

VIEW FROM GOVERNORS QUARTERS



Photo by D. Henning

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS TERRACE HILL 1981

by Dale R. Henning



ABSTRACT

Archeological investigations on the grounds of Terrace Hill were conducted by a research team from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, from June 15 to July 15, 1981. A series of questions were selected for investigation; the methods for developing answers were through documentary and archeological research. The exact location and dimensions of a bi-lobed garden plot were sought and can be developed by combination of both subsurface and documentary data. The location and identification of structures once located to the south of the mansion constituted a series of interrelated problems; portions of at least three structures have been isolated. The questions selected for investigation can, for the most part, be answered; others remain to be resolved.

INTRODUCTION

On June 15, 1981, a research team* from Luther College, Decorah, arrived to begin the second major subsurface investigations on the Terrace Hill

grounds. The aims of this project were developed upon previous research by Robert R. Harvey (1977), Joyce McKay (n.d.) and Arthur Hoppin (n.d.), following consultation with Adrian D. Anderson, State Historic Preservation Officer and Jerome Thompson, Site Coordinator, Terrace Hill.

*Grace Egeland, Bridget Mullen, Mark Jensen; students, Carol Hasvold; staff, Theresa Donham, Jacqueline Saunders; Supervisors, Dale R. Henning, Project Director.

Several questions were developed which could be brought to solution through subsurface investigations coupled with intensive study of all previous subsurface work, photographic and archival records, and published sources, especially the ideas of Robert Harvey. In many ways, the underlying inspiration for the 1981 work was very practical; portions of the grounds had to be 'cleared' for future development of gardens and pathways, part of the ongoing restoration of the past grandeur of Terrace Hill.

CHALLENGES AND RESULTS

Our initial problem was to ascertain the exact location and dimensions of a bilobed garden plot which we knew from photographs (archival records, Terrace Hill) had been an important feature along the east side (near the northeast corner) of the mansion. Even the most intensive efforts here were not adequate to locate the entire garden outline; it had been reshaped over the decades, leaving a record of change in the soil, but no single clear and definitive outline. Further, the garden margins had been disturbed by two utilities trenches probably dug since

1970. We are fortunate in having the combination of photographic and archeological records; using these data, we can plot the outline and dimensions of the garden at one point in time. The archeological information allows precise spatial placement of the garden plot; the photograph offers information pertinent to the shape of the bilobed ends which we found had been altered significantly by re-shaping and trenching.

Our next series of problems involved the dimensions and time of use for the greenhouse located south of the mansion. I will refer to this structure as the 'principal greenhouse'. McKay had excavated a number of squares within this structure and determined that it was a greenhouse, but had not defined the margins. It was this area which Harvey had defined as one of three high-priority loci recommended for subsurface testing. This area is in his Zone 2, area d., identified as a "high priority area for investigation archaeologically to locate hot-house foundations and any evidence still extant of accompanying pattern gardens" (Harvey 1977: 96). This statement was derived from photographic and archival analyses of the mansion grounds.

We were concerned not only for location and dimensional data of the greenhouse, but for a number of exterior and interior functional features as well. McKay's work of 1978 was precise and well-controlled, giving us much excellent data pertinent to time and the sequence of events, but lacked breadth. Our task was to enlarge upon her work and to locate the foundations of the

greenhouse as well as to expand upon the functional integration of features located through subsurface investigations. We were to locate and define the type of heating system employed and to define entryways, walkways, drainage systems, planting tables and other features if at all possible. Further, in his limited investigations of the site, Hoppin (n.d.) had suggested that a second greenhouse foundation was located to the south of the principal greenhouse. Since Hoppin's work involved investigation of a series of security trenches as they were being dug, his information was derived from only a 'peek' into the subsurface record. We wanted to expand upon his suggestions.

Our investigations involved removal of a great deal of overburden (Maps 1, 2, Plate 1) to an average depth of ca. two feet. The area excavated by McKay was expanded to no less than 70 by 20 feet, with some extensions plus two trenches to the south of the present arbor.

This work exposed what we believe is about half of the principal greenhouse (this structure is depicted to the south of the mansion, connected to it by a pathway in the Jacob Weidenmann plat of ca. 1884). If we are correct in our belief that only half the building foundation has been exposed, the remaining portions of the structure are now beneath a limestone retaining wall and ca. eight feet of fill, and the gazebo or arbor. Although most archeologists are intrepid souls, the amount of fill and the devastation which would have been wrought upon the quiet beauty of the Terrace Hill lands and grounds was sufficient to deter our quest for the unknown. We were able to expose the entire east wall founda-

tion and about half of the north and south wall foundations. Within the greenhouse, we have located (Map 1) the entrance for steam pipes which were connected to the mansion heating system, a line of drainage tile, a possible brick walkway, a subsurface rock drainage system which was beneath some kind of walk (board?) and extended out the east wall in two places, which we expect were doorways. The subfloor of the greenhouse bore evidence for lesser features such as large planter or jardiniere bases, post stains, concentrations of glass, pot fragments, bricks and other refuse.

We also excavated two trenches south of the principal greenhouse foundation. It was here that Hoppin had discovered a portion of a structure in the security trenches. Although our excavations were extremely limited in scope, we located solid evidence for two independent structures, one of which may have housed an independent heating system, perhaps a boiler used for heating the principal greenhouse before the mansion was outfitted with steam heat. If the connecting system exists, it lies beneath the gazebo. A second structure floor or light foundation was located in the south extension trench; it was located well below the other two structures and was definitely independent of them. Time did not allow for determining its function or dimensions.

Portions of the south lawn were explored using a steel probe. Probing was done to enhance our completed excavations; it offers a limited perspective of what is beneath the surface at low cost in both time and effort. With this instrument, we were able to determine the

dimensions of the rock-filled 'drainage areas' or walkway subsurfaces as they extended outside the building foundation. Further, we located portions of pathways to the north of the principal greenhouse foundation (Map 1).

The probe was used extensively over much of the south lawn area. Although it was impossible to determine consistent shapes and dimensions, there is every reason to believe that some kind of structure was once present between our principal greenhouse and the mansion. Judging from a photograph taken in the late 1800's (Iowa figure, Goettsch and Weinberg 1979:99), it seems quite possible that the greenhouse we have excavated was removed, then replaced by a smaller one located much nearer to the mansion. The one pictured is much smaller than our principal greenhouse; the visual image offered suggests that it is nearer the mansion as well.

The probe was also employed to the east and south of our excavated areas; many more features remain beneath the surface, particularly to the south of our principal greenhouse, but are at varying levels and were inconsistent in dimensions.



CONCLUSIONS

The dust has hardly settled in the south lawn of Terrace Hill, some mud still clings to our tools and the new grass seed has hardly germinated over our closed excavation units. As with most forms of scientific endeavor or archeological research requires much post-experimental research, testing and retesting before conclusions should be presented. Such intensive effort has not as yet been expended for this project, but will be as the final report is drawn together. The conclusions offered are tentative and subject to some alteration over the next few months.

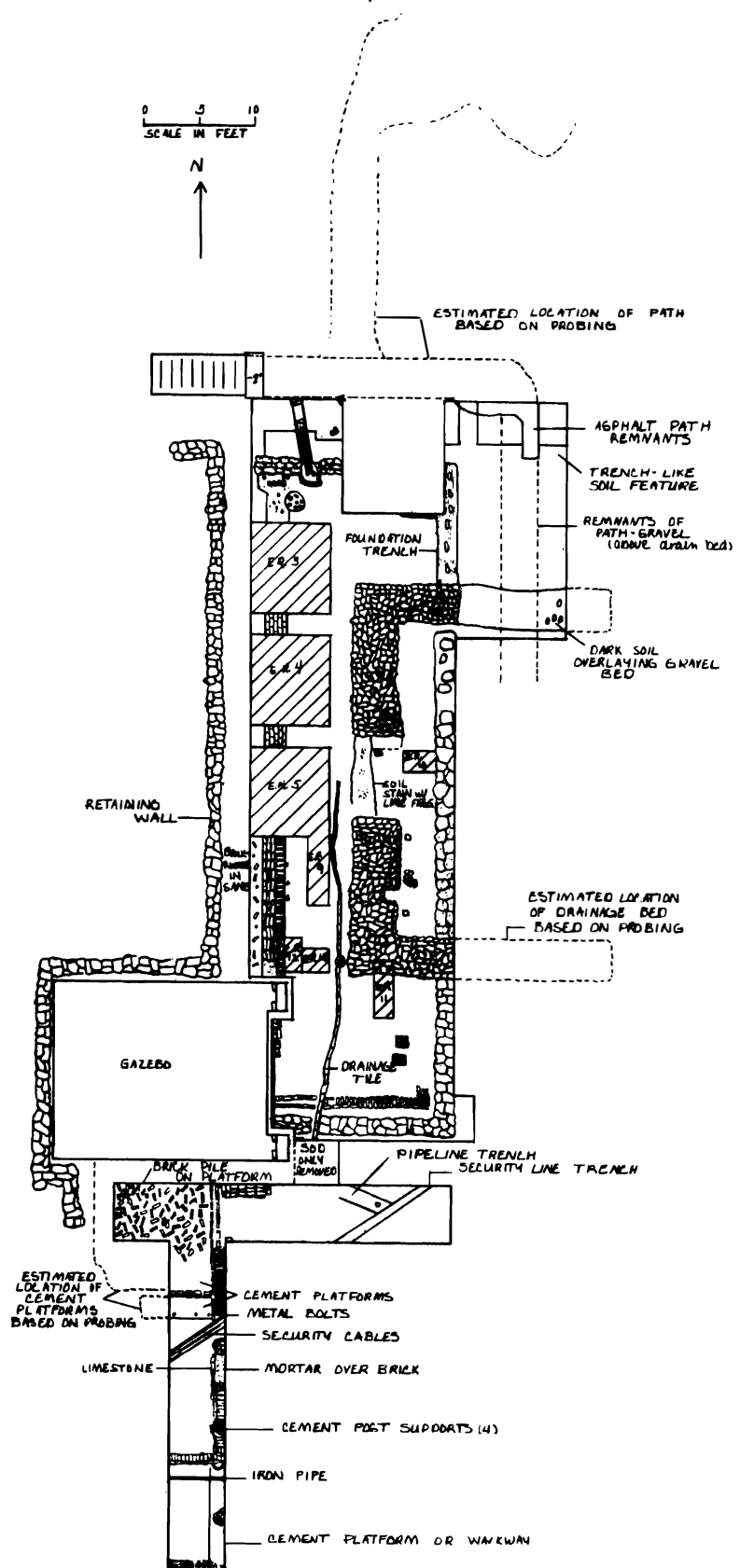
We have located the bilobed garden bed on the east side of the mansion; although it has been subjected to modification, we can offer dimensions and form by combination of subsurface and photographic data.

We have located the foundation of the principal greenhouse; probably half of the structure was exposed by our excavations. The remainder is beneath the retaining wall, ca. eight feet of fill and the gazebo; it is not threatened at this time and excavation beyond ours would be costly and difficult. The heating system for the principal greenhouse was located; it was connected to the steam heating system for the mansion. Many greenhouse features were located and recorded; the functional integration of these features will be undertaken in the final report.

Two structures to the south of the principal greenhouse were located; one of these may have housed an independent heating system. The function of the other structure is unknown; it

'Principal greenhouse' area excavation

Map #1



ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 16-17, 1983 IN DES MOINES

One of the recent concerns of all IAS members is the health and well being of its local chapters. The organization of IAS members on the local level adds yet another dimension to becoming involved in the preservation of Iowa's prehistoric and historic treasures.

In order to further the development of local chapters and insure their healthy future, I anticipate that the recently established "Public Archaeology Programs", will have a great impact on involvement in archaeology on the local level. For those of you yet unfamiliar with "Public Archaeology Programs", this ambitious project has been established to encourage interest and participation in Iowa Archaeology. Partially through matching funds and a \$7,000 grant from the Iowa Humanities Board, a series of programs will be presented by amateur and professional archaeologists through regional chapters of the IAS. A long list of archeologists and historians will be presenting programs of interest preceded by timed press and radio releases to capture the eye of the

general public. The tentative beginning date for these programs will begin sometime this fall and run through May of 1983. Programs will include slide presentations, artifact displays, lectures, and many other activities.

As newly elected president of the IAS, I am very pleased at the prospects of this most ambitious program. No doubt this program will serve many educational as well as practical purposes. Hopefully this will give an opportunity for amateur and professional archaeologists to work together more closely in furthering public awareness of archaeological investigation. Even more important, we hope that these programs will help bolster memberships on the local level and make them more active as a result.

For those interested in obtaining more information on "Public Archaeology Programs", contact Dick Slattery, program coordinator, or Duane Anderson, program director.

I firmly believe that we should all welcome this new program in to our communities.

Dan Zwiener

We are happy to publish "Archeological Investigations, Terrace Hill: 1981" by Dale Henning. This project reflects a growing interest in the investigation and interpretation of historic sites in Iowa. Hopefully, Iowans will continue to support funding of research into the historic growth and development of their state.

Betsy and I want to thank all the I.A.S. members who braved a blustery day to attend the fall meeting at Simpson College and Woodland Mounds Preserve. If you were unable to attend the meeting, we hope you will take some time to visit Woodland Mounds Preserve in the future. We will be happy to send a map or stop for directions at the Warren County Conservation Board, 301 W. 2nd, Indianola, IA 50125.

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