

METHODOLOGY

Historic Maps

As a first step in the investigations, we procured historic maps of Oakland. Unfortunately there are few, and these are limited in scope. At present, we have maps constructed from aerial photographs taken in 1947 (Figure 17), 1958 (Figure 18), 1966 (Figure 19), and 1980, but some of the structures on the plantation are obscured. We do not have the actual aerial photographs. From the Louisiana State Land Office, we obtained survey maps of the Cane River area for 1829 (see Figure 3) and 1850. Unfortunately, these do not provide structure locations, only property boundaries. Knowlin and Associates, under contract with the National Park Service, conducted a survey of the plantation during the summer and fall of 1997. Their survey map, combined with the map created by SEAC technicians, served as the base map for our investigations (see Figure 4).

Fieldwork

On May 12, 1996, part of the crew arrived at Oakland; the rest arrived a week later. On the first day of fieldwork, the advance party established a baseline grid using a Sokia Total Station transit. The team placed ½-inch-diameter steel rods at intervals along the baseline and at subsequent points around the site. Beginning at 1000N 1000E, we placed points at 1300N 1000E, 1600N 1000E, and 1710N 1000E. Because the landscape prevented a straight baseline, the next point was placed at 1710N 1050E. We then continued north with points at 2060N 1050E, 2360N 1050E, 2660N 1050E, and 2960N 1050E (Figure 20). Additional points were placed around the plantation to facilitate pin flagging.

Because we were investigating a historic site, we decided it would be more efficient to be con-

sistent with the measurement system used historically on the plantation. Thus, even though the standard archeological practice is to use the metric system, we chose to use the English system of measurement to record dimensions.

The plantation complex was examined prior to the commencement of the field season to determine the testing intervals. High-use areas were pin flagged at 25-foot intervals around such areas as the slave/tenant cabins, the overseer's house, the barns, and the area adjacent to the main house. Low-use areas, such as those historically used as pasture, were pin flagged at 50-foot intervals (Figure 21). The majority of the auger tests conducted in the eastern section of the plantation were positive, while the preponderance of those tested at 50-foot intervals were negative.

Auger testing is more likely to reveal horizontally extensive features than vertical features. However, the objectives of our study made auger testing a reliable and efficient method for surveying the 42-acre plantation complex. The testing intervals employed enabled us to identify areas of artifact and artifact group concentrations (see Chapter 6).

Once the grid was established (Figure 22), a portion of the crew began pin flagging in the cornfield. After a section was pin flagged and marked with grid coordinates, crew members began auger testing. The pin flagging crew continued to work ahead of the auger testing crew. The tractor-mounted auger was placed over the flagged point, and a 1-foot diameter hole was drilled until sterile soil, subsoil, or in situ structural features were encountered. A two-person team sifted the dirt through a ¼-inch screen and bagged recovered artifacts according to provenience. Using forms specifically designed for auger testing, the crew recorded all necessary and pertinent information, including a profile drawing of each auger hole.

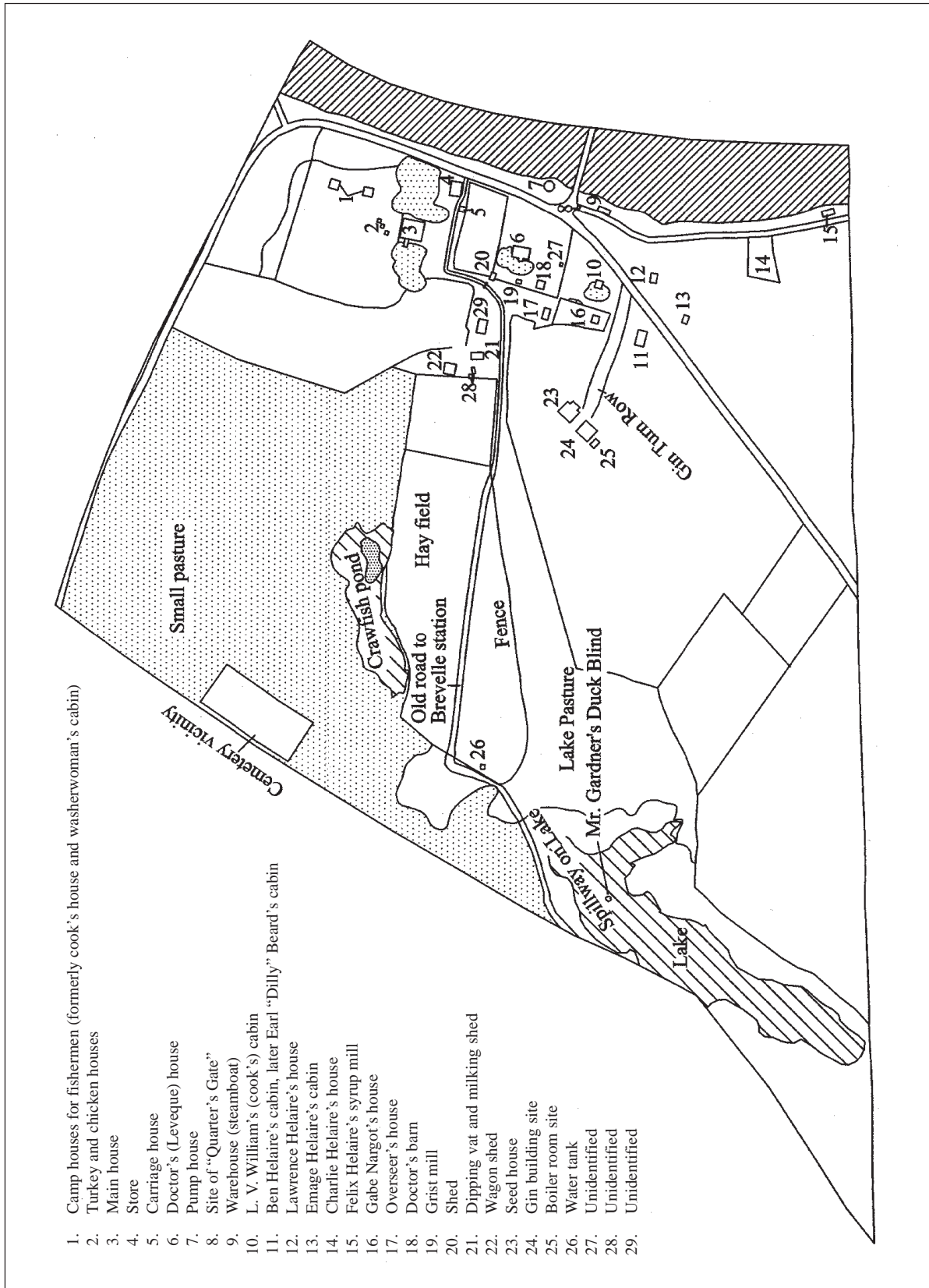


Figure 17 — Map of Oakland Plantation rendered from a 1947 aerial photograph.

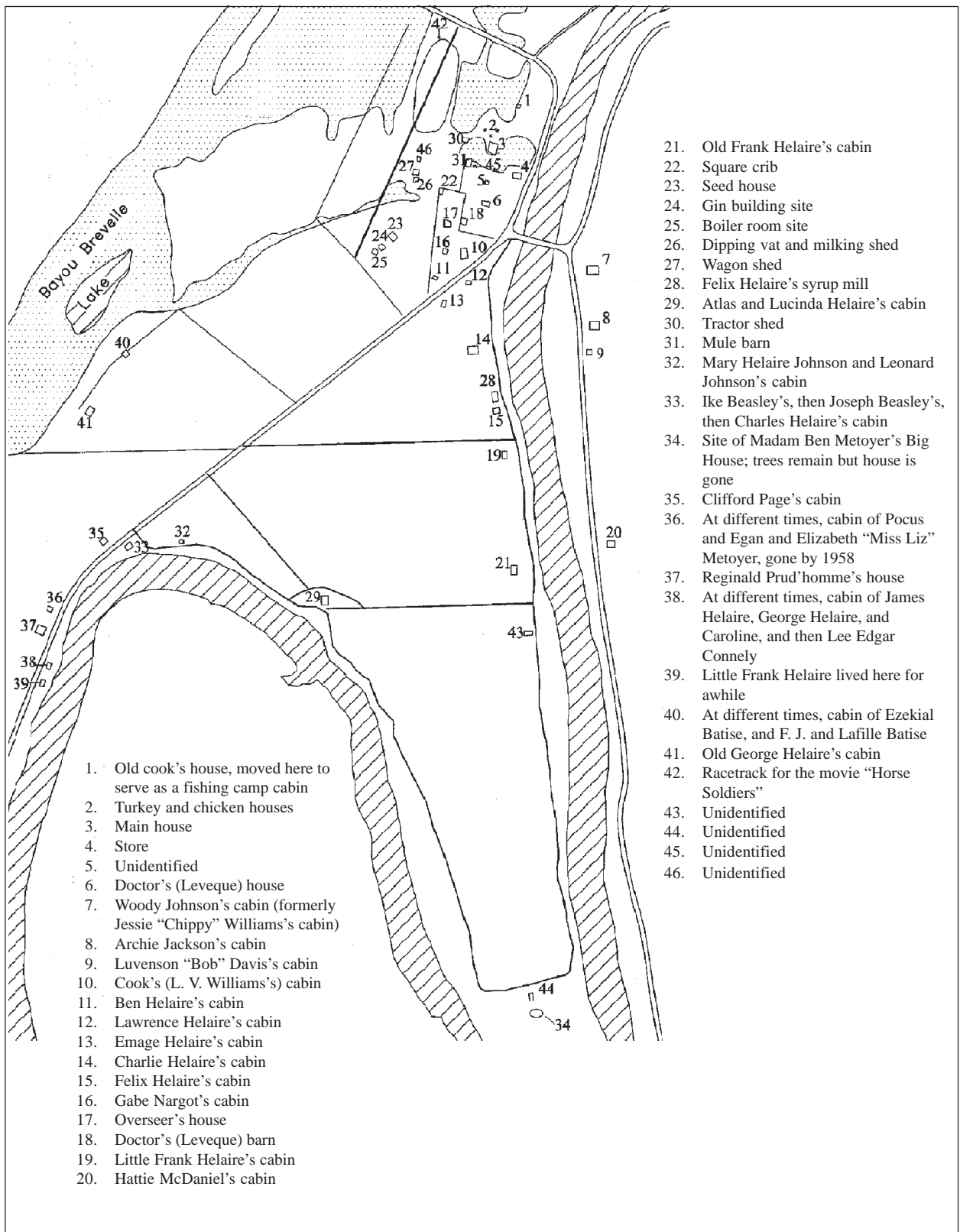


Figure 18 — Map of Oakland Plantation rendered from a 1958 aerial photograph.

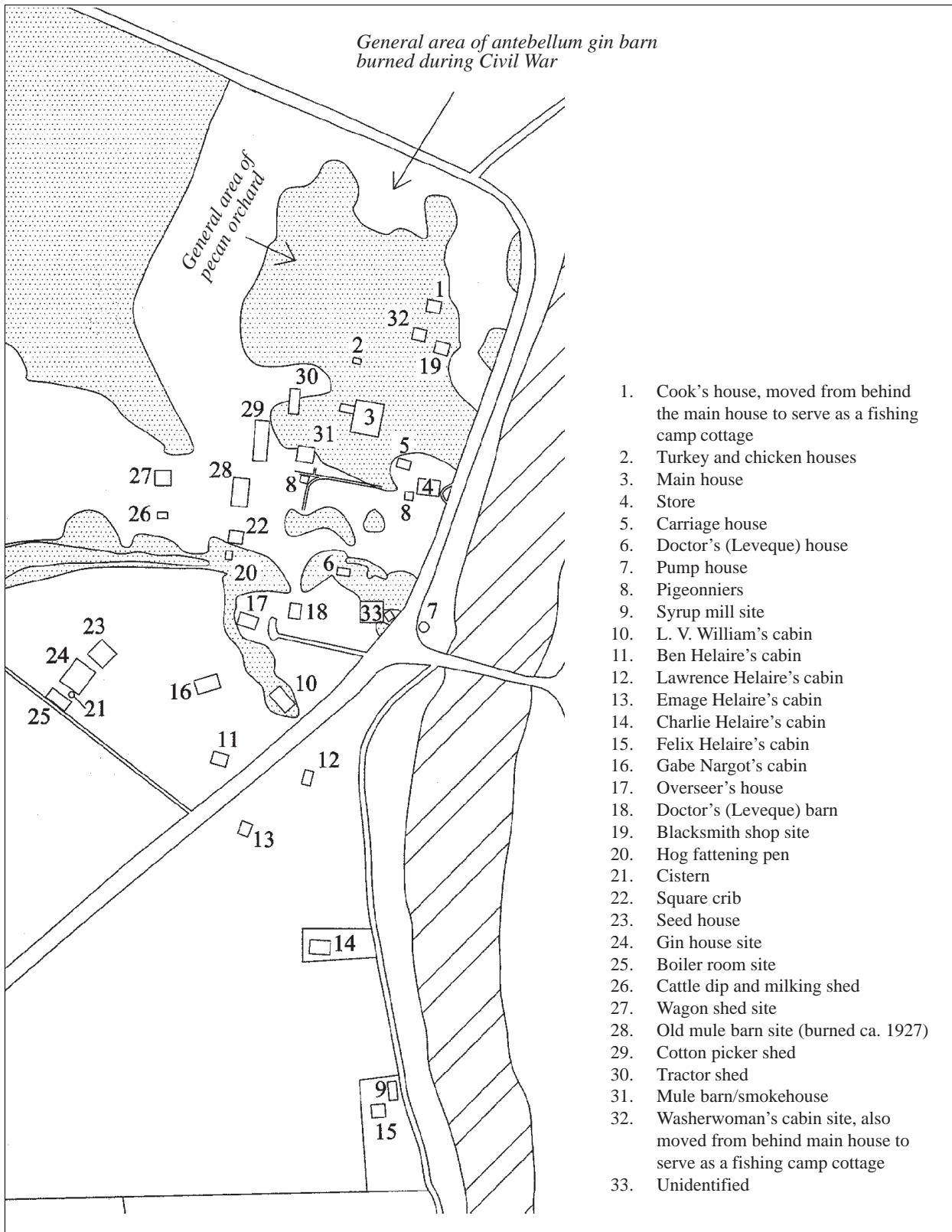


Figure 19 — Map of Oakland Plantation rendered from a 1966 aerial photograph.

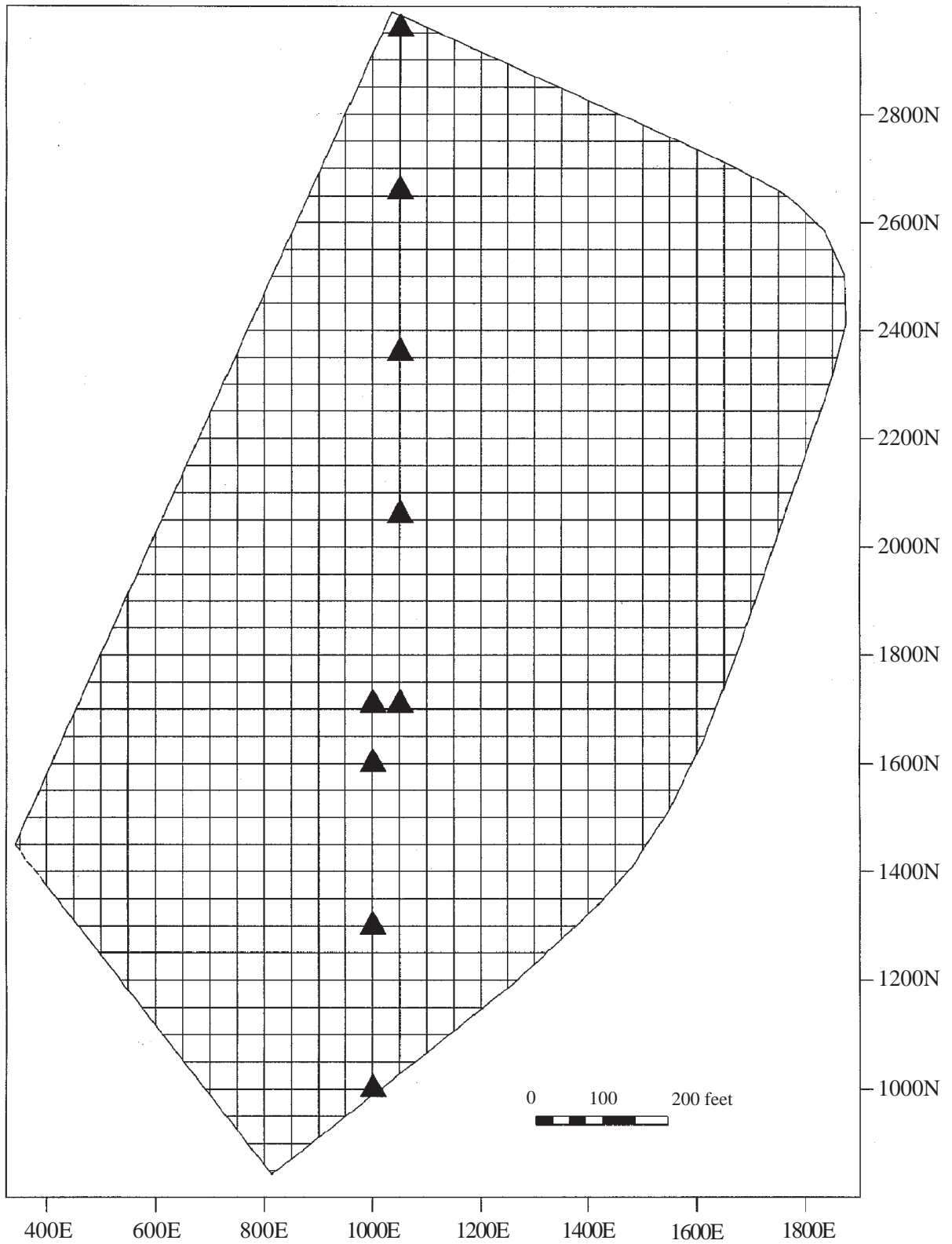


Figure 20 — Datum points.

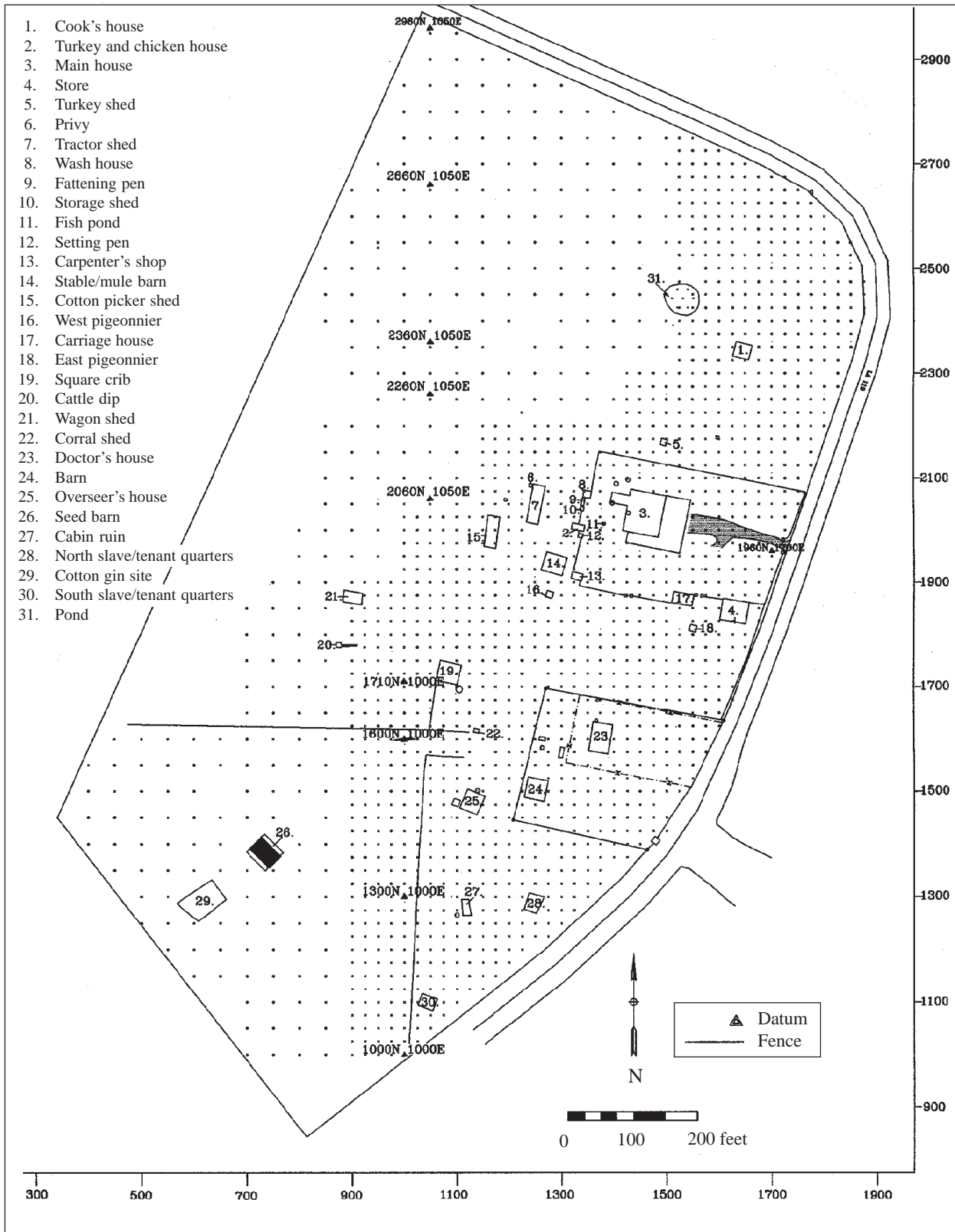


Figure 21 — Structure and auger test locations.



Figure 22 — Establishing the grid.

It is important to mention the conditions under which the crew worked. The average daily temperature was 94 degrees Fahrenheit, while the humidity level averaged 90 percent. The pin flagging crew's work was especially arduous due to the dense growth of mock orange and bois d'arc.

Between May 19 and June 27, a total of 1,660 auger tests were drilled in addition to the formal excavations conducted in the graveyard and elsewhere on the plantation. In 466 (28 percent) of the auger tests, no cultural material was recovered. Twenty-seven or 2.3 percent of the positive auger tests contained enough data to warrant the assignment of a feature number.

STRATIGRAPHY

Soil levels encountered during the auger-testing program were formed during the Holocene and late

Pleistocene eras, when alluvial deposits formed the Red River floodplains. They range from well-drained soils to poorly drained clayey soils. Cultural activity, such as plowing, has impacted the physical characteristics of the sediments. Time, fill episodes, erosion, and biological influences have shaped the characteristics of Oakland's stratigraphy. These activities are represented in the stratigraphy as plowed soil, post molds, brick footings for structures and brick piers, brick and mortar construction rubble, and midden deposits, which were assigned feature numbers. The stratigraphic profiles typical of these features and of the sediments are illustrated in Figure 23.

In areas of the park that have undergone cultivation, the stratigraphy consisted of a plowzone ranging from 0.35 to 1.1 feet in depth and, in color, from dark reddish brown (5YR 3/4) to dark brown (7.5YR 3/4). This layer (Zone I) rested on culturally sterile subsoil (Zone II) of the same parent material. The subsoil ranged in color from yellowish red (5YR 4/6) to reddish brown (5YR 4/4). In areas that had not been plowed, the stratigraphy consisted of two layers. The first layer (Zone I) was a silty-loam ranging in color from reddish brown (5YR 4/4) to dark brown (7.5YR 4/4). The second layer (Zone II) was a clayey-silt ranging from yellowish red (5YR 4/6) to dark reddish brown (5YR 3/3).

FEATURES

Twenty-seven features were recorded at Oakland Plantation during the auger-testing program. They have been grouped into four categories: in situ structural remains, construction rubble, midden, and post mold (Table 1).

In Situ Structural Remains

Due to the lack of historically accurate maps, we have encountered problems correlating the location of in situ structural features (Figures 24 and 25) with the historic location of structures. Features 1, 8, 11, and 19 were intact brick. Feature 1 was located near the cotton gin ruin in the southwest corner of the plantation. Feature 8 was lo-

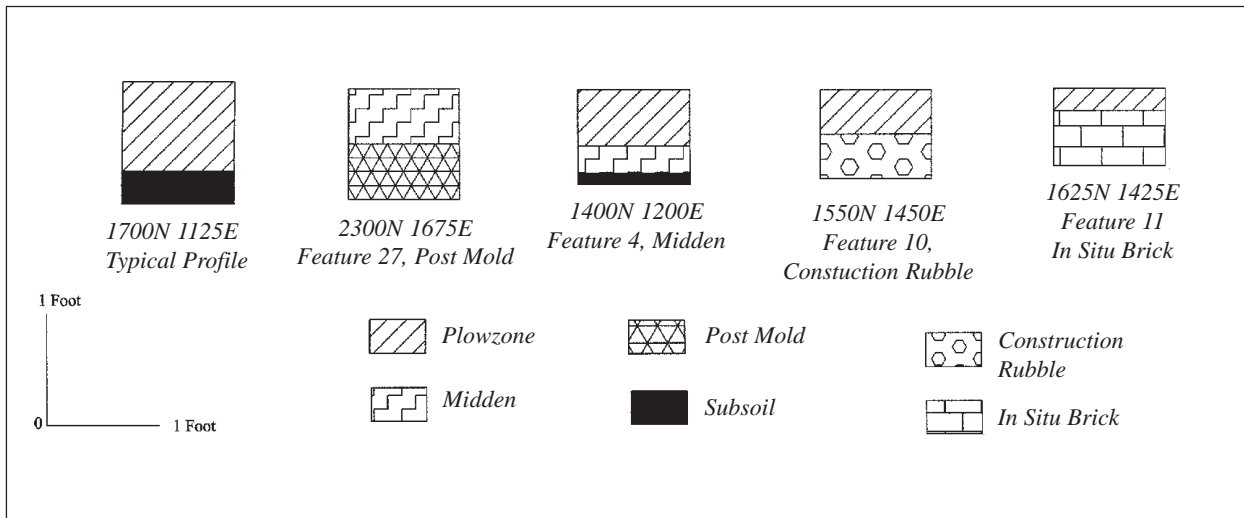


Figure 23 — Stratigraphic profiles.

cated 10 to 15 feet north of the west pigeonier. In the front yard of the doctor’s house, we uncovered feature 11, while Feature 19 was located in the backyard of the main house.

Construction Rubble

Most of our features (fourteen) were construction rubble (Figures 26 and 27) composed of either brick or mortar and brick. Some of the construction rubble features represent fill episodes. Feature 13, located next to a filled cistern north of the doctor’s house, likely represents construction materials from the cistern.

Midden

Eight midden features were recorded at Oakland (Figure 28). One of these, Feature 27, was classified as both a midden and a post mold feature. Features 2, 4, and 5 were located in the vicinity of the slave/tenant houses and the overseer’s house. Feature 14 was located behind the doctor’s house, near a former gristmill. The remaining three features were situated in the proximity of the main house. The middens contained such artifacts as metal fragments, plastic, bone, nails, ceramics, and glass. Several of these features guided the placement of formal test units.

Table 1 — Feature numbers by category (total = 27).

<i>In Situ</i>	<i>Rubble</i>	<i>Midden</i>	<i>Post Mold</i>
1	3	2	27
8	6	4	
11	7	5	
19	9	14	
26	10	18	
	12	20	
	13	25	
	15		
	16		
	17		
	21		
	22		
	23		
	24		

Post Mold

Feature 27, shown on Figure 28, was encountered in the area north of the main house, which is traditionally the location of the blacksmith shop. The post mold can also be categorized as a midden feature. The top layer was composed of a dark brown to black humic soil and contained metal objects, slag, nails, ceramics, and brick.

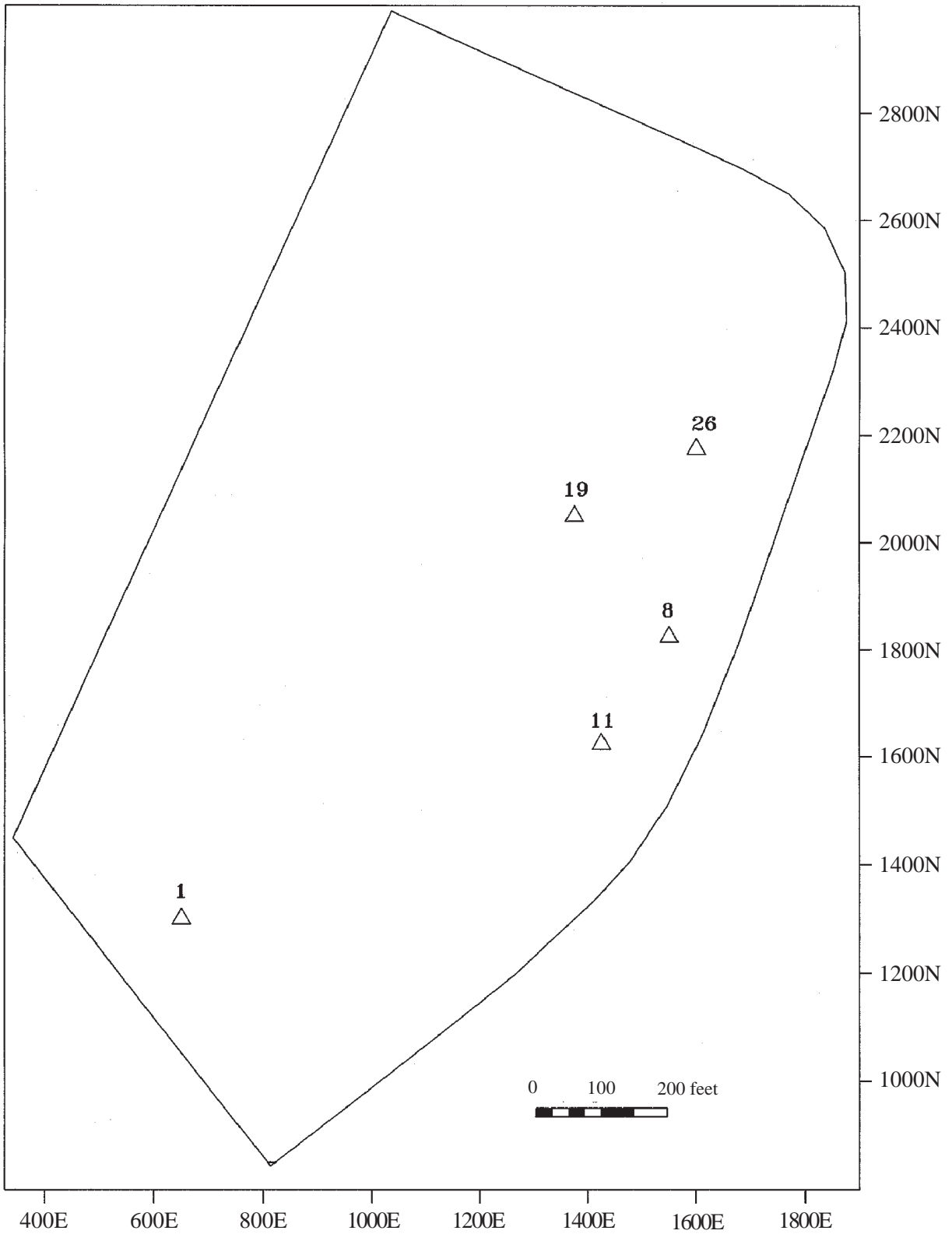


Figure 24 — In situ structural features.



Figure 25 (left) — An in situ structural feature (Feature 11).



Figure 26 (right) — A construction rubble feature (Feature 7).

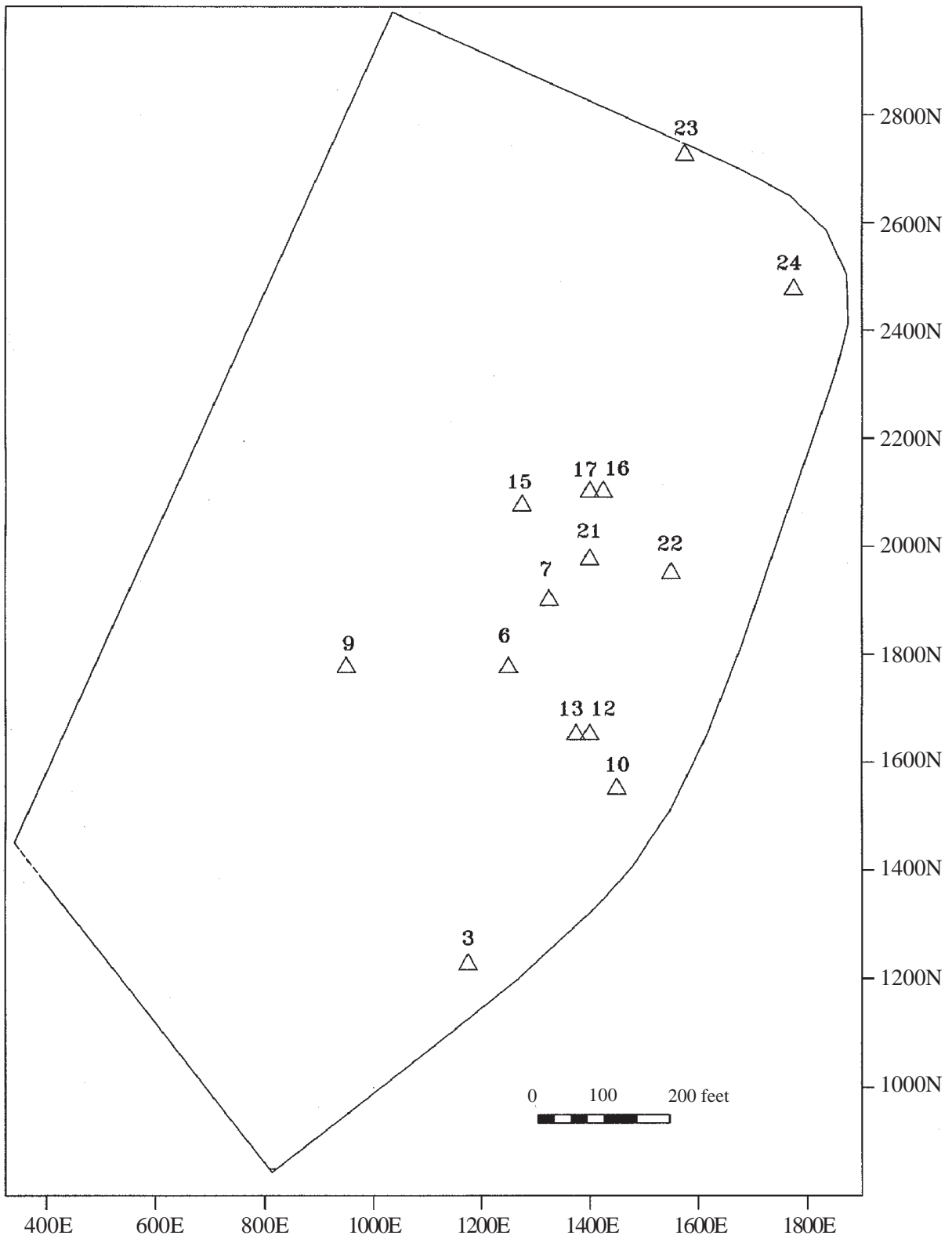


Figure 27— Construction rubble features.

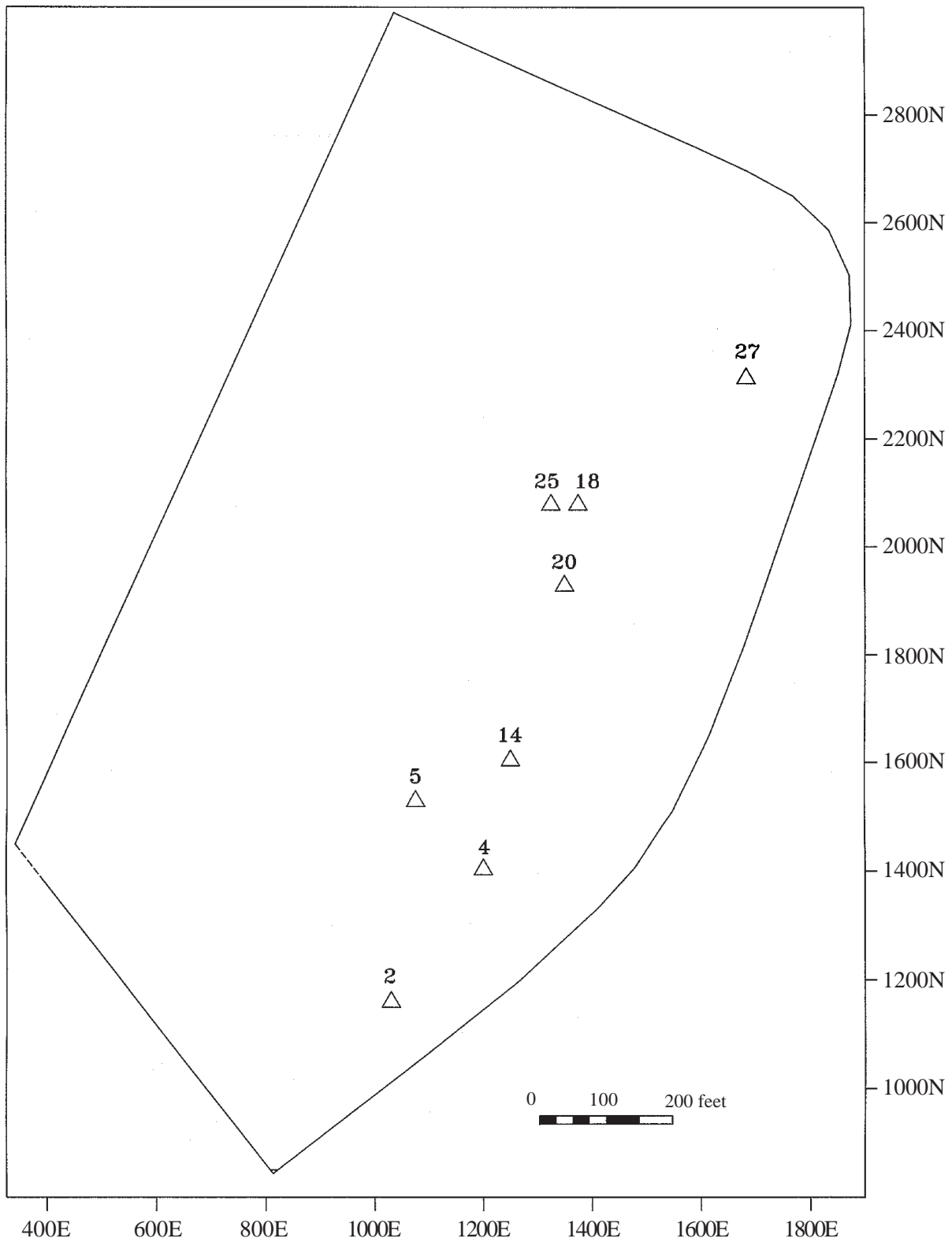


Figure 28 — Midden features, including Feature 27, a post mold (see Table 1).