

An archaeological dig at the Lee/Redd farm duplex site May and June 2008

Farm owner Gordon Pace planned to plant the field where John D. Lee began the duplex in 1869. We had taken a tour of the farm in 2007 with a group from the Lee reunion. Some partial bricks lay exposed so sent a few people down the fence line to pick up brick pieces for the group. One man from the south came back with two brick clumps where whole bricks were melted together. He had unearthed them, probably because a corner of one was peeking out of the plowed earth. This new thing intrigued me.

The Pace family had long been unearthing bricks and giving them to Redd and Lee family who came to see their historical families' farm, but none were like those in the melted clumps which appeared to have more sand content and so melted and warped and were greener in color. I wanted to dig for some of those bricks.



Gordon was unsure about anything being under the earth. He told me that his father had leveled the land and that they had been plowing, planting, and removing rocks (foundation stones?) for 100 years. In the fall of 2007, we talked of a dig by backhoe but by spring when Gordon returned from his winter vacation in Yuma, he had misgivings about such a large movement of his ground. When time came, he allowed we were to dig for one day before he got the field ready for planting. As we unearthed stuff and his planting was delayed by family and weather events, he added a day or two at a time until we had the whole month of May 2008 to dig.

Still ever the gentleman of his southern ancestral tradition, Gordon put his deepest plow on his tractor and plowed the field to unearth some bricks for us. Pioneer apple tree exists on fence line to right of tractor scoop.



As Gordon and plow neared part where we suspected the bricks we wanted might lie, as determined by

the discovery by the Lee of last fall and the melted brick remnants on the surface, the plow hung up on something large as it passed. We started the dig at that point and found it was a large foundation rock. Gordon then left off plowing of that strip to let us dig.

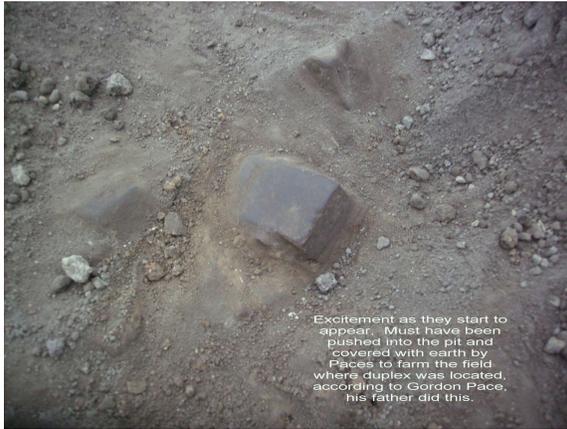


At first, we started the dig with small shovels, whiskbrooms and a probe. My crack archaeological team consisted of two young grandsons and me. The first find was a copper spoon and then some whole bricks brought to top by the plow.





Dig begins where plow struck rock. Note the warped brick in front, and the bright orange brick that we later learned were subject to melting by being under fired. Flop bricks used in duplex construction?



Excitement as they start to appear. Must have been pushed into the pit and covered with earth by Paces to farm the field where duplex was located, according to Gordon Pace, his father did this.



Dig joined by older grandson and we are carefully exposing bricks and leaving them in place though time is limited.

Redd history notes the collapse of the duplex chimneys. Maybe due to the nature of the homemade bricks, which the Mormon Chronicles, the diaries of John D. Lee, show as being burned on July 4, 1869.

Read the full entry to get a feel of what place Lee felt he had in the town and then the next entry on July 24, 1869 which shows he apparently did. He was not asked to be main speaker on the fourth, but was on the 24th.

The bricks to right look as if pushed into the pit with mortar still holding groups of them in place.



Below, warped and with its own "ring or tone" when clinked together. Appears to an artist's and not schooled historian's eye to be a different kind of earthenware clay mixed with silica in sand.



Notice the shape of the Lee indent on the brick to left, unique among other bricks of early houses, smaller and deeper. To right is a group of bricks with mortar in place that would have been a walk or hearth?



Richard Jensen, an experienced bottle hunter joined the dig and began in earnest with a shovel, just harvesting the bricks right and left--we had had our play acting fun at a trowel and broom cautious dig. Using his instructions, we unearthed a foundation wall below plow line indicating three partial sides. Two corners of a pit building. Since I only know of one pit building, the potato pit that Ann Gordge fell into that caused the incident that led to her leaving John D. Lee, I wonder if this was that pit house. Emma Lee and Ann Gordge, the younger wives, occupied the brick duplex at time the Lee's sold the farm to Lemuel Redd and left for Paria.



Stacks of bricks harvested and ready for transport..

Bricks butted snugly against east pit foundation. Note where plow line is by the broken bricks above and the whole bricks below reach of the plow.



Four bricks below show warping and three show normal clay on one half and the high silica or glassy content clay warping the other half as if molds were half full of one and then filled with other but why this way? Maybe an experiment?

These warped bricks will go in the proposed New Harmony Town museum or a room in the hoped for town hall. We do not have a large hall for town meetings for non-denominational things. We are allowed a little leeway to use the church for some public functions.



The fused bricks below have opposite sides facing camera, one up, one down-the only fused ones we found.



Richard hit a crock and dug it out. He said it was old enough to have been in Lee era. The broken pieces of a newer brown one were taken by him for reconstructing. A pepper bottle, some horseshoes were unearthed. Many pottery shards and horseshoe of indeterminate period were found on the surface after the plowing. The crock was found in west part of dig(probably middle of the pit foundation. where no bricks were located. A piece of broken slate was located in higher layer and north of it.



The 100 years of plowing has moved bricks, and pottery shards all round the field. A group of town children scoured the field and found many pieces.

To recover all, you would have to screen the top two feet of the field. A field that is being turned into pasture. We were happy to have been given the opportunity to dig this site before the planting.

We have many partial bricks to give to the families of those who occupied the farm duplex when they visit.

New Harmony Heritage is not longer an active non-profit. All funds and inventories donated to New Harmony Town.