

# Historic Resources of the York River Watershed

*Or, York River has a rich history, and a  
wealth of historical resources!*

**Presentation for York River  
Stewardship Committee  
February 27, 2024**

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Native Americans arrived in York County about 12,000 years ago.

- Much transportation was by birch bark or dugout canoe, along the York River and its tributaries



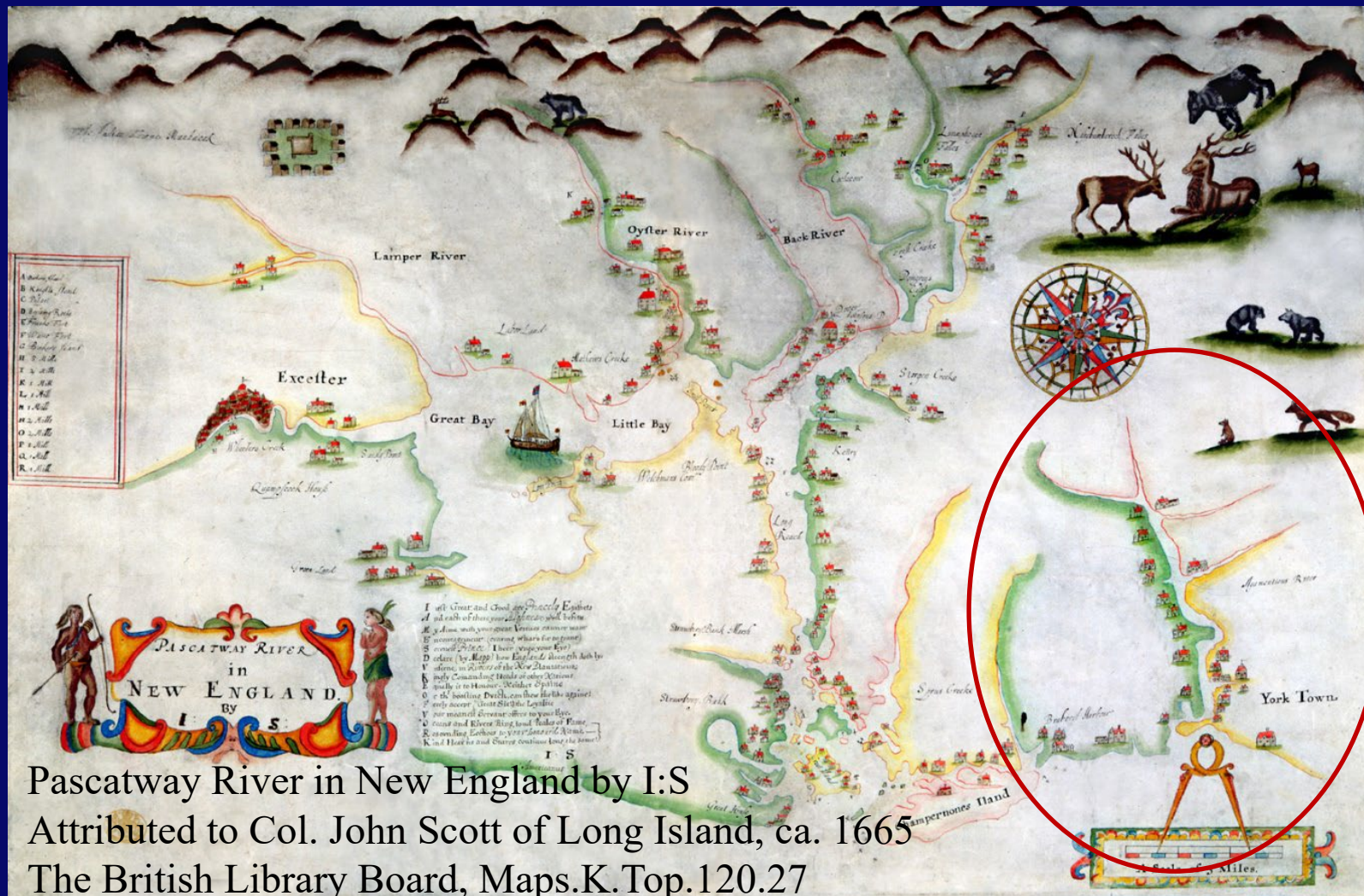
Samuel de Champlain's 1607 map of the Saco River. He visited it in 1605

# Prehistoric pottery found in the York River

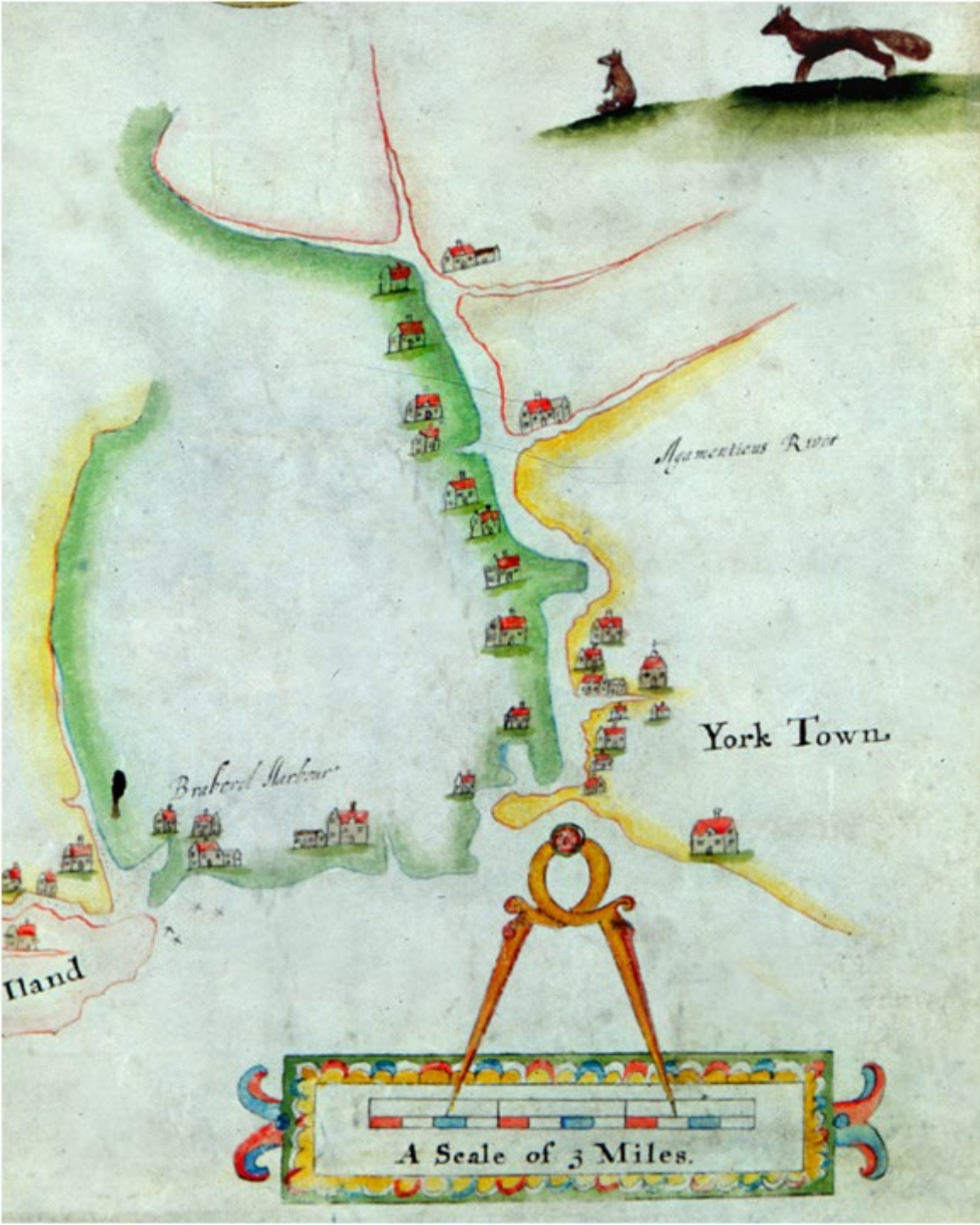


“Proto-Contact or contact period Iroquoian-like (but probably local Algonkian) vessel, date about 1500 to 1620.” - Art Spiess

# First known as Agamenticus, York was first settled in 1630 or 1631.



Piscataway River in New England by I:S  
Attributed to Col. John Scott of Long Island, ca. 1665  
The British Library Board, Maps.K.Top.120.27



Like Native Americans, English settlers lived close to the coast and the river, using it as their principal transportation routes

- Detail of the Scott map

## Settlement in Town of York 1641–1691



Eleven years after the initial English settlement, the town of Agamenticus was chartered as the City of Gorgeana, after the proprietor Sir Fernando Gorges. Despite this lofty status, the settlement comprised approximately 100 people.



In 1652, settlers in Gorgeana agreed to be annexed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which renamed the community York. Heads of 48 households signed the submission, suggesting a population of more than 200. The largest concentration remained at the mouth of the York River, though the tide powered saw mills up river also attracted people and a few settlers had established themselves beside the Cape Neddick River.

## Godsoe Map, 1701



Left: A Plot of Mr. Humphrey Chadburns farm att Sturgen Creek by William Godsoe, 1701. This plan shows the Chadbourne and Frost farmsteads located by a brook near the Piscataqua River. Settlement along streams and rivers was typical of early English settlement in Maine.

# Most early settlements were close to the York River

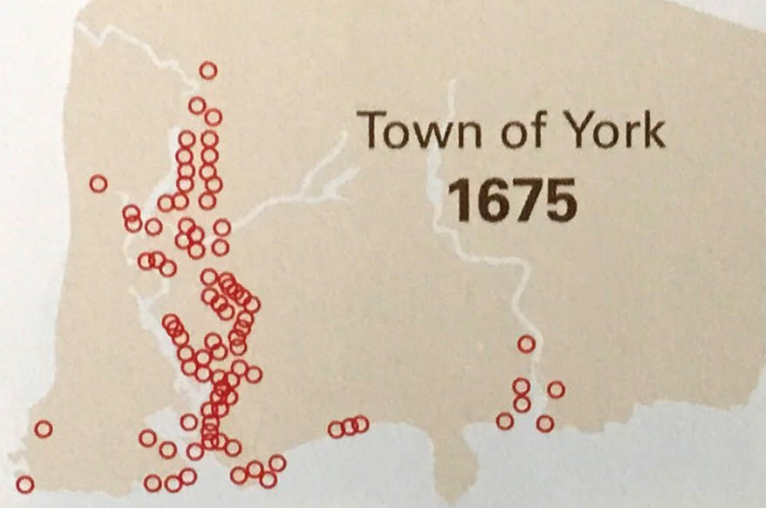


York continued to grow until the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675. York could field a militia of 80 soldiers, suggesting the town's population was probably between 400–500 people.

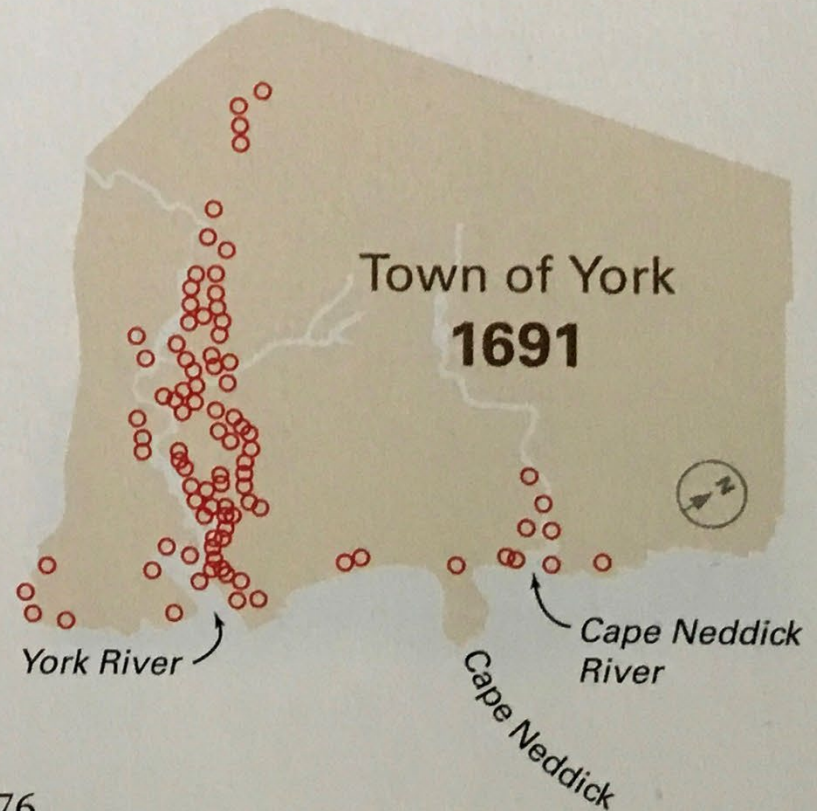


Having suffered only minor raids during King Philip's War, York continued to grow until King William's War. With over thirty new homesteads established between 1676 and 1691, the prosperous shire town of York County had a population in excess of 600 people when the town was nearly destroyed. A native raid on Candlemas Day, 25 January 1692, caused extensive destruction. The Wabanaki either killed or took captive more than one hundred settlers and burned most of the buildings on the north side of York River. York remained a frontier outpost until the Treaty of Utrecht brought peace to New England in 1713.

# Ove 200 potential 17<sup>th</sup> century sites

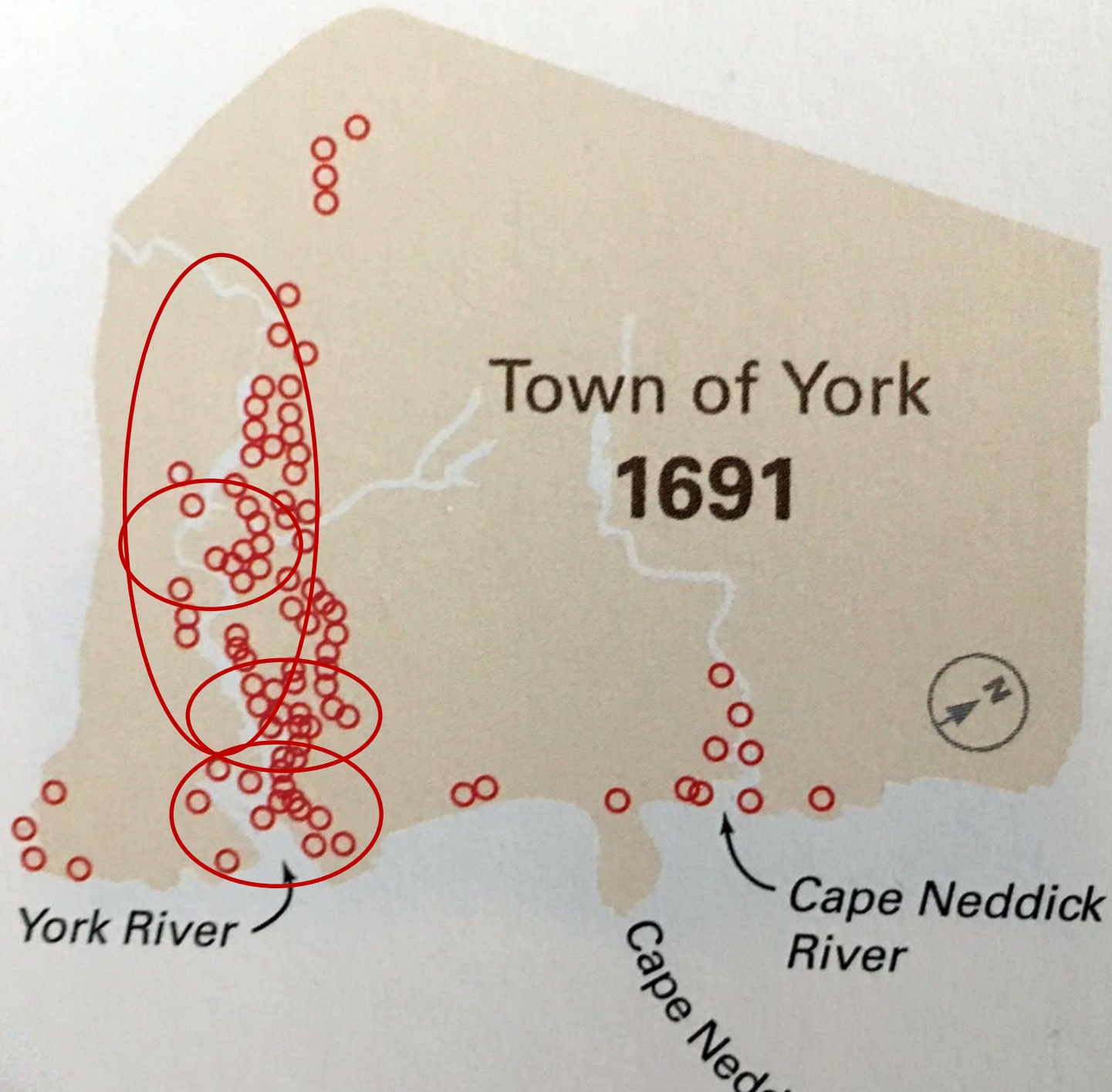


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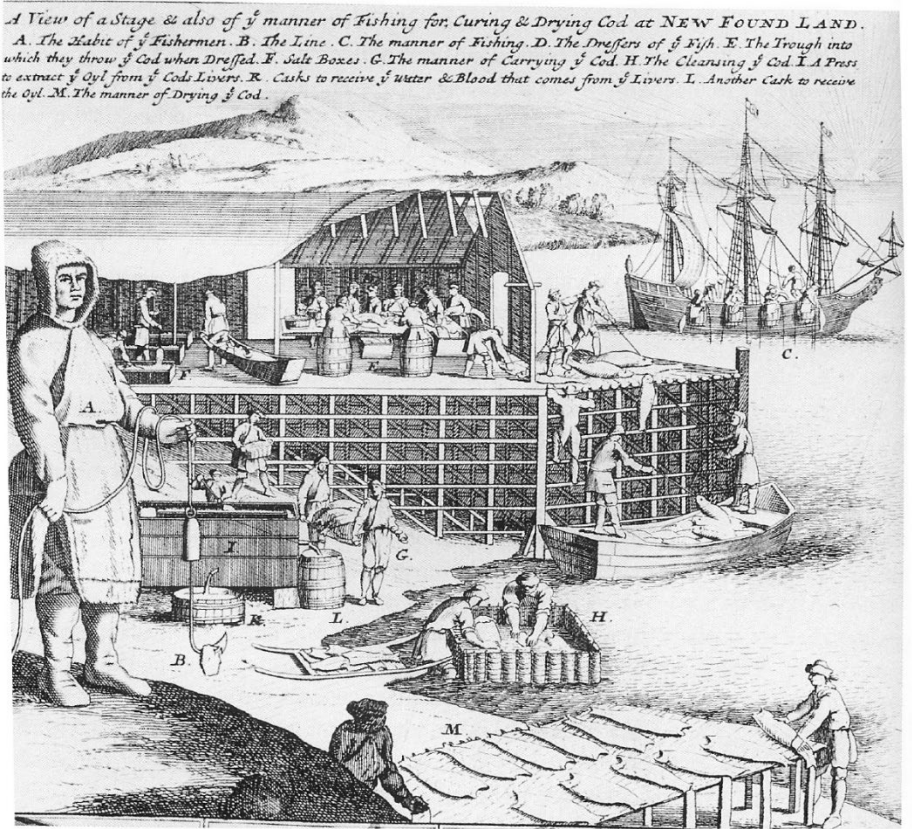


NO THRU TRUCKS OR BUSES  
ALL PARKING BY PERMIT ONLY

# Stage Neck Inn

DINING-COCKTAILS

OPEN ALL YEAR



*A View of a Stage & also of y<sup>e</sup> manner of Fishing for, Curing & Drying Cod at NEW FOUND LAND. A. The Habit of y<sup>e</sup> Fishermen. B. The Line. C. The manner of Fishing. D. The Dressers of y<sup>e</sup> Fish. E. The Trough into which they throw y<sup>e</sup> Cod when Dressed. F. Salt Boxes. G. The manner of Carrying y<sup>e</sup> Cod. H. The Cleansing of Cod. I. A Press to extract y<sup>e</sup> Oyl from y<sup>e</sup> Cods Livers. K. Casks to receive y<sup>e</sup> water & Blood that comes from y<sup>e</sup> Livers. L. Another Cask to receive the Oyl. M. The manner of Drying y<sup>e</sup> Cod.*

• Stages and Flakes on Moll's Map, 1715



Donnell-Hancock Warehouse, 1740s



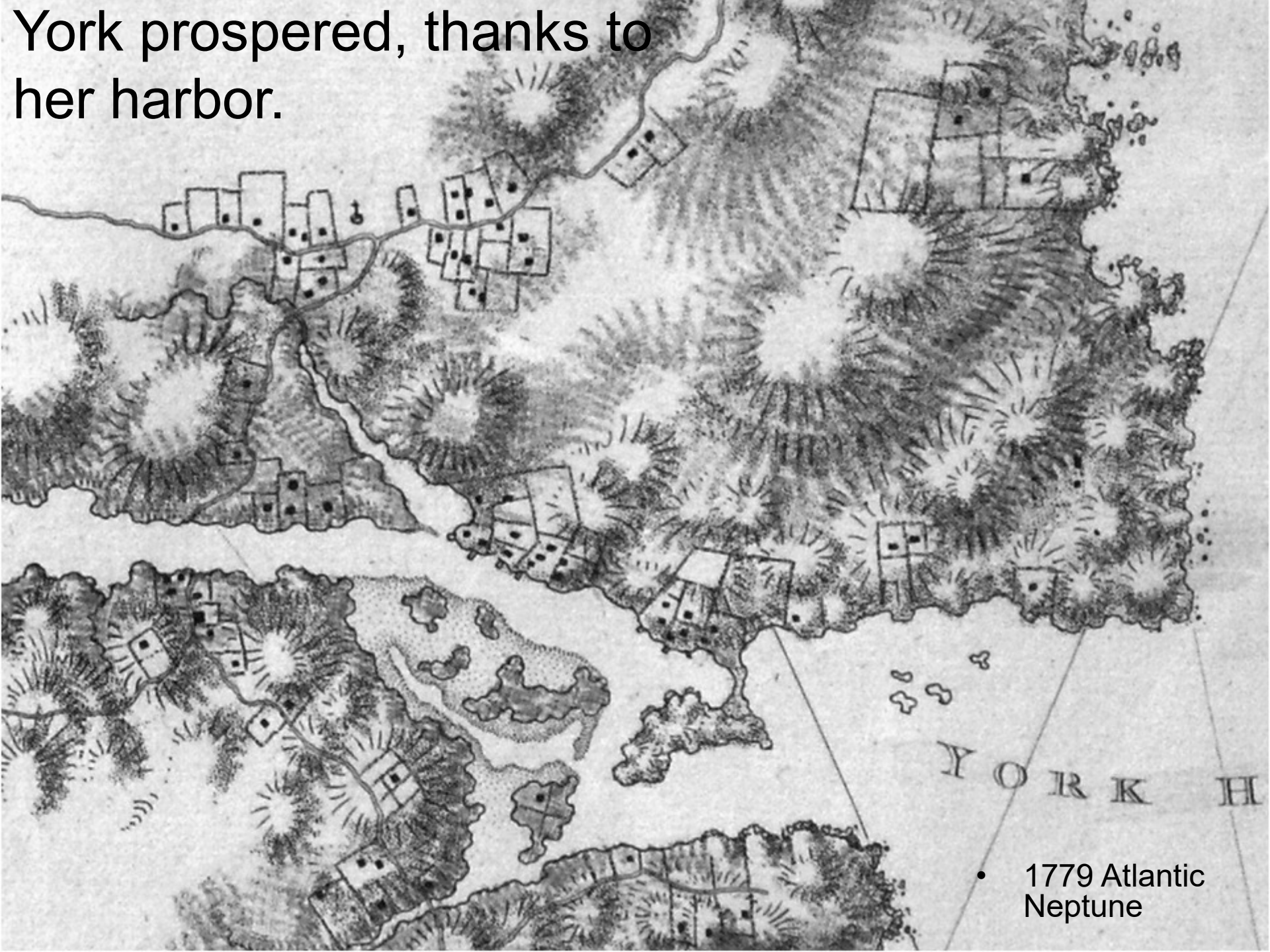
Sayward Wheeler 1718



Marshall Store 1867



York prospered, thanks to her harbor.



• 1779 Atlantic Neptune

... & eight rods of pasture land, represented by  
... fifty eight rods of mowing land adjoining, represented  
... acres and ninety rods of wood land, represented by

... daughter of said Intestate, twenty three acres  
... by J. N. 1; and also nine acres & a quarter  
... by J. N. 2.

... youngest daughter of said Intestate, five  
... with one half the barn, thereon stand-  
... also twelve acres and one hundred rods of pasture  
... represented by K. N. 2; and also one third part  
... house.

... that each of the parties aforesaid  
... and repassing to and from their  
... by the way that are  
... as little damage as possible.

... the eleventh day of November,

William Grov  
John Bradbury  
Daniel Sewall



Site of  
Wiggly  
Bridge

... Probate, held at York,  
... The Committee aforesaid  
... and the foregoing divi-  
... for my approbation, and  
... there, the same is now  
... and thereupon decreed  
... have and hold the part  
... severally, during life: - &  
... said Nathaniel deceased, have  
... in assigned them, to them  
... in severally forever, accordingly.



Nathaniel Donnell estate division,  
ca. 1790 by Daniel Sewall  
York County Probate, Alfred

18<sup>th</sup> century, settlement & roads moved inland – but the river remained a focus.



- Daniel Sewall, Township Map of York, 1794

# 1794 York Town Map detail



# Old Mill Creek (Dolly Gordon Creek)

First tidal saw mill in New England (1634)?  
First saw mill in New England?  
First tidal mill in English America?  
First saw mill in English America?









# York has a wealth of archaeology sites from the historic period

- Over 200 historical archaeological sites in York are in the Maine Historic Preservation Commission register
- Many important ones are within 50-100 feet of the river.
- The York River is particularly rich in 17<sup>th</sup> century sites, some of the best preserved in New England.
- Some are nationally and even internationally significant.

# Old Mill Creek – Dolly Gordon



Robert  
Gray  
1707

1634  
1705

Jeremiah  
Moulton  
1678

Robert Gray  
House 1707-1724



Jeremiah Moulton's  
"log house Ca. 1678



# Old Mill Creek – Dolly Gordon



Robert  
Gray  
1707

Barrell  
Grove  
1760

1634

1705

Jeremiah  
Moulton  
1678



Barrell Grove  
built 1760  
but parts date to  
1713

Childhood home of  
Sally Sayward Barrell  
Keating Wood  
(1759-1855)

America's first  
female Gothic  
Novelist



There's even more up river...





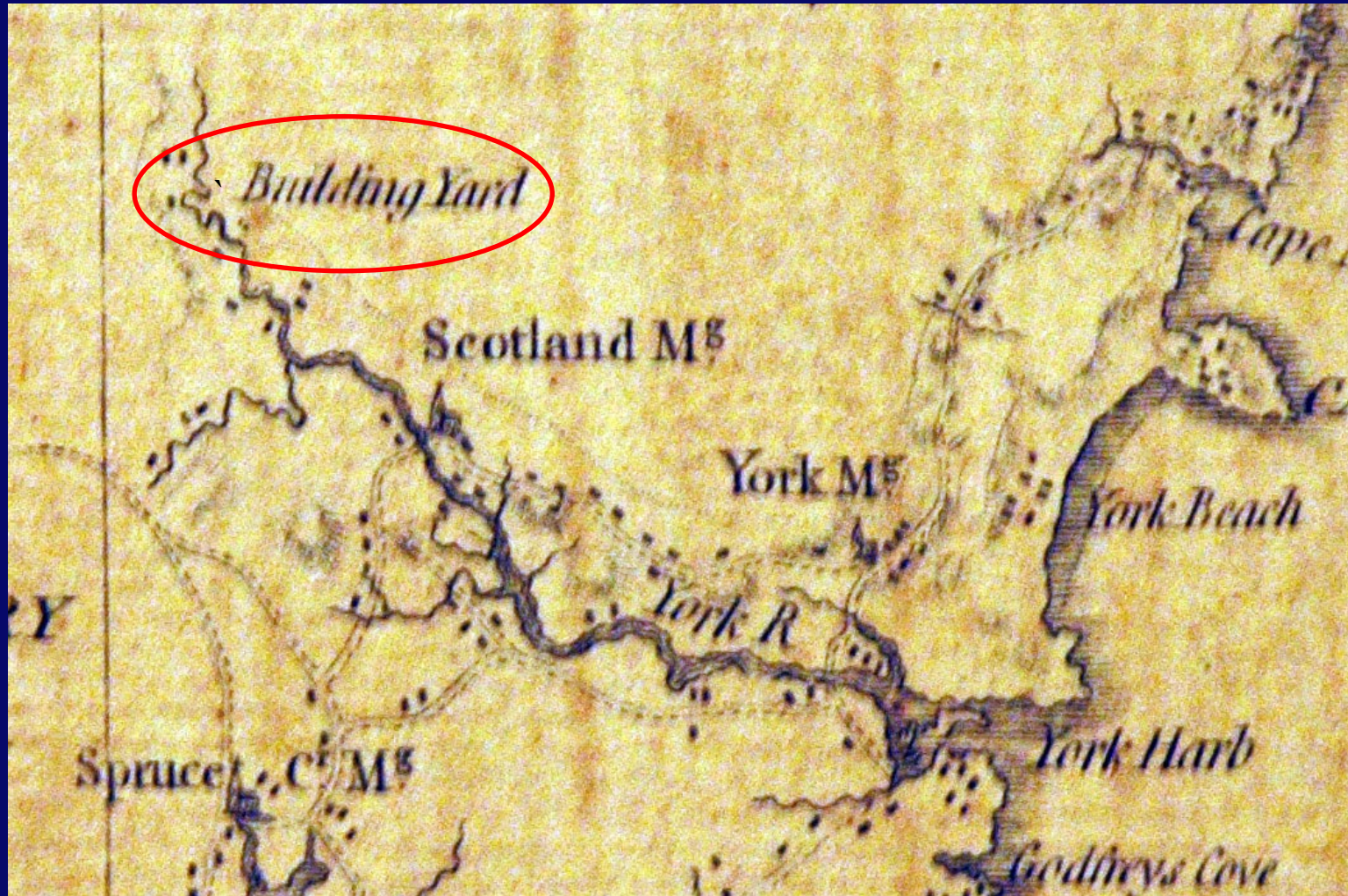
1700  
Tide Mill  
Smelt  
Brook



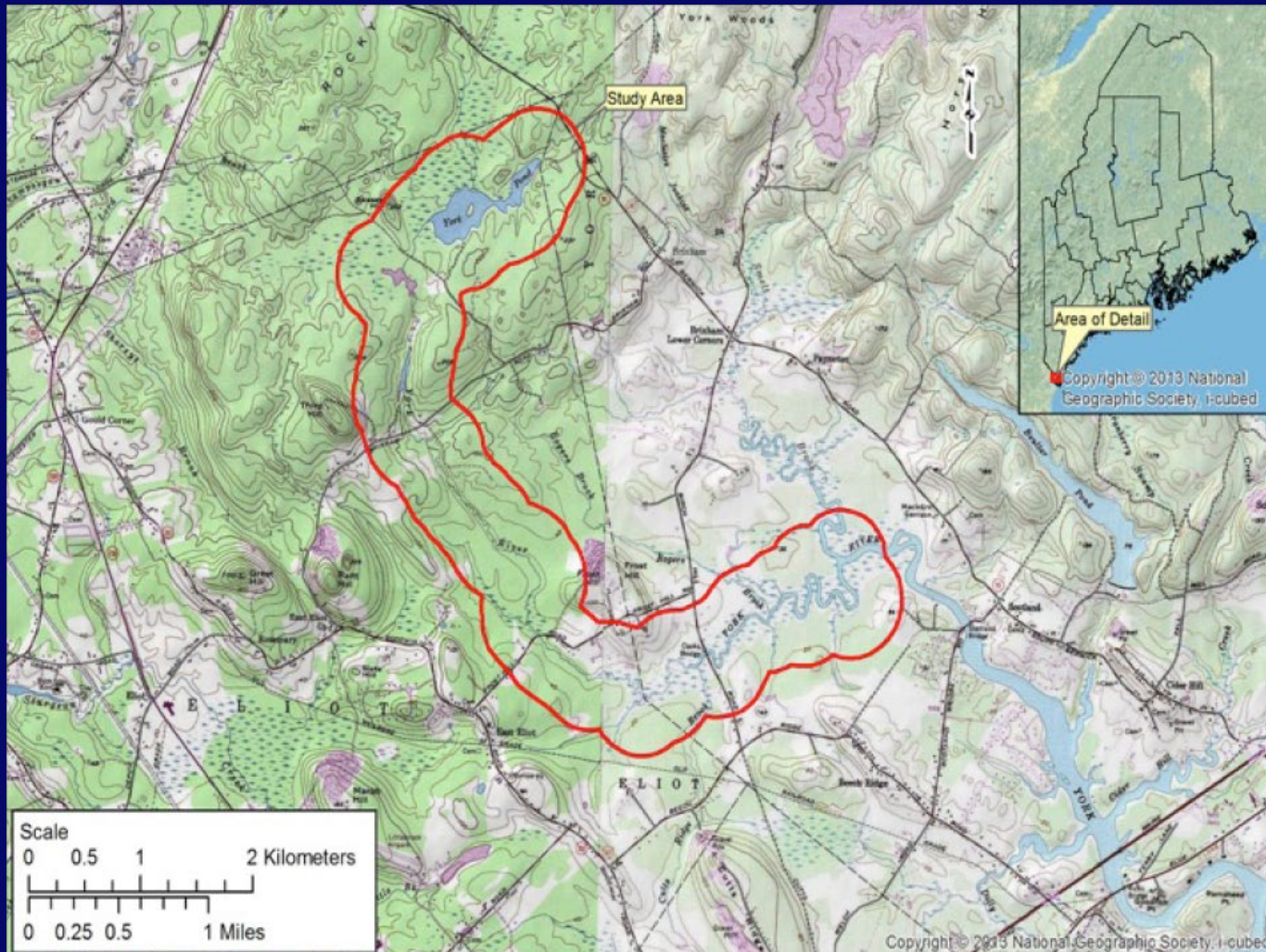
Built by  
Abraham Preble  
Arthur Bragdon  
Peter Nowell



# 1780s map showing shipyard located next to the sawmill

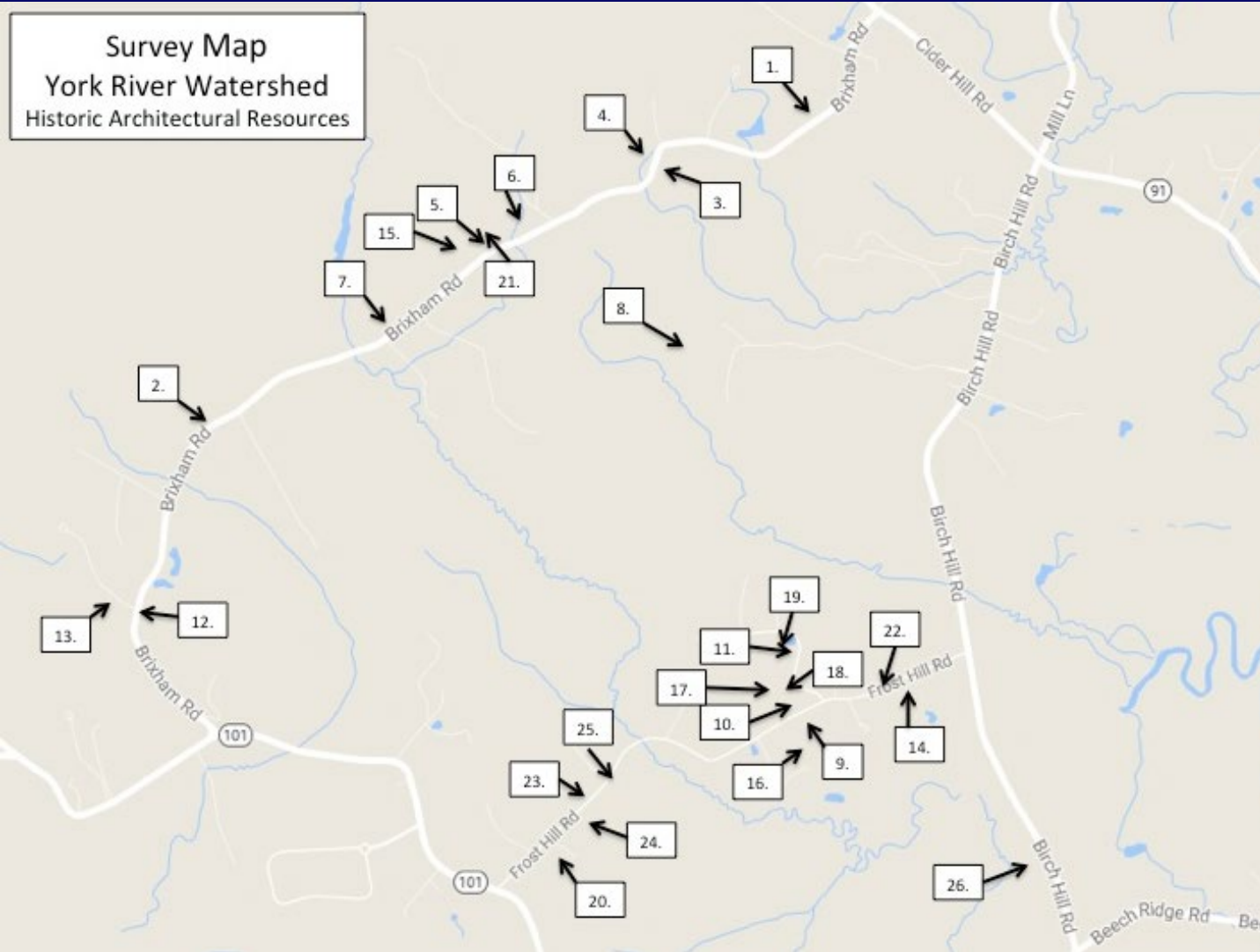


# 2017 Upper York River Survey



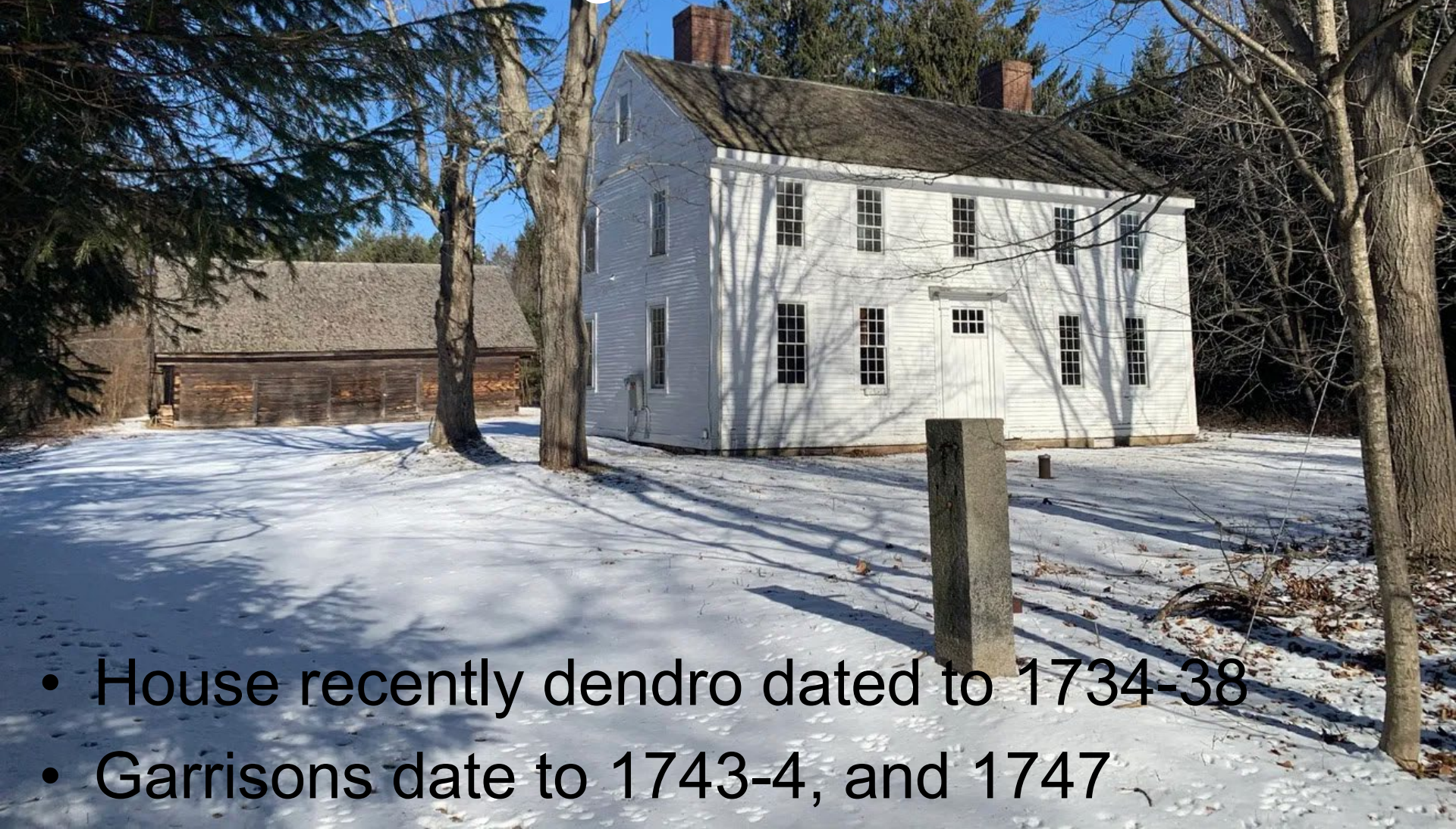
- Both archaeology sites and historic structures
- Area outlined in red
- Funded by the York River Study Committee

# 26 Structures of Historical Significance were Identified



Survey by  
Groundroot  
Preservation  
(Scott Stevens &  
Steven Mallory)

# Frost house and garrisons on National Register of Historic Places



- House recently dendro dated to 1734-38
- Garrisons date to 1743-4, and 1747

# There are two garrisons



1747

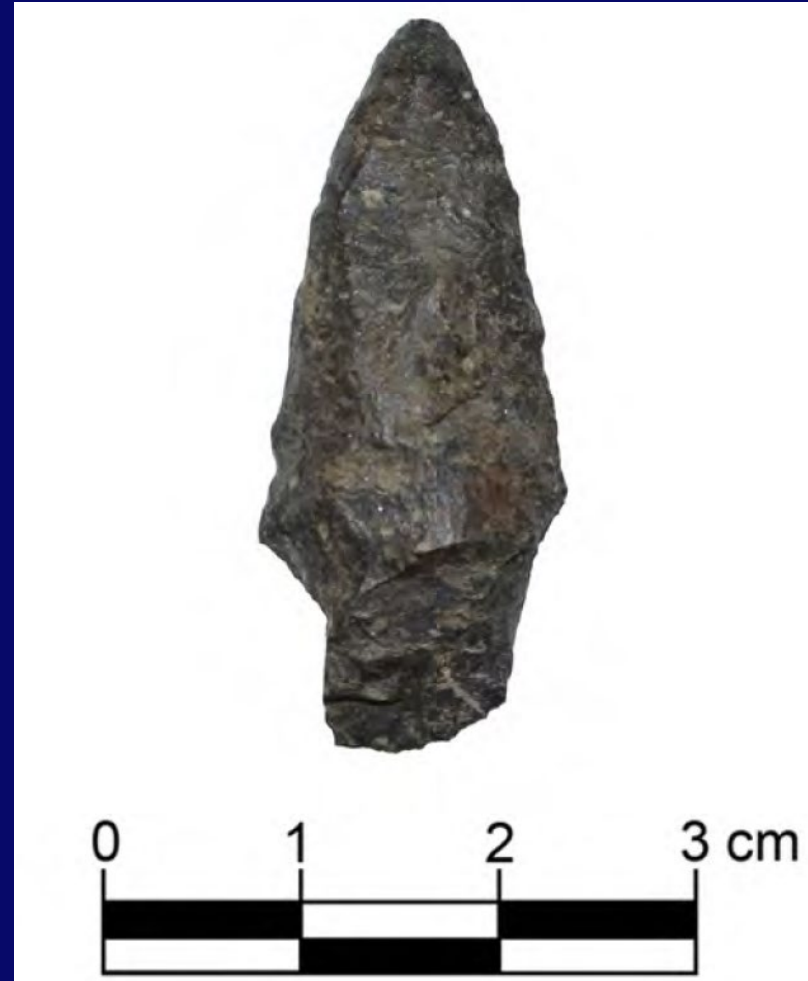
1743-1744

During King George's War

- Both were dated with dendrochronology as well

# 6 prehistoric sites discovered

- One as old as 5,000-4,500 B.P., dated by a small-stemmed point
- Others perhaps roughly 4,000-2,000 B.P.
- Potential for many more!
- Archaeology survey by Northeast Archaeology Research Center (Farmington, Maine)



# Historic sites recorded in Punkintown date to the later 1700s



Emery Barn



Plaisted House Site





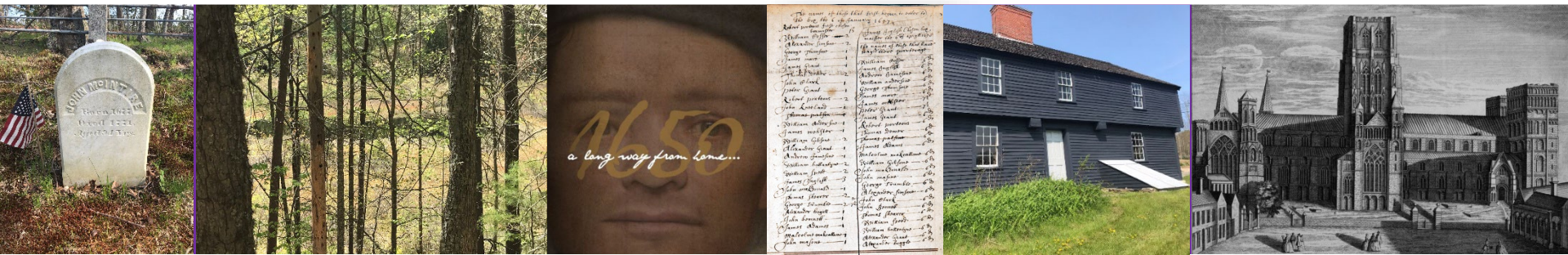
# Scotland District

- Settled by former Scots Prisoners of War in the 1650s and 1660s
- They had been shipped to New England as indentured servants
- Many worked in Piscataqua saw mills
- Once freed many settle in “Scotland”

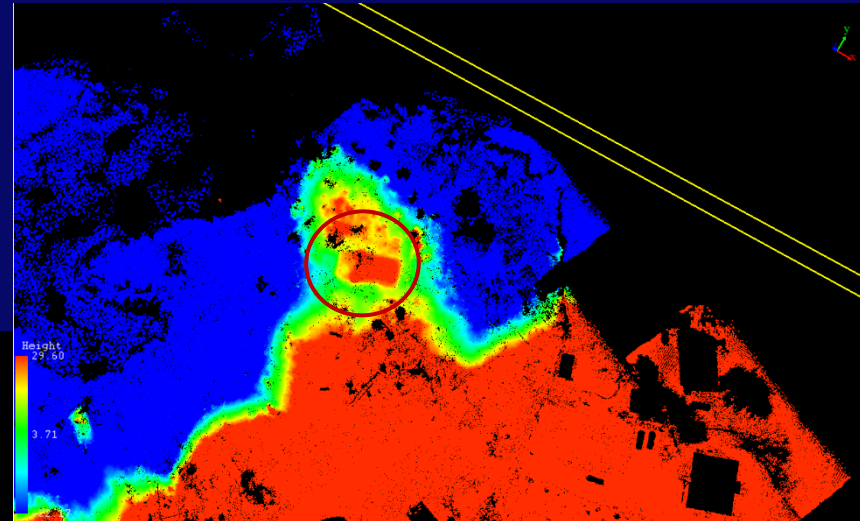


# Landscapes of Indenture

## *How Scottish Prisoners of War shaped New England*



# History, archaeology, paleoecology, remote sensing, material culture



MORR 47:8 of records - 1705

This being devised by John McIntire and his Brother  
 McIntire to warran ancestral of their father McIntire  
 now deceased who warran records an order warran  
 a griseed  
 His cows and barn and house to 20 acres of red land - 035 = 00 = 00  
 To his warran of cows and house goods - 020 = 00 = 00  
 To the acres of land a some of partings of 8 miles - 025 = 00 = 00  
 To 30 acres of land and 4 acres of marsh - 025 = 00 = 00  
 To 60 acres of land upon South west of 8 miles - 007 = 00 = 00  
 To 7 acres of swamp marsh at -  
 To 20 acres of land that lie at of <sup>near Howard</sup> Sabnan falls - 014 = 00 = 00  
 To 6 acres at - 026 = 10 = 00  
 To 50 acres at - 015 = 00 = 00  
 To 30 acres at - 001 = 10 = 00  
 To 30 acres at - 004 = 00 = 00  
 To 12 acres at - 006 = 00 = 00  
 To 06 acres at - 007 = 00 = 00  
 199 = 00 = 00  
 By us  
 Richard McIntire  
 James Darnell  
 To about eight loads of hay - at  
 To about 35 bushels of grain at



Sediment coring for 17<sup>th</sup> C pollen

Micum McIntire's 1705 Probate Inventory

# Junkins Cemetery, ca. 1700



# McIntire Garrison



- Now dated by dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) to 1713
- Probably the earliest extant building in Maine

Thanks! I'm happy to answer questions

