

Archaeological survey of the Thayer Farm: Survey of the hop house and dairy barn

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In June of 2005, a series of shovel test pits were excavated around the Thayer Farm property. This investigation was carried out to determine if any archaeological remains or features would be impacted by proposed updates to the Thayer property. A total of 35 shovel test pits were excavated around the hop house and dairy barn by SUNY Oneonta Archaeology Field school students, who were supervised by Dr. Renee B. Walker. Thus, this project accomplished two goals: to determine the impact of construction to any archaeological resources on the Thayer farm property and to provide a unique learning opportunity to SUNY Oneonta archaeology students. The results from the shovel test pit survey do not indicate that any archaeological resources will be adversely affected by the proposed upgrades to the hop house or dairy barn

INTRODUCTION

The Thayer Farm (Figure 1) was acquired by the SUNY Oneonta Biological Field Station in 2001 and is currently used to support the Biological Field Station's ecological and educational activities (Gifford 2003). The property is located off Route 80 and is directly across from Otsego Lake. The farm structures were mostly built in the late 19th/early 20th centuries by the Thayer family and represent one of the oldest operating farms along this section of the lake (Bill Reed, personal communication, 2006). Proposed renovations will allow the field station to expand both undergraduate and primary school programs.

Renovations to the hop house (Figure 2) include conversion to classroom and laboratory spaces, a conference room and offices. These renovations will require plumbing and electrical work in addition to interior remodeling. The dairy barn (Figure 3) is to be converted into a student dormitory for housing up to 32 students. The dormitory would include bathrooms, a kitchen and dining room and a laundry area (Gifford 2003).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING

Hop House

A total of 18 shovel test pits were excavated around the hop house (Figure 4). Three transects were excavated to the immediate north of the building and two transects were excavated several meters north into the field adjacent to it. One transect was excavated to west of the building and one transect to the south of it. No shovel test pits were excavated to the east because the slope was too steep.

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The shovel test pits were excavated to depths between 40 and 60 centimeters below the surface, depending on the amount of gravel in the lowest levels of the pits. All of the pits contained pea to large-sized gravel and cobble, with most of the gravel concentrated in the lower two-thirds of the units. Very few artifacts were recovered from these units, but recovered artifacts included clear glass, coal fragments, wire, plastic, blacktop and brick fragments (Table 1).



Figure 1. View of Thayer Farm looking east (Gifford 2003).

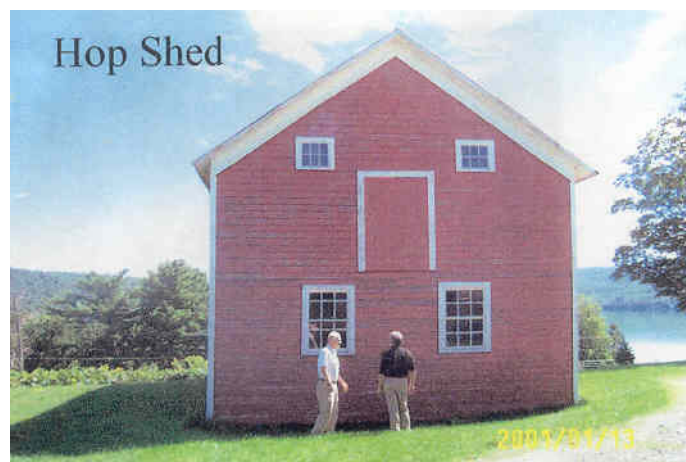


Figure 2. View of hop house looking east (Gifford 2003).

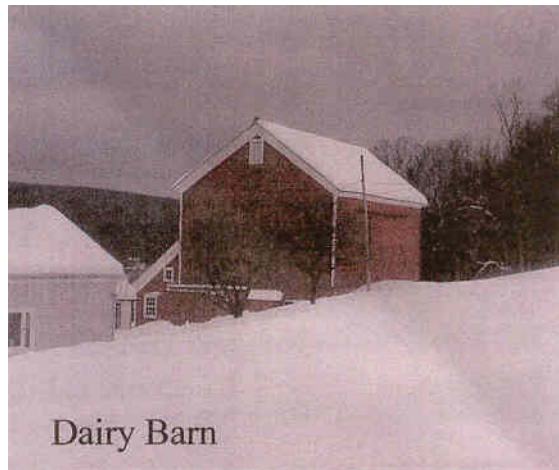


Figure 3. View of dairy barn looking south (Gifford 2003).

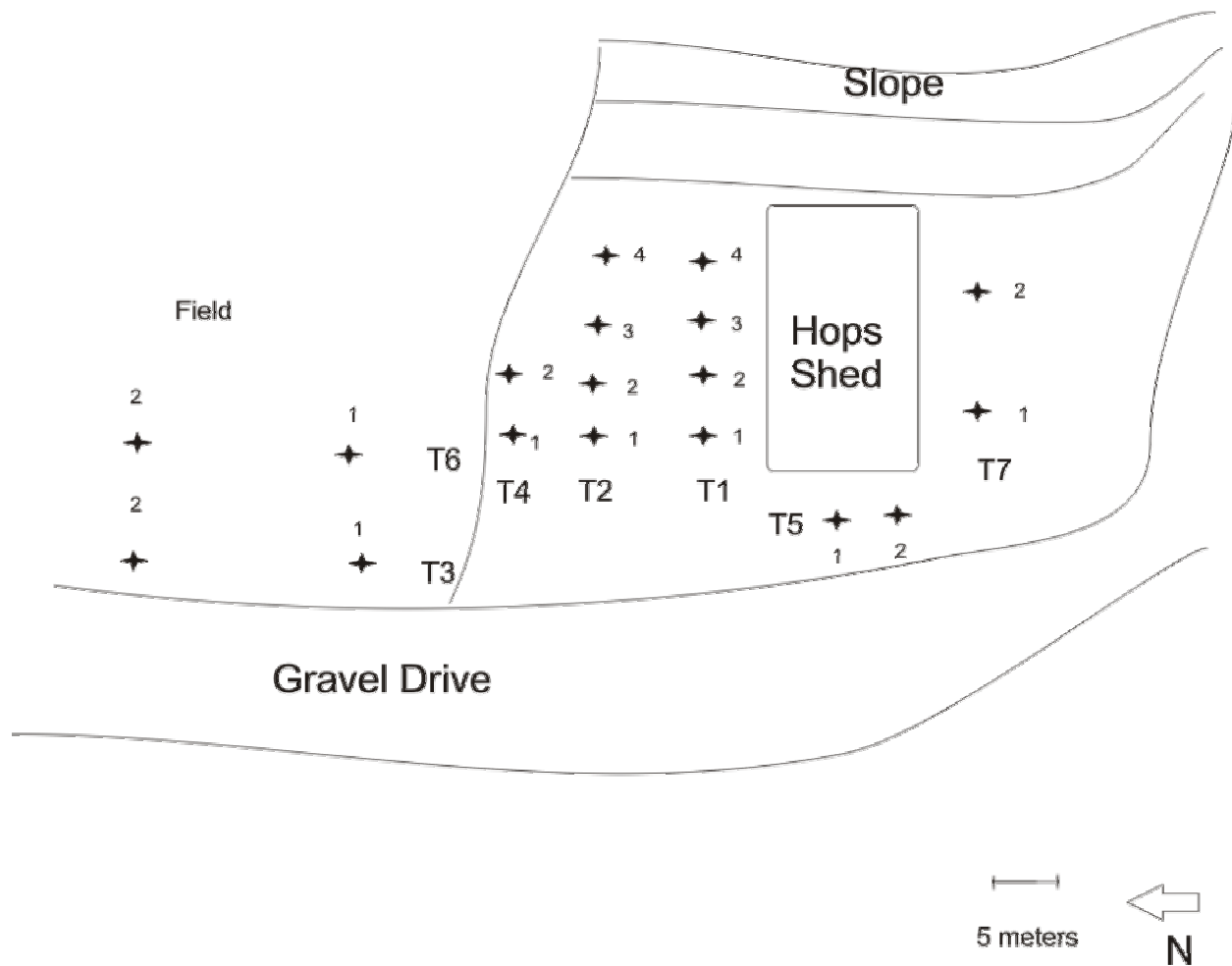


Figure 4. Location of shovel test pits around the hop house.

Table 1. Materials recovered from the hop house shovel test pits.

Transect	STP	Material
1	1	Clear glass
	3	Wire fragment
2	1	1 bone, 1 metal fragment, 1 brick fragment
	3	2 brick fragments
4	3	Charcoal
5	1	Clear glass fragment, plastic, blacktop fragment

Dairy Barn

Seventeen shovel test pits were excavated around the dairy barn (Figure 5). Two transects of four shovel test pits each were excavated to the west of the barn, two transects of three shovel test pits each were excavated to the south of the barn, one transect of three shovel test pits was excavated to the east of the barn, and one transect of two shovel test pits was excavated to the north of the barn. The shovel test pits were excavated to a depth of 30-50 centimeters below the surface. Depth varied due to some pits to the east and north of the barn containing thick layers of gravel at about 30 centimeters below surface. Artifacts recovered from the shovel test pits around the dairy barn included coal, wire nails, bone, clear glass, plastic, ceramics, barbed wire and brick (Table 2).

Table 2. Materials from the Dairy Barn shovel test pits.

Transect	STP	Material
1	2	Coal, wire nail
	3	Charcoal
	4	Barbed wire fragment
	5	Clear glass, plastic, metal fragment, ceramic fragment
2	2	9 brick fragments, 2 ceramic fragments
	3	2 brick fragments, 2 charcoal fragments
3	2	1 Wire nail
	3	20 clear glass fragments, 2 wire nails, 1 bone fragment
4	1	2 wire nails, 1 ceramic fragment
	3	1 metal screw, 1 nail fragment

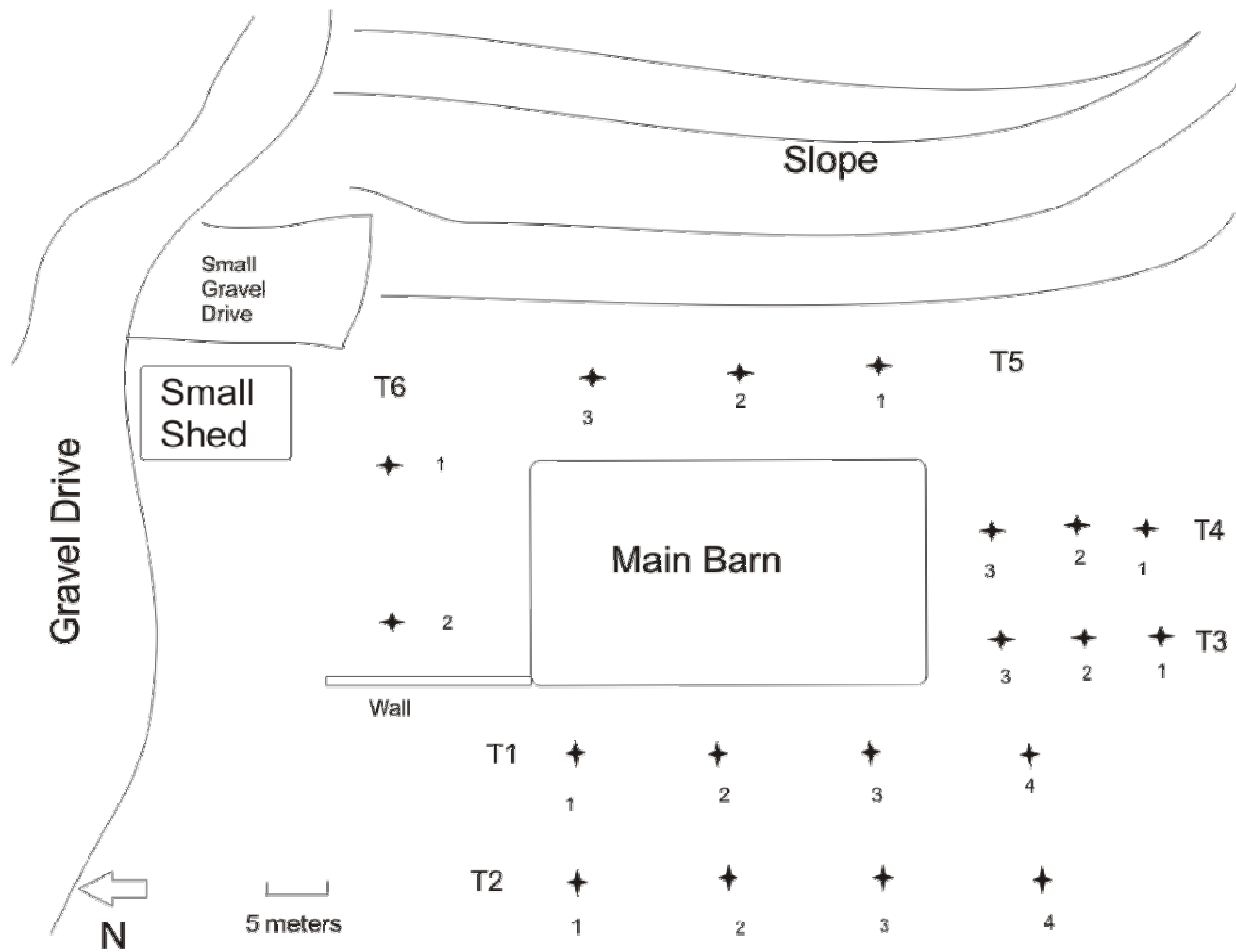


Figure 5. Location of the shovel test pits around the dairy barn.

RESULTS

None of the shovel test pit excavations revealed archaeological material that would be impacted by the pending remodeling of the hops house and dairy barn at the Thayer Farm. Artifacts recovered from the test pits dated to the 20th century, with most dating to the later half of the 20th century. The gravel fill around both the hop house and dairy barn does not contain any intact archaeological deposits.

No further testing around these two buildings would be warranted, however, it is recommended that deep excavation for water pipes and septic systems be monitored to determine if there are any materials preserved below the depth at which the shovel test pits were terminated.

REFERENCES

Gifford, K.A. 2003. Thayer Farm Master Plan: The Biological Field Station at Lake Otsego, State University of New York at Oneonta. Internal report, SUNY Oneonta.

Reed, W. 2006. Personal communication. Port Orange, FL.