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The Archeology of College Hill

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Critical Response 1

From the two site reports, specific aspects should be leveraged for our report, while supplementary information and slightly different organization are needed, given our specific circumstances. The two reports gave historical and contextual information on the sites, while also providing technical details and even visual aid. In addition, the organization and presentation of the data contributed to the reports’ clarity. The final site report for the John Brown House 2009 dig should contain elements of both the Gibson and Beaudry site reports. Our report should include; historical information and research description, visual aid, a clear organization that suits our site, and a clear focus.

In the beginning of our report, there should be historical context reported. Krysta’s introduction to the John Brown House allowed for us to begin our dig conscious of many important factors, including how we chose the sites for our units. It is important to provide the archeologists and other readers with the historical information that was used to make our decisions. The “Research Framework” section of the Beaudry report also has details how the research was conducted. In our report, using the Rhode Island Historical Society and the John Brown House as resources, we should be able to include a significant amount of historical context and explain how it informed our decisions. In addition, it is important to include current contextual information, such as information about our class and the previous class’ work, and information about the current use of the John Brown House.

The Beaudry report contains many helpful plans and profiles, which help visually narrate the specific parts and the entirety of the site. In our report, we can include plan photographs and hand drawn profiles of the units to help reference our finds and demonstrate the soil changes. Since the John Brown House and the Rhode Island Historical Society highlight our work to the public, visual aid will help the report be more relatable to those without a background in archeology.

The organization of our findings must be specific by unit but also tell the overall story of the John Brown House site. The structure of Beaudry report can be more logical and compelling from an outside perspective, since it includes the history of the owners of the Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm, but from an archeological perspective there can be value in the detail and historical record of the work on the site, which Gibson includes. Gibson’s report attempts to chronologically explain the site through the previous archeological work, though it lacks fluidity and narration. While the Beaudry report begins with historical context but then separates the rest of the report by location, or our equivalents of units. Ultimately, it is best to include a balance of historical knowledge and the archeological record of the site, with an unbiased view. Since last year’s class’ discoveries have significantly influenced our specific work at each unit, it is important to include their findings individually by unit. The 2008 class’ report should also be applied to our larger story, which should also include the information and records we have from the John Brown House. In addition, as included in the Gibson report, we should define research questions we are looking to answer in our units, and frame our findings to reflect them. Due to the small size of our dig, we can be very specific in our descriptions of the units, though we must work to create a complete narrative, not just a collection of small anecdotes and findings.

As in both of the reports, is important to frame our findings as an argument for the maintenance of the John Brown House as a historical and archeological site. In addition, we should use our report to promote the class and the Joukowsky Institute, as our report will most likely be used in evaluating the class for the next year.