

**Historical Archaeology  
at an Indiana Farmstead**

An Honors Thesis

by

Carrie Kissel

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*Abstract*

For my Senior Honors Thesis, I chose to surface collect a historic farmhouse site located on my family's farm and create a museum display using the artifacts from the assemblage. This procedure allowed me to become familiar with the entire archaeological process, from designing a research project to interpreting the results to the public. In this paper, I specify the methodology used in conducting research both in the field and in the laboratory. I also detail the results of my investigation as presented in the exhibit and explore avenues for additional research.

### *Acknowledgements*

I owe thanks to Beth McCord for providing me with field and lab advice, research references, and comments on the display and the paper. Thank you for taking on the role of advisor in addition to all your other responsibilities.

My parents, Bob and Francie Kissel, were indispensable in this project. Thank you for allowing me to use the field, your countless hours helping me to lay out the grid and collect the artifacts, your purchases of orange flags and black Sharpies, your storage of thousands of artifacts, and your support in opening the museum display. I could not have done this without you.

My sister, Trina Kissel, not only helped with the fieldwork, but created an interactive computer program and a documentary about my site. Thanks for helping me see applications of technology in interpreting archaeology and allowing me to share your work with others at the exhibit opening.

Eric Efav gave me the idea to complete this project for my thesis and was a terrific help in collecting the artifacts. Thanks for your advice in fieldwork, labwork, display design, and in writing this paper.

Thanks to Jan Northam and Mandy Terkhorn for helping greatly with the surface collection of the site.

I am grateful that my roommates Margot DuVall, Jennifer Lawson, and Beth Schaefer allowed me to take up so much space in our house with my dirty artifacts during the cleaning process. Along with honorary roommate Linda Rabadi, you inspire me to excel by your hard work and support me in everything I do.

Thanks also go to the Honors College for allowing me to complete this project and to the Anthropology Department for providing me with the space for my museum display.

*Introduction*

Although not a requirement for a major in Anthropology at Ball State University, I feel that students should graduate having conducted research in some aspect of the discipline. Going into my senior year, I was not satisfied with my level of knowledge in archaeology, and decided to develop a thesis project that would provide me with experience in many aspects of archaeological research. I determined that an ideal thesis would be to surface collect a historic farmhouse site on my family's farm in Hancock County and to develop an exhibit in the Anthropology Department Museum. This project allowed me to gain experience in the entire archaeological process as I have learned it in my coursework and employment at Ball State University, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, University College Cork, and Martin University: choose a site and identify its boundaries, direct collection of artifacts, process the objects collected, research some of the diagnostic artifacts, analyze and make conclusions, and present these conclusions to the public.

I had taken part in archaeological research before this semester, but to command a project differs vastly from participating in one. The house was located on a rise in the field, with a barn on an adjacent rise. In an attempt to research the extent of the site that may have been considered domestic space rather than work space, I established boundaries far too large to be completed with good field conditions: I began to work on the site when the field had just been planted, and ended at the end of summer when the corn was 9-10 feet tall. I had not expected the work to be that severe. Heat, biting insects, and sharp corn leaves were an increasing source of frustration as the summer

progressed, and probably biased the sample collected since I was so eager to get out of such field conditions by the end of every evening.

Family members and friends helped me a great deal throughout the process, but some of them had no prior archaeological experience. I had to give these people specific instructions before I could let them collect artifacts to ensure that my results would be reliable. Even so, each individual collected certain items differently, so I learned that I was not thorough enough in my training. For example, I could not analyze the distribution of brick because some collected every fragment, large or small, while others kept only large brick fragments. Also, as the summer wore on, and more and more brick was found, I decided that it was not as important to collect every brick in the field because I would not have time or space to deal with so many structural artifacts. Frequently, such artifacts are sampled at a site, rather than collecting each one. As director of the project, my methods for collecting that type of artifact changed throughout the summer, so I'm sure that the methods that the volunteers used changed as well as they became frustrated with heat, humidity, insects, corn, and heavy loads of artifacts. Consequently, I was not able to reach any conclusions from the brick since a random sample of the site would not take the different modes of collection into account. I should have looked more carefully at the site initially, realized the amount of brick present, and conducted a random sample to have a manageable amount of structural artifact data.

Researching the artifacts gave me a fuller knowledge of historical archaeology references available. I had experience dealing with historical artifacts both in the field and the laboratory, but had done little more than identify basic types of objects. I had not conducted research on specific artifacts. Through this project, I became more

familiar with references that I had used before, and I found new research tools both in print and online that were helpful in finding out specific information about my artifacts. Many people collect historical artifacts as a hobby, and I found vast numbers of websites devoted to specific artifact types. Some of these hobbyist sites contained thorough information regarding the chronology of development of the material and identification of objects. Others included little useful data but provided photos that gave me a clearer idea what an intact artifact would have looked like when I had only found fragments.

The final phase of my project was to develop a museum exhibit to be displayed in the Anthropology Department Museum. This task helped me to determine if Museum Studies could be a professional interest. I have never worked or volunteered in a museum, but I have always thought that I would enjoy putting exhibits together. Ball State does not offer any museum classes with practical application of skills, so I had never had the opportunity to experiment with museum work. In putting together my display "Historical Archaeology at an Indiana Farmstead," I did not use any texts describing public interpretation of assemblages. Instead, I combined observations from other museum exhibits I have seen with design principles that I learned while working on my high school newspaper to create a display that I felt was well laid out and easy to follow. I greatly enjoyed choosing artifacts from my assemblage that both imparted information about the site and could interest viewers. I knew that my interpretation of the site could be different from other researchers' views, and by choosing specific artifacts that I felt were interesting, I was sharing my opinions and biases with the public. Advertisements, photos, and maps provided additional visual elements for the exhibit. I



was pleased with the result of my work and wished I had had time and resources available to put together a larger display.

Although few people use the Anthropology Museum, I am glad that I had the opportunity to present archaeological information to the public. I believe that archaeology is useful to society by allowing us to discover where we have been as a group of people. But too often, results of such research are available only to professionals. Many archaeologists look down upon those researchers who discuss their findings in newspapers, magazines, and on televised news and features programs. A large lag exists between the development of theories in the discipline and their implementation into textbooks, often the only mode of public consumption. Thus, society does not receive the information that is, in theory, gathered for its benefit.

Public archaeology also introduces non-professionals to problems that exist within the discipline's practice. Historical and prehistoric sites are non-renewable resources. Unfortunately, they are frequently destroyed not only by physical factors such as flooding and erosion, but by humans when construction projects occur and a site has not been identified or when looters take artifacts out of context to enrich their personal collections. When sites are damaged, everyone loses a piece of his or her identity and history. By presenting archaeology in an engaging manner in museum exhibits, professionals can invite members of the public to become interested in preserving their material heritage and preventing site loss.

#### *Fieldwork methodology*

To begin the fieldwork for my thesis, I walked the area of the field where I knew the house had stood in early June, 2002. The house was located on a rise in the field, and

a barn had been built on an adjacent slope. On this first look at the site, I had not yet decided to make research of the site my thesis project. Consequently, I gathered many artifacts from within the boundaries of the site that I set a few weeks later, but I did not record the precise location of each artifact. After my initial survey of the field, I decided that to collect the material from both the barn and house locations would be more than I could realistically complete, even though a comparison of domestic and occupational debris might have been interesting. I chose to collect artifacts from the entire sloped area of the house location, even though the front few meters seemed only to contain recent trash, like broken beer bottles.

By mid-June, I had decided to research the material culture at the site for my thesis, and I began to lay out the grid for the site. To do this, I followed the same procedures that I learned from Dr. Paul Mullins during field school at IUPUI, Summer Session 2001. I first established a site datum at a semi-permanent point, the fence post at the end of the driveway to one of my family's barns, on the south side of our road. From the datum, I measured a line north across the road and began marking 5m intervals north from the edge of the field using orange pin flags. My southern boundary was 11m north of the datum, and the site extended north 60m. From each of the flags in line with the datum point, I measured 5m intervals east and west. The slope extended 30m west and 45m east from this line. I named each unit from the distance in meters the flag at its southwest corner was from the datum. Thus, the boundaries of my site were the following: 11N30W at the southwest, 11N40E at the southeast, 66N30W at the northwest, and 66N40E at the northeast (Figures 1 and 2).

I decided to collect every artifact within each unit that was on the surface of the ground, as I had done at the beginning of my excavation at IUPUI and in my employment at Martin University. Along with several friends and family members, I systematically walked between rows of corn to find the artifacts located between the flags. Artifacts were placed in bags bearing the number of the unit so that provenience information could be recorded for further analysis. This process began in early July and continued on evenings and weekends through early August.

#### *Laboratory methodology*

Once the fieldwork was completed, I began to process the artifacts. Between September and December, I sorted through the artifacts to identify the types of objects I had found. During this time period, I helped my sister Trina Kissel to create a documentary, *Archaeology in Your Own Backyard*, and an interactive computer program, *Archaeologists: Detectives of History*, about my site, fulfilling requirements for her graduate class in New Media at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. These creative endeavors, also a part of this thesis, present the small amount of research that I had completed on specific artifacts at that time, but they describe the process of doing archaeology more than analyzing the material culture of my site.

During the semester break and from January to March, I cleaned artifacts in time I had free outside of other coursework. I sorted the objects, and with a museum exhibit in mind, I pulled some visually appealing artifacts from their unit bags, as well as others that I knew might reveal specific date ranges for the site. So that I would have distribution data available, I marked each of these artifacts with its unit number. I chose these artifacts for various reasons: some were aesthetically pleasing, some had specific

dates and places associated with them, and some seem better able to remind the viewer of the individuals who had once owned them.

Once I had identified some diagnostic artifacts, I began to research them. I met with my advisor, Beth McCord, who provided me with several references for historical material. I used these references along with online material to begin my research, then supplemented this material with other texts located in the library of the Archaeological Resource Management Services of Ball State University.

#### *Discussion of Exhibit*

In putting together my display “Historical Archaeology at an Indiana Farmstead,” I wanted to present aspects of life on a typical farm inhabited from about 1850 until the 1930s (Figure 3). From over one thousand artifacts in the assemblage from the site, I chose objects that represented daily life, like ceramic and glass fragments associated with eating, drinking, and preserving food. Metal fragments from machinery would also have been everyday objects as family members went about their work on the farm.

I also wanted to remind the viewer that artifacts once belonged to people and had specific meanings for their owners. While this seems obvious, many museums, including the Ball State University Museum of Art, take artifacts out of cultural context and erase the connection between the objects and the people in their displays. With this in mind, I picked out certain artifacts that might bring particular images of people to the minds of the viewer. A pipe bowl fragment that I found at the site made me picture a man smoking and reading a newspaper while sitting by the fireplace. Plain and fancy buttons might cause some people to think about the clothes the buttons came from and why inhabitants at the site chose to wear such clothes. Porcelain doll and figurine parts and

marbles may conjure up images of a little girl crying when her toy broke or boys getting tired of playing traditional marble games and deciding to use the marbles as projectiles to torment the flock of starlings always in the yard. Burnt objects make me think of the devastation members of the family must have felt when their home was destroyed.

One of the few things I knew about the site before I began my project was that the house had burned. I had thought that the site was destroyed in the 1950s, but my grandmother, although unsure of the date, knew that the house burnt before she and my grandfather were married and moved into the house where I grew up, which would have been around 1940 (Frances Kissel, personal communication 2003). The land was listed on an 1881 plat map of Hancock County as belonging to the Elizabeth Tuttle family (Figure 2). When the fire occurred, a family named Wampner who had inhabited the house at that site was forced to relocate to another house on the south side of the street (Robert Kissel, personal communication 2003). Several of the artifacts that I found at the site seem to attest to the destruction of the house by fire. Many bricks were reddened in the blaze and show smoke damage. Such alteration may have occurred normally if the bricks had been part of a chimney, but some ceramic fragments show similar smoky discoloration. In addition, a few flowered transfer print ceramic fragments exhibit round scars called “pot lids” that are another indication that the artifact was subject to extreme heat. Some of the glass at the site had melted in the blaze and cooled into odd shapes (Figure 4).

Many of the ceramic fragments found have designs typically produced during the date range I identified for occupation of the site, from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A light blue transfer print sherd may have been a family keepsake, since this

type of ceramic was made from 1826-1831, before the site was occupied (Stelle 2001, n.p.). Darker blue transfer print designs were used throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with flow blue becoming popular mid-century (Feldhues 1995, 8). Other whiteware fragments in the assemblage exhibit gilding, which was introduced in 1880 (Feldhues 1995, 10) (Figure 5).

Maker's marks reveal additional information about the types of ceramic used by the families who occupied this site. Some of the dishes were made in the Midwestern region. One semi-porcelain fragment bears a mark used by the Wellsville Pioneer Pottery Company, of Wellsville, Ohio (Barber 1976, 128) (Figure 6). Although the sherd is small, enough of the distinctive mark remains to identify the manufacturer. This company existed around 1896-1900, and demonstrates the use of local artifacts by the families who lived at the site during that time (Barber 1976, 128).

Other pieces found at the site were imported from England. One maker's mark that I found is difficult to see because it was impressed on the dish, but not inked. This mark uses the lion, unicorn, shield, and crown of the British royal arms, surrounded by the words "Richard Alcock" and "Burslem" (Figure 6). Richard Alcock operated the Central Pottery in Burslem, Staffordshire, England from 1870 until his death in 1881 (Birks 2003, n.p.).

Another ceramic bears the mark of Wedgwood and Company Pottery, which operated in Staffordshire from 1860-1965 (Birks 2003, n.p.) (Figure 6). Enoch Wedgwood used the unicorn as a symbol on some of his wares from 1860-1900 (Birks 2003, n.p.). Since this piece includes the word "England," it was probably made after 1891, when the McKinley Tariff Act went into effect in the United States; this legislation

was passed to protect American potters whose business had suffered because the public preferred British ceramics (Birks 2003, n.p.).

Since the Wedgwood and Alcock pieces were imported, they may have been more expensive to purchase than the locally produced whitewares and ironstones found at the site, such as the Wellsville Pioneer Pottery Company dishes. The Tuttle, Wampner, and other families may have reserved these dishes for special occasions like holidays and when company came to dinner.

The fragments of glass tumblers, or drinking glasses, discovered at the site were too small to determine how they were made or if there was an identifying mark on the base. But they look similar to the glass sets pictured in the 1902 Sears Roebuck Catalogue (Greenland Studios 1969, 138-139) (Figure 7). The families who occupied this site may have picked out their drinking vessel sets from Sears or other catalogues or stores.

Carnival glass was popular in the Midwest from about 1900 to 1940. It was made inexpensively by pouring a metallic paint over a colored glass object (Stelle 2001, n.p.). Two sherds of an object, probably a candy dish or other ornamental object, were found at the site. It may have been a favorite with the inhabitants of the site because it was pretty, even though it was not expensive to purchase (Figure 8).

Most of the glass I collected was from broken tumblers or from plain bottles. But I found two containers that held toiletry items, rather than medicines or beverages. A small perfume bottle is embossed with the name "Jergens" on the base (Figure 9). The Andrew Jergens Company was established in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1882 (Jergens 2002, n.p.). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, companies like Jergens

made popular perfumes in small plain bottles. By the 1920s, Jergens' perfumes were among the most popular at five and dime stores (Museum of American Glass 1999, n.p.).

In 1901, Jergens Company bought the John H. Woodbury Company, producer of Woodbury's Facial Soap, which is depicted in a 1924 ad by Margaret Watkins that I used in the display (Jergens 2002, n.p., Robert Mann Gallery 2003, n.p.) (Figure 10). At least one inhabitant, probably female, of the site used Woodbury's Facial Cream, identifiable by the company logo at the bottom of a milk glass vessel from the assemblage. Since milk glass was in use from 1890 to 1960, it is possible that members of the Tuttle and Wampner families chose Woodbury's over other cold creams because of the effective advertising campaign (Figure 9).

Work was a daily part of life at this farm. A chain and several metal pieces included in the exhibit likely belong to some of the farm machinery and garden implements that were in use in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Robert Kissel, personal communication 2003). The families who lived at this site probably kept a garden and preserved their own food. Fruits and vegetables were kept in canning jars sealed with milk glass disk fragments, several of which were found at the site. People of this time also kept food items in various types of stoneware crocks (Figure 11).

Because the buttons with four holes found at the site are plain, they may have been used on work clothing or other casual garments. The two-holed, white, fish eye button and the black, decorated glass button with a shank may have been fastened dress clothing (Figure 12). This black button is an example of the fancy closures that served the double purpose of ornamentation during this time period. Dark glass buttons became



popular when Queen Victoria began to wear jet ornaments following Prince Albert's death in 1861 (Hughes and Lester 1991, 113).

Although most of the artifacts I found at the site were associated with daily habits like eating or with work, a few objects are linked to leisure activities. I found a pipe bowl fragment that may have been used recreationally after work each day. It resembles the Hamburg pipe pictured in the 1895 catalogue of the Akron Smoking Pipe Company (Sudbury 1979, 29). Similar pipes were also found in the business's 1940 catalogue, so this pipe may have been smoked by one of the Tuttle family, one of the Wampner family, or others who may have resided in this house in between (Figure 13).

I found two porcelain arms at the site, belonging to different figurines. These objects may have been collected by the families who lived here. Displaying such bric-a-brac may have served to indicate the families' social status to those who visited their home (Paul Mullins, personal communication, 2001). A porcelain doll's leg found at the site may have once been a treasured possession of once of the Tuttle or Wampner children. Although the doll's owner may have taken very good care of it, the unglazed ceramic became stained during the years it spent in the ground. In contrast, the glazed figurine arms exhibit much less discoloration even though they are also porcelain (Figure 13).

Some members of the family who lived at the site, probably the children, collected or played with glass marbles. Two of these bear pontil scars from being hand-made, while the other two may be early machine-made items (Block 2000, n.p.) (Figure 14). Due to fractures on the surface of the latter two marbles, it is difficult to tell whether pontil scars may have existed. Because of their precise shape, though, I believe they

were automatically produced. The disfigurement of the marbles may have occurred as the field was cultivated, or by the process of freeze and thaw. But the marbles may have cracked before they were deposited at the site by children who used the objects as projectiles as some modern children do. Each hand-made marble is unique, and one of the former two marbles may have been a favorite—most Divided Core marbles have three bands, but this less common artifact has six bands of blue and white glass within the clear background (Block 2000, n.p.).

### *Conclusions*

Although the site has already provided me with a wealth of information, additional avenues of research exist. I would like to conduct further historical research on the site and its inhabitants. So far, I have only talked to family members who have lived locally for a long period of time, but documents should exist that detail the owners of the ground and their use of the site. Once I knew more about the identities of the individuals who lived in the house, I could look up birth, death, marriage, and census records in the Genealogy Division Library of the Indiana Historical Society. Cemetery records are also available at my county library.

Personal information could lead me to additional analysis of the site. For example, if I knew that the family had many children and was extremely poor, I might speculate that the rare Divided Core marble had even greater significance in the minds of those who played with it. Its loss in the front yard might have been traumatic, even though the circumstance allowed me to find it and increase my knowledge of the site. Or, if the family members had great prominence within the community, others in the area may have emulated their use of imported Staffordshire ceramic wares.

Once I had more concrete historical information about the date range for habitation of the site, it would be interesting to compare the result of historical information to a mean ceramic date. In this process, one researches dates of production for the types of ceramic found at the site. A statistical average is then found, which provides one means of dating a historical site. Since I have never completed an analysis of mean ceramic date before, I hope to be able to do this over the summer.

I would also enjoy researching how specific areas of the site, such as the front yard, the back yard, and the site of the house, were used by those who lived there. For example, by identifying the distribution of specific types of artifacts, I might find that some of the yard space was work space rather than domestic space. I would also like to know what kinds of artifacts appear at the site of the barn that once stood adjacent to the house. If I were able to collect that area of the field as well, I might see a stark division between domestic and occupational debris.

Although I will probably not collect the barn site, knowing how intense such fieldwork would be, analysis of distribution data of the house site is likely to occur. For the completion of my sister's Master's program, she is considering creating an interactive map of my site and digital catalogue of artifacts. This would involve identifying the locations of the ceramic, glass, metal, structural debris like brick, nails, and window glass, as well as any other artifacts. Since I recorded provenience information for each artifact that I collected (except those found in my initial survey of the site: see *Fieldwork Methodology*), I will compile the data and supply it to her. Once her catalogue and map are complete, I can use the visual representation of the area to come to new conclusions regarding site use.

Even though I have not yet finished the research that I would like to complete on the site, I feel that I am beginning to find out what the lives of these families were like by examining their material culture. These families used some ceramic wares that were imported, demonstrated by the Alcock and Wedgwood fragments, which may indicate that they could afford to buy imported products. Other ceramics, like the Wellsville Pioneer Pottery fragment, were made locally and may have been available to individuals with smaller incomes. Carnival glass was inexpensively manufactured, so that type of artifact would not have been reserved for the elite members of society (Stelle 2001, n.p.). Bric-a-brac like the porcelain figurine fragments that I found was sometimes used by families during this time period to indicate their social status; the acquisition of additional curios could mean that a middle class family was trying to reach a higher social class (Paul Mullins, personal communication 2001). From this assemblage, it appears that the families who inhabited the site were typical of the kind of middle class farmers who lived in Central Indiana in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Beth McCord, personal communication 2003).

Choosing to build a thesis project around this historical farmhouse site on my family's farm has allowed me to gain experience in many aspects of archaeology, from the first step of planning the fieldwork procedures to the final step of presenting information to the public. The "Historical Archaeology at an Indiana Farmstead" project has also made me realize the endless amount of archaeological research that can be done on a site. Even after completing fieldwork and a museum exhibit, I feel that I have only brushed the surface of researching the site to find out what the lives of the inhabitants of the site were like by looking at their material culture. The additional lines of research

outlined above are only a few of the routes I could take in investigating the site. Over the next year, I hope I can complete some of this research to gain even more experience in archaeological analysis.

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## Appendix

66N 30W						66N 0E								66N 45E
						61N 0E								
						56N 0E								
						51N 0E								
						46N 0E								
						41N 0E								
						36N 0E								
						31N 0E								
						26N 0E								
						21N 0E								
						16N 0E								
11N 30W						11N 0E								11N 40E

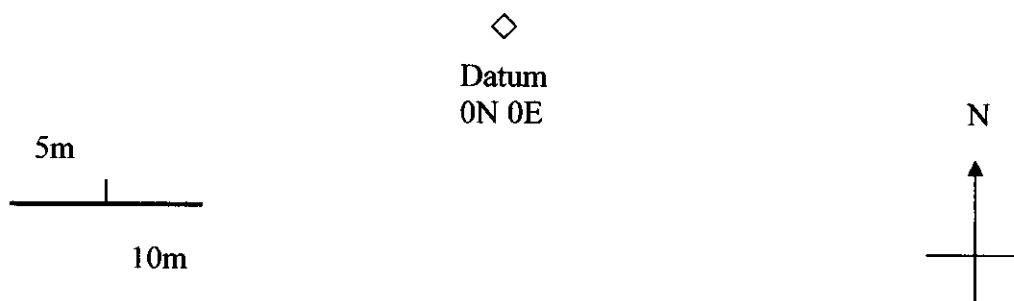
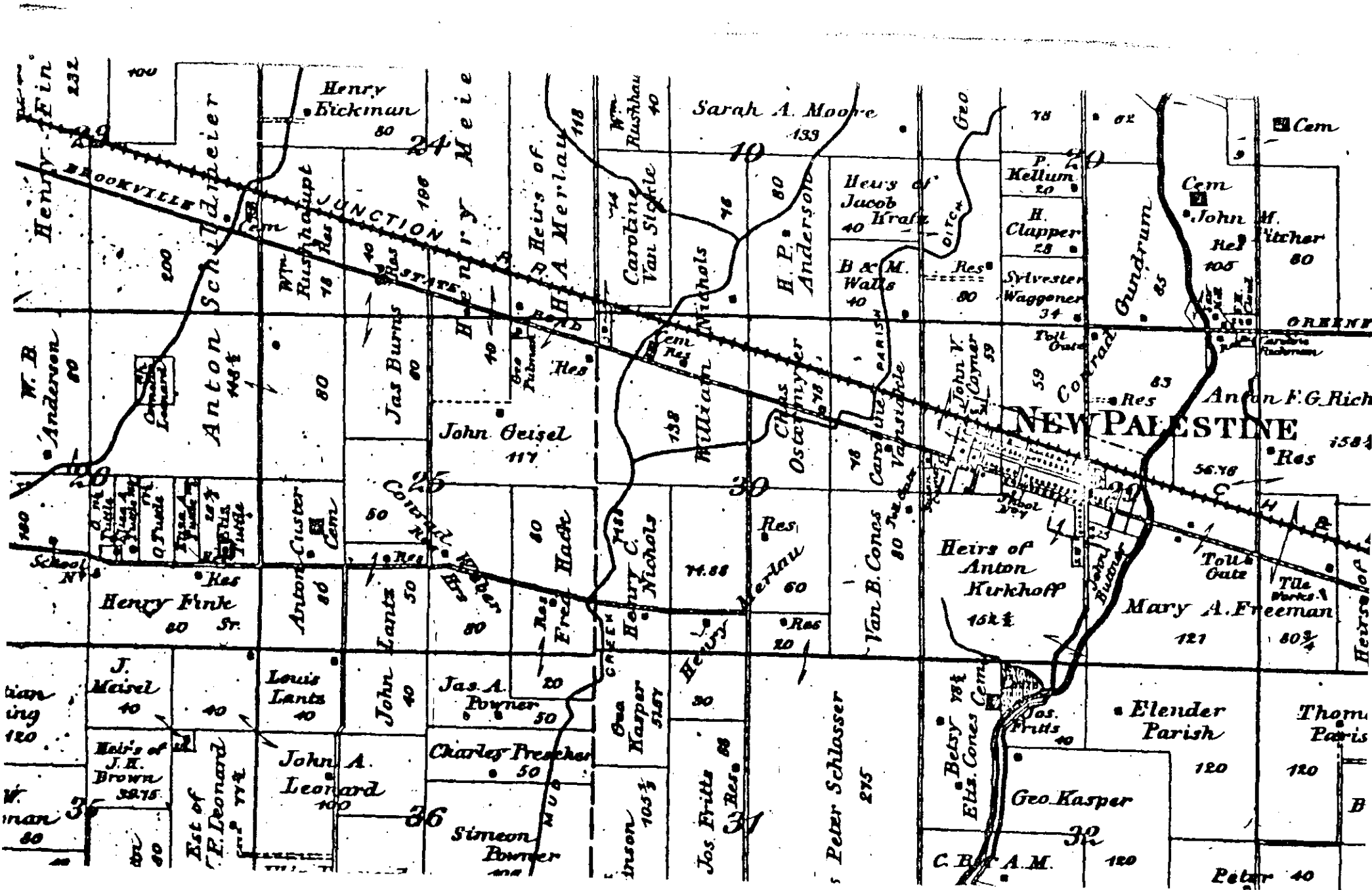


Figure 1. Site map

Figure 2. The red box on this 1881 map marks the location of the site in southwestern Hancock County.





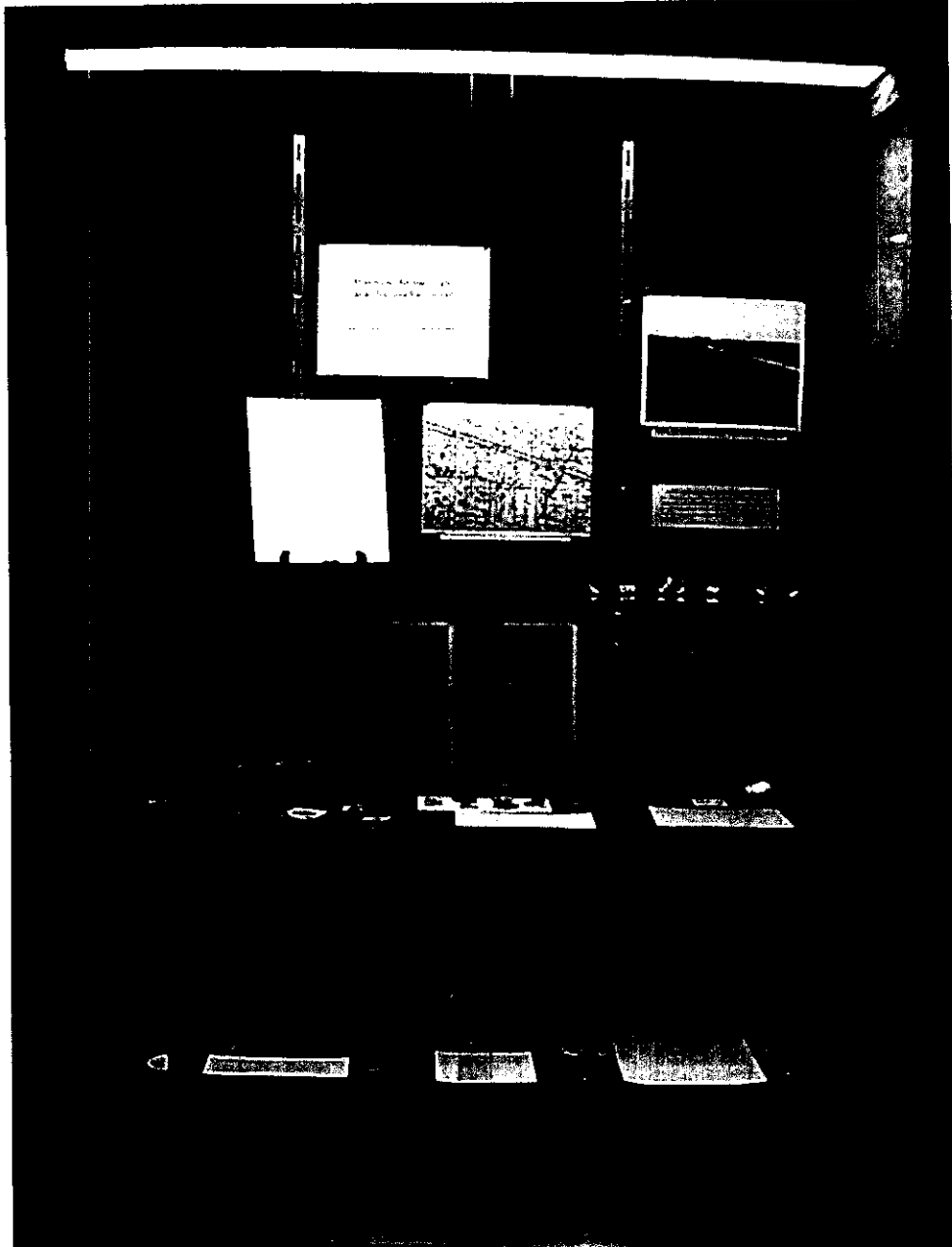


Figure 3. "Historical Archaeology at an Indiana Farmstead" Display



Figure 4. Burnt brick, ceramic, and glass fragments

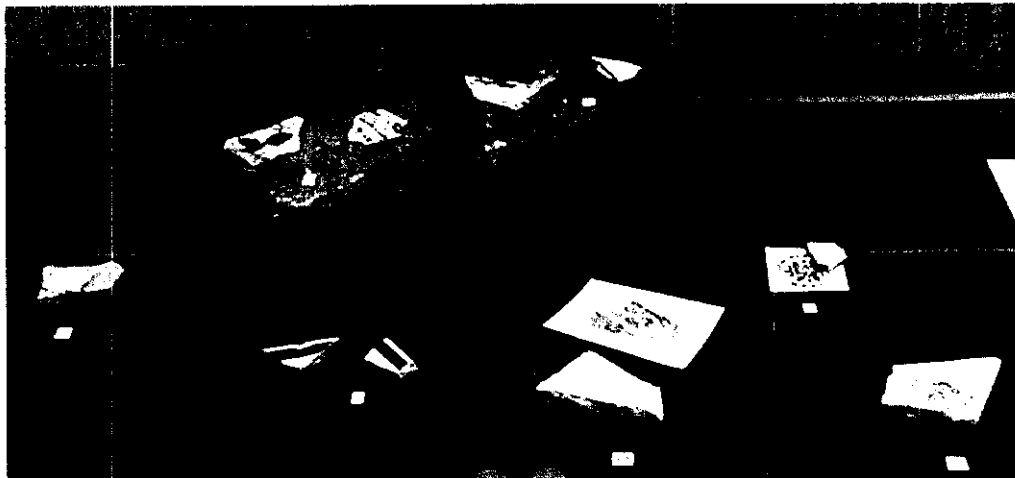


Figure 5. White ware ceramic fragments

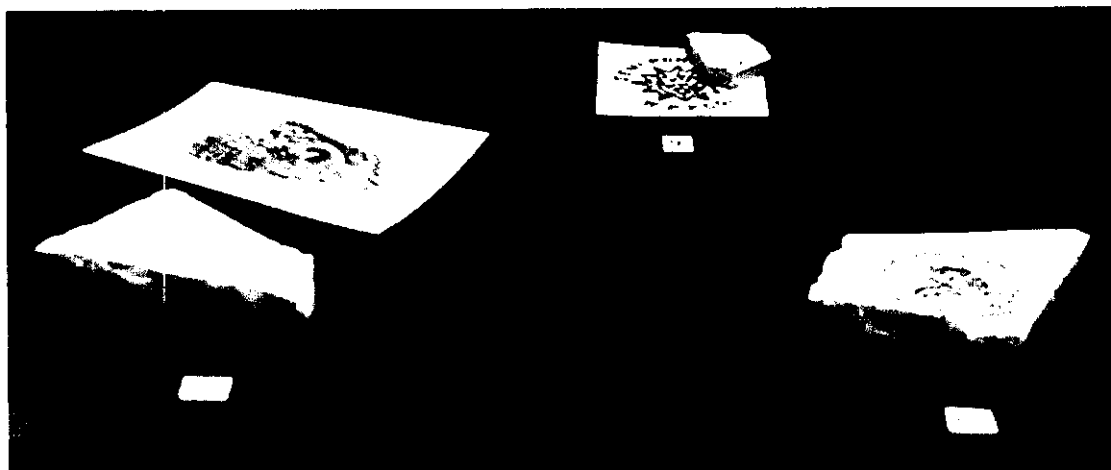


Figure 6. Ceramic fragments with maker's marks

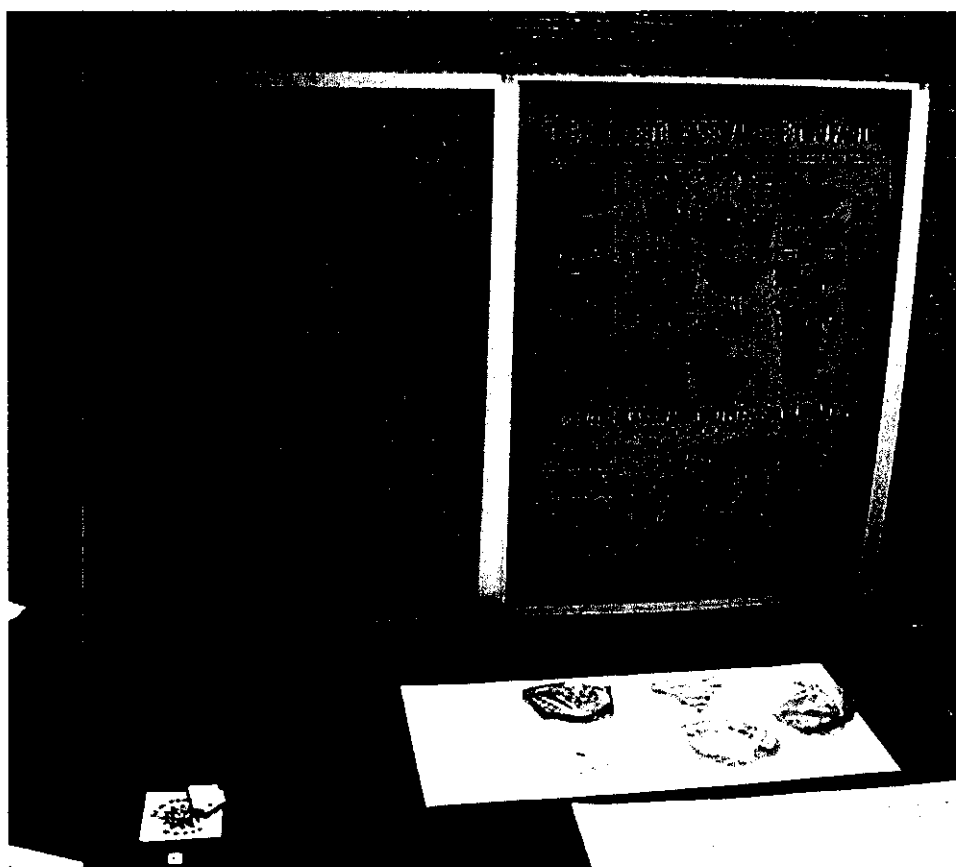


Figure 7. Glass tumbler fragments

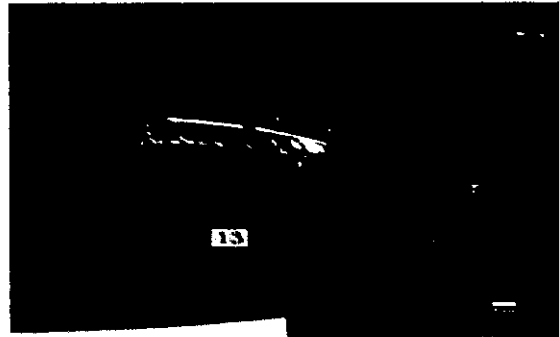


Figure 8. Carnival glass

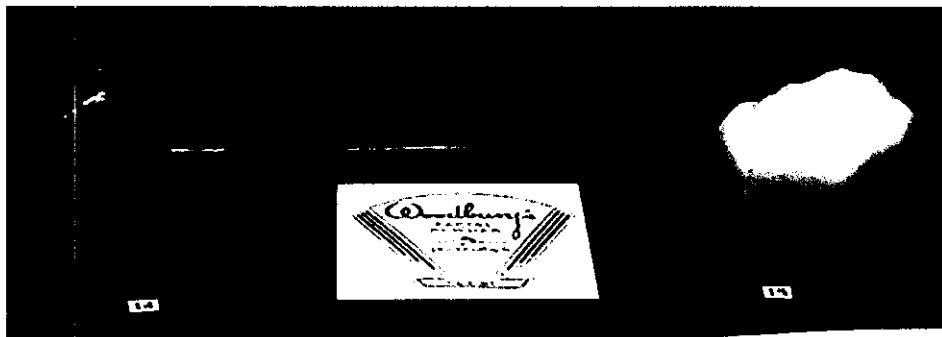
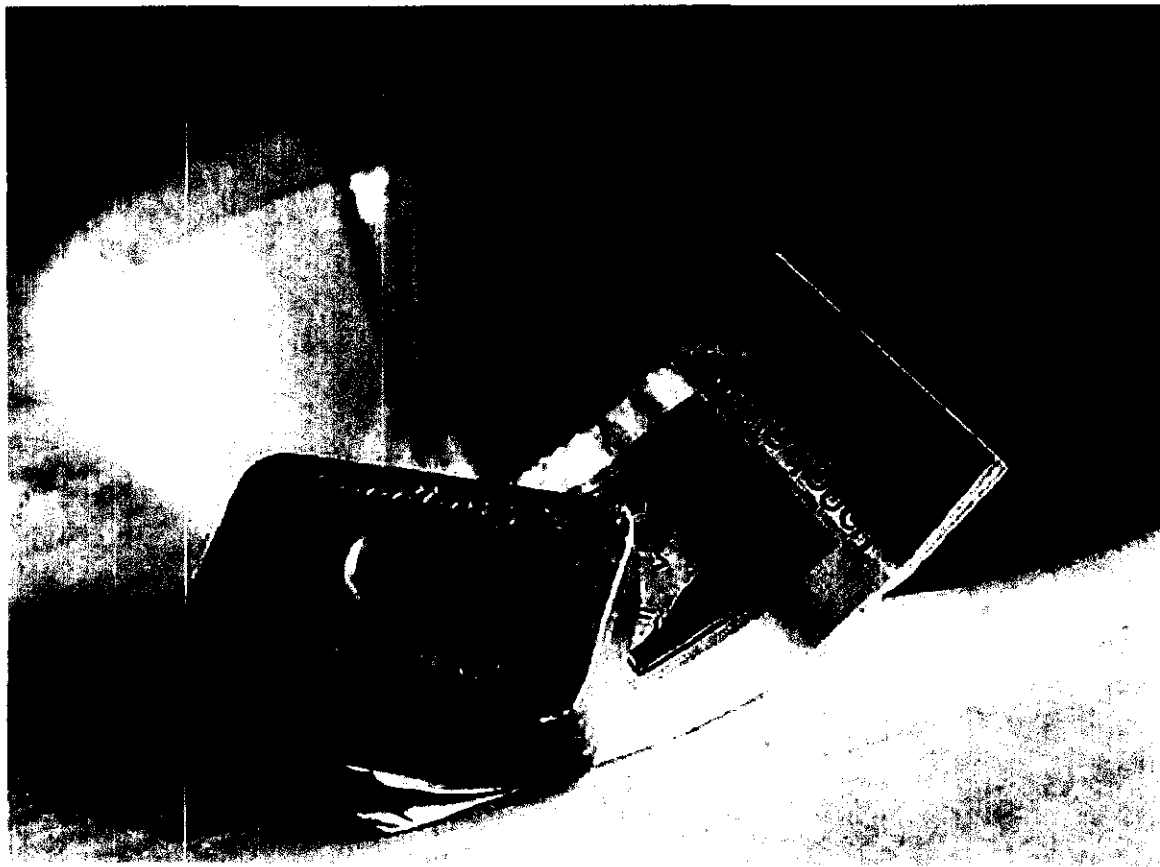
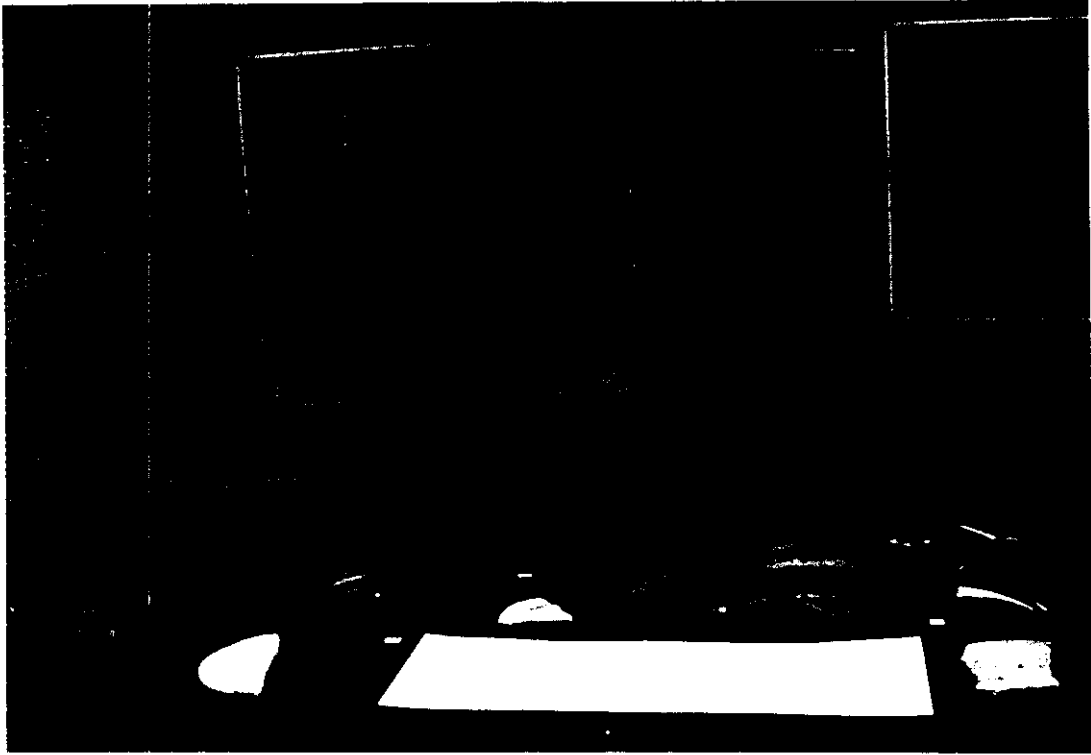


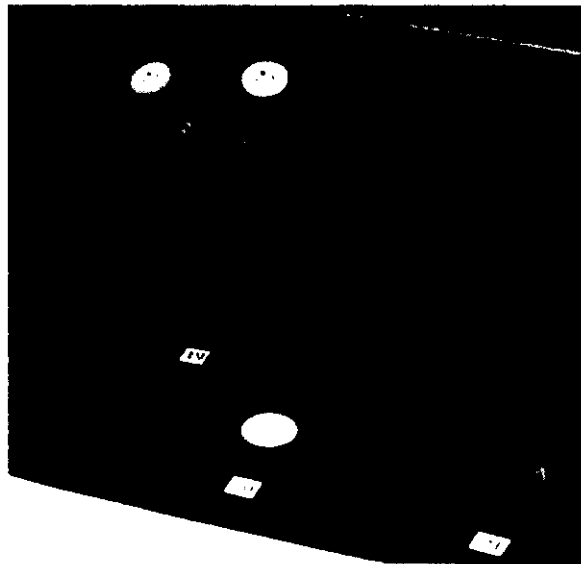
Figure 9. Jergens perfume bottle and Woodbury's Facial Cream jar



**Figure 10.** 1924 Woodbury's Facial Soap advertisement by Margaret Watkins



**Figure 11.** Metal machinery parts, glass canning jar and seal fragments,  
and stoneware crock fragments



**Figure 12.** Buttons

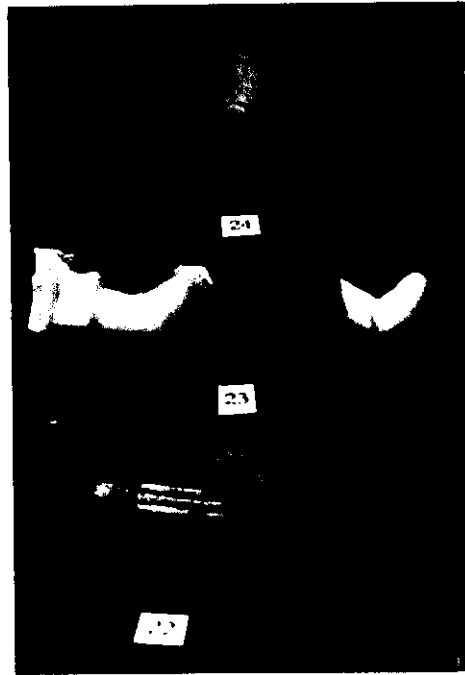


Figure 13. Pipe bowl and porcelain doll and figurine fragments

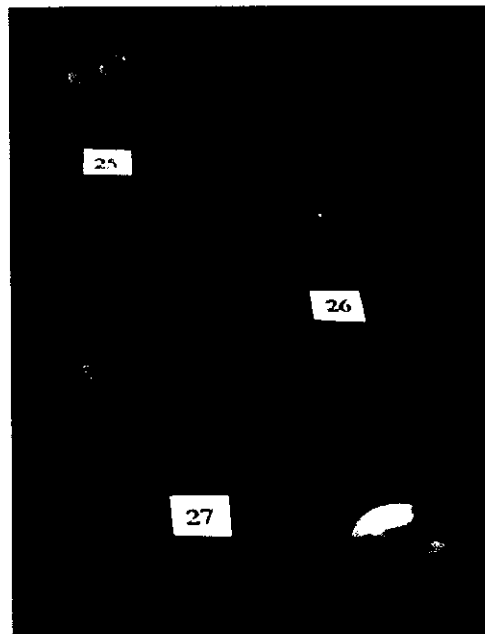


Figure 14. Marbles