

A Pioneer Settlement Period Home in Nephi, Utah: An Avocational Archaeological Investigation

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Over the past twenty years, the author has remodeled and renovated his settlement-period home in Nephi, Utah. Recognizing that Utah is losing its pioneer heritage to the bulldozer and ever increasing development, it was decided to undertake a study to document and record the site to demonstrate what the avocational archaeologist, historian, or common property owner might consider in contributing to the historical and archaeological record. Recognizing that much of Utah's disappearing heritage lies on private ground, awareness, interest and input from the general public and the everyday homeowner are a must if it is to be preserved. Further, as we move into times of greater need for the conservation of natural resources and materials, reuse will inevitably become more common. This will provide increased opportunity to record and learn from the past as we chart a way forward to the future. For this project, research was carried out to place the author's historic home in the context of Juab Valley, the development of Nephi City, and to discover who the builder may have been and the date of original construction. The details of the home's construction and episodes of renovation are described in architectural drawings, photographs and limited archaeological excavation. As a narrative, this article follows the renovation over the past twenty years to lend context to the study and artifact collection.

An Avocational Investigation

It was during the course of renovating the home that I became seriously interested in archaeology and joined the Utah County Chapter of USAS. I then contemplated the question: Can the avocationist (or the typical homeowner for that matter) make a worthwhile contribution to the historical and archaeological record? In this instance, the home and its materials were still intact and still inhabited. For more than twenty years, my family and I have renovated and refurbished the structure, hopefully preserving it for the future. In doing this we were able to strip away previous remodeling episodes, and thereby follow the story back to the original construction. As work progressed and my knowledge and concern for archaeology developed, time constraints and commitment to family and others placed limits on the endeavor.

Getting the Lay of the Land

Nephi, UT, is situated on an alluvial fan originating from where Salt Creek drains Nephi

Canyon and the area south and east of Mt. Nebo, forming a tongue of land extending westward into the Juab Valley (Figure 1). Nephi Canyon marks the boundary between the southernmost extent of the Wasatch Range vertical or "normal fault" zone and the northernmost part of the Gunnison-Sanpete (Sanpitch) Plateau, a "thrust fault" zone. These fault features expose a variety of deep Paleozoic and shallower Mesozoic rock formations (Stokes 1987) that provide both resources, as well as small earthquakes that regularly rumble underfoot. The Juab Valley is the remnant of an ancient lakebed that was once part of the pluvial Lake Bonneville system, and eventually drains through Goshen Canyon, where the stream takes the name of Currant Creek before emptying into Utah Lake in the Utah Valley. It is from the raw materials and resources of this country, ranging from the valley marshlands and pinion-juniper foothills to the ponderosa pine woodlands and alpine reaches of the surrounding mountains, that this home was constructed.

The archaeological and historic records testify to a long occupation and history of exploration in

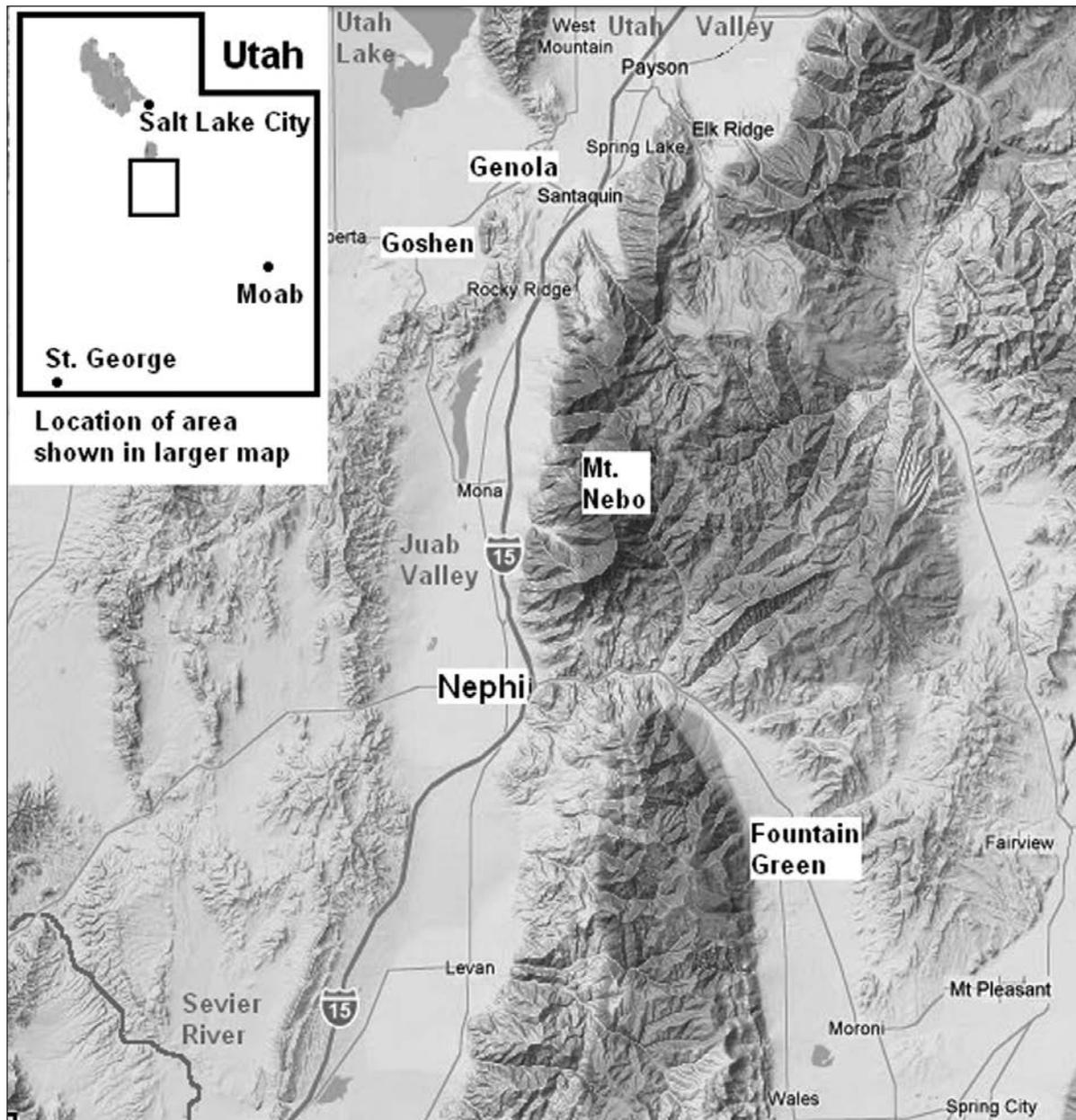


Figure 1. Nephi, Utah, is located near the geographical center of the state, 35 miles South of Provo, and 70 miles south of Salt Lake City.

the area prior to the nineteenth-century colonizing efforts (Copeland and Fike 1988; Sharrock and Marwitt 1967; Steward 1938; McCune 1947; Wilson et al. 1999; Egan 1977). But it was in 1847 that Mormon pioneers, under the leadership of Brigham Young, entered the Salt Lake Valley

and moved quickly to occupy the surrounding territories. Howard Stansbury, accompanied by John W. Gunnison, made a survey of the Great Salt Lake and Utah Valleys for the U.S. Government in 1849-1850 (Madsen 1989). The map accompanying the Stansbury report labels a

number of the notable landmarks of Juab Valley with their native Ute names. Burraston Spring is called “*Pungun Spring*” and Salt Creek is labeled the “*Ona-Pah*.” Stansbury aptly described the Mormon’s settlement practice of sending out groups with diversified skills. The first order of business, after setting up shelter and planning for crops, was to set up grist or flour mills and saw mills.

In September of 1851, seventeen families moved to settle Nephi, and, while it didn’t take long for the new settlers to set up mill facilities, the first year or two they depended on products from the established mills of the Sanpete Valley. In the *Deseret News* of December 13, 1851, it was reported that 12 homes had been built, “3 built of adobies, 2 of willows, plastered inside and out, 1 two-story house built of 4 inch plank, and the balance of logs... roofs and flooring are principally of lumber cut at Hamilton A. Potter’s mills, San-Pete Valley” (McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979).

In 1852, the settlement’s inhabitants began to build a defensive wall. The project was modified, enlarged, and finally completed in 1854 (McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979). The fort formed by the wall, occupied three square city blocks, and was built primarily on the east of the ‘Old California Trail,’ today’s Main Street and State Highway 41. Hostilities with the native inhabitants limited the colonists’ ability to expand and develop their settlement during the 1850s, but by 1860 they were able to leave the confines of the city walls and began to spread out into the surrounding area (McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979). This marks the earliest time in which the home in this report, located three blocks outside the fort, to the south, could have been built.

According to the *Abstract of Title* (from the Juab County Records Office, acquired in 1988 with the adjoining property) the U.S. Federal Government began conveying ownership of Nephi Township property to private individuals through the new Territorial Government in 1870. This document has been valuable in tracing the

division and ownership of the property through time and provided information to produce plot plan drawings of the property then (at the first conveyance) and now (at the present time). The original 1870 conveyance of the property, dated April 26, 1870, names the owner as John Ostler. The Abstract further notes, “(and other property),” which indicates that the original adobe structure was possibly already in place at that time. The property remained in John Ostler’s name until February 24, 1912, when a Quit Claim Deed was recorded transferring title from “John Ostler and Mary Ann Ostler, husband and wife.”

This documentary evidence, in conjunction with the materials used in construction and the timing of their use in the pioneer period, suggests the most likely construction date to be the ten year period between 1860 when the settlers left the confines of the fort walls, and the government survey of 1870. This is further supported by a brief biography of John Ostler on file with the Juab (Salt Creek) Company of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers.

John was born June 5, 1839, in Bridport, Dorset, England. He learned the tanning trade in the port city of Southampton where he also served on a merchant ship sailing to Sevastopol, Russia. In April of 1861 he married Mary Ann Prince and the young couple set out for America. In Omaha, Nebraska, John worked on the transcontinental telegraph line to help finance their travels across the country.

John and Mary Ann spent their first winter together living in a dugout shelter in Salt Lake City’s Tenth Ward. The couple had two children while living in Salt Lake City, where John worked on building the Salt Lake Theater and the city’s first telegraph office. Late in 1864, they moved to Nephi, where John built this small home in the middle of the block between the homes of his brother David to the south, and his father’s to the north.

The family saw great success through the years operating a tannery, a bootmaking shop, and later a harness shop which was expanded to a second location in Gunnison, Utah, all while operating



Figure 2. Photo of the pioneer settlement period home in 1986, viewed here from the north-west.

freight wagons between Pioche, Nevada and Salt Lake City. As the family grew, John built a large, new home that once stood where the County Fair Grounds are located today.

In 1873 John married Dorothy Howarth, a second wife in the Mormon tradition of plural marriage, and in 1886 bought her a home in Fountain Green, Utah. Both women had large families, Mary Ann having nine children, two daughters and seven sons, and Dorothy having eight children, three daughters and five sons. The biography lists the following dates for their deaths; Mary Ann died February 2, 1913; John on September 7, 1913 and Dorothy, April 7, 1920.

The Newcomers

In May of 1986, my family and I purchased the property and moved in (Figure 2). We had

recently moved from New Mexico where we had lived in the last remaining section of the 1833 Gallina Placita (a Spanish jacal pueblo), which acquainted us with the qualities of adobe. Adobe maintains a relatively constant temperature year round, and coupled with the home's small size and low ceilings, we knew this would be a comfortable and economical place for a young family starting out. Another bias that may have led to our acquiring the property is my familiarity with a similar home that was built by my great grandfather, John Thomas, between 1881 and 1883, on Warm Creek (present day Genola) just a stone's throw off Highway 50 and 6 in the Goshen Valley. Four generations of the Thomas family occupied the home before it was demolished, and I can personally attest to a number of similarities in the construction of these two homes.

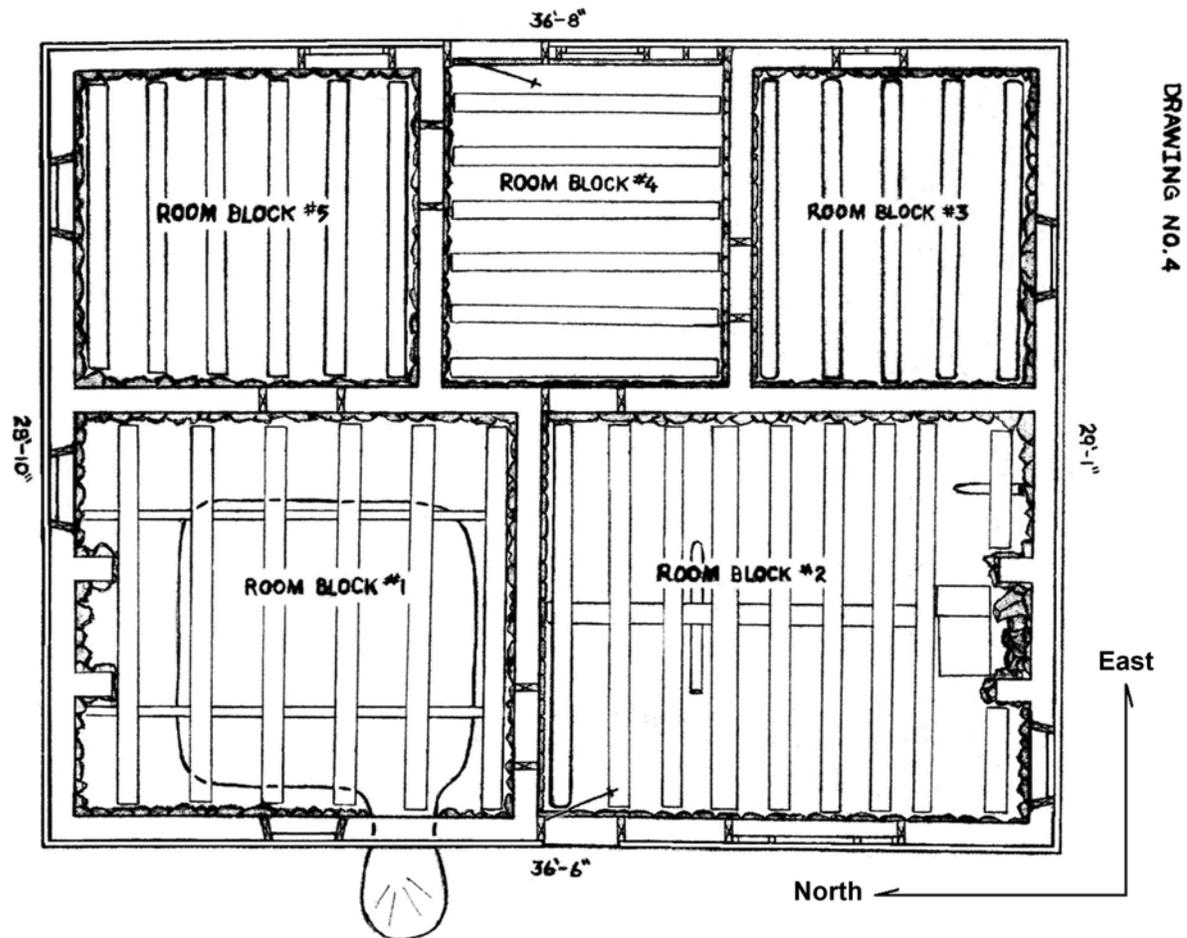


Figure 3. Floor plan showing the stone foundation and log floor superstructure alignment.

De-constructing and Reconstructing

The work of de-constructing and reconstructing this old house has been rewarding, challenging, and full of surprises. The materials used in the original construction limited what could be done in remodeling, and the work of former occupants had hidden what lay beneath. Plans ahead of the work were often modified, as were the preconceived notions of what would be found with each swing of the hammer or scoop of the shovel. As the plan map was developed to show the original layout of the house, the term “room block” was used to describe the areas defined by the original stone foundation.

The main section of the home forms a one-and-a-half story hall-parlor house with internal fireplaces and chimneys at the gable ends (Figures 3 and 4) (Carter and Goss 1988). Its entry is from the west into the larger of the two rooms or the hall (room block #2); to the north is the smaller parlor room (room block #1). To the rear are three room blocks roughly equal in size under a lean-to roof. According to style, the house is classified as a vernacular Classical design, a one-room deep structure with a rear lean-to addition. Details include smooth stucco exterior wall surfaces, symmetrical design elements of a centrally located doorway flanked by window openings on either side, heavy, flat-arched windows, a hip-

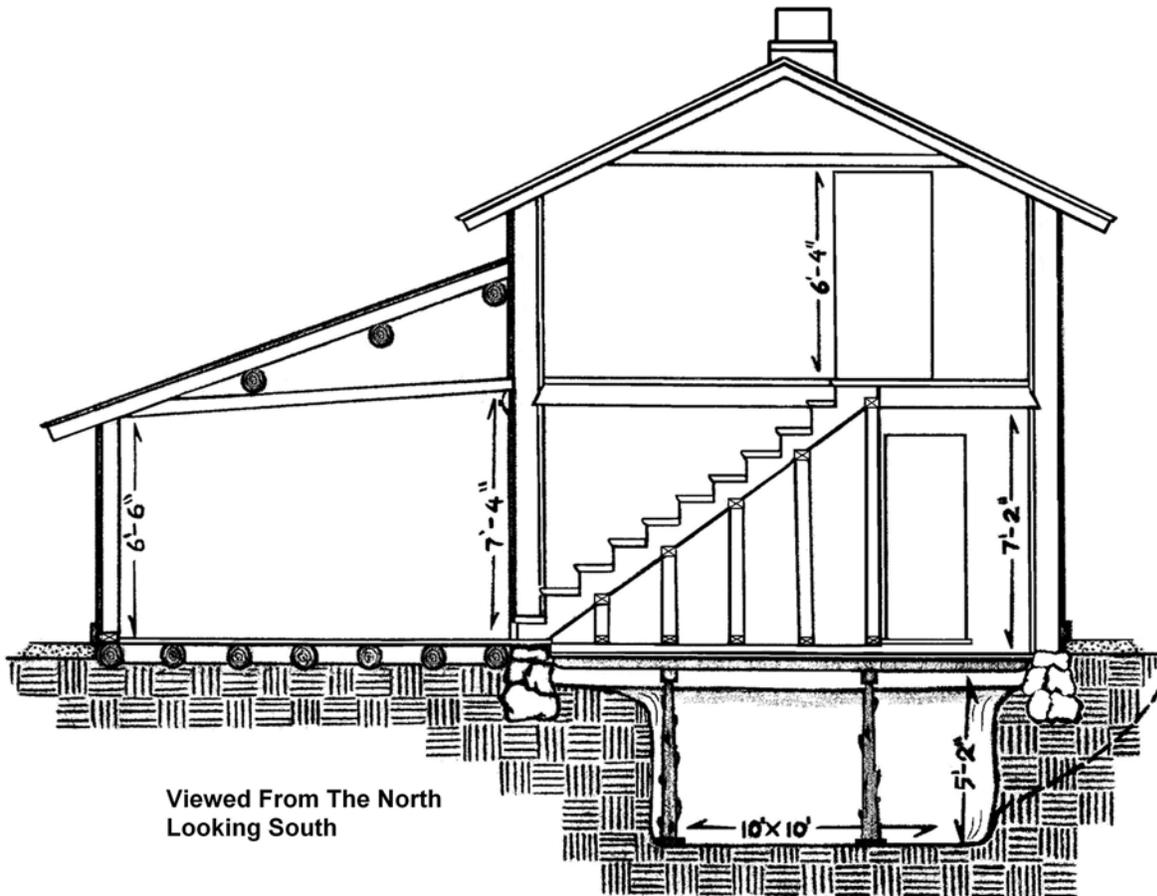


Figure 4. Typical profile perspective of the home, viewed from the north.

roofed porch and a low-pitched gable roof (see Figure 2). The hall-parlor house is considered the “quintessential Utah house” of the second half of the nineteenth century. The classical style reflects the architectural traditions prevalent in the Eastern and Midwestern United States during the 1830s and 1840s and dominant in Utah well into the 1880s (Carter and Goss 1988).

The foundations are constructed of massive irregular rubble stone and generally measures 18” to 24” in height, rising slightly above the surrounding ground level. This type of stone was obtained from Mesozoic rock formations located at the mouth of Nephi Canyon, and used only briefly during the early decades of settlement

(Worthington et al. 1979). On the external walls the exposed part of the foundation has been capped with concrete, 2” to 3” thick and 8” to 10” high, which supports the cement, lime and sand stucco of the walls. The exterior portions of the foundation have not been examined. Some interior sections are of a more carefully coursed stone masonry; other sections are more irregular, sometimes with massive stones. Interior dividing wall foundations average about 14” in width and 14” to 18” in height, and are more uniformly coursed (Figure 5). Generally, the east and south faces of the foundation show a uniform, smooth face. This perhaps indicates the use of a form (or at least a uniform line to maintain the overall



Figure 5. View from room block #4, of the log and plank floor being removed from room block #3. In the foreground is the interior dividing wall foundation, to the right is the central wall of the house. Upper left is the gable end wall that has been stabilized with a new concrete foundation.

dimensions and measurements of the house) that vary only 2" in width and 3" in length.

The walls range in thickness from 10" to 14" and are constructed of sun-dried or soft-fired adobe bricks, measuring 4 1/2" wide by 9 1/2" long and 3 1/2" thick (Figure 6), laid in Common (American) bond. The walls were plastered with a scratch coat of adobe mud and a finish coat of lime plaster on the interior surfaces. The modern exterior wall finish is a cement, lime, and sand stucco. The Common (American) bond pattern consists of five courses of stretchers (bricks running parallel to the wall line) with staggered overlapping joints, two wythes (or courses) thick. The first and each sixth course thereafter are of headers, which are bricks set at right angles to the wall surface. These bricks are used to tie the two wythes (courses) together. The walls of room blocks #3 were exposed and the masonry

bond could be examined in detail (Figure 7). The outside and center walls demonstrated the regular 1-5-1 bond pattern of headers and stretchers. However, the end wall was irregular, showing a mixed pattern of 1-6-1-5-1-4, with the bond becoming tighter ascending the gable end. Fireplaces and chimneys are integral to the gable end walls and have been left in place and repaired where necessary to maintain the mass and support they provide to the structure. The bricks used in the construction were of two types with no discernable pattern of placement. The least common type is of a chalk-gray colored clay, and the more common has a tan-to-red, gritty temper. Both are well-suited for building, however, friable examples of both types were found. The gray type, referred to as "blue adobe" in the pioneer journals (Worthington et al. 1979), is slightly more brittle, and when broken flakes



Figure 6. Examples of the tan-to-red sun-dried, sometimes referred to as soft-fired adobe bricks. The red, sandstone, grinding wheel and logging chains were found in the cellar. The bricks measure 4 1/2" wide by 9 1/2" long and 3 1/2" thick, the wheel is 12" in diameter.

somewhat like shale. The gray clay was reported to have been brought in from the North Meadow, which is located north of town on the valley floor. The tan-to-red type, when broken, crumbles to a gritty, sandy material, resembling the alluvial material of the foothills. Some straw or plant matter was found in the discarded bricks, but it was not abundant.

Windows and doorways were of a flat arch type with rough-cut, lumber lintels topped off with perpendicular header bricks. Splayed side walls were a unique feature of the window openings. The opening, narrowest on the external side of the wall and widening on the inside, allowed a wider angle for sunlight to enter and illuminate the room. The doorways of the hall (room block #2) are flush with the interior walls, with only the

wooden frame extending the doorway out from the wall (Figure 8).

The second floor is divided into three roughly equal spaces, with rooms at each end of the house and a hallway with adjoining bath and stairway occupying the central space. The stairway and bath are relatively late additions, and access in the original plan was most likely by ladder or steep stairs from the parlor (room block #1) in the same area that the stairway today ascends over a closet on the ground floor. The end walls (north and south) are formed by the chimneys and gable ends of the house. The chimneys have been blocked off and now serve to vent the attic space. The side walls (east and west) are half-height, at which point the ceiling, being part and parcel of the low-pitch roof, slopes up to a maximum ceiling height of 6' 4". Above this is a small attic



Figure 7. View of the central wall of the house in room block #3 from room block #4. Note the split log ceiling support bolted to the top of the wall, the walls bond pattern and adobe mud scratch coat can also be seen.

space at the roof's peak. The rafters, constructed of rough-sawn lumber, have been reinforced with later kiln-dried, dimensional lumber. The rough-sawn floor joists of the second floor were cut longer than the span of the rooms with the ends cut on a diagonal taper. The ends were then placed in notches in the adobe wall for support and covered with irregular widths of 1" thick planks that serve as the upstairs floor.

The ceiling and roof of room blocks, #3, #4 and #5, are constructed with newer kiln-dried dimensional lumber, which indicates a later remodeling episode. However, the original log supports, which run the entire length of the building, are still in place to support the roof. A unique support was originally used to suspend

the ceiling lumber in this area and is still in place in room block #3. A log slab is bolted to the central adobe wall (see Figure 7) with notches cut to hold the lumber pieces that extend down over the outside wall.

The floors of the main level, constructed in the original phase of construction, were of four different types, and their deconstruction and removal has been revealing of the home's history through the years. It is evident from the orientation of the superstructure and our observations during renovations that the log and plank floors in room blocks #1, #2, #3, and #5 were constructed in the original phase and, with the exception of room block # 5, had remained intact and undisturbed to the time of the renovation. The floor of room

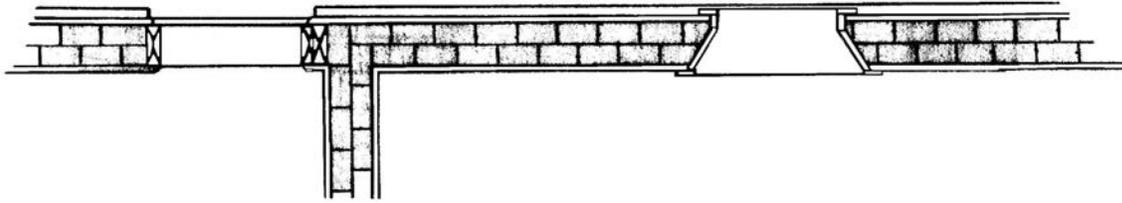


Figure 8. Typical wall section showing door and window openings.

block #5 was significantly altered when water and sewer services were installed, and artifacts recovered there span nearly the entire lifetime of the home. While each floor is unique, the floor of room block # 4 is the most diverse, and gives a revealing and informative portrayal of the home's overall history and development through time. The floor of room block #4 was originally linoleum over a hard packed lime and mud concrete base, with three more successive living floors added through time. A collection of spikes and nails used in the construction has been saved. Nails began to be commercially produced in Nephi in the late 1850s (McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979).

Work began in room block #1, as the small shallow cellar there needed to be shored up because of its collapsing entryway. The cellar floor's depth was taken down to a more comfortable height. Cinder block walls were erected and grouted solid, and the doorway casement was set in concrete. Beams were then set in place to support storage shelves around the perimeter and the original split log and plank floor left in place above. The original cellar plan used juniper post supports and the floor and walls were plastered with a thick lime plaster finish (Figure 9). The eastern wall was coursed with a mix of adobe bricks and stones, and it was in this wall that a red grinding wheel made from stone was found. Several logging chains were found hanging from the beams and buried in the loose fill on the floor (see Figure 6).

It was in room block #2 that the layered nature of the living floors was first noticed. The existing

carpet was first removed to expose the hardwood flooring, and when that was removed the original split log and plank flooring came into view. In this instance, the split log joists were supported by a central full log that was laid directly on the ground, running north-south down the center of the room (Figures 10 and 11). An axe had been used to fashion simple saddle notch joints where the central log and the floating split log joists intersected. The joists were leveled and supported at the ends by stones in the foundation or rocks lain directly on the ground. This is the only room in which this type of central support beam floor was found.

As the floor was removed and the area was cleaned up and readied for new construction, a number of artifacts were found (Figure 12). First was a tidy collection of corncobs, with long bones and ribs of a young sheep, found in front of and near the side of the fireplace. This later was remembered as the "last supper." There was also a low three-by-four-foot oval mound of lime or gypsum that was probably used in the plaster coat of the interior walls. Also found were a number of scattered fruit pits, a few scraps of leather, a pocket knife and blade, a carved wooden tool and pencil, marbles, and fragments of metal and ceramic. Along the east wall, at the doorway leading to the back rooms of the house, were a number of clothing-related items, including buttons, a thread spool, and a clothespin that had fallen down along the baseboards. Here also was a unique token inscribed with a "Deseret beehive." In front of the fireplace were pieces of red sandstone, likely used as part of a hearth.

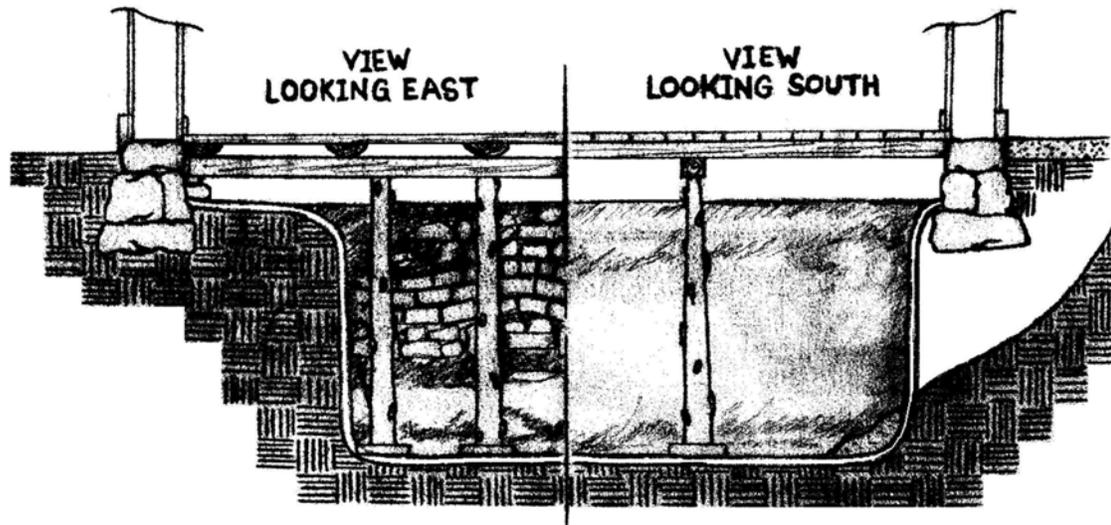


Figure 9. This is a split view of the cellar, looking east on the left and facing south on the right. The stone grinding wheel was found built into the east adobe and stone coursed wall. Much of the heavy lime plaster that lined the walls and floor was still intact.

As they were removed to make way for the new floor construction, a number of small corncobs under the northwest corner were discovered. Having attended the Goshen Elementary school as a child, where we danced and braided the May Pole each spring, I wanted to believe this might represent another “Old World” tradition of making a dedicatory offering at the hearth. But it is just as likely the work of small rodents.

At the time of renovation, room blocks #3 and #4 formed a single room that served as the kitchen and dining area, respectively. As the modern carpet and linoleum were removed it was revealed that an adobe dividing wall between the room blocks had been in place prior to the construction of this latest floor. The earlier hardwood floor and log and plank floors were present here, as throughout the rest of the house in prior times. However, at the same time that the dividing wall had been removed and covered over, water lines were installed overlaying its stone foundation and the log and plank floor below. A channel had been cut into

the hardwood floor to carry these same water pipes across room block #4 to the kitchen area in room block #3. Documentary sources show that the culinary water system in Nephi was begun in 1893, most households were served by 1901, and major improvements made to the system in 1947 (Worthington et al. 1979). From the piping materials, and the carpet and linoleum used in the latest floor, it would seem that the water system described here was installed sometime after this latest date. Room block #4 also proved to be unique in that a log served as the exterior wall foundation, not stone, and the orientation of each floor level was perpendicular to those in the rest of the house, possibly indicating a separate phase of construction.

After removing the multiple floors of the kitchen area, we began to clean up the loose fill of dirt that had accumulated over the years. Along the east wall of room block #4 my son, Zachary, found a couple of small blue beads. We fashioned a makeshift screen of 3/8 inch wire mesh, proceeded in a more careful fashion to

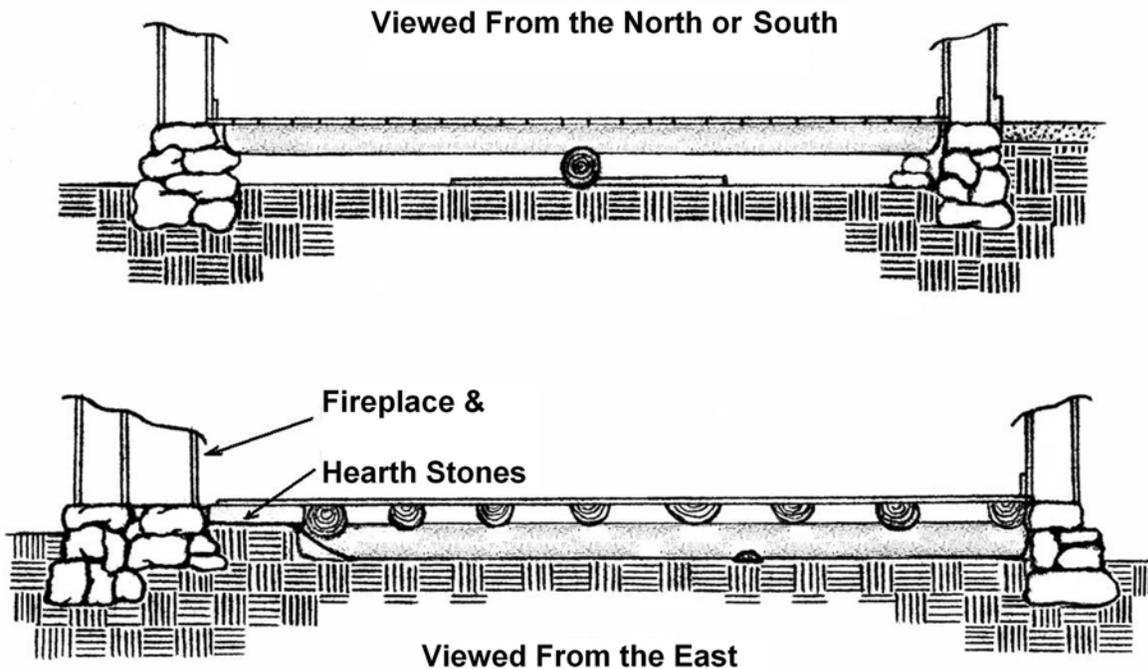


Figure 10. Detail drawings of the central support beam floor construction in room block #2. Viewed from the north or south above, and from the east below.

excavate the fill, and found several more beads of varying sizes. The most abundant artifacts recovered are without question fruit pits; more than one hundred were found, the majority being plum and apricot. It was sometime after we stopped collecting them that we realized they were of two different kinds, but the majority were plum. There were less than twenty peach pits and few cherry pits found. There were a good number of nut shells as well: a half dozen or more walnut and others not yet identified in the collection. Women's items were well represented with hair pins, combs and brooches, and sewing items. Children's toys were also found, including an arm and a leg from porcelain dolls (that became known as "Venus de Milo's limbs") a collection of marbles, and a small handmade wooden animal – a quadruped missing both front legs (Figure 12). There were fragments of metal, knives, leather, and a large quantity of ceramic and glass sherds.

Though not as prevalent, some coins were found that date to the mid 1900s. Other unexpected items were discovered, including a large sample of whittled or shaped wedges, picks, and other such implements, as well as a tube or a straw and a bucket handle, all made from wood.

Plant starts were often obtained from the Salt Lake Valley, and transplanted in Nephi (McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979). Under the floorboards of room block #3 we found a small ceramic planter that would serve well in transporting such seedlings (also known as "starts"). McCune further notes that John and Jonathon Ostler operated a tannery "which provided leather for the shoes which were made by them and other shoemakers in the towns at that time, as well as supplying harness makers with the necessary leather for their businesses" (McCune 1947:98). A vintage photograph from the Chapman collection shows John Ostler, the



Figure 11. Photo of the central support beam floor in room block #2. The doorway leading to room block #4 is at the upper right.

original owner of this property and first boot maker of record in Nephi, in front of his place of business (Figure 13) (McCune 1947:99; Worthington et al. 1979:33). This brings us to what I consider the “crown jewel” of the artifact collection: a complete, if small sized, woman’s shoe (Figure 14) was recovered close to where the ceramic planter was found in room block #3.

As the cleanup across room block #4 continued, a pioneer or lime and mud concrete (in which the floors logs were set and leveled) was identified. According to Carter and Goss (1988), this mixture “refers to an indigenous form of concrete containing specific proportions of lime and mud.” The sample collected from this floor also contains a considerable amount



Figure 12. Clockwise from left: The ‘last supper,’ corn from beneath the hearth stone; brooches and coins; children’s toys and the ‘Deseret beehive’ Mormon token. The scale is of centimeter squares, 15 cm in length.

of charcoal, an indication that the lime, or gypsum, had been either cooked or baked. In this excavation, fragments of fabric-impressed clay were found, and eventually an identifiable piece of linoleum with the tell-tale fabric lining turned up. Although this slowed the excavation, several areas with intact smoothed and compacted clay floor that once underlay the linoleum were identified. This had been the original form of the floor in room block #4, which explains the disconnected alignment of the later log and plank floor superstructure with that of the rest of the house, and brings to four the total number of living floors identified here in room block #4 (Figure 15).

Room block #5 had served as the bath and laundry rooms, as it does today. The floor had been significantly altered at the time that water and sewer services were installed. The original

dividing wall between room blocks #4 and #5 was most likely removed at this same time to make room for the new stairway and plumbing to the second floor, and then replaced with a framed lumber wall. Artifacts recovered here span nearly the entire lifetime of the home, from a civil war era U.S. cavalry sharpening stone (Ron Meyers, personal communication 2007), to a screwdriver with synthetic handle that, with the exception of the heavily corroded metal part, would not look out of place in my tool set today.

As this goes to press, the construction of a new garage is turning up new artifacts and details about the property. Found from the area of a backyard flower garden is an 1817 British Silver Halfcrown of George III, a silver coin only minted in the years 1816 and 1817.

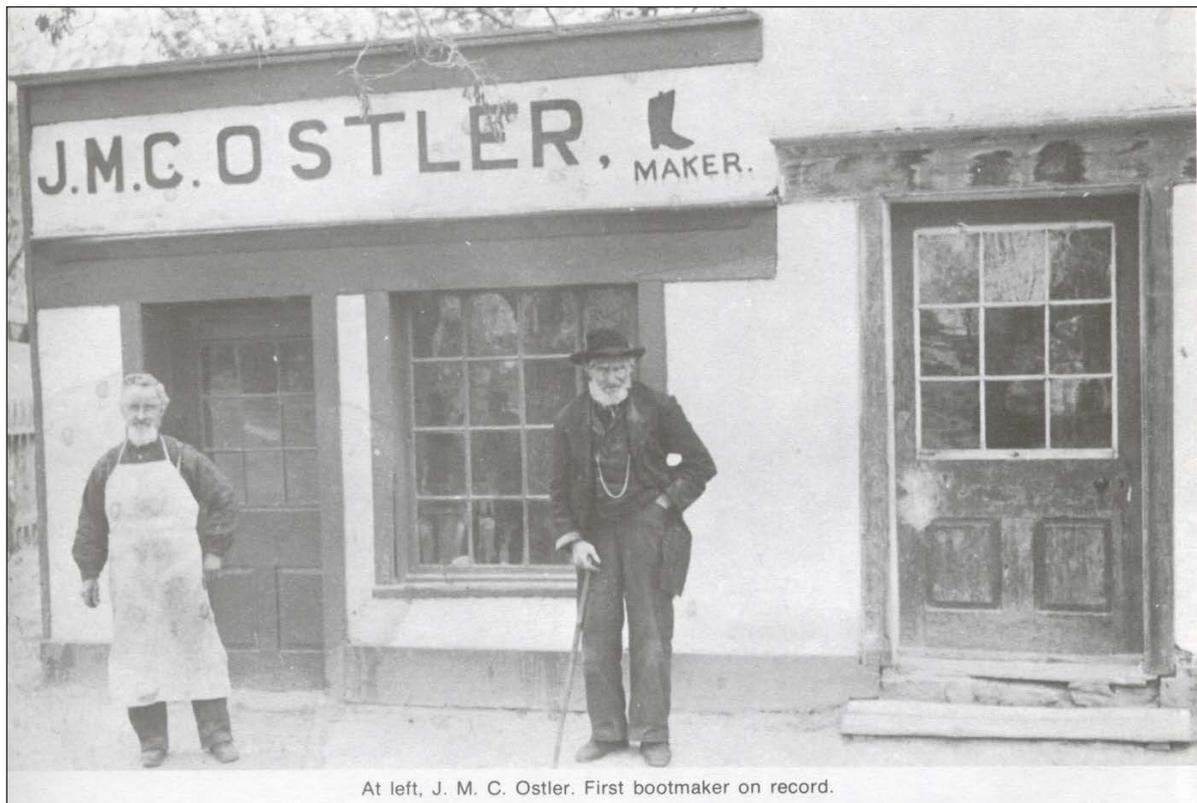


Figure 13. Vintage photograph from the Chapman collection of John Ostler in front of his place of business. McCune 1947; Worthington et al. 1979; Juab (Salt Creek) Company of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers.

Conclusion

First conceived and initiated for a presentation at the 2007 USAS/UPAC Convention, this article is a summary of the work undertaken to document a settlement period home in Nephi, Utah. Further, the study might be viewed as a complimenting material component to the work of previous workers. Most notably: the Juab (Salt Creek) Company of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers historian, Alice Paxman McCune, and Keith N. Worthington, Sadie H. Greenalgh and Fred J. Chapman, and of the Utah State Historical Society's Pearl D. Wilson, June McNulty, and David Hampshire. Their work has been indispensable in tying this old house to the times and to the land from which it was raised.

Much has been learned. This is a humble vernacular home, made of local materials at hand

to endure along with the land and community. From the documentary record and construction materials we can be sure that it was erected in the early decades of the settlement period, beginning most likely in late 1864, or early 1865. The finding of a large collection of leather fragments and an intact shoe supports the report of the original owner being John Ostler, the first boot maker in Nephi, and that it was here he set out to contribute to the development of a simple agricultural community while making a new life for himself and his family.

The evidence supports the view that they relied on local food supplies of corn, plum, apricot, sheep, cattle and small animals such as chicken and possibly rabbit. The personal and household items represent a family life busy with young children. Tools found here are of a simple



Figure 14. Selected artifacts from room block #3. Clockwise from the upper left: The small hand thrown pot; the small size woman's shoe; leather and metal fragments; and a selection of ceramic pieces. The scale is of centimeter squares, 20 cm in length.

and basic nature used in building and maintaining the home. Often of local manufacture, I was surprised by the several whittled or shaped wooden implements.

In researching the ceramics from this project I was fortunate to visit the excavation of the Thomas Davenport pottery kiln site in Parowan, Utah, and the concurrent exhibition of early Utah pottery at the Iron Mission State Park Museum in Cedar City, Utah, under the direction of Timothy J. Scarlett, Director of the Utah Pottery Project, Michigan Technological University. Dr. Scarlett was kind enough to provide descriptions of a number of the pottery pieces from my collection. The small seedling flower pot is described as a "small earthenware pot, very well fired, hand thrown. Fabric has coarse sand inclusions,

possible temper." The majority of the sherds are simple imported "white improved earthenware (WIE)," with a few that were perhaps ironstone, sometimes improperly referred to as "porcelainous WIE." A small number of sherds are of a WIE type with a blue transfer printed interior. A single fragment, probably of a teacup or small pitcher of European origin is described as "WIE fabric, exterior-black transfer print on blue underglaze, with polychrome overglaze-green and yellow." Other examples include stoneware, possibly Utah made, with an exterior salt glaze and the interior unglazed, and lead glazed earthenware with "paste varying from red to buff or yellow."

Several construction episodes can be discerned and deserve comment. In the original

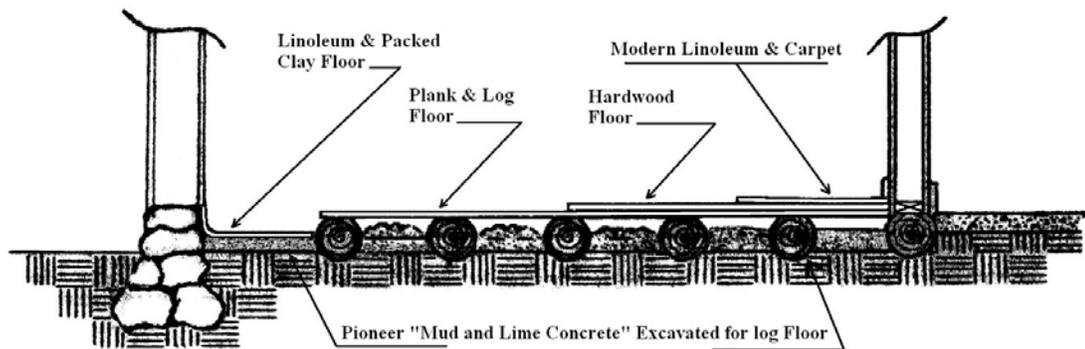


Figure 15. Detail drawing, illustrating through time, the four living floors found in room block #4. From left to right: The mud and lime concrete and linoleum floor; the log and plank floor; the hardwood floor; the modern carpet and linoleum floor.

phase, four of the five room blocks were laid out with similarly oriented log and plank floors, while room block #4 was provided with a floor of hard-packed pioneer or lime and mud concrete overlain with linoleum. Room block #4 seems to have been a central traffic area with entrances from the front “Hall and Parlor” section of the home and from the yard to the rear, and provided access to the living spaces in room blocks #3 and #5. A small shallow cellar was in place below the parlor or room block #1, and access to the upper floor would have been from room block #1. The next phase of construction appears to have been the installation of the log and plank floor in room block #4 with an orientation perpendicular to that of the other floors. The activities of the inhabitants had worn the flooring down between the polished knots of the planks, leaving material evidence of a long-lived in living space. In the third phase of construction, a uniform hardwood flooring was placed over the log and plank floors throughout the house, laid out perpendicular to the flooring below.

The most extensive renovations were undertaken in the fourth and final episode of construction before the work was done for this project. At that time, most likely after 1947, the adobe walls separating the three room blocks in the rear were removed. This is most likely the

same time that the roof and ceiling in the lean-to section of the house was replaced, and the rafters of the upper floor reinforced. Much of the floor in room block #5 was opened up to install the water and sewer services throughout the house. A frame wall was put in place to divide room block #5 from room block #4, leaving space to open a new stairway to the upper floors. A channel for the water pipes was cut into the hardwood floor of room block #4, and they were laid on top of the planks and stone foundation left in place below. The piping continued on to the kitchen area in room block #3, and the floor there was left intact. A bath and laundry was installed over room block #5, and water services were routed up the stairway to a second floor bath. Then, a final modern floor of carpet and linoleum was installed to cover this work. It is hard to tell when the less intrusive installations of the electrical and telephone systems were put in place, but any needed upgrades were probably done at this time as well.

The work of documenting, cataloging, and analyzing the artifacts and observations goes on and may last a lifetime. In the process of going to press, a project undertaken by Dinah Eastop (Senior Lecturer) at the Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, England, was brought to my attention. The project enlists

anthropologists, archaeologists, curators, historians, and other scientists to documents the folk practice of deliberately concealing objects within the fabric of buildings, a practice prevalent in Britain and Northern Europe for centuries, with some instances known from the United States and Canada. One study from the project shows the practice reached its height from 1800-1899, with few instances prior to 1600 or after 1900, though this may reflect a bias due to the type and ages of buildings available for investigation today. Caches have been found in building foundations, walls, under floorboards, in window frames and in staircases, and often include items of dress, shoes (seldom in pairs), bottles, animal bones, seeds, and nuts. The practice is thought to represent folk magic or superstitious traditions relating to the ritual protection of a household and its inhabitants.

This information may be valuable in understanding the placement and distribution of artifacts in the Nephi home. A misplaced toy, bead, coin, token or clothespin falling behind the baseboard or falling through the cracks is easy to understand. A scrap of leather, a charcoal (graphite) marker, a fragment of metal or a pocket knife being dropped and lost during construction is to be expected, but other instances continue to pose questions and remain perplexing. John Ostler was a recent convert to the new Mormon religion when he left England in 1861 at the age 21. The caches of corn and bones near to and beneath the hearthstones in the hall, or room block #2, as well as the shoe and ceramic planter situated under the floorboards of room block #3, might represent folk traditions learned in his boyhood home, and placed for the protection of his new American home.

A study of this kind is certainly of value to the property, its owners, and hopefully to other investigators at work today, and to the community at large. From this experience I have come to believe this kind of project can be a very rewarding avenue for the avocational archaeologist, historian, and homeowner wishing to make a contribution to the record.

The approach can easily be adapted to projects in any community and in collaboration with many of our neighbors as well as organizations, local, regional or statewide. ■

Acknowledgments. This project is dedicated to my wife, Hilda, and my sons, Zachary and Daniel. The work we have accomplished together, turning this old house into a home, has instilled in me a great sense of pride, and I hope this will in some way recompense them for the tolerance and indulgence they have granted me over the years.

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