Volunteering with The Vermont Archaeological Society: Excavations at the Severence Site, Colchester

by Charles L.F. Knight

Introduction

The Vermont Archaeological Society (VAS) coalesced in 1968 out of the desire to bring together a loose-knit community of amateur and professional archaeologists that existed in Vermont at that time. Central to the newly formed organization was a core set of aims that promoted the research and conservation of archaeological resources, all the while raising the public's awareness of Vermont's archaeological past (Morrissey 1969; Popecki 1994). The timing of the Society's formation followed a series of local and national events that were directly affecting Vermont's cultural heritage. The first occurred in 1965 with the appointment of Dr. William Haviland to the faculty of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Vermont. Dr. Haviland was a principal force behind the development of the VAS. In addition, he spearheaded the earliest field projects carried out by VAS volunteers and the development of the Vermont Site Survey, which today has catalogued approximately 4,000 sites and find spots throughout the state. The second major event occurred at the national level, with the construction of the federal interstate system throughout the 1960s. This included the construction of Interstate-89 (I-89), which stimulated large amounts of archaeological salvage within Vermont. One of the first acts of business for the VAS was to establish a liaison with the Vermont highway department to ensure that no archaeological sites were being destroyed because of the I-89 construction (Morrissey 1969).

Fittingly, the first dig carried out in 1969 by the VAS was at Pine Island in Colchester, in an effort to mitigate the destruction brought about by the construction of the Burlington Beltline. One of the results of the dig was the identification of two historic period charcoal kilns, VT-CH-1 and VT-CH-2, which became the first two sites in Chittenden County formally identified on the newly developed Vermont Site Survey. Throughout the 1970s, the VAS was very active in Vermont field archaeology. Since professional Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firms had yet to develop in the state, the VAS served as the principal avenue for conducting archaeological evaluations. One important example of this was the 1972-73 VAS excavation of the Winooski site (VT-CH-46) along the banks of the Winooski River. This early VAS work was incorporated into the study of the ceramics from the site that became the Society's first published monograph in 1980, which is still an important reference work on the Middle Woodland period (ca. A.D.1-1000). The Winooski site excavation, along with the 1979 John's Bridge dig in Swanton marked the Society's last substantial involvement in site excavation, since major changes in the way regulatory archaeology was being conducted in the state was underway. Beginning in the early 1980s field archaeology in Vermont quickly became the domain of professional CRM firms.

In response to this quickly changing archaeological landscape, the 1983 VAS board of directors realigned the Society's mission from a focus on field excavation to one of education and public outreach (Popecki 1994). In 1994, the VAS undertook its most ambitious public outreach event to date with the inception of Vermont Archaeology Week; one week in May dedicated to archaeological events and talks across Vermont. It shifted to a week in September in 1997, and in 2002 was expanded to the entire month of September, becoming what we are all familiar with as Vermont

Archaeology Month. In 1994, the first edition of *The Journal of Vermont Archaeology* was published. Publication of the Journal became an annual event in 2003 with Volume 4 under the editorship of Victor Rolando.

As the VAS entered the new millennium, the board became acutely aware of frustration within the Society over the lack of field excavation and lab opportunities for members, like those that initially brought the Society together in the 1960s. Several practicalities underlay the inability of the Society to develop field opportunities. In the past, the VAS had been able to utilize field equipment owned by the Anthropology department at UVM. In the 2000s however, there was no equipment available to the Society and no funds to purchase any. Even if the Society had the equipment for field excavations, a related problem was storage space, since the VAS was (and still is) without a permanent office. A second major obstacle was finding a site in need of excavation that was easily accessible, safe and secure, had plenty of nearby parking and was convenient for weekend excavation. Finally, there was no plan for long-term curation of any materials recovered from such a dig.

While the Board was grappling with these logistic shortcomings, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) notified the Society in 2007 that funding resulting from an Act 250 enforcement action had recently become available for fieldwork. The VDHP encouraged the Society to develop and submit a proposal for archaeological work that would use a portion of this funding. In addition, the VDHP suggested the Severence site (VT-CH-1002), in Colchester, Vermont, would be a fruitful locus for excavation. The University of Maine at Farmington Archaeological Research Center (UMF ARC) had originally conducted Phase I and II studies of the Severence site in 2006 as part of the Act 250 permitting process and determined that it was not eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Nevertheless, important supplementary information, such as dateable artifacts, might still be recovered from the site beyond the fieldwork required by Act 250. At the same time, the recent establishment by the VDHP of a statewide archaeological curation facility in South Burlington gave the VAS a place to conduct lab analysis and properly store long term any material recovered by the excavation.

The Severence Site Background

On weekends from June 28 to October 5, 2008, members of the VAS conducted a Phase III-level excavation of the prehistoric Native American Severence site in Colchester, Vermont (Figure 1). The goals of the Severence site excavations were three-fold. First, to recover data and features that would date the site occupation and provide a better understanding of how the occupants of the site lived. The second goal was to provide field excavation opportunities to the VAS membership, and the third goal was to raise the public's awareness of Vermont's cultural heritage and the mission of the VAS. The VAS excavation at the Severence site represented, in many ways, a return to the stimuli behind the original formation of the Society 40 years earlier, with its location in Colchester, its ties to CRM, and the strong volunteer spirit of those involved.

The Severence site is one of three precontact Native American archaeological sites originally identified in September 2006 by UMF ARC as part of the cultural resource review of a proposed housing development (Brigham et al. 2009). These sites, listed as VT-CH-1000, VT-CH-1001, and VT-CH-1002 in the Vermont Archaeological Inventory, are located on a parcel immediately north of Severence Road and east of VT Route 7 (Figure 2). All three sites were identified by well-defined concentrations of artifacts recovered through subsurface testing. At the Severence site, the small size and intensity of the subsurface artifact concentrations suggested that historic plowing of the landform did not seriously disturb the site and therefore, intact features may still exist below the plowzone. Since no temporally diagnostic artifacts were recovered during the original Phase I and II studies conducted by UMF ARC, the recovery by the VAS of intact features could provide dateable

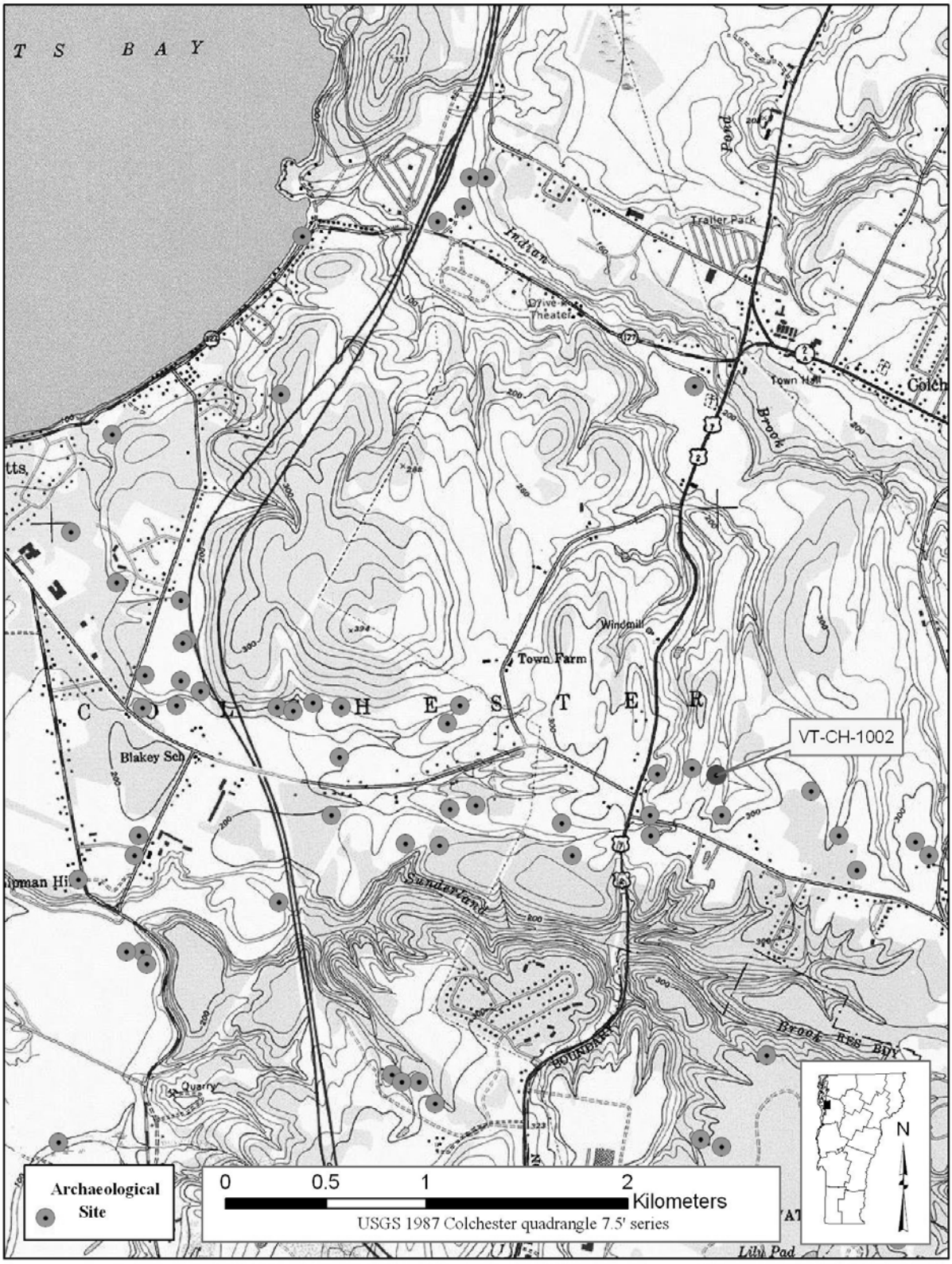


Figure 1 . The location of the Severence site in relation to other known archaeological sites in Colchester.

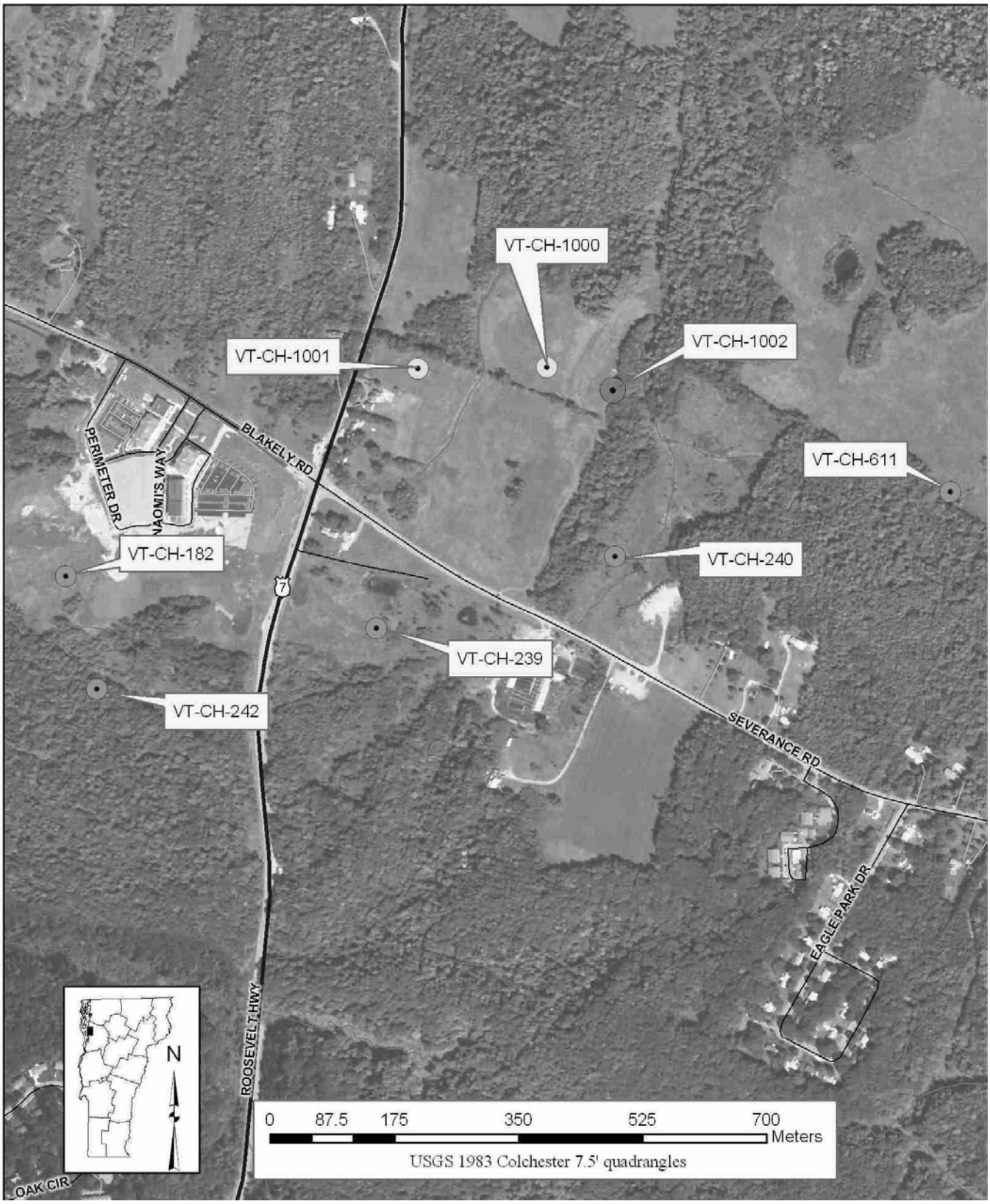


Figure 2. Known archaeological sites within 1.5 km of the Severence site (VT-CH-1002).

materials. Of the three sites, the Severence site produced the greatest quantity of artifacts in the densest concentration. This combined with its convenient location, friendly landowner relations, and planned destruction due to housing development made it an excellent candidate for Phase III excavation by the VAS.

The Severence site is located on a north-south trending knoll approximately 280 ft (85 meters) above sea level. The site overlooks an unnamed tributary of the Indian Brook to the northeast, which ultimately drains into Malletts Bay. The Severence site is also approximately 300 meters north of Sunderland Brook, which drains into the Winooski River to the southwest. Therefore, the Severence site lies at the drainage divide between watersheds of the Winooski River and Malletts Bay, and possibly along an inland shortcut between these two drainages. This may help explain the relatively high density of known precontact Native American sites in the area.

In addition to sites VT-CH-1000, VT-CH-1001, and VT-CH-1002, numerous sites exist within the general area. VT-CH-240 is the closest to the Severence site, located 200 meters to the south-east at the headwaters of the same tributary of the Indian Brook as borders the Severence site. Numerous artifacts, including pottery fragments were recovered, thus dating the site occupation to the general Woodland period (ca. 1000 B.C. – A.D. 1600). About 500 meters due east, and associated with another unnamed tributary of Indian Brook, site VT-CH-611 was identified from the presence of numerous lithic flakes representing multiple stone sources, as well as burned bone and seeds from within a bell-shaped feature. Associated with the Sunderland Brook watershed to the south are at least 19 precontact Native American within a 2 km radius. The closest of these is site VT-CH-239, located 400 meters to the southwest and next to the headwaters of a tributary of Sunderland Brook. Site VT-CH-239 likely dates to the Early Woodland period (ca. 1000 – 100 B.C.) based on the recovery of a projectile point similar in style to a Meadowood point.

Table 1. Lithic artifact quantity by excavation unit.

	Quad				
Unit	NE	NW	SE	SW	Total
N123E98	46	7	10	10	**73**
N123E99	8	13	1	7	**29**
N123E100	9	5	5	8	**27**
N124E98	11	10	18	16	**55**
N124E99	18	25	25	25	**93**
N124E100	36	41	28	32	**137**
N125E94	9	2	15	4	**30**
N125E96	8	16	17	14	**55**
N125E98	4	8	9	13	**34**
N125E99	20	15	12	24	**71**
N125E100	16	24	21	33	**94**
N126E97	2	0	6	6	**14**
N126E98	3	0	6	2	**11**
N126E99	8	5	8	13	**34**
N126E100	10	8	22	11	**51**
N127E100	--	--	6	6	**12**
				Total	**820**

VAS Excavations

The Phase III data recovery at the Severence site excavated 15½ square meters, consisting of fifteen 1- by 1-meter and one 0.5- by 1-meter excavation units centered on the positive Phase I test pit Transect 11 Test Pit 6 (Figure 3). The Phase III excavations were aligned 15° east of magnetic north along a grid established during the Phase I study, corresponding to Transect 11. Although the Phase II excavations were aligned by their northeast corners, the VAS excavations utilized the more common southwest corner to delineate unit orientation. All 50- by 50-cm Phase III excavation quadrants within each unit, except two along the northern excavation border, contained precontact Native American artifacts (Table 1). Test units were excavated through a plowzone (Ap Horizon) that varied in depth from 25 to 46 cm below the surface. Plowzone depth within each test unit correlated to its location on the knoll, with the thinnest plowzone layer in the central and central-south test units. Plowzone thickness increased to the west and east,

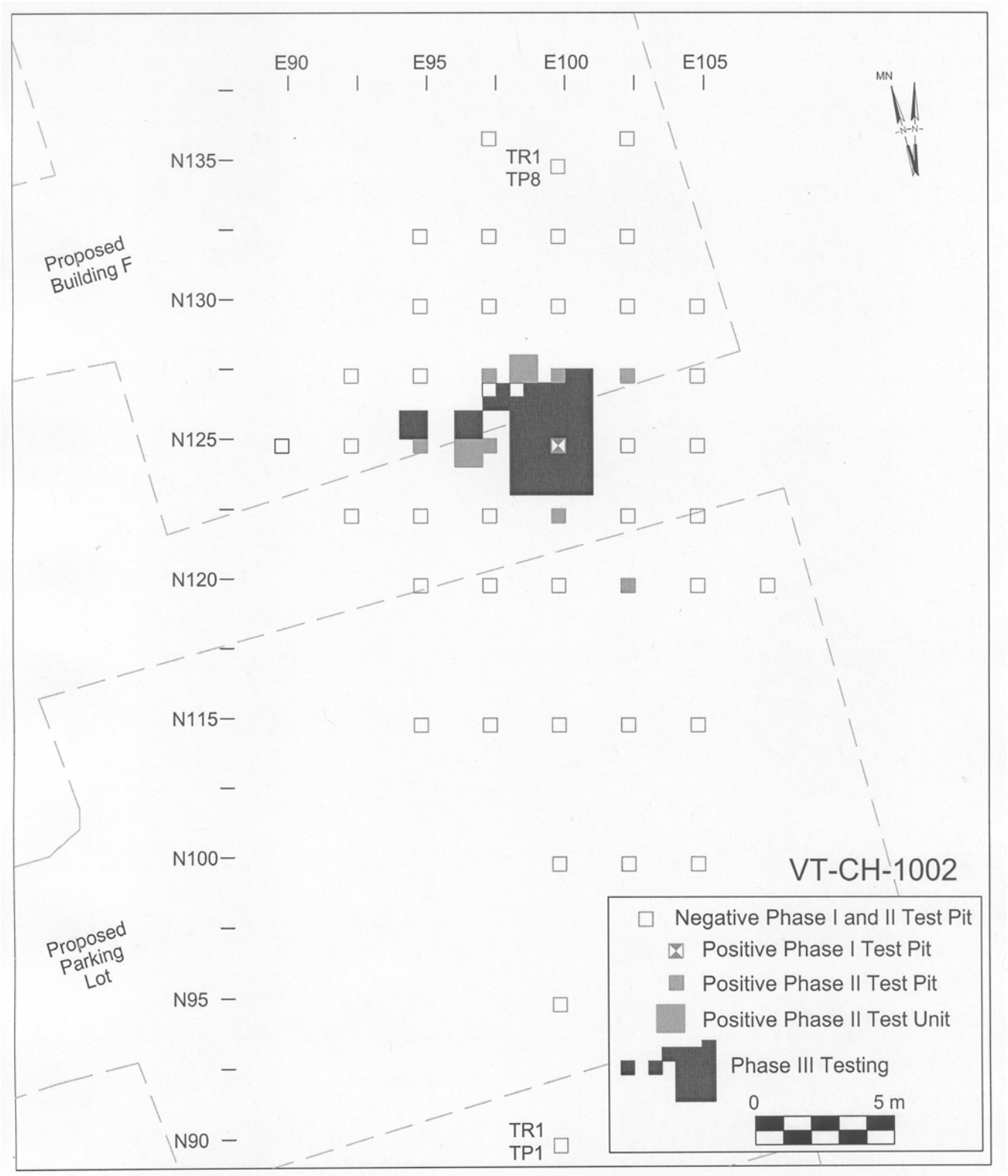


Figure 3. The distribution of Phase I. II, and III archaeological testing of the Severence site.

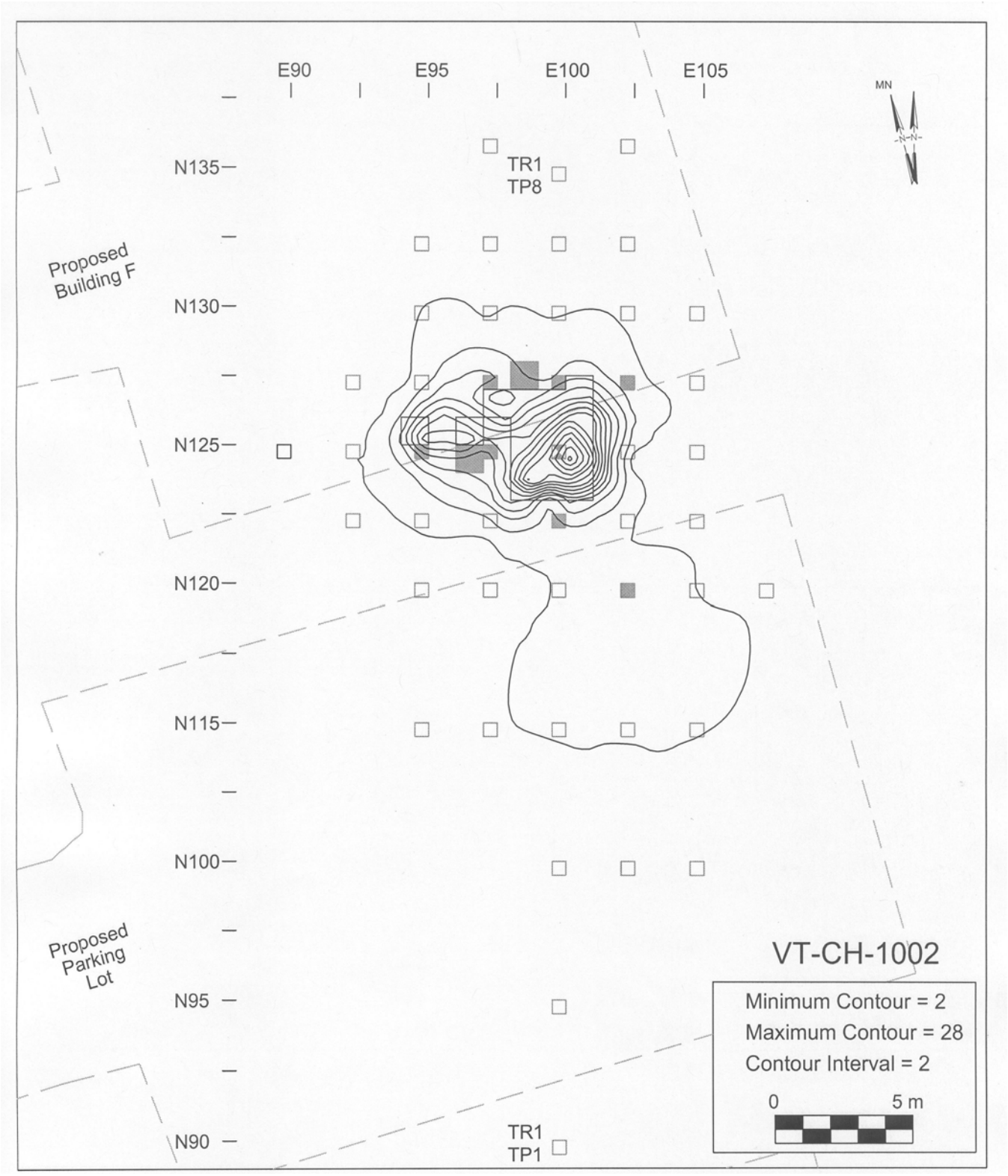


Figure 4. A contour map showing the distribution of artifact quantity recovered during Phase III excavations at the Severence site.

likely the result of slope wash to either side of the ridge top. Below the plowzone was a 10- to 25-cm thick B Horizon made up of olive brown silty loam. Excavation was terminated as soon as the C Horizon became visible below the B. All units were excavated in arbitrary 10 cm levels within natural strata. All soils were screened through ⅛-inch hardware cloth and feature soils were collected intact for later flotation and water screening through 1 mm mesh.

Artifacts

In total, 827 artifacts were recovered during the Phase III excavation: 820 pieces of lithic debitage and 7 pieces of fire-cracked rock. Several pieces of severely fragmented food bone also were recovered, but they have not yet been studied. Of the lithic debitage, the vast majority were made from chert, while several questionable artifacts of quartzite, shist, and sandstone also were recovered. Unlike the majority of sites in Vermont, not a single definitive artifact made from quartzite or quartz was recovered during any point in the excavation of the Severence site. In addition, no quartzite artifacts were recovered from adjacent site VT-CH-1001. At site VT-CH-1000 however, seven quartzite artifacts were recovered representing 26% of that site's chipped stone assemblage (Brigham et al. 2009). The lack of quartzite at the Severence site may reflect stone procurement and exchange networks oriented towards the northern half of the state, where quartzite is not readily available. Quartzite in Vermont is widespread along the Green Mountains, but the high quality quartzite typically found in Vermont chipped stone assemblages has its northern extent in the Monkton region of Addison County. At the Severence site, the Phase I and Phase II studies by UMF ARC recovered 62 pieces of lithic debitage, a retouched chert flake and a chert biface fragment (Brigham et al. 2009). No temporally diagnostic artifacts were ever recovered during any phase of excavation, and we are therefore unable to date the occupation of the site. During the VAS excavations, however, sufficient charcoal samples were obtained to carry out future C^{14} dating.

A low density of lithic debitage covering a broad area characterizes the Severence site, where artifacts were recovered from almost all excavation units. Two artifact concentrations also were identified along the eastern edge of the site, the largest centered on the positive Phase I test pit (TR11 TP6). The second, smaller artifact concentration is located 1.5 meters southwest of the first one. These two artifact concentrations also correspond to Feature 2 and Feature 3, the only two definitive features identified during the excavations. An isometric contour map depicting the distribution of artifacts at the site by quantity is presented in Figure 4. The lithic debitage recovered from the water screening and flotation of the feature soil was not included in the contour maps.

At least two types of siliceous material were identified in the chipped stone assemblage: Hathaway chert and Mt. Jasper rhyolite. Hathaway chert, the more common material, originates from a known quarry source located immediately north of St. Albans Bay in Franklin County. The Hathaway chert artifacts recovered ranged in color from light to dark grey, often with small black radiolaria throughout (Figure 5). Light to dark grey coloring was often seen on a single artifact, and may result, to some degree, from weathering. In addition, a black variety with and without the black radiolaria was identified, but this was much less common. The other principal material type recovered, based on visual characteristics, appears to be Mt Jasper rhyolite from the Berlin, New Hampshire, area. This variety was tan to very light brown/yellow in color, similar to butterscotch, and very fine-grained (Figure 6). Mt. Jasper rhyolite is most commonly found in the Late Paleoindian period (ca. 8000-7000 B.C.) in Vermont, although it has been found during other periods as well. At the Severence site, at least 23% (n=187) of the assemblage consists of Mt. Jasper rhyolite. Some of the light yellow/tan material also may come from this source. Flake types and metrics by color are presented in Table 2.

Reduction Stages

Stone tool production is a reductive process. That is, in order to form a stone tool from a piece of raw

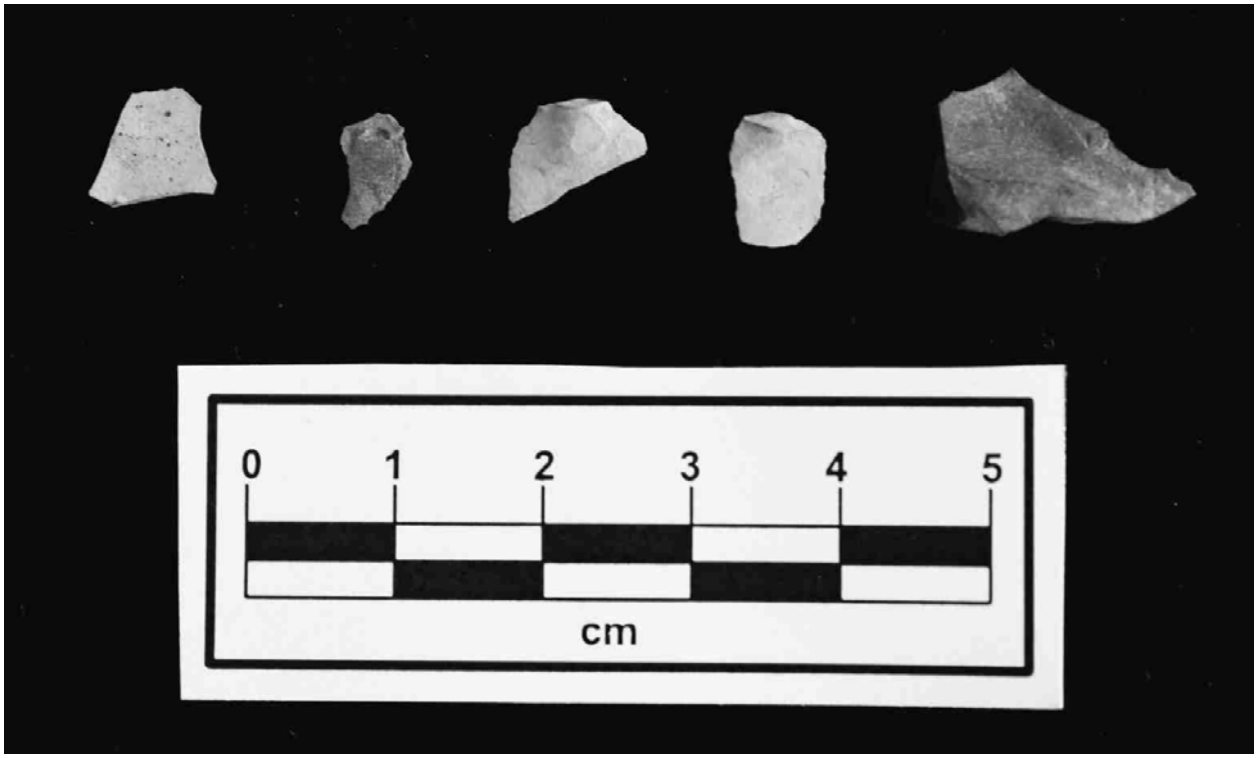


Figure 5. Visual lithic artifact types recovered. From left to right: light grey, dark grey, light yellow/tan, light brown/yellow, black.

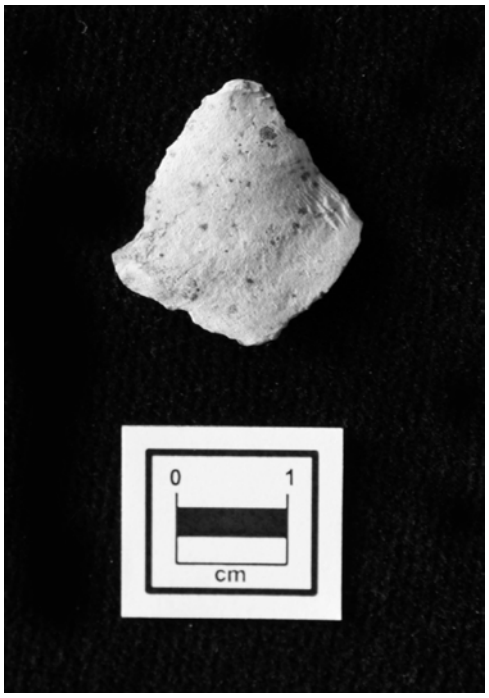


Figure 6. Artifact sample of Mt. Jasper rhyolite.

Table 2. Lithic artifact quantity by color and type

	Color					
Artifact Type	Light Grey	Dark Grey	Light Yellow/ Tan	Light Brown/ Yellow	Black	Total
Bifacial Reduction						
Unidentified Flake with platform	76	85	14	50	30	**255**
Unidentified Flake without platform	131	118	17	95	28	**389**
Notching flake	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
Shatter	26	41	4	16	8	**95**
Shaping Flake	2	2	0	0	0	**4**
Thinning Flake	3	1	0	0	0	**4**
Bifacial Reduction Flake	9	4	1	15	0	**29**
Sharpening Flake	9	7	0	10	5	**31**
Bipolar Reduction						
Sheared Flake	5	2	0	0	1	**8**
Bipolar Flake	0	2	0	0	0	**2**
Formal Tool						
Biface	0	2	0	0	0	**2**
Total	**261**	**264**	**36**	**187**	**72**	**820**

material, flakes are removed until the desired form is achieved. Therefore, it is expected that flake size will decrease through the reduction sequence, as will the amount of cortex or patina on each flake. It is also expected that the amount of dorsal and platform scarring on those flakes will increase through the reduction sequence. Many lithic artifacts also exhibit other diagnostic attributes that were used in characterizing the lithic assemblage. Since lithic flakes are typically extremely sharp, they themselves can be used as a quick, expedient tool and may be the desired object rather than a more formal bifacial tool. For this reason, we also investigated edge wear.

For this analysis, flakes were categorized as either flakes with platforms or flakes without platforms (a.k.a. flake fragments). If a flake with a platform could be more accurately identified due to several diagnostic characteristics, such as size, platform angle, platform lip, and general flake morphology, then it was designated as a shaping flake, a thinning/reduction flake, a bifacial reduction flake, or a sharpening flake.

Shaping flakes are produced in the earliest stages of preform shaping. As a result, shaping flakes tend to be on the large end of the spectrum and are not expected to exhibit complex negative scarring (0-2 scars) on either their dorsal face or on their platform, since few flakes will have been removed before them (Magne 1985: figure 14). Thinning/reduction flakes are produced during the thinning of the preform that is, during the act of removing material from the center of each face. As a result, thinning/reduction flakes tend to be relatively narrow and long, with a distinct curve in lateral profile. It is expected that they will exhibit moderate negative scarring (1-3 scars) on their dorsal face and platform. The bifacial reduction flake is characterized by a pronounced lip on the ventral face at the base of an often, multifaceted platform (Crabtree 1982:44; Kooyman 2000:170). The platform itself represents a small portion of the opposite face from which the flake was removed. As a result, it reflects the removal of a flake from a very

acute edge, such as the edge of a biface. This type of flake tends to be removed at the same time or after biface thinning has occurred, but before edge sharpening has been initiated. Finally, sharpening flakes are produced during the final edge shaping of the biface and sharpening flakes will therefore be on the smaller end of the size spectrum. Platforms likely will be extremely small due to pressure removal. Since sharpening flakes are produced at a late stage in the production of the biface, they are expected to exhibit complex negative scarring (3+ scars) on the dorsal face and platform. As illustrated in Table 2, flakes with and without platforms represented the majority of artifacts recovered during the VAS excavations. Of the artifacts that could be better assigned to specific reduction stages, sharpening flakes and bifacial reduction flakes were more common than thinning/reduction flakes or shaping flakes.

In addition to bifacial reduction technology, 1.2% of the chipped stone assemblage (*n*=10) was the result of bipolar reduction. Unlike the more formalized bifacial reduction, which requires a certain degree of specialized knowledge, bipolar reduction is an expedient technology that does not require specialized knowledge. As a result, anyone with two or more stones can create sharp edged artifacts using bipolar reduction techniques (Hayden 1980; Shott 1989, 1999). Two types of distinctive bipolar artifacts were recognized: sheared flakes and bipolar flakes.

I adopt the term "sheared flaked" from Crabtree (1982:5) who described the shearing effect on a pebble by the radiating force caused by direct percussion in bipolar reduction. Sheared flakes are triangular in cross section and have three faces, usually two discernable ventral faces and one dorsal. Although all faces of a sheared flake lack negative scarring or any evidence of the percussion force that removed them from a core, such as bulbar scarring or ripple marks, a dorsal face can often be identified from cortex or remnant patina. The morphology of a sheared flake best fits the description Crabtree (1982:5) provides for bipolar debitage as resembling "segments of an orange." Crushed platforms are often identifiable on opposite ends, although it is not uncommon for one end to be completely obliterated. One sheared flake in the assemblage was used as an informal tool, as it exhibited overlapping microflakes along one edge, suggestive of cutting actions.

Bipolar flakes have evidence of crushing at proximal and distal ends displaying evidence of shearing and/or rippling on their ventral faces. Evidence for bidirectional flake scarring on their dorsal faces also is often present. None of the bipolar flakes recovered exhibited edge wear.

Edge Wear

How the artifacts may have been used was investigated through edge wear analysis. That is, certain use activities leave distinctive markings on the edges and faces of tools and debitage. All artifacts were visually analyzed under 10X magnification with a hand lens. In total, 5% (*n*=40) of all chipped stone artifacts showed some form of use wear on their edges. However, in order to investigate use wear in the chipped stone assemblage, we must measure the proportion of useable flakes that exhibit use wear, rather than all flakes recovered. In other words, we would not expect the smallest and lightest, thus fragile, flakes to be used as informal tools, therefore we must remove those flakes from the equation. All debitage, regardless of size and weight was analyzed for use wear. However, of the 40 artifacts that exhibit use wear all are at least 2 mm in thickness. In addition, no flakes lighter than 0.1 gram exhibited use wear. Therefore, I removed all flakes less than 2 mm in thickness and lighter than 0.1 grams (*n*=517) from the sampling universe, and was left with 303 artifacts that may have been used informally as tools. Of these, 13% of all useable chipped stone artifacts exhibited some form of use wear.

In terms of use wear events, six artifacts had multiple use wear patterns, therefore a total of 46 use events are represented on the 40 artifacts that have use wear. Regarding the types of activities for which these informal tools were used, 26 (thus 56% of all artifacts with use wear) were marked by small,

overlapping microflakes along the artifact edge (Figure 7a). Use wear experiments I have conducted, and that have been conducted by others (e.g. Clark 1988) suggest that this type of use wear results from a forward and back cutting motion on moderately hard surfaces, such as wood or bone. The next most common use wear type is "continuous slicing," marked by continuous small lunate nicks taken out of the artifact edge (Figure 7b). Continuous slicing comprises 23% (*n*=6) of all use wear identified. It also results from a cutting motion on soft to medium hard surfaces. Another type of use wear attributed to cutting actions that results in rounded and dull edges (Figure 7c), was identified on 9% (*n*=4) of all artifacts exhibiting use wear. Overlapping, truncated edge flaking, where two layers of edge flakes are present, is typical of scraping actions and comprised 9% (*n*=4) of all use wear (Figure 7d).

In general, the use of debitage as informal tools was not a major event at the Severence site. Slicing activities on soft to moderately hard items appear to have comprised the majority of use activities, with some scraping also occurring. Considering that 87% of all useable chipped stone artifacts display no visible use wear, either material processing was not a major activity at the site, use wear was not visible under 10X magnification, or it was carried out on soft materials that do not leave easily detectable traces. Nonetheless, the artifact assemblage strongly points to a temporary encampment where biface preforms were reduced and finished tools rejuvenated.

Formal Tools

Three biface fragments were recovered from all phases of archaeological study of the Severence site. One fragment was recovered during the Phase II testing by UMF ARC and is discussed elsewhere (Brigham et al. 2009), and two fragments were recovered during the Phase III excavations (PN 1012-01 and PN 107-01). All fragments were of the same dark grey Hathaway chert and all were approximately the same size (Figure 8). Both biface fragments recovered by the VAS exhibited edge wear and all three biface fragments recovered at the site came from the same eastern edge of the site, corresponding to the eastern artifact concentration.

Features

During the VAS excavations, eight features were initially identified and delineated. After additional excavation in and around the delineated features and later lab analysis of the material recovered, all except two were determined not to be cultural features. Features 2 and 3 represent possible fire hearth remains located in the center of the area with the greatest concentration of artifacts at the site. Both features were identified in Unit N124 E100. All feature soil was floated, water screened, and sorted.

Feature 2

Feature 2 was located in the western half of the unit and comprised a 40- by 20-cm, semi-circular stain 9 cm in depth that extended into the adjoining 1- by 1-meter Unit N124 E99. However, the portion of Unit N124 E99 that would have contained the western portion of Feature 2 had been removed by the positive Phase I test pit TR11 TP 7 before the VAS excavations. Feature 2 contained small charcoal flecks, lithic debitage, and fire-cracked rock.

Feature 3

Feature 3 was located in the northeast quadrant of Unit N124 E100 comprising an oblong stain 32 by 25 cm in size and 5 cm deep, extending north into Unit N125 E100 (Figure 9). This feature stain was infused with small and medium sized charcoal flecks and contained fire-cracked rock. It also contained lithic debitage, but in the same concentration as from the rest of the test pit.

VAS Volunteering and Public Outreach

In total, 43 volunteers spent over 23 days conducting the Phase III field excavations at the Severence site. Of the volunteers, 6 were VAS board members and 37 were general VAS members and non-members. Altogether 968 volunteer hours were spent on the dig, 504 of these by non-board mem-

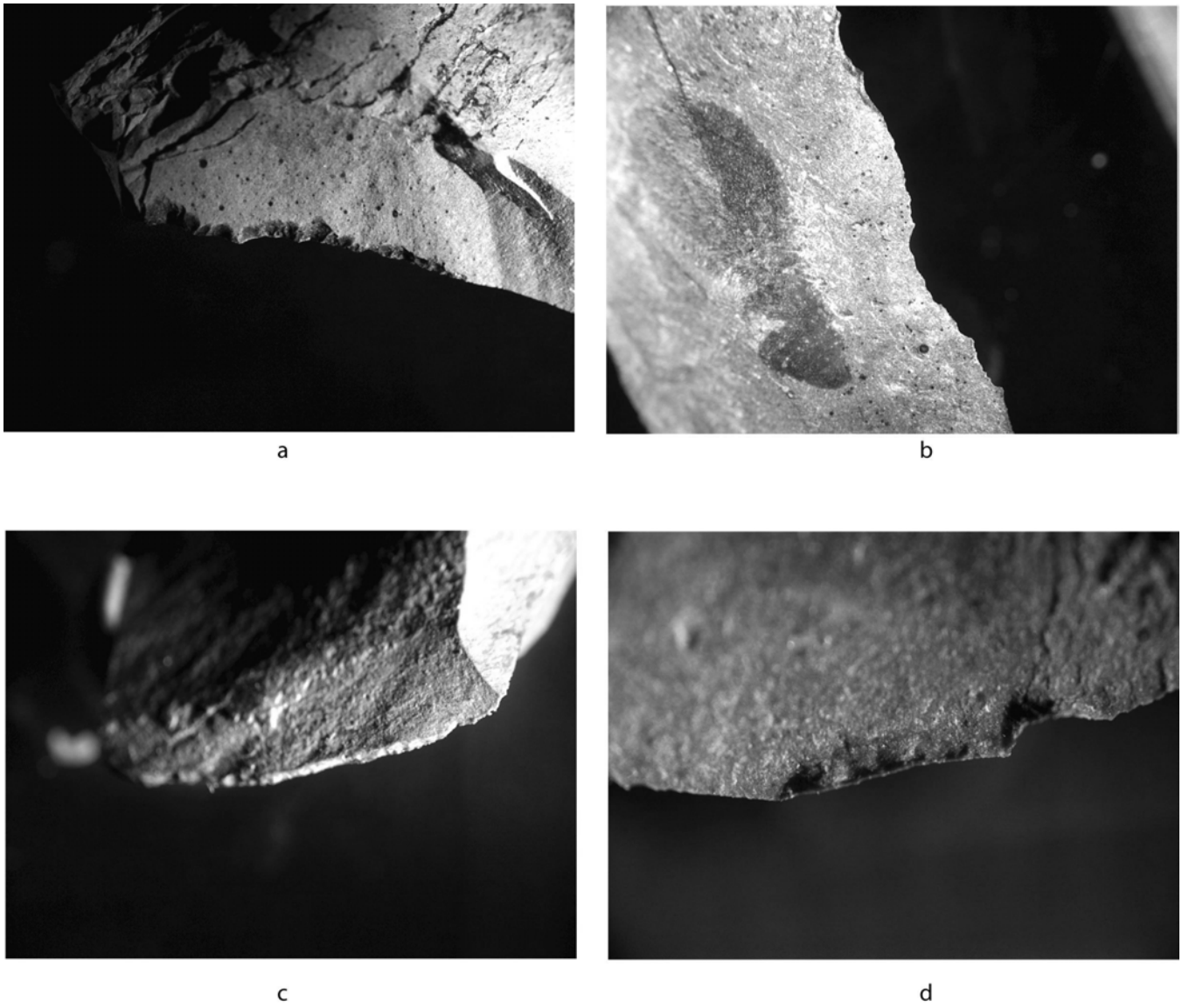
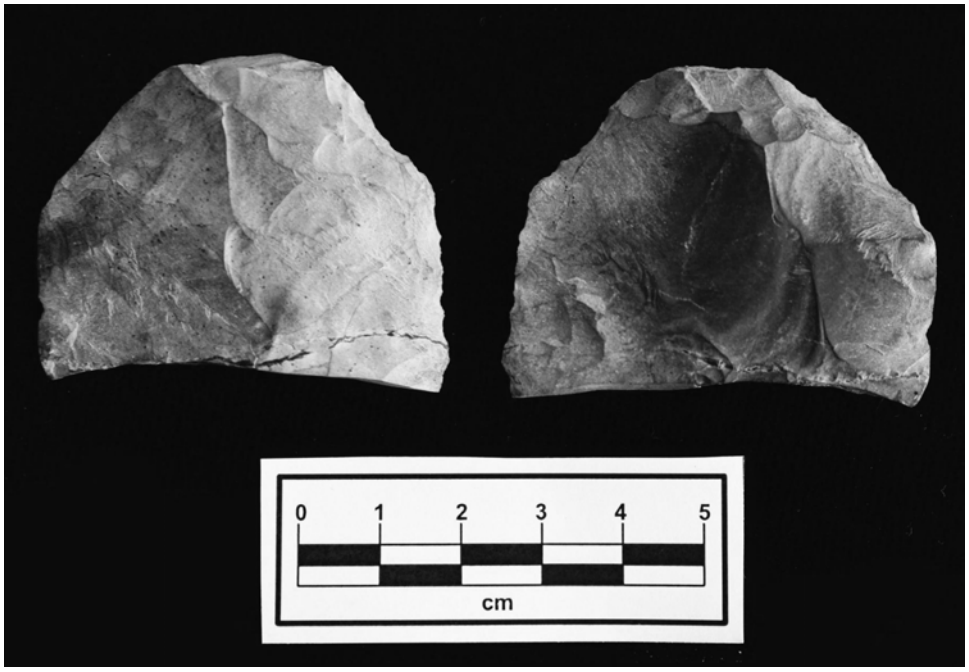


Figure 7. Four principal types of edge wear observed: (a) overlapping, (b) lunate, (c) dull and rounded, and (d) truncated.

bers. Non-board member volunteer time ranged from 2 hours per person to 128 hours by VAS life member Fred Royce, who was there almost every day the VAS was excavating. Regarding laboratory volunteer time, 9 board and non-board members spent 117 hours over 17 days of cleaning, cataloging, and analyzing the artifacts at the South Burlington curation facility.

The Severence dig also generated modest attention from the local media. The dig was picked up by the *Burlington Free Press* who published a full page article on it in the Community section on September 1, 2008, while NECN TV news interviewed the crew for a story broadcast later that same day. *The Vermont Cynic*, the UVM student newspaper, and *The Colchester Sun* also reported on the dig. In general, however, the high profile location of the dig along Severence Road in Colchester, where the VAS banner was displayed near the entrance to the project parcel, was responsible for the highest



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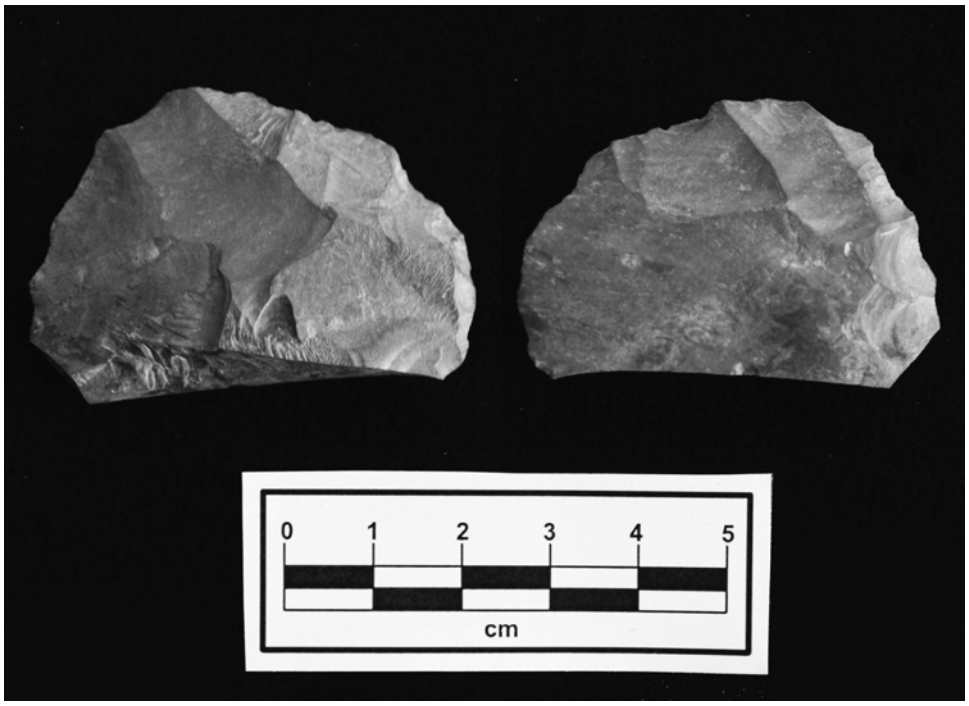

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Figure 8. Two biface fragments recovered from the Severence site. Both faces of each fragment are shown: (a) PN 1012-01 from Unit N123 E99 and (b) PN 107-01 from Unit N123 E99.

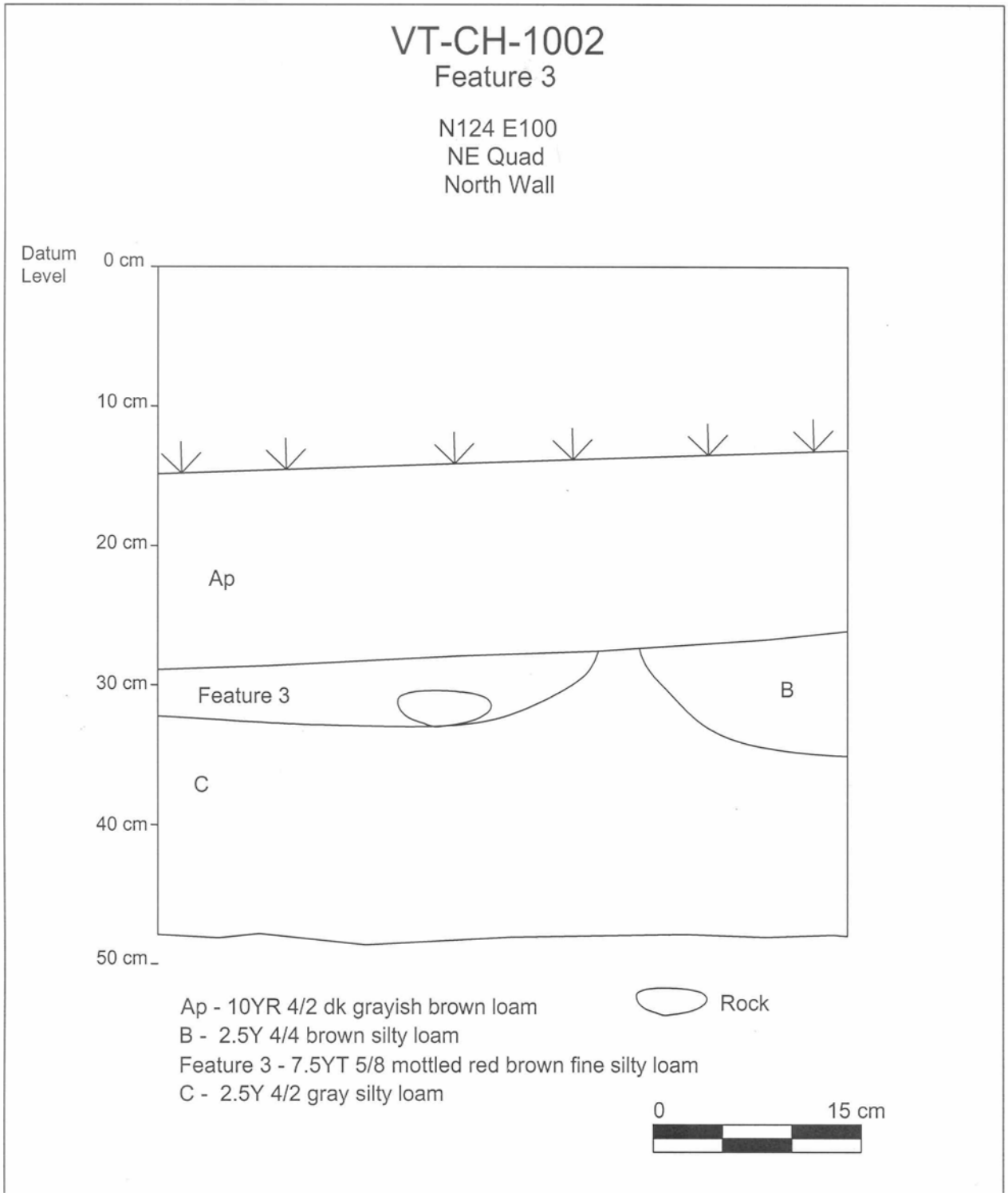

Figure 9. Profile of Feature 3 from the northeast 50 by 50 cm quad of Unit N124 E100.

number of drop-in visitors. Because the dig was conducted during the summer months, we were not able to coordinate local school visits as originally planned.

Conclusion

The Severence site has much in common with many of the known archaeological sites along the Indian Brook and Sunderland Brook drainages. The relatively dense, yet spatially circumscribed lithic scatter of late stage bifacial tool debitage, strongly suggestive of a short-term encampment, is not uncommon for landforms adjacent to the small heads-of-draw of the many unnamed tributaries throughout the Lake Champlain lowlands. While historic period accounts and archaeological data indicate that horticulture was widely practiced by large semi-permanent groups of Native Americans along the shores of Lake Champlain during the centuries immediately preceding the arrival of Europeans, it is the small hunting or fishing camp or bivouac that best characterizes the types of habitation in Vermont's ancient past. Although we have yet to absolutely date the occupation of the Severence site, the relatively large proportion of the lithic assemblage made from Mt. Jasper rhyolite, suggests that it may date to the Late Paleoindian period.

The excavation of the Severence site provided members of the VAS with the opportunity to get their hands dirty and dig into Vermont's ancient past, while also training a series of volunteers in the methods of excavation and lab analysis. The Severence site excavations also provided the VAS with the wherewithal for future archaeological investigations anywhere in the state. We hope this marks the beginning of a regular program of field excavation and another avenue for cooperation and understanding between the Society and the public regarding Vermont's cultural resources.

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