

The most important mystery archaeologists needed to solve was the function of the Market Master's House. They knew the Lowndes family owned the property up through the early 19th century, but they did not know who lived there. The building was named during the mid-20th century by an author who assumed this small stone cottage must have housed the man who managed the adjacent market square; however, there is no historical basis for this assumption.



Sample of historic period metal alloy clothing buttons.

In an attempt to learn more, archaeologists excavated around the north (front), east (side yard), and south (back) yard areas to search for evidence of outbuildings and artifacts. While digging in the front yard of the house, they noticed patterns in the soil created from digging postholes and a drip line formed from water running off of a roof. The location to the house suggests an overhang may have extended out a few feet from the building sometime during the 18th century. In addition, excavators found wheel ruts preserved in the solid clay indicating a wagon road came right up to the front of the Market Master's House. Concentrations of 18th century refuse were discovered over a foot deep in front of the house while most of the mid- to late 19th century refuse was found in the backyard.



1865 copper 2 cent piece (back), copper alloy button (back), copper alloy Christian cross from necklace.

After two seasons of fieldwork and hours of historical research, archaeologists learned that this stone building may have been used as a store. Archival research revealed that Benjamin Lowndes inherited the Market Master's property and the mercantile business after the death of his father, Christopher Lowndes, in 1785. After Benjamin Lowndes' death in 1808, his son, Christopher Lowndes, inherited the property. The executors of Benjamin Lowndes' will advertised the following property for rent and the contents of the store for sale:

"The Subscribers will rent the house in Bladensburg, which was occupied as a Store by the late Mr. Benjamin Lowndes, also the large Brick Building which has been used as a Warehouse and Granary. The situation of the store premisses [sic] being convenient to the water side, to one of the best Tobacco Inspections in the state, and also to a fertile extensive country, render them a object of attention to a person who wished to engage in a business on a limited or extensive scale, they will sell for cash the stock of goods now in the Store, consisting of a valuable assortment of DRY GOODS, Groceries, Iron Mongery of different sorts, Earthen Ware, China, and many other articles that would be wanted in a country Retail Store" (Advertisement, The Washington Federalist, 23 February 1809)

The archeological record supports the interpretation of the Market Master's House as both a residence and store. The artifact assemblage from the 18th and 19th century suggests whoever lived in the house may have been a single person of low to moderate socio-economic status. The interpretation of wealth is based primarily on the discovery of cheap meat cuts from cows and pigs. Often, dietary remains are directly linked with a person or family's wealth. Interestingly, the ceramics from this same occupation include a variety of types, including expensive decorated tea wares one would expect to find in merchant households. In fact, Richard Henderson, a merchant who lived next door, has a less impressive ceramic assemblage than the Market Master's House. The disparity in cost between the ceramic assemblage and faunal remains is only curious if the site was



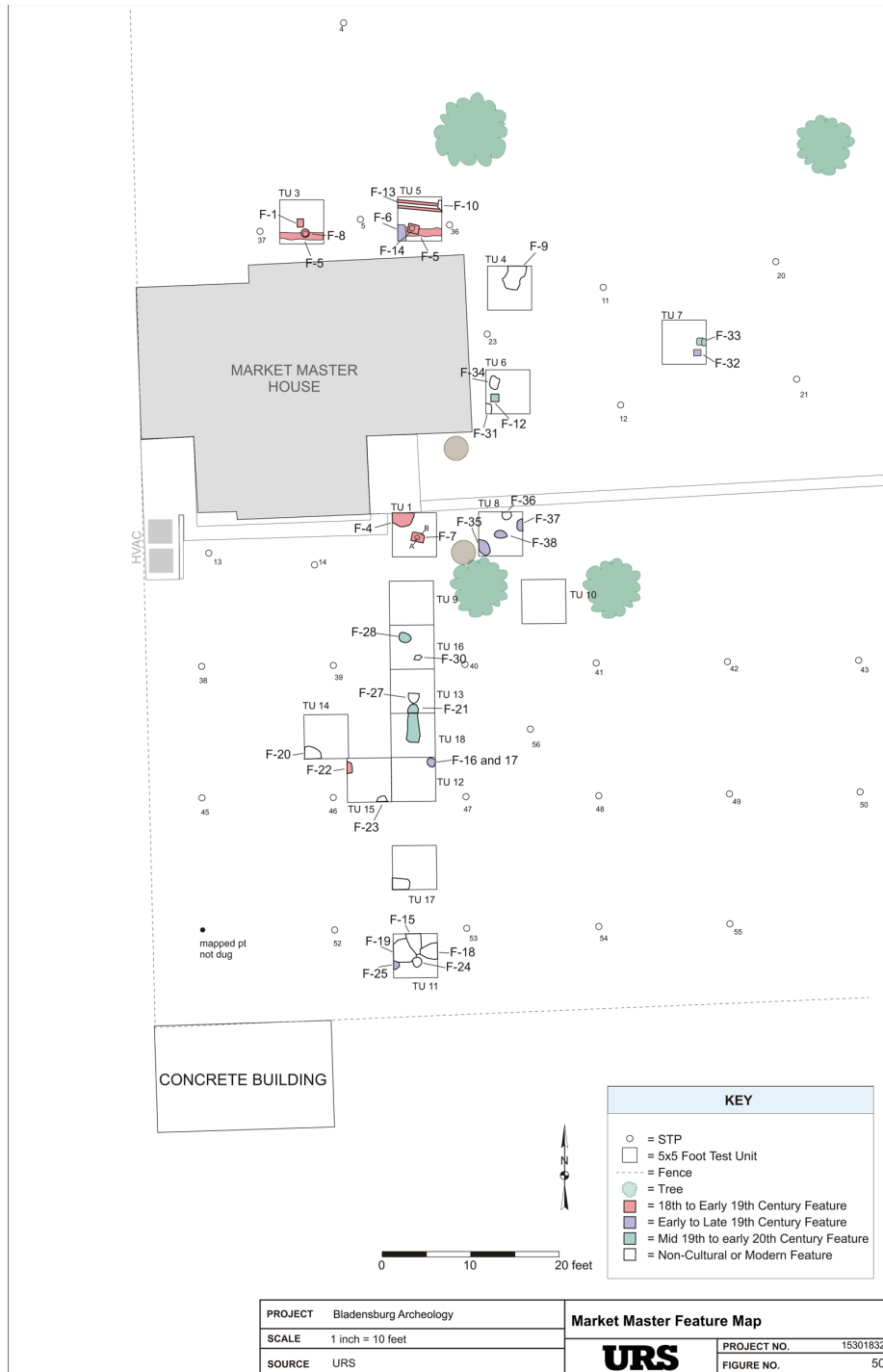
strictly used as a domestic residence. In other words, this pattern fits with the site's potential function as a store. The faunal remains (waste bone from food consumption) are likely associated with a tenant while the ceramic sherds may have been store goods damaged during the oversea voyage or broken in the store where they were then tossed out the front door or windows.



Early 20th century makeup compact.

Despite digging in an urban neighborhood, prehistoric artifacts dating up to 10,000 years ago, were found just feet from the highway. The discovery of a discrete and dense concentration of metarhyolite lithics, including debitage (stone flakes) and three Susquehanna Broadspear projectile points, suggest Native Americans brought unfinished bifaces to the area to form into projectile points sometime between 1000 B.C. to 2,500 B.C. Additional tools identified at the site suggest brief periods of occupation during the Early (8,000 B.C.-6,500 B.C.) and Late Archaic Periods (2,500 B.C.-1,000 B.C.). A sparse, but well-defined, ceramic scatter of Mockley and one Pope's Creek sherd, dating to the Middle Woodland Period (500 B.C. – A.D. 900) was also found in this area.





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