



**Archeological Investigation at the Hovagimian Barn
Stow-Hardy House
Minute Man National Historical Park
Concord, Massachusetts**

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Abstract

The following report summarizes the results of an archeological investigation conducted within the interior of the Hovagimian Barn, a small 20th century structure located within the Minute Man National Historical Park in the town of Concord, Massachusetts. Three one by one meter excavation units were placed at impact areas in the floor of the barn associated with the installation of new vertical supports for an overlying floor. The units were found to contain a large amount of mid-20th century cultural material, and each also contained a feature associated with earlier supports that had been located in the same areas. The entire area of potential effect for the project was archeologically excavated, and no potentially significant deposits will be impacted.

Introduction

The following report summarizes the results of a testing program conducted within the interior of the Hovagimian Barn, a small, mid-20th century structure located within the Minute Man National Historical Park (MIMA), in the town of Concord, Massachusetts. The barn is located north of the Stow-Hardy House, a late 18th century structure that fronts on Route 2A (Figures 1 and 2). Archeological work was conducted in the barn during May of 2010, and this report was completed in December 2010.

The barn that was subject of this investigation was a replacement for an earlier barn also associated with the Stow-Hardy House, and was constructed in 1945. The exact date of June 30 1945 is inscribed in a poured concrete threshold of the existing structure, and tax records for the property indicate a rise in value associated with the barn's construction following 1945, (Photo 1; Yocum 2003: 31). The barn was vacant between October 2000 and 2010, when the current reconstruction project was planned and begun.

At the time the barn was constructed, the property was owned by Hagop Hovagimian, an egg dealer and small farmer who resided on the farm with his wife and children (Yocum 31-32). The property was incorporated into the park in 1959, and the federal government secured an easement on the property in 1974. Hovagimian reserved the right for his family to live in and use a portion of the farm, including the barn, for an additional twenty-five years, and one of his sons continued to live in the Stow-Hardy House, and presumably used the barn, until 2000.

The barn is thirty-three by twenty-two foot structure constructed primarily of concrete blocks, with an upper wooden floor and a lower or cellar level floored with a mixture of soil and slag or coal fragment gravel (Photo 2 and 3). The principal entrance to the building is an earthen ramp that provides access to the upper wooden-floored area. This main story was originally divided into two rooms, while the cellar level was one larger room. The archeological work described here took place within the lower level.

This report is limited to a brief description of the undertaking that had an impact on potentially significant archeological resources, and a description of the archeological work that was completed. These sections are followed by a description of results and an assessment of the affect of the project on potentially significant archeological resources. This document will comprise one of a series of short reports that document recent archeological investigations at MIMA.

Description of Undertaking

Prior to the planning of this project, the Hovagimian Barn had extensively deteriorated and was in need of structural repair. However, most of the work required entailed repair of the above-ground portions of the structure, with a limited amount of soil disturbance at three distinct areas within the ground or cellar floor of the structure.

At the beginning of the project, three vertical wooden posts supported north-south floor carrying beams. The vertical posts ranged between three by four and six by six inches. Each was supported by a flat rock or rocks visible within the soil of the floor. These posts were the only support for the overlying

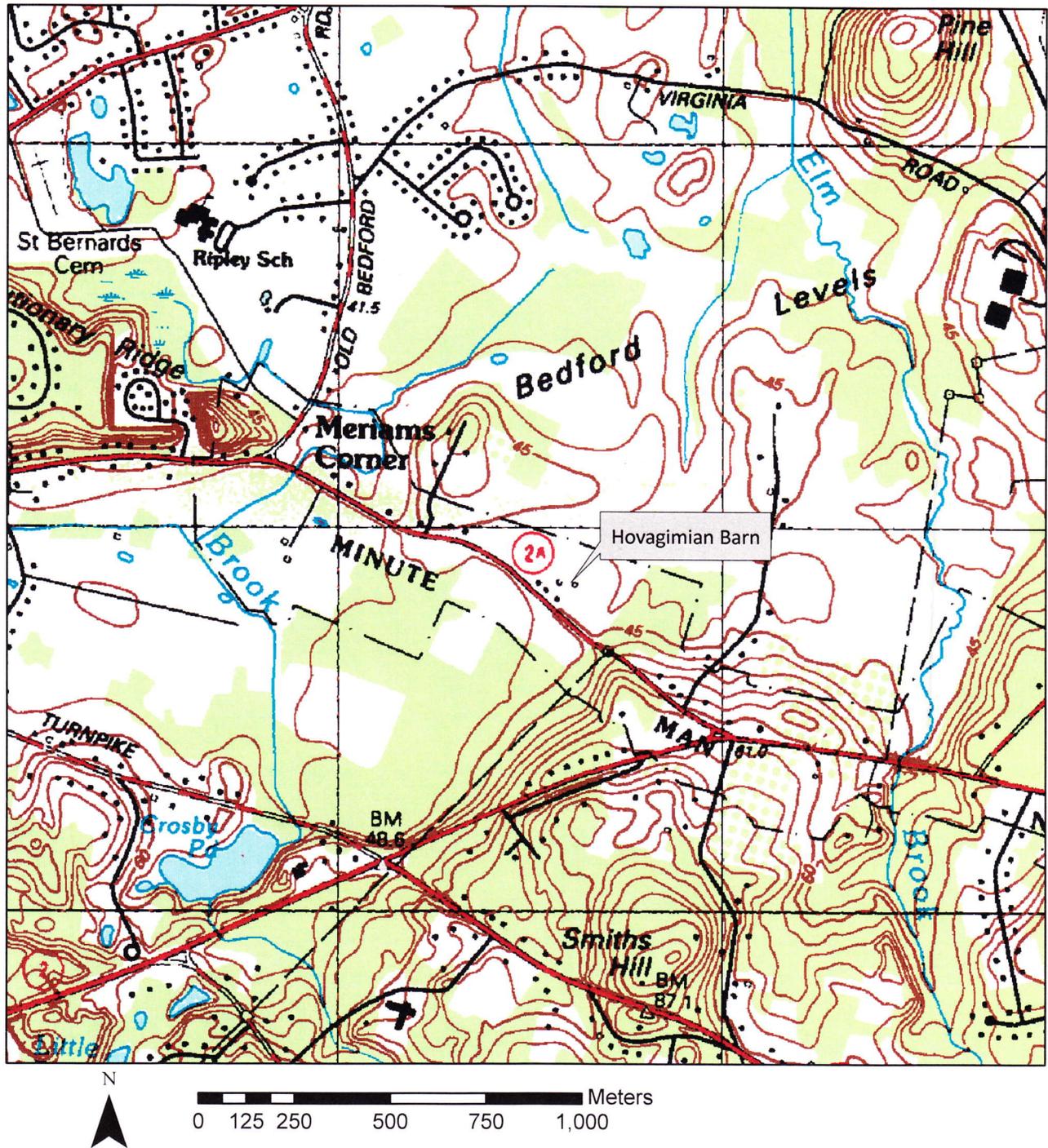


Figure 1: Location of Hovagimian Barn.
 Source: USGS 7.5 by 15 Minute Quadrangle "Maynard, MA".



Figure 2: Location of Hovagimian Barn in Relation to Stow-Hardy House and Route 2A, Town of Concord, Massachusetts



Photo 1: Hovagimian Barn Exterior Conditions at Time of Field Investigation (May 2010). Facing North.



Photo 2: Hovagimian Barn Exterior Conditions Showing Entrance to Lower Level (May 2010). Facing Northwest.



Photo 3: Interior Conditions At Hovagimian Barn. (May 2010)

first floor, and had softened and rotted due to moisture in the barn structure. The stones that were supporting them were partially buried in the soil of the barn floor, and contact between the soil and the base of the posts had caused further decay (Photo 4).

A decision was made to replace the flat stone foundations at each of the three vertical posts with concrete poured into sono-tube forms. The forms were to be buried three feet below the current floor grade, with an additional twelve inches of concrete protruding above grade. The sono-tubes to be used were twelve inches in diameter (Photo 5). Each vertical post would then be replaced, with the base above the damp interior floor. This work comprised the total extent of soil disturbance for the project.

Archeological Methods

The undertaking had been planned in such a way that the project would change the structure as little as possible; would avoid exterior impacts; and would limit the amount of interior soil disturbance to the location of the three sono-tubes. Due to this planning, and due to the fact that the flooring material would not be otherwise impacted, a decision was made to entirely excavate the impact areas and leave the remainder of the floor undisturbed. Three one by one meter excavation units were placed at each of the three sono-tube locations, thus the entire area of ground disturbing impacts was eventually excavated.

Soils were removed from excavation units using hand tools, and were excavated in 10 centimeter levels within natural stratigraphy. Scale plan and profile drawings were prepared as appropriate during excavation, and profiles of each unit were prepared following completion of excavation. Photographs of the exterior and interior of the structure were taken before beginning archeological work, and each unit was also photographed during and following the excavation process.

All soils removed from the units were screened through ¼" mesh hardware cloth. All artifacts were systematically retained with the exception of nutshells, coal and slag fragments. The collection and supporting documentation is currently stored in the offices of the NPS Northeast Region Archeology Program in Lowell, MA; and will be returned to the park for curation upon completion of cataloging

Excavation Results

Soils

Two distinct soil strata were identified within the three excavation units, and there was very little variation across the floor of the barn. The first layer, designated Stratum 1, was a very dark gray (10 YR 3/1) and was comprised of approximately half silty sand and half slag, coal, and clinker, and modern nutshell fragments. The stratum was moderately compact, and was visible at the ground surface across the entire interior of the lower level of the barn. It appeared that this stratum was largely cultural in origin, and had been deliberately placed within the barn, perhaps in an effort to control moisture. This soil stratum ranged between 10 and 16 centimeters in thickness, and contained all of the features and artifacts described in following paragraphs.



Photo 4: Typical Vertical Support within Barn Interior. Note Flat Stone Foundation and Rot at Base of Post. Facing Northeast.



Photo 5: Sono-Tube Installation in Excavation Unit 3.

The second stratum (Stratum 2) was dark yellowish brown very compact silty sand subsoil. The stratum contained granitic gravel, many granite cobbles and pebbles, and was culturally sterile. This soil stratum was interpreted as the subsoil that had been revealed during excavation for the original construction of the barn in 1945. Excavation was continued in each unit at least one 10 centimeter level into this stratum. The soil became more compact with depth, and was further explored during monitoring of the excavation for the sono-tube forms (see Photo 5 above). This soil continued to at least the approximately three feet below ground surface revealed during this excavation.

Features

As described above, each of the three excavation units were placed in areas that were also the location of the original vertical wooden beams that had supported the upper floor of the barn. Each was also found to contain a feature consisting of a large, relatively flat, granitic foundation stone (see Photo 4 above; and Photo 6). These were pedestaled during excavation, and each was also found to have a number of smaller granite cobbles around it, placed to stabilize and allow the larger stones to more fully support the vertical beams.

Figure 3 and Photo 6 represent a typical view of one of the features at the ground surface within Unit 3. As indicated, only one large stone measuring approximately fifty by twenty centimeters is visible at that level.

Figure 4 and Photo 7 depict a typical lower level of the features, this time from Unit 2. This exposure is at 12 centimeters in depth, and of note is the internal fill around and between the smaller cobbles. In addition to slag and coal, this fill contained glass, two bone fragments, an unidentifiable nail fragment, and a single undecorated whiteware rim sherd. The internal fill artifacts were indistinguishable from those in Stratum 1 in the larger surrounding unit, as was the soil color and texture.

Finally, Photo 8 represents the feature in Unit 2 following removal of the overlying small cobbles. At this depth (15 centimeters below ground surface) the subsoil stratum is has become visible across much of the unit, and there is just one granitic cobble remaining. Of note here is the fact that the final cobble is embedded within the subsoil, rather than within the Stratum 1 soils that surrounded and comprised the internal fill of the feature.

The most remarkable aspect of these features was their similarity in terms of depth, internal structure, function, and artifact content of surrounding soils. This finding indicates probable simultaneous installation with internal fill artifacts consistent with those within the larger soil stratum that dating them to approximately the construction date of the barn (1945).

Artifacts

The soil layer containing cultural material in the barn was very rich in artifacts, particularly glass. Artifacts recovered are summarized in Table 1 below, and an inventory of materials recovered is attached as Appendix A. A total of 525 artifacts were recovered from the three excavation units. Artifacts were recovered from all proveniences excavated, including one of the three features described

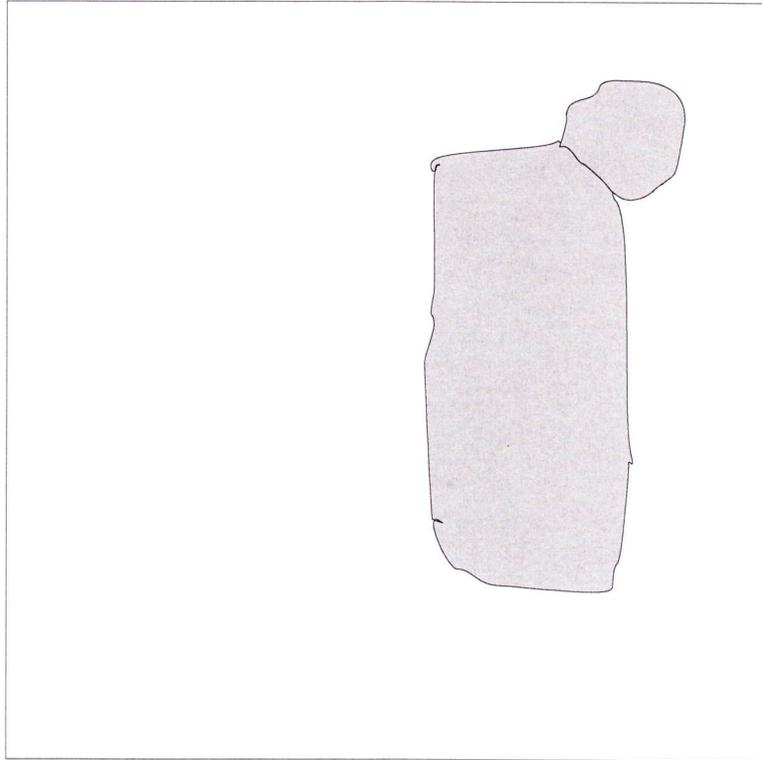


Figure 3: Surface, Excavation Unit 3.
Initial Exposure of Foundation Stones

Gray Areas represent foundation stones visible at the surface of the Hovagimian Barn floor. Surrounding soil matrix consists of very dark gray (10YR3/1) silty sand mixed with approximately 50% coal and slag fragments.

One by one meter square excavation unit, grid squares are twenty-five by twenty-five centimeters. North at top.

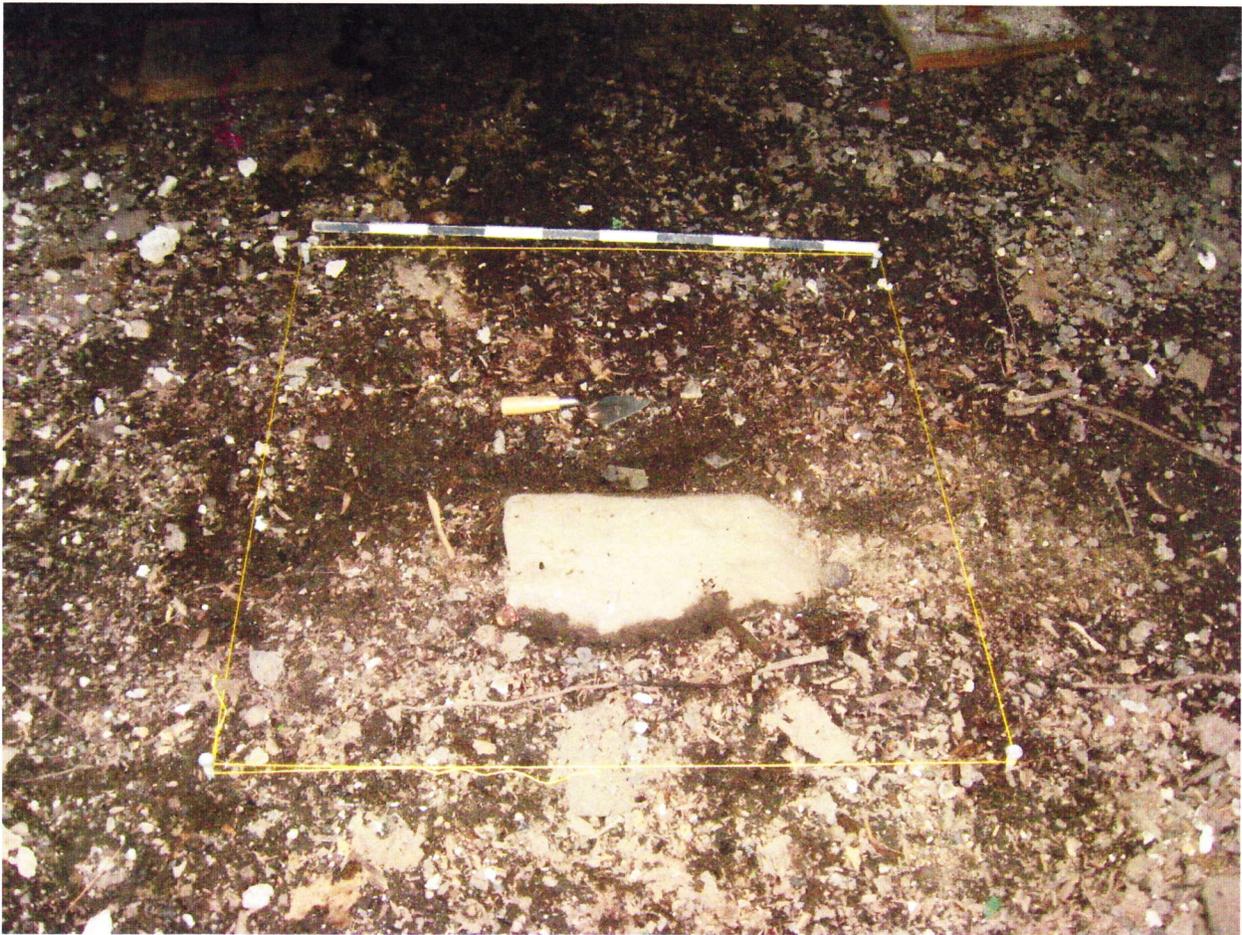


Photo 6: Surface of Excavation Unit 3 . Note Exposure of Flat Foundation Stone at Surface. Facing West.



Figure 4: Excavation Unit 2, Base of Level 1

Figure depicts cobbles and small granitic stones exposed following removal of larger stone at surface of feature. Cobbles exposed here range in depth between 15 and 28 centimeters below the ground surface of the barn. Darker gray stones are lower in profile than lighter in this figure. Soil matrix within interstices is very dark gray sandy silt with coal/slag gravel and high artifact content (Stratum 1).

One by one meter square, north at top.



Photo 7: Foundation Stone Feature in Excavation Unit 2 Following Removal of Upper Soils. Facing North.



Photo 8: Base of Foundation Stone Feature in Excavation Unit 2 Following Removal of Stratum 1 Soils. Facing North.

Table 1:

Hovagimian Barn Archeological Investigation
Artifact Summary

Minuteman National
Historical Park

Artifact Type	Count	Total
Colorless Flat Glass (Window)	250	47.62%
Embossed Colorless Flat Glass	48	9.14%
Vessel or Bottle Glass	108	20.57%
Wire Nails	25	4.76%
Cut Nails	18	3.43%
UID Nails	12	2.29%
Modern Roofing Nails	6	1.14%
Other Metal	11	2.10%
Faunal Materials	8	1.52%
Ceramics	9	1.71%
Other Artifacts	30	5.71%
TOTALS	525	100.00%

above. The actual origin of the material is unknown, as some may have been imported into the barn with the flooring soils; however, at least some were associated with construction of the barn and/or activities carried out therein.

Glass, more specifically flat glass, comprised over 77% (n=406) of the total artifact assemblage. Of this, almost 47% was window glass (n=250). The source of much of this glass may have been the original windows of the barn, most of which were broken out at the time of this investigation (Photo 10). Another 9% (n=48) of the total assemblage was an embossed, colorless, flat glass that appeared to either be a shower or bathroom door panel.

The remainder of the glass was all vessel or bottle glass, with just one shard potentially predating the construction of the barn. This was a curved vessel rim fragment from a mason jar, and was slightly patinated. While possibly dating as early as the nineteenth century, its association with more modern materials makes this unlikely.

Fourteen of the bottle or vessel glass fragments were recovered from the surface of the feature in Excavation Unit 2. These were from two bottles which partially refit, and were embossed "The Middlesex Fells Spring Water Company of Melrose, MA, Registered". The bottles are both fully machine made, glass is uniform in thickness, has no bubbles, and rims are for modern crown caps. This dates them to approximately 1950.

A number of nails were also recovered during the testing, these included twenty-five wire and eighteen cut nails. Further, twelve nails that were so corroded that they could not be positively identified were recovered. Finally, six modern roofing nails were present. While the cut nails may date earlier than the barn's original construction, their origin could not be determined due to the corrosion layers that covered all of the iron artifacts present.

Several unidentified metal fragments were recovered, these probably were bolts or other hardware. A single silver-plated teaspoon was recovered from Unit 3. The reverse of the spoon handle was embossed with "Monroe Silver Co.", and several other letters or symbols. Corrosion on the artifact prevented identification of the latter. While there was a Monroe Silver Company active as early as the mid-19th century, it is unknown if this spoon was produced by this company. The modern 20th century materials also present in the same stratum, and continued production by Monroe Silver through at least the middle of the 20th century make this unlikely.

The faunal assemblage recovered from the excavation units consisted of six bone fragments, one whole clam shell valve and a piece of fiber identified as wool. The bone fragments included two that were identifiable as long bones from a large bird, one of which exhibited saw cut marks. The remainder were very small fragments, with two burned.

Just nine sherds of ceramic were recovered with the other materials. These consisted of one sherd of plain unglazed redware, probably from a flower pot; three sherds of a green-glazed earthenware; three sherds of a yellow-glazed earthenware; one undecorated whiteware rim sherd; and one undecorated porcelain sherd.



Photo 9: Remnants of Six over Six Windows, West Elevation of Hovagimian Barn

The earthenwares were buff-bodied, and also appeared to be from flower pots. The three sherds were from two vessels, but none refit. The undecorated whiteware and porcelain could predate the construction of the barn, while the earthenwares appeared more modern.

The other artifact category used for the summary table above consisted primarily of single modern artifacts. However, nine plastic fragments were placed in this category, along with two plastic and wire battery terminals. Car or other vehicle parts consisting of hose fragments were present as well. Aluminum fragments, a crown bottle cap, a plastic button, and a grommet or snap were also placed in this category.

While relatively high densities of artifacts were recovered from the Stratum 1 soil, few had the potential to predate the construction of the barn. In fact, most artifacts dated to the mid-20th century at the earliest, with a number being modern. Several did have the potential to be earlier than the construction of the barn, these included a mason jar rim fragment, the cut nails, and two of the ceramic sherds. The relative counts of the materials present seem to indicate deposition of the Stratum 1 floor soil at or near the construction of the barn, and the post support features to the same period.

Summary and Conclusions

The archeological investigation described above yielded some information about the use of and modifications to the interior of the structure in the years following its construction in 1945. These can be summarized as follows:

The presence of cut nails and other materials within the excavation units do not firmly indicate remains of the earlier barns that may have been located in the area beginning in the late 18th century. In fact, the relative lack of material of other than 20th century origin seems to reflect the opposite case.

The entire interior surface of the lower level of the barn where excavation took place was covered by a 10-15 centimeter layer of cinder/slag material, perhaps placed to improve drainage. The post support features located in each of the three units may have been contemporaneous with this material, as there were no earlier or deeper deposits located. The cobbles that comprised the lowest level of the features were embedded within the Stratum 2 subsoil, further supporting the finding that they are the original supports for the vertical posts.

The presence of the Middlesex Fells Spring Water bottles on top of the post support feature in Excavation Unit 2 both post-date the turn of the century and may date as late as the 1950s, and the single fragment of the ca. 1950s painted bottle label that was present in the test units indicate some possibility that the post features were established simultaneously with the installation of the cinder/slag floor. This further indicates that the flooring material was deposited at or near the time of the barn's original construction. Conversely, the features may represent an effort to reinforce the upper floor of the barn after original posts rotted away. In any event, the post supports were in place recently, no more than 65 years ago.

All areas of soil disturbance within the barn that were associated with this undertaking were archeologically excavated, with the results reported above. Installation of the sono-tubes to support the base of the new reinforcing beam will thus not adversely affect any potentially significant archeological deposits.

References

Yocum, Barbara

2003 "Olive Stow House Historic Structure Report, Minuteman National Historical Park, Concord, Massachusetts". Report prepared by the NPS Building Conservation Branch for Minuteman National Historical Park.

Appendix A: Artifact Inventory

Excavation Unit	Provenience	Description	Count	Comment
EU-1	Level 1	Flat Glass (Window)	110	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-1	Level 1	Brown Vessel Glass	6	Bottle fragments
EU-1	Level 1	Embossed Brown Vessel Glass	3	Bottle fragments
EU-1	Level 1	Colorless Embossed Glass	7	Shower Door?
EU-1	Level 1	Embossed Colorless Glass	4	Vessel Glass
EU-1	Level 1	Curved Colorless Glass	15	Vessel Glass
EU-1	Level 1	Colorless Glass Jar or Bottle Rim	1	Modern
EU-1	Level 1	Light Green Curved Glass	1	Vessel Glass
EU-1	Level 1	Blue Glass Bottle or Jar Rim	1	Vessel, Modern
EU-1	Level 1	Automobile Hose Fragments	2	Recent Historic
EU-1	Level 1	Plastic Fragments	4	UID Function, all Different
EU-1	Level 1	Slag Fragments	2	Small
EU-1	Level 1	Yellow-glazed earthenware body sherds	2	Recent Historic
EU-1	Level 1	Porcelain Cup base sherd	1	Undec.
EU-1	Level 1	Green-glazed earthenware body sherds	3	Recent Historic
EU-1	Level 1	Clam Shell	1	Whole Valve
EU-1	Level 1	Burned Bone	1	UID, Small Fragment
EU-1	Level 1	Wire Nails	11	
EU-1	Level 1	Wire Roofing Nails	3	Modern Galvanized
EU-1	Level 1	Cut Nails	8	
EU-1	Level 1	Misc. Corroded Iron Fragments	8	Probable Hardware
EU-1	Level 1	Crown Bottle Cap	1	
EU-1	Level 2	Flat Glass (Window)	30	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-1	Level 2	Colorless Embossed Glass	8	Shower Door?
EU-1	Level 2	Brown Curved Glass	1	Vessel or Bottle Fragment
EU-1	Level 2	Colorless Curved Glass	14	Vessel or Bottle Fragment
EU-1	Level 2	Colorless Milk Bottle Glass	3	2 Embossed, 1 base fragment
EU-1	Level 2	Plastic Fragments	2	UID Function, all Different
EU-1	Level 2	Plastic 2-hole button	1	Modern
EU-1	Level 2	UID Nail Fragment	1	Corroded
EU-1	Level 2	UID Iron hardware	1	Corroded, Bolt?
EU-1	Level 2	UID Metal Battery Terminal	1	Automobile-related
EU-1	Level 2	Slag Fragment	1	Small
EU-1	Level 2	Yellow-glazed earthenware body sherds	1	Recent Historic, Same vessel as in Level 1

EU-1	Level 3	Flat Glass (Window)	2	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-1	Level 3	Colorless Curved Glass	4	Vessel or Bottle Fragments
EU-1	Level 3	Green Curved Glass	1	Vessel or Bottle Fragment
EU-1	Level 3	Slag Fragments	3	Small
EU-1	Level 3	Plastic Fragments	2	UID Function, all Different
EU-1	Level 3	Cut Nail	1	
EU-1	Level 3	UID Nail Fragment	1	
EU-1	Level 3	Unglazed Earthenware Rim/Body Sherd	1	Flower Pot, Modern or recent historic
EU-2	Level 1	Flat Glass (Window)	52	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-2	Level 1	Colorless Embossed Glass	17	Shower Door?
EU-2	Level 1	Colorless Curved Glass	20	Bottle or vessel fragments
EU-2	Level 1	Colorless Vessel or Bottle Lid	1	Unk Origin
EU-2	Level 1	Green Flat Glass	1	1 side rippled
EU-2	Level 1	Brown Flat Glass	5	1 side rippled
EU-2	Level 1	Brown Curved Glass	4	Bottle or vessel fragments
EU-2	Level 1	Purple Flat Glass	2	1 side rippled, not solarized amethyst glass
EU-2	Level 1	Cut Nail	6	
EU-2	Level 1	Wire Nail	8	
EU-2	Level 1	Roofing Nail	3	Modern Galvanized
EU-2	Level 1	UID Nail Fragment	3	
EU-2	Level 1	Brick Fragment	1	
EU-2	Level 1	Aluminum Fragment	1	UID
EU-2	Level 1	Aluminum Bottle Cap	1	Marked with "National Distillers"
EU-2	Level 2	UID Metal Battery Terminal	1	Fragment, same as EU-1
EU-2	Level 2	Metal Fragment		UID
EU-2	Level 2	Bone	1	Rodent Jaw with teeth
EU-2	Level 2	Fiber		UID, Wool?
EU-2	Level 2	Slag	6	Small
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Flat Glass (Window)	12	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Embossed Flat Glass	2	Shower Door?
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Curved Glass	12	Undif fragments
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Bottle Glass Frags	8	All from same bottle, some embossed
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Curved Glass Vessel Rim Frag	1	Patinated Mason Jar
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Purple Flat Glass	1	1 side rippled
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Saw-Cut Bird Bone frags	2	Probable Chicken
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Undiff Unmod Bone	1	Leg or Long Bone, probable leg
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Whiteware Rim Sherd	1	undecorated
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	UID Nail Fragment	2	
EU-2	Feature Fill (Pier Footing)	Slag	1	small
EU-2	Surface	Embossed Flat Glass	1	Shower Door?

EU-2	Surface	Curved Glass	14	All are from 2 identical bottles, crown cap rim. Embossed "Middlesex Fells Spring Water Registered"
EU-3	Level 1	Flat Glass (Window)	22	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-3	Level 1	Embossed Flat Glass	8	Shower Door?
EU-3	Level 1	Curved Glass	3	Bottle or vessel fragments
EU-3	Level 1	Brown Flat Glass	1	1 side rippled
EU-3	Level 1	Machine Bolts	2	Very corroded
EU-3	Level 1	UID Nail Fragment	3	
EU-3	Level 1	Cut Nail	3	
EU-3	Level 1	Wire Nail	5	
EU-3	Level 1	Roofing Nail	1	Modern
EU-3	Level 1	Brick Fragment	2	Very small
EU-3	Level 1	Burned Bone Fragment	1	UID
EU-3	Level 1	Long Bone Fragment	1	Bird or Rodent, Gnawed
EU-3	Level 1	Mica Fragment	1	Very Small
EU-3	Level 1	UID Metal/Fabric Snap or Grommet	1	Approximately 2 cm diameter; car part?
EU-3	Level 2	Flat Glass (Window)	2	Some may be safety glass fragments
EU-3	Level 2	Embossed Flat Glass	5	Shower Door?
EU-3	Level 2	Curved Glass	1	Vessel or Bottle
EU-3	Level 2	Brown Flat Glass	1	1 side rippled
EU-3	Level 2	UID Nail Fragment	2	
EU-3	Level 2	Silver-plated Tea Spoon	1	whole and undamaged (bent). Handle reverse marked "Monroe Silver Co."