

Category C Heritage Research Permit Report
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Archaeological Monitoring at Perkins House

Perkins House Museum, Main Street, Liverpool, Queens County



(Image courtesy of the Nova Scotia Museum)

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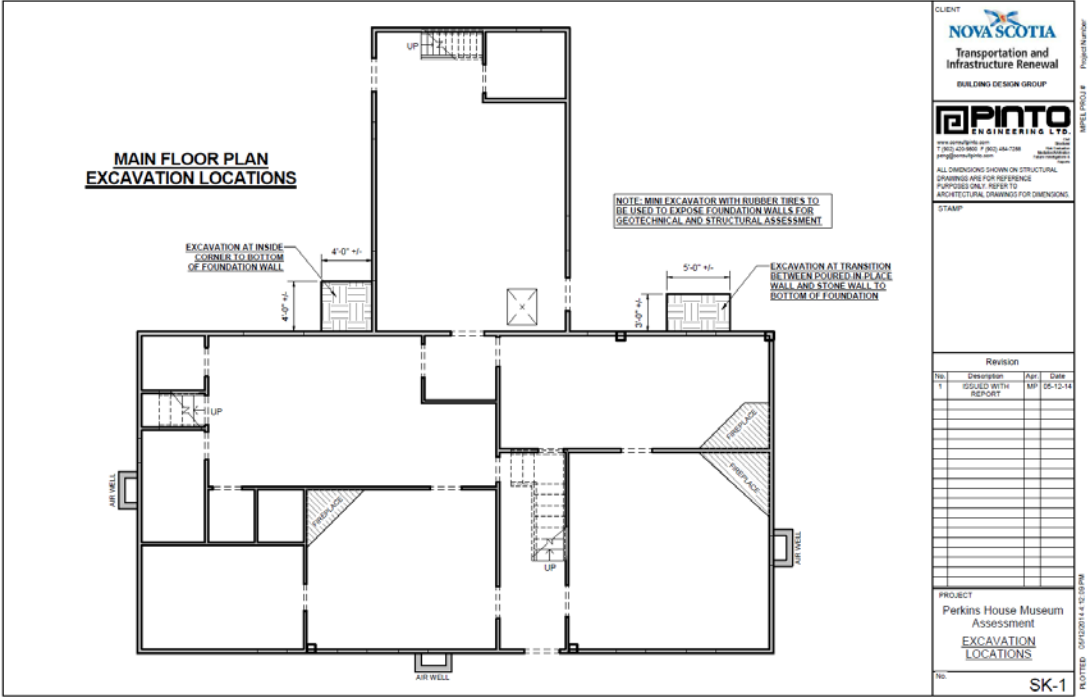
For some time, historic Perkins House in Liverpool, Queens County, has been undergoing a structural integrity review. Several structural issues have been identified over the past 2-3 years as small projects on the interior took place. It was also highlighted by those involved that a plan forward was needed to address building concerns over the long term. To that end, initial steps were organized to gather information particular to the flooring, cellar, walls, roof, foundation, etc. In November 2014, a construction crew was organized to conduct limited mechanical excavation along the rear exterior of Perkins House. The mechanical excavation was scheduled as part of the larger effort to collect structural information about the house prior to the development of refurbishment and/or rehabilitation plans.

On November 21, 2014, Pinto Engineering Ltd. was on site to examine the state of the building's foundation.¹ Exposing the foundation at two locations was planned. The approach would be from the outside of the house. Two small excavation pits were opened at the rear: Area A at the east and Area B at the west. Given the historic nature of Perkins House² and the surrounding landscape (c. 1766), the Curator of Archaeology for the Nova Scotia Museum was

¹ Pinto representative was Mr. Scott Clarke.

² Perkins House was the home of Simeon Perkins and his family and servants. See <https://perkinshouse.novascotia.ca/about-perkins-house/simeon-perkins> Simeon Perkins was born in Norwich, Connecticut—fourth in a family of 16 children. After receiving his education, he was apprenticed in the family business. In May 1762, Perkins was sent to Liverpool, where he established a thriving store and shipping trade. He quickly became a community leader in matters of business and public affairs. By 1772, Perkins was made lieutenant-colonel of the Queens County militia. At first the settlers of Queens County were reluctant to take a stand against the American revolutionaries, since so many of them had New England roots. However, in time, raids by the American patriots spurred them to mount a defense. Under Perkins' direction, a battery was built in Liverpool in 1793 providing an official muster point for the Queens County militia. Local civilians were given permission to capture enemy ships, and Perkins was actively involved in these privateering efforts throughout his lifetime. This **Information adapted from the biography of Simeon Perkins, written by C. Bruce Fergusson for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online.* Also, see <https://perkinshouse.novascotia.ca/about-perkins-house/diary-simeon-perkins> for the following and more. Perhaps best known for the detailed diary he kept, Simeon Perkins provided a faithful record of his life and times. As in the excerpts above, his diary provides vivid detail about what life was like in Liverpool from 1766 to 1812. Today, the information recorded in Perkins' diary finds new life through the exhibits and interpretation of Perkins House Museum, part of the Nova Scotia Museum. Simeon Perkins' diary was bequeathed to the town of Liverpool in 1896 and turned over to the Queens County Historical Society in 1932 where it remains in their possession and on permanent display in the Queens County Museum. C. Bruce Fergusson—in a biography for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online—describes Perkins diary as “a mine of information for the study of economic, political, and social institutions, shedding light not only on the life of a community but also on a region occupying a significant place in the North Atlantic triangular trade and an important position in the evolution of the second British Empire.” In his diary, Perkins kept a careful record of births, deaths and marriages; faithfully recorded the weather; and often commented on religion, the war at sea, and public affairs. The Diary of Simeon Perkins was published in five volumes by the Champlain Society and edited by H.A. Innis et al, but the book is currently out of print.

on site to monitor the excavation and record any findings. The mechanical excavation at the rear of the house included the excavation of 2 units measuring approximately 2m x 1.5m and to a depth of approximately 1.2 m. Both units abutted the foundation wall and once dug by the excavator, were hand-shoveled by crew members to clearly expose the foundation structure.



(Excavation location plan courtesy of NSTIR Building Design Group, 2014)



Perkins House, excavation Area A at the east end of the rear of the house prior to excavation. (K. Cottreau-Robins, 2014)



Excavation underway at Area A. (K. Cottreau-Robins, 2014)



Foundation partially exposed in Area A. See modern plastic pipe remnants amongst the fill.

(K. Cottreau-Robins, 2014)



Excavation Area B located at the rear of Perkins House in the western area.

(K. Cottreau-Robins, 2014)



A view of the exposed foundation at the rear of historic Perkins House.

(K. Cottreau-Robins, 2014)

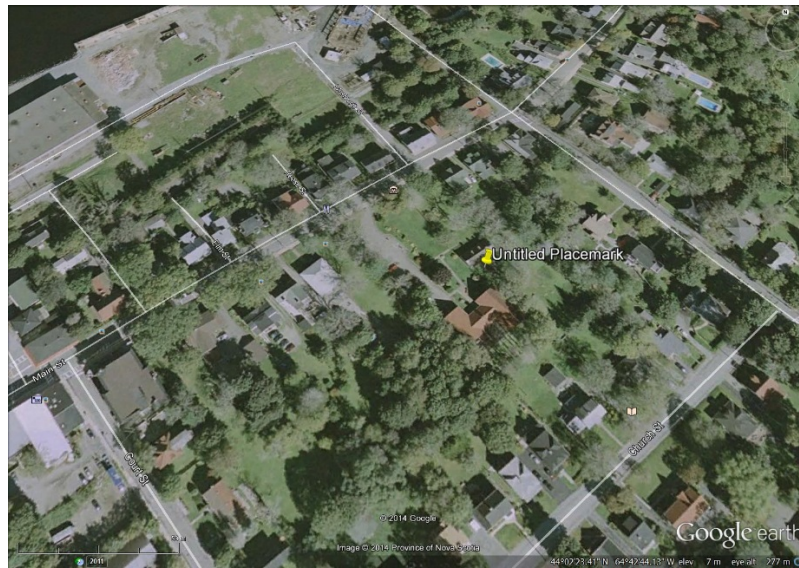
The foundation itself over the years had experienced stabilization/modern upgrades. There was considerable fill and the original elements of the dry laid stone work were not visible. In Area A, excavation had to stop due to interference with subsurface wiring that pulled on the super structure of the house when encountered. Large stones were also encountered which made excavation at times tricky, especially in Area B where a significant boulder stopped the digging.

Period artifacts did emerge in the excavated soil and back dirt pile. The artifacts were not collected. They consisted of 18th and 19th century ceramics and glass fragments representative of domestic tableware and kitchenware.³ Particularly visible were sherds of creamware, yellow lead-slip decorated coarse earthenware, green window glass, light green bottle glass, and Willow pattern transfer-printed refined earthenware. The artifacts confirmed the presence of historical archaeological materials. Given the historic nature of the house and surrounding yard and the minimal degree of development in the area, the Perkins House property is considered to exhibit high potential for archaeological resources. To that end, a MARI form was prepared and submitted (see MARI Online <https://cch.novascotia.ca/mari>). Perkins House Museum now has the Borden Number BaDe-44 and is a registered archaeology site.⁴

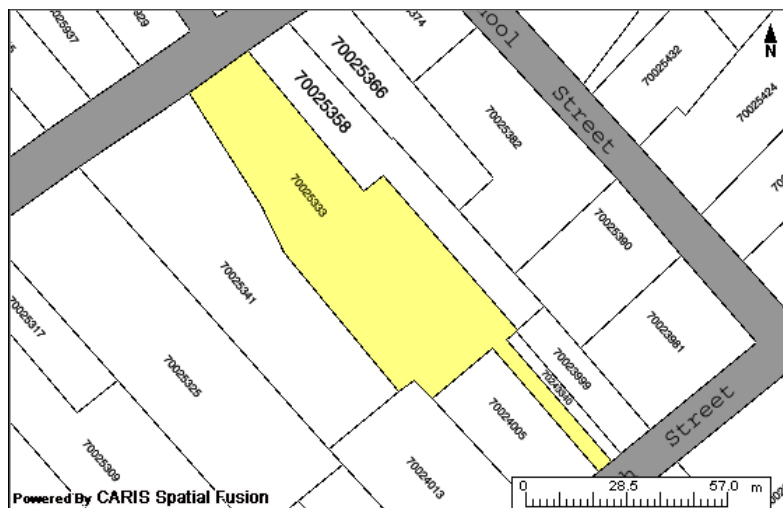
³ All ceramics were post 1760 era.

⁴ Perkins House was always considered to be of high archaeological potential based on the historic and documentary record, however before this project, archaeology had never taken place at the property and a Borden Number never assigned.

The stratigraphy for the rear yard adjacent the foundation was simple and uncomplicated. Three levels were recorded: Level 1 – sod/leaf mat; Level 2 – dark brown gravelly loam with fill mix and artifacts; and Level 3 – orange-brown sandy loam, no cultural material, sterile. In this area near the house, the depth below surface to the sterile soil level was approximately 1.2 meters.



Yellow pin indicates Perkins House and yard on Main Street, Liverpool.



NS Property on Line Map of Perkins House property, 105 Main St., Liverpool. Yellow shows the extent of property (PID 70025333).

Overall, there were no surprises regarding the archaeological findings. No features were identified, besides the obvious house foundation. Artifacts uncovered were typical for the Perkins period and to be expected on an eighteenth-century domestic site. Based on the above, it is recommended that if any further work or ground disturbance is scheduled in the immediate vicinity of Perkins House - meaning the land parcel defined by the property map including the yard surrounding the house up to the foundation walls or within the cellar of Perkins House itself - **advanced notification** is to be made to the Curator of Archaeology, Nova Scotia Museum (902-424-6461) and the Coordinator of the Special Places Program, Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (902-424-6475), so that discussion and planning regarding potential impacts to archaeological resources can take place.