the ages of 12 and 20, and 18 shillings for an adult (New York City Common Council 1905:4:101).

hood chapels mapped by archaeologist Nan Rothschild (1990:43–56) eventually became a conduit for funeral news: the number of Africans attracted to Christian services and catechumen classes increased as the eighteenth century advanced.

Preparing the Body for Burial

Washing and laying out the dead was women's work in many colonial American communities. In rural areas, women, singly or in groups, performed these services as a mark of respect for the deceased, the family, and the community. Often, these women were midwives as well. This arrangement endured for varying lengths of time—African American women prepared the body for burial well into the twentieth century in some pockets of rural America (Roediger 1981:169; Rundblad 1995). In urban centers like New York, African women probably also would have washed and laid out their community's dead when the burial ground was in use.

African men's participation in preparing the body for burial did not enter the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documentary record. Given that Islam was probably a part of the religious repertoire of eighteenth-century black New York, it is likely that washing and laying out the dead was not solely a female domain. In Islamic tradition, men wash and cover men, and women wash and cover women.²²

Generation as well as gender might also have been a consideration for black New Yorkers who prepared the bodies of friends and relatives visited by death. Two examples illustrate how these fundamental organizing principles can be entwined when preparing the body for the grave. Among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, where Islamic and traditional practices overlap, a male friend, a son, or a senior wife past her childbearing years attends to a dying man. After death, the man's male friends, assisted by his granddaughters, wash his corpse in fresh water and daub it with oil (Jackson 1989:69). The Muslim dead in the Sakalava area of Madagascar are washed and covered by close male or female kin, "with the exception of parents whose grief is too great" (Feeley-Harnik 1991:33).

Many of the individuals interred at the African Burial Ground would have had family and friends who could discuss and perhaps help furnish appropriate burial attire, be it a winding sheet, a shroud, or **street clothes.**²³ Yet surely some of the graves held people whose preferences were unknown because their stay in the city had been too brief to make deep social ties.

Europeans noted that in Africa the dead were wrapped in cloth. Accounts from the 1700s refer to cloth-wrapped corpses among the Wolof of the Senegambia region and among a range of coastal and inland peoples in the geographical precursors of modern-day Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Angola, and the Congo (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:85–87). For those who followed the teachings of Islam, the prescribed wrapper would likely have been made from unstitched white cloth (Barratt 2005:181). Sugarcane planters in Barbados did not mention whether their African workers were cloth wrapped or clad in everyday clothing when interred (Handler and Lange 1978:185). White winding sheets, sometimes supplied by women like Fanny Kemble, were used in parts of the antebellum American South. Kemble had been importuned "for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a windingsheet" for a neighbor (Foster 1997:196; Roediger 1981:169).

Did personal adornment and other possessions remain with the deceased, or were they removed when the body was washed and covered? According to a late-eighteenth-century account of burials in Jamaica, the African dead were arrayed with their jewelry—"all the trinkets of the defunct are exposed in the coffin" (Brathwaite 1981:9). The deceased were interred in their jewelry and clothing in parts of the Gold Coast (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:86). Probate records for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century white New Yorkers indicate that jewelry was typically bequeathed to descendants and heirs rather than placed with the dead.

Was the use of **coffins** widespread in black New York? As with the preparation of the body, decisions about a coffin would have mobilized the deceased's kin, friends, and neighbors, either to ensure that a slaveholder provided what was "customary" or to

²² For a discussion of Islam among Africans in colonial America, see Gomez (1998:59–87).

²³ Winding sheets and shrouds were integral to English and Dutch burials during the period when the burial ground was in use. These two coverings are not always differentiated in documents of the day. A length of fabric wound around the body and fastened with pins or hand-tied knots was sometimes called a winding sheet and sometimes called a shroud. A shroud also referred to a particular type of ensemble that might include a loose-fitting, long-tailed shirt or chemise, a cap, and "a small piece of cloth to cover the face" (Barratt 2005:180–181; Earle 1896:305).

help raise cash for the accoutrements that Africans considered proper and correct.²⁴ Joshua Delaplaine was one of many artisans that a person in search of a coffin could call upon. Black cabinetmakers like William Miller might have been approached for coffins—Miller is known in the annals of the African independent church movement for having opened his Cross Street home in 1795 for planning meetings of black Methodists who broke away from the John Street Methodist Church (see Walls 1974). Enslaved Africans also might have made coffins. Carpentry and coopering were two of the trades in which New York's black workers were clustered (Foote 1991:41-44; Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009c:55-64). Boards cut from cedar and pine could be had from lumberyards, such as the one Thomas Shreve, a carpenter and joiner, kept near William Walton's warehouse on Hunter's Key (New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy, June 3, 1754).²⁵

Coffin burials for Africans in Barbados and the French West Indies entered the documentary record at the end of the eighteenth century by way of plantation work logs and eyewitness descriptions (Delpuech 2001; Handler and Lange 1978:191). Reports and recollections about coffin burials of Africans in the American South also date from the end of the eighteenth century (Roediger 1981:169). A coffin carried through the streets of New Orleans in the late 1700s had six white ribbons attached to its lid; the end of each ribbon was held by a girl dressed in white (Foster 1997:196). European travel accounts place coffin use in western Africa in the early 1700s, decades before Delaplaine's daybook was filled in. The accounts suggest that coffin burials were becoming common in parts of the Gold Coast and in the city-states of the Niger Delta during the eighteenth century. In the Loango region of central Africa, eighteenth-century reports indicate that coffins were made from woven

thatch or grass (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:86). Coffin burial appears to have become typical in England and the Netherlands by the end of the seventeenth century, and perhaps in colonial Manhattan as well (Earle 1896:297; Gittings 1984; Litten 1991; Singleton 1909:253–255; Talman 1968a:13).

Selecting a Grave Site and Digging the Grave: New York's African Sextons

Did each funeral party select its own grave site and supply its own grave digger? Or did a handful of men routinely undertake these tasks, thereby serving as de facto caretakers of some, perhaps all, portions of the African Burial Ground?

In New Amsterdam/New York's public cemeteries and private churchyards, **grave digging** was centralized rather than ad hoc: grave diggers, acting under the auspices of city officials and congregational governing boards, charged a standardized fee for clearing the surface and breaking the ground. In 1703, when the city granted Trinity's Vestrymen the right to operate the town cemetery situated on the north side of the church, the Common Council set the fee schedule at 1 shilling for the grave of a child under age 12 and 3 shillings for the grave of a person age 12 and over (Stokes 1915–1928:4:443).

Churchyard grave diggers sometimes doubled as sextons (church officials in charge of property), a role that conferred community and congregational esteem. In addition to breaking the ground, sextons typically oversaw the ringing of the death bell and the rental of funeral equipment such as palls and boards. Sextons also helped organize funeral processions and sometimes officiated at the grave. ²⁶ The centrality of the grave digger–sexton to the material and spiritual sides of interment figured in New York's municipal code. Grave diggers, as mentioned in the chronology entry for 1731, were excluded from the head count when the Common Council limited the attendance at African funerals to 12 people.

The names of Manhattan's black grave digger–sextons did not enter the documentary record until the years immediately after the American Revolution, a period when the city's churches were slow to groom black leaders (Hodges 1999:180–183) and to make provisions for the burial of black communicants. Five African American grave digger–sextons who

²⁴ Official voices entered the decision-making process when death pushed Africans in the direction of men like city coroner John Burnet. At an inquest Burnet attended on March 20, 1758, the jurors were unable to discover the identity of the African whose case they heard; among the man's possessions were seven Spanish dollars, a pair of silver cuff links, a silver ring, a pair of wrought metal buttons, and an old key (Sypher 2004:82). Whether the man was buried in a coffin did not enter the record, but municipal arrangements for burying strangers would have come into play. When black residents of the Almshouse died, the wardens apparently were responsible for providing a coffin, as suggested by Joshua Delaplaine's daybook (see Chapter 10).

²⁵ Newspaper advertisements placed by New York City artisans are used throughout this report. Unless otherwise noted, such advertisements are from Gottesman (1938).

²⁶ In Manhattan's seventeenth-century Dutch community, the funeral inviter (*aanspreeker*) typically took on these tasks (Talman 1968a, 1968b).

mobilized resources to ensure the safety and dignity of their community's dead might have dug graves or officiated at interments at the African Burial Ground during the 1780s and 1790s. Among them are Scipio and Virgil Gray (they may have been brothers, or father and son), who resided at 47 Beekman Street, near the intersection of Beekman and Gold adjacent to Anglican St. George's Chapel. It is likely that Scipio Gray was a grave digger for the congregation and that the lot he made available for African interments during the height of the grave-robbing scandal was part of St. George's yard (see the chronology entry for 1788). Virgil Gray was listed as St. George's under-Sexton in the 1794 city directory.

African Society member Lewis Francis—his name appears at the end of the list on the petition reproduced in Figure 25—was the first known grave digger at the new African cemetery on Chrystie Street (see the chronology entry for 1795). The Chrystie Street cemetery, which became the final resting place for black city residents immediately after the African Burial Ground had closed, was eventually ceded to St. Philip's Church, Manhattan's first black Anglican congregation. Francis served as one of St. Philip's churchwardens (St. Philip's Church 1986:18, 90).

Peter Williams, Sr., who, in 1795, helped lead the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, was a grave digger for the John Street Methodist Church. Williams used the fees he earned from grave digging to buy his own and his family's way out of bondage from the John Street congregation, which had purchased Williams in 1783 (John Street Methodist Church Archives, New York, Accounts 1783–1795, Record No. 249). When the AME Zion Church erected a permanent meetinghouse in 1801 at Church and Leonard Streets, it provided burial vaults for its members. Samuel Day, a sexton at Mother Zion, as the church was known, helped oversee the vaults, which were rapidly filled. Between 1801 and 1807, there were some 150 interments annually there (Duffy 1968:1:219; for information on Samuel Day, see Municipal Archives of the City of New York, Death Libers, Liber 1).

Direct linkages between the African Burial Ground, the African Society, and the African independent church movement are likely, but it should be kept in mind that securing burial space would have been a key concern long before the names of black church leaders and community activists entered the documentary record. It should also be kept in mind that a "commitment to the dead" (Wilf 1989:512) was not unique to

black New York. African Americans in Philadelphia, Newport, Charleston, and Richmond also established benevolent associations and independent churches with the explicit goal of providing their communities a proper place for burial (see Kuyk 1983; Nash 1988; Wilder 2001).

Transporting the Body to the Cemetery and Conducting Graveside Rites

Given the location of the African Burial Ground, some form of procession was probably customary from early on. Did members of the procession congregate at the house where the deceased had lived? How large was a typical funeral party? Recall that the 1731 amendment to the ordinance governing black funerals set a quota for the attendees but excluded the bearers from the count. Did the number of bearers increase after 1731 to exploit the loophole in the law? Was the body transported to the cemetery in a handbarrow or a horse-drawn cart, or did the bearers shoulder the coffin on a bier or a board through the city streets and, ca. 1745-1760, one of the palisade gates? Did the cortege proceed to the African Burial Ground in silence, or with prayers, shouts, dancing, and song? In Boston, in 1723, a black funeral "zig-zagged across town and into the night," an "adaptation of meandering funeral corteges common in West Africa" (Desrochers 2002:648). African funeral processions in the lateeighteenth-century Caribbean and in the antebellum South were large, song filled, and slow moving (Handler and Lange 1978:186–191; Roediger 1981:170). In Jamaica, bearers raised and lowered the coffin. In Antigua, they danced a reel (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:87).

Oppression affected the scheduling as well as the size of African funerals. Night funerals were common in both the colonial and the antebellum eras; after toiling for others from sunup to sundown, Africans used the night as their own (see Roediger 1981). Night funerals would have provided opportunities for geographically distant kin and friends to attend the graveside rites. Prior to the banning of night funerals in New York in 1722, black city residents may well have buried their dead at dusk or after dark. Whether sundown became a typical time for holding black funerals after 1722 is unclear.

Did the mourners place any **goods in the coffin or on the surface of the grave**, such as food and drink, utensils and crockery, or flowers and herbs? Expensive mats decorated the surface of eighteenth-century

graves in parts of Sierra Leone–Liberia. Objects reminiscent of a person's life were placed atop graves in Gold Coast locales; mourners returned to the grave to care for the objects. Offerings of food and drink and personal belongings, such as tobacco and pipes, were placed on graves in some Niger Delta regions (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009b:86). Direct historical evidence for grave offerings exists for Jamaica. During the late 1680s, enslaved Africans in Jamaica supplied the corpse with "bread, roasted fowles, sugar, rum, tobacco, & pipes" (Handler and Lange 1978:199). An African American folk belief prevalent in parts of antebellum rural Georgia held that "the last objects touched by the deceased" should be placed on his grave lest his spirit retrieve them from his house. A variant of the belief was recorded in 1980 among the Kongo of Central Africa (Thompson 1983:134).

Marking and Visiting the Grave

Were **grave markers** used to memorialize the dead? Simple stone slabs like the ones at Trinity Churchyard (see Figure 12) were common in eighteenth-century Christian cemeteries in rural and urban America, but whether headstones were typically provided for churchyard burials of blacks is not known. In 1798 in Barbados, the manager at Newton Plantation requested a small stone marker for the grave of one of the plantation's "much-valued slaves" who had been interred in an Anglican churchyard. Such requests were rare (Handler and Lange 1978:203, 175–178).

Did the deceased's family and friends return to the cemetery to visit the grave, either on their own time, or by absconding from work? Were postinterment rites conducted?

In Jamaica, during the last half of the eighteenth century, Europeans noted that Africans heaped dirt on the month-old graves of their dead. Known as "covering" the grave, the practice was one of many postinterment rituals that involved returning to the cemetery to care for the grave and the spirit of its occupant (Handler and Lange 1978:203–204). Philip Madin's 1779 account of his journey through the West Indies

called attention to the consequences of neglecting postinterment rites. Madin learned from a Barbados planter that the departed husband of an African woman had troubled her dreams because a graveside ritual had been delayed (Handler and Lange 1978:205). Large, noisy Sunday gatherings in Philadelphia's African cemetery were cause for complaint during the eighteenth century (Nash 1988:13–14). Barbadosborn Africans were said in 1789 to be "superstitiously attached to the burial places of their ancestors and friends" (Handler and Lange 1978:209).

In sum, only a fraction of the funeral customs in the black Atlantic world entered the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documentary record. Although there is no doubt that burial practices in black New York drew on deep and varied African roots, using written documents to identify the epicenters of these practices is a difficult task. Funeral customs in captivesending areas in the interiors of West Central and West Africa were largely unknown to cultural outsiders.

Archaeologists who study African Diaspora communities have long grappled with uneven documentary records (see Jamieson 1995; Posnansky 1999; Samford 1996). Yet the archaeology of the African Diaspora is far more than a search for material signs of African ethnic identities. Contemporary archaeologists seek to understand how the experiences of Africans in the Americas differed from the experiences of other newcomers. In the words of archaeologist Theresa Singleton (1999:17): "To ignore the consequences of forced migration, enslavement, legalized discrimination, and racism misses the very essence of how African Americans created their world and responded to that of the dominant culture." If the challenge for archaeology is "to pry open places where the material world can inform the analysis of these complexities," then the New York African Burial Ground is an especially important site. It was the setting for a rite of passage (burial) that connected the desires of the living to the treatment of the dead in America's urban north, where the pervasiveness of slavery during the colonial and early federal periods is only now coming to wide public attention.

CHAPTER 3

The Archaeological Site

Jean Howson and Leonard G. Bianchi

This chapter focuses on the archaeological site as such. We discuss the original landscape in the vicinity of the historic African Burial Ground and then turn to the 1991–1992 excavation site, which was a much smaller area, and show its location superimposed on historic maps. We look at physical impacts to the African Burial Ground that occurred during the active life of the cemetery and then summarize the development of the site over the 200 years between the closing of the cemetery and its rediscovery. Damage sustained to the site during the archaeological project is described. We then discuss overall site stratigraphy, the condition of the graves, and preservation factors.

The Landscape, the Site, Postcemetery Development, and Site Preservation

The Historical Landscape

It is small wonder that New Yorkers of the late twentieth century were unaware of the presence of the African Burial Ground beneath the densely developed lower Manhattan civic and commercial district (Figure 28). The modern topography in the vicinity barely suggests the original landform. The cemetery was on uneven terrain that sloped down from the flat of the Common on the south, the "spine" of Broadway on the west, and "Pot Baker's Hill" on the southeast to the "Little Collect" pond or swamp (Figure 29). Depictions of the land surrounding the Collect Pond show undulating terrain, with high bluffs—presumably the Calk-Hook itself (the shell or chalk hill from which the farm and the pond got their original name)—on the north (Figure 30).

Today, a vestige of the original slope can be seen along Elk Street, with a decrease in elevation of approximately 20 feet from Chambers Street to Duane Street (Figure 31). During the period that the African Burial Ground was being used, this slope would have been much steeper. We now know that the bottom of the hill was approximately 24 feet lower in elevation than it is today—at sea level. "Pot Baker's Hill" has been leveled, and Chambers Street's elevation has changed little. The historic and current elevations of the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark are discussed in the National Historic Landmark Nomination (see Appendix A, Part 3 of this volume).

The hillside may not have been ideal for farm fields,1 but animals grazed on the Common and may have been a nuisance at the cemetery. The pollen data (see Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume) registering the African Burial Ground landscape suggest that the flora was dominated by grass with some insect-pollinated herbs, such as relatives of goosefoot, chicory, asters; members of the pea sub-family; and probably some ragweed. Land clearance and tree removal on Manhattan and in the surrounding region are registered among the average total tree-pollen percentage, but it does not appear that there were trees actually within the portion of the cemetery that was excavated. The northeastern edge of the African Burial Ground would have been marshy—note the proximity of the small "Swamp" depicted on Mrs. Buchnerd's Plan (see Figure 17 in Chapter 2); this body of water was also called the "Little Collect" on historical maps. Pollen analysis suggests that the marsh itself did not extend into the excavated portion of the cemetery, although sedge

¹ Pollen analysis (see Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume) identified a small quantity of cereal-type pollen grains but indicated that the African Burial Ground site had probably never been farmed.

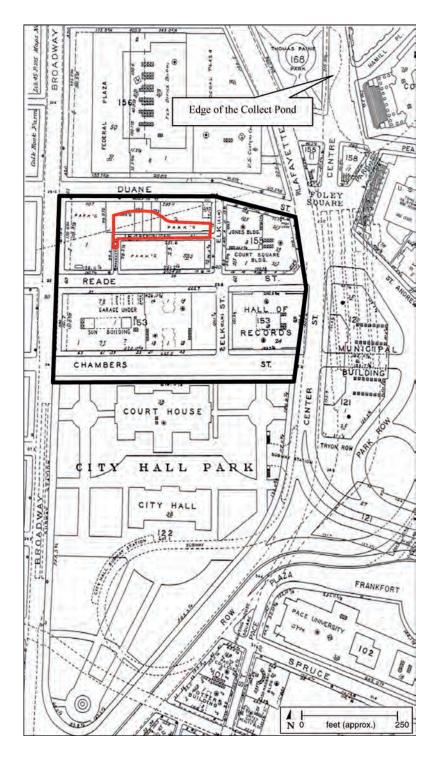


Figure 28. Sanborn Map (Manhattan Land Book 1984-85) of New York's civic center area, encompassing the historic African Burial Ground at the time of the initial cultural resources investigation in 1989. Most of Block 154, bounded by Broadway and Duane, Reade, and Elk Streets, was covered by parking lots. The map shows the historic "Calk Hook Farm" (labeled in upper left corner) and its southern boundary running diagonally from Broadway across the block. The historic edge of the Collect Pond is shown at the upper right. The small portion of the cemetery that was excavated in 1991–1992 is outlined with a red line within the boundary of the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark (outlined with a thick black line). New York City's designated "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District" encompasses a larger area that includes all of City Hall Park as well as Foley Square (use of 1984-85 Sanborn Map 290 Broadway, New York, NY, reprinted/used with permission from the Sanborn Library, LLC).

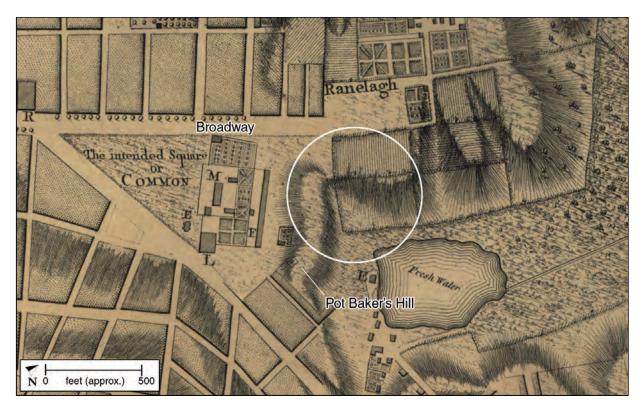


Figure 29. Detail from cartographer John Montressor's plan (1766) showing the topography in the general location of the historic African Burial Ground (circled in white). Hachures show downward sloping north of "Pot Baker's Hill" and from west to east, beginning about 250 feet east of Broadway, toward Fresh Water Pond. *E* denotes the Powder House; *F*, the soldiers barracks; *L*, the Gaol; *M*, the Almshouse/Workhouse; and *R*, St. Paul's. Ranelagh was a public pleasure garden (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

Figure 30. A 1798 watercolor of Collect Pond and vicinity, attributed to Archibald Robertson (American, 1765–1835). The view (to the south) is rather bucolic and idealized considering the industries such as tanneries that lined the shore. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps, and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954 [54.90.168]. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)





Figure 31. An October 2005 view of the slope on Elk Street within the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark, looking south toward City Hall Park (photograph by Rob Tucher).

pollen may indicate intermittently wet conditions in low spots. Anthony Rutgers and his heirs drained the low-lying portions of their Calk Hook Farm during the eighteenth century, reducing the size of the Collect and "Little Collect" ponds (Stokes 1915–1928:3:540, 965–966). It is likely that this action affected the drainage of the ground within and at the edge of the cemetery. As the swampy ground surrounding the Little Collect became drier, the area used for interments may have been extended to the northeast.²

The Archaeological Site in Relation to the Historic Cemetery

"How much of the African Burial Ground did the archaeologists excavate?" is a question that has been

asked often during the course of this project. The maximum historical extent of the cemetery is not known, and the maps in Chapter 2 depict its general location rather than its precise boundaries. Broadway (a road leading northward from town that would be called Great George Street in the early eighteenth century) may have formed the western edge of the cemetery. When houses were built along the east side of that thoroughfare (in place by the 1760s), the west side of the cemetery would have been truncated. To the north, the boundary between the Van Borsum patent and the Damen patent/Calk Hook Farm may have been maintained, with burials limited to the south side of the line throughout much of the cemetery's life (this will be discussed further in Chapter 4). Eastern and southern limits are more problematic. The pottery manufactories would have hemmed in the burial ground on the east starting in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, but interments may have extended along the south side of the pond before that time. Municipal use of the northern part of the town Common, now City Hall Park, would have "pushed" the cemetery northward in the same period, and the palisade constructed in 1745 would have formed an

² The Collect was fed by deep springs. In the early to mid-eighteenth century, it teemed with fish and its water supplied households as well as industrial yards. The pond was surveyed in 1801, 2 years before it began to be drained (see Stokes 1915–1928:1:Plate 58A), but the contours of the adjoining meadowlands and swamps had shifted by then. Rutgers started draining the swamp in 1733–1734, to the consternation of nearby tanners, who complained that the lowering of the pond's water level had compromised the water supply in their manufacturing yards.

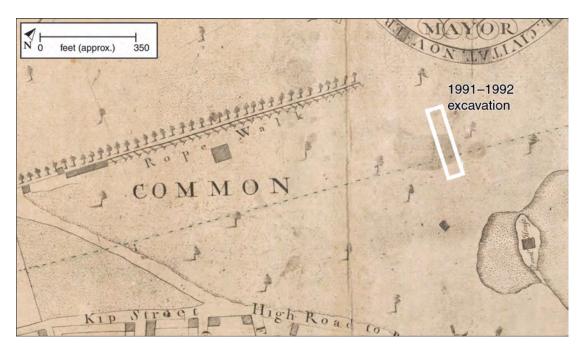


Figure 32. Site location overlaid on Lyne-Bradford Plan (1730). The ropewalk (shown lined with trees) is the alignment of present-day Broadway. The dashed north-south line that runs through the excavation site represents the boundary between the North and West Wards of the city. Scale is 1 inch = approximately 350 feet (Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

effective southern boundary, at least while it was in place (until approximately 1760).³

It is possible the cemetery grew in area during its early period (whether in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century) and then constricted during the second half of the eighteenth century, as various kinds of development encroached. With this constriction, the density of interments and the superimposition of graves within the remaining ground would have increased.

The excavated site was located in the north part of the cemetery along the Van Borsum patent/Calk Hook Farm boundary. In Figures 32–34, the outline of the New York African Burial Ground archaeological excavation is superimposed on eighteenth-century maps provided in Chapter 2. As can be seen from these figures, the excavation site was in a portion of

the cemetery that remained "available" for interments throughout the eighteenth century—that is, it did not see construction of private houses and industries, military structures, or public buildings, as did the perimeter area. The only known structure within the excavation site that dates to the life of the cemetery (other than the graves themselves) was the fence that apparently ran along the boundary between the Van Borsum patent and the Calk Hook Farm.

The archaeological site thus sampled a part of the historical African Burial Ground where interments continued to take place until the property was subdivided and developed by the Barclay and Kip families (1787 and 1795 respectively) and the cemetery was closed. And, because the overall area that could be used for interments was constricting owing to surrounding development (the potteries, the palisade, the barracks, public buildings, and houses) we believe that the archaeological site included a part of the cemetery that would have been intensively used during the second and third quarters of the century. We also posit, however, that it included a part of the cemetery (to the north of the Van Borsum patent-Calk Hook Farm boundary) that was only used during the final quarter of the century and thus is less densely packed with graves. This argument is further developed in Chapters 4 and 9.

³ The boundary given for the National Historic Landmark (NHL) was partly based on historic documentation but was partly drawn with reference to the likelihood of preservation in the blocks surrounding the archaeological site (see Appendix A, Part 3 of this volume). The southern extent of the cemetery was never clearly established for the NHL nomination, and later excavations at the north end of City Hall Park and on Chambers Street revealed the presence of graves near the north foundation of the Tweed Courthouse and at the perimeter of the northern part of City Hall Park. The cemetery probably extended farther south than the NHL boundary.

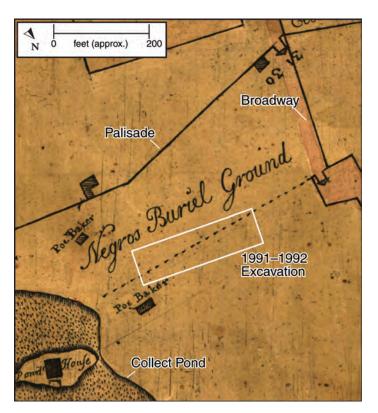


Figure 33. Site location overlaid on the Maerschalk Plan (1754). The dashed line crossing the excavation site may represent the boundary between the burial ground and the Rutgers Calk Hook Farm at the time the map was made. The area containing excavated graves spanned this line. Scale is 1 inch = approximately 200 feet (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

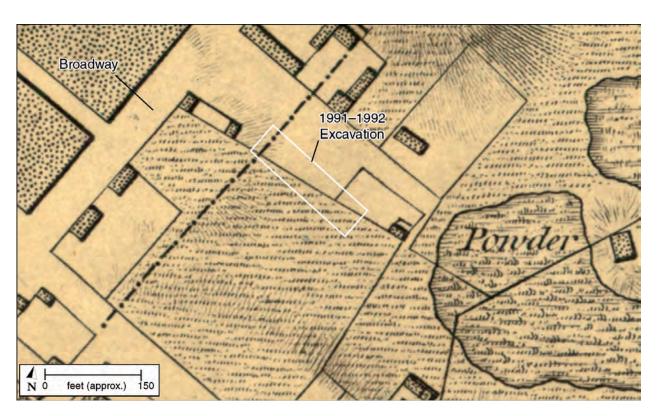


Figure 34. Site location overlaid on the Ratzer Map (1767). The solid line crossing the excavation site may represent the boundary between the cemetery/Van Borsum patent and the Calk Hook Farm at the time the map was made. The area containing excavated graves spanned this line. The dashed-dotted line parallel to Broadway is the ward boundary (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

The total area designated an NHL is approximately 7 acres, and the Van Borsum Patent comprised approximately 6.6 acres. The area investigated archaeologically covered 27,000 square feet of Block 154, and the portion where burials were excavated comprised about 9,500 square feet. Using 6 acres as a low-end estimate of the historic expanse of the African Burial Ground, the excavated area containing burials may represent just 3.6 percent of the original cemetery. The number of graves excavated within the archaeological site was 424. If we were to assume that the density of burials was similar over the whole of the African Burial Ground, 6 acres could have accommodated over 11,600 burials. Based on the density encountered within the excavated portion, it is estimated that an additional 200-300 graves were left unexcavated on Block 154, within the "Pavilion" site (now the reinterment and memorial site) alone. As noted, the excavated site contains a portion of the cemetery that was very densely used and a portion that was relatively thinly used, so there is room for error in either direction.

Another way to estimate the total number of people buried in the African Burial Ground is to attempt to project the total number of Africans who might have died in the city during the years of the cemetery's use. This is problematic, because although we do have census data for blacks for some years, we do not have any data on death rates. Bills of mortality available for Philadelphia in the period 1767–1775 indicate an average of 75 burials of Africans per year; this represents about 7 burials for every 100 blacks per year, a rate about 50 percent higher than among whites (Nash 1988:34). If a similar death rate applied to New York, about 219 blacks would have been buried in 1771 based on that year's census count of 3,137. If we use this same death rate for each census year, and smooth the rate of population growth (or decrease) between the census years, the numbers of deaths of Africans in New York would be calculated at 14,010 for the period 1698–1795. This number is close enough to the estimate of 11,600 individuals based on area to allow for a general estimate of 10,000–15,000 individuals for the cemetery as a whole. Using the estimates based on area, the 419 individuals that are represented by skeletal remains would be a 3.61 percent sample of a mortuary population spanning a 100–150-year period. Using estimates based on projecting numbers of deaths from population statistics, the 419 individuals would be a 2.97 percent sample.

Impacts to Graves during the Cemetery's Use

It is impossible to know for certain all of the times and places graves would have been disturbed over the life of the burial ground, especially because the date of its inception and its full geographical extent (particularly on the south and east sides) are not known. Known and likely impacts are summarized here.

- The development of the pottery industries would have been the first major impact. It is not known whether the stoneware potteries located east of the excavated site stood within the original burial ground. If so, their construction surely would have destroyed existing graves. We do know for certain that pottery waste was dumped on the cemetery, because such a dump was encountered in the eastern part of the site.
- The construction of dwellings (with associated gardens, fences, and outbuildings) is likely to have disturbed graves. The locations of eighteenth-century dwellings—on Broadway and possibly on the east side of the cemetery at the stoneware potteries—were outside the area excavated archaeologically.
- The construction of municipal and military facilities in what is now City Hall Park during the eighteenth century may have impacted the southernmost graves. This area is south of the excavated site.
- The construction and maintenance of the town palisade probably disturbed graves along its alignment. The palisade was located to the south of the excavated site.
- The interments of prisoners in the southern part of the ground by the British army during the occupation may have disturbed or destroyed existing African burials. Again, this impact was probably to the south of the excavated site.
- The archaeological excavation revealed that tannery waste (i.e., cattle bone, hoof, and horn) was

⁴ Neither a constant death rate nor a smooth population trend is historically likely, of course. Disease may have created spikes in the death rate, and importations would have caused fluctuations in the rate of population growth. The period of the British occupation during the war saw both a swollen black population and increased deaths. It is also very likely that infants—and especially newborns—were consistently undercounted in the census (as well as in the mortality bills). Infants also may be underrepresented in the burial ground owing to poor preservation. If the total number of blacks who died in New York is estimated at 30 percent higher in order to include "missing" infants, then the total population of the African Burial Ground may have been well over 15,000.

dumped in the northern part of the cemetery while it was active.

• Graves were robbed for cadavers in the 1780s.

It was not unusual for eighteenth-century cemeteries to have been encroached upon by construction and intrusions by animals. The African community may have suffered these depredations largely in silence, although protests may have gone unrecorded. Efforts to protect the burial ground from depredations were not documented until the most egregious of the encroachments—the exhumation of newly interred bodies for dissection—caused a public outcry (see Chapters 2 and 9). In the case of intact coffins that proved empty, body snatching by medical students may be an explanation, and two individuals, in Burials 323 and 364, were probably reburied after dissection (see burial descriptions in Part 2 of this volume and discussion in Chapter 9). By and large, however, within the small portion of the cemetery that was excavated archaeologically, severe disturbances to burials appeared to date to later periods, after the cemetery ceased to be used for interments.

Postcemetery Development

The Earliest Street and Lot Development and the Fill

The African Burial Ground was subject to 200 years of building construction and demolition, street maintenance, and utility installation once interments ceased. The portion of the cemetery that was excavated survived not only the early development of urban residential lots but also much more massive, later construction phases, owing to three factors: (1) an alley was laid out in the 1790s through the middle of the block, and portions of this alley were relatively undisturbed subsequently; (2) some of the structures built on the lots had relatively shallow basements; and (3) most important, in the final years of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth century, the lowlying terrain of the African Burial Ground was covered with landfill to bring the area up to a level grade, thus protecting graves from later construction damage.

After the streets crossing the cemetery were mapped out (Table 10), and the Barclay land (part of the old Calk Hook Farm) and the Kip land (the old Van Borsum patent) were surveyed and subdivided into lots (see Chapter 2 and Figures 22 and 24), the way was open for intensive residential and commercial devel-

opment of the African Burial Ground. As discussed in Chapter 2, African community leaders petitioned for and received a subsidy to purchase land and establish a new cemetery elsewhere at this time.

During the period of its confiscation by the purchasers and developers of individual lots—a process that probably took a decade or more (at least from the 1787 survey of the Calk Hook until the 1795 survey of the Kip property)—the African Burial Ground may have witnessed an almost daily struggle on the part of the relatives and descendants of those buried there to maintain their ties to the place and the dignity of grave sites. There were doubtless many visible, marked graves at the time of initial development of some of the lots—evidence from the archaeological excavation indicates that markers such as headstones or cobble outlines were used (see section on overall site stratigraphy). These would have been covered over, if not destroyed, in the first phase of lot development.

Reade Street and Anthony (later called Barley and subsequently renamed Duane) Street were laid out perpendicular to Broadway, but since the property line between Barclay and Kip lands was not, an "extra" triangular piece of property remained through the middle of the block when the rectangular Reade Street lots were first laid out. An alley, later to be called Republican or Manhattan Alley, was laid out running north from Reade Street and turning at a right angle to run east-west behind the Reade Street lots, taking up a portion of the "extra" triangle and providing additional frontage to maximize the potential for building houses. But this still left a small "gore," a triangular piece of land, on the north side of the alley, abutting the rear yards of the Duane Street lots. The pieces of the gore were all eventually purchased and consolidated with the Duane Street lots, but the alley remained in place through the twentieth century. Burials survived beneath a portion of this alley.

What about the new building lots? The history of property transactions from 1787 onward within Block 154 has received detailed scrutiny, although properties on blocks surrounding this one have not been researched in as much detail.⁵ The important

⁵ Preliminary research was conducted for the Stage IA background study on the site (Ingle et al. 1990). Subsequently, more-detailed research on postcemetery ownership and occupation of lots that were excavated was conducted by both Historic Conservation and Interpretation (HCI), by Jean Howson, Richard L. Porter, and Stephen Barto, and later John Milner Associates (JMA), by Thelma Foote and Reginald Pitts. Research relevant to the time periods represented archaeologically is presented in the report on the nonburial component of the 290 Broadway site (Cheek 2003).

Table 10. Streets Laid Out through the African Burial Ground

Street	History
Duane Street	The segment of this street to the east of Broadway was called Anthony Street when it was mapped at the time of the Calk Hook Farm subdivision in 1787 (see Figure 22). It was known as Barley Street at the turn of the century and renamed Duane Street in 1809. Proprietors of abutting lots were ordered to "dig out and fill in" [Minutes of the Common Council, May 18, 1795, in New York City Common Council 1917:2:149] the street in 1795. (This street should not be confused with the later Anthony Street two blocks to the north.)
Elk Street	This street was known as Ann Street when mapped at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision in 1795 (see Figure 24). Regulated in 1803, at which time it was called Elm Street.
Reade Street	Laid out in 1795 at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision (see Figure 24). Formerly Reed Street.
Republican Alley	The alley was called Manhattan Place or Alley in the nineteenth century. Laid out in 1795 at the time of the Van Borsum patent subdivision (see Figure 24), although its position shifted south and west compared to the alley shown on the map. The proprietors of abutting lots were ordered to "fill up" the alley in 1803.
Chambers Street	In 1796, a triangular wedge out of the "Negros Burial Ground" (i.e., the southern edge of the Van Borsum Patent—see Figure 24) was acquired by the city from the patent heirs for laying out this street to the east of Broadway (New York City Common Council 1917:2:250).

Note: See Hunter Research (1994) for details and sources for each street within New York's African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District. Figures 22 and 24 are in Chapter 2.

issues for understanding the final years of the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground are (1) the timing of initial building construction on the new city lots and (2) the possible construction of a new fence at the rear of some Duane Street building lots, along the old Calk Hook Farm–Van Borsum patent boundary.

The excavated portion of the cemetery spanned the line between lots laid out in 1787 (on the north) and those laid out in 1795 (on the south). Did burials continue on the lots until houses were actually built, and when was that? Or did burials continue only in the southern area in the years between 1787 and 1795? The Barclays began to sell and lease lots on Duane Street after 1787, but documentary evidence indicates that Lots 12-17 were all developed (built on) in the period 1794–1799, and the first house within the excavated portion of Block 154 was built in 1794 on Lot 12 (Cheek 2003:Chapter 4). Thus, it is possible burials continued over the entire area up until 1794. However, if a new fence was built along a stretch of the diagonal boundary line in order to demarcate the rear of Duane Street lots, it is possible those lots were off-limits for interments even before the construction of houses began.

Houses on Lots 12, 15, and 16 were the earliest built (Cheek 2003:Chapter 4). Damage to graves was

caused when various types of pit features were dug in the rear parts of these lots (Figures 35 and 36).

The earliest houses were not destined to last long. Beginning in the 1790s and into the first decade of the nineteenth century, the city undertook the filling in of the marshy areas around the Collect Pond, then of the pond itself, along with the grading of the hills in the area and the leveling of streets. Property owners were obliged to fill their own lots as well as "regulate" (build up or dig out) the streets on which they fronted. Filling of the low-lying properties and streets on the African Burial Ground commenced in the 1790s. Duane Street property owners were required to build up the street in 1795, and Republican Alley was ordered to be filled up in 1803 (Hunter Research 1994:29–31, 55–56, 59–61). Once streets were leveled, the Common Council ordered "sunken" (low-lying) lots along them to be filled in (New York City Common Council 1917:2:327–328). The pit and shaft features in the rear yards of Duane Street lots that had been built on before the filling were covered over and buried, just as were the graves of the African Burial Ground. Houses had to either be raised to the new street level or torn down and replaced. Once a lot was filled, building construction would begin at the new surface, and new building foundations and



Figure 35. In situ photograph of Burial 153. A privy shaft at the rear of Lot 15 truncated the entire eastern part of the grave (bottom of photograph). The disturbed parts of the skeleton had been tossed aside and were found on the opposite side of the privy in a pile. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

basements often extended only into the fill, not into the graves.

Fill encountered at the New York African Burial Ground archaeological site was approximately 13 feet deep on the west (behind Lot 12) and approximately 24 feet deep on the east near Elk Street, reflecting the original lay of the land. Some of this fill was from the time of the initial leveling of the area (notably behind Lot 12, where it was sampled and could be dated on the basis of artifacts it contained), but much of the site also contained heavy demolition fill from various demolition and rebuilding episodes over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even these episodes failed to destroy hundreds of underlying graves, however, because they were so deeply buried.

Building Construction in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Maps from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries depict the density of development on Block 154 (Fig-



Figure 36. In situ photograph of Burial 297. A privy shaft at the rear of Lot 16 truncated the entire western part of the grave (top of photograph), leaving only the legs below the knees and the eastern portion of the coffin. Scale shown is in inches; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

ures 37–39). Every one of the lots that the Kip and Barclay families sold had structures on them before the middle of the nineteenth century—many had houses at the street front and at the back, along the alley.

On some lots, successive buildings eventually obliterated all physical traces of the cemetery. This was true for all of the lots along Broadway, where the graves were not protected by deep fill and where large commercial structures had deep basements. We know from a newspaper reference that bones were removed during the 1845–1846 construction of the A. T. Stewart Store on Broadway between Chambers and Reade Streets (New York Times, November 14, 1878). Lot 12 was in a part of the site where fill was relatively shallow, but a building with a deep basement extending to the rear of the lot had never been constructed there, so graves were intact in that area. The most recent structure on Lot 13 had a deep basement, and no graves were preserved within its footprint (see Figure 7, pocket map). Because of a combination of shallower basements and deeper fill to the east, buildings in Lots 14–18, 20½, and 21 did not destroy all of the graves (see Appendix A, Part 3 of this volume, for schematic cross sections through the blocks within the NHL that show the projected level of graves in relation to building basements). Graves were preserved in place within the alignment of Republican Alley

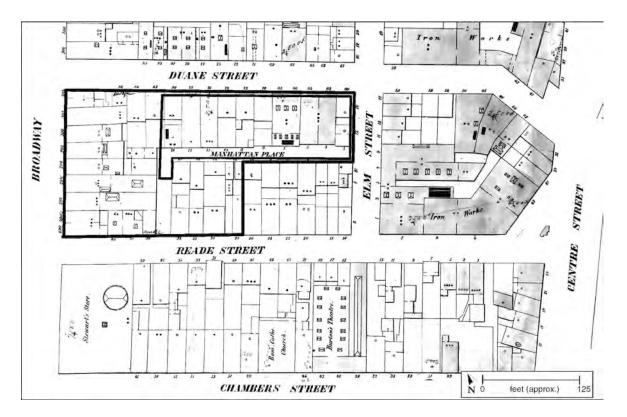


Figure 37. Detail from Perris Map of 1853. By the mid-nineteenth century, every property that had been laid out in the 1780s and 1790s had been developed, some having already seen successive building phases. Republican Alley was known as Manhattan Place at this time, and most of the lots that backed onto it had buildings at both front and rear. Elm (now Elk) Street had not been laid through to Chambers Street yet. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint (The Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

along a short stretch of the north-south leg and behind Lots 12–15, but to the east, all graves that once lay beneath the alley had been disturbed by the excavation of the foundation for 22 Reade Street.

Even though hundreds of graves were preserved beneath the alley or the lot fill, considerable damage was caused by successive building episodes and related excavations. The site map (see Figure 7, pocket map) indicates areas where historic excavations for structures such as foundation walls, footings, drains, or elevator shafts clearly disturbed or destroyed graves. Known burials that were damaged prior to the archaeological investigation are listed in Table 11. For ease of reference, the historic lot numbers are used, but it should be remembered that the lots postdate and have no relevance for the New York African Burial Ground itself. "Feature" numbers are arbitrary consecutive numbers assigned to pits, privies, drains, footings, etc., that were encountered during the archaeological excavations. These are described in full in the report

of the 290 Broadway nonburial component (Cheek 2003). Examples of graves damaged in the second or third phases of development at the site are shown in Figures 40 and 41. Table 11 lists only those graves for which historical impacts resulted in removal of skeletal remains; compression also caused damage.

Damage Sustained during the Project

Burial 1, the first grave discovered at the New York African Burial Ground, was uncovered during backhoe excavation of a test trench and was truncated by the machine. Subsequently, excavation proceeded so as to delineate burials by identifying the outline of the grave shafts prior to beginning meticulous hand excavation. Nevertheless, numerous graves were partially disturbed during backhoe clearing of demolition fill

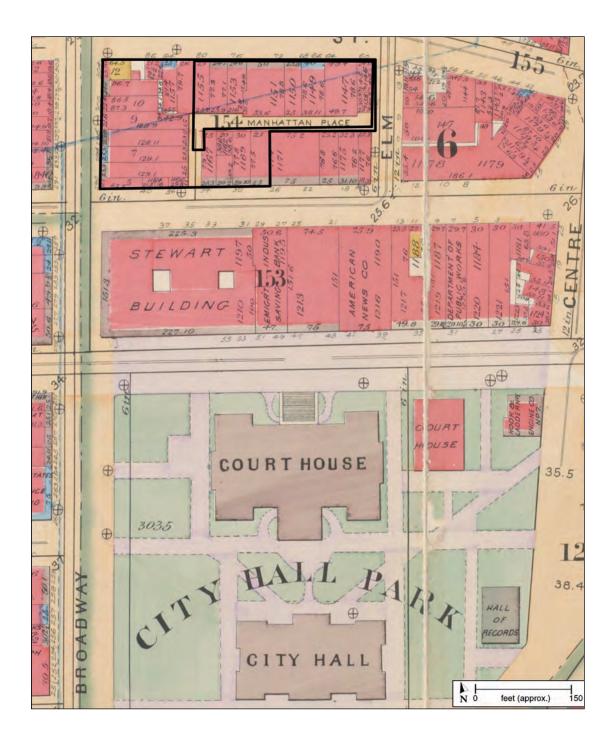


Figure 38. Detail from Robinson and Pidgeon Atlas (1893) showing late-nineteenth-century development in the area of the African Burial Ground. The former boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm was shown running diagonally across Block 154. Brick structures that covered entire lots now characterized the blocks in the area, and the "Tweed" Court House, facing north onto Chamber Street, had been built in City Hall Park. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint (The Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

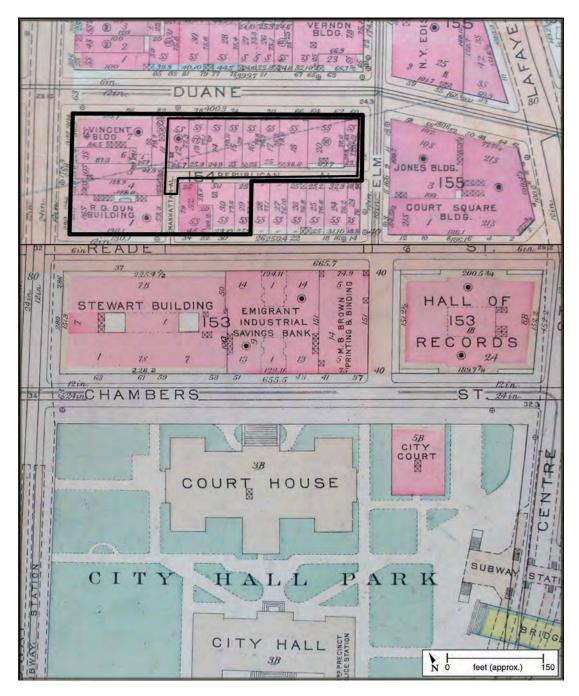


Figure 39. Detail from the Bromley Map (1934) showing development in the area of the African Burial Ground. The former boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm was shown running diagonally across Block 154. The eightstory Hall of Records, on Block 153 on the east side of Elm (Elk) Street, was built on the leveled eighteenth-century "Pot Baker's Hill." Because of the previous leveling and the deep sub-basement of this building, it is unlikely any burials survive on the block. Burials may be extant beneath the "Jones" and "Court Square" buildings on Block 155 just across Reade Street, however, as this would have been a lower-lying area and the basements are not as deep. Buildings are discussed in the National Historic Landmark nomination (see Appendix A.2 in Part 3 of this volume) and in the designation report for New York's African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District. The footprint of the Federal building at 290 Broadway (as originally proposed) is indicated with a heavy black outline. The outline of the archaeological site is indicated with a thin black line within this footprint (use of 1934 Bromley Map reprinted/used with permission from the Sanborn Library, LLC).

Table 11. Damage to Known Burials Caused by Historic Development

Type of Feature, by Lot	Impact
Lot 12	
Cistern	truncated Burials 58 and 63
Lot 13	
Concrete foundation	truncated Burials 10, 97, 102
Stone foundation	truncated Burials 25, 26, 32, and 52; damaged Burials 83 and 84
Lot 14	
Foundation	truncated Burials 125, 162, 188, 228, 275, 277, 287
Basement at front of lot	disturbed Burials 152 and 178
Shallow pit (Feature 106)	possibly damaged Burial 125
Lot 15	
Privy (Feature 56)	truncated Burial 153; damaged Burial 203
Privy (Feature 77)	damaged Burials 192, 193, 252, and possibly 225
Pit (Feature 91)	slightly damaged Burial 158
Brick drain (Feature 100)	damaged Burial 213
Lot 16	
Privy (Feature 58)	truncated Burial 297; damaged Burial 181
Lot 17	
Foundation	damaged Burials 351, 370, 428
Lot 18	
Foundation excavations	damaged Burials 410, 413, 420
Footing	damaged Burial 414
Elevator shaft	damaged Burials 417, 418, 423, and 434
Broadway lots	
Foundations	damaged Burials 15, 36, 41, 46, 54, 67, 81, 89, and 93
Reade Street lots	
Foundations, mid-block	damaged Burials 66, 70, 118, 168, 170, and 189
Foundation, 22 Reade St.	damaged Burials 308, 316

over large areas. Such damage is noted in the burial descriptions contained in Part 2 of this volume. It is worth noting that 30 of the 31 skulls that were considered to be "intact" for the purposes of skeletal analysis were recovered among the first 100 burials excavated, which suggests that the quality of excavation suffered as pressure to speed the work increased.

Construction of 290 Broadway proceeded throughout the archaeological field project, and damage to the burials continued despite the presence of the archaeological team. Excavations for massive footings in the eastern part of the site were responsible for the destruction of many graves (Figure 42). Four openings for these 10-by-10-foot footings were excavated along a north-south alignment, each disturbing a 15-by-15-foot area (one is shown on the site plan, Figure 7, pocket map). Based on the density of burials in the southeastern part of the site (an area that was not even fully exposed), it is likely that dozens of graves were destroyed by each of the footings. Construction



Figure 40. In situ photograph of Burial 97. A concrete wall between Lots 12 and 13 obliterated the eastern half of the grave. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

in 1991 of a perimeter wall for 290 Broadway also destroyed or damaged an unknown number of graves along Elk Street and possibly also along Duane Street. Another large area was disturbed during construction activity in the rear part of Lot 16. The use of heavy machinery on the site caused damage to additional graves, although the extent of the damage is more difficult to assess.

Overall Site Stratigraphy

As noted, clearing in most areas was done mechanically down to a level where graves were clearly visible and sometimes to the very tops of coffins. It appears that pressure to speed the excavation often led to the disregard of deposits above this level. It is possible that historical development had already destroyed the earlier ground surfaces. But any historic surfaces that may have been extant beneath the fill may have been stripped in the interest of reaching the burials quickly. In some areas, stripping proceeded until the tops of coffins (readily recognizable from wood stain-



Figure 41. In situ photograph of Burial 213. A brick drain constructed some time in the nineteenth century extended down through the grave, removing a portion of the coffin and skeletal remains but leaving the rest of the burial remarkably intact. Ruler alongside the grave is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

ing and in situ nails) were observed. This destroyed the opportunity for the archaeologists to examine most of the site for evidence of grave markers and items that had been deliberately placed on the tops of graves. The exception was the north-south leg of Republican Alley, where the surface of some graves was present (Figure 43). This was the first site area excavated archaeologically and also the shallowest, requiring hand excavation of upper layers; it is possible that there the excavators had the luxury of time enough to carefully look for old surfaces.

Despite not having the original or eighteenth-century ground surface over the majority of the archaeo-

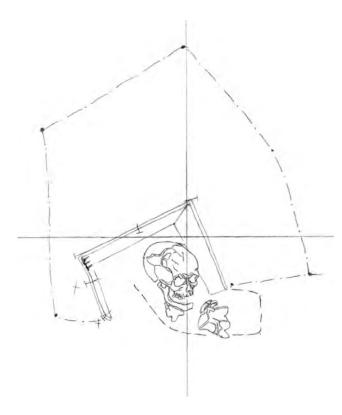


Figure 42. In situ drawing of Burial 362, which was nearly destroyed by the installation of a massive concrete footing for the 290 Broadway building in February of 1992. The grave held a man of undetermined age. His cranium and a portion of the coffin were left relatively undisturbed. Numerous other burials were also damaged or destroyed by this footing and three others in the eastern part of the site. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot; north is to the right (drawing by M. Schur).

logical site, it is possible to get a sense of the lay of the land by looking at the recorded elevations of burials. The microtopography of the portion of the cemetery that was studied archaeologically appears to have included a general northeast-trending slope and possibly also "terrace" areas, where the ground was flatter and where burials were concentrated. Figure 44 is a schematic profile of the excavated graves from west (closest to Broadway) to east (at Elk Street). Concentrations of burials are seen at 50–100 East and at 110–145 East. The apparent precipitous drop-off at 100 East is the effect of the construction disturbance at the rear of Lot 16.

When each interment originally took place, the soil from the surface of the ground and from the grave shaft was removed and then redeposited in the shaft. Thus material from the surface at the time of burial ended up mixed in with the fill in the grave shaft. In many cases, nonburial deposits surrounding or overly-

ing the burials, but contemporary with the cemetery, are reflected in the contents of the shafts. For instance, some burials found in the area where the stoneware potteries were dumping kiln waste contained large amounts of that waste in the grave shafts. In other cases, the grave-shaft contents reflected the presence of a sparse sheet scatter of domestic debris (bits of glass, brick, smoking pipes, or ceramics) or of a fairly heavy deposit of animal bone and horn (probably waste material from a tannery). Materials present in the grave shafts can be used to reconstruct the eighteenth-century ground-surface deposits over the site area. For our purposes, this information is useful for dating graves and for understanding the series of encroachments that affected the burial ground (see further discussion in Chapter 4).

Post-burial-ground features and deposits, which were located north of the cemetery or which overlay or cut into the cemetery deposits, were also excavated during the field project (Cheek 2003). Some of these represented distinct phases of use of Block 154. Cheek (2003) designated development Phases 1–6 for the site as a whole:

- Phase 1 (through 1787)—African Burial Ground and contemporary uses including the potteries
- Phase 2 (1788–1803)—initial "urbanization"
- Phase 3 (1799–1807)—the raising of Anthony-Barley-Duane Street
- Phase 4 (1807–1890s)—development
- Phase 5 (1900–1990)—development [also the razing of structures in the 1960s in advance of an aborted civic center development project]
- Phase 6 (1990–1992)—construction of 290 Broadway

The African Burial Ground cemetery was still in use during the first part of Cheek's "Phase 2," through 1795.

Condition of Graves

The wet conditions at the New York African Burial Ground site were not a surprise, given the proximity of the Collect Pond and surrounding wetlands (the latter possibly at one time extending into the area of the cemetery). Moreover, many of the graves were themselves at or below modern sea level. During excavations, the water table often was high enough to flood burials, and it is assumed that fluctuating moisture levels affected them throughout the period



Figure 43. In situ photograph of Former Republican Alley, as the surface of graves was revealed. View is toward the south (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

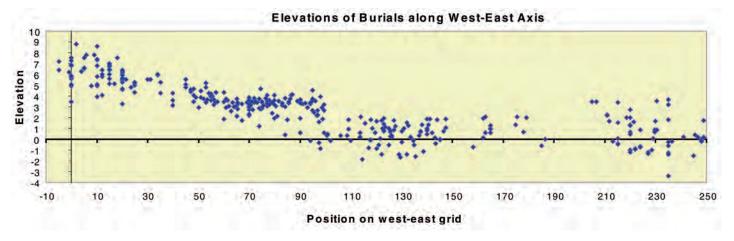


Figure 44. Schematic diagram of elevations of burials (shown as diamonds) from west to east. Elevations are in feet above/below current sea level (measured at the highest point of the in situ skeletal remains). West is to the left. Grid line "0" on the West-East site grid is 280 feet east of Broadway. Differing scales along the X- and Y-axes exaggerate the variation in elevations.

of their interment, which in most cases would have been more than 200 years.

Preservation of both skeletal remains and artifacts was dependent on soil conditions. Project conservator Cheryl J. LaRoche (2002:17) described these as follows:⁶

The presence of naturally occurring alluvial clays with lenses of Cretaceous sands . . . contributed to the variety of environmental conditions. . . . Many of the natural catalysts of artifact and skeletal deterioration were in these soils. Sand allowed water seepage, while the alluvial clay acted as a hydrophilic substrate, binding

free water to the adjacent artifacts and skeletal materials. The wet, gelatinous consistency of [some of] the skeletal remains upon excavation was indicative of waterlogged conditions. The abundance of oxygen, inherent in alluvial clays, increased acidity (lowered pH), which broke down organic resins. Furthermore, this oxygenated environment encouraged the deterioration of ferric alloys through oxidation as the free oxygen was tied to the groundwater. Thus, iron preservation at the 290 Broadway Block was poor due, in part, to oxygenated conditions and electrochemical activity.

When a catalyst, such as oxygen, is depleted, the soil becomes anoxic, and agents of deterioration that are dependent on an oxygenated environment rapidly decline while there is a

⁶ The African Burial Ground project conservators were Gary McGowan and Cheryl J. LaRoche. This text is from an unedited draft report of conservation activities prepared by LaRoche.

corresponding increase in anaerobic activity. This anoxic environment harbored anaerobic bacteria, which accelerated the rate of degradation of organic materials. Several artifacts exhibited blackened surfaces, evidence of metal sulfides produced by sulfate-reducing bacteria associated with anaerobic conditions. The microenvironment produced by the permeable sand lenses fostered its own unique degradation pattern. While these more permeable loci are less biologically reactive, they can be more chemically reactive. As one agent of deterioration diminished, another flourished.

In addition, the chemical environment caused by decomposition of the human remains in each grave would have affected the preservation of items such as cloth or artifacts.

Soil chemistry was not tested during excavations of the graves or subsequently in the laboratory. Differential preservation conditions generally cannot be determined from burial to burial (unless obvious factors such as excessive moisture are mentioned in the notes), and this has implications for studying the distribution of burial artifacts. In other words, the presence or absence of burial items cannot be checked against preservation conditions. For graves where no artifactual material was recovered, the possibility of total decomposition should be considered. For example, pins were often noted in the field but not recoverable, and it is possible some were so decomposed that they were not distinguishable to the naked eye in the field. Similarly, recovered pewter- and bone-button fragments were very poorly preserved, and it is not inconceivable that such items were simply no longer extant in some burials. Where field notes indicate that the preservation was poor, determinations as to the absence of burial artifacts (or skeletal elements, for that matter) should be qualified.

Post-interment animal activity (worm action and small mammal burrows) was noted in numerous graves. Changes in drainage caused by filling and construction over the centuries would have created fluctuations in moisture conditions, and such fluctuations themselves are very damaging. Pollutants from nineteenth- and twentieth-century use of the property that seeped through the soils may have altered the preservation environment of graves. Finally, the exposure of skeletal remains through excavation presented an immediate danger of deterioration. Most important, if the bones were soft from moisture, drying would

cause them to become friable. Field protocols for ensuring maximum stabilization of remains and artifacts are noted in Chapter 1.

All recorded observations of the in-field condition of individual graves are noted in the burial descriptions in Part 2 of this volume.⁸ The condition of artifacts and products of decomposition noted during laboratory processing are discussed in the appropriate artifact chapters (Chapters 11–14).

Preservation Assessment

Field records were reviewed for information pertinent to the likely presence or absence of artifacts in graves based on preservation factors, including damage sustained to burials, degree of disarticulation and disturbance, and whether excavation was complete. This is crucial to the analysis of artifact-frequency distributions, which should only include burials for which the preservation of items was at least possible. A simple logic was applied, taking into account the fact that in an intact grave, artifacts might survive even where bone does not (recall the number of coffins, especially very small ones, that did not contain extant human remains). Burials were assigned "yes" or "no" values depending on whether artifacts could be expected. For a small number of burials, we also needed to take into account which part of a burial had survived. Pins were most frequently found on the cranium, so burials with missing crania but good preservation otherwise were noted. The "preservation" field in the burial data table contains a value for each burial as defined in Table 12.

This artifact preservation assessment does not correspond to the cranial and postcranial preservation value assigned to the skeletal remains for each

⁷ Conservation measures, such as consolidation of friable material with PVA (polyvinyl acetate), were sometimes taken in the field. Trained conservation staff was not always on hand during the fieldwork, however. The professional conservators subsequently indicated that the overuse of PVA sometimes caused soil to bind to bones and artifacts.

⁸ Field recording was highly variable. In general, recordation of the condition of the skeleton, element by element, was much better than that of the overall grave (notes on the observed condition of in situ skeletal elements were recorded on forms by the excavation staff of the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team [MFAT] and are retained in the project archive). For some burials, detailed notes were taken on the soil; moisture conditions; consistency and surface condition of the bone, wood, and artifacts; and damage from exposure. For others, little or no information on these factors was recorded.

Value	Definition
"y"	Overall preservation of grave is such that artifacts might be expected to have survived. Skeletal elements from the upper half of the body and/or the coffin outline with nails were found in situ.
"n"	Heavily disturbed or redeposited remains; or the upper body was missing because of truncation by later feature, and no artifacts were found with lower body.
"y (no cranium)"	Otherwise intact grave where just the cranium had been truncated (cranial pins would be missing, but survival of other artifacts may be expected).
"y (cranium only)"	Only the cranium was still in its apparent original burial location (pins may be expected, although other artifacts would be missing, as they are rarely present on the cranium).
"n (empty coffin)"	Human remains (and possibly artifacts) appear to have been removed from otherwise intact coffin. These are rare cases for which it is believed decay cannot account for the lack of skeletal remains.
"n (not excavated)"	Artifacts were not found, but the burial was not fully excavated at the time the field project was halted, so their presence cannot be ruled out.

burial (see *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground*, Appendix D [Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009b]), which serve a different purpose. Although some of the factors affecting bony preservation also apply to artifacts, others do not. For example, even where the preservation of skeletal remains was minimal, such as in the case of many of the infants, coffins were clearly defined, and preservation of any other artifacts that had been placed with the deceased might be expected. It is worth noting that in several cases of extremely disturbed remains, copper staining from pins or tiny pin fragments were nonetheless noted with the bone.

Discussions of artifact frequencies in subsequent chapters will indicate the total numbers of burials considered based on the preservation assessments or other relevant criteria.

Graves Remaining in Place at the Site

The field excavation was halted by the General Services Administration (GSA) at the end of July 1992. Graves for which excavation was already underway at the time the excavation was halted were filled with vermiculite, and soil was placed over them. Some were subsequently removed in October 1992; others were left in place. At

that time, only some areas had been fully excavated (i.e., all burials removed). The site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) depicts the boundary line between the area that had been fully excavated and that which had not. It should be noted that between grid lines 110 and 150 East, excavated burials seem to be equally dense on either side of this line. The excavation team, however, clearly indicated that the area eastward of the line had not been fully excavated and that therefore additional burials might be present. 10

Based on the distribution of burials in areas that were fully excavated, it is likely burials are present throughout most of the northern portions of former Lots 17–19, 20½, and 21 (one possible grave outline was noted in the northeastern part of the site prior to halting the excavation). This indicates that the current memorial site, in fact, contains an intact portion of the original cemetery containing perhaps 200–300 graves beneath up to 25 feet of fill soil within the grass-covered enclosure.

⁹ The field excavations were stopped only after all burials had been excavated within the entire footprint of the 290 Broadway 34-story tower. The redesign of the building thus only had to address the relatively minor "Pavilion" section.

The draft site plan was prepared by field personnel Brian Ludwig and Margo Schur under the direction of Field Director Michael Parrington. This plan was used to plot foundations, nonburial features, limits of excavation, site disturbances, and the site grid on Figure 7, pocket map.

CHAPTER 4

Relative Dating

Jean Howson, Warren R. Perry, Augustin F. C. Holl, and Leonard G. Bianchi

This chapter describes the rationale and methodology for dividing the burial population into temporal groupings. It is emphasized that the chronological sequence developed here is a relative one and the dates assigned to each grouping approximate. Burials are assigned to broad temporal groups on the basis of (1) location and stratigraphy relative to nonburial features at the site, (2) artifacts found in direct association with the deceased or in the grave fill, (3) stratigraphic relationships to other burials, and (4) coffin type. In many cases, the parameters support each other, strengthening the assignments, although in other instances, evidence is ambiguous.

Site Features Relevant for Chronology

Nonburial physical features within the excavated site that are relevant for understanding the cemetery's use over time include:

- the remains of fences that once crossed the site from southwest to northeast along the boundary between the Van Borsum Patent and the Calk Hook Farm (see Chapters 2 and 3);
- ditches found in Lot 12 that trend in the same direction as the fence;
- the scatter of animal bone and cattle-horn core fragments that may represent waste dumping (possibly from tanneries) over a portion of the north part of the excavation site:
- the stoneware waste dump associated with potteries that stood on and/or adjacent to the cemetery.

The Fence Lines

Historic maps from 1754 and 1767 depict lines running diagonally from the southwest starting at Broadway

to northeast across the area of the cemetery, along or very near the alignment of the Van Borsum patent's northern boundary as it would be established in the 1780s-1790s (see Figures 22 and 24 in Chapter 2). On the 1754 Maerschalk map (see Figure 19 in Chapter 2 and Figure 33 in Chapter 3), the line is dashed and the "Negros Buriel Ground" is clearly labeled to its south. The fact that the mapmaker depicted a line suggests, at least, that the boundary somehow was physically marked on the landscape. There may have been a fence dividing the Calk Hook Farm from the burial ground at the time, or perhaps a path ran along the boundary, leading from the structure depicted on Broadway eastward to the "Pot Baker" near the Little Collect Pond. On the Ratzer plan of 1767 (Figure 45; see Figure 20 in Chapter 2 and Figure 34 in Chapter 3), a similarly placed line runs along the south side of three buildings: one on Broadway, shown with a second structure to its east, and the presumed pottery building farther east, shown within a rectangular lot (which itself may have been enclosed by a fence). Again, the line extending east from Broadway may represent a fence, dividing properties on the Calk Hook Farm (some of which was developed and had presumably been leased) from land to the south that is depicted as undeveloped (the cemetery).

Further evidence for the existence of a fence in the 1760s can be found in court records of 1812–1813 relating to the ownership of the former cemetery. The heirs to the Van Borsum patent had the land surveyed in 1784, but arguments arose as to the legality of possession of certain parcels during the period following the War for Independence. Proceedings included testimony of a number of witnesses as to the boundaries of the burial ground or patent and verification of tenancy during the period from the mid-eighteenth century through the 1790s. The summary of the case (Johnson 1853–1859:10:355) reads in part:

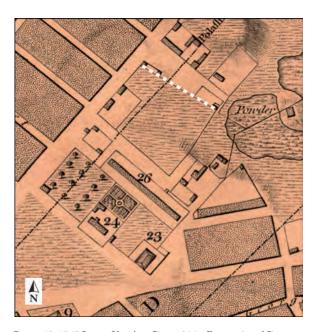


Figure 45. 1767 Ratzer Plan (see Figure 20 in Chapter 2 and Figure 34 in Chapter 3) showing a possible fence along the north side of the cemetery (dashed white) (Geography & Map Division, Library of Congress).

[The plaintiffs] showed that in May 1768, J. Teller, their ancestor, entered into possession of a house which he had built two or three years before on the negroe's burying ground, and which had, previously to his entrance, been occupied by his tenant. That he had a fence enclosing the burying ground, and claimed it as his property, and pastured it, and kept the key of the gate leading to the ground, and took payment for the use of the ground, and that it was known and called by the name of his land and fence. That he continued in possession until his death in June, 1775, and his family continued in possession afterwards, and until . . . the invasion of New-York in 1776; and that then the family left the city and retired into the country; and the British army took possession of the house and lot, and during the course of the war, and while under the dominion of the British, the house and fences were destroyed [emphasis added].

It is possible the Ratzer Plan depicts the fence that Teller had erected along the north side of the cemetery. It is doubtful the "Teller-phase" (ca. 1765–ca. 1776) burial ground was fully enclosed; the Broadway lots and the northern boundary may have been fenced. As the palisade, which once ran along the top of the rise on the south side of the burial ground, was no longer in place at the time of the Ratzer Plan, it is possible

that the cemetery had spread southward again. We can only speculate on the placement of a gate—Broadway seems the most likely location, although access from behind the barracks or the through the potteries may have been possible.

Archaeological evidence for fence alignments takes the form of filled-in postholes. A series of these features was recorded within the excavated site, roughly along the alignment of the patent boundary (Figure 46). The irregularity in the pattern of recorded postholes, as well as the variation in profile among those that were excavated, suggests that more than one fence is represented.

One iteration of the fence may date to the period from 1787 to ca. 1800, when the building lots on Duane (then Anthony) Street were initially laid out and developed, as discussed in Chapter 3. If the 1787 partition of the Calk Hook lots on Block 154 was physically marked out in some way—with a fence or even just with posts—burials in this area would have been discouraged or prohibited. Lots 12-16 were initially sold off with rear property lines that ran diagonally along the "Negroes Burying Ground" boundary (as shown in Figure 22 in Chapter 2). From Lot 17 eastward, however, properties were consolidated with the triangular gore of ground to their rears before being sold as building lots, so there may not have been a 1787 fence behind these properties. It is also possible that a fence was put up only as construction actually began on the lots, which was not until 1794.

Moving back in time, the evidence cited above suggests that John Teller constructed a fence in 1765 or 1768. An earlier fence, the one possibly depicted on the 1754 map (see Figure 19 in Chapter 2 and Figure 33 in Chapter 3), might have been taken down sometime before Teller took possession. It is also possible John Teller's fence was already partially in place when he came to live on the property, erected by a previous Van Borsum claimant or by the Rutgers to delimit their property to its north.

Finally, it is possible there was a fence along the patent boundary earlier in the eighteenth century, although none is depicted on any map. In 1723, Jacobus Kip, one of the heirs to the Van Borsum patent, petitioned the Common Council to assist him in surveying the property (New York City Common Council 1905:3:335). It is at least possible that he was successful in having the bounds of "his" land surveyed and then erected a fence to separate it from the Calk Hook Farm.

There is little doubt that the northern portion of the excavated cemetery was used differently than

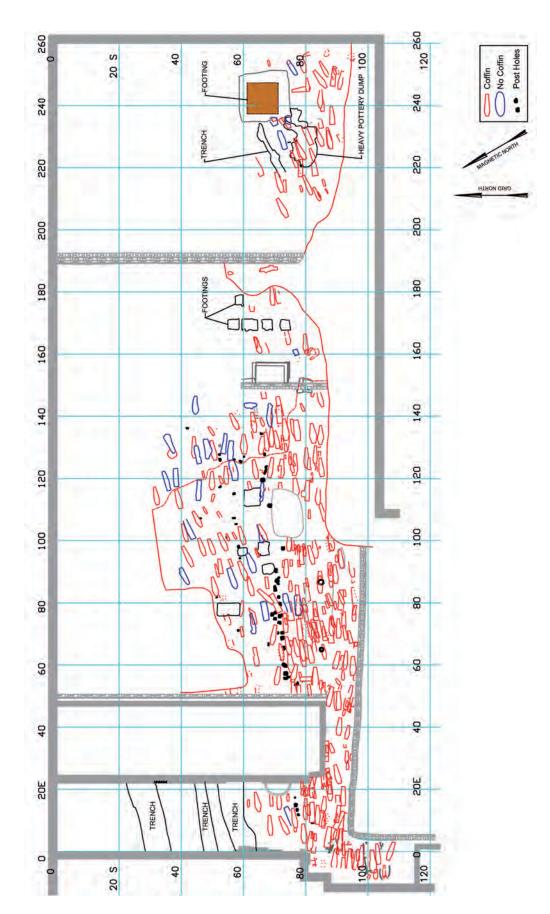


Figure 46. Site features and burials, African Burial Ground archaeological excavation (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

the portion south of the fence line. Interments in the northern area are sparse compared to the southern area, where intensive use and reuse resulted in a dense concentration of graves (see Figure 7, pocket map). Other distinctions of the northern area include a higher frequency of domestic refuse in the soil matrix, evidence for a higher frequency of weedy plants, a more regular and more southerly orientation of burials, and the presence of most of the site's coffinless graves.

The domestic refuse that found its way into northern grave shafts includes ceramics that were common from the seventeenth century on, suggesting the northern area was used more than the south for scattered refuse disposal. There is also a slightly higher incidence of weedy taxa—aster relatives, goosefoot relatives, and chicory relatives—from analyzed burials in the northern portion of the excavated site (see Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume). There is no similar increase in ragweed type, suggesting that the increases in the other weedy types were not caused by cultivation or continuous soil disturbance. Noncultivated plants related to asters, goosefoot, and chicory are waste-ground plants and may reflect the use of landfill containing these plants (see Chapter 3 on the filling of the Calk Hook lots) or perhaps the neglect of this property beginning with the British occupation.

Divergent nonburial land use aside, north of the fence line, the graves themselves are distinct. The scarcity of burials in the northern area allows regularities in the horizontal placement of graves to emerge so that it is possible to discern rows oriented roughly north-south, probably along contours in the hillside. In addition, at least in the western half of the northern area, graves are angled fairly uniformly south of grid west; burial orientation in the area south of the posthole alignment is much more variable (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of burial orientation). Finally, 21 graves without coffins were located clearly to the north of the fence line, out of the 32 coffinless graves at the site (see Figure 46). Put another way, 33 percent of the burials that were clearly to the north of the line were without coffins, compared to only 4 percent of those clearly south of the line.

If we thus accept that the northern area represents a distinct pattern of use, the question arises as to how the burials to the north of the posthole alignment are related temporally to fences. Were these burials interred:

• before any fence was built, in which case interments were made in the area for a brief time (given their

- relative sparsity) early on and subsequently were restricted to the area of the Van Borsum patent to the south;
- prior to the Teller phase, but while an earlier fence (possibly as early as 1723, and depicted in 1755) was standing and thus deliberately outside the main cemetery;
- during Teller's tenure, and thus deliberately outside the gated cemetery for which a fee was charged (ca. 1766–1776); or
- after the British destroyed the fence (i.e., during the occupation and after the war, 1776 through the development of the lots and the effective closing of the African Burial Ground)?

Artifact analysis, discussed in the section "Artifact Dating," indicates that at least some of the northern burials postdate 1760. As the low density of burials suggests a limited period of use for the northern area, it is most likely datable to either the Teller phase or the post-1776 phase, or possibly to both. We believe the post-1776 hypothesis is best supported by the evidence, as discussed in the section titled "Results of Analysis: The Temporal Grouping of Burials" and in Chapter 9.

The Ditches

Physical boundaries may also be created by ditches. There were three southwest-northwest-trending ditches recorded archaeologically within Lot 12 (see Figure 46). According to Cheek (2003:Chapter 4) the fill in the ditches has been dated: the two northernmost contained material from the 1760s and later, and the southern ditch yielded artifact types from the 1780s and later. Cheek has mentioned several possible functions for the trenches, from drainage features, to dumping features, to boundary ditches or fencepost trenches. The northern ditch feature was some 9–10 feet wide and the middle one was 3–4 feet wide; each was 2.5–3 feet deep. In cross section, the middle ditch had a straight northern side, such as would be found in a "ha-ha," a landscape feature meant to keep animals out of gardens. The southernmost ditch was 7–7.5 feet wide and shallow—just 1.5–2 feet deep and it appears to have been open for a longer period of time than the others, based on its fill layers.

If one or more of the ditches functioned as a cemetery boundary, this would mean that during the period when the interments located northward of the fence

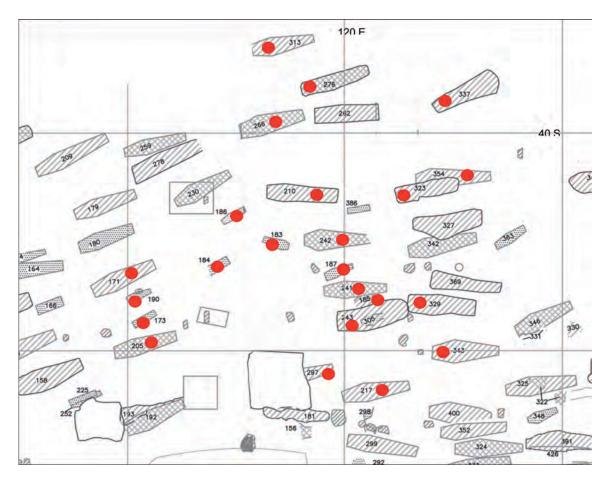


Figure 47. Burials in the vicinity of the tannery dump in the northern part of the excavated site. Burials with significant cow hoof, horn, and bone material in the grave shaft are indicated with large dots.

line were being conducted, either the cemetery's users or its putative property owners saw fit to mark its extent or perhaps to protect it from grazing animals. No burials were located to the north of the southernmost trench within Lot 12. However, the alignment of this trench, if projected northeastward beyond Lot 12, falls within areas of the site that were not excavated, so it is not possible to determine whether any graves were located outside it. As Cheek has pointed out, the southernmost trench feature is the most likely candidate for a cemetery boundary. It is doubtful that any of the ditches represent an early, pre-fence boundary, as there is no evidence that early burials extend this far north.

Another possibility is that the trenches mark edges of or beds of roadways or paths that once led from Broadway eastward to the pottery kiln(s) located near the Little Collect Pond (see maps in Chapter 2).

Animal-Bone Dumping

The frequency of animal bone and horn in grave shafts and in other excavated features (for the latter, see Cheek [2003]) has been plotted over space, and it seems clear that within one area of the site—between grid coordinates 135 and 195 East to the north of the fence line—dumping of animal bone took place at some period (Figure 47). The faunal remains in the dump include high relative frequencies of horn, hooves, etc., suggesting that this subarea was used for waste from tannery operations (see Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume). However, within this subarea, there are some interspersed graves with little or no animal bone.

It is possible that the dumping area was very irregular, so that its edge might fall between adjacent graves. But another reasonable explanation for the pattern of presence-absence is that some of the burials here predated the bone dump, although others were dug into it, with the animal bones then back-filled into their grave

¹ Cheek (2003:Chapter 4) has suggested that there were burials north of the alignment, but this is not apparent from the site mapping.

shafts. For this small part of the site, then, it may be possible to date graves relative to one another according to the presence or absence of animal remains. If the dump represents a single event or a brief period of time, the interval of time between burials with and without bone may be small. The burials within the dump are discussed further in Chapter 9.

Pottery-Waste Dumping

Stoneware pottery manufacturers were located immediately adjacent to the excavated portion of the cemetery from the 1730s on, and for at least part of the period, these industries used the area of the cemetery for dumping kiln waste (broken stoneware vessels, clay waste, and kiln furniture—see Appendix F, Part 3 of this volume). The ceramic material would have lain on the surface of the ground or in shallow pits. When graves were dug in these locations, the sherds were back-filled into the graves. Thus we hypothesize that in the areas where ceramics were ubiquitous (i.e., the dump areas), any grave shaft that did not contain these materials probably predated the dump. In addition to the stoneware operations, earthenware was being produced by the Campbell pottery, located just across Broadway from Block 184, during the eighteenth century. Redware waste sherds from this pottery were also scattered over the ground, although not concentrated in defined dumping areas.

Kiln waste was concentrated in the southeastern area of the excavated cemetery. The material may have been from either or both of the kilns that stood nearby (one to the southeast and one closer by, near Duane Street). It should be remembered that the northeastern part of Block 154 was never fully excavated and may have contained pottery middens as well. A particularly dense dump, which appears to have been on the surface rather than in an excavated pit, was designated Feature 139 during fieldwork. It covered an irregular area that overlapped with several burials. A scatter of stoneware waste sherds and discarded kiln furniture came to be spread over a much larger area, however. Such material was recovered from grave shafts at the far west end of the site, although concentrations drop off markedly to the west of the 200 East grid line. (It is likely at least some of the stoneware sherds recovered were from vessels that were in use, rather than kiln wasters.)

The commencement of the stoneware operation on "Pot Bakers Hill" (in the southeast part of the Van Borsum patent and to the southeast of the excavated site) can be placed as early as 1728, when it appeared on the Lyne survey (see Figures 15 and 16 in Chapter 2). William Crolius, the presumed proprietor of the works, was registered in the city as a potter in 1728, although he had immigrated here by 1718 (see Janowitz and Cheek 2003). The second, northern kiln, associated with Crolius and/or Remmey, may date to somewhat later, probably ca. 1740 (it was depicted on the Grim map, which was drawn in 1804 but represents 1742–1744, and appeared on contemporary maps by the 1750s).

We do not know, however, when the potters dumped kiln-waste material in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Analysis of the ceramic materials themselves suggests that very few kiln firings, perhaps even just one, are represented by the most concentrated dump (Feature 139; see Appendix F, Part 3 of this volume). This analysis also indicates that the wares at the New York African Burial Ground are dissimilar to those from other New York sites that date to after the Revolution. We consider it likely the dumping would have stopped during the period when Teller fenced the land. Therefore, we date the stoneware kiln dump to somewhere in the period from ca. 1728 to ca. 1765. Some burials in the southeast subarea of the excavated cemetery are clearly datable to after the dumping began, since they were placed in the middle of the midden and their shafts were literally filled with sherds and kiln furniture. Others, with smaller amounts of stoneware waste in the shaft fill, were located outside the edge of the dense midden. In some cases, burials with little or no ceramic waste are thought to have been interred prior to the time of the heavy dumping.

The Campbell earthenware manufactory on Broadway, which produced redware vessels and pantiles (roofing tiles), probably commenced operation in the late 1750s (John Campbell first appears in the records as a potter at age 20 in 1759 [see Ketchum 1987:42–43]). Frequencies of redwares in grave shafts are low, however, and no localized dump area similar to those for stoneware or animal waste can be mapped within the excavated cemetery.² Dumping seems to have occurred within Lot 12 to the north of the grave-yard, and the only burial with a high frequency of redware, Burial 313, is the northernmost excavated burial at the site. This burial can confidently be placed in time after the beginning of redware manufacture. Otherwise, only the presence of redware kiln furniture, pantiles, or

² A nonburial feature in Lot 12, dated to the period 1760–1780, was filled with redware kiln debris (Cheek 2003).

kiln wasters can be used to place burials in the second half of the eighteenth century, and there are very few with such items in their shafts: Burials 185, 186, 213, 217, 242, 266, 276, 323, and 354.³ The absence of redware kiln items cannot be used as a terminus ante quem (TAQ), the date before which deposition must have occurred, to place burials in the first half of the century, because overall frequency is so low.

Artifact Dating

Where possible, artifacts found in direct association with skeletal remains or coffins as well as artifacts from the grave-shaft fill have been used to assign a terminus post quem (TPQ), the date after which deposition must have occurred, for a burial. A grave that, based on superposition, clearly postdated a burial with dated artifacts was given that burial's TPQ (unless it had a later one of its own). It should also be remembered that if an interment cut into an earlier grave, an item that was recovered along with the later burial might actually have come from the earlier grave shaft. Because there is no way of determining when such mixing occurred, however, such items can only provide a TPQ for the later burial. Most of the graves that were disturbed as a result of construction activities, either historically or recently, have not been assigned TPQs owing to the likely presence of intrusive material. Artifact-based TPQs are listed in Table 13.

Stoneware and redware kiln furniture have not been used as datable types in this analysis; the wares, which in themselves have wide time ranges, have instead been used as time-markers for the dumping from local potteries, which we choose to keep as a separate variable.

Because so many burials contained no datable items at all, and most datable artifacts from the New York African Burial Ground have very broad manufacture dates, only a few burials can be assigned to temporal periods on the basis of datable items alone. However, when combined with data on coffin shape, stratigraphic sequence, and relationships to other site features, the artifacts are helpful in developing the chronology.

Many grave shafts contained artifacts that were first manufactured in the seventeenth century (e.g., slipware or white delft) and are devoid of items that are clearly of later manufacture. However, over the southern part of the excavated cemetery, the distribution of artifacts overall was very sparse, and it is likely the absence of later artifacts reflects a relatively "clean" surface. When evaluating domestic sites, the absence of artifact types that were ubiquitous can be used to assign TAQs (dates before which depositional events occurred, in other words, latest likely dates) for archaeological deposits. However, artifact types, especially ceramics, which are typically ubiquitous on sites with domestic components, cannot be used in this way at the New York African Burial Ground. Although dwellings stood adjacent to the cemetery during the eighteenth century, associated domestic refuse may not have been quickly scattered over the area of the excavated interments. Thus the absence of creamware, a type imported in quantity in the 1760s, cannot be taken to mean that a burial predated that decade (although the presence of creamware, of course, indicates that the burial cannot have been made prior to its importation). Nor can the presence of creamware and the absence of pearlware bracket a burial within the 1760s–1770s period, because there is no reason to expect pieces of ceramic to be present in the first place. If crockery were being deliberately placed on the surfaces of graves, as has been documented at African American cemeteries elsewhere. the presence/absence of datable types might be useful for dating. There is no evidence from the New York African Burial Ground for this practice, as on most of the site the original surface was not present or had been mechanically stripped (for a possible instance of crockery placed on a coffin lid, see Chapter 14). The items providing the early TPQs listed in Table 13—for the most part ceramic types—all may have been in use well into the eighteenth century and, in some cases, were still being manufactured. The fact that the graves in which they were found contained no items manufactured later does not mean that they were early interments, although it does raise that possibility. In fact, graves believed to be the earliest in our sample based on other criteria typically contained no datable artifacts at all in the grave fill, which suggests to us that the ground was "clean" in the early years and acquired a sparse accumulation of refuse material over time. It should also be noted that there were 16 burials that we believe to be later than 1776 (based on other criteria) whose only graveshaft artifacts were of types manufactured beginning between 1640 and 1744.

³ Redware sherds identified as fragments of dishes, pots, or bowls that may represent domestic refuse rather than kiln waste are *not* taken as proof the pottery was in operation at the time of their deposition.

Terminus Post Quem	Artifact Burial No.		
1640	plain white delft	191	
1660	Chinese export	192, 402	
1670	slipware	9, 50, 57, 60, 67, 171, 194, 245, 414	
1680	light-blue painted delft	37, 63, 72, 158, 180	
1720	white salt glaze	25, 35, 55, 205, 268, 276, 278, 286, 419	
1727	coin	214, 259	
1740	agate ware	4A	
1740	pipe	217	
1740	Whieldon ware 297		
1744	scratch blue	135, 328, 366, 379	
1750	Fazackerly palette delft	5, 30	
1760	creamware	40, 172, 196, 224, 228, 236, 242, 266, 313, 323, 333, 337, 354, 362, 413	
ca. 1760	iron tacks	101, 176	
ca. 1770	buttons	6	
1780	pearlware	1, 12, 14, 204, 207, 208, 241, 257	

Table 13. Artifact-Based Termini Post Quem

Items placed directly with the deceased (as opposed to being mixed into the shaft fill) also cannot be used to assign any date other than the TPQ. In the case of the New York African Burial Ground, items placed with or worn by the deceased included such things as beads datable only broadly to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, numerous buttons with broad manufacture dates, a pipe datable only broadly to the eighteenth century, and so forth. Fortunately, some items (buttons and coins) do have beginning manufacture dates that fall within the eighteenth century, and these, along with similarly datable grave-shaft material, can be used to place some burials more precisely in time.

Burial Stratigraphy and Spatial Patterning

Superimposed burials provide an opportunity to sequence interments from earlier to later, even without being able to date them. All burials that overlapped with others were organized into "series," arbitrarily numbered groups for which stratigraphic relationships could be examined. It is important to emphasize that the series we used for relative sequencing

do not necessarily or even typically reflect clustered or related burials, terms which refer to burials that may have been intentionally placed in relation to each other. Many of the series included only a pair of overlapping burials, whereas a few, in the more densely occupied areas of the cemetery, consisted of 20 or more graves. The term "isolates" was used to refer to burials that do not overlap with any others, and again, it is emphasized that a stratigraphically isolated burial was not necessarily spatially or socially isolated from others.

The relative positioning of overlapping burials within a series was reconstructed through analysis of field notes, drawings, site maps, and photographs. All recorded depths had to be converted to absolute elevations. Sometimes the order of interment was apparent upon first examination, especially when just two or three burials were involved, but in the more complex cases, the sequence often had to be derived from multiple lines of evidence. Although individual burial drawings are in the main excellent, stratigraphic relationships were only occasionally shown, with each burial recorded as though in isolation. A series of field maps, created during the excavations by tracing or transposing burial or coffin drawings cumulatively onto larger sheets (at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot),

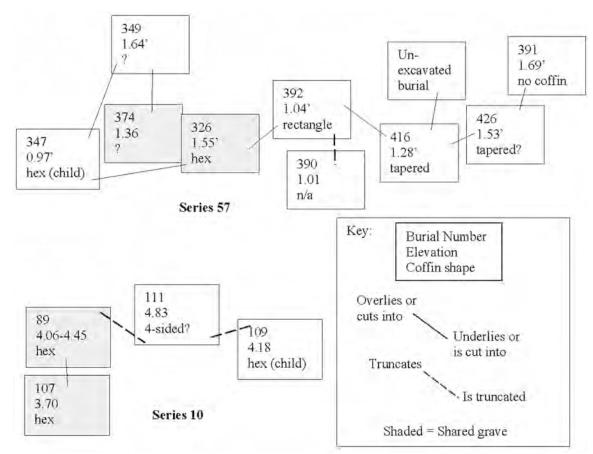


Figure 48. Examples of diagrammed stratigraphic series. The positions of the rectangles represent the relative positions of the burials (to the extent possible in a two-dimensional diagram).

was very helpful but not always conclusive as to the sequence of superposition of the most crowded burials. There are also a few maps drawn prior to the excavation of graves within excavation shelters, which sometimes clarify relationships, but these exist only for a few locations. The field notes, which were recorded burial by burial, rarely directly address issues of stratigraphic relationships to other burials, and the descriptions of grave-shaft and overlying, underlying, and surrounding soils are somewhat sporadic. As is always the case when analyzing a site subsequent to the actual fieldwork, much time and effort had to be spent reconstructing the archaeological excavation before the virtual reconstruction of the original site could begin.

Reconstructed stratigraphic relationships were diagramed for ease of analysis. Examples are reproduced in Figure 48, and the full set is in Appendix I, Part 3 of this volume, along with a list of the burials in each series analyzed. Prose descriptions of the stratigraphic relationships of each burial are provided in Part 2 of this volume.

The "earlier than," "later than" order of interment arrived at through the stratigraphic and site map analysis does not, of course, provide information regarding the span of time involved overall or the intervening time between individual burials, and much less regarding the absolute date of any interment. Inferences have been made for specific types of stratigraphic sequences, however: In cases where a later burial actually truncated an earlier one—that is, destroyed all or part of the prior burial—it is hypothesized that a relatively lengthy period intervened between the two. This is predicated on the assumption that the later interment in these cases showed a disregard for the earlier, either because the grave diggers had no knowledge of, or no concern for the preservation of, an existing grave. The truncation of one grave by another is not, in fact, all that common at the New York African Burial Ground, even though there are locations where burials are quite densely crowded.

The task of placing burials in temporal groups is complicated by a practice we believe to have been common at the cemetery, the placement of young children within, above, or in close proximity to adult graves (see discussion in Chapter 5). We recognize our own bias toward assigning child burials to the same temporal groups as the adults but do not have a means to straightforwardly correct it.⁴

There is one group of cases where the elapsed time between a later disturbance and a burial or between superimposed burials can be better estimated. The degree of disarticulation of the disturbed burial can suggest how long it was in the ground before it was displaced. Sometimes it is clear that the remains were fully disarticulated prior to the disturbance, as bones were either placed in a neat pile or scattered. In these cases, the minimum length of time necessary for full fleshy decomposition provides a minimum interval between events. This interval may have been approximately 2–3 years, although coffins, shrouds, and clothing may have reduced the decomposition rate somewhat (Rodriguez 1997:460–461).⁵

In other cases, the span of time encompassed by a stratigraphic sequence can be deduced only with reference to other factors, such as spatial considerations (e.g., apparent groups or rows) or to independent variables such as TPQs or relationships to other site features. Likewise, isolates can be temporally related to other burials only by reference to such variables. In this type of analysis, the danger of tautology must always be avoided: another variable can provide a hypothesized date range for one or more of the members of a stratigraphic series, but only if stratigraphic position has not been used to assign a date range to that variable. However, if stratigraphic position tends to co-vary with another trait, such as coffin shape or the nature of grave-fill contents, then chronological distinctions are strengthened, and periodization becomes more feasible.

One factor that must be examined in relation to stratigraphy—and especially to the assignment of isolates to strata—is elevation. Sitewide, absolute elevation itself cannot be used to determine earlier and later burials. This is because the original ground

surface of the cemetery sloped downward from the west, near Broadway, to the east, near the Collect Pond (see Chapter 3). Thus, most of the westernmost burials were originally at higher elevations than those in the eastern part of the site. It is only within limited areas that absolute elevation might be a clue as to sequence of interment. However, even this would presume that the ground surface in any given location remained constant over the life of the cemetery. Such a presumption is untenable. In fact, there is evidence that the ground surface in some places eroded away in the interval between interments, although in other areas, it was raised. Given the uneven terrain, it is likely that the hillsides eroded and the flatter areas came to be covered over as the seasons passed. Hence, there are instances, not infrequent, where a burial has clearly been damaged by a later burial, but the earlier of the two has a higher cranial elevation than the later (e.g., Series 10, in Figure 48). This indicates that an isolate burial cannot simply be placed temporally with others nearby that have similar elevations. Instead, its alignment, soil description, grave-fill contents, and any other available evidence must be considered. In many cases, it was necessary to simply leave isolates in the default Middle Group.

It should also be remembered that the depth below the ground surface of even the uppermost burials cannot be reconstructed in most cases. This is because a ground surface was intact in only one small area of the site, the western end of Republican Alley (see Chapter 3). Thus the depths of grave shafts relative to shifting surfaces cannot be used to gauge the likelihood that interments were from the same period. Where the ground surface was recorded, grave shafts apparently were no more than 2.5–3 feet deep. It may be possible through further analysis, using this depth as the norm, to postulate changes in the ground surface at various locations in the cemetery where burials overlap.

The inability to use absolute elevation to reconstruct relative chronology does not mean that the use of the higher part of the cemetery and the use of the lower part coincided. In fact, one or the other area may have been used first, and there are good historical arguments for either scenario. One or more other time-sensitive variables would have to covary with east-west coordinates in order to begin to test which area saw earliest use. No such covariance has been discerned in the data thus far.

⁴ This bias is apparent when we look at the child/adult ratios for each temporal group (see Chapter 5)

⁵ Sometimes a later action displaced bones from an earlier burial, but some of the earlier bones remained articulated. Research at ossuary sites has lead to the development of a sequence for skeletal element disarticulation, which helps us to recognize that remains that were displaced from their original burial position might display partial articulation (Ubelaker 1974:28–31).

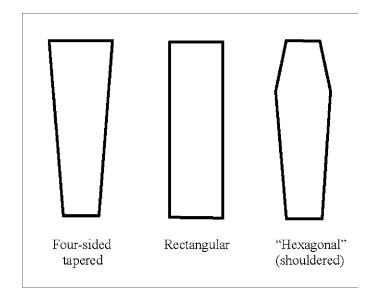


Figure 49. Coffin shapes represented at the African Burial Ground.

Coffin Shape

The New York African Burial Ground sample includes four-sided tapering, rectangular, and shouldered or "hexagonal" shaped, coffins (Figure 49). From the outset, we considered the possibility that this variability is temporally diagnostic. The documentary and material record for change over time in coffin shape is confusing, but in general, a change from four-sided tapering coffins to the shouldered variety is supported (coffins are discussed in Chapter 10). The preponderance of stratigraphic relationships at the New York African Burial Ground point to this sequence. The issue is complicated because of the large number of infants and young children interred here. It is very clear on the basis of burial stratigraphy and other dating factors that many very small coffins were made in the four-sided shapes (tapered or rectangular) throughout the period that the cemetery was in use. Only the "full-sized" coffins were therefore considered candidates for temporal sequencing.

Four-sided adult coffins at the cemetery were of two types, those that tapered toward the foot and those that were rectangular. Initially, both were grouped together as possible indicators of early burials. Subsequently, stratigraphic and artifact analysis produced contradictory evidence for this, and the rectangular-shaped, fullsized coffin—found in any case in only two burials—is now considered to be nondiagnostic.

There is evidence that four-sided tapered and hexagonal coffins overlapped in time at the New York African Burial Ground. However, the tapered coffin type appears to provide the greatest degree of confidence for generating an early analytical cohort (see discussion of the Early Group in "Results of Analysis: The Temporal Grouping of Burials").

Attempted seriation of coffins based on other characteristics, such as size, material, and construction details, has not been fruitful. None of the basic parameters of variation other than shape appear to be time sensitive. One possible instance of change over time is decreased use of spruce, but the sample number is too small for confidence. See Chapter 10 for detailed data on New York African Burial Ground coffins.

Results of Analysis: The Temporal Grouping of Burials

The assignment of burials to temporal groups is presented in Figure 50*a*–50*d* and Chapters 6–9. A complete list of burials that includes temporal assignments is in Appendix C, Part 3 of this volume; the burial descriptions in Part 2 of this volume include the temporal group assignments and the supporting evidence where appropriate. The Early Group and the Late Group are derived based on the analyses described previously in this chapter. The Middle

⁶ The term "hexagonal" was used throughout the analysis and in the database but is perhaps technically a misnomer. The angled shoulder of these coffins was formed by bending a single side board and can be slight or pronounced. See Chapter 10.

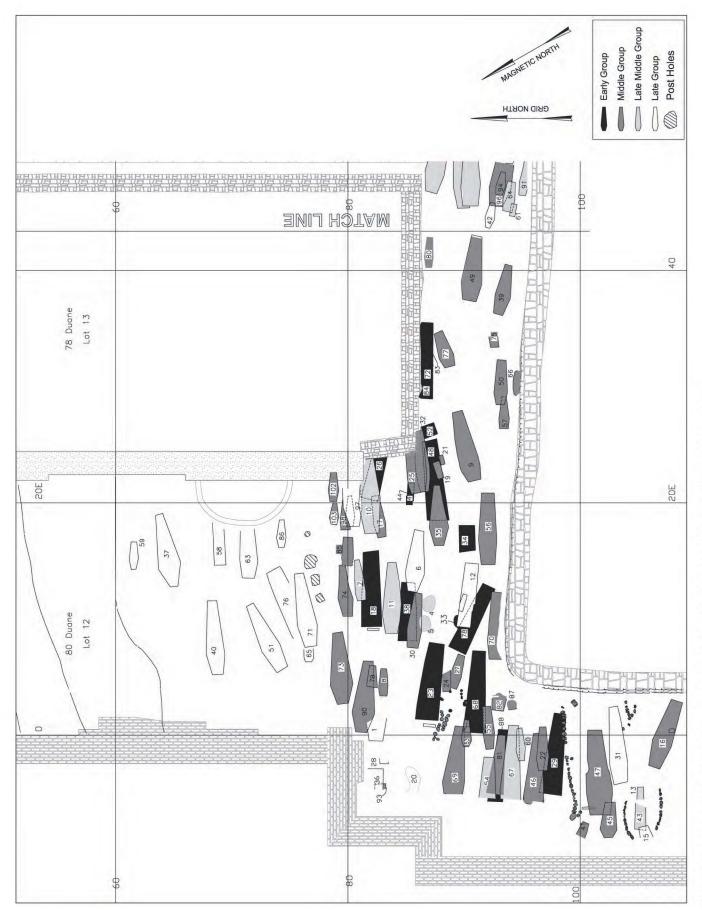


Figure 50a. Western area, African Burial Ground excavation (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

Figure 50b. Western-central area, African Burial Ground excavation (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

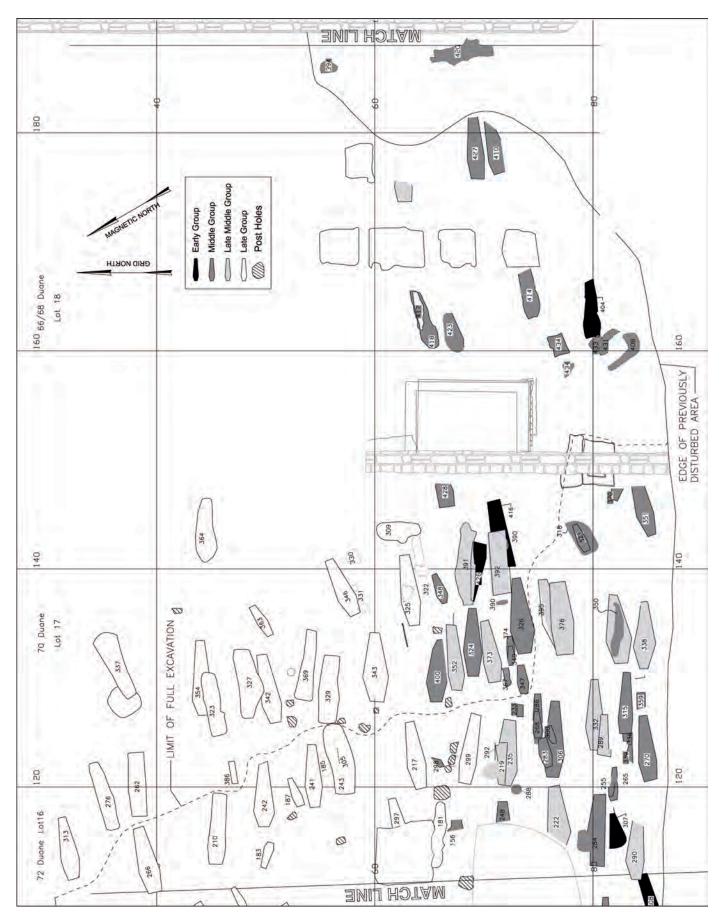


Figure 50c. East-central and Lot 18 areas, African Burial Ground excavation (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

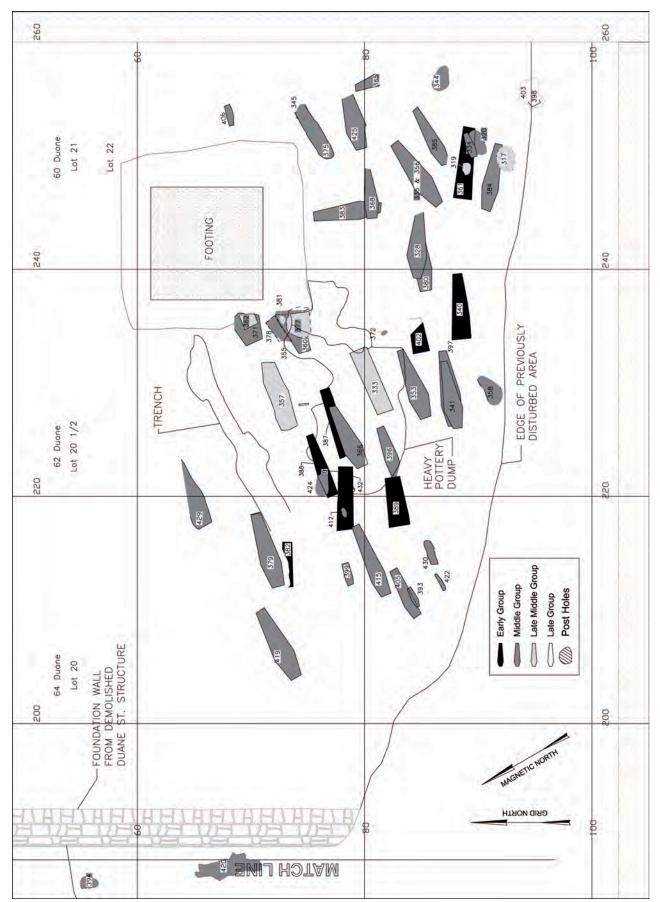


Figure 50d. Eastern area, African Burial Ground excavation (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

VOLUME 2, PART 1. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE NEW YORK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Groups comprise all remaining burials—the majority of those excavated at the New York African Burial Ground—and within it a Late-Middle component is identified based on stratigraphic relationships and, in some cases, artifact dating. It is likely the Middle Group overlaps at one end with Early Group burials and that the Late-Middle Group overlaps in time with the Late Group. It is emphasized that no burials are dated absolutely. In the following discussion we first address the Late and Early Groups, which are most clearly defined.

The Late Group

The Late Group (114 graves) was first postulated on the basis of burials' spatial and stratigraphic relationship to the posthole alignment that is believed to represent the Calk Hook Farm–Van Borsum patent boundary. Eight of the northern-area burials have TPQs of ca. 1760 (creamware in the shafts). Two have TPQs of ca. 1780 (pearlware in the shafts; see Table 13). It is posited on the basis of this and spatial patterning (i.e., relatively sparse burial distribution), that this area was in use relatively late in the life of the cemetery. But was it a 30–40-year span encompassing the Teller and postwar periods, or was it a shorter span limited to one or the other period?

Possible evidence for the use of the northern area during the Teller phase, 1765–1776, includes the presence of most of the coffinless burials in the area. Those who buried their dead north of the fence may have included people unable to pay the "fee" that Teller was supposedly charging and who, by extension, also may have been unable to afford coffins.

Three kinds of evidence argue against the correlation of burial-without-coffin and Teller's imposed fees. For one thing, there are coffinless burials in which the deceased were interred with objects of value, suggesting that those without coffins were not necessarily the poorest of the cemetery's population. Forty-five burials had items of clothing or jewelry (discounting problematic associations as discussed in Chapters 12 and 13)—6 of these were among the 32 coffinless burials. These 6 include 2 with enameled cuff link or button faces and 1 with a set of matching gilt cuff links. It does not appear likely that extreme impoverishment correlates directly with coffinless burial, although we note the small numbers in the sample. Second, in at least one case, there is an apparent north-south row of coffinless burials (Burials 223, 150, 199, and 211, approximately at

grid line 75 East) that spans the fence-post alignment, suggesting that this type of interment was being conducted at a time when the fence was not standing (and thus no fees were being extorted by Teller). Finally, there is the simple fact that throughout the course of the cemetery's use, most African New Yorkers buried there were very poor, yet their survivors almost always managed to provide a coffin, either through the household head (the "master" in the parlance of the time) or through contributions from kin and community. The provision of a coffin, we argue, was likely considered one of the very basic components of a proper burial (see Chapters 5 and 10). Why then, would poverty be marked by lack of coffins only during the Teller phase? It is possible, and perhaps likely, that the frequency of coffinless interments north of the fence line has an explanation other than a purely economic one.

There is some circumstantial historical evidence for the use of the northern area only after 1776. Why, we might ask, would the Rutgers/Barclay family (proprietors of the Calk Hook land) allow burials on their property in the 1760s? They had leased out some of this property (apparently to potteries and a potash manufacturer), and structures stood on it adjacent to the burial ground. During the occupation, however, property boundaries were more easily ignored, and proprietors were subject to encroachment with little legal recourse. With the destruction of the fence, the Calk Hook property may have lain open for usurpation by cemetery users. It is possible, too, that British use of the southern part of the cemetery for barracks and other military uses and for burying its army dead and prisoners (see Chapter 2) effectively "pushed" the African Burial Ground northward. The animalbone dump identified north of the fence also may be evidence that this part of the Calk Hook property was encroached upon during and after the war.

In summary, the burials to the north of the alignment of the patent boundary are assigned to the late cohort within the cemetery population. The actual time period—after ca. 1765 or after 1776—is not certain, although there are historical reasons to select the later date. In brief, the presence of most coffinless burials to the north of the fence line can be linked to its use during the British occupation of New York. Demographic evidence supports this dating, a point taken up in Chapter 9.

In three cases, northern burials were truncated by other interments, and the bones were redeposited in such a way as to prove that they were completely defleshed by the time of the second interment. These cases are Burials 76, 185, and 193. We do not know the precise length of time it would have taken for the bones to be completely disarticulated. All three were without coffins, which may have led to quicker decomposition. Assuming the northern area became available for burials in 1776 and was in use through at least 1787, the interval between superimposed burials could have been a maximum of 11 years. Decomposition may have taken only 2–3 years, so the assignment of even the disturbed burials to the Late Group is justified.

It is assumed that burials continued south of the fence line during the time the northern area was used, as there is no evidence (archaeological or historical) to indicate they did not. Those burials to the south of the fence line that have been placed in the Late Group have been assigned on the basis of stratigraphy, spatial alignment, and artifacts. There are a number of burials, notably toward the western end of the excavated site, whose elevations are considerably higher than others in the immediate area. It appears the area saw a last phase of use after earlier graves had been covered over, possibly owing to development on Broadway.

As noted, there are some cases where a row of interments appears to span the line of fence posts. Some such rows include burials whose grave shafts cut into postholes and thus clearly postdate at least one fence. Rows, of course, may include both pre- and post-fence burials, but where other factors suggest a burial is relatively late (e.g., it overlay several others), its location in a row with northern ones can support the dating.

The Early Group

We have seen that artifacts can provide dates after which burials must have taken place, but the lack of datable artifacts in most burials makes it impossible to know the earliest possible dates of interment. Analysis of coffin shape, stratigraphy, and relationships to the pottery dump, however, has led to the generation of an early grouping of burials consisting of 51 graves,

although 8 of these are considered only probable.

The hypothesis that four-sided coffins at the New York African Burial Ground were earlier than hexagonal coffins (see Chapter 10) was tested by examining stratigraphic relationships. In 26 cases, graves containing four-sided adult coffins were overlain or cut into by other graves, and in 10 cases, four-sided coffins were actually thoroughly truncated by later graves (see Appendix I in Part 3 of this volume). Five burials with four-sided coffins were isolates, and one was an isolate except for a co-interred child burial. Only three graves with four-sided coffins, Burials 207, 392, and possibly 388, overlay other burials.

Burial 207, an adult grave with a tapered coffin, overlay numerous child and infant burials. Cleaning of the cranium of Burial 207 in the laboratory yielded a tiny piece of hand-painted pearlware, datable to the 1780s or later. Based on this sherd, which probably was in the soil matrix at the time of the original interment, Burial 207 appears to be a Late Group interment.⁸

The burials with four-sided coffins were also examined in relation to other site features. None appears north of the fence line. Burials with four-sided coffins in the area of the stoneware dump were next examined. The grave shaft of one with a rectangular coffin, Burial 333, contained massive amounts of stoneware waste (from Feature 139) and thus had to be placed later in time than the kiln dumping. It also contained a piece of creamware (dating it to after ca. 1760). However, other four-sided-coffin burials within the vicinity of the dense kiln dump contained only small quantities of ceramic waste material relative to the midden density and no other temporally diagnostic artifacts. These included Burial 340, an isolate burial with a tapered coffin, which had no stoneware in its grave shaft. The grave was located just to the south of Feature 139 and therefore outside the concentrated dump. However, it seems highly unlikely that no sherds would have found their way into the grave shaft if the dump was already in place here when the woman in Burial 340 was interred (shafts of other

⁷ Burial 185 definitely was interred after the period of animal-bone dumping, and there was much animal bone in its shaft fill. The waste material in the soil may have affected taphonomic conditions for Burial 185, causing an even speedier decomposition of the flesh. The presence of tanning materials, such as leather scrap and tree bark, would have increased preservation of flesh, but there is no reason to believe such materials accompanied the animal bones to the dump (Rodriguez 1997:463).

⁸ For purposes of the chronological analyses in Chapters 6–9, Burial 207 has been placed with the later group. There were disturbances in the immediate area, including the area above this burial. Because the sherd of pearlware was actually in the cranium, however, it seems prudent to assume it was not intrusive. If we were to consider it as intrusive and place Burial 207 with the Early Group, then all of the underlying subadult interments would also need to be assigned to the Early Group. This reassignment would substantively alter the demographics of the earlier group. See Chapter 6 for further discussion.

burials near the edges of the dump contained at least some stoneware).

Burials 387 and 389 had four-sided, tapered coffins and were located beneath burials with hexagonal coffins. They contained some ceramic waste but nowhere near as much as their respective overlying burials or the midden itself. The field records are not specific as to where sherds were recovered within a given grave, but there is a possibility that the ceramics in these two burials came from the intruding later graves. Yet another grave with a four-sided, tapered coffin, Burial 388, contained much more kiln waste (over 400 pieces) than did Burials 387 and 389. Although Burial 388 did not have a later burial intruding into it, the area surrounding and overlying the grave was disturbed, so the possibility that the ceramics were intrusive cannot be ruled out. If the ceramics in their shafts were not intrusive, these burials suggest that the midden was formed during a time when four-sided, tapered coffins were still in use. In this case, the lowered frequencies of stonewares in these graves may be due to the fact that their grave shafts were truncated, and thus the sheer amount of fill sampled was greatly reduced, and/or to the fact that they were located at the edges of the dense midden feature.

Burial 333 was distinct from all of the other burials with four-sided coffins in the southeast area of the site because of the huge amount of stoneware waste material in its shaft fill (over 3,000 pieces) and the TPQ of ca. 1760. Because of this, we wondered whether rectangular coffins should be grouped together with tapered ones or considered separately as temporal indicators. One other clearly rectangular adult coffin, that of Burial 392, appears to be a later burial and, in fact, overlay a burial with a tapering coffin. Burial 432, also located in the southeastern part of the excavation (not far from Burial 333), also had an apparently rectangular coffin. Unfortunately, it was not fully excavated, and there is no record of material from the grave with which to independently date the burial. Also, because excavation was incomplete, the assignment of the coffin shape should be considered tentative.

If we tentatively identify tapering coffins as early, it does not follow that graves with six-sided coffins are all later than all of those with tapered coffins. It seems likely that for a number of years, both styles would have been in use. Adjacent to the area of the dense stoneware midden, there was one intact burial (Burial 384) with a hexagonal coffin but no stoneware at all in the grave shaft. This burial may have predated the midden; otherwise, we would expect at

least a few sherds to have found their way into the grave shaft. In the excavated cemetery as a whole, there were 94 burials with hexagonal coffins from which no stoneware was recovered. All of these except Burial 384, however, were located far away from the midden (the closest was Burial 351, about 80 feet to the west), and therefore the absence of the waste material cannot be used to place them earlier in time than the dump. The graves with tapered adult coffins that contained stoneware in their shafts included the burials mentioned above that were located immediately adjacent to the midden and had later intrusions, as well as two that were far from the midden, Burials 404 and 416, both also disturbed by later interments.

Because there are tapering coffins in graves with stoneware, and hexagonal coffins in graves without it, we had to make a decision as to what to use as a temporal diagnostic. We can use either coffin shape, or the absence of stoneware, or a combination of both factors to identify the earliest graves. The preponderance of spatial and stratigraphic evidence supports the general use of four-sided, tapering adult coffins to identify early burials (questionable assignments are indicated in Chapter 6). For the analysis in this report, hexagonal coffins have been placed in the Middle Group or later. Burial 384 probably predated the midden, but it was still placed in the Middle Group-it was probably among the earliest burials in that cohort, however, and it may in fact have been contemporary with adjacent Early Group Burial 361.

In some cases, once the early adult burials were identified, other burials could be grouped with them. Child Burials 121 and 226, for example, were cointerred with Burials 202 and 221, respectively, and therefore have been placed in the Early Group (see Chapter 6). In other cases, stratigraphic relationships indicate early burials even where coffin shape is not determinable owing to poor preservation.

The absolute dating of the early burial cohort is problematic. There is no firm date for the stylistic change to hexagonal coffins. The general absence of pottery waste may provide a TAQ for the burials (a date before which they must have been interred), but we do not know when dumping began. Assuming that the potteries were in operation by 1728 and that they began dumping their waste on the burial ground shortly thereafter (although this cannot be verified), Early Group burials are probably pre-1730 and/or from the very early period of the potteries.

Early burials are located in every area of the site except north of the fence line. It is therefore posited

that there was no sequence of use from east to west (or vice versa) within the portion of the African Burial Ground excavated archaeologically. Although this project appears to have exposed the latest portion of the historic cemetery, it may not have exposed the earliest area used. There is no way to date the earliest of the early burials excavated, although a general assignment to the early decades of the eighteenth century is safe, with the understanding that earlier interments certainly may be included. In terms of datable material, only a few sherds of imported ceramics (delft and Chinese porcelain, providing TPQs in the mid-seventeenth century) were found in two of the Early Group burials; the remaining burials contained no datable items other than the local stoneware.

The Middle and Late-Middle Groups

Having identified an early burial cohort on the basis of coffin shape, grave-shaft material, and stratigraphy, and a late cohort on the basis of artifact dating, site location (north of the fence), and stratigraphic/spatial relationships, the majority of burials (256 graves) was assigned by default to a main, middle temporal group. These burials were then checked for TPQ and analyzed stratigraphically to extract possible earlier and later subsets. In the main, an adult burial was assigned to the Late-Middle Group if it overlay others and especially if it truncated another burial. Child burials, more often than not found overlying adults, were considered for inclusion in the Late-Mid-

dle Group if they truncated underlying interments, or if they appeared to be associated with later adult burials, or, occasionally, if they were thought to be later based on overall stratigraphy. The stratigraphic series charts were used in assigning relative chronological placements. Isolate Middle Group burials were more difficult to assign and were placed in the Late-Middle Group only if they appeared to be spatially related to others (e.g., aligned adjacent and parallel) or had artifacts with beginning manufacture dates later than ca. 1760. There are 58 graves that have been assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

It is emphasized that the Middle and Late-Middle cohorts of burials are, as groups, more strictly relative than are the early and late cohorts. There may be much overlap between the Middle and Late-Middle Groups in the dates of individual interments. Likewise, Late-Middle Group burials may overlap in time with the Late Group. Although some variables, such as orientation, and some artifact distributions show a distinction or perhaps a trend occurring between the two groupings, none is strong enough to be used as a temporal indicator.

For some purposes, the Middle Group can be seen as the "main" group rather than as a temporal cohort. As it is presumed to include the broadest temporal span of interments (with early and late graves included inadvertently in the absence of temporal evidence), it can serve as a proxy "median" or "average" sample in terms of demography and material-culture distribution. Thus, deviations from this average can be discerned and examined.

CHAPTER 5

Overview of Mortuary Population, Burial Practices, and Spatial Distribution

Warren R. Perry and Jean Howson

This chapter presents an overview of the archaeological evidence for population, burial practices, and spatial arrangements at the New York African Burial Ground. After providing a demographic profile of the population whose graves were disinterred, we turn to the overall evidence for burial practices, viewing the evidence from the site as the physical signature of the repeated performance of funerary ritual. Seven material aspects of mortuary practice are examined: coffins; grave orientation; body position; individual and co-interment; burial attire, such as shrouds, winding sheets, and street clothes; adornment and other goods in direct association with the deceased; and grave marking. In subsequent chapters, we will look sequentially at the four temporal groups of burials, noting possible evidence for change over time. As will be seen, however, continuity overshadows change with regard to burial patterns.

The Mortuary Population

This section contains basic information on the age and sex profile of the mortuary population. Demographic data based on analysis of the skeletal remains are presented in Chapter 7 of *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground* (Rankin-Hill et al. 2009). Here we provide basic information on the age and sex distribution within the excavated sample as a whole—the same information is presented for burials in each temporal group in Chapters 6–9.

Throughout this report, when referring to a specific individual, age is given in terms of an age range, from the lowest estimate to the highest estimate. However, there are several other ways to refer to age. There are three age categories: "infant" (6 months old or younger), "subadult" (under approximately 15 years of age), and "adult" (15 years or older). This tripartite

division is used, for example, when distinguishing between those who could be sexed using standard metric parameters (adults) and those who could not (subadults). A composite "age" was also derived for each individual, a single number reflecting the statistical age based on numerous parameters measured. For purposes of analysis, this age was used to assign individuals to age groups, so that the demographic distribution data can be presented more clearly and so that counts would be sufficient to discern any patterning of traits (such as pathologies). Age groups for subadults are in half-year increments for the first year of life and thereafter in 1-year increments. Age groups for adults are in 5-year increments. Age groups are used in the age and sex distribution graphs here (Figures 51 and 52) and in Chapters 6–9.

The individuals interred in the excavated portion of the cemetery represent the entire life cycle (see Figure 52). Preservation of infants' and children's remains was probably not as good as preservation of adult remains, but the under-15 cohort (n = 157) nevertheless represented 39 percent of those for whom at least an age category (if not an age range) could be determined (n = 402). Unlike the burial ground for enslaved workers at Newton Plantation in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:285–287), the young were interred along with the old in New York's African cemetery.

Of "adults" (i.e., those approximately 15 and over) for whom sex could be determined, there were more men than women (see Figure 52). This demographic may have to do with the area within the historic cemetery that was archaeologically excavated. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, the northernmost portion of the burial ground may have been in use during the British occupation of the city at the time of the Revolution, and it is possible more men than women were buried in that period. Additional discussion of the sex ratio

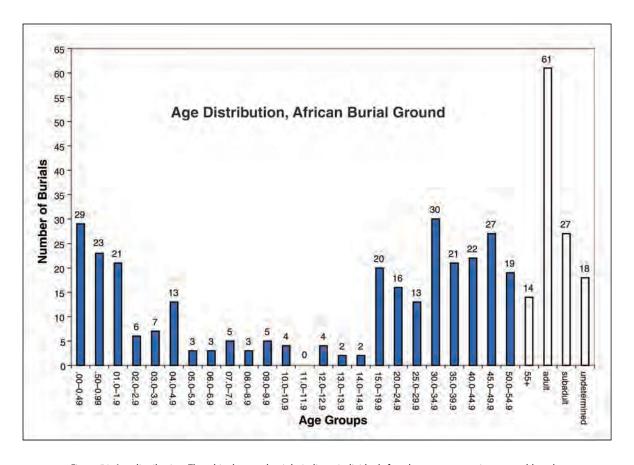


Figure 51. Age distribution. The white bars at the right indicate individuals for whom a more precise age could not be determined.

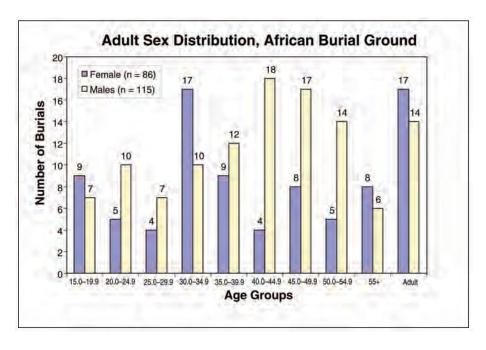


Figure 52. Adult sex distribution. The "adults" represented in bars at the far right of the graph are individuals identified as adults but for whom age could not be determined.

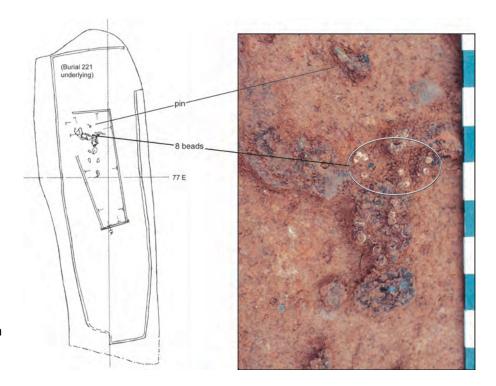


Figure 53. *Left*, in situ drawing of Burial 226 atop Burial 221; and *right*, in situ photograph, showing the scant remains of the infant with a pin and eight fired-glass beads that were worn at the neck (drawing by M. Schur; photograph by Dennis Seckler).

in relation to the mortuary population is provided in Chapter 13 of *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground* (Blakey, Rankin-Hill, et al. 2009).

Burial Practices

Figure 53 illustrates several of the aspects of burial practice that we discuss. The infant in Burial 226 was interred in its own coffin, but within the grave of Burial 221, a man between the ages of 30 and 60. The coffins were placed with the heads to the west. The infant wore a strand of fired-glass beads that were probably made in West Africa, and copperalloy straight pins apparently fastened the winding cloth.

The use of individual coffins, the head-to-west orientation, and shrouding are all typical of burials within the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. On the other hand, the shared grave and the adornment of the child with beads are unusual, for most of those interred in the burial ground had separate graves and lacked personal possessions or adornment.

An extraordinary degree of homogeneity is found in four parameters of potential variability examined at the New York African Burial Ground. Coffin use, body orientation with head to west, and extended supine body position characterize the vast majority of interments. The preference for individual interment is also very evident, and even where graves were shared, separate coffins were typically provided. It is also very likely that shrouding was the prevailing practice, although evidence of shroud fastenings in the form of pins was present in only half the graves; those without pins probably were wrapped. Variation emerges in evidence for clothing, personal adornments, and other items recovered in direct association with skeletal remains, all of which were few and far between, and their stylistic and material range was limited. It is not possible to determine whether grave markers, which were preserved in very few cases, were typical. The spatial relationships among graves were variable, but not strikingly so, as though a limited syntax guided grave placement.

How do we explain the overall lack of variability at the New York African Burial Ground? Poverty can account for the limited presence of items placed with the deceased. The sumptuary aspects of funerary rituals and the disposition of the corpse, which might have signaled differing ritual programs and beliefs, were severely constrained. Other mortuary patterns are more surprising. Given the diverse geographical and ethnic origins of black New Yorkers during the eighteenth century, why do we not see more variation in a range of attributes?

The portion of the cemetery that was excavated may represent only a portion of the community. As we discussed in Chapter 3, we believe the excavations sampled only a small percentage of the graves in the historic cemetery as a whole. The excavated sample might represent only an ethnically or religiously distinct segment of the African population. As the burials apparently span a long period of time, and because infusions of captive Africans both from the continent and via the Caribbean would have joined New York's black community periodically and sporadically during the eighteenth century, it seems unlikely that the sample includes only one distinct group. Still, this possibility should be kept in mind, despite the lack of clear material evidence, such as distinct burial positions or grave goods or a cross or other religious insignia, to identify any specific ethnic or religious group. We also lack documentary evidence. Surviving church records, for example, do not provide an adequate profile of the Christian affiliations of New York's Africans, although to be sure, the Dutch Church had black members from at least the 1640s, Elias Neau drew blacks to his school beginning in 1704, and Methodists and Moravians counted black members later in the century. Shipping records, which often cite only "Africa" or "Coast of Africa" as points of origin, are not specific enough to identify the ethnic groups that were represented in the town's population (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009d:48–49).

Another possibility is that the physical signature we are examining represents aspects of funerary ritual (i.e., digging of individual graves, coffin use, or orientation) that were under the control of some sort of management that would have proscribed ethnically distinct types of graves. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that the cemetery was ever regulated in this way. Grave diggers serving at the African Burial Ground, however, may have influenced the development of a general mortuary program.

Coffin Burial

There can be little doubt that black New Yorkers considered coffins as a sine qua non of a proper burial. At the New York African Burial Ground, there were 385 graves (some without extant human remains) for which the presence or absence of a coffin could be definitively determined. Of these graves, 353, or

91.6 percent, had coffins.¹ Coffins were provided for all age categories (Table 14). The use of a coffin was the norm during most of the period represented archaeologically in most of the cemetery, as seen on

Table 14. Presence or Absence of Coffins

Coffin	Subadult	Adult	Undetermined	Total
Present	152	186	15	353
Absent	0	31	1	32

the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map, and Figures 50a–50d in Chapter 4). The wood used to make the coffins was generally inexpensive cedar, pine, or fir. Coffin hardware consisted almost exclusively of nails (see Chapter 10).

Considering the overwhelming frequency of coffins, it is worth exploring the possible circumstances under which coffinless burials occurred. The adult burials without coffins may reflect the inability of the family of the deceased to afford a coffin or the refusal of an enslaved person's household head to provide it, it may be indicative of burial under some kind of special circumstance, or it may represent a distinctive burial custom. The spatial distribution of burials without coffins is very skewed, as discussed in Chapter 4, as most were located in the northern part of the excavated cemetery, and this points to an explanation. We will further analyze the coffinless burials, which appear to be from the latest period of the cemetery's use, in Chapter 9.

Head-to-West Orientation

A burial orientation with the head to the west seems to have been one of the first mortuary practices to become standardized in the African Diaspora (Jamieson 1995:52). The New York African Burial Ground bears this out. There were 375 burials for which the general orientation of the body can be determined. This includes cases where precise angle of orientation could not be measured owing to very partial preservation but for which enough bones were in situ

¹ At Newton Plantation cemetery in Barbados, another large burial place for enslaved Africans that overlaps in time with the African Burial Ground, only 29 of the 92 excavated burials had coffins, a much lower frequency (31 percent). Disturbances to the Newton burials made determination of presence/absence difficult, however (Handler and Lange 1978:191, 231–250). Coffin use at Elmina, Ghana, on the Gold Coast, appears to belong to the nineteenth century (DeCorse 2001:101).

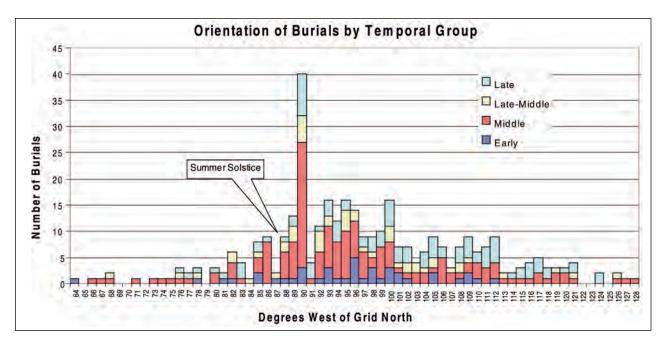


Figure 54. Distribution of burials with heads oriented to the west at the African Burial Ground, by temporal group.

to determine general placement. Of these 375 burials, 367, or 97.8 percent, had the head in a westerly direction. Figure 54 summarizes information about burials with heads oriented to the west for which the angle of orientation could be measured in degrees west of "grid north."²

Although the most frequent head orientation is at 90° west of grid north, head orientation of head-to-west burials ranged from 64° to 128° west of north. Fully two-thirds were angled at greater than 90° west of grid north, a skewing that can be seen on the site maps in Figures 7 (pocket map) and 50a-50d (in Chapter 4) and in Chapters 6–9. This southward trend is most marked in the Late Group burials. Other orientations (not graphed) include head to east (n = 4), head to south (n = 3), and head to north (n = 1). These are discussed further here and in Chapters 6–9.

How was the orientation determined when a grave shaft was dug and the coffin (or coffinless body) placed in it? Obviously, cemetery users would have known which way was west, but the variability within the west-oriented graves is worth examining, especially because the New York African Burial Ground offers a unique opportunity to examine this kind of patterning. Three possibilities were considered: (1) use of the path of the sun, at sunset in particular; (2) use of landmarks or physical features in the vicinity to orient burials; (3) and alignment with neighboring graves.

Alignment to the Path of the Sun: Orientation with reference to sunset would account for variability because the sun sets at different points on the horizon over the course of the year (Figure 55 and Table 15).³

The 90° west-of-grid-north position, the most frequent orientation, corresponds to the position of sunset at either late May through mid-June or the first part of July. A total of 45.5 percent of burials are oriented to where the sun would have set from about mid-May to mid-August. The azimuth angle at the summer solstice is 87.59° west of our grid north (i.e., very close to our grid west). The burials oriented with the head further southward (33 percent) may correspond either to February through April or to August through October (no burials were oriented extremely southward,

² "Grid north" is based on the grid that was used for the field excavations, which in turn in based on the alignment of the buildings and streets surrounding the archaeological site. It is 30° east of magnetic north. Burials for which the head can be presumed to have been in a westerly direction, but which were too disturbed for exact measurement of the angle, are not included in this figure. Comparative archaeological examples are less uniform than orientations observed at the New York African Burial Ground. The Newton cemetery had 58 burials for which orientation could be determined, and of these, 38, or 65 percent, had the head oriented to the west.

³ The source for this information is Gronbeck (1997). We used the twenty-first of each month to calculate sunset. The azimuth angles over the course of the year would not have changed noticeably over the past 300 years.

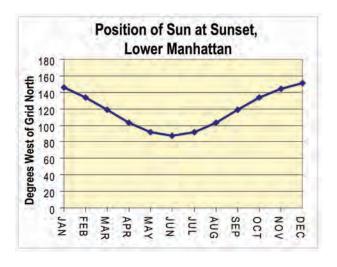


Figure 55. Position of the sun on the horizon at sunset in lower Manhattan over the course of a year, relative to the African Burial Ground site grid.

Table 15. Angle of Sunset for Each Month of the Year

Month	Angle (degrees)
January	145.98
February	133.27
March	119.02
April	103.48
May	92.14
June	87.59
July	91.78
August	103.26
September	118.53
October	133.58
November	144.48
December	150.90

Note: Degrees west of grid north, using the twenty-first of each month.

where the sun set from approximately mid-November through early February). The rest of the measurable orientation angles fall northward of where the sun set at the summer solstice.

The highest numbers of deaths among Europeans in colonial New York tended to occur during the "disease season" from August to October. Eighteenth-century burial registers for New York's Reformed

Dutch Church and Trinity (Anglican) Church have been tabulated by month as shown in Table 16. The peak death months overlap in both samples. The Dutch Church data are probably most reliable because of the large sample size.

Klepp (1994:478) has shown, however, that in Philadelphia the pattern of seasonal mortality was quite different for Africans. There, although Europeans had higher death rates in summer and fall just as in New York (owing to malarial and diarrheic diseases), for Africans, it was late fall and winter that brought the highest mortality, probably as a result of respiratory ailments. It is possible that death rates for blacks in New York climbed in the winter, as they did in Philadelphia.

The orientations at the New York African Burial Ground, however, suggest fewer burials in winter than in other months and a high frequency of burials that, if sunset was in fact used as a guide, took place during the early summer. If burials were postponed during the winter, we would expect high frequencies in early spring when the ground first thawed, rather than early summer.

We suggest that if bodies were being oriented with reference to the sun, the actual path of the sun on the day of interment was not always, or even typically, used. The digging of the grave probably did not occur at the interment itself, but earlier in the day, so that where the sun set on the funeral evening would not have dictated the precise orientation. Instead, perhaps a convention based generally on sunset was used for westward orientation. The summer solstice is close to the peak in frequency (90°) seen at the New York

Table 16. Deaths Recorded for Reformed Dutch Church and Trinity Church in the Eighteenth Century, by Month

Month	Reformed Dutch Church		Trinity Church	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
January	307	6.41	39	8.84
February	239	4.99	25	5.67
March	296	6.18	35	7.94
April	262	5.47	40	9.07
May	282	5.89	32	7.26
June	249	5.20	20	4.54
July	426	8.90	46	10.43
August	751	15.69	49	11.11
September	723	15.10	49	11.11
October	525	10.96	39	8.84
November	378	7.89	40	9.07
December	350	7.31	27	6.12
Total	4,788	100.00	441	100.00

Note: Dutch records from 1727 to 1775 (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Burial Register of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New York, 1727–1804), Trinity records from 1703 to 1785 (Trinity Church n.d.).

African Burial Ground and may have been a referent. Burials angled with the head well northward of the solstice (more than 5° off), numbering 22, seem anomalous but may have been summer interments for which the path of the sun was estimated.

The season of death can also be addressed through pollen data that have been analyzed for a small set of burials, although these data are themselves quite problematic, as discussed in Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume. Table 17 lists possible season of interment for 14 graves based on pollen and head orientation. There is broad general agreement in most cases, but for Burials 147, 151, 192, 210, and 415, the two possible lines of evidence appear to diverge.

Alignment to Physical Features: Variability might be accounted for by use of different physical features for different interments. Such features may have included a fence, a street, the slope of a hill, the palisade, or even visible buildings such as the Almshouse, pottery factory, or dwellings. The spike in orientation at 90° west of our grid north at first may seem surprising, as the archaeological site grid can have had no meaning for those using the cemetery. But the site

grid corresponds to the street grid, and one street, Broadway, had been laid out during the eighteenth century. Therefore, it is believed that at least some burials were aligned with reference to Broadway as a physical landmark. That is, in order to place burials on an east-west axis, they were placed perpendicular to Broadway, which was used as a convenient northsouth axis. Broadway was laid out northward along the west side of the burial ground in 1723 and was shown on the Lyne-Bradford Plan surveyed in 1730 and on all subsequent maps (see Chapter 2 chronology entries for the years 1723 and 1730 and Figure 15). It is also possible that some of the 90° west-oriented burials, using a similar "shorthand" reckoning of the east-west axis, were aligned with later buildings in the immediate vicinity, which themselves would have been aligned with the street.

The burials with orientations similar to that of the patent boundary line may have been aligned with a fence or a road or path that paralleled it. The number of graves located to the north of the projected fence line that appear to share that boundary's general southwest-northeast alignment, especially noticeable in the area to

Burial No.	Possible Season(s) of Interment Based on Pollen Analysis	Orientation (Degrees West of Grid North)	Possible Season(s) of Interment Based on Angle of Sunset
6	June through August	91	May through July
45	June to September	86	June
115	June to September	94	May through early August
147	fall	81	June
151	June to September	138	October through November or February through March
155	June through August	92	May
192	May through August or fall	116	March through April
194	May to September	104	April or August
207	June through August	93	May
210	fall	88	June
270	June to September	97	April through May or July through August
366	summer or fall	118	March or September
392	May through August or June to September	head to east	
415	fall	99	late April or early August

the west of the 110 East grid line, is intriguing considering our hypothesis that these graves are post-fence. Either the fence was in fact still in place when these graves were dug, or the burials were oriented to something else, either the sun (in which case the interments were in spring or fall) or another feature. As noted in Chapter 4, the ditches visible at the westernmost end of the site in Lot 12 also shared a similar southwestnortheast alignment. It is possible they represent the remains of another boundary or roadway leading from Broadway along the south edge of the Calk Hook Farm and that this served as a visual marker for aligning graves west to east. Finally, as we also noted in Chapter 4, these graves may have been arranged in "rows" along the contours of the hillside, and their orientation may simply reflect the direction of the slope.

Burials in the southeast portion of the excavated cemetery also may have been oriented with reference to the town palisade, a prominent feature from 1754 to 1760. The palisade raked southwest to northeast just south of this portion of the ground (see Figure 19 in Chapter 2).

Alignment to Neighboring Graves: Many burials may have been aligned with reference to the nearest known or visible graves. This seems most likely in cases where burials were simultaneous or very close in time and/or were marked and were of individuals for whom some kind of close relationship was being acknowledged or expressed. Well-marked graves may have been visible for many years and thus could be used for orienting nearby burials. Pairs and groups of parallel graves are noted in Chapters 6–9.

If several burials, unrelated to each other or to existing clusters of graves, were being conducted at one time (perhaps in the space of 1 or 2 days), it is quite possible a grave digger would have made the graves parallel and near to one another for convenience. This may have occurred at the spring thaw, if the burials for those who died in the coldest part of winter had been postponed.⁴ Likewise, deaths during an epidemic may have occasioned the preparation of

⁴ We thank Robert Paynter for suggesting this as a possible explanation for burials in apparent parallel alignments.

several graves at once. Noël Hume (1982:36–37) has proposed this as an explanation for precisely parallel adjacent graves at Carter's Grove, reasoning that if graves were not simultaneous, there would be little likelihood grave diggers would be able to make them so perfectly aligned.

It should also be remembered that if particular individuals had responsibility for digging graves, change in this personnel could account for variation. The possibility of orienting burials to other features or to the sun would still apply, with the reference point selected by the grave digger. If the sunset was used, variation in types of grave shaft should not correspond to variation in orientation. If a physical feature selected by the grave digger was used, however, we might expect grave shaft "style" or shape to co-vary with orientation. Analysis of grave shafts by shape has not been attempted but is suggested for future research.

Supine Extended Body Position

Of 269 burials at the New York African Burial Ground for which the position of the body could be definitively determined, 100 percent were supine—that is, the deceased had been laid on their backs. For 204 of these supine burials, the position of the arms and hands has also been determined (Table 18). When excavated, the hands were usually resting on the pelvis or upper legs of the deceased. The next most common arm/hand position was at the sides, although in some of these burials the person may have been placed with the hands resting on the pelvis, and they later fell to the sides. Arm positions in general were consistent with what would be expected for a wrapped/ shrouded corpse.

Not surprisingly, leg position is much less variable. In nearly all cases, the legs were extended straight down from the hips. In two cases, the ankles were crossed, and in a few burials, one or both legs were slightly bent at the knee. These individuals may have been laid in the coffin with bent legs. Alternatively, the shifting of the coffin during interment may have caused the bending.

Data on head position have been collected but are not believed to be diagnostic, because given the supine position of the body, the head would have rolled to one side or the other, back or forward, during interment or decomposition.

The supine extended body position is so uniform at the New York African Burial Ground as to constitute,

Table 18. Arm Position

Arm Position	Number of Burials
Resting on pelvis	93
Both at sides	47
Right at side, left on pelvis	9
Left at side, right on pelvis	8
Both flexed at sides	7
Crossed right over left	3
Crossed left over right	6
Left flexed, right at side	1
Right flexed, left at side	1
Right at side ^a	7
Left at side ^a	4
Right flexed ^a	3
Left flexed ^a	4
Left on pelvis a	2
Over head	1
Crossed over chest	1
Other ^b	7

^a The position of the other arm could not be determined.

along with coffin burial and orientation, part of an accepted mortuary program. This position was typical of European Christian burial, but supine extended burial was just one of a wide range of positions used in African societies from which captives were taken (Handler and Lange 1978:198, 318 n. 28). Other diaspora examples, however, show a similar preference for the supine extended position.

Shrouding

Cloth was seldom recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, and fragments were preserved only when in association with metal artifacts. In the absence of cloth or any evidence for clothing, shrouding or clothes without durable fasteners may be inferred. Small copper alloy straight pins with wire-wound heads were observed in and/or recovered from 213 burials, representing approximately 65 percent of those burials that appeared to have adequate

The arms were flexed and lying across the body in various positions.

preservation for pins to have survived (n = 327).⁵ This may be an underrepresentation of the total number of burials that originally contained pins, because where preservation was especially poor or the burial was disturbed, these fragile items may have been lost. Pins may have been used to fasten cloth in which the deceased was wrapped or partially wrapped, but it should be remembered that they might also represent clothing fasteners, especially for women. In most cases, young children and infants appear to have been more fully wrapped, although many adults had pins on the cranium only. Pins are present in all age groups, but they were observed in a higher percentage of children's graves than adults. Pins and shrouding are discussed further in Chapter 11.

Shrouding was documented at Elmina, in Ghana, prior to the introduction of coffin burial in the nineteenth century (DeCorse 1992:183) but was not in evidence at the Newton Plantation cemetery in Barbados. Handler and Lange (1978:185) have hypothesized that most enslaved Africans were buried clothed, although shroud pins or winding cloth may not have survived to enter the archaeological record.

Individual Interment and Shared and Clustered Graves

The overarching mortuary program as performed at the cemetery called for individual interment. Shared graves are exceptional, although they appear in all temporal groups. By shared, we mean burial in the same grave (see Figure 53), rather than burial in close proximity. There were 27 instances of shared or possible shared graves. In some of these cases, the individuals were apparently interred at the same time. In other cases, there may have been an interval after which a second burial was placed in a grave shaft already in use. Family relationships can only be hypothesized at this point, although future DNA analysis may confirm consanguinity in some cases. A mother-child relationship can be assumed with

some confidence in the cases of Burials 335 and 356, where the woman cradled the newborn in her arm, and Burials 12 and 14, where the infant's coffin had been placed on the woman's torso. In other cases, we are reluctant to assume parent/child relationships, since other types of relatives may have been seen as appropriate to share the grave.

The shared or possibly shared graves are listed in Table 19. Most involve infants or children buried together (n = 12) or with an adult (n = 12 or 13). In many other cases, we believe individuals were placed deliberately in relation to each other, although not in the same grave. Among these, one pattern is of infants and young children being placed above or immediately adjacent to the graves of adults (see site maps in Chapters 6–8 and Part 2 of this volume). Examples of these grave clusters are Burials 29 (Early Group) and 46 and 22 (both Middle Group); Burials 67 and 60 (Late-Middle Group); Burials 42, 61, and 64 (Late-Middle Group); Burials 101 and 108 (Late-Middle Group); Burial 280 (Early Group) and Burials 295, 246, and 215 (Middle Group) and 229 and 239 (Late-Middle Group); and Burials 300, 306, and 283 (Middle Group).

In a number of cases, an infant was found interred at the foot end of an adult's grave, overlapping and/ or offset to one side, its coffin parallel. These burials represent Early, Middle, and Late-Middle temporal groups, and include one adult (first burial number given) and one or more children. Some examples are Middle Group Burials 46 and 22; Late-Middle Group Burials 67 and 60; Middle Group Burials 69 and 53; Middle Group Burials 90, 79, and 8; Late-Middle Group Burials 101 and 108; Middle Group Burials 159, 161 and 206; Early Group Burials 250 and 249; and Early Group Burial 177 and Middle Group Burial 128.6 The adults in this type of burial included three men, two women, one probable woman, and two whose sex could not be determined; they were all approximately 30 years old or older.

There is an "excess" of children in the main Middle Group, but there is no reason to believe that child mortality was greater during the middle of the time period represented at the site than during others (Figure 56). We believe more children appear in the middle grouping because children's burials from the later periods of

⁵ All burials were assessed for the likelihood of artifact preservation (see Chapter 3). The burials without pins from which the cranium was missing are not included in the total burial count here, as pins are most often found on the cranium. However, two burials without crania that did contain pins, Burials 67 and 81, are counted in the total. Six severely disturbed sets of remains had pins or pin staining: Burials 20, 131, 175, 189, 303, and 319; these are included in the total. However, two burials for which there was no way to assign pin fragments to an individual owing to redeposition, Burials 398 and 403, are excluded from the count.

⁶ These cases are all located in the western half of the site, although this distribution is not considered significant, as the eastern half of the site was never fully excavated. Burials 177 and 128 are placed in the Early and Middle Groups respectively, but the child may still have been placed deliberately at the foot of the earlier adult grave.

Table 19. Shared Graves and Possible Shared Graves at the New York African Burial Ground

Burial No.	Map Location	Comments	Adult/ Child	Children	Adults
12 and 14	S 89.5, E 12	Woman aged 35–45 with a newborn; the infant appeared to have been in its own coffin but within the coffin of the woman; interred at the same time; Late Group	X		
25 and 32	S 87, E 20	Woman in her early 20s stacked atop a man 50–60 years old; the woman had suffered trauma and had a musket ball lodged in her rib cage; possibly interred at the same time; Middle Group			X
72, 83, and 84	S 87.5, E 34	Possible shared grave; two very young children placed above a young woman 17–21 years old; burials were disturbed by a later foundation; Early Group	X	X	
79 and 90	S 82, E 5	Possible shared grave with an infant placed above the foot end of a burial of a woman in her late 30s; soil intervened; the woman's coffin was hexagonal, the child's tapered; not buried at the same time; Middle Group	X		
89 and 107	S 90, E 48	Possible shared grave; a woman in her 50s placed above a woman in her late 30s, both in hexagonal coffins; the top coffin was offset to the south but apparently in the same grave; possible interval between burials; the younger woman had a cylindrical red bead near her ear; Late-Middle Group			X
94 and 96	S 94, E 47	An infant centered precisely above a young man 16–18 years old; both in hexagonal coffins; possible interval between interments; these burials were part of a cluster with additional child burials; Middle Group	X		
121 and 202	S 86, E 70	A child 2.5–4.5 years old placed atop an adolescent (a probable female) 12–18 years old; both were in tapered coffins; Early Group		X	
126 and 143	S 88.5, E 80.5	Two children, one 3.5–5.5 and one 6–10 years old, shared a single coffin, with the younger child placed atop the elder; the coffin was hexagonal and deep in construction; Middle Group		X	
142, 144, and 149	S 88, E 90	A woman of 25–30 years with an infant/newborn and a child of 6–12 months placed directly atop her coffin; the woman's coffin was hexagonal and the two babies' four sided; Middle Group	X	X	
146 and 145	S 73.5, E 74	An infant under 6 months old in a coffin placed atop an empty adult coffin; located along south side of posthole alignment; Late-Middle Group	X?		
159 and 161	S 73.5, E 90	An infant or young child placed adjacent to the coffin (near the foot end) of a woman 25–35 years old; the grave may also be shared with Burial 206, another infant or child grave adjacent on the opposite side; all are in coffins, the woman's hexagonal, the children's rectangular; Middle Group	X	_	

Table 19. Shared Graves and Possible Shared Graves at the New York African Burial Ground (continued)

Burial No.	Map Location	Comments	Adult/ Child	Children	Adults
Burials 224, 231, and 234	S 77.5, E 97	Three infants in a likely shared grave; Burial 224 was of a child between 6 and 16 months old, Burial 234 of an infant less than 6 months old, and no age can be assigned for Burial 231, but the coffin was infant-sized; all of the coffins were probably four sided, possibly tapering toward the foot; Middle Group		X	
219 and 235	S 71.5, E 123	Possible shared grave; a child 4–5 years old placed above a woman aged 28–42 years, apparently in the same grave shaft but with an interval of time between interments; both in coffins; severe disturbance to the grave from construction; Late-Middle Group	X		
225 and 252	S 64.5, E 95	An infant between 6 and 15 months old placed above a child of 1–2 years; the upper coffin was offset slightly to the north; Late Group		X	
226 and 221	S 83.5, E 77	An infant of 2 months or less placed atop a man of 30–60 years, both in tapered coffins; the infant had a string of fired-glass beads at the neck; Early Group	X		
255 and 265	S 82, E 120	Two infants, one less than 2 months old and one 6–12 months old, in coffins placed one atop the other in a shared grave; poor skeletal preservation; Middle Group		X	
263 and 272	S 88.5, E 74	Infant burials placed one atop the other in the same grave; both were in four-sided coffins; probable Early Group based on stratigraphy		X	
268 and 286	S 75, 126 E	Infant of 6 months or less, placed above a child between 4 and 8 years old; both in coffins, probably hexagonal; Middle Group		X	
293 and 291	S 82.5, E 94	An adult man (age undetermined) and child 3–5 years old may have shared a grave; the burials were disturbed by a later grave, and some skeletal remains of the adult and those of the child were displaced into the later grave shaft; Middle Group	X		
311 and 316	S 88.5, E 99	An infant 3–9 months old placed in the corner of the grave of a woman 18–20 years old; the woman's coffin was hexagonal, the infant's tapered; not buried at the same time; Late-Middle Group	X		
314 and 338	S 82, E 134	Possible shared grave, with a man of 40–50 years and a woman 33–65 laying side by side, both in hexagonal coffins; Late-Middle Group			X
318 and 321	S 79.5, E 144	Possible shared grave; bones of a child 7–14 years old, apparently in place, within the upper part of the grave of a child 1–2 years old; possibly isolated from other burials; Middle Group		X	
320 and 334	S 89, E 251	Possible shared grave; child of 2–4 years and another young child, in immediately adjacent, aligned coffins; disturbed by construction; Middle Group		X	

Table 19. Shared Graves and Possible Shared Graves at the New York African Burial Ground (continued)

Burial No.	Map Location	Comments	Adult/ Child	Children	Adults
326 and 374	S 75.5, E 135	An infant of 3 months or less was placed adjacent to left side of a man of 45–55 years, near the head, in the same grave shaft; they appear to have been buried at the same time; both in coffins; Middle Group	X		
335 and 356	S 84.5, E 248	A woman 25–35 years old and a newborn buried together in a hexagonal coffin; infant lay within the woman's flexed right arm; Middle Group	X		
341 and 397	S 87.5, E 229	A man of undetermined age and a woman 30–40 years old; the man's coffin had been placed atop the woman's in a shared grave; cuff links were found with the man; the woman's teeth were modified by distal chipping; Middle Group			X
393 and 405	S 84, E 211	An infant or newborn placed with a child 6–10 years old; both in narrow coffins of undetermined shape; not buried at the same time; Middle Group		X	

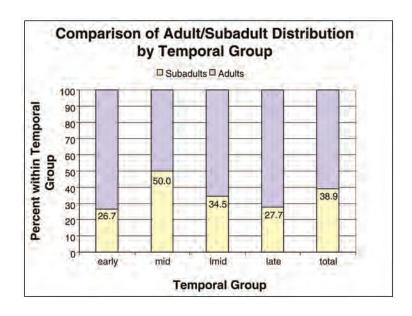


Figure 56. Adult/subadult distribution by temporal group.

the cemetery were placed in, above, or near existing graves from earlier periods, but these children's burials cannot be otherwise distinguished as later. The early group's low frequency of child burials is probably a result of reduced preservation. Thus, the subadult age profiles broken down by period (Chapters 6–9) must be considered provisional.

Another type of cluster includes several child burials in close proximity to each other, such as Burials 98, 100, 102, and 103; and Burials 224, 231, and 234 (a shared grave), 232, 254, and 240. The latter type of spatial grouping may reflect the setting aside of

specific locations for child burials at particular times during the cemetery's history or may indicate that the deaths of numerous children took place in a short period of time, as could be expected to occur during an epidemic.

There were no mass graves, in which a number of individuals would be stacked in a single large opening at one time. Such interments would have been expected only in the case of epidemics, war, or mass executions. Although all of these events occurred during the period the cemetery was in use (see Chapters 6–9), there is no evidence of mass interments within the area excavated.

Such graves may exist elsewhere within the cemetery, but the evidence in the excavated burial ground clearly shows that New Yorkers living under slavery called attention to the uniqueness of each individual when they buried the dead.

Only in the northern cemetery area were most burials spatially separate from others. We think this lower density of graves reflects a shorter period of use, as discussed in Chapter 4. But it may also represent a response to demographic shifts during the Revolutionary War and its aftermath. Fewer co-interments (shared graves and deliberately proximal graves) and a rise in graves spaced in rows may have been a grave digger's respectful solution to two kinds of predicaments: a spate of burials on a single day or in a short span of time, or an increase in burials of recent arrivals without relatives or friends in the cemetery. The special circumstances of the Late Group of burials are explored in Chapter 9.

Individual burial, then, did not mean isolated burial. Although actual shared graves are relatively uncommon, most burials overlap or are within a foot or two of others. Although we do not know whether the management of the African Burial Ground was centralized or dispersed; as explained in Chapter 2, there is no reason to suppose that it was not African controlled. In this scenario, we should expect burial grouping. In order to conduct a systematic spatial analysis, one needs to devise a spatial syntax that can help organize the material; the key tactic is the search for patterns. Burials occurred in chronological sequences and were more or less isolated or arranged in larger concentrations, into clusters, and, finally, into more or less discrete groups, sets, or pairs.

There was a range of opinion among the researchers regarding our ability to define burial groups and subsets, but because it is unlikely that people buried their family and neighbors in a geographically random way, we consider the existence of groupings almost certain. We have tried to recognize them archaeologically or at least to present the site data in a manner open to interpretation by others. Spatial analysis is one way to allow the burial ground, as we encounter it archaeologically, to "speak" to us of its use and of the historical community. To the extent that viewers (whether archaeologists or others who encounter the site records) perceive spatial relationships among interments, ideas can be generated about how the ritual space was constructed over time and about social relationships among the deceased. We raise additional possibilities about the

internal geography of the excavated cemetery in the section entitled "Additional Observations on Internal Geography."

Clothing, Personal Adornment, and Other Items

Distinguishing between "grave goods" and items of clothing/personal adornment that can be categorized as dressing the dead is problematic. The dressing of the deceased can be seen as one aspect of their preparation for their new state of being, and therefore, in a sense, the distinction is moot. Items that cannot be categorized as clothing or adornment but are likely goods meant to guide, equip, or accompany the deceased in the world of the dead—tools, items for personal use, or talismans—might include a knife, a smoking pipe, a piece of coral or shell, or an item held in the hand or placed around the neck.

Items other than pins found in direct association with the skeletal remains included buttons, beads, rings, cuff links and other miscellaneous jewelry, and remnants of cloth, shell, smoking pipes, knives, metal, coins, and possibly floral tributes. Any of these items may have been the personal property of the deceased, and any of them may have had symbolic or spiritual significance. Clothing, adornment, and other miscellaneous items placed with the dead are described in Chapters 12–14. Clothing fasteners were reliably associated with 33 burials and other adornment items with just 13 others. Other kinds of objects (not considered clothing or jewelry) were found with an equally small number of burials. It is certain that some items placed with burials were not preserved, particularly those of cloth, wood, or plant materials.

Thus it appears that street clothes or adornment and/ or the placement of grave goods in the grave was not considered a necessary component of the mortuary "program" as it was typically enacted at the African Burial Ground. We hasten to point out, however, that dressing the dead or including items in the grave certainly may have been an integral part of death ritual performed for particular individuals.

Grave Markers

In the part of the New York African Burial Ground where the old ground surface was recorded, at least some of the graves were marked with stones (Figures 57–61). In addition, one coffin (in Burial 194) had



Figure 57. Burials at the southwest corner of the excavated cemetery that were marked with cobbles at the surface. This style of grave marking has been observed throughout the African Diaspora over a broad temporal span (Thompson 1983:137; Vlach 1978:139-45) (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 58. Excavated grave of Burial 18 with stone marker in place at its west (head) end. Arrows point to the coffin outlines of Burial 7, cutting into the north profile, and Burial 11, at the lower left. Both of these graves lay above the coffin in Burial 18 (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 59. Vertical slab of stone found above Burial 47 and the line of cobbles along the north side of the grave. The stone and cobbles were designated "Features 1 and 2" during the excavation (photography by Dennis Seckler).

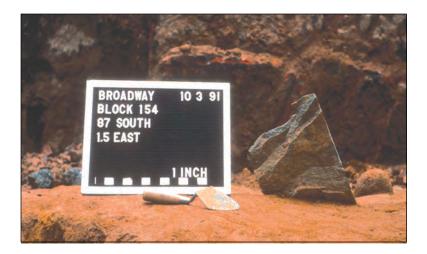


Figure 60. Stone that appears to have been a marker for Burial 23. At the time the photograph was taken, Burial 23 had not been defined, and the stone had been removed when the grave was excavated and recorded. North is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 61. View of larger excavation area with the same stone shown in Figure 60, in relation to nearby lines of cobbles (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

a vertical post attached to its headboard, presumably meant to extend above the ground surface to mark the grave. The presence of marked graves suggests that the cemetery was visited—perhaps for the performance of "second funerals" or periodic postinterment rituals—and that subsequent graves could have been sited with reference to the marked ones.

The stone grave markers were of two types: rectangular slabs placed vertically near the head of the grave and rows of small cobbles arranged so as to outline a grave or possibly a group of graves. The preservation of the markers indicates that these graves were covered over with fill when their surfaces were still intact.

Because markers were found in the one area where their preservation was possible, we think it is likely that such markers were also used elsewhere at the cemetery. Archaeologists who were present during the mechanical clearing of the site did not observe grave markers, and it is possible they had been removed during the early phases of development and filling of the property.

Additional Observations on Internal Geography

Graves were not distributed uniformly across the archaeologically excavated burial ground. From a bird's-eye view of the site (represented by the site maps in Figures 7, pocket map, and 46 in Chapter 4), at least three spatial patterns or features are visible:

areas of relatively dense and relatively sparse graves, possible rows of graves, and, in the less densely used areas, grave spacing.

As discussed in Chapter 4, graves in the portion of the cemetery to the north of the alignment of postholes were relatively sparse compared to the area to the south. This is probably attributable to a shorter period of use. But within the area south of the former fence line, there are also areas that were more densely packed with graves than others. In Chapter 3, we hypothesized that the original topography may account for this, with the flatter areas used more than the slopes (see Figure 44 in Chapter 4). It is also possible, however, that the densest areas of the excavated cemetery had a sociological basis, and perhaps social, ethnic or religious groups used particular corners of the burial ground repeatedly to bury their own. The early coffin type (tapering) clusters in two of the denser areas of the cemetery (see Chapter 6), and it is possible that the concentrations we now see result from the reuse of particular "plots" over longer periods of time than others.

There are a number of possible "rows" of graves aligned roughly north-south across the excavated site, which may correspond to contours in the original hillside (Figure 62). These are easiest to discern beginning in the northern part of the site, such as between grid lines 80 and 140 East. It is possible some of these rows extend all the way to the southern edge of the site. In this case, it is possible that rows of graves were in place prior to the use of the area north of the fence line and were extended northward after the fence was demolished. Chapter 9, which discusses the Late Group of burials, addresses the question of rows and grave siting.

In places where there were adjacent graves with few or no superimposed burials, such as in the rows, a kind of spatial syntax is hinted at, with burials spaced deliberately apart. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Was there any patterning of graves by age or sex? There are a few places where numerous children's and infant's graves seem to cluster, usually with one or more adult graves included. One cluster is beneath Burial 207, mentioned in Chapter 4 and discussed further in Chapter 6; others are discussed in Chapter 7. Sex distribution is skewed, with a preponderance of men in the northern part of the cemetery (see Chapter 9). Otherwise, men, women, and children are distributed more or less evenly across the entire excavated site, relative to overall density.

Distinctive Women's Graves in the Southeastern Area of the Site

There is one area, in the far eastern part of the excavated site, where distinctive women's burials were found (Figure 63). There are a number of possible "rows" of graves aligned roughly north-south across the excavated site, which may correspond to contours in the original hillside.

Middle Group Burials 365 and 383 were highly unusual in that they were oriented with their heads to the south rather than the west. The two burials were 10 feet apart. No age could be calculated for the woman in Burial 365; the young woman in Burial 383 was determined to be between 14 and 18 years old. Burial 365 was truncated, with only the legs, feet, and portion of the left hand remaining, although these elements were articulated. It is unlikely that the entire burial had been displaced into a north-south orientation, as a grave-shaft outline was recorded, and the extant portion of the coffin appeared intact. Upon the lid of the coffin, an oyster shell and an artifact made from shell and metal were found (see Chapter 14).

Middle Group Burials 371 and 375 and Late-Middle Group Burial 377 were of women with no coffins but with unique personal effects. Although the grave of Burial 371 (Figure 64) had been partially destroyed by construction of a massive concrete footing in February 1992, the surviving portion (the upper body) was relatively intact. The grave, which held a woman between 25 and 35 years old, had a remarkably straight-sided shaft, which tapered toward the head end. The grave was considerably deeper than others excavated in this area, and another grave had been dug into it, well above the woman's remains. Two turquoise enamel cuff-link faces, each decorated with a squat, whiteand-pink V and two dots, were found beneath the woman's left upper arm. Given their location and the lack of a connecting shank or link between them, it is unlikely that they fastened a shirtsleeve. These items were unique within the assemblage from the cemetery; how they were worn or used is not known (see Chapter 13).

Only two other coffinless graves were assigned to the Middle Group, Burial 375, also of a woman, and Burial 434, of undetermined sex. The 16–18-year-old woman in this grave had been buried with her arms crossed above her head, a unique position at the New York African Burial Ground (Figure 65). The east end of the grave had been disturbed by construction

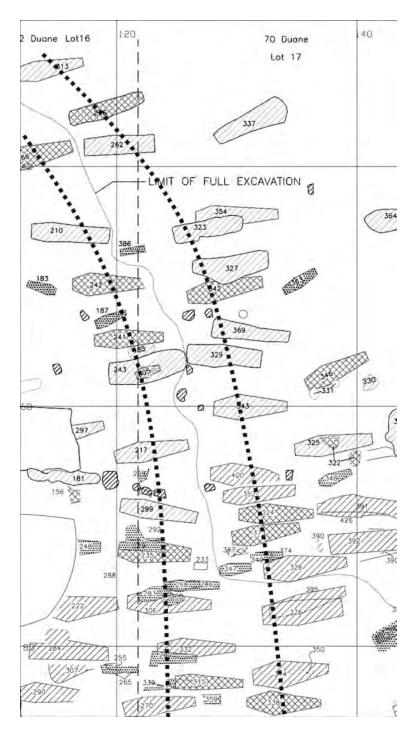


Figure 62. Detail of the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map). Row-like alignments of graves spanned the site from south to north. These may reflect the contours of the hillside.

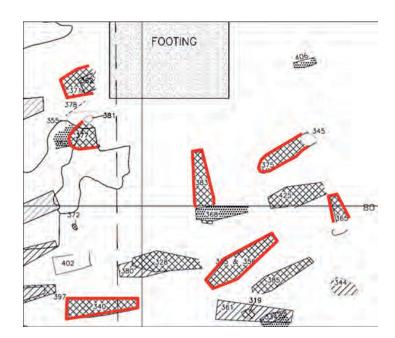


Figure 63. Detail from site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing locations of distinctive women's graves in the southeast corner of the excavated site.

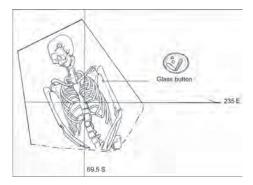


Figure 64. In situ drawing, Burial 371. Remains are shown here at a scale of 1 inch = 2 feet. The button or cuff-link faces were 14 by 11 mm (drawing by W. Williams).

activity (although the feet appear to be missing in the photographs and drawings, foot bones were present when archaeologists exposed the burial).

The idiosyncratic arm position suggests that no winding sheet wrapped the arms at the time the woman was placed in the grave—bearers may have carried the corpse by the arms and legs. A ceramic ball with a copper alloy band encircling it, surrounded by an organic stain, possibly representing cloth or leather, was found at the right hip, adjacent to the right femur head (Figure 66). The object is described in full in Chapter 14.

Burial 377, assigned to the Late-Middle Group, held the remains of a woman 33–58 years old who had three rings at her throat, possibly with a bit of associated thread (these items were never received in

the laboratory but were documented in the field—see Chapter 13). This woman also had been buried without a coffin, although possible wood staining was noted above and below the skeletal remains. Excavators suggested that boards might have been placed above and below the body, although the residue could have been from the coffin of a prior burial that was disturbed by Burial 377. A substance that excavators believed to be red ocher was observed on the possible wood remains and on the head, ribs, and scapulae.⁷

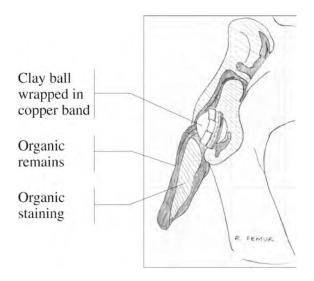
The presence of three burials of women in coffinless graves close to one another and that contained distinctive personal effects is noteworthy. Most burials without coffins are of men and are in the Late Group, mainly in the northern part of the excavated site. The women's graves may be incorrectly assigned to the Middle temporal groups and could belong instead with the majority of other coffinless burials in our Late Group, although the stratigraphic position of Burial 371 argues against this.

The final distinctive woman's grave in this area of the site, Burial 340, had a coffin, was oriented with the head to the west, and lay in the typical position,

⁷ Red ocher (a pigment made from iron oxide) was used by Native Americans from the early Archaic (the Lamoka period in New York, ca. 4,500 years ago), was a component of elaborate burial sites of the Orient peoples (ca. 3,000 years ago) on Long Island, and continued to be used into late prehistoric and historic times. Recent scholarship has explored the possible symbolic significance of the color red among Native Americans (see Cantwell and Wall 2001:69–70; Ritchie 1965).

Figure 65. In situ photograph of Burial 375, with arms crossed above head (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Figure 66. In situ drawing of artifacts at the hip of the woman in Burial 375 (drawing by M. Schur).





supine and extended. Burial 340 was nevertheless unique and is one of the most extensively described interments at the New York African Burial Ground. It held a woman between 39 and 64 years who had been buried wearing a strand of beads and cowrie shells at her hips and a bracelet of beads on the right wrist (Figure 67), as well as an unused smoking pipe. The coffin was four sided and tapered toward the foot and although located near the pottery midden, the grave predated that feature and was placed in the Early Group.

Most of the beads were found in a line that circled once around the woman's hips, although most of the beads were recovered from the sides. A total of 112 glass beads were ultimately recovered, along with 1 amber bead and 7 cowries (9 cowries were recorded in the field, but 1 of the cowries was later found to be a fragment of bone). Another cowrie was not recoverable and may have been an impression of a shell in the soil (LaRoche 1994a:19). The waist beads varied in color. With the exception of two specimens with adventitious decoration, the beads were simple, drawn types (see Chapter 13 for descriptions).

Excavators originally believed that some of the beads (a line of tiny, alternating blue-green and pale

yellow beads) were worn on the woman's right wrist but later decided that all beads were probably from the strand at her waist because no hand or wrist bones underlay the in situ beads. Yet the interpretation of the distinct strand of alternating blue-green and yellow beads as a bracelet is compatible with its location beneath extant hand/wrist bones and seems much more plausible than their interpretation as part of the waist beads. There were 15 of the yellow beads and 26 of the blue-green beads recovered, 15 of which were found aligned and in an alternating pattern (the others were scattered in the general pelvic area).

Eleven straight pins were found in place, most on the cranium, suggesting the woman had been shrouded. A kaolin pipe bowl and joining stem were recovered from beneath the woman's pelvis (this item is described in Chapter 14). The pipe had not been smoked. The skeletal remains from Burial 340 were poorly preserved, which accounts for the wide range of the woman's estimated age. Her incisors had been altered to hourglass and "peg" shapes.

One other woman's grave in the same small area should be mentioned here: Middle Group Burial 335 belonged to a woman between 25 and 35 years old



Figure 67. In situ photograph of the pelvic area of Burial 340, showing beads. The top arrow points to one of the cowries, the bottom arrow to the strand of alternating blue-green and yellow beads at the right wrist. See Chapter 13 for a drawing and additional photographs of the individual beads recovered. Ruler is marked in inches; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

with an infant (Burial 356) held in the crook of her arm. This is the only burial in the excavated sample where an infant was so placed (in the case of Burials 12 and 14, another woman with an infant, the infant was in its own coffin).

We consider it possible that the proximity of these distinctive women's graves to one another was deliberate, which in turn raises the possibility that a special area of the cemetery existed for women who shared one or more kinds of social distinction. There is no way to know whether any such distinction was negative or positive or whether it was formalized in the management of the cemetery or tacitly agreed upon by the women's mourners or the community.

Conclusion

It is likely that one of the most important things enslaved people did on their "own" time was participate in wakes, funerals, and grave-site gatherings. Funeral labor involved preparation and transport of the body, digging the grave, participation in funerary rituals, closing and marking the grave, and whatever subsequent actions were necessary to maintain proper relations with the dead and among living relatives. By

participating in burial-related activities on behalf of departed loved ones and community members, Africans acted for themselves and each other, reclaiming their own labor from those who purported to own it. Labor also extended to the work needed to obtain the necessary accourtements of proper burial. The coffin was a key component. Even when household heads or the Almshouse wardens supplied them (see Chapter 10), such a custom can be viewed as the result of struggles over the terms of bondage rather than as a paternalistic gesture. Typical accourtements appear to have also included, at a minimum, the shroud or cloth with which to wrap the body or the limbs and chin, with or without pins (see Chapter 11).

Other material goods found with the deceased also can shed light on how Africans acted on their own account. When a person was buried wearing jewelry or clothing, or with other objects that belonged to them in life, a claim was made about the inalienability of their possessions. Those possessions were likely obtained through own-account activities. Africans in colonial New York, including those who were enslaved, created opportunities to earn money of their own to purchase small luxuries. Goods within easy reach may have been vended on the sly or fenced at well-known taverns and the proceeds spent on personal

items—or personal items may themselves have been stolen goods.⁸ The burial of possessions took them out of circulation and fixed them to the deceased, symbolically defying a system that denied property to, and defined as property, an entire people.

The richness of the nonmaterial aspects of African funerals (rituals that do not enter the documentary or archaeological record) is lost to us. But based on the material record, it is reasonable to propose that an insistence upon the full humanity of the deceased might well have been at the spiritual and political heart of burial at this cemetery. Most individuals

were buried without any personal goods, some even without a coffin, yet the digging of an individual grave for the deceased, care in the orientation of the grave, and the placement of each body in a specific position (supine and extended) and probably wrapped, testifies to a degree of attention and respect accorded to all.

The acts of interment that we are able to witness at a historical distance speak most importantly of the individual's relationship to others—to family but also to a larger community. The "conformity" that the record implies should be seen in this context. We think the cemetery provided a way for a community to form through the communal performance of a fundamental rite of passage. If via the archaeological record we are seeing mainly the shared aspects of mortuary behavior, then we have a remarkable window on a critical historical process. It is possible the common burial practices that are so evident within the excavated site took root during the beginning years of the burial ground, perhaps even earlier, when New Amsterdam's first Africans were interred in the West India Company's common cemetery. Because the African Burial Ground subsequently would have been one of the few sites where black men, women, and children could act communally and on each other's behalf, it would have been a key place and institution for the continual incorporation of diverse newcomers into the fold.

⁸ Laws passed to stifle the enterprise of bondmen and bondwomen provide a glimpse of some of the revenue-generating projects Africans undertook after work or on their masters' time. Africans were banned from selling independently grown crops and livestock; gathered fruits; home-made commodities and crafts, such as soap; and oysters gathered from beds in New York waters. Colonial Manhattan's unfree African workforce encompassed the skilled as well as the unskilled. Africans labored in city homes and on nearby farms but also in the warehouses, workshops, and markets that provisioned a bustling port. African blacksmiths, coopers, cord makers, brewers, butchers, and tailors may have profited from their skills, as suggested by legislation forbidding Africans to hire out as day laborers without their masters' consent. On own-account economic activities of New York's Africans, see Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground (Medford et al. 2009h:63-64; see also Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:181-182). Some of the restrictive legislation that gives us a glimpse of economic activities includes colony-wide laws (New York State 1894:1:157, 761-767, 845, :2:679-688) and city ordinances (New York City Common Council 1905:1:232, :4:497-498). The variety of occupations of Africans is learned from sale and escapee advertisements and from the censuses of 1703 and 1790.

CHAPTER 6

The Early Group

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

Burials are assigned to the Early Group on the basis of coffin type, relationship to site features, and stratigraphy (see Chapter 4; problematic assignments are noted below). Burials placed in this group appear to predate the use of the eastern part of the cemetery by nearby pottery factories, in place ca. 1730, for dumping of kiln waste. Absolute dating is not possible, however. For convenience, we give the Early Group a hypothetical end date of 1735.

A sketch of the town and its population precedes the tabulation of the Early Group mortuary sample. The material culture and spatial distribution of the burials are then discussed, followed by a description of unique and unusual interments.

The Town

New York grew considerably during the first four decades of the eighteenth century, but the burial ground was still outside the developed portion of the town. The southern shore of the Fresh Water (or Collect) Pond was considered the edge of the town proper. The northern extent of development at the end of the period was at present-day Park Row and Franklin Street on the east side of present-day Broadway, and at present-day Liberty Street on the west side of Broadway (see the Lyne-Bradford Plan in Figure 15 in Chapter 2). The "Negro Burying Place," as it was labeled on Mrs. Buchnerd's hand-drawn plan of the town in 1735 (see Figure 17 in Chapter 2), was in the northern part of the Common. The Common tradition-

ally was open space that townspeople could use for pasture and for digging sod and burning lime, although the latter activities were barred in the area south of the Collect in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The town used the Common as a parade ground for troops, for celebrations and bonfires, and for executions. The municipal powder house was built in 1728 on a small island between the Collect and Little Collect, just east of the African Burial Ground.²

A number of churches had been established in New York by the end of our early period, some of which had African members, but it appears they were not burying blacks in their cemeteries. In addition to the Dutch Reformed, Anglican, French Huguenot, Lutheran, and Quaker churches and the Jewish synagogue established in the seventeenth century, by 1728 there were two additional Anglican and Dutch Reformed congregations, as well as Baptist and Presbyterian churches, all located within the town proper (Rothschild 1990:47). French Huguenot Elias Neau had begun a school for Africans in 1704.

Regulation of the activities of enslaved people grew extremely restrictive in this period. English rollback of the margin of freedom allowed under Dutch rule culminated in 1702 with An Act for Regulating Slaves (New York State 1894:1:519–521), and from then on both the colonial government and New York's Common Council continued from year to year to legislate social control over blacks, enslaved and free. The 1702 law was renewed in 1705 and again in 1719.

Enslaved people were brought to New York City directly from Africa and via the Caribbean. For New

¹ This is reflected in laws of the time, which typically state that provisions apply to the area south of the Collect or Fresh Water. As noted in Chapter 3, the pond was fed by deep springs and was used by the general public for fishing and for drinking water and later would be used by private industries such as tanning.

² See historical summaries of the vicinity of the African Burial Ground in each chronological period in Harris et al. (1993); for detail on specific structures in the area throughout its history, see Hunter Research (1994).

Table 20. Sources of Imports of Enslaved Africans into New York Colony, 1701–1726

Year	West Indies	Coast of Africa
1701	36	_
1702	165	_
1703	16	_
1704	8	_
1705	_	24
1710	_	53
1711	_	55
1712	_	77
1714	53	_
1715	17	38
1716	19	43
1717	68	266
1718	447	70
1719	104	_
1720	81	_
1721	76	117 ^a
1722	106	_
1723	82	_
1724	61	_
1725	54	59
1726	180	_
m . 1	1.570	000
Total	1,573	802

Note: From "Account obtained from the collector of the customs," December 16, 1726, in Brodhead (1853–1887:5:814).

York Colony as a whole, the importations in the period of the Early Group are listed in Table 20. There is no way of knowing how many of and which of these captives remained in the city of New York, but the preponderance of those who had spent time in the Caribbean was probably reflected in the town's enslaved population. It is also likely that the importations directly from Africa resulted in intermittent infusions of African-born individuals into the local

community, as town residents would have had a ready opportunity to acquire captives at the docks.

Tensions between Africans and Europeans flared with the 1712 Uprising (Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade, June 23, 1712, in Brodhead 1853–1887:5:341–342; Scott 1961). African-born captives (along with diverse others) appear to have played a role in the insurrection, and participants are thought to have used African practices to bind each other's

^a "Entered from the Coast of Africa but found afterward to have been from Madagascar."

loyalty. It is possible that those executed were interred in the African Burial Ground, although authorities may have kept some of the bodies from burial as a further retribution for the uprising (as would be the case in the executions of 1741). No burials that appear to have been mangled or otherwise buried inauspiciously were assigned to the Early Group.

The revolt led to the colony's most restrictive and punitive legislation to date, An Act for Preventing Suppressing and Punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves (New York State 1894:1:761–767). It reiterated the 1702 law and added clauses meant to reduce interaction between free and enslaved Africans and to prevent ownership of property by free "Negro, Indian, or Mullato" persons. It curtailed manumission by setting high bond prices (although the latter were removed in 1717).

Restrictions were placed on African funerals as well (see Chapter 2). Some of the archaeologically recovered burials in the Early Group might have been interred during the years after night funerals (1722) and large corteges and pall-draped coffins (1731) had been banned.

Some might also have been interred in 1731, when a devastating smallpox epidemic struck New York. This is the only time for which bills of mortality listing blacks were published. Of 79 deaths reported, at least 50 were probably from the disease. As shown in Table 21, in any given week, the maximum number of deaths never rose above 14. Implications for burials at the African Burial Ground are discussed in the section entitled "Mortuary Material Culture."

The Population

Census

Census figures for Africans in this period are contained in Table 22. The sex ratio fluctuated, from a preponderance of men and male children in 1703, an equal proportion in 1712, more women than men in 1723, and back to near parity in 1731. We have interpreted the increasing numbers of girls and women to be indicative of the growing demand for domestics as the European residential population grew.³ The

Mortuary Sample

Early Group burials, numbering 51, are listed in Table 23. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. Problematic assignments, such as those for which the coffin shape was not determined but stratigraphic considerations point to early burial, are noted on the table. The distribution of Early Group graves at the excavated site is shown on Figures 68a–68e. Age and sex profiles are graphed in Figures 69 and 70.⁴

The small number of subadults (n = 6, or 13) percent of the group) can probably be attributed to poor preservation, but other possibilities should be considered. Infant and child mortality may have been lower for some reason in these years, but this is highly unlikely. It is possible that a separate area of the African Burial Ground was being used for children in the Early Group, although there is no clear evidence of this. Moreover, in two cases, a toddler and an infant were deliberately buried with adults. Although we cannot extrapolate a general rule from these examples, they at least suggest that children were not segregated in death. Still, inauspicious deaths of infants or stillbirths may have required different types of burial or burial in a different location, so this possibility cannot be ruled out. A hypothetical alternative assignment of a concentration of child burials to the Early Group is discussed in the section entitled "Spatial Distribution."

Mortuary Material Culture

Early Group burials were all in coffins except for Burial 307. It is possible that other burials without coffins have not survived from this period, as the length of time in the ground and the possibility of disturbance from later interments would have affected preservation. As noted, early coffins by definition

number of children per woman was approximately one throughout the period. The proportion of the population that was labeled as "Negro," "Black," or "Slave" (note that this category included Native Americans) remained fairly stable, at around 18 percent, throughout the period.

³ For discussions of overall demographic patterns see Rankin-Hill et al. (2009; Chapter 7 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground).

⁴ Aging and sexing methods are described in Blakey, Mack, et al. (2009; Chapter 4 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground).

Table 21. Deaths Reported for Blacks, August to December, 1731

Date	Deaths	Deaths from Smallpox
August 23	_	_
September 6	6	3
September 13	8	7
September 20	6	4
September 27	7	6
October 4	14	10
October 11	9	8
October 18 ^a	12	
October 25	_	_
November 1	7 ^b	_
November 8 c	_	_
November 15	2	_
Total when smallpox reporting ceased	71	_
November 22	4	_
November 29	1	_
December 5	1	
December 13		_
December 21	2	_
Total reported	79	_

Note: From *New-York Gazette* August 23–30 through December 13–21, 1731.

were four sided and tapered toward the foot. Very few of the early burials had items in the coffin with the deceased, but again, poor preservation owing to the extended length of time in the ground may be a factor in the low frequency of burial artifacts. It is possible that decomposition claimed all traces of some pins, buttons, or cloth in some of these burials.

Fourteen individuals had copper-alloy straight pins. The pins were mainly on the crania, with some in the neck area. One person, the infant in Burial 226, had a pin on the innominate or hip. The exception is in keeping with the overall findings on pin placement: young children were most likely to have been wrapped and pinned all along the body (see Chapter 11). Burial 361 had a pewter button that might have fastened a shirt collar. Burial 250 also had a button, of copper alloy, that was found in the pelvic area along with an iron mass and a bead, suggesting a talisman or memento

^a Cause not specified from this date on, although the report indicates "most of smallpox."

b Includes preceding 2 weeks.

^c The *Gazette* reported that no new cases of smallpox had appeared in the preceding week.

Year	Label in Census	Adults		Chi	ldren	Age for	Total
	Label III Celisus	Male	Female	Male	Female	Children	Total
1703	"Negroes"	298	276	124	101	≤15	799
1712	"slaves"	321	320	155	179	≤15	975
1723	"Negroes and other slaves"	408	476	220	258	not given	1,362
1731	"blacks"	599	607	186	185	11	1,577

Table 22. Black Population by Age and Sex, 1703-1731

Note: Information from Green and Harrington (1932) and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).

rather than clothing. A textile pseudomorph (a corrosion product that permeated the fibers and replaced them, creating an exact replica) was recovered from Burial 121, the only evidence of cloth from the Early Group. It is likely most individuals were shrouded.

Most of the beads recovered at the New York African Burial Ground belong to this period: two of the individuals at the cemetery who were buried wearing strung beads, Burial 340 (112 beads at the waist and wrist) and Burial 226 (8 beads at the neck), are in the Early Group, and a single bead was found with an adult of undetermined sex in Burial 250. Because beads are unusual in graves at this cemetery, their presence in three Early Group interments is significant. The beads recovered with the infant in Burial 226 are unusual for yet another reason: they were characteristic of West African manufacture. The bead from Burial 250 was recovered from the central part of the coffin, possibly near the pelvis, in association with an iron mass, a pewter tack, and a copper-alloy button. The beads are discussed in Chapter 13.

Spatial Distribution

In this section and the corresponding sections of Chapters 7–9, we discuss burial distribution and spatial groupings that we have discerned. No attempt is made to discuss the location of each individual burial. Early Group burials were distributed over the entire site from east to west (see Figures 68a–68e). They were missing from the area north of the fence line, which we believe was not in use until the final quarter of the eighteenth century (see Chapter 9). All but two Early Group burials (Burials 237 and 264, which might represent the same individual) were interred with their heads to the west, and all were laid supine.

A concentration of burials that is assigned to the Early Group is located in the western part of the excavated site, extending from the north-south leg of former Republican Alley eastward to the alley behind Lot 13. The distribution of the concentration was relatively loose, and the concentration itself may well be "false" because building construction obliterated so much of this part of the cemetery. The most clearly defined concentration within the Early Group is located approximately between grid coordinates 65 and 90 East. We refer to this as the central concentration. The third area considered is on the far eastern part of the excavated site. It is likely that early burials originally extended to the west and north of this area but were either destroyed or not excavated archaeologically. The eastern group is treated separately here because these burials are in a defined area that subsequently became a dump for pottery-waste material.

Between the central and eastern concentrations, from grid coordinates 110 to 160 East, there were only five Early Group burials. However, excavations were not complete in the area north of grid line 75 South and east of grid line 130 East, and it is possible additional early interments are still in place. Also, based on the stratigraphic relationships reconstructed in the vicinity, the area south of grid line 75 South and between grid 130 and 150 East may have been eroded or leveled at some time in the past, resulting in a loss of early burials that may have been situated on the hillside. Graves that were placed here subsequently, however, survived.

Burial orientation in the Early Group was uniformly west-headed with one exception, Burial 237/264 (probably a single individual—see the section on unique and unusual burials). The distribution of precise orientation angles within the west-headed early burials differs from that of later groups (see Figure 54 in

Table 23. Early Group Burials

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex ⁸	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
18	adult	35	45	female?	93	81.5	12	у	tapered
23	adult	25	35	male	85	87.5	8	у	tapered
26 b	subadult	8	12	undetermined	78	83	20	у	four sided
29	adult	35	45	male?	82	97.5	0	у	tapered
33	adult			undetermined	93	87.5	10	n	none (redeposited bones)
34	adult			undetermined		87.5	15	n	rectangular?
38	adult	12	18	female	90	86	10	y	tapered
44 b	subadult	3	9	undetermined		85.5	21.5	у	four sided
48	adult			undetermined	97	87.5	20	у	tapered
52	undetermined		100	undetermined	18	87.5	25	n	rectangular
68	adult	21	25	male	87	91	3.5	у	tapered
72 b	subadult	1	2	undetermined	90	87.5	34	у	rectangular
78	adult	16	19	undetermined	64	91	- 10	у	tapered
83 b	subadult			undetermined	95	87.5	31	у	rectangular
84	adult	17	21	female	89	87.5	35	у	four sided
88	undetermined			undetermined	81	93.5	-4	n	unidentified
120	adult	25	34	female	93	88.5	70	у	tapered
121	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	98	86	70	y	tapered
155	adult			undetermined	92	92	75	n	four sided
177	adult	30	60	undetermined	88	91.5	80	у	tapered
182	subadult	7.5	12.5	undetermined	102	94	69	у	tapered
200	adult		1-1	male	98	75.5	77	у	four sided
202	adult	12	18	female?	108	85.5	70	ý	tapered
221	adult	30	60	male	96	83.5	77	у	tapered
226	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	105	83	77	у	tapered
227	undetermined			undetermined	96	77	84	n	four sided
237	undetermined			undetermined	183	80	55.5	n	four sided?
247 b	adult	35	49.9	male?	90	84.5	90	n	unidentified
249 b	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	101	81	87	у	tapered
250	adult			undetermined	98	80.5	84	у	four sided
261	n/a			no skeletal remains		87.5	80	n	unidentified
263	subadult		-	undetermined	105	88.5	74	у	tapered

Table 23. Early Group Burials (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex ^a	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
264	adult			undetermined		80	55	n	unidentified
272	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	100	88.5	74.5	у	four sided
279	adult			undetermined	99	76.5	75.5	n	four sided
280	adult			female?	96	83	70	n	four sided
281	adult			male?	90	79.5	75	у	four sided
282	adult	32.5	42.5	male	96	77.5	71.5	у	four sided
307 b	adult	45	55	male?	88	82.5	116	у	no coffin
308	subadult			undetermined	109	84.5	109	у	four sided
340	adult	39.3	64.4	female	94	88.5	237	у	tapered
361	adult	33	57	male	85	88.5	249	у	tapered
382 b	subadult	4	5	undetermined	110	71.5	215	у	four sided
387	adult	34	44	male	109	78	227	у	tapered
388	adult	29	57	female	112	75.5	222	у	tapered
389	adult			female	100	82	220	у	tapered
402	adult			undetermined	100	84.5	235	n	tapered
404 ^b	adult			female	96	79.5	165	n	tapered
416	adult			undetermined	101	71.5	142	y (no cranium)	tapered
426	undetermined			undetermined		69.5	141	n (not excavated)	tapered?
432	adult			undetermined	90	78	220	у	rectangular?

^a In the Sex column, a question mark indicates a probable assignment.

b Indicates a problematic temporal assignment.

Chapter 5). There is no peak frequency at grid west $(90^{\circ} \text{ west of grid north})$ as there is for later groups. The most frequent orientation (n = 5 burials) is at 96° west of north, but the rest of the graves were fairly evenly distributed at more northerly and more southerly orientations.

The Western Concentration

The western early concentration (shown on Figure 68b) includes 14–16 burials: Burials 18, 23, 29, 33, 34, 38, 48, 52, 68, 72, 78, 83, 84, 88, and possibly 26 and 44.

Burials 18 and 23 are notable because grave markers associated with them were recovered archaeologically. As we saw in Chapter 3, this is the part of the

site where the early ground surfaces were preserved beneath the fill. The grave markers consisted of flat, squared stones that appeared to have been placed upright at the heads of the graves.

The flat, rectangular stone associated with Burial 18 was still in place, vertical and perfectly aligned with the grave and coffin (see Figure 58 in Chapter 5). The deceased was between 35 and 45 years old, probably a woman (the sex could not be determined with full certainty owing to the deterioration of the bones). Other than the coffin nails and a remnant of coffin lid identified as red cedar, no other artifacts were recovered from the burial. No engraving was observed on the stone. Had the stone ever been engraved, some trace might have survived because the stone was covered with soil rather than exposed to the air. The

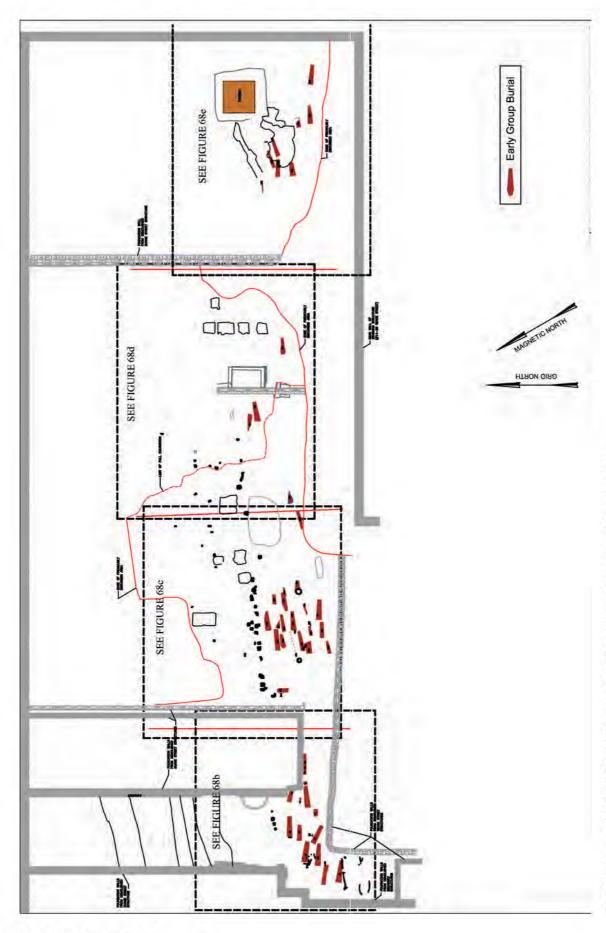


Figure 68a. Excavated Early Group burials (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

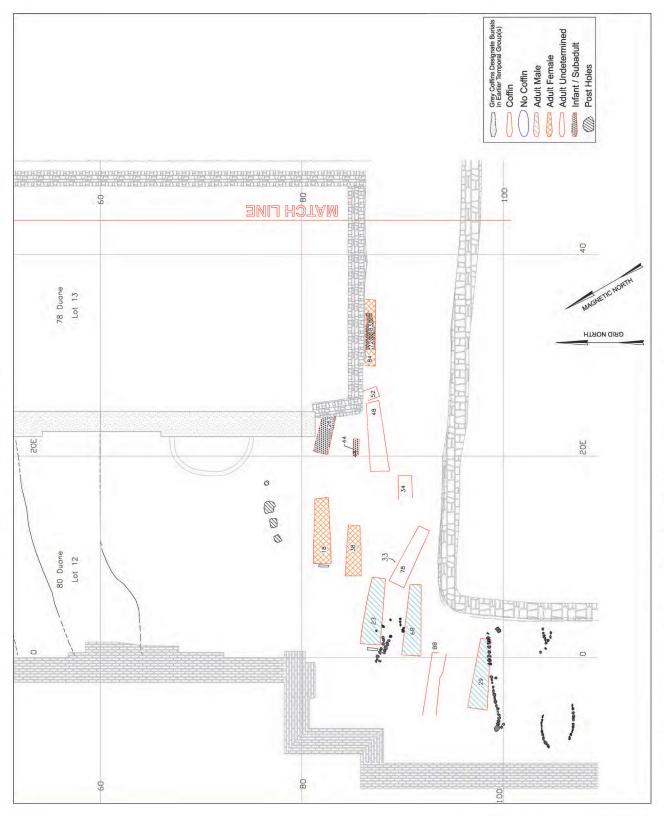
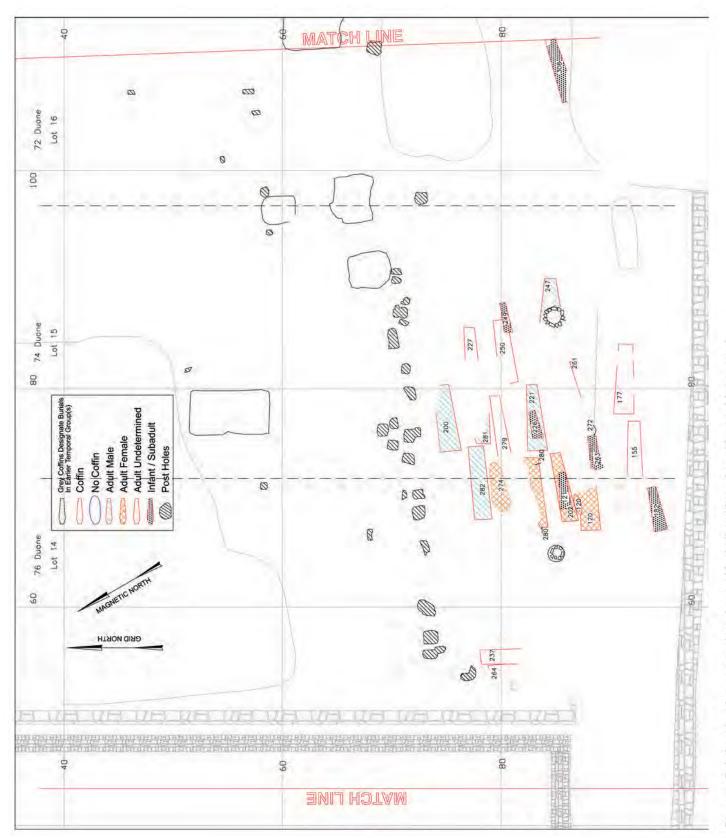


Figure 68b. Early Group burials, western area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).



Hgure 68c. Early Group burials, west-central area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

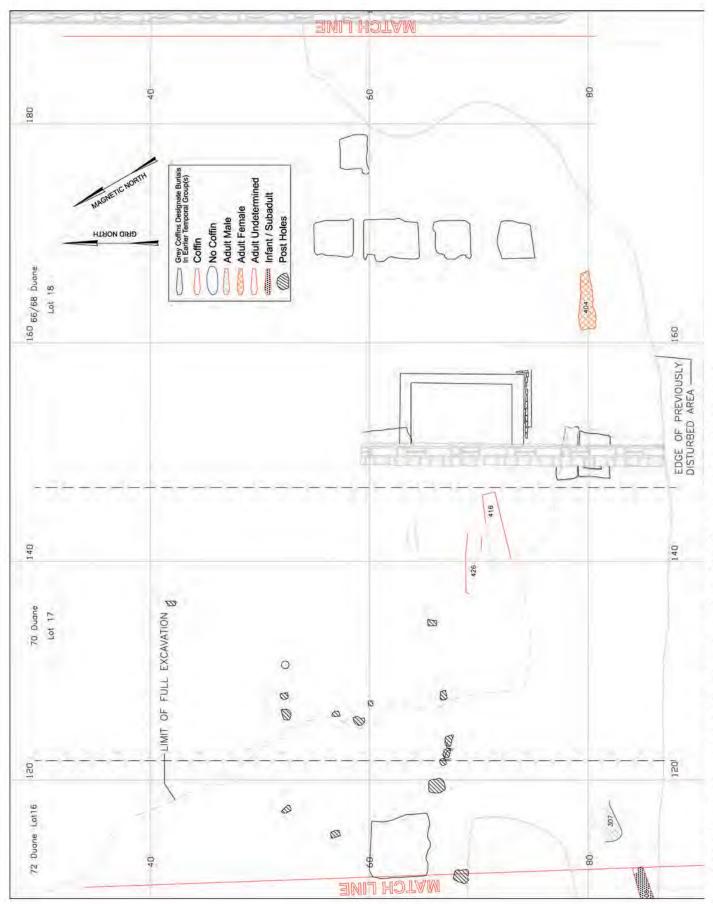


Figure 68d. Early Group burials, east-central and Lot 18 areas (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

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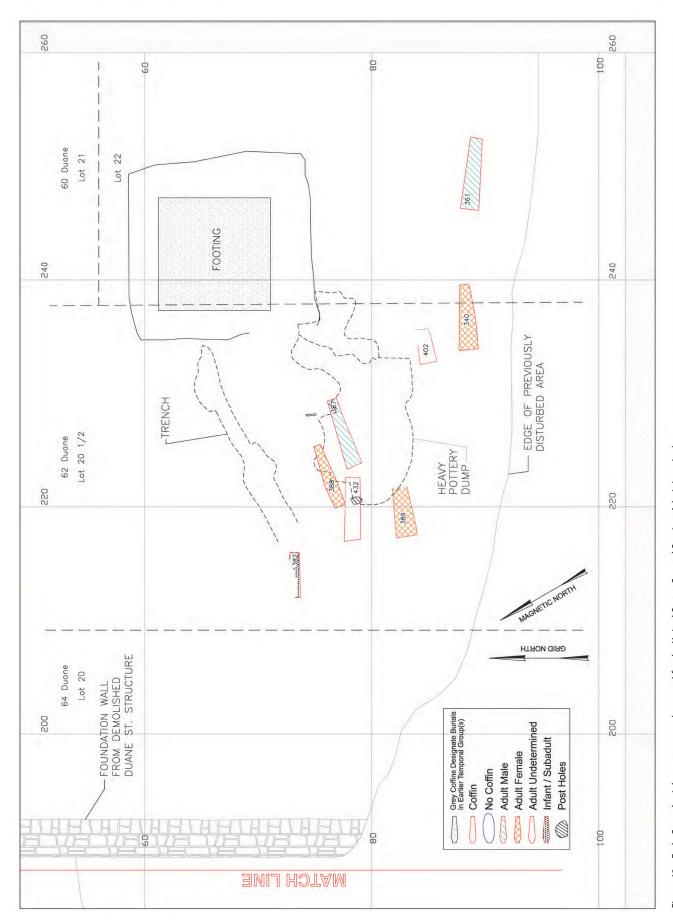


Figure 68e. Early Group burials, eastern area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

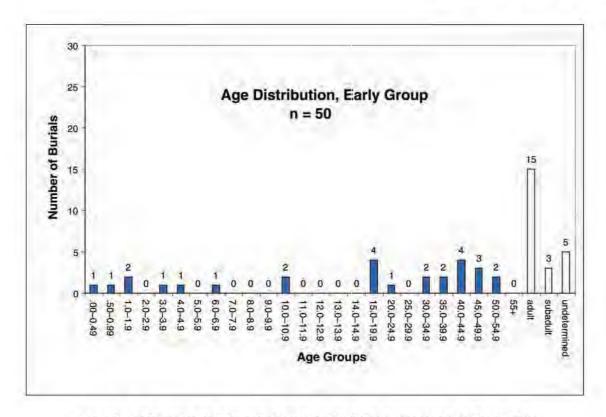


Figure 69. Age distribution, Early Group. White bars indicate individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

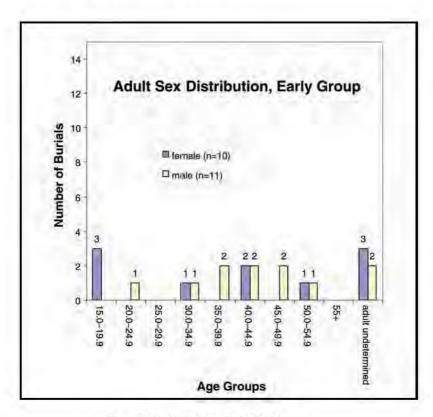


Figure 70. Adult sex distribution, Early Group.

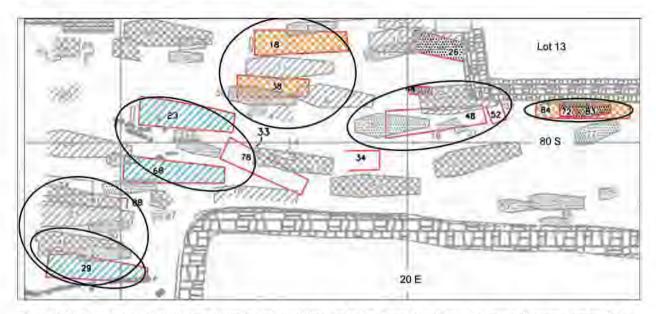


Figure 71. Detail (5 West to 30 East) of the southwestern portion of the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map), showing all temporal groups. Early Group burials are shown in color. Possible clusters mentioned in the text are circled.

stone was not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center, and it was never measured or identified as to type of stone or geologic provenience.

The stone that is thought to be associated with Burial 23 (see Figures 60 and 61 in Chapter 5) was askew but otherwise appeared to have been in place at what turned out to be the head of the grave. A line of cobbles, also possibly marking the grave at the surface, was recorded just to the south (see Figure 68b). Burial 23 held a man between 25 and 35 years old. This burial and the adjacent Burial 68 (of a man between 21 and 25) had virtually identical coffins, probably from the same coffin maker (see Chapter 10).

Burial 38, which held a young woman between 12 and 18 years of age, may have belonged to a grave grouping that included Burials 18, 23, and 68. The cluster also may have included Burial 78, which held the remains of an individual of undetermined sex, between 16 and 19 years of age. Burial 78, however, was distinct in that it had a much more northerly orientation than the others. Indeed, it was the most northerly skewed of the head-to-west burials from the site. Burials 33 and 34, very partial and disturbed burials (possibly representing a single individual), may have originally been part of the group, but their condition makes assignment to the Early Group tentative.

The presence of grave markers raises the possibility that later interments were deliberately placed with reference to these early graves. Therefore, burial groupings that span time periods must be considered, not only here, but also in other locations at the site where surface markers might once have been present but did not survive archaeologically. Figure 71 shows burials from all temporal groups and should be compared to Figure 68b.

Burials 24 and 27 (young children) have been assigned to the Middle Group but might have been positioned deliberately between Burials 23 and 78 (see Figure 71, center left). Burial 27 had a very northerly orientation, as though it were aligned with Burial 78. Burials 53 and 55 may have been placed deliberately among existing Early Group burials as well.

Later burials overlying Burials 18 and 38 included Burial 7 on the north side of Burial 18 and Burials 11, 5, 6, and 30, which clustered above Burial 38 (upper center in Figure 71). All of these later burials may have been added to a group anchored by the Early Group Burials 18 and 38. Burial 6, however, which is offset to the east of the others, has been assigned to the Late Group and may have been aligned with other late interments rather than with underlying early graves.

Burials 54, 81, 67, 60, 46, and 22 may have been deliberately placed above Early Group Burials 29 and 88 (at left in Figure 71). Burial 29 held a man between 35 and 45 years of age; Burial 88 held an individual of undetermined sex and age, Prior to uncovering Burials 22, 46, and 29, excavators had recorded a line of small cobbles, which ran east-west just south of the burials. The line was 3-4 feet above the Burial 29 coffin.

The grave marker may be associated with Burial 29 (or alternatively with Burial 47 to the south; the latter association was assumed in the field) or may have formed a boundary marker between two grave groups. It is possible Burial 46 was deliberately placed next to the man in marked Burial 29, and that Burial 22, a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years in age, who was interred later, was deliberately placed immediately above the two without disturbing them at all.⁵

An apparent cluster of burials at the southwest corner of Lot 13 (see Figure 71, upper right corner) includes burials from our early and middle temporal groups. Burials 25 and 32 (described in Chapter 7) were placed above Burials 44, 48, and 52, and Burial 35 overlay the west half of Burial 48. Highly disturbed graves of young children or infants, Burials 19 and 21, were also found with the cluster, although perhaps these were interred later.

Of course, the intensive reuse of the cemetery in this area may account for the overlapping graves, and the interpretation that perceived groupings were deliberate, spanning long time periods, is tenuous. Still, the stone and cobble grave markers provide added support for such an interpretation.

The Central Concentration

Approximately between the east-west grid coordinates 65 and 90 East a concentration of early burials has been identified (shown on Figure 68c), consisting of Burials 120, 121, 155, 177, 182, 200, 202, 221, 226, 227, 249, 250, 261, 263, 272, 279, 280/274, 281, and 282. "Gaps" in the overall distribution of burials that may have been caused by construction disturbance lie to the east and to the west of this concentration, but nevertheless, it appears to be real. In general, the central cluster has a coherence to it, attributable to a fairly regular arrangement of graves with little variation in orientation.

The significance of the concentration is a matter of conjecture. One possibility is that the distribution simply reflects the topography of the cemetery. This area was apparently relatively flat, forming a small "terrace" on the hillside that sloped down toward the east. Burials continued to be concentrated in this general area in later periods. Figure 44 shows the distribution of burial elevations across the site, and the "flat" area between approximately 50 and 100 East is apparent.

We do not discount, however, the possibility that this group represents ties of kinship, religion, or ethnicity. No common attributes other than burial orientation, time period, and burial location left behind any trace; a function, perhaps, of the general lack of preserved material culture.

The burials include 12 adults and just 5 children, or 6 if Burial 249 is counted, 6 but early child and infant graves may not have survived. In several cases, cointerment of children with adults was suggested by the arrangement of burials. The most likely pairs are Burials 121 and 202, Burials 226 and 221, and Burials 250 and 249.

Burial 121, which held a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old, was buried above the 12–18-year-old individual in Burial 202, identified as a probable female (Figure 72). The two burials either were interred at the same time, or Burial 121 was deliberately placed within the Burial 202 grave at a later date. The coffins were essentially aligned, the child's centered atop the adult's. The grave shaft of another early burial, Burial 120, was directly adjacent to the south of the grave shaft of Burial 202, and although the two did not share a grave and were aligned slightly differently, it is possible this placement was deliberate, also. Burial 120, which held a woman between 25 and 34 years old, was disturbed when a later grave was dug (Burial 119), at which time long bones from Burial 120 were placed in a small pile against the south side of the Burial 202 coffin (Figure 73).

The infant in Burial 226 was interred atop Burial 221, which held a man between the ages of 30 and 60. It is possible that Burial 226 had a grave shaft of its own within that of Burial 221, in which case it was interred at least slightly later in time. Alternatively, Burial 226 was interred at the same time as Burial 221, and the soil distinction was the result of the decay of Burial 226. The infant, as noted in the section on mortuary material culture, was buried wearing a strand of fired-glass beads that were probably made in West Africa.

Burials 250 and 249 may also form a deliberate pair; in this case, however, the infant (Burial 249) was

⁵ See the burial descriptions in Part 2 of this volume for additional detail and alternative sequences for all burials.

⁶ One burial in the cluster, Burial 261, consisted only of coffin remains, and no skeletal remains were recovered. Burials 126 and 143, representing a later interment of two children in the same coffin, truncated the majority of Burial 261. The excavators of Burial 261 believed that all three individuals were interred in the same grave shaft, and in fact, the coffins seem to have been oriented exactly parallel to each other. It seems clear, however, that Burial 261 predated Burials 126 and 143, and apparently no effort was made to preserve the former when the second burial took place.

Figure 72. In situ photograph of Burial 121, which held a child, within the grave shaft of Burial 202. The Burial 202 coffin outline is barely discernible to the left of the child's coffin (photograph by Dennis Seckler).





Figure 73. In situ photograph of displaced bones from the woman in Burial 120. They had been disturbed when a later grave was being dug, and the gravedigger had placed them in a small, neat pile alongside the coffin of neighboring Burial 202. North is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

placed above the foot of the adult's coffin, slightly to one side. Burial 250 held an adult of undetermined age and sex; the infant in Burial 249 was between 6 and 16 months old.

It is also possible that the infants in Burials 263 and 272 were placed deliberately near the woman in Burial 120. The only other child, between 7.5 and 12.5 years old, was in Burial 182; the grave was separate from any adult's.

The above cases indicate that the burial of young children within or adjacent to the graves of adults was preferred during the period in which the Early Group was interred. As discussed in Chapter 5, we have identified this as a mortuary practice that was common, although not universal, at the New York African Burial Ground. The relationships between the young woman and child in Burials 202 and 121 or between the man and the infant in Burials 221 and 226 can only be guessed at. However, we interpret these co-interments as evidence that burial with some kind of kin was preferred, however "kin" might have been defined.

As in the western concentration, the possibility that grave clusters spanned time periods was explored. In cases where early graves were truncated and partially destroyed by later interments, we are less inclined to posit a deliberate grouping. Burials 120, 155, 261, 279, and 280 were all partially destroyed by later burials. Burial 227 was truncated on the west, probably during the interment of Burial 256, from the femur heads up, but the skull had apparently been replaced within the coffin, suggesting some measure of regard for the earlier burial.

Only Burials 250 and 177 were left undisturbed by later interments. Burial 249 lay immediately above the southeast corner of Burial 250, and the two have been discussed above as a possible paired interment. Burial 177 was overlain by two later children's graves with hexagonal coffins (Burials 128 and 169), and a string of other children's graves (including Burials 123, 126 and 143 [in a shared grave], 198, and 258) lay to its north (Figure 74). Highly disturbed children's remains also lay nearby (Burials 110, 112, 117, and 131), probably from the latest period of the cemetery. It is impossible to know whether this concentration of children's graves had any reference to the early Burial 177 or other early graves nearby.

An Anomaly and a Possible Burial Cluster: Burial 207. We noted in Chapter 4 that Burial 207,

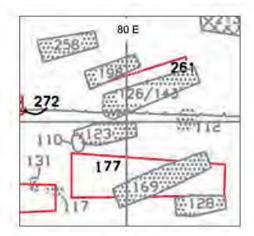


Figure 74. Detail (90 South and 80 East) of site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing later child burials near Early Group Burial 177.

which held a probable woman between 25 and 35 years old, was anomalous in that the coffin was apparently of the tapering shape, although the grave appears to be late. The Late Group assignment of the burial is based on a single tiny piece of pearlware found in the soil within the cranium and on its position overlying numerous child burials. Field records indicate that the top of the burial was somewhat disturbed, and we consider it possible that the pearlware sherd was

introduced into the cranium through silting of soil from an overlying midden.

It is possible to discern an east-west line of adult burials that includes Burial 207 and Early Group Burials 250, 221, 202, and 120 to its west (Figure 75). This possible alignment, along with the tapered coffin type and the possibility that the late artifact in the burial soil may be intrusive, points to a possible early assignment for Burial 207.

The burials that underlay the edges of Burial 207 included Burial 220; Burial 232; the shared grave of Burials 224, 231, and 234; Burial 240; and Burial 254. These were all graves of children and infants. Immediately to the east was a large area of construction disturbance that must have obliterated numerous additional graves.

If Burial 207 is actually from the early period, then all of the underlying children's burials also would be early. In this case, the mortuary demographic profile for the period could be modified to include seven additional subadults (with ages ranging from infancy to 4 years), and their spatial concentration might point to a special, separate placement of at least some children within the cemetery (in an area that may have extended eastward, where graves have been obliterated). Only one of these children had an associated

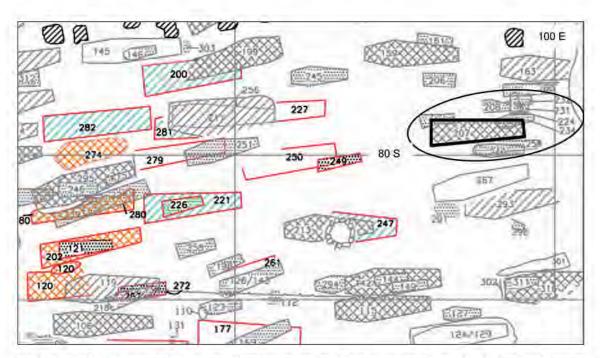


Figure 75. Detail (73—92 South and 70—100 East) of west-central portion of site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing all temporal groups. Early Group burials are shown in color, with Late Group Burial 207 shown with coffin outlined in black. The duster of children's burials beneath Burial 207 is circled.

artifact: Burial 254, a young child, had a silver pendant at his or her neck (see Chapter 13).

There is one other piece of evidence that may indicate an early date for Burial 207. Oak pollen made up 7 percent of the pollen types on the coffin lid, just nine-tenths of a percent in the grave fill, and 1 and four-tenths of a percent in the stomach of Burial 207. It is possible that the "grave fill" sample is from the later midden that overlay this area, but the "coffin lid" sample is derived from the original soil into which the grave was dug. This soil contained an early pollen spectrum in which oak was prominent (i.e., prior to the clearance of lower Manhattan; see Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume, for the pollen analysis).

This alternative chronological interpretation of Burial 207 and surrounding graves should be considered when analyzing change over time at the cemetery. However, in this report, we have assigned Burial 207 to the Late Group and have placed the children's graves in the middle groups.

The Eastern Concentration

Eight early burials were identified in the southeastern corner of the excavation site (shown on Figure 68e), Burials 340, 361, 382, 387, 388, 389, 402 and 432. As noted, these do not necessarily represent an original concentration of graves, because the limited preservation and excavation in the eastern part of the site make it impossible to gauge the actual distribution. In this area, stoneware pottery waste was dumped on the surface of the cemetery beginning sometime after about 1730 (see Chapter 4). Some of the burials assigned to the Early Group here contain these sherds and pieces of kiln furniture, although not in the same high concentrations as later burials that were clearly dug into the midden. It is possible that the waste material is intrusive into these graves from later dumping; alternatively, they represent interments that overlap in time with the dumping. Burials 387, 388, and 389 may postdate the beginning of the stoneware accumulation and thus fall late in the early group. Each had stoneware within the grave shaft, although not the high volume of others to their south and east—they appear to have been at the edge of the dumping area or, alternatively, they were interred before the stoneware was dumped but had debris mixed into upper layers through later disturbances.

The discernment of burial clusters in the eastern area is impossible because of the partial excavation. There is one possible north-south alignment of graves running from Burial 382 on the north southward through Burials 388, 387, 402, and 340, which might reflect a contour in the slope. Otherwise, the proximity of Burials 389, 432, 388, and 387 is noted as a possible cluster, with the latter two considered a pair. Burials 388 and 387 were nearly identical in terms of grave-shaft shape and coffin style (see Chapter 10). Burial 388 was of an adult woman between 29 and 57, Burial 387 of a man 34–44 years old.

Unique and Unusual Burials

There are many distinctive interments at the New York African Burial Ground, and most are described in this report in one place or another. Early Group Burial 340, for example, was described in Chapter 5. Here and in Chapters 7–9, burials that warrant special mention and/or are not discussed elsewhere are described under this heading.

South-Headed and Coffinless Burials

To the west of the central concentration (see Figure 68c), there were two very poorly preserved interments identified as Burials 237 and 264, which are probably the remains of a single burial. This grave appears to have been oriented with the head to the south. Burial 237 consisted of partial remains completely truncated above the pelvis. Burial 264 was immediately adjacent to the west and parallel; this burial consisted only of partial right leg bones oriented exactly the same way and coffin wood remains.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, head-to-west burial was clearly the typical orientation at this cemetery. The deceased was probably an adult, but sex and age could not be determined from the surviving bones. No artifacts other than coffin remains were found with the burial. The other south-headed burials at the cemetery are in the far eastern area and have been placed with the middle rather than the earlier temporal group. No explanation for the unusual orientation can be offered at this time. Although it is possible this was a Muslim burial, with the deceased originally placed on the side and meant to face east, the presence of a coffin makes such an interpretation less tenable.

Burials 307 and 308 were located to the east of the central concentration, in a very disturbed part of the cemetery (see Figures 68c and 68d). It is not possible to say with certainty that they are isolated from other early burials; this apparent spatial separation may be



Figure 76. In situ photograph of Burial 247. The bones had been placed at the foot of the grave, presumably at the time Burial 213 was interred. The position of the foot-end of the Burial 213 coffin (which had been removed when the photograph was taken) can be seen at the bottom of the photograph (where the label "B247" was placed). Ruler is marked in Inches; north is to the left (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

a function of the area's disturbance. They may have been aligned with each other, although the head of one was about 3 feet from the foot of the other. One, Burial 307, was buried with no coffin, and it was the only coffinless grave in the Early Group. It had been truncated by a later interment and contained only a cranium and right shoulder and arm. The remains were identified as those of a probable male between 45 and 55 years old. It is possible that he was a stranger and newly arrived in the town and no one provided him with a coffin when he died; or, alternatively, that his survivors or his household could not afford a coffin.

The presence of the coffinless burial and of the south-headed burial(s) in the Early Group raises questions about whether social characteristics or types of death left distinctive material signatures. The fact that these graves were located somewhat apart from the concentration in the central area might lend support to an interpretation that the deceased buried in this area were different in some way.

Burial 247: A Secondary Burial

Burial 247 is a possible early interment that lay immediately beneath Burial 213. The skeletal remains were identified as those of a probable man from 35 to 50 years old (Figure 76). The bones were completely disarticulated (with the possible exception of a few vertebrae) and had been placed in a small pile in the east end of the later grave of Burial 213. It appears that the Burial 213 grave digger removed and stacked the bones with care, as was also observed in the case of Burial 120, as noted in our discussion of the central concentration. Excavators suggested that some remnants of the Burial 247 coffin might have been

moved to surround the bones, as if to maintain an enclosed effect.

Burial 247 simply may have been an early grave that was inadvertently disturbed. But the later Burial 213 was so precisely aligned as to appear deliberate. This may have been a case of deliberate, rather than chance, secondary burial. (See Chapter 7 for a similar case from the Middle Group, Burial 175.)

Burial 404: Empty Coffin

Burial 404 was located in a very disturbed area at the rear of Lot 18, but excavators believed that the coffin was empty prior to the disturbance. Several fragments of skeletal remains, identified as those of a woman, were found in the surrounding grave-fill soil. Although the coffin had collapsed, it appeared to be complete. Drawings indicate it was probably four sided and tapering toward the foot, although excavators' notes state it was hexagonal. Disturbances were observed at the foot end and also on the south side adjacent to the head of the coffin. Nails were recorded around the perimeter of the coffin, mainly at the bottom. Excavators emphasized that the coffin bottom was represented by the in situ nails as well as an "extremely thick" organic stain. It was their opinion that the body had been removed from the coffin at some time prior to its decomposition. Although we should keep in mind the possibility that the burial had been disturbed from above during a construction episode in the past, it is difficult to envision the complete removal of the remains with so little disturbance to the coffin.

In this and other cases of empty coffins (from later temporal groups), there are two possibilities: the deceased were removed from their coffins after interment, or empty coffins were interred intentionally. The first possibility points to *at least* two scenarios: secondary burial and grave robbing. The second possibility (empty coffins interred intentionally) also points to at least two scenarios, one alluding to religious

sensibilities and practices, the other to deception and stealth. A ritual burial, with the coffin representing an individual whose body could not be recovered, is possible. A sham burial, to mark a death that did not occur, is also possible.

CHAPTER 7

The Middle Group

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

Most burials in the archaeologically excavated portion of the African Burial Ground are placed in the main or Middle Group, by default, because they were not clearly assignable to earlier or later cohorts. Yet even though the temporal groupings are relative rather than absolute, it is likely that burials assigned to the Middle Group were indeed interred during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. For convenience, we describe the period of New York's history from approximately 1735 to 1760, when the cemetery would have been intensively used.

A sketch of the town and the development in the area of the burial ground is presented, along with an overview of the African population and the mortuary sample. The material culture and spatial distribution of the Middle Group burials are then discussed, followed by a description of some unique and unusual interments.

The Town

The city was in an economic recession in the 1730s. Aside from the Almshouse complex, begun in 1735 on the Common, construction in the area near the African Burial Ground was minimal. But the city's inexorable northward push soon resumed. Residential and commercial development proceeded up the west side of Broadway to present-day Warren Street (at the southwest corner of the burial ground). Development on the east side of town extended even farther north. The relative remoteness of the African Burial Ground also was reduced when the road along the east side of the Common (Park Row) was cut through to the Bowery and Pearl Street was extended westward. Two pleasure grounds northwest of the cemetery, the Ranelagh Gardens and the Vauxhall Gardens, drew

city residents beyond the settled edge of the town (see the Grim, Maerschalk, and Montressor Plans [see Figures 18 and 19 in Chapter 2, and Figure 29 in Chapter 3]; see Harris et al. 1993; Homberger 1994; Hunter Research 1994).

The Corselius/Crolius and Remmey pottery works were located in the eastern part of the Van Borsum patent by 1741. These pottery works shared space with the African Burial Ground, and at least one of them used a portion of the cemetery as a dump for waste material from the kilns. A palisade that spanned the width of the city was erected in 1745. It crossed the southern portion of the African Burial Ground, and burials were probably restricted to the area north of its line-of-march. During the time the palisade stood, access from the town to the cemetery required passing through a gate.

The Common drew large crowds in 1739–1740 and again in 1741. Thousands of whites and blacks turned out to hear evangelist George Whitefield preach in 1739–1740 at the height of a surge in religious enthusiasm known as the Great Awakening (Burrows and Wallace 1999:157-158). Protestant churches during this time were reluctant to accept Africans, but the evangelicals called for the baptism and humane treatment of captives. There is no evidence that the enslaved Africans of New York embraced evangelical Protestant faith as a result, although some contemporaries would suggest that Africans were spurred to insurrection in 1741 by the preaching (see Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:192-193). The churches of New York did have black congregants, although few in number, during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Only three burials of blacks were recorded: one in the Reformed Dutch churchyard in 1729 (a free black woman) and two in the churchyard of Trinity Lutheran in the 1740s, one of a free black woman and one of an illegitimate "mulatto" child (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Burial Register of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New York, 1727–1804; Stryker-Rodda 1974:84–85).

A year after Whitefield's visit, crowds assembled again to watch the executions of 30 enslaved Africans and 4 Europeans convicted of conspiring to burn the town. The Panic or "Conspiracy" of 1741 centered on a series of fires set during late March and early April. A grand jury concluded that the alleged arsonists were part of a wider network involving the city's black population and a handful of European ringleaders. More than 200 people were arrested with the aid of testimony coerced under threat, extricated through torture, or purchased through cash rewards. Underground activity involving the participation of both blacks and poor whites was exposed, highlighting the ability of people on the margins of society to move about, meet clandestinely, frequent taverns, plan and launch criminal actions, organize clubs, and forge unions with free persons. Thirteen of the convicted Africans were burned at the stake, and 17 were hanged. The hangings took place near the powder house at the south end of the Fresh Water pond and the burnings a bit further to the southeast (see Figure 18 in Chapter 2). It is not known when and where the executed individuals were buried. The corpses of some of those who were gibbeted were left in chains to rot (see Lepore 2005:170–171); the desecration of the corpses constituted both an added punishment of the convicted and a warning to the community.

Did city residents gather on the Common to celebrate Pinkster, the Dutch holiday of Pentecost (English Whitsuntide)? The holiday was marked in New Netherland from at least the 1640s. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Africans in New York colony and New England held distinctive celebrations using town commons for Pinkster and Negro Election Day, respectively. These festivals involved large gatherings for drumming, dance, food, drink, and lampooning

typical of carnival. There is no documentary evidence for large-scale celebrations of black Pinkster in New York City.²

Legal restrictions on the economic pursuits of bondmen and bondwomen were tightened in this period, thereby providing an unintended glimpse of how black New Yorkers sought to gain a foothold in the economy. In August 1740, for example, the Common Council passed a law restricting the marketing of produce, stating that

of Late Years great Numbers of Negros Indians and Molatto Slaves have Made it a common Practice of Buying, Selling and Exposing to Sale, not Only in houses, out houses & yards but Likewise in the Publick Streets Within this City, great Quantities of Boiled Indian Corn, Pears, Peaches, Apples and other kind of fruit which pernicious practice is not only Detrimental to the Masters Mistresses and Owners of such Slaves in Regard they Absent themselves from their Service: But is also productive of Encreasing if not Occasioning many and Dangerous fevours and other Distempers & Diseases in the Inhabitants in the same city [New York City Common Council 1905:4:497–498].³

Marketers who came into the city from the country and the Out Ward were exempted from the restriction and the penalty that accompanied it (public whipping or a 6 shilling fine payable by the slaveholder), so long as they had the permission of their legal master. The law refers not to the city's municipal markets, but to unregulated venues such as homes and streets where Africans bought produce for resale. Because it was already illegal to trade with enslaved persons without permission, the need for a special ordinance suggests there had been a noticeable lapse in enforcement.

¹ The events have been interpreted variously as a trumped-up conspiracy and subsequent "witch-hunt," the actions of a theft ring that were prosecuted overzealously, a true conspiracy but one that was limited in scope, or a proletarian "revolutionary conspiracy, Atlantic in scope" (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:177–179). The records of the events caution us, in any case, about separating the African community from other ethnic groups too absolutely: overlapping social and economic networks among African, Native American, Spanish, English, and Irish New Yorkers were revealed by the investigation. The primary source is Daniel Horsmanden's *Journal*, published in 1744 (see Lepore 2005). For analyses of the conspiracy, see Davis (1985), Foote (2004), Launitz-Schürer (1980), Lepore (2005), Stokes (1915–1928:4:569–575), and Szasz (1967).

² For discussions of Pinkster in New York, see Epperson (1999:94–96), Hodges (1999:25, 221–223), Lepore (2005:158–159), Stuckey (1994), and White (1991:95–106). In his novel *Satanstoe*, James Fenimore Cooper (1912:66–79 [1845]) wrote a fictional account of a 1757 Pinkster holiday in New York City. The story locates the celebrations at the upper end of Broadway on the Common, with whites in attendance as spectators. Because no such public festival is recorded for the city, it is possible his story was based on oral tradition from the upper Hudson Valley area.

³ During the eighteenth century, similar laws were passed in towns throughout the English colonies, reflecting widespread participation of the enslaved in local economies.

Year	Label in	Ad	ults	Chil	dren	Age for	Total	
leai	Census	Male	Female	Male	Female	Children	iotai	
1737	"black"	674	609	229	207	≤10	1,719	
1746	"black"	721	569	419	735	≤15	2,444	
1749	"black"	651	701	460	556	≤15	2,368	
1756	"black"	672	695	468	443	≤15	2,278	

Table 24. Black Population by Age and Sex, 1737-1756

Note: Black adult males include 76 males over the age of 60 in 1746, 41 males over the age of 60 in 1749, and 68 males over the age of 60 in 1756. Information from Green and Harrington (1932) and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).

The Population

Census

The black population of New York grew substantially from the mid-1730s to the mid-1740s, as census figures indicate a 42 percent increase. Children (defined as 10 years and under in 1737 and 15 and under in 1746) account for the increase. Black residents numbered 2,444 in 1746. This was the eighteenth-century high mark of 20.9 percent of the total population. The distribution by age and sex in 4 census years is shown in Table 24.

Imports of enslaved Africans into New York continued from both the Caribbean and Africa during the mid-1700s, although precise figures are difficult to reconstruct. It is possible that following the 1741 panic, when Africans from the Caribbean were implicated in the 1741 conspiracy, importation of captives directly from Africa increased.⁴ The sense among New York merchants was that the Caribbean colonies had been transporting troublesome captives to the northern colonies, and, in fact, there is evidence that seasoned insurrectionists from the islands played a role in the New York conspiracy (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:193–203). It is also possible that greater numbers of children, especially young girls, were brought to the city beginning in the 1740s, owing to greater demand for domestic labor and anxiety about insurrection by seasoned men. The preponderance of girls over boys and of adult men over women in the 1746 census probably reflects these market shifts. As noted in Chapter 13 of *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground* (Blakey, Rankin-Hill, et al. 2009), the local urban demand for girls would be satisfied via the direct African trade.

Mortuary Sample

Nearly half of the burials excavated at the New York African Burial Ground are placed in the Middle Group (n = 198). Burials are listed in Table 25 and shown on the site plan in Figures 77a–77e. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. An entry of "n/a" in the coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed, displaced, or redeposited so that coffin presence/absence could not be determined. The age and sex profiles for the mortuary sample are shown in Figures 78 and 79. The age profile carries a caveat: we noted in Chapter 5 that the frequency of child burials in this cohort is higher than that in the overall skeletal sample and proposed that some of these burials may actually belong in the Late-Middle or Late Groups, although there is no way to so assign them.

Mortuary Material Culture

Adult coffins were hexagonal by definition for the Middle Group. In contrast, the smaller coffins for subadults (when identifiable) were hexagonal (33), rectangular (7), tapered (5), or uncertain but four sided (7) in shape (see Chapter 10). There were 38 subadults buried in coffins for which shape could not be definitively determined. Only three burials without coffins are assigned to the Middle Group, Burials 371, 375,

⁴ Lydon (1978:378, 387–388) compiled data showing that 70 percent of captives brought to New York Colony prior to 1742 were imported from American sources; subsequently, the ratio was almost exactly reversed. His information from shipping records indicates a marked increase in the African trade in the late 1740s.

Table 25. Middle Group Burials

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
3	adult	25	35	male		107	2	n	n/a
8	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	101	82.5	5	у	hexagonal
9	adult	35	45	male	90	89.5	25	у	hexagonal
16	adult	50	60	female	67	107	0	у	hexagonal
17	subadult	4	6	undetermined	89	83.25	20	у	hexagonal
19	subadult			undetermined	108	81.5	20	у	unidentified
21	subadult			undetermined		87.5	20	n	rectangular
22	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	90	96.5	-1.5	y	unidentified
24	subadult	3	6	undetermined	92	87.5	5	y	rectangular
25	adult	20	24	female	96	87.5	20	y	unidentified
27	subadult	1.4	2.8	undetermined	74	88.5	5	у	hexagonal
30	subadult	7	11	undetermined	92	86	10	у	hexagonal
31	adult	14	16	undetermined	90	103.5	-1	у	hexagonal
32	adult	50	60	male	100	86.5	23.5	y	hexagonal?
35	subadult	8	10	undetermined	93	87.5	15	y	hexagonal
39	subadult	5	7	undetermined	82	81.75	40	y	hexagonal
41	adult			undetermined	66	99.5	-11	n	unidentified
45	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	86	103.5	-5	y	hexagonal
46	adult			female?	86	95.5	0	y	unidentified
47	adult	35	45	male	94	103.5	0	y	hexagonal?
49	adult	40	50	female	82	87.5	40	у	hexagonal
50	subadult			undetermined	90	87.5	30	y	hexagonal
53	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	90	87.5	0	y	hexagonal
55	subadult	3	5	undetermined	93	92.2	0	y	hexagonal
56	adult	30	34	female	90	90.5	15	у	hexagonal?
57	subadult	0.88	2.16	undetermined	90	87.5	25	у	hexagonal
66	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	90	93.5	25	у	unidentified
69	adult	30	60	male	82	89	-3.5	y (no cranium)	hexagonal?
70	adult	35	45	male	90	92.5	10	y (no cranium)	hexagonal
73	adult	20	30	female?	96	79	10	у	hexagonal
74					97	80	15	n (empty coffin)	hexagonal
75	infant	0	0	undetermined	97	92.5	34	у	rectangular
77	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	110	88.5	35	y	hexagonal

Table 25. Middle Group Burials (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
79	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	90	82	6	у	tapered
80	subadult			undetermined	88	87.5	40	y	hexagonal
81	adult			female	90	93	-3	y (no cranium)	unidentified
82	adult	18	25	female	86	93	3	y (cranium only)	unidentified
85	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	89	80.5	15	у	hexagonal
87	subadult	4	6	undetermined	90	94	3	y (cranium only)	unidentified
90	adult	35	40	female	90	81.5	4	y	hexagonal
93	adult			undetermined		85	-3	n	unidentified
94	subadult			undetermined	80	92.5	47	y	hexagonal
96	adult	16	18	male	71	94.5	47	y	hexagonal
98	subadult	1	2	undetermined	90	81	20	y	hexagonal
100	subadult			undetermined	90	80.5	20	y	hexagonal
102	subadult	1.33	2.67	undetermined	90	79.5	20	y	hexagonal
103	subadult			undetermined	86	79.5	20	y	hexagonal
104	adult	30	40	female	77	89.5	61	y	hexagonal
111	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	73	91.5	53	y	four sided?
112	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined		89	82.5	у	unidentified
113	adult			undetermined	85	91.5	60	y	unidentified
114	adult	45	50	male	100	94.5	91	у	hexagonal
115	adult	25	35	female	94	89.5	89	y	hexagonal
116	adult	45	55	male	100	95.5	81.5	у	hexagonal
118	adult			undetermined		94.5	55	n	unidentified
122	adult	18	20	female	86	93	61	у	hexagonal
126	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	110	88	80.5	у	hexagonal
127	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	94	90	95	у	hexagonal
128	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	89	92.5	83	y	hexagonal
129				n/a	97	91.5	95	no (empty coffin)	unidentified
130	subadult	1	2	undetermined	89	92	56	y	hexagonal
133	subadult	1	2	undetermined	76	96	78	у	hexagonal
136	subadult			undetermined		95	86.7	у	unidentified
142	adult	25	30	female	95	88	90	y	hexagonal
143	subadult	6	10	undetermined	111	88	80.5	у	hexagonal
144	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	99	88	90	у	four sided

Table 25. Middle Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
148	adult	12	18	undetermined	93	91.5	70	у	hexagonal
149	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	97	88	90	у	four sided
154	adult	25	29	female	88	95.5	75	у	hexagonal
156	adult	30	60	female		66.5	115	y	unidentified
159	adult	25	35	female	89	73.5	90	y	hexagonal
160	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	93	73	98.5	y	four sided
161	subadult			undetermined	83	74.5	90	y	rectangular
163	adult	18	24	male?	89	74.5	99	y	hexagonal
167	subadult	8.5	12.5	undetermined	99	86.5	65	y	hexagonal
169	subadult	5.5	9.5	undetermined	114	91.5	81	y	hexagonal?
175	adult	24	28	male		72	64.5	n	unidentified
189	adult			undetermined	90	95.5	65.5	n	unidentified
206	subadult			undetermined		75.5	93	y	rectangular
212	subadult	4.5	5.5	undetermined	85	82.5	55	y (no cranium)	hexagonal?
213	adult	45	55	female	93	84.5	85.5	y	hexagonal
215	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	111	81.5	72.5	у	four sided?
218	subadult	0.5	3.5	undetermined	105	89	73	y	unidentified
220	subadult			undetermined	95	78	92	y	tapered
224	subadult	0.5	1.33	undetermined	86	77.5	97	y	four sided
231	subadult			undetermined		77.5	97	y	four sided
232	subadult			undetermined		77.5	97	y	unidentified
233				n/a	90	73	127	n	rectangular
234	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	107	77.5	96.5	y	tapered
239	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	109	83.5	70	y	tapered
240	subadult	0.88	2.66	undetermined	90	79.5	95.5	y	hexagonal?
245	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	93	75	85.5	y	hexagonal
246	subadult	0.5	2.9	undetermined	92	82.5	70	y	four sided
248	subadult	14	15	undetermined	90	71.2	118.5	n	unidentified
254	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	96	79.5	97.5	y	unidentified
255	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	90	79.3	117.9	y	hexagonal?
256	adult	40	60	male	93	77.5	79	y	hexagonal
258	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	104	85.5	78	y	four sided
260	undetermined			undetermined	94	84.5	53.5	n	n/a
265	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	95	82	120	y	hexagonal?
268	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	96	74.5	125.5	у	hexagonal?

Table 25. Middle Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
270	adult			male	97	84.5	123.5	y	unidentified
271	adult	45	57	male	103	76.5	65	y	hexagonal
275	adult			female?	96	81	50	n	unidentified
277	subadult			undetermined	92	77.5	51	n	unidentified
283	subadult	0.33	0.67	undetermined	104	76	123	y	hexagonal
284	adult	21	28	male	86	80.5	115.5	y	unidentified
285	adult	20	30	female	102	80.5	64	y	hexagonal
286	subadult	4.4	8.5	undetermined	89	75	126	y	hexagonal?
287	adult	18	20	male	95	73.5	53	y (no cranium)	unidentified
288	adult			undetermined		74.5	120	n	n/a
291	subadult	3	5	undetermined		82.5	94	n	n/a
292	adult			undetermined		72.5	121	n	unidentified
293	adult			male?	106	82.5	94	n	hexagonal
294	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	96	88	86.5	y	hexagonal
295	adult	30	50	female	110	82	70	y	hexagonal
296	infant	0.5	2.9	undetermined	68	84	98	n	unidentified
298	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined		66.5	123	n	unidentified
300	infant			undetermined	106	76	125.5	y	hexagonal?
301	adult			undetermined	99	86	100.5	n	n/a
301A	undetermined			undetermined		86	100.5	n	n/a
302	adult			female?	99	88.5	99.5	n	n/a
303	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	100	73.5	76.5	n	n/a
304	subadult	3	5	undetermined	90	81.5	109	у	tapered
306	adult	28	44	male	88	76.5	125	у	hexagonal
310	adult	44	52	female	99	75.5	60	у	hexagonal
312	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	94	75	67	у	rectangular
315	adult	30	40	female	88	83	127	у	hexagonal?
318	subadult	7.5	14	undetermined	116	78	144	n	n/a
320	subadult	2	4	undetermined	120	90	251.5	у	unidentified
321	subadult	1	2	undetermined	117	79.5	143	y	hexagonal
324	adult	25	35	female	90	69	132	у	hexagonal
326	adult	45	55	male	96	73.5	135	y	hexagonal
328	adult	40	50	female	88	84.5	241	y	hexagonal
334	subadult			undetermined	111	89	251	у	unidentified
335	adult	25	35	female	127	84.5	248	у	hexagonal

Table 25. Middle Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
336	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	92	83	125.5	у	hexagonal?
339	subadult			undetermined	86	83	123	n	unidentified
341	adult			male	103	87.5	229.5	у	hexagonal
344	adult	25	35	male?		87.5	255	n	unidentified
345	adult			undetermined		74.5	254	n	n/a
347	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	98	73.5	130	y	hexagonal
348	subadult	1	2	undetermined	112	66	138	у	hexagonal
349	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	94	72	132	у	unidentified
350	undetermined			undetermined		82	133.5	n	n/a
351	adult	50	60	male	106	84.5	145	у	hexagonal
353	adult	24	34	male	112	84.5	230	у	hexagonal
355	adult			undetermined		74.5	235	n	n/a
356	subadult			undetermined	128	84.5	248	у	shared
358	adult			female?	126	89.5	230	n	unidentified
359	subadult			undetermined	95	84.5	127.5	n	unidentified
360	subadult			undetermined		75.5	235	у	unidentified
365	adult			female	195	79.5	257.5	n	unidentified
366	adult	34	62	undetermined	118	78	224	у	hexagonal
367	adult	25	35	female?		72	130	n	n/a
368	subadult	10.5	13.5	undetermined	95	80.5	246.5	у	unidentified
370	subadult	2	4	undetermined	75	82	146.5	у	hexagonal?
371	adult	25	35	female	115	69	235	у	no coffin
372	adult	25	35	female		81	235	n	n/a
374	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	93	72	132.5	y	unidentified
375	adult	16	18	female	120	74.5	253	y	no coffin
378	undetermined			undetermined		75.5	235	n (not excavated)	unidentified
379	adult	30	40	male	109	71.5	215	y	hexagonal
380	adult	40	60	male	98	85	241	y	hexagonal
383	adult	14	18	female		79	245	y	hexagonal
384	adult	25	45	female	80	91.5	248	y	hexagonal
385	adult	40	60	female	121	86	251.5	y	hexagonal
390	adult	25	35	male	94	71.5	140	n	n/a
393	infant	- 0.17	0.17	undetermined	119	84	211	y	hexagonal?
394	adult	16	25	undetermined		59.5	185	n	n/a
396	subadult	6.5	8.5	undetermined	108	82.5	224	у	hexagonal

Table 25. Middle Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
397	adult	30	40	female	100	87	229	у	hexagonal
398	adult	25	35	undetermined		93	255.5	n	n/a
399	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	106	78	213	y	rectangular
400	adult	25	35	male	85	65.5	130	y	hexagonal
403	adult	39	65	male	113	93	255.5	n	unidentified
405	subadult	6	10	undetermined	119	83.9	211.8	y	hexagonal?
406	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	280	68.25	253.5	y	hexagonal?
408	adult			male?		79.5	158	n/a	n/a
410	adult			female	95	69.5	178	y	hexagonal
412	infant	0	0	undetermined		78.5	218.5	y	unidentified
414	adult	39	59	male	112	74	165	y	unidentified
415	adult	35	55	male	99	81	215	y	hexagonal
417	subadult	9.5	14.5	undetermined		64.5	165	y	unidentified
418	adult	30	55	male	106	64.5	163	y	unidentified
419	adult	48	62	male	117	71.5	206.5	y	hexagonal
420	adult	35	45	male		69.5	186.5	n	n/a
422	undetermined			undetermined		86.5	212.5	n	unidentified
423				n/a		67	162	n (not excavated)	unidentified
424	adult			undetermined		76	220	n/a	n/a
425	adult			female	107	79.1	253	n (not excavated)	hexagonal
427	adult	16	20	male?	91	69.5	179	у	hexagonal
428	adult	40	70	female	95	66.5	147.5	у	unidentified
429	adult			undetermined		64.5	215	n (not excavated)	unidentified
430				n/a		84.5	215	n (not excavated)	unidentified
431	adult			undetermined		79.5	162	n	unidentified
433	adult			undetermined		79.5	160.5	n	n/a
434	undetermined			undetermined		79.5	155	n	no coffin

 $^{^{\}mbox{\scriptsize a}}$ In the Sex column, a question mark indicates a probable assignment

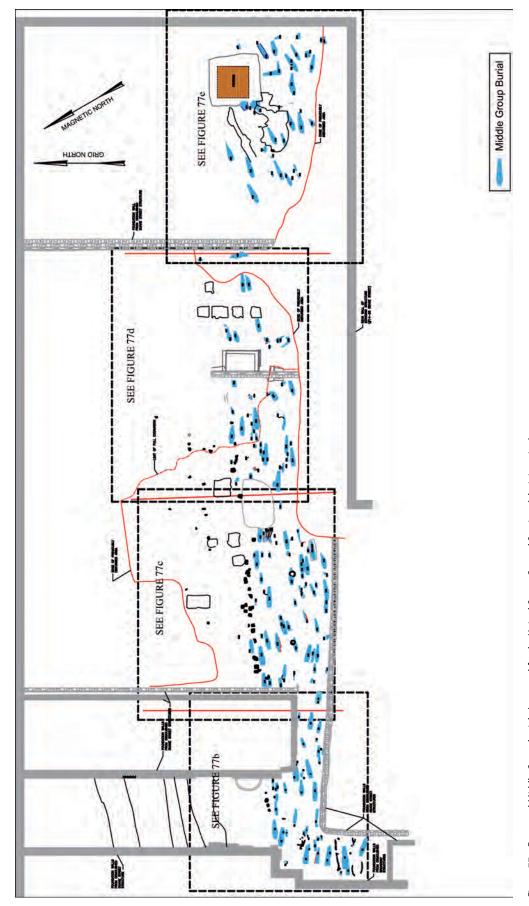


Figure 77a. Excavated Middle Group burials (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

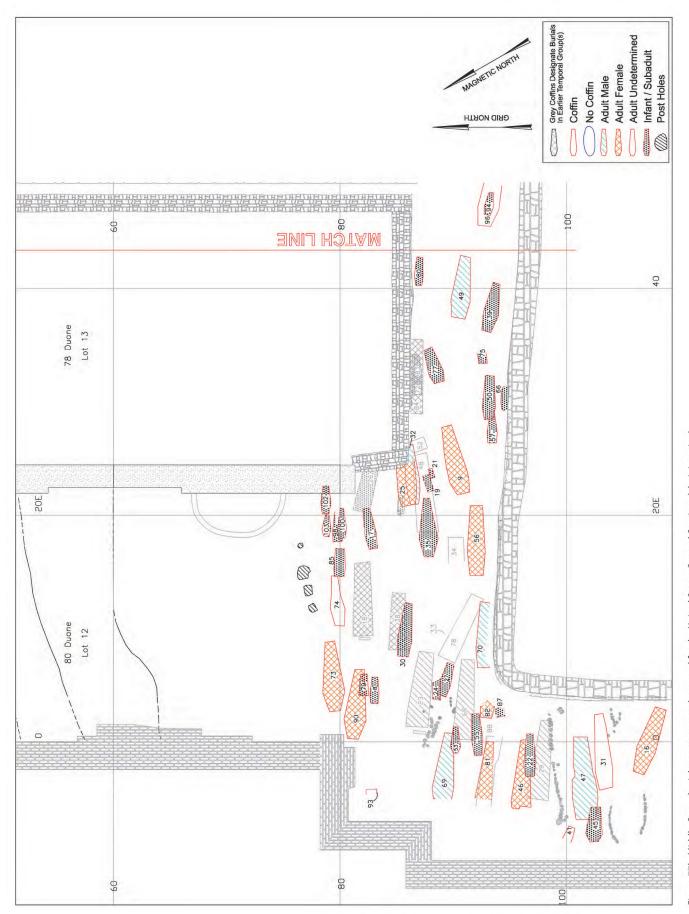


Figure 77b. Middle Group burials, western area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

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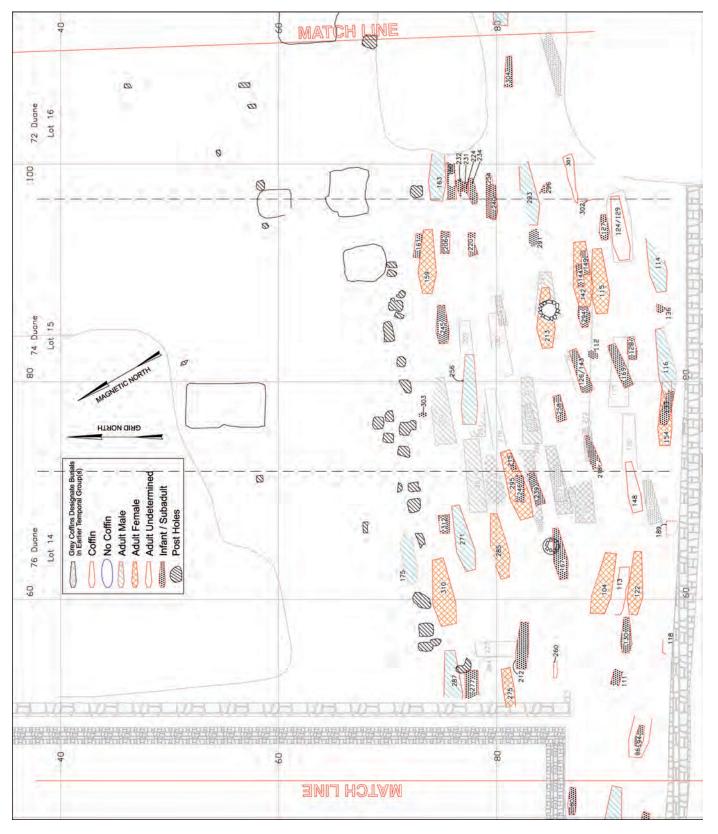


Figure 77c. Middle Group burials, west-central area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

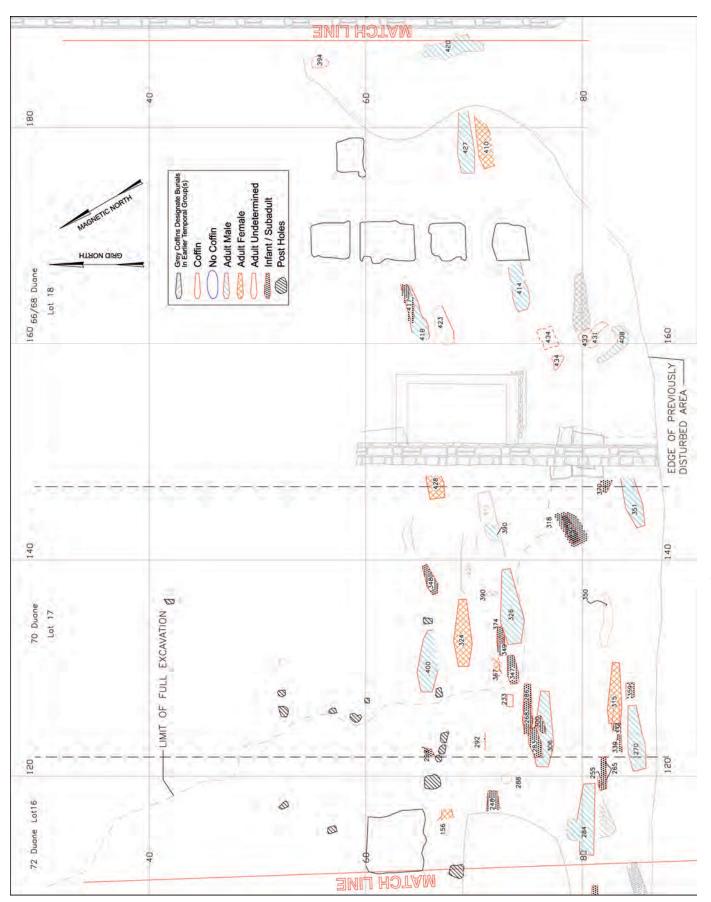


Figure 77d. Middle Group burials, east-central and Lot 18 areas (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

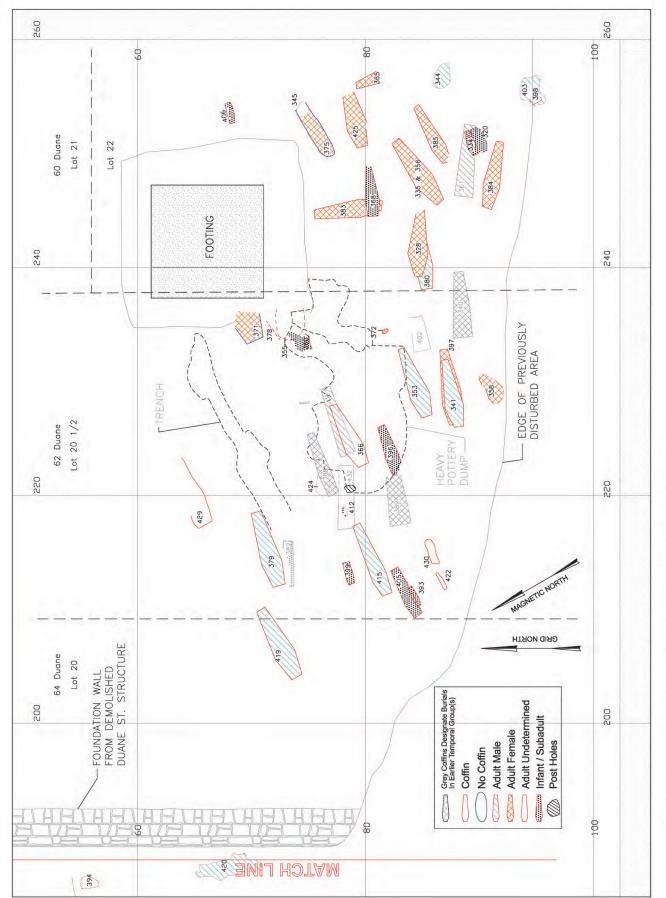


Figure 77e. Middle Group burials, eastern area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

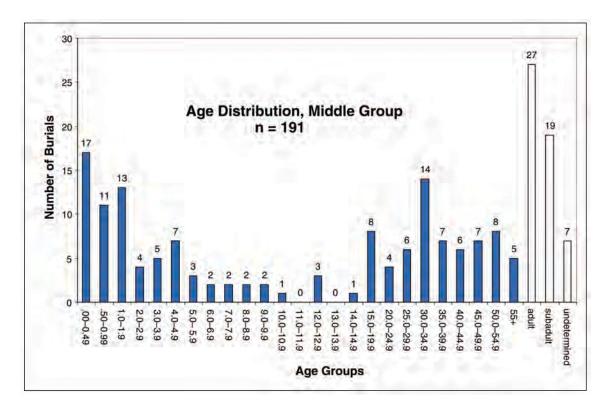


Figure 78. Age distribution, Middle Group. White bars indicate individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

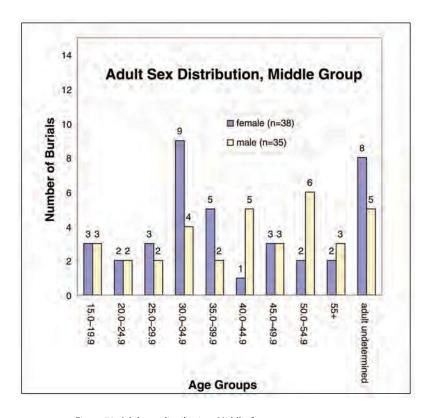


Figure 79. Adult sex distribution, Middle Group.

and 434. Although Burial 375 is placed in this group "by default," there being no way of distinguishing it as either early or late, Burial 371 can be assigned with more confidence owing to the fact that it was found 2 feet beneath another adult interment. Both of these coffinless burials are located in the southeastern site area, and both had associated artifacts of particular note. Burial 434 was never completely excavated.

Pins were found with 103 of the Middle Group burials, including 62 children (see Chapter 11). Eleven individuals from the Middle Group had evidence or possible evidence for clothing (see Chapter 12). These 11 represent only 7.5 percent of the 145 burials that had adequate preservation for such evidence. A child (in Burial 22) and a woman (in Burial 213) had aglets (tiny metal tubes that enclose the ends of laces and cords), which probably indicate clothing or perhaps shrouds tied with laces. The men interred in Burials 326 and 415 clearly wore trousers, the first having a row of copper-alloy domed buttons indicating a trouser "fly" and the second having 13 copper-alloy buttons at knees and hips, representing breeches. The remaining buttons were found singly or in pairs on five men, one woman, and one adult of undetermined sex. Cuff links were found at the left wrist of the man in Burial 341.

Jewelry (see Chapter 13) was scarce, with only four burials containing items that appear to have been worn as adornment. The woman in Burial 115 wore a ring with a plain band on the third finger of her left hand, and the woman in Burial 310 had a ring with blue glass insets, also on her left hand (it is not clear which finger). A third woman (Burial 371) had two enamel cuff link faces beneath her left upper arm. They had a turquoise ground and white-and-pink surface decoration. A young child (Burial 254) had an exceptional item of adornment, a small silver pendant on a loop, similar to an earring, which may have been strung and worn at the neck. Glass beads from unknown contexts were recovered with Burials 428 (2 specimens) and 434 (1 specimen).

Other material culture from Middle Group burials included a small glass sphere associated with Burial 410 and a small crystal cluster with Burial 55; shells in the coffin of Burial 22 and on the coffin lids of Burials 348, 352, and 365; and several nails that may have been deliberately placed in coffins. A clay ball (roughly the size of a marble) encircled with a decorative copper band was found with possible evidence for a cloth or leather pouch in Burial 375. This unique artifact is discussed in Chapter 14, along with the glass sphere and the crystals.

Spatial Distribution

Burials assigned to the Middle Group were located throughout the excavated site except north of the fence line. For ease of discussion, the site is broken down into subareas, although these are defined more on the basis of preservation factors than spatial distribution of graves. The western area (see Figure 77b) is west of grid line 45 East, a line where a distinction can be seen between relatively sparse interments to the west and very dense burials to the east. This distinction may be the result of poor preservation to the rear of Lot 13, although topography probably played a role in the siting of graves, and there may have been a slope here that made it less desirable for interments (see Chapter 3). The west-central area (see Figure 77c) extends from grid line 45 East to grid line 110 East. Burials are relatively dense within this subarea, but the apparent sudden falling off of burial frequency east of here is probably a result of poor preservation, in particular because of a large construction disturbance at the rear of Lot 16. Again, we believe the original topography was important in the selection of grave sites, as this subarea was relatively flat. The area east of Lot 16 between grid lines 110 and 150 East is the east-central area (see Figure 77d). Here burials are again quite dense, and this was probably another relatively level area within the cemetery. Farther east, the rear of Lot 18 (see Figure 77d) saw particularly heavy disturbance and is considered separately. Finally, the southeast area (see Figure 77e) in and surrounding the pottery dump is discussed. We know that excavation was incomplete in the eastern part of the site, and burials once extended westward and northward of those exposed in this last area (i.e., there is a false appearance of a separate concentration here).

The distribution of burial orientations in the Middle Group burials is shown in Figures 54 (Chapter 5) and 77a–77e. Overall, there were more southwesterly oriented burials (relative to our grid) in this period than in the earlier group. It is possible that the fence was present during part of our middle period and that graves were oriented to it, but the town palisade—in place from 1745 through approximately 1760—may have been an even more notable landmark forming a roughly east-west axis by which to orient graves. It is also possible that more burials were oriented according to the position of the sun at sunset because of stronger enforcement of the law restricting the time that funerals could be conducted to daylight hours.

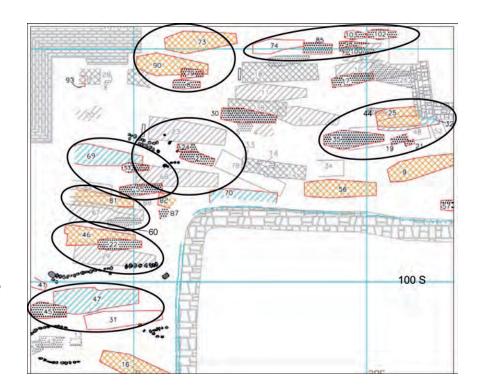


Figure 80. Detail (5 West to 25 East) of the southwestern corner of the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing burials from all temporal groups. Middle Group burials are shown in color. Grave clusters mentioned in the text are circled.

It seems possible that the spatial syntax governing the placement of a grave included some standard of distance between individual interments. Even the graves of children are sometimes spaced apart from others, which suggests that at times the locations were selected not on the basis of familial/social relationships but on expedience and/or in reference to a spatial system (implicit or explicit) within which individual "plots" were appropriate. There were eight children's graves in the Middle Group that appear to have been placed apart from other interments: Burials 39, 77, and 80 (see Figure 77b) and Burials 130, 258, 245, and 304 (see Figure 77c). In addition, Burials 128 and 169 were separate from others in the Middle Group; however, they overlay Early Group Burial 177, and deliberate placement with that adult cannot be ruled out. Grave diggers may have sited burials with reference to each other, leaving a certain minimum amount of space between, unless a particular relationship dictated that a grave should join or overlap an existing burial.

Overall, Middle Group burials were dispersed over much more of the excavated portion of the cemetery than were Early Group burials. It is possible that intervening areas between spatial concentrations of early burials were gradually "filled in" during subsequent decades. Although older locations were also reused, resulting in some superimposed burials, there appears to have been some effort to maintain the identity or integrity of early graves during the middle period. Thus, more than half of the early burials, including Burials 18, 23, 68, 29, 78, 34, 38, 48, 84 and 83, 182, 120, 202, 121, 282, 200, 221/226, 177, 308, 416, 426, 404, 387, 388, 432, and 340, were left undisturbed by Middle Group interments, although some subsequently would be disturbed by Late-Middle or Late Group burials.

The Western Area

Middle Group burials in the western part of the excavated site (see Figure 77b) are found in several clusters. Some of the clusters include burials that are thought to belong to earlier or later temporal groups, as discussed in Chapter 6, and in order to illustrate this, Figure 80 shows burials from all temporal groups in this area of the site (compare to Figure 77b).

One cluster includes Burials 73, 90, 79 and 8 (top left in Figure 80). These are located at the rear of Lot 12, just south of the projected fence line that once marked the cemetery's north side. Burials 73 and 90 were of women in their 20s and late 30s respectively, and the infants in Burials 79 and 8 may have been placed deliberately with the older of the two women. It is also possible that a later burial, Burial 1, which lay at a higher elevation and is assigned to the Late Group, was placed deliberately with these graves. The recorded

stratigraphy suggests, however, that the surface of the earlier graves may have been covered over, obscuring their locations, before Burial 1 was interred.

To the east of this group, a second cluster can be viewed as a string or line of burials, running parallel to the south side of the projected fence alignment. These graves, which include Burials 74, 85, 98, 100, 102, and 103 (top right, Figure 80), belonged to children or infants (although no remains were recovered from the child-sized coffin in Burial 74).

Burial 53 lay at the foot of Middle Group Burial 69, and this association well may have been deliberate, but the child's grave also overlay the head of an Early Group grave, Burial 68 (left center, Figure 80). Burial 55, likewise, was near the foot of Middle Group Burial 81 but also at the head of Early Group Burial 68. Clusters where Middle Group (and later) burials may be associated with earlier graves have been discussed in Chapter 6. These include

- Burials 24 and 27, infant graves among earlier Burials 23, 68, and 78 (center, Figure 80);
- Burials 54, 81, 67, 60, 46 and 22, which may have been deliberately placed above early Burials 29 and 88 (left center, Figure 80);
- Burials 25 and 32 (described in the section on spatial distribution in this chapter), 35, 19, and 21, placed above Early Group Burials 44, 48 and 52 (at right in Figure 80).

Also discussed in Chapter 6 were Burials 22 (of a child) and 46 (of an adult woman), which may have been placed deliberately with Early Group Burial 29, a probable male adult. Burial 46, although included here with the Middle Group, also may in fact be an early burial (its coffin shape is difficult to determine). The child, between 2 and 4 years old, was in a possibly hexagonal coffin that had been placed so as to straddle the two underlying adult burials. An east-west row of cobblestones. 3-4 feet above the Burial 29 coffin, separated these three burials from other interments to the south. The cobbles, averaging about 0.3 feet in diameter, may have formed a boundary marker between grave groups. South of the line were Burial 47, of a man of 35–45 years; Burial 31, of an adolescent; and Burial 45, of a child of 2-4 years. The man and the adolescent may have been placed in a single large grave, although this is impossible to determine with certainty. The child was buried later, its grave overlapping the head end of the man's grave. A thin slab of stone was found oriented vertically above the upper-body portion of Burial 47

and was identified as a possible grave marker (see Figure 59 in Chapter 5).

To the south of Burial 103 and Burials 98 and 100, Burials 17, 35, and 56 lay in what may have been a "row," fairly evenly spaced from north to south. It is not possible to determine whether this apparent alignment was deliberate. Each of these graves was adjacent to or overlay an earlier burial. Their spacing, and that of Burials 9, 77, 80, 49, 39, and the cluster consisting of Burials 50, 57, and 66 (see Figure 77b), suggest the positioning of burials in "plots" as mentioned above for the Middle Group.

The West-Central Area

Several clusters can be discerned among Middle Group interments in this part of the site (see Figure 77c). One cluster centers on Middle Group Burials 96 and 94, an adult and child in a shared grave, located within Republican Alley behind the southeast corner of the Lot 13 basement (Figure 81). Surrounding and overlying this grave were those of several more children, Burials 42, 64, 61, and 91. Their placement is suggestive of deliberate association with the double grave. (Although they postdate Burials 96 and 94 based on superposition and were placed in our Late-Middle temporal group, it is possible these children all belong together in the main Middle Group.) A final interment, Burial 95, actually truncated the entire eastern portion of Burial 96, suggesting that the earlier grave had been forgotten or was disregarded by the grave diggers by the time the later grave was dug. Because of this, Burial 95 has been placed in the Late Group for this analysis.

Another tight clustering of burials includes Middle Group Burials 215, 246, 295 and 239 (at left center in Figure 82). Burial 215 was placed in the same grave as Burial 295, although possibly slightly later. All of these overlay an earlier grave, Burial 280, and in turn were overlain by a later grave, Burial 229. Early Group burials are concentrated in this area of the cemetery, including several that had no superimposed interments, as though they had been deliberately kept undisturbed. Because of this, initially, the placement of a cluster of later (Middle Group) graves immediately above Burial 280 seemed as though it might have been deliberate. However, the grave of shared Burials 295 and 215 truncated both the north side of Burial 280 and the western portion of another early burial (Burial 279), suggesting that the early burials either were not known or not considered at the time

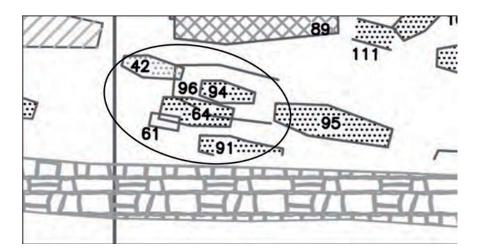


Figure 81. Detail (41–55 East and 91–96 South) of west-central area of the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing burials from all temporal groups. The cluster containing Middle Group Burials 96 and 94 is circled.

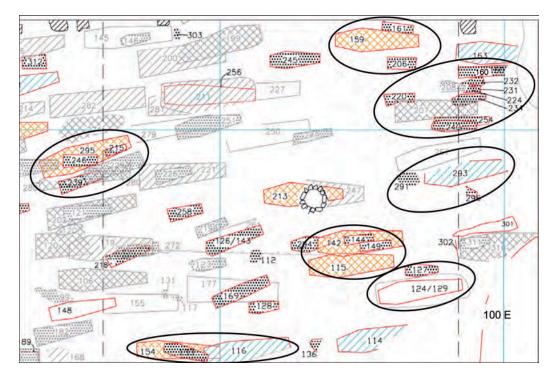


Figure 82. Detail (65–100 East and 70–98 South) of west-central area of the site plan (see Figure 7, pocket map) showing burials from all temporal groups. Middle Group burials are shown in color. Clusters mentioned in the text are circled.

of the later interments. Instead, we suggest that it was Middle Group Burial 295 that "anchored" the cluster of children's burials from the Middle Group and later.

Three graves, Burials 133, 154, and 116, are clustered together near the south edge of Republican Alley (bottom center, Figure 82); their association is the more striking because of the gap of several feet between these burials and their neighbors to the north. Burial 116 was of a man between 45 and 55, Burial 154 of a woman in her late twenties, and Burial 133 of a child of 1–2 years. The woman and child were buried after the man.

Another cluster includes Burials 142, 144, and 149 (a triple interment of a woman in her late twenties with two children) and Burials 115 and 294 (lower right quadrant, Figure 82). Burial 115, adjacent to the south and parallel to the woman and children, held a woman between 25 and 35 years old; her grave appears to have been dug slightly later in time than the other. The stratigraphic relationship of Burial 294 to the others is impossible to reconstruct, but it probably was the first interment of the three.

Nearby, just to the southeast, lay Burials 124/129 and Burial 127. No skeletal remains were found in

the coffin of Burial 129, which was adult sized (a few skeletal elements found in its grave fill were designated Burial 124). Burial 127, which held an infant, was immediately adjacent to the central north side of Burial 129, and the two may have been placed together deliberately.

An instance of an adult with children probable cointerment assigned to the Middle Group is Burials 159, 161 and 206 (top right, Figure 82). As noted in Chapter 5, this group comprised a woman of 25–35 years old and two infants or young children, who were placed on either side of the foot end of her grave.

A cluster of overlapping graves of children was excavated at the eastern edge of the rear of Lot 15, in an area severely disturbed by construction activity during the fieldwork (upper right, Figure 82). The interments included Burials 160, 231, 232, 224; Burials 254 and 240 slightly to the south (in an apparent shared grave); and Burial 220 slightly to the west. Adult graves lay immediately to the north (Burial 163), and immediately above (Burial 207). The child burials are placed in the Middle Group, but their possible earlier assignment is noted in Chapter 6, where we discussed the problematic temporal assignment of Burial 207. In any case, Burial 207 was clearly later than the children's graves it overlay. It is unusual at the New York African Burial Ground site for an adult grave to be above children's graves. The underlying graves may not have been known to the Burial 207 grave digger. Alternatively, this adult may have been placed here on purpose, having had some relation to the children. A partially intact late child's grave (Burial 208) and disturbed adult remains from another adult grave (Burial 204) were found in positions overlying Burial 207 and the children's graves.

Burials 291, 293/269, and 296 may have formed another grave cluster (right center, Figure 82). Burial 296 consisted only of child-sized coffin remains, Burial 291 contained displaced infant bones, and Burial 293 held an adult, possibly male. A later grave, Burial 267, disturbed Burial 293 and presumably also the infant Burial 291.

The East-Central Area

Grouped burials, what we have been referring to as "clusters," are few in this part of the site (see Figure 77d). One, with an adult and several children/infants, includes Burials 306 (this contained the adult, a man between 28 and 44 years of age), 300, 283,

268, and 286 (see Figure 77d, lower left). The latter two burials consist of an infant and a child between 4.4 and 8.5 years of age that appear to be in a shared grave that was dug before that of Burial 306—which was not placed above the infant graves but adjacent to them—followed by Burials 383 and 300.

Children's graves also lay to the east of these burials, and it is possible the grouping actually extended eastward to Burial 326, which held a man who died at 45–55 years of age. The man had filed teeth, as did the probable woman represented by a displaced cranium in nearby Burial 367. It seems likely these two individuals were originally interred in close proximity to one another. In the case of Burial 367, isotope and lead analysis pointed to African birth. Burial 374, which held an infant or newborn, was found within the grave of Burial 326, on the north side near the head. Other children's graves lay above and just to the west of Burial 374. These were Burials 349, 347 and 233 (the latter consisting only of a tiny rectangular box, with no extant human remains).

South of the Burial 306 cluster was an area crowded with graves, possibly representing another extended grouping (see Figure 77d). The burials include, on the west, Burial 284 (of a man in his twenties); on the south, Burial 270 (of another man, age undetermined); and on the east, Burial 315 (of a woman between 30 and 40 years old). Graves of infants and children lay between, above, and beneath these. In another unusual instance of an adult burial overlying a child burial, Burial 315 lay immediately above and perfectly aligned with the infant in Burial 336. Burial 339, partially destroyed by construction activity in this location, and the shared grave of Burials 255 and 265 lay in the midst of these others.

Other burials in the east-central area were apart from each other and from these clusters, suggesting, as noted, that the grave diggers at the African Burial Ground might have relied on a mental template when placing graves, which would have included an offset between plots.

The Lot 18 Area

The rear portion of historic Lot 18 (see Figure 77d) suffered disturbance from multiple twentieth-century construction features, including an elevator shaft and a series of concrete footings, and many graves were probably destroyed in this area. The area was never fully excavated, however, and, presumably, graves remain intact below and adjacent to those that were

exposed by archaeologists, which numbered 12. All were assigned to the Middle Group by default, except for Burial 404, which had a tapered coffin and was assigned to the Early Group, and Burial 413, which had a piece of creamware (dating no earlier than 1760) in its shaft and was dated to the Late-Middle Group.

Owing to the partial excavation and the degree of disturbance, an analysis of spatial patterning is not possible. It is possible that Burials 410 (of a woman of undetermined age who had a small amber-colored glass sphere in her grave) and 427 (of a young man in his late teens) were purposely placed adjacent to one another, as the graves were aligned and very close together.

The Southeast Area

As previously noted, colonial New York's mid-century palisade wall may have been used, along with the direction of sunset, to orient burials along a general east-west axis. This hypothesis is strengthened by the observation that head-to-west Middle Group burials in the southeastern part of the excavated cemetery (see Figure 77e) have a strong southwesterly trend in orientation (as do Late-Middle Group burials in this area). This is where the palisade, oriented southwest to northeast, passed closest to the excavated site (no doubt along the ridge of "Pot-Baker's Hill"), and this location would have been most prominent in the landscape as grave diggers worked. There were other nonburial site features excavated in this area that also raked southwest to northeast, including the pottery-waste midden and a filled-in trench, designated Feature 163. It is possible that the trench, midden, and burials ran parallel to the original slope of the ground here, just as the palisade wall would have.

The function of this 1-foot-deep trench is not known, and it may have been a natural depression. Artifacts within the trench do not lend themselves to firm dating but did include kiln waste (Janowitz and Cheek 2003). It separated Burials 419, 379, 429, and 382 (the latter assigned to our Early Group) from the rest of the burials in this area. This part of the site was never fully excavated, and it is likely many other interments are located to the north of the trench.

A few burials lay southeast of the stoneware dump (see discussion in Chapter 4), slightly lower in elevation than the burials that were within or at the edges of the dump, and contained no fragments of stoneware whatsoever. This loose grouping includes Burials 384, 320, and 334 from the Middle Group, along with Burial 361

from the Early Group (near lower right corner of Figure 77e). The complete absence of kiln waste from these graves is difficult to explain except by positing that they predate the dump. As discussed in Chapter 4, Burial 384 is problematic because although it is devoid of stoneware and aligned adjacent and parallel to early Burial 361, its hexagonal coffin suggests it is later than its neighbor. Burial 384 and the side-by-side children's Burials 320 and 334 all may have been placed deliberately in association with the early grave.

Although there are several paired interments in the southeast subarea, clusters are not discerned. Shown on Figure 77e (moving left to right), the pairs include Burials 393 and 405 (of an infant with a child of 6–10 years); Burials 341 and 397 (of a man and a woman); Burials 328 and 380 (a man and a woman both over 40 years old, possibly interred together, although not at the same time; and Burials 335 and 356, of a woman with an infant cradled in her arm. A unique pair (not sharing a grave) was formed by Burials 383 and 368, the latter lying perpendicular to the former such that the heads overlapped.

Unique and Unusual Burials

Burials 25 and 32: A Violent Death and a Shared Grave

The remains in Burial 25 were of a woman whose age was calculated as 20–24 years. Lodged beneath her fourth left rib was a lead musket ball, slightly flattened (Figure 83). Her coffin had been placed atop that of an older man aged 50–60 (Burial 32) and precisely aligned with it, so that a deliberate co-interment is postulated (Figure 84).

The bullet's point of entry cannot be definitively determined, although there was a large hole at the center of the shattered left scapula, and it is possible the woman was shot through her upper left back. Bone fractures suggest that she also had suffered a bluntforce trauma to the face; an oblique fracture of her lower right arm had been caused by twisting. A small trace of new bone around the fractures suggested that she lived for a short while after the fractures occurred (no more than a few days). The woman's skeleton showed scarring on each ulna (one of the two lower arm bones), where the muscles attached at the elbows, suggesting habitual activity using these muscles (see Wilczak et al. 2009 [Chapter 11 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground]).



Figure 83. In situ photograph of musket ball lodged in rib cage of the woman in Burial 25 (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



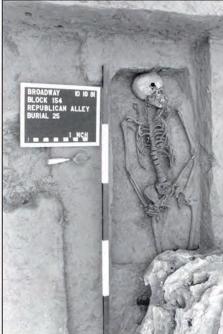


Figure 84. In situ photographs of *left*, Burial 32, and *right*, Burial 25. The burials may have shared a grave, and both were disturbed by the construction of a foundation wall on Lot 13. The heads are to the west. The ruler alongside Burial 25 is measured in feet (photographs by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 85. In situ photograph of Burial 175, bones placed atop the coffin of Burial 257. Ruler laid alongside the burial is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial 175: A Secondary Burial

Burial 175 consisted of bones found in the grave of Late Group Burial 257 (Figure 85). Although completely disarticulated, the skeletal elements from Burial 175 were almost all accounted for and were identified as those of a man between the ages of 24 and 28. One possible scenario is of grave diggers coming upon the earlier grave, removing all of the bones, and then carefully replacing them atop the new coffin. Although the disturbance may have been accidental, another possibility is that these remains represent a deliberate exhumation followed by secondary burial. In this case, the bones may have been placed within the grave of a recently deceased relative.

Burials 74 and 129: Empty Coffins

There were no human remains found in the coffin excavated as Burial 74. The grave was located in the far western part of the site, at the rear of Lot 12 (see Figure 77b). The shaft outline was rectangular in shape, and the coffin was hexagonal, with its head to

the west. It was approximately 4.5 feet long, suggesting that it had held a child. Nails were recorded in situ around the perimeter of the coffin, although only at the bottom. Because this coffin was of a probable child, it is possible the skeletal remains had simply decayed, leaving no trace; however, judging by other child burials at the site, we expect that some teeth would have been preserved in situ.

Burial 129 also contained no skeletal remains. There were scattered adult skeletal remains (three teeth, an occipital fragment of the skull, and the distal end of a humerus) recovered from the grave-fill soil, and excavators hypothesized that when Burial 129 was interred it completely displaced another burial (designated Burial 124). It is not possible to determine whether one or two burials are actually represented. The coffin lid recorded as belonging to Burial 129 was fairly well preserved, however, and it is difficult to envision how or why the remains were removed from within it and somehow scattered. The coffin was first drawn as four sided, slightly tapered toward the foot (east) end; however, the final burial drawing represents the coffin as hexagonal in shape.

As discussed in Chapter 6, either the deceased were removed from their coffins after interment, or empty coffins were interred intentionally. Secondary burial and grave robbing are possible scenarios in the first case, although burial of an empty coffin might suggest adherence to a religious practice or an attempt at deception.

South-Headed and East-Headed Burials

Burials 383 and 365, south-headed women's burials in the southeast area of the site (see Figure 77e, left center), were discussed in Chapter 5. The orientation of the head of the infant in Burial 406, also located at the far eastern edge of site, was toward the east. The coffin shape was unclear: it appeared to be six sided, but the "shoulder" was not obvious. There is a possibility that the position of the infant within the coffin was not known to those who placed it in the grave, and thus that the unusual orientation was accidental.

Burials 142, 144, and 149: A Triple Grave

In this grave, a woman between 25 and 30 years of age was buried along with two infants, one whose age was calculated at less than 2 months, and one thought to have been between 6 and 12 months old

at death. The three were in separate coffins. The tiny coffins of the children, Burials 144 and 149, had been placed so as to both fit on the top of the woman's (Figure 86).

Either all three were interred at the same time, or the infants were buried together after the woman. In the other two instances at the New York African Burial Ground where a woman shared a grave with an infant (Burials 12 and 14 and Burials 335 and 356), the infant had been placed within the coffin of the adult.



Figure 86. In situ photograph of Burials 142, 144, and 149. The outlines of the individual coffins are indicated. Ruler alongside the woman's coffin is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

CHAPTER 8

The Late-Middle Group

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The Late-Middle Group consists of burials that have been distinguished from the main group because of stratigraphic relationships or because artifacts found with them are datable to the final third of the eighteenth century. It is possible that there is some overlap between the Late-Middle and the Late Groups, defined as post-1776. Nevertheless, in order to keep those burials that are most securely assignable to the later period (see Chapter 9) analytically distinct, we have separated out a Late-Middle cohort and for convenience use the start of the Revolutionary War as the end date. We use 1760 as an approximate beginning date for Late-Middle burials, although some overlap between the Middle and Late-Middle Groups is likely because in many cases temporal-group assignment is based solely on stratigraphic position. Relatively few burials (n = 58) are assigned to the Late-Middle Group.

A sketch of the town and its population precedes the presentation of the Late-Middle Group mortuary sample. The material culture, spatial distribution, and some unique and unusual burials assigned to this group are then discussed.

The Town

This period opens with the French and Indian, or Seven Years, War (1754–1763), over the course of which thousands of soldiers were quartered in the city and thousands of sailors manned ships in the harbor (for a description of the city in these years, see Burrows and Wallace [1999:165–222]). New barracks to house the troops had to be constructed, and the buildings were sited in the northern part of the town Commons just south of the African Burial Ground. The city's merchants prospered during and after the war. Following the war the growing trade of the port and the

marketing of goods that began to flow to the colonies as a result of the Industrial Revolution in England fed the local economy and the fortunes of the local elite; artisans also benefited from a boom in construction during and after the war. The town continued its northward growth, although the fashionable families remained downtown.

Residential development along Broadway began to encroach upon the western side of the burial ground during these years. The town is best depicted on the Ratzer Map of 1767 (see Figure 20 in Chapter 2) for the Late-Middle burial cohort. A composite map (covering the entire period 1730–1770) prepared for the book *Gotham* (Burrows and Wallace 1999:206) is also useful for locating streets, churches, and public buildings throughout the city. Isaac Teller (one of the heirs of the Van Borsum Patent) built three houses along Broadway near present-day Chambers Street sometime between 1760 and 1765, and two other houses stood to the north of these. Teller's fence, reportedly with a locked gate, also went up in this period (see Chapters 2 and 4). Buildings that may have been associated with the Campbell pottery abutted the cemetery on the northwest along the property line; buildings that may have been part of the Crolius/ Remmey pottery operation were farther to the east, also along the property line. On the town Commons just south of the burial ground, a jail and a cemetery for the Almshouse were erected in 1757; in 1775, the Bridewell went up. Although this part of town was no longer remote, it was still marginal in a social sense, as it was characterized by a concentration of public institutions for the criminal, the homeless, the insane, and the impoverished, not to mention the place of execution.

As neighborhoods moved northward, churches also appeared in the northern precincts (see Rothschild 1990:25–80). Many churches had at least small

numbers of black congregants by this time. An important development was the founding of the Methodist Church in New York, the first meeting of which was held in 1766. Its permanent home was built in 1768. The Methodists welcomed blacks and were antislavery. The black membership in the beginning included small numbers of mainly enslaved men and women, but reports from the early 1770s suggest that the numbers of blacks who came to hear the Methodist preachers grew quickly (Walls 1974:39–40).

Complete segregation and restrictions on full participation by blacks within the churches was the norm, however. At John Street, as at the other churches, blacks sat in the loft and entered by a separate stair, and black members met in separate "Negro classes" led by white men (John Street Methodist Church Archives, New York, Class Rolls, 1785–1790, Record No. 223, Book 1A [old]; Walls 1974). Segregation extended to the churchyards. Burial records survive for this period for the Reformed Dutch; Anglican (Trinity as well as St. Paul's and St. George's Chapels); Lutheran (Trinity, Christ, and United); Moravian; Baptist; and German Reformed churches of Manhattan, and of those examined, only the Dutch church recorded the burial of blacks in the 1760s—just three individuals, and even for these the location of the burials is not known (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, Burial Register of the Reformed Dutch Church in the City of New York, 1727–1804). In 1773, Trinity (Anglican) Church's black membership was substantial enough to warrant some provision for burials, and the church established its own small African cemetery at the corner of Church and Reade Streets (just one block west of the African Burial Ground). Trinity also allowed the 1774 burial of an enslaved woman named Mary—arranged and paid for by her master Evert Bancker—at the "English" churchyard (Trinity), suggesting the occasional paternalistic gesture (House Expense Book of Evert Bancker, cited in Foote [1991:146]). It is possible other blacks were interred in elite family vaults or plots as well, but there is no evidence for the general practice.

The importation of captives continued down to the eve of the Revolution, with the 1760s and 1770s seeing the greatest volume of direct trade between New York and Africa. Doubtless a high proportion of Africanborn people entered the local black community (Lydon 1978:378–381). It was in March 1762 that merchant John Watts (1928:31) wrote that captives for the New York market "must be young the younger the better if not quite Children." Two large shipments of cap-

tives direct from the continent, a total of 196 persons, arrived at the city docks in 1763, and at least 59 more African-born captives were recorded between 1768 and 1772 (Lydon 1978:382–383).

The Population

Census

After a slight drop from the 1740s to 1750s, the black population of New York City grew substantially again between 1756 and 1771 (Table 26). The 38 percent increase was accounted for mainly by adults and by more women than men, with the adult sex ratio dropping to 85.9 in 1771.

The adult male category included 68 men over 60 years of age in 1756 and 42 over 60 in 1771. This absolute and proportional drop in elderly men may reflect natural attrition accompanied by increased importation of younger men. As a proportion of the city's total population, blacks dropped to 14.3 percent, outstripped by accelerating European growth (presumably through immigration and natural increase).

Mortuary Sample

The 58 burials assigned to the Late-Middle Group are listed in Table 27, and their distribution within the excavated portion of the cemetery is shown on the site plan in Figures 87a–87e. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. An entry of "n/a" in the coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed, displaced, or redeposited so that coffin presence/absence could not be determined. Age and sex profiles are shown in Figures 88 and 89.

As explained in Chapter 5, we believe that subadults are underrepresented in the age profile because children's burials that might actually belong in the Late-Middle Group were buried in, above, or near existing graves from earlier periods, and such children's burials cannot be distinguished.

Mortuary Material Culture

Only three burials assigned to the Late-Middle Group were without coffins, Burials 357, 377, and 391. All three may in fact belong with the Late Group, which

Year	Label in	Ad	ults	Chil	dren	Age for	Total	
leai	Census	Male	Female	Male	Female	Children	iotai	
1756	"black"	672	695	468	443	≤15	2,278	
1771	"black"	932	1,085	568	552	≤15	3,137	

Table 26. Black Population by Age and Sex, 1756-1771

Note: Information from Green and Harrington (1932) and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909).

had most of the other coffinless interments. However, lacking additional evidence, such as stratigraphic superposition, spatial association, or late artifacts, we have kept them with the middle period graves, thus avoiding the tautology of placing them in the Late Group solely on the basis of having no coffins. It should be noted, however, that shifting these burials to the Late Group would enhance that cohort's distinctiveness (for example, two of the three are men, which matches the skewed sex distribution of the Late Group).

Coffins of adult burials in the Late-Middle Group were hexagonal except for those in Burials 333 and 392, which were rectangular. These were the only unambiguously rectangular adult coffins excavated at the site. Coffins of children and infants were hexagonal (9), rectangular (1), tapered (2), and four sided but uncertain as to rectangular or tapered (1). Four were unidentifiable owing to poor preservation.

Four of the five coffins at the New York African Burial Ground that were either clearly or probably decorated (in Burials 101, 176, 222, and 332) have been assigned to the Late-Middle Group (the fifth, a possibly decorated coffin in Burial 252, has been assigned to the Late Group). This may reflect changing coffin style and perhaps indicates that by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, in some cases coffins were being displayed at the deceased's home or graveside. However, we stress the small number of decorated coffins and also would caution that some of these burials' Late-Middle Group assignment is based on the decorations themselves: tacks forming the lid adornment were of a type manufactured in England beginning in the 1760s (see Chapter 10 for further discussion of coffins and hardware). All of the individuals in decorated coffins were identified as adult males or probable males. Burial 101 had a coffin with a heart-shaped design formed from tacks; the design has been identified as a possible Sankofa symbol. The coffin in Burial 176 had tacks edging the lid and six handles with back plates, each with cut-out < > shapes. The coffin in Burial 222 also apparently had a tack design on the lid, although it was disturbed and could not be reconstructed. Burial 332 held a coffin with initials and a number formed in tacks. These coffins are illustrated in the section on unique and unusual burials in this chapter and in Chapter 10.

Pins were found with 34 of the individuals in the Late-Middle Group. Pins were in 70.2 percent of the 47 graves considered well enough preserved to expect them and in 1 other burial (Burial 319), where preservation was very poor but pin fragments were recovered with the bone. Men, women and children were among the 34. By contrast, only 4 (8.3 percent) of the graves, all of men, had clear evidence for clothing. Burial 10 contained 13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole; 5 with shanks only) in positions indicative of breeches and a jacket. Burial 238 had a bone button back that was recovered from the cervical vertebrae (neck) of its occupant, along with octagonal cuff links recovered from each wrist. Burial 333 had 6 bone buttons in the pelvic area. Burial 392 had 11 buttons, some in fragments and others associated with cloth; the positions of the buttons are indicative of breeches. This man also had an octagonal cuff link face at the right clavicle (collar bone); the apparent mate was recovered in the laboratory when the cervical vertebrae were cleaned. The only other item of adornment found with a Late-Middle Group interment, the woman in Burial 107, was a single cylindrical red and green glass bead found during cleaning of the cranium in the laboratory; the bead may have been worn in her hair. Pins are discussed further in Chapter 11, buttons in Chapter 12, and the bead in Chapter 13.

Spatial Distribution

For convenience, we will look at spatial distribution of the Late-Middle Group burials using the same subareas we used for the Middle Group (the western,

Table 27. Late-Middle Group Burials

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
4	adult	30	40	male		86.5	11	n	n/a
4A	adult	20	25	male?		86.5	11	n	n/a
5	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	90	86.5	9	y	unidentified
7	subadult	3	5	undetermined	105	80.5	15	у	hexagonal
10	adult	40	45	male	88	82.5	20	у	hexagonal
11	adult	30	40	male?	90	83.5	12	y	hexagonal
13/43	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	90	105	-7	у	four sided?
42	infant	0	2	undetermined	76	91.5	45	у	hexagonal
54	adult			undetermined	90	92	-4	n	unidentified
60	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	95	93.5	0	у	four sided?
61	undetermined			undetermined	82	87.5	45	n	unidentified
64	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	82	92.5	45	у	hexagonal
67	adult	40	50	male	88	94	0	y (no cranium)	unidentified
89	adult	50	60	female	92	90.5	48	у	hexagonal
91	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	84	95	48	y	hexagonal
101	adult	26	35	male	78	88.5	49	y	hexagonal
105	adult	35	45	male	89	95	60	y	hexagonal
106	adult	25	35	female?	92	90.5	71	у	hexagonal
107	adult	35	40	female	93	90	48	у	hexagonal
108	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	68	87	53	у	hexagonal
109	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	126	90.5	54	у	hexagonal
119	adult	35	45	male	93	88.5	72	у	hexagonal
123	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	96	89.5	80	у	hexagonal?
145				n/a	95	73.5	74	n (empty coffin)	hexagonal
146	infant	0	0	undetermined	102	73.5	74.5	у	hexagonal
168	adult			male	90	95.5	68.5	n	n/a
176	adult	20	24	male	103	74.5	65.5	у	hexagonal
198	subadult			undetermined	113	86.5	80	у	four-sided
216	infant	0	0.16	undetermined	104	78.5	57	у	rectangular
219	subadult	4	5	undetermined	87	71.5	122	у	unidentified
222	adult			male?	95	76.5	118	y (no cranium)	hexagonal
229	subadult	6.75	11.25	undetermined	108	83.5	72	у	unidentified

Table 27. Late-Middle Group Burials (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
235	adult	28	42	female	85	71.5	123	у	hexagonal
238	adult	40	50	male	102	78.5	62	у	hexagonal
251	subadult	12	14	undetermined	101	79.5	79	у	hexagonal
253	subadult	13	15	undetermined	96	82.5	65.5	у	hexagonal
267	adult			undetermined	105	82.5	94	у	hexagonal
289	subadult	5	9	undetermined	89	81	125	у	tapered
290	adult	45	55	male	89	84	114	у	hexagonal
311	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	100	88.5	99.5	у	tapered
314	adult	40	50	male	97	82	134	у	hexagonal
316	adult	18	20	female	95	88.5	99.5	у	hexagonal
317	adult	19	39	male?		91.5	220	n	unidentified
319	adult			female		88.5	249	n	unidentified
332	adult	35	40	male?	92	80.5	126	у	hexagonal
333	adult	45	55	male	121	81.5	230.5	у	rectangular
338	adult	33	65	female	92	84.5	133.5	у	hexagonal
352	adult			male	100	67.5	131	у	hexagonal
357	adult	45	65	male	109	72	228.5	у	no coffin
362	adult			undetermined	119	69.5	235	y (cranium only)	unidentified
373	adult	45	60	female	100	70.5	132	у	hexagonal
376	adult	45	65	male	98	77	134.5	у	hexagonal
377	adult	32.6	57.8	female	103	75.5	235	у	no coffin
381	undetermined			undetermined		75.5	235	n (not excavated)	n/a
391	adult	16.5	19.5	male	90	68	140.5	y	no coffin
392	adult	42.5	52.5	male		71.5	140	y	rectangular
395	adult	43	53	male	107	76.5	135.5	у	hexagonal
413	adult	50	70	female	95	62.5	175.5	у	hexagonal

^a In the Sex column, a question mark indicates a probable assignment.

west-central, east-central/Lot18, and southeast subareas (see Figures 87a–87e).

Burial orientations, all head-to-west in the graves assigned to the Late-Middle Group, were at angles that overall were more similar to those in the Middle Group than to those in the Late Group. Late-Middle Group burials, like the rest of the Middle Group, often

appear to be sited with some sense of an appropriate separation from other burials. Again, as in the Middle Group, even children's graves sometimes seem to have been dug several feet apart from others, as though such separation was part of a standard practice. Burials 5, 7 (see Figure 87b), 109, 123, and 198 (see Figure 87c) were all children's graves that were spatially separated

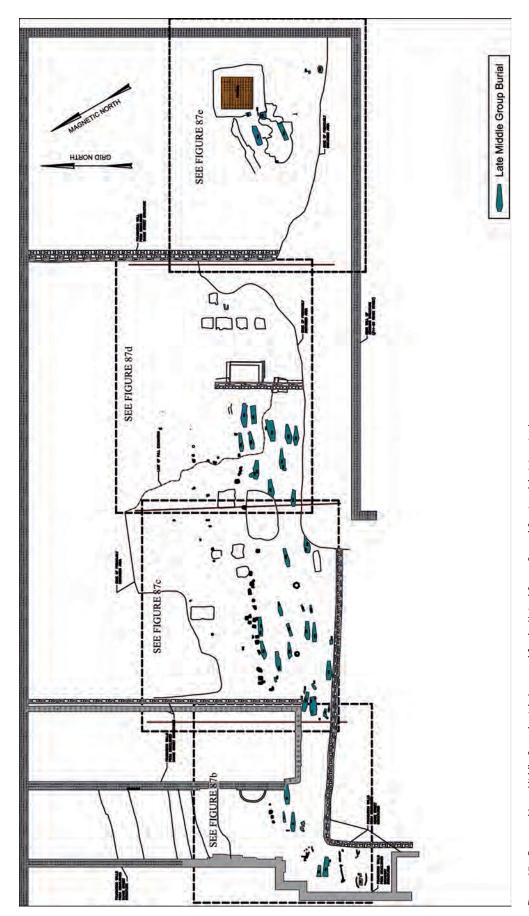


Figure 87a. Excavated Late-Middle Group burials (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

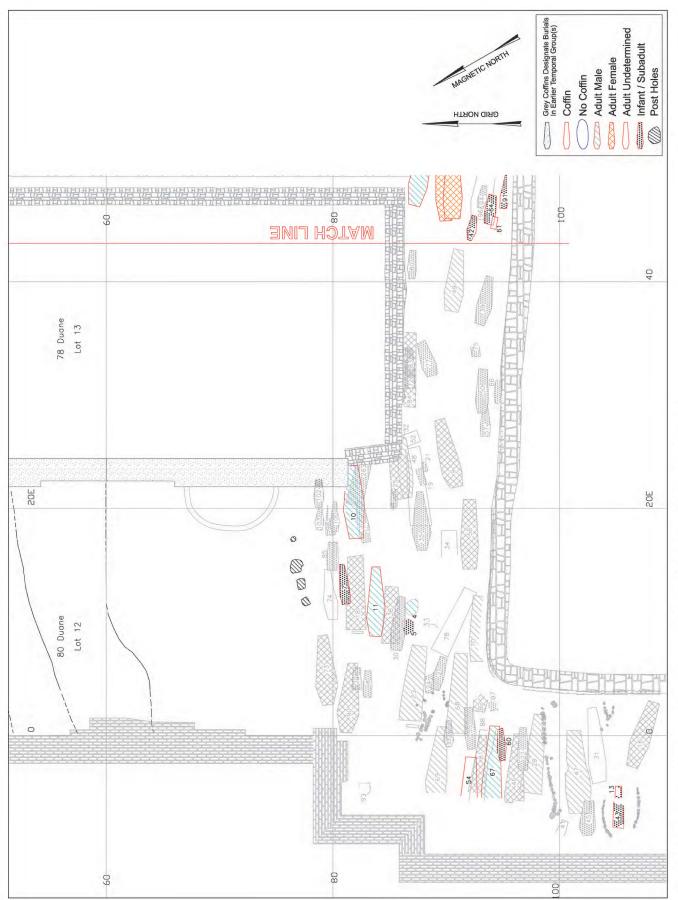


Figure 87b. Late-Middle Group burials, western area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

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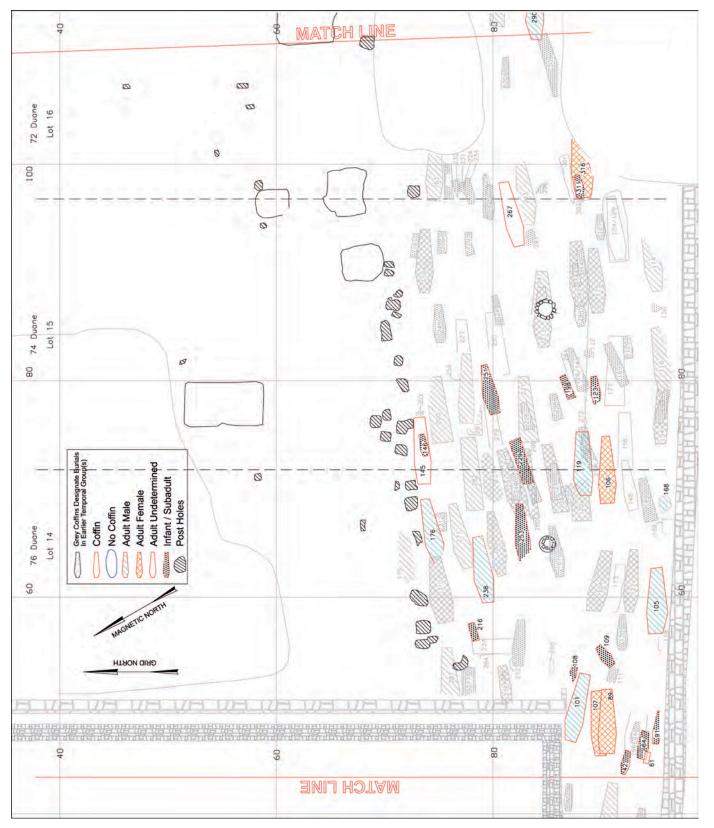


Figure 87c. Late-Middle Group burials, west-central area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

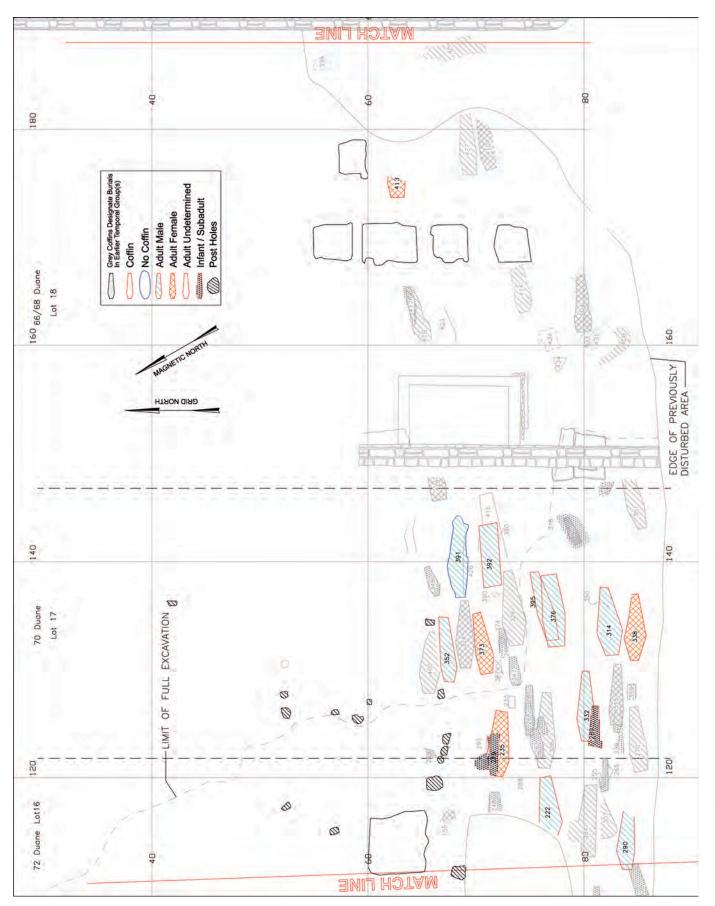


Figure 87d. Late-Middle Group burials, east-central and Lot 18 areas (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

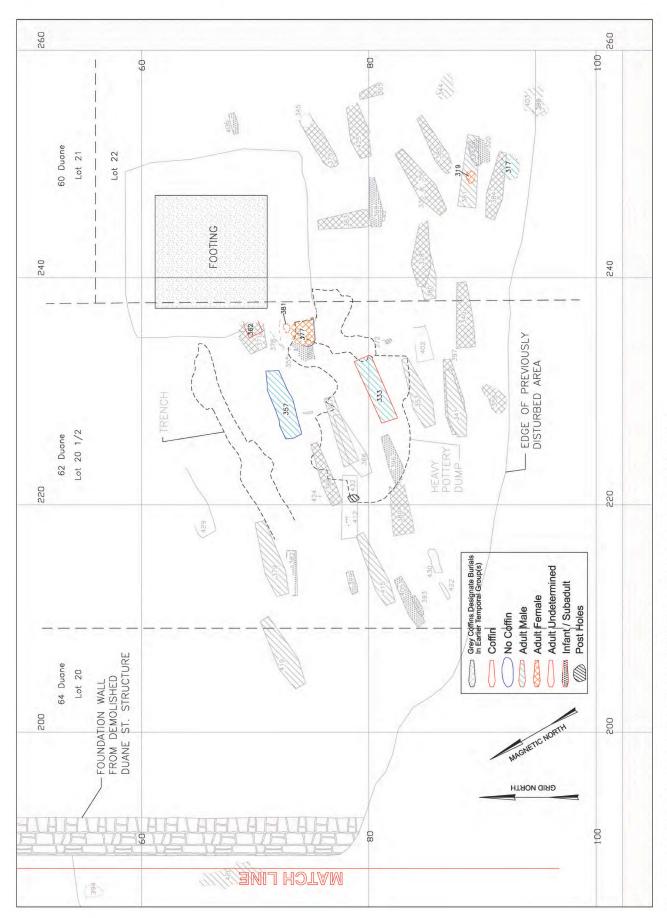


Figure 87e. Late-Middle Group burials, eastern area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

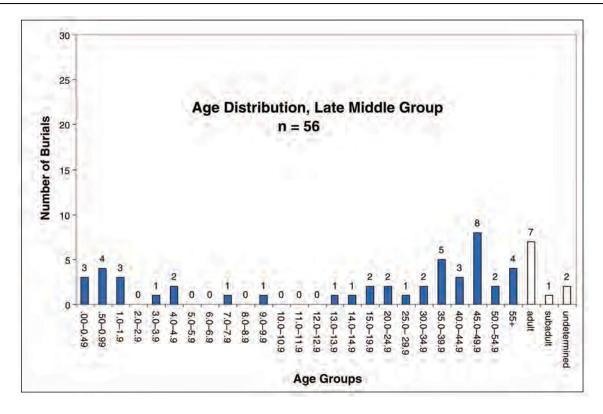


Figure 88. Age distribution, Late-Middle Group. White bars indicate individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

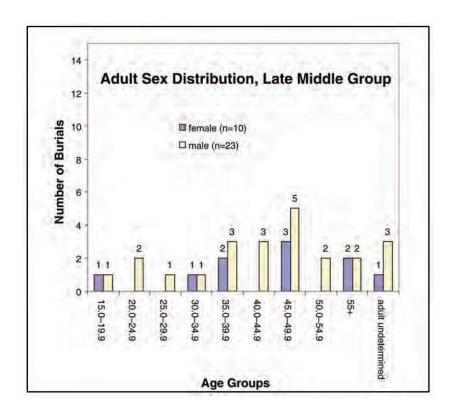


Figure 89. Adult sex distribution, Late-Middle Group.

from other graves in the Late-Middle temporal group; yet their deliberate placement above or near burials we have placed with the earlier groups is possible, so the apparent isolation may be false. By this time the cemetery was becoming increasingly crowded, and the "filling in" of spaces between earlier graves had clearly commenced. Although Late-Middle Group graves might be spatially separated from one another, they most often overlay or lay close beside earlier graves.

The Western Area

The western part of the site is shown in Figure 87b. Burials 54, 60, and 67, all adjacent, were placed above earlier burials from both the Middle and Early Groups, although there is no way to determine whether or not they were deliberately sited with reference to the earlier graves (the cluster is shown on Figure 80). Burial 60, which held a baby of 3–9 months, may have been deliberately placed at the foot of Burial 67, the grave of a man between 40 and 50, although the two had separate grave shafts, indicating the child was interred later than the man. Burial 54 was about 1 foot to the north of Burial 67 and held a second adult, although because it was truncated from the legs up, no sex or age could be assigned. All three form a possible group.

Burials 4, 4A, 5, 7, and 11 also were placed above earlier graves, possibly deliberately. As we mentioned in Chapter 6, the Early Group Burial 18 had a headstone, and therefore the deliberate placement of Burials 7 and 11 above and adjacent to it should be considered likely (although a social relationship cannot necessarily be inferred). Burials 7 and 11 also "fill in" between two Middle Group graves (Burials 74 on the north and 30 on the south), suggesting that the spacing of graves, although tight, was deliberate. The entire cluster of graves from Burial 74 south to Burials 4, 4A, and 5 appears as a roughly linear arrangement, the graves nearly parallel. Burial 6, too, offset somewhat to the east, may have been added later. It is possible to envision the deliberate reuse of this small area over time, with Burial 18 as the "anchor" marked by a headstone.

In the southwesternmost corner of the excavation was the grave of a child between 2 and 4 years of age, Burial 13/43 (excavated as two separate interments and subsequently determined to represent a single burial). This grave was outlined with a double arc of cobbles, found in situ (see Figure 57 in Chapter 5). It seems likely the cobble grave marker was

tended until such time as this area was covered over with fill. Based on general stratigraphy in the area and the fact that its rather ephemeral surface marker was intact, Burial 13/43 has been placed in the Late-Middle temporal group, although it could be placed in the Middle cohort instead. This corner of the site gives us a tantalizing glimpse of the type of surface markers that once may have been used throughout the African Burial Ground (see additional description of the area in sections entitled "Mortuary Material Culture" in Chapters 6 and 7). As we noted in Chapter 3, historical development as well as machine stripping during the project resulted in the loss of the original surface layer over the majority of the site.

The West-Central Area

Burials in the Late Group in the west-central site area are shown in Figure 99c. We noted in Chapter 7 that Middle Group Burials 96 and 94, an adult and child in a shared grave, were surrounded and overlain by later graves of several more children, Burials 42, 64, 61, and 91. We cannot determine how close in time all of the interments occurred but place the latter four in the Late-Middle Group because of their stratigraphic relationship to the double burial. The entire cluster exhibits a relatively uniform orientation, slightly northward of grid west, suggesting the earliest grave may have been marked at the surface and the later graves deliberately aligned with it. The single adult, in Middle Group Burial 96, appears to have anchored the grouping.

There was a "gap" or void in Late-Middle Group burials from approximately 55–70 feet grid east and approximately 80–95 feet grid south. Within the void was a smaller circular area without graves from any period (see Figure 7, pocket map). The absence of burials there is intriguing. The circular arrangement of graves around a central void may allude to, or reproduce, a cosmogram. But it also may allude to former topography, such as a mound, that had been destroyed through leveling, with soil from the top of the mound scattered to become part of the overlying fill (for discussion of burials arranged around mounds at Newton Plantation, see Handler and Lange [1978:105–117]).

On the west side of the void were Burials 108, 101, 107, 89, and 109. Burials 101 and 108 may represent a deliberate pairing of an infant with a man, although the excavation records do not clarify the relationship between the two grave cuts. Burial 101 had the coffin

with the heart-shaped design on its lid; this burial held a man between 26 and 35 years of age. Burials 89 and 107 represent the possible shared grave of a woman in her fifties placed above a woman in her late thirties. The two hexagonal coffins were essentially parallel and precisely aligned. They were just to the south of Burial 101, although oriented differently.

Northeast of the void, Burials 176, 238, and 253 appear to be "filling in" between Middle Group burials along a north-south row. The northernmost of these, Burial 176, appears to have been placed along the south side of the fence that once marked the northern boundary of the cemetery. Just to its east, Burials 145 (containing an empty adult coffin) and 146 (of an infant in a coffin) also seem to have been placed up against the fence line, although not because of crowding, as there was space to the south. It is possible the Middle and Late-Middle Group graves in the area were deliberately placed so as not to disturb early graves, Burials 200 and 282.

Burial 145 suggests one of three scenarios: a stolen cadaver, removal of the remains for secondary burial, or deliberate burial of an empty coffin for either religious purposes or for deception. The fact that the Burial 146 child coffin was placed atop the empty coffin argues against the body-snatching scenario. As we noted for the empty coffins of the Middle Group (see the section entitled "Unique and Unusual Burials" in Chapter 7), it is not possible to choose among possible explanations.

East of the void, Burials 119 and 106 were placed adjacent to each other, only a foot apart and parallel, as though a pair. An underlying Early Group grave, Burial 120, was partially displaced when Burial 119 was interred, suggesting that the grave digger was unaware of the previous burial, but bones from Burial 120 were set aside with some care rather than simply mixed with the shaft fill. Three other underlying interments, Burials 263, 272, and 218 were left intact by Burial 119.

The East-Central Area

Four pairs of graves are noted in the east-central area (see Figure 87d): Burials 289 and 332, Burials 219 and 235, Burials 376 and 395, and Burials 314 and 338. Burial 289, which held a child between 5 and 9 years old buried with a tiny quartz crystal, was placed so as to overlap with Burial 332, the grave of a man whose initials, "HW," and probable age, "38," were tacked on his coffin lid (see the illustrations in this

chapter in the section entitled "Unique and Unusual Burials" and in Chapter 10). Burial 219 held a young child buried above a woman aged 28–42, within the latter's grave shaft.

Burials 376 and 395 were of men whose age ranges extended from 45 and 43 to 60 and 53. The pair is placed in the Late-Middle Group because they appear to have been part of a north-south "row" of burials that filled in between existing Middle Group graves (see Figure 7 [pocket map] for the distribution of burials from all temporal groups in this area). This row may have extended all the way to the north edge of the site, but the interments north of the fence line are assigned to the Late Group. Burials 352 and 373 are part of this row. At the south end of the row are Burials 314 and 338, a pairing of a man between 40 and 50 and a woman aged 33–65, whose coffins seem to have been placed side by side and parallel, possibly in a shared grave.

At the east edge of the east-central area, Burials 391 and 392 are somewhat problematic in their assignment. Both may in fact belong with Late Group burials. In the case of Burial 391, this is suggested by its lack of a coffin, but again, we have not used this variable alone to place interments in the last period. Burial 392 seems to have totally disturbed an underlying Middle Group burial (Burial 390), and thus the interments may have been separated by many years. However, this area was never fully excavated, and burial relationships are not clear-cut. It seems prudent to place both burials in the Late-Middle Group, with the caveat, rather than in the Late Group. Burial 392 is described in the section entitled "Unique and Unusual Burials."

The Southeast Area

Two burials in the southeast area of the excavated site (see Figure 87e) were assigned to the Late-Middle period on the basis of artifacts recovered from the grave-shaft fill (Burials 333 and 357), and two additional, disturbed burials were placed in this group on the basis of stratigraphic position (Burials 317 and 319).

Burials 333 and 357 were oriented identically to numerous Middle Group burials in the immediate vicinity. Two Early Group burials nearby were also parallel (Burials 387 and 388). The very strong alignment of all of these interments suggests the grave diggers used some constant feature to orient the openings, and/or, of course, that they were all purposefully aligned with each other. As noted in Chapter 7, a

trench (Feature 163) with a similar orientation ran just to the north of these graves, and the trench itself may have provided the alignment, or it too may have followed another feature.

Unique and Unusual Burials

Decorated Coffins

Coffin decorations that survived archaeologically were very rare at the New York African Burial Ground, but there were four (out of five overall) in the Late-Middle Group. Photographs and drawings taken during excavation show the coffin lids of Burials 101, 176, and 332, but Burial 222, which had tacks that apparently formed a decorative lid pattern, was disturbed by vandals before the decoration was recorded.

Two of these burials held individuals that can confidently be identified as men (Burials 101 and 176), and the other two (Burials 222 and 332) held individuals that were very likely men as well. Calculated age ranges were 20–24 (Burial 176), 26–35 (Burial 101), and 35–40 (Burial 332). Burial 222 could not be assigned an age range. Burials 222 and 332 were located just 5 feet apart, in the east-central part of the site (see Figure 87d). Burials 101 and 176 were not close by each other, but both were in the same general area, in the west-central part of the site (see Figure 87c). It is noteworthy that the men in Burials 101, 176, and 332 each had a child or infant buried either immediately adjacent to or above his grave.

The tack pattern on the lid of the Burial 101 coffin was first described as heart shaped, with unidentified designs within the outline of the heart (Figure 90). As discussed in Chapter 10, the interior decoration may represent initials and a date of death. In this case, the upper portion, which would be the initials, has not been deciphered (the tacks displaced as the coffin wood rotted); the lower portion may have formed numerals for the year "1769" (Figure 91).

The heartlike design has also been identified as a Sankofa symbol associated with Twi-speaking Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The symbol depicts a proverb, "Se wo were fi na wo sankofa a yenkyi" which can be translated as "It is not a taboo to return and fetch it when you forget." It reminds people of the need to "[tie] the past with the present in order to prepare for the future" (Ofori-Ansa 1995:3).

Four straight pins, three on the cranium (one with a small tuft of hair) and one on the torso, were found



Figure 90. In situ photograph of coffin lid decoration formed of iron tacks in Burial 101 (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

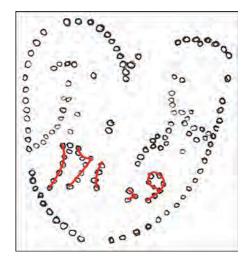


Figure 91. Possible reading of the year "1769" formed by tacks on the lid of Burial 101.

with the bones, but no other artifacts were recovered. Excavators recorded two possible bone button fragments on the left leg; however, no buttons were cataloged in the laboratory, and it is possible the observed pieces were simply fragments of the skeleton.

One of the man's incisors had been intentionally filed, a practice found in Africa and a possible indicator of his birth on that continent. Chemical analysis was undertaken in an attempt to determine whether the man had spent the early part of his life in Africa,

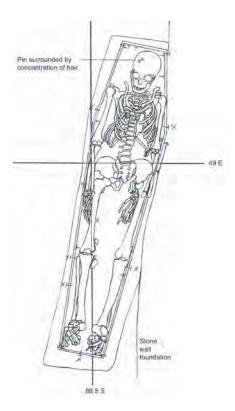


Figure 92. In situ drawing of Burial 101 skeletal remains. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (drawing by M Schur).

but strontium isotope levels overlapped those of individuals from the cemetery population that are likely to have been born in New York (young children), although lead levels were low, close to those in other individuals with modified teeth. The man's nativity remains ambiguous.

Preservation of the skeleton was excellent (Figure 92) and several pathologies were observed, including signs of periostitis (bone scarring due to inflammation from bacterial infection or injury) on the cranium and legs; "saber shin" (suggesting he had treponemal disease); stress-affected muscle attachments at the elbows; conditions of the bones at the joints that indicated mild to severe arthritis; enamel hypoplasias on the teeth suggesting childhood nutritional stress; and severe molar caries with indications of likely abscesses and perhaps infections of the surrounding bone.

The coffin in Burial 176 was the only one excavated that had a full set of coffin handles, two on each side and one at each end (see Chapter 10 for illustrations and discussion). Its lid was decorated with iron tacks around the entire perimeter, spaced 2 inches apart—also unique within the excavated sample (Figures 93 and 94).



Figure 93. In situ photograph of excavation showing iron tacks edging the lid of the Burial 176 coffin. Six handles were also found. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 94. In situ photograph of one of the Burial 176 coffin handles during excavation. Ruler is marked in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

The lid tacks and handles were recorded in situ during excavation. The only other artifact found in association with the remains was a straight pin fragment from the jaw/neck area. It is possible Burial 312, of an infant, was placed immediately adjacent to the





Figure 95. *Left*, in situ photograph of Burial 332 coffin lid decoration formed of iron tacks (photograph by Dennis Seckler); *right*, reconstruction of initials "HW" and number "38." The coffin lid had split longitudinally, severing the "H" and the likely "3."

Burial 176 grave, although the stratigraphic relationship is not clear.

Only one of the graves excavated at the New York African Burial Ground held a clue to the name of the deceased. This was Burial 332, where the coffin lid had been decorated with iron tacks forming the initials "HW" ("M" is an alternative, but perhaps less likely reading of the first letter) and a number, probably "38" (Figure 95). The number was probably the man's age, which agrees closely with the age range calculated from skeletal analysis (35–40). Thus far, documentary sources have not yielded any record of a man with initials H.W. who is likely to have been laid to rest at the New York African Burial Ground, but future compilations of the names of African New Yorkers or escapees from out of town may yet reveal a plausible identity.

There were just two items recovered from this burial other than the coffin and the skeletal remains (Figure 96). One straight pin and a lock of hair were recorded under the right side of the cranium, and during cleaning of the thoracic vertebrae in the laboratory, a curved copper-alloy object was recovered, adhering to a fragment of coffin wood. The latter may have been the remnant of an earring or a curved pin (see Chapter 13). As noted, a child of 5–9 years old (Burial 289) may have been deliberately buried immediately above "HW."

Burial 392

Burial 392 was one of just four interments in the excavated sample that was oriented with the head toward



Figure 96. In situ photograph of "H W" (Burial 332) skeletal remains after removal of the coffin lid. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

the east (Figure 97). It also contained a rectangular coffin, one of only two adult coffins that were clearly of this shape. One explanation for the east-headed orientation is that the symmetrical coffin was lowered into the grave without the bearers knowing which end was the head, although deliberate placement is also possible. The coffin was of unique construction among those recorded at this site, with at least two cross pieces nailed to the lengthwise boards of the lid.

The man in Burial 392 was buried wearing breeches, as evidenced by buttons found at the knees and hips (see Chapter 12). In addition, two octagonal cuff links were found in the neck/shoulder area. The skeletal remains were in poor condition, complete but crushed and very eroded. Three possible urinary stones were removed from below the hip, and possible healed fractures of the left kneecap and right ribs were also noted.



Figure 97. In situ photograph of Burial 392. Ruler alongside the remains is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Stan Bottitta).

CHAPTER 9

The Late Group

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Augustin F. C. Holl

Late Group assignments are based on the dating of artifacts from grave shafts, on stratigraphic relationships, and, most importantly, on burial location, as discussed in Chapter 4. Reasons to place this group in the period from 1776 to the close of the cemetery include the destruction of the fence marking the cemetery's north edge and likely usurpation of Rutgers property during the British occupation, and northward pressure caused by military uses of the ground to the south (for a more complete discussion, see Chapter 4). The frequency of coffinless burials and the preponderance of men to the north of the fence-post alignment is also best explained by the circumstances of the Revolutionary War and the British occupation of New York, as discussed in the section on mortuary material culture.

The town and its population are characterized, and then the mortuary sample and related material culture are described. A discussion of the spatial distribution of excavated graves and descriptions of some unique and unusual burials in this temporal group follow.

The Town

The American War for Independence profoundly disrupted the city's streets, homes, and cemeteries. British troops took the city in the first months of the war and occupied it for 7 years. Conflagrations, beginning with the Great Fire of September 1776, ravaged the downtown area, destroying huge swaths of the built environment. Public spaces were taken over for military use. Soldiers were billeted in barracks on the Common and in private homes appropriated for army use, including Isaac Teller's on the western side of the African Burial Ground. Thousands of prisoners of war languished in makeshift prisons and on prison ships, most of them perishing before hostilities ended. Loyalists from the hinterland relocated to the city, and

over the course of the war refugees streamed into town (on New York in general during and after the war, see Burrows and Wallace [1999:223–287]; on the presence and role of Africans in the city in these years, see *Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground* [Medford and Brown 2009a:98–102; Medford and Brown 2009b:103–104], Hodges [1999:139–161], and Foote [2004:212–216]).

Africans from New York and New Jersey escaped from households sympathetic to the patriot cause and joined the British forces in the months leading up to the war. They were responding to Lord Dunmore's proclamation freeing enslaved and indentured servants who supported the crown. During the occupation of New York City, thousands of blacks from surrounding areas and from distant colonies found their way to refuge here. Those confiscated by the British from patriot households during the war were brought to the city, and Loyalist refugees brought their own enslaved Africans with them. The British used hundreds of African workers, mainly runaways, during the occupation, paying wages (or, sometimes, rum) for various types of labor. Housing was in seriously short supply, but some were billeted in "Negro Barracks" (appropriated buildings), several in the vicinity of upper Broadway (New York Public Library, Special Collections, British Headquarters Papers 1775–1783, List of Barrack Houses in the Garrison of New York, No. 10349). A "Black Brigade" had been organized when the British took the town, and blacks brought in from other colonies joined its ranks. The "Black Pioneers" were commissioned in 1776 to serve as guards, pilots, spies, and interpreters to the Native Americans (Hodges 1999:147). Blacks were used mainly as teamsters but also for cleaning the streets and in the fuel and ordnance departments; they rebuilt the infrastructure burned in the Great Fire, were used for foraging expeditions, and worked as pilots on harbor craft. Numerous opportunities for paid work were seized by Africans during this time, but harsh exploitation of the enslaved also characterized the occupation. Severe wartime shortages, especially of food, fuel, and lumber for building, made life in the city difficult for all.

By an agreement negotiated with Washington, when the British evacuated New York in 1783, the blacks who officially left with them were inspected and registered. This was the famous "Book of Negroes" (New York Public Library, Special Collections, British Headquarters Papers 1775–1783, No. 10427, 1783), listing some 3,000 men, women, and children, many of whom testified that they had escaped from households in New York or other colonies and come to New York, or had served in the British forces during the war. Approximately 80 percent of the black refugees listed were from southern colonies and 20 percent from New York and New Jersey (Foote 1991:342–343). It is estimated that perhaps a thousand additional blacks evacuated with the British in private vessels (Quarles 1961:172), for a total of approximately 4,000.

It is likely that most blacks who died during the occupation, whatever their residence or status, were buried in the African Burial Ground, though Trinity's small "Negroes" cemetery on Church Street was probably available to church members, of whom there were many among Anglican loyalist families. Reportedly, many black refugees also joined the church (Hodges 1999:146–147).

Dissenting Christian denominations also were attracting black members. The John Street Methodist Church reported membership of 25 blacks in 1786, 70 in 1789, 135 in 1791, and 155 by 1795 (Walls 1974:40–46). After the war, black churchgoers increasingly moved to separate from white congregations, where restrictions on their full participation as members and preachers continued unabated. A pivotal moment in the history of the black church in America was the formation in New York of a separate black Methodist meeting in 1795. One of the galvanizing issues behind the separatist movement in this and other churches was probably the

demise of the African Burial Ground, which, we believe, had heretofore served as a focal religious institution in New York's African community.

A new soldiers' barracks erected at present-day Chambers Street and the use of the ground behind the barracks for a cemetery by the British (see Figure 21) in Chapter 2) would have constricted the African cemetery and possibly pushed it northward. Members of the city's African community might have appropriated the southern edge of the Rutgers Farm (the old Calk Hook Farm) for burials at this time. As discussed in Chapter 4, the British reportedly destroyed the fence that had marked the boundary between the burial ground and the Rutgers/Barclay property; that property may have been left unleased, or been held in uncertain possession, during the war. The houses within the Van Borsum patent were either destroyed or were occupied by various tenants, also in uncertain possession, during the war once Teller was removed (Johnson 1853–1859:9:174–77).

The growth of the town in the decade following the war is reflected in the 1797 Taylor-Roberts Plan (see Figure 26 in Chapter 2). Streets and building lots were laid out northward from Chambers Street, and in 1787, the Barclays began selling off lots along Duane Street, on the northern edge of the African Burial Ground. Sometime soon after, a new fence was probably constructed, once again delimiting the area Africans could use. Within 7 years, claimants to the Van Borsum patent were able to have the remainder of the cemetery land surveyed and sold in lots (see Chapter 2).

Depredations on the African Burial Ground from medical students seeking cadavers in the 1780s led to forceful protests from the city's African community leaders. Aside from providing a window on the development of black leadership in the town, the protests revealed the vulnerability of what we believe was still the community's most important institution at the time, their cemetery. As explained in Chapter 2, at least one attempt was made to provide a more secure place of burial (Mr. Scipio Gray's plot on Gold Street), but that, too, was subject to depredation. Africans were particular targets of this practice, as attested by numerous newspaper accounts, and were the first to raise a public protest. Public anger against doctors was first aroused when a free African American man's letter was printed in the *Daily Advertiser* on February 16, 1788.2 The author suggested that a law be passed

¹ In the 1780s, the John Street congregation had several "Negro Classes" with men and women separated, as was the church practice. Several of the men who would emerge as leaders of the black community and founders of a separate black congregation were in Class Number 31; Class Number 28 included Peter Williams, Sr., the church's sexton and one of its grave diggers, who worked at John Street to earn his own freedom. Black Methodists met in a house on Cross Street in 1795. In 1801, they incorporated the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and erected their own chapel, with a burial ground as well as a vault, on Church Street (see Walls 1974).

² The writer's name was omitted "for reasons," as the publisher stated, "which must be obvious to the author."

Year	Label in Census	Ad	ults	Chi	ldren	Age for Children	Free	Enslaved	Total
i cai	Luber III Celisus	Male	Female	Male	Female	Age for children	1166	Liisiavea	Total
1771	"blacks"	932 ⁸	1,085	568	552	<16			3,137
1779	"blacks"					No separate count given by gender or age.			1,951
1786	"slaves"	896	1,207			No separate count of children.			2,103
1790	"all other free per- sons" and "slaves" (no separate count given by gender)					No separate count given by gender or age.	1,036 ^b	2,056	3,092

Table 28. Black Population by Age and Sex, 1771-1790

Note: Information from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1909) and White (1991:126); for 1779, Elliott Papers cited in Hodges (1999:150).

prohibiting dissection of any but criminals so that "a stop might be put to this horrid practice here; and the mind of a very great number of my fellow-liberated, or still enslaved Blacks quieted." The closing of the letter is an intimation of rising concern on the part of the aggrieved African community. His next letter contained a less veiled threat: "students of physick" were warned that "their lives may be the forfeit of their temerity should they dare to persist in their robberies" (Daily Advertiser, February 28, 1788). A group of free and enslaved black men also petitioned the Common Council to protect the graves of blacks (Municipal Archives of the City of New York, Papers of the Common Council, Petitions, Free Negroes and Slaves of the City of New York, February 14, 1787). Black leaders thus pursued simultaneous strategies: appealing to the authorities and threatening to meet violence against the dead with violence on the streets. A general riot that became known as the "Doctors' Riot" erupted in April, showing that New Yorkers of European heritage were as incensed about grave robbing as were Africans, and suggests that for people of all backgrounds the desecration of the dead was a particularly heinous crime.

The Population

Census

African New Yorkers made up 14.3 percent of the population before the war but were only 9.9 percent of the city total in 1790. This drop does not reflect a decrease in the black population, which was essentially the same in 1771 and 1790. Rather, European immigration accelerated following the war, their numbers increasing by 10,000.

Census figures for Africans are available for points in time bracketing the war years (1771 and 1786) and for 1790, which can be considered the eve of the African Burial Ground's closing (Table 28). There was also one count taken during the occupation, in 1779 (Hodges 1999:150). Fluctuations during the war years went unrecorded, however. We do know that 3,000–4,000 blacks left with the British in 1783 and that most of them were from out of town. The 1779 count seems low; it may be inaccurate, or it is possible the numbers of fugitive/refugee Africans swelled after that year.

Includes 42 men over the age of 60.

Includes 678 men living in free black households and 349 living in households headed by whites. In 1790, about half of the enslaved (1,170 persons) and about half of the free blacks living in households headed by whites lived with merchants, artisans, or retail tradesmen (White 1991:7).



Figure 98. Locations of households in New York in 1790: top, free black households; bottom, slaveholding households. Arrows point to the location of the African Burial Ground. (From Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770–1810, by Shane White. © 1991 by the University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia 30602. All rights reserved.)

In addition to the census figures, data on residential patterns of both enslaved and free blacks in New York are available. Shane White, by analyzing the census and city directories, has been able to locate most of the households inhabited by people of African descent (Figure 98). The extent of slaveholding in the early federal era is evident.

The numbers of free blacks in New York are difficult to reconstruct for the period before 1790. Because the number of enslaved persons in the 1786 census is roughly equal to the number enslaved in 1790, it is possible that the free blacks were counted with the white population in 1786. Many came to New York during the war as fugitives and stayed on. Others constituted the small number of free blacks whose families had been living in the city for many years, even generations. Free blacks were overwhelmingly con-

centrated in the Montgomerie Ward, especially along Fair, Gold, and Beekman Streets near St. George's Chapel, where Scipio Gray worked, and adjacent to which the African Free School was founded in 1789 (see Rothschild 1990:100–101).

There was a preponderance of black women over men in counts taken both before and after the war. Child-to-woman ratios cannot be calculated except for 1771, when about one child per adult female was counted.

Mortuary Sample

Late Group burials, numbering 114, are listed in Table 29. In the table, head angle is the orientation in degrees west of north (discussed in Chapter 5). Preservation codes are explained in Chapter 3. "N/a" in the

Table 29. Late Group Burials

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
1	adult	20	25	female?	94	82.5	2	y	hexagonal
2	adult	27	42	male		43.5	11	n	n/a
6	adult	25	30	male?	91	87.5	15	у	hexagonal
12	adult	35	45	female	83	89.5	12	y	rectangular?
14	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	89	89.5	12	y	rectangular
15	subadult	11	18	undetermined	105	103.5	-5	n	unidentified
20	adult	45	50	male		85	0	n	no coffin
28	subadult			undetermined		83	-2	у	unidentified
36	adult			female		87.5	-5	n	unidentified
37	adult	45	55	male	102	65	20	y	hexagonal
40	adult	50	60	female	94	65	10	y	hexagonal
51	adult	24	32	female	118	75	10	y	hexagonal
58	subadult	3.5	4.5	undetermined	93	65	15	y	rectangular
59	infant	0	0.25	undetermined	90	65	15	y	hexagonal
63	adult	35	45	male	91	70	15	y	hexagonal
65	infant	0	0.49	undetermined	90	75	10	y	hexagonal?
71	adult	25	35	female	102	75	10	y	hexagonal
76	adult	25	55	male	112	75	10	y	no coffin
86	subadult	6	8	undetermined	91	74	18	у	hexagonal
95	subadult	7	12	undetermined	76	94.5	51	y	hexagonal
97	adult	40	50	male	97	81	20	y	hexagonal
99	subadult	6	10	undetermined	78	91.5	70	у	unidentified
117	infant	0	0	undetermined		91.5	77	n/a	n/a
125	adult			female?	89	64.5	52	n	unidentified
131	subadult			undetermined	90	91.5	76.5	n	unidentified
132	adult	25	30	male	98	64.5	61.5	y	hexagonal
134	adult	40	50	female	106	62.5	85	y	hexagonal
135	adult	30	40	male	100	70	70	у	hexagonal
137	adult	25	35	undetermined	100	63	75	y	unidentified
138	subadult	3	5	undetermined	98	67.5	86	y	rectangular
147	adult	55	65	male	81	70.5	56.5	y	hexagonal
150	adult	20	28	female	117	70.5	80	y	no coffin
151	adult	35	45	male	138	67.5	83	y	hexagonal
152	undetermined			undetermined	110	55.5	67	n	unidentified
153	adult			female?	111	54.5	74	у	hexagonal

Table 29. Late Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
157	adult			female?		53.5	81.5	n	n/a
158	adult	20	30	male	111	63	92	у	no coffin
162	adult	35	45	male	109	55	51.5	n	unidentified
164	subadult	8	13	undetermined	97	52.5	91	у	tapered
165	adult			undetermined	108	62.5	73	у	no coffin
166	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	111	55.5	92.5	у	rectangular
170	subadult	7	11	undetermined	90	96	65	y (no cranium)	unidentified
171	adult	44	60	male	114	53.5	99.5	у	hexagonal
172	adult	25	35	female	118	40.5	88	у	no coffin
173	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	121	57	101	y	rectangular
174	adult	17	18	male	115	60.5	90	y	hexagonal
178	adult			male		62	57	n	n/a
179	adult	25	30	male	110	46.5	98	y	hexagonal
180	subadult	11	13	undetermined	111	50	97.5	y	hexagonal
181	adult	20	23	male	86	66	115	y	no coffin
183	subadult	0.63	1.13	undetermined		50	113.5	y	hexagonal
184	subadult	1	1.5	undetermined	121	52	108.5	y	four sided
185	adult	21	23	male		54.5	122	у	no coffin
186	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	124	47.5	110	у	hexagonal
187	subadult	1.5	4	undetermined	112	52.5	119.5	у	hexagonal
188	adult	26	32	undetermined	95	58.5	52.5	n	n/a
190	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	112	55	100.5	y	hexagonal
191	adult	25	30	male	109	56.5	87.5	у	no coffin
192	adult	40	60	female	116	67	101.5	у	hexagonal
193	adult	30	48	male	109	65.5	101.5	у	no coffin
194	adult	30	40	male	104	50.5	84	y	hexagonal
195	adult	30	40	female	100	81.5	63	y	hexagonal
196	adult	20	24	undetermined	90	83	56	y	hexagonal
197	adult	45	55	female	77	76	57.5	у	hexagonal
199	adult	30	40	female	112	73.5	80	у	no coffin
201	subadult	1.5	3.5	undetermined	101	59.5	70.5	у	rectangular
203	adult	12	18	undetermined	83	59	77	у	hexagonal
204	adult			female?		77.5	98	n	n/a
205	adult	18	20	female	108	59.5	102	y	hexagonal

Table 29. Late Group Burials (*continued***)**

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
207	adult	25	35	female?	93	78.5	95	у	tapered
208	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined		77	96	n	unidentified
209	adult	40	50	male	117	42	94	у	hexagonal
210	adult	35	45	male	88	46	116	у	no coffin
211	adult			male?	95	77	79.5	у	no coffin
214	adult	45	55	male	99	79.5	63.5	у	hexagonal
217	adult	17	19	male	100	64.5	122.5	у	hexagonal
223	adult	25	35	female	101	66.5	76.5	у	no coffin
225	subadult	0.5	1.25	undetermined	112	64.5	95.5	у	four sided
228	adult			male?	85	86	55	n	hexagonal
230	adult	55	65	female	120	45.5	106	у	hexagonal
236	subadult	4	5	undetermined	90	84.5	53.5	у	hexagonal
241	adult	55	65	female	94	54.5	121	у	hexagonal
242	adult	40	50	female	90	49.5	117	у	hexagonal
243	adult	40	50	male	105	57.5	121	y	no coffin
244	subadult	5	9	undetermined	104	51.5	90	y	unidentified
252	subadult	1	2	undetermined	115	64.5	95.5	y	hexagonal
257	adult	30	40	male	100	72.1	64.5	y	other
259	adult	17	19	female?	105	40.5	102	y	hexagonal
262	adult	15	17	male?	94	38.5	120	y	no coffin
266	adult	25	35	female	105	38.5	113.5	y	hexagonal
276	adult	20	24	female	108	35.5	118.5	y	no coffin
278	adult	45	55	male	116	42	103	y	no coffin
297	adult	30	40	male	106	62.5	117.5	n	unidentified
299	adult	40	50	male	80	68.5	123.5	y	hexagonal
305	infant	-0.33	0.33	undetermined	109	57	122	y	hexagonal
309	adult	20	25	male		62	143.5	y	no coffin
313	adult	45	55	male	102	31.5	114.5	y	hexagonal
322	adult			female	99	64.5	140	n	n/a
323	adult	19	30	male		45	128.5	y	no coffin
325	adult	25	35	male	99	63.5	137.5	у	hexagonal
327	adult	35	45	male	98	48.5	129	у	no coffin
329	adult			male	85	56	128.5	y	no coffin
329.1	adult			undetermined		56	128.5	n	n/a

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex [®]	Head Angle (degrees)	Grid South (feet)	Grid East (feet)	Preservation Code	Coffin
330	adult	28	58	male		58.5	140	n	n/a
331	adult	30	35	undetermined		58	137	n	n/a
337	adult	40	50	male	116	37	130	у	no coffin
342	adult	25	35	female?	104	50	129	y	hexagonal
343	adult	19	23	male	92	59.5	130	у	hexagonal
346	adult	50	70	female	117	57.5	138.5	у	hexagonal
354	adult	35	45	male	93	44.5	129.5	у	hexagonal
363	subadult	1	2	undetermined	124	49.5	135	у	hexagonal
364	adult	25	35	male	90	44.5	143.5	у	no coffin
369	adult	40	50	male	83	54	131	у	no coffin
386	infant	0	0.3	undetermined	101	48	121.5	у	unidentified

Table 29. Late Group Burials (continued)

coffin column indicates that the bones were severely disturbed or redeposited so that coffin presence/ absence was not determined. The distribution of Late Group graves is shown on Figures 99a–99d. Profiles by age and sex are graphed in Figures 100 and 101. It is possible men predominate in this temporal group because they were more likely than women to remain in, or flee to, the occupied town, and because they were volunteers or conscripts in the British army.

Mortuary Material Culture Coffins and Burials without Coffins

Most graves without coffins, most of which were located to the north of the fence alignment, have been assigned to this last period of the cemetery's use. In Chapter 5, we suggested three possible explanations for burial without a coffin: (1) the inability of the family and friends of the deceased to afford a coffin or the refusal of an enslaved person's household head to provide it, (2) burial under some kind of special circumstance, or (3) adherence to a distinctive funeral practice.

A culturally distinctive funeral program may be the explanation for burial without coffins, but there is no evidence, either documentary or archaeological, to illuminate this possibility. Although coffins were not used in most African cultures of our period, there are no other features of the New York burials that point to specific cultural origins. For example, although we know that there were probably Muslims among New York's African population—and in strict adherence to Islamic law, they would not have used coffins by choice—body orientation and the presence of personal items argue against Muslim practice. The other explanation based on distinctive funeral practice is that these were poor church members who were brought to the cemetery in a "parish coffin," used to transport the deceased but retained by the church for repeated use. The growth in the late period of black Christian congregations, especially at the Anglican and Methodist churches, may support this explanation. Proper burial facilities were given priority by eighteenth-century African American benefit societies and by early leaders of the black churches, including those in New York, but whether a church coffin would have been seen as adequate is not known.

There is one obvious circumstance affecting the provision of coffins. The disruptions of the war caused shortages in supplies, particularly wood for fuel and building. Even obtaining sufficient scrap lumber to fashion a coffin for one's own kin might have been difficult. This explanation supports the dating of coffinless burials to the period of the occupation.

^a In the Sex column, a question mark indicates a probable assignment.



Figure 99a. Excavated Late Group burials (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

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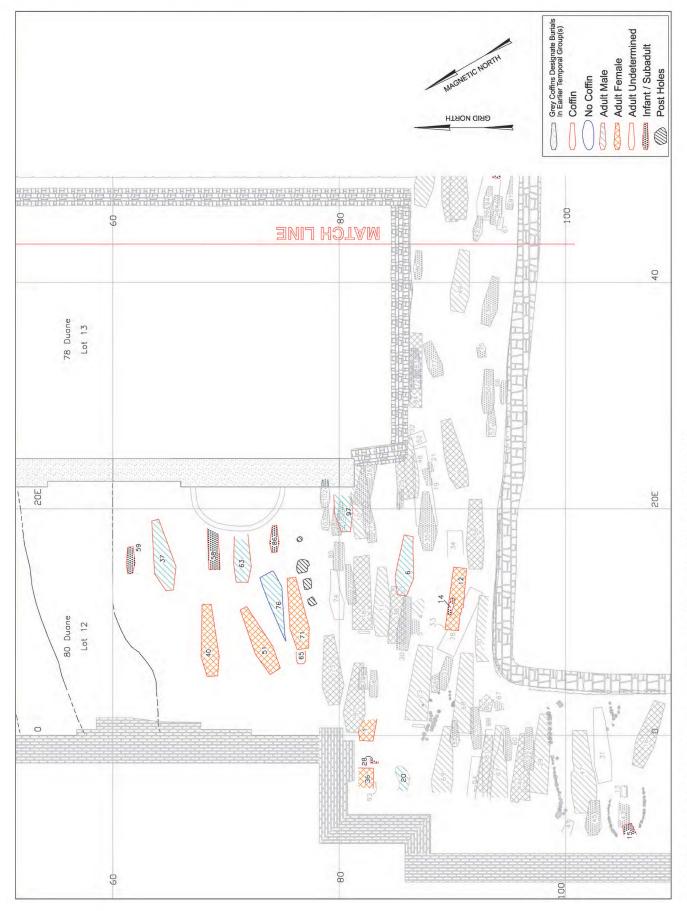


Figure 99b. Late Group burials, western area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

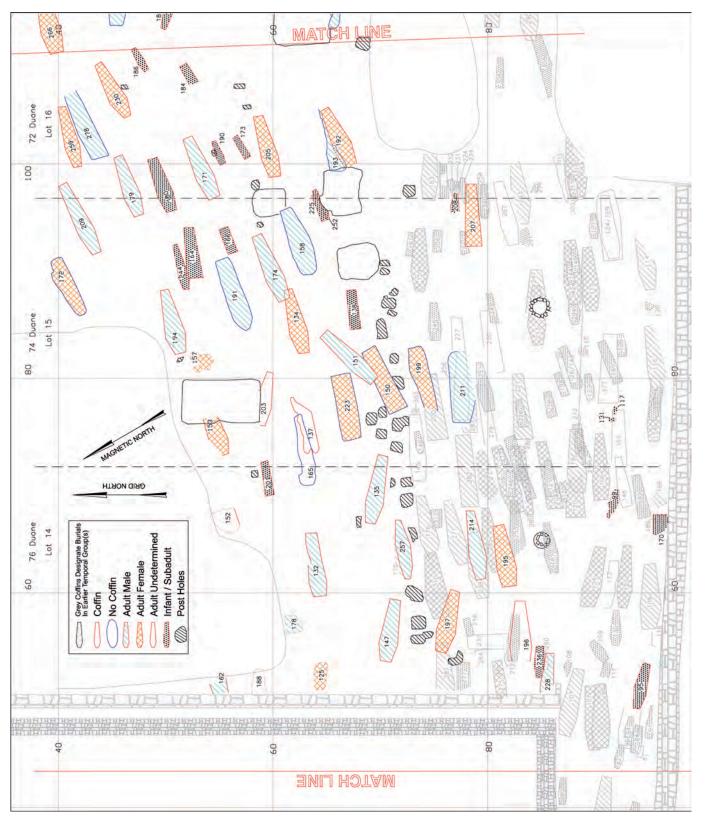


Figure 99c. Late Group burials, west-central area (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

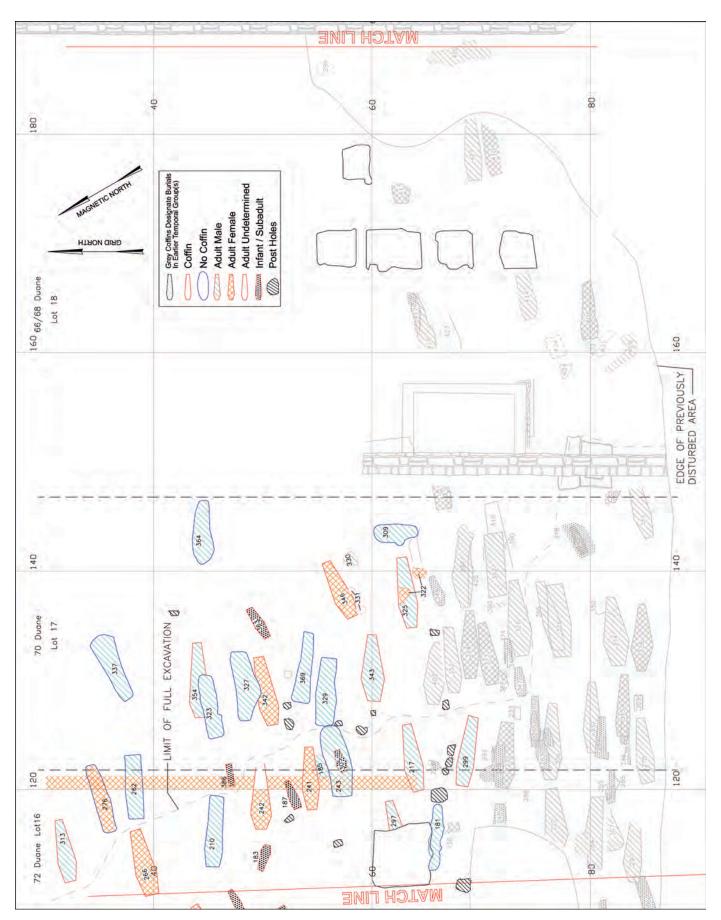


Figure 99d. Late Group burials, east-central and Lot 18 areas (prepared for the United States General Services Administration).

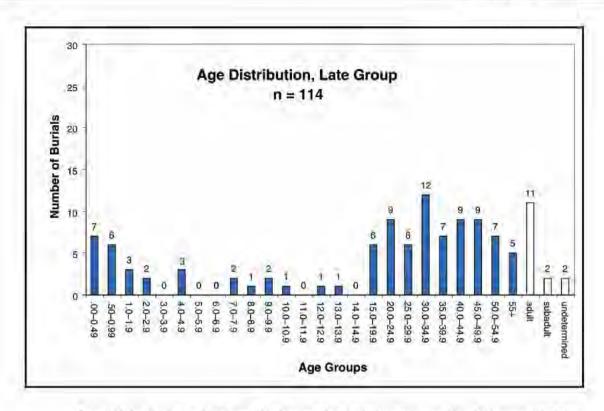


Figure 100. Age distribution, Late Group. White bars include individuals whose age could not be determined (includes only burials from which remains were recovered).

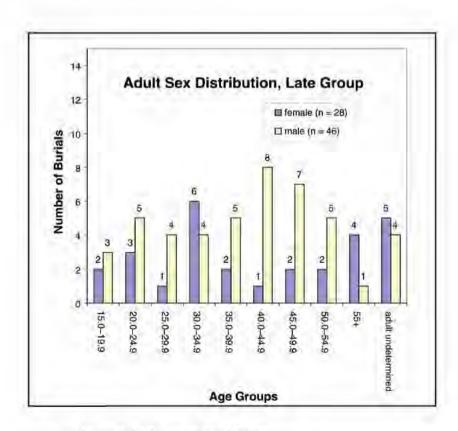


Figure 101. Adult sex distribution, Late Group.

Age Group	15-19	20-24	25–29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	Adult, Undetermined	Total
Female	_	2	_	2	1			_	_	5
Male	1	4	2	1	1	3	4	1	2	19
Undetermined	_		_	_	_	_	_	_	1	1

Table 30. Late Group Burials without Coffins, by Sex and Age

Note: Two coffinless burials of men (Burials 391 and 357) are in the Late-Middle Group (see Chapter 8), and these may also be from the period of British occupation.

We hypothesize that another special circumstance leading to coffinless burial was not a lack of means, but a lack of people to see to these individuals' funeral arrangements. If the burials took place during the Revolution, the deceased may not have had time sufficient to form deep social bonds in the local community. They may have been soldiers, laborers in the employ of the British forces, or refugees, and they may have been in the city for only a short while. Typically, when someone in the New York African community died, the provision of a coffin was considered a minimum standard of proper treatment. Even outsiders, in earlier periods, may have been afforded this minimum through the pooled resources of an established community (which took in escapees or transient free blacks), or, if enslaved, through their slaveholders, who were obliged by custom to provide it. But during the war, with severe disruptions in community life and the huge influx of outsiders, we can imagine strangers dying with no people of their own and no local group able to take care of their funeral.

The fact that the coffinless burials are all of adults lends support to the idea that these burials held transients. Children were unlikely to be in the city alone, and therefore when a child died, there was probably someone to see to its burial.³ The predominance of men in coffinless burials also supports the interpretation: black soldiers and refugees who became laborers

for the British would have been buried at the African Burial Ground (Table 30).

This is not to deny the formation of families among Revolutionary War refugees in New York, for there is, in fact, evidence of this process. For example, the lists of blacks evacuated with the British in 1783 provide information on several marriages of men and women from distant places who met in the occupied city (Foote 1991:370–375; Kruger 1985:666–673). But many deaths must have occurred among those who had not yet had opportunities to find kin, acquire spouses, make friends, join a religious group, or otherwise form bonds within a local community.

The lumber shortage during the war cautions us against overinterpreting the structural niche of occupants of coffinless burials. Even if families and friends were on hand and wished to provide adequate funerals, the means may not have been available. Still, we believe that the provision of a coffin for most of the deceased speaks to the efforts of mourners to provide that item even in the face of shortages. Burials without coffins may therefore represent individuals for whom less effort was made, because they were strangers or because the family's or household's means were too limited.

Despite the possible hindrances, there were three times as many Late Group burials with coffins than without (79 coffins). Hexagonal coffins are typical of the late period. Only three of the adult coffins with recognizable shapes were not six sided: a tapered coffin (Burial 207), a possible rectangular coffin (Burial 12), and a possible eight-sided coffin with a two-piece headboard (Burial 257). Even among the children and infants, 12 out of 21 recognizable coffin shapes were hexagonal. One adult, in Burial 207, had a four-sided tapering coffin, the shape we have considered to be typical of the early period. Although the presence of a sherd of pearlware in the soil within the cranium and the fact that the burial overlay many children's graves force us to consider it late, it is possible Burial 207 has

³ Poor preservation of child burials may also account for the lack of recorded coffinless children's graves. Even with no dental preservation, the outlines of graves should have been discernable. Yet, if excavation failed to turn up any evidence of either a coffin or skeletal remains, it is possible no burial would have been recorded, and disturbances to the site may have obscured such graves beyond recognition. A number of infants' or small children's coffins contained minimal or no skeletal material; if a coffin aided preservation at least to some degree, we would expect even less skeletal survival for coffinless juveniles. The degree of skeletal preservation for individuals 15 years and older does not appear to have been significantly affected by the presence of coffins.

been assigned incorrectly. Burial 12, which also had pearlware in the grave-shaft-fill soil, had a coffin for which it is difficult to determine the shape, although it appears to have been four sided.

Other Artifacts

Other types of material culture directly associated with Late Group burials included pins, jewelry, plain and decorative buttons and cuff links, and miscellaneous items including coins. Fifty-three percent (60 out of 114) of the Late Group burials had at least one pin. Shrouding was probably typical, although 16 individuals had some evidence of clothing (buttons, cuff links at the wrists, or an aglet). Little in the way of personal adornment was recovered from Late Group burials, as was the case for the excavated cemetery as a whole. A woman was laid to rest wearing a ring with glass insets (Burial 242), an infant was buried with a glass and wire filigree ornament (Burial 186), and a young child was interred with a string of black beads looped at the waist (Burial 187).

Sixteen of the 33 burials with clothing items that were clearly associated with the deceased were in the Late Group; more than half of the buttons recovered at the New York African Burial Ground were from Late Group burials. Particular types of clothing are suggested in Burials 6 (a jacket), 181 (trousers or breeches), 203 (breeches), and 259 (breeches). One man had cuff links at each wrist (Burial 158), and another was buried with an enameled cuff-link face (Burial 211); a possible cuff link was recorded for Burial 181.⁴

The greater frequency of buttons and cuff links in later burials raises questions about the increased use of street clothes as burial attire (see Chapter 12). There is a caveat, however: because buttons have in some cases provided the rationale for placing burials in the Late Group (Burial 6, for example), a comparison of button/no button burials within and across temporal groups is suspect. In other words, there are probably burials that date to the late period but that have not been identified as late because they have no artifacts and are not assignable spatially or stratigraphically. Such burials would increase the frequency of buttonless burials in the Late Group.

"Miscellaneous" items such as coins, shells, and pipes were also more prominent in Late Group burials than in burials from earlier groups (see Chapter 14). Because these items were not used to date burials, the comparative frequency is more likely to reflect actual mortuary practice than in the case of clothing fasteners. Miscellaneous items were found in direct association with 11 individuals in the Late Group. Two women (Burials 230 and 242) and one man (Burial 135) had coins on their eyes. A coin and a knife were found with another man (Burial 214). Iron tacks were found with a woman (Burial 197) and a young child (Burial 138); the infant in Burial 186 had a possible nail on the left side of its cranium. The man in Burial 147 was found with a cluster of small copper rings and pins next to his right arm. Two adults (Burials 158 and 165) had portions of pipes.

Spatial Distribution

Orientation

In the later grouping of burials, more graves were angled southward relative to the site grid than in the earlier or middle groupings (see discussion of orientation in Chapter 5). The pattern may be evidence for a higher frequency of winter deaths, or reliance on physical features in the northern part of the cemetery (for example, terracing along the slope of the hill), or a more regularized approach to grave digging, such that once a grave was dug, other graves were aligned to it.

The fence-post alignment was oriented at approximately 102° west of grid north. If the southerly trend of Late Group burials were construed as evidence of alignment with the fence, the hypothesis that these burials postdate the fence's destruction must be rejected. There remains the possibility that a path or road extended roughly parallel to the property line, leading from Broadway to the pottery buildings that stood near the northeast part of the cemetery. The trenches identified in Lot 12 (see Chapter 4) might be related to such an access road. Such an east-west feature could have been used to orient burials.

Rows

To a greater degree than elsewhere at the site, burials in the northern area appear to form "rows" with north-south alignments. These rowlike alignments

⁴ Buttons, cuff links, and clothing are described in Chapter 12. All of the decorative buttons and all of the cuff links are considered as personal adornment and hence are also discussed in Chapter 13. The enamel cuff-link face from Burial 211 is illustrated in Chapter 13. Beads, rings, and pieces of jewelry made from metal and glass are discussed in Chapter 13, as well.

can be explained in several, mutually compatible ways. First, the alignments might reflect the lay of the land, lying more or less along parallel "terraces" on the sloping ground. This may be supported by the somewhat more regular orientation of graves. Second, the rowlike alignments might indicate that the dayto-day management of the cemetery was becoming more regularized, so that a grave digger, rather than the mourners themselves, would have sited graves. Regularization of grave sites is also compatible with our idea that the northern area was used during the British occupation and contains many individuals from outside the local community. The grouping of graves with regard to known social ties, such as kinship or residence, would not always have been possible under the circumstances of war. Finally, the arrangement may reflect a pragmatic response to a heightened mortality rate. The war and the appalling health conditions in the town would have raised the death toll and possibly required several burials on a single day. Similarly, the yellow fever that plagued the city annually beginning in 1791 may have taken lives at a rate requiring that several graves be prepared at once.

Paired Burials

A woman-infant co-interment, Burials 12 and 14, was found in a relatively separate location in the southwest part of the site (see Figure 99b), and child Burials 225 (of a 6–12-month-old) and 252 (of an 18-month-old) form another pair in the northern area of the site (see Figure 99c, at the east edge of former Lot 15). Although there is no way to know, the pairs may have been victims of the yellow fever epidemics of the 1790s.

Burials 137 and 165 in the northern area of the excavated site (see Figure 99c, straddling the line between former Lots 14 and 15) may have been placed together deliberately, since the two are spatially separate from other interments within an apparent row. Burial 137 was between 25 and 35 years old and of undetermined sex; Burial 165 was an adult for whom neither sex nor precise age could be determined. Burial 137, which had a coffin, overlay Burial 165, which did not; the later burial did not disturb the earlier, however.

Burials 243 and 305 are the only other likely paired burials in the Late Group (see Figure 99d, on the line between former Lots 16 and 17). They were very unusual if in fact they were deliberately buried together: the infant (in Burial 305) was beneath the adult (Burial 243), a man between 40 and 50 years of age.

Gendered Space

We have noted that the predominance of men in the later burials and their greater frequency in coffinless burials is to be expected because of the presence of soldiers and laborers during the British occupation. Do the coffinless burials exhibit any spatial patterning by gender? There were three women's graves (Burials 223, 150, and 199) aligned roughly parallel in a north-south line at approximately 75 East (see Figure 99c, center). Other burials in this possible "row" include two to the north (Burials 137 and 165) for which sex could not be determined, and another to the south (Burial 211) identified as a probable male. A "row" of four men's graves lay to the east of the women, two in coffins and two without (Burials 194, 191, 174, and 158; see also Figure 99c). Another possible row of men's graves, mainly without coffins, lay somewhat further east (approximately at 130 East; see Figure 99d, within former Lot 17) and included, from north to south, Burials 337, 354, 327, 369, 329, and 343. (A woman's grave, Burial 342, intervened.)

These rows of adjacent burials of the same gender are distinctive in comparison to the overall demographic distribution within the excavated site (see Figure 7, pocket map). The apparent nonrandom distribution of men may be related to specific historical circumstances. Men from the barracks, for instance, may all have been buried in a row if sickness claimed several lives in quick succession. Infectious and contagious diseases notoriously ravaged the troop barracks and prisons during the occupation. The cluster of women consists of only three individuals, so it may simply be the random result of normal day-to-day cemetery use. The possibility that gendered space within the cemetery had a religious basis should be considered, but there is no documentary or comparative evidence to provide hypotheses.

Isolated Infants

No children were identified as having been buried without coffins, and although many adults came to the city from other geographical locales during the final period of the burial ground's use, children were likely to have had family members who could provide for their funerals. On the other hand, there

were several spatially separate child burials in the northern part of the excavated cemetery, suggesting that these children's families may not have had their own places of burial within the cemetery. Detached child burials in the northern area include Burials 59, 58, and 86, in the rear of Lot 12 (see Figure 99b). Although interred in an apparent north-south row, the children are aligned with, but not clearly associated with, any of the adult interments nearby. Burials 173 and 190 similarly appear to be aligned in a row but not definitely coupled with adult burials (see Figure 99c, approximately 100 East), and Burials 166, 187, and 386 may also fall into the category of "detached" child burials that may be associated with rows. It is possible, of course, that the children were placed near adults with some specific association within the apparent rows.

Even more isolated are Burials 201, 138, 184, and 186, shown east to west on Figure 99c, and Burials 183 and 363, shown on Figure 99d. Burials 183, 184, and 186 (see Figures 99c and 99d) lay within the central part of Lot 16 where few burials were found, and it is possible that disturbances could have obliterated nearby interments. But it would be unusual for these child burials to have better preservation than those of adults. Here is an area that may have been used specifically for the burial of children.

The Area of the Animal-Bone Dump

Burials in the area where animal bone (mainly cow and likely tannery waste) had been dumped are shown in Figure 47 in Chapter 4). The faunal material found in each grave shaft in this area is inventoried in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume. We examined the distribution of these graves in relation to the presence/ absence of coffins and in terms of burial superposition to determine whether the tannery dump can provide a relative dating sequence in the area. There were 23 grave shafts containing significant amounts of cow bone, and these must have been dug after the dumping had occurred. Of these, 10 were adult burials with coffins, 7 were adult burials without coffins, and 6 were children's burials, the latter all with coffins. Thus, both coffined and coffinless burials occurred after the dumping episode(s). It is likely that the tannery dump dates to some time during the occupation. Therefore, it is possible that some burials were placed within the dump area during the occupation (coffinless) and some burials were placed within the dump area after the war, during the mid-1780s (coffined). There

were only two cases of burial superposition among those with tannery waste. In one case, two burials, coffinless Burial 243 and coffined Burial 241, both truncated coffinless Burial 185—the coffined burial may be the latest. In the second case, a coffinless burial (Burial 323) overlay a coffin burial (Burial 354), which would argue against a coffinless wartime vs. coffined postwar sequence within the dump. However, as we discuss in the section on unique and unusual burials, Burial 323 is a unique interment, one that probably occurred under inauspicious circumstances unrelated to the war, probably in the mid- to late-1780s.

Area within Lot 17

A slight increase in the density of graves can be seen in the small area that was excavated eastward of grid line 120 East. This is approximately the western boundary of Lot 17, surveyed originally in 1784 and available for lease after 1787, when the Barclay property was subdivided. It is possible this lot continued to be used for burials after 1788, whereas those to its west did not, the latter having been fenced off (see Chapter 4). Another explanation for the increased overlap in burials is topography: this may have been one of those areas of flatter ground that was used more intensively than the slope. Because the central and northern portions of Lots 17, 18, 20, and 21 were not excavated fully, it is impossible to determine whether the concentration of burials in these eastern lots supports the idea that they were used for a longer period of time than Lots 12–16.

Unique and Unusual Burials

Burial 183: Head-to-East, Possible Painted Coffin

Burial 183 was one of two excavated child burials with its head oriented toward the east rather than the west (the other was Middle Group Burial 406). The grave, located in the north-central part of the site, held a 6–12-month-old child in a tiny-shouldered coffin. As noted, it was an isolate burial, with no apparent relationship to any other. Coffin wood preservation was excellent (Figure 102), and samples were identified as cedar and spruce. Excavators noted flecks of possible paint over the entire surface of the coffin lid and a concentration of orange/red color on the north



Figure 102. In situ photograph of exposed coffin lid, Burial 183. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the left (photograph by Dennis Seckler.

side.⁵ Fifteen straight pins were recorded in situ in the burial, distributed the full length of the remains.

Burial 194: Wooden Grave Marker

A cedar board was attached to the head of the coffin in Burial 194. The vertical board was the remnant of a grave marker that would have extended to the ground surface, a unique find at the New York African Burial Ground (Figure 103; see Chapter 5 on other types of grave markers). The coffin, which was shouldered and made at least partly of cedar, held a man aged between 30 and 40 years. His central incisors had been filed. Tooth modification is sometimes interpreted as a sign of birth in Africa, although tooth modification in diaspora contexts should also be considered (see Goodman et al. 2009 [Chapter 6 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground]). Burial artifacts included a single copper-alloy button shank and an



Figure 103. In situ photograph of Burial 194 showing wood from the coffin bottom and the vertical board at the head end (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

organic fragment, possibly a leather button cover, found near the head of the right femur. Pollen analysis suggested that flowers of the Liguliflorae family might have been placed on the coffin.

Burial 196: Displaced Legs and an Opened Coffin

Burial 196 held the remains of an individual of undetermined sex whose calculated age range was from 20 to 24. The western end of the grave shaft and the coffin had been disturbed, and the skeletal elements from the upper body, although all accounted for, were displaced and shifted eastward within the coffin. The leg bones were found as shown in Figure 104, as though the legs had been severed at the knees, with the tibiae and fibulae offset next to the femurs.

The state of the coffin in this burial may help explain the disposition of the bones. Coffin lid nails

⁵ Field records indicated that a sample was collected, but it was not brought to the attention of the conservators or inventoried by the Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff. Consequently, the substance was never analyzed.



Figure 104. In situ photograph of Burial 196. Ruler alongside the burial is marked in feet; north is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

were found in place only at the foot corners; the other lid nails appear to have been removed. A small pile of nails was found alongside the north edge of the coffin, near the top, and another cluster of nails was removed from the corresponding area beneath the coffin. It is possible the coffin was opened and the lid replaced without the nails. The coffin may have been tipped on end some time after decomposition, causing the bones to shift toward the foot. This might account for the position of the leg bones, providing the shifting followed at least partial soft-tissue decomposition.⁶

The possibility that the deceased had been dismembered at the knees prior to or after death is also considered, though no visible cut marks were noted by the Skeletal Biology Team. The positions of the leg bones appear too precisely in tandem to have simply slid into this arrangement when the coffin was disturbed. It is also possible that the hands had been behind the deceased's back at the time of burial, which would suggest possible execution.

The coffin bottom was of unusual construction (see Chapter 10). Instead of lengthwise boards, short crosswise boards had been used, nailed from the bottom into the coffin sides. The unique coffin, possibly of ad hoc construction, along with the apparent opening of the receptacle some time after interment, the shifting of the remains, and the disconcerting leg position, suggest unusual circumstances surrounding the death and burial of the individual in Burial 196.

Burials with Skeletal Elements Displaced: Dismemberment and Dissection

Like Burial 196, Burials 151 and 364 contained skeletons with bones placed in puzzling ways. Burial 151 held a man between 35 and 45 years old. The coffin was oriented with the head well to the southwest, outside the typical range at the excavated cemetery. Excavators noted that the right leg was turned "backward" (Figure 105). It is possible the leg had been severed (before or after death) and placed in the coffin in this position. The man's incisors had been filed to points. A single pin, found at the neck, was recovered from the burial.

The bones in Burial 364 were even more mystifyingly arranged. The remains were of a man between 25 and 35 years old, buried with no coffin (Figure 106). The right ulna and radius (the bones of the forearm) were found in the left lower leg area, end to end, where the tibia should have been, and the left tibia was rotated 180 degrees and placed at the inside of the left femur. The left arm bones were flexed at a sharp angle. The left foot overlay the distal end of the left fibula. The hand bones were found scattered in the torso area. Skeletal analysis revealed indirect evidence of a gruesome scenario: the left hand and possibly the right, as well as the forearms, had been severed near the time of the man's death. Old cuts or abrasion of bone on the top of the left ulna and dark cut marks consistent with a sharp blade on the top of the left radius might have been made just before or

⁶ Ubelaker (1974:28–31) has analyzed frequencies of partial disarticulation, reflecting the strength of muscle or ligament attachments. Ubelaker's (1974:28) results suggest that decomposition produces separation first at the major joints such as the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, and knee. Separation next occurs at the joints between the sacrum and pelvis, bones of the hand, lower leg and foot, radius and ulna, sacrum and fifth lumbar vertebrae, skull and first cervical vertebrae, the lumbar segments, first and second cervical vertebrae, skull and mandible, and the third to seventh cervical segments. The thoracic vertebrae, tibia and fibula, and bones of the feet are the last to become disarticulated.

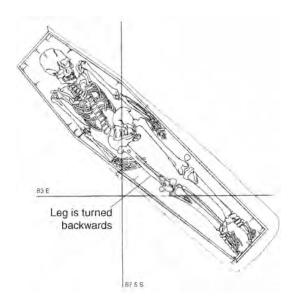


Figure 105. In situ drawing of Burial 151. North is to the right. Note the southwesterly orientation. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (drawing by M. Schur).

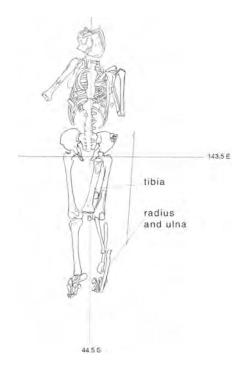


Figure 106. In situ drawing of Burial 364. The vertical line to the right of the remains represents the edge of the grave shaft. The scale is 1 inch = 2 feet; north is to the right (drawing by W. Williams).

after death. Darkened blade cuts were also found on the distal (hand) end of the left radius. This cannot be a case of simple dismemberment, however. The left fibula was in its correct anatomical position, but the tibia was not, and the displaced, right lower-arm bones were not adjacent to each other but laid end to end.

One explanation for the position of the bones is that the remains represent a stolen cadaver (perhaps from the burial ground) that had been partially dissected and subsequently interred with the bones from the severed elements. We cannot know who performed the burial, but it is possible family and friends of the deceased, or other citizens among the many who decried the practice of dissection, retrieved the body and laid it to rest. Because we know that African New Yorkers assumed active vigilance over their dead (see section entitled "The Town" and Chapter 2), it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that they made efforts to retrieve bodies, which then would have been afforded proper burial.

One other grave in the Late Group raises issues of the appropriation of bodies after death. Burial 323 held a man between 19 and 30 years of age who had been subjected to postmortem surgery during which the top of the skull had been sawn off. He had been placed in his grave with the top of his skull held in his arms upon his torso (Figure 107). It is possible that his body had been obtained for dissection, and perhaps the family or friends were able to retrieve the body and bury it. It is also possible that a coroner's inquest had been performed on the body, as sectioning of the cranium was typical of an autopsy in the eighteenth century (Sledzik and Micozzi 1997:488; for archaeological examples from Great Britain, see Chamberlain [1999]). The position of the body, with the head to the east rather than the west, is very unusual (only four instances were recorded at the New York African Burial Ground), and supports the overall impression of inauspicious circumstances of burial. So, too, may the absence of a coffin.⁷

⁷ New York City coroner Thomas Shreve's 1771 petition to the Common Council for recovery of fees lists 20 inquests performed but does not indicate whether autopsies were undertaken. The petition does itemize extra fees incurred for burials, and Shreve charged for having to dig two graves himself. In only one case was there a charge for a coffin, implying that the others were buried without coffins (Municipal Archives of the City of New York, Papers of the Common Council, Petitions, Thomas Shreve, April 19, 1771).



Figure 107. In situ photograph of Burial 323 skeletal remains as found. The top of the skull was held in the man's arms. Ruler is marked in feet; north is to the left (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

CHAPTER 10

Coffins

Jean Howson and Leonard G. Bianchi with the assistance of Iciar Lucena Narvaez and Janet L. Woodruff

Coffin remains (wood and hardware) were by far the most ubiquitous artifacts recovered from graves at the New York African Burial Ground. In this chapter we report on the distribution of coffins among demographic and temporal groups and examine the historical context for coffin use. We then provide descriptive information on the shapes, sizes, material, construction, and decoration of coffins represented at the excavated cemetery. Finally, we describe the material remains that were recovered from coffins and their treatment, identification, and quantification.

Presence/Absence of Coffins

As discussed in Chapter 5, the vast majority of the graves excavated at the New York African Burial Ground had coffins (Table 31, which includes burials for which presence or absence of a coffin could be determined, whether or not human remains were recovered). All of the children's graves had coffins. Of adults, 85.7 percent of our sample (186 of 217 adult burials for which the presence or absence of a coffin could be determined) was buried in coffins. (See Tables 23, 25, 27, and 29 for coffin presence/absence by individual burial.)

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 9, the presence or absence of a coffin co-varied with spatial location within the excavated site and with the age and sex of the deceased—this patterning suggests that coffinless burial took place in the context of economic and social disruptions during the Revolutionary War and British military occupation of New York (1776–1783). Prior to this, coffin burial appears to

have been the norm in the African community of New York.¹

In addition to the distribution of coffins by age, sex, and temporal group, we examined coffin presence/absence in relation to other types of artifacts. Burials with coffins were much more likely to have pins (205 of 301, or 68.1 percent) than those without coffins (6 of 31, or 20 percent).² It is possible that the presence of a coffin enhanced the preservation environment and therefore increased the survival of pins. However, a more likely explanation for the observed frequency distribution is that pins, like lumber for coffins, were in short supply during the war and/or that refugees who died during the British occupation had no family to provide a shroud. As noted in Chapter 4, clothing and jewelry items were present in clear association with the deceased in 6 coffinless burials, which argues against interpreting the lack of a coffin as strictly a function of poverty.

¹ Our specific historical explanation for coffinless burial as well as our chronological sequence contrast with those advanced for Newton Plantation in Barbados. There, the earliest (seventeenth century) rather than the later (late eighteenth and early nineteenth century) burials were without coffins, and change over time in mortuary practice, with increasing adoption of coffins owing to European influence, is suggested (Handler and Lange 1978:162, 192–193). We do not know if any of the burials excavated at the New York African Burial Ground are as early as the earliest graves at Newton Plantation—the earliest New York graves may have lain outside the excavated area. It is possible that, as in Barbados, seventeenth-century African burials in New York were without coffins, but our data do not speak to this or to the issue of European influences on the use of coffins.

² Percentages are based on 326 burials (296 with coffins, 30 without) where coffin presence/absence could be determined and preservation was "y," in addition to 5 coffin burials and 1 coffinless burial with "n" preservation that also had pins.

Burials -		Count		Percent		
Duriais	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Absent	
			By Sex and Age			
Adult male	83	22	105	79.0	21.0	
Adult female	74	8	82	90.2	9.8	
Adult, sex undetermined	29	1	30	96.7	3.3	
Subadult, sex undetermined	150 8	_	150	100.0	0.0	
Sex and age undetermined	16 ^b	1	17	94.1	5.9	
Total	352	32	384°	91.7	8.3	
		I	By Temporal Gro	up		
Early	49 ^b	1	50	98.0	2.0	
Middle	172 ^a	3	175	98.3	1.7	
Late-Middle	51	3	54	94.4	5.6	
Late	79	25	104	76.0	24.0	

Table 31. Coffin Presence or Absence, by Sex, Age, and Temporal Group

352°

Total

384°, d

Clothing and jewelry were actually somewhat more frequent proportionally in well-preserved coffinless burials (6 out of 30, or 20 percent) than in well-preserved coffin burials (39 out of 284, or 13.7 percent). It is possible that in some cases, the families of the deceased actually sold clothing or other items to pay for a proper funeral, defined as including a coffin. The co-variance of coffin absence and burial in clothing may support the idea that less investment was made in the preparation of the body for burial in these cases.

Coffin Production and Provision

Joiners, carpenters, and cabinetmakers typically built coffins in colonial and early federal period American towns. These artisans were sometimes also "undertakers," providing other funeral accoutrements in addition to the coffin, as well as various services.³ The men who made and sold coffins in New Amsterdam/ New York, and the enslaved and free laborers who worked in their shops, would have followed the artisanal traditions of their home countries and regions. Coffins were used commonly in Europe by the middle of the seventeenth century, and travelers' accounts from West Africa suggest their use there by the eighteenth

91.7

8.3

⁸ Excludes two subadults that were inside coffins shared with another individual.

^b Includes one possible coffin.

^c Burial 124 appears to have had a coffin and is included in the count but has not been assigned to a temporal group.

^d The total sample used to calculate this table includes burials for which presence or absence of a coffin could be determined, whether or not human remains were recovered.

³ The more general term "joiner" referred to any woodworker. After about 1760, the term cabinetmaker came to refer specifically to men who made both furniture and coffins (Rauschenberg 1990:26). Upholsterers also served as undertakers, although they did not build the coffins. Bells and palls for the procession; portable biers and coffin stools; decorations for the church; rings, scarves, and gloves to give out to mourners; and funeral foods and beverages are some of the items undertakers could provide. See Habenstein and Lamers (1981) on the history of American undertaking. The first "undertaker" to advertise in colonial New York was a woman, Blanche White, who hailed from London and offered a range of services in 1768 (see the advertisement in Gottesman [1938:141–142]).

century, though examples are known archaeologically only from the nineteenth century (Armstrong 1999:181). The ethnic backgrounds of coffin makers probably reflected the diversity of the town as a whole, and individual training and skill must have contributed to variation in coffin construction, so that coffin styles might be expected to vary from shop to shop. Still, based on historical and archaeological research, there was a very limited range of basic coffin styles used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the American colonies and in Europe.

As Julian Litten (1991:88) points out, most specific information on English coffins prior to the nineteenth century has been gathered from archaeological research and vault openings. Prints, drawings, paintings, sculpture, trade cards, and advertisements also can provide details, and Litten (1991:89–90) provides information on early coffin shapes used in England based on such sources: gable-lidded coffins, four sided and tapering toward the foot (i.e., trapezoidal), are depicted for the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. This style was also used in seventeenth-century America, as evidenced at Carter's Grove (Noël Hume 1982). Gable-lidded, shouldered coffins are found in England from about 1575.4 Litten (1991:99–100, Plate 11) states both that the latter were common from 1600 to 1675 and that gablelidded, trapezoidal types "gave way" to shouldered, flat-lidded types during 1660–1675. In his sample, coffins from the period 1725–1775 were "almost without exception" of the flat-lidded, shouldered variety—what we term "hexagonal" in this report. Litten does not specifically discuss flat-lidded, trapezoidal coffins. It seems possible they were the less expensive versions of the gable-lidded, trapezoidal style. It should be noted that Noël Hume (1982:38) had difficulty finding actual examples of gable-lidded coffins from the seventeenth century and stated that the "hundreds" of coffins he examined in London vaults had lids "made from a single, wide board," so the flat-lidded variety may well have been the more common. Noël Hume does not suggest dates for flatlidded, trapezoidal types.

If the shift to shoulder-shaped, flat-lidded coffins was indeed virtually complete in England by 1725,

we may surmise that English cabinetmakers setting up shop in New York after that date would have produced wares in this style. The trapezoidal (four-sided tapering), flat-lidded coffins found at the New York African Burial Ground may represent an earlier and/or less expensive style, a simple style resulting from lack of up-to-date training, or a style preferred by non-English coffin makers. As noted, where graves are superimposed, burials with four-sided, tapered coffins usually predate burials with hexagonal-shaped coffins, so the hypothesis that the style shifted from the former to the latter over time is supported. If nonartisans built coffins on an as-needed basis with minimal tools and expertise, a simple style without shoulder or gable may have resulted.

We know that at least in some cases, the master of a household was expected to provide the coffin for an enslaved member (and probably also for free or indentured servants or other dependents). Blacks who died at the Almshouse (presumably free persons or enslaved persons who had been handed over to the Almshouse when their slaveholders died) also were provided coffins, as least during the 1750s. Surviving records of New York cabinetmaker Joshua Delaplaine, covering a period from 1752–1756, list coffins made at his workshop (New-York Historical Society, Joshua Delaplaine Papers, 1721–1779, 1815– 1817, Day Book of Joshua Delaplaine, 1752–1756). Delaplaine worked for a variety of customers, from wealthy merchants to the Almshouse warden. Thirteen orders for coffins for "Negroes" were recorded (Table 32). A basic adult coffin cost 11 or 12 shillings, perhaps based on size. Charges for two children's coffins were 4 shillings 6 pence and 5 shillings. The less expensive one was painted black; it may have been smaller in size.

Records from Charleston also indicate that coffins were frequently "blacked" and that no other color was used to paint them (Rauschenberg 1990:38). The black paint apparently usually added 1 shilling to the cost of a coffin, screws and rosin added 1 or 2 shillings each, and an extra-large size increased the price by 1 shilling. Thus Christopher Fell's bondwoman received the fanciest and most expensive of the "Negroes" coffins at 14 shillings; it included screws, rosin, and paint (see Table 32).

Compared with other entries in Delaplaine's day book, the prices paid for most of the blacks' coffins were at the very low end, reflecting the use of few embellishments and presumably the less expensive woods. Handles, breastplates or other lid decora-

⁴ A surviving early example of the shouldered, gable-lidded coffin in wood (Litten 1991:Color Plate 11) is the Easingwold, Yorkshire, parish coffin, dated to ca. 1645, which has metal braces straddling the gable ridge (it is not clear whether these are original, however). The gable is quite shallow.

Date	Person Placing Order	Description	Cost (shillings and pence)
November 14, 1753	Joseph Ryal	"coffin for his negro boy"	10s
January 22, 1754	Abraham Leffer[t]s®	"coffin for Jane a negro" (poorhouse)	11s
March 27, 1754	Robert Livingston	"a large coffin for his negro"	12s
April 30, 1754	Abraham Lefferts	"coffin for Mo[lly?] a negro"	11s
August 6, 1754	Christopher Fell	"black coffin for his negro woman rozind and with screws"	14s
December 20, 1754	Daniel Gomez	"coffin for his negro woman"	12s
March 4, 1755	Caleb Lawrence	"coffin for his negro child"	5s
March 4, 1755	Robert Griffith	"coffin for his negro man"	12s
July 9, 1755	Christopher Fell	"coffin for a negro woman"	12s
July 19, 1755	Caleb Lawrence	"rough coffin for Joseph Castins negro"	9s
August 12, 1755	Estate of Peter Vergerau	"coffin for negro woman w/screws"	13s
August 27, 1755	Thomas Dobson	"coffin for his negro girl"	11s
February 29, 1756	John Stephens	"black coffin for a negro child"	4s 6d

Note: From New-York Historical Society, Joshua Delaplaine Papers, 1721–1779, 1815–1817, Day Book of Joshua Delaplaine, 1752–1756.

tions, linings, and special wood increased the price for many of the coffins Delaplaine furnished for deceased whites. Examples include a child's coffin 4 feet 3 inches in length, covered and lined in Holland cloth and "trimmed with polisht nails" for £3.10; a coffin for a woman that was covered, fully trimmed, and lined with sasinet for £5; bilsted (liquidambar) coffins for children priced at 11 shillings lined and 7 shillings unlined; a man's coffin covered and lined with a breastplate on the lid for £3.15; a child's coffin lined and "struck with name & age" for 14 shillings; and a man's coffin of bilsted with a heart, name, age, and date "struck" on the lid for £2.2. The term "struck" probably refers to forming the letters and numerals in nails or tacks.

At the very end of our period, the cost of a basic coffin had apparently risen slightly. A 1796 price list (Table 33) informs us that they were sold in standard lengths increasing in 6-inch increments. Prices were set according to size, with the cost rising 1 shilling

sixpence per 6 inches of length up to 5 feet.⁵ A shilling was charged for putting on handles and a sixpence for a breastplate (exclusive of the cost of these coffinfurniture items themselves).

The provision of a coffin may not always have been the duty of a household head. For some—maybe most—enslaved Africans and for free persons, it might have fallen to family and friends to see to the coffin. The prices listed would have had to be paid to the woodworking shops; otherwise, materials and labor would have had to be donated. Many blacks worked for and as cabinetmakers and carpenters in early New

Abraham Lefferts, one of the two city Church Wardens, placed numerous orders for coffins for the poorhouse, two of which were for deceased black inmates.

⁵ The coffin prices, from the *Cabinet-Makers' Philadelphia and London Book of Prices*, are reprinted in Rauschenberg (1990:34). Because we do not know the types of wood represented in either the Delaplaine accounts for "Negroes" coffins or the 1796 price list, we cannot be certain whether the price differential was contingent on inflation, different materials, or a change in the availability of wood.

Table 33. Coffin Prices, 1796

Coffin Features	Cost (shillings and pence)
2-foot length	6s 6d
2-foot-6-inch length	8s
3-foot length	9s 6d
3-foot-6-inch length	10s 6d
4-foot length	12s
4-foot-6-inch length	13s 6d
5-foot length	15s
Above 5-foot length	18s
Above 5 feet of poplar, deduct	3s
Application of handles	1s
Application of breastplate	6d
Full trimming with lace	1s 6d

Note: From Rauschenberg (1990:34).

York, so their access to tools and materials may have been relied on.

In addition, participation in own-account economic activities would have afforded some the means of purchasing coffins outright. Also, as suggested in Chapter 2, the existence of informal burial societies probably predates the formal establishment, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of mutual aid societies in New York. The primary benefit of such societies would have been the provision of a proper burial with a coffin.

Coffin Variation at the New York African Burial Ground

Coffin Shape

As shown in Chapter 4, coffin shapes at the New York African Burial Ground were shouldered (hexagonal), tapered (sometimes called trapezoidal), and rectangular. Many small and poorly preserved examples are simply listed in the database as "foursided" (i.e., although the shoulder bend could be ruled out, it could not be determined whether they were rectangular or trapezoidal). One exception (Burial 257) appeared to be eight sided, the head

comprised of two boards that came to a point. Many coffins that were poorly preserved were tallied as tentative (indicated by a question mark). Table 34 lists coffin shapes, including uncertain ones, by general age category.⁶

Some of the coffins had footboards that sloped outward toward the top. Fourteen of these were made note of and drawn in cross section at the time they were excavated (a drawing is reproduced in the section on coffin construction), and examination of drawings for in situ nail locations indicates there were at least five additional examples. This feature was found in coffins of both tapered and shouldered varieties and in all time periods. It was probably a common variant. The sloped-foot coffins identified thus far were in Burials 23, 31, 40, 44, 48, 51, 68, 71, 100, 122, 130, 145, 151, 241, 266, 299, 321, 342, 354, 416, and 418.

There was no evidence of gable-lidded coffins at the New York African Burial Ground. Such coffins would have had a distinctive pattern of nails aligned down the centerline of the lid, as did those at the seventeenth-century Martin's Hundred site in Virginia (Noël Hume 1982:38-39, 70), and either the headboards and footboards would have been gable shaped, or the lids would have had gable ends. Hexagonal, gable-lidded forms in North America seem to date to the nineteenth as well as the seventeenth century. Fourteen of 19 identifiable coffin shapes from Philadelphia's First African Baptist Cemetery excavation were gable lidded (Parrington et al. 1989:144). Gabled coffins are more complex in construction, requiring additional boards and five-sided ends. We were particularly interested in determining whether any of the four-sided coffins we believe to be earliest had gable lids. Field drawings for all of the four-sided coffins from our sample were examined carefully for evidence of this form, but none was found. In the best-preserved and recorded examples (Burials 18, 23, 68, 78, 177, 202, 221, and 282—see drawings in Part 2 of this volume), the headboards and footboards had straight-cut top edges, and no centerline nails were found. There is no evidence that headboards or footboards were shaped to fit a gable lid.

The identification of four-sided, tapering (trapezoidal) adult coffins as earlier than hexagonal coffins is based on analysis of archaeological data, mainly

⁶ Two subadults were buried inside coffins that held another individual. (These coffins were counted once in Table 34.)

Shape	Adult	Subadult	Undetermined	Total
Four sided	8	15	1	24
Four sided?	_	4	1	5
Tapered	20	13	_	33
Tapered?	_	_	1	1
Rectangle	2	16	2	20
Rectangle?	3	_	_	3
Hexagonal	109	53 ^a	2	164
Hexagonal?	5	15	_	20
Other	1	_	_	1
Unidentifiable	38	34	9 p	81
Total	186	150	16	352°

Table 34. Coffin Shape, by Age Category

stratigraphic relationships.⁷ Information on changing coffin shape over time, although not conclusive, supports the use of shape to seriate the coffins and of the trapezoidal variant to characterize the earliest group. Thus all adult coffins of the Early Group were, by definition, four sided, mainly tapered, although two were identified as possibly rectangular, and eight can only be characterized as "four-sided." For later groups, adult coffin shapes (when clearly defined) were mostly hexagonal, with just four exceptions: two from the Late-Middle Group were rectangular, one from the Late Group was possibly rectangular, and one Late Group coffin (Burial 207) appeared to be tapered.

Coffins of children were much more varied in shape than coffins of adults. And, although the numbers are small, the distribution of coffin shape by age of child (Figure 108) suggests that the coffins of infants and young children were more varied in shape than the coffins of older children. Also, although hexagonal coffins were the most common shape for children in the Middle to Late Groups, four-sided varieties

remained in use, accounting for 23.7 percent of the total (Figure 109). We suggest that the shape of children's coffins was less standardized than the shape of adult coffins because children's coffins were more likely to be made by families rather than purchased from workshops. Coffins for the youngest children and infants were most likely to be homemade.

Coffin Size

Coffin measurements (maximum length and width) were recorded in the field for most burials, but because we were only interested in tabulating sizes of whole coffins, we used the final burial drawings to obtain length, width, and head-to-shoulder measurements. This information is presented in Appendix J, Part 3 of this volume. The distribution of coffin lengths is shown in Figure 110. One question that we wished to address was whether coffins seemed to be constructed "to order"—in other words, made to measure—for individuals or, alternatively, whether they represented standard sizes built from a limited set of templates or kept in stock by coffin makers. There was a high degree of variation in coffin size, suggesting that either numerous templates were used and/or that coffins were built to accommodate the measurement of the deceased.

^a Excludes two subadults that were inside coffins shared with another individual.

b Includes one possible coffin.

[©]The total sample used to calculate this table includes burials for which a coffin was determined to be present, whether or not human remains were recovered.

⁷ As discussed in Chapter 4, we initially thought that all four-sided adult coffins might have been in use earlier in our sequence than those that were six sided, but upon examination of the stratigraphic evidence, the rectangular variant appeared to be used later as well.

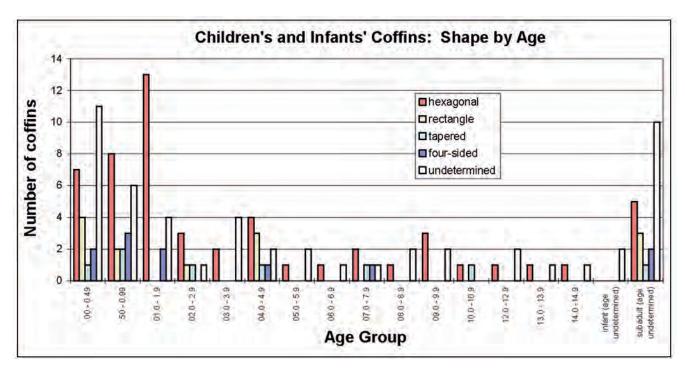


Figure 108. Shapes of children's and infants' coffins by age bracket.

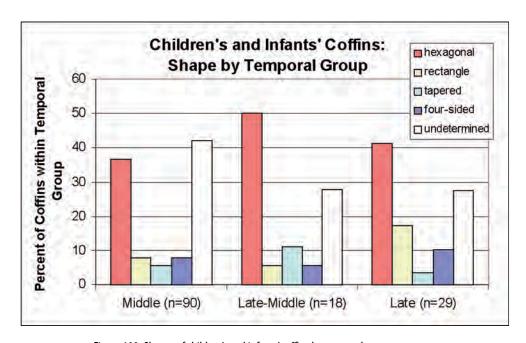


Figure 109. Shapes of children's and infants' coffins by temporal group.

For 88 individuals with measurable coffins, stature could also be calculated (stature data supplied by Sue Goode-Null of the Skeletal Biology Team). Figures 111 and 112 show the relationship between stature and coffin size in two ways. The average difference between the calculated stature of the deceased and the coffin length was 0.52 feet, or approximately

6 inches. The average ratio of length to stature was 1.12, with a standard deviation of 0.1. The covariance of coffin size and stature is clear. Yet it can be seen that for individuals of approximately equal height, coffin lengths could vary by as much as a foot or more. For example, for 12 individuals whose height was calculated at approximately 5.6 feet, coffins

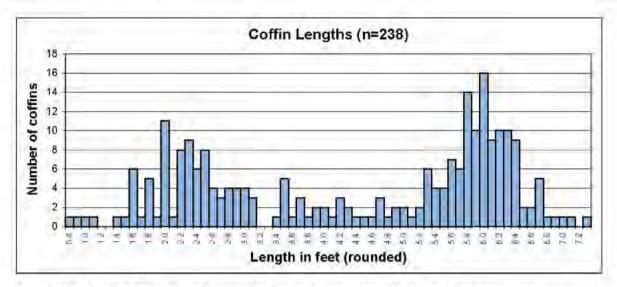


Figure 110. Distribution of coffins by length. Includes only coffins that could be measured for length. Rounded to nearest 0.1 feet.

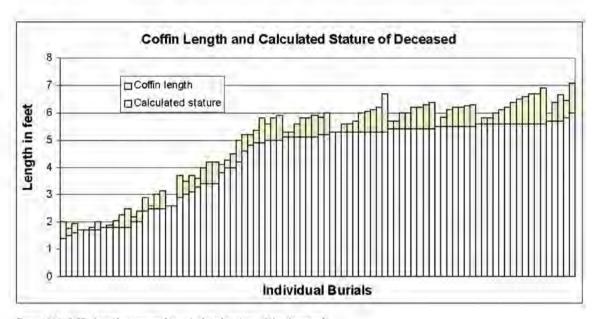


Figure 111. Coffin length compared to calculated stature of the deceased.

were from 0.3 feet shorter to 1.3 feet longer than the deceased.

Owing to the margin of error in calculating both stature and coffin length, we hesitate to draw conclusions about coffin production. However, we would suggest that the coffin maker was given at least an approximate height and built the coffin a few inches longer. For six-sided coffins, the closest template was probably used, whereas for four-sided shapes, the wood may have been measured and cut without a template (see below for a discussion of coffin construction).

Coffin widths as measured in the field ranged from just under half a foot to over 2 feet. It is likely some "splaying" occurred during decay. There were 83 cases for which coffins measured greater than 18 inches wide and 8 where coffin remains measured 2 feet wide or more. In the case of the longest and widest coffin measured, from Burial 47 (at 2.3 feet wide by 7.3 feet long), it is possible the ground had shifted, displacing the sides. One other "extra-wide" coffin. that of Burial 376, appears to have been built that way, and it is possible the man interred in it was heavyset (Figure 113).

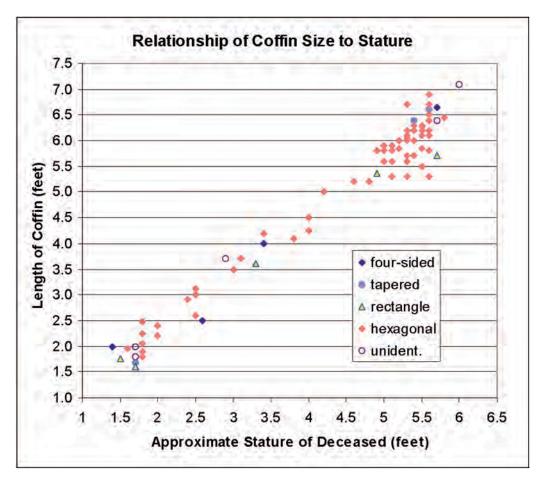


Figure 112. Coffin length in relation to calculated stature of the deceased, by shape.

The ratio of length to width ranged from 1.6 to 6.4, increasing with the coffin length, although for coffins 5 feet long or longer, the length was typically between 3 and 5 times the width. The only outliers were the coffins of Burials 387 and 388 (Figure 114). These two were slightly tapered and exceptionally narrow, just less than 1 foot wide although 6 feet long, and they were in adjacent graves. The same maker probably crafted both.

Coffin Wood

There were 104 coffins at the New York African Burial Ground for which at least one wood sample was identified in the laboratory. The number of coffins with each type of wood or combination of woods is listed in Table 35, with percentages shown in Figure 115, and all identified samples are listed by burial in Table 36. Tables and figures follow showing the frequencies of woods by coffin shape and by temporal group.

The most frequently identified woods were varieties of cedar. Because this wood is the slowest to rot of the soft woods, more samples of it may have been retrievable archaeologically, and its predominance may be the result of sampling error. All coffins that yielded identified samples, with the exception of one, were built of soft woods. Cedar, pine, and spruce were the top three woods in all time periods (Table 37). However, although all three were approximately equal in the Early Group, cedar and pine clearly predominated by the Middle Group, and in the Late Group, cedar was the clear favorite, barring sampling error. Research on the relative availability of these woods over time would be needed to determine whether wood can be used as a temporal indicator. Coffins made of combinations of different woods made up similar proportions of the sample in each temporal group, suggesting that expediency dictated the selection.

The one hardwood coffin identified, from Burial 290, was of black walnut. There was no other distinguishing

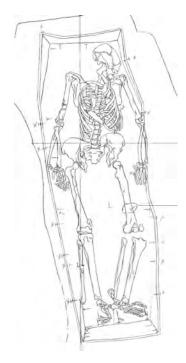


Figure 113. Drawing in situ of Burial 376. The coffin was 3 feet wide at its "shoulder." It held the remains of a 45–65-year-old man (drawing by M. Schur).

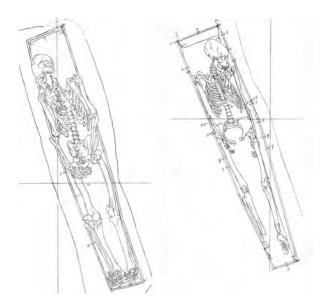


Figure 114. Drawings depicting unusually narrow coffins: *left*, Burial 387; *right*, Burial 388. The two graves were adjacent and precisely aligned. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet; north is to the right (drawings by M. Schur).

feature of the coffin, and there were no artifacts found in association with the deceased other than a single straight pin on the cranium. It is perhaps significant that the deceased was a man between 45 years and 55 years old, one of the older individuals in the sample population. The burial is assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Larch (also called tamarack) was identified in only two coffins, from Burials 97 and 101, both later

in our sequence and both of men. One, in Burial 101, was one of the very few decorated coffins at the New York African Burial Ground.

The wood types were used in similar proportions for adult and children's coffins (Table 38). The only two coffins made of yew (a tough but flexible softwood) were children's coffins, whereas the other infrequent woods (fir, larch, and black walnut) were all in adult coffins.

Table 39 shows the distribution of woods by coffin shape. The rank order among the top three woods is essentially the same, but it was mainly the hexagonal coffins that used combinations of woods, and the least frequent woods were all found in hexagonal coffins.

Coffin Construction

Historical sources and analysis of surviving examples from opened vaults indicate the following construction method and details for plain, flat-lidded, shouldered coffins (Litten 1991:90–92; Julien Litten, personal communication 1999; Salaman 1997:150):

- The coffin bottom and top were marked using a template and sawed.
- The sideboards were soaked and while damp were "kerfed" on the inside at the shoulders with six or seven crosscuts sawn almost through the boards.
- The headboards and footboards were nailed to the bottom.
- The sideboards were bent around the bottom board and nailed (or sometimes screwed for strength) in place. The bottom, headboards, and footboards were set inside the sides.
- The head of the coffin was 2 (or "a few") inches wider than the foot.
- Corners were butt jointed.
- The lid spanned the sides (thus the lid would have been larger than the bottom, which was inset).
- The inside was sometimes coated with pitch to seal the joints.

Construction of the tapered and rectangular shapes would have followed the same steps, minus the soaking and kerfing of the sides, and probably would not have required a template. Surviving evidence, such as the locations and the orientations of nails, of the majority of coffins at the New York African Burial Ground, appears consistent with this basic construction method. There were a few coffins, however, that deviated from the standard.

Table 35. Categories of Coffin Wood

Category	Sample Identifications	Number of Coffins
Cedar	cedar	31
	red cedar	3
	cedar, red cedar	1
	eastern red cedar	1
	cedar, eastern red cedar	1
	white cedar	1
Cedar/pine	cedar, eastern white pine	1
	cedar, pine	3
	cedar, red pine	1
	cedar, pine, eastern white pine	2
	red cedar, eastern white pine	1
Cedar/spruce	cedar, spruce	2
Pine	pine	11
	eastern white pine	6
	red pine	8
	red pine?	1
	pine, red pine	1
	sugar pine, pine	1
	loblolly pine	1
	pine, loblolly (soft pine)	1
Pine/spruce	pine, spruce	2
Spruce	spruce	9
	white spruce	3
	white spruce, red (eastern) spruce	1
Fir	fir	3
	balsam fir	1
Fir/pine	fir, eastern white pine	1
Fir/pine/spruce	eastern white pine, Scots pine, white spruce, fir	1
Larch	larch	2
Yew	yew	2
Walnut	black walnut	1

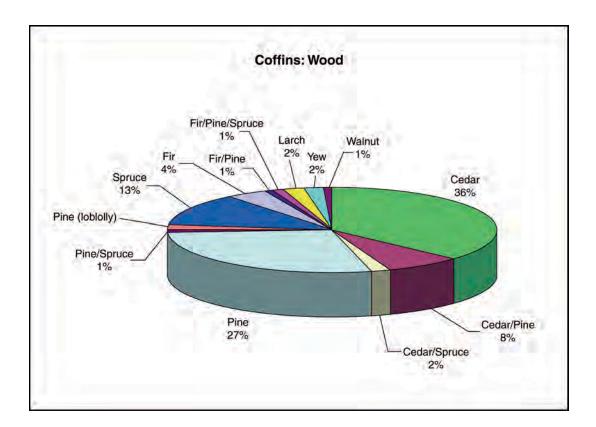


Figure 115. Frequencies of identified coffin woods.

The coffins in adjacent Burials 23 and 68 were virtually identical; the bottom board had been nailed into the sides rather than vice versa, so that vertical nails pointed upward (Figure 116). The coffins were four sided, tapering toward the foot, the walls sloping outward at the top. Around the perimeter, vertical nails attached the lid to the sides; there were four nails at each corner of the head attaching the sides to the headboard and three at each corner of the foot attaching the sides to the footboard. These two coffins were probably from the same maker.

Our evidence points strongly to the use of single boards for lids and bottoms, but there were at least two exceptions. Eighteen inches is a width that, according to Noël Hume (1982:38), "would have posed no problem to colonial . . . sawyers." As noted, however, 83 coffins were measured as wider than 18 inches. The use of narrower and presumably cheaper boards for lids and bottoms might be expected in these cases, but the boards would have to have been cross braced. There was only one coffin (in Burial 352) in which the bottom had a batten nailed to it crosswise for support and one coffin (in Burial 392) in which at least two crosspieces were nailed onto the lid (Figures 117 and

118). The apparent excess width of so many of the other coffins in our sample may be because of splaying, resulting in inaccurate measurement.

One uniquely constructed hexagonal coffin was found. For the coffin bottom of Burial 196, instead of a lengthwise board, numerous short crosswise boards had been used, and these were nailed from the bottom into the coffin sides (Figure 119). The lid and bottom were identified as pine, the sides as cedar. Several other coffins (in Burials 237, 250, 258, and 361) had the bottoms nailed from the bottom up into the sides, and although no crosswise boards were preserved well enough to be noted in the field, it is possible these too had more than one board forming the coffin floor. Alternatively, this is simply a variant construction method, possibly with the bottom attached after the sides, head, and foot had been joined.

Finally, Burial 194 had the only coffin for which a wooden marker had been nailed to the headboard (Figure 120; see Figure 103 in Chapter 9).

Nail Locations

Nail locations based on drawings were recorded for a subset of coffins, those that were complete and

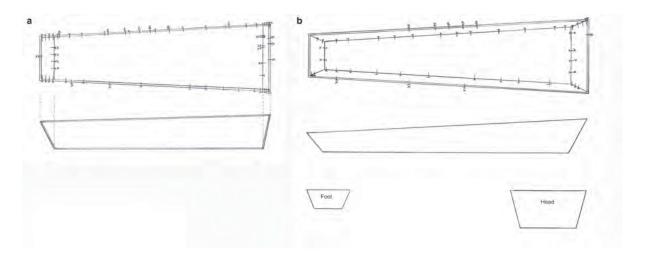


Figure 116. Renderings of coffins: (a) Burial 23; (b) Burial 68. The coffin bottoms were nailed into the headboards and footboards from the bottom up. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (drawing by B. Ludwig).

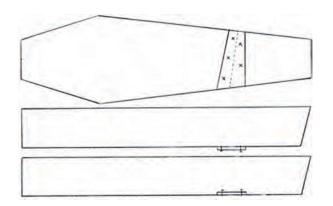


Figure 117. Possible reconstruction of the Burial 352 coffin bottom. The crosspiece may have been made of two butted boards. It was not possible to determine whether the piece was on the outside (center sketch) or the inside (bottom sketch) of the coffin. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (reconstruction by B. Ludwig).

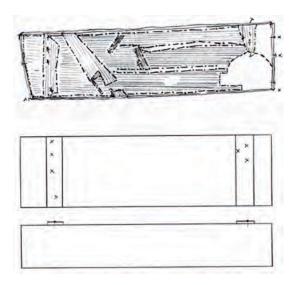


Figure 118. The lid of the coffin in Burial 392: *top*, field sketch; *bottom*, on-site reconstruction. Two crosspieces were nailed to the top of the lid board or boards. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (reconstruction by B. Ludwig).

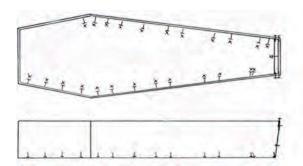


Figure 119. Possible reconstruction of the Burial 196 coffin showing unusual bottom construction. Numerous boards had been nailed crosswise. Scale is 1 inch = 2 feet (reconstruction by B. Ludwig).



Figure 120. In situ photograph of the board nailed to the head of the coffin in Burial 194. The board, a grave marker, was of cedar (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

had what appeared to be the best in situ recordation (Table 40). Many nails were found at the corner joints of the coffins, as expected, because the strength of the box depended on these joints. There were also usually two or three (sometimes four) nails along the bottom of the footboard and headboard, attaching these boards to the bottom, as well as several along the sides. There were far fewer top nails than bottom nails, also to be expected, as the lid added some support but mainly just had to be nailed shut.

The presence of horizontally oriented nails at the top of a coffin along its sides would indicate that the lid was inset and was nailed from the sides, although vertically oriented nails would indicate that the lid was nailed from the top and therefore overlapped the

edges of the side boards, headboards, and footboards. The latter pattern reflects typical coffin construction as described above.

Coffins with inset lids are documented,⁹ but no evidence of any beading or cleats that could have supported inset lids was found for coffins at the New York African Burial Ground. Therefore, burials where records showed horizontal and top nails were reexamined carefully. In some cases, close examination of in situ photographs led to the conclusion that all

⁸ A study of a sample of seven coffins for which nails were recorded in situ at a small late-eighteenth- to early-nineteenth-century rural family cemetery in Delaware also indicated clearly that the majority of nails were used at the head and foot (LeeDecker 2001:6).

⁹ Inset lids are recorded for expensive, lead-lined, triple-shell coffins. Describing the inner coffin of typical surviving triple-shell coffins in vault and intramural graves in England, Litten (1991:101) has noted that the lids were recessed, supported by a length of beading that was glued and tacked around the upper inner sides. At the College Landing site in Williamsburg, it was concluded from nail placement that the coffin lids were "attached with nails placed horizontally into the six sides," but no discussion is offered regarding the specific construction method or whether the lids would have been inset (Hudgins 1977:64). The burials, all thought to be of African Americans, were dated from 1790 to 1820 based on the machine-cut nail shanks.

Table 36. Burials with Identified Coffin Wood

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin Shape	Catalog No.	Sample Location	Wood
6	adult	25	30	male?	Late	hexagonal	00219-CWA	lid/side	eastern white pine
11	adult	30	40	male?	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00267-CWA-CWD	bottom	cedar
12	adult	35	45	female	Late	rectangular?	00253-CWA	lid	cedar
15	subadult	11	18	undetermined	Late	unidentifiable	00286-CWA	unspecified	red pine
17	subadult	4	6	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00357-CWA	lid	yew
18	adult	35	45	female?	Early	tapered	00310-CWA	lid	red cedar
22	subadult	2.5	4.5	undetermined	Middle	unidentifiable	00344-CWA	bottom	pine
							00344-CWB	unspecified	pine
23	adult	25	35	male	Early	tapered	00383-CWA and CWB	unspecified	white spruce
							00383-CWC	unspecified	red (eastern) spruce
25	adult	20	24	female	Middle	unidentifiable	00353-CWA	unspecified	pine
27	subadult	1.4	2.8	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00378-CWA	unspecified	pine
29	adult	35	45	male?	Early	tapered	00381-CWA1	side	white spruce
							00381-CWA2	unspecified	white spruce
34	adult			undetermined	Early	rectangular?	00427-CWA	bottom?	fir
35	subadult	8	10	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00458-CWA	unspecified	red pine
36	adult			female	Late	unidentifiable	00459-CWA	unspecified	cedar
37	adult	45	55	male	Late	hexagonal	00460-CWA	lid/side	cedar
38	adult	12	18	female	Early	tapered	00461-CWA	unspecified	spruce
40	adult	50	60	female	Late	hexagonal	00489-CWA	unspecified	eastern white pine
41	adult			undetermined	Middle	unidentifiable	00525-CWA	lid	sugar pine
							00525-CWB	lid	pine
							00525-CWC	bottom	pine
46	adult			female?	Middle	unidentifiable	00605-CWA	unspecified	fir
47	adult	35	45	male	Middle	hexagonal?	00619-CWA	unspecified	spruce
49	adult	40	50	female	Middle	hexagonal	00641-CWA	unspecified	cedar
50	subadult			undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00649-CWA	interior	spruce
							00649-CWB	lid, bottom	pine
							00649-CWC	unspecified	pine

Table 36. Burials with Identified Coffin Wood (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin Shape	Catalog No.	Sample Location	Wood
54	adult			undetermined	Late- Middle	unidentifiable	00726-CWA	unspecified	cedar
57	subadult	0.88	2.16	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00796-CWA	unspecified	cedar
58	subadult	3.5	4.5	undetermined	Late	rectangular 00797-CWA1		bottom	red pine
63	adult	35	45	male	Late	hexagonal	00805-CWA	bottom	cedar
							00805-CWB	side	pine
64	subadult	0.38	0.88	undetermined	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00803-CWA	unspecified	pine
67	adult	40	50	male	Late- Middle	unidentifiable	00810-CWA	unspecified	eastern white pine
							00810-CWB	unspecified	fir
68	adult	21	25	male	Early	tapered	00807-CWA	unspecified	cedar
69	adult	30	60	male	Middle	hexagonal?	00808-CWA	unspecified	spruce
70	adult	35	45	male	Middle	hexagonal	00812-CWA	unspecified	cedar
71	adult	25	35	female	Late	hexagonal	00813-CWA	unspecified	cedar
77	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00820-CWA	unspecified	pine
82	adult	18	25	female	Middle	unidentifiable	00825-CWA	unspecified	red pine
83	infant			undetermined	Early?	rectangular	00826-CWA	unspecified	white spruce
85	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00831-CWA	unspecified	cedar
89	adult	50	60	female	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00830-CWA	unspecified	spruce
91	subadult	0.67	1.3	undetermined	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00834-CWA	unspecified	eastern red cedar
94	subadult			undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00837-CWA	unspecified	cedar
96	adult	16	18	male	Middle	hexagonal	00839-CWA2	unspecified	eastern white pine
97	adult	40	50	male	Late	hexagonal	00840-CWA	unspecified	larch
101	adult	26	35	male	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00843-CWA1	unspecified	larch
107	adult	35	40	female	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00850-CWA	unspecified	fir
108	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00851-CWA	unspecified	pine
109	subadult	0.67	1.33	undetermined	Late- Middle	hexagonal	00852-CWA	unspecified	pine
122	adult	18	20	female	Middle	hexagonal	00867-CWA	unspecified	eastern white pine
126	subadult	3.5	5.5	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00871-CWA	lid	spruce

Table 36. Burials with Identified Coffin Wood (continued)

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Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin Shape	Catalog No.	Sample Location	Wood
128	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00873-CWA	unspecified	cedar
130	subadult	1	2	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	00875-CWA	unspecified	eastern red cedar
						00875-CWB		unspecified	cedar
137	adult	25	35	undetermined	Late	unidentifiable 00882-CWA		unspecified	pine
147	adult	55	65	male	Late	hexagonal	00892-CWA	all	white cedar
153	adult			female?	Late	hexagonal	00898-CWA	unspecified	cedar
159	adult	25	35	female	Middle	hexagonal	00905-CWA1	unspecified	cedar
							00905-CWA2	unspecified	red pine
171	adult	44	60	male	Late	hexagonal	00931-CWA	lid	pine
							00931-CWB	side	spruce
174	adult	17	18	male	Late	hexagonal	00940-CWA	unspecified	cedar
177	adult	30	60	undetermined	Early	tapered	00946-CWA	lid	eastern white pine
182	subadult	7.5	12.5	undetermined	Early	tapered	00970-CWA	unspecified	cedar
183	subadult	0.63	1.13	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	00971-CWA	unspecified	cedar
							00971-CWB	side	spruce
							00971-CWC	side	cedar
186	infant	0	0.17	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	00987-CWA	lid	spruce peg
189	adult			undetermined	Middle	unidentifiable	01015-CWA	unspecified	cedar
194	adult	30	40	male	Late	hexagonal	01109-CWA	unspecified	cedar
							01109-CWD	post	cedar
195	adult	30	40	female	Late	hexagonal	01151-CWA	unspecified	red cedar
196	adult	20	24	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	01150-CWA and CWE	side	cedar
							01150-CWB	lid	pine
							01150-CWC	lid	eastern white pine
							01150-CWG	bottom	pine
200	adult			male	Early	four-sided	01165-CWA	unspecified	cedar
202	adult	12	18	female?	Early	tapered	01171-CWA	unspecified	white spruce
206	subadult			undetermined	Middle	rectangular	01180-CWA	unspecified	red pine
208	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	Late	unidentifiable	01182-CWA	bottom	cedar
212	subadult	4.5	5.5	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	01189-CWA	unspecified	yew
213	adult	45	55	female	Middle	hexagonal	01190-CWA	unspecified	red cedar

Table 36. Burials with Identified Coffin Wood (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin Shape	Catalog No.	Sample Location	Wood
214	adult	45	55	male	Late	hexagonal	01191-CWA	unspecified	balsam fir
221	adult	30	60	male	Early	tapered	01206-CWA	unspecified	pine
228	adult			male?	Late	hexagonal	01214-CWA	bottom	cedar
236	subadult	4	5	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	01222-CWA	bottom	loblolly (soft pine)
							01222-CWB and CWC	side	pine
237	undetermined			undetermined	Early	four-sided?	01223-CWA	lid	red pine
242	adult	40	50	female	Late	hexagonal	01229-CWA	unspecified	spruce
244	subadult	5	9	undetermined	Late	unidentifiable	01231-CWA	unspecified	cedar
246	subadult	0.5	2.9	undetermined	Middle	four-sided	01234-CWA	bottom	cedar
247	adult	35	49.9	male?	Early?	unidentifiable	01236-CWA	lid	cedar
							01236-CWB	bottom	eastern white pine
							01236-CWE, CWG, CWI, CWJ	lid	pine
259	adult	17	19	female?	Late	hexagonal	01249-CWA	unspecified	cedar
							01249-CWB	unspecified	pine
263	subadult			undetermined	Early	tapered	01257-CWA	unspecified	cedar
265	subadult	0.5	1	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	01261-CWA	unspecified	cedar
268	infant	0	0.5	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	01264-CWA	unspecified	pine
270	adult			male	Middle	unidentifiable	01266-CWA	lid	cedar
272	subadult	0.25	0.75	undetermined	Early	four-sided	01268-CWA	unspecified	cedar
277	subadult			undetermined	Middle	unidentifiable	01274-CWA	lid	eastern white pine
							01274-CWB	bottom	cedar
283	subadult	0.33	0.67	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	01302-CWA	bottom/lid	red pine
290	adult	45	55	male	Late- Middle	hexagonal	01324-CWA	unspecified	black walnut
306	adult	28	44	male	Middle	hexagonal	01474-CWA	unspecified	spruce
310	adult	44	52	female	Middle	hexagonal	01486-CWA	bottom	red pine?
313	adult	45	55	male	Late	hexagonal	01516-CWA	bottom	eastern white pine
315	adult	30	40	female	Middle	hexagonal?	01519-CWA	lid	cedar
							01519-CWB and CWC	bottom	cedar

Table 36. Burials with Identified Coffin Wood (continued)

Burial No.	Age Category	Low Age	High Age	Sex	Temporal Group	Coffin Shape	Catalog No.	Sample Location	Wood
316	adult	18	20	female	Late- Middle	hexagonal	01521-CWA	lid	cedar
328	adult	40	50	female	Middle	hexagonal	01589-CWA	unspecified	red cedar
							01589-CWB	lid	red cedar
							01589-CWC	side	cedar
333	adult	45	55	male	Late- Middle	rectangular	01613-CWA	bottom	loblolly pine
340	adult	39.3	64.4	female	Early	tapered	01651-CWA and CWB	side	eastern white pine
							01651-CWC and CWE	bottom	red cedar
							01651-CWD	lid	eastern white pine
342	adult	25	35	female?	Late	hexagonal	01660-CWA	unspecified	pine
354	adult	35	45	male	Late	hexagonal	01742-CWA	unspecified	eastern white pine
							01742-CWB	side	white spruce
							01742-CWC	lid	fir
							01742-CWD	unspecified	fir
							01742-CWE	unspecified	Scots pine
363	subadult	1	2	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	01825-CWA	bottom	cedar
384	adult	25	45	female	Middle	hexagonal	01955-CWB	bottom	red pine
							01955-CWC	side	red pine
388	adult	29	57	female	Early	tapered	02008-CWA	lid	red pine
							02008-CWB	lid	pine
392	adult	42.5	52.5	male	Late- Middle	rectangular	02039-CWA	unspecified	cedar
							02039-CWB	side	pine
402	adult			undetermined	Early	tapered	02066-CWA	lid/side?	spruce
							02066-CWB	lid	cedar
415	adult	35	55	male	Middle	hexagonal	02097-CWA	bottom	cedar
419	adult	48	62	male	Middle	hexagonal	02104-CWA	side	spruce

Table 37. Number of Coffins Made of Each Wood Type, by Temporal Group

Wood Category	Early	Middle	Late- Middle	Late
Cedar	6	15	4	13
Pine	4	14	3	7
Spruce	5	5	1	2
Cedar/pine	2	2	1	3
Cedar/spruce	1	_	_	1
Pine/spruce	_	1	_	1
Pine (loblolly)	_	_	1	1
Fir	1	1	1	1
Fir/pine	_	_	1	_
Fir/pine/spruce	_	_		1
Larch	_	_	1	1
Yew	_	2	_	
Walnut	_	_	1	_
Total	19	40	14	31

Table 38. Number of Coffins Made of Each Wood Type, by Age Category

Wood Category	Adult	Subadult	Infant	Undetermined
Cedar	24	13	1	
Pine	15	11	1	1
Spruce	10	2	1	
Cedar/pine	7	1	_	_
Cedar/spruce	1	1	_	_
Pine/spruce	2	1	_	_
Pine (loblolly)	1	1	_	_
Fir	4	_	_	_
Fir/pine	1	_	_	_
Fir/pine/spruce	1	_	_	_
Larch	2	_	_	_
Yew	_	2	_	_
Walnut	1		_	_
Total	68	32	3	1

of the top nails were in fact vertical. In other cases, the horizontal nails in question did not appear at all in the photographs. Top nails were sometimes removed during excavation and therefore were not present at the time the final burial photographs were taken and drawings rendered. The illustrators had to rely on the excavators' recollections of nail locations. We conclude that the depictions of lid nails on the in situ drawings are less reliable than those of bottom nails. The depicted orientations of nails that had been removed probably were not always accurate. It also is possible that some nails were never drawn at all, although the number of nails depicted in some drawings was greater than the number of nails counted in the laboratory (using nail heads to arrive at minimum numbers—Appendix J, Part 3 of this volume, lists all burials with minimum nail counts from the laboratory inventory).

Screws

We know that the use of screws in coffins added to the cost (by about a shilling at mid-century), so an attempt was made to examine the distribution of these hardware items. Unfortunately, the severe corrosion of all coffin hardware made the identification of screws difficult, especially in the field during excavation—there were only three burials in which screws were recorded on the field drawings (Figure 121). In the laboratory, some screws were identified through visual inspection after minimal mechanical cleaning, but numerous items that could not be clearly identified as either nails or screws were set aside for X-rays and were lost when the laboratory was destroyed. Screws were recovered and identified from 31 coffins, and there were possible screws from 1 other. Their distribution is presented in Table 41. Coffins of young children and men and women of all ages are represented. Almost all of the coffins where screws were used were hexagonal, doubtless because extra strength was needed at the joints because of the bent sideboards. The only Early Group coffins with screws were from Burials 72 and 83, but this shared grave had been disturbed by a foundation, and the screws, which lacked specific provenience, might have been intrusive, or the burials might be incorrectly assigned to the Early Group. The lack of screws in early burials is probably attributable to the lack of hexagonal coffins. As noted, tapered coffins of the Early Group generally had more nails at the joints, and a change in joinery accompanying the change in style is suggested.

Wood Category	Tapered	Four Sided	Rectangular	Hexagonal	Unidentifiable [®]
Cedar	4	3	_	22	9
Pine	3	_	2	15	8
Spruce	4	_	1	6	2
Cedar/pine	1	_	1	4	2
Cedar/spruce	1	_	_	1	_
Pine/spruce	_	_	_	2	_
Pine (loblolly)	_	_	1	1	_
Fir	_	_	_	2	2
Fir/pine	_	_	_	_	1
Fir/pine/spruce	_	_	_	1	_
Larch	_	_	_	2	_
Yew	_	—	_	1	1
Walnut	_	_	_	1	_
Total	13	3	5	58	25

Table 39. Number of Coffins Made of Each Wood Type, by Shape

^a Questionable cases for each shape (e.g., tapered?) are counted as "unidentifiable" in this tabulation.

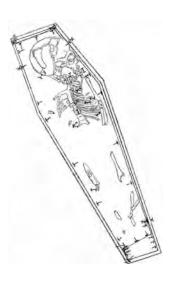


Figure 121. Example of a coffin with screws recorded in situ. The drawing is of Burial 321, which held the remains of a child 1–2 years old. One screw attached the right side to the footboard and two others attached the left side board to the bottom. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot; north is to the right (drawing by W. Williams).

In most cases, only a single screw was identified, and numerous nails were also present in every case. Although we are likely to have missed screws because of poor preservation and the loss of information from items that were never X-rayed, New York African Burial Ground coffins were clearly built mainly with nails. Screws were apparently usually employed on an as-needed basis during coffin construction rather than being used, per order, instead of nails. The few screws that were recorded in situ were at the corner joints (Burials 225 and 321) or at the top and oriented vertically to attach the lid (Burials 286 and 321).

The joints may have occasionally required screws for strength—for instance, if warped boards were used. Another possible use for screws would have been to secure the lid temporarily, perhaps if the coffin was to be stored or were to be transported to the house of the deceased, where it could then be removed to place the body inside.

It is worth noting that the coffin in Burial 101, which had a decorated lid and would have been relatively expensive, had at least four screws (although

Table 40. Coffin Nail Locations

					Loca	tion			
Burial No.	Nail Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
23	31	63	_	13	21	9	12	8	Drawing 1026 used
40	16	29	_	1	15	_	7	6	Drawing 1039 used
44	16	20	_	9	11	_	_	_	Drawing 1042 used
45	2	11	_	_	8	3	_	_	
48	13	22	_	_	16	_	2	4	
49	17	17	_	4	12	_	_	1	
50	18	18		4	4	_	4	6	
53	3	16	_	2	10	1	_	3	
55	21	22		12	10	_	_		
56	21	19	2	8	5	2	1	1	two top horizontal nails questionable
57	17	26	3	_	15	1	6	1	
59	11	13	_	4	3	_	4	2	Drawing 1047 and photo used
64		17	2	_	11	_	2	2	
68	35	49	_	9	21	6	8	5	
71	43	44	2	_	24	1	9	8	Drawings 280 and 1049 used
73	14	14	_	2	10	_	2		
77	9	20	_	4	11	_	1	4	counted two bottom nails at foot as corner nails
78	17	25	_	4	7	_	7	7	photo used
85	12	14	4	_	6	_	3	1	
86	9	8	_	_	2	_	3	3	one nail on cranium, one nail by right foot
90	9	16	_	5	9	_	_	2	photo used
94	20	28	2	3	9	_	7	7	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
100	10	13	_	4	3	_	1	5	
101	32	27	2	6	9	_	4	6	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
106	6	15	2	_	10	_	2	1	one nail on coffin floor
107	5	28	_	12	10	_	2	4	
115	34	22	_	5	10	_	5	2	
121	16	14	_	2	8	_	2	2	
122	28	31	_	4	14	_	5	8	used cross section drawing

Table 40. Coffin Nail Locations (*continued***)**

	Nail				Loca	tion			
Burial No.	Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
123	30	13	_	1	9	_	2	1	one nail outside coffin wall?
127	7	11	_	2	2	_	3	4	
128	4	16	_	1	10	_	2	3	
130	7	20	1	2	8	_	5	4	top horizontal nail not visible in photo
133	13	12		1	8		2	1	
134	13	24		3	9	_	6	6	
135	8	21	2	3	10	_	3	3	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
138	4	24	_	6	8	_	8	2	photo used
145	26	33	_	8	14	_	6	5	Drawing 1055 used
146		18	_	4	10	_	3	1	
147	20	20	_	3	15	_	_	2	one nail on coffin floor
148	19	27	5	2	7		5	8	top horizontal nails not visible in slide; one nail by left radius, one nail by distal left femur
149	17	19	5		8	_	3	3	
151	16	27		1	16		6	4	Drawings 348 and 1056 used
159	19	17	_		15		2		
216	13	15	2		13	_	_	_	
217	27	14	_	_	11	1	_	2	two nails near cranium on coffin floor
218	3	12	2	3	3	_	2	2	
221	6	20		5	2	8	2	3	one vertical nail in middle of coffin lid, one nail by right shoulder on coffin floor
225	15	16	1	2	3	1	5	4	horizontal top nail visible in photo; includes two cor ner-joint (head) screws
226	1								
230	36	30	4	6	17	1	1	1	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
235	4	35		11	9	8	5	2	
236	23	20	2	_	14	_	1	3	one nail near cranium on coffin floor

Table 40. Coffin Nail Locations (continued)

	Nail				Loca	tion			
Burial No.	Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
238	24	25	_	8	8	_	4	5	
239	27	12	3	_	6	_	3	_	Drawing 514 used
241	21	23	_	3	18	_	2	_	
242	14	22	_	4	10	5	1	2	
245	38	20	_	6	9		4	1	four scattered nails on cof- fin lid in drawing
254	9	19		1	10	_	4	4	
266	6	40	_	10	16	_	5	9	
268	11	16	_	5	2	2	2	5	
282	17	16	_	2	_	6	5	3	
294	16	18	_	2	9	2	3	2	
295	39	27	_	5	19	_	1	2	
299	59	39	_	7	20	3	3	6	
306	20	23	_	5	12	1	3	2	
310	6	32	2	3	18	1	5	3	top horizontal nails and vertical bottom nail not visible in slide; one nail near left foot
311	2								
312	3	17	_	3	2	2	3	7	
314	35	26		3	13	_	7	3	
315	27	16	_	4	9	1	1	1	plus one nail near left elbow on coffin floor
324	1	15	6	_	8	_	1	_	plus one nail near right ribs on coffin floor
332	3	29		9	12	l	5	3	nails were missing from laboratory inventory
334	15	17		_	11		1	5	Drawing 712 used
335	9	38	5	7	17		4	5	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
336	12	9	4	1	1	_		3	
340	37	47	11	13	6	5	5	7	top horizontal nails not visible in photo
342	22	43	5	4	24	3	5	2	
346	28	27	1	_	14	5	5	2	
347	17	18	_	1	10		5	2	
353	6	55		15	26		7	7	photo used

Table 40. Coffin Nail Locations (continued)

	Nail								
Burial No.	Heads (MNI)	Total	Top Horizontal	Top Vertical	Bottom Horizontal	Bottom Vertical	Corner Joint Head	Corner Joint Foot	Comments
354	15	37	_	7	16	_	7	7	
361	14	14	_	1	2	10	1	_	
366	29	37	_	11	12	2	6	6	
376	63	28	_	10	9	2	_	7	
379	23	31	_	7	12	1	6	5	photo used
380	29	44	4	9	24	1	3	3	top horizontal nails not visible in slide
381		8	_	1	4	_	2	1	
387	11	8	_	1	3	_	3	1	
388	17	30	5	11	6	_	6	2	top horizontal nails not visible in photo; two nails on coffin floor near feet
389	9								
390		7	1	4	_	_	1	1	top horizontal nail not vis- ible in photo; one nail out- side coffin, two on coffin floor
392	29	21	2	4	7	_	4	4	top horizontal nails not visible in slide; four nails scattered on coffin floor; seven vertical nails on lid cross boards
397	39	41	_	10	20	_	7	4	four nails scattered on cof- fin lid
399	24	27	2	4	12	1	4	4	Drawing 874 used; top horizontal nails oriented outward (displaced?)
415	19	31	_	11	12	_	4	4	Drawing 891 used
419	14	20	_	8	9	_	2	1	Drawing 904 used

Key: MNI = minimum number of individuals.

Table 41. Burials with Coffin Screws

Burial No.	Low Age	High Age	Sex ⁸	Temporal Group [®]	Coffin [®]	Number of Screws ^b
17	4	6	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	1
22	2.5	4.5	undetermined	Middle	unidentifiable	1
40	50	60	female	Late	hexagonal	1
72	1	2	undetermined	Early?	rectangle	2 plus 4 shanks
77	0.67	1.3	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	1
83			undetermined	Early?	rectangle	1
86	6	8	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	1
89	50	60	female	Late-Middle	hexagonal	3
95	7	12	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	1
97	40	50	male	Late	hexagonal	1
100			undetermined	Middle	hexagonal	3
101	26	35	male	Late-Middle	hexagonal, decorated	4
122	18	20	female	Middle	hexagonal	1
135	30	40	male	Late	hexagonal	1
154	25	29	female	Middle	hexagonal	1
159°	25	35	female	Middle	hexagonal, painted	2
173	0.25	0.75	undetermined	Late	rectangle	2
186	0	0.17	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	1
187	1.5	4	undetermined	Late	hexagonal	1
225	0.5	1.25	undetermined	Late	four-sided	2
241	55	65	female	Late	hexagonal	1
268	0	0.5	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	1
284	21	28	male	Middle	unidentifiable	1
285	20	30	female	Middle	hexagonal	1
286	4.4	8.5	undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	2
300			undetermined	Middle	hexagonal?	1
315	30	40	female Middle		hexagonal?	1
321	1	2	undetermined Middle		hexagonal	1
341			male	Middle	hexagonal	1
346	50	70	female	Late	hexagonal	1
353	24	34	male	Middle	hexagonal	1
427	16	20 male?		Middle	hexagonal	1

⁸ A question mark indicates a probable assignment.

Counts are minimums: fragments were counted if a head was present, or if a shank with point was present with no potentially corresponding head. Thirteen whole screws were recovered.

^c Burial 159 had two possible screws (no X-ray was taken prior to the items' destruction on September 11, 2001).

their precise locations on the coffin are unknown), which may have further increased the cost, and that Burial 159 held a coffin that was painted and also had possible screws. Thus, the fancier the coffin, the greater the likelihood the builder would use screws, perhaps reflecting a keener sense of overall quality of workmanship.

Coffin Decoration

Coffin furniture refers to handles, corner and edge "lace," breastplates, upholstery, and other decorative metalwork as opposed to hardware (nails and screws) used in constructing the box. Five coffins with decorative metalwork were found at the New York African Burial Ground. Two of these were problematic owing to recordation problems or disturbance. One hexagonal coffin, in Burial 252 (from the late period and located north of the fence line), may have had a small breastplate on the lid; this item was recorded in the field but never accessioned in the laboratory. A small iron disk was recorded along with the possible breastplate and was inventoried in the laboratory but not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center. One possible tack and several nails were also recorded roughly aligned lengthwise down the center of the coffin lid; it is possible these attached the breastplate to the wood. The grave contained the remains of a very young child between 1 and 2 years old. In Burial 222, assigned to the Late-Middle Group and holding an adult (probably a man) of undetermined age, excavators noted small iron tacks that they thought represented a lid decoration on the hexagonal coffin. The tacks were observed in place on the pelvis and right arm of the individual during excavation, but vandals disturbed the human remains, apparently scattering the tacks, and only four were recovered. They were identified as of cast iron, manufactured using a technique first patented in England in 1769 (see Lenik 1977).

Only three coffins with clearly decorated lids were recorded in detail, in Burials 101, 176, and 332. All three were in men's graves assigned to the Late-Middle Group and are discussed in Chapter 8. Iron tacks formed the decorations, and as in Burial 222, the tacks appeared to be cast metal. In one case (Burial 176) the coffin also had handles. Each coffin is described more fully below.

Tacks were also recovered in association with Burials 138, 197, and 256 but do not seem to have represented decorations. A handle back plate was recovered from Burial 90, though it is considered unlikely the

coffin in this grave had handles (only one was found, and the edge of the burial had been disturbed, raising the possibility that the item was intrusive).

It is interesting that the New York African Burial Ground coffin lid decorations were composed of iron tacks, rather than the brass tacks favored by Euroamericans. In addition to the fact that iron is less expensive than brass, it may have been preferred for cultural reasons. Tinning would have "whitened" the tacks and made them reflective, so the possible significance of color or other visual quality should be considered (see Thompson 1983; Thompson and Cornet 1981).

Burial 101: The Heart or Sankofa Symbol

Burial 101 (see Chapter 8) was of a man in his early thirties whose dental modifications and dental lead levels suggested possible African nativity but whose strontium isotope levels pointed to possible birth in America (Goodman et al. 2009 [Chapter 6 of *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground*]; see Handler [1994] on modified teeth). The coffin lid decoration or symbol measured approximately 45 cm wide and 48 cm long and was positioned over the midsection of the body (Figure 122).

The heart-shaped outline consisted of 51 domed, square-shanked iron tacks, with heads measuring 10 mm in diameter. The inner decorative elements were composed of smaller tacks, with heads approximately 6 mm in diameter (Figure 123). The tacks were described as "tinned or silvered, iron-headed tacks" when first exposed. All of the tacks appeared to be of one-part construction and were of cast manufacture.

As illustrated in Chapter 8, the interior portion of the decoration may have originally formed initials and an age or year. If so, the initials are indecipherable, but the year "1769" is a plausible reading for a date (keeping in mind that the lid had split longitudinally, possibly bifurcating a "6"). Alternatively, the interior design may have formed part of a non-alphanumeric device.

Coffins with heart motifs on the lids are not uncommon in colonial period and nineteenth-century contexts. These motifs typically included initials or a name and an age and/or year formed in tacks on the interior. As noted, Joshua Delaplaine made one such coffin for Samuel Hallet of New York in 1756. Samuel Hallet's estate paid over £2 for his heart-decorated coffin, but because it was made of an expensive wood (liquidambar), we do not know how much the Burial 101 coffin, which was made of larch, may have cost. Nor can we know who ordered the man's coffin, his family

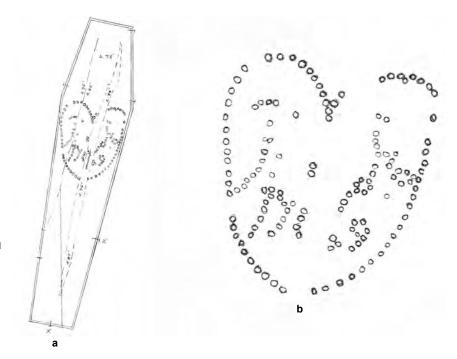


Figure 122. Coffin lid in Burial 101: (*a*) in situ drawing (scale is 1 inch = 2 feet); the lid had split longitudinally as shown; (*b*) detail of the motif formed from tacks on the lid (drawings by M. Schur). See Chapter 8 for in situ photograph.

and friends or the head of the deceased's household; whether an African craftsman built it; or whether the deceased's mourners decorated it themselves. The heart shape may have had meanings for the mourners that diverged from or expanded on those that Europeans would have attributed to it. The heart has been interpreted as representing the soul, for example, in West Central Africa (Denbow 1999), and the shape of a heart with interior scrolls has been identified as an Adinkra symbol—"Sankofa"—associated with Twi-speaking Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, as noted in Chapter 8.

Burial 176: Handled Coffin with Tack-Edged Lid

Burial 176 held possibly the most expensive coffin of those excavated at the New York African Burial Ground. It was fitted with six iron handles (the only definitively handled coffin at the site) and, in addition, had iron tacks around the perimeter of the lid. The handles, of the inverted bale type with "ears" on each end of the back plates, were probably a matched set, though they were not all well enough preserved to confirm this. One that was X-rayed was decorated with facing < cutouts between the posts (Figures 124–127). The handles were placed two on each side, one each at the head and foot.

We considered the possibility that the coffin was cloth covered, a common embellishment by the eighteenth century. However, no textile fragments adhered to the perimeter tacks, and it is likely they were simply decorative.

The reverse-bale-type coffin handles were of hand-wrought iron. Conservators noted that the back plates had strike marks from having been hand forged along the outer edges (visible in the X-ray) and score marks at the cutouts. The handles connected to the back plates with posts, and the plates were screwed into the coffin boards. A similar handle, with the "ears" and facing cutout design, was recovered from a disturbed burial context at the St. Anne's Churchyard in Annapolis (Jones 2001:8).

Burial 332: "HW"

Unique at the New York African Burial Ground, Burial 332 held a coffin with a lid decorated in iron nails forming initials and a number (Figure 128). The grave was of a man whose presumed initials were "HW" and who probably died at age "38" (see Chapter 8). The coffin was hexagonal in shape. Its lid had split lengthwise, leaving a gap down the center and disturbing the lettering. The only artifacts in the coffin were a pin beneath the man's skull and a curved pin or copper ring fragment in the chest area. Burial 289, of a young child, overlay the southwest part of Burial 332. The grave-shaft outline indicates the latter was a separate interment, although it may have been deliberately placed above Burial 332.

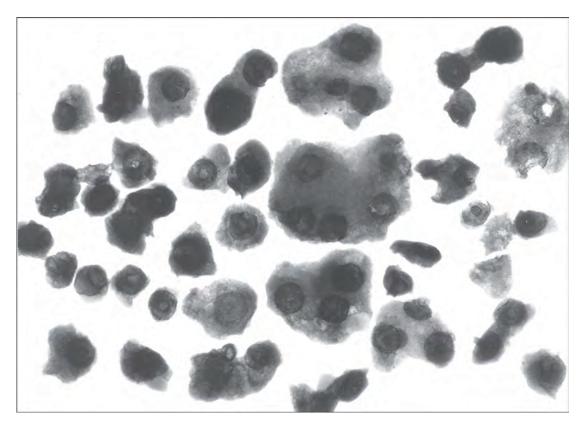


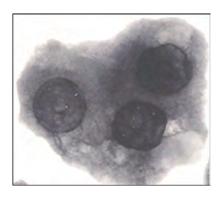
Figure 123. X-ray of small tacks from the Burial 101 coffin lid decoration. Detail shows three tacks that had rusted together. The circles at the centers of the tack heads are where the tack shanks had broken off. Diameter is 6 mm. Exposure 30 sec./70K (courtesy of the W. Montague Cobb Anthropology Laboratory, Howard University).

Coffins with initials and age at death, like those with hearts, were not uncommon during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Delaplaine's records tell us that one for a child was made in New York in 1756 for 14 shillings.

The display of the deceased's identity on the lid suggests that the funeral ritual may have involved showing the coffin, either at the home, during the procession to the cemetery, or at the graveside.

Possible Painted Coffins

Coffins in Burials 159, 183, 213, and 313 were thought by excavators to have possible paint residue. ¹⁰ Burial 159 was of a woman between 25 and



35 years old, assigned to the Middle Group. Her coffin was hexagonal in shape. The western portion of the lid was well preserved but had split down the middle lengthwise. When exposed, it appeared to have red paint adhering to the wood, which was photographed and sampled. Laboratory analysis (see section entitled "The Coffin Wood and Hardware Assemblage: Condition, Treatment, and Chain Of Custody") suggested that the Burial 159 coffin may in fact have been painted, based on the presence of copper at the surface of the wood. It was not possible to determine the color of the original surface treatment. Documentary sources from both New York and

¹⁰ The conservation report (LaRoche 2002:44) stated that Burial 63 was also thought by excavators to have possible paint, but there is no mention of this in the field notes.

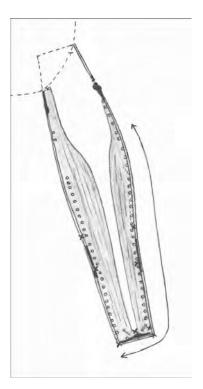
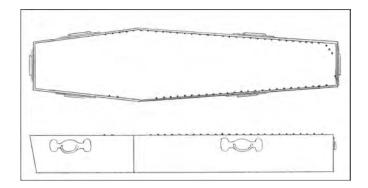


Figure 124. Coffin lid in Burial 176, drawn during excavation (drawing by B. Ludwig).

Figure 125. Reconstruction of coffin in Burial 176, top and side view, based on field observation (reconstruction by B. Ludwig).



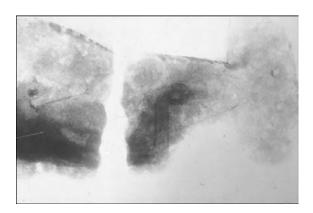


Figure 126. X-ray of coffin handle from Burial 176. The "ear" of the back plate with two screw holes is visible at right, and the bale handle can be seen to the left of this. One of the cutouts is visible on the piece at the left (courtesy of John Milner Associates).

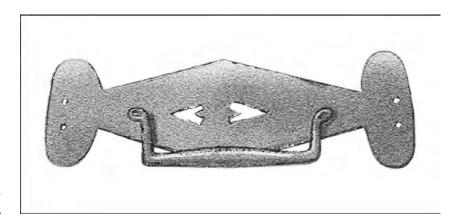


Figure 127. Composite drawing of coffin handle based on the X-rays taken of the handles from Burials 176 and 90. Length is 7.4 inches (drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schultz).

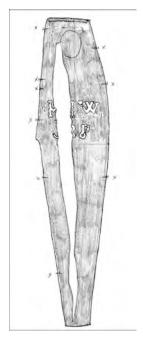


Figure 128. Burial 332 coffin lid, drawn as found during the excavation. The oval indicates where the skull was visible through the remnants of the coffin wood. See Chapter 8 for a photograph (drawing by M. Schur).

Charleston suggest that the color typically used for coffins was black (see discussion in section entitled "Coffin Production and Provision").

The other coffins with possible paint also had observable reddish coloration adhering to wood. None was analyzed for pigment.¹¹ Burial 183, north of the fence line and assigned to the Late Group, held a child approximately a year old in a hexagonal coffin, who had been buried with the head to the east rather than the west. Samples of wood were taken, and the south side board was identified as cedar, the north as spruce. The coffin lid was recorded as having flecks of possible paint over the entire surface and a concentration of orange/red color on the north side. A wood sample was taken from the hexagonal coffin in Burial 213, the grave of a woman 45–55 years old and was identified as red cedar. Excavators noted that a wood sample with possible red paint was also taken, but no such sample was inventoried or analyzed by laboratory staff. Burial 313 held a man of 45–55, buried in a hexagonal coffin. His grave was north of the fence line and is assigned to the Late Group.

A sample of the coffin lid included what excavators thought was a possible paint stain collected from the pelvic/femoral area; this sample was not identified or analyzed for pigment. A sample of wood was also taken from the coffin bottom and was identified as eastern white pine.

The decorated coffins represent an added funeral expense. If any of the adorned coffins were provided by slaveholders, they might be interpreted as instances of paternalism: valued household members (including free or enslaved servants and laborers) could be afforded special treatment in death, above and beyond the customary practice. But they might also speak to the ability of kin to pressure slaveholders into extra outlay. If, on the other hand, special coffins or accoutrements were donated or paid for by friends and kin of the deceased, they may reflect the special esteem in which the deceased was held or the status or aspirations of the mourners. In the case of Burial 101, the symbolic content of the decoration may have been primary, whereas for Burial 332, the identity of the deceased was emphasized in the decoration. The Burial 176 coffin's decorated handles suggest fashion and expenditure and perhaps also special attention to the act of carrying the deceased to the grave. Their cutout decorations may simply have been a commonly available style for handles or may have been somehow symbolic.

The Coffin Wood and Hardware Assemblage: Condition, Treatment, Chain of Custody

Wood

Coffin wood samples as well as samples of wood thought to be from grave markers were frozen upon recovery to preserve them for analysis. In addition, there were many bags of soil from the scraping of coffin stains, labeled as coffin wood, which often contained only slivers of wood or no wood (all wood samples are listed in Appendix E.1, Part 3 of this volume). Wood samples of all kinds were assigned consecutive catalog number suffixes ("CWA," "CWB," etc.; see Chapter 1). Often, the bags indicated which part of the coffin (lid, bottom, or sides) the sample came from, but many samples were not so labeled. Unless two bags were labeled identically, it was assumed that some

¹¹ According to the project conservators (LaRoche 2002:44), the possible paint from Burial 183 was not brought to their attention for analysis, and it is assumed this was the case for Burials 213 and 313 as well. Howard University laboratory staff likewise did not note any wood samples that had been labeled as possibly painted or that appeared to be painted. The sample identified as red cedar from Burial 213 was labeled as "Bag 1 of 2," but no second sample was ever located. The lid sample from Burial 313 was stored in the freezer and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

distinction in provenience was represented by separate bags even when such a label was absent; therefore, separate bags from a burial were always retained. Analysis involved thawing of samples, preparation, and examination under a polarized-light microscope. The conservation report describes sample preparation as follows:

The largest and most robust pieces within each thawing episode were sampled first. For these samples, conventional sampling strategies were employed, including boiling the wood to facilitate taking samples or taking the required cuts directly from viable wood (Hoadley 1990). This was the method most frequently employed. The more fragile samples and some minute samples were infused with Primol WS-24 to facilitate sample taking and identification.

Due to the large number of samples collected, microscopic slides were not retained but photomicrographs of samples with clear distinguishing features were digitized for documentation using a digital imaging system [LaRoche 2002:43].

A total of 203 frozen wood samples from 133 burials was analyzed by John Milner Associates (JMA) conservators using comparative techniques. Often, the identifying morphological features were no longer extant or were degraded, and the wood could be identified only to the family or genus level rather than to species. Odor and the presence of residue were useful in some identifications (further description of the identification process will be found in LaRoche [2002:42]). All of the identified wood samples are listed in Table 36.

No additional samples were analyzed by Howard University Archaeology Team staff. All wood samples stored in the freezer at the World Trade Center lab were lost on September 11, 2001. Most of the wood samples stored in boxes on the laboratory shelving (many of which consisted of scrapings from woodstained soils) were salvaged; however, these samples were not considered likely to yield definitive identifications.

As noted (see section entitled "Coffin Production and Provision" in this chapter), coffins in Burials 63 and 159 were identified as possibly having remnants of paint on the wood. Wood samples from these burials were examined microscopically, but no evidence of organic binders was identified, and the samples were subsequently subjected to X-ray fluorescence to attempt to detect pigment. Procedures and results

of the X-ray fluorescence analysis are provided in the conservation report (LaRoche 2002:44–48). The analysis was performed at the U.S. Customs Laboratory using a Jordan Valley Applied Research energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence spectrometer, Model EX 300. Wood samples with iron and copper staining from other burials, as well as control samples with no evidence of metallic staining, were used for comparative analysis. In addition, soil samples were tested in order to determine the extent to which wood-surface discoloration might be a result of elements in the soil. Results indicated that the wood from the coffin in Burial 159 probably had some kind of surface alteration, based on the levels of copper present (higher than in soil samples but lower than residue from copper artifacts). It should be noted, however, that a copperalloy straight pin was recovered adhering to the wood where the pigment appeared to be best preserved. It seems possible the copper levels present in the wood sample may be distorted because of the proximity of corroded pins.

Iron Hardware and Coffin Furniture

Coffin hardware was not among the material to receive treatment by project conservators. The bags labeled as "coffin nails" were examined by Howard University Archaeology Team laboratory staff in 1999. Every fragment was examined and enumerated as either whole, head fragment, head and shank fragment, shank fragment, or shank with point. This made a minimum nail count possible for every context, which then could be checked against the field drawing of in situ nails where available.

Nails were all of iron and hand wrought. They typically were not measurable (whole nails that could be measured are listed in the inventory). Most nails were broken at the head and along the shaft, either while in situ or during recovery. Very small nails were often listed in the inventory as "tacks," but these are not to be confused with the dome-headed and tinned iron tacks used for lid decorations.

The identification of screws was considered important because screws were more expensive than nails, and their presence may indicate a higher overall cost for the coffin (see discussion of coffin construction). Some screws were identifiable upon visual inspection. In other cases, where corrosion was too far advanced for identification, possible screws were set aside for X-rays. X-rays of unidentifiable items were only taken

for Burials 1–138. The remaining items that had been set aside remained on separate shelving when the laboratory was shut down in early 2000. These items were not salvaged after the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001.

Coffin handles and tacks consisted of corrosion products (rust) forming relatively amorphous masses. They were desalinated in deionized water baths but received no further conservation treatment. Some of the handles and tacks were X-rayed by project conservators working for JMA, and some additional tacks were X-rayed by Howard University staff. Many lumps of rust that were possible tacks, or that appeared to be tacks but could not be quantified, were set aside for X-rays along with the possible screws and were lost in the World Trade Center collapse.

Handles with back plates numbered seven but were broken into pieces in the course of removal from the soil. Although not all of them were well enough preserved for accurate description, based on the surviving pieces and X-rays, it appears likely that all were of the same basic type and shape. Because the bags of nails from Burial 176 were not recovered from the World Trade Center, it is not known whether any screws were recovered.

Disposition

All coffin remains that survived the destruction of the World Trade Center lab were transferred to General Services Administration for reburial. Where there were corresponding human skeletal remains, the coffin wood and hardware were placed in the new coffin along with the remains and any other artifacts. No samples of coffin wood or hardware were retained.

CHAPTER 11

Pins and Shrouding

Jean Howson with the assistance of Shannon Mahoney and Janet L. Woodruff

It is our assumption that for those interred at the New York African Burial Ground, preparation of the body included some form of covering, whether a winding sheet, a shroud, or clothing. Where remnants of such dressing have not survived, we cannot know how the body was treated. However, it seems most likely these cases had cloth that had been wound about the corpse or sewn or tied shut. Owing to preservation conditions, textile and fiber fragments recovered from graves at the New York African Burial Ground were only found in association with metal artifacts (pins, buttons, coins, jewelry, and nails).

Other than coffin remains, the most common artifacts recovered from graves were copper-alloy straight pins. These were always referred to in the field records as "shroud pins." Pins, however, may have been used to fasten clothing (especially for women), or to fasten a strip of cloth used to tie up the chin of the deceased. An attempt has been made to analyze the placement of the pins on the body to better determine whether the presence of a winding cloth, some other type of burial garment, or clothing is indicated. This chapter focuses on pins; other clothing items are discussed in Chapter 12.

A Profile of the Burials with Pins

As noted in Chapter 5, pins were found in almost two-thirds of the burials in which their preservation was feasible. (We arrived at a total sample of 327 burials by including 317 burials with "y" or "y, cranium only" preservation; 2 burials with "y, no cranium" preservation that had pins; and 8 burials with "n" preservation that had pins.) A total of 812 pins was recorded overall, from 213 burials. It is likely

the actual frequency was greater, assuming that pins were originally present in many of the extremely disturbed burials and that some pins had decomposed beyond recognition. In many cases, the pins could not be recovered because of their advanced decomposition, but often, even when no actual fragment remained, telltale green stains indicating that pins had been present were noted and recorded (either prior to removal of the skeleton or during cleaning of the bone).

Tables 42 and 43 provide a basic profile of the burials with pins. We look at age, gender, and pin use over time, then turn to the actual placement of pins on the body.

Sex, Age, and Time

The distribution of pins was skewed along age and gender lines. Children and infants were more likely to have pins than adults, and women more likely than men. It is possible that clothing is represented by some of the pins—they were more likely to be used with women's clothing than men's. This will be discussed further when we turn to pin placement.

The overall frequency of burials having at least one pin changed little from the Middle Group on (Table 44). The lower frequency of Early Group burials with pins is attributable both to the probability that these goods were less abundantly available in the early eighteenth century and to reduced preservation.

¹ Pins were very fragmentary at the time they were inventoried (see section entitled "Recovery, Condition and Treatment, and Chain of Custody"). The number 812 is the number of pins represented based on field and laboratory recording, rather than pin fragments that were recovered and eventually reburied, which numbered 1,232.

Age/Sex	Number of Burials with Pins	Total Sample of Age/Sex Category	Percent of Age/ Gender Category [®]
Adult females	53	74	71.62
Adult males	46	94	48.94
Adult undetermined	10	17	58.82
Total adults	109	185	58.91
Infants up to 6 months	22	28	78.57
Subadults 6 months to 15 years	82	114	71.93
Total subadults	104	142	72.53
Total	213	327	65.14

Table 42. Presence of Pins, by Age Category and Sex

If we look at the distribution of burials with pins by sex and age over time, we also see little appreciable change. Burials of women were consistently much more likely to be associated with at least one pin than those of men.

The numbers of pins in adult burials, rather than their presence or absence, exhibit a different pattern, however (Table 45). In the Early and Middle Groups, more of the pins were found with women's burials, although in the later temporal groups, slightly more of the pins were found with men than with women. The preponderance of men in the Late Group burials accounts for the distribution in that group, but the Late-Middle burials may point to a change over time in burial attire.

Analysis of Pin Placement

Table 43 lists burials with pins in four body areas. This information helps us to understand the function of pins and ultimately sheds light on how the living mourners prepared the body for burial.

Those who prepared the very youngest for burial apparently wrapped them in cloth and then fastened the cloth with numerous pins (Figures 129 and 130). This seems counterintuitive: complete shrouding

would have required little cloth to wrap the smallest children and infants, so why the need for pins at all? We hypothesize that pins had ritual meaning beyond fastening. This meaning may have had to do with protecting the very young or with ensuring adequate means to make a spiritual passage. Without knowing the precise meanings, we can point to the extra care taken by mourners in their ministrations to the body of an infant, pin by pin, and the social and spiritual connection to the deceased embodied in this ritual moment. A purely utilitarian interpretation (as shroud fasteners) in the burials of children is inadequate. By extension, all of the pins used in shrouding may have had ritual meaning as well as having a functional use as fasteners.²

Burials with pins only on the cranium include 31 adults and 13 subadults (excluding 2 burials with pins that had been truncated so that the cranium was the only surviving part of the skeleton, making it impossible to know whether pins had been present elsewhere on the body). Burial drawings show the

Totals used to calculate percentages do not include burials for which neither age nor sex determination can be made, burials that were completely redeposited remains, burials where empty coffins were discovered, or burials without pins that were missing the cranium, unless the pins were recovered with the bone. We arrived at a total sample of 327 burials by including 317 burials with "y" or "y, cranium only" preservation; 2 burials with "y, no cranium" preservation that had pins; and 8 burials with "n" preservation that had pins.

² In his early study of African American burials from College Landing, Carter Hudgins (1977:71) similarly noted that "the placement of pins and location of the stains assumed a pattern that indicated cultural significance rather than random occurrence."

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations

Burial	Law	High	100		Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Low Age	Age	Age Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
1	20.00	25.00	adult	female?	Late	1		_	_	_	у
5	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	1	6	12	_	_	у
6	25.00	30.00	adult	male?	Late	3	_	3	_	1	У
7	3.00	5.00	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	3		3	_	_	У
8	0.00	0.50	infant	undetermined	Middle		1	_	_	1	У
12	35.00	45.00	adult	female	Late	1	1	1	_	_	У
14	0.00	0.50	infant	undetermined	Late	4	4	14	4	_	У
16	50.00	60.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	1	_	_	У
17	4.00	6.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	1	2	1	_	У
19			subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	_	—	_	_	У
20	45.00	50.00	adult	male	Late	_			3	_	n
22	2.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1		3	_	_	у
23	25.00	35.00	adult	male	Early	1		_	_	_	у
24	3.00	6.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	5	_	_	у
27	1.40	2.80	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	4	7	_	_	у
30	7.00	11.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	2	3	_	_	У
31	14.00	16.00	adult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	11	_	_	У
32	50.00	60.00	adult	male	Middle				_	1	у
35	8.00	10.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
37	45.00	55.00	adult	male	Late	1	_	5	1	_	у
38	12.00	18.00	adult	female	Early	1	_	_	_	_	у
39	5.00	7.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	1	4	3	_	у
40	50.00	60.00	adult	female	Late	1			_	1	у
43	2.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	3		_	_	_	у
45	2.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1		_	_	_	у
46			adult	female?	Middle	_	1	_	_	_	у
49	40.00	50.00	adult	female	Middle	4	_	_	_	_	у
53	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Middle	3	_	1	1	_	у
55	3.00	5.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	_	2	_	_	у
56	30.00	34.00	adult	female	Middle	2	_	3	_	_	у
57	0.88	2.16	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	1	_	_	_	У

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age		Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
58	3.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Late	2	_	_	_	1	у
59	0.00	0.25	infant	undetermined	Late	1	1	4	_	_	у
60	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	1	3	1	_	_	у
63	35.00	45.00	adult	male	Late	1	_	_	_	_	у
64	0.38	0.88	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	_		1	_	_	у
65	0.00	0.49	infant	undetermined	Late	3	3	_	_	_	у
67	40.00	50.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	_	_	6	_	_	y (no cranium)
71	25.00	35.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	1	_	2	у
72	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Early?	_	3	2	_	_	у
73	20.00	30.00	adult	female?	Middle	2	1	1	1	_	у
75	0.00	0.00	infant	undetermined	Middle	_	_	4	_	1	у
78	16.00	19.00	adult	undetermined	Early	1	_	_	_	_	у
79	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Middle	4	_	4	_	_	у
81			adult	female	Middle	_	_	1	_	_	y (no cranium)
82	18.00	25.00	adult	female	Middle	2	_	_	_	_	y (cranium only)
84	17.00	21.00	adult	female	Early	_	3	_	_	_	у
85	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	2	_	_	у
86	6.00	8.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	1	_	_	_	1	у
87	4.00	6.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	3	_	_	_	_	y (cranium only)
89	50.00	60.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	_	_	2	_	_	У
90	35.00	40.00	adult	female	Middle	2	_	1	_	_	у
91	0.67	1.30	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	_	3	2	_	_	у
94			subadult	undetermined	Middle	1		3	_		у
95	7.00	12.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	1	_	1	_	_	у
97	40.00	50.00	adult	male	Late	5					у
99	6.00	10.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	1	1	_		у

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age	a	Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
101	26.00	35.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	3	—	1	_	_	у
102	1.33	2.67	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_		_	_	1	у
103			subadult	undetermined	Middle	_		1	_	_	у
104	30.00	40.00	adult	female	Middle	_	1	_	1	1	у
107	35.00	40.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	_	_	2	_	_	у
108	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	_	1	3	_	_	у
109	0.67	1.33	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	1	1	2	_	_	у
111	0.67	1.33	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	1	_	_	у
112	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	4	у
115	25.00	35.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
116	45.00	55.00	adult	male	Middle	2	_	_	_	_	у
119	35.00	45.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	1	1	1	_	_	у
121	2.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Early	2	_	_	_	_	у
122	18.00	20.00	adult	female	Middle	_	2	4	_	_	у
123	0.67	1.33	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	3	2	5	_	_	у
126	3.50	5.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	_	1	_	_	у
127	0.67	1.33	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	3	6	2	1	у
128	0.00	0.17	infant	undetermined	Middle	1	2	2	_	1	у
130	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	1	_	_	у
131			subadult	undetermined	Late	1	_	_	_	_	n
133	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	2	1	_	_	у
134	40.00	50.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
136			subadult	undetermined	Middle		_	1	_	3	у
143	6.00	10.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_		_	_	у
144	0.00	0.17	infant	undetermined	Middle			_	_	3	у
146	0.00	0.00	infant	undetermined	Late- Middle	3	4	1	_	_	у
147	55.00	65.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	4	_		у
148	12.00	18.00	adult	undetermined	Middle	4	1	1			у
149	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1		1			у

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Dunial	Low	Uiah	A = 0		Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
Burial No.	Low Age	High Age	Age Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	No Provenience	Code
151	35.00	45.00	adult	male	Late	_	1	_	_	_	у
153			adult	female?	Late	1	_	4	_	_	у
154	25.00	29.00	adult	female	Middle	3	_	3	2	_	у
159	25.00	35.00	adult	female	Middle	2	1	8	_	_	У
160	3.50	5.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_		_	_	1	У
166	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	2	6	5	_	_	У
167	8.50	12.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	1	У
169	5.50	9.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	3	_	—	_	_	У
171	44.00	60.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	5	_	_	У
173	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	1	3	_	_	у
174	17.00	18.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
175	24.00	28.00	adult	male	Middle	_	_	_	_	1	n
176	20.00	24.00	adult	male	Late- Middle		1		_	_	у
177	30.00	60.00	adult	undetermined	Early	1	_	_	_	1	у
179	25.00	30.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
180	11.00	13.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	2	2	_	_	У
183	0.63	1.13	subadult	undetermined	Late	1	2	7	5	_	У
186	0.00	0.17	infant	undetermined	Late	4	1	3	_	_	У
187	1.50	4.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	1		—	_	1	У
189			adult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	1	_	n
190	0.38	0.88	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	4	4	_	1	у
191	25.00	30.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	_	2	1	У
192	40.00	60.00	adult	female	Late	1	_	2	_	_	У
195	30.00	40.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	_	1	_	У
196	20.00	24.00	adult	undetermined	Late	_	_	1	_	_	У
199	30.00	40.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
201	1.50	3.50	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	1	_	_	_	у
203	12.00	18.00	adult	undetermined	Late	_	_	1	_	_	у
205	18.00	20.00	adult	female	Late	1	1	4	_	4	у
210	35.00	45.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
213	45.00	55.00	adult	female	Middle	1	1	1	_	_	у
214	45.00	55.00	adult	male	Late	_	_		1	_	у
215	0.00	0.16	infant	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	1	у

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age	a	Temporal		Lo	cation	_	No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
216	0.00	0.16	infant	undetermined	Late- Middle	_	_	4	_	1	у
219	4.00	5.00	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	1	—	1	_	_	у
221	30.00	60.00	adult	male	Early	2	_		_	_	у
225	0.50	1.25	subadult	undetermined	Late	1	1	1	1	_	у
226	0.00	0.17	infant	undetermined	Early	4	1	1	_	_	у
229	6.75	11.25	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle		1	_	_	1	у
230	55.00	65.00	adult	female	Late	_	1	1	_	_	у
235	28.00	42.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	_	_	_	_	1	у
236	4.00	5.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	_	_		_	1	у
239	1.50	3.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	1	1	_	_	у
241	55.00	65.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	5	_	_	у
242	40.00	50.00	adult	female	Late	_	_	2	_	_	у
244	5.00	9.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	1	_	2	_	_	у
245	2.50	4.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	1		_	1	у
252	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	3	1	1	1	_	у
253	13.00	15.00	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle			1	1	_	у
255	0.00	0.17	infant	undetermined	Middle	1	_		_	_	у
257	30.00	40.00	adult	male	Late	4	2	3	_	_	у
259	17.00	19.00	adult	female?	Late	_	_	_	_	1	у
265	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
266	25.00	35.00	adult	female	Late	_	_		1	_	у
268	0.00	0.50	infant	undetermined	Middle	_	1	2	_	_	у
281			adult	male?	Early	2	_		_	_	у
283	0.33	0.67	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	1	_	_	y
289	5.00	9.00	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	1	1	2	_	_	у
290	45.00	55.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
294	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	3	_	3	_	_	у
295	30.00	50.00	adult	female	Middle	3	_	_	1	_	y
299	40.00	50.00	adult	male	Late	2	_	_		_	y

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age		Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
300			infant	undetermined	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
303	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	2	n
305	-0.33	0.33	infant	undetermined	Late	2	_		_	1	у
311	0.25	0.75	subadult	undetermined	Late- Middle	3	2	_	_	_	у
312	0.00	0.30	infant	undetermined	Middle	2	3	7	2	_	у
313	45.00	55.00	adult	male	Late	1	1	1	_	_	у
315	30.00	40.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
316	18.00	20.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	1	_	3	_	_	у
319			adult	female	Late- Middle	2	_	4	_	1	n
320	2.00	4.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	1	1	_	у
321	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	2	7	1	_	у
325	25.00	35.00	adult	male	Late	1	_	_	_	_	у
328	40.00	50.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	3	_	_	у
332	35.00	40.00	adult	male?	Late- Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
334			subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
335	25.00	35.00	adult	female	Middle	3	3	4	_	_	у
336	0.50	1.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	1	1	_	_	у
338	33.00	65.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
340	39.30	64.40	adult	female	Early	8	1	2	_	_	у
341			adult	male	Middle	_	_	1	_	_	у
342	25.00	35.00	adult	female?	Late	1	1	1	_	1	у
343	19.00	23.00	adult	male	Late	_	_	1	_	_	у
346	50.00	70.00	adult	female	Late	3	_	1	1	_	у
348	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	2	_	_	у
351	50.00	60.00	adult	male	Middle	1	_	1	_	_	у
352			adult	male	Late- Middle	1	1	_	_	_	у
353	24.00	34.00	adult	male	Middle	5	1	_	_	2	у
356			subadult	undetermined	Middle	5	8	1	1	2	у
360			subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	1	у

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age	а	Temporal		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category	Sex [®]	Group	Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
361	33.00	57.00	adult	male	Early	3	_	1	_	_	у
362			adult	undetermined	Late- Middle	4	1		_	_	y (cranium only)
363	1.00	2.00	subadult	undetermined	Late	2	1	4	1	_	у
368	10.50	13.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	1	_	1	у
369	40.00	50.00	adult	male	Late	1	_	_	_	_	у
370	2.00	4.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2	_	1	_	_	у
373	45.00	60.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
374	0.00	0.25	infant	undetermined	Middle	5	2	_	2	_	у
375	16.00	18.00	adult	female	Middle	_		1	_	_	у
376	45.00	65.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	2	_	6	_	_	У
380	40.00	60.00	adult	male	Middle	_	_	_	2	_	у
382	4.00	5.00	subadult	undetermined	Early?	_	_	_	_	1	у
383	14.00	18.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
385	40.00	60.00	adult	female	Middle	2		1	_	_	у
388	29.00	57.00	adult	female	Early	2		_	_	1	у
389			adult	female	Early	2	_	_	_	_	у
393	- 0.17	0.17	infant	undetermined	Middle	2	1	1	1	_	У
395	43.00	53.00	adult	male	Late- Middle	1	_	_	_	_	У
396	6.50	8.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle	1	2	1	1	_	у
397	30.00	40.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_	_	_	_	у
398	25.00	35.00	adult	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	1	n
399	0.00	0.30	infant	undetermined	Middle	5	1	_	1	_	у
400	25.00	35.00	adult	male	Middle	2		_	_	_	у
403	39.00	65.00	adult	male	Middle	1		_	_	_	n
405	6.00	10.00	subadult	undetermined	Middle	2		_	_	_	у
406	0.00	0.50	infant	undetermined	Middle	3		6	2	3	У
412	0.00	0.00	infant	undetermined	Middle	_	_	_	_	7	у
413	50.00	70.00	adult	female	Late- Middle	2		_	_	_	у
414	39.00	59.00	adult	male	Middle	2	_	_	_	_	У

Table 43. Burials with Pins and Pin Locations (continued)

Burial	Low	High	Age	SAV	Temporal Group [®]		Lo	cation		No	Preservation
No.	Age	Age	Category			Cranium	Jaw/ Neck	Torso	Extremities	Provenience	Code
415	35.00	55.00	adult	male	Middle	2			_	_	у
417	9.50	14.50	subadult	undetermined	Middle		1		_	_	у
418	30	55	adult	male	Middle	_	_	1	_	_	у
419	48.00	62.00	adult	male	Middle	2	_		_	_	у
427	16.00	20.00	adult	male?	Middle	_			1	_	у
428	40.00	70.00	adult	female	Middle	1	_		_	_	у
432			adult	undetermined	Early	1	_		_	_	у

Note: Table 43 includes observations of pin evidence in each location, such as staining on bones, as well as pins recorded in the field and those recovered and inventoried. Fragments found in soil from the same location are normally counted as a single pin. Where records indicate a pin was recovered from a location and staining on bone from that location was subsequently noted, only one pin should be counted.

Table 44. Burials with Pins by Age, Sex, and Temporal Group

	Early				Middle		Ī	Late-Middle			Late				Total			
Sex/Age	Number	With Pins	Percent	t	Number	With Pins	Percent	t	Number	With Pins	Percent	Number	With Pins	Percent	ı	Number	With Pins	Percent
Female	8	5	62.50		32	23	71.88		10	8	80.00	24	17	70.83		74	53	71.62
Male	10	4	40.00		26	14	53.85		18	9	50.00	40	19	47.50		94	46	48.94
Adult, undetermined	5	3	60.00		6	4	66.67		2	1	50.00	4	2	50.00		17	10	58.82
Infant	1	1	100.00		18	14	77.78		3	2	66.67	6	5	83.33		28	22	78.57
Subadult	11	3	27.27		66	48	72.73		16	14	87.50	21	17	80.95		114	82	71.93
Total	35	16	42.86		148	103	69.13		49	34	69.38	95	60	63.16		327	213	65.14

Note: Number includes burials with adequate preservation to expect pins in addition to burials with "n" preservation from which pins were nevertheless recovered.

Table 45. Pin Frequencies, by Temporal Period and Sex

Temporal	Total	W	omen en	Men				
Group	No. of Pins	No. of Pins	Percent	No. of Pins	Percent			
Early	29	20	68.96	9	31.03			
Middle	109	81	74.31	28	25.69			
Late-Middle	47	20	42.55	27	57.45			
Late	98	41	45.28	57	54.72			

^a A question mark indicates a probable assignment.



Figure 129. *Left*, in situ photograph of Burial 14. Burial 14 was of an infant no more than 6 months old who shared a grave with a 35–45-year-old woman (Burial 12). The bones of the woman can be seen in the photograph, with the infant's remains superimposed (photograph by Dennis Seckler). *Right*, excavator's drawing of pin locations prior to removal. The pins encircled the infant's skull (at top) and extended down to the knees. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot.

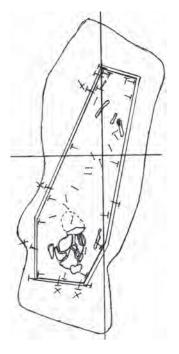


Figure 130. In situ drawing of Burial 183, which held an infant between 8 and 16 months old. This burial was one of just two infants that had the head to the east rather than the west. Pins were found in place along the center of the remains from the skull (at bottom of drawing) down the length of the body. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot; north is to the right (drawing by M. Schur).

precise locations on the crania in many cases, and the pins were typically on the top of the skull or near the ear. The presence of pins on the cranium has been taken to be diagnostic of shrouding in other archaeological contexts (e.g., Hudgins 1977; Hunt 1994:92). It is possible, however, that pins found only at the head represent a piece of cloth used to secure the chin rather than a complete shroud. In cases where cranial pins are absent, chin cloths simply may have been tied. The securing of the jaw was necessary because it would otherwise fall open when the corpse was laid out supine. Richardson (2000:19) records that in traditional English practice, prior to the onset of rigor, the eyes would be closed, then the mouth, which would be secured either with the band of a shroud cap or with "a bandage passing under the chin and tied at the top of the head." According to Litten (1991:72) the chin tie was removed if a tied cap was put on. The tying of the chin was typical in English practice in the eighteenth century, and chin cloths could be purchased ready-made along with a shroud (Litten 1997:48). Any strip of cloth would have been sufficient, however.

Tying the chin may have been a typical part of the process of laying out the dead among both white and black New Yorkers, but pinning the chin cloth suggests a variant practice. If, on the other hand, cranial pins reflect the special arrangement of the shroud so as to expose the face, it is possible that for these deceased individuals, the face was meant to be in view at some point during the funeral proceedings, perhaps during a wake.

Table 46. Number of Burials with One or More Pins in the Four Body Areas, by Sex

Sex	Cranium	Jaw/Neck	Torso	Extremities
Female	31	10	25	6
Male	25	7	14	5

Note: Only adults for whom gender could be definitely determined are included.

About equal numbers of New York African Burial Ground men (15 men and 2 probable men) and women (11 women and 1 probable woman) had pins only on the cranium, but the distribution by age is skewed toward adults aged 30 or over. Children's chin cloths may typically have been tied rather than pinned. Tying rather than pinning also may have been dictated by religious observance, as in Muslim shrouding. If the cranial pins indicate arrangement of the shroud so as to show the face, such a practice may have been reserved mainly for older individuals.

There were a number of burials with pins that also had possible evidence of clothing. For example, a child (Burial 22) and two women (Burials 213 and 342) had aglets (small copper-alloy "tubes" that cover the ends of laces) as well as pins. In these cases, the aglets may represent clothing (see Chapter 12) or the ties of shrouds. The locations of the aglets on the body were not provenienced in the field because they were indistinguishable from pins. The aglet in Burial 213 was determined to be from the left parietal.

Other burials with evidence for clothing that also had pins include one of a man with a jacket (Burial 6) and three adults with apparent knee breeches (Burials 203, 259, and 415). Thirteen adults with miscellaneous buttons or button fragments that may represent clothing also had at least one pin. There are several possible reasons for the presence of both pins and buttons:

- Individuals were both clothed and wrapped. Four of the people buried with both pins and buttons (Burials 325, 353, 405, and 415) had pins only at the cranium or cranium and jaw. One, the woman in Burial 385, had a pin in the torso area as well as two at the cranium. Only one of these had clearcut evidence for clothing, Burial 415; perhaps preparation of this man's body included securing the jaw with a chin cloth, which was left in place at burial.
- They wore buttoned undergarments beneath their shrouds. Bone buttons, likely to represent undergar-

- ments were found with Burials 37, 171, 257, 313, 353, and 385.
- They were clothed rather than wrapped, and some of their clothing was pinned.
- Their buttons were not attached to clothing but rather were worn on a string or placed in the hand as a memento or talisman at the time of burial.

Some adults had pins on the head, torso, and extremities. These cases, like those of children with pins along the body, probably indicate winding sheets that may have been pinned along the length of their bodies ³

Although pin distributions by sex on cranium, jaw, and extremities were comparable, more than twice as many women than men had pins on the torso area (Table 46). This is consistent with the hypothesis that in some cases pins represent clothing fasteners rather than shrouds. Pins were used more often than buttons to fasten women's clothing in the eighteenth century (Figure 131; see section entitled "Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context" in Chapter 12). Of the adults with pins only on the torso, 5 were women, and 5 were men (excluding two burials with torso pins that had been truncated, leaving only the post-cranial skeleton and making it impossible to know whether cranial pins had been present).

Pins and Shrouds in Eighteenth-Century New York

Mass produced in the period of the African Burial Ground cemetery, straight pins would have been available at shops, at the markets, and no doubt from peddlers, and they also could have been obtained by women and girls who did the sewing in European households. Cloth for shrouds or winding sheets may

³ Litten (1991:59) cited this practice for English shrouding in the fifteenth century but did not trace its history.



Figure 131. Detail from "Jersey Nanny" (mezzotint) by John Greenwood, American, 1748. This depiction of a working-class woman shows two items of clothing fastened with pins. The scarf or shawl is pinned at her throat; her short gown, which wraps across her torso, is pinned on the left side of her chest. (Photograph © 2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. John Greenwood, American, 1727–1792, *Jersey Nanny*, 1748, Mezzotint, Sheet: 24.4 x 19.7 cm [9 5/8 x 7 3/4 in.], Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Henry Lee Shattuck, 1971.715.)

have been considered, along with the coffin, a sine qua non of proper burial. As we noted in Chapter 2, there is scant evidence, but wrapping the dead in some manner was practiced in at least some of the African cultures to which captives brought to New York belonged. There is no documentary evidence of New York's household heads providing cloth as there is for coffins, though such a custom may have developed. Alternatively, like pins, cloth would have been available to blacks through several other means, such as purchase at the many eighteenth-century shops that dealt in cloth, or from peddlers who sold such wares; recycling from the deceased's or a relative's household, or through appropriation that would have come under the heading of "theft."

Litten (1991:57–84) has described shrouding in fifteenth- through nineteenth-century England, relying for the most part on information gleaned from sculptures, drawings, and paintings; Richardson (2000:20–21) draws on folklore and illustrated funeral invitations to provide a picture of traditional practices. The winding sheet was commonly used for burials in post-medieval England, and the custom would have come to New York with European colonists. In English (and more widely European) practice, a winding sheet consisted of a rectangular length of cloth that

enclosed the corpse, tying above the head and below the feet. The edges of the sheet, about three times the width of the corpse and 6 inches longer at both head and foot, were fastened either by stitching or pinning, and each end was tied with a strip of cloth. Illustrations from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries show English corpses wrapped in generous widths of material with gathered ends. In some cases, the illustrations show that the fabric was pushed back to reveal the deceased's face; otherwise, the winding sheet completely concealed the corpse. In Europe and among European colonials, specific garments called "shrouds," as opposed to winding sheets, came into fashion in the eighteenth century. These somewhat resembled an open-backed nightshirt with a tie at the feet. The shroud had a drawstring tie at the neck, rather than above the head, and sleeves with drawstrings or tapes at the wrists. A fabric cap complemented the dress. Men and women seem to have been dressed for the grave in similar, if not identical, fashion.

Blanche White, who advertised as an undertaker in New York in 1768, sold "shrouds and sheets" (Gottesman 1938:142), suggesting that these were two different items, the former probably a garment rather than a winding sheet. There was probably no difference between the sheets used for bedding and those used for winding sheets, at least among the poor. Household mistresses may have offered old bedsheets for use as shrouds by enslaved and free servants, whereas they might have used heirloom linens or newly purchased sheets or garment shrouds for their own family members.

In the North American colonies, there was no regulation of the type of cloth used for shrouding; linen and wool would have been most common.4 Lengths of cloth, like wood for a coffin, would have represented no small expense for bereaved family and friends, and it was probably impossible to provide the flowing or repeatedly wrapped shrouds that are depicted on the well-to-do in early European sculptures and prints. A proper Muslim shroud, too, requires yards of cloth because more than one wrap is used and each wrap should be large enough to cover the entire body. The ideal is three wraps for a man and five wraps for a woman, but one wrap can suffice because the provision of a shroud should not be unduly burdensome.⁵ The outlay for a proper shroud would have been prohibitive for African Muslims living under slavery in colonial New York. They would have met their collective obligation to wrap the dead by adapting their practices to the economic constraints they faced.

Surviving records from funeral suppliers do not detail the colors of cloth used for shrouds or winding sheets, but in most cases, illustrations appear to show white or pale fabrics dressing the dead (see Litten 1991:57–84). Antebellum accounts from the American South suggest that enslaved plantation laborers usually used white cloth to wrap their dead (Roediger 1981:169). Muslim shrouds are always supposed to be white. The colors of shrouds used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the areas of Africa where New York's captives came from were not recorded.

The Pin Assemblage and Associated Cloth

Pins recovered from graves at the New York African Burial Ground were very uniform. Almost all were fragmentary (if not already broken in situ, they usually broke when handled). Those that were whole or were in pieces that could be measured were just under to just over 1 inch long. Only five whole pins were present at the time of the Howard University inventory of the assemblage. Examples of recovered pins are shown in Figure 132. (A photograph of the replicas of pins that were created for the New York African Burial Ground by artisans at Colonial Williamsburg is provided in Chapter 1; see Figure 9.)

Cloth was typically recovered along with larger metal artifacts such as buttons or coins, but was also recovered with pins from a few of the burials. The identified textiles are of linen and cotton. Burials with textile remnants associated with pins or aglets (rather than buttons or cuff links) are listed in Table 47 (see Chapter 12 for textiles associated with buttons). Also included in this table are burials that yielded textile fragments that were associated with metal items that would have aided preservation (e.g., coins) but no buttons or cuff links. The fragments listed in Table 47 may represent shrouds, but some might also be from clothing. One man, in Burial 415, had clothing represented by numerous buttons but is included because we know he also had cloth pinned on the cranium (Figure 133). Examples of textiles from possible shrouds are shown in Figures 134 and 135.

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, Chain of Custody

During excavation, pin recovery was not always possible because of the state of decomposition of these fragile items. When recovered in the field, the pins or pin fragments were placed in small plastic containers or bags and brought to the project laboratory. In the laboratory, conservators noted that pins were mineralized and highly fragmented, often consisting only of corrosion product. The pins were desalinated and batch-treated with a corrosion inhibitor, vacuum-impregnated with the acryloid B-72, and stored in polyethylene boxes. The exact location of each pin within a burial (e.g., cranium, vertebrae, etc.) was either not recorded on the field containers, or this

⁴ In the late seventeenth century, the English Parliament passed *The Act for Burying in Woollen*, which prohibited the use of linen or other fabrics as burial garments (in order to protect the woolen industry). Well-to-do families sometimes flouted this law and considered the fines imposed as one of the costs of a funeral (Litten 1991:74). The act remained in effect until the early nineteenth century in England.

⁵ During the course of the African Burial Ground project, Fatimah Jackson, Kofi Agorsah, Muhammad Hatim, and Sylviane Diouf provided information about Muslim burial practices. For an overview of prescribed Muslim practices, see University of Southern California Muslim Student Association (2007).



Figure 132. Copper-alloy pins from Burial 12 (Catalog Nos. 253-B.001 and 253-B.002). The bottom pin is 2.2 cm in length (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Table 47. Textile Fragments Recovered (Not in Association with Buttons)

Burial No.	Catalog No.	Type of Fragment	Comments
18		unidentified possible textile	Found in soil adhering to left parietal during cleaning of remains; not conserved.
22	344-B.004	linen	Plain weave, partially mineralized; single aglet recovered.
46	605-B	unidentified	Found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved.
71	813-B.003	unidentified	Textile associated with pin; not listed in conservation report.
104	847-B.003	unidentified	Not listed in conservation report.
109	852-B.002	linen	
121	866-B	unidentified	Pseudomorph (exact replica of textile formed by corrosion products).
136	881-B.002	linen	
156	901-B	fiber, unidentified	Found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved.
169	926-B.001	cotton	
180	960-B	fiber, unidentified	Found in soil pedestal during cleaning of remains; not conserved.
219	1200-UNC	unidentifiable	Provenience unclear.
225	1211-B.004	unidentified	Not listed in conservation report.
230	1216-B.002	unidentified	Adhering to either side of a copper-alloy coin.
252		unidentified	Impression of cloth noted in field records; not recovered.
363		unidentifiable	Single fiber from cranium.
389	2023-B.002	unidentifiable	
415	2097-В	unidentified	Recovered with pin during cleaning of cranium in laboratory; not conserved.



Figure 133. Pin with fabric from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B). This burial held a man buried in clothing and with this pin and cloth on the cranium. Recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains. The ruler is measured in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 134. Unidentified woven textile from Burial 104 (Catalog No. 847-B.003). Length is 5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 135. Textile from a possible shroud that had adhered to a coin from Burial 230 (Catalog No. 1216-B.002). The coin is 22 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).

information was not retained after laboratory staff reboxed the items.

These pins were inventoried and a few examples photographed by laboratory personnel. They were reexamined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel during laboratory analysis in 1998–1999 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted (head and shank, shank, or shank with point). Final, high-quality photographs of representative pins were taken by Jon Abbott in August 2001. At that time, the pins were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and

shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The pins were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at Artex in 2003 and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

In many cases, pins were within soil pedestals adhering to skeletal remains when they were removed from the ground. When such pins were recovered during the cleaning of the bones at the Howard University Cobb Laboratory, they were placed in polyethylene bags and labeled according to the skeletal element they were associated with. These pins were not treated by conservators. They were retained at the Cobb Laboratory and shipped to the New York laboratory in 2003, where they were inventoried by Howard University Archaeology Team staff. In September 2003 they were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers and placed in coffins for reburial.

The low rate of textile survival is a result of the soil conditions at the site. Textile and fiber fragments were recovered in association with some pins during field excavation, preserved by copper salts associated with the degradation of the copper alloy. Only the more robust fibers and textile fragments were cleaned in the laboratory. Of the possible shroud fragments, three were identified as linen and one as cotton. In some cases, pseudomorphs (corrosion products that permeated the fibers and replaced them, creating an exact replica) of cloth were recovered. Pseudomorphs from Burials 121 and 135 were examined and photographed microscopically. Another possible pseudomorph from Burial 186 was investigated with scanning electron microscopy, which indicated mineralized wood but was inconclusive as to the presence of textile or fiber.

In two cases, fibers brought to the laboratory were identified as rodent hairs (these are not included in the list above).

Methodology

Pins were examined visually, some under magnification. Pin fragments were recorded in the artifact inventory as head and shank, shank, or shank with point. This allowed for counting minimum numbers of pins for each burial in cases where they were not noted in the field or shown on field drawings. Pins were counted as follows: all pins recorded in situ were counted for the analysis of pin placement. Where field recording was not precise or pins were recovered during laboratory cleaning, an inventoried pin fragment was counted as one pin only if it included the pinhead, or was the only fragment from a burial location, or had the point and no fragment with a head present.

Pin placement within a burial was recorded in the database where possible. This information was obtained from field records and drawings or, in the case of pins from pedestalled remains, from the skeletal laboratory staff, who were careful to label pins according to skeletal element.

Manufacture and Dating

The pins found at the New York African Burial Ground were copper alloy and drawn with wire-wrapped heads; on some, a tinned surface was visible. These were typical manufactures of the African Burial Ground period. Wrapped-head pins were common by the beginning of the seventeenth century and were produced until the early nineteenth century (Noël Hume 1969:254). The pins, therefore, do not provide specific dating for burials.

CHAPTER 12

Buttons and Fasteners

Leonard G. Bianchi and Barbara A. Bianco with the assistance of Shannon Mahoney

This chapter discusses the evidence for clothing supplied by the buttons, cuff links, and aglets associated with the deceased. It begins with an overview of the burials from which these items were recovered. It then focuses on what black New Yorkers wore during the eighteenth century and how clothing and buttons were acquired. The assemblage is then described. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, and findings about manufacture, origin, and age. A synopsis of the material and stylistic range of the assemblage is provided in the typology. The inventory is organized by individual burial, a format that best conveys how the fasteners were used.

Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets

The preservation environment at the New York African Burial Ground favored durable items, and cloth and clothing did not survive except in tiny fragments that adhered to metal objects. Only a handful of textile fragments were recovered (see section entitled "The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth"). More conspicuous were the fasteners clothing left behind. These included buttons, cuff links, and aglets, tiny tubes that encased the ends of lacings and cords typically used on caps, shirts, and gowns. One possible grommet was also recovered.

Clothing fasteners made from metal, bone, and wood were found in direct association with 33 individuals, about 8.8 percent of the burials in the archaeologically excavated portion of the cemetery. Another

nine individuals had tenuous connections with clothing fasteners. The characteristics of the burials are summarized in Table 48. Cases with problematic proveniences are noted in the table.

The burials listed in Table 48 do not provide an even-handed guide to eighteenth-century street clothes—three quarters of the entries pertain to men. Nor does the table provide an even-handed guide to the clothes people were interred in. Drawstrings, tapes, and ties fastened eighteenth-century street clothes in black New York, but shirts, trousers, and gowns with fabric fasteners are not represented in the archaeological record at the New York African Burial Ground. Straight pins also fastened street clothing, particularly women's wear. Women, as noted in Chapter 11, had a higher frequency than men of pins in the torso area of the body, a difference that may hint of bodices beneath, or in lieu of, winding sheets and shrouds. In addition, some of the buttons and cuff links were recovered from contexts that point to nonclothing use.

Aglets were the least visible of the clothing fasteners recovered from the individuals interred in the burial ground. Small in size and few in number, aglets were also the least informative about burial attire. Only three aglets were recovered, one from a young child (Burial 22, a Middle Group interment) and two others from adult women (Burials 213 and 342, Middle and Late Group interments, respectively). The aglets from Burials 22 and 342 were not provenienced in the field. The aglet from Burial 213 was located on the left parietal (the cranium) and a few strands of hair had adhered to it. Whether the aglet enclosed the end of a lace on a woman's cap is unclear.

Unlike aglets, buttons were numerous, stylistically varied, and although associated almost exclusively with men, provided considerable detail about the types of attire in which the dead were laid out.

¹ The total used here of 376 burials includes those for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be clearly determined; the most highly disturbed burials are not counted.

Table 48. Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex ^a	Temporal Group [®]	Items	Location in Grave ^b	
6	25–30	male?	Late	8 buttons (5 whole copper alloy, 2 with anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum	
10	40–45	male	Late- Middle	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole, 5 shanks only)	7 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg	
22	2.5-4.5	undetermined	Middle	aglet	not recorded	
37	45–55	male	Late	1 bone button	at left wrist	
158	20–30	male	Late	2 pairs ^c gilt copper-alloy cuff links, circular shape	at wrists	
171	44–60	male	Late	2 bone buttons; 1 copper- alloy button ring	bone buttons at right scapula and right femur; button ring at sternum	
174	17–18	male	Late	2 pewter buttons	lumbar vertebrae and right innominate	
181	20–23	male	Late	7 buttons (3 copper-alloy; 4 copper-alloy-and-bone with impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; location of cuff links unknown	
191	25-30	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	left ilium	
194	30–40	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button shank	near right femur	
203	12–18	undetermined	Late	8 wood-and-copper-alloy but- tons; possible leather covers	at the knees, wrists, and pelvic area	
211	adult	male?	Late	1 enamel cuff link face	on the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin	
213	45–55	female	Middle	aglet	left parietal	
214	45–55	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button; fragments from 3 shanks; 1 wood button	copper-alloy button near right shoulder; 2 shanks in pelvic area; shank and wood button in soil near head	
238	40–50	male	Late- Middle	1 bone button, 2 pairs ^c octagonal-shaped copperalloy cuff links	button at cervical vertebrae; cuff links at each wrist	
250	adult	undetermined	Early	1 copper-alloy button	possibly near pelvis	
257	30–40	male	Late	3 bone buttons	1 button from left acetabulum; 2 found during screening of soil	
259	17–19	female?	Late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, and 5 shanks)	4 copper alloy at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 wood at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis	
313	45–55	male	Late	3 bone buttons; 1 possible copper-alloy button ring	coffin floor beneath top of the head; possible button ring from among left ribs	
325	25–35	male	Late	1 gilt copper-alloy button	left upper sacrum	
326	45–55	male	Middle	4 copper-alloy domed buttons	in pelvic area and between tops of the fe- murs, near the hands	
333	45–55	male	Late- Middle	6 bone buttons	pelvis	
341	adult	male	Middle	1 pair ^c octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	left radius	

Table 48. Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets (continued)

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex [®]	Temporal Group [®]	Items	Location in Grave ^b
342	25–35	female?	Late	aglet	not recorded
353	24–34	male	Middle	1 bone button	next to left sciatic notch
361	33–57	male	Early	1 pewter button (missing from laboratory)	above right scapula/humerus
366	34–62	undetermined	Middle	1 copper-alloy button	at right wrist
368	10.5–13.5	undetermined	Middle	1 possible grommet, copper alloy	at throat
379	30–40	male	Middle	1 copper-alloy domed button, 1 possible leather button	pelvic area (innominate and left ulna)
385	40–60	female	Middle	2 bone buttons	right rib area
392	42.5–52.5	male	Late- Middle	11 bone-backed buttons; 2 octagonal cuff-link faces	4 buttons at right knee, 3 at left knee, 3 adjacent to right hand, 1 adjacent to left hand; 1 cuff link at right clavicle, 1 at cervical vertebrae
405	6–10	undetermined	Middle	1 white metal button	below right wrist on pelvis
415	35–55	Male	Middle	13 copper-alloy domed buttons (14 recorded in field)	4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, 2 at sacrum
			Burials	with Artifacts with Problems	atic Provenience
32	50–60	male?	Middle	1 pewter button fragment	unknown; button not recorded in field records
243	40–50	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	beneath the skull, in redeposited soil (no coffin)
271	45–57	male	Middle	2 copper-alloy domed buttons	found on the screen
276	20–24	female	Late	1 copper-alloy button	above right rib area in soil that was likely redeposited (no coffin)
278	45–55	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	unclear, probably from soil matrix in fill (no coffin)
371	25–35	female	Middle	1 metal button; 2 turquoise enamel cuff-link faces	button appears to be intrusive to the burial; cuff-link faces beneath left humerus
387	34–44	male	Early	cuff link or button fragment	provenience unknown
398	25–35	undetermined	Middle?	1 octagonal cuff link face	in disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear
403	39–65	male	Middle	2 copper-alloy buttons (1 domed, 1 flat); 2 pewter buttons	in disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear

^a A question mark indicates that the assignment is probable.

^b Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter. CA "pair" of cuff links—two faces (or crowns) linked together—fasten a sleeve. One "cuff link" (a single face) is insufficient. A properly fastened shirt would have needed a "set" of cuff links—two matched pairs, one pair per sleeve.

Ten individuals appear to have been interred in pants or breeches that buttoned at the hips or at the hips and the knees (Burials 10, 181, 203, 259, 325, 326, 379, 392, 415, and possibly 174). With the exception of the young people in Burials 203 and 259, the wearers of pants and breeches were men. Burials 203 and 259 were Late Group interments. The former held a 12-18-year old of undetermined sex, and the latter held a 17–19-year old identified as a probable woman. Because the degree of confidence in the identification was not the highest, it is conceivable that Burial 259 held a slender young man clad in knee breeches. But the idea of a young African woman remaking herself by manipulating everyday dress is not far fetched (for examples of enslaved Africans in colonial Boston and New York suspected by their owners of intending to pass for the opposite sex, see Greene [1944:141] and White [1991:126]; for a white New York woman who sought to obtain work on a privateer by dressing as a man, see Foote [2004:202]).

Two men probably wore jackets, as indicated by buttons in the torso area of the body. The jacket buttons from Burial 10 (Late-Middle Group) formed a seven-member set of matched, polished faces. The jacket buttons from Burial 6 (Late Group) also made a striking display: the set included one polished and four gilt faces in different sizes bearing a range of impressed designs, including upright foul anchors (see Button Type 6, discussed in section entitled "The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth").

Cuff links—two buttons linked together—fastened shirtsleeves during the era when the burial ground was in use. Cuff links were found with six individuals, but only in three cases were the cuff links positioned near the wearer's wrists. The men in Burials 238 (Late-Middle Group) and 158 (Late Group) each had a set of cuff links. Just one pair was recovered from the man in Burial 341 (Middle Group), although its location at the wrist also suggests a shirt was worn. It is possible a second pair was not preserved or that the man had only one pair when interred. The two turquoise enamel cuff-link faces associated with the woman in Burial 371 (Middle Group) might not to have been used to fasten a garment. They were located beneath her left upper arm. The probable man in Burial 211 (Late Group) had a turquoise enamel cuff-link face on the right clavicle, immediately adjacent to the chin. The man in Burial 392 (Late-Middle Group) also had a cuff link face on the right clavicle; a possible mate was recovered in the lab when the cervical vertebrae

were cleaned. Whether the cuff links from Burials 211 and 392 fastened a shirt with, say, a generous front overlap or a center front is unclear.

Eighteenth-century shirtsleeves were also fastened with buttons, as were shirtfronts and shirt necks. Buttons recovered from the ribs of the probable woman in Burial 259 suggest her knee breeches were topped with a shirt. Two bone buttons and a possible button ring were recovered near the scapula and sternum of the man in Burial 171 (Late Group). This man may have been interred in a shirt that fastened at the neck.

The bone buttons from Burial 171 may have been covered with fabric or thread, as suggested by the lack of staining associated with a metal cap. This kind of button sometimes fastened eighteenth-century undergarments (see discussion in section entitled "Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context"), particularly when its size was relatively small. In addition to Burial 171, bone buttons that may have had fabric or thread covers were associated with seven other interments. Some of these buttons were located in areas that hint of underdrawers (the left sciatic notch of the man in Middle Group Burial 353, the pelvis of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 333, and the left acetabulum, or hip joint, of the man in Late Group Burial 257). Other examples were located in areas that hint at a gown (the ribs of the woman in Middle Group Burial 385) and shirts (the cervical vertebrae of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 238 and the left wrist of the man in Late Group Burial 37). Whether shirts that fastened with covered buttons were street clothes or undergarments in the eyes of their wearers or in the eyes of the mourners who prepared shirt wearers for burial, is not known. The three bone buttons with the man in Burial 313 (Late Group) were located on the coffin floor beneath the top of the head. Their use as clothing fasteners is doubtful. They might have decorated a hat or been part of a hairstyle (for hat and hair decorations, see Chapter 13).

Some of the buttons (Burials 6, 10, 181, 259, 325, 326, and 415) and cuff links (Burials 158, 238, 341, and 392) would have ornamented as well as fastened clothing. The items were either decorated with gilt or impressed designs or were arrayed in eye-catching ways. Seven of the 10 individuals interred with what we consider decorative buttons and cuff links were from the Late-Middle and Late Groups. These men were apparently part of a broader trend. As shown in Table 49, the proportion of men with durable clothing fasteners increased with each successive temporal group.

Temporal Group	Total Men [®]	Men with Cl	othing Items ^b
	i otai Meii	Number	Percent
Early	10	1	10.0
Middle	27	5	18.5
Late-Middle	19	4	21.0
Late	39	13	33.3

Table 49. Burials of Men with Buttons or Cuff Links, by Temporal Group Assignment

Although the small size of the sample exaggerates the rise of male burial attire with durable fasteners, the rise itself, even if less robust than it appears, is not especially remarkable from an economic view. As we explain in the section entitled "Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context," the availability of consumer goods like clothing, buttons, and cuff links increased rapidly after the mid-1700s.

Still, the proportion of Late Group men with buttons and cuff links is striking because some of these items clearly fastened street clothing rather than undergarments or shrouds. It is impossible to determine precisely how many men were interred in street clothes. The quandary derives, in part, from the difficulty of differentiating outerwear from undergarments on the basis of button cover and button size. But it also derives from the multiple lives buttons led. For example, some buttons in Late Group burials of men may have been accessories rather than fasteners, such as the buttons beneath the head of the man in Burial 313. Other possible accessories include the bone buttons and button ring found at the scapula and sternum of Burial 171, which might have been worn on a string necklace, and the bone button at the left wrist of the man in Burial 37, which might have been part of a bracelet.

Even if we had a more precise sense of where to draw the line between undergarments and outer garments, we have no way of knowing whether street clothes constituted the deceased's best outfit or simply the garments he had on when he died. Men who were buried in the clothes they had on when they died may not have had a circle of kin and neighbors who could supply a shroud or a winding sheet. Street clothes may therefore represent makeshift burial attire—a practical response of community members to the circumstances

of death rather than to the economic wherewithal of the deceased per se. Data on coffinless burials lend support to the idea of street clothes as the burial attire of unusual circumstances. Evidence for clothing was slightly more frequent in burials of men without coffins (see Chapter 10). Coffinless burials were prominent in the Late Group, when the Revolutionary War and its aftermath disrupted the city.

Some of the buttons recovered in association with skeletal remains may have been talismans or mementos rather than fasteners or jewelry. The likeliest candidate is the copper-alloy button from Early Group Burial 250. It was recovered near the pelvis, in conjunction with a small iron mass and a large glass bead.

Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context

The clearest view of how Africans in eighteenthcentury Manhattan dressed comes from the New-York Gazette and the rival weeklies that issued from the city's print shops. Government printer William Bradford established the *Gazette* in 1725. Within the next two decades three of his former apprentices, John Peter Zenger, Henry DeForeest, and James Parker, started publications of their own (Hildeburn 1895). Their newspapers, and those that followed, brokered New York's commercial world. They carried shipping news, business correspondence, notices of public auctions and private sales, lists of imported and domestic goods, and, as the century progressed, an expanding roster of appeals for the capture of workers who fled from bondage. A command of insider knowledge about the lives of unfree laborers was a key feature

^aTotal includes male and probable male burials with likely preservation ("y" or "y, no cranium").

^bBurials in which clothing items were not clearly associated with an individual's skeletal remains are not included (see Table 48).

of the appeals (White 1991:116–120). In addition to clothing and adornment, writers described linguistic proficiency and workplace skills, elemental signs of status manipulated by runaways, confidence men, and ambitious members of the public at large (Waldstreicher 1999).

An "endless procession of tow cloth shirts and trousers, buckskin breeches, and beaver hats" made its way through Manhattan's world of print (Hodges and Brown 1994:xxxii). Waistcoats and jackets were also part of African men's attire. African women typically wore a petticoat (a skirt) and a short gown, an overblouse to present-day eyes. Figures 136–138 illustrate the construction and silhouette of these loosefitting staple garments, which also clothed workers of European descent.

Although utilitarian garments changed relatively little during the eighteenth century, they varied in texture and color, particularly in urban areas like New York. Descriptions of clothing in advertisements for the return of Africans who escaped from Manhattan households (Table 50) indicate that breeches were cut from a range of durable fabrics. The coarse, Germanmade osnaburg linen so ubiquitous in the plantation colonies (Earle 1894:175) outfitted Andrew and York, breeches-wearing New Yorkers who fled from bondage in 1733 and 1749. Breeches were also made from firmly woven worsteds and long-napped shags, sturdy woolen fabrics available in blue, green, red, scarlet, and yellow, along with somber brown and black. The old, red quilted petticoat that Fanny wore in 1758 may have been kin to the one pictured in Figure 138; Sal wore a blue version in 1766. The petticoat Suck wore in 1761 was black on one side and light colored on the other. Petticoats and short gowns were striped in blue, red, purple, black, and green.

Domestic and imported linen mingled with woolens and cottons produced overseas. Solids and stripes abutted checks and prints. When Hector escaped in 1750 he wore a coarse linen shirt and trousers with a twilled-woolen Kersey pea jacket lined in red. Pompey fled from bondage in 1763 dressed in a checked shirt and striped trousers. Pleasant absconded in 1781 wearing a brown short gown lined in white and a petticoat cut from red moreen, a worsted cotton or wool with a wavy or watery surface. A flowered red-and-green flannel petticoat and a blue, cloth jacket outfitted an unnamed 14–15-year-old girl in 1780.

Familiarity with the clothing Africans wore was not difficult to come by. Europeans and Africans typically lived under the same roof and often worked

alongside one another in homes, shops, warehouses, and industrial yards (Foote 2004:72-75). And although there is a fragmentary quality to the evidence from newspaper advertisements, in general, black New Yorkers had meager, long-suffering wardrobes, as did working people everywhere (Kidwell and Christman 1974:19–21). A comparison of three women highlights some of the gaps. Jenney (see Table 50) may have layered her clothing for warmth after deserting the home of carpenter John Bell in December 1737. She owned two petticoats and two waistcoats, jacket bodices that closed at the front with laces, pins, or buttons (on the construction of women's waistcoats, see Baumgarten [2002:120]). Hannah, prosecuted in 1716 for stealing a silk muslin handkerchief, a bit of calico, and enough Bristol stuff to make a petticoat and a gown, testified that her mistress had not provided her with anything to wear (Goodfriend 1992:122). In contrast, the African woman that George Clarke purchased in 1723 did not want for clothes, nor did she want for a new pair of stockings and shoes. Contention centered on the provision of two blankets, which Clarke's secretary had been obliged to supply after the seller had refused (McKee 1935:121-122).

Cloth and clothing were vexed issues for many, perhaps all, colonial Americans. Not only was fabric one of the most expensive consumer goods, it crisscrossed social boundaries the rich and the wellborn found it increasingly difficult to control (Breen 2004:148-192). Domestic cloth production varied regionally in response to shifting agrarian regimes and nonimportation movements (Ulrich 1998:6–7; White and White 1995a:165–168). Yet the output of home spinners never kept pace with the demands of a growing, fashion-minded population; neither did the output of shop-based swinglers (flax cleaners) and weavers like those Obadiah Wells hired for his spinning factory on Mulberry Street, near the Fresh Water Pond (New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy, May 8, 1766, and December 31, 1767; New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury, May 4, 1772). Finished cloth was the preeminent import during the eighteenth century (Figure 139).2 It accounted for over one-third to one-half of the annual expenditure on manufactured goods imported from Great Britain (Breen 2004:62; Shammas 1982:267). A mid-century surge in lower-priced textiles brought a wide variety of imported fabrics into the hands of ordinary people

 $^{^{2}\,}$ Cloth and clothing also dominated British trade with western Africa, as noted in Chapter 13.





Figure 136. Men's everyday breeches with fall fronts over the center fly. *From left to right*: linen cotton (1765–1785), cotton velvet (1785–1825), and yellow "nankeen" cotton (1785–1815). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

Figure 137. Working woman's striped linen wool petticoat (1770–1820) topped by a high-waisted short gown made from cotton linen (1800–1820). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).



Figure 138. Quilted petticoat (1770–1775) made in New York by Margaret Bleeker Ten Eyck. Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Sarah		November 14, 1732	about 24	female	"callico suit, striped satteen silk waistcoat, 2 homespun waistcoats, petticoat"	
Andrew	Saxon	October 1, 1733	man	male	"linen osnaburg breeches, old coat, shirts w/cross on left breast"	
Johnsey		August 26, 1734	25	male	"homespun jacket, pair of trowsers, speckled shirt"	
Jenney		December 19, 1737	14–15	female	"birds-eyed waistcoat, darkish pettycoat, callico waistcoat w/lg. Red flower and broad stripe"	
Jupiter		January 14, 1740	about 25	male	"cargey coat and jacket, pair yellow leather britches, good shoes and stockings"	
Galloway		October 27, 1740	21	male	"dark grey homespun jacket, lined; linen breeches; new shoes"	
Andrew		June 22, 1747	man	male	"blue cloth waistcoat, green breeches"	
Wan		June 6, 1748	about 25	male	"white pea jacket lined w/blue, osnaburg shirt, sailor's trousers, a pretty old hat and shoes"	
York		May 29, 1749	about 17	male	"blue and white streaked woolen jacket, coarse osnaburg shirt, old hat, coarse osnaburg breeches"	
Bolton		September 4, 1749	about 30	male	"very ordinary"	
Simon		November 21, 1748	man	male	"blue cloth great coat"	
Sam		October 16, 1749	about 27	male	"homespun coat, short trousers"	
Phoebe		August 13, 1750	about 45	female	"uncertain"	
Hector		October 8, 1750	man	male	"light colored Kersey pea jacket lined w/red, osnaburg shirt, trousers, shoes, stockings"	
Crook		June 8, 1752	about 22	male	"brown homespun jacket, homespun shirt, blue flowered handkerchief on head, no hat, barefoot"	
Lewis	Francois	November 5, 1753	man	male	"white linen shirt, brown yarn stockings, lt. brown cloth breeches w/silk kneebands, yellow cloth jacket w/gilt buttons"	"large sq. brass shoe buckles, gilt jacket buttons"
Jeremy		March 3, 1755	about 21	male	"2 blue coats, turn'd up with red, silver laced hat, sundry other clothes"	
Anthony		March 3, 1755	about 18	male	"darkish bearskin coat, Lt. Cloth jacket, breeches, blue jacket, red breeches, castor hat, sundry other clothes"	"brass buttons"
Holliday		October 27, 1755	about 25	male	"homespun Kersey jacket, felt hat, shoes and stockings"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Venture		January 12, 1756	boy	male	"blue watch-coat, pair of buckskin breeches, striped waistcoat w/metal buttons, very dirty old homespun shirt, mixed hose, shoes w/ large buckles"	
Pompey		May 31, 1756	about 14	male	"blue sailors jacket, striped homespun jacket underneath, old brown cloth breeches, old hat and cap"	
Titus		July 26, 1756	29–30	male	"olive jacket, black breeches, white stockings, half-worn pumps"	
Duke		August 30, 1756	man	male	"speckled shirt and trousers"	
Reick		May 9, 1757	man	male	"leather breeches, striped woolen trousers and shirt, yellowish vest, old shoes, no hat"	
Charles		May 30, 1757	about 23	male	"osnaburg shirt and trousers, blue jacket without sleeves, castor hat, blue cloth coat, red vest, everlag breeches, several shirts"	
Claus		July 4, 1757	about 35	male	"light col. Silk camblet coat, lined w/shalloon, flowered stuff waistcoat lined w/same, wash-leather breeches almost white w/washing, light col. Worsted stockings, pr. Homespun blue woolen stockings, 2 pr. Shoes, Garlix shirt, more"	"big brass shoe buckles, brass knee buckles"
Rose		November 21, 1757	35–36	female	"striped homespun joseph, old red cloth petticoat, white yarn stockings, old shoes"	
Hanibal		January 2, 1758	young	male	"brown short jacket w/hooks and eyes, black and white striped homespun double- breasted jacket, leather breeches, old wig and hat"	
Jasper		May 8, 1758	man	male	"brown forest cloth coat, blue waistcoat, leather breeches, all w/flat pewter buttons, old hat, broken yarn stockings, old shoes"	
Fanny		July 3, 1758	woman	female	"small black silk hat, lg. Cross barred blue and white striped stuff gown, old red quilted petticoat, bundle of other things"	
Ohnech		July 24, 1758	28	female	"homespun stole, petticoat, blue short cloak, white cap"	
York		July 24, 1758	man	male	"old shoes, blue, red worsted plush breeches, old trousers, check shirt, blue jacket, small cropt hat w/yellow worsted ringing around"	"carved shoe buckles"
Frank	Francosis	September 13, 1758	about 40	male	"a short blue sailor's jacket, and trowsers, a checked shirt and old hat"	
Jack		January 29, 1759	man	male	"brown Pea-jacket, a blue under one, a pair of buck-skin breeches"	
Fanny and child		October 1, 1759	(child) 8 months	female	"red and white striped Cotton Gown, a striped blue and white Petticoat, and a cap without any border"	
Harry		December 31, 1759	man	male	"old green jacket and a white one under it, a cap and woolen ribbed stockings"	"iron collar around his neck (not visible without exam)"
Pompey		February 18, 1760	man	male	"white coat, ozenbrigs shirt, cloth trowsers"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Glasgow		March 17, 1760	about 18	male	"blue great coat, plain white swan-skin jacket, pair of trowsers, pair of Lt. Blue stockings joined in the middle, new pair of shoes"	
Tom		June 30, 1760	14 or 15	male	"osnabrigs shirt and trousers, deep blue broad cloth jacket, the fore-parts lined in two colors."	
Suck		February 26, 1761	about 20	female	"homespun short gown with different colored stripes, a blue and white handkerchief, a quilted petticoat, one side light coloured the other side Black,"	
Prince		February 26, 1761	man	male	"Brown bearskin pea jacket double breasted lapel, lined with light coloured cloth, a short double breasted red waistcoat brass buttons, a pair of cloth"	
Lens		June 18, 1761	17	female	"homespun Josey and pettycoat, no shoes or stockings"	
Windsor		July 23, 1761	about 23	male	"brown frock livery coat with yellow collar, white shirt, waistcoat, black shag breeches, speckled stockings, new shoes, gold lac'd hat; new beaver hat"	
Charles	Roberts	April 29, 1762	28 or 30	male	"2 or 3 coats or suits, dark brown cloth coat (worn) dove colored cloth or fine frize, light blue-gray summercoat of grgam, camblet," (other)	"waistcoat with silver cord"
		August 19, 1762	about 30	male	"light colored cloth pair of breeches, jacket with flash sleeves, long striped trowseres, check shirt w/ chitterstrings"	"wears rings in his ears"
Tom		August 26, 1762	man	male	"Lt. Brown sagathee coat, crimson waistcoat, breeches, Lt gray stockings, white shirt, felt hat, stockings"	
Jack		September 9, 1762	man	male	"blew surtout coat w/yellow buttons, black knit breeches, black stockings, check shirt"	
Jack		September 23, 1762	13 or 14	male	"white shirt, black stocking breeches, white waistcoat, Lt. Brown stuff waistcoat w/dirty silver cord, no sleeves, black stocking waistcoat, black castor hat, no shoes or stockings."	
Pero		September 30, 1762	19	male	"white jacket, strip'd trowsers, a hat, but no shoes"	"had bobs in his ears"
Salvavus		October 14, 1762	about 22	male	"Lt. Blue double breasted jacket, lined white flannel, Lt. Colour'd breeches, oznabrig shirt"	
Joe		December 23, 1762	24	male	"brown coat with red lining, red double breasted vest, thicksett breeches, felt hat"	
Siro		January 7, 1763	man	male	"brown coat, green jacket. Leather breeches, blue stockings, shoes but on the top and sew'd up again"	
Lucretia		March 5, 1763	woman	female	"black petticoat, white apron, speckled handkerchief, blue waistcoat, laced cap, blue shot cloak"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

irst Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
		July 28, 1763	man	male	"oznaburgh jersey, petticoat"	"beads round her arms and neck"
		July 28, 1763	man	male	"oznaburgh frocks, trowsers"	
		July 28, 1763	woman	female	"oznaburgh frocks, trowsers, brown cloth jacket without sleeves"	
Pompey		August 15, 1763	20	male	"check shirt with white patch, linsey woolsey double breasted jacket- no buttons, red cap, long striped trowsers, no shoes, linen neckcloth"	"has a hole in each ear"
Tom		August 18, 1763	30	male	"red waistcoat faced with white, gray coat faced with red"	
Wall		August 25, 1763	40	male	"red coat, manchester velvet jacket, thread stockings, new shoes"	
Baptist		September 1, 1763	about 40	male	"good cloaths, green striped jacket, holland skirts,"	
Sam		September 29, 1763	about 30	male	"narrow brimmed hat cock'd on one side, Lt. Brown coat, short shirts, scarlet breeches, black worsted stockings "	"pewter buckles"
Lester		October 27, 1763	about 40	male	"white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, homespun shirt"	
Caesar		October 27, 1763	about 18	male	"white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, homespun shirt"	
Isaac		October 27, 1763	about 17	male	"white flannel jacket and drawers, leather breeches and homespun shirt"	
Mingo		October 27, 1763	about 15	male	"white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers and homespun shirt"	
Hannah		February 9, 1764	about 19	female	"green jacket, old home-spun petticoat, red and white handkerchief about her neck, men's shoes, old black crape gown, old flowered apron, check one"	
Harry		September 20, 1764	man	male	"Lt. coloured double-breasted jacket, coarse white linen shirt, short wide trowsers, half worn shoes"	"steel buckles and a scotch bonnet"
		November 8, 1764	man	male	"new blue jacket, new stockings and shoes without any buckles"	
		November 8, 1764	man	male	"new blue jacket and breeches, new stockings and shoes without any buckles"	
Pegg		December 13, 1764	about 40	female	"red cloak, white hat, pair of men's shoes, callico gown, [a variety]."	
Cate		June 27, 1765	woman	female	"striped home-spun petticoat, double purple and white callico, short gown, old stuff shoes without stockings"	
Sharp		July 4, 1765	about 20	male	"blur sailor's jacket, checked shirt, oznabrigs trowsers, old beaver hat (cock'd), pair of old shoes, no stockings"	
Toby		July 11, 1765	about 21	male	"brown fustian jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers and an old beaver hat"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
John		January 16, 1766	about 30 years	male	"good castor hat, ozenbrigs shirt, black crape caravat, brown bearskin great coat, cloth upper jacket lined with red striped linsey, green napt, possesses one white shirt, stockings"	"figure brass buttons, square steel buckles"
Sal		April 24, 1766	about 28	female	"purple calico gown, striped cotton short ditto, purple and white calico Joseph, old plain gown, blue quilted petticoat, green pettistone ditto"	
Bill		May 1, 1766	about 20 or 22	male	"old red cloth jacket, home-spun trowsres"	"iron collar"
Charles		June 26, 1766	man	male	"brown jacket, blue short waist coat underneath, pair of trowsers, sailor's round hat"	
John	Baptist	October 8, 1768	about 45 to 50	male		"has holes in each ear for earrings"
Norway		August 1, 1768	about 33	male	"a blue coat with silver thread buttons, reddish mix'd color cloth waistcoat, white plush breeches"	
Spier		December 10, 1770	about 15	male	"blue cloth coat, short white ditto under it, old knit yellow breeches, shoes stockings, hat sewn up all around"	
Syme		March 18, 1771	about 24	male	"old thickset coat, old beaver hat, old watch coat, other olds cloaths"	
Bristol		September 2, 1771	about 15	male	"tow-cloth jacket, trowsers, oznabrigs shirt, barelegged"	
Cato		October 19, 1772	about 22	male	"ozenbrigs shirt, jacket trowsers, new felt hat, shoes stockings"	
Philis		January 4, 1773	woman	female	"Lt. coloured calimaco gown, check apron, black silk cloak, black peelong bonnet"	
Jack		January 11, 1773	about 33	male	"brown double-breasted short Forrest Cloth Jacket, plain brass buttons, lined with red baize, red baize under jacket, leather breeches, blue yarn"	
Dick		January 11, 1773	19	male	"beaver hat (smartly cocked) new Lt. coloured coat and green cuffs, buckskin breeches, ribbed stockings (mixed colour)"	"silver buckles"
Prince		October 13, 1774	20	male	"brown thickset suit, band on his hat, his hair tied up behind"	"silver loop button, large tupee before"
John	Rattan	December 8, 1774	about 33	male	"Lt. coloured cloth coat, blue cloth waistcoat and breeches"	
Joseph	Low	November 27, 1775	man	male	"possesses several suits of good cloaths"	
Daniel		February 5, 1776	about 9	male	"old brown surtout coat, cotton check shirt"	
Prince		July 15, 1776	about 21	male	"blue cloth jacket, white home-spun shirt, trowsers"	
James		July 22, 1776	man	male	"old gray bearskin short coat, check shirt, linen breeches, worsted stockings"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Caster		August 19, 1776	about 35	male	"white linen trowsers, tow shirt, pair of old shoes"	"brass buckles"
Tom		September 9, 1776	about 50	male	"pair of brown tow trowsers, striped woolen shirt, felt hat half worn, new shoes waistcoat four parts- brown/white"	"Buckles"
York		October 14, 1776	about 19	male	"old brown cloth jacket w/ plain yellow metal buttons, red cloth collar, brown cloth waistcoat w/ small yellow metal buttons, check shirt, trowsers"	"shoes w/ yellow buckles, old round hat w/ gold ed."
Will		November 11, 1776	19	male	"white linen jacket w/ sleeves, blue cloth breeches, white stockings, and a hat half worn; Has knapsack full of clothes; possesses broad cloth coat etc"	
Ned		November 13, 1776	about 12	male	"blue under jacket, whiteish wilton coat, new blue duffle trowsres, check shirt whiteish stockings"	
Fortune	Brookman	December 9, 1776	about 20	male	"red plush waistcoat, snuff coloured long trowsers"	
Caesar		January 6, 1777	about 30	male	"wears a dirty looking cloth coat with buttons of the same colour, round hat with high crown, wears boots in wet weather; has a variety of clothes"	"set of silver shoe and knee buckles of open work"
Loui		March 3, 1777	about 20	male	"short blue coat lapelled w/ yellow metal but- tons, white waistcoat and breeches, white flannel trowsers, good shoes, stockings, white shirt,"	"white cap bound with red"
Joe		April 28, 1777	young fellow	male	"green cloth coat, waistcoat leather breeches"	
Sam		May 19, 1777	about 28	male	"property of the heirs of the late Widow Hester Weyman"	
Chess		May 26, 1777	about 20	male	"blue coat breeches, fond of dress"	
Pompy		June 2, 1777	about 17	male	"red jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, shoes, stockings, jockey cap"	
Frank		June 14, 1777	18 or 19	male	"brown coat with a cape, old black breeches, may alter his dress: 2 check shirts, pair of trowsers"	
Dick		July 28, 1777	man	male	"dark gray coat, jacket, white and check shirts, sundry strip'd trowsers, red and white striped jacket"	
Jerremy		August 4, 1777	about 25	male	"black breeches & stockings, white cloth coat w/ []d buttons, beaver hat"	"silver buckles in his []"
Fortune		August 18, 1777	about 23	male	"osnaburgh Trowsers, spotted flannel jacket"	
Tom		September 22, 1777	about 14	male	"striped jacket, trowsers, check shirt, no shoes or stockings, jacket tied with pieces of tape in place of buttons"	
Bet		October 20, 1777	woman	female	"homespun pettycoat, callico short gown"	
Peter		November 3, 1777	about 13 or 14	male	"suit of brown fustian, suit of claret coloured fine cloth ² /3rds worn, round hat, several pair stripped trowsers, etc."	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name Surname		Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Alick		January 3, 1778	about 15	male	"check shirt, reddish coloured jacket, onzaburg trowsers, leather cap"	
		January 24, 1778	about 13	male	"red coat (turned up w/green), green trowsers, blue jacket, coarse hat with gold band"	"stone buckle"
Diona		May 16, 1778	18	female	"blue striped waistcoat, blue petticoat, black hat, short red cloak w/ ermine on the fore part"	
Jem		May 16, 1778	about 14	male	"hat, brown vest and trowsers"	
Phillis		June 6, 1778	about 25	female	"black and white striped wooly jacket and petticoat and white bonnet"	
Hannah		August 1, 1778	about 14	female	"ozenbrig petticoat and shift, brown and blue short gown and an old green bonnet"	
Belinda		February 12, 1780	about 21	female	"brown jacket, red petticoat, white handkerchief, high cap"	
Robert	Kupperth	March 29, 1780	about 19	male	"old regimentals"	
Tom		April 15, 1780	about 15 or 16	male	"had on a brown thicksett jacket and osnaburg trowsers, old round hat shoes and stockings"	
		May 3, 1780	14 or 15	female	"had on flowered red and green flannel petticoat and blue cloth jacket"	
York		May 20, 1780	about 12	male	"short brown waistcoat, check shirt, woolen trowsers nearly white, blue cap"	
Toney		June 17, 1780	boy	male	"brown sailor's jacket, striped Holland trowsers, check shirt and a bound hat"	
Cain		July 5, 1780	about 26	male	"brown short coat, w/white metal buttons, brown waistcoat, white breeches, cock'd hat, black silk handkerchief about his head; has sundry other wearing apparel"	
Tom		August 5, 1780	about 16	male	"thicksett jacket, and osnaburgh trowsers"	
Scip		September 2, 1780	about 14	male	"check shirt, pair of striped trowsers"	
Fortune		September 2, 1780	about 18	male	"small round hat bound w/ silver lace"	
Jenny		September 6, 1780	about 14	female	"black callimanco coat, white linen wrapper and cap; carried all clothes with her"	
Rose		September 20, 1780	woman	female	"green fluff petticoat, a red & white callico short gown, red silk handkerchief, black sattin bonnet"	
Will		October 18, 1780	about 17	male	"blue jacket [] up with red, canvas pair of breeches"	"silver plated buckle"
Bob		November 1, 1780	about 12	male	"onzaburg frock, red jacket"	
Tony		December 13, 1780	22	male	"short blue coat, white metal buttons, striped jacket, long pair of blue trowsers"	
Sim	Sampson	January 27, 1781	about 18	male	"white jacket, black hat w/red ribbon, pair of boots, long blue and white trowsers"	

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name Surname		Advertisement Date		Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment	
Pleasant	Queen Ann	March 3, 1781	woman	female	"red moreen petticoat, brown short gown w'/ white lining, pair of brown ribbed stockings"		
Prussia		March 21, 1781	about 21	female	"had a quantity of cloaths with her"		
Tom		May 2, 1781	boy	male	"brown cotton jacket, black velvet Jockey cap, blue breeches, shoes and stockings"		
Charles	Macaulay	May 5, 1781	about 16 or 17	male	"old red jacket, white flannel one under it, pair of white fearnought trowsers, a sailor's round hat"		
Pameila		June 27, 1781	18	female	"short purple callicoe gown, pink petticoat"		
Duff		May 30, 1781	boy	male	"red waistcoat, check shirt, osnaburgh trowsers, no shoes, nor hat"		
Luce		July 21, 1781	about 28	female	"homespun short gown and petticoat"		
Sarah		July 25, 1781	about 19	female	"white short gown and a cotton petticoat"		
York	Revers	July 25, 1781	about 21 or 22	male	"brown coat with red cuffs and collar, and osnaburgh trowsers"		
Jack		July 25, 1781	about 12	male	"blue coat faced with red"		
Jane		August 15, 1781	about 19	female	"two Lt. coloured callico short gowns, black callimanco skirt and old stuff shoes"		
		August 25, 1781	boy	male	"coarse round hat, small striped jacket w/out sleeves, check shirt, pair of Russia [] trowsers open at foot		
Mattis		August 25, 1781	about 22	male	"three check shirts, oznaburgh trowsers and frock, pair of mottled nankeen breeches patched on the Rt. Knee, striped jacket, round hat."		
Jacob		September 1, 1781	near 14	male	"red jacket, osnaburgh trowsers, check shirt, no hat or shoes"		
Jack		September 1, 1781	14	male	"check shirt, trowsers"		
Bristol		October 3, 1781	about 14	male	"homespun linen shirt and trowsers"		
Diana		October 10, 1781	about 14	female	"short red callico bed gown, osnaburgh petticoat, blue handerchief"		
James	Herbert	October 10, 1781	34	male	"brown jacket"		
Tom	Whit[]en	October 10, 1781	23	male	"green jacket"		
Peg		November 17, 1781	18	female	"blue cloth jacket w/ long sleeves (in the form of a riding dress) w/ bright yellow buttons"		
Tom		December 8, 1781	boy	male	"long scarlet coat, double lapelled w/ gilt buttons, red jacket, double breasted, white breeches, grey worsted ribbed stockings, strong shoes, cap"	"white metal buttons"	
Cudjoe		January 5, 1782	boy	male	"blue jacket, trowsers"		
Rachel		January 9, 1782	woman	female	"dark callicoe short gown, homespun petticoat without cloak or hat"		

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	First Name Surname Adv		Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment	
Polly		January 9, 1782	13	female	"off without shoes, stockings, and wore a blue baize frock"		
Jane		February 9, 1782	about 15	female	"pale green callimanco petticoat, red short gown, scarlet cloak with hood"		
Lissa		February 13, 1782	about 24	female	"brown short gown, brown serge petticoat, blue short cloak unbound with a cap to it; possesses 2 callico long gowns, other"		
Charlottee		March 6, 1782	19	female	"white gown and petticoat"		
		March 13, 1782	boy	male	"black super-fine broad cloth coat, waistcoat, black silk breeches & stockings, beaver hat with crape around it"		
Tom		March 23, 1782	boy	male	"suit of morning"		
Joe		April 20, 1782	man	male	"blue short jacket, straw hat"		
James		April 24, 1782	16 or 17	male	"cap [red, Lt. coloured] short brown coat, white dimity jacket, homespun linen trowsers"		
Phillis		May 15, 1782	woman	female	"brown strouding jacket, black shirt, cheque apron, blue stockings, men's shoes"		
Bacchus		June 8, 1782	about 12	male	"white jacket, striped trowsers, no shoes or hat"		
Caesar	Augustus	June 15, 1782	man	male	"regimental blue coat w/ red collar, red waistcoat, linen trowsers, round hat"		
Jack		June 15, 1782	about 15	male	"blue and white striped linen jacket. Pair of parson's grey board cloth trowsers, white homespun linen shirt, small round hat"		
David		July 17, 1782	13 or 14	male	"scarlet waistcoat and trowsers"		
		July 27, 1782	about 24	female	"shift and under petticoat"		
		August 3, 1782	13 or 14	female	"white short gown, black calimanco skirt, no cap, black bonnet"	"pair of ear bobs in her ears"	
Tony		August 17, 1782	24	male	"short Lt. coloured wilton coat, callico jacket, pair long brown silk trowsers, pair new shoes, round black hat"		
Adam		August 17, 1782	19	male	"wore an officers old red coat faced with white, gold basket button, brown jacket and trowsers"		
John	Jackson	September 25, 1782	about 22	male	"Lt. coloured Fustian jacket, waistcoat, breeches, cock'd hat, green and red short outside jacket, pair of black silk breeches"		
Peter		October 2, 1782	boy	male	"white linen shirt, white cloth waistcoat without sleeves, striped Holland trowsers"		
Cato		October 12, 1782	boy	male	"blue short jacket, linen with green, and long linen trowsers"		
Jack		October 16, 1782	10	male	"coarse white shirt, trowsers, old light brown cloth jacket, round hat, without shoes or stockings"		

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name Surname Advertisement Age Sex		Clothing	Other Adornment				
Jack		October 16, 1782	boy	male	"blue waistcoat, striped jacket, canvas trowsers, grey stockings, without a hat"		
		October 26, 1782	about 13	male	"check shirt, oznabrig trowsers, old red coat w/ black collar and cuffs"		
London		October 30, 1782	14	male	"white wollen waistcoat, breeches, and a shirt"		
Billy		January 13, 1783	about 20	male	"common dress of a sailor, viz, a blue jacket, pair of blue trowsers, round hat, check shirt"		
Nancy	Blond	February 15, 1783	woman	female	"green baize wrapper, light coloured pet- ticoat, bundle of other clothes"		
Seth		March 15, 1783	about 14	female	"red baize jacket, petticoat, high heel'd shoes"		
EBB		April 9, 1783	18	male	"brown coat (French fashion), grey cloth coat, black breeches, large brimed bound hat"		
Duff		April 28, 1783	boy	male	"brown jacket, new fustian trowsers, new wool hat"		
Jack		May 10, 1783	about 23	male	"check shirt, blue waistcoat, blue coatee w/ red cape, long white trowsers, white stockings"		
Cesar		June 14, 1783	about 26	male	"Lt. coloured cloth waistcoat, no sleeves, white metal hole buttons, pair of jean breeches, shoes stockings, half worn white hat"		
Poll		June 14, 1783	about 13	female	"red cloath petticoat, Lt. Blue short gown, home made"		
Luce		June 29, 1783	about 30	female	"green striped fluff gown (washed), dark blue moreen petticoat, gauze cap, pink rib- bons, no hat, dark purple callicoe gown"		
Jack		July 9, 1783	between 11 and 12	male	"osnaburg shirt, tow trowsers"		
Lucy		August 13, 1783	about 28	female	"2 short gowns, 2 petticoats, 1 striped bottom short gown, yellow ground callicoe, black petticoat, one green"		
Venus		August 13, 1783	5 or 6	female	"tow cloth frock"		
		August 16, 1783	little boy	male	"blue coat w/ red cuffs and collar, fustian trowsers, with buttons all down the sides"		
Madlane		October 3, 1783	about 12	female	"striped woollen rapper, dark blue petti- coat w/ white flowers, bare footed"		
Kate		October 22, 1783	woman	female	"callico short gown w/ blue and yellow horses, carriages & soldiers, several caps w/ long ears"		
Thomas		November 3, 1783	man	male	"blue sailors jacket, green under waistcoat, whitish woollen or oznabrig trowsers"		
Cuffey		November 5, 1783	man	male	"brown surtout-coat"		
Johannis		November 5, 1783	man	male	"blue & white striped linen jacket, with shoes and stockings"		

Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment	
Flora		November 12, 1783	44 or 45	female	"generally wears striped homespun; may be in black"		
James		November 12, 1783	about 21	male	"wears dark brown; may be in black"		
Hector		November 19, 1783	18	male	"round hat, short coatee (Lt. Colour), cloth waistcoat, watchcoat w/velvet cap, coating pair of trowsers (grey), white stockings"		
Stepney		December 6, 1783	20	male	"green short coat, blue under waist-one, buck-skin breeches w/ blue surtout-coat"		
Prince		December 6, 1783	17	male	"blue cloth trowsers, reddish sailor's jacket, dk brown great coat"		
Sarah		December 17, 1783	30	female	"callicoe short gown, black shirt, black hat trimmed w/ edging; took number of good clothes"		
		December 24, 1783	13	male	"blue short jacket, trowsers of the same cloth"		

Note: The database of escapee advertisements was created by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation for the African Burial Ground, primarily from the compilation in Hodges and Brown (1994).



Figure 139. A New York City merchant's order for textiles from England, with swatches of linen (tobine) attached, 1746 (Collection of the New-York Historical Society).

and, to a lesser extent, to those of the working poor. City dwellers were well entrenched in the empire of goods. Among the textile cargoes auctioned in Manhattan in mid-April 1732 were Spanish cloth, Holland linen, English damasks, Indian cherryderries (similar to gingham), striped and flowered Persians (thin, soft silk used for coat lining), China taffetas, and garlicks (linens) from Silesia. Printed calicoes and durants, glazed woolen stuffs touted for their endurance, were available, also, along with buttons, thread, and a few parcels of haberdashery (*New-York Gazette*, March 27, 1732).

New York lawmakers did not follow South Carolina's 1735 lead in prohibiting African workers from wearing fancy, colorful fabrics. But disquiet about the appearance of blacks lodged in a few Manhattan homes. Historian Shane White (1991:199–200) has explained that some New Yorkers of European descent suspected smartly dressed Africans of having a larcenous and insubordinate bent. Dry goods were peripatetic in eighteenth-century Manhattan, as was the city's workforce. Cloth and clothing shifted from warehouses, shops, and home linen cupboards to tavern-based fencing operations, and rates of prosecu-

tion for theft and the keeping of disreputable drinking establishments rose in tandem as the century advanced (see Greenberg 1974:138–140). Africans, in turn, deserted their posts, sometimes with a master's or a mistress's clothing in tow.

Eighteenth-century attire was not always easy to parse. Consider, for example, the garments Sarah possessed in 1732 (see Table 50). Her wardrobe included a suit (a term usually reserved for a complete outfit cut from the same cloth), a petticoat, and three waistcoats, two made from homespun and the third from striped satteen silk. "Homespun" and "silk" evoke separate worlds, one characterized by frugality and the other by wealth. Yet these commonplace words were unstable signposts for the fabrics they named. Textile terminology and fiber content varied from place to place. Homespun, for English speakers, described cloth that was unmilled and coarsely woven, but in American usage, homespun meant "homemade." The quality of homemade cloth reflected the skills of the sorter, the carder, the spinner, the washer, and the weaver. Its texture ranged from coarse to fine, and it attired housewives as well as servants and the enslaved (Baumgarten 2002:78, 114-115; Ulrich 2001:84–93).

"Satteen silk" was ambiguous, too. Sateen denoted a cotton textile with a shiny, satinlike face. Satin was a twilled silk. Silk was sometimes blended with wool. Sarah's owner, merchant Joseph Reade, may have been hedging his bets about whether her striped waistcoat had been cut from the genuine article or a lower-priced imitation, but he did not claim that she had lifted her clothes (for eighteenth-century fabric terminology, see Cunnington et al. [1960] and Montgomery [1984]).

Like all clothing worn during the eighteenth century, Sarah's garments were sewn by hand. She may have cut and stitched them herself. Sarah worked as a domestic, as did many of the women interred at the African Burial Ground, and Reade said that she was handy with all kinds of housework. She probably sewed the family linens. Sheets and undergarments (shifts, drawers, and nightshirts) were typically made at home (see Kidwell and Christman 1974:25).

Ready-made garments supplemented the apparel women stitched in parlors and kitchens. Some of the ready-made items black New Yorkers wore were geared to sailors and soldiers (Kersey pea coats, widelegged trousers, and regimental attire). Other items were marketed to the public at large (men's shirts and waistcoats, women's cloaks and quilted petticoats, and knee-length woolen and cotton stockings). Whether



Figure 140. Self-enclosed casing for a drawstring, on a gown with set-in sleeves (1800–1810). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

imported from England or locally produced, readymade clothing often "bore the mark of a second-class product" (Kidwell and Christman 1974:31). Unlike bespoke suits and gowns, ready-made garments were not cut and draped with a particular person in mind. The generalization holds for leather breeches, which were the province of specialized tailors like John Baster. Like many ambitious artisans who hung out their signs in Manhattan, Baster sought patronage from gentlemen who wore custom-fitted leather breeches for leisure and sports (see Baumgarten 2002:125). But "all sorts" of breeches could be had at Baster's shop opposite the Old Slip Market. The phrase was a tailor's deft way of conveying his willingness to supply ready-made items for workingmen (New-York Gazette, October 5, 1761).

Despite its loose fit, utilitarian attire registered a few fashion trends. The waistlines on women's short gowns migrated upward toward the end of the 1700s—the short gown pictured in Figure 137 has a high, or "Empire," waist (on the design and construction of the short gown, see Kidwell [1978]). Necklines and bodices continued to be fastened primarily with drawstrings made with cords and tapes (Figure 140).³ Leather and cloth breeches rode low on the hips. After 1730, breeches acquired a fall, or flap front, over the center fly, which increased the number of buttons needed to keep the breeches in place (Tortora and Eubank 1998:232).

Buttons: Attention to appearance included buttons as well as clothes. The writers of runaway advertise-

³ Only one woman listed in Table 50 had buttons on her clothes: Peg, who escaped in 1781. The buttons were bright yellow, and they fastened a long-sleeved, blue cloth jacket. References to buttons on short gowns are scarce, suggesting that buttons were atypical (Kidwell 1978:56). An example of a short gown fastened with pins can be found in Chapter 11.



Figure 141. Example of a salesman's sample card, circa 1780, for buttons made from pinchbeck, a copper alloy that retains its polish (source: Albert and Kent 1949:392).

ments noted the color, size, and placement of buttons on men's attire and remarked when buttons were missing from a garment, or when alternative fasteners were used. Pompey's linsey-woolsey double-breasted jacket, mentioned in an advertisement published in 1763, was bereft of buttons. Tom's striped jacket was tied with pieces of fabric tape when he escaped in 1777. In 1762 advertisements, Charles and Jack both had waistcoats that fastened with silver cord. Hanibal's brown short jacket was described as having been closed with hooks and eyes in a 1758 advertisement.

Although the runaway advertisements lack the visual clarity of a salesman's sample card (Figure 141), they highlight one of the ornamental contributions buttons made to everyday clothing. Practical fasteners doubled as adornment by playing upon color contrasts. White and yellow metal buttons fastened brown, blue, and red jackets, surtouts (overcoats), and waistcoats (Jasper, 1758; Jack, 1773; Cain, 1780; Tony, 1780; Jack 1762; Prince, 1761). Yellow and gilt buttons enlivened blue and scarlet coat lapels for Louis in 1777 and Tom in 1781. Nor-

way's blue coat sported buttons covered with silver thread in 1768.

Metal buttons and cuff links also carried eye-catching designs. A gold button with a "basket" motif fastened the old red officer's coat Adam wore in 1782. The motif may have resembled the cross weave stamped on the metal-capped bone buttons from Burial 181, or on the sample attached to the salesman's card (see Figure 141, middle column, second row from bottom). Eleven of the breeches' buttons from Burial 259 were ridged. Three of their stylistic kin appear on the card (see Figure 141, column one, second row from top; column two, fourth row from bottom; column three, third row from bottom).

Not all button faces, of course, were designed for the light of day. Buttons covered with thread and cloth joined the ranks of undergarment fasteners in the decades after 1650 (Cunnington and Cunnington 1981:16). Although a variety of undergarments were available for men as the eighteenth century progressed, the routine use of ready-made and custom-fitted underwear within and across occupational groups is not known. Men's underdrawers are a case in point. Cut full from plain-weave cotton or woolen flannel, underdrawers fastened with fewer front buttons than breeches and lacked the flap over the center fly. But long-tailed shirts tucked into trousers often performed the work of underdrawers. Under waistcoats and undershirts also added warmth to men's attire. Based on examples from costume collections, the latter were cut like outer shirts and fastened with a covered button at the neck or with covered buttons down the front (see Baumgarten 1992). Workingwomen's undergarments consisted of a chemise or a slip beneath a petticoat and a gown. The chemise and the slip typically fastened with tapes, strings, or ribbons (Tortora and Eubank 1998:236).

Ready-made clothing would have come with buttons already attached, but home sewers and ordinary consumers in need of fasteners might have scrutinized the wares in a peddler's sack, a market stall, a dry goods store, or a specialty shop. Henry Whiteman, a brass button maker who served his apprenticeship in Philadelphia, prospered in mideighteenth-century New York. Ten years after gaining a foothold in Manhattan's lively garment sector, Whiteman supplied buttons at wholesale and retail prices under a Buttons and Buckles sign (*New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, September 17, 1750; *New-York Gazette*, October 13, 1760). Edward Andrews, a London-trained cutler, carried a



Figure 142. Gold octagonal cuff links on an infant's shirt sleeve (1730–1760). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

choice assortment of buttons for gentlemen, ladies, and others (*New-York Gazette and the Weekly Post-Boy*, Supplement, May 18, 1752). Braziers like Thomas Yates and William Scandrett offered sundry kinds of buttons and cuff links at reasonable rates (*New-York Gazette*, November 19, 1759, and April 16, 1764).

Popular styles of buttons and cuff links could be had in a range of materials and sizes. Burials 238, 341, and 398 had copper-alloy versions of the gold octagonal cuff links shown in Figure 142.

Buttons were also recycled. For example, the bone buttons from Burial 313, which may have been covered with fabric or thread, might originally have been button backs that were modified or reused. Recycling, modification, and functional substitution—using a readily available item to perform the task of an item that has become scarce—were a commonplace of African and African diasporic life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Posnansky 1999:31–33). Personal adornments were modified and recycled, too, as explained in Chapter 13.

The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth

The assemblage included 133 buttons or portions of buttons, 3 aglets, and 1 grommet or eyelet from a clothing fastener. Cuff links were also recovered, including 2 sets (2 pair of linked faces) and 3 single pairs (two faces only). Materials represented among the clothing fasteners included copper alloy, pewter, bone, and wood.

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, Chain of Custody

Almost all the buttons and cuff links were recovered during the field excavation of the burials. A few were found during cleaning of skeletal remains in the laboratory (the pewter button from Burial 174; bone-backed buttons and bone button fragments from Burials 181, 238, and 257; copper-alloy buttons associated with Burials 379 and 387; a possible button ring from Burial 313 and a cuff-link remnant from Burial 392). In some cases, items were identified as button or cuff-link fragments only after initial cleaning (the shanks from Burial 10; the button ring from Burial 171; a copper-alloy button from Burial 276; a domed button from Burial 379). All of the aglets were recovered in the field but were identified as pins at the time. They were recognized as aglets only after research on eighteenth-century clothing had been conducted and the archaeological literature had been searched for examples of clothing artifacts from the period when the burial ground was in use.

Several items were recorded in the field but were missing from the laboratory at the time the Howard University Archaeology Team came on board. Among the items logged as "missing" were the cuff links from Burials 181 and the pewter button attributed to Burial 361.

Textiles were found in association with a number of the metal clothing items, as listed in Table 51. Conservators noted a textile impression in association with the bone-and-copper-alloy buttons from Burial 181. Subsequent examination indicated that the metal faces of these buttons were impressed with a cross-weave design. Field notes on Burial 6 indicated possible textile fragments had adhered to the cranium, but none was recovered.

Bone buttons were generally very stable. They were cleaned and treated with a barrier coating. Metal buttons were normally desalinized in deionized baths and mechanically cleaned with a scalpel, then vacuum impregnated with BTA and B-72. The cuff links from Burials 238 and 341 were treated with a 1 percent solution of formic acid to loosen and soften the corrosion products and then cleaned a second time in deionized water. The aglets received the same treatment as the pins. The staff at John Milner Associates took an initial series of photographs.

Buttons, cuff links, and aglets were reexamined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel

Table 51. Textile and Leather Fragments Associated with Clothing Fasteners

Burial No.	Catalog No(s).	Type of Fragment	Comments		
10	234-B.012	wool, plain weave	Location was not recorded, but the fragment would most likely have been attached to a button.		
22	344-B.004 linen		Location was not recorded. An aglet and pins were recovered with the burial. The linen fragment may have been part of a shroud.		
194	1109-B.002 organic matter		A fragment of organic matter, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with a copper-alloy shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.		
203	1174-B.001–1174-B.008	leather button covers	Eight wooden buttons were evidently covered in leather.		
259	1249-B.002–1249-B.004, 1249-B.006, 1249-B.011, 1249-B 012, 1249-B.017, 1249-B.019, 1249-B.021–1249-B.024	wool, linen, and possible leather	Woven, fine wool fragments were associated with some of the breeches' buttons. One of these had a well-preserved buttonhole. Conservators identified linen fragments, but did not record which buttons these fragments were associated with. Wooden buttons appeared to have leather covers.		
278	1275-UNC.001	textile (missing)	Conservators noted a textile fragment attached to the back of a copper-alloy button, but it was not given to the Howard University Archaeology Team.		
326	1854-B.009	organic matter	Field records state that a small fragment of cloth, as well as a bit of possible hair, had adhered to one of the buttons. A small fragment of organic material was cataloged (not photographed) but was not identifiable.		
371	1875-B.002	wool, weave undeterminable	Fragment was associated with an iron button that appears to have been intrusive to the burial.		
379	1906-B.001	possible leather button cover	The preserved remains of one of the buttons (No. 1906-B.001) may have been from a leather cover or, alternatively, from the outer portion of a wooden crown.		
392	2039-B.001–2039-B.003, 2039-B.006, 2039-B.007, 2039-B.011, 2039-B.012	wool, fine weave with an S twist; one of the fragments included a button-hole	Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone-button backs. One fragment from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole 1 mm wider than the associated button.		
403	2067-B.004	textile, simple weave, black color	It is not clear whether the cloth fragments were associated with particular buttons.		
415	2097-B.003, 2097-B.005, 2097-B.007, 2097-B.008	wool buttonhole frag- ment; wool fragment attached to coffin wood; possible leather	Because of a laboratory processing error, it is not possible to identify the specific button associated with the wool buttonhole. Another woolen fragment was attached to coffin wood.		

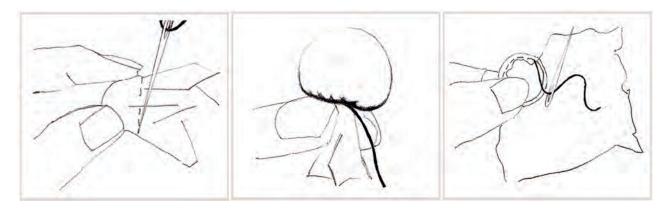


Figure 143. Diagram showing the process for covering a button blank or button ring with cloth (drawing by Alliah Humber).

during 1998–1999 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted. Jon Abbott took final high-quality photographs of the buttons and cuff links in August 2001. At that time, the assemblage was packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art-storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The assemblage was reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003, and then transshipped back to New York. Items that National Park Service staff selected for replication were sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study; these included buttons and cuff links from Burials 6, 10, 181, 214, 250, 313, 392, 403, 405, and 415.

Items not selected for replication were sent to Jon Abbott for digital photography in September 2003. A series of high-quality digital photographs was taken from many angles for each individual item, allowing for future analysis. All clothing-related items were placed in coffins for reburial in October of 2003.

Typology

In this section, we categorize the types of clothing fasteners represented in the assemblage. The types are based on materials employed in the manufacturing process (organic, metallic, or composite) and structural attributes (Table 52). An attempt will be made to correlate these types with those represented in the following published sources: Noël-Hume (1969), South (1964), Hinks (1988), Cotter (1968), Stone (1974), and Olsen (1963). Other attributes may be more important for understanding button acquisition and use; for instance, the number of parts (which may reflect cost/expense of manufacture), decoration, the potential for reuse

and modification, durability and longevity, cost, and availability of specific imports. We note these attributes in the inventory where possible.

The key characteristics of the buttons and cuff links are summarized in the typology in Table 52. Because of the small quantity of aglets and cuff links recovered, no attempt was made to ascribe these objects to particular types.

Type 1: Bone Backs or Molds for Thread-Cov**ered Buttons**: Type 1 buttons are flat disks cut from animal bone with a single, centrally located, drilled hole. The preferred raw material appears to have been the wide, flat, rib bones from large mammal species. Sections of these bones were easy to secure, thereby preventing movement during the cutting process. The button blanks were cut and the hole drilled at the same time by the use of specially designed metal bits that were outfitted on a hand or powered drill press (see the Diderot illustration of a mid-eighteenth-century French manufacturer in Albert and Kent [1949:28]). With the use of more refined bits, this process would also form the offset rim on the back face for the attachment of a metal cap. It should be noted that once the button and hole were finished, the button blanks could be used "as is"; those that were not finished or considered defective could be put to an alternative use. Also called a "thread-back" button, these types of fasteners could be used either plain faced with a thread shank or with a cloth or thread covering that was sewn directly onto the garment (Figure 143; Albert and Kent 1949:44–45). Small diameter sizes, in the range of 9–15 mm, were worn on waistcoats or shirts, and larger sizes, measuring 16-29 mm, were intended for coats. It is assumed these types of buttons were of low cost and easy to manufacture.

Table 52. Button Types Recovered at the African Burial Ground

Button Types	ABG Type	Noel-Hume/ South Type	Hinks Type ^b	Olsen/ Cotter Type [©]	Stone Type ^d	Description
Organic buttons						
Bone backs or molds for thread covered buttons	1	15 (1726–1865)	9A1w waistcoat or shirt, 9A1c coat (1680– 1810)	nonfunctional button blank	Cat. 1, Type 1	Cut, flat disk with a single central hole; with or without turning marks and off-set rim on at least one face; small diameter for waistcoat or shirt, 9–15 mm; large diameter for coat, 16–29 mm.
Composite buttons						
Copper-alloy ring for thread- covered buttons f	2	not listed	9B1 (1750–1840)	not listed	Class V, SA T1 (?)	Copper-alloy ring with soldered ends; provides framework for thread or cloth covering; shirt button.
Composite button with a nonmetallic cap, wood back, and copper-alloy wire loop shank ⁹	3	not listed	with single-hole type 9A2—but states single hole was not functional		Class V, SA (?)	Turned and cut wood disk with a single central hole; circular recessed area on one face; cop- per-alloy-wire shank held in place with a wire flange or crimped end; possibly covered with leather or cloth, may also be painted or stained a dark color.
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, bone back, and copper-alloy wire loop shank h	4	4 (1726–1776)	5B3 (1750–1810)	Type B variant 1700–1790	Class III, SA	Stamped sheet-metal cap; usually decorated; with bone back; finely turned on both sides with a single central hole; concave front and convex back; offset rim. Wire loop shank: exterior portion of shank appears round in cross section, whereas the ends of shank (within the space between front and back of the button) are flattened and splayed outward; shank is loose fitting.
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, with perforated (four- hole) bone back	5	3 with cap (1726–1776)	5B2 (1750–1810)	Type B (1700–1790)	Class III, SA	Bone back; finely turned on both sides with four holes; concave front and convex back; also has an offset rim. No shank; cap has been removed so as to be used as a simple sew through.

able 32. Button Types Recovered at the African Burial Ground (continued)								
Button Types	ABG Type	Noel-Hume/ South Type [®]	Hinks Type ^b	Olsen/ Cotter Type [©]	Stone Type ^d	Description		
Metal buttons								
Cast 2-and 3- piece all metallic buttons with wire loop shank	6	Types 7, 8, 9, and 11 (1726– 1776); Type 11 also occurs in mid-nine- teenth century	(1690s to early nine- teenth century)	Type C, D, and E (1750–1812)	CI, SD	Cast two-piece button; crown cast around a separate wire-looped eye in a raised or coneshaped boss; mold marks have been removed by hand filing or machine spinning the back.		
	7	Types 2 and 6 (1726–1776)	Type 3 (1680s–1770s)	not listed	CII, SA	Cast three-piece button; cast fror and back; flux joined after a sep- arate wire-loop eye is inserted through back plate; shank is either braised or loose; without holes (one or two) on back.		

Table 52. Button Types Recovered at the African Burial Ground (continued)

A total of 19 buttons of this type were recovered from eight burials at the African Burial Ground: Burials 37, 171, 238, 257, 313, 333, 353, and 385. None of the examples in the collection was decorated, and no textile remains were recovered in association with any of the buttons. In most cases, these were the only type of button found with the individual. They were not used in conjunction with metal caps.

Type 2: Copper-Alloy Rings for Thread- or Cloth-Covered Buttons: Type 2 buttons are composed of small copper-alloy rings manufactured of drawn wire and covered by thread or cloth. The ends of the wire were apparently braised together to form a 10–12-mm-diameter ring. Also known as Dorset buttons, this type of button was made in England in the seventeenth century; production continued into the mid-nineteenth century (Albert and Kent 1949:90; Luscomb 1967:57).

Two buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, from Burials 171 and 313. None of the examples in the collection contained the thread covering, nor were any textiles found in association with the buttons.

Type 3: Composite Button, Wood with a Nonmetallic Covering and Copper-Alloy Wire Loop **Shank**: Type 3 buttons are composed of a wooden body, a metal shank, and possibly a cloth or leather covering sewn over the button face. The buttons are cut from fine-grained hardwoods, such as apple, yew, or boxwood, that are lathe-turned into long, dowel-like rods. Individual buttons blanks are then sawed from the dowel's end. A single central hole is drilled through the wooden disk (Albert and Kent 1949:26). On the examples recovered from the New York African Burial Ground, the front face of the button contained a circular recessed area, evidently required to secure and provide space for the copper-alloy wire shank. Finally, the button's face and the exposed ends of the shanks were covered with leather or cloth. Painting or staining the button a dark color was an alternative surface treatment. These buttons measured approximately 16 mm in width.

To prevent the shank from pulling through the button face, the wire loops were attached and held in place in a variety of ways. In some of the specimens recovered from the New York African Burial Ground, the ends of the shank appear to have either been splayed or twisted; in others, the ends were crimped to form a wider protuberance or, possibly, a piece of wire was wound around the ends of the shank. Beyond

^a From Noel-Hume (1969); South (1964).

^b From Hinks (1988).

[©] From Cotter (1968); Olsen (1963).

^d From Stone (1974).

[®] Found in 1770–1780 contexts.

^fPost-1750 manufacture in England.

⁹ Hinks (1988:89) has noted that wood buttons were found on inexpensive clothing.

h Found in ca. 1784 contexts (Hinks 1988:125–126).

the use of pin shanks (a wire that is pushed through the body of the button and is looped back to form a shank), the type of shank observed at the New York African Burial Ground has not been detailed in the literature on button manufacture.

A total of 23 buttons of this type were recovered from five burials (Burials 10, 194, 203, 214, 259, and 379) at the New York African Burial Ground.

Type 4: Composite Button with a Stamped Metal Cap and Bone Back with Single Hole for a Copper-Alloy Wire Loop Shank: Type 4 buttons consist of a die-stamped, copper-alloy sheet-metal cap, usually decorated, covering a bone back and a fastener composed of a copper-alloy wire loop shank. The bone backs were finely turned on both sides with a single, central hole, a concave front, a convex back, and a well-defined, offset rim. The loose fitting wire loop shanks were placed within the concave space between the cap and front of the button back prior to the cap's attachment. There was some variation in the shape of the wire loop shank: in one example from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.006), the exterior portion of the shank appears round in cross section, whereas the ends of the shank (within the space between the front and back of the button) were flattened and splayed outward. The caps are decorated by either die stamping or repoussé and subsequently gold plated. This type of button was manufactured throughout the eighteenth century, according to Albert and Kent (1949:29).

Four buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, all from Burial 181. No textiles were found in association with any of the bone-backed buttons.

Type 5: Bone-Backed Buttons with Multiple **Perforations (Originally Composite Buttons with Stamped Caps**): Type 5 buttons are very similar to Type 4 buttons, the main difference being the manner in which the button was attached to the garment. As originally designed, the button was manufactured with a die-stamped, copper-alloy, sheet-metal cap, usually decorated, that was fitted over a bone back. The back was finely turned on both sides with a concave front and convex back and a defined, offset rim on the back. Each of the specimens contained four drilled holes and a shallow central impression on the back, which is produced during the manufacturing process. In contrast to the Type 4 loop shank set in a single hole, the holes in the Type 5 back are laced with thread, catgut, or wire to form a shank.

Only the bone backs were present in the burial ground assemblage. There was a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples. It is possible that the buttons' metal components had been removed and the bone backs reused as simple sew-through buttons. Alternatively, all trace of the metal caps had decomposed beyond recognition. No other components of these buttons, such as pieces of metal caps or wire shanks, were present in the assemblage. This was a common button type during the eighteenth century.

A total of 11 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, all from Burial 392. Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. A wool fragment from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved, thread-finished buttonhole.

Type 6: Cast Two-Piece, All-Metallic Buttons: Type 6 buttons consist of a cast, two-piece button with the crown cast around a separate, wire-looped eye in a raised or cone-shaped boss of metal. This type also includes specimens in which the loop shank was braised directly to the button's back. The crown face was usually flat or slightly convex, occasionally with a beveled or cupped back edge. In most specimens, any marks derived from the manufacturing process had been removed as a result of the back being hand filed or machine spun. For the latter method, individual buttons are set in a collet or chuck—a device used for holding cylindrical objects in a lathe—and spun at a high speed; a handheld chisel is used to cut and trim excess metal castings from the back and boss (Olsen 1963:552). This type of button was usually covered with cloth or decorated with a variety of motifs produced during the manufacturing process. Decorated buttons without cloth covers were also given a high polish or, alternatively, were plated with gold or tin.

A total of 35 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground from a total of 13 burials (Burials 6, 10, 181, 191, 243, 250, 259, 276, 278, 325, 366, 403, and 405).

Two of the buttons of this type found with Burial 6 were decorated with anchors and gilt. As described in the inventory, the two specimens did not match, although based on their locations, they are believed to have adorned a jacket or coat. Anchor buttons were used on British naval officers' uniforms from 1774 and may have been more generally available in New York just before, during, and after the Revolution (see Troiani [2001:9–10] for illustrations of British naval officers' anchor buttons). Because buttons were



Figure 144. Buttons from Burial 6 associated with a man's coat or jacket: *top row,* Catalog Nos. 219-B.001, 219-B.002, and 219-B.003; *bottom row,* Catalog Nos. 219-B.004 and 219-B.008. Largest button is 26 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).

often obtained separately from clothing and were typically recycled, we do not identify this man as a naval officer based on his burial in a jacket bearing two anchor buttons. The motifs may have signaled his occupation, whether as a sailor or a member of the navy, but they also may have been chosen for aesthetic or other reasons.

Type 7: Cast Three-Piece, All-Metallic Buttons: Type 7 buttons are dome-shaped, all-metal buttons composed of separately cast fronts and backs. The two halves are joined or braised at a high temperature with the aid of a fluxing agent. Prior to joining the two portions, a separate wire loop eye (the third piece) is inserted through a single hole in the back plate and braised or set in place. Distinctive characteristics of this type of button are the presence of an additional small hole(s) on the button's back. These openings allow the heated, expanding gases within the hollow space to escape during the braising process, which would prevent the two halves from joining. This type of button was usually decorated during the casting process, or, as was the case for some specimens from the New York African Burial Ground, the entire button was gilded.

A total of 24 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, from Burials 10, 181, 214, 271, 326, 379, 403, and 415. Seventeen of the buttons were in matching sets found with the two individuals in Burials 326 and 415. Evidence of gilding was preserved on buttons in Burial 415.

Button/Fastener Inventory by Individual Burial

Burial 6: Eight buttons were recovered from Burial 6, a Late Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between 25 and 30 years old. Five of the buttons were evidently attached to a coat or jacket in which the individual was buried, but as Figure 144 illustrates, they did not form a matched set. These buttons were, for the most part, dissimilar in decoration and manufacture. The two buttons with anchor motifs did not match (Figures 145 and 146).

Button 219-B.001 was made of cast copper alloy that had been gilded on each side; it had an applied wire loop shank. The 17-mm-diameter button was decorated with an upright foul anchor device on a plain ground. Both the centrally located device and the gilding were well preserved. In finely executed detail, the anchor's rope extended down from the left side of the ring, passing behind the end of the left stock (a guide to anchor terminology is provided in the key to Figure 147). It then looped first to the right, passing in front of the shank, and then to the left, passing behind the shank. The rope continued to the left, passing in back of the bill of the left fluke, then looped to the right below the anchor's left arm and crown. Finally, it passed behind the center point of the right arm, ending with a short section of rope that extended down from the anchor's right bill.



Figure 145. Gilt, copper-alloy button from Burial 6 (Catalog No. 219-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 146. Gilt, copper-alloy button from Burial 6 (Catalog No. 219-B.004). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

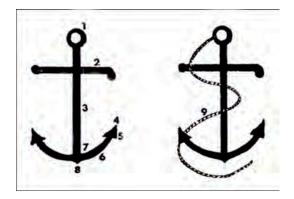


Figure 147. Diagram of anchor device: *left*, upright anchor; *right*, upright foul anchor. Key is as follows: 1 = ring; 2 = stock; 3 = shank; 4 = bill; 5 = fluke; 6 = arm; 7 = throat; 8 = crown; 9 = rope (source: Luscomb 1974:32).

Button 219-B.004 was comparable to the previous example in terms of manufacture, decoration, and preservation. This button, however, was of heavier construction and had a larger loop shank and a more concave back. The primary differences between the two buttons were in the details of the anchor design, in particular the use of a chain rather than a rope. Overall, the upright foul anchor on the second button, although just as detailed, was slightly larger in scale and covered more of the button's face. Another minor difference was the distance between the top ring and the shank, which, in the second button, was negligible. The layout of the "chain" in relation to the anchor was essentially identical to button 219-B.001.

Button 219-B.003 was a 17-mm copper-alloy disk with a wire shank fastened to the back during the cast-

ing process (see Figure 144, top row, right). The ends of the loop shank were set in a cast boss of metal and the back had been spun and cut. The gilt button evidently contained a central decoration on a plain ground, but owing to corrosion, no elements survived.

Button 219-B.002 was also a 17-mm copper-alloy fastener with a wire shank attached during the casting (see Figure 144, top row, middle). The lack of cut marks on the back seemed to indicate the button had not been spun. However, the metal boss surrounding the ends of the shank had been hand trimmed or filed in the area adjacent to the long axis of the shank, leaving a mound of metal along one side. The button did not appear to have been decorated beyond a possible high polish.

Button 219-B.008 (see Figure 144, bottom row, right), the final whole button, was of cast copper alloy and was found on the sacrum. The 26-mm diameter button, one of the collection's largest, was manufactured with an alpha loop shank and appeared to have had a stamped decoration on its face. Not only was this button comparable in size to most of the coins recovered from the burial ground, there appeared to be some design elements on the face that were similar to coins of the eighteenth century. Poor preservation, however, makes it impossible to determine whether a coin had been converted into a button or if a coin die had been used to strike the decoration.

Portions of at least three pewter buttons were recovered from the burial (12 fragments, Catalog



Figure 148. Buttons from Burial 10 associated with a man's coat or jacket (Catalog Nos. 234-B.001–234-B.007). Buttons are 17 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).

No. 219-B.007). Field notes indicated that a pewter fragment was located on the sacrum. However, the exact size, shape, and type of manufacture of the pewter buttons could not be determined because of their fragmentary state. Field notes indicated possible textile fragments adhered to the cranium, but none was recovered.

Burial 10: Thirteen buttons were recovered from Burial 10, which held a 40–45-year-old man. The burial has been assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Seven buttons found on the torso apparently fastened a coat or jacket (Figure 148). One button was located at the right foot. An additional five buttons were inferred from wire shanks (unique objects unassociated with the coat buttons) recovered from the lower right leg. The shank fragments likely represented the remnants of composite buttons constructed of organic materials, such as wood or bone, and metal. In contrast to Burial 6, the coat buttons recovered from Burial 10 formed a matched set.

The coat buttons were cast copper-alloy with a copper-alloy wire alpha loop shank applied during manufacture. All of the buttons measured 17 mm in diameter and, with the exception of a slightly beveled edge, all were undecorated and had evidence of a polished face. The conservators' notes stated that the buttons were possibly tin plated on the front surface. The backs of these buttons were turned and had lost the upper, rounded portion of the eye shank.

Button 234-B.013 was a domed two-part copperalloy button with a copper-alloy shank cast in place. Recovered from the area of the right foot, the button measured 16 mm in diameter, and although the face

was corroded, the button did not appear to have been decorated (Figure 149). The front had a ground edge.

The five copper-alloy wire shanks recovered from the right leg were identified in the field as "eyelets." The lack of any corresponding "hooks" would indicate that the items (Catalog Nos. 234-B.008–234-B.012) were probably the shank portions from composite buttons, which presumably were covered with cloth. The ends of each shank were either bent flat or splayed outward; this would have prevented the shank from pulling through the front of the button. One shank had a tight twist at the end, resembling a continuous loop (Figure 150, Catalog No. 234-B.010; see also Figure 151 for another example of a copper-alloy shank from this burial). Other well-preserved examples of this type of button shank were found with Burials 259 and 379.

The conservation inventory listed a cuff-link fragment, but no such item was present when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work. It is likely the item was actually one of the buttons or button shanks. A textile fragment (Catalog No. 234-B.012; Figure 152), identified as plain weave wool, was recovered, and although no provenience was recorded, it is likely the fragment was associated with one of the buttons.

Burial 22: A single aglet was recovered from Burial 22, a Middle Group interment of a young child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old. The item (Figure 153) was not noted during excavation, and its location on the body is not known. The aglet may have been mistaken for a pin; three pins were recorded clearly in situ on the torso, with an additional one on top of

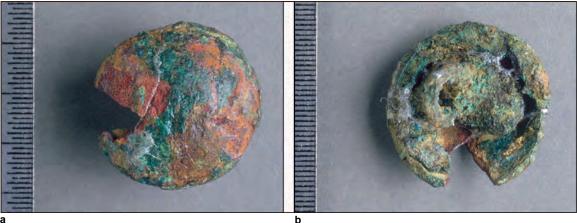


Figure 149. Copper-alloy button from Burial 10: (a) face; (b) back (Catalog No. 234-B.013). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 150. Copper-alloy button shank from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.010). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 151. Copper-alloy button shank from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.008). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 152. Plain-weave wool textile fragment from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.012). Length is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 153. Copper-alloy aglet from Burial 22 (Catalog No. 344-B.003). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 154. Bone button from Burial 37 (Catalog No. 460-B.001). Diameter is 13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 156. Turned bone button from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.002). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

the skull. A tiny fragment of linen was also recovered from the burial.

Burial 32: A fragment from a cast, one-piece pewter button was recovered from Burial 32, a Middle Group interment of a man between 50 and 60 years of age. The size and shape of the button (Catalog No. 420-UNK.002) could not be determined. There was no mention or depiction of the button in the field records.

Burial 37: A turned bone button with a drilled center hole (Catalog No. 460-B.001) was recovered near the left wrist of the 45–55-year-old man in Burial 37, a Late Group interment. The 13-mm button (Figure 154) apparently had been covered with cloth or thread and had a thread shank, an assessment based on the absence of staining typically found on bone buttons that had copper-alloy metal caps (see Burial 181 for an example).



Figure 155. Gilt, copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 158 (Catalog No. 903-B.001). Face diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Burial 158: A pair of round gilt copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the 20–30-year-old man in Burial 158, a Late Group interment. The pair from the left wrist (Catalog No. 903-B.001) is shown in Figure 155. It matched the pair from the right wrist (Catalog No. 903-B.002). The cuff links measured 17 mm in diameter and had cast U-shaped shanks, possibly diagnostic of the seventeenth century or the first half of the eighteenth century (Noël Hume 1961:383). With the exception of the gold plating and a possible raised edge, there were no discernable decorative elements.

Burial 171: Three buttons, two made from animal bone and one represented by a copper-alloy button ring, were recovered about the body and within the coffin from Burial 171, a Late Group interment of a man between 44 and 60 years of age. The bone buttons each had a single, central drilled hole. The larger of the buttons (Catalog No. 931-B.002) was found beside the right femur. It measured 22 mm in diameter and was turned on both sides with a relatively wide offset rim (Figure 156). The offset rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this button type from Burial 181.

The smaller bone button (Catalog No. 931-B.001), from the right scapula, measured 10 mm in diameter and was a less "finished" object. In addition to being turned only on one side, leaving a rough, natural surface (the inner wall of the bone), the edge of the button was left untrimmed from the cutting tool (Figure 157). The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone buttons indicated they were thread or cloth covered and attached with a thread shank. The edges of the sewing holes,



Figure 157. Turned bone button from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.001). Diameter is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

particularly on the smaller button, were worn and abraded. It is possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by removing the metal cap or by reusing buttons that had lost their shanks.

The remains of a copper-alloy ring were found on the sternum. The ring (Catalog No. 931-B.003) may have functioned as the frame for a thread or cloth button (Figure 158). The curved fragments were identified initially as shroud pins. The smaller of the bone buttons may have fastened a shirt collar, but the locations of the buttons do not strongly indicate a particular item of clothing they might have been used for.

Burial 174: Burial 174, another Late Group interment, held a man between 17 and 18 years of age. Two highly degraded pewter buttons (Catalog Nos. 940-B.001 and 940-B.002) were recovered during the cleaning of the skeletal remains at the Cobb Labora-



Figure 158. Copper-alloy button ring from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.003). Interior diameter is approximately 12 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

tory, Howard University. The buttons were located on the lumbar vertebrae and the right innominate. The exact size and shape of the buttons could not be determined because of the fragmentary nature of the items, and there were no identifying attributes to suggest method of manufacture. Based on their locations, they may have fastened breeches.

Burial 181: Burial 181, a coffinless burial assigned to the Late Group, held a man between 20 and 23 years old. Six buttons—three made from copper alloy and three made from copper alloy and bone—were recorded in situ (Figure 159). A seventh button, also a bone-and-copper-alloy composite, was recovered in the laboratory, but the provenience is unknown. In addition, laboratory records indicate that copper-alloy cuff links attributed to this burial were treated by the conservator but were subsequently noted as missing. No cuff links were mentioned in the field notes or

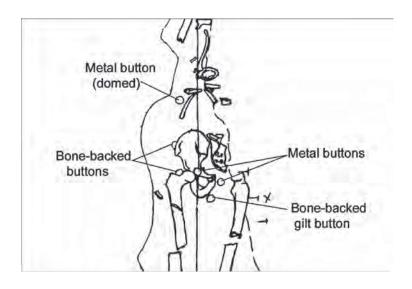


Figure 159. Detail of the disturbed Burial 181 with buttons in the pelvic area. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 160. Copper-alloy, with zinc and nickel, button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.001). Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 161. Copper-alloy, with zinc and nickel, button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.008). Diameter is 29 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

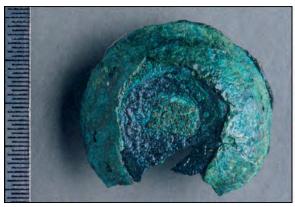




Figure 162. Copper-alloy button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.009): (a) face; (b) back. Diameter is approximately 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

depicted on field drawings, and none was found in the laboratory when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

The three metal buttons (Catalog Nos. 967-B.001, 967-B.008, and 967-B.009) varied in manufacture and size. Button 967-B.001 (Figure 160) was a cast one-piece copper-alloy button that evidently contained zinc and nickel. It had a spun back and a drilled shank. The relatively flat disk, found at the head of the man's right femur, measured approximately 20 mm in diameter. The button appeared to have been decorated, but no design elements were identified because of the extensive corrosion.

Button 967-B.008 (Figure 161), also from the pelvic area, was a slightly concave, cast disk of copper alloy with zinc and nickel. It measured 29 mm in diameter. The button had an applied loop shank and

the back was evidently spun. There were no decorative elements on the button's face.

Button 967-B.009 (Figure 162) was the front portion of a copper-alloy domed button with a stamped decoration. The button, which measured approximately 22 mm in diameter, was probably of a cast, two-piece construction, with a braised or flux-joined seam. No remains of the button's back or the shank were recovered in the field. The cast, central decoration was located within a circular recessed area, 13 mm wide, and appeared to have had an overlapping scalloped design, possibly representing the petals from a stylized Tudor Rose. The back of the object contained a large, off-center mass of metal. The untrimmed mass was evidently a part of the manufacturing process.

The four composite buttons had stamped copper-alloy faces and turned bone backs with looped copper-al-



Figure 163. Copper-alloy button, with bone back, from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.002). Note remains of the button's cap and impressions of crisscross pattern to the left of the bone back. Fragments of the impressed and gilded decoration of the cap and impressions on soil clods are in the upper left portion of the photograph. Diameter is 25 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 165. Bone and copper-alloy button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.005). Note the repoussé (raised impression) decoration on the preserved fragment of the cap. Fragment is attached to the end of the shank, which rests against the front, concave side of the bone disc. Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

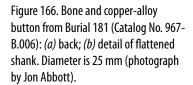




Figure 164. Copper-alloy button, with bone back, from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.003). Diameter is 25 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

loy wire shanks (Catalog Nos. 967-B.002, 967-B.003, 967-B.005, and 967-B.006; Figures 163–166). All of the items appeared to have been decorated with repoussé or impressed designs. The best-preserved button (967-B.002, see Figure 163) bore a simple cross-weave pattern finished with gold plating. The design was discernable on fragments of the metal cap and was also impressed on small fragments of soil that adhered to the button.

Buttons 967-B.002, 967-B.003, and 967-B.006 measured approximately 25 mm in diameter, although they would have been slightly larger with the thin, sheet-metal caps in place. The bone backs for these three examples were identical in type of manufacture. Concentric turning marks and a narrow, offset rim were evident on each side of each button back. There was a slight concavity to the button back's inner surface, whereas the opposing surface was convex. Each had been stained by the decomposition of the copper-alloy caps.



Button 967-B.005 (see Figure 165) was slightly smaller in size than the other composite buttons. This example measured 16 mm in diameter. Portions of the front cap were in place, as well as a complete copperalloy loop shank. Although the button face appeared to have been decorated, no design elements or any evidence of gilt were preserved.

The composite buttons from Burial 181 yielded some interesting manufacturing details. Unlike the flat bone disks found on other burials, the front side of the bone button back was concave to provide a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. In one example (Catalog No. 967-B.006) the ends of the wire loop shank were flattened (see Figure 166). The shank's ribbonlike shape may have served the purpose of making the end of the shank wider and therefore less likely to pull out. This is in contrast to the "sew-through" portion or eye of the shank, which was formed of rounded wire. Placement of the ends of the wire shank through the bone back preceded the attachment of the metal cap. These examples do not appear to have had metal back plates.

Although Burial 181 was disturbed, the button locations in the pelvic area of the skeletal remains are suggestive of trousers. The four matched, composite specimens may have fastened the trouser front. The two flat metal buttons may also have been from this garment. The domed button was found slightly further up the torso area and may not have fastened the trousers.

Burial 191: Burial 191, a Late Group interment of a man between 25 and 30 years old, contained one copper-alloy button. Located at the left ilium, the button measured 17 mm in diameter and was cast in one piece with a loop shank (Figure 167). Although the back of the flat disk appeared to have been spun, the front face had a few raised features that suggest the button was decorated. In particular, the raised, wavy lines are suggestive of a crown and/or shield, design elements found on contemporaneous coins.

Burial 194: A single copper-alloy button shank was found near the head of the right femur of the 30–40-year-old man in Burial 194, a Late Group interment. An organic fragment, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with the shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.

Burial 203: Burial 203, a Late Group interment, held an individual between 12 and 18 years old. The skeletal remains offered no clear indication of the individual's sex, but the material and positioning of the button fragments recovered with the individual



Figure 167. Copper-alloy button from Burial 191 (Catalog No. 1081-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

were typical of eighteenth-century knee breeches, suggesting that Burial 203 was a young man. Field records depict buttons at distinct locations on the individual: at the knees, the wrists, and the pelvic area.

The button fragments from Burial 203 represented a total of eight separate wood buttons, which had copper-alloy wire shanks and evidently had been faced with leather (Catalog Nos. 1174-B.001–1174-B.008). Field notes refer to 14 buttons, which were depicted on the in situ drawing. The discrepancy in count between the field staff and the laboratory staff may have stemmed from counting displaced fragments as individual buttons (Figure 168; note the bottom right specimen fragmented into two layers). In general, the shank portions of the buttons were less well preserved than the crowns.

The eight buttons were identical in terms of manufacture and material. Based on an overall assessment of the recovered fragments, the wooden button disks measured approximately 14–15 mm in diameter and appeared to have been manufactured from a finegrained wood species.

Although the button stock was evidently lathe turned and subsequently cut into thin disks, there were no surviving features of this process on the face or back of any of the buttons. Unlike the turned bone discs used for button backs (e.g., Burial 181), which had a concave front side to allow space for the ends of the wire loop shank, these buttons had a circular, shallow, recessed area on the button face (Figure 169). The recessed area provided a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. The loop portion of the shank would have been on the button's flat back (Figure 170).

The copper-alloy wire shanks from these buttons were poorly preserved, as noted, and no complete

Figure 168. Wood buttons apparently faced with leather, with copper-alloy shanks, from Burial 203 (Catalog Nos. 1174-B.001–1174-B.008). Diameters are 13–15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).





Figure 169. Front of wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Note the recessed area on the front of the face: the hole for the shank had apparently been enlarged by wear. Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 170. Back of wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B.007). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 171. Detail of copper-alloy button shank fragment from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).

shanks were recovered. Based on the best-preserved example (Figure 171), the ends of the wire shank were tightly twisted but not splayed, thus raising the question of how they would have been held in place. It is possible that the ends of the shanks were missing because of corrosion. It is also possible that a piece of wire had been wound around the end of each shank to prevent it from pulling through the central hole. An example of this type of shank was found with Burial 379.

The eight composite wood and metal buttons were apparently finished with a small piece of material, which was identified as leather by the conservators. The material covered the recessed face of the wood disk and was probably tightly sewn over the back of the button, as illustrated in Figure 143. Although the wooden disk buttons did not have the overall green staining associated with copper-alloy covers on bone discs (as in Burial 181), the rust present on many of the fragments may indicate that the wood button was



Figure 172. Wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Note the corroded ends of the copper-alloy shank. Diameter is 14 mm. Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).

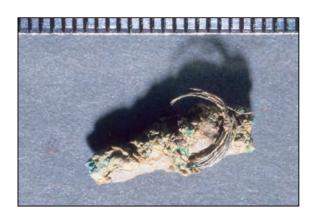


Figure 173. Copper-alloy aglet (with hair adhering) from Burial 213 (Catalog No. 1190-B.001). Length is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

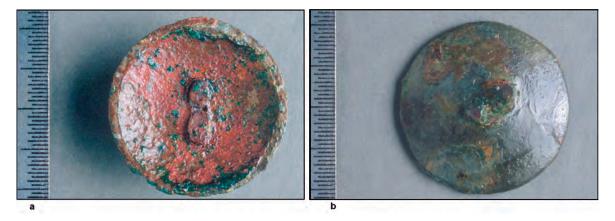


Figure 174. Copper-alloy button back from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.002): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

capped with a thin sheet of poorly preserved, iron-based metal (Figure 172).

Burial 211: A turquoise enamel cuff link face was recovered near the chin of the adult in Burial 211, a Late Group interment of a probable man. This item is described and illustrated in Chapter 13.

Burial 213: One aglet (Catalog No. 1190-B.001) was recovered from Burial 213, a Middle Group interment of a woman between 45 and 55 years of age. The aglet (Figure 173) was found on the left parietal with hair adhering to it (field records identified it as a straight pin). The presence of an aglet on the skull may indicate lacings on a cap, or a shroud drawstring. Alternatively, it may have been displaced from the collar area. Note that the aglet recovered from Burial 22 may also have been located on the skull.

Burial 214: Burial 214 was assigned to the Late Group. It held a man between 45 and 55 years old. Artifacts recorded in situ included a copper-alloy

button back (Catalog No. 1191-B.002) near the right shoulder, several button shank fragments, a straight pin, and a coin and a knife handle (the latter items are described in Chapter 14).

The button back was from a 21-mm-diameter domed button of two-piece construction, with a braised wire shank. The ends of the wire loop shank appear to have been flattened or crimped prior to the attachment of the button's front face (Figure 174). Two degraded copper-alloy shank fragments (Catalog No. 1191-B.004), possibly from button 1191-B.002, were also recovered, but their provenience is unclear. Two iron shank fragments were also recovered from the pelvic area during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains (Figure 175). A third shank fragment and the remains of a wooden button, Catalog Nos. 1191-SBH.001 and 1191-SBH.002, respectively (not pictured), were recovered from a flotation soil sample taken from the head area.



Figure 175. Possible iron button shank from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.004). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).





Figure 176. Copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 238 (Catalog Nos. 1224-B.001 [bottom] and 1224-B.002 [top]): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 177. Detail of decorative motif on cuff-link faces from Burial 238.

The location and fragmentary nature of the clothing-related artifacts from Burial 214 was the result of a later trash pit that affected the central part of the grave shaft, disturbing the pelvic area.

Burial 238: Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment, held a 40–50-year-old man with a set of cast copper-alloy cuff links. One pair was found on the

right radius (Catalog No. 1224-B.001) and the other pair, beneath the left radius (Catalog No. 1224-B.002; Figure 176). The cuff links were octagonal in shape with flat faces and backs and a small rear lip. The faces measured 15 mm across, and each had a cast, flat shank with a drilled eye. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 16 mm in length. The apparent raised semicircular design or letter, which may be a by-product of corrosion, was located adjacent to one end of the shank. A possible maker's mark was noted on the back of one of the faces (Catalog No. 1224-B.001) but is not visible in the photograph.

The four faces had identical decorations (Figure 177). Along the outer edge were two narrow octagonal bands. The outermost band was decorated with what may have been an egg-and-dart motif, or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose, whereas the inner band was undecorated. The center had a circular band with a decoration that repeated the design of the octagonal band. The innermost circle appeared to be stippled.



Figure 178. Bone button from Burial 238 (Catalog No. 1224-B.003). Diameter is 8 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 180. Copper-alloy button from Burial 250 (Catalog No. 1239-B.001). Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

In addition to the cuff links, a very small single-hole bone button (Catalog No. 1224-B.003) was recovered overlying the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae. The turned button measured 8 mm and appeared to have had an offset rim (Figure 178). The lack of any metallic shanks from the burial or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone button indicates this was a cloth or thread-covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.

Burial 243: Burial 243 was a Late Group, coffinless interment of a man between 40 and 50 years of age. A single button (Figure 179) was recovered from beneath the upper part of the man's skull. The copperalloy button (Catalog No. 1230-B.001) was cast, with an applied shank, and measured 27 mm in diameter. The loop portion of the shank was missing. Although the button was heavily corroded and fragmentary, there was a hint of a raised, annular edge decora-



Figure 179. Copper-alloy button from Burial 243 (Catalog No. 1230-B.001). Diameter is 27 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

tion. Based on the location of the item, the relation of this burial to other grave cuts, and the presence in the grave shaft of household and industrial waste material, including glassware, ceramics, tannery and slaughterhouse debris, the artifact was probably the result of secondary deposition.

Burial 250: Burial 250, an Early Group interment, held an adult of undetermined sex and age. A copper-alloy button (Catalog No. 1239-B.001) and a small iron mass (Catalog No. 1239-B.003) with a large black glass bead (No. 1239-B.004, described in Chapter 13) were found in the central portion of the coffin interior, possibly near the pelvis. The copperalloy button (Figure 180) measured 20 mm in diameter and had a braised shank, although the loop portion of the shank was missing. With the exception of a small raised nipple centered on the face, the button was undecorated. Another item, originally identified by conservators as a highly degraded pewter button, was subsequently identified as a tack associated with the iron and glass object. Field recording was minimal for this burial; the precise location of the button and its association with possible clothing is impossible to reconstruct. Although the button may have fastened a burial garment, the apparent juxtaposition of the objects in this burial suggests a possible alternative function, such as a memento or talisman.

Burial 257: Burial 257 held a man between 30 and 40 years old who has been assigned to the Late Group. Two whole bone buttons were found in the process of screening the grave fill. Field notes state that one of the buttons was originally located in the sacrum area. A portion of a third bone button was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the left acetabulum (hip joint). The two whole buttons (Catalog No. 1246-



Figure 181. Bone buttons from Burial 257: *left,* fragment (Catalog No. 1246-B.002); *right,* two whole buttons (Catalog No. 1246-B.001). Diameters are 12–13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

B.001) and the portion of the third button (Catalog No. 1246-B.002) are shown in Figure 181.

All three buttons were cut from animal bone and measured between 12 and 13 mm in diameter, with worn or minimal turning marks and no evidence of an offset rim. The lack of offset rims and metal components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone, suggest that these buttons were cloth- or thread-covered with thread shanks. It is also possible they were button backs that were never made into buttons or that the shanks and covers had been removed. The buttons may have fastened undergarments, but the lack of good provenience information precludes assignment to particular garments or speculation about other ways the items may have been used (such as strung).

Burial 259: Burial 259 was a Late Group interment of a 17–19 year old identified as a probable woman. Eighteen buttons or parts of buttons were recorded

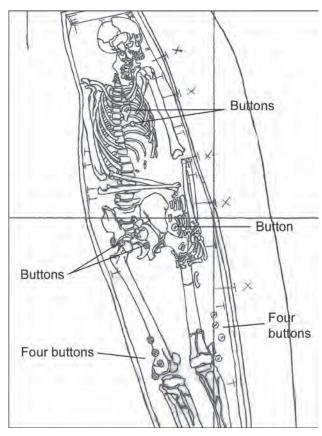


Figure 182. In situ drawing of Burial 259 showing button locations. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (drawing by M. Schur).

in situ with the skeletal remains (Figure 182). There were four buttons with an identical face design aligned along the end of each femur, just above the knees, and three more of the same buttons were found in the pelvic area (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.009, 1249-B.010, 1249-B.013 [which includes two specimens], 1249-B.017, and 1249-B.019–1249-B.023).



Figure 183. Copper-alloy buttons, with parallel ridged and milled decoration, from Burial 259: *top row,* Catalog Nos. 1249-B.009, 1249-B.010, and 1249-B.013; *middle row,* Catalog Nos. 1249-B.017, 1249-B.019, and 1249-B.020; *bottom row,* Catalog Nos. 1249-B.021, 1249-B.022, and 1249-B.023. One additional specimen (Catalog No. 1249-B.005) is not pictured. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 184. Tin-plated, copper-alloy button from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.013). Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Two smooth-faced buttons and a button shank were also found on the ribs (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.11 and 1249-B.12). Three more button shanks were recorded on the vertebrae and two on the pelvis (Catalog No. 1249-B.016).

The button locations at the hips and knees indicate the individual was buried wearing breeches. The two buttons on the ribs may have been from a shirt.

Ten of the copper alloy breeches buttons are shown in Figure 183. The ones that had been lying facedown on the coffin floor (all on the left side of the body; see Figure 182) had wood adhering to their faces. The buttons measured 18 mm in diameter and were of cast copper alloy, with a parallel, ridged decoration with milled impressions. The buttons were subsequently spun and finished with tin plate (Figure 184). The copper alloy wire shanks were cast in a high cone shaped boss (Figure 185).

Portions of two of the buttons on the ribs, identified as metal in the field, were recovered and subsequently were identified by project conservators as leather with



Figure 185. Copper-alloy button from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.010); photograph shows boss and wire loop shank. Total boss/shank length is 8 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

woolen fibers adhering. They were apparently made of wood, possibly with leather covers (Figure 186). The five copper-alloy shanks recorded separately in the field represent five additional buttons, which also may have been made of wood that did not survive. Based on the shank morphology, the ends would have extended through the button and were crimped or tied off with a wire to create a flange, so as not to pull through the button face (Figure 187; also see Burials 203 and 379 for comparative examples).

Woven textile fragments and leather adhered to several buttons and to the coffin wood where buttons had lain against the bottom board (Figures 188 and 189). Several of the textile fragments were not identified, but those associated with the breeches buttons were of wool. There were also fragments of linen, labeled as "from buttons" (Catalog No. 1249-B.003), but conservators did not record which buttons they were associated with.

Burial 271: Burial 271 was assigned to the Middle Group. It held a man between 45 and 57 years old who



Figure 186. Possible leather-covered wood buttons from Burial 259 (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.011 and 1249-B.012). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 187. Copper-alloy button shanks from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.016). Length is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 188. Textile from Burial 259, retrieved from coffin wood sample (Catalog No. 1249-CWB) (photograph by Jon Abbott).

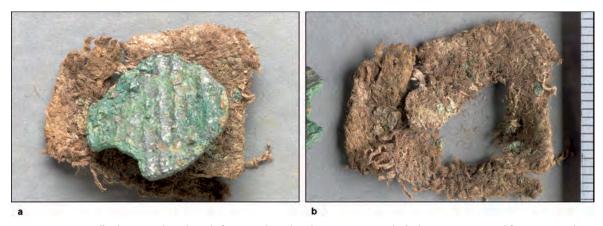


Figure 189. Copper-alloy button and wool textile from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.017). The button was removed from associated cloth to show the buttonhole, which did not appear to have been top stitched (compare to the example from Burial 415). The ruler at right is measured in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 190. Bone button, with offset rim, from Burial 313 (Catalog No. 1516-B.001 [1 of 2]). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Figure 191. Bone button from Burial 313 (Catalog No. 1516-B.002). Diameter is 13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

was interred in a coffin with a hexagonal shape. Two copper-alloy domed buttons, each with an outside diameter of 14 mm, were recovered from the screen during excavation. The first button was of one-piece, solid-cast construction with a high shank (Catalog No. 1267-UNC.001). The second button consisted of small fragments of the dome, which appeared to have been decorated, and a portion of the shank (Catalog No. 1267-UNC.002). Because the items were found in the screen, it is impossible to state whether, or how, they were directly associated with the man's remains.

Burial 276: Burial 276 was a Late Group, coffinless internment of a woman between 20 and 24 years of age. Although no artifacts were directly associated with the individual, the grave shaft contained a relatively heavy secondary deposit of industrial waste from nearby tanneries/slaughterhouses and ceramic manufacturers. Also in the grave shaft were faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics and glassware from the second and early part of the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The field notes referred to a possible coin recovered from slightly above the body, near the woman's right rib cage. Upon closer inspection, however, this item was identified as a button (Catalog No. 1273-UNC.001). It was of cast copper-alloy and measured 20 mm in diameter, with a curved face and an applied loop shank. The conservators treated seven fragments from the button's face, some of which were gilded. The button did not appear to have functioned as a clothes fastener or to have been deliberately placed with the woman but was present in the grave's back fill owing to redeposition.

Burial 278: This Late Group, coffinless interment

held a man between 45 and 55 years old. The association of this burial with a cast copper-alloy button was problematic. The button was cataloged in the laboratory, but its provenience was not recorded in the field. Although there were no artifacts directly associated with this individual, the grave shaft contained a secondary deposit of material including faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics from the second and early part of the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

The button (Catalog No. 1275-UNC.001) was a cast, copper-alloy disk that measured 16 mm in diameter. It had a slightly curved face and an applied loop shank. The majority of the shank was missing. The conservator's notes stated that the back of the button exhibited gold plating and was associated with fabric. No cloth fragments were in the collection handled by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

Burial 313: Three buttons manufactured from animal bone and another possible one represented by a small copper-alloy ring were recovered about the body and within the coffin of Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. The three bone buttons, each with a single, central drilled hole, were found lying on the coffin bottom at the top of the man's head. Two measured 22 mm in diameter (Catalog No. 1516-B.001; Figure 190), and a third (Catalog No. 1516-B.002; Figure 191) measured 13 mm in diameter. The smaller example was identical in manufacture to the two larger buttons. Turning or cut marks were visible on both sides of each button. One of the larger specimens had a narrow offset rim, but the rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this type found



Figure 192. Copper-alloy button and shank fragments from Burial 325 (Catalog No. 1577-B.001). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

with Burial 181.

The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of staining on these bone buttons indicate that they were covered with cloth or thread and probably attached with a thread shank. It is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused.

The copper-alloy items (not photographed) identified as fragments of a possible button ring were initially cataloged as three curved straight pin fragments. They were found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal remains, in soil among the left ribs.

The location of the bone buttons near the top of the cranium suggests that they did not function as clothing

fasteners. There is no way to know whether the possible button ring represented a clothing fastener.

Burial 325: A single copper-alloy button was found on the left upper sacrum of Burial 325, a Late Group interment of a man between 25 and 35 years old. The button's copper-alloy loop shank was found in two pieces on the lower right sacrum. Both the button disk and the two shank fragments were designated Catalog No. 1577-B.001. The cast button measured 22 mm in diameter. It is possible that the face was decorated with a bust or human figure in portrait (Figure 192). The face was gilded, and the back was spun flat, with a braised loop shank. Field records indicate that unidentified organic material was associated with the objects, but none of the material was recovered.

Burial 326: Four buttons (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.001–1584-B.003 and .006) were recorded in association with Burial 326, a Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. (In addition to the buttons, three lead buckshot [3-mm size] were recovered in association with the man's remains.) All of the buttons were made of copper alloy with a cast, hollow-domed construction. Two measured 19 mm in diameter (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.001 and 1584-B.002; Figures 193 and 194) and the other two, 23 mm (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.003 and 1584-B.006). They were all found in the pelvic area and between the tops of the femurs, near the hands. The larger pair was poorly preserved but appeared to have

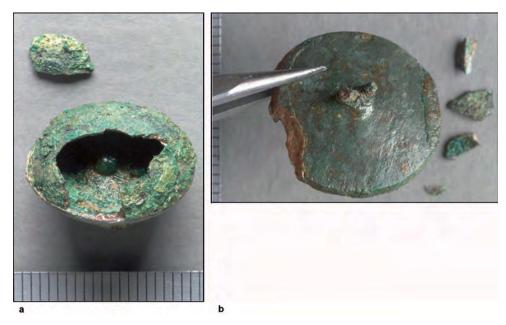


Figure 193. Copper-alloy button, with cast hollow-dome, from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.001): (a) face; (b) back. Diameter is 19 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 194. Back of copper-alloy button, with hollow-dome, from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.002). Diameter is 19 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

been ovoid in shape. The button locations suggest either trousers or sleeve links.

On the best-preserved item, one of the two 19-mm buttons, the loop shank was of drawn wire manufacture and was braised on the button's back (see Figure 194).

Items 1584-B.003 and 1584-B.006 consisted of three fragments from two apparently oval, cast copperalloy buttons (Figure 195). The items were manufactured in at least two parts and were domed. No decoration was apparent on any of the pieces. It was not possible to determine the manner in which the shanks had been attached. The pieces from Catalog No. 1584-B.006 had undergone mending by conservators in the lab but were separated at the time of the final inventory.

Field records state that a small fragment of cloth as well as a bit of possible hair had adhered to

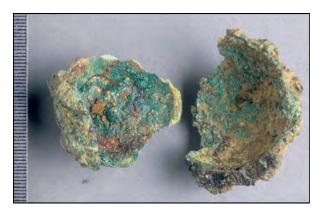


Figure 195. Face of cast-copper-alloy button from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.006). Mended diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

one of buttons. A small fragment of organic material was cataloged (Catalog No. 1584-B.009; not photographed) but was not identifiable. Finally, an intrusive, steel ball bearing (1-mm diameter) was recovered.

Burial 333: Six bone button disks were found in association with Burial 333, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. The disks were positioned on and around the pelvic region. Three had outside diameters of 11 mm, two of 13 mm, and one of 20 mm (Figure 196). (The original catalog listed four at 13 mm and one at 11 mm.) The center holes measured 2–3 mm in diameter.

All of the buttons had been cut from animal bone and had a center-drilled hole and worn or minimal evidence of turning marks on one or both sides. A possible narrow offset rim was present on one of the smaller buttons (Figure 197). The edge, however,



Figure 196. Bone buttons from Burial 333: *top left,* Catalog No. 1613-B.001; *top right,* Catalog No. 1613-B.002; *bottom row,* Catalog No. 1613-B.003 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 197. Bone button from Burial 333 (Catalog No. 1613-B.001). Diameter is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).





Figure 198. Copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 341 (Catalog No. 1652-B.001): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

did not follow along the entire circumference of the button, and it was likely that a fault was introduced in the cutting of the button blank. The absence of offset rims and metal components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining indicated the buttons had originally been covered with cloth or thread and probably had thread shanks.

Burial 341: Burial 341, a Middle Group interment, held a man of undetermined age. A pair of cast copper-alloy cuff links was found on the distal left radius (Catalog No. 1652-B.001). The cuff links had an octagonal-shaped design, but the flat, possibly untrimmed crowns appeared circular when viewed from the back (Figure 198). Unlike the octagonal cuff links from Burial 238, these lacked a rear lip, and they were slightly larger in size. The crowns measured 18 mm across and had cast, flat shanks with hand-drilled eyes. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 18 mm in length.

The faces had identical decorations. Along the outer edge was a narrow octagonal band decorated with an egg-and-dart motif or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose. The central portion of each crown consisted of a circular band with a decoration that repeated the design of the octagonal band. Within this circular band was a circular area, apparently stippled.

Burial 342: Burial 342, a Late Group burial, held the remains of a woman 25–35 years old. A copper-alloy aglet (in two pieces) was identified in the laboratory (Catalog No. 1660-B.001), but its location within the burial is not known. Two straight pins were recorded in situ during excavation, one on the cranium and one on the sacrum, and two pins were accounted for in the lab. It is possible, however, that one of the pins identified in the field was actually the aglet. No decoration was visible on either of the fragments. However, as is evident from the photograph in Figure 199, the object was constructed of rolled sheet metal and the ends of the tube were slightly wider than the midsection.

Burial 353: Burial 353, a Middle Group interment, held the remains of a man between 24 and 34 years old. Fragments of a turned bone button were recorded in situ next to the left sciatic notch. Owing to wear



Figure 199. Copper-alloy aglet from Burial 342 (Catalog No. 1660-B.0012). Scale is in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

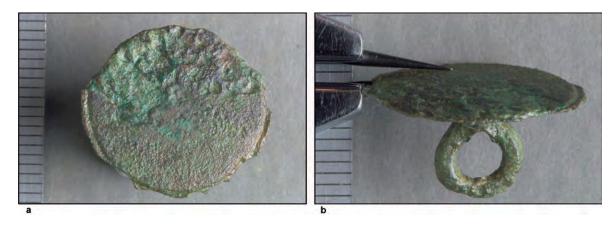


Figure 200. Copper-alloy button, with applied loop shank, from Burial 366 (Catalog No. 1830-B.001): (a) face; (b) side view with shank. Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

and/or corrosion, the exact diameter of the button (Catalog No. 1723-B.003) could not be determined. The button had a single, centrally located, drilled hole. The lack of any metal shanks in the burial or evidence of metallic staining on the button indicates it was a cloth- or thread-covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.

Burial 361: Burial 361 was an Early Group interment of man between 33 and 57 years old. A pewter button was recovered with this burial, from just above the right scapula/humerus. It was given a number in the field (361.1) and was cataloged when first accessioned in the laboratory but subsequently was noted as missing. The item was never located or examined by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

Burial 366: Burial 366 was a Middle Group interment of an adult between 34 and 62 years of age whose sex could not be determined. The deceased had been buried with the hands over the upper thighs. A

single one-piece button was recorded in situ on the right wrist (Catalog No. 1830-B.001). It was 20 mm in diameter, of copper alloy and had an applied alpha loop shank (Figure 200). A narrow, plain band along approximately 50 percent of the button's preserved edge may have been decorative or may have been untrimmed excess from the casting process.

Burial 368: Burial 368, which held a child 10.5–13.5 years old whose burial was assigned to the Middle Group, was found with a small (11 mm diameter) ring (Catalog No. 1868-B.001) just below the chin, at the throat (Figure 201). This item was tentatively identified as part of a fastening of some kind or a grommet. It was of sheet-copper alloy that had been rolled over.

Burial 371: Burial 371 has been assigned to the Middle Group. It held the remains of a woman between 25 and 35 years of age who was interred without a coffin. Two button or cuff-link faces of copper alloy decorated with enamel (a turquoise background



Figure 201. Possible grommet made of copper alloy (in situ) from Burial 368 (Catalog No. 1868-B.001). Diameter is 11 mm (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

and white-and-pink surface decoration) were found beneath her left humerus. The items, which we categorize as adornment rather than clothing fasteners, are described and illustrated in Chapter 13.

A metal button was also recovered from Burial 371, but its location within the grave was not noted in the field records. The domed, stamped, circular iron disk (Catalog No. 1875-B.002) was 12 mm in diameter and had a 2-mm central hole (Figure 202). A small fragment (broken into pieces) of rust-encrusted textile, identified as wool with an undeterminable weave, was found adhering to the button face. The button (possibly used for upholstery) is evidently lacking the pin shank and appears to be of a type manufactured in the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Noël Hume 1969:90–91). Based on the lack of provenience and the high degree of disturbance to Burial 371, the button is considered to have been intrusive.

Burial 379: Burial 379, which held a man between 30 and 40 years old, was also assigned to the Middle Group. Field notes stated that following the removal of skeletal remains, a bone button with a copper-alloy shank was found below the distal end of the left ulna. The item (Catalog No. 1906-B.001) was subsequently identified in the laboratory as a leather button, possibly a backing (not photographed). Based on comparable items from Burial 259, the preserved remains may



Figure 202. Iron button with associated textile fragment from Burial 371 (Catalog No. 1875-B.002). Diameter is 12 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

have been the leather covering or the outer portion of a wood button with a copper-alloy loop shank. The shank (Catalog No. 1906-B.002) was well preserved (Figure 203). It was made of copper-alloy wire, which was then shaped by hand. The inside surface of the loop had been flattened, as had the joined ends. The ends of the 10-mm-long shank, which would have extended through the button disc, are slightly wider than the shaft and may have been hand crimped or possibly wound with wire to create a flange that fastened the shank.

A second button (Catalog No. 1906-B.003), of entirely different manufacture, was found during laboratory cleaning of the right innominate. It was an undecorated, two-piece, copper-alloy domed button with a soldered loop shank extending through the back of the button. The front face of the button measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 204). Most of the back portion of the button was not preserved, but conservators treated the loop shank. The ends of the wire shank, attached before the front and back button sections were joined, were splayed outward.

Burial 385: Burial 385, a Middle Group interment of a 40–60-year-old woman, had two tiny bone buttons. One came from the coffin floor between the right first rib and third thoracic vertebra, and the other came from loose sand examined after removal of the right ribs. The buttons (both Catalog No. 1964-B.001) were of turned bone and measured approximately 8 mm in diameter. Each of the buttons had a single drilled hole with very little evidence of turning on either side (Figure 205). The lack of offset rims and metallic components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining indicates they were probably cloth- or thread-covered fasteners attached with a thread shank.



Figure 203. Copper-alloy loop shank from Burial 379 (Catalog No. 1906-B.002). Length is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Such buttons are typical of undergarments. As noted for previously described burials, it is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by the removal of the metal cap or by reusing a button that lost its shank.

Burial 387: Burial 387 was an Early Group burial of a man between 34 and 44 years of age. A fragment of a cast copper-alloy cuff link or button was recorded in the laboratory from an unknown provenience within this grave. It was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. The item cannot be associated definitively with the remains in Burial 387, owing to the lack of field provenience and possible mixing from Burial 366. Excessive corrosion made it impossible to obtain the item's overall dimensions or observe manufacturing details.

Burial 392: Eleven buttons, some in fragments, were recorded in situ with Burial 392, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between 42 and 52 years of age who was buried with his head to the east in a rectangular coffin (Figure 206). Four well-preserved bone-button backs, with associated cloth, were found adjacent to the outside of the right knee (all Catalog Nos. 2039-B.002; Figure 207), and three that were poorly preserved were found on or under the left knee (Catalog Nos. 2039-B.005 [Figure 208], 2039-B.006, and 2039-B.008 [Figure 209). Another three were located adjacent to the right hand: two buttons assigned Catalog No. 2039-B.010 (Figures 210 and 211) and Catalog No. 2039-B.011, and one more was found near the left hand (Catalog No. 2039-B.009; Figure 212). The button backs from the right hand were 2.1–2.2 cm in diameter, and the others examples measured 1.5–1.6 cm. One octagonal copper-alloy cuff-link face (Catalog No. 2039-B.004) was recov-



Figure 204. Copper-alloy dome button from Burial 379 (Catalog No. 1906-B.003). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 205. Bone buttons from Burial 385 (Catalog No. 1964-B.001). Diameter is 8 mm (whole specimen) (photograph by Jon Abbott).

ered from the right clavicle, and a highly degraded portion of a second face was found in the laboratory when the cervical vertebrae were cleaned (not shown).

The locations of the bone-button backs suggest the deceased was laid to rest in pants or breeches, and the possible links at the shoulder may have fastened a shirt at the neck.

The bone disks were cut and turned, and each had four drilled sew-through holes. A slight central indentation on each was probably the result of the manufacturing process. There was a slight variation in the location of the drilled holes. In the best-preserved examples, the backs had a slight convex dome with a narrow offset rim; the front faces were concave to allow space for threading. The presence of a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples (see Figure 207), possibly metallic staining, suggests that they may once have had metal caps. No metal components, such as caps, were preserved, nor were any fragmentary remains noted in the field records.

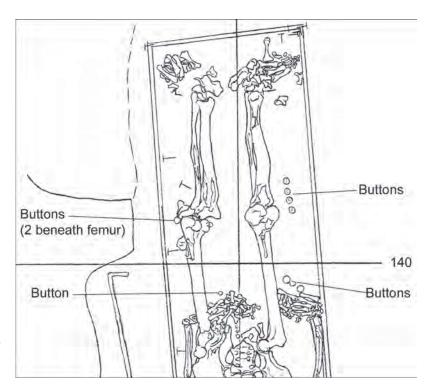


Figure 206. Detail of Burial 392 with buttons at knees and hips. North is to the right, as is the convention throughout this report. This burial was oriented atypically, with the head to the east. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 207. Bone buttons from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.002). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. One from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole (Catalog No. 2039-B.001) (Figure 213). The buttonhole, which measured approximately 1 mm wider than the buttons, does not appear to have been edged or finished with thread (for an example of a finished buttonhole, see Burial 415). The project conservators recognized that the fiber had an S-twist.

The cast copper-alloy cuff-link face (Figure 214) found at the right shoulder appears to have had loop shank that was cast in place. The cuff link's face

measured 16 mm in diameter and appears to have had an impressed, centrally placed decoration. A narrow, undecorated band was evident along the edge of the preserved portion of the cuff link. Most of the shank was missing, as was the link. The cuff link may have been used as the top button on a shirt.

Burial 398: Burial 398 consisted of redeposited human remains from an adult between 25 and 35 years of age. Among other items, including nails, nail fragments, straight-pin fragments, and a ring, was a portion of a button or cuff link. Another button, found to the north of the main concentration of



Figure 208. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.005). Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 209. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.008). Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

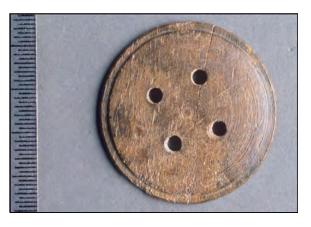


Figure 210. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.010 [one of two]). Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 211. Mended bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.010 [one of two]). Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 212. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.009). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 213. Wool buttonhole from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.001). Width is 33 mm; buttonhole is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 214. Copper-alloy cuff link from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.004). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 215. Copper-alloy button or cuff link from Burial 398 (Catalog No. 2061–B.003). It is 12 mm at widest part (photograph by Jon Abbott).





Figure 216. Pewter button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.001 [one of two]): (a) front; (b) side view. Diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

bone, was noted and mapped but was cataloged with Burial 403.

The copper-alloy cuff link (Catalog No. 2061-B.003) had an octagonal-shaped face with a cast design consisting of a series of circular impressions, possibly stars, within narrow octagonal bands around a circular central decoration. Additional fragments included portions of a copper-alloy-wire link and possibly the remains of a loop shank (Figure 215).

Burial 403: The remains in Burial 403, from a man between 39 and 65 years old, were fragmentary and damaged as a result of construction activity at the site during the field program. Items recovered with this interment were scattered among the skeletal remains, and it is not clear whether the items were in direct association with the deceased. Two buttons were photographed and drawn in situ before being collected in the field, but three buttons were mentioned in the field notes. Later, four buttons were cataloged in the laboratory. It is likely the fourth button was

one that was noted in the field records for Burial 398 (see above).

Two of the buttons were of pewter with a high tin and lead content. They were of cast construction, had applied loop shanks, and measured 23 mm in diameter (Catalog No. 2067-B.001; Figure 216).

A third button (Catalog No. 2067-B.002) was plain, of cast copper alloy with a flat face and a loop shank set in a low boss, 22 mm in diameter. The back of the button appears to have been spun (Figure 217). The fourth button (Catalog No. 2067-B.003) was an undecorated, copper-alloy cast, domed type of two-piece construction with a brazed shank and soldered seams; it measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 218). This button's back had two small holes and appeared to have been gilded.

In addition to the buttons, fragments of black cloth with a simple weave were recovered, although it is not clear whether these were associated with particular buttons (Catalog No. 2067-B.004; Figure 219).

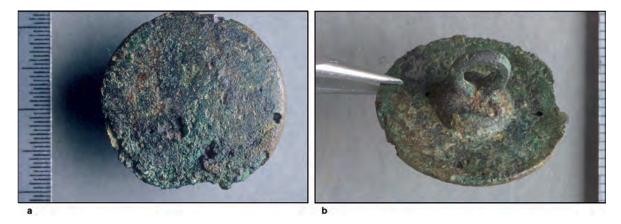


Figure 217. Copper-alloy button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.002): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

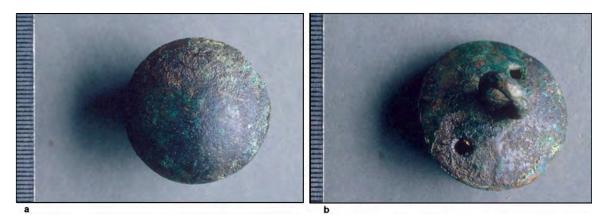


Figure 218. Cast 2-piece copper-alloy button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.003): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 219. Textile from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.004). Scale is in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Burial 405: Burial 405 held the remains of a 6–10-year-old child. A single button was recorded in situ below the right wrist and was identified in the laboratory as a Brittania large button made of spun white metal with an applied copper-alloy loop shank (Catalog

No. 2071-B.001). The face measured 30 mm in diameter (Figure 220). The placement and size of the button suggest it did not function as a fastener for clothing. It may have been a talisman or item of adornment that



Figure 220. Spun-white-metal Brittania button with copper-alloy shank from Burial 405 (Catalog No. 2071-B.001). Diameter is 30 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

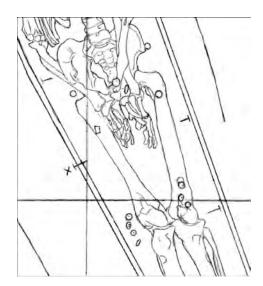


Figure 221. Detail of Burial 415 drawing, buttons at knees and hips. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).

was perhaps worn on a string or as a bracelet or may have been placed in the hand of the deceased.

Burial 415: The 35–55-year-old man in Burial 415, a Middle Group interment, was buried wearing knee breeches, possibly of woolen cloth, and apparently with a fall or drop flap in front. The field drawing of the remains showed 14 buttons in locations consistent with breeches of this style: 4 over the left knee, 4 outside the right knee, 2 above and on the proximal left femur, and 2 above and on the proximal right femur (Figure 221). Two additional buttons were noted as located beneath the sacrum. There is, however, a discrepancy between the field count of 14 and the number of buttons (13) that were inventoried in the lab. It is likely the field number was inaccurate owing to a button having been broken and counted as 2.

Although each button was labeled and its exact location (and the elevation of selected items) recorded in the field, this information did not follow individual pieces through the laboratory conservation process, and there is no way now to know with certainty what buttons, which were not of identical manufacture and size, were at each location on the body.

Ten of the buttons (all Catalog No. 2097-B.004) were hollow cast and measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 222). Two holes were present in backs (from which heated gases could escape during manufacture).

The face and back of each button were joined, and the buttons had a hollow center and a separate wire loop shank that was braised to the back. Remnants of the gilding process were observed on some of the buttons, but no other decoration was apparent.

The three remaining buttons were of similar manufacture but lacked the back holes. Two (both Catalog No. 2097-B.006) measured 23.5 mm in diameter (Figures 223 and 224). One of these was broken, and may account for the fourteenth button mentioned in the field records. The final button inventoried (Catalog No. 2097-B.003) measured 18 mm (Figure 225). It had a remnant identified by conservators as leather adhering to the back, and a fabric fragment was also processed in association with the button (Figure 226).

Wool cloth (Catalog No. 2097-B.005) was recovered with one of the buttons, but owing to a laboratory processing error it is not now possible to determine to which specific button it belonged. The cloth was in two layers, one to which the button attached and one containing a sewn finished buttonhole (Figure 227 has a detail of the buttonhole).

Another fragment of textile was recovered adhering to coffin wood (Figure 228). This may also have been from clothing, although the presence of a shroud cannot be ruled out (there were pin fragments found at the cranium).





Figure 222. Copper-alloy buttons from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.004): (*a*) front; (*b*) back. Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 223. Copper-alloy button from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.006 [one of two]). Diameter is 23.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 224. Copper-alloy button from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.006 [one of two]). Diameter is 23.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).





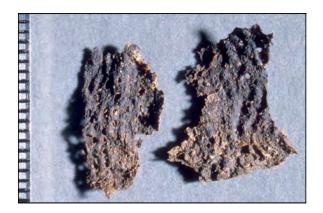


Figure 225. Copper-alloy button, with leather, from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.003): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

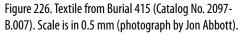






Figure 227. Wool textile from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.005): (a) left, fabric to which button was sewn; right, fabric with buttonhole (width is 21 mm); (b) detail of buttonhole finished with lighter-colored thread (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 228. Wool textile from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.005). Width of fragment is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

CHAPTER 13

Beads and Other Adornment

Barbara A. Bianco, Christopher R. DeCorse, and Jean Howson

In this chapter we take the measure of the beads and other personal adornment recovered in association with skeletal remains. We begin with a profile of the burials with adornment and then consider where and how the items were acquired. Each of the assemblages inventoried in the chapter—beads, cowries, rings and other jewelry—is then described in detail. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, descriptive typologies and findings about manufacture, origin, and age.

A Profile of Burials with Personal Adornment

With the exception of a handful of cowries and a piece of amber, the adornment from the New York African Burial Ground consisted of factory-made goods. The beads, buttons, cuff links, finger rings, and other ornaments found with the deceased would have been priced modestly in their day. The prominence of copper alloy and simple monochrome glass places the assemblages at the lower end of the ready-to-wear jewelry market. Business in this sector was brisk when the African Burial Ground was open: the supply of inexpensive jewelry increased in volume and variety in every major colonial American city during the 1700s, as did the supply of jewelry crafted with precious metals and stones (see Fales 1995:63–78). London imports and locally made merchandise were advertised in the weekly press, typically with the enthusiastic but perfunctory prose Manhattan silversmith Daniel Fueter used: "Articles too numerous to mention, all extremely Cheap" (New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy, March 10, 1763; for Manhattan jewelry advertisements, see Gottesman [1938:29-83]).

Very little of this ever-expanding stock in trade found its way to the graves of Manhattan's African workers. Adults were interred with personal adornment during all periods of the New York African Burial Ground's archaeologically documented use, as were infants and young children. Still, burials with adornment are uncommon—they are the anomaly, not the norm. Only 25 individuals, some 6.7 percent of the excavated burials, were directly associated with adornment. Among them were 2 infants, 2 young children, 9 women, 11 men, and 1 probable adult of undetermined sex and age. Another 5 individuals had tenuous links to adornment. Table 53 summarizes the particulars; problematic cases are noted in the table.

It may seem unusual that so few of the dead were adorned when many of the living seem to have embellished themselves in small but memorable ways. Historians who have studied fugitive slave advertisements published during the eighteenth century call attention to scores of city dwellers accessorized with panache. Earrings, bracelets, and buckles added a finishing touch to the clothing Africans wore in Manhattan, Philadelphia, and Charleston; buttons gussied up hats. Hair, perhaps the most personal and distinctive adornment of all, was sculpted, plaited, tufted, and queued. Less frequently noted, but not out of place in an era of peruke-wearing men, were wigs and toupees (Smith and Wojtowicz 1989; White 1991:185–206; White and White 1995b; Windley 1983).

Yet whether adornment was more widespread among the living than among the dead is unclear. Mentioned in the advertisements are items that would not have survived at the New York African Burial Ground, including handkerchiefs, ribbons, lacing, and

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be determined clearly. The most highly disturbed burials are not included.

Table 53. Burials with Personal Adornment

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex [®]	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^b	
6	25–30	male?	Late	8 buttons (5 copper alloy, 2 with anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum	
10	40–45	male	Late- Middle	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole, 5 with shanks only)	1 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg	
71	25–35	female	Late	ring	on third finger of right hand	
107	35–40	female	Late- Middle	1 bead	found during laboratory cleaning of cranium, near ear	
115	25–35	female	Middle	ring	on the third finger of the left hand	
158	20–30	male	Late	2 pairs ^c gilt copper-alloy cuff links, round shape	at wrists	
181	20–23	male	Late	7 buttons (3 copper alloy, 4 copper alloy and bone with impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 buttons on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; cuff links not provenienced	
186	0-0.17	undetermined	Late	glass-and-wire ornament	on the cranium	
187	1.5–4	undetermined	Late	22 beads?	12 found beneath pelvic area, 10 while screening soil	
211	adult	male?	Late	1 turquoise enamel cuff link face	on the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin	
226	0-0.17	undetermined	Early	8 beads	at throat (beneath mandible)	
238	40–50	male	Late- Middle	2 pairs ^c octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	at wrists	
242	40–50	female	Late	paste ring	on the middle finger of the right hand	
250	adult	undetermined	Early	1 bead	central part of coffin interior, possibly near pelvis	
254	3.5–5.5		Middle	cast silver pendant	found during laboratory cleaning below mandible	
259	17–19	female?	Late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, 5 shanks)	4 copper alloy at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 wood at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis	
310	44–52	female	Middle	paste ring	found during laboratory cleaning of left hand	
325	25–35	male	Late	1 gilt copper-alloy button	left upper sacrum	
326	45–55	male	Middle	4 copper-alloy domed buttons	in pelvic area and between tops of femurs, near the hands	
340	39.3–64.4	female	Early	112 beads strung with 7 cowries	around hips and right wrist	
341	adult	male	Middle	1 pair ^c octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	at left radius	

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex ⁸	Temporal Group	Items	Location
371	25–35	female	Middle	2 turquoise-enamel cuff link faces with motif	beneath the left hu
377	33–58	female	Late- Middle	3 copper-alloy rings (missing from lab)	at throat

Table 53. Burials with Personal Adornment (continued)

n in Grave ^b umerus 392 42.5-52.5 male Late-2 octagonal copper-alloy cuff 1 at right clavicle, 1 at cervical Middle link faces vertebrae 415 35-55 Middle male 13 copper-alloy domed 4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, buttons (14 recorded in field) 2 at sacrum **Burials with Artifacts with Problematic Provenience** 332 35 - 40male? Latecurved copper-alloy object found during laboratory cleaning; at-Middle tached to coffin wood near thoracic (possible earring) vertebrae 387 34-44 male Early cuff link or button fragment provenience unknown 398 25-35 undetermined Middle 1 octagonal cuff link face; in disturbed deposit—association with burial unclear 1 ring 428 40-70 female Middle 2 beads unknown—found during screening of grave fill soil 434 undetermined undetermined Middle 1 bead found in soil to west of bones

fabric bands. The disparity is formidable. Roughly a third of the adornment recorded in the list of Africans who escaped from New York City households between 1732 and 1783 (see Table 50, Chapter 12) was made with perishable material, and rarely did a person have adornment of more than one type.²

Missing from the advertisements, however, are the adornment worlds of the very young and the middle aged. Africans who fled from Manhattan households typically were in their late teens and their twenties (White 1991:122–124), a pattern illustrated in Table 50 (see Chapter 12). Only 3 of the 205 entries feature infants and young children: an 8-month-old child and its mother escaped in the autumn of 1759; a 5–6-year-old girl headed into the city's Revolutionary War-torn streets in August 1783, as did a little boy. The little boy's fustian trousers had buttons all down the sides, but neither the infant nor the girl appears to have had an adornment to their names. The upper end of the life cycle is better represented than the lower end but not appreciably so. Decorations are scarce in this cohort as well: just one of the eight adults with "about 40" or more years of age had adornment, a man named Tom who escaped in 1776 wearing new shoes fastened with buckles. Most of the individuals listed in the roster had no adornment of any kind and thus were not unlike their deceased neighbors and kin.

Even so, there is little reason to suppose that burials with adornment held people who were more beloved

^a A question mark indicates a probable assignment.

^b Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter.

[©] A "pair" of cuff links—two faces (or crowns) linked together—fasten a sleeve. One "cuff link" (a single face) is insufficient. A properly fastened shirt would have needed a "set" of cuff links—two matched pairs, one pair per sleeve.

² None of the women did. Seven of the 10 adornment-wearing women listed in Table 50 (see Chapter 12) had "perishable only" items, as did 10 of the 42 adornment-wearing men. Three women and 25 men had "durable only" adornment. Seven men had a mix of durable and perishable goods. Not all advertisements included descriptions of the clothing and jewelry that black city residents wore and took with them when they fled from bondage. Table 50 is limited to advertisements that describe clothing and jewelry. It thus represents a subset of the advertisements published in eighteenth-century New York newspapers.

or better off economically than their contemporaries. It is true that the African Burial Ground served many people for whom the cost of small luxuries was dear.³ It is also true that the possessions of the poor seldom stayed in place for long. Objects owned by the poor "[migrate] under the pressure of debt" (Stallybrass 1998:196–199). In colonial Manhattan's African community, adornment migrated for still another reason: individuals on the run reconfigured their accessories for expediency and disguise. Pompey no longer had earrings when he fled from bondage in 1763; Claus absconded in 1757 with a bundle of things, including a "flowered stuff waistcoat" lined with shalloon and likely fastened with decorative buttons (see Table 50, Chapter 12). But the wearing of personal adornment is a matter of inclination as well as circumstance. Not everyone chooses to wear adornment, even in communities where people and possessions are less likely to roam.

The types of adornment from the burial ground were narrow in range. For instance, decorations for the feet come up short when the cemetery population is compared to the African public at large. By the 1750s Africans in colonial Manhattan were wearing shoes fastened with buckles of brass, silver, steel, pewter, and stone, a reference to crystal, or perhaps to paste, metal jewelry with glass insets held by a "bezel," in the form of a groove or a flange. Bits of leather and fragments of metal that hint of footwear were not recovered in the field or the laboratory. The reasonable inference is that shoes were held back from the grave.

Decorations for the head come up short too, but headwear typically took the form of perishable hairstyles and perishable hats with ribbons and bands. Consequently, neither the decisions nor the decision makers are etched sharply enough to discern where community-wide sensibilities bumped up against individual tastes. Some hairstyles may have harbored durable items like the glass bead from Burial 107. Prior to interment, the hair of the deceased may have been dressed and groomed (for representations of hair and hats in African art, a key source of knowledge about African adornment in the past, see Seiber and Herreman [2000]).

Although the adornment from the cemetery was not as varied as the adornment seen on Manhattan streets, its expressive sweep was arguably the same. If adornment can be likened to a language, a system of symbolic communication akin to speech, then it spoke in a babble of tongues during the period that the African Burial Ground was in use. It conveyed considerable information as well, from evocations of a remembered Africa to subtle mockery of European pretensions (see White 1991:196–199). This communicative intricacy reflected the complexity of the city. Colonial Manhattan was a crossroad on the commercial map, and its shops and homes had an international cast. After 1703, newcomers outnumbered the native born, and no particular nationality, ethnicity, or religion held sway (Butler 2000:9). As the century progressed, members of the black community hailed from an ever-widening swath of a continent that hundreds of African societies called home.

Two notes on terminology may be of help before moving on to the individual profiles. "Button" is used more restrictively than in Chapter 12. In this chapter, the term refers to decorative buttons recovered alone (Burial 325) and en masse (Burials 6, 10, 181, 259, 326, and 415). Plain, serviceable buttons may have spruced up a collar or personalized a cuff, or perhaps dangled from a string at the neck or the wrist. Burials with plain buttons are not included in the adornment profile because any aesthetic value these buttons held for their wearers is not apparent from the grave.

Second, "personal adornment" and "personal decoration" are used interchangeably, although only the latter was a commonplace phrase 300 years ago. "Jewelry" and "ornament" stand in as well. The qualifier "personal" is sometimes omitted but always implied because it best describes the domain in which the items belong. A consideration of the formidable gear attached to a necklace recovered from another African Diaspora cemetery of the period may clarify the distinction we seek to make. The necklace from Burial 72 at Newton Plantation, Barbados, held 1 large agate, 7 cowries, 14 glass beads, 21 dog canines, and 5 vertebrae from a bony fish—an array linked to the practice of divination (see Handler 1997; Handler and Lange 1978:125–130). There are no counterparts to that necklace at the New York African Burial Ground (cf. LaRoche 1994b:12). Adornment worn for personal pleasure is by no means culturally insignificant, however. As we explain in the discussion that follows the profiles, the adornments from lower Manhattan connected their wearers both to the wider African community and to the constraints and possibilities of the times.

³ Archaeologist Barbara J. Heath (1999) has examined how "small luxuries" were acquired. Own-account economic activities are discussed in *Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground* (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009c:63–64).

Infants and Young Children with Personal Adornment

Eight opaque yellow beads characteristic of African manufacture were found at the throat of the infant in Burial 226 (Bead Type 14; see Figure 53 in Chapter 5).⁴ The infant had its own coffin but shared the grave of an adult man. The grave is placed in the Early Group of excavated burials (see Chapter 6).

Twenty-two black beads, drawn and cut from glass made in Europe, encircled the hips of the 1.5–4-year-old child in Burial 187 (Bead Type 6). This child's grave was in the northern part of the cemetery and is assigned to the Late Group, post 1776. The grave appears to have been placed next to or between the graves of adults (see Chapter 9).

A cast silver pendant that may have been attached to a string and worn as a necklace was found with Burial 254, a Middle Group interment that held a child between 3.5–5.5 years old.⁵ The pendant, which rested at the child's neck, was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the skeletal remains. Burial 254 was directly beneath the coffin of another young child of less than 2 years of age; the two youngsters appear to have been placed together in an area crowded with burials.

A glass-and-wire-filigree ornament was found on the cranium of the infant in Burial 186, a Late Group interment. Although seemingly aligned with adult burials to the north, Burial 186 is one of a handful of spatially isolated infant burials.

Adults with Personal Adornment

The woman in Burial 340 wore two strands of beads assembled primarily from a mix of European-made glass in shades of blue and yellow (Figure 229). The smaller of the two strands, a bracelet with 41 glass beads, was draped around her right wrist. The larger strand encircled her hips; it held 70 glass beads, 1 amber bead, and 7 cowries. These two strands account for all of the cowries recovered from the New York African Burial Ground and approximately 76 percent of the beads (112 of 147 specimens), including half of the

bead types represented (Bead Types 1–4, 7–9, 12, 15). Burial 340 is assigned to the Early Group. The woman it held was between 39 and 64 years old when she died. In addition to her jewelry, she was interred with other items, including an unused tobacco pipe (see Chapters 5 and 14).

Two other adults each had a single bead. Burial 250, an Early Group burial of an adult of undetermined sex and age, had a large spherical bead of opaque black (Bead Type 11). The bead was recovered from the central part of the coffin, possibly near the pelvis, in association with an iron mass, a pewter tack, and a copper-alloy button. The 35–40-year-old woman in Burial 107, a Late-Middle Group interment, had an opaque redwood bead with a transparent green core (Bead Type 5). The bead was recovered near her ear during the cleaning of the skeletal remains in the laboratory.

Adults were laid to rest with their rings as well as their beads. Four copper-alloy finger rings, two of which had glass ("paste") insets of seemingly identical design, were associated with women from three temporal groups. The 44–52-year-old woman in Burial 310 wore her paste ring (Catalog No. 1486-B.001) on her left hand, although the exact finger placement is unknown. The ring was recovered in the laboratory, minus its central inset, which is thought to have been missing at the time of interment. Burial 310 has been assigned to the Middle Group; the grave appears to have been placed along the south side of the fence that once traversed the site. The paste ring of the 40–50-year-old woman in Burial 242 was found on the third finger of the right hand (Catalog No. 1229-B.003). Coins were placed over her eyes; pins found in her lumbar region and sternum are suggestive of clothing. She was buried in what appears to be a north-south row of graves situated north of the fence line; her grave is assigned to the Late Group, post-1776.

The 25–35-year-old women in Burials 115 and 71 wore rings with plain bands (Catalog Nos. 858-B.001 and 813-B.004, respectively), the former on the third finger of the left hand, the latter on the third finger of the right hand. Pin fragments on the cranium of the woman in Burial 115 suggest shrouding; her grave is assigned to the Middle Group. Copper staining at the hips, probably from pins, of the woman in Burial 71 hints at clothing. Burial 71 is assigned to the Late Group.

One woman (Burial 377, a Late-Middle Group interment) had three copper-alloy rings (no catalog number assigned) that lay side by side near her throat

⁴ The characteristics of each Bead Type are summarized in "The Bead Assemblage" section of this chapter. Beads from each type are illustrated in this section.

⁵ Metal jewelry associated with infants, young children, and adults is illustrated in the "Inventory" of the "Rings and Other Jewelry" section of this chapter.

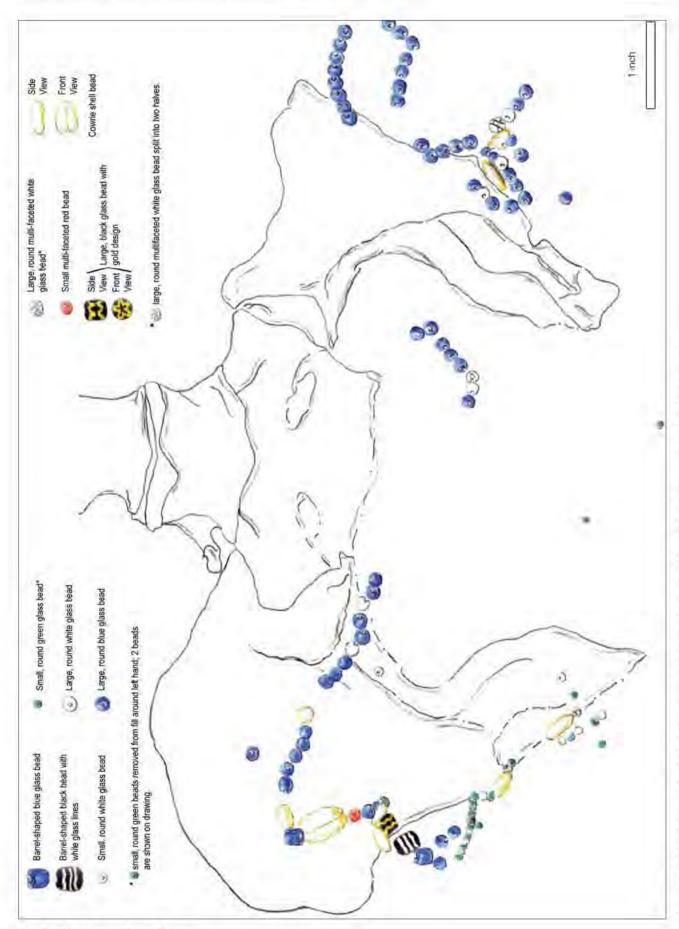


Figure 229. In situ drawing of Burial 340 showing beads in pelvic area (redrawn by M. Schur from photocopy of original field drawing).





Figure 230. In situ photographs of Burial 377 showing copper-alloy rings found at the throat. The diameter of the ring in the detail is 30 mm.

Two additional copper-alloy rings (not visible in the photographs) were recovered adjacent to it (photographs by Dennis Seckler).

(Figure 230). One of the rings had a small fragment of hair or fiber attached to the bottom. The material may have been from a string of some sort. If that was the case, then the rings might have been part of a necklace. The woman in Burial 377 was between 33 and 58 years old. Whether she was interred in a coffin is unclear. Excavators noted deteriorated material, possibly remnants of a coffin lid and floor, above and below the skeletal remains. A substance excavators believed to be red ocher was observed on the possible wood remnants.

Decorative cuff links were found with six individuals. Some of the cuff links, called "sleeve buttons" or "links of buttons" during the eighteenth century, came in plain and fancy versions. Others were no longer attached to their mates. Still others were missing the shanks that would have been soldered to their backs when the items were new. The two turquoise enamel faces recovered from Burial 371 were decorated with a squat, white-and-pink V that straddled two like-colored dots (Catalog No. 1875-B.001). This burial, which is assigned to the Middle Group, held a 25–35-year-old woman interred without a coffin; the cuff-link faces were found beneath her left upper arm. The turquoise enamel face recovered near the chin of the individual in Burial 211 was undecorated (Catalog No. 1186-B.001). This individual, probably a man, also was interred without a coffin directly over another grave, in what appears to be a north-south row of Late Group burials, post-1776.

Three men had octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links with impressed designs. One pair was recovered near the left wrist of a man of undetermined age who occupied Burial 341, which is assigned to the Middle Group (see Figure 198 in Chapter 12). This man's coffin was directly atop the coffin of a woman with whom he may have shared a grave. Two pairs were found near the wrists of the 40-50-year-old man in Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment (see Figures 176 and 177 in Chapter 12). Another Late-Middle Group interment, Burial 392, held a 42–52year-old man with two cuff-link faces, one near the right shoulder and another near the cervical vertebrae (see Figure 214 in Chapter 12). Buttons and fibers indicate that he was clothed when interred; unlike most burials, the head was oriented to the east. In addition, a pair of round, gilded copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the 20-30-year-old man in Burial 158, another coffinless burial from the Late Group (see Figure 155 in Chapter 12).

Seven individuals were apparently laid to rest in jackets, shirts, and breeches fastened with a mix of decorative buttons, primarily cast copper alloy but also pewter and wood. Button faces ranged in style—two had anchor motifs; others were domed, smooth, ridged, and gilded—but the buttons worn by particular

individuals did not always match. The domed buttons belonged to men from the Middle Group (Burials 326 and 415). Another man, a Late-Middle Group interment, had smooth-faced buttons (Burial 10), as did a probable woman (Burial 259) and a probable man (Burial 6) whose graves are assigned to the Late Group. The latter two individuals also had buttons in other styles, including buttons with ridged faces (the woman) and anchor motifs (the man). Two other Late Group burials also had decorative buttons. The man in Burial 325 had a single gilt copper-alloy button. The buttons recovered from the man in Burial 181 came in different materials as well as styles. Four of the buttons had turned bone backs and copper-alloy fronts decorated with repoussé or impressed designs.

Problematic Cases

Artifacts with ambiguous provenience are not uncommon on archaeological sites, and the adornment assemblages have their share. A whitish tan bead characteristic of African manufacture (Bead Type 13) was found in soil to the west of the bones from Burial 434, a Middle Group interment that was only partially excavated when fieldwork ceased. The age and sex of the burial's occupant could not be determined. Grave fill from Burial 428, another Middle Group interment, yielded two gray beads with facets (Bead Type 10). This burial held a woman between 40 and 70 years of age. A third burial from the Middle Group, Burial 398, was found in redeposited soil that contained a copperalloy ring and fragments from a copper-alloy cuff link with an octagonal shape. The remains of the deceased, an adult between 25 and 35 years old, were heavily disturbed by the construction of a retaining wall during the archaeological excavation of the site.

There is one case in which cuff links were recorded in the laboratory but not in the field. Laboratory records indicate that a fragment of a cast copper-alloy cuff link or button from an unknown provenience was attributed to Burial 387, an Early Group interment of a man between 34 and 44 years of age. The item was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Finally, a curved piece of copper alloy, identified tentatively as either a remnant of an earring or a bent pin, was attached to a fragment of coffin wood recovered from Burial 332, a Late-Middle Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between 35 and 40 years old. It was found in the laboratory when the thoracic vertebrae were cleaned. More distinctive than the

object is the mark on the coffin, "HW38," which is discussed in Chapter 10.

Problematic cases are not reflected in the count of burials with personal adornment. Had the problematic cases been included, the total would still form too modest a base to support meaningful inferences about consumer preferences or aesthetic trends.

Discussion

Of all the objects associated with the individuals interred at the African Burial Ground, adornment would seem to be the special preserve of the self. Shroud pins, coffins, and grave markers are the stuff of cemeteries. Adornments, in contrast, are personal effects that presumably kept company with their wearers prior to death. Moreover, adornments may have been among the most meaningful of the personal effects that New Yorkers living under slavery used or owned. Unlike clothing, which slaveholders supplied, the grace notes fell to Africans themselves.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that black New Yorkers enlisted their adornments to redress constraints slavery placed on their day-to-day lives. Newspapers of the period call attention to the deployment of adornment in pursuit of freedom. On view at the New York African Burial Ground, with the infants and young children in Burials 186, 187, 226, and 254, is another foundational project adornment supported: the shoring up of intergenerational ties.

Manhattan's compact homes and episodic commercial economy made an inauspicious framework for African childrearing. Africans resided in every municipal ward during the 1700s, but they typically worked apart from their compatriots and kin. Slaveholdings were small—singletons and pairs were the norm; turnover among owners was high; and family members were scattered when sold within the city and its surrounds (Kruger 1985:128–259; Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009a:70–73; White 1991:88–92). Information about how parents cared for children who lived at a remove is difficult to come by. Weekend and workday visits, and the gifts that enlivened them, were a key strategy for maintaining intergenerational attachments in the plantation colonies of Virginia and South Carolina (Morgan 1998:498–558). Visiting and gift giving would also have connected the families that city dwellers formed. Yet black family visiting went largely unnoticed in white Manhattan unless truancy was involved (on New Yorkers who ran away to visit relatives, see White [1991:134–139]). The things adults routinely provide to infants and young children—food, names, stories, spiritual instruction, physical care—went unnoticed, too, as did occasional gifts, such as a silver pendant, a piece of filigree, a necklace, and a string of beads looped at the waist.

The relationship between the adult givers and the child receivers did not come down to us. Among the possibilities are fictive kin, relatives created by cultural convention rather than the circumstances of birth. Also unknown are the events that prompted the gift giving, and the material burdens that the givers incurred. Only the lines of exchange are intact. They tell of emotional and material investments in children within a community where the likelihood of seeing children mature was uncertain.

Instances of adult-to-child gift giving in the archaeological record of eighteenth-century slavery are unusual, both in mainland America and farther afield. In addition to the four youngsters at the New York African Burial Ground, a child with a bead necklace was uncovered in the African portion of a cemetery shared by the Nagel and Dyckman families, Dutch homesteaders with adjoining farms in Washington Heights, now a part of upper Manhattan (Bolton 1924:203–204). A burial site in the Chesapeake held an infant interred with a string of small white beads (Hudgins 1977:70). No adornments were recovered with the infants and young children laid to rest at Newton Plantation; interment practices at this Barbados cemetery were selective, however, and relatively few infants and young children were buried there (Handler and Lange 1978:285–287).

Although material endearments deepened ties among peers, the gifting of jewelry to friends, sweethearts, and spouses is not accessible from the burial ground. Unlike the young children found wearing adornment, the adults did not leave behind any telltale evidence about the hands that brought personal decorations into their lives. Neither did the items the adults had. Buttons and cuff links destined for clothing could have been received as gifts, along with rings and strung or single beads. Conversely, all of the items could have been self-acquired, including the finger rings with plain bands (Burials 71 and 115) that connote matrimony to twenty-first-century American eyes. Africans who lived 300 years ago saw rings in a different light (see Herbert 1984:23-31). So, also, did colonial Americans of European descent (Fales 1995:23-41). Because the custom of wearing wedding rings was not universally common among the latter, there would have been little reason to pressure enslaved Africans to solemnize their unions with rings.

Men and women configured their worlds when they wore adornment, not just when they gave it away. Accessories reserved for festive occasions helped separate work from leisure, a role that clothing played (White 1991:195). Adornment worn every day also put a stamp on the routines and rituals in which adults engaged. The waist beads from Burial 340 exemplify the everyday category, albeit with a twist: they would have been hidden beneath the wearer's clothes, if not in Manhattan, then in parts of Ghana and Nigeria, where women used waist beads to apportion the public and private sides of their lives. Waist beads doubled as foundation garments. But rather than reshaping a woman's figure, like girdles or corsets, waist beads helped conceal it from view. The garment (typically a wrapper or an apron) that covered a woman's hips was tucked around the beads, which functioned as an "under" belt to keep the garment secure. Waist beads were removed from time to time for restringing but otherwise stayed in place. They were visible to people who lived in emotional and physical proximity to the wearer, such as a husband or a sweetheart, and the women with whom she bathed and groomed (for the etiquette of waist-bead concealment and display among the Akuapem of Ghana, a group whose kingdom dates to the beginning of the 1700s, see Gilbert [1993:126–127]).

Whether the waist beads from Burial 340 were worn daily beneath a gown or a petticoat is impossible to know. Still, the beads are a point of contact with the gendered dimensions of the world black New Yorkers created. Historians of black life in eighteenth-century Manhattan have pieced together male-to-female population ratios and patterns of labor (Kruger 1985; White 1991). The Skeletal Biology Team has reconstructed male and female mortality trends (see Blakey, Rankin-Hill, et al. 2009 [Chapter 13 of Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground]). Evidence concerning how Africans construed manhood and womanhood is harder to find. Women's subjective understandings about femininity and comportment are particularly elusive, not only for Manhattan but also for the regions from which captives came. The images and associations that made waist beads meaningful to women with dissimilar backgrounds and experiences are elusive as well (for present-day images among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, see Drewal and Mason [1998:80–81]).

Although some adornment wearers drew on the fashions of their homeland, others looked to their friends. Thomas de Voe, a chronicler of the city's public markets, called attention to stylistic camaraderie among black youths and men who showed off their dance moves at Catharine Market, an east-side foodselling venue established in 1786. A dance contingent from Long Island favored neatly tied queues and improvised wigs. The signature look of a group from Tappan, New Jersey, centered on plaited forelocks bound with tea lead, a thinly hammered lead alloy named for the tea boxes it lined (De Voe 1969:341, 344-345 [1862]). De Voe did not describe the decorations black bystanders wore, but sorting out the influences and sizing up the trends would have been more difficult in the city than in its less congested surrounds.

Matters of style are no better documented on the African side of the Atlantic than in New York. Beads and metal jewelry were available throughout the Atlantic world, as discussed in the section entitled "Personal Adornment in Historical Context," and adornment wearers in western Africa were inveterate recyclers of local and imported goods. Yet the canon of knowledge built by observers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries makes a poor fashion gazetteer. It highlights the coasts rather than the hinterlands that provisioned New York's African labor force (see Curtin 1964:11-27; see Figure 27 in Chapter 2). Its sociological sightlines are limited as well. More often than not, what dazzled European visitors and African artists of the day were the accoutrements of the privileged and the sumptuary systems that underwrote the expansion of African states (on the use of art to advance statecraft in eighteenth-century Benin, see Ben-Amos [1999]).

Observers like the Reverend Willhelm Müller illustrate the extent of the documentary gaps. During his stay in the Gold Coast kingdom of the Fetu, Müller noticed the adornments of the general public as well as of the elite. Ordinary men who lived in the shadow of Fort Frederiksborg, where Müller served as chaplain from 1662 to 1669, wore "poor-quality beads" or cowries around their necks and copper or iron rings on their arms and hands. Ordinary women plaited their hair "elegantly" and sometimes "[hung] just one large blue bead in it." A string of "common beads," and "perhaps an elegant little cord woven from bark," encircled their legs, arms, and necks. Cowries were becoming widely available during this period but were not used as adornment among the Fetu elite. Wealthy

men and women ornamented themselves with gold and precious stones (Jones 1983:203–207).

Because only a small fraction of the era's adornment styles entered the historical record, the beads and other jewelry from the New York African Burial Ground are unreliable guides to their wearer's ethnic roots. Yet these items are not bereft of identifying detail. They belong to an era when Africans in geographically far-flung places were using mass-produced goods to organize everyday desires and circumvent the inequities that troubled their lives.

Personal Adornment in Historical Context

Personal adornments like those found at the New York African Burial Ground were highly portable and widely circulated, both in the Atlantic world and in mainland North America. Most, if not all, were available in New York City as well. We look briefly at the traffic in adornment along the west African coast, where the majority of Africans sent directly to New York from the 1660s onward were embarked; in the Caribbean, where Africans were transshipped to North American ports; in mainland America, where trade was oriented to Native American populations; and finally, in the city of New York.

Because the African Burial Ground provided a resting place for black New Yorkers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, our temporal focus is confined to the high tide of Atlantic trade. This period witnessed enormous change in the material worlds of the regions from which captives were taken: monetary standards, sumptuary codes, and consumption patterns were reconfigured as European and African powers vied for control of labor and goods. Commerce and consumption on the American side of the Atlantic changed dramatically, too. Economic expansion in the decades after 1680 drew colonial Americans into the consumer revolution then sweeping through the Netherlands, Britain, and France. By the mid-1700s, "material goods appeared with increasing frequency at cheaper prices among far more consumers than ever before" (Butler 2000:154). Understanding how adornment from an African cemetery in lower Manhattan is entangled with Atlantic commerce is important because African labor produced much of the plenitude that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century consumers enjoyed.

Glass beads formed the largest portion of personal decorations imported to western Africa, with "many billions landed in barrels, cases, and casks" along the Guinea Coast (Alpern 1995:22). Venice was the main center of European bead production, although bead making also thrived in the Netherlands from the late-sixteenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries (Baart 1988; Karklins 1974; Van der Sleen 1963). Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, and France had glass bead industries as well.

Prior to the heyday of European mercantile imperialism, glass beads from Egypt, South Asia, and Spain reached western Africa via trans-Saharan trade routes. So, too, did beads made of carnelian and other precious stones. The trans-Saharan traffic in exotic-glass and -stone beads was supplemented by local production and benefited primarily the political elite (Insoll and Shaw 1997:15–16; Ogundiran 2002:432–436). For the West African public at large, the mass availability of glass beads coincided with the boom in Atlantic commerce.

To be sure, glass beads and jewelry such as silver chains and metal rings represented only a small percentage of the overall value of European imports. Cloth and clothing dominated the European–West African trade "from start to finish" (Alpern 1995:6).⁶ Yet the sheer volume of personal adornment was nonetheless enormous, and it grew in amount and range as the eighteenth century progressed.

Imports of personal decorations varied regionally, as did imports of cowries and metal, two other materials from which adornments were made. Cowries may have "touched the daily lives of [ordinary] individuals" more profoundly than other Atlantic imports (Gregory 1996; Ogundiran 2002:440). Cowries underwrote secular and sacred exchange in an ever-expanding shell-money zone that eventually extended from the Bight of Benin to the Mali Empire, where the monetization of cowries took hold in the

context of trans-Saharan trade. The amount of cowries in western Africa escalated dramatically with the shifting of primary supply routes from land to sea. Between 1700 and 1790, the British and Dutch cartels that dominated the maritime trade moved more than 25 million pounds by weight of cowries—over 10 billion individual shells—into West African ports (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:58–61). The contours of regional supply and demand on the eve of the boom are shown in Table 54, which focuses on cowries and adornments carried under England's flag.

Africans refashioned imported commodities into goods used for personal display and official regalia as well as food production and market exchange, activities that extend and intensify social life. Unworked and semiprocessed metal fed a millennia-old industry attuned to shifts in material availability and consumer demand (Herbert 1984:9–11).7 African smiths recast iron bars into farm implements, household utensils, and bangles. Brass and copper manillas, open-ended bracelets imported by the millions to West Africa beginning in the fifteenth century, were worn as jewelry but also melted down to make plaques, weights, and measures (Alpern 1995:13). Thin sheet brass was especially prized in Benin, as Captain Thomas Phillips learned during his stopover in Whydah in 1694; the sheets were cut up to make bracelets and bands for adorning the neck and the limbs (Handler and Lange 1978:156). Bracelets recovered archaeologically from pre-nineteenth-century contexts at Elmina on the Gold Coast were likely produced from white metal and iron wire and rods acquired from overseas (DeCorse 2001:135).

Glass beads shipped from Europe were also reworked in African locales. The melting, grinding, polishing, and drilling of imported glass beads predates the Atlantic trade, as archaeological finds from Mali and Nigeria attest (DeCorse 1989; Insoll and Shaw 1997; Ogundiran 2002). Although the history of African glassmaking is not well understood, several different industries of unknown ancestry are represented in West Africa, including one involving the firing, in clay molds, of chipped and powdered glass (Lamb 1976, 1978; Wild 1937). Glass from the Atlantic trade came to be used as raw material in the manufacture of powder-glass beads (DeCorse 2001:137). Powder-glass beads were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground with Burials 226 and 434.

⁶ The dominance of textiles is evident in Eltis's (2000:300) snapshot of merchandise shipped from London aboard crown vessels to West and West Central Africa between 1662 and 1713. Textiles were by far the most important import, accounting for 55 percent by value for the combined regions of the Guinea Coast, followed by metals (18 percent), cowries (6 percent), personal decorations (6 percent), containers (4 percent), guns and gunpowder (4 percent), spirits (2 percent), luxury goods (1 percent), and miscellaneous items (5 percent). Alpern (1995) provides information on the following categories of goods: cloth (Indian and European), clothing (especially kerchiefs, hats, and caps), linens, unworked or semiprocessed metal, metal containers, and other metal wares such as tools and utensils, firearms, beads, coral, cowries, spirits, tobacco, glassware, ceramics, and paper.

Frank McManamon, who kindly reviewed a draft of this report for the National Park Service, contributed to our phrasing of this point.

Table 54. Adornments and Cowries Imported into Africa, 1662–1713, by Region

Region	Value of Personal Decorations Imported into Africa (pounds sterling)	Percent of Imports to Each Region Represented by Personal Decorations	Value of Cowries (pounds sterling)	Percent Represented by Cowries
Upper Guinea	12,700	27	400	1
Gold Coast	4,600	1	3,900	1
Bight of Benin	6,700	8	38,300	44
Bight of Biafra	13,000	14	800	1
West-Central Africa	900	1	_	_
Windward Coast	100	not calculated		
Total	38,000	6	43,400	6

Note: From Eltis (2000:300) adapted by Ogundiran (2002:430).

The presence in colonial Manhattan of glass beads characteristic of West African manufacture calls attention to the movement of adornment from Africa to the Americas. This aspect of the material culture of Atlantic slavery is not well charted. Some Africans arrived in the Americas with adornment, but how often this occurred and whether the items were brought from home or acquired en route is unclear. Captors were not squeamish about confiscating the belongings of the captured, as indicated by the disheartening spectacle William Hugh Grove observed in 1732 in a Virginia port: "The Boyes and Girles [aboard the slave ship were] all Stark naked; so Were the greatest part of the Men and Women. Some had beads about their necks, arms, and Wasts, and a ragg or Piece of Leather the bigness of a fig Leafe" (cited in Baumgarten 2002:132). Shippers were not averse to parceling out adornments stowed on board. In 1796, the women on a slaver anchored in Carlisle Bay, off the southwest coast of Barbados, wore necklaces strung with glass beads acquired, apparently, from the crew. General William Dyott, who described the scene, learned from the ship's master that new-stringing the beads was the women's "chief employment" (cited in Handler and Lange 1978:147).

That eighteenth-century merchants were not always able to off-load their adornment cargos in African ports is confirmed by the salvaging of the British slaver *Henrietta Marie*. A cache of glass beads was recovered from the hold of the ship, which sank off Key West in 1701 during the last leg of its London-Calabar-Kingston route (*African-American Archaeology Newsletter* 1997:9).

Yet Africans crossed the Atlantic as sailors, not just as commodities enchained below deck. Black seafaring took root in the emerging Anglo-American maritime world of the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The presence of enslaved and free black seamen in North American ports and plantation roadsteads increased steadily after 1740, as did the number of black New Yorkers who fled from bondage in sailor guise (see entries from 1748 to 1783 on Table 50 in Chapter 12). By 1803, black men filled approximately 18 percent of American seamen's jobs (Bolster 1997:2–9). Ships and boats provided a "porous boundary" across which "goods, ideas, individuals, and aesthetics" flowed (Bolster 1997:7). During their travels, black seamen may well have acquired strings of beads or cowries, which could have been sold, exchanged, or given as gifts upon return to port.

European-made glass beads, buttons, cuff links, and copper-alloy rings were imported to and available for sale in the circum-Caribbean colonies of Britain, Holland, Spain and Portugal during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Captives who ultimately were transported to New York may have acquired adornments in the Caribbean. Avenues for acquisition of adornment included own-account economic activity, such as marketing produce, processed foodstuffs, and livestock.

Personal decorations produced in European factories circulated widely in mainland North America. Glass beads and metal and paste rings akin to those found at the New York African Burial Ground are documented on colonial-era sites ranging from Upper Michigan and upstate New York to southern Florida (see Deagan 1987; Karklins 1992; Quimby 1966; Smith 1965; Stone 1974; Wood 1974; Wray and Schoff 1953). French, Spanish, English, and Dutch trading cartels and colonial agents used adornments in conjunction with other commodities to negotiate "favored" trading partnerships with Native American populations. Native Americans, in turn, drew on such items to reconfigure status relations and spheres of influence amongst themselves.

Imported and locally made jewelry was plentiful in New York City. Silversmiths who apprenticed in Europe and in the mainland British colonies crowded Manhattan, as did specialist jewelers who worked in enamel and set gems (Fales 1995:66–70). Silversmiths made large and small wares for wealthy patrons and the general public, sometimes acting as jobbers for retailers, and sometimes operating retail stores of their own, often with a jeweler on site (Barquist 2001:25). Charles Oliver Bruff, a Maryland-born silversmith's son, employed two jewelers, one from London and another from Paris. Enameled cuff links, brass buttons, earrings, hair jewels, and "all sorts of silver smiths work" could be found on the shelves of his Maiden Lane shop (New-York Mercury, January 3, 1763; New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury, May 25, 1772).

Personal adornment was sold in general emporiums as well as specialty stores. The account books of merchant Samuel Deall record necklaces, earrings, and beads sold in 1758 (New-York Historical Society, Account Books of Samuel Deall, Invoice Book T, 1757–1766). The price of a "bunch" of black beads, perhaps like those found with Burial 187, was 2 shillings and sixpence. Beaded necklaces—it is not known whether of glass or metal—ranged in price from 1 to 17 shillings, whereas earrings suitable for children sold from 1 shilling and 10 pence to as much as 1 pound 4 shillings for fine red drop clusters. Deall's emporium on Broad Street was typical of its time, stocking clothing, foodstuffs, house wares, light construction materials, and "all elements of ornamentation for person and home" (Arthur 1985:37).

Although Africans are not likely to have patronized establishments like Deall's or Bruff's, some of the less expensive adornments merchants and craftsmen carried would have made their way into smaller retail venues. "Cheap sales" and auctions of overstocked merchandise lowered retail prices, and small-scale vendors such as peddlers would have bought inexpensively and sold with a modest markup. Stocks of

stolen goods also circulated in the city, and peddlers were accused of trafficking in ill-gotten wares (on merchants and peddlers, regulatory legislation, and the disposal of overstocks, see Matson [1998:131–134, 139–140, 158]).

Personal adornment may also have been received as gifts from the households where Africans toiled, but unlike clothing, jewelry was not customarily given to enslaved household members.

In summary, personal adornment could have been acquired in Africa, along the routes by which Africans reached New York, or in the city itself. Glass beads circulated throughout the Atlantic world. Metal and paste rings were traded in Africa and the Americas and sold in Manhattan stores. A silver pendant would have been available in a city shop or market stall or as part of a peddler's stock. Enamel cuff links were imported and locally produced. And although cowries never played a visible role in the Native American trade, all manner of items were bought, sold, and fenced at the docks and taverns that comprised the "waterfront economy" (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:181–182).

Considering the poverty of most who were interred at the African Burial Ground, the outlay of even one or two shillings for adornment would likely have been a considerable expense. Holding on to an adornment for a long period of time may have been difficult as well. But however hard-won or precariously held, the beads and other adornments recovered with the deceased were treated as inalienable possessions at the end of their wearers' lives. Why these objects were removed permanently from circulation rather than passed along to one of the mourners is impossible to know. It is unlikely that a single explanation exists. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of the 25 individuals directly associated with adornment would have varied. So, too, would the sensibilities of the neighbors and kin who laid these individuals to rest.

The Bead Assemblage

The bead assemblage from the New York African Burial Ground includes 146 glass beads and 1 amber bead. The majority of the glass beads were likely produced in Venice (Murano), but 9 glass beads were produced using distinctive firing methods associated with West African manufacturing techniques. The glass beads fell into two structural categories: simple beads made from a single, undecorated layer of glass (144 specimens, or 99 percent), and complex beads

with adventitious decoration (2 specimens, or 1 percent). Three different production methods—winding, drawing, and firing—were represented (Table 55 and Figures 231–243).

The color and diaphaneity of the glass beads ranged from opaque black to opaque and translucent yellow, light gold, and whitish tan. Transparent blue (58 specimens) and translucent blue-green (26 specimens) beads predominated. The African Burial Ground bead assemblage, however, does not support hypotheses about color preference at the collective level (see Stine et al. 1996) because the majority of the beads were recovered from a single burial.

Bead sizes ranged from very small (diameters of 2.2–2.3 mm for the black beads from Burial 187) to medium (the powder-glass beads from Burial 226 were approximately 4.5 mm in diameter; most of the blue and light gold beads were in the 5–7-mm range), and large (the opaque black bead from Burial 250 was 13.6 mm in diameter).

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, and Chain of Custody⁸

Almost all the beads were recovered in the field during careful scraping of soil from skeletal remains. Ten beads from Burial 187 were found when screening the soil. The bead from Burial 107 was recovered in the laboratory when the skeletal remains were cleaned.

The majority of the beads were vitrified and glassy. Most beads exhibited signs of glass disease, surface corrosion, pitting, or frosting. The beads were cleaned with a dry brush to remove the soil but not the weathered surface, a corrosion product that represents the deteriorated original surface, and hence the dimensions of the once-healthy glass.

Porous, flaking, and friable surfaces of six beads from Burial 340 were impregnated with acryloid B-72 to prevent further loss of surface detail. All other beads were left untreated, although five beads from Burial 340 were sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for SEMS/ED elemental analysis. The analysis was undertaken to determine the relationship between chemical composition and corrosion pattern. Test results indicated that the beads were composed primarily of soda, lime, and silica, with varying levels

of magnesium and other trace elements. Visually identical glass beads with different patterns of corrosion had different chemical formulations.

The beads were inventoried and discussed by conservator Cheryl La Roche (1994a, 1994b) for John Milner Associates. The assemblage was then reexamined for the Howard University Archaeology Team by archaeologist Christopher R. DeCorse at Syracuse University (fall 1998, spring 1999, summer 2001). Syracuse University returned the beads to the New York laboratory during the summer of 2001. Jon Abbott took a final set of photographs in August 2001. At that time, the beads were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The beads were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003 and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Methodology and Definitions

DeCorse examined the beads under magnification of 10x–20x with strong light. The descriptive data recorded for each bead included the following information.

Manufacture: The primary technique(s) used in the creation of the bead, such as winding, drawing, and firing (see Karklins 1985, 1993; Kidd and Kidd 1983).

Structure: This term refers to the arrangement or relationship of the parts of a bead. Structure refers to gross physical characteristics, such as the number of layers or applied decorative elements, not to the chemical or physical characteristics of the glass. Following Karklins's terminology (1985), two structural categories are represented in the assemblage: simple beads, made from a single, undecorated layer of glass, and complex beads, simple beads with adventitious decoration.

Secondary Modification: The alteration of the shape, color, or opacity of a bead through reheating, tumbling, grinding, cutting, and kindred techniques. Beads were modified both at the place of manufacture and long after they left the factory floor. Determination of when modification took place is sometimes impossible. Some secondary modification techniques, however, can be correlated with particular manufacturing sites.

Venetian manufacturers used several techniques of heat rounding to alter cylindrical drawn beads into spherical, oblate, and barrel shapes. The *a speo*

⁸ Conservation information for the three assemblages discussed in this chapter was obtained from John Milner Associates (see LaRoche 2002:29–39).

Table 55. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground

Type of Bead	Description	Burial No.	Count	Diameter (mm)	Length (mm)
Glass					
Drawn					
1	Simple; heat rounded; oblate, occasional examples more barrel shaped; surfaces dull; translucent yellow; typically have heavy opaque white to yellowish brown patination that obscures actual color; surfaces degraded and pitted, typically more degraded at ends.	340	15	2.8–3.3	1.7–2.8
2	Simple; heat rounded; some examples have attributes associated with the <i>a speo</i> technique, such as protuberances, tails, and off-center perforations; spherical to oblate, occasional examples globular or more barrel shaped; dull to shiny; transparent blue; minor to moderately pitted, some chips and scratches, some examples have lunate scars.		58	4.8–7.3	3.8–7.0
3	Simple; heat rounded; oblate/donut shaped; dull; translucent blue-green; degraded, very pitted.	340	26	2.9–3.5	1.9–2.5
4	Simple; heat rounded; oblate; dull; opaque black; some scratches, minor pitting; small chip at aperture.		1	6.3	5.6
5	Compound; slightly heat rounded; cylindrical; opaque redwood on transparent apple-green core; large chip at one end.	107	1	3.2	7.7
6	Simple; oblate, donut shaped to tubular; generally dull, but some examples are more shiny; opaque black, some appear translucent dark reddish amber under strong light and this may be color of all examples; moderately degraded with more wear on ends; pitted; many bubbles present in glass.		22	2.2–3.3	1.3–2.6
Wound			II.		l.
7	Simple; truncated cone; dull; translucent light gold; opaque white patination; weathered and pitted. In all examples, the top of the cone has been broken off after manufacture, which may represent intentional secondary modification by the user(s); the flake scar is covered with same patination as the rest of the bead.		6	5.8–6.6	4.7–5.4
8	Simple; faceted; color obscured by heavy opaque patination, probably colorless or transparent amber; heavy opaque brown patination layer; has parallels from Elmina.		3	3.3–5.9	5.5–6.2
9	Complex; barrel; dull; opaque black, appears dark amber under strong light; gold foil wave pattern on each end; gold foil has worn off in places; scratches, some pitting, two large flakes at one end.	340	1	6.1	6.1
10	Simple; faceted with eight pressed facets; dull; transparent light gray; pitted.	428	2	8.6–9.6	7.8–8.1
11	Simple; spherical; dull to shiny; opaque black; some pitting and weathering of surface.		1	13.6	10.7

Table 55. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground (continued)

Type of Bead	Description	Burial No.	Count	Diameter (mm)	Length (mm)
12	omplex; barrel shaped; opaque black; three wavy lines ound circumference; very pitted; line decoration has mpletely weathered away, leaving grooves; traces of ry degraded glass (possibly patination) suggest color of the decoration may have been opaque white.		8.6	8.9	
Fired					
13	Tubular or cylindrical in shape with a slightly off-center perforation through the length of bead, with roughly trapezoidal cross section; opaque white, with tan or whitish brown patination on surface; some pitting and cracking of surface; bead has a granular appearance under magnification; original microstructure was heterogeneous, as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points	434	1	6.3	3.7
14	Produced by firing glass powder and likely produced in Ghana; oblate to donut shaped; the original color is difficult to determine, but it was probably opaque yellow. Though similar in manufacture—and also in the weathering represented—to the fired bead in Burial 434, they are much smaller and more regular in appearance, and they were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is also possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, are also regular and were likely polished or drilled after the beads were fired. As in the Burial 434 bead, the beads have a granular appearance under magnification. Original microstructure was heterogeneous, as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points.		8	4.0–4.8	2.7–3.8
Non-glass (amber))		•	•	
15	Bead; 14 facets; dull; transparent red; wear or polishing has rounded the edges of facets; internal cracks and bubbles; surface pitted, some chipping; damage at apertures; drilled perforation shows traces of cutting.	340	1	4.8	4.3

method, introduced in the eighteenth century, was one method. It was accomplished by reheating beads on a specially designed fork, or *a speo*, placed near the door of an oven. Karklins (1993) has identified several diagnostic features on beads altered using this method. These attributes include tangs or tails of glass where the more viscous surface of the glass flowed downward. In other cases, beads fused together while on the *a speo*. Drawn beads that show evidence of having been broken apart at the ends, or beads that are fused together with their perforations in perfect alignment, were heat rounded by the *a speo* method. Some of

the Type 2 beads have many of these attributes. Some Type 2 beads also have marks within their perforations that may be indicative of the *a speo* method. Beads modified using this technique that do not have any of these attributes would appear the same as other heatrounded beads, and it is often difficult to differentiate these technique on individual beads. All produce similar results, and subsequent polishing, use wear, or weathering obliterates differences. Hence, although all of the Type 2 beads may have been rounded using the *a speo* technique, no clear indications are present on some of the beads.

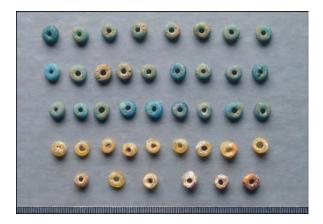


Figure 231. Bottom two rows, Bead Type 1 (diameters are 2.8–3.3 mm); top three rows, Bead Type 3 (diameters are 2.9–3.5 mm). All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

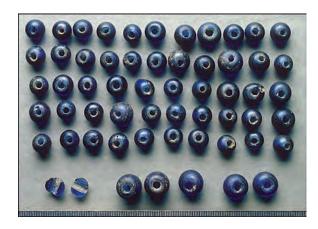


Figure 232. Bead Type 2. Diameters are 4.8–7.3 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

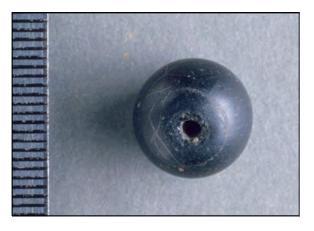


Figure 233. Bead Type 4. Diameter is 6.3 mm. Bead is from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 234. Bead Type 5. Length is 7.7 mm. Bead is from Burial 107 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

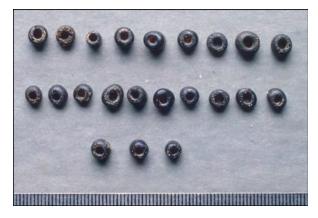


Figure 235. Bead Type 6. Diameters are 2.2–3.3 mm. All beads are from Burial 187 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

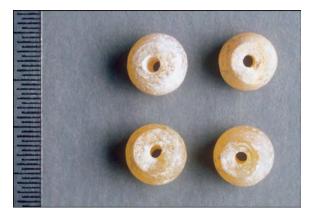


Figure 236. Bead Type 7. Diameters are 5.8–6.6 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 237. Bead Type 8. Diameters are 3.3—5.9 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 238. *Left*, Bead Type 9 (diameter is 6.1 mm); *right*, Bead Type 15 (diameter is 4.8 mm). Both beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 239. Bead Type 10. Diameters are 8.6–9.6 mm. Both beads are from Burial 428 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 240. Bead Type 11. Diameter is 13.6 mm. Bead is from Burial 250 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 241. Bead Type 12. Length is 8.9 mm. Bead is from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 242. Bead Type 13. Diameter is 6.3 mm. Bead is from Burial 434 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 243. Bead Type 14. Diameters are 4.0–4.8 mm. All beads are from Burial 226 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Drawn beads were also rounded using other methods during the eighteenth century. Before 1817, beads were rounded in a large pan containing a mixture of sand and wood ash or plaster and graphite (Karklins 1985:88). The pan was then heated over a charcoal fire and the mixture continuously stirred.

Shape: The shape is the profile of the bead. Shape implies nothing about the size or contour of the perforation, the relative length of the bead, or the manufacturing processes represented. An effort has been made to use terminology that is clear in casual reading but precise in relation to the attributes represented. For this reason, some terms popular in common usage, such as "barrel shaped" and "donut," have been retained.

Spherical Beads: Spherical beads have shapes approximating a sphere, mathematically defined as an approximately round body in which the surface is equidistant from the center at all points. Few beads are precisely spherical; the term is used to indicate shapes that are clearly round.

Oblate Beads: Oblate beads have profiles that are circular to ellipsoidal.

Globular Beads: Globular beads have a semispherical or ellipsoidal aspect but are irregular or nonsymmetrical in cross section. Beads of this shape include specimens such as drawn beads that have been heat rounded or cooked.

Cylindrical Beads: Cylindrical beads always have clearly circular cross sections along their entire length, the sides of the beads being parallel to the line of the perforation. The term is used for beads with the very regular, straight profiles often associated with drawn beads that have not been heat altered.

Tubular Beads: Tubular beads are often cylindrical but lack the very regular, parallel surfaces characteristic of drawn or molded beads. The term "tubular"

should not be conflated with the terms "tube" or "tube beads," which have been used to describe drawn beads.

Barrel-Shaped Beads: Barrel-shaped beads have a circular cross section, widest in the middle, decreasing in a regular way to flat or semiflat ends. The side profiles of these beads appear as arcs that intersect planes at each end.

Conical Beads: Conical beads have profiles that decrease in a regular line from one end to the other.

Bead Facets: Facets are intentional planes on the surface of a bead produced by grinding, molding or marvering.

Decoration: A wide variety of decorative techniques are employed in bead manufacture. Only two beads examined in the New York African Burial Ground assemblage were decorated. These are Bead Types 9 and 12. In each case, the decoration consists of adventitious decoration on a wound bead. The Type 9 bead is an opaque back bead with a trailed decoration of gold foil. The Type 12 bead is opaque black with traces of a trailed (possibly opaque white) decoration. Both types are typical of Venetian manufacture.

Color: Colors should be regarded as approximate rather than absolute. Color is an ephemeral characteristic, often appearing slightly different under different viewing conditions. Individual perceptions may also result in different readings. The minute size of some of the decorative components also makes precise color determination a challenge. In addition, color is often variable even on specimens of similar age from the same factory. Prior to the twentieth century, manufacturing techniques were not precise, and slight color variations might result. Postproduction weathering through use or burial in an archaeological site creates additional variation.

Diaphaneity: Each color is preceded by its diaphaneity, which is opaque, translucent, or transparent. Opaque glass is impenetrable to light. Translucent glass transmits light but diffuses it so that objects on the other side are indistinct. Transparent glass allows objects on the other side to be clearly viewed. In recording this attribute, an attempt was made to determine the bead's original character.

Luster: The appearance of the bead's surface in reflected light. In contrast to color and diaphaneity, this attribute often reflects postmanufacture use wear, weathering, and modification. Two luster types are used to describe the beads from the New York African Burial Ground: shiny (smooth and bright) and dull (not shiny).

Size: This refers to the length and diameter are given for each bead or, if a type is being described, a range for each dimension. Measurements reflect the maximum length or width. Generalized categories of length, such as short, standard, and long, defined in terms of specific length to width ratios, are not used.

Manufacture, Age, and Origin

As noted, the majority of the beads in the assemblage were likely produced in Venice. They consisted almost entirely of simple monochrome beads that have comparatively wide temporal and geographic distributions and that have been documented on a wide variety of archaeological sites. They are completely consistent with, although not restricted to, the African Burial Ground's historically documented period of use. Notably absent were distinctive nineteenth-century bead types, including the products of Bohemia.

The significant exceptions were one amber bead (Type 15) from Burial 340 and nine powder-glass beads of likely West African origin, one from Burial 434 (Type 13) and eight from Burial 226 (Type 14).

Amber beads were traded in Africa as well as in Europe (Alpern 1995:23; Dubin 1987:101). British Customs House ledgers indicate that amber beads were also shipped to New York (Breen 2004:62). It is possible that the Burial 340 amber bead, which is translucent red in color with 14 worn or polished facets, originated in Africa. However, no exact parallels to the Burial 340 bead are known from African or European archaeological contexts.

The powder-glass beads were simple in structure. Type 13 (from Burial 434) was opaque whitish tan in color and cylindrical in shape, with a slightly offcenter perforation through the length of the bead. The eight examples of Type 14, all from Burial 226, were oblate to donut shaped. The original color is difficult to determine but it was probably opaque yellow. Although similar in manufacture to the bead from Burial 434, the Type 14 beads were smaller and more regular in appearance and were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, were also regular and likely produced or drilled after the beads were fired. Both the Type 13 and Type 14 beads were covered with an opaque tan or whitish brown patination on the surface and were very degraded and friable, exhibiting pitting and cracking. The beads had a granular appearance

under magnification. Multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points indicates the heterogeneity of the original microstructure.

Although there is some evidence for indigenous glass manufacture in West Africa, fired glass beads from Ghana, as well as other areas, relied on the reuse of imported European glassware, beads, and bottles. Using this technology, glass fragments are pounded into a fine powder that is placed into fired clay molds. These molds have small recesses at the bottom, into which thin reeds or cassava (manioc) stems are placed. During firing, the stem burns away, leaving a perforation through the bead. Firing, which is known ethnographically, is done in small, domed ovens or kilns made of clay. After removal from the mold, the beads are shaped and smoothed by grinding. Although this fired-glass technology is found in other areas of the world, notably Mauritania, the characteristics and archaeological context of the beads from Burial 226 and 434 would indicate that Ghana was their likely place of origin.

Using a variety of molds, different colors of glass, and imported beads, African glassmakers were able to produce beads with a wide variety of elaborate shapes and decorations. For example, placing layers of different colored glass into the mold might produce bands. Stripes were made by carefully inserting lines of colored glass down the sides of the mold. Intact European beads were also incorporated into decorations (for illustrations of elaborately decorated powder-glass beads, see Francis [1993] and Liu et al. [2001]). This industry continued into the present century and, indeed, our understanding of the technology is known primarily through observations of twentieth-century craftsmen.

Beads characteristic of African glassmaking techniques are virtually unknown in American contexts. The only other example uncovered thus far is from the Newton Plantation Burial Ground in Barbados (Handler 1997). Produced using the same technology as the bead from Burial 434, the Newton bead is similar in shape but larger in size. It is possible that other beads made with powdered glass have been uncovered in archaeological sites in the African Diaspora but that their distinctive characteristics have been unrecognized.

The presence of powder-glass beads in a colonial New York setting is also exciting from an Africanist perspective. Only limited finds of such beads have been recovered in well-dated African archaeological contexts, including a handful of examples from southern Ghana (DeCorse 2001:137–138). Even in African locales where fired glass beads were produced, European beads predominate on archaeological sites. The New York African Burial Ground beads thus provide information on the age of this particular bead-making technology. Excavated examples from Elmina on the Gold Coast were present in early eighteenth-through nineteenth-century contexts.

Typology

The types of beads recovered from the New York African Burial Ground are defined in Table 55 and illustrated in Figures 231 through 243. The inventory in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume, describes each bead in full. The typology DeCorse created is specific to the New York African Burial Ground assemblage (for the application of taxonomies developed by Kidd and Kidd and Karklins, see LaRoche [1994a, 1994b]).

The Cowrie Shells

The cowrie shells were observed during excavation of Burial 340 and were recorded in situ (see Figure 229). Although nine cowries were recorded on the field drawing prior to removal of the skeletal remains, one of the cowries was later found to be a fragment of bone. Another cowrie was not recoverable and may have been an impression of a shell in the soil (LaRoche 1994a:19). It is not known which of the cowries depicted on the drawing were among the seven cowries that constitute the assemblage.

The shells became friable when exposed to air. Application in the field of polyvinyl acetate adhesive as a consolidant caused soil to adhere to the surface of the shells, as shown in Figure 244.

Information about conservation and treatment is not available. The cowries were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. They were then reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003 and transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Information about the identification of the cowries is not available. They might well have originated in the Maldives, a group of atolls in the Indian Ocean that supplied the cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) that dominated the Atlantic trade. Cowries thrive in



Figure 244. Cowrie shell from Burial 340. Length is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

warm, shallow lagoons. In addition to the Maldives, cowries are harvested along the East African coast, offshore of Mozambique and Zanzibar. Shells from the same species that are harvested in different time periods show no discernable difference (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:7–9).

The Rings and Other Jewelry

This portion of the New York African Burial Ground adornment assemblage consists of 11 items: 5 copperalloy finger rings (3 plain bands and 2 bands with glass insets); a cast silver pendant with a pear-shaped dangle; a glass-and-wire-filigree ornament; 3 cufflink faces covered with turquoise enamel (1 plain; 2 with designs); and 1 curved fragment of copper alloy, perhaps from an earring or a pin.

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, Definitions, and Chain of Custody

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn in situ prior to removal. The exceptions were the silver pendant from Burial 254, the paste ring from Burial 310, and the curved copper-alloy object from Burial 332; these were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

The three rings from Burial 377 are not included in the assemblage count. The rings, along with cervical vertebrae, were freeze-dried in the field and removed intact after photographs were taken. The rings were not cataloged in the laboratory and appear to have been lost prior to accessioning by conservators. The items were not located when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

The condition of the items in this assemblage ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

The plain finger rings from Burials 71, 115, and 398 were inspected visually and identified as copper alloy based on the corrosion products present. The term "copper alloy" is used because the precise admixture of various alloys is highly variable and is not considered particularly diagnostic of date or place of manufacture.

The paste rings were desalinated. The paste ring from Burial 310 was stable enough to undergo mechanical cleaning. The paste ring from Burial 242 was too fragile for cleaning; it was reassembled but not restored. Both rings were vacuum impregnated with BTA, a corrosion inhibitor, and then coated with acryloid B-72.

The pendant from Burial 254 was grayish white and not readily recognizable as silver, despite the telltale signature of the corrosion product, which was pale, white, and waxy. The pendant was brittle, most likely from intergranular corrosion deep within the alloy. Surface layers at the lower portion of the dangle were disrupted and discontinuous. The pendant was mechanically cleaned under a microscope to remove the silver chloride crust. The damaged portion of the dangle was repaired with a B-72 adhesive. The entire pendant was then treated with Acryloid B-72. Elemental analysis via X-ray fluorescence indicated the presence of silver. To determine the percentage or "grade" of silver, a 0.5-mm sample of the inner plane of the upper ring was removed for testing with emission spectrophotometry. The spectrograph analysis was conducted by John Boyd of the U.S. Customs Service and utilized a Jarrell Ash Standard Varisource Emission Spectrophotometer. The content of the sample was found to be 94–100 percent silver, well within the range for "pure" silver, a designation reserved for items with a silver content of 92.5 percent and above.

The glass-and-wire-filigree ornament from Burial 186 was not treated. No information is available on treatment of the undecorated turquoise-colored enamel cuff-link face. The two decorated enamel faces from Burial 371 were mechanically cleaned and impregnated with acryloid B-72. Project conservators theorized that the pink surface decoration and the

turquoise background had faded, respectively, from red and blue. Given the lack of devitrification, there is little reason for supposing that the faces were untrue to their original colors (Emily Wilson, Conservator of Archaeological Materials, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, personal communication 2005).

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of the rings and other jewelry, with certain items photographed before, during, and after conservation treatment. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35-mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which the items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. The items were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003.

Jewelry earmarked for replication was sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study. Items not selected for replication were sent in September 2003 to Jon Abbott for digital photography. Abbott photographed each item from different angles, thus permitting analysis without access to the items themselves.

Items seconded to Colonial Williamsburg were returned to New York in September 2003 and, along with the rest of the assemblage, were placed in coffins for reburial.

Manufacture, Age, and Origin

Personal adornments made and sold in colonial America did not typically carry a maker's mark (Fales 1995:23), and the rings and other jewelry from the New York African Burial Ground were no exception. Undecorated pieces are especially difficult to date precisely. Place of origin cannot always be ascertained. Comparative archaeological and documentary evidence indicate that the items in this assemblage were consistent with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wares.

As noted in the section entitled "Personal Adornment in Historical Context," plain copper-alloy rings had a wide geographical distribution in mainland North America. So, too, did copper-alloy rings with glass insets. Consumer demand for inexpensive jewelry ensured a profitable market for paste, and the

Sites	Time Period	Reference
Santa Rosa Pensacola, Florida (Spanish occupation with French trade links)	1723–1752	Smith (1965:97)
Seneca/Iroquois sites in western New York (Rochester area)	1730–1814	Wood (1974:102)
Fort Michilimackinak, Michigan (late French/British occupation)	ca. 1750–1781	Stone (1974:123–128)
St. Augustine, Florida (Spanish)	eighteenth century	Deagan (1987:125)

Table 56. Paste Rings with Central and Side Insets from North American Archaeological Contexts



Figure 245. Reconstruction of silver pendant from Burial 254 (drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schulz).

ranks of European producers and American retailers swelled as the eighteenth century advanced (Fales 1995:48–51; Newman 1981:228). Table 56 highlights European spheres of influence at North American sites where rings with insets identical to the rings from Burials 242 and 310 have been found.

The cast silver pendant from Burial 254 has no counterpart in artifact collections from European trading posts and Native American encampments with eighteenth-century dates (Figure 245). The lack of a twin is not for want of commerce in silver. From the 1750s to the 1830s. silver jewelry lubricated the fur trade in upstate New York and in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi regions (Karklins 1992:93). Fur from the north and the west passed through colonial Manhattan; silver ornaments made by city artisans retraced some of the routes taken by the pelts. Daniel Fueter, for example, received a commission for two sets of silver medals intended for Native American chiefs; engraved with a view of Montreal, the medals commemorated the French and Indian Wars (Fales

1995:57). The extent to which Manhattan artisans were involved in the production and import of silver for Native American consumers is not well documented, however. The output of Philadelphia workshops is far better known (see Gillingham 1936).

The pendant may have been made with the general customer in mind. Its pear shape was a perennial favorite among colonial American jewelry wearers (Fales 1995:47). In contrast, Native American consumers prized dangles in other styles. The simplest style, known as a "tinkling cone," was cut in a conical shape from flat sheet silver (Fredrickson 1980:43, 46). An example of a cast dangle worn as a nose ornament can be seen in Bartoli's 1796 portrait of Seneca Chief Cornplanter; the dangle is gently hooked (illustrated in Karklins [1992:79]). Pear-shaped dangles may have become popular among Native Americans in the New York region during the nineteenth century, when Iroquois artisans took up the silversmith trade. A dangle from a collection of Iroquois silverwork owned by the Rochester Museum and Science Center offers a close match to the New York African Burial Ground pendant (see the illustration in Van Horn [1971:64]). The collection dates to the second half of the nineteenth century and was assembled near Rochester.

Enameled jewelry was fashionable during the eighteenth century, although much of it was acquired ready-made from overseas. Prior to the influx of continental-trained jewelers in the mid-1700s, silversmiths in colonial America used enamel for inscriptions but few artisans would have mastered the techniques needed for more intricate work (Fales 1995:62). Charles Dutens was among the first wave of enamel specialists to ply the trade in Manhattan. He worked out of his lodgings on the lower end of Broad Street and supplemented his income by teaching French (New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy,

March 4, 1751). The enterprising Charles Oliver Bruff burnished his adornment business in 1763 by hiring a London-trained artisan who understood every kind of "enamel'd work in the jewellry way" (*New-York Mercury*, January 3, 1763). Two years later, Captain Jacobson sought to cash in on the vogue for enameled cuff links by selling a shipment of London-made goods (*New-York Mercury*, April 29, 1765).

Decorative motifs enlivened plain enamel. Consumers from different social circles sometimes favored the same design. The color and shape of the motif on the enamels from Burial 371 are echoed on a pair of enamel cuff links recovered from debris at a New York City Revolutionary War encampment. Along with the squat V and the two dots (see "Inventory"), the faces from the British encampment bear an additional mark, apparently scratched on. The encampment cuff links are said to show "the familiar emblem of Masonry" (Calver and Bolton 1950:227), an attribution based, perhaps, on the resemblance of the V to a drawing compass or a carpenter's square rule, two of the core "jewels" or badges of office around which lodge governance is organized.

Masonic symbols were a part of the public culture in urban America by the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The Broad Street tavern kept by Samuel Fraunces carried "the Sign of the freemason's arms" when put up for public auction in 1767 (New-York Journal or the General Advertiser, December 17, 1767). Widely available pattern books provided silversmiths and engravers with the official vernacular of designs for the silver badges of office and the silver medallions lodge members commissioned for personal use (Hamilton 1994:4-5, 126). Colonial merchants stocked drinking glasses decorated with Masonic tools. On occasion, Masons in Boston, Charleston, New York, and Philadelphia paraded through the streets with their bright silver regalia and unblemished white aprons conspicuously displayed (Bullock 1996:52-56).

Yet the visual language of American Freemasonry has little in common with the motif on the enamels from the New York African Burial Ground. Craft symbols replicated on badges and medallions made during and after the eighteenth century are larded with realistic detail (see illustrations in Hamilton 1994:134–145 and Fales 1995:138–139). Small-sized

items like enameled buttons show compasses with hinges and tapered legs, as well as square rules with discernable measuring lines (see Ertrell 1973:Plate 6; Houart 1977:51).

Free men of color were unwelcome in the Masonic brotherhoods that formed in colonial American cities after 1730. Enslaved Africans like Caesar, Prince, and Cuffee were ineligible for membership. These men, African New Yorkers who financed their nighttime junketing by stealing goods, dubbed themselves "Free Masons" in 1738, "in imitation" of the members of Manhattan's Masonic society. Court Recorder Daniel Horsmanden did not mention whether the threesome speculated about universal wisdom and ethics when making the rounds of dram shops and tippling houses. He mentioned instead that their burlesque was "very ill accepted" among bona fide lodge brothers, learned gentlemen who met semi-secretly in expensive public taverns and favored a restrictive application of fraternal ideals (see Horsmanden 1971:67 fn. q).

The first Masonic lodge for men of African descent, led by Boston artisan Prince Hall, received a charter in 1784 (Wallace 2000:183–184). The African Lodge of New York, Boyer Lodge No. 1, was established in Manhattan in February 1812, after the burial ground had closed (see Harry A. Williamson, A History of Freemasonry among American Negroes, 1929, Sc Micro R-2240, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture).

⁹ As of this writing, the encampment cuff links, pictured in blackand-white in Calver and Bolton (1950:225), have not been located in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

Inventory



Figure 246. Plain, copper-alloy ring from Burial 71 (Catalog No. 813-B.004). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 1.5 cm when whole (mended) (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 247. Plain, copper-alloy ring from Burial 115 (Catalog No. 858-B.001). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 1.8 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 248. Plain, copper-alloy ring from "Burial 398" (redeposited fill soil) (Catalog No. 2061-B.001). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 2.1 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 249. Copper-alloy ring with glass insets from Burial 242 (Catalog No. 1229-B.003). Construction is cast metal; the ring band and face were cast as one unit. Each side has three faceted blue glass insets. The colorless central glass inset is worn on the face. Diameter of center inset is 0.6 cm; diameter of blue glass insets is 0.3 cm. Ring portion was mineralized corrosion product. Band diameter is not measurable (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 250. Copper-alloy ring with glass insets from Burial 310 (Catalog No. 1486-B.001). Construction is cast metal; the ring band and face were cast as one unit. Each side had three faceted blue glass insets (diameters are 0.3 cm); one is missing. The central glass inset also is missing. Inside band diameter is 1.5 cm. The ring was found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal remains (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 251. Copper-alloy and glass jewelry/ornament from Burial 186 (Catalog No. 987-B.001). The ornament appears to be a hand-shaped glass disk (plate or flat bottle glass) that was set in a wire filigree frame or base. Diameter of disk is approximately 1 cm. Textile and textile impressions are associated (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 252. Cast silver pendant from Burial 254 (Catalog No. 1243-B.001). Upper portion has a slightly twisted metal hoop (width is 1.6 cm, length is 0.9 cm) attached to a sphere (diameter is 0.9 cm). Attached to the bottom of the sphere is a jump ring from which hangs a pear-shaped dangle (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 253. Fragment of copper-alloy earring or pin from Burial 332 (Catalog No. 1608-B). The object is curved or bent and is attached to wood. It was recovered during cleaning of thoracic vertebrae. Inside diameter is approximately 0.8 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 254. Enamel jewelry/possible cuff-link or button face from Burial 211 (Catalog No. 1186-B.001). The oval face is of turquoise enamel, originally on a copper-alloy backing (dimensions are 1.4 by 1.1 cm) (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 255. Enameled cuff link faces on copper-alloy backs, from Burial 371 (Catalog No. 1875-B.001). Dimensions of the faces are 1.4 by 1.1 cm. The background is turquoise; the decorative motif is white and pink (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

CHAPTER 14

Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Warren R. Perry and Janet L. Woodruff

This chapter describes an array of items—coins, shells, pipes, nails and tacks, crystals, unique objects, and botanical remains—that do not fit neatly into artifact assemblages organized around function and use or material, manufacture, and age.

The first part of the chapter provides a profile of the burials with these items. The items are described in detail in the section entitled "The Assemblage." Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, findings about manufacture, origin, and age. Burials with possible floral tributes are discussed in "Possible Floral Tributes."

Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Twenty-five individuals, approximately 7 percent of the excavated burials, were directly associated with coins, shells, pipes, and other items. Three other individuals had items for which provenience is considered tenuous. The burials are listed in Table 57. Burials where the association was problematic are noted on the table.

Eleven of these burials have been assigned to the Late Group, three to the Late-Middle Group, eight to the Middle Group, and three to the Early Group. The items may have been personal possessions and/or were placed with the deceased by friends and relatives. Examples of similar objects and placements from Africa and the African Diaspora will be discussed in the section entitled "The Assemblage."

Nearly half of the graves included here were considered to be from the post-1776 period of the cemetery. Although the numbers are small overall, there is some suggestion of a shift in practice toward people being buried with items such as coins, knives, or pipes. As explained in Chapter 9, Late Group burials probably occurred during the period of the British occupation of New York, when fugitives from distant places (including the city's hinterland and colonies further south) made their way to the town; or from the period following the war, when the town's population probably included many relocated/displaced persons. We therefore consider it possible that burial practices from the later years of the cemetery reflect diversity based on regional differences.

The Coin, Shell, Pipe, and Other Item Assemblage

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, and Chain of Custody²

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn in situ prior to removal. The crystal cluster from Burial 55, the quartz crystal from Burial 289, and the amber-colored glass sphere from Burial 410 were recovered during cleaning of the skeletal remains. The condition of the items ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be determined clearly.

² John Milner Associates supplied information about conservation and treatment (see LaRoche 2002).

Table 57. Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ⁸
22	2.5–4.5	undetermined	Middle	shell	adjacent to left clavicle
48	adult	undetermined	Early	knife	location not recorded
135	30–40	male	Late	2 copper coins, mica schist fragment	one in left eye socket, one on right shoulder; mica schist found during cleaning of remains
138	3–5	undetermined	Late	4 metal tacks	one at coffin headboard, one at right foot; two unknown (found during cleaning of skeletal remains)
147	55–65	male	Late	cluster of small copper- alloy rings (7) and pins (4)	between right humerus and ribs
158	20–30	male	Late	pipe bowl fragment	adjacent to right femur
165	adult	undetermined	Late	pipe stem and bowl	near left arm
186	0-0.17	undetermined	Late	unidentified iron object (possible nail)	left side of the cranium
197	45–55	female	Late	tacks	two in area between the ankles; three from unrecorded location
214	45–55	male	Late	coin, knife	coin and knife near left forearm
217	17–19	male	Late	peach pit	on coffin lid
230	55–65	female	Late	2 coins (1 with textile fragments attached)	one above left mastoid process; location of other not recorded
242	40–50	female	Late	2 coins	eye sockets
289	5–9	undetermined	Late-Middle	quartz disc	unknown; found during cleaning of skeletal remains
310	44–52	female	Middle	tacks	between lower legs
328	40–50	female	Middle	broken pot	coffin lid
340	39.3–64.4	female	Early	pipe	beneath the pelvis
348	1–2	undetermined	Middle	shell with nail	coffin lid
352	adult	male	Late-Middle	shell with iron object	coffin lid
365	adult	female	Middle	shell and metal object	coffin lid
375	16–18	female	Middle	clay ball with copper-alloy band, surrounded by cloth or leather	right side of right femur/pelvis
376	45–65	male	Late-Middle	coral	coffin lid
387	34–44	male	Early	oyster shells	coffin lid
405	6–10	undetermined	Middle	shell and nail	shell and nail recovered during lab- oratory cleaning of the cranium
410	adult	female	Middle	glass sphere	not recorded; found during cleaning of skeletal remains

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^a	
	Burials with Artifacts with Problematic Provenience					
15	11–18	undetermined	Late	metal fragment from an ox shoe	above right leg (next to builder's trench); association with burial unclear	
55	3–5	undetermined	Middle	calcite crystal	found during cleaning of skeletal remains	
313	45–55	male	Late	2 coins (missing from lab)	beneath the head (excavation notes altered)	

Table 57. Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items (continued)

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of some items, including the ox shoe from Burial 15, the coins, the clay ball from Burial 375, smoking pipes, and the rings from Burial 147. However, owing to their multivalent nature, some of the items described here were not immediately recognized as deliberate placements and were afforded less attention. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35-mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final, high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which most items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. Some artifacts were left in New York at the World Trade Center laboratory, and were lost on September 11, 2001. The items stored at Artex were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003, and returned to New York that September, where they were placed in coffins for reburial the following month.

Coins

Copper-alloy coins were found in direct association with four individuals: two men (Burials 135 and 214)

and two women (Burials 230 and 242).⁴ All of the burials with copper coins were from the Late Group, and all were adults with ages estimated between 30 and 65 years. The New York African Burial Ground sample is small, but the fact that coins were found exclusively in Late Group burials of older adults suggests that the custom of placing coins on the eyes of the dead may have been adopted toward the latter part of the eighteenth century, and reserved for individuals at the upper end of the life cycle.

In addition to the coins found in these four burials, two silver coins may have been observed in association with Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. However, no coins from this burial were brought to the conservation laboratory, and the section of the original excavation records describing the coins and their location was erased. The records may have been altered because no coins were present; on the other hand, the erasure

⁸ Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all artifacts were recovered and reburied in the coffins of the individuals with whom they were originally associated. Artifacts that were lost from the World Trade Center will be noted in the text.

⁴ Another coin was recovered from a disturbed context, apparently construction fill, within the grave shaft of Burial 259, a Late Group interment of a young adult, probably a woman, aged 17-19 years. This coin was similar to those recovered from the four burials mentioned. It was not reinterred and has been retained with the grave-shaft-fill artifact collection. Yet another coin was noted in the grave shaft of Burial 276, a coffinless Late Group burial of a woman between 20 and 24 years, well above the level of the human remains; however, the laboratory did not catalog a coin from this burial. An inventoried copper-alloy button from an uncertain context was probably misidentified as a coin in the field notes. This item was not included with burial artifacts because it did not appear to be associated with the deceased; furthermore, it was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. Finally, a coin was mentioned in field notes for Burial 328 in disturbed soil that could not definitely be associated with the interment. This coin was cataloged as part of the non-burial-ground assemblage and was destroyed along with the rest of that collection on September 11, 2001. It was identified in the 290 Broadway inventory as a George II halfpenny.



Figure 256. In situ photograph of Burial 135, showing copper coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) in left eye socket. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 257. Copper coin (George II halfpenny) from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B.002). Diameter is 30 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

may have been intended to conceal their discovery. In situ drawings and photographs do not depict coins in association with Burial 313.

All of the recovered coins were of copper alloy and were severely worn and corroded, with surface features no longer visible to the naked eye. Initial identifications were based solely on coin diameters. None of the coins was pierced. Coins were desalinated and mechanically cleaned with care in case surface features were extant. They were examined by eye and under magnification, but no features were perceptible. One of the coins from Burial 135 was examined further in a later discussion.

The 30–40-year-old man in Burial 135 appeared to have been laid out with a copper coin over each eye. One coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) was found in situ in the left eye socket (Figure 256), and the other coin (Catalog No. 880-B.002; Figure 257) lay above the right shoulder and probably had fallen from the right eye socket. Excavators noted that cloth and hair were preserved on the coins. The coin from the left eye was X-rayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 258) and surface features (e.g., the left-facing profile) were identified as those of a George II halfpenny, dating between 1727 and 1760. The other coin was too degraded to identify but may also have been

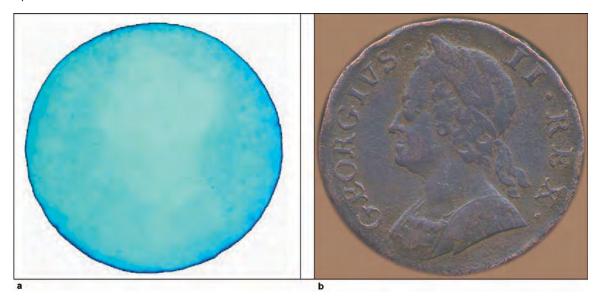


Figure 258. (a) X-ray of coin (copper George II halfpenny, obverse) from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B.001). Diameter is 30 mm. The left-facing profile and legend are faintly discernible on the surface of the excavated coin (X-ray by Metropolitan Museum of Art, supplied by John Milner Associates). (b) 1749 George II halfpenny from the numismatic collection at the University of Notre Dame Libraries (source: Jordan 1998). Figure 256. In situ photograph of Burial 135, showing copper coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) in left eye socket. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 259. Copper-alloy coin from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.003). Diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 260. Copper coin from Burial 230 (Catalog No. 1216-B.003). Diameter is 29 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

a George II halfpenny. The coins were approximately the same size and were both of stamped manufacture. This grave also contained a fragment of mica schist that appeared to have been a deliberate inclusion within the burial (see later section discussing "other items").

The 45–55-year-old man in Burial 214 had a single copper alloy coin situated between his left pelvic area and forearm. The coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003; Figure 259) was cast rather than stamped and its identification as a George II halfpenny is qualified at best. It differed in size from the two coins in Burial 135. A knife handle found with the coin is discussed in the later section discussing "other items."

Burial 230 held a woman between 55 and 65 years of age who was interred with two cast copper-alloy coins of markedly different sizes. The larger coin (Catalog No. 1216-B.003; Figure 260) measured 29 millimeters in diameter and was found just above the left zygomatic arch, having probably slipped from her eye during or after her interment. The smaller coin (Catalog No. 1216-B.001) measured 22 millimeters in diameter, and its exact provenience was not recorded in the field notes. Fragments of textile had adhered to either side of this coin. The coin may have slipped from the right eye into her burial garb, or it may have been inside a pocket or a cloth purse buried with the woman.

The two cast copper coins associated with the woman in Burial 242 had retained their positions at her eyes. The coin from her right eye (Catalog No. 1229-B.001) measured 27 mm in diameter (Figure 261), and the one in her left eye (Catalog No. 1229-B.002) mea-

sured 26 mm (Figure 262). The woman was between 40 and 50 years of age when she died. She wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her right hand (see Chapter 13).

Copper pennies and halfpennies were probably the most common denominations circulating among captive Africans and other poor and marginalized people. The economic activities that enabled African New Yorkers to acquire clothing, ornaments, or extra food involved not just barter of services or goods but also outright purchase with exchange of currency.

The coins found at the New York African Burial Ground appear to have been common issues circulated in colonial New York after 1729. The only definitively identified coin, the British George II halfpenny from Burial 135, was minted from 1727 to 1760 but produced in large quantities from 1729 to 1754. George III halfpennies, similar to the George II coin, were minted from 1770 to 1775.

The placement of coins with the dead is known from various western ethnohistoric contexts. In Europe and its North American colonies, corpses were sometimes buried with coins meant as fares across the River Jordan (Coffin 1976:76). This practice appears to have been adapted from the Greek tradition documented in Virgil's *Aeneid*, of placing coins in the mouths of the deceased as payment to Charon, the ferryman who conveyed souls across the River Styx to their postmortem domain. Coins were placed on the eyes of the deceased in England and other European countries well into the twentieth century (Roberts 1989:194–195). The placement was usually attributed to a need to hold the eyes closed for aesthetic reasons,



Figure 261. Copper coin from right eye socket of Burial 242 (Catalog No. 1229-B.001). Diameter is 27 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

but was probably rooted in the traditional belief that unless their eyes were weighted firmly shut, corpses would look for someone to accompany them into death (Coffin 1976:97; Frazer 1886:71; Richardson 2000:19).

Some African American burial practices included the placement of coins (or coin analogues) with the deceased. The custom of burying the dead with coins was observed in excavated cemeteries with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts, including St. Anne's churchyard in Annapolis, Maryland, and the First African Baptist Church cemetery in Philadelphia (Jones 2001; Parrington et al. 1989). Eight individuals at the latter cemetery had coins; most were found near the heads of the deceased (Parrington et al. 1989:75). No coins were found (in the eyes or elsewhere) in eighteenth-century burials excavated at Newton Plantation in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:201, 318), but evidence exists from other areas of burial with coins in more recent times. For example, excavation at a cemetery for enslaved Africans on Montserrat uncovered at least one burial that included a single "metal disc [that] may have acted as a token or fee for the return of the deceased's spirit to Africa" (Watters 1994:64). As at the New York African Burial Ground, coins were placed on the eyelids, in the hand(s) or pocket, scattered inside the coffin, or left on the grave surface. West African Ashanti burials observed in the twentieth century included parcels of gold dust "tied in the loincloth of the dead" (Habenstein and Lamers 1963:218), a finding that is not inconsistent with the New York African Burial Ground coins that appeared to be pocketed. A pierced silver coin, probably worn on a string, was noted in at least one burial in the nineteenth-century



Figure 262. In situ photograph of Burial 242, showing a copper coin in the left eye socket (Catalog No. 1229-B.002) and another immediately beneath the right eye socket (Catalog No. 1229-B.001). Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Cedar Grove cemetery in Arkansas (Rose 1985:75); this coin appeared to have been a protective amulet worn during life. As in European-American cemeteries, coins at the New York African Burial Ground may have served dual, multivalent purposes: both the pragmatic (closing of the deceased's eyes) and the spiritual.

Shells and Coral

Many of the grave shafts at the New York African Burial Ground held fragments of clamshell and oyster shell in the soil matrix, but in some burials, whole or partial shells were observed in positions suggesting deliberate placement in the grave. Burials in which the shell inclusions seemed deliberate were Burials 22, 348, 352, 365, and 387 (although the provenience of the latter was problematic).

The mechanical excavation, as well as recent and historical construction at the New York African Burial Ground, obliterated the surfaces of many graves, including those that may have offered insights into spiritual practices of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Africans in New York. The material that can be clearly associated with the burials, however, dovetails neatly with some West and West Central African



Figure 263. In situ photograph of Burial 22, showing a fragment of hard-shell clam above the left clavicle (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

practices as well as those known from the diaspora (see Vlach 1978; Thompson 1983). The shells at the New York African Burial Ground may have been placed as symbols of the deceased's passage through water to the spirit world and to represent his or her new identity as an ancestor. Clams and oysters were native to the waters surrounding New York, and the shells would have been easily acquired for placement on coffins.

A fragment of local hard-shell clam (Catalog No. 344-B) was found in Burial 22, a Middle Group burial of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old. The shell's position near the left clavicle (Figure 263) may indicate that the shell was strung and worn as a necklace, much like the adornment on the infant and child in Burials 226 and 254 (see Chapter 13). The shell fragment was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Three coffins had lid artifacts that consisted of both a shell and a piece of iron, which appeared to be deliberate placements. A clamshell fragment (Catalog No. 1702-CL.001) and an iron nail (Catalog No. 1702-CL.002) were recovered from the lid of Burial 348, a Middle Group interment of a child between 1 and 2 years old. The objects lay slightly to the left side of the hexagonal coffin near the shoulder break, corresponding to the child's upper torso area (Figure 264). The shell lay atop the nail, covering it completely. Both artifacts were lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Burial 352, a man of undetermined age assigned to the Late-Middle Group, had a whole oyster valve (Catalog No. 1719-CL) with an iron nail (Catalog No. 1719-CLA) on his coffin lid. This pair of artifacts was recovered from the coffin lid above the torso, much like the similar combination from Burial 348, which was located just a few feet to the east of



Figure 264. In situ photograph of Burial 348 coffin lid, showing clamshell fragment (Catalog No. 1702-CL.001) near coffin's left shoulder break. Excavators found an iron nail (Catalog No. 1702-CL.002) beneath the shell. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial 352. This pair of artifacts was also destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Burial 365, the Middle Group grave of a woman of undetermined age, had another permutation of shell-and-iron-artifact assemblage on her coffin lid (Catalog No. 1827-CL; Figure 265). In this case, the iron artifact was clearly not a nail, and instead of lying underneath the oyster shell, it curved around and nearly enclosed the shell. This oyster shell was of a different (although unidentified) variety than most of the oyster shells recovered from the New York African Burial Ground. This burial is further notable: in contrast to most of the burials at this site, the woman's head was oriented to the south rather than the west. This woman's skeletal remains may have been displaced (see Chapter 7). The shell and the iron piece were both lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

The Early Group Burial 387, of a man between 34 and 44 years, may also have had shell on the coffin



Figure 265. Detail of in situ photograph of shell and iron artifact from coffin lid of Burial 365. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

lid, but the provenience is less certain. Field records referred to the presence of oyster shell, including whole upper and lower valves, without specifying location in either text or drawing. Photographs of the coffin lid in situ show a whole oyster shell above the left femur. The shell was cataloged at the laboratory, but lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Another shell and nail (Catalog No. 2071-B) were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 405, a Middle Group grave of a child between 6 and 10 years. The artifacts were both associated with the cranial bones, although labeling did not indicate whether they were found together or separately.

Unlike clamshell and oyster shell, coral was exotic to New York harbors.⁵ Five specimens of coral were identified at the New York African Burial Ground, but only one appeared to have been deliberately included with a burial. It was recovered from the distal femoral area of Burial 376, a Late Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 65 years old. The specimen (Catalog No. 1895-B; Figure 266) was particularly large and may have been placed on the coffin lid at the time of burial. In keeping with the hypothesis that relics of the ocean may have been associated in multivalent fashion with Africa, the Middle Passage, and the spirits of the ancestors (Thompson 1983:135–138; Thompson and Cornet 1981:197–198; Vlach 1978:143), the coral's place



Figure 266. Coral (*Siderastrea siderea*) from Burial 376 (Catalog No. 1895-B. Weight is 190 g. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

of origin became a clue to its spiritual, as well as archaeological, meaning.

In 1997, the coral specimen was examined by a series of researchers. The first investigator, Alan Harvey, Ph.D., Curator of Invertebrates at New York City's American Museum of Natural History, could not identify the species, as the sample was badly degraded and had lost its morphological structure. Subsequently, the coral was analyzed by Steven D. Cairns, Ph.D., Curator of Stony Corals at the Department of Invertebrate Zoology at the New York Aquarium. He identified the genus, but species remained undetermined. On Dr. Cairns' advice, the coral specimen was sent to Ian G. Macintyre, Ph.D., Sedimentologist and Research Specialist in the Department of Paleobiology of the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. Dr. Macintyre suspected that the coral may have been a fossil specimen when it was buried; thus he recommended that it be examined by Ann F. Budd, Ph.D. Dr. Budd is a Fossil Coral Taxonomist and Professor of Geology at the University of Iowa. Dr. Budd performed a thin section microscopy, which required that only a small sample of the coral be sacrificed, and determined that the coral was *Siderastrea siderea*, an Atlantic species found mainly in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and Bermuda. It is present in a lesser degree along the Brazilian coast, in the Gulf of Guinea, and along the coast of West Africa. Subsequent to the analysis, the coral specimen has gone missing and may have been destroyed in the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

⁵ Several cowrie shells, also exotic to New York waters, were included in the strand of beads encircling the waist of the woman in Burial 340. They are discussed in Chapter 13.

Pipes

Smoking pipes were found in direct association with skeletal remains in Burial 340 and in two cases that were less clear-cut (Burials 158 and 165).⁶

A whole, unused clay pipe was found in Burial 340, an Early Group interment of a woman between 39 and 64 years of age. The pipe (Catalog No. 1651-B.134; Figure 267) was placed within her coffin, beneath her body at pelvis level. Although the pipe was unused, its surface was rough in places. Its form is comparable to those of British pipes of the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. The pipe may have been a personal possession, but because it was unused, it may have been included as a talisman or a memento. The pipe was reburied with the woman's skeletal remains in October 2003. In addition to the pipe beneath her hips, the woman in Burial 340 was laid to rest with strands of glass beads around her right wrist and around her waist (see Chapter 13).

Burial 158 held the remains of a man 20–30 years old, assigned to the cemetery's Late Group. He was buried without a coffin, and a piece of a pipe bowl marked "IW" (Catalog No. 903-GF; Figure 268) was found adjacent to his right upper leg. Because only part of the bowl was present, this artifact may not have been a deliberate inclusion; however, the fragment could have been placed with the man because of the mark, suggesting that the lettering may have had some significance. Furthermore, the fragment was positioned such that it may have been held in the hand at the time of burial. Six additional pipe stem and bowl fragments (with bore diameters between 5/64 and ⁷/₆₄ of an inch) were recovered from the grave fill in this burial. All of the pipe fragments were presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. The man was buried wearing a matched set of gilt copper-alloy cuff links (see Chapters 12 and 13).



Figure 267. Clay pipe from Burial 340 (Catalog No. 1651-B.134). Bore diameter is 6/64 inches (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Burial 165, a coffinless Late Group burial of an individual whose age and sex could not be determined, contained an articulating pipe bowl and stem fragment (Catalog No. 919-B), bored at ⁴/₆₄ of an inch, near the left forearm (Figures 269 and 270). This pipe was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. Like the other pipes in direct association with burials here, this pipe appeared to be unused. The reason it was placed with the deceased is not known.

Unused pipes were found in burials at Seville Plantation village in Jamaica dating between 1670 and 1760 (Armstrong 1999:181), as well as in burials at the African settlement in Elmina, Ghana (DeCorse, personal communication 2003). Handler (1998) encountered at least one incidence of an undisturbed eighteenth-century burial in Barbados in which whole, unused pipes were placed at the chest and pelvis. It is noteworthy that in all of these cases the pipes in the burials had yet to be smoked.

Pipe smoking was probably very common among African New Yorkers of both sexes. The habit can sometimes be identified archaeologically by the presence of pipe notch dentition—worn areas created by clutching a pipe stem between the upper and lower teeth. Pipe notches were noted in some individuals excavated at the New York African Burial Ground, although not in the three with whom pipes were apparently buried.

Clay smoking pipes were ubiquitous throughout the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were mass-produced in both England and the Netherlands, shipped overseas, and sold inexpensively throughout the colonies. Tobacco was smoked in West Africa by the late sixteenth century, and millions of pipes were shipped there as well

⁶ Fragments of pipes were found in the grave shaft fill of 72 additional burials and are considered likely to have been present in the soil matrix rather than placed deliberately in the shaft. Their presence in the soil suggests they may have been placed on some other burial at some point in time during the cemetery's use, but it cannot be determined with which individual they were originally associated. These items are listed in the artifact inventory in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume. Most were lost in the World Trade Center collapse.

⁷ Because pipes of this style spanned such a long period of manufacture, the pipe was not considered temporally diagnostic. Other evidence in this burial indicated that the grave was among the cemetery's Early Group; therefore, it is assumed that the pipe dated to the early side of this broad temporal range.

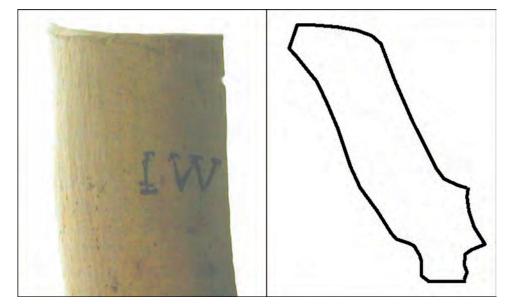


Figure 268. (a) Detail of clay pipe bowl, showing /W mark, from Burial 158 (Catalog No. 903-GF). Bore diameter is 5/64 inches (photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse); (b) Drawing of bowl shape.

during the period the cemetery was in use, mainly from Dutch suppliers but also from England and Rouen (Alpern 1995:26–27). Dutch pipes predominate in West African archaeological assemblages dated before the nineteenth century (DeCorse 2001:164). Doubtless, there were smokers among the captives brought to New York, as well as among those born in the Americas.

Pipes can be dated by shape, decoration, and makers' marks (and statistically by bore diameter if large numbers are in the sample).8 The pipes recovered from Burials 158, 165, and 340 were typical of the eighteenth century and were all probably of English manufacture, but exact dates and makers cannot be assigned.

The pipes and pipe fragments recovered in association with skeletal remains and from grave shaft fill were examined by Christopher R. DeCorse at the World Trade Center laboratory in 1998. Specimens that were possibly diagnostic or that were found in direct association with skeletal remains were brought to Syracuse University for further analysis. A complete inventory was made, and diagnostic pieces were photographed.

Subsequently, the pipes were returned to the World Trade Center laboratory, and those that were clearly in direct association with skeletal remains were prepared

Figure 270. Clay pipe stem and bowl from Burial 165 (Catalog No. 919-B). Bore diameter is 4/64 inches (photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse).



Figure 269. In situ photograph of clay pipe stem and bowl near the

left forearm of Burial 165 (Catalog No. 919-B). Scale is in inches

(photograph by Dennis Seckler).

⁸ Stem-bore diameters of fragments from all contexts yielded a mean date of 1764. See Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume.

for reburial in August 2001.⁹ These were shipped to the Artex facility in Landover, Maryland, at that time. They were placed in coffins and reburied in October 2003.

Other Items

The historical contexts for acquisition of copperalloy pins, buttons, and personal adornment items are discussed in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. These contexts pertain to the pins and small rings found with Burial 147, the banded ball found with Burial 375, and the glass sphere found with Burial 410. Each of these items or components may have been obtained through typical channels of purchase, gift giving, recycling, or appropriation, then reused and recontextualized, either by the deceased during their lifetime or by whoever prepared the body for burial.

The identification of some objects as talismans either belonging to the deceased or bestowed upon them at death is speculative but reasonable. Bundles or caches of pins, buttons, crystals, smooth stones, and other items excavated at domestic sites have been interpreted by archaeologists as conjuring items, medicinal or protective charms, or other *minkisi*-type religious paraphernalia of African derivation (see Brown and Cooper 1990; Kelso 1984; Leone and Fry 1999; Patton 1992; Paynter et al. 2005; Russell 1997; Wilkie 1997; for an introduction to African systems of divination, see Peek [1991]). Such caches may have been intended to identify the deceased, communicate with the spirit world, or as offerings to ancestors and spirits.

Burial 147, in which a bundle of pins and tiny rings were found together, poses the strongest argument for this practice, although other burials may have contained nonsurviving organic items placed with spiritual intent, as well as surviving materials not obviously recognizable as spiritual in intent. The identification of such items is complicated by their contexts: common household items were reused and imbued with meanings not envisioned or deciphered by manufacturers or slaveholders. The practice remained hidden to European eyes but surely was discernable to Africans.

Clay Ball with Copper-Alloy Band

Burial 375 contained a small ceramic ball (presumably a marble) with an embossed copper-alloy band



Figure 271. Ceramic and copper-alloy sphere with band from Burial 375 (Catalog No. 1886-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

wrapped twice around its circumference (Catalog No. 1886-B.001; Figure 271). It is one of the most interesting and unusual artifacts found at the New York African Burial Ground (see Figures 65 and 66 in Chapter 5 for a photograph of the burial and an in situ drawing of the object). This Middle Group grave held the remains of a woman between 16 and 18 years old. She had been placed directly in the ground with no coffin, with her arms crossed above her head and her legs extended. At her right hip was a mass of cloth or leather containing the ball. The soil immediately surrounding the object was not sampled. The omission makes it impossible to ascertain whether the ball was part of an assemblage of material that included botanical, faunal, or mineral elements. Such assemblages are usually contained within bundles, bags, or other wrappings, and are well known in African American ethnographic and historical accounts. No comparable artifact has been documented in the literature.10

Cluster of Rings and Pins

Burial 147 was a Late Group grave of a man between 55 and 65 years old, buried with a group of straight pins and small copper-alloy rings (Catalog No. 892-B.004) between his right humerus and rib cage (Figure 272). Four pins, three of which were precisely aligned along the arm bone, and 14 rings were counted

⁹ Pipes from grave shaft fill contexts remained in the laboratory, but were not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

¹⁰ Spheres have been recovered from African American archaeological sites such as the W. E. B. DuBois birthplace in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Paynter et al. 2005), although the copper banding is unique to this artifact. The 20-mm-diameter ceramic marble from the DuBois site was of a type produced in Europe in the eighteenth century and may have been chosen for its "magic" or spiritual properties.



Figure 272. Detail from in situ drawing of Burial 147, showing three pins aligned along the inside of the right humerus, an adjacent pin on the right scapula, and a cluster of copper-alloy rings (diameters are 11 mm) between the upper arm and the rib cage. Scale is 1 inch = 6 inches (drawing by M. Schur).

during excavation; many of the observed fragments were too deteriorated to remove, and it is probable that many of the pieces were not collected. Although the field drawing clearly shows 14 rings, conservators recovered only enough fragments to reconstruct an arbitrary seven rings, each measuring 11 mm in diameter (Figure 273). The fragments were stabilized chemically and by mounting on a linen backing (LaRoche 2002).

At the time of burial, the rings were probably enclosed in a cloth pocket or sack pinned to the sleeve of the man's burial garment (see Chapter 11 for a discussion of shrouding). The group of pins and rings is considered a possible talisman or conjuring bundle of some kind.¹¹ No soil samples were collected from this part of his body; thus it could not be determined whether textile fragments or botanical remains were a part of the cache.

Concealing amulets on the body was (and is) a documented practice in many African cultures and in the

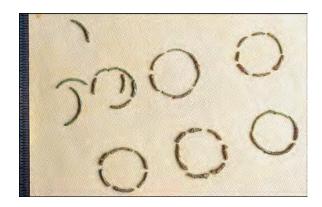


Figure 273. Copper-alloy rings from Burial 147 (Catalog No. 0892-B.004). Diameters are 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

African Diaspora. Handloff (1982:186–189) has noted the practice as having been used both historically and at the present in the Ivory Coast, including a reference to protective bracelets worn on the upper arms. During the nineteenth century, Asante warriors wore armbands called *kapo*, which were akin to *bansare* armbands worn in spiritual practice (McCaskie 2000).

Glass Sphere

A tiny, amber-colored glass sphere (Catalog No. 2082-B.001; Figure 274) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 410, a Middle Group burial of a woman of unknown age. The exact location of the sphere was not recorded. The object was not perfectly spherical and may have been from a piece of jewelry, although no evidence of a setting was noted with this burial.

Knives

Two individuals, from Burial 214 and Burial 48, had parts of knives in association with their remains.



Figure 274. Glass sphere from Burial 410 (Catalog No. 2082-B.001). Diameter is 3.44 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

¹¹ The assemblage calls to mind a "luck ball," well documented in African American contexts (Hyatt 1935:799; Puckett 1926:229–234). Luck balls have been common forms of conjuration for many years and are well known among present-day Africans and African Americans as well (Handloff 1982:186–187, 189).

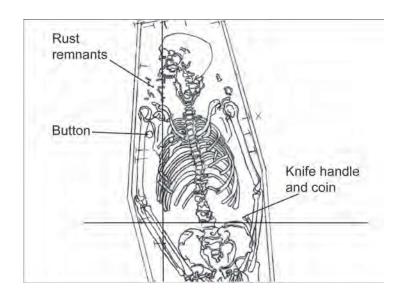


Figure 275. In situ drawing of Burial 214, showing artifact locations. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot; north is to the right (drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 276. In situ photograph of knife handle (Catalog No. 1191-B.005) and coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003) from the left pelvic/forearm area of Burial 214. The coin is visible above the right side of the knife handle, lying on a fragment of coffin wood. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial 214, a Late Group grave of a man between 45 and 55 years, held a bone or antler and iron knife handle (Catalog No. 1191-B.005) about 8.5 cm long in close association with a single copper coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003; see previous description of coin in this chapter; see Figure 259). Both artifacts were recovered from his left pelvic area or forearm, perhaps indicating that they were enclosed in a pocket (Figures 275 and 276). Douglas Armstrong's excavation of house-yard burials at Seville Plantation in Jamaica also found an example of a man, presumed to have been a captive plantation worker, buried with a knife in his left hand, perhaps similar to the placement of the knife in Burial 214 (Armstrong 1999:181; Armstrong and Fleischman 1993).

Conservators did not treat the knife handle, as it had been collected and sent to the laboratory along with the coffin nails. The handle was of bone or antler, the shank of iron (Figure 277).



Figure 277. Knife handle of bone or antler and iron, from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.005). Length is 85 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

A knife blade (Catalog No. 620-CHC) was found in association with Burial 48, an Early Group grave of an adult of undetermined age. It was originally identified as a probable nail, but the X-ray revealed a

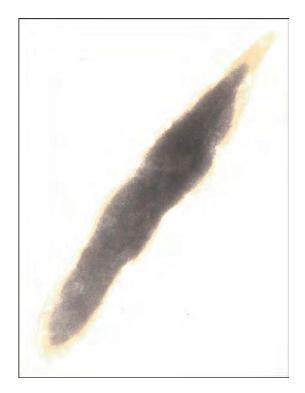


Figure 278. X-ray of iron knife blade from Burial 48 (Catalog No. 620-CHC), shown at actual size (image courtesy of John Milner Associates).

likely blade (Figure 278). The item was not salvaged following the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Calcite Crystal, Quartz Disc, and Mica Schist Fragment

Laboratory personnel found a very small calcite crystal (Catalog No. 0792-B.003; Figure 279) while cleaning the skeletal remains from Burial 55, a Middle Group interment of a child between 3 and 5 years



Figure 279. Calcite-crystal cluster from Burial 55 (Catalog No. 0792-B.003). Width is 3.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

of age. The crystal was forwarded to the conservation staff, then to the American Museum of Natural History, where Mr. Sydney Horenstein identified it as nonlocal calcite. The nearest sources of similar crystalline calcite are north of Kingston, New York, or west of the Delaware River. It is also possible this crystal originated elsewhere, perhaps outside of North America. It is not possible to know whether the item was placed with the deceased or contained in the grave-fill soil.

A quartz disk (Catalog No. 1321-B.004; Figure 280) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the remains in Burial 289, a Late-Middle grave of a child between 5 and 9 years. Because the disk was found in direct association with the skeletal remains, it was probably deliberately placed in the child's grave. According to laboratory technicians, the stone appeared to have been cleaved rather than flaked;



Figure 280. Rose quartz disk from Burial 289 (Catalog No. 1321-B.004). Diameter is 7 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

however, the flat, round shape may be the result of intentional modification rather than natural processes. Small stone or ceramic pieces were sometimes shaped into discs for use as game pieces; such items have been recovered archaeologically from colonial-era sites with an African presence, including the Broad Street site in New York City (Wall 2000) and the Isaac Royall House in Medford, Massachusetts (Royall House Association 1994). Alternatively, the disk may have been from a piece of jewelry, perhaps like the glass-and-wire-filigree ornament found with the infant in Burial 186 (see Chapter 13).

A small mica schist disk (Catalog No. 880-B) was recovered in the laboratory from within the soil pedestal of Burial 135, a Late Group interment of a man between 30 and 40 years of age (Figure 281). The circular piece measured 6 mm in diameter. Although



Figure 281. Mica schist disk from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B). Diameter is 6 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

it was very small and its exact provenience was not recorded, the disk may have been a game piece or perhaps a "flash" placed for its reflective quality symbolic of water. In addition to the mica disc, Burial 135 held two copper coins, which were probably set over each eye. The multivalent secular-plus-spiritual purposes of the coins on the eyes reinforce the possibility that the mica disk may have been intended to attract the attention of African spirits.

Crockery

A large piece from a salt-glazed stoneware vessel with a blue spiral design (Catalog No. 1589-GF) was found on the lid of the hexagonal coffin in Burial 328, a Middle Group burial of a woman between 40 and 50 years of age (Figure 282). The portion of the site where she was interred was apparently cleared by backhoe to the tops of coffins, damaging them and compromising the eighteenth-century-era ground

surface. Nonetheless, this vessel fragment appeared to have been deliberately placed on the coffin lid, approximately level with the shoulder break. This area would have been directly over the woman's upper torso. There is abundant ethnohistorical, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence for this practice from West and West Central Africa (see Agorsah et al. 1999:5–7; David 1992:197; DeCorse, 1999:148, 2001:101, 155, 157, 189; Denbow 1999:405) and from mainland North America (Brown 2001:90; Deetz 1996:206–210; Gundaker 2001:130; Jamieson 1995:49–51; Schuyler 1972:26; Thompson 1983:184; Thompson and Cornet 1981:76–94, 182–185; Vlach 1978:139–145).

Sherds from similar pots with identical designs were common in the grave fill and in the industrial features throughout the southeastern portion of the New York African Burial Ground. Therefore, we are reasonably certain that the pot was produced by the Crolius-Remmey potters on Pot Bakers Hill (see Appendix F, Part 3 of this volume:Plates F.21 and F.29). The stoneware pot from Burial 328 was missing at the time of the final New York African Burial Ground artifact inventory; it was not included in the analysis of the local stoneware from grave shafts and was never photographed in the laboratory.

As mentioned, a copper-alloy coin was recovered from a disturbed context within this burial (see Footnote 4, earlier in this chapter). A fragment of kiln furniture was also found in the burial, lying directly on the lumbar vertebrae.

Nails and Tacks

Nails and tacks that did not appear to be from coffin construction were found with four individuals: Buri-

Figure 282. In situ photograph of stoneware vessel fragment, Burial 328 (Catalog No. 1589-GF). North is at the top (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



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als 138, 186, 197, and 310. The individuals in these burials had all been buried in coffins. Two of the burials with noncoffin nails and tacks were of infants or young children, and two were of relatively older (within this population) women.

Burials 197 and 310, both women in their forties or fifties, were buried in overlapping coffins adjacent to or crossing the projected fence line. The field drawing for Burial 310, a Middle group interment, illustrates seven tacks¹² between the proximal tibiae, loose but not widely scattered. Four tacks were identified in the laboratory, cataloged, and ultimately reburied with the woman's remains. Six other iron artifacts, listed as possible multiple tacks, were set aside to be X-rayed but were lost on September 11, 2001. The woman in this grave also wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her left hand (see Chapter 13) and was positioned with her right arm crooked as though holding a child, although no other skeletal remains were present in the grave.

The field drawing for Burial 197, a Late Group interment, showed two small round iron objects placed rather precisely between the ankles. Laboratory personnel cataloged three possible tack fragments, which were lost on September 11, 2001, and thus not X-rayed for definitive identification. It is presumed that these three fragments included the two from the ankles.

Burial 138, a Late Group interment of a child aged between 3 and 5 years, held four tacks scattered throughout the coffin: one at the headboard, one at the right foot, and two found during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

An iron artifact, tentatively identified as a nail, was recovered from the left side of the cranium of Burial 186, a Late Group interment of a neonate or very young infant. The nail was in a provenience inconsistent with the coffin's construction (although it could have become displaced during the coffin's decomposition). The infant's head was also adorned with a glass disk set in a filigree of copper alloy (see Chapter 13).

Conservation treatment was limited to desalination and, in some cases, X-rays. After this processing, the tacks were forwarded to the Howard University laboratory.

Ox Shoe

An iron mass later identified as a partial ox shoe or horseshoe (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001) was recovered from a somewhat unclear provenience in Burial 15, a Late Group burial of a child or adolescent between 11 and 18 years old. The artifact was found adjacent to the remains of the right leg; however, this grave had been disturbed and the skeletal remains truncated by later foundation construction, and the artifact lay at the interface between the grave and the construction trench (Figure 283), making the association of individual and artifact tentative at best.

Conservators cleaned the artifact in deionized water and removed some corrosion with a petroleum-distillate sequestering agent. X-rays revealed the item more clearly (Figure 284). The drawing based on the X-rays (Figure 285) depicts a morphology that is consistent with either an ox shoe or a horseshoe. It is similar to examples of horseshoes dating to the seventeenth through mid-eighteenth centuries (Noël Hume 1969:238) and to ox shoes recovered from Revolutionary War encampments in the New York area (Calver and Bolton 1950:218–219). One of the rectangular holes still contained a hand-wrought nail.

Horseshoes are a frequent component of grave surface decoration, and examples are known from African American contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to this association with the grave, horseshoes are commonly used as "lucky" devices among Europeans and European Americans as well as African Americans.

Peach Pit

Excavators recovered a peach (*Prunus persica*) pit from the coffin lid of Burial 217, a Late Group grave of a young man between 17 and 19 years old. The pit was collected in a wood sample and not noted in the field records, so excavators may have mistaken it for part of the coffin wood.

The pit was probably a deliberate inclusion rather than intrusive. It is unlikely that peach trees grew on the site during its tenure as a cemetery, as neither the pollen nor macrobotanical analyses turned up any other evidence of this species at the site. The grave fill shows no evidence of household dumping in the immediate vicinity, and the pit was directly upon the coffin lid.

Peach pits are a common component of African American conjuration bundles. Their use has been documented in the southern United States (Puckett 1926:437; Ruppel et al. 2003:326).

¹² The exact count was uncertain because several iron pieces, believed to have been tacks, had rusted together into an unidentified mass. This accumulation was slated to be X-rayed, but was lost on September 11, 2001



Figure 283. Iron ox shoe (adjacent to trowel handle at left side of photograph) at Burial 15 (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001). North is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

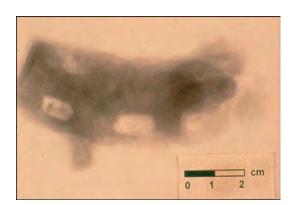


Figure 284. X-ray of ox shoe from Burial 15 (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001) (image courtesy of John Milner Associates).

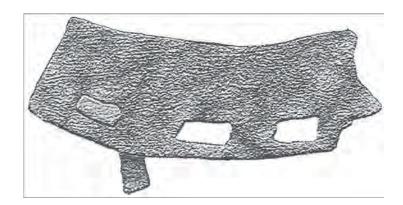


Figure 285. Drawing of ox shoe from Burial 15. Length is 3.5 inches (drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schultz).

Possible Floral Tributes

Results of the analyses of pollen and macroplant remains from selected soil samples are presented in Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume. In this section, we summarize the possible evidence for flowers having been placed in graves as a component of funerary observance, based on the presence of pollen from flowering species. Table 58 lists the burials for which such evidence is considered. Macroplant remains (seeds) recovered from flotation or in the field have not been analyzed as possible evidence for flowers.¹³

Several burials contained honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*) pollen in the stomach soil samples. The variety that grows in the New York area is not widely

utilized for medical purposes; therefore, it is most likely evidence of floral tributes placed in or on the coffins. Honewort may have grown wild at the burial ground and could have been gathered there.

Burials that contained high relative percentages of honewort pollen included Burial 45 (a Middle Group grave of a very young child), Burial 115 (a Middle Group grave of a woman between 25 and 35 years of age), Burial 151 (a Late Group grave of a man between 35 and 45 years), Burial 210 (another Late Group grave of a man between 35 and 45), Burial 270 (a Middle Group burial of an adult man whose age was not determined), and Burial 392 (a Late-Middle Group burial of a man in his early forties to early fifties who was laid head-to-east in a rectangular coffin, wearing breeches and possibly a shirt).

Honewort flowers between June and September, which suggests that these burials took place during the summer months. Most were of men who were middle aged for their time. It is possible there was a

¹³ Seeds that were observed and recovered during excavation (as opposed to those recovered by flotation) were never identified as to plant species—they were lost in the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Pollen was analyzed for soil samples from only 28 graves, including 62 total samples from coffin-lid, stomach-area, and control samples. Distinct spectra between control and either lid or stomach-area samples was considered as possible evidence that plants had been placed with the deceased (or had been ingested). A full explanation of the methods and results of palynology is provided in Appendix G.2, Part 3 of this volume.

Table 58. Burials with Possible Floral Tributes

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Pollen Evidence
45	2.5-4.5	undetermined	Middle	pollen of thorough wax, Queen Anne's lace, honewort
115	25–35	female	Middle	honewort
151	35–45	male	Late	honewort
194	30–40	male	Late	chicory-type (Liguliflorae) pollen; this bouquet may have been gathered at the cemetery itself
210	35–45	male	Late	honewort
270	adult	male	Middle	honewort
392	42.5–52.5	male	Late-Middle	honewort

Note: See Appendix G in Part 3 of this Volume.

preference for inclusion of flowers in the burials of older men.

Burial 45, a Middle Group interment of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old, contained an assortment of pollen species that included honewort, thorough wax (*Bupleurum rotundifolium*), and several genera of carrot family (Apiaceae) pollen, which probably included Queen Anne's lace (*Datura carota*). These species are all flowering plants that grow wild in the New York City vicinity. Based on the flowering season of the plants represented here, the child probably died during the summer.

Burial 194, a Late Group grave of a man between 30 and 40 years, contained a comparatively high level of chicory-type (Liguliflorae) pollen in the soil samples taken from the stomach and lid areas. The pollen may have been associated with the consumption of chicory leaves, which resemble dandelion greens,

shortly before death. However, because plant pollen is associated with flowers rather than leaves, it seems more likely that it represents a floral tribute, perhaps gathered at the cemetery and placed on the coffin at burial. ¹⁴ Chicory-type plants are common wildflowers that inhabit a range of areas and soil conditions that were probably present at the site. If the pollen recovered was from a floral tribute, the deceased most likely was buried sometime between May and September, when this species normally blooms. This burial is also notable for the cedar plank attached to the coffin headboard as a grave marker (see Chapter 9).

¹⁴ It is assumed that coffins were already sealed when they arrived at the burial ground; thus, if the plants were gathered at the site, they must have been placed on, rather than in, the coffin. The high pollen content in the stomach area may have been from grains that filtered downward as the coffin and soft tissue decomposed.

CHAPTER 15

Summary and Conclusions

Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco

The New York African Burial Ground, located in lower Manhattan, New York City and County, proved to be the largest excavated African cemetery from colonial America and contained the largest sample of human skeletal remains ever studied from any African Diaspora cemetery, anywhere. The total number of graves identified in the excavated portion of the cemetery was 424, and the total number of individuals for whom skeletal remains could be inventoried numbered 419.

The area investigated archaeologically during 1991–1992 represents but a fraction—less than 4 percent—of the cemetery's estimated original extent. Although the maximum footprint of the African Burial Ground is not known, the total area designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993 is approximately 7 acres, nearly 305,000 square feet. In contrast, the portion of the archaeological site where burials were excavated encompassed about 9,500 square feet. The site was located on Block 154, bounded on the north by Duane Street, on the south by Reade Street, on the west by Broadway, and on the east by Elk Street. Block 154 is now home to the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building and to a small, publicly accessible part of the cemetery where unexcavated graves are protected. The publicly accessible area is where the reinterment of the excavated remains was held in October 2003. This area memorializes all of the men. women, and children laid to rest at the African Burial

For much of the colonial period, New York City had a higher proportion of Africans in its population than any other urban center except Charleston, South Carolina. Nearly all African city residents lived under enslavement until after the Revolutionary War. Most would likely have been interred in the African Burial Ground, which was in use until 1795. Although no documentation about the cemetery's opening has come

to light, the African Burial Ground may have originated as early as the middle of the seventeenth century and no later than the beginning of the eighteenth century; it may have contained 15,000 or more graves.

The occupants of the graves that were excavated archaeologically constitute a large sample but cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the entire cemetery population. Further archaeological excavation that could provide information about the majority of the individuals once interred in the entire African Burial Ground is not likely to be undertaken. Additions to the thin documentary record on the African Burial Ground may someday come to light, but for now, the skeletal and nonskeletal remains from the excavated site provide a unique window on Manhattan's African community during the colonial and early federal periods.

Here we summarize the key archaeological findings presented in this report. We revisit the research agenda and the archaeological methods used to address it. We then review the findings and their implications and identify topics for future study.

Ancestors, Descendants, and the Research Agenda

Howard University's New York African Burial Ground project is a bioarchaeological investigation conducted by multidisciplinary teams of archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians with expertise on Africa and the African Diaspora. Inaugurated in 1993 under a contract with the U.S. General Services Administration, the project's investigation of the cemetery is an outcome of public intervention.

Archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians are accountable to their peers and professional asso-

ciations but also to their "ethical" clients—the people whose lives we study and the descendant communities our studies impact. Members of the descendant community and their allies were steadfastly committed to ensuring that the skeletal remains uncovered at the site were treated respectfully and reinterred with dignity, that African American scholars were appointed to direct the scientific study, and that the realities of enslavement in colonial Manhattan be brought to wide public attention.1 Howard University's New York African Burial Ground project owes much to the vigilance of African Americans and others who wanted to learn the truth about their urban predecessors and to recover a history that has been hidden for centuries. Their intervention was a crucial and deciding factor in how the project's research agenda was designed and implemented.

Four overarching topics of concern to the descendent community were identified during public hearings. These topics included the cultural and geographical origins of the men, women, and children whose remains were uncovered at the cemetery; the quality of their lives under captivity; the ways they resisted enslavement; and the transformation from African to African American—in other words, the ways they made new identities and formed new communities.

The language of this report as well as its scope and substance addresses the concerns of the descendent community. The African American descendant community is multidimensional and ideologically heterogeneous. Even so, all felt that the term "slave" was insulting and outdated and expressed a strong preference for the use of "captive Africans" to describe the individuals laid to rest at the African Burial Ground. The term "captive African" differs substantially from the word "slave." "Captive" used as an adjective rather than a noun avoids denoting the condition under which people lived as if it alone defined their identity. As a mark of respect for the African American community, whose members have the greatest right to speak for the black population of New Amsterdam/New York, the researchers under Howard University's auspices refer to the ancestors with a phrase their descendants have chosen.

Location and Dating of the Excavated Site

Standard archaeological methods were used to turn the material record into information that might speak to the research agenda. Our first methodological task as historical archaeologists was to sort out the spatial and temporal dimensions of the excavated site. This involved systematizing the excavation and laboratory records, reconstructing the stratigraphic position of each grave, and charting the development of the cemetery during and after its use as a burial ground (see Chapters 1–3 and the site map, Figure 7, pocket map).

The historic African Burial Ground was situated at the edge of the Collect Pond, on the once-northerly outskirts of New Amsterdam/New York.² Farms owned by Africans and Europeans were established in the area in the 1640s. The cemetery may date back to that time. Although graves in the excavated portion may span much of the cemetery's period of use, it is not possible to determine whether the earliest generations of captive Africans who labored in colonial Manhattan were interred within the excavated site.

The excavated site, which was in the northern part of the historic African Burial Ground, overlapped a former fence line that once separated the Van Borsum patent from the Calk Hook Farm; these two parcels of land were granted to Dutchmen during the second half of the seventeenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Van Borsum patent had come to be known as the "Negroes Burial Ground."

The excavated site, and the cemetery as a whole, was dramatically impacted by several phases of development, civic and private, industrial and residential. The excavated site included a portion of the cemetery that was very densely used and a portion that was relatively thinly used (south and north of the fence line, respectively). It is possible the cemetery grew in area during its early period and then contracted during the second half of the eighteenth century as various kinds of development encroached. After 1730, factories such as the Crolius and Remmey pottery; institutions

¹ The New York African Burial Ground project has an Office of Public Education and Interpretation that informs and involves the public in the scientific research. Based in New York City, the office is supported and operated under the auspices of the GSA. It was headed until September 2005 by Dr. Sherrill Wilson.

² The location near water may have held spiritual significance for some of the African people who used the burial ground. In some coastal West African and West Central African communities, cemeteries were associated with bodies of water where spirits are believed to reside (Ferguson 1992, 1999; Samford 1994; Thompson 1983:135–138; Thompson and Cornet 1981:197–198).

such as a military barracks, an almshouse, and a jail; and residential construction including houses, fences, and outbuildings encroached upon the cemetery. With this encroachment, the density of interments and the superimposition of graves within the remaining ground would have increased.

After 1795, intensive, full-scale development covered the area, damaging or destroying some of the graves and bypassing others. Mechanical stripping of the site down to grave shaft outlines or, worse, the tops of coffins themselves, resulted in further loss of the original ground surface during the construction of the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building in 1991. This may have obliterated irreplaceable material evidence of early African American burial practices.

Relative and absolute dating of the graves was complicated by the paucity of material culture found in direct association with the skeletal remains and from within the grave shafts. We therefore used a combination of factors to establish relative temporal groups. Burials were assigned to one of four temporal groups based on physical features (fence lines and concentrated areas of pottery waste), artifact dating, burial stratigraphy and spatial patterning, and coffin shape (see Chapter 4).

The Early Group (n = 51) included adults with four-sided coffins that tapered toward the foot and the children associated with the adults. Many of the graves underlay, and some were truncated by, ensuing burials. Early Group burials seem to predate the heavy dumping of kiln waste from nearby potteries, which were in operation by 1730.

Most burials (n = 256) lacked strong evidence for earlier or later assignment, and thus were placed in a Middle Group (n = 198) or Late-Middle Group (n = 58). Stratigraphic relationships, and occasionally artifacts from grave shafts or coffins, were the primary criteria for inclusion in the Late-Middle Group. Because the temporal assignments are based on relative factors, the list of burials in the middle groups cannot be considered definitive or absolute. This holds especially true for children. The higher proportion of children in the Middle Group probably indicates that some of these children's graves should be assigned to the Late-Middle Group or even to the Late Group, but there is no way to sort out which ones.

Assignment to the Late Group (n = 114) was based on location north of the former boundary fence (which apparently stood until the British occupation of the

city during the Revolutionary War) and/or the presence of artifacts with a terminus post quem of similar or later dates; in a few cases, stratigraphic relationships to other burials was a determining factor. The removal of the fence is used to date the Late Group.

Burial Practices within the Excavated Site

Our second methodological task was to examine patterns in burial practice for the site as a whole as well as within and across each temporal group (Chapters 5–9). What was typical and what was unusual in how African New Yorkers interred their community's dead? Seven aspects of burial practice were examined: coffin use, grave orientation, body position, individual vs. co-interment, burial attire, the presence of adornment and other possessions or goods, and grave markers. In addition, we also looked at the cemetery's internal geography. Were the graves of men, women, and children arranged in configurations or distributed evenly? Was there any patterning along gender or generational lines?

Four of these variables showed remarkable homogeneity regardless of the deceased's age, sex, or temporal group assignment. These include coffin use (91.6 percent), body orientation with the head to the west (97.8 percent), extended supine body position (100 percent), and predominantly individual burial. Only two coffins contained more than one individual, and relatively few grave shafts were shared.

We think shrouding of the dead may also have been typical. Small, copper-alloy straight pins with wirewound heads were among the most numerous artifacts recovered in direct association with the deceased—only coffin remains (see Chapter 10) outnumbered pins. Straight pins were observed in and/or recovered from half of the burials. In the absence of cloth or any evidence for street clothes, the use of winding sheets or shrouds without durable fasteners may reasonably be inferred (see Chapter 11).

The case for grave markers as a typical burial practice is unclear. Grave markers were observed in the southwest corner of the excavated site, an area where the original ground surface was still intact. Grave markers took the form of smooth stone cobbles (arranged on the ground in lines and, in one case, an arc, so as to demarcate a grave or possibly groups of graves) and of rectangular stone slabs (placed verti-

cally at the heads of the graves). Because such markers were found in the one area where their preservation was possible, we think it is likely that markers were used elsewhere at the cemetery. It is likely that a vertical wood post attached to the headboard of a coffin marked a grave (Burial 297) in the northern part of the site; presumably, the post extended above the ground.

Relatively few individuals appear to have been buried in street clothing (indicated by the types and locations of buttons and cuff links directly associated with the skeletal remains). Personal adornment and other goods were also unusual. Among the items recovered were glass beads (nine of which were likely manufactured in western Africa); finger rings and metal jewelry; and coins, shells, pipes, and unique objects such as a small ceramic ball with an embossed metal band. It is also possible that floral tributes had been placed in a few of the graves (Chapters 12–14).

Most burials were placed within a foot or two of neighboring graves, but the internal geography of the excavated site was not uniform. In addition to shared grave shafts, there were several locations where burials appeared either to have been clustered together or placed in possible rows.

The shared or possible shared grave shafts (n = 27) held two (but sometimes three) individuals, typically infants or young children (n = 12) or an infant or a child with an adult (n = 12 or 13). In some cases, the individuals in shared or possible shared grave shafts appear to have been interred at the same time; in other cases, there may have been an interval after which a second burial was placed in a grave shaft already in use.

Burial clusters encompassed individuals from different age groups (infants and young children interred near adults) as well as child burials and, occasionally, pairs of adults. Possible rows of graves (aligned roughly north-to-south) were easiest to discern in the northern part of the site, although some of these apparent rows may have extended all the way to the site's southern edge.

In the northern part of the site, where graves were not as crowded as elsewhere, burial practices as well as the demographic profile were somewhat distinct. There was a preponderance of men, and almost all of the coffinless burials were in this area. Clothing fasteners were more frequent, as were goods such as coins, knives, and pipes. We think that burial practices in this area reflect both a shorter period of use and a response to the demographic displacement and social

privation that accompanied the Revolutionary War. There was a large influx of fugitive Africans during the British occupation, followed by a mass exodus after the British troops decamped. With the exception of the northern part of the site, the graves of men, women, and children were distributed more or less evenly across the excavated space.

Differences in burial practices for men and women were not observed. Although men were more likely than women to have been buried without coffins, we attribute this to the increased presence of men during the Revolutionary War. Buttons were more typically associated with men, but because workingwomen's clothing from that era seldom fastened with buttons, it is not possible to state that men were more likely to be buried in street clothes. Pollen representing possible floral tributes was identified with more men than women, but the sample is too small to generalize from. The two south-headed burials for which sex could be determined held women; the four east-headed burials held either men or children.

Burial practices for adults and children differed in some ways. All children had coffins (with the exception of one infant who was buried in the arms of a woman), even in the northern part of the site, where numerous adults had none. The shapes of children's coffins appear to have varied throughout the site's entire time span; in contrast, adult coffins were more uniform once the shoulder-shaped variety was adopted (from the Middle Group on). One possible explanation is that children's coffins were more likely to be made by families rather than purchased. Pins were present in all age groups, but they were observed in a higher percentage of children's graves than adults' graves. Many adults had pins on the cranium only, which was much less common proportionally for children. Some infants had pins along their entire bodies, and a purely functional explanation is unlikely. It is possible pins had a special role in the ritual preparation of the bodies of youngsters.

Buttons were not found with children, but, as was the case with women, some pins may have fastened children's clothes. Adornment was just as likely to be found on children as on women (beads and rings) and men (decorative buttons and cuff links). Glass beads, a silver pendant, and a glass-and-metal-filigree ornament were recovered with young children and infants. Unlike adults, children could not have obtained adornments on their own; children's adornments had to have been gifts from adults, whether bestowed in life or at death.

Individuals and Communities

Variation in burial practice at a public cemetery in use for a century or more is not unexpected, particularly in a cemetery serving an urban community that continually absorbed newcomers from a wide range of cultures and places. Yet the scope of variation at the African Burial Ground was narrow. Viewed from the excavated site, a typical or "proper" burial in African New Amsterdam/New York entailed a coffin large enough to hold a supine, extended body that was probably covered with a shroud and placed head-to-west in a grave of its own.

We had assumed that a "proper" burial would have multiple configurations, because no documentary evidence about municipal or outsider oversight of the cemetery came to light. Municipal codes enacted during the 1720s and 1730s specified the time and size of black funerals but carried no stipulations about coffin use, grave orientation, burial attire, or the positioning of the corpse. No evidence indicating that white New Yorkers played a role at the gravesides in the African Burial Ground has been found (see Chapter 2).

It seems, however, that black New Yorkers may have arrived at a provisional consensus about how to deal with death early on.³ The consistency in the archaeological record suggests that a model of a proper burial was in place by the time the graves in the excavated portion of the cemetery had been interred. Conformity can be seen in the context of the individual's relationship to family and to the larger community. Funerals were communal and public expressions of loss, transformation, and restoration, and the cemetery provided a space where such rituals could help to forge a developing African American identity.

It is clear, though, that the concept of a proper burial was elastic enough to accommodate the expression of individuality. Consider, for example, four distinctive interments in the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Each of the individuals (in Burials 340, 22, 101, and 147, one from each of our temporal groups), had a coffin, was probably shrouded, had been laid with the head to the west, and was in a grave of his or her own. Each also had skeletal indicators of work, illness, or nutritional stress that remind us of their likely common lot as captive laborers in an

eighteenth-century city.⁴ Each, however, was buried with distinctive items.

Burial 340, an Early Group grave of a woman between 39 and 64 years old, was buried with an African-style strand of beads around her waist. Her molecular genetic affinities point to West Africa, and her incisors were modified, suggesting African nativity—but skeletal evidence suggests a later life of hard labor and possible nutritional stress. Although skeletal preservation was generally poor, the bones showed several pathologies, including scarring on the femurs where the muscles attached and hypertrophy (the enlargement of an area of bone probably caused by repeated stress) on the scapulae and ulnae (shoulders and lower arms). Moderate osteoarthritis affected the hip and the vertebrae of the neck and lower back, and there was possible evidence of anemia in the cranial bone.

This woman's distinctive African-style adornment seems to bespeak her commitment to her cultural ancestry. 5 Women's waist beads, associated as they are with femininity, sexuality, and female friendship, are recognizable as a form of adornment that had a wide geographical spread in western and central Africa.

Burial 22, a Middle Group grave of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old, was found with a shell (clam, of a species native to New York waters) located above the left collarbone. Perhaps the shell was placed in the coffin by mourners for its association with water, to mark the ritual transformation of the child's status via an analogy between crossing through water and crossing from life to death. The use of shells in this manner is known from Africa and the African Diaspora. The child in Burial 22 was probably born in New York, and strontium isotope levels measured in the teeth support this assumption, as they fell within the narrow range of the other young children in the sample tested. During his or her short life, the child suffered from an infection or an injury that left scars on the bones of the lower and upper limbs.

³ The author thanks Grey Gundaker for articulating the idea of a "provisional consensus" with reference to burial practices.

⁴ The Howard University Skeletal Biology Team provided information on skeletal pathologies and on genetic and chemical analyses.

⁵ Although there appears to have been a substantial break in the continuity of waist-bead wearing in the African Diaspora, waist beads have in recent years become fashionable among some African-descendent women in the United States as a way of reclaiming and proclaiming their African identities. A similar practice may be the African American "nation sack," a bundle or bag of varied materials worn on a string around a woman's waist. A nation sack is intended to protect the wearer rather than to ornament her. It is worn beneath the clothing and is seen only occasionally by close female kin, never by men.

The coffin that held the child straddled two underlying adult burials, one of a woman (Burial 46) and the other of a probable man (Burial 29). The child and the adults were part of a cluster of graves bordered by a row of white cobblestones, apparently watersmoothed rocks. This style of grave marking has been observed throughout the African Diaspora over a broad temporal span. The relationship of the child to others in the community probably guided the placement of the grave within this cluster.

Burial 101, of a man in his early thirties, was assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Lead levels in his teeth were consistent with African birth, although strontium isotope levels overlapped the ranges of both American and African birth. Preservation of the skeleton was excellent, and several pathologies were observed, including bone scarring owing to inflammation from bacterial infection or injury on the cranium and legs. The muscle attachments at the man's elbows were enlarged from stress, mild to severe arthritis affected his joints, layers of his teeth indicated that he experienced nutritional stress in childhood, and cavities were severe (he probably had abscesses and perhaps infections of the surrounding bone). The tibiae were malformed consistent with a condition called "saber shin," suggesting he had yaws.

This man's coffin lid was decorated with a heart-shaped design formed of tinned or silvered iron tacks with an interior pattern formed of smaller tacks.⁶ Heart-shaped decorations may not have evoked the same meanings for Africans as for Europeans. The coffin design may have called to mind the Sankofa symbol (Figure 286) that originated with the Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast; the symbol



Figure 286. One version of the West African Sankofa symbol (source: MacDonald 2005).

refers to of the need to remember one's ancestors (Chapter 8).⁷ If the mourners who interred the man in Burial 101 viewed the heart-shaped decoration as a Sankofa symbol, then the design on the coffin lid would provide evidence of the portability of expressive culture and its importance to cultural survival. The multivalence of a familiar sign provided the opportunity to incorporate an African symbol into a funeral observance.

Burial 147, one of the Late Group graves, held the remains of one of the oldest individuals in the excavated sample, a man between 55 and 65 years old when he died. His arm and leg bones had scarring from infection or injury, and the sites of muscle attachments were enlarged from repeated stress. Moderate to severe osteoarthritis affected all of the major joint complexes and the spine. Porous bones of the cranium and eye orbits suggested nutritional stress in childhood, possibly anemia, and childhood nutritional deficiencies were also recorded in his teeth (hypoplasias).

The man was buried with a cluster of small copperalloy wire rings between his upper right arm and chest. Pins that were aligned precisely along his right upper arm indicated that cloth may have been attached in that location, possibly enclosing the rings—perhaps an armband or underarm pouch. The rings may have been part of a conjuring bundle of some kind, which would have been concealed on his person in life. This elderly man may have had powers that were offered to or sought out by others in the community. His conjuring apparatus went with him to the grave, perhaps pointing to a close association of the items themselves with the practitioner. The location of the burial, in the northern part of the cemetery, suggests that he died during or after the Revolution, and it is possible he was one of the many refugees who came to the city during the war.

⁶ Iron tacks may have been chosen for this coffin based on the symbolic importance of iron in some African cultures (Puckett 1926:218; Thompson 1983:52–61) and in African American conjuration (Puckett 1926:208, 230, 237, 252, 277, 478).

⁷ James Denbow offers another interpretation of the Sankofa/heart shape. His study of heart-shaped designs on tombstones dating to the early twentieth century in the Loango coast of West Central Africa found that the "heart" was perceived as the location of "the soul of the inner body, called mwela [...] manifested physically by the breath" (Denbow 1999:412). Thus, Denbow saw the heart shape as representing the soul of the deceased. Perhaps the symbol was recognized (although differently) by both West and West-Central Africans. As Fennell (2003:23-24) has noted, symbols become widespread through cultural contact, and cultures assign nuances of encoded meaning to them. However, Denbow also cites earlier sources that considered the soul to be contained in the head and represented heads as "cruciform and helioform" (Denbow 1999:413). The "heart" as a two-lobed, pointed-base figure does not necessarily represent the concept as it would have been expressed in the eighteenth-century Loango region.

Ancestors, Cultural Roots, and the Transformation of African to African American Identities

Characteristic of today's African American sensibility is the apparently straightforward query, "Who are your people?" This question asks both "Where did you come from?" and "How do we relate to one another?" The abhorrent circumstances under which people were separated from their families and homelands complicate the search for origins and cultural roots of African-descendant people throughout the African Diaspora. The multidisciplinary New York African Burial Ground Project has developed new lines of data, and a host of questions, about the origins of early African New Yorkers, through historical research, preliminary genetic and craniometric data, and archaeological analysis.

As noted, the project's history volume (Medford 2009), highlights the scope of the trade in captives and the range of societies from which the burial ground population derived. The skeletal biology volume (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009a) has examined the physical remains of the ancestors for indications of their places of origin. Their research found a range of probable birthplaces, from the continent of Africa to the Caribbean to New York. The archaeology has been less specific in its investigation of roots. But what we do observe in a number of instances is that even if today we cannot read specific places in Africa from the material record, we can read that people were declaring to one another that their people were African.

Although none of the objects associated with distinctive burials precisely answers the question of origins, the mobilization of material culture is a thread that appears to run through the temporal groups. It would not be surprising if materials and associations that held particular significance in Africa continued to be important to African people in New York. The deceased may have been people newly captured from Africa (possibly in Burials 101 and 340), a child born into captivity in New York (Burial 22), or second- or third-generation African Americans whose forbears maintained and transmitted African cultural practices despite, or as a respite from, the brutality of their lives in North America (the elderly man in Burial 147). The material from these graves clearly points out that at least some of the African people of eighteenth-century

New York remembered and honored their ancestral traditions.

Future Research

The archaeological excavation of the New York African Burial Ground has opened a window on how Africans under slavery cared for their dead in a key center of colonial America's urban north. It makes sense, then, to design research agendas around the findings the burial ground's archaeological record has brought to light. Future research might focus more deeply on how African New Yorkers used the burial ground for community purposes of their own. Several lines of investigation show promise of providing a fuller grasp of the cemetery as a setting for reshaping social ties within and across generations:

- 1. The connections among individuals interred in close proximity, be it within the same grave shaft or within a burial cluster. Genetic analysis of the remains might reveal kinship or home-place ties between the individuals in these graves. Such information, if coupled with data on nutrition, disease, and physical trauma, might yield a more fine-grained picture of the biocultural experiences that marked kin, compatriots, or friends whose graves were clustered together.⁸
- 2. Rural-to-urban migration during the Revolutionary War and its immediate aftermath. During the 1700s, the promise of freedom pulled Africans from near and far to New York City, but the movement of blacks into Manhattan accelerated during the British occupation. A systematic look at documentation relevant to Africans on the move after 1776, along with a close examination of the bioskeletal signatures of Late Group burials, might furnish insights into the social/regional roots of the burial patterns and material culture in the northern part of the cemetery.
- 3. The social and material production of a "proper" burial in the independent black churches that provided burial facilities after the African Burial Ground had closed. How was the "proper" burial of the seventeenth/eighteenth century reconfigured in the liturgies and in the burial yards and vaults of the city's nineteenth-century black churches? Were the accoutrements, logistics, and divisions of labor that

We assume that African people buried at the cemetery formed families—quite simply, the birth of children would have begun families, and however strained the logistics of maintaining ties, family relationships would have built exponentially.

constituted a "proper" burial altered during periods of heightened social suffering, such as the yellow fever or cholera years? Using the New York African Burial Ground as a baseline might offer a more sophisticated grasp of how a rite of passage is remade when the organizing structures in the world around it have changed.

We suggest a new look at one of the key stories of early African American history in New York, the founding of the AME Zion and St. Philip's Churches. It should make a difference if one imagines, as we do, that the African Burial Ground provided an institutional basis as well as founding personnel for the churches. The African Methodist and Episcopal churches might have had a century-and-a-half's worth of African and then African American religious philosophy and ritual practice upon which to build.

More generally, the information obtained from the New York African Burial Ground archaeological investigation adds significantly to an ever-growing database on the historic material culture of the African Diaspora. It is hoped that the findings reported here will be useful to a large research community. For example, changing ritual practices of African descendant people and the symbolic dimensions of their material culture should continue to be interrogated through African eyes. Symbols, especially those used by oppressed populations, are not necessarily accessible to outsiders; the multivalent aspect of symbolic practices enables divergent meanings to be cloaked. Historical archaeologists, with input from historians, anthropologists, and folklorists, continually explore new ways to recognize and interpret symbols used by African Americans. Fresh examination of objects and their associations should continue to be fruitful, and it is hoped that items recovered at the New York African Burial Ground will become part of this broader project.

The archaeological data from the New York African Burial Ground should continue to be analyzed within a worldwide context. This site did not exist in a historical, geographic, or cultural vacuum. As important as the African Burial Ground is, the excavated site offers but a glimpse of African life in a cosmopolitan center of colonial American. The burial ground adds to a growing multidimensional perspective on Africans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it bears closer comparison to other sites in Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean.

The African Burial Ground will not be forgotten again. This can be attributed to the keen interest of African descendants in their community's material past as much as it can to the insights and data compiled here. The research offers new avenues for teaching and learning about the people of the African Diaspora and for hearing their long-stifled voices. We hope this report, along with the skeletal biology volume (Volume 1 of this series) and the history volume (Volume 3 of this series) will inspire and educate both academics and the public. We also hope to engage students, colleagues, and the public in a broader examination of the African American past and to create inclusive histories that transform our views of the past, the present, and the future. Creating inclusive histories involves breaking down boundaries between the academy and African American-descendant communities so that we all can learn from oral history, apply African American perspectives on material culture, and create memorials that honor the long history of the African Diaspora.

Epilogue

Warren R. Perry

The African Burial Ground has become a symbol of the strength, spirit, and agency of African descendant people in New York over nearly four centuries of exploitation and inequality. The site has attracted tens of thousands of visitors and is the focus of deeply felt reverence by many people in the United States and Africa and throughout the African Diaspora.

The Rites of Ancestral Return culminated in New York City on Friday, October 3, and Saturday, October 4, 2003. Four individual coffins, representing the men, women, boys, and girls among the ancestors, were conveyed in a procession up Broadway to the African Burial Ground Memorial Site. The event was both a funeral and a celebration, and the ceremonies



Mother Delois Blakely heads the procession of the coffins from Wall Street to the African Burial Ground (photograph by Sherrill D. Wilson).

were exhilarating, as well as profoundly solemn. An overnight vigil marked the ancestors' last hours away from their rightful resting place.

Dr. Michael Blakey and the Institute for Historical Biology at the College of William and Mary, which he now heads, invited New York African Burial Ground Project staff and researchers to attend a Friday night reception in the Presidential Suite at the Millennium Hilton Hotel. Following this event, several members of the Howard University research teams returned to the site to pay final respects to the ancestors before the next day's re-interment ceremonies.

It was nearing midnight when we arrived at the memorial site. It had been a long and emotionally charged day, but each of us felt drawn to spend a last few personal moments with the ancestors, remembering them not as the subjects of scientific research but as living people who had endured lives of pain and struggle, love and sadness, strength and meaning.

Most of the day's attendees had left by this time. Among those who remained were several members of the descendant community who had spoken out and advocated for the ancestors since the early 1990s, among them Mother Delois Blakely, Queen Mother Jordan, and the Chief Alagba Egunfemi Adegbolola. The night had gone chill and the spotlights had gone out, but the descendants that remained seemed to draw light and heat and sustenance from the presence of the once-forgotten ones who were returning to their rightful place.

We offered our farewell to the ancestors and turned to leave, passing by the memorial site and the platform on which many of the descendants still clustered. As we walked up Elk Street, a young man ran up from behind. Mother Blakely had sent him to ask for elders for the naming ceremony. "Would we come back to participate?" the young man asked.

Our first impulse was to offer a polite excuse and continue on. It was cold, we were tired, and the morning's observances were but a few hours away. But the voices of the ancestors resounded in our heads:

Were we not cold?
Were we not tired?
Did we not wish for home and rest?



Wooden coffins, hand carved in Ghana, held the ancestors' remains for reburial at the African Burial Ground (photograph by Anne and Jon Abbott).

We could not refuse this summons, on the eve of their reburial, and we returned to the site, where Dr. Michael Blakey, as the project's scientific director, was to be named in the African tradition. We spoke in low voices, which could not have been overheard: "I am cold," and at that moment a blanket was offered; "I am tired," and a chair appeared almost from thin air. We felt as though the ancestors had acknowledged our sincerity in returning to the vigil and favored us with respite from our discomforts.

It has been a tremendous privilege to work for the New York African Burial Ground Project. "Privilege," in this case, is not to be confused with "ease." In many ways it has been one of the most difficult projects we will ever conduct. It was also one of the most spiritually rewarding. We have been blessed to be offered the opportunity to share a fraction of the ancestors' experiences: the hard work, the setbacks, the pain of loss. We also have been blessed by the strength and sense of purpose that comes from building a cadre of committed workers. Much as the ancestors built new social networks, cultures, and identities for themselves, the people who have worked and fought for the African Burial Ground have shared deep bonds. The ancestors inspired us to keep moving forward through our tribulations and to keep in mind that our commitment was to honor their courage, strength, and dignity.

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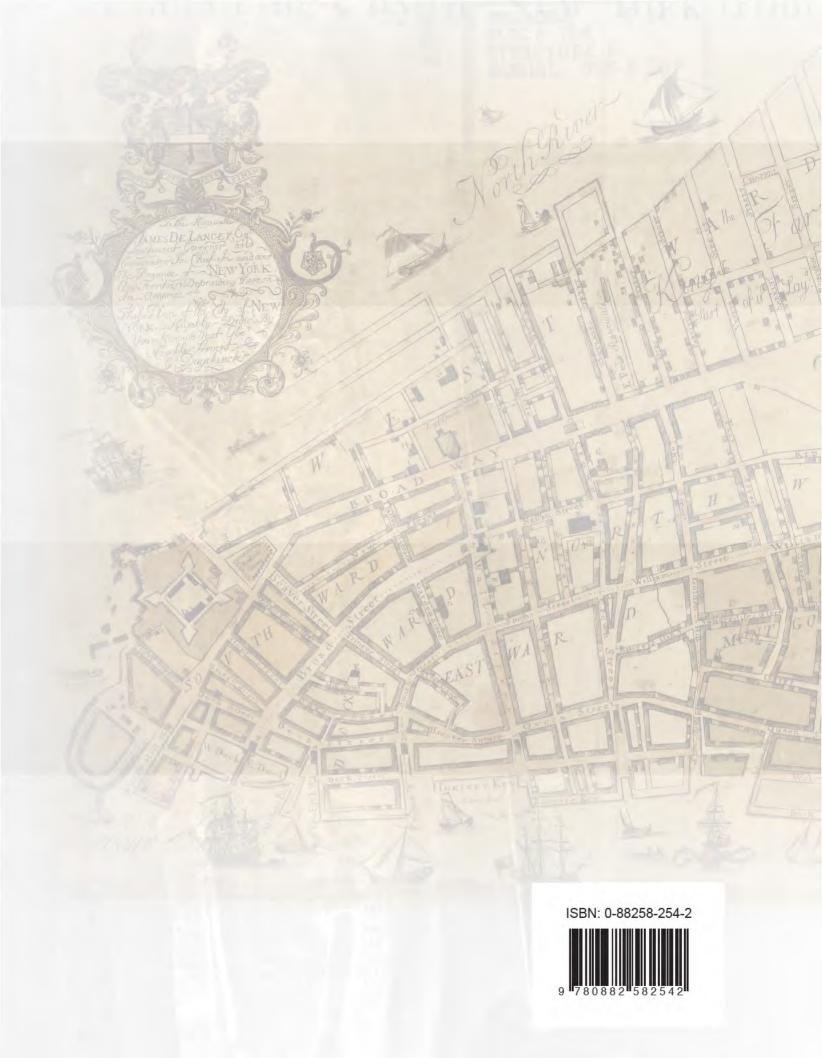
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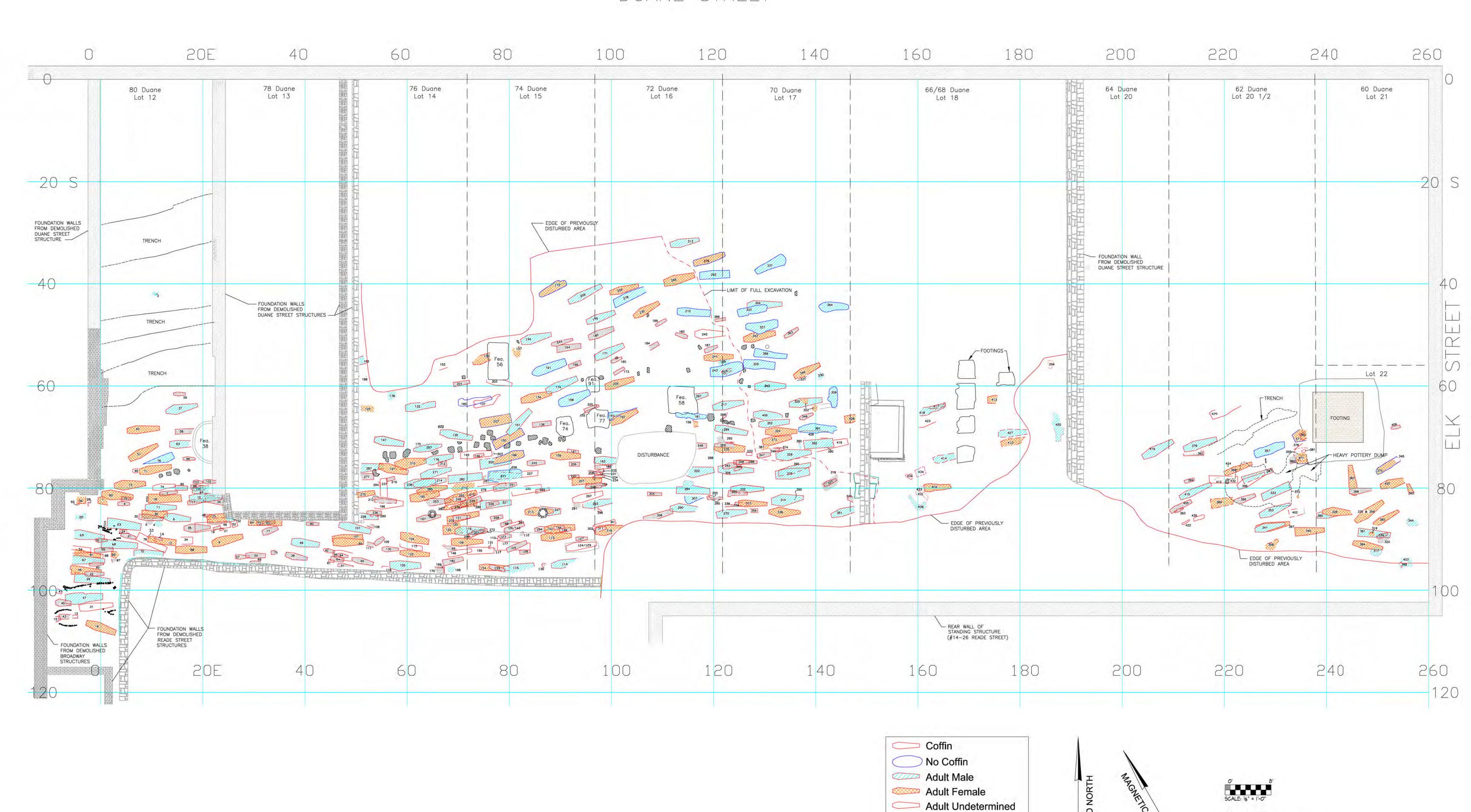
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DUANE STREET



Infant / Subadult

Post Holes

Figure 1.7

New York African Burial Ground Archaeological Site Plan

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