

have conducted excavations on Mound A, the larger of the two mounds at this site in Mississippi. They have also excavated the plaza and habitation areas around the mounds.

Parchman was occupied during the late Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 1400-1500), and a great deal has been learned about when and how it was used. Archaeologist Erin Stevens Nelson earned her master's degree at the University of Mississippi, and she participated in previous excavations of the site. Nelson, who is now a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, returned to the site this summer to take a closer look at the small residential areas that were detected by the gradiometer surveys, which revealed outlines of clusters of square houses around the mounds.

Excavating trash pits associated with the various house groups, she recovered artifacts such as pottery and food remains that reveal the daily activities at the site. She also hopes to learn about the chronology of the houses as well as the organization of this community and the relationships between its inhabitants.

The cornfields in Mississippi's Yazoo River basin aren't the easiest place to do field work. The seven-foot tall corn stalks tend to block out any breeze that might alleviate the intense humidity. Despite the challenges, Nelson and her crew are determined to make her contribution to our understanding of Parchman Mounds.

## Learning More About New Philadelphia

MIDWEST—This summer a field school was conducted at the New Philadelphia site in west-central Illinois, to uncover more details about the town founded in 1836 by "Free Frank" McWorter. The Conservancy recently purchased nine acres of the 42-acre town, which was located a few miles from the Mississippi River. The field school presented a rare opportunity to investigate a site with a large population of free African Americans in the years leading up to, and following, the Civil War.

The researchers conducted geophysical surveys, soil probes, and excavations. The excavations focused on the remains of the Louisa McWorter homestead, uncovering a cellar and remnants of an abandoned well. Twentieth-century residents remembered the home, owned by the widow of Frank McWorter's son, Squire, as one of the most imposing in the town. Project directors Christopher Fennell of the University of Illinois, Terrance Martin of the Illinois State Museum, and Anna Agbe-Davies of the University of North Carolina will use the data from the McWorter dwelling to make comparisons with other African American or Euro-American households.

As a result of a new collaboration with scholars from the University of

Iowa, the exploration of several modern farming terraces will give archaeologists a sense of the transformations that resulted as the town lots reverted to agricultural fields. Analysis of soil core samples this fall by geosciences professor Art Bettis and doctoral student Mary Kathryn Rocheford could provide information about buried surfaces in an area previously thought to have been severely eroded. Phytolith samples will allow for the reconstruction of the botanical landscape of the frontier community, and will complement the extensive analysis of faunal material that's already taken place.

The students received training in field techniques thanks to a National Science Foundation-Research Experiences for Undergraduates grant.



Students take soil core samples during the field school at New Philadelphia.