Finding the foundation: exploring a historic Stockade property in Schenectady, New York

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FINDING THE FOUNDATION:
EXPLORING A HISTORIC STOCKADE
PROPERTY IN SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK

by
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Abstract

Schenectady County Community College Community Archaeology Program researchers have been excavating in the Stockade Historic District, an area dating back to the Dutch colonization period. Sites located on the current property of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, located within the district, include a house razed in 1938, but which appears according to existing deed records, to have originally been built in the late 1700s. Two primary finds have come from the excavation, including the presence of two different strata with significant amounts of burnt debris that is believed to represent the most significant fires on the property (1861/1948). In addition, a large kitchen midden has been located. The research presented will illustrate the importance of the two burn layers in interpreting the property, and will also delve into the importance of ceramics and zooarchaeology for further explanations of the lifestyle and occupation habits of the site’s previous residents.
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Introduction

Archaeologically speaking, the Stockade Historic District in Schenectady, New York has been studied decently, though the focus for most of its history has been more on history itself—rather than the archaeological record. The Schenectady County Community College Community Archaeology Program\(^1\), however, has made the study of the Stockade its primary focus on inquiry since its inception. The 107 Union Street project, sometimes referred to as the First Reformed Church Project given its position on grounds currently a part of the church’s yard, is the most recent effort of the program to continue efforts to uncover the ‘unseen’ parts of Schenectady’s history. The site itself is in a prime location, give its place not only next door to the Yates House (also previously excavated by the program) but within the original stockade boundaries and so close to the intersection that made up the center of town for many decades when the Reformed Church was located at the crossroads. While there were many big picture and several more targeted questions surmised of the project going in, there are four questions that will be focused on in the analysis of the data for this thesis.

Firstly, the biggest question we have for the property and the archaeological excavation itself is ‘what remains?’ The main goal of all archaeological work on the site will intersect with this question as any interpretations of the site on other levels are directly connected to what is actually left for the archaeological record to interpret for the property. The work done on all portions of the site will overlap with what parts of the foundation were left from the 1938 razing of the property, as well as what may be left or have been replaced after the 1861 fire that

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\(^1\) Referred to from this point on by its acronym, SCCC-CAP.
damaged the western side of the house and may have been the cause for some reconstruction at levels that may be left for archaeological interpretation.

The second question is also directly related to the foundation of the house itself. Based off of archival investigation taken on by several volunteers and faculty members associated with the SCCC-CAP program, it has been determined that there were at least three expansions completed on the house that stood at 107 Union Street. Excavation hopes to also uncover evidence as to how these expansions were done and whether or not they are still visible in the archaeological record.

The final question that will be discussed in this project is the hopeful dating and analysis of the kitchen midden that was uncovered during preliminary excavation taken on in the spring by SCCC-CAP. Two STPs (9 and 12) showed a significant amount of faunal remains on the back end of the property, where the back edge of the house would have been found. The two STPs were located 5 meters apart and a trench was decided upon as the best course of action during excavation, to determine whether we were looking at multiple deposits or a singular, long used, deposit.

The ultimate goal of this project is to begin work on a property in the Stockade that has previously not been excavated (the First Reformed Church property – though the intersection where a previous church was located had excavation done due to the finding of human remains during utilities work). The ensuing work focuses on answering the above preliminary questions, as well as giving a foundational background on the church and residential properties themselves as they relate to the history of the Stockade. It is the hope of this particular project that future
work can be based on this project to further explore the history of both the church’s material history and its nearby neighbors.

**Background**

**Stockade**

After the 1609 exploration of what is now known as the Hudson Valley by Henry Hudson, it took very little time, for the Dutch West India Company to establish a foothold in what we now refer to as the Capital District. Beginning with the construction and short-lived use of Fort Nassau in 1614 and solidified by the building of Fort Orange in 1624, the area’s fate as a focus for the Dutch was put into motion. Beverwijck (now Albany) and Rensselaerwijck (now Rensselaer)\(^2\) were both founded after initial farming land was bought in 1630 and 1631.

Schenectady, with its many varied spellings, came a few decades later, after Arent Van Curler negotiated a deal with the Mohawks for land along the river that would later become the village in July of 1661.\(^3\)

Schenectady itself was not officially founded in 1661; rather the founding of Schenectady became a several yearlong debacle, due to attempts to get the settlers to sign some rather limiting trade agreements. The land itself was not surveyed until 1664, more than a year after the first request was made to Jacques Cortelyou in 1663 when he was ordered by Stuyvesant to travel to the proposed location. It is proposed that there were 14 original proprietors of Schenectady, 8 of whom had long histories in the local fur trade – further complicating the fact that there was a proposed block on the trade for the town. Schenectady was not Dutch for very long, despite its

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\(^2\) Beverwyck and Rensselaerwyck are also common spellings from the time period.

\(^3\) William A. Starna, Introduction in Mohawk Frontier
roots in the local Dutch community, as the English were the occupying governing force by the end of 1664.  

The Stockade, the historic district that now sits on the National Register and occupies a portion of modern-day western Schenectady, was at one point in time a literal stockade. The British put up the wooden structure enclosing the original 4 blocks after they began to control the area and it lasted well into the later decades of the 1700s (though records for its on-again off-again use are not wholly clear about the official end of the structure in its final form). It is important to stress that, while the British controlled the area for most of its existence and the area considers itself to be Dutch in origin, it was always a multi-ethnic community that included Dutch, English, French, African slaves, and Mohawk Indians cohabitating from early in the town’s inception. This is an important note to make for the area’s history, particularly when the next chapter of its history (the massacre) is taken into consideration, as the local community had many ties to the local Mohawk community. The First Reformed Church has records going back to the 1660s that indicate there were more than the fair share of intermarriages with the local Mohawk, as well as a large number of baptisms in the late 1600s and early 1700s.  

There was a time, however, when Schenectady looked as if it may not make it out of the 1600s. The town suffered from its first massacre – perhaps what the stockade area is most well-known for, beyond its remaining historic houses, to those outside of upstate New York – in 1690. On February 8th, 1690 60 individuals were slain and 27 were taken captive by the attacking forces. The remaining inhabitants began to attempt to bury their dead on the 10th, when it became

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4 Thomas E. Burke Jr., Chapter 1 in Mohawk Frontier
5 Thomas E. Burke Jr., Chapter 4 in Mohawk Frontier
clear that there would not be a second wind of attacks and a joint group of Dutch and Indians (Mohawk) pursued the French and Indians (Iroquois) who had attacked and were now en route back to Montreal with their captives. The town had been largely razed of its wooden structures and left in a sorry state. The massacre at Schenectady left a lasting impression not only locally but more widely amongst colonies in New England.\textsuperscript{6}

The survivors of the massacre took refuge at Albany – the most sensible place for them to seek shelter quickly and easily. This was, however, to be short-lived as by mid-May of the same year, the magistrates at Albany were already calling for the return of the surviving individuals of the massacre to return to Schenectady. However, historical records show that this was a lengthy process overall, despite the quick return of some families. During this same period (records say as early as that summer in 1690), captives from the massacre began to return to Schenectady as well. According to records by 1693 at least 10 of the 27 had returned and in the end, records can be provided that show at least 18 of the captives made their way back. It should be noted that there are no records of the names of the 5 slaves taken captive, so there is no way to trace whether or not those 5 individuals were ever returned in any capacity.\textsuperscript{7}

The effects of the massacre were long lasting on the community, even resulting in a visit from Governor Henry Sloughter in May of 1691 – however, the viability of Schenectady for both agriculture and trade was too much to be passed up, so the town continued to grow over time. By 1714, a decade before the Yates House was built; the population of Schenectady sat at 591

\textsuperscript{6} Thomas E. Burke Jr., Chapter 3 in Mohawk Frontier

\textsuperscript{7} Thomas E. Burke Jr., Chapter 6 in Mohawk Frontier
inhabitants – more than double the 238 there in 1697. This growth would continue over time, though the most substantial boom wasn’t seen until the industrial revolution.

By the latter half of the 1700s, leading up to the Revolutionary War, what is now the Stockade Historic District continued to see growth and continued development. The town itself had a population of around 2,400 in 1773 – a time around which it is possible an early version of the structure that would make up 107 Union Street, may have gone up.\(^8\) Schenectady may have seen devastation and would continue to do so over time, as several fires threatened the viability of the city, but it also saw continued development and growth over the years. In 1769 the city was described by a visitor, Richard Smith – he stated that the town held about 300 dwellings, with a described 3 primary streets crossed by 4 or 5 others, it was also noted that there were 6 or 7 mansions in the area at that time. At this point in time Saint George’s had been constructed a few blocks away from 107 Union Street and the Dutch Church was still located in the intersection of Church and Union. The Dutch Church would not move to be at the corner of the street, rather than the intersection, until we know that 107 Union had been constructed. This would have been a major turning point for the layout of this central part of the town.\(^9\)

**The First Reformed Church**

The First Reformed Church of Schenectady has a long history in the community, dating back to early on in the history of Schenectady’s formation as a town. This long history encapsulates five names, one massacre, three locations, three fires, three different ruling

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\(^8\) Based on early deeds for the property dating back to the 1760s – though the house is not explicitly spoken of until the turn of the century.

\(^9\) Willis T. Hanson, Chapter 2 ‘Schenectady’, in A History of Schenectady During the Revolution
governments, and two different official languages. The church itself has a past rooted in the community and that very community has been what has kept the congregation alive since the late 1600s.

While the origins of the church are Dutch, the name of the church itself has not always heralded that history, despite that it also continues to, colloquially, be referred to as the Dutch Reformed Church up until this day. The church was originally called the Dutch Reformed Church of Schenectady – where this tradition of being called thusly, likely came from. The church may have begun by being called the Dutch Reformed Church, however, as early as 1702 the church was going by a new name. By 1702 the church was called the Reformed Nether Dutch Church of Schenectady and it would be renamed two more times in quite quick succession in the 1700s. In 1727, it became the Nether Dutch Reformed Church of Schenectady and then in 1734 it became the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Schenectady. This fourth name would remain in use until just after the Civil War, when in 1867, the current name (First Reformed Church of Schenectady) came into use.

The three locations in the Stockade area that the church has occupied over time are directly indicative of the growth and spread of the town itself. The original church was located in the center of the original town that was largely destroyed during the massacre; the church itself
was a small building in the center of town in what is now Liberty Park. This version of the church burnt in the 1690 fire that resulted from the torching of buildings during the massacre. After the massacre, a second version of the church appeared in the same area and stood from 1702 until 1734.

With the shift of the town to becoming more central, the church moved locations in 1734, to stand in the intersection of Church and Union streets – close to the modern location, though standing physically in the middle of the two streets where the traffic light now resides, rather than directly on its current lot. This version of the church lasted through the Revolutionary War and into the early 1800s. In 1814 the church moved from its location in the intersection to sitting on the corner of the lot at Church and Union. The congregation resided in this version of the church until 1861, when they were forced to move. During the August 6th fire of that year the corner church burned and subsequently the community put together enough money to rebuild by the next year – construction on the fifth version of the church was completed in 1863 and three of the outer walls still remain, despite another fire ravaging the church in 1948 that was the result of a (suspected) overheated furnace.

Socio-culturally the church has always proven to be an integral part of the local community. Whether you look back into the historic records when the First Reformed Church was performing all of the local baptisms and marriages, to their involvement with the local Mohawk community that continues to this day, to in more recent years the giving of public lectures not only on church history but the history of the Stockade on a more general level.
107 Union Street

107 (initially 25) Union Street as a property of varying size and use can be traced back as far as 1671 and has remained occupied at some level, with fairly decent documentation, right up until the properties razing and subsequent inclusion in the larger lot that the First Reformed Church owns in 1938. Throughout the earlier documented years of the house, 1671-1767 the lot is coupled with what would become the Riggs House lot at 105 (then 23) Union Street and there is no mention of structures on this larger 100x200 Amft lot – though it can be assumed there would have been a dwelling of some sort, given that all deed owners lived in Schenectady over that period of time. There is no formal documentation that mentions a house of any size on the larger, combined lot and the material remains would show that if there was, nothing is left to be found of it.

In 1767 the lots were split when Johannes Van Vorst deeded the eastern half (105) to his son of the same name. It is in this deeding of the eastern half of the larger lot that not only both lots (105 and 107) become 50x200 Amft, but it was the first time there is mention of a house, as it is stated that a ‘house and lot’ are what the deed itself pertains to. There is no mention in the deeds, at this point in time, of whether or not there is a structure standing on the western half of the lot (107), though two decades later in May of 1798 there is an extant deed showing that the property at what is now 107 Union Street is owned by a Joseph Shurtleff and that the lot includes a house.  

The house goes through a long list of owners over the years but several are of marked importance to this project in particular. First that is Rev. Jacob Van Vechten, minister of the

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10 See Appendix: Timeline 1. History of site ownership.
Reformed Church, who purchased the house from Shurtleff and resided there during his tenure as minister of the church. The church itself did not own the property, but 107 Union Street became the de facto parsonage for the time period that the couple (Jacob and his wife Maria) owned the house. In December of 1850 the house was sold to Horace Goodrich.

Horace Goodrich sold the house to Aaron Barringer in March of 1854; Barringer was the owner of the property when it is damaged in the 1861 fire that takes down both the fourth version of the church and damagers the neighboring Riggs property (parts of which had been sold to the church as early as 1814) beyond repair. The house at 107 Union Street (listed as 25 Union Street until the mid-1880s) was damaged in the fire, but is repaired and occupation by a member of the Barringer family continues. Martha Barringer (Aaron’s daughter) and her husband, Frank Bissell, sold the property to John Shankle in 1896, however, the Bissells resided alongside the Shankles until some point between 1904 and 1910. By 1910 it is known that only the Shankle family resided on the property and the Bissells were living at 26 Washington.

The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Schenectady, the name the church used during this period of time, purchased the property and house at 107 Union street in June of 1911 at a public auction. Martha Bissell was still the mortgagee at this time, though from the records it can be inferred that the Shankles still resided at the property, as they are listed as defendants. The next year, 1912, the property officially becomes a parsonage when Rev. Clayton J. Potter moved into the house there. The church owned the property during its last two and a half decades of its existence until it was taken down in 1938 due to its ‘deteriorated condition’.

Much like its change in ownership over time the structure from the late-1700s on the lot at 107 Union Street went through several significant changes over the years – the changes dating
from 1880 and on are well documented via insurance maps available from the time. In 1880 a Hopkins map exists that shows the Barringer house by name – its shape vaguely square at the time. By the time of the introduction of the Sanborn map in 1889 there is an addition on the back end of the house that aligns the Barringer property with the second section of the Yates house. The next Sanborn map available dates from 1912 and the change in shape from purely rectangular of that second addition (likely a porch) has changed significantly. A slanted portion is visible on the eastern side of that second section of the home, as well as an additional rectangular addition on the northwestern corner of the house that is rectangular in shape.

The last Sanborn map available for the house shows what we can guesstimate, given that by 1938 when the decision to take the house down was made there were no additional church minutes that discussed additions, may have been what was the final shape of the house. This last map of the house shows it listed as a parsonage. The original house is shaped out, still in its relatively square shape, though in this version of the house the odd triangular shape in the second addition is portioned out – as well as a second rectangle within that addition. The small third addition seems unchanged, but on the northeastern corner of the house a small balcony and stairwell have been added.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{The Fires of 1861 and 1948}

In 1861 there was a large fire in the town of Schenectady, referred to periodically as the ‘Great Fire of Schenectady’, on August 6\textsuperscript{th}. The fire devastated the Stockade district, destroying 15 homes and totaling a bill of around 55,000 dollars in the currency of the day. The First Reformed Church, 105 Union Street, and 107 Union Street all saw large amounts of damage

\textsuperscript{11} All maps will be cited directly to the appendix where they appear.
during the fire. The church, still residing on the corner of the lot at that time, had damage totaling around 16,000 dollars and was considered to be destroyed; the destruction of the church prompted a fundraising effort by the community from which the fifth version of the church was built from. 105 Union saw 2,000 dollars’ worth of damage, which was considered to be too much to salvage and the property was sold to the church and the house taken down and converted into lawn. 107 Union did have 1,000 dollars in damage that was done, however, it is worth noting that the house was not considered destroyed and during the fire there was effort put into saving the house, via the watering down of the western side while the Riggs house burned. ¹²

Despite the structure at 107 Union Street being taken down in 1938, the property itself has archaeological evidence of the fire that ravaged the fifth version of the First Reformed Church in 1948. ¹³ On February 1st, evening at 4pm in the afternoon thermometers in Schenectady read as low as negative 22 degrees. At around 4:30pm the first scent of smoke made obvious that a fire had begun to rage in the basement of the church, caused by what is suspected to be an overheated furnace. The fire lasted throughout much of the night as several smaller fires sprung up from the wreckage. By morning little was left on the property that wasn’t damaged or entirely encased in ice due to the sub-zero temperatures. The fire itself, thankfully, did not spread though it did irreparable damage to the church. Three outer walls (the east, south, and western vestiges of the 1863 building) remained, but the rest of the church had to be rebuilt. ¹⁴

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¹² Evening Star and Times from August 9th, 1861  
¹³ Stained glass, worked wood with evidence of burn, a significant amount of coal and cinder.  
¹⁴ Special Edition of the Town Crier, commemorating the fire.
Methods

Excavation

The excavation of the 107 Union Street site was done over the course of one field season split into two general sessions. The first session took place over the course of the spring semester and was led by Field Methods course instructor Adam Luscier with Hanna Marie Pageau acting as the field assistant for the training course. The Field Methods course is a training course for all SCCC-CAP basic certificate hopefuls and serves as an introduction to field experience for students in the program. The second session took place over the course of the summer semester and was led by Hanna Marie Pageau as Field Director. The summer fieldwork is directed as independent study participation by any qualified student – in this field season, that was a mixed group of SCCC-CAP students who had previously taken the Field Methods course and two interns from the University at Albany’s Anthropology department.

Spring fieldwork consisted of mapping out the area of excavation (roughly a 50x200 foot area) and digging shovel test pits (STPs). STPs were dug on a grid with 5 yards between them in either direction. The STPs themselves were dug by students of the SCCC-CAP program, overseen by both instructors on site. Each STP was dug as
far down as they could go – digging was stopped for one of two reasons; obstruction by roots or foundation or, alternatively, because there had been over 10cm since the last artifact found in the STP. Due to the sheer depth of the back half of the yard (which is elevated visibly above the neighboring Yates’ House due to backfill on the property over time) it was nearly impossible to dig down to sterile soil, so lack of material remains was used as an alternative quantifier.

**Artifact Collection and Curation**

All artifacts were bagged in the field on a daily basis. Field bags were recorded with preliminary data including; a preliminary list of artifacts in the bag, the unit the bag came from, who excavated the unit, and the date the artifacts were excavated on. Sifted versus directly excavated artifacts were not separated and it was decided that due to the outlook and goals of the project that direct point provenience was not necessary for artifact collection. However, provenience has been provided for several artifacts of great importance where their exact location is not only relevant but helps to further any number of the questions posed by this body of research. Items identified as being in need of conservation were bagged separately with soil prior to being put in the larger day bag.

No cleaning of artifacts was done in the field, beyond removal of any larger clumps of soil. Once in the lab all items were given a preliminary cleaning with a toothbrush and minimal use of water where necessary, all artifacts were photographed and recorded for accessioning records. Any further items in need of conservation that were not separated out in the field were separated out at this point. Initial recording of all items included measuring of the largest and smallest nails in each bag, measuring of items such as pipe stems, and ascertaining the type of
ceramics represented in the collected material. All artifact collection and cleaning was taken on by students associated with the SCCC-CAP program.

The artifacts were separated out into three categories of bags to proceed more systematically through the process of cataloguing, dating, and analyzing the material. Nails, bricks, and mortar samples were separated out first. Bones from Trench 2 were also relocated into separated bags for storage and cleaning. It was decided, due to the lack of significant volume, to allow the small number of bone specimens from Trench 1 to remain in the primary artifact bags with ceramics and other items. All other artifacts were grouped together and remained in the original bags that the separated-out materials had come from. This decision was made due to the largely in part to two main acting forces; the timeline of the contract SCCC-CAP retained with the First Reformed Church (holding a deadline for the project of the end of December) and spatial needs within the laboratory to handle and analyze the materials in such a way that would uphold the academic goals of the program, as well as the preservation goals of the property owner.

After reviewing the timeline required by our contract, the three questions the research design hoped to answer, and the volume of artifacts a course of action was decided upon for artifact analysis and record keeping.

Metal was handled in three different categories; screws and nails, items that could possibly be identified, and items that did not fit criteria to be identified. Nails and screws themselves were separated into three categories; near-complete nails with diagnostic features, small fragmented nails, and screws. Near-complete nails were separated out by type (square-cut, rose head etc.) and weighed; all nails were counted and photographed. Fragmented nails were
weighed per level and unit as groups and documented as best could be allowed due to their condition. The small amount of screws were documented individually. All other metal, whether identifiable or not, was put through the documentation process including the documentation of weight and size, along with photographic record being kept of all artifacts.

Other building materials were collected, though 100% of samples of brick and mortar were not brought back from the field. Brick and mortar specimens focused on samples taken from foundation features or specimens that were large enough or bore diagnostic markings (such as a markers mark or were indicative or a specific style of brick). Small chips and fragments were not retained. Photographs and documentation of bricks was done to assure that all diagnostic markings were recorded in their best condition possible. Mortar samples were retained in the hope of further analysis that may have been able to lead to possible dating on the mortar as well, however, access to the ability to do such analysis was not possible due to the unavoidable abrupt stop of the excavation process. Mortar samples have been retained to allow for future study, should the opportunity present itself.

Glass specimens were generally treated as two different categories; fully, partially intact, or identifiable artifacts (such as a glass bottle) and glass shards and fragments. Most glass specimens in the first category were sent for conservation to stabilize the glass and prevent further oxidation. Colour, patina, and embossed markings were recorded both via documentation and photographic record. Glass fragments were separated out by colour and whether or not the fragment is curved or straight. After initial cataloguing, stained glass was separated out from the other glass as it provided separate analysis as it is suspected that stained glass likely originated from the fire on the property during the 1940s, after the house was already taken down, as it is well recorded that several of the stained-glass windows facing where the house would have
previously been blown out. Remaining glass fragments were weighed after being separated out by colour and shape.

Ceramics made up the bulk of the most reliably dateable material on the site and were a common find across units. Given the date range being worked with and the scope of the project it was decided to separate ceramic processing methods into two general categories: fragments or intact artifacts with identifiable markings or features and generalized sherds. All ceramic specimens were cleaned, documented by type and decoration, and photographed. Ceramic artifacts (intact plate, doll parts) were sent for conservation and measured. Sherds were separated out into colour-based categories by one lab researcher to avoid intraobserver error and weighed, retaining separation by unit and level. Dating on all ceramics was completed by the same individual, Diane Carter of SCCC-CAP, for the same reason as the separation of the sherds so that intraobserver error could be best avoided.

**Results**

Setting out to answer the three primary questions of this project, two areas of the 107 Union Street property were excavated. Trench 1 (the front, right corner of the house) is comprised of 10 units of varying sizes\(^\text{15}\) and Trench 2 (the suspected kitchen midden), which was compromised of 5 different units. Units 2A (exploratory unit dug in Spring), 2B, 2C ran north south, with unit 2D directly under 2A, and 2E located directly west of 2A/D. A singular 1x1m exploratory unit was also excavated at what was believed to be the front left corner of the house.

\(^{15}\) Map 14 (Map of Trench 1)
The excavation of the two trenches and one unit resulted in three corners of the house (front left and right, rear right) being exposed during the summer excavation process.

The first question this project sought to answer was what exactly was left of the house under the surface. As it turns out, from excavation efforts in both dig periods that a good majority of the foundation is likely left under the surface. The front corner, including the base of a chimney that can be located in available photographs was easily exposed and it appeared that, while in poor condition on the upper levels because of settling after the house was taken down, there did not appear to be a lot of reuse of the original foundations that made up the basement. However, despite the lower levels of foundation being present it does appear that the exposed level of foundation may have been repurposed, as was not unusual for the time period. It is possible that the large, discarded and seemingly out of place foundation blocks in Trench 1 that contributed to the terminated of Unit 1D\textsuperscript{16} are some of these upper portions of the foundation that would have been visible above ground level when the house was exposed.

\begin{center}
\textit{Image 3: What would have been the front right corner of the dwelling at 105 Union exposed. Courtesy of Hanna Marie Pageau.}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{16} Map 9 - Sketch of Unit 1D
still standing, however, there is no concrete way to prove that from the data that was able to be collected.

During the investigation of what was left of the foundation of the property an underlying question arose while Units 1A-D were being excavated. Within the fill of the basement, which was originally thought to be from the when the cellar would have been filled in during demolition – bricks pre-dating those found in level 1 with evidence of having been exposed to being burnt were discovered. Over the course of proceeding field and lab work it was eventually surmised that there were three possibilities that may have caused a second layer of fill to exist that seemed to not only represented an earlier time period, but level 2 was also strikingly devoid of artifacts\textsuperscript{17}. Originally there was hope that we might be able to ascertain whether or not this brick layer at the bottom of 1D adjacent to the discarded foundation stones was related to either the 1861 fire or the work done on the chimneys in the 1920s\textsuperscript{18}. As it turns out, with the lack of artifacts and the lack of a clear reason as to why there would have been significant amounts of fill left in the basement like that, we can narrow down the possibilities to three reasons, though there is little way to prove precisely which is correct via the archaeological record.

The first, and most likely, is that during the 1920s the construction that was done to the chimney in the basement, possibly left this lower level of fill as the basement was no longer in active use and it didn’t actually block continued use of the chimney. It would explain why the second level of fill is not only so different in colour, but contains brick from a completely different (we’re talking mid-late 1700s vs. late 1800s/early 1900s here) time period. It would
also explain why leaving dirt and debris did not seem to be an issue. However, due to the age of the bricks found in level 2 it is hard to deny that it is still possible the fill level is from earlier, particularly given the lack of artifacts.

There is also the possibility that two different layers of fill are just happenstance from the 1936 razing of the house. It is quite peculiar that the second level would be so sterile and the difference in age of bricks be so stark, but the soil difference is entirely plausible. This option just can’t be ruled out as there’s really no way to prove, empirically, without a more dense presentation of artifacts that this isn’t the case. There is also the fact that the older age of the bricks could be due to their use as insulation for the walls, a practice demonstrated in several houses in the Schenectady Stockade, including the neighboring Yates’ house.

Lastly, and most unlikely, due to the start difference in age of the bricks, the fact that the lower of the two fill levels doesn’t seem to block the chimney in the basement entirely, we still can’t 100% deny that this may be a result of the damage done to the western side of the house in the 1861 fire, which it is entirely possible also damaged that side of the basement ($1,000 worth of damage in 1861 USD was done, so a sizeable amount). It is still highly unlikely that this is the end result, given that fill level would have had to have just stayed there for 70 years. However, given that there is a complete lack of artifacts in the lower fill level and such a stark difference in the age of the bricks, both coupled with the suspicious burn markings, we can only say that it is unlikely due to logistics, rather than ruling it out entirely.

Alongside wanting to figure out what had been left of the property at 107 Union Street after its demolition, maps\textsuperscript{19} of the Stockade gave us insight into the change of the shape of the

\textsuperscript{19} See Appendix: Maps 15 – 18.
building over time. It appeared as if there were at least 4 additions to the building, based off of the available insurance maps, over the course of its existence. The earliest maps date to the 1860s, so, prior to that, it is unknown if there were any formative changes to the building. However, it should be noted that in the newspaper publication post-dating the fire of 1861\textsuperscript{20}, the description of the house seems to appropriately match the original foundation shape. That being said, there is no record of whether the house was always two stories or was originally one as the early records for the property only sparsely mention the actual house and don’t make any specific mention of its shape. Given the property is located within the original stockade, it is also possible there were earlier structures on the property that there is little to no physical record of, archaeologically speaking. The earliest manufacturing

\textsuperscript{20} Evening Star and Times from August 9\textsuperscript{th}, 1861
dates for ceramic types found onsite do pre-date Schenectady as a settlement\textsuperscript{21} and there isn’t a lack of material that could bare a possible date from the first half of the 1700s, prior to any available deeds\textsuperscript{22} mentioning the property itself.

The earliest theory of the property based off of photographic evidence and available maps was that it seemed, most likely, that there were two additions added onto the house that would have been more formal – meaning that they were actual additions, they were not porches and they had load bearing foundations (meaning they were made of stone). It was believed the third addition was a porch and photographs left researchers unable to ascertain whether or not it was most likely this was an addition with its own additional foundation or if it was held up by wooden structures. STPs showed that there were stone foundations beneath the surface of the lawn that would have matched up with the placement of at least one of the additions; at the very least there were remnants of foundation extending beyond where the original square outline of the house would have been.

Based off of STPs, probing, and excavation the project was actually able to ascertain that both the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} expansion (both of which were vaguely the length of the house – there were other small alterations to the houses shape, but those are not being considered as full expansions at this time) had at least partially stone foundations. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} expansion appears to have a stone foundation that goes the length of the house, based off of evidence of continued presence of foundation like features that span the width of the house’s shape in STPs.\textsuperscript{23} The 3\textsuperscript{rd} expansion, however, seems to have been done in a different style. Based off of the evidence in Trench 2 it

\textsuperscript{21} See Supplementary Data (Ceramics)
\textsuperscript{22} Earliest deed dates to 1760.
\textsuperscript{23} See Appendix: Maps 2 and 3.
appears that when the 3rd expansion (the porch) was put in it was done similar in style to how a wooden post support system would have been done. Rather than spanning the length of the house, the expansion was supported by periodic stacks of foundation blocks in the ground. The project was unable to uncover any evidence of the 4th expansion, which appears from photographic evidence to have been a fire escape like feature, however, the historic documentation shows that this was most likely a short-lived wood feature.

The third goal of the project resulted from the high concentration of faunal remains found in two STPs (9 and 12) during initial spring excavations. It became apparent that there was quite possibly a midden in the space between and area surrounding these two test pits (which were located 5 meters apart). Excavation revealed not only that there was a midden present in the area, but one of significant size. A trench of 5 meters by 1 meter was dug in 4 stages; in total 855 ceramic sherds24, 378 bones25 and other animal remains (such as sturgeon plates), and a number of other artifacts (primarily nails and glass shards) were found in Trench 2. The goal of excavating the midden was two-fold; first, ascertain dating of each of the individual units and secondly, once the artifacts were allocated dates to examine the results to see whether or not we could tell if there seemed to be a singular midden that was used over multiple occupations of the house or if the midden seemed to be several separate deposits, merely located close to each other. Originally during excavation, it looked as if there might be two middens. The original theory was based off of the fact that there had been several expansions on the house, meaning that it may have been necessary for the midden to move father back as the house grew in size.

24 See Supplementary Data (Ceramics)
25 See Appendix: Tables 1 & 2, results of preliminary bone count/analysis.
Initial concerns were had over the fact that an ash pit disrupted the middle of the portion of the midden that could be excavated. After analysis of the ceramics from the midden was completed, however, the results ending up showing that both units 2B and 2C (which represent the northern and southern ends of the midden) had, in general, similar date ranges. Paying attention more so to the earliest dates possible, as the nature of ceramics means that later dates can be off by a fair bit due to extreme variation in longevity based on how each resident was using the items and how well they were cared for, 2B and 2C both had an earliest represented manufacturing year of 1620.\textsuperscript{26} The Stockade wasn’t occupied at that time, however, with both units dating well into the period of occupation prior to the existence historical records and baring similar latest dates represented (both having historic latest dates in the early 1900s, though both units had whiteware that could date as recently as 2000, however unlikely it is that anything that new is present in the archaeological record given the history of the site) it seems that the midden was most likely just very large and used over the occupation of the lot itself, rather than dating to one specific period or home owner. It should also be noted that unit 2D, the unit dug below 2A (where the ash pit was located), also dates back to 1620.

As a result of the excavation of the ash pit itself the project was able to actually date the pit to a very specific period of use. Three artifacts were found in or associated with the ash pit; the body and arms of a porcelain doll and a complete (though fractured) plate were both found within the pit itself, a seemingly intact (though shattered beyond reconstructive ability) glass lamp shade was found on top of the pit and encased in ash. The doll and lampshade both date to being from the mid-late 1800s or early 1900s. The plate recovered from the ash pit is possibly

\textsuperscript{26} See Supplementary Data (Ceramics)
the most interesting artifact on site, as it can be dated all the way down to a specific month of production (August 1895). Looking at the occupants post-dating 1895, there are only two different owns of the house; the Shankles and then the church. It seems most likely that the items belong to the Shankle family. This is based off of the fact that of the two families, only the Shankles had a child (who would have been 3 in 1900, during the dolls production period of 1860-1920). This gives the ash pit a date range of being disposed of between 1896-1911 at its widest, though more likely it dates to a narrower period of 1900-1907 or dates to around the time of the new occupants moving in and disposing of left behind items in this manner (in 1912).

Discussion

With the preliminary results of the 107 Union Street project completed and all field records compiled, we are able to take an objective view of what was happening on the site. The ability to come to early conclusions is due largely in part to the sheer amount of information available just from dating and classification of ceramics, and overviews of the uncovered structures themselves. The unexpected wealth of material from a singular site that has had a number of disturbances over the years from continued use of the property as a lawn for the church was a pleasant surprise from a research perspective. When we look at the questions asked of the site alongside the available artifacts there are a few conclusions that we can draw.

Perhaps the most interesting result from the preliminary data is that we have can ascertain that the midden onsite was most likely in consistent use over the duration of occupation on the site, at least prior to the church acquiring the property in 1912. This result comes directly from the ceramics data that represents possible dates ranging from the mid-1600s at the earliest, right up to post-industrial era style whiteware. Continued use is interesting in this case due to how
often the house at 107 Union was not only altered, but due to how many different (and mostly unrelated) occupants were on site. It is believed that we also only discovered a portion of the midden. Further digging, whether as a continuance of this project or the future, to reveal more of the midden would be unfortunately problematic. On the western and eastern sides of the excavated midden there are trees and north of the midden is a sidewalk, unfortunately, this means the possibility of further excavation to see the full extent of the midden is limited in probability.

The midden proves interesting as well because with the results of analysis from what is in the main portions of the midden and the ash pit, it appears as if the ash pit is around the time of the cut off for use of the midden. There are a number of possibilities, none of which we can prove through the archaeological record, for why we see a shift in use of the midden. These possibilities range from the burning of trash (rather than mere disposal) to use of a garbage service (which by the 1920s was beginning to become more common place) to use of other methods of disposal (piggeries, ocean dumping) which were still used around the time of the last occupants’ arrival. Any of these changes in methods to what we consider common methods of waste disposal could explain why the midden seems to cease use around the time that the ash pit is deposited in its place. However, it should be mentioned that it is entirely possible that because at that time the house became the parsonage and was owned by the church, rather than the pastor as it had been on a previous occasion, that waste dumping was being done in a combination effort between the parsonage and the church to not only consolidate but perhaps save energy and
money. More archival research would be needed to answer this particular question, but it is possible that it could be answered from the church’s financial records from the 1920s and 30s.27

Another point of interest within this project is that it is interesting that despite all of the activity on the site, changes in the landscape of the lot done to make it into a lawn, and the planting of several trees over time – that the site is so well preserved. With two large trees and a moderately sized dogwood tree immediately on top of at least portions of the foundation of the house and a third large tree whose roots were visible within the midden between the 2nd and 3rd expansions the fact that the foundation and the archaeological record seems so well intact was remarkable. All of this is coupled with the fact that a majority of the nails are not only in good enough shape to be identified by type and manufacturing period, but were also mostly intact and able to be measured.

As a result of the work done thus far on the materials from 107 Union Street, we’ve also been able to find representation of both major fires on the lot – the first in 1861 and the second in the 1940s. Both did damage to the church itself and some surrounding homes. During excavation, evidence of burnt wood and bricks were found at lower levels and the presence of stained glass was found filtered throughout the back half of the site. The well-preserved nature of the site leads to a substantial amount of future possibilities not only for the site itself, but for the materials recovered.

The Schenectady Stockade was once called the most historic rich property historic district in the US, according to the National Parks Service. What is ironic about this is the lack of archaeological work that has been done in the stockade and the greater district itself, which

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27 These records are unavailable at this time.
includes parts of a section of Schenectady that were not inside of the original 4 block stockade (though are colloquially referred to as the Schenectady Stockade today). Most of the archaeological work that has been done in the stockade has either been to keep up with compliance code and handled by CRM firms, or has been part of the ongoing efforts of the Schenectady County Community College Community Archaeology Program, but little of the data from the program’s excavations has been published in academic sources.

The 107 Union Street project has opened a lot of new doors for study of the history of occupation in the stockade. With such a well-documented history, having the material culture alongside those records is a boon to those who want to study the history of the area. There is a significant amount of future research that could come out of the completion and documentation of such a well preserved urban site, particularly when comparison to other excavation projects that have been previously undertaken within the stockade.

The CAP program spent several years digging the Yates’ house, which is the neighboring property to 107 Union Street, and uncovered a wealth of material. While there have been other projects done by the program, including the railroad project just down the block, 107 and the Yates’ property yielded, by far, the most material due to their scope. It would be very interesting to be able to go back into the collections for both properties and do comparative analysis on the ceramics. There is one overarching reason for this; there is an odd shade of off-white that sits between what is conventionally called creamware and whiteware on both sites and until now, there was no availability for a comparative study that would allow us to better understand this middle-toned colour that doesn’t wholly fit the traditional diagnostics for either of the previously mentioned categories. A comparative analysis would allow not only for a better understanding overall of the longevity of ceramics sold and used within the stockade, but also allow for better
understanding of the difference per household. Having this comparative analysis done would also allow for future projects within the stockade to have a better footing for analysis done on recovered ceramics.

Due to the percentage of bone found on site, primarily located within the midden behind the house itself, I would also propose more in-depth butchering analysis be undertaken on the remains. With most of the bones showing some sort of human-caused alteration to them (working, burning, butchering) it would be advantageous to undertake a study on this. As of now butchering analysis has never been undertaken within the stockade and, like much possible archaeological research, would be a great boon to filling in the gaps of history – particularly between the early 1700s and 1800s where we have less data and great inconsistencies in previous historically based work.

The last of my recommendations for further work resulting from this initial excavation and analysis of artifacts from 107 Union Street would be the use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) to further understand what exactly is left on the lot as a whole. Parts of the lot, in particular the immediate portion of the lot that was a foot or so north of trench 2, was so heavy with backfill that without a backhoe (something not logistically possible due to trees and positioning on the church’s property) it would be improbable to be able to actually excavate what amounts to about half of the lot that the house sat on. GPR would not only help assess whether or not there were any undocumented features in the backyard of the house, but would also give the project a second chance at locating the barn that we know existed on the property, but were unable to locate any remnants of via STPs.
Continued work on the materials from 107 Union Street will, overall, help provide a better foundation for both historical and archaeological study of the Schenectady Stockade. Future work in the stockade is imperative towards understanding the early development of the Capital Region and given the lackluster and arguably often misleading current body of historical literature focusing on the post-massacre pre-General Electric time period in the stockade, it is a necessary undertaking so that local populations and researchers alike can study the area.
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Appendix

Map 1

Description: Site Layout. North is top.
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
Description: Spring 2016 STPs. North is top.
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
Map 3

Description: Original Unit Plan with Additional and Original STPs. North is top.
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
Map 4

Description: Unit Plan and Additional STPs, without Original STPs. North is top.
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
Map 5

Description: Map of central portion of Trench 1 as seen in Image 3, pg. 22.

Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 6

Description: Map of initial Trench 1 excavation (Units a, b, c).
Credit: Derek J. Healey

Map 7

Description: Map of original excavation of Unit 1f and cobblestone feature within.
Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 8

Description: Depiction of stratigraphy in Unit 1d. North is left.
Credit: Derek J. Healey

Map 9

Description: Soil change in upper levels of Unit 1d. North is bottom.
Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 10

Description: Depiction of Unit 1g and its features. North is top.
Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 11

Description: Details of features in Units 1a/b/h and 1f. North is top in both drawings.

Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 12

Description: Details of excavated cobblestone feature (Units 1e/f/g/j/k/l). North is left.
Credit: Derek J. Healey

Map 13

Description: Depiction of Unit 3. North is top.
Credit: Derek J. Healey
Map 14

Description: Alignment of Trench 1 including all finalized units (a-l). Not to scale. North is top.
Credit: Derek J. Healey
Description: Section of 1850 Dripps map of Schenectady Stockade, Schenectady, New York.
Description: Section of 1884 Sanborn Map of Schenectady Stockade, Schenectady, New York.
Description: Section of 1889 Sanborn Map of Schenectady Stockade, Schenectady, New York.
Map 18

Description: Section of 1900 Sanborn Map of Schenectady Stockade, Schenectady, New York.
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Description: Total Bone Count
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
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Description: Breakdown of fauna remains found on site.
Credit: Hanna Marie Pageau
Timeline 1
Composed by Laurel Berbach.

1671 As early as 1671, the 100’ broad and 200’ deep (Amsterdam measure) 1/4-lot is owned by Christiaan Christiaanse. This lot will eventually be split equally and will become 23/105 and 25/107 Union St.*

Ca. 1682 The first Dutch Reformed church building in Schenectady was located near the intersection of current State St., Church St. and Railroad Ave.

1 Dec 1694 The deed to the 100’ x 200’ ¼-lot is re-conveyed to Christiaan Christiaanse by Johannes Sanderse Glen, magistrate of Schenectady village. The original deed was lost in the destruction of the 1690 massacre. On the same day, Christiaanse sells the ¼-lot to Neeltie Claase, widow of Hendrick Gardenier.

21 Feb 1701 Johannes and Neeltie Claase Ouderkirk sell the entire ¼-lot to Jellis (Gillis) Van Vorst.

1702 The second Reformed Church building is located on the same site as the first. It is called the Reformed Nether Dutch Church until 1727 when it became the Nether Dutch Reformed Church.

1734 The third Nether Dutch Reformed Church building is located in the middle of what is now the intersection of Union St. and Church St.

Ca. 1735 Jan Baptist Van Vorst, son of Jellis Van Vorst, owns the westerly half of the ¼-lot. This westerly half eventually becomes 23/105 Union St. Johannes Van Vorst (also the son of Jellis) inherits the easterly half of the ¼-lot. This easterly half eventually becomes 25/107 Union St. Johannes is a bricklayer.

20 Aug 1767 Johannes Van Vorst (son of Jellis) deeds the easterly lot (eventually 25/107 Union St.) to his son Johannes (John) Van Vorst. (Perhaps as a wedding gift: “Deed on Consideration, his love + affection”. John and Mary Adams were married March 1767.) This deed is the first mention of a “house and lot.” John is a carpenter. Jan Baptist Van Vorst still owns the westerly half of the original ¼-lot.

1 May 1798 A mortgage deed states that Joseph Shurtleff owns the house and lot that will become 25/107 Union St.

10 Apr 1801 Joseph Shurtleff, Jr. sells the house and lot to Joseph Shurtleff (his father, the Hon. Joseph Shurtleff). Hon. Joseph Shurtleff is the 1st postmaster of Schenectady, a Revolutionary War veteran and is active in government.
The fourth Nether Dutch Reformed Church building is built on the corner of Union St. and Church St. very near its current site. During this time the name changed to the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Schenectady.

1 Mar 1814  Joseph Shurtleff owns the (25/107 Union Street) property. Isaac and Catharine Riggs sell a 30’ deep strip of land along the back of their (23/105 Union St.) property to the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church.

1 Dec 1815  Rev. Jacob Van Vechten, minister of the Reformed Church, purchases the property from the estate of Joseph Shurtleff. The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church does not own the property at this time.

15 Aug 1844  Isaac and Catherine Riggs sell another 10’ deep strip of land along the back of their property (23/105 Union Street to the Reformed Church.

3 Dec 1850  Rev. Van Vechten and his wife, Maria, sell the property to Horace Goodrich. As of this date the Rev. and Mrs. Taylor occupy the house.

4 Mar 1854  Horace and Matilda Goodrich sell the property to Aaron Barringer.

8 Aug 1861  The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church burns in “The Great Fire” of Schenectady. The “Riggs” (23/105 Union St.) and Barringer (25/107 Union St.) properties are damaged.

16 Oct 1861  The widow Catherine Riggs sells 23/105 Union St. to Freeman Volney who then sells the property to the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. Catherine’s husband and son had died by 1859 and the house was heavily damaged in the recent church fire.

8 Dec 1864  Aaron Barringer purchases a small strip of land from the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. This strip of land is “about thirty four feet 6 inches long + about five (5) feet wide at one end + four feet at the other + lies along the East side of the church lot + was adjoining the land of Aaron Barrenger + is bounded on the north by lands of the Widow Washington + on the East + South by Aaron Barringer + on the West by a stone wall on the East side of the church lot.”

Jun 1881  Mary and Martha Barringer (Aaron’s daughters) inherit the entire property including the strip of land purchased in 1864.

11 Jul 1881  Mary Barringer dies and Martha Barringer, her sister, inherits the entire property including the strip of land purchased in 1864.

1894  Martha Barringer marries Frank C. Bissell and they reside at the 107 Union Street property.

11 Apr 1896  Martha and Frank Bissell sell the 107 Union Street property to John H. Shankle.
1900, 1904  Martha and Frank Bissell are living with John and Kittie Shankle and the Shankle’s daughter.

1908, 1910  Only the Shankle family is living at 107 Union St.  The Bissells are living at 26 Washington St.

6 Jun 1911  The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Schenectady purchases the 107 Union St. property at public auction, said auction at the order of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.  (Martha Bissell as mortgagee and plaintiff; John H. Shankle, his wife Kittie L. Shankle, and Veeder and Brown, a corporation, defendants.)

1912  The First Reformed (Protestant Dutch) Church owns the property.  Rev. Clayton J. Potter, pastor of the church resides at 107 Union St.

1938  The Parsonage at 107 Union Street is torn down as it is in "deteriorated condition." The area is turned to lawn the next year.

1 Feb 1948  Fire destroys the First Reformed Church.  The church is rebuilt on approximately the same site.