

Interim Report 2015: Sunnyside 1 (CIAI-05)

Permit # 15.17

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The goal of this year's brief excavation at Sunnyside 1 (CIAI-05) was to map all of the visible features associated with this 17th-century winter house, further expose the large stone fireplace partially uncovered in 2013 and continue testing portions of the associated midden. Despite the fact that we only had three days to complete these tasks, it was a resounding success — due in large part to my team of dedicated volunteers.

The fireplace and associated chimney collapse is the key to understanding the orientation, width, and approximate length of this building as well as the time and energy expended in its construction. Detailed total station mapping of the chimney collapse revealed its full extent: spanning 4.7m by 4.5m, 1m high, and an overall volume of approximately 6.9m³. The rocks used in the construction were potentially obtained from an outcrop of angular sandstone/siltstone located 86.9m away on the shoreline heading toward nearby Frenchman's Island. Other important man-made features such as the adjacent root cellar (5.8m by 6.6m) were also mapped, as were relevant natural features such as the distances between the site and the low watermark (27.5m), the current stream (26.9m) and a relic stream bed (26m) (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Distances between CIAI-05 and the low watermark, stone outcrop, current stream and relic stream. Produced by Anatolijs Venovcevs 2015.

Excavations inside the fireplace revealed distinct stratigraphy in the form of a tapered deposit of sterile clay and small pebbles sandwiched between two occupation layers. This is suggestive of either multiple winter occupations at Sunnyside 1 and/or an attempt to raise up the hearth floor, particularly toward the east end, in an effort to mitigate against problems associated with water runoff and standing water which still occur in the spring and fall. Charcoal samples were also taken from inside the fireplace for carbon dating. With the assistance of Dr. Vaughan Grimes, one sample was sent to Keck Carbon Cycle AMS (KCCAMS) in the Department of Earth System Science at University of California. The result was a C14 date of 330 +/- 15 yrs BP. Calibrated (using Calib and Intcal13), the highest probability is AD 1553-1599 (Vaughan Grimes, personal communication, July 18th, 2015). Although seemingly contradictory to the other datable artifacts, in retrospect, this date is not entirely surprising as the cultural materials in the hearth also included small furniture tacks and a chest hinge indicating that the residents were burning old wood in the form of unusable furnishings.

The artifacts recovered in the hearth helps to shed further light on the daily lives of these European overwinterers. Evidence for subsistence practices and diet continues to have a terrestrial focus. Clusters of small lead shot, sprue and waste lead were recovered from inside the fireplace as was a small section of what appears to be a gun barrel (Figure 2). Additional examples of crudely-made gunflints were found both inside the hearth and in the associated midden outside the house, now numbering 20 in total. The faunal material, though quite fragmentary and burnt, tells a similar story: 95% is mammal, 1% bird, and 2% fish (2% indeterminate). Identified species include caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), hare/rabbit (Leporidae), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and domesticated pig (*Sus scrofa*) (Elliott 2014, 2015). Some meals were cooked in a large copper kettle, several fragments of



Figure 2. *In situ* cluster of small lead shot (left) and possible gun barrel fragment (right) found in the hearth.

which were found this year and each exhibits extensive evidence for repair in the form of riveted patches to extend its use life (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Copper kettle fragment

Additional finds in the hearth include many clay tobacco pipes, mostly stem fragments but also a few intact bowls (ca. 1650-80) and at least one decorated stem; an identical decorated pipe stem was found during the 1980-81 excavation at Frenchman's Island (see Gaulton 2014, Figure 6 middle left). Although more work needs to be completed on the interior and exterior of the fireplace before we can determine its exact size and shape, this year's investigation established that the interior measurements are at least 2.4m wide by 1.5m deep (Figure 4).

Work on the nearby midden southeast of the fireplace was restricted to two 1 metre units. Both produced a variety of material associated with the structure and the activities of the residents. Iron nails and spikes continue to be a common find on all parts of the site suggesting that the winter house was a modest timber-framed building clad with rough boards. Surprisingly, several pieces of window glass were also found indicating the presence of a (small) glazed window along the east side of the dwelling facing the water. Woodworking was represented by a gouge and interior lighting by a broken, yet complete, oil lamp (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Fireplace looking northwest



Figure 5. Broken but complete oil lamp

Evidence for the production of flint implements continues to be the most prevalent find at Sunnyside 1. The 1244 pieces of European flint — from whole cores to tertiary flakes — demonstrate that these people transported ballast flint to their winter residence and frequently utilized this resource for the manufacture of fire starters and for spall-type gunflints used in flintlock muskets. None of the gunflints from this site are of the well-made variety produced in European workshops. This is anomalous with respect to evidence found in contemporaneous domestic assemblages from permanent settlements such as Ferryland, Renewes and Placentia as the pattern is reversed; most gunflints are mass-produced spall or blade-types and there is limited evidence for flint knapping at the household level (Crompton, 2001, 2012; Leskovec, 2007; Mills, 2000; Nixon, 1999).

The final task of the 2015 field season involved limited shovel testing to the south and east of the site to better delineate its parameters. The results, though very preliminary, show that CIAI-05 covers an area of at least 357m². With 25 metres excavated, this leaves approximately 93% of the site for further investigation (Figure 6).

As in previous years, residents of Sunnyside were keen to learn more about our ongoing excavation and interpretations. We had several visits by members of the Town of Sunnyside including Susan Khaladkar and Kevin Stacey, who serve as stewards for this important archaeological site and others nearby. In 2015, we also met with two local metal detectorists who previously visited CIAI-05 and dug up artifacts, unaware that it was a registered archaeological site. This was a particularly valuable meeting as we were able to establish that the well-preserved iron carpenter's or shipwright's adze they found in 2012 (see Gaulton 2012) was in fact removed from the midden area immediately southeast of the chimney collapse. Even more important, it provided the opportunity to reinforce the importance of preserving and protecting this site and the necessity of properly recording and conserving all archaeological materials.

Notable post-excavation work included the tabulation and quantification of the main artifact types as well as the x-raying of ferrous metal objects. The latter task aided in the identification of specific artifacts such as a possible axe blade fragment, a buckle and the aforementioned gun barrel (Figure 7); while the results of the former were tabulated from the Sunnyside 1 database and can be broken down into the following categories:

Iron nails/spikes 880 (19.8% of overall collection)

Iron tools/strap/miscellaneous/unidentified 125 (2.7% of collection)

European flint 1244 (28% of collection)

Local chert 116 (2.6% of collection)

Clay tobacco pipes 924 (20.8% of collection)

Glass 51 (1.1% of collection)

Ceramic 119 (2.6% of collection)

Assorted Lead 311 (7% of collection)

Non-ferrous metals, faunal material, other organics and miscellaneous 682 (15.4% of collection)

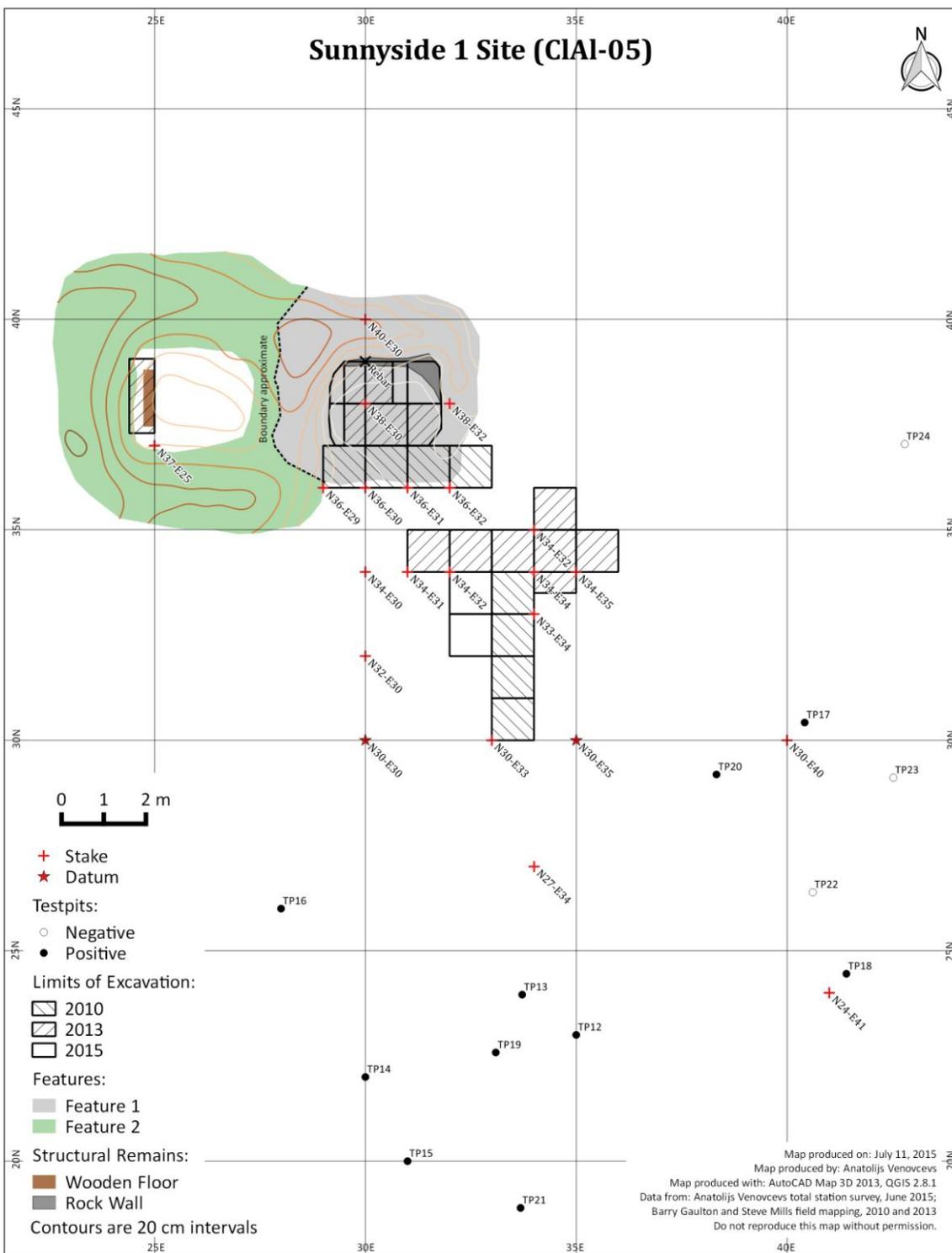


Figure 6. Plan of CIAI-05 showing the existing features, excavation units and test pits. Produced by Anatolijs Venovcevs 2015.

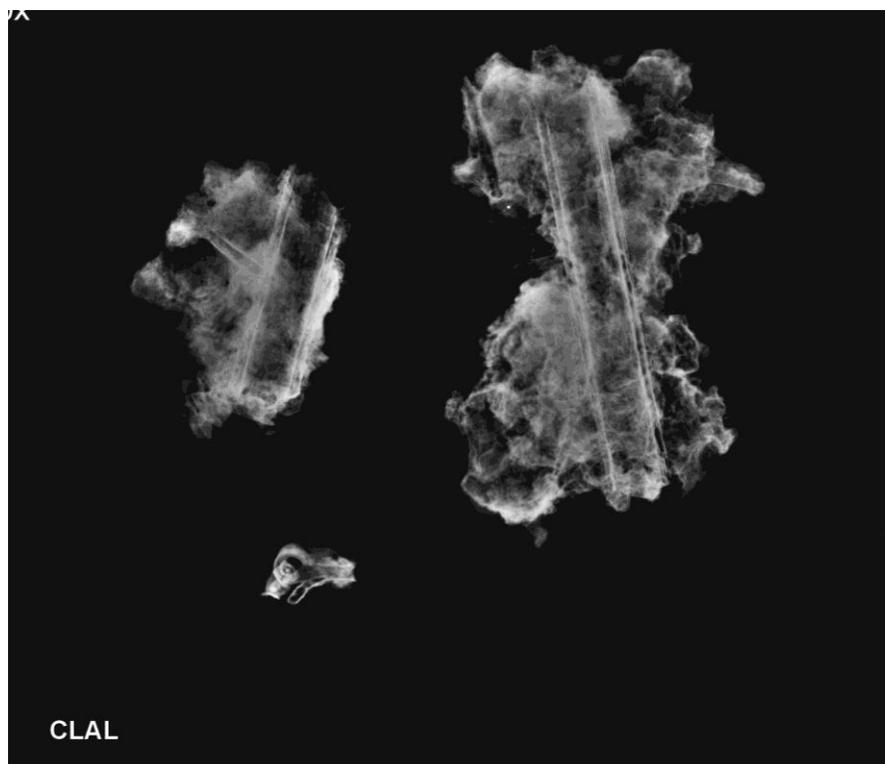


Figure 7. X-Ray of gun barrel fragments found in hearth at CIAI-05.

To conclude, I'd like to thank Steve Mills, co-director of the Sunnyside 1 project, who was unable to take part in this year's brief excavation but whose sound advice is always appreciated. A big thank you goes out to the 2015 field crew: Arthur Clausnitzer Jr, Catherine Hawkins, Anatolijs Venovcevs, Simon Newcombe, Donna Teasdale, and Lisa Imamura. Anatolijs deserves additional recognition for overseeing the total station mapping as well as for producing Figures 1 and 6. MUN's archaeological conservator Donna Teasdale provided additional assistance by x-raying the iron objects, and the raw artifact counts were prepared by undergraduate student Ian Petty. Last, but most important, the Provincial Archaeology Office has provided steadfast support (financial, logistical, and otherwise) for this project since its inception.

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