

**Archaeological Study of the Dunham House Site,
Block 587, Lot 1, Woodbridge Township,
Middlesex County, New Jersey**



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September 30, 2020

Abstract

This report contains the results of an initial archaeological research study conducted by Monmouth University in 2002 and a subsequent archaeological research study by the Archaeological Society of New Jersey (ASNJ) on a 0.39-acre portion of Block 587, Lot 1 in Woodbridge Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey. This portion of the property is designated as the Study Area and surrounds the Dunham House. Block 587, Lot 1 is listed in the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, C, and D as the Trinity Episcopal Church (NR:5/12/2004; SR:3/8/2004) and is significant in the areas of religion, architecture and archaeology. The historic property has a period of significance between ca. 1717 and 1874. Specific significant architect/builders associated with the historic property include Richard Upjohn, C. Harrison Condit, and Georg Hogan. The specific dates of significance include ca. 1717, 1858-1861, and 1873-1874. However, based on dendrochronology data discussed below, the period of significance should be revised to range from 1709 to 1874.

The studies were completed with the permission of the Trinity Episcopal Church of Woodbridge (TECW), the current owner. In 2019, the Middlesex County Office of Arts and History (MCOAH) requested and funded the completion of an archaeological study near the Dunham House by the ASNJ with permission from the TECW. The MCOAH concurrently engaged in the completion of a dendrochronological study, a ground penetrating radar (GPR) study, and partial architectural recordation endeavor. The ASNJ study complies with New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act (NJHPA), falls under the review authority of the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO), and adheres to an Application for Project Authorization dated July 15, 2019 approved by the NJHPO on August 22, 2019 and September 26, 2019. This report includes the results of the 2002 Monmouth University and 2019 ASNJ archaeological studies, dendrochronology study, and GPR study. The studies identified the Dunham House Site (28-Mi-220).

Prior to the 1870s, the western half of the Study Area was part of the Meeting House Green and the eastern half of the Study Area was owned by the Dunham family (1696-1727), John Van Horne (1727-unknown), the Barron family (as late as 1778-1872), William Peterson (1872-1873), and George Hance (March-December 1873). In December 1873, the Trinity Episcopal Church of Woodbridge purchased the entirety of the Study Area and remains under church ownership to the present day.

In 2002, Monmouth University completed an initial archaeological study around the Dunham House as part of a graduate research project. The study included the excavation of 28 shovel test pits (STPs) (36 had been laid out) north and west of the house on a 10-foot interval grid and the excavation of five 3-foot square excavation units (EUs 1-5). The study resulted in the identification and registration of the Dunham House Site (28-Mi-220). Dense 18th- and 19th-century artifact deposits were found north and west of the Dunham House. In total, 1,147 artifacts were found. EUs 4 and 5, dug north of the house, identified notably dense and temporally mixed artifact deposits. West of the house, EUs 1, 2, and 3 encountered mixed 18th- and 19th-century deposits. Possible features identified included possible stone pavement associated with a former driveway in STPs 2, 3, and 13, and

midden deposit in the rear yard in EUs 4 and 5. Shovel test pit 23 encountered what may be an in-filled cellar or other 18th-century feature.

Dendrochronology sampling extracted and dated core samples from first floor joists below the patterned brick section of the house that yielded a date of Spring 1709. Samples taken from the attic of the patterned brick portion of the house yielded a date of Spring 1871. The earlier date corresponds with the initial construction of the house by Benjamin Dunham and the latter date corresponds with the home's extensive alteration and remodeling at the end of the Barron family ownership period.

A geophysical survey was completed by Environmental Probing Incorporated (EPI) in October 2019. The survey identified a large, buried oval or teardrop shaped driveway in the west yard of the Dunham House. Subsurface testing revealed that this driveway consisted of two layers of cobble stones (designated as Features 3 and 4) separated by a thin soil layer and post-dates the 1820s. The survey also identified two anomalies south of the Dunham House that are interpreted as possible building footprints.

In 2019, the ASNJ conducted a subsequent archaeological study in cooperation with the MCOAH, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Monmouth University. The ASNJ study was conducted as a planning tool to identify the location of and interpret archaeological deposits near the house, aid in understanding the development history of a portion of the property, and better understand 17th- through 19th-century life in Woodbridge. The 2019 excavations included 21 STPs (STPs 50-71) and one five-foot by four-foot EU (EU 9) and two five-foot square EUs (EUs 7-8) that yielded 6,008 artifacts. The STPs were dug at 5-, 10-, and 50-foot intervals. The STPs identified two stacked layers of a 19th-century cobble stone driveway (Features 3 and 4) in the west yard (STP 61), extremely rich artifact deposits within STPs 50-65, deep artifact deposits dating to the mid-18th-century in STPs 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 60 and 61, suggesting the presence of a large feature, such as a structural crawlspace. STPs 66 to 72, dug 60 to 160 feet west of the Dunham house in a portion of the property that was formerly part of the Meeting House Green yielded notably low artifact counts. Shovel test pit 71 yielded the only prehistoric Native American artifact, a chert flake from the B-horizon.

Unit excavation was concentrated within 0.5 feet to 21.5 feet west of the 1871 house addition. Rodent burrows were present in all of the EUs. EU 7 encountered the edge of Feature 6, a deeply buried northwest/southeast oriented, mortared foundation present 4.5 feet below datum (bd). This feature was also encountered in STP 51 at 3.3 feet below ground surface (bgs), in STP 2 at 3.0 bgs, and in EU 9 at 4.7 feet bd. Feature 6 was capped by a soil layer containing a dense 1760s to late 18th-century artifact deposit. Excavation of EU 7 was arbitrarily terminated at 4.5 feet bd before the base of cultural deposits were reached. At the base of EU 7, an artifact-rich deposit was exposed but not excavated due to time constraints. The artifact-rich deposit was designated as Feature 7 and was present in the northwest corner of the unit.

Excavation of EU 8 contains STPs 35 and 51 and encountered three fill layers (Fills 1-3) over a truncated B-horizon. Fills 1 and 2 contained dense artifact deposits dating from the

early 18th century to the 1870s. Due to time constraints, at 2.0 feet bd, excavation in Fill 2 was arbitrarily terminated and a 1.5-foot square STP was dug in the southwest corner of the EU. The STP encountered Fill 3, a 0.9-foot thick soil layer with artifact deposits post-dating 1762.

Excavation Unit 9 was dug adjacent to an 1871 window bay, southeast of EU 7, in order to determine if a foundation extended off of the northwest corner of the 1709 portion of the dwelling. The EU identified Feature 5, a dry-laid stone foundation. The north wall and northwest corner of the foundation was present in EU 9. The foundation was present from 1.7 to 4.7 feet bd. Feature 5 may have connected to the Dunham House and was removed in 1871. Feature 5 capped a portion of Feature 6, a deeper, mortared foundation for a building or addition that was removed by the early 19th century based on the presence of dense artifacts found above Feature 6 that date from the early 19th century. Only a portion of Feature 6 was exposed in EU 9. Excavation 9 did not reach culturally sterile soils due to safety constraints.

The cultural deposits and features identified represent a significant archaeological resource that contribute to the Trinity Episcopal Church historic property under Criterion D. The archaeological deposits inform current understanding of the development history of the Dunham House and side yard and provide insight into the Barron family household during the second half of the 18th century and early 19th century.