

Phase I, II and III Archaeological Investigations Waterman House Site Marshfield, Massachusetts

Archaeological surveys undertaken in advance of a major transportation improvement project in



Marshfield, Massachusetts, identified the buried remains of an entire early Plimoth Colony house. Documentary research indicates the house was likely built by Robert Waterman around the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Bourne in 1638. Elizabeth Bourne was the daughter of local proprietor who probably provided Waterman the plot of land along the Green Harbor River. It was an ideal location for the farmer-fisherman Waterman; adjacent to a huge salt marsh and river system very close to

the Atlantic Ocean. No documents pinpointed a house in the project are before testing began. And the initial testing provided only the slightest hint that a buried early house was present (27 artifacts, most nondatable). Intensified testing, however, revealed the remains of a 20 x 16-foot earthfast (post-in-ground) home, with a corner hearth, cellar and food-storage pit. Completely charred wooden structural elements survived; they, along with large amounts of carbonized botanical and faunal remains, indicate the probable wood and thatch one-room structure burned down in the 1640s, after which the house was abandoned and the land converted to agricultural use. Waterman appears to have then moved a short distance away. Thousands of household-related artifacts support the occupation date and provide tremendous new information about house construction, foodways, internal use of space, and material culture use by an average, or “middling sort” of family in the early years of European settlement.

