



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: www.cambridgema.gov/Historic

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE

1. The undersigned hereby applies to the Cambridge Historical Commission for a Certificate of (check one box): Appropriateness, Nonapplicability, or Hardship, in accordance with Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws and/or Chapter 2.78 of the Municipal Code.

2. Address of property: , Cambridge, Massachusetts

3. Describe the proposed alteration(s), construction or demolition in the space provided below:
(An additional page can be attached, if necessary).

"Here Lies Darby Vassall" is a temporary, audiovisual public art installation that will be displayed on the front lawn of Christ Church Cambridge in the fall of 2022 -- from October 12th (the date of Darby Vassall's death) until November 6th (the Sunday following All Saints' and All Souls' Days, when Christ Church will be hosting a contemplative day). The installation consists of an 11-minute, looped video projected onto a curved wall (~8.5-ft H x 32-ft L). The video will run for a few hours each evening (times TBD). Given the nature of this artwork and medium, there will be light and sound output during these nightly activation windows. During the day (inactive windows), a removable banner will cover the curved wall, displaying the project title and schedule (activation days/times). The existing banner stand on-site, used for public announcements, will also display project information.

I certify that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. The undersigned also attests that he/she has read the statements printed on the reverse.

Name of Property Owner of Record: <input type="text" value="Christ Church Cambridge"/>	
Mailing Address: <input type="text" value="0 Garden St, Cambridge, MA 02138"/>	
Telephone/Fax: <input type="text" value="617-786-0200"/>	E-mail: <input type="text" value="admin@cccbridge.org"/>
Signature of Property Owner of Record: <i>Allyne R. Pierson</i> (Required field; application will not be considered complete without property owner's signature)	
Name of proponent, if not record owner: <input type="text"/>	
Mailing Address: <input type="text"/>	
Telephone/Fax: <input type="text"/>	E-mail: <input type="text"/>

<i>(for office use only):</i>			
Date Application Received: _____	Case Number: <u>4848</u>	Hearing Date: <u>9/8/22</u>	
Type of Certificate Issued: _____	Date Issued: _____		

Installation Details

Link to the installation video, mocked up on site (not to scale):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPnoM4RBC9k&ab_channel=NicolePiep

There will be a dedication ceremony/opening event on the evening of October 12th to officially begin the installation. It will include a live viewing and will be open to the public. The event will be the final site/stopping point of a pilgrimage (walking tour) to sites of historical violence in Cambridge. As such, people will be moving and congregating around Christ Church on this day.

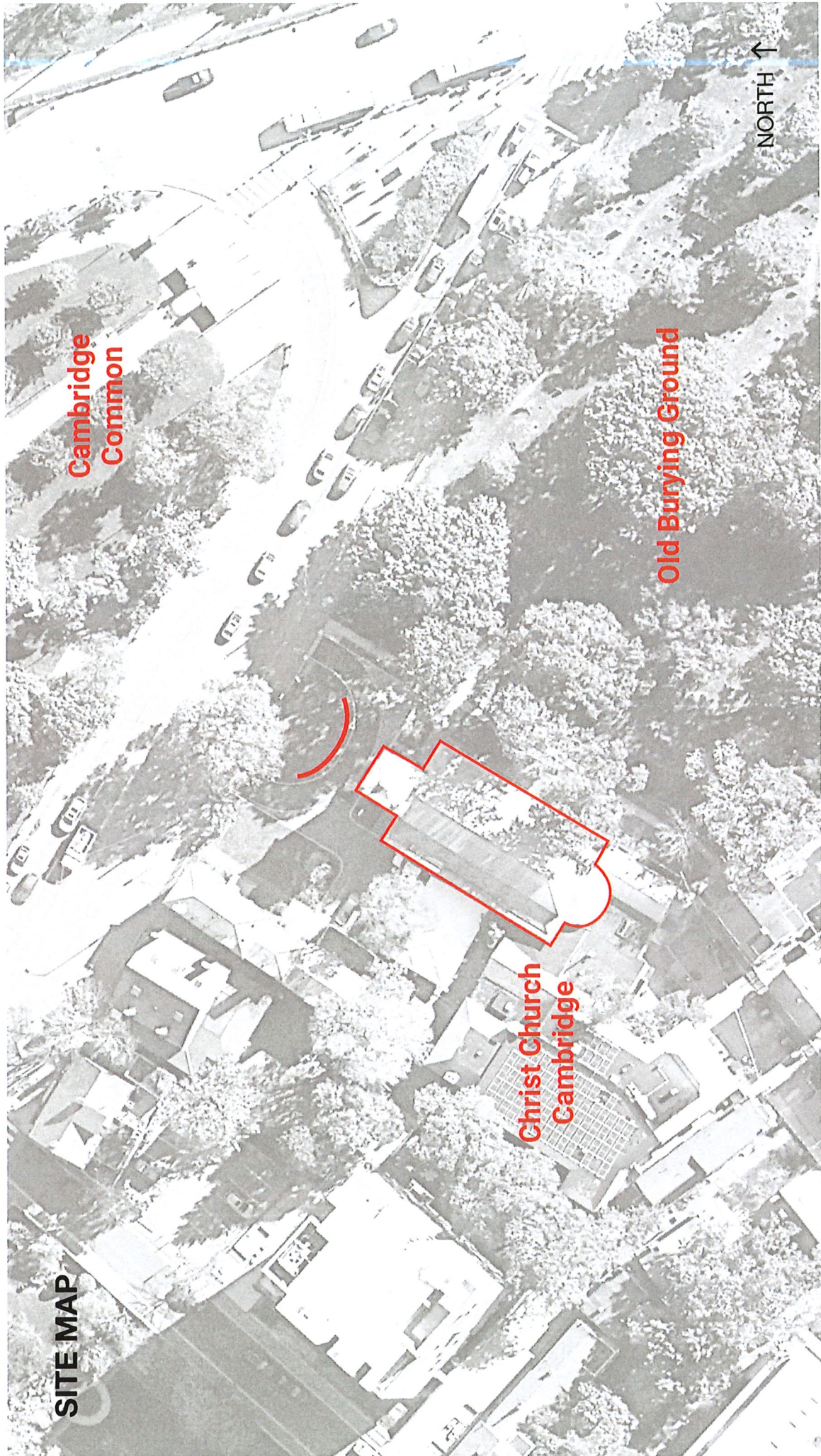
This installation is open to the public and free of charge. The video will play every evening for the entire 3.5-week duration of the display.

Fixed on-site elements during the duration of the public art display (Oct 12 – Nov 6):

- Curved screen: ~8.5 ft. H x 32 ft. L x 6 ft. D
- Banners attached to the preexisting banner stand (dates, times, and text to be updated)

Elements that will move between indoors/outdoors daily, before and after the nightly activation window:

- A banner attached to the curved screen (yet to be designed, the graphic style will be congruent with other graphic elements)
- A projector and computer
- A protective covering for projector and computer
- Speakers
- Accents lights to shine on church facade (budget dependant)
- Other misc. tech and gear
- A chair for a volunteer who will sit with the installation while active
- A table/podium/surface for holding printed pamphlets that contain an audio transcript (for accessibility) and project information



SITE MAP

**Cambridge
Common**

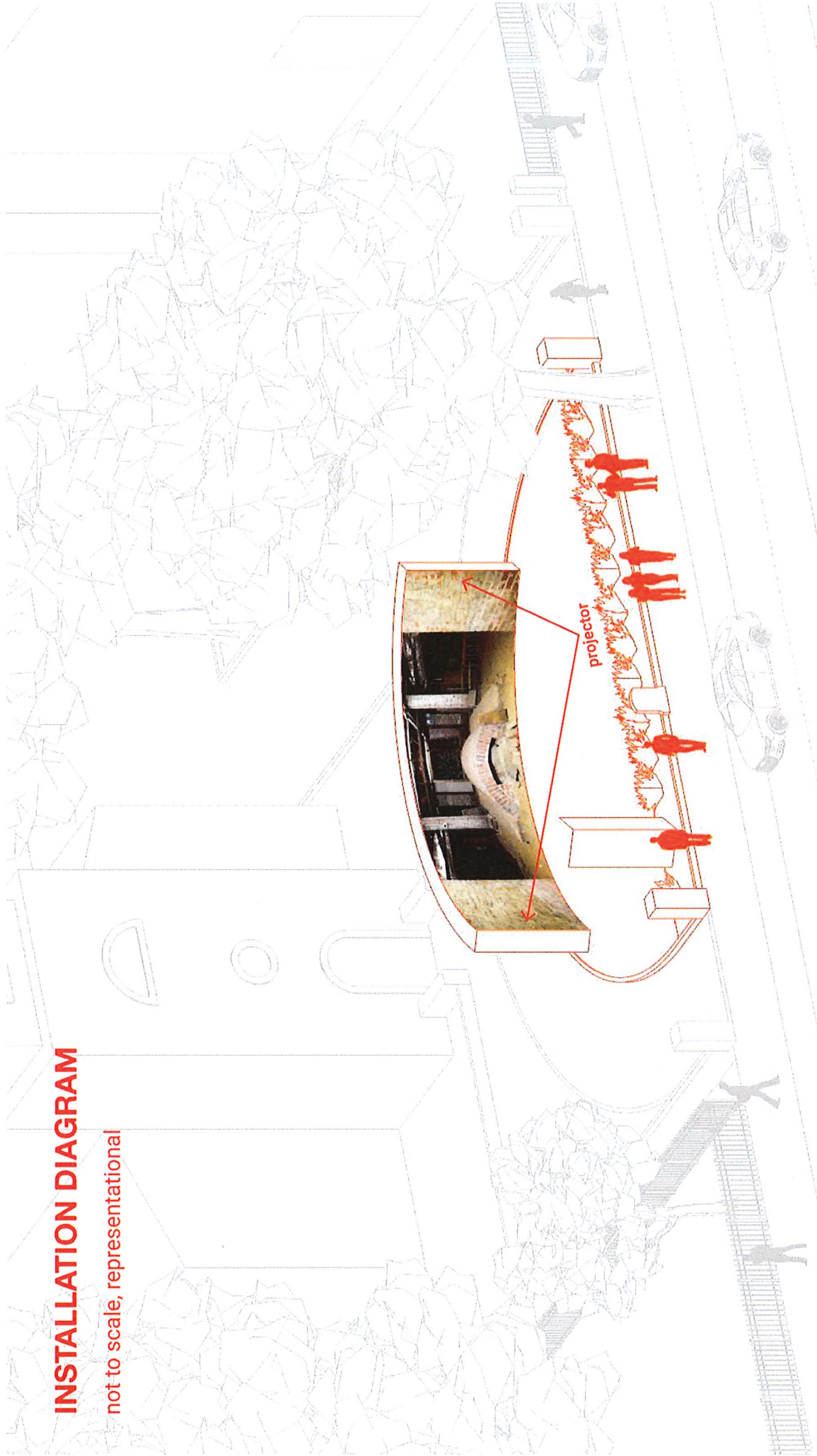
Old Burying Ground

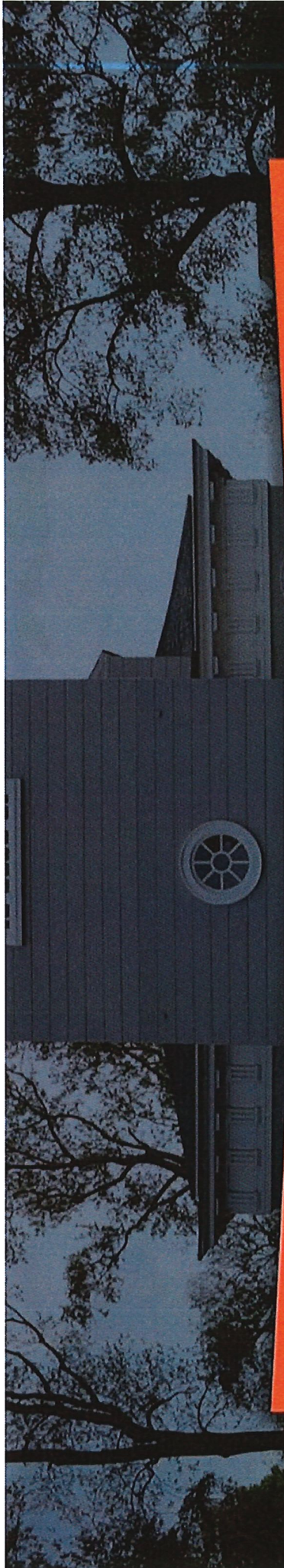
**Christ Church
Cambridge**

NORTH ↑

INSTALLATION DIAGRAM

not to scale, representational

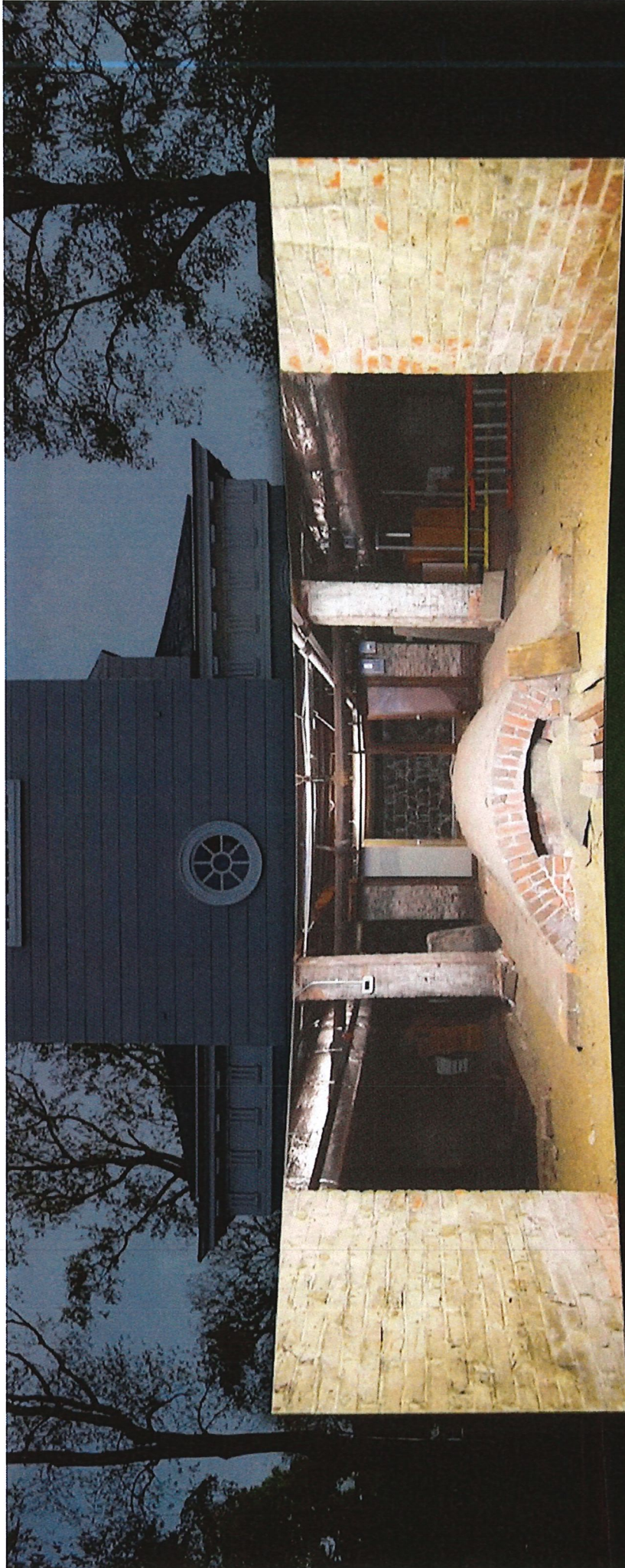




HERE LIES DARBY VASSALL

NIGHTTIME VIEW FROM SIDEWALK

not to scale, representational

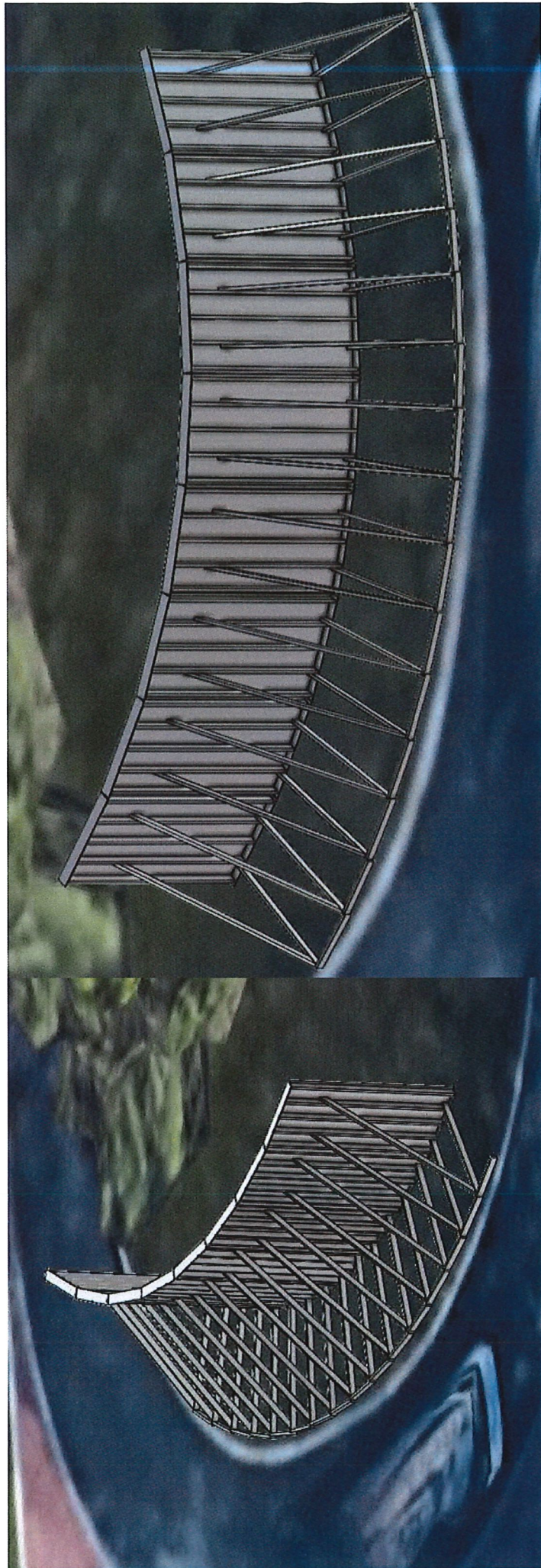


NIGHTTIME VIEW FROM SIDEWALK

not to scale, representational

STRUCTURAL DIAGRAM

~8.5 ft. H x 32 ft. L x 6 ft. D



BANNERS

dates, times,
QR code,
and context
statement are
placeholders



HERE
LIES
DARBY
VASSALL

Oct.
12-26

Thank you for engaging. We want to
hear about your responses,
reflections, questions, curiosities,
experiences, and knowledge.

7-9pm daily

Visit the project website (via QR
code) to join us in dialogue on our
discussion board; read an audio
transcript; learn more about the
research; find additional resources;
and get involved with ongoing work
to understand, reckon with, and
respond to the history of slavery at
Christ Church Cambridge.

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SAMPLE PAMPHLET

dates, times, QR code, and context statement are placeholders

HERE LIES DARBY VASSALL

Oct. 7-9pm
12-26 daily

Please visit the project website to see more about Darby's life and his activism; join us in dialogue; read an audio transcript with references; learn about the research; find additional resources; and get involved with ongoing work to understand, reckon with, and respond to the history of slavery at Christ Church Cambridge.



Here lies Darby Vassall.
Born May 15, 1769. Died October 12, 1861.
Son of Tony and Cuba. A brother, husband, and father.
Co-founder of the African Society. Property owner in Beacon Hill.
Activist for abolition, equality, and education.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

The Vassall Tomb beneath the church is marked by a long, low mound... the section of the wall which was built shortly after the completion of the church by Henry Vassall, one of the original proprietors.

According to Darby, Henry was "a very wicked man... it was a common remark that he was **the Devil!**"

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

Henry's father, Leonard, was the owner of a sugar plantation in Jamaica. The value of his estate in 1738 was £3907.5 (Jamaican currency). Approximately £3,000 (the value of 131 enslaved people).

Henry purchased Tony, Darby's father, in Jamaica to be his coachman and brought him to Cambridge.
In 1759, Henry pledged £80 towards the construction of the church.
In 1762, he paid £13.6.8 for a church pew.
An inventory of Henry's property after his death in 1769 measures Tony's worth as equivalent to a church pew - £13.6.8.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

Henry was married to Penelope Royall.
In 1769 she inherited 8 enslaved people from her father, Isaac Royall Sr. Cuba and Tony were among them. She brought them to the Rectory in Bedford from Antigua in 1737 along with 27 other enslaved people, including her family members.

Tony and Cuba married and had at least 6 children.
Henry sold Cuba and some of her children across **Brattle Street** to his nephew, John Vassall.
When Darby was a young child, John gave him away to an occasional fellow parishioner, George Reed.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

John - who was a graduate of Harvard like his father, Henry's brother - inherited his father's estate in Jamaica. The value of his estate in 1748 was £74,322.5 (Jamaican currency). Approximately 67% of that was the value of 1,167 enslaved people.

In 1759, John pledged £130 towards the construction of the church.
In 1762, he paid £13.6.8 for a church pew.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

Penelope's brother, Isaac Royall Jr., inherited 18 enslaved people in Massachusetts from their father, as well as sugar plantation land and an unknown number of enslaved people in Antigua.

In 1762, Isaac paid £13.6.8 for a church pew.
Upon his death in 1781, he gave hundreds of acres of land to Harvard College.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

A Royall family member and husband of John's sister, Thomas Oliver, inherited plantations in Antigua.

During a 1763 trip to the island, he spent £920 on slaves, silver, and pictures.
Two years after his death, the total number of people enslaved on his Antigua property was 206.
In 1762, Thomas pledged £50 towards the construction of the church.
In 1762, he paid £13.6.8 for a church pew.

In 1833, his heirs claimed £1984.16.10 for losing 137 enslaved people as their property after emancipation in the British colonies.
The house he built in 1767 is where Harvard presidents live today.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

Henry Vassall's former house was purchased by Samuel Bancrocker II in 1841.
Samuel generated wealth from the New England cotton industry, which ran on cotton produced by enslaved people in the American South.
The Bancrocker family invested in the church.
In 1800, Samuel gave £1000 to the church.
In 1800, he gave £1000 to the church.
Christ Church Cambridge "to be added to... the Wardens Fund."
In 1888 Christ Church was included as a beneficiary in his will.
One of the Samuel's gave a Sunday School room to the church in 1868.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

These Christ Church subscribers and parishioners, along with many others, lived in and around Cambridge while depending on and profiting from slavery. The labor of enslaved Africans financed their investments, which supported the construction and growth of this and many other New England churches and institutions.

After the end of slavery in Massachusetts in 1783, Darby was involved in the activism of and advocacy for New England's Black community. He was a lifelong member of Brattle Street Church and maintained a

connection to Christ Church in his adult life. We do not know why he chose to be buried here; we only know that he chose this place.

"Almighty God... from you no secrets are hid."

Do you work wonders for the dead?
Will those who have died stand up and give you thanks?
Will your loving-kindness be declared in the grave?
Will your faithfulness in the land of destruction?
Will your wonders be known in the dark?
Will your righteousness in the country where all is forgotten?

"Grant eternal rest to your beloved Darby Vassall, O God, and let light perpetual shine upon him." Grant eternal rest to his parents, Tony and Cuba; to his siblings, James, Dorranda, Flora, Cyrus, and Catherine; to all those enslaved whose labor helped create this place; to those who fought for freedom and equity for all members of their communities. Amen.

Here Lies Darby Vassall - created through a collaboration between Nicole Ripstein and Christ Church Cambridge. The project was inspired by the arts, ethics, community, and talent of many individuals, including:

Video Participants
Louise Amble | Christ Church Parish Historian
David Brancaccio | Racial Justice Group Co-Chair
Jeff Brown | Christ Church parishioner
Wanda Brown | Christ Church parishioner and Racial Justice Group member
Catherine Calkins | Christ Church parishioner
Ted Harriet | Christ Church parishioner and Racial Justice Group Co-Chair
Dennis Lloyd | Darby's descendant, Slave Legacy History Coalition Co-Founder
Egbert Lloyd | Darby's descendant, Slave Legacy History Coalition Co-Founder
Beverly Parks-Lloyd | Advice on the Daughters of the King Diocesan Assembly Board of Atlanta
Polly Malcolm | Christ Church parishioner
Paula Paris | Cambridge Black History Project
Rudine Parks Johnson | Christ Church parishioner
Wendy Squares | Christ Church Diocesan Delegate

Audio Co-Creators
Timothy Joseph | narration
Emmanuel Oduwale | vocals
Erica Oduwale | vocals
Evan Papapanikou | producer; percussion, vocals
Nicole Ripstein | composer/producer; vocals
Alicia Ripstein | producer; percussion, vocals
Michael Villabona | percussion, vocals

This project was supported by student grants from the Presidential Initiative on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery and the Master in Design Studies Critical Conservation program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.