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A Phase I Archaeological Survey at Free State, Albemarle County, Virginia

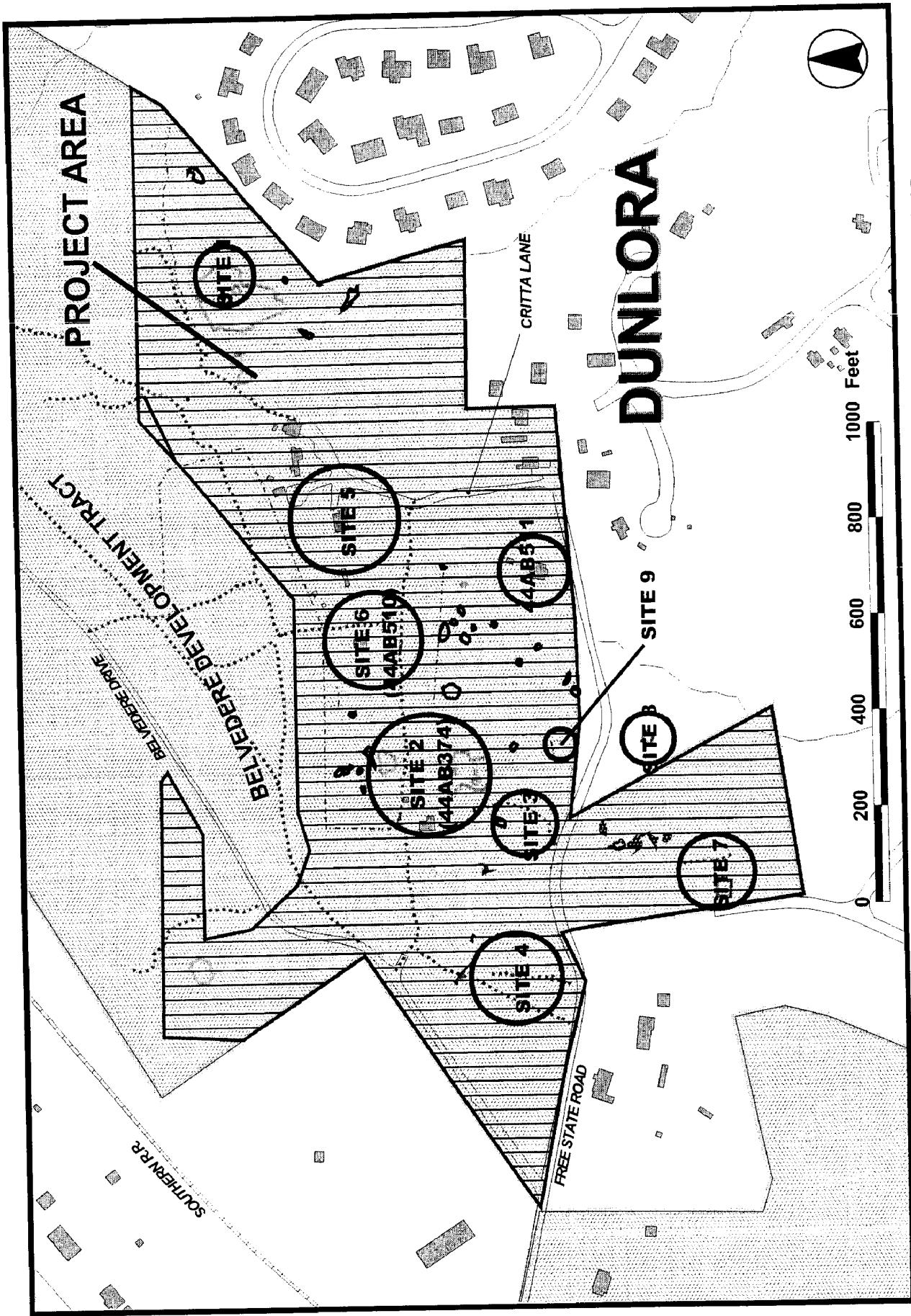
Management Summary

From January 1 through February 22, 2005, Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC carried out a Phase I archaeological survey of a ca. 30-acre portion of Free State, a late 18th through 20th century African-American rural community located in northeastern Albemarle County, Virginia approximately 0.75 miles east of Rio Road. This survey was conducted according to standards set forth by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and followed strategies developed through consultation with Stonehouse Development and historic preservation and zoning staff within Albemarle County's Department of Community Development. The purpose of the survey was to provide detailed information concerning the nature and location of archaeological resources within the project area. Of particular concern was the location of sites and/or site components dating to the late 18th-early 19th centuries, when free African-Americans occupied the Free State community. Phase I fieldwork included, 1) a comprehensive archaeological survey comprised of hand-excavated and screened shovel tests placed at 40-foot centers, 2) a metal detector survey along transects spaced at 40-foot intervals, 3) close interval shovel testing (on 20-foot centers) of identified archaeological sites, 4) detailed mapping of extant landscape features visible within the project area, and 5) interviews with local residents and other informants with a first-hand knowledge of Free State. This management summary includes an overview of the findings of Phase I fieldwork and a preliminary assessment of the eligibility of identified archaeological resources for the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP).

During the initial stage of archaeological fieldwork, 716 shovel tests were excavated at 40-foot centers across the project area. Approximately 1.2 acres located primarily along the eastern margins of the project area were excluded from shovel testing due to the presence of slopes in excess of 15°. Elsewhere, systematic shovel testing was suspended over limited areas because of deep trash piles, existing structures, or roadways. Approximately 30% (n = 223) of the 716 shovel tests excavated in the first stage of fieldwork yielded artifacts, however the vast majority of this recovered material dates to the twentieth century. The results of the initial stage of shovel testing combined with information gathered from informant interviews resulted in the identification of seven sites within the project area that received further, close-interval shovel testing. During this second stage of site testing, an additional 252 shovel tests were excavated across identified sites covering a combined total area of 131,150 sq ft (3.01 acres). With permission from the property owner (Mr. Phillip Brown, Sr., 1135 Free State Road), an additional six shovel tests were excavated at an eighth site located just beyond the southern boundary of the project area in Tax Map Parcel 62-8. The final stage of Phase I field work consisted of a metal detector survey along 3-ft-wide transects spaced at 40-ft intervals across all portions of the project area relatively free of dense brush and/or visible deposits of 20th-century

refuse. In all, approximately 10.8 acres or just over one-third of the project were covered by the metal detector survey. A ca. 0.5-acre area north of Free State Road and Tax Map Parcel 62-8 identified by Mr. Phillip Brown, Sr. as the site of the historic period "Bowles cemetery" was subjected to more intensive metal detector survey and is discussed below as Site 9. Close-interval shovel testing was not conducted at Site 44AB511 (VCHR # 002-1715), located in the northwestern corner of the intersection of Free State Road and Critta Lane, as only 20th-century artifacts were recovered from the area during the initial 40-ft-interval testing and because both documentary research and informant interviews revealed the buildings here to have been constructed no earlier than the 1950s.

Of the eight sites identified within the project area during the Phase I survey, five are not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Sites 1, 5, 6, and 7 represent primarily 20th-century domestic occupations, while Site 4 represents the find spot of a single, apparently isolated late 18th-early 19th century artifact. None of these five sites holds the potential to offer significant information important to the understanding of local or regional history. Site 2 (44AB374) and Site 3 both contain evidence of late 18th-early 19th century domestic occupation and on-going documentary research indicates that both may be directly associated with the earliest, free Black occupation of the Free State area. Sites 2 (44AB374) and Site 3 both are considered potentially eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion D. Consequently, further archaeological investigations in these two locations are recommended to further evaluate the extent, nature, and integrity of Early National (1789-1830) and Antebellum (1830-1860) Period deposits. Site 9, identified on the basis of informant interviews in conjunction with the study of historical documents and aerial photographs and archaeological fieldwork, is considered the most likely location of an historical cemetery thought to be present in this part of the project area. Large-scale clearing of surface soils across the Site 9 area is recommended to conclusively test for the presence, number, and distribution of burials potentially present in this location. A final site, Site 8, located outside of the current project area and not currently threatened by development, also received brief field study and, on the basis of evidence currently available, is considered potentially eligible for NRHP listing and worthy of further archaeological investigation should threats to the site arise in the future. Appendix 1 contains fuller descriptions of each of the nine sites identified and tested during Rivanna Archaeology's Phase I archaeological survey at Free State.



Free State Phase I. Map of Project Area and Sites Identified and Tested. Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC, 2005

Appendix 1 – Sites Identified and Tested

Site 1 is located in the northeastern corner of the project area approximately 400 ft northeast of the residence of H. Nelson Sprouse (1360 Critta Lane). This site, covering an area of approximately 8,400 sq ft (0.19 acres), is located on level land within mature hardwood forest. An apparent road trace, possibly an earlier continuation of the road now named Critta Lane, runs along the site's northern border while several cairns of fieldstones are located within or in close proximity to the site. In all, 24 shovel tests placed at 20-foot centers were excavated at Site 1. Recovered artifacts included container glass, ceramics, wire nails, brick, and table utensils - all dating to the late nineteenth-early twentieth century. The recovered assemblage appears domestic in origin, however the possibility that it represents secondary dumping cannot be ruled out. One shovel test, STP 1014, contained a high density of artifacts of diverse sorts as well as evidence of intense burning including melted and fused fragments of container glass, and may be indicative of intentional dumping and burning of household refuse. No structure appears in this location on the County's earliest property tax maps (ca. 1942) and Nelson Sprouse, who moved to the area ca. 1951, has no recollection of a building in this location. Due to the relatively late date of recovered materials and the possibility that they represent secondary refuse disposal, Site 1 is not considered eligible for NRHP nomination and warrants no further investigation.

Site 2 (44AB374) houses standing structure VDHR # 002-1717. The site is located ca. 1,000 feet east of the Fairview Swim Club and 325 feet north of Free State Road and lies along the southern side of the disused, unpaved roadway that traverses the project area east-to-west. The site occupies roughly level terrain, and vegetation across the site area includes dense understory and brush as well as more mature woodlands. Modern trash scatters the surface of the entire site area, while substantial dumps of 20th-century trash occur both to the southeast and north of the standing structure. This site was first identified in 1988 during an archaeological survey conducted by John Milner and Associates (Stevens 1990) and was briefly revisited in 2003 by the William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research (Underwood et al. 2004). The main block of the standing structure is dated ca. 1900 with a rear addition and outbuildings constructed ca. 1940 (Hallock 2004). Very limited shovel testing around the standing structure by both JMA and WMCAR recovered late 19th-20th century artifacts. The VDHR site form completed by JMA mentions a bulldozed, "historic ruin" that once stood near the surviving house and concluded that earthmoving and severe erosion have resulted in substantial disturbance to the site area.

During Rivanna Archaeology's Phase I survey, a total of 90 shovel tests (on 20-ft centers) were excavated at Site 2/44AB374 across an area of ca. 33,700 sq ft (0.77 acres) east and south of the standing structure. While 20th-century artifacts were recovered from many of these shovel tests, a small number of late 18th-early 19th-century artifacts were recovered in addition to a number of less clearly diagnostic 19th-early 20th century artifacts. The limited stratigraphic exposes afforded by during shovel testing revealed some localized areas of disturbance, but not to the extent suggested by the JMA report. Presence of an earlier structure at the site was confirmed by Nelson Sprouse, who lived here as a young child in the 1950s. Specifically, Sprouse recalls a log cabin, occupied by his grandmother, standing a short distance east of the surviving two-story frame structure and immediately adjacent to the south side of the east-west roadway. A structure is indicated in this location on the County's first tax map (ca. 1942) and is clearly visible on

1936-37 aerial photography, which also appear to show a ca. 100 x 100 ft yard area around this building. An *in situ* section of concrete slab as well as a portion of a mortared brick and stone chimney observed in this location during Rivanna Archaeology's survey appear further confirmation of the building's former existence, although neither of these features likely represents original elements of the structure. The earliest artifacts recovered by Rivanna Archaeology at Site 2/44AB374 were located primarily around the perimeter of the apparent yard area visible on the early aerial photographs, along the northern margin of an extensive 20th-century trash dump. The distribution of these early artifacts may be indicative of intentional refuse disposal beyond the yard area of an early building or, alternatively, of an earlier structure now buried beneath the trash dump. Although inconclusive, the early aerial photography shows mature trees over the entire dump area that might indicate an earlier, possibly residential use of this location.

Documentary research, still on-going, indicates that Site 2/44AB374 lies within the approximately 45-acre tract inherited ca. 1850 by Stephen Bowles from his uncle, Zacharia Bowles, son of Amy Farrow. A special census recording free African-Americans in 1833 suggests that Stephen Bowles and his wife, Susan, may have been residing at the time in the home of his uncle, Zacharia, and aunt, Critta Hemmings Bowles. Given the presence of late 18th-early 19th century artifacts at Site 2/44AB374, the possibility exists that not only Stephen Bowles, but also his uncle and aunt once occupied this site. Stephen Bowles, in turn, passed the property to his nephew, Stephen T. Coles, ca. 1870 and Coles appears to have resided at Site 2/44AB374 until selling the land in 1916 (ACDB 164:5). Because of the presence of artifacts dating to the first phase of free Black settlement at Free State, quite possibly associated with the residence of Stephen Bowles, if not Zacharia and Critta Bowles, and the potential for surviving, subsurface archaeological deposits, this site is considered potentially eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion D. Specifically, Site 2/44AB374 holds the potential to provide rare insights into free African-American rural life in central Virginia during the Early National (1789-1830) and Antebellum (1830-1860) Periods. Further archaeological investigations are recommended at Site 2/44AB374 to clarify the extent and severity of disturbances, to evaluate the nature and preservational integrity of early deposits, and to provide recommendations for future treatment of the site.

Site 3 is located approximately 200 feet south of VDHR structure #1717 at Site 2/44AB374 and approximately 90 feet north of Free State Road. The site, covering an area of ca. 9,500 sq ft (0.22 acres), is bordered to the east by a north-south power line cut and the trace of mid-20th-century drive connecting Free State Road to VDHR structure #1717 at Site 2/44AB374. The potential historical cemetery (Site 9) identified by Mr. Phillip Brown, Sr. is located approximately 200 ft southeast of Site 3. Site 3 occurs on gently sloping terrain and is densely overgrown with privet and thorny brush. A total of 26 shovel tests at 20-ft centers were excavated in the area of Site 3. Recovered artifacts included a single shard of late 18th-early 19th-century ceramic as well as several cut nails and another ceramic shard dating more broadly to the 19th or possibly early 20th-century. Because of the presence of artifacts dating to the first phase of free Black settlement at Free State and the potential for surviving, subsurface archaeological deposits, this site is considered potentially eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion D. As with Site 2/44AB374, Site 3 holds the potential to provide information concerning free African-American rural life in central Virginia during the Early National (1789-1830) and Antebellum

(1830-1860) Periods. Further archaeological investigations are recommended at Site 3 to to evaluate the nature and integrity of early deposits, and to provide recommendations for future treatment of the site.

Site 4 is located on gently sloping terrain in mature hardwood forest near the western boundary of the project area, approximately 900 ft due east of the Free State Road bridge over the Southern Rail Line. The site is bounded to the west by a southwest-northeast trending road trace clearly visible on early aerial photographs. Site 4 was defined on the basis of a single find of an antebellum kaolin pipe stem fragment during initial 40-ft-interval shovel testing. Subsequent close interval testing entailed the excavation of an additional 33 shovel tests (at 10- and 20-ft centers) across an area of 11,250 sq ft (0.26 acres) centered on the pipe stem find spot. Apart from twentieth debris scattered along the margins of the road trace, no other cultural remains were recovered during close interval shovel testing. Metal detector survey along transects spaced at 20-ft intervals also yielded no other artifacts except modern trash and fencing wire concentrated along the edges of the road trace. Given the apparently isolated character of the single late 18th-early 19th-century artifact recovered at Site 4, the location is not considered eligible for the NRHP and further archaeological investigation is not recommended.

Site 5 is centered on the concrete block dwelling located at 1373 Critta Lane in the eastern half of the project area. Although the standing structure (VDHR # 002-5054) is dated ca. 1950 (Hallock 2004), Mr. H. Nelson Sprouse recalls an earlier, dilapidated, two-story frame structure in this location that was demolished by his father in the 1950s-1960s prior to construction of the current building as the Sprouse family's home. Site 5 is bounded to the east by a graveled drive, the northern terminus of Critta Lane. Most of the site area is maintained as mown turf, however areas overgrown in grasses, weeds, and thorny brush occur around the northern and western sides of the site. Considerable quantities of 20th-century refuse litter the surface of the northern part of the site and beyond. The existing concrete block building is constructed on what appears to be an artificially constructed earthen terrace while a lower, similarly constructed terrace lies immediately to the south. Several possible late 19th-early 20th century artifacts recovered during initial shovel testing led to close interval testing (at 20-ft intervals) across an area of 24,700 sq ft (0.57 acres). In all, a total of 55 shovel tests were excavated at Site 5. Close interval testing revealed, in addition to abundant 20th-century domestic artifacts, several additional possibly late 19th-early 20th-century artifacts. These archaeological findings are consistent with on-going documentary research that strongly suggests that residential occupation in this location began no earlier than the end of the 19th century following the sale, to James Tucker Coles, of a one-acre parcel containing Site 5 by Stephen T. Cole, nephew and heir of Stephen Bowles, in 1895 (Albemarle County Deed Book 104:432). Four years later in 1899, the land passed to Henry Brown (Albemarle County Deed Book 116:155). Due to the relatively late date of the recovered assemblage and the likelihood of considerable mid-20th-century disturbance associated with construction of the current building at 1373 Critta Lane, Site 5 is not considered eligible for NRHP listing. Consequently, no further archaeological investigation is recommended.

Site 6 is broadly coterminous with Site **44AB510**, identified by WMCAR in 2003 (Underwood et al. 2004). The site houses the burned and abandoned frame structure VDHR # 002-5053 recently determined to have been constructed ca. 1920 (Hallock 2004). Site 6 is located on roughly level to gently sloping land approximately 100 ft west of the western boundary of Tax

Map Parcel 62-3 and immediately north of the power line cut and road trace that run east-west through the project area. Considerable quantities of modern debris occur in piles and more diffuse scatters around the eastern, western, and northern sides of the extant structure. A deeply gullied dirt road runs through the eastern half of the site, just east of the Structure 002-5053, connecting Belvedere Drive and Critta Lane. Two shovel tests were excavated at the site by WMCAR staff in 2003, with both revealing high densities of exclusively 20th-century artifacts. Close-interval shovel testing (on 20-ft centers) by Rivanna Archaeology excavated a total of 50 shovel tests across 23,000 sq ft (0.52 acres) at Site 6. With the exception of several possible late 19th-early 20th century artifacts, recovered material culture dates exclusively to the 20th century. Site 6/44AB510 is located within land sold by Stephen T. Coles, nephew and heir of Stephen Bowles, in 1916 (Albemarle County Deed Book 164:5), and it would appear that occupation of this location took place only after this date. Site 6/44AB510 is not considered eligible for the NRHP and further archaeological investigations are not recommended.

Site 7 is located on moderately sloping terrain within secondary mixed deciduous forest and dense understory along the southwestern margin of Tax Map Parcel 61-161 approximately 300 ft south of Free State Road. To the northeast, Site 6 is bounded by the course of a small, spring-fed stream. Cleared and graded terrain associated with the margin of the Dunlora subdivision forms the site's southern border. To the west, the site is bounded by a largely disused, unpaved roadway. A considerable quantity of modern refuse has been dumped down the eastern side of this roadway. At the southwestern corner of Site 6, stand collapsing masonry walls constructed of concrete, brick, and rubble of a previously unrecorded ca. 30 ft x 30 ft building, which appears closely comparable to the structural remains recorded in 1988 at Site 44AB342 to the south (Saunders 1990). Both the building at Site 7 and that at 44AB342 are visible on 1936-37 aerial photographs and both are indicated as residences on Albemarle County's ca. 1942 property tax map. East and north of the remains of the building at Site 7, evidence of north-south trending terracing, visible also on aerial photographs taken in 1936-37, was observed during fieldwork.

During the initial phase of 40-ft interval shovel testing, in addition to considerable quantities of 20th-century artifacts in proximity to the standing architectural remains at Site 7, a single shard of early 19th-century ceramic was recovered from STP 17, located in level terrain approximately 25 feet west of the small stream draining this area and 120 ft northeast of the masonry building remains. Subsequent close interval testing (on 20-ft centers) resulted in the excavation of 53 shovel tests across an area of 20,600 sq ft (0.47 acres) within and around Site 7. The recovered assemblage consisted almost exclusively of 20th-century artifacts with only a few possible late 19th-early 20th-century items. No additional material clearly datable to the early 19th century was recovered. As was the case with STP 17, close-interval testing confirmed the presence of relatively deep soils along the narrow band of level land bordering the small stream, indicating the accumulation of sediments in this setting. Quite possibly, the single early 19th-century artifact recovered from Site 7 was redeposited from a source upstream, possibly Site 3 or even Site 2 to the north where the evidence for early 19th-century occupation appears more substantial. Documentary evidence currently available suggests that historic occupation within Tax Map Parcel 61-161 is unlikely prior to 1919 when this land passed into the hands of Benjamin F. Carr and Giles Edward Carr. Phillip Brown, Sr., in fact, recalls that a cousin of his occupied the structure at Site 7. Prior to 1919, this property was part of a larger, ca. 15-acre tract inherited by Susan Bowles Spears, daughter of Peter F. Bowles who was the nephew of Amy Farrow's son,

Zacharia Bowles. Pre-20th-century historical occupation within the 15-acre Susan Bowles Spears tract is believed, on the basis of current documentary research, to have been limited to its southernmost portion, broadly congruent with current Tax Map Parcel 62-10, currently owned in part by Phillip Brown, Sr. and passed to him from his mother, Susie D. Spears Brown, a granddaughter of Susan Bowles Spears and great-granddaughter of Peter F. Bowles, nephew of Zacharia Bowles. Mr. Brown, a great-great-grandson of Peter F. Bowles, refers to Tax Map Parcel 62-10 as the land on which his grandfather once lived. In light of archaeological, documentary, and oral historical evidence that occupation at Site 7 probably began only in the early 20th century, the site is not considered eligible for NRHP listing and no further archaeological research is recommended.

Site 8 is located just south of Free State Road in Tax Map Parcel 62-8, currently owned by Mr. Phillip Brown, Sr. Although outside of the project area and the Belvedere development tract, Rivanna Archaeology carried out brief, opportunistic testing at this site following the discovery of a ca. 20 ft x 20 ft, dry-stone, half-basement foundation in this area immediately northeast of the Brown cemetery (VDHR 002-5052). English ivy and yucca plants also were noted in the area. The area surrounding the foundation is overgrown in dense, thorny brush and vines. Approximately 120 feet south of the foundation, in an area of mature hardwoods and pines, two substantial circular depressions were observed. No residence is mapped here on the County's earliest ca. 1942 property tax map, nor is a building visible in this location on 1936-37 aerial photographs. Mr. Brown recounted in an interview that a cousin lived here and that the house burned in the 1920s. With permission from Mr. Brown, Rivanna Archaeology excavated a total of six shovel tests around the perimeter of the extant foundation. Evidence of burning, associated with wire nails, was found in the single shovel test excavated north of the structural remains at Site 8, although it is unclear whether this burnt deposit represents later dumping or *in situ* remains. Cut nails as well as additional wire nails and a single piece of clear container glass were recovered from other shovel tests excavated at Site 8. The unmortared character of the foundation remains at Site 8 together with site's proximity to both the Brown cemetery and the potential Bowles cemetery (Site 9, see below) across Free State Road may be indicative of a primarily 19th century, or earlier, occupation date, an interpretation supported by current documentary and oral historical research. Site 8 is located within a ca. 15-acre tract of land inherited by Peter Bowles (Jr.) from his father, Peter Bowles (Sr.), nephew and heir to Zacharia Bowles. Given the possibility that Site 8 may belong to an early, possibly antebellum, phase of Free State, the site is considered potentially eligible for NRHP listing, and further archaeological investigations are recommended should the property be threatened by development in the future.

Site 9 encompasses an area of approximately 0.5 acres and is located in mature hardwood forest immediately north of Free State Road, abutting the northern boundary of Tax Map Parcel 62-8. Phillip Brown, Sr. identified the location as the site of a cemetery belonging to the Bowles family and recalls at least several linear depressions, no longer visible, marking grave shafts in the area. Mrs. Marion Bowles Dukes (Charlottesville, VA), a granddaughter of Edward Ned Bowles and Mary Sarah Farrer Bowles and the last surviving local Bowles descendent, also believes that a cemetery exists here. Mrs. Dukes, however, never lived at Free State and appears to have no direct, personal memory of the cemetery's location. Examination of 1936-37 aerial photographs suggest that the Site 9 area then contained several large trees and that it abutted to the north and west a large, open field. Rivanna Archaeology noted and mapped a low earthen

berm along the northern side of Site 9 that likely formed along the southern edge of the large field visible in these early aerial photographs. Metal detector survey across the Site 9 area discovered remnants of a barbed wire fence line along the site's southern side that clearly marks the northern border of Tax Map Parcel 62-8. Fragments of smooth metal wire distributed in roughly linear patterns, thought also to be remnants of fencing, were also recovered through metal detecting along the western, northern, and eastern sides of the possible cemetery area. Site 9 is located within a larger, ca. 9-acre property that was passed down from Stephen Bowles, nephew and heir of Zacharia Bowles, to Stephen T. Coles. Stephen Coles sold the property in 1916 (Albemarle County Deed Book 164:5) to George Jones and the deed recording the transaction describes the parcel as that upon which Coles "had resided for a number of years." A deed recording a sale of the same parcel less than three years later in 1919 mentions a ca. 0.5-acre grave yard on the property, though its exact location is not specified. Although inconclusive, evidence currently available indicates that Site 9 is the most likely candidate for the historical cemetery thought to be associated with Site 2/44AB374. In the absence of less ambiguous physical evidence, confirmation of the cemetery's location and full extent can only be accomplished through the stripping of surface soils to locate grave shafts. It is recommended that this work be conducted before any development in the area begins.