A Brief Historical Sketch of Archaeology on Nantucket.

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"Some time or other, you would say, it had rained arrowheads, for they lie all over the surface of America....It is a stone fruit..., fossil thoughts ...., the mindprint of the oldest man...."(Thoreau 1962:88-93). Beautiful as that thought is, the pleasure of finding arrowheads from Thoreau's time onward has been tempered by an unsatisfied curiosity about the lives of those earliest Americans. Today, with careful excavating techniques and carbon-14 dating, answers are being found to questions both old and new. How, when, and why were different kinds of stone tools used? How were changes in style of tools and ways of mkaing a living related to changes in the physical and cultural environment over the past 10,000 years? Nantucket's prehistory, while perhaps similar on the whole to that of mainland New England, is likely to show important differences because of her seaward location.

In order to study the prehistory of the island, archaeological data is necessary. For the past two years, the Nantucket Historical Association has been trying to assemble and record information about Nantucket's archaeological resources from museums, collectors, scattered publications, and people's memories. Much of what we've learned has come from surface collectors on the island. These sharp-eyed individuals, having found prehistoric artifacts while walking, gardening, farming, or digging house foundations, show such enthusiasm and curiosity about the early inhabitants of Nantucket, that it has been a pleasure to interview them. For many years, Dr. Maurice Robbins has offered inspiration and support to Nantucket's avocational archaeologists, who have, in considerable numbers, travelled to the mainland to pay a visit to him at the Bronson Museum. With answers to questions, comparative data, and a real interest in what was being learned about the prehistoric inhabitants of Nantucket, he has played a leading role in archaeology on the island.

On the basis of information the Nantucket Historical Association has obtained in 1977 and 1978 by talking to many people and visiting many places, we have pieced together enough information to sketch the following history of archaeology on Nantucket.

THE HISTORY OF NANTUCKET ARCHAEOLOGY

The first recorded collectors on Nantucket were H.J. and W.S. Bigelow, and D.F. Lincoln, whose late nineteenth century collections are now at the Peabody Museum, Cambridge. A collection made by W.K. Moorehead was given to the Peabody Museum, Andover, in 1910. In 1916 Harry Turner, a Nantucket newspaper editor, tried to arouse the public to the loss of Indian artifacts (Turner 1916), and contributed various finds he had made to the

Nantucket Historical Association. Over the years the museum accessions books tell us about other collections (most importantly those of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred F. Shurrocks, Mr. and Mrs. N. Olney Dunham, Irving Sandsbury, and Marcus L. Ramsdell) that were donated to the N.H.A.

The years 1935 to 1941 represent a golden age of archaeology on the island. Edward Brooks and Ripley Bullen organized excavations at Squam Pond, Herrecater Swamp, and the Hughes Site, and published reports of their work in the Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society (Brooks 1939, 1941; Bullen and Brooks 1947, 1948, 1949).

In addition to controlled excavations, documented surface collecting took place on a large scale. By walking on dirt roads and beaches, looking for artifacts exposed by erosion, and recording find sites, Alfred F. and Alice A. Shurrocks between 1935 and 1940 collected over 1000 artifacts which they subsequently gave to the N.H.A. (Shurrocks 1940). Field notes for this collection are believed to exist but have not yet been located. Mrs. Shurrocks continued recording her surface finds for 10 years after her husband's death, and last summer John Gilbert gave her substantial collection, which includes field notes and site locations, to the N.H.A. Another husband and wife team, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Olney Dunham, also began recording the location of surface finds in 1935, and gave their collection to the N.H.A. in 1943. In 1978 Mr. Dunham presented us with a copy of his find site list. Correlating these collections with their site records, whose existence had been unrecognized, was one of the most exciting things to happen that year. Olney Dunham, it should be noted, painted a number corresponding to a listed site on each artifact immediately after finding it.

Following a hiatus in activity during World War II, the Shawkemo Chapter of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society was formed on Nantucket in 1957 (Roy 1958), and undertook excavations during its eight years of operation. Publications by Stanley Roy (1956), Bernard T. Stockley (1964a, 1964b, 1965, 1968), and Joseph H. Waters (1965) recorded these controlled excavations.

The University of Massachusetts started an archaeological program in 1965 at the Field Station at Quaise, with a field school directed by Dr. Ronald Spores. This was continued by Dr. William Harrison in 1966. Stephen M. Perlman and John P. Pretola studied the results of the 1966 excavations for the Anthropology Department of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (Perlman 1970, Pretola 1973).

In 1972 the Nantucket Historical Association, under LeRoy H. True, administrator, assumed leadership and responsibility for an on-going archaeological program. Between 1972 and 1976, Daniel Crozier of Temple University, Dr. Selena Johnson, Edward B. Anderson, Paul C. Morris, Jr. (Fowler 1963), Barbara Kranichfeld, Cynthia Young, and Elizabeth A. Little directed several excavations with the assistance of many volunteers. The recovered materials, field notes, and reports (Anderson 1974; Kranichfeld 1975; Little 1977) are kept at the N.H.A.

To complete the list of formal excavations on the island, we note that Valerie Talmage of the Institute for Conservation Archaeology surveyed the Elementary School site in 1977, Professor Barbara Luedtke of the University of Massachusetts at Boston conducted an intensive survey of the Quaise Field

Station during a field school held there in 1978, and Frederic Turchon surveyed a site at the Field Station in 1979. Extensive reports have resulted from each of these surveys (Talmage 1977; Luedtke 1979, 1980; Turchon 1979).

In 1978 the Nantucket Historical Association obtained a matching grant-in-aid from the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, to survey prehistoric sites on Nantucket. This work was coordinated by Cynthia Young, chairman of the Archaeology Department of the Nantucket Historical Association, and Elizabeth A. Little. Its goals were to collect information on prehistoric sites and to encourage responsible archaeological leadership on the island. Professor Dena F. Dincauze of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst served as project consultant, helping with methodology, technical advice, and most importantly, with continuous support and encouragement. Volunteers, indefatigable painters of numbers on artifacts, also helped with the site inventories. In addition to collecting records and reports of excavated sites, we interviewed collectors, catalogued and photographed their collections, visited sites identified by them, and photographed and mapped the sites (Little 1979). Such site information, on M.H.C. inventory forms, will enable the Nantucket Historical Association and the Massachusetts Historical Commission to work toward preserving prehistoric sites on the island, especially with respect to federally assisted projects.

The N.H.A. survey, supplemented by the survey of the Quaise Field Station conducted by Barbara Luedtke as part of the same project, established an information base of site data for future archaeological work on Nantucket. In addition, the project established important channels for communication and cooperation between island and off-island archaeologists.

We now have an office at the N.H.A., and this year plan to build facilities for permanent storage of our archaeological materials. A growing body of reports, including The Collected Papers on Nantucket Archaeology (Little 1978), is available to researchers. The Nantucket Historical Association looks forward with confidence to a productive future for Nantucket's archaeological heritage.

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