

**THE RESULTS  
OF THE 2017 EXCAVATIONS  
AT THE  
C-3/ JOHN AND ELIZABETH HOWLAND HOMESTEAD:  
TESTING THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE SITE**

Sponsored by the Pilgrim John Howland Society (PJHS)  
Conducted by PJHS and the  
Plymouth Archaeological Rediscovery Project (PARP)

January 2018

In September, PJHS members, archaeologists and volunteers, tested the southwest corner of the John and Elizabeth Howland Homestead (**Figure 1**). The goals were twofold: to investigate piles and possible linear arrangements of stones encountered during brush removal in this area, and to gain a clearer understanding of the nature and date of the apparent cellarhole present in this portion of the homestead lot. Previous investigators had either ignored its presence or interpreted it as an outbuilding associated with the original 1638-ca. 1680 Howland farm complex. Previous interpretations identified it, for unknown reasons, as a smokehouse (**Figure 2**). This interpretation may have stemmed from an antiquated idea that homelots in the seventeenth century would have invariably included a series of outbuildings: barns, stables, corncribs, outhouses, and ancillary support buildings such as dairies and smokehouses. While some farm lots did have a variety of outbuildings, their inclusion was not invariable. In New England at least, it seems that some of these outbuildings became subsumed literally beneath the roof of the farm house itself.

**Field Testing**

The field crew excavated a total of 15 units of various sizes this year, totaling 43.75 square feet (**Table 1**).

Table 1. 2017 testing summary

<b>2017 Unit</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>1</b>	2.5' E-W, 5' N-S with 2.5x2.5' Ext to NE	3.75	West
<b>2</b>	2.5' E-W, 5' N-S	2.5	West
<b>3</b>	2.5' N-S, 5' E-W	2.5	Central
<b>4</b>	2.5' N-S, 5' E-W	2.5	Central
<b>5</b>	2.5' N-S, 5' E-W	2.5	Central
<b>6</b>	2.5' N-S, 5' E-W	2.5	East
<b>7</b>	2.5' N-S by 5' E-W	2.5	Southwest
<b>8</b>	5 x 5'	5	Central
<b>9</b>	2.5' N-S, 5' E-W	2.5	Southwest

<b>10</b>	2.5' E-W, 5' N-S	2.5	Central
<b>11</b>	5 x 5'	5	North
<b>12</b>	2.5' E-W, 5' N-S	2.5	North
<b>13</b>	2.5' E-W, 5' N-S	2.5	Central
<b>14</b>	2.5 x2.5'	1.25	Central
<b>15</b>	5.25' N-S x 2.5' E-W	3.75	North
<b>Total</b>		<b>43.75 Square Feet</b>	

Units were located in five areas: **Central**, where a concentration of cobbles were visible on the surface and larger stones extended down to on top of the subsoil; **West**, which was west of the central area and was looking for any traces of foundations associated with a large stone visible on the surface in what became Unit 1; **North**, which was located north of the central area where the possibility of a north wall to the possible outbuilding were were investigating was predicted to be located; **East**, which was east of the central area to investigate if the stone concentration in the central are extended east; and **Southwest**, which was located at, and to the west, of where the northwest corner of what appeared to be a large cellarhole was believed to be located.

Excavation in the Central area (Units 3-5, 8, 10, 13, and 14) revealed a large concentration of fist-sized cobbles (possibly representing a rock dump pile associated with Strickland's excavations) in the center of the excavation area (**Figure 4**). Larger stones, more probably foundation stones, were present on the east, south, and possibly west sides. Excavation in 2017 only cleared the topsoil off of the the cobbles and visible larger stones, but none of the exposed stones were removed this year. Unit 15 was placed 50 cm to the north of the main concentration to see if it continued further north. A linear arrangement of stones running north to south were identified. A second unit, Unit 14, was placed between Unit 15 and the main concentration, and this unit also had a concentration of stones, confirming the connection between the two. Unit 14 shows that the soil to the east of the wall appeared to be subsoil at 9” below surface, while the soil on the west side was subsoil and a pocket of darker soil extending down to at least 12” below surface (**Figure 5**). This unit would have to be expanded in order to further explore the dark soil and the stone wall.

Excavation in the West area (Units 1 and 2) revealed a large glacial erratic in the southern half of Unit 1. This erratic was visible on the surface and excavation showed that it extended below the 20” depth we excavated the unit to. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, someone, possibly a pot hunter, had excavated along the eastern side of the stone and then backfilled it with trash, including beer bottles and plastic. The dark soil associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century pit extended below the rock, indicating that it may have been tipped into the hole or that the stone was a foundation stone associated with an earlier building that was displaced by the 20<sup>th</sup> century digging. The east wall profile appeared to show a possible foundation trench that had its upper portion re-excavated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (**Figure 6**). The feature appears to be 70 cm wide and ended at 19” below surface.

Excavation of Unit 2 revealed a backdirt pile on top of the original ground surface slightly sloping to the stone in Unit 1 (**Figure 6**). This offers support to the idea that this was, originally, a foundation stone.

Excavation in the North area (Units 11, 12, and 15) were placed here to see if any evidence of an outbuilding wall, a parallel to the one that was found in the Central area, was present. Unit 11 was placed in the general area where the projected northeast corner of the outbuilding should have been. Excavation revealed a backdirt pile that is believed to have been associated with Strickland's excavations in the 1930s, in the southeast corner extending to the north and east. The pile was approximately 12" high and contained many prehistoric and historic artifacts. Scattered rocks were found at the base of the pile, but they did not appear to represent part of a wall or foundation (**Figure 7**). The stones were found to be resting on and into the subsoil. Unit 12 was positioned to the north and west of Unit 11. This unit encountered one of Wheeler's units extending approximately 6" into the Unit 12 from the west. Two brown colored stains were found extending into the subsoil in the north half of this unit (**Figure 8**). Bisections revealed that the eastern stain may represent a shallow posthole, possibly associated with a 17<sup>th</sup> century fence line, while the western feature looked more like a tree root (**Figure 8**). Unit 15 was located to the North of Unit 14. A scattering of stones was encountered at 4' below surface (**Figure 5**), but further excavation and removal of the stones to determine if they were part of a wall, was not possible due to time constraints. They do appear to be associated with the stones identified to the south though.

Excavation in the East area (Unit 6) revealed a scattering of stones between 4 and 9" below surface. The subsoil was encountered at 11" below surface. The soil associated with the scattered stones was clayey and compact in this unit, similar to what was encountered in 2016 in association with the barn area. This clayey soil was conjectured to have been associated with a clay floor installed in the barn, possibly for use as a threshing floor, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Small pieces of brick were found mixed in with the clayey soil, indicating that some brick creation nearby (possibly the chimney or hearth associated with the original Howland house) had been taken apart and the bricks had been recycled. The clayey soil was not encountered in the western half of the unit, it appeared to extend from the east wall to approximately 24" east of it.

Excavation in the Southwest area (Units 7 and 9) revealed a 12" thick layer heavily laden with soft shell clam shells, in Unit 7 and extending further to the west. In the general area of these units a large pile of backdirt extended to the west, north and south (**Figure 9**). Excavation revealed that this most probably came from a preliminary excavation of the fill within the cellarhole at some time in the past, most probably either by Strickland in the 30s or early 40s, or Deetz in the 1960s. Failing to find any significant artifacts, and encountering a dense layer of larger stones making up the lower layer of fill in the cellar, it appears that the efforts to excavate the cellarhole were abandoned. Unit 9 encountered the northwest corner of the cellar hole and excavations were carried out as deep as possible until the presence of larger fill stones stopped our efforts as well. The excavations in 2017 were carried out to a maximum depth of four feet (1.2 m). Excavation found several layers of different types of fill including what looked like subsoil that may have washed into the cellar after the collapse of the west wall. A large piece of pig bone was found at 44" below the surface and excavation continued to 55" below surface where the stones make it impossible to continue. A much larger area would need to be excavated to reach the floor of the cellar.

The surface area around the cellar was further investigated, and it was found that this cellar is oriented in the same direction as the "dew pond" cellar to the east (**Figure 10**). The western cellar was found to measure 9.75 feet (3 m) north to south by 11.5 feet (3.5 m) east to west. The east wall appears to be

intact while the west wall has either collapsed or is buried beneath the backdirt pile present in that area. The distance between the dew pond and western cellars was 26 feet (8 m). Wheeler's excavations found that the dew pond cellar measured 16 feet square (4.9 m) and 3-4 feet (.9-1.2 m) deep.

It is quite possible that the two cellarholes are part of one house measuring approximately 52 feet long (east to west) by at least 16 feet wide (north to south). This seems very long for a house, and more work needs to be done to determine if we have one or two buildings here (**Figure 10**).

**Artifacts**

Fieldwork this year resulted in the recovery of a total of 4121 pieces of prehistoric and historic material culture (**Tables 2 and 3**).

Table 2.

<b>Artifact</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Prehistoric</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Quartz</b>	<b>140</b>
Chipping Debris	30
Shatter	106
Bifaces	2
Core	1
Uniface	1
<b>Rhyolite</b>	<b>13</b>
Chipping Debris	10
Shatter	3
<b>Quartzite</b>	<b>2</b>
Chipping Debris	2
<b>Shell-Tempered Pottery</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Grit-Tempered Pottery</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Architectural</b>	<b>2550</b>
<b>Brick</b>	<b>2455</b>
<b>Mortar</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Hand-Wrought Nails</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Window Glass</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Charcoal</b>	<b>25</b>



<b>Foodways</b>	<b>1389</b>
<b>Ceramics</b>	<b>62</b>
Redware	57
Buff Stoneware	1
Staffordshire Slipware	1
Tin-Glazed	2
English Mottledware	1
<b>Bone</b>	<b>97</b>
Bird	1
Chicken	2
Cod	2
Calcined	16
Sheep	7
Swine	4
Cattle	57
Medium Mammal	6
Large Mammal	2
<b>Shell</b>	<b>1221</b>
Soft Shell Clam	958
Quahog	249
Surf Clam	14
<b>Hand Blown Bottles</b>	<b>9</b>
Wine Bottle	3
Case Bottle	2
Thin Pharmaceutical	4
<b>Personal Items</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Pewter Button</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lead Bale Seal</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Kaolin Pipes</b>	<b>10</b>
Small belly Bowl	1
Bowl with Cartouche	1

Bowl Fragment	1
8/64" Stem	2
7/64" Stem	2
6/64" Stem	2
5/64" Stem	1
<b>Flint</b>	<b>6</b>
Gunflint	1
Split Pebble	1
Chipping Debris	4
<b>Other</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Modern Material</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Flat Iron Fragment</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4121</b>

Table 3.

Unit	Prehistoric	Architectural	Foodways	Personal	Other	Total
<b>1</b>	4	300	48		1	<b>353</b>
<b>2</b>	14	81	67	2	1	<b>167</b>
<b>3</b>	4	123	17			<b>144</b>
<b>4</b>		26	4	1		<b>31</b>
<b>5</b>	3	62	15	1		<b>81</b>
<b>6</b>	5	713	20	3		<b>741</b>
<b>7</b>	2	151	468		2	<b>623</b>
<b>8</b>		7	7	2		<b>16</b>
<b>9</b>	2	533	464		2	<b>1001</b>
<b>10</b>		77	7			<b>84</b>
<b>11</b>	112	180	34	8	3	<b>337</b>
<b>12</b>	1	8				<b>9</b>
<b>13</b>		5				<b>5</b>
<b>14</b>	5	283	173	1		<b>462</b>
<b>15</b>	2	62				<b>67</b>

The architectural and foodways classes (dominated by brick and shell fragments) made up the largest portion of this year's assemblage (95.6%). Shellfish remains were concentrated in the backdirt from the western cellarhole (n=907) and in Units 14, 15, 1, and 2 (n=269). All these shellfish may have been deposited at the site after it had been abandoned, possibly representing a clam bake shellfish dump. Brick fragments were concentrated in Units 6 and 9 (n=683 and 527). These may represent either brick fragments dumped by Strickland or chimney fall resulting from the removal of one of the structures at the site. We found that the animal bones were concentrated in the western cellar and its backdirt, but, the largest concentration was found around the stonewall identified in Unit 14, where it apparently represented a primary and undisturbed, possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century, deposit. Hand-wrought nails were concentrated in Unit 6, possibly showing that this unit was located under or very close to some building that was removed (possibly the Howland barn).

Native American material was concentrated in the Strickland backdirt pile in Unit 11, and to a lesser degree in Unit 2. The Native assemblage was dominated by quartz shatter, which represents stones collected and initially processed at the site by Native people. A few tools were also found, with the assemblage consisting of an expedient unifacial tool (which was basically a single flake of stone that someone used for cutting and then discarded), a rough-shaped biface that was discarded before it was completed, and a knife or point that had been used to the point of becoming rounded on the edges, eventually snapping at its midpoint either during its use to pry something, or during resharpening, as the twisting break present on the fragment shows (**Figure 11**). We also found two pieces of Native pottery, one tempered with shell and one with grit or gravel. The grit-tempered piece came from the rim of a relatively small pot, only 6 inches in diameter at the rim, that had a flat and slightly outward curving rim, an exterior bearing the traces of having been paddled with a cordage-wrapped paddle during manufacture, and burned traces of last meal prepared in the pot burned to the interior surface.

Tobacco pipes were evenly distributed between ones bearing larger stem bores (older ones) and smaller bores (relatively more recent, like 1680 to the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century). One bowl bore the edge of a maker's mark cartouche, dating it to the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, while another was a small belly bowl, having been broken and discarded by someone in John and Elizabeth's household in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (**Figure 12**).

Notable historic artifacts included a pewter button that was similar to those Wheeler found in the dew pond cellar (probably dating to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century) (**Figure 12**), and a lead bale seal that may date to the Howland period (**Figure 12**). The latter artifact was found in association with the central stone concentration. The seal may bear an R and an I with a T between them, all surrounded by a rope border. This seal would have been affixed to a bale of cloth shipped from England. The recovery of this seal supports the findings from the reanalysis of the assemblage made by Strickland that showed a disproportionate amount of ceramics imported from the North Devon region of England, a region well known for seventeenth century exports. Excavation also recovered a roughly shaped gunflint, bifacially worked, which dates it to the Howland occupation, and subsequently disposed of in the hearth fire once it had worn out (**Figure 12**).

### **Interpretation**

It appears that, this year, we discovered a previously unknown building in the central area of our excavation. It may be a northern extension of the building associated with the western cellarhole, or it

may be a separate building in the northern yard. The artifacts associated with it appear domestic in nature, specifically the bone and ceramics, so it is probably not a barn or outbuilding. Excavation of the units to the east and north have shown that no building remains are present in those areas.

### **Recommendations**

Further excavation around the area we excavated in 2017 is recommended. It appears that we have found traces of at least one previously unknown building at the site, a building that, due to the orientation of stones we have thus far uncovered, probably does not date to the John and Elizabeth Howland period and which does not appear to have been impacted by Strickland's excavations. This building is represented by the larger stones in the central area. A second building must have been associated with the western cellar, but it is not known at this time if it was part of a single structure connected with the dew pond cellar that Wheeler excavated. What we do know is that it has not been previously excavated, with previous excavators having been thwarted by the dense rock fill that was deposited when it was filled. Further excavation within and around the cellarhole could help better determine when it dates to and how it relates to the dew pond cellarhole. Both are on the orientation, more true to north and south than the John and Elizabeth house, so it must be related.

APPEDIX A  
Figures



Figure 1. View of the 2017 excavation area (center right where the buckets are) looking south.

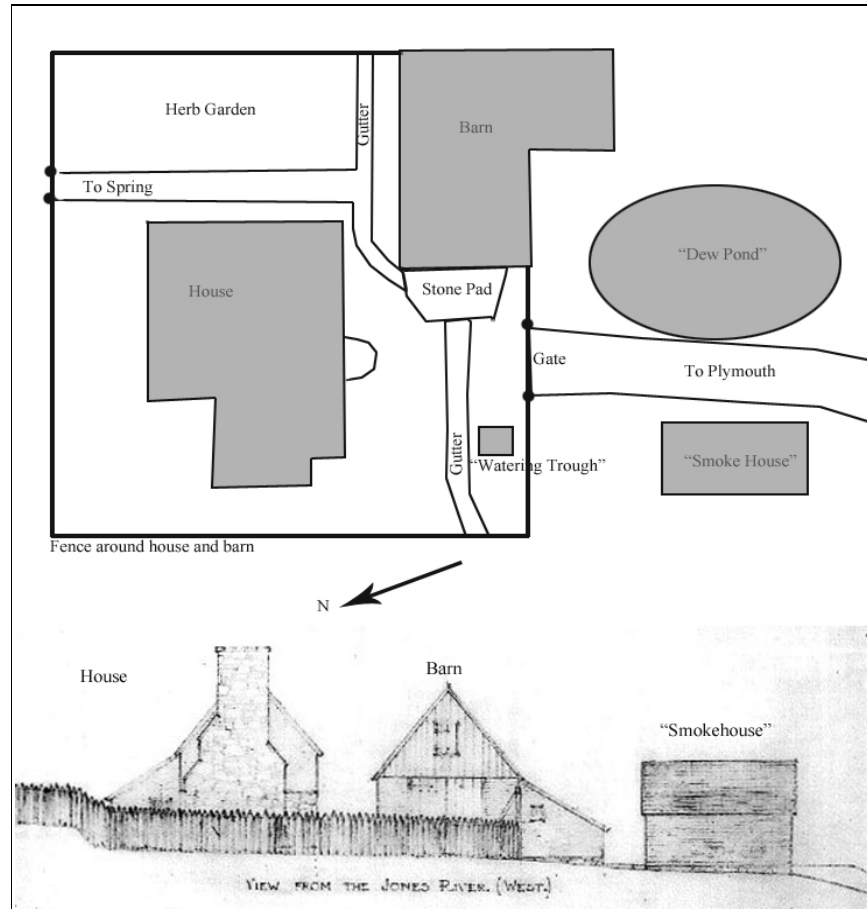


Figure 2. Strickland's plan and interpretive drawing showing the "smokehouse" he thought was located where we excavated in 2017.

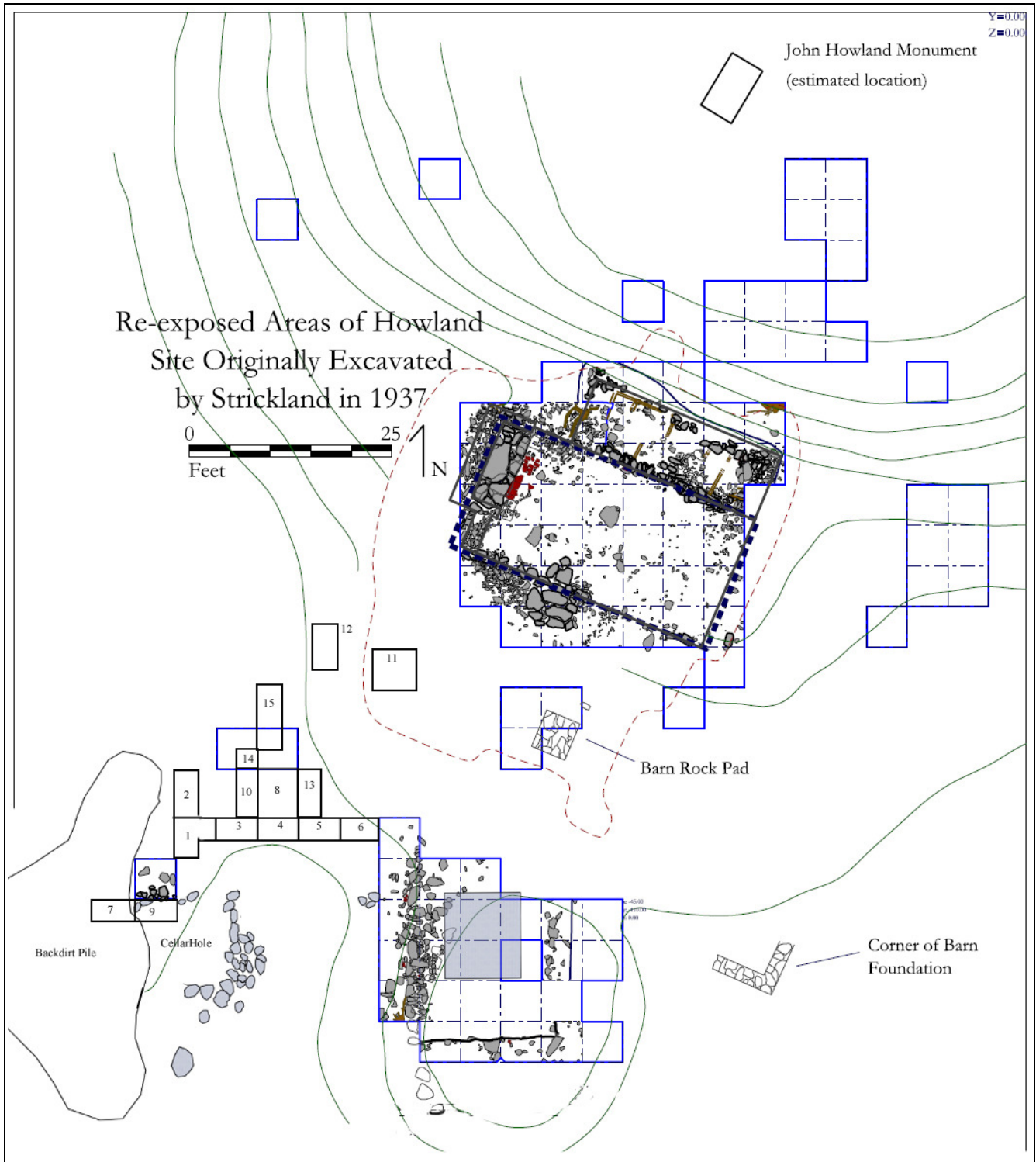


Figure 3. 2017 testing





Figure 4. Plan of the Central testing area



Figure 5. Units 14 and 15 plans.



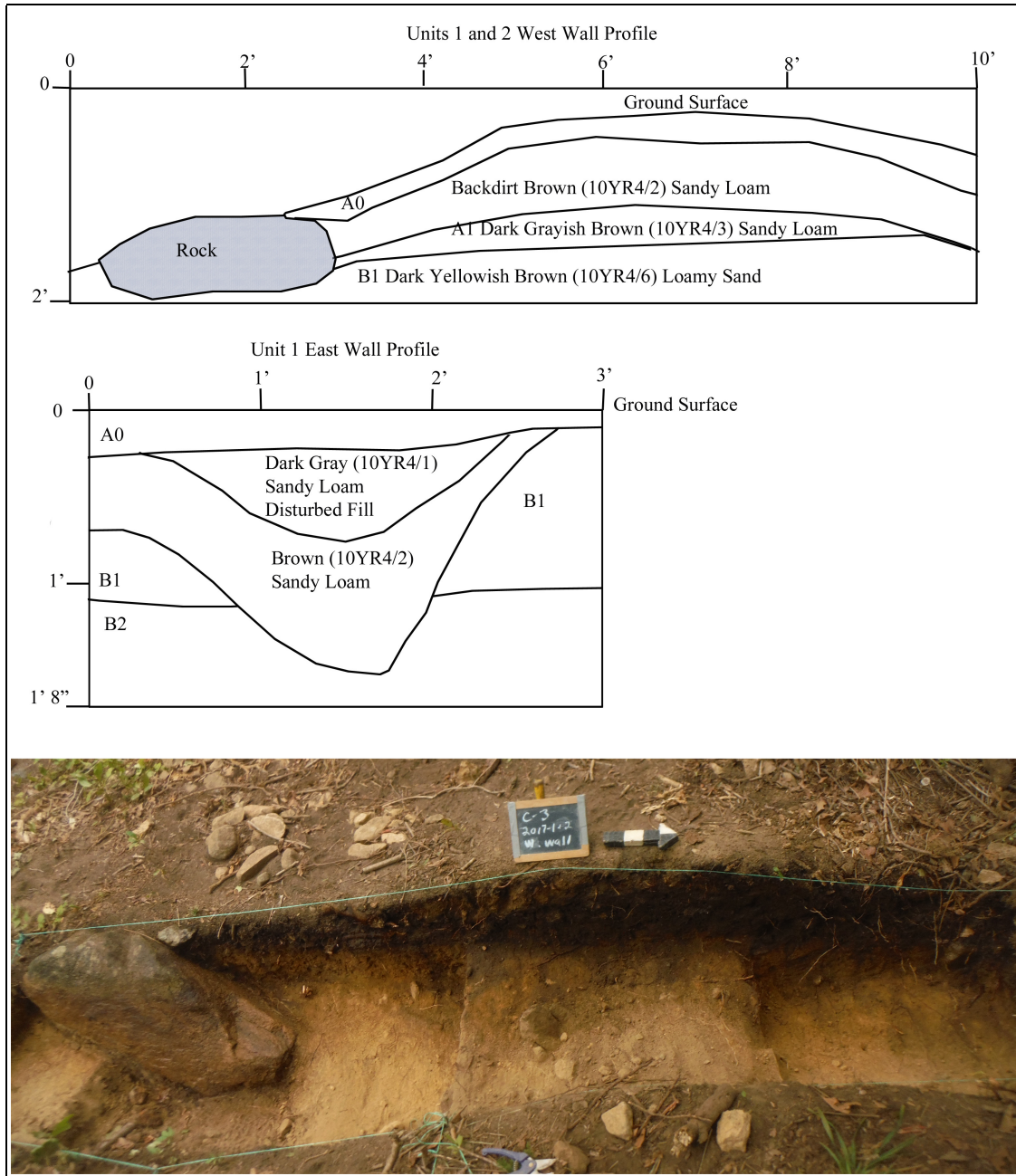


Figure 6. Units 1 and 2 plan and profile

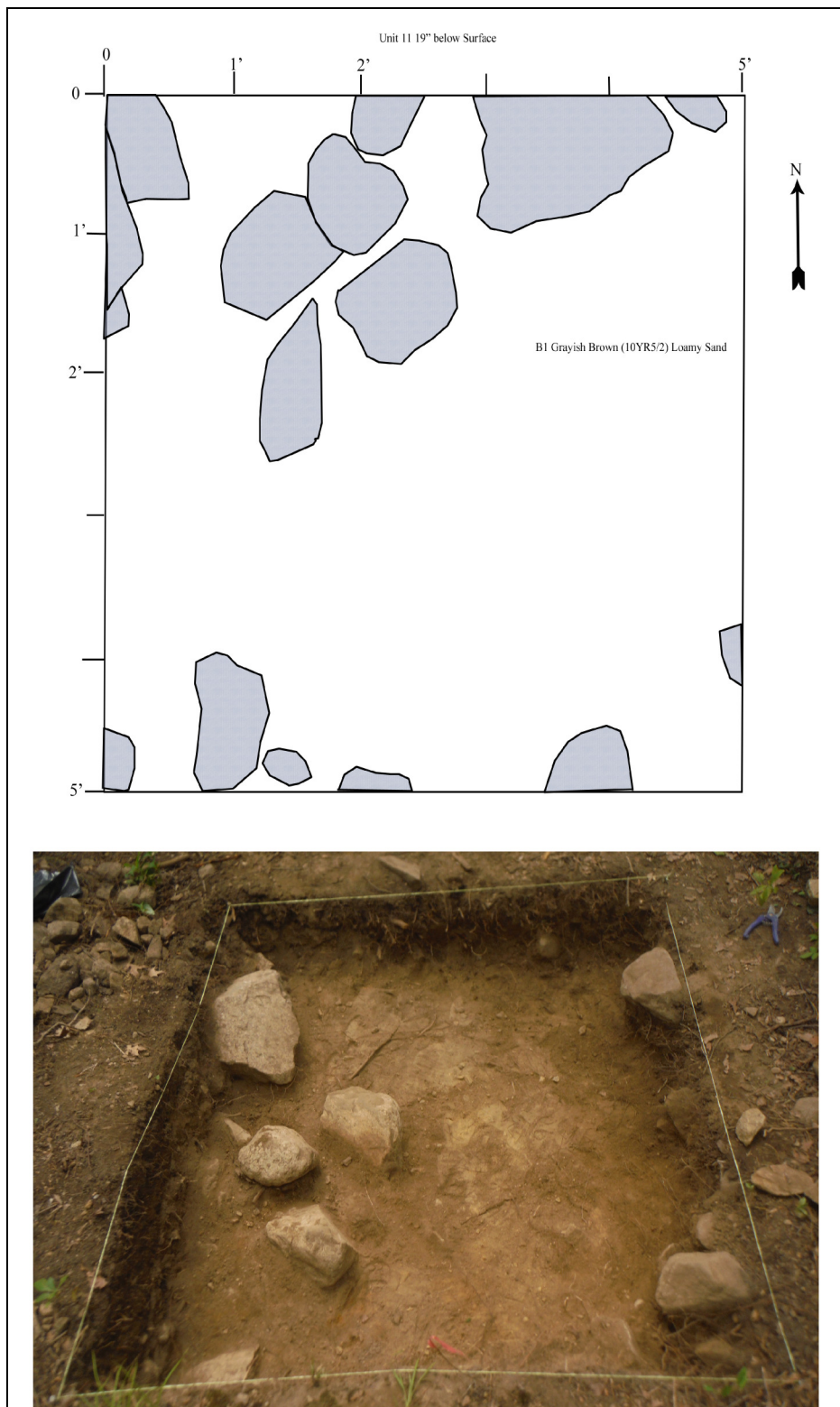


Figure 7. Unit 11 plan

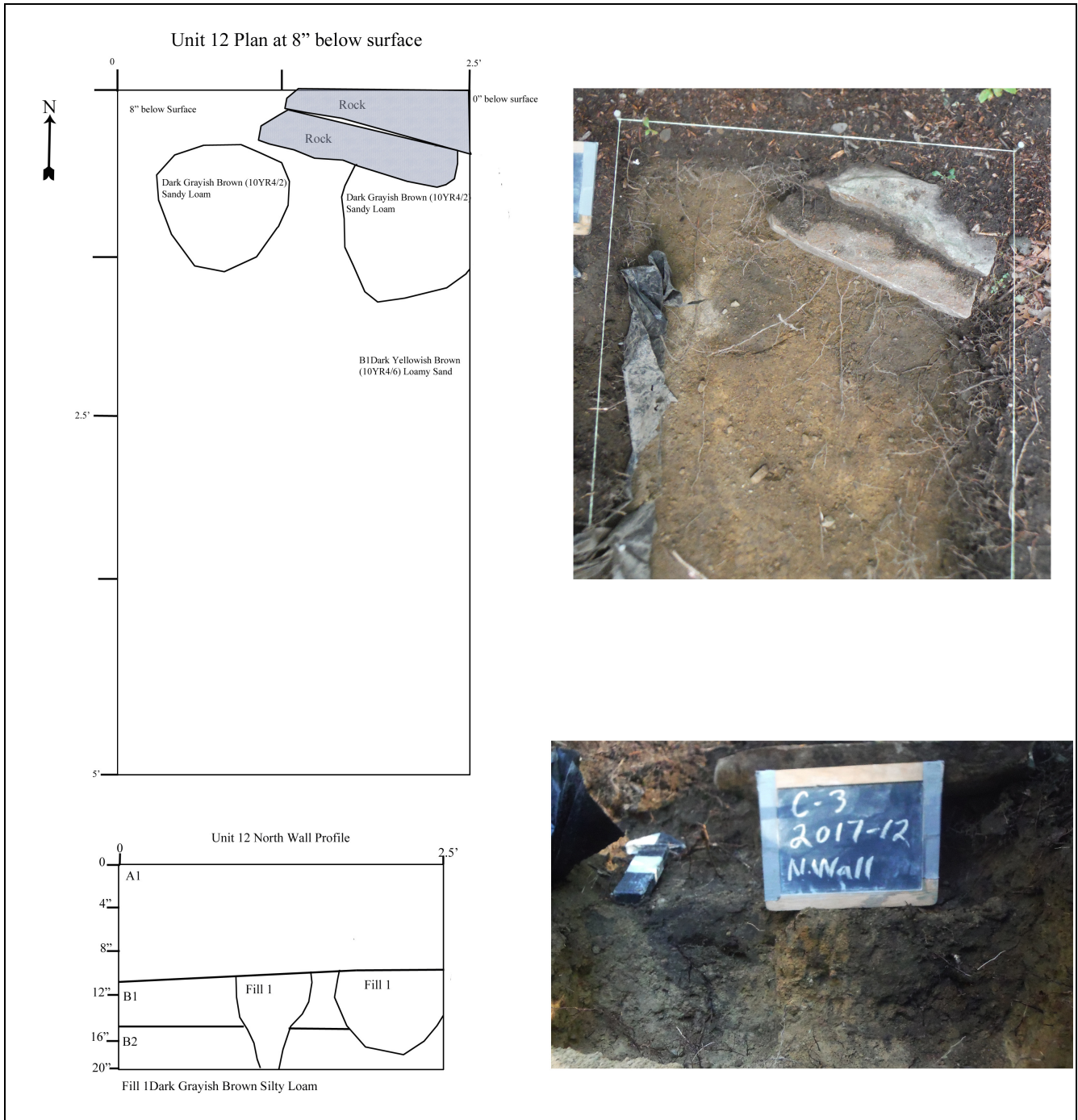


Figure 8. Unit 12 plan and profiles



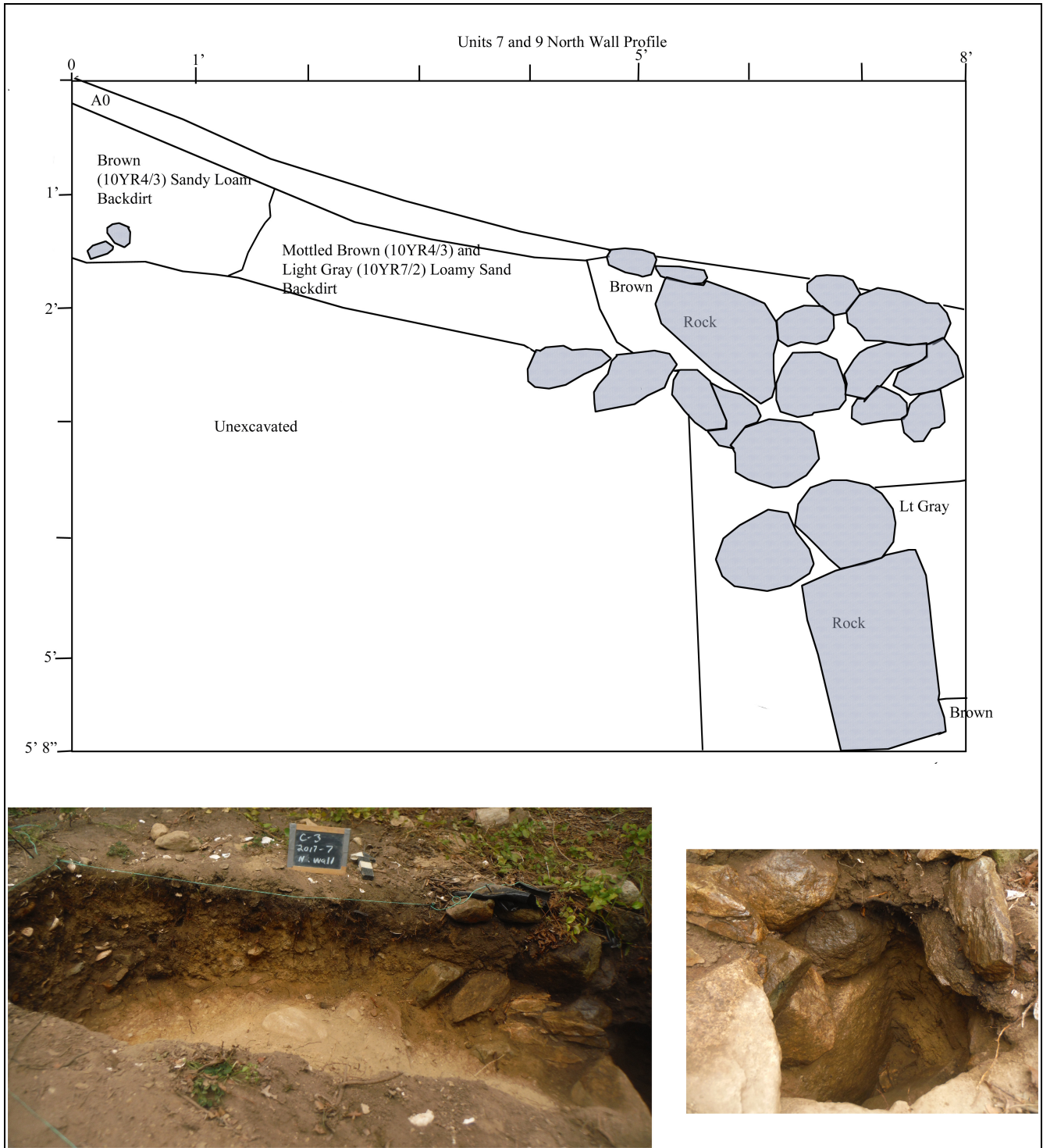


Figure 9. Units 7 and 9 profiles

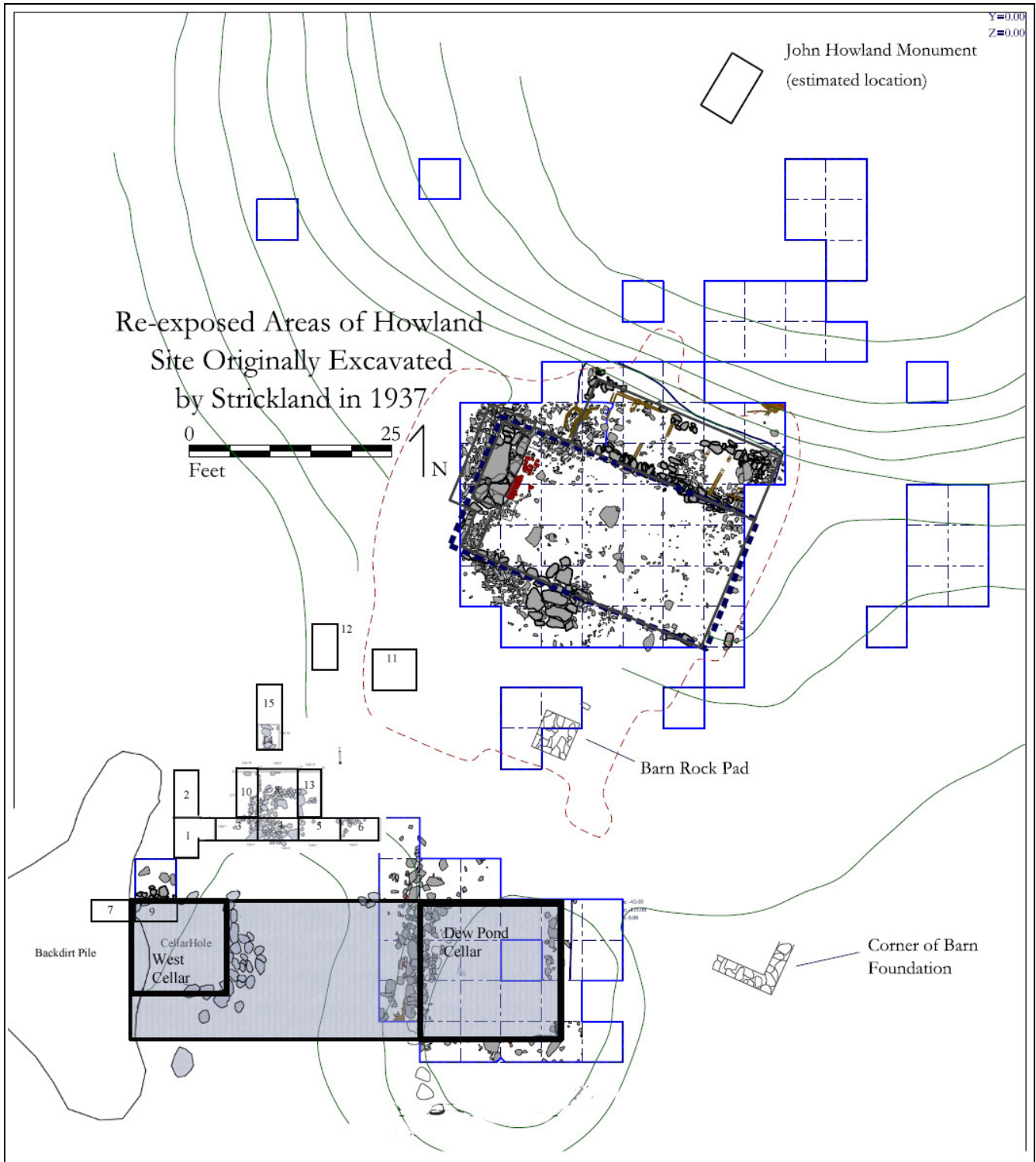


Figure 10. Orientations of the dew pond and western cellars and possible building outline.



Figure 11. Native artifacts recovered in 2017 (Upper left: Core; Upper right: Bifaces; Lower: Pottery)





Figure 12. Historic artifacts (Upper Left: small belly bowl tobacco pipe; Upper right: pewter button; Middle left to right: gunflint and lead seal; Lower Left to Right: Staffordshire Slipware, Redware, Redware mug rim)

APPENDIX B  
Artifact Catalog