Black History Project Update

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Submitted Charles Orser, Illinois State University

In June 1994, the McLean County Historical Society and the local Black History Project co-sponsored a two-week dig at the Wilbur Barton homesite in Normal, Illinois, occupied by the Barton family from the 1890s to the 1980s. Volunteer workers, directed by Edward B. Jelks, explored the backyard of the house, where a privy and the remains of a horse barn were partially excavated. From these features and from an extensive sheet midden a sizeable sample of artifacts was collected. The archaeological finds, augmented by oral history from members of the Barton family, document the utilization of space on the home lot, as well as domestic activities in general.

This is the second archaeological project in the ongoing Black History Project: a study of the Bloomington-Normal black community from the initial Euroamerican settlement ca. 1820 to the present. The first took place in 1992, when excavations were carried out around the Weyman Methodist Church and attached parsonage in Bloomington, dating from the 1840s, under the direction of Mark Groover and Melanie Cabak. Their report on the Weyman Church project will appear soon in Historical Archaeology.