AN INVENTORY OF INDIAN SITES ON NANTUCKET

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Contents.

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1. GOALS.

The goals of the project, An Inventory of Indian Sites on Nantucket, were to gather information about known Indian Sites on Nantucket, and to develop responsible leadership among Nantucket people interested in archaeology.

2. METHODOLOGY.

The Nantucket Historical Association sponsored the project, and a Nantucket resident and a summer resident coordinated it in conjunction with an archaeological consultant, Dena F. Dincauze. An intensive survey of the U. Mass. Field School property directed by Barbara Luedtke complemented the extensive NHA survey.

Among the activities carried out were the establishment of an office for storage and cataloguing of materials, the preparation of an inventory of artifacts and materials belonging to the NHA, and the compilation of a collection of published articles on Nantucket archaeology. With the help of Dincauze we prepared an exhibit at the Peter Foulger Museum showing projectile point styles as a function of time, as well as a display showing the use of other kinds of tools by the prehistoric inhabitants of Nantucket.

As the major focus of the NHA project, we interviewed collectors and recorded sites known to them. Over 6000 artifacts in 25 collections were catalogued, with a copy of each collector's catalogue going to the collector as well as to the NHA. After recording data about sites, we visited them to collect and photograph samples of shell, flakes, bone, or pottery found on the surface, and to photograph the sites themselves.

Volunteers helped in cataloguing collections, typing, and filling out forms. In a few cases, volunteers joined site visits and helped gather field data.

Regular newspaper articles and interviews informed the public of our activities, and 4 public lectures and a U. Mass. Open House at Nantucket, a talk by Luedtke at the fall meeting of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and a talk by Little at the annual meeting in Boston of the Sons and Daughters of Nantucket reached a wide range of people interested in Nantucket and archaeology.

In order to incorporate the results of the survey into the community planning process, we held briefings with William Klein of the Nantucket Economic Planning and Development Commission, Dr. Wesley Tiffney of the U. Mass. Field School, Carl Borchert of the Nantucket Conservation Commission, and

James Lentowski of the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, Inc. Eileen McGrath of the Maria Mitchell Association, and Louise Hussey and Andre Aubuchon of the Foulger Museum provided much support.

A numbering system with geographical order was developed. The island was divided into quadrangles: Tuckernuck (T), Nantucket (N), Siasconset (S), and Great Point (G). Siasconset was further subdivided into north (N), west (W), and east (E) sections. Within these regions, coherent geographical areas were given numbers, and the site number and subdivisions of the site follow the decimal point. Thus in the Siasconset quadrangle (S), north section (N), region 9, at site .1, the part excavated by the Shawkemo Chapter has the number: NHA-SN-9.1.C.

3. SITE INVENTORIES.

Approximately 106 site inventories filed at the Massachusetts Historical Commission with a copy at the NHA Archaeology Office represent the central portion of this report. MHC and NHA have agreed that discretion on the part of both organizations will be required in order to conserve archaeological sites on Nantucket.

4. SOURCES OF INVENTORIED SITE DATA.

Except for fewer than 6 sites discovered by chance in the field, the approximately 106 sites were either reported to the NHA by collectors, or located by using field notes, maps, and reports of previous workers. Since the data recovered from the sites depends on how the sites were discovered or excavated, we have classified them into 3 classes, A, B, and C, qualified by +, *, and -, as follows.

Class A: Formal or controlled excavations.

Class B. Unsponsored excavations including salvage.

Class C: Sites reported from surface finds.

+: A report exists.

*: Surface sample obtained in 1978, now at NHA Archaeology Office.

-: Location given imprecisely.

Class A Sites.

There were 23 controlled excavations reported to the NHA this year, and all were inventoried. Formal excavations, with the greatest potential for recovering information, prove to be the most difficult to inventory. Although written reports exist for 11 of these sites, and much of the excavated material has been located, field notes and artifacts are in many cases still dis-

persed among the participants. From this experience we conclude that for a coherent curatorial system, one of the most significant contributions of the NHA could be its development into a permanent depository for copies of field notes and inventories of materials deriving from controlled excavations. Luedtke's inventory for the 1978 Field School survey now on deposit at the NHA provides an excellent model for the future.

Class B Sites.

24 unsponsored excavations, including sites uncovered by bulldozers, salvage excavations, private excavations, and pot hunting excavations, were reported to the NHA this year, along with artifacts and site locations. The artifacts include some pottery and faunal remains; the participants report some features. However, field notes are uncommon, and published reports exist for only 3 of these sites. Thus, the record of first hand information about Class B sites has been one of the most valuable outcomes of interviews with collectors. Those who keep artifacts grouped and recorded by sites deserve our special gratitude.

Class C Sites.

Inventories were completed for 77 Class C sites. These sites, located and represented by surface finds,

do not include hearsay sites, that is, reported sites for which we could find no material evidence, with the exception of a site at which a steatite bowl was reported uncovered during construction. Generally the artifact provenience data has a high level of accuracy. Although there is a certain amount of gamesmanship among collectors, not only are the 1978 inventories based on a conservative choice of artifacts, but duplication and consistency of data reported to the NHA confirm the validity of the sites inventoried.

In the time available we visited sites to obtain surface samples. 49 such confirmed sites are listed with a *. Although we have less information about sites known only from surface finds than about excavated sites, we suggest that Class C sites may be the least disturbed and therefore, for conservation purposes, the most valuable on the island.

Perhaps the most exciting event this year was the discovery and correlation of the surface finds and provenience data of two collectors, N.O. Dunham and Shurrocks, made in 1935-67. Totalling about 500 artifacts, these collections represent many days of walking eroding beaches, dirt roads, and plowed fields, <u>with notebooks</u>! Mr. and Mrs. Dunham donated their collection to the NHA in 1942, and John Gilbert donated the Shurrocks material

on permanent loan this summer.

Surface hunters often become collectors because the artifacts appear accidentally while walking, gardening, farming, or digging house foundations. Many of these collectors have such a knowledge of the land, such an eye for a half exposed artifact, and such enthusiasm and curiosity about the prehistory of Nantucket that it has been a priviledge to interview them.

5. EVALUATION OF SITE DATA.

Sites reported to the MHC by the NHA on inventory forms in 1978 represent locations for which material evidence such as flakes, shell, bone or artifacts has been reliably reported. How do these locations correspond to prehistoric sites? This question, which requires a definition of the word 'site', will need careful research and excavation to answer properly. The Field School Survey addressed the issues this summer, and Luedtke's report will help evaluate the NHA results. In addition, some observations are possible based on the NHA experience.

Definition of Sites.

We frequently received a report that a whole area was a site. To consider as an example the Quaise Field

Station, which was so reported, we in fact filled out only two inventories for specific sites in the area (which well represents our coverage of the island as a whole). However, a study of the JCA Catalogue will show perhaps 10 additional locations at which artifacts have been found at Quaise. JCA himself reasons that the extensive distribution of artifact finds could mean that prehistoric groups have used the land at different times in places that overlap rather than coincide. Since surface data cannot delineate the boundaries of sites, Luedtke's report will give the first known data that allows an analysis of almost continuous overlapping sites of this kind.

Meanwhile we shall define and use the term 'find sites' to identify areas within 20 meters of where artifacts have been found. Adjacent artifacts found more than 40 meters apart shall be considered to belong to two different find sites. A single find site, lacking further data, shall not be larger than 170 meters in diameter. These numbers, obtained from several extensively excavated Nantucket sites, may be adjusted if better information becomes available. With these criteria, we report 8 find sites at the U. Mass Field Station: NHA-SW-8.(A, J, & K), 8.B, 8.C, 8.D, 8.E,

8.(G & G1), 8.H, and 8.I. The beach has been included in adjacent find sites.

Number of Sites.

The sites reported on inventories, for lack of adequate or verified data, represent less than half the total number of artifact find sites reported to the NHA. In addition, there are at least a dozen uncatalogued collectors known to us, and simple site models based on available water or land forms predict more sites than have been reported, especially in undeveloped areas of the island. Therefore, while the inventoried sites represent a site density of 2.1 per square mile, conservative estimations would suggest a higher actual site density.

MAS Sites.

The MAS site map at the Bronson Museum shows 67 sites, of which 62 were given about 1940 by Edward Brooks and N.O. Dunham, according to an index card in the files at the museum. BHS, JCA, and others on Nantucket recall that these sites represent a very reliable survey by Brooks and Dunham. 34 of the sites inventoried in 1978 fall in MAS site areas. We visited about 7 sites reported only by the MAS map, and observed

surface evidence for prehistoric occupation at each site. On the evidence so far obtained, the MAS sites are probably valid, and in many cases, almost undisturbed.

Surface Finds in Dirt Roads.

A number of collectors do their surface hunting by walking the dirt roads of Nantucket, and their reports give valuable suggestions of sites in otherwise undisturbed areas. Shurrocks, NOD, and RAH are noteworthy examples of road explorers. Unfortunately we must also report that many collectors now find artifacts in road fill originating at Glowacki's pit(s). Caution is needed in evaluating the provenience of artifacts recently found in dirt roads.

Vegetation.

Because of intensive land use such as sheep grazing, agriculture, and fire until about 75 years ago, a slow recovery rate, and the insular situation of Nantucket, almost all of the vegetation is transitional and often bears little relationship to the natural communities found on the mainland. Lady slippers bloom in the sun above such open heath plants as reindeer moss, and pitch pine forests are introduced. Since the vegetation of

the present, then, is anomalous, the vegetation of the past would be an excellent topic for a research project.

Because of the richness of this subject on Nantucket, the aerial photographs obtained in July of 1978 and included in the inventory give especially valuable information about vegetation.

A vigorous growth of milkweed is reported to be and in fact is associated with many shell middens. However, the association has not yet been shown to be necessary or sufficient.

The vegetation types on Nantucket today as named in the site inventory forms are given in Appendix A.

6. PROJECT EVALUATION:

Consultant.

Dena F. Dincauze contributed significantly to the success and especially to the quality of the project. Her always helpful information and professionalism helped establish high standards for the work, while at the same time allowing the NHA to carry it out.

Artifacts.

Although the projectile point style exhibit prepared by Dincauze (see Appendix B) has helped to upgrade local capabilities in recognizing point styles, we observe that not only do we have much to learn, but many projectile points do not fit neatly into predescribed style categories. With these limitations, the recorded comments of Dincauze during brief inspections of parts of 5 Nantucket collections, although biased toward the unusual, provide the best currently available sample of Nantucket artifact style identifications. A count of the number of points identified by her, in several cases very tentatively, suggests occupational peaks in the Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, and Late Woodland periods, with a general trend toward increasing population.

In addition to projectile points, there are grooved cobbles, bone and antler tools, steatite and clay pottery fragments, two fragments of stone pipes, an ulu, a few atlatl weights, some grooved axes,

pestles, gouges, celts, one and two holed gorgets, copper artifacts, and many scrapers found in Nantucket collections.

A quantitative analysis of these collections could raise and perhaps help answer many questions about how, where, and why prehistoric people lived on Nantucket.

Artifact Recording.

Many methods were explored in the process of recording collections of artifacts, and any method has some utility for an overview of the quantity and type of artifacts as well as for a permanent record of a collection. The quality of the recording varies considerably and the method of choice will depend both upon the purpose for which the record is intended and the important constraints of time and money. About 250 photographs of artifacts were taken in 1978. The most informative, if time-consuming, recording proved to be careful sketches with comments. Such a record, with a photograph of any quality, conveys a great deal

of information with assurance. Color Polaroid prints leave something to be desired in sharpness, but their availability and dependability make them the most highly recommended method for the unstructured (coffee table) artifact recording which we encountered most often this year. Xeroxing is not readily available on Nantucket. As the number of catalogued artifacts became very large, we developed a black and white capability with E. Kniskern and J. Huber. For the future we recommend a semi-permanent set-up at the office for photographing large numbers of artifacts in black and white.

Site Numbers.

Because of the ongoing nature of site reporting, the site numbering system proved difficult. For the future we suggest that a site name rather than a site number be given in the field.

Public Lectures.

The four public lectures given wide publicity by posters and articles in the newspaper constituted important public relations, but, to attract collectors, additional avenues need to be explored.

Geology.

Geological studies with Leona Champney, geologist,

of the stones and rocks on the island suggest that there are at least two major kinds of glacial debris. Representative surface samples of rock picked up at a variety of locations were studied and catalogued at the NHA office. The beaches at Great Point, Coskata, Pocomo, and Shawkemo provide a selection of rocks which in many cases can be matched in type with Nantucket Indian stone tools made of felsite, rhyolite, andesite, grano and gabbro diorite, basalt, quartzite, argillite, and a slatey rock. In contrast, several places such as Cisco, Popsquatchet Hills, and Saul's Hills provide primarily granite and quartzite stones, which were not often used as raw materials for Indian tools. An exposure north of Gibbs Pond suggests that the latter kind of glacial debris lies on top of the former material.

Although geological studies are still preliminary, it appears that raw materials for most stone tools were available on Nantucket, if you knew where to look. Further studies of this kind would be both informative and of considerable local interest.

Scope.

The scope of the work undertaken for the survey project exceeded the time planned. Future plans call for increased paid assistance, and a narrowing of the

scope of a summer's plans. That this will be possible is due, however, to the broad range and documented results of this year's work.

The proposed budget and the actual budget are shown in Appendix C. Additional expenses for photography and copying as well as services were contributed by Little outside the budget. Otherwise, the money spent approximates the proposed budget closely except in the case of consulting, which was under-used. This was partly because our consultants and colleagues were very generous with rates and time, and partly because a proposed consultant was unable to participate due to other commitments. The lack of provision for costs such as management, financial recording, office space and other overhead expenses of the NHA has also been noted.

Goals.

Since one of the biggest challenges of the project has been to record the large quantity of information about Indian sites on Nantucket, it is apparent that we accomplished our first goal, to gather information, and did so in a manner which forms a sound basis for further archaeological work on Nantucket. Our second goal, that of establishing responsible leadership among

Nantucket people interested in archaeology, with the guidance of professional archaeologists, is well begun.

Conclusions.

The most valuable archaeological resources developed by the NHA this year have been the collectors' catalogues and our contacts with professional archaeologists.

Important elements in the success of the project were that a local person was co-coordinator, and that the project was sponsored by the Nantucket Historical Association, a respected and conservative local organization.

We gained the confidence of the island collectors through patience, increasing competence, and hard work. As a result, people were extraordinarily open with their knowledge of sites. In order to reassure collectors and property owners of our reliability in the common goal of archaeological site conservation, discretion will continue to be necessary.

We would like to express particular appreciation to Paul C. Morris, Jr., J. Clinton Andrews, Nelson O.

Dunham, and Edward B. Anderson, who have contributed generously of their time and knowledge.

Elizabeth A. Little

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7. APPENDIX A.

TYPES OF VEGETATION ON NANTUCKET-

Vegetation Types: Diagnostic vegetation.

Sand Dune: beach grass
Rosa rugosa

Abandoned Agricultural Fields: red cedar
milkweed

Grass Plains: red fescue?

Heath: A. Open Heath: mealy plum (bearberry)
reindeer moss
Hudsonia

B. Successional Heath: low bush blueberry
low bush huckleberry
sweet fern
bayberry
scrub oak

C. Shrub Heath: scrub oak
viburnum
Virginia creeper
Rose (Carolina)
poison ivy
beach plum

Forest-Dry: pines
oaks
-Wet: beech
sassafras
tupelo
-Swamp: red maple

Shrub Swamp: highbush blueberry
winter berry
swamp azalea

Cranberry Bog-Natural: cranberry (Eel Point, Taupawsha)
-Cultivated: cranberry (large irrigated bogs at Gibbs Swamp and Polpis)

Fresh Marsh: cattails
water lilies
water willow (swamp loose-strife)
phragmites
sedge (bullrushes)

Salt Marsh: spartina alternaflora
spartina patens
black rush, juncus

(Based on 6/24/78 interview with Dr. W. Tiffney at U. Mass. Field Station.)

8. APPENDIX B.

NANTUCKET INDIAN STONE ARTIFACT STYLES

Exhibit at the Peter Foulger Museum, Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts, prepared by Dena F. Dincauze and Elizabeth A. Little, 1978.

People's ideals of form change through time. Just as you can often date a photograph by the dress style or automobile style shown in the picture, so a trained archaeologist can tell the period of manufacture of spearheads, knives, and arrowheads by the style of the artifacts. The age estimations shown in this display of Nantucket Indian artifacts represent our present knowledge of the dates of prehistoric styles. - Dena F. Dincauze, archaeologist.

The display consists basically of implements from the Sandsbury Collection of Nantucket, with the addition of a few artifacts from other Nantucket collections for completeness of representation.

The Nantucket Historical Association

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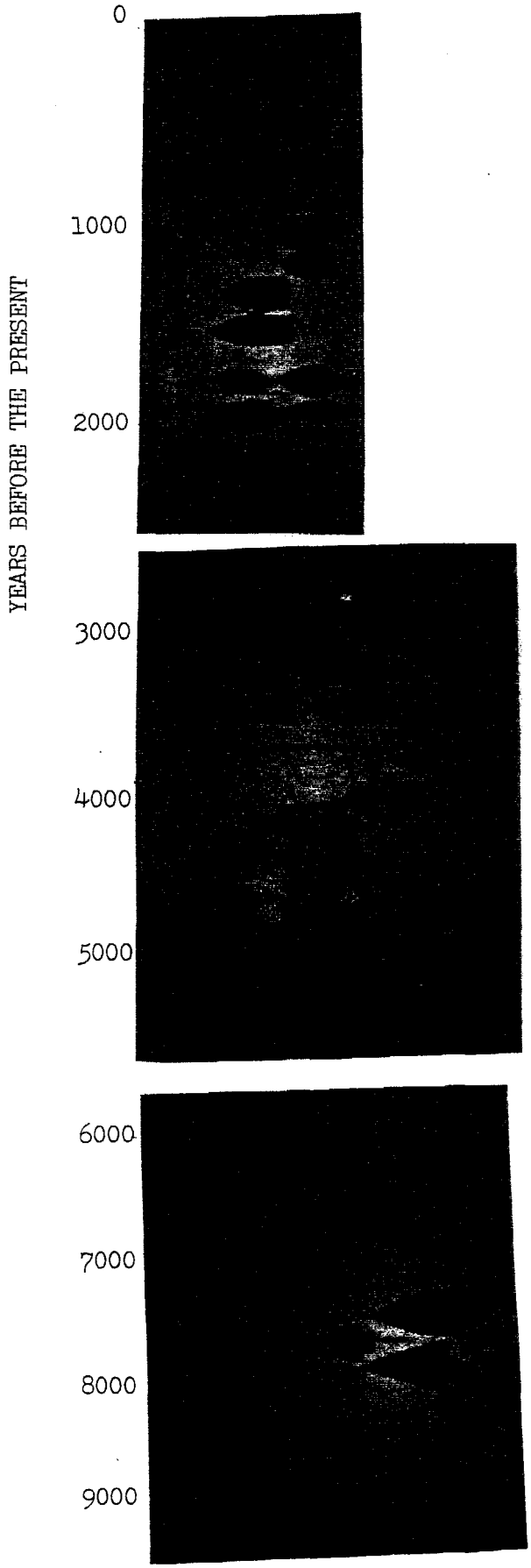
NANTUCKET INDIAN STONE ARTIFACT STYLES



English Gun Flint

Woodland Triangle

Jack's Reef Corner Notched

Green

Rossville

Lagoon

Meadowood (W)

Orient Fishtail (S)

Untyped Side Notched

Wayland Notched (S)

Atlantic (S)

Squibnocket Triangle
and
Small Stemmed

Brewerton Eared Notched

Stark

Neville

Bifurcated

(Susquehanna Tradition: S)
(From the West: W)