

Behind the Curriculum: Developing *Investigating a Shotgun House*

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If I had known then what I know now, would *Kentucky Project Archaeology* have embarked on developing *Investigating a Shotgun House*?

Looking back over the long, long process (2011-2017), my answer is still yes.

Development

The Kentucky Archaeological Survey's (KAS) decision to support *Kentucky Project Archaeology's* involvement in the *Investigating Shelter* curriculum was an ambitious one. Made in the flush of optimism and naiveté, *Kentucky Project Archaeology* set as its goal to develop two case studies - one targeting an historic site and the other targeting a Native American site.

KAS has a strong relationship with the archaeologists at the Kentucky Department of Transportation. These folks share the Survey's commitment to public archaeology and archaeology education. For *Shotgun*, KAS was in the right place at the right time with the right Section 106 project. (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires projects that involve federal money, permits, or lands to take into account the effect they will have on archaeological resources)

Development of *Investigating a Shotgun House* was funded in part by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds. The Newtown Pike Extension Project was a project made in heaven for the development of a shelter investigation. The road project had been on the books for over 50 years. When it finally materialized in the late 1990s, not only was the FHWA required to ensure that the highway did not adversely impact archaeological sites, but social impact assessments of the project's impact on the lives of the poor and minority residents of the Davis Bottom neighborhood also were required by President Clinton's Executive Order 12898.



Top: Davis Bottom in 1890s

Bottom: Davis Bottom before field work

Background work required to develop *Investigating a Shotgun House* was expedited because it was one of several education elements implemented in advance of construction of the new road. The others included a one hour documentary on the community - the award-winning *Davis Bottom: Rare History, Valuable Lives*; a series of lessons linked to the art panels commissioned for the documentary (see image to left); and an extensive website including information on the neighborhood's architecture, oral history, archaeology, and history ([link here](#)).

So, when we started work on *Shotgun*, we had funding and a deep and rich foundation of information at our fingertips, uncovered, collected, and vetted by archaeologists, architectural historians, cultural anthropologists, and historians. All we had to do was write it following an already prepared format.

It was brutal!

With more information than we knew what to do with, important decisions rested on the shoulders of KAS's urban archaeologist Dr. Jay Stottman, who oversaw the development of the archaeological elements in the case study. KAS's architectural historian, Janie-Rice Brother, intimately familiar with Kentucky shotgun houses and their diversity, provided the architectural information we needed. Invaluable research on the neighborhood was presented in Heather Dollins' Masters thesis in historic preservation from the University of Kentucky (UK). *Shotgun* required more detailed information about the Davis Bottom neighborhood, so Tom Law, the director and pro-

FOR SHOTGUN, WE WERE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME WITH THE RIGHT SECTION 106 MITIGATION PROJECT

ducer of the documentary, joined me in interviewing former residents. His extensive videotaped interviews with a host of other former residents provided the background information used in the geography and history sections. The Today Section profited from the social impact assessment conducted in Davis Bottom by UK Assistant Professor Dr. Juliana McDonald, and a Masters thesis by UK geography student Kathleen Powers which considered the dynamics of city and neighborhood negotiations regarding the outcomes of the road building project.

But that wasn't enough - or at least it wasn't enough for me. I desperately wanted to get critical feedback from the end-users - teachers and students - to ensure that the final product was engaging, relevant, and had no unforeseen speedbumps that would impact anyone's ability to use the curriculum easily, creatively, and appropriately.

This is where Valerie McCormick, archaeologist at the Nashville District and an alumna of *Project Archaeology*, came in at a most auspicious time. The Nashville District Corps of Engineers (COE) was looking to fund archaeology education projects. The Lake Cumberland drawdown during repairs to Wolf Creek Dam had impacted cultural resources. Did KAS need any support for archaeology education or public archaeology projects? Did we ever!



Gwynn Henderson interviews students

Piloting, Testing, Research

Core of Engineers funding supported a week-long teachers workshop devoted to introducing teachers to *Investigating Shelter* as an example of inquiry-based teaching. Partici-

pating teachers provided us with critical comments on how well the lessons and materials stood the test of use. In addition, COE monies provided support for an in-class pilot project during which a revised *Investigating a Shotgun House* was tested with students in four Kentucky elementary school classrooms.

Our findings from that pilot project were wonderful, amazing, and humbling. The teachers told us - Dr. Linda Levstik, UK Professor (now retired) from the College of Education and my long-time colleague in archaeology education, and me - how well the materials worked technically, but also how well the materials engaged their students in inquiry-based learning about the poor African-American and European-American residents of Davis Bottom. The students, too, shared with us



Students investigate the Shotgun House floor map

what they thought, and learned, and in some cases felt, about race and poverty; and about home and family, neighborhood, and community. Along with the intended content and conceptual takeaways, we discovered that *Shotgun* held deeper and broader underlying themes and broader civic connections than we had anticipated. These related to very timely and fundamental social studies concepts of civil rights in America and issues surrounding socioeconomic differences in our country.

What We Learned

We hope that some of the innovations we developed for *Investigating a Shotgun House* will be copied by others. These include: 1) the Powerpoint presentations in lieu of overheads that teachers also can use as supplemental visuals and content; 2) printable Shotgun House site maps in two sizes available through the national office; 3) the “story behind it” pages that describe the narratives encoded in each quadrant’s artifact distributions; 4) a timeline element; 5) a suggestion for how to teach the unit if time is short; and 6) purposefully linking the investigation to broader social studies/history curricula (in our case, [World History For Us All](#)) and to more targeted extensions (the ones we developed as part of the Davis Bottom History Preservation Project).

Did we take more calendar time than we planned (because of other job responsibilities), and spend more development time than we planned (because it was all new to us), and spend more money than we planned? Yes, we did.

Because none of us had ever prepared a shelter investigation before, we didn’t know how to best operationalize information collecting and materials development. Yes, we used other investigations as templates. Yes, we talked to the national office and to others who had prepared a shelter investigation, but we didn’t understand the engineering of curriculum de-

velopment. We didn’t realize that we would have to do the activities to be sure they worked, and to develop the answers (!), and adjust the data if it was unclear, and adjust the

questions if they didn’t work. In other words, we explored *Investigating a Shotgun House* at least two or three times all the way through over the course of the unit’s development. WHEW!

We had so much data, it was difficult to figure out exactly what to access and to privilege in the investigation - although we had very specific notions of the themes we thought the unit would address and the respectful tone we must strike. In addition, we wanted to provide lessons and activities that did not overlap with or cover the same archaeological content and activities as other investigations. This meant carefully studying the other shelter investigations. In this regard, *Investigating Shelter* and its case studies is inspired. Each one is different, and yet all are arranged according to a very clear format with a similarity of approach. What this means is, a teacher can do several different shelter investigations, each one slightly different, but each one building on the other.

Kentucky Project Archaeology has begun developing its next shelter investigation...



NATIONAL TEAM COMINGS AND GOINGS

Meet Hannah Ludlow Project Archaeology’s Newest Student Intern

Hannah Ludlow is a Junior at Montana State University. She is studying anthropology and history and is also studying in the Honors College. Archaeology is a subject near and dear to her heart and she looks forward to learning more about archaeology and teaching as she grows as an archaeologist and student. As an intern she does whatever the Project Archaeology team needs of her. Her work primarily involves assisting in and preparing for events as well as writing for the Project Archaeology blog. Eventually, Hannah hopes to have a PhD in anthropology and have a career as a professor or curate for a museum or historical society.

