

The Archaeology and Ecology of a Ghost Town

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(SUNY Brockport)

Frost Town Archaeology Symposium

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Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge respectfully the Indigenous Peoples on whose lands SUNY Brockport and the Cumming Nature Center now stand, the Onöndowa'ga (Seneca) Nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy.

SUNY Brockport Anthropology works to promote the support and recognition of indigenous students, scholars, and colleagues at the college and in all our research endeavors.



Outline

I: A History of Frost Town

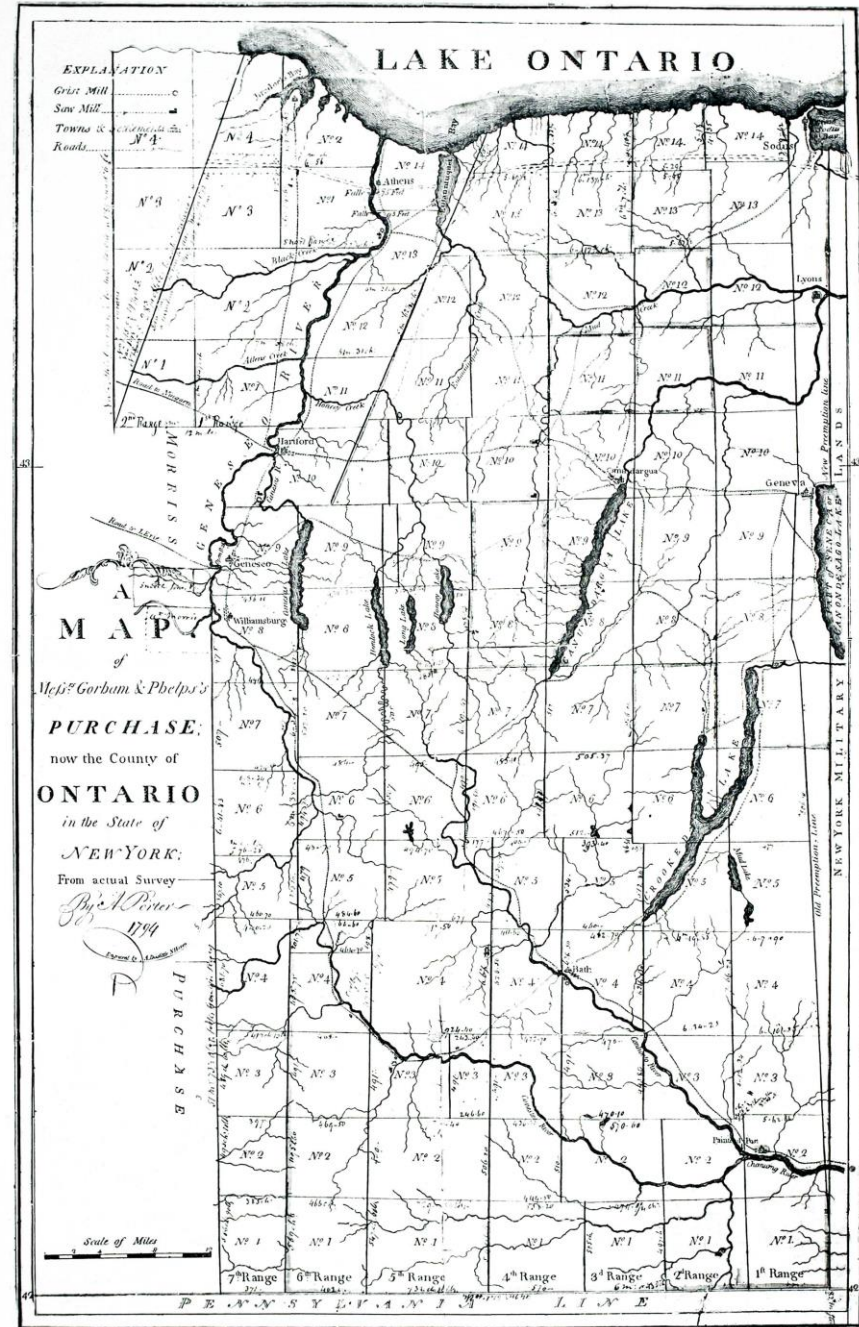
II: Studying a Ghost Town

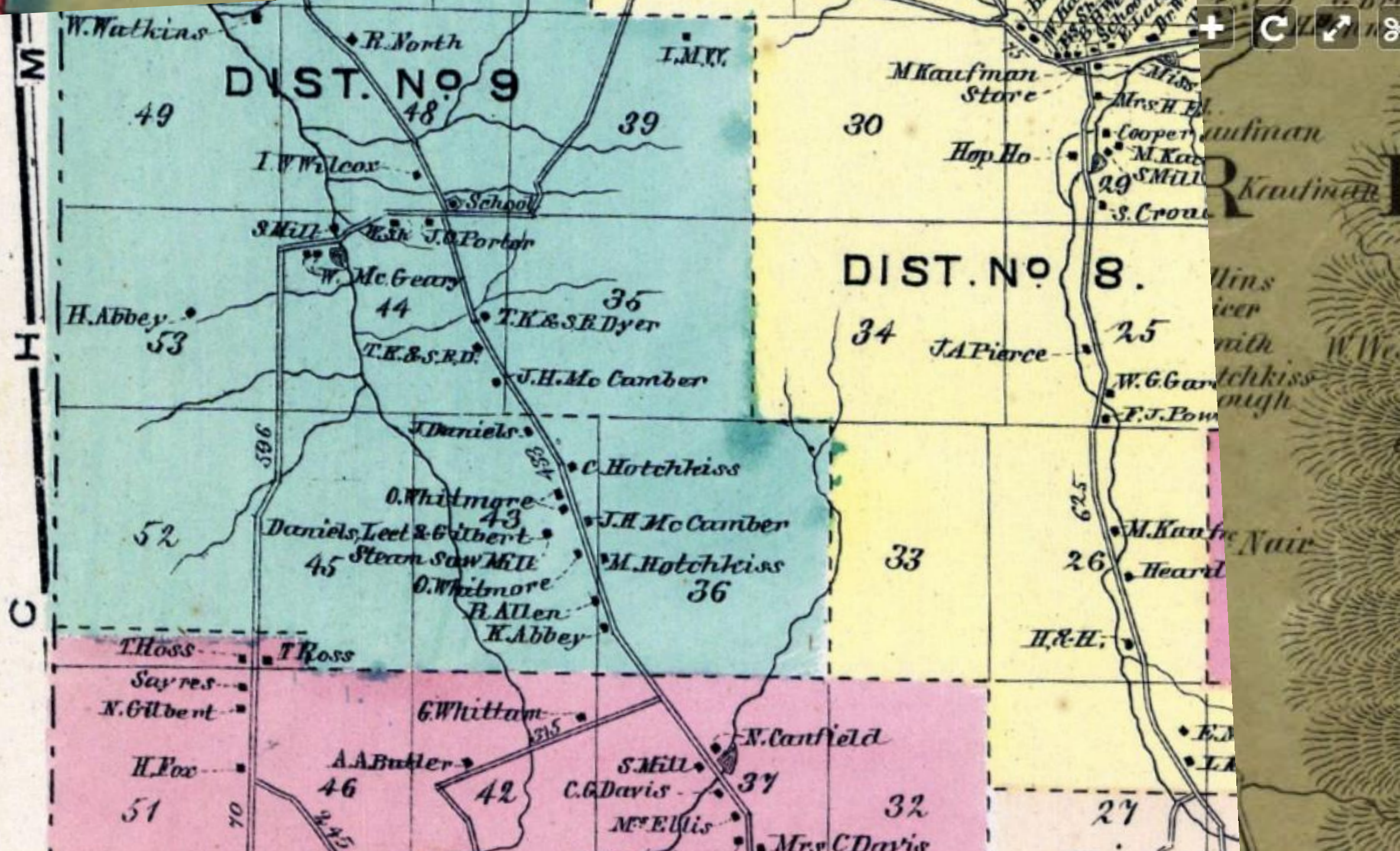
II: Archaeology at Frost Town

III: Conclusion – The Ecology of a Ghost Town

IV: The Future of Frost Town

I: A History of Frost Town and FTA





Families with Deep Roots

- Macumber
- Hall
- Dyer
- Hatch
- Wilcox



Logging

- Lumber Extracted for Years
- Short Track Railway Built in Briggs Gully
- Logs transported to Honeoye Lake



Logging Industries

- Meyer's Camp on Honeoye Lake saw logs coming down Briggs Creek into the early 1900s
- Logging continued in the area for generations after the first boom in the early 19th century



Agriculture

- But much of the area went to agriculture and pastoralism
- Hops, potatoes, berries, even watermelons



Agriculture

- South Bristol becomes known for pastoralism, as was Frost Town specifically
- The area was cleared in large swaths across the Bristol Hills



Abandonment

- By the 1920's most of the logging infrastructure was in ruins, including the Meyers Logging Camp and railway track in Briggs Gully
- Much of Frost Town was similarly abandoned



Lots
Consolidated,
Sold, and
Rebranded as
Nature
Reserves



Becoming a Ghost Town

Shortsville Enterprise 1963

confusion of the youngsters involved, our hats are off to a school board which operates as agreeably, as quickly, as efficiently as does the Phelps Board!

Foliage Tourists

See Local Color

The foliage tourists are arriving in Ontario County this week having followed the changing fall colors, in Michigan, Canada, Adirondacks, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Publicity about the beautiful autumn

reached. A side excursion to Canadice Hill on County Road 37 gives marvelous views of Honeoye and Canadice Lakes. From Honeoye, the West Lake Road to Naples reveals some rare scenery and history. In this region are the sites of the lost villages of Pansy, Hickory Bottom, Gulick, Frosttown, and West Hollow. These places once had post offices. All side roads in the Town of Naples and South Bristol offer adventure. County Road 12 from Naples to Bristol Springs

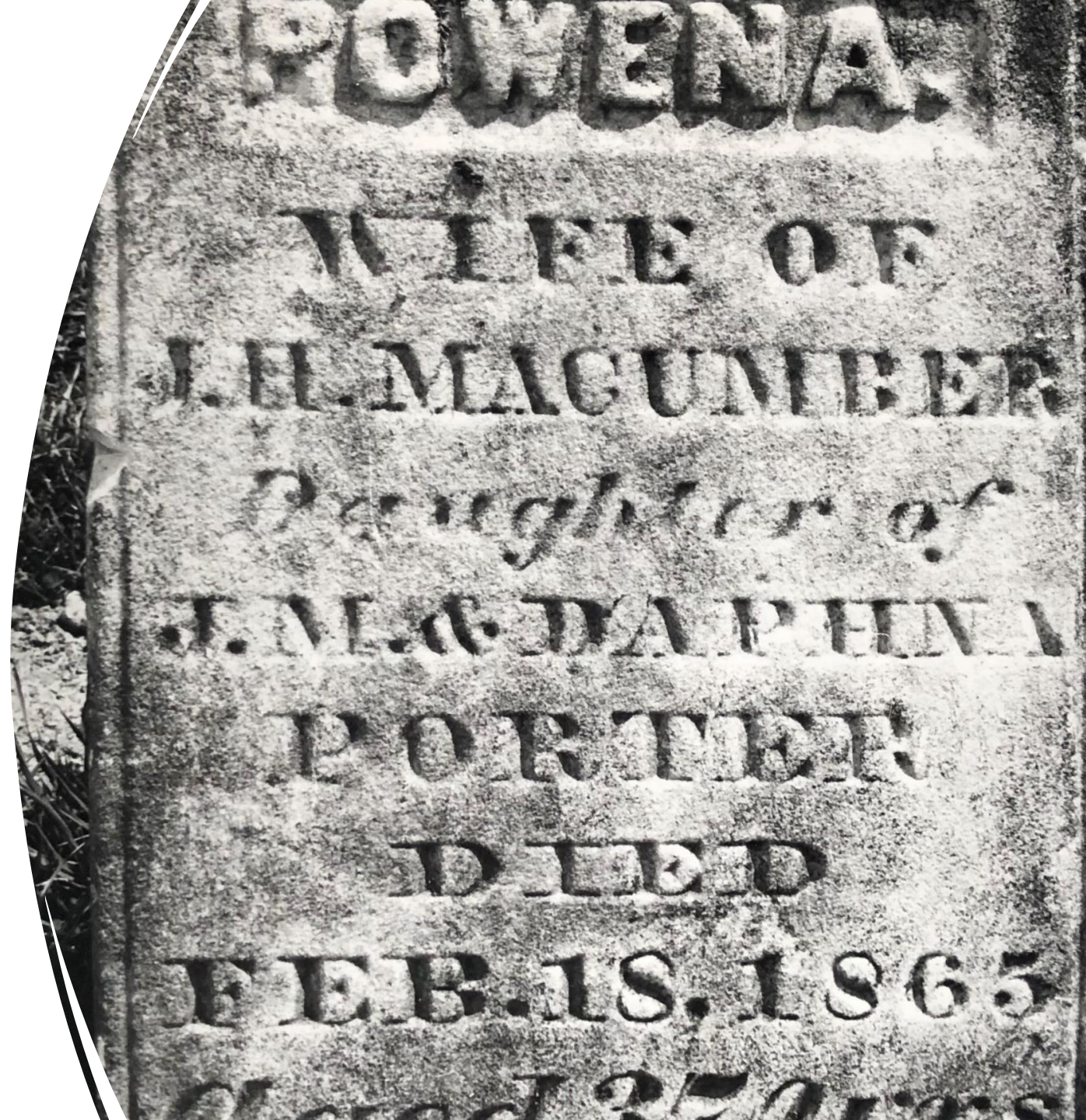


II: Studying a Ghost Town



Memory and the Continued Construction of Frost Town

- Frost Town lives on through its ruins
- Every generation we reinterpret Frost Town, approach it differently with new or different questions



Cumming Nature Center and Early Studies of Frost Town

Cumming
Nature
Center



Rochester Museum
& Science Center

THE MACUMBERS: A FAMILY IN THE
CUMMING NATURE CENTER'S PAST

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of
State University of New York College
at Oneonta at its Cooperstown Graduate Programs
in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Mary Latus Shedlock

1980

Archaeology at
the Cumming
Nature Center



Frost Town Archaeology 2017-Present



- Studying the remnants of Frost Town since 2017
- Started with Family Archaeology Days and Camps
- In 2019 and 2022, we held undergraduate archaeological field schools.

III: Archaeology at Frost Town





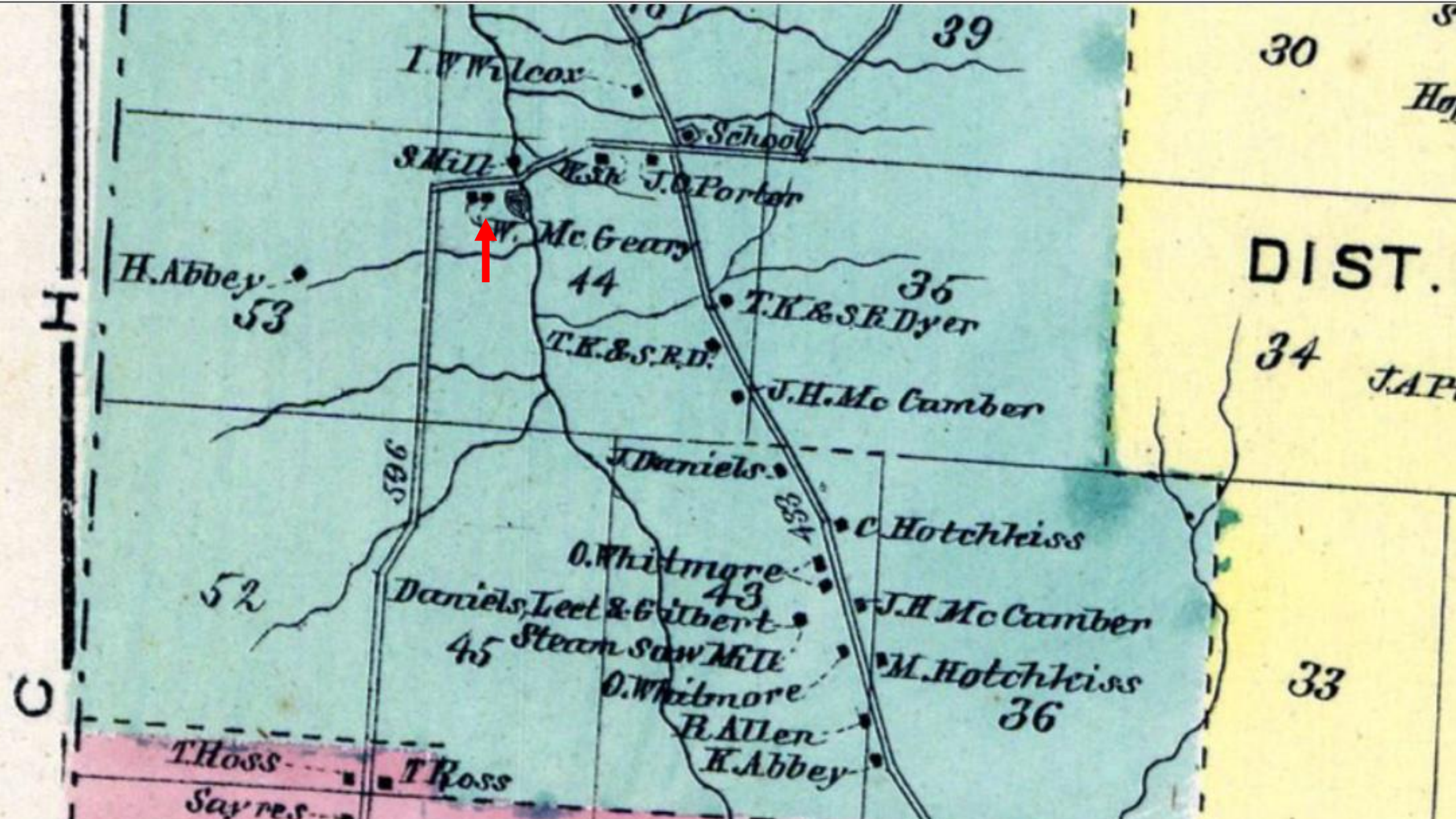
What do We Actually Find?



House Foundations



- Foundations are scattered throughout the property.
- Most of them just look like random piles of rocks.
- But the area had so many different houses, barns, and structures with field stone foundations that are now lost.



The Hall Site

- Focus of excavations since 2017
- Built in the 1840's



Excavations from 2019-2022

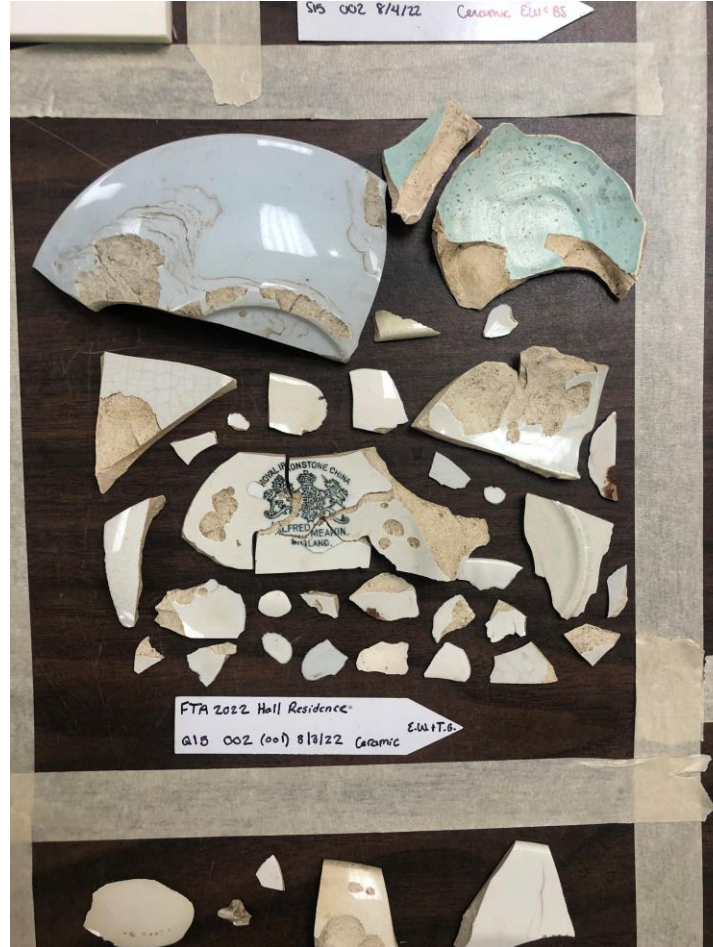


A Carriage House or Barn

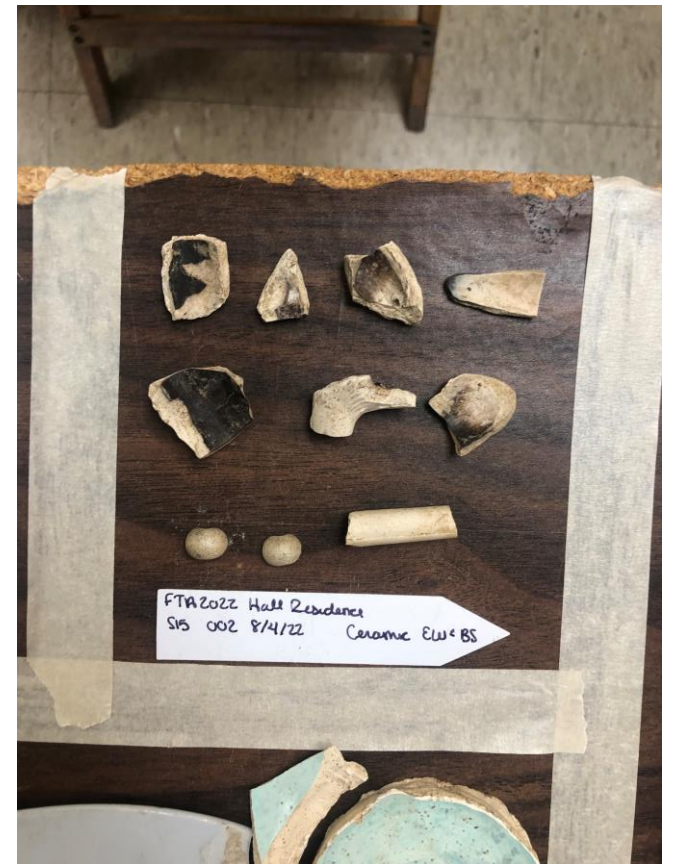


- Located at the Hall Site, just west of the main Hall Site.
- Materials date to the late 19th/Early 20th century
- Clear indications it was not a residence

Pottery Caches

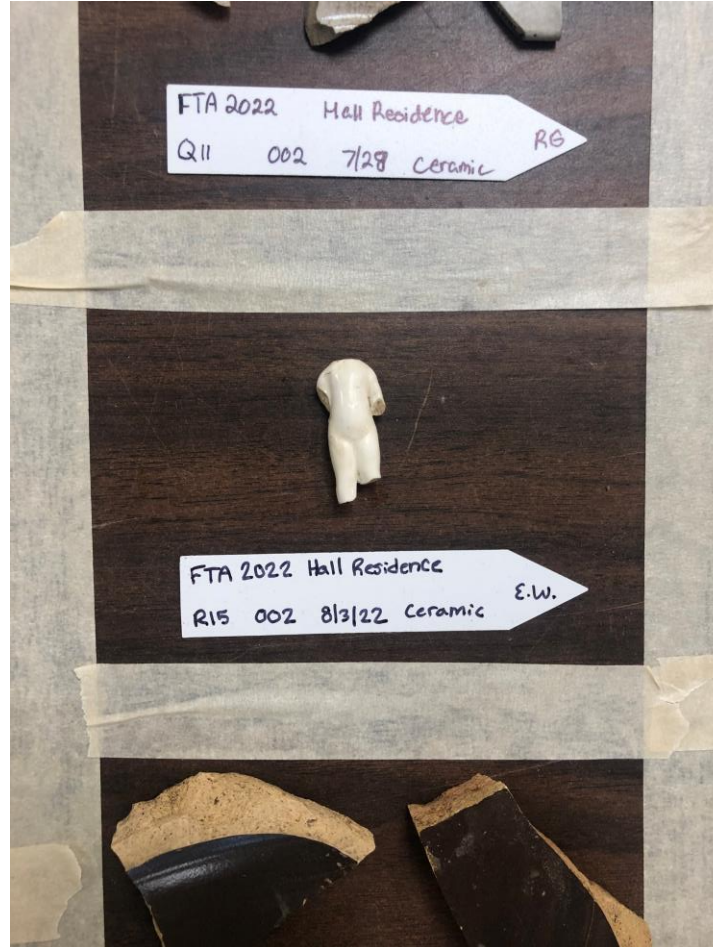


- Just south of the foundation, we've found large concentrations of trash, including collections of pottery.

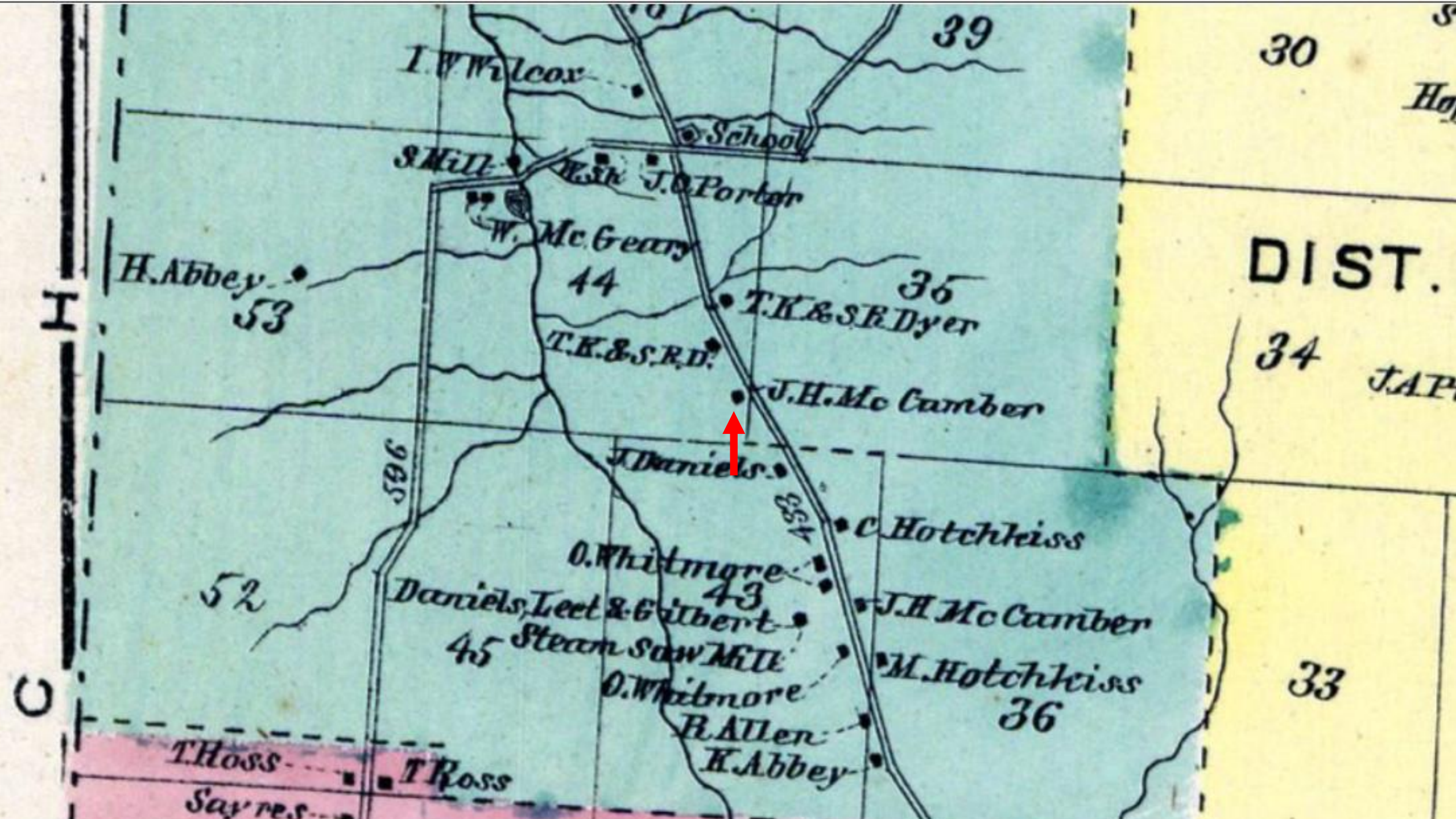


Shoes, Buttons, Pipes, and Other Clothing Materials

Frozen Charlotte



- 19th to early 20th century children's toy found among the trash deposits
- One of the only clear indications of childhood we've discovered at Frost Town



The Macumber Site



- Family Archaeology Day site
- Built sometime in the 1870's, most likely
- Excavations will continue!

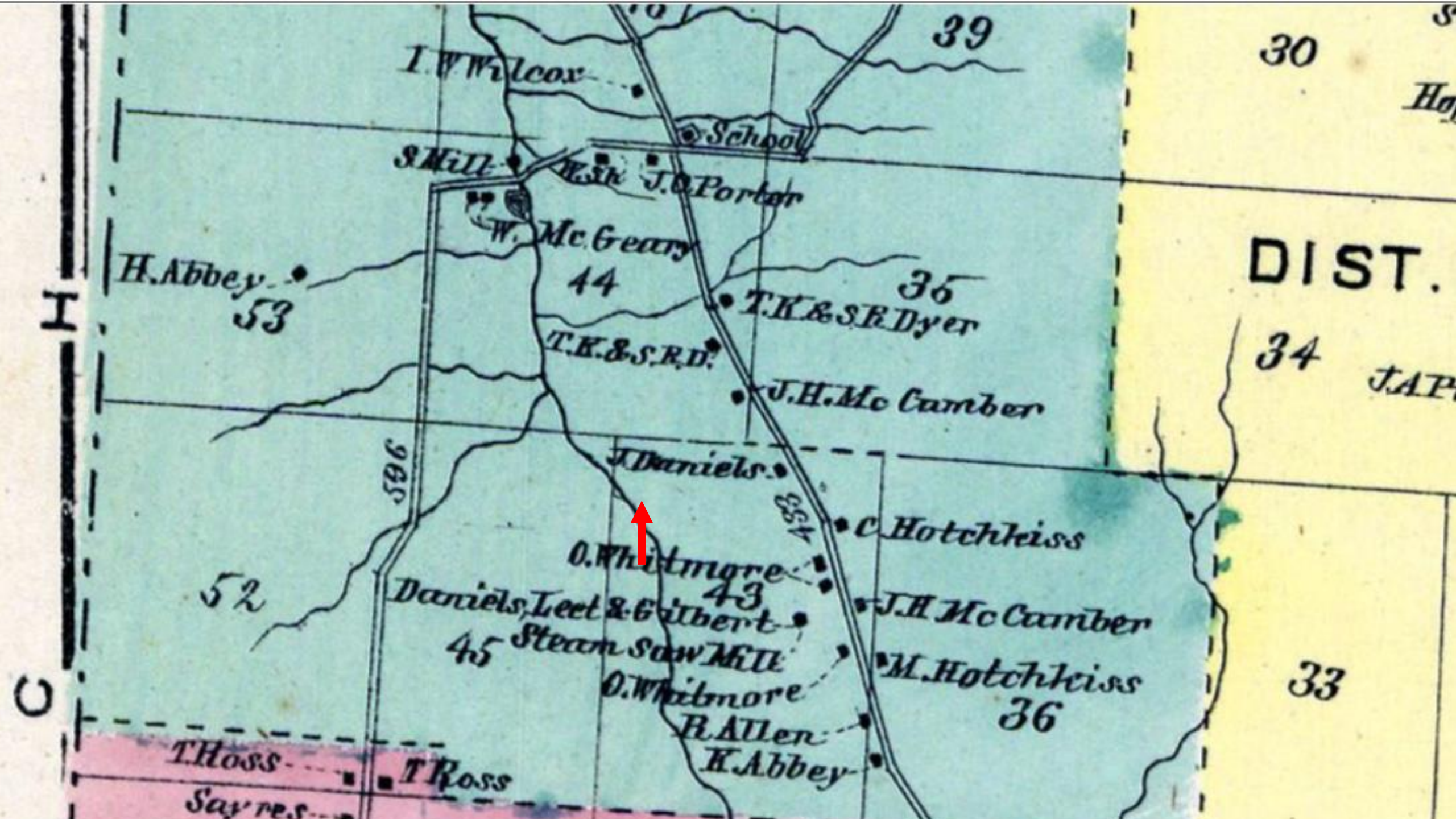
Discovery of an 1870's Sawmill



The Wilderness Team/Saw Mill



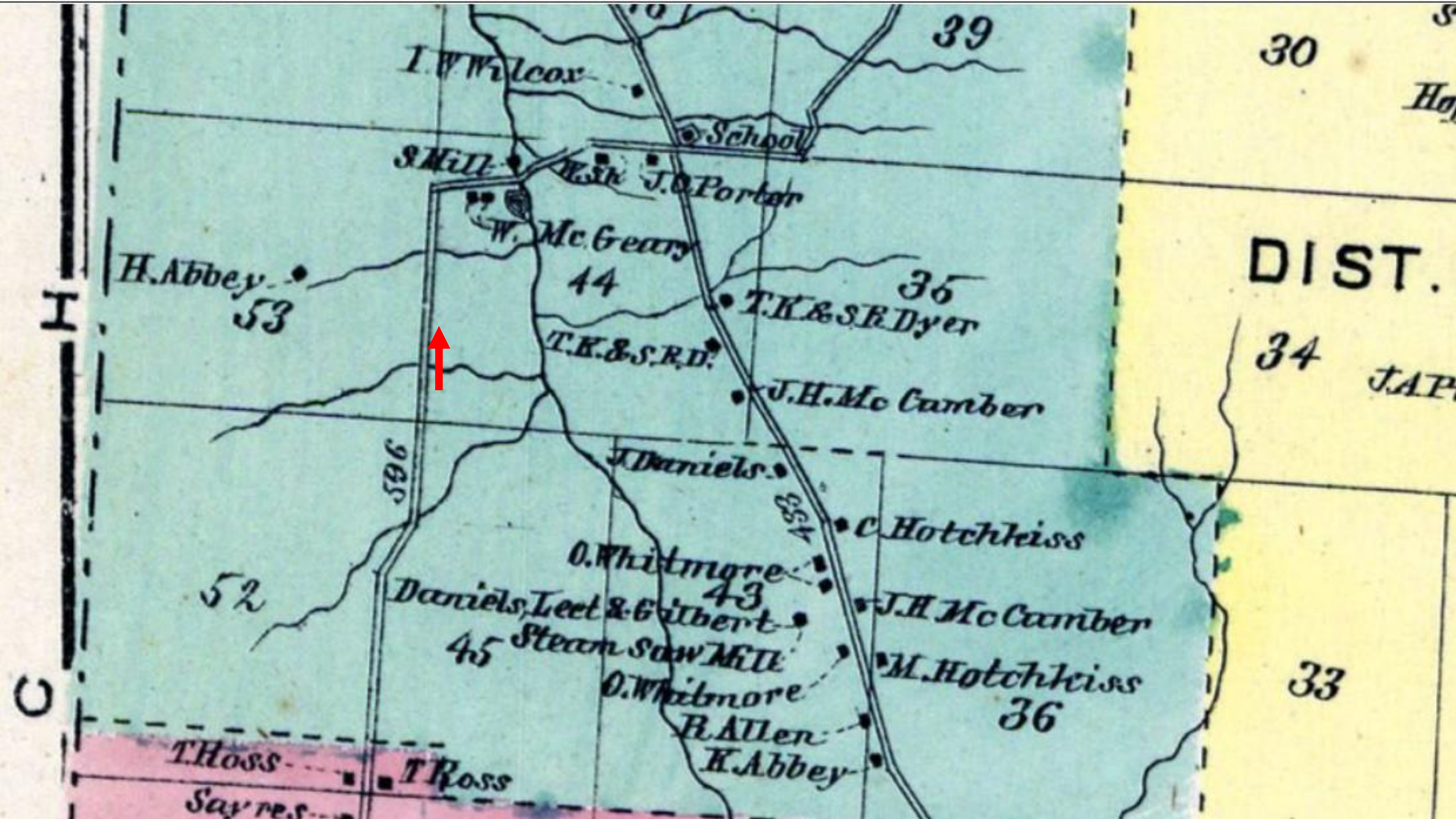
- Identified in 2021 as part of the LiDAR Ground Truthing Survey
- Probably dates to the 1870's and is most likely a saw mill



Industrial Objects

- Remains of Logging Equipment
- Steel chassis, bridges, abandoned bits of equipment



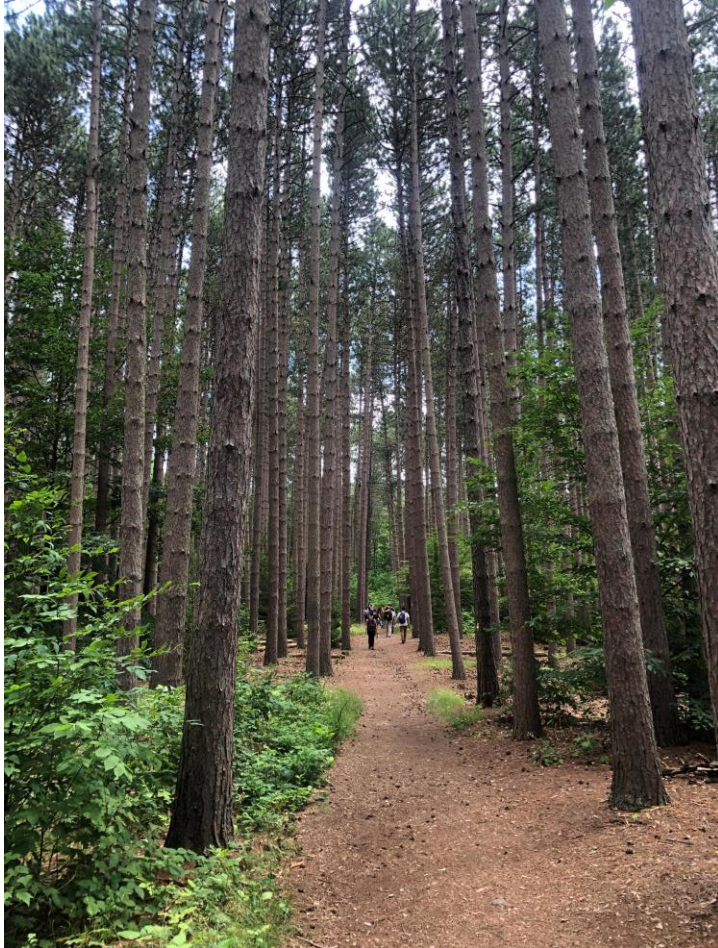


Tracks, Roads, and Fieldstone Walls


- Field Stone Walls
- Abandoned Roads
- Logging Tracks



Natural Features Modified by Humans



- Logging Stands
- Wolf Trees
- Apple Trees
- Abandoned Orchards
- Vegetation Tracks



Part IV: Conclusion - Ecology of a Ghost 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 WOND

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 e programs.

[BUY TICKETS](#)

[OR BECOME A MEMBER >>](#)



Frost Town as Recovering Industrial Landscape






Considering Reclamation and Rewilding

The Trouble With Wilderness – William Cronon



Understanding the Ecology of a Ghost Town

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



Part IV: The Future of Frost Town Archaeology



Frost Town Public Archaeology

- In 2023, we will help administer two weeks of summer archaeology camps through the RMSC
- On October 8-9th, we will be hosting a Frost Town Festival of sorts, doing public archaeology, but also expanding the event to include heritage makers, period games, and other interactive activities.
- In 2024, the full undergraduate team will be back with multiple opportunities for public engagement



Frost Town Exhibit

- The Frost Town exhibit will be up through November of 2023
- Following November, we will discuss reducing the exhibit to a small, permanent component
- We are also in talks with RIT Press about producing an exhibit catalogue



Frost Town's Publications

- Frost Town will appear in the Routledge Handbook for the Publicly Engaged Humanities and Social Sciences.
- We are currently working on a number of publications related to Frost Town and regional archaeology, preparing for New York History journal and the Journal of Historical Archaeology
- We are in talks to organize a kid's book on Frost Town
- Finally, in 2025, we will be preparing a book length publication on the project



Frost Town 2024

- In 2024, we plan to have the full undergraduate field school, integrating their study with the RMSC camps and public archaeology days.
- We will expand excavations to smaller sites throughout the area, focusing less on the Hall Site, though continuing excavation within the building and the carriage house.
- We plan to explore the Wilderness Site further
- I also hope we can do some targeted excavation at the G. Brown site and the Hiram Abbey site
- Finally, I will be living in Naples and reaching out to hopefully you all to conduct interviews on the family histories of Frost Town, but also your memories, stories, and thoughts about the logging community and heritage of Frost Town.



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.
DELAWARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

