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Archaeological Research at Riel House, Manitoba, 1976

The rationale for the Riel House archaeology project can be traced to its designation as a National Historic Site in 1969. The location is in the St. Vital district of Winnipeg and supports the only existing structure related to the family life of Louis Riel in Manitoba. This building was the third family residence and was the home he returned to in 1868 following his education in Montreal. The property was then owned by Julie de Lagimodiere, Riel's widowed mother, and occupied by seven other members of the family. Louis Riel resided at this house until the capture of Fort Garry and formation of the Provisional Government in 1869.

Preliminary plans for the development of the site have been formulated and the archaeological study was accordingly carried out in 1976. The project was a single season endeavour encompassing developmental and research problems. The demand aspects of the program were defined by the need for visitor related facilities including a parking area and interpretation center (Fig. 1). Archaeological testing of the site was aided by the limited size of the property and prior knowledge of the projected disturbance. The main area of importance was the immediate vicinity of Riel House which would be disrupted by the construction of an underground visitor reception center. Other locations involve a parking lot in the southeast quadrant of the property and the intermediate area affected by an access tunnel connecting the two components. The most important of the planning issues was to determine if Riel House still stands in the location of original construction. Other questions included determining the characteristics of an annex in relation to the main building and resolving the historical problem of whether or not the

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Riel family was representative of the Metis community.

Historical Background

The Metis people came into being as a direct result of the fur trade. They were of mixed European and Indian blood although the term was applied most frequently to those of French and Indian descent especially, whatever the relative proportions of genetic contribution. Many of these people settled in the Red River area where they had access to employment either in fur trade ventures or the bison hunt and pemmican trade. Settlement was accelerated by the amalgamation of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies in 1821 and the subsequent closures of many fur trade posts. During this period - the 1820's - the Metis seem to have developed their cultural identity. As an artistic expression, for example, they developed a naturalistic variety of floral art decoration commonly applied to clothing and trappings (Brasser 1976: 55, 56). A lifestyle with a round of casual farming coupled with an almost ritualized buffalo hunt was another characteristic. Population pressures and limited employment opportunities led increasingly to the illicit trade in furs and eventually de facto breaking of the Hudson's Bay monopoly in 1849 (Gosman 1976: 15). Many Metis were active in these events and several attained positions of political importance. Some of these people, in the year following, became wealthy and respected leaders. Against this background of divergent class development can be documented the Riel House site occupations.

The property on which Riel House stands was first owned and occupied by Pierre Parenteau in 1835. A census states the family consisted of husband, wife, and five children. A house and stable were present and five acres were under cultivation. In 1843 his farm was sixth in order of size among St. Boniface farmers. By 1849 he had six Red River carts which was fourth in terms of ownership among the St. Boniface Metis. The farm was sold in 1849 to F. Gendron who was a 40 year old native of Rupertsland with a wife and four children. This family owned a house, stable and barn which probably were built by the previous occupants. They also had some livestock and cultivated eight acres.

In 1864 the property was sold to Julie de Lagimodiere, widow of Jean-Louis Riel. This family reflected a slightly different lifestyle from that of the previous occupants. Jean-Louis, father of Louis Riel, was an educated man who married a daughter of an affluent Metis family. He actively engaged in the social, political and industrial life of St. Boniface. Although Jean-Louis farmed on a moderate scale and had some livestock his main ambition focused on milling operations. It was this industrial enterprise that got him into debt. The debt was still being charged against his estate in 1868. Jean-Louis Riel in the words of Bob Gosman (1976:97)"...had definitely been a Canadien in outlook and temperament. His friends and associates were among the leading bourgeois of his community. His children had been educated and had married into prominent families." The family which came to the

site consisted of a widow and seven children. Two other offspring, Louis and Sara, were away from home receiving further education. The children present on the farm ranged from 14 years to one year old and were somewhat inexperienced or too young to participate fully in a farming endeavour. The farm gradually became a viable economic unit and as the family matured some individuals married and left while still others moved in.

The historical documentation indicates significant differences in family size, age and composition, and distinctions of economic level between families occupying the site. This is particularly evident for the Parenteau and Riel periods of habitation. Yet each family living on the site was a part of the developing St. Boniface core of farmers, merchants and industrialists. The archaeological data can next be correlated against this brief historical sketch.

Riel House and Metis Life in Red River

The excavations at Riel House extended over approximately 560 square meters (Fig. 2). All areas of projected development were surveyed archaeologically. The dominant observation was that most of the site had been extensively cultivated through more than a century of farming activity. Only the area around Riel House showed high potential regarding early historic features and density of artifactual deposition. Extensive excavations resulted in destroying structural remains to obtain evidence on construction details, contextual data and associated artifacts.

The ruins of three early historic buildings were unearthed on the site (Fig. 3). Two of these structures dated from the earliest habitation of the property while the third was an annex to Riel House itself. Each of the areas evidenced wooden foundation elements, a cellar depression and associated artifacts. This information represented an almost continuous occupation dating from 1835 to 1969. Analysis of the results focused on providing information directly related to interpretative and developmental problems of the site.

Structure 1

The remains of this structure were contained in broad excavation units near the south west corner of Riel House (Fig. 4). The foundation remains were fragmentary but taken in association with a cellar depression and diagnostic artifacts it was possible to outline the small building.

Only the ruins of the foundation were still evident. These included the vestiges of a base log for the west wall and four wood foundation shims. The outline formed by these elements attested to a rectangular ground plan with an E-W dimension of 5.0 m by 4.0 m N-S.

There were two wooden foundation blocks supporting the base log remnant. These shims were perpendicular to the orientation of the foundation beam and had been squared in cross-section. The larger

block was 42 cm long x 22 cm wide x 5 cm thick. It was sawn square on the western end but was pointed at the opposite extremity. Cut marks at this location exhibited the smooth angular characteristics of a driven wedge or axe chop. The smaller wood shim measured 40 cm long x 11 cm wide x 3 cm thick, but was very fragmentary at both ends.

The only other wood remains congruent with the proposed structure consisted of another two foundation blocks situated near the northwest and southeast corners of the building. These shims were similar in size and form to those occurring under the base log and also lacked associated hardware. All of the blocks rested in slight depressions on an undisturbed soil horizon.

The south end of the foundation log along the west wall was the only intact perimeter beam. This timber was squared in cross-section with a width of 20 cm and thickness of 9 cm. The southern extremity of this member had been roughly sawn square. There were no evidences of overlapping, notching or morticing details. These characteristics, however, might not have been visible due to the advanced state of decay. No hardware was attached to the base log although it directly overlay two wooden shims. The underside of the timber had an elevation of 232.22 m A.M.S.L. This is equivalent to 50 cm below the bottom of the wood blocking which underlies the base logs at the southwest corner of Riel House (Elder, West, Dalibard 1973: Figs. 16, 36).

Approximately one-half of the cellar depression in this structure had been destroyed by the recent construction of a concrete foundation under Riel House. This disruption post-dates the Winnipeg flood of 1950 and included a builder's trench, cement block footing, and a concrete perimeter beam. The corner footing was the single most disruptive element because it extended below the bottom of the cellar.

This feature existed as an earth walled dugout with sides sloping in towards the bottom. The basic form of the cellar was rectanguloid in plan view with an E-W dimension of 2.4 m x 1.4 m N-S, measured near the surface. The floor was irregularly flat and registered a depth of 0.95 m below the underside of the base log. Soil deposition within this feature was characterized by a few major stratigraphic layers with several smaller lenses and thin bands.

Depositional Remains

Artifacts uncovered near the surface and close to the foundation elements exhibited a broad temporal range implying a disturbed context. The correlation of material culture data and the occupation of the structure is therefore based on items recovered from deposits in the cellar. The operative assumption was that the depression and surrounding wood features were essentially contemporaneous.

Most of the artifacts from the cellar comprised household and personal articles. These items included ceramic tableware, glassware, cutlery, bottles, smoking pipes, thimble, beads, and pin. A few corroded square nails were the only hardware pieces present. A single wool fragment of twill weave was also recovered. The faunal materials represented mammals, birds, fish and shellfish.

The earthenware sherds were the most numerous and diagnostic of the artifact classes. There were 24 distinct decorative patterns. The various designs ranged from floral to geometric to Chinese motifs. Most of the decoration was applied underglaze blue transfer print. There was also one green transfer printed specimen, one stamped example, a sponge decorated saucer, and a multi-colored hand painted cup. Only two of the objects could be conclusively identified as COPELAND-LATE SPODE, although patterns on 11 other specimens were known to have been used by the Spode and Copeland companies. Dates of manufacture were available for nine of the designs. These began in 1816 (1) followed by 1828 (1), 1830 (1), 1833 (2) and 1847 (4). The terminal date of production was 1867 for several decorative styles, although at least one pattern is still turned out today. Five forms clearly exhibited cup, saucer, dinner plate, luncheon plate and soup bowl shapes. Fragments of two other vessels suggested a pitcher-type container and a small scalloped platter. Cups (3) and saucers (4) were the most frequent forms followed by a single specimen each of all the other ware shapes. There was only one pattern which could be identified on more than one object, and this on both a cup and saucer.

The small amount of glassware in the deposit included fragments of three bottles and one stemware object. The only diagnostic element was a base and side sherd of a "Perry Davis Vegetable Pain Killer" medicine bottle dating after 1840. The other specimens appeared to be a condiment or food bottle, and a wine bottle.

A definitive relationship could not be established between artifacts from the area outside of the cellar and to the structure because of extensive disturbance. Several earthenware specimens were recovered which had patterns similar to those from the depression although no crossmends were observed. A number of other sherds had different designs but could be regarded as a contemporary sample. Several hardware items of nineteenth century origin were also uncovered that were potentially related to the fabric of the building. These artifacts consisted of wrought and cut nails.

Interpretation

The construction of the building was initiated by the laying and spacing of wood block elements directly on the ground. These shims supported the overlying foundation of large squared timbers. From the low frequency of hardware fastenings in the area it was inferred that these items were not essential to the construction. The presence of wrought and cut nails and datable artifacts from the cellar deposits was taken as evidence that the building could have been erected ca. 1835. The structure functioned as a dwelling with a cellar storage facility. Occupants of this house were probably members of the Pierre Parenteau family who owned the farm. These people made at least some purchases from the Hudson's Bay Company as evidenced by the ceramic materials. No earthenware set of a single decorative pattern was ever owned although almost all pieces exhibited designs. Smoking pipes evidenced the same variability in decoration and form. It is suggested that the structure was dismantled after 1847 because of the backfilled cellar.

The latter event occurred as late as 1850 based on the absence of diagnostic materials for that year. The time frame for these activities would correlate to the known transfer of ownership to Francois Gendron in 1849.

Structure 2

Remains of this building were uncovered in an excavation area to the east of Riel House (Fig. 5). The main features still evident included segments of the foundation, floor, and a cellar. Investigation of the wooden elements showed that two construction phases were represented. The first building erected was of squared logs in the Red River style while the smaller addition was composed of lighter frame materials. Most of the ruins consisted of foundation elements. The largest of these members were squared base logs along the east and west sides of the house. Several shims beneath these sills and to the north and south of the cellar depression completed the original structure outline. This area measured 5.8 m N-S x 4.90 m E-W.

Wood blocks of variable form and dimension supported and levelled all four walls. The shims rested on sterile ground and several were in slight depressions. Most of the remains were squared in cross section and the largest of these was 50 cm long x 16 cm wide and 6 cm thick. The smallest shim was under the west base log and measured 9 cm long x 7 cm wide x 1.5 cm thick. A corresponding position under the east sill was notable for a small depressed area which probably was another shim location. Most of the evidence for the placement of the north and south walls was dependent on shim remains, and one of these was a round section log north of the cellar.

The east and west wall foundation logs were the two major remaining structural timbers. Both members were square in cross section, rested directly on wood shims and did not exhibit in situ hardware.

The west wall foundation timber had a width of 16 cm and a thickness of 8 cm. The wood was poorly preserved and only a single notch could be located. This construction detail was in the underside of the member at the southern extremity where it was half-lapped with a fragment of the south wall base log. The ends of these timbers had not been cut flush with the walls. The elevation of the west base log was 232.19 m A.M.S.L.

The east wall base log was 16 cm wide x 10 cm thick. This timber was sufficiently well preserved to exhibit notching details in the upper surface. One of the notches was cut into the west side and top of the member. The notch measured 18 cm N-S x 11 cm E-W x 5 cm deep, with 4 cm of wood below. A second notch passed completely across the top of the log, had a 15 cm N-S dimension and depth of 5 cm with 5 cm of wood below. The northern end of the base log was fragmentary but hinted at the presence of a corner half-lap or a mortice. The south half of this timber was no longer in evidence, but a soil stain, a few square nails and a shim suggested its extension. The east base log had an elevation of 232.17 m A.M.S.L.

The north and south walls were indicated by the presence of

fragmentary ruins at the southwest and northeast corners. Complimentary data consisted of five wood shims perpendicular to the orientation of the walls.

The cellar was centrally located within the main part of the structure as an earth walled feature with sides sloping in towards the center. The cellar was circular in plan with a diameter of 3.90 m. The earth floor was flat, with a registered depth of 1.40 m below the underside of the base logs.

A few small posts and boards set on edge were found on the floor of the cellar. The boards had a thickness of 1.5 cm to 2.0 cm, and the width dimension reached to a maximum of 19 cm. The longer board was held on edge between two pairs of circular, tapered posts which had been driven into the ground more than 25 cm below the cellar floor. The shorter board was perpendicular to the first and leaned against one of the support posts sandwiching the longer board. No hardware fastenings were present in any of these remains which divided the cellar into sections which may have represented separate bins. Several other small posts also occurring at the bottom were of indeterminate significance.

Addition

Wood planks, joists and floorboards to the north of the original building indicated the presence of a small addition. The outline of this extension was 4.9 m E-W x 3.0 m N-S.

The lowermost building element of the addition was a small board under the east end of the southernmost plank joist. This shim was cut square on the south end and appeared broken at the other. The piece measured 15 cm long x 6 cm wide x 1.5 cm thick.

There were three plank floor joists which lay directly on the ground. The width of these members was highly variable due to the fragmentary condition of the remains. Maximum thickness was only 2 cm. The center joist consisted of two parallel boards with edges abutting.

The floor boards were laid perpendicular to the joists and fastened to them with nails. The boards were 14 to 16 cm wide x 2 cm thick, and were laid parallel with squared edges abutting. The side boards were slightly narrower (12 cm wide) and thicker (4 cm deep) and functioned as sole plates for framing the walls. A similar board was represented for the north wall at the east corner. Excavations below the floor boards and joists revealed a culture bearing layer containing quantities of fish scales and a few earthenware fragments post-dating 1833.

Depositional Remains

The artifacts recovered from the vicinity of Structure 2 proved that variable disturbance had taken place as deep as the foundation remains. Analysis of the material culture from the cellar deposit indicated that backfilling began post-1866. The late date presents a problem in establishing a correlation between these artifacts and the dating and

function of the structure. This is because the Riel family are not documented as having inhabited or made other use of buildings on the site erected earlier than Riel House or the Riel House annex.

Many of the artifacts in the deposit consisted of hardware and household items. This range included blacksmith tongs, wrought iron objects, shovels, hoe, ceramic tablewares, glassware and cutlery. Personal objects were represented by leather and textile clothing fragments, footwear, beads and buttons. The identified faunal materials evidenced a high proportion of young pig, but also included chicken, turkey, fish and shellfish.

The earthenware sherds were the most numerous and varied of the artifact classes with 49 different decorative patterns. Many of the styles incorporated floral, geometric, picturesque and oriental designs. There were also some plain white wares. Most of the decoration was underglaze blue transfer print although violet, green, and brown transfer print designs were represented. Other decorative techniques included stamped, sponge decorated, hand-painted and embossed or relief styles. The identified manufacturers included "COPELAND" (2 specimens), "J. & G. MEAKIN" (1) and "E & C ..." (1).

At least seventeen of the patterns were known to be used by Copeland although six of these had originally been produced by Spode. Other designs were used by J. & G. Meakin (2), J. Marshall and Son (1) and E & C ...(1). Dates of manufacture were available for 21 of the patterns. These began in 1818 (1) followed by 1828 (1), 1830 (1), 1833 (2), 1847 (9), 1850 (2), 1851 (2), 1854 (1), 1861 (1) and 1862 (1). The terms of production for many of the designs ran a minimum of 20 years. There were eight different forms including cups (2), saucers (6), soup bowls (2), dinner plates (4), tea pot (1), deep oval dish - possibly for gravy (1), large platter (1) and small platter (1).

The glassware sample from the cellar included bottles, glass oil lamp chimneys and font, toy marble and pane glass fragments. The most diagnostic specimen was an almost complete bottle of "RED JACKET BITTERS", produced by William Frank and Sons in Pittsburgh, Pa., between 1866 and 1876. Other bottles may have contained beer or wine (2) and medicines or condiments (5).

Interpretation

The basic foundation elements for this building were similar to those for Structure 1. Wooden shims supported overlying squared base logs. These were half-lapped at the corners and had notches and mortices cut into them for floor joists or sills and wall uprights. The presence of wrought and cut nails from the vicinity of the area were the only indicators that the building might have been erected as early as 1835. The structure certainly was in existence through the Francois Gendron period of ownership (1849-64) and was probably still standing on the site when the property was acquired by Julie de Lagimodiere. The building was soon dismantled following occupation by the Riel family as the cellar was being backfilled ca. 1866 and there is no historical documentation for its existance at this time period. Salvageable

timbers from the structure may have been incorporated into the Riel House being constructed and completed 1868.

Structure 3: Riel House Annex

The outline of this building was situated east of Riel House. Major structural features included base logs and an associated cellar (Fig. 6).

The excavation of the annex exposed the north and east base logs and traces of sills or joists and floor boards. These ruins formed a rectangular outline with an E-W dimension of 6.0 m by 3.6 m to 4.0 m N-S. Not all areas of the structure were unearthed or clearly defined. The west end of the annex had been extensively disturbed by a builder's trench for a concrete perimeter beam.

A projection of the north wall foundation log did not meet Riel House at the corner but was off-set 20 cm to the south. This timber was not strictly perpendicular to the main house but angled an additional three degrees northwards to the north east end. The maximum sectional dimensions of the base log were 11.0 cm in width and 10.0 cm in thickness. The condition of the wood was highly fragmentary although a lap joint was indicated at the corner where it underlay the east base log. The north wall foundation timber had an elevation of 232.22 m A.M.S.L.

The east wall foundation log had sectional dimensions similar to the north wall base log. The east timber was poorly preserved and incomplete for its length. The south extremity had been destroyed by a small, late depression. A similar activity also disrupted the south east corner construction.

None of the wood elements in the vicinity of the south wall were of sufficient scantling to represent base logs or timbers. The maximum thickness of any of these remains was 3 cm. Only one of the various traces actually overlay a wood shim. This foundation support was cut square on both ends and was adjacent to a small soil depression. This feature had a rectangular outline with an E-W dimension of 24 cm and a N-S dimension of 22 cm. The feature was excavated to a depth of 40 cm below the adjacent shim without encountering the natural stratigraphy. No wood fragments or artifacts were recovered from the hole.

There were several wood fragments oriented in an E-W direction which represented floor joists or sills. These members had a maximum thickness of 4 cm and rested directly upon the ground. Although these specimens were poorly preserved there was no evidence for their connection to the perimeter base logs. There were only two pieces of wood overlying these interior remains. Both pieces were thin--0.8 cm and 1.5 cm--and appeared to indicate flooring but there was no hardware attaching them to underlying elements.

An earth cellar was at the east end of the annex. This feature was circular in outline with a 3.0 m diameter. The main portion of the cellar had steep sides which were sloping in towards the bottom. The floor was slightly concave with a deeper depression at the south end. Depth of the main cellar area measured 1.2 m below the underside of the north and east base logs.

Depositional Remains

There was no discrete stratigraphic layer or defineable arbitrary level within the annex that related to the occupation of the building. Among the artifacts recovered from within the structure outline were ceramic fragments, a small glass container, a dinner fork, triangular file, clay pipe fragment, buttons and faunal remains of mammal, fish and shellfish.

The earthenware sherds evidenced a variety of patterns. Some of these designs had been registered in the first half of the nineteenth century but their range of production extended into the 1860's and 70's. Several of the designs were similar to those recovered from the cellars of Structures 1 and 2. Two of the identifiable designs were obtained from directly under the north and east base logs. The artifacts recovered from the annex cellar deposits included hardware, household items and personal objects. Hardware was represented mostly by nails and other fabric fasteners followed by a file, padlocks, hasp, chisel and garden hoe. The household category included ceramic tableware, glass containers, tumblers, a lamp chimney and pane glass. Many of the window glass fragments were found along the north edge of the cellar depression. More personal items included buttons of metal and glass, a clay pipestem, glass beads, a doll's head and toy teacup. Textile and leather fragments from clothing and footwear were also present.

Glassware was the most numerous and diagnostic of the artifact classes. Most of the items were glass containers although tumblers, lightning rod balls and other objects were also present. The bottles consisted of beer (2), wine (4), liquor (3), soda (5), medicinal-pharmaceutical and condiments (21), paint (1) and ink (1) forms. The manufacturers marks on containers were represented by "R & Co" (1880-1890), "M" of Maryland Glass Corp, Baltimore (1907-1916), "Ⓝ" of Obear-Nester Glass Co., East St. Louis (1894-1915), and "A B Co" of American Bottle Co., Chicago (1905-1916).

Interpretation

The base logs for the annex were laid directly upon the ground without any support by shims as for the two earlier structures. There was also no prior preparation of the ground surface such as removal of accumulated occupational debris and excavation to sterile soil as artifacts and fish scales occurred underneath. The post hole and wood shim along the south wall may constitute significant details of a door frame construction. This would correspond to the east door jamb of the doorway visible in the 1886 sketch. The use of timbers for base logs, possible heavy scantling door frame and low frequency of cut nails were considered as related factors in proposing the use of piece sur piece construction for the superstructure. The floor of the annex ran N-S over mud sills or joists that were not tied in to the fabric of the building. The recovery of pane glass fragments from a limited distribution near the center of the north wall was considered as evidence of a window placement at this location.

The date of construction could not be determined due to the lack of associated diagnostic artifacts. The few shards recovered from under the base logs were information suggesting the walls were erected after 1847. Features of the annex including lack of shims, rectangular shape, off-center cellar, and post-in-ground door jamb do not exhibit the same comparability as exists between Structures 1 and 2. This data suggests a break in construction values which may be in agreement with the property exchange known to have taken place in 1864 (Gosman 1975:8). The purpose of the annex is not known although historical analogy from Batoche indicates that such structures often functioned as a storage facility and/or as a kitchen in summer (Diane Payment personal communication 1976). In 1899 Joseph Riel obtained a Post Office franchise and this wing may have been the business location until the shed addition was erected. In any case, the annex was dismantled and the cellar backfilled sometime between 1907 and 1915.

Other Features

There were ten other features investigated on the site including the post office area, four major depressions or privies, post features, well, roadway and sidewalk. Most of the components were encountered in the course of exploration for structures or cultural anomalies contemporary with the earlier historic period of the site. Analysis of the data indicated that most of these features pertain to twentieth century activities.

Conclusions

The results of the archaeology program can be summarized in terms of the constraints by which the excavations were undertaken. The excavation process systematically explored areas designated for projected development as well as other locations. Only the area around Riel House realized importance regarding potential interpretative value. This significance was represented by highly fragmentary structural elements and associated material culture deposits. Almost all traces of the building features were dissected and removed by the archaeological process in the search for construction details and contextual data. All artifacts were retrieved. Analysis of the information thus obtained permits interpretations to be made with a degree of confidence that would not otherwise be available. Riel House does stand in the location of original construction. This is supported by the presence and situation of foundation ruins representing the annex which appears in the 1886 sketch. Two other structures were exposed relating to the historical development of the site.

The structure at the southwest corner of Riel House correlates to initial occupation of the site although cellar deposits represent a backfilling phase of activity. This event can be connected to the F. Gendron period of habitation with the deposits constituting use of the old cellar as a temporary garbage pit. During this span of

ownership the structure to the southeast of Riel House served as a dwelling with a small frame addition added to the north end. The building was still in existence when the Riel family obtained the property. Dismantlement did not happen immediately as backfilling of the cellar depression began only after 1866. This feature also served as a garbage pit with much of the debris representing Riel family possessions of considerable interpretative value.

If the artifacts from the cellar of Structure 1 are accepted as representing deposition by the Parenteau and/or Gendron families, then they form an effective comparative base for the Riel family material culture recovered from the cellar of Structure 2. Analysis of this information supports the historical assertion that no substantive social differences existed between families occupying the site although distinctions of degree were apparent. For example, the high variability of decorative patterns on ceramics indicating the absence of complete tableware sets was noted for both occupations, but only in the Riel family sample was this accompanied by increasing diversity of different manufacturers. In the case of faunal remains an almost complete reliance on domestic mammals and fowl can be cited for both periods of habitation, but for the early years of Riel family occupation there was a greater dependence on suckling pig than any other single species.

All of the data from the site can also be considered to support the historical proposition that there were two classes of Metis and that Riel House can only be viewed in the sedentary Metis class - St. Boniface context. This is concluded from the preponderance of manufactured goods, the almost complete absence of non-domestic faunal remains and the lack of hunting paraphernalia.

The archaeology project at Riel House was initially undertaken to provide information regarding the potential disruptive effects of site development on archaeological remains. In addition it was hoped that the program would uncover data relevant to the early phase of Riel occupation which was lacking documentation. The results of the excavations were not only successful in these terms but also in providing background and comparative facts on site evolution. Correlation of this information with historical research can only conclude in a more viable interpretation of Riel House and Metis life in the Red River area.

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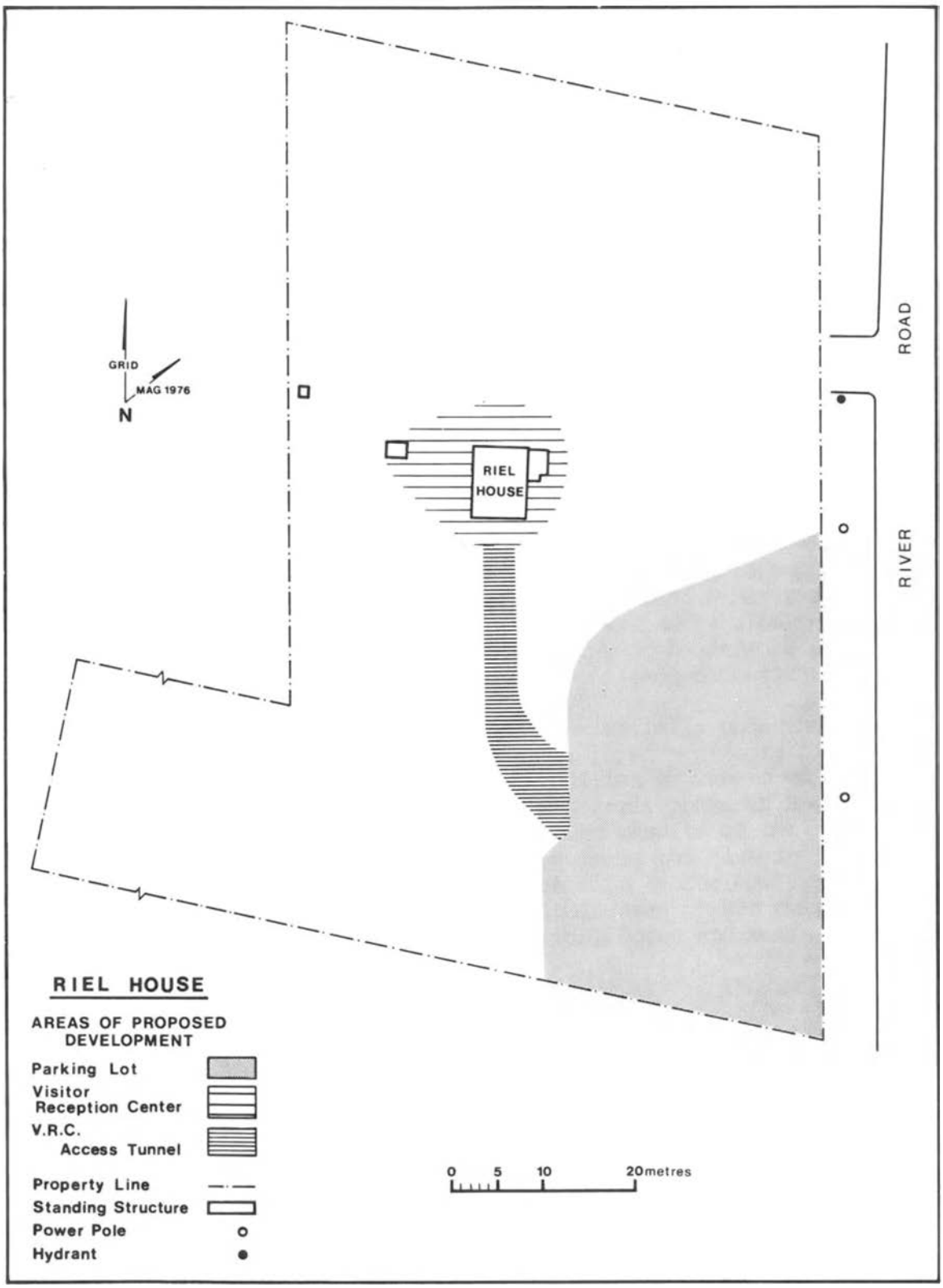
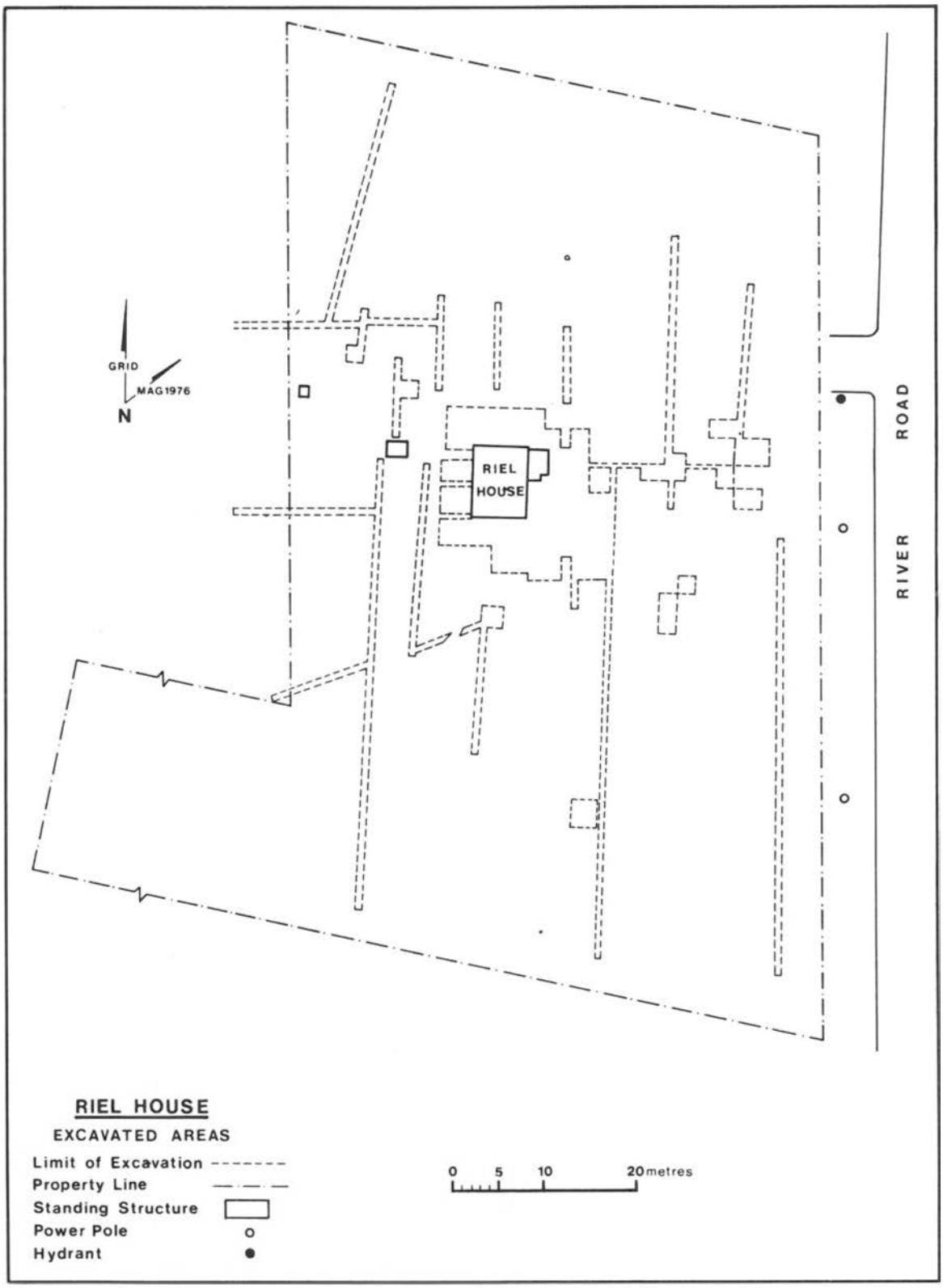
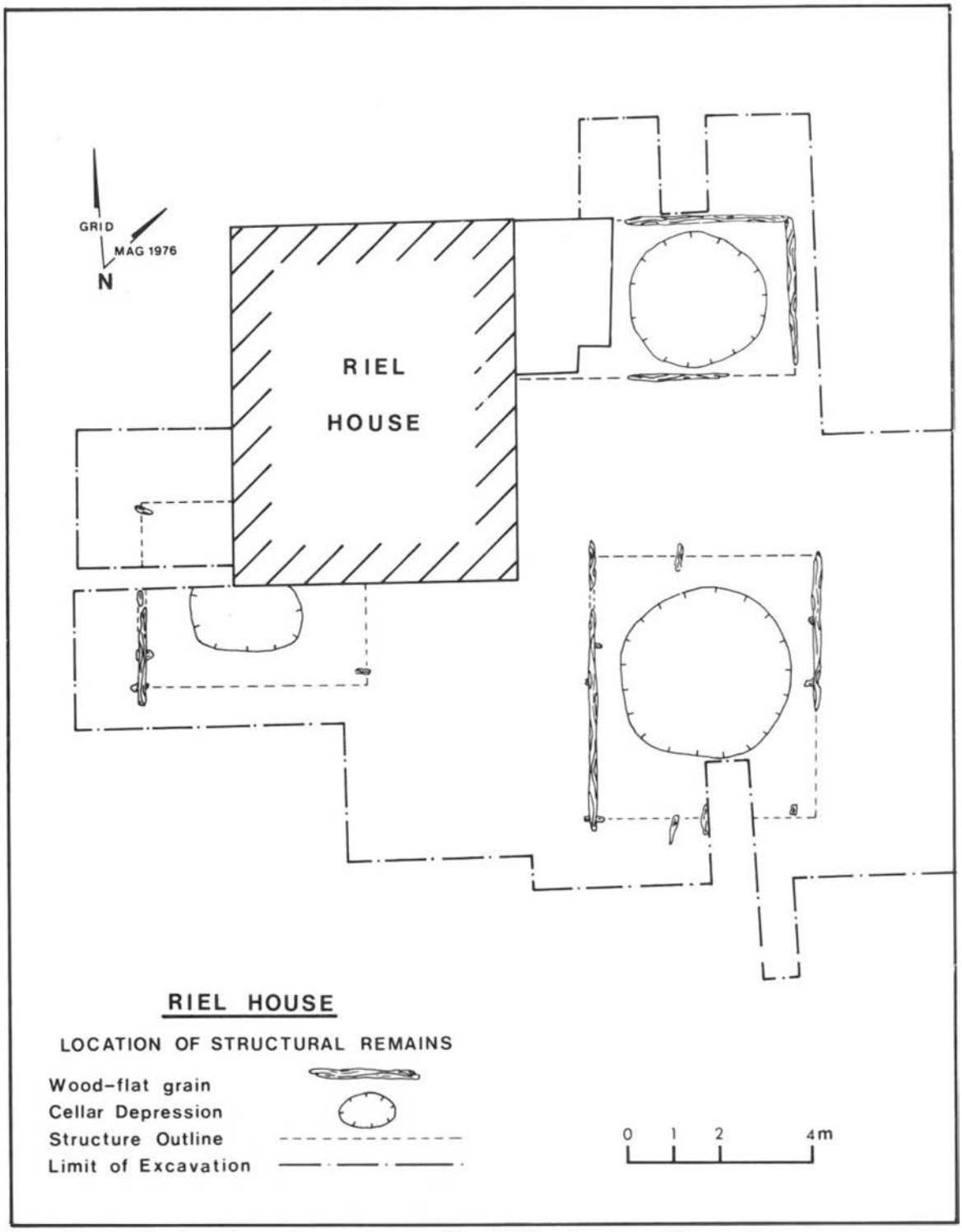
Parks Canada
Prairie Region



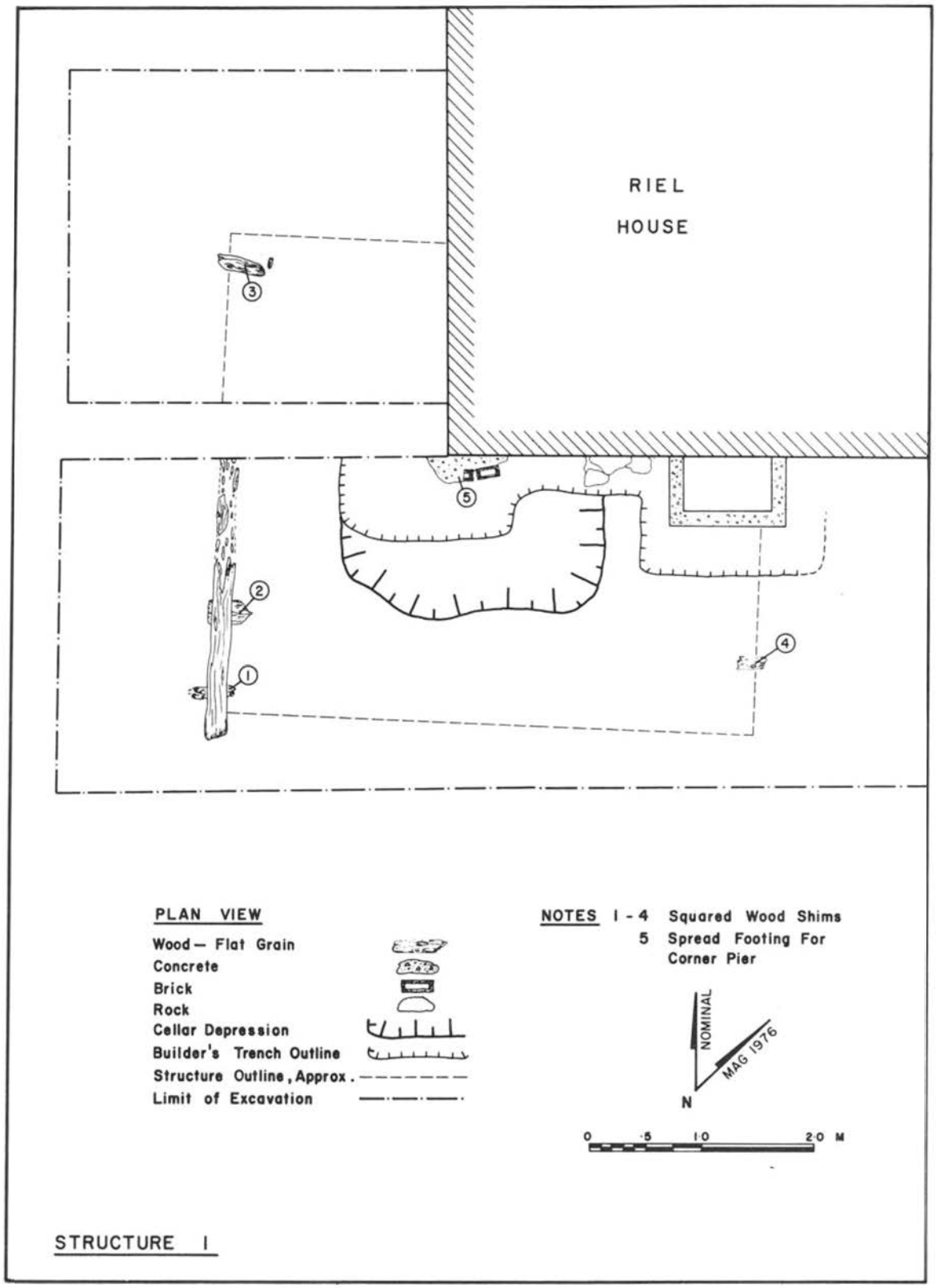
1 Areas of proposed development. (Drafting by D. Milton.)



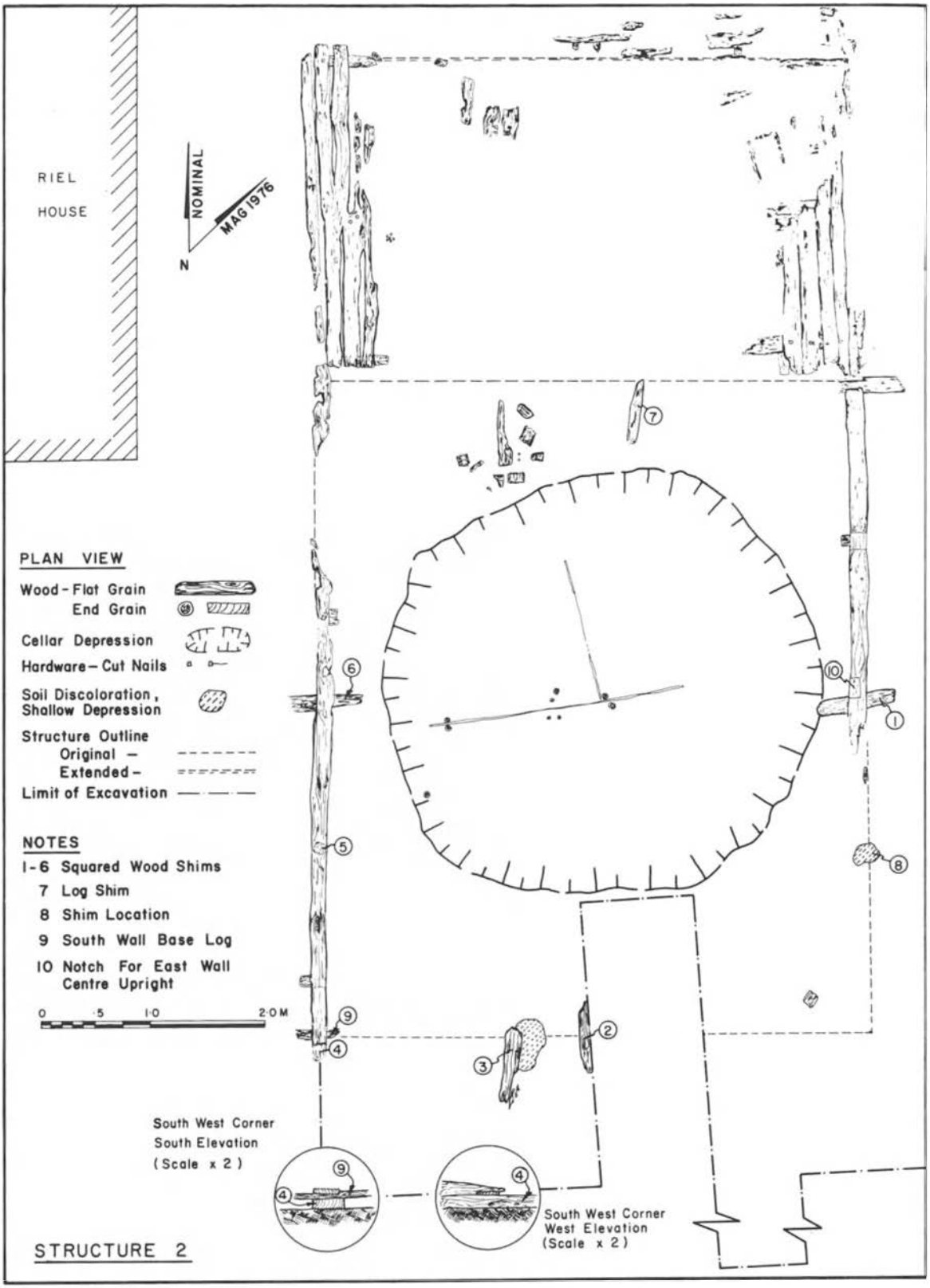
2 Excavated areas. (Drafting by D. Milton.)



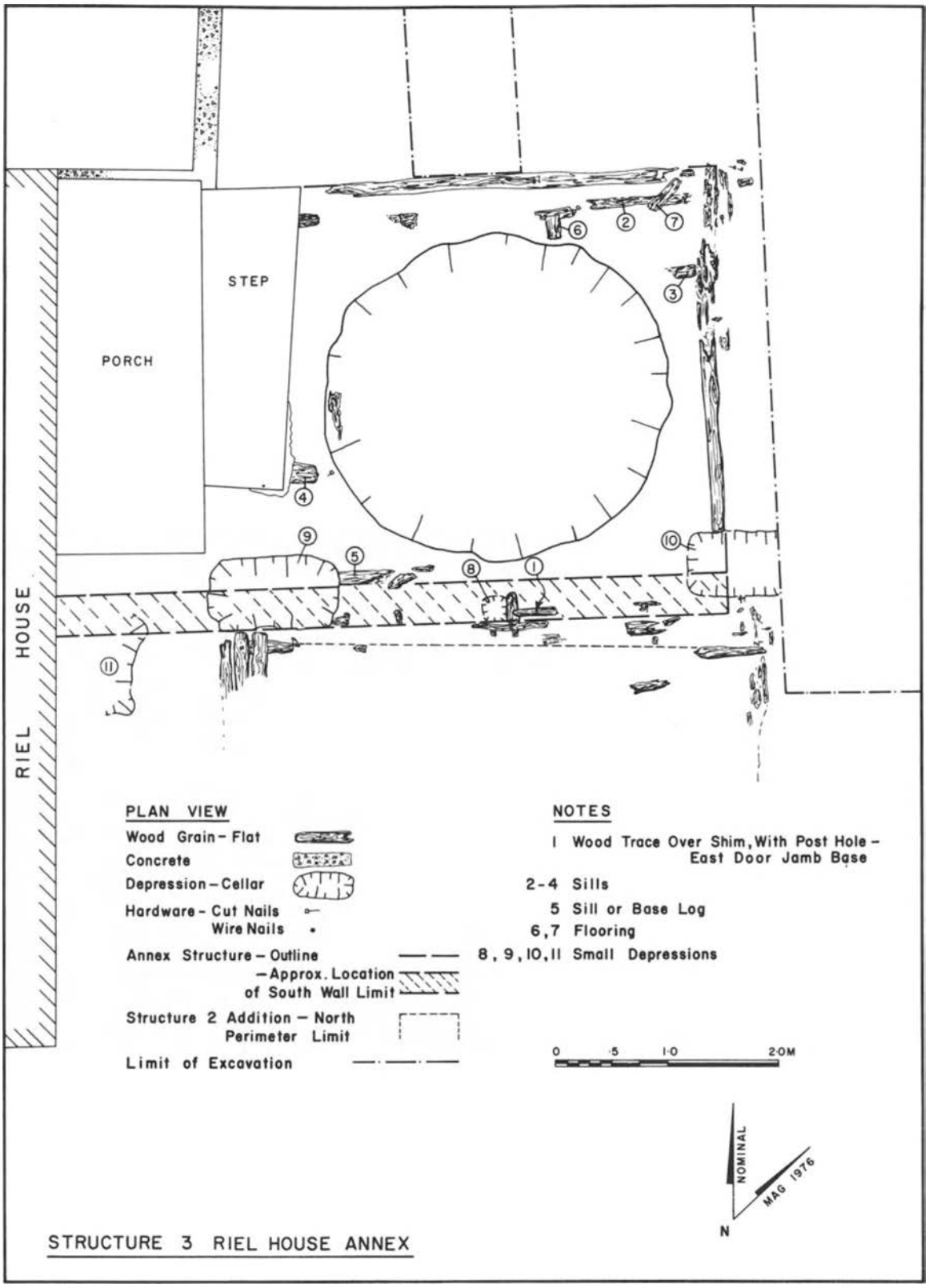
3 Location of structural remains. (Drafting by D. Milton.)



4 Structure 1 plan view. (Drafting by D. Milton.)



5 Structure 2 plan view. (Drafting by D. Milton.)



6 Structure 3 Riel house annex plan view. (Drafting by D. Milton.)