

*“Here I Have Lived”:*  
An Historical Archaeology of Lincoln’s  
Springfield, Illinois

by  
Floyd Mansberger

Fever River Research  
Springfield, Illinois

UIS Public Affairs Center  
Illinois State Historical Society  
Springfield, Illinois  
May 19, 2010

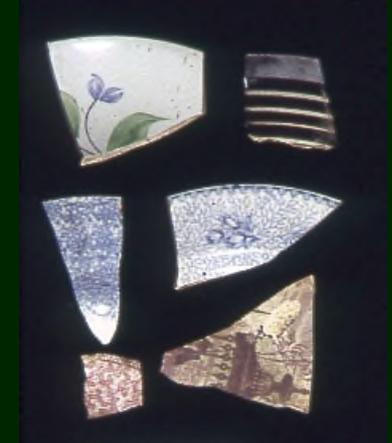


Oil Painting of Downtown Springfield  
(Weimar 1858).



Newly constructed Illinois State Capitol building.

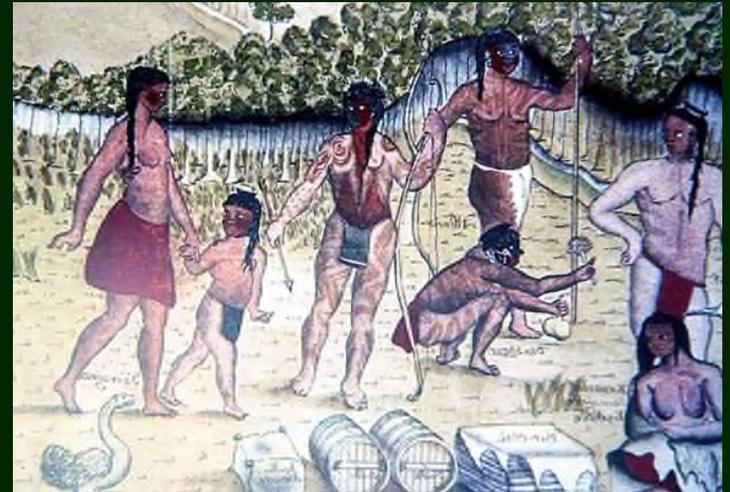
Archaeology is a methodology that brings a *material culture approach* to the study of the past. It is the goal of archaeologists to understand man's past lifeways through the study of the artifacts used and discarded by those past peoples.



And ultimately, archaeology  
is about people...

—whether prehistoric  
Native Americans or more  
recent European  
Americans—

... and their adaptation to  
the environments in which  
they live in.



Archaeologists study artifacts and artifact assemblages. Although individual artifacts can often be significant, to the archaeologist *artifact assemblages* (a collection of artifacts from a single *context*) often contain greater research value, as they convey information relevant to a specific *time* and *place*. Archaeologists use the term “feature” in reference to non-portable artifacts such as pits and structures. These “archaeological features” often contain large artifact assemblages.

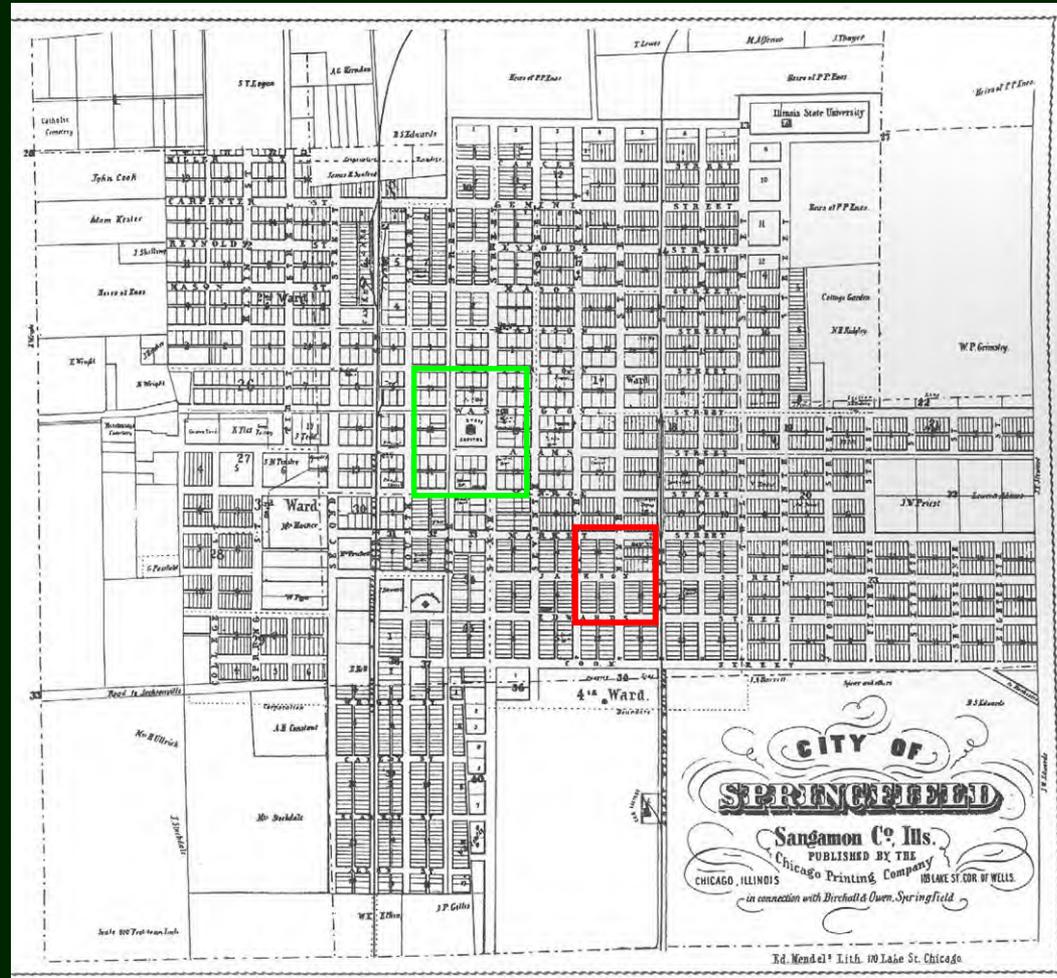


Middle Woodland pit (100 A.D.)



1840s house basin

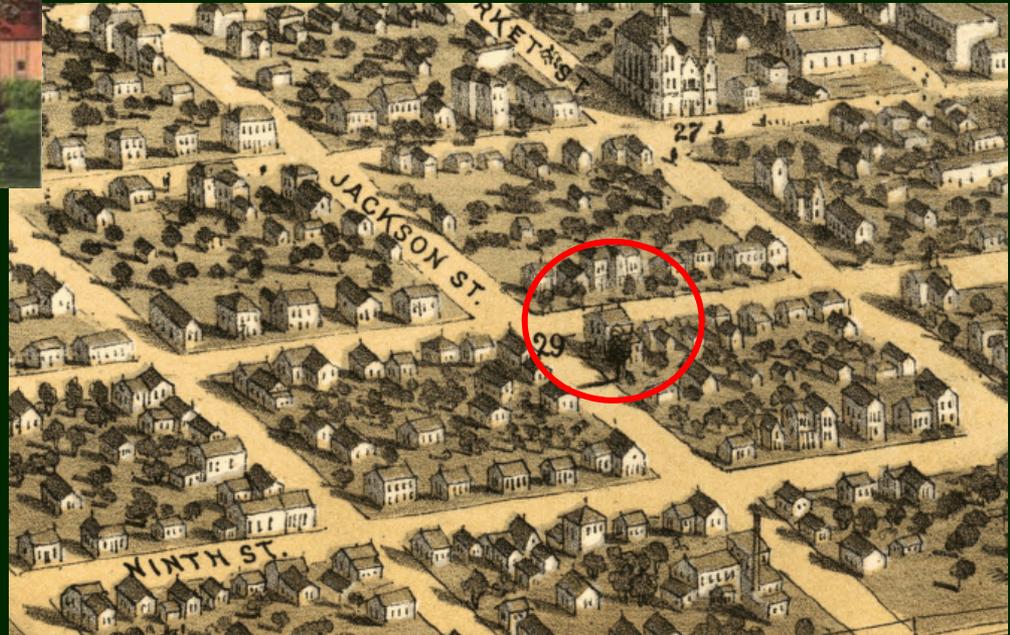
Springfield in 1855, illustrating the location of the Central Business District (green) and the Lincoln Home neighborhood (red).



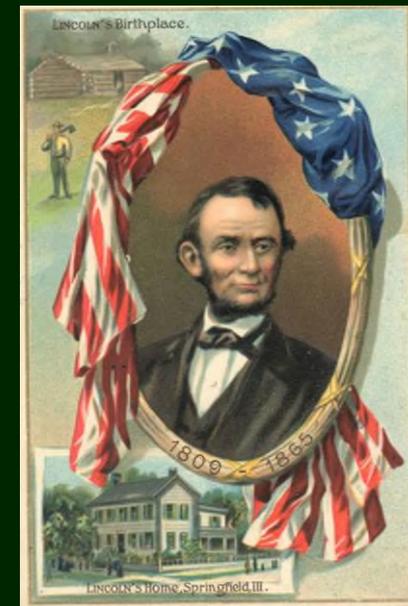
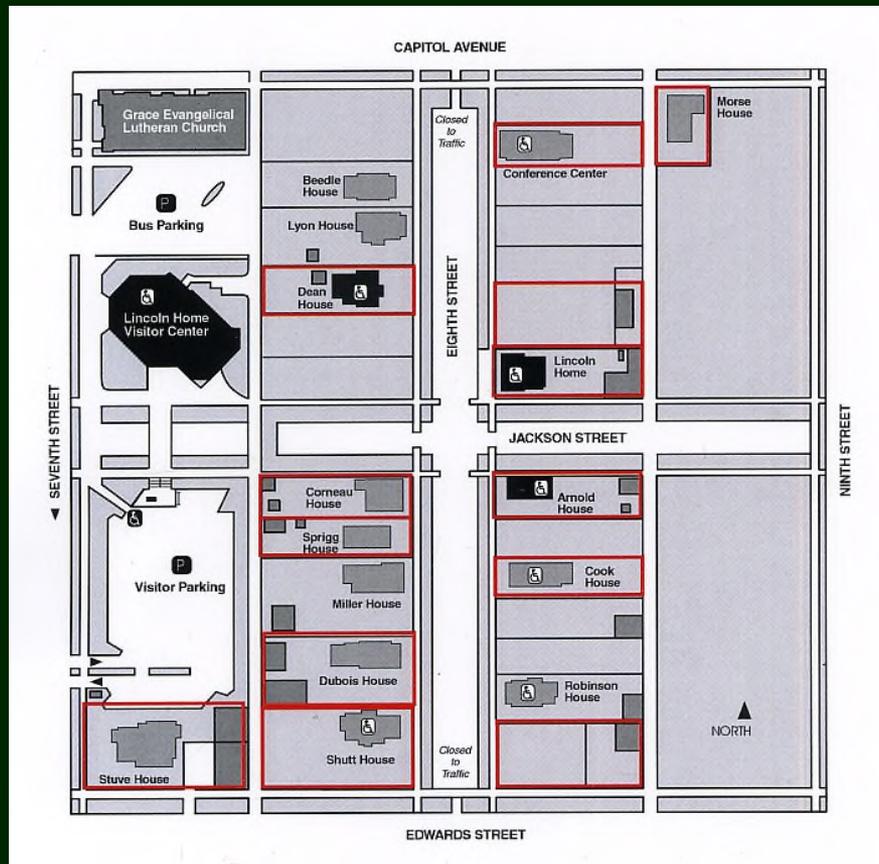
By the 1860s, the Lincoln Home neighborhood had developed into a mature urban landscape.



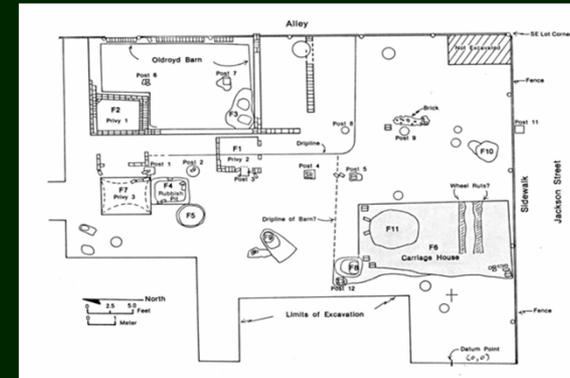
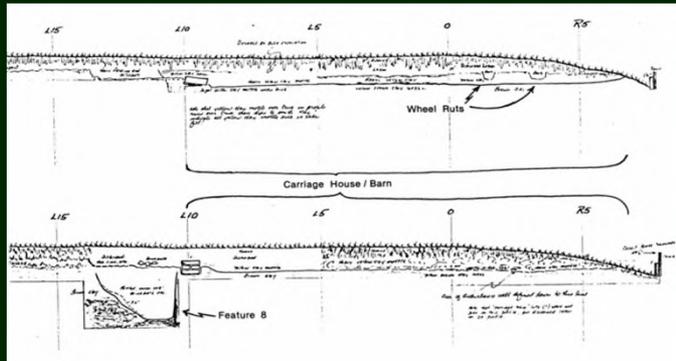
*1867 Bird's Eye View of Springfield, Illinois*



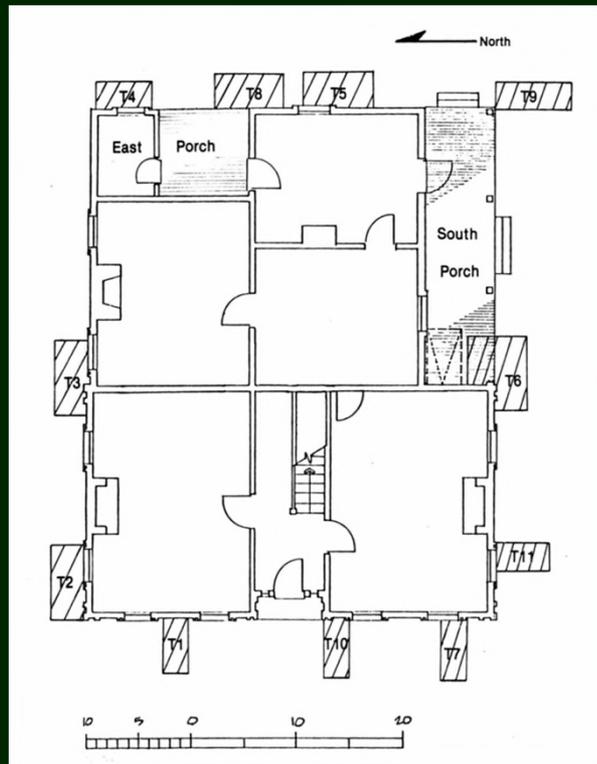
Over the past 25 years, Fever River Research has conducted extensive archaeological investigations within the Lincoln Home neighborhood for the National Park Service. The firm has conducted excavations on all the properties marked in red.



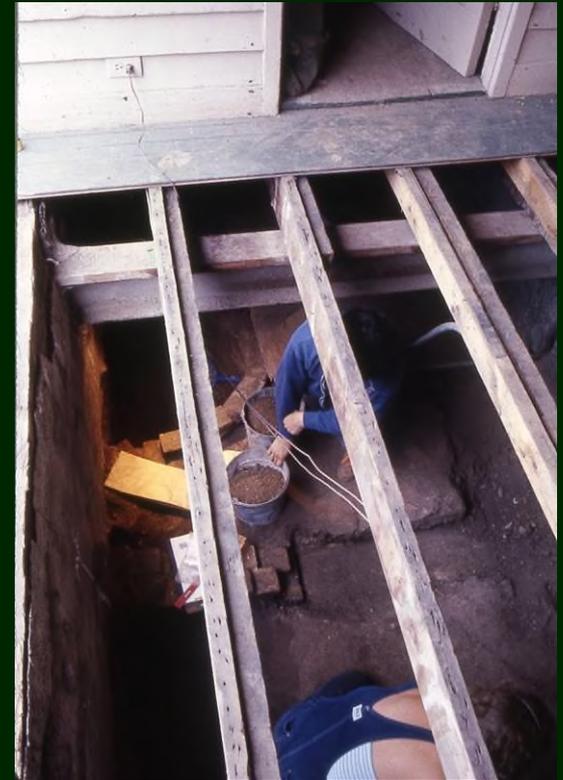
Springfield is no stranger to historical archaeology. During the early 1950s, in conjunction with the State of Illinois' restoration of the Lincoln Home, archaeological investigations were conducted by state historian Richard Hagen within the back yard of the Home.



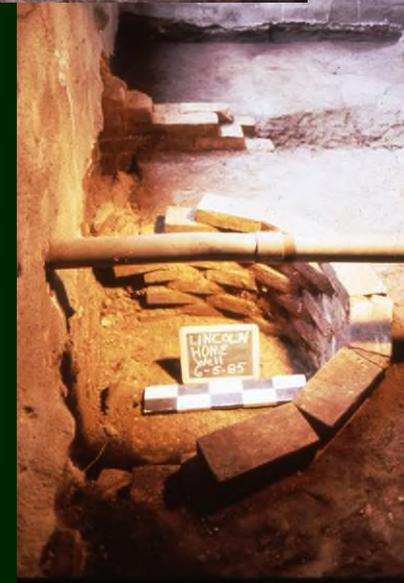
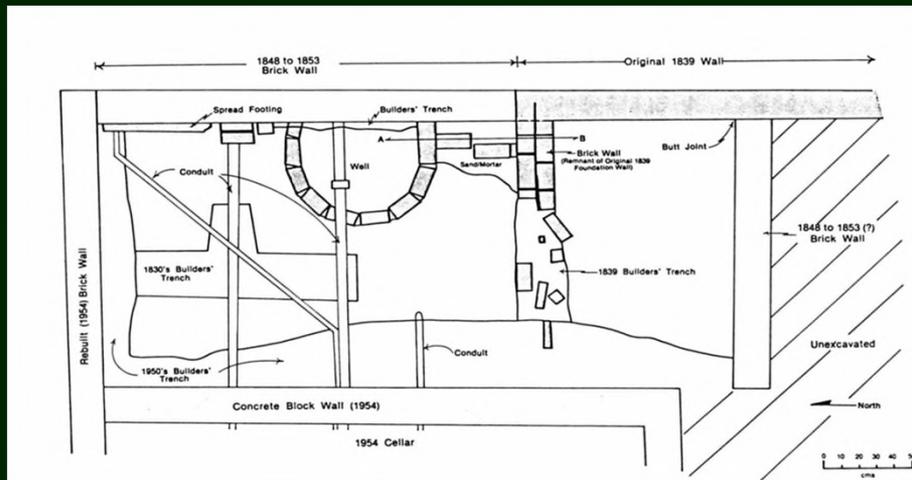
Again in the middle 1980s, in anticipation of yet another restoration of the Lincoln Home, the National Park Service contracted with Northern Illinois University and Fever River Research to conduct excavations around and under the Lincoln Home.



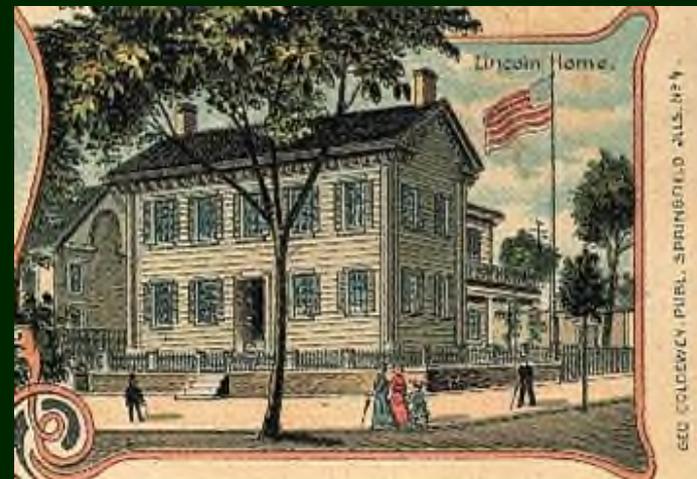
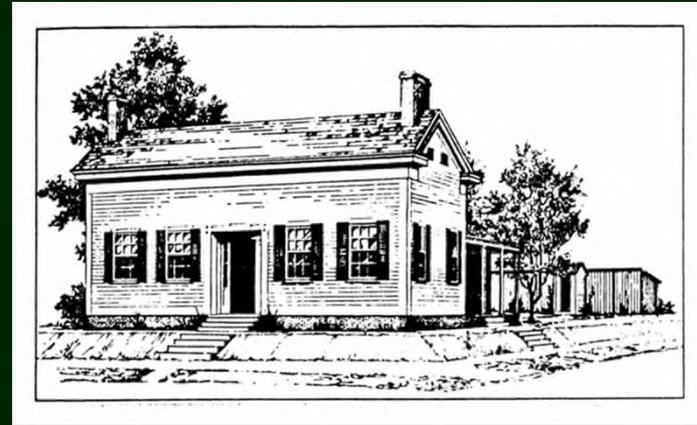
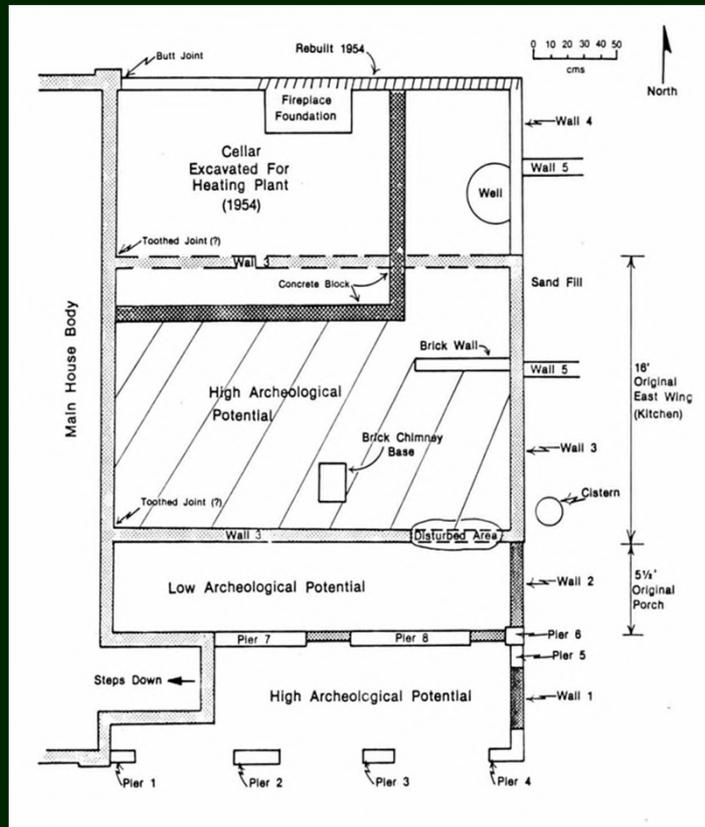
Besides excavating around the perimeter of the house, excavations were conducted under both the east and south porches.



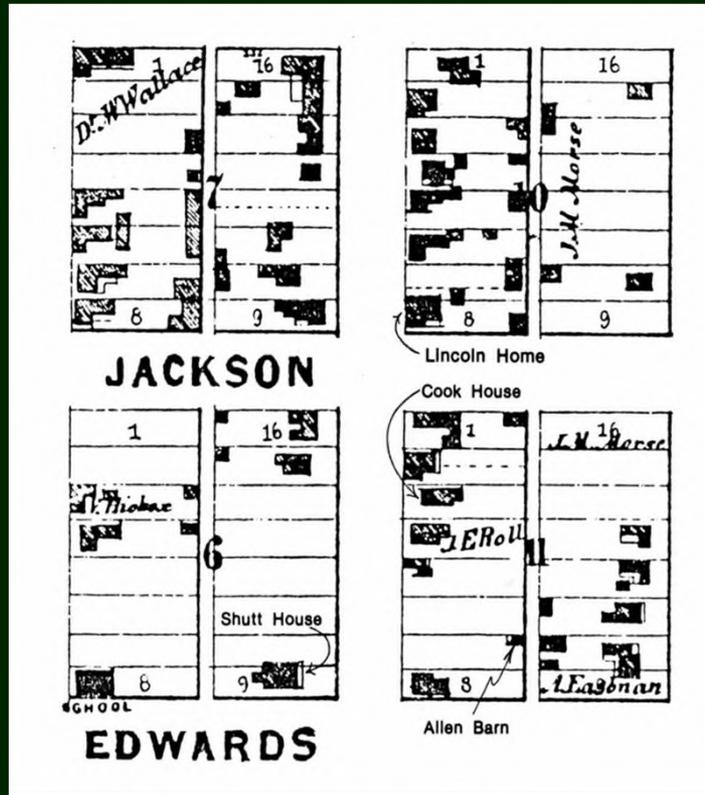
# Significant features were discovered beneath both porches...



...and contributed significantly to deciphering the evolution of the home during Lincoln's tenure.



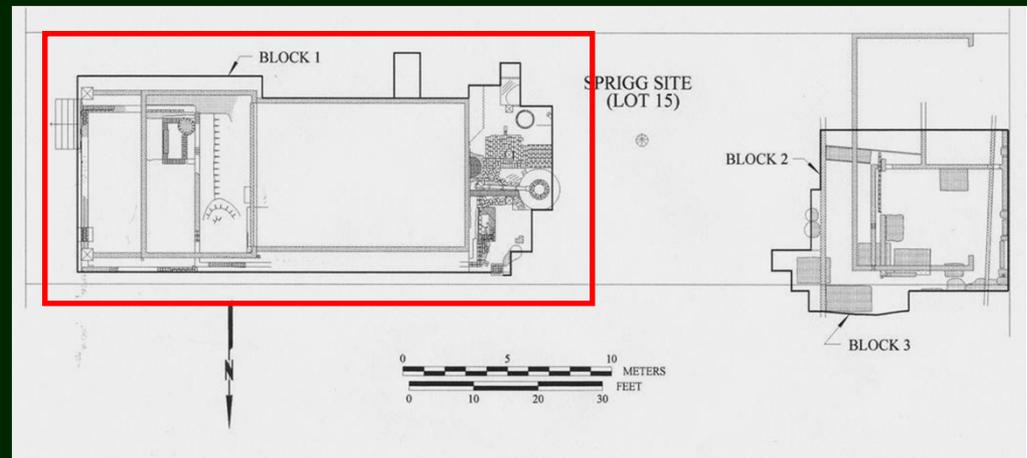
Additionally, excavations were conducted at the Cook House, Shutt House, and Allen Barn by Mansberger during the summer of 1985.



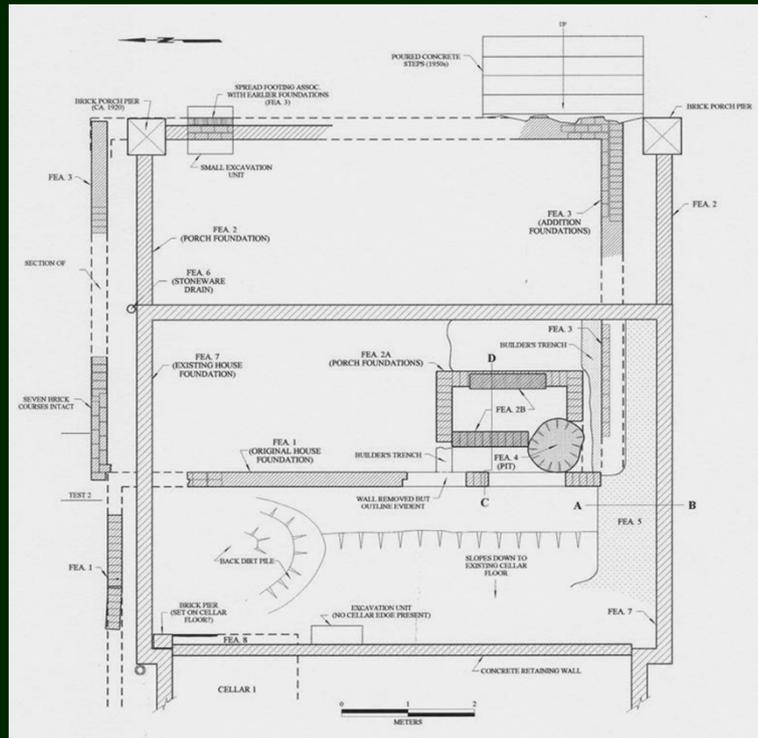
During the later 1980s through late 1990s, archaeological work conducted in the Lincoln Home neighborhood was conducted by the National Park Service's Midwest Archaeological Center, mostly under the direction of Dr. Vergil Noble. Much of this work consisted of small testing projects. The most substantial project was excavations in support of the Arnold house and barn restoration. Unfortunately, the integrity of this site was badly compromised.



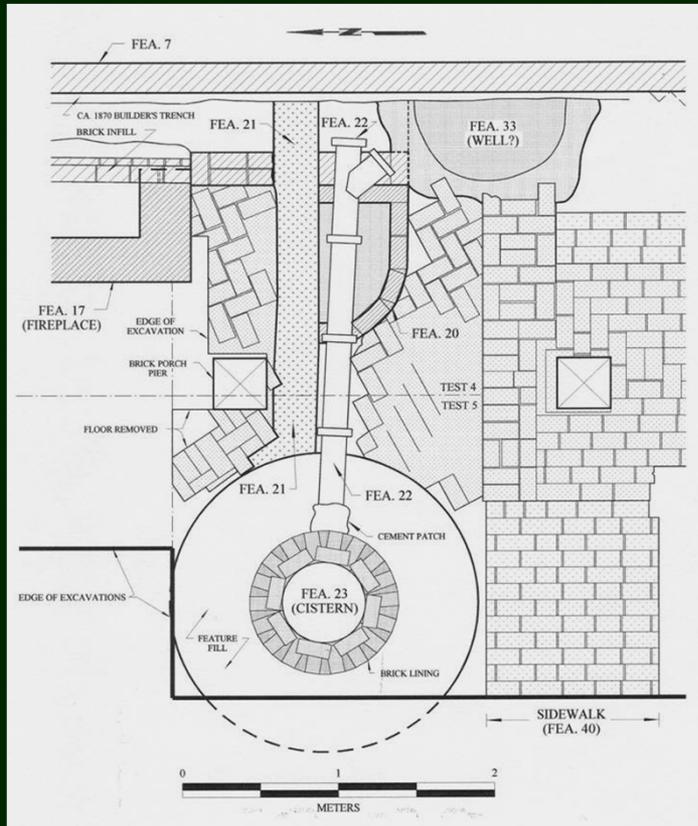
By the late 1990s, the LHNHS developed an interest in hiring a local firm to conduct their archaeological work, resulting in the hiring of Fever River Research to conduct investigations at the Sprigg House. In 1997, work begun at that site, with the initial emphasis being the restoration of the house.



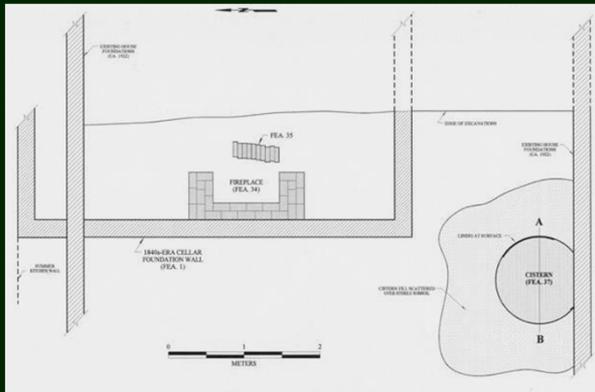
Excavations at the Sprigg House revealed that the house had evolved substantially over the years, and that it had even been moved from its original foundations.



Additionally, several early features associated with the early use of the house (such as this cistern and water collection system) were also documented along the rear of the original house.



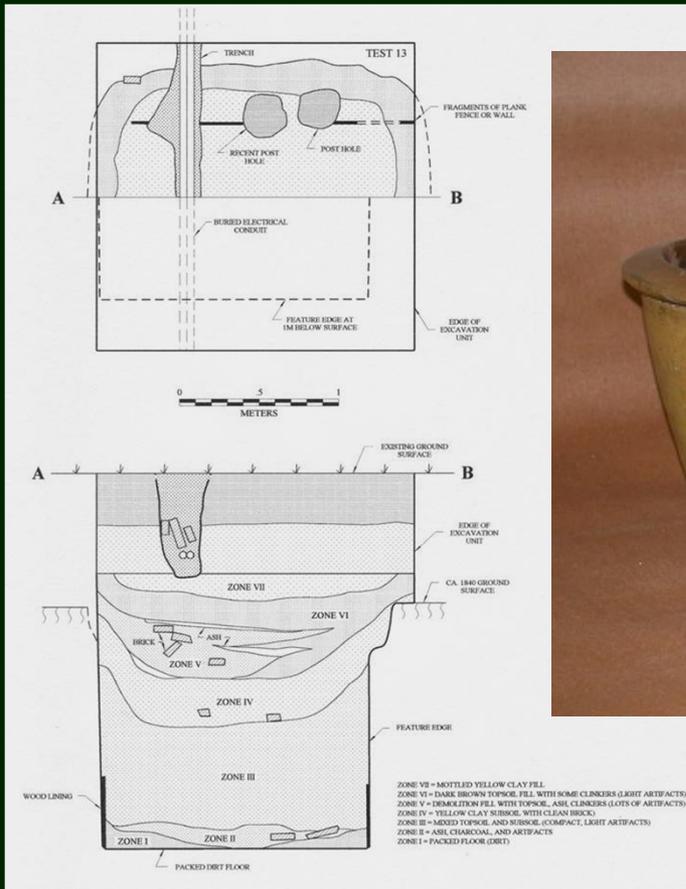
Upon completion of the initial work, the house was picked up, relocated off site, and additional excavations were conducted beneath the structure. Additional features were recorded at that time, and included a fireplace foundation and earlier cistern.



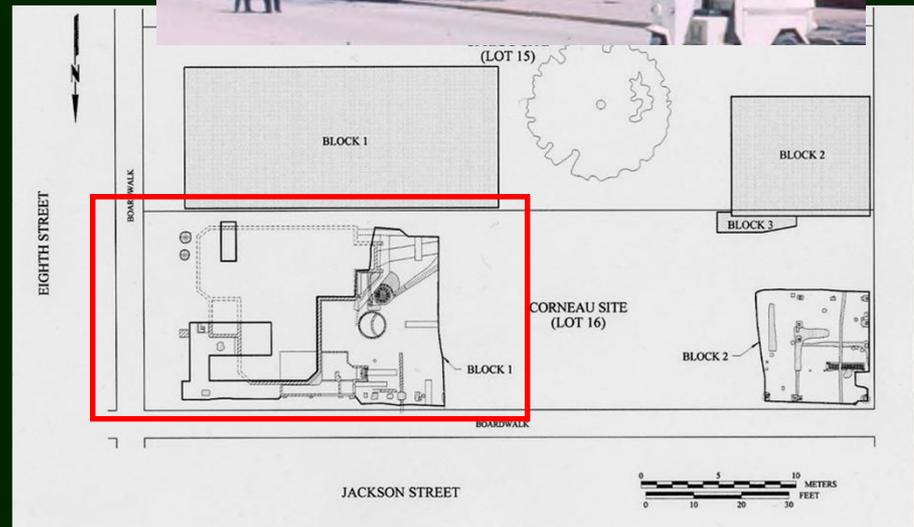
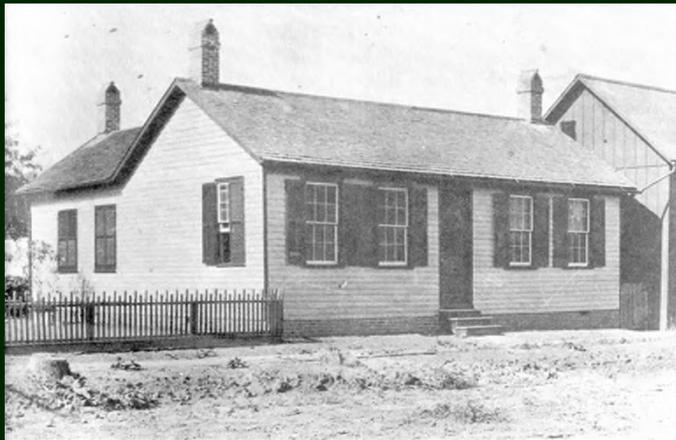
The new archaeological information assisted restoration architects with the subsequent plans for the Sprigg House restoration.



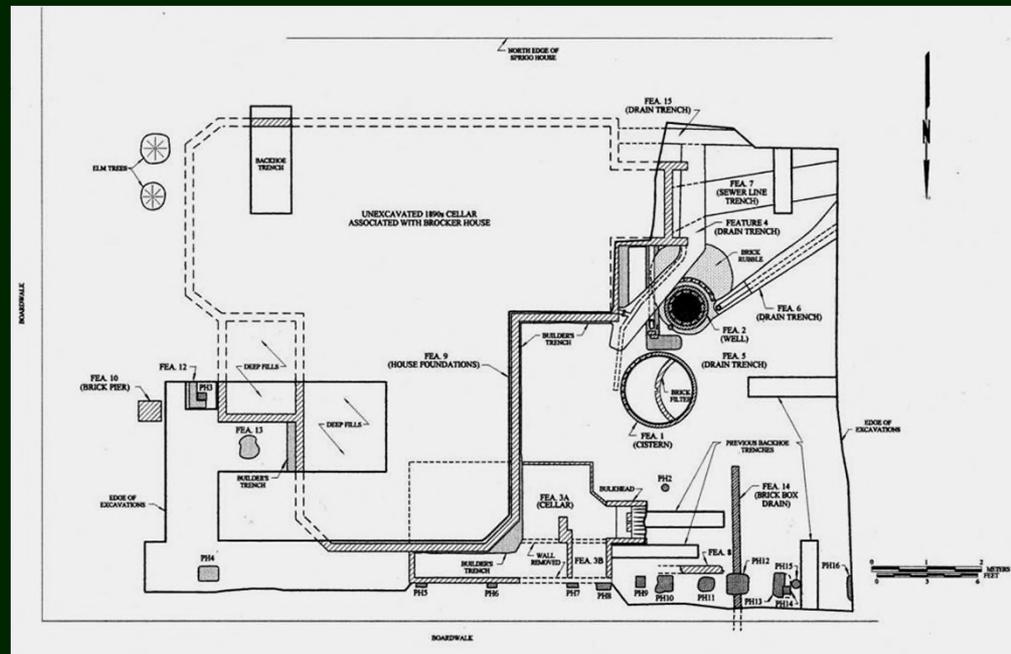
Additionally, in 1997, an early privy pit (Feature 32) discovered earlier by NPS archaeologists at the Sprigg Site was excavated.



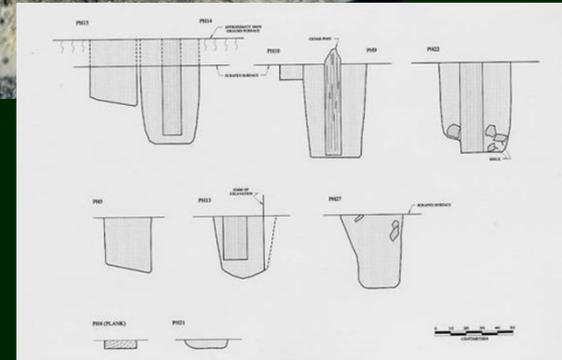
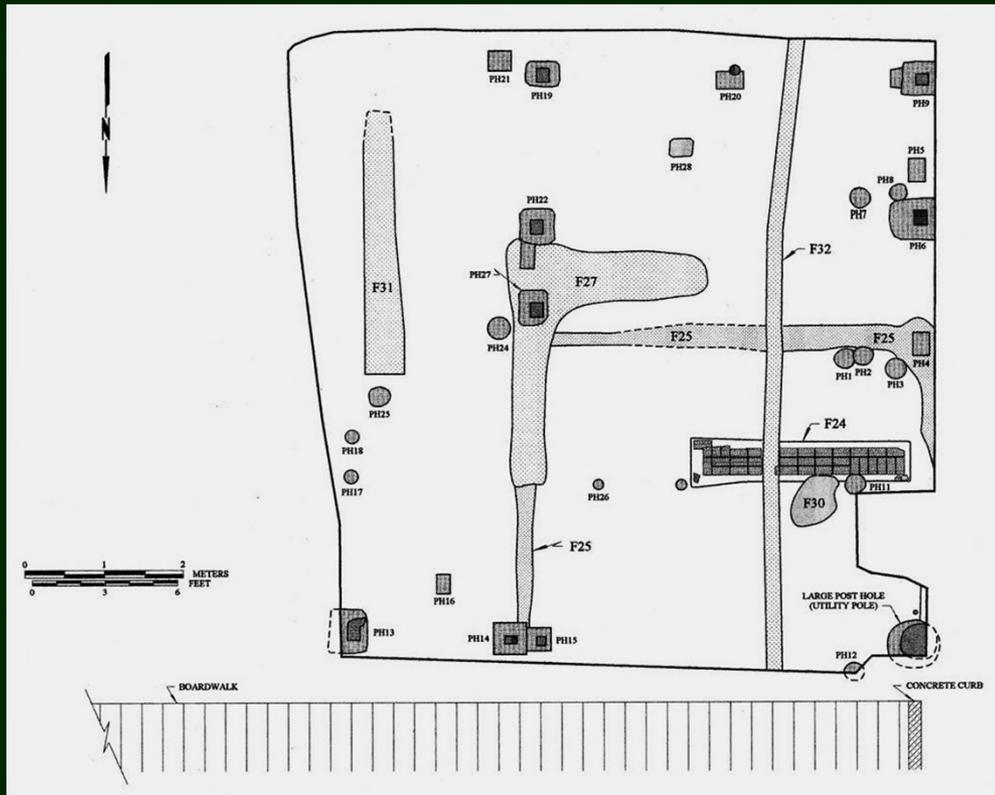
In the Fall of 1997, we initiated work on the original site of the Corneau House—a structure that had traveled extensively in the park.



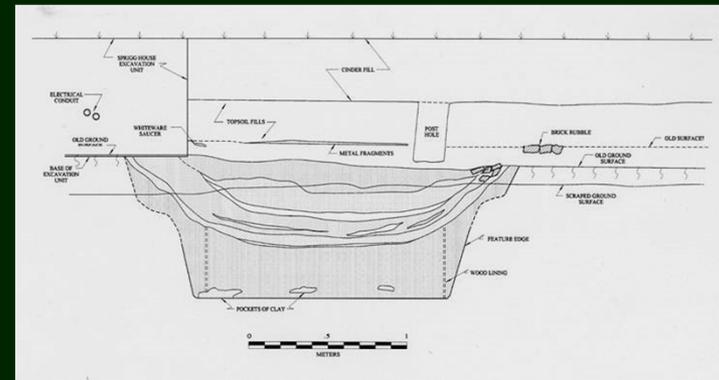
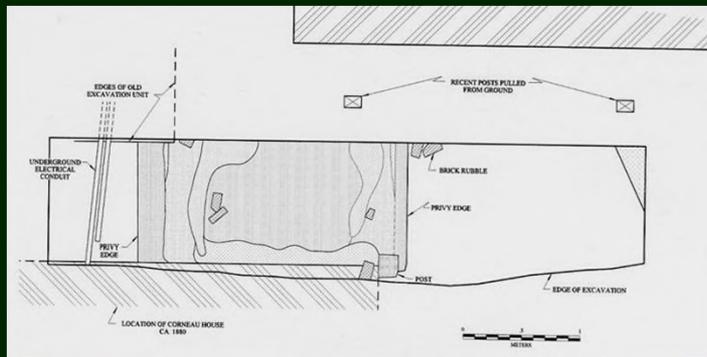
The construction of a later nineteenth century house on the original location of the Corneau house had not completely erased evidence of the early house's location or associated activity areas. Of particular interest was the identification of an early cellar associated with the original house.



We returned to the Corneau Site in the Spring of 1998 and conducted work around the location of the barn.



In the late summer of 1998 we conducted excavations in search of the privy.



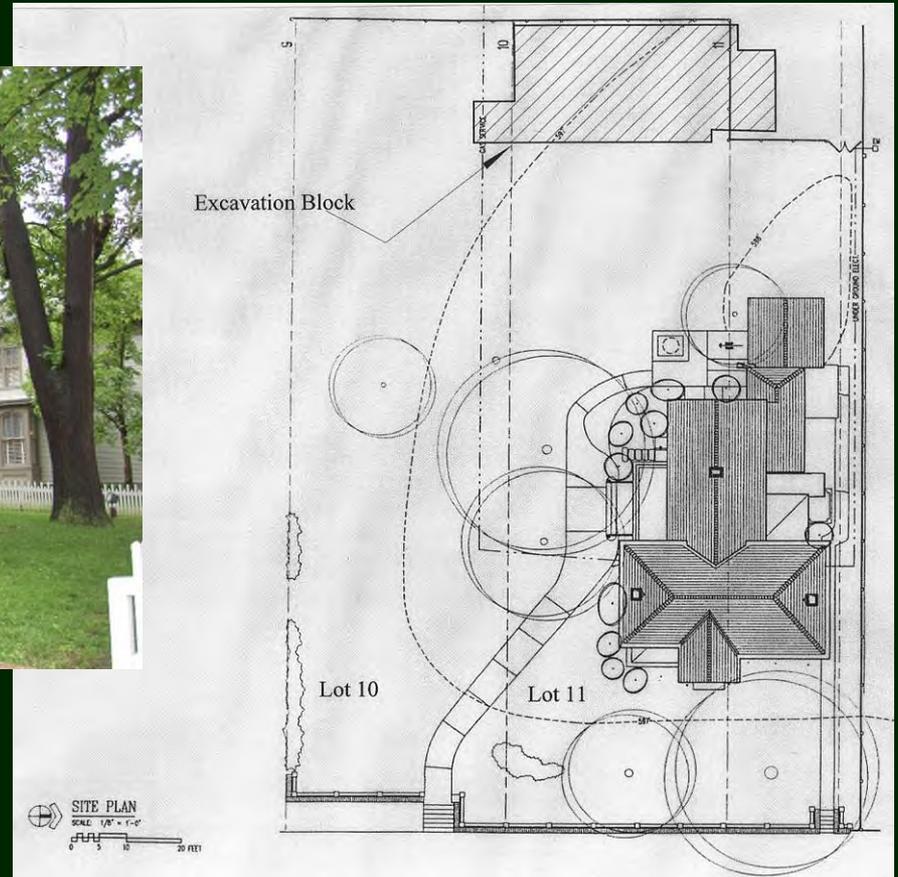
The privy yielded a great number of artifacts potentially associated with the Corneau family's occupation of the property.



The archaeological research contributed substantially to the restoration of the Corneau House and the reconstruction of the rear yard outbuildings at the site.



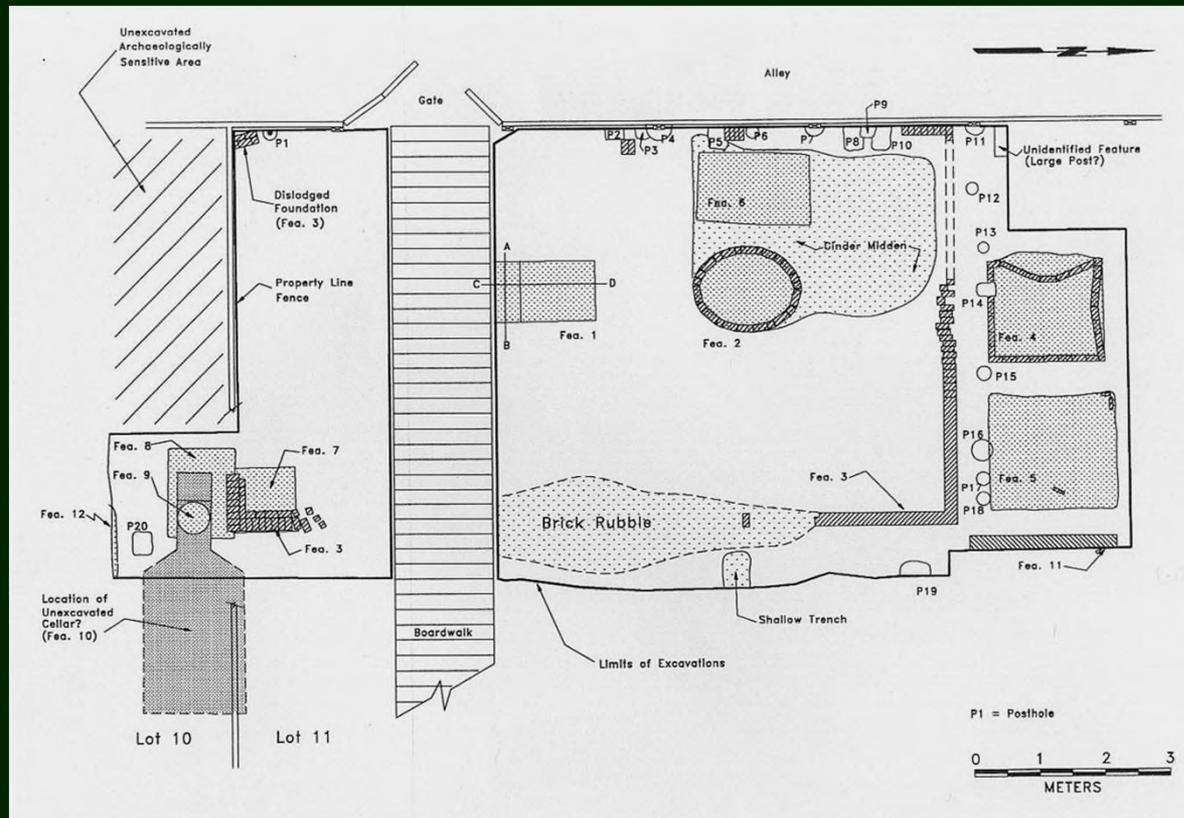
In November and December 1997, in anticipation of reconstructing a new carriage barn, Fever River Research conducted excavations in the rear yard of the Dean House.



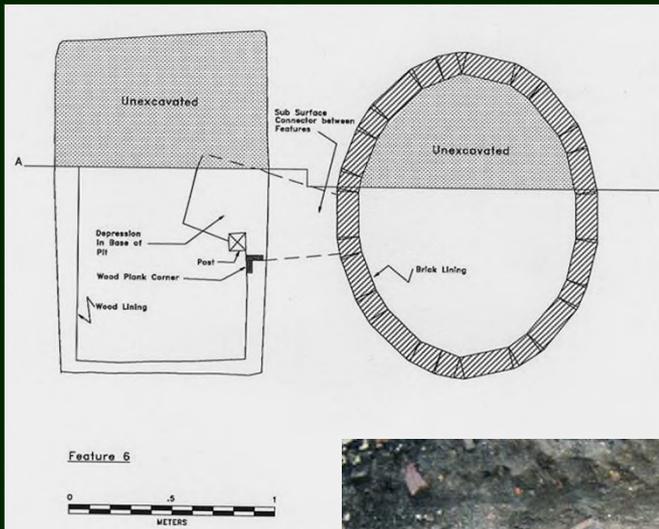
The excavations began by hand, were followed by machine excavations, and then the excavation of several feature by hand.



Rear yard site plan for the Dean house, illustrating location of structural foundations and additional features (such as privy pits and cellars).



Numerous privies were identified behind the Dean House, and document the period circa 1840 through 1920.

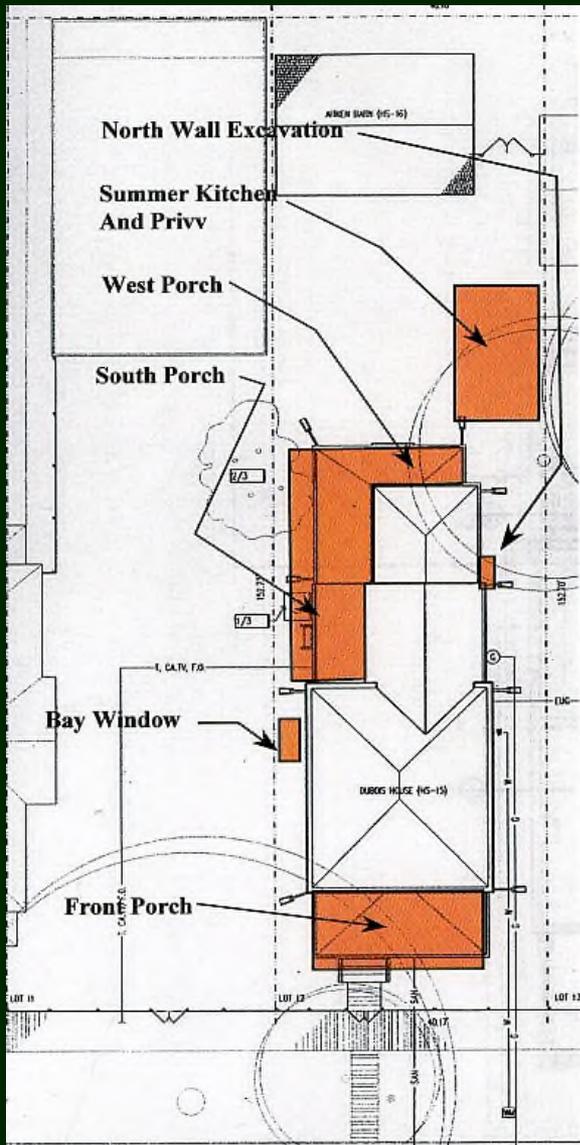


Artifacts from the earliest privy pit behind the Dean House, which probably was abandoned during the 1840s.



# Reconstructed Dean barn.





In the late summer and fall of 1998, we conducted extensive archaeological investigations around the Jesse Dubois House. This work was conducted around the perimeter of the house...



...as well as beneath the front and side porches...



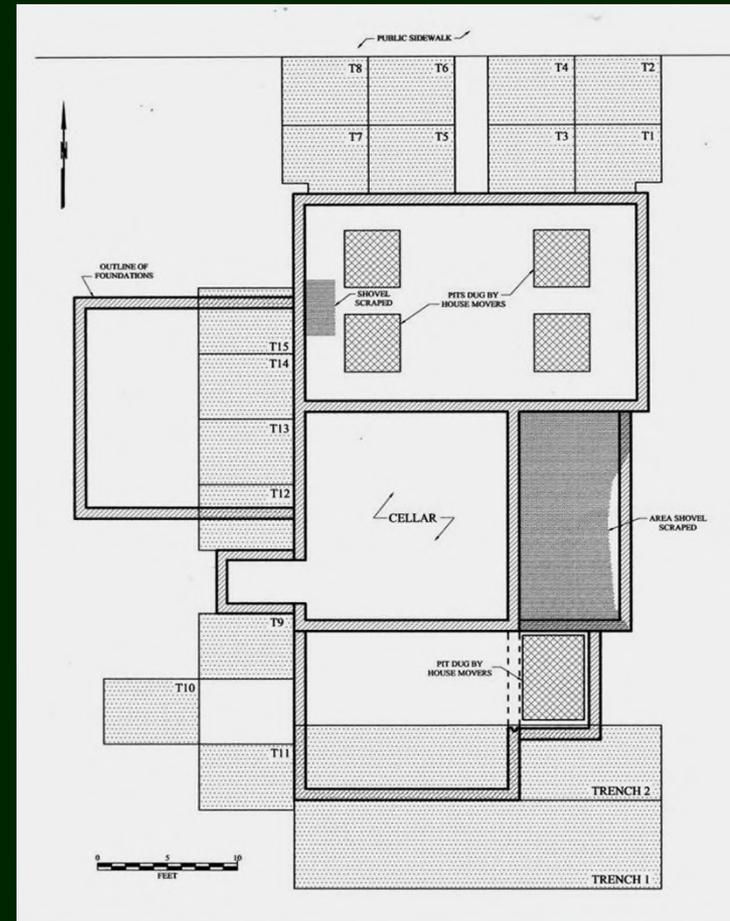
The house was then relocated off-site to reconstruct the foundation system, and additional archaeology conducted beneath the floor of the old structure—including remains of this early cistern.



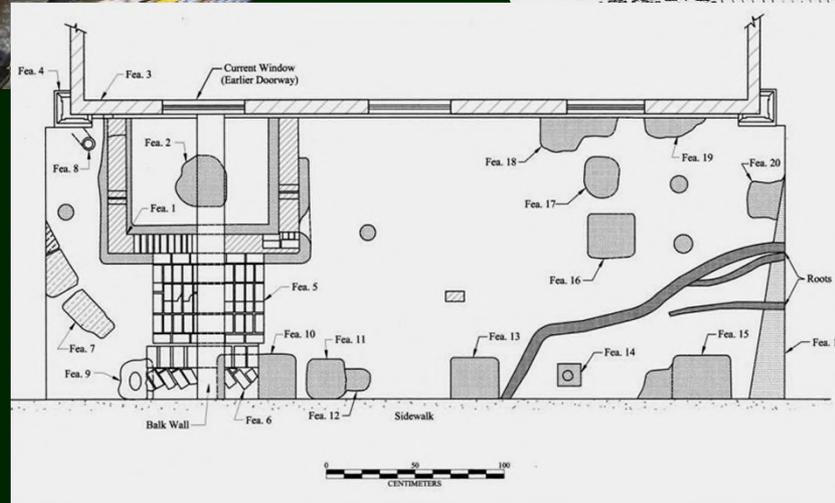
The reconstructed Dubois House incorporates the archaeological findings into its design.



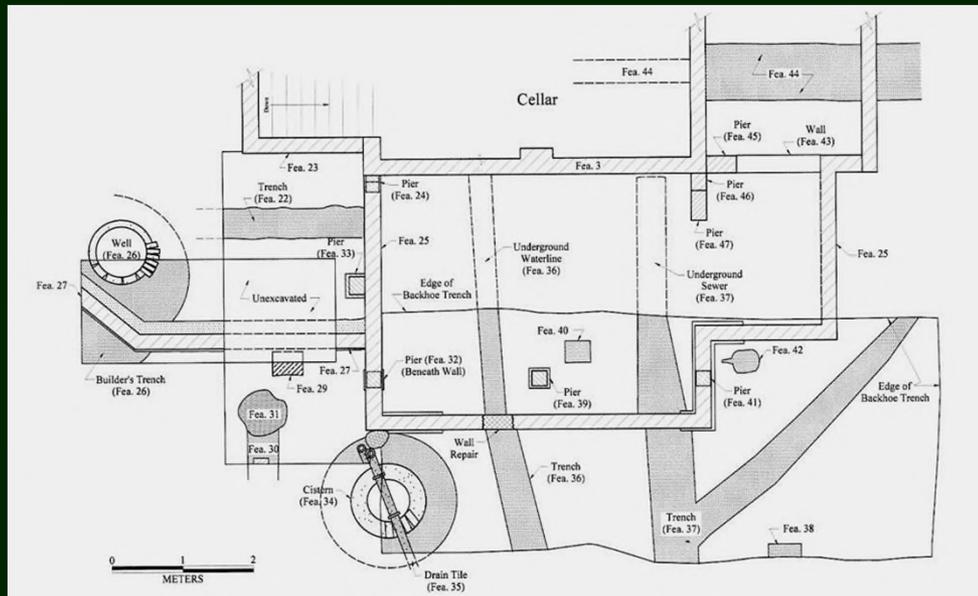
In the Spring of 1999, we began investigations at the Morse House. This work continued through the summer. Funding for the preparation of a report did not occur until late 2007.



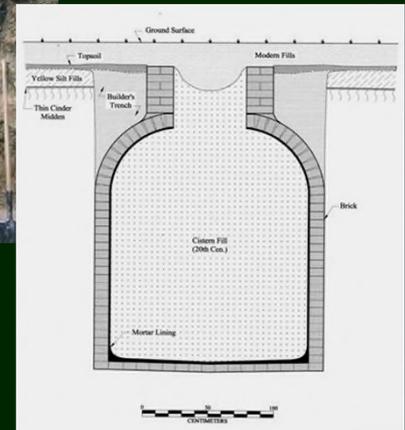
Excavations in the front yard yielded the remains of a small porch or landing. The physical remains of a full length porch were not documented by the archaeology.



Excavations in the rear yard yielded a variety of features associated with previous additions and activity areas. The excavations were conducted both by hand and machinery.



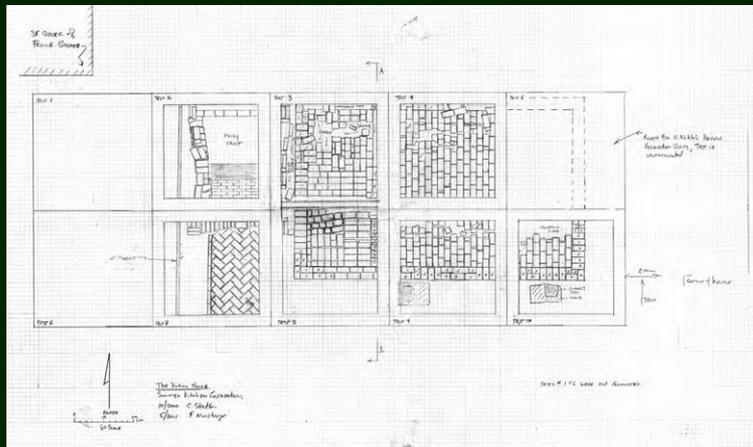
Upon completion of the archaeology, the house was relocated off-site, and new foundations constructed. Additional archaeological investigations were conducted at that time to document a large cistern associated with the early house.



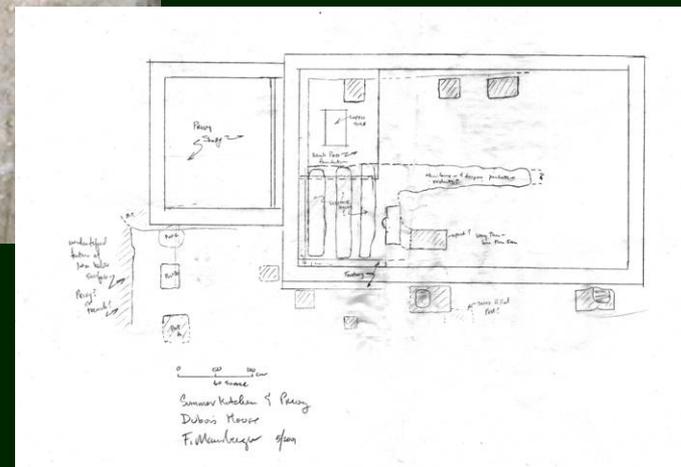
The archaeology contributed to the restoration of the Morse House.



In the summer of 2000, after completion of the house foundations, we again returned to the Dubois House to explore the mid-yard summer kitchen and privy complex. This work was conducted intermittently through the Spring of 2001.



... and privy. Artifacts from this feature remain un-inventoried.  
No report has, as yet, been funded for this work.

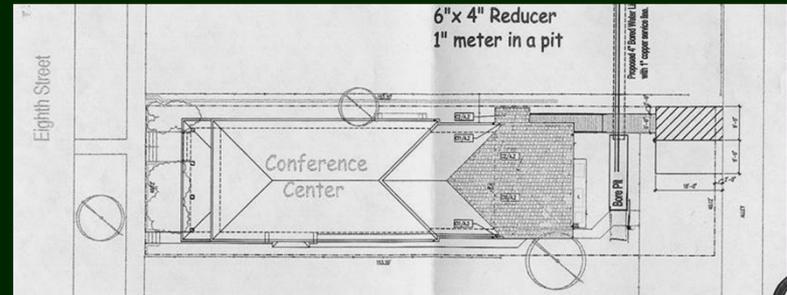
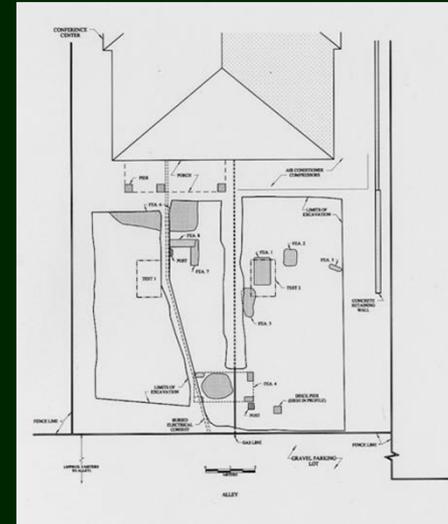


In anticipation of the construction of a new service wing to the rear of the Conference Center, archaeological investigations were conducted at this site in the Fall of 2002.

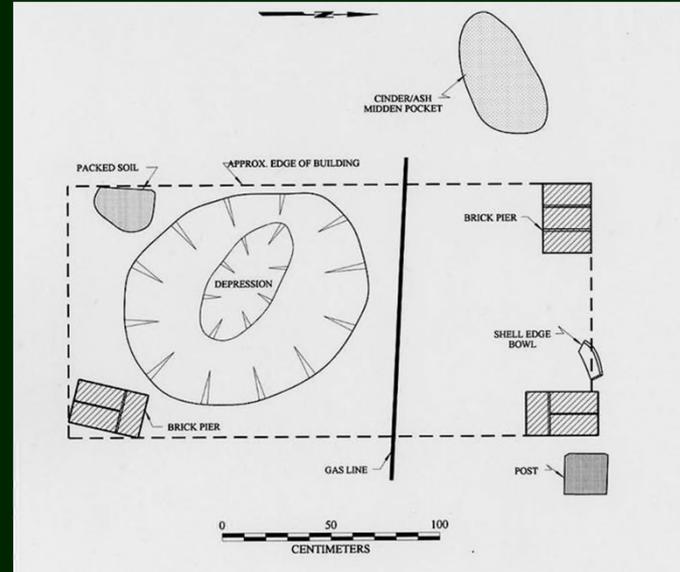


Ninan Edwards house is where Lincoln courted and married Mary Todd.

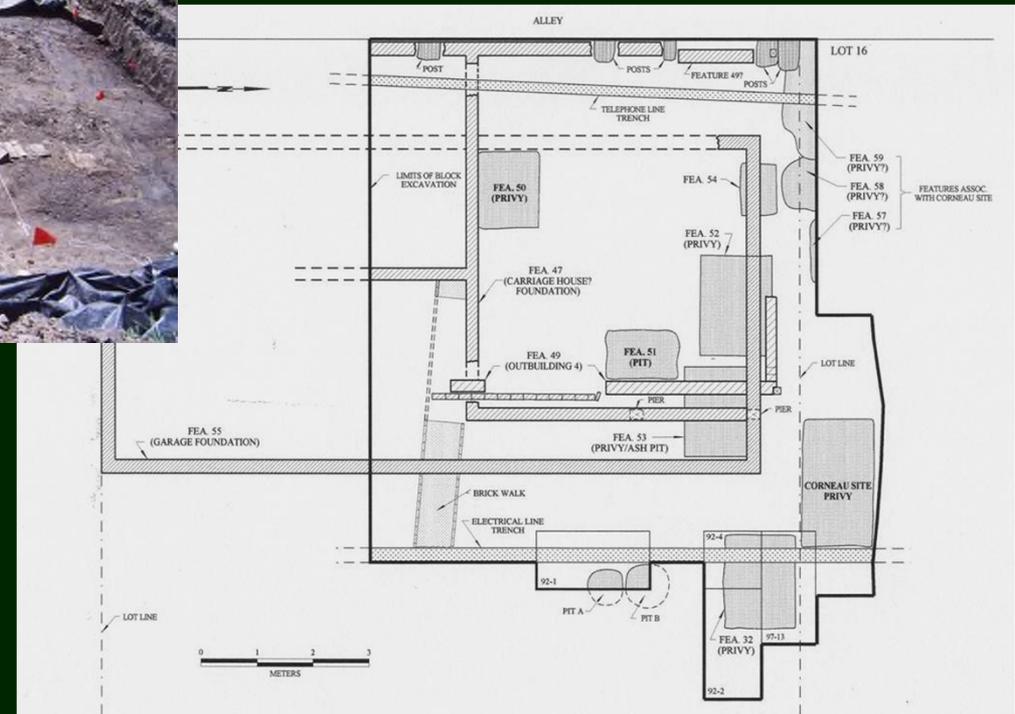
[TRIBUNE Staff Photo: By Walter Neal]



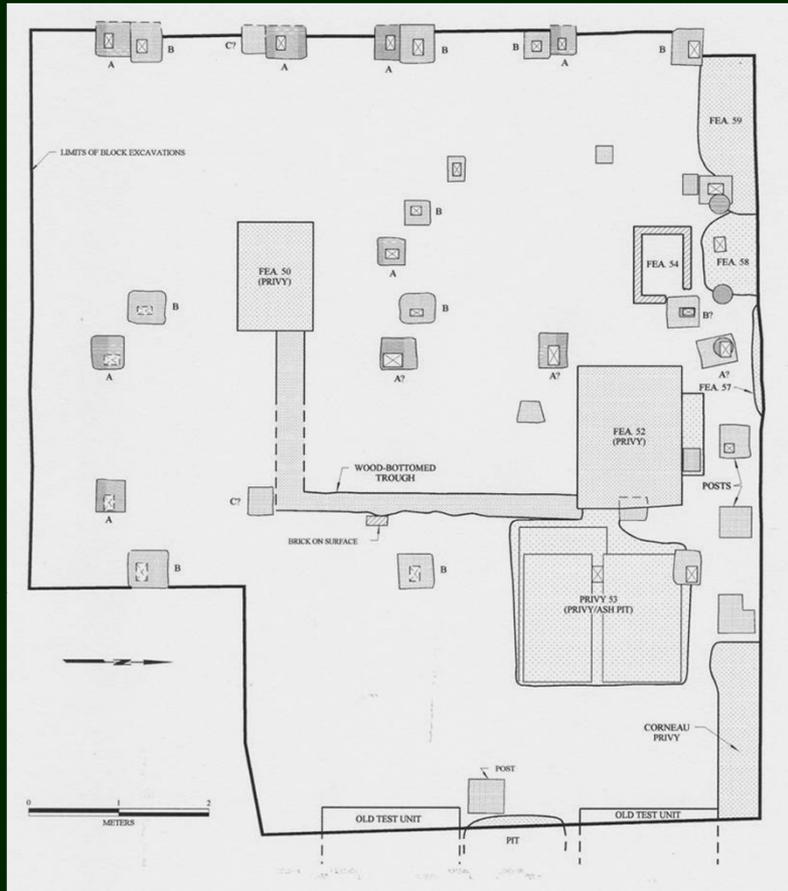
Excavations at the Conference Center documented the remains of a small outbuilding and an interesting mid-nineteenth century midden.



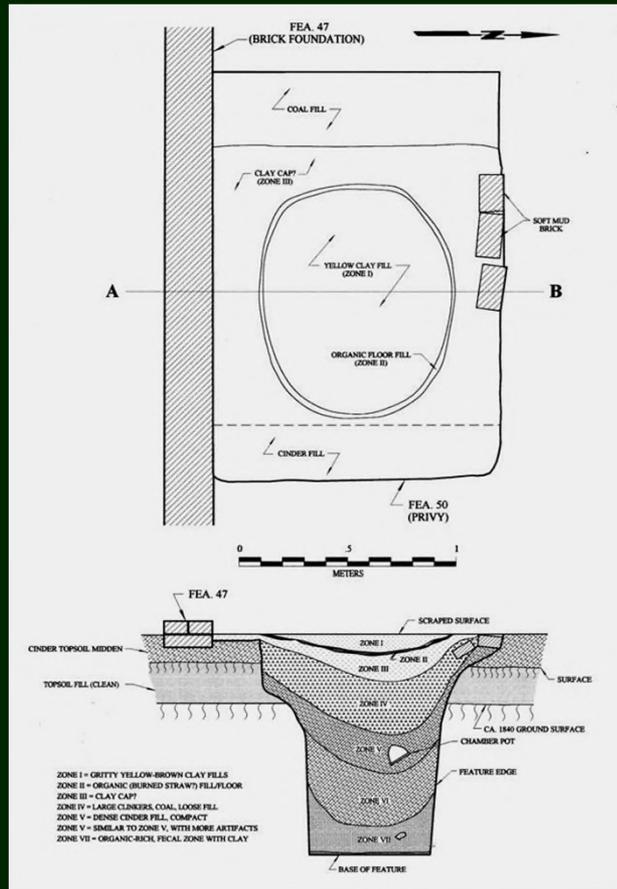
In the summer of 2003 we returned to the rear yard of the Sprigg House, to assist with the reconstruction of the barn.



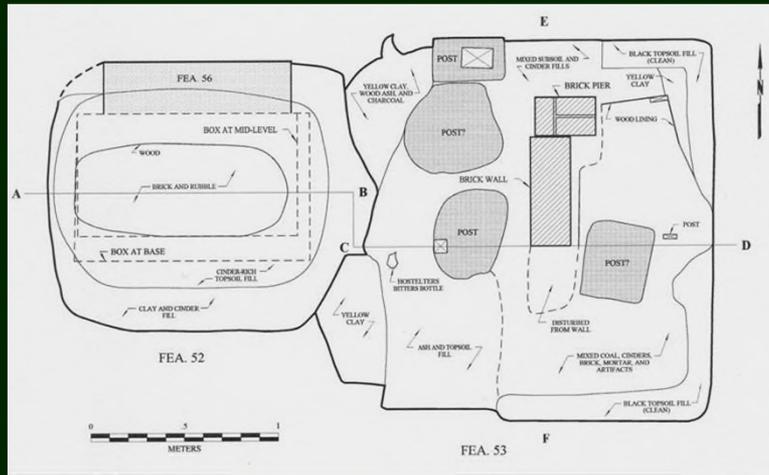
A substantial number of nineteenth century features were uncovered within the rear yard of the Sprigg House.



This is one of the mid-century privies uncovered...



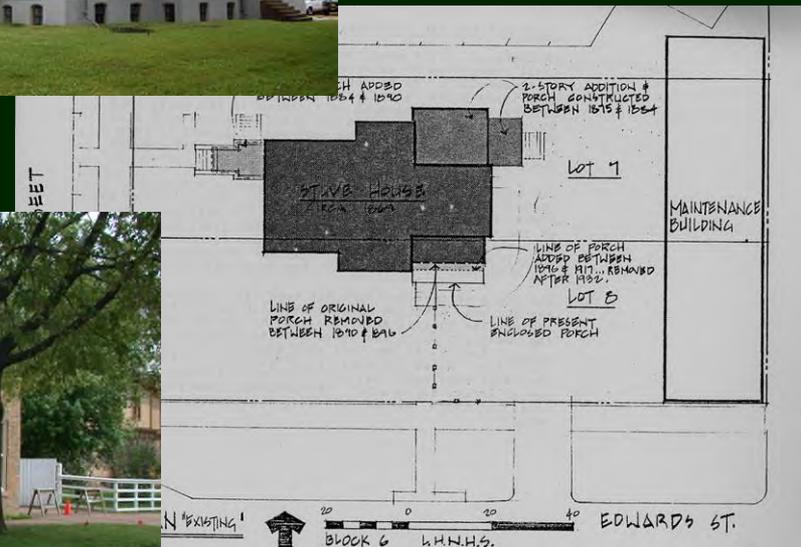
... and this is one of the later nineteenth century privies...



The archaeology assisted significantly with the reconstruction of the rear yard at the Sprigg House. These are the newly constructed carriage barn and privy at the site, with the newly reconstructed Corneau family privy and carriage barn in the background.

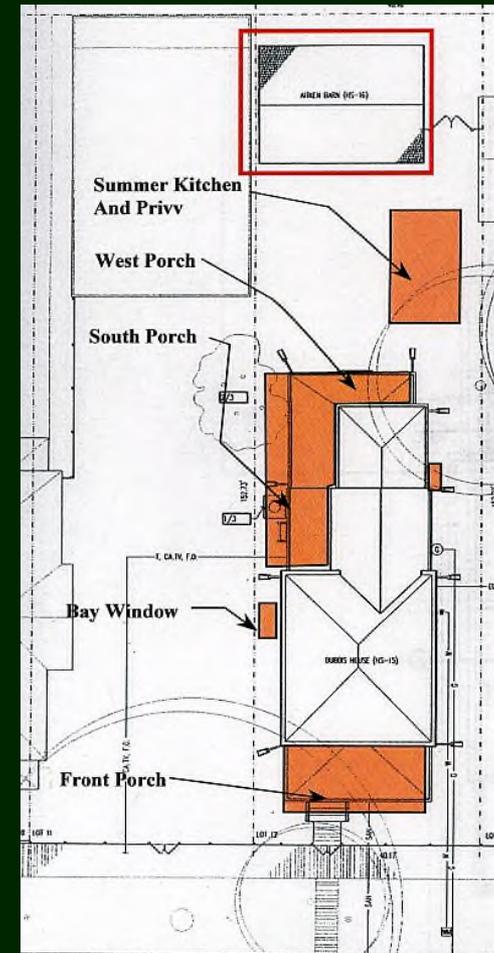


In the Spring of 2007, the NPS demolished a non-contributing structure attached to a contributing outbuilding behind the Stuve House. This work consisted of the removal of the concrete slab foundation...





In the Fall of 2009, we again returned to the Dubois House, and began archaeological investigations beneath the Aitken Barn. This work continued through early 2010.

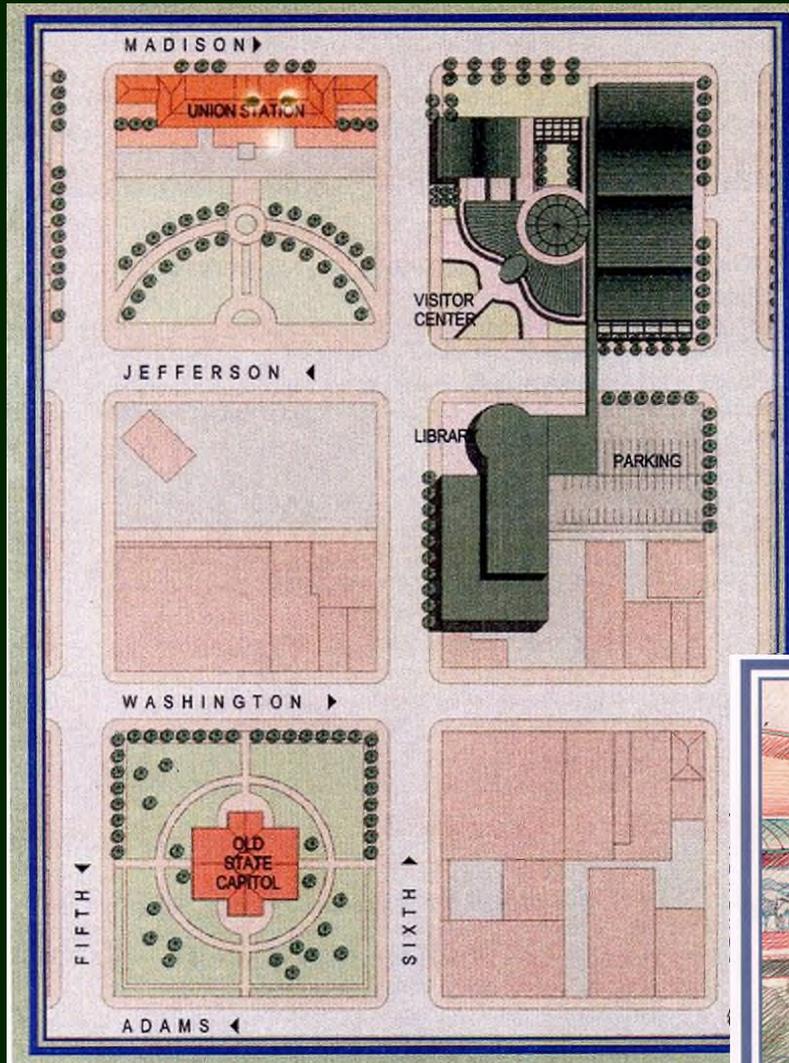


The Aitken Barn was raised and relocated off-site to facilitate the construction of the new foundation system, as well as to facilitate the archaeological investigations.

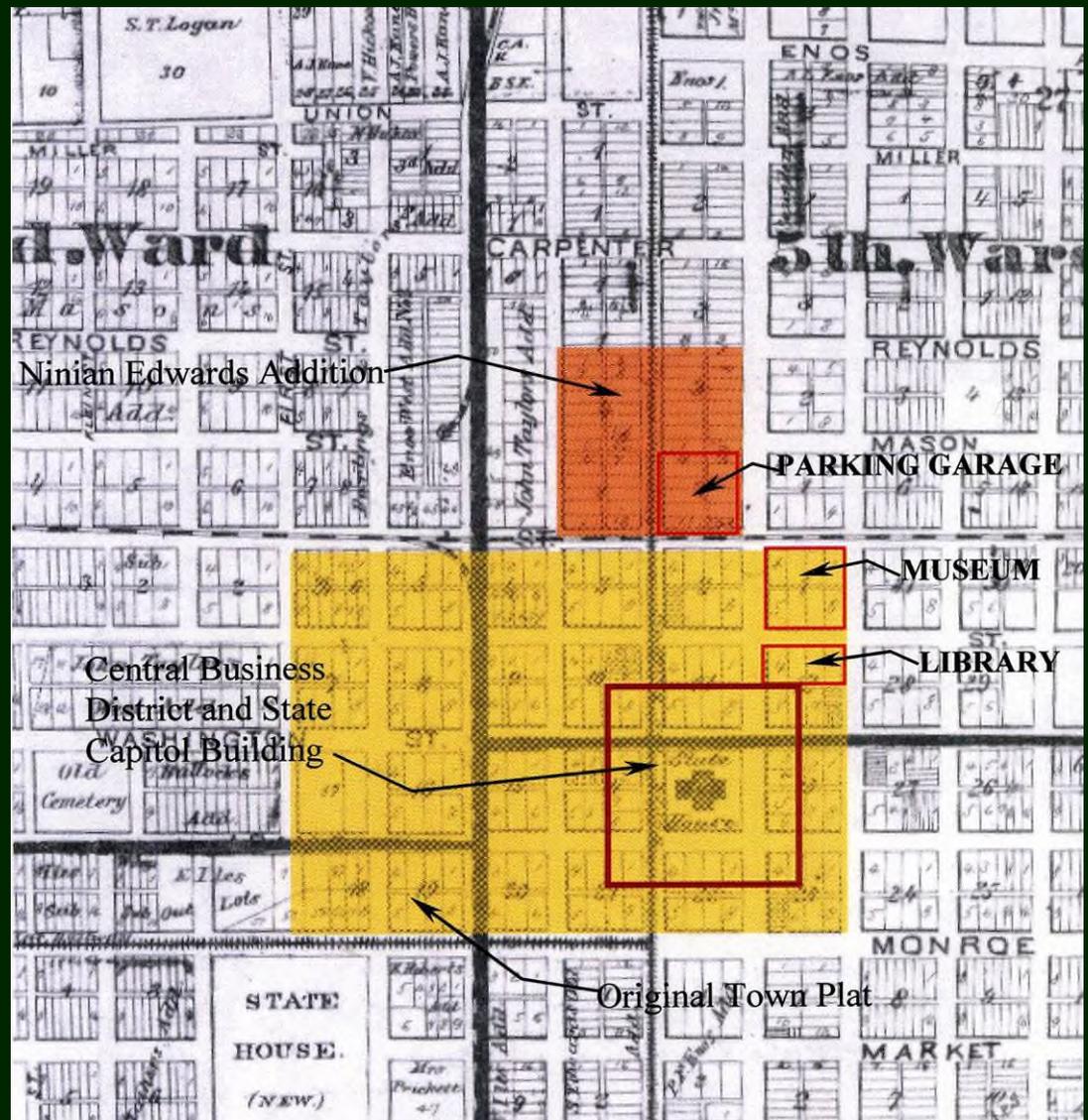




Beginning in early 2000, plans were underway for the construction of a Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) complex in Springfield to commemorate the life of the city's favorite son, Abraham Lincoln.



Between 2001 and 2004, four major mitigation projects were undertaken within three city blocks—for construction of the Library, Museum, and Parking Garage complex. These investigations have contributed significantly to the archaeology of Springfield.



In many places, the archaeological integrity was excellent. The pre-1870s archaeological resources were relatively well preserved and, in places, very complex.



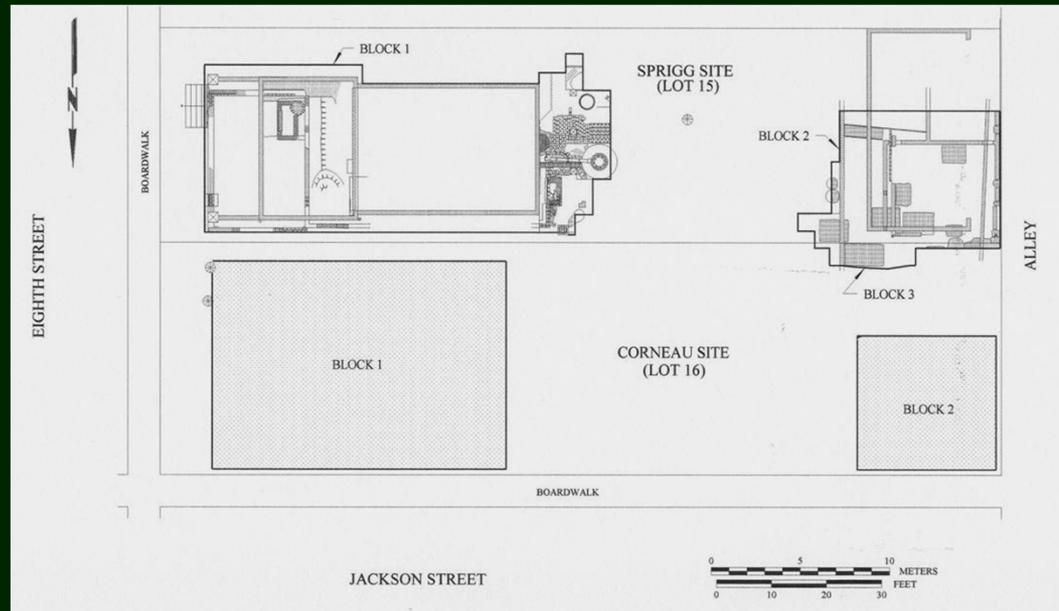
Over 370 subsurface archaeological features were recorded and/or excavated—often under some fairly adverse conditions. The vast majority of the features pre-dated the circa 1890s.



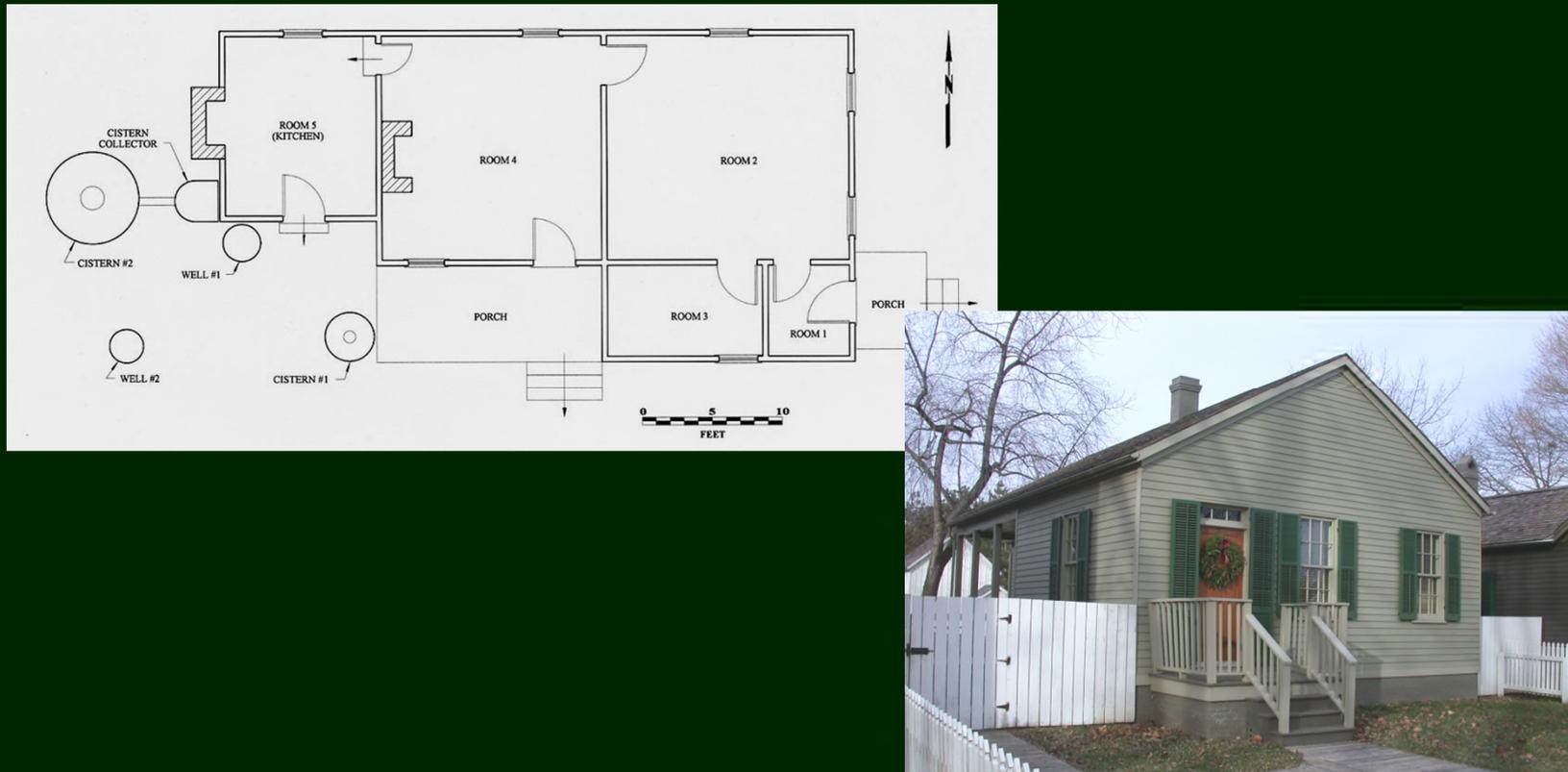
The majority of the excavations conducted in the Lincoln Home neighborhood have been conducted to assist the NPS with the restoration of the historic buildings within the park. Although the research designs have been focused on restoration-oriented questions, a great variety of data relevant to addressing social history and/or anthropological questions have also been generated—and supplemented by the ALPLM investigations.



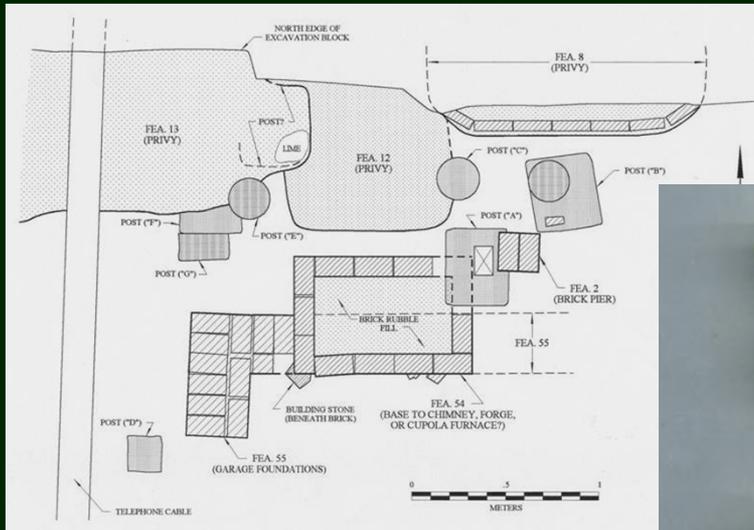
One of the more significant aspects of the archaeological investigations in Springfield has been the excavation of large block areas, and not small test excavation units. This results in a much better understanding of the structure of the urban lot, and how it changed through the years.



Additionally, the research has focused on the definition of various activity areas within the urban house lot. This figure details the inner yard activity area associated with the early Sprigg House.



Another interesting aspect of the investigations has been the documentation of a wide range of undocumented craft and/or trade related activities in the Lincoln Home neighborhood (as represented by this blacksmith forge).



Yet another interesting aspect of this research has been documenting the dynamic change and/or evolution in the urban landscape through the years. Changing fuel sources and changing practices of garbage disposal had a dramatic affect on the evolving landscape.



Also of great significance is the artifact assemblages recovered from the various features excavated. These artifact assemblages—such as those often found in privy pits—represent unique time capsules that lend themselves to a variety of social history studies.



Primary artifacts from Feature 84 (Lot 16, Edwards' Addition) (ALPLM project)

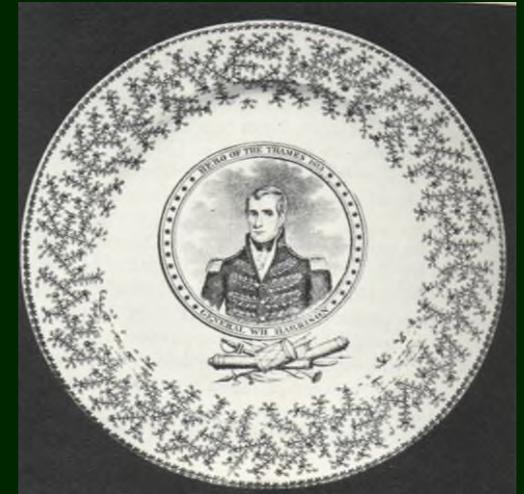


Feature 84 contained a rather unique assemblage of German manufactured ceramics (including this large charger), distinctive glass stemware (probably non-American in origin), yellowware pipkins, and German hock-style wine bottles. This assemblage was probably deposited by a recent German immigrant who had brought both ceramic and glass tablewares from the Old World, and continued to consume food and liquor familiar to the family's cultural tastes, and traditions.

The detailed studies of individual artifacts recovered also have great research potential for social historians. This Chinese manufactured opium pipe was recovered from excavations in the ALPLM project area and documents the use of illicit drugs in early Springfield.



Ceramics illustrated with a distinctive rim design and central medallion were recovered from several contexts from the ALPLM investigations. These 1840-era sherds commemorated William Henry Harrison's Battle of the Thames, 1813.

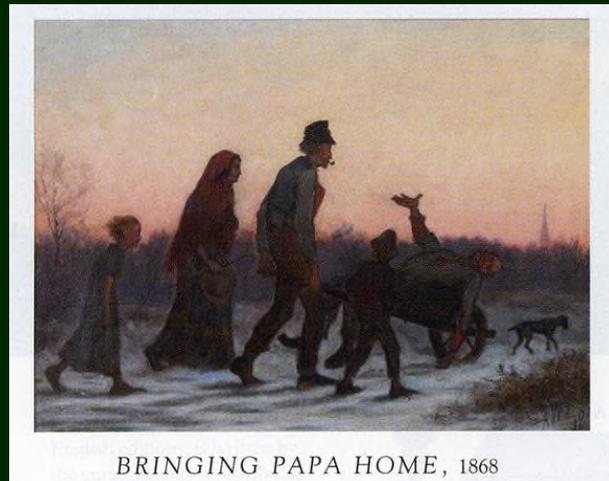


Ceramics such as the Harrison plate represented more than just souvenirs, but rather were open expressions of the owner's political allegiance and were intended for public display just as earlier items associated with George Washington had been. The extensive production of political-oriented ceramics in association with the Whig campaigns of 1840 and 1844 illustrates a willing acceptance of party politics within the domestic sphere during this brief period in which female involvement was actively encouraged. These ceramics stand in contrast to the distinctly male-oriented whisky flasks of the period.

And let's not forget liquid refreshments or *Drink*. Documenting differential patterns of alcohol consumption from the artifacts deposited in these features has been another avenue of research.



This artifact assemblage documents a traditional pre-Civil War, working class American pattern (which consists predominately of the consumption of distilled American whiskey from flasks).



This pre-Civil War artifact assemblage documents an upscale American family's more formal consumption of distilled liquor (via a decanter) and wines.

Feature 32 (Lot 18)





The multi-year archaeological excavations conducted for the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, complemented by that conducted for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, have contributed significantly to our understanding of the variability in the lifeways and/or quality of life associated with the early inhabitants of this region. The data is an invaluable comparative data base for understanding urban lifeways in central Illinois.

Copies of this paper can be requested at either:  
*IllinoisArchaeology.com* or *fmansberger@comcast.net*

Thank You.

