Archeological Documentation of Gas Utility Trench
Rego House, North Great Road, Lincoln, MA
Minute Man National Historical Park

By

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Introduction

This report describes the results of archeological monitoring by the author of a utility construction project at the Rego House, North Great Road, Lincoln, MA, on September 8, 2009 (Figs. 1, 2). The archeological project resulted from a request made by MIMA Facility Manager Jeff Kangas earlier that day to the Northeast Region Archeology Program (NRAP), Lowell, for archeological monitoring for construction of a gas line from North Great Road to the west side of the Rego House because the gas company's excavation contractor was present at the site. Following coordination with NRAP staff, Pendery gathered field equipment from Lowell and traveled to the Rego House at Minute Man National Historical Park (MIMA). The utility trench had already been excavated upon his arrival, and the crew was pressure-testing the newly-installed gas line. Pendery documented the profile of the 30 m long trench, sampled and screened soil from the select contexts, and determined that no potentially significant archeological resources had been disturbed.

Background

The Rego House property is included in an area with high archeological sensitivity as designated in the MIMA Archeological Overview and Assessment (PAL 2005: Appendix B5). Evidence for pre-contact use of the area was discovered in the Hartwell Parking Lot prior to its construction, directly across the North Great Road from the Rego House. However, testing in the proximity of the Rego House in the past has
failed to disclose significant archeological resources. Previous fieldwork included testing for a cess pool in the driveway between the house and garage on June 21, 2000 by the author, and monitoring construction of a cable line between the house and garage on December 30, 2002, also by the author. The Rego house is listed as a contributing element in the MIMA’s National Register listing, as Building #040244 (105), a 1900-1910 frame structure. The garage is listed as a non-contributing structure, Building 2-124-B (106).

Site evaluation

A 30 m long, 75 cm wide trench had been excavated nearly 2 meters east of the Rego property west driveway connecting the edge of North Great Road with the west side of the Rego House (Fig. 3). Backfill was piled on both sides of the trench. Pendery photographed the site and cleaned the east side of the trench to expose and sample the stratigraphy. No pre-contact or colonial period artifacts or features were identified, although a possible blue transfer-printed plate fragment was found in a mixed context in trench backfill about 6 m from the south edge of North Great Road. The profile was measured from north (the south edge of Great North Road) to south (entering the Rego House) although the northern end was prioritized for documentation. The northern 8 meters revealed evidence of (most likely) filling at the lower part of the Rego property where it meets the North Great Road (Fig. 4). Towards the extreme north, rocky fill was visible (Stratum 3). Further to the south, lensed fills appeared. Resting on the yellow sandy subsoil (Stratum 4), the lowest deposit was of coal ash (Stratum 2a). Overlying this
was Stratum 2, a black clayey loam fill deposit containing some rocks and lenses of sand. Overlying this part of the site was a deposit of topsoil (Stratum 1).

Further south, the typical profile consisted of topsoil overlying a sterile brown sandy loam deposit, resting in turn on subsoil (Fig. 5). There were no obvious features, although the brown loam deposit itself was found to be buried under fill deposits in the vicinity of the Rego House, suggesting various recent landscaping episodes. A window shade support was recovered from disturbed deposits in this area.

Artifacts

Only two artifacts were recovered from the Rego gas utility trench: a copper alloy window shade support, and a blue transfer-printed transitional pearlware-whiteware ceramic plate fragment (Fig. 6). These two artifacts were both recovered from disturbed contexts, the ceramic (Accession MIMA -613, MIMA 7) at about 6 m from the Great North Road edge, and the window hardware (Accession MIMA-613, MIMA 8), from close proximity to the house, at about 30 m from the road. Both artifacts are curated at Minute Man National Historical Park along with the associated field documentation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

No pre-contact or colonial period artifacts, features or deposits were observed in the trench excavated by gas company contractors at the Rego House site on September 8, 2009. While the Rego property is included within one of MIMA’s sensitive archeological zones, the property may have been at a slightly greater distance from natural resources of interest to pre-contact populations, such as the wetlands north of North Great Road. It
appears not to have been the setting of any colonial domestic activities, and none are
documented in this area. No additional archeological work is recommended for the utility
trench excavation.

Notwithstanding these results, if potentially significant archeological resources
were present, they would not have been properly documented during the construction of
the gas line. The Rego gas line project did not follow any approved archeological
compliance process, and the results could have turned out quite differently had significant
resources been disturbed. Similar situations at other Northeast Region parks have led to
ARPA charges being filed against excavation contractors working for utility companies.
Monitoring should be reserved for areas that have already been tested and proven sterile
of potentially significant archeological remains. It is recommended that standard NPS
archeological compliance procedures be applied to all future subsurface undertakings at
MIMA.
References

Pendery, Steven R.

Public Archaeology Lab, Inc.
Figure List

1. USGS map of MIMA.
2. Locator Map
3. Photograph of trench from north
4. East profile of trench
5. Photograph of trench, facing east.
6. Artifacts: possible window shade support (l), transitional pearlware/ whiteware, blue transfer-printed.
Fig. 1. USGS map locating the Rego House within Minute Man NHP.
Fig. 2 Site plan of Rego property showing location of project area (not to scale).
Fig. 3. Photograph of project area from the north.
Fig. 4. Profile of north end, east side of Rego property gas line utility trench.
Fig. 5. Photograph of east side of Rego property gas utility trench.
Fig. 6. Window shade support MIMA 8 (left) and blue transfer-printed transitional pearlware/ whiteware, MIMA 7 (r). Accession MIMA-613.