

Poplar Forest Archaeology:
Studies in Plantation Life and Landscape
Excavations and Analysis of Site B, Southeast Curtilage
June 2004–August 2005

Report to the Public Welfare Foundation

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Introduction

With the support of the Public Welfare Foundation, archaeologists continue to explore two related sites at Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson's Bedford county plantation. These sites, known as "Site A" and "Site B," are likely associated with a complex of agricultural support structures and possible slave quarters that may predate the construction of Jefferson's retreat house on the property. They certainly have components that postdate relandscaping efforts carried out under his direction during the 1810s. Both sites are located adjacent to a historic fence line (believed to have been constructed in 1813) that bounded 10 acres, dividing Jefferson's purely ornamental villa landscape from the mixed-use landscape of his 61-acre curtilage, also enclosed in that year (Figure 1).

Within the ornamental grounds west of the fence line, archaeologists discovered the multicomponent historic site known as Site A. It contains deposits that relate to the destruction of a likely plantation outbuilding dating to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This destruction appears to be part of an intensive episode of landscape modification that resulted in the creation of a level terrace at the site. Believed to date to the period between 1810 and 1820, the terrace may represent Jefferson's efforts to regularize the natural landform around his house to better serve as a setting for his pleasure grounds. Later deposits are associated with the construction, occupation, and abandonment of an 1840s–1860s slave cabin as well as postbellum through twentieth-century gardening carried out by African American tenant farmers and workers. Findings from this site are summarized in a report submitted to the Public Welfare Foundation in June 2004 (Heath et al. 2004).

The adjacent Site B lies to the east of the historic fence. Documentary evidence indicates that the route of an early nineteenth-century radial road connecting Jefferson's home to the Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike (modern Rte. 460 business) passed close to the site. A drainage swale, still visible in the field southeast of the site today, may mark the path of that road. Additionally, Jefferson-era letters and memoranda make reference to a variety of slave quarters and plantation outbuildings that have not yet been located. Currently, evidence suggests that Site B may contain deposits relating to some of these structures.

To date, archaeologists have excavated a total of 38 contiguous 5ft. x 5ft. units and 11 discontinuous 5ft. x 5ft. units at Site B. These excavations have revealed several substantial layers and features at the base of the plow zone, which include a large filled depression, a sinuous stone-filled trench, and several apparently related brick and stone features.

In addition to the block excavation, fieldwork undertaken in 2004–2005 also included an attempt to better understand the stratigraphy of the adjoining terrace. Staff placed six contiguous 5ft. x 5ft. excavation units on the slope of the terrace to examine the soil profile. Excavations were designed to locate the eastern boundary of the probable Jefferson-period fill that covers Site A and to find physical evidence of Jefferson's 10-acre fence. Archaeologists successfully identified the boundary of the fill layer and have located a feature that may relate to the 10-acre fence.

Findings reported previously from Site B interpreted a stone-filled feature and adjacent silt-filled depression as a portion of a building foundation and possible cellar fill (Heath et al. 2004). Subsequent fieldwork, discussed below, has challenged this interpretation while revealing additional features of importance to the overall interpretation of the site. It is currently hypothesized that at least two structures stood at Site B, spaced approximately 20ft. apart. Ongoing excavations will attempt to determine their dimensions, uses, and lifespans. Following a brief history of Poplar Forest, this report will summarize our findings in the field and the lab, focusing on the period from June 2004 through August 2005.

Brief History of Poplar Forest

In 1745, William Stith patented the 4,000-acre tract of land in Bedford County, Virginia, known as "Poplar Forest." John Wayles acquired the property some 19 years later. By the early 1770s, he had expanded its boundaries and transferred an unknown number of enslaved Africans and African Americans there to produce tobacco. At his death in 1773, Wayles bequeathed the tract, enlarged to nearly 5,000 acres, to his daughter, Martha, and her husband, Thomas Jefferson. He also left them 135 enslaved individuals, who formed a portion of his estate (Chambers 1993: 1–4; Heath 1999: 9–10).

By 1780, the residential and administrative core of the property was an area known as "the Old Plantation." It contained at minimum an overseer's house, a barn, and an adjoining slave quarter that housed some of the 35 enslaved laborers documented as living on the plantation at that time (Betts 1976: 24; Wenger 1997: 237–41). While the overseer's house and barn lie outside of the modern Poplar Forest property, archaeologists have investigated the adjoining 1770s–1780s quarter site (Heath 1998; Olson and Heath 1999). Immediately beyond this settlement lay fields carved out of native forest. Environmental data collected at the quarter address questions of plantation crop diversity as well as subsistence patterns and resource exploitation by quarter-site residents (Andrews 1998, 1999; Jones 2002; Raymer 2002; Raymer and Heath 2001).

Archaeologists investigated a later slave quarter (c. 1790–1812, today referred to as the Quarter Site) at the edge of the Old Plantation. Evidence of its internal layout revealed three dwellings surrounded and separated by a series of enclosed yards. Social alliances and distances within the quarter are evident through the sharing of yard space between Structures 1 and 2 and the separation of Structure 3, which sat some distance away. The location of workspaces on the side of the houses opposite the overseer's house points to the conscious manipulation of space by site residents to maximize privacy (Heath 1999; Heath and Bennett 2000). Historical, environmental, and artifactual evidence from the site support the argument that enslaved people actively engaged in a variety of economic activities outside of the larger plantation economy by this period (Heath 1997, 2004). Environmental data also contribute to a comparative study of changing patterns of subsistence and resource exploitation (Andrews 1993, 1995, 1996; Heath 2001; Jones 2002; Raymer 2002; Raymer and Heath 2001).

As Jefferson approached retirement from the presidency, he began a significant reorganization of Poplar Forest, beginning with the construction of an octagonal Palladian retreat house in close proximity to the Old Plantation. It is likely that the existing plantation infrastructure strongly influenced Jefferson's choice of a site for his house and gardens.

By 1813, Jefferson had enclosed a 61-acre area surrounding the house, which he called the "curtilage" (Betts 1944: 485). Documentary evidence suggests that this area most likely contained a kitchen garden, orchards, and the buildings needed to support Jefferson while he was in residence. The 10-acre enclosure in the center of the curtilage hints at Jefferson's additional refinement of the use of space closest to his home. The dividing and subdividing of space was further realized by the construction of a road that encircled the dwelling house and that bounded nearly five acres of pleasure grounds (Betts 1944: 494; Brown 1990: 121).

Within the 10-acre enclosure, Jefferson designed a villa retreat that blended the built and natural environments (Chambers 1993: 84; McDonald 2000: 178–9). In 1814, he added a dependency wing to the east side of the house (which he called the Wing of Offices) that included a storeroom, kitchen, cook's room, and smokehouse (Chambers 1993: 80–3; Kelso et al. 1991). Two earthen mounds to the east and west of the house and a sunken lawn to the south formed the skeleton of the pleasure grounds. Roads radiated off the circular road to the north, southeast, and southwest, connecting the plantation to the surrounding community. Extensive archaeology has been undertaken to document aspects of this landscape and to trace changes over time (Kelso et al. 1991; Heath 2002, in press; Strutt 1992, 1999; Trussell 2000).

Jefferson's postretirement alteration of Poplar Forest extended to the functional farmscape as well. Archaeological and documentary evidence suggests that in 1812 or 1813 he destroyed the Old Plantation complex, relocated its residents, and converted the site to agricultural use (Heath 1999). Jefferson-era quarters postdating that event have not yet been located, although records indicate that by 1819 nearly 100 enslaved men, women, and children labored on the property (Betts 1976: 166–7). Features and artifacts recently uncovered at Site B may indicate the location of post-1813 quarters.

Jefferson's reforms also extended to agricultural practices with the introduction of new technologies and new field systems (Adams 1997). He continued to modify the plantation until his final visit in 1823; however, by 1813, the physical transformation of Poplar Forest from a vernacular quarter farm to a gentleman's villa was well under way.

Jefferson's grandson Francis Eppes inherited 1,075 acres of the property, including the main house and grounds, following his grandfather's death in 1826 (Chambers 1993: 167). He sold the house and land to William Cobbs, a Bedford neighbor, two years later. Cobbs's only child, Emma, married Edward Hutter, who assumed management of the property following their marriage (Chambers 1993: 178).

Undoubtedly the Cobbs-Hutters modified the landscape during their lives to fit their vision of the appropriate use of space. This landscape modification took place in the context of ongoing negotiations with plantation slaves, tenants, and other stakeholders. While several changes are currently recognized, others remain to be discovered and understood. From the 1830s to the 1860s, the family oversaw the construction of many new outbuildings necessary for a working plantation. Among these were two brick dwellings located east of the main house in the former path of Jefferson's circular road. Built in the 1850s, these structures currently stand at the northern boundary of Site A (Strutt 1998) and may have been built to upgrade living conditions represented by the log cabin discovered at that site. Known today as the North and South Tenant Houses, these buildings originally housed overseers and slaves. The Civil War left Hutter so far in debt that by 1866 numerous creditors had brought suit against him. Family tradition indicates that all but 10 of the Hutters' 48 slaves left with Union troops in 1864 (Chambers 1993: 194).

In the 1840s, the Jefferson-era dependency wing was removed from the east side of the house and was replaced by a freestanding kitchen and smokehouse (Kelso et al. 1991). The biggest construction project tackled by the family, however, was the reconstruction of Jefferson's octagonal house following an 1845 blaze that destroyed the roof and all interior woodwork (Chambers 1993: 181).

Edward and Emma Hutter's son, Christian, acquired the property in the late nineteenth century and used it as a farm and a summer home for his family. Labor during this period came from a cadre of tenants and perhaps some hired workers under the direction of a succession of farm managers. Some managers and workers lived in the brick tenant houses at this time (Olson 2000: 8).

Christian Hutter sold Poplar Forest to the James O. Watts family in 1946. Watts, a local attorney, refurbished the main house and transformed the farm into a successful dairy operation. These changes seem minor in comparison to the breakup of the larger property during the 1970s. Watts sold land to a developer, who built a nine-hole golf course, a lake for irrigation, and tract housing. The Watts family sold Poplar Forest and its remaining 50 acres in 1980 to Dr. James Johnson of North Carolina. Johnson never lived in the house, and in December 1983 he sold the property to the newly formed Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest (Chambers 1993: 208). This private nonprofit organization set about restoring and interpreting the property to the public. Since 1983, the Corporation has actively reacquired land that was part of the original property, and it currently owns nearly 600 acres.

Overview of Previous Work

Initial Testing

As part of a propertywide survey undertaken in 1995, archaeologists tested the field lying east of Jefferson's 10-acre boundary and west of the curtilage line. Transects, spaced at 50ft. intervals, contained test units placed no more than 50ft. apart. Closer-interval testing was undertaken around locations where excavators discovered artifacts or features.

Positive units fell in a line trending roughly northwest-to-southeast across the project area. They contained a variety of historic-period artifacts, including brick fragments, wrought and cut nails, window glass, creamware and pearlware, green-glazed and slipped earthenware, dark green bottle glass, and fragments of a cast-iron pot lid. Archaeologists concluded that “the nature of the artifacts indicate the presence of one or more domestic structures” (Adams 1996: 44).

In August 2003, staff and participants in an annual seminar for teachers returned to the site and opened up eight 5ft. x 5ft. units (ERs 2317/3, 2380/1, 2464/4, 2360/2, 2361/1, 2402/4, 2465/2, and 3004/1). All of the units were characterized by a thin layer of topsoil overlying less than 1ft. of plow zone, and all contained a variety of domestic artifacts ranging in date from the late eighteenth century through the twentieth century. Material dating from 1790 to 1830 dominated the assemblage. In two units, 2360/2 and 2402/4, quantities of stone and brick rubble in the plow zone, as well as intact features below the plow zone, confirmed the location of a site, since designated as Site B.

In the spring of 2004, staff and field school students began excavating five additional units (2403/3, 3008/4, 3009/3, 2323/4, and 2324/3) with the goal of investigating previously located features. Unit 2402/4 was expanded to the east to expose a portion of a stone-filled feature running in a north-south alignment. Soil probes west of the feature revealed relatively shallow deposits, while to the east, probing indicated the presence of a 1ft.-2ft.-thick layer of fill overlying subsoil.

June 2004–August 2005 Field Results

The initial plan for Site B fieldwork in 2004 was to finish excavating several 5ft. x 5ft. units that were incomplete at the close of the 2003 field season and then to continue excavating new units at 25ft. intervals. While completing ER2402/4, however, staff identified a substantial stone-filled feature that resembled a foundation wall. The significance of this find prompted a change in plans, and archaeologists set out to expose the remainder of the feature. As excavation progressed it became clear that ER2402/4 contained just a small part of a much larger feature complex. Most of the field season was devoted to opening up new units surrounding ER2402/4. Staff excavated 11 additional units within the block in 2005 (Figure 2). Cultural features sealed beneath the plow zone and contained within the block excavation area are discussed in detail below.

Main Block Excavation: Stratigraphy

Stratigraphy across the block-excavated area of Site B consisted of reddish-brown (5YR4/4) clay loam plow zone that directly overlaid subsoil and all of the cultural features discovered to date. The upper 0.1ft.–0.2ft. of plow zone was removed separately and recorded as “topsoil” in an effort to separate recent litter and slope wash out of the chronological equation. The plow zone stratum, including topsoil, averaged 0.6ft. in thickness. The small size and weathered condition of artifacts recovered from the plow zone suggest that the site has been plowed many times. Plow scars were present in each excavation unit.

Main Block Excavation: Features

Although a firm chronology of the site is not yet known, the following discussion of features is arranged according to the current understanding of depositional sequences, starting with the earliest feature. Features believed to be roughly contemporaneous share the same Roman numeral designation. These designations are somewhat conjectural, however, given that several of the features have not yet been excavated and their relationships remain unclear at this time. Figure 3 depicts the major features at the site.

I. Silt-and-clay-filled depression

The largest and earliest-dating feature discovered at Site B is a depression measuring at least 45ft. north-south by a minimum of 20ft. east-west (Figure 4). Several 0.75in.-diameter probe holes have been made into the feature at various points. These indicate that the depth of the deposit ranges from about 1ft. along its western edge to nearly 2ft. near its east side. The only noticeable variation on the surface of the deposit is a 4ft.-wide strip on the east edge that contains mottles (approximately 30 percent) of red (2.5YR5/6) clay loam. The same area also has a higher proportion of schist and quartz gravel, brick flecks, and charcoal flecks than the rest of the fill. Several wide features, most likely plow scars, were recorded at the northwest end of this strip in 2004 but have not yet been excavated.

In late 2004, archaeologists cut a 2.5ft.-wide section through the fill in ER2403/3. The resulting profile showed that the depression has a gently sloping western edge, suggesting that it could be a natural feature that was later filled. A small number of brick fragments were found in the fill, which overlays a thin (0.1ft.-0.3ft.-thick) layer of yellowish-red (5YR4/6) clay loam. This layer contained a single small brick fragment and may represent a natural deposit that lined the depression.

In August 2005, archaeologists cut a 5ft. x 15ft. north-south section through ER units 3008/4, 3010/2, 3010/4, and 3018/2 along the eastern edge of the depression. The section revealed a thin deposit of red silt overlying a thicker deposit of red silt with greenstone fragments, charcoal, and red clay mottles (both deposits were 2.5YR3/6) (Figure 5). To date, two prehistoric flakes, one small piece of clear vessel glass, and numerous small brick fragments have been found in this section of the fill. Along the northeastern edge of ER3010/2, the red silt was sealed by a shallow lens of soil that contained higher concentrations of greenstone and mica. Together, these soils sealed sharply sloping deposits of dark-brown silt with charcoal, light-brown silt, yellowish-brown silt, and light-brown silt, each with concentrations of schist. Each deposit slopes abruptly toward the south and/or west, forming a narrow channel curving northwest to southeast that reaches a depth of approximately 2.2ft. below modern grade (Figure 6).

Further excavations of the remaining deposits of fill within the larger feature are necessary to understand its depositional sequence and possible function. The paucity of artifacts encountered to date makes it impossible to assign a tight date to the upper layer and lenses of fill. Given the evidence at hand, however, it is reasonable to conclude that this portion of Site B was filled relatively early in Poplar Forest's history.

IIA. Trench

A sinuous 25ft.-long trench filled with schist rubble defines the western edge of the depression described above. The width of the trench varies somewhat but averages 2ft. over its course. Initially the feature appeared to be the remains of a structural wall, but its irregularly curved shape and the unorganized state of its schist fill argue against such an interpretation. Although foundation remains are routinely found to have been “robbed-out”—disturbed by later reuse of the building materials—there are no signs that the basic shape has been altered to any great extent. Similarly, the argument might be made that the schist fragments are simply a liner or leveling course for a more substantial layer of stone or brick. This unusual construction technique has been documented archaeologically at Poplar Forest in the stone footing of the 1814 Wing of Offices. In that instance, however, the bottom of the builder’s trench was fairly flat with a much thinner (approximately 0.1ft.) layer of brick and schist fragments mixed with soil. The cross-section of ER2403/3, noted above, revealed that the trench feature is bowl-shaped in profile. It measures 0.7ft. deep at its center (Figure 7). Perhaps the most significant conclusion drawn from the cross-section is that, while the trench closely follows the outline of the silt-and-clay-filled depression, it clearly postdates that feature. This suggests that the fill episode was used to lay the groundwork for the trench construction, although the functions of both remain a mystery.

The trench fill contained four wrought nails, one unidentifiable iron fragment, and a moderate number of brick fragments. Considering the moderate-to-high concentration of domestic artifacts recovered from the overlying plow zone, it appears that the trench was filled prior to domestic activity on the site. Most of the remaining features discovered at Site B are connected in some way to this trench. As noted below, some features appear to cut through the trench fill, while others abut it. Whatever original function the trench may have fulfilled, it seems to be a structuring element for activity at the site.

During the 2005 field season, archaeologists discovered a portion of trench with somewhat similar fill bounding the northeast side of the block excavation. Both schist and brick fragments are present but in lower concentrations than in the previously identified trench. The new trench appears in ER2361/2 and ER2340/3. It crosses the units from southeast to northwest, approximately parallel to the trench on the west side of the clay fill.

IIB. Schist concentration

A broad concentration of small fragments of schist stone adjoins the northern end of the trench and may, in fact, be contemporaneous with its construction (Figure 8). Excavation first revealed this feature near the end of the 2004 field season, and it was greatly expanded upon in 2005. The feature covers the entirety of ER units 2381/3, 2381/1, and 2360/3 and extends southward into ER2402/1, eastward into ER2381/2, and westward into ERs 2380/2, 2359/4, and 2359/2. It appears to have been laid in a roughly circular pattern, although further excavation of its projected eastern half is needed to confirm this observation. Current measurements suggest it is greater than 15ft. long (north-south) and 7.5ft. wide (east-west). The feature contains schist and brick fragments similar to the trench fill, but the schist pieces are smaller on average than those found in the trench and

do not appear to be organized in a pattern. A single sherd of blue hand-painted pearlware was recovered from the feature surface in 2004. It appears that this feature represents an intentionally placed pavement sealing the silt-and-clay-filled depression. Currently, staff hypothesize that the stones may be the remains of a subfloor, similar to those discovered in association with storage buildings and quarters along Monticello's Mulberry Row (Kelso et al. 1984). There, concentrated stones provided a level and solid base for packed-earth floors that were constructed above them and enclosed within log structures. Further excavations that define the boundaries of the schist concentration, locate possible features associated with the structure's walls or storage areas, and test the depth and composition of the soils associated with the schist are needed to confirm or challenge this hypothesis.

IIIA. Circular feature ER2380C/2

Excavators discovered a circular feature in unit ER2380/2. The feature was located at the western edge of the possible stone paving. ER2380C/2 measures approximately 1.75ft. in diameter and appears to be half within and half outside of the schist concentration. The fill of the feature is slightly redder than the surrounding soil but is still nearly identical to the mixture of schist and brick fragments found in the adjoining schist concentration. This circular feature has not yet been excavated.

IIIB. Brick-filled feature

A 4ft. x 3ft. feature cuts the trench near its northern end. It is roughly rectangular and is oriented northeast to southwest lengthwise. It contains large brick fragments, some nearly whole, but they do not appear to have been laid in any particular order (Figure 8). Excavation of an adjoining feature (ER2402C/2 and 2402E/2) revealed that the brick fragments fill a depression that measures at least 0.5ft. deep. The proportion of brick to schist fragments in the fill is roughly the reverse of that found in the trench; i.e., nearly all brick with bits of schist mixed in. A small number of artifacts were recovered during cleaning around the top of the bricks and were bagged as context 2381C/4. These included brick, nails (both cut and wrought), mortar, and sherds representing several varieties of pearlware vessels.

IIIC. Brick rubble concentration

In 2005 staff uncovered a small rectangular concentration of brick fragments at the base of the plow zone in ER2360/3 (Figure 9). The rectangle is only partially exposed, running on a southwest-northeast axis into ER2360/1. South of and parallel to the brick rubble is a concentration of larger schist fragments, which lie in the larger schist concentration noted above.

IVA. Circular feature ER2380B/2

A smaller feature, ER2380B/2, appears to cut the northwest corner of the larger feature ER2380C/2 and measures 1ft. in diameter. It has not yet been excavated.

IVB. Round feature cutting brick-filled feature and trench (ER2402C/2 and 2402E/2)
A roughly circular feature measuring 2ft. in diameter was excavated at the southeast corner of the brick feature (IIIB) discussed above (Figure 10). Its fill was composed of

red (2.5YR4/8) clay loam mixed with yellowish-red (5YR4/6) loam. The feature contained relatively few schist and brick fragments, making it especially evident where it interrupted the juncture of the bricks and the schist-filled trench. The base of the feature was irregular and measured just under 0.6ft. deep at its lowest point. A single wrought nail and several brick fragments were recovered from the fill. A thin (0.1ft.) lens of red (10R4/6) silty clay was found on the east slope of the feature and excavated as ER2402E/2. The lens contained brick fragments but no other artifacts. The function of the feature remains undetermined, but it clearly postdates both the trench and brick pad.

Features outside the sequence

Gravel feature

A 3.5ft.-square concentration of quartz gravel lies close to the south end of the trench (Figure 11). This gravel pad is roughly similar in size and orientation to the brick pad near the north end of the trench and may be related to it. Unlike the brick concentration, however, the gravel boundary is somewhat unclear. The gravel may have been pushed into the subsoil in this area, as opposed to being placed in a hole, which appears to be the case with the bricks. The gravel feature also lies next to the trench, as opposed to cutting through it. In fact, although the edge of the feature parallels the trench edge, there is a gap of nearly 1ft. between them.

Unidentified features ER2423B/2, C/2, D/2, and F/2

Four small, shallow features were excavated at the plow zone-subsoil interface in ER2423/2. ER2423B/2 was a roughly circular deposit of dark reddish-brown (5YR3/4) clay loam with a diameter of 1.3ft. A square inclusion in the center of this feature, slightly lighter in color, gave the illusion of a post mold. The inclusion measured approximately 0.5ft. east to west and 0.4ft. north to south. It was excavated as 2423C/2; the color difference between it and ER2423B/2 was so slight that it received the same Munsell soil color designation. The base of C/2 was relatively flat. It cut straight downward into B/2 on its north side, but its remaining sides were gently sloping. Feature C/2 was very shallow, measuring just 0.02ft. thick. Excavators then removed B/2 and found that it extended only slightly deeper than C/2, measuring 0.06ft. thick. Like C/2, it had a flat bottom with gently sloping sides. Feature B/2 contained five brick fragments, while C/2 was sterile.

ER2423D/2 was a small bowl-shaped feature located in the center of ER2423/2. It measured 0.75ft. in diameter and 0.18ft. deep at its center. The fill was composed of reddish-brown (5YR4/4) clay loam. Five brick fragments were recovered from the feature.

ER2423F/2, another small (0.4ft.-diameter) circular feature, was located just 0.1ft. northwest of ER2423D/2. Its fill was identical to that of feature D/2, but it was slightly deeper (0.2ft.) with a flat bottom and sharply sloping sides.

None of these four features were identifiable, and it is likely that at least some of them are related to rodent burrows or root or plow scars. On the other hand, so little is known

about the function of Site B that they should be carefully re-evaluated as the block excavation is expanded to see if they are part of a larger pattern of features.

Terrace Cross-Section

Near the end of the 2004 field season, staff began to investigate the slope of the terrace at the west side of Site B. Questions regarding the relationship between Site A (on top of the terrace) and Site B had become increasingly important as the size and complexity of Site B increased throughout the summer. Two 5ft. x 5ft. units excavated on the terrace slope in 2004 were designed as a first step in a longer-term plan to compile a stratigraphic profile running the entire distance between the two sites (ER2376/2 and R2377/1). Additional units (ERs 2377/2, 2378/1, 2378/2, and 2379/1) were excavated along this trench in 2005, bringing the total number to six for a continuous 30ft. east-west profile. The terrace stratigraphy is discussed in detail below.

Stratigraphy

The trench was placed where the Southeast Terrace intersected the field that covers most of Site B. The units stretched from the toe of the terrace slope to the more level part of the terrace to the west. The westernmost unit (ER2376/2) was designated part of Site A because it lay on the west side of the projected location of Jefferson's 10-acre fence.

Excavators discovered a thick (1.2ft.) layer of twentieth-century plow zone in the five units on the flat portion of the terrace. The terrace slope was less disturbed, having escaped recent plowing. There, several lenses of twentieth-century slope wash sealed late-nineteenth-to-early-twentieth-century fill to a depth of 1.2ft. below ground surface. The red clay terrace fill, believed to date to the Jefferson era, was found beneath the plow zone in ER2376/2. The fill ended at the east edge of the excavation unit. The edge of the fill, therefore, aligns with the projected 10-acre fence boundary of 1813. The layer varied in thickness from 0.4ft. on the west to 0.1ft. in the southwest quadrant of ER2377/1, where a small strip of the clay pinched out into that unit. Artifacts recovered from this layer, including a wrought nail and one-half of an ox shoe, were consistent with an 1813 deposition.

The red-clay fill sealed a 0.25ft.-thick layer of plow zone. Numerous plow scars were noted at the base of the layer cutting what is presumed to be sterile subsoil, although excavation is currently incomplete. Small brick and charcoal flecks were noted in the plow zone layer, but no artifacts were recovered.

Features

Trash-burn midden

Excavators recorded a trash-burn midden (ER2378B/2) just beneath the modern topsoil on the west edge of ER2378/2. The edge of this feature formed a gentle convex curve that extended close to 2ft. into the unit at its apex. The fill was composed of dark-brown (7.5YR3/2) loam mixed with red (2.5YR5/6) clay and charcoal. The fill was slightly less than 0.2ft. thick at its deepest point in the southwest corner of the unit. Although this feature was first noted beneath the topsoil layer, it appears to be the southeast corner of a

large (approximately 10ft.-long) oval patch of burned earth noted at the ground surface in 2001 when the area was first cleared of bamboo.

Modern fence post hole (ER2379E/1) and mold (ER2379F/1)

A deep modern post hole was excavated at the northeast corner of ER2379/1. The feature extended from the present ground surface to a depth of 2.1 ft. Large chunks of wood from the original post were found near the base of the post mold. This feature is in a north-south line with the ruins of a post-and-wire fence. Sections of barbed wire are embedded in nearby trees, and the fence is shown clearly in aerial photographs as early as 1955.

Possible post hole

In ER2378/2 excavators noted two features that could be related to a historic fence line at the base of the late-nineteenth-century fill. The smaller of the two features is 0.5 ft. in diameter with one nearly straight side. Just north of this feature is a larger straight-sided feature with charcoal and mortar inclusions. It presently extends westward beneath an unexcavated layer in ER2378/1.

Summary of Lab Work 2004–2005

During the course of excavation, all soil removed from the site was screened through 1/4 in. wire mesh to standardize artifact recovery. Objects made of ceramic, glass, metal, synthetic, and organic materials, as well as obviously worked or modified nonarchitectural stone, mortar, burned lime, and limestone, were collected for standard laboratory analysis. Bricks and brick fragments were also collected. The sheer volume of material and limitations on storage space precluded their long-term curation. Instead, all bricks and brick fragments were washed and weighed. Whole bricks, fragments with measurable dimensions or diagnostic attributes, and a limited sample of fragments from each context were curated, while the remainder, constituting the majority, were discarded.

All artifacts collected from Site B between June 2003 and July 2005 have been washed and labeled. Seventeen metal artifacts from Site A, including buttons, spoons, coins, a thimble, and a horseshoe, have been conserved to ensure their long-term stability and to enable researchers to see surface details previously obscured by corrosion. Conservation is under way on additional artifacts recovered at Site A and on objects found in 2004 and 2005 at Site B.

A total of 5,941 artifacts have been catalogued, including those from all units dug in 2003 and 40 percent of units excavated in 2004, as well as all brick and window glass (except for window glass from ER3018/1 and ER3018/2). Units spaced regularly across the site were selected for cataloguing to facilitate distribution mapping. Most artifacts from the remaining 28 units have not been catalogued. These units are not represented in the following analyses of plow zone data, except where noted. Tables 1 and 2 provide details of cataloguing completed to date.

Catalogued Units	
ER	Year Excavated
2255	2003
2275	2003
2317	2003
2360/2	2003
2361/1	2003
2380/1	2003
2402/4	2003
2464/4	2003
2465/2	2003
3004	2003
2377/1	2004
2380/2	2004
2381/3	2004
2382/3	2004
2402/1	2004
2424/2	2004
2424/3	2004
3008/4	2004
3009/3	2004
3010/2	2004
3011/2	2004

Table 1. Catalogued units

Uncatalogued Units	
ER	Year Excavated
2377/2	2004
2379/1	2004
2381/1	2004
2381/2	2004
2381/4	2004
2402/2	2004
2403/1	2004
2403/3	2004
2423/2	2004
2423/4	2004
2424/1	2004
2424/4	2004
3010/1	2004
3011/1	2004
3012/1	2004
2340/3	2005
2359/2	2005
2359/4	2005
2360/3	2005
2361/2	2005
2378/1	2005
2378/2	2005
2380/4	2005
2401/2	2005
3010/3	2005
3010/4	2005
3018/1	2005
3018/2	2005

Table 2. Uncatalogued Units

Main Block Excavation: Preliminary Plow Zone Analysis

Plowing disturbs both the vertical and horizontal placement of artifacts. Horizontal movement is affected by slope, soil type, and artifact size; however, studies have shown that important spatial information about site structure remains preserved in plowed soils. Indeed, with gentle slopes and heavy clays typical of Site B, relatively minor movement of artifacts is expected. This is borne out by the correspondence between brick density in the plow zone of ER2381/4 and the preserved brick-filled feature beneath it. An examination of artifact distribution helps to pinpoint activity areas at the site relating to building construction or destruction, trash disposal, manufacturing and processing, and other activities that leave a spatial signature through artifact dispersal.

Using SURFER, a commercially available mapping program, raw counts or weights of specific artifact types from Site B were plotted to look for potentially meaningful concentrations. The results are discussed below; maps are located in Appendix B. Note that for each map, north is at the top of the page.

All Artifacts

When plotted, the distribution of all counted artifacts from catalogued units indicates two areas of concentration on the site (Graphic 1). The first concentration occurs at the northwest boundary of the block excavation, peaking near ER2360/2 and ER2361/1 and stretching south toward ER2381/3 and ER2382/3. The second appears near the southern end of the block, peaking around ER2424/1 and ER2424/3 and extending north and west into ER units 2424/2 and 2424/4. Overall, the highest concentrations of artifacts seem to be following the same northwest-southeast trend observed for the large clay-and-silt-filled depression at the site and the features that cluster around it.

Architectural Artifacts

Brick

All bricks have been weighed (in grams), catalogued, and converted to pound weights for distribution mapping. Graphic 2 shows four areas of concentration. A small peak along the northern edge of the block excavation reflects the peak for all artifacts. A second peak, representing about 23lbs. of brick, occurs over ER unit 2381/4. That unit still contains the remainder of a small brick-filled pit located in its southern half, and it is likely that the concentration seen here reflects the upper portions of this feature that were truncated by plowing in the past. The two primary peaks, each defined by brick weights of 26–28lbs., occur above ER units 3008/4, 3010/3, and 3010/4. They are connected by a slightly northwest-southeast trending line of concentrated brick approximately 20ft. in length. Plow zone is deepest in this area of the site. This elongated concentration of brick most likely represents one large or several smaller features that have been completely eradicated by modern plowing. Further excavation to the north and south in this area may reveal that the line of brick extends in either or both directions.

Window Glass

Window glass has been catalogued for all units except ER3018/1 and ER3018/2 and is distributed by weight in grams. Like brick, glass concentrates in the southern portion of the block excavation, with a peak centered on ER3010/2 and ER3010/3. A smaller, more dispersed cluster of glass falls in the northwestern part of the site overlying the concentration of schist stones (Graphic 3).

Wrought and Cut Nails

Hand-wrought and machine-cut nails are abundant at the site and demonstrate a greater degree of dispersal than other artifacts relating to architecture. Nevertheless, two of the areas of concentration noted for other artifact categories are also demonstrated by their distribution. A concentration along the northern edge of the block, seen in the graphic for all artifacts and for bricks, is also formed by discarded nails. Although more widely scattered than bricks or window glass, nails also cluster at the southern end of the site around units 2424/2 and 2424/3 and extend out to the west as far as unit 3010/2 (Graphic 4).

Domestic Artifacts—Ceramics

Detailed analyses of the distributions of domestic artifacts must await further cataloguing. However, a quick comparison of the dispersal of creamware, pearlware, whiteware,

yellowware, and ironstone, ceramic types that are sensitive indicators of time, provides an interesting glimpse at changing use of space at the site during the nineteenth century. Graphic 5 shows a peak of creamware and pearlware, refined British table- and teawares that were in common use from the 1770s through the late 1820s, concentrating in the northwest corner of the site. With the exception of this area, however, the distribution of these ware types seems quite consistent across the site. By contrast, the whiteware, yellowware, and ironstone, common in the mid-nineteenth century, cluster in three distinctive areas closer to the center of the block, with the highest peak above ER2402/4. The distribution of these wares is the only one plotted to date that does not follow a northwest-southeast trend. While the presence of these ceramics may indicate that Site B remained in use into the middle of the nineteenth century, it is equally likely that their presence relates to dumping activities undertaken by residents of the nearby antebellum slave quarter at Site A. Cataloguing of adjacent units should clarify whether the peaks represented in Graphic 6 are part of a larger concentration stretching westward toward Site A or whether they are a discrete cluster indicative of independent activities at Site B.

Discussion

Spatial structure at the site is beginning to emerge. The categories of bricks, window glass, nails, and all artifacts reveal similar peaks of distribution in the southern end of the site in and around units 2424/2 and 2424/3 and stretching eastward as far as ER3010/2. Concentrations fall abruptly further to the east. Although less consistent in size or density, a secondary area of concentration falls at the northern end of the site for nails and all artifacts, while window glass and bricks show a peak slightly further to the south and west in the vicinity of units 2380 and 2381. These distributions in the north overlie the schist concentration, supporting the hypothesis that a structure once stood in this area. The high densities in the south also may indicate the location of a structure that has been largely erased by plowing.

Domestic artifacts, represented by refined British table- and teawares spanning the period from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, show a fairly regular scatter of earlier wares across the site, with a single peak in the northwest. Three distinctive peaks formed by the later wares may relate to dumping from residents of nearby Site A or may indicate that Site B continued to be used into the antebellum period.

Discussion of Individual Artifacts

While this report thus far has focused on artifact types in the aggregate, some important individual artifacts have been discovered at the site. Two such items, a pierced coin and an inscribed clay tobacco pipe, which have both been modified, are considered below.

In the first case, the modification transforms the primary use of the coin as an economic form of legal tender into an object with primary medical and/or religious significance. In the second case, the object is personalized, providing a first-person description of the owner's valuation of the object.

Pierced Spanish Coin

In 2004 excavators recovered a pierced Spanish coin from the site (Figure 12). The coin is a half real, minted in 1789 during the reign of King Charles III. Spanish coins were valued throughout the world for their consistent weight and purity. Consequently, Spanish coinage was abundant and easy to obtain, given that it was minted in Spain's colonial possessions as well as in Spain. It is estimated that half of the coins in colonial America were Spanish reales. Virginia made the Spanish real its standard currency in 1645. An act passed on February 9, 1793, made Spanish dollars legal tender in the United States, and they were not demonetized until February 21, 1857.

The coin from Site B was pierced at the top, likely to allow it to be strung and worn on the body. Pierced silver coins are commonly recovered through archaeology on sites formerly associated with enslaved individuals. Most excavated pierced coins are of Spanish origin (Singleton 1995: 164). Two other pierced coins have been excavated at Poplar Forest. Both are also half reales. The first, recovered in plow zone at Site A, was minted in the 1780s (the actual date is worn away). The second coin was found in the fill of the Wing of Offices. It is too worn to read the date.

Anthropologists and historians have suggested that the act of wearing coins had the practical purpose of guarding against theft or loss. Within the context of slavery, however, coins were even more valuable, making them a precious commodity. While piercing coins for attachment to clothing may have held a functional purpose for slaves, documented folklore and narratives of former slaves suggest different motivations for wearing them (Davidson 2004). Folklorist Newbell Puckett collected African American folklore in the early nineteenth century and documented the use of silver coins for good luck, for protection from conjuring, and as a general cure-all (Russell 1997: 68). Sam Jordan, formerly enslaved in Oklahoma, stated: "The Negro slaves were very superstitious and believed in voodooism. All of them wore a silver dime on a raw cotton thread around their ankles to keep from being voodooed" (Baker and Baker 1996: 235). Stephen McCray, also from Oklahoma, mentions another function of dimes: "A dime was put 'round a teething baby's neck to make it tooth easy, and it sho' helped too" (Baker and Baker 1996: 271). Jordan's and McCray's narratives provide information on pierced coins' specific medicinal and religious purposes. But items used as charms weren't always worn; sometimes they were simply carried. Mollie Watson said: "Lots o' folks carry lucky pieces. It can be a rabbit's foot, a buckeye, coin or even a button. It all depends on how much faith you have in it" (Baker and Baker 1996: 454). This statement reminds us that unaltered everyday items may also have had symbolic significance, although this would be difficult to establish archaeologically.

Nonpierced silver coins have been found on the Poplar Forest property, including another Spanish half real. This coin was minted in 1790 and was found at the Quarter Site. A quarter of a Spanish real minted in 1738 and half of a Spanish real minted at some point between 1700 and 1746 were found at the location of an earlier quarter for enslaved laborers, occupied in the 1770s–1780s. Whether or not these coins had significance beyond their monetary value is uncertain.

A 1930s Works Progress Administration interview with Mrs. May Satterfield of Lynchburg, Virginia, who was born into slavery in 1861, suggests that silver coins continued to hold special significance in the twentieth century (Perdue et al. 1994: 246–7). Mrs. Satterfield explained various “signs” to the interviewer and told him how to procure good luck and avoid bad luck. In the course of this instruction, she told him: “Ef you change money, don’t give ’em no silver money, fo’ it’s sho’ bad luck. Sho’ it’s all right to give paper money and nickels an’ pennies too, but jes’ don’t give no change in silver.” She goes on to relate a story in which “ole stebens,” a Lynchburg barber, profited significantly by following her advice (Perdue et al. 1994: 246–7).

George White, from Danville, Virginia, was born into slavery in 1847. He mentioned the use of a dime to obtain more money. He said: “My daddy knew all de roots an’ he showed dem to me. Now, if you take a dime when de moon first rises, hold it up to de moon an’ thank God, an’ kiss it an’ put it in your pocket, you will get a piece of money before night” (Perdue et al. 1994: 310).

Good Pipe

Tobacco-pipe fragments are common finds on archaeological sites dating from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, and many have been recovered at Poplar Forest. In addition to being fragile and easily broken, clay pipes were relatively cheap and replaceable, making them ubiquitous in the archaeological record. White-clay pipes were the most common smoking medium in use from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries (Parker and Hernigle 1990: 113). However, many other materials were used to make smoking pipes, including wood, corn cobs, metal, bamboo, stone, and local clays. Pipes fashioned from local sources produced a variety of colors based on the mineral contents of the clay. In central Virginia, the iron-rich soil typically produced pipes in varying shades of red, orange, and brown. These pipes were used locally, regionally, and internationally.

Clay pipes manufactured in North America differed in form from white-clay pipes. Elbow pipes—characterized by pipe bowls with short stems into which a reed was inserted to serve as the extended stem and mouthpiece—were a common type manufactured in North America. The reed stem provided a cooler, smoother smoke than pipes with clay stems (Parker and Hernigle 1990: 113). The design of the short-stemmed or “stub-stemmed” pipe was copied from Native Americans. The angle and shape of the pipe bowl, however, is European, making the North American elbow pipe a multicultural artifact.

The elbow pipes excavated at Poplar Forest may have been made by a local or regional potter. The manufacture of these pipes became an important cottage industry in nineteenth-century Virginia, particularly in Appomattox County (Mouer et al. 1999: 111). Many of Shenandoah Valley’s earthenware and stoneware potters manufactured elbow pipes (Comstock 1994: 78), a common practice throughout the region. Locally produced clay pipes could either be molded in a lead mold, resulting in characteristic mold marks and surface decoration, or molded by hand. Both types of pipes could be burnished or polished, producing a smooth finish and luster. The majority of elbow pipes were made

of earthenware, and some were glazed on the exterior. Handmade pipes were sometimes decorated by incising or rouletting designs on the pipe bowl (Noël Hume 1969: 307–8).

Most of the North American clay elbow pipe fragments recovered at Poplar Forest have clean finishes and appear to be manufactured from molds. The angle and shape of the pipe bowls also suggest that they date to the historic period, particularly the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Only a few pipe fragments and related materials have been found at Site B. To date, archaeologists have recovered one British-manufactured white-clay pipe stem and one white-clay partial pipe bowl. A cut piece of micaceous schist, believed to be discarded material from the production of stone pipes similar to those recovered at the Poplar Forest Quarter Site and the Wing of Offices, has also recently been found. Two red-clay pipe stems and a black-glazed redware pipe stem have also been found. One of the red-clay pipe stems is undecorated and circular in shape; the other is molded into an octagonal shape and shows evidence of considerable use in the form of wear on the stem. The owner of this pipe used a small tool to inscribe the words “Good Pipe” on the side of the stem (Figure 13). The letters were formed by small etched dots, probably created by pressing a sharp instrument on the surface of the pipe and turning it to form an impression. This modification transforms the pipe into a personal possession, evoking a sense of the individual owner in a way that an undecorated pipe stem cannot.

Current Interpretation and 2005 Work Plan

Site B remains something of a mystery at this time. Further excavation is necessary to fully expose and sample features identified in 2004 and 2005. The long stone-filled trench that initially appeared to be a structural wall now appears to be a landscape feature. The large silt-filled depression adjoining the trench indicates that the site was leveled prior to construction.

Staff members continue to recover dense deposits of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artifacts in the northwest and southern units of the site (Graphic 1), including wrought nails and early cut nails, bricks, coarse and refined earthenwares, glass bottle sherds, and table glass. The finds also include a smaller number of personal items such as buttons, smoking-pipe fragments, a jaw harp, the 1789 pierced silver coin, and the ceramic smoking pipe with the words “Good Pipe” hand-carved along its side. Ongoing artifact analysis will help to better establish a site chronology, refine our understanding of spatial relationships, and shed new light on the activities of site occupants.

The evidence that has emerged from the past two years of work at Site B suggests that two or more structures most likely occupied the area beginning c. 1800. The artifact assemblage strongly suggests a domestic component associated with mixed-use buildings designed primarily for manufacture or storage and that included living space. The complexity and size of features at the site and their apparent Jefferson-period origins lend particular significance to Site B. It is hypothesized that this site is linked to the artificially

created terrace immediately to its west and reflects a reorganization of plantation activities following the creation of the curtilage and the subsequent construction of the Wing of Offices in 1814. Whatever its function, Site B is thought to have been a very visible and important part of the Jefferson-period landscape.

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Appendix A

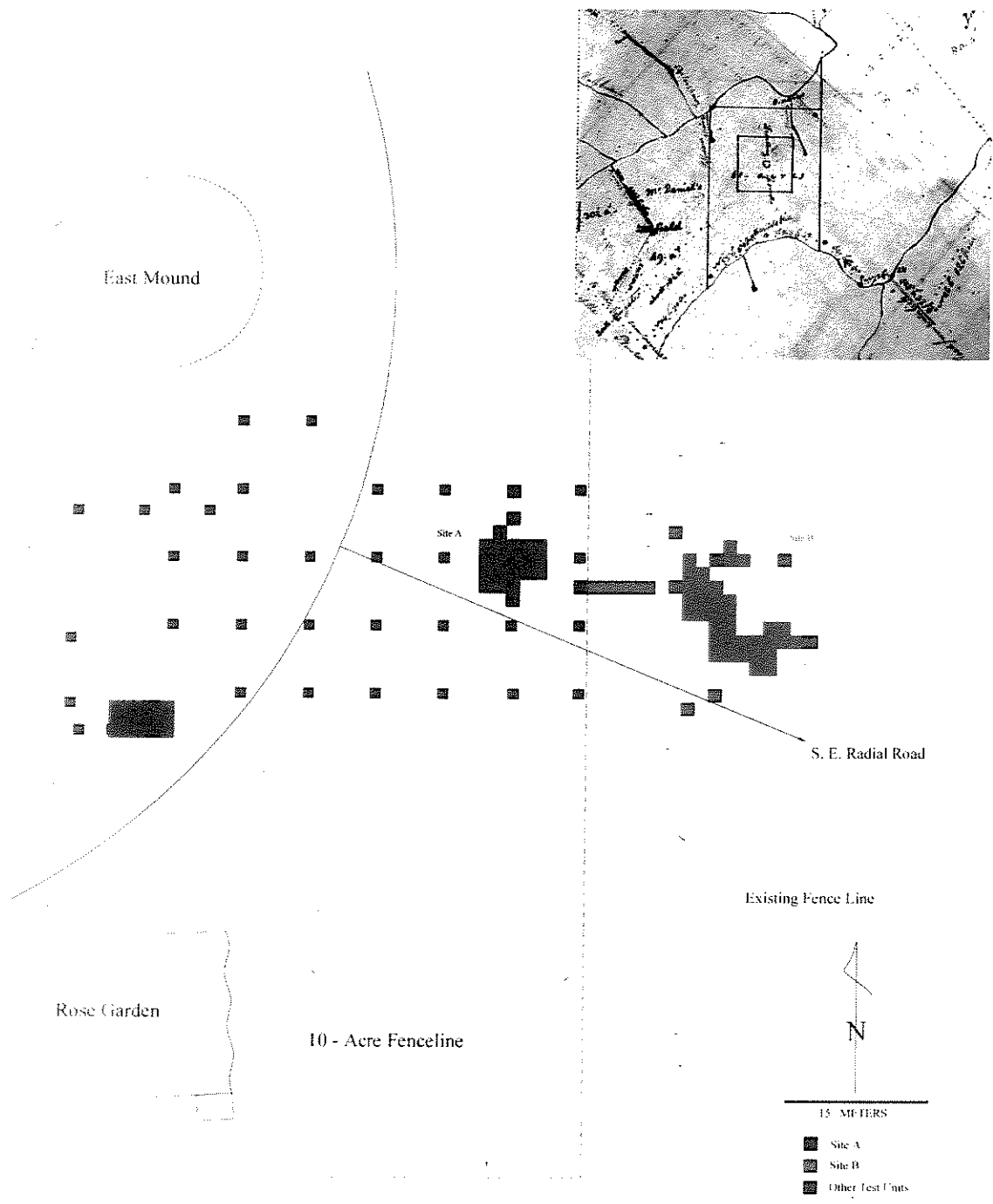


Figure 1. Locations of excavation units at Sites A and B with inset depicting curtilage and 10-acre fence boundaries on 1813 Slaughter survey map.

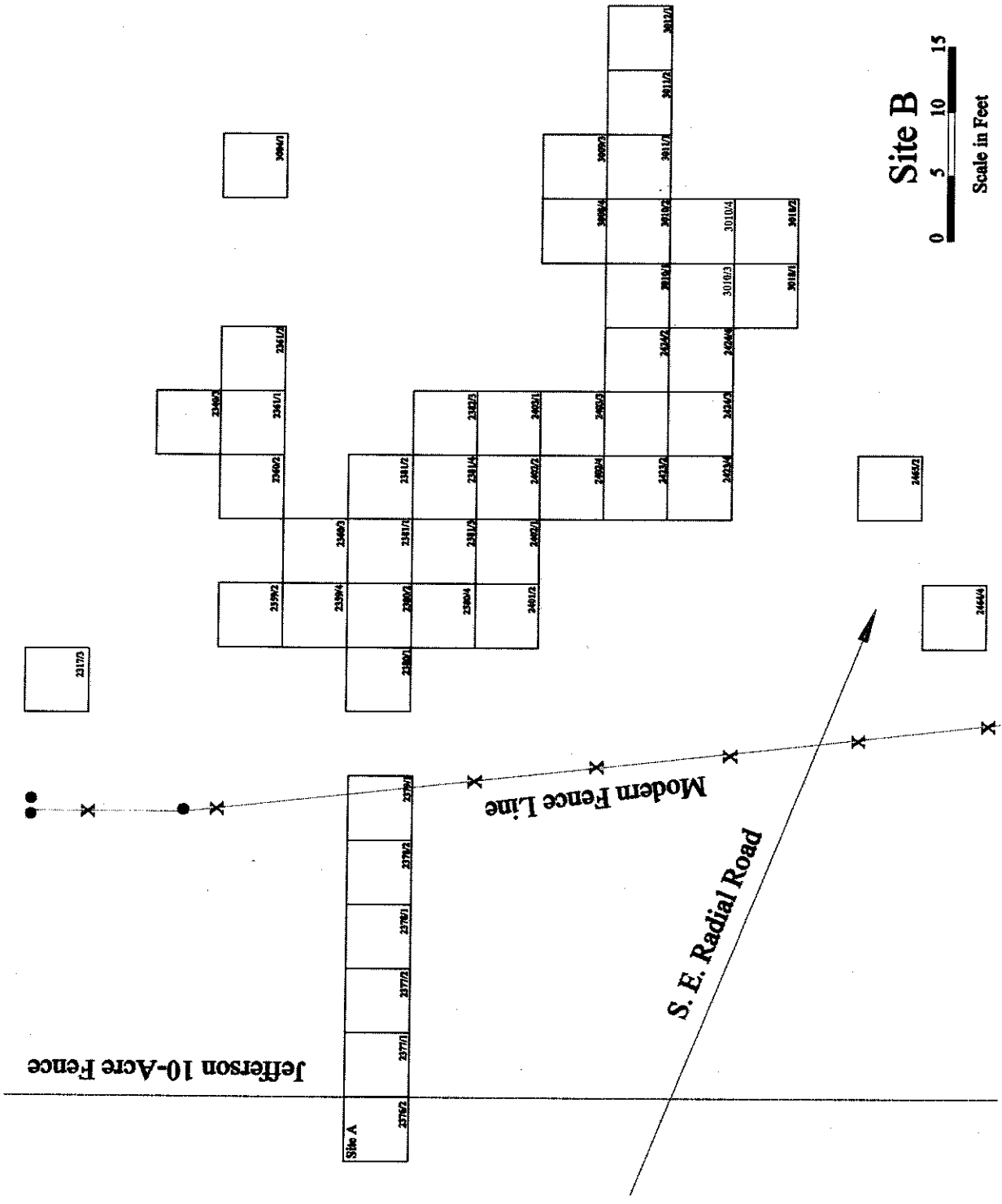


Figure 2: Current Site Map of Block Excavations at Site B

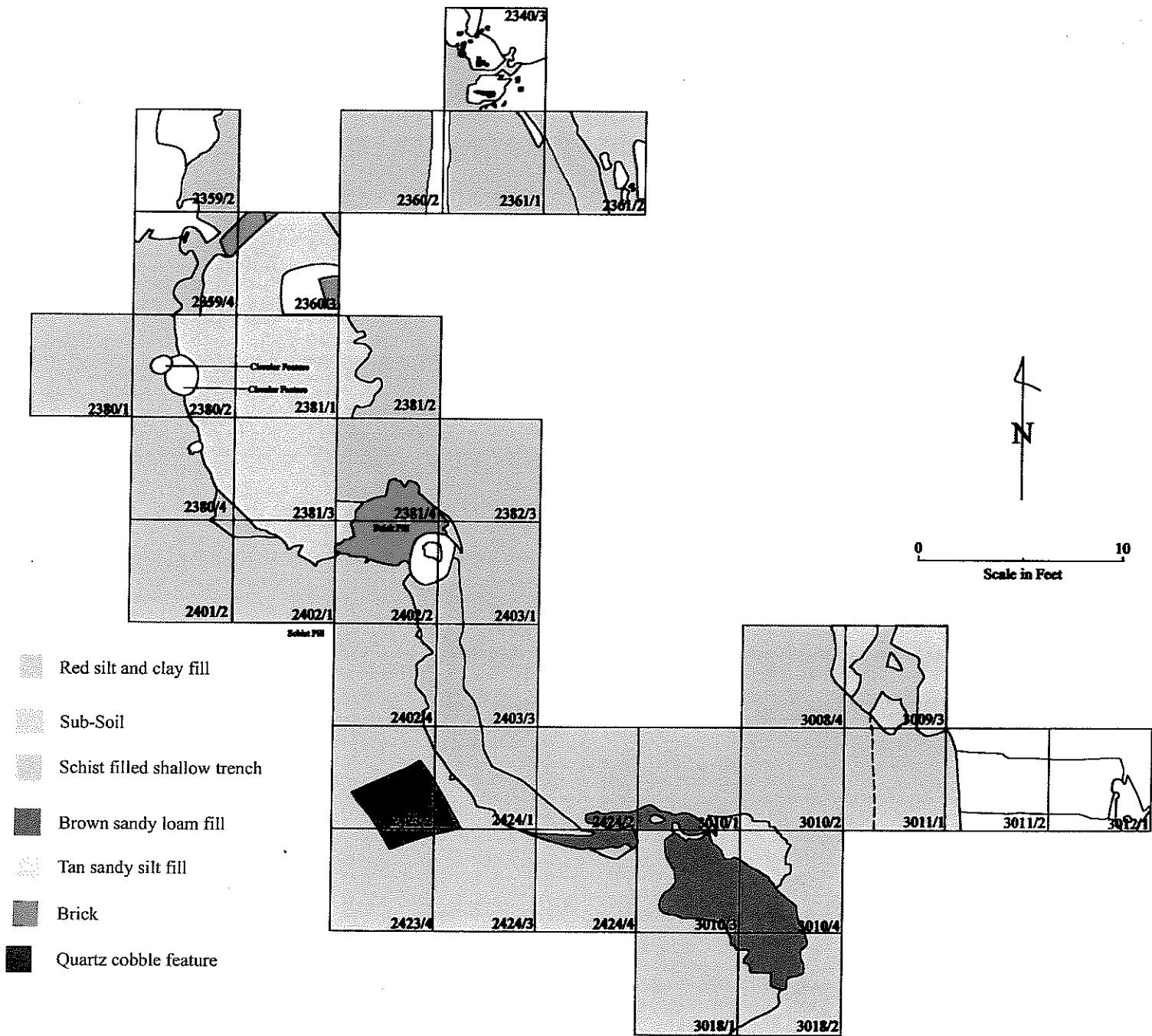


Figure 3. Site B Block Excavation Features.

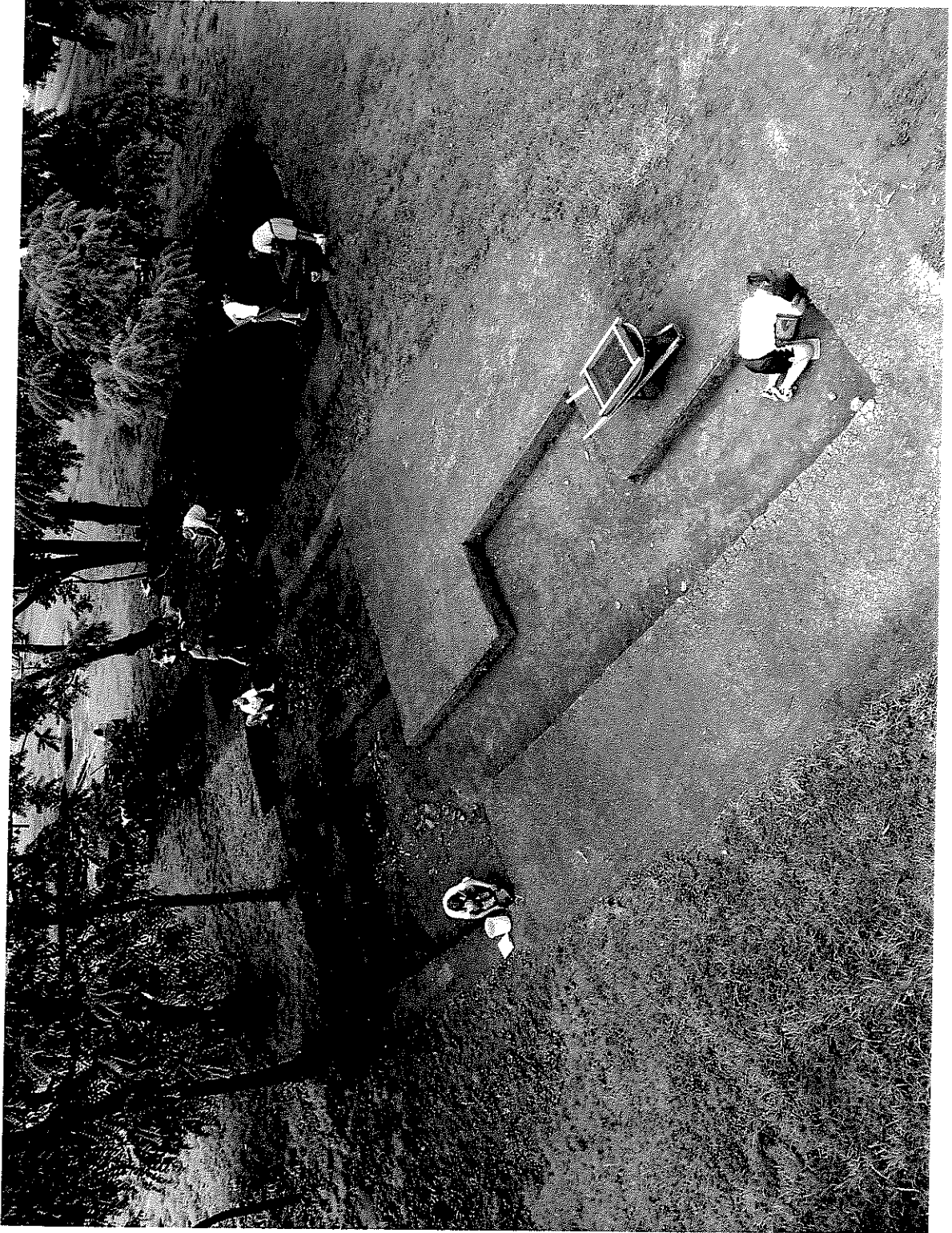


Figure 4. Site B aerial photo.

Level Line

Line Level

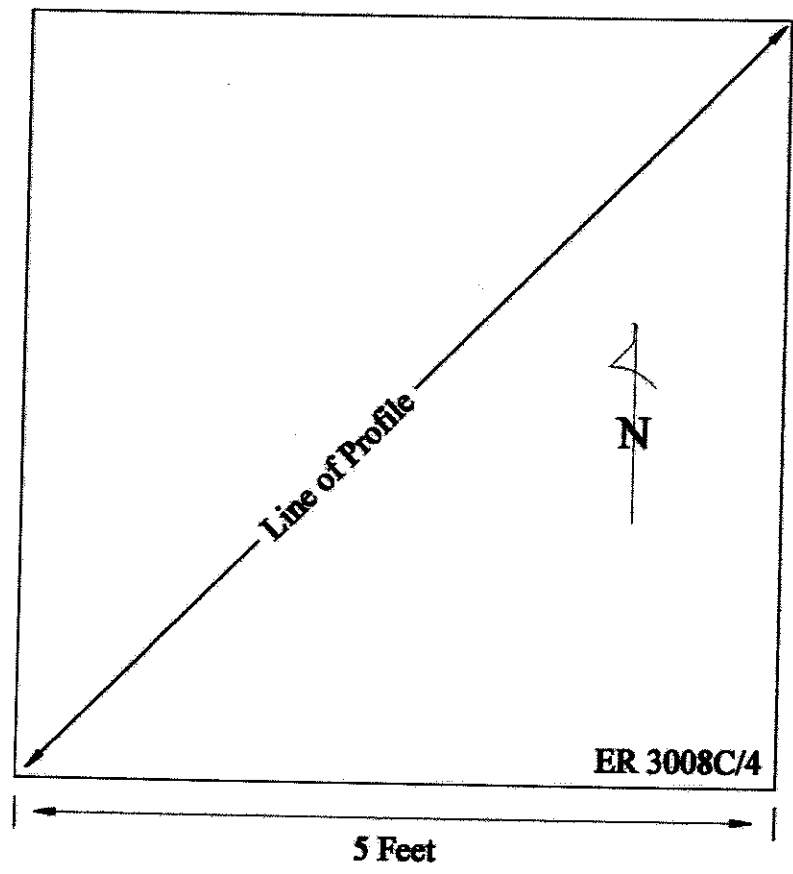
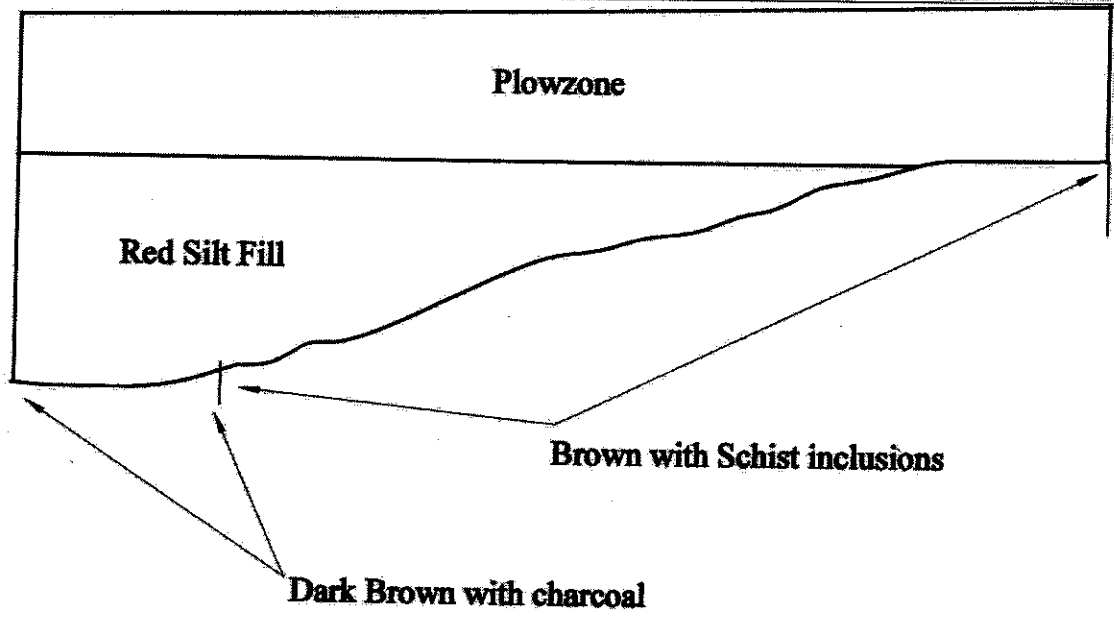


Figure 5: Section Drawing of Fill in Silt-Filled Trench

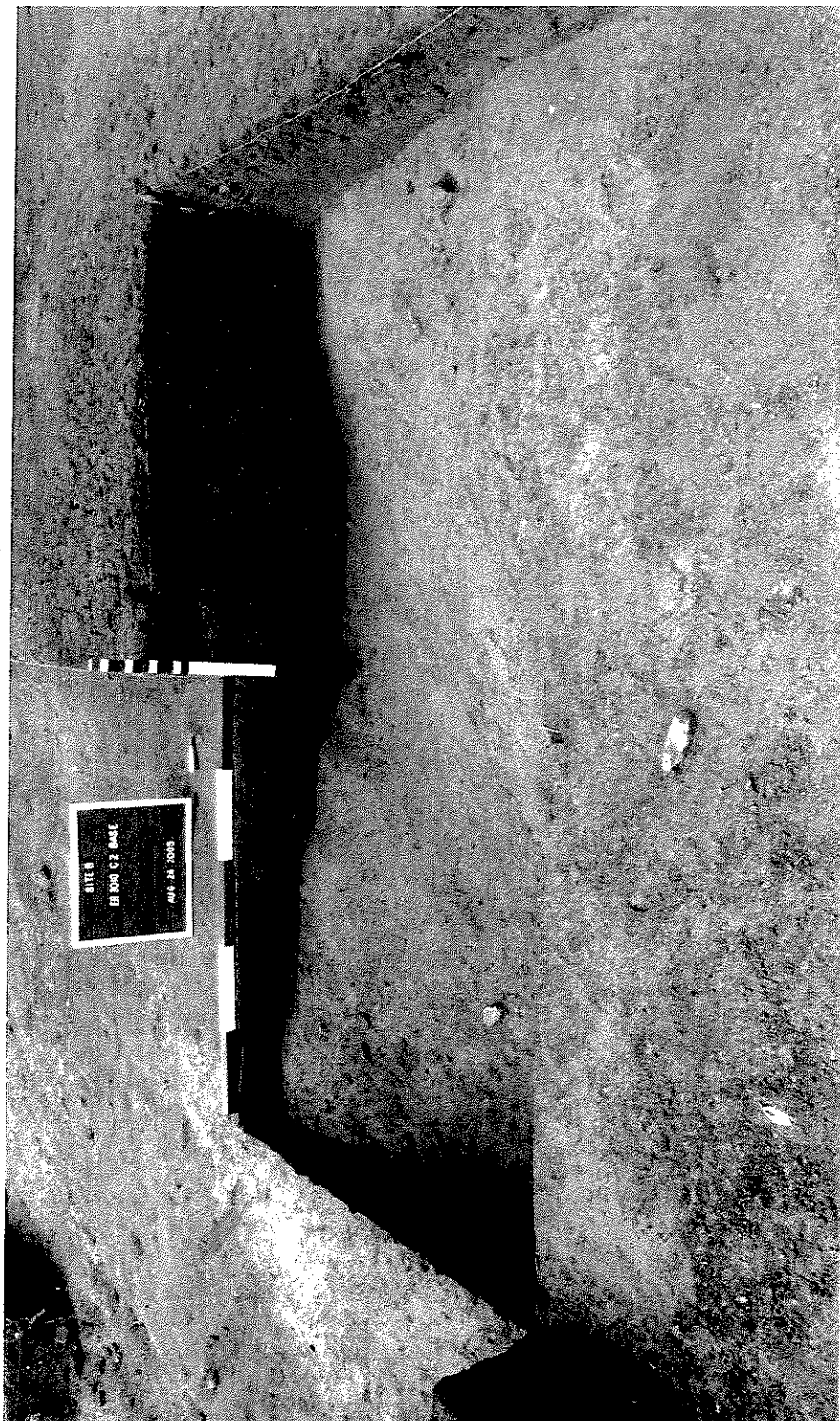


Figure 6. Excavated section of silt-filled depression.



Figure 7. Cross-section of rubble-filled trench.



Figure 8. Detail of brick-filled feature and schist layer.



Figure 9. Brick rubble in ER2360/3.



Figure 10. View of brick pad following excavation of Feature ER2402C/2.



Figure 11. Staff member excavating quartz gravel feature.



Figure 12. Pierced Spanish half real.

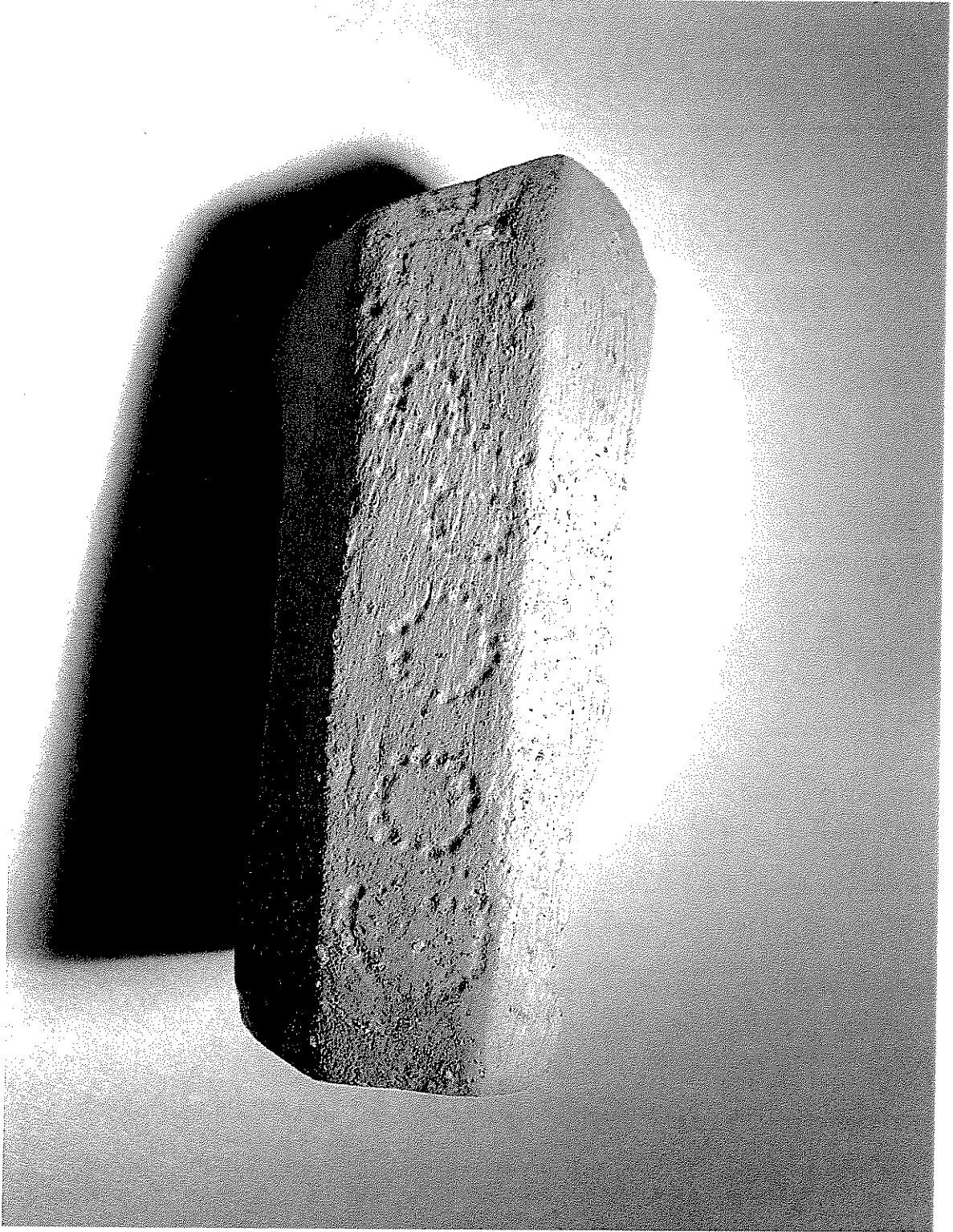
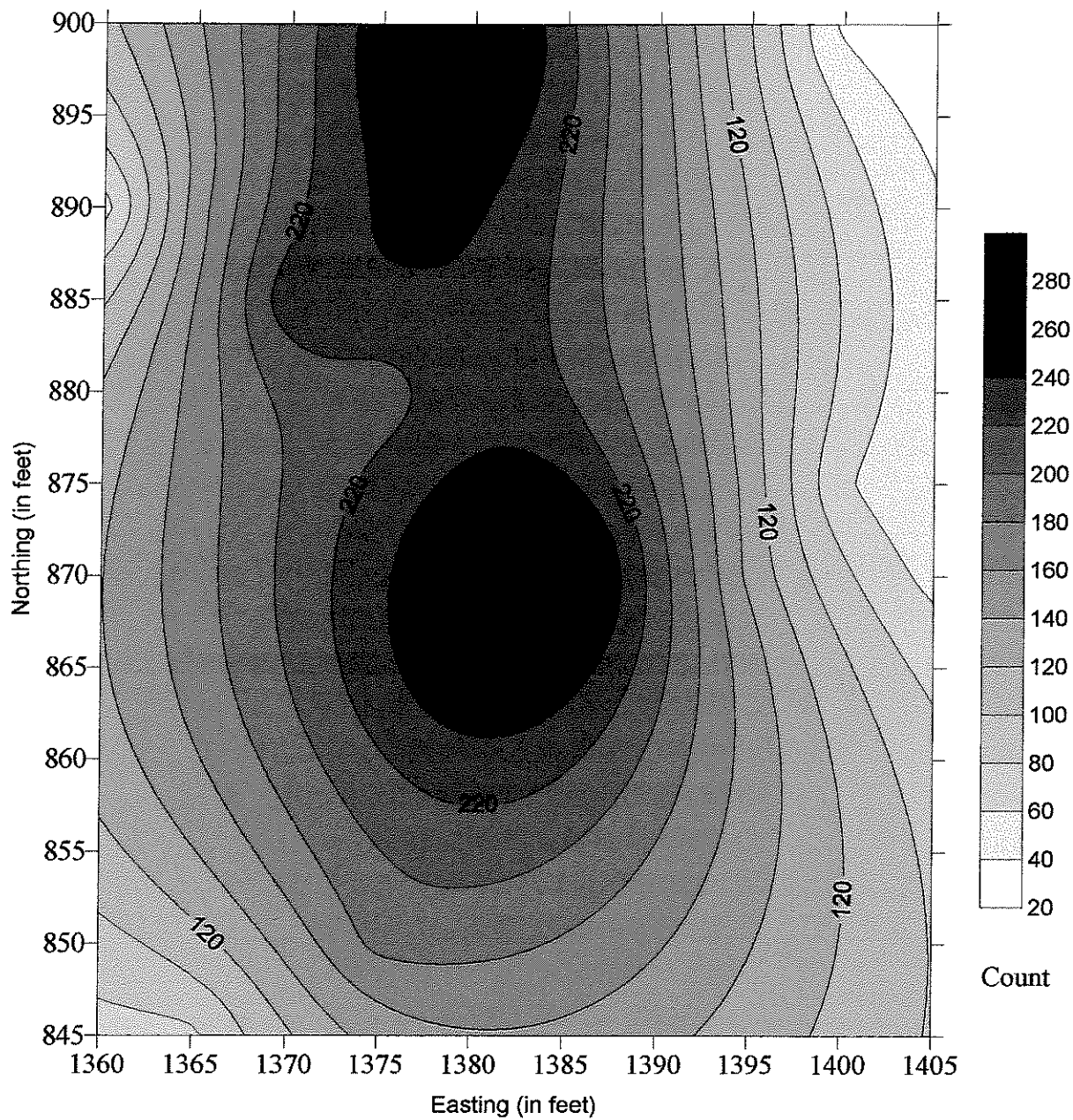
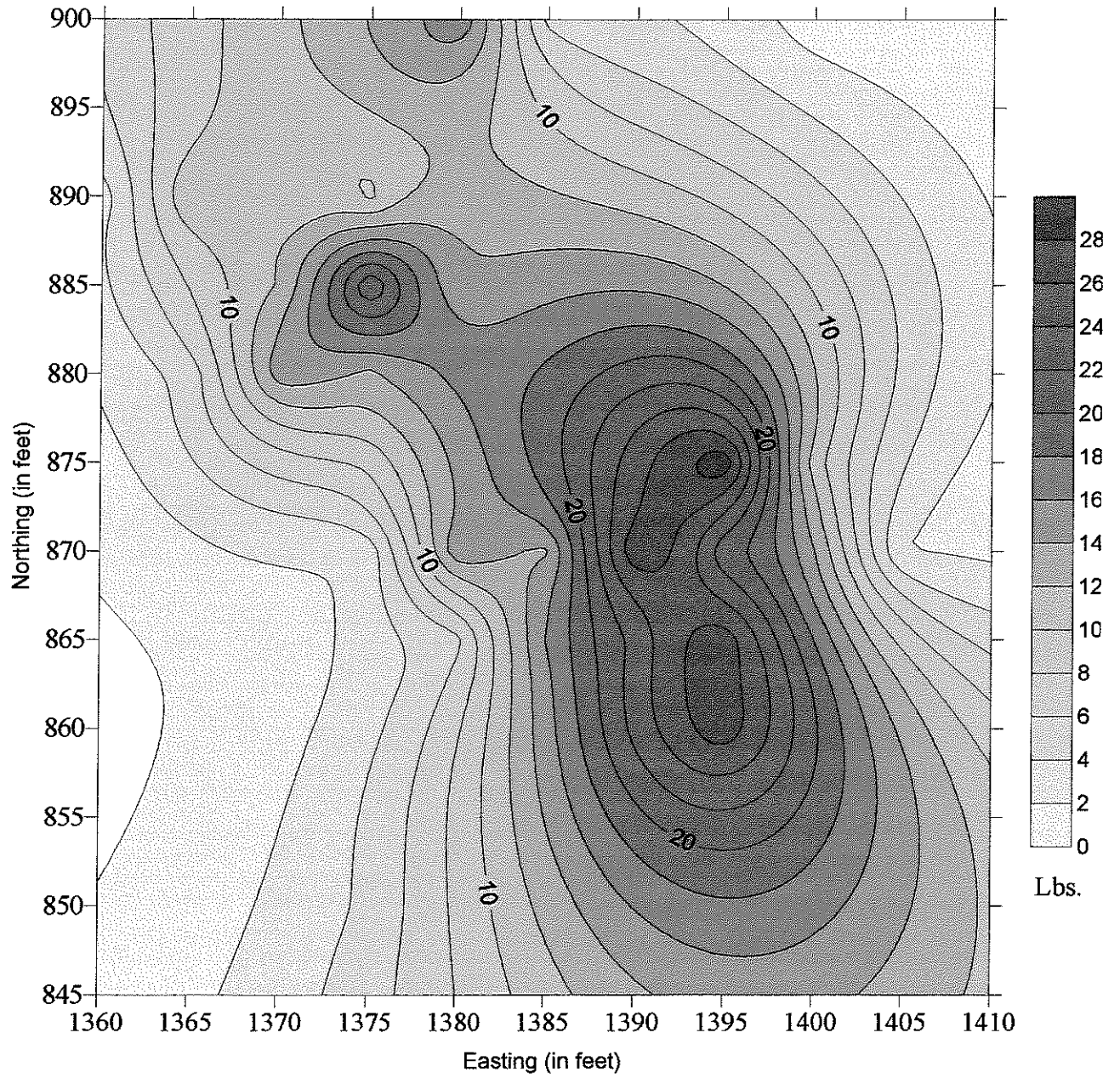


Figure 13. Personalized clay smoking pipe.

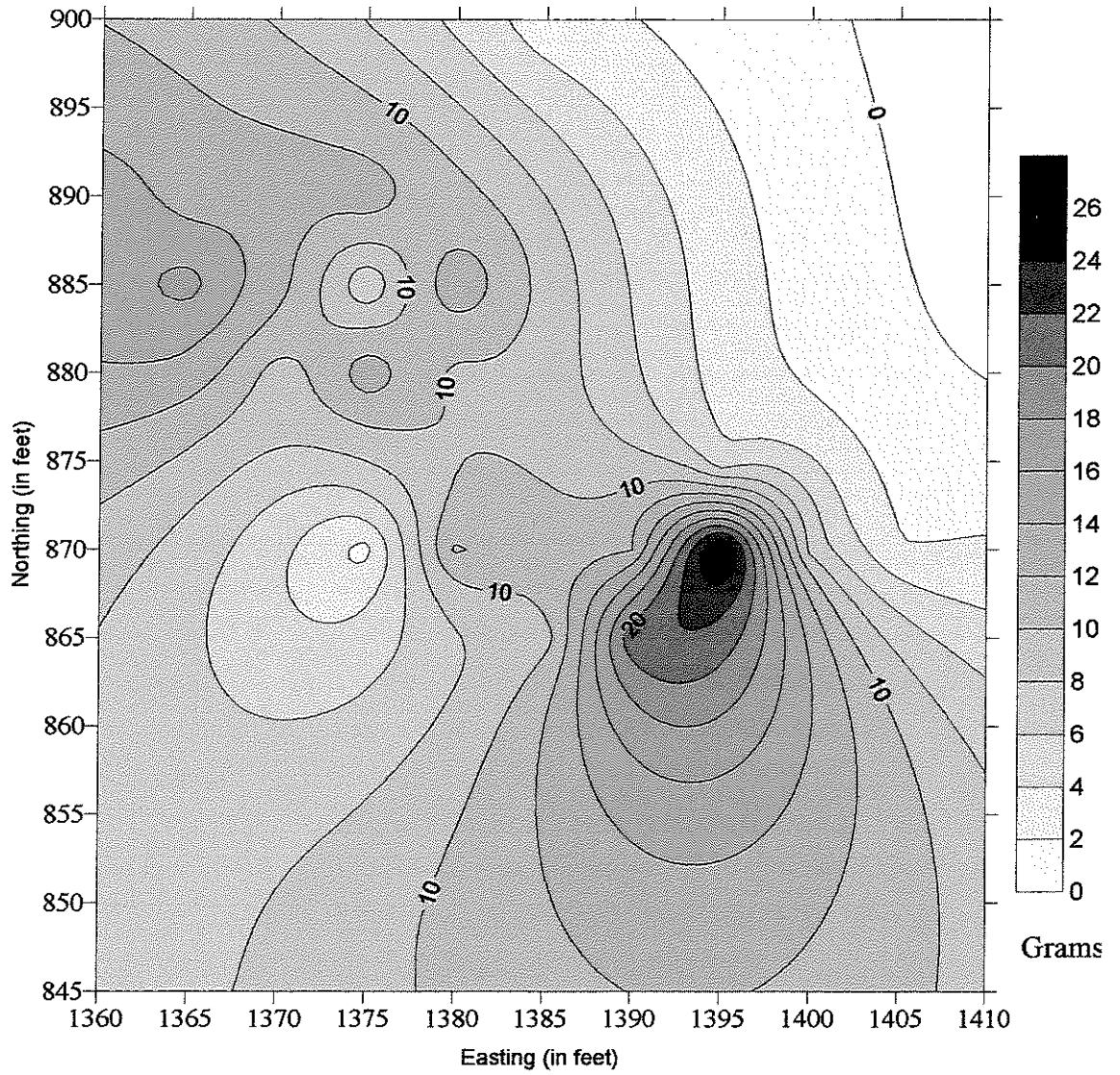
Appendix B



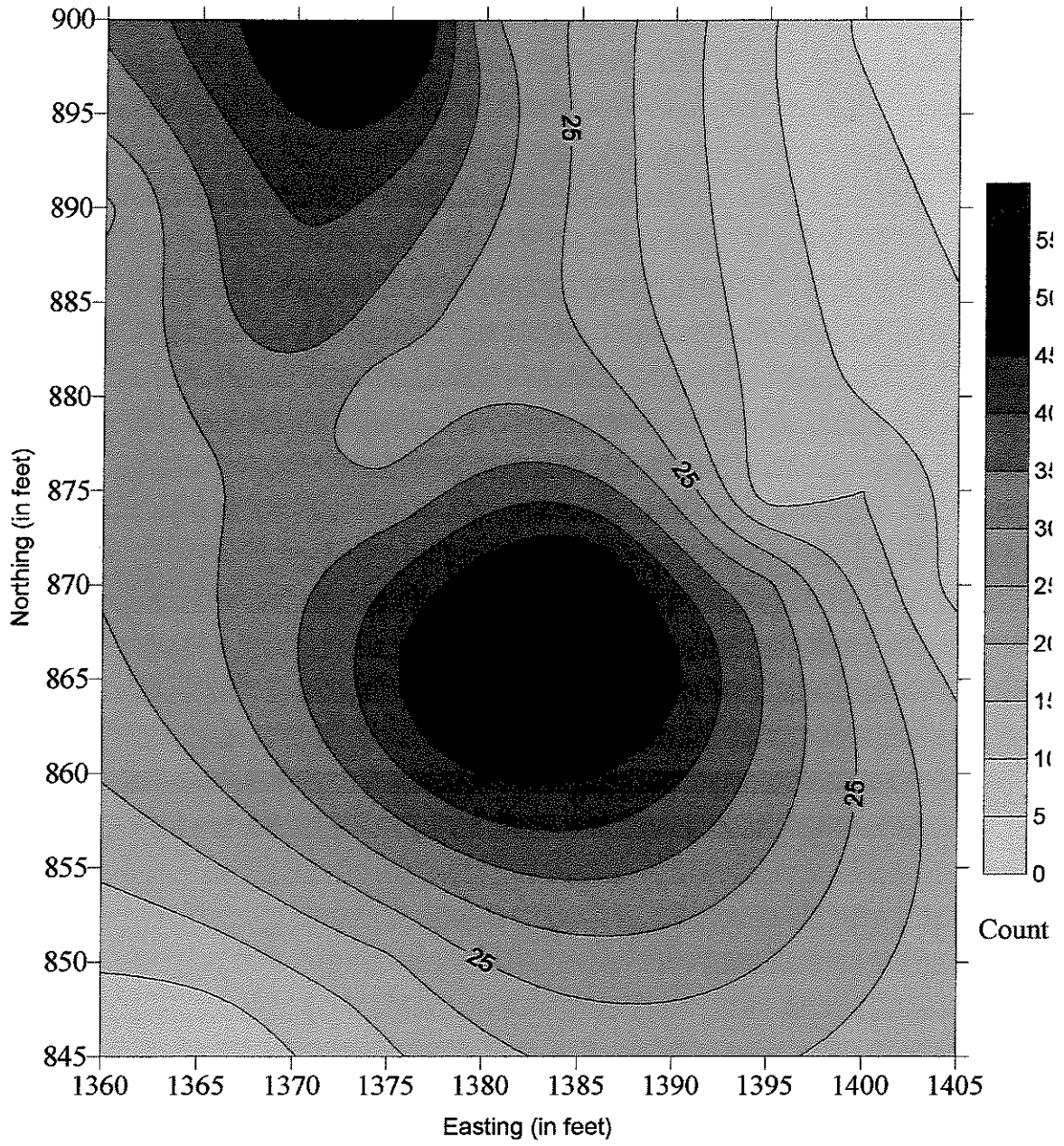
Graphic 1: Distribution of all counted artifacts from catalogued units, Site B



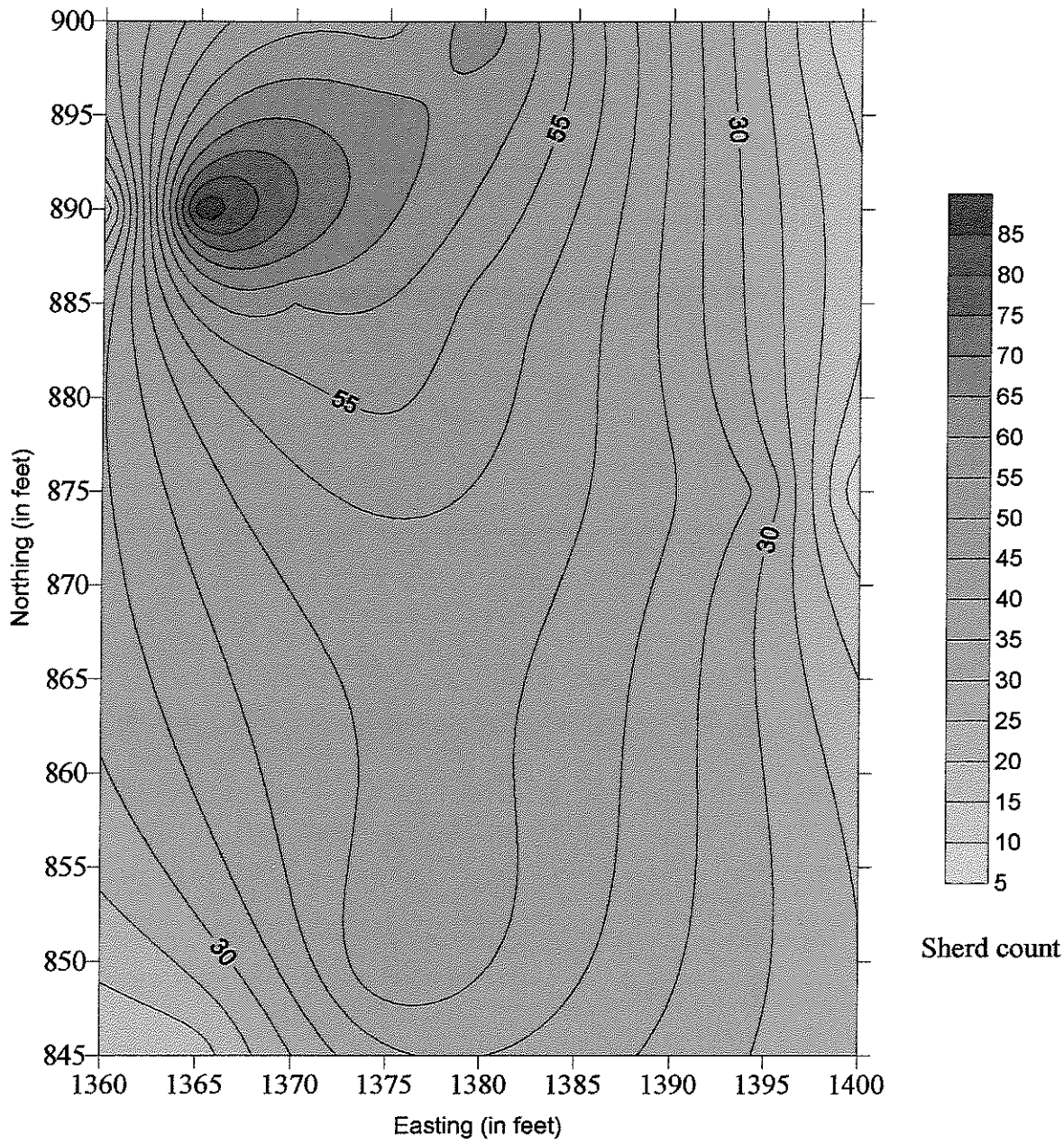
Graphic 2: Brick distribution at Site B (weight in lbs)



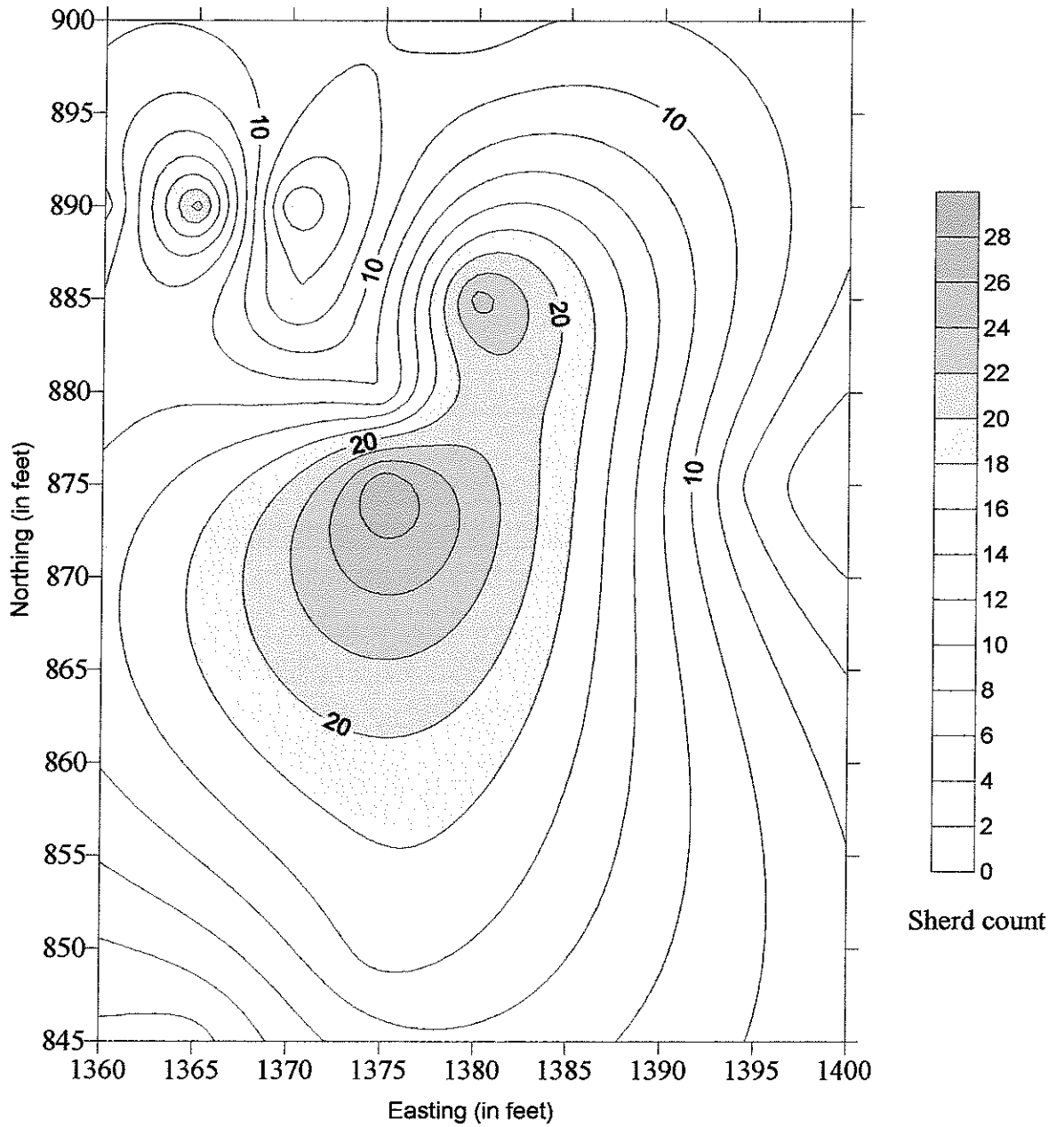
Graphic 3: Window glass distribution at Site B (weight in grams)



Graphic 4: Wrought and machine cut nails distribution at Site B (count)



Graphic 5: Creamware and pearlware distribution at Site B (counts combined)



Graphic 6: Whiteware, yellowware, and ironstone distribution at Site B
(counts combined)