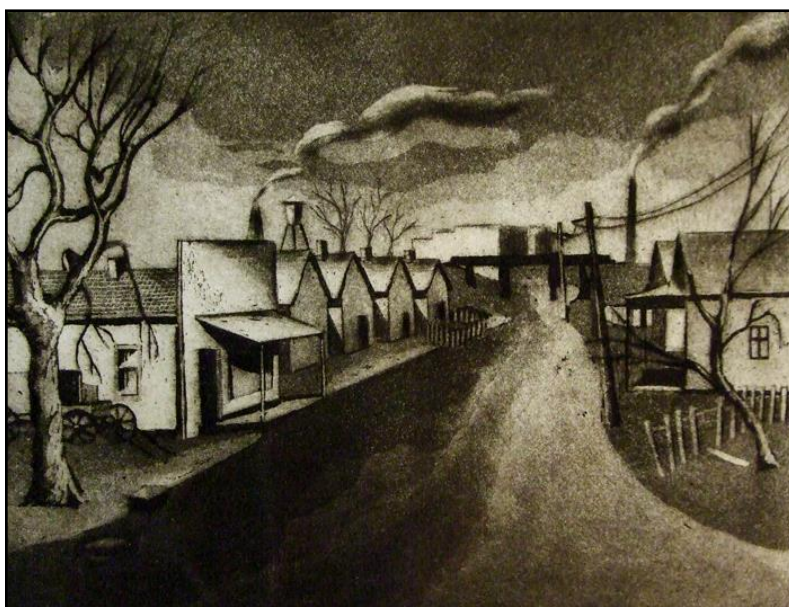


Investigating a Shotgun House

Archaeology Notebook

Name of Student Archaeologist

Archaeology can uncover a lot of information about people in the past, but it tells only part of the story. In this investigation, you will learn what other stories can be told by studying geography and history. You will use different forms of **evidence** to learn about the working-class people who lived in shotgun houses in an urban neighborhood near downtown Lexington, Kentucky. You will consider how Lexington's urban geography influenced the neighborhood. You will study historic photographs, read oral histories, and explore historic documents and maps. You will “make” an archaeological site and classify artifacts. You will help create a time line. You will use what you learned to design a project about the Davis Bottom neighborhood. In a final informative essay, you will show what you learned.



Kentucky artist
William D. Frazer's
drawing of a street
probably in the Davis
Bottom neighborhood
around 1935.

Investigating a Shotgun House

Part One: Geography

Archaeology Notebook

You are an archaeologist. Your question is:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Investigation Activities

1. Read **biographies** of Kenny Demus and the Laffoon Sisters, “Meet Two Davis Bottom Families” (pages 3-6)
2. Estimate the size of a **shotgun house** with the whole class (teacher-led activity)
3. Read “Urban Geography of Davis Bottom” (pages 7-8)
4. Complete data collection sheet: “Urban Geography of Davis Bottom: Analyzing the Data” (page 9)
5. Begin “A Davis Bottom Timeline” (teacher-led activity)

Data Sources

Biographies of Kenny Demus and the Laffoon Sisters, “Meet Two Davis Bottom Families” (pages 3-6); “Urban Geography of Davis Bottom” (pages 7-8)

Word Bank

biography: history of a person’s life as told by another person

cultural: having to do with the customs, beliefs, laws, ways of living, and all other results of human work and thought that belong to people of the same society

ethnic enclave: a concentration of people who have the same customs, religion, and origin; an *ethnic group* living in a small area in a city. For example, a section of a town where most people who live there have Italian or Irish heritage.

prejudice: an unfavorable or unreasonable opinion, feeling, or attitude made beforehand or without knowledge, especially an unfriendly opinion, about an ethnic, racial, social, or religious group

redryer: a place in a tobacco warehouse, a machine, and a kind of job. Workers put tobacco leaves on a belt that fed the leaves through a redryer’s heating chambers. This removed moisture so the leaves could be stored in the warehouse without getting moldy.

resident: a person who lives in a place

shotgun house: a long, narrow building that is one room wide, and two, three, four, or five rooms long

urban: related to a city

working-class: people who work for wages, usually in manual labor (with their hands)

Meet Two Davis Bottom Families

Davis Bottom is different from Lexington's other **urban, working-class** neighborhoods. That is because throughout its long history, black people and white people lived side-by-side as friends and neighbors. Let's meet members of two Davis Bottom families who lived on DeRoode (pronounced duh-road-ie) Street.

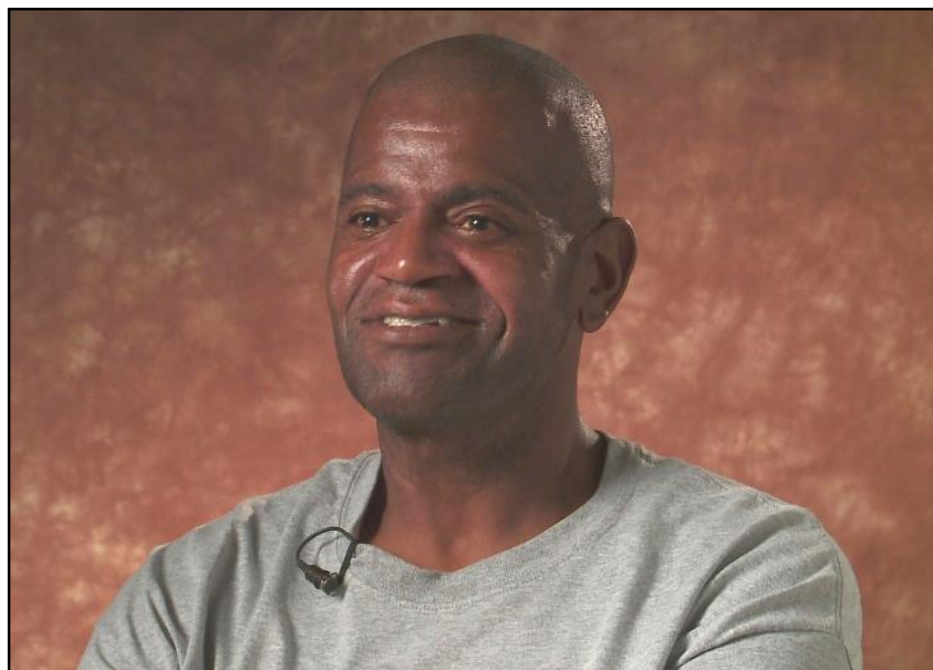
Kenny Demus, and Cissy and Mary Laffoon know each other, even though Kenny grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, and Cissy and Mary grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. All three grew up in Davis Bottom **shotgun houses** and lived in them as adults. Each holds warm memories of life in the neighborhood. They also remember the sting of **prejudice** because of where they lived.

When Kenny, Cissy, and Mary heard about the Davis Bottom History Preservation Project, they brought in family pictures to share. Through their videotaped oral history interviews, you can hear them talk about what it was like to live in Davis Bottom. Learn even more by reading their **biographies** here.

Kenny Demus

Kenny Demus was born in Davis Bottom in 1961 at 565 DeRoode Street. His grandparents had lived in Davis Bottom since the late 1940s.

Kenny's was a big family. He had a twin brother, four other brothers, a half-brother, and a sister. He



grew up surrounded by aunts, uncles, and cousins who also lived in Davis Bottom. When Kenny was a child, he spent a lot of time at his grandparent's house at 728 DeRoode Street.

The Demus Family lived in several rented houses in the neighborhood when Kenny was young. One of the places they rented was a shotgun house.

It was a lot like 712 DeRoode Street, the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site that you will

Kenny Demus in 2012. investigate. It had three rooms and a wood-burning stove. All the boys slept in the same big steel-frame bed. There was never any argument about where to sleep. Each boy knew his spot on the mattress. The family used an outhouse, and at night, they kept a little pot in the corner of the bedroom. During the time they lived there, their landlord had a bathroom added to the house. Thank goodness, with such a big family!

As a child, Kenny ran errands for grownups. Carrying a note, he'd walk to the store to get things like a pack of cigarettes. He played with friends in "The Jungle," a wooded area on the steep hillsides below the train tracks. They build forts out of tree limbs, old blankets, old tires—anything lying around would work.

Kenny remembers how, if he misbehaved out of sight of his parents, they somehow knew all about what he had done when he got home. Once, Kenny snuck into a yard in the neighborhood and stole peaches and apples off the trees. Because he ate the “evidence” as he walked home, he felt proud of himself for getting away with it. But when he arrived, his father wanted to know why he had stolen the fruit!

Davis Bottom’s black children went to a neighborhood school near the neighborhood’s center: George



Demus Family on the front porch of 728 DeRoode Street in the 1970s (see map Page 8).

Washington Carver Elementary School. White children went to Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, on the northern edge of Davis Bottom. Once Lincoln School closed, though, those students went to Carver.

From first to fifth grade, Kenny walked the short distance to Carver Elementary. He loved Carver. Lexington integrated its public schools when Kenny was in sixth grade.

So, as he later would for junior high and high school, he had to go to school outside of Davis Bottom. He took a school bus across Lexington.

Teachers and students looked down on Kenny because he lived in Davis Bottom. They said nothing good ever came out of his neighborhood. They let his poverty in material things cloud their judgment about him. It was hard to go to school and learn in a place like that. Kenny taught himself to read, because he did not learn to in school.

When Kenny was a teenager, he got a job cutting and hanging tobacco. He graduated from high school and soon afterwards, took a job with the City of Lexington as Director of Southside Park. He held that job for 17 years, until The City closed the park.

Kenny married and moved to another Lexington neighborhood. Kenny and his wife had three girls—Ken-nisha, Ken-nae, and Ken-yale—and a boy, Kenny, Jr. After Kenny became a single parent, he and his children moved back to his old neighborhood to live for a while. They lived in a shotgun house near his parents, who helped him take care of his kids. His children were upset about moving to Davis Bottom. They knew what people in town thought of people who lived there. Kenny told them, “It’s not where you live that counts. It’s how you choose to live.”

Today, Kenny works for the Lexington Public Schools as a bus driver. His children are grown and in college. He lives in an apartment near Davis Bottom. Once the City of Lexington finishes building the roads and new houses as part of the Newtown Pike Extension Project, he hopes to move back to his old neighborhood.

Cissy and Mary Laffoon

Cissy Laffoon and her older brother PeeWee were born in Marble Creek, Jessamine County, Kentucky. When Cissy was about three years old, she and her family moved to Lexington. Mary Laffoon was born in Lexington when they lived in the nearby neighborhood of Irishtown. Cissy was six and Mary was three when they made the short move to 848 DeRoode Street in Davis Bottom in 1953.

Both of their parents had been married before, so Pee Wee, Cissy, and Mary have nine other brothers and sisters. When Mary was six years old, their parents divorced. Their father moved a few streets away in Davis Bottom. The girls, their brother Pee Wee, and their mother stayed at 848 DeRoode Street.

Cissy and Mary's mother was a single parent. When their mother worked nights, their older half-brother, Ed, fixed dinner. Neighbors helped out, too. When Cissy and Mary were small, "Miss Julie" watched them while their mother worked. Julia Turner was a black woman who lived across the street at 865 DeRoode Street. Cissy and Mary's mother watched Julia Turner's children, too.

When Cissy and Mary were young, their family lived in many different rented shotgun houses throughout Davis Bottom. Their mother was trying to save every dollar she could. Cissy and Mary remember sleeping together in a big bed in the living room of their two-room shotgun house. To try to insulate the house, their mother nailed up sections of cardboard boxes and



The Laffoon Sisters in 2012: Mary Pollard (left) and Marie "Cissy" Head (right).

pages from the newspaper on the walls and ceiling. She painted the nails different colors. From their bed, the girls often played a game of searching for words in the newspaper on the ceiling.

Cissy was a tomboy and always getting into trouble. She had many scraped knees. She stole the boys' bicycles and rode all over the neighborhood. Mary was always the littlest and the youngest of the kids who played together. The girls loved to walk down to the end of DeRoode Street where someone had tied a swing on a tree. They'd jump out of the swing onto a mattress. Cissy also liked doing cartwheels and rolling downhill. Starting at the top near the West High Street Viaduct, she would roll all the way down, ending up at the bottom, in Southside Park. The girls tried not to get hurt, because they knew their mom did not have the money to take them to the doctor. Cissy remembers when she got sick, her mother used "old home cooking" medicine. For cuts and scrapes, her mother rubbed on liniment that came in a can.

White children in the neighborhood went to school at Lincoln Elementary. It was only about a block away from Cissy and Mary's home at 848 DeRoode Street, so they could easily walk to school. They attended first through sixth grade there. Cissy and Mary loved going to Lincoln. The food was good. Their teachers were nice. They did not want to leave.

There were no junior high or high schools in Davis Bottom. Because there were no school busses, the girls had to walk many blocks or take a city bus. These schools were very different from Lincoln. They were not welcoming places. Teachers and students looked down on Cissy and Mary because of where they lived. It was hard to go to school and learn there. Mary said if she could have kept going to school in Davis



Mary Laffoon (left), Cissy Laffoon (center), and a friend (right) in front of the back porch at 848 DeRoode Street in the mid-1950s (see map Page 8).

Bottom, she would have stayed in school. Both girls dropped out of school when they were 16 years old.

Cissy married soon afterward and became Cissy Head. She had two sons: Steve and Tim. Mary married and became Mary Pollard. She had two boys, too: Les and Scott. Mary and Cissy lived with their families in Davis Bottom for many years, and on several different streets.

Cissy and Mary were homemakers, and went to work outside the home after their boys were older. Cissy worked in many different jobs: at the nearby Red Mile Race Track's track kitchen, and cleaning commercial buildings. When her boys were young, her family also had a paper route. Cissy, now divorced, has owned her own house cleaning business for many years. Mary worked at the dry cleaners, the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. redryer, and other factories. Mary, a widow, is retired now.

Eventually, Cissy and Mary moved away from Davis Bottom to other parts of Lexington. However, they hold fond memories of their friends, the games they played, Southside Park, and their old neighborhood. Cissy and Mary want to see their old neighborhood thrive again. They are hopeful that the new homes and the road that The City has planned for so long, Newtown Pike Extension, will be finished soon. Mary said she might move back. She knows it will not look the same as her old neighborhood. The houses will not be shotguns. The streets will have sidewalks. But it will be home.

Urban Geography of Davis Bottom

The Davis Bottom neighborhood once sat on the very edge of Lexington, Kentucky. Today, it is located only one-half mile southwest of downtown. You might think everyone always wanted to live in Davis Bottom. It would be easy to get to work in downtown offices and to shop in downtown stores.

But you would be wrong.

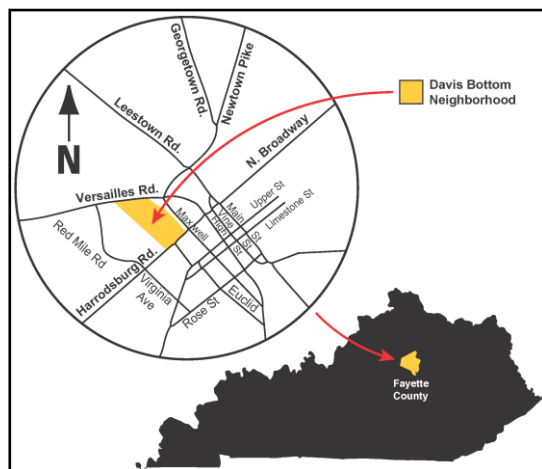


2010 aerial view of downtown Lexington looking southeast - heart of Davis Bottom outlined in red.

In the early 20th century, buses and streetcars did not come through Davis Bottom. Their routes were along the streets that bordered it. Before the Newtown Pike Extension Project started, it was impossible to see much of Davis Bottom except from the edge of the West High Street Viaduct/Bridge.

In the early 20th century, invisible boundaries made life hard for the people of Davis Bottom. Some people were black. Some people were white. Everyone was poor. The City looked down on these **working-class** people. This isolation helped make Davis Bottom a close-knit **urban** community.

In 1931, downtown Lexington needed a new road. The City wanted to build it through Davis Bottom. This road would have destroyed the neighborhood. The Davis Bottom **residents** protested, so The City put the plans on hold. For over sixty years, the residents lived with this threat to their community. By the late 1990s, however, traffic congestion was worse and the need for new development in downtown Lexington was urgent. The City could not wait any longer.



Davis Bottom in Lexington and in Kentucky.

Today, as part of the Newtown Pike Extension Project, The City is building a new road, new houses, and a new park in the low-lying section of Davis Bottom (see map on Page 8). This neighborhood is called Davis Park. Only a small section of Davis Bottom still remains—the part that sits on higher ground on the eastern edge of the old neighborhood.

Davis Bottom got its name from two sources. “Davis” was the last name of the first landowner—Lexington lawyer and civil rights supporter Willard Davis. He bought land in what is now Davis Bottom in 1865. He divided the land into 43 long narrow house lots. Narrow lots mean narrow houses. That is one reason why cheaply built, wooden

frame shotgun houses were common in the neighborhood.

“Bottom” comes from the land itself. Bottoms are low-lying places along streams. Lower Town Branch used to flow down the center of the neighborhood. Because this stream was so quick to flood, The City built a covered culvert for it in the early 20th century. Then no one could see it.

Bottoms are often not good places to live. Low wet spots are perfect for mosquitos and snakes. The lowest spot in Davis Bottom was Southside Park, but everyone in Davis Bottom just called it “The Park.” It always flooded in heavy rains. Because of flooding, some houses were built on wooden piers.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, “bottom” had another meaning. When people heard “bottom” as part of a neighborhood’s name, they thought of a low-lying city district where poor people lived. They thought of **ethnic enclaves**, places with cheap housing (like shotgun houses), **cultural** differences, and crime.

Early in its history, Davis Bottom had orchards and pastures. However, the land was no good for farming. So even though people lived there, Davis Bottom soon became an industrial area. Railroad tracks, tobacco **redryers** and warehouses, stone quarries, brickyards, and coal yards grew up around the neighborhood. A freight depot and a train station were nearby. The people who lived in Davis Bottom worked at these businesses. Over time, some industries polluted the soils in the neighborhood.



Map of lowest-lying section of Davis Bottom (in dark green) showing important places now gone.

Through most of its history, the streets in Davis Bottom were not paved. There were no street gutters or curbs, no sidewalks, and no streetlights. But the residents did not have to leave the neighborhood to shop. There were neighborhood butcher shops and grocery stores like Hank’s, Henderson’s, Swagger’s, and Blue and White. They ran up bills at the stores and paid when they could. The neighborhood also had businesses, like a car repair shop and a scrapyard. It had churches—Nathaniel Mission, Pleasant Green, and smaller storefront congregations—and two elementary schools.

The Park was the heart and center of the community. People had picnics. The City held community ball games there. Teams from other parts of Lexington and other towns in the region played there.

Oaks and maples grew in the neighborhood, as did a few apple and peach trees. The Jungle was the rough area of woods that grew on the steep hillsides below the train tracks. Trees looked scraggly here because people cut branches for firewood. Wild blackberries and raspberries grew in brambles along the edges of the neighborhood. Cattails and cane grew in swampy spots.

People kept rabbits (for meat) and chickens (for meat and eggs). Mothers knew how to split a chicken and share it with the whole family. Residents fished in nearby lakes and invited the neighborhood to bluegill fish fries. They grew vegetables in small gardens, and fed the corn to their chickens. Mothers canned fruits and vegetables for their families. Some families could barely make it, but no one went hungry. Neighbors helped.

Name _____

Urban Geography of Davis Bottom: Analyzing the Data

*Using what you have learned about Davis Bottom's urban landscape, answer the following questions.
Use the back of this sheet to continue your answers.*

1. How did Davis Bottom get its name?
2. What are the most important characteristics of Davis Bottom's urban landscape?
3. How did the urban landscape influence housing type and location? In what ways did the urban landscape influence the way people lived in the neighborhood?
4. On another sheet of paper, draw a picture of what a Davis Bottom shotgun house might look like.
5. Even though the people of Davis Bottom lived in a city and went to the grocery store, they also gathered or grew some of their own food. What kinds of food?
6. Explain how a place like Davis Bottom can be near the center of a city but still be "*on the margins*" (meaning unknown or ignored by other people in the city).



Investigating a Shotgun House

Part Two: History

Archaeology Notebook

You are an archaeologist. Your question is:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Investigation Activities

1. Examine “Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses” (pages 11-12) and complete the data collection sheet: “Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses: Analyzing the Data” (pages 13-14)
2. Read “The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century” (pages 15-16), “Using Primary Documents” (pages 17-18)
3. Participate in teacher-led class discussion of primary documents using “How To Read a Sanborn Map” and “DeRoode Street—1934” (pages 19-20); and “1940 U.S. Federal Census” (teacher will provide)
4. Answer questions on: “The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century: Analyzing the Data” (page 21), and complete the data collection sheet: “The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century: Organizing the Data” (page 22)
5. Add to “A Davis Bottom Timeline” (teacher-led activity)

Data Sources

“Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses” (pages 11-12); “The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century” (pages 15-16); “DeRoode Street—1934” (page 20); “1940 U.S. Federal Census” (teacher will provide)

Word Bank

census: a count the federal government takes, every ten years, of everyone living in America to figure out the number of representatives a state should elect to the House of Representatives

household: the people who live in a house or apartment. They may or may not be members of the same family.

landlord: a person who rents land, a building, or an apartment to someone

primary document: a kind of document, like a photograph, autobiography, memoir, and oral history, that provides first-hand information or direct evidence about a topic or question

smudge pit: a small, shallow pit filled with materials, like rags, that can make a lot of smoke when set on fire

WPA (Works Progress Administration): a work program created during the Great Depression in the 1930s by the federal government as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal

Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses



Photo #1: A shotgun house on DeRoode Street, Davis Bottom, Lexington, Kentucky, in 1958, near the West High Street Viaduct/Bridge.

Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses



Photo #2: Front yards of two shotgun houses on DeRoode Street, Davis Bottom, Lexington, Kentucky in 1958.

Name _____

Historic Photographs of Davis Bottom Shotgun Houses: Analyzing the Data

*Examine the historic photographs of Davis Bottom shotgun houses and answer the following questions.
Use additional sheets of paper to continue your answers.*

Observing and Inferring from the Data

1. What materials do you think were used to build the houses? List them below.

Photo #1

Photo #2

What makes you think so?

2. What are the people doing? List the activities below.

Photo #1

Photo #2

What makes you think so?

3. When do you think each picture was taken (time of day, season)? List the activities below.

Photo #1

Photo #2

What makes you think so?

Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

1. How are the photographs different? How are they the same?

2. What does each picture tell you about the past? What is your evidence?

Photo #1

Photo #2

3. Why do you think the photos were taken?

Photo #1

Photo #2

4. What questions do you still have about the photographs?

Photo #1

Photo #2

5. What other kinds of information could you use to answer your questions?

The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century

Learning about the lives of the people who lived on DeRoode Street during the Great Depression and World War II can give us a picture of the Davis Bottom neighborhood. Some people owned their homes. Most people, however, both black and white, paid rent to **landlords**. Most families lived in shotgun houses like the one at 712 DeRoode Street, the shotgun house site that you will soon study.



A WPA photograph of DeRoode Street from under the West High Street Viaduct/Bridge during the Great Depression.

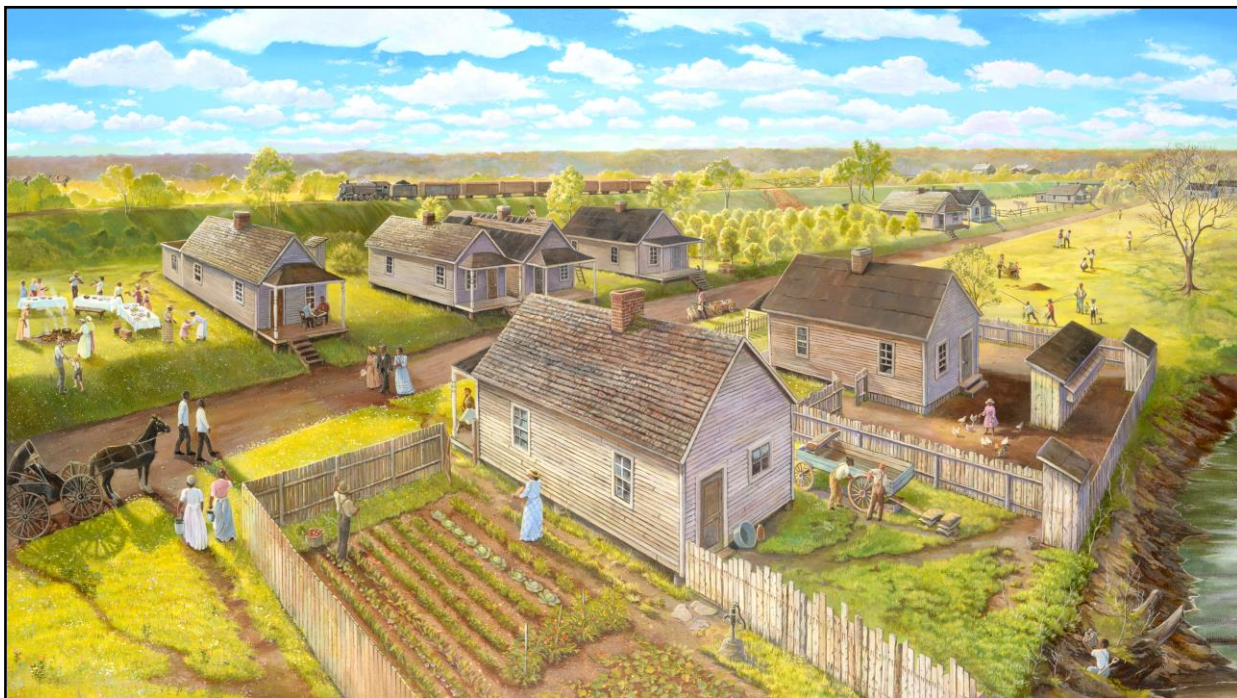
A shotgun house is a long, narrow building. It is one room wide, and two, three, four, or five rooms long. It has a brick fireplace, no basement, and often has a front porch. Shotgun houses can be built of brick, stone, or wood. The shotgun houses in Davis Bottom were made of wood. People said it was cramped living in a shotgun house, especially for large families, but everyone managed.

In the early 20th century, not everyone in Davis Bottom had inside running water. People had to walk two or three doors down to a public well. There, using a hand pump, they filled buckets with water. There were no sewers in the neighborhood until the late 1960s. People used outhouses.

The houses in Davis Bottom were not air-conditioned. On hot summer nights, people slept with the doors and windows open. Some even slept out on the porch! In the winter, they heated their houses with a

coal or gas stove and used coal or wood for fuel. They saved things in their yards to use later and for repairs. They turned worn-out clothes or old holey blankets into quilts. They put everything to good use.

Few people owned cars, so almost everyone walked or rode bicycles to work and school. A five-mile walk one way was not uncommon. Few people had phones of their own. Neighborhood telephones were on a party line. To call someone, you had to wait until the caller on the line had finished his or her call before you could make yours.



Artist's drawing (looking northwest) of what Davis Bottom might have looked like in the 1890s.

They kept dogs and cats and horses. The cats helped keep the cockroaches, rats, mice, and snakes under control. In the summer, some people made smoky **smudge pits** from rags to help keep the mosquitoes away.

Often mothers and fathers worked. They made an honest living, but they worked hard for long hours at low pay. They struggled a lot and had hard times. For fun, adults played cards and dominoes. Someone always was playing a game of checkers.

Kids in the neighborhood, black and white, played together. The whole neighborhood—all the streets and The Park—was their yard! Because money was tight, kids who grew up in Davis Bottom shared everything, including their toys and bikes. They made their own fun out of simple things. They played hopscotch, jump rope, and did cartwheels. They rode bikes. They climbed trees and the WATER TOWER! They played horseshoes and croquet. They played ballgames of all kinds: football, baseball, softball, kickball, stickball, dodge ball. They played with their dogs and cats and chickens. Neighborhood children loved to play in The Jungle. They built forts out of junk they found lying around.

But it was not all play. There were chores to do, too. Depending on how old they were, children helped their parents do housework. They cleaned the house, washed dishes, cooked, did laundry in a tub with a washboard, and ironed clothes. Families kept the coal they used for heating in a pile under their houses. It was the children's job to break up the coal into smaller pieces, put it in the coal bucket, and bring the coal into the house.

Using Primary Documents

Historic archaeologists collect information from many different sources. Interviews with former residents are one important source. Archaeological sites and the artifacts they contain are another.

They also learn about people who lived long ago from **primary documents**. In this lesson, you will use two different types of primary documents—the 1940 U. S. Federal Census, and the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map—to explore the Davis Bottom neighborhood and find out about the working-class people who lived there just before World War II. This is not too long before Kenny Demus' relatives moved to 728 DeRoode Street. It is a little over ten years before Cissy and Mary Laffoon and their family moved to 848 DeRoode Street.

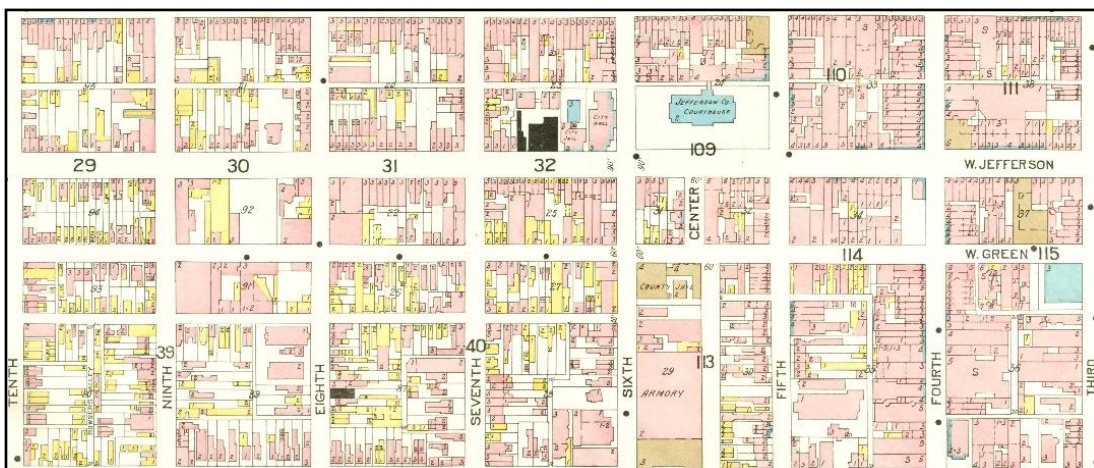
The image shows a detailed scan of a 1940 U.S. Federal Census form for Lexington, Kentucky. The form is titled 'POPULATION SCHEDULE' and 'SIXTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1940'. It contains a large table with columns for household data, personal data, and supplementary questions. The table lists residents of various households, including names, birth dates, and marital status. The last entry on the page is for Louise Davis Dickens, born April 22, 1940, at 712 DeRoode Street.

Page 39 in the 1940 U.S. Federal Census for the Lexington precinct where Davis Bottom is located. The last entry on this page is for 712 DeRoode Street, the shotgun house site that you are studying. Census Taker Louise Davis Dickens recorded this information on April 22, 1940.

United States Census

The U.S. Constitution requires the federal government to take a **census**, or count, of everyone living in America every ten years. Residents fill out survey forms or census takers interview residents to collect information on households. A **household** included all of the people who lived in a dwelling, such as members of the same family, renters, and boarders. This is how the government figures out the number of representatives a state should elect to the House of Representatives (one chamber of the U.S. Congress).

The census also is a way to take a snapshot of Americans every decade. Censuses are packed with information about people, their children, where they worked, how much money they made, and many other facts.

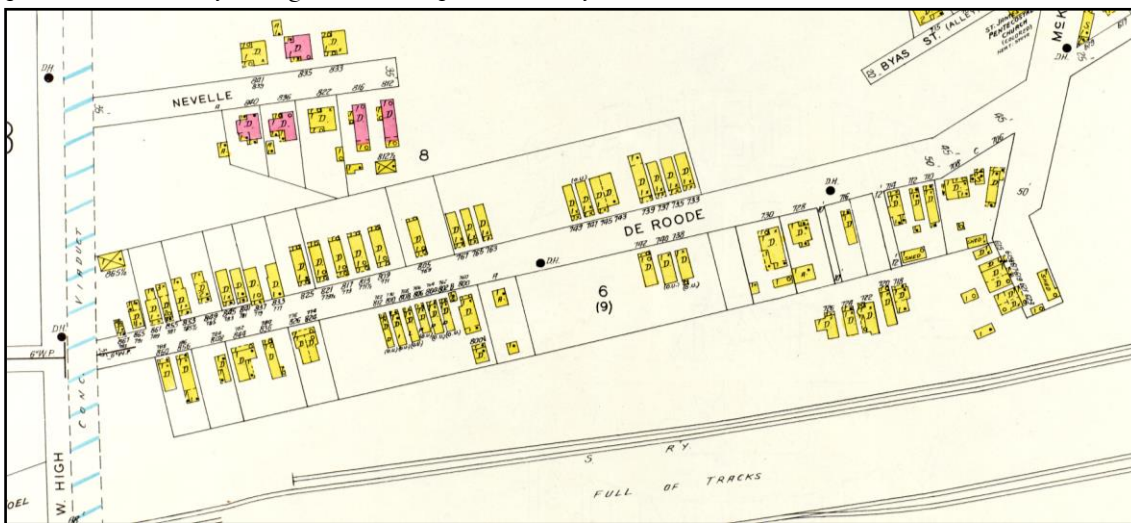


Section of the 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the Central Business District in Louisville, Kentucky.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Starting in the late 1860s, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company made detailed maps of American cities and towns. Sanborn Maps show features that officials can then use to figure out insurance rates. The maps, like the ones on this page, show street width and fire hydrant and fire station locations. Through color codes and symbols, the maps identify what materials were used in the construction of buildings. A building will be more or less fireproof, depending on how it is made and what materials the builders used in its construction. For example, a building made only from wood located far from a fire station is more expensive to insure than another made out of brick or stone located near a station.

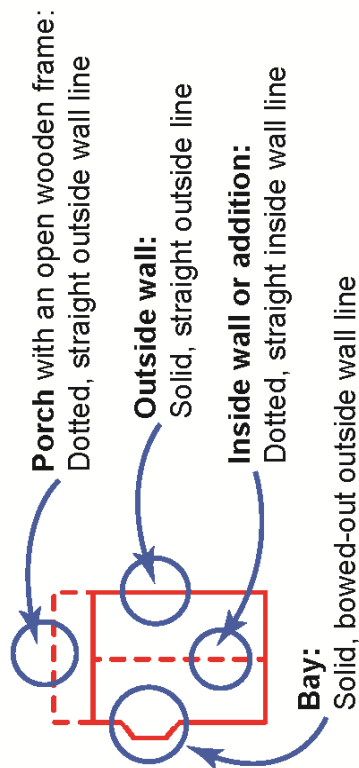
Historic archaeologists are not interested in insurance, however. They use fire insurance maps to find out where buildings were located and what materials were used in their construction. Over time, these maps record the many changes that take place in a city or town.



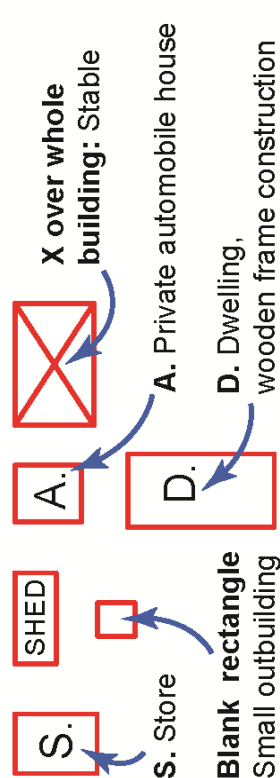
Section of the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the portion of DeRoode Street in Davis Bottom that you are studying.

HOW TO READ A SANBORN MAP

Type of Walls



Building Type

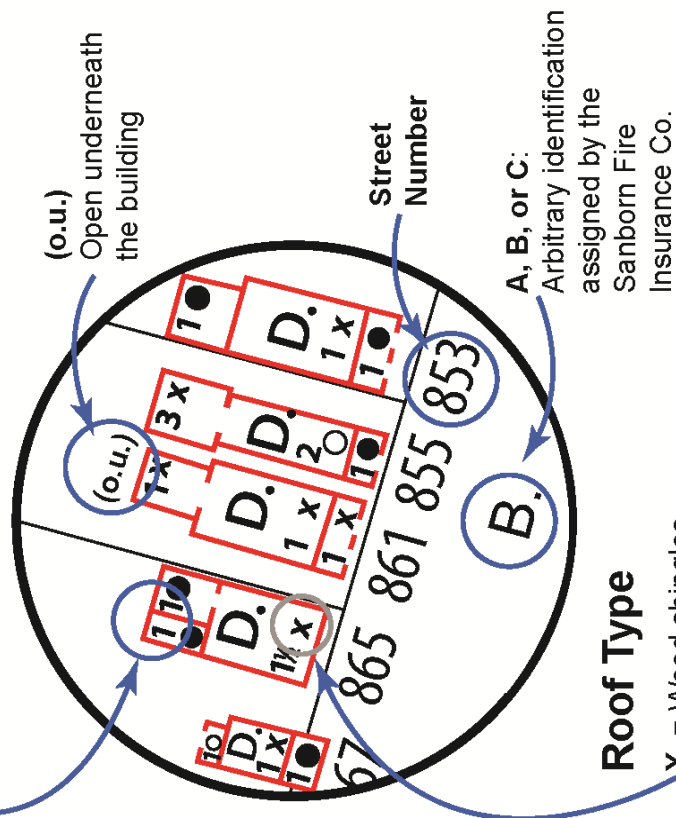


Dwelling lost to fire on Sunday, August 3, 1930

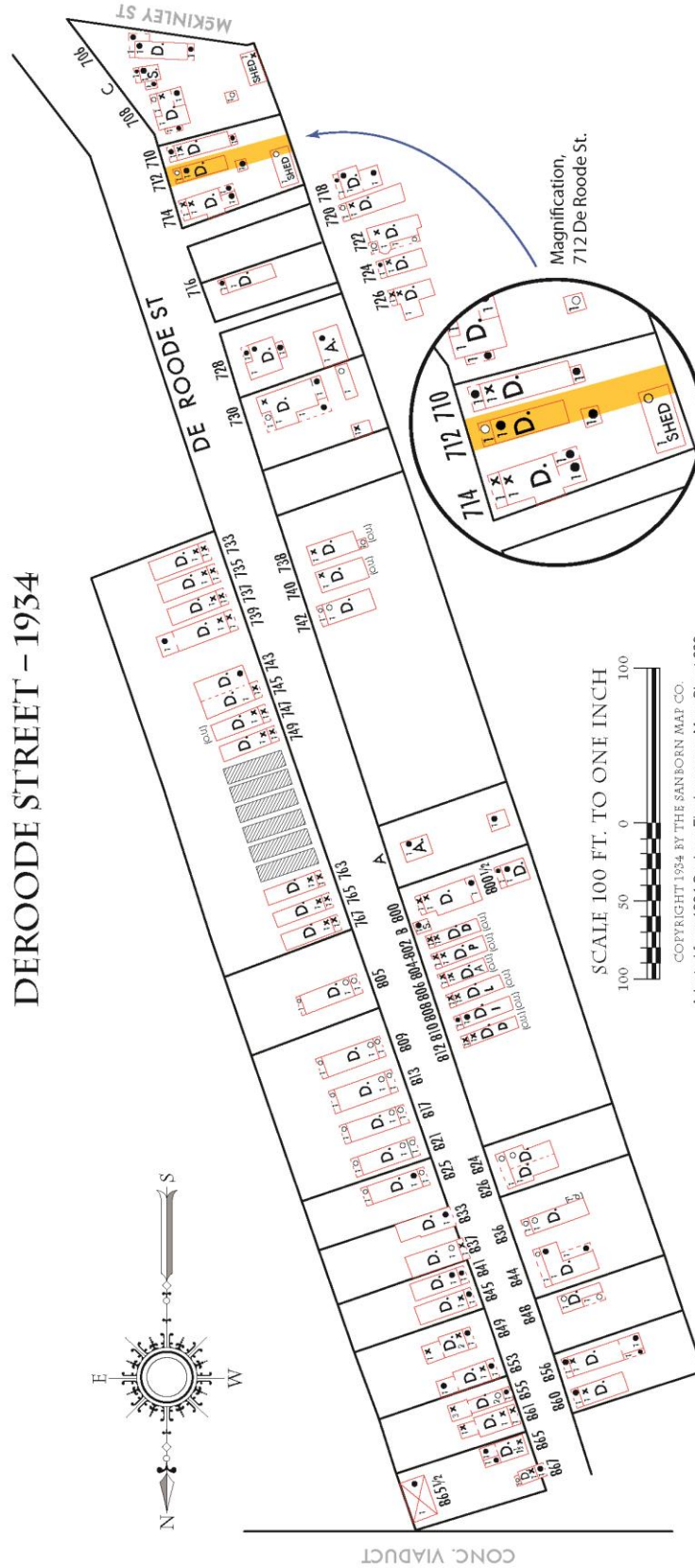
DILAPD Dilapidated

Number of Stories

- 1 = single story
- 1 1/2 = one-and-a-half stories
- 2 = two stories
- 3 = three stories



DEROODE STREET - 1934



Name _____

The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century: Analyzing the Data

Your teacher has given you the 1940 U.S. Federal Census for a section of DeRoode Street. You have the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (and its key) for the same street section. Using these documents, on other sheets of paper, answer the following questions to find out about the Davis Bottom neighborhood in the early 20th century. Record the data you collect on “The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century: Organizing the Data” Analysis Sheet (Page 22).

1. What do the different types of buildings tell you about the Davis Bottom neighborhood?

A. Using the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, find out how many different types of buildings are along DeRoode Street. For building types, refer to “How to Read a Sanborn Map.” Graph this information on Graph One. How many different types did you find? Which ones are the most common? Can you find some dwellings that might not be shotguns? What makes you think they are not shotguns?

B. How many different ways of changing the basic shotgun house can you find on the Sanborn Map? Why do you think someone would want to change their house? How would you change a shotgun house to meet your needs today?

2. What does owning or renting houses tell you about the Davis Bottom neighborhood?

Using the 1940 U.S. Federal Census, find out how many houses on DeRoode Street are owned and how many are rented (use the “Owned or Rented” column). Graph this information on the left hand side of Graph Two. Using different colored markers for “Owned” and “Rented,” mark the house locations on the 1934 Sanborn Map. Where do house owners live? Where do renters live? Now, find out who owns and who rents these houses (use the “Sex,” “Color/Race,” and “Age” columns). Describe any patterns you see.

3. What does “Who lives where?” tell you about the Davis Bottom neighborhood?

Using the 1940 U.S. Federal Census, find out how many Negro families and how many White families live on DeRoode Street (use the “Color/Race” column). Graph this information on the right hand side of Graph Two. Using different colored markers for “Negro” and “White,” mark the house locations on the 1934 Sanborn Map. Where do Negroes live? Where do Whites live? Describe any patterns you see.

4. What does household information tell you about the Davis Bottom neighborhood?

Using the 1940 U.S. Federal Census, find out about Davis Bottom households (use the “Relation to Household Head” column). List the different ways the census taker described the social relationship of the residents to the household head (for example, daughter, brother, cousin, lodger). Count up how often each type of relationship is listed. Graph your data on Graph Three. Describe any patterns you see.

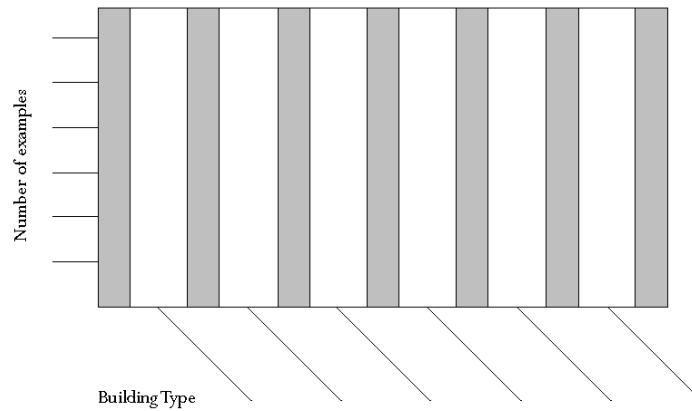
5. What does information about children tell you about the Davis Bottom neighborhood?

List the names of your friends—the ones you play with regularly. How many live within walking distance of where you live? How many live too far away to walk to? Now collect information from the 1940 U.S. Federal Census about the children who lived on DeRoode Street. Where do they live? What are their ages? Using different colored markers, mark on the 1934 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map where they lived and their ages. Describe any patterns you see.

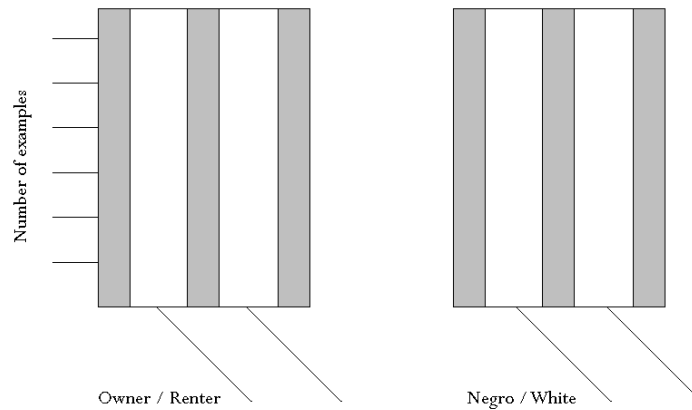
Name _____

The Davis Bottom Neighborhood in the Early 20th Century: Organizing the Data

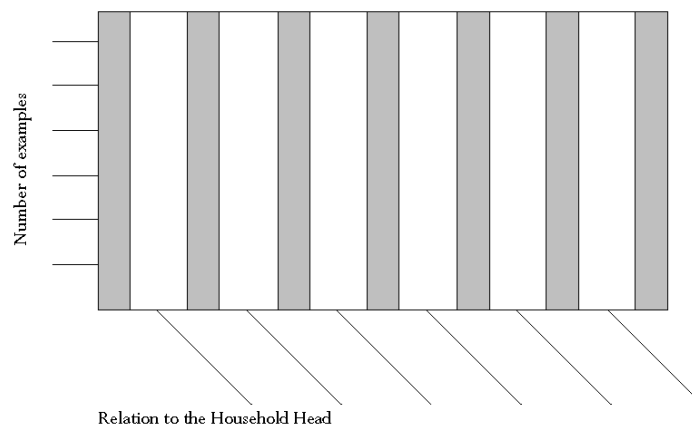
Graph One: About Building Types in the Davis Bottom Neighborhood



Graph Two: About Owner/Renters and About Negro/White Residents in the Davis Bottom Neighborhood



Graph Three: About Households in the Davis Bottom Neighborhood



Investigating a Shotgun House

Part Three: Archaeology

Archaeology Notebook

You are an archaeologist. Your question is:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Investigation Activities

1. Teacher-led class discussion using “Footprints of Shelters” (page 24)
2. Class review of the “Footprint of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House” (page 25) and the “Map of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site” (page 26)
3. Construct a “Quadrant Map” or “Site Map” (teacher will provide)
4. Complete data collection sheet: “Quadrant of the Shotgun House Site: Analyzing the Data” (page 27)
5. Participate in teacher-led class discussion of the data you collected
6. Review with the whole class the “Shotgun House Construction” (page 28) and “How an Archaeological Site is Formed” (page 29)
7. Read “Strata in the Privy” (pages 30-33)
8. Complete data collection sheet: “Strata in the Privy: Analyzing the Data” (page 34)
9. Add to “A Davis Bottom Timeline” (teacher-led activity)

Data Sources

“Footprints of Shelters” (page 24); “Footprint of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House” (page 25); “Map of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site” (page 26); “Shotgun House Construction” (page 28); “How an Archaeological Site is Formed” (page 29); “Strata in the Privy” (pages 30-33)

Word Bank

archaeological site: a place where people used to live and where they left objects behind

cross-dating: a method of dating objects and deposits by comparing objects recovered from other sites and levels

diagnostic artifact: an object with particularly distinctive characteristics that archaeologists can link to a specific date or time

excavate: to uncover by digging by hand or machinery and expose to view

Law of Superposition: the oldest strata occur at the bottom of archaeological deposits and the most recent strata are at the top

nightsoil: the human waste (or “poop” layer) in a privy

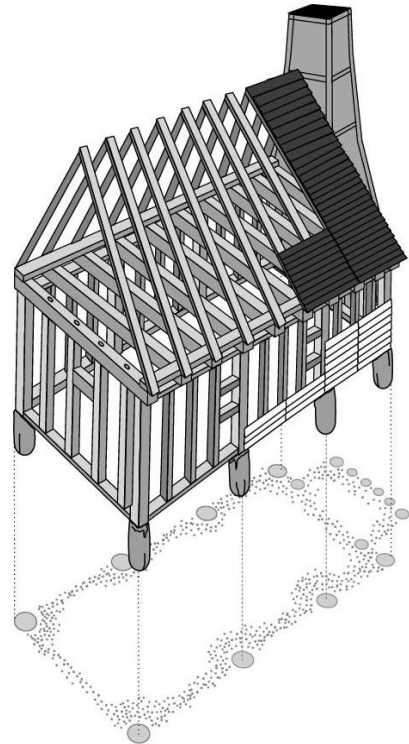
privy or outhouse (pronounced *priv I*, not like private *prai vit*): a pit dug into the ground to collect and store human waste in a sanitary way

strata: layers in archaeological sites; one layer is called a *stratum*

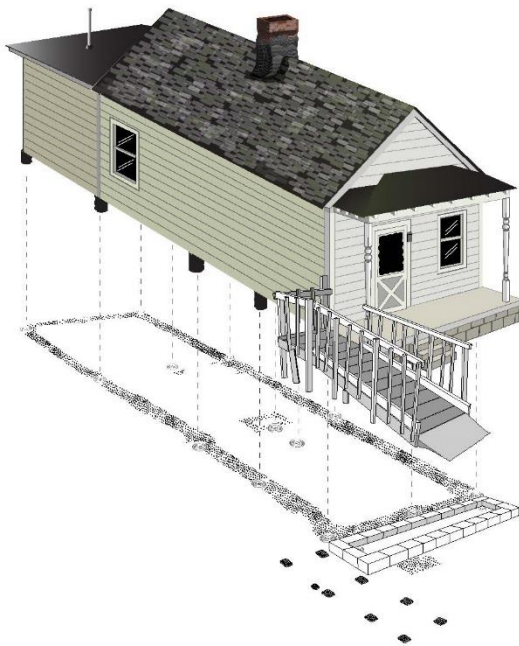
Footprints of Shelters



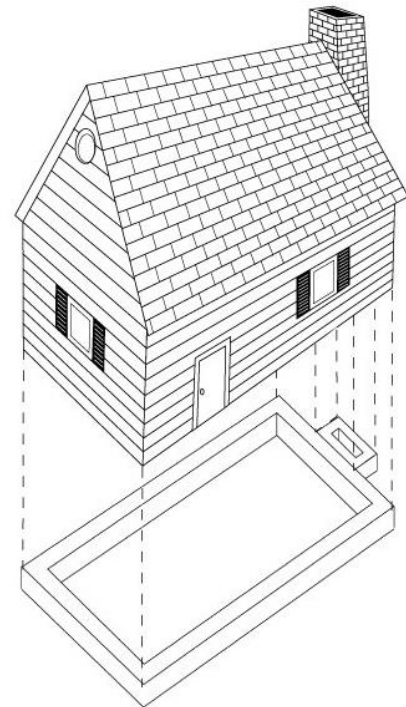
Archaeological footprint of an ancient tipi



Archaeological footprint of a colonial house



Archaeological footprint
of a 20th-century shotgun house



Archaeological footprint of a 21st-century house

Footprint of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House

The City of Lexington built a new road through the low-lying part of Davis Bottom and redeveloped that part of the neighborhood during the Newtown Pike Extension Project. This gave archaeologists a chance to **excavate** and study the neighborhood's archaeological sites in 2010-2011.



712 DeRoode Street is the house on the right.

The Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site covers a single lot on the west side of DeRoode Street. This lot is long and narrow like many of the lots in the neighborhood.

The house at 712 DeRoode Street was built between 1920 and 1925. The original two-room house measured 14 ½ feet by 28 feet. Next, the owner/residents added on a kitchen to the back of the house. Finally, they added a new porch and wheelchair ramp on the front. The final size of the house was 14 ½ feet by 39 ½ feet.

We know these changes took place based on evidence from several sources. Archaeological research is one source. Historic documents, like Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, are another. Oral history interviews with people who used to live in the neighborhood also provide information and photographs.

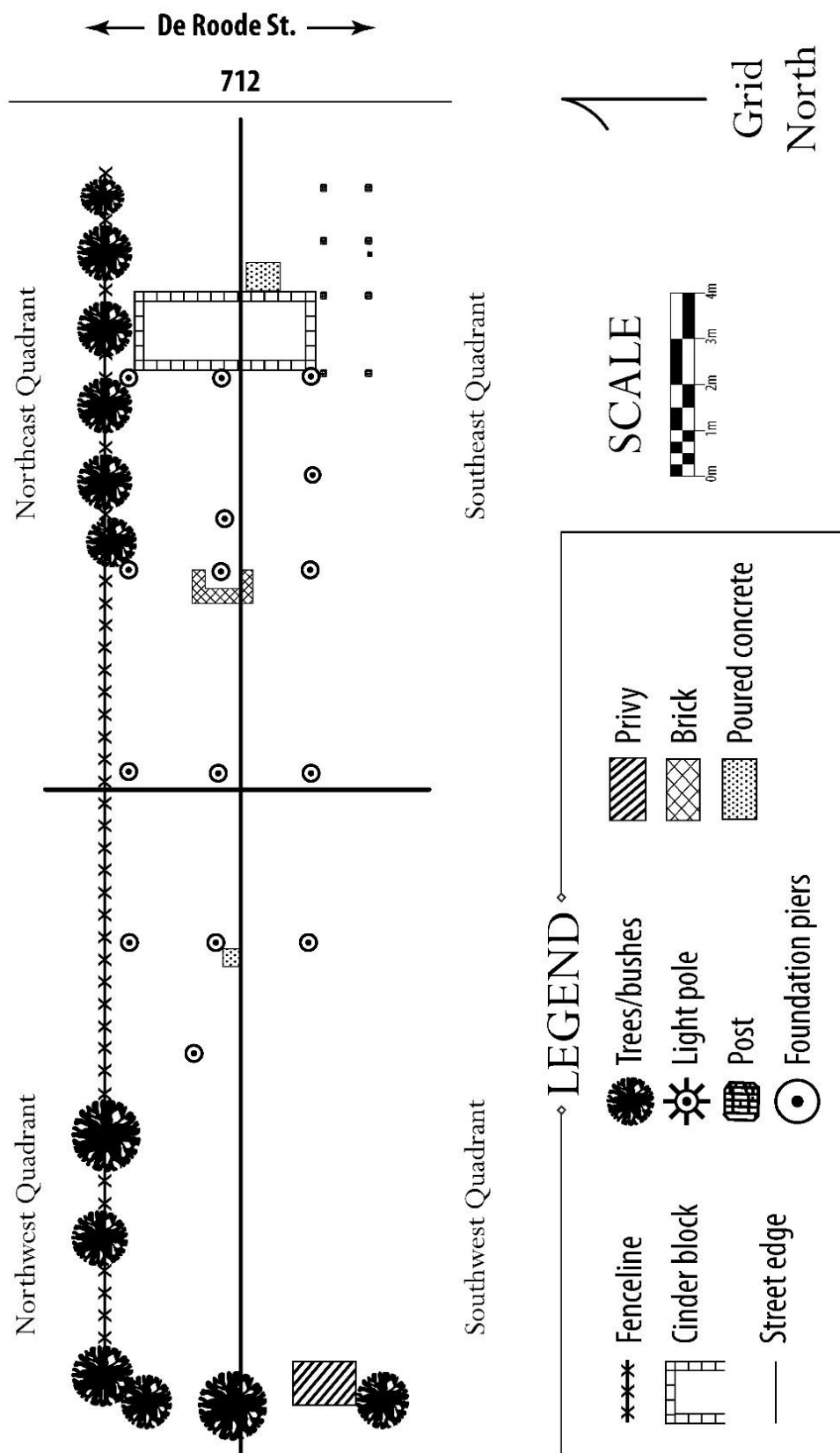
In this part of the Investigation, you will study a map of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site (see Page 26). When archaeologists excavated and researched the site, they divided it into four sections or quadrants.



**Trench Excavation at 712 DeRoode Street (left).
Wooden pier with brick (above).**

Archaeologists often use backhoes (at left, in the background) during excavation of urban sites. They use them to remove modern deposits to search for building foundations, trash pits, and privies. At 712 DeRoode Street, archaeologists found what was left of the house foundation piers and debris from the house. The two yellow flags in the picture (at left) mark where they found two wooden foundation piers. A photo of a post (above) used as a pier is shown with a brick for scale.

Map of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site



Name_____

Quadrant of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site: Analyzing the Data

1. Write the name of the quadrant you are investigating. _____
2. Use the circles below to put your artifacts in groups. Give each group a name and then count the artifacts. You may want to add more circles.

A large circle with a horizontal line across the middle. Below the line, the text "Category 1" is written. At the bottom of the circle, there is another horizontal line, and below it, the text "Number of Artifacts" is written.

A large circle with a horizontal line across the middle. Below the line, the text "Category 2" is written. At the bottom of the circle, there is another horizontal line, and below it, the text "Number of Artifacts" is written.

A large circle with a horizontal line across the middle. Below the line, the text "Category 3" is written. At the bottom of the circle, there is another horizontal line, and below it, the text "Number of Artifacts" is written.

A large circle with a horizontal line across the middle. Below the line, the text "Category 4" is written. At the bottom of the circle, there is another horizontal line, and below it, the text "Number of Artifacts" is written.

3. Show the information from Question Number 2 as a bar graph or pie chart. Use the back of this page.
4. Based on your observations of your artifact groups, on the back of this page, write down two or more inferences about the activities you think took place in this quadrant.
5. Observe the complete archaeological map of the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site. Do your ideas change after seeing the entire site? Do you have different ideas about how the people lived? If so, write down your new ideas on the back of this page.

Shotgun House Construction



Stage One

First workers prepare the lot for construction. Then they drive round wooden piers into the ground where the house will stand. These piers are the foundation. Larger piers are for the house; smaller ones are for the front porch. Bricklayers bring mortar and bricks from the local brickyard. They lay the bricks for the chimney foundation. Then, they build the chimney and the fireplaces.



Stage Two

Carpenters frame-up the skeleton of the two-room house. They use thick wooden boards for framing the walls, roof, and ceiling. Thinner wooden boards are for walls and flooring. The carpenters also build the wooden front steps.



Stage Three

Carpenters nail up vertical weatherboard to cover the skeleton of the house. Roofers install the house roof—tar impregnated paper or fabric—and the porch roof, made of tin. Now workers can finish the inside of the house.



Stage Four

Carpenters insert windows in the walls. Workers hang doors on iron hinges. On the front porch, roof supports are the only decorated parts of the house. Painters white-wash the house inside and out for the new residents. It is time to move in!

How an Archaeological Site is Formed

Archaeological sites in cities are rarely made by buildings that fall apart over time and disappear. Usually, someone tears down the building. They bring in fill (dirt, rocks, chunks of concrete and brick) to flatten out the lot. Then they build a new building. For this reason, archaeologists often find overlapping footprints of many buildings and many different kinds of buildings on a city lot. This creates complex archaeological sites.

Archaeologists who worked at the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site were lucky. Before they began their work, architectural historians studied the shotgun house. They took photographs, measured the house inside and out, and then made drawings. Because of this work, the archaeologists knew what the building looked like before crews with bulldozers tore it down. Artifacts and documents helped tell more of the story.



Step One: A New House in 1920-1925



Step Two: An Older House After 1970



Step Three: An Older House Around 2000



Step Four: Torn Down in 2011

Strata in the Privy

Scientists call layers in archaeological sites **strata**. Strata can be different from each other in color and texture. Strata represent different events that took place in the past—over long or even very short periods of time. Natural processes, like flooding, make strata. People make strata, too. Wherever people live, they leave behind the remains of their daily lives—such as trash, or parts of buildings—as strata. For this reason, strata are a record of past activities and events.

Archaeologists analyze and interpret strata to learn about when and how people lived. The order of strata provides clues. The oldest strata are at the bottom. The youngest, most recently deposited strata are at the top. That is the **Law of Superposition**. This law is always true, except when roots grow or burrowing animals dig tunnels and disturb the layers. People disturb strata, too, when they dig trenches for a building foundation or holes for a post or a well, or when they loot sites for artifacts.

Artifacts in strata also provide clues. **Diagnostic artifacts** are especially helpful. The distinctive characteristics of these artifacts link them to specific dates or times. These objects help archaeologists figure out the age of strata by comparing them to similar objects recovered from other sites and levels. This is called **cross-dating**.

The Privy at 712 DeRoode Street

Before flush toilets, people dug an **outhouse** or **privy** behind their homes, like the one at the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site, to collect and store human waste in a sanitary way. These were private places, and so that is why another name for an outhouse is “privy” (pronounced *prɪv* I, not like private *praɪ* vt).

People threw ash and lime into their privies to help keep down the smell. They also threw out trash in



Archaeologist Tanya Faberson and the privy at 712 DeRoode Street during excavation.

privies—food, bottles, broken dishes, and other household items. Both the human waste and the trash created strata.

House lots in cities are small. Once people filled-up their privy, they either dug a new one or cleaned out the old one. This disturbed the strata. The people who lived at 712 DeRoode Street cleaned out their privy when it got full, but they did not go back to using it as a toilet. They used it as a trash pit.

Cleaning out a privy was a messy, smelly job. People who did this usually worked in the middle of the night when

everyone else was asleep. This is why we call the waste (or poop layer) in privies “**nightsoil**.”

Archaeologists like to find and study privies. That’s because privies often hold more information about people than other places archaeologists study. Privies contain lots of many different kinds of artifacts. These

artifacts often are larger and more complete than those found in yards. This means artifacts from privies can be easier to study.

Nightsoil also contains information about what people ate. Archaeologists find food remains in privies—chicken bones from roasts, or raspberry seeds and peach pits from pies and cobblers.

Archaeologists found a privy in the southwestern part of the 712 DeRoode Street lot. It was a large, wood plank-lined pit, 5 feet deep and 4.5 by 2 feet in size. Based on the size of the pit, the outhouse probably had two seats. Page 33 shows a simplified scale drawing of the privy's north wall.



After archaeologists wash the privy artifacts, they identify and catalogue the artifacts, in this case, pieces of glass.



COLD WINTER WORK! A crew member draws the South Wall profile of Test Unit 35.



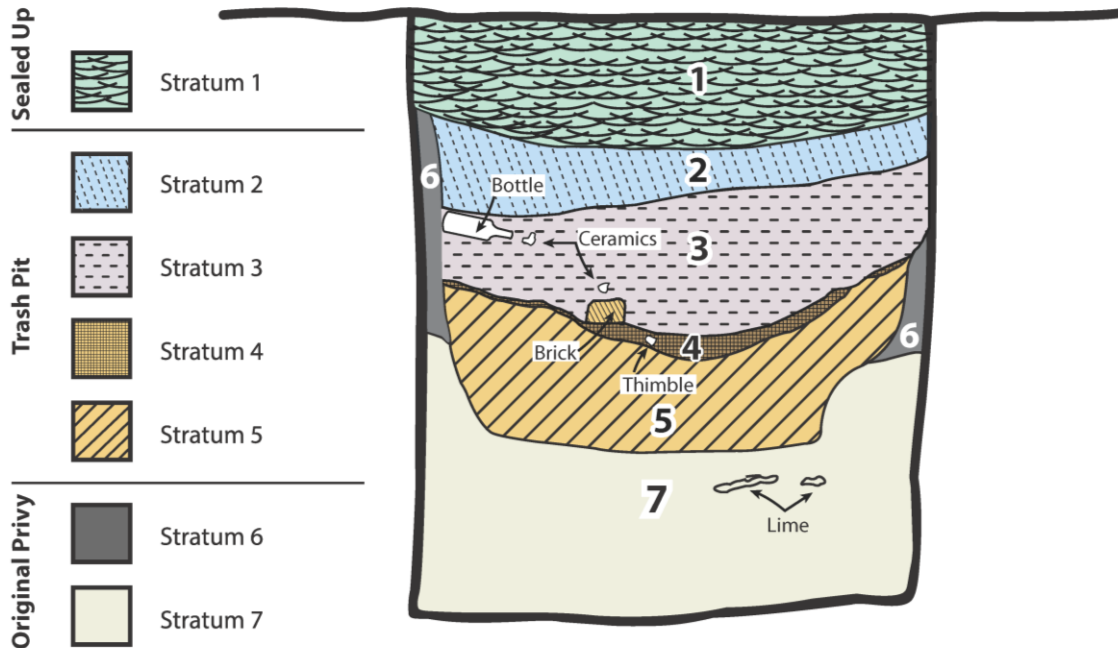
Personal items (top), including tableware, buttons and beads, and glass bottles (left) from the DeRoode Street privy.

Privy Cut-away View



The Minnesota State Board of Health published this picture of the correct placement and construction of a detached home privy on page 12 in their May 1916 issue of *The Sanitary Privy*. The Board of Health used this drawing to train public health workers about how to protect water supplies.

The Privy at 712 DeRoode Street



Privy Strata

Sealed Up. Residents sealed up the full privy/trash pit between around 1945 to the 1950s. Archaeologists found a vinyl audio record (1940), glass canning jars (1869 to 1955), glass medicine bottles (1909 to 1955), glass liquor bottles (1903 to 1955), and plastic items (1930 to now).

Stratum 1: Gray-brown Soil. Coal and cinder. Lots of building debris (window glass, nails, and brick) and household trash (glass bottles and jars, metal cans, and broken dishes).

Trash Pit. Residents cleaned-out the privy and used it as a trash pit from the 1930s to 1940s. Archaeologists base this date range on the age of a glass bottle (1911 to 1929), glass canning jars (1869 to 1955), glass medicine bottles (1938 to 1969), glass liquor bottles (1933 to 1955), a penny (1940), and plastic items (1930 to now).

Stratum 2: Brown Clay. Some household trash (glass bottles and broken dishes) and some window glass.

Stratum 3: Gray Sandy Clay. Coal and cinder. Some household trash (glass bottles and jars; broken ceramic dishes) and some building debris (window glass, nails, and brick).

Stratum 4: Coal and Cinder. A little household trash (glass bottles and jars) and a metal thimble.

Stratum 5: Yellow-brown Clay. Some household trash (glass bottles and broken dishes).

Original Privy. Residents deposited nightsoil in the privy from the 1920s to 1930s. Archaeologists base these dates on the age of the glass bottles they found: glass medicine bottles (1913 to 1938), an unidentified glass bottle (1911 to 1929), a glass liquor bottle (1929 to 1954), and a glass soda bottle (1917 to 1928).

Stratum 6: Gray-brown nightsoil (poop layer) mixed with ash. A little household trash (glass bottles and broken ceramic dishes).

Stratum 7: Black nightsoil with some lime. Lots of household trash (glass bottles, broken ceramic dishes, and animal bones).

Name _____

Strata in the Privy: Analyzing the Data

Study the north wall profile drawing of the 712 DeRoode Street privy on Page 33. Read the descriptions of the strata, the deposits, and the artifacts they contained. Then answer these questions. You may continue your answers on the back of this page.

1. Apply the Law of Superposition to the Trash Pit. Which stratum is the oldest and which is the most recent?
2. Based on the dates of the artifacts that archaeologists recovered from the privy:
 - a. When did the people living at 712 DeRoode Street dig this privy?
 - b. When did they clean it out?
3. Lime and ash appear only in the Original Privy, the deposit containing nightsoil strata (or “poop” layers). Why did the residents stop using lime and ash after the Original Privy?
4. Why is there no nightsoil in the Trash Pit?
5. Compare how the residents of Davis Bottom disposed of trash and nightsoil in the 1940s to how we do it today. How is it different? Can you think of anything that is similar?
6. What does the trash in the privy tell us about the people who lived in Davis Bottom?

Investigating a Shotgun House

Part Four: Today

Archaeology Notebook

You are an archaeologist. Your question is:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Investigation Activities

1. Discuss the relationship that Kenny Demus and the Laffoon Sisters had with their old neighborhood
2. Read “The Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site Today” (pages 36-38)
3. Discuss the changes that took place in Davis Bottom, why they happened, and how they affected the neighborhood residents. Using “Home Buying Guide: Questions and Answers” and “Rental Guide: Questions and Answers” (teacher will provide) discuss what the future might hold for the neighborhood
4. Read “Preserve a Shotgun House Site?” by M. Jay Stottman (pages 39-40)
5. Discuss the importance of preserving shotgun house sites and the role archaeology plays in helping people understand how people lived long ago
6. Complete “A Davis Bottom Timeline” (teacher-led activity)

Data Sources

“The Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site Today” (pages 36-38); “Preserve a Shotgun House Site?” by M. Jay Stottman (pages 39-40); “Home Buying Guide: Questions and Answers” and “Rental Guide: Questions and Answers” (teacher will provide)

Word Bank

cistern: a container for storing or for holding water

community land trust: a nonprofit corporation that helps keep housing affordable for a community. It balances the needs of individual people to own land with a community’s need to have low-cost housing, many different kinds of economic opportunities, and local access to basic services (like electricity, water, and garbage pick-up).

environmental justice/social justice: to be fair and just to all people. Everyone has the right to be treated equally or has the right to equal say about what’s going on in their community.

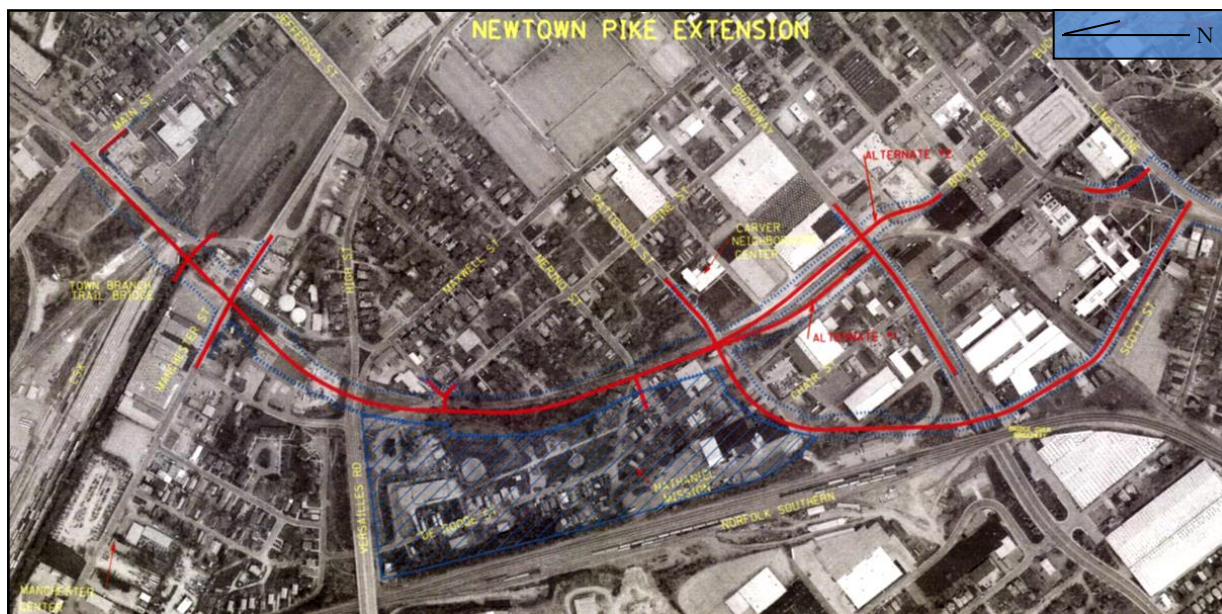
mitigate: to make less severe

preserve: to remain intact, to protect from injury or harm

The Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site Today

A small section of the original Davis Bottom neighborhood sits on higher ground along the old neighborhood's eastern edge. Today, it is all that remains untouched.

The road project discussed for decades, the Newtown Pike Extension Project, finally began during the first decade of the 2000s. As part of that project, the City of Lexington built a new neighborhood, called Davis Park, in the low-lying section of Davis Bottom.



Aerial photograph of Davis Bottom, showing planned locations for new roads (red lines) and neighborhood redevelopment (faint blue hatched area below and left of red lines).

The City started buying up property in 2000. Ten years later, construction crews began to clear away houses and commercial buildings using bulldozers and backhoes. They tore down the shotgun house at 712 DeRoode Street and scraped up the archaeological deposits. They removed at least a foot of soil contaminated by oil and metals where the neighborhood's auto repair shop, junkyards, and metal scrapyards once stood. Then they spread between five and ten feet of clean soil across the whole bottom, covering all traces of the lives of the families who once had lived in this part of Davis Bottom.

In 2014, construction crews installed new storm sewers. These sewers will stop the flooding that had plagued the low-lying parts of Davis Bottom for so long. Crews also built a new DeRoode Street and started building new houses. By 2016, the first of the former Davis Bottom residents had moved into her new home.

When the Newtown Pike Extension Project is finally finished, Davis Park will be a place of homes and businesses. Much like the old Davis Bottom neighborhood, it will have a park with a ball diamond. However, the new Davis Park neighborhood will be different in many ways. It will have new utilities, roads, streetlights, and sidewalks. It will have affordable, well-built, energy-efficient single-family houses, townhouses, duplexes, and four-plexes. There will be handicapped-accessible houses with front porches. The dwellings will have closets and basements and outside storage buildings. There will be a bus stop, a laundromat, a day care, and businesses in the community where young people can work. Some houses will be for rent. Others will be for sale. There will be no cheaply built, poorly insulated, cramped, shotgun houses.

But What About the People?

The changes the Newtown Pike Extension Project brought to Davis Bottom were a long time coming: over 80 years, in fact. Because some Davis Bottom residents got tired of waiting, they moved away. Older residents died waiting for the road.

By 2010, few people lived in the heart of Davis Bottom. The City of Lexington paid them for their homes and gave them relocation benefits, too. While construction was going on, these families lived in mobile homes owned by The City. They did not have to pay rent or pay utilities while they waited.

Former Davis Bottom renters and homeowners were given the chance, before anyone else, to rent the new apartments or buy the new houses in Davis Park. However, no one will own land in the new neighborhood, not even the long-time homeowners.

The **Lexington Community Land Trust**, a non-profit organization of Davis Park community members, owns the land. All of Davis Park's homeowners have to join the Trust. Residents new to Davis Park have to pay a land lease fee of \$25 a month, but the original Davis Bottom residents will not.

Why does the Land Trust own all the land in Davis Park? In the late 20th century, people noticed that all across America, housing and land prices increased sharply in and near poor urban neighborhoods after new roads or redevelopment projects were finished. Usually, these prices forced the residents to move away. They could not afford to live in their old neighborhood.



DeRoode Street in Davis Bottom before neighborhood redevelopment (2010), and during the first phase of redevelopment (2014). Notice the same tall building in the background in both photographs. Compare these views to an earlier but similar view of DeRoode Street on Page 15.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 12898. Now, when federal agencies plan to build new roads or redevelop urban neighborhoods, they must consider how these projects will affect the health and lives of minorities and poor people, as well as the environment. The agencies must find ways to avoid, minimize, or **mitigate** project impacts. This is called **environmental justice**. It is a kind of **social justice**.

Remember how close Davis Bottom is to downtown Lexington? The neighborhood's location makes it a very attractive place to live. This is because economic development has changed downtown Lexington. If

The City lets the market set the price of land and new homes in Davis Park, former Davis Bottom residents will not be able to afford to live in the new neighborhood for long. Eventually, they will have to leave because they will not be able to pay the property taxes.

The City of Lexington does not want this to happen. It wants environmental justice for the former residents of Davis Bottom. The Lexington Community Land Trust's job is to provide that.

What Did the Davis Bottom Community Think?

The Newtown Pike Extension Project destroyed a working-class way of life with deep history. It was hard for Davis Bottom residents to live through the road planning and the redevelopment of their old neighborhood.



There was grief, frustration, and fear. Some people felt bullied. Some people were angry. They thought they did not get enough money for their homes. They were disappointed they could not own the land. For them, to give up their land meant giving up their rights and freedom.

Others felt powerless, at the mercy of the Newtown Pike Extension Project, and just in the way. They said: “Leave the neighborhood alone. It is cheap living. People can make it in Davis Bottom when they can’t make it anywhere else in Lexington.”

Some people were positive and hopeful about the future. They were glad to live in the mobile homes while they waited for construction to end. They had air-conditioning in the summer and insulation against the cold in the winter.

Everyone was anxious for the construction to end. Residents hoped they would live close to their former neighbors in the new Davis Park neighborhood. They hoped The City



710 (left) and 712 (right) DeRoode Street.

would restore Southside Park. But many did not see how such poor people could own homes in Davis Park. They did not understand how the Lexington Community Land Trust could work for them. They were unsure how everything would turn out in the end. However, **IF** everything worked out, they felt that the improvements would be good, and they looked forward to living in a clean, decent place. They were willing to give it a try.

The bottom line was this: everyone in Davis Bottom was tired of waiting. Nobody wanted Davis Bottom to be forgotten. Everybody wanted Davis Bottom's link to its history to be visible still.

Preserve a Shotgun House Site?

by M. Jay Stottman

*M. Jay Stottman is an historic archaeologist at the Kentucky Archaeological Survey.
He has studied many different kinds of urban house sites in Kentucky.*

Shotguns are cheap houses, designed to fit on narrow city lots. They are not beautiful fancy mansions. Rich and famous people did not live in them. Thousands of these houses were built in American cities in a variety of styles and materials. So, you might think a shotgun house is not important enough to **preserve**.

But think about this.



DeRoode Street in 2010. The last house on the right is 712, the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site that you have been studying.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, because of the low cost and small size of shotgun houses, immigrants and working people could move out of overcrowded city tenements. They could move into homes they owned. In the book *The Big Orange Splot* by Daniel Pinkwater, Mr. Plumbeam says, “My house is me and I am it. My house is where I like to be and it looks like all my dreams.” That is what these versatile houses were. Owners could easily add extra rooms. They could add porches and decorative trim to the front to reflect their personality. So shotgun houses hold a special place in America history because the working-class people who built America lived in shotgun houses.

In many ways, working-class neighborhoods are lost landscapes today. Public housing and highway projects, and the growth of suburbs have changed America’s cities. In Lexington, as in many cities, no one really thought working-class neighborhoods were historically, culturally, or architecturally important. We have all but written these neighborhoods, and the people who lived there, out of our history.

Preserve the Archaeology of a Shotgun House Site?

The shotgun house sites along DeRoode Street in the working-class neighborhood that was Davis Bottom are gone now. Bulldozers and backhoes have torn down the houses, scraped up the archaeological deposits, and spread clean soil on top.

But why preserve the archaeology of shotgun house sites anyway? In many places, shotgun houses are still standing. We have documents, maps, and photographs. Some of the people who once lived in these places can still tell their stories. Is that not enough?

Architecture, documents, and oral histories are only part of the story of working-class neighborhoods and communities like Davis Bottom. If we preserve a shotgun house site, we preserve the evidence of the people who helped build America.

Archaeologists study objects, the materials of everyday life, to learn about how people lived. These



Archaeologists excavating at a three-room 1873 urban shotgun house site in Louisville, Kentucky's Portland Neighborhood (above and below).

objects and their patterns are another kind of information. They give us another point of view on the past, another part of the story.

From archaeological research, we have learned how workers built shotgun houses and how owner/renters changed them over time. We have learned how working-class people made a life in the small spaces

of a crowded city. We have learned that the things these people bought were not much different from the things people bought who lived in other neighborhoods.

Doing archaeology in a city can be challenging and complicated. Every time someone moves dirt, puts up a building or tears one down, they destroy archaeological information. However, building and rebuilding on tiny city lots creates archaeological information, too. Each event leaves evidence behind. Evidence from previous times and previous people can escape later earth moving and construction. This is especially true of old privies, wells, and **cisterns** dug deep into the earth. This evidence gives archaeologists a great deal of information about the past.



The history of the Davis Bottom community is found in its documents, its people, its shotgun houses, and the objects beneath its yards. Shotgun house sites can tell the story of any working-class neighborhood, whether inhabited by immigrants from a foreign country, a family from the Eastern Kentucky mountains, or the descendants of formerly enslaved people.

Investigating a Shotgun House: Assessment

Archaeology Notebook

You are an archaeologist. Your question is:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Assessment Activities

1. Write a final informative essay (page 42)
2. Complete the “Bringing the Past Into the Future” project (page 43)

Word Bank

evidence: data used to answer questions

performance standard: basis for measuring your work

Final Informative Essay

After archaeologists finish studying a site, they describe what they found. *And* they describe what they discovered. They write technical reports for other archaeologists. They also share what they learned with interested people. This can take many forms: a museum exhibit, a presentation, or a website.

Now it is time for you to share with others what you found out during your study of Davis Bottom and its shotgun houses. Your essay will answer this question:

What can we learn about the lives of urban working-class people by investigating a shotgun house in Davis Bottom?

Introduction (one paragraph)

State the question. Then list four facts or ideas you learned about the working-class people of Davis Bottom. Use one or two complete sentences. Try to include one fact or idea from each section of the unit: “Urban Geography,” “History,” “Archaeology,” and “Today.”

Body (four paragraphs)

Write one paragraph about each fact or idea. Include specific **evidence** from your research to support each one. Here is an example:

Archaeologists found many artifacts at the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site. For example, the animal bones and beans from the privy tell us about what people ate and where they threw away their trash. The patterns of where toys were found show us what kinds of games they played, like marbles and checkers, and where they played them. The coal fragments tell where families stored the coal they used to heat their houses.

Conclusion (one paragraph)

Summarize your main points. Discuss how learning about the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site helped you understand what it might have been like to grow up in a neighborhood like Davis Bottom.

Performance Standards

- ❖ **Introduction** – My introduction states the question. It lists four facts or ideas I learned about urban working-class people by studying the Davis Bottom shotgun house.
- ❖ **Body** – The body of my essay has four paragraphs, one for each fact/idea. Each paragraph describes the fact/idea, and I include specific evidence to support it.
- ❖ **Conclusion** – My conclusion summarizes the main points I discussed in the body of my essay. It presents my ideas about what I think it might have been like to grow up in a neighborhood like Davis Bottom.

Bringing the Past Into the Future

One way to honor history is to create new things in the present by using ideas from the past.

Project

Imagine that your State Historical Society is planning a new exhibit about an urban neighborhood in your state. The Society members have narrowed down their choices to two ideas. One of the neighborhoods is like Davis Bottom.

Half of the members think there is nothing interesting to learn from a poor neighborhood. The others think there might be something worth showing. That is because they have heard about your Davis Bottom research. These members want to know what you think visitors would like to learn about people who lived in that neighborhood.

Collect your thoughts. What have you learned about Davis Bottom? Think about the shotgun houses. About where the adults worked and about the games the children played. About how much everyone cared about their neighborhood. What might it have been like to live in Davis Bottom? How and why should Davis Bottom be remembered?

Now design a project for the next State Historical Society meeting. This project will show what you think visitors to the new exhibit should know about neighborhoods like Davis Bottom. Your project will describe the Davis Bottom neighborhood.

Choose your approach. Create a Prezi or a short PowerPoint presentation. Draw a poster or prepare a museum display. Make a blueprint or a 3D model. Write a magazine article or a play. Write a graphic novel and illustrate it. Prepare a storyboard.

Draw on at least three facts or ideas from your Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site research. Label the facts/ideas you borrowed from the shotgun house.

Performance Standards

- ❖ **Ideas from the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site** - My project includes three facts or ideas from the site.
- ❖ **Design** - My project design is eye catching and interesting.
- ❖ **Lines and Labels** - I labeled all three of the facts/ideas from the Davis Bottom Shotgun House Site.