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From 2011 to 2013, archaeologists, students and volunteers conducted survey and excavation of the Zagreb site, near Plattsburgh, NY, in an effort to associate it with the enigmatic Cantonment Saranac—Col. Zebulon Pike’s winter cantonment of 1812–1813. Missing for over a century, local historians had tried unsuccessfully to establish its location based on archival descriptions. Until 2011, archaeological evidence from the site was entirely lacking. Using metal detection, the current project has successfully linked the historical to the actual, providing a unique glimpse into events of the early War of 1812 period in the Champlain Valley.


Introduction

Prior to the recent era of intensive archaeological-sites inventory, the archaeological identification and assessment of ephemeral military sites, compared to other types of more-permanent historical sites, have been relatively slow to mature. This delay may be due to the fact that, while abundant historical information may exist about these site types, standard methods of systematic shovel testing were poorly suited to identifying these sites, much less adequately assessing their archaeological significance. The pioneering survey work of Doug Scott and his colleagues at the Little Big Horn Battlefield demonstrated that different methods were necessary if archaeologists were to be able to find and correctly assess these site types (Scott and Fox 1987; Scott and Connor 1997).

The past two decades of “Doug Scott Archaeology” have seen a literal explosion in the number of ephemeral military sites identified and under archaeological investigation; e.g., Espenshade and Babicki (2010), Geier, Babits, Scott, & Orr (2011), Geier, Orr, and Reeves (2006), and Scott, Babits, and Haecker (2009). As a result, our understanding of many key aspects of military-site types, the historical record, and of military culture more broadly, has increased. The array of conflicts covered by these inquiries has also expanded, now ranging from the Roman era up to and through recent conflicts in the Middle East. In the U.S., much of this research has been bolstered by the American Battlefield Protection Program, which gave national priority and funding to the identification and preservation of American military sites. While War of 1812 sites also were included in this legislation, the identification and investigation of these latter sites has generally lagged.

Some of this lag can be explained by the limited scope of that war. Concentrated in the northeastern quarter of the United States, the rest of the country, save for the eastern and southern coast, saw little impact from the conflict. This contrasts starkly with the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, which had a much broader impact all across the nation. The scale of conflict in the American Civil War, particularly, resulted in a much larger number of sites for that war. The implications and outcomes of those conflicts also were seen by many in the U.S. as pivotal to the national narrative. Only in the past few years, with the coming of the War of 1812 bicentennial, has an interest in War of 1812 archaeology finally rooted itself within the broader scope of military-sites archaeology.

The history of the Zagreb site is a manifestation of this broader history of military-sites archaeology. The site was discovered during a standard, systematic
shovel-testing survey of the Plattsburgh Air Force Base in 1993 (Morgan, Abbott, Doggett, Hedrich, & Richardson 1995). Prior to this time, this discovery would have elicited nary a second look. Because artifact density was small and undiagnostic, however, its identification as a military site, as well as its potential association with Colonel Zebulon Pike’s 1812–1813 winter cantonment, “Cantonment Saranac,” were questioned. An even more-intensive assessment carried out in 1995, using close-interval shovel testing and test units, failed to yield diagnostic military artifacts (Parsons Engineering Science, Inc. [PESI] 1997). Thus, while the possibility was discussed, direct evidence of a military association was lacking.

It was not until 2011–2013, in work by the Battle of Plattsburgh Association using metal detectors as the primary survey tool, that the site was positively identified as Cantonment Saranac. This article documents the discovery and survey of the Zagreb site and its association with Pike’s 1812–1813 winter cantonment. It is intended to provide a more complete background to current (Abel 2014) and future research, as well as an understanding of its significance as both an historical and archaeological site. In recognition of this significance, the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012, just in time for its 200th anniversary.

**Historical Background**

The United States declared war on Great Britain on 18 June 1812. For the United States, the opening year of the war could not have gone worse. Confusion over chain of command, politically appointed military leaders, and a reliance on fickle and poorly trained militia led to disastrous and embarrassing defeats at Mackinaw, Detroit, and Queenston. In the Northeast, the last hope for an American victory was pinned on an army gathering at Greenbush, New York, under the command of Major General Henry Dearborn. Through the summer and into August of 1812, the army trained for an invasion of Canada through the Champlain Valley to Montreal.

The units that arrived at Greenbush included the newly organized 15th Regiment, under the command of newly minted colonel, Zebulon Pike. Pike was born in Lambertville, New Jersey, in 1779, the son of a Revolutionary War officer of the same name. His storied military career began in 1794, and, in 1802, as a young lieutenant, he accompanied General James Wilkinson to the Illinois Territory. In 1805 he was appointed to lead an expedition west to locate the source of the Missouri River. He led a second expedition up the Red River in 1806, during which he described the mountain that would eventually bear his name: Pike’s Peak.

Upon his return from the west, Captain Pike was promoted to major and served as military agent in New Orleans from 1809 to 1810. In 1811 he was a lieutenant colonel in the 4th Regiment, seeing action at the Battle of Tippecanoe. After serving as deputy quartermaster general at New York from April to July 1812, Pike was appointed colonel in August and given command of the 15th Regiment.

The army at Greenbush moved north in the fall of 1812. On 8 September, it put into boats to traverse Lake Champlain and arrived at Plattsburgh, New York, and Burlington, Vermont, on 11 September (FIG. 1). Here the army camped to await remaining units, including the 16th Regiment and two companies of “flying” artillery (light, mobile artillery that could support a moving army). No barracks were built, so the soldiers lived in tents while waiting to move on Montreal. On 15 November, General Dearborn arrived to lead the army across the border and into battle. On the next day the army marched to the village of Champlain, a tiny village just 1 mi. south of the Canadian border.

There the army stopped to probe the British defenses. Small scouting parties were sent across the border on the evening of the 17th and 18th, none of which reported any enemy contact. Intelligence gathered from local inhabitants suggested a force of about 400–500 British and Native Americans were encamped at the small village of LaColle, just 4 mi. from the border. On the evening of 19 November, the 15th Regiment, along with a few members of the 16th Regiment, some 70 dragoons, and 40–50 militia volunteers from the Troy Rifles, about 600 soldiers in all, crossed into Canada. In the early morning hours of the 20th they came upon LaColle Creek.

Pike split his force into two columns to trap the enemy in a classic pincer. Being well aware of the American army’s approach that evening, however, the British withdrew most
of their forces to the rear, leaving only the Indians and a few militia sentries to harass the invaders. The Americans crossed the river to attack the enemy position. From this point, accounts of the evening encounter differ.

Captain Jacques Viger of the Canadian Voltigeurs, in a letter home to his wife, writes:

As the American detachment was moving towards the Indian huts and guardhouse and firing their muskets, they could not reach their targets. In fact, their gunshots were reaching their comrades-in-arms in the half-circle. These comrades-in-arms thought that they were being fired at by our people and so fired back at their comrades-in-arms. To make matters worse, the infantrymen from the other side of the river joined in. (Beaudoin and Blanchet 2009: 178)

Captain John Scott, who was with Pike that evening, recounts it differently in his letter home to family:

When we arrived within about 20 or 30 yards of the first light we were fired on, we immediately fired & charged bayonet and, on entering the first Shantee, as they call them, we found it deserted. We pressed forward to the others for there were four of them and found them all deserted. Then we advanced to a log house 40 yards further that stood in the edge of a piece of cleared ground where we expected they would make a stand. During this time there was a considerable fire kept up. We were again disappointed and found the house deserted. We formed the line in order as we expected the main body would soon attack us. While forming the line there were some shots fired at us from the chamber of the log house. We immediately fired 2 or 300 balls through the roof and gable ends of the house. After standing in this situation for 1/2 an hour we saw no enemy approach and we set fire to the house and shantees and returned by the same route we came across the river (LaColle). ... I have been particular in giving you a description of this little affair as there are many false reports in this place such as our men killing each other and there was no enemy here. There was sufficient room in the house and shantees for 400 men in all of which there were fresh fires when we found them. (Fredricksen 1989: 72–73)

Regardless of the account, the firefight left six Americans wounded and a number of the enemy killed and wounded as well. Pike and his men pulled back to Champlain later that morning, where two of his men died of their...
wounds. The bloodshed rattled the militia, who informed Dearborn that morning they would invoke their privilege as militia and not cross the border. The army remained in Champlain for two more days, while Dearborn called a council of war among his senior officers. On the 22nd, to the astonishment of his troops, Dearborn abandoned the campaign and marched the entire army back to Plattsburgh, arriving on 23 November (Everest 1981; Fredricksen 1985, 1989).

The army set out for the campaign without winter provisions. There were few tents, no winter coats, and, after the failed march into Canada, most of the food and provisions were left at Champlain, where they were quickly pilfered. So after ten days of marching and camping in the cold, wet, late-November snow, the nearly 6,000-man army arrived 2 mi. south of Plattsburgh to begin preparations for winter quarters. Five days later, on 28 November, the army separated by brigade. The 1st Brigade, including the 6th, 15th, and 16th regiments, was to be encamped at Plattsburgh. The 2nd Brigade, made up of the 9th, 11th, 21st, and 25th regiments, was to be encamped at Burlington and Pittsfield.

According to Colonel Cromwell Pierce of the 16th Regiment:

Here commenced the ruinous and disgraceful practice of officers obtaining furloughs, immediately on the army entering winter quarters, in order that they might spend the remainder of the winter in the cities. In the mean time, soldiers were deprived of that care so essential to subordination; contracted bad habits; and in many cases, when disease pervaded whole regiments, officers could not be found to give such directions as necessary not only for the health of the men, but for the safety of the troops. ... Every General and field officer had left the post; except for Colonels Pike and Pearce. (Fredricksen 1985: 134)

The 1st Brigade marched 4½ mi. up the Saranac River to the “Pine Forrests,” where it commenced building winter huts (Fredricksen 1985: 134). Each company was responsible for preparing its own quarters. This included clearing, cutting timbers, and constructing log huts. Until the huts were constructed, the men sheltered themselves with whatever they could find. As Captain Scott states in a letter home:

I am writing this at the root of a large pine tree with a few sticks set up to keep off some of the winds, and a fire to put my feet to at night. This with my blanket defends me from the weather. We have not one tent in our Regt. I wish you could see the style in which we live. The snow is six inches deep. (Fredricksen 1989: 73)

The miserable conditions, coupled with disease and a lack of sanitation, killed off the men by the dozens. While an accurate accounting of the number who died that first month is lacking, estimates from the rate of death given by Dr. Ward at Greenbush place the number at nearly 200 (Everest 1981: 95). Colonel Pike, himself, who remained in Plattsburgh, reportedly fell ill with pleurisy and had to seek convalescence in the village for most of December (there is some question as to the authenticity of his illness). Pike returned to camp in mid-January, once his hut was finished. Dr. William Beaumont, chief surgeon of the 16th Regiment, wrote:

[The weather was very various—warm and cold, sometimes raining, sometimes snowing—the men lying upon the cold, wet ground, with only a fire before their tents for two, three of four weeks. Whilst in this wretched and deplorable situation, the men were seized with Dysentary, Intermittants, Pleurisy, Peripneumony, Cynanche, and Rheumatism, which made the very woods ring with coughing and groaning. (Myer and Osler 1912: 50)]

The first huts were completed on Christmas Day (Fredricksen 1985), though most were not completed until after 1 January. According to Captain John Scott of the 15th Regiment: “There are 4 rooms, 20 ft. square, allotted to each company, one of which is occupied by the officers of each company at present” (Fredricksen 1989: 74). That works out to about 40–50 soldiers per hut. But as Captain Scott notes, the huts were but shells, for they had no chimneys. By 16 January, half still had no chimneys, and none of them, but Colonel Pike’s, was “fit for living in.” By January, with the soldiers in their huts and order being restored, the death rate dropped precipitously.

Approximately 2,000 soldiers under Colonel Pike comprised what came to be known variously as Camp Plattsburgh, Camp Saranac, Cantonment Saranac, or Pike’s Cantonment (Everest 1981: 93). Life at Cantonment Saranac was harsh, to say the least—as harsh as Washington’s first winter at Valley Forge, if not more so. As Captain Scott recounted:
The days are now so short and the weather so cold men can do but little in a day. We have nothing new at this place, our time is all occupied in getting wood and endeavoring to finish the huts. ... We have good sleighing here since the 1st of December. There have been one or two days that it has thawed any. The days are cold and the nights much colder. (Fredricksen 1989: 74, 76)

February was, for the most part, uneventful, save for Pike’s trepidation at attempting to control local smuggling. Everyone, from the common citizen, who committed the smuggling, to the merchants, who funded it, to the local militia, that turned a blind eye, was complicit and guilty. The problem was so widespread that even the local judges condoned the practice by refusing to prosecute arrested smugglers. In fact, many of the arresting officials found themselves incarcerated for wrongful imprisonment. The sole customs agent at Plattsburgh was easily intimidated into helplessness, and neither could the army do anything to curb the flow of goods into Canada, mostly provisions destined for the forces of the Crown.

In March, Colonel Pike received orders to move the brigade under his command (consisting of the 6th, 15th, 16th, and a detachment of light artillery) to Sackets Harbor, some 175 mi. west and over the Adirondacks. According to firsthand accounts, Pike set off on 4 March with some 400 men on 130 sleds through 3 ft. of snow (Fredricksen 1985: 135). Some of the men switched to snowshoes to keep from freezing. He arrived in Sackets Harbor on the 19th. The remainder of Pike’s units followed him, leaving Plattsburgh undefended, aside from a company of militia, the sick, and the wounded. Shortly after arriving in Sackets Harbor, Pike was minted a brigadier general and would lead the assault on York (Toronto), where he was killed by an exploding magazine on 27 April 1813.

Life in Plattsburgh returned to normal after the army’s departure, though on edge because of its exposed and undefended position. Governor Daniel Tompkins protested the removal of the army to General Dearborn, who responded by simply removing all the army’s stores farther south, to Burlington, which was defended by a small force of contracted militia and regulars. The fears were realized in July of 1813, when a force of about 1,000 British, bound for Plattsburgh, crossed the border in Royal Navy warships. Alarms were dispatched to Burlington with pleas to bring the army forward, but they were ignored in favor of protecting the stores there. The British, under Lieutenant Colonel John Murray, landed unopposed on 29 July and proceeded to burn all public buildings (and a few private ones), including Cantonment Saranac, on 31 July. He left Plattsburgh on 1 August (Everest 1981).

Finding Pike’s Cantonment Saranac

The location of Cantonment Saranac has been the subject of intense historical debate for the better part of the last century. This is largely due to the vague accounts of the encampment that have survived (Harris 1987), and the fact that no contemporary map of the cantonment was ever produced. The firsthand accounts and early historians favored a location, known locally as the “Indian Falls,” near the former air-force base runway, but later historians shifted their focus to another location, known as the “Main Mill,” after an 1812 coin was found in the river there. The evidence favoring the Main Mill site was believed to rest on General Alexander Macomb’s map of the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1814, which shows the British army’s crossing near that bend in the river. In his written account, it is mentioned that the British army crossed the Saranac River in front of the former cantonment 3 mi. from the American forts, a location that favors the Indian Falls (PESI 1998).

More recent research, conducted by Leon Harris and Keith Herkalo, proves quite convincingly, at least from archival data, that the Indian Falls site was the most likely location of Cantonment Saranac (Harris 1987; Herkalo 2001). This location also corresponds to local private collections of military artifacts recovered from areas around the Indian Falls (Thomas Pray, pers. comm. 2012-2014). These collections contain examples of military artifacts diagnostic to the opening year of the war.

When preparations were being made for the closure of Plattsburgh Air Force Base in 1993, a Phase 1 archaeological survey of the installation was conducted by the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (Morgan, Abbott, Doggett, Hedrich, & Richardson 1995). The Zagreb site was found during that survey
in a location near the Indian Falls. Shovel testing at 10 m (33 ft.) intervals revealed a scatter of 19th-century architectural and domestic debris across a roughly 1 ha (2.5 ac.) area. At the time, it was concluded that the site was probably related to the building of the former Dannemora Railroad spur, but a remote possibility was raised that it might, in fact, represent part of Cantonment Saranac. The site was recommended for Phase 2 investigations.

The Phase 2 archaeological site assessment was performed in 1997 by Parsons Engineering Science, Inc. (PESI 1998). It conducted test excavations to determine the nature of roughly ten, low, rock platform mounds on the site, and performed shovel tests at 7.5 and 15 m intervals to aid in delineating the site’s boundaries. The mounds were recognized as certainly being in situ architectural features, perhaps the remains of Pike’s cantonment chimneys, noted in a late 19th-century account of a trip on the Dannemora Railroad (Harris 1987). Of 140 artifacts, however, no diagnostic military artifacts were found; 73% were faunal remains, while 26% of the artifacts were architectural, almost all of which were nails. The remainder of the assemblage (1%) was made up of nondiagnostic glass and white clay-pipe fragments.

**Research Design and Methodology**

For the Zagreb site to be considered representative of Zebulon Pike’s 1812–1813 Cantonment Saranac, it needed to produce a significant number of artifacts diagnostic to military sites of the early War-of-1812 period (i.e., military buttons, musket balls, lead sprue, or other military objects). The 2011–2013 survey investigations turned to metal detection as a primary sampling tool. To accomplish this goal while leaving the majority of the site’s artifacts in context, a transect interval of 10 m (33 ft.) was used. Metal detection was completed by Murat O’Hara, using a Minelab Explorer SE Pro, and by the author, using a White M6. Each positive detection was flagged and mapped prior to investigation. Because of forest cover, hotspots were mapped using a grid laid in by compass and tape measure (fig. 3).

Hotspots, where metal was detected, were mapped and then investigated using shovel test pits (STPs) 35 cm (14 in.) in diameter. Soils from each were screened through ¼ in. mesh to recover artifacts. When a metal object was found, each STP was again cleared by metal detector prior to documentation and backfilling. When no object was found, the STP was expanded up to 70 cm in an effort to recover an artifact. If no metal object were recovered within 70 cm of the center, the detection was assumed to be false. The stratigraphy of each STP was documented by measuring the depths...
Figure 2. Location of the Zagreb site, along with localities referenced in the text. (Figure by author, 2014; adapted from USGS Digital basemaps by National Geographic.)
to the bottom of each soil horizon. All STPs were excavated to sterile subsoil.

In order to document the site boundaries, transects were surveyed in three areas. Transects A–D were placed in the area defined as the Zagreb site according to the 1997 PESI survey. Transects E–I were placed on the terrace above the defined site area to rule out the possibility of multilevel occupation. Transects J–M were placed to the east of the defined site area to confirm the eastern site boundary. The north boundary was assumed to be the edge of the disturbed Route 22 corridor. The south boundary was assumed to be the edge of an adjacent wetland (fig. 3).

Results

A total of 102 hotspots were investigated on Transects A–D, with all but four resulting in the recovery of 534 historical artifacts. Transects E–I produced 17 hotspots, only two of which contained historical artifacts. The rest consisted of modern ammunition casings and clips. Transect I was not surveyed. Transects J–M produced 88 hotspots. Transects J and K produced an abundance of historical artifacts. Transects L and M produced many hotspots, but nearly all were modern artifacts (fig. 3).

The stratigraphy of the site is generally characterized by a light grayish brown, silty, duff topsoil that extends to a depth of about 5 cm (2 in.) (Stratum 1). Beneath this is dark gray-brown sandy loam extending to a depth of 10–15 cm (4–6 in.) (Stratum 3). No features were noted, save for ash lenses, which were ubiquitous across the site. Beneath this is an orange- to yellow-tan coarse, cobbly sandy loam (Stratum 4), where excavation was terminated.

The artifact assemblage is, not surprisingly, dominated by the Architectural group (82%), followed by the Unaffiliated (7%), Food (6%), and other groups (tab. 1). Of the assemblage, 57% (n=188) is made up of nails and nail fragments (fig. 4A). These were of the wrought, transitional, early, and modern cut varieties (Belton 2013) (tab. 2). Many of the nails were in pristine, rust-free condition, having been heat hardened. Nails were found predominately along Transects A–D, but a few were also found elsewhere (Transects G, J, and L).

This particular site characteristic, the ubiquity of cut nails, I suspect, is what had thrown previous researchers off the trail of Cantonment Saranac. Cut nails are generally regarded to mark the middle to late 19th century. More intensive investigations at Zagreb, however, have shown that these cut nails are associated with other nail forms both in and around the structures on the site (Abel 2014). Their burned nature suggests that they were present during the burning of the site in 1813. There is absolutely no evidence that the site was reoccupied after the 1813 burning. In addition, since nail-cutting machines were in use on the East Coast as early as the 1780s (Nelson 1968; Phillips 1993, 1996), there is no reason to doubt that cut nails would make it to this location. In short, it is clear that the cut nails are associated with Cantonment Saranac.

Brick fragments accounted for 25% of the artifact assemblage recovered from STPs. The brick fragments are of so-called soft brick—low-temperature fired clay bricks—that would have been in common production during the time period, likely in close proximity to the site (several extant buildings in downtown Plattsburgh are undoubtedly made of bricks).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architectural</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>–</td>
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Table 1. Summary of artifact frequencies by group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cut finish nail</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut nail fragment</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrought</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of nail types represented in the assemblage.
from the same source). Historical research has identified possible brick kilns in nearby Clintonville, Lower Jay, and Beekmantown, though it is not certain whether any of these were in operation at the time of the war (Hurd 1880). The brick fragments all came from Transects A–D.

Unaffiliated artifacts includes objects whose function is either ambiguous or indeterminate. The category accounted for 7% of the assemblage (n=35). The most frequent unaffiliated artifact collected was charcoal, most of which was not collected, save for large pieces suitable for wood-species identification. Five pieces of melted glass were included in this category. Glass melts at 1,300° F which indicates this glass was burned at a high temperature. Two pieces of clear, flat glass also were recovered. The fragments are small and thin. The remainder of the artifacts included an unidentified iron object and a wire staple, which are undoubtedly modern. All of the Unaffiliated-category artifacts came from Transects A–D.

Food remains accounted for 6% of the assemblage (n=34). Overall, the assemblage is characterized by small fragments of calcined bone. While a full analysis is pending, most of the remains appear to be mammalian. All the pieces came from Transects A–D and J.

Kitchen-group artifacts accounted for just 1% of the assemblage (n=5). These artifacts included two sherds of glazed stoneware, one

Figure 3. Survey methodology and results. (Figure by author, 2014; adapted from survey and basemap by AES Northeast Architecture, Engineering and Land Surveying Northeast, PLLC, 2011.)
sherd of pearlware, and two sherds of porcelain. The presence of the pearlware is consistent with a War-of-1812 association. All of these sherds came from Transects A–D.

Four artifacts were grouped with Activities, including a pole coupling with an associated wood fragment and nails found on Transect C. This artifact is believed to have come from a regimental standard pole. A jackknife was found on Transect J, and may or may not be associated with the 1812 component. A brass screw was found on Transect M and may or may not have an 1812 context. The last artifact was found on Transect B, an iron, tailor’s thumb thimble that was a common accessory in military sewing kits (fig. 4C).

Eight artifacts from the Firearms group were found. A total of five lead, round balls were recovered (fig. 4D). All the balls are in a dropped condition, except one, which appears to have been a failed mold pouring. It is characterized by a half ball with attached sprue. Of the whole balls, two are 0.62 in. in diameter (.62 caliber) and three are 0.66–0.67 in. in diameter (.66–.67 caliber). This is the typical diameter of single-shot projectiles used in the .69-caliber 1795 Springfield musket. The smaller rounds were probably used in a typical “buck and ball” cartridge, while the larger rounds would have been used for single-round cartridges. The 1795 Springfield and the .75 caliber India Long Land Pattern Brown Bess were the standard-issue long arms of the War of 1812 period.

One of the musket balls was found on the terrace above the site (Transect F) (fig. 3). It was the only historical artifact found in that area. Two of the musket balls were found to the east of the site near its eastern boundary (Transect K). They also were the only historical artifacts in the area. These isolated, stray musket balls may be evidence of military drilling or perhaps sentry positions in those areas. The remaining ball was found on Transect D.

One lead flint cushion was found on Transect C (fig. 4B). Otherwise known as cap cushions, these were pieces of either lead or leather that were used to wrap the gunflint for better grip by the cap screw. Lead cap cushions were preferred by the army because leather rotted in inclement weather. This particular cap cushion is broken in half and stamped with a beaded design along the border. Flint impressions are clearly visible on one side, and tooth marks from the cap plate are visible on the other.

One small gunflint fragment was found on Transect B. It is gray white, probably heat-treated Brandon flint; compare Witthoft (1966). The flint exhibits spalling, which indicates the heat treatment, and its fragmentary condition may have resulted from later burning. The last firearms-related artifact is an obviously intrusive brass, .22 caliber, long rimfire casing.

Four clothing buttons are placed in the Personal group. They are military-issue coat buttons all found on the south end of Transect C. Two of the buttons are identical, though found several meters apart. Each has a floral script I, with an underlying oval cartouche bearing the number 15. They are classified as GI34R15, using Albert’s catalog of military coat buttons (Albert 1976) (fig. 4F). One button bears an eagle motif with an underlying cartouche inscribed: 6 Rt. and is classified as Albert’s GI32R6C (fig. 4G). These were issued from 1808 to 1811. The last button is small, bearing the generic US stamp (Albert’s GI30Av) (fig. 4H). These buttons often were used on military-issued pantaloons, waistcoats, or fatigue jackets. All of the buttons were found in a small area at the southern end of the site, along with glassware, ceramics, and animal bone, perhaps indicating a refuse dump.

The 6th, 15th, and 16th regiments were the three regiments that made up General Dearborn’s 1st Brigade, which was encamped at Cantonment Saranac in the winter of 1812–1813. The 15th Regiment was under the command of Colonel Zebulon Pike from July 1812 to April 1813. Numerous additional examples of these same buttons have been collected in the area of the site by Thomas Pray (pers. comm. 2012-2014) of Plattsburgh. Regimental buttons were only manufactured through the first year of the War of 1812, and only for the original 16 regiments of the army at that time. After the first year, only blank or “star” buttons were produced. These provide perhaps the best evidence that the Zagreb site represents part of Cantonment Saranac.

The last diagnostic artifact is a bayonet-scabbard chape assigned to the Personal group (fig. 4E). The object is brass. This item, holding the 1795 pattern bayonet, would have been standard issue to all infantry soldiers of the period.
The bayonet was a three-sided, 15 in., pointed blade attached to the barrel of the 1795-pattern Springfield musket. It was a secondary-meele weapon designed to be used as a pike in close combat. The leather bayonet scabbard was worn on the hip suspended by a shoulder strap, and the chape prevented the tip of the bayonet from running through the scabbard and cutting into the leg during sheathing.

**Current and Future Research**

Excavation conducted at the Zagreb site in 2012 and 2013 concentrated on uncovering an intact structure floor (FIG. 5). This research resulted in the archaeological documentation of the first and only complete, ephemeral, military habitation structure from the War of 1812 period (Abel 2014). The structure is roughly 12 × 15 ft., with a fireplace on each end. One of these was used for cooking, as evidenced by a burned faunal assemblage, while the other appears to have been used solely for heating because it lacked anything other than architectural debris. Based on recovered cultural assemblages, it was likely a log structure with a frame roof. Archival evidence suggests that the interior was finished with plank, and the roof was shingled. The hearths were made of brick, but the chimneys were likely of cribbed wattle-and-daub construction.

The interior of the structure was remarkably clean, save for small fragments of bone, ceramic, and glass. This pattern is interpreted as evidence of its frequent sweeping and the removal of trash. Much of the glass was melted. The nails associated with the structure also, predominantly, showed evidence of heat
treatment. This is taken as evidence that the structure was burned, corroborating the historical accounts of the site’s destruction in the summer of 1813.

Based on the location of the structure, its orientation relative to other nearby structures (defined by associated mounds and chimney foundations), and pieces of Asian export porcelain found on the structure floor, the structure is believed to represent an officer’s quarters. It is located at the top of the hill, a place reserved for officers in Von Steuben’s castramentation plan. Its size is nearly identical to quarters of field officers documented at the Revolutionary War New Windsor Cantonment (Fisher 1983). The porcelain, which is gilded, likely would have graced the table of an officer, rather than that of an enlisted soldier. Lastly, the size and layout of the structure suggest an occupant of stature, more likely an officer than enlisted soldiers.

Significance and Research Potential

A search of the literature reveals that archaeological sites related to the War of 1812 are rare in New York State when compared to listings for the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars. Even rarer is that these archaeological components have been subjected to controlled survey and excavations. Among War of 1812 military sites, most are classified as battlefields—only a handful are associated with cantonments. It is, therefore, the case that present knowledge of War of 1812 cantonments and encampments is extremely limited when compared to that of other wars (which is also limited).

Research at Cantonment Wilkinson in Illinois provides the most tangible starting point.
Conclusions

The confirmation of the Zagreb site as part of Colonel Zebulon Pike’s Cantonment Saranac provides yet another example of the utility and potential of using metal detection as an aid in locating ephemeral military sites. Unlike more permanent forts and barracks, these sites often lack abundant diagnostic assemblages and are often masked by a background of debris that appears to be more domestic than military. Elusive diagnostic artifacts are recovered more frequently with metal detection, a fact that is essential to identifying and assessing these site types correctly. It is a method well known to collectors of militaria, but one that archaeologists have only begun to implement on a systematic basis.

The 1812 Champlain Campaign began with a tremendous amount of hubris, but, like most other American campaigns during that war, ended in blunder and disgrace. The 1812–1813 winter encampment was among the worst episodes of the war, resulting in the deaths of over 200 men, more than died in the initial campaign. The Zagreb site contains sufficient archaeological evidence to associate it with Colonel Zebulon Pike’s Cantonment Saranac, along with an abundance of architectural features and middens associated with this well-documented episode of United States history. It offers a glimpse into the management and mismanagement of the army during the first year of the war, and into the lives of soldiers during a period for which little archaeological data exist.

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