

Chapter 1 Introduction

(Last updated: Jan. 4, 2009)

New Philadelphia, Illinois, is nationally significant as the first town in the United States planned in advance and legally founded by an African American. Frank McWorter founded the town in 1836, and it grew as a multi-racial community through the nineteenth century. The town was planned and platted in a grid pattern with 42 acres of space, divided into 20 blocks, 144 lots, alleyways, and several streets. The community population reached a peak of approximately 160 people, 29 households, and merchant and crafts operations as listed in the 1865 federal census. New Philadelphia was bypassed by a new railroad in 1869 and the population declined steadily thereafter. By 1885, the status of the community as a town was eliminated and large tracts of the land were put into agricultural use. Today, no structures from the town remain above ground, and the town site is covered by prairie grasses and agricultural fields.

Archaeological and historical studies of New Philadelphia were undertaken in the period of 2002-2006, with support in 2004-2006 provided in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates (NSF-REU) program (Grant No. 0353550). Archaeological and historical studies based on work conducted in 2002-2006 have been reported in previous publications, including those presented on two inter-linked public history web sites maintained by the University of Maryland (<http://heritage.umd.edu/>) and the University of Illinois (<http://www.anthro.uiuc.edu/faculty/cfennell/NP/>). Background information and studies concerning the history of New Philadelphia, its founder, and the regional contexts in which the community existed, are available in those earlier publications, and are not repeated here. Our 2006 archaeology report (Shackel et al. 2006) provides a cumulative overview of research work and results up through that publication date. Historical studies and accounts of Frank McWorter and New Philadelphia include those of Ensign (1872), Chapman (1880), Grimshaw (1876), Matteson (1964), Simpson (1981), Walker (1983, 1985), and Burdick (1992). This 2008 report is intended primarily to provide a concise overview of developments and research results in the period of 2006-2008.

2004-2007 Program Results and related Developments

Some overall observations can be made concerning the results of our archaeological and historical research in 2004-2006 (Shackel et al. 2006). Archaeological work through the end of the 2006 field season uncovered over 65,000 artifacts, faunal and floral remains, and the locations of twelve house and business structures, including a grocery and a blacksmith operation. There appears to have been no racial segregation of property locations within the town. The locations of residences and businesses of African Americans and European Americans were spatially interspersed in the town during the nineteenth century. We uncovered no archaeological evidence of violent destruction of properties within the town, even though the community was located within a region sharply impacted by racial strife. Most structures and occupation sites appear to have been concentrated in the landscape covered by the north-central portion of the town plan. Archaeology revealed early house sites not indicated in historic-period documents, such as deeds, tax ledgers, and census records. Community members in the nineteenth century likely utilized a mix of architectural styles and building methods, including

frame, log, wood post, stone, and brick construction. Residents enjoyed access to local, regional, and international commodities from the outset of settlement of the town. Ceramic housewares were similar in style, expense levels, and types of assemblages across house sites of both African Americans and European Americans. There may have been some variations in dietary and culinary practices based on the region of origin or ethnic background of particular families who moved to New Philadelphia (Shackel et al. 2006).

Based upon the success of the archaeological investigations in earlier years, the archaeology project succeeded in placing the town site of New Philadelphia on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. Project efforts now include continuing work towards nominating the New Philadelphia town site for National Landmark status, an effort headed up by Ms. Charlotte King and Prof. Paul Shackel, Director for the Center of Heritage Studies at the University of Maryland. While over 80,000 properties in the United States have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, fewer than 2,500 have received this higher distinction as a National Historic Landmark. A hearing was convened on October 29, 2008, by the National Historic Landmarks Committee, which voted unanimously to approve this nomination. Patricia McWorter presented an eloquent and moving statement on behalf of the McWorter family at that hearing on the powerful legacies of New Philadelphia and Frank McWorter. This nomination received official support from U.S. Senators Barak Obama and Richard Durbin; U.S. Representatives Ray LaHood and John Shimkus; Illinois Senators Deanna Demuzio, Emil Jones, Jr., and John Sullivan; and Illinois Representative Jil Tracy, among others. Upon final approval by the Secretary of the Interior, the New Philadelphia town site will be formally designated as a *National Historic Landmark*. Ms. King, a graduate student at the University of Maryland, has also authored an excellent lesson plan based on the history of New Philadelphia as part of the National Park Service's *Teaching with Historic Places* program (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/>).

The 2004-2006 NSF-REU field schools at New Philadelphia were also very successful as educational programs. Our recruitment efforts were very effective in addressing a primary goal of the NSF's REU program by attracting the participation of students of diverse heritage backgrounds and students from small colleges and historically black universities and colleges. Applications in the 2004-2006 period came from students at dozens of such colleges, and our enrolled students included numerous individuals of African-American, Native-American, Asian-American, Latin-American, and European-American heritage. Our enrolled students came from historically black colleges and universities (e.g., Tuskegee University and Lane College), small local schools (e.g., Quincy University and Hannibal-LaGrange College), and liberal arts colleges, at which such scientific research opportunities were not otherwise available. We received 30 to 50 applications for each summer's field school from students across the nation. Our enrolled undergraduate students came from colleges and residences in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

Each of the 27 students who participated in our programs in 2004-2006 benefited greatly from the training and education they received. A few examples will illustrate such student successes. A student of African-American heritage from Tuskegee University concentrated her studies on African-American history, and followed up her work at New Philadelphia by applying

to graduate programs in history. With the training she received in the NSF-REU program, and a supporting letter of reference from one of our co-principal archaeologists, she was admitted to Ohio State University's graduate program. As a result of participating in our field school in 2004, a second student shifted her undergraduate focus to archaeology, and is now a graduate student with a focus on historical archaeology. A third student, of African-American heritage, has similarly benefitted from our field school experience and training and is now enrolled in a graduate school program in anthropology, with a focus on African diaspora subjects. A number of our students also co-authored papers on New Philadelphia that have been presented at professional archaeological conferences.

We have promptly published reports and underlying data obtained in the 2004-2006 program to a broad and diverse array of interested stakeholders and audiences, including professionals and students in archaeology, history, and African-American studies, descendant community members, and local community members. We have published these reports and extensive archaeological, geophysical, and documentary data sets through our public archaeology web sites. These publications and diverse data sets on our internet sites are being used by college instructors as undergraduate lesson plans for research methods in history, archaeology, and African-American studies. We have created these extensive internet resources for the use of other researchers, stakeholders, and broad public audiences in a way that significantly contributes to the available "cyberinfrastructure" of interdisciplinary research, a goal also strongly promoted by the NSF-REU program.

Our earlier published reports and data compilations include: 2004 Archaeology Report; 2005 Archaeology Report; 2006 Archaeology Report; 2004-2006 Geophysics Survey Report; 2005 Shovel Test Survey Report; 2002-2003 Field Walkover Survey Report; Hadley Township Census Data; New Philadelphia Census Data; Deed Records of New Philadelphia; Report of Newspaper Archival Transcriptions; Report of Oral History Transcriptions; Hadley Township Tax Assessments for New Philadelphia; New Philadelphia National Register Nomination; and Maps, Surveys and Plats related to New Philadelphia. Members of our project have also published articles about archaeological investigations at New Philadelphia in the following publications (among others): *Illinois Antiquity*; the *Society for American Archaeology Record*; *Living Museum*; *Outdoors Illinois*; the *Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*; and the *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*. In addition, the results of the New Philadelphia project have been presented through papers and posters at a number of professional archaeological conferences, including those of the Society for American Archaeology, Society for Historical Archaeology, Midwest Archaeological Conference, and Illinois Archaeological Survey. A number of those papers were co-authored by undergraduate students who participated in the NSF-REU field schools, including studies entitled "Archaeozoology at New Philadelphia" and "Ethnic Identities and Consumption Patterns: A Minimum Vessel Count Analysis at New Philadelphia."

We are also preparing to publish a collection of articles about this long-term research project in a specially edited issue of a peer-review journal and are at work on other articles and books. Our findings and interpretations to date are scheduled to be published in an official monograph series reviewed and published by the Illinois State Museum (ISM). This publication series, entitled the *Illinois State Museum Reports of Investigations*, utilizes ISM and external

peer reviewers, and has previously published studies by distinguished scientists such as Patty Jo Watson, Melvin Fowler, Jane Buikstra, and George Milner. In addition, we have a specially edited, thematic issue of articles on New Philadelphia accepted for publication in *Historical Archaeology*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Society for Historical Archaeology.

With support from the University of Illinois' Research Board, Ms. Nanguo Yuan, a professional landscape architect educated in Beijing, China, and a graduate student at the University of Illinois, worked in 2007 to consolidate data sets useful for landscape and archaeological analysis of the New Philadelphia town site and related cultural features in the area. She standardized and consolidated data from Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) topographic surveys, extensive laser transit measurements, and a variety of ground-based archaeological and geophysical surveys into a Geographic Information System (GIS) database platform. Ms. Yuan also worked with members of the local and descendant communities of New Philadelphia to create visual renderings of potential approaches to preserving and presenting the town site to public audiences in the future.

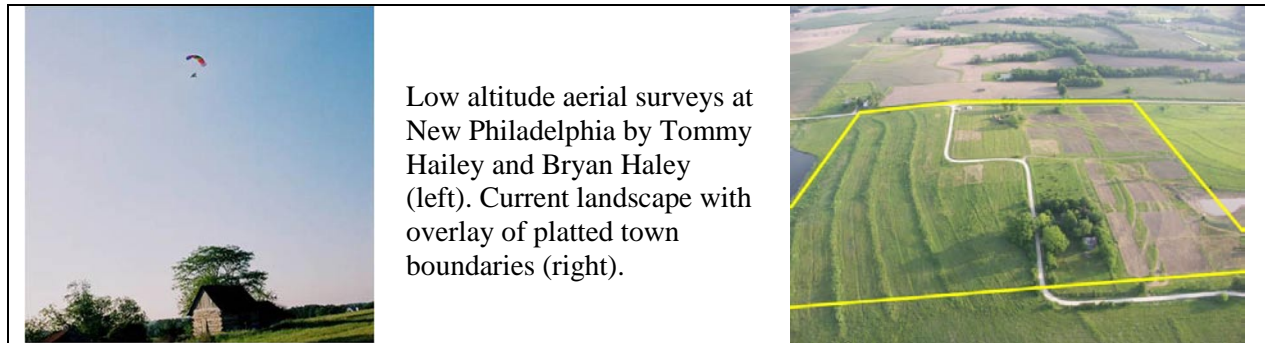
While our targeted surveying and excavation methods proved highly successful in our work up through 2006, we had only excavated approximately 2,300 square feet of the town surface at New Philadelphia, which represents less than one percent of the town's spatial extent as planned in the 1836 plat. Challenging research questions concerning the impacts of ethnic, racial, and market dynamics on household development and the social and economic relationships among town residents can best be addressed with increasingly robust data sets. With ongoing support and research activities, we hope to compile larger data sets with which to address these research questions in the most complete manner we can, and also to further contribute to the overall success of the NSF-REU program.

2007-2008 Aerial Thermal Survey Project

Federal and state census records, tax records, and deeds provide extensive data about the residents of New Philadelphia. However, such historical documents do not provide a specific spatial map of household and merchant locations. Archaeological survey and excavations can map those locations in much greater detail to provide a richer data set for the social history of this community. The 1836 plat provides a plan for the town, including a grid pattern of streets, alleys, and lots, but the question remains as to whether this design was followed as the town developed. Indeed, newspaper reports during the town's existence indicated that town residents did not adhere to planned property lines in their building activities. Archaeological excavations at the town site have also uncovered early structures for which documentary evidence from deeds and other historical records provided no indications.

A number of archaeological survey and prospection methods have been employed previously at the New Philadelphia town site by collaborating researchers. These survey methods have included a pedestrian survey and surface collection of a large portion of the town site. Dr. Michael Hargrave has conducted approximately 6.5 acres of surface-based geophysical surveys at the town site, utilizing electric resistivity and magnetic gradient sensors (Hargrave 2006). Due to the large size of New Philadelphia as platted (42 acres), it is not practical to attempt surface-based geophysical surveys of the entire town site.

In June, 2007, the National Park Service and National Center for Preservation Technology and Training awarded a grant to test the usefulness of low-altitude aerial surveys employing high resolution thermal imaging at New Philadelphia. We planned to employ this methodology at the town site for a new and specific purpose: determining whether this technology can detect the grid pattern of an historic town site buried beneath 1-2 feet of agricultural fields and prairie grasses. Prof. Tommy Hailey of Northwestern State University in Louisiana and Bryan Haley of the University of Mississippi have pioneered the techniques used in combination in this survey approach, collecting survey data utilizing a powered parachute ultralight aircraft and a high resolution thermal camera (Hailey 2005).

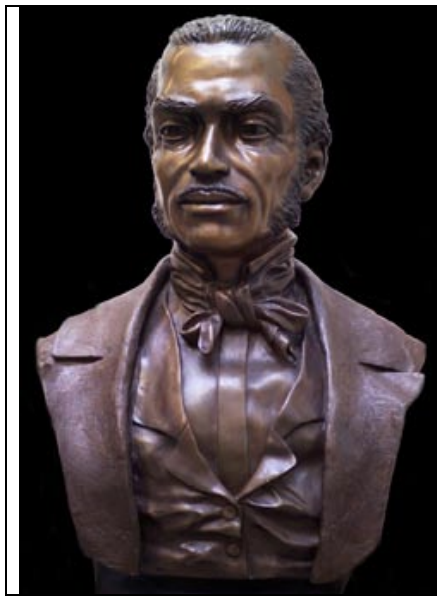


The initial data collection through this aerial survey was completed successfully at the town site in the week of May 12, 2008. The data sets from this aerial thermal survey are being geo-referenced and integrated using spatial mapping programs, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, and the creation of mosaic imaging representations. The survey results can then be examined in relation to a geo-referenced version of the 1836 town plan and other comparative data from archaeological investigations. The results of this aerial survey project will also be published in articles to be submitted to peer-reviewed journals. If successful, this technique will provide an extremely useful resource for applications on numerous similar sites throughout the nation. Portions of the resulting data were ground-tested at the site during the excavations phase of the ten-week field school in June, 2008. Preliminary results from the aerial survey have also identified thermal anomalies that appear to correspond with known locations of subsurface stone foundation remains. Researchers plan to further test thermal anomalies identified in this aerial survey through soil core sampling probes, targeted ground-based geophysical surveys, and excavations in future field seasons.

Overview of 2008 Research and Educational Activities

In early January, 2008, our collaborative group of researchers received funding from the NSF-REU program for another three years (2008-2010) of field school research at New Philadelphia (Grant No. 0752834). The archaeological and historical research work in the period of this grant will be co-directed by Anna Agbe-Davies (DePaul University), Terrance Martin (Illinois State Museum), and Christopher Fennell (U. Illinois). Our plan for these ongoing archaeological investigations at the town site is designed to further enhance our knowledge about the social dynamics of this remarkable community and its surroundings while conserving the site for future generations of visitors and researchers.

One month after news of the new grant, members of the McWorter family, other descendant family members, and members of the local community, gathered at the Lincoln Presidential Library on February 28, 2008, to commemorate African-American History Month. The group presented the Library with a bronze bust of Frank McWorter, sculpted by Shirley McWorter Moss, and a bound, eleven-volume set of archival papers and archaeology reports. Shirley McWorter Moss, Sandra McWorter, Allen Kirkpatrick, Kathryn Harris, Janet Davies, Anna Agbe-Davies, Terry Martin, and Chris Fennell spoke at the gathering.



Frank McWorter, founder of New Philadelphia, Illinois. Sculpture by Shirley McWorter Moss on display at the Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield (Photo courtesy of Sandra McWorter and Lincoln Presidential Library).

We also organized a series of public speakers and audience discussions on the subjects of *African-American Heritage in the Midwest* to be held in June and July of 2008. This program provided a forum for lectures and broad audience discussions of subjects concerning African-American history and struggles for freedom and equality in ongoing efforts to combat racism in American society. This forum contributed to a broad, collaborative project of archaeologists, historians, and members of the local and descendant communities to place such topics of African-American accomplishments in greater focus within our national memory and heritage. The series included talks by Profs. David Gradwohl (University of Iowa), Paul Shackel (University of Maryland), Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter) (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Timothy Baumann (Missouri Valley College), Paul Mullins (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis), Flordeliz Bugarin (Howard University), and Kamau Kemayo (University of Illinois, Springfield). Convened in the period of June 3 through July 23, 2008, this program was sponsored by the New Philadelphia Association, Sprague's Kinderhook Lodge, and the Illinois State Museum, with the support of a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly.

The educational components of our ten-week field school, convened from May 27 through August 1, 2008, also included discussions among the participants on issues of race and racism in American history and contemporary society. Following a presentation of related historical data by Chris Fennell, Anna Agbe-Davies, and Terry Martin, our field school students

Prof. Abdul Alkalimat (Gerald McWorter) is a direct descendant of Frank McWorter and is Professor, Department of African American Studies, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He presented a talk on July 10, 2008, entitled “African-American History and Struggles for Freedom: Conditions of Subject and Object” as part of a speaker series.



discussed and debated the contours and regional context of racism in which New Philadelphia existed, and how racial prejudices may have impacted the daily lives of town residents. Over a number of group meetings, we reviewed episodes of the PBS program entitled “African American Lives” and discussed issues of African-American heritage and the legacies of racism in the United States. Our discussions included debates concerning facets of the social construction of concepts of race, the deployment of racial ideologies against different target groups in American history, evolving concepts within biological science of physiological and genetic variations among populations, research purporting to identify DNA links between population locations over time, and arguments concerning the dangers of racial profiling in modern medical and pharmaceutical practices.

The overall plan for the research components of our ten-week field school in the summer of 2008 included new ground-based geophysical surveys in the first week, followed by four weeks of excavations and surveys at the town site, and a subsequent five weeks of laboratory research and analysis of the material, faunal, and floral remains at the Illinois State Museum’s Research and Collections Center in Springfield. In April and May researchers had corresponded with Michael Hargrave to identify the areas of the town site on which he would conduct new surveys, using electric resistance and magnetic gradient detection methods, in the week of May 27. The Spring of 2008 was marked by higher than normal rainfalls, which provided very good conditions for conducting such geophysical surveys. In past years at New Philadelphia, low moisture content in the ground surface made the process of obtaining and interpreting such geophysical data very challenging. Among other results obtained in the week of May 27, Hargrave obtained vivid data in the area of Block 3, Lot 4, on the north edge of the town site, which was later explored by two of our excavation teams.

Correspondence and consultations among historians, archaeologists, geophysical specialists, and members of the local and descendant communities in April and May had resulted in a list of potential areas on which we might concentrate our excavation and survey efforts during the 2008 field school. These locations and potential efforts included:

- a. Undertake systematic soil core sampling (with a one-inch diameter sampler) at the locations of new anomalies identified by geophysical surveys in the week of May 27, and commence excavations where warranted.
- b. Expand survey and excavations in the area of Block 3, Lot 4, owned for a period of time by Alexander Clark and located near a lime slacking pit uncovered as Feature 2 in 2004 excavations.
- c. Continue excavations in the area of Block 7, Lot 1, for which a newly discovered tax record from 1845 listed a higher value assessment that might indicate the presence of building at a time when Frank McWorter owned the parcel. Partial excavations at this location in 2004 uncovered Feature 3, the foundation of an 1870s house site, which may have overlain the remains of an earlier occupation.
- d. Survey and excavations in the southern half of Block 8, Lots 1 and 2, for which a number of deed references indicate a school house for African American families may have been located in the 1850s and 1860s.
- e. Excavations on previously identified geophysical anomalies A8, A9, and A36 in the area of King Street north of Block 8, and anomalies A37 and A38 in the space platted for Walnut Alley on the northern edge of Block 8, Lots 5 and 6.
- f. Use a hammer-driven, soil core sampler (with two-inch diameter and up to six feet in sample length) to test thermal anomalies from the aerial survey and anomalies identified in ground-based geophysical surveys, or to explore the stratigraphic profiles of earthen terraces on the west side of the town site.
- g. Continue excavations of the site of a blacksmith shop located in the area of Block 3, Lots 1 and 2, on which partial excavations were undertaken in 2006.
- h. Undertake geophysical surveys, and subsequent excavations, in the area of Block 12, Lots 1-4, in which a shovel test pit survey in 2005 uncovered indications of potential occupation remains.
- i. Continue excavations of the site of Louisa McWorter's house on Block 13, Lots 3 and 4, on which partial excavations were undertaken in 2005.

Of these options, field work in May and June of 2008 focused on tasks (a)-(f), undertaken by the NSF-REU field school participants and by a collaborating archaeology team associated with the "Time Team America" documentary program. We did not pursue project (g) with additional excavations in the area of the blacksmith shop on Block 3, because that location was at the base of a shallow slope and so water-sodden from recent rains that it would have been difficult to undertake carefully controlled excavation work. We chose not to pursue effort (h) on Block 12, or task (i) with further excavations of the site of Louisa McWorter's house on Block 13, because our excavation teams were fully occupied at other locations on the town site during the field season.

Our field teams consisted of co-managers Anna Agbe-Davies (DePaul University), Terry Martin (Illinois State Museum), and Chris Fennell (University of Illinois). Kati Fay, a graduate student at the University of Illinois, served as our Archaeology Laboratory Director and also assisted in surveys and excavations. Nine undergraduate participants in the NSF-REU field school were divided into three teams. As archaeologists fond of spatial analysis, we named these teams X, Y, and Z, after a common nomenclature for three dimensions of topographic relationships. Christopher Valvano, a graduate student at Michigan State University, supervised

team X, which included George Calfas (University of Illinois), Shalonda Collins (Mississippi State University), and Elizabeth Sylak (Albion College). Megan Bailey, a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, supervised team Y, with Mathew Davila (Western Oregon University), Annelise Morris (University of Illinois), and Camille Sumter (Mississippi State University). Terry Martin supervised team Z, with Joshua Brown (Mississippi Valley State University), Kathrine Hardcastle (Grand Valley State University), and Alison McCartan (Willamette University). Our nine undergraduate participants in 2008 were selected through a rigorous and competitive application process and each brought excellent academic credentials to bear in their work. They traveled to Illinois from locations spread across the nation and provided diverse perspectives of African-American, Native-American, Latin-American, and European-American cultural heritage. Our field work was also aided by a collaborating team of archaeologists affiliated with the Time Team America documentary program, including geophysicists Bryan Haley and Margaret Watters Wilkes, and archaeologists Eric Deetz, Rochelle Lurie, Catherine Bird, and Julie Schablitsky, among others.

Lastly, May and June of 2008 were also months of high rainfall in the Midwest. The Mississippi River rose to record-breaking levels and weakening levies threatened to give way and flood small communities ten miles to the west of the New Philadelphia town site. Our NSF field school participants helped fill sand bags to reinforce levies protecting the small town of Hull, Illinois. We also spent long hours packing up the Hull Museum and Library and loading their collections and exhibits onto a tractor-trailer for safe-keeping from the threatening flood waters.



Joshua Brown, Chris Valvano, and their colleagues filling sandbags to reinforce local levies (Photograph by Terrance Martin).

The research results and interpretations presented in the following chapters of this report are preliminary, and these report subjects will be expanded and updated in the future as

additional research on each area of investigation is completed. The aerial thermal survey conducted in May 2008 is discussed in Chapter 2 by Bryan Haley of the University of Mississippi. Chapter 3 of this report addresses historical and archaeological data obtained by teams Y and Z concerning a house site in Block 3, Lot 4. Chapter 4 focuses on team X's work on a series of layered house sites in Block 7, Lot 1. Chapter 5 turns to Block 8, Lots 1 and 2, and Time Team America's search for the remains of a school house that served African-American families in the 1850s and 1860s. Chapter 6 addresses remote-sensing and archaeological data concerning roadways in the space platted for King Street on the northern edge of Block 8. Chapter 7 focuses on soil core sample surveying of the stratigraphic profiles of earthen terraces created in the early 1990s west of a gravel road lying on the space platted for Broad Way on the north side of the town site. Concluding observations and recommendations for future work are presented in Chapter 8. Chapters 9 and 10 provide a bibliography of references cited in this report and our excavation unit summaries for 2008.