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REPORT ON SPRING 1987 TEST EXCAVATIONS AT THE
JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE SITE (QUEENS COUNTY FARM MUSEUM),
BELLEROSE, QUEENS COUNTY, NEW YORK.

N.Y. State Inventory No. (A)081-01-0019

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Prepared for

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes a very limited archaeological testing program conducted on the the Queens County Farm Museum property by a New York University field class, directed by Professor Bert Salwen, in the Spring of 1987. A single 5-foot-square test cut, designed to expose and record the stratigraphic sequence, was placed immediately east of the Jacob Adriance farmhouse. A second cut, measuring about 4 by 6 feet, was excavated approximately 220 feet west of the farmhouse, near the large L-shaped garage structure, to explore a foundation wall exposed by tree-planting activities (see Figure 2). Descriptions of these excavations and the materials they contained are presented below.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

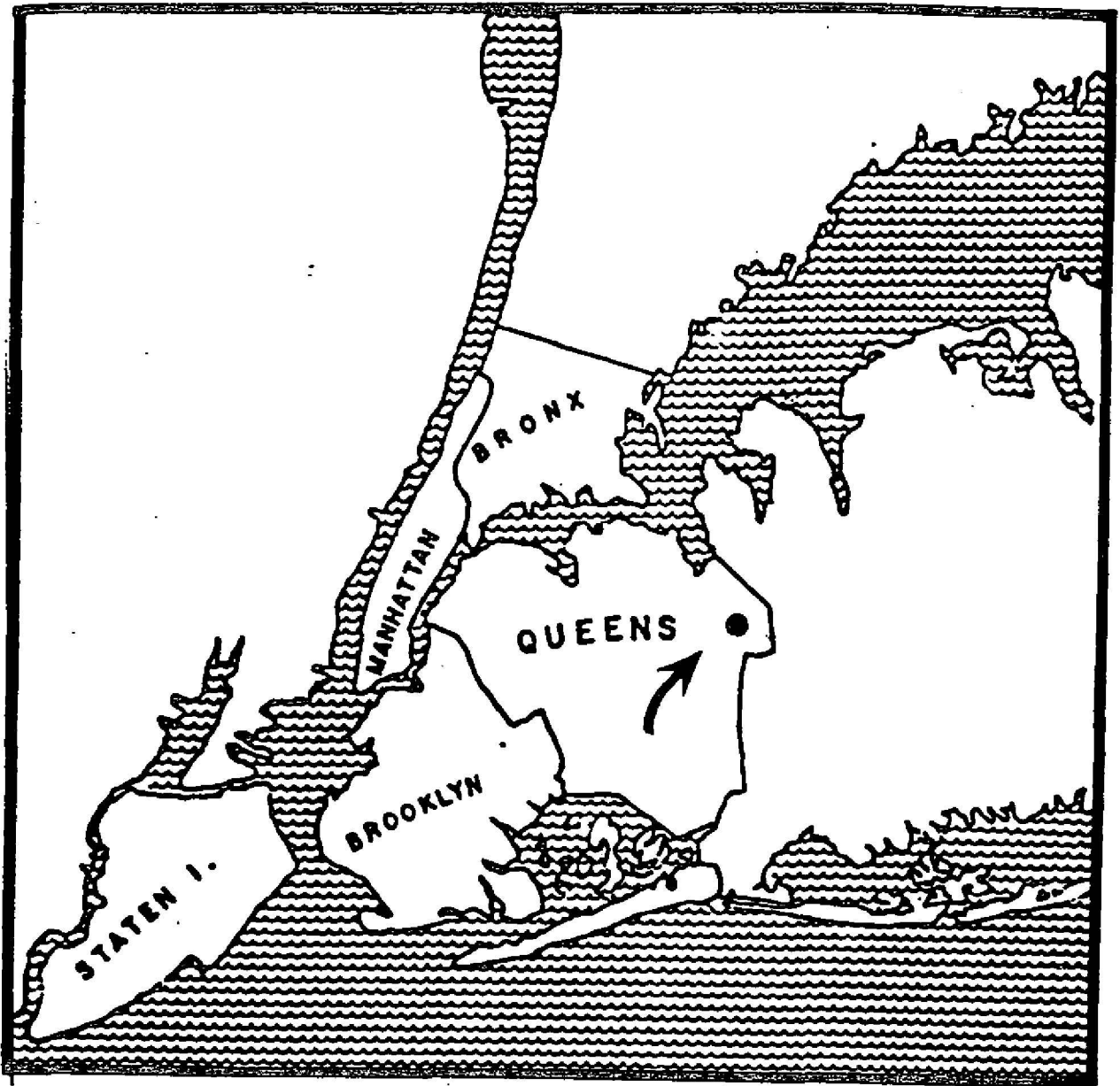
The Jacob Adriance (Cornell) farmhouse is a "five-bay, wood frame, one and one-half story house with high gable roof" (Trent 1976) set on level land, just east of Little Neck Parkway and south of Public School 186, on property now managed by the Queens County Farm Museum in Bellrose, Queens County, New York (Figure 1).

Documentary research and examination of structural features strongly indicates that it was built in the late 18th century, and modified at various times since then. It became a New York City Landmark in 1976 (LPC 1976), and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

According to the documents prepared in connection with these designations, the original construction date was "c.1750" (Trent 1976, LPC 1976). However, a more recent, and probably more intensive, study of the documentary and structural evidence suggests that the house is somewhat younger, having been built shortly after 1772, when Jacob and Catherine Adriance acquired the property (Ludder 1980:67).

All three sources agree that major changes were made about 1840, when

"the house was doubled in size with the addition of two rooms to [sic] east of the original house, conforming in depth and height and roof pitch to the original house... At the same time a one story wing, with a lower roofline, extended north from the new half of the



LOCATION OF JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE,
BELLEROSE, QUEENS, NEW YORK

FIGURE 1

main block of the house. This 1840 portion of the house was built on a brick foundation... with a crawl space beneath (Ludder 1980:68).

Between 1890 and 1910, visual evidence indicates that porches were added to the east facade of the main block of the house and along its entire south side. These were widened in about 1932, and a small pantry, built on unfooted piers, was added to the east facade of the north wing in 1945 (Ludder 1980:69-70).

During its entire history, the structure appears to have served as a "farmhouse," occupied by people who cultivated the surrounding land. This was true even in the recent past, when the farm was part of the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, and used to grow food for patients at that institution (LPC 1976, Trent 1976, Ludder 1890).

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Although the author of the 1976 National Register nomination form suggested that "archeological remains may be present" (Trent 1976), and both documents and visual inspection seem to indicate minimal disturbance of the terrain in the immediate vicinity of the structure, very little archaeological investigation has been conducted at the Jacob Adriance property.

In the fall of 1983, a field party of Queens College anthropology students, led by Professors James Moore and Warren DeBoer, conducted limited testing in an area across the service road from, and about 100 feet to the west of the house, where construction of a public toilet facility was contemplated. (This structure was never built.) The group established a grid and excavated 7 or more shovel tests. An analytical report of this "pro bono" activity is not available at this time, but the tabulations of recovered materials suggest human use of the area from the late 18th through the mid-20th centuries. However, the tests do not appear to have demonstrated the presence of distinct depositional strata (Moore and DeBoer n.d.).

More extensive archaeological explorations were conducted on the Queens County Farm Museum property between March and May, 1985, when Louis Berger and Associates tested three areas that would be affected by planned construction activities. These included portions of the house cellar, areas immediately north and west of the house that were to be landscaped, and proposed utility trench alignments running from Little Neck Parkway to various structures on both sides of the service road (Louis Berger Associates 1985).

The Berger test program revealed the presence of buried 19th

century architectural features to the north of the farmhouse. It also recovered significant quantities of late 18th and early 19th century cultural debris from shovel tests placed to the west, north, and east of the structure. But these materials appeared to originate in disturbed or redeposited contexts. The report states: "The shovel testing did not expose intact and in situ cultural deposits, with the possible exception of the area immediately adjacent to the east side of the farmhouse" (Louis Berger Associates 1985:14, emphasis added).

The 5-foot square excavated by the NYU class just east of the house was designed to further explore for the possible presence of intact early strata in this locality.

THE N.Y.U. SPRING 1987 FIELD PROGRAM

The fieldwork described below was conducted during five work days between April 12th and May 16th, 1987.

To facilitate mapping control, a horizontal datum point was established at the southwest corner of the stone foundation of the Jacob Adriance house. The "east-west" baseline followed the line of the outside edge of the south wall of the house (Figure 2). Vertical datum was established as the top of the foundation wall at the horizontal datum point (1.70 feet above ground surface).

Test Cut N10E55:

A five-foot test square was excavated just east of the farmhouse (see Figure 2:Cut N10E55, designated by the coordinates of its northwest corner). Its placement was guided by the general conclusions of the Berger report, cited above, and more specifically, by the inventories of Berger shovel tests Nos. 5 through 8, which suggested the presence of a relatively undisturbed stratum (or strata) containing late 18th and/or early 19th century cultural materials in that locality (Louis Berger Associates 1985:Appendix A).

Excavation was conducted using shovels and pointing trowels. The sod was removed in blocks, examined for artifactual content, and set aside, to be reused when the excavation was completed. The material from all other layers was passed through 1/4-inch hardware cloth. Each natural or cultural layer was removed separately, thicker zones being subdivided into shallower arbitrary levels to permit finer control of provenience data.

Four distinct strata were recognized in this unit. Beneath the sod was a zone of brown organic loam, approximately 6

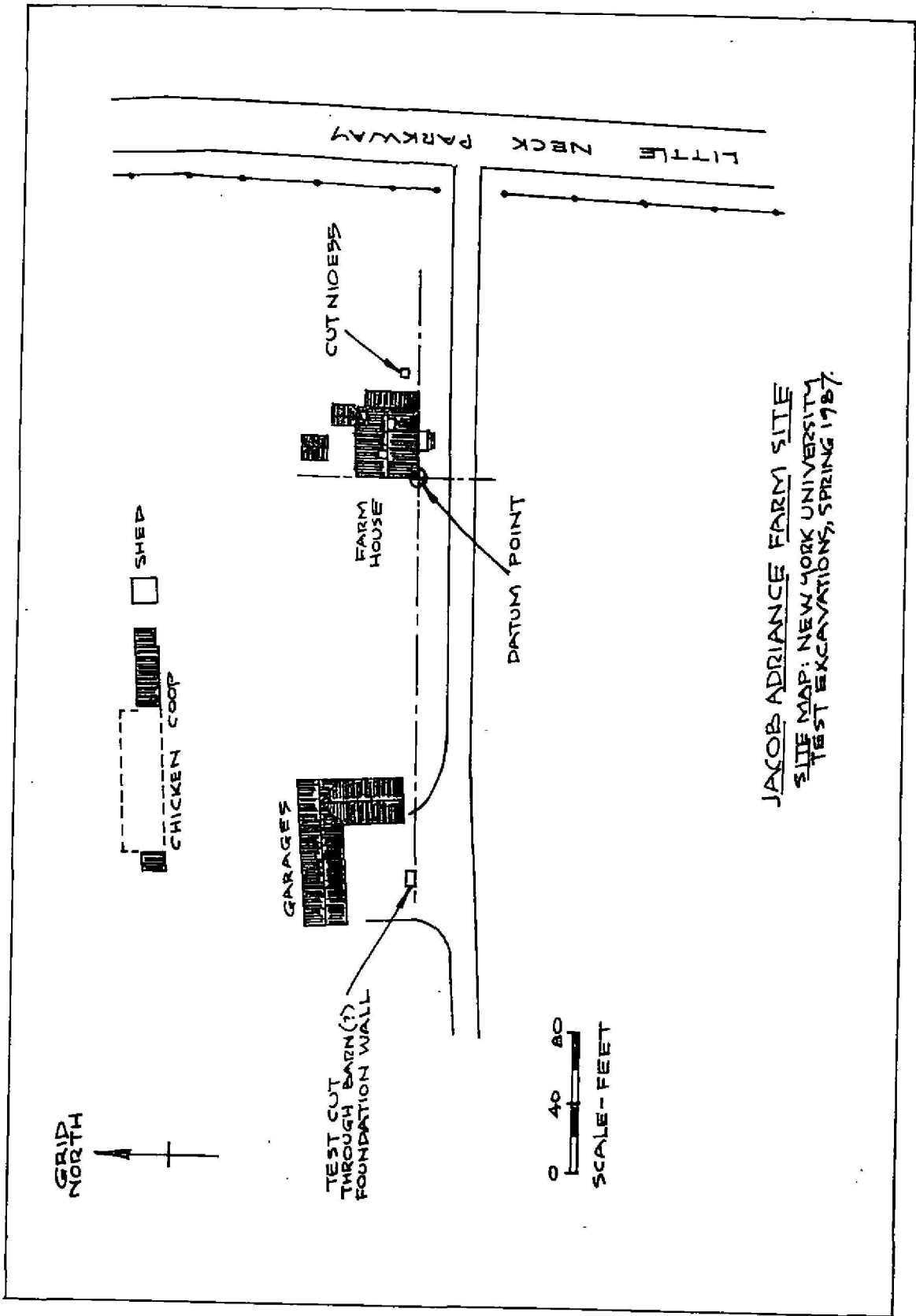


FIGURE 2.

inches thick, which was removed in two 3-inch-thick levels. At about 10 inches below the surface, a layer of mottled brown and orange loam, containing many small pebbles, was encountered, and removed in five 3-inch arbitrary levels. The base of this stratum was extremely uneven, its depth varying from 19 to 23 inches below the surface. It was underlain by a stratum of mottled orange earth, apparently subsoil, containing virtually no cultural materials. In the eastern side of the cut, two irregular "features" of brown loam, each measuring about 2 feet across its widest dimension, extended down into the subsoil zone from the mottled brown loam above them. These appeared to be the portions of rodent burrows.

The profiles of all four walls of Cut N10E55 are shown in Figure 3. Table 1 provides an inventory of all specimens recovered from the cut, organized by strata and arbitrary levels within strata.

Inspection of Table 1 indicates that there are significant differences in the artifactual content of the different visible strata. With few exceptions, recent objects (e.g., plastics, a 1974 penny, clothes pin springs, paper clip and crimped bottle cap fragments) were found only in the two uppermost layers--the sod and brown loam. In contrast, the materials from the mottled brown and orange loam stratum which underlies the brown loam appear to date predominantly from the early 19th and/or late 18th centuries.

Furthermore, most of the more recent specimens from this stratum were retrieved from its upper levels. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate this distributional trend for two frequently invoked indicators--nails and earthenwares. As shown in Figure 4, wire nails constitute the overwhelming majority of specimens from the sod and still predominate in the sample from the brown loam zone. They constitute only a small fraction of the nail specimens from the brown and orange loam stratum, where nails of square or rectangular section predominate. The few wire nails in this lower stratum were all retrieved from its uppermost 6 inches. Similarly, as shown in Figure 5, White earthenware, which came into general use in the second quarter of the 19th century and became the dominant ware in the later 19th and 20th centuries, dominates the sample from the brown loam zone, but is only only sparsely represented in that from the mottled brown and orange loam layer.

As noted above, the orange loam stratum encountered below the mottled brown and orange loam yielded almost no specimens, only 13 in all (1 fragment of window glass, 4 earthenware sherds, 8 small pieces of coal and charcoal, see Table 1), and 11 of these were found in the uppermost 4 inches of the layer.

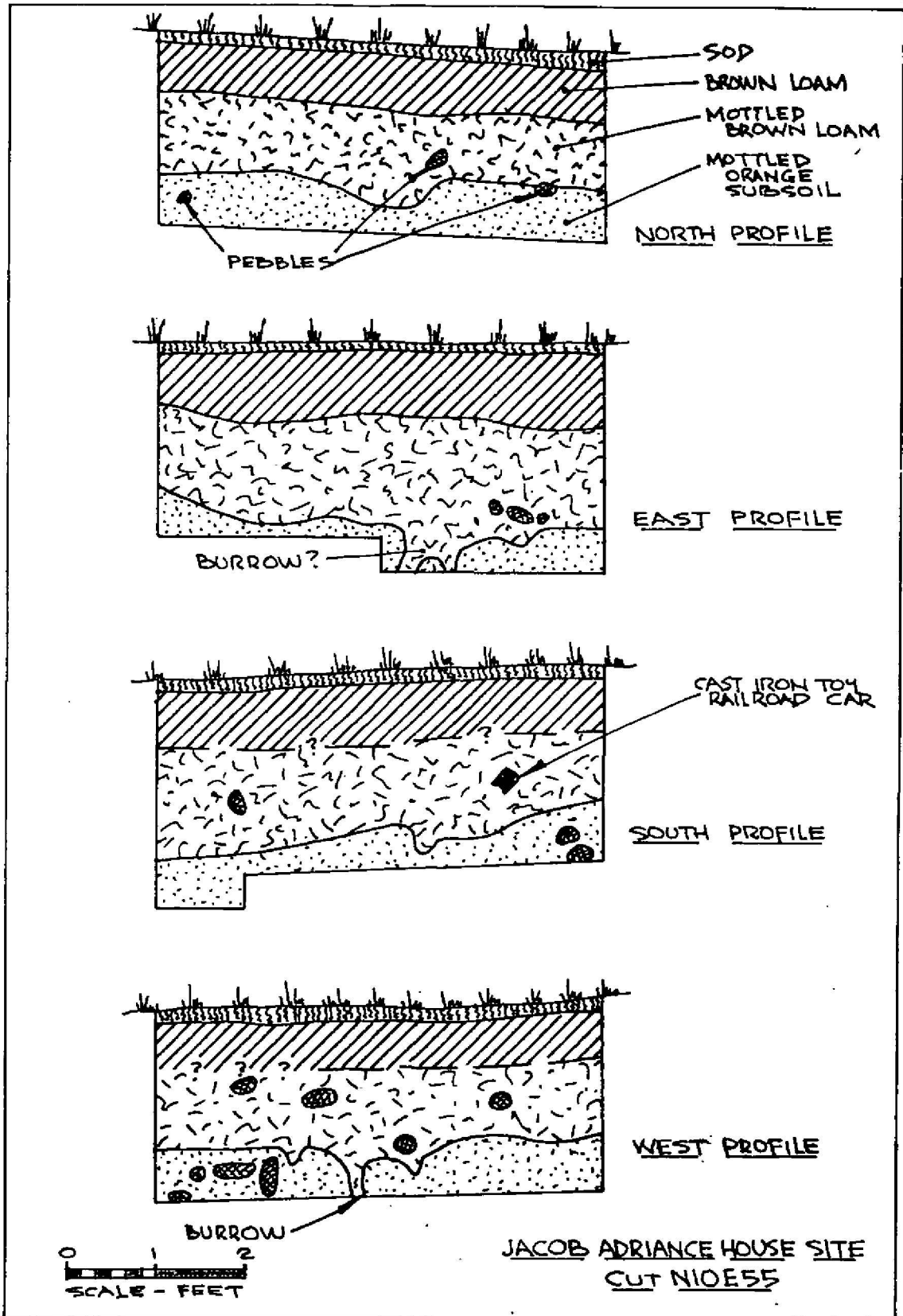


FIGURE 3.

JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE SITE
 QUEENS COUNTY FARM
 QUEENS COUNTY, N.Y.
 DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIMENS
 FROM CUT NO. 1
 BY COUNT AND WEIGHT.

| CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|--------|
| SOD | BROWN LOAM 0'-5' | BROWN LOAM 5'-6' | MOTTLED BROWN LOAM 0'-3' | MOTTLED BROWN LOAM 3'-6' | MOTTLED BROWN LOAM 6'-9' | MOTTLED BROWN LOAM 9'-12' | MOTTLED BROWN LOAM 12'-15.5' | MOTTLED ORANGE LOAM 0'-4' | MOTTLED ORANGE LOAM 4'-7' | FEATURE NO. 1 (BUR. RD?) N.E. QUAD. | FEATURE NO. 2 (BUR. RD?) S.E. QUAD. | TOTALS |

TABLE I
 METALS

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| IRON | 24 | 2112 | 32 | 45 | 18 | 19 | 2 | 20 | | | | | 110 |
| COPPER | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10 |
| ALUMINUM | | | | | | | | | | | | | 14 |
| TIN | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| TOTAL - METAL | 24 | 2112 | 32 | 45 | 18 | 19 | 2 | 20 | | | | | 135 |

TABLE II
 GLASS

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| PLAIN | 80 | 87.5 | 17 | 33 | 124 | 23.5 | 31 | 12.7 | 27 | 23.8 | 31 | 5.2 | 19 |
| TOTAL - GLASS | 80 | 87.5 | 17 | 33 | 124 | 23.5 | 31 | 12.7 | 27 | 23.8 | 31 | 5.2 | 19 |

TABLE III
 CERAMICS

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| BRICK - RED | 21 | 77.5 | 41 | 204 | 70 | 844 | 40 | 38.7 | 31 | 491 | 75 | 74.4 | 31 |
| TOTAL - CERAMICS | 21 | 77.5 | 41 | 204 | 70 | 844 | 40 | 38.7 | 31 | 491 | 75 | 74.4 | 31 |

TABLE IV
 MISCELLANEOUS

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| TOTAL - MISCELLANEOUS | 25 | 32 | 19 | 8.9 | 2 | 63.2 | | | | | | | 47 |

TABLE V
 SLICE

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| TOTAL - SLICE | 104 | 43 | 70 | 28.5 | | | 2 | 11 | | | | | 176 |

TABLE VI
 FUEL

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| TOTAL - FUEL | 20 | 105 | 54 | 64.5 | 97 | 173 | 17 | 40.8 | 35 | 49.2 | 14 | 104 | 21 |

TABLE VII
 PALINA

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| TOTAL - PALINA | 2 | 6.5 | 17 | 6.7 | 218 | 376.5 | 116 | 115.1 | 24 | 10.9 | 11 | 94.3 | 410 |

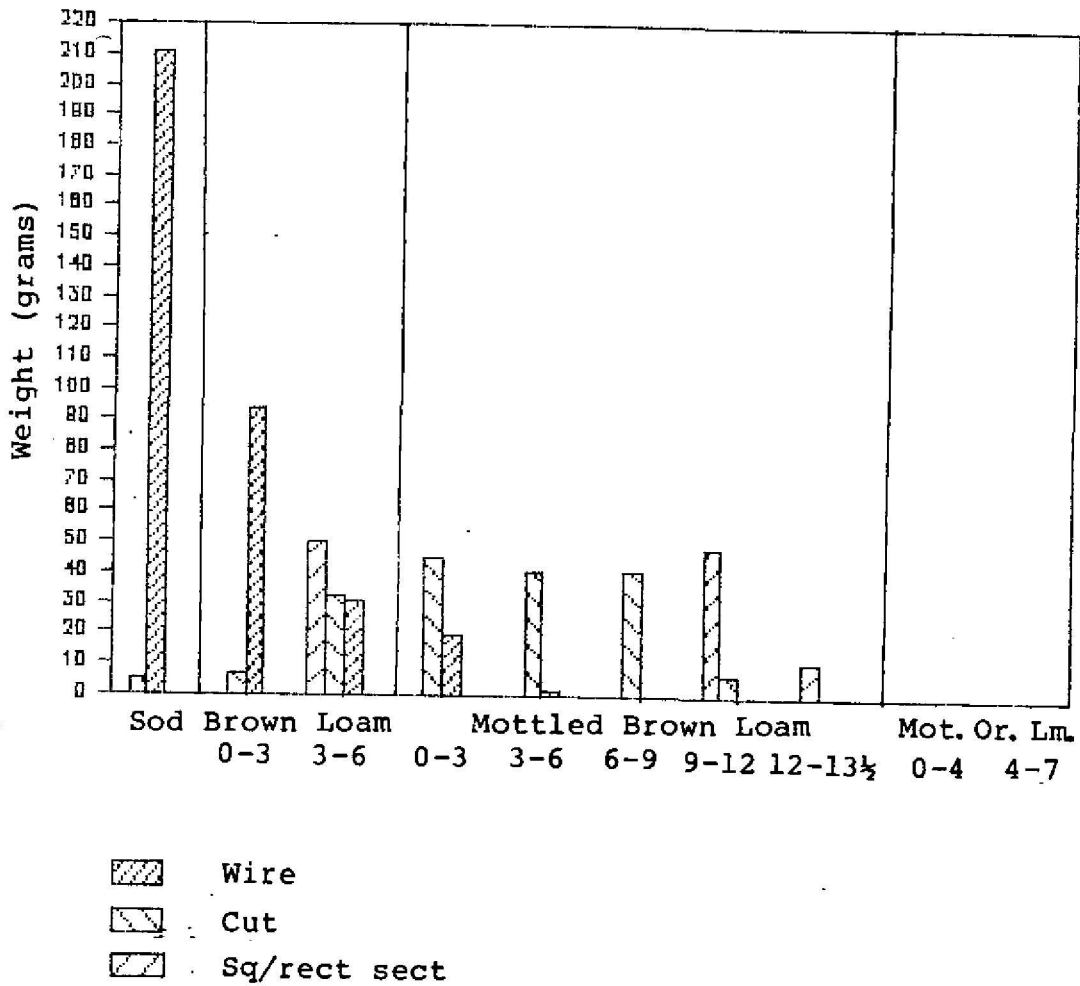
TABLE VIII
 FLORA

| ITEM | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| TOTAL - FLORA | 7 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.1 | | | | | | | | | 8 |

| | CAT. NO. 1 | CAT. NO. 2 | CAT. NO. 3 | CAT. NO. 4 | CAT. NO. 5 | CAT. NO. 6 | CAT. NO. 7 | CAT. NO. 8 | CAT. NO. 9 | CAT. NO. 10 | CAT. NO. 11 | CAT. NO. 12 | TOTALS |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| COIN - U.S. (1921) | 4 | 11.5 | 4 | 9.7 | 6 | 2.7 | | 1 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.9 | | 10 |
| PLANT TOP | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| PLANT SHOULDER | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| TOTAL - TIN | 56 | 198.4 | 51 | 141.5 | 72 | 504 | 45 | 393.1 | 34 | 251.1 | 22 | 266.9 | 23 |
| TOTAL - METAL | 56 | 198.4 | 51 | 141.5 | 72 | 504 | 45 | 393.1 | 34 | 251.1 | 22 | 266.9 | 23 |
| TOTAL - GLASS | 80 | 87.5 | 17 | 33 | 124 | 23.5 | 31 | 12.7 | 27 | 23.8 | 31 | 5.2 | 19 |
| TOTAL - CERAMICS | 21 | 77.5 | 41 | 204 | 70 | 844 | 40 | 38.7 | 31 | 491 | 75 | 74.4 | 31 |
| TOTAL - MISCELLANEOUS | 25 | 32 | 19 | 8.9 | 2 | 63.2 | | | | | | | 47 |
| TOTAL - SLICE | 104 | 43 | 70 | 28.5 | | | 2 | 11 | | | | | 176 |
| TOTAL - FUEL | 20 | 105 | 54 | 64.5 | 97 | 173 | 17 | 40.8 | 35 | 49.2 | 14 | 104 | 21 |
| TOTAL - PALINA | 2 | 6.5 | 17 | 6.7 | 218 | 376.5 | 116 | 115.1 | 24 | 10.9 | 11 | 94.3 | 410 |
| TOTAL - FLORA | 7 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.1 | | | | | | | | | 8 |
| TOTALS | 286 | 471.0 | 315 | 388.4 | 348 | 1312.9 | 285 | 444.8 | 169 | 751.7 | 215 | 474.4 | 193 |

TABLE I

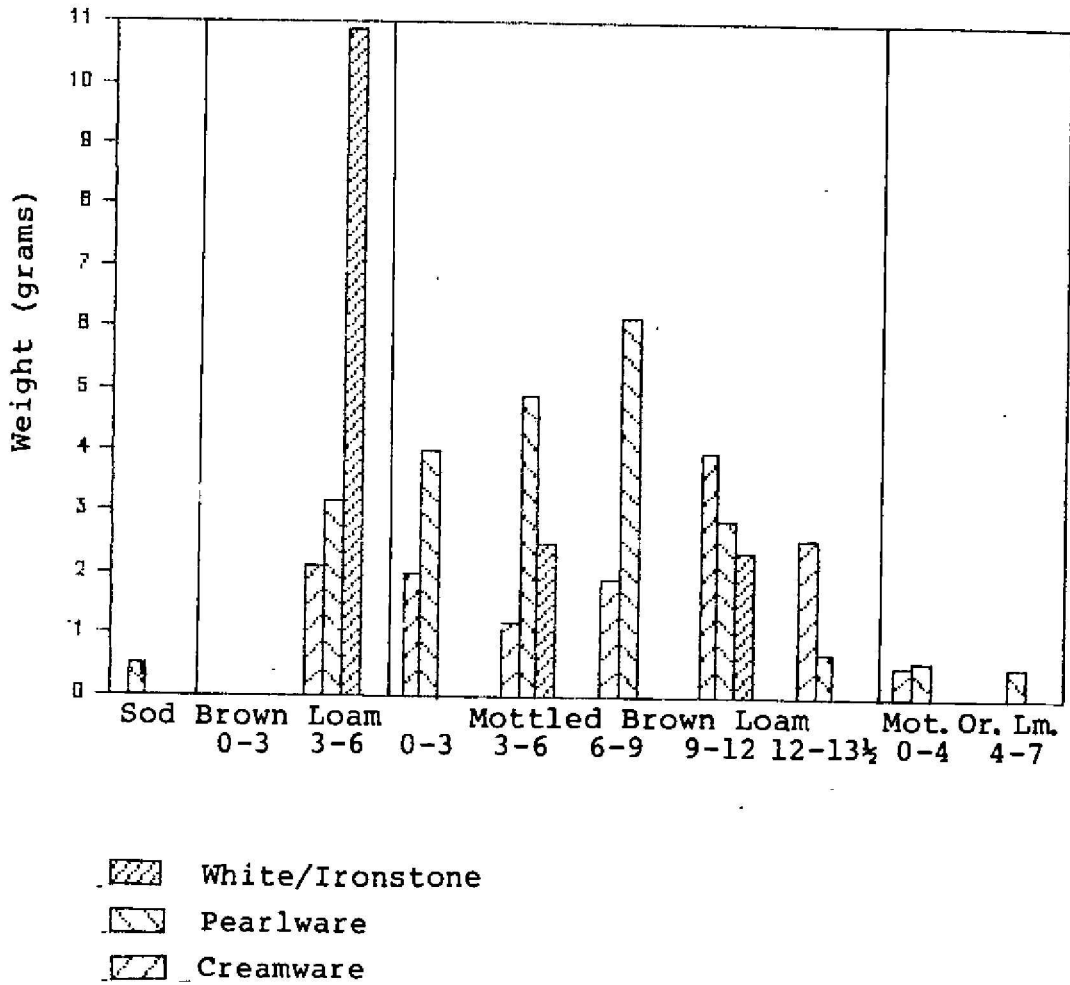
Distribution of Nails (by weight)



JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE SITE
 QUEENS COUNTY FARM MUSEUM
 Cut N10E55

FIGURE 4.

Distribution of Selected Earthenwares (by weight)



JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE SITE
 QUEENS COUNTY FARM MUSEUM

Cut N10E55

FIGURE 5.

Stratigraphic Interpretation: It is obviously impossible to provide firm characterizations of the succession of strata adjacent to the Jacob Adriance house on the basis of a single test cut. However, it seems appropriate and useful to present some tentative conclusions at this time.

The uppermost strata--the sod and brown loam--are quite clearly associated with the late 19th and 20th century use of the Adriance house as a farm-related residence. Most of materials recovered from these zones are products of domestic activities or of minor building repair/reconstruction episodes.

It seems equally certain that the orange loam stratum at the bottom of the cut is a natural soil zone, and that the few specimens found in it had been displaced by natural agencies from the stratum immediately above it.

That stratum, the zone of mottled brown and orange loam, requires somewhat fuller discussion, and can probably be interpreted in a number of ways. Inspection of all four profiles revealed no visible indications of stratigraphic sub-zones within it. It appears to have been deposited during a single terrain-modifying episode. The color and texture of the matrix, with its mixture of brown and orange flecks, also suggests that this is a layer of redeposited "fill." As noted above, the uppermost 6 inches of this layer yielded a small number of 20th century objects, probably intrusive from the overlying strata, but the three lowest arbitrary levels yielded materials attributable exclusively to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Based on this evidence, it is tempting to interpret this stratum as "fill" created during the excavation of the foundation wall trenches and crawl spaces associated with the major enlargement of the house which is believed to have occurred in the early 1840s (see pp. 1 and 3), which was then spread evenly over the ground surface adjacent to the excavated area. This fill would have contained household debris accumulated adjacent to the original structure during its occupation between the 1770s and the 1840s. With the exception of four objects (to be discussed below) all specimens recovered from the lowest three levels could have been in use before 1840.

The exceptions are two brass rimfire cartridges, one marked with a "U" (from the 6-to-9-inch level), the other with an "H" (from the 9-to-12-inch level), and two cast iron toy railroad cars, found between 6 and 12 inches below the surface of the stratum. The first "true rimfires" made in the United States were developed by D.B. Wesson between 1856 and 1858 (Suydam 1965:12), but the headstamps on the specimens discussed here designate the Union Metallic Cartridge Company ("U") (White and Munhall 1977:31) and the New Haven Arms Com-

pany or its successor, the Winchester Repeating Arms Company ("H") (White and Munhall 1977:23; Williamson 1952:47). New Haven Arms was producing rimfire cartridges by 1861 (but in larger caliber only?) (McDowell 1985:117). The other two companies were not organized until 1867 (White and Munhall 1977:31; Williamson 1952:47). The toy railroad cars bear no manufacturers marks, but resemble, in form, rolling stock of the mid-19th century or somewhat later.

If the "construction-associated fill" interpretation of the stratum is the correct one, these four objects may indicate that the major construction episode occurred somewhat later than previously believed. It is also possible, of course, that these specimens were intrusive from the later overlying layer.

Furthermore, examination of the distribution of some of the cultural materials recovered from the successively deeper arbitrary levels of the mottled brown and orange loam stratum provides a hint of pattern that may point to another interpretation. The relative frequencies of creamware and pearlware are particularly striking (Table 1 and Figure 5). From bottom to top, the ratios of creamware to pearlware are: 2.00, 0.85, 0.27, 0.50., and 0.50 (by sherd count); or 3.72, 1.38, 0.31, 0.25, and 0.50 (by weight). This regular, and chronologically expectable, trend may indicate that the stratum is less homogeneous than we now believe, and may have accumulated over a longer period of time than suggested in the preceding paragraph.

In any case, the terrain to the east of the Adriance house is clearly worthy of further archaeological investigation. Additional test cuts would permit more thorough examination of the stratigraphic profile and provide a larger artifactual sample on which to base conclusions about both historical events and processes and the day to day lives of the Adriance family and its successors.

Test Cut through Barn(?) Foundation:

During one of the Saturday field sessions at the Queens County Farm Museum, the field party was asked to examine an excavation begun by a tree-planting crew, but discontinued when a mass of large boulders was encountered slightly below the surface, between the large L-shaped garage and the service road, some 220 feet west of the Adriance house (Figure 2). The field crew cleared the loose earth from the excavation, straightened walls to facilitate observation and permit recording, and prepared a plan view (Figure 6). No artifactual material was recovered during this operation. The stones appear to be part of a 3-foot-wide foundation wall, whose massive nature and location near existing farm buildings suggest that it is part of the foundation of a barn

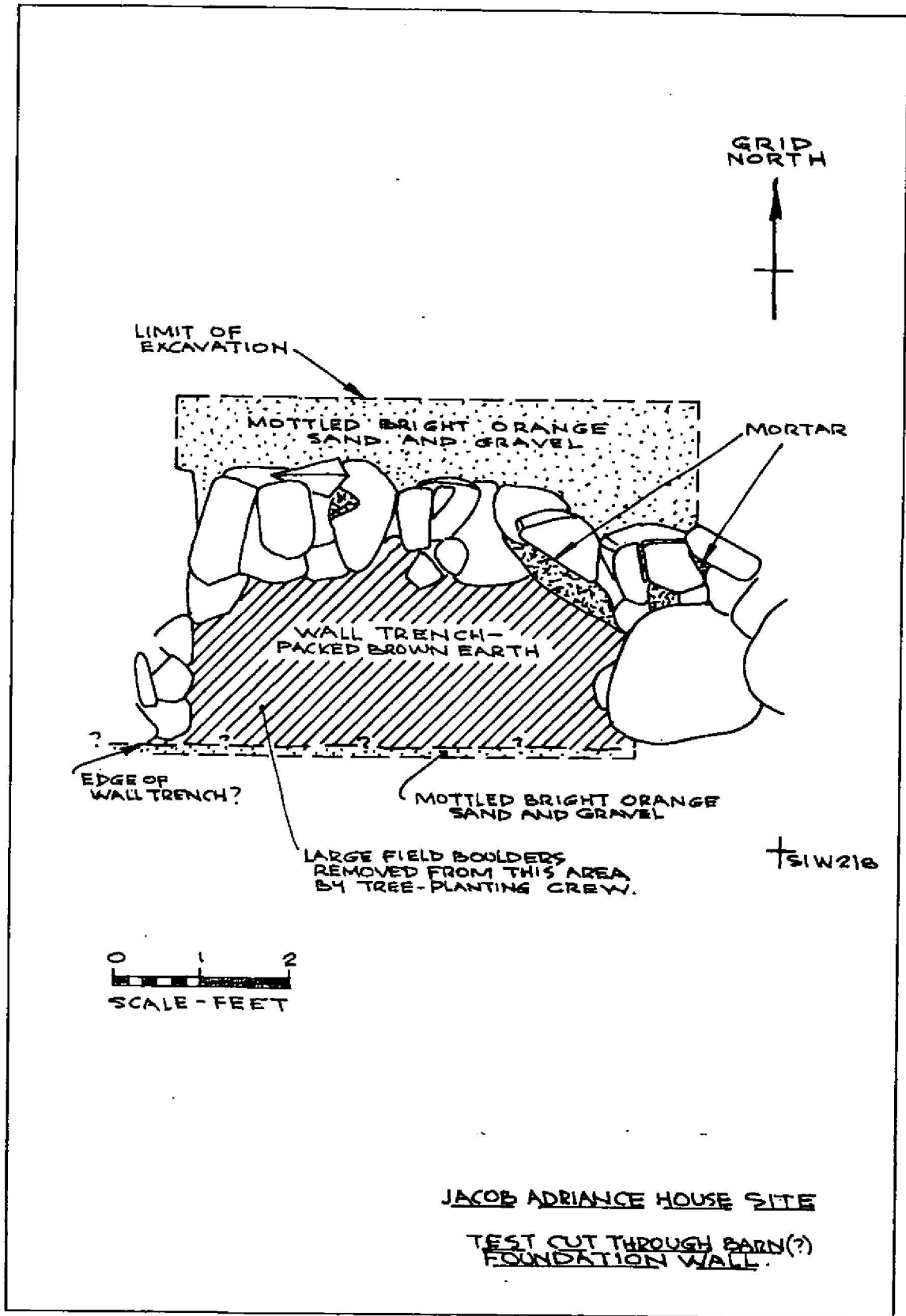


FIGURE 6.

which previously occupied the locality immediately north of the service road.

It is interesting to note that the south edge of this structure was parallel to and almost in line with the baseline established by the N.Y.U. field team, which also runs along the south wall of the Adriance house.

No further tests were conducted in this locality.

SUMMARY

This report has discussed the results of a very brief archaeological field program conducted by an N.Y.U. field class at the Queens County Farm Museum property in the spring of 1987. The single 5-foot-square test cut excavated immediately east of the Adriance house produced evidence of a stratum, approximately 13.5 inches thick, containing cultural materials dating primarily from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The test was too limited to permit conclusive statements about the origins of this stratum. It appears to be a secondary deposition of "fill" created during enlargement of the house in the 1840s, but it may have been created more slowly through gradual accumulation of household debris.

The accidentally discovered buried foundation wall near the garages to the west of the farmhouse could not be further explored during the short field season, but the presence of this shallowly buried intact masonry feature emphasizes the need for additional archaeological tests in the farmyard area west of the farmhouse.

Acknowledgements: The archaeological research described in this report was made possible by the officers of the Queens County Farm Museum and its director, Lillian Naar, who invited the N.Y.U. class to work at the Jacob Adriance site, and provided many kinds of help during the field season. The students who cheerfully and competently did the real work deserve special thanks, as does Patience Freeman, who volunteered her services as field assistant.

Note: The archaeological collection and field records resulting from the spring 1987 field operation are now housed at the N.Y.U. Department of Anthropology. When additional study of this material has been completed, it will be returned to the Queens County Farm Museum for permanent curation.

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