

Old North Crypt Field Notes

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Day 1

Arrived by 9 am Monday, March 13th. Crew includes Jane, Laura, Sarah, Corinne, and Joe

Prior to arrival, four excavation units were cut through the existing concrete floor of the crypt, one near the center of each of the four pathways.

Existing conditions: Tombs appear to be sturdy, though some bricks are crumbling. There are multiple brick in-fill episodes visible within the openings of the tombs. The floor is essentially uniform poured concrete. The brick of the tomb walls extends below the existing concrete walkway

Within the cut, the concrete is approximately 10cm in thickness with some slight variability. At the base of the concrete, there is a wire mesh, it appears to be steel, but may be aluminum. Below the grid is a thin sheet of clear plastic, with soil below.

The plastic will need to be removed in order to excavate.

A scaled plan drawing was completed by the team, which includes the entirety of the floor plan of the crypt, the location of each unit, and the edges and doors of each tomb.

Unit 1 is located on the eastern walkway, Unit 2 is on the north, 3 on the west, and 4 on the south. The south and north walkways are the longer of the four.

Our screening area is located outside the columbarium, where we will be sifting soils through 1/8" mesh. Soils will be checked in the unit and at the screen for artifacts and human remains.

Unit 1.

Unit 1 is located within the eastern walkway near the center of the path (see plan for exact measurements). It is located to the west of the tomb of Capt. Thomas Potts and Timothy & Elizabeth Cutler. These individuals were some of the first reverends of Old North. The unit is located at the edge of the Potts/Cutler tomb and a second tomb that is not labeled. It is just south of the doorway of the Potts/Cutler tomb. The western end of Unit 1 is located at the brick center point/wall holding up the floor of the Church, and abuts the eastern wall of two tombs, who both have their openings facing the north and south walls, respectively.

The tomb to the northeast of Unit 1 is Tomb 18, Tomb 19 is to the southeast, Tomb 33 to the northwest, and 20 to the southwest.

Unit 1 measures 1.50 meters east-west and 1.03 meters north south. After removing the plastic layer, a second highly fragmented plastic layer was found just below the first. Below the plastic is a dark brown silty sand with some pockets of mortar dust. Very compact.

Unit 1 str 1 is the concrete layer. 0-10 cm in Str 2 is the first strata under the plastic. ONC 001 is the first soil in Unit 1 at Str 2 level 3 10-15. THERE ARE NO BAGS FOR UNIT 1 Str 1 lev 1 or 2

Unit 1 Str 2 Lev 3 10-15- ONC-001

ONC-001 has some coal, oyster shell, charcoal, and mortar. It is very dense. Two cut or wrought nails, lots of shell, and a mammal longbone shaft fragment was recovered. The fragment was not distinct enough to determine if the bone was human. Str 2 is highly mottled with what appears to be A, B and C soils mixing, with some darker organic black soils. Overall, the most common soil color is a 10 YR 3/3 DK BN FSND SLT

In the southeast corner at 15 cmbs, a new strata appeared at bottom of level. This is a reddish sandy layer. This will be strata 3, but was not in this level in the southeast corner. This sandy layer is a 7.5YR 4/3 brown fine-medium sand

Unit 1 ONC-001- Pinkish soil continues in the center of the unit, appears right at 15 cmbs. There is a pipe stem imbedded in the transition between str 1 and str 2. Brown mottled soil continues on outer edge. A concentration of small mammal bones, perhaps a rat, were found in the northwest corner of the unit near a concentration of slate fragments.

A fragment of tin glazed earthenware rim sherd, red ware, shell, two nails, and some animal bone are all that was recovered.

Unit 1 Str 2 Level 4- ONC-003

Brown continues in North edge and along outer edges. We tried excavating str 2 alongside str 3 to see if it goes under str 2, but str 2 continued vertically, then undercut str 3. Furthermore, the edge of str 3 was undulating. These two issues suggested that str 3 was not its own strata but in fact a larger area of mottling within str 2. When excavated in a small area, str 3 pinkish soils disappeared in less than 1 cm and str 2 soils appeared. Therefore we decided that str 3 was not its own strata, and it was incorporated as an additional mottling color in strata 2. The image label taken of the floor at 15 cm is not correct, it instead only shows strat 2. Str 2 continues to 20 cmbs with increasing mottling of pinkish soil, but not a distinct strata.

ONC-006: error in bag recording ONC-006 does not exist.

Unit 1 str 2 Lev 5- Looks almost the same as previous, but has more olive soil colors ONC-0010

Unit 1 str 2 level 6- 25-30 ONC-011 Soil continues. Started using shovel. No sign of builder's trenches. At some point, the soil has switched to a nearly solid brown soil. Likely will show a strata change in the wall profile from the mottled strata above, to a more-solid color in the current layer, but it was subtle when it happened while digging. Regardless, other than a steady decrease in the number of artifacts, there has been little change overall in this unit.

Unit 1 str 2 lev 7- ONC-014. Soil continues. Rodent burrow continues in northern wall. Appears to have the top layer of stone foundation at the bottom at 35 cmbs.

Unit 1 str 2 level 8 35-40- ONC-015 Soil continues.

Unit 1 str 2 level 9 40-45 ONC-018 Continues same, more shell, possibly shell midden fragments

Unit 1 str 2 level 10 45-50 ONC-019. Rocks increasing to east along tomb wall. Large long bone of a mammal found along stones near the southeast corner of the unit extending north-south. No other bones found, appears to be mottled fill in the surrounding area.

Unit 1 Str 2 Lev 11 50-55 ONC-022- Rocks increasing, appears to be larger cobbles near eastern edge, somewhat in alignment parallel to crypt wall. A stain appeared diagonally NW to SE across pit, with lots of darker mottling. It appeared to be a feature, but it quickly disappeared, so it isn't a feature. Shells continue

Unit 1 Str 2 Lev 12 55-60 ONC-023 Feature-like stain disappears, not a feature. Rocks still present. Shells continue. Soils still mottled fill. No apparent stratigraphy in wall. Still appears to be fill, lots of organic along north wall likely extensive rodent disturbance. Lots of mottling and different colors implying that it is not a grave shaft or other type of feature.

End comments: Appears to be entirely in fill 0-60cm. No sign of natural soils or human remains in tomb.

Unit 2

Because of the progress in Unit 1, Unit 2 was opened on the northern path.

Tomb 2 is located mid way down the northern pathway. It lies nearly in front of two tombs. To the south is Tomb 30, which according to the inscription houses John Dewhurst and William Palmers and the date 1811. To the north is tomb 14, which houses the stranger's tomb, and is dated 1813

When the plastic was removed, a reddish sandy layer was encountered, similar to strata 3 in Unit 1. The opening soils are a 10YR 4/4 DK YW BN Fine-Medium sand. THERE ARE NO BAGS for the first two levels as they are concrete.

Unit 2 Str 2 Lev 3 10-15cmts- ONC-002

Excavations began, but did not get to the screening stage in first day. One circular wheel-like iron fragment found

Unit 2 ONC-002- soil is a reddish brown, sandy, but still compact. There is lots more brick, mortar, and debris in the soil than in Unit 1. Looks like demo debris. Not too many artifacts. The demo debris turns up first in the northeast corner, appears to be a separate strata. Will be calling it str 3 starting at 15 cmts. At 15cmts, the eastern half, almost at the center point of the unit north-south, is a demo layer. The western area is a consistent soil color, not as compact as the upper level. The division line lines up with the center point of the two crypts, so no indication of why the division exists, yet.

Unit 2 Str 2 Lev 4- ONC 004

Transition continues to be down the middle of unit 2 with str 2 on the west. Large fragments of slate are appearing, very light artifact density. The western edge of str 3 appears to have a line of bricks down its edge, possibly indicating a feature. When we removed the soil on the western half, there was a massive amount of brick and slate fragments, looks like a demo debris, but without the mortar visible in the eastern half of the unit (str 3). After removing strata 2 down to 20 on the west side, we removed strata 3 on the east side.

Unit 2 Str 3 Lev 4 15-20, ONC-005

Str 3 in eastern half begins to end in all but the northeast. Northeast still has mortar present. Across entire unit, large fragments of brick, some mortared together, span most of the unit. On the southern end, along the brick tomb wall, there are mortared slate fragments suggesting there may have been a slate floor within the crypt at one point. The bricks we are finding may represent a removal of the brick from the strangers archway, enlarging it and expanding it. Or, perhaps they are fill. The mortared elements suggests that it did not travel far as they are still stuck together.

Unit 2 Str 2 Lev 5 20-25 ONC-007

Strata 2 continues across all of unit. Str 3 ends in the northeast. Str 2 ends across unit at the top of strata 4, a compact horizon that likely represents a former surface. The surface is undulating with lots of brick and mortar on the surface. The brick wall element is sitting on top of strata 4. Str 2 appears to be a demo debris of late 19th or early 20th century origin. Date based on large and regular shape of bricks and late-style mortar in wall element. At bottom of strata, the brick was u-shaped, but still sitting on top of strata 4. Probably construction debris, of a late date due to the brick size. The slate floor in the southern end of the unit appears to be sitting directly on top of strata 4. Given that str 4 is so undulating, it is likely that the slate must have been removed at some point, before strata 4 became undulating, as a slate floor would not have worked on

anything other than a flat surface, so after the floor was removed, the dirt floor was exposed and gathered small debris from the tomb walls, before a large amount of demo fill was dumped on top of the unit.

The brick square shape is filled with a roofing slate, more brick, and rubble, indicating it is a feature. We are calling this Feature 1. It will be dug separately. Just in case it extends below/into strata 4, the brick will be left in place as we dig into str 4. There is no large beams directly over the square, so it doesn't look like it is supporting the floor anywhere. The southern end of the feature does not have brick, but it does have a distinct edge, with the interior of feature 4 containing large amounts of mortar and debris. To the south, extending from the edge of the western side of feature 1 is a layer of slate fragments, possibly mortared together, but it is not possible to say that the pieces were originally mortared together. Mortar is present, but it can't be seen if it was originally mortared, or if it was stuck to the slates from the previous use. Many of the slates are roofing slates due to drilled holes and finished edge.

The slates will be feature 2, they may or likely are related to feature 1. Perhaps it is a drain but we don't know yet.

Photo mislabeled, it shows str 4, fea 1 and fea 2 NOT str 2.

Feature 1 str 1 begins in level 5 20-25cmbs. It is mostly mortar. This is bag ONC-008

Str 4 Lev 6 25-30 OCN-009

This strata seems to have an increase in artifacts, but they increase on the north end, where we appear to have a builders trench associated with the stranger's tomb (feature 3). That feature will begin in Level 7. Bone increasing in center of unit, cut marks on bone, likely not human.

Feature 2 str 1 begins in level 6. It is ONC-013

Once the slate was removed, totaling about three slates thick in some areas, feature 2 ended and strata 4 was found under it. It looks like a stack of slate, though there were also other thicker fragments of slate found in it, so it was not exclusively roofing slates.

Feature 1 str 1 level 6 is ONC-012

After removing the two courses of brick, and scraping the small amount of mortar-rich soil, the entire feature disappeared. At 30cmbs, the feature was gone. It appears to have been some sort of rubble deposit that managed to keep the structure and partial contents of the feature intact.

Now that the entire unit except for feature 3 is str 4, we compared the soil color between str 2 in unit 1 and str 4 in unit 2 and they appear to be the same soil.

Feature 3 str 1- after bricks removed, mostly stones visible, which appear to be a wider element of foundation under the bricks. May still be fill in a builder's trench, but not sure if attached to the wall. We found a concentration of metal fragments, including a possible coffin handle.

Str 4 level 7 30-35 ONC-17 soil continues with some layering of mortar, but it appears overall fill still. There is a new dark stain in the area formerly at Feature 1, but it does not appear to be significant. Essentially sterile at the moment.

Feature 3 str 1 level 8 35-40 ONC 020, after removing loose sand and a few rocks, all other large rocks appeared to be mortared into the foundation of the stranger's tomb. It appears feature 3 ends at this point because it is only rock.

Str 4 lev 8 35-40 ONC-021 gets sandier, but not a distinct strata. Easier to screen!

Str 4 lev 9 40-45 ONC-024- Feature 3 appears to be gone, so entire unit is str 4. Level is getting increasingly wet, sandy, and clear of rocks. Level is sterile

Str 4 Lev 10 45-50- ONC025. Unit called after two sterile levels. APpears to be glacial C soils due to presence of regolith, possible varves, and micro strata of olive, iron staining, tan, grey, soils.

End of unit summary: Two main strata, a fill over a compact floor, likely associated with the former slate floor, and a fill over C soil. The main artifacts are in Feature 3, where the coffin handle came out. We likely hit C first as the slope of the hill leaned towards the east, so foundation of Old North extends "deeper" into natural soil towards west. If this is true, we may hit C soils higher up in Unit 3. In the west profile, a white layer of mortar dust is visible at the transition from strata 3 to 4. The bricks are sitting on this layer, and the dust appears to spread from the bottom of the remnant slate floor to the south to the transition from stone to brick foundation on the north. I believe this represents an earlier floor layer that had stone, perhaps slate, across the unit, but this was later removed. The fill above this was likely part of the 1960s reno when the undulating floor had to be filled in to level it before the concrete was poured.

OVERALL NOTE: The lack of bones may be due to the presence of a formal floor surface in the crypt, which allowed for bones to be sitting on the surface and visible/accessible to people, rodents, etc, which likely increased their likelihood of being picked up or removed from the site, but also meant they were not being actively pressed or dropped into soil surfaces.

Unit 3-

Opening- Looks much the same as other units.

Unit 3 Str 2 Lev3 10-15 ONC-026- Dense soil, greenish with high amounts of clay. A large cow rib found in first level looked like a human bone at first, but was not. Nails present, very difficult to screen. Brick tops appear to be somewhat path-like, but disorganized, and spanning the north-south center of the unit. Possibly a makeshift pathway.

Unit 3 Str 2 Lev 4 15-20 ONC-029- Bricks present, southern half of "pathway" was mostly mortar and brick fragments that were removed. Photos taken of unit before and after the removal of bricks/rocks. Both appear to be a layer sitting on top of more strata 2. In the southwest corner of unit, there is a small pocket of olive sandy soil appearing, may be a new strata. More bone in the same concentration near the northeast corner. Rodent burrow in Northwest corner. Pipe stem and bowl fragment in southwest quad.

Unit 3 Str 2 Lev 5 20-25 ONC-032. Soil removed, includes possible viewing glass fragments. Extremely compact, with large quantities of brick, stone, and clay. Extremely difficult to dig. Lots of pipe stems and overall more artifacts than most other layers/units. In the southwest corner, soil is getting extremely wet.

Unit 3 str 2 Lev 6 25-30 ONC-034- Rocks decreasing, with clay continuing. Banding of iron oxide indicating the possible presence of intact glacial marine clay, potentially a C soil. Hoping that there will be no additional brick fragments in the clay, and the unit can be stopped. Southwest corner actively filling with water, making difficult digging even worse. Easily one of the most difficult units I have ever dug in. Gravel in southwest, due to water, appears to be drainage related, but may just be that the soil between the rocks was eroded by the water.

Unit 3 Str 2 Lev 7 30-35. Stopped due to water, very clayey and similar to above.

Unit left overnight to see what water would do.

On following day, water filled unit. Impossible to dig or screen in wet clay. Called MHC to notify them that the unit would be stopped early at 30cm. Permit states unit will end at 60cmbs or sterile C.

Possible water source: Dripping fire suppression, dripping steam vent, water infiltration from outside, or all three

Profile drawn of North wall

Unit 4-

Opening- southern end has the slate and mortar edge of a possible former floor we saw in other units, especially unit 2. Ground almost feels hollow

Unit 4 Str 2 Lev 3 10-15 ONC-027

Looser, with lots of brick and mortar fragments over a brownish soil. More coffin related goods, but no human remains. Coffin= handle, shroud pins, and coffin tack.

Unit 4 Str 2 Lev 15-20 ONC-026- Less debris, mostly sandy, with more metal, glass.

Unit 4 Str 2 Lev 5 20-25 ONC-030

Brown soil continues but ends first in southern end of pit around 22 cmbs. Slopes north to 25cmbs in the north. Next level is sandier, possibly a C soil. Cluster of in southern end.

Unit 4 Str 3 Lev 5 22-25 ONC-031- Sterile, c-like

Unit 4 str 3 lev 6 25-30cmbs ONC-033- Sterile C soil

Unit overall: More coffin debris here than other units, but also the smallest cultural deposit by depth. No human remains. Coffin debris near northern and southern ends of units implies dropping directly from tombs above, or center of walkway swept/kept clear of debris concentrating any fallen artifacts to edges. Some evidence of a slate walkway in the southern wall.