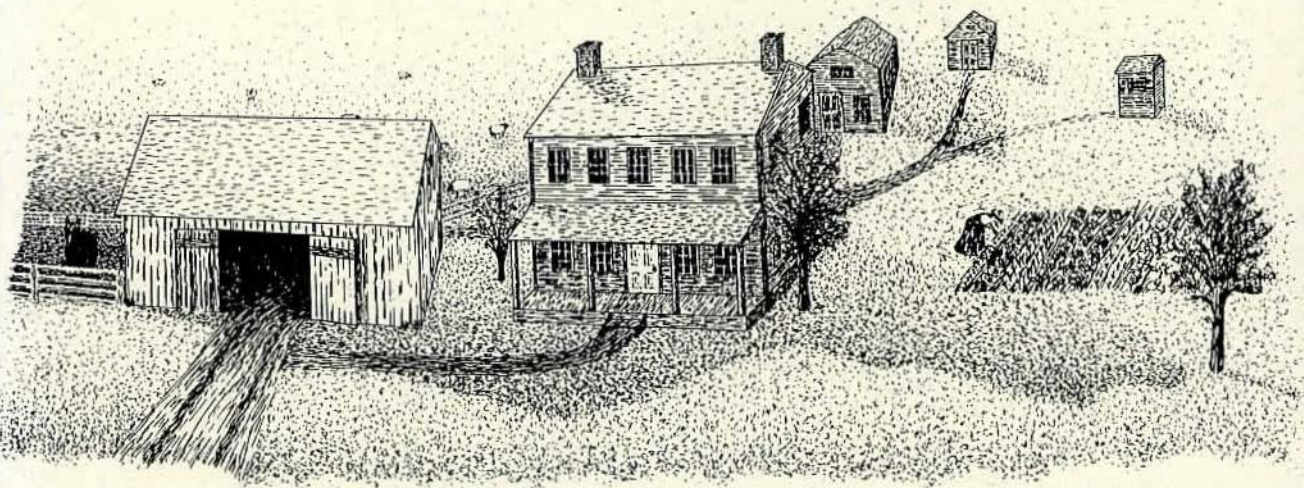


# *"The farm that I bought of Salmon Green"*

**Archaeology at the Lucius Lathrop Site**

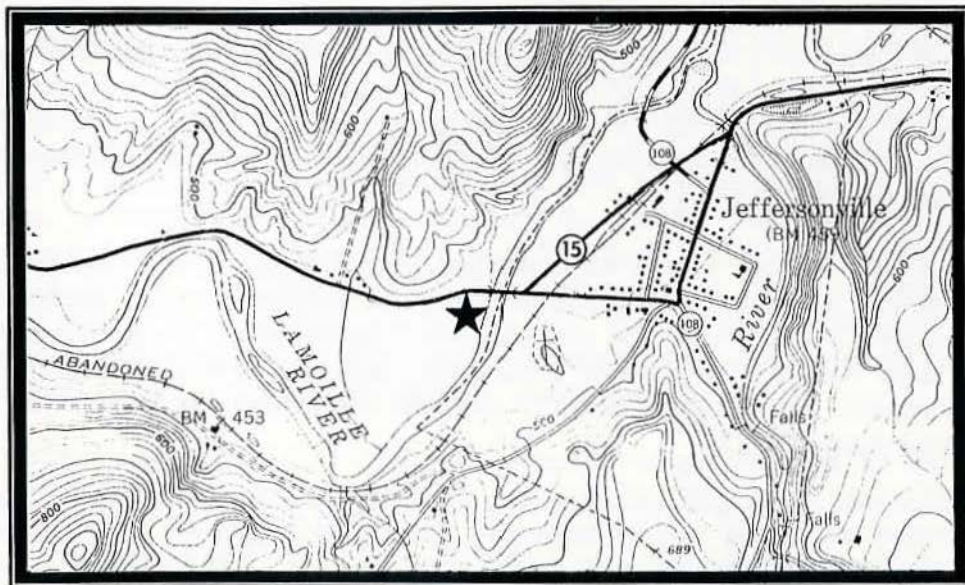
**Cambridge, Vermont**



*Artist's Reconstruction of the Lucius Lathrop Site.*

## Archaeology at the Lucius Lathrop Farmstead Site

In 1985, at the request of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the University of Vermont's Consulting Archaeology Program began archaeological investigations in Cambridge, Vermont where the agency planned to build a new bridge over the Lamoille River. The archaeological study was designed to help the agency comply with federal regulations which protect historic buildings and archaeological sites from construction impacts. The investigations began with identification, proceeded to evaluation, and finished with recovery of valuable information about the way early Vermonters lived, which was not often recorded in documents.



The archaeological investigations in the bridge project area uncovered the remains of the Lucius Lathrop farmstead, listed on the state archaeological inventory as VT-LA-15. The Lucius Lathrop farmstead dates from approximately 1800-1860. It represents the early stage of historic period settlement in this part of the Lamoille River valley, and also represents the transition from frontier to established settlement. Located just south of the village of Jeffersonville on Route 15, the Lathrop site operated as a small farm.

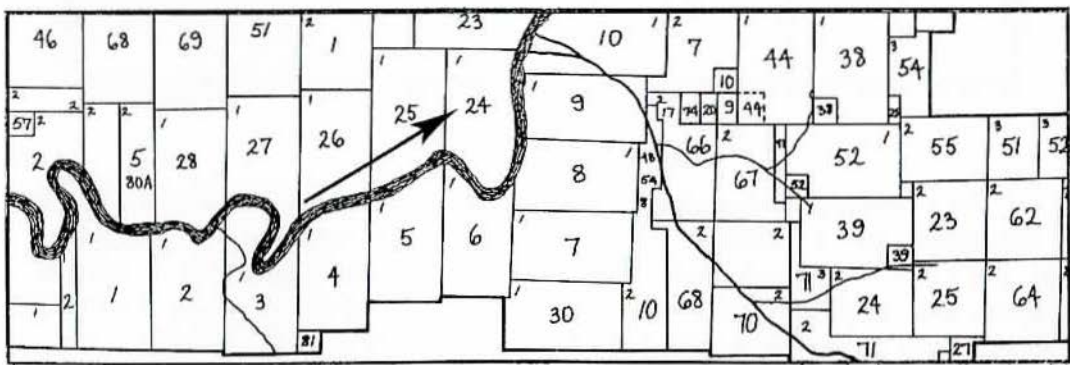


## Setting

The first white settlers came to Cambridge in 1783 and 1784 and settled in the western part of town near the fertile intervalles of the Lamoille River. Land divisions were first made in 150-acre lots with 1,920-foot frontages on the Lamoille. Later land divisions were made in more upland areas away from the river. Two larger villages and several smaller hamlets grew up. The Lathrop site was located on Lot 24 near the village of Jeffersonville, which developed in the early 1800s near the confluence of the Lamoille and Brewster Rivers.

The floodplains of the Lamoille River supported successful farms, and the wooded upland areas provided lumber. During the first half of the nineteenth century, farmers grew a variety of crops and provided services to their neighbors. Later, dairying became the primary focus for Cambridge farmers, and butter, cheese and later fluid milk were sent to urban markets. Many small farms like the Lathrop place were incorporated into much larger operations during the second half of the nineteenth century. Mill sites on the Brewster River, Seymour Brook, and smaller streams were used for local industries during the nineteenth century.

An extensive road network was established early to connect the farms and villages and to provide connections with markets elsewhere in northern Vermont. Because the Lamoille River bisects Cambridge, construction and maintenance of bridges has always been a major concern. Town records contain many references to needed bridge repairs or construction. The bridge on Route 15 slated for replacement was erected after the devastating flood of 1927.



Early Cambridge lot map. Arrow points to Lot 24, where the site was located.

## **The Farm's Early Owners and Occupants**

Early owners of the property probably did not intend to settle on it, but were purchasing large tracts of land for speculation. Thomas Chittenden, Vermont's first governor, and his son Noah, both residents of Arlington in southern Vermont, were the first owners of Lot 24. The Lathrop site was located in the southern portion of Lot 24. Even after Noah Chittenden moved to Cambridge, he did not live on Lot 24. In 1786, Noah sold Lot 24 to David Dunbar, who lived in Newbury in eastern Vermont. Dunbar sold half of the lot to Daniel Goodwin, a fellow Newbury resident, in 1787. In 1799, Goodwin sold this portion of Lot 24, which was bounded on the east and south by the Lamoille River and included 30 acres, to Stephen Peabody.

Peabody is the first recorded resident of the site. A town history records that he "came to Cambridge in 1792, and settled on the west side of the Lamoille River, in the center of town near the arch-bridge." According to the same historian, Peabody was a doctor and an intemperate man. Although the historical account indicates that Peabody did not remain in town long and died in 1805 or 1806, town records provide a different picture. In 1808, a justice of the peace ordered the Franklin County sheriff to commit Stephen Peabody "to the keeper of the gaol, in St. Albans." Peabody was to be kept in jail until debts he owed Thomas and Eli Green were paid. The sheriff gave the Greens a small piece of Peabody's land to satisfy the debt. Peabody sold the remaining larger portion of land to Parley Davis of Montpelier in the same year. Stephen's wife Hannah, who died in 1825, is buried in the cemetery near the Lathrop site.

The Greens, Parley Davis, and the woman who bought his parcel did not live at the site, nor did they own the property for very long. In 1809, Daniel Macoy acquired both parcels of the original lot. Macoy mortgaged "all that farm formerly owned by Stephen Peabody which I now occupy." Macoy may have been renting the farm; he clearly lived there. Macoy sold the farm in 1821 to Salmon Green. Two years later, Green sold "the whole of the farm that I said Salmon Green now live on" to Varanus Lathrop. Lathrop owned a house and blacksmith shop in Cambridge and did not live on the parcel he bought from Green. When Lathrop sold the land to his son Lucius in 1827, he described it simply as "the farm that I bought of Salmon Green."



## The Lathrop Family

Lucius Lathrop and his family may have been the longest residents of the 30-acre farmstead. Lucius owned it from 1827 until he died at aged 39 in 1841. In the 1830 census, he was listed as the head of a household which included his wife Sarah and one male less than 10 years old. By 1840 his household had increased to include three boys and one girl--Danforth, Homer, Lucius and Sarah. His wife died in May, 1840, presumably after the census was taken. By March, 1841, Lucius Lathrop was also dead.

After Lucius died, his property was inventoried. The inventory indicates that in addition to farming and raising livestock, the family income depended on shoemaking, spinning, and woodworking. Lucius owned 35 sheep, five head of cattle and several horses and had hay in a barn. He had a small number of farm implements: hay forks, rakes, a hay knife, shovels, a manure fork, an old plow, and two hoes. "Two great wheels" and a "foot wheel" suggest that Sarah Lathrop was spinning wool and flax. Other items in the inventory suggest that Lathrop was a woodworker and shoemaker. He owned a large quantity of woodworking tools and lumber, a shoe bench and tools valued at \$1.50, 25 sole and upper leathers worth \$3.50, and 17 shoe lasts worth \$1.42. He may have worked in the shop listed in the inventory. Members of the Lathrop family may have been making shoes for one of their neighbors to the west, John Warner, a very successful tanner and shoemaker.

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### *The Lathrops Shop at the Village Store*

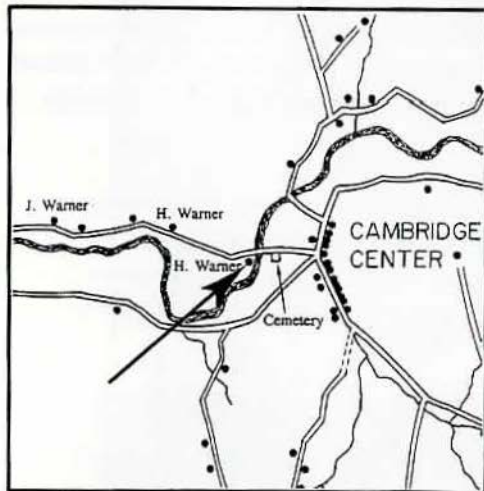
An account ledger from the Martin Wires store in Cambridge Center (now Jeffersonville) lists purchases that the Lathrop family made in 1840. In March, they bought one ounce of saffron and asafetida for \$.47, soap and tea. Saffron and asafetida, herbs imported from Europe and the Middle East, were used to treat a variety of ailments. In May, two weeks before Sarah's death, suspenders, buttons, silk, calico and some kind of black fabric were purchased for \$7.81 in cash. Five days before she died, \$4.59 was spent on lawn (a fine, thin fabric), muslin, thread and three palm hats. In October, Lucius Lathrop bought two yards of binding (possibly used in shoemaking); in December, he bought 6 yards of binding, tobacco and sponge.

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## After Lucius Lathrop's Death

The assets of Lucius Lathrop's estate were too small to cover debts, which included costs for boarding the four children, caring for stock, and maintaining the farm. In 1843, the 30 acres were sold at public auction to Will Lathrop, who was probably Lucius' brother. From this point on, the farmstead must have been rented out, as all the owners lived elsewhere.

In 1848, the property was sold to John Warner. The Warners were large landowners in Cambridge during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, and did not live at the site. John Warner's son, Chauncy, purchased it in 1849 and sold it to his brother Harrison in 1851. A structure was still present on the farm until at least 1859; Harrison Warner may have used it as a tenant house. No structure is shown there on an 1871 map. The house was demolished between 1859 and 1871. At some point, the site was filled in and the land was used for agricultural purposes.



1859 map shows the site and nearby Warner properties.



VT-LA-15 is not shown on an 1871 map.

In 1875, after Harrison Warner and his wife died, Chauncy acquired 350 acres which included the 30 acres of the Lathrop farm. In 1885, apparently as a result of a dispute with the town over taxes, Chauncy Warner deeded 350 acres to the Warner Home for Little Wanderers and the St. Albans Hospital. This land included the former location of the Lathrop farmstead. In 1929, the charities sold the land to the Miners. Several years later, they sold it to T.J. McGovern, who owned it until the Vermont Agency of Transportation acquired the property to build the new bridge over the Lamoille River.



## Discovering the Lucius Lathrop Site

Archaeologists focused on the section of land bounded by Route 108 and the west bank of the Lamoille River for two reasons: a large prehistoric Native American camp site had been found in a similar location upstream, and historical records showed that a farmstead was once located there. First, archaeologists inspected the plowed surface of the corn field. They found both prehistoric and historic period artifacts. Next, they excavated small test pits in the spots where artifacts were collected. In several test pits, they encountered soil used to fill the cellar of a historic building. Artifacts recovered from the surface and from the test pits date from 1790-1840, coinciding with the period of occupation documented in historical records.

## Evaluating the Site's Significance

During the second phase of the archaeological investigation, the historic component of VT-LA-15 was evaluated and determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A variety of methods were used to collect a wide range of information about the site.

- Test units ranging in size from .5 x .5 meter to 1 x 1 meter were excavated to look for buried features such as stone foundations, a cellar, a well, holes for posts, or trenches for water pipes, and to collect more artifacts. A filled cellar, a small pit feature and a large rock-filled pit were found.



Backhoe stripping the site.

■ A ground penetrating radar unit was pulled across an area of approximately 2,000 square meters at regular intervals to locate subsurface structural elements, fill, structural rubble or intact foundation stones. Unfortunately, the broken patterns recorded by the radar represented the gravel and cobbles of the old riverbed which once lay under much of the site, not historic site components.

■ The plow zone was mechanically removed to get horizontal exposure of the yard area around the house. The field crew then shovel scraped the stripped surface and found outlines of former buildings, posts, and pits.



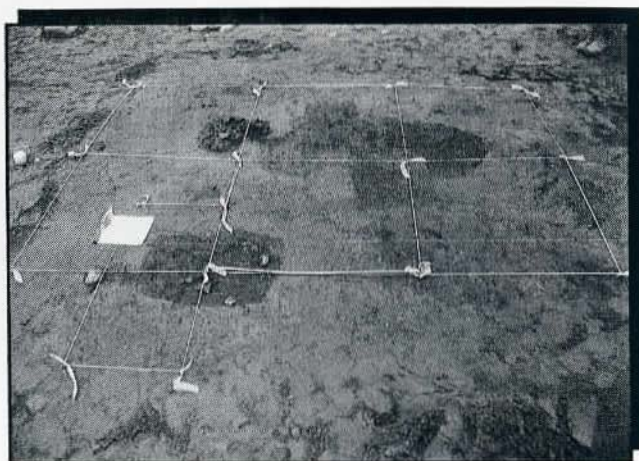
Field crew clearing the stripped surface.

The Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer agreed that the Lucius Lathrop site was eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places because it could provide exceptional information about early Vermont farmsteads. The evaluation proved that the site displayed excellent integrity and content, despite its location in a field that probably has been plowed and planted for over one hundred years. The outlines of buildings and other features at the stripped surface indicated that the site had the potential to provide significant information about Vermont's past. Archaeological evidence of a house, a water system, outbuildings, and other features in the yard area could provide information about the layout of outbuildings, the use of yard space, and the location of activity areas.

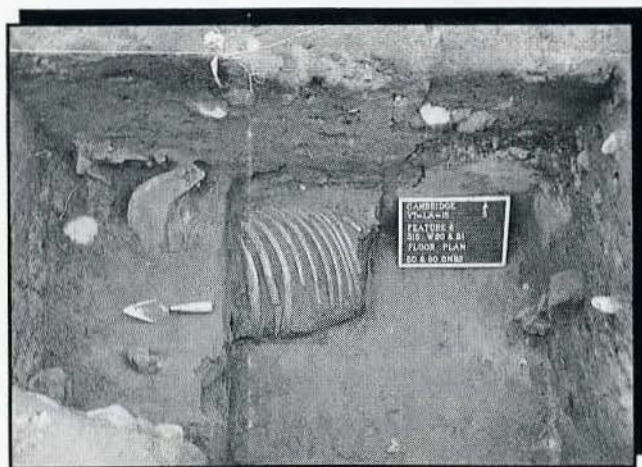




Backhoe digging trench through cellar.



Outlines of storage pits at stripped surface.  
String marks excavation grid.



Horse skeleton buried behind barn. Its legs were chopped off with an ax to expedite burial.

## **Recovering Information**

The Vermont Agency of Transportation could not redesign the new bridge to avoid the Lathrop site. Because of the site's exceptional content and degree of preservation, it was important that additional excavation, analysis and research be conducted before construction began.

Archaeologists chose several research topics to investigate during the last phase of archaeological study.

- One area of interest was the arrangement of site components at the Lathrop farmstead. In addition to the house and water system, the site included the shop, shed, barn, a garden, animal pens, and activity areas.
- A second area of concern focused on the characteristics of the many site components. Archaeologists collected information about construction methods, kinds of materials used, and operations. This information helps us understand how Vermonters were developing homes and communities during the first fifty years of settlement.
- A third major area of investigation was the sequence of construction, use, abandonment and reuse—what archaeologists call the "site formation process".
- Archaeologists were able to determine that most artifacts were actually related to site occupation, and that very few were deposited after the site was abandoned and the cellar was filled.

During the final phase of excavation, all features identified at the stripped surface were mapped, photographed and excavated. Additional excavation was undertaken in the house cellar to look for a chimney and interior walls and to determine how the cellar was filled after the site was abandoned. Most excavation units were dug by hand, but a backhoe was brought in to excavate two large circular features filled with rocks. The backhoe was also used to help dig a trench through the house cellar.



## The Lathrop Farmstead

The Lathrop site farm house measured 30 by 24 feet, and was aligned with the long side facing the road. The 1½ or 2 story structure was supported by a dry-laid stone foundation. The full cellar probably had a bulkhead entrance on the west side. At some point, a large front porch supported by two parallel rows of four posts was added. Ornamental maples and bushes were planted in the front yard. Brick rubble suggested that the house had chimneys at the east and west ends. The end chimneys may have replaced an earlier central chimney when the cook stove listed in Lathrop's estate inventory was installed. Although no evidence of a fireplace was encountered, fireplace tools were listed in the inventory. At the back of the house, a lean-to or ell addition provided additional work space near the kitchen. A large flat rock served as a stoop at the back door in the southwest corner of the house.

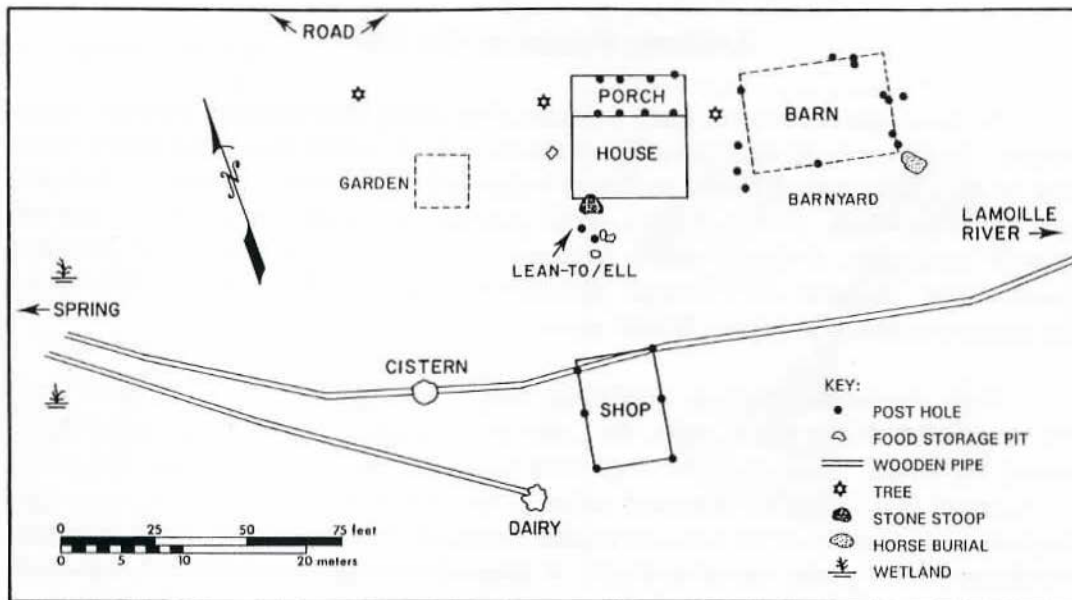
Storage pits for root crops were located in the immediate yard area around the house. Buried wooden pipes brought water from a spring at the west edge of the farmstead to a stone-lined cistern covered by a small structure. Wooden pipes also brought water to a dairy behind the house. Milk and milk products were kept cool by the naturally cold spring water. The kitchen garden was likely situated in the side yard near the spring.



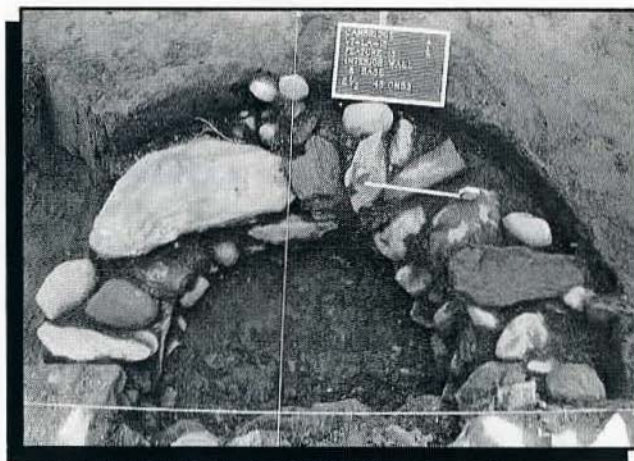
Southeast corner of house foundation.

In the side yard between the house and the river, there was a barn and barnyard where livestock were housed and tended. A fence enclosed the barnyard. A horse was buried in back of the livestock area. Lucius Lathrop's shop stood behind the house.

Either the Lathrops' privy was located far from the house outside the archaeological study area or they did not have one. Many rural households during that time period relied on the closest patch of cover, the barn, or chamber pots. Archaeologists uncovered fragments of at least one chamber pot at the site.



Layout of the Lucius Lathrop farmstead.



▲ East half of cistern after excavation.

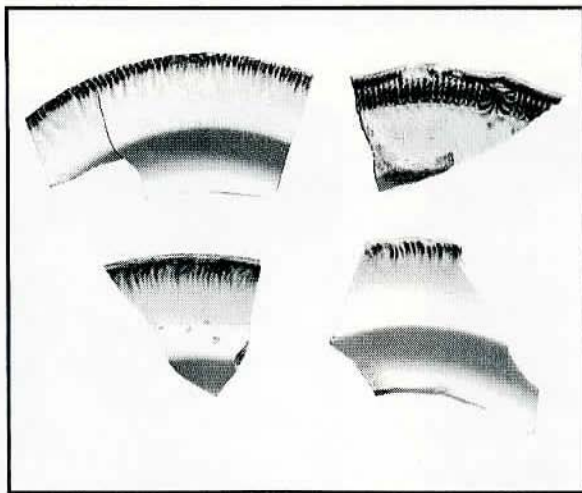
◀ Cistern at stripped surface. Pipes brought water from the spring to the cistern and carried it away toward the river.



## Artifacts Found at the Site

Archaeologists recovered many artifacts after sifting excavated soil through metal screens. Some can be directly related to site activities. A leather heel and a child's shoe may be associated with the Lathrop family's shoemaking. Lucius Lathrop could have used the plane blade, wedge and two metal punches in woodworking. Fragments of redware milk pans, tin pans, and a stoneware churn represent butter and possibly cheesemaking. Needles and a straight pin could have been used to fashion clothes from the fabrics purchased at Martin Wires' store.

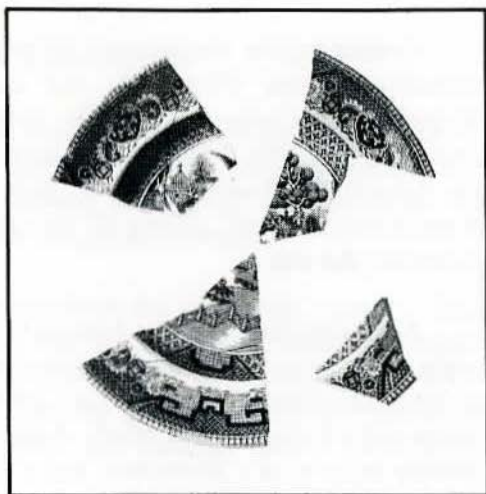
Many fragments of plates, bowls and other dishes used to serve and store food were recovered. When dishes broke, the Lathrops and other site residents discarded them around the house. Over time, the fragments broke into even smaller pieces and were incorporated into a sheet of farmstead refuse in the side and rear yards. The recovered fragments reflect many of the dishes in Lucius Lathrop's estate inventory, which included 1½ dozen printed plates valued at \$1.34, ¾ dozen printed plates worth \$.38, and four edged plates worth \$.16.



By 1830, plates with blue and green painted rims were among the less expensive tablewares shipped from England to America. Although the Lathrops had only four edged plates in 1841, archaeologists found fragments of many edged plates, suggesting that the Lathrops and earlier site residents had discarded broken edged plates. Fragments from four different blue-edged plates are shown here.

*Two pigeons flying high,  
Chinese vessels sailing by,  
Weeping willows hanging o'er,  
Bridge with three men, if not four.  
Chinese temple, there it stands,  
Seems to take up all the land.  
Apple tree with apples on,  
A pretty fence to end my song.*

► These fragments are from a plate printed in blue with the classic willow pattern design. The design incorporates elements from Chinese sources. It appeared during the first decade of the nineteenth century, was very popular during the Victorian period, and is still produced today. An old rhyme from Staffordshire, England, where many of the British potteries were located, describes the design elements. Only portions of the willow, the apple tree and the fence are visible on the fragments.



◄ These fragments are from two printed plates made by Enoch Wood and Sons, an English firm which exported huge quantities of pottery to America. These two plates are from a series of American and Canadian views designed for the American market and introduced in the late 1820s or early 1830s. They are printed in a very dark, brilliant blue and edged with a distinctive shell border. The fragment on the left shows Montmorency Falls near Quebec City. The little building in the middle of the fragment was an observation house built in 1792 by the governor of Quebec. The plate on the right may show the banks of the Hudson River.



## Conclusion

Archaeologists wove many threads of information together to tell the story of archaeological site VT-LA-15, the Lucius Lathrop farmstead. After collecting information from historical records, they exposed the buried farmstead and excavated portions of it. They drew detailed maps and took many photographs to document the site. After the field work was over, archaeologists returned to the lab to clean and study the recovered artifacts. Using all the different kinds of information, they were able to reconstruct the site.

At the beginning of the historic period, the land where the site was located was bought and sold by speculators. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a small farm had been established. Until Lucius Lathrop bought the farm in 1827, the farm changed owners and residents fairly often. Lathrop was both a farmer and a craftsman, and he probably worked as a shoemaker and a woodworker from a shop on his property. His family, which included four young children, was struck by misfortune when his wife Sarah died in 1840 and when he died in 1841. His estate was not large enough to cover all his debts, so the farm was sold. It eventually was incorporated into a very large farm nearby. The farmstead was abandoned and the cellar was filled so the land could be used for agriculture.

In the field, archaeologists discovered that much evidence of the farmstead remained intact. A bulldozer stripped away the upper soil level and exposed the outlines of a house with a porch and a back ell, a barn and a barnyard, pits, a shop, and trenches that led from a spring to two different locations behind the house. As excavation continued, archaeologists learned many more details about the characteristics of the buildings and other features. For example, the pits behind the back door turned out to be storage pits, some lined with bricks, probably used to store root crops. The trenches contained wooden pipes that brought water to a cistern and to cool dairy products in a small building behind the house. The shop was built over the outlet channel from the cistern after the water system was already in place.

Although more Vermont farmstead sites have been excavated since the field work at the Lathrop site was completed, it remains unique in the amount of information collected. Between the good historical records and the remarkable evidence of farm buildings and activity areas, archaeology at the Lathrop site provided a rare opportunity to understand an early to mid-nineteenth-century farmstead.

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## Conduct Your Own Research

- **Trace the history of your house.** Use land records (deeds) at your town office to find out who owned your house, when it was bought and sold, and how much it cost. Sometimes deeds contain descriptions of buildings, landmarks, and activities that occurred on the property. Work backward from the current owner.

- **Visit a town cemetery.** Look for gravestones from the nineteenth century. Read the inscriptions. What can you learn about the people buried here? Compare decorations on old and new gravestones. What differences can you see? If you live near Jeffersonville, visit the cemetery near the Lathrop site. Look for gravestones of people associated with the site, like members of the Lathrop family and Hannah Peabody.

Remember, respect cemeteries. For safety's sake, never lean or climb on gravestones. For more information, contact the *Vermont Old Cemetery Association*, P.O. Box 105, Underhill, VT 05490.

- **Compare old and new houses.** Find some old houses (100-200 years old) in your community. Compare them to new houses. What things are the same? What things are different? To find old houses, contact your town's historical society, look at a town history at the library, or contact the *Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*, 135 State Street, Drawer 33, Montpelier, VT 05633, 802-828-3226.

- **Learn from your dishes.** Archaeologists used pieces of ceramic plates to find out where the Lathrop family dinnerware was made. Look at plates, bowls and coffee cups in your cupboard. Turn them over. Do they have maker's marks? What do they tell you? If you have older plates, you can look up the marks in books like Kovels' New Dictionary of Marks to find out when they were made.

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## Suggestions for Additional Reading

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### *Acknowledgements*

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