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Chapter 4 Research, Educational and Interpretive Goals

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Anthropology Department Archaeological Projects
University of Massachusetts Amherst *Year 2008*

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CHAPTER 4

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INTRODUCTION

The archaeological research goal for the 2003 Summer Field School was the same as for the 1983 and 1984 surveys, namely to assess the extent and integrity of archaeological remains at the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite. If the Homesite continued to prove to be an integritous archaeological resource of significant extent, then it held out promise to provide clues about the larger picture of African American life and work in 19th and 20th century rural New England and insight into the life of W.E.B. Du Bois. The Field School also had the teaching goal of training field school students in standard archaeological field methodologies and procedures. The program also required that the students understood the site and archaeological principles well enough to interpret them to a general public. Because of the unique relationship of this site to an historical figure who was involved in ground-breaking scholarship and civil rights activism we had distinctive public outreach goals hoping to engage any member of the public, and particularly to work with the local African American community, in the investigation and development of the Homesite. Robert Paynter was Field School Director, Kerry Lynch was Field Director with the day to day responsibilities for realizing the research, pedagogical, and outreach goals of the Field School, Elizabeth Norris was the Field Coordinator with primary responsibilities for teaching and conducting field mapping, geophysical survey, and field excavations, and Quentin Lewis was the Lab Coordinator with responsibilities for Field Lab Analysis and the outreach Interpretive Center at the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church in Great Barrington.

This chapter presents these four goals, assessing the extent and integrity of the archaeological resource at the W.E.B Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, advancing our knowledge of the place of African Americans on the Massachusetts historical landscape in general and W.E.B. Du Bois's place in particular, educating students in archaeological field and lab procedures, and performing and interpreting archaeology in a public context. As awkward as it may be for reading this report, we better understood the results from the 1983 and 1984 field work from the perspective of artifact studies and documentary analyses that were stimulated by the 2003 Field School. As a result, a reader of the first two chapters knows more about the site and its documentary context than we knew at the beginning of the 2003 Field School. A prominent example is that we found the second photograph of the House, with evidence of renovations, and the letters to various contractors only after the 2003 Field School. We are not sure that having this information would have significantly altered our field strategies or unit interpretations. But it does make reading some of the rationale for our strategic decisions seem oddly under-informed. Rather than update our research strategies to reflect new knowledge about the previous archaeological work or about the documentary record, we herein present the research strategies as we understood them at the start of the 2003 Field School, a record that gives a clearer sense of why we investigated the questions and unite

that we did in 2003. The following chapter on Results will of course present up to date interpretations.

RESEARCH GOALS

The previous surveys in 1983 and 1984 focused on the area behind the house, seeking evidence of outbuildings, privies, agricultural spaces, and middens. The chapter on previous archaeological work details these studies. In brief, these studies identified a) two large surface middens, hypothesized to be the remains of the barn and the remains of the superstructure and contents of the house, b) trash pits behind the house, c) evidence of plowing in areas to the rear of the house (Figure 1). The surface scatter for the two middens was quite evident. (Out of concern that these surface deposits would alert bottle collectors to intact buried deposits, both middens were surface collected, but virtually untested as to depth or stratigraphy.) The house and chimney foundation and the front and side yards of the house were not evaluated.

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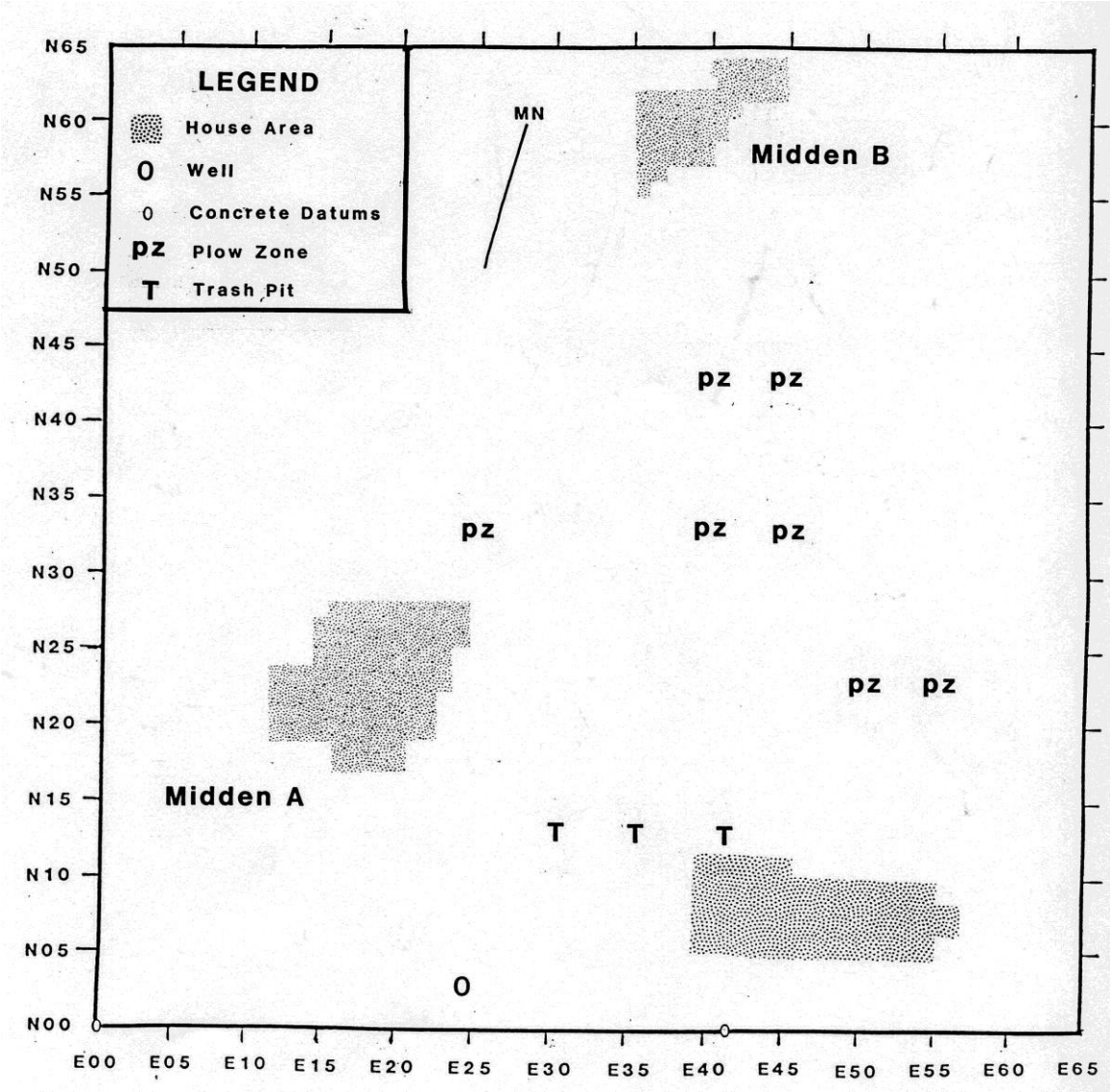

Figure 1 Archaeological Remains Recovered from the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite in 1983 and 1984

The summer of 2003's work was guided by the hypothetical landscapes developed from the archaeological and documentary research of the 1980s and presented at greater length in Paynter et al 1994 and discussed above at the conclusion of Chapter One on Previous Research (Chapter 1 Figures 24-27). Utilizing the information gained in the 1980s, and subsequent documentary research, the proposed work for the Summer Field School in 2003 addressed 4 distinct issues.

1. Survey the side yard. The 1980s work sought outbuildings and agricultural use areas to the back of the house. This year tested the spaces to the side of the house looking for evidence of activities of household reproduction, such as food processing and disposal, heating the house, children's activities, and formal presentation.

2. Date and renovations to the house. The house was virtually untested in the 1980s. Testing and mapping the area of the house was aimed primarily at ascertaining the date of house construction and the extent of renovations. Initially dated with deeds to the 1820s, Muller's dissertation (Muller 2001) suggests an earlier 1790s date for the house. In addition, beginning in 1928 Du Bois had blueprints drawn up for renovations to the house and we wanted to estimate which if any had been done. We focused on the location of chimneys to address the questions of dating the house and the extent of renovations. We had Vance's blueprints which call for an eastern end chimney on the main block of the House and another situated in the western ell. The eastern chimney was built on top of a stoned cellar that also appeared to have been a footing for the House. We only knew at the time of the Field School of one extant photograph of the House, the photograph published in the New York Times that shows a centrally placed chimney in the main block (Appendix L). Investigating the extant eastern end chimney foundation and the cellar wall associated with it and attempting to locate the chimney in the western ell were excavations that might produce evidence on the construction and age of the cellar and the extent of the completion of Vance's proposed major changes to the chimneys.

3. The location of barn footings. A barn location is sketched in Parrish's MHC site form (Parrish 1981). Attempts to more precisely locate footings or foundations associated with a barn were inconclusive in the previous 1980s field work. Better resistivity equipment was to be used, at closer intervals, in order to more firmly locate the expected barn.

4. The depth and stratigraphy of the middens. At the outset of 2003 both of the middens were known mostly from surface collections. A .5x.5m unit had been excavated into Midden A in 1983 and a .5x.5m unit had been excavated just to the south of Midden B in 1984. Neither seemed an adequate sample of the stratigraphy of the middens. Our intent was to examine Midden B with 1x1m units in 2003

We saw addressing these issues as completing the intensive survey stage of the most heavily used portion of the property. It should allow for refinement of the hypothetical landscapes and provide information needed to plan excavation stages.

Field Research Strategies

The four distinct research questions gave rise to specific tactics to address them. Front and side yard: The side and front yards of the house had only seen a walkover survey that identified the location of the well and the stump of what was likely the elm tree Du Bois noted in the 1920s (Du Bois 1928). These areas had not been tested with geophysical survey or subsurface tests. The front yard is a narrow strip of land between the cellar hole and the very busy road Rt. 23. For safety purposes, and parking considerations, only the side yard would be investigated. The area would be gridded and tested with resistivity survey. The equivalent of a 1x1x1m unit was allocated to test anomalies that could not be explained by surface observations.

House: The house cellar hole and footings had not received intensive study in previous work. Only a footprint incorporating the cellar hole and surface features had been established (Chapter 1 Figure 3). In 2003 we planned to clear the surface and carefully map evidence for the extent of the house, comparing the physical evidence with the

photograph from the Times and the Vance blueprints. Two questions drove this work: the age of the initial construction and the existence of any renovations. The photograph and the blueprint disagree on the location of the chimney, with a more central chimney in the photograph and one end chimney and one in between the proposed Living and Garage in the blueprints. Since Du Bois (Du Bois 1928; Du Bois 1968: 278-279) indicated his rather tight financial situation at the time he received the house, had he been able to do any of the renovations identified on the blueprint? Discerning the relationship of the present chimney to a construction footprint would clarify the possibility of extensive renovations. In addition to mapping surface evidence of footings, the chimney stack and construction footprint would be studied with one or two .5x1m trenches to develop a date for its construction. Until recently the construction date for the house was put at the 1820s, the earliest date in the deed chain. Muller's recent dissertation (2001) argues for a 1790s initial construction date. To gain a sense of the age of the house, the nails recovered from Midden B in the 1980s work will be restudied in the field lab. In addition two .5x1m units would be placed on the exterior of the cellar hole foundation to determine if it has a builder's trench and to identify any stratigraphy associated with the free standing footings.

Barn area (Midden A): The reigning hypothesis was that a barn existed to the west of the house. This was based primarily on reports in the MHC files by James Parrish and an artifact assemblage collected during the 1980s consistent with this proposition (Paynter, et al. 1994). In the 1980s we used surface survey and geophysical survey to search for footings. The state of the art in geophysical survey equipment and computer analysis has changed considerably. As noted above, the resistivity equipment used in the 1980s was particularly time consuming, requiring the mixing of chemicals and the use of porous pots instead of metal probes to take the readings. Results had to be hand entered into early mapping programs. A compromise given the equipment was that we conducted survey in 1m intervals along any given transect, but the transects were at 5m intervals along the baseline (See Chapter 1 Figs. 6 and 7). Since then the geophysical survey equipment has improved. We intended to resurvey the area of the barn using a more modern resistivity meter at 1m intervals along the transect and 1m intervals between the transects. Identified anomalies that could not be explained readily by surface features would be evaluated with .5x.5m units. These would also provide information on the stratigraphy of Midden A and the depth of the artifact deposit. The equivalent of a 1x1x1m unit was allocated to identify and test resistivity anomalies and determine the stratigraphy and depth of the artifact level of Midden A.

Midden area B: The reigning hypothesis was that the midden towards the rear of the site (Midden B) wa most likely the remains from the superstructure and content of the house that was destroyed in the 1950s. The goal was to get a sense of the depth and integrity of this feature and use it to estimate the time span and number of associated artifacts. Midden B was assigned the equivalent of a 1x1x1m unit.

Back agricultural field: The area north of Midden B had only been walked over. This area had not been tested with geophysical survey or subsurface tests. Two .5x.5m units would be placed at grid coordinates determined to be useful in obtaining base line soil profiles and evidence of potential plow activities.

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Field Research Procedures

All units were excavated in cultural or natural stratigraphic levels not to exceed 10cm without identifying a new level and recorded as individual "excavation levels". There were 12 units total excavated in 2003, named as both Provenience Indexes (PI) #'s 1-12 and with their southwest corner grid coordinates (with the exception of PI 2 which used its northeast corner). All soils were screened through 1/4 "mesh to ensure standard artifact retrieval; 1/8" mesh screens were available to be used at the discretion of the Field Director. Plan views and elevations were recorded at the beginning of every excavation level (filed as Unit Excavation Level Forms) and profiles of all walls were drawn at the end of a unit's excavation. All features, ending plans and profiles were photographed.

A Harris Matrix method of recording the stratigraphic units of deposition was utilized (Harris 1979). This method ensured that the excavators think about the natural and cultural agents that formed the site. Lynch, as Field Director, was responsible for identifying, describing and naming each unit of stratification as the excavators encountered them (filed in the Harris Log). A 1975 edition Munsell Soil Color Chart was used to describe the color of each Harris level soil.

Artifacts recovered were bagged and recorded by broad descriptive category within each excavation level. These were HIST (historic), PHST (prehistoric), FANA (fauna), FLRA (flora) and SOIL (soil) (and filed as Excavation Level Forms or ELFs). Artifacts were cleaned and identified in a field lab located in nearby Great Barrington (and filed as Field Lab Artifact Control forms or FLACs). All artifacts not processed and cataloged during the 4 weeks of Summer Field School were evaluated during the fall semester in Anthropology 325, Analysis of Material Culture at the University of Massachusetts. The Harris Matrix analysis, soil profile graphics, detailed artifact analysis and databases of forms and artifacts were also generated during the fall.

The 14 students were divided into 5 teams total, 4 teams with 3 students and 1 team of 2. The datum from the 1980s was relocated and used to establish the virtual grid that all units were tied into. This grid is the same one used in the 1980s (Chapter 1 Fig. 4). A theodolite, or at times a total station, was used to lay in all units. The two units in the back agricultural field were additionally verified with compass and tape. The resistivity testing began in the barn area. When all the students had been given a chance to learn about and use the resistivity and land survey instruments the test units that were not dependant on resistivity information were opened. These consisted of the back agricultural area, Midden B, and two units in different locations of the house area. Problems with the resistivity testing delayed opening units in the Midden A/barn area and the side yard as discussed in Appendix A.

Resistivity readings continued to be difficult to obtain the Midden A/barn area so practicality dictated opening a unit to test Midden A depth and stratigraphy without waiting for resistivity information (midden boundaries were established in the 1980s). The side yard area offered more receptive resistivity results and a unit was opened in the vicinity of a high resistivity anomaly following the geophysical testing and analysis.

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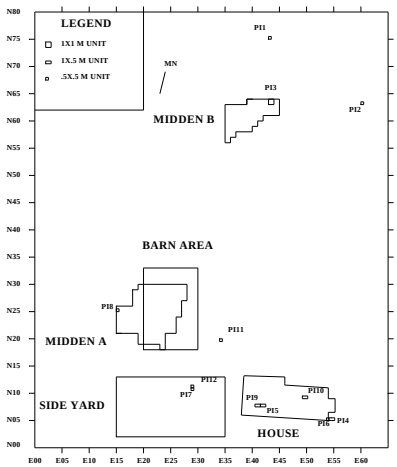

Figure 2 2003 Test Areas and Subsurface Units

The coordinates and dimensions for these units are as follows (Figure 2):

Back agricultural field;	PI1	E43N75	.5x.5m
	PI2	E60N63	.5x.5m
Midden B;	PI3	E43N63	1x1m
House area, east;	PI4	E54.166N5	.5x1m
	PI6	E53.666N5	.5x.5m
west;	PI5	E41.5N7.5	.5x1m
Side yard;	PI7	E28.75N10.5	.5x.5m
Midden A;	PI8	E15N25	.5x.5m

Additional units were opened in the course of field excavation as situations warranted. Following is a list of coordinates and dimensions:

House area, west;	PI9	E40.5N7.5	.5x1m
Cellar hole foundation;	PI10	E49.22N9	.5x1m
Barn area/Hump;	PI11	E34N19.5	.5x.5m
Side yard;	PI12	E28.75N11	.5x.5m

PI9 was added as an extension immediately to the west of PI5. The western wall of PI5 had embedded dressed stones and it was necessary to expand the excavation in order to straddle them. PI10 was placed against the exterior, western, cellar hole foundation edge in order to compare the western cellar wall with the stratigraphy being revealed in PI4 at the exterior, eastern, cellar hole foundation edge. PI11 was opened to the east of the barn area to test a surface feature known as the Hump that had figured in previous interpretations of a possible barn sill. It was placed kitty corner to a 1980s unit so as to compare PI11 stratigraphy (which straddled the surface feature) to this unit, which lay outside the surface feature. PI12 was added as an extension of PI7 to the north. PI7 was intended to straddle the south edge of a high resistivity anomaly. When no cultural features were encountered during its excavation, it was expanded in the direction of the highest resistance.

Eleven units were excavated through a minimum of 20cm of culturally sterile soil. The limit of excavation in PI10, against the cellar hole foundation, was before reaching the bottom of the cellar wall. However safety, and time constraints, limited our ability to dig further. If future excavations take place in this area PI10 will have to be expanded, either into a 1x1m or a .5x2m, in order to continue studying this unit.

PEDAGOGICAL GOALS

Students were introduced to the goals of archaeology, historical archaeology, and the proposed research on the first day. They were assigned readings for each of the field days discussing topics including W.E.B. Du Bois's life and writings, African American archaeology, the Harris methodology, and basic information on historic period artifacts. Articles were discussed at lunch and/or students attended guest lectures. Students heard two lectures open to the public at the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church by Dr. David Du Bois and Dr. Warren Perry along with Janet Woodruff. In addition, students heard from Dr. Jessica Neuwirth on African American archaeology, Mrs. Elaine Gunn on the controversial history of commemoration at the Du Bois site, Mr. Steven Comer on Mohican history of the region, and Mr. Bernard Drew on the European period history of Great Barrington. Students were required to keep journals that included observations on their assignments as well as observations on their excavation units and lab problems.

Before opening any units all students were cycled through teaching modules of: 1) compass and tape survey methods, 2) theodolite survey methods, and 3) resistivity survey methods. In the lab all students were given introductory presentations on historic period glass and ceramics. Students were introduced to the field and lab paperwork as they began working on specific materials. The Field Coordinator, Field Director and Field School Director all helped teach the initial field modules and excavation techniques; the Lab Coordinator introduced the basic archaeological material analysis and processing.

PUBLIC INTERPRETATION STRATEGY AND PROCEDURES

An integral part of the field school involved the public interpretation of the Homesite for the visitors and the community of Great Barrington. The site was located off of busy Rt. 23 and with no space for parking, the traffic presented hazards for pedestrians. Given the Homesites contentious history, the lack of on site security and the

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parking difficulties, we couldn't readily engage in archaeological interpretation at the Homesite itself. We were very fortunate that the Reverend Esther Dozier agreed to allow the field school team to establish an interpretive center and archaeology lab in and on the grounds of the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church in Great Barrington. Du Bois and members of his family were active in the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church congregation in the second half of the 19th century. In addition to providing storage space and work areas, Rev. Dozier graciously hosted the public lectures by Prof. Du Bois and Dr. Perry. The church had a seating capacity of about around 100 and it was filled to overflowing for both of these lectures.

The public interpretation component of the Field School had two main goals. Our first goal was pedagogical, to train students in public interpretation. We have found in past field schools in Deerfield that having students conduct public interpretation provides a greater impetus for then to learn how to translate archaeological language into a narrative telling of the story of the site. This practice results in a fuller understanding on the students' parts about how the site formed and how various archaeological methods and practices are used to understand the past. The second goal was to inform the public about the goals and reasons for archaeological research. We sought to teach about the stewardship of non-renewable archaeological resources, the importance of new interpretations for continually retelling the history of the region, and the need for public support of archaeological projects. In addition, because of the high profile of W.E.B. Du Bois as a historical figure, we also sought to inform the public about his life, his work, and especially his time in Great Barrington.

The Lab Coordinator (Quentin Lewis) oversaw the public interpretation and the lab work at the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church. On sunny days, a table was set up in the yard of the church where students engaged in the preliminary processing of the artifacts. In addition, there was a larger information board that presented general archaeological concepts, the history of the site, and some basic information about Du Bois. A student on lab rotation would be assigned daily visitor duty and would show any visitors around the field lab and the information board. Students working in the lab were asked to discuss their interpretations of the material culture they were processing, as well as their perceptions and understanding of the site and of Du Bois. Ideally, visitors began by reading the information board about archaeology and the site's documentary history. However, visitors would frequently just walk up and ask: "So what's this all about?" or "Found anything good yet?" The assigned public interpretation person would go up and talk to them so that the other students could continue with lab processing without undue distraction. The center was open for visitors for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, announced by setting up the Interpretive Center sign at 10:00 AM and taking it in when the interpretive center closed at 3:00**.** A running count of visitors was maintained and visitors were encouraged to sign the visitor log in the lab.

For those visitors who made their way to the Homesite we did engage in public interpretation. Each day one student on the site would be chosen to conduct site tours for visitors. The tour guide script would generally introduce the history of the site and the changing roles of the Burghardts in the history of the site. He or she would bring any visitors around to each provenience and discuss its importance in furthering the understanding of the site. Students working on each provenience were encouraged to discuss their interpretations with visitors as the guide brought them around.

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