

**Archaeological Overview for the Unity Wetlands Conservation Plan (by Gary D. Shaffer, NRCS)**

Prehistoric archaeology. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has inventoried 17 prehistoric archaeological sites within the Unity Wetlands study area (18 June 2004) (Table \_\_). These sites have evidenced artifacts and cultural features dating from the Archaic (ca. 8500 – 800 B.C.), Ceramic (ca. 800 B.C. – A.D. 1500), and Early Contact (A.D. 1500 – 1675) periods. Site 53.34, in Benton Falls, is the one site listed in the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60.4); and Varney (1881:109) noted the early collecting of Indian artifacts in the vicinity. At least 95 percent of the known prehistoric habitation and workshop sites in Maine are found next to waters that are (or were) navigable by canoe (Spiess 1999). This observation holds for the sites in the Unity Wetlands area, since all are located by sizeable streams. It is also important to note that 16 of these prehistoric sites are situated along the well surveyed Sebasticook River; and 10 of the camps by the Sebasticook are near rapids or a confluence with another stream.

<b>Site Number</b>	<b>Cultural Periods</b>	<b>Geographic Position</b>
53.13	N/A	East of Sebasticook River
53.24	Ceramic	Confluence of Sebasticook River & small stream
53.25	Archaic?; Early & Middle Ceramic	Confluence of Sebasticook River & small stream
53.26	Archaic; Ceramic	Bank of Sebasticook River near small falls
53.27	N/A	Confluence of Sebasticook River & small stream
53.28	Middle & Late Archaic	Bank of Sebasticook River
53.32	N/A	Bank of Sebasticook River
53.33	N/A	Confluence of Sebasticook River & small stream
53.34	Archaic; Middle Ceramic	Bank of Sebasticook River
53.76	Archaic?	Confluence of Sebasticook River & small stream
54.2	Late Archaic	Bank of Sebasticook River near rapids
54.3	Ceramic	Bank of Sebasticook River near rapids
54.4	N/A	Confluence of Sebasticook River & stream
54.5	N/A	Bank of Sebasticook River
54.6	N/A	Bank of Sebasticook River
54.7	Early Contact (or multicomponent)	Bank of Sebasticook River near rapids
54.18	Later Ceramic	Along Sandy Stream



In addition to the sites recorded by MHPC, Willoughby (1980:83-86, Plate 17) described an isolated Indian artifact recovered by a farmer in the town of Albion—a “mask-like sculpture” of sandstone with pecked and incised eyes, mouth, and other facial lines. This find was almost 25 cm long and exhibited a yellowish pigment. It is unclear if the portable rock sculpture was found within the Unity Wetlands study area or simply nearby.

With respect to professional archaeological investigations of prehistoric sites, Bradstreet (1982) conducted a survey in the southwest part of the Unity Wetlands study area along the Sebasticook River from Fowler Brook to Benton Falls. Among his recorded sites were the aforementioned 53.24, 53.25, 53.26, 53.27, and 53.28. Additionally, he found that waters impounded by a former Colonial-era dam near the Route 139 bridge had eroded sites below the 100-ft elevation (Bradstreet 1982:3). The University of Maine at Farmington surveyed further southwest of the present study area along the Sebasticook River from Benton Falls downstream to Fort Halifax Dam (Bartone et al. 1992). That work discovered or reidentified 30 sites (Early Archaic through Ceramic and Contact/historic periods). The Farmington researchers considered the Sebasticook River area to be rich in archaeological material due to the seasonal anadromous fish runs and the human transportation route between the Kennebec and Penobscot drainages (Bartone et al. 1992:290). Also along the Sebasticook River, Wilson (1994) conducted a limited survey for a proposed manure pit on a farm in Benton but found no archaeological resources. Another example of professional archaeology along the Sebasticook River, but north of the Unity Wetlands area, was for the Burnham Hydropower Project. Following an earlier identification survey, test excavations served to evaluate the significance of several prehistoric sites. While most of the sites evidenced light densities of cultural material or a lack of cultural stratigraphy, 54.1 proved to be a relatively large site (11,200 sq. m.) with intact resources of the Susquehanna Tradition (ca. 1900 – 800 B.C.) and Ceramic Period (Wilson et al. 1994) and 54.19 exhibited a significant Susquehanna Tradition component, including a hearth (Wilson and Bourque 1999). Finally, Shaffer (2004) directed the survey of a planned enhancement of a crossing of Fifteenmile Stream in Albion just south of the present study area, but found no prehistoric archaeological deposits.

It is expected that continued professional survey in the Unity Wetlands study area would locate more prehistoric sites. As noted above, most of these sites would be found adjacent to canoeable waters, especially in those locations by stream confluences and rapids. Other settings sensitive for prehistoric archaeological sites would include fairly level areas with well drained sandy soils by small streams (Spiess 1999).

Historic archaeology. MHPC records three historic archaeological sites within the study area (18 June 2004): one in Albion and two in Burnham. A petroglyph, evidently of nineteenth-century Euroamerican derivation, is located near Bog Road in Albion. This inscription of “JTA 16.08” is found on bedrock and is called site ME 004-001; it may represent a surveyor’s mark (MHPC site file). Site ME 068-001--Eel Bridge--sits along



the east bank of the Sebasticook River south of Burnham. In addition to finding ceramic and lithic artifacts and hearths dating at least as early as the later prehistoric Ceramic period, Gerald Dunn's excavations from 1957 to 1959 recovered several seventeenth-century items. The latter artifacts include kaolin pipes and a metal jetton (i.e., counter or token) with fleurs-de-lis (MHPC site file; Dunn 1968). Also on the east bank of the Sebasticook River south of Burnham is site ME 068-002. University of Maine archaeologist Alaric Faulkner recorded rouletted clay pipes dating from approximately 1630 to 1670 at this possible Contact period site. These seventeenth-century items were in the collection of avocational archaeologist Lloyd Varney along with prehistoric stone tools (same as prehistoric site 54.7) (MHPC site file).

Among professional archaeological studies of historic sites in the Unity Wetlands area, Archaeological Research Consultants surveyed a proposed pedestrian/bike trail over the Sandy River in Unity (originally to seek prehistoric resources) and found late nineteenth to twentieth-century artifacts, the base of a bridge or dam, and a possible dam-related structure (Clark 2002). An example of a historic archaeological study outside of but near the current study area is the work of MHPC from the late 1980s to 1990 at Fort Halifax at the confluence of the Kennebec and Sebasticook rivers (Cranmer 1991). That research focused on excavating cellars of the Fort House and found some intact structural remains as well as artifacts dating from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

One might expect to find additional historical archaeological sites along historic roads and where streams pass near such roads. An examination of the town maps in Halfpenny's (1879) atlas of Kennebec County shows that later nineteenth-century residences generally were adjacent to highways (Figure \_\_). Furthermore, light industries would have enjoyed the benefits of water power and transportation near streams and roads. Historical archaeological sites could be associated with these domestic and industrial structures depicted in the historical atlas. (While only an archaeological assessment was requested for this study, historic standing structures might also be located in the Unity Wetlands study area and be associated with buildings depicted on the nineteenth-century maps.)

MHPC generally considers historical archaeological sites of the early Colonial period (1604 – early eighteenth century) and those associated with the earliest Euroamerican settlements or industries in given areas to be of interest (i.e., perhaps eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; <http://www.state.me.us/mhpc/archaeol.htm>). Earliest Euroamerican settlements in the Unity Wetlands study area could date as early as pre-1690 for Albion and the 1770s and 1780s for Benton, Clinton, and Unity (Varney 1881:67, 108, 176, 548). Nineteenth-century industrial sites might include brickyards, lumber mills, tanneries, tinware shops, and so forth (Varney 1881:148, 548).

Compliance with historic preservation law. Any proposed federal agency undertaking for the Unity Wetlands study area will necessitate the involved agency's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This statute (16 U.S.C. 470f) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their projects, activities, and programs on historic properties (including significant prehistoric and historic



archaeological sites, buildings, etc.) and to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The Section 106 regulations (36 CFR 800) outline a process of consultation between federal agencies, State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and other parties to identify, evaluate, and treat historic properties within areas of potential effects. For the Unity Wetlands area, any new federal conservation practice or construction project with proposed ground disturbance might entail archaeological studies when near canoeable waters or well drained soils by small streams (prehistoric sites) or by documented historic structures (historic sites). While they were not the focus of the present assessment, non-archaeological historic properties like standing buildings and engineering structures may also exist in the study area and would also be subject to Section 106 reviews.

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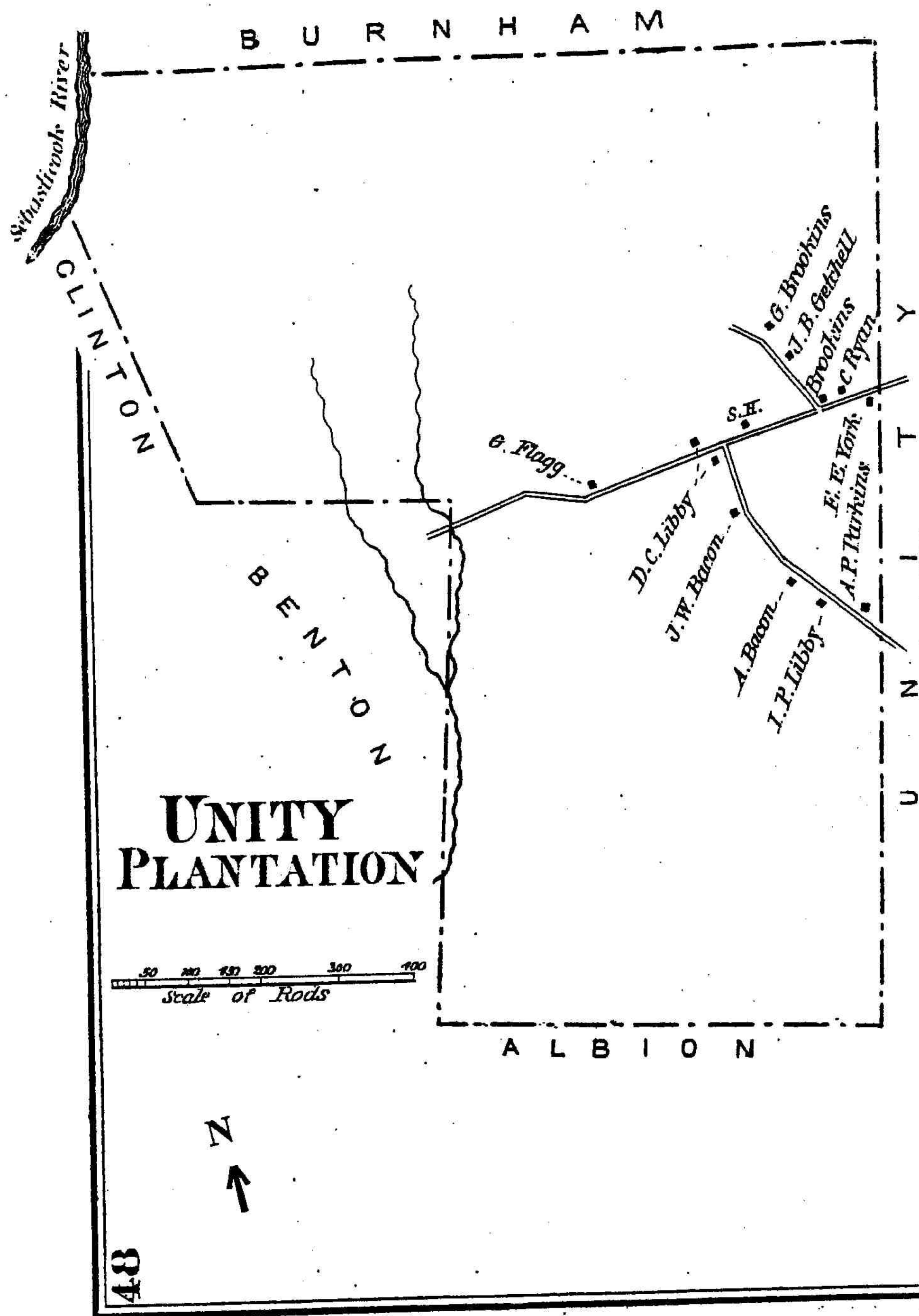


Figure \_\_\_\_\_. Map of Unity Plantation from Halfpenny's (1879:48) *Atlas of Kennebec County, Maine*, illustrating later nineteenth-century residences adjacent to roads.