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May 20, 2015

RE: Letter report detailing the unanticipated discover of Feature 1 associated with the Otis T. Mason House (029-5181-0006/44FX2461) during planned construction activities in Section E of the US Route 1 Improvements at Fort Belvoir from Pohick Road to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway

Dear Rick,

This letter is to serve as a report of findings and recommendations regarding the recent unanticipated discovery of a brick masonry feature (Feature 1) associated with the Otis T. Mason House (44FX2461) during planned construction activities in Section E the US Route 1 Improvements at Fort Belvoir from Pohick Road to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway project on 11 May, 2015. Specifically, a row of articulated stretchers half brick thick and minimally two courses deep was exposed by a tall loader during grading for an access road running roughly north-to-south approximately 35 feet south of the extant Otis T. Mason House. At this time, per the terms of the Programmatic Agreement, excavation was halted by the onsite archaeological monitor to assess the situation (and inform Corman Wagman). It was determined that mechanical excavation had uncovered the southwest corner and the entire southern wall of the feature (the southeastern corner was poorly defined).

**Methods:** A tile probe was employed in an attempt to locate a third corner. Test Unit 1 (3x3 feet) was placed with the intention of hitting the northwest corner. Upon excavation, it was determined to be completely outside of the feature. Test Unit 2 (2x1.5 feet) was excavated to expose the exterior of the southern wall in the vicinity of the southwest corner to confirm the number of brick courses. Shovel testing confirmed that the western wall was shorter than previously believed. The presence of subsurface concrete (what appeared to be a footer) in the eastern wall of the shovel test 14-22 inches below surface also further confirmed twentieth-century disturbance in the area. The decision was made to expose the western and northern walls completely. Test Unit 3 (3x3feet) was placed to expose the interior of the southern wall (approximately mid-way along its length) and allow systemic investigation of the feature interior.

**Feature Description:** Feature 1 was determined to be an articulated brick feature laid as stretchers one half brick thick and five courses deep. Though both eastern corners have been disturbed, the dimensions are measured as approximately 14 feet 6 inches in length



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by four feet in width. The northwest corner of the feature is approximately 35 feet off the porch of the Otis T. Mason House. The feature is oriented differently than the nearby Otis T. Mason House running due north-to-south (rather than northeast/southwest). Excavation along the exterior wall revealed that the courses of subsurface brick had been sunk directly into subsoil. No evidence of a builder's trench was noted.



*Feature 1 in foreground with Otis T. Mason house in background, views facing northwest and west respectively.*

**Stratigraphy:** Excavation in the area, both mechanical and archaeological, generally revealed the presence of fill and (assumed) twentieth-century disturbance. No intact A horizon or yard deposit was noted in the general vicinity of the feature. More detailed stratigraphic descriptions from test unit 1 and 3 are provided in the tables below:

*Test Unit 1 –North of Feature 1/exterior(datum at NW corner)*

Stratum A	0-13.5 inches below datum; mottled 10YR3/2 (50%), 10YR5/4 (40%) & 10YR6/6 (10%) 1 5/10Y	Fill; clay dominant with clumps of clay
Stratum B	13.5-15.5 inches below datum; 10YR3/4	Fill; clay loam
Stratum C	15.5-17 inches below datum; mottled 10YR6/4 (70%), 7.5YR5/6 (20%), 10YR4/3 (10%)	Fill; sandy clay loam with clay and clay loam
Stratum D	17-24 inches below datum; mottled 7.5YR5/6 with 10YR6/6	Intact subsoil; sandy clay with 40% quartz gravel inclusions



**Test Unit 1 at top of subsoil north of Feature 1, view facing south.**

*Test Unit 3 – Along southern wall of feature/internal(datum at NW corner)*

Stratum A	0-8.5 inches below datum; mottled 10YR2/2	Fill; sandy loam
Stratum B	8.5-17.5 inches below datum; mottled 10YR4/2	Fill; loam
Stratum C	8.5-17.5 inches below datum; mottled 10YR5/6 (75%) with 10YR4/4 (25%)	Intact subsoil; sandy clay loam



*Test Unit 3 at close showing south wall and interior of Feature 1, view facing north.*

**Associated Artifacts:** Artifacts documented in association with the feature, both systematically through test unit excavation and from non-systematic sampling, generally include a range of common late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth-century artifact types and some modern debris recovered from fill contexts. There is no real distinction to be made between artifact types recovered from outside the feature when compared to those found inside of the feature. There is also no distinction to be made between artifacts recovered from the different fill strata.

	<i>Test Unit 1 (exterior)</i>	<i>Test Unit 3 (interior)</i>
Stratum A	3pc whiteware/ironstone, 1 pc ironstone pink transferprint, 15 pc clear bottle glass, 1 pc amber bottle glass, 1 UID nail frag, 5 pc window glass, 2 pc utilitarian redware, coal, plastic	3 wire nail, 2 tacks, 6 pc bottle glass, 5 pc window glass, brick, plastic, Styrofoam
Stratum B	1 horseshoe, 1 belt/bridle piece, 1 iron spike, 3 pc whiteware, 1 pc redware, 7 pc clear bottle glass, 1 wire nail, coal	117 pc borrow glass, 6 pc window glass, 1 pc molded milk glass, 1 liquor bottle finish work plastic cap, 1 glass marble, 6 pc whiteware/ironstone, 1 oyster shell, 12 wire nails, 1 fish hook, 4 UID nail, 1 cut nail, 1 spike, 4 tacks, plastic, brick, coal
Stratum C	1 piece window glass, 1 piece plastic	1 wire nail, 1 pc porcelain (appears modern), 1 pc clear bottle glass, 1 pc people bottle glass (not manganese), brick fragments

In addition, a non-systematic sample of artifacts was collected in the area from soil disturbed by mechanical excavation as well as the archaeological excavation of the western and northern walls. This sample includes: an early twentieth-century Bristol-glazed stoneware jam jar (W.P. Harlley), window glass, the brass head of a shotgun shell, wire nails, modern bottle glass, bathroom tile, plastic bottles, whiteware, and a segment of iron chain (possibly relayed to a gate or something decorative) found just west of the feature.

A sample including one brick and mortar fragment was collected from the feature.

**Discussion:** Given the dimensions and construction methods of the feature, it is believed to be some sort of landscape feature or planter. Though its exact purpose cannot be known, it is not engineered to provide any sort of true structural foundation or support and was likely intended to be decorative or somewhat ephemeral in nature. It is of note that brick flower beds exist around the Otis T. Mason House, however, they were created by merely placing and in some cases stacking the brick without the use of mortar. Extensive fill and disturbance in the vicinity of the feature further diminishes any potential to understand the true use/function of the feature.

**Recommendations:** From work completed prior to breaking ground on the UD Route 1 project (Deetz et al. 2012; Reed and Person 2014; Trinkley et a. 2000) archaeological site 44FX2461 was determined to be not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, however, both the Otis T. Mason House (029-5181-0006) and associated site 44FX2461 are identified as contributing resources to the Woodlawn Cultural Landscape Historic District (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service [USDI, NPS] draft). It is our recommendation that the brick feature detailed in this letter report does nothing to further inform the site or refine any of the National Register criteria as originally applied. Due to extensive twentieth-century disturbance, the feature retains little integrity, its true function is not known, and it has no potential to yield additional information on the site. As such, we further recommend that the investigations and documentation completed to date are sufficient and that construction activities proceed as planned. Field notes and documentation should be curated with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and Fairfax County.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr. Brian Crane ([bcrane@versar.com](mailto:bcrane@versar.com); 703-642-6735) with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,



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