

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY

HOUSE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY

SPRING/SUMMER of 1999

Prepared and Written

by

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INTRODUCTION:

In March, 1999 I was asked by Wintonbury Historical Society Vice President, Ed Stanley, to assist in an archaeological study. This study was to be conducted at the societies' future home, the Captain Oliver Filley House.

Shortly there-after I met with Ed Stanley and Judy Sitkin at the site. We toured both the exterior and interior of the house. I found the site very interesting and offered my services. Also, I made it very clear that I was an advocational archaeologists and there would be no charge for my service. Further, if assistance was needed beyond my knowledge or capabilities, I would seek or recommend the assistance of experts through the Office of the State Archaeologist.

Shortly before the archaeological study of the site commenced, Ed Stanley gave me several reports and studies to update me on the site's history and recent activities. One of the reports was the 1995 archaeological survey performed by Archaeological Research Specialists (ARS). This report aided me in what I might expect to find on the site and provided me an insight of where to dig in the future without repeating their work. Thus, the spring/summer 1999 study would be a continuation of where ARS left off.

My basic approach to this site's study was to divide the site into areas or zones and dig what I feel is a good representative amount of test pits. This test pit probing for

artifacts is a sampling approach that has the least damaging effect on the sites integrity.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS:

Our area of study for the 1999 season would entail the area around the house where the grass is mowed regularly. Drawing 1 and 2 show this area. In front of the house it stretches over 43 feet in a southerly direction from the southeast corner of the house. On the westside of the house it is merely a 10 foot strip abutting the foundation. Finally, on the northern rear of the house it stretches out over 30 feet.

One of my initial observations was the house's orientation. If one holds a compass inline with the houses' west wall, it points directly at magnetic north. Was this intentional or coincidental?

Viewing the total landscape, both the study area and the surrounding fields, it is evident that the soil in the study area has been regraded. We know from the "Feasibility Study" of May 1995 on page 5, the Town of Bloomfield graded the northside to direct drainage around to the westside (Photo 2). Obviously, this excavation episode has effected the artifactual integrity of this portion of the site.

Another observation was a wet spot in the unmowed grass in the front yard. It is located directly inline with the east wall of the house, see Drawing 1.

The eastside of the minor wing looks to be the most intriguing. The large circumferential stone arch portico and the undug basement could indicate that this portion of the

minor wing was originally used for something other than living quarters. If this is the case, the undug basement floor could hold secrets to what service this area of the home may have served.

In the northwest corner of the house is a bricked in door connecting to the remains of a bathroom inside the house. The former use of this entry way should be a goal of our archaeological study.

The above are what I found to be of interest. I am sure as time goes on, others will come along with new perspectives and observations.

PHASE I:

Digging commenced in April and continued until August for all 3 phases. In order to compare the soils of our study area with the relatively undisturbed area outside, a control pit (Photo 4) was dug in the field northwest of the house (Drawing 2). This control pit reveals 5 inches of topsoil before a hard packed subsoil takes over.

Phase I study area is illustrated in Drawing 1. Due to the Town of Bloomfield's plans to install the septic system in front of the house in June, we felt pressed for time to complete PHASE I of our study. But by September this project hadn't begun.

We began our first digging a few days after the town came in with a backhoe to test for a possible location of the septic system. They did some mild surface scraping in an area on the southwest corner edge of the mowed area and uncovered some very large brownstones. When we arrived for our Saturday morning digging, we expanded this area and the wall shown in Drawing 1 and Photo 5 was revealed. The larger stones lie westerly and get smaller in a easterly direction. Our first thoughts were that this maybe foundation remains of an earlier structure. Areas at the walls extremes were wire probed in all directions, but didn't reveal anymore large stones. Therefore, what we uncovered appears to be some kind of a retaining wall. Whether it served a functional value other than decorative couldn't be determined.

The soil removed in the wall area wasn't screened but we recovered several artifacts, such as window glass and bottle shards, that related to recent times.

A total of 53 test pits were dug in this phase, reference Drawing 1. Test pits were typically 1 foot in diameter and 1 foot deep. If I had to do this phase over again I would have limited this area to half as many test pits, but I feared the installation of the septic system would disrupt the integrity of the site. Therefore, I decided to dig more than normal as added precaution that we wouldn't miss anything.

Surprisingly for a house and property that has been lived on nearly continuously since at least 1834, its soil contains few artifacts. Additionally, PHASE I test pits yielded few artifacts dating earlier than this century. For example, a recovered penny and a dime had dates of 1947. Other finds were a Maxwell House coffee can and typical 20th century pottery and glass shards. There were but a few artifacts typical of 18th and 19th century such as one ceramic pipestem, and a few redware and creamware shards. In fact Photo 6 shows a sock that was uncovered. Textiles normally decompose rapidly in our acidic soil and I would guess not last longer than 10 or 20 years.

This report has only data collection sheets for test pits 46 through 57 of PHASE I (see Appendix A). Test pits 1 through 45's artifacts are in the possession of Ed Stanley

and as of this writing have not been cataloged.

All of the test pits showed a typical stratigraphy of 3 inches of topsoil and then hard packed gravelly subsoil to our final depth of twelve inches. Compared to the control pit, the top soil is 2 inches less. This is no surprise because we know of the regrading that went on in the rear of the house and this may have also occurred in the front. I think a soil expert might be consulted to get his thoughts on how long it takes for organic decomposition to build the topsoil layer on land typical of our study area.

Test pit 1 was dug deeper (28 inches) than any of the other test pits. That is because we ran into two separate stratified layers of coal and clinkers. For some reason not evident, this area was dug deeply in the past and refilled.

Test pits 16 and 46 revealed two sections of cast iron pipe that lines up with the wet area alluded to earlier and referenced in Drawing 1. This leads me to believe that the wet area maybe the remains of a septic tank or cesspool. Further, test pit 46 had 12 inches of topsoil before subsoil was encountered. This might be due to the installation or maintenance of the soil pipe.

The two most interesting features, of Phase I are the brownstone wall and the possible evidence of a defunct septic system. For the time being, these are features that need noting in case of some further study or find can relate to them.

No single artifact revealed anything useful. Most relate to recent times such as the coins and the sock. Other artifacts not mentioned above but relate to recent times are; Our Lady of LaSalette Medal, Mr. Potato Head's nose, and shutter dogs that fell from the house's windows.

The front yard may have had several episodes of landscaping and in the process the soil and its contents removed or relocated. I believe property and a house of this age should yield more artifacts.

Further, the pottery shards that were found are extremely small, indicating that they have been disposed and redisposed and trodden upon since they were originally discarded.

PHASE II:

This phase covered the area shown in Drawing 2 and PHOTO 7. It consisted of 17 evenly spaced test pits. We retrieved artifacts similar to what was found in PHASE I and listed in Phase II (Appendix B). There were representative amounts of coal and clinkers, pottery and glass shards, and food remains (namely bone of butchered meat). Again, the shards were small, indicating redepositing and trotting upon as alluded to earlier. Of course this should be no surprise because of the grading the town recently did here and mentioned in the Initial Observations section.

The test pits stratigraphy was the same as in the front yard; three inches of topsoil before the hard gravel subsoil is encountered. Test pits were dug to a depth of 12 inches in most cases except for one instance where a posthole digger was used to go down 36 inches in test pit 15. Beyond the 12 inch depth in test pit 15 no artifacts were found.

Several small shards of pressed hollow ware glass of the same pattern were found in several test pits. They appear to be of the same original piece and is further evidence of artifact scatter.

The most interesting point broughtout in PHASE II of our study is the flatstones found in test pits 8 and 12. They very well maybe the floor of the long shed that extended off the rear of the house as seen in the 1913 archive

phonograph, PHOTO 15. These two test pits weren't backfilled in case there is a desire to resume this investigation.

Because we know that the town in recent years has regraded this area and its top soil thickness is the same as Phase 1, it seems to me that the front was also graded around the same time.

PHASE III:

This phase consists of only 6 test pits as seen in Drawing 2. Except for test pit 1 nothing extraordinary was recovered.

Test pit 1 is an area that Archaeological Research Specialists (ARS) recommended in their final report to further pursue. What started as a normal size test pit grew in size because of the large artifacts that this test pit exposed adjacent to it. Photo 9 shows many of the items retrieved. I would speculate that the broken commode seen here came from the bathroom that once existed off the kitchen, as shown in the "Feasibility Report" of May 1995 on page 5. Therefore, this would indicate these items were probably dumped here quite recently. Further, the soil in this area was loose and the easiest digging on the site this season.

Also in the same context were several complete bottles. It puzzles me why someone threw since they certainly worthy collector items. Two of the most noteworthy bottles are seen in Photos 11, 13, and 14. They have embossed on them; "Warranted Flask" and "Sawyer Crystal Blueing" respectively. Referring to "American Bottles and Flasks and Their Ancestry" by McKearin and Wilson (see bibliography), the "Warranted Flask" bottle appears to date back to the middle 19th century. The Sawyer bottle is also interesting and may date back to the turn of the century. Laundry blueing was the

standard until bleach became available. Additionally, even if the flask was late 19th century, it was found in the same context as the later artifacts dumped with it. It follows the axiom that a test pit or a stratigraphic layer is no older than its latest dated artifact. Therefore, these bottles appear to serve no meaningful purpose in our archaeological study. Since these items were dumped here quite recently, maybe someone in the Historical Society might want to investigate the who and why of this episode.

Other items of interest found in this area are shown in Photo 12. On top appears to be a chisel and below it a mortar repointing tool. They both are appropriate tools for repairing and maintaining this stone home.

Also in Photo 12 is a copper downspout hanger of unique shape. This hanger mates with remains of downspout sections we recovered in this area. I assume they were once attached to this house.

The most interesting feature that came out of Phase III can be seen in Photo 8 and its closeup in Photo 10. A hole dug at the stoop of the northwest bricked in door reveals a flatstone like those in PHASE II's test pit 8 and 12. If one takes a close look at Photo 15 reference B, taken in 1913, they can just makeout a structure in the northwest corner of the house. It appears that the now bricked in doorway led from the kitchen to the long structure shown in the photo via a connecting structure built atop the foundation that now

remains in the northwest corner, see Drawing 2, note 1. Thus; my conjecture is that the bricked up doorway from the kitchen led to food provisions stored in the long shed and/or living quarters for domestic help.

A quote referred to in the February 28, 1995 ARS report on page 5 of 7 closely fits my above conjecture. It is here that Marguerite Pinney, wife of a former Filley House resident describes the attachment of the kitchen to a since removed addition where domestic help lived.

We also know this homestead was a working farm and provided for the Missionaries of LaSalette's self sufficiency. This would be a convenient addition to the house, to store harvests needed to prepare food to feed a large group. Further, according to Marguerite Pinney, residents prior to the LaSallettes also made use of this addition.

SUMMARY:

The spring and summer of 1999 archaeological study brought out several new developments not seen before. PHASE I uncovered the front brownstone wall, the possible remains of a septic system and some evidence of a recent landscaping episode. PHASE II revealed the flatstones that may have been the remains of the long addition's floor. Finally, the flatstone by the bricked in northwest doorway revealed in PHASE III is compelling evidence connecting the long addition to the kitchen and reinforces the oral report we have from a Pinney descendent.

Finally, I feel the most interesting study would be the eastside of the minor wing where the cellar was never dug out. A study in this area may tell us about the original use for this section of the minor wing. But a word of caution for anyone digs in this area. It should be done when the floor boards are removed during renovation. This will allow easier digging and a higher quality of data recovery.

In conclusion, I hope that this report will be of help to any further archaeological studies. It has been my pleasure to assist the Historical Society and I am willing to offer further assistance in the future.



PHOTO 1 - SOUTHSIDE VIEW



PHOTO 2 - NORTHSIDE VIEW



PHOTO 3 - EASTSIDE VIEW



PHOTO 4 -

CONTROL PIT



PHOTO 5 - UNCOVERED STONEWALL



PHOTO 6 - TEXTILES REMAINS, SOCK



PHOTO 7 - THE DEDICATED BRUCE HALES

WORKING IN PHASE II



PHOTO 8 - THE NORTHWEST CORNER

OF THE HOUSE



PHOTO 9 - REMAINS FOUND IN NORTHWEST CORNER



PHOTO - 10

FLATSTONE BY

BRICKED UP

DOORWAY IN

NORTHWEST

CORNER



PHOTO 11 - WARRENTED FLASK ON LEFT, SAWYER CRYSTAL BLUEING
ON RIGHT



PHOTO 12 - POSSIBLE A CHISEL ON TOP, DOWNSPOUT HANGER IN LEFT
HAND CORNER, MASONARY REPOINTING TOOL AND 2 CUT NAILS



PHOTO 13 - BASE OF SAWYER BLUEING BOTTLE

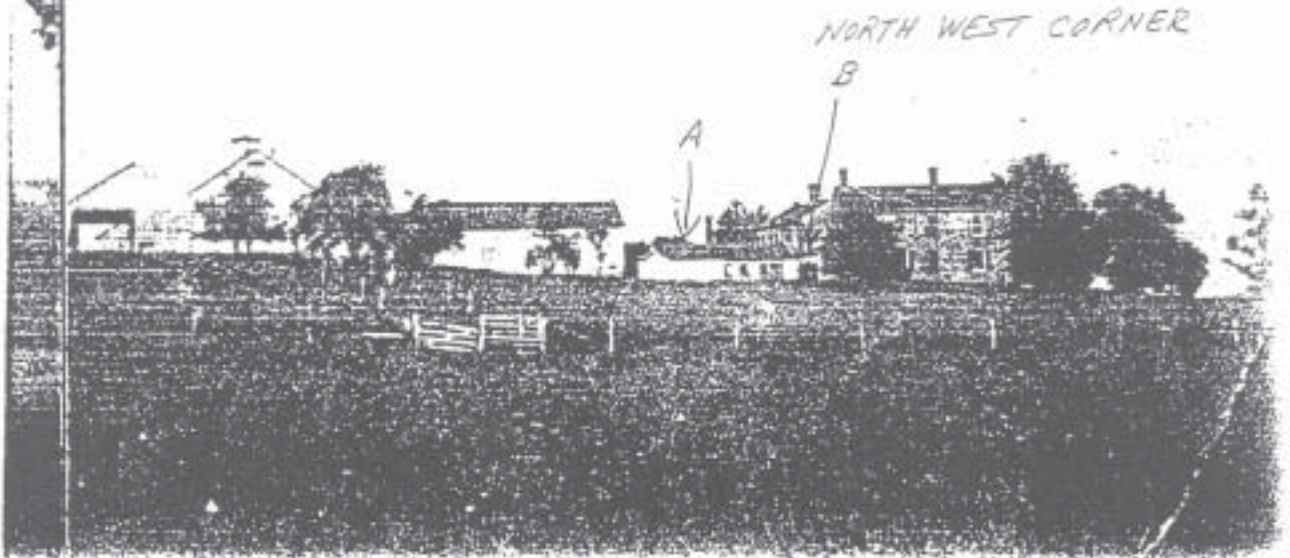


PHOTO 14 - BASE OF WARRENTED FLASK

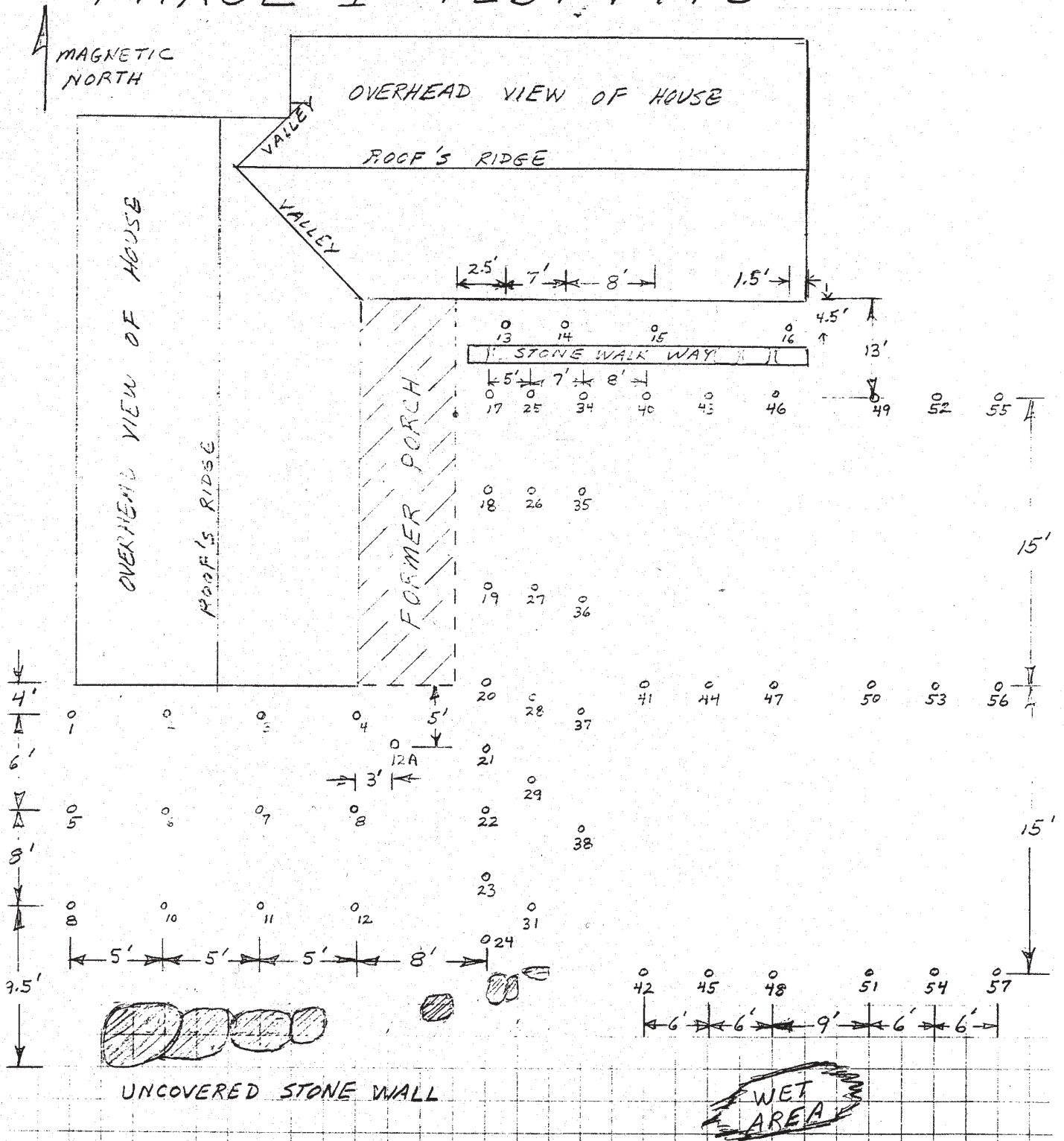
PHOTO 15 - FORMER LONG ADDITION (MARKED A)
AND ITS CONNECTION IN NORTHWEST
CORNER TO KITCHEN (MARKED B).

Photo shows addition to corner of
Filley house, no longer existing

June 18, 1913.

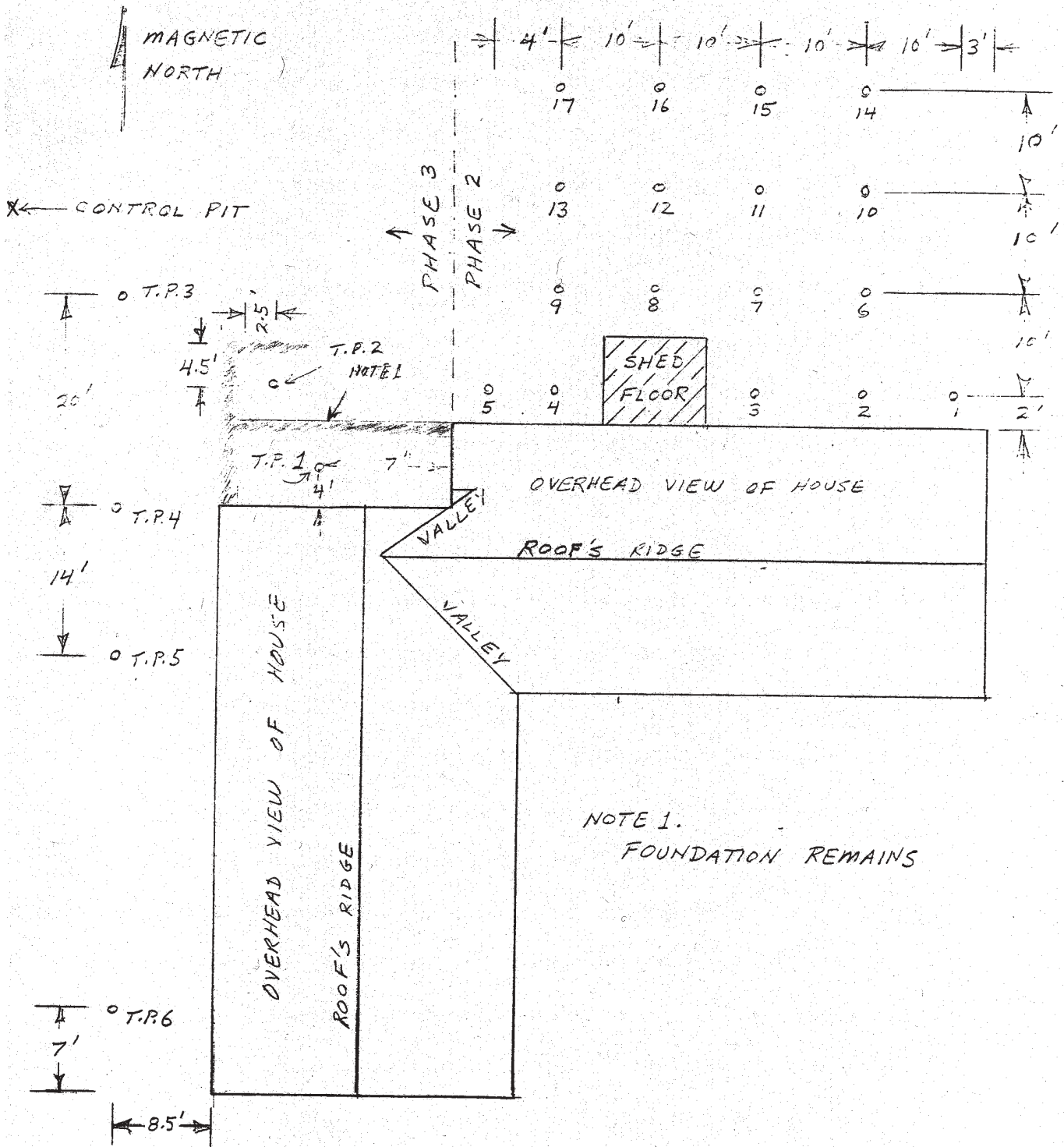


PHASE 1 TEST PITS



DRAWING 1

PHASE 2 & 3 TEST PITS



DRAWING 2

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

PHASE II

SITE: CAPT. OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE

DATE: 6/26/99 UNIT or TEST PITS IN REAR OF HOME

BAG NUMBER	DEPTH	COMMENTS / ARTIFACTS / FEATURES
T.P. 4	0-4"	large piece of soil pipe and fragments, creamware shard with blue decor edge, 2 corroded nails and a roofing nail, 7 window glass and 5 container glass shards.
	4-8"	large iron crank that appears to be the kind used for the shaker grate on a coal furnace, soil pipe shard, 2 wire nails, window glass and 4 container glass shards.
	8-12"	piece of cloth, 6 window and 3 container glass shards, 1 creamware shard, mirror shard, 2 corroded iron, ceramic insulator.
T.P. 5	0-4"	6 container and 6 window glass shards, piece of brick and soil pipe, roofing and corrosion nail, 1 button, 1 creamware and 1 delftware shard.
	4-8"	2 window glass shards, soil pipe and flower pot shard, shell, corroded iron, whiteware shard.
	8-12"	3 whiteware shards, wire nail, 2 window and 1 container glass shard.
T.P. 12	0-12"	11 corroded wire nails, 5 cut nails, 2 forged nails, 1 shell and 7 bone, plastic pieces, 4 coal pieces, 5 container and 1 window glass shard, plaster.
T.P. 13	0-6"	Charcoal, 2 bone, 6 corroded wire nails, 1 cut nail, 1 forged nail, 6 coal pieces, 16 container and 3 window shards, several pieces of brick, 5 whiteware and 2 delftware shards.

APPENDIX C

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