

THE LAUREL CEMETERY MEMORIAL PROJECT

UNCOVERING OUR FORGOTTEN PAST

LCMP Newsletter
Volume ★ 002
Number ★ 003
Fall 2023

1852 – 1958

WEST BALTIMORE ARCHAEOLOGY

/ ELGIN KLUGH

We are continuing to research and analyze historic communities, populations, and individuals associated with Laurel Cemetery. In this effort, there have been wonderful opportunities to work with Baltimore area researchers whose investigations align with our goals. One such example was the opportunity to volunteer on the West Baltimore Archaeology Project—a project begun by Adam Fracchia (former University of Maryland archaeologist) with the goal to “research and explore the archaeological heritage of metropolitan Baltimore and tell a more representative history of the city and region.”¹ »

Artifacts recovered from the base of the privy
at 1904 Etting St. prior to conservation



Archaeologist Tammie Gillums taking photographs
of the Etting Street assemblage.



The mission of the Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project (LCMP) is to erect a permanent memorial in recognition of the thousands of African Americans who were laid to rest at the historic Laurel Cemetery, ensure the safety and stability of the site into the foreseeable future, and to educate the public about the rich history of the cemetery and the lives of those buried there.

laurelceemetery.omeka.net

In This Issue

FEATURES

- 1 West Baltimore Archaeology

RESEARCH

- 3 Spatial Analysis

PROFILES

- 4 Did Black Lives Matter?

CONNECTIONS

- 6 DNA Research and the Catocin Iron Furnace

UPDATES

- 7 *A Place for Memory* discount, Hard Histories, Lemon Project, RACE Conference, Historic Cemeteries Symposium

1. <https://anth.umd.edu/about-us/archaeology-baltimore>

FEATURES



Isaac Shearn and student sift for artifacts at the Etting Street archaeological excavation.



Archaeologists Adam Fracchia and Alexandra Jones at the Etting Street archaeological dig (2021). Jones is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of *Archaeology in the Community*, and President-Elect the *Society of Black Archaeologists*.



Adam Fracchia with students at the Etting Street archaeological excavation.

Excavation sites included the Sellers Mansion, Upton Mansion, and Etting Street alley houses. Through this project, students from local universities (Coppin State University, Morgan State University, Goucher College, and the University of Baltimore) gained experience in archaeological methodology while contributing to a more inclusive understanding of Baltimore's history.

Archaeological work on Etting Street was the result of a pioneering agreement between Adam Fracchia and Shelley Halstead (Founder and Executive Director of *Black Women Build*). Halstead created her organization with the long-term goal of helping black women build intergenerational wealth. She is doing this by renovating Baltimore rowhomes to make opportunities for aspirant but otherwise financially unqualified black women to become homeowners. These once distressed and abandoned properties become renewed sites of community through Halstead's program. Fracchia saw her work and reached out to gauge her interest in capturing aspects of heritage in these communities. The result was an agreement wherein Fracchia would conduct archaeological excavation in the back lots of the rowhomes that Halstead was renovating. This work was featured on NPRs Marketplace January 7th, 2021 program ([use this link to listen to the audio report or read the transcription](#)).

The Etting Street project afforded Fracchia the opportunity to direct students in the excavation and analysis of material culture. In particular, he sought to locate and excavate the privies of these homes. A privy is basically an outhouse. These were utilized before the installation of modern sewer lines which were not installed in some Baltimore neighborhoods until as late as the 1950s. A Privy can be a goldmine for historical archaeologists due to the

assemblage of artifacts. What was once discarded as trash can be used to provide a basis for understanding the daily lives and socio-economic circumstances of earlier populations. In the case of Etting Street, privies also help us to understand more about common worker populations whose stories and deeds were not usually preserved in history books and archives.

The homes in the 1900 block of Etting Street were built in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and are examples of *Baltimore alley houses*. These small, two-story homes were built on narrow streets and intended to house working-class families. As these Etting Street homes have generally been inhabited by African Americans from the initial build to the present day, the Laurel Cemetery death certificate transcription project reveals several Etting Street addresses. Although there were some within the same block, we have not yet located a Laurel Cemetery death certificate with the exact address of one of the properties excavated. There are sure to be multiple connections, however.

Examples of artifacts recovered from Etting Street privies include medicine bottles, kids' toys, ink bottles, writing slates, ceramics, pieces of shoes, and smoking pipes. Nothing groundbreaking—but taken together, these items begin to illustrate a picture of what life was like in this community. Fracchia, now an archaeologist working for the city of Nashville, TN, is no longer digging in Baltimore. However, he is in the process of finalizing the reporting and curation of the findings from West Baltimore Archaeology. Future research will hopefully add to the base of knowledge that this project has provided. ★

RESEARCH

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

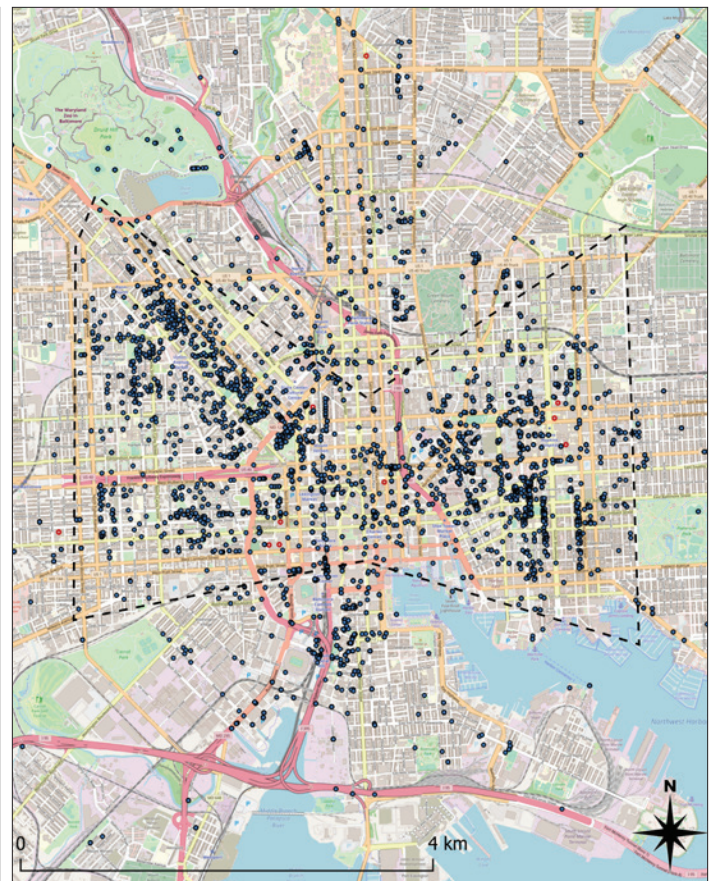
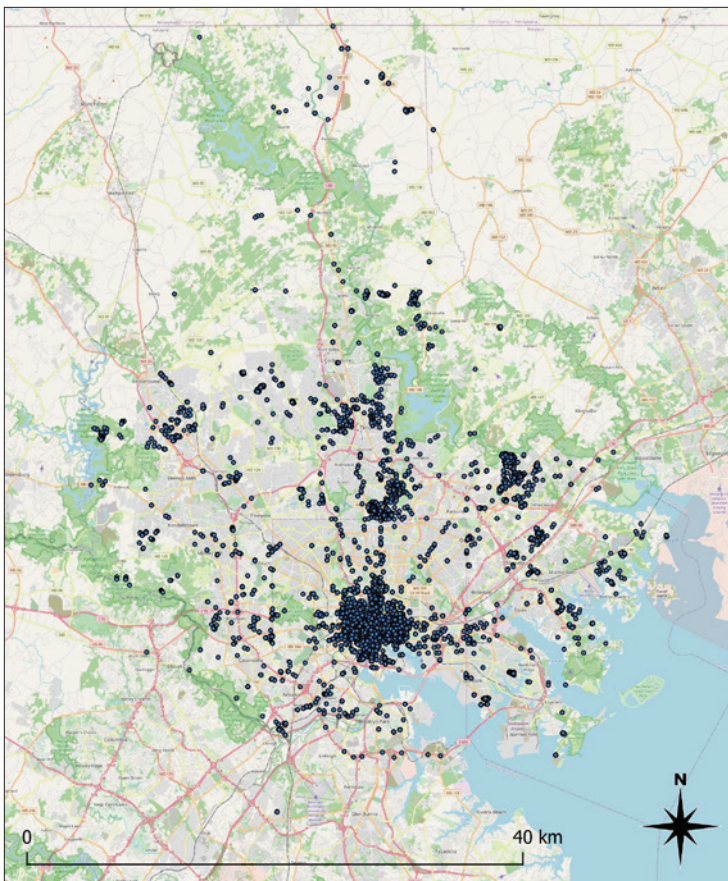
/ ELGIN KLUGH

One outcome of the death certificate transcription project is the development of a data set that can be used to spatially analyze residential patterns of Baltimore's African American community.

As most of the death certificates recorded document the last-known residence of the decedent, this information can be mapped to gain an understanding of where black people lived in and around Baltimore City. Dr. Issac Shearn utilized QGIS (a free and open-source Geographic Information Systems software) to map the addresses. Some challenges with the data set include missing information and altered street patterns and street names (some due to the Baltimore Fire of 1904). However, with over twenty-thousand death certificates, there is a significant sample to begin the analysis.

The following maps show the nonrandom distributions of individuals buried at Laurel Cemetery. Notice that within Baltimore City, the pattern appears to conform to what has been referred to as the “Black Butterfly.” We plan to do more spatial analysis with this growing data set. In particular, we plan to explore changes in African American residential patterns over time, and to explore the associations between residential locations and such items as occupation and cause of death. The data is gleaned largely from Baltimore City death certificates between 1875 and the first three decades of the twentieth century.

What would you be interested in learning from this data? ★



PROFILES

DID BLACK LIVES MATTER?

/ DONNA T. HOLLIE

On May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of George Floyd, an African American man, until Floyd was dead. This occurred in front of witnesses, who used their phones to film the incident, and the non-interference of Chauvin's fellow police officers. As a result the entire civilized world was exposed to this act of unnecessary cruelty. *Enter your time machine and travel back to Baltimore on the evening of July 31, 1875.*

John A. Greason, an African American sailor, had been notified that his next destination was to be Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He decided to celebrate his departure from Baltimore by having a party at the home of **Daniel and Keziah Brown**, from whom he and his wife rented a room. The Browns lived at 41 Tyson Street, a street named for **Elisha Tyson**, one of Baltimore's most militant abolitionists.

A neighbor complained that the partygoers had become too loud and an Irish immigrant policeman, **Patrick McDonald**, came to investigate. He was met at the door by Keziah Brown and in response to his inquiry was informed that the party was not a "Cakewalk" for which a permit from the city would have been required.* Mrs. Brown explained that due to their religious beliefs there was no dancing and no alcohol being served or sold. When Daniel Brown came to the door to ask why Officer McDonald was there, McDonald struck him in the head with his baton. Brown fell to the floor and McDonald threatened to shoot him, calling him a "black expletive." He also threatened to shoot every "black expletive" in the house. In spite of Mrs. Brown's pleas, McDonald carried out his threat and shot Brown in the head. As the policeman was leaving, Mrs. Brown screamed "You have killed him" to which McDonald replied "Let him die."

Those attending the party and neighbors who could see the front door from their homes witnessed the event.** The African American community was in an uproar. A protest meeting was held at the Douglass Institute, 210 E. Lexington Street on August 5, 1875. Speeches were made and outrage was expressed. Businessman and civic activist, John W. Locks was appointed

chairman of a committee to lobby city officials to charge McDonald with a crime. Their efforts were successful and McDonald was indicted and tried.

Ten African Americans, including the widow, Mrs. Keziah Brown, testified at McDonald's trial and in spite of defense claims that Brown had attacked the police man, McDonald was convicted by a jury of twelve white men. How did this happen in 1875? The jury could not agree on the charges of first and second degree murder and compromised on the verdict of manslaughter. The African American community rejoiced at the verdict and the sentence of five years for manslaughter, however McDonald served less than seven months for Brown's murder. The Court of Appeals reversed his conviction, ruling that the judge who sentenced him had erred, since the law only provided for a two year sentence for manslaughter.

There are numerous newspaper accounts of the murder and the trial, all with minimal focus on Daniel Brown. He was a thirty-seven year old native of Maryland's eastern shore. The Baltimore Sun of August 2, 1875 described him as "industrious, sober and quite intelligent." He worked as a laborer and was a member of the Odd Fellows. He was buried in Laurel Cemetery on August 1, 1875. Daniel Brown's life mattered.

For further information see *The Uncommon Case of Daniel Brown: How a White Police Officer was Convicted of Killing a Black Citizen, Baltimore, 1875*, by Gordon H. Shufelt.

*The cakewalk originated during the ante-bellum era when enslaved people would dress up to the best of their ability and mimic the manner in which enslavers danced at their parties. The couple who did the best dance impression would be given a cake as their prize.

**One of the witnesses was Abraham Trusty, whose wife's story was told in the Summer 2023 issue of this newsletter.

The Special Attention of Physicians is respectfully invited to the remarks below, and to List of Diseases on back of this Certificate.

Board of Health, City of Baltimore,

Permit No. *4503*

OFFICE OF REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS.

The Physician who attended any person in a last illness is responsible for the presentation of this Certificate, accurately filled out, to the undertaker or other person superintending the burial, within twenty-four hours after the death of the deceased, or sooner, if requested so to do, under penalty of law.

NO PERMIT FOR BURIAL CAN BE OBTAINED WITHOUT A PROPER CERTIFICATE.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH.

Date of Death, *July 31st*

Full Name of Deceased, { Write legibly and spell correctly. If an infant not named, give names of parents. } *Daniel Brown*

Sex, Male or Female, { Cross out the word not required in this line. } *Male*

Age, *37* Years, Months, Days.

Color, *Mulatto* Sex, *Male*

Married, Single, Widow or Widower, { Cross out the words not required in this line. }

Occupation, *Laborer*

Birthplace, { State or country (and how long in the United States, if of foreign birth. } *Mad Eastern Shore*

Duration of Residence in the City of Baltimore,

Place of Death, { Give street and number. } *41 Lyson st*

Cause of Death, { First (Primary,) Second (Immediate,) } *Shot by a Pistol*

Duration of Last Sickness, *immediate*

All the above information should be furnished by the Physician.

Place of Burial, *Lavel Cemetery* *George Oph* M. D. Medical Attendant

Date of Burial, *August 1, 75*

{ Undertaker, *J. M. Chase* Address

{ Place of Business, *1912 Howard st*

Extract from Regulations of the Board of Health to secure a full and correct record of Vital Statistics in the City of Baltimore.

SECTION 2. And it be further enacted and ordained, That whenever any person shall die in the said city, it shall be the duty of the Physician who attended during his or her last sickness, or the Coroner, when the case comes under his notice, to furnish within forty-eight hours after the death, to the Undertaker or other person or persons superintending the burial, a Certificate setting forth, as far as the same can be ascertained, the full name, sex, age and condition (whether married or single) of the person deceased, and the cause and date of death, except in cases of births and deaths of illegitimate children.

{ OVER }

CONNECTIONS

DNA RESEARCH AND THE CATOCTIN IRON FURNACE

/ ELGIN KLUGH

Have you heard about the Catoctin Iron Furnace? It was an iron works that helped supply ammunition during the Revolutionary War and operated throughout the 1800s. Located in the area of Thurmont, MD (between Westminster and Hagerstown), the iron furnace utilized the labor of enslaved and free African Americans, burying the dead in a cemetery on the premises. This cemetery was excavated for highway construction roughly 43 years ago and recovered remains were sent to the

Smithsonian. Recently, researchers have done DNA testing on the remains and have utilized the 23andMe DNA database to identify thousands of living genetic relatives. Could you be one? To learn more about this project, read the journal *Science* article, “**Forging Connections.**”

Other black cemetery sites where researchers are utilizing DNA to learn about the burial population and to possibly identify living descendants include **Williamsburg, VA**, and **Charleston, SC**.



The manor house at Catoctin Furnace stands in ruins.
Photo: KINTSUGI KELLEY-CHUNG / AAAS, *Science* magazine.

UPDATES

A PLACE FOR MEMORY: BALTIMORE'S HISTORIC LAUREL CEMETERY

You can purchase *A Place for Memory: Baltimore's Historic Laurel Cemetery* at a 30% discount through the **Rowman & Littlefield** site. The paperback will not be available until 2024 (March at the earliest). ★

	ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD <i>A Place for Memory</i> <i>Baltimore's Historic Laurel Cemetery</i> Edited by Isaac Shearn and Elgin Klugh SPECIAL OFFER 30% DISCOUNT OFF LIST PRICE PLEASE ORDER USING THIS CODE: RLFANDF30 (This is not for Resellers or Institutional Bulk Orders) 978-1-5381-5613-1 • Hardback • \$95.00 / £73.00 (discount price \$66.50 / £51.10) 978-1-5381-5614-8 • eBook • \$45.00 / £35.00 (discount price \$31.50 / £24.50)
---	--

14TH ANNUAL LEMON PROJECT SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The Lemon Project at William & Mary University will host its annual spring symposium, March 22-23, 2024. This will be an in-person and virtual event. A goal of **The Lemon Project** is to explore and encourage “scholarship on the 330-year relationship between African Americans and William & Mary.” The **Call for Papers** will close on October 15th, 2023. The 2024 theme is “Taking Our Time: Healing Through Black History, Family, and Communities.” ★

COMMEMORATION AND MEMORIALIZATION OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The 2023 Research Symposium will take place at Clemson University on October 9th and 10th. **This event** is sponsored by the Clemson University Woodland Cemetery Historic Program. This year marks their third research symposium. ★

HARD HISTORIES AT JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

On September 7th and 8th, The Johns Hopkins University Hard Histories programs hosted a series of panel discussions at the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History & Culture. The **Hard Histories program**, launched in fall 2020, “examines the role that racism and discrimination have played at Johns Hopkins.” **The Hard Histories: Changing Landscapes Panel** (featuring Savannah Wood – Executive Director of Afro Charities; David Armenti – VP of Education and Engagement at the Maryland Center for History and Culture; Lori Finkelstein – Philip Franklin Wagley Director & Curator, Evergreen Museum & Library Director, Homewood Museum; Elgin Klugh – Chair, Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project) is **available to view on YouTube**. ★

REPARATIVE ARTS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (RACE) CONFERENCE

The Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Concern is hosting the **RACE conference, October 5-8, 2023**. This conference will “explore how public spaces may better represent a shared vision where Baltimore citizens may experience belonging.” **Elgin Klugh** and **Isaac Shearn** will represent the Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project at the closing reception and plenary, October 8th at the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, 2:00pm to 4:00pm. **Register for the conference here**. ★

BMORE HISTORIC 2023

On **Friday, September 22, 2023, the BMORE HISTORIC “unconference”** was held at the Baltimore Museum of Industry. This was a conference Historians, preservationists, museum professionals, archivists, librarians, humanities scholars, students, volunteer activists, Main Street board members, educators, and anyone interested in exploring the intersections between people, places, and the past in Baltimore and Maryland. Look out for news and information about BMORE HISTORIC 2024! ★

5487 Halflight Garth
Columbia, Maryland 21045

laurelcemetery.omeka.net

DONATIONS

To donate to the project, please send a check or money order to:

Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project, Inc.
5487 Halflight Garth
Columbia, Maryland 21045

INQUIRIES

Questions about the Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project?

Email lcmpbaltimore@gmail.com

MEETINGS

The Laurel Cemetery Memorial Project meetings are on the 3rd Friday of the month at 3:00pm (in months with 5 Fridays we will meet on the 4th Friday). Since the start of the Pandemic, all meetings have been virtual, via Zoom.

For information about meetings and/or volunteering,
please contact lcmpbaltimore@gmail.com
or visit laurelcemetery.omeka.net.



LCMP OFFICERS

Elgin L. Klugh, *Chair*
Molly Ricks, *Secretary*