

Michie Stadium. The proposed new press box will rise one story above the existing press facility, while an electronic scoreboard will extend four stories above the northern grandstand. These impacts have been assessed by Historical Perspectives Inc. during a series of environmental studies.

Individually and collectively, these alterations pose difficult design choices due to the stadium's location within the viewshed of two Revolutionary War-era forts and in the middle of a nationally significant historic district. The U.S. Military Academy has initiated consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Office with respect to creating a design concept that will minimize physical alterations to the historic integrity of Michie Stadium, be visually compatible with the national historic landmark district, and accomplish a much-needed facilities upgrade

to ensure the successful participation of Army's 20th-century intercollegiate athletic programs.

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## Boston's Curious Bowling History

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**B**oston is often defined by its history, which is made tangible in its architecture and complicated street patterns. Because it is home to great sports teams including the Red Sox, the Celtics, and the Bruins, those less interested in history often define Boston as a great sports town. Boston is also home to the largest and most complex construction project in the United States, the Central Artery Project. Better known as the Big Dig, this project includes replacing the elevated portions of Interstate 93 with a wider underground tunnel and building a third tunnel under Boston Harbor to Logan International Airport and a new bridge over the Charles River. The archeological investigations that preceded construction led to some of the more significant archeological excavations ever conducted in downtown Boston. Although Boston is not known as a great bowling town, this massive construction project has helped the city merge the historic with the sporting through a unique artifact, North America's oldest bowling ball.

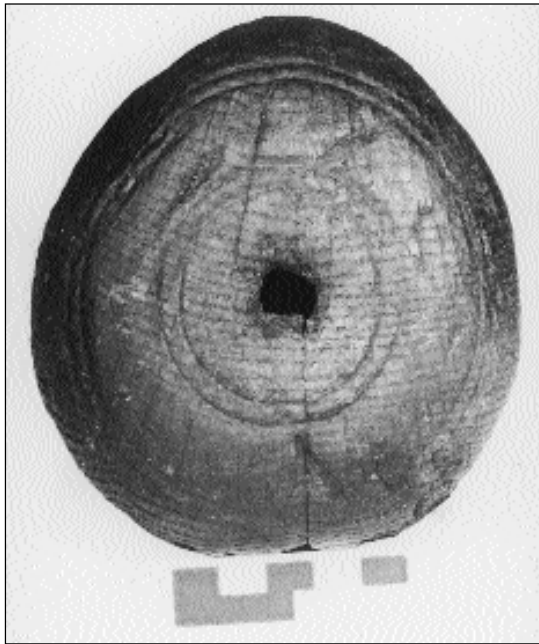
It is not a particularly eye-catching artifact, but the bowling ball is certainly one of the most well-known artifacts in the Big Dig archeological

collection. Archeologists recovered the ball from a privy at the Cross Street Site. This site was home in the 1600s to Katherine Nanny Naylor, the daughter of Rev. John Wheelwright, a prominent Boston minister who was banished from Boston for supporting the religiously radical Anne Hutchinson.

The archeological collection includes a typical variety of goods found in the home of a wealthy Boston merchant. The conditions in the privy were perfect for the preservation of organic materials, which includes the wooden bowling ball. The wheel-shaped bowling ball, which is more properly called a bowle, is made of lathe-turned oak and at one time held a small lead weight and had a decorative cover over the hole. It was recovered from the Cross Street privy in 1994, promptly identified as a bowling ball, and added to the list of interesting small finds. We were unprepared, however, for the crush of public interest in the bowle when its existence was announced in a local newspaper article about the Central Artery archeological collection.

It was this interest that led the Massachusetts Historical Commission to examine more closely the history of bowling in Boston. This

North America's oldest bowling ball. Photo courtesy the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Cross Street Backlot Site, Boston, Massachusetts.



particular bowle would have been used for lawn bowling, a game more similar to bocce than to modern American ten-pin games. Early English literature on bowling suggests that you could bowl in any relatively flat area out of doors. Lawn bowlers would roll out a smaller ball, the jack, and then compete with their own bowles to come as close as possible to the jack. There were at least three different types of bowles (spherical, wheel shaped, and biased) and much of the art of the game came from choosing the right bowle for the chosen field. Modern lawn bowling shares many similarities, but overall the modern game is much more structured than the 17th-century version.

The greatest surprise was bowling's legal status. As early as the 16th century, English royalty banned bowling among the poorer classes in an effort to keep recreation better focused on military sports. The prohibition against bowling made it to the New World, but the reasons for it were different. Boston's early colonial leaders actively legislated against recreation in an effort to control personal behavior. In 1647, the court passed a law banning shuffleboard in taverns citing complaints of "great disorder" in houses of "common entertainment" where shuffleboard was played. In 1650, the law was expanded to issue fines for bowling, fining the tavern owner 20 shillings and each player 5 shillings. The problem wasn't the bowling itself, but the gambling and carousing that went along with it. The prohibition against bowling didn't last long and by the early 1700s, taverns were advertising in the *Boston Newsletter* that they had a bowling green

available. However, the Cross Street bowle comes from a deposit firmly dated to bowling's illegal period.

Soon after the Central Artery collection came to the Archaeological Curation Center at the Massachusetts Historical Commission for permanent curation, the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Missouri, called to tell us that, as far as they knew, our bowle was the oldest bowling ball in North America. The status of the bowle as the "oldest" may be challenged in the future as new sites are excavated and new finds made, but the bowle will remain one of the collection's more interesting and important artifacts. It is important, in part, because of the insight it provides into Boston's colonial past, but equally so because of its popularity with the general public. The bowle has provided a window on the past that is so familiar to modern audiences that we engage our audience much more quickly and hold their interest longer. Merging sports and Boston history has provided a benefit we never expected, but which will have a long-lasting, positive effect on our programs.

Artifacts from the Central Artery Collection, including the lawn bowle, are on display in *Archaeology of the Central Artery Project: Highway to the Past* at the Commonwealth Museum in Boston through July 2001. The exhibit is sponsored by William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth and Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission and supported by the Gillette Company.

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