

CHAPTER 13

Beads and Other Adornment

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In this chapter we take the measure of the beads and other personal adornment recovered in association with skeletal remains. We begin with a profile of the burials with adornment and then consider where and how the items were acquired. Each of the assemblages inventoried in the chapter—beads, cowries, rings and other jewelry—is then described in detail. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, descriptive typologies and findings about manufacture, origin, and age.

A Profile of Burials with Personal Adornment

With the exception of a handful of cowries and a piece of amber, the adornment from the New York African Burial Ground consisted of factory-made goods. The beads, buttons, cuff links, finger rings, and other ornaments found with the deceased would have been priced modestly in their day. The prominence of copper alloy and simple monochrome glass places the assemblages at the lower end of the ready-to-wear jewelry market. Business in this sector was brisk when the African Burial Ground was open: the supply of inexpensive jewelry increased in volume and variety in every major colonial American city during the 1700s, as did the supply of jewelry crafted with precious metals and stones (see Fales 1995:63–78). London imports and locally made merchandise were advertised in the weekly press, typically with the enthusiastic but perfunctory prose Manhattan silversmith Daniel Fueter used: “Articles too numerous to mention, all extremely Cheap” (*New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 10, 1763; for Manhattan jewelry advertisements, see Gottesman [1938:29–83]).

Very little of this ever-expanding stock in trade found its way to the graves of Manhattan’s African workers. Adults were interred with personal adornment during all periods of the New York African Burial Ground’s archaeologically documented use, as were infants and young children. Still, burials with adornment are uncommon—they are the anomaly, not the norm. Only 25 individuals, some 6.7 percent of the excavated burials, were directly associated with adornment.¹ Among them were 2 infants, 2 young children, 9 women, 11 men, and 1 probable adult of undetermined sex and age. Another 5 individuals had tenuous links to adornment. Table 53 summarizes the particulars; problematic cases are noted in the table.

It may seem unusual that so few of the dead were adorned when many of the living seem to have embellished themselves in small but memorable ways. Historians who have studied fugitive slave advertisements published during the eighteenth century call attention to scores of city dwellers accessorized with panache. Earrings, bracelets, and buckles added a finishing touch to the clothing Africans wore in Manhattan, Philadelphia, and Charleston; buttons gussied up hats. Hair, perhaps the most personal and distinctive adornment of all, was sculpted, plaited, tufted, and queued. Less frequently noted, but not out of place in an era of peruke-wearing men, were wigs and toupees (Smith and Wojtowicz 1989; White 1991:185–206; White and White 1995b; Windley 1983).

Yet whether adornment was more widespread among the living than among the dead is unclear. Mentioned in the advertisements are items that would not have survived at the New York African Burial Ground, including handkerchiefs, ribbons, lacing, and

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be determined clearly. The most highly disturbed burials are not included.

Table 53. Burials with Personal Adornment

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex ^a	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^b
6	25–30	male?	Late	8 buttons (5 copper alloy, 2 with anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum
10	40–45	male	Late-Middle	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole, 5 with shanks only)	1 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg
71	25–35	female	Late	ring	on third finger of right hand
107	35–40	female	Late-Middle	1 bead	found during laboratory cleaning of cranium, near ear
115	25–35	female	Middle	ring	on the third finger of the left hand
158	20–30	male	Late	2 pairs ^c gilt copper-alloy cuff links, round shape	at wrists
181	20–23	male	Late	7 buttons (3 copper alloy, 4 copper alloy and bone with impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 buttons on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; cuff links not provenienced
186	0–0.17	undetermined	Late	glass-and-wire ornament	on the cranium
187	1.5–4	undetermined	Late	22 beads?	12 found beneath pelvic area, 10 while screening soil
211	adult	male?	Late	1 turquoise enamel cuff link face	on the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin
226	0–0.17	undetermined	Early	8 beads	at throat (beneath mandible)
238	40–50	male	Late-Middle	2 pairs ^c octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	at wrists
242	40–50	female	Late	paste ring	on the middle finger of the right hand
250	adult	undetermined	Early	1 bead	central part of coffin interior, possibly near pelvis
254	3.5–5.5		Middle	cast silver pendant	found during laboratory cleaning below mandible
259	17–19	female?	Late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, 5 shanks)	4 copper alloy at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 wood at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis
310	44–52	female	Middle	paste ring	found during laboratory cleaning of left hand
325	25–35	male	Late	1 gilt copper-alloy button	left upper sacrum
326	45–55	male	Middle	4 copper-alloy domed buttons	in pelvic area and between tops of femurs, near the hands
340	39.3–64.4	female	Early	112 beads strung with 7 cowries	around hips and right wrist
341	adult	male	Middle	1 pair ^c octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	at left radius

Table 53. Burials with Personal Adornment (continued)

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex ^a	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^b
371	25–35	female	Middle	2 turquoise-enamel cuff link faces with motif	beneath the left humerus
377	33–58	female	Late-Middle	3 copper-alloy rings (missing from lab)	at throat
392	42.5–52.5	male	Late-Middle	2 octagonal copper-alloy cuff link faces	1 at right clavicle, 1 at cervical vertebrae
415	35–55	male	Middle	13 copper-alloy domed buttons (14 recorded in field)	4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, 2 at sacrum
Burials with Artifacts with Problematic Provenience					
332	35–40	male?	Late-Middle	curved copper-alloy object (possible earring)	found during laboratory cleaning; attached to coffin wood near thoracic vertebrae
387	34–44	male	Early	cuff link or button fragment	provenience unknown
398	25–35	undetermined	Middle	1 octagonal cuff link face; 1 ring	in disturbed deposit—association with burial unclear
428	40–70	female	Middle	2 beads	unknown—found during screening of grave fill soil
434	undetermined	undetermined	Middle	1 bead	found in soil to west of bones

^a A question mark indicates a probable assignment.

^b Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter.

^c A “pair” of cuff links—two faces (or crowns) linked together—fasten a sleeve. One “cuff link” (a single face) is insufficient. A properly fastened shirt would have needed a “set” of cuff links—two matched pairs, one pair per sleeve.

fabric bands. The disparity is formidable. Roughly a third of the adornment recorded in the list of Africans who escaped from New York City households between 1732 and 1783 (see Table 50, Chapter 12) was made with perishable material, and rarely did a person have adornment of more than one type.²

Missing from the advertisements, however, are the adornment worlds of the very young and the middle aged. Africans who fled from Manhattan households typically were in their late teens and their twen-

ties (White 1991:122–124), a pattern illustrated in Table 50 (see Chapter 12). Only 3 of the 205 entries feature infants and young children: an 8-month-old child and its mother escaped in the autumn of 1759; a 5–6-year-old girl headed into the city’s Revolutionary War–torn streets in August 1783, as did a little boy. The little boy’s fustian trousers had buttons all down the sides, but neither the infant nor the girl appears to have had an adornment to their names. The upper end of the life cycle is better represented than the lower end but not appreciably so. Decorations are scarce in this cohort as well: just one of the eight adults with “about 40” or more years of age had adornment, a man named Tom who escaped in 1776 wearing new shoes fastened with buckles. Most of the individuals listed in the roster had no adornment of any kind and thus were not unlike their deceased neighbors and kin.

Even so, there is little reason to suppose that burials with adornment held people who were more beloved

² None of the women did. Seven of the 10 adornment-wearing women listed in Table 50 (see Chapter 12) had “perishable only” items, as did 10 of the 42 adornment-wearing men. Three women and 25 men had “durable only” adornment. Seven men had a mix of durable and perishable goods. Not all advertisements included descriptions of the clothing and jewelry that black city residents wore and took with them when they fled from bondage. Table 50 is limited to advertisements that describe clothing and jewelry. It thus represents a subset of the advertisements published in eighteenth-century New York newspapers.

or better off economically than their contemporaries. It is true that the African Burial Ground served many people for whom the cost of small luxuries was dear.³ It is also true that the possessions of the poor seldom stayed in place for long. Objects owned by the poor “[migrate] under the pressure of debt” (Stallybrass 1998:196–199). In colonial Manhattan’s African community, adornment migrated for still another reason: individuals on the run reconfigured their accessories for expediency and disguise. Pompey no longer had earrings when he fled from bondage in 1763; Claus absconded in 1757 with a bundle of things, including a “flowered stuff waistcoat” lined with shalloon and likely fastened with decorative buttons (see Table 50, Chapter 12). But the wearing of personal adornment is a matter of inclination as well as circumstance. Not everyone chooses to wear adornment, even in communities where people and possessions are less likely to roam.

The types of adornment from the burial ground were narrow in range. For instance, decorations for the feet come up short when the cemetery population is compared to the African public at large. By the 1750s Africans in colonial Manhattan were wearing shoes fastened with buckles of brass, silver, steel, pewter, and stone, a reference to crystal, or perhaps to paste, metal jewelry with glass insets held by a “bezel,” in the form of a groove or a flange. Bits of leather and fragments of metal that hint of footwear were not recovered in the field or the laboratory. The reasonable inference is that shoes were held back from the grave.

Decorations for the head come up short too, but headwear typically took the form of perishable hairstyles and perishable hats with ribbons and bands. Consequently, neither the decisions nor the decision makers are etched sharply enough to discern where community-wide sensibilities bumped up against individual tastes. Some hairstyles may have harbored durable items like the glass bead from Burial 107. Prior to interment, the hair of the deceased may have been dressed and groomed (for representations of hair and hats in African art, a key source of knowledge about African adornment in the past, see Seiber and Herreman [2000]).

Although the adornment from the cemetery was not as varied as the adornment seen on Manhattan

streets, its expressive sweep was arguably the same. If adornment can be likened to a language, a system of symbolic communication akin to speech, then it spoke in a babble of tongues during the period that the African Burial Ground was in use. It conveyed considerable information as well, from evocations of a remembered Africa to subtle mockery of European pretensions (see White 1991:196–199). This communicative intricacy reflected the complexity of the city. Colonial Manhattan was a crossroad on the commercial map, and its shops and homes had an international cast. After 1703, newcomers outnumbered the native born, and no particular nationality, ethnicity, or religion held sway (Butler 2000:9). As the century progressed, members of the black community hailed from an ever-widening swath of a continent that hundreds of African societies called home.

Two notes on terminology may be of help before moving on to the individual profiles. “Button” is used more restrictively than in Chapter 12. In this chapter, the term refers to decorative buttons recovered alone (Burial 325) and en masse (Burials 6, 10, 181, 259, 326, and 415). Plain, serviceable buttons may have spruced up a collar or personalized a cuff, or perhaps dangled from a string at the neck or the wrist. Burials with plain buttons are not included in the adornment profile because any aesthetic value these buttons held for their wearers is not apparent from the grave.

Second, “personal adornment” and “personal decoration” are used interchangeably, although only the latter was a commonplace phrase 300 years ago. “Jewelry” and “ornament” stand in as well. The qualifier “personal” is sometimes omitted but always implied because it best describes the domain in which the items belong. A consideration of the formidable gear attached to a necklace recovered from another African Diaspora cemetery of the period may clarify the distinction we seek to make. The necklace from Burial 72 at Newton Plantation, Barbados, held 1 large agate, 7 cowries, 14 glass beads, 21 dog canines, and 5 vertebrae from a bony fish—an array linked to the practice of divination (see Handler 1997; Handler and Lange 1978:125–130). There are no counterparts to that necklace at the New York African Burial Ground (cf. LaRoche 1994b:12). Adornment worn for personal pleasure is by no means culturally insignificant, however. As we explain in the discussion that follows the profiles, the adornments from lower Manhattan connected their wearers both to the wider African community and to the constraints and possibilities of the times.

³ Archaeologist Barbara J. Heath (1999) has examined how “small luxuries” were acquired. Own-account economic activities are discussed in *Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground* (Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009c:63–64).

Infants and Young Children with Personal Adornment

Eight opaque yellow beads characteristic of African manufacture were found at the throat of the infant in Burial 226 (Bead Type 14; see Figure 53 in Chapter 5).⁴ The infant had its own coffin but shared the grave of an adult man. The grave is placed in the Early Group of excavated burials (see Chapter 6).

Twenty-two black beads, drawn and cut from glass made in Europe, encircled the hips of the 1.5–4-year-old child in Burial 187 (Bead Type 6). This child's grave was in the northern part of the cemetery and is assigned to the Late Group, post 1776. The grave appears to have been placed next to or between the graves of adults (see Chapter 9).

A cast silver pendant that may have been attached to a string and worn as a necklace was found with Burial 254, a Middle Group interment that held a child between 3.5–5.5 years old.⁵ The pendant, which rested at the child's neck, was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the skeletal remains. Burial 254 was directly beneath the coffin of another young child of less than 2 years of age; the two youngsters appear to have been placed together in an area crowded with burials.

A glass-and-wire-filigree ornament was found on the cranium of the infant in Burial 186, a Late Group interment. Although seemingly aligned with adult burials to the north, Burial 186 is one of a handful of spatially isolated infant burials.

Adults with Personal Adornment

The woman in Burial 340 wore two strands of beads assembled primarily from a mix of European-made glass in shades of blue and yellow (Figure 229). The smaller of the two strands, a bracelet with 41 glass beads, was draped around her right wrist. The larger strand encircled her hips; it held 70 glass beads, 1 amber bead, and 7 cowries. These two strands account for all of the cowries recovered from the New York African Burial Ground and approximately 76 percent of the beads (112 of 147 specimens), including half of the

⁴ The characteristics of each Bead Type are summarized in “The Bead Assemblage” section of this chapter. Beads from each type are illustrated in this section.

⁵ Metal jewelry associated with infants, young children, and adults is illustrated in the “Inventory” of the “Rings and Other Jewelry” section of this chapter.

bead types represented (Bead Types 1–4, 7–9, 12, 15). Burial 340 is assigned to the Early Group. The woman it held was between 39 and 64 years old when she died. In addition to her jewelry, she was interred with other items, including an unused tobacco pipe (see Chapters 5 and 14).

Two other adults each had a single bead. Burial 250, an Early Group burial of an adult of undetermined sex and age, had a large spherical bead of opaque black (Bead Type 11). The bead was recovered from the central part of the coffin, possibly near the pelvis, in association with an iron mass, a pewter tack, and a copper-alloy button. The 35–40-year-old woman in Burial 107, a Late-Middle Group interment, had an opaque redwood bead with a transparent green core (Bead Type 5). The bead was recovered near her ear during the cleaning of the skeletal remains in the laboratory.

Adults were laid to rest with their rings as well as their beads. Four copper-alloy finger rings, two of which had glass (“paste”) insets of seemingly identical design, were associated with women from three temporal groups. The 44–52-year-old woman in Burial 310 wore her paste ring (Catalog No. 1486-B.001) on her left hand, although the exact finger placement is unknown. The ring was recovered in the laboratory, minus its central inset, which is thought to have been missing at the time of interment. Burial 310 has been assigned to the Middle Group; the grave appears to have been placed along the south side of the fence that once traversed the site. The paste ring of the 40–50-year-old woman in Burial 242 was found on the third finger of the right hand (Catalog No. 1229-B.003). Coins were placed over her eyes; pins found in her lumbar region and sternum are suggestive of clothing. She was buried in what appears to be a north-south row of graves situated north of the fence line; her grave is assigned to the Late Group, post-1776.

The 25–35-year-old women in Burials 115 and 71 wore rings with plain bands (Catalog Nos. 858-B.001 and 813-B.004, respectively), the former on the third finger of the left hand, the latter on the third finger of the right hand. Pin fragments on the cranium of the woman in Burial 115 suggest shrouding; her grave is assigned to the Middle Group. Copper staining at the hips, probably from pins, of the woman in Burial 71 hints at clothing. Burial 71 is assigned to the Late Group.

One woman (Burial 377, a Late-Middle Group interment) had three copper-alloy rings (no catalog number assigned) that lay side by side near her throat

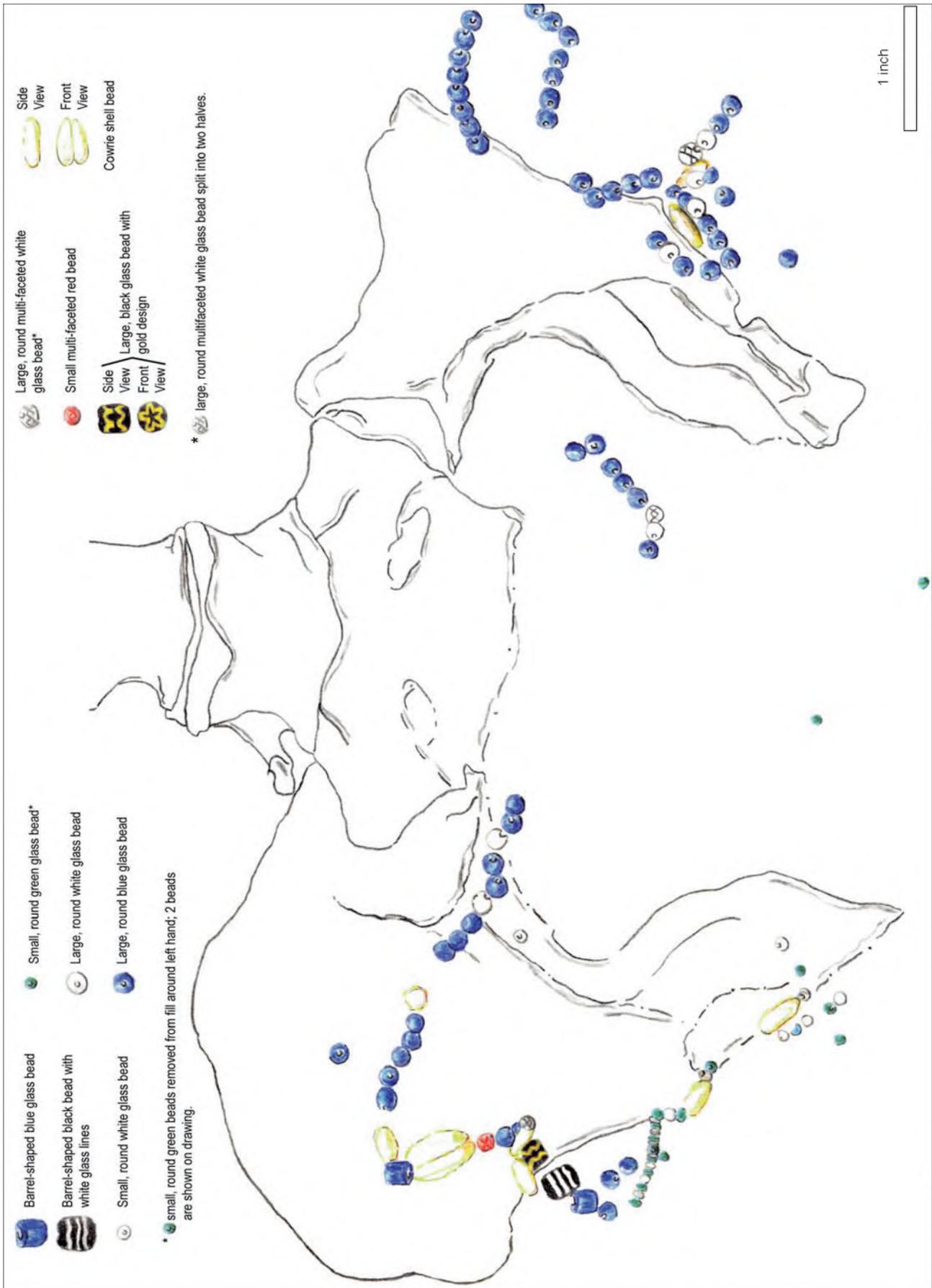


Figure 229. In situ drawing of Burial 340 showing beads in pelvic area (redrawn by M. Schur from photocopy of original field drawing).



Figure 230. In situ photographs of Burial 377 showing copper-alloy rings found at the throat. The diameter of the ring in the detail is 30 mm. Two additional copper-alloy rings (not visible in the photographs) were recovered adjacent to it (photographs by Dennis Seckler).

(Figure 230). One of the rings had a small fragment of hair or fiber attached to the bottom. The material may have been from a string of some sort. If that was the case, then the rings might have been part of a necklace. The woman in Burial 377 was between 33 and 58 years old. Whether she was interred in a coffin is unclear. Excavators noted deteriorated material, possibly remnants of a coffin lid and floor, above and below the skeletal remains. A substance excavators believed to be red ocher was observed on the possible wood remnants.

Decorative cuff links were found with six individuals. Some of the cuff links, called “sleeve buttons” or “links of buttons” during the eighteenth century, came in plain and fancy versions. Others were no longer attached to their mates. Still others were missing the shanks that would have been soldered to their backs when the items were new. The two turquoise enamel faces recovered from Burial 371 were decorated with a squat, white-and-pink V that straddled two like-colored dots (Catalog No. 1875-B.001). This burial, which is assigned to the Middle Group, held a 25–35-year-old woman interred without a coffin; the cuff-link faces were found beneath her left upper arm. The turquoise enamel face recovered near the chin of the individual in Burial 211 was undecorated (Catalog No. 1186-B.001). This individual, probably a man, also was interred without a coffin directly over

another grave, in what appears to be a north-south row of Late Group burials, post-1776.

Three men had octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links with impressed designs. One pair was recovered near the left wrist of a man of undetermined age who occupied Burial 341, which is assigned to the Middle Group (see Figure 198 in Chapter 12). This man’s coffin was directly atop the coffin of a woman with whom he may have shared a grave. Two pairs were found near the wrists of the 40–50-year-old man in Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment (see Figures 176 and 177 in Chapter 12). Another Late-Middle Group interment, Burial 392, held a 42–52-year-old man with two cuff-link faces, one near the right shoulder and another near the cervical vertebrae (see Figure 214 in Chapter 12). Buttons and fibers indicate that he was clothed when interred; unlike most burials, the head was oriented to the east. In addition, a pair of round, gilded copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the 20–30-year-old man in Burial 158, another coffinless burial from the Late Group (see Figure 155 in Chapter 12).

Seven individuals were apparently laid to rest in jackets, shirts, and breeches fastened with a mix of decorative buttons, primarily cast copper alloy but also pewter and wood. Button faces ranged in style—two had anchor motifs; others were domed, smooth, ridged, and gilded—but the buttons worn by particular

individuals did not always match. The domed buttons belonged to men from the Middle Group (Burials 326 and 415). Another man, a Late-Middle Group interment, had smooth-faced buttons (Burial 10), as did a probable woman (Burial 259) and a probable man (Burial 6) whose graves are assigned to the Late Group. The latter two individuals also had buttons in other styles, including buttons with ridged faces (the woman) and anchor motifs (the man). Two other Late Group burials also had decorative buttons. The man in Burial 325 had a single gilt copper-alloy button. The buttons recovered from the man in Burial 181 came in different materials as well as styles. Four of the buttons had turned bone backs and copper-alloy fronts decorated with repoussé or impressed designs.

Problematic Cases

Artifacts with ambiguous provenience are not uncommon on archaeological sites, and the adornment assemblages have their share. A whitish tan bead characteristic of African manufacture (Bead Type 13) was found in soil to the west of the bones from Burial 434, a Middle Group interment that was only partially excavated when fieldwork ceased. The age and sex of the burial's occupant could not be determined. Grave fill from Burial 428, another Middle Group interment, yielded two gray beads with facets (Bead Type 10). This burial held a woman between 40 and 70 years of age. A third burial from the Middle Group, Burial 398, was found in redeposited soil that contained a copper-alloy ring and fragments from a copper-alloy cuff link with an octagonal shape. The remains of the deceased, an adult between 25 and 35 years old, were heavily disturbed by the construction of a retaining wall during the archaeological excavation of the site.

There is one case in which cuff links were recorded in the laboratory but not in the field. Laboratory records indicate that a fragment of a cast copper-alloy cuff link or button from an unknown provenience was attributed to Burial 387, an Early Group interment of a man between 34 and 44 years of age. The item was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Finally, a curved piece of copper alloy, identified tentatively as either a remnant of an earring or a bent pin, was attached to a fragment of coffin wood recovered from Burial 332, a Late-Middle Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between 35 and 40 years old. It was found in the laboratory when the thoracic vertebrae were cleaned. More distinctive than the

object is the mark on the coffin, "HW38," which is discussed in Chapter 10.

Problematic cases are not reflected in the count of burials with personal adornment. Had the problematic cases been included, the total would still form too modest a base to support meaningful inferences about consumer preferences or aesthetic trends.

Discussion

Of all the objects associated with the individuals interred at the African Burial Ground, adornment would seem to be the special preserve of the self. Shroud pins, coffins, and grave markers are the stuff of cemeteries. Adornments, in contrast, are personal effects that presumably kept company with their wearers prior to death. Moreover, adornments may have been among the most meaningful of the personal effects that New Yorkers living under slavery used or owned. Unlike clothing, which slaveholders supplied, the grace notes fell to Africans themselves.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that black New Yorkers enlisted their adornments to redress constraints slavery placed on their day-to-day lives. Newspapers of the period call attention to the deployment of adornment in pursuit of freedom. On view at the New York African Burial Ground, with the infants and young children in Burials 186, 187, 226, and 254, is another foundational project adornment supported: the shoring up of intergenerational ties.

Manhattan's compact homes and episodic commercial economy made an inauspicious framework for African childrearing. Africans resided in every municipal ward during the 1700s, but they typically worked apart from their compatriots and kin. Slaveholdings were small—singletons and pairs were the norm; turnover among owners was high; and family members were scattered when sold within the city and its surrounds (Kruger 1985:128–259; Medford, Brown, Carrington, et al. 2009a:70–73; White 1991:88–92). Information about how parents cared for children who lived at a remove is difficult to come by. Weekend and workday visits, and the gifts that enlivened them, were a key strategy for maintaining intergenerational attachments in the plantation colonies of Virginia and South Carolina (Morgan 1998:498–558). Visiting and gift giving would also have connected the families that city dwellers formed. Yet black family visiting went largely unnoticed in white Manhattan unless truancy was involved (on New Yorkers who ran away to visit relatives, see

White [1991:134–139]). The things adults routinely provide to infants and young children—food, names, stories, spiritual instruction, physical care—went unnoticed, too, as did occasional gifts, such as a silver pendant, a piece of filigree, a necklace, and a string of beads looped at the waist.

The relationship between the adult givers and the child receivers did not come down to us. Among the possibilities are fictive kin, relatives created by cultural convention rather than the circumstances of birth. Also unknown are the events that prompted the gift giving, and the material burdens that the givers incurred. Only the lines of exchange are intact. They tell of emotional and material investments in children within a community where the likelihood of seeing children mature was uncertain.

Instances of adult-to-child gift giving in the archaeological record of eighteenth-century slavery are unusual, both in mainland America and farther afield. In addition to the four youngsters at the New York African Burial Ground, a child with a bead necklace was uncovered in the African portion of a cemetery shared by the Nagel and Dyckman families, Dutch homesteaders with adjoining farms in Washington Heights, now a part of upper Manhattan (Bolton 1924:203–204). A burial site in the Chesapeake held an infant interred with a string of small white beads (Hudgins 1977:70). No adornments were recovered with the infants and young children laid to rest at Newton Plantation; interment practices at this Barbados cemetery were selective, however, and relatively few infants and young children were buried there (Handler and Lange 1978:285–287).

Although material endearments deepened ties among peers, the gifting of jewelry to friends, sweethearts, and spouses is not accessible from the burial ground. Unlike the young children found wearing adornment, the adults did not leave behind any tell-tale evidence about the hands that brought personal decorations into their lives. Neither did the items the adults had. Buttons and cuff links destined for clothing could have been received as gifts, along with rings and strung or single beads. Conversely, all of the items could have been self-acquired, including the finger rings with plain bands (Burials 71 and 115) that connote matrimony to twenty-first-century American eyes. Africans who lived 300 years ago saw rings in a different light (see Herbert 1984:23–31). So, also, did colonial Americans of European descent (Fales 1995:23–41). Because the custom of wearing wedding rings was not universally common among the

latter, there would have been little reason to pressure enslaved Africans to solemnize their unions with rings.

Men and women configured their worlds when they wore adornment, not just when they gave it away. Accessories reserved for festive occasions helped separate work from leisure, a role that clothing played (White 1991:195). Adornment worn every day also put a stamp on the routines and rituals in which adults engaged. The waist beads from Burial 340 exemplify the everyday category, albeit with a twist: they would have been hidden beneath the wearer’s clothes, if not in Manhattan, then in parts of Ghana and Nigeria, where women used waist beads to apportion the public and private sides of their lives. Waist beads doubled as foundation garments. But rather than reshaping a woman’s figure, like girdles or corsets, waist beads helped conceal it from view. The garment (typically a wrapper or an apron) that covered a woman’s hips was tucked around the beads, which functioned as an “under” belt to keep the garment secure. Waist beads were removed from time to time for restringing but otherwise stayed in place. They were visible to people who lived in emotional and physical proximity to the wearer, such as a husband or a sweetheart, and the women with whom she bathed and groomed (for the etiquette of waist-bead concealment and display among the Akuapem of Ghana, a group whose kingdom dates to the beginning of the 1700s, see Gilbert [1993:126–127]).

Whether the waist beads from Burial 340 were worn daily beneath a gown or a petticoat is impossible to know. Still, the beads are a point of contact with the gendered dimensions of the world black New Yorkers created. Historians of black life in eighteenth-century Manhattan have pieced together male-to-female population ratios and patterns of labor (Kruger 1985; White 1991). The Skeletal Biology Team has reconstructed male and female mortality trends (see Blakey, Rankin-Hill, et al. 2009 [Chapter 13 of *Skeletal Biology of the New York African Burial Ground*]). Evidence concerning how Africans construed manhood and womanhood is harder to find. Women’s subjective understandings about femininity and comportment are particularly elusive, not only for Manhattan but also for the regions from which captives came. The images and associations that made waist beads meaningful to women with dissimilar backgrounds and experiences are elusive as well (for present-day images among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, see Drewal and Mason [1998:80–81]).

Although some adornment wearers drew on the fashions of their homeland, others looked to their friends. Thomas de Voe, a chronicler of the city's public markets, called attention to stylistic camaraderie among black youths and men who showed off their dance moves at Catharine Market, an east-side food-selling venue established in 1786. A dance contingent from Long Island favored neatly tied queues and improvised wigs. The signature look of a group from Tappan, New Jersey, centered on plaited forelocks bound with tea lead, a thinly hammered lead alloy named for the tea boxes it lined (De Voe 1969:341, 344–345 [1862]). De Voe did not describe the decorations black bystanders wore, but sorting out the influences and sizing up the trends would have been more difficult in the city than in its less congested surrounds.

Matters of style are no better documented on the African side of the Atlantic than in New York. Beads and metal jewelry were available throughout the Atlantic world, as discussed in the section entitled “Personal Adornment in Historical Context,” and adornment wearers in western Africa were inveterate recyclers of local and imported goods. Yet the canon of knowledge built by observers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries makes a poor fashion gazetteer. It highlights the coasts rather than the hinterlands that provisioned New York's African labor force (see Curtin 1964:11–27; see Figure 27 in Chapter 2). Its sociological sightlines are limited as well. More often than not, what dazzled European visitors and African artists of the day were the accoutrements of the privileged and the sumptuary systems that underwrote the expansion of African states (on the use of art to advance statecraft in eighteenth-century Benin, see Ben-Amos [1999]).

Observers like the Reverend Willhelm Müller illustrate the extent of the documentary gaps. During his stay in the Gold Coast kingdom of the Fetu, Müller noticed the adornments of the general public as well as of the elite. Ordinary men who lived in the shadow of Fort Frederiksborg, where Müller served as chaplain from 1662 to 1669, wore “poor-quality beads” or cowries around their necks and copper or iron rings on their arms and hands. Ordinary women plaited their hair “elegantly” and sometimes “[hung] just one large blue bead in it.” A string of “common beads,” and “perhaps an elegant little cord woven from bark,” encircled their legs, arms, and necks. Cowries were becoming widely available during this period but were not used as adornment among the Fetu elite. Wealthy

men and women ornamented themselves with gold and precious stones (Jones 1983:203–207).

Because only a small fraction of the era's adornment styles entered the historical record, the beads and other jewelry from the New York African Burial Ground are unreliable guides to their wearer's ethnic roots. Yet these items are not bereft of identifying detail. They belong to an era when Africans in geographically far-flung places were using mass-produced goods to organize everyday desires and circumvent the inequities that troubled their lives.

Personal Adornment in Historical Context

Personal adornments like those found at the New York African Burial Ground were highly portable and widely circulated, both in the Atlantic world and in mainland North America. Most, if not all, were available in New York City as well. We look briefly at the traffic in adornment along the west African coast, where the majority of Africans sent directly to New York from the 1660s onward were embarked; in the Caribbean, where Africans were transshipped to North American ports; in mainland America, where trade was oriented to Native American populations; and finally, in the city of New York.

Because the African Burial Ground provided a resting place for black New Yorkers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, our temporal focus is confined to the high tide of Atlantic trade. This period witnessed enormous change in the material worlds of the regions from which captives were taken: monetary standards, sumptuary codes, and consumption patterns were reconfigured as European and African powers vied for control of labor and goods. Commerce and consumption on the American side of the Atlantic changed dramatically, too. Economic expansion in the decades after 1680 drew colonial Americans into the consumer revolution then sweeping through the Netherlands, Britain, and France. By the mid-1700s, “material goods appeared with increasing frequency at cheaper prices among far more consumers than ever before” (Butler 2000:154). Understanding how adornment from an African cemetery in lower Manhattan is entangled with Atlantic commerce is important because African labor produced much of the plenitude that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century consumers enjoyed.

Glass beads formed the largest portion of personal decorations imported to western Africa, with “many billions landed in barrels, cases, and casks” along the Guinea Coast (Alpern 1995:22). Venice was the main center of European bead production, although bead making also thrived in the Netherlands from the late-sixteenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries (Baart 1988; Karklins 1974; Van der Sleen 1963). Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, and France had glass bead industries as well.

Prior to the heyday of European mercantile imperialism, glass beads from Egypt, South Asia, and Spain reached western Africa via trans-Saharan trade routes. So, too, did beads made of carnelian and other precious stones. The trans-Saharan traffic in exotic-glass and -stone beads was supplemented by local production and benefited primarily the political elite (Insoll and Shaw 1997:15–16; Ogundiran 2002:432–436). For the West African public at large, the mass availability of glass beads coincided with the boom in Atlantic commerce.

To be sure, glass beads and jewelry such as silver chains and metal rings represented only a small percentage of the overall value of European imports. Cloth and clothing dominated the European–West African trade “from start to finish” (Alpern 1995:6).⁶ Yet the sheer volume of personal adornment was nonetheless enormous, and it grew in amount and range as the eighteenth century progressed.

Imports of personal decorations varied regionally, as did imports of cowries and metal, two other materials from which adornments were made. Cowries may have “touched the daily lives of [ordinary] individuals” more profoundly than other Atlantic imports (Gregory 1996; Ogundiran 2002:440). Cowries underwrote secular and sacred exchange in an ever-expanding shell-money zone that eventually extended from the Bight of Benin to the Mali Empire, where the monetization of cowries took hold in the

context of trans-Saharan trade. The amount of cowries in western Africa escalated dramatically with the shifting of primary supply routes from land to sea. Between 1700 and 1790, the British and Dutch cartels that dominated the maritime trade moved more than 25 million pounds by weight of cowries—over 10 billion individual shells—into West African ports (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:58–61). The contours of regional supply and demand on the eve of the boom are shown in Table 54, which focuses on cowries and adornments carried under England’s flag.

Africans refashioned imported commodities into goods used for personal display and official regalia as well as food production and market exchange, activities that extend and intensify social life. Unworked and semiprocessed metal fed a millennia-old industry attuned to shifts in material availability and consumer demand (Herbert 1984:9–11).⁷ African smiths recast iron bars into farm implements, household utensils, and bangles. Brass and copper *manillas*, open-ended bracelets imported by the millions to West Africa beginning in the fifteenth century, were worn as jewelry but also melted down to make plaques, weights, and measures (Alpern 1995:13). Thin sheet brass was especially prized in Benin, as Captain Thomas Phillips learned during his stopover in Whydah in 1694; the sheets were cut up to make bracelets and bands for adorning the neck and the limbs (Handler and Lange 1978:156). Bracelets recovered archaeologically from pre-nineteenth-century contexts at Elmina on the Gold Coast were likely produced from white metal and iron wire and rods acquired from overseas (DeCorse 2001:135).

Glass beads shipped from Europe were also reworked in African locales. The melting, grinding, polishing, and drilling of imported glass beads predates the Atlantic trade, as archaeological finds from Mali and Nigeria attest (DeCorse 1989; Insoll and Shaw 1997; Ogundiran 2002). Although the history of African glassmaking is not well understood, several different industries of unknown ancestry are represented in West Africa, including one involving the firing, in clay molds, of chipped and powdered glass (Lamb 1976, 1978; Wild 1937). Glass from the Atlantic trade came to be used as raw material in the manufacture of powder-glass beads (DeCorse 2001:137). Powder-glass beads were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground with Burials 226 and 434.

⁶ The dominance of textiles is evident in Eltis’s (2000:300) snapshot of merchandise shipped from London aboard crown vessels to West and West Central Africa between 1662 and 1713. Textiles were by far the most important import, accounting for 55 percent by value for the combined regions of the Guinea Coast, followed by metals (18 percent), cowries (6 percent), personal decorations (6 percent), containers (4 percent), guns and gunpowder (4 percent), spirits (2 percent), luxury goods (1 percent), and miscellaneous items (5 percent). Alpern (1995) provides information on the following categories of goods: cloth (Indian and European), clothing (especially kerchiefs, hats, and caps), linens, unworked or semiprocessed metal, metal containers, and other metal wares such as tools and utensils, firearms, beads, coral, cowries, spirits, tobacco, glassware, ceramics, and paper.

⁷ Frank McManamon, who kindly reviewed a draft of this report for the National Park Service, contributed to our phrasing of this point.

Table 54. Adornments and Cowries Imported into Africa, 1662–1713, by Region

Region	Value of Personal Decorations Imported into Africa (pounds sterling)	Percent of Imports to Each Region Represented by Personal Decorations	Value of Cowries (pounds sterling)	Percent Represented by Cowries
Upper Guinea	12,700	27	400	1
Gold Coast	4,600	1	3,900	1
Bight of Benin	6,700	8	38,300	44
Bight of Biafra	13,000	14	800	1
West-Central Africa	900	1	—	—
Windward Coast	100	not calculated		
Total	38,000	6	43,400	6

Note: From Eltis (2000:300) adapted by OgunDIRAN (2002:430).

The presence in colonial Manhattan of glass beads characteristic of West African manufacture calls attention to the movement of adornment from Africa to the Americas. This aspect of the material culture of Atlantic slavery is not well charted. Some Africans arrived in the Americas with adornment, but how often this occurred and whether the items were brought from home or acquired en route is unclear. Captors were not squeamish about confiscating the belongings of the captured, as indicated by the disheartening spectacle William Hugh Grove observed in 1732 in a Virginia port: “The Boyes and Girles [aboard the slave ship were] all Stark naked; so Were the greatest part of the Men and Women. Some had beads about their necks, arms, and Wasts, and a ragg or Piece of Leather the bigness of a fig Leafe” (cited in Baumgarten 2002:132). Shippers were not averse to parceling out adornments stowed on board. In 1796, the women on a slaver anchored in Carlisle Bay, off the southwest coast of Barbados, wore necklaces strung with glass beads acquired, apparently, from the crew. General William Dyott, who described the scene, learned from the ship’s master that new-stringing the beads was the women’s “chief employment” (cited in Handler and Lange 1978:147).

That eighteenth-century merchants were not always able to off-load their adornment cargos in African ports is confirmed by the salvaging of the British slaver *Henrietta Marie*. A cache of glass beads was recovered from the hold of the ship, which sank off Key West in 1701 during the last leg of its London-Calabar-Kingston route (*African-American Archaeology Newsletter* 1997:9).

Yet Africans crossed the Atlantic as sailors, not just as commodities enchained below deck. Black seafaring took root in the emerging Anglo-American maritime world of the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The presence of enslaved and free black seamen in North American ports and plantation roadsteads increased steadily after 1740, as did the number of black New Yorkers who fled from bondage in sailor guise (see entries from 1748 to 1783 on Table 50 in Chapter 12). By 1803, black men filled approximately 18 percent of American seamen’s jobs (Bolster 1997:2–9). Ships and boats provided a “porous boundary” across which “goods, ideas, individuals, and aesthetics” flowed (Bolster 1997:7). During their travels, black seamen may well have acquired strings of beads or cowries, which could have been sold, exchanged, or given as gifts upon return to port.

European-made glass beads, buttons, cuff links, and copper-alloy rings were imported to and available for sale in the circum-Caribbean colonies of Britain, Holland, Spain and Portugal during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Captives who ultimately were transported to New York may have acquired adornments in the Caribbean. Avenues for acquisition of adornment included own-account economic activity, such as marketing produce, processed foodstuffs, and livestock.

Personal decorations produced in European factories circulated widely in mainland North America. Glass beads and metal and paste rings akin to those found at the New York African Burial Ground are documented on colonial-era sites ranging from Upper

Michigan and upstate New York to southern Florida (see Deagan 1987; Karklins 1992; Quimby 1966; Smith 1965; Stone 1974; Wood 1974; Wray and Schoff 1953). French, Spanish, English, and Dutch trading cartels and colonial agents used adornments in conjunction with other commodities to negotiate “favored” trading partnerships with Native American populations. Native Americans, in turn, drew on such items to reconfigure status relations and spheres of influence amongst themselves.

Imported and locally made jewelry was plentiful in New York City. Silversmiths who apprenticed in Europe and in the mainland British colonies crowded Manhattan, as did specialist jewelers who worked in enamel and set gems (Fales 1995:66–70). Silversmiths made large and small wares for wealthy patrons and the general public, sometimes acting as jobbers for retailers, and sometimes operating retail stores of their own, often with a jeweler on site (Barquist 2001:25). Charles Oliver Bruff, a Maryland-born silversmith’s son, employed two jewelers, one from London and another from Paris. Enameled cuff links, brass buttons, earrings, hair jewels, and “all sorts of silver smiths work” could be found on the shelves of his Maiden Lane shop (*New-York Mercury*, January 3, 1763; *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, May 25, 1772).

Personal adornment was sold in general emporiums as well as specialty stores. The account books of merchant Samuel Deall record necklaces, earrings, and beads sold in 1758 (New-York Historical Society, Account Books of Samuel Deall, Invoice Book T, 1757–1766). The price of a “bunch” of black beads, perhaps like those found with Burial 187, was 2 shillings and sixpence. Beaded necklaces—it is not known whether of glass or metal—ranged in price from 1 to 17 shillings, whereas earrings suitable for children sold from 1 shilling and 10 pence to as much as 1 pound 4 shillings for fine red drop clusters. Deall’s emporium on Broad Street was typical of its time, stocking clothing, foodstuffs, house wares, light construction materials, and “all elements of ornamentation for person and home” (Arthur 1985:37).

Although Africans are not likely to have patronized establishments like Deall’s or Bruff’s, some of the less expensive adornments merchants and craftsmen carried would have made their way into smaller retail venues. “Cheap sales” and auctions of overstocked merchandise lowered retail prices, and small-scale vendors such as peddlers would have bought inexpensively and sold with a modest markup. Stocks of

stolen goods also circulated in the city, and peddlers were accused of trafficking in ill-gotten wares (on merchants and peddlers, regulatory legislation, and the disposal of overstocks, see Matson [1998:131–134, 139–140, 158]).

Personal adornment may also have been received as gifts from the households where Africans toiled, but unlike clothing, jewelry was not customarily given to enslaved household members.

In summary, personal adornment could have been acquired in Africa, along the routes by which Africans reached New York, or in the city itself. Glass beads circulated throughout the Atlantic world. Metal and paste rings were traded in Africa and the Americas and sold in Manhattan stores. A silver pendant would have been available in a city shop or market stall or as part of a peddler’s stock. Enamel cuff links were imported and locally produced. And although cowries never played a visible role in the Native American trade, all manner of items were bought, sold, and fenced at the docks and taverns that comprised the “waterfront economy” (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:181–182).

Considering the poverty of most who were interred at the African Burial Ground, the outlay of even one or two shillings for adornment would likely have been a considerable expense. Holding on to an adornment for a long period of time may have been difficult as well. But however hard-won or precariously held, the beads and other adornments recovered with the deceased were treated as inalienable possessions at the end of their wearers’ lives. Why these objects were removed permanently from circulation rather than passed along to one of the mourners is impossible to know. It is unlikely that a single explanation exists. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of the 25 individuals directly associated with adornment would have varied. So, too, would the sensibilities of the neighbors and kin who laid these individuals to rest.

The Bead Assemblage

The bead assemblage from the New York African Burial Ground includes 146 glass beads and 1 amber bead. The majority of the glass beads were likely produced in Venice (Murano), but 9 glass beads were produced using distinctive firing methods associated with West African manufacturing techniques. The glass beads fell into two structural categories: simple beads made from a single, undecorated layer of glass (144 specimens, or 99 percent), and complex beads

with adventitious decoration (2 specimens, or 1 percent). Three different production methods—winding, drawing, and firing—were represented (Table 55 and Figures 231–243).

The color and diaphaneity of the glass beads ranged from opaque black to opaque and translucent yellow, light gold, and whitish tan. Transparent blue (58 specimens) and translucent blue-green (26 specimens) beads predominated. The African Burial Ground bead assemblage, however, does not support hypotheses about color preference at the collective level (see Stine et al. 1996) because the majority of the beads were recovered from a single burial.

Bead sizes ranged from very small (diameters of 2.2–2.3 mm for the black beads from Burial 187) to medium (the powder-glass beads from Burial 226 were approximately 4.5 mm in diameter; most of the blue and light gold beads were in the 5–7-mm range), and large (the opaque black bead from Burial 250 was 13.6 mm in diameter).

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, and Chain of Custody⁸

Almost all the beads were recovered in the field during careful scraping of soil from skeletal remains. Ten beads from Burial 187 were found when screening the soil. The bead from Burial 107 was recovered in the laboratory when the skeletal remains were cleaned.

The majority of the beads were vitrified and glassy. Most beads exhibited signs of glass disease, surface corrosion, pitting, or frosting. The beads were cleaned with a dry brush to remove the soil but not the weathered surface, a corrosion product that represents the deteriorated original surface, and hence the dimensions of the once-healthy glass.

Porous, flaking, and friable surfaces of six beads from Burial 340 were impregnated with acryloid B-72 to prevent further loss of surface detail. All other beads were left untreated, although five beads from Burial 340 were sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for SEMS/ED elemental analysis. The analysis was undertaken to determine the relationship between chemical composition and corrosion pattern. Test results indicated that the beads were composed primarily of soda, lime, and silica, with varying levels

of magnesium and other trace elements. Visually identical glass beads with different patterns of corrosion had different chemical formulations.

The beads were inventoried and discussed by conservator Cheryl La Roche (1994a, 1994b) for John Milner Associates. The assemblage was then reexamined for the Howard University Archaeology Team by archaeologist Christopher R. DeCorse at Syracuse University (fall 1998, spring 1999, summer 2001). Syracuse University returned the beads to the New York laboratory during the summer of 2001. Jon Abbott took a final set of photographs in August 2001. At that time, the beads were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The beads were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003 and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Methodology and Definitions

DeCorse examined the beads under magnification of 10x–20x with strong light. The descriptive data recorded for each bead included the following information.

Manufacture: The primary technique(s) used in the creation of the bead, such as winding, drawing, and firing (see Karklins 1985, 1993; Kidd and Kidd 1983).

Structure: This term refers to the arrangement or relationship of the parts of a bead. Structure refers to gross physical characteristics, such as the number of layers or applied decorative elements, not to the chemical or physical characteristics of the glass. Following Karklins's terminology (1985), two structural categories are represented in the assemblage: simple beads, made from a single, undecorated layer of glass, and complex beads, simple beads with adventitious decoration.

Secondary Modification: The alteration of the shape, color, or opacity of a bead through reheating, tumbling, grinding, cutting, and kindred techniques. Beads were modified both at the place of manufacture and long after they left the factory floor. Determination of when modification took place is sometimes impossible. Some secondary modification techniques, however, can be correlated with particular manufacturing sites.

Venetian manufacturers used several techniques of heat rounding to alter cylindrical drawn beads into spherical, oblate, and barrel shapes. The *a speo*

⁸ Conservation information for the three assemblages discussed in this chapter was obtained from John Milner Associates (see LaRoche 2002:29–39).

Table 55. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground

Type of Bead	Description	Burial No.	Count	Diameter (mm)	Length (mm)
Glass					
Drawn					
1	Simple; heat rounded; oblate, occasional examples more barrel shaped; surfaces dull; translucent yellow; typically have heavy opaque white to yellowish brown patination that obscures actual color; surfaces degraded and pitted, typically more degraded at ends.	340	15	2.8–3.3	1.7–2.8
2	Simple; heat rounded; some examples have attributes associated with the <i>a speo</i> technique, such as protuberances, tails, and off-center perforations; spherical to oblate, occasional examples globular or more barrel shaped; dull to shiny; transparent blue; minor to moderately pitted, some chips and scratches, some examples have lunate scars.	340	58	4.8–7.3	3.8–7.0
3	Simple; heat rounded; oblate/donut shaped; dull; translucent blue-green; degraded, very pitted.	340	26	2.9–3.5	1.9–2.5
4	Simple; heat rounded; oblate; dull; opaque black; some scratches, minor pitting; small chip at aperture.	340 (right side)	1	6.3	5.6
5	Compound; slightly heat rounded; cylindrical; opaque red-wood on transparent apple-green core; large chip at one end.	107	1	3.2	7.7
6	Simple; oblate, donut shaped to tubular; generally dull, but some examples are more shiny; opaque black, some appear translucent dark reddish amber under strong light and this may be color of all examples; moderately degraded with more wear on ends; pitted; many bubbles present in glass.	187	22	2.2–3.3	1.3–2.6
Wound					
7	Simple; truncated cone; dull; translucent light gold; opaque white patination; weathered and pitted. In all examples, the top of the cone has been broken off after manufacture, which may represent intentional secondary modification by the user(s); the flake scar is covered with same patination as the rest of the bead.	340	6	5.8–6.6	4.7–5.4
8	Simple; faceted; color obscured by heavy opaque patination, probably colorless or transparent amber; heavy opaque brown patination layer; has parallels from Elmina.	340	3	3.3–5.9	5.5–6.2
9	Complex; barrel; dull; opaque black, appears dark amber under strong light; gold foil wave pattern on each end; gold foil has worn off in places; scratches, some pitting, two large flakes at one end.	340	1	6.1	6.1
10	Simple; faceted with eight pressed facets; dull; transparent light gray; pitted.	428	2	8.6–9.6	7.8–8.1
11	Simple; spherical; dull to shiny; opaque black; some pitting and weathering of surface.	250	1	13.6	10.7

Table 55. Bead Types at the African Burial Ground (*continued*)

Type of Bead	Description	Burial No.	Count	Diameter (mm)	Length (mm)
12	Complex; barrel shaped; opaque black; three wavy lines around circumference; very pitted; line decoration has completely weathered away, leaving grooves; traces of very degraded glass (possibly patination) suggest color of line decoration may have been opaque white.	340	1	8.6	8.9
Fired					
13	Tubular or cylindrical in shape with a slightly off-center perforation through the length of bead, with roughly trapezoidal cross section; opaque white, with tan or whitish brown patination on surface; some pitting and cracking of surface; bead has a granular appearance under magnification; original microstructure was heterogeneous, as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points..	434	1	6.3	3.7
14	Produced by firing glass powder and likely produced in Ghana; oblate to donut shaped; the original color is difficult to determine, but it was probably opaque yellow. Though similar in manufacture—and also in the weathering represented—to the fired bead in Burial 434, they are much smaller and more regular in appearance, and they were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is also possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, are also regular and were likely polished or drilled after the beads were fired. As in the Burial 434 bead, the beads have a granular appearance under magnification. Original microstructure was heterogeneous, as evidenced by multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points.	226	8	4.0–4.8	2.7–3.8
Non-glass (amber)					
15	Bead; 14 facets; dull; transparent red; wear or polishing has rounded the edges of facets; internal cracks and bubbles; surface pitted, some chipping; damage at apertures; drilled perforation shows traces of cutting.	340	1	4.8	4.3

method, introduced in the eighteenth century, was one method. It was accomplished by reheating beads on a specially designed fork, or a *speo*, placed near the door of an oven. Karklins (1993) has identified several diagnostic features on beads altered using this method. These attributes include tangs or tails of glass where the more viscous surface of the glass flowed downward. In other cases, beads fused together while on the *a speo*. Drawn beads that show evidence of having been broken apart at the ends, or beads that are fused together with their perforations in perfect alignment, were heat rounded by the *a speo* method. Some of

the Type 2 beads have many of these attributes. Some Type 2 beads also have marks within their perforations that may be indicative of the *a speo* method. Beads modified using this technique that do not have any of these attributes would appear the same as other heat-rounded beads, and it is often difficult to differentiate these technique on individual beads. All produce similar results, and subsequent polishing, use wear, or weathering obliterates differences. Hence, although all of the Type 2 beads may have been rounded using the *a speo* technique, no clear indications are present on some of the beads.



Figure 231. Bottom two rows, Bead Type 1 (diameters are 2.8–3.3 mm); top three rows, Bead Type 3 (diameters are 2.9–3.5 mm). All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

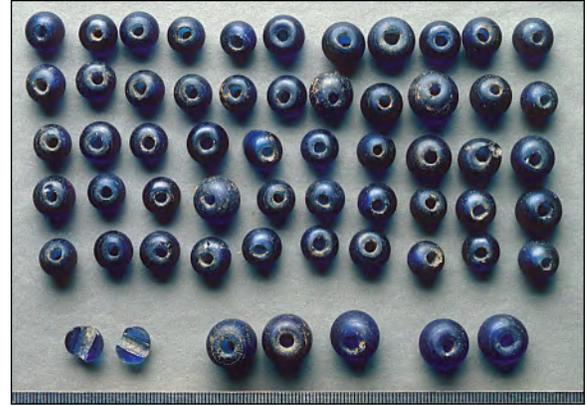


Figure 232. Bead Type 2. Diameters are 4.8–7.3 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 233. Bead Type 4. Diameter is 6.3 mm. Bead is from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 234. Bead Type 5. Length is 7.7 mm. Bead is from Burial 107 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 235. Bead Type 6. Diameters are 2.2–3.3 mm. All beads are from Burial 187 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 236. Bead Type 7. Diameters are 5.8–6.6 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 237. Bead Type 8. Diameters are 3.3–5.9 mm. All beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 238. *Left*, Bead Type 9 (diameter is 6.1 mm); *right*, Bead Type 15 (diameter is 4.8 mm). Both beads are from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 239. Bead Type 10. Diameters are 8.6–9.6 mm. Both beads are from Burial 428 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 240. Bead Type 11. Diameter is 13.6 mm. Bead is from Burial 250 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 241. Bead Type 12. Length is 8.9 mm. Bead is from Burial 340 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 242. Bead Type 13. Diameter is 6.3 mm. Bead is from Burial 434 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 243. Bead Type 14. Diameters are 4.0–4.8 mm. All beads are from Burial 226 (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Drawn beads were also rounded using other methods during the eighteenth century. Before 1817, beads were rounded in a large pan containing a mixture of sand and wood ash or plaster and graphite (Karklins 1985:88). The pan was then heated over a charcoal fire and the mixture continuously stirred.

Shape: The shape is the profile of the bead. Shape implies nothing about the size or contour of the perforation, the relative length of the bead, or the manufacturing processes represented. An effort has been made to use terminology that is clear in casual reading but precise in relation to the attributes represented. For this reason, some terms popular in common usage, such as “barrel shaped” and “donut,” have been retained.

Spherical Beads: Spherical beads have shapes approximating a sphere, mathematically defined as an approximately round body in which the surface is equidistant from the center at all points. Few beads are precisely spherical; the term is used to indicate shapes that are clearly round.

Oblate Beads: Oblate beads have profiles that are circular to ellipsoidal.

Globular Beads: Globular beads have a semispherical or ellipsoidal aspect but are irregular or nonsymmetrical in cross section. Beads of this shape include specimens such as drawn beads that have been heat rounded or cooked.

Cylindrical Beads: Cylindrical beads always have clearly circular cross sections along their entire length, the sides of the beads being parallel to the line of the perforation. The term is used for beads with the very regular, straight profiles often associated with drawn beads that have not been heat altered.

Tubular Beads: Tubular beads are often cylindrical but lack the very regular, parallel surfaces characteristic of drawn or molded beads. The term “tubular”

should not be conflated with the terms “tube” or “tube beads,” which have been used to describe drawn beads.

Barrel-Shaped Beads: Barrel-shaped beads have a circular cross section, widest in the middle, decreasing in a regular way to flat or semiflat ends. The side profiles of these beads appear as arcs that intersect planes at each end.

Conical Beads: Conical beads have profiles that decrease in a regular line from one end to the other.

Bead Facets: Facets are intentional planes on the surface of a bead produced by grinding, molding or marvering.

Decoration: A wide variety of decorative techniques are employed in bead manufacture. Only two beads examined in the New York African Burial Ground assemblage were decorated. These are Bead Types 9 and 12. In each case, the decoration consists of adventitious decoration on a wound bead. The Type 9 bead is an opaque back bead with a trailed decoration of gold foil. The Type 12 bead is opaque black with traces of a trailed (possibly opaque white) decoration. Both types are typical of Venetian manufacture.

Color: Colors should be regarded as approximate rather than absolute. Color is an ephemeral characteristic, often appearing slightly different under different viewing conditions. Individual perceptions may also result in different readings. The minute size of some of the decorative components also makes precise color determination a challenge. In addition, color is often variable even on specimens of similar age from the same factory. Prior to the twentieth century, manufacturing techniques were not precise, and slight color variations might result. Postproduction weathering through use or burial in an archaeological site creates additional variation.

Diaphaneity: Each color is preceded by its diaphaneity, which is opaque, translucent, or transparent. Opaque glass is impenetrable to light. Translucent glass transmits light but diffuses it so that objects on the other side are indistinct. Transparent glass allows objects on the other side to be clearly viewed. In recording this attribute, an attempt was made to determine the bead’s original character.

Luster: The appearance of the bead’s surface in reflected light. In contrast to color and diaphaneity, this attribute often reflects postmanufacture use wear, weathering, and modification. Two luster types are used to describe the beads from the New York African Burial Ground: shiny (smooth and bright) and dull (not shiny).

Size: This refers to the length and diameter are given for each bead or, if a type is being described, a range for each dimension. Measurements reflect the maximum length or width. Generalized categories of length, such as short, standard, and long, defined in terms of specific length to width ratios, are not used.

Manufacture, Age, and Origin

As noted, the majority of the beads in the assemblage were likely produced in Venice. They consisted almost entirely of simple monochrome beads that have comparatively wide temporal and geographic distributions and that have been documented on a wide variety of archaeological sites. They are completely consistent with, although not restricted to, the African Burial Ground's historically documented period of use. Notably absent were distinctive nineteenth-century bead types, including the products of Bohemia.

The significant exceptions were one amber bead (Type 15) from Burial 340 and nine powder-glass beads of likely West African origin, one from Burial 434 (Type 13) and eight from Burial 226 (Type 14).

Amber beads were traded in Africa as well as in Europe (Alpern 1995:23; Dubin 1987:101). British Customs House ledgers indicate that amber beads were also shipped to New York (Breen 2004:62). It is possible that the Burial 340 amber bead, which is translucent red in color with 14 worn or polished facets, originated in Africa. However, no exact parallels to the Burial 340 bead are known from African or European archaeological contexts.

The powder-glass beads were simple in structure. Type 13 (from Burial 434) was opaque whitish tan in color and cylindrical in shape, with a slightly off-center perforation through the length of the bead. The eight examples of Type 14, all from Burial 226, were oblate to donut shaped. The original color is difficult to determine but it was probably opaque yellow. Although similar in manufacture to the bead from Burial 434, the Type 14 beads were smaller and more regular in appearance and were likely ground to shape after firing. However, it is possible that the beads were heat treated after initial firing. The perforations, where visible, were also regular and likely produced or drilled after the beads were fired. Both the Type 13 and Type 14 beads were covered with an opaque tan or whitish brown patination on the surface and were very degraded and friable, exhibiting pitting and cracking. The beads had a granular appearance

under magnification. Multidirectional weathering that starts at multiple points indicates the heterogeneity of the original microstructure.

Although there is some evidence for indigenous glass manufacture in West Africa, fired glass beads from Ghana, as well as other areas, relied on the reuse of imported European glassware, beads, and bottles. Using this technology, glass fragments are pounded into a fine powder that is placed into fired clay molds. These molds have small recesses at the bottom, into which thin reeds or cassava (manioc) stems are placed. During firing, the stem burns away, leaving a perforation through the bead. Firing, which is known ethnographically, is done in small, domed ovens or kilns made of clay. After removal from the mold, the beads are shaped and smoothed by grinding. Although this fired-glass technology is found in other areas of the world, notably Mauritania, the characteristics and archaeological context of the beads from Burial 226 and 434 would indicate that Ghana was their likely place of origin.

Using a variety of molds, different colors of glass, and imported beads, African glassmakers were able to produce beads with a wide variety of elaborate shapes and decorations. For example, placing layers of different colored glass into the mold might produce bands. Stripes were made by carefully inserting lines of colored glass down the sides of the mold. Intact European beads were also incorporated into decorations (for illustrations of elaborately decorated powder-glass beads, see Francis [1993] and Liu et al. [2001]). This industry continued into the present century and, indeed, our understanding of the technology is known primarily through observations of twentieth-century craftsmen.

Beads characteristic of African glassmaking techniques are virtually unknown in American contexts. The only other example uncovered thus far is from the Newton Plantation Burial Ground in Barbados (Handler 1997). Produced using the same technology as the bead from Burial 434, the Newton bead is similar in shape but larger in size. It is possible that other beads made with powdered glass have been uncovered in archaeological sites in the African Diaspora but that their distinctive characteristics have been unrecognized.

The presence of powder-glass beads in a colonial New York setting is also exciting from an Africanist perspective. Only limited finds of such beads have been recovered in well-dated African archaeological contexts, including a handful of examples from south-

ern Ghana (DeCorse 2001:137–138). Even in African locales where fired glass beads were produced, European beads predominate on archaeological sites. The New York African Burial Ground beads thus provide information on the age of this particular bead-making technology. Excavated examples from Elmina on the Gold Coast were present in early eighteenth- through nineteenth-century contexts.

Typology

The types of beads recovered from the New York African Burial Ground are defined in Table 55 and illustrated in Figures 231 through 243. The inventory in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume, describes each bead in full. The typology DeCorse created is specific to the New York African Burial Ground assemblage (for the application of taxonomies developed by Kidd and Kidd and Karklins, see LaRoche [1994a, 1994b]).

The Cowrie Shells

The cowrie shells were observed during excavation of Burial 340 and were recorded in situ (see Figure 229). Although nine cowries were recorded on the field drawing prior to removal of the skeletal remains, one of the cowries was later found to be a fragment of bone. Another cowrie was not recoverable and may have been an impression of a shell in the soil (LaRoche 1994a:19). It is not known which of the cowries depicted on the drawing were among the seven cowries that constitute the assemblage.

The shells became friable when exposed to air. Application in the field of polyvinyl acetate adhesive as a consolidant caused soil to adhere to the surface of the shells, as shown in Figure 244.

Information about conservation and treatment is not available. The cowries were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. They were then reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003 and transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

Information about the identification of the cowries is not available. They might well have originated in the Maldives, a group of atolls in the Indian Ocean that supplied the cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) that dominated the Atlantic trade. Cowries thrive in



Figure 244. Cowrie shell from Burial 340. Length is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

warm, shallow lagoons. In addition to the Maldives, cowries are harvested along the East African coast, offshore of Mozambique and Zanzibar. Shells from the same species that are harvested in different time periods show no discernable difference (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986:7–9).

The Rings and Other Jewelry

This portion of the New York African Burial Ground adornment assemblage consists of 11 items: 5 copper-alloy finger rings (3 plain bands and 2 bands with glass insets); a cast silver pendant with a pear-shaped dangle; a glass-and-wire-filigree ornament; 3 cuff-link faces covered with turquoise enamel (1 plain; 2 with designs); and 1 curved fragment of copper alloy, perhaps from an earring or a pin.

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, Definitions, and Chain of Custody

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn in situ prior to removal. The exceptions were the silver pendant from Burial 254, the paste ring from Burial 310, and the curved copper-alloy object from Burial 332; these were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

The three rings from Burial 377 are not included in the assemblage count. The rings, along with cervical vertebrae, were freeze-dried in the field and removed intact after photographs were taken. The rings were not cataloged in the laboratory and appear to have

been lost prior to accessioning by conservators. The items were not located when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

The condition of the items in this assemblage ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

The plain finger rings from Burials 71, 115, and 398 were inspected visually and identified as copper alloy based on the corrosion products present. The term “copper alloy” is used because the precise admixture of various alloys is highly variable and is not considered particularly diagnostic of date or place of manufacture.

The paste rings were desalinated. The paste ring from Burial 310 was stable enough to undergo mechanical cleaning. The paste ring from Burial 242 was too fragile for cleaning; it was reassembled but not restored. Both rings were vacuum impregnated with BTA, a corrosion inhibitor, and then coated with acryloid B-72.

The pendant from Burial 254 was grayish white and not readily recognizable as silver, despite the telltale signature of the corrosion product, which was pale, white, and waxy. The pendant was brittle, most likely from intergranular corrosion deep within the alloy. Surface layers at the lower portion of the dangle were disrupted and discontinuous. The pendant was mechanically cleaned under a microscope to remove the silver chloride crust. The damaged portion of the dangle was repaired with a B-72 adhesive. The entire pendant was then treated with Acryloid B-72. Elemental analysis via X-ray fluorescence indicated the presence of silver. To determine the percentage or “grade” of silver, a 0.5-mm sample of the inner plane of the upper ring was removed for testing with emission spectrophotometry. The spectrograph analysis was conducted by John Boyd of the U.S. Customs Service and utilized a Jarrell Ash Standard Varisource Emission Spectrophotometer. The content of the sample was found to be 94–100 percent silver, well within the range for “pure” silver, a designation reserved for items with a silver content of 92.5 percent and above.

The glass-and-wire-filigree ornament from Burial 186 was not treated. No information is available on treatment of the undecorated turquoise-colored enamel cuff-link face. The two decorated enamel faces from Burial 371 were mechanically cleaned and impregnated with acryloid B-72. Project conservators theorized that the pink surface decoration and the

turquoise background had faded, respectively, from red and blue. Given the lack of devitrification, there is little reason for supposing that the faces were untrue to their original colors (Emily Wilson, Conservator of Archaeological Materials, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, personal communication 2005).

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of the rings and other jewelry, with certain items photographed before, during, and after conservation treatment. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35-mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which the items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. The items were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003.

Jewelry earmarked for replication was sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study. Items not selected for replication were sent in September 2003 to Jon Abbott for digital photography. Abbott photographed each item from different angles, thus permitting analysis without access to the items themselves.

Items seconded to Colonial Williamsburg were returned to New York in September 2003 and, along with the rest of the assemblage, were placed in coffins for reburial.

Manufacture, Age, and Origin

Personal adornments made and sold in colonial America did not typically carry a maker’s mark (Fales 1995:23), and the rings and other jewelry from the New York African Burial Ground were no exception. Undecorated pieces are especially difficult to date precisely. Place of origin cannot always be ascertained. Comparative archaeological and documentary evidence indicate that the items in this assemblage were consistent with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wares.

As noted in the section entitled “Personal Adornment in Historical Context,” plain copper-alloy rings had a wide geographical distribution in mainland North America. So, too, did copper-alloy rings with glass insets. Consumer demand for inexpensive jewelry ensured a profitable market for paste, and the

Table 56. Paste Rings with Central and Side Insets from North American Archaeological Contexts

Sites	Time Period	Reference
Santa Rosa Pensacola, Florida (Spanish occupation with French trade links)	1723–1752	Smith (1965:97)
Seneca/Iroquois sites in western New York (Rochester area)	1730–1814	Wood (1974:102)
Fort Michilimackinac, Michigan (late French/British occupation)	ca. 1750–1781	Stone (1974:123–128)
St. Augustine, Florida (Spanish)	eighteenth century	Deagan (1987:125)



Figure 245.
Reconstruction of
silver pendant from
Burial 254 (drawing
by C. LaRoche and R.
Schulz).

ranks of European producers and American retailers swelled as the eighteenth century advanced (Fales 1995:48–51; Newman 1981:228). Table 56 highlights European spheres of influence at North American sites where rings with insets identical to the rings from Burials 242 and 310 have been found.

The cast silver pendant from Burial 254 has no counterpart in artifact collections from European trading posts and Native American encampments with eighteenth-century dates (Figure 245). The lack of a twin is not for want of commerce in silver. From the 1750s to the 1830s, silver jewelry lubricated the fur trade in upstate New York and in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi regions (Karklins 1992:93). Fur from the north and the west passed through colonial Manhattan; silver ornaments made by city artisans retraced some of the routes taken by the pelts. Daniel Fueter, for example, received a commission for two sets of silver medals intended for Native American chiefs; engraved with a view of Montreal, the medals commemorated the French and Indian Wars (Fales

1995:57). The extent to which Manhattan artisans were involved in the production and import of silver for Native American consumers is not well documented, however. The output of Philadelphia workshops is far better known (see Gillingham 1936).

The pendant may have been made with the general customer in mind. Its pear shape was a perennial favorite among colonial American jewelry wearers (Fales 1995:47). In contrast, Native American consumers prized dangles in other styles. The simplest style, known as a “tinkling cone,” was cut in a conical shape from flat sheet silver (Fredrickson 1980:43, 46). An example of a cast dangle worn as a nose ornament can be seen in Bartoli’s 1796 portrait of Seneca Chief Cornplanter; the dangle is gently hooked (illustrated in Karklins [1992:79]). Pear-shaped dangles may have become popular among Native Americans in the New York region during the nineteenth century, when Iroquois artisans took up the silversmith trade. A dangle from a collection of Iroquois silverwork owned by the Rochester Museum and Science Center offers a close match to the New York African Burial Ground pendant (see the illustration in Van Horn [1971:64]). The collection dates to the second half of the nineteenth century and was assembled near Rochester.

Enameled jewelry was fashionable during the eighteenth century, although much of it was acquired ready-made from overseas. Prior to the influx of continental-trained jewelers in the mid-1700s, silversmiths in colonial America used enamel for inscriptions but few artisans would have mastered the techniques needed for more intricate work (Fales 1995:62). Charles Dutens was among the first wave of enamel specialists to ply the trade in Manhattan. He worked out of his lodgings on the lower end of Broad Street and supplemented his income by teaching French (*New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*,

March 4, 1751). The enterprising Charles Oliver Bruff burnished his adornment business in 1763 by hiring a London-trained artisan who understood every kind of “enamel’d work in the jewellery way” (*New-York Mercury*, January 3, 1763). Two years later, Captain Jacobson sought to cash in on the vogue for enameled cuff links by selling a shipment of London-made goods (*New-York Mercury*, April 29, 1765).

Decorative motifs enlivened plain enamel. Consumers from different social circles sometimes favored the same design. The color and shape of the motif on the enamels from Burial 371 are echoed on a pair of enamel cuff links recovered from debris at a New York City Revolutionary War encampment. Along with the squat V and the two dots (see “Inventory”), the faces from the British encampment bear an additional mark, apparently scratched on.⁹ The encampment cuff links are said to show “the familiar emblem of Masonry” (Calver and Bolton 1950:227), an attribution based, perhaps, on the resemblance of the V to a drawing compass or a carpenter’s square rule, two of the core “jewels” or badges of office around which lodge governance is organized.

Masonic symbols were a part of the public culture in urban America by the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The Broad Street tavern kept by Samuel Fraunces carried “the Sign of the freemason’s arms” when put up for public auction in 1767 (*New-York Journal or the General Advertiser*, December 17, 1767). Widely available pattern books provided silversmiths and engravers with the official vernacular of designs for the silver badges of office and the silver medallions lodge members commissioned for personal use (Hamilton 1994:4–5, 126). Colonial merchants stocked drinking glasses decorated with Masonic tools. On occasion, Masons in Boston, Charleston, New York, and Philadelphia paraded through the streets with their bright silver regalia and unblemished white aprons conspicuously displayed (Bullock 1996:52–56).

Yet the visual language of American Freemasonry has little in common with the motif on the enamels from the New York African Burial Ground. Craft symbols replicated on badges and medallions made during and after the eighteenth century are larded with realistic detail (see illustrations in Hamilton 1994:134–145 and Fales 1995:138–139). Small-sized

items like enameled buttons show compasses with hinges and tapered legs, as well as square rules with discernable measuring lines (see Ertrell 1973:Plate 6; Houart 1977:51).

Free men of color were unwelcome in the Masonic brotherhoods that formed in colonial American cities after 1730. Enslaved Africans like Caesar, Prince, and Cuffee were ineligible for membership. These men, African New Yorkers who financed their nighttime junketing by stealing goods, dubbed themselves “Free Masons” in 1738, “in imitation” of the members of Manhattan’s Masonic society. Court Recorder Daniel Horsmanden did not mention whether the threesome speculated about universal wisdom and ethics when making the rounds of dram shops and tipling houses. He mentioned instead that their burlesque was “very ill accepted” among bona fide lodge brothers, learned gentlemen who met semi-secretly in expensive public taverns and favored a restrictive application of fraternal ideals (see Horsmanden 1971:67 fn. q).

The first Masonic lodge for men of African descent, led by Boston artisan Prince Hall, received a charter in 1784 (Wallace 2000:183–184). The African Lodge of New York, Boyer Lodge No. 1, was established in Manhattan in February 1812, after the burial ground had closed (see Harry A. Williamson, *A History of Freemasonry among American Negroes, 1929*, Sc Micro R-2240, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture).

⁹ As of this writing, the encampment cuff links, pictured in black-and-white in Calver and Bolton (1950:225), have not been located in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

Inventory



Figure 246. Plain, copper-alloy ring from Burial 71 (Catalog No. 813-B.004). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 1.5 cm when whole (mended) (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 247. Plain, copper-alloy ring from Burial 115 (Catalog No. 858-B.001). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 1.8 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 248. Plain, copper-alloy ring from "Burial 398" (redeposited fill soil) (Catalog No. 2061-B.001). Outside and inside band surfaces are convex. Inside diameter is 2.1 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

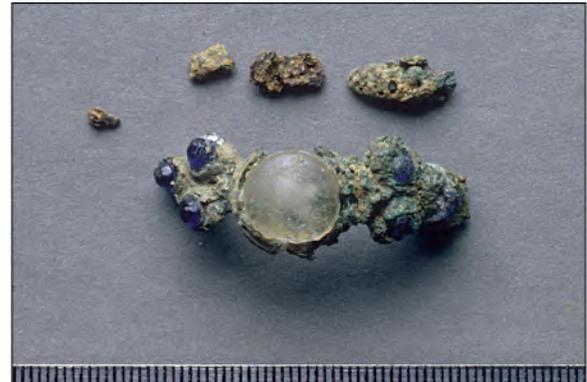


Figure 249. Copper-alloy ring with glass insets from Burial 242 (Catalog No. 1229-B.003). Construction is cast metal; the ring band and face were cast as one unit. Each side has three faceted blue glass insets. The colorless central glass inset is worn on the face. Diameter of center inset is 0.6 cm; diameter of blue glass insets is 0.3 cm. Ring portion was mineralized corrosion product. Band diameter is not measurable (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 250. Copper-alloy ring with glass insets from Burial 310 (Catalog No. 1486-B.001). Construction is cast metal; the ring band and face were cast as one unit. Each side had three faceted blue glass insets (diameters are 0.3 cm); one is missing. The central glass inset also is missing. Inside band diameter is 1.5 cm. The ring was found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal remains (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

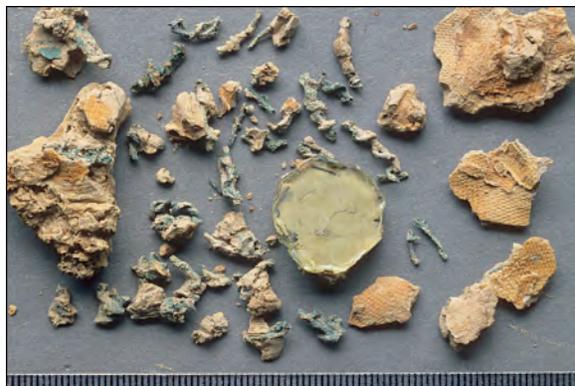


Figure 251. Copper-alloy and glass jewelry/ornament from Burial 186 (Catalog No. 987-B.001). The ornament appears to be a hand-shaped glass disk (plate or flat bottle glass) that was set in a wire filigree frame or base. Diameter of disk is approximately 1 cm. Textile and textile impressions are associated (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 252. Cast silver pendant from Burial 254 (Catalog No. 1243-B.001). Upper portion has a slightly twisted metal hoop (width is 1.6 cm, length is 0.9 cm) attached to a sphere (diameter is 0.9 cm). Attached to the bottom of the sphere is a jump ring from which hangs a pear-shaped dangle (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 253. Fragment of copper-alloy earring or pin from Burial 332 (Catalog No. 1608-B). The object is curved or bent and is attached to wood. It was recovered during cleaning of thoracic vertebrae. Inside diameter is approximately 0.8 cm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 254. Enamel jewelry/possible cuff-link or button face from Burial 211 (Catalog No. 1186-B.001). The oval face is of turquoise enamel, originally on a copper-alloy backing (dimensions are 1.4 by 1.1 cm) (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.



Figure 255. Enameled cuff link faces on copper-alloy backs, from Burial 371 (Catalog No. 1875-B.001). Dimensions of the faces are 1.4 by 1.1 cm. The background is turquoise; the decorative motif is white and pink (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

CHAPTER 14

Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Warren R. Perry and Janet L. Woodruff

This chapter describes an array of items—coins, shells, pipes, nails and tacks, crystals, unique objects, and botanical remains—that do not fit neatly into artifact assemblages organized around function and use or material, manufacture, and age.

The first part of the chapter provides a profile of the burials with these items. The items are described in detail in the section entitled “The Assemblage.” Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, methods of analysis, and where relevant, findings about manufacture, origin, and age. Burials with possible floral tributes are discussed in “Possible Floral Tributes.”

Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Twenty-five individuals, approximately 7 percent of the excavated burials, were directly associated with coins, shells, pipes, and other items.¹ Three other individuals had items for which provenience is considered tenuous. The burials are listed in Table 57. Burials where the association was problematic are noted on the table.

Eleven of these burials have been assigned to the Late Group, three to the Late-Middle Group, eight to the Middle Group, and three to the Early Group. The items may have been personal possessions and/or were placed with the deceased by friends and relatives. Examples of similar objects and placements from Africa and the African Diaspora will be discussed in the section entitled “The Assemblage.”

¹ The total used here is 376 burials, a count that includes burials for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be determined clearly.

Nearly half of the graves included here were considered to be from the post-1776 period of the cemetery. Although the numbers are small overall, there is some suggestion of a shift in practice toward people being buried with items such as coins, knives, or pipes. As explained in Chapter 9, Late Group burials probably occurred during the period of the British occupation of New York, when fugitives from distant places (including the city’s hinterland and colonies further south) made their way to the town; or from the period following the war, when the town’s population probably included many relocated/displaced persons. We therefore consider it possible that burial practices from the later years of the cemetery reflect diversity based on regional differences.

The Coin, Shell, Pipe, and Other Item Assemblage

Recovery, Condition and Treatment, and Chain of Custody²

Most items were observed during field excavation of the skeletal remains and were photographed and/or drawn in situ prior to removal. The crystal cluster from Burial 55, the quartz crystal from Burial 289, and the amber-colored glass sphere from Burial 410 were recovered during cleaning of the skeletal remains. The condition of the items ranged from excellent to structurally unstable. Treatment varied accordingly, with an effort to avoid invasive procedures.

² John Milner Associates supplied information about conservation and treatment (see LaRoche 2002).

Table 57. Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^a
22	2.5–4.5	undetermined	Middle	shell	adjacent to left clavicle
48	adult	undetermined	Early	knife	location not recorded
135	30–40	male	Late	2 copper coins, mica schist fragment	one in left eye socket, one on right shoulder; mica schist found during cleaning of remains
138	3–5	undetermined	Late	4 metal tacks	one at coffin headboard, one at right foot; two unknown (found during cleaning of skeletal remains)
147	55–65	male	Late	cluster of small copper-alloy rings (7) and pins (4)	between right humerus and ribs
158	20–30	male	Late	pipe bowl fragment	adjacent to right femur
165	adult	undetermined	Late	pipe stem and bowl	near left arm
186	0–0.17	undetermined	Late	unidentified iron object (possible nail)	left side of the cranium
197	45–55	female	Late	tacks	two in area between the ankles; three from unrecorded location
214	45–55	male	Late	coin, knife	coin and knife near left forearm
217	17–19	male	Late	peach pit	on coffin lid
230	55–65	female	Late	2 coins (1 with textile fragments attached)	one above left mastoid process; location of other not recorded
242	40–50	female	Late	2 coins	eye sockets
289	5–9	undetermined	Late-Middle	quartz disc	unknown; found during cleaning of skeletal remains
310	44–52	female	Middle	tacks	between lower legs
328	40–50	female	Middle	broken pot	coffin lid
340	39.3–64.4	female	Early	pipe	beneath the pelvis
348	1–2	undetermined	Middle	shell with nail	coffin lid
352	adult	male	Late-Middle	shell with iron object	coffin lid
365	adult	female	Middle	shell and metal object	coffin lid
375	16–18	female	Middle	clay ball with copper-alloy band, surrounded by cloth or leather	right side of right femur/pelvis
376	45–65	male	Late-Middle	coral	coffin lid
387	34–44	male	Early	oyster shells	coffin lid
405	6–10	undetermined	Middle	shell and nail	shell and nail recovered during laboratory cleaning of the cranium
410	adult	female	Middle	glass sphere	not recorded; found during cleaning of skeletal remains

Table 57. Burials with Coins, Shells, Pipes, and Other Items (continued)

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Items	Location in Grave ^a
Burials with Artifacts with Problematic Provenience					
15	11–18	undetermined	Late	metal fragment from an ox shoe	above right leg (next to builder's trench); association with burial unclear
55	3–5	undetermined	Middle	calcite crystal	found during cleaning of skeletal remains
313	45–55	male	Late	2 coins (missing from lab)	beneath the head (excavation notes altered)

^a Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter.

Staff of John Milner Associates took an initial series of color slides of some items, including the ox shoe from Burial 15, the coins, the clay ball from Burial 375, smoking pipes, and the rings from Burial 147. However, owing to their multivalent nature, some of the items described here were not immediately recognized as deliberate placements and were afforded less attention. A second series of photographs (color slides and 35-mm black-and-white) was taken in 1998, but neither the slides nor the negatives from the second series were salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Laboratory technicians with the Howard University Archaeology Team reexamined the assemblage from 1997 through 1999 and in 2001. Jon Abbott took final, high-quality photographs in August 2001, after which most items were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland. Some artifacts were left in New York at the World Trade Center laboratory, and were lost on September 11, 2001.³ The items stored at Artex were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2003, and returned to New York that September, where they were placed in coffins for reburial the following month.

Coins

Copper-alloy coins were found in direct association with four individuals: two men (Burials 135 and 214)

³ Unless otherwise noted, all artifacts were recovered and reburied in the coffins of the individuals with whom they were originally associated. Artifacts that were lost from the World Trade Center will be noted in the text.

and two women (Burials 230 and 242).⁴ All of the burials with copper coins were from the Late Group, and all were adults with ages estimated between 30 and 65 years. The New York African Burial Ground sample is small, but the fact that coins were found exclusively in Late Group burials of older adults suggests that the custom of placing coins on the eyes of the dead may have been adopted toward the latter part of the eighteenth century, and reserved for individuals at the upper end of the life cycle.

In addition to the coins found in these four burials, two silver coins may have been observed in association with Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. However, no coins from this burial were brought to the conservation laboratory, and the section of the original excavation records describing the coins and their location was erased. The records may have been altered because no coins were present; on the other hand, the erasure

⁴ Another coin was recovered from a disturbed context, apparently construction fill, within the grave shaft of Burial 259, a Late Group interment of a young adult, probably a woman, aged 17–19 years. This coin was similar to those recovered from the four burials mentioned. It was not reinterred and has been retained with the grave-shaft-fill artifact collection. Yet another coin was noted in the grave shaft of Burial 276, a coffinless Late Group burial of a woman between 20 and 24 years, well above the level of the human remains; however, the laboratory did not catalog a coin from this burial. An inventoried copper-alloy button from an uncertain context was probably misidentified as a coin in the field notes. This item was not included with burial artifacts because it did not appear to be associated with the deceased; furthermore, it was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. Finally, a coin was mentioned in field notes for Burial 328 in disturbed soil that could not definitely be associated with the interment. This coin was cataloged as part of the non-burial-ground assemblage and was destroyed along with the rest of that collection on September 11, 2001. It was identified in the 290 Broadway inventory as a George II halfpenny.



Figure 256. In situ photograph of Burial 135, showing copper coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) in left eye socket. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 257. Copper coin (George II halfpenny) from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B.002). Diameter is 30 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

may have been intended to conceal their discovery. In situ drawings and photographs do not depict coins in association with Burial 313.

All of the recovered coins were of copper alloy and were severely worn and corroded, with surface features no longer visible to the naked eye. Initial identifications were based solely on coin diameters. None of the coins was pierced. Coins were desalinated and mechanically cleaned with care in case surface features were extant. They were examined by eye and under magnification, but no features were perceptible. One of the coins from Burial 135 was examined further in a later discussion.

The 30–40-year-old man in Burial 135 appeared to have been laid out with a copper coin over each eye. One coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) was found in situ in the left eye socket (Figure 256), and the other coin (Catalog No. 880-B.002; Figure 257) lay above the right shoulder and probably had fallen from the right eye socket. Excavators noted that cloth and hair were preserved on the coins. The coin from the left eye was X-rayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 258) and surface features (e.g., the left-facing profile) were identified as those of a George II halfpenny, dating between 1727 and 1760. The other coin was too degraded to identify but may also have been

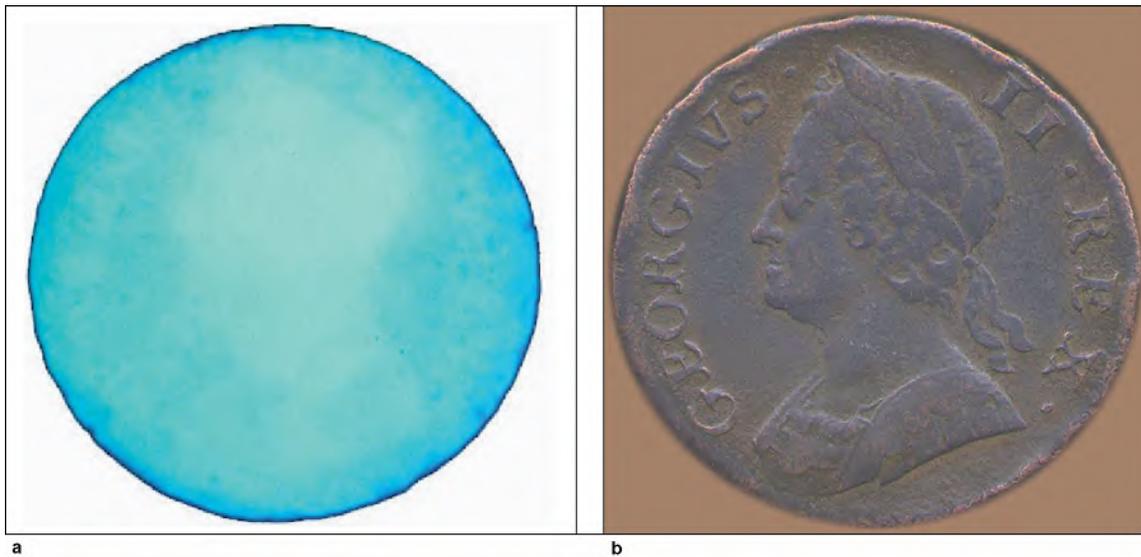


Figure 258. (a) X-ray of coin (copper George II halfpenny, obverse) from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B.001). Diameter is 30 mm. The left-facing profile and legend are faintly discernible on the surface of the excavated coin (X-ray by Metropolitan Museum of Art, supplied by John Milner Associates). (b) 1749 George II halfpenny from the numismatic collection at the University of Notre Dame Libraries (source: Jordan 1998). Figure 256. In situ photograph of Burial 135, showing copper coin (Catalog No. 880-B.001) in left eye socket. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 259. Copper-alloy coin from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.003). Diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 260. Copper coin from Burial 230 (Catalog No. 1216-B.003). Diameter is 29 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

a George II halfpenny. The coins were approximately the same size and were both of stamped manufacture. This grave also contained a fragment of mica schist that appeared to have been a deliberate inclusion within the burial (see later section discussing “other items”).

The 45–55-year-old man in Burial 214 had a single copper alloy coin situated between his left pelvic area and forearm. The coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003; Figure 259) was cast rather than stamped and its identification as a George II halfpenny is qualified at best. It differed in size from the two coins in Burial 135. A knife handle found with the coin is discussed in the later section discussing “other items.”

Burial 230 held a woman between 55 and 65 years of age who was interred with two cast copper-alloy coins of markedly different sizes. The larger coin (Catalog No. 1216-B.003; Figure 260) measured 29 millimeters in diameter and was found just above the left zygomatic arch, having probably slipped from her eye during or after her interment. The smaller coin (Catalog No. 1216-B.001) measured 22 millimeters in diameter, and its exact provenience was not recorded in the field notes. Fragments of textile had adhered to either side of this coin. The coin may have slipped from the right eye into her burial garb, or it may have been inside a pocket or a cloth purse buried with the woman.

The two cast copper coins associated with the woman in Burial 242 had retained their positions at her eyes. The coin from her right eye (Catalog No. 1229-B.001) measured 27 mm in diameter (Figure 261), and the one in her left eye (Catalog No. 1229-B.002) mea-

sured 26 mm (Figure 262). The woman was between 40 and 50 years of age when she died. She wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her right hand (see Chapter 13).

Copper pennies and halfpennies were probably the most common denominations circulating among captive Africans and other poor and marginalized people. The economic activities that enabled African New Yorkers to acquire clothing, ornaments, or extra food involved not just barter of services or goods but also outright purchase with exchange of currency.

The coins found at the New York African Burial Ground appear to have been common issues circulated in colonial New York after 1729. The only definitively identified coin, the British George II halfpenny from Burial 135, was minted from 1727 to 1760 but produced in large quantities from 1729 to 1754. George III halfpennies, similar to the George II coin, were minted from 1770 to 1775.

The placement of coins with the dead is known from various western ethnohistoric contexts. In Europe and its North American colonies, corpses were sometimes buried with coins meant as fares across the River Jordan (Coffin 1976:76). This practice appears to have been adapted from the Greek tradition documented in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, of placing coins in the mouths of the deceased as payment to Charon, the ferryman who conveyed souls across the River Styx to their postmortem domain. Coins were placed on the eyes of the deceased in England and other European countries well into the twentieth century (Roberts 1989:194–195). The placement was usually attributed to a need to hold the eyes closed for aesthetic reasons,



Figure 261. Copper coin from right eye socket of Burial 242 (Catalog No. 1229-B.001). Diameter is 27 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

but was probably rooted in the traditional belief that unless their eyes were weighted firmly shut, corpses would look for someone to accompany them into death (Coffin 1976:97; Frazer 1886:71; Richardson 2000:19).

Some African American burial practices included the placement of coins (or coin analogues) with the deceased. The custom of burying the dead with coins was observed in excavated cemeteries with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts, including St. Anne's churchyard in Annapolis, Maryland, and the First African Baptist Church cemetery in Philadelphia (Jones 2001; Parrington et al. 1989). Eight individuals at the latter cemetery had coins; most were found near the heads of the deceased (Parrington et al. 1989:75). No coins were found (in the eyes or elsewhere) in eighteenth-century burials excavated at Newton Plantation in Barbados (Handler and Lange 1978:201, 318), but evidence exists from other areas of burial with coins in more recent times. For example, excavation at a cemetery for enslaved Africans on Montserrat uncovered at least one burial that included a single "metal disc [that] may have acted as a token or fee for the return of the deceased's spirit to Africa" (Watters 1994:64). As at the New York African Burial Ground, coins were placed on the eyelids, in the hand(s) or pocket, scattered inside the coffin, or left on the grave surface. West African Ashanti burials observed in the twentieth century included parcels of gold dust "tied in the loincloth of the dead" (Habenstein and Lamers 1963:218), a finding that is not inconsistent with the New York African Burial Ground coins that appeared to be pocketed. A pierced silver coin, probably worn on a string, was noted in at least one burial in the nineteenth-century



Figure 262. In situ photograph of Burial 242, showing a copper coin in the left eye socket (Catalog No. 1229-B.002) and another immediately beneath the right eye socket (Catalog No. 1229-B.001). Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Cedar Grove cemetery in Arkansas (Rose 1985:75); this coin appeared to have been a protective amulet worn during life. As in European-American cemeteries, coins at the New York African Burial Ground may have served dual, multivalent purposes: both the pragmatic (closing of the deceased's eyes) and the spiritual.

Shells and Coral

Many of the grave shafts at the New York African Burial Ground held fragments of clamshell and oyster shell in the soil matrix, but in some burials, whole or partial shells were observed in positions suggesting deliberate placement in the grave. Burials in which the shell inclusions seemed deliberate were Burials 22, 348, 352, 365, and 387 (although the provenience of the latter was problematic).

The mechanical excavation, as well as recent and historical construction at the New York African Burial Ground, obliterated the surfaces of many graves, including those that may have offered insights into spiritual practices of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Africans in New York. The material that can be clearly associated with the burials, however, dovetails neatly with some West and West Central African



Figure 263. In situ photograph of Burial 22, showing a fragment of hard-shell clam above the left clavicle (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

practices as well as those known from the diaspora (see Vlach 1978; Thompson 1983). The shells at the New York African Burial Ground may have been placed as symbols of the deceased's passage through water to the spirit world and to represent his or her new identity as an ancestor. Clams and oysters were native to the waters surrounding New York, and the shells would have been easily acquired for placement on coffins.

A fragment of local hard-shell clam (Catalog No. 344-B) was found in Burial 22, a Middle Group burial of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old. The shell's position near the left clavicle (Figure 263) may indicate that the shell was strung and worn as a necklace, much like the adornment on the infant and child in Burials 226 and 254 (see Chapter 13). The shell fragment was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Three coffins had lid artifacts that consisted of both a shell and a piece of iron, which appeared to be deliberate placements. A clamshell fragment (Catalog No. 1702-CL.001) and an iron nail (Catalog No. 1702-CL.002) were recovered from the lid of Burial 348, a Middle Group interment of a child between 1 and 2 years old. The objects lay slightly to the left side of the hexagonal coffin near the shoulder break, corresponding to the child's upper torso area (Figure 264). The shell lay atop the nail, covering it completely. Both artifacts were lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Burial 352, a man of undetermined age assigned to the Late-Middle Group, had a whole oyster valve (Catalog No. 1719-CL) with an iron nail (Catalog No. 1719-CLA) on his coffin lid. This pair of artifacts was recovered from the coffin lid above the torso, much like the similar combination from Burial 348, which was located just a few feet to the east of



Figure 264. In situ photograph of Burial 348 coffin lid, showing clamshell fragment (Catalog No. 1702-CL.001) near coffin's left shoulder break. Excavators found an iron nail (Catalog No. 1702-CL.002) beneath the shell. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial 352. This pair of artifacts was also destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Burial 365, the Middle Group grave of a woman of undetermined age, had another permutation of shell-and-iron-artifact assemblage on her coffin lid (Catalog No. 1827-CL; Figure 265). In this case, the iron artifact was clearly not a nail, and instead of lying underneath the oyster shell, it curved around and nearly enclosed the shell. This oyster shell was of a different (although unidentified) variety than most of the oyster shells recovered from the New York African Burial Ground. This burial is further notable: in contrast to most of the burials at this site, the woman's head was oriented to the south rather than the west. This woman's skeletal remains may have been displaced (see Chapter 7). The shell and the iron piece were both lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

The Early Group Burial 387, of a man between 34 and 44 years, may also have had shell on the coffin



Figure 265. Detail of in situ photograph of shell and iron artifact from coffin lid of Burial 365. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

lid, but the provenience is less certain. Field records referred to the presence of oyster shell, including whole upper and lower valves, without specifying location in either text or drawing. Photographs of the coffin lid in situ show a whole oyster shell above the left femur. The shell was cataloged at the laboratory, but lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001.

Another shell and nail (Catalog No. 2071-B) were recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 405, a Middle Group grave of a child between 6 and 10 years. The artifacts were both associated with the cranial bones, although labeling did not indicate whether they were found together or separately.

Unlike clamshell and oyster shell, coral was exotic to New York harbors.⁵ Five specimens of coral were identified at the New York African Burial Ground, but only one appeared to have been deliberately included with a burial. It was recovered from the distal femoral area of Burial 376, a Late Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 65 years old. The specimen (Catalog No. 1895-B; Figure 266) was particularly large and may have been placed on the coffin lid at the time of burial. In keeping with the hypothesis that relics of the ocean may have been associated in multivalent fashion with Africa, the Middle Passage, and the spirits of the ancestors (Thompson 1983:135–138; Thompson and Cornet 1981:197–198; Vlach 1978:143), the coral's place

⁵ Several cowrie shells, also exotic to New York waters, were included in the strand of beads encircling the waist of the woman in Burial 340. They are discussed in Chapter 13.



Figure 266. Coral (*Siderastrea siderea*) from Burial 376 (Catalog No. 1895-B. Weight is 190 g. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

of origin became a clue to its spiritual, as well as archaeological, meaning.

In 1997, the coral specimen was examined by a series of researchers. The first investigator, Alan Harvey, Ph.D., Curator of Invertebrates at New York City's American Museum of Natural History, could not identify the species, as the sample was badly degraded and had lost its morphological structure. Subsequently, the coral was analyzed by Steven D. Cairns, Ph.D., Curator of Stony Corals at the Department of Invertebrate Zoology at the New York Aquarium. He identified the genus, but species remained undetermined. On Dr. Cairns' advice, the coral specimen was sent to Ian G. Macintyre, Ph.D., Sedimentologist and Research Specialist in the Department of Paleobiology of the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. Dr. Macintyre suspected that the coral may have been a fossil specimen when it was buried; thus he recommended that it be examined by Ann F. Budd, Ph.D. Dr. Budd is a Fossil Coral Taxonomist and Professor of Geology at the University of Iowa. Dr. Budd performed a thin section microscopy, which required that only a small sample of the coral be sacrificed, and determined that the coral was *Siderastrea siderea*, an Atlantic species found mainly in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and Bermuda. It is present in a lesser degree along the Brazilian coast, in the Gulf of Guinea, and along the coast of West Africa. Subsequent to the analysis, the coral specimen has gone missing and may have been destroyed in the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Pipes

Smoking pipes were found in direct association with skeletal remains in Burial 340 and in two cases that were less clear-cut (Burials 158 and 165).⁶

A whole, unused clay pipe was found in Burial 340, an Early Group interment of a woman between 39 and 64 years of age. The pipe (Catalog No. 1651-B.134; Figure 267) was placed within her coffin, beneath her body at pelvis level. Although the pipe was unused, its surface was rough in places. Its form is comparable to those of British pipes of the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.⁷ The pipe may have been a personal possession, but because it was unused, it may have been included as a talisman or a memento. The pipe was reburied with the woman's skeletal remains in October 2003. In addition to the pipe beneath her hips, the woman in Burial 340 was laid to rest with strands of glass beads around her right wrist and around her waist (see Chapter 13).

Burial 158 held the remains of a man 20–30 years old, assigned to the cemetery's Late Group. He was buried without a coffin, and a piece of a pipe bowl marked "IW" (Catalog No. 903-GF; Figure 268) was found adjacent to his right upper leg. Because only part of the bowl was present, this artifact may not have been a deliberate inclusion; however, the fragment could have been placed with the man because of the mark, suggesting that the lettering may have had some significance. Furthermore, the fragment was positioned such that it may have been held in the hand at the time of burial. Six additional pipe stem and bowl fragments (with bore diameters between $\frac{5}{64}$ and $\frac{7}{64}$ of an inch) were recovered from the grave fill in this burial. All of the pipe fragments were presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. The man was buried wearing a matched set of gilt copper-alloy cuff links (see Chapters 12 and 13).

⁶ Fragments of pipes were found in the grave shaft fill of 72 additional burials and are considered likely to have been present in the soil matrix rather than placed deliberately in the shaft. Their presence in the soil suggests they may have been placed on some other burial at some point in time during the cemetery's use, but it cannot be determined with which individual they were originally associated. These items are listed in the artifact inventory in Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume. Most were lost in the World Trade Center collapse.

⁷ Because pipes of this style spanned such a long period of manufacture, the pipe was not considered temporally diagnostic. Other evidence in this burial indicated that the grave was among the cemetery's Early Group; therefore, it is assumed that the pipe dated to the early side of this broad temporal range.



Figure 267. Clay pipe from Burial 340 (Catalog No. 1651-B.134). Bore diameter is $\frac{6}{64}$ inches (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Burial 165, a coffinless Late Group burial of an individual whose age and sex could not be determined, contained an articulating pipe bowl and stem fragment (Catalog No. 919-B), bored at $\frac{4}{64}$ of an inch, near the left forearm (Figures 269 and 270). This pipe was lost and presumed destroyed on September 11, 2001. Like the other pipes in direct association with burials here, this pipe appeared to be unused. The reason it was placed with the deceased is not known.

Unused pipes were found in burials at Seville Plantation village in Jamaica dating between 1670 and 1760 (Armstrong 1999:181), as well as in burials at the African settlement in Elmina, Ghana (DeCorse, personal communication 2003). Handler (1998) encountered at least one incidence of an undisturbed eighteenth-century burial in Barbados in which whole, unused pipes were placed at the chest and pelvis. It is noteworthy that in all of these cases the pipes in the burials had yet to be smoked.

Pipe smoking was probably very common among African New Yorkers of both sexes. The habit can sometimes be identified archaeologically by the presence of pipe notch dentition—worn areas created by clutching a pipe stem between the upper and lower teeth. Pipe notches were noted in some individuals excavated at the New York African Burial Ground, although not in the three with whom pipes were apparently buried.

Clay smoking pipes were ubiquitous throughout the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were mass-produced in both England and the Netherlands, shipped overseas, and sold inexpensively throughout the colonies. Tobacco was smoked in West Africa by the late sixteenth century, and millions of pipes were shipped there as well

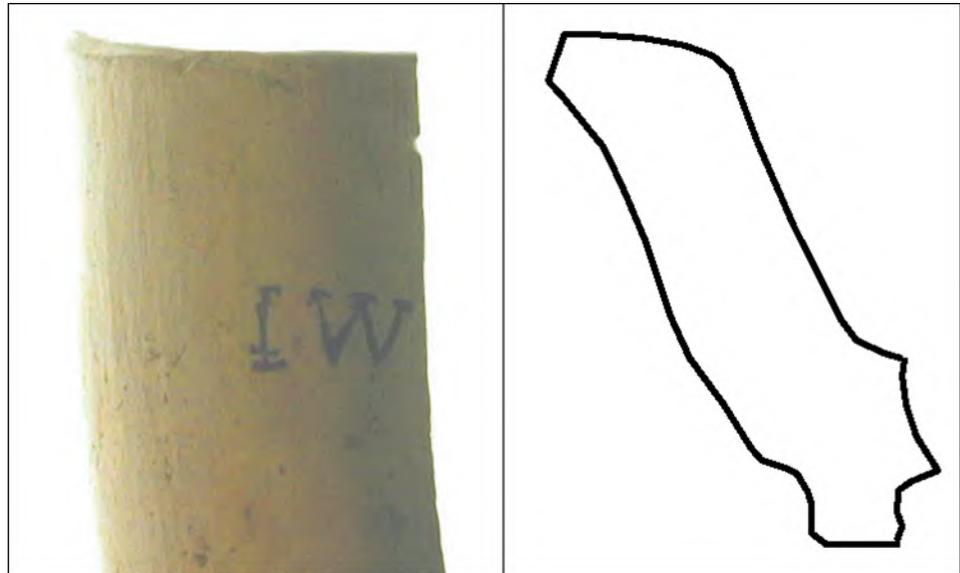


Figure 268. (a) Detail of clay pipe bowl, showing IW mark, from Burial 158 (Catalog No. 903-GF). Bore diameter is 5/64 inches (photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse); (b) Drawing of bowl shape.

during the period the cemetery was in use, mainly from Dutch suppliers but also from England and Rouen (Alpern 1995:26–27). Dutch pipes predominate in West African archaeological assemblages dated before the nineteenth century (DeCorse 2001:164). Doubtless, there were smokers among the captives brought to New York, as well as among those born in the Americas.

Pipes can be dated by shape, decoration, and makers' marks (and statistically by bore diameter if large numbers are in the sample).⁸ The pipes recovered from Burials 158, 165, and 340 were typical of the eighteenth century and were all probably of English manufacture, but exact dates and makers cannot be assigned.

The pipes and pipe fragments recovered in association with skeletal remains and from grave shaft fill were examined by Christopher R. DeCorse at the World Trade Center laboratory in 1998. Specimens that were possibly diagnostic or that were found in direct association with skeletal remains were brought to Syracuse University for further analysis. A complete inventory was made, and diagnostic pieces were photographed.

Subsequently, the pipes were returned to the World Trade Center laboratory, and those that were clearly in direct association with skeletal remains were prepared



Figure 269. In situ photograph of clay pipe stem and bowl near the left forearm of Burial 165 (Catalog No. 919-B). Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



Figure 270. Clay pipe stem and bowl from Burial 165 (Catalog No. 919-B). Bore diameter is 4/64 inches (photograph by Christopher R. DeCorse).

⁸ Stem-bore diameters of fragments from all contexts yielded a mean date of 1764. See Appendix E, Part 3 of this volume.

for reburial in August 2001.⁹ These were shipped to the Artex facility in Landover, Maryland, at that time. They were placed in coffins and reburied in October 2003.

Other Items

The historical contexts for acquisition of copper-alloy pins, buttons, and personal adornment items are discussed in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. These contexts pertain to the pins and small rings found with Burial 147, the banded ball found with Burial 375, and the glass sphere found with Burial 410. Each of these items or components may have been obtained through typical channels of purchase, gift giving, recycling, or appropriation, then reused and recontextualized, either by the deceased during their lifetime or by whoever prepared the body for burial.

The identification of some objects as talismans either belonging to the deceased or bestowed upon them at death is speculative but reasonable. Bundles or caches of pins, buttons, crystals, smooth stones, and other items excavated at domestic sites have been interpreted by archaeologists as conjuring items, medicinal or protective charms, or other *minkisi*-type religious paraphernalia of African derivation (see Brown and Cooper 1990; Kelso 1984; Leone and Fry 1999; Patton 1992; Paynter et al. 2005; Russell 1997; Wilkie 1997; for an introduction to African systems of divination, see Peek [1991]). Such caches may have been intended to identify the deceased, communicate with the spirit world, or as offerings to ancestors and spirits.

Burial 147, in which a bundle of pins and tiny rings were found together, poses the strongest argument for this practice, although other burials may have contained nonsurviving organic items placed with spiritual intent, as well as surviving materials not obviously recognizable as spiritual in intent. The identification of such items is complicated by their contexts: common household items were reused and imbued with meanings not envisioned or deciphered by manufacturers or slaveholders. The practice remained hidden to European eyes but surely was discernable to Africans.

Clay Ball with Copper-Alloy Band

Burial 375 contained a small ceramic ball (presumably a marble) with an embossed copper-alloy band

⁹ Pipes from grave shaft fill contexts remained in the laboratory, but were not salvaged after the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.



Figure 271. Ceramic and copper-alloy sphere with band from Burial 375 (Catalog No. 1886-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

wrapped twice around its circumference (Catalog No. 1886-B.001; Figure 271). It is one of the most interesting and unusual artifacts found at the New York African Burial Ground (see Figures 65 and 66 in Chapter 5 for a photograph of the burial and an in situ drawing of the object). This Middle Group grave held the remains of a woman between 16 and 18 years old. She had been placed directly in the ground with no coffin, with her arms crossed above her head and her legs extended. At her right hip was a mass of cloth or leather containing the ball. The soil immediately surrounding the object was not sampled. The omission makes it impossible to ascertain whether the ball was part of an assemblage of material that included botanical, faunal, or mineral elements. Such assemblages are usually contained within bundles, bags, or other wrappings, and are well known in African American ethnographic and historical accounts. No comparable artifact has been documented in the literature.¹⁰

Cluster of Rings and Pins

Burial 147 was a Late Group grave of a man between 55 and 65 years old, buried with a group of straight pins and small copper-alloy rings (Catalog No. 892-B.004) between his right humerus and rib cage (Figure 272). Four pins, three of which were precisely aligned along the arm bone, and 14 rings were counted

¹⁰ Spheres have been recovered from African American archaeological sites such as the W. E. B. DuBois birthplace in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Paynter et al. 2005), although the copper banding is unique to this artifact. The 20-mm-diameter ceramic marble from the DuBois site was of a type produced in Europe in the eighteenth century and may have been chosen for its “magic” or spiritual properties.



Figure 272. Detail from in situ drawing of Burial 147, showing three pins aligned along the inside of the right humerus, an adjacent pin on the right scapula, and a cluster of copper-alloy rings (diameters are 11 mm) between the upper arm and the rib cage. Scale is 1 inch = 6 inches (drawing by M. Schur).

during excavation; many of the observed fragments were too deteriorated to remove, and it is probable that many of the pieces were not collected. Although the field drawing clearly shows 14 rings, conservators recovered only enough fragments to reconstruct an arbitrary seven rings, each measuring 11 mm in diameter (Figure 273). The fragments were stabilized chemically and by mounting on a linen backing (LaRoche 2002).

At the time of burial, the rings were probably enclosed in a cloth pocket or sack pinned to the sleeve of the man's burial garment (see Chapter 11 for a discussion of shrouding). The group of pins and rings is considered a possible talisman or conjuring bundle of some kind.¹¹ No soil samples were collected from this part of his body; thus it could not be determined whether textile fragments or botanical remains were a part of the cache.

Concealing amulets on the body was (and is) a documented practice in many African cultures and in the

¹¹ The assemblage calls to mind a "luck ball," well documented in African American contexts (Hyatt 1935:799; Puckett 1926:229–234). Luck balls have been common forms of conjuration for many years and are well known among present-day Africans and African Americans as well (Handloff 1982:186–187, 189).

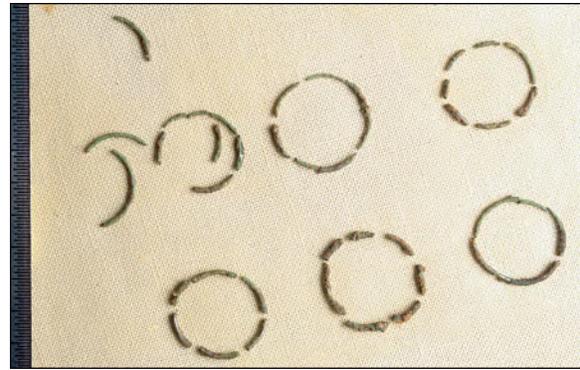


Figure 273. Copper-alloy rings from Burial 147 (Catalog No. 0892-B.004). Diameters are 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

African Diaspora. Handloff (1982:186–189) has noted the practice as having been used both historically and at the present in the Ivory Coast, including a reference to protective bracelets worn on the upper arms. During the nineteenth century, Asante warriors wore armbands called *kapo*, which were akin to *bansare* armbands worn in spiritual practice (McCaskie 2000).

Glass Sphere

A tiny, amber-colored glass sphere (Catalog No. 2082-B.001; Figure 274) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains from Burial 410, a Middle Group burial of a woman of unknown age. The exact location of the sphere was not recorded. The object was not perfectly spherical and may have been from a piece of jewelry, although no evidence of a setting was noted with this burial.

Knives

Two individuals, from Burial 214 and Burial 48, had parts of knives in association with their remains.



Figure 274. Glass sphere from Burial 410 (Catalog No. 2082-B.001). Diameter is 3.44 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

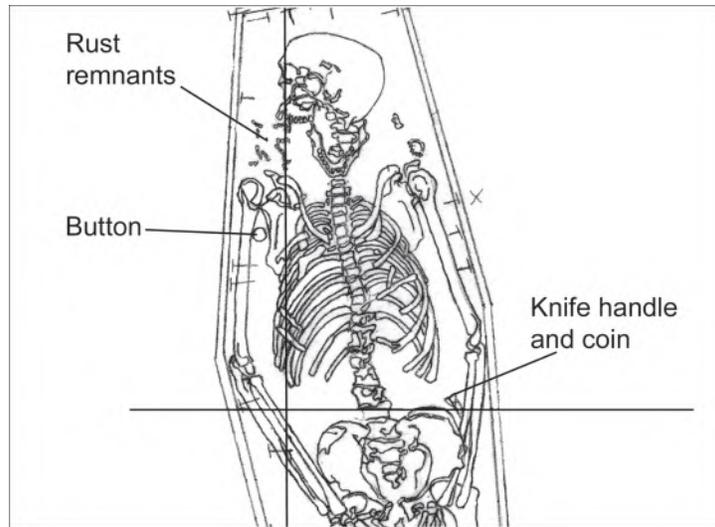


Figure 275. In situ drawing of Burial 214, showing artifact locations. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot; north is to the right (drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 276. In situ photograph of knife handle (Catalog No. 1191-B.005) and coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003) from the left pelvic/forearm area of Burial 214. The coin is visible above the right side of the knife handle, lying on a fragment of coffin wood. Scale is in inches (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

Burial 214, a Late Group grave of a man between 45 and 55 years, held a bone or antler and iron knife handle (Catalog No. 1191-B.005) about 8.5 cm long in close association with a single copper coin (Catalog No. 1191-B.003; see previous description of coin in this chapter; see Figure 259). Both artifacts were recovered from his left pelvic area or forearm, perhaps indicating that they were enclosed in a pocket (Figures 275 and 276). Douglas Armstrong's excavation of house-yard burials at Seville Plantation in Jamaica also found an example of a man, presumed to have been a captive plantation worker, buried with a knife in his left hand, perhaps similar to the placement of the knife in Burial 214 (Armstrong 1999:181; Armstrong and Fleischman 1993).

Conservators did not treat the knife handle, as it had been collected and sent to the laboratory along with the coffin nails. The handle was of bone or antler, the shank of iron (Figure 277).



Figure 277. Knife handle of bone or antler and iron, from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.005). Length is 85 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

A knife blade (Catalog No. 620-CHC) was found in association with Burial 48, an Early Group grave of an adult of undetermined age. It was originally identified as a probable nail, but the X-ray revealed a



Figure 278. X-ray of iron knife blade from Burial 48 (Catalog No. 620-CHC), shown at actual size (image courtesy of John Milner Associates).

likely blade (Figure 278). The item was not salvaged following the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Calcite Crystal, Quartz Disc, and Mica Schist Fragment

Laboratory personnel found a very small calcite crystal (Catalog No. 0792-B.003; Figure 279) while cleaning the skeletal remains from Burial 55, a Middle Group interment of a child between 3 and 5 years



Figure 279. Calcite-crystal cluster from Burial 55 (Catalog No. 0792-B.003). Width is 3.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

of age. The crystal was forwarded to the conservation staff, then to the American Museum of Natural History, where Mr. Sydney Horenstein identified it as nonlocal calcite. The nearest sources of similar crystalline calcite are north of Kingston, New York, or west of the Delaware River. It is also possible this crystal originated elsewhere, perhaps outside of North America. It is not possible to know whether the item was placed with the deceased or contained in the grave-fill soil.

A quartz disk (Catalog No. 1321-B.004; Figure 280) was recovered during laboratory cleaning of the remains in Burial 289, a Late-Middle grave of a child between 5 and 9 years. Because the disk was found in direct association with the skeletal remains, it was probably deliberately placed in the child's grave. According to laboratory technicians, the stone appeared to have been cleaved rather than flaked;

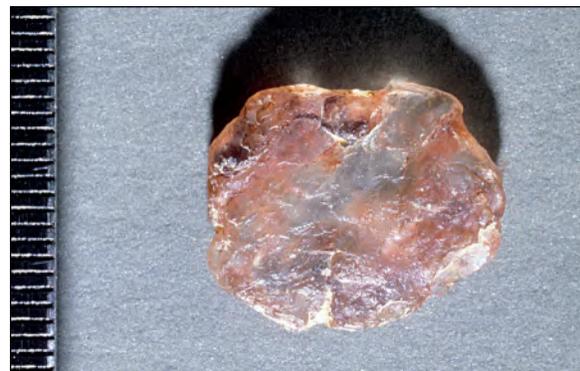


Figure 280. Rose quartz disk from Burial 289 (Catalog No. 1321-B.004). Diameter is 7 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

however, the flat, round shape may be the result of intentional modification rather than natural processes. Small stone or ceramic pieces were sometimes shaped into discs for use as game pieces; such items have been recovered archaeologically from colonial-era sites with an African presence, including the Broad Street site in New York City (Wall 2000) and the Isaac Royall House in Medford, Massachusetts (Royall House Association 1994). Alternatively, the disk may have been from a piece of jewelry, perhaps like the glass-and-wire-filigree ornament found with the infant in Burial 186 (see Chapter 13).

A small mica schist disk (Catalog No. 880-B) was recovered in the laboratory from within the soil pedestal of Burial 135, a Late Group interment of a man between 30 and 40 years of age (Figure 281). The circular piece measured 6 mm in diameter. Although



Figure 281. Mica schist disk from Burial 135 (Catalog No. 880-B). Diameter is 6 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

it was very small and its exact provenience was not recorded, the disk may have been a game piece or perhaps a “flash” placed for its reflective quality symbolic of water. In addition to the mica disc, Burial 135 held two copper coins, which were probably set over each eye. The multivalent secular-plus-spiritual purposes of the coins on the eyes reinforce the possibility that the mica disk may have been intended to attract the attention of African spirits.

Crockery

A large piece from a salt-glazed stoneware vessel with a blue spiral design (Catalog No. 1589-GF) was found on the lid of the hexagonal coffin in Burial 328, a Middle Group burial of a woman between 40 and 50 years of age (Figure 282). The portion of the site where she was interred was apparently cleared by backhoe to the tops of coffins, damaging them and compromising the eighteenth-century-era ground

Figure 282. In situ photograph of stoneware vessel fragment, Burial 328 (Catalog No. 1589-GF). North is at the top (photograph by Dennis Seckler).



surface. Nonetheless, this vessel fragment appeared to have been deliberately placed on the coffin lid, approximately level with the shoulder break. This area would have been directly over the woman’s upper torso. There is abundant ethnohistorical, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence for this practice from West and West Central Africa (see Agorsah et al. 1999:5–7; David 1992:197; DeCorse, 1999:148, 2001:101, 155, 157, 189; Denbow 1999:405) and from mainland North America (Brown 2001:90; Deetz 1996:206–210; Gundaker 2001:130; Jamieson 1995:49–51; Schuyler 1972:26; Thompson 1983:184; Thompson and Cornet 1981:76–94, 182–185; Vlach 1978:139–145).

Sherds from similar pots with identical designs were common in the grave fill and in the industrial features throughout the southeastern portion of the New York African Burial Ground. Therefore, we are reasonably certain that the pot was produced by the Crolius-Remmey potters on Pot Bakers Hill (see Appendix F, Part 3 of this volume:Plates F.21 and F.29). The stoneware pot from Burial 328 was missing at the time of the final New York African Burial Ground artifact inventory; it was not included in the analysis of the local stoneware from grave shafts and was never photographed in the laboratory.

As mentioned, a copper-alloy coin was recovered from a disturbed context within this burial (see Footnote 4, earlier in this chapter). A fragment of kiln furniture was also found in the burial, lying directly on the lumbar vertebrae.

Nails and Tacks

Nails and tacks that did not appear to be from coffin construction were found with four individuals: Buri-

als 138, 186, 197, and 310. The individuals in these burials had all been buried in coffins. Two of the burials with noncoffin nails and tacks were of infants or young children, and two were of relatively older (within this population) women.

Burials 197 and 310, both women in their forties or fifties, were buried in overlapping coffins adjacent to or crossing the projected fence line. The field drawing for Burial 310, a Middle group interment, illustrates seven tacks¹² between the proximal tibiae, loose but not widely scattered. Four tacks were identified in the laboratory, cataloged, and ultimately reburied with the woman's remains. Six other iron artifacts, listed as possible multiple tacks, were set aside to be X-rayed but were lost on September 11, 2001. The woman in this grave also wore a copper-alloy ring with glass insets on her left hand (see Chapter 13) and was positioned with her right arm crooked as though holding a child, although no other skeletal remains were present in the grave.

The field drawing for Burial 197, a Late Group interment, showed two small round iron objects placed rather precisely between the ankles. Laboratory personnel cataloged three possible tack fragments, which were lost on September 11, 2001, and thus not X-rayed for definitive identification. It is presumed that these three fragments included the two from the ankles.

Burial 138, a Late Group interment of a child aged between 3 and 5 years, held four tacks scattered throughout the coffin: one at the headboard, one at the right foot, and two found during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains.

An iron artifact, tentatively identified as a nail, was recovered from the left side of the cranium of Burial 186, a Late Group interment of a neonate or very young infant. The nail was in a provenience inconsistent with the coffin's construction (although it could have become displaced during the coffin's decomposition). The infant's head was also adorned with a glass disk set in a filigree of copper alloy (see Chapter 13).

Conservation treatment was limited to desalination and, in some cases, X-rays. After this processing, the tacks were forwarded to the Howard University laboratory.

¹² The exact count was uncertain because several iron pieces, believed to have been tacks, had rusted together into an unidentified mass. This accumulation was slated to be X-rayed, but was lost on September 11, 2001.

Ox Shoe

An iron mass later identified as a partial ox shoe or horseshoe (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001) was recovered from a somewhat unclear provenience in Burial 15, a Late Group burial of a child or adolescent between 11 and 18 years old. The artifact was found adjacent to the remains of the right leg; however, this grave had been disturbed and the skeletal remains truncated by later foundation construction, and the artifact lay at the interface between the grave and the construction trench (Figure 283), making the association of individual and artifact tentative at best.

Conservators cleaned the artifact in deionized water and removed some corrosion with a petroleum-distillate sequestering agent. X-rays revealed the item more clearly (Figure 284). The drawing based on the X-rays (Figure 285) depicts a morphology that is consistent with either an ox shoe or a horseshoe. It is similar to examples of horseshoes dating to the seventeenth through mid-eighteenth centuries (Noël Hume 1969:238) and to ox shoes recovered from Revolutionary War encampments in the New York area (Calver and Bolton 1950:218–219). One of the rectangular holes still contained a hand-wrought nail.

Horseshoes are a frequent component of grave surface decoration, and examples are known from African American contexts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to this association with the grave, horseshoes are commonly used as “lucky” devices among Europeans and European Americans as well as African Americans.

Peach Pit

Excavators recovered a peach (*Prunus persica*) pit from the coffin lid of Burial 217, a Late Group grave of a young man between 17 and 19 years old. The pit was collected in a wood sample and not noted in the field records, so excavators may have mistaken it for part of the coffin wood.

The pit was probably a deliberate inclusion rather than intrusive. It is unlikely that peach trees grew on the site during its tenure as a cemetery, as neither the pollen nor macrobotanical analyses turned up any other evidence of this species at the site. The grave fill shows no evidence of household dumping in the immediate vicinity, and the pit was directly upon the coffin lid.

Peach pits are a common component of African American conjuration bundles. Their use has been documented in the southern United States (Puckett 1926:437; Ruppel et al. 2003:326).



Figure 283. Iron ox shoe (adjacent to trowel handle at left side of photograph) at Burial 15 (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001). North is to the right (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

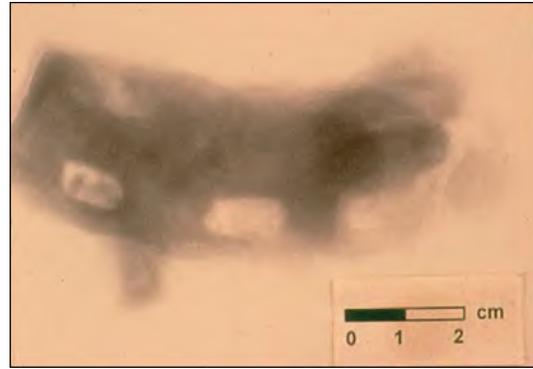


Figure 284. X-ray of ox shoe from Burial 15 (Catalog No. 0286-UNC.001) (image courtesy of John Milner Associates).

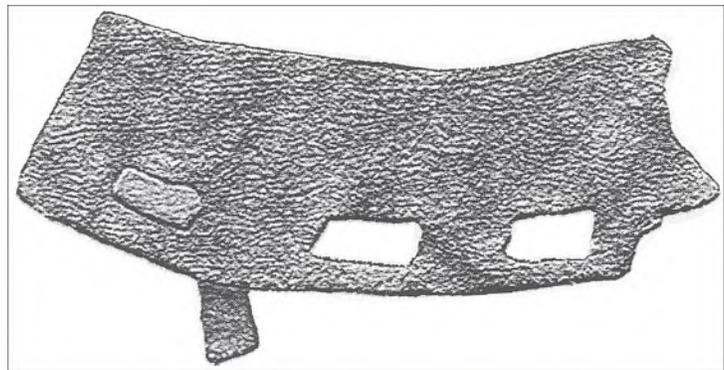


Figure 285. Drawing of ox shoe from Burial 15. Length is 3.5 inches (drawing by C. LaRoche and R. Schultz).

Possible Floral Tributes

Results of the analyses of pollen and macroplant remains from selected soil samples are presented in Appendix G, Part 3 of this volume. In this section, we summarize the possible evidence for flowers having been placed in graves as a component of funerary observance, based on the presence of pollen from flowering species. Table 58 lists the burials for which such evidence is considered. Macroplant remains (seeds) recovered from flotation or in the field have not been analyzed as possible evidence for flowers.¹³

Several burials contained honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*) pollen in the stomach soil samples. The variety that grows in the New York area is not widely

utilized for medical purposes; therefore, it is most likely evidence of floral tributes placed in or on the coffins. Honewort may have grown wild at the burial ground and could have been gathered there.

Burials that contained high relative percentages of honewort pollen included Burial 45 (a Middle Group grave of a very young child), Burial 115 (a Middle Group grave of a woman between 25 and 35 years of age), Burial 151 (a Late Group grave of a man between 35 and 45 years), Burial 210 (another Late Group grave of a man between 35 and 45), Burial 270 (a Middle Group burial of an adult man whose age was not determined), and Burial 392 (a Late-Middle Group burial of a man in his early forties to early fifties who was laid head-to-east in a rectangular coffin, wearing breeches and possibly a shirt).

Honewort flowers between June and September, which suggests that these burials took place during the summer months. Most were of men who were middle aged for their time. It is possible there was a

¹³ Seeds that were observed and recovered during excavation (as opposed to those recovered by flotation) were never identified as to plant species—they were lost in the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Pollen was analyzed for soil samples from only 28 graves, including 62 total samples from coffin-lid, stomach-area, and control samples. Distinct spectra between control and either lid or stomach-area samples was considered as possible evidence that plants had been placed with the deceased (or had been ingested). A full explanation of the methods and results of palynology is provided in Appendix G.2, Part 3 of this volume.

Table 58. Burials with Possible Floral Tributes

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex	Temporal Group	Pollen Evidence
45	2.5–4.5	undetermined	Middle	pollen of thorough wax, Queen Anne’s lace, honewort
115	25–35	female	Middle	honewort
151	35–45	male	Late	honewort
194	30–40	male	Late	chicory-type (Liguliflorae) pollen; this bouquet may have been gathered at the cemetery itself
210	35–45	male	Late	honewort
270	adult	male	Middle	honewort
392	42.5–52.5	male	Late-Middle	honewort

Note: See Appendix G in Part 3 of this Volume.

preference for inclusion of flowers in the burials of older men.

Burial 45, a Middle Group interment of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old, contained an assortment of pollen species that included honewort, thorough wax (*Bupleurum rotundifolium*), and several genera of carrot family (Apiaceae) pollen, which probably included Queen Anne’s lace (*Datura carota*). These species are all flowering plants that grow wild in the New York City vicinity. Based on the flowering season of the plants represented here, the child probably died during the summer.

Burial 194, a Late Group grave of a man between 30 and 40 years, contained a comparatively high level of chicory-type (Liguliflorae) pollen in the soil samples taken from the stomach and lid areas. The pollen may have been associated with the consumption of chicory leaves, which resemble dandelion greens,

shortly before death. However, because plant pollen is associated with flowers rather than leaves, it seems more likely that it represents a floral tribute, perhaps gathered at the cemetery and placed on the coffin at burial.¹⁴ Chicory-type plants are common wildflowers that inhabit a range of areas and soil conditions that were probably present at the site. If the pollen recovered was from a floral tribute, the deceased most likely was buried sometime between May and September, when this species normally blooms. This burial is also notable for the cedar plank attached to the coffin headboard as a grave marker (see Chapter 9).

¹⁴ It is assumed that coffins were already sealed when they arrived at the burial ground; thus, if the plants were gathered at the site, they must have been placed on, rather than in, the coffin. The high pollen content in the stomach area may have been from grains that filtered downward as the coffin and soft tissue decomposed.

CHAPTER 15

Summary and Conclusions

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

The New York African Burial Ground, located in lower Manhattan, New York City and County, proved to be the largest excavated African cemetery from colonial America and contained the largest sample of human skeletal remains ever studied from any African Diaspora cemetery, anywhere. The total number of graves identified in the excavated portion of the cemetery was 424, and the total number of individuals for whom skeletal remains could be inventoried numbered 419.

The area investigated archaeologically during 1991–1992 represents but a fraction—less than 4 percent—of the cemetery’s estimated original extent. Although the maximum footprint of the African Burial Ground is not known, the total area designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993 is approximately 7 acres, nearly 305,000 square feet. In contrast, the portion of the archaeological site where burials were excavated encompassed about 9,500 square feet. The site was located on Block 154, bounded on the north by Duane Street, on the south by Reade Street, on the west by Broadway, and on the east by Elk Street. Block 154 is now home to the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building and to a small, publicly accessible part of the cemetery where unexcavated graves are protected. The publicly accessible area is where the reinterment of the excavated remains was held in October 2003. This area memorializes all of the men, women, and children laid to rest at the African Burial Ground.

For much of the colonial period, New York City had a higher proportion of Africans in its population than any other urban center except Charleston, South Carolina. Nearly all African city residents lived under enslavement until after the Revolutionary War. Most would likely have been interred in the African Burial Ground, which was in use until 1795. Although no documentation about the cemetery’s opening has come

to light, the African Burial Ground may have originated as early as the middle of the seventeenth century and no later than the beginning of the eighteenth century; it may have contained 15,000 or more graves.

The occupants of the graves that were excavated archaeologically constitute a large sample but cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the entire cemetery population. Further archaeological excavation that could provide information about the majority of the individuals once interred in the entire African Burial Ground is not likely to be undertaken. Additions to the thin documentary record on the African Burial Ground may someday come to light, but for now, the skeletal and nonskeletal remains from the excavated site provide a unique window on Manhattan’s African community during the colonial and early federal periods.

Here we summarize the key archaeological findings presented in this report. We revisit the research agenda and the archaeological methods used to address it. We then review the findings and their implications and identify topics for future study.

Ancestors, Descendants, and the Research Agenda

Howard University’s New York African Burial Ground project is a bioarchaeological investigation conducted by multidisciplinary teams of archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians with expertise on Africa and the African Diaspora. Inaugurated in 1993 under a contract with the U.S. General Services Administration, the project’s investigation of the cemetery is an outcome of public intervention.

Archaeologists, bioanthropologists, and historians are accountable to their peers and professional asso-

ciations but also to their “ethical” clients—the people whose lives we study and the descendant communities our studies impact. Members of the descendant community and their allies were steadfastly committed to ensuring that the skeletal remains uncovered at the site were treated respectfully and reinterred with dignity, that African American scholars were appointed to direct the scientific study, and that the realities of enslavement in colonial Manhattan be brought to wide public attention.¹ Howard University’s New York African Burial Ground project owes much to the vigilance of African Americans and others who wanted to learn the truth about their urban predecessors and to recover a history that has been hidden for centuries. Their intervention was a crucial and deciding factor in how the project’s research agenda was designed and implemented.

Four overarching topics of concern to the descendent community were identified during public hearings. These topics included the cultural and geographical origins of the men, women, and children whose remains were uncovered at the cemetery; the quality of their lives under captivity; the ways they resisted enslavement; and the transformation from African to African American—in other words, the ways they made new identities and formed new communities.

The language of this report as well as its scope and substance addresses the concerns of the descendent community. The African American descendant community is multidimensional and ideologically heterogeneous. Even so, all felt that the term “slave” was insulting and outdated and expressed a strong preference for the use of “captive Africans” to describe the individuals laid to rest at the African Burial Ground. The term “captive African” differs substantially from the word “slave.” “Captive” used as an adjective rather than a noun avoids denoting the condition under which people lived as if it alone defined their identity. As a mark of respect for the African American community, whose members have the greatest right to speak for the black population of New Amsterdam/New York, the researchers under Howard University’s auspices refer to the ancestors with a phrase their descendants have chosen.

¹ The New York African Burial Ground project has an Office of Public Education and Interpretation that informs and involves the public in the scientific research. Based in New York City, the office is supported and operated under the auspices of the GSA. It was headed until September 2005 by Dr. Sherrill Wilson.

Location and Dating of the Excavated Site

Standard archaeological methods were used to turn the material record into information that might speak to the research agenda. Our first methodological task as historical archaeologists was to sort out the spatial and temporal dimensions of the excavated site. This involved systematizing the excavation and laboratory records, reconstructing the stratigraphic position of each grave, and charting the development of the cemetery during and after its use as a burial ground (see Chapters 1–3 and the site map, Figure 7, pocket map).

The historic African Burial Ground was situated at the edge of the Collect Pond, on the once-northerly outskirts of New Amsterdam/New York.² Farms owned by Africans and Europeans were established in the area in the 1640s. The cemetery may date back to that time. Although graves in the excavated portion may span much of the cemetery’s period of use, it is not possible to determine whether the earliest generations of captive Africans who labored in colonial Manhattan were interred within the excavated site.

The excavated site, which was in the northern part of the historic African Burial Ground, overlapped a former fence line that once separated the Van Borsum patent from the Calk Hook Farm; these two parcels of land were granted to Dutchmen during the second half of the seventeenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Van Borsum patent had come to be known as the “Negroes Burial Ground.”

The excavated site, and the cemetery as a whole, was dramatically impacted by several phases of development, civic and private, industrial and residential. The excavated site included a portion of the cemetery that was very densely used and a portion that was relatively thinly used (south and north of the fence line, respectively). It is possible the cemetery grew in area during its early period and then contracted during the second half of the eighteenth century as various kinds of development encroached. After 1730, factories such as the Crolius and Remmey pottery; institutions

² The location near water may have held spiritual significance for some of the African people who used the burial ground. In some coastal West African and West Central African communities, cemeteries were associated with bodies of water where spirits are believed to reside (Ferguson 1992, 1999; Samford 1994; Thompson 1983:135–138; Thompson and Cornet 1981:197–198).

such as a military barracks, an almshouse, and a jail; and residential construction including houses, fences, and outbuildings encroached upon the cemetery. With this encroachment, the density of interments and the superimposition of graves within the remaining ground would have increased.

After 1795, intensive, full-scale development covered the area, damaging or destroying some of the graves and bypassing others. Mechanical stripping of the site down to grave shaft outlines or, worse, the tops of coffins themselves, resulted in further loss of the original ground surface during the construction of the 290 Broadway Federal Office Building in 1991. This may have obliterated irreplaceable material evidence of early African American burial practices.

Relative and absolute dating of the graves was complicated by the paucity of material culture found in direct association with the skeletal remains and from within the grave shafts. We therefore used a combination of factors to establish relative temporal groups. Burials were assigned to one of four temporal groups based on physical features (fence lines and concentrated areas of pottery waste), artifact dating, burial stratigraphy and spatial patterning, and coffin shape (see Chapter 4).

The Early Group (n = 51) included adults with four-sided coffins that tapered toward the foot and the children associated with the adults. Many of the graves underlay, and some were truncated by, ensuing burials. Early Group burials seem to predate the heavy dumping of kiln waste from nearby potteries, which were in operation by 1730.

Most burials (n = 256) lacked strong evidence for earlier or later assignment, and thus were placed in a Middle Group (n = 198) or Late-Middle Group (n = 58). Stratigraphic relationships, and occasionally artifacts from grave shafts or coffins, were the primary criteria for inclusion in the Late-Middle Group. Because the temporal assignments are based on relative factors, the list of burials in the middle groups cannot be considered definitive or absolute. This holds especially true for children. The higher proportion of children in the Middle Group probably indicates that some of these children's graves should be assigned to the Late-Middle Group or even to the Late Group, but there is no way to sort out which ones.

Assignment to the Late Group (n = 114) was based on location north of the former boundary fence (which apparently stood until the British occupation of the

city during the Revolutionary War) and/or the presence of artifacts with a terminus post quem of similar or later dates; in a few cases, stratigraphic relationships to other burials was a determining factor. The removal of the fence is used to date the Late Group.

Burial Practices within the Excavated Site

Our second methodological task was to examine patterns in burial practice for the site as a whole as well as within and across each temporal group (Chapters 5–9). What was typical and what was unusual in how African New Yorkers interred their community's dead? Seven aspects of burial practice were examined: coffin use, grave orientation, body position, individual vs. co-interment, burial attire, the presence of adornment and other possessions or goods, and grave markers. In addition, we also looked at the cemetery's internal geography. Were the graves of men, women, and children arranged in configurations or distributed evenly? Was there any patterning along gender or generational lines?

Four of these variables showed remarkable homogeneity regardless of the deceased's age, sex, or temporal group assignment. These include coffin use (91.6 percent), body orientation with the head to the west (97.8 percent), extended supine body position (100 percent), and predominantly individual burial. Only two coffins contained more than one individual, and relatively few grave shafts were shared.

We think shrouding of the dead may also have been typical. Small, copper-alloy straight pins with wire-wound heads were among the most numerous artifacts recovered in direct association with the deceased—only coffin remains (see Chapter 10) outnumbered pins. Straight pins were observed in and/or recovered from half of the burials. In the absence of cloth or any evidence for street clothes, the use of winding sheets or shrouds without durable fasteners may reasonably be inferred (see Chapter 11).

The case for grave markers as a typical burial practice is unclear. Grave markers were observed in the southwest corner of the excavated site, an area where the original ground surface was still intact. Grave markers took the form of smooth stone cobbles (arranged on the ground in lines and, in one case, an arc, so as to demarcate a grave or possibly groups of graves) and of rectangular stone slabs (placed verti-

cally at the heads of the graves). Because such markers were found in the one area where their preservation was possible, we think it is likely that markers were used elsewhere at the cemetery. It is likely that a vertical wood post attached to the headboard of a coffin marked a grave (Burial 297) in the northern part of the site; presumably, the post extended above the ground.

Relatively few individuals appear to have been buried in street clothing (indicated by the types and locations of buttons and cuff links directly associated with the skeletal remains). Personal adornment and other goods were also unusual. Among the items recovered were glass beads (nine of which were likely manufactured in western Africa); finger rings and metal jewelry; and coins, shells, pipes, and unique objects such as a small ceramic ball with an embossed metal band. It is also possible that floral tributes had been placed in a few of the graves (Chapters 12–14).

Most burials were placed within a foot or two of neighboring graves, but the internal geography of the excavated site was not uniform. In addition to shared grave shafts, there were several locations where burials appeared either to have been clustered together or placed in possible rows.

The shared or possible shared grave shafts ($n = 27$) held two (but sometimes three) individuals, typically infants or young children ($n = 12$) or an infant or a child with an adult ($n = 12$ or 13). In some cases, the individuals in shared or possible shared grave shafts appear to have been interred at the same time; in other cases, there may have been an interval after which a second burial was placed in a grave shaft already in use.

Burial clusters encompassed individuals from different age groups (infants and young children interred near adults) as well as child burials and, occasionally, pairs of adults. Possible rows of graves (aligned roughly north-to-south) were easiest to discern in the northern part of the site, although some of these apparent rows may have extended all the way to the site's southern edge.

In the northern part of the site, where graves were not as crowded as elsewhere, burial practices as well as the demographic profile were somewhat distinct. There was a preponderance of men, and almost all of the coffinless burials were in this area. Clothing fasteners were more frequent, as were goods such as coins, knives, and pipes. We think that burial practices in this area reflect both a shorter period of use and a response to the demographic displacement and social

privation that accompanied the Revolutionary War. There was a large influx of fugitive Africans during the British occupation, followed by a mass exodus after the British troops decamped. With the exception of the northern part of the site, the graves of men, women, and children were distributed more or less evenly across the excavated space.

Differences in burial practices for men and women were not observed. Although men were more likely than women to have been buried without coffins, we attribute this to the increased presence of men during the Revolutionary War. Buttons were more typically associated with men, but because workingwomen's clothing from that era seldom fastened with buttons, it is not possible to state that men were more likely to be buried in street clothes. Pollen representing possible floral tributes was identified with more men than women, but the sample is too small to generalize from. The two south-headed burials for which sex could be determined held women; the four east-headed burials held either men or children.

Burial practices for adults and children differed in some ways. All children had coffins (with the exception of one infant who was buried in the arms of a woman), even in the northern part of the site, where numerous adults had none. The shapes of children's coffins appear to have varied throughout the site's entire time span; in contrast, adult coffins were more uniform once the shoulder-shaped variety was adopted (from the Middle Group on). One possible explanation is that children's coffins were more likely to be made by families rather than purchased. Pins were present in all age groups, but they were observed in a higher percentage of children's graves than adults' graves. Many adults had pins on the cranium only, which was much less common proportionally for children. Some infants had pins along their entire bodies, and a purely functional explanation is unlikely. It is possible pins had a special role in the ritual preparation of the bodies of youngsters.

Buttons were not found with children, but, as was the case with women, some pins may have fastened children's clothes. Adornment was just as likely to be found on children as on women (beads and rings) and men (decorative buttons and cuff links). Glass beads, a silver pendant, and a glass-and-metal-filigree ornament were recovered with young children and infants. Unlike adults, children could not have obtained adornments on their own; children's adornments had to have been gifts from adults, whether bestowed in life or at death.

Individuals and Communities

Variation in burial practice at a public cemetery in use for a century or more is not unexpected, particularly in a cemetery serving an urban community that continually absorbed newcomers from a wide range of cultures and places. Yet the scope of variation at the African Burial Ground was narrow. Viewed from the excavated site, a typical or “proper” burial in African New Amsterdam/New York entailed a coffin large enough to hold a supine, extended body that was probably covered with a shroud and placed head-to-west in a grave of its own.

We had assumed that a “proper” burial would have multiple configurations, because no documentary evidence about municipal or outsider oversight of the cemetery came to light. Municipal codes enacted during the 1720s and 1730s specified the time and size of black funerals but carried no stipulations about coffin use, grave orientation, burial attire, or the positioning of the corpse. No evidence indicating that white New Yorkers played a role at the gravesides in the African Burial Ground has been found (see Chapter 2).

It seems, however, that black New Yorkers may have arrived at a provisional consensus about how to deal with death early on.³ The consistency in the archaeological record suggests that a model of a proper burial was in place by the time the graves in the excavated portion of the cemetery had been interred. Conformity can be seen in the context of the individual’s relationship to family and to the larger community. Funerals were communal and public expressions of loss, transformation, and restoration, and the cemetery provided a space where such rituals could help to forge a developing African American identity.

It is clear, though, that the concept of a proper burial was elastic enough to accommodate the expression of individuality. Consider, for example, four distinctive interments in the excavated portion of the African Burial Ground. Each of the individuals (in Burials 340, 22, 101, and 147, one from each of our temporal groups), had a coffin, was probably shrouded, had been laid with the head to the west, and was in a grave of his or her own. Each also had skeletal indicators of work, illness, or nutritional stress that remind us of their likely common lot as captive laborers in an

eighteenth-century city.⁴ Each, however, was buried with distinctive items.

Burial 340, an Early Group grave of a woman between 39 and 64 years old, was buried with an African-style strand of beads around her waist. Her molecular genetic affinities point to West Africa, and her incisors were modified, suggesting African nativity—but skeletal evidence suggests a later life of hard labor and possible nutritional stress. Although skeletal preservation was generally poor, the bones showed several pathologies, including scarring on the femurs where the muscles attached and hypertrophy (the enlargement of an area of bone probably caused by repeated stress) on the scapulae and ulnae (shoulders and lower arms). Moderate osteoarthritis affected the hip and the vertebrae of the neck and lower back, and there was possible evidence of anemia in the cranial bone.

This woman’s distinctive African-style adornment seems to bespeak her commitment to her cultural ancestry.⁵ Women’s waist beads, associated as they are with femininity, sexuality, and female friendship, are recognizable as a form of adornment that had a wide geographical spread in western and central Africa.

Burial 22, a Middle Group grave of a child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old, was found with a shell (clam, of a species native to New York waters) located above the left collarbone. Perhaps the shell was placed in the coffin by mourners for its association with water, to mark the ritual transformation of the child’s status via an analogy between crossing through water and crossing from life to death. The use of shells in this manner is known from Africa and the African Diaspora. The child in Burial 22 was probably born in New York, and strontium isotope levels measured in the teeth support this assumption, as they fell within the narrow range of the other young children in the sample tested. During his or her short life, the child suffered from an infection or an injury that left scars on the bones of the lower and upper limbs.

⁴ The Howard University Skeletal Biology Team provided information on skeletal pathologies and on genetic and chemical analyses.

⁵ Although there appears to have been a substantial break in the continuity of waist-bead wearing in the African Diaspora, waist beads have in recent years become fashionable among some African-descendent women in the United States as a way of reclaiming and proclaiming their African identities. A similar practice may be the African American “nation sack,” a bundle or bag of varied materials worn on a string around a woman’s waist. A nation sack is intended to protect the wearer rather than to ornament her. It is worn beneath the clothing and is seen only occasionally by close female kin, never by men.

³ The author thanks Grey Gundaker for articulating the idea of a “provisional consensus” with reference to burial practices.

The coffin that held the child straddled two underlying adult burials, one of a woman (Burial 46) and the other of a probable man (Burial 29). The child and the adults were part of a cluster of graves bordered by a row of white cobblestones, apparently water-smoothed rocks. This style of grave marking has been observed throughout the African Diaspora over a broad temporal span. The relationship of the child to others in the community probably guided the placement of the grave within this cluster.

Burial 101, of a man in his early thirties, was assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Lead levels in his teeth were consistent with African birth, although strontium isotope levels overlapped the ranges of both American and African birth. Preservation of the skeleton was excellent, and several pathologies were observed, including bone scarring owing to inflammation from bacterial infection or injury on the cranium and legs. The muscle attachments at the man's elbows were enlarged from stress, mild to severe arthritis affected his joints, layers of his teeth indicated that he experienced nutritional stress in childhood, and cavities were severe (he probably had abscesses and perhaps infections of the surrounding bone). The tibiae were malformed consistent with a condition called "saber shin," suggesting he had yaws.

This man's coffin lid was decorated with a heart-shaped design formed of tinned or silvered iron tacks with an interior pattern formed of smaller tacks.⁶ Heart-shaped decorations may not have evoked the same meanings for Africans as for Europeans. The coffin design may have called to mind the Sankofa symbol (Figure 286) that originated with the Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast; the symbol



Figure 286. One version of the West African Sankofa symbol (source: MacDonald 2005).

⁶ Iron tacks may have been chosen for this coffin based on the symbolic importance of iron in some African cultures (Puckett 1926:218; Thompson 1983:52–61) and in African American conjuration (Puckett 1926:208, 230, 237, 252, 277, 478).

refers to of the need to remember one's ancestors (Chapter 8).⁷ If the mourners who interred the man in Burial 101 viewed the heart-shaped decoration as a Sankofa symbol, then the design on the coffin lid would provide evidence of the portability of expressive culture and its importance to cultural survival. The multivalence of a familiar sign provided the opportunity to incorporate an African symbol into a funeral observance.

Burial 147, one of the Late Group graves, held the remains of one of the oldest individuals in the excavated sample, a man between 55 and 65 years old when he died. His arm and leg bones had scarring from infection or injury, and the sites of muscle attachments were enlarged from repeated stress. Moderate to severe osteoarthritis affected all of the major joint complexes and the spine. Porous bones of the cranium and eye orbits suggested nutritional stress in childhood, possibly anemia, and childhood nutritional deficiencies were also recorded in his teeth (hypoplasias).

The man was buried with a cluster of small copper-alloy wire rings between his upper right arm and chest. Pins that were aligned precisely along his right upper arm indicated that cloth may have been attached in that location, possibly enclosing the rings—perhaps an armband or underarm pouch. The rings may have been part of a conjuring bundle of some kind, which would have been concealed on his person in life. This elderly man may have had powers that were offered to or sought out by others in the community. His conjuring apparatus went with him to the grave, perhaps pointing to a close association of the items themselves with the practitioner. The location of the burial, in the northern part of the cemetery, suggests that he died during or after the Revolution, and it is possible he was one of the many refugees who came to the city during the war.

⁷ James Denbow offers another interpretation of the Sankofa/heart shape. His study of heart-shaped designs on tombstones dating to the early twentieth century in the Loango coast of West Central Africa found that the "heart" was perceived as the location of "the soul of the inner body, called *mwela* [...] manifested physically by the breath" (Denbow 1999:412). Thus, Denbow saw the heart shape as representing the soul of the deceased. Perhaps the symbol was recognized (although differently) by both West and West-Central Africans. As Fennell (2003:23–24) has noted, symbols become widespread through cultural contact, and cultures assign nuances of encoded meaning to them. However, Denbow also cites earlier sources that considered the soul to be contained in the head and represented heads as "cruciform and helioform" (Denbow 1999:413). The "heart" as a two-lobed, pointed-base figure does not necessarily represent the concept as it would have been expressed in the eighteenth-century Loango region.

Ancestors, Cultural Roots, and the Transformation of African to African American Identities

Characteristic of today's African American sensibility is the apparently straightforward query, "Who are your people?" This question asks both "Where did you come from?" and "How do we relate to one another?" The abhorrent circumstances under which people were separated from their families and homelands complicate the search for origins and cultural roots of African-descendant people throughout the African Diaspora. The multidisciplinary New York African Burial Ground Project has developed new lines of data, and a host of questions, about the origins of early African New Yorkers, through historical research, preliminary genetic and craniometric data, and archaeological analysis.

As noted, the project's history volume (Medford 2009), highlights the scope of the trade in captives and the range of societies from which the burial ground population derived. The skeletal biology volume (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009a) has examined the physical remains of the ancestors for indications of their places of origin. Their research found a range of probable birthplaces, from the continent of Africa to the Caribbean to New York. The archaeology has been less specific in its investigation of roots. But what we do observe in a number of instances is that even if today we cannot read specific places in Africa from the material record, we can read that people were declaring to one another that their people were African.

Although none of the objects associated with distinctive burials precisely answers the question of origins, the mobilization of material culture is a thread that appears to run through the temporal groups. It would not be surprising if materials and associations that held particular significance in Africa continued to be important to African people in New York. The deceased may have been people newly captured from Africa (possibly in Burials 101 and 340), a child born into captivity in New York (Burial 22), or second- or third-generation African Americans whose forbears maintained and transmitted African cultural practices despite, or as a respite from, the brutality of their lives in North America (the elderly man in Burial 147). The material from these graves clearly points out that at least some of the African people of eighteenth-century

New York remembered and honored their ancestral traditions.

Future Research

The archaeological excavation of the New York African Burial Ground has opened a window on how Africans under slavery cared for their dead in a key center of colonial America's urban north. It makes sense, then, to design research agendas around the findings the burial ground's archaeological record has brought to light. Future research might focus more deeply on how African New Yorkers used the burial ground for community purposes of their own. Several lines of investigation show promise of providing a fuller grasp of the cemetery as a setting for reshaping social ties within and across generations:

1. The connections among individuals interred in close proximity, be it within the same grave shaft or within a burial cluster. Genetic analysis of the remains might reveal kinship or home-place ties between the individuals in these graves. Such information, if coupled with data on nutrition, disease, and physical trauma, might yield a more fine-grained picture of the biocultural experiences that marked kin, compatriots, or friends whose graves were clustered together.⁸

2. Rural-to-urban migration during the Revolutionary War and its immediate aftermath. During the 1700s, the promise of freedom pulled Africans from near and far to New York City, but the movement of blacks into Manhattan accelerated during the British occupation. A systematic look at documentation relevant to Africans on the move after 1776, along with a close examination of the bioskeletal signatures of Late Group burials, might furnish insights into the social/regional roots of the burial patterns and material culture in the northern part of the cemetery.

3. The social and material production of a "proper" burial in the independent black churches that provided burial facilities after the African Burial Ground had closed. How was the "proper" burial of the seventeenth/eighteenth century reconfigured in the liturgies and in the burial yards and vaults of the city's nineteenth-century black churches? Were the accoutrements, logistics, and divisions of labor that

⁸ We assume that African people buried at the cemetery formed families—quite simply, the birth of children would have begun families, and however strained the logistics of maintaining ties, family relationships would have built exponentially.

constituted a “proper” burial altered during periods of heightened social suffering, such as the yellow fever or cholera years? Using the New York African Burial Ground as a baseline might offer a more sophisticated grasp of how a rite of passage is remade when the organizing structures in the world around it have changed.

We suggest a new look at one of the key stories of early African American history in New York, the founding of the AME Zion and St. Philip’s Churches. It should make a difference if one imagines, as we do, that the African Burial Ground provided an institutional basis as well as founding personnel for the churches. The African Methodist and Episcopal churches might have had a century-and-a-half’s worth of African and then African American religious philosophy and ritual practice upon which to build.

More generally, the information obtained from the New York African Burial Ground archaeological investigation adds significantly to an ever-growing database on the historic material culture of the African Diaspora. It is hoped that the findings reported here will be useful to a large research community. For example, changing ritual practices of African descendant people and the symbolic dimensions of their material culture should continue to be interrogated through African eyes. Symbols, especially those used by oppressed populations, are not necessarily accessible to outsiders; the multivalent aspect of symbolic practices enables divergent meanings to be cloaked. Historical archaeologists, with input from historians, anthropologists, and folklorists, continually explore new ways to recognize and interpret symbols used by African Americans. Fresh examination of objects and their associations should continue to be fruit-

ful, and it is hoped that items recovered at the New York African Burial Ground will become part of this broader project.

The archaeological data from the New York African Burial Ground should continue to be analyzed within a worldwide context. This site did not exist in a historical, geographic, or cultural vacuum. As important as the African Burial Ground is, the excavated site offers but a glimpse of African life in a cosmopolitan center of colonial American. The burial ground adds to a growing multidimensional perspective on Africans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it bears closer comparison to other sites in Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean.

The African Burial Ground will not be forgotten again. This can be attributed to the keen interest of African descendants in their community’s material past as much as it can to the insights and data compiled here. The research offers new avenues for teaching and learning about the people of the African Diaspora and for hearing their long-stifled voices. We hope this report, along with the skeletal biology volume (Volume 1 of this series) and the history volume (Volume 3 of this series) will inspire and educate both academics and the public. We also hope to engage students, colleagues, and the public in a broader examination of the African American past and to create inclusive histories that transform our views of the past, the present, and the future. Creating inclusive histories involves breaking down boundaries between the academy and African American–descendant communities so that we all can learn from oral history, apply African American perspectives on material culture, and create memorials that honor the long history of the African Diaspora.

Epilogue

Warren R. Perry

The African Burial Ground has become a symbol of the strength, spirit, and agency of African descendant people in New York over nearly four centuries of exploitation and inequality. The site has attracted tens of thousands of visitors and is the focus of deeply felt reverence by many people in the United States and Africa and throughout the African Diaspora.

The Rites of Ancestral Return culminated in New York City on Friday, October 3, and Saturday, October 4, 2003. Four individual coffins, representing the men, women, boys, and girls among the ancestors, were conveyed in a procession up Broadway to the African Burial Ground Memorial Site. The event was both a funeral and a celebration, and the ceremonies



Mother Delois Blakely heads the procession of the coffins from Wall Street to the African Burial Ground (photograph by Sherrill D. Wilson).

were exhilarating, as well as profoundly solemn. An overnight vigil marked the ancestors' last hours away from their rightful resting place.

Dr. Michael Blakey and the Institute for Historical Biology at the College of William and Mary, which he now heads, invited New York African Burial Ground Project staff and researchers to attend a Friday night

reception in the Presidential Suite at the Millennium Hilton Hotel. Following this event, several members of the Howard University research teams returned to the site to pay final respects to the ancestors before the next day's re-interment ceremonies.

It was nearing midnight when we arrived at the memorial site. It had been a long and emotionally charged day, but each of us felt drawn to spend a last few personal moments with the ancestors, remembering them not as the subjects of scientific research but as living people who had endured lives of pain and struggle, love and sadness, strength and meaning.

Most of the day's attendees had left by this time. Among those who remained were several members of the descendant community who had spoken out and advocated for the ancestors since the early 1990s, among them Mother Delois Blakely, Queen Mother Jordan, and the Chief Alagba Egunfemi Adegbolola. The night had gone chill and the spotlights had gone out, but the descendants that remained seemed to draw light and heat and sustenance from the presence of the once-forgotten ones who were returning to their rightful place.

We offered our farewell to the ancestors and turned to leave, passing by the memorial site and the platform on which many of the descendants still clustered. As we walked up Elk Street, a young man ran up from behind. Mother Blakely had sent him to ask for elders for the naming ceremony. "Would we come back to participate?" the young man asked.

Our first impulse was to offer a polite excuse and continue on. It was cold, we were tired, and the morning's observances were but a few hours away. But the voices of the ancestors resounded in our heads:

Were we not cold?

Were we not tired?

Did we not wish for home and rest?



Wooden coffins, hand carved in Ghana, held the ancestors' remains for reburial at the African Burial Ground (photograph by Anne and Jon Abbott).

We could not refuse this summons, on the eve of their reburial, and we returned to the site, where Dr. Michael Blakey, as the project's scientific director, was to be named in the African tradition. We spoke in low voices, which could not have been overheard: "I

am cold," and at that moment a blanket was offered; "I am tired," and a chair appeared almost from thin air. We felt as though the ancestors had acknowledged our sincerity in returning to the vigil and favored us with respite from our discomforts.

It has been a tremendous privilege to work for the New York African Burial Ground Project. "Privilege," in this case, is not to be confused with "ease." In many ways it has been one of the most difficult projects we will ever conduct. It was also one of the most spiritually rewarding. We have been blessed to be offered the opportunity to share a fraction of the ancestors' experiences: the hard work, the setbacks, the pain of loss. We also have been blessed by the strength and sense of purpose that comes from building a cadre of committed workers. Much as the ancestors built new social networks, cultures, and identities for themselves, the people who have worked and fought for the African Burial Ground have shared deep bonds. The ancestors inspired us to keep moving forward through our tribulations and to keep in mind that our commitment was to honor their courage, strength, and dignity.

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BLOCK 154
STRUCTURE F
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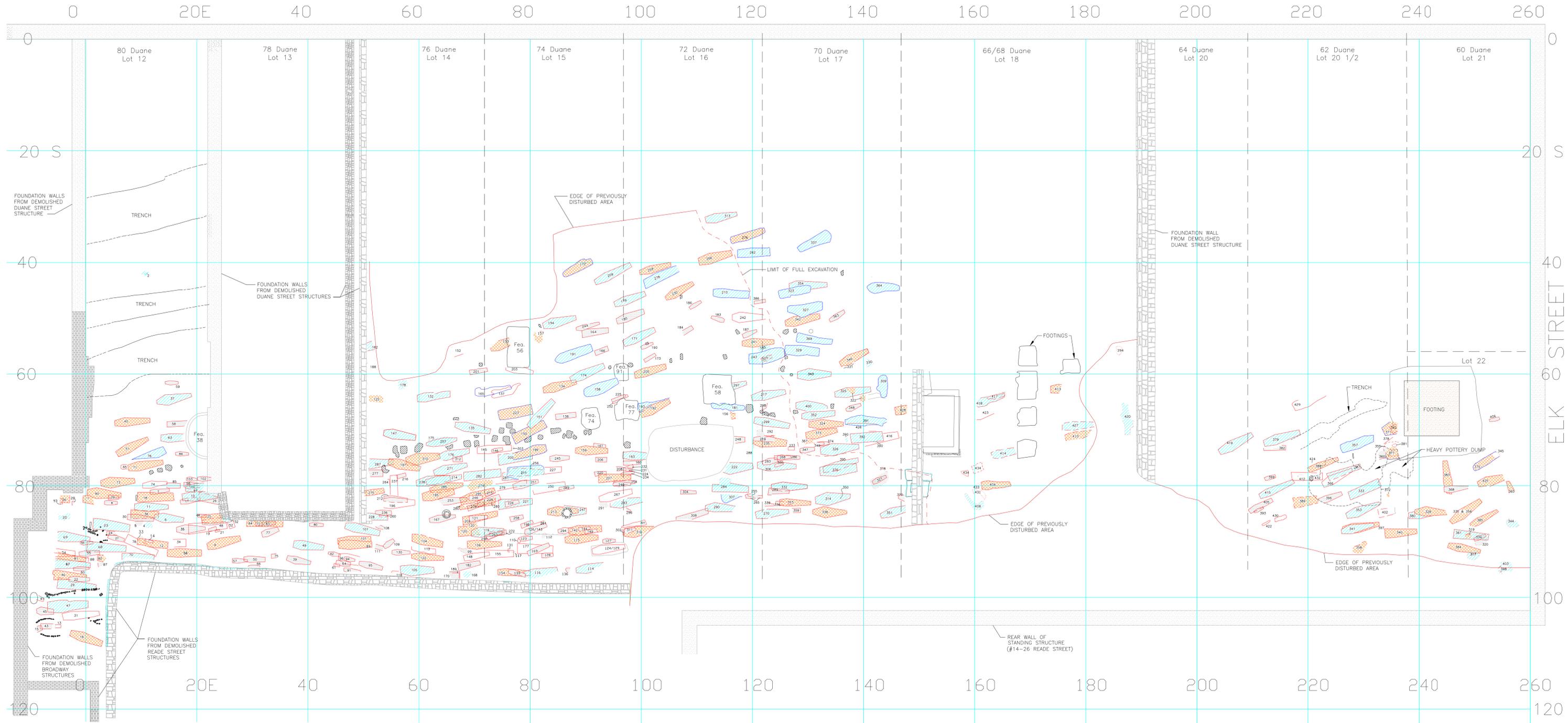
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DUANE STREET



- Coffin
- No Coffin
- Adult Male
- Adult Female
- Adult Undetermined
- Infant / Subadult
- Post Holes

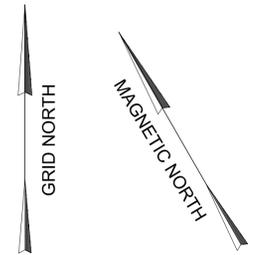


Figure 1.7
 New York African Burial Ground
 Archaeological Site Plan
 Prepared for: The United States General Services Administration