



Expansion and Exclusion

Historical Archaeology in Maywood and Bronzeville

Catherine Brotz-Twohig



Maywood & Bronzeville

This research focused on the Chicago suburb of Maywood, Illinois and the Milwaukee neighborhood of Bronzeville. Both communities became African American neighborhoods due to past restrictive covenants enforcing racial segregation. These segregation policies greatly impacted where Black people were able to relocate to during the first and second waves of the Great Migration. Community interest in the history of Maywood led to archaeological digs at two locations in the neighborhood. The excavations were performed by Dr. Jane Peterson, Dr. Michael Gregory, DePaul University, and many volunteers. The excavations uncovered an unanticipated amount of artifacts that gave insights into what material goods were used and discarded by people at those locations. As the archaeological finds continue to be processed, more information on who was living in those homes and the surrounding area is necessary to reveal a more complete picture of the past. As the Maywood project has uncovered so much about 20th century life in that area, a historical archaeology project in Milwaukee's Bronzeville may bring to light more of the nearby neighborhood's history.

Providing Context

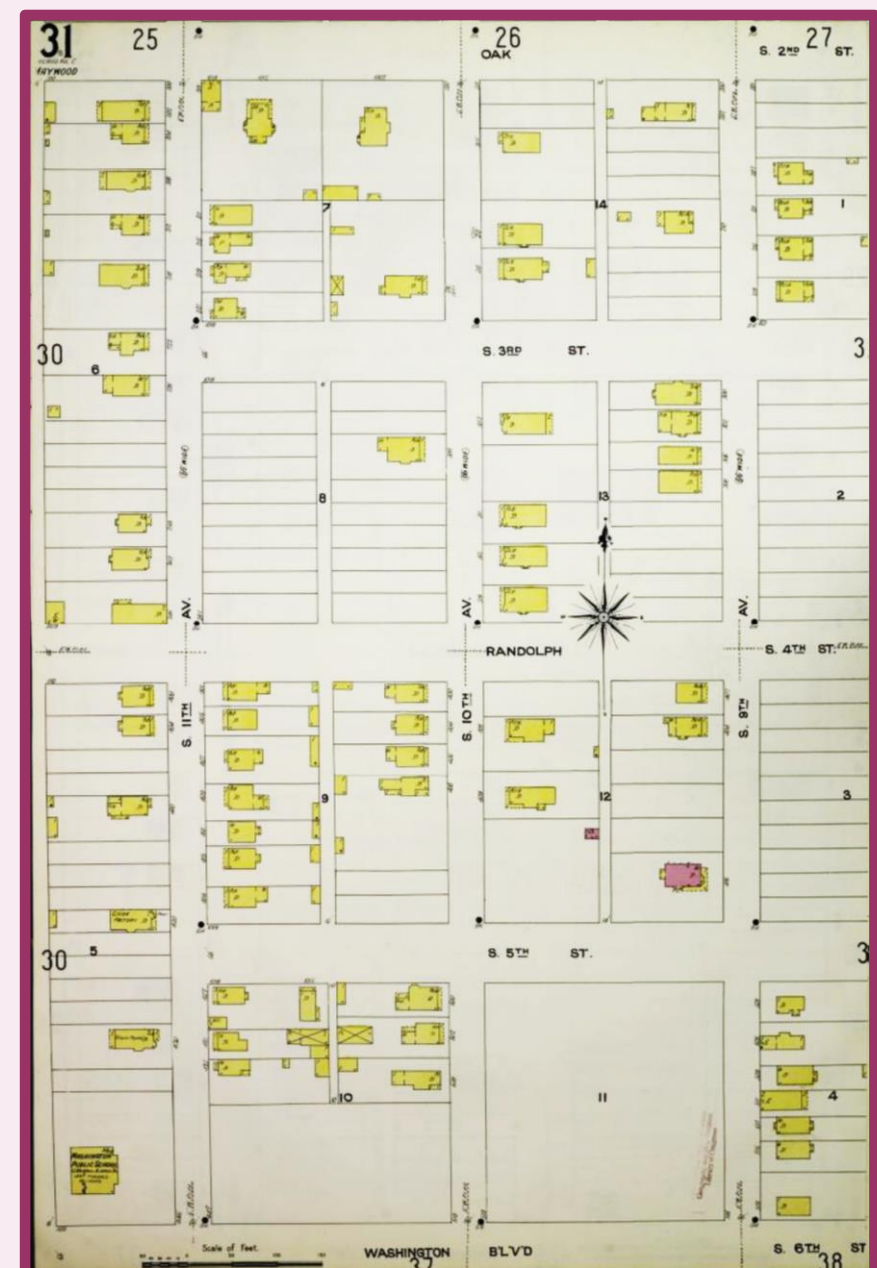
My goal was to find historical data to add to the known oral and written histories and archaeological finds to create a fuller picture of Maywood's past. Specifically, I looked into the history of the two properties at which excavations were performed. I also began compiling sources on Bronzeville and put together a timeline of African American life in the greater Milwaukee area to better understand the forces at work behind the development of the city and the Bronzeville neighborhood.

Project Futures

From the continued processing of materials from the Maywood excavations and further historical investigations, the Maywood project will hopefully be able to reveal more life in the neighborhood before, during, and after the restrictive covenants. My research has filled in some blanks about who lived there and how the neighborhood grew. However, more questions for continued research arose about how the residential restrictions were enforced and how life in the restricted zone was different from life in the surrounding area. As for Bronzeville, my research contributions will hopefully be a starting point for a continued project that can progress if community members are interested.

Finding Sources

I first read through literature on Bronzeville from the Marquette Raynor Memorial Libraries, the UWM online Encyclopedia of Milwaukee, copies of African American newspapers on microfilm at the Milwaukee Public Library, and Milwaukee and Wisconsin Historical Society information on African American history in the state. For Maywood, I used publicly available US Census data along with Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from the National Archives to put together how the properties developed and who moved through the area.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were created to provide detailed diagrams of US cities for insurance companies in the 19th and 20th centuries. As they were done by hand, maps are not available for every year. However, the maps can give information as to how neighborhoods grew and estimates of when structures were built. This particular map includes the block on which one of the excavations in Maywood took place. Picture from Library of Congress Online

The Wisconsin Weekly Blade based out of Madison was one of Wisconsin's earliest African American newspapers. In 1922, publisher Anthony Josey moved the paper to Milwaukee and reestablished it under the name The Wisconsin Enterprise-Blade (Greenen, 2006). Picture from Library of Congress Online



Uncovering History

Some of the most interesting results came from digging through the US Census data. The two properties at which excavations were performed turned out to be owned by two white families from the 1910 to the 1940 census. The Warnecke's were German-American and the Millers were English-American. (Warnecke's in census below) In looking through who lived in the surrounding properties, many of the inhabitants were white in the early 20th century with smaller pockets of Black residents and homeowners. The African American population reached a higher density from 1940 on meaning that they arrived mainly during the second wave of the Great Migration after WWII. In the same enumeration districts as the two excavated properties, there were also four Black families who owned their homes for multiple census years. This data revealed that there was evidence of property ownership and residential stability in the neighborhood for both white and Black residents. As for Bronzeville, my timeline ended up including African American Wisconsin history from the arrival of the first known Black man, Joe Oliver, in 1835 to the Civil Rights movement in Milwaukee in the 1960s. The events through those 130 years all affected the development of the Bronzeville neighborhood and African American life in Milwaukee through today.

References

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