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# 4

*The Morris Birkbeck Estate*

Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies

Volume 4 2026



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VOLUME FOUR  
The Morris Birkbeck Estate

1. The Morris Birkbeck Estate  
*Archaeology at the "English Settlement" in Southeastern Illinois 1817-1835*  
Robert Mazrim, Curtis Mann, Valary Carraro, and William Weedman\_\_\_\_\_Page 1



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The Morris Birkbeck Estate  
 Archaeology at the “English Settlement” in Southeastern Illinois  
 1817-1835

Robert Mazrim, Curtis Mann, Valary Carraro and William Weedman



FIGURE 1: Morris Birkbeck.

## 1. Introduction

Robert Mazrim

During the earliest decades of Euro-American settlement of the Midwest, Illinois and Indiana became the sites of several “utopian” or “visionary” communities that were settled on the basis of religious or philosophical beliefs. Each was the product of educated, charismatic, and highly motivated individuals who enticed immigrants and residents of eastern communities with the promise of success on the new American frontier. The origin of these towns, and in some cases the character of their services and populations, differed rather substantially from neighboring communities.

In southeastern Illinois (Edwards County), two such towns – Albion and Wanborough – were founded by English gentlemen farmers George Flower and Morris Birkbeck, respectively, in 1819. Both built lavish estates, purchased thousands of acres of farmland, and invited business and craftsmen to their new frontier towns. Birkbeck wrote two books - *Notes on a Journey in America from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois* (1817) and *Letters from Illinois* (1818) - which are regarded as invaluable first-person insights into the settlement history of the Midwest. He also created the first State Agricultural Society, contributed to early abolitionist efforts, and served as the Secretary of State for Illinois (Figure 1).

Across the Wabash River in Indiana, the town of New Harmony was established in 1814 by George Rapp, leader of a German Lutheran separatist community known as the Harmony Society. Soon, the Harmonists had built 180 homes, stores, a brewery, mills, and two churches. In 1824, however, the entire community left their ten-year-old town to relocate near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. New Harmony was purchased by Robert Owen, a Scottish industrialist and social reformer. Under his direction, and that of his

business partner William Maclure, the community was repopulated and envisioned as a center of intellectual study and education (e.g. Lockwood 1905).

The two communities in Illinois and Indiana are well known in the historical literature of the American settlement of the Midwest. They were also intricately linked during the 1810s and 1820s. Aside from numerous business and financial connections, George Flower's father brokered the sale of Rapp's town to Owen. Morris Birkbeck drowned while returning home from New Harmony in 1825, and was buried in the New Harmony cemetery. Residents at Wanborough attempted to form an Owenite Society at Wanborough, but it was short-lived. Instead, many of the residents of Birkbeck's town moved to New Harmony during the late 1820s and 1830s.

Today, the town of New Harmony is known for its unique history and its unusually well-preserved architecture (much of it dating to the first quarter of the nineteenth century). It is also a popular tourist destination. In Illinois, the town of Albion gradually became a modern city and County Seat. Nearby, the town of Wanborough, platted by Morris Birkbeck, founded and was largely abandoned shortly after Birkbeck's death in 1825. Largely forgotten today, the site of Wanborough actually represents a rare "archaeological preserve" associated with this unique chapter in early Midwestern history.

The English Settlement first established by Morris Birkbeck and George Flower in 1817 is also well known to historians of the Old Northwestern frontier (Figure 2). One of these communities - the town of Albion platted for George Flower in 1819 - remains on modern maps as a small town in Edwards County, Illinois. The other - the town of Wanborough platted by Birkbeck in 1819 - failed to develop, and its former location is rarely a point of discussion. More importantly, its early demise inadvertently created an important archaeological resource. The archaeological remains associated with Wanborough serve as a direct reflection of the daily lives of the settlers in this unusual corner of the Illinois frontier.

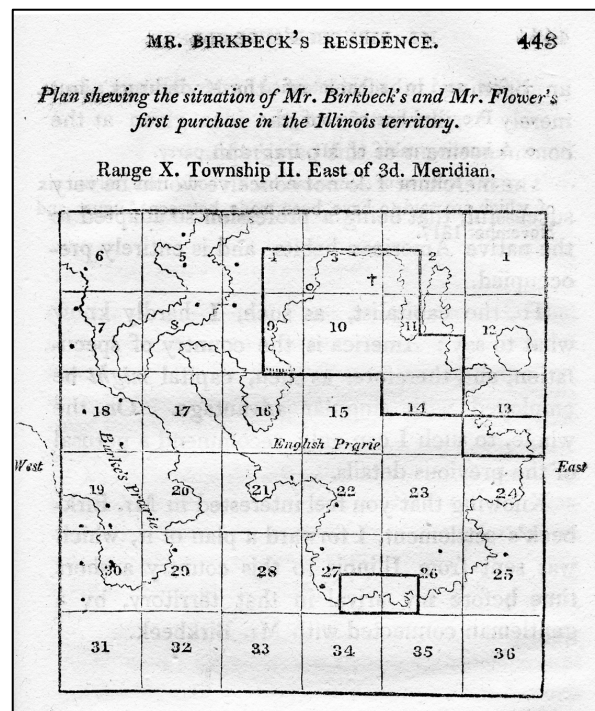


FIGURE 2: Map of Birkbeck and Flower's land holdings from Fearon 1819.

Upon his arrival in 1817, Morris Birkbeck built a small cabin near the northwestern edge of the prairie, immediately southwest of the village he would plat two years later. Construction of a new, much larger house started soon afterward. In September of 1819, Birkbeck noted “we are beginning to inhabit our house and things are looking very pleasant about us” (Thomson 1953: 57). His daughter Elizabeth reported that “We have got into our new house which is only partly finished; one of the upper rooms, which opens on to a balcony commanding a fine view over the prairie we have fitted up as our library” (Thomson 1953: 60).

Birkbeck himself noted that the house contained “thirteen rooms and two cellars, walled and floored with bricks” (Birkbeck 1819: 32). These details have direct relevance to the archaeological remains at the site of his estate. Also of interest to archaeologists is a remark made by Birkbeck in 1817: “We have just received our baggage, consisting of about 5 tons weight of our Wanborough conveniences such as linen, books, clothing etc.” (Thomson 1953: 38). Evidently, a considerable portion of the material culture on the site (presumably both durable and non-durable) was brought directly from England by Birkbeck himself.

Morris Birkbeck died in June of 1825, leaving his house to his son-in-law with the provision that Birkbeck’s two sons could occupy the house for two years. The family remained in the house for several years, and then dispersed. The house fell into disrepair and was described as nearly deserted by 1835.

This report describes the field and laboratory results of a brief archaeological investigation of the site of Birkbeck’s home, conducted in 2005 by the Sangamo Archaeological Center. The actual site of Birkbeck’s home, while known to some local residents, had not been previously identified or marked by historians or tested by archaeologists.

## **2. Morris Birkbeck’s Village of Wanborough**

Curtis Mann

The village of Wanborough was established in 1819 on the edge of what would become known as the English Prairie in Edwards County, Illinois. The village was initially one of two platted communities in the settlement founded by Morris Birkbeck and George Flower. Although the two had conceived the idea of the colony together, they parted ways early in its development. As a result, two towns were created - Wanborough by Birkbeck and Albion by Flower and his associates. Conceived as a village to accommodate newly arrived emigrants from Great Britain, Wanborough served as both a residential and commercial center for some members of the colony during its formative years. The site of the village is located in the portions of the northwest and southwest quarters of Section 3 Township 2 South Range 10 East, adjacent to Birkbeck’s house and farm.

With the arrival of new emigrants, Morris Birkbeck began the process of establishing a place for their settlement. George Flower noted that Birkbeck first had workers erect a “square of rough log cabins, with two doors in each, and a small sash-window in every door. This rendezvous, afterward called the barracks, was for all comers” (Flower 1882: 100). His son Bradford was soon put to the task of laying out a town on a quarter section of forested land. The Birkbecks chose to name the new village after their former farm in England.

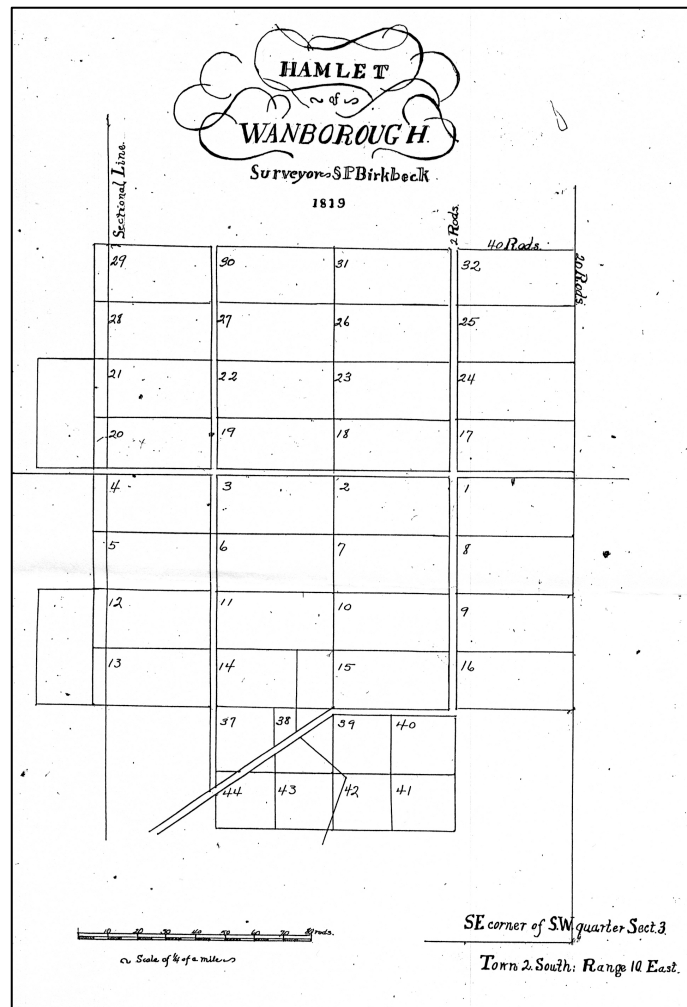


FIGURE 3: 1819 Plat of Wanborough.

In a letter written to a family member in England on February 3, 1819, Birkbeck's daughter Elizabeth wrote about her brother's work:

[Bradford Birkbeck] has lately been employed in laying out five-acre lots within half a mile of our house, which Papa sells for 20 dollars, upon a written agreement that it shall be fenced round and a house built upon it within eighteen months. Many of Papa's labourers have bought these lots and are now industriously building their cabins and laying out their gardens. These lots lay along a sweet brow just in the skirts of the woodland, which on some spots commands a fine view of the Prairie.  
(Thomson 1953: 55)

The plat of the village, or "hamlet" as it was described on the survey document, was recorded in August 1819 (Figure 3). The plat includes a total of forty lots but is numbered to indicate forty-four lots. Lots 33-36 do not appear on the plat. The plat has two north-south roads and two east-west roads. Lots 1-32 are five-acre lots, while lots 37-44 were two-and-a-half-acre lots. By the summer of 1819, a visitor reported the following conditions at Wanborough:

"About a mile and a half from here is Birkbeck's settlement, which he calls the HAMLET, consisting of about ten cabins built on five-acre lots which he sells at 20 dollars per lot for

the land only; the purchaser builds his own cabin. The settlement here consists of about 460 persons from all parts of England; some from London – poor devils! As much business here as they would have in the moon”.

(Dukes 1950: 143)

Although these two sources indicate that Birkbeck was selling lots to individuals and requiring them to build cabins, only one sale of lots was recorded in 1819 - the conveyance of three lots to Joseph Hanks for \$60. A possible explanation for this lack of sales records could be that Birkbeck actually made informal sales with purchasers. Individuals may have agreed to buy 5-acre lots for \$20, but did not bother to record the sale until after they had built a house. In a letter written on July 31, 1819, Birkbeck stated that “I have built fifteen cabins with floors of plank, and mostly with two glazed windows each” (Sparks 1907: 31). This remark might refer to the “barracks”. Birkbeck also noted in the same letter that he had built a forge and carpenters’ shops as part of the improvements he listed for his own farm. William Hall’s 1823 census of Wanborough notes that a blacksmith shop was located on Lot 19, for which there is no extant sale record. The location of the carpenters’ shops is unknown.

In 1820 John Woods provided the most thorough description of the village, noting that it contained: “...25 cabins, a tavern, a store or two, and several lodging houses; and several carpenters, bricklayers, brick-makers, smiths, wheelwrights and sawyers; also a tailor and butcher. A horse or ox mill is building, a malt-house planned out, and a new brick building for a tavern, and several new houses began. As water is scarce, there are some more wells digging. Mr. Birkbeck, in July, found a tolerable good spring, by digging only six feet, about 300 yards from his house but several of the wells lately dug have little water in them.

(Woods 1968: 118).

The population of Wanborough peaked early in the development of the settlement, reaching approximately 100 residents in 1820. By 1825, the population had been reduced to roughly half that number. One principal reason for this fall was the departure of many of the village’s residents who chose to relocate to Robert Owen’s communitarian social experiment at nearby New Harmony, Indiana (Edwards County Historical Society 1980: 26). Most of the village’s services (such as several stores, two taverns, a tailoring business, and a brewery) had ceased operation by this time. The town’s blacksmith had departed for New Harmony, but was eventually replaced. Another loss to the community was the death of Morris Birkbeck on June 4, 1825.

Despite the loss of population, and of Birkbeck himself in 1825, Wanborough continued in a diminished state. The mill remained in operation during this period. Thomas Cooper appears to have built a pottery kiln in 1832 or 1833. The blacksmith shop was reopened about 1834. A visitor to the village in 1835 noted the presence of these three businesses and described the housing stock as “eight or ten dilapidated huts” (Gustorf 1969: 51). A carding mill was also in operation in the village in 1835.

By the 1840s, all of the businesses associated with Wanborough had closed or moved to nearby Albion. The majority of the lots were acquired by a small number of individuals, such as David Hearsom (in the northwest portion of the village), the Prichard family (on the east side), and Francis Hanks on the south side. The village plat was never formally vacated. However, most of the village lots were eventually converted into agricultural purposes and were gradually integrated into adjacent farms. This shift is reflected in the deed records, which began to describe property boundaries in measurements based on the location of nearby section lines rather than by original lot numbers.

The transformation of Wanborough from a village into farmland was gradual. The community continued to have a demographic “half-life” of sorts. Some business activity, together with a church and a

schoolhouse, kept the community's identity at least partially intact through the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A tannery was operating in the community by 1850, and a union meeting house was constructed near the cemetery by this time. Ann Birkbeck, the granddaughter of Morris, had inherited the remains of the family holdings in the area, including the property where the cemetery and union meeting house stood. She deeded a quarter acre of land to the building's trustees on September 1, 1850. This church building remained active until it was replaced by a new structure in 1892.

By 1880, a new store had opened in the community, and a competitor appeared in 1885. The second store was reputed to be the only business in the dry county to sell alcohol illegally. The local newspaper, which described this business as a "gallon shop," expressed satisfaction upon learning the business was scheduled to close by the end of April 1887 (*Albion Journal*, 7 April 1887: 1).

By the turn of the century, all of the businesses affiliated with the old Wanborough locale had closed. The church remained in use until 1925, when it was demolished. The school building was eventually closed, and its students then attended school in Albion. Today, only the village cemetery and a historic marker stand as a reminder of the former village.

### **3. Descriptions of the Morris Birkbeck House**

Curtis Mann

An unusual number of sources provide details on the construction, occupation, and demolition of the Birkbeck house. Reports from Birkbeck himself, along with family members, neighbors, and visitors made this house one of the most noted buildings for its place and time in Illinois.

Morris Birkbeck's plans for his own house in the English Settlement appear to have been to replicate the one that he left behind in England. He noted, "I shall build and furnish as good a house as the one I left with suitable outbuildings, garden, orchard & c." (Birkbeck 1818: 18). Birkbeck first contracted for the construction of a small cabin near the edge of a timber where it would face the prairie located to the south and east. The cabin was built two hundred yards from the future location of the house.

In June 1818, Thomas Hulme visited the Birkbeck house site and reported "at present his habitation is a cabin, the building of which cost only 20 dollars; this little hutch is near the spot where he where he is about to build his house, which he intends to have in the most eligible situation in the prairie for the convenience to fuel and for shelter in the winter, as well as for breezes in the summer, and will, when that is completed make one of its appurtenances" (Boewe 1962: 91). Wanborough resident John Woods also appreciated the location, noting that it "stands pleasantly and commands a fine view of the prairie (Woods 1968: 120). Construction of the house began soon afterward.

In February 1819, Morris Birkbeck noted that his family was still lodging in cabins, but construction of the house was progressing (Thomson 1953: 53). Birkbeck's inability to procure seasoned building materials delayed the finishing of the house (*Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 1820: 607). The cost of these materials apparently made building the house expensive for its time (*Weekly Messenger*, 22 September 1825: 4).

The Birkbeck family was able to move into the partly finished house by September of 1819. (Thomson 1953: 57). At the time, the Birkbeck family consisted of Morris, his sons Charles and Bradford, and daughters Elizabeth and Prudence. Elizabeth reported at that time "one of the upper rooms, which opens on to a balcony commanding a fine view over the prairie we have fitted up as our library" (Thomson

1953: 60). Adlard Welby visited the Birkbeck settlement during this time and made similar remarks regarding its status. Welby reported the library was the only room that had been finished. He met Birkbeck's daughters in the library, where they were busy with ornamental needlework. Welby noted everything in the library "was well arrayed to give effect, as well as the sterling, good, and for a private library, a large assortment of books" (Welby 1821: 117).

William Faux visited the house two months later and described the house as:

"...very capacious and convenient, furnished with winter and summer apartments, piazzas and balconies, and a fine library, to which you ascend by an outward gallery. Every comfort is found in this abode of the Emperor of the Prairies as he is here called. It is situated out of the village and on an elevation, having a fine view of his estate and the prairies in front. It is a pity that it is not built of brick or stone instead of wood; once on fire it will be inextinguishable, and the loss of comfort and property considerable and moreover, irrecoverable."

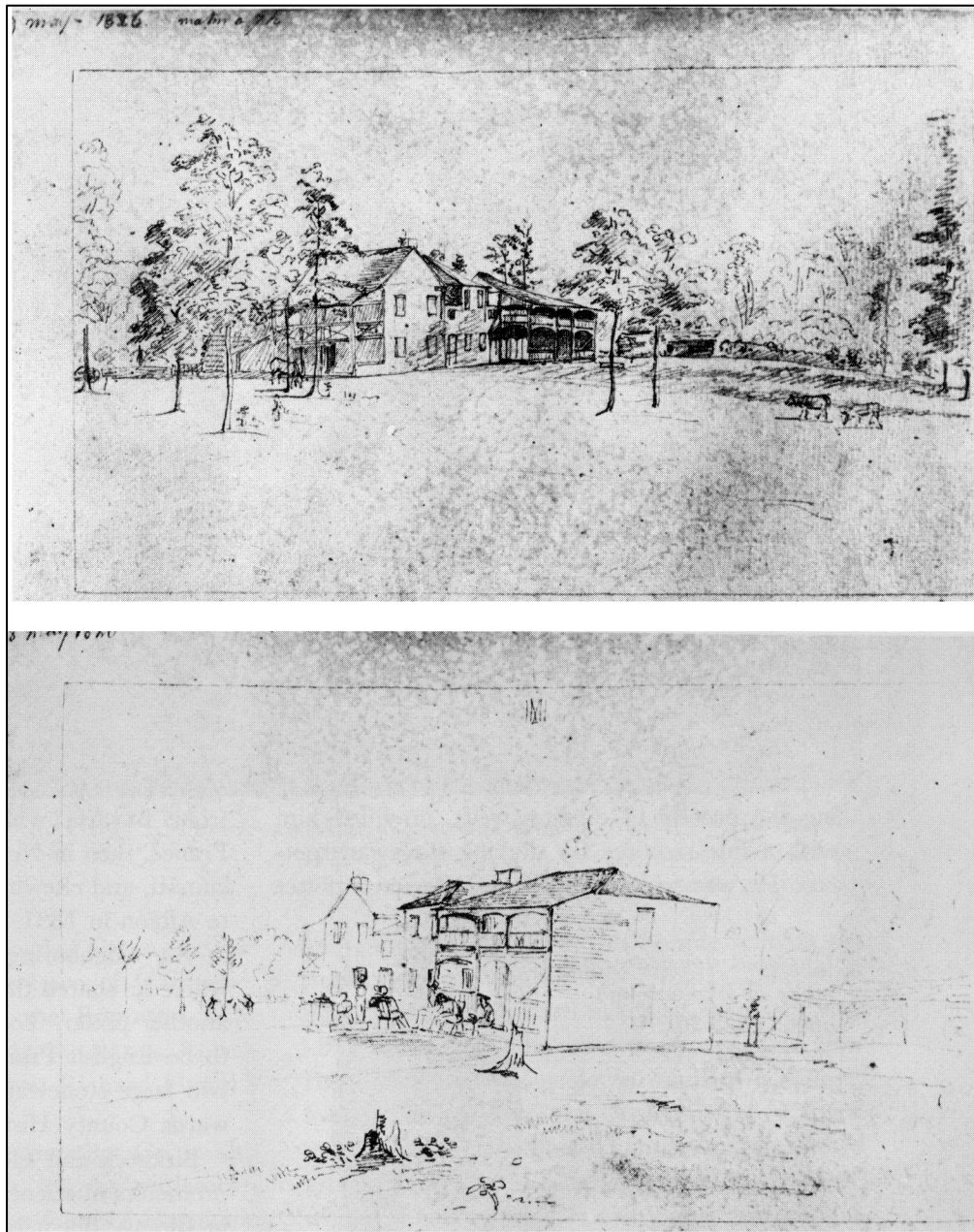
(Boewe 1962: 130)

By February 1820, the Birkbeck family was living comfortably in their frame house, which included a handsome dining room with whitewashed walls (*Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 1820: 609). The Birkbeck house was one of the larger homes located on the eastern side of the new state. One local resident described it as a "large and commodious mansion" (*Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 1819: 690). Woods described the house as a frame and log building of good size. Birkbeck described the house as of mostly frame construction, with walls filled in with brick. He said it contained thirteen rooms and was fitted with two cellars walled and floored with bricks (Birkbeck 1819: 32). In 1822, a visitor to the English Settlement reported the Birkbeck residence was a large frame house of about 90 feet in length (*Weekly Messenger* 1825: 4).

Morris Birkbeck died in June 1825, and his house was left to his son-in-law Gilbert T. Pell with the provision that Birkbeck's two sons (Charles and Bradford) could occupy the house for two years after his death. Bradford Birkbeck reported in August 1825 that he was living in the house along with his brother Charles, sister Prudence, and her husband Francis Hanks.

During the summer of 1826, others joined the Birkbeck family in the house. Their purpose was to experiment with a form of communal living modeled after Robert Owen's utopian community at New Harmony, Indiana. Dissatisfied with Owen's experiment, brothers William and Philip M. Price, along with their families, left New Harmony and relocated to the Birkbeck House (Wunsch 2009: 133). English architect Stedman Whitwell was also among the participants. Little record of the experiment survives, but by the end of the summer, all members of the group except the Birkbeck family had departed (Bestor 1950: 214).

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, another member of Robert Owen's New Harmony community, also visited the English Settlement. He may have been at Wanborough during the period when the Prices and others were residing in the Birkbeck House. Lesueur, a French naturalist and artist, arrived at New Harmony aboard the "Boatload of Knowledge," which consisted of a group of scientists, educators, and intellectuals who traveled together down the Ohio River to join the social experiment at New Harmony (Lockwood 1905: 81). During his time in the region, Lesueur made several excursions into the surrounding countryside to collect specimens and produce sketches. On one visit to Wanborough, he drew scenes of the Birkbeck House and several other homes in the settlement (Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4:** Charles Lesueur’s 1826 drawings of the Birkbeck estate.

Gilbert Pell and family were living in the house in 1830 when James Stuart drove through Wanborough. Stuart observed that the house and property were as not as well managed as they were during Morris’ tenure. He noted Pell’s disinterest in the maintenance of the property.

“Mr. Birkbeck was drowned in the Wabash River some years ago, and none of his sons were in a situation to succeed him here. Since his death, the property has not been managed as he would have managed it. Mr. Pell, one of his sons-in-law, is here but, I was afterwards told, has no turn for proceeding with the improvements. It is, however, sufficiently apparent that Mr. Birkbeck was possessed of a very comfortable settlement here, and that his residence and the accommodation afforded were in substance such as he represented them in publications.”

(Stuart 1833: 381)

The Pells lived in the house for a about a year and then departed. They travelled to New Orleans, presumably to follow the Birkbeck brothers to Mexico. Gilbert Pell sold the house and land to New Orleans merchant Daniel T. Walden. The Birkbeck brothers also sold their inherited land to Walden, with Pell acting as their agent.

With ownership of the property in the hands of an absentee landlord, the house fell into disrepair. A description of it was made on September 10, 1835 by Frederick Julius Gustorf.

“Not far from here, on the western side of the Boltenhouse Prairie, was Birkbeck’s country home, a plantation of four to five hundred acres that now lies deserted. During the lifetime of its founder, this settlement is supposed to have been magnificent; but now the land is covered with high weeds, part of the house is torn down and the remainder is near collapse. The land, which by nature is very productive, with a charming view of the prairie, belongs to a merchant in New Orleans who has tried for two years to sell it for \$1.25 per acre.”  
(Gustorf 1969: 51-52)

In 1837, English entomologist Edward Doubleday visited Wanborough while on a tour of North America. Doubleday’s report was similar to that of Gustorf’s.

“We reached Albion to dinner, calling at once on J. Clark and afterward walked to Wanborough. D. Prichard’s house does not answer Stuart’s description as being like an English villa, but it stands pleasantly, and is, for that country, a very good house. We were hospitably received, and had our luggage fetched from Albion. The following day we walked to Birkbeck’s farm. The house is two-thirds pulled down: much of the land is so entirely overgrown with brambles, that you could scarcely suppose it had ever been cultivated: everything about the place is backwards.”  
(Doubleday 1838: 204)

Joseph B. Shepherd purchased the land from its New Orleans owners in 1856. The land has remained in possession of the Shepherd/Mann family.

## **4. Archaeological Fieldwork**

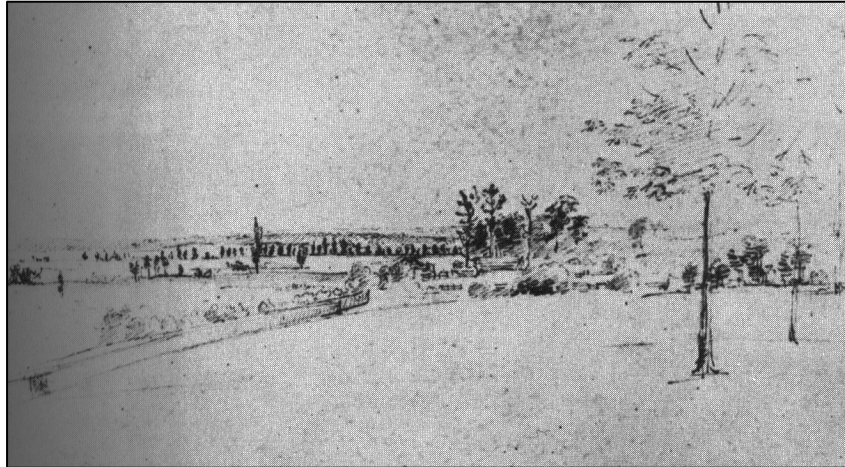
Robert Mazrim

While the general location of the Birkbeck estate has been familiar within the local community for generations, historian Edgar Dukes synthesized oral traditions, land purchase records, and descriptions of property contained in the Birkbeck's will. His research supported the oral traditions that the Birkbeck site lay outside of the platted town of Wanborough, in Section 10 (Dukes 1945). Further, period descriptions of the topographic setting of the farm (particularly with regard to the timberline and the prairie to the southeast) fit comfortably with the information recorded on the General Land Office survey map of Section 10.

In 2005, the Sangamo Archaeological Center (SAC) was asked to assess the state of the archeological remains associated with Birkbeck's 1817-1840 settlement (Mazrim 2005). The early nineteenth century plat of Wanborough was digitally overlaid onto modern topographical and aerial photographs of the area. The resulting maps indicated that many of the properties associated with the 1810s -1830s occupations had experienced little impact since the mid-nineteenth century. A survey of selected sites within the 1819 plat of Wanborough discovered intact archaeological deposits associated with at least four town lots. Further, the

proposed site of Morris Birkbeck's 1817 farmstead was also examined and found to contain rich and well-preserved archaeological deposits dating to the 1810s and 1820s.

The site of Morris Birkbeck's home is today occupied by a dwelling constructed during the 1960s. Based on the excavations conducted in 2005, it appears that the site of Birkbeck's dwelling (or a portion of that dwelling) escaped damage by later occupations, and is today situated in a mown yard and garden. Also in this portion of the property is a stone-lined well, said to have been built during Birkbeck's tenure. The yard is situated at the edge of a gentle slope trending to the east, at the base of which is a small secondary drainage. The view from the yard is nearly identical to the view drawn by Charles Lesueur from "M's veranda" in 1826 (Figure 5).



**FIGURE 5:** Lesueur's 1826 sketch "from the Piazza of M", shown with 2005 view of the commencement of excavations of the cellar. Note the similarity of the landscape. Birkbeck's "piazza" was probably located very near the excavation unit in the foreground.

The Sangamo Archaeological Center began archaeological investigation at the Birkbeck site with a two-day excavation in March 2005, and continued with a four-day excavation in September (Figure 6). That testing encountered a large, subsurface feature (Feature 1) that appears to be a subfloor cellar, measuring as large as 15 by 20 feet. Based on the temporally sensitive artifacts recovered from the feature, the cellar was abandoned and filled prior to 1840, producing materials dating circa 1815 to 1835, appropriate to the tenure of the Birkbeck family.

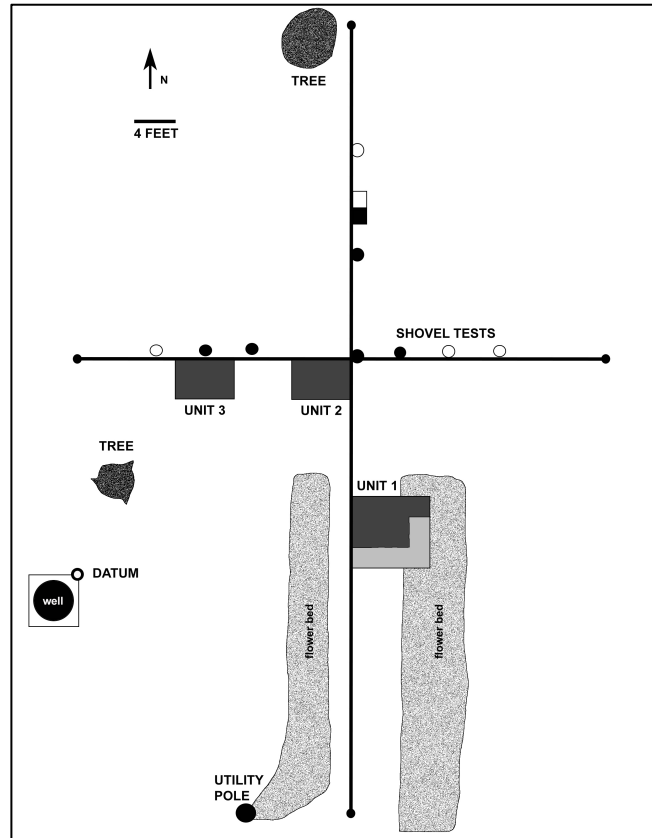


FIGURE 6: Base map of 2005 excavations.

A large stone lined well believed to date to Birkbeck's tenure is located at the edge of the yard, immediately west of the archaeological footprint of the house, and is open and still in use on the farm (Figure 7). In 2005, a datum was erected at the northeast corner of that well. An east-west baseline was run 20 feet north of the datum eastward for 48 feet. Seven shovel tests were placed along that baseline, four of which were positive. A north-south baseline was centered on the east-west line. Five shovel tests were excavated along this line, four of which were positive (Figure 6). The results suggested the presence of a large subsurface feature, probably a cellar, dating to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



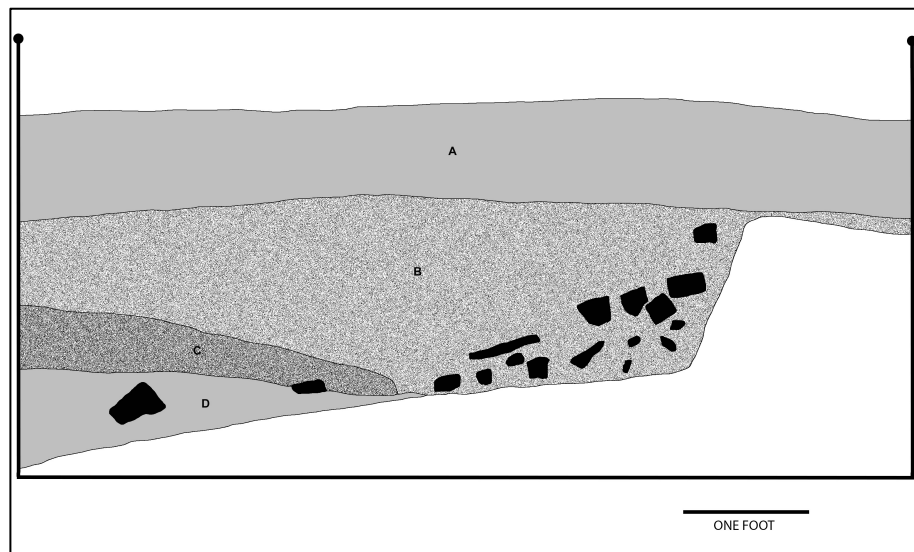
FIGURE 7: Early 19<sup>th</sup> century well at the Birkbeck Site.

Units 1 and 3 were placed so that they would overlap the edge of the feature, as indicated by positive and negative shovel tests. A small window or expanded shovel test on the north-south baseline may have encountered the northern edge of the feature, but it was not fully excavated. From shovel test and test unit information, the feature would have measured over 20 feet north-south by approximately 15 feet east-west. This seems rather large for a frontier context cellar in pre-1840 Illinois (e.g. Mazrim 2002, 2008). But of course, Birkbeck's house was unusual in many other respects.

It is also possible that, in fact, the excavations in 2005 found two adjacent cellars measuring approximately 10 by 15 feet. A period description of the house described two separate cellars beneath the house. If this were the case, however, they would have been situated so close together that the balk between them was narrow enough to escape notice in the shovel tests. In any case, it seems likely that Units 1, 2, and 3 each sampled the same feature, either from the southern half of a very large cellar, or from across the span of what would be the southernmost cellar in a closely placed pair.

### Unit 1

Unit 1 exposed the southern and eastern walls of the cellar (Figures 8-9). The unit began as a 3-by-5-foot excavation but was expanded to the east to follow the contours of the south wall to the southeast corner of the facility. There was a jog of sorts in the south wall, perhaps associated with a fireplace footing on the ground surface. Unit 1 is the only unit that provided a depth for this feature. The maximum depth of the floor of the cellar in this unit was approximately 36 inches below ground surface.



**FIGURE 8:** Unit 1, North Profile.

From the information gathered from Unit 1, the clay walls of the cellar may have been originally secured by planking, but no posts or nailers were evident in the clay floor or wall of the cellar itself. In this area, at least, the feature suffered substantial erosion. This caused considerable slumping of the southern wall. That slump covered brick debris in clean clay, including a small section of brick wall where the bricks tumbled into the cellar while still mortared together. The presence of the brick supports the idea of a nearby chimney accommodated by the jog in the eastern half of Unit 1.

That the clay wall slumped on top of this brick suggests that the chimney may have been pushed into the cellar, but only after it was partially filled with clay mixed with topsoil and debris. The cellar then remained open long enough for water or other forces to cause the walls to slump on top of the brick debris.

No substantial silting was evident in profile, however. Alternatively, if the cellar was brick-lined, it was very thoroughly salvaged, at least in this portion of the facility.



**FIGURE 9:** Unit 1, excavation view to the southwest.

The bulk of the feature fill in this unit consisted of a yellow-brown clay mixed with slight silt modeling, particularly against the wall. That fill was laden with brick fragments, some limestone, as well as indications of wall plaster. Deposited on top of this clay was a zone of gray-brown silt loam that probably represents surrounding topsoil that was used to cap the fill of the abandoned cellar. Compared to Units 2 and 3, Unit 1 produced little domestic material, but it is consistent with a closure during the mid-1830s.

### Unit 2

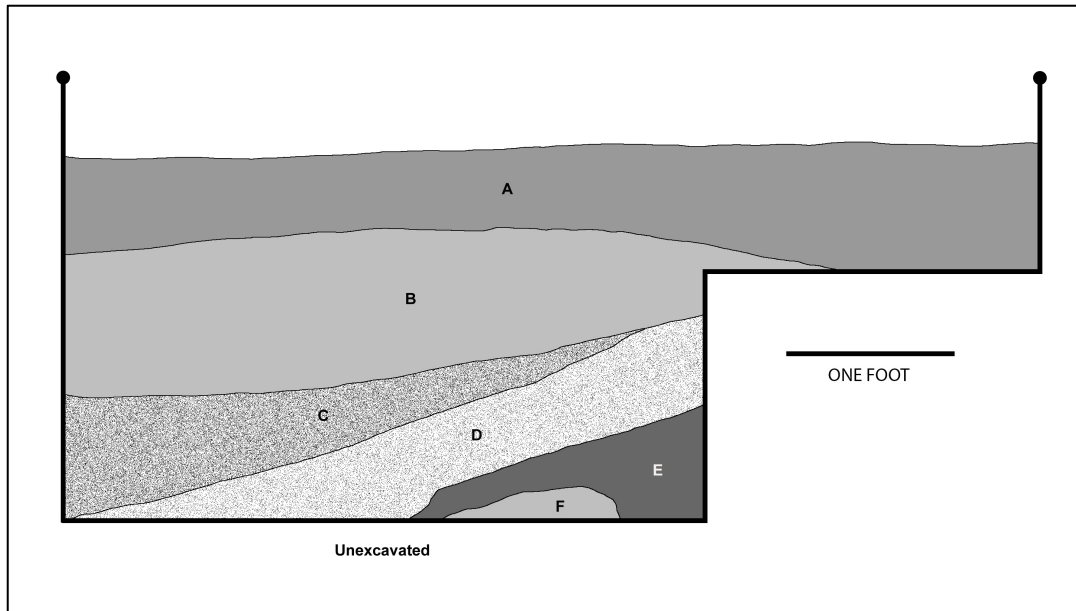
Unit 2 was located near the center of what would be a single large cellar, or instead, it may be situated in the central north portion of the southernmost of two adjacent cellar features. No walls were encountered within that unit. Extremely dry soil conditions prevented excavation to the base of the cellar. In both Units 2 and 3, the fill was so compacted and dried that hand troweling was nearly impossible and threatened to damage the artifacts within.

The stratigraphy of Unit 2 consisted of a reasonably typical stratification of silt loams and clayey loams reflective of the intentional filling of the cellar feature (Figure 10). In this case, this involved the borrowing of nearby topsoils that were heavily laden with domestic midden. Some of that debris (buttons, unused gunflints, etc.), may have been deposited on the ground surface beneath the house via gaps in the flooring.

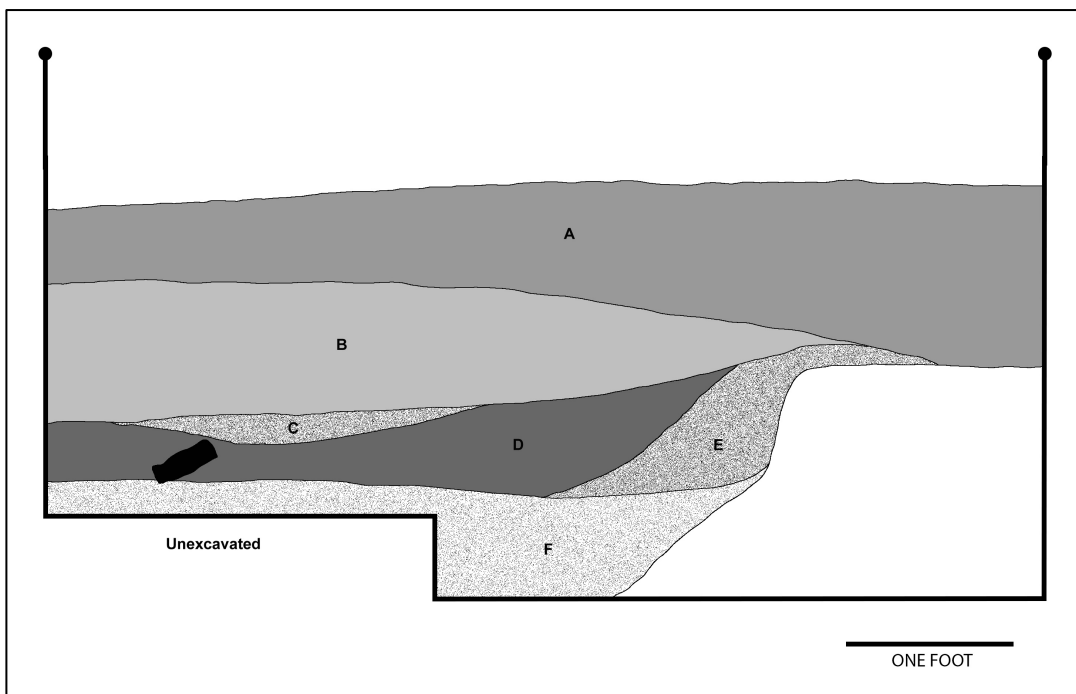
### Unit 3

Unit 3 exposed either the west wall of a large cellar feature or the west wall of the southernmost cellar in what may have been a pair. While it too contained a reasonably typical stratified filling sequence, the upper zones on the western end of the feature displayed evidence of a stairway into the cellar (Figures 11 and 12). Thus, Unit 3 appears to have been placed atop a bulkhead entrance. The actual western wall of the cellar, then, may be two or three feet further east, reducing its east-west dimensions.

In-situ evidence of the stairway consisted of a very sharply defined dark organic soil, along and under which were intentionally placed fragmented and whole bricks that were used to chink and stabilize the wooden planks above. Essentially, it appears the bulkhead entrance was constructed by excavating a ramp into the sterile clay. Inside this was constructed a wooden stairway that was chinked and supported by bricks and broken brick debris.



**FIGURE 10:** Unit 2, South Profile.



**FIGURE 11:** Unit 3, South Profile.



**FIGURE 12:** Brick chinking of stairway, Unit 3.

## **5. Artifacts**

Valery Carraro, Robert Mazrim, William Weedman

This discussion focuses on the artifacts from Units 1-3, all associated with the Feature 1 cellar. Artifact analysis was conducted in 2025 at the FICAS laboratory by Carraro, under the supervision of Mazrim. Weedman independently analyzed the architectural materials.

### **Refined Ceramics**

A minimum of 81 refined ceramic vessels is present in the Feature 1 sample (Figure 13). This includes porcelain, creamware, pearlware, and whiteware. The lack of ironstone is consistent with an abandonment in the 1830s. The assemblage is composed of redeposited, heavily fragmented vessels, many of which are represented by small, singular fragments. Pearlware dominates the sample (54%), followed by porcelain (22%). The last years of the assemblage are represented by whiteware (13%). Creamware (9%) and a single faience vessel complete the sample. Teawares outnumber tablewares by a ratio of 2:1. The dominance of teawares over tablewares follows a ubiquitous pattern noted in pre-1840 rural contexts in Illinois (Mazrim 2002, 2008). Surprisingly, given the diverse character of the sample, no toiletwares are present.

### **PORCELAIN**

The size and diversity of the porcelain sample is unusual, and is one of the largest assemblages recovered from early nineteenth century Euro-American domestic contexts in Illinois (e.g. Mazrim 2002, 2008). Chinese Export, Cantonese, and French gold-banded porcelains are present (Figures 14 and 15). A minimum of 19 porcelain vessels were recovered from Feature 1.

The porcelain assemblage is dominated by teawares - primarily cups and saucers (n=10). There are two matching cup and saucer sets. One of the sets is of Cantonese origin. The other set features a transfer-printed Chinoiserie pattern, with the rim of the cup highlighted in gold. Another cup is overglaze painted in the “Familie Rose” pattern, which is somewhat common in eighteenth century contexts in Illinois (e.g. Mazrim 2011). Two polychrome overglaze-painted saucers and three French gold-banded vessels complete the porcelain teaware assemblage. At least one teacup had a handle.

FEATURE: Birkbeck F1	Plate/Pitr	Dish	Bowl	Pitcher	Other Table	Cup	Saucer	Tea/Sgr Pot	Other Tea	Chamber	Ewer	Basin	Other	Ti	Remarks
Faience: white													1		drug pot
Faience: painted															
Faience: brun															
Porcelain: undecorated															
Porcelain: painted b&w														1	possible ginger jar
Porcelain: painted PC						1	2								
Porcelain: French gold band						1	1	1 sugar							cup=handled
Porcelain: Cantonese	6	1				1	1							1	Ti=punch bowl?
Porcelain: printed						1	1								
Creamware: undecorated	3					1							1		small drug pot
Creamware: banded/dipt			1												
Creamware: painted															
Creamware: printed															
Creamware: other				1											floral molded & burnt
Pearlware: shell edged	6	2													1=muffin size plate
Pearlware: other edged	2														
Pearlware: banded/dipt														1	dendritic bowl or pitcher
Pearlware: china glaze painted															
Pearlware: mineral PC painted						4	4								
Pearlware: MC broad painted						1	1								
Pearlware: PC broad painted															
Pearlware: blue printed	3					8	8	1 tea						2	1 Ti= possible pepper pot. 2 cups=handled
Pearlware: other															
Whiteware: undecorated															
Whiteware: shell edged	1														platter, other edged, red
Whiteware: banded/dipt			2												
Whiteware: PC broad painted															
Whiteware: PC sprig painted						1	2								
Whiteware: sponged															
Whiteware: blue printed							1								
Whiteware: other color printed	1					1	1								plate & cup=red saucer=green
Whiteware: other															
Ware type indeterminate															
Dry bodied black or red															
Silver luster															
Yellow-glazed															
Other : wedgewood jasperware														1	white relief on blue background/hollow
Other :															
<b>TOTALS: 81</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>					<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	

FIGURE 13: Refined ceramics, minimum vessel count.

Most commonly in Illinois, in early nineteenth century contexts, porcelain is not only rare, but it is generally confined to teawares. Here, a surprising number of tablewares (mnv=7) includes Cantonese plates, a platter, and a deep dish. A thick-bodied Cantonese hollowware may possibly be a punch bowl.

A possible Chinese “ginger jar” is represented by a base or foot fragment. Finally, a single fragment of Wedgewood or Wedgewood-style “Jasperware” vessel features typical white relief decoration over a blue background. Represented only by a single fragment, the vessel is unique in the archaeological literature of Illinois and was probably among the goods that were carried with Birkbeck during his immigration.

#### TIN-GLAZED

A small, plain drug or cosmetic jar has a flared lip and was less than four inches tall (Figure 16). It is tin-glazed in a white enamel and is probably French faience.

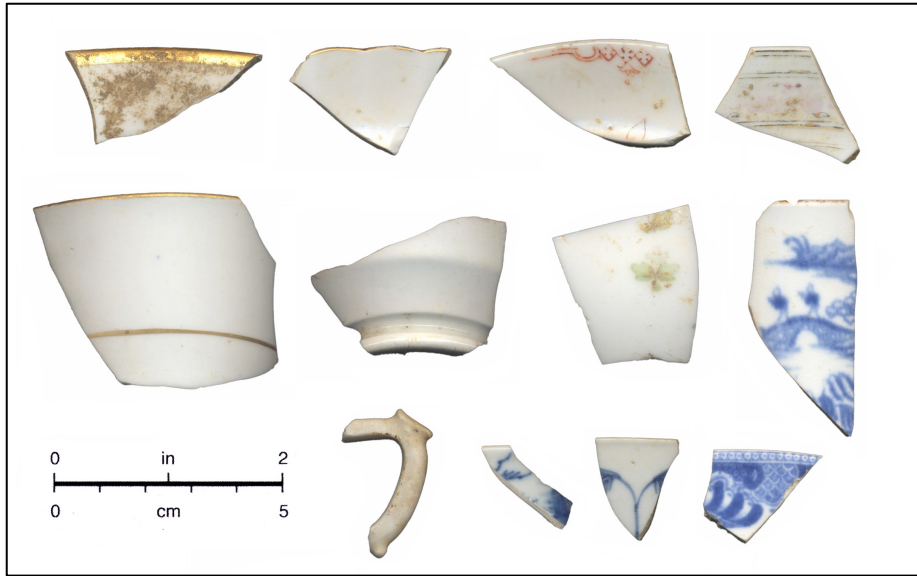


FIGURE 14: Porcelain teawares.

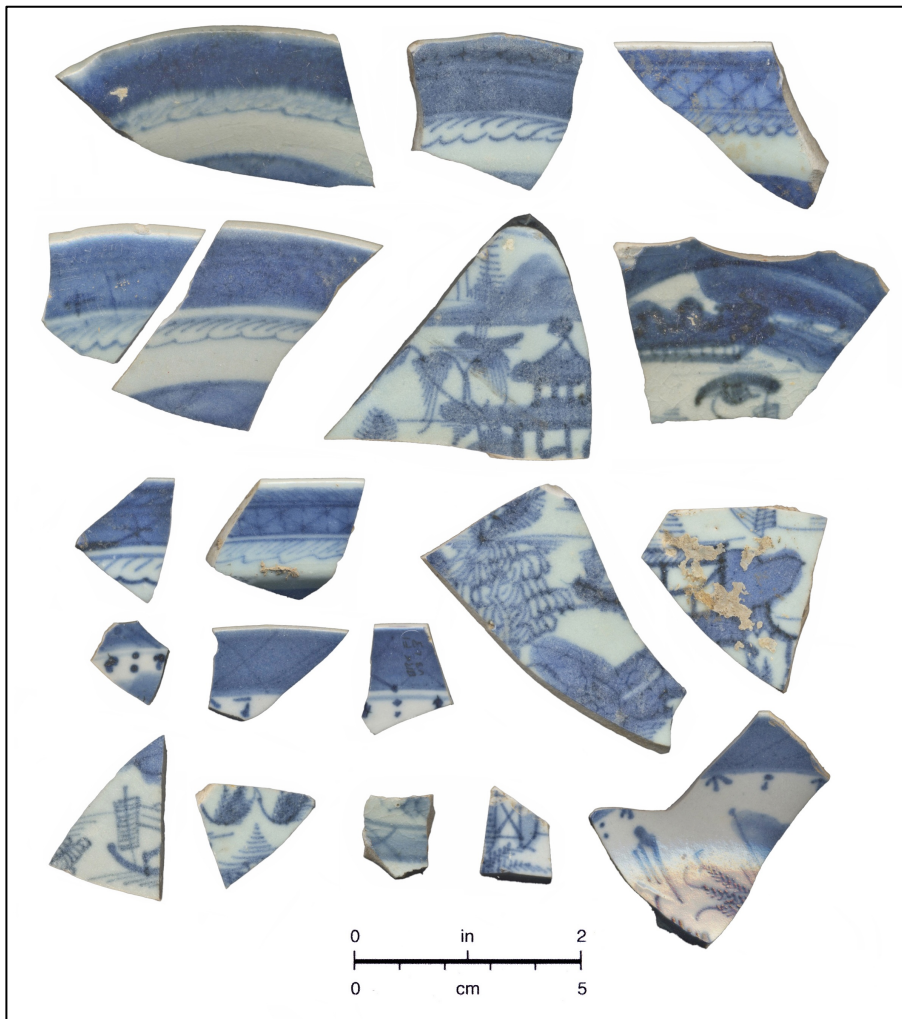
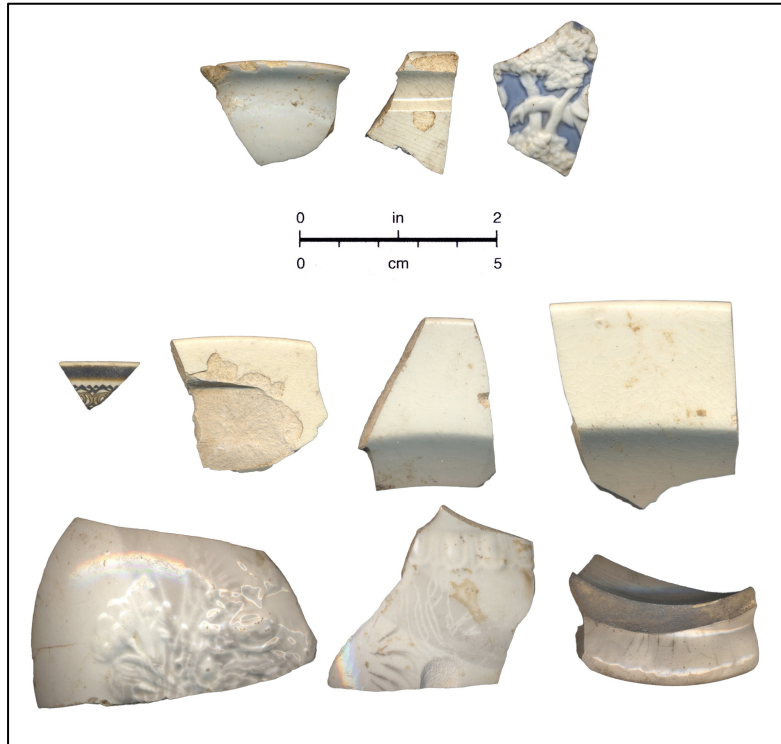


FIGURE 15: Cantonese porcelain table and teawares.

## CREAMWARE

The creamware sample from Feature 1 is small. A minimum of seven vessels is dominated by undecorated tablewares, as is common at early nineteenth century domestic sites in Illinois (Mazrim 2002). Three are undecorated plates, and one is a dipt / annular bowl. An unusual, partially restorable pitcher is relief molded in a floral motif. It has been burnt. A small, plain white drug pot has a groove below its lip to accommodate a cord to secure a cloth or paper lid (Figure 16).



**FIGURE 16:** Tin-glazed jar, creamware jar, Jasperware (upper). Creamware tablewares (lower).

## PEARLWARE

The refined ceramic assemblage from Feature 1 is dominated by pearlware, consisting of a minimum of 43 vessels (Figures 17-18). Of these, 27 are teawares, and 13 are tablewares. The dominance of teawares again reflects a common teaware-table ratio before 1840 in Illinois. Shell and other edged plates account for 77% of the tablewares and are of various sizes. Three plates are blue-printed - two in Chinoiserie “Willow”-like patterns, and one in a scenic or “Romantic” pattern. One dipt bowl or pitcher is represented by a small body fragment. One type-indeterminate fragment may be from a printed pepper pot.

Most of the teawares are transfer-printed. About half of these feature Chinoiserie, Willow-like motifs. There are at least two matching cup and saucer sets present. A saucer is printed with the scene “Erie Canal, Aqueduct Bridge at Rochester” by Enoch Wood and Sons. Eight mineral-painted polychrome cups and saucers are of similar colors but not from matching sets. At least two of the teacups were handled, which is unusual in pre-1830 contexts of Illinois (Mazrim 2002).

## WHITEWARE

The post-1830s whiteware vessels in the collection reflect items purchased after Morris Birkbeck’s death, and the last years of occupation of the site. At least ten vessels are present (Figure 19). These were brought to the site, used, and broken within 5-7 years of their introduction in England. Four whiteware tablewares were identified in the assemblage, one of which is an edge-decorated platter with a very unusual red-painted rim.

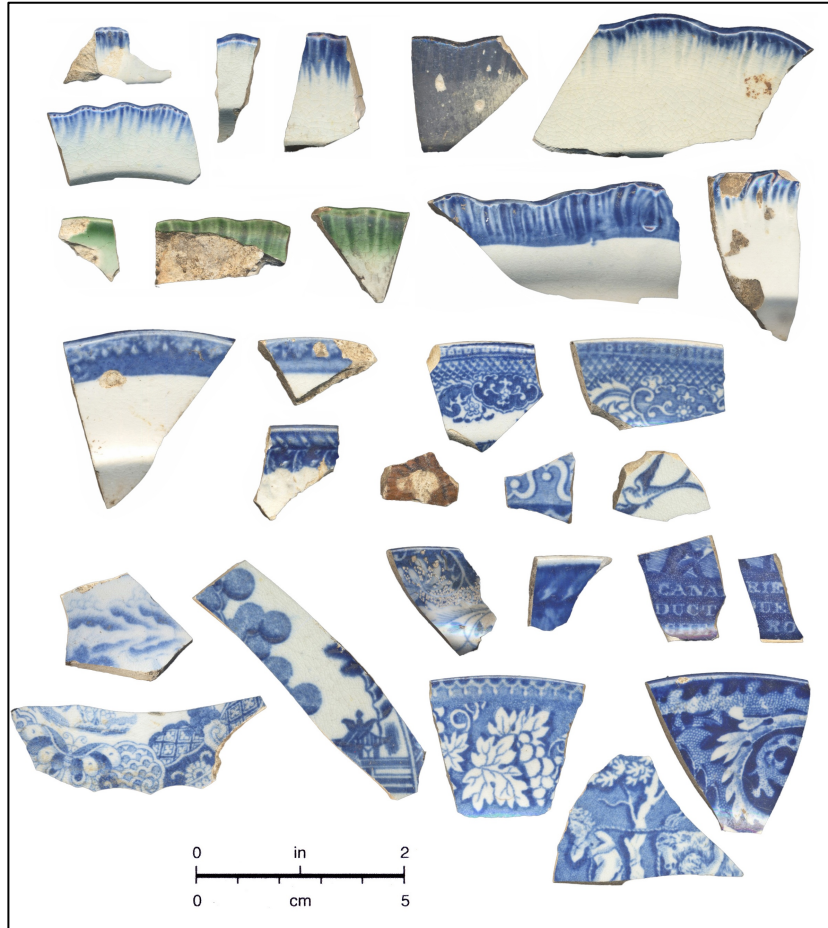


FIGURE 17: Pearlware tablewares.

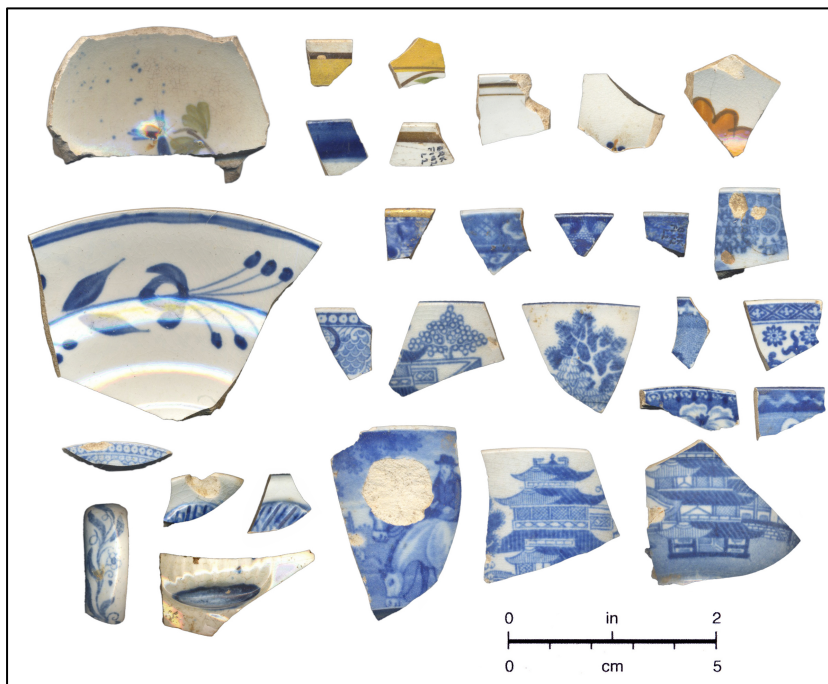


FIGURE 18: Pearlware teawares.

Edged wares used in the rural Midwest are nearly always painted in blue or green. A red transfer-printed plate and two annular or dipt bowls complete the whiteware tableware assemblage.

There are six whiteware teawares in the collection. Unlike the earlier pearlware teas, half are hand-painted. Most of the whitewares, aside from the banded bowls, are in colors (such as bright red and green) generally not available on Queenswares before the introduction of whiteware in 1830.

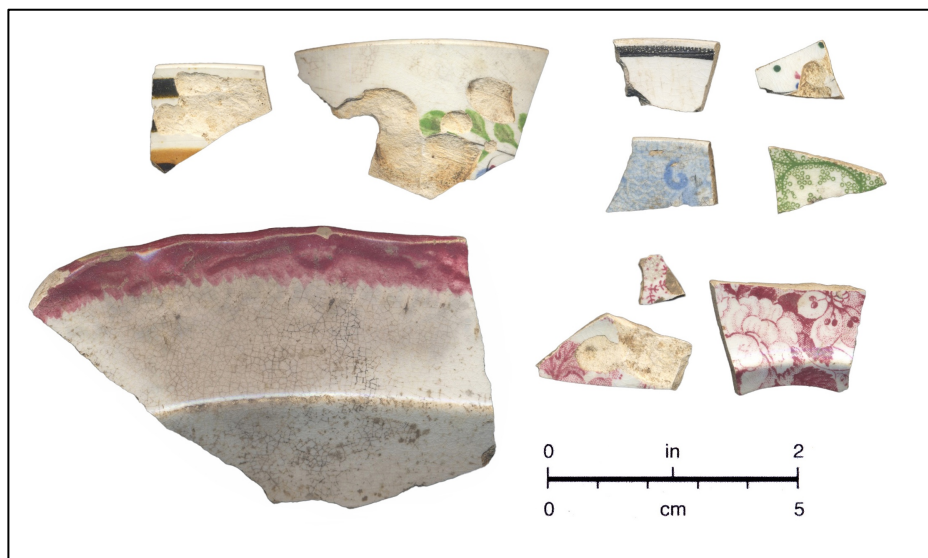


FIGURE 19: Whiteware tablewares and teawares.

### Unrefined Ceramics

#### REDWARE

Fragments of at least 15 redware vessels were recovered from Feature 1 (Figure 20). While unrefined coarse earthenwares in Illinois consist most often of food storage pots, jars, or jugs, and general-purpose kitchen bowls, this sample is notable for its high proportion of table service vessels. These include traditional dishes or “pie plates” as well as finely-potted table bowls.

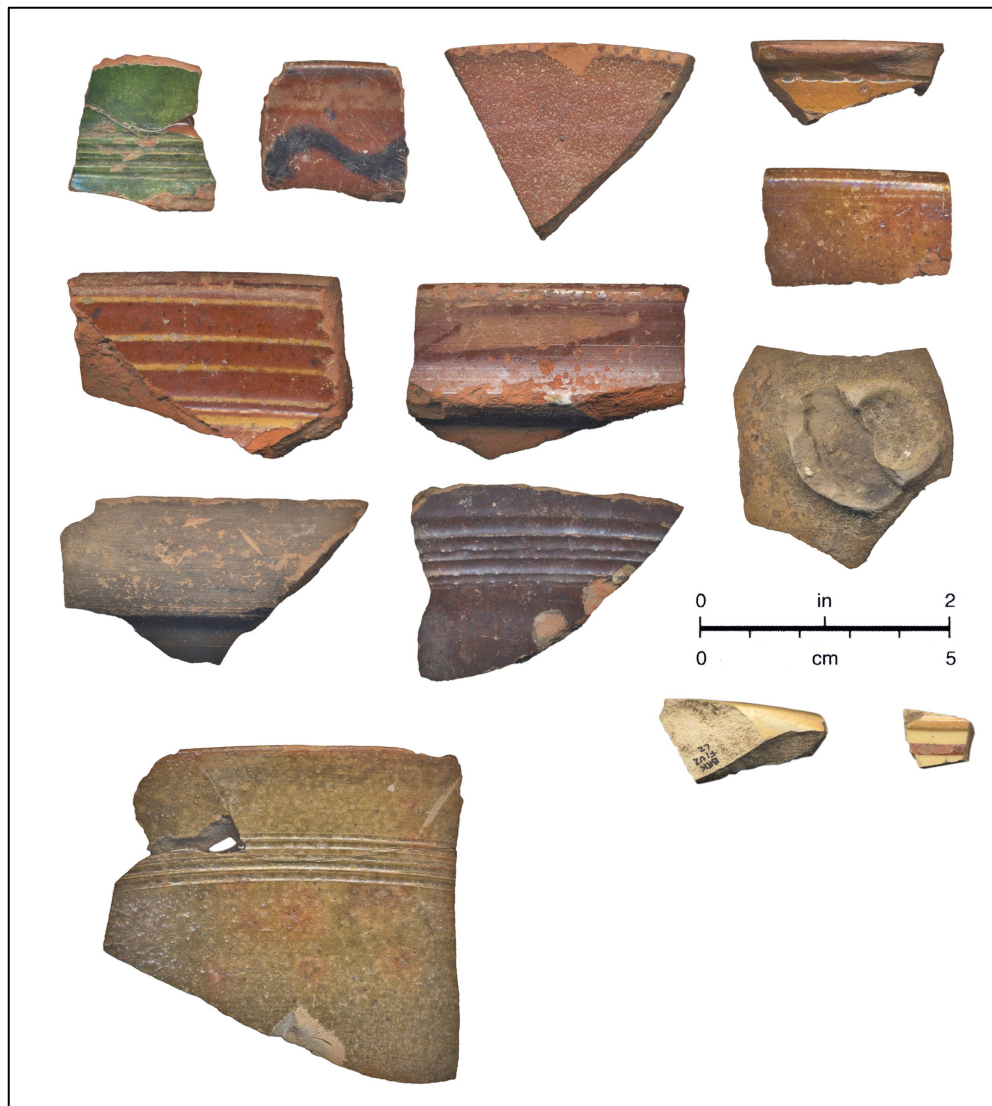
**Vessel 1** is diagnosed by a rim fragment from a small-capacity jar. The rim is fine, everted, and tapered. It is lead-glazed on its exterior and interior.

**Vessel 2** is represented by an unusually large body fragment of an ovoid pot or jar. It has a capacity of approximately one gallon. It is lead-glazed on the exterior and interior. There is an intentional green clouding to the glaze. It is decorated on its shoulder by two sets of incised parallel lines.

**Vessel 3** is an ovoid jug or jar represented by body and foot fragments. It is lead-glazed on the exterior and interior. The glaze is tinted with manganese. It is decorated with a series of incised lines on the shoulder.

**Vessel 4** is a redware jug represented by a body fragment with a handle remnant on the shoulder. It is lead-glazed on the exterior and interior. It is burnt from overfiring in the kiln.

**Vessel 5** is a redware bowl that is represented by a rim fragment. It was overfired in the kiln and was probably part of a medium-capacity kitchen bowl. The rim is bolstered and tapered. It is unglazed on the exterior and lead-glazed on the interior.



**FIGURE 20:** Redware tablewares and storage vessels, and two yellowware vessels (lower right).

**Vessel 6** is a serving plate or baking dish with a coggled rim. It is undecorated with a plain lead-glazed interior and unglazed exterior.

**Vessel 7** is a slip-decorated dish with a thin, bolstered rim. The interior is lead-glazed and slip-decorated with dark brown or black, wavy trailing.

**Vessel 8** is a larger, heavy-bodied, baking dish. It has a thick compound rim. It is unglazed on the exterior and lead-glazed on the interior. The interior is slip-decorated with yellow and black lines.

**Vessels 9 and 10** are nearly identical, finely-potted table bowls. They are of the “tea bowl” shape, with lead glazes on the exteriors and interiors. Both have unmodified rims. Vessel 9 has a slight green cast, probably from a copper additive in the slip/glaze. Vessel 10 is clear-glazed. Such forms have been found on several domestic sites in Madison County (Mazrim 2002).

**Vessel 11** is unusual in Illinois contexts. It is a foot fragment of a hollow vessel, possibly a table pitcher. The exterior glaze is a distinctive apple green color, and the interior is mustard yellow. The vessel is probably of

southern French origin (e.g. Duplessy 2003). These vessels may have been available in New Orleans during the early 19th century, but there is little evidence of availability in St. Louis markets.

**Vessels 12-15** are all type indeterminate hollowwares. They are represented by small body sherds. All appear to be of Midwestern origin.

#### STONEWARE

There is a minimum of five stoneware vessels present in the Feature 1 assemblage. All diagnostic vessels are affiliated with storage.

**Vessel 1** is a medium-capacity ovoid jar or pot. It is represented by body and foot fragments. It is salt-glazed on the exterior and interior.

**Vessel 2** is probably a medium-to-large capacity jug. It is salt-glazed on the exterior and unglazed on the interior.

**Vessel 3** is represented by a small shoulder fragment of a product bottle, such as a mineral water or beer. It is salt-glazed on the exterior with a thin, matte Albany-slipped interior. There is little evidence of the use of Albany slip in Illinois prior to the very late 1830s (e.g. Mazrim 2008). It may have been imported.

**Vessels 4 and 5** are represented by small body and base fragments and are type-indeterminate hollowware vessels.

#### YELLOWWARE

Two yellowware fragments represent the very last years of occupation of the site and are the latest temporally-sensitive objects in the collection. Generally, yellowware does not appear in rural Illinois contexts until circa 1840, although there has been some suggestion of its presence by the late 1830s (e.g. Mazrim 2002, 2008).

**Vessel 1** is represented by a small rim fragment, probably from an undecorated baking dish or “nappy”. It would have functioned similarly to the redware dishes.

**Vessel 2** is a small fragment of a banded type-indeterminate hollowware. It may have been a small table bowl, similar in function and appearance to British dipt / banded pearlware or whiteware bowls.

#### Container Glass

The container glass sample from Feature 1 is composed of very small fragments, few of which can be accurately attributed to a particular type of bottle. A minimum of 16 glass vessels are present. Of this, 11 are product bottles, and four are table service vessels. All glass tablewares are of clear flint glass (Figure 21).

Four spirits bottles include an aqua glass free-blown(?) whiskey bottle; an aqua glass whiskey flask with molded ribbing; and two olive-green wine bottles. All of these are represented by small body fragments. Five bottles probably contained medicinal or utility products. Two are flint glass, dip-molded vials. One of these has a partially intact base with solid rod pontil scar that suggests a British origin. Two aqua glass, dip-molded vessels are also probable vials, and are represented by small base and rim sherds. Finally, one flint glass proprietary medicine is represented by a single body fragment embossed with “...\_E\_...”. Two type-indeterminate bottles are represented by emerald green and olive-green sherds.

A minimum of four glass tablewares are present. One is a flint glass, dip-molded, round tumbler with an iron pontilled base. A large, flint glass, stemmed vessel is represented by a base or foot fragment. A

pressed, flint glass, “Lacey” pattern sweet meat dish is present, and the small sample is completed by a flint glass, two or three-piece molded, paneled vessel that might be a cruet.



**FIGURE 21:** Flint glass bottles (left) and service vessels (right).

### Other Artifact Classes

#### FLATWARE

The Feature 1 excavations produced only two pieces of flatware. Two handle fragments from a pewter teaspoon are present. A brass serving spoon is represented by a broad bowl and handle fragment.

#### SMALL TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS

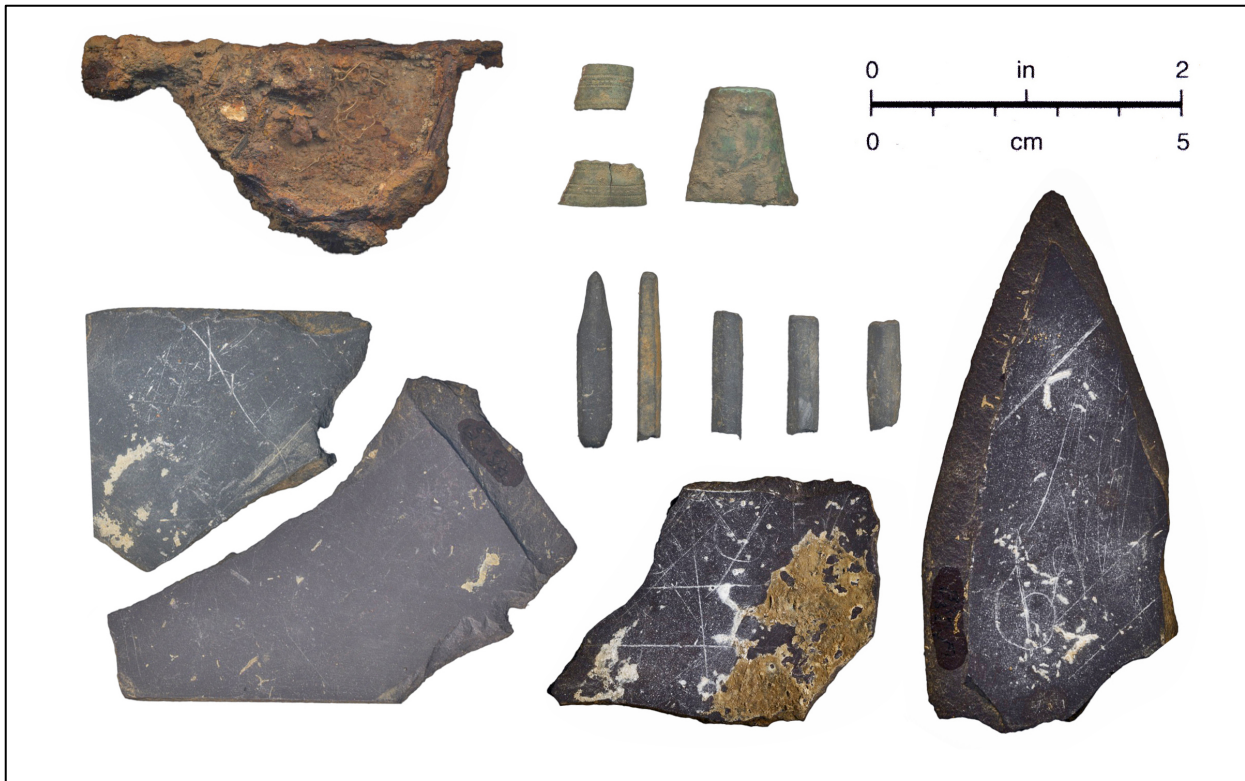
Writing implements include fragments of slate pencils and writing slate (Figure 22). Several large fragments of writing slate may represent more than one such item. One fragment is etched in a grid, and another is engraved with what appears to be a treble clef symbol. This might indicate that writing slates were used for music in the Birkbeck household. The grid may have also assisted in household calculations. Five slate pencil fragments include two tips and represent at least two pencils.

Sewing-related items include one brass straight pin and two brass thimbles (Figure 22). One thimble is fragmentary, and the other is an open “Tailor’s” thimble. The latter exposes the fingertip and allows for more control over the fabric. Also in the sewing category is a lid to a bone thread holder or cotton barrel. It is 22mm wide and is pierced with a large, single hole.

A large fragment of a whetstone was also recovered from Feature 1.

#### CLOTHING

An unusually large sample of buttons was recovered from Feature 1 (Figure 23). In Illinois, early nineteenth century rural sites generally produce less than ten buttons from moderately sized samples of redeposited domestic debris (Mazrim 2002, Mazrim et. al. 2024). The Birkbeck site produced a total of 28 buttons. No single material type dominates this sample. Bone and brass are the most commonly occurring (10 each), followed by seven white metal buttons, and one shell button.

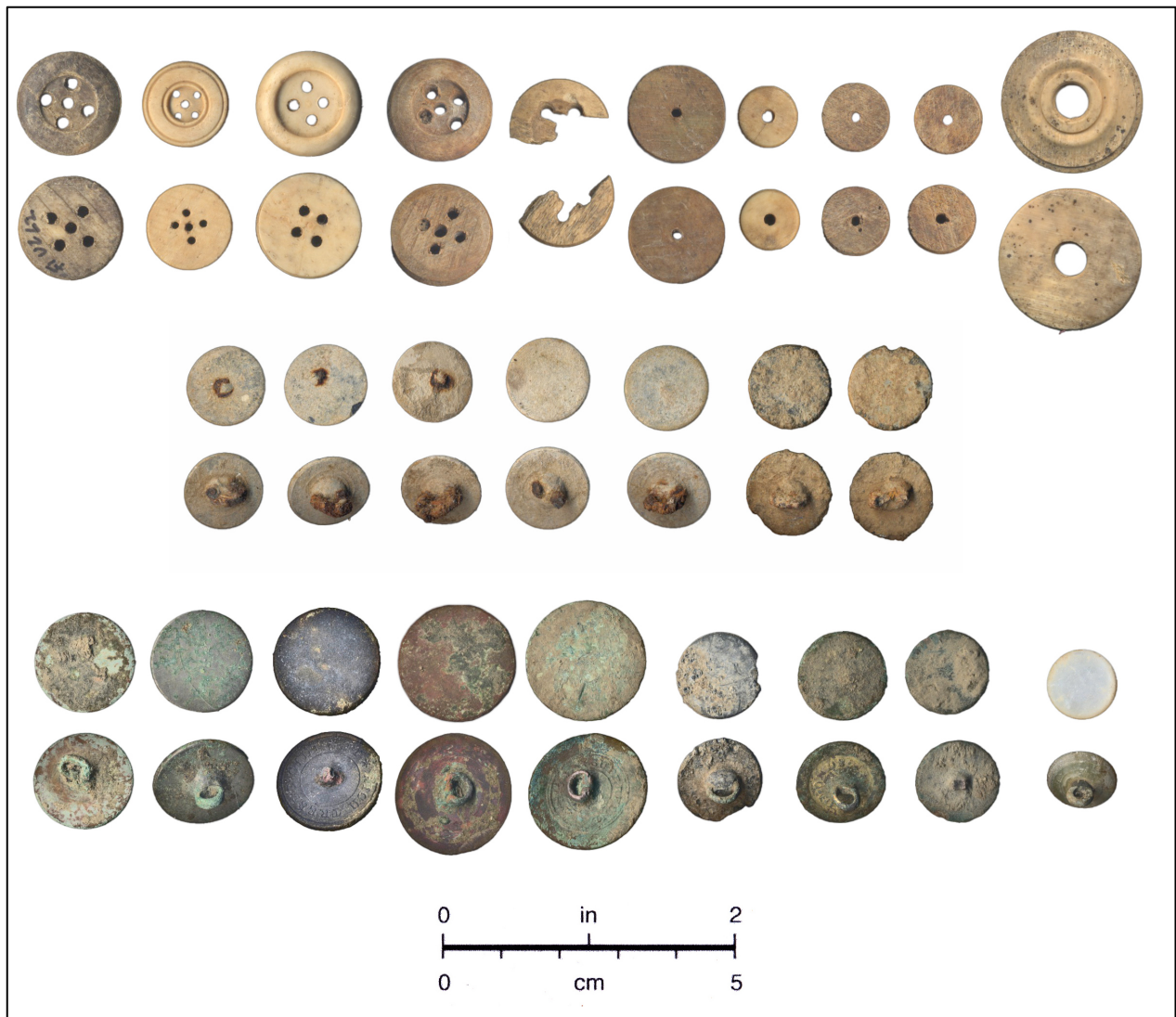


**FIGURE 22:** Wick trimmer, thimbles, writing slate and slate pencils. Note markings on two fragments lower right.

All the bone buttons are of the "sew-through" type, meaning they are pierced for stitching directly to the garment. The larger bone buttons are drilled with four or five holes, while the smaller specimens have only a single hole. Two of the five-hole buttons are identical. The single-hole buttons, referred to as "blanks or molds", functioned as either sew-through buttons or button-backs (Hinks 1988: 67). One of the smaller single-hole buttons stands out due to its round, domed face.

The brass buttons are all flat disc, "shank" specimens. A shank is either a cast or soldered wire loop on the back of the button, used for attachment. Two of the 10 brass buttons feature engraved quality marks on their reverse. One is marked "RICH TREBLE GILT \*J.C.\*", and one is marked "SUPERFINE." These phrases refer to the amount of gold applied and were marketing attempts by the manufacturer to promote the quality of their buttons. One brass button is marked in relief on its reverse. It reads "W. EDMONDS". Traces of gold gilt are still present. Instead of a more typical quality claim, this mark actually refers to the manufacturer. W. Edmonds appears as a "Button and Trimming Seller" in the 1818 edition of *Johnstones London Commercial Guide and Street Directory*.

Seven white metal (probably pewter) buttons are present. Among these, three feature a "pin shank" design, while the remaining four are flat discs. The pin shank buttons measure 11mm, whereas the flat disc buttons are only slightly larger at 12mm. All of the white metal buttons are "embedded wire" specimens. Typical of white metal, the shank is made of an iron loop that is embedded in a metal hump (e.g. Olsen 1963). Five of the buttons have a spun back cast, which is characterized by concentric circles, lack of mold seams, and a cone-like shape to the shank. Two of the buttons are more heavily corroded, yielding little detail. Only one shell button is present. It has a brass wire shank.



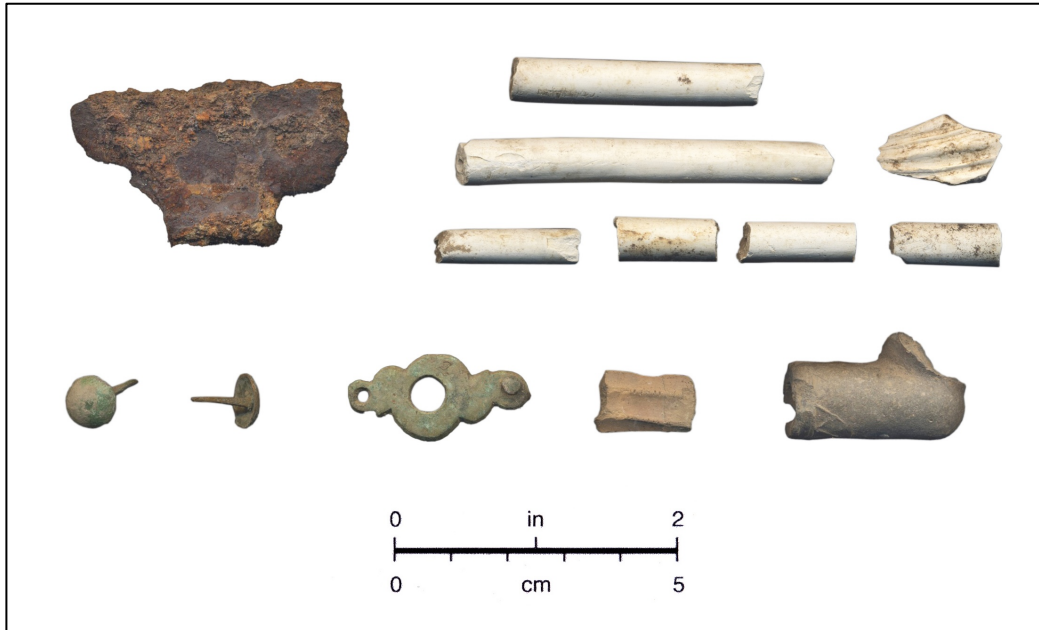
**FIGURE 23:** Selected buttons (obverse over reverse). Bone, white metal, brass, and one composite specimen (lower right).

Finally, one button (not included in the total above), is intrusive to the Feature 1 deposit. Postdating circa 1870, it is a Levi's jean or overall button with a riveted shank marked "RIP PROOF BRAND". A single brass hasp and three iron shoe nails complete the clothing-related assemblage.

The buttons from the Birkbeck site are overwhelmingly affiliated with men's attire. Before the 1840s, women's garments were generally not fastened with buttons, and thus are poorly represented in early nineteenth century archaeological samples (e.g. Baumgarten 2002, Mazrim et.al. 2024, Wass and Fandrich 2010). For this study, buttons were assigned to one of four garment classes (as devised in Mazrim et.al. 2024: 61-62) to better interpret the clothing to which they were once attached.

The Birkbeck assemblage is dominated by Garment Class 3 buttons (n=13), which include those for shirts and underwear. This is followed by Garment Class 2 specimens (n=7), which include those for waistcoats, jackets, trousers, and sleeve links. Following closely behind are Garment Class 4 buttons (n=6), which include those for male children or adult collars. The remaining (n=4) are Garment Class 1, which include greatcoats and coats.

Considering these ratios, it seems that mens' under garments and outer garments are represented nearly equally in this sample. This suggests the natural attrition of random button loss from various garments in the wardrobe. The relative paucity of Garment Class 1 buttons might suggest that fasteners attached to coats or great coats are more often lost outside, while buttons from vests and under garments were more commonly lost during dressing or during activity occurring inside the house.



**FIGURE 24:** Hinge fragment, white clay pipes, brass tacks, brass item, earthenware and stoneware pipes.

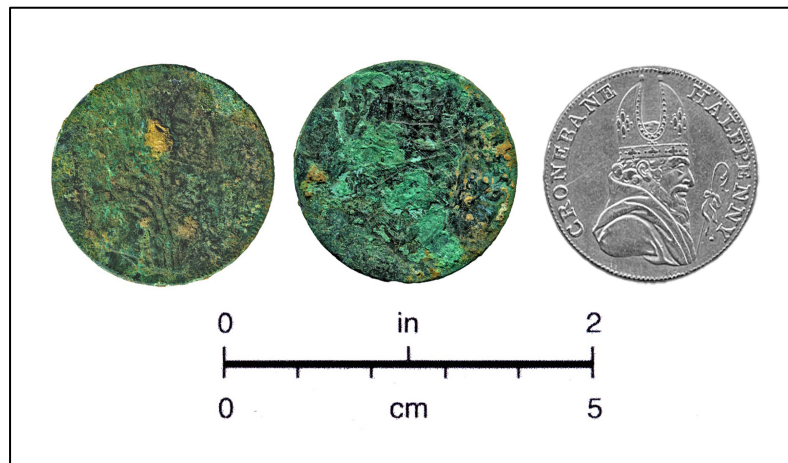
#### SMOKING PIPES

Fragments of at least four tobacco pipes are present (Figure 24). Two are imported white clay or “kaolin” pipes, and two are North American elbow pipes. The latter were originally fitted with reed stems. Six white clay stem fragments and one ribbed bowl fragment represent two or three long stem pipes. They were likely manufactured in England. From North American makers, a stoneware stem and partial prow fragment represent a Point Pleasant-style elbow pipe (e.g. Murphy 1976). It is molded in crosshatching at the edge of the stem, suggesting a Point Pleasant “crisscross” style akin to Thomas and Burnett’s GD-28 or GD-29 (Murphy 1976: 13-14). Finally, an earthenware elbow pipe of unknown origin is represented by a small unglazed fragment.

#### COINAGE

An unusual copper token was recovered from Feature 1 (Figure 25). It was issued by the Associated Irish Mine Company in 1789 at Cronebane in County Wicklow, Ireland. The company was established in 1787 and operated until 1798. The coin circulated as a part of Ireland’s currency system (Dalton and Hamer 1967).

The obverse side of the token features a bust of Saint Patrick wearing a mitre and facing in profile to the right. A crosier is tied with a bow of ribbon. The inscription “Cronebane Halfpenny” is featured around the bust. The reverse side features the company’s arms with elements such as shovels, pickaxes, and a bugle horn. A windlass is featured above the coat of arms. The inscription “Associated Irish Mine Company” is curved around the coat of arms.



**FIGURE 25:** Cronebane Halfpenny. Obverse, reverse and non-archaeological example.

#### FURNISHINGS

Feature 1 produced six furnishings-related artifacts. A fragment of a possible oil lamp shade is present. It is made of flint glass and is decorated with wheel-engraved dashes along its neck. Two brass tacks may have been used on a trunk or upholstered furniture. A brass escutcheon-like item with a round opening is fine and thin and may have been used on a small document box (Figure 24). A small iron butt hinge fragment is too small to have hung a door but may have been affixed to a free-standing or built-in cabinet (Figure 24). Finally, a heavily corroded pan portion of a pair of wick trimmers was recovered from Feature 1 (Figure 24). The pan was designed to safely catch a cut and smoldering wick.

#### ARMS AND AMMUNITION

A total of 19 arms and ammunition-related items were recovered from Feature 1. These include a 13mm lead musket ball, and 16 gunflints (Figure 26). Again, the large number of gunflints in comparison to other artifact categories seems surprising and may suggest the presence of a container or bag of flints that was inadvertently deposited directly into the upper levels of fill in the abandoned cellar.

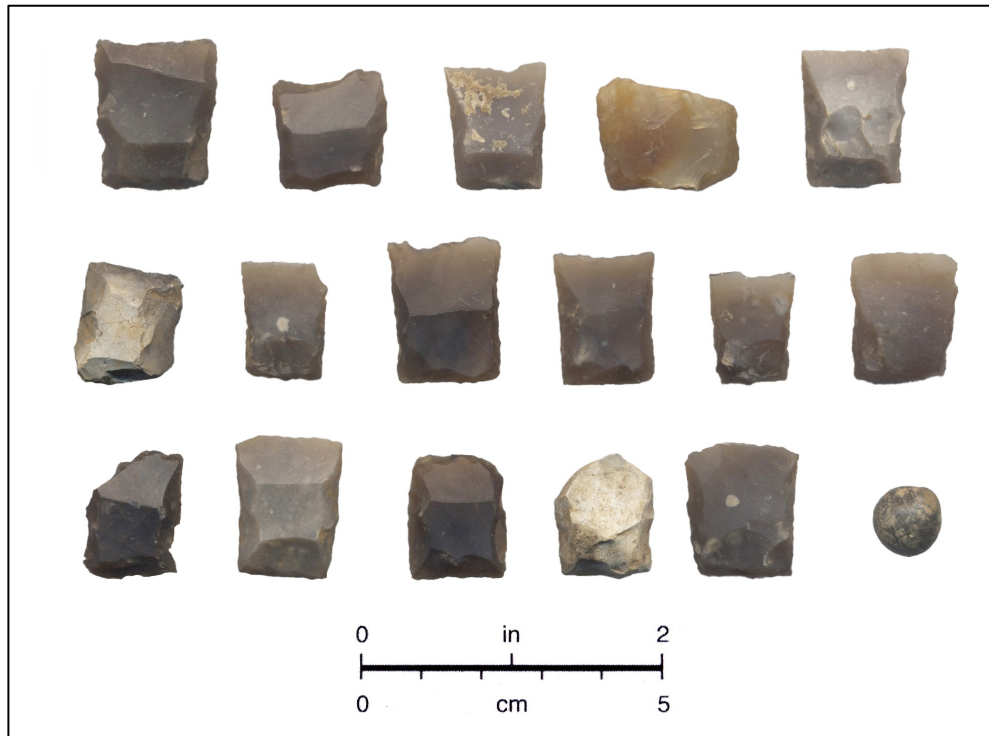
The majority of the flints are British blade-style ( $n=15$ ). Most measure between  $5/8''$  and  $3/4''$  and would have been used in a long arm or perhaps a large pistol. Interestingly, 9 of the 16 specimens are unused and in new condition. Five British flints show moderate use and two have been converted into strike-a-light flints. A single flint of French chert appears to be a very heavily used blade form.

#### ANIMAL AND TRANSPORTATION

A single horseshoe nail and a broken iron harness buckle comprise the animal and transportation category.

#### ARCHITECTURAL

Two hundred and one fragments of window glass were recovered from Feature 1, totaling approximately 89 square inches. Mohr's method of dating window glass manufacture from thickness was applied to these fragments (Mohr 1987). The results of the analysis showed two notable spikes, the highest dating to 1814 with the consideration of the margin of error of + or - 7 years. This fits well with the known history of the site. Another peak appears in 1831, again with + or - 7 years, which may suggest a brief period of repair. Dates fall off rapidly after 1831.



**FIGURE 26:** Gunflints and musket ball.

A total of 581 nail or nail fragments were recovered from Feature 1. One hundred and twenty-six are whole. Functionally, there is a wide range of light-duty nail types present. The largest sizes are 5d and 6d, which would have been used on siding, ceiling planks, or other forms of finishing. This is followed by 4d nails, probably used for shingles or shakes. Twenty-two nails (or 17% of the assemblage) are lath nails. This might indicate that at least a portion of the house was lathed and plastered. Less than 20% of the nail assemblage is 8d or larger. Flooring and framing nails are underrepresented in this sample. As descriptions of the house indicate that Birkbeck's second phase of construction utilized timber-frame methods, the lack of larger nails seems surprising.

## **6. Summary**

Robert Mazrim

The 2005 excavations at the Morris Birkbeck estate encountered either a single, unusually large cellar feature or two adjacent facilities located very close to one another. The three test units showed no evidence of an in-situ brick lining as described by Morris Birkbeck himself. However, only Unit 1 reached the base of the future due to the soil conditions. Brick was encountered in that unit, but it appeared in the field as part of redeposited, post-abandonment fill. If the cellar was indeed walled and floored in brick, Unit 1 suggests that it was thoroughly salvaged. This may account for the substantial slumping of the south wall, without evidence of multiple episodes of silting. Units 2 and 3 did not reach depths necessary to examine the construction of the cellar, save for evidence of a rather crude bulkhead entrance on the west side of the facility. Given the position of the well, the bulkhead entrance, and the slight suggestion of a fireplace footing along the south edge of Feature 1, it seems that the cellar was positioned beneath the kitchen in what may

have been the southern end of the large Birkbeck dwelling. Further work is necessary to clarify the original morphology of Feature 1, which most certainly will be the most visible and expressive archaeological footprint of the estate.

Less than 5% of the cellar fill has been excavated, but the artifact sample is already an impressive one. The assemblage seems to reflect a family of not only substantial means, but who were consumers of goods not often found on rural farmsteads of the period. Generally, the refined ceramic assemblage from the Birkbeck cellar reflects a well-appointed table setting made more formal by a dominance of printed over painted patterns, and also an unusual preponderance of porcelain. Some of these goods are almost certainly affiliated with the five-ton shipment of goods Birkbeck received in 1817. For instance, the number of Cantonese porcelain plates and teawares found in the very small sample removed from the cellar *exceeds the amount of such porcelains from all other domestic sites yet investigated in Illinois combined*. The Birkbeck's also enjoyed expensive and difficult to obtain Wedgewood Jasperware, French salves or cosmetics not sold in rural stores of the era, and potentially, Chinese ginger and some coarse earthenware tablewares from southern France.

Other object classes, such as glass service vessels, however, do not follow this apparent pattern of copious consumption of finer goods. The paucity in this pre-1835 assemblage would not be surprising in general rural Illinois contexts, but Birkbeck's lifestyle would create the expectation of more stemware and glass service vessels. While he did indeed import five tons of goods on his immigration journey, fragile glassware would have been difficult to pack, and perhaps not a high priority. Such products were also available to some degree in Saint Louis, however, so the paucity of these goods in this assemblage may simply represent sample error.

Other notable aspects of the artifact assemblage include a larger-than-average presence of redware tablewares in the household. These consist of baking dishes or "pie plates", as well as finally-potted table bowls. The slip-decorated dishes are reminiscent of those made during the era by a potter at nearby New Harmony (Strezewski 2013). The Cronebane half penny is, of course, a singular find in Illinois and was presumably carried with one of the members of the family or their associates during their initial immigration to Illinois. It is difficult to know if such a token would have been acceptable currency here in the Midwest.

The concentration of gunflints found in Unit 3, which includes a number of unused flints, appears to reflect an unusual example of primary deposit into the fill of the abandoned cellar. Most of the material found in the fill represents debris that was previously discarded onto the ground surface surrounding the house or beneath it, which was then redeposited into the cellar when it was abandoned. The close proximity of these flints (and their condition) suggests they were kept in some sort of container that wound up in the cellar during the reclamation of the site. Finally, evidence of literacy and writing in the Birkbeck family, while not surprising based on the family history, is quite visible archaeologically. Slate pencils and writing slates were often used for household calculations, and in this case, the slates may have also been used for transcribing or writing music.

In general, this large and early sample from the American Frontier period in Illinois is unusual in all the right aspects, when compared to the existing archaeological literature of consumer practices of the era. The family's wealth and obvious interest in creating a well-furnished lifestyle on the Midwestern frontier is visible even though the surface of the site has only been scratched.

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