III. PHASE I/II INVESTIGATIONS AT THE JOHN HENRY SITE

A. METHODS

Phase I/II fieldwork at the John Henry Site (7NC-J-223) began with the establishment of a grid over the site with its X-axis parallel to Blackbird Landing Road. Grid north therefore had a bearing of 45 degrees east of north. The limits of the testing were Blackbird Landing Road on the north, the Dupont Highway on the west, a fence that marked the property boundary on the east, and wetlands on the south. A plan of the site was prepared at a scale of 1 inch = 20 feet (Figure 3).

Shovel tests were placed at 20-foot intervals on east-west-running transects that were set 20 feet apart. Because of a field error, Transect B was actually 25 feet from Transect A and 15 feet from Transect C. Shovel tests on adjacent transects were offset by 10 feet. Transect A was on the N200 line, and Transect E was on the N120 line. Shovel tests were numbered consecutively from west to east. A total of 48 shovel tests were excavated on this site.

All shovel tests were 1.5 feet in diameter, and they were excavated into culturally sterile levels. All soils were excavated by natural or cultural horizons and screened through ¼-inch hardware mesh. Results of individual shovel tests were recorded on standard field forms developed by LBA, using Munsell color notations and USDA textural classifications. All artifacts from the shovel tests were retained for analysis.

Seven test units measuring 3x6 feet were placed to maximize and refine the information from this site. Since it was known that the house had been moved to its present location when U.S. Route 13 was expanded to four lanes, Test Unit 1 was to be placed inside the house to test for features or intact strata underneath the house's current location. The remaining test units were to be placed based on the results of the shovel tests. Test Unit 2 was placed southeast of the house between the two shovel tests on Transect C that had produced the highest artifact totals. Since there was otherwise no definite patterning to the shovel testing results, Test Units 3, 5, and 6 were placed on the east, north, and west sides of the house. Test Units 4 and 7 were placed to sample the area of the privy and barn.

Test units were excavated by natural strata. Strata more than 0.3 foot thick were separated into arbitrary 0.3-foot levels. The uppermost stratum in all test units was an old plowzone, but this stratum was also excavated in levels, in the hope of isolating recent (post-1950) deposits. All soils were screened through ¼-inch hardware mesh. Soils were described using Munsell color notations and USDA textural classifications, and the appropriate data were recorded on the standardized field forms developed by LBA. Two-liter samples of soil were collected from each level for paleobotanical analysis. Soil profiles were drawn for each unit, as were plan views, and these were recorded photographically in both black-and-white and color-slide film. Photos were also used to document general site conditions and features. All excavations were backfilled and the areas restored, as nearly as possible, to their original condition.

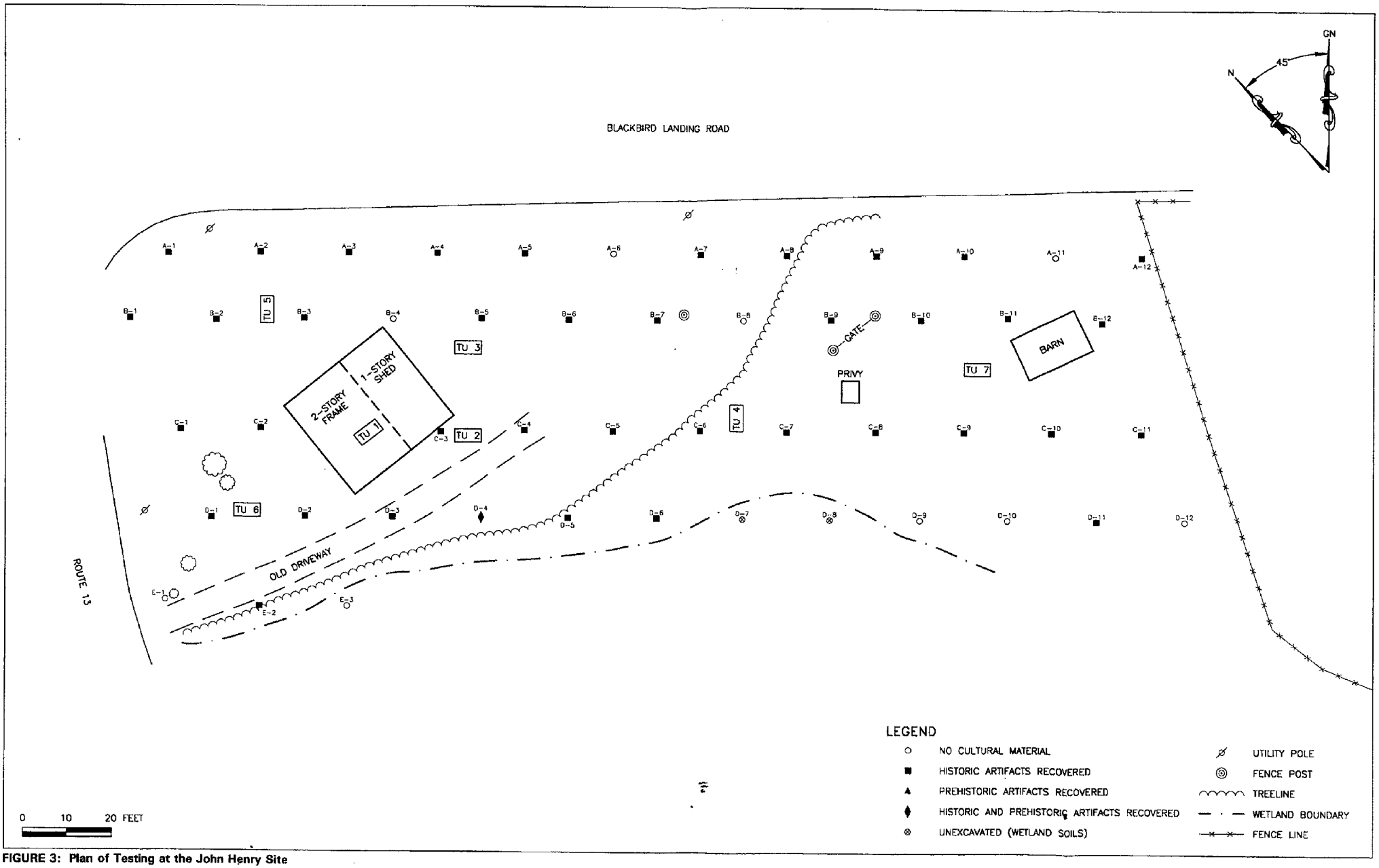


FIGURE 3: Plan of Testing at the John Henry Site

B. FINDINGS

A total of 308 historic artifacts and one prehistoric artifact were recovered from the 48 shovel tests. Only nine shovel tests were culturally sterile. The average artifact count per shovel test was six, with a standard deviation of 12. Only two shovel tests, Shovel Tests C3 (N=81) and C4 (N=27), had counts higher than one standard deviation above the mean. These two shovel tests were near the southeast corner of the house. Shovel Test D4, which formed an isosceles triangle with Shovel Tests C3 and C4, had a rather high count (N=10) in its Stratum C, which was probably a buried plowzone. The concentration of negative shovel tests showed no distinct patterning.

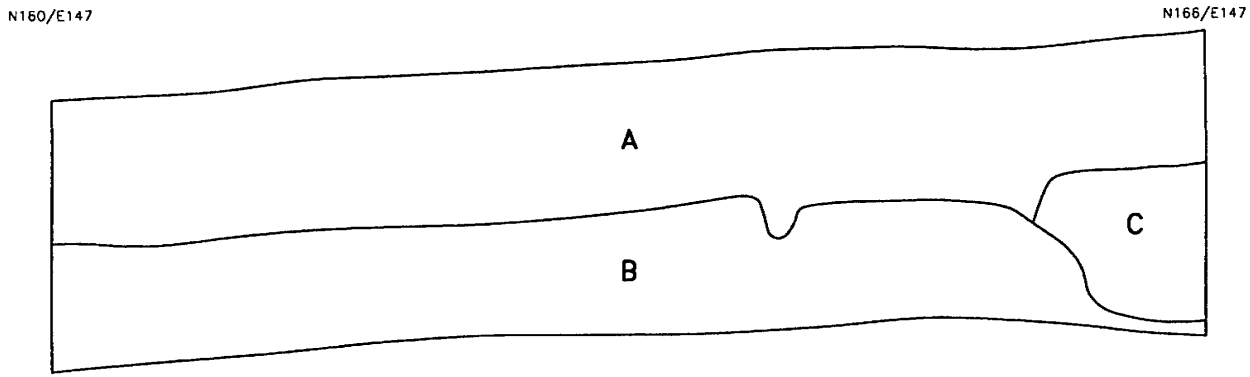
The shovel tests revealed varying stratigraphy across the project area. In general, the sand content of the subsoils increased toward the west, and the clay content increased toward the east. The area with the greatest elevation, east of Shovel Tests A6, B6, C5, and D9, coincided with the higher clay content.

Typically, in the west, Stratum A consisted of a dark grayish brown loamy sand. In the east, Stratum A was a dark yellow or olive brown loam or silt loam. These were interpreted as plowzone, because of the generally sharp interface and the consistent depth, and also from the historic record. The average depth to the base of the plowzone was 0.7 feet in the east and 1.0 feet in the west. In some cases in the west, the plowzone overlay unplowed A-horizon soil, which was designated Stratum B. In the east, plowing seemed to have extended into B-horizon soils. These were yellow brown and light yellow brown loams and sandy clays.

The areas in the immediate vicinity of the house, especially south and east, showed evidence of filling for landscaping. The shovel tests with high artifact counts were all located in this landscaped area. Shovel testing also showed that a gravel drive had been present south of the house, running from U.S. Route 13 to approximately even with the east wall of the house. A gate was present at the foot of the drive, framed by trees more than 30 years old.

The results from the test unit excavations provide a more complete picture of the John Henry Site stratigraphy. Test Unit 1 was placed inside the house, which was moved to its present location in about 1931 and now rests on a foundation of cinder blocks. It was thought that the presence of the house might have protected some deposits from later contamination. Also, an informant, John Henry's grandson, told members of the crew that a shed stood on the spot before the house was moved. Test Unit 1 did not yield as many recent artifacts as the other units. Artifacts were recovered from Strata A and B. Stratum A was the plowzone and Stratum B was thought to be a mix of plowzone and subsoil, caused by early occasional deeper plowing. In Test Unit 5, a plowscar was noted at the base of a similar mixed soil.

Test Unit 2 was excavated southeast of the house, between Shovel Tests C3 and C4. Test Unit 2 encountered complex stratigraphy and produced 950 artifacts, more than 40 percent of the artifacts recovered from the site. Four strata were defined (Figure 4). Stratum A was a layer of dark grayish brown topsoil nearly a foot thick, apparently landscape fill. Stratum B was a layer



LEGEND

A VERY DARK GRAYISH BROWN (10YR 3/2) LOAMY SAND; PLOW ZONE

B LIGHT YELLOWISH BROWN (2.5Y 6/4) MOTTLED WITH YELLOW BROWN (10YR 5/6) AND LIGHT GRAY (2.5Y 4/2) CLAY LOAM; SUBSOIL

C BROWN (10YR 4/3) SILT LOAM; POST HOLE

0 1/2 1 FOOT

FIGURE 4: Stratigraphic Profile of Test Unit 4

of redeposited subsoil, approximately 0.3 feet deep. Stratum C was an old plowzone, and Stratum D was the natural subsoil. Because Test Unit 2 was so close to the house, it seems likely that the redeposited subsoil derived from digging its foundation. Stratum B therefore separated two A-horizons, one from before and one from after the house was moved in the 1920s. Most of the artifacts from the test unit were recovered from the top layer, and they can therefore be dated to the post-1920 period.

TABLE 1 HISTORIC ARTIFACT RECOVERY FROM TEST UNIT EXCAVATIONS

UNIT	STRATUM						
	A	B'	B	C'	C	D	TOTAL
1	28	-	15	-	0	-	43
2	865	69	-	16	-	0	950
3	145	-	0	-	-	-	145
4	663	-	1	-	0	-	664
5	27	-	0	-	-	-	27
6	35	-	0	-	-	-	35
7	207	41	-	-	0	-	248
TOTAL	1,970	110	16	16	0	0	2,112

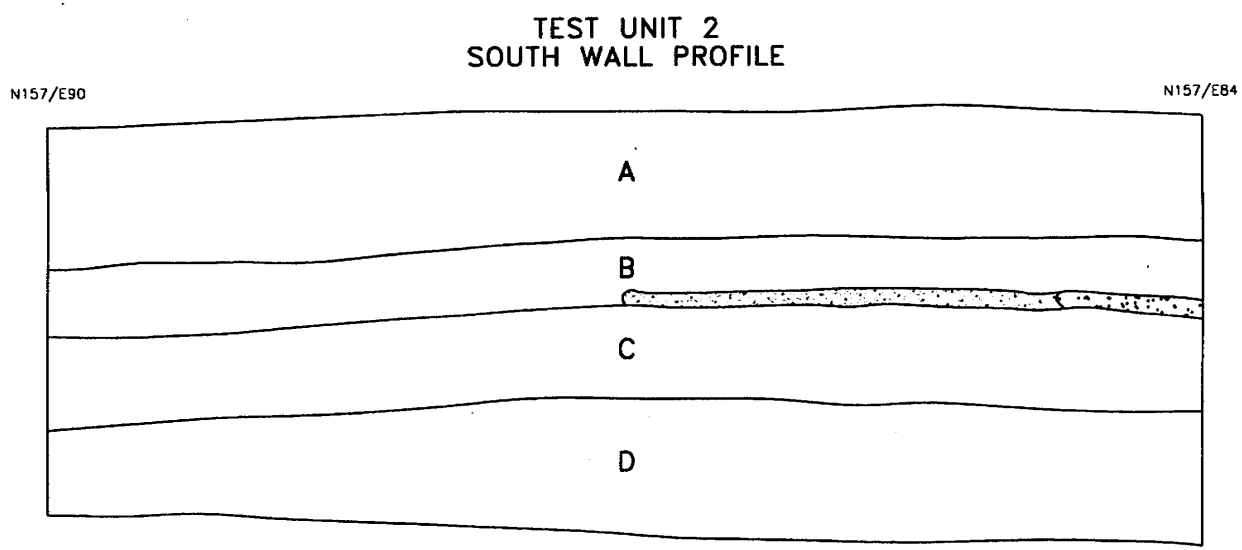
Note: B' and C' represent fill strata encountered in Test Units 2 and 7.

Test Units 3, 5, and 6 were located on the other three sides of the house. Test Unit 5 was located northwest of the house, near the road intersection. Although it was highly disturbed by a rodent burrow in the south half, the north half was intact and very similar to Test Unit 1. Test Unit 6, in the front yard, was similar to Test Units 1 and 5, but it did not show the deeper plowzone. Test Unit 3, located behind the house, showed the same Ap- and B-horizon soils, with the addition of an overlying layer of landscaping fill. These units yielded very few artifacts.

Test Units 4 and 7 were placed to investigate the privy and barn area in the eastern portion of the site. Both revealed a clay loam subsoil mottled by mineralization, with the predominant shade a light yellowish brown and the mottling a brownish yellow and light gray (Figure 5). In Test Unit 7, two stacked plowzones were present, possibly indicating filling at some point. Moderately high counts of artifacts were recovered from the plowzones of these two test units, and essentially none from subplowzone contexts. The artifact mix seemed to be less contaminated by modern material than was seen in the fill strata of Test Unit 2.

The only features noted in the test units were small historic postholes in Test Units 4 and 6. These postholes were mapped but not otherwise investigated.

The artifact assemblage from the John Henry Site was dominated by cut and wire nails, bottle glass, window glass, and miscellaneous metal fragments, a fairly typical twentieth-century



LEGEND

A DARK BROWN (10YR 3/3) SANDY LOAM; LANDSCAPING FILL

B DARK YELLOWISH BROWN (10YR 4/6) SANDY LOAM MIXED WITH STRONG BROWN (7.5YR 5/8) SILTY SAND AND DARK YELLOWISH BROWN (10YR 4/4) SANDY LOAM; REDEPOSITED SUBSOIL

C GRAYISH BROWN (10YR 5/2) SILTY SAND MIXED WITH LIGHT BROWNISH GRAY (10YR 6/2) SAND WITH SOME FINE GRAVEL; OLD PLOW ZONE

D LIGHT YELLOWISH BROWN (2.5Y 6/4) WET SILTY SAND; SUBSOIL

REDDISH YELLOW (7.5YR 6/8) COARSE SAND; LENS

LIGHT YELLOWISH BROWN (2.5Y 6/4) SILTY SAND; LENS

0 1/2 1 FOOT

FIGURE 5: Stratigraphic Profile of Test Unit 2

assemblage. Recent artifacts, including styrofoam and plastic, were recovered from all levels of Stratum A. The dominant ceramic type found was ironstone, with some whiteware, redware, and terra cotta flowerpot fragments also recovered. Other objects recovered included fragments of canning jars and lids, asphalt shingles, a leather shoe sole, a wooden button, a lead or pewter charm from a charm bracelet, rubber fragments, crown bottle caps, brick, coal, and fragmentary animal bones. It had been thought possible that the John Henry House might have been built on the site of an earlier tenant dwelling, but if so, that dwelling must have been destroyed by the construction of the Dupont Highway. The only artifacts recovered dating prior to the A.J Henry occupation were a few pieces of pearlware, a sherd of delftware, and a single white clay pipestem.

The only prehistoric artifacts recovered were four jasper flakes.