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Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Project: Plymouth Colony Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey

Supported by a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, The Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research at University of Massachusetts Boston, in conjunction with Plimoth Plantation, is undertaking a thematic reconnaissance survey of the archaeological resources related to the Plymouth Colony. The survey area focuses on the settlement around historic Plymouth Bay, including the current Towns of Plymouth, Kingston, Marshfield and Duxbury. While a major focus is on the period of the Plymouth Colony (1620-1691), we are also interested in Native American sites that immediately pre-date or are contemporaneous with the Colony.

This project includes: 1) a review of known site information and existing archaeological collections; 2) historical research on potential site locations; 3) compilation of modern and historic map data in a GIS database; 4) ranking of archaeological resource potential and sensitivity of different areas; 5) preparation of a descriptive and interpretive report summarizing the results of this work; and 6) preparation of site forms for any new sites identified.

We plan to include a focus on areas of downtown Plymouth, especially the core area of the earliest fortified settlement and the surrounding neighborhood. This area has seen substantial modern development and urban renewal, raising concerns about site integrity and making the identification of potential sites challenging. The reconnaissance survey will include non-destructive geophysical remote sensing of one or more sites in the downtown Plymouth area to test the effectiveness of this equipment for site identification and assessment.

This work will be done in collaboration with Plimoth Plantation and with the Native American Institute at UMass Boston. We will work to ensure that Native perspectives and concerns are integrated into the project from the outset. We will also work with Plimoth Plantation—drawing on the museum's expertise in public education and public programming—to help translate our archaeological work for a broader audience.