CHAPTER 11

MORE THAN “JUST A PLACE TO START FROM”: HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGIES OF WEST OAKLAND

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This, the final chapter, begins by placing the Cypress Project and its approach in the context of research in historical archaeology, how this approach came to be and its goals. The next section shows the genesis of West Oakland’s image as an undesirable place in ideological statements from the 19th and 20th centuries. This view is contrasted with the image of community that emerges from the material culture and oral history. The chapter ends with an assessment of the Cypress Project and suggestions to improve the conduct of urban historical archaeology.

ARCHAEOLOGY, THE MELTING POT, AND DOING RESEARCH

The civil-rights movement changed this nation’s view of its past.

Before the 1960s, the notion that the United States was formed of many populations that had not simply melted into a homogeneous cultural soup was not a respectable topic for research. Coming not long before the bicentennial, the social upheaval and revolutionary ideas of the ’60s had a profound influence on the way in which this patriotic event was celebrated. Images of diversity abounded in the popular media, and academic research into cultural difference was moved to the front burner. The fledgling discipline of historical archaeology contributed with evocative studies of the lives of Overseas Chinese in the Pacific West, African Americans enslaved on southern plantations, and other disenfranchised groups, carving out a role for itself in the historical study of ethnicity.

Attempts at defining the material correlates of class and ethnicity occurred at just the right time in historical archaeology’s methodological development. As a self-identified social science, practitioners sought ways to extract patterned relationships from their data. Techniques such as ceramic scaling and faunal economics were developed to fill the need, while a focus on the remains of historically documented households provided sets of controlled data.

True to the times in which they were conceived, these early analyses focused on difference: archaeologists sought to define how the remains left by various ethnic groups were dissimilar from one another and how those variations demonstrated the ways in which cultural integrity had been maintained in the face of the apparently ineffable homogenizing forces of American popular culture. The point was made and became axiomatic. Yet as more work was done it became clear that, as valid and powerful as this basic insight remained, the process of cultural interaction in 19th-century America was highly nuanced and situationally variable. Emerging from this disciplinary history, we see the central contribution of the Cypress Historical Archaeology Project as both celebrating material and cultural difference while simultaneously
teasing out the meaning of similarity whereby apparent material homogeneity both masked and advanced class-based differences.

An important archaeological goal of the Cypress Project was the recovery of discrete collections of artifacts that could be associated with documented households representing many of the cultural groups and social classes that made up urban America (Figure 11.1.). This has been achieved on a scale that surpassed our expectations: field archaeologists found over 100 such deposits—the largest archive of firmly linked and consistently documented archaeological collections in the West. All of these materials and their archaeological and historic contexts have been fully documented in the Block Technical Report (BTR) series, which are available on compact disc at the back of this report or may be ordered online from www.sonoma.edu/asc.

More than social-science data, these materials bring to life a neighborhood, a community and communities of people who lived next door to each other, passed on the street, worked and socialized together. When we compare the artifacts from these homes, we are looking at collections that would have been familiar to neighbors, groups of objects that functioned within the same social milieu. We can see the contents of widow Margaret O’Connell’s parlor and compare it, as she might have done, to that of her new neighbor, 21-year-old Mrs. Adeline Long. We can analyze difference and similarity, and have some insight into what they may have meant to those who used these things.

Like its sister discipline of social history, contemporary historical archaeology is less concerned with propounding unambiguous answers to questions of fact than providing insights
into historically consequential themes through the analysis of specific contexts. Although in the practice of North American archaeology, “it is still common for research questions, expectations, and means of evaluation to be made clear . . . accounts of research tend to move fairly freely among research questions, relevant information, and new interpretations and questions” (Hegmon 2003:230).

Thus, not all the research questions we presented in the project research design have been addressed definitively in this volume. The research design was conceived as a beginning point in the development of a framework in which issues would

build upon each other as new data are gathered from the ground, the archives, from maps and photographs, and from oral history informants. The answers, when woven together, will provide a richer more human history of West Oakland and a deeper understanding of the working-class people who once lived there [Praetzellis 1994:238].

Thus, we have addressed the research design by focusing on how the influence of forces such as social class, ethnicity, and consumerism are expressed in the evidence from individual households and populations. The focus of our research is not, for example, consumerism per se, but rather its effect on matters of everyday life from health to ethnic identity. In examining the history of Oakland, historian Robert Self points out that we cannot separate change, and the people who carried it out, from this location that was the focus of their lives. Civil rights and black power "did not call for rights in abstract terms and ill-defined places. They called for very specific things in relation to very specific places” (Self 2003:17).

Our research has been intensively collaborative, involving professionals in archaeology, history, museology, oral history, and vernacular architecture, as well as many subdisciplinary specialists. Neighborhood residents contributed their perspectives through oral interviews. Our goal has been to link past with present by constructing and reconstructing how life was lived in this place.

WEST OAKLAND FROM ABOVE AND BELOW

The representation of the historic inner-city has been profoundly influenced by the writings of those through whose eyes it was seen: social reformers in the guise of novelists, temperance workers, popular writers, and the first generation of social scientists. What they perceived was the slum, a place of poverty, degradation, and environmental pollution. These observers recorded snippets of reality that were relevant to their goals and, in so doing, essentialized the place into the stereotypes of contemporary wisdom that have come down to us.

Urban historian Alan Mayne and archaeologist Tim Murray have proposed a two-pronged strategy for studying cities that uses archaeology as a nexus of historical knowledge to “deconstruct slum myths” and “explore the enveloping social and cultural milieus of vanished inner-city communities” (2001:2). Their ideas sum up quite neatly the approach of the Cypress Archaeology Project. In the following sections, we present historical and archaeological perspectives on West Oakland; how the place was characterized in the past and how historical archaeology may contribute to changing this image.
THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

The public perception of West Oakland has gone through many changes since the city’s establishment nearly 150 years ago (Figure 11.2).

Initially, it was the perfect spot for the terminus of the transcontinental railroad, with land that was flat, plentiful, and vacant. The surrounding property was subdivided and rapidly sprouted inexpensive homes. In a classic display of the American dream realized, working- and lower-middle-class families, who had swarmed to jobs on the railroad, seized the opportunity and became the first proud owners of these cottages. With well-paid jobs and inexpensive housing, a stable multi-ethnic, working and lower middle class flourished. Yet at the same time, city sewers and industrial wastes polluted the Bay and the very bayside location that had attracted development was now seen as the source of miasma, damp, and disease. With the economic decline following World War II, the forces of urban redevelopment moved in and declared it a “slum.” In the following pages, we present visions of West Oakland from the perspectives of a real-estate developer, a public-health official, a social reformer, a widely read novelist, and 20th-century redevelopers.

Figure 11.2. The Cypress Freeway and downtown Oakland. From the Seventh Street Post Office complex, we look southeast down Fifth Street to downtown Oakland. The abrupt end of the freeway, just east of Peralta Villa, shows the site of the demolished Cypress structure.
Developers Advertise a Grand Credit Sale

In February 1875, real-estate developer E.C. Sessions & Co. advertised 300 lots in Oakland Point to be sold at public auction (Figure 11.3). The terms: one-third in cash, the remainder in the following two years, and annual interest at nine percent. A deposit was required at “the fall of the hammer,” with the balance due on delivery of the deed. The developers did not stint in extolling the virtues of the Gibbons Tract:

This property is situated near the lines of the overland and local railroads; also, to the projected line of the Bantas Road; is in the immediate vicinity of the workshops, ship-yards, wharves and other extensive and valuable property of the Central Pacific Railroad Company. It has also a large frontage on Peralta Street, a prominent thoroughfare, and the most direct route to the University; also an extensive frontage upon Railroad Avenue, upon which are already established at a distance of only one block, hotels, post office, public halls, and a number of business houses. It is near to schools, churches, also to station from which runs twenty four daily trains to San Francisco, at a monthly commutation fare of only three dollars, time thirty minutes. It has a large number of oak trees upon it, and is surrounded with numerous houses, many more being contemplated. The tract fronting upon the bayshore is desirable also for manufacturing purposes. Entire property lies upon a natural grade, a perfect system of sewerage has been adopted by a Board of Eminent Engineers and accepted by the City. Good water can be obtained by wells within eighteen feet. Mains of the Water and Gas Companies are within a short distance, and can be extended through the property when desired. The desirable climate of Oakland, the frequency and convenience of communication with San Francisco, the improvements by Government upon the harbor, now in progress, the extensive Railroad enterprises, considered in connection with the commanding position and many other advantages offered by this property will certainly cause it to advance rapidly in value [E.C. Sessions & Co. 1875].

From the subdivision map and accompanying text, these lots were a good investment, with jobs, transportation, schools, churches, shops, and services within easy reach. Today’s commuters would surely be tempted by the convenient 30-minute trip across the bay to San Francisco. In the event, the “perfect” sewerage system and good water did not materialize, and proximity to the railyard, harbor, and manufacturing sites proved to be a mixed blessing.

Dr. Woolsey Makes a Difference

By 1880 E.H. Woolsey, the passionate new Oakland City Health Officer and City Physician, was waging all-out war against preventable diseases. Woolsey made a direct link between the “quantity of filth” and deaths from diphtheria, typhoid fever, and similar illnesses. He raged against the evil of uncleanliness still lurking in some neighborhoods: “we are not thinking of dirty faces, or soiled hands—albeit the divine use of water is an hygienic necessity, but rather of such unsanitary conditions as bad drainage, defective sewage, crowded habitations with dark inside sleeping rooms, the drinking of surface well-water, and so forth” (Woolsey 1881:6). With the drive of a true reformer, Dr. Woolsey likened those who overheated their temperate Oakland homes to South Pacific Islanders who lived in abundance but still devoured their neighbors, and made a pithy comparison to the temperance movement: “for every death from alcoholism, there are about fifteen deaths from impure-air-ism” (Woolsey 1881:44).
Figure 11.3. The Gibbons Tract—West Oakland is sub-divided.

“The tract fronting upon the bay shore is desirable for manufacturing purposes. Entire property lies upon a natural grade, a perfect system of sewerage has been adopted by a Board of Eminent Engineers and accepted by the City. Good water can be obtained by wells within eighteen feet.” (E.C. Sessions and Co. 1875)

Under Woolsey’s instruction, City inspectors conducted a sanitary survey. They responded to complaints and made house-to-house searches for nuisances in problem neighborhoods, noting deficiencies in sewerage facilities, water supply, and unsanitary conditions wherever they were to be found. It is not coincidental that death certificates now began to contain information on sanitation. From this information, Woolsey compiled a color-coded Official Sanitary Map of Oakland that showed the locations of deaths from preventable diseases by year as well as detailed tables by City ward indicating deaths and the results of the 1880 sanitary-inspection reports. Using this information, Woolsey made a case for the direct link between overall health, sanitation, and preventable deaths, as well as the relationship between foul privy vaults, the frequency of neighborhood complaints to the sanitary inspectors, and higher mortality (Table 11.1).

At this time, the City of Oakland was divided into seven wards. The Cypress Archaeological Project area falls within two of these: the First Ward covers our Oakland Point neighborhood or Cypress Blocks 9 through 34; while the Fourth Ward covers the East of Market (Blocks 1 to 3) and West of Market (Blocks 4 to 8) neighborhoods.

Dr. Woolsey took great pride in the success of his program: the death rate in 1880—including “dead bodies drifted upon our shores”—was less than 13 per 1,000 residents, notably lower than comparable cities in the United States or Europe. Even more telling, deaths from preventable
Table 11.1, Report of Sanitary Inspections, First and Fourth Wards 1880 (Woolsey 1881:84)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>City Total</th>
<th>First Ward</th>
<th>Fourth Ward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premises inspected</td>
<td>3,497</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises re-inspected</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private complaints attended to</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privy vaults connected to sewer</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises found already connected</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises supplied with city water</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises supplied with well water</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises inspected occupied by owner</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises inspected occupied by tenants</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diseases represented less than one-sixth of total mortality, less than half the one-third considered average under favorable conditions (Woolsey 1881:6). By these measures Oakland was a very healthy place to live. But even one preventable death was too many for Dr. Woolsey, who felt negligent enforcement of reasonable sanitary measures to be infinitely worse than the crimes committed by the “veriest criminal within the walls of San Quentin” (1881:66).

Of the seven Oakland wards, the First and Fourth were the sickliest, as measured by death rates—15.51 and 16.37 per 1,000, respectively, preventable deaths, and nuisance abatements. The situation of these wards upon the waterfront, exposed to winds from the marshland where the city deposited its sewage, doomed them to be the sickliest until the construction of an intercepting sewer system. Nevertheless, Woolsey moved on those fronts under his control and drilled into his sanitary inspectors the importance of making a concerted effort to improve the cleanliness of these blighted wards. The inspectors pursued their work by systematically enforcing the ordinance that mandated connection to the sewer (Woolsey 1881:84). Over 750 homes in the First and Fourth wards connected with the City sewer system during Woolsey’s one-year reporting period, doubling the number of homes already connected at the time of inspection. His first battle had been “very decisive—resulting in the immediate abandonment of the fortifications of filth—privy vaults” (Woolsey 1881:63).

Ordinary Oaklanders were themselves evidently making the connection between unsanitary privy vaults and preventable deaths. The large number of privies confirmed by Cypress Project excavations to have been abandoned around 1880 is further proof that Dr. Woolsey’s efforts were making a difference. The link between sanitation, health, and privy backfilling is particularly striking on Cypress Block 4, where the presence of livestock, wells, and privies coincided with numerous deaths from typhoid fever in around 1880. It was surely no coincidence that several Block 4 households abandoned their privies at this time (Figure 11.4).

In spite of Dr. Woolsey’s efforts, conditions were far from desirable—which is to say that they did fall below the expectations of social reformers such as Eva Carlin.
Eva Carlin Is Not Impressed

*Overland Monthly* correspondent Eva Carlin visited West Oakland in 1900 and described it flatly as “an ugly locality, lined with small unattractive, crowded dwellings” (1900a:425) and a “law-abiding workingman’s district settled chiefly by hard working foreigners, with a sprinkling of Americans,” which reportedly housed 21 nationalities and 35 saloons, (1900b:247).

In contrast to the “problem areas” of larger cities, West Oakland was not considered a slum at this time. The homes harbored neither extreme poverty nor unskilled labor, for “industrial life” flourished in the district. It lacked the packed tenements, and many of its working-class residents achieved a modest and respectable livelihood from the railroad and local industries. In West Oakland, domestic reformers such as Eva Carlin sought as their subjects immigrant and working-class housewives, who they felt to be “ignorant of science and its immutable laws; all lack the knowledge which in any form ‘transmutes existence into life’” (Carlin 1900a:426).

Carlin noted that the occupants generally owned their small homes of two or three crowded rooms, worth about $900 apiece. The correspondent was appalled by the fact that all of some families’ everyday activities—cooking, eating, sleeping, childbirth, illness, and death—took place in the same small domestic space. Carlin interpreted the custom of using front steps and sidewalks as social space as symptomatic of the “over worked and ill-tempered” women who were “turning their backs on the dreariness within.” The cooking and hygiene habits of immigrant women were alarming indeed, and their food was “selected without regard to its nourishing value. It is badly cooked, untidily served and often eaten irregularly” (Carlin 1900a:426-428).
Following Dr. Woolsey, hygiene and sanitation were also important issues for domestic reformers. With the acceptance of germ theory in the 1880s and 1890s, middle-class Americans feared that the contamination and disease that was rife in poor communities would spread unabated to their neighborhoods (Seller 1978:309). Reflecting this fear, Oakland’s New Century Club called for the application of sanitary science beyond the home:

We must have a clean house, a clean street: we must go farther and have a clean neighborhood, and perfection demands a clean city and community. To secure health for ourselves we must secure it for those who lack our training or our standard. In one part of town a cesspool sends out disease germs; some neighbor’s body is weak from poor food, and thus some plague finds a stronghold from which to hurl its foraging battalion upon the community [1901:n.p.].

Boys and young men were particularly at risk. West Oakland saloons and the corner grocery stores that sold liquor illegally were described as the “storm centers of child-crime.” According to reformers, the lack of wholesome amusements, combined with the adventurous spirit of youth, often led to street gangs and to the police station. The concern was not unfounded, for many contemporary accounts describe the sometimes brutal exploits of young West Oakland gang members. Not surprisingly then, reformers first set out to domesticate the boys before teaching the girls to cook (Figure 11.5). Carlin and domestic reformers likened the child criminal to diphtheria, both natural products of preventable conditions. They argued that if just one-tenth the money spent for reformation was spent on character formation—parks, playgrounds, education—youth gangs would disappear (Carlin 1900a:434).

![Image](image_url)

Figure 11.5. The Boys’ Club, 1900. In her 1902 report on the Boys’ Club, Mrs. Wheaton (the Director) confessed, “We are trying to improve our taste in music but it is slow work, the boys being faithful to ‘Goo-goo Eyes.’” (Oakland New Century Club, 1902). George Gaskin’s catchy song “Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes” was one of the most popular recordings of 1901. (Photo source: Domestic Science Monthly August 1900:119)
Growing up on the Oakland streets and waterfront, Jack London’s childhood exemplified everything the reformers were fighting against. Nevertheless, the experience of his youth provided the most widely read English language novelist of the era with a wealth of material.

Jack London Gets Even

In Jack London’s 1913 novel Valley of the Moon, the author situated his tale of the battle between Capital and Labor in West Oakland. It was a logical choice for this figurative struggle. The streets and railyards of this city had seen many actual battles and from the front window of his family’s home on Pine Street, young Jack had a good view of the comings and goings at the Southern Pacific Railyards, where his father sometimes worked.

It is from this cottage that Saxon, London’s heroine, witnessed a brutal confrontation between strikers and Pinkerton agents. The violence of the event caused the young woman to reflect deeply about the modern, urban way of life and to conclude that “jobs are bones” (1913b:189) over which poor men fight; and that “the man-world was made by men, and a rotten job it was” (1913b:254). “Her eyes,” wrote London, “showed her only the smudge of San Francisco, the smudge of Oakland, where men were breaking heads and killing one another, where babies were dying, born and unborn, and where women were weeping with bruised breasts” (1913b:256). Even the clams that working people gathered from the nearby marshes caused typhoid fever; this was “still another mark against Oakland . . . Oakland the man trap, that poisoned those it did not starve” (London 1913b:286).

Then, in deep despair, Saxon meets a boy—who surely represents Jack London himself—who casually speaks the words that would change her life: “Oakland,” he says, “is just a place to start from” (London 1913b:267). Soon thereafter, Saxon and her husband began their journey to the rural Valley of the Moon, a natural world where men don’t fight over bones.

To Jack London, Oakland represented all cities. In its sicknesses, both medical and metaphoric, he read symptoms of the excesses of 19th-century capitalism. The only course for London’s fictional creations, as well as for the man himself, was escape to a new, clean environment. In his distaste for this heterogeneous landscape, London was not alone. By the mid-20th century, the forces of “urban renewal” were poised to clean up the area.

Postmaster General’s “Favor” Transforms the Landscape

Returning to Oakland during a 1930s lecture tour and finding her old home demolished, Gertrude Stein famously observed that “there’s no there, there.” The boyhood homes of Jack London, on Pine Street and Huey Newton on the corner of Fifth and Brush were also later torn down for urban renewal—replaced by a post office and freeway, respectively (Figure 11.6).

What was West Oakland like on the eve of redevelopment? The answer depends on one’s source. In 1958 the Oakland Redevelopment Agency declared that over half of West Oakland was blighted and should be cleared. To resident Tom Nash, however, it “was a beautiful place” (Nash, cited in Self 2003:157) and Landon Williams recalled, “how vibrant Seventh Street was on both sides. I can remember little cleaners, you know, meat markets, grocery stores. Liquor stores, furniture stores . . . and they wiped it out and the ground lay fallow for ten years” (Williams, cited in Self 2003:157).

The source of these changes was partly economic. The wartime boom was over and the once teeming docks and railroad yards were largely idle. Into this environment came several massive public-works projects that necessitated the purchase, through eminent domain, and
inevitable demolition of hundreds of the 19th-century cottages built in Oakland’s initial boom. As in the 19th century, local people owned and occupied many of these residences, which provided very small, modest accommodations. Among the projects was the construction of the Nimitz freeway and its component—the Cypress structure.

Seventh Street in West Oakland was significantly affected by the construction of both the Bay Area Rapid Transit line and Project Gateway, an enormous new postal facility built in the 1960s (see also Chapter 10). In the mélange of down-at-heel buildings and their (by now) largely African American occupants, public officials saw an opportunity to modernize. “We’re doing this area a favor,” declared the Postmaster General (San Francisco Chronicle 19 July 1960). Project Gateway was built on 12 city blocks at the cost of scores of residences and the displacement of more than 300 local families. With no government relocation plan to fall back on and insufficient settlement money to replace their somewhat shabby homes, the neighborhood scattered.

Thus ended the promise of the Gibbons Tract, promoted with so much optimism nearly a century before.
THE VIEW FROM BELOW

As we have seen, almost as soon as it was established, West Oakland was perceived by those above and outside as a problem to be fixed. Yet these disapproving, explicitly ideological images afford only one perspective; a history written from the inside out shows other realities and perceptions. In the following section, we attempt to construct an emic view of life in this heterogeneous 19th-century neighborhood that is, in some ways, parallel to the oral accounts of its 20th-century residents (Figure 11.7).

Archaeology of a Neighborhood

West Oakland was a socially mixed area during the late 19th century. European immigrants—many from Ireland—lived next to the native born, both black and white. The homes of semi-skilled workers backed onto those of the middle class. Property owners and their renters of different ethnicities and social classes commonly lived in adjacent houses and apparently thought nothing of it: the Jockners from Germany and the Irish Donavans, the African American Brooks household and the Japanese Fujis. Binary pairs of social categories emerge readily from the primary sources: native born/immigrant, nationality/nationality, white/nonwhite, class/class. And yet the neighborhood was composed of people with their own histories and motivations. To reduce them to anonymous social categories or homogeneous “others” would be to depersonalize the past, to create something that never existed outside the analyst’s mind.

Thus, one of our goals was to see how people divided themselves up socially—to consider what groups people may have placed themselves in, rather than our categorizations of them. This has turned out to be even more complicated than we anticipated. Sociological groupings are good places to start when the goal is to reconstruct emic definitions, since they are all we have. Ours has turned out to be an investigation into the complexity of past contexts, uncovering some of the multi-leveled meanings of artifacts, and thereby revealing the perspectives of different classes, ethnicities, and neighborhoods. We ask complex and open-ended questions: how useful are the conventional standards of social prominence, wealth, education, and “culture” by which the “aristocrats of color” have been defined by Gatewood (1993)? Indeed, what did “high status” mean in West Oakland and how was it expressed? How did these expressions vary from either contemporary norms or modern interpretations, and how did they vary between classes and ethnic groups? These results emerge by combining data from historic and archaeological sources, shrinking, enlarging, and adjusting the context until we find which characteristics seem meaningful.

West Oaklanders expressed their identities—both ethnic and social—in language, food, and, most publicly, in social institutions. Marta Gutman and Mark Walker have examined social-reform associations and labor unions in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively, but the Cypress study focuses on both the large and small scale, on the neighborhood and the household. Household material culture tells us a great deal about the everyday negotiation of identity in West Oakland (see Chapter 4); objects have effects in addition to their utilitarian functions and were used to defend group identity by preventing commensality with nonmembers. Material symbols are potent and, as Chapter 3 has shown, industrial production had created an enormous range of goods by which to express membership and, by the same token, allow for exclusion. Yet, the power of the market was such that the range of material objects that were used within the home varied relatively little. The artifact “layout” photographs contained in Appendix D, representing nearly 70 households, show a great deal of duplication of artifact types and decorative motifs. We have teased out differences and similarities on a variety of scales by conducting statistical
analyses, looking at the meanings of particular classes of objects from teapots to table settings, as well as the role of particular items in the parlor of specific families (such as the McLaughlin household in Chapter 8).

Many of these artifacts and the behaviors associated with them were widely understood to have certain normative meanings, and thus possessed substantial symbolic weight. We have suggested that the material culture of display in the dining room and parlor was the result of conscious decisions related to popular aesthetics, impression management, and the maintenance of social boundaries. The daily consumption of food, however, was something else again. What was put on the table and the plate—as opposed to the plates themselves—gave frequent opportunity for the expression of social aspiration and identity.

In the roiling social stream, apparently patterned behavior and apparently meaningful symbols are constantly coming to the surface. However, determining which are significant and which are simply artifacts of the data can only be induced by statistical analysis that requires both the large sample size and controlled, consistent data collection of a Cypress-scale research project. In the following section, we describe several statistically derived patterns and their significance for the construction of emic social categories. Some of this material is taken directly from Bruce Owen’s analyses, which are reported in Appendixes F and G. ( Dwelling type is an important variable in many of these studies; see Chapter 1 and Groth and Gutman [1997] for a discussion of house types.)

Who Bought Wine and Who Bought Hard Liquor?

Liquor bottles were completely absent from the refuse of residents of polite two-story Victorian houses, in significant and consistent contrast with most other dwelling types (see

Figure 11.7. At the West Oakland Railyards. Vernon Sappers, from whose collection this photograph is taken, was born in West Oakland. His father, Josef, was a Russian immigrant who worked at the railyards. “My father and I would take off on a Saturday or a Sunday morning . . . When we would get back late my mother couldn’t understand how we could have spent so much time in West Oakland.” (Photo reproduced with permission from Vernon J. Sappers)
Appendix G). The residents of these houses—the largest and most expensive in the West Oakland sample—seem to have avoided not alcohol in general, but specifically hard liquor, at least at home. Wine bottles were strongly correlated to better-paying professions, being most common in Wealthy Professionals’ refuse, and becoming progressively scarcer as one progresses down the income scale to Professional, Skilled, and Unskilled households. Strongly associated as they are with higher-paid employment, finer housing, and home ownership, wine and champagne bottles appear to be an excellent index of what would generally be recognized as upper-middle-class status. Conversely, but less strongly indicated, beer and/or ale bottles were a greater fraction of the alcoholic beverage bottles at households of Skilled workers than at those of Wealthy Professionals, and liquor bottles comprised more of the alcoholic beverage bottles in lower-income (Skilled and Unskilled) households than in higher-income (Professional and Wealthy Professional) households.

While one’s choice of alcohol is far from being an unambiguous class “marker” in the archaeological record, it is clear that social classes used beer, wine, and hard liquor differently and in patterned ways. Cost may have influenced these practices; each of these forms of alcoholic beverage, however, had symbolic meaning as symbols of class identity and sophistication.

Who Bought Expensive Meat?

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no evidence that wealthier households consistently purchased more expensive cuts of meat than poorer ones. On the contrary, this practice seems to correlate with African Americans and Unskilled households, as well as renters of Polite Victorian houses; by the same token, no single ethnicity/nativity group ate consistently more expensively or cheaply than any of the others in spite of the fact that some groups were poorer than others overall. The quality of one’s housing, however, was a much better predictor of the cost of meat purchased than was profession or ethnicity: unlike profession and ethnicity, dwelling types exhibit clear, easily intelligible and intuitively expected patterning in meat-cut prices. There is a consistent trend towards more expensive meat cuts in the data from the least to the most prestigious homes. Two-story Victorian homes have significantly more high-cost meat than not only Informal workers’ cottages but more than all others combined. The top two dwelling types lumped together have more high-cost cuts, and fewer medium- and low-cost cuts than the three lower-status dwelling types lumped together. Informal worker’s cottages have significantly more low-cost cuts and fewer high-cost cuts than do all the other dwelling types lumped together. By a number of measures, then, quality of housing corresponds directly to cost of meat consumed.

In addition, there was a consistent, significant difference between the purchases of owners and renters of Almost-polite houses: the latter consumed more high-cost cuts and fewer medium and low-cost cuts than the former. This contradicts the intuitive assumption that owners were better off than renters and that they used their wealth to enjoy conventionally desirable commodities. The lack of a significant difference overall between owners and renters, and the inconsistent patterning within specific dwelling types comes as a surprise since the quality of housing was such a good predictor of meat-cut costs. Dietary choices, then, are more strongly related to a household’s immediate standard of living, as expressed in the quality of their dwelling than they are to their capital or underlying economic status, as measured by profession, income, or homeownership. An interesting difference in purchasing patterns emerges when U.S.-born whites are compared to the other ethnicity/nativity categories: the former show less beef than African Americans, at the 5-percent level of significance.
Table 11.2, Whole Bottles and Tableware Complexity by Occupation and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black Households</th>
<th>White Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unskilled/Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean whole bottles</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean tableware</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. All data except for “Professional” represent Southern Pacific employee households exclusively. These are the same households studied by Walker in Chapter 7.

2. Households representing “Professional” and “Wealthy Professional” categories are combined due to the small sample size.

3. Only assemblages containing a ceramic MNI of >70 are used in the analysis.

Who Recycled Bottles (and Who Just Threw Them Out)?

An empty bottle was a potential source of cash. As we mentioned in Chapter 5, used glass bottles were bought for a few cents by neighborhood junk dealers, who sold them wholesale for reuse. Thus, the question arises what kinds of households recycled (in the sense of disposing of their bottles to the junk dealer), what kinds didn’t, and was there a relationship between this and other artifact patterns?

Bottles have an unfortunate tendency to break; furthermore, thin-walled bottles break at a higher rate than thick. Since a broken bottle would have been worthless to the junk dealer, it was necessary to devise a way of avoiding (as far as possible) the problems inherent in this characteristic. To this end, Bruce Owen devised three independent measures for each category of bottle and ran the same statistical tests on all (see Appendix G) in the belief that patterns that emerge in multiple categories will have behavioral significance and not be mere statistical artifacts.

As elsewhere, four employment categories were defined: Unskilled, Skilled, Professional, and Wealthy Professional. If patterns of disposal were in some way a reflection of relative wealth, one would expect a straight-line relationship between the social classes. This worked as expected for the lowest three employment groups: by every measure and in all cases the Unskilled households left a smaller proportion of whole bottles in their refuse than did their neighbors. When data representing the two middle groups (Skilled and Professional) were compared with the combined lowest and highest groups (Unskilled and Wealthy Professional), however, an interesting pattern emerged: by two statistical measures and at the 5-percent level of significance, the extremes were found to be more alike in comparison with the two middle groups. In other words, the poorest and the richest had similar habits when it came to disposing of whole bottles—they tended to recycle rather than throw them out.

Although statistical analysis did not show any significant patterns in recycling by ethnicity/nativity, differences between various social categories can sometimes be derived by combining, recombining, and reformulating the data sets, and can often lead to unexpected correlations. In Table 11.2, the characteristics of selected white and black households are compared using arithmetic means. The results lack the statistical authority of our other analyses; with only two households represented, it is possible that the African American data may be anomalous.
As well as describing the occurrence of whole bottles, Table 11.2 also presents data for what we call ceramic tableware complexity. This measure, which is described in detail by Mark Walker in Chapter 7, consists of the number of individual vessel functions that occur within an assemblage (Figure 11.8). In applying the concept, we assume that the larger the number of types of tableware contained in an assemblage, the more the household participated in a dining ritual that approximated the Victorian ideal.

Consistent with our statistical studies of the same phenomenon, this table shows that the refuse of poorer white households contained fewer whole bottles than that of wealthier ones. It also reveals that household types with the highest and lowest tableware complexity have the highest and lowest mean number of whole bottles, respectively. We conclude that, by these two measures, the 19th-century working-class African American households in our sample had more in common with the white middle-class than with whites of adjacent socioeconomic categories.

Archaeology of Household Decisions

The foregoing section has examined the choices made in purchase and practice by a range of 19th-century Oakland house-holds: hard liquor vs. wine, expensive meat vs. cheaper, complex table settings vs. simple ones, and recycling vs. throwing bottles in the trash. While economics played a role in these decisions, other factors also seem to have been involved. Late 19th-century reformers viewed the purchase of household commodities as, ideally, a rational process whereby households bought goods appropriate to their economic level. When reality interfered, critics like nutritionist Wilbur Atwater decried the working class’s practices as extravagant and irrational (see also Chapter 3). There is much in the Cypress Project data that would have caused Dr. Atwater grief. Our understanding of these data varies from his. Continuing the theme established in earlier chapters of the symbolic significance of mundane objects, we offer an interpretation informed by Giddens’ (1979) theory of structuration.

One of the most influential theoretical approaches, structuration posits that people are not deceived by the hegemonic structures set up by their oppressors to naturalize social inequalities. “Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens and Pierson 1998:77). Because they are aware of these structures, subaltern groups constantly nibble away at them by taking onto themselves and redefining the symbols by which social inequality is communicated. We propose that this process was at work in 19th-century West Oakland and that it can be seen in the end products of household decision-making because of the scale offered by the archaeological data.
In 19th-century West Oakland, households of relatively low-paid, first-generation immigrants and many African Americans fill our “unskilled” category. This is the group whose taste ran to expensive cuts of meat, the complex table settings that Mark Walker has described in Chapter 7, and the fancy parlor bric-a-brac depicted by Paul Mullins in Chapter 4. These are also the people targeted by the institutions of social reform of which Marta Gutman has written in Chapter 6 and in her essay “Domesticating Institutions” (Gutman 1997) issued in an earlier Cypress publication. Supporters of the domestic-reform movement sought through education to improve the working-class standard of living by rationalizing housework into a “domestic science.” Purchases—particularly food—should be suitable to one’s financial ability, should be made with appropriate frugality, and where cooking, cleaning, and decorating were concerned, with the application of scientific principles (Figure 11.9).

Figure 11.9. “The Coming Housekeeper.”

“I’m only a wee lassie but I can think and feel,
And though this world has sorrow we all may share its weal
By being true and honest and doing what we can
To make the best of everything and lend a helping hand.
My home is with the lowly, my parents dear are poor;
But I need not be unhappy nor scorn the rich I’m sure.
Every little maiden in our school may learn
To be a skillful housemaid and honest wages earn.
To be the best of housemaids and keep things bright you know
Is the reason I’m learning to sweep and cook and sew.
The Son of God, our Savior, a servant chose to be,
And to live like Christ the holy must be the aim for me.
I’m only a wee lassie but I will learn each rule
And heed the lessons taught me in our West Oakland School.”

(Oakland New Century Club, 1901)

If successful, one of the effects of this movement would have been the reproduction of social-class boundaries, clearly demarked by means of symbols encapsulated in material culture. As society at large promoted behavior suitable to one’s class, variation from this pattern would be considered subversive. In Chapter 3 we suggested that meat in general and beef in particular had symbolic significance for many Americans. More than mere nutrition, it represented their aspirations and serving it was a matter of pride. Specifically, we propose that beef was a symbol of success in late-19th-century America; consequently, those who were excluded from conventionally assigned measures of social approval—such as African Americans and the unskilled working-class—particularly desired and purchased it.

We apply similar motivations to the behaviors and purchasing decisions by working-class households in relation to the other items enumerated above. We hypothesize that the practice of purchasing above one’s “station” was a strategy whereby working-class households seized those elements of middle-class material culture that fit their own goals. In this way, evidence of resistance is seen in variation from class-based expectations. In demonstrating that behaviors were being carried out where they were conventionally prohibited, the subaltern populations of West
Oakland daily undermined the Victorian structure of meanings by blurring what should be clear and by making ambiguous symbols that should be plainly understood.

By the same token, while among white households relative wealth seems to correlate with the propensity to recycle (and the necessity to deal with the neighborhood junk dealer), African American households are the exception. In this area, as well as in the complexity of their table settings, they resemble upper-middle-class white households. What might be the source of this similarity?

In Chapter 5 we described how the industrialization of America reduced the necessity for even the working class to buy secondhand goods. Concomitantly, one-price stores had largely replaced the system of variable retail prices that had been the norm in the early- and mid-19th century. The intense personal contact involved in barter—the primary mode of the junk dealer—was seen as outmoded and of dubious propriety. Thus, the bottle data may reflect a tension between the Victorian value of thrift and the declining respectability of barter in the new cash economy. This tendency may be reflected most strongly in the behavior of the white middle-class, as well as certain African American households that, despite their relatively low economic standing, enjoyed a level of social sophistication well above their conventionally assigned class.

In an article subtitled “CRM and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora,” J.W. Joseph is particularly critical of analyses developed in CRM contexts. Joseph asserts that analyses focusing “on African American socioeconomic status as measured by Euroamerican indices . . . are meaningless at best and at worst, demeaning” (2004:25). We support this contention, which is congruent with the methodological stance encouraged by Mullins (1999); both insist that cultural groups must be studied in the context of things, both material and political, that are important to them. We feel that this approach should not be limited to African American archaeology but is appropriately applied to the study of all other ethnicities and social classes, particularly subaltern groups; and this is what we have attempted to do.

Working-Class Oaklanders were Rational After All

While 19th-century nutritionist Wilbur Atwater was shaking his head in puzzlement over the extravagances of the poor, British economist William Stanley Jevons was coming up with a concept that grounded Victorian intellectuals like Atwater ever more solidly in their rationalist view of household economics: marginal utility (Hutchison 1966). Jevons explained how the value of an item to a consumer depends on its utility at the time of the decision to obtain it. A glass of water, for example, has high utility (value) to a thirsty person; but after two or three glasses the drinker is satiated, at which point the substance’s utility for the person has effectively disappeared. In short, the utility of each additional glass of water or unit of a commodity—the “marginal utility”—is said to decline, as the individual possesses more of it.

This principle of neoclassical economics predicts that the marginal utility for additional wealth is lower for the rich than for the poor. “We would scarcely compare the state of mind of a poor clerk,” wrote a contemporary of Jevons, “who received his month’s salary of £5 on the first day of the month and lost it on his way home, with that of the millionaire who dropped the same sum” (von Böhm-Bawerk 1959:174). Since £5 constitutes proportionally more of the clerk’s wealth than that of the millionaire, the former would be expected to place more value on it and structure his purchasing to reflect the fact. Or so 19th-century science believed.

The essence of Victorian culture was its rationality, whereby goals were to be achieved via judicious, predictable ends. Since this assumption underlay the concept of marginal utility,
contemporary social reformers perceived only irrationality in the consumer behavior of the working class. Randy McGuire, however, looks at the argument from the perspective of the clerk, pointing out that

[if] your income is above a certain threshold “extra” money may be saved, invested or put aside for future large purchases. Below a certain threshold the “extra” money is in small amounts—it would take too long to get significant savings and the instability of income means that when a crunch comes what money you have will not fill the breach. [Thus] it is rational to enjoy it while you have it [McGuire 2003, personal communication].

Although they purchased and displayed the same items as their social superiors, in our view West Oakland’s working class were not merely being extravagant in their attempt to acquire what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as “cultural capital” by aping the manners and artifacts of the Victorian middle class. We take the position that the working-class culture that can be reconstructed on the local and household level involved the creation of a system of symbols borrowed from a variety of available sources, including Victorian values and artifacts, as well as ethnic and class experience. The result was a bricolage of symbolic structures that served the purposes of their creators.

In the 20th century, as in the 19th, to successfully label a group as unable to make rational decisions was to marginalize it and—not coincidently—to silence voices of dissent. Imposed from the outside and with little thought to its impact on community life, urban renewal was the mid-20th-century solution to the perceived inability of West Oaklanders to solve their own problems. Like the social reformers of an earlier era, government regulators and elected officials saw the district’s residents as responding inappropriately and irrationally to the condition of their neighborhood. The next step was easy: decisions about the future should be taken out of local hands and made by those who knew better: technocrats and experts.

Writing about social changes in Oakland, historian Robert Self notes that “there is a pressing need to move beyond the trope of the black ghetto . . . and to theorize how African American communities responded—in creative, productive, and at times even halting and unsuccessful ways—to the structural changes brought on by migration and metropolitan reorganization” (2003:334). Self looks for the origins of the Black Panther Party and other social movements in both public policy and local responses to it. The Cypress Archaeology Project deepens the historic contextualization of Self’s analysis by examining, at household and neighborhood scales, the network of relationships from which modern Oakland was forged.
THE CYPRUS PROJECT CONCLUDED

A construction project of huge proportions, the Cypress Freeway Replacement Project presented Caltrans with a mammoth challenge and an equally great opportunity: how to replace the demolished Cypress structure without inadvertently destroying an irreplaceable source of West Oakland’s history.

With 48 city blocks that might contain important remains, there were many questions to be answered before a strategy could be developed: Was it possible that important deposits would have survived the initial freeway construction? Where might these remains be located and how would it be possible to tell important ones from the rest? Would toxic contamination complicate or even preclude the study altogether? The rebuild was on a particularly tight schedule for, until the new freeway was open, traffic was forced onto city streets. Caltrans’ greatest challenge would be to develop a strategy by which all these questions would be answered and an archaeological mitigation program completed without holding up construction.

The first response was to develop a sensitivity study that reduced the initial 48 blocks down to a comparatively manageable 22. Recognizing that the standard procedures to discover, evaluate, and treat the potential wealth of archaeological remains would be far too time-consuming, Caltrans and FHWA created a Memorandum of Agreement that defined the alternative approach to compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and good archaeological practice that is described in Chapter 1. The process of fieldwork was assisted by Caltrans engineers, planners, archaeologists, architectural historians, surveyors, videographers, and environmental/health and safety specialists. Caltrans Headquarters in Sacramento provided the agency’s senior Historical Archaeologist to help apply the evaluation criteria to archaeological remains in the field.

From the outset, Caltrans took every opportunity to inform both the neighborhood and Bay Area residents in general about the exciting discoveries. Interest in the archaeology project was encouraged by several “news media days” organized by the District 4 Office of Public Affairs, which brought television, radio, and print journalists onto the site. The inevitable local curiosity generated by these events led to the creation of a widely distributed book of essays, and a partnership with Oakland’s African American Museum and Library that engendered locally displayed exhibits on the archaeology and local history brought to light by the Cypress Project (see Appendix B). Later, the National Park Service used Caltrans’ outreach efforts as an exemplar of successful public programming in its National Register Bulletin Telling the Stories: Effective Interpretive Programs for Places Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Thomson and Harper 2000).

The fieldwork generated a huge quantity of data to be analyzed, documented, and disseminated to the general public and professionals; and without careful planning, this abundance might have caused the Cypress Project to become a victim of its own success. Since a conventional archaeological report was impractical due to the sheer volume of information, Caltrans created an array of products. These range from technical data that other archaeologists will use for years to come in their comparative studies, to accessible interpretive and popular reports in formats that include conventional printed documents, compact discs, a Web site, and an educational videotape distributed by the University of California.

Caltrans’ Cypress Archaeology Project has created a database whose size is unequalled in the region. No other investigation of the 19th-century West has discovered and documented such a large number of tightly associated urban assemblages using consistent methods of
excavation and analysis. With new immigrants and native-born citizens, railroad porters and wealthy investors all living side by side, West Oakland’s story has turned out to be richly textured and complex. Often disparaged and historically ignored, West Oakland is now one of the best-documented spots in California.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

The Cypress Archaeology Project was of unprecedented size and complexity in the West. At this time it seems appropriate to reflect on the undertaking as process, in the hope that lessons learned may aid future cultural resources management efforts. What would we have done differently and where might we have changed our emphasis to improve outcomes? Which innovations might be productively emulated by other projects? In the pages that follow, we assess what worked and what didn’t in relation to a number of crucial themes.

1. The Consolidated Approach to Section 106 Review

The conventional phasing required under the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s rules involves discovery, evaluation, and treatment. Each has its own review period, comments pass between various officials, and the entire process (while ensuring appropriate oversight and opportunity to comment) is quite drawn-out. Early in the Cypress Project it was realized that this was not a practical approach for a construction project on the fast track. The Memorandum of Agreement addressed this problem by allowing officials to condense the 106 Process, whereby the three phases were to be carried out concomitantly, guided by the highly specific terms of the project research design. As described in Chapter 1, the research design specified the conditions under which an archaeological deposit would be considered to have sufficient research potential to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Most evaluations were made in the field, jointly by the consulting archaeologist and the agency archaeologist.

Analysis

The approach required a high level of investment in focused prefield historical research. While some of this work did not relate directly to discoveries, it was essential in order to make the field evaluations. Since identification, evaluation, and treatment could often be accomplished within a few days, fieldwork moved rapidly. That construction was delayed for not a single day was due to this fast decision-making.

It is axiomatic among archaeologists that research value is a moving target. Archaeological remains do not have intrinsic importance, but are assigned value depending on the investigator’s approach and goals, and the available database. Paradoxically, the Cypress model required us to predict which deposits would best serve the research goals before the universe of data was known. Considering funding limitations and the logistics of working in front of construction equipment, this conflict may be unavoidable. In retrospect, however, we believe that, in some cases, more reliable significance decisions could have been made in the lab, with materials from contexts that failed the test, together with their associated historical research data, donated to educational organizations.

2. Consistency of Data Collection and Analysis

The project research design emphasized the recovery of caches of artifacts from discrete, historically documented contexts. A great deal of emphasis was placed on rigorous excavation
and recording methods. A pull-down menu approach to lab cataloging resulted in a high level of standardization.

Analysis
The emphasis on a particular source of archaeological data, its collection, and analysis resulted in a database that can be used for both qualitative and quantitative comparison with a high degree of confidence. Conversely, the highly focused approach discounted types of data—such as landscape features and structural remains—that would have been useful for different types of analyses. Excluding these types of remains was a value call on the part of the research design’s authors, who observed that effort spent on examining and describing the latter is not often rewarded with concomitant insights into past lifeways. Thus, the research design sought to achieve a high cost-benefit ratio by maximizing the return of demonstrably useful data.

The weakness in this approach is that it is inherently conservative. Contexts that do not meet the standard are discounted out of hand and not allowed to contribute to an evolving research design. It is essential that innovation not be stifled by the rote application of this approach with its appeal of apparent scientific rigor. To fully explore the potential of these resources, interpretive schemes that require qualitative or quantitative data should be given equal standing in analysis, as should the ability to work at a variety of scales from the household to the city. The eclectic “feel” of this volume is the result of our application of these principles. This quality may be seen as a lack of consistency and coherence in message whereas it is, in fact, part of the goal. To some degree, “the medium is the message.”

3. Working with Interested Local Parties
The research design required us to involve local organizations in the development and conduct of the project, both in order to inform local people about what we were doing and to solicit their ideas about what issues we should be examining.

Analysis
Contacts with the news media were managed by Caltrans public relations professionals; media days and other efforts are listed in Appendix B. To get local input into the project, we met early with Robert Haynes, Director of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO). Mr. Haynes, a historian, identified a series of interconnected themes that we incorporated into our research, a co-sponsored exhibit, and finally this volume: the railroad, unionism, black migration, and the evolution of modern Oakland through slum clearance. Caltrans, ASC, and AAMLO partnered on several interpretive projects, also listed in Appendix B.

While this aspect of the project was very successful, it did not achieve its full potential. Keeping fieldwork ahead of construction was the highest priority and, in retrospect, overshadowed other important aspects of the project. The California Office of Historic Preservation asked that visitors be accommodated on site; however, physical access by all but project personnel was restricted for safety and insurance reasons. Access problems might have been resolved by having input into the construction general contractor’s health-and-safety plan, which governed the conditions under which guests could visit the site, before construction began.

The project research design, while having the merit of flexibility in this area, did not require us to pursue all potential avenues for local cooperation. The result was that our relationships
with official citywide and larger-scale organizations (such as AAMLO and the news media) were
developed at the expense of contacts with truly local organizations such as neighborhood schools,
neighborhood social organizations, and local elected officials. A project of this size would benefit
from a designated outreach coordinator.

4. Presentation of Raw Data and of Interpretation

The Cypress Project developed truly massive quantities of archaeological and historical
data. The conventional approach to making this available to professionals in a series of narrative,
paper-based reports was determined to be inadequate, so a new format was created: the Block
Technical Report (BTR) series and the Interpretive Report. The former presents the data in
standardized format as backup for the latter (this volume), whose job is to offer interpretations.

Analysis

The BTRs present the data in a format that is readily usable for researchers concerned with
is particular datasets, such as specific ethnicities, periods, or social units. Separating the raw
data from the interpretation also prevents the latter from becoming swamped and facilitates a
readable interpretative product. This division is also a logical way of applying the hermeneutic
approach established in the research design, which takes our interpretations as only some of the
possible orientations to the data. Other researchers may agree with our interpretations, passively
disagree, or even actively reanalyze the data contained in the BTRs to counter our claims.

5. Hermeneutics and a Broadly Defined Historical Archaeology

The project research design involves both hermeneutic and scientific (hypothetico-
deductive) approaches. While links between datasets and research domains are explicit, the
latter are conceived as issues to be addressed rather than questions to be answered. Furthermore,
the research design conceives of historical archaeology broadly as an interpretive nexus of several
traditional disciplines, including history, oral history, vernacular architecture, and urban studies
among others.

Analysis

The research design took the position that historical archaeology is, by definition,
interdisciplinary. Its goal was to link past to present through important themes such as the
origin and reexamination of the “slum”—a theme emphasized by urban historians Alan Mayne
(Mayne and Murray 2001) and Robert Self (2003). Taking this stance required using data and
interpretation from nonarchaeological sources—indeed, some nonmaterial sources—to construct
interpretations. One outcome of taking this approach was that some have questioned the centrality
of hard, excavated archaeological material in our interpretations. “Would we have known this
without the artifacts?” is the pivotal issue to those who do not accept historical archaeology as
the nexus described above.

Whatever one’s stand on this critique, it is clear that future reports should make more
explicit the links between the various sources of data employed in pursuit of interpretation. In
the future, the types of ambitious interpretations that we have attempted will be improved by
more synthesis of the disparate forms of material culture, archaeological and otherwise. This
will require giving individual authors the opportunity to see others’ interpretations and develop
cross-disciplinary themes. The lack of a single theme and method is seen as a positive outcome,
in that it avoids an authorial voice that would tend to naturalize the archaeologist’s interpretations.
6. Keeping the Results Available

Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations has become largely a matter of creating technical reports of limited availability that fulfill the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines. The purpose of the law, however, is to encourage the use of heritage resources (such as archaeological sites) for long-term public benefit, an idea that has begun to assume more importance in the practice of cultural resources management (e.g., Jameson 1997; Little 2002).

Analysis

The Cypress Archaeology Project attempted to serve at least two ‘publics’: professional archaeologists and interested community members; both were addressed by the various products listed in Appendix B, as well as this volume.

Caltrans’ strategy of sponsoring several products of varying formats (video, a book of essays, displays, printed reports, CDs, and a web page) rather than a single mega-report was well received by peer reviewers. However, limited numbers of hardcopy products—such as CDs and paper reports—were created; when those are distributed, the product is effectively no longer available. The same can be said of the well reviewed but ultimately short-lived exhibits created by AAMLO. These products were created at public expense and have continuing value. The question is how to keep them available after the end of the project.

Cypress Archaeology Project staff found the World Wide Web to be a huge boon to disseminating information and receiving public input; a review draft of this volume, for example, elicited over 600 visits in April and May 2004. The WWW is not a panacea—many people do not have access to a fast computer—and should not substitute for other forms of outreach. It has great potential, however, as a medium-term, virtual home for these creations during a project’s afterlife.