Summary of Fall 2000- Spring 2001 Public Education

The Trimborn Farm Archaeology Project has continued to grow since its inception in 1998. The farm is located at the intersection of 88th and Grange in Greendale, Milwaukee County (Figure 8.1, 8.2). The eight-acre site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is owned by Milwaukee County and maintained by the Park People, a non-profit group. Established in 1851 by Werner Trimborn, a German immigrant, the farm played an important role in Milwaukee’s lime industry until the family sold the farm in 1911. Five buildings depicted on the lithograph are still standing: the farmhouse, the granary, the threshing barn, the stone stable, and the lime kilns. At its peak, the farm covered over 500 acres.

Our objective of informing both the public and professionals remains a bedrock focus of the project. Field work on the long term research project is accomplished with public participation — mostly children with committed adult volunteers from the archaeological community. A significant milestone in the past year has been a variety of both temporary and permanent exhibits allowing us to reach a wider audience.

As in the past two years, we have been on site during the Trimborn Antique Show. A temporary display showing interesting artifacts found on site and basic archaeological tools and techniques was set up near ongoing excavations by the smokehouse. Approximately 1500 visitors passed by our display. For the first time we set up our display at the Harvest of Arts and Crafts, the Park People’s major fund raiser for the farm attended by 8500 people.

In 2001 the Park People transformed the pumphouse into a permanent exhibit space. Prior to this year it had been used for storage by the landscaping committee and the archaeologists. This equipment was moved into a larger space inside the chicken coop. The pumphouse now has four locked cases with permanent interpretive panels. Currently, our archaeological display is on view there.
Figure 8.1 Trimborn Farm Site Map — Location of Test Units.
The May 12, 2001, Open House during Historic Preservation Week drew volunteers from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Anthropology Department, the Wisconsin Archeological Society, Archaeological Rescue, and the Milwaukee Public Museum. Volunteers from 10 and up spent the day preparing Units 7, 9, 10, and 12 for the summer field season, and excavating in Unit 13 (Figure 8.3). These units focused on the stonewall foundations of a large outlying structure.

Unit 7 was cleaned and the floor leveled. Unit 9 was cleaned and the wall profiles were drawn. Unit 12 was also cleaned, and a new feature (Fe 01-001) was uncovered in the northern portion of the unit. The feature was mapped, profiled, and the fill was retrieved for further analysis. Unit 13 was placed adjacent to Unit 12. Removal of the sod revealed T-shaped stonewall foundations, and a concentration of nails in the northern half of the unit.

The summer field season began with two sessions of College For Kids in July (Figure 8.4). The total of 32 students ranged in age from 10 to 14. Four unit supervisors taught the basics of archaeology and kept field notes for Units 7, 12, 13, and 14. Unit 14 was opened at the start of field school, and is located approximately 20 meters east of Unit 7.
An exciting development was the appearance of crop marks in this area. Drought conditions leached moisture away from the foundations, and the outline of the building clearly appeared. The Greendale Fire Department kindly took aerial photos with their ladder truck (Figure 8.5). The tracking of the foundation stones led to the placement of Unit 14. During the week long sessions, the foundation walls continued to emerge, and architectural debris consisting of nails and glass decreased in density. Walker Middle School participated in two days of excavations, with ten students in the 7th and 8th grades participating. They continued work in Units 12 and 13, and worked in the field lab to clean and inventory artifacts found to date.

In addition to our field study program offered through College for kids, we worked in cooperation with their junior archaeology class aimed at 1st through 4th grade students. They finished their two week sessions with a tour of the Trimborn site highlighting the archaeological dig. In 2001 we look forward to sharing the history and archaeology with 24 College for Kids students. We also gave organized tours to groups from the Milwaukee Foundation and Park People volunteers.

We plan for expansion of the Trimborn Farm Archaeology Project in the future. The UWM Anthropology Student Union is holding a raffle to finance one week of field school for Milwaukee Public School children in 2002. We also hope to add family archaeology Sundays next season.
Figure 8.4 College for Kids students and supervisors excavating Units 12 and 13.

Figure 8.5 Aerial photograph showing foundation of building revealed by crop marks.
Issues with Public Education Archaeology at Trimborn Farm

How do you run a proper excavation with ten to 15 year old as part of your work force? Can you produce uncompromised data for research? These are the dual challenges that underlie the excavations conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Regional Archaeology Program at Trimborn Farm in Greenfield, Wisconsin.

As an archaeological site, Trimborn Farm has much to offer. Besides the lure of recognizable material remains that can confirm, disprove or add to the oral and written histories, the farm itself is accessible and appealing. Located in a Milwaukee suburb, it is easy to find and get to. Park status means public facilities. We often joke that it is the Club Med of sites. There are two clean, heated indoor rest rooms with hot and cold running water and soap. Drinking water is available if needed from the farmhouse kitchen. There is also shelter available in the threshing barn for temporary lab space, as well as on-site storage in the old chicken coop. These are major pluses for archaeological work at the site, and all of this eases our work with children. The parents are also happy.

Excavating with children, however, requires more than accessible bathrooms. You need supervision and training. Graduate students from the Anthropology Department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee provide supervision for each unit. We maintain a low ratio of students to supervisor -- 4 to 1, and this is the way we balance the responsibilities of the archaeological resources and the children. Both need to be closely watched. Supervisors must also be willing to work slowly – even more than on a dig with an experienced adult crew, and be patient and able to work well with children. A demonstrated willingness to stop, explain, and correct (gently!) is necessary. Not all archaeologists possess these qualities. The field director has carefully determined each year’s crew.

The children also need structure – each should have a specific task for the half-day work sessions held over the course of five days. We alternate the positions of recorder, screeners, and excavators among the students in each group, and it is the responsibility of each supervisor to maintain and monitor these activities. Finally, the supervisors are responsible for maintaining archaeologically correct field books.

During the first season, a full day of classroom training was provided before allowing the students to dig. This has been shortened to an introductory session on site that discusses how
archaeologists do things, how to identify artifacts, and introduces the tools used. This session also includes an overview of the site with a tour. We have found that showing the students how to do things – such as shoveling, troweling, at their actual units works best. Each work session ends with every student answering a specific set of questions for their notes: What is today’s weather? Who did you work with? What did you do? How much work did you do? Did your team have any problems? What did you find? What can you say about it? What do you think is being found in your unit? The questions are being revised for the upcoming 2001 season.

The young students themselves are the unknown factor in producing uncompromised data. In three excavation seasons at Trimborn Farm, we have worked with nearly 200 children. We discovered that previous familiarity with – and enthusiasm for – archaeology makes a difference. The students who enrolled for the public field school through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s College for Kids program are often acquainted with archaeological techniques from school and their own reading. Students without this background need more training, more supervision, and are more likely to compromise the data (usually by removing an artifact before the context is recorded). In addition to precollege students, we also work closely with adult volunteers from Archaeological Rescue and the Wisconsin Archaeology Society. These groups bring their own set of challenges and prior experiences to the project. They are invaluable assistants, who are willing to do whatever we ask. However, they also need close supervision to maintain our standard of fieldwork.

At the Society for American Archaeology 1999 annual meeting, the field director, Geralyn Flick, organized a symposium on the excavations at Trimborn Farm (Jeske 1999). Not only did the supervising graduate students present their research, students from Grandview High School in Milwaukee did a poster presentation on their yearlong program of excavations, analysis, and research. They later converted that into an exhibit with artifacts at the Greendale Public Library. A grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council funded their project.

Our initial excavations in the summer and fall of 1998 were followed by an extended if sporadic season in 1999, with six units excavated. Boy Scout Troop 5, from the Potawatomi Council, excavated Units 5 and 6 as part of their archaeology merit badge requirements in the spring. Both units were placed at the rear or south side of the milk house, and the materials recovered were primarily 20th century. These units were excavated as a cultural resource management service for the Park People, who wanted to put a small garden there. Our educational
efforts had an impact - the Park People now ask us to check for archaeological remains before any physical modifications to the site.

The three weeks of summer field school included two in conjunction with the College for Kids program, and one with the Milwaukee Public School system funded by a grant. These students enthusiastically worked on Units 4, 7 and 8. In addition, Unit 1 was reopened for further exploration. Due to its depth, the young students did not dig in this unit; the work was undertaken by the supervisors before the kids arrived, and later by volunteers from Archaeological Rescue. The children visited the unit with their supervisors to monitor activity. At the base of level 9, a greasy ash stain appeared near the south wall. This was the start of Feature 2, an interesting puzzle still under review. The feature, in the northern half of the unit, has produced charcoal, weathered limestone, and ceramic material. Professionals have often volunteered their expertise to aid our analysis. Dr. Katie Egan-Bruhy of Lakes States Archaeological Ecological Consulting provided an analysis of plant remains recovered from flotation samples taken from the feature. She confirmed that the material is likely industrial fill derived from the farm’s lime kilns; the floral material included wood, wood charcoal, and uncharred seeds (Flick 2000: 52).

Stratamorph Personnel, a Madison, Wisconsin firm that specializes in geomorphology, cored the surrounding area to identify the horizontal extent of the feature (see Kolb, this volume). Coring was done every five meters to the east and north of the unit. The areas west and south of the unit were not included due to the presence of the house and known heavy disturbance. The matrix is comprised of degraded limestone, slag, and charcoal. This fill is present in all cores extending 12 meters east before it disappears, and for 14 meters to the north. Written evidence for large amounts of kiln waste at the farm and the apparent moulding of the fill against the foundation of the house suggest that the fill could be a false surface created to facilitate the building of the farm house.

Unit 7 was excavated during the summer field school and placed approximately 20 meters north of the park’s southern boundary. The 2x2 meter square was located on what was believed to be remnants of a building – rocks are barely visible in a rectangular positioning, suggesting foundations. Four arbitrary 10 centimeter levels were excavated, and 92.9% of the materials recovered was architectural debris. The surface rocks are part of a wall approximately 26 inches thick, with hand mixed mortar visible between the granite rocks. The distribution of the rocks indicated that the wall collapsed towards the interior of the building. It was decided to tarp and
backfill this unit for continued excavations in 2000.

Unit 4 was located immediately adjacent to the east or back wall of the smokehouse. The function of this structure remains unclear. Originally excavated by the Grandview High School students, the unit remains open and has been worked on by the Scouts, volunteers from the Wisconsin Archaeology Society and Archaeological Rescue, the students, and supervisors. Seven 10 centimeter levels were excavated by the close of the 1999 season. Slag, both coal and limestone, formed 81% of the material recovered. Several interesting attributes appeared: a single course of unmortared limestone 70 centimeters below the surface; a large stain with a uniform matrix of sandy soil at 78 centimeters below the surface, and two pieces of lumber at the same level. The season ended with Units 4 and 7 tarped and backfilled for further investigation in 2000.

The 2000 season began in late spring with the above units being reopened by volunteers from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Archaeological Rescue in preparation for the summer field school. The material features and stratigraphy of Unit 4 are still being analyzed, and will be the focus of a future report. Three new units were opened for the College for Kids session: Unit 11, 50 centimeters south of Unit 4 (now considered too deep for the children, and requiring exacting excavation), and Units 9 and 10, placed near Unit 7 in hopes of uncovering more of the field stone foundation.

Unit 11 was excavated four levels before work was halted due to the discovery of live electrical wires undetected by the Wisconsin Electric Company and unknown to us. The mix of materials recovered, plus the wires and a metal pipe in the center of the unit indicated a disturbed area.

Units 9 was placed 5 meters east of Unit 7. At 30 centimeters, a corner of the foundation began to appear. The children and the supervisor were fascinated, and excavated in arbitrary levels to 70 cm below the surface. The hand mixed mortar between the granite foundation stones became clearly visible, along with stains indicating a possible builder’s trench. The substantial wall is approximately two feet thick. A total of 69.8% of the artifacts recovered was architectural debris, with 43% overall being square cut nails. The nails were in near-perfect condition, and nearly 6% have highly visible traces of red paint.

Unit 10 was located approximately 10 meters north of the southern park boundary, and on a diagonal axis from Unit 9. The students also excavated this unit to 70 centimeters below the
surface over a two week period. A T-shaped foundation was revealed, showing both exterior and interior walls. The remnants of a wooden plank were noted on the northwest corner of the unit at 9.5 centimeters below the surface. It is believed that this may be a lower sill of the building that was constructed on top of the stone foundation.

To replace Unit 11, a third unit was opened near Units 9 and 10. Unit 12 was located in an attempt to better understand the interior portions of the building. However, a limestone foundation wall running through the middle of the unit was identified after removal of the sod zone. It measured 33 centimeters in width, and extended the entire length of the unit. The wall was unexpected, since there were no surface indications of an interior foundation in this area.

Well over 15,000 artifacts have been recovered during the past three years. The high rate of recovery can be attributed to the historic nature of the site, the research plan, and the visual acuity and enthusiasm of the children. They like to find things, and once they know what to look for, the bags fill. Also, they are trained to ask their supervisor if the identification of an item as artifact is questionable.

They were very good at finding bones - 532 fragments over three years. A preliminary analysis of the faunal remains was completed last year by three University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee students under the guidance of Dr. Robert J. Jeske and the assistance of Dr. Jean Hudson. The units were analyzed separately, with the bones identified as mammal, avian, or fish. These results were then grouped by domestic activities area (Units 1-4 and 11 by the farmhouse and the smokehouse), and non-domestic. Approximately 93% of the faunal remains are from the domestic activities area, and 83% of these are mammal bones (see next chapter).

The results from Unit 4, adjacent to the so-called smokehouse, are intriguing. Madrigal cites smokehouse assemblages from two 19th century homesteads as being primarily pig, with a large percentage of teeth and cranial fragments. The rates are 64% and 31% respectively. The Trimborn Farm assemblage is only 11%; this does not confirm the oral history identification of the structure as a smokehouse. The analysis also indicates that meat was a significant part of the diet, but that on-site butchering did not occur. It is likely that meat cuts were purchased; the family was wealthy, and the quicklime produced on the farm was transported to the Milwaukee store on a near-daily basis. Purchasing meat on the way back to the farm was probable.
Finally, we have the annual challenge of mounting temporary exhibits on-site for two annual and well-attended events at the property: the Antique Fair and the Harvest Festival of Arts and Crafts. The exhibits are designed to educate the public about the archaeological work, and we try to keep the displays current and interesting.

Teaching archaeology to young students is challenging - but the reward of watching the children meet the demands of recovering the material remains is great. Patience develops, and the children display a precision that is often unexpected. Just as important, young student archaeological field experience is an important part of the process to diversify the field of archaeology. Students in inner city neighborhood schools need to be exposed to the joys--and the hard work--of doing archaeology early in their scholastic careers if we ever hope to take the discipline of archaeology beyond its current pallor. By actively focusing upon and encouraging children of color, we hope to inspire students who will contribute in the future to a professional archaeology that is more representative of our general population.