



Management Summary for Archaeological Excavations at the Javins Homestead Fort Ward Park 4301 W. Braddock Rd. Alexandria, Virginia

The City of Alexandria, Virginia, contains 566 acres of parkland. One of its most popular and heavily visited parks is the 43.46 acres at Fort Ward Park located at 4301 Braddock Road, in the northwest quadrant of the city. The central 36.5-acre central portion of Fort Ward Park encompasses a Civil War-era fortification and a small museum. As well as historic resources related to the Civil War, the park also contains a host of archaeological sites related to an African American community that was founded on the property after the Civil War and continued as a neighborhood until the creation of the park in the 1960s. Known as "The Fort," over the years the community included nearly two dozen homes, a schoolhouse that later became a chapel and then a residence, and several burial grounds. African Americans, some formerly enslaved, owned most of the properties at The Fort, and the enclave formed an important place where African American families established roots that lasted through several generations.

Background History of the Javins Site

In 1889, Samuel and Florence [McKnight Shorts] Javins [sometimes also spelled Javin, Gavins, Givens] purchased a 2.5-acre lot in The Fort neighborhood, acreage located immediately to the north of the earthen fort. The Javins recorded the formal deed to the property in 1894, which included rights to use a 10 ft. wide road leading to the property from Braddock Road to the south (Fairfax County Deed R-5-413, 1894). Nearly three decades later the Javins expanded their holdings to a total of 4.24 acres by purchasing an additional 1.74 acres to the west of the 2.5 acres they already owned (Moon 2014:70-72; Fairfax County Deed I-9-83, 1921) (Figure 1). On a 1927 aerial photograph of the area, the main Javins house appears to have stood in the center of the 4.24-acre property, surrounded by a grove of trees to the north. An entrance road led to the house from the east, ending in a bare area on the south side of the main house, probably where vehicles were parked. A road led from the north off the property. Two footpaths appear to branch out from the house to the west. The 1.74-acre parcel to the west appears to have been under cultivation at that time, as does the acreage to the south and east of the main house (see Figure 1).

The Javins had built a house on their lot in the last decade of the nineteenth century that was standing by 1894, according to historic maps. The exact location of the main house has been difficult to establish. Before archaeological testing began at the site in 2012, an analysis of





1927 and 1937 aerial photographs suggested several possible footprints for the main house (Figure 2). Other projections placed the main house in the road (Appler 2009:143) or in the general location of the picnic area (Moon 2014:74). More recently, with a better rendering of the 1927 aerial photograph, and improved GIS mapping tools, the probable location of the main house has been refined to a "best fit" model (see Figure 2). Preserved physical evidence of the house structure would be the only way to identify the exact location. In addition to the main house, by 1927, several possible outbuildings stood to the south of the house, around the bare area in front of the house (see Figure 2). The grove of trees to the north of the main house may have served as a small orchard. Samuel Javins and Florence McKnight married in the District of Columbia in 1882 and raised eight children over their lifetimes, beginning with the eldest Robert T. in 1886 and the youngest Odell born in 1899 (District of Columbia Marriages, 1830-1921: p. 314 "Samuel Jivinse") (Table 1). All but one of their children lived into adulthood; one boy named Austin appears to have died as an infant. In the 1900 federal census, Samuel Javins is listed as a day laborer, and Florence Javins as a "wash woman." All six of their living children were in the household, ranging in ages from 12 years old to 10 months. The two oldest, Robert and Samuel Arthur were listed as "in school." (1900 Federal Census, "Sam Javins").

	Birth & Death Dates	Place of Death or Burial
1. Samuel A. Javins	[1865-1958]	in DC
1. Florence McKnight Shorts Javins	[ca. 1856-1931]	"Seminary Hill"
2. Robert T. Javins	[1886-1955]	"Fort Cemetery"
2. Austin Javins	[1887-]	unknown
2. Samuel Arthur Javins	[1889-1957]	died in Arlington, services at OBC
2. Ada V. Javins Jackson Plummer	[1891-1981]	Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
2. Adolphus C. Javins	[1893-1967]	Harrisburg, Penn.
2. Frank Louis Javins	[1895-1956]	in DC
2. Florence Hansborough Tancil [adopted]	[1897-1984]	in DC
2. Odell Javins	[1899-1930]	Mount Olivet Cemetery

Table 1. Members of the Samuel and Florence Javins household.





A decade later, eight people resided in their household in 1910: Samuel Javins listed as a laborer in a steel plant, Florence Javins as a laundress, two adult sons as farm laborers, two teenage sons, an "adopted" 12-year-old daughter named Florence Hansborough, and Willis McKnight, Florence's nephew (1910 Federal Census, "Soom Javins").

During World War I, Samuel and Florence Javins relocated to Steelton, Pennsylvania, where Samuel and three of his sons worked in a steel mill (Moon 2014:70; 1920 Federal Census, "Samuel Javins"). Given the listing of Samuel as a steelworker in the 1910 census, he had probably spent time working in Pennsylvania prior to relocating there during the war. It is not clear if other members of the family continued to reside on The Fort property during their absence, although records suggest that when Samuel Javins Jr. returned in 1919 from serving in the Army, he took up residence on the property (Fairfax County Chancery 1923-057). By 1921, the Javins family had returned to The Fort. At that time, they expanded their holdings by acquiring 1.74 acres to the west of their original parcel (Fairfax County Deed I-9-83, 1921). By the early 1920s most of the Javins' children had moved away and started their own families, either in the nearby District of Columbia, or in Pennsylvania. Only Robert, the eldest child continued to live close by. According to Florence Javins' death certificate, she suffered a major health crisis in 1915 and 1916 and lost the use of her legs to paralysis (Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987).

By 1930 the Javins household had dwindled to Samuel and Florence, both elderly and not working, their adult son Robert, and an in-house nurse named Rose Dudley who helped care for Florence (1930 Federal Census, "Sam Gavins"). Their house and property were valued at \$1,000. A year later in 1931 Florence Javins died, Samuel soon remarried, and he sold the 4.24-acre property to George Garrett in 1934 (Fairfax County Deed Q-11-511, 1934). Samuel Javins lived into his 90s and died in the District of Columbia in 1958. George Garrett hoped to develop the area into a suburban neighborhood (Moon 2014:72). Whether or not anyone lived in the house after the Javins sold it in 1934 remains unknown. An aerial photograph dated to 1949 appears to indicate that the buildings on the property had been razed.

Archaeology at the Javins Site

Archaeological investigations have taken place in and around the Javins property in two phases. In 2012 Alexandria Archaeology conducted a shovel testing survey throughout the entire park at 30 ft. intervals, followed by the excavation of selected test units in areas of interest, including three within the bounds of the Javins property (Figure 3). In conjunction with the shovel testing, systematic metal detector sweeps were made to the west of the picnic pavilion (see Figure 3). Lastly, in July 2013, Alexandria Archaeology hosted its annual Summer Archaeology Camp at the Javins Site. Guided by Alexandria Archaeology staff, fifteen 12 to 15year-old participants helped to excavate 10 test units at the site (see Figure 3).





Shovel Testing

Archaeologists excavated at total of 119 shovel test holes throughout the Javins property, most at 30 ft. intervals (Figure 4). Sixty-six of the shovel test holes produced a total of 615 artifacts (Table 2). In an effort to focus on the distribution of artifacts related to the Javins occupation of the site, any artifacts that clearly dated to post-1950 (i.e., coins, plastic, etc.), and plain bottle glass was filtered out, leaving 301 artifacts from the shovel test holes (Figure 5). Both the total artifacts and filtered artifacts generally indicated that the house lot boundaries for the main domestic core of the site span approximately 150 ft. by 175 ft. (see Figures 4 and 5).

The shovel testing results also illustrated that a drainage swale located immediately to the east of the picnic area is nearly devoid of artifacts (see Figure 4). According to historic topographic maps, the drainage swale was present when the Javins occupied the property, and they largely avoided it. Furthermore, the projected location of the main house as derived from a 1937 aerial photograph is likely inaccurate because it places the house in the drainage swale (see Figure 2).

Material Type	Count	Material Type	Count
Aluminum	8	Iron	113
Asbestos	7	Metal	4
Brass	2	Organic	1
Brick	5	Plastic	13
Ceramic	5	Porcelain	8
Coal	16	Quartz	1
Coarseware	1	Rubber	1
Copper	2	Steel	3
Earthenware	71	Stoneware	3
Glass	348	Zinc	1
		Total	615

Table 2. Types of materials recovered from the shovel test holes at the Javins Site.

Metal Detecting

In 2012 metal detecting sweeps were made on the west side of the Javins property, mostly confined to the 1.74-acre section of the family's holdings. Twenty-one signals were dug and produced a total of 42 artifacts (Figure 6). Among the more interesting findings was a grouping of artifacts associated with the occupation of the site during the Civil War in locations SA72 to SA77 (Table 3). Although located near the Javins homestead, the Civil War materials





predate the Javins on the property.

Table 3.List of findings from metal detector hits.

Prov #	Material 1	Form	Count	Description
SA50	MBRASS	CARRIAGE TACK	1	Ornamental rein guide.
				14.5 cm long, 1.5 cm in diameter, round tubing,
SA51	MBRASS	TUBE/TUBING	1	possibly crimped at one end
SA51A	RQUARTZ	DEBITAGE	1	could be a quartz core
SA52	MBRASS	KEY	1	"AUSTRAL" on front, "Mexico" on back.
SA53	MBRASS	KEY	1	plain, 20th century
SA72	MLEAD	SCRAP METAL	3	large hunk of melted scrap lead, Civil War era
SA73	MLEAD	SCRAP METAL	1	scrap lead, probable Civil War era
				silver plated brass flagstaff tip or top. Civil War
SA74	MBRASS	FLAGSTAFF	1	era
		HARNESS		
SA75	MBRASS	BUCKLE	1	Civil War era brass buckle with an iron tang
		DOOR LOCK		
SA76	MBRASS	PLATE	1	cast brass
C A 77	MCOPPER		1	1.6 inches in diameter, bottom of a Civil War shell
SA77	ALLOY	SHELL CASING	1	casing
SA78	MSTEEL	AUTO PART	1	car wheel cap
SA79	MIRON	WAGON PART	1	iron bracket and loop; probable wagon part
SA79A	MBRASS	HARDWARE UNIDENTIFIED	2	2 pcs of hardware, slotted in center, rectangular shape
JATJA	CCERAMIC	UNIDENTIFIED	2	Shape
SA79B	OBJECT	MARBLE	1	red clay marble
SA79C	CPORCELAIN	CUP	1	
0, 1, 9 0	MNICKEL			
SA79D	ALLOY	COIN	1	US quarter, date obscured
SA79E	MIRON	HARDWARE	1	small iron strip
SA79F	SGLASS	BOTTLE	4	
		WINDOW		
SA79G	SGLASS	GLASS	2	
SA79H	SGLASS	BOTTLE	1	looks like possible Coke bottle glass
SA79I	SGLASS	BOTTLE	4	pink tint to the glass
SA79J	SGLASS	BOTTLE	2	darker green than normal modern bottle glass
SA81	MIRON	KNIFE TABLE	1	complete blade and most of tang. Civil War era
SA82	MLEAD	SCRAP METAL	1	melted lead





Prov #	Material 1	Form	Count	Description
SA83	MBRASS	KEY	1	20th century key, "Taylor" on front
	MCOPPER			turquoise setting in copper heart, back is stamped
SA85	ALLOY	JEWELRY	1	"c EIC"; 20th century
		HARDWARE		
SA86	MCOPPER	UNIDENTIFIED	1	silver plated copper piecepossible jewelry (?)
				Fired .58 caliber, three-ring minie ball; Civil War
SA87	MLEAD	MINIE BALL	1	era
SA88	MBRASS	WATCH PART	2	watch plate inner workings, Civil War era

Test Units

Archaeologists excavated 12 test units at the Javins site, ten of them concentrated in the close vicinity of where the main house once stood. At the time, analysis of the 1927 aerial map suggested that the main house was located adjacent to parking spots immediately to the west (Figure 7). Thus, those ten test units were placed in and around the projected location of the main house, as it was understood at the time. Subsequent reanalysis suggests that the main house is more likely located approximately 30 ft. further to the east, meaning the ten test units were situated immediately to the south and west of the likely location of the main house (see Figure 7, best fit).

The dozen test units excavated at the site generated a robust artifact assemblage of 2,865 artifacts (Table 4 and Table 5). As is common for domestic sites, the artifact assemblage is dominated by bottle glass fragments (n=1,008), iron nails (n=427), and ceramic sherds (n=371) of various types (see Table 5). These three artifact types comprised nearly two-thirds of the artifacts recovered from the test units (n=63%). As mentioned previously, some of the materials collected from the test units may pertain to park use, particularly the bottle glass. Nevertheless, the ceramic sherd assemblage was dominated by plain whiteware (n=243), transfer printed whiteware (n=38), and American porcelain (n=38). In addition to those types, archaeologists also recovered examples of Chinese porcelain, porcelaneous, Yellow ware, Ironstone, Rockingham, Albany slip stoneware, Bristol glaze stoneware, American blue and gray stoneware. Most of these ceramic types date to the latter 19th and early 20th centuries.

Features

Archaeologists identified five buried features in the test units (Figure 8). These included a well (Fe 201), a concentration of sheet iron (Fe 202), a small posthole (Fe 203), a concentration of cobbles and bricks (Fe 204), and a possible trash pit (Fe 42-1).





Table 4.Total artifacts recovered from test units, per test unit.

Test Unit	Surface	Layer A	Layer B	Layer C	Total
2		3	47		50
41		5	34		39
42		158	55		213
115	27	108	165	40	340
116	13	50	86	292	441
117	39	109			148
118	15	107	20		142
119	6	196	135		337
120	6	198	298		502
121	25	159			184
122		72	4		76
123	167	174	52		393
Total					2,865

Table 5.Total artifacts recovered from test units, type of material.

Material Type	Count	Material Type	Count
Aluminum	13	Lead	4
Bone	2	Metal	5
Brass	4	Mortar	1
Brick	50	Organics	1
Ceramics	355	Plastic	38
Charcoal	6	Porcelain	24
Coal	55	Quartzite	4
Copper	30	Rubber	3
Earthenware	1	Slate	5
Floral	1	Stoneware	3
Glass	1,579	Synthetic	10
Iron	669	Unidentified	2
			2,865





Feature 201: Archaeologists uncovered the edge of a probable well in Unit 115, just a few inches below the ground surface (Plate 1). The feature appears to be brick lined with the presence of numerous cobbles. Archaeologists excavated several inches into the feature to confirm its interpretation as a well. That small test produced 73 artifacts, including ceramics, bottle glass, nails, and domestic debris.

Feature 202: In the south corner of Unit 119, archaeologists encountered a large piece of sheet metal embedded approximately 3 inches below the ground surface (Plate 2). Other fragments of sheet metal seemed to be scattered next to the complete piece, and a small hole appeared to be located next to the edge of the intact piece. The function of the sheet metal is indeterminate, although the intact piece clearly had an edge, which suggests it may have been used as a drip pan for working on automobiles.

Feature 203: Also in Unit 119, archaeologists uncovered a small posthole with a postmold in the center (see Plate 2). Approximately 0.9 ft. by 1.2 ft. in diameter, the posthole may have served as a fencepost, perhaps part of a fence that enclosed the south side of the main house.

Feature 204: In the corner of Unit 121, a grouping of cobbles and bricks was found directly below the surface of the ground (Plate 3). Other than recording the feature in place, archaeologists did not excavate any further to better understand its depth. The cobbles and brick could be remnants of a pier, possibly for the main house; but considerably more excavation would be needed to verify this.

Feature 42-1: Archaeologists encountered the edge of a pit feature in the northwest corner of Unit 42 (Plate 4). The feature was tested, but not excavated in its entirety. Yet, the testing yielded 61 artifacts such as bottle glass, whiteware, porcelain, and sheet metal (note: archaeologists left the complete glass bottle seen in Plate 4 in place and did not collect it). Given the amount of household debris associated with this feature, it likely served as a trash pit.

Summary

Samuel and Florence Javins owned and occupied their property for more than four decades (ca. 1889-1934), raising eight children, and establishing themselves as one of the first and foremost families at The Fort. Although archaeologists did not identify conclusive physical evidence of the location of the main Javins house, the circumstantial evidence, both documentary and archaeological, thus far suggests that it once stood approximately 30 ft. to the east of the westernmost angled parking spot, in the center of what is now Picnic Area 2 at the park (see Figure 2).





The archaeological excavations conducted at the Javins Site by Alexandria Archaeology in 2012 and 2013 generated more than 3,750 artifacts. Although the footprint of the main house remains unknown, archaeologists identified the location of a well (Feature 201), a sizeable trash pit (Feature 42-1), a possible work area (Feature 202), a possible fence line (Feature 203), and perhaps a pier for the main house (Feature 204). These findings alone are an indication that the archaeological resource remains in good condition for future research. However, archaeologists also noted several factors that have impacted, and will continue to impact the site. For one, because the site is located on a gradual slope, and borders a drainage swale, soil erosion has significantly diminished the soil stratigraphy in this area. Moreover, as a high-use picnic area that has experienced decades of foot traffic, the soil layers have been noticeably compacted, so that in some places only a few inches of topsoil overlay the sterile clay subsoil. Additionally, development like the construction of Van Dorn Street and the picnic shelter and associated infrastructure likely impacted the site as well.

References Cited

Appler, Douglas

2009 Inventory of Historical Resources Fort Ward Park City of Alexandria, Virginia (Working Draft as of September 10, 2009). On file at Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria, Virginia. <u>https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-</u> archives/historic/info/archaeology/fortwardparkhistoricalresourcesinventorydraft2009.pdf

Death Certificates, Obituaries, etc.

Ada V. Javins Jackson Plummer (1891-1981): Obituary, *The Evening Star*, June 4, 1981:D9.

Adolphus C. Javins (1893-1967): FindaGrave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/232066329/adolphus-caluste-javins

Austin Javins (1887): Fairfax County, Register of Births, 1853-1897, North District, p. 161. "Virginia, Library of Virginia State Archive, Births, Marriages, and Deaths 1853-1900", database. <u>https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6ZRK-K6MB</u>

Florence McKnight Shorts Javins (ca. 1856-1931): Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987, March 20, 1931. <u>https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVRW-5RM8</u>

Florence Hansborough Tancil [adopted] (1897-1984): Social Security Death Index, District of Columbia. <u>https://tinyurl.com/yrarc7j3</u>





Frank Louis Javins (1895-1956): Obituary, The Evening Star, July 25, 1956:A20.

Odell Javins (1899-1930): Obituary, *The Evening Star*, October 27, 1930:A9. <u>https://tinyurl.com/u4anm5h7</u> FindaGrave, <u>https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/225371235/odell-javins</u>

Robert T. Javins (1886-1955): Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987, March 5, 1955. https://tinyurl.com/y34tdeue

Samuel Arthur Javins [Jr.] (1889-1957): Obituary, *The Evening Star*, March 2, 1957:A10.

Samuel Javins [Sr.] (1865-1958): Obituary, The Evening Star, January 10, 1958:A16.

District of Columbia Marriages

1830-1921Samuel Jivinse and Florence McKnight, 12 April 1882, p. 314.https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F71N-24H

Fairfax County Chancery Cases

1923 1923-057 Samuel Arthur Javins v. Martha Javins Divorce Action. https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/case_detail.asp?CFN=059-1923-057

Fairfax County Deed Books 1894 Deed R-5-413

- 1921 Deed I-9-83
- 1934 Q-11-511

Federal Censuses

- 1900 Sam Javins, *Falls Church, Fairfax, Virginia;* Roll: 1707; Page: 5; Enumeration District: 0018; FHL microfilm: 1241707. <u>https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/71526521:7602</u>
- 1910 Soom Javins, *Falls Church, Fairfax, Virginia;* Roll: *T624_1628;* Page: *15B;* Enumeration District: *0031;* FHL microfilm: *1375641.* <u>https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/199762940:7884</u>
- 1920 Samuel Javins, Steelton Ward 3, Dauphin, Pennsylvania; Roll: T625_1560;





Page: 16A; Enumeration District: 137. https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryuicontent/view/11894794:6061

1930 Sam Gavins, *Falls Church, Fairfax, Virginia;* Page: *15A;* Enumeration District: *0011;* FHL microfilm: *2342176.* <u>https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/97696482:6224</u>

Moon, Krystyn

2014 Finding The Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s-1960s. On file at Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria, Virginia. <u>https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-</u> archives/historic/info/archaeology/fortwardparkhistoryreportmoon-2014.pdf







Figure 1. Javins property at The Fort neighborhood, 1927 aerial photograph.







Figure 2. Map-projected locations of buildings on the Javins property, 2019 aerial photograph.







Figure 3. Locations of shovel test holes, test units, and metal detector hits at the Javins Site.







Figure 4. Results of shovel test holes, total artifacts recovered noted in blue.







Figure 5. Results of shovel test holes, with modern and plain glass filtered out. Artifact counts noted in blue.







Figure 6. Metal detector hits.





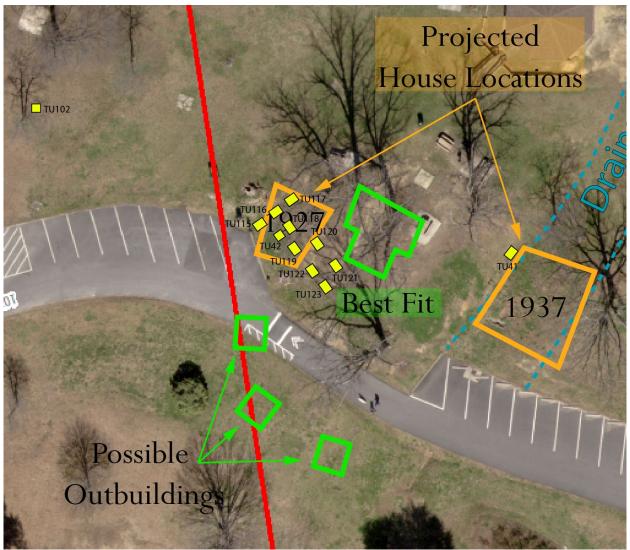


Figure 7. Locations of test units in relation to possible locations of main house.





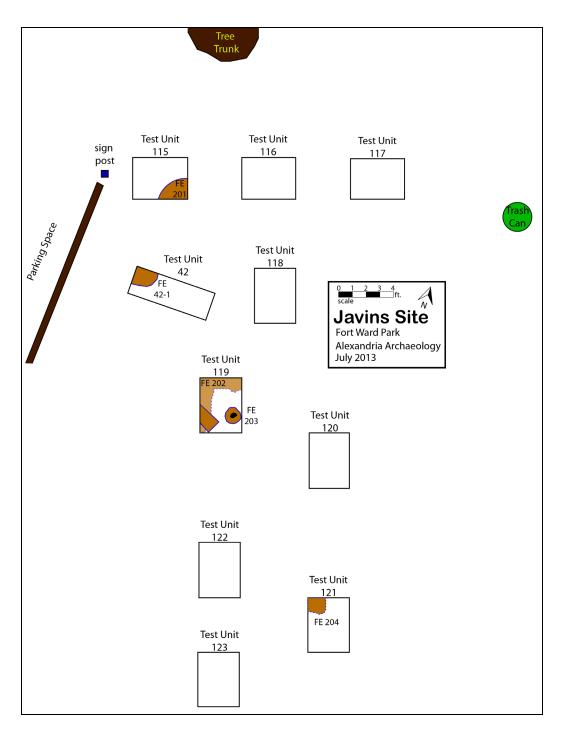


Figure 8. Locations of test units at features at the Javins Site.







Plate 1. View of Feature 201, a likely well in Unit 115; facing south.







Plate 2. View of Features 202 and 203 in Unit 115; Feature 202 on the right consisting of pieces of sheet metal, and Feature 203 on the left, a posthole; facing southeast.







Plate 3. View of Feature 204 in Unit 121, a grouping of cobbles and bricks near the surface, facing south.







Plate 4. View of Feature 42-1 in the far corner of Unit 42, a trash pit feature.