

**Report on the 2016 Investigation
of the
Remains of the Isaac Allerton/
Thomas Cushman Homesite
Spring Street, Kingston, Massachusetts**

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Introduction

In 2015, David Russo, a descendent of Isaac Allerton, visited the homesite of his ancestor in Kingston, Massachusetts. What he found shocked him. The site of Allerton's home, the site first investigated by the late Dr. James Deetz in 1972, the site that revolutionized the study of vernacular architecture in Plymouth Colony, the site that the owner in 1972 had wanted to preserve for the future by moving the original planned location of his house, appeared to be actively being destroyed by a new owner who was building a house for his son. Russo searched online and found my website and the report that I recently put up there about Deetz's 1972 archaeology (which I created because Deetz had not completed a final report on the project before his death in 2000). Armed with the map from the report that I had created that theorized where the location of the house was (as Deetz had never mapped in the actual location of his excavations at the site), Russo returned to the property and feared that the original site really was destroyed. He spoke with the contractors working on the house, who in turn spoke with the owner, and he was allowed to screen backdirt piles on the property. Russo found numerous artifacts dating from over 3000 years ago, into the 17th century, and to modern times. He contacted me and asked if I could meet him at the site and help him locate where the original dig was and date the artifacts that he had found. My schedule finally allowed me to do so late in 2015 and during this first and one subsequent meeting, I identified and cataloged the material that he found. Unfortunately, during the field visits I was unable to say exactly where the 1972 excavation had occurred or whether the site had been destroyed. A neighbor who owned the property prior to the 1972 excavations and who lived across the street from the site in the 70s, recalled the dig. He said that he remembered the Plantation staff arriving with goats and dogs in tow and generally being a nuisance in the neighborhood. He remembered the excavation occurring more towards the house that currently sits close to the edge of the drop off to the nearby spring, and thought that the cellar hole was located where the flagpole is today (**Figures 1, 2, and 3**).

In 2016, Dave contacted the owner and he gave permission for a limited amount of excavation to occur prior to the final landscaping at the site. Dave, myself, and my 12 year old son Alden were able to spend two days conducting a metal detector survey across the property, surface collecting, and excavating four trenches (**Figure 4**). The purpose of these trenches was to identify the location of the palisade trench that was found in '72. It was hoped that once this trench was located, it could be followed back to the edge of the original excavation and from there, we would be able to determine where the original house was located. Excavations were carried out from April 23-24, 2016.

Trench 1

Trench 1 ran west to east starting 2 m. south of the southeast corner of the driveway associated with the house at the end of Spring Street. The entire trench was 15 m. long and extended to a point parallel with the northwestern corner of the newly built house, ending approximately 2 m. north of that corner. B1 soils were encountered at 30 cm below the ground surface at the western end, below two modern fill layers (a 10 cm deep very dark grayish brown sandy loam, a 9 cm deep sand fill)

and 3 cm of original A1 horizon. Obviously, the topsoil had been stripped in this area during the 1972 construction episode. Trench 1 encountered what was determined to be a 1970s backfilled deposit within the original palisade trench at a point approximately 5 m east of the west end of the trench. This deposit consisted of back filled and filled topsoil with a dense deposit of wallboard fragments being encountered at 60-75 cmbs in the center of the trench (**Figures 5 and 6**). Soils below the wallboard appeared to represent intact 17th century fill deposits that were not excavated in 1972. A dense deposit of electrical wire scrap was found 50 cm south of the north wall of Trench 1, again, representing backfill from 1972. It was determined that the best way of locating the extent of the original excavation was to trench further to the south following the palisade line. This trench was designated Trench 4.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located 5 m south of Trench 1 and was placed here with the hope of intersecting the palisade line and confirming its route across the property. The original trench was 30 cm (a flat shovel width) wide and extended for 2 m east before encountering what was believed to be the palisade trench. Once it was confirmed that what was found was indeed the palisade trench, the section of the trench where the palisade was found was expanded to a 1.5 x 1.5 m square unit called Unit 1. A dense deposit of disturbed clay was found at a depth of 30 cmbs in the southern two thirds of the trench. This was later confirmed to represent a water utility line that ran from Spring Street to the new house in 2010. The total area to the south that was disturbed by this trench was at least 20', which brought any evidence of the palisade line to the south side of the new driveway, right up to a large backdirt pile that covered the ground right up to the southern property line. The combination of the disturbance, the driveway and the backdirt pile effectively ended any further search for the palisade trench to the south of Unit 1/ Trench 2.

The remains of the palisade trench were found to extend only 50 cm south of Trench 2's north wall. This portion of the palisade line had been excavated into a dense clay deposit present on the property. At 70 cmbs, the soil was mottled into separate bands (**Figures 7 and 8**) that represented different slumped layer of backfill that occurred in the 17th century. Mottling was gone by 80 cmbs and the soil was a consistent color and texture. The dimensions of the palisade trench, as evidenced in this unit, were 100 cm wide, 70 cm below the bottom of the A1 horizon for a total depth of 100 cmbs, and 30 cm wide at the bottom. No evidence of individual post stains were found and few artifacts, (one piece of redware found at the A1/ top of the palisade fill interface [30 cmbs], four pieces of redware that were unglazed on the exterior and missing their interior, and one piece of North Devon Gravel Free baluster jar were found in the 40-60 cmbs level) were recovered from within or around the palisade trench. The lack of artifacts is indicative of an early creation for this feature prior to any rubbish buildup in the yard around the original ca. 1630s house. It appears that the trench was dug and possibly rapidly refilled without ever having served as an actual fenceline. Evidence of the bottom 15-20 cm of the palisade trench was found in the south wall of the unit being preserved beneath the disturbed clay fill from the modern waterline, so some evidence is still preserved at the site beneath even this modern disturbance.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located 2m south of Trench 1. This unit encountered extensive disturbance to a depth of at least 100 cmbs, presumably caused by the installation of electrical and sewage lines to the modern house. This trench extended 2 m east to west and while it was originally 30 cm wide, it was subsequently excavated to the north to encounter the junction of the disturbed and undisturbed portions of the palisade trench. It eventually joined with Trench 4.

Trench 4

Trench 4 began as a 30 cm wide trench that ran north to south off of Trench 1. It followed the backfilled palisade line encountered in Trench 1. It was hoped that this trench would eventually encounter the southern end of Deetz's 1972 excavation of what he designated as "Excavation Unit 2", the area that was the focus of the original excavation and which saw the complete excavation of all of the features within that area (**Figure 9**). 1970S disturbed soils were found to continue to a distance of 180 cm south of the north end of Trench 1's north wall. At a distance of 140 cm south of Trench 1's north wall, a deposit of wire nails, string and two beer cans (Black label and Schlitz) were found at a depth of 80 cmbs (**Figure 10**). This deposit is believed to represent the beginning of the dismantling and backfilling of the excavation area in 1972. The nails and string representing the materials used to lay out the grid that the archaeologists excavated within while the beer cans represented the remains of the celebration that marked the successful completion of the excavation and possibly a termination deposit left by the archaeologists to mark the end of their work. Or it could just be some trash from the dig that was haphazardly thrown out in a convenient hole while they backfilled the site on the last day.

The southern terminus of the 1972 dig (at 180 cm south of Trench 1's north wall) was found to not end in a straight wall, but was found to gradually slope up to the south. This was probably the result of the purposeful collapsing of the south wall of the excavation on the last day of the dig. It is entirely possible that one of the excavators stood on the wall at the southern end of the excavation and jumped, purposefully causing the wall to collapse to the north. It is also possible that the final excavations were carried out more randomly than shown in the site photographs (**Figure 9**) with the top portion of the palisade trench deposit being shoveled out in a final desperate search for more artifacts like the ones found at the northern end of the trench. The portion of the trench that had been excavated in 1972 that was close to the house was found to contain lots of ceramics and domestic artifacts while the portions further away from the house contained little material. Someone may have just been prospecting around a bit to the south of the southern end of "Excavation Unit 2" on the last day just to make sure nothing else was present in this area.

The 1972 excavation in the portion of the trench excavated in 2016 appears to have stopped within approximately 10 cm of the bottom of the original palisade trench, indicating that at least portions of the original trench were never completely excavated. The complete excavation and profiling of the trench (**Figures 11**) show that the trench was not originally V-shaped as Deetz reported, but had a rounded bottom and steeply to gently sloping sides. The 2016 excavation revealed that the trench was most probably excavated by someone standing on the west side of the trench. This is based on the presence of more steeply sided walls on the east side versus the more sloping west wide, which is the result of the digger using a pick ax to more sharply chop the face of the excavation away from them and more gradually excavating the area directly in front of them. Seventeenth century shovels were iron shod wooden tools that are not capable of excavation without first loosening the undisturbed soils with a mattock or pick. They were more designed for soil removal versus soil loosening. Shovels made entirely out of iron do not come into general use until the 18th century.

Artifacts

A total of 574 artifacts were recovered from the backdirt piles and from the limited excavations (**Table 1**). They can be divided into a few broad categories: prehistoric material; 17th century material in context; 17th century material out of context; 19th century material; and 20th century material from the 1972 excavation and the construction of the house. A catalog of the material recovered is presented in Appendix B.

Table 1. Artifacts recovered from 2015/ 2016 work at the Allerton/ Cuhman Site

Class	Artifact	Count
Prehistoric		
	Quartz Bifaces	2
	Quartz Preform- Small Stemmed	1
	Quartz Flakes	43
	Quartz Shatter	48
	Quartzite Flakes	3
	Rhyolite Preform- Small Stemmed	1
	Rhyolite Wayland Notched	1
	Rhyolite Small Stemmed	1
	Rhyolite Flakes	24
	Rhyolite Split Cobble	1
	Rhyolite Shatter	1
Architectural		
	Brick	15
	Hand Wrought Nails	30
	Window Glass	1
	Fire Cracked Rock	6
Ceramics		
	Bellarmino	1
	Westerwald Stoneware	1
	Rhenish Stoneware	1
	Midlands Purple	2
	North Devon Gravel Tempered	1
	North Devon Gravel Free	2
	Borderware	1
	Staffordshire Slipware	1
	Merida	1
	Redware	61
Faunal		
	Bone	25
	Shell	8
Personal		
	7/64" Bore Dutch Pipe	1

	Pipe Bowl Fragment	1
	8/64" Pipe Stem Fragment	1
	7/64" Pipe Stem Fragment	3
	6/64" Pipe Stem Fragment	1
	4/64" Pipe Stem Fragment	1
	Flint Flakes	5
	Gunflint	1
	Lead Waste	1
	Hearth Hook	1
Glass		
	Wine Bottle	3
19 th Century to Modern		
	Whiteware	15
	Machine Cut Nails	170
	Wire Nails	34
	Fire Brick	1
	Wood Screw	1
	Machine Made Bottle Glass	3
	1972 Bottle	1
	Milk Glass	1
	Aluminum Can	2
	Beer Cans	2
	Brass Hook	1
	Brass Snaps	3
	Iron Button	1
	Twisted Iron Handle	1
	Iron Lump	1
	Flat Iron Fragment	2
	String	1
	Iron Can Cover	1

The prehistoric material indicated a strong Late Archaic (6,000-3,000 BP) presence at the site including both Small Stemmed and Susquehanna (Wayland Notched sub-tradition) Tradition material (**Figure 12**). Seventeenth century material that was recovered in context was limited to a few pieces of redware and a piece of North Devon Gravel Free ware from the palisade trench. This probably represents material that was kicking around the yard that accidentally was included in the

backfill of the trench. The majority of the 17th century material was recovered from the backdirt piles and it represented more samples of the same materials recovered in 1972 by Deetz. The 19th century material was probably associated with the farm that was located nearby and the lack of 18th century material indicates that there may have been a gap in the occupation of the immediate area after the original house was removed and before the later farmhouse was built. It is possible that the land was just used as agricultural fields. Material that is assumed to be associated with the 1972 excavation included two types of beer cans, a glass bottle, and 20d nails and string that must have been used by Deetz to lay out the units. When the archaeological work at the site was finished, the excavators presumably just threw the nails and their lunch trash into the trench before backfilling.

Conclusion

Finding the terminus of the 1972 excavation allows us to place the other features on the ground today. It appears that the flagpole is located in the center of the cellarhole identified in 1972. This means that while the recently constructed house has impacted some of the postholes at the southern and southeastern portions of the original house, the majority of it remains intact (albeit probably impacted by various more recent utility trenches) straddling the boundary between the property we tested on and the property to the immediate north (**Figure 13**). The palisade trench could have also been investigated in 2010 when the town waterline was installed along the path of the present driveway, but the archaeologists at the time only tested with shovel test pits, and, as luck would have it, failed to encounter it (**Figure 14**). At present, neither property owner cares about the presence of this site on their property, being more concerned that we don't impact their newly installed utility lines versus protecting a significant site, but the Kingston Historical Commission will be contacted and encouraged to try to at least monitor the property in the future and possibly purchase one or both lots for future protection, if they ever come up for sale (although it is probably more likely that the lot to the north will come up for sale sooner than the one to the south).

Appendix A
Figures



Figure 1. View of the site in 2016 looking east, new house is blue and the house built in 1972 is white.

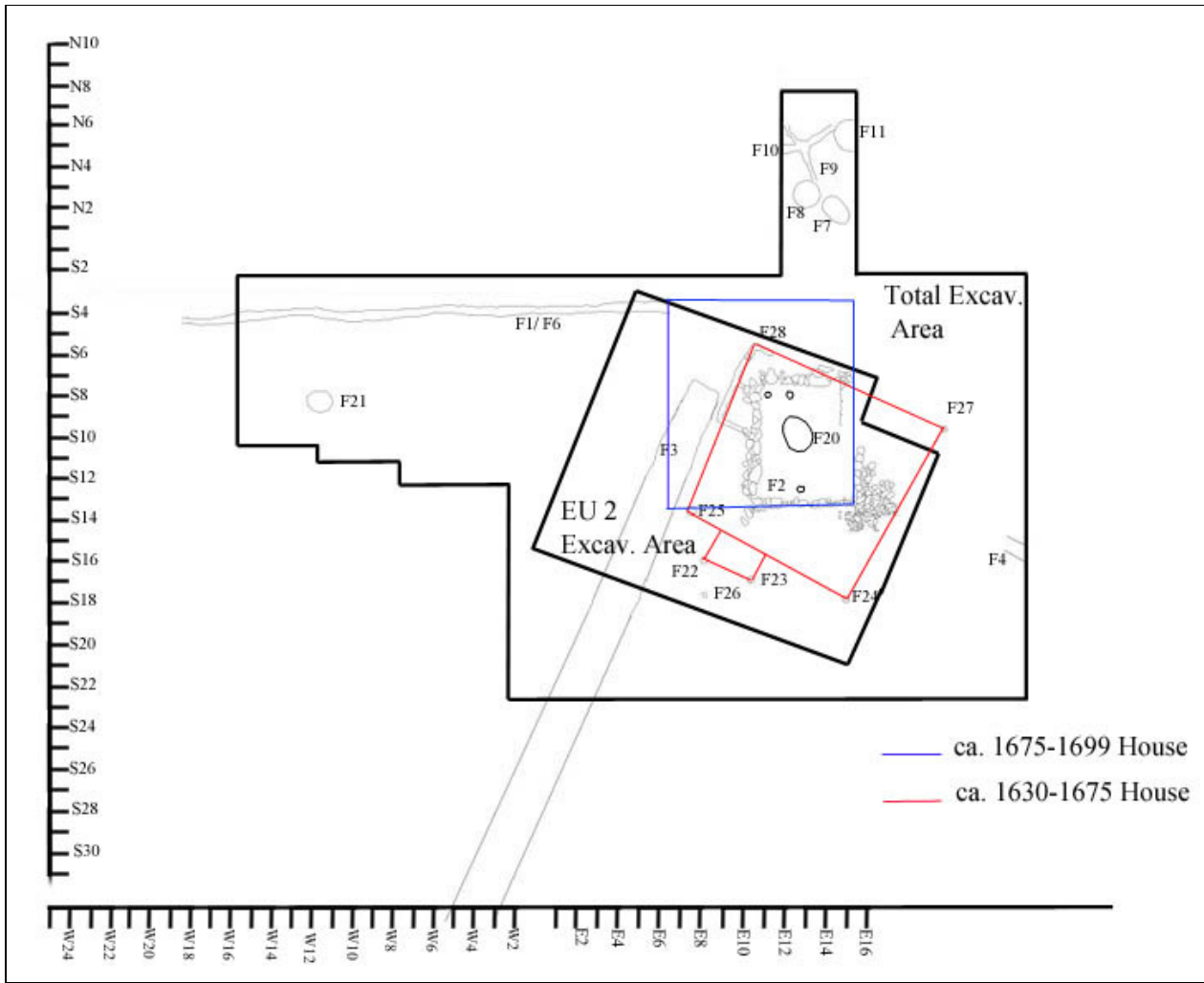


Figure 2. Map of the 1972 excavations created by the present author

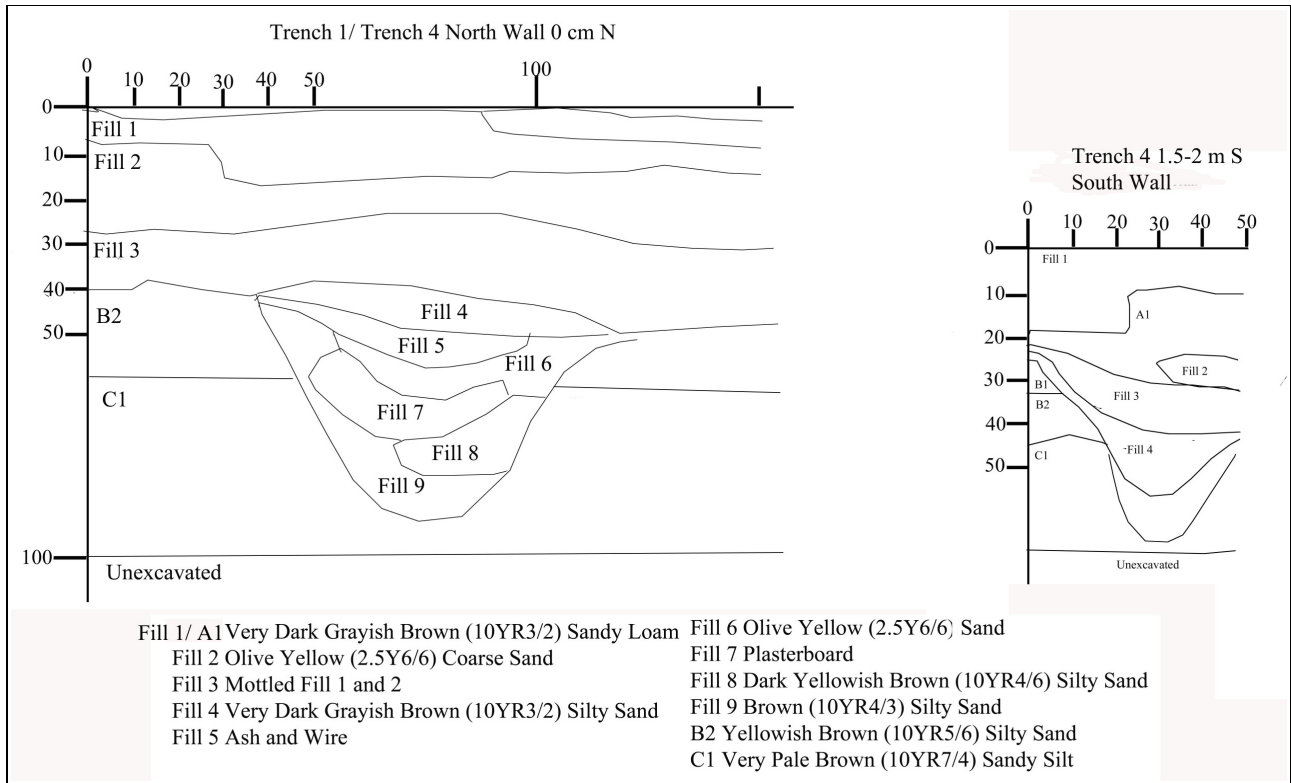


Figure 3. Trench 1/ 4 profile



Figure 4. Location of 2016 testing.



Figure 5. Trench 1

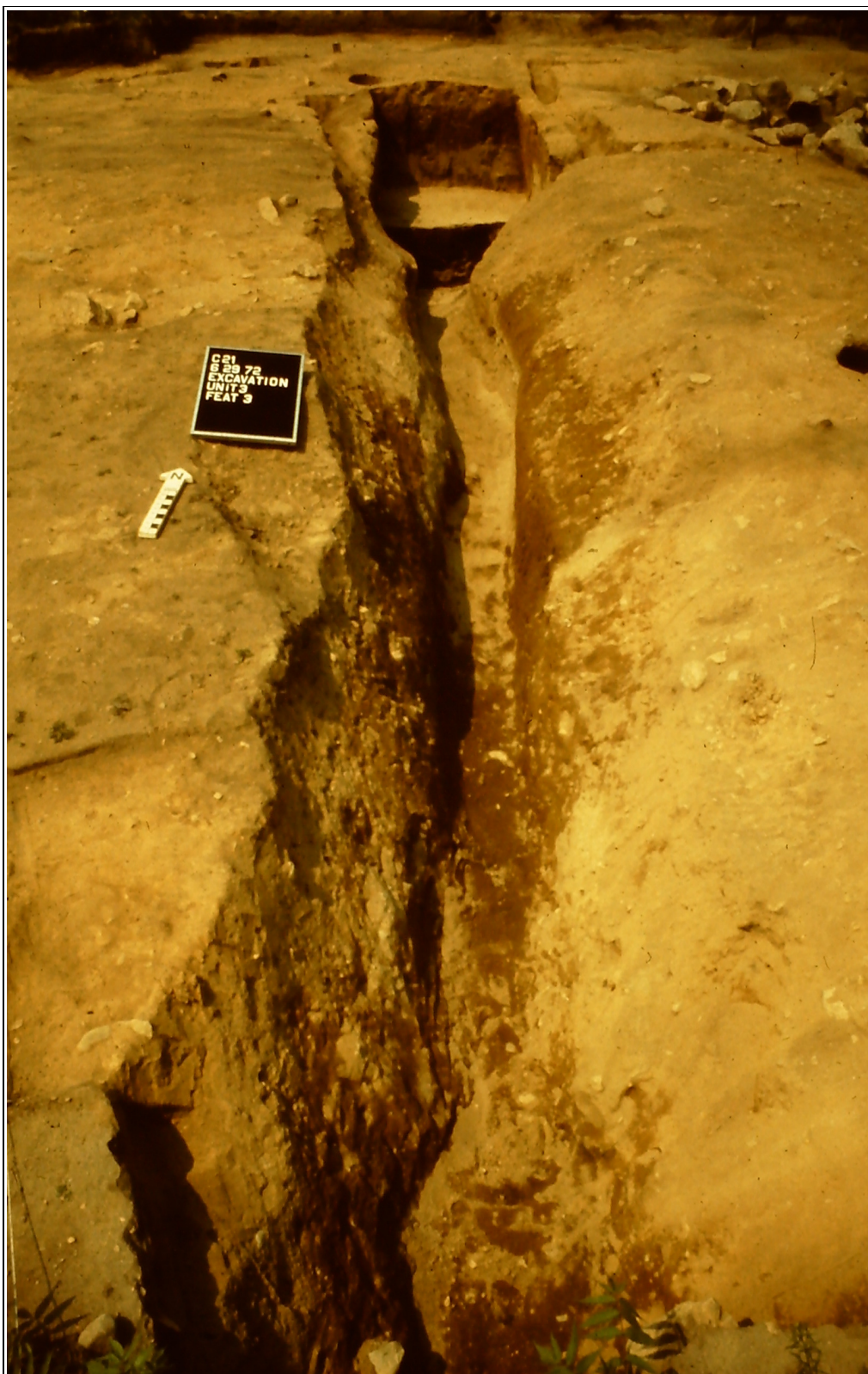


Figure 6. Palisade Trench excavation in 1972



Figure 7. Trench 2

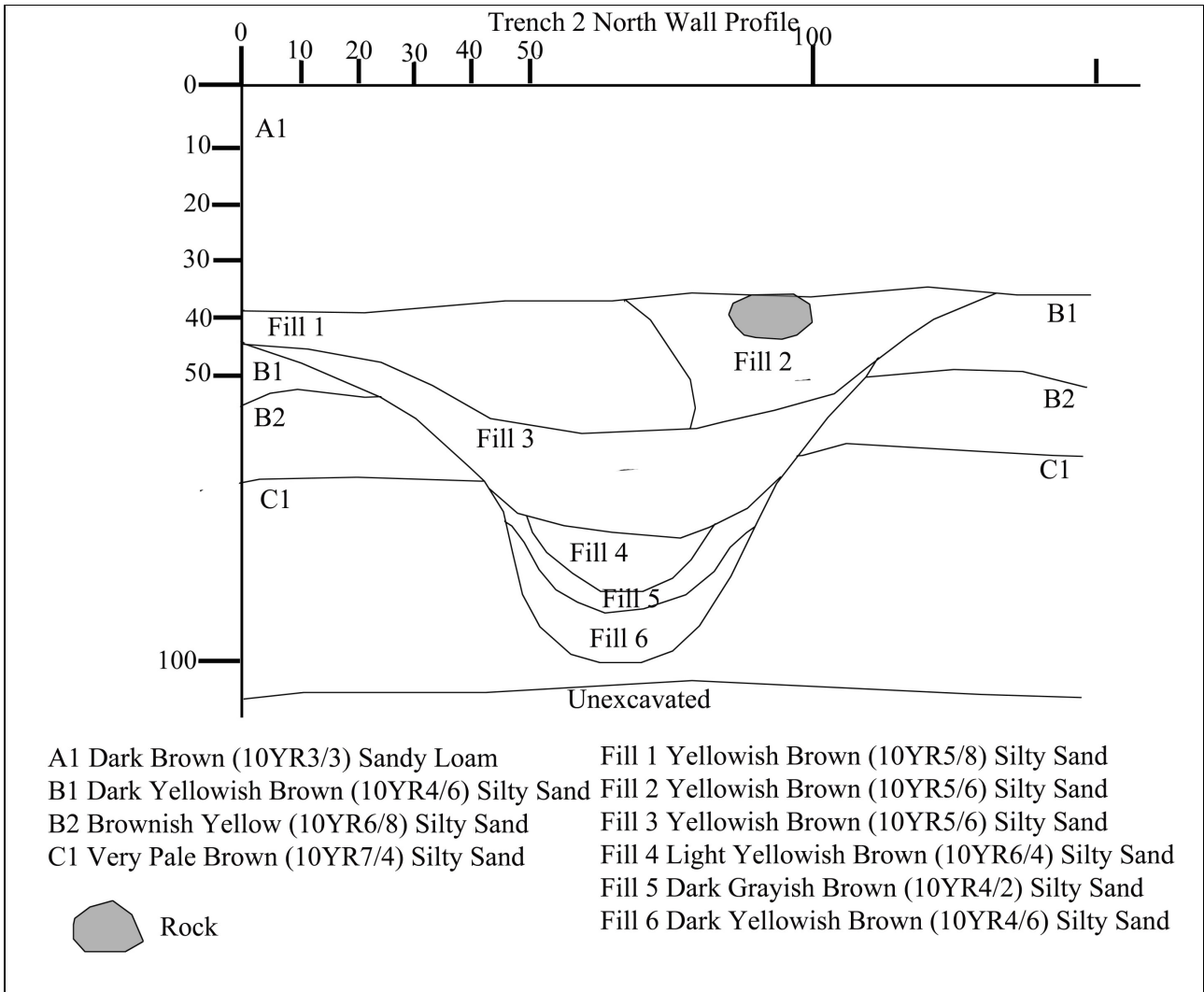


Figure 8. Trench 2 wall profile



Figure 9. Photograph of the 1972 excavation. Palisade trench on right side.

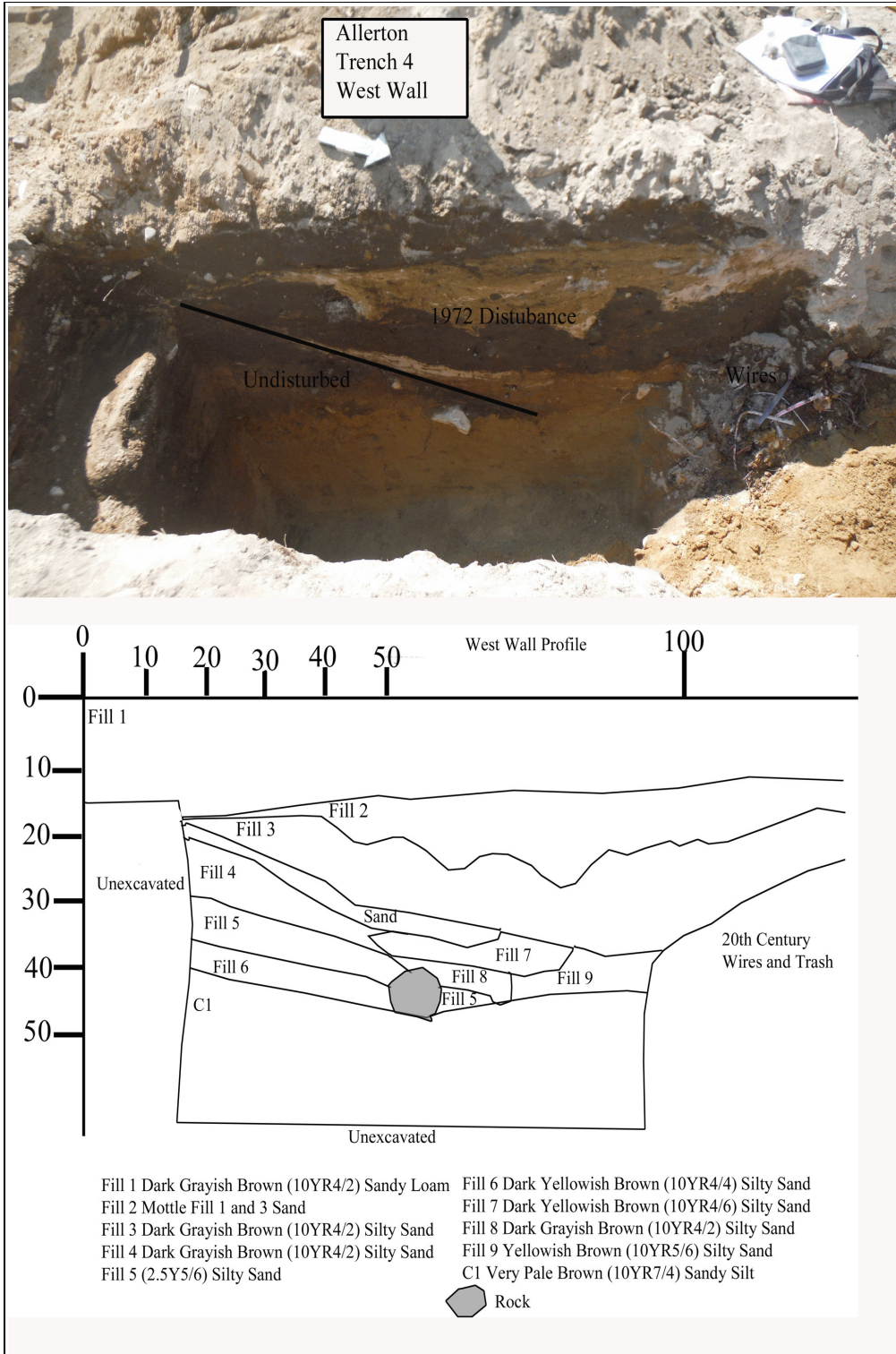
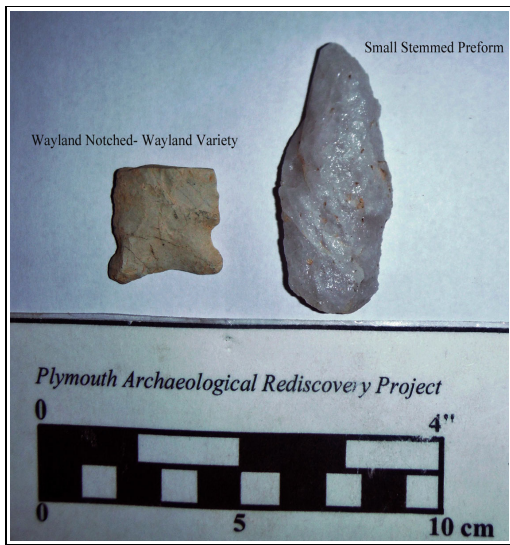


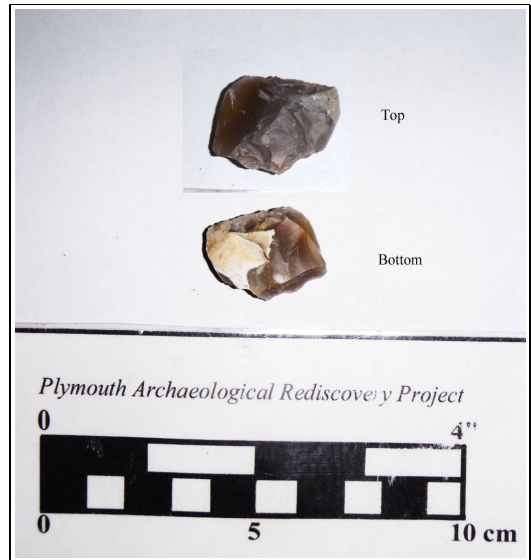
Figure 10. Trench 4 profile photograph and drawing



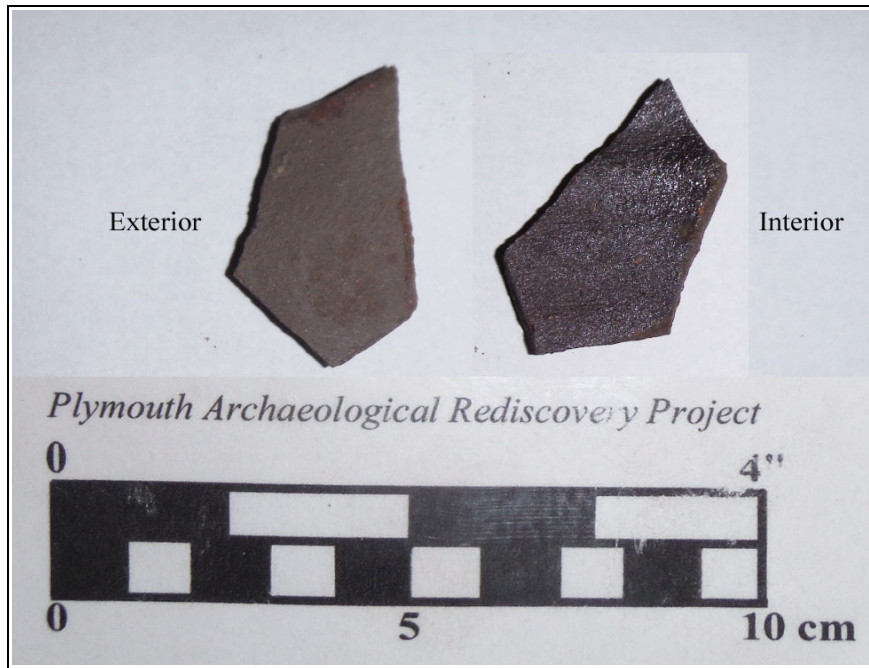
Figure 11. Trench 4 plan and profile photographs



Prehistoric Points



Gunflint



Midlands Purple Ceramic

Figure 12. Artifacts from the 2015/ 2016 work



Figure 13. Track of the palisade line as identified in 2016.

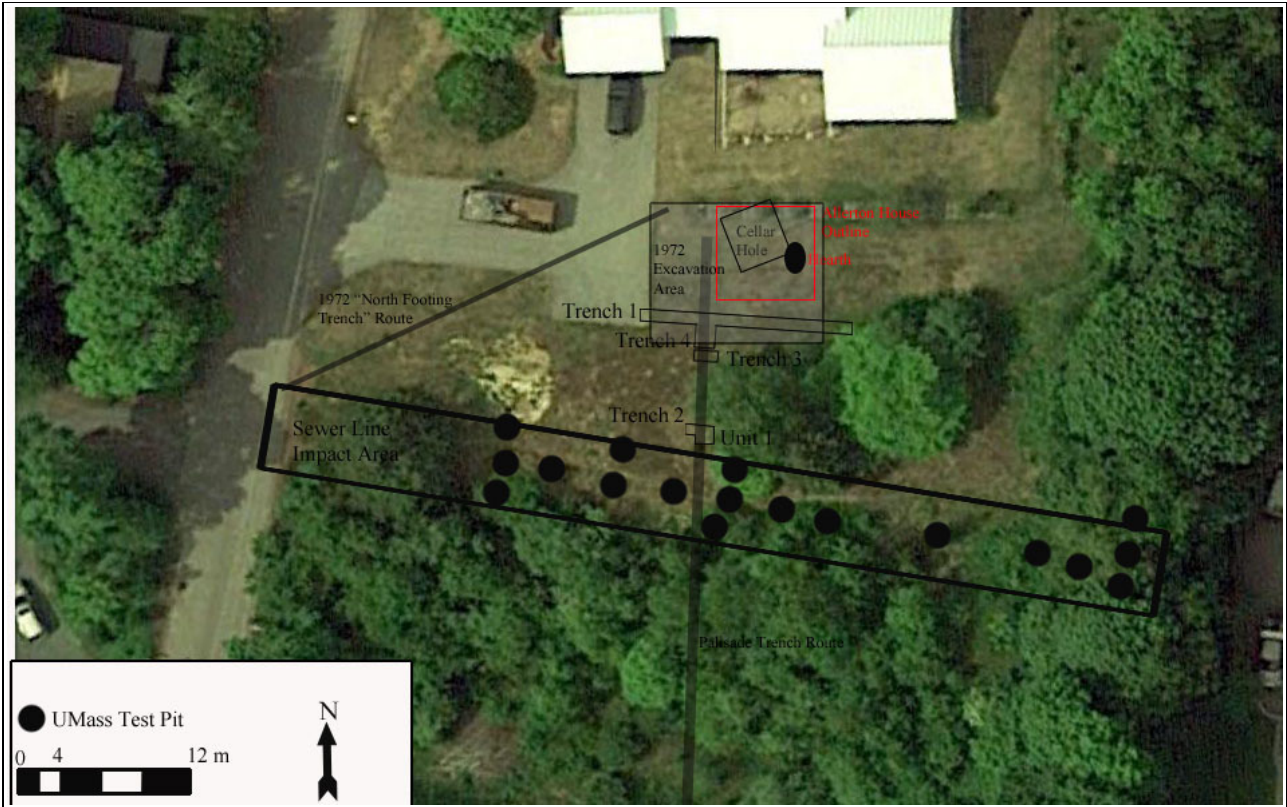


Figure 14. 2016 excavation location and 2010 waterline testing.

Appendix B
Artifact Catalog