

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT THE WEANTINOGE SITE:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY IN LATER PREHISTORY

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Prepared by:

Russell G. Handsman, Director of Research
Jeffrey Maymon

American Indian Archaeological Institute
Box 260
Washington, Connecticut 06793

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A "Non-Model" for Late Prehistoric Settlements in New Milford.

This drawing, based upon a 1585 watercolor by John White, depicts an Indian village in coastal Virginia. Archaeologists in New England often have assumed that late prehistoric native villages in this region would have looked much the same. However it is becoming more evident that many native settlements were actually dispersed hamlets, consisting of no more than six wigwams separated and surrounded by variable distances and spaces. The Weantinoge site may represent one such small hamlet.



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I. ABSTRACT AND FINDINGS

This report describes recent archaeological studies of the late prehistoric settlement at the Weantinoge site, located along the Still River within a land preserve owned by Weantinoge Heritage. Excavations in 1986 uncovered a portion of a native hamlet, built sometime after A.D. 1000. The results of this work are described, as is the importance of the site to our future understanding of the late prehistory and seventeenth century history of native societies and landscapes around Fort Hill. Included in this report are discussions of:

1. The roles of ideas and research questions in studying the archaeological record at the Weantinoge site (pp. 1-2).
2. Our knowledge of the archaeological resources along the Still River (pp. 5-6).
3. The recent losses of archaeological sites, especially of those situated above the river's floodplain (pp. 5-6).
4. Prior archaeological studies of the Weantinoge site, including a summary of the 1983 work (pp. 6-7).
5. The research questions explored in 1986 (p. 10).
6. The models of settlement normally used by archaeologists to study what happened in New England after A.D. 1000 (pp. 10-14).
7. A new and different view of late prehistoric native settlement in southern New England (p. 11).
8. How and why colonists in the seventeenth century "misread" native landscapes in interior regions, failing to see hamlets and other signs of systematic land use (p. 13).
9. How contemporary archaeologists used the colonialist view to misread landscapes, thus failing to find native hamlets (p. 14).
10. The associations and relations between the Weantinoge site and the Fort Hill District, an important area of native settlement and land use in New Milford (pp. 14-16, Figure 3).
11. The archaeological field methods used in 1986 (pp. 18-22).
12. Descriptions of prehistoric features from the site, such as storage and garbage pits (pp. 23, 26, Figure 8).
13. Analysis of lithic artifacts and prehistoric pottery (pp. 26-31).
14. Analysis and interpretation of the size and settlement plan of the native hamlet at the Weantinoge site (pp. 32-38, Figure 14).

15. Future plans for a long-term study of the late prehistory and early history of the Fort Hill District; additional excavations at the Weantinoge site (pp. 39-41, Figure 15).

Included among the more important findings are:

1. The realization that there is perhaps one decade left in which to conduct surveys and excavations of the remaining archaeological resources along the Still River in Brookfield and New Milford (p. 6).

2. The hypothesis that late prehistoric native settlements in northwestern Connecticut were not necessarily large, permanent, nucleated villages. Rather, the native Indians inhabited hamlets, small clusters of a few wigwams and their associated spaces; in any region, such hamlets would have been spread across a landscape (p. 11).

3. The discovery that the seventeenth century colonists did not "see" or recognize native hamlets because these settlements did not resemble their villages or plantations; hamlets were smaller, more diffuse, and tended to blend into the native landscape. Likewise archaeologists have missed hamlets because they looked almost exclusively for larger, nucleated villages (pp. 13-14).

4. Several prehistoric features such as storage and garbage pits were preserved at the Weantinoge site. Although the tops of these features had been truncated by plowing, their presence indicates that there was a late prehistoric settlement in the old pasture (pp. 23, 26). More pits should be discovered during future excavations, and their contents may help us to understand the diet and foodways of native Indians during the last 1000 years.

5. An analysis of flakes and stone tools indicated that much of the flintknapping at the site involved the repair and sharpening of projectile points, knives, and scrapers (p. 28).

6. At least four separate pottery vessels were represented by the excavated sample of 77 sherds. Although the vessels exhibited different surface treatments and techniques of decoration, they were all made after A.D. 1000 (pp. 28-31).

7. The squares in the southwestern quadrant of the block had fewer artifacts, suggesting that the space was used differently, perhaps representing the edge of the settlement or a wigwam floor (p. 32).

8. The old pasture probably contains one or more wigwam floors which represent a small, rather isolated native hamlet. This settlement was probably built sometime after A.D. 1000 (pp. 32, 37-38, Figure 14).

9. The 1986 block excavation apparently uncovered a part of a wigwam floor and its associated interior and exterior spaces, features, and work areas (pp. 37, 38).

10. Future excavations to expand the 1986 block will provide important information about the size and spatial organization of native hamlets. This information can then be used to adjust the scale of archaeological approaches to site survey and thus to discover other, currently invisible late prehistoric and early historic settlements (pp. 37-39).

11. A long-term research project, focused on the late prehistory and early history of the Fort Hill district, will soon begin at the American Indian Archaeological Institute. The purpose of this project will be to explore and preserve the archaeologies and histories of native settlements and societies in western New Milford, including the lower reaches of the Still River. As this project continues, we will be able to tell new stories about what happened in this region after A.D. 1000.

II. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The archaeological study described in this report was completed during the early fall of 1986 by a field crew associated with the American Indian Archaeological Institute (AIAI) of Washington, Connecticut. This study represents the second such project undertaken at the Still River Preserve. The first was conducted in the fall of 1983 and succeeded in demonstrating that a later prehistoric archaeological site existed in the northern end of the Preserve (Handsman 1984).

Weantinoge Heritage, a land trust that owns and manages the Still River Preserve, was interested in learning more about this settlement's size and archaeological potential. Initial discussions with the AIAI took place early in 1985 and continued into the spring. Subsequent conversations, more than one year later, lead to an agreement for a cooperative study in June of 1986.

Field work began in later September and continued for slightly more than four weeks. During this period, intensive block excavations helped to clarify the extent, age, and research significance of the previously-discovered resource now known as the Weantinoge site. This report summarizes the work and findings of the AIAI and traces the connections between the site and important research questions concerning what happened in northwestern Connecticut after A.D. 1000.

The archaeological study and the preparation of this report were supported by a matching grant-in-aid from Weantinoge Heritage and the Ellen Knowles Harcourt Foundation. Other funds were contributed by the Friends of Research of the AIAI. Cooperative undertakings such as this one represent an important direction in sharing the responsibilities for the study and preservation of archaeological resources in western Connecticut. We hope this report will serve to encourage other such ventures.

More about This Report and Some Acknowledgements

This report is another in the Manuscript Series of the Research Department of the American Indian Archaeological Institute. This series, begun in 1978, consists of many unpublished reports that describe aspects of the Institute's active and on-going program in archaeological research. There are two premises that have guided this program over the past decade.

First, the archaeological record in Litchfield County is extensive, diverse, and, in many places, well preserved. The continuing study and preservation of the county's early hunter-gatherer sites, long-term records of flooding, later prehistoric settlements, soapstone quarries, and buried nineteenth-century gardens will produce important discoveries about the distant and more recent pasts and about the lives of the peoples who lived then.

Second, archaeological research is about ideas and questions; it should not be simply a plan to excavate and recover artifacts. Rather, this way of studying the past should be framed in terms of problems and uncertainties: what do we think happened, what do we normally assume

did not happen, and why? How were prehistoric societies organized, how and why did such societies change, what happened to native societies when the colonists began to arrive early in the seventeenth century? The answers to these questions are neither obvious nor available; sometimes the questions themselves are not even asked. However these kinds of questions are at the core of the Institute's research program. Any excavation, however preliminary or intensive, is organized in order to produce information about such problems. Thus the significance of any resource, such as the Weantinoge site, can be discussed only in relation to specific questions about native society, settlement, land use, everyday life, and history.

With these premises as a beginning, this report has been organized into two parts. In the first, we evaluate the status of our knowledge of the Still River's prehistory, summarize the Institute's earlier study of the Weantinoge site, and identify those research questions which are most important to an understanding and exploration of the site. The second part consists of descriptions of our field methods and findings. Here we also present some ideas for future archaeological studies of the later prehistory of New Milford and Brookfield.

Without the efforts and encouragement of the directors and members of Weantinoge Heritage, this study could not have been completed. Their commitment to, and interest in, preservation provide important opportunities for the protection of archaeological sites. John McNeely, Charles Barlow, and Alice McCallister were instrumental in initiating the project and in gaining support for it. A grant from the Ellen Knowles Harcourt Foundation provided Weantinoge Heritage with the matching funds necessary for the project. We are grateful to the Foundation for their continued interest and support.

John McNeely was an important link between Weantinoge Heritage and the AIAI. He also provided access to aerial photographs and maps and advised us about conditions at the site. Edmund K. Swigart and Susan Payne encouraged us to undertake the initial study in 1983 and were supportive as the second project was organized.

Jeff Maymon directed an experienced field crew for more than four weeks. The crew's members included Polly Fiacco, Anita Gellella, Annie Harlow, Lori Rubens, and Ray Tubby. They braved the mosquitoes early in the project and rain, cold, and abundant poison ivy at the end. Their commitment and interest often went beyond the normal work day. This crew was aided by several people enrolled in a week-long training session as well as by volunteers, who adjusted their personal schedules in order to lend a hand. Our thanks to Jeff Marino, Jim Mooney, Jean Watson, Jim Roaix, Laura Nouryan, and Cheryl Sladicki for their help. Stephanie Korobov and students enrolled in her archaeology course at Northwestern Connecticut Community College also participated in the excavations in October.

George Nicholas, Catherine Carlson, Gordon Nicholas, and Ann McMullen also participated in the fieldwork, lending their supervisory and technical skills when needed. Polly Fiacco and Ann McMullen processed

and catalogued the artifacts from our work. Gordon Whitbeck and Bill Worcester provided the illustrations for this report.

We are especially grateful to James Hulton, who kindly furnished a parking area for the crew and who, together with his family, provided us with knowledge about archaeological sites in the Still River Valley. Throughout the field project and the preparation of this report, the administrative staff of the AIAI accomplished much work with their usual efficiency, care, and good humor.

PART ONE: THE WEANTINOGE SITE AND AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF
THE LAST 1000 YEARS ALONG THE STILL RIVER

III. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES ALONG THE STILL RIVER

Although the AIAI has conducted intensive archaeological surveys in western Connecticut since 1978, little of this research has been focused on the Still River Valley in New Milford and Brookfield. Brief surface surveys of plowed fields immediately north of the Still River's mouth were completed in 1981 and 1982. Several prehistoric sites were found, and this evidence, together with data excavated from the locality of Lovers Leap, suggests that the lower reaches of the Still River were an important focus for native settlement and land use over the past 3000 years (Swigart 1974).

The Institute's work in the Still River Valley rarely continued south of Lovers Leap. However, prior surveys and excavations undertaken by other institutions and individuals allow us to assess the extent of this valley's prehistoric archaeological record. These data also provide some information about the region's late glacial and early postglacial landscape history (13,000-8000 B.P.). Geomorphological studies of this region, including the efforts of Richard Flint (1930), George Kelley (1975), and Peter Patton (1978), demonstrate that glacial ice had disappeared from the Housatonic Valley and its tributaries prior to 13,000 B.P. By 11,000 to 10,000 B.P., human populations had begun to inhabit the Housatonic Valley and its branches, including the Shepaug and Still Rivers. The Edward H. Rogers collection, now stored at the AIAI, includes numerous artifacts from the Still River Valley, some of which represent tools made more than 7000 years ago.¹

Prior to 9000 B.P., human habitation and use of this valley would have been restricted to the uplands and the rolling surfaces of glacio-fluvial formations elevated above the river's more recent terraces and floodplains. Much of the land surface below the 250' contour line would have been an extensive wetland or late glacial lake. The older, more elevated landforms were deposited when ice blocks were still present in the valley, more than 10,000 years ago. After the glacial ice had disappeared, these landforms became stable and were not subjected to extensive or intensive flooding. Therefore their surfaces since 9000 B.P. have remained almost unchanged, although recent plowing and mining have disturbed them.

Since the surfaces of these earlier landforms are characterized by long periods of stability, their associated prehistoric archaeological records are quite fragile, lying on or just below the modern landscape. Often there is no stratigraphic separation between successive occupations, so the remains of prehistoric populations may be mixed with much later residues from the historic era. More than half of the Still River's known archaeological resources are located on such formations and could easily be destroyed during the next decade.

Prior to 1960, the river's archaeological record above the 250' contour line was more intact; prehistoric sites were more numerous, and fewer parts of sites had been disturbed. Between 1960 and 1980, the commercial gravel mining and development of these older landforms resulted in the

loss of many prehistoric sites.² The current total of twelve known sites along the Still River, between its mouth and the Brookfield-Danbury town line, represents only a small fraction of what was once a rich archaeological record.³

Since 1980 these losses have continued, in part because of new residential construction. For example, several prehistoric sites along Aldrich Road east of the Weantinoge site, between the 250' and 350' contours, have been disturbed or threatened with destruction by housing developments. Similar losses can be identified west of the Still River, especially along the Route 7 corridor between Route 133 in Brookfield and Lanesville in the Town of New Milford.

A small number of prehistoric sites, approximately five, have been discovered below the 250' contour within the fluvial terraces and floodplains associated with the Still River. In comparison to those situated on the older landforms, some of these sites have been buried by successive floods, and thus protected from minor disturbances. Others however were destroyed during small-scale graveling or the construction of power lines.

This recent history of growth and intensified land use in the Still River Valley has resulted in periodic losses of archaeological sites. These losses cannot be reversed; however some prehistoric sites remain in the valley and could become a focus for significant anthropological and historical research. For these resources, there is perhaps one decade left in which to conduct surveys and excavations.

Prior Archaeological Studies of the Still River Preserve and the Weantinoge Site

The earliest known archaeological study of the Still River Preserve was undertaken by John Pawloski, an avocational archaeologist from New Milford, Connecticut. Pawloski visited the tract periodically during the early 1970s, noting the presence of scatters of artifacts towards the northern end. Although he did not undertake any excavations, he did sometimes see evidence that others were looting the site with shovels and picks. In the late 1970s, Pawloski reported the site to Frederic Warner of the Connecticut Archaeological Survey (Central Connecticut State University in New Britain), who completed an inventory form for the locality and named it the Gallows site.

This form, now in the comprehensive site files of the Connecticut Historical Commission, described the Gallows site (6FA115, CAS 1052) as a possible hunting camp represented by quartz stemmed projectile points, other bifaces, and flakes produced by the manufacture and maintenance of tools. In 1979 the site was an old meadow and was reported by Warner to have been destroyed before a visit in April of 1979.

During the fall of 1981, the locality of the Gallows site was revisited by a team from the AIAI. This visit, in conjunction with a field study undertaken by the King's Mark Environmental Review Team, evaluated the

archaeological potential of the entire tract, including the part that was supposed to contain the site. At that time there was no obvious evidence that this locality had been bulldozed or otherwise disturbed. The final evaluative report of the Environmental Review Team described the archaeological locality as follows: "A field reconnaissance demonstrated that the Gallows site has not been disturbed by recent activity. There are no signs of looting nor has the terrace been bulldozed in a search for subsurface gravel deposits."⁴

The obvious discrepancies between this later report and the earlier form completed by Warner can now be understood on the basis of our studies undertaken during September of 1983. The Still River Preserve actually once contained two prehistoric sites at its northern end, immediately south of the now-abandoned road. One of these, situated to the east of the north-south access road, beneath the powerline, was the original Gallows site and, as reported, has been destroyed. A second, later prehistoric site - the Weantinoge site - was discovered during our work, further to the west along a floodplain of the Still River. The pasture which contains this site has been used for agriculture; however there is no evidence that the tract has ever been extensively disturbed.

During late September and early October, 1983, a small field crew from the AIAI explored the archaeological potential of the old pasture included in the Still River Preserve (Figure 1). During a seven-day period, test excavations were undertaken to answer several questions:

Was there any evidence that archaeological resources existed in the pasture? If archaeological sites were present, had they already been disturbed or destroyed?

Had archaeological deposits been buried below the plowzone during periodic floods of the Still River?

Although some evidence of buried soil horizons and earlier landscapes was discovered, the field crew did not recover any artifacts from two deep squares excavated to depths between 1.00 and 1.50 meters below the ground surface. It was obvious from this part of the study that the Still River had once flowed through the pasture and had gradually shifted its position further to the west (Handsman 1984).

Evidence of a later prehistoric site was also discovered during the brief 1983 study. Several sherds or broken pieces of prehistoric pots were found in small shovel test pits in the west-central section of the pasture. Similar sherds were recovered from units more than 30 meters apart, suggesting that one or more native settlements had been built here sometime in the last 1000 years. Although the density of artifacts was low in each shovel pit, this earlier study demonstrated that the Preserve contained a small late prehistoric settlement, a relatively rare and potentially significant archaeological resource (Handsman 1984).

On the basis of this discovery, the AIAI recommended that the pasture be maintained as an open space and archaeological conservancy. By developing and using such a management approach, Weantinoge Heritage

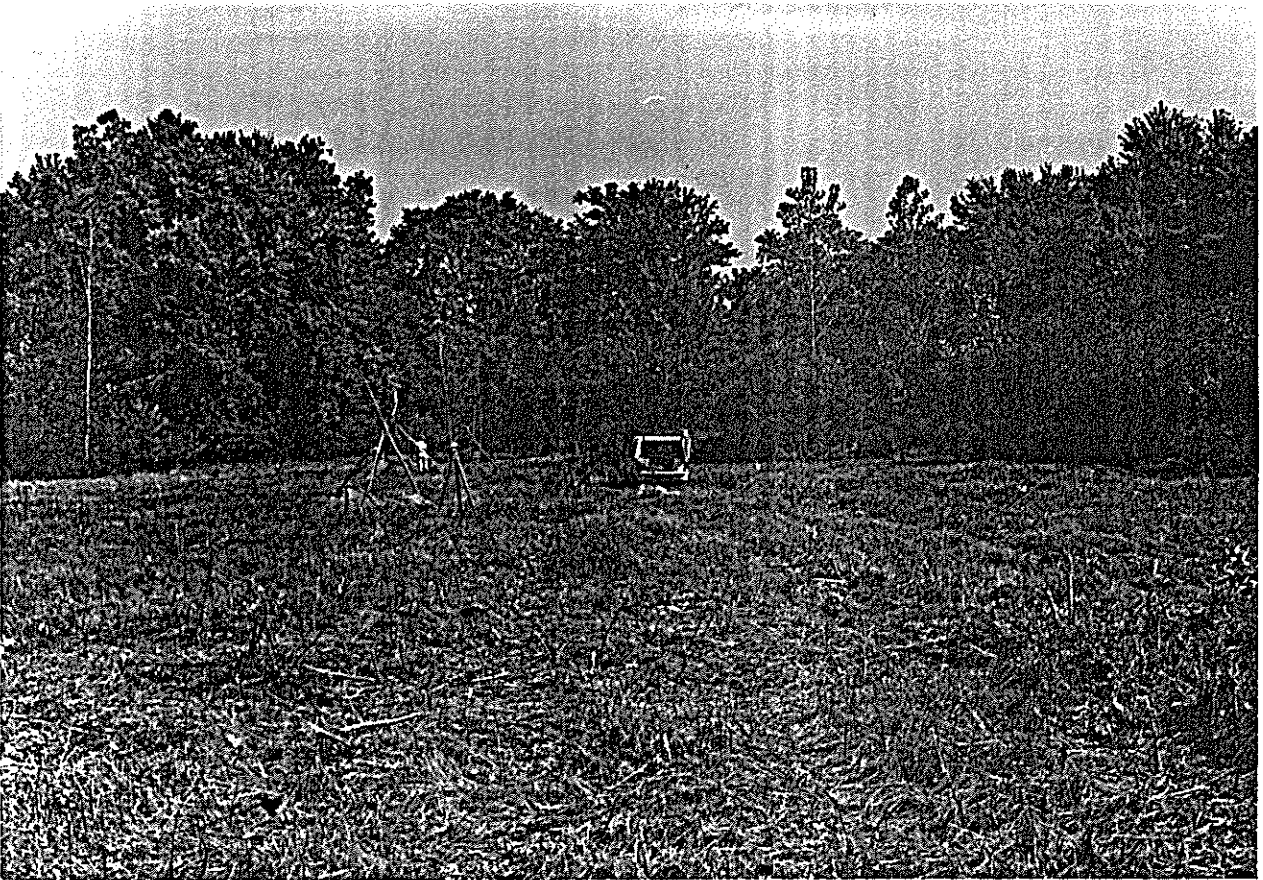


Figure 1. Field excavations at the Still River Preserve, September 1983.

succeeded in preserving the Weantinoge site for a second phase of research in 1986.

IV. THE WEANTINOGE SITE AND THE FORT HILL DISTRICT Archaeological Problems in Later Prehistory

The 1983 study of the old pasture at the Still River Preserve was limited in its scale and duration. Although a previously-unreported archaeological site was discovered, little was actually learned about this resource. For example, we could estimate that the Weantinoge site was less than 1000 years old. However we still did not have enough information to characterize the research potential of the site, nor were we able to understand how these lands were used and settled by native Indians during the late prehistoric period.

Thus in 1986, a second archaeological study was undertaken in order to explore the Weantinoge site and its potential to contribute to an understanding of the late prehistory and seventeenth-century history of native settlement and society in the region. This work was concerned with three groups of inter-related research questions:

1. How do archaeologists, historians, and other scholars normally describe the later prehistoric and early historic patterns of native land use in interior regions such as northwestern Connecticut? What kinds of settlements or villages were built; what happened to these settlements and the people who lived in them when colonists began to arrive? What do we normally assume happened after A.D. 1000, and how can we think differently about the people who lived in that time?

2. How might these questions be explored in the region around the confluence of the Still and Housatonic rivers in southern New Milford? Is there any evidence from extant artifact collections, prior archaeological work, or historic records to indicate that this region was an important locus for native settlement during the last 1000 years?

3. How could the research potential of the Weantinoge site be evaluated in terms of specific questions about native settlement and land use in this region? How should one approach the site's archaeological record in order to recover information about the organization and use of space within a late prehistoric village? What might we learn from this work about the size of such settlements, and how might this new knowledge change how we normally think about what happened after A.D. 1000?

These research questions provided a frame for the AIAI's second study of the archaeological record at the Weantinoge site. The first two sets of questions are examined further in this section. The last set is explored in Part Two of this report.

What Happened after A.D. 1000: Working Against the "Grain" of Normal Interpretation

For almost a decade, field crews from the AIAI have been exploring the archaeological records of early hunter-gatherers who settled Litchfield County's landscapes more than 7000 years ago (Handsman 1983, Nicholas and Handsman 1984). For almost as long, and sometimes as a result of

this work, we have been aware that these lands were also a focus for native habitation during the last ten centuries, the late prehistoric and early historic periods. This period's archaeological record is barely visible; late prehistoric sites are infrequent and tend to be represented by small, rather diffuse scatters of sherds, flakes, and stone tools, usually associated with plowzone layers. What does this record mean? How have archaeologists usually interpreted this pattern of diffuse artifact scatters?

Normally it has been thought that interior regions in southern New England were used only for seasonal or shorter-term hunting and fishing activities by Indians who lived on the coast or along the major river valleys in large, permanent villages during the late prehistoric period (Salwen 1978, Snow 1978). In this model, native Indians are not thought to have been a permanent presence in areas such as northwestern Connecticut until after the mid-seventeenth century, when these lands were settled by groups moving away from the growing colonial centers along the coast (Conkey et al. 1978). The amorphous, seemingly transient pattern of the late prehistoric archaeological record would appear to substantiate this picture; there is little apparent evidence to indicate that large, permanent native villages existed here at any time during the last 1000 years.

Suppose however that the native Indians of northwestern Connecticut began to build small villages - hamlets - shortly after A.D. 1000. Such settlements might have included four to six wigwams and a longhouse (fewer than 50 people), perhaps some small patches of cultivated corn, outside hearths for cooking, and other features such as garbage pits and storage racks. Assuming that wigwams rarely exceeded 20 feet in diameter, and that longhouses were often no larger than 100 feet long and 30 feet wide (Snow 1980:83, Sturtevant 1975), the total area covered by such a native settlement would have amounted to less than one half-acre. These native hamlets were not extensive sites; although they were occupied year-round, new villages were probably constructed every decade or so. Their arrangement, organization, size, and intensity of use would have contrasted sharply with the native settlements so familiar to seventeenth century Euroamericans.

Many of the seventeenth century accounts written by explorers, traders, and those who came to live here described the native villages, cleared fields, corn plots, and other features common to New England's coastlines and major rivers (Ceci 1982, Cronon 1983, McManis 1972:116-131, Wood 1634). For example, Samuel de Champlian's accounts of his pre-1620 voyages were illustrated with scale drawings of specific harbors in Massachusetts and Maine. These drawings, containing views of native wigwams and longhouses adjacent to bountiful corn fields, suggested that the coasts and estuaries had been intensively settled and used before New England began (Figure 2). In the same way, an earlier and continuing native presence around Provincetown harbor was recognized by the Pilgrims during some initial weeks of exploration in 1620. One account of their observations, known as Mourt's Relation (Fiore 1985), contained numerous references to cultivated fields, planted corn, recently-harvested plots, Indian houses, cleared ground, and so forth.

Figure 2. What Samuel de Champlain Would Have Drawn If He Had Sailed Up the Housatonic River Near Milford, Connecticut in 1605.

This hypothetical view is based upon similar maps of harbors in Massachusetts and Maine, drawn during the pre-1620 voyages of Samuel de Champlain (see de Champlain 1604-1610). Archaeologists have long used these depictions to suggest that large villages and maize agriculture were present along the coast before A.D. 1600. These "maps" also seem to support the idea that coastal locations were the important focus for native settlement; interior regions were depicted here as unused, heavily-forested ("undomesticated") spaces. Suppose however that native Indians used such spaces in ways very unfamiliar to and unobserved by the colonists. How should these settlements be depicted, and how can archaeologists learn to find them?



All these patterns of Native American land use and settlement were familiar to the colonists despite the newness of native technologies and crops. These signs were familiar, recognized, and written about because they represented processes of domestication, environmental competence, and the control and development of nature - the same processes that had already transformed the English countryside for several centuries before A.D. 1600 (Cronon 1983, Kupperman 1980:80-106). Thus in coastal New England, what the colonists saw first was very much like what they had left.

However this sense of "remembrances of things past" disappeared as the colonists moved inland away from the coasts, estuaries, and larger rivers. In these interior regions, the colonists had difficulty finding the familiar signs of "domesticated settlement and society." So they employed a new vocabulary to describe these lands, with terms such as "unused," "unimproved," "not cleared or planted," "worthless," and so on. Obviously such a discourse permitted the colonists to engage in what were sometimes illegal land transactions; just as obviously, this discourse was also used to rationalize the immorality of continuing purchases and the reduction of native lands (Feder 1982). But this cannot be the whole story.

The colonists spoke as they did because they did not see recognizable signs of large nucleated villages, enclosed lands, or extensive plots of growing corn. That is, the native landscapes in places such as northwestern Connecticut looked very different from those along the coast, and the colonists had no prior experience in or an adequate vocabulary for describing them. They "misrepresented" what they saw, or would not see, suggesting that much of the interior space of southern New England was under-used and uninhabited.

This idea of a native invisibility might have been challenged if enough colonists had systematically observed native settlements and patterns of land use in other than coastal areas. However the opportunity for making such observations was controlled in part by legal codes which governed the social and economic relations between natives and colonists. Significantly, these codes (for example, Connecticut's 1650 Code of Laws) stated that colonists were not to visit or trade "at or about wigwams" or "to settle or join with the Indians," thereby limiting their ability to observe native settlements, keeping that world unknown and invisible (Handsman 1986a). Although such restrictions began to disappear before A.D. 1750, they prevented for some time the realization that Native Americans lived in definite, yet different, societies and settlements in many places in southern New England.

If the interior regions of this large area did contain a very different type of native settlement, one which was unknown to and unmentioned upon by the colonists, why haven't archaeologists discovered evidence of this systematic and continuous pattern of land use? In part this failure is due to an uncritical acceptance and use of the seventeenth-century accounts; archaeological interpretations of the last 1000 years are ruled by the written word, or printed image. Yet the problem is even

more entangled than this. Archaeologists have probably missed native hamlets in many interior regions because the scale of their field research overestimates the extent and intensity of this sort of land use. Unless we revise our traditional approach to the survey of interior spaces and look for smaller, almost invisible, groups of dispersed wigwam sites, we will continue to believe what the written records say: that much land in the interior regions of New England was unimproved, unused, and uninhabited.

There are few comparative archaeological data in southern New England to use in working out a solution to this problem. However the second season of excavations at the Weantinoge site began to expose one part of what may prove eventually to be an archetypal late prehistoric native hamlet. This site's patternings - its size and plan of organization - can therefore be used to help us understand how to do an archaeology of what may have always been present, yet unseen, in northwestern Connecticut. Too, future studies of the Weantinoge site, and of other nearby archaeological records from the last 1000 years, can tell us much about what happened to native societies, the everyday lives of Native Americans, and native lands after A.D. 1000 (see Feder 1984).

The Weantinoge Site and the Fort Hill District in Later Prehistory

The archaeological potential and significance of the Weantinoge site must be explored in part within a broader, more regional perspective. The native settlement at this site would have represented only one point in a more extensive network of settlements and social relations. Included in this network would have been other nearby native hamlets, isolated wigwams inhabited by family groups of varying sizes, critical localities where important food resources or raw materials could be acquired, trading places, cemeteries and other ritual spaces, and small plots for agriculture, especially after A.D. 1400. Together all these activities, places, and settlements comprised a native view, or conceptual model, of both a landscape and a society. Within this model and the regional space it organized, native Indians lived and worked for more than ten centuries.

Although archaeological studies of the late prehistory of the region around the Weantinoge site have been limited, there is enough evidence to indicate that this landscape was used and settled on a more than impermanent, transitory basis. For example, of the more than sixteen sites recorded on maps along the Still River in Brookfield and New Milford, at least six have materials (ceramics, projectile points) less than 1000 years old. Important localities in this late prehistoric landscape seem to be concentrated along the lower reaches of the Still River, within a kilometer of its mouth. Surface collections from two of these sites are stored at the AIAI;⁵ none of these late prehistoric sites has ever been extensively excavated.

Immediately to the north of the confluence of the Still and Housatonic rivers lies a second important area of late prehistoric and early historic native settlement (Lamb-Richmond 1987). Known as the Fort Hill District,

this area is bounded by the Housatonic River on the east and north and by a ridge line above Lake Candlewood on the west (Figure 3). Its southern border is more arbitrary, following modern patterns of development as well as topographic features in the vicinity of Lanesville.

Historic records from the early eighteenth century indicate that the lands within the District were inhabited and used by native Indians for "villages," cemeteries, fishing sites, corn plots, and trading activities (Orcutt 1882:101-109). Among the important localities often mentioned were Weantinock (now Fort Hill), Metichawan (near Lovers Leap), Goodyear Island (now beneath the impounded waters of the Housatonic below Lovers Leap), the Great Falls (mouth of the Still River and the former gorge at Lovers Leap), and the Indian Fields (along the west bank of the Housatonic, north of the 202 Bridge). Although population estimates vary widely, there is more than enough documentary evidence to indicate that the Fort Hill District was an important locus for native Indian settlement and land use during the historic period (Handsman 1986b).

These indications are supported and extended by archaeological evidence; at least two early historic Indian sites are located in the northern end of the District in the locality of Fort Hill.⁶ In addition, several later prehistoric sites have also been recorded from fields north of the Still River's mouth and along small tributaries of the Housatonic. These sites may also contain later components, representative of historic Indian occupations. Together the historic documents and this preliminary archaeological evidence suggest that there was a long-term pattern of native land use in southwestern New Milford which began sometime after A.D. 1000 and continued through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries.

Much of the known evidence comes from the Fort Hill District, indicating this area's research potential for future archaeological studies. To some extent, part of this potential has already been lost. About one-fourth of the District's available area has been disturbed and destroyed, primarily by residential and industrial developments of the last twenty years (see Figure 3). However at least another one-third of the District's lands are now protected from development; any archaeological sites within such protected spaces have been preserved and should therefore contain significant information about native settlements and societies.



Continuing developments along the Route 7 and Still River corridors, and within the Fort Hill District, suggest that the next five to ten years are a crucial period for archaeological research in this region. Extensive surveys and test excavations should be undertaken in order to clarify how this landscape was used by native Indians, to discover where significant archaeological resources continue to exist, and to identify those resources which would be most important for future research and preservation efforts. Such a project would also further our understanding of the archaeology and early history of the lower Still River in New Milford, providing links between the Fort Hill District and the Weantinoge site.

Figure 3. The Weantinoge Site and the Fort Hill District.

Located in the western section of the Town of New Milford, the Fort Hill District was an important focus for native settlement and land use after A.D. 1000. Historic records indicate that its importance continued into the early eighteenth century. The spaces within the District and along the Still River were used for villages, cemeteries, corn fields, fishing and hunting localities, and trading sites.



LEGEND:

FORT HILL DISTRICT BOUNDARY: - - - - - PROTECTED AREAS  DISTURBED AREAS 

PART TWO: THE 1986 EXCAVATIONS AT THE WEANTINOGE
SITE: METHODS AND RESULTS

V. FIELD METHODS AT THE WEANTINOGE SITE

During the early fall of 1986, additional excavations were undertaken at the Weantinoge site in order to clarify the extent and research potential of the late prehistoric settlement in the old pasture. The pasture is bordered on the east by an old meander scar and on the west by a slight levee and active floodplain. At its midpoint, the pasture is about sixty meters wide, and its surface's topography does not vary more than thirty centimeters as one moves from east to west. The old meander scar is represented by an elongated depression which is seasonally filled with water and wetland vegetation. At one time the main channel of the Still River was situated within this depression, and the pasture would have been an active floodplain or even an island (Handsman 1984). Built by recent flood deposits of sand and silt, a natural levee rises approximately fifty centimeters above the pasture surface along its western edge. Beyond the levee, the elevation drops to the floodplain. This floodplain is an active erosional and depositional surface characterized by sand bars and sheets as well as erosional scour holes. Many of the root systems of the floodplain's sycamores are buried beneath flood deposits of sand. The Still River meanders adjacent to the floodplain, flowing north to join the Housatonic River in southern New Milford (Figure 3).

Grid Plan and Excavation Methods

Two base lines were established in order to test the site during the initial season in 1983. These were oriented north-south (165 meters) and east-west (70 meters), crossing in the south-central portion of the pasture. Three lines or transects of shovel test pits (STP's) were excavated across the north-south line to test for cultural material. Two of the three STP's that contained sherds of late prehistoric pottery were located on the western end of the N-30 line (Figure 4).

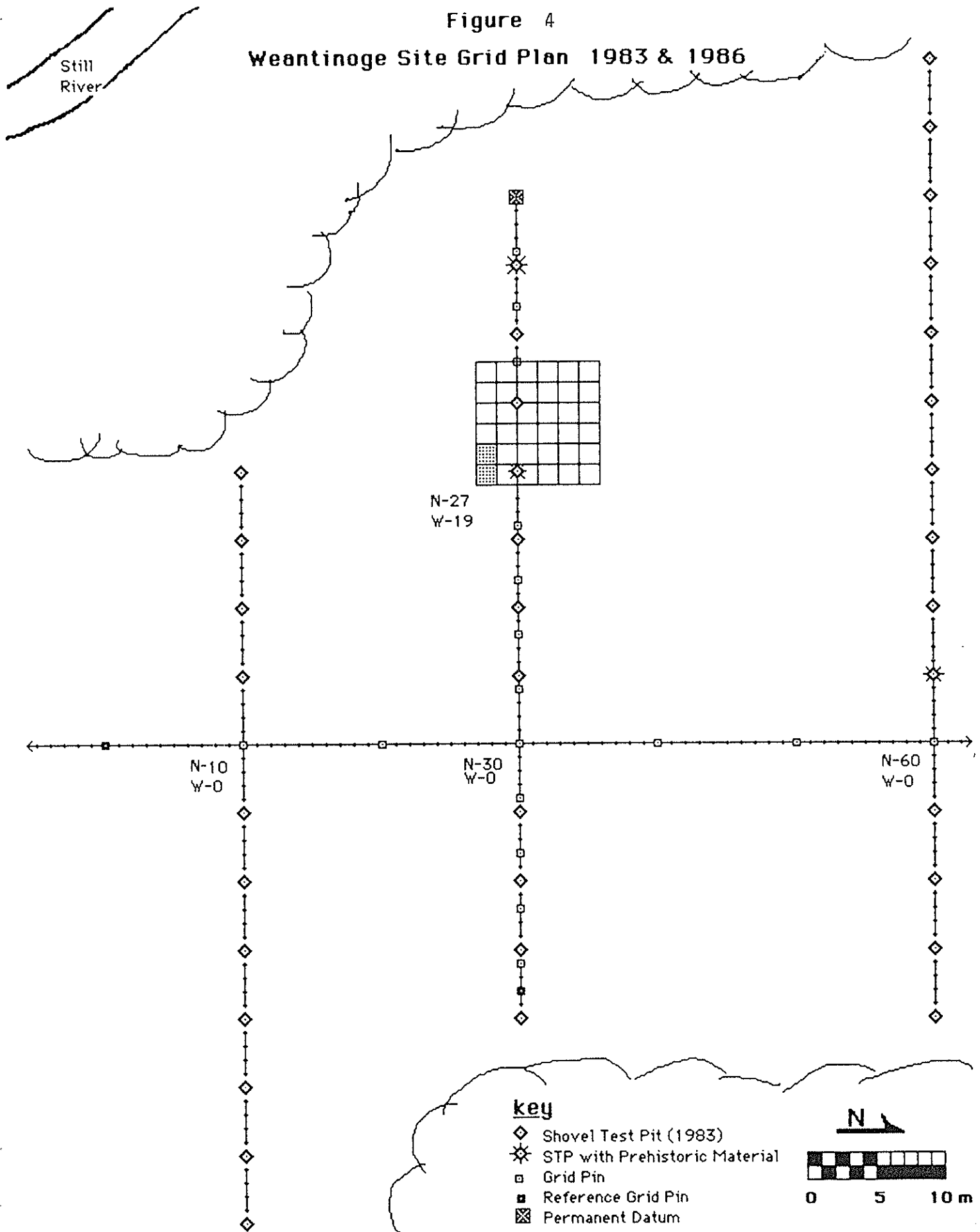
In 1986 we planned to open a large excavation block in one of the areas where artifacts had been found earlier. The 1983 grid was relocated, and a 9.0-meter square block was surveyed towards the western end of the original N-30 transect. Figure 4 shows the locations of both the 1986 block and the 1983 test pits.

By excavating as many contiguous 1.50-meter squares as possible, we hoped to expose completely a portion of the Weantinoge site. Maps of features and distributional diagrams of recovered artifacts would help us understand the size and spatial organization of the late prehistoric settlement. These data could then be used to construct a picture of a "typical" native hamlet or isolated wigwam, and to redefine the scale of regional archaeological surveys in order to locate such settlements.

Fieldwork began in late September and continued for slightly more than four weeks. A field crew of five to seven people and a small group of volunteers excavated 34 1.50-meter squares within the block (Figures 5, 6). The volunteers were enrolled in a week-long training session sponsored by the AIAI.

Figure 4

Weantinoge Site Grid Plan 1983 & 1986



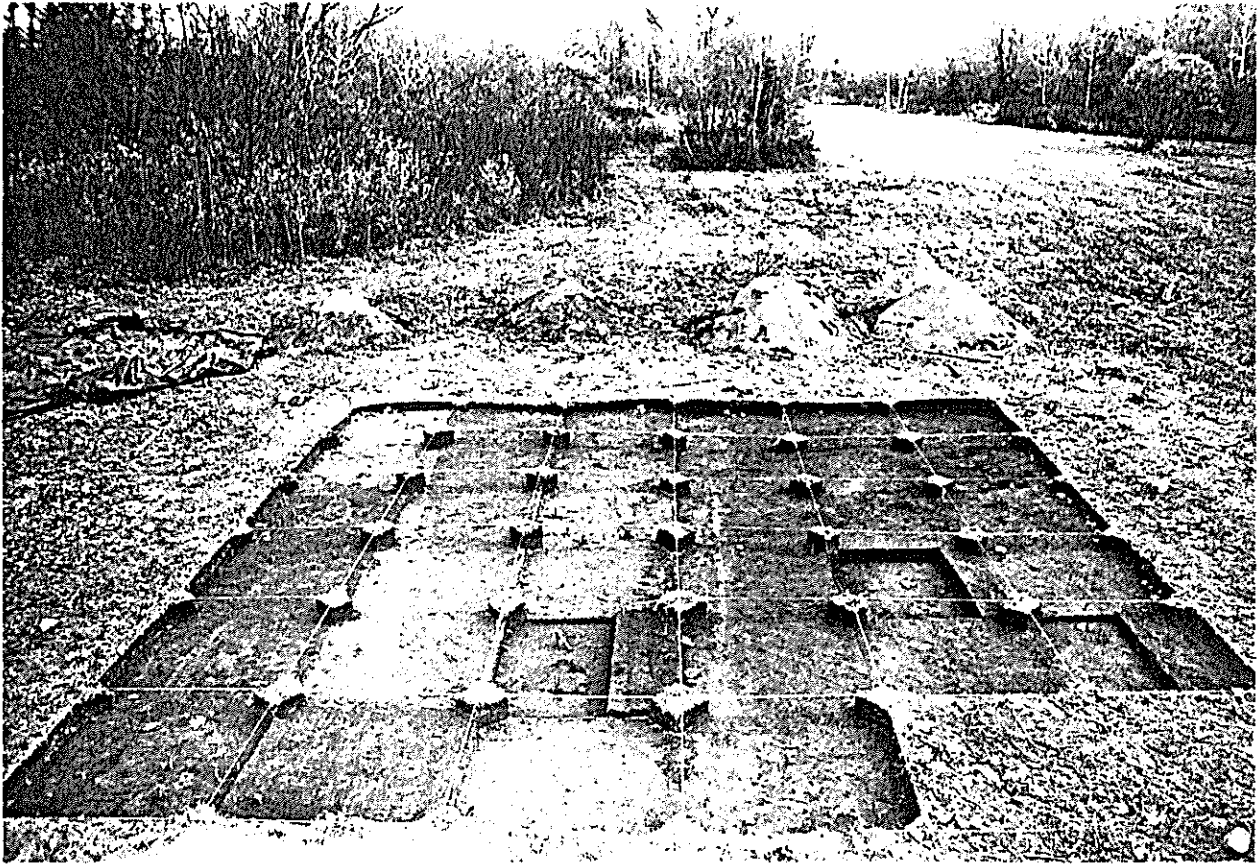


Figure 5. The Completed Excavation Block, October 1986.

Each unit is a 1.50-meter square. The unexcavated pillars within the block contain spikes defining the corners of each square.

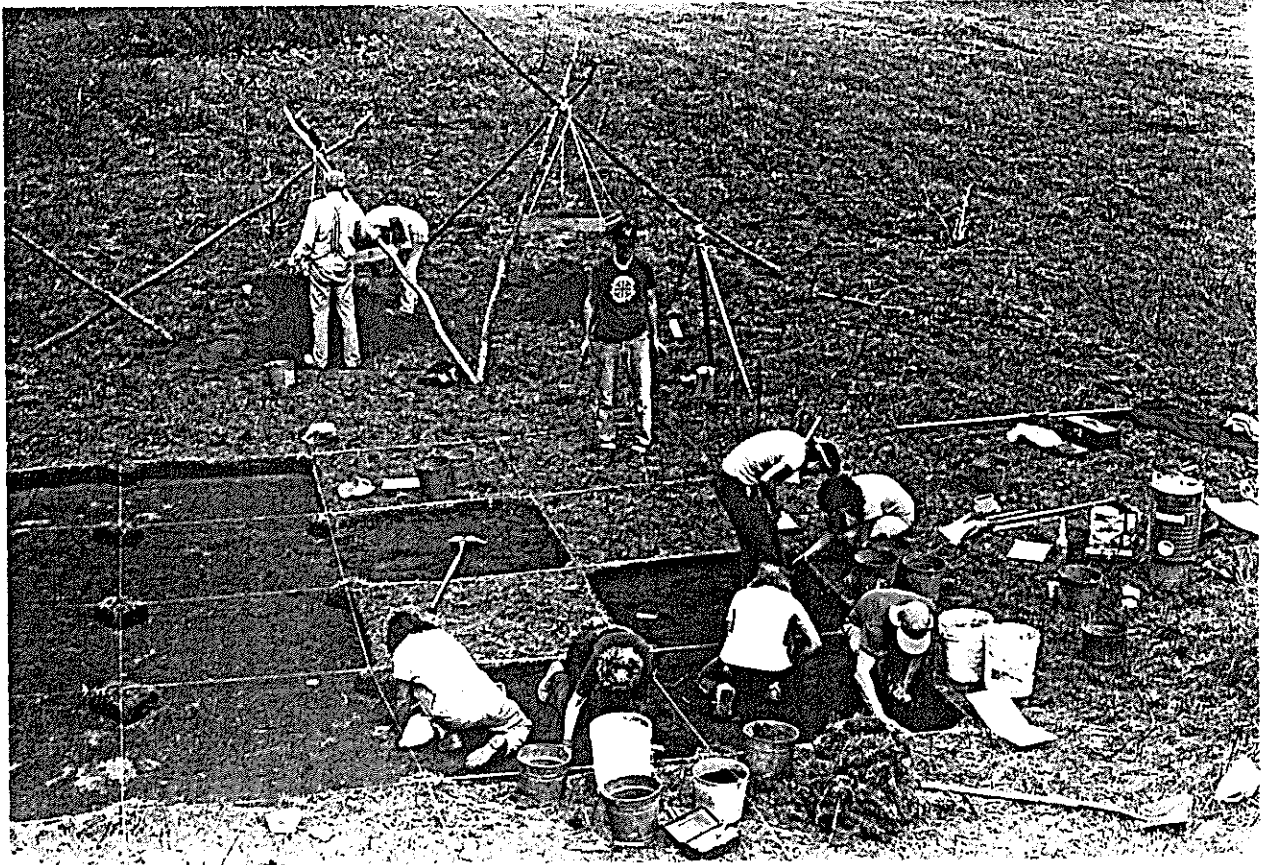


Figure 6. Excavation Scene at the Weantinoge Site.

The plowzone of each unit was removed and screened through 1/4-inch hardware cloth. Then five-centimeter levels were excavated below the plowzone to clarify the depth and structure of the site. Horizontal plans of each square were drawn to show the position of both historic and natural features such as plowscars, rotted tree stumps, and animal burrows, and prehistoric features such as storage/garbage pits, post-molds, and charcoal stains. Those features excavated were bisected on a north-south axis, and the vertical profile recorded. In addition, the soil removed from each excavated feature was subjected to flotation and examined for small faunal or botanical remains.

The cultural material within the plowzone of each 1.5-meter square was bagged together. Precise locations of individual pieces were not measured, as historic plowing had moved the artifacts from their original context. Below the plowzone, exact locations and elevations of all diagnostic artifacts (pottery, bifaces, scrapers, etc.) were measured within each square and below the datum plane. During the excavations, a nail in a large maple tree served as datum. A permanent datum, a steel bar set in concrete, was placed at N-30 W-40 at the close of the field season.

Description of Assemblage

Fieldwork was concluded in early October, 1986; the organization and analysis of artifacts continued into early December. The archaeological materials recovered from the excavations were cleaned, examined, and catalogued. The artifacts, field notes, and photographic records from the excavations are now part of the AIAI's permanent research collection (catalogue #86-2-1) and are available for study. The excavated assemblage includes 257 pieces of debitage, four projectile point tips, two biface fragments, 77 sherds of pottery (18 decorated, two rims), two other stone tools, and 51 very small pieces of rock that may be fire-altered. Artifacts were recovered from every square within the excavated block.

VI. DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS OF FIELDWORK

Our work this fall helped to clarify the age and archaeological potential of the Weantinoge site. After the 1983 excavations, we suggested that the site apparently represented a late prehistoric settlement about 500 to 700 years old. More artifacts (pieces of pottery) recovered this season tend to confirm that estimate, although some materials may actually be closer to 1000 years old. More than 90 percent of the artifacts were recovered from the shallow plowzone layer, usually about 15 centimeters in thickness. At the base of the plowzone, several soil stains of contrastive color and texture were discovered and mapped (Figure 7). Five of these stains have been identified as possible prehistoric features; others appear to represent tree roots or stumps, or perhaps areas of more recent historic disturbance.

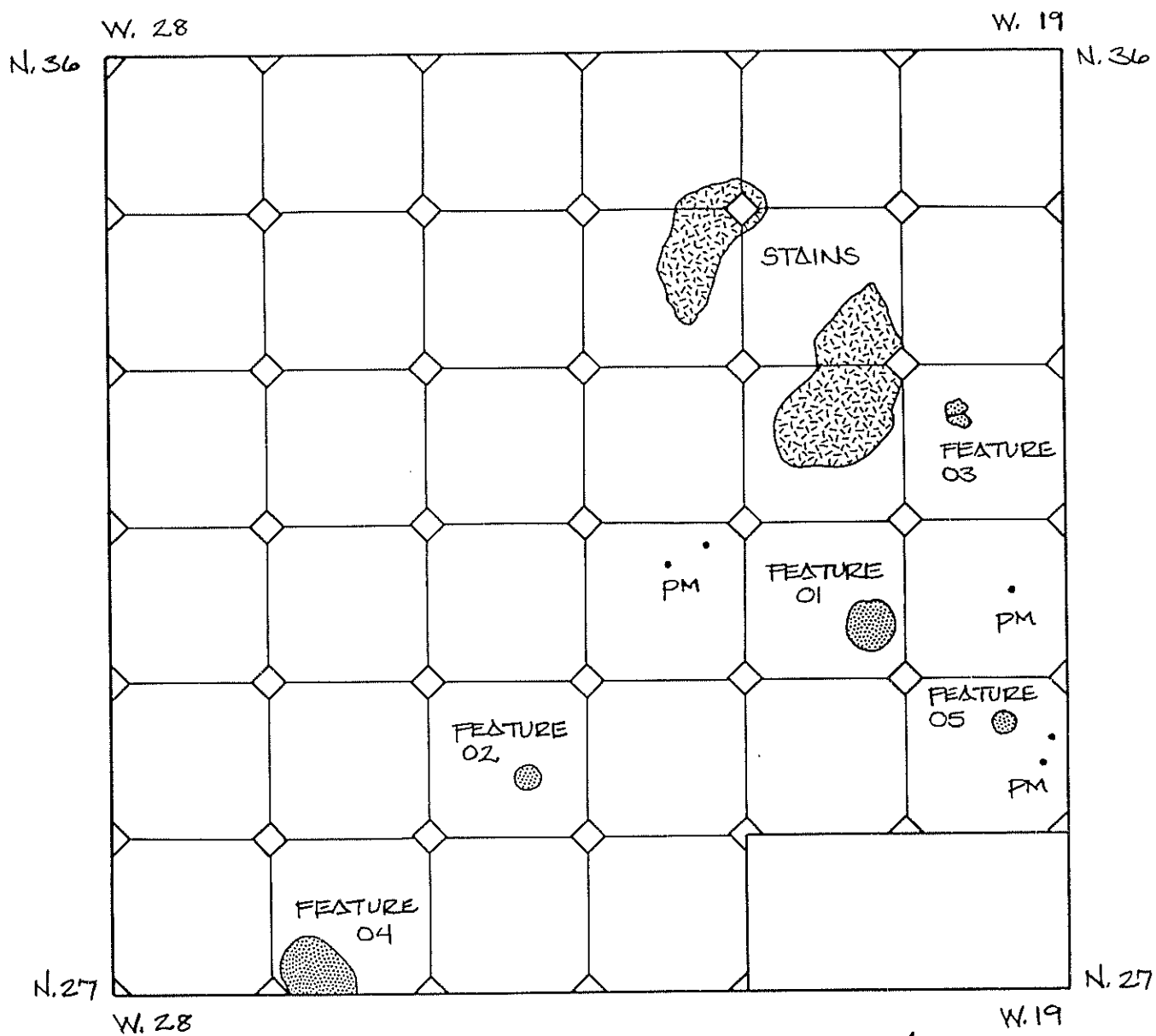
For example, two large stains in the northeast quad of the block had diffuse boundaries and irregular shapes. Their "fill" appeared to be organically-stained silts ranging in color from dark grayish brown to dark brown; however no flecks of charcoal were visible. The density of their fill and irregularity of their boundaries distinguished them from the group of five, more obvious prehistoric features.

The Prehistoric Features

These five features appeared as dark stains against the lighter-colored subsoil; they all had fairly regular outlines whose tops had been somewhat obscured by historic plowing. In several cases, plow scars cut across these pits, helping to establish their chronological position. Three of these features were bisected, and half of their fill was excavated in five-centimeter levels in order to observe their cross-sections. The soil from each excavated half was saved and floated in water, in order to recover small remains such as tiny flakes and sherds, charcoal and charred seeds, or the preserved fragments of nuts.

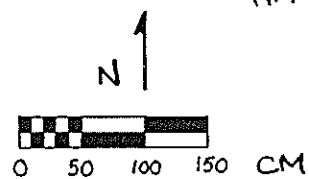
Feature 01 was a basin-shaped, flat-bottomed pit measuring 50cm by 45cm across and 14cm deep (Figure 8). Originally this feature might have been 10cm deeper; plowing had removed almost half of its original depth. The pit's fill consisted of a compact, dark gray to black silt and contained one quartz flake and one black chert flake. No evidence of food remains was recovered through flotation; therefore the feature may have been used only for floor sweepings or as a cache pit for tools.

Feature 02 was a bowl-shaped, round-bottomed pit measuring 23cm by 20cm across and 12cm deep (Figure 8). The fill of this pit was compact and consisted primarily of very dark, grayish-brown silt. It also contained a large lense of yellowish-brown silt within it; this lense curved up towards the edges of the feature, suggesting that it represented a different episode of pit-filling and not a rodent borrow or root cast. A small sherd of thin, exterior cord-impressed/interior-smoothed pottery was recovered from the fill. As flotation revealed no evidence of food remains, this feature may have had a function similar to that of feature 01.



EXCAVATION PLAN, WEANTINOGE

1986



• POSTMOLDS (PM)

FIGURE 7

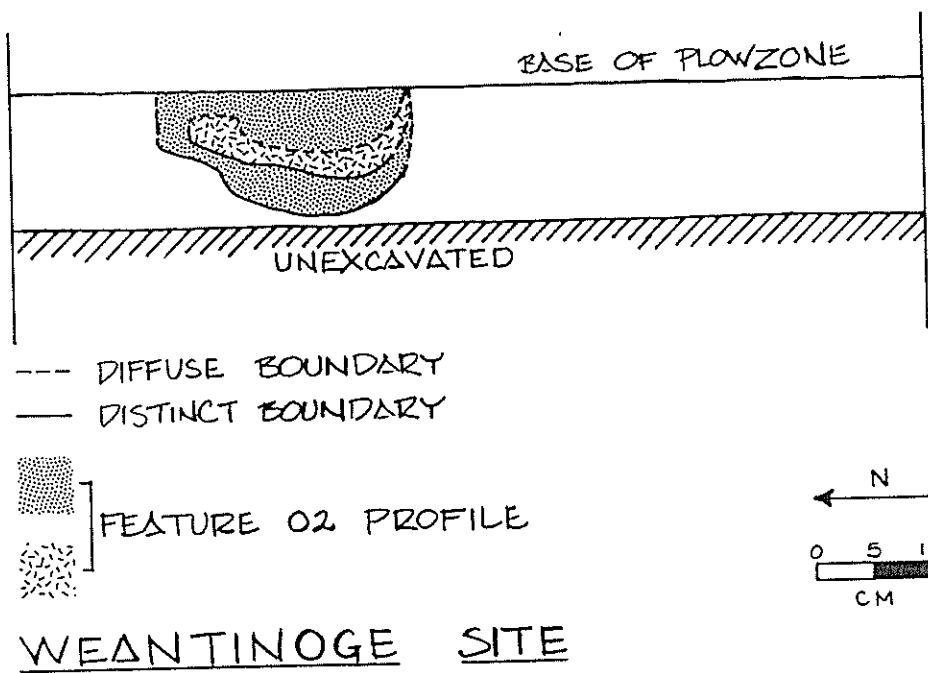
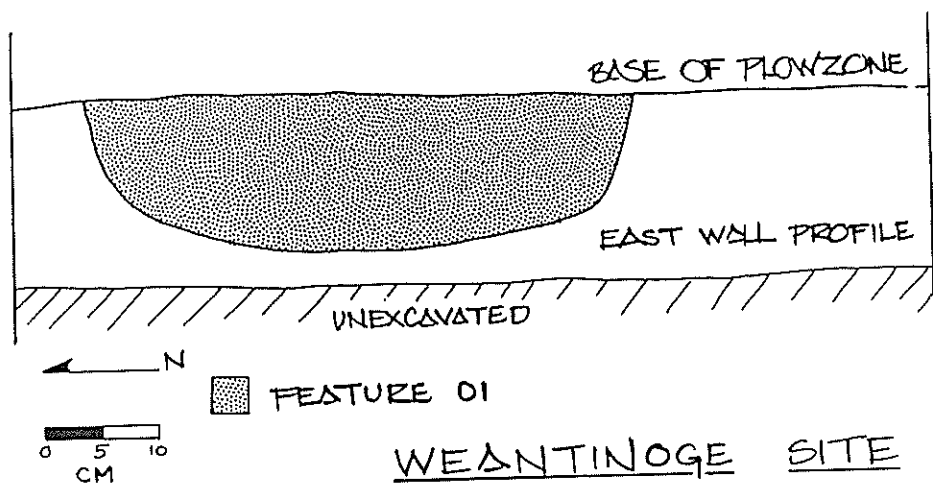


FIGURE 8

Feature 03 was not excavated, but does appear to be prehistoric in origin. A roughly circular stain, measuring 20cm by 18cm, it contained compact, very dark, grayish-brown silt. The southern part of this feature was somewhat mottled. It was fairly similar in size, shape, and composition to feature 02.

Feature 04 was not excavated. Its irregular shape and lack of distinct edges made it different from the rest of the features at the site. It measured roughly 60cm by 55cm, and its fill was composed of very dark gray, loose sandy silt. This feature may actually represent a lense deposited during a flood.

Feature 05 was a small, cylindrical, irregular-bottomed stain measuring 8cm by 8cm across and 8cm deep. This feature was probably about 18cm deep originally. The fill of this feature consisted of compact, very dark grayish-brown to dark brown silt. Flotation of this soil revealed no food remains. Most evidence suggests that this was a large postmold; however it may have been a root stain. Several small stains similar to feature 05 were also exposed (Figure 7). These may have been post-molds or root stains. Expansion of the block to the east might reveal additional small stains forming a pattern such as storage racks or house walls.

Lithic Artifacts

A large portion of the artifact assemblage from the site consists of debitage, the waste from the manufacture and resharpening of chipped stone tools. The 257 pieces of debitage recovered were distributed across the entire block. Every unit contained at least one piece (Figure 9). Quartz was the predominant material; however black and gray-brown cherts were also well represented. In addition, quartzite, gray jasper-like chert, and dark gray chert were present.

The majority of these raw materials (stone) are believed to be of local origin. Both quartz and chert can be found as cobbles in the stream beds of northwestern Connecticut. Occasional pieces of debitage, such as the brown jasper-like chert and the coarse black chert, may be nonlocal. The few flakes of translucent gray quartzite have been tentatively identified as Cheshire Quartzite from Vermont.⁷ These quartzite flakes often had a distinctive cortex (outer surface) that suggested this raw material was quarried from bedrock outcrops.

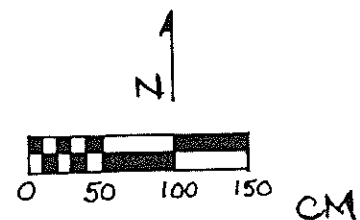
The types of flakes recovered indicate that several different stages of tool manufacture and maintenance activities (repair, resharpening) took place at the site. For example, a few of the complete flakes had weathered rinds or a cobble cortex on their exterior surfaces. Such flakes were usually detached during the initial stage of tool manufacture as a cobble or block of material was used as a source for larger flakes or blanks. These would then be worked further into a variety of tools for procuring game, processing foods, or manufacturing other items.

WEANTINOGE SITE: ARTIFACT DENSITY 1986

● 1 △ 2 ▲ 6 □ 1	● 2 △ 7	● 2 △ 9 ▲ 5 □ 3 T.	△ 2 □ 3	● 8 △ 9 ▲ 3 □ 2	● 6 △ 3 ▲ 1 △ 1 □ 4 T.
△ 6 □ 7 T.	● 2 △ 8 ▲ 6 △ 1 □ 4	● 5 △ 9 ▲ 2 □ 1 T.	● 1 △ 3 □ 1	● 2 △ 3 ▲ 5 □ 4 T.	● 4 △ 9 ▲ 8 △ 1 □ 6
● 1 △ 5 □ 1	● 4 △ 4 △ 1 □ 2	● 4 △ 3 ▲ 5 □ 5 T.	△ 4	● 1 △ 6 ▲ 2 △ 1 □ 6	△ 8 ▲ 6
● 1 △ 4	△ 3 △ 1 □ 1	● 1 △ 5 ▲ 7 △ 1 □ 1 T.	● 2 △ 19 ▲ 1 △ 2 □ 1	● 6 △ 3 ▲ 2 □ 2 T.	● 3 △ 11
△ 3 □ 1	● 2 △ 4	● 2 △ 2 ▲ 2 □ 1	● 3 △ 4 ▲ 6 △ 1 □ 5	● 2 △ 4 □ 3 T.	● 5 △ 10
● 5 △ 2	● 2 □ 2	△ 1	△ 1 ▲ 1	X	

- POTTERY
 ▲ CHERT FLAKE
 △ QUARTZ FLAKE
 △ QUARTZITE FLAKE
 □ FIRE-CRACKED ROCK
 T TOOL / TOOL FRAGMENT

FIGURE 9



Much more of the debitage from the excavated block consisted of medium-sized and smaller flakes that represented the thinning, shaping, and resharpening of stone tools, including projectile points, knives, and scrapers. Nearly all raw materials were present. Their frequency in the assemblage suggests that much of the flintknapping at the site involved the final production of stone tools and their repair and maintenance. Some of the tool fragments recovered support this inference. For example, three of the projectile tips (two of quartz, the other chert) were evidently broken during the final stage of manufacture. Two additional tips, well formed of quartz with lenticular cross-sections and thinned edges, appear to have been broken during resharpening, or they may represent fragments recovered from game during butchering.

In addition to these five tips, three other tools or tool fragments were excavated from the site, including a small, unifacial chert scraper probably used in woodworking, a bifacially-flaked chopper or knife of schist, and a fragment of a chert knife or projectile point. The small number of recovered stone tools may be representative of the range of activities and the duration of occupation. If the site was used only on a seasonal or even a shorter-term basis, we would expect to recover an assemblage limited in number and perhaps in diversity. However the tool assemblage from the Weantinoge site may represent only how a specific area within this late prehistoric settlement was used. Additional excavations might uncover different, more intensively-used work spaces or even lenses of midden (garbage deposits) where the density of artifacts would increase.

The Prehistoric Pottery

Sherds of pottery were small but fairly numerous, thus comprising a significant part of the assemblage. Seventy-seven fragments were recovered during the 1986 fieldwork; of this total, only two were rim sherds, while the remainder were body sherds of varying thicknesses. Most of the body sherds' exterior surfaces were plain or smoothed; only eighteen exhibited some form of surface decoration such as cord- or fabric-impressions or incisions (Figure 10). As a group, the paste characteristics, range of thicknesses, surface treatment, and decoration of the sherds were consistent with later prehistoric ceramics between 500 and 700 years old (see Lavin 1984).⁸ The attributes of only two matching sherds diverged from this group. These may have represented an earlier vessel about 1000 years old.

Four different types of tempering material can be observed in the ceramic assemblage, including fine grit, fine to medium grit, fine grit and biotite, and grit and grog. "Fine grit" is defined as a fine, sand-like temper, smaller than 0.1mm. "Fine to medium grit" is an unsorted, sand-like temper up to 0.3mm in size. "Fine grit and biotite" is fine grit combined with biotite (black mica). "Grit and grog" is fine grit combined with grog or ground-up pieces of pottery.

Several different surface treatments can be identified, including cord-impressed sherds, fragments with cord-wrapped stick impressions, and net- or fabric-impressed sherds. Only one sherd is incised. Cord impressions are formed by impressing cordage or a cord-wrapped paddle into the surface of the pottery vessel before it is fired. This effect can also be produced by wrapping one's hand with cordage and then molding, slapping, or tamping the vessel walls. Nets or woven textiles can be used in a similar fashion.

Sticks can also be wrapped with cordage and then pressed into a vessel wall, leaving a single row or multiple rows of indentations. Incised pottery is produced by drawing a design, usually with a pointed stick or finger/fingernail, on the clay. Most of the complete body sherds from the Weantinoge site are not decorated, simply having smoothed or wiped surfaces. Such sherds may represent undecorated vessels, but are probably fragments from the undecorated portions of pots.

Fine grit is the most abundant temper in the assemblage, accounting for more than 50 percent of the complete sherds and more than 75 percent of those missing either an exterior or an interior surface. All other forms of temper are found in lower quantities. Smoothed surfaces can be identified on slightly more than half of the assemblage; cord-impressed sherds are the dominant type of surface treatment, accounting for more than three-fourths of the decorated fragments.

Two rim sherds are in the assemblage. Both are tempered with fine grit, exhibit straight profiles, and have tapering, rounded lips. Their thicknesses and decoration vary: one (5.1mm thick) is smoothed on the exterior, while the second (7.0mm thick) has horizontal cord impressions below the lip. These two rims are probably from two different vessels.

On the basis of paste characteristics (temper size and density, texture of clay), surface treatments and decorative techniques, and thicknesses, it is possible to differentiate at least four groupings of sherds which represent a minimum of four separate vessels:

1. A thin-bodied (4.50-5.50mm in thickness) pottery, tempered with fine grit, which was cord impressed on the exterior and interior smoothed. Rim forms are straight and decorated to the lip.
2. A somewhat thicker-bodied (6.50-7.25mm in thickness) pottery, also tempered with fine grit, which was cord impressed on the exterior and smoothed on the interior. Rim forms in this group were also straight, but were smoothed below the lip.
3. A group of sherds, variable in thickness and temper, whose exterior surfaces were cord impressed, smoothed, or more rarely decorated with a cord-wrapped stick or incision. Undoubtedly more than one vessel is represented by this broadly-defined group. Further excavations and analyses of late prehistoric ceramic assemblages in this region are needed in order to understand the variability that could have been

exhibited by a single vessel. Such work, including an expansion of the block at Weantinoge, should allow us to subdivide this group in the future.

4. A pair of thick-bodied sherds (10.5-11.5mm in thickness), tempered with a fine-to-medium grit, whose exterior surfaces were impressed with either a fabric or a net. These sherds fit together and may represent a vessel earlier in age than the remainder of the ceramic assemblage. Their characteristics resemble later prehistoric wares from coastal Connecticut which range widely in age between A.D.1 and A.D.1500 (Lavin 1984:Figure 3, 1986; Lavin and Russell 1985). There is no substantive evidence from the 1986 excavations at Weantinoge to indicate the existence of a second, later prehistoric component; consequently these anomolous sherds may prove to be thick, basal fragments from one of the vessels described above. Further excavations would help to clarify the age and associations of such sherds and produce additional information about the technology, stylistic variability, and social meanings of groups of late prehistoric pottery in the Still River valley.

VII. FIRST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WEANTINOGE SITE: PATTERNS OF SCALE AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The 1986 excavation block at the Weantinoge site was located along the north-central part of the old pasture, where a few sherds from prehistoric pots had been recovered during 1983. In the area covered by the thirty-four contiguous squares in the block, part of a late prehistoric settlement was discovered; its boundaries have not yet been delimited. The block itself contained somewhat fewer than eighty square meters, about seven percent of the area between the N-30 and N-60 lines now suspected to be archaeologically sensitive. Thus the data from the 1986 work represent a relatively small sample.

Block excavations normally result in a small-sized sample, since the labor required to excavate and map a block is much more than that needed to conduct more limited testing. Consequently, in a block excavation, archaeologists often sacrifice overall coverage for a more intensive look at a restricted area. However the use of such a research strategy can produce important information about the size and internal patternings of prehistoric settlements preserved in archaeological records. That is, by using a block excavation, archaeologists can learn more about the scale and spatial organization of late prehistoric settlements: what hamlets looked like, how wigwam floors and adjacent spaces were used, and how the areas within a native settlement were organized.

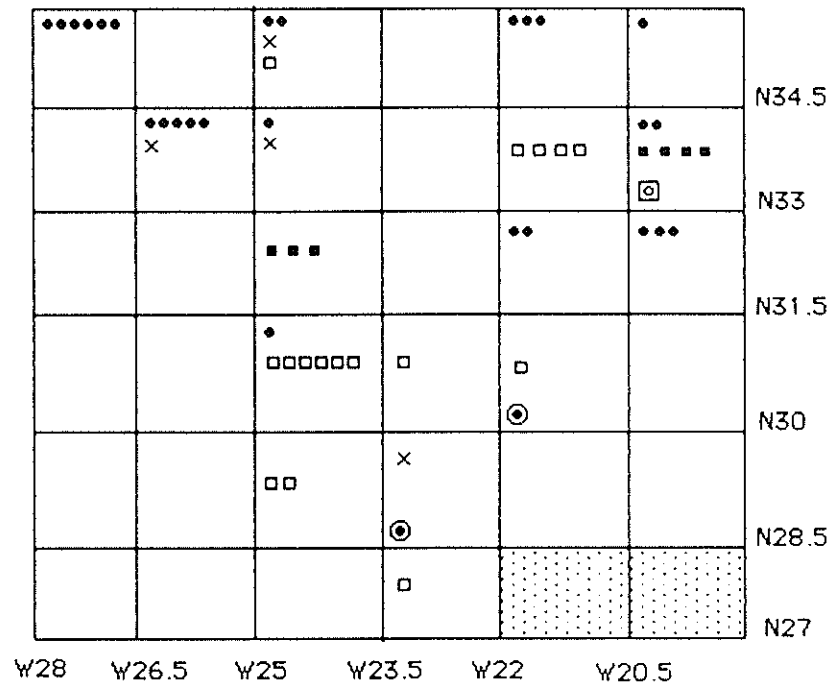
Some Thoughts about the Size of the Weantinoge Hamlet

Maps of the distributions of all artifact classes, including ceramics (Figure 10), specific raw materials such as cherts (Figure 11) and quartz or quartzites (Figure 12), and fire-altered rock (Figure 13) indicate that every square contains at least one artifact. Each of the four quadrants of the block has a similar amount and diversity of materials, except for the southwest quadrant, whose nine squares are relatively clean (Figure 9). There is a noticeable drop in artifact frequency as one moves in a southerly direction through the block, towards both the southeastern and southwestern corners. These trends may be indicative of a settlement or site boundary, or perhaps represent relatively "clean" spaces within the settlement itself.

As the size of the block is increased through future excavations, it may be possible to delineate more clearly the limits of the settlement. Probably the edges will be rather diffuse and reflected by amorphous configurations of stains and low densities of artifacts and organic refuse. In a late prehistoric native hamlet, the wigwams would not necessarily have been clustered in a residential space formally separated from other work and activity areas. Rather, isolated wigwams, or wigwams in pairs or groups, might be spread throughout the pasture in a rather diffuse pattern. In this model, the hamlet would not have clearly-distinct edges. Instead there would have been zones and spaces of use that differed in intensity, specificity, and size (Figure 14).

Figure 11

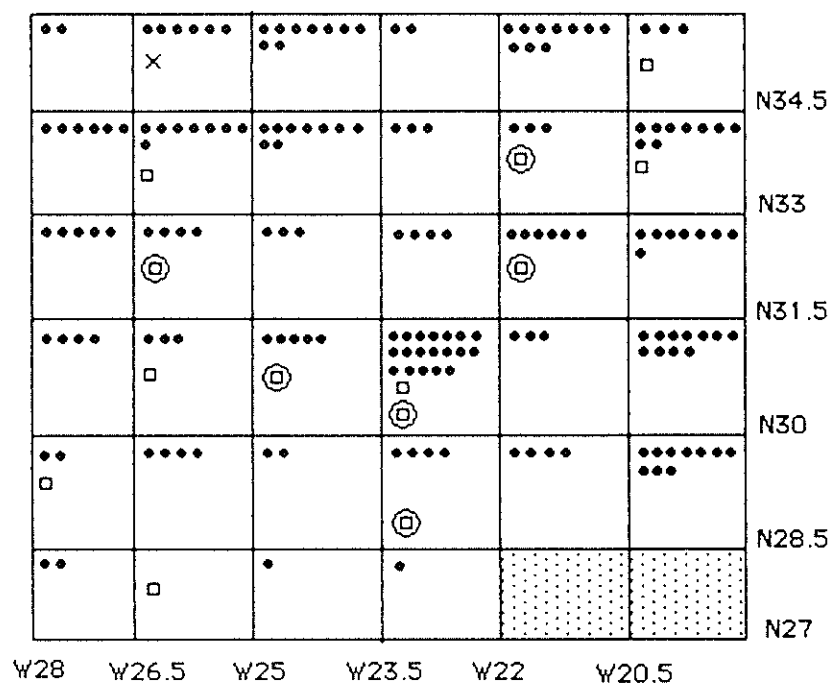
Spatial Distribution for all Varieties of Chert

**Key**

- Black Chert
- x Dull Black Chert
- Grey-Brown Chert
- Dark Grey Chert
- ⊙ Translucent Grey Chert
- ⊙ Brown Jasper-like chert

Figure 12

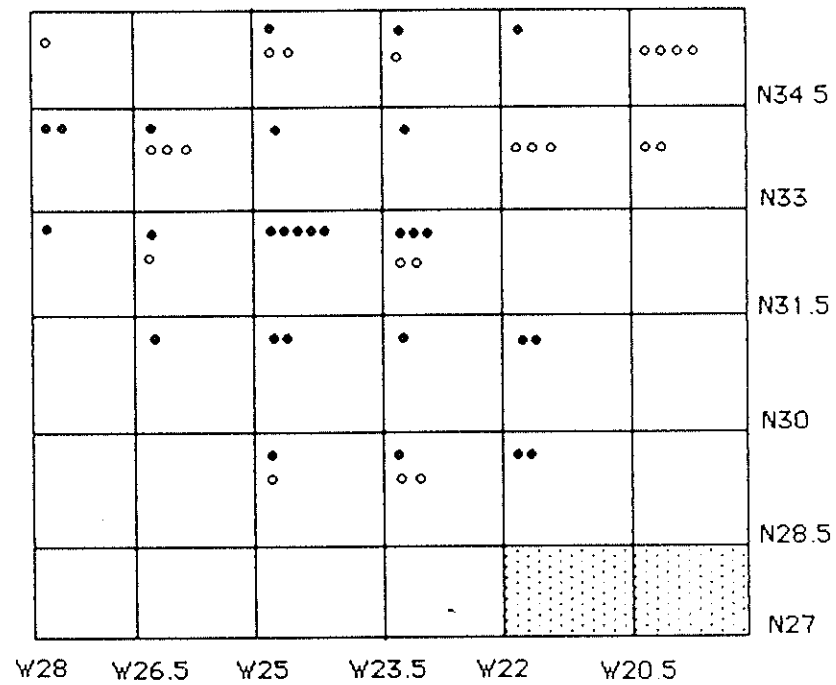
Spatial Distribution for Quartz, Crystal Quartz,
Quartzite and Cheshire Quartzite



Key

- Quartz
- x Crystal Quartz
- Quartzite
- ⊙ Cheshire Quartzite

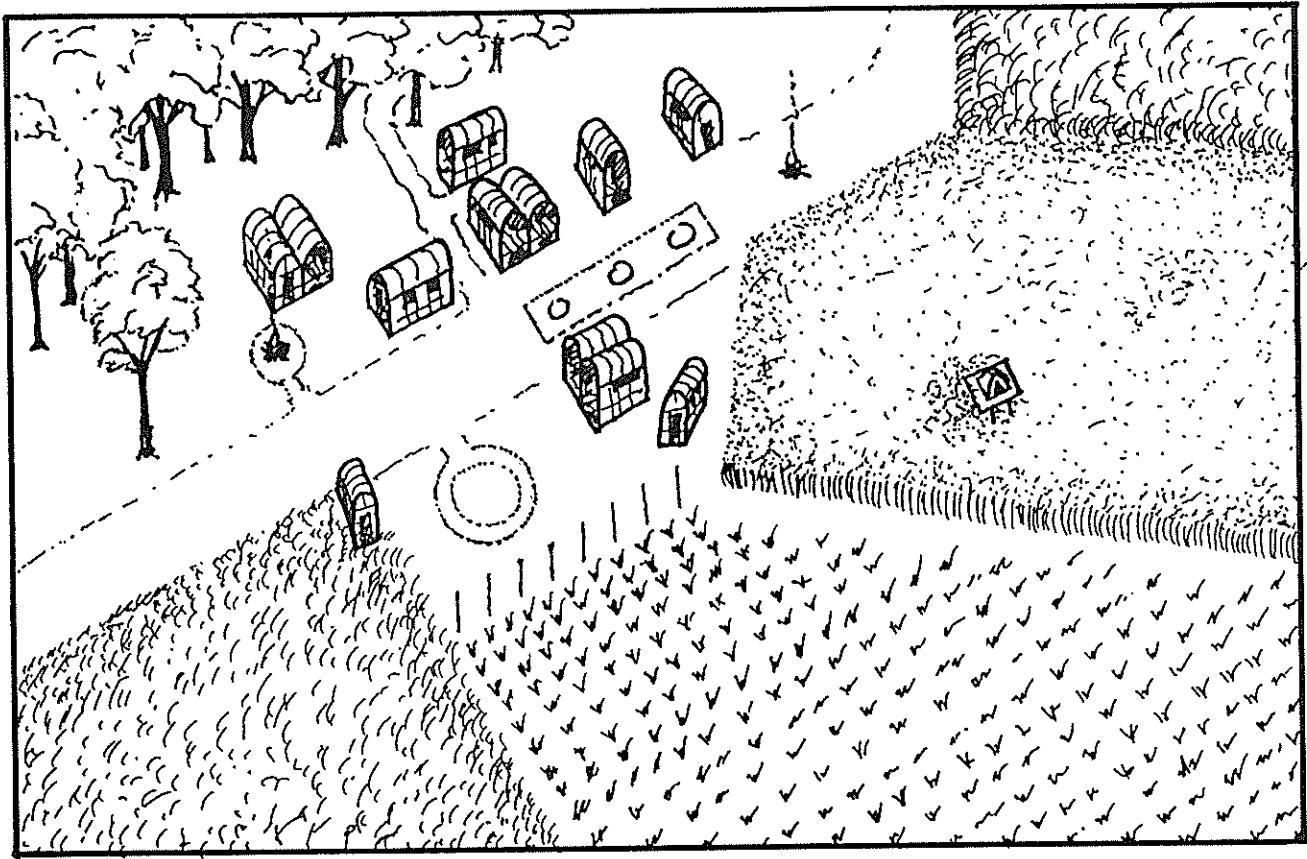
FIGURE 13
Spatial Distribution of Fire-ãltered Rock



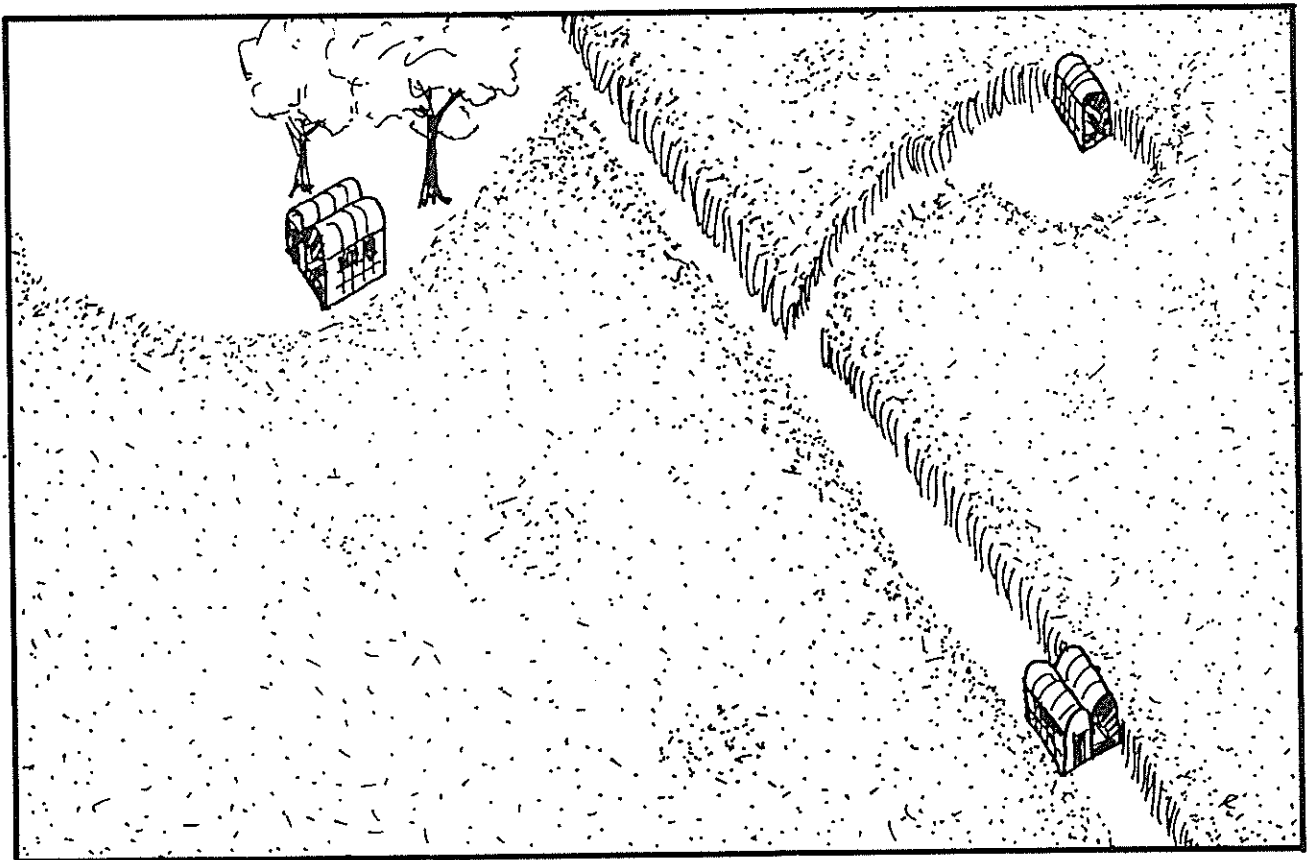
KEY

Fire-altered Rock less than 1 cm

Fire-altered Rock greater than 1 cm



MODEL I



MODEL II



MODEL III

Figure 14. Three Models of a Late Prehistoric Hamlet.

This series of three drawings illustrates the very different types of native settlements that might have been constructed in the old pasture. Differing in size and spatial organization, these settlements would be represented by distinctive archaeological records. To date, the late prehistoric Weantinoge site is thought to represent a hamlet or isolated wigwams, so Models II and III are probably more appropriate depictions. The 1986 block excavation may have exposed a part of a wigwam floor and its associated spaces, as illustrated in the upper right corner of Model III.

Given the small size of the excavation block, we cannot use the distributional maps to determine the scale of the late prehistoric settlement. We do know that late prehistoric ceramics were also recovered from the N-60 line in 1983 (Figure 4), some twenty-five meters north of the 1986 block. If these materials represent the same hamlet, then we have one indication of the minimum extent of the settlement's zone of use. It is possible that other sections of the pasture, further removed from the 1986 block, also contain portions of the hamlet. Although no artifacts were recovered earlier from test pits east of the W-0 line and south of the N-30 line, this evidence may not be truly reflective of the hamlet's size. Our work at Weantinoge, and other studies being conducted throughout southern New England, suggest that shovel testing has sometimes missed late prehistoric sites, subsequently revealed by block excavations.⁹

Thus it is important to realize that the 1986 block at the Weantinoge site may have uncovered only one part of a settlement, one type or pattern of use within a settlement, or most of a settlement, if the only archaeologically-sensitive space is between the N-30 and N-60 lines. Further block excavations in other parts of the pasture, as well as an expansion of the 1986 area, will help archaeologists understand the size and scale of, and the patterns of land use within, a late prehistoric native hamlet.

Some Thoughts about "Wigwam Spaces" at Weantinoge

It is possible that the 1986 block includes part of a wigwam space, here defined as a residential floor and its immediately-adjacent exterior areas. To some extent, the artifact densities in the block, together with the presence of prehistoric features, support this inference. There is no clear evidence of any structural remains such as lines of postmolds for house walls, hearths or fire basins for cooking or heating, or living floors compacted from walking and working. However the configuration of features and possible postmolds around the southeastern quadrant of the block, and their association with lower densities of artifacts (Figures 10, 11, 13), suggest that about forty percent of all of the space is relatively "clean."

Perhaps this pattern represents the difference between an interior house space or wigwam floor, located to the southeast, and exterior spaces immediately adjacent to a wigwam or between two wigwams, situated towards the northwestern section of the grid. In this case, the wigwam floor would contain lesser amounts and a smaller variety of artifacts, the result of sweeping and redeposition. Those units with higher amounts of materials would represent areas where specific types of activities took place (flint knapping, food processing), or where midden refuse was deposited from the insides of houses and other settings.

Comparative literature from southeastern coastal Connecticut (McBride 1985, Sturtevant 1975) indicates that wigwam spaces may be of a variety of shapes (usually oval to circular), and may encompass between 40 and 60 square meters. By extending the 1986 block to the south

and east, we could determine whether this pattern of cleaner space continued, and whether it is associated with more definite evidence of structural remains. If successful, this work would help us to understand how wigwam spaces are represented in the archaeological records of late prehistoric and early historic native hamlets in southern New England.

VIII. THE WEANTINOGE SITE AND THE FORT HILL DISTRICT:
FUTURE ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES OF "WHAT HAPPENED AFTER A.D. 1000"

The 1986 excavations at the Weantinoge site have demonstrated that an archaeological record of a late prehistoric settlement continues to exist intact in the old pasture. Although the pasture has been plowed periodically since the colonial period - shallow plowscars transect the excavated block in a north-south direction - the site's settlement pattern, features, and artifact distributions are preserved within the topmost layers of the floodplain. The somewhat minimal signs of native occupation first isolated in the brief 1983 study can now be seen to represent an important archaeological resource.

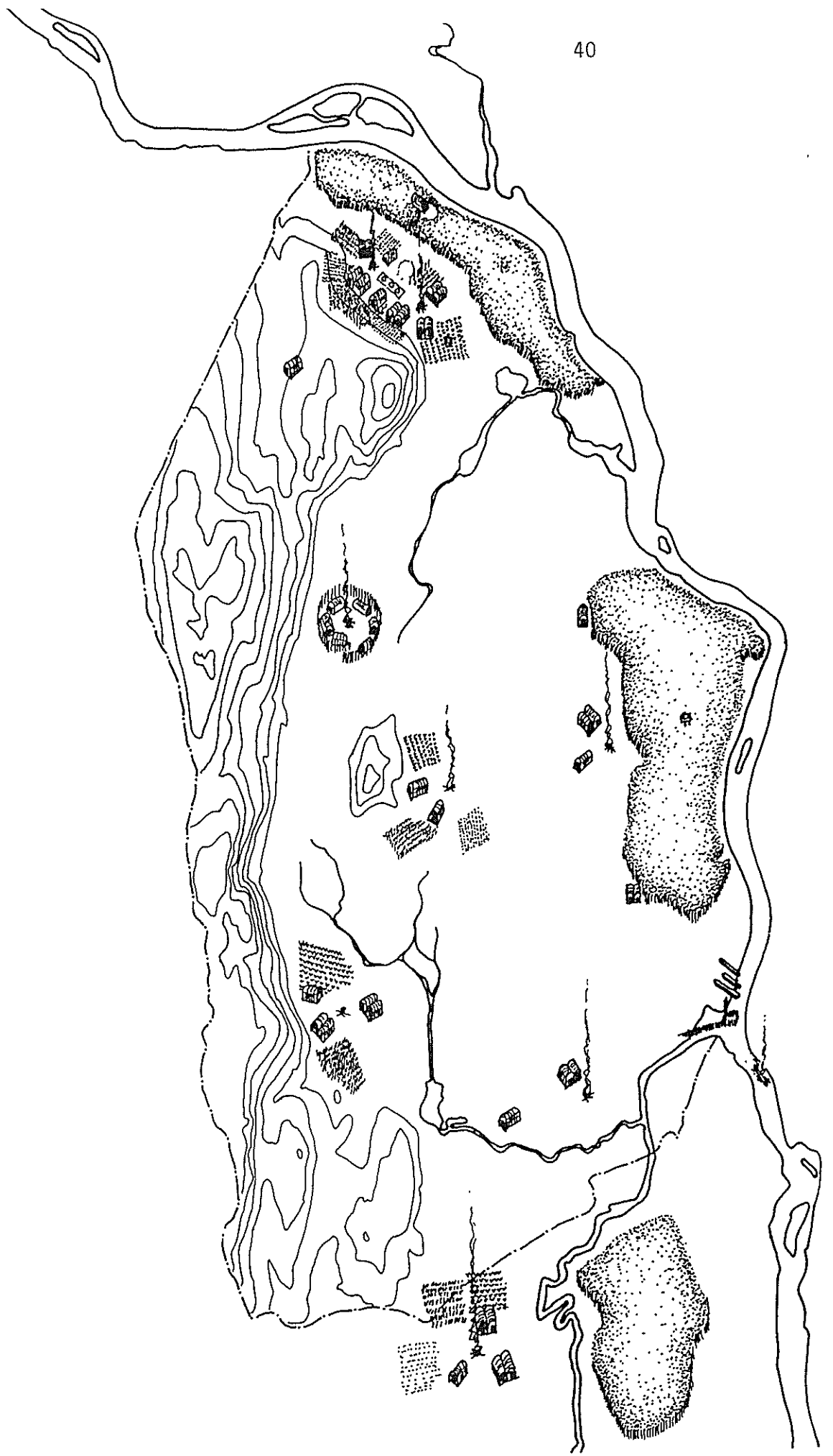
The importance of the Weantinoge site is in part a reflection of its relative uniqueness. The site is one of a small number that continues to exist; many archaeological sites in New Milford and Brookfield have been lost as these lands have been developed and used for residential and commercial purposes over the past two decades.

The Weantinoge site is also unique because it is one of the few late prehistoric settlements that has been identified and tested in these towns. Other similarly-small hamlets probably continue to exist in archaeological records along Still River's floodplain, precisely in the zone which has in part remained undeveloped in the twentieth century. Ironically, the field methods normally used by archaeologists to discover such sites may actually miss these hamlets. The 1983 and 1986 studies of the Weantinoge site are helping us to understand the size and spatial organization of such late prehistoric settlements. As future work at Weantinoge expands the block and clarifies the archaeological form of wigwam floors and spaces, it will be possible to adjust the scale of fieldwork and to find other hamlets along the Still and Housatonic rivers. And as more of these hamlets are discovered, it will become more apparent that these lands were settled, modified, and used extensively by native Indians in the ten centuries before colonists arrived (Figure 15).

The patterns of land use and settlement - even the societies themselves - were distinctly native and were probably very different from those more familiar and recognizable to the colonists. It probably was not until the 1750s, after more than thirty years of observation and interaction with native Indians, that the white settlers in the region began to understand how to read these native landscapes. Meanwhile the everyday lives, beliefs, social relations, and rituals of the native Indians were being transformed through the presence and actions of, and interactions with, the colonists and the colonial governments. Thus in some sense, as the settlers struggled to read and understand another culture, it was changing before their eyes.

Figure 15. A Regional Model of the Native Landscape
in and around Fort Hill, after A.D. 1000

This is a hypothetical, "bird's-eye view" of the native landscapes in and around Fort Hill during the late prehistoric and early historic periods. The American Indian Archaeological Institute will begin intensive surveys and excavations in 1987 and 1988 as part of a long-term research project focused on the archaeology and history of the region. Our purpose will be to explore what happened to native societies and landscapes after A.D. 1000.



The record of these native and colonial histories is preserved in part in the archives and documents of those who came to colonize in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But what is preserved is only a partial and prejudicial record; in fact, this record sometimes suggests that these lands were not settled by native Indians at all. Native traditions and knowledge suggest otherwise, indicating that the Fort Hill District and the adjacent drainage of the Still River were important landscapes for use and settlement, at least since A.D. 1000.

Another record, representative of this enduring native presence, is needed. It can be made available through the preservation and study of the late prehistoric and early historic archaeological sites of the region. Together with documents and native traditions, the future study and interpretation of these sites can tell us about what happened after A.D. 1000. The stories that will be told will not be the ones normally recited in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nor will they be the ones still heard today. Instead, future historians of the region will have to declare that there were native landscapes before New Milford began, landscapes that continued to be a significant focus and world for native Indians after A.D. 1700.

IX. NOTES

1. The important components from Still River in the Edward H. Rogers collection include collections from the Hatch Farm (76-1-386), Lanesville (76-1-606), and the Larsen Farm (76-1-717). A much larger collection from plowed fields along the Still River in New Milford is also included in the Rogers materials (76-1-722/1-303). All of these materials are stored at the AIAI.
2. The scale of these recent losses can be reconstructed through a comparison of the U.S.G.S. 7½" Topographic sheets for New Milford, Connecticut (1955 sheet and 1971 photorevision) and Danbury, Connecticut (1963 sheet and 1972 photorevision). As one proceeds upriver towards southern Brookfield and Danbury, the extent of graveling increases.
3. Inventory sheets for these sites and other known resources in the Still River Valley are on file at the AIAI.
4. This statement and others about the archaeological potential of the Preserve are included in the 1981 report prepared by the King's Mark Environmental Review Team. This and related documents are on file at the Research Department of the AIAI.
5. These materials are part of the John Pawloski collection (79-22-5,8).
6. These sites (6LF120,121) are represented by artifacts (AIAI 76-1-337,375,748) recovered from native burials excavated in the 1930s.
7. Steve Loring identified this raw material during a visit to the AIAI in January of 1987.
8. Notes and tables summarizing the ceramic assemblage were prepared by Jeffrey Maymon, and are on file at the AIAI.
9. This problem was explored recently in a session at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association. Titled "Where Are the Woodland Villages," this workshop was organized by Peter F. Thorbahn.

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