

A Brief Report on the William Bradford II Site (Colonial 6/ C-06) Kingston, Massachusetts

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Background

The C-06 site was partially excavated in 1966 by Dr. James Deetz and Plimoth Plantation as part of the Plantation's archaeology program. The excavation was documented as "Colonial Six", an educational film that was shown for decades in college archaeology classes. A copy of this film remains at Plimoth Plantation. Excavation consisted of the placement of a test unit in a visible depression near the marker stone at the site. Once the test unit identified the depression as a cellarhole filled with refuse, the entire area around the cellar may have been stripped to the subsoil level and the cellar was fully excavated. Stripping of the topsoil around the cellarhole continued until the robbed trenches for the foundation of the house had been identified. Figure 1 shows a preliminary map of the excavations based on the documents on file at Plimoth Plantation. The house was found to be a hall and parlor style with a central hearth. Excavations were not carried out in the yard around the house so this area, the presumed location of outbuildings such as barns, stables, privies, and a well, remains to be undertaken.

Siting the Site

Governor William Bradford is believed to have been granted land in what is now Kingston during the second land division of 1627/28. No record remains of this division in the Kingston and Duxbury areas but it is believed to have been the period when the lands around Plymouth Bay were divided up and people began to move out to their farms to establish at least seasonal planting homesites occupied either by themselves or by servants or tenants. The first reference to land owned by Bradford is in 1637 when the road from Plymouth to Duxbury was laid out:

"From the towne of Plymouth to Joanes River, as it was cleared, pvided it be holpen at Mr Allertons § by going through the old cowe-yard at the river, the place being comonly called the Old Wading Place, and so through a valley vp the hill, and then to turne straight to Abraham Pierces ground , and through his ground as it is marked, and so the old path to Massechusett, leaveing Mr Bradfords house vpon the west, & from Mr Bradfords house to Steephon Tracys ground, as the way now lyeth." (Plymouth Colony Records Vol. 1: 58).

The road followed along what is now 3A in North Plymouth, turning west to run parallel to the Jones River through Isaac Allerton's land. Allerton's homesite has been identified and excavated at the north end of Spring Street. The road crossed the Jones River along what is now Main Street (Rt 3A) west of the Route 80 (the Old Wading Place) intersection and then turned north approximately following Landing Road to Loring Road to Bay Road which roughly followed the Green Harbor Path, the earliest N-S path through Kingston/ Duxbury. The road headed towards Stephen Tracy's land which we know

were at what is now Bay Farm on the Kingston/ Duxbury border (Figure 2).

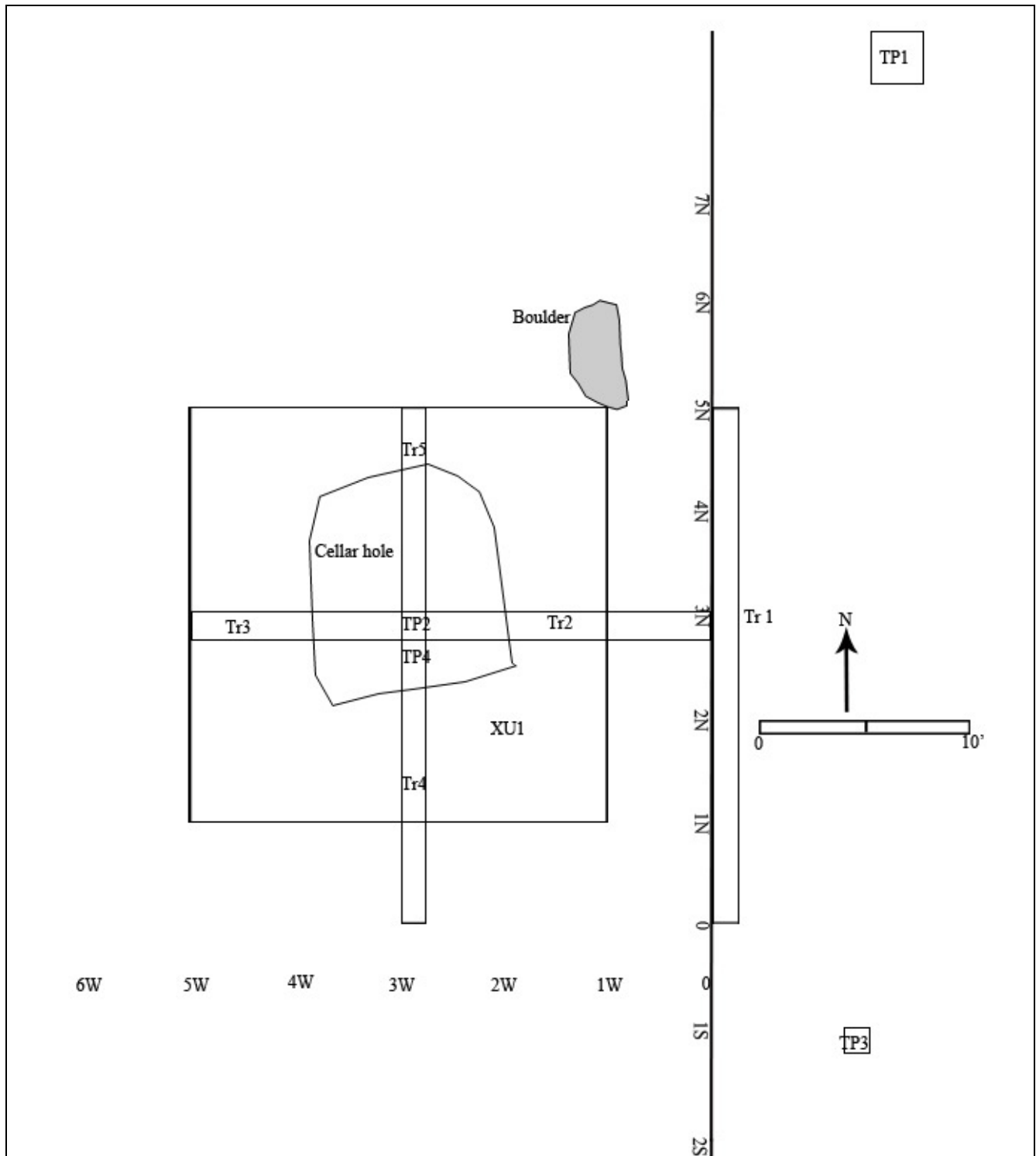


Figure 1. Preliminary map of the 1966 archaeological testing at the C-06 site showing the locations of the excavation units and the area excavated.

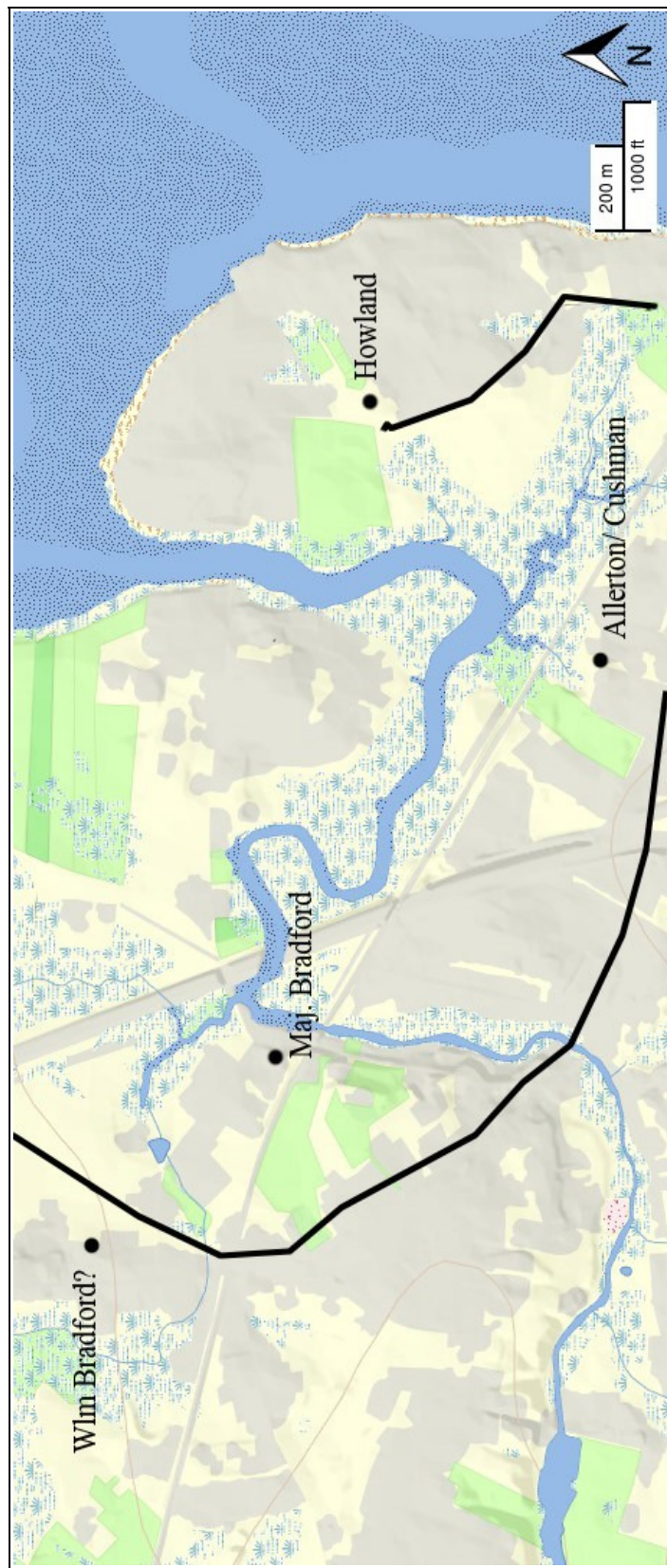


Figure 2. Locations of known 17th century sites along the main road from Plymouth to Duxbury.

The 1637 description of the laying out of the road indicates that Bradford's house and lands were to the west of it. The C-06 Bradford site is located to the west of the road as well.

My work on early Plymouth Colony housesite locations has shown me that the early settlers chose their locations based on three criteria: elevation, proximity to fresh water, and proximity to established paths or roads. The early settlers wanted to be high and dry, within relatively easy access to fresh water for drinking, cooking, and watering their animals, and they wanted to be close to established Native (which later became colonial) trails. Other known 17th century colonial sites in Kingston (John Howland, Isac Allerton/ Thomas Cushman, Major John Bradford homesites) appear to follow this pattern (Figure 2).

The Allerton/ Cushman site at the north end of Spring Street represents the earliest, clearest evidence of what a ca 1627-1630 Plymouth Colony homesite would have looked like (Figure 3). The structure uncovered by Dr. Deetz and Plimoth Plantation was a 20 x 22' post-in-ground building with a hearth on the eastern gable end. The entire architectural footprint consisted of one large post hole in each of the four corners, a fire-cracked cobble hearth on the east wall, stains from floor joists in the northwest corner, and two postholes just south of the south side of the house. These last features are interpreted by me as representing either a porch or more probably a leanto addition that may have served as a chicken coop or wood storage. Aside from these few features, that was it for the house, no cellarhole, no well (as there is a spring to the immediate northwest of the site). There was a scattering of 17th century artifacts around the building as well as a possible palisade or animal fence to the immediate southwest of the corner of the house. The building is believed to have been replaced by the next inhabitant of the site, Thomas Cushman and his wife Mary Allerton Cushman, who appear to have filled in the palisade trench and built a presumably larger house of an unfortunately indeterminable size that was represented by a large stone-lined cellarhole placed at a slightly different alignment than, and overlapping, the original house. Allerton was one of the wealthiest colonists and it would seem illogical that he would have constructed such a small house for himself, but it is my belief that at least some of the homesites established as a result of the second land division were not occupied by their owners but were staffed with tenants or servants who farmed these lands for their owners or masters. Men such as Allerton and possibly Bradford, would have remained living in Plymouth town center in their much larger houses, perhaps occasionally visiting the tenant/ outlier farms but not living there. This pattern would result in a larger, finer house in Plymouth town and a smaller cottage on these outlier farms to house the servants or tenants. Thus, when a record refers to Mr. Allerton or Mr. Bradford's farm or house along the Jones River, it may just be referring to a farm or building that they owned and not to a place where they actually lived.

My Work on the Archaeology Collection

I catalog 851 artifacts, specifically the ones that came from the lower fill of the cellarhole and the peripheral trenches and excavation units, from the C-06 site in 1996. I did not catalog either the material from the upper layers of the cellarhole that appeared to represent a nineteenth century filling of the open hole, or the nails and nail fragments present in the collection. It should be remembered that the artifacts recovered from the cellarhole mainly represent a terminal deposit created when the building was taken down and the site abandoned and it may not represent the entire site occupation history. While the cellar was in use a few pieces of detritus may have occasionally and accidentally been deposited in the feature, but it is assumed that the area was kept relatively clean until it was no longer in use. When the decision was made to abandon and remove the house, items that remained in the cellar were probably evaluated for their salvagability with most things (barrels, bags, boxes, stored ceramic and metal vessels, and tools) being removed and reused elsewhere and a few unwanted items (broken

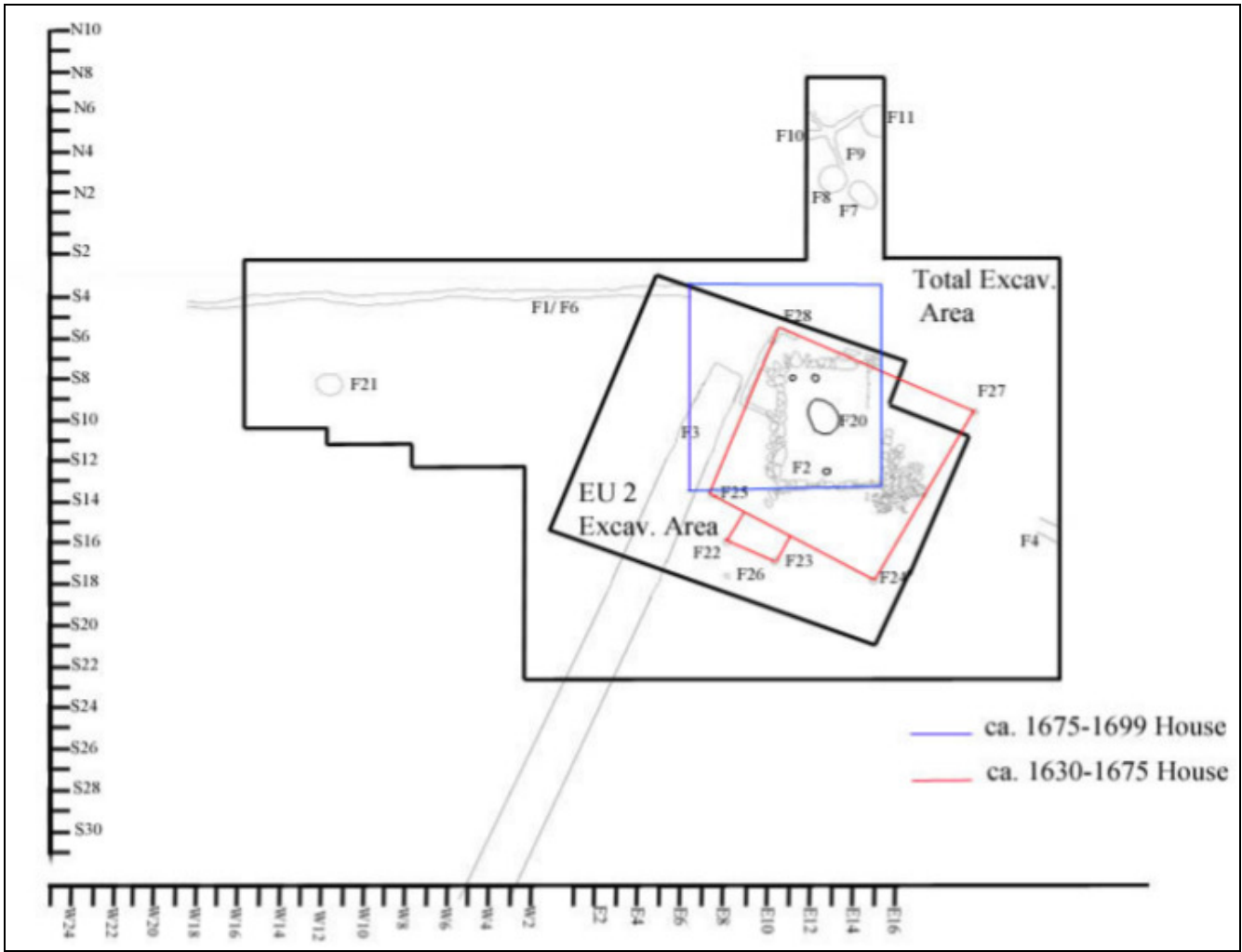


Figure 3. Archaeological evidence at the Allerton/ Cushman Site.

or outdated items) being left in place as the filling began. No evidence of burning was encountered at the site, so it is assumed that the building was removed either in total or was dismantled and used elsewhere. The filling of the cellarhole would have been accomplished using discarded material from the dismantling or cleaning out of the house as well as possibly muck piles from the yard with additional soils having to be brought in from elsewhere or dug up from somewhere close by.

That being said, artifacts recovered from the cellarhole most probably do represent at least a limited snapshot of the occupation history of the site (Table 1). As can be seen in the accompanying table, a limited amount of prehistoric material was found. These show occupation of the area going back to the Middle Archaic Period (8000-6000 years ago) as represented by the Neville projectile points. The semi-lunar knife and the full-grooved ax indicate occupation in the Late Archaic Period (4200-3400 years ago). Colonial period artifacts hint at occupation in the middle 17th century, offering support to the idea that the site was the location of Major William Bradford's house (ca 1650-1703/ 4) , as well as possible evidence of earlier occupation associated with William Bradford Sr. (ca. 1627-1647?).

The most telling of the artifacts that can be associated with an earlier occupation are the tobacco pipe stem fragments. These utilitarian and commonly disposed of pieces of colonial material culture, are one of the most common finds on a site. They are important to archaeologists because the size of the bore hole through the stems changed at a fairly regular rate throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, gradually shrinking in 30 to 50 year increments from 9/64” to 4/64” from ca. 1580 to ca. 1800. It should be remembered that the rates are not absolute though and one could still find pipe stems with 8/64” bores being made or used at a site that was first occupied in ca. 1660, but the presence of larger bored pipes is a good indicator that there was occupation at the site around or before 1650 (give or take a few years).

In the collection from the C-06 site, there are three stems with 8/64” bores, indicating possible occupation at or before 1650. More stems with 7/64” bore were found, indicating more intense occupation in the 1650-1680 period, with more intense occupation after that being evidenced by the increasing number of 6/64” and 5/64” stems. Some of the ceramics also hint at least a last quarter of the 17th century occupation, with most classes having a beginning date of ca. 1675 at the earliest and a couple dating to possibly earlier. Redwares are very hard to date and they could generally date to any period before 1850 while the tin-glazed could also date to earlier, but probably are of a late 17th to early 18th century date.

Overall, the artifacts I cataloged indicate Native presence at the site going back 6000-800 years and colonial occupation, as represented in this terminal deposit, probably going back at least to the middle to late 17th century.

Table1. Artifacts cataloged by Chartier ca. 1996.

Artifact	Count
Clay pipe	145
Stems with 8/64” bore (1620-1650)	3
Stems with 7/64” bore (1650-1680)	8
Bowl with 7/64” bore rouletted rim 17 th century style	1
Bowl with 7/64” bore unknown style	1

Stems with 6/64" bore (1680-1710)	34
Bowl with 6/64" bore unknown style	1
Stems with 5/64" bore (1710-1750/ 19 th century)	58
Bowl with 5/64" bore bearing TD mark	1
Bowl with 5/64" bore 19 th century style	5
Bowl with 5/64" bore 18 th century style	2
Bowl with 5/64" bore unknown style	5
Stem/ Bowl juncture with 5/64" bore heelless funnel style	3
Bowl with 5/64" bore heelless funnel style ER in cartouche on bowl	1
Stems with 4/64" bore (1750-1800/ 19 th century)	1
Stem with 4/64" bore marked Thomas White and Co. Glasgow	1
Bowl fragments	18
Bowl with molded Chinese head 4/64" bore	1 (2 fragments)
Ceramics	462
English Mottled ware mug (1675-1775)	4
Staffordshire Slipware mug, platter, posset pot (1675-1775)	19
Gray Stoneware jug	2
Westerwald mug (1620-1775)	5
English Brown Dipped stoneware mug (1675-1775)	3
Wrotham Slipware (?) mug (1612-1739)	3
Tin-glazed Black Hand painted decorated plate	8
Tin-glazed light blue hand painted decorated saucer	1
Tin-glazed purple hand painted decorated plate	2
Tin-glazed turquoise hand painted decorated saucer (late 17 th -early 18 th century)	1
Tin-glazed purple speckled malling cup (1620-1670)	5
Tin-glazed blue hand painted decorated plate	24
Tin-glazed blue hand painted decorated mug	1
Tin-glazed undecorated medicine cup	1
Tin-glazed dark blue hand painted decorated cup or bowl	1
Tin-glazed blue hand painted decorated charger	3

Tin-glazed undecorated bowl	3
Tin-glazed blue hand painted decorated bowl	1
Redware chamberpot	58
Redware cup	5
Redware flatware	1
Redware flowerpot	1
Redware with trailed slip decoration holloware	2
Redware holloware	1
Redware milkpan	45
Redware slip decorated milkpan	1
Redware mug	41
Redware Pan	8
Redware slip decorated pan	6
Redware pitcher	5
Redware slip decorated plate	28
Redware Plate	8
Redware Pot	83
Redware small pot	9
Redware Tall pan	25
Redware fragments	48
Bone	139
Duck	3
Goose	5
Chicken	14
Large Mammal	1
Cattle	38
Medium mammal	19
Sheep	29
Pig	30
Shell	25
Moon Snail	1

Quahog	3
Soft Shell Clam	12
Surf clam	9
Iron Artifacts	29
Barrel Hoop	1
Buckle	6
Fragment	3
Shoe Heel	1
Horse Bit	1
Horseshoe	6
Knife	7
Scythe	1
Spur	1
Trunk/ Chest Lock	1
Chain Links	1
Prehistoric Artifacts	43
Flakes	18
Shatter	7
Uniface	1
Biface	3
Preform	1
Point tip	1
Scraper	4
Neville Point (Middle Archaic)	2
Fox Creek Lanceolate Point (Middle Woodland)	2
Full grooved ax	1
Gorget	1
Pestle	1
Semi-lunar knife	1
Colonial Stone Tools	5

Sharpening Stone	3
Button mold	2
Natural Stones	3

Preliminary Conclusion

From my limited investigation of the archaeological collection and the documentary evidence relating to the C-06 site, I believe that it does have the potential to contain the original Kingston homesite of Governor William Bradford. Whether or not he ever lived here or just had a structure built for tenants or servants to live in is another matter, but the limited amount of evidence I looked at, especially the tobacco pipe fragments, does offer tantalizing clues that the colonial occupation goes back into at least the middle of the 17th century. I would recommend 1) a ground penetrating radar survey of the property and any of the surrounding lands; 2) a further investigation of the artifact collection (currently being undertaken by UMass Boston); and 3) a new dig at the site to locate remains that may have been missed during the 1966 excavation, which really just focused on the cellarhole and house location. Traces of an earlier ca. 1627-1650 occupation may be very slight, as they were at the nearby Allerton/Cushman Site, but there is the potential that they are present. I would recommend a series of 19" square test pits placed on a six to 15 foot grid pattern be initially dug to locate artifacts that could date to the earliest possible occupation, followed by the excavation of larger units that would expose features such as postholes, wells, or privies associated with any of the occupations at the site. Grid testing such as this has been successfully used to identify 17th century house locations by myself and other archaeologists.

The ground penetrating radar testing would allow for large anomalies that could represent cellarholes, wells and pits to be identified. These anomalies would need to be further tested using traditional archaeological excavation to determine what they represent. GPR is not an exact method of identifying features, as it only provides you with possible soil anomalies that may represent a feature you are looking for, but can not identify exactly what the anomaly is.