

Research Design

on Dr. Jesse Reynolds, Potsdam, NY

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Introduction

Although archaeological excavation has been conducted in Potsdam before, none has focused specifically on recovering the material culture of homesteads and businesses in the Village area. The Pinpoint Potsdam project was designed to document citizens, businesses, and other entities relevant to the culture of Potsdam who lived in the Village during the mid-late 19th century. At this time, the town was quickly evolving due to the construction of St. Lawrence Academy, the future SUNY Potsdam, which was erected in 1816. It was also changing due to the Civil War, and many Potsdam citizens fought for the Union Army. Pinpoint Potsdam has brought more attention to the history of Potsdam, but much of the information is brief due to the lack of archaeological evidence to answer questions that arise from review of the historical documents. Of the entities covered in Pinpoint Potsdam, this design describes archaeological research to be conducted at Dr. Jesse Reynolds' house and office during his occupation period (1823-1909). The proposed archaeological research will focus on the Reynolds' site in order to gain a deeper understanding of the politics of doctors in the post-war period and masculine and feminine roles within 19th century home and work spaces.

Site History & Description

Jesse Reynolds' house and property has been the subject of some confusion. Pinpoint Potsdam names the current St. Larry's Bar & Grill at 6 Elm Street as Reynolds' property and suspects that it may have been his doctor's office, but fails to mention his confirmed office that was attached to the dwelling and is now the Silver & Collins law firm (Pinpoint Potsdam). However, historic maps clearly show the division of the doctor's office and the home on the Reynolds' property.

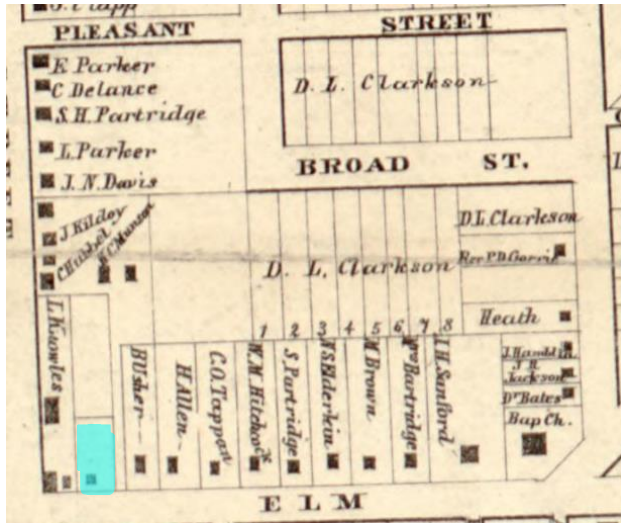


Fig. 1: 1858 map of Reynolds' block.

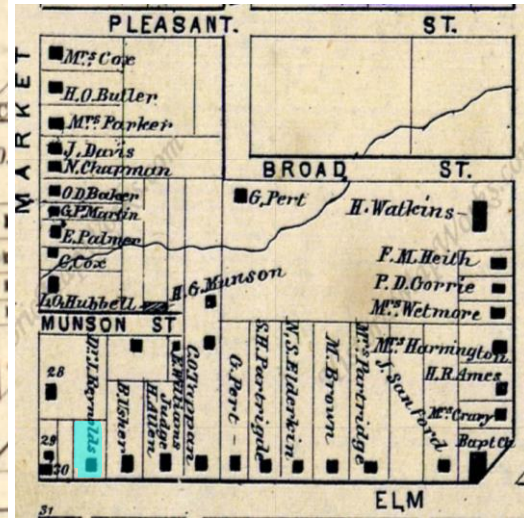


Fig. 2: 1865 map of the block.

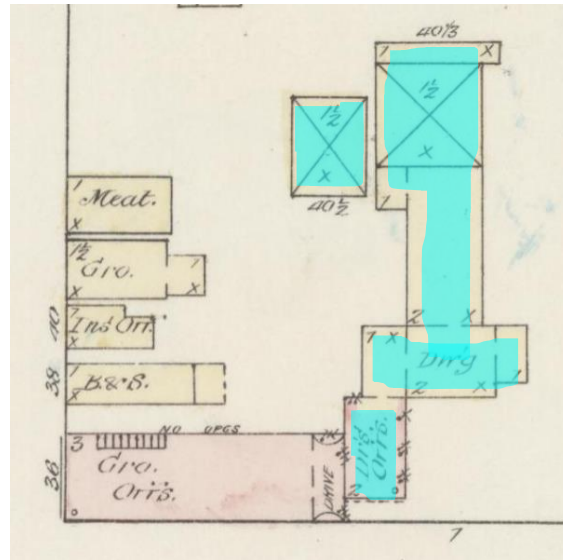


Fig. 3: 1885 map of the Reynolds' property and surroundings.

Dr. Reynolds purchased his property in 1860, for \$2,000 dollars (Deed 1860). Prior to that, it was owned by Horatio Munson. In 1860 his household consisted of himself (36), his wife Lorena (30), their son Willie/Wilbur (2), a servant named Delia Giffin (19), Irena Montgomery (70), Albert Reynolds (22), A. Hopkins (59), and Betsey Hopkins (55) (Census 1860). Even at his earliest residence, he had a large household. By 1870, according to the census, his household had shrunk to be him, Lorena, Wilbur, and newcomers Ambrose Woolcott (19), Nellie Montgomery (8), and the servant Elizabeth McDermott (18) (Census 1870). Lorena passed away in 1871

(Reynolds 1954). This is reflected in that by 1880 he was re-married to Lucy (40) and Wilbur was still there, as were his sons Leonard (4), James (2), and May (0). In addition, the nurse Mary Gaynor (43) lived in the house as well as cooks Margaret Ford (27) and Catherine McMullen (30) (Census 1880).

By 1885, his property had expanded as shown on the Sanborn map (fig. 3), which goes in hand with the developmental changes in the surrounding properties. The buildings to his right became a grocery office, which was separated from his medical office by a small walkway. This building is still visible today. His house was attached to the office and extended far into the backyard. The property also accommodated a shed. In a pamphlet published in 1954, Jesse's son Leonard writes that Jesse was not extraordinarily wealthy and most of his lifestyle and the extent of the property was possible due to the rigidity he held himself and his family to, as well as interest from his investments (Reynolds 1954).

The house itself was a large, three-story structure that was built in 1822 and then re-built in the early 1900s, according to an inventory form from 1983. After Jesse's death, the building was purchased in 1916 by the Freemasons (Pinpoint Potsdam).



Fig. 4: Reynolds' property, date unknown.
Courtesy of Potsdam Public Museum.



Fig. 5: The properties as of 2022.
Courtesy of Google Maps.

Research Goals

i. Doctors in post-war America

Reynolds was settled at his Elm Street residence in 1860, according to the deed book from that year. The Civil War lasted from 1861-1865, and as Reynolds' practiced until late in his life, much of his work took place in the post-war period. According to Shauna Devine, the end of the war marked a transformative period in medical practice, notably "physiological conceptions of disease [were replaced] by ontological ones." The Civil War saw a rise in the use of microscopes and other medical equipment in hospitals, as well as an uptick in battlefield autopsies (Devine 2016). The amount of death and disease in the war meant that physicians had to quickly adapt, and these rigorous requirements helped shape the medical field as it shifted towards a professional discipline. Notably, the war increased a need for debates surrounding germ theory, showcased by the fact that 63% of deaths in the war were due to disease and infection (Gilchrist 1998: 258).

Although Reynolds is documented as member of the board for the St. Lawrence Medical Society for decades on end, according to Leonard's pamphlet, he had little experience with the practical education that the war sparked. Most of his body of knowledge was built from his personal experience, he had never worked in a hospital, he knew little of germ theory, and only performed autopsies when absolutely needed, limiting his knowledge of the organ systems of the human body. According to his son, he was also reluctant to give out medicine unless absolutely necessary, and frequently treated issues like appendicitis with oils (Reynolds 1954).

We see that Reynolds was both an extremely well-known and respected physician, and someone who didn't follow the changes that occurred in medicine during the post-war period. I propose that the following questions could be answered by archaeological excavation, as their answers are not present in available literature.

1. How did Dr. Reynolds change his practice due to the medical knowledge that arose from the Civil War?
2. When did this knowledge reach him? Did he ever implement ideas related to fields like microbiology, and if so, when did he? Is there a noticeable change in sanitary standards in his office and household over time?

3. What evidence exists for what problems he was treating, and how does this reflect other physicians of the time?
4. Does his conservatism in medical practice reflect how he ran his home, and what does the intersection of his practice and his personal life tell us about notions of family in post-war America?

This last question provides a segue into the next topic, as it requires examining both the office and the home.

ii. Femininity in the 19th century

In the Reynolds homestead at any given time, there were female servants and cooks. He was married thrice, and each successional marriage took place 3 years after the other wife had passed (Reynolds 1954). He had 5 sons and 2 daughters, and according to Leonard's pamphlet, the house was also continuously filled with more distant relatives and occasionally students from the Normal School who worked for rent. This full household dynamic was commonplace at the time for members of his class, and his wives and servant girls would have been expected to manage the tasks of the household while Jesse worked. However, while this was their expectation, it was also a chance for the wives to express themselves and to take pride in how they could shape the household (Di Zerega Wall: 70).

Leonard's primary source tells us how Jesse treated his sons, but not his daughters. Leonard also mentions that a female cousin who lived with the family acted like a surrogate mother to the Reynolds children between Lucy (Leonard's mother)'s death and Jesse's remarriage to his third wife Elizabeth. Here, we see a chance to examine the maternal role and how it was constructed in lieu of the biological mother. Although there were female servants who had been with the family for decades, the cousin was chosen to fill the mother's spot (Reynolds 1954).

Since the historic record often favors men, archaeology can be used to deduce the real scope of women's roles. Particularly, archaeology needs to be used to assess how women

followed or didn't follow what was expected of them, for example, it has been used to document the "trendiness" of designs on ceramics and other items that middle-class white mothers bought (Fitts 49). Reynolds' homestead provides an interesting possibility for artifact concentrations, as his office was connected to the home, which allows for questions surrounding women's spaces versus men's spaces in a building where the work and the home were entwined. Particularly, what can be asked is as follows:

1. What were the dynamics between the female relatives and the female non-relatives?
For example, what is the division of space between women of the household based on their relation and status within the family?
2. What is the difference between material culture of the female servants in the office vs in the home?
3. How does the feminine material culture change under each of Jesse's wives? What do we find of his daughters?

iii. Masculinity in the 19th century

There is a sort of paradox within archaeology where, despite being the dominating gender, less is known about men and masculinity than there is about women and femininity. This is because women are recognized as the historical "other", and their records and culture can be analyzed in the context of a heavily masculine society, since they are not the norm. However, there is not much research on conceptions of manhood and masculinity, especially among well-off white men, because this class was and is so domineering it is assumed to be the default. For many men, the degree of masculinity they present to the outward world is different from the masculinity they may express in private spaces, and this is true as long as there have been patriarchal societies that both put men on pedestals and put them in boxes. Sites like the Reynolds' homestead are perfect for studying the material culture of men and the differences in space both within the gender and between genders, as Jesse not only had sons living under his roof in his 30s and 60s, but he also was heavily involved in male-oriented affairs such as politics, and he housed boarders from the Normal School in his younger years (Reynolds 1954). The construction of his household in itself is relevant to questions of masculinity, as the cultural

expectation for men at this time was to be a provider, not just for the immediate family but for his whole house (Barker 2008: 17). These concepts are especially interesting in the 19th century, a time when male archetypes were evolving quickly and becoming distinct due to economic and sociocultural changes (Kruczek-Aaron: 311). Of the many questions that can be asked, the following will be the most viable to answer at the Reynold's site.

1. How is masculinity presented in living quarters across the different generations and social classes- Jesse's first sons, the Normal School boards, and Jesse's later sons? Similarly, what changes are there in masculine material culture across time in the household?
2. What spaces seem to belong more to the men, and what do they tell us about masculinity within the home and the family vs masculinity as presented to the outside world?

Methods

Given that Jesse's original home still partially stands today, as does his office, access to these interior structures is limited. However, the back portion of Jesse's home is no longer standing and is now a parking lot.



Fig. 6: The modern Elm Street block.



Fig. 7: An overlay of the 1885 and modern maps.

GPR will be used to detect the remains of the structure beneath the asphalt. From there, I propose that mechanical stripping be used to remove the asphalt of the entire lot, as Jesse's

property extended beyond the end of the building and those yard spaces will potentially provide valuable information. After this, trenches will be used across the suspected feature since we are interested in both establishing the boundaries of the structure and in documenting changes in material culture across heads of the domestic household. In the rest of the backyard area, 5x5 pits will be selected with systematic unaligned sampling. The size of these pits will allow us to gather a broad scan of activity, and the selection method is ideal since it is a very high visibility area yet we don't know without excavation where activity occurred. These units will also assist in detecting a sheet midden, if one is present.

Dry screening will be used on all levels, and a $\frac{1}{4}$ screen will be used generally throughout since we don't expect to find debitage or other minuscule material culture. However, $\frac{1}{8}$ screens will be on standby if beads, buttons, and other small artifacts are found. Although the soil is expected to be thick and clumpy given its burial beneath asphalt and accumulation of groundwater, as recommended by Hester et al (Hester et al 2016), water screening will not be used as it can destroy plant and animal remains that could tell us what the household ate at different times. In the front yard, the same screening techniques will be used, but due to its small size, 3x3 pits will be opened, two on either side of the entryway and the rest chosen with systematic unaligned. This is to ensure that the areas off the steps where things may have been discarded or decorations displayed are excavated, but the rest of the yard is also examined at random chance. The bulk of excavation will focus on the back area as it also includes a structure that is no longer standing. All levels will be 5 arbitrary centimeters unless a natural level is discovered. Stratigraphic profiles will only be taken on the wall that best represents the pit as a whole. Since both the office and the house were built for/by Jesse and remain standing, cultural material is not expected to be present under either structure. Because of this, no excavation will occur here. However, if there is evidence of a doorway that has been blocked in in the doctor's office that would lead to the backyard, mechanical stripping will occur around this area so STPs can be done to evaluate if there is any material at this former doorstep. This focus on yard excavation and access to middens is especially beneficial for the questions proposed, as what was disposed will reflect not only what was used in the household but what was used in the office as well, and the manner of disposal could relate to sanitary practices.

Significance

This research is important because of Reynold's particular life circumstances that, in theory, leave behind a dream-like archaeological record. He was a doctor who practiced before, during, and after the Civil War, while also being detached enough from the war itself that evidence of his medical practice will show how knowledge gained from the war transferred to medical practitioners in general, instead of only surgeons in big hospitals or those that worked on the battlefield. He embodied the Christian Gentleman, an archetype of a religious man built on balance and piety (Rosenberg 1973: 139). He had three wives, with the same 3-year-gap between each marriage, that would have ran his household in different ways. All bore him children well into his 60s, which meant there were three distinct decades of life in his house. He is the perfect encapsulation of a 19th century doctor and family man, subjects that are well documented in history. However, only archaeology can discover what went unsaid.

From excavation of his property, we will gather more information on the ever-growing topic of women's historical roles, particularly how women functioned as heads of the domestic household, a topic that continuously benefits from new information as so much has been left out of the historical record that all research is valuable, especially at a household with such an important female population of both family and servants. This research will contribute to feminist theory by examining the household from a female-first perspective that sees women as active decision makers in their lives, instead of being passive either to the men or to the systems that dictate what they should be.

Not only this, but we will examine the roles of women in relation to the spaces that weren't "theirs", like Jesse's doctor's office. This is a rare chance where this type of establishment was attached directly to the house and can provide plenty of information on spatial and functional relationships when these buildings were physically connected- one masculine and public, one feminine and private. Similarly, Jesse's site can tell us a lot about the masculine gender, a topic that is less often explored with a critical eye, especially in the case of 19th century well-off white men. Since his house was home not only to his sons but male students, there is a perfect example of cross-class masculinity available. Most importantly, both of these gendered researches will be unique because expression of gender is as much about the absence as

it is the presence, particularly in a house that contained a heterosexual family unit and men and women from outside the family. This research will come at this topic of 19th century gender through the lens of absence and presence, with a postprocessualist view that considers not only what is present in the material culture but how people interacted with their objects on a level beyond physical.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research will document Jesse Reynold's homestead and doctor's office from his 1860 settlement until his death in 1909. The excavation will target the yard areas, as much of the original structures still stand and have been renovated. We will use a combination of GPR, purposefully chosen trenches on suspected features, and systematic unaligned pits to uncover the yard. This will answer questions on the role of men and women in the house and office as well as on changes in the medical practice throughout and after the Civil War.

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