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## Exploratory Excavation in the Yard of the John Fox House

Richard Polhemus

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### Description

The archeological investigation of the John Fox House (38LX3I) was sponsored by the Lexington County Historical Society and undertaken by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina. The exploratory excavation behind the John Fox House was made to locate any significant features which might be altered or damaged by future development. The excavation was carried out during two weeks in February 1971 by Richard Polhemus and John Jameson of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology. No work was done on the main structure which is still standing in a good state of preservation. The primary purpose of the excavation was to locate and interpret outbuildings known to have existed in the rear of the main structure.

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EXPLORATORY EXCAVATION IN THE YARD OF THE  
JOHN FOX HOUSE (38LX31)

by

Richard Polhemus

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Prepared by the  
INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
September 1971

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## INTRODUCTION

The archeological investigation of the John Fox House (38LX31) was sponsored by the Lexington County Historical Society and undertaken by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina. The exploratory excavation behind the John Fox House was made to locate any significant features which might be altered or damaged by future development. The excavation was carried out during two weeks in February 1971 by Richard Polhemus and John Jameson of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology. No work was done on the main structure which is still standing in a good state of preservation. The primary purpose of the excavation was to locate and interpret outbuildings known to have existed in the rear of the main structure (Figure 1, 5).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the people who have contributed to this project, particularly Mrs. Nancy Wingard of the Lexington County Historical Society; Dr. Robert L. Stephenson, Director of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology; and Mr. Stanley South, Archeologist of the Institute staff. I would also like to thank John Jameson for his continued assistance during the excavation and for drafting the archeological base map of the John Fox House.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The John Fox House was constructed in 1835 in conjunction with the Lutheran Seminary and Classical Academy of the South Carolina Synod established in 1833. The Seminary building was located opposite the John Fox House on the west side of Fox Street. The house was acquired in 1858 by



FIGURE 1

Present day view of the rear of the John Fox House from the southeast showing the later additions to the original structure.

John Fox, a resident of Lexington who held the position of County Sheriff, Clerk of Court, and State Senator (Wingard, Personal Communication).

#### DESCRIPTION OF STANDING STRUCTURES

The main frame house structure is almost entirely original although several subsequent additions to the rear of the house have altered its appearance somewhat (Figure 1). The central portion of the two story rectangular structure measures 16 feet by 60 feet, flanked by a full length front porch and back porch, each 16 feet in width. The original kitchen, represented by foundations 82 feet behind the left rear portion of the house, was constructed at the time the house was built. At a later date, possibly when John Fox acquired the property in 1858, the rear porch was enclosed to form a number of additional rooms. John Fox may have added the building adjoining the right rear portion of the house at the same time. This building is presently used as the Lexington County Museum Office. The final addition to the rear of the house was made in recent years when a structure identified as the second kitchen was moved to a position on the left rear portion of the house from a point 100 feet northeast of the house. The second kitchen was probably constructed shortly after John Fox acquired the property. The construction techniques, hewn sills, and form of square cut nails found in the second kitchen match those in the building used as the museum office and the two structures appear to be of contemporary construction. The last building presently standing on the lot, is a log structure moved onto the property within the last ten years, from a location behind a house at 225 Columbia Avenue. The lot from which it was removed was once occupied by Dr. Ernest Hazelius, First President of the Lutheran

Seminary. This structure, although dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, was unfortunately placed over the north end of the foundations of the original kitchen located during the present exploratory excavation. \*

#### THE EXCAVATION

The exploratory excavation consisted of 18 slot trenches and several expansions of slot trenches to delineate structural features (Figure 5). Slot trenches are narrow, exploratory excavations to sterile subsoil to locate significant features of archeological interest, such as building foundations, refuse deposits, or other evidence of human activity. Slots 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 14 were excavated to determine the size and construction of the structure identified as the original kitchen. Slots 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 were excavated in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the well. Slots 12 and 13 were excavated to determine if there had been any earlier structures prior to the second kitchen adjoining the left rear portion of the house. Slots 15 and 16 were excavated to define an elongated pit which may represent a small potato cellar in a small outbuilding. Slots 17 and 18 were excavated to determine the nature of a clay and refuse filled depression north of the original kitchen.



## DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF FEATURES

### The Kitchen

The structure identified as the original kitchen was located 82 feet behind the house when Slot 1 crossed the stone and brick chimney foundation situated at the south end of the structure (Figures 2, 5). Other slot trenches revealed the size and type of construction used for the structure. The stratigraphic position of a number of artifacts beneath a wash layer derived from the yellow clay mortar of the dismantled chimney gives an indication of the date the structure ceased to be used as a kitchen, sometime in the 1850's. This may have been at the time John Fox acquired the house. The foundations show that the structure was 16 feet wide and 26 feet long with an eight foot by four foot chimney centered on the south end of the building.

The foundations are made up of a base of roughly squared granite slabs set in a wide, shallow, builder's trench overlain by a single course of brick footings. The eight inch wooden sills are supported at intervals by the brick footings. The brick used for the kitchen chimney and footings match those of the original house footings and chimney. Traces of the eight inch wooden sills remained in place on the single-course brick footings. The foundations have been disturbed to a great extent in some areas suggesting that some stone and bricks may have been reused elsewhere. The chimney foundation is made up of a single course of large, irregular blocks of granite showing drill marks on them, overlain by the bottom course of the brick chimney (Figure 3). The remaining bricks were frost-broken when exposed. A well-defined builders' trench was present around the back wall of the chimney foundation. The sandy subsoil in the hearth area is burned red.

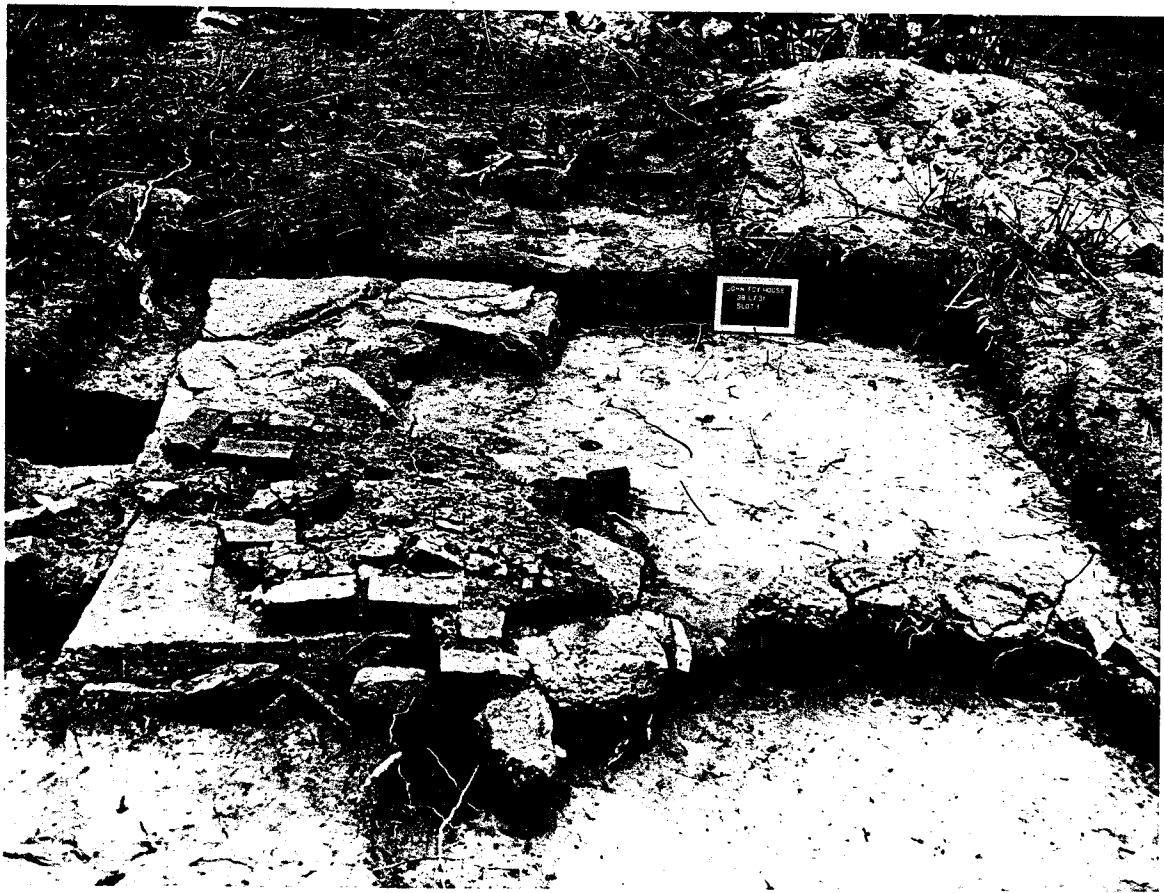


FIGURE 2

Granite chimney foundation located at the south end of the original kitchen.



FIGURE 3

Northeast corner foundation of granite slabs overlain by brick footing. Recently moved log smokehouse foundation in background.

The size of the chimney and the position of the structure in relation to the main house suggest that the structure was the kitchen. Mrs. Beulah King, a local resident who was born and lived in the John Fox House, recalled that a structure occupied the area we were excavating, and that it was of the size and orientation of the structure we located. She recalled that the structure was used as a smokehouse and had one large and one small room, but was positive that the chimney was not present at that time. She remembered that the smoking process was accomplished in a metal container rather than a brick firebox, and that the structure had a wooden floor.

It is suggested that the original kitchen was built in 1835 at the time the main house was constructed, as the bricks, nails, dimensions, and orientation indicate. It is also suggested that the kitchen ceased to be used as a kitchen, possibly at the time the present kitchen was constructed, and that the chimney was dismantled at that time. This may have been in 1858 when John Fox acquired the house. The yellow clay used as mortar between the bricks washed out into a layer, dipping away from the chimney foundation on three sides, ending at the wall line for the structure and covering a small deposit of blue-edged pearlware sherds. The wash did not extend north of the wall line, indicating that the structure was still standing at the time the chimney was dismantled. The opening left in the south wall was probably closed at that time and the remaining structure utilized as a storehouse and smokehouse. This structure was removed about 1940 and old photographs may give a good idea of the appearance of the structure if such photographs can be located.

A receipt for building materials, found among the Fox papers, provides an idea of the size and quantity of materials for a 16 by 26 foot frame

structure utilizing the same form of construction as the Fox House.

Receipt for Building Materials

Stepney Goodwin D.

1848

To George Leaphart

Augt - 24th

2 Sills 26 ft. long 8 by 8	276 ft.	-	\$ 2.41
2 Do. 16 ft. long 8 by 8	170 "	-	1.49
2 Plates 26 ft. long 4 by 6	104 "	-	.91
2 Do. 16 ft. lg. 4 by 6	64 "	-	.56
4 Posts 10 ft. lg. 4 by 6	80 "	-	.70
4 Braces 15 ft. lg. 4 by 4	80	-	.70
13 Joists 16 ft. lg. 2 1/2 by 8	346	-	3.42
13 Do. 18 ft. lg. 3 by 5	270	-	2.36
38 Studs 10 ft. lg. 3 by 4	380	-	3.32
12 Rafters 19 ft. lg. 3 by 4	228	-	1.99
27 Boards 18 ft. lg. 12 by 1	486	-	4.25
12 Do. 16 ft. lg. 12 by 1	192	-	1.68
8 Do. 16 ft. lg. 12 by 1 1/2	192	-	1.68
1100 Ft. of weather boarding 10 by 3/4	- 1100	-	9.63
500 Ft. of Rough edge Boards	- 500	-	3.50
			<u>\$38.20</u>

Although the 1848 Receipt does not refer to the building in question, the material supplied was cut to order and supplies construction details not available to the archeologist concerning a single story frame clapboard structure of the same dimensions and period. A further search of the Fox papers in possession of the Lexington County Historical Society may provide not only clues to building construction and repair but also to the location of other outbuildings not found in the exploratory excavation.

Other Features

The slots excavated, in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the well, exposed a number of minor features. Slot 4, north of the museum office, exposed evidence of a large tree fall as shown by a large irregular basin-shaped feature filled with sand. A sherd of blue-edged pearlware and a

jaw trap fragment in the fill suggest that the hole was open after construction of the house. A footing of unknown date was located near the house and may have been part of a small porch remembered by Mrs. King at the north-east corner of the house. A small ditch paralleling the wall of the present museum office contained material indicating a date of about 1900. Slot 5 crossed a shallow, unidentified disturbance which was not completely exposed. Slots 7 and 11 revealed a number of small post holes.

Slots 12 and 13, excavated to determine the presence of any earlier structures on the site of the present kitchen, revealed no traces of disturbance other than the drip line from the present structure. A large tree stump was also located beneath the present structure.

Slots 15 and 16, excavated to define a long rectangular pit, located one end of the feature and provided a vertical profile showing a flat bottom overlaid with a silt deposit. This feature could represent a portion of the structure referred to in an 1869 inventory of the property as a "potato house."

Slots 17 and 18, excavated to determine the nature of a clay and refuse-filled depression north of the original kitchen foundation, revealed a recent refuse layer, containing wire with plastic insulation, overlaid by a red clay layer.

#### COMPARISON WITH OTHER STRUCTURES

The standing outbuildings situated behind the Hazelius-Leaphart Cottage, constructed between 1820 and 1830, occupied by the President of the Lutheran Seminary, were examined to gain insight concerning the basic construction techniques which may have been utilized for the outbuildings behind the John Fox House. The nails used for the construction of these outbuildings are square cut and match those in the main portion of the Hazelius-Leaphart

Cottage and the John Fox House. The structures were found to rest on foundations consisting of a single large stone at each corner. The stones are not deeply set into the ground and would leave little trace of the location of the outbuilding upon removal. It is quite possible that the outbuildings behind the John Fox House were constructed in a similar manner and left little evidence of their previous location.

#### THE ARTIFACTS

The artifacts recovered from the exploratory excavations at the John Fox House contribute not only to the dating of the various features located but also in giving an idea of the material in use during the occupation of the site. Unfortunately, only a small amount of material was recovered in the tight context necessary to make it useful for furnishing the house to the pre-Civil War period desired. The only sample of material having such context was recovered in the vicinity of the chimney foundation of the original kitchen, sealed under a layer of yellow clay deposited after the chimney was dismantled. This area contained blue shell-edge pearlware (Figure 4e) and white earthenware sherds, but no ironstone indicative of the Civil War period and after, suggesting that the chimney was dismantled by John Fox upon acquiring the property in 1858. Two wrought iron pan handles and cast iron griddle fragments suggest cooking activity prior to deposition of the clay layer. Ceramics provide the most reliable dates of any class of material in the collection.

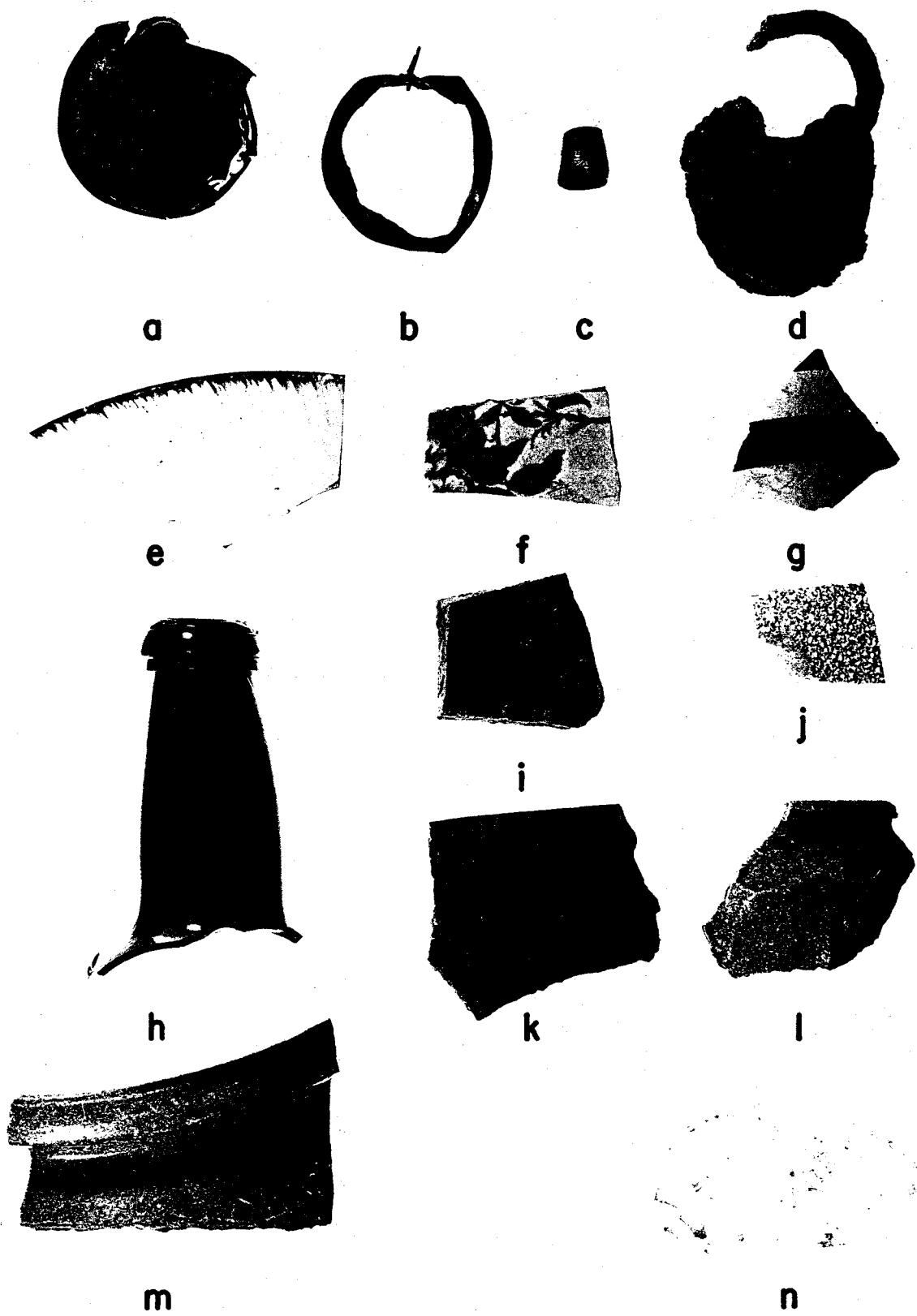
Pearlware is represented by most of the decorative techniques utilized in this ware characteristic of the first half of the nineteenth century. Plain body sherds predominate and can be attributed to the edge ware groups. Blue shell-edged pearlware (Figure 4e) and plain shell-edged ware were found

FIGURE 4

ARTIFACTS RECOVERED DURING THE EXCAVATION

- a. Sheet Brass Curtain Tie
- b. Sheet Brass Curtain Ring
- c. Brass Thimble
- d. Iron Padlock
- e. Blue Edged Pearlware
- f. Blue Transfer Printed Pearlware
- g. Banded Yellow Ware
- h. Wine Bottle Neck
- i. Alkaline Glazed Stoneware
- j. Sand Textured Yellow Ware
- k. Unglazed Stoneware
- l. Alkaline Glazed Stoneware
- m. Alkaline Glazed Stoneware
- n. White Quartz Biface





**FIGURE 4**

ARTIFACTS RECOVERED DURING THE EXCAVATION OF THE FOX HOUSE (38LX31)

in plate and soup plate forms. Flow blue and banded ware occur in bowl and cup forms. Blue hand-painted pearlware occurs in cup and saucer forms. Blue and purple transfer-printed pearlware (Figure 4f) occurs in plate forms, as does the polychrome hand-painted pearlware.

The second most frequent ceramic group is represented by white earthenware in a variety of decorative techniques found on the earlier pearlware. The white earthenware is characterized by the lack of the cobalt blue tinted glaze characteristic of pearlware in areas with thick glaze accumulation, a dead white surface, and noticeable porosity when touched to the tongue. Vessel walls are thicker and forms more chunky than those of pearlware. White earthenware seems to be most characteristic of the middle half of the nineteenth century. Sponged ware, sometimes called "spatter ware" occurs in white earthenware at the Fox House in the form of a handleless cup. Transfer printing on white earthenware incorporates more colors (sepia, red, purple, and blue) than pearlware.

Yellow wares, although common to the mid-nineteenth century are represented by only a small number of sherds. Banded yellow ware (Figure 4g) is well represented in the small sample as is a sand-textured group of sherds (Figure 4j) from a single vessel, possibly an animal effigy. This ware has one source in Ohio, but was manufactured at many locations.

Course earthenwares are present in two forms, wheel turned Albany slipped and the unglazed redware commonly utilized in manufacturing flower pots. It is not possible to determine vessel form from the sherds present.

Stonewares are represented by two varieties common on mid-nineteenth century sites in South Carolina. Locally made alkaline-glazed ware (Figure 4i, l, m) and feldspathic glazed ware utilized for ginger beer bottles.

Two fragments of unglazed stoneware (Figure 4k) were recovered from disturbed excavation areas.

Ironstone is poorly represented from the excavation. This ware is characterized by the surface appearance and vessel forms of white earthenware without the decorative techniques. The opaque paste is nonporous and, like porcelain and stoneware, does not stick to the tongue. Decoration is restricted to relief around the rim of plates and the exterior surface of bowl forms. This ware is characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.

Porcelain is also poorly represented in the collection. The sherds present could be quite recent in origin as the John Fox House has had a continuous occupation until acquired by the Lexington County Historical Society. The sherds are plain with the exception of a single gilded rim and a figurine fragment decorated with blue flowers.

The metal artifacts are less dateable and more durable than ceramics and thus have a longer probable span of use. The curtain tie (Figure 4a), curtain ring (Figure 4b), the brass thimble (Figure 4c), and the padlock (Figure 4d), all could have been present in the pre-Civil War occupation of the house.

The square cut nails are machine headed and match those found in the standing structures.

The brass spoon and two-tine fork fragment could be useful in making up place settings of tableware. The rest of the list of metal objects found in the appendix to this report may have been deposited at any time during the occupation of the house, with the exception of wire nails and crown bottle caps which can be attributed to the twentieth century.

Only the wine bottle neck illustrated in Figure 4h can be attributed to the first half of the nineteenth century out of the collection of glass recovered. Other glass recovered occurred in small fragments and is listed\* in the appendix.

The slate pencil and writing slate fragments may have seen use by one of the seminary students boarding in the Fox House. Other artifacts recovered consist of an abalone shell, single-hole button and a whetstone from the kitchen area. A quartz biface Figure 4n (an artifact of prehistoric Indian origin) may represent either the prehistoric occupation of the lot or an artifact collected by one of the occupants of the house.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The exploratory excavations at the John Fox House (38LX31) have shown once again the necessity of archeological reconnaissance and assessment of historic sites prior to alteration by repair, reconstruction, restoration, or the removal or addition of structures on such sites. The historic site archeologist is frequently presented with problems due not so much to the situation of the site as to well-meant attempts by sponsoring organizations to "improve" the site to be preserved prior to calling upon the archeologist. The example provided by the John Fox House is far from being an isolated example in this respect and little actual damage has been done that could not be rectified. The present kitchen could be replaced on its foundation north of the main house. The log "smokehouse" could be returned to the lot once occupied by Dr. Ernest Hazelius, first President of the Lutheran Seminary. The original kitchen, located through archeology, could be reconstructed on its original foundations utilizing both archeological and documentary sources, or stabilized and interpreted to the public through signs and as an historical architect's conception of the appearance of the structure.

The present investigation has provided the location of a structure identified as the original kitchen and traces of other artifacts in the yard of the house. The relative age and construction sequence of the structures concerned has been determined, utilizing excavated material and structural similarities. The artifacts recovered during the investigation of the yard will provide a comparative collection which can be used in analyzing other mid-nineteenth century historic sites. These artifacts also provide a nucleus of material associated with the house and its occupants to act as a guide in furnishing the restoration with correct ceramics, hardware, and other objects

of the period of occupation desired. The listing of artifacts recovered, contained here as an appendix is provided as an aid to this end. Those artifacts which can be correlated with the pre-Civil War occupation either by stratigraphy or period of manufacture are indicated with an asterisk.

Reconstruction of the original kitchen is possible but not recommended, due to the difficulty in determining many details of the super structure which would be necessary. If old photographs could be located showing the structure remembered as a smokehouse, it is possible that the necessary structural details could be determined. Further documentary research may also provide information in the form of property descriptions or receipts for construction materials. A detailed study of the construction techniques used on the standing structures would also provide information which would aid in reconstructing the original kitchen.

APPENDIX

Artifacts recovered during the exploratory excavation in the yard of the John Fox House (38LX31).

Artifacts which can be correlated with the pre-Civil War occupation (1835-1858) are marked with an asterisk.

CERAMICS

Pearlware

*Plain	37	*Hand painted, blue	3
*Shell edge, blue	12	*Hand painted, polychrome	4
*Shell edge, plain	2	*Transfer printed, blue	4
*Flow blue	1	*Transfer printed, purple	<u>2</u>
*Banded ware	8	Total pearlware	73

White Earthenware

*Plain	60	*Transfer printed, blue	8
*Gilded rim	1	*Transfer printed, purple	6
*Sponge ware, red & green	2	*Transfer printed, red	<u>2</u>
*Hand painted polychrome	5	Total White Earthenware	84

Yellow Ware

*Plain	1	Gilded rim	<u>1</u>
*Banded	4	Total Yellow Ware	14
Roughened	8		

Course Earthenware

*Albany slipware	7	Lead glazed, red with with slipped interior	<u>1</u>
Unglazed, red (flower pot)	4		
		Total Course Earthenware	12 *

Stoneware

*Alkaline glaze	27	Unglazed	<u>2</u>
*Feldspathic glaze (ginger beer bottle)	8		
		Total Stoneware	37

Ironstone

Plain	<u>22</u>		
Total Ironstone	22		

Porcelain

*Plain	8	Gilted with molded blue flowers	<u>1</u>
Gilted	1		
		Total Porcelain	10

TOTAL CERAMICS 252

METAL

IRON

*Padlock	1	*"T" clamp from saw	1
Gate pintal	1	Chain link	1
*Square cut nails	44	*Two tine fork	1
Wire nails	15	Harness buckle	2
*Wrought iron pan handles	1	*Flat file	1
*Cast iron griddle fragments	2	*Wood Chisel	1
*Cast iron kettle fragment	1	Crown bottle caps	<u>2</u>
Cast iron handle fragment	2	Total Iron	76



## BRASS

Spoon bowl	1	*Thimble	1
*Curtain tie fragment	2	Shotgun shell fragment	1
Curtain rings	3	Tablespoon silver plated	<u>1</u>
*Straight pins	2	Total Brass	11

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## ZINC

Button-four hole	1
"Perfect" Mason jar cap	<u>1</u>
Total Zinc	2

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TOTAL METAL 90

## GLASS

*Wine bottle	11	"Perfect" mason jar cap milk glass liner	6
*Flat Glass (window)	40	"Shoe Polish" bottle	1
Small bottle (shades of green, blue and amber)	35	Tumbler fragment	1
Clear glass (recent)	38	Mason jar fragments	6
Soda bottle	3	Carnival glass	1
"Lightning" jar lid fragments	2	Amber "Peroxide" bottle	<u>1</u>
		Total Glass	145

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## OTHER

*Shell button (abalone)	1	*Slate fragments	2
*Whetstone	1	Bone - pig	4
*Slate pencil	1	cow	1
		chicken	10
		unidentified	<u>22</u>
		Total Other	42

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GRAND TOTAL 528