



**Pristine Wilderness or Industrial Heritage?**

# **Creating a Critical Public Archaeology at Frost Town, New York**

Dr. Alexander J. Smith (SUNY Brockport)

Society for Historical Archaeology

January 7, 2023



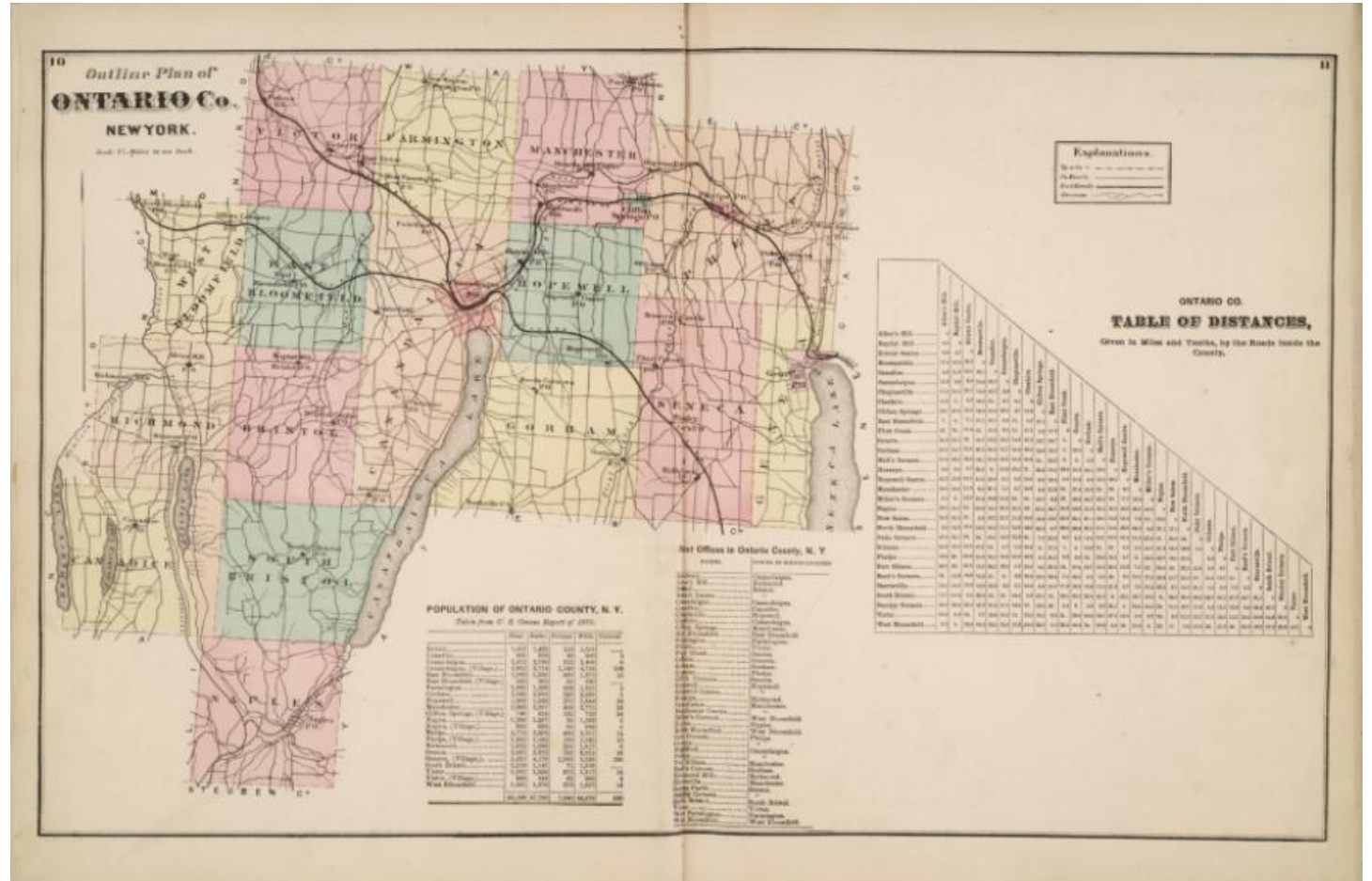
# Outline

I: A Brief History of Frost Town and FTA

II: Public Archaeology at FTA

III: Heritage, Wilderness, and the Future of Frost Town

# I: A Brief History of Frost Town and FTA



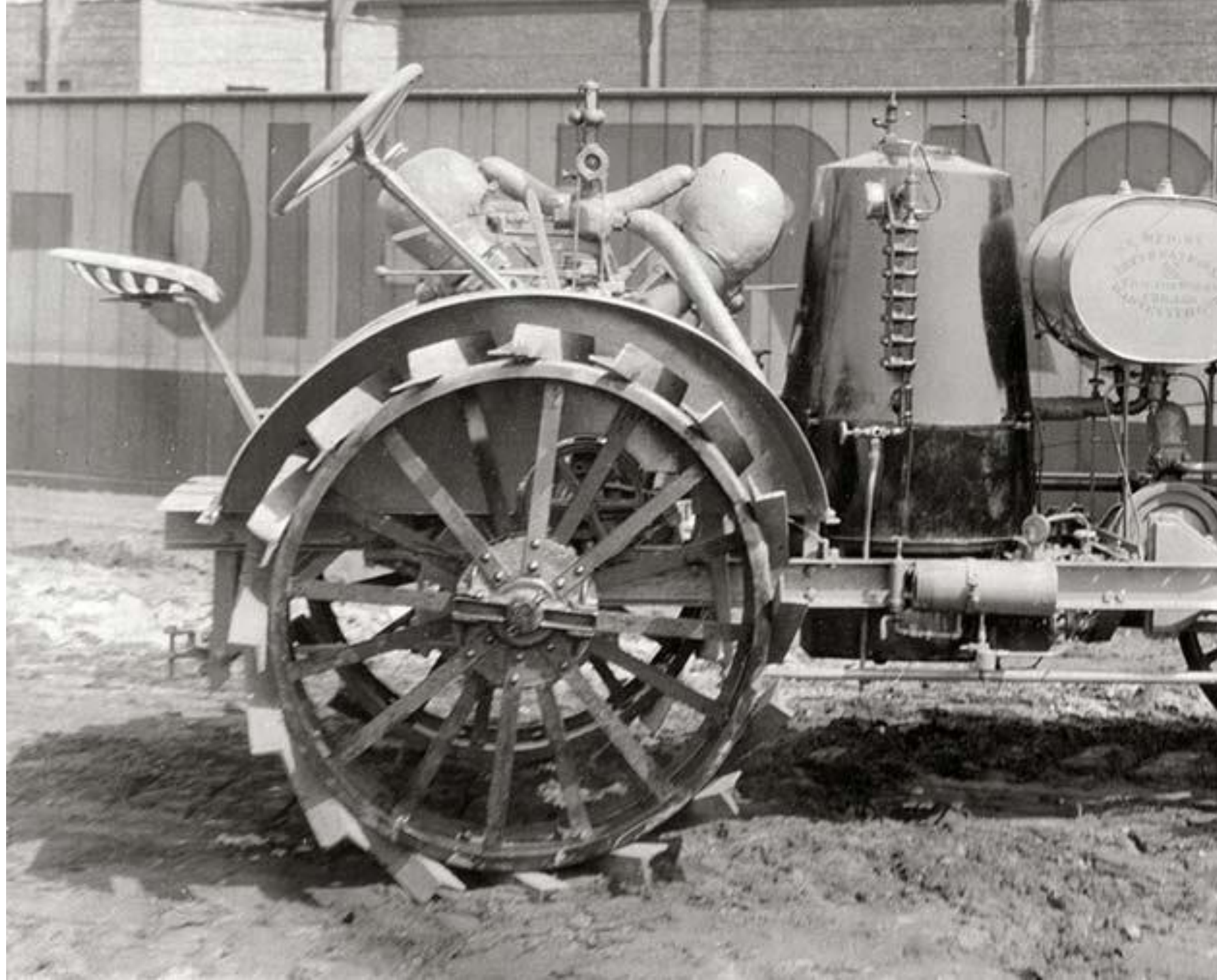


# Destruction of Old Growth Forests; Agriculture and Pastoralism





Population  
Decline in  
the Early 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century







# Frost Town Archaeology 2017-Present



# Excavations from 2019-2022





## Part II: Public Archaeology at FTA

# Children as Stakeholders



# Adults and Frost Town's Descendant Community



Thank You!

- Thank you to Nathan Brown of the Canning Station Center, as well as the other staff members who have worked with us at the CMC for various events. Special thanks to our former staff member, Victoria Brown, Jim Daniels, Tony Dine and the Canning Center.
- Funding for the Canning Station Center and related public programs was provided by the Department of Arts and Sciences at SUNY Cortland and the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Thanks to our collaborators, including Sarah Price and the Canning Station Center.
- Finally, special thanks to all the children, parents, and volunteers who have made this event so special. You are the true stars of the event. Special thanks to: Amy Gill, Sarah Lenthorn, Samantha Russell, Anna Deane, and the staff of the Canning Station Center, including: Chris Williams, and Catherine...

Check our Facebook page for more!

# Frost Town's Public Engagement in 2022

- Community Archaeology Day on August 6<sup>th</sup>
- Family Archaeology Day on September 11<sup>th</sup>
- Family Archaeology Day on October 16<sup>th</sup>
- We helped administer two week-long day camps for the Rochester Museum and Science Center for ages 9-15.
- We gave two public lectures with the Bristol Hills Historical Society in February of 2022 and September of 2022, drawing over 100 community members at the first.

# The Next Year of Public Outreach at Frost Town

- With the help of the ACLS' Sustaining Public Engagement Grant, we will be hosting a number of events and initiatives at Frost Town
- We are planning to work with the Rochester Orienteering Society to create a heritage-based orienteering course, accessible to anyone coming on the CNC property
- In May of 2023, we will be hosting a Frost Town Symposium at the Cumming Nature Center. There we will have local historians, archaeologists, and artists discuss the meaning of Frost Town
- During that event, we will also have an opening of a semi-permanent exhibit at the Cumming Nature Center welcome center on the story of Frost Town.



# Part III: Heritage, Wilderness, and the Future of Frost Town

---







# The Cumming Nature Center as Wilderness

MUSEUM & SCIENCE CENTER

STRASENBURGH PLANETARIUM

CUMMING N

JO

CUMMING NATURE CENTER

## 900 ACRES. 15 MILES OF TRAILS. UNLIMITED WONDER

Get up close with nature at our 900 acre preserve nestled in the Lakes. Explore 15 miles of hiking and ski trails, take in an exhibit Visitor Center, and enjoy year-round events and environmental programs.

[BUY TICKETS](#)

[OR BECOME A MEMBER >>](#)



# Frost Town as Industrial Landscape





# Narratives of Reclamation and Rewilding

The Trouble With Wilderness – William Cronon

# Disconnect between Colonial Ecology and Modern Conservation



A photograph of a dense forest of tall, thin trees, likely a plantation, with a path leading through them. The trees are arranged in neat rows, and the path is a narrow, light-colored trail that recedes into the distance. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a shaded forest interior.

# Creating an Archaeology of the Forest

Un-Wilding Nature  
Creating Critical Access Points  
Making the Process Agentive

# Frost Town's Next Steps

- Frost Town's 2023 exhibit will feature archaeological remains of the site, images of the people who once inhabited it, and instructions on how to read the forest for its human history, both as colonial and industrial.
- Frost Town 2023 will include two weeks of summer camps and an archaeology weekend in September, that will include excavations, historical craft demos, and an academic lecture, all foregrounding these notions of "reading the forest."
- Frost Town is currently working with the to Networking Archaeological Data and Communities, an NEH Institute for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities to begin the process of producing publicly available records and reports to the community, where this information will be available.

Thank You!

**FROST TOWN**  
TOWN PIONEERS ERECTED A SAW  
MILL HERE IN 1790. BY 1880 JONATHAN  
FROST WAS OPERATING THREE MILLS.  
TOWN OF 200 PEOPLE AND 39 BUILDINGS  
FABED WITH THE HARVESTED TIMBER.  
SOUTH BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2011

