

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE FISHKILL ENCAMPMENT "DIG"

June 2nd and 3rd; June 18th through 23rd, 1962

Through the courtesy of the N.Y. Department of Public Works, and under the auspices of the Fishkill Rotary Club -- a group of fine volunteers -- led by archeologist Godfrey J. Olsen -- have spent a number of days exploring the foundation remains opposite the Wharton-Van Wyck House on Route 9, one mile south of Fishkill. The following conclusions have been reached:

1. Bulldozers are a mixed blessing! Without the deep bulldozing which was done on the site in preparation for re-laying the Fishkill water main and moving Route 9 west, it is unlikely the foundations on which we have been working would have come to light. However, at the same time the bulldozers uncovered the foundations they also seriously disturbed them -- even removing large portions -- and it has been impossible for Mr. Olsen to determine the size of the structures or their exact use.

2. It is apparent that there were two buildings on the site on which we first worked. A fireplace foundation was uncovered directly below the soil line which had been crudely constructed of rubble from an earlier building: broken brick, slag, field and cut stone, broken pottery, animal bones, large pieces of iron -- some of which were identified by a staff member of the New York State Museum as being part of an iron fireback. This was all held together by a mud mortar. Immediately under it was an 1796 U.S. penny. Then there was a layer of fine gravel in which was embedded the iron sheath of a wooden shovel and a bayonet reworked to make a tool of some sort.

The foundation of the original building was of heavy laid field stones four feet below the soil line at the deepest point. When first found there was a floor of wood ash five inches deep but unhappily it was somehow lost during the week there was no digging, supposedly. On this ash floor was found a broken plate under which were egg and clam shells; a small pewter spoon bowl, a broken fork and other broken crockery.

How far east this building extended is now impossible to determine because of the work of the Carryall which took it away as fill for Interstate 84. However, much material was found under the stone wall along Route 9: more assorted nails, hardware, clay pipe stems and bowls, two razors, grape shot an inch in diameter and general indications that the area had been used as an 18th century household dump.

A second disturbed foundation was explored 130 feet north of the site above described. It appears to have been a frame building 12 feet by 16 feet with an outside fireplace. The hand cut nails found here do not appear to have been burned -- as is the case with the first structures. An interesting piece of basket weave pottery of a kind frequently found in officers' huts was found here.

Mr. Olsen is continuing to analyse the site and the artifacts and will make a further report at a meeting to be held Thursday, June 28th at 8 p.m. in Van Wyck Hall, Fishkill. All interested in forming a FISHKILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY are urged to attend. Such a Society would also include, of course, an Archeological Group to continue exploration of the historic Fishkill Revolutionary War Encampment.

C.C.F. for
Fishkill Historian, W.J.Hammond