

2016 ARCHAEOLOGY AT MOLAND HOUSE: "The South Pile"

By Sybil Johnson and Mary Porter

The Moland "South Pile" came about at the end of the 2006 archaeology season as the result of an effort to alleviate water infiltration in the Moland House basement. From the south lawn, several inches of soil were removed and the ground regraded, which extended as much as 40 feet from the house. The soil movement created a large pile on the east side of the property, and ever since then, The Millbrook Society has been screening the soil and salvaging artifacts from it each year.

Thousands of artifacts have been recovered, the majority of which represent a timespan of approximately 200 years. Many different types of artifacts have been recovered, including architectural items such as rubble stone, brick, concrete and mortar fragments. Pieces of redware, whiteware, creamware, pearlware, transferware, porcelain and other types of earthenwares turn up on each scheduled day. Window and bottle glass, well oxidized nails and other corroded, sometimes unidentifiable, objects are common to the collection. Fragments of animal bone and teeth are always items of interest.

But, believe it or not, it is the more recent plastic toy parts and game pieces we find that can be the most amusing. Even in the mixed context in which all of these artifacts are found, there is much information to be gained about the previous activity and lifeways of Moland's occupants.

When the south pile was first encountered all of those years ago, we were overwhelmed and discouraged by this massive mountain that we knew would take years to tackle. But when we came up with a plan to share the hunt for historic treasures with visitors on open house and reenactment days, the excitement and enthusiasm shared created in us a growing affinity to the now disappearing pile. It won't be long before it is completely gone, and in some strange way, I think we all will miss the "south pile."



Colonial era brick and a piece of concrete (not dated).



Several nails in various stages of rust, an unidentified rust piece and the remains of a pair of garden shears (modern).



Pieces of glass including mirror glass, a lens from a pair of eyeglasses, brown beer bottle glass, dark green "black glass" from a wine bottle (c. 1700 onion bottle shape) and the bottoms from two medicine/ fragrance bottles.



(l) Redware pieces including a bottom from a mug, a bottle neck and top, rim of a crock and rim of a cup with decoration and parts of a mug handle

(r) Slip decorated redware. Redware production began in the 17th century, and although its use declined in the mid 1800's, it is still produced in limited quantities today. (Slip is a decoration technique using liquefied clay).



Variety of "whiteware," (pottery made from a white clay base.) It is fired at a higher temperature than redware. Here are examples of porcelain, hand painted whiteware (1840-), yellowware with brown spots (c. 1840-1900), scratch blue stoneware (c. 1765-1795), both blue and pink transfer printed ware (c. 1803-1860), feather edged pearlware (c. 1790-1850), and mochoware (1840-1900).



Here is part of a knife handle made of bone with iron rivets, a piece of lead or pewter which may have been part of a utensil handle, a shank type button probably brass (1700 -1800), a brass thimble, two pieces of kaolin pipestem, and a gun flint.

Plastic LEGOs and a plastic/white metal toy car (20th century). These also speak to Moland House's history!

