

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Morrison Farm Committee, as overseen by the Acton Historical Commission, was awarded a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant for Site Examination testing at the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite in Acton, Massachusetts (**Figures 1-3**). The property is owned and managed by the Town of Acton, and they plan on stabilizing the walls of the cellar hole at some point in the near future, but have not received funding to do so. The aim of the Site Examination was to determine how much of the yard space around the original homesite remains intact. The Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite is an historically significant site as it was here that the Captain of the East Acton Militia lived, and it was to here that the call of "Capt. Robbins! Capt. Robbins! The regulars are coming." was carried by a rider on April 19, 1775. Robbins, along with the other Acton militia commanders, then led their respective companies to Concord Bridge.

The site is marked with a large inscribed boulder and consists of an intact cellar hole, hearth base, and capped well head on a small parcel of property, adjacent to the town soccer fields to the west and the Morrison Farm to the east. Robbins' homestead originally contained 75 acres on both sides of Concord Road. On the north side of the road, the original eastern border was probably the present border with Morrison Farm; the western border was the cemetery; the southern border was the road; and the property ran for approximately 276 meters (900 feet) to the north of the road. The current protected portion associated with the cellar hole measures 30.8 meters (100 feet) east to west by an average of 17 meters (55 feet) north to south - a total acreage of 0.12 acres. The town-owned land around the protected parcel consists of soccer fields to the west (the creation of which would have destroyed any intact archaeological deposits located here), Woodlawn Cemetery to the north, and the Morrison Farm to the east. The testable area around the protected parcel is limited to an area measuring 73-m. (north to south) by 81-m. (east to west) that may contain the remaining features and yard space around the house site. Goals of the Site Examination include assessing the integrity of this area, determining to what extent the area around this parcel remains intact, and what, if any, potentially significant archaeological deposits may be impacted by rebuilding the cellar hole walls.

PARP archaeologists conducted the Site Examination at the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite in the Fall of 2015 under Massachusetts State Archaeologist permit number 3618. The field work was carried out and the report generated in compliance with Massachusetts General Laws (950 CMR 70).

The area of the cellar hole and the yard space in its immediate vicinity were found to be relatively undisturbed since the abandonment of the site, and both were found to have a high sensitivity for potentially significant archaeological remains. Further investigation in the form of mitigation of any area to be impacted by subsurface alterations of the site, including the proposed stabilization of the cellar walls, is recommended.

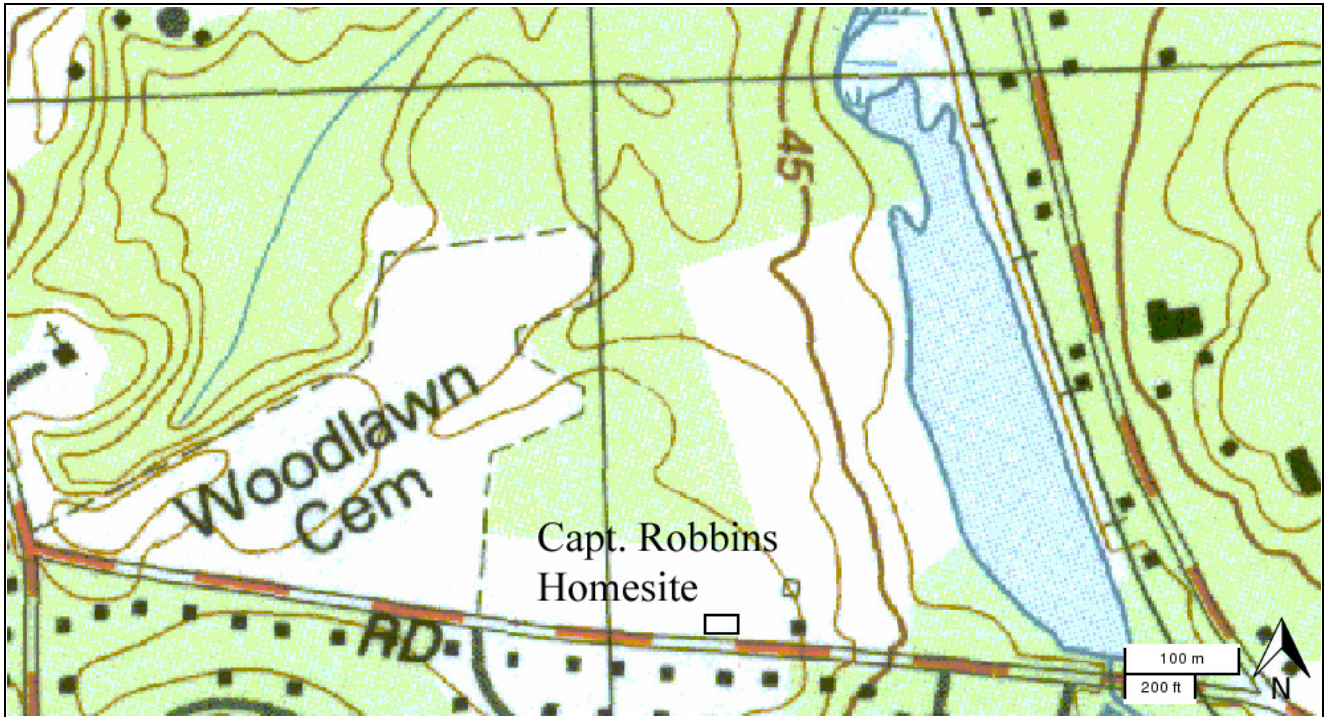


Figure 1. Project area on USGS topographic map (cite 7.5' quadrangle).

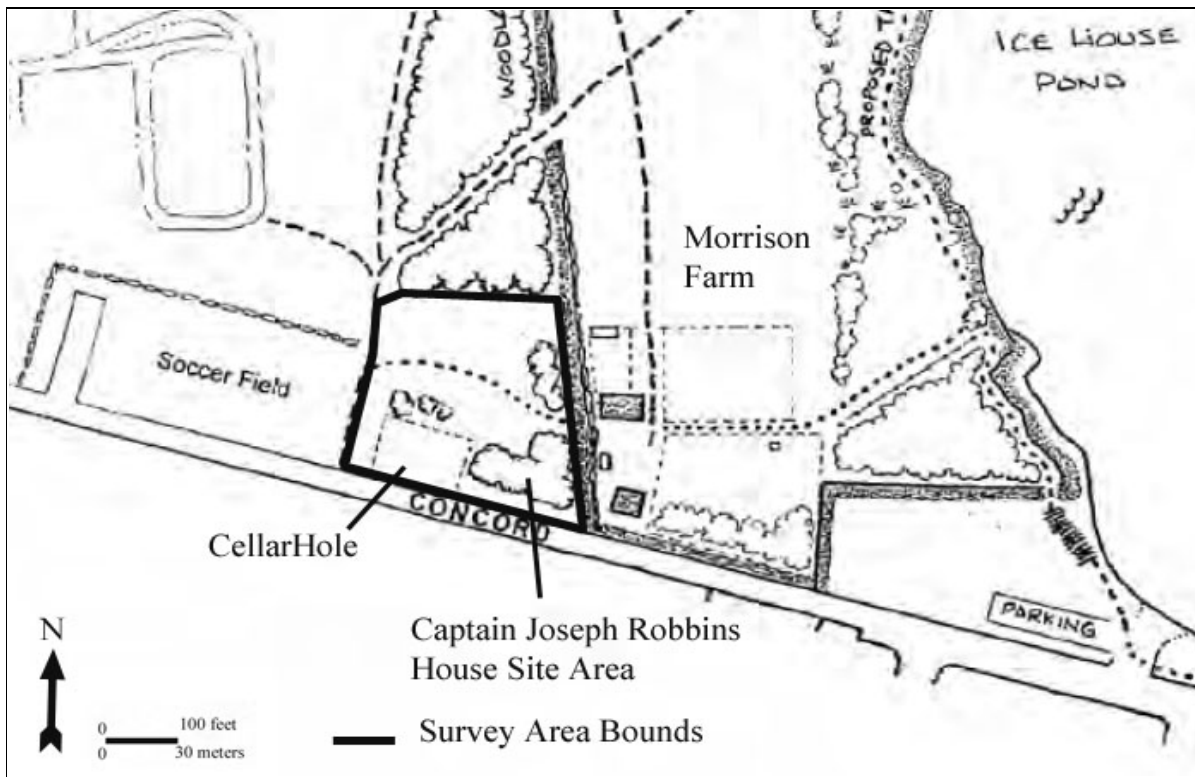


Figure 2. Town produced site plan showing location of project area.

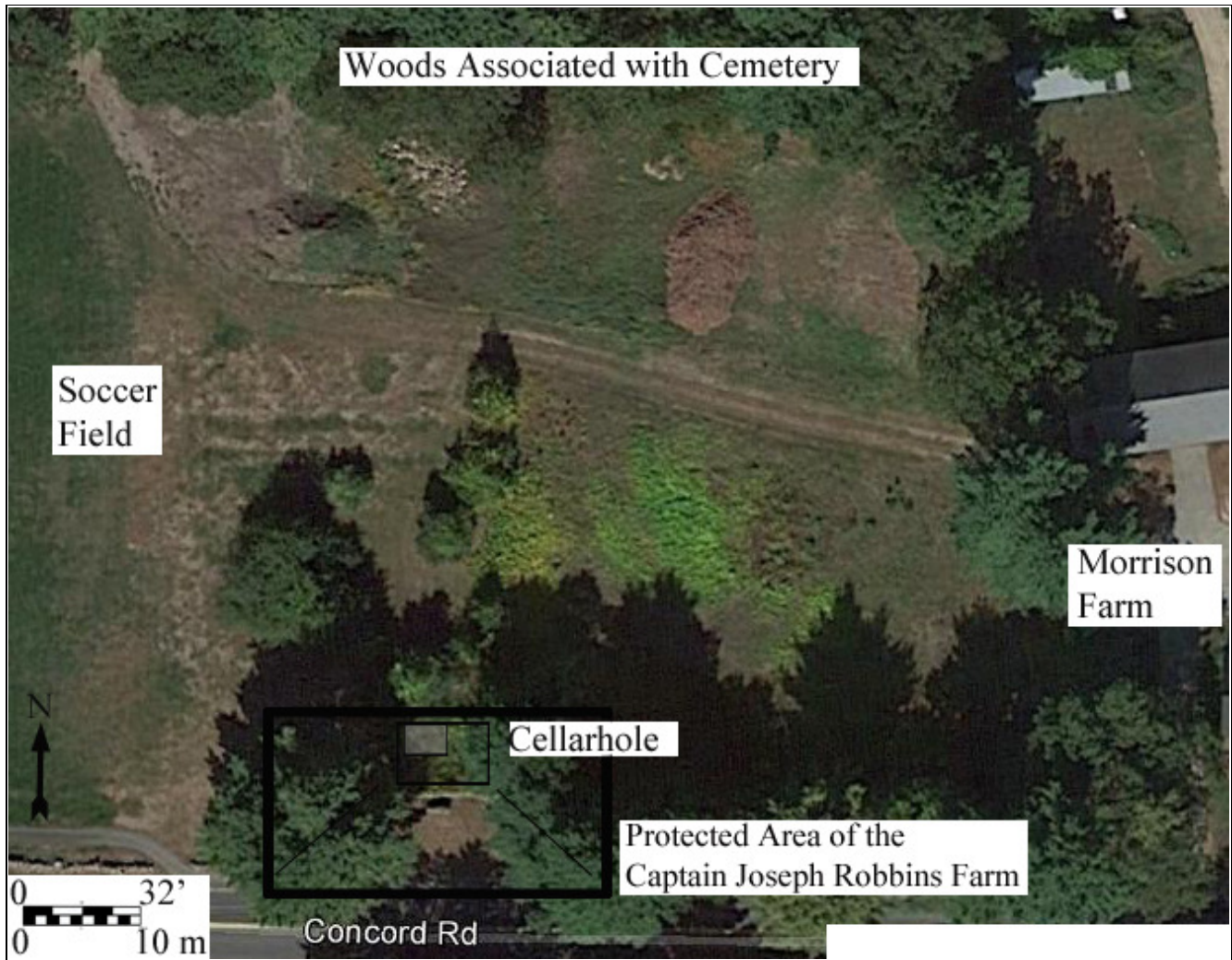


Figure 3. Aerial View of project area (Source: Google Earth).

## **II. SITE EXAMINATION RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **A. Introduction**

The research design for the Site Examination at the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite was developed to examine the natural and historical aspects of the project area and to place the project area within a prehistoric and historic context associated with the Town of Acton and the broader Massachusetts region. The data collected through the analysis of the environmental factors associated with the project area (e.g. soil types, topographical conditions, and fresh water resources), when combined with an examination of the known Native and historic archaeological resources in the Town of Acton, allowed archaeological models to be developed that can help predict the likelihood of Native and historic resources within the project area.

### **B. Environmental Context**

The Town of Acton is within Middlesex County. Located 24 miles west of Boston, it is bordered by Westford and Carlisle to the north, Concord to the east, Maynard and Stow to the south, and Boxborough and Littleton to the west. The majority of the topography of Acton is rugged upland terrain with gravelly and rocky soils, especially in the northern part of the town. Larger hills include Strawberry, Wright and Great Hill. Major drainages include the Assabet River to the south, and Nagog and Nashoba Brook to the east of the project area. These significant waterways led to focal points of settlement and industry.

Soils within the project area are Windsor loamy sands on 0-3% slopes. Windsor loamy sands are excessively drained soils commonly occurring on outwash terraces, deltas, and outwash plains. They are commonly forested or contain low growing brushy vegetation. Agricultural uses are limited to fields for silage corn, hay, and pasture.

### **C. Previous Cultural Resource Management Surveys**

No cultural resource management surveys have been conducted within two kilometers of the project area. The Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL) did conduct a town-wide reconnaissance survey in 2009 (Ritchie 2009). The Captain Robbins Homesite is registered in the MHC inventory as ACT.HA.33.

### **D. Prehistoric Context**

New England's prehistory is poorly understood relative to that of other regions in North America. Throughout the majority of the region's prehistory, river drainages defined physiographic units within which human communities operated. This pattern follows from the longitudinal diversity of habitats that occur along drainages, forming ecologically unique wetland habitats, together with the transportation routes afforded by their watercourses. In the clearest examples, rivers provide access to maritime and upland resources at each end of the drainage, and to the diverse habitats in between. The exploitation of those habitats can be integrated into a seasonal round that differs at various historical moments.

The prehistory of southern New England is divided into seven periods, each identified by characteristic projectile points, pottery and other artifacts. These periods are the Paleo Indian (10,500-9000 BP), Early Archaic (9000-8000 BP), Middle Archaic (8000-6000 BP), Late Archaic (6000-3000 BP), Early Woodland (3000-2000 BP), Middle Woodland (2000-1000 BP) and Late Woodland (1000-350 BP). These cultural periods also are distinguishable on the basis of changing patterns of site location, activities, and size.

A total of three prehistoric archaeological sites are recorded in the MHC site files within two kilometers of the two project area (Table 1).

Table 1. Known prehistoric sites within 2 km of project area

Site	Water	Type	Date	Finds
19-MD-136	Nashoba Brook	Small Camp	Unknown	Points and flakes
19-MD-502	Fort Pond brook	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
19-MD-503	Nashoba Brook	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Unfortunately, these sites were identified by avocational archaeologists, and no diagnostic artifacts were found to allow for the sites to be dated. PAL's survey found that in the SUASCO drainage, the highest occupation density of sites are found near areas on the edges of environmental settings with high natural resource potential (Ritchie 2009: 23). Put simply, people tended to occupy sites where there were lots of edible and raw material resources versus resource-poor areas. These areas include riverine zones (swamps, open marsh, floodplain/terraces) and some tributary stream corridors, versus more upland areas. Two large base camps have been identified in Acton, along with small to moderate size sites in these settings. The 68 previously recorded prehistoric archaeological sites in the town tend to be clustered along Fort Pond and the Nashoba and Nagog Brook drainages (Ritchie 2009: 23).

Overall, based on the occurrence of known sites within Acton, it appears that Native people favored sites in close proximity to brooks and ponds versus a site such as this one located a considerable distance from a reliable fresh water source. The project area lies within PAL's Acton Center / East Acton survey unit. PAL found that areas of high sensitivity occur in close proximity to the lower portion of the Nashoba Brook drainage and also in Woodlawn Cemetery and the Morrison Farm Stable parcel adjacent to Ice House Pond. Small to moderate size sites (100-m<sup>2</sup> to 500-m<sup>2</sup>) were predicted to occur in the high sensitivity areas. A significant portion of the survey unit was designated as low sensitivity due to post-Contact development. The project area was designated as a low sensitivity area due to its distance from fresh water, thus the project area was given a low probability for ancient Native American archaeological resources. No prehistoric archaeological resources were identified during the current phase of fieldwork.

### E. Historic Context

Preliminary background historical research was conducted at the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County Registry of Probate, Acton Public Library, Acton Historical Society, Massachusetts Archives, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The historic sources that were consulted to develop the Historic Context included an examination of the historic site files, historic

maps, Acton Town Report (MHC nd), and the United States Department of Interior's 1980 publication *Cultural Resources in Massachusetts: A Model for Management*. The Acton Historical Commission and the Morrison Farm Committee were also consulted. Historical sources that were consulted include Lemuel Shattuck's 1832 *History of the Town of Concord*, James Fletcher's *Acton in History (1890)*, Harold Phalen's *History of the Town of Acton (1954)*, Acton Historical Society's *A Brief History of Acton (1974)*, and the Acton Town Records 1735-1847.

Acton was originally part of the Christian native community of Nashoba and part of the Euro-American town of Concord. Native and English settlement in town was focused in the Nashoba Brook area. Euro-American settlement in northern Acton began in the 1650s, and the area was continuously occupied to the present day. By the time of Acton's incorporation in 1735, the economy of the town was focused on apple-production and mixed agriculture. Industrial development supported the apple industry, with saw and stave mills being constructed. Even to this day, apples continue to be an important economic staple. Improved roadways leading to Boston and other major towns led to an expansion of industry, including shoe and boot manufacture, gun powder production, and wood-working. Acton's economy became increasingly focused on export to Boston, and the town eventually became a suburban bedroom community for people working in and around Boston.

The history of Acton during the **Plantation Period (1620-1675)** is intimately tied to that of Concord to the east and Littleton to the west. Native populations in the general Concord area were impacted by the 1633 smallpox epidemic that originated in Boston. This likely reduced the strength of the communities living in the Concord and Acton area. Between 1650 and 1675, John Eliot, the evangelical missionary to the Natives, began organizing the remnants of the Native communities living around Boston into seven "Praying Indian Towns" that essentially encircled Boston. The northern portion of Acton, in the area of the Nashoba Brook Conservation Land where the Stone Chamber is located, together with Spring Hill, may have been part of the Nashoba Praying Village established by Eliot in the mid-1600s. One of the purposes of these towns was to provide a sanctuary where Native Americans would, if they were willing to adopt European ways, be protected from attack by other Natives such as the Mohawk. The center of the Nashoba Brook praying village was in what is now Littleton. Nashoba extended for a four-mile square from the center of Littleton.

During King Philip's War, distrust of all Native people caused the colonists in Boston to collect as many of the Christian town Natives as possible, and concentrate them on Deer Island in Boston Harbor. Following the war, those who survived the interment on Deer Island were released, but the Praying towns had by this time become parts of the larger English communities.

Acton did not exist as a separate town until its incorporation in 1735. The New Grant of Concord Village in 1655 included much of the land of present day Acton. These were lands granted to the west and northwest of the already established Village of Concord (MHC nd: 2), and were granted to the town of Concord "for feeding" (Shattuck 1832: 274). This land grant was written so that it did not include the following: the Iron-Work Farm, Major Simon Willard's farm in the north part of the tract, and two grants near Nagog Pond - one to the Natives, and the other to Joseph Wheeler and others (Shattuck 1832:274). Native trails running along Nagog and Nashoba Brooks became the early settlement roads that connected mill sites to Concord and Littleton. By the latter half of the seventeenth century, c. 1669, it is known that Captain Thomas Wheeler of Concord had leased land, constructed a

house and a grist mill on Nashoba Brook, and was keeping cattle for the people of Concord (MHC nd:3). Wheeler also may have acquired land that was abandoned by the Nashoba Natives during the years of the Mohawk raids. Wheeler's farm consisted of 260 acres of uplands and meadow land northwest of Nashoba Brook near Great Road. His farm is believed to have been approximately 1/4 mile from the Acton Stone Chamber, and is today represented by the foundation of the house, barn, outbuildings, and a cattle drover path. Other early settlers in Acton included John Law (ca. 1656), who settled on School Street, and John Shepard (ca. 1660), who settled on Hosmer Street (MHC nd:3).

**Colonial Period (1675-1775)** settlement focused on what later became Acton Center and around Wheeler's Mill, where an iron furnace was constructed in the early eighteenth century by Joseph Harris (MHC nd. 4). Nashoba Brook saw the erection of other saw and grist mills throughout this period as well. By 1738, there appears to have been a dwelling house, barn, grist mill and saw mill erected at the end of what is now Wheeler Lane (Acton Historical Society 1974:17). While mixed agriculture, primarily at the subsistence level, was the dominant economic activity prior to King Philip's War in 1675-1677, apple-growing became the primary crop in the eighteenth century. Orchards were located around the town, especially in the area around Nashoba Brook and the Stone Chamber. The apple industry, with the primary products being cider and vinegar, retained a dominant position in Acton's economy throughout the eighteenth century and into the early twentieth century (MHC nd: 5). Along with the apple industry, an increase in the importance of cooperage, the making of barrels used to ship apples, cider, beef, pork, etc., increased to the point that in 1757, a culler of shingles and staves was elected by the town to inspect the quality of the coopered wares (Acton Historical Society 1974: 18).

Trends that characterized Acton during the **Federal Period (1775-1830)** include improvement of roads and the expansion of mills and cottage industries in town. Union Turnpike was laid out in 1806, which connected Concord with West Acton and the Harvard Turnpike, Route 111 (MHC nd:6). New and expanded industries in Acton included the Faulkner saw and grist mills in South Acton, the Lewis Wood water-powered turning shop, and the Fletcher shoe and boot mills in Acton Center (MHC nd: 6).

As a response to increased industrial and mill activity, the town center saw development with the building of a hotel and housing lots around the Town Common throughout this period. The 1795 map of Acton (**Figure 4**) shows the project area on one of the main roads to the town meetinghouse, but does not show the icehouse or mill pond near the project area.

The most important event in the **Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)** was the construction of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1844. This line connected Boston with Fitchburg through West Acton (MHC nd:8) and opened up the Town of Acton to both the economic benefits of increased trade with Boston and to an influx of inhabitants who worked in Boston but wanted to live in the suburbs. The economic growth led to an expansion of mill and industrial activities in town, which in turn led to an increasing need for housing and schools for the influx of new mill worker families and children of people commuting to work in Boston. The 1832 map of Acton (**Figure 5**) shows no structures on the Captain Robbins property, indicating that, just as the local history had stated, the structure was apparently gone by this point. No icehouse or mill pond is present, indicating no large scale industrial

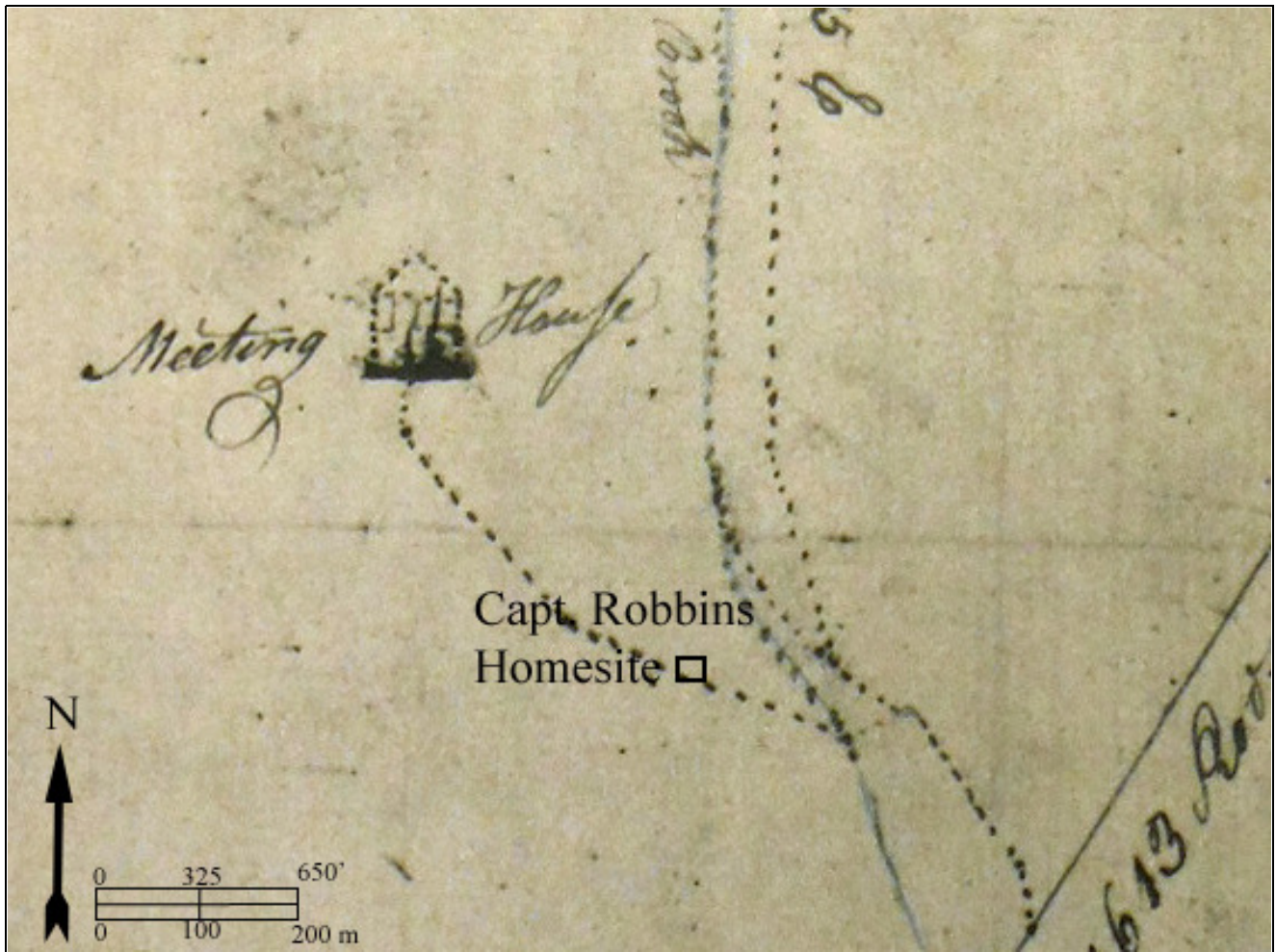


Figure 4. Project area shown on the 1795 map of Acton.



Figure 5. Project area shown on the 1833 map of Acton.

development in this area at the time. On the other hand, the 1856 map (**Figure 6**) does show a mill pond and shows three industrial facilities (saw, plaster, and grist mills) to its south.

The **Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)** saw an increase in the apple-growing and processing portion of Acton's economy. In West Acton, Edwin Parker and Sons constructed cider mills in the 1870s, and Robinson's Cider and Jelly Manufactory was established in the 1880s, while in South Acton, Henry Barker built a cider and vinegar mill (MHC nd: 12). Thanks to the railroad connection to Boston, that city now became a major target market for apple businesses in Acton. Luke and later Arthur Blanchard, for example, shipped 60,000 barrels of apples to Boston in one season (MHC nd:12). The 1875 map of Acton (**Figure 7**) shows an ice house on the Ice House Site and the saw mill remains on the south side of Concord Road.

The economy stayed relatively stable for Acton during the **Modern Period (1915-1940)**. The town became more of a haven for businessmen working in Boston, and the American Powder Mill, established in 1864, helped maintain the economy in the twentieth century with government contracts and sales to Russia (MHC nd:14). No occupation is shown for the project area on the 1943 topographic map (**Figure 8**).

European use of the project area is believed to have begun ca. 1669 when Captain Thomas Wheeler was granted 200 acres on which to graze cattle (Fletcher 1890: 229). He also constructed a grist mill and house on Nashoba Brook south of today's Concord Road. Wheeler's land was eventually acquired

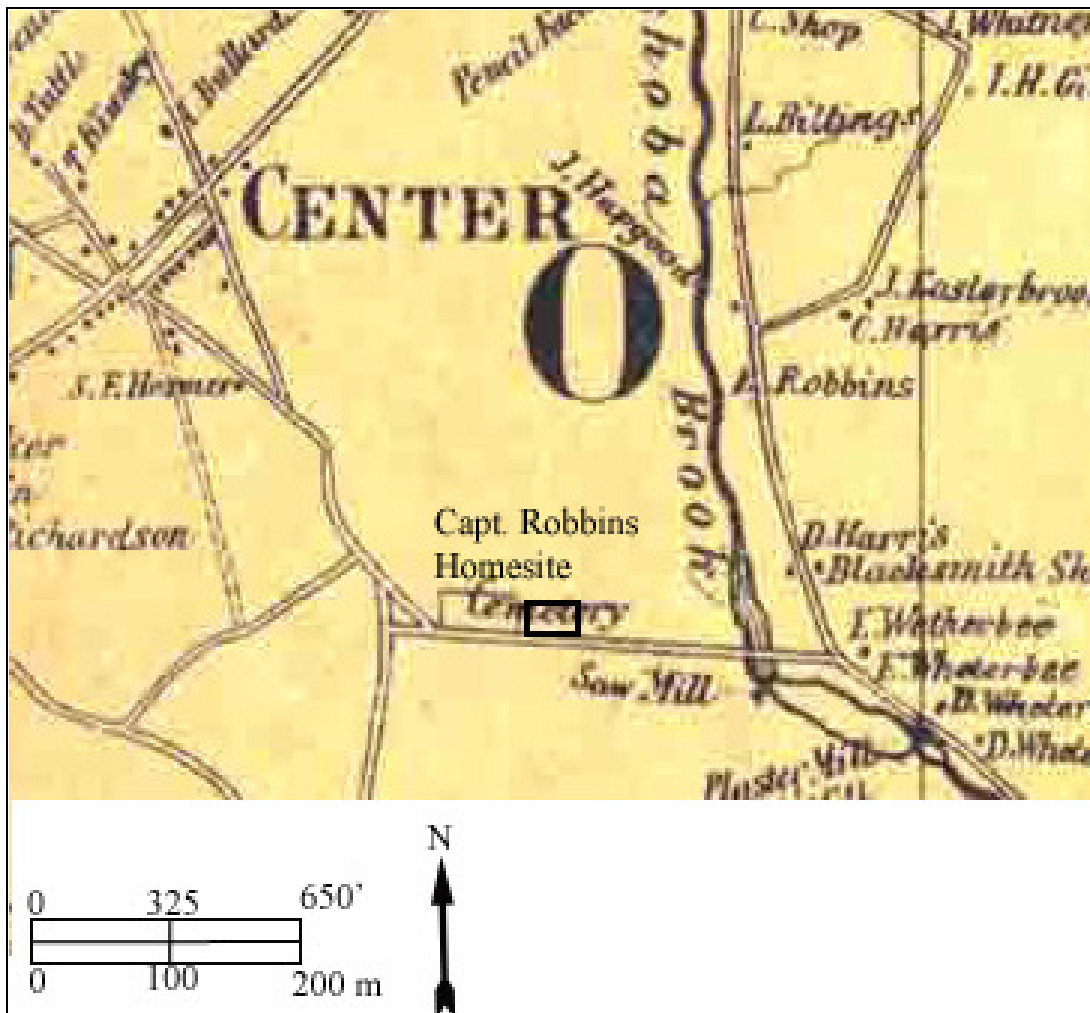


Figure 6. Project area shown on the 1856 map of Acton.

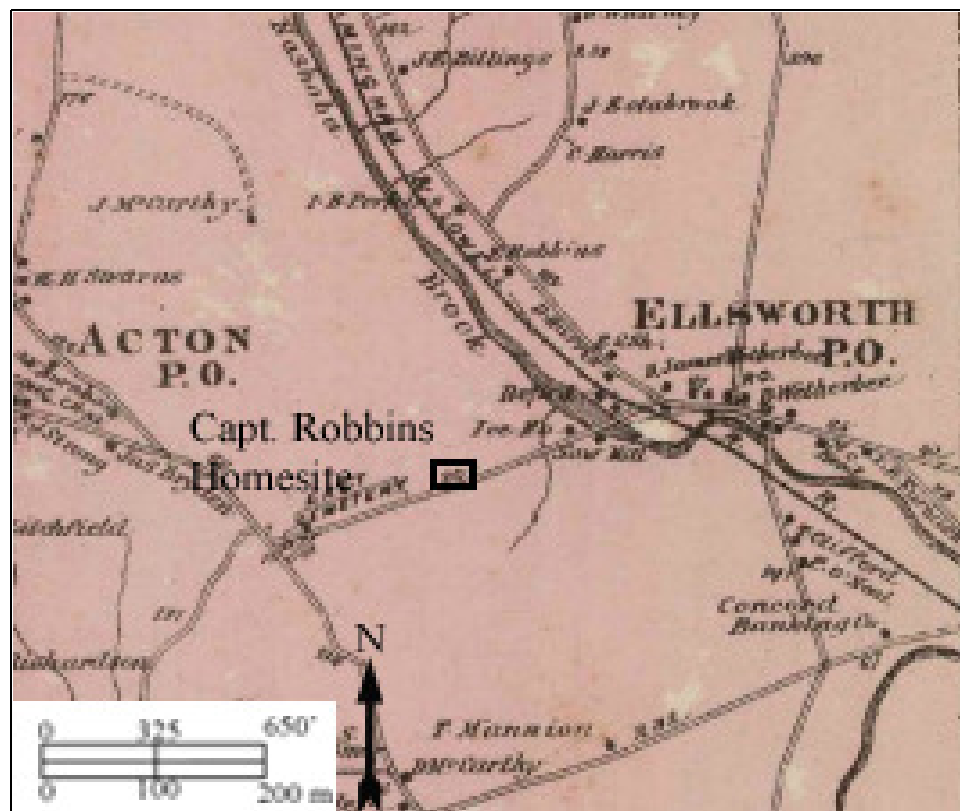


Figure 7. Project area shown on the 1875 map of Acton.

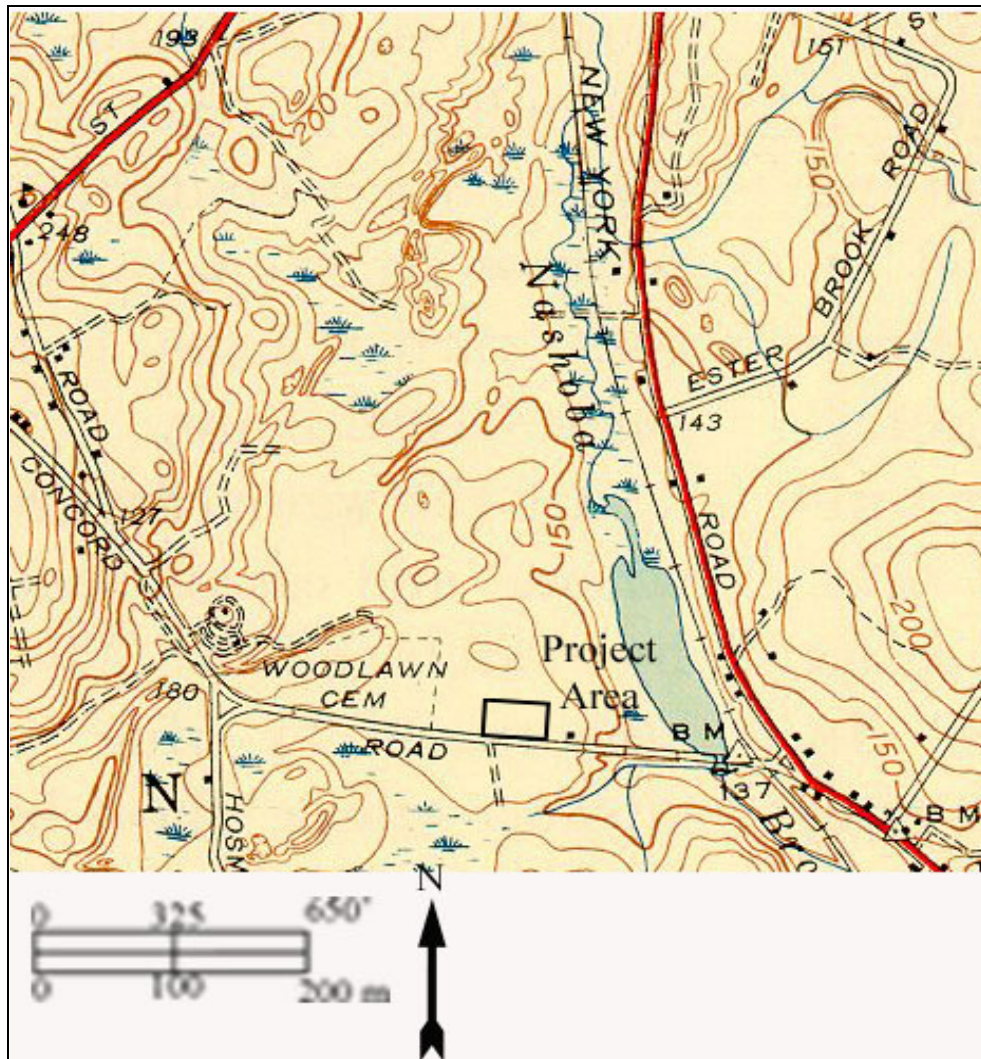


Figure 8. Project area shown on the 1943 topographic map.

by George Robbins, Captain Joseph Robbins' grandfather, and it then passed to his son Nathan Robbins, father of Captain Joseph Robbins, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nathan gave the land on the south side of the road, which was noted to have a house and barn already existing on it, to his son Joseph in 1750 (Middlesex County Courthouse, Cambridge, Massachusetts [MCC] 1750: Deed Book [DB] 50:438). The property was described as including 60 acres more or less of uplands and meadow, part of which was improved by plowing.

Joseph bought an additional 15 acres of upland from his father in the same year (MCC 1750:DB 50-439). This land was on the north side of the “way from the forge to the meetinghouse” (present day Concord Road) and was bounded on the west by the Acton burying place, on the north by land of Nehemiah Robbins, on the east by land of Josiah Woolley, and on the south by the way to the meetinghouse (MCC 1750:DB 50-439). It was not noted as having any buildings on it and was probably used as pasture and farmland for the Wheeler's and Robbins'. Subsequently, he either built a

new house or more likely moved the house that was located on the south side of the street to the north side. His total acreage in 1750 was 60 acres on the south side and 15 acres on the north side of the road. Local history reports that Wheeler's house, Joseph Robbins' first house, was the first house built in Acton. It was two stories tall and stood on the opposite side of the road a few yards to the south near a little brook. Local historian Phalen reported that it was moved from that location by Robbins to the present site and became their homestead, and subsequently, the first painted house in Acton (Phalen 1954: 71). No other information regarding architectural characteristics or ells or outbuildings are documented for the structure.

Captain Joseph Robbins was born on February 8, 1728/29 in Acton, Massachusetts. He was the son of Nathan and Dorothy Baker Robbins and married Ruth Bacon of Bedford on April 18, 1751 in Bedford (NEHGS 1923: 216). The Robbins had nine children between 1752 and 1767. Joseph was chosen Captain of the local militia on September 29, 1774 and led the East Acton Militia Company (Phalen 1954:55). He was an active member of Acton town politics, first serving in 1753 as constable at age 24 and served as a fenceviewer, warden, and tythingman until 1767 when he served on his first committee (Acton Town Clerk, Acton, Massachusetts [ATC] 1753; 1755; 1761; 1767: Early Town Records [ETR] 115; 124; 165; 199). He served almost exclusively on committees relating to Revolutionary activities (Committee of Correspondence, committees to purchase rye for soldiers, to set prices for necessities, to settle with soldiers families, and to recruit new soldiers) from 1775-1786 (ATC 1775; 1776; 1777; 1778; 1779; 1780; 1781; 1782; 1783; 1784; 1785; 1786: ETR 269; 270; 281; 292; 299; 301; 315; 337; 339; 352; 354;362; 373). Robbins also served on the committee that, in December 1774, voted to join the Continental Congress and on the subsequent committee to see that the resolves of that congress were strictly observed in the town (Fletcher 1890: 252; Phalen 1954: 67; ATC 1774: ETR 263).

On April 19, 1775, the "Alarm rider" rode up to the house of Captain Robbins and struck sharply on the corner board with a bludgeon and at the same time shouting "Capt. Robbins! Capt. Robbins! The regulars are coming." Captain Robbins and his 13 year old son John alerted Isaac Davis, the Captain of the Acton Minute Men and Simon Hunt, Captain of Acton's West Militia Company (Fletcher 1890: 252). Robbins commanded the East Acton Militia Company at Concord Bridge with an unknown number of men in his company.

After the Revolutionary War, Robbins continued to serve on various town committees until 1795, including committees for building bridges, repairing the meetinghouse, purchasing and allocating pews, setting rates, and reviewing the distribution of schools in the town (ATC 1767; 1770; 1780; 1782: ETR 199; 219; 325; 342). One of the last acts of his life was to purchase the mill at the west end of the dam, east of his house in 1797. Captain Robbins died on March 31, 1800 and was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.

His wife died in 1816, and the house appears to have been abandoned by 1830 when the barn was struck by lightning and totally destroyed. The house reportedly burned around the same time from a fire caused by transients (Phalen 1954: 71; Fletcher 1890: 255).

Captain Robbins' son, John, inherited the property after his father's death in 1800. Upon John's death in 1836, the land passed to his son Elbridge Robbins. It appears to have been abandoned after this time. Looking at the 1833, 1856, 1875, and 1943 maps, no structures are shown, and the entire piece appears to have been used as pasture. The "Alarm Stone" monument was erected on April 19, 1895 by the

Acton Patriot Day Committee (Conant 1995). The committee also landscaped the area south of the cellar hole, an action that included modifying the stone walls and adding granite steps up to the site (Conant 1995). The property remained in the Robbins family until it was given to the town by Fred L. Robbins in 1959 to be included within Woodlawn Cemetery. The eastern portion of the original Robbins farm was sold out of the Robbins family in 1920 and subsequently was sold in 1929 to the Concord Ice Company (MCC 1929:DB 5341-117).

Review of the MHC recorded historic archaeological site files identified five historic archaeological sites within two kilometers of the project area (ACT HA-14-18). These sites are industrial and farm-related complexes consisting of cellar holes and mill and bridge foundations. These sites date to the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and show that this part of Acton was an active farm and industrial area. The Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite is documented as ACT.HA.33 in the MHC site files.

### **III. SITE EXAMINATION FIELD METHODS AND STRATEGIES**

#### **A. Theory**

The archaeological potential of the project area was evaluated by analyzing all the environmental and topographic characteristics of the area, the recorded archaeological sites, the distribution of identified prehistoric resources within the Town of Acton and within 2 km of the project area, and the documentary records relating to the town and specifically to the project area. A predictive model for the probability of encountering prehistoric and historic period archaeological resources was developed, based upon proximity to water, soil characteristics and drainage, slope, and disturbance.

Due to the presence of few recorded prehistoric archaeological sites within two kilometers of the project area and its distance from fresh water, the area was given a low probability for ancient Native American archaeological resources. The project area is a known historic home site adjacent to Concord Road, which was probably a pre-Contact Native trail and subsequently an early road, and in an area that had an active 18<sup>th</sup> century industrial and limited settlement focus. Considering these characteristics, the project area expressed a high potential for containing pre- and early nineteenth century historic archaeological resources.

#### **B. Research Questions**

Joseph Robbins is variably referenced in various records as a husbandman (MCC 1750:DB 50-439), a yeoman (MCC 1765:DB 64-66), consistently as a gentleman (after 1774), and a trader (MCC 1775:DB 76-562). It is known that he purchased or built a saw mill in 1788, and another in 1797 (Robbins Papers, Acton Historical Society). He sold planks to the town in 1763, so he either owned a saw mill at that time or was the intermediary between the saw mill owner and the town for this transaction (ATC 1763; ETR 176). The earning of the title of gentleman by 1774 indicates that he was something other than a yeoman or saw mill owner. It is much more probable that he was one of the new members of the merchant class that sprang up in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (**See Appendix A**).

Research questions sought to be investigated by the Site Examination include:

1. What was the nature of the relationship between the Robbins and their neighborhood and town spheres of interaction?
2. Was Captain Joseph Robbins a farmer and a trader, or did his income only come from his trading work? Can any of the material remains at the site (e.g. agricultural tools, faunal remains) help to investigate this?
3. To what degree was the family self-sufficient, and to what degree did they rely on the larger local, regional, national and international markets?
4. What was their socio-economic level, and how did it manifest itself in their consumer choices (e.g. ceramics, glass, and faunal)?
5. What can the architectural style of the house and the layout of its surrounding yard tell us about the Robbins' participation in larger regional and national trends in architectural styles and farm / work yard layout in the eighteenth century and about the family's socio-economic status?

6. The local history states that the house burned down in 1830 after having been abandoned for a number of years. Is there any evidence of destruction of the structure by fire, and are there any artifacts associated with this possible burn layer that could help date the end of occupation at the site?
7. Is there any archaeological evidence for ells, outbuildings, or structural modifications to the main house, and can their date of erection and abandonment be dated by associated artifacts?

The theoretical background of these research questions is presented in Appendix A of this report.

### **C. Fieldwork Testing Strategy**

The planned focus of site examination testing was the determination of the size and layout of the structure associated with the cellar hole at the site, and the investigation and sampling of the yard space with the goal being the identification of work spaces and possible outbuildings around the structure. Archaeological findings that can address some of the topics relating to the working class life in the Colonial and Early Industrial Periods as proposed in the research questions include material culture, foodways, the spatial organization of the household and yard, evidence of any change or evolution in that organization, evidence of agricultural specialization, and work areas relating to Captain Joseph Robbins' stated occupations as a trader and possible farmer (Johnson and Handsman 1996: 41; Clark 1990). Landscape features that were looked for during the site examination that had the potential to add to our understanding of these topics include other cellar holes, refuse deposits, privies, domestic and work areas, pathways, soil profile evidence of agricultural use, wells, and boundary walls or ditches.

In order to determine the boundaries of, and activities occurring at, the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite, the excavation of 50-x-50 -cm shovel test pits in a five-meter grid pattern extending out to the north, south, east, and west from the cellar hole was initiated (**Figure 9**). The grid lines were ceased after two sterile test pits were encountered, if artifact concentrations dropped off significantly, or if topographical features that clearly represent the edge of the site, such as the road to the south, the soccer fields to the west, the cemetery to the north, or the Morrison Farm to the east, were encountered. The total area that could be tested measured 73-m. north to south by 81-m. east to west - a total of 1.5 acres of town owned land. Testing was carried out initially within 30-m. of the cellar hole, and was subsequently extended towards the property lines if the artifact concentrations were found to extend that far.

Concentrations were identified by field-plotting the number of pieces recovered in each test pit by various artifact classes (e.g. architectural, ceramic, faunal, glass).

Captain Joseph Robbins was found to have been a husbandman as well as a trader, and it was assumed that he would have needed a barn, stable, and other outbuildings associated with the care and housing of livestock. It has been found that outbuildings are generally located within relatively close proximity to houses (Chartier and Carvino 2014; Dwyer, Syneki, and Sheehan 1990). The buildings were expected to have been constructed of a wooden superstructure resting upon a single course of fieldstone, possibly with chinking stone infill between the foundation stones (Dwyer and Syneki 1990: 65). Alternately, outbuildings could have been post-set, with the main structural posts being set in the

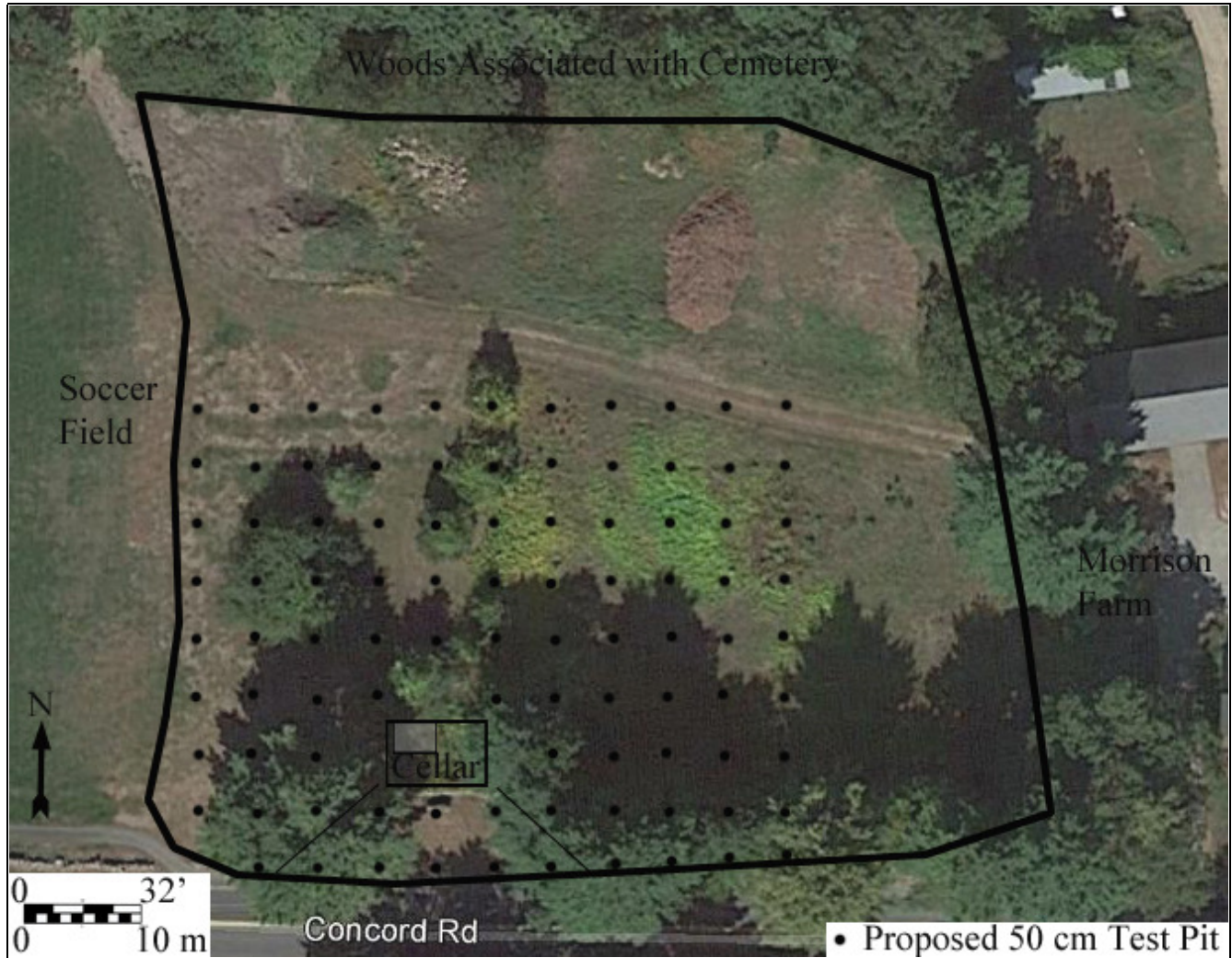


Figure 9. Testing in yards around the cellar hole.

ground. Archaeological evidence of predicted outbuildings was expected take the form of patterns of post holes, concentrations of field and chinking stones, and possible voids visible in yard scatter.

The second phase of testing focused on the cellar hole and surrounding structure, with the goal being to identify the size of the structure over the cellar hole, the method and time of construction of the cellar, and the time of abandonment of the structure. Excavating three trenches perpendicular to the north, west, and east walls of the cellar hole accomplished these goals (**Figure 10**). These trenches began at the cellar hole walls and extended at least two meters beyond the cellar hole or until evidence of the foundation trenches or sill footings associated with the structure were encountered. The maximum distance beyond the cellar hole that these trenches were excavated was four meters. These trenches were 50 cm. wide and were excavated in one meter long segments, each segment being excavated in 10-cm levels within the natural or encountered soil stratigraphy.

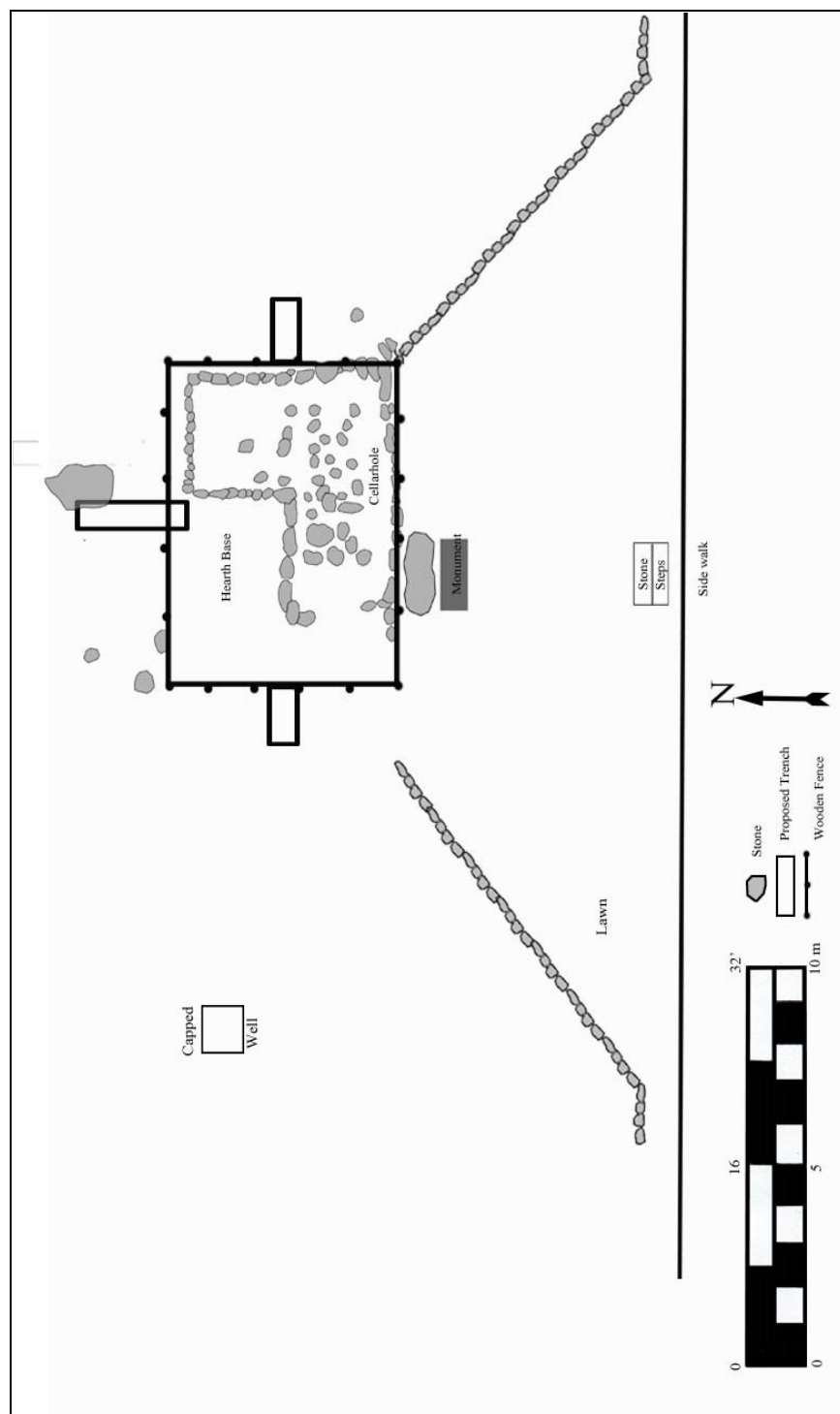


Figure 10. Proposed archaeological testing immediately adjacent to the cellar hole.

#### **D. Laboratory Processing and Analysis**

All recovered cultural material was cleaned, identified, described, and cataloged for analysis. The artifacts were then placed in labeled acid-free plastic bags in acid-free boxes for curation at the Public Archaeology Laboratory, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The original excavation forms, maps, catalog sheets, and a copy of the final report will accompany the artifacts to the curation facility, and PARP will retain copies of all documentary material on acid free archival quality paper.

Analysis of recovered cultural material focused on four main classes of excavated materials: ceramics, glass, architectural remains, and faunal remains. These classes have been found to first, be the most commonly recovered classes on historic archaeological sites, and second, to hold the greatest potential for helping to investigate some of the research questions posed for this project.

#### **E. Site Comparison**

The findings from the Site Examination were compared with archaeological findings from other sites in Massachusetts that have comparable occupation ranges: the David Brown (1644-1830), Joseph Mason (pre 1691/92-1820/30), David Fiske (ca. 1647-1723), and Daniel Brown (1700/1722-1770) homesites at the Minuteman National Historical Park in the towns of Lexington, Lincoln, and Concord, and the George Watson homesite (1745-1800) in Plymouth. The Minute Man National Historical Park sites represent the homes of various persons involved with the American Revolution. Occupations and statuses range from a successful farmer, captain of the militia, committee member and politician (David Brown) to rural artisans (Joseph Mason was a currier and Daniel Brown was a cordwainer) and a husbandman (David Fiske). While the results of detailed artifact analysis have not been published, the results presented in the final published report on the 1980s investigations at the Minuteman National Historical Park (Disviscour et al 1990) provide abundant comparative information on yard scatter patterns and vernacular architecture and gross ceramic analysis. George Watson was the richest man in Plymouth - a Tory, and a prominent coastal merchant with dealings in the West Indies. The archaeological investigations conducted at his homesite resulted in a rich collection of the material culture representative of such a person (Chartier 2014). Comparison of the percentages of ceramic types, vessel forms, fauna, and glass assemblages provided a good comparison between the material culture and socioeconomic status of a primary merchant/ importer and his rural counterpart, the country trader. Country traders were the middlemen who acquired goods from their neighbors and shipped them to the port towns where they were used to purchase other goods to be sold and traded by the rural country trader.

#### **IV. RESULTS OF SITE EXAMINATION FIELD WORK**

Archaeologists excavated a total of 78 50-cm-square test pits and three 50-cm-wide by two to four-meter long trenches. Artifacts were recovered from all of the trenches and 55 of the test pits. No prehistoric artifacts were recovered, and very few pieces of modern material were found. Testing around the cellar hole determined that the main areas of deposition were on the northwest and south sides.

##### **A. Yard Testing**

Seventy-three 50-cm-square shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated along nine transects around the cellar hole, with 23 test pits (31.5%) yielding no cultural material (**Figures 11 and 12**). The stratigraphy encountered consisted of an Apz horizon that extended to an average depth of 30 cmbs, followed by a B1, B2, and C1, the latter which was most commonly encountered at 60-65 cmbs (**Figure 13**). A few test pits closer to the cellar hole exhibited what appeared to be sterile fill layer on top of a truncated plowzone (**Figure 13**). Excavation was carried out following the natural stratigraphy within each test pit with artifacts being bagged by soil context and by level. As a result some levels were 20 cm thick, as there was no difference between the 0-10 and 10-20 cm levels.

STP testing ceased when artifact concentrations dropped off significantly. As a result of the STP testing, the areas of maximum artifact deposition were found to be located in the south and northwest yards (**Figure 14**). Historic period artifacts were recovered from the upper 30 cm of soil in the Apz horizon.

##### **B. Trench Testing**

Archaeologists excavated three trenches: Trench 1 on the east, Trench 2 on the north, and Trench 3 on the west side adjacent to the cellar hole walls within areas that could be impacted by the proposed cellar wall rebuilding (**Figure 15**). Due to the disturbance caused by the excavation of the cellar hole and the destruction of the house, soil stratigraphy in the test trenches differed slightly from what was encountered in the yards and is really only comparable when excavation reached the buried A horizon soils and lower subsequent horizons.

##### **Trench 1**

Archaeologists placed Trench 1 on the east side of the cellar hole 50 cm east of the cellar wall and 1.5 to 2 m. north of the cellar's southeast corner. The unit measured 50 cm north to south and 2 m. east to west. Excavation revealed that the area originally excavated for the cellar hole extended 140 cm east of the cellar wall and terminated in what is believed to be the outer wall of the trench for a foundation. The actual foundation stones appear to have been removed, but the 20 cm wide trench for the stones remained. The stratigraphy of this unit (**Figures 16 and 17**) revealed a buried sterile A1 layer that was first encountered at approximately 35 cmbs at Trench 1's east end that sloped into the hole that had been excavated when the cellar was initially built. The point where the A1 horizon begins to slope downward coincided with the location of the building's wall trench. Two fill layers overlaid the A1 horizon. The first, Fill 2 (a sterile light olive brown [2.5Y5/6] coarse sand), appears to represent

11 x17

Figure 11. Site examination testing overlaid on the Google Earth aerial image of the project area.

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Figure 12. Site map showing Site Examination testing.

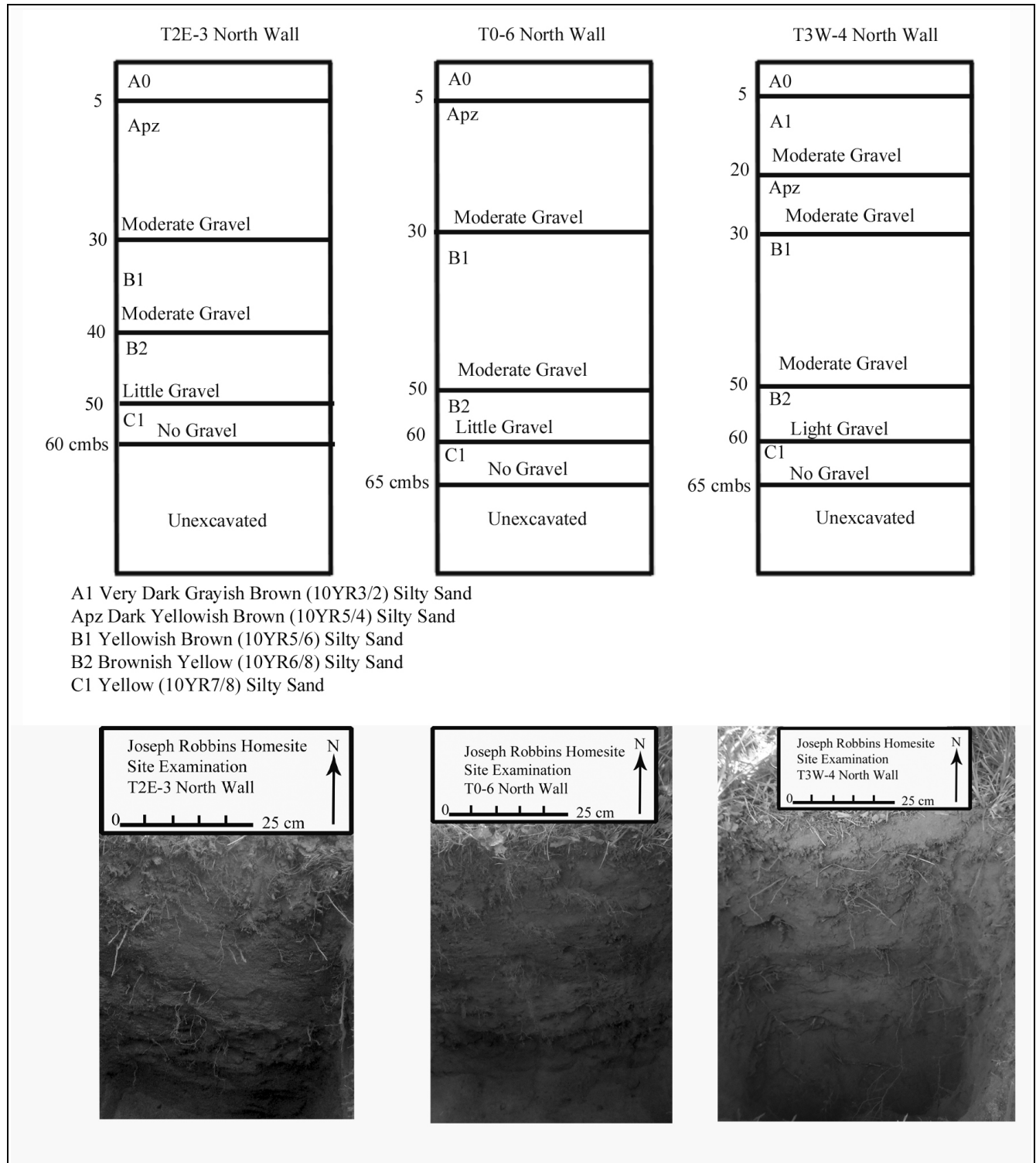


Figure 13. Representative test pit soil profile drawings and photographs.

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Figure 14. Site plan showing yard divisions referenced in the report and artifact concentrations.

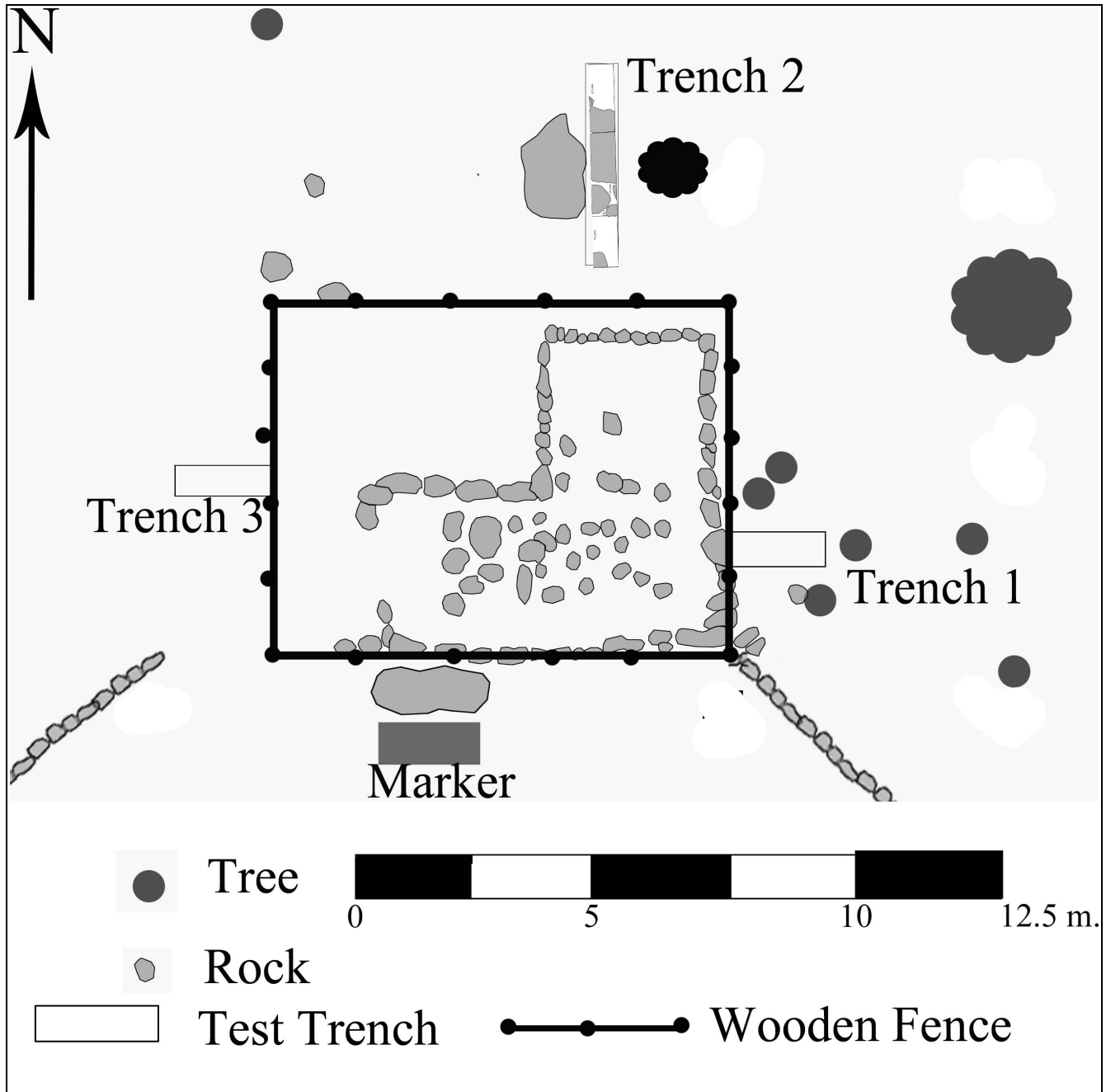


Figure 15. Locations of trenches 1-3 around the cellar hole.

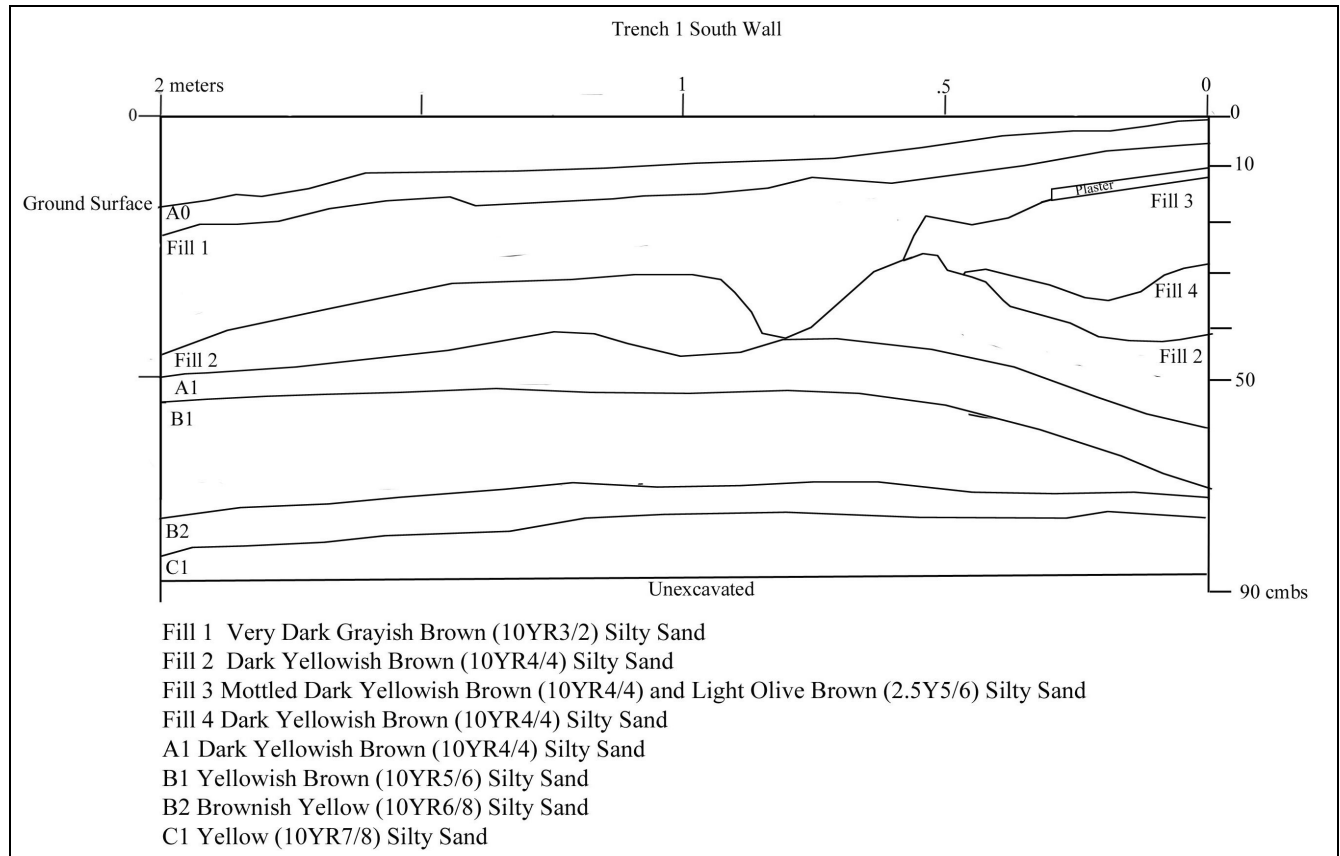


Figure 16. Trench 1 south wall profile.

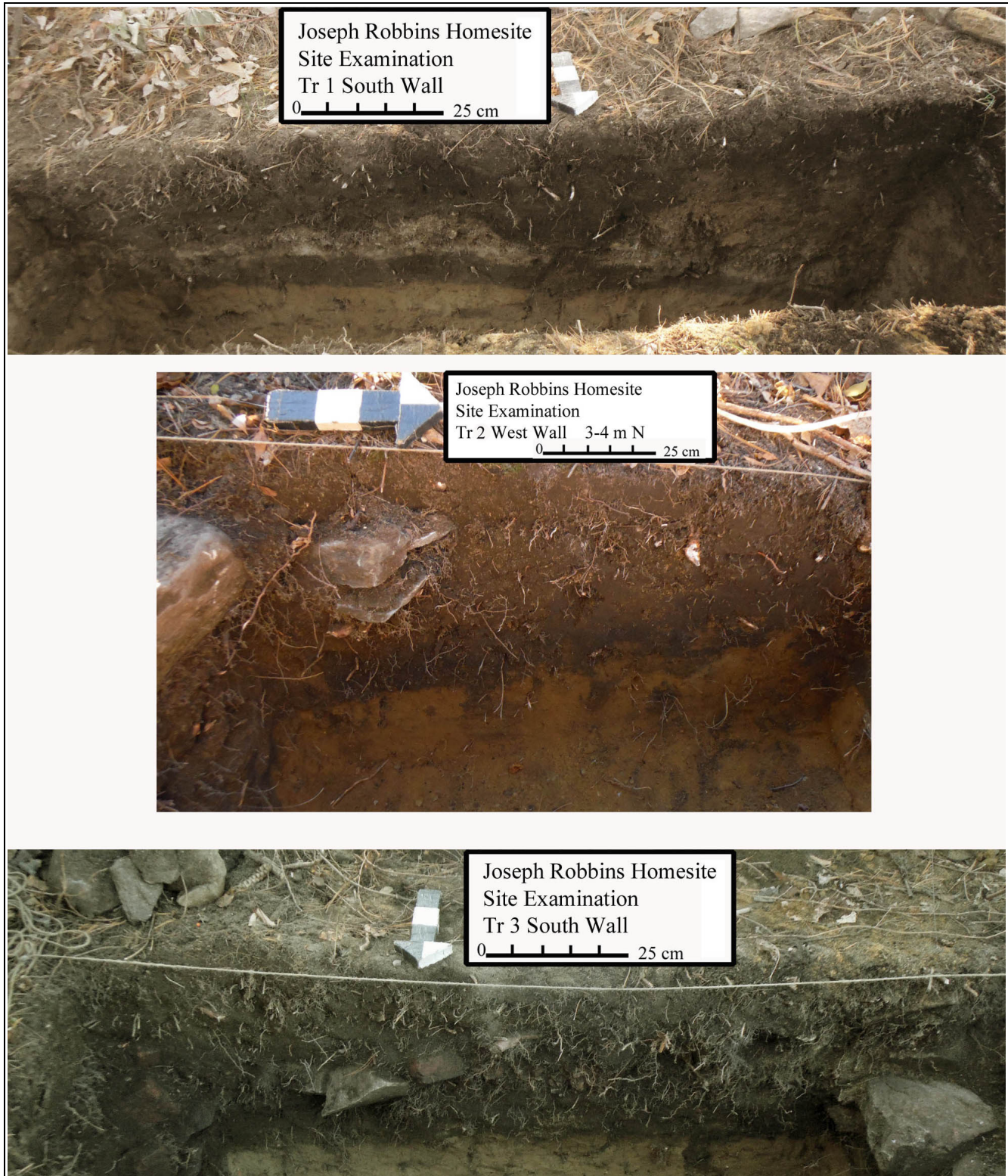


Figure 17. Trench wall profile photographs.

original excavation of the cellar hole. This layer was deepest to the west and gradually tapered away to almost nothing by the eastern end of the trench. Fill 1 was located above Fill 1. This layer was a very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) silty sand that appeared to overlay and fill the possible foundation trench, indicating that it was deposited after Fill 2. Two other fill layers, Fills 3 and 4, were located to the west of the possible foundation trench. The lower fill, Fill 3, was a mottled dark yellowish brown (10YR4/4) and light olive brown (2.5Y5/6) silty sand while Fill 4 was a dark yellowish brown (10YR4/4) silty sand. A layer of wall plaster was found capping Fill 4 and extending part of the way to the possible foundation trench.

Artifacts were recovered from fill layer 1 and, to a lesser degree, layer 4. The lack of artifacts from the buried A or the cellar hole excavation fill layer indicates a lack of activity prior to the construction of the Robbins house in the eighteenth century. Recovered artifacts were chiefly architectural in nature (e.g. brick, mortar, plaster, window glass, and nails), but pieces of white salt-glazed stoneware and creamware help to establish a date of occupation as ca. 1762 at the earliest.

### **Trench 2**

Archaeologists placed Trench 2 on the north side of the house 2 m. west of the northeast corner of the cellar hole and 50 cm to its north. This trench measured 50 cm east to west and 4 m. north to south. Excavation revealed a flooring of large flat stones that extended from 2 to 3 m. north, with only scattered stones to the north and south of it (**Figure 18**). The large flat paving stones were encountered just below the duff and were not removed during excavation. The area extending from 0 to 1 m. north of the south end of the trench was found to consist of a 45 cm deep layer of very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) silty sand fill similar to that encountered in the test pits and Trench 1 (identified as Fill 1) (**Figures 19 and 17**). A buried A1 horizon (dark yellowish brown [10YR4/4] silty sand) that measured approximately 15 cm thick was encountered below this fill layer. A 10-15 cm thick second layer of fill (identified as Fill 2) was found beneath Fill 1 and above the buried A1 horizon. This was found extending from 22 to 100 cm north of the south wall of this trench. Fill 2, as it had in Trench 1, again appeared to be from original excavations of the cellar hole. A deeper depression extended from 30-65 cm north and appeared to cut into the original A1 horizon. This depression is hypothesized to represent the foundation for the north wall of the house. The portion of the trench from 1 to 3 m. north was not excavated due to the presence of the large flat paving stones. The soils on the north side of the paving stones, from 3 to 4 m. north, consisted of a sloping deposit of Fill 2 soil that overlaid a buried A1 horizon.

Artifacts were only recovered from the Fill 1 layer in all segments of the trench and from on top of the paving stones. A mixture of creamware and pearlware was recovered from all levels in the 0-1 m. north segments of Trench 2, while in the 3-4 m. north segments, pearlware was present only in the upper 10-20 cm layer. It is proposed that the original house extended to the possible foundation trench identified at approximately 1 m. north of the south wall of Trench 2 (1.5 m north of the cellar wall) and that the paving represents a later lean-to addition, possibly a dairy, added on to the north side of the house - likely in the early nineteenth century.

### **Trench 3**

Archaeologists placed Trench 3 perpendicular to the west wall of the cellar hole at a point 3 m. north of its southwest corner. Trench 3 measured 50 cm north to south by 2 m. east to west. Excavation

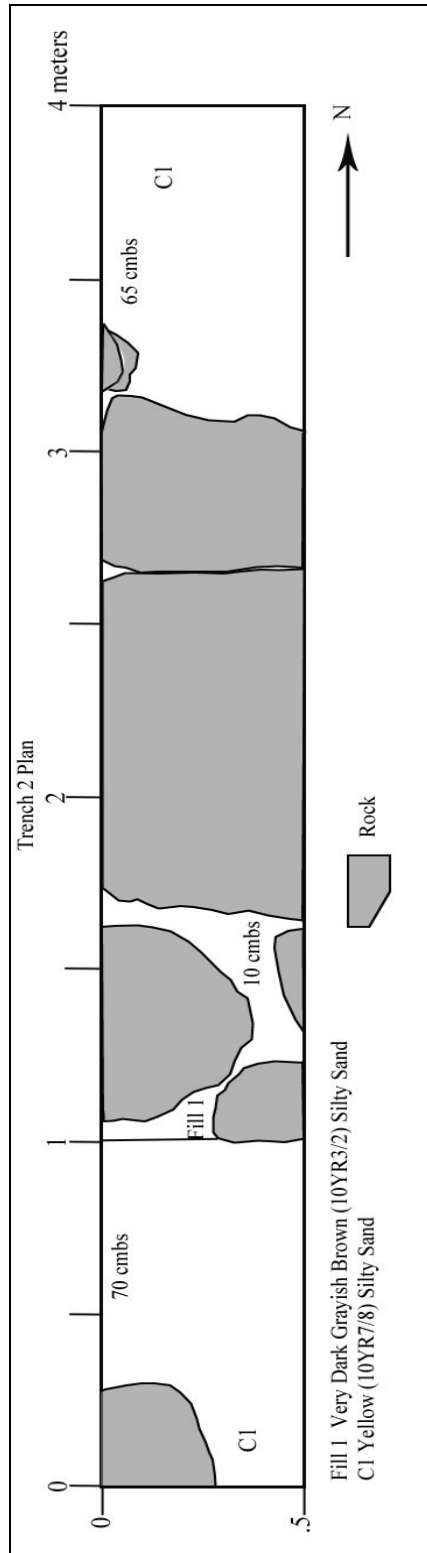


Figure 18. Trench 2 plan.

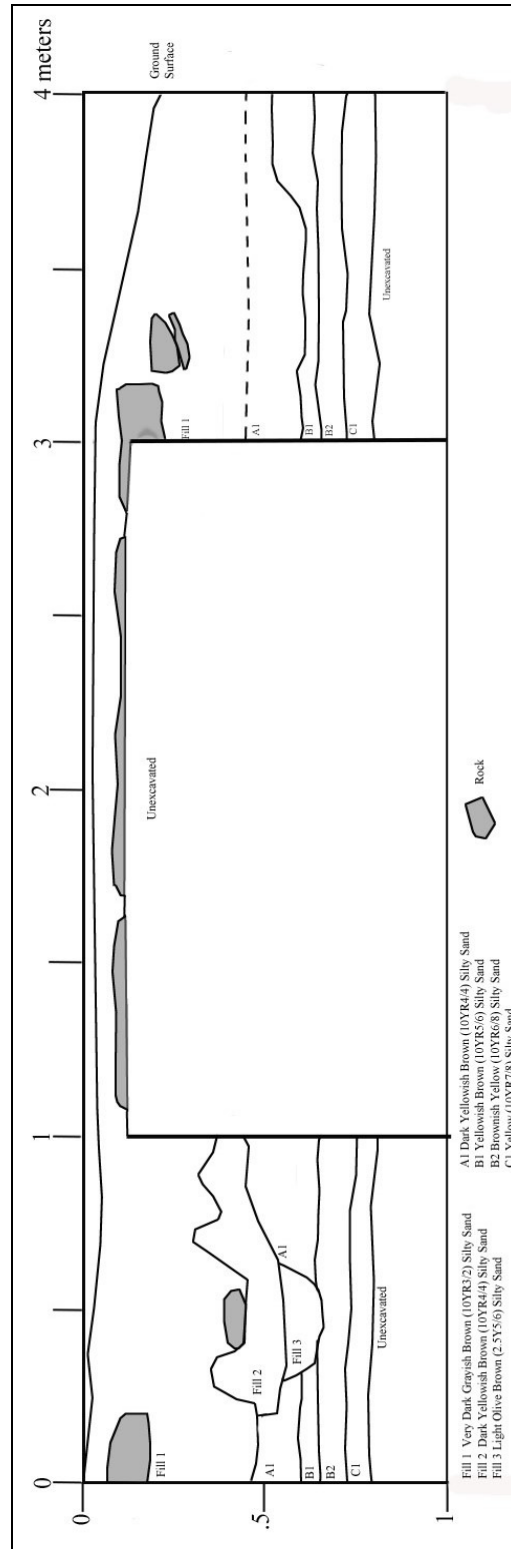


Figure 19. Trench 2 west wall profile.

encountered the same very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) silty sand Fill 1 from the surface to a depth of 10-25 cmbs across the trench (**Figure 20**). Fill 1 overlaid Fill 2 (also a very dark grayish brown [10YR3/2] silty sand), which in this case was a layer of demolition / destruction rubble consisting mainly of brick, mortar, and nails that extended to a depth of 40 cmbs. This demolition layer extended to 1.4 m. west where the foundation of what is believed to be the west wall of the house was encountered (**Figures 21 and 17**). This foundation consisted of stacked field stones whose whole width was 60 cm east to west. Fill 2 overlaid the original dark yellowish brown silty sand (10YR4/4) A1 horizon.

Artifacts were recovered from the Fill 1 and Fill 2 layers to a depth of 40 cmbs. Only a few pieces of creamware, a piece of cattle bone, and two pieces of redware were recovered along with the abundant amounts of brick, mortar, window glass, and nails.

### **C. Artifact Analysis**

A total of 1,904 artifacts were recovered, with the majority of these being ceramics, and architectural materials (e.g. brick, mortar, plaster, window glass, and nails) being the next most common (**Appendices B and C**). Overall, the artifacts indicate an occupation period of middle eighteenth to early nineteenth century, with a strong emphasis on the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century (ca. 1780-1830).

### **Household Equipment**

#### **Historic Ceramics**

The ceramic assemblage (N=1,000) is dominated by utilitarian redware (n=636) and creamware (1762-1820) (n=232). Overall, the datable ceramic assemblage fits into three periods: the middle to third quarter of the eighteenth century (n=5); the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century (n=309); and ca. 1830-1840 (n=28). The few piece of ceramics from the earliest period consist of Staffordshire Slipware (1675-1770 ) (n=2); White Salt-Glazed Stoneware (1720-1770) (n=1); and Nottingham Stoneware (1700-1810) (n=2), but overall, the assemblage is biased towards ceramics produced in the second period. These include Blue Edged Pearlware (1785-1840) (n=2); Blue and White Hand-Painted Pearlware (1775-1840) (n=62); Dark Blue Transfer-printed Pearlware (1784-1840) (n=8); and Mocha Annularware (1795-1895) (n=5). The final period is represented by Polychrome Floral Hand-Painted Whiteware (1830-1840) (n=26) and Black and Blue Transfer-printed Whiteware (1830+) (n=2) (**Figure 22**). The ceramic assemblage appears to represent the occupation period identified in the documentary record (ca. 1751 to ca. 1830) fairly well, leaving open the possibility that, because of the abundance of ceramics dating to the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, the house may have been first occupied just before or just after the Revolution. It is possible that the Robbins lived at the old house location on the south side of the road from their marriage until the 1770s, and then lived at this site from ca. 1770s to 1800, with someone else occupying the site, possibly as renters, from the time of Captain Joseph's death in 1800 until the house burned ca. 1830.

Vessel forms consist of tablewares (**cups** [creamware, annular mochaware, blue and white hand-painted pearlware, dark blue transfer-printed pearlware, Staffordshire slipware, hand-painted floral whiteware,

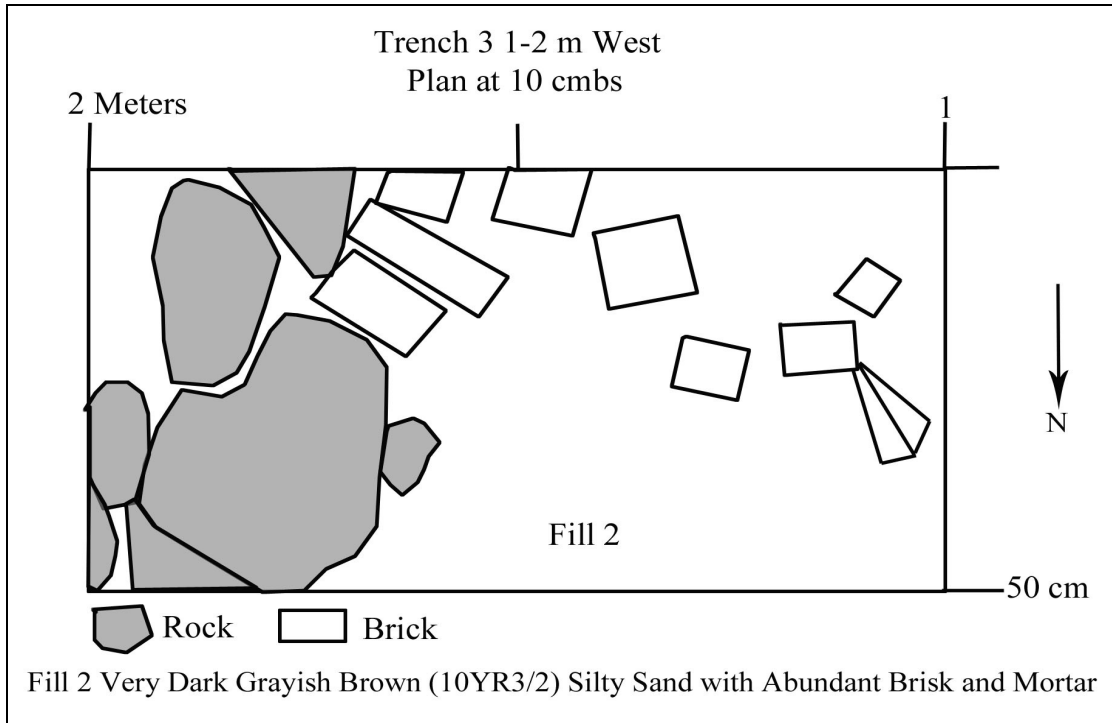


Figure 20. Trench 3 plan.

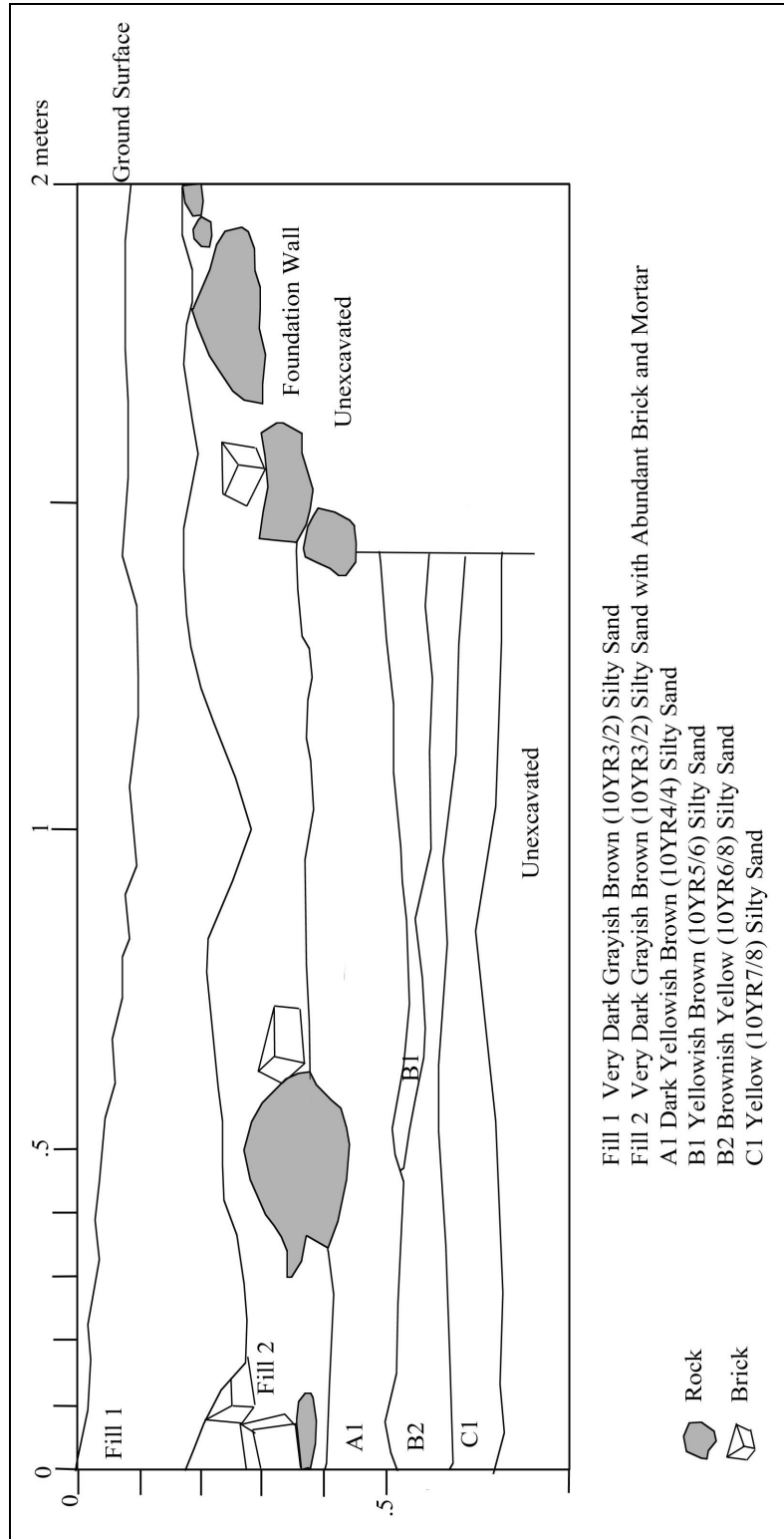


Figure 21. Trench 3 south wall profile.

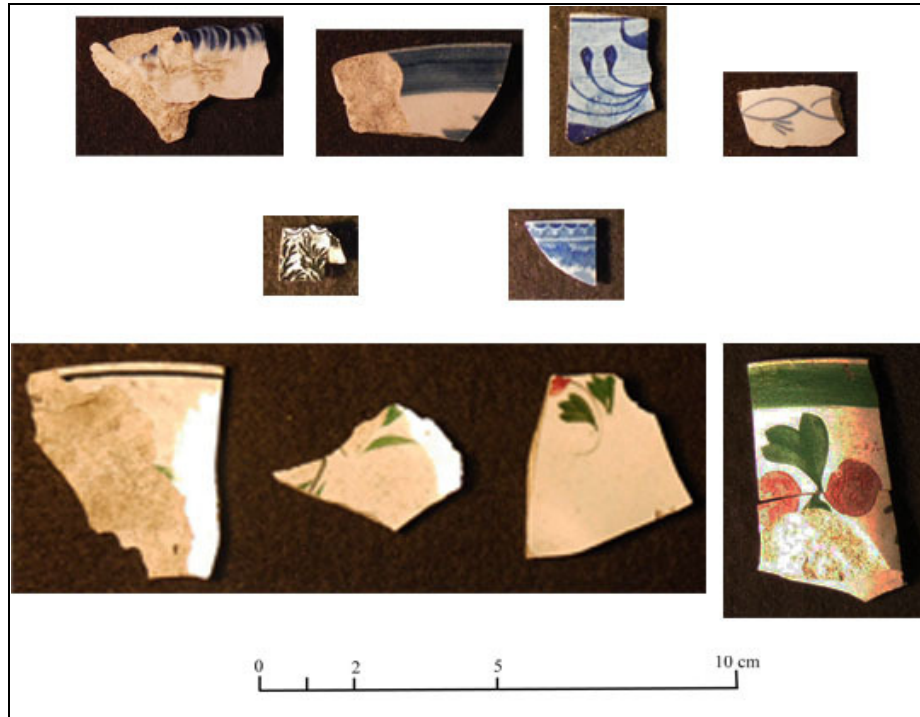


Figure 22. Representative ceramics recovered during the site examination.

(Upper: Left to Right- T2 2 0-.5 m N-20 cm, T2 2 0-.5 m N-20 cm, Tr 2 .5-1 m N-30 cm, T2W-6-26 cm; Middle: Left to Right- Tr 1 .5-1 m E-20 cm, Tr 2 1-1.5 m N-10 cm; Lower: Left to Right- Tr 2 1-1.5 m N-10 cm, Tr 2 1-1.5 m N-10 cm)

light blue transferprinted whiteware], **plates** [creamware, blue edged pearlware, dark blue transfer-printed pearlware], **saucers** [creamware, blue and white hand painted pearlware, dark blue transfer-printed pearlware, hand-painted floral whiteware], a **mug** [Nottingham stoneware], and a **jug** [redware]); storage and processing vessels (**milkpan** [redware], **storage pot** [redware]) and **baking vessels** (pans [redware and Staffordshire slipware]).

Overall, the ceramics are indicative of common wares found in upper lower to middle class households of the period, with an emphasis on teawares (cups and saucers) and matched sets (dark blue transfer-printed pearlware, blue and white pearlware, and floral hand-painted whiteware).

### Glass

Very little table glass was found with fragments of one wine bottle, one drinking glass, an early nineteenth century pressed glass dish, and a possible lamp chimney making up the entire assemblage of 19 pieces. The shapes of the wine bottle could not be determined due to the small size of the fragments. The drinking glass appears to be a hand blown tumbler. The wine bottle was dark olive in color while the wine glass was clear. The clear pressed dish, appears to be decorated with an Oak Leaf pattern, dating it from 1830 to 1845 (Barlow and Kaiser 1993) (**Figure 23**).

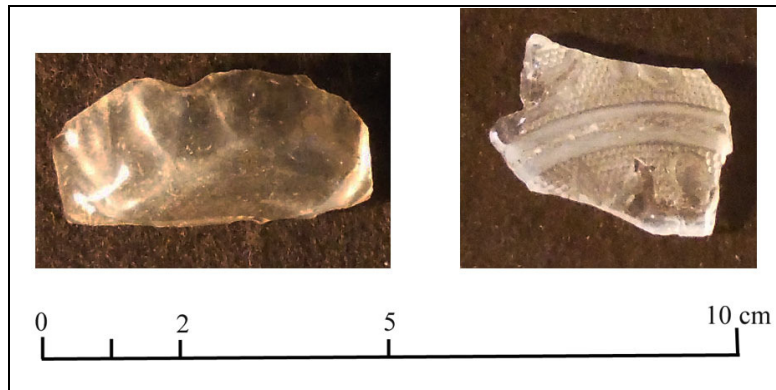


Figure 23. Fragments of glass vessels recovered during the site examination.  
(Left- T3W-4-30 cm; Right-T2W-6-26 cm)

### Cooking equipment and eating utensils

Cooking equipment is well represented in the artifact assemblage, especially in Trench 2 at the north side of the house. This assemblage includes an iron knife blade of a style dating from the mid-eighteenth century (Noel Hume 1969: 182), brass teaspoon handle, segment of hearth chain, fragment from a small three-legged sauce pan, large kettle bale, small bucket (possibly the well bucket) handle, and two fragments of a large cooking kettle (**Figure 24**).

### Sewing Equipment

Sewing equipment is limited to one plain brass thimble found in the south yard (**Figure 25**). The style may be indicative of ca. 1750-1800 style British or American manufacture (Beaudry 2006: 103).

### Personal

#### Tobacco Pipes

Surprisingly, only one tobacco pipe fragment, a stem/ bowl junction piece from an early nineteenth century pipe bearing molded ribs, was recovered from the excavations in the south yard (**Figure 25**). Like most pipes of the period, it is made of white kaolin ball/pipe clay and is most probably of European manufacture (possibly from Bristol, England). Stylistically it dates from the ca. 1790-1820 period and is typical of pipes of this, the Napoleonic Period (Noel Hume 1969: 303). It is common for tobacco pipes to become rarer at archaeological sites throughout the nineteenth century due to temperance and anti-smoking campaigns, but it is very rare to have only one pipe fragment be recovered from a site occupied in the second half of the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.

It is informative to compare the lack of tobacco pipe occurrence at this site with archaeological findings from other sites in Massachusetts that have comparable occupation ranges: the upper class Thwing/Haynes/ Slade site in Newton (Donohue 2001, 2002), the upper class Watson Homesite in Plymouth (Chartier 2014), the lower class Sophronia Young House site in Mashpee (Donohue and Smith 2003), the lower class Harlow House in Plymouth (Chartier 2010), the Clam Pudding Pond Farmstead Site in south Plymouth (Ritchie et al 2008), and the lower class Parting Ways in Plymouth (Hutchins 2013).

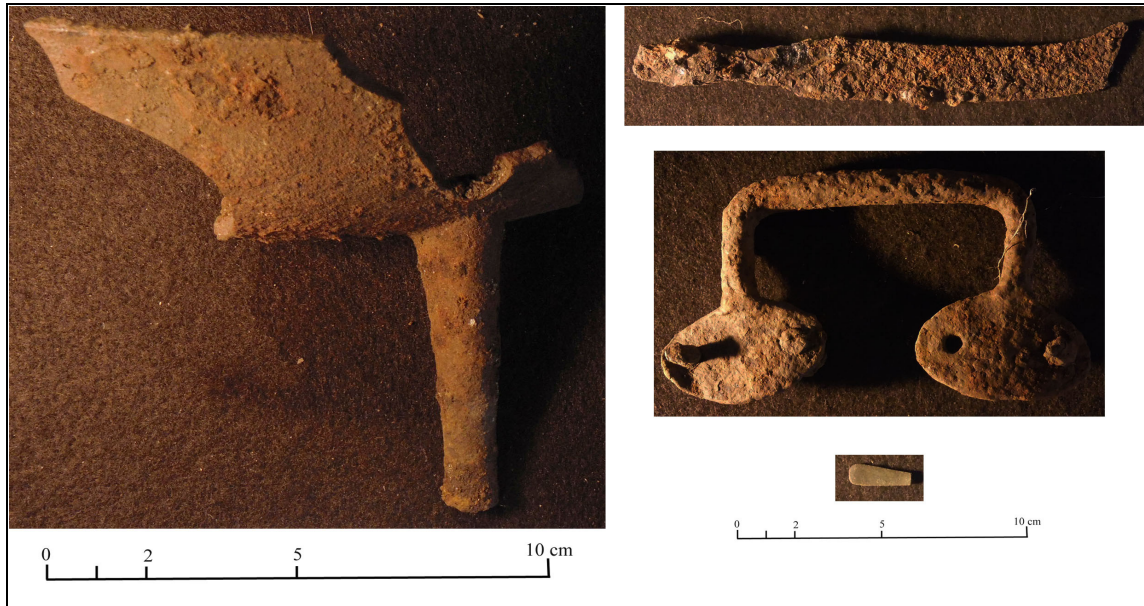


Figure 24. Cooking related artifacts recovered during the site examination.  
(Left- Tr 2 1-1.5 m N-10 cm; Right: Upper-Tr 2 3-3.5 m N-10 cm;  
Middle- Tr 2 1.5-2 m N-10 cm; Lower- Tr 2 3-3.5 m N-10 cm)

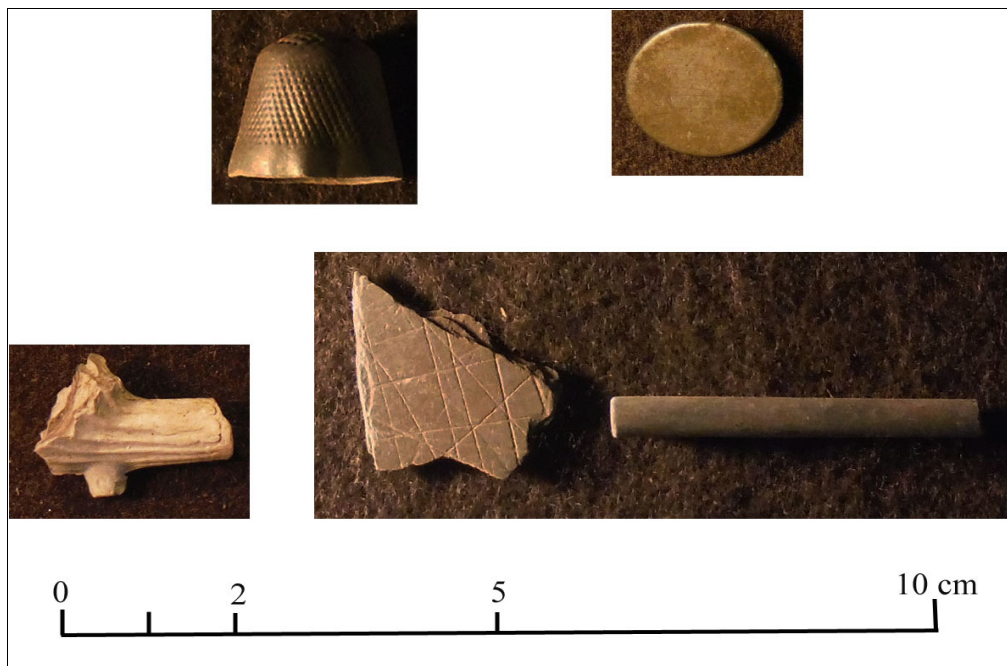


Figure 25. Personal items recovered during the site examination.  
(Upper Row: Left- T1W-2-12 cm; Right- Tr 2 .5-1 m N-10 cm;  
Lower Row: Left- T0-1-20 cm; Right- Tr 2 .5-1 m N-30 cm)

The Thwing/Haynes/Slade site, dating from 1806 to circa 1895, followed the development of the farming community of East Newton to the development of the suburban community of Chestnut Hill. The assemblages were generated by wealthy members of the Thwing, Haynes, and Slade families. George Watson was the richest man in Plymouth, a Tory, and a prominent coastal merchant with dealings in the West Indies from ca. 1750 to 1800. The archaeological investigations conducted at his homesite resulted in a rich collection of the material culture representative of such a person (Chartier 2014). The Sophronia Young House Site dates from 1842 to circa 1878. Sophronia Young, a member of the Mashpee Tribe, lived at the site with her husband, John Young, a “black foreigner” from either New York or Virginia, and four children until her death in 1850. Following her death, John is believed to have lived at the house site until 1852 when he remarried, and then returned to the house between 1874 and 1878. The cellar deposits from the Harlow House were excavated in the 1970s by the late Dr. James Deetz and consist principally of ceramics, glass, and faunal remains dating from the first to thirds quarters of the nineteenth century associated with an upper lower class to middle class family in downtown Plymouth. The Clam Pudding Farmstead Site was investigated at the Data Recovery level by the Public Archaeology Laboratory in 2008. It was occupied by a farmer of lower to moderate means from ca. 1830 to 1860. Parting Ways was a freed African slave community in Plymouth occupied from c. 1780s to 1900. Deetz also excavated this site, and the collection was recently reanalyzed by a Boston University PhD candidate.

At the Slade homesite (1806-1895), clay tobacco pipes accounted for only one half of one percent of the ceramic assemblage, and the low occurrence was interpreted as possibly reflecting the nineteenth century Temperance Movement that accounted tobacco smoking and alcohol drinking to be the two main devices causing depravity among the period's society. The Samuel Fuller homesite (1830-1900) had a comparable low occurrence of clay tobacco pipes (0.5%). Tobacco pipe use was three times greater at the Sophronia Young site (1842-1878) (1.5%), seven times higher at the Clam Pudding Pond Farm (1830-1860) (3.5%), and even higher at the Parting Ways (1780-1900) (4.4%) and Harlow (1800-1875) (4.7%) sites. If tobacco use is assumed to be represented through the discarded clay tobacco pipes, the Fullers, who were lower class laborers, were on par with the high class Slade household, while at all of the other households, smoking was much more prevalent. The occurrence of smoking pipes was also low at the high status Watson Homesite (1750-1800) where pipe fragments represented only 0.37% of the eighteenth to nineteenth century ceramic assemblage. The overall pattern of this limited sample indicates that class may have been more important than timing of the temperance movement, with a lack of tobacco pipes inversely related to wealth. This may have important implications for the inferred status of the Robbins occupation and household.

### **Clothing Items**

One plain disc silver button was recovered from Trench 2. This button is simple disc, 1.5 cm in diameter, with a cone-shaped shank attachment on the rear, a style dated by White to the second half of the eighteenth century (White 2005: 52). The material, silver, supports the idea of a higher status for the household (**Figure 25**). There was a hierarchy to the metals worn by colonists, gold and cast silver were used by the gentry, brass and copper by those below them, pewter on the those below them, and iron for the simple laborer (Noel Hume 1969: 86). Based on the size and style, this button was probably used on a man's waistcoat (White 2005: 59).

### **Writing Utensils**

One slate pencil and a fragment of a slate writing tablet bearing multiple overlapping and intersecting lines were found together in Trench 2 (**Figure 25**). The presence of a writing instrument and slate is consistent with Robbins' occupation as a trader or merchant and his involvement in the colonial government affairs, both jobs that would require literacy. Slate pencils were used to write on slate tablets, often by children practicing letters. The slate pencil was replaced by wooden pencils with lead (and later graphite) cores after the Civil War.

### **Construction Class**

#### **Hand-Wrought and Machine-Cut Nails**

Architectural material makes up the second largest category of recovered items, accounting for 43% of the total artifact count. Numerous hand-wrought nails and nail fragments were found, with the majority (51%) of the complete nails measuring between 5 and 6.5 cm in length. These would have been suitable for attaching exterior sheathing boards to the house and for attaching flooring boards. The second most common (37.4%) nail sizes are those measuring between 3 and 4.5 cm in length, which would have been used for attaching clapboards and shingles. The smallest category (11.6%) of nails measure between 7 and 9 cm in length and would have been used for flooring and for structural timbers.

Forty-six machine made nails of a variety made after 1820 were recovered, predominantly from Trench 3 (41%), but also from Trench 2 (23.9%) and Trench 1 (19.6%). Unlike the hand wrought nails, the majority (53%) of the measurable machine cut nails measure between 3 and 4.5 cm in length, with those measuring between 5 and 6.5 cm amounting to slightly less (37.5%). This size distribution indicates a period of renovation or repair occurring at the house in the early nineteenth century, with the focus of the work apparently on reshingling or residing the house.

#### **Brick**

As early as 1625 there were English laws regulating the dimensions for bricks as 9" by 4 1/2" by 3" high (22.9 x 11.4 x 7.6 cm), which was very similar to the 1700 dimensions for statute (a.k.a common) bricks which was 9 x 4 1/2 x 2 1/4" (22.9 x 11.4 x 5.7 cm)(Cummings 1979:118). The Massachusetts Bay Colony set regulations on brick sizes in 1679, stating that the molds for bricks must be 9" long, 4 1/2" wide and 2 1/4" high, but, as William Leybourn observed in 1668, molds of such size seldom produced bricks of such size due to drying and burning (Cummings 1979:118). Bricks such as these were made of local clay mixed with sand, gravel, and even larger pebbles and small rocks to act as aggregates to give strength to the clay. The molding process was begun by drenching a wooden mold into water and then placing it on a table covered with a thin layer of sand. The mold was then filled with a large glob of clay and a board was run either vertically or horizontally across the upper face to level the mold off. The mold was then removed and the brick was paled in the sun to dry before it was fired. Firing bricks involved stacking them up in a specific manner, building what is referred to as a clamp. Wood was placed within the clamp, around the bricks, and the whole thing was set on fire and allowed to burn until the bricks were hard. Bricks that were fired close to the heat source tend to be blackened on their faces that faced the fire, often bearing a vitrified, glass-like surface finish, while those that were farther from the direct heat were more evenly colored. The bricks that were closest to the flames tended to warp and often deformed to some degree. The firing of a single brick clamp results

in three different types of bricks: Clinker- those that lie closest the fire which have a glaze on them; those that lie next in the clamp which are of second quality; Samuel or Sandal-bricks- those that lie at the outside of the clamp and which are soft and will dissolve in the weather (Neve 1736). As early as 1629, clamps were established in Salem, Massachusetts for the manufacture of bricks and roof tiles, while in the same year there is a singular, unique record of 10,000 bricks being imported into the colony (Cummings 1979:119).

Archaeologists recovered 291 bricks and brick fragments during the site examination, the majority of which were concentrated in Trench 3 to the east of the house foundation. The bricks from the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite were all handmade. The paste is slightly sandy with some pebble inclusions. They all bear a sand-covered face, the face that was laid upon the sanded table on which they were made, and a water struck opposite face. The water striking, which was used to level the clay in the brick mold, in all cases was done perpendicular to the long axis of the brick. The consistency in brick composition indicates that they were all probably made at the same time by the same maker. The occurrence of the bricks on the inside of the house indicates that the chimney either collapsed when the walls of the house were still present or that the chimney was systematically taken down while the house still stood. Brick sizes range from 18.2-19.5 cm long, 8.3-10.3 cm wide, and 3.5-6 cm high. The average brick dimensions are 18.9 cm long, 9.4 cm wide, and 4.7 cm high. Brick dimensions from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century generally became smaller, and the change can be used to help approximate a site date range. The average dimensions of the bricks from the Robbins Homesite are compared with those from the John Howland homesite (ca. 1630-1730), the Duxbury Second Meeting House Site (ca. 1707-1787), and the Samuel Fuller Homesite (1830-1890) (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Comparison of average brick dimensions between 17th-19<sup>th</sup> century sites

	Length	Width	Height
<b>John Howland (1630-1730)</b>			
	24.8 cm	10.2 cm	5.2 cm
<b>Second Meeting House (1707-1787)</b>			
		10 cm	5 cm
<b>Samuel Fuller (1830-1890)</b>			
	18.2 cm	9 cm	4.8 cm
<b>Captain Robbins</b>			
	18.8 cm	9.4 cm	4.7 cm

The average brick sizes from the Captain Robbins homesite are closest in size to those from the Samuel Fuller Homesite, but are still slightly larger. This may mean that the chimney and hearth at the Robbins Homesite dated slightly earlier than the one at the Fuller homesite, but later than the ones at the seventeenth or eighteenth century sites. This offers support to the homesite having been constructed later in the eighteenth century versus ca. 1751 when the Robbins were married.

One piece of what appears to be a brick clay tile, possibly for use in front of the hearth, was found in the east yard. Twenty-nine pieces of sand-tempered mortar were found associated with the brick concentration in Trench 3, with two additional pieces being recovered from Trench 1.

### **Wall Plaster**

Seventeen fragments of wall plaster were recovered from Trench 1. It is assumed that the plaster once covered the walls of this room, thus at least this room of the house was plastered. This may mean that the room was the parlor, or fancier room of the house, and that the remainder of the walls in other rooms of the house were unplastered. It also may mean that this plastered room was the original, single cell, Wheeler house that was expanded by Wheeler into the central chimney house that later became Robbins' house.

### **Window Glass and Leads**

The 118 pieces of window glass were found concentrated in the south yard (n=59) followed by Trench 2 (n=23) and Trench 1 (n=15). Several pieces of window glass were melted as a result of the fire that led to the abandonment of the house. Along with the window glass fragments were one piece of lead came from a casement window and a single glazing point from a double hung sash type window. The recovery of evidence of both the older casement window and the double hung sash window typical of the eighteenth century indicates that it is likely that Robbins' house was originally built in the seventeenth century and was the Captain Thomas Wheeler house (built ca. 1668). Joseph Robbins' father gave him this house and the land around it at the time of Joseph's marriage in 1750, and local tradition holds that Captain Robbins moved the house from its original location to the project area. The recovery of evidence of both casement and double hung sash windows supports the tradition that a seventeenth century house was moved to the site, and this also shows that it was probably upgraded after the move.

### **Charcoal**

A total of 82 fragments of charcoal were recovered from immediately around the house, and especially from Trench 2. Some of the charcoal may have entered the archaeological record as a result of the periodic cleaning of the hearth, but the co-occurrence of charcoal, burnt nails, and melted window glass is interpreted as evidence of destruction of the house by fire as reported in the local history.

## **Labor and Technology**

### **Transportation Equipment**

Archaeologists recovered three horseshoe nails from Trench 2 and the south yard. One iron buckle that may have come from an animal harness was also found in Trench 2 (**Figure 26**).

### **Tools**

Archaeologists recovered a possible tool handle fragment from the south yard.

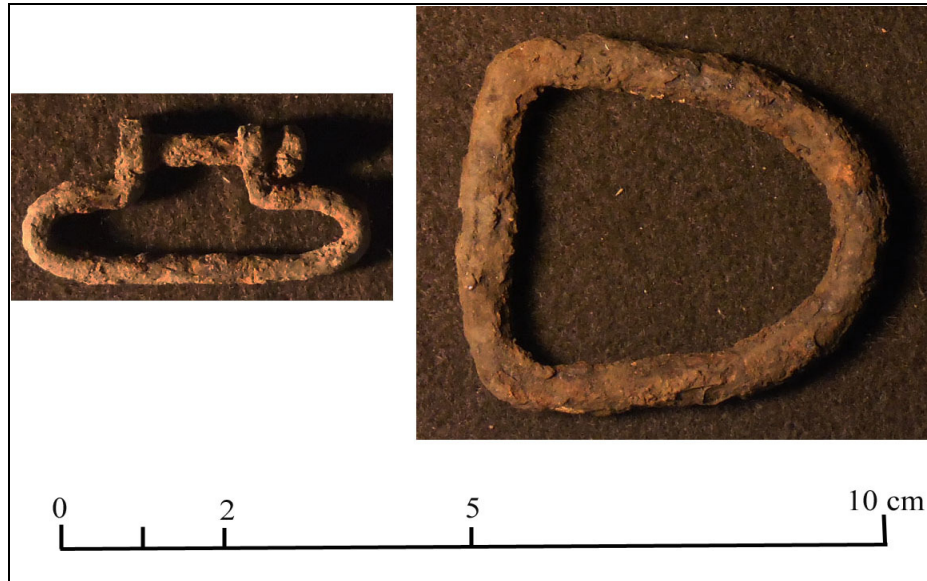


Figure 28. Husbandry and procurement related artifacts recovered during site examination testing.  
 (Left: Musket strap swivel Tr2 3-3.5 m N-10 cm; Right: Harness buckle Tr 2 2-2.5 m N-10 cm)

## Subsistence

### Procurement Equipment

Archaeologists recovered three items associated with procuring foodstuffs: two pieces of flint debris and one strap swivel from a Brown Bess musket (**Figure 26**). The flint chips, one gray and one tan in color, were found in the south yard, and the strap swivel was found in Trench 2. The Brown Bess musket was first developed in 1722 and became a common weapon among both American militia and British regulars. The presence of an iron strap swivel may indicate that this was from an earlier model, as later ones (generally after the mid 1730s) were made of brass.

### Faunal Remains

Archaeologists recovered 26 pieces of bone and one quahog shell fragment. The majority of the bone could not be identified beyond the level of large or medium mammal (including a few calcined pieces that probably came from the cooking hearth). Thirteen pieces were identified as having come from cattle. These were found in Trench 2 (the kitchen area trench) and in the south yard.

### Floral Remains

Three peach pit fragments were found in the west yard. Their recovery from well below the surface supports their probable association with the historic occupation versus being recent depositions at the site.

### Other Metal

Archaeologists also recovered seven unidentifiable flat iron fragments.

### **Modern Material**

Modern to late historic artifacts recovered include one piece of machine-made glass and one piece of coal.

### **Artifact Summary**

A total of 1,904 artifacts were recovered during the site examination. The recovered ceramics were strongly biased towards those produced in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, with a very small portion, excepting possibly some of the creamware, dating to before the Revolution. The ceramic evidence appears to indicate that occupation at the site began possibly a quarter century after the Robbins had married in 1751. The ceramic vessels were biased towards table and teawares (e.g. plates, cups, saucers, mugs, and a jug) in many ware types, with other vessel types being limited to food processing and storage vessels (e.g. milk pans, pans, and storage pots). It is possible that other common wares (e.g. chamber pots, bowls, platters) may have been made of pewter or silver, or even wood, and would not be commonly represented archaeologically. The presence of matched sets and wares that were considered more expensive (transfer-printed) as well as more common wares (blue and white and polychrome hand-painted wares) indicate that the family appears to have been of moderate status and by no means wealthy. Other recovered artifacts support both the presence of a few artifacts dating before the last quarter of the eighteenth century (the table knife and the iron Brown Bess musket sling swivel) as well as moderately expensive pieces (the silver button).

The architectural artifacts indicate that the house does appear to have burned (as evidenced by the melted window glass, the charcoal, and the burned nails) and was a seventeenth century house moved to the location and upgraded / renovated with the replacement of the casement windows with double hung sash windows and the replacement or repair of the exterior covering (either shingles or clapboards or a combination of both). This later work was known to have occurred after 1820 based on the nail types. The window replacement may have taken place at the same time or earlier.

Faunal remains indicate that the family ate cattle and medium-sized mammals (possibly sheep or swine) and that, based on the cattle elements present (head, rib, and lower limbs), at least the cattle were probably raised and butchered on site. Peaches may have been another food eaten on site.

The pattern of alcohol and tobacco use at the site conforms more closely to nineteenth century Temperance Movement patterns than to eighteenth century ones, with little evidence of either having been used. The tobacco use pattern may also be more indicative of higher relative socio-economic status, where upper level households either used tobacco less often, or else they smoked out of reusable pipes that were less likely to leave a trace archaeologically. The lack of tobacco pipes also may be a result of a decision by Robbins to not use kaolin tobacco pipes, which were generally made in Bristol, England, as part of his support for local industries, possibly preferring to smoke cigars or out of wooden or corn cob pipes, all of which would be less likely to leave a trace archaeologically.

Fieldwork determined that Captain Robbins' house was of a central-chimney, hall and parlor plan typical of seventeenth century New England. The house may have started out as a single cell cottage measuring 5.5 m. (18') east to west by 7 m. (23') north to south with a west wall chimney that was the original home of Captain Wheeler. This finding is based on the presence of wall plaster only associated with the east room of the house, as recovered from Trench 1. The wall plaster may also indicate that

only the east room was plastered while the west room could have been just whitewashed or had walls covered with wainscot boards. If the building did begin its life as a smaller cottage (as many other 17<sup>th</sup> century houses in the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies did [Cummings 1979]), it may have been expanded into a hall and parlor style house measuring 12 m. (39') east to west by 9 m. (29') north to south in the seventeenth century as well. The dimensions of the house are based on the findings from the 2015 site examination. Testing immediately south of the south wall of the cellar hole encountered refuse more typical of yard scatter (small pieces of ceramics) versus material that would be expected to be found beneath the house (larger pieces of ceramics). The presence of a threshold stone immediately adjacent to the south cellar hole wall supports the interpretation that the south sill of the house rested on the south wall of the cellar. The location of the east wall of the house was determined by the concentration of artifacts recovered from Trench 1 and from the presence of what may be a robbed trench associated with the foundation on this side of the house. The west foundation of the house remains in place and was encountered at the west end of Trench 3. The location of the north foundation of the house was determined by the presence of a possible robbed foundation trench in Trench 2 while the north end of the leanto was determined by the distribution of the large paving stones encountered in Trench 2 and the difference in soils at the south and north ends of the trench. The soils at the southern end appeared more disturbed, while those at the north end were more consistent with the natural stratigraphy encountered in the yards around the house. The leanto located on the north side, measuring 2 m. (6.5') north to south and possibly running the entire width of the house (12 m.) may have been added or rebuilt after it had been moved to its present location by Captain Robbins. No excavation was carried out in or immediately around the hearth, so its dimensions are theorized based on the chimney base visible in the cellar hole.

The chronology of the use and occupation of the property is presented below in Table 3.

Table 3. Occupation and property history

Date	Event
1669	Captain Thomas Wheeler granted 200 acres of land including the property area Captain Thomas Wheeler builds his house
Early 18 <sup>th</sup> century 1747	George Robbins (Captain Joseph's grandfather) acquired the property Nathan Robbins (Captain Joseph's father) acquired the property upon his father's death
1750	Nathan Robbins granted 60 acres, including the Wheeler homesite, to his son Joseph, possibly as a wedding present Joseph Robbins purchased 15 acres on the north side of Concord Road (the project area) from his father
1751	Joseph Robbins marries Ruth Bacon
By April 1775	Joseph Robbins and his wife were living on the north side of Concord Road (at the project area) Wheeler house moved from south side of Concord Road to the project area Casement windows replaced with sash windows Chimney rebuilt
1770s	Middens on the northwest and south sides of the house begun to form
1800	Joseph dies and the property is left to his son John who has a home elsewhere

Table 3. (Cont.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1816	Joseph's wife Ruth dies (it is not known if she continued to live on the property after Joseph's death)
1800?-1830	Property possibly rented out by John
1830	House burns Middens cease to be added to
1836	Property passes from John to his son Elbridge
1895	Alarm Stone monument erected Land on south side of cellar hole landscaped Stonewalls added on south side of cellar hole Granite steps added leading down to Concord Road from the south yard
1959	Property donated to the Town of Acton by the Robbins family

## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite Site Examination resulted in the recovery of 1,904 historic artifacts and the identification of the size and layout of his house. Archaeologists recovered the majority of the artifacts in the south and northwest yard areas within 15 m. of the house. No soil features were encountered in the yards, but two concentrated areas of artifacts were found.

### **A. Site Boundaries**

The maximum bounds of the site were initially defined by topographic features: the soccer field to the west, Concord Road to the south, Morrisson Farm to the east, and Woodlawn Cemetery to the north, defining a site area measuring 73.2 m. (238') north to south by 83 m. (270') east to west. Site examination testing redefined the bounds to 18 m. (58.5') to the north of the house, 5 m. (16.25') to the south, 15 m. (48.75') to the west, and 10 m. (32.5') to the east. The northern and eastern bounds are defined by drop offs in artifact concentrations, the southern bound remains defined as Concord Road, and the western bound remains as the soccer field.

### **B. Site Integrity**

Archaeologists suggest that the site evidences considerable archaeological integrity, based on the content and extent of intact refuse areas and structural remains, the stratigraphic and horizontal separation of artifact deposits, and presence of faunal materials. Archaeologists identified two artifact concentrations and an assemblage of artifacts temporally diagnostic to the eighteenth and nineteenth century. There is no evidence of historic plowing but, despite evidence of some type of earth moving and filling across the site, probably dating to the period of occupation, the site expresses a high degree of archaeological integrity.

### **C. Research Potential**

Archaeologists evaluated the research potential for the site by considering site type, trade and settlement, subsistence practices, and site activities.

The following research questions were investigated by the Site Examination:

#### **1. What was the nature of the relationship between the Robbins and their neighborhood and town spheres of interaction?**

Documentary evidence indicates that Joseph Robbins was a very active member of the Acton community. He held various posts in the town from 1753 until 1795, serving almost exclusively on committees relating to Revolutionary activities (Committee of Correspondence, committees to purchase rye for soldiers, to set prices for necessities, to settle with soldiers families, and to recruit new soldiers) from 1775-1786. Joseph Robbins is variably referenced in various records as a husbandman (MCC 1750:DB 50-439), a yeoman (MCC 1765:DB 64-66), consistently as a gentleman after 1774, and a trader (MCC 1775:DB 76-562). While not referred to directly as a merchant, the title of trader may have meant someone who occasionally dabbled in providing goods to their neighbors.

**2. Was Captain Joseph Robbins a farmer and a trader, or did his income only come from his trading work? Can any of the material remains at the site (agricultural tools, faunal remains) help to investigate this?**

Only one record referred to Robbins as a trader (1775) at a time when he was supplying food for the local militia and lumber to the town (possibly from a sawmill he may have owned on the old Wheeler land). The amount of land that he held at the time of his death (75 acres in the immediate vicinity of his homesite and an additional amount of woodlot elsewhere in town) make it likely that he was a farmer and a trader, and he probably received pay for the many positions that he served at various times in town. Archaeologically, the only evidence of husbandry was the cattle remains recovered - the presence of cranial and lower limb elements is indicative of on-site butchery of complete carcasses (as the heads and lower limbs are the elements processed first, and generally not sold or preserved) either purchased whole or, as is more often the case, raised and killed on-site. The recovery of fragments of redware milkpans and storage pots also indicates that the family probably processed milk at the site and stored home-grown products.

**3. To what degree was the family self-sufficient, and to what degree did they rely on the larger local, regional, national and international markets?**

The presence of ceramics imported from England indicates that this family, like virtually every other Colonial and Early Federal period family, laid their tables and took their tea from cups and plates made in foreign factories. Redware at the Robbins site accounts for a larger overall portion (63.6%) of the ceramic assemblage, however. Redware made up only 31.6% of the assemblage at the contemporary, but higher status, Watson Homesite in Plymouth. The Robbins also had a very small assemblage of ceramics that dated strictly to before the American Revolution. Complicating the assessment of socio-economic status via the ceramic assemblage, Robbins was also known to have supported the ban on the purchasing of British goods in 1770, continuing a non-consumption tradition begun in the 1760s. It is possible that the small number of British ceramics and the larger percentage of presumably colonial-made redware present at the site could represent an active decision on the site's inhabitants to limit their consumption of British goods and support local industries. Following the American Revolution, trade with England resumed, and the ceramics present at the site (creamwares, pearlwares, and whitewares) may reflect the inhabitants' active choice to once again purchase British goods, possibly as a sign of America's new self-determined control of their own economy.

**4. What was their socio-economic level and how did it manifest itself in their consumer choices (ceramics, glass, and faunal)?**

Unfortunately, no probate is on file in the Middlesex County records, so it is impossible to determine just how well off the Robbins were compared to their neighbors. A probate attributed to Captain Robbins is in the possession of the Acton Historical Society, but it lacks title page and concluding pages that would definitely verify it as representing Captain Robbins' estate and appears to have been erroneously attributed to him. Further support of this erroneous attribution is provided by the assigning of values in pounds/ shillings/ and pence versus dollars and cents on this supposed 1800 probate. As this document lacks any clear association with Captain Robbins, it was concluded that it would be inappropriate to use it for any analysis associated with this project. Archaeologically, the lack of

porcelain in the assemblage and the abundance of hand-painted versus transfer-printed wares points towards a family of modest means, while the documentary record indicates that Captain Robbins held posts and served on committees in the town and colony normally associated with people of the upper class. It may be a situation just like Wood addressed, where he stated that because the North lacked a wealthy gentry class, colonial assemblies grudgingly included merchants and husbandmen, people who patriotically wanted to serve but could not ignore the everyday needs of their occupations (Wood 1992: 120). The Robbins may not have been economically well off, but Joseph Robbins appears to have had a genuine patriotic desire to serve his emerging country. After commanding the militia at Concord Bridge, he never seems to have led troops into battle again, preferring, or being forced to, stay in Acton and fulfill his role by making sure the militia was well supplied, by recruiting new militia men, and by attending committee meetings, thus fighting on a governmental / administrative level in a no less important way than that of the militias who were fighting in the field.

**5. What can the architectural style of the house and the layout of its surrounding yard tell us about the Robbins' participation in larger regional and national trends in architectural styles and farm / work yard layout in the eighteenth century and about the family's socio-economic status?**

Fieldwork determined that Captain Robbins' house was of a central-chimney, hall and parlor plan typical of seventeenth century New England. The house is believed to have started out as a single cell cottage measuring 5.5 m. (18') east to west by 7 m. (23') north to south with a west wall chimney that was the original home of Captain Wheeler. It was probably expanded into a hall and parlor style house measuring 12 m. (39') east to west by 9 m. (29') north to south in the seventeenth century as well. The leanto located on the north side, measuring 2 m. (6.5') north to south and possibly running the entire width of the house (12 m.) may have been added or rebuilt after it had been moved to its present location by Captain Robbins. Robbins updated the house by replacing the casement windows with double hung sash style windows and by painting it. The window change was evident through the recovery of both casement leads and a glazing point, and the painting was recorded in the local history. The Robbins house was reportedly one of the first painted houses in Acton. The house was originally located on the south side of Alcott Street, which is directly across Concord Road from the project area. Robbins apparently wanted to "modernize" the house, but perhaps because of the financial outlay associated with building a new fashionable Georgian style house, he chose to move the house onto north the side of Concord Road - the main road from Concord center to the center of Acton (a more visible and fashionable location) - and give it a facelift, possibly to make it look more Georgian than it was (much the same way as occurred at Mott Farm in Portsmouth, Rhode Island (Upton 1979)).

The author's reanalysis of the work at the Minuteman National Historical Park (MMNHP) in the 1970s and 80s found that the David Brown, Joseph Mason, and David Fiske homesites all were first occupied in the seventeenth centuries and all had central-chimney hall and parlor plans, similar to the Robbins' homesite. This shows that the hall and parlor plan was a common architectural style in use in the Acton/ Concord area and that families tended to continue to occupy and use seventeenth century houses into at least the end of the eighteenth century. It also shows that the typical seventeenth century houses in this area were pioneer homes, but none of them appear to have been built using post-in-ground / earthfast construction. They also appear to have been built from the start as hall and parlor structures with cellars. All these factors indicate that the occupants saw themselves as people who were going to

not just settle but occupy the land for a significant period of time. If one was unsure about whether they would be living on their parcel for a generation or even until their death, one would not invest a significant amount of energy or resources in home construction. The 17<sup>th</sup> century settlers on the MMNHP and the Robbins' homesite appear to have arrived with a sense of permanence right from the start. They were planning to stay, and thus built houses of some significance - fine and fair buildings versus cottages. This finding could indicate that the occupant's actual or perceived prospects for economic prosperity were high (Disviscour et al 1990: 396).

The yard area around the Robbins homesite also conformed well to what was discovered at the MMNHP. A potentially significant difference was found in the use of yard space around the Mason and Brown Homesites when compared with the Fiske Homesite. Refuse at both the Mason and Brown Homesites was scattered somewhat indiscriminately around the house. At the Mason site, the archaeologists did find that the occupants tended to dispose of their refuse very near the house, especially in the south yard, which faced the road. The distribution of cultural material in the yards around the Brown house indicate that the north and south yards were extensively used for waste disposal and possibly agricultural activities, while the east yard yielded only domestic debris, probably from the kitchen. The highest concentration of utilitarian redwares came from the east yard extending from the house east to the edge of the property (and probably beyond). This was also the area that contained the highest concentration of phosphates (which result from organic waste from humans and animals), interpreted as possibly being the result of the disposal of kitchen refuse. The high concentration of phosphates may be an indicator of the location of animal pens or houses, and thus places where animals would be depositing their waste, or muck heaps - places where wastes were composted prior to being used as fertilizer in beds and fields. The south and north yards were also used, perhaps for domestic and/or agricultural activities as suggested by the highest concentrations of phosphates and bone. Overall, the high occurrence of phosphates may indicate that yard appearance was not as great of a concern as it became in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Yards may have been used more as outdoor work spaces and generally as places to dispose of trash that was not wanted in the household. The west yard yielded much lower amounts of artifactual refuse and phosphate levels, indicating a different use for this area, possibly for planting beds or as a work yard where one would not want to be emptying chamber pots or throwing out sherds of broken pottery.

At the Fiske site, the refuse was deposited primarily in the north and south yards, while the west yard, which contained the well and a possible drain or slot trench fence line, was relatively free of refuse. Analysis of the distribution of yard waste found that most of the material had been disposed of in the immediate vicinity of the house, and that the south yard was used intensively for the disposal of kitchen-related debris and domestic and possibly agricultural activities. The highest density of phosphates and ceramics was in the south yard, and the highest concentration of bone was to the southwest of the house. The highest density of redware and utilitarian wares was to the north of the house, possibly indicating the location of dairy activities. The paucity of refuse in the north and western yards was interpreted as possibly indicating where the orchards were located. The use of the cellars at the Fiske site also showed that Fiske organized his labors within the house as well, much in the same way that the paved room at the north side of the Robbins house does. The west cellar of the Fiske house appears to have been used as a dairy, just as the north room at the Robbins' house may have been, while the east cellar may have been for more general purpose use.

At the Robbins homesite, the highest concentrations of refuse were found in the south and northwest yards, including in the area immediately around the well. This pattern conforms more to what the MMNHP archaeological work found in association with the Daniel Brown and Joseph Mason versus the Fiske homesite. Mason and Brown were not part of the emerging elite (as David Fiske was), rather they were artisan-farmers of moderate means. This may mean that Joseph Robbins was more like Mason and Brown than Fiske, at least in the outward presentation of his homelot and his refuse disposal patterns, with the yard being more of a general work area versus a presentation piece.

**6. The local history states that the house burned down in 1830 after having been abandoned for a number of years. Is there any evidence of destruction of the structure by fire and are there any artifacts associated with this possible burn layer that could help date the end of occupation at the site?**

Abundant evidence for the destruction of the house by fire was found, taking the form of charcoal, melted window glass, fire-hardened nails, and a few burnt pieces of ceramics. The presence of burned machine-cut nails of a style dating to after 1820 supports the destruction of the house after this date. The ceramic and nail assemblage indicates that the house was probably occupied until ca. 1830 when it burned down and was not rebuilt. Evidence for the fire appeared most extreme in the west room.

**7. Is there any archaeological evidence for ells, outbuildings, or structural modifications to the main house, and can their date of erection and abandonment be dated by associated artifacts?**

No evidence for additional outbuildings was found, but it was determined that the north ell / leanto may have been added after the house had been moved to the present site and had been occupied for a period of time. The depth and age of the artifacts found to the south versus the north side of the paving stones may indicate that it was added in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. Evidence in the form of machine-cut shingle / clapboard nails was also found, indicating repairs or renovations being conducted on the house in the early nineteenth century. It also appears that the original casement windows present on the seventeenth century house were replaced with double hung sash type windows at some point after the house had been moved to the present location.

## **Recommendations**

The Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite was found to maintain a high degree of integrity and to have a high research potential. The site has provided valuable information about Plantation to Early Federal Periods (1668-1830) regarding vernacular architecture and colonial use of house yard space and consumer choices. The site was also found to extend beyond the present preserved bounds.

It is recommended that the protected area around the cellar hole be expanded to at least 20 m. to the north, west, and east of the cellar hole, and to the sidewalk bordering Concord Road to the south of the cellar hole. It is also recommended that, due to the undisturbed nature of the site and the archaeological potential around the house, archaeological excavations be carried out in the areas to be impacted by the proposed cellar wall rebuild in order to mitigate the impacts that will be caused to the site.

Additional information regarding the restoration / stabilization work scope, including a project narrative, rehabilitation specifications, and scaled plans and drawings showing existing and proposed work should be prepared and submitted for review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Town of Acton prior to the start of any stabilization work on the walls.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Research Topics**  
**Addressed by this Report**  
**(as presented in the permit application)**

Captain Joseph Robbins was married in 1751, a time when merchants and husbandmen were becoming rich off the demands for foodstuffs and military supplies for the war with France. With the cessation of hostilities in 1765, those same people were now faced what has been called “an uncomfortable period of adjustment” after British troops had left and the demand for goods and services dried up (Labaree 1975:17). Fortunately, by this time, America had become the wheat bread basket of Europe, and as a result, farmers grew surplus wheat that could be sold to merchants and traders who then exported it to Europe (Wood 1992: 134). The other major export from America was homespun cloth. Exports increased, causing a proto-industrialization of rural life, with farmers diversifying their economic income base to include a bit of homespun cloth, a bit of lumber, or a bit agricultural surplus grown solely for export. In the years before the Revolution, imports from Britain skyrocketed from one million pounds in 1747 to four and one-half million in 1772 (Wood 1992: 137). All sorts of shopkeepers and petty traders became involved in the import and sale of British dry goods, making the title of merchant meaningless by the time of the Revolution (Wood 1992: 137). The idea of labor had also substantially changed by the 1770s to 1780s, with hard work no longer being thought of as menial and servile - it was now thought to be the natural state of man and a natural result of poverty and necessity. The lower classes no longer felt that they were destined to remain at their low stations for their entire lives. Though hard work, a simple farmer could rise to the level of government office and be part of the newly defined genteel class. This led many farmers to grow surplus in order to have more to sell and more disposable income with which to purchase fashionable consumer goods.

Captain Joseph Robbins may have begun his independent adult life as a simple farmer, but 50 years later, at the time of his death, he appears to have risen in the ranks of Acton society and passed away as a gentleman whose livelihood came from serving on town committees and in various town posts, agriculture, the operation of at least one saw mill, and serving as one of the town's merchant traders. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this would have been considered a respectable, but not a genteel occupation, making it unlikely that a country merchant like Robbins would achieve much status before ca. 1750. At this time, the genteel were distinguished by birth / parentage, wealth, walk and talk, use of silver, dancing and fencing, poetry and musical instruments, classical learning, wigs and powdered hair, lace ruffs and silk stockings, elaborate houses, portraits, servants, fine livery, and freedom and independence (Wood 1992: 32). These were the men of soaring ambition in society, the men who, in the first half of the century, made things happen, the ones who did not have to work to earn a living (Wood 1992: 28). Captain Joseph Robbins was a player on the local, state, and national level. He was representative of the emerging nouveau riche, the merchant farmer gentleman who was becoming the leader-class in the North.

## **Wealth**

The theoretical basis of the Site Examination at the Captain Joseph Robbins Homesite was to examine how the physical remains recovered (e.g. artifacts, architectural evidence and yard space use) can be used to link these physical remains to processes such as status display, wealth, farmstead organization, and economy in the seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries. The examination of status and wealth will follow the theoretical and methodological basis outlined by Gibb (1996).

The study of consumer behavior attempts to link artifacts to historical processes such as status, display, and class conflict, and are accessed by analysis of house siting, the creation, maintenance and

modification of architectural spaces, interment of dead, and ceramic selection (Gibb 1996:2). Consumer behavior researchers such as Gibb see these as direct attempts by the household to maintain their identities and / or to achieve identities and forms to which they aspire, with household members making decisions guided by prescribed roles within larger social, cultural, and economic contexts (Gibb 1996 2, 16). Gibb (1996) proposed a wealth-based examination of the artifacts, architecture, and layout of historic archaeological sites. His essential point is that the artifacts we collect from a site represent expended wealth that are discarded because they no longer held any value as wealth, no longer could be used to produce wealth, and had stopped articulating the identities or values of the owner (Gibb 1996: 43). The household is described as an aggregation of individuals, with the houselot (the collection of buildings, fences and yards) being both product and medium of household aggregate behavior (Gibb 1996:17). The household serves the purpose of providing a bridge between reality of the individual or group situation and the ideals for which they strive (Gibb 1996: 25). The material culture of the household "... gives physical form to abstraction of culture mediating contradictions between real and ideal by providing stability and convincing arguments for the reality, validity and achievability of those ideals" (Gibb 1996: 25). Items of material culture are purchased as a means of achieving an economic goal (e.g. purchasing hoes to grow salable crops) while other items (e.g. above subsistence level quality ceramics) create the illusion that the subject is achieving an ideal, reinforcing the notion that the ideal is achievable (Gibb 1996: 25). Artifacts of similar form and function found among households that are similar in terms of self perceptions are measurable in terms of economics, ethnicity, naturalism and religion, while aberrant artifacts may represent efforts at redefinition, a striving for an ideal state as perceived by the subject (Gibb 1996: 25). The act of purchasing items of material culture, either for practical subsistence or for consumption, is a process by which an individual or group creates and recreates its identity. This reminds us who we are as individuals and material consumption, and in particular, is a way for the group to declare identity, goals, and values (McCracken 1998). The household and its portable items of material culture represent the wealth of the household and the kinds, relative proportions of materials, and ways in which they were used. As such, they indicate the householders' efforts to define self to self as well as to larger community (Gibb 1996: 41). For example, in and of itself, a redware pot is relatively inexpensive, but it can be used for dairying to create a salable product to bring more wealth into the household. Alternatively, clothing may be a necessity, but the purchase of extra and finer clothes provides a "saving account" that could be bequeathed at the death of its owner (Lemire 1990). Faunal remains indicate efforts to acquire energy through food consumption and ultimately produce wealth through activity; but studying the kill-off patterns can also indicate the husbandry practices and possible sources of income for the household.

The houselot, the location of the domestic site and its architecture and landscaping, includes the artifacts that are the residue of how householders attempted to define and assert themselves as a group; features that represent the remains of occupation, as well as material expressions of how the householders perceived themselves in the physical and social world (Gibb 1996: 39). Also evident was attempts at building expansion or simple maintenance, the active modification of landscape, and passive alteration through erosion/ decay (Wilk 1990). Analysis of these features and processes will provide evidence for perceived, real, and projected images of wealth of the occupants. King and Miller (1987) found that the organization of the homelot space reflects the occupation of the people who lived there and argued that social and functional change was reflected in refuse disposal patterns. Gibb and King and Miller (1987) further recognized that seventeenth century sites generally lack well-defined

activity areas and little spatial differentiation in open areas around structures. They interpreted this as being a product of weakly defined gender roles and a small, relatively undifferentiated work force.

Wilk has pointed out some of the limitations of a consumer behavior model of studying historic households and houselots. In the first instance he argues, the household is not a corporate entity with well-defined bounds, so, unlike a corporate model, household boundaries are ill-defined. The household is not isolated and autonomous, but is embedded within a wider reference of social and economic networks; individuals within the household have different degrees of household membership; the household economy is always abridged by law, custom, community; and there is no function that is universal to all households (Wilk 1990). Unlike a corporate entity whose motivations can be read out of a corporate philosophy, householders' motivations are not directly retrievable from the archaeological record. Finally, both internal and external influences such as social class, ethnicity, and family marketing efforts are not controlled in the consumer behavior model, making it analytically weak in many instances. (Henry 1991).

At this time, laboring was associated with toil, trouble, pain, and it was a pursuit for the common, and not the genteel folk. As the century progressed, this attitude about work changed as the desire for material goods by the lower classes increased, and the lines between the genteel and commoners became blurred, thanks to the ideals of the Revolution (Wood 1992: 34). Merchants gained their profits in the workaday world of interests, and as a result they were considered to be motivated by avarice rather than virtue. Thus, in the south, on the eve of the Revolution, such people would not be allowed to serve in public office, because to serve it was believed that one needed to be virtuous, and to be virtuous one needed to have liberty and independence, the kind of independence that could only come from freedom from the workaday world (Wood 1992: 106). The North did have some well-educated independent professional men and gentlemen, the Jeffersons and Washingtons of the South, but not enough to fill all the positions needed during and following the Revolution. It lacked "merchant princes" whose wealth and standing sufficed to allow them to imitate the lesser gentry of England, and was filled with a gentry class that could not ignore everyday business, and as a result many of the colonial assemblies grudgingly included merchants and husbandman (Wood 1992: 120). Such a merchant / husbandman was Captain Joseph Robbins.

In the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these men had begun to become rich off of economic changes wrought by the Revolution and America's changing economic role in the world. America became the wheat bread basket of Europe, and as a result, farmers grew surplus wheat that could be sold to merchants and traders who then exported it to Europe (Wood 1992: 134). The other major export from America was homespun cloth. This led to these classes having disposable income for the first time in American history. These classes then used this income to begin to emulate the genteel, thus weakening the social hierarchy and leading to the emergence of a consumer society (Wood 1992: 135). The upper class reacted by speaking out against luxury and invoking Republican messages and traditional Puritan ideals to extol simplicity and to warn of the danger of excess, even going so far as to urge higher duties on imported goods to put them out of reach to the lower class (Wood 1992: 136). Others contended that the new consumption was a stimulus to manufacture and industrialization. No matter what was preached by the genteel, it appeared that by the time of the Revolution, the new consumer culture had become ingrained in America. As an example of this, the years before the Revolution saw imports from Britain skyrocket from one million pounds in 1747 to four and one-half million in 1772 (Wood 1992:

137). All sorts of shopkeepers and petty traders became involved in the import and sale of British dry goods, making the title of merchant meaningless by the time of the Revolution (Wood 1992: 137). The idea of labor had substantially changed by the 1770s to 1780s, with hard work no longer being thought of as menial and servile, as it was now thought to be the natural state of man and a natural result of poverty and necessity. The lower classes no longer felt that they were destined to remain at their low stations for their entire lives. Through hard work, a simple farmer could rise to the level of government office and be part of the newly defined genteel class.

The genteel had to then redefine themselves, as a definition based on wealth and material goods had become blurred by the scramble of the lower classes to acquire goods and rise socially. Gentility became defined as politeness, grace, taste, learning, and character - to be a gentleman meant to think and act like one (Wood 1992: 195). The Revolutionary leaders tended to be men of high ambition and relatively modest origins who were gentlemen as a result of achieved versus ascribed standards of aristocracy (Wood 1992: 196). They were, in effect, first generation gentlemen. These men, like Washington, Jefferson, Adams and Franklin, went to extraordinary lengths to fulfill the classical values embraced by the proponents of the new republic and to create suitable classical personae - Washington, the perfect Roman Cincinnatus (general who returned to his farm after the war), and Adams, the epitome of classical values (educated, devoted to the public, without interests or private passions, no personal ambition, and no desire for wealth) (Wood 1992: 205-206). Unfortunately, the mass of the American people were incapable of the utopian ideals and the degree of virtue needed for pure republicanism, and as a result, the new leaders were too involved with trade and money-making to think beyond their narrow interests and neighborhoods to be concerned with the welfare of the state or country (Wood 1992: 229). The expectation of raising one's standard of living seeped deeper and deeper into society, breeding social competitiveness and individualism (Wood 1992: 230). The changes created by the Revolution made industry and individuality more important than ever before, leading to a leveling of society and a rise in power of the working class.

Local ways of life and cultural manifestations can be considered as functioning parts of regional systems of spatial and cultural interaction (USDI 1980: 68). During the Colonial and early Federal periods (1675-1800) rural home sites and farmsteads in Massachusetts were locations that, while they may have practiced more agrarian or vernacular subsistence practices, existed as parts of larger local, regional and national economies which were experiencing a mixture of burgeoning and turbulent economic, technological, and social changes. Generally, rural farmsteads in the northeast during this period experienced a change from diversified (subsistence) operations to those that were specialized (market-oriented) (Division for Historic Preservation, State of Vermont 1990). This change came about for a variety of reasons: early industrialization, improved transportation networks, the growth of competitive markets, and the eventual migration of farmers to cheaper, more productive land in the western frontier. As the century progressed and farms became more specialized, features within the farm were reorganized (Grettlar et al 1996). Documenting the development of the farmstead, as witnessed in its special organization and changes to this organization, helps to delineate both patterns and variations in farm types through time (Beaudry 2001-2002).

Studies in the archaeology of domestic sites have focused on integrating primary documentation, social history, architectural history, and archaeological evidence in order to understand how changes in the landscape, waste and water management, and outbuilding construction relate to changes in household

consumption and economics (Beaudry 1986). The examination of changes in the use of the houselot, be it in the realm of rural, suburban, or urban development, can provide many insights into the nature of the group that created that environment (Stewart-Abernathy 1986). By analyzing and comparing varying aspects of landscape treatment, such as filling land to create land or to alter grade levels for aesthetic or for practical purposes, changes in sanitary facilities and utilities (associated with changing technology), plantings and gardens, cobbled yards or drives, and the placement of any feature or activity within a house lot can add to understanding of how people altered their surroundings to create order within the world around them (Beaudry 1986).

### **Research Topic: Self-sufficiency**

One of the research questions for this project involves the degree to which this family, which was living only a few miles outside of Acton center, was involved with the local market economy. This question relates to the Robbins' degree of self-sufficiency. According to this model, attitudes and not self-sufficiency inform rural occupation patterns. Rural inhabitants could and often did produce their own food, fuel, and furniture, but few researchers believe that they were totally self-sufficient. The stereotypical New England Yankee, self-sufficient, independent, and self-reliant, is more a romantic notion than a fact. Rural inhabitants, especially those who lived close to an urban core, must have sold produce or labor to pay their taxes and procure a limited range of high utility commodities such as imported ceramics. Food, firewood, and clothing do not survive well archaeologically, but those that do survive are those that are mass-produced, such as glass, ceramics, and metal. In many ways, this does not make consumer goods purchased at the market a good indicator of the overall standard of living enjoyed by the people who used them. Overall, it has been found that consumer-produced goods accounted for only a small percentage of total household expenditure in the nineteenth century (Friedlander 1991; Klein 1991). But, if the purchase of consumer goods was a high priority for householders, it would be reflected in high percentage of consumer goods within an assemblage. If, on the other hand, the purchase of consumer goods was not a high priority for household occupants, then the percentage, quality, and types of market-produced goods would reflect their philosophical choice.

The question is whether and to what degree did rural inhabitants made economic decisions that would maximize their profits and increase their purchases of consumer goods in order to maintain economic independence and preserve strong relations with their neighbors.

### **Research Topic: Vernacular Architecture/ Housing**

Unlike clothing and other perishable elements of culture, housing is usually well represented and more visible archaeologically, suggesting to some researchers that housing is the most sensitive indicator of class, in contrast to ceramics, glass, or faunal remains (Soltow 1992: 131). Catts and Custer (1990: 227), for example, found that 450 square feet formed a convenient dividing line between the houses of the poor and those of the middle class. The examination of the size, structure, and layout of the house at this site can provide insight into the social class and status of this industrial period working class family. Conversely, some investigators see status as best indicated by social status followed by the quality of the house or residential area (neighborhood) (Spencer-Wood 1984: 35).

## **Research Topic: Farmstead Studies**

As Miller and Klein note, "... our greatest opportunity to understand the relationship between people, their social and natural environment, and material culture comes from well-documented sites that have rich intact deposits" (Miller and Klein 2001-2002: 164). To that end, entire farmstead sites and their feature systems need to be studied through the use of landscape archaeology as advocated by Beaudry (2001-2002: 129), Klein and Baugher (2001-2002:167), and Adams (1990). Through the study of the entire farmstead within a geographic and environmental context, we can begin to understand the structure of these sites and the temporal variation in disposal and use patterns across the entire site, thus helping to resolve the question of the value of conducting archaeological research of these site types (McCann and Ewing 2001-2002: 19). Farmsteads are more than just the house, yard and outbuildings - the farm is a higher order subsystem within which many smaller subsystems operated. The landscape archaeology approach aims to examine the farm as an integrated whole and seeks to link changes in the landscape to the nature of and changes in technology, innovation in farm management practices, social identity, and regional and national events (Klein and Baugher 2001-2002: 167). Research questions for large scale farmstead archaeology thus seeks to delineate patterns of farm development; the variety of farm sizes, buildings, dates of construction and arrangement of buildings; typicality in terms of size, wealth, and resources of each farm; the incremental fashion in which most farms achieved this organization; the prevalence of farm building rearrangement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and the recurring patterns of spatial organization and activity usage (Beaudry 2001-2002: 130). Landscape archaeology research questions proposed by Adams include investigation of forest clearing, the construction of roads, tillage practices, the use of draft animals, change to woodlot use associated with the availability of coal and oil, and crop production (Adams 1990: 93) Farmstead sites represent the culmination of years of occupation, adaptation and change and should be thought of in these terms (Catts 2001-2002: 145). Beaudry advocates that archaeologists stop thinking in terms of potsherds and start thinking in terms of landscapes; of viewing the whole rather the parts that comprise farmstead features (Beaudry 2001-2002: 139). This view goes hand-in-hand the opinion of Wade Catts, who recommends farmstead land use histories as a means to understand long-term change in rural space (Catts 2001-2002: 150).

Other avenues for farmstead research include analysis of farmsteads a reflection of industrialization; ethnic and class differences between farmers and farm laborers examining; the roots of modern communities in the past; and the use of archaeological sites to create micro-histories, site biographies, and ethnographies that will lead to a broader understanding of rural and agricultural culture and society (Klein and Baugher 2001-2002: 167). Klein and Baugher advocate developing historic contexts for farmsteads by identifying the theme, time period, and geographic limits of the site, and defining the type of farmstead. From this perspective, archaeological investigations should involve survey and testing of all components of the farmstead site, excavating large areas within the entire site, using remote sensing within areas outside the farmstead core, giving equal attention to areas with and without large artifact densities, and using the full range of historical sources, including literature, paintings, agricultural journals and publications, and oral history (Klein and Baugher 2001-2002: 168-169).

APPENDIX B  
Table of Site Examination Artifacts

Artifact	Trenches			Yard Sections							
	T 1	T2	T3	N	S	E	W	SE	SW	NE	NW
<b>Architectural</b>											
Brick	23	34	80	28	111		6	2			7
Plaster	18										
Mortar	2		29								
Machine-Cut Nails	9	11	19		2		5				1
Hand Wrought Nails	39	64	89		35	2	2			3	3
Window Glass	15	23	8	8	59		3	1			2
Ceramic Tile Frag		1				1					
Lead Window Kame					1						
Glazing Point	1										
Charcoal	3	58		2	10						9
<b>Metal</b>											
Iron Flat Frag		2			3					1	1
Horseshoe Nail		1			2						
Iron Tool Handle?					1						
Hand Wrought Pail Handle							1				
<b>Clothing</b>											
<b>Buttons</b>											
Silver		1									
<b>Buckles</b>											
Buckle Frame		1									
Buckle Frag		1									
<b>Foodways</b>											
<b>Ceramics</b>											
Creamware- Undec.	3	75	3	60	37	9	11	1		6	26
Creamware- Brown HP		1									
Pearlware- Blue Edged		3			2						
Pearlware- Annular		1		1	3						
Pearlware- Blue HP	2	43		5	3		1			1	5
Pearlware- Dk Blue TP		4		2	1						

Artifact	Trenches			Yard Sections							
	T 1	T2	T3	N	S	E	W	SE	SW	NE	NW
Pearlware- Tan HP		1									
Pearlware- Interior TP		1									
Pearlware- Undec.	3	1			1						
Pearlware- Molded		3									
Redware- Int/ Ext Glz	2		1	1	10		5				10
Redware- Int & Ext Glazed		2									
Redware- Int. Glazed		12	1	2	6	2	11				
Redware- Glaze Miss.	9	45		93	199	4	71	1	25	11	65
Redware- Int. Glaze Missing/ Ext. Glazed				2							
Redware- Int. Glazed/ Ext. Glaze Missing	1	12		6	13		4			1	1
Redware- Int. Slip Dec.		6									
Stoneware- White Salt Glz	1										
Stoneware- Nottingham		2									
Whiteware- Blue HP		3									
Whiteware- Black TP	1										
Whiteware- Lt. Blue TP		1									
Whiteware- Green HP									1		
Whiteware- HP Poly. Floral		26									
Whiteware- Willow TP			1								
Whiteware- Undec.	1						1	1			
Refined Earthenware	1		1	1						1	
Staffordshire Slipware				2							
<b>Kitchen Metal</b>											
Kettle Handle	1										
Kettle Frag		1									
Kettle Bale		1									
Hearth Chain		1									
Cast Iron Pot		1									
Brass Teaspoon Handle		1									

Artifact	Trenches			Yard Sections							
	T 1	T2	T3	N	S	E	W	SE	SW	NE	NW
Iron Knife Blade		1									
<b>Faunal Remains</b>											
Cattle		8	1	1	3						
Large Mam. Lngbn		1									
Med. Mam. Lngbn				1			7				
Calcined Med. Mam. Fltbn		1		2							
Calcined Med. Mam. Lgbn		1									
Quahog			1								
<b>Floral</b>											
Peach Pit Frags							3				
<b>Glassware</b>											
Mold Blown Clear							2				
Lamp Glass											
Curved Thin Clear		4									
Curved Hand Blown Olive		2		1	1						2
Curved Hand Blown Clear		2									1
Curved Mach. Made Clear					4						
Curved Pressed Clear											1
<b>Fuel</b>											
Coal							1				
<b>Personal</b>											
Brass Thimble					1						
Pipe- 4/64"					1						
<b>Lithics</b>											
Flint- Gray					1						
Flint- Tan					1						
Slate- Writing Tablet		1									
Slate- Pencil		1									

APPENDIX C  
Artifact Catalog