



CITY OF NEWTON CITY-WIDE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY: PUBLIC EDUCATION REPORT



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Newton Community Preservation Committee

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August 2011

This report is also available online:
www.newtonma.gov

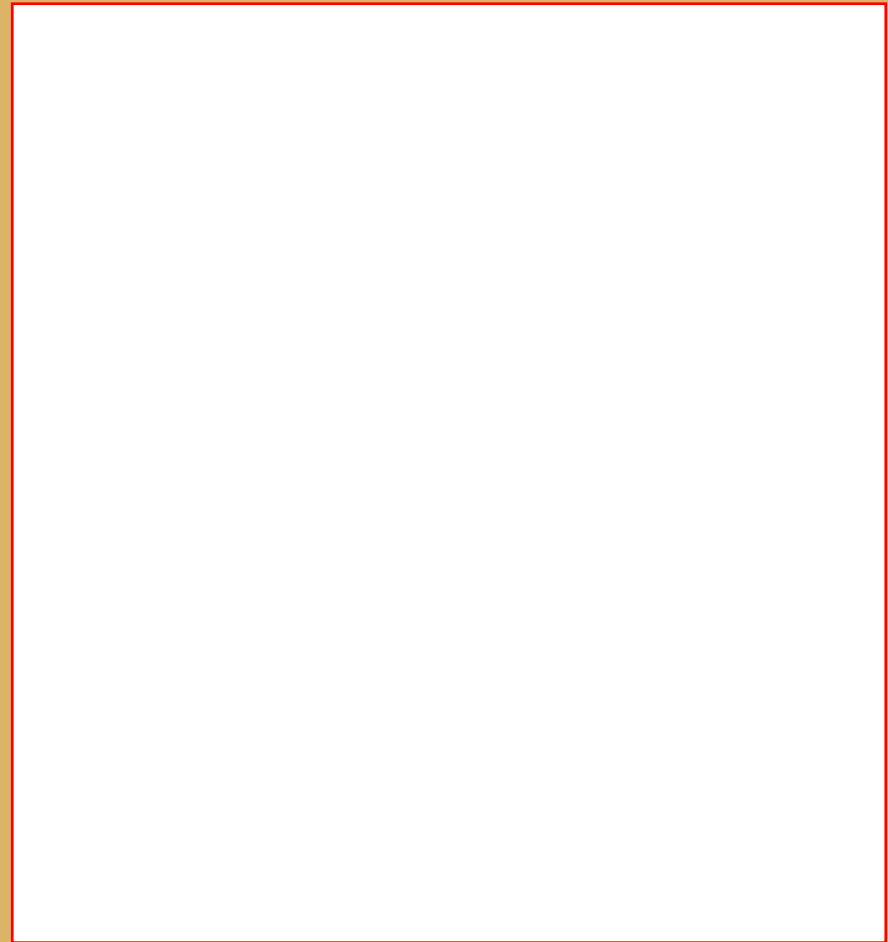
Cover Photographs: Left: Archaeologists excavating at the Durant-Kenrick Homestead; Right: the Eliot Memorial

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The City-Wide Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey of Newton, Massachusetts has been funded in whole by the Community Preservation Act from the category of Historic Preservation.

Introduction

This public report summarizes the results of a City-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey of Newton. The objective of the survey was to produce a comprehensive inventory of known archaeological resources in Newton and to identify areas of high archaeological sensitivity in the City in order to provide a guide for planning, permitting and preservation. The full version of this report is on file with the City. The archaeological survey was conducted by Archaeological Services, a consulting organization at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Funding was provided by the City of Newton. The research was conducted with the generous assistance of the Newton Historical Society.

The project included: 1) background research into Native American occupations that occurred before A.D. 1620, and historical uses of City lands after A.D. 1620; 2) ranking of City lands into zones possessing low and high likelihood to contain archaeological resources, based on topography, water sources, soils, and



*Newton artist Phillip Butler's "Old Farm House"
From the collection of the Lasell College Library*

previously recorded sites; 3) a walkover inspection of selected archaeological sites and areas of high sensitivity; 4) interviews with local informants and City personnel; and 5) integration of this information into thematic narratives of the City's past and development of an archaeological site protection plan for sensitive resource areas.

The study found that Newton contains some areas of high potential for the discovery of unrecorded Native American sites and many areas rich in historical archaeological sites. While most of the City has been subject to disturbance associated with urban

development, the potential to produce additional significant information remains. When the survey began, 13 Native American sites and 16 historic sites were on record for Newton at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. During the course of the project, nine additional Native American sites and 56 historic sites were added to the state inventory. The archaeological sites in Newton, both Native American and Historic, represent a vital part of the City's heritage and could contribute important information to the fields of archaeology and history.

Preservation Protocols

Residential development in Newton is dense, and small housing developments, single family homes, roadwork, and similar construction projects often affect archaeological sites. In instances where such projects do not fall under existing federal or state regulations that include an assessment of threat to potentially significant sites, it is recommended that the City adopt an ordinance and establish a system of review designed to require archaeological surveys of sensitive areas in an effort to protect archaeological sites. This process is spelled out more fully in the complete report.

Archaeological Resource Management Studies

As of 2007, 15 archaeological surveys had been conducted that relate to Newton, and have resulted in archaeological reports. Copies of these reports are on file at the Massachusetts Historical Commission in Boston. The previous surveys have provided varied information about archaeological resources in Newton, with some adding nothing new to the literature, and some reports providing extensive detailed information. However, in general, the findings of the previous surveys contributed some good information to the Native American and historical research contexts that were developed for the present survey.

Of these 15 surveys, only nine included

actual excavations, while the remaining six included background research and/or reconnaissance surveys. Of these nine surveys, five recovered new information and artifacts related to Native American sites. This includes artifacts from Marcy Farm (19-MD-182), two projects at the Jackson Homestead, and the identification and investigation of the Boston College Law School sites 1 and 2 (19-MD-771, 19-MD-772). In addition, all of the nine projects that included excavation also recovered artifacts from the historic period. This includes nineteenth and twentieth century materials from the area of Marcy Farm; eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts from the Boston College Chestnut Hill campus; nineteenth century material from the Jackson Homestead; artifacts dating from as early as the seventeenth century at the Boston College Newton campus; nineteenth and twentieth century materials from Houghton Garden; nineteenth century artifacts associated with the Thwing/Haynes/Slade residences; and some material found at the Boston College Law School 2 Native American site.

Collections Research and Local Informant Interviews

As part of the public presentation for this survey, members of the public were invited to bring in any artifacts they had found for identification. Where possible, the source locations of these artifacts were recorded, and were added to the list of Native American sites.

Identification and Documentation of Sites through Background Research

The background research resulted in lists of Native American and historical archaeological sites that have been recorded previously in Newton. It also resulted in the identification of artifacts and artifact collections obtained from locations in Newton where no sites had previously been documented. These locations were added to the list of known archaeological sites. The series of historical maps dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries revealed numerous resources (meeting houses, residences, mills, etc.) whose locations were plotted on a modern topographic map. These locations were designated as archaeological sites, and many of them were visited during the field reconnaissance. The recording of these sites will increase the likelihood of protection in the future, and will enable future researchers to investigate more fully the documentary records concerning the historical owners and occupants of the sites.

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Archaeology is the study of the material remains left behind by people in the past. These remains may be artifacts manufactured by people, the remnants of structures (usually referred to as "features") or, more likely, a combination.

Archaeologists use artifacts and features to tell a story about the past, ideally about specific events related to the behavior of individuals. Not all of these events are necessarily groundbreaking. Most archaeologists are more concerned with the mundane, day-to-day lives of people, especially those who have not left behind a written record. This is the main difference between archaeology and history.

Archaeologists must use the evidence they find during their careful excavations to piece together stories about the past, while historians most often search through written documents.

Because archaeological information must be excavated and removed to be analyzed, it is critical that archaeologists carefully record everything they do. Excavating a site destroys the original context, or relationship, between artifacts and features. If an archaeologist does not carefully document the finds, that context may be lost, and the information about human activity at the site is lost with it. That is why British archaeologist Ian Hodder says, "context is everything." Because of this, archaeology is a slow, painstaking process. Small trowels



An archaeology student from UMass Boston works on the Durant-Kenrick house

are usually used to excavate the soil, tape measures are used to constantly measure one's position, line-levels are used to ensure that depths from a known elevation are always correct so that an artifact's location in space in three dimensions is documented.

Drawings and photographs of each excavation level are usually made as well. In fact, excavation itself is far less time consuming than all of the necessary record keeping. But those records are critical to the archaeologist's ability to reconstruct the site and analyze artifacts later in the lab. The careful procedures used by archaeologists also differentiate them from artifact looters who are simply after pretty objects. Archaeologists use objects to understand the past, but what they treasure most is the information they uncover.

Archaeological sites are found a number of different ways. Many sites are discovered by accident, by people walking along a trail, or during construction. Hopefully in these circumstances, a responsible person will let the Massachusetts Historical Commission know exactly where their discovery was



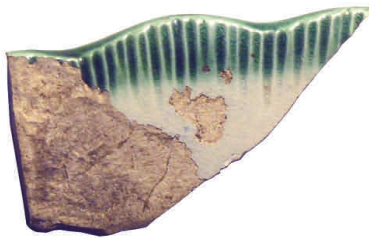
white salt-glazed stoneware
ca. 1760



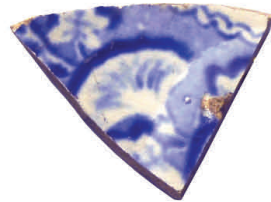
creamware
ca. 1790



overglaze trade porcelain
ca. 1810



green shell-edged pearlware
ca. 1820



blue transfer-printed pearlware
ca. 1820



green transfer-printed whiteware
ca. 1840

Ceramics like these excavated at the Jackson homestead are used by archaeologists to date episodes of activity associated with construction, remodeling or landscape use.

made so that the area can be protected in the future. Some sites are found through scholarly research, often using old documents and maps to reconstruct the location of an important site. In the case of Newton, for example, this might be the location of the Sachem Waban's wigwam, where John Eliot first preached to the Natives of this region. Most often, archaeological sites are located because of local, state or federal laws developed to protect archaeological sites, including those that may not yet be documented. The field of "Cultural Resource

Management" (or contract archaeology) has existed since the 1960s to ensure that areas that might contain important archaeological sites are carefully examined before construction occurs that might otherwise destroy an unknown site.

To actually locate unknown sites, archaeologists first do background research to learn more about documented sites in the area. They usually look at old maps and town histories that may include information about historic period features (like homesteads or old mills) that may no longer be visible on the

surface. Sometimes modern equipment like ground penetrating radar is used to locate areas of soil disturbance that may indicate the presence of old cellars that may warrant investigation, or even burials that should not be disturbed.

In fact, as part of this evaluation, ground penetrating radar was used to locate possible unmarked graves associated with Newton's East Parish Burying Ground. Most often, archaeologists just have to dig to find sites. They usually excavate small square holes carefully placed in a grid pattern so that the location can be accurately recorded. The soil is carefully dug up and passed through a shaking screen to help separate artifacts from the soil. When artifacts are found, they are placed into carefully labeled bags that record their location, depth and the soil type. Often, hundreds of such test pits may be excavated in order to be sure that no significant site is located in an area of proposed construction.

When a site is found, a determination must be made regarding its historical significance. Not every site qualifies, but, if after some additional testing the archaeologists decide that a site is important and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) agrees, then a decision must be made to alter construction plans to preserve the site or to excavate it so that construction can continue.