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A (Re)theorization of the Archaeology of Fauna at the Germantown Parsonage

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A (Re)theorization of the Archaeology of Fauna at the Germantown Parsonage

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Abstract

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Abstract: In “A (Re)theorization of the Archaeology of Fauna at the Germantown Parsonage” I aim to explore how archaeological methodology and theory can be applied and thought about differently to create more anthropologically useful archaeological knowledge and analysis. To do so, I explore theoretical approaches, such as pragmatism, and apply them to analysis of faunal finds from the Germantown Maple Avenue Parsonage site. While the faunal records have been analyzed and written about prior, one example being by Marie-Lorraine Pipes, PhD, RPA, I aim to look at the material through the lens of new theoretical approaches and hope to exhibit how doing so can create new discussion of the faunal finds, reveal new conclusions concerning the finds, and perhaps create new archaeological knowledge about these faunal remains.

In order to do so, I will first analyze how faunal finds at the Parsonage have been analyzed in the past, interrogating the reports and comparing them to reports from similar sites, that is, sites reporting similar faunal finds and sites with similar African American histories. I will take note of the methodology and theory that was used to analyze the finds and draw conclusions from them, briefly investigate these methodological and theoretical techniques in a more general context, and analyze and scrutinize how these techniques were used to analyze faunal finds. Secondly, I will explore recent archaeological theory and methodology, such as Anna Agbe-Davies and Oliver J.T. Harris and Craig N. Cipolla, and analyze how their approaches differ from theory of the past. Lastly, I will revisit the faunal finds from the Parsonage, as well as new additions that have been found in recent digging seasons, and reanalyze them with fresh eyes, with mind to analysis of the past and our new toolbox of theory and methodology. By using the Parsonage faunal finds, I hope to analyze the merit of these new techniques and approaches as well as produce new and different conclusions and knowledge about these faunal finds.

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Introduction

Anthropology and archaeology have undergone much theoretical scrutiny and revising over the last decades. In many ways archaeology has transformed into more of a social science than it has ever been, straying from a strictly empirical, science based study and becoming much more abstract and theoretical in its methodology and practice. Additionally, technological improvements in methodological tools have largely impacted the effectiveness and accuracy of the empirical data side of archaeology, so with this aspect constantly improving, there is more room for archaeologists to think through this data in new and different ways. When we can be confident that our methodological practices are producing the most accurate empirical data as possible, there is less need to qualify this accuracy and more opportunity to apply anthropological theory and question to the data we are looking at. In this paper, I aim to think through these recent theoretical approaches that have been applied to archaeology and rethink them, using faunal remains from the Germantown Maple Avenue Parsonage in New York to put this theory into practice and develop a new theoretical approach that I believe incorporates the best parts of the theories I will explore.

In the first chapter, I explain recent theory that involves the methodological and theoretical sides of archaeology, including the work of Trouillot, Latour, and Agbe-Davies. With the help of the work of Cipolla and Harris (Cipolla 2017), who also endeavored into exploring recent archaeological theory, I lay out the theories as they make sense to me in developing my own approach. While I agreed with all of these theories at one point or another, I critique them in the parts that fell apart for me as I embarked on researching bones and fauna at the Parsonage. In chapter two, I introduce the finds from the Parsonage and explain and critique past analysis of these faunal finds by Marie-Lorraine Pipes. My analysis will consist of the finds she analyzed as

well as faunal remains found in the years after and over the past summer during my own research at the Parsonage. Chapter two largely consists of empirical analysis and a traditional breakdown of the artifacts themselves, informed by my experience analyzing artifacts, my conversation with Pipes and discussion of her report, and literature concerning the archaeology of bones at other prehistoric and historic sites, mainly as they relate to the bones being food refuse and evidence of farming and agricultural traditions of the Parsonage. Chapter three begins to break down the findings in terms other than food refuse, including possible spiritual and ritualistic uses, productive reuse of the bones for clothes, decor, musical instruments, etc., and reuse of these bones as tools. Additionally, I will use a series of maps I have created to analyze how the fauna is distributed across the Parsonage yard in order to show what the fauna could tell us about what activities happened in the yard. Through this speculative analysis, I aim to display the wide range of possible uses of bone refuse and offer a pragmatic, while still exploratory, approach to analyzing archaeological finds that extends archaeological theory into a more anthropological place rather than a strictly empirical and conclusive result. Through doing so, I aim to formulate my own theoretical approach to studying fauna and other archaeological material and develop this approach alongside modern archaeological theory and Parsonage research.

Through this paper, I aim to rethink the archaeology of bones that has been done at the Germantown Parsonage, explore more theoretical paths regarding the use, possession, and manipulation of the bones, and curate a more well rounded, detailed examination as to the meaning and purpose of the bones presence on the site.

Chapter One: Recent Archaeological Theory

The study of archaeology, as well as anthropology as a whole, has undergone tremendous reform and endured harsh critique and skepticism throughout the 21st century. A study that was once the half sibling of science has become more closely related to anthropology and the social sciences than ever. This change is closely aligned to the “ontological turn” of the field of anthropology in the last twenty years, a period that has brought about a host of new ways of thinking about the humans and nonhumans we study. As I studied anthropology through my time at Bard College, I am constantly exposed to a monumental conversation between an ever growing number of anthropologists, archaeologists, and other social scientists, all bouncing ideas off of one another about the past, present, and future of the social sciences. From new approaches to analyzing artifacts, discussion and critique of ethnographic methods, to complete rethinkings of truths we have come to accept as a society, world, and field of study, the social sciences are heavily enthralled in an ontological shift that stands to change what the studies are and what they aim to prove or solve, or if they aim to do either.

This being the case, it is intimidating to walk into one’s own research project, having to take into account the seemingly hundreds of approaches to studying humans, making decisions as to which ones will inform your own work, and considering how those decisions will strengthen or weaken your research, now and in the future. As a result, my goal for this project is not to come to any definitive conclusions concerning the use or purpose of the faunal material at the Germantown Parsonage, but instead join the conversation concerning how we conduct archaeological and anthropological research. I aim to work through the different approaches and theories I have encountered through my studies and apply them to a tangible archaeological study. While I stray from making or proving any definitive arguments in favor of exploring each

possibility, I hope to conclude this study by arguing for the importance of theory in archaeological work and displaying how a well rounded, maybe speculative at times, approach to archaeological studies can result in a richer conversation about the artifacts in question, the people that used, produced, and discarded of them, and the society at the time of their use. While archaeology of the past has focused on drawing conclusions through scientific evidence and using this evidence to extract knowledge of a particular group of people at a particular period of time, I aim to show how the use of scientific methods in tandem to anthropological theoretical thinking can produce a much more substantive study of the humans and their objects at a particular place and time in history. Through doing so, I hope to show how producing a study in this way lends itself much more to understanding why we study archaeology and understanding why archaeology is a pivotal sect of anthropology and the study of humans and society.

To begin, I will outline a brief history of the study of archaeology and its recent developments, with the help of Craig N. Cipolla and Oliver J.T. Harris and their book *Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium: Introducing Current Perspectives*, and prominent anthropological theorists such as Bruno Latour, Charles S. Pierce, and Donna Haraway.

Processual Archaeology

Our story of archaeology as a scientific and anthropological study of humans' past materiality begins in the mid 20th century, when scholars like Colin Renfrew and Lewis Binford suggested a shift in the study of archaeology to a more scientific based methodology. Processual, or new, archaeology, as it would come to be called, seeks to escape the trope of historical description as the goal of archaeology, leaning more in favor of an explanation as to why and how material remains were used and left in their designated location, and what material remains

can tell us about the societies that used and left them (Cipolla 2017: 19). Rather than to provide a historical recounting of materials made and used by people of the past, processual archaeologists aimed to provide a generalized structure that can be used to explain material remains, attach these remains to their designated place in historical society, and explain the *processes* in which these material remains were used by humans in response to their natural, societal, and political environments. Rather than recounting *what* people of the past did, processual archaeology wants to know *why* people acted the way they did, using material remains as a variable to come to conclusions. This ontological shift in archaeology came with an increased interest in scientific methods of studying material remains. Because processual archaeologists wanted to explain *why* certain things happened in the past, they had to come up with a way of studying material remains that had an objective base, a method that would definitively explain these remains. Enter: the scientific method. Archaeology and its methods of procedure would change drastically in response to this new ontology, introducing quantitative, impartial methods of digging up the material remains, statistical methods of calculating and interpreting the material, and new sub-fields that focused on particular material remains, like the fauna I will be looking at. Additionally, archaeologists became much more interested in *where* these material remains were being uncovered, the "site" of human activity, and how and why *these* locations became sites of material culture. Processual archaeology is considered the first step in "modern" archaeology and provided us with much of the methodology that we use to this day. Processual archaeology also brought much more validity to the study as a whole, in part due to its scientific, objective outlook.

While science and objectivity is a cornerstone of processual archaeology, there was also a good amount of theoretical consideration. Most prominently were ideas of positivism that

worked in tandem with the scientific approach of processual archaeologists. Positivism refers to a philosophical theory that asserts that truths of the world can be defined, are measurable, and can be proven through experience and logic. In archaeology, we see positivism manifest through scientific and empirical methodologies and interpretations of material remains. Processual archaeologists believed that conclusions drawn from material remains should be based on empirical, observable, and cross examined truths between archaeological sites and historical record. Archaeology took on a very scientific front through this positivist lens, focusing on proving hypotheses as to what, why, and how material remains meant for the people that used and left them behind. Additionally, there was a strong push towards functionalism: “[Artifacts] were the means by which people adapted to the environmental conditions in which they found themselves” (Cipolla 2017: 21). Cipolla and Harris use an example of a pot being found through archaeological methods. Processual archaeologists would assume a functional intention of this material remains; If a pot is found on a site, it must mean that the people here needed to obtain or hold liquid. Under a functionalist lens, artifacts are symbolic of adaptation and response to environment and society.

Cipolla and Harris briefly mention Lewis Binford’s “middle-range theory” as a cornerstone of processual archaeology in the late 20th century, a theory I want to spend a bit of time unpacking as its premise has become synonymous with archaeology as a study. Christopher Pierce offers a concise definition of the theory in his essay critiquing it:

“middle-range theory can be seen as consisting of four components: 1) documentation of causal relations between relevant dynamics and observable statics; 2) recognition of signature patterns in static remains; 3) inference of past

dynamics from observation of signature patterns in archaeological record; and, 4) evaluation of these inferences” (Pierce 1989: 1).

The theory is, on the surface, a precise and effective way of “translating” static material evidence into the dynamic organizations that produced, used, and left them in the ground; however, as we will see, it does have its faults and is not a full proof way of explaining archaeological sites and material. Nevertheless, I find it important to break it down as much as I can as it is, and has been, a foundational method of archaeological work, whether we realize we are employing it or not. Binford developed middle-range theory in an effort to logically and conclusively connect raw archaeological material with dynamic, systematic movements of humans that use these materials. Binford wanted to generate causal connections between the material being found and the human driven acts that produce and use the material as it relates to the adaptation of their environment. A pinnacle of this method is the reliance of the present to explain and understand the past. According to Binford, because we can not go back and dissect the dynamic processes that occurred to, with, and around the static material, we must rely on present record, ethnographic research, and historical context to make a dynamic connection between material evidence and the people and organizations in place that employed them for use. These connections must be causal, meaning the organizational dynamics must *make* the static material and/or the organizational dynamics must be explainable in functional systemic terms. In order to jump from static, fixed material evidence to inferring about the dynamic systems that were involved with them, Binford theorized “signature patterns” as a way to uniformly infer across sites and cultures. Pierce explains these signature patterns as translating the evidence into “if and only if” statements. Pulling from scholarship on symbolic logic, “if and only if” statements refer to arguments that state the consequent (in our case the dynamic system) can only

be true if and only if the antecedent (the material evidence) is present or true. For example, bringing back the pot analogy, under a signature pattern, there would be a pot found at an archaeological site *if and only if* the people needed to carry liquid, cook, etc. These signature patterns aimed to act as a valid and interchangeable way of viewing different sites with the same materials; If multiple sites have a pot present, this must mean that people at each of the sites had to use the pot in response to their environment (hunger, transportation, etc). These signature patterns are one step in Binford's inference process, a process that Pierce explains as "a translation process in which observations of matter in the archaeological record are converted into statements or concepts regarding the dynamic conditions that brought them into being" (Pierce 1989 : 3). Signature patterns are dynamic actions and systems that exist in the past and the present, allowing Binford to make "uniformitarian assumptions" and transcribe material remains into dynamic processes that we can observe in the present. Validity of these inferences lies in an archaeologist's ability to spot these signature patterns and methodologically ascribe them to the static material in a uniform manner. Pierce cites an example of Binford employing his theory to a Nunamiut site in Alaska and the findings of bones: through ethnographic research, Binford was able to conclude an economic utility of bones of animals in the community and through archaeological research he found different distributions of distal limb bones; Through this established pattern, Binford was able to infer the likelihood of these bones being transported through the sites for functional, causal reasons, allowing him to infer the elemental frequencies we should expect to see in the region. All together, Binford believes this theory to be a way of bringing validity and a level of scientific certainty, granted that the material evidence was recovered methodologically, to archaeological findings and use it to explain societal processes that we can speak to in the present.

While we will dive deeper into the faults of Binford's theory in the next section, Binford himself recognized the limitations of his theory in later years of his research. When similar studies to his Nunamiut study yielded different results, Binford expanded his theory to account for "ambiguities" to be present in the inference process, particularly among different sites and cultures. Ambiguity aims to be another approach to evaluating inferences, for instances where signature patterns are displayed differently due to different culture and systematic organizations. Binford believes that only after middle range research can we begin to implement general theoretical ideas and seek explanations for inferred knowledge. Binford's theory is a method of translating static facts (material) into the dynamic systems of the past that we can no longer observe. Binford's separation of his middle-range theory from other general theory aims to avoid the fallacy of confirming the consequent. This fallacy happens when we take the truth of an antecedent statement (the material evidence) and assign truth to the consequent on that basis alone; The truth of a premise does not equal the truth of the conclusion, rather Binford aims to use middle-range theory as a logical process of assigning truth to the consequent (the presence of dynamic systems) based on the truth of the antecedent (material evidence), without illogically jumping from one to the other in a way that can not be reproduced or proven under other methods.

In conclusion, processual archaeology aimed to make generalized laws about the past and how to study it. Driven by a desire to bring validity and certainty to archaeological findings, processual archaeology provided us with a vast array of methodological strategies that we still use today. While processual archaeology was very influential in the way we conduct our excavations and interpret the material evidence, archaeology is still a study of humans, human behavior, and human society, concepts that do not often fit neatly into a scientific, processual

framework. Archaeologists of the late 20th century and the early 21st century had begun to identify the limitations of processual archaeology and introduce more abstract and broader concepts into the study, including recognizing biases and inaccuracies in historical record and ethnographic research, identifying archaeologists' impact on the study and their own work, among other things that drastically impact the work of archaeology and the conclusions we draw from it. In the next section, I will examine post-processual archaeology as a response to processual archaeology and continue to unpack the theoretical developments of archaeology that have impacted my own research.

Post-Processual Archaeology

Post-processual archaeology emerged in the late 20th century in response to the limitations observed in processual archaeology. Theorists believed that while the scientific methodology of processual archaeology was useful in the excavation and analytical process as it relates to dating material, identifying material, etc, they asserted that applying “hard science” theory into a homocentric study was counterintuitive to understanding the dynamic, ambiguous, and random nature of human behavior and society. While processual archaeology aimed to *prove* meaning and function of archaeological material and the societies that produced them, post-processual archaeology began to acknowledge the impossibility of *proving* what we can not see and observe first hand. The study became interested in the specificity of human behavior and the unique qualities that drive humans to act in different ways under different circumstances. A way of achieving this depth in archaeological studies for post-processualists became searching for *meaning* in the objects and material being found, rather than a functional, practical purpose alone. While processual archaeology would tell us that if a pot was found at a site, this most

likely meant the people using it needed its functional ability of carrying liquid, post-processual archaeology will ask us to look further: Why this particular pot?; What meaning did this particular pot hold for the people that used it? Cipolla and Harris break down three main influences of post-processualism: Marxism, feminism, and structuralism/post-structuralism. Post-processualists' claim to Marxist theory within archaeology lies in their interest in power structures and relations that impact and are represented in material culture. There was also an increased emphasis on ideology and the systems in place that produced material, distributed material, and resulted in material ending up in certain places. Marxist influence greatly extended *what* was being searched for in the study of archaeology, moving even further away from recounting the past and into the realm of understanding what societal, political, and economical systems were involved in the materials being found. Feminism also heavily influenced this shift in archaeology, particularly in the way it critiqued processual archaeologies assumption that "modern issues were timeless, natural, and therefore fixed and unchanging" (Cipolla 2017: 24). Feminism also critiqued the largely male influence within the study and suggested that the voices of present day archaeologists could influence the interpretations of the past that are developed. Additionally, feminist theorists in archaeology became interested with the way archaeological writing was written, believing that creatively expanding the way archaeology is written about can produce new understandings and perhaps be an additional avenue of interpreting and translating archaeological findings into dynamic systems. These two ideologies began to unpack and put on display the great limitations of processual archaeology, and while its methodology concerned the recovery of material from the ground was useful in synthesizing and streamlining the excavation process to produce valid and objective findings, it lacked depth in what it was aiming to answer and how it aimed to explain the complex nature of humans, past and present.

Structuralism and post structuralism also play a large role in how post processual archaeologists conduct their work and interpret their findings. Popularized in archaeology by the work of Claude Lévi Strauss, structuralism asserts that humans structure their society, beliefs, and systems around definite binaries, believing that humans act in accordance to and in opposition to these binaries. This fits well into the developing post processualism as it lends a solid framework for archaeologists to interpret meaning behind the material itself and their uses. Additionally, developments in post structuralism introduced the idea that language and writing can produce, represent, and display these structures that guide human behavior. Ian Hodder describes this focus on language in archaeology as “contextual archaeology” and asserts that reading archaeological findings as if they were texts can help archaeologists infer in more productive ways with historical and societal context behind their inferences (Hodder 1985). The idea that one can look at a set of material artifacts and come to different conclusions about how and why these materials were produced, used, and left behind displays the stark difference between processualism and its theoretical successor. How can one *prove* anything if evidence can be read differently? This idea reveals how post processualism is ontologically opposed to positivism in processual archaeology and introduces a form of relativism within archaeology.

In the next section, I will explore further developments in archeological theory that have heavily influenced the research I am conducting on fauna at the Parsonage. While theory has made vast developments in anthropology and archaeology, it is not to say that processual and post-processual archaeology have not remained a strong influence on the study to this day. Elements of my analysis, as well as elements of the authors explored in the next section, will pull from all these theoretical arenas, from the processual process of excavation to the post-processual focus on systems and their representation within the recovered material.

However, through exploring theoretical developments like symmetrical archaeology and pragmatism, I hope to shape a unique theoretical framework to view my own analysis through in a later chapter in order to cultivate a well rounded analysis and attempt to avoid the limitations created by any particular theoretical framework.

Pragmatism and Symmetrical Archaeology

In this last leg of my first chapter, I want to explore some theories that have developed in the 21st century and have influenced the way I aim to conduct my archaeological analysis. While post-processual archaeology abstracted the study more than we had seen in the past, 21st century theory takes it a step further, asking archaeologists to not only evaluate the way they use language and understand human ideologies, but also to evaluate their own role in the shaping of history and archaeological research. Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley ask in their book *Reconstructing Archaeology*, “Whose past is it? Who are the 'we' of 'our' past? Who is speaking and writing? The justifications, of course, come from those involved in producing the past and supplying it to others,” questions that have guided theoretical expansion in the 21st century (Shanks 1992: 26). As we learned in the first section, processual archaeologists became interested in the present, but in a much different way than the authors of later generations. While processual archaeology maintains a relationship with the present as it concerns societal systems and assigning present day structures to past material evidence, authors of the 21st century are interesting in the present as it relates to how and why archaeologists conduct their work, and how this work and the knowledge produced stand to impact present day people of the cultures we study. Rather than being in direct opposition to post-processual archaeology, the theories we will discuss are in response to and aim to build upon the ideas of post-processual archaeology.

Anna Agbe-Davies explores ideas of pragmatism in archaeology through research on the African diaspora and plantations around Chesapeake, Virginia. Agbe-Davies asks archaeologists to consider the consequences of archaeological work on people in the present and to practice archaeology self reflexively. While post-processual archaeology is interested in searching for the meaning of the past, Agbe-Davies is interested in searching for what archaeological material meant in the moment for the people that interacted with them. Agbe-Davies takes an abstract, anti-foundationalist approach, contrasting with some of the theories we have discussed earlier, in the way that she does not want to look at archaeological material through a predetermined, fundamental frame of reference. Agbe-Davies aims to stray from the traditional, deductive way of archaeology that has been popular in the past, in favor of an inductive approach that considers individual cases of archaeological research in order to draw more generalized conclusions (Agbe-Davies 2017: 11).

While archaeology has gone through many theoretical phases throughout the last century, a strong archaeological analysis will consider all of these ideas and aim to give a voice and space in history to the archaeological material and the people it once belonged to. As I continue with my analysis through exploring the case study of the Parsonage, I aim to consider all of these theories and acknowledge their place within the practice as ideas that push the discipline forward, rather than pit stops along the way to finding the “correct” way of analyzing archaeological material. With that being said, I feel my analysis is most closely aligned with Agbe-Davies’ approach in the way it aims to use an individual case, the fauna at the Parsonage, to explore how this analysis could be used to approach other cases similar to the Parsonage, sites that involve the residence of enslaved peoples or an abundance of bones and other fauna, and to

use an exploratory approach in order to keep the archaeological material alive and included in future analysis.

Chapter 2: Past and Present Faunal Analysis of the Parsonage

Marie-Lorraine Pipes' Faunal Report

Pipes begins her report by summarizing the faunal findings of a series of test units at the Germantown Parsonage. Pipes' report remains quite factual and objective, leaning in a more processual direction than Agbe-Davies as we saw in the last chapter. She states "historic context of the site led to the expectation that the majority of fauna remains would consist of domesticated animals" and observes that this expectation was proven accurate. The rhetoric of this statement leans heavily in a processual and positivist direction, however, Pipes does go on to observe the high quantity and even distribution of mollusks that occurs on the site. She states in the introduction and discussion sections of her report that these species of mollusks are not native in this area in upstate New York and interprets the findings as evidence of importation of these mollusks. She does not go on to interpret further as to why importation of clam and oyster was prominent in this area or why findings increased dramatically in 19th century deposits.

Characteristic of processual archaeology, Pipes seldom refers to interpretation that could be considered speculation or that can not be directly drawn from the findings or historical records. While this is the case, Pipes largely interprets the faunal findings as dietary refuse or arbitrary remains from domesticated species, like the remains of cat(s). I am interested in her interpretation of some findings as "accidental inclusions," what exactly constitutes an accidental inclusion and how it was concluded that those findings were examples. Pipes does use the word "positive," stating that attempts "to crossmend bones within and across units failed to yield positive results." This statement could be a fickle use of the word, but it does correspond with a processual theme of the report, pointing towards hypotheses that were held prior to the analysis and relying solely on the empirical data to make speculations toward connections between test

units and areas of the parsonage. Pipes concludes her introduction by speculating on the lack of variability in the findings across the 18th and 19th century deposits, stating this could be due to a singular cook at the parsonage for a long period of time or a cultural tradition of meals that existed at the parsonage. Nevertheless, her speculation remains under the assumption that the majority, if not all, of the faunal remains represented dietary refuse.

Pipes then begins to explain her methodology, specifically her methodological approach to organizing, displaying, and calculating the faunal findings. Pipes did not conduct the digging herself, therefore she can not speak to the methodology of obtaining the fauna, an aspect I hope to develop further in my analysis. Pipes calculates the fauna by means of Total Number of bone Fragments (TNF) and Minimum Number of bone Units (MNU), as well as distinguishing between 18th and 19th century and transitional deposits. Pipes uses these units of measurement to compare and contrast the frequency of faunal findings throughout the deposits and test units. Furthermore, she analyzes bone modifications solely in terms of butcher marks and other cuts with dietary use intent. These butcher mark categories include “dietary refuse,” “processed cut,” and “trimming waste.” Through taphonomy and bone identification, Pipes classifies the faunal material into tables displaying species, frequency among test units, frequency among centuries, and type of processed cut she believes was used on the varying fauna. Pipes offers a solid analysis of the fauna in a food refuse context, but leaves little room for other interpretation.

When I first read Pipes' report, I was taken aback by the way she so confidently attributes these faunal finds to the reminiscence of food waste left behind as it was no longer needed. The report felt disconnected from the context of the Parsonage, blind to the people that once interacted with these bones, and felt like it was written with the idea that all the fauna had come from a midden or trash deposit. This became more understandable when I eventually spoke with

Pipes herself and learned the context she had at the time of writing it. Nevertheless, the report inspired me to begin this project and expose the report to the broader archaeological and historical context that the Parsonage and these bones have to offer. Through my own excavation work on the site and working with the collection in the lab over the last two years, it became very clear that these bones were not found in a specific place in the yard of the Parsonage, but seemed to be coming up in droves across the yard, from small fragments to large jaw bones with teeth still intact. While it is possible that Pipes was right all along and the people of the Parsonage simply disposed of leftover food waste, I became curious as to if there could be a reason or evidence that these bones were kept far after being used for their initial purpose of preparing food. We know that the Parsonage was once inhabited by enslaved peoples and church goers in the 18th century, eventually became the home of an African American shoemaker, and has a rich history of religion and spiritualism as shown by much of the archaeological deposit in and outside of the building structure. I began to consider whether these contexts could help build upon Pipes' initial analysis of the fauna and reveal other uses of these bones that could tell us more about what the people of the Parsonage found important and how they conducted their lives with and around the materials we have found centuries later.

A Conversation with Professor Pipes

After exploring her report, I was able to sit down with Professor Pipes and get her updated take on the fauna at the Parsonage, as well as her experience with thinking of bones as materials other than food refuse. She began by explaining how her inexperience with bones as anything other than dietary refuse led to the report focusing solely on the diet and eating and cooking patterns of the immediate residents of the parsonage. At the time of the report, Pipes had

far less context about the site than we do now, and she explains how this led her to analyze the faunal findings as evidence of the residents raising, butchering, and possibly selling their own livestock. While she maintains that this was most likely part of the story, she admits that as the research at the parsonage has evolved, she would have liked to expand her analysis to consider other possibilities, particularly how the historical collection of artifacts could play a role in a faunal analysis, as well as how enslaved people at the parsonage may have interacted with fauna, ceramics, and other findings much differently than free or European Americans at the time. Since her writing of the report, Pipes has gained much more experience analyzing fauna from various indigenous and enslaved people sites and was excited to share some ideas as to how to analyze these faunal finds again with a new lens.

Pipes offered a unique way of approaching this analysis when she asked me to create a list of everything I do and use in a given day. While studying bones as tools may seem far-fetched and speculative at first glance, it becomes much more feasible when we analyze our own actions and use of unlikely tools throughout a day. From makeshift knick knacks employed when I didn't feel like retrieving the actual tool, to using leftover boxes or containers to store new things, I began to notice all the little things in life that I use that maybe weren't their original purpose. Flashback a couple hundred years, when there were not as many things that make life a bit more convenient, it becomes much more feasible to think that the people of the Parsonage may have used these leftover bones to make their lives a little more convenient. Pairing this thinking with the fact that the Parsonage was once home to enslaved people that may not have always had tools of convenience, Pipes suggests that there could be a much larger story behind these bones that goes beyond the dinner table. Pipes revealed more recent work she had done at sites that housed enslaved people, such as her work at the Winnie and Bogart site, that have

shown evidence of fauna sticking around in their lives far after their disposal from the kitchen. Pipes explained how excavations of the Winnie and Bogart house revealed worked bones, big and small, under the floorboards, shaped into points, and formed into shapes resembling hooks and bowls (Pipes 2022). She stated that just because something appears broken, that does not mean that the material would have had no value for the people who lived at the site or the archaeologists that found it. She was able to list off a number of scenarios in which broken bones may be useful to an 18th century worker, such as maritime work that often required workers to bring their own tools, making and maintaining fires with poker shaped items, or for personal hygiene, similar to how we use q-tips or toothpicks. All of a sudden, small bone fragments from birds and broken femurs seem to tell a whole different story than what was on the dinner plate of our 18th century Parsonage resident.

According to Pipes, the Parsonage shares many similarities to other sites that have found worked bones, including the presence of enslaved people and proximity to a body of water. While the study of bones as tools in a historical context is very much in its infancy, Pipes did give me a few things to look for when examining these bones, which we will examine in the next chapter. Nevertheless, my conversation with Pipes showed me that there is definitely more thinking to do around the bones at the Parsonage and attributing their presence solely to the result of food refuse would be doing an injustice to the archaeological material and the people of the Parsonage. When we begin to think of access to tools of convenience as a privilege, we are able to think about scenarios in which these bones, particularly ones that are easy to hold and intact, could have been seen as useful far beyond their use in food preparation. In the last chapter, I will use the knowledge I have accumulated thus far to take another look at the fauna in order to explore how the fauna plays a role at the site and within the archaeological record.

Chapter 3: Rethinking Faunal Material at the Parsonage

Thus far, I have detailed the principles of some prominent anthropological and archaeological theory as it pertains to my thought process throughout this project. Inspired by the innovative archaeological thinking of Agbe-Davies and Cipolla and Harris, and the more abstract anthropological thinking of Trouillot, Latour, and Haraway, I approached this project as an opportunity to explore the possible ways of thinking about archaeological material and its context using the case study of the Germantown Parsonage. By reanalyzing the fauna at the Parsonage, rather than accepting the primary analysis and leaving it at that, we can continue to learn from and about the material and the people of the Parsonage, and open new avenues of thinking about materials that will be found in the future. As we saw through my conversation with Professor Pipes, knowledge can be produced through experience and can evolve with new contexts. While an archaeological record can sit untouched for years, only being needed when new information fits that context, by reopening the record and looking at the data with fresh eyes and minds, we can work toward building a complete complex of a site, or, better yet, discover new contexts that include all information past and present. In this final chapter, I hope to begin this discovery and show how new analysis on past archaeological finds can bring about new information about the material and the site as a whole.

Reanalyzing the Bones

After my conversation with Professor Pipes, I was able to take another look at the bones that have been found throughout the yard of the Parsonage. While in her initial report, Pipes analyzed many of the markings and cuts in the bones to be a result of food preparation, she admitted that with her new experience, she may have identified these markings differently today.

To help along my analysis, she gave me some things to look out for that could indicate a worked bone or a bone that could have been used as a tool. Firstly, the appearance of a point, worked or not, could resemble a bone that could have been used as a tool. There were a couple examples like this, particularly leg and arm bones whose broken or cut edge resembled a point. Figure 9 is an interesting example, a cattle jaw bone that did not show any wear marks, but featured a very long and pointed tooth that was still intact to the jaw. The tooth is lodged within the jaw and comes to a hooked point and there is a large slash through the tooth continuing into the jaw bone, however, the tooth remains staunchly in the jaw. Perhaps this slash was created through overuse. While the jaw bone is not “easy” to handle, meaning that it isn’t exactly shaped in a way made for handling, the remaining teeth that line the top are dulled out and do not stop one from holding it in a manner to use the pointed tooth as a tool.

Figure 8 shows a bone, most likely one that was a part of a joint, that has many marks that could be of importance. While Pipes initially cited the three distinct cuts as butcher marks, as I looked at it again, I suggest that these could be wear marks, or marks made when trying to make this bone into a tool. Additionally, Pipes stated that a key defining feature on many bone tools is a glossy appearance, produced by handling the bone with one’s hands, often enough to dull out the porous texture of the bone. This was noticeable on the bone in figure 8, as well as figure 7, which showed this gloss texture along the indented sides, most likely where it would have been held. With small, not pointed bones like these, it can be hard to imagine a scenario in which they could have been useful, however, I speculate that they could have been used as a hammering device, being used to knock in nails or something similar. Particularly in figure 7, you can see uneven, random puncture marks and scratches that seemed to have been put there after the butchering process. Other signs of worked tools include, crystalized planes, splinters,

and bones that stand on their own (Lyman 1984; Pipes 2022). While not all of these were visible on the bones I looked at, there are many fragment collections, such as the one in figure 6, that could have been intact at one point and broken by nature, sitting together in the ground waiting to be found. Many leg and arm bones found like the one in figure 5 seem like they would have been easy to handle and worked into a point or another fashion, however I was not able to identify any wear marks of this nature.

While I was not able to make any definitive conclusions to whether or not these bones were used as tools, I hope that as the study of bones as tools develops, students at the Parsonage can begin to look for some of these marks and develop them within the context of the Parsonage. By attributing these bones to a purpose other than food refuse, we open another avenue to knowing their importance, and why they appear so frequently and throughout the yard, something we will explore in the next section.

Maps of Faunal Distribution

While archaeological methodology is very empirical and science based, it is equally as important to consider anthropology's role in the discipline and to recognize the humanity within the archaeological record. To close out my project, I'd like to blend the two and offer an analysis that is equal parts empirical and anthropological. To do so, I have created a map showing the distribution of the faunal find, particularly the bones and teeth that have been found throughout the Parsonage yard. Through cartographical analysis, I hope to show how we can use the empirical data of the archaeological record, where precisely the fauna was found and how many were found, and view this data from an anthropological lens, where the people of the Parsonage would have interacted with or left these materials. By placing the archaeological record onto the

landscape, we can analyze the material not as a stand alone entity, but as a material that belongs to and around humans, and get a glimpse into how these materials may have existed for the people that used them.

In order to gain insight into how or why the faunal material ended up where it was found, I decided to map only the distribution of bones and teeth that were found in the Parsonage yard. When we consider the possibility of middens, cooking or dining areas, or workspaces, including fauna such as shells, of which there is an abundance across the yard, may skew the results of the map and draw our attention to areas much too large to draw any conclusions about. As I mentioned earlier, the bones found at the Parsonage seemed to be appearing everywhere throughout the yard, rather than in any particular area we could attribute to a specific cooking or dining area. By analyzing just the bones and teeth against the Parsonage yard landscape, we can better pinpoint areas in which cooking, dining, work, or refusal disposal may have taken place. The maps in the first four figures were made through ArcGIS, a cartographic computer software, and display a scaled representation of the Parsonage yard, as well as the scaled trenches that have been excavated throughout. With the help of past students and professors that have created base maps for the Parsonage, as well as my own data collection, I have mapped the distribution of the bone and teeth finds throughout all the trenches in the yard and have symbolized them through symbols as well as colors.

Looking firstly at Figure 1, which displays the front yard of the Parsonage, west of the Parsonage building structure, we can see how frequently excavators were coming across these bones. The large black circle represents a well, in which there were not many bone fragments found, however, just south west of it, we can see an abundance of bones¹. This area represents

¹ My maps were made using a slightly outdated version of the Parsonage map that features the well about 5 feet south of its actual location, shown in Figure 10.

what is thought to be an old foundation to the building that existed prior to the main Parsonage building we see now. The three large circles are on the foundation while the large circles slightly west of it would be the outside of this building structure. Generally, the further we move away from the old foundation, the fewer bones are found, with slight exceptions around the well, namely test unit 45. Additionally, it is important to mention that the test units within and directly outside of the Parsonage structure were not included on the map, but showed very little to no bone fragments found. This could be for many reasons. Perhaps, if these bones are food refuse, the people of the Parsonage were using the yard as a refuse deposit, perhaps the old foundation or behind the well would have been a good spot. Perhaps the lack of bones within the main structure could tell us that hiding these tools was not a necessity for whoever was using them, something Pipes mentioned as a key feature of bone tools at sites with enslaved people. Maybe, by the time of the building of the main structure we see today, the residents no longer held onto the bones after their initial use, therefore we no longer see large deposits by their living areas. Bones were often found in each soil stratum, meaning that we are unsure exactly what century these bones are coming from, or whether these bones were placed at the old foundation while it was still in use or after. By the looks of the map, it appears that whenever the old structure was in use, it could have been a designated cooking or dining area, a refuse pit, or a work space.

Oddly enough, while there were not many bones found directly next to the well, there does seem to be an equal distribution in the area around it, approximately within the five feet north and west. While the distribution sits outside of the old foundational structure and could be thought of as a trash deposit from the residents of that structure, the distribution is pretty even, spanning about 10 feet, a bit large and disordered for a midden deposit. Perhaps there was a work or recreational area in this area that would have produced or used these bones. When we look at

figure 3, which shows this same distribution using colors, we can see that there is not as strong of a concentration in these areas next to the well as there is by the old foundation. Something interesting appears on the colored map is the transition between the old foundation and this well area, namely test units 17, 27, 26, and 16, which feature little to no bones. When viewing the map this way, we can see what looks like a path from the old foundation to the well area. While I can not speak for what other artifacts were found in these transitioning units, this shows how this mapping process can reveal aspects of a site that wouldn't be seen otherwise. When looking at just the bone distribution, we could speculate that these units represent a path or walking area between the main living structure and whatever activities were happening by the well.

Looking now at figures 2 and 4, that feature the backyard, north and west of the Parsonage building separated by a steep hill that slopes downward into the yard area, we see that it has not yet been as thoroughly excavated as the front yard. Nevertheless, the map is very telling and shows two distinct concentrations. The first concentration lies about 50 feet north of the units by the well and about 25 feet northwest of the Parsonage building, along where the ground flattens out below the hill. The second concentration appears about 15 feet from the first concentration and also lies where the ground flattens. This second concentration is where I did much of my fieldwork at the Parsonage, and I can say with certainty, bones were coming up very frequently. These areas in the backyard are harder to pin down, as we don't have an old foundation or well that the people of the Parsonage may have based their activities around. While it is easy to say that the flattened ground behind the structure would most likely be a refuse pit, I am privy to the rest of the archaeological record in this area. Along with concentrations of bones, there were also many pottery fragments and building materials like nails and other metals found in this area, leading me to believe that there was once much more activity in the backyard than

what appears in the present. Due to the flattening of the ground in this area, it is not far-fetched to say that a structure may have stood there once upon a time, perhaps one that was used for craft work or food preparation. Additionally, the farm animals that were raised at the Parsonage sometime during its occupation would have had to be kept somewhere, perhaps in the flattened area behind the structure. However, if this were the case, I predict we would find an even larger concentration and a more scattered one, such as we see in the front yard. The ground continues to flatten directly west of the concentrations, so I would be interested to see how further excavations could develop this distribution further and show an area with such a purpose in future analyzes. Nevertheless, viewing the distribution of the bones within a map draws out new routes for analysis and forces us to look back in the archaeological record further, to answer questions like the possible path in the front yard, or where the farm animals may have been kept. Rather than identifying these possibilities when they could compare to other sites or when historical context is revealed, it is important to develop these questions and make these speculations throughout the archaeological process. My hope with this analysis is to provide a foundation for future analysis and future excavations to work off of, producing questions that could be answered or supply future excavators with knowledge as to where they should dig next to continue to develop this picture.

Conclusion

While students continue to add to the Parsonage's archaeological record every year, I found it important to look back at this key part of the record with a new lens, one informed by new material, as well as new theory that has developed in the last couple decades. It is easy in archaeology, short term projects and long term projects like the Parsonage, to assign particular

meaning to any set of materials in order to develop a working context around a site. It is how archaeology has worked for decades and breaking old habits can be hard. However, archaeology is not only a science, but a humanity, and we would never take one look at a human and think we know who they are after that. The same goes for archaeological material. The things we dig up can seem like nothing, fragments of something discarded, but archaeological material was once produced, used, and left behind by humans who are no longer around to tell us why. Even one's "trash" can tell us a lot about the people it belonged to, what they found important and what they needed at a particular time. My goal with this analysis is not to draw any specific conclusions about the importance of these bones to the people that once used or discarded of them, but to explore how importance can be found in anything, and that something that may not be important to us, could have been vital to someone else at a different point in time. This is where anthropological theory is important in archaeology. While it is important to scientifically gather the material and ensure that it maintains historical integrity through the excavation process, it is also important to use this preserved integrity to study the people of which these materials came from. Materials do not just appear or disappear, there is always a path they must go through, people they are exchanged with, and a purpose for their existence that is key to understanding the people that are no longer around to learn from themselves.

This project and my entire experience within the anthropology program at Bard have made me consider the way I live my life and the way I view the lives of others in a completely new way. One day, we will be the people discussed in an archaeological report and our materials will be scrutinized for their importance and purpose. Just as we would expect an ethnographer to consider every angle of a culture or people before publishing knowledge about them, an archaeologist must take on a similar responsibility to the people they study. I hope my analysis

can act as an important stepping stone in the development of this thinking for archaeology done at Bard, and inspire future students to challenge the material they find during and after the excavation process. Knowledge is always being produced and there is always something more to learn from the rich material people of the past have left behind.

Figures

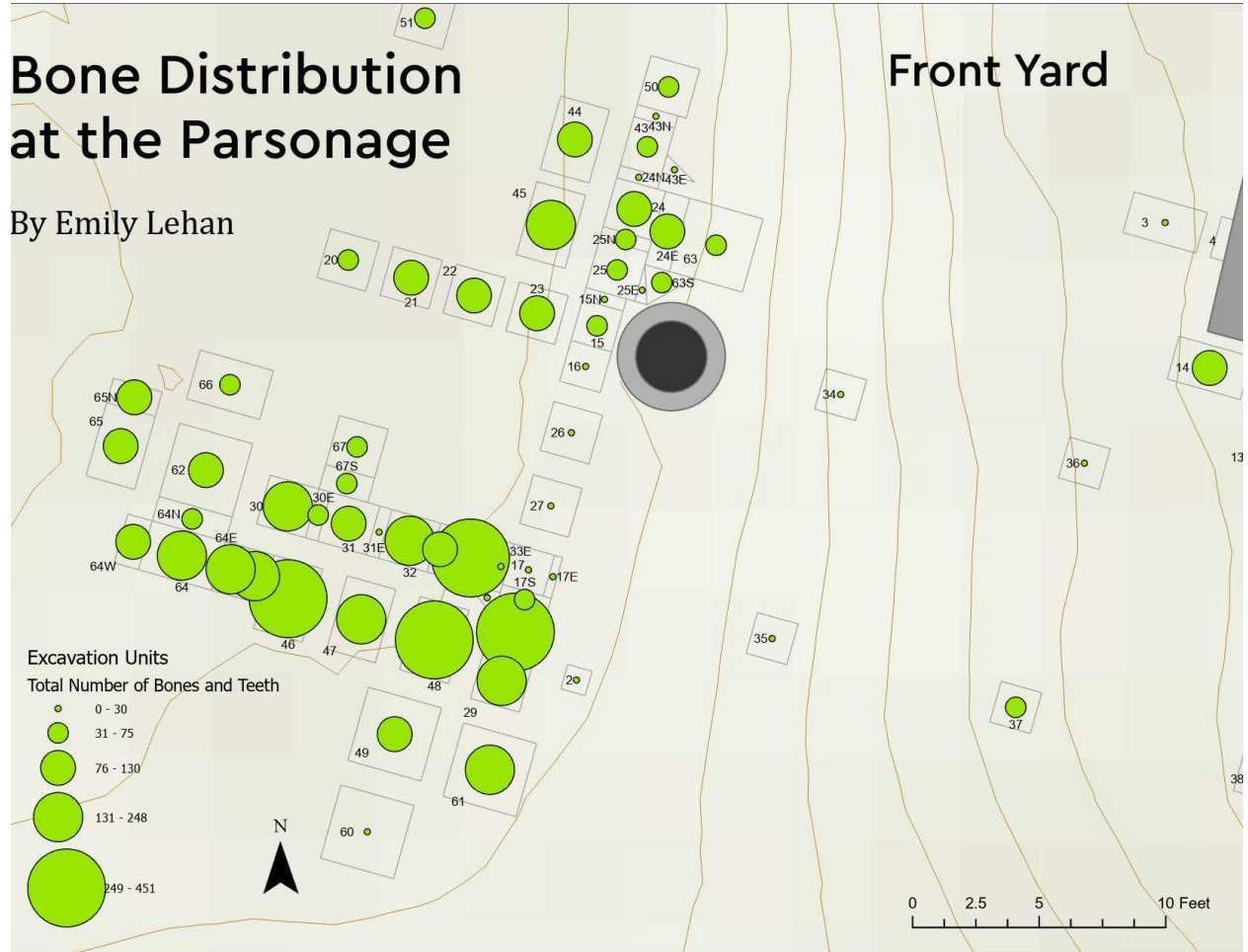


Figure 1

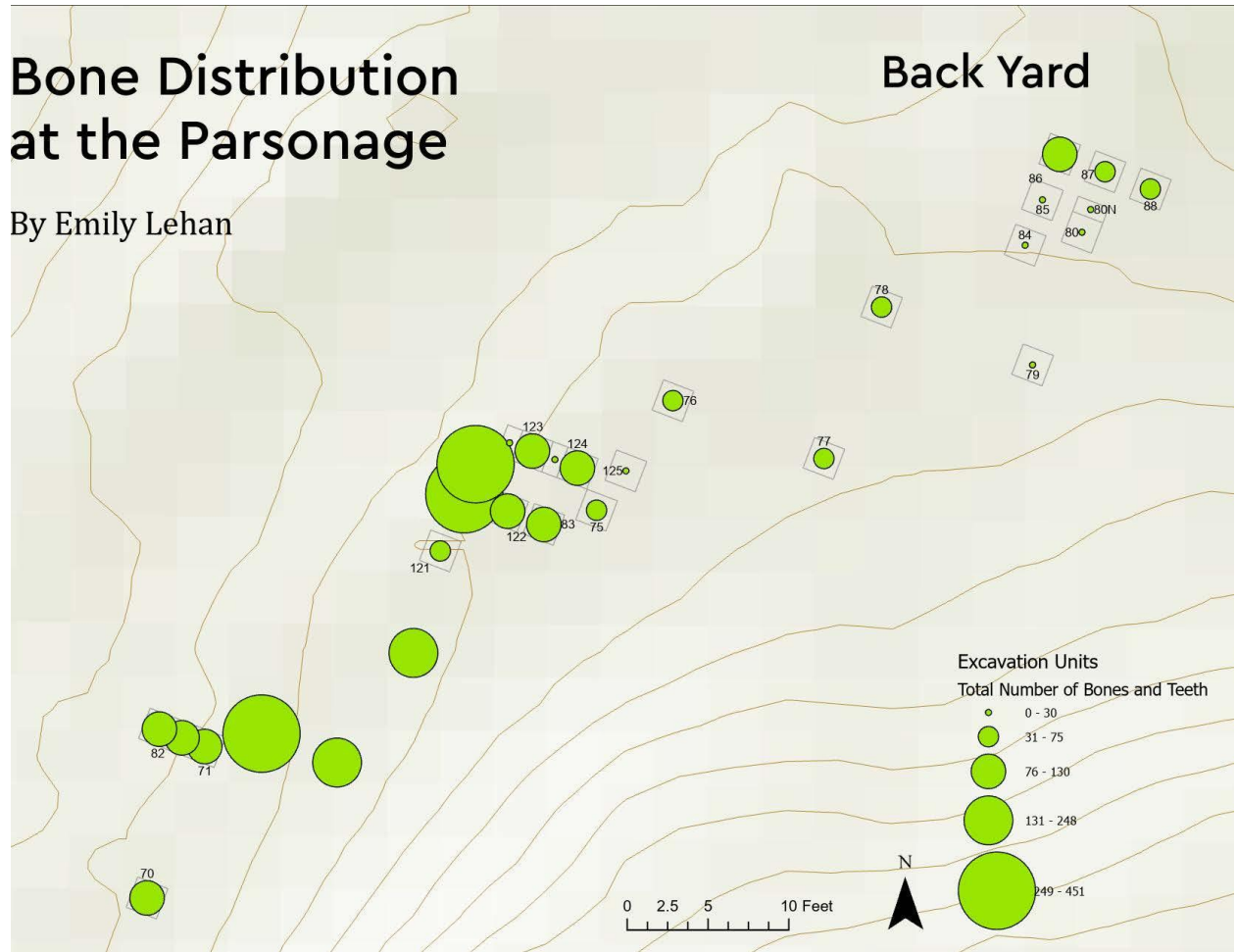


Figure 2

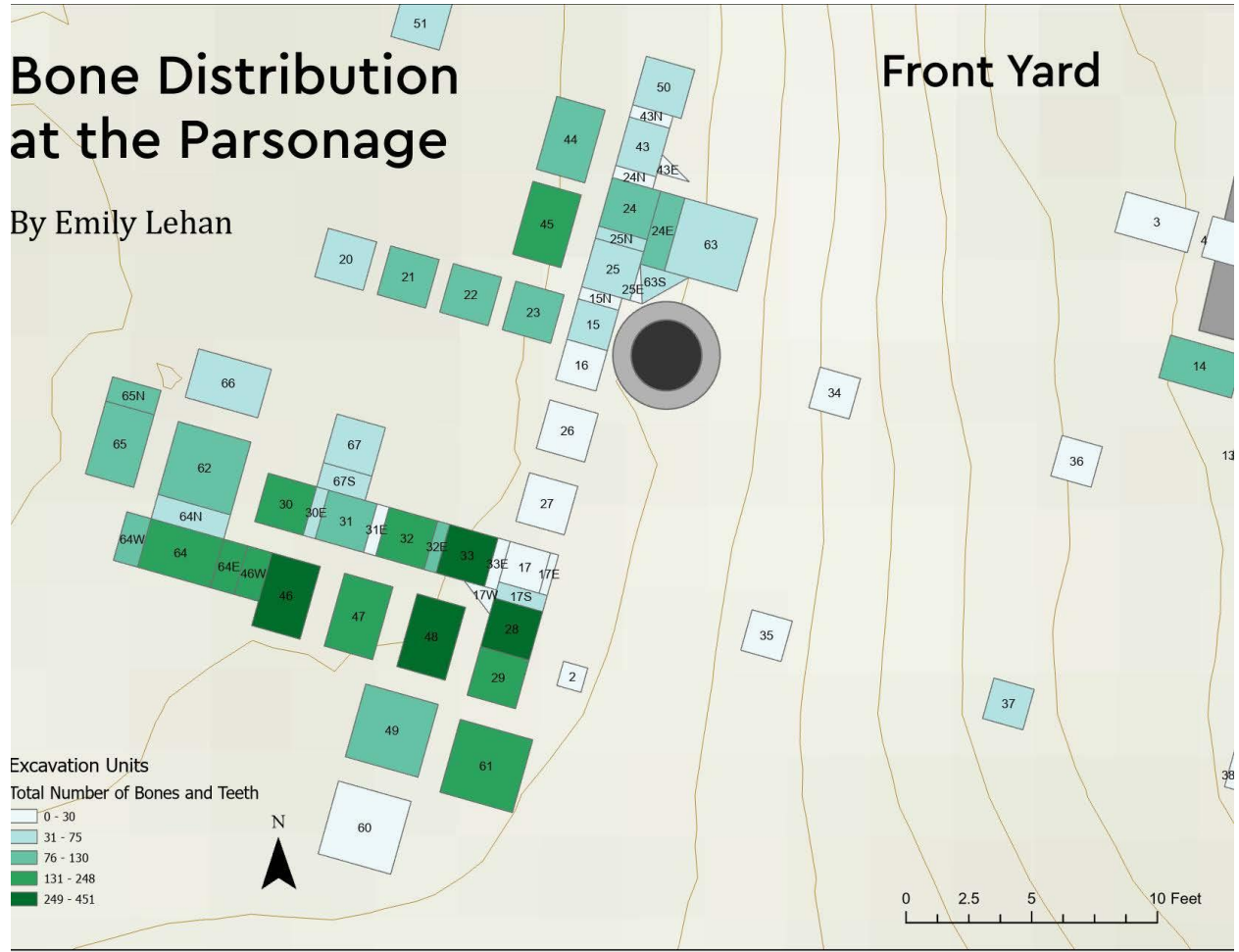


Figure 3

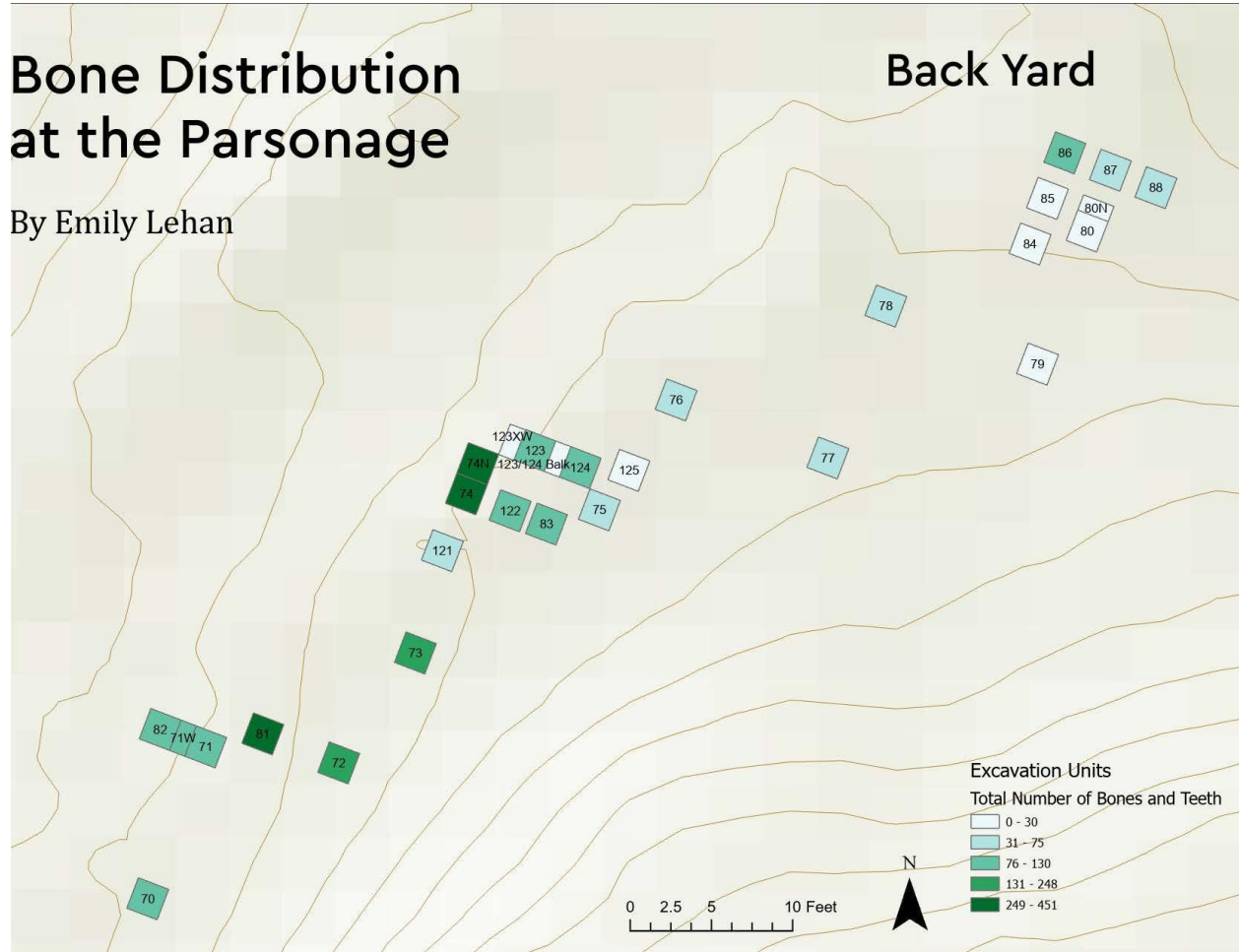


Figure 4



Figure 5: Cat #7199.3



Figure 6: Cat #7359.2



Figure 7: Cat #7426



Figure 8: Cat #7429.1



Figure 9: Cat #7631.1

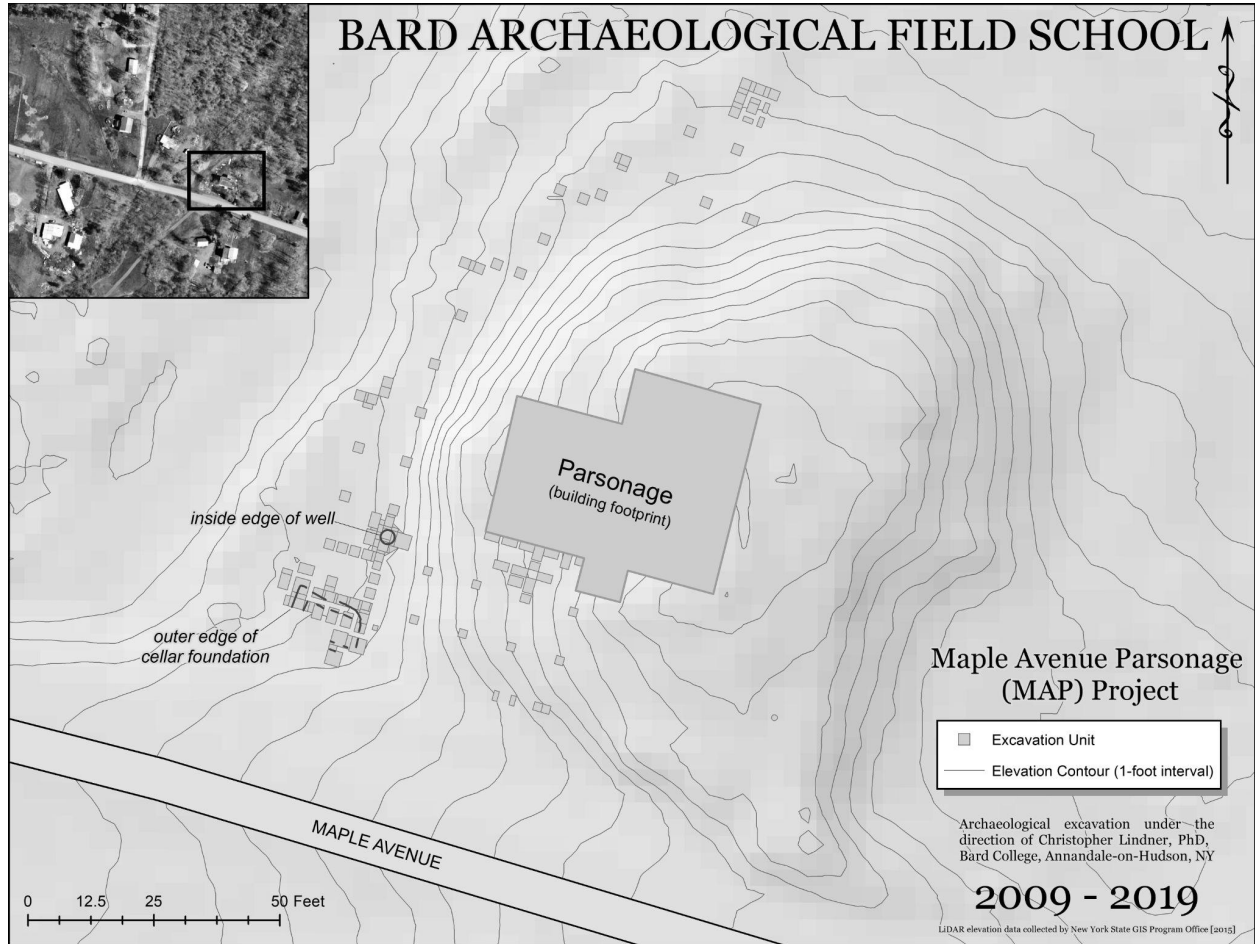


Figure 10: Full Map of Parsonage Excavations

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