Archaeologies of Listening

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The essence of collaboration in any field is listening. Over the past decade, I have overseen the Hassanamesit Woods Project, a collaborative effort involving the Fiske Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the Nipmuc Nation, and the Town of Grafton, Massachusetts, where Keith Hill—the main focus of our archaeological investigations—is located (Map 4.1). From the beginning, the collaboration grew organically through the relationships that developed during the project. Working with a variety of stakeholders, from the residents of Grafton who voted to support the project with their tax dollars, to the members of the Hassanamesit Woods Management Committee who oversaw the project for the town, to the tribal council of the Nipmuc Nation, our investigations involved communication and negotiation. When I originally met with the tribal council, some questioned the need for an archaeology that they saw, correctly, as disruptive. Others were willing to support the project as long as the process was handled respectfully. Rae Gould, who served as the tribal historic preservation officer, and was then a graduate student in the Ph.D. program in anthropology at the University of Connecticut, was the liaison for the project and played a critical role in helping chart the course of research.

In this chapter I want to outline some of the concrete benefits that resulted from listening to the Nipmuc perspective through Rae, the tribal council, and other Nipmuc tribal members, including Ray Vickers and Cheryll Toney Holley, who have served as chief while the project has been ongoing. It was Cheryll—then a member of the tribal council—who raised questions concerning the disturbance that archaeology would cause. I acknowledged that she was right to have such a concern because the archaeological process was indeed disturbing.
Over time, Cheryll came to support the work at Hassanamesit Woods. There were several reasons for this, which I discuss below, but overall I think it was because we listened to each other. That helped us develop a level of trust because our overall goals were the same.

The protocol for the project involved the Nipmuc, particularly Rae Gould, who provided feedback on research plans and publications, collaborated with
scholarly and public presentations, helped interpret materials, and suggested questions that the project sought to pursue. Having begun as a heritage-based project to determine if any Native American or Euro-American sites were located on a 202-acre parcel that the Town of Grafton decided to purchase for conservation and recreational uses, the project has expanded into a comprehensive inquiry of Nipmuc history, with a particular focus on the community of Hassanamisco. One of the earliest and largest “Praying Indian” communities

in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Hassanamesit was first acknowledged by the colony’s general court in the 1660s (Map 4.2).

Most of the archaeology carried out in Grafton has focused on the later members of the community who survived King Philip’s War of 1675–1676 and returned to a postwar landscape (Gould 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Law 2008; Law Pezzarossi 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; Mrozowski 2012, 2013, 2014; Mrozowski, Gould, and Law Pezzarossi 2015; Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015; Pezzarossi 2008, 2014). The narratives that have emerged from that work and the intellectual exchanges that have been and continue to be an essential part of the project provide a detailed picture of Nipmuc life over the past 1,000 years, with a particular focus on the last 300. Listening has been a particularly critical piece of the process. Here I want to highlight just a few of the more meaningful examples. The scale of these contributions varies, but in each instance, it involved a sharing of information and perspectives that I believe has resulted in a much stronger, more robust form of inquiry than some (such as McGhee 2008, 2010) suggest is possible (but see Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010; Mrozowski et al. 2009; Nicholas 2010; Silliman 2010; Wylie 2015).

The Pragmatic Quality of Collaboration

Having come to collaborative research rather late in my career, I have been aided by the lens of pragmatism—a philosophical tradition that traces its roots to the United States of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fairly stark contrast to European philosophical traditions that deal extensively with the mind as a plane of reality or the detachment inherent in most positivist epistemologies, pragmatism values engaged research that seeks to improve the human condition. A distinctly American philosophical tradition, pragmatism developed during the later stages of the nineteenth century out of the work of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (see Baert 2005; Preucel and Bauer 2001).

Peirce is the scholar most identified with pragmatism’s initial development, including his own highly complex conceptualization that contributed to the growth of semiotics today (see Preucel 2006; Preucel and Bauer 2001). It is, however, the work of William James (1898, 1907) and John Dewey (1916, 1925) that has continued to inspire advocates, most notably Richard Rorty (1979, 1982, 1998, 1999) but more recently Philip Baert (2005) to argue for a return to the activism that was a hallmark of early pragmatism. For Dewey, inquiry and
truth were not separate realities. Indeed, the differences between belief and reality were hotly contested topics during the early years of the twentieth century (Dykuizen 1973; Taylor 1973). Within this context, Dewey argued for the kind of self-referential knowledge that scholars influenced by postmodernism today take for granted. He felt that the intellectual process of inquiry helped in shaping human perceptions of realities that, while existing outside human experience, nevertheless gained meaning or importance through human experience (Dewey 1906a, 1906b, 1907). In this regard, Dewey’s argument concerning reality and human experience presaged the same point that Henri Bergson (1999 [1922]) would offer in defense of his own criticism of Albert Einstein’s concepts of time.

Einstein published his theory of relativity in 1916. Bergson did not agree with his ideas concerning time and summarized his opinions in his book Duration and Simultaneity (Bergson 1999 [1922]), in which he attempted to address the implications of Einstein’s theories. Bergson had tried to address time in his doctoral dissertation entitled Time and Free Will (Bergson 2001 [1889]), in which he distinguished between real time and measurable time. The difference revolved around the idea that there was actually no way to define the present, because time always involved a time before and a time afterward but never really an actual present that could be temporally isolated (Scott 2006:186). In Duration and Simultaneity Bergson (1999 [1922]) formulated the idea of “durée” that would influence Braudel (1980), suggesting that time could not truly be separated from consciousness and human experience. According to Scott (2006:185–188), Einstein and Bergson met at a meeting of the Philosophical Society in Paris in 1922. Bergson was quite popular at the time; despite some reservations, he was persuaded to “extemporaneously outline” his views on Einstein’s ideas concerning time. As Scott (2006:185) notes, Bergson assumed that Einstein “was giving us not only a new physics but also certain new ways of thinking,” yet as a philosopher he felt the need to pursue the question of whether a notion of time existed outside such experience.

Scott (2006:188) concludes his recounting of the encounter between the two men by stating: “After listening patiently to Bergson, Einstein articulates the essential conflict between them in terms of a question: ‘So, the question before us is this: Is the philosopher’s time the same as the physicist’s?’ The answer that Einstein gives is a resounding ‘No.’” Despite Einstein’s apparent acceptance of the legitimacy of these different views of time—that of the philosopher who grounded time in human experience and that of the physicist who believed in a
time that existed “independent of individual consciousness”—he nevertheless insisted “on the primacy of the physicist’s time” (Scott 2006:188).

In the same way that Bergson saw the meaning of time linked to human experience, Dewey saw truth as something realized primarily through daily life. For him, inquiry was more important than truth because he did not believe in truth as something that preexisted human inquiry. Dewey envisioned a social science that stressed the ceaseless process of inquiry, seeing himself “as an instrument of continuous learning” (Taylor 1973:xx). The purpose and ultimate goal of such learning, however, was not some transcendent truth that only the philosopher or physicist could comprehend, but rather an understanding of human existence that had some practical benefit or application to a problem of everyday life.

It was the concern for everyday experience and the open quality of intellectual inquiry of Dewey’s pragmatism that would later inspire Richard Rorty (1979, 1982, 1998, 1999) to revitalize the approach. Rorty’s pragmatism raises two points concerning the goals and process of inquiry. First, he argues against the postmodernist proclivity to critique rather than engage. He is particularly disdainful of postmodernist critiques of modernity that are celebrated for their erudition rather than their practical benefit. Second, he echoes the earlier calls of both James and Dewey to maintain a never-ending process of inquiry that must remain open to all forms of knowing as long as the epistemologies that underpin these forms of knowledge are not closed systems (see Baert 2005; Preucel and Mrozowski 2010).

Pragmatism provides a sound philosophical grounding for collaborative research because of its insistence on maintaining an open intellectual process. Part of that process involves an open dialogue with descendant populations on a whole host of levels. It also aids in fostering communication that helps in decolonizing the academic as intellectual authority. The broader movement of decolonizing Western intellectual practice is proving to be one of the more important developments for the social sciences (see Harding 2016) but is particularly relevant for academically trained archaeologists working with indigenous and/or descendant communities (see Atalay 2006; Lightfoot et al. 2013; Nicholas 2010; Panich 2013; Silliman 2009). This process of decolonization can take many forms, but chief among them is the growth of collaborative research projects. From the terminology employed to the questions we pursue, the benefits of collaborative research are beginning to prove their worth in creating an archaeology that is intellectually sound and politically sensitive. There is a
salutary dimension to this process that is essential to doing other people’s history. Trigger (1980) posed this question almost 40 years ago, and the growth of collaborative indigenous archaeology is the logical outgrowth of concerns he raised about the questions archaeologists asked of other people’s history.

The Hassanamesit Woods Project

Each of the processes noted above has contributed to the growth of the Hassanamesit Woods Project. One of the more gratifying parts of this collaboration has been working with Rae Gould—a Nipmuc scholar who has worked as a review officer for the advisory council in Washington, DC, and now serves as university tribal liaison and senior lecturer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Rae proved to be the ideal interlocutor for the project, combining her own experience growing up Nipmuc with her perceptions of the academic world while completing her Ph.D. in anthropology. One of the most fundamental benefits of the collaboration has involved drawing comparisons between our own work and Rae’s on several properties that were linked to the seventeenth-century Nipmuc community of Hassanamisco. As a descendant of that community, Rae is uniquely situated to examine the deep connections between today’s Nipmuc community and its long history in the area (Gould 2010, 2013a, 2013b). Of particular interest has been her fieldwork and ethnographic work associated with the 2.5-acre Hassanamisco Nipmuc Reservation less than a mile from the focus of our fieldwork on what is today Keith Hill in Grafton (Map 4.1).

Hassanamesit was one of the “Christianized Communities” that were established with the help of English missionary John Eliot. Fourteen such “Praying Indian” towns were said to have been “established” by Eliot during the period before King Philip’s War (see Map 4.2; Cogley 1998; Kawashima 1969; O’Brien 1997, 26–30).

When we were writing an article together, Rae asked me why I had written that English missionary John Eliot had established the Praying Indian Communities of Massachusetts and Connecticut during the seventeenth century. To me, this was common knowledge and had been an accepted assumption on the part of both historians and archaeologists who had researched these communities. I use the term “common knowledge” purposefully to characterize a form of knowledge that has indeed been in common use by academics who have studied and written about the history of these Praying Indian communities (see Cogley 1998; Kawashima 1969; Pierce 1879:20). Given that most second-
ary discussions of these communities had consistently included a statement to this effect, I assumed that it was correct and have to admit that I had never put much thought into the process of precisely how these communities were indeed established.

When I asked Rae what she thought about the subject, she said that she saw these “towns” as being located within long-standing Native communities. Rae also raised the deeper question of just what constituted community beyond the space they inhabited. That space, until recently, had eluded archaeologists’ attempts to locate the Praying Indian communities (see Mrozowski 2009). Concerted efforts during the 1980s proved fruitless, forcing some to ask why these well-documented communities had such low archaeological visibility (see, e.g., Brenner 1984, 1986; Carlson 1986; Cogley 1998; Thorbahn 1988). Cemeteries associated with the Praying Indian communities of Natick, Ponkapoag (Canton, Massachusetts), and Okommakamesit (Marlboro, Massachusetts) had been discovered as a direct result of construction activities in Natick and Okommakamesit during the 1960s, but these discoveries were poorly documented (see Kelley 1999). A cemetery thought to be associated with the community of Ponkapoag was uncovered by preliminary construction for a development that was never completed (Kelley 1999; Mrozowski 2009).

Systematic attempts to locate other communities were unsuccessful, leading the archaeologists involved to question the accuracy of the descriptions of the early communities written by Eliot (1655, 1670, 1834) and Daniel Gookin (1972 [1674]), who served as the supervisor for the Indian towns of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Brenner 1980, 1984, 1986; Carlson 1986). Brenner (1984:169) argued that even a community such as Natick, the largest and oldest of the towns, may have been more of a seasonal village that might contain a central meeting house described as being present by Gookin (1972 [1674]; also see Cogley 1998, 31 who uses the term “fair house”). Cogley disagrees with Brenner’s interpretation in arguing that the towns were continuously occupied residential communities (Cogley 1998:31–33, 1999). O’Brien’s (1997:2010) extensive research on Natick and other Praying Indian communities also tends to counter the notion that these were only seasonal occupations. She does note that documentary evidence indicates divisions within Native communities between those willing to adopt English cultural practices and those who resisted such changes (O’Brien 1997:93; see also Mrozowski, Gould, and Law Pezzarossi 2015). The fluid nature of Native practices described by O’Brien raises questions about the veracity of Daniel Gookin’s 1674 descriptions of communities composed of streets, houses
built in the English style, and meeting houses. Despite the concerted efforts of archaeologists to find the remains of these communities (e.g., Brenner 1984, 1986; Carlson 1986), it was not until the late 1990s that evidence of the settlement of Magunkaquog was unearthed during a cultural resource management survey in Ashland, Massachusetts (Herbster and Garman 1996). Subsequent investigations in 1997 and 1998 revealed the remains of what is believed to be the community’s meeting house and its adjoining yard (Mrozowski 2009; Mrozowski et al. 2009).

Since the discovery of the Magunkaquog meeting house, additional investigations of several Nipmuc households associated with the eighteenth-century community of Hassanamesit—consisting of families associated with the seventeenth-century Praying Indian settlement of the same name—have been conducted (Gould 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015). Combined with the results from Magunkaquog, the Hassanamisco research has provided a wealth of detail about daily life as well as strong evidence of cultural dynamism and continuity. It has also provided evidence of the deeper history of Hassanamisco that has implications for Gould’s point concerning the gathering of these communities. In his original request for land for the Natives interested in Christianity, Eliot noted that the education they needed as part of their conversion was best taught them “where they dwell,” noting later in the same passage: “A place must be found . . . some what remote from the English where they must have the word constantly taught, and government constantly exercised, means of subsistence provided, encouragements for the industrious [and a] means of instructing them in Letters, Trades, and Labours” (O’Brien 1997:28). There is nothing in this passage that is discordant with Rae Gould’s point concerning the Praying Indian towns being parts of well-established communities. In fact, the archaeology of these communities provides a fairly rich picture that supports this interpretation (Mrozowski 2009; Mrozowski et al. 2009; Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015).

Reimagining the seventeenth-century Praying Indian towns as much older communities presented a picture that countered the notion of historical rupture that had influenced my own perceptions of that past. It led me to realize the falsehood embedded in the concept of prehistory as constituting a period severed from the more recent past and the need to abandon the notion. Fortunately, I found answers to what could have been a quandary in the philosophy of pragmatism. If the notion of prehistory was to become a barrier to collaboration because my Nipmuc partners found it offensive or, more importantly, basically
inaccurate, then I needed to find my own new way of carrying out my research (see Mrozowski 2013; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013). Once the artificial boundary between history and prehistory was removed, it was conceptually much easier to see the experience of the Nipmuc through the lens of deep history. This made it easier to see the dialectical qualities of change and continuity in Nipmuc cultural practices. Even more profoundly, it forced me to reexamine the epistemological underpinnings of concepts of time and space employed in scientific inquiry, making it possible to dismantle the boundaries between past, present, and future (see Mrozowski 2014). Viewed as a continuum—a duration of time experienced by the Nipmuc—their own pragmatic needs concerning their future and the purpose of our broader archaeological inquiry became complementary.

The primary focus of the Hassanamesit Woods Project has been the area of Keith Hill in Grafton (Map 4.1). The project began with an intensive survey of a 202-acre parcel that the town had purchased. Surveys carried out in 2003 and 2005 found early evidence of Native American quarrying in the area as well as a single concentration of material culture associated with the remains of the Sarah Burnee/Sarah Boston (hereafter SB/SB) farmstead (see Gary 2005). This mid-eighteenth-century farmstead was the home to four generations of Nipmuc women who can trace their lineage directly from the Sachem Petavit, who was the political leader of the Hassanamisco community during the seventeenth century. Petavit was known as Robin by the English, and it is his heir, Sarah Robins, along with her husband, Peter Muckamugg, who first appears as one of the owners of a 106-acre parcel granted to them as part of the 1727 sale and redistribution of Hassanamisco lands, designed to provide up to 40 lots for English families. As a result of King Philip’s War, all Native lands in the Massachusetts Bay Colony became subject to the control of colonial authorities. While they did not take full ownership of these lands at this time, the 1727 redistribution represented a forced sale of Hassanamisco lands to provide land for the English families (see Map 4.3).

The 1727 map that documents the Hassanamesit sale contains the uniformly abstracted English lots as well as seven Native lots that were set aside for the most prominent members of the former Praying Indian community. These included Sarah Robins and Peter Muckamugg as well as Moses Printer, whose original 1727 parcel contained what is today the last remaining piece of Hassananisco land, the Nipmuc Reservation. This parcel has been the subject of intensive research by Rae Gould, which has helped in developing
larger narratives of Hassanamisco history based on our research on Keith Hill (Gould 2013a, 2013b; Mrozowski, Gould, and Law Pezzarossi 2015). There is also one additional 120-acre lot on the 1727 map that is labeled “For Indians Overplus.” I believe “overplus” makes use of a Middle English term for excess land or grains accorded to tenants. Recent excavations in this lot have found evidence of another possible Nipmuc household—that of Deborah Newman,
Stephen A. Mrozowski

who was a contemporary of Sarah Boston—and what might be the foundation of a circa 1730 meetinghouse/school for both English and Native children. The school was to be constructed, maintained, and provided with a teacher at the expense of the 40 English families who were purchasing the former Hassana-misco lands in 1727.

The documentary record of the events surrounding the purchase of the Hassanamisco lands is a prophetic example of the kinds of tactics that the English employed over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to take control of Native property (Mrozowski 2019; see also Massachusetts Archives Collections [hereafter MAC], vol. 30, 1603–1705:117–118, 746–748). Through a combination of legal manipulation that was often constructed on the assumption of eventual Native extinction, these documents represent a good example of the kind of governmentality that Foucault envisioned. The instrumentality to the process was a challenge to the Nipmuc, but they did avail themselves of

Map 4.3. A 1727 Hassanamisco Lands Distribution Map, showing Lots of Peter Muckamugg and Sarah Robins, Moses Printer, and "Indian Overplus" lots. Map by author.
the courts to argue for fairer treatment. Contrary to the inevitability implicit in much of the archive, the archaeology from Hassanamesit Woods presents an interesting history of survivance.

The location of the SB/SB farmstead within the original Sarah Robins lot on the Eastern Slope of Keith Hill is identical to that of the Magunkaquaq Meeting House. This is not a coincidence in my estimation. What they share is a building technique that takes advantage of the downslope to buttress the western walls of the structures. It is possible that this is a continuation of a long-standing Native building tradition that often made use of large outcrops along hillsides to create temporary shelters or more permanent structures. Our search for the Deborah Newman farmstead, for example, has found the remains of such a structure that we believe to be an animal pen, quite possibly a lambing pen. However, nineteenth-century descriptions of similar structures suggest that they could have been Native dwellings. Law Pezzarossi (2014a) has raised a series of extremely interesting questions about these descriptions and the very real possibility that such structures are indeed Native, but that their descriptions in nineteenth-century local histories are part of an Anglo-American narrative that views them as impermanent. According to Law Pezzarossi (2014a) the English viewed this impermanence in stark contrast to the “fixity and place” that O’Brien (2010:84) argues provided justification for the acquisition and improvement of Native lands by English colonists.

The landscapes of New England during the early to mid-eighteenth century remained contested space. The challenge of deciphering the difference between the descriptions compiled by Eliot and Gookin and the archaeology on the ground leads me to conclude that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape of Grafton remained very much an indigenous landscape, in the same way that parts of it remain so today. The Nipmuc never disappeared; they remained a self-identified group that has retained indigenous cultural practices. While these are different from those that were part of daily practice in the deep or recent past, Anglo-American cultural practices have themselves changed over the past 300 years. Beyond the more academic questions that this raises about notions such as hybridity and its value in describing the cultural processes that are linked to colonialism, issues of identity and authenticity are critically linked to the struggles of Native groups such as the Hassanamisco Nipmuc to gain federal recognition (Den Ouden 2005; Gould 2010, 2013b; Mrozowski 2012, 2014; Mrozowski et al. 2009).

The original Nipmuc petition was granted in the later phases of the Bill Clin-
ton administration, only to see the positive designation reversed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) under the George W. Bush administration on the grounds that the Nipmuc had failed to provide written documentation of political continuity over the past 300 years (Adams 2004; Gould 2013b). Given that one of the baseline goals of our research in Grafton was to chronicle the occupation of Hassanamisco families, it seemed quite logical to ask whether there was archaeological evidence or oral testimony that might counter the government's denial of the Nipmuc petition. After all, archaeology provides an empirically powerful set of techniques with which it can document both the chronology of occupation and the cultural practices of the Hassanamisco community since at least the seventeenth century, if not earlier. In what remains of this chapter, I provide an overview of the multiple lines of evidence that confirm the kind of political continuity that the BIA denied could be documented.

The Archaeology of Hassanamesit

The major focus of our work in Grafton has been the SB/SB farmstead that was located in the original 1727 plot of Sarah Robins and Peter Muckamugg. This original 106-acre parcel was home to four generations of Nipmuc households, all headed by women named Sarah. Over time, the lot was slowly reduced in size by a combination of sales to raise capital and a land dispute between Sarah Boston and her brother Joseph Aaron that resulted in part of the land going to him (Law Pezzarossi 2015a, 24–28). Over a period of roughly 100 years, the 106-acre parcel was reduced to approximately 20 acres (Map 4.4). These last 20 acres have received the bulk of our attention over the past decade.

Map 4.4. Hassanamesit Woods Site Plan, showing Sarah Burnee/Sarah Boston farmstead home lot, pasture, and “Swago.” Map by author.
This took place in a phased manner, starting with survey to identify archaeological deposits within the 203 acres that the Town of Grafton purchased (Gary 2005). This resulted in the identification of several sites, including a quarry site used in the deep past and the remains of the SB/SB farmstead that was occupied between 1750 and 1840. In addition to the home lot that contained a dry-laid stone foundation and the possible remains of a barn, investigations were also carried out in a large pasture area to the south of the home lot and an area known as “Swago” that was referenced in several primary sources (Map 4.5); Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015). According to local folklore, this area of rocky, wooded streams was where Sarah Boston would collect herbs (Law Pezzarossi 2014a). In addition to our work at the SB/SB farmstead, we also conducted geophysical survey, archaeological testing, and large-scale excavations in the area of Salisbury Street on Keith Hill that would have been part of the 120-acre overplus lot mentioned earlier. I provide a brief discussion of our recent work in this area below after presenting the results of analysis of the material from the SB/SB farmstead.

Using a combination of field testing and geophysical survey, it was possible to identify the remains of a deep, dry-laid foundation that had been filled with a small bulldozer after the 1938 hurricane. Much of the spatial, stratigraphic macro-botanical and micro-stratigraphic analysis carried out at the SB/SB farmstead was geared toward determining how much damage the hurricane had done to the foundation and surrounding yard (see Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015). Fortunately, it was possible to determine that much of the damage to the yard deposits was restricted to the southern side of the foundation and yard. Intact yard deposits included a primary trash deposit that appears to have been located beneath part of the structure (perhaps a lean-to or porch) as well as a cooking hearth and food-preparation area and a sizable midden to the east and downslope from the foundation (Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015). Much of the fill of the foundation was excavated by hand—a truly daunting task—yet it uncovered evidence of an interior hearth area and possible corner chimney in what we believe to be the rear or west portion of the building. The foundation was also constructed with a drainage system that appears to have channeled hill runoff through the cellar floor and through a stone-lined drain that terminated west and downslope from the foundation (Figure 4.1).

Using a combination of soil chemistry, geophysical testing, and additional excavation, it was possible to gain a rough idea of the configuration of the home lot, but some of this remains speculative. The house itself rests on a terrace that
was probably augmented by landscaping. The midden noted above contained material culture spanning the period 1750–1840 and was clearly deposited downslope of the house. No concrete evidence of a barn that is noted in some primary documents was uncovered, but geophysical testing did identify an area of scattered stones that coincides with slightly elevated phosphate levels to the
south of the foundation. A similar configuration along the wall that separates the home lot from the south pasture suggests that animals were traveling over the wall in this area. This is not a high level of detail about the home lot, but it does lend itself to some level of spatial activities.

By far the most interesting result of our excavations is the more than 100,000 artifacts recovered from within the foundation and the surrounding yard. There was also a rich faunal assemblage and more limited macrobotanical assemblage that added to the picture of life at this Nipmuc household. The bulk of the material recovered was tightly dated to the period 1790–1840—when both Sarah Burnee and Sarah Boston were active in the community—but a steady percentage of material culture from the mid-eighteenth century is probably linked to the Sarah Muckamugg household.

Anything approaching a comprehensive discussion of the assemblage is beyond the scope of this chapter (but see Allard 2010, 2015; Law 2008; Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015; Pezzarossi 2008, 2014; Pezzarossi, Kennedy, and Law 2012), so instead I focus here on the results that pertain to the question of political continuity. The sheer size and the diversity of the assemblage reflect what is best described as a well-appointed household with the fine earthenware to provide servings for a large number of people. In his analysis of a large sample of the ceramics from the site, Pezzarossi (2014) compared the SB/SB material with assemblages from eight Anglo-American sites from the surrounding area. In terms of ware types and patterns of decoration, he notes that the SB/SB assemblage is perhaps most notable because of its “insignificance or commonness” (Pezzarossi 2014:165). He makes two additional points that warrant mentioning. The first is that the SB/SB assemblage compares most favorably with Anglo households that practiced a mixture of farming and artisan work (Pezzarossi 2014). This is consistent with a large iron assemblage that contained numerous examples of tools that Law Pezzarossi (2014a, 2014b) has linked to basketmaking as well as woodworking more generally. Some of these tools appear to have been repurposed—a scythe made into a possible draw knife for cutting splints, for example, as well as several examples of bent knives also used in basketmaking. Other tools, such as small drill bits, may have been used for repairing chairs (see Law Pezzarossi 2014a, 2014b; Mrozowski, Law Pezzarossi, et al. 2015:176), suggesting another possible economic activity carried out by the members of the SB/SB household. One of the most common trees used in basketmaking and chair repair was ash. Although Trigg (2015:135–136) recovered charred ash along with other woods commonly using in cooking such as oak, hickory, and
chestnut, at best it might represent residue of basketmaking that was thrown into the fire for kindling (Mrozowski, Law Pezzarossi, et al. 2015; Trig 2015; Heather Trigg, personal communication 2017).

The ceramics and glassware from the SB/SB site are most notable for the large number of food-serving and drinking vessels. The remains of between 15 and 20 tumblers were recovered, including one that displayed evidence of microflaking so it could be used as a cutting tool (Bagley 2013; Bagley et al. 2015; Law 2008). Another notable class of glass artifact was decanters: remains of several were recovered from the site (Mrozowski, Law Pezzarossi, et al. 2015:160). The assemblage of glass and ceramics is consistent with urban households in terms of vessel diversity and overall size (Mrozowski 2006; Mrozowski, Law Pezzarossi, et al. 2015). An impressive array of refined earthenware, especially coffee and tea wares, also reflect a “middle-class” sensibility for entertaining that was comparable with English and American households in rural Massachusetts (see Pezzarossi 2014) as well as those in the region’s urban centers (Mrozowski 2006). There is a notable departure from other assemblages in the region in the large number of metal eating utensils recovered from the SB/SB farmstead; 31 knives and 12 forks were recovered, along with a collection of iron cooking pots. These included remains of no less than 12 cooking vessels, including kettles, a skillet, and the lid for a Dutch oven. Most of the iron vessels were recovered from deposits associated with what we believe to have been an interior hearth that collapsed into the cellar after the building fell into disrepair (Mrozowski, Law Pezzarossi, et al. 2015:170–171).

Faunal analysis indicates that food preparation took place both in the house and in the yard area. The one clearly defined exterior hearth contained both calcined bone and maize remains (Allard 2010; Trigg 2015). In her analysis of the faunal material from the site, Allard (2010, 2015) found that the bone from the yard represented both food preparation and food consumption, while the bone recovered from the foundation was residue of food preparation alone. Most of the faunal remains were from domesticated animals, especially cattle, caprines, and pigs, which Allard thinks were husbanded on site. Evidence that all three species were being butchered on the site supports this interpretation, as do the age ranges of the domesticated animals. Cattle and sheep of all ages were being slaughtered on site, indicating that they were part of a varied household economy: cows provided dairy products as well as meat, while caprines, including sheep, were raised both for wool, or milked in the case of goats, and to be eaten. Some of the cattle remains were from individuals of prime age, indicating
that they could have been consumed or traded. Only pigs appear to have been raised purely for consumption (Allard 2010, 2015).

Although the bulk of the faunal material represents domesticated animals, a rather rich collection of wild animal remains indicates that hunting and trapping were an important part of the household economy. In addition to deer, Allard identified wild fowl remains, including duck, pigeons, turkeys, and possibly pheasants. The remains of nine individual turtles were recovered from the site, suggesting that these highly prized animals were probably available in the ponds and streams in and around Keith Hill. In contrast to this fairly localized activity, the presence of saltwater fish on the site is evidence of trade with the coast (Allard 2010, 2015). Both Allard (2010, 2015) and Pezzarossi (2008, 2014) argue that local traders exchanged their catches with local shopkeepers who were themselves linked to commercial ties to Boston and beyond.

Taken as a whole, the rich assemblage from the SB/SB site presents a picture of a well-appointed household that practiced a varied economic strategy of farming, hunting, trapping, woodworking, and basket production that was linked to local and regional economies. The large ceramic assemblage and the unusually large number of eating utensils suggest that large dinners, sometimes consumed outside, were commonplace. The varied nature of the assemblage indicates entertaining with food and drink. Smoking is also evident from the pipe remains recovered from the site. In her analysis of pipes Rymer (2015) offered two observations suggesting that smoking behavior among the Nipmuc was in some ways different from that of their English neighbors while in other ways quite comparable. Her first observation concerns dating. While most of the pipes date to 1790–1830—the peak period of ceramic consumption—she suggests that some earlier pipes were being purposely curated (Rymer 2015:169). Her second observation is that smoking seems to have been done within the house and yard at the SB/SB farmstead much more than during work in the area surrounding the site (Rymer 2015:165). This observation is supported by statistical spatial analysis indicating that smoking and drinking vessels correlated favorably in the area of the house.

English culture also showed a strong preference for the consumption of tobacco, food, and drink, especially in taverns. Taverns were places of entertainment and frivolity, but they were also places where politics were discussed and, in Massachusetts, where rebellions were planned (see Bragdon 1981; Bridenbaugh 1938; Conroy 1995; Thompson 1998). Smoking played a more serious role in Native culture, often as part of political discussions as in the case of the
English, but of a more religious nature—something that was not part of the culture of tobacco use in Europe (Rymer 2015). Combined with the other classes of material culture and their distribution on the site, I believe the data strongly suggest that gatherings at the SB/SB farmstead served an important political purpose. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Hassanamisco community would have been particularly close knit. The documentary record is replete with case after case of expressions of communal identity that support Nipmuc scholar Thomas Doughton’s (1997) argument for a resilient and vibrant Nipmuc community throughout central Massachusetts (see also Gould 2010, 2013a, 2013b). One of the more important conclusions reached by the combined work of the Hassanamesit Woods Project participants (Allard 2010, 2015; Law 2008; Law Pezzarossi 2014a, 2014b; Mrozowski 2012, 2014; Mrozowski, Gould, and Law Pezzarossi 2015; Mrozowski and Law Pezzarossi 2015; Pezzarossi 2014) is that the SB/SB farmstead served as a community gathering place for a self-identified political group. When combined with the work of Gould (2010, 2013a, 2013b), it provides strong evidence of political continuity between both the SB/SB farmstead and the Moses Printer property—the current Nipmuc Reservation. This evidence stands in stark contrast to the conclusions reached by the BIA in denying the Nipmuc petition in 2004.

Conclusion

The collaboration that has been a major feature of the Hassanamesit Woods Project has demonstrated the value of pragmatic archaeology. The techniques and methods brought to the fieldwork and analysis of the SB/SB farmstead are rigorous and sophisticated. And I would argue that the quality of the research is not compromised by the collaboration but strengthened. This is especially true of the questions that have driven the overall research program that are consistent with long-standing strengths of basic archaeological research, such as the duration of the occupation. Further, what kinds of activities were carried out at the farmstead? What was the nature of the interaction between the Nipmuc and their English neighbors and how did it change over time? How did the life of the Nipmuc change as English colonialism unfolded? These are the kinds of base questions that any archaeologist would ask.

As the nature of our collaboration deepened, these questions were both interrogated and refined as a result of two facets of our work with the Nipmuc. First, we were introduced to the oral history of the Hassanamisco Nipmuc that
has been kept alive by tribal members, in particular Rae Gould. This provided both a Native perspective and a Native voice. More deeply, however, it brought a different history to our larger inquiry than we could access through our standard approach. Second, it raised questions about the larger intellectual inquiry, especially its ultimate purpose. In this instance, the collective goal of the project participants was most broadly to make the history resulting from the collaboration address questions of cultural and political importance to the Nipmuc—it is their history. The history generated from the work at Hassanamesit Woods and Gould’s work on the Moses Printer property (2010; 2013a, 2013b; Mrozowski, Gould, and Law Pezzarossi 2015) provides a rich picture that will form the corpus of a book being prepared for the University Press of Florida, which is designed to be primarily descriptive and accessible to a broader audience.

The questions and results outlined in this chapter capture only a small part of the picture that emerges from the research, but they do stress a convergence of archaeology and pragmatic philosophy that reinforces the benefits of collaborative research. At its core, the openness of the inquiry and the significance it places on all forms of knowledge make for a dynamically creative intellectual environment in which innovation can be fostered. That effort continues on a variety of levels. The focus of the project has now shifted to other Nipmuc and English households around Keith Hill. Most of these are located within the boundaries of the 1727 overplus lot (see Map 4.6). Some evidence, in the form of a slate writing board with the days of the week on either side and several slate pencils, could be linked to a circa 1730 meeting house and school that the general court stipulated would be built and maintained by the 40 English families who were allowed to purchase Hassanamisco land (MAC, vol. 31, 1701–1750:117–118, 746–748). Additional archaeological evidence appears to be linked to other members of the Nipmuc community living on Keith Hill, including the household of Deborah Newman—a contemporary of Sarah Boston—and her husband, Isaac Newman. Despite several seasons of geophysical and archaeological testing and excavations, definitive evidence of the house site of Deborah Newman has not been found. There is a scattering of material culture that dates to the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century—precisely when documentary evidence suggests that the Newmans were living on Keith Hill. But several attempts to find what was described by nineteenth-century historians as Deb Newman’s cellar hole (Pierce 1879) have failed to find such a structure.

The most recent discovery made in the area is an oval-shaped (2 × 3 m) stone surface that includes fire-cracked rock and circa 1730–1750 ceramics, which is
much earlier than any of the English farmsteads established close to 50–70 years later within the bounds of 120-acre overplus lot. I believe that this deposit is linked to Deborah Newman and her mother, Elizabeth Samson, and may represent family members who resided in the same area. It is possible that the extra land was used for other Nipmuc families; by the early nineteenth century, however, the vast majority of the land on Keith Hill was owned by English and then American farmers and artisans.

In the mid-nineteenth century the Commonwealth of Massachusetts en-
listed John Milton Earle to assess the disposition of the Indians in the state. His report, published in 1861, focused on many groups, but his largest chapter focused on the Nipmuc. The picture that he paints of a small group of Native descendants whose treatment did not reflect well on the commonwealth, despite its sympathetic tone, nevertheless reinforced the notion of a dying people. The Hassanamisco Nipmuc continue to deal with the legacy of this troubled history in their struggle for federal recognition. If the archaeology of Hassanamesit Woods and at their own reservation helps them in making their case, I believe that this is a worthy purpose. Archaeology is a sophisticated form of inquiry that can examine historical questions that remain contested territory. Some of its more traditional strengths, such as temporal clarity and breadth, allow archaeologists to document the past in an empirically sound manner that can be used to answer sensitive historical questions. This is not the only advantage of collaboration, but it does provide a concrete example of the benefit and mutual respect that it embodies. That fact alone bodes well for the future of both communities.

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