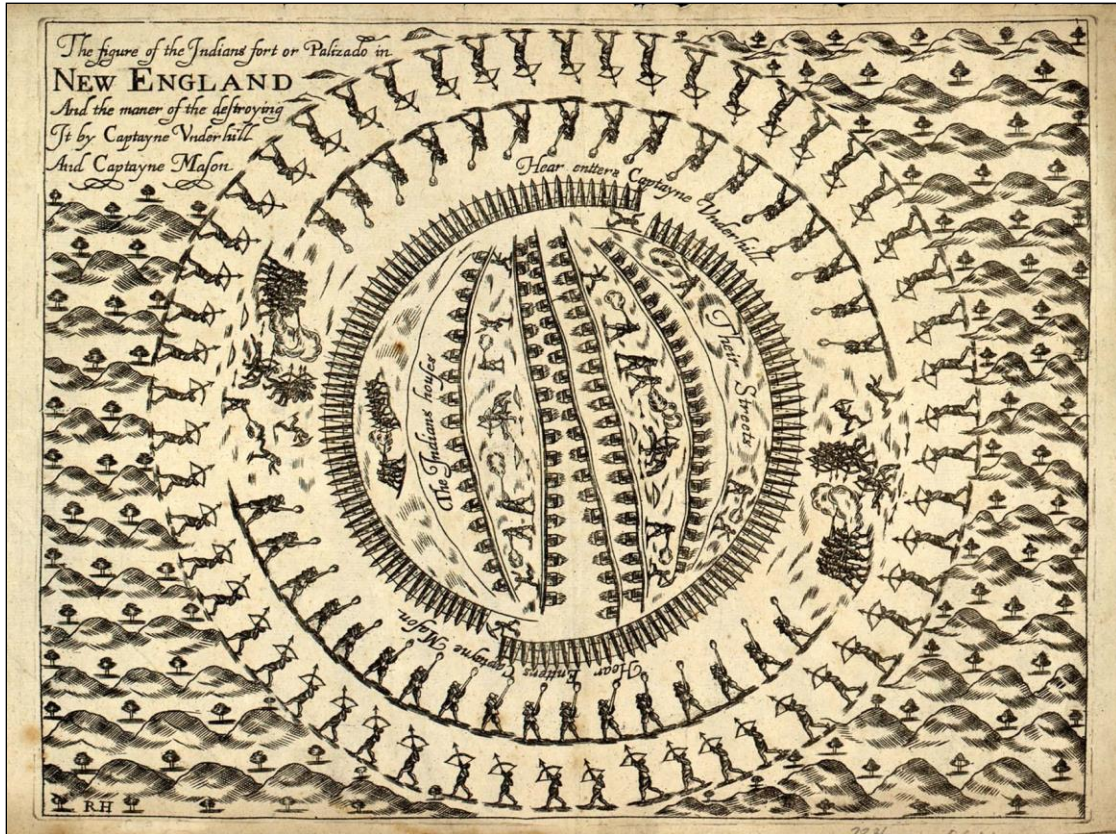


**BATTLE OF MISTICK FORT**  
**Site Identification and Documentation Plan**  
*Public Technical Report*  
**National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program**  
**GA-2255-09-017**



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## Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of the “Battle of Mistick Fort Documentation Plan” grant awarded to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center (MPMRC) from the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS ABPP).<sup>1</sup> This grant and associated research is part of an MPMRC long-term research project, *Battlefields of the Pequot War*.<sup>2</sup> Awarded in July 2009, this grant allowed for the study of the Battle of Mistick Fort Core Area identified within a Study Area outlined during 2007-2008.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NPS ABPP grants agreement number GA-2255-09-017.

<sup>2</sup> The NPS ABPP promotes preservation of significant historic battlefields associated with wars fought on American soil. Its purpose is to assist citizens, public and private institutions, and governments in planning, interpreting, and protecting sites where historic battles were fought during the armed conflicts that shaped the growth and development of the United States, in order that present and future generations may learn and gain inspiration from the ground where Americans made their ultimate sacrifice. Many battlefields might be preserved if the property owner or the community were aware of their existence and informed of the significance of the battlefield and its contribution to a broader understanding and appreciation of history. Preserved battlefields and related historic sites can add to a community’s sense of identity and foster a greater interest in history and preservation.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this project, the Pequot War era fortified village site (today in Mystic, Connecticut) is referred to as “Mistick”, while the Mystic River retains its present-day spelling. Throughout the seventeenth century, the region was documented as “Mistick” in records such as the *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*. During the Pequot War era, Roger Williams indicated the easternmost Pequot fortified village as “Mistick” for Massachusetts Bay. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the village at the head of the Mystic River was known as Mistick or Mistic. Southwest of the Mystic River’s mouth, the town was known as “Portersville” while the town on the east side was called “Mistick Bridge.” In 1890, the United States Post Office Department renamed the village at the head of the river as “Old

## ***Project Scope and Objectives***

The overall goal of the *Battlefields of the Pequot War* project is to expand knowledge of the Pequot War with investigations of associated individual battle sites while placing actions and events in a broader historical and cultural context. Historical research focuses on the political, social, economic, and military causes and consequences of the war, as well as the nature and complexity of inter-tribal, inter-colonial, and Native-Colonial relations of the period. By the conclusion of 2012, the MPMRC was awarded six grants from the NPS ABPP to study battlefields and sites associated with the Pequot War.<sup>4</sup>

## ***Battle of Mistick Fort Site Identification and Documentation Plan***

The Battle of Mistick Fort is the earliest example of major combat between the Natives and English in the Northeast. Commonly referred to as the “Mystic Massacre”, it is generally depicted as a singular action, lasting less than two hours, and involving the attack and destruction of a Pequot fortified village by forces containing 77 English and 250 Native allies. In fact, the Battle of Mistick Fort consisted of numerous actions and engagements, routes of approach and retreat, camps, and ancillary sites. The significance of researching the Battle of Mistick Fort lies in the reevaluation of centuries-old assumptions about the battle and how it unfolded, as well as knowledge of Pequot, Native and English weaponry, tactics, and warfare.

## **New Insights and Project Success**

### ***Pequot Territory and Political Control***

During 1620-1630 (the decade prior to the Pequot War), the Pequot expanded their control over large territories of southern New England. Through warfare, coercion, diplomacy, and marriage, the Pequot exerted control over thousands of square miles in southern New

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Mystic” while Portersville and Mistick Bridge combined to form the village of “Mystic.” See: Mystic River Historical Society, *Images of America: Mystic* (Portsmouth, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2004). Pp. 4, 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Grants awarded: 2007–2008: Planning and Implementation Grant, *Battlefields of the Pequot War*; 2009–2010: Site Identification and Documentation Grant, *Battle of Mistick Fort*; 2010–2011: Planning and Implementation Grant, *Siege and Battle of Saybrook Fort*; 2011–2012: Site Identification and Documentation Grant, *English Retreat and Counter-attack from Mistick Fort*; 2011–2012: Education & Preservation Grant, *Preserving the Memory and Legacy of the Pequot War*; and 2012–2013: Site Identification and Documentation Grant, *Siege and Battles of Saybrook Fort*.

England and subjugated dozens of tribes and communities. This formed a regional alliance of allied tribes under their military and political leadership. The power of the Pequot during the beginnings of European influences illuminates a broader understanding of the climate and causes of the Pequot War, and gives way to the knowledge of Pequot military abilities, effectiveness, and their adaptations during this period.

### ***Native Warfare Climate***

Traditionally depicted as a “skulking way of war”, Native warfare in southern New England is characterized by raiding with limited casualties and discreet political goals.<sup>5</sup> During the 1620s and 1630s, the Pequot and their confederates fought dozens of battles and actions with Native groups throughout the region. These conflicts took place over in the present states of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and eastern New York, where combatants from many communities and tribes fought for power. Conflicts determined territorial, political, and economic control over a region defined by the waterways of Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River. These areas were critical for control of trade; furs, wampum, and European goods were highly sought during a time of cultural transformation and exchange in early New England.

### ***Native Weapons and Tactics***

The Battle of Mistick Fort, while historically characterized a massacre (and rightfully so, as 400 men, women, and children died in the attack), was in fact a short but very intense battle between two highly capable adversaries that the English came very close to losing. The adaptability and effectiveness of Native tactics and weapons, with minimal use of European firearms, has never been fully studied or illuminated. Pequot successes in warfare and countering English weapons and tactics for the first eight months of the Pequot War are evident, particularly during the Siege and Battle of Saybrook Fort (fall of 1636 through spring 1637). Between the first battle of the Pequot War (August 1636, English assault on Manisses of Block Island and Pequot villages near Thames River) and the Battle of Mistick Fort (May 1637), the Pequot never lost a military engagement.

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among New England Indians* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1991).

## ***English Soldiers and Military Logistics***

Previous Pequot War historians simply undervalued the experience, complexity, and sophistication of the planning and logistics of English soldiers who participated in the Mistick Campaign of the Pequot War. The success of the English at Mistick, and for the remainder of the war, was previously attributed primarily to their superior military technology, i.e. musket fire. In fact, English successes against the Pequot in battle were achieved by a combination of intelligence gathering, careful planning, logistics, prior military experience, and tactical adjustments based on previous encounters at Thames River, Saybrook Fort, and Wethersfield. New research shows that one-third to one-half of Connecticut's Pequot War soldiers had combat experience while serving under English Regiments during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in the Low Countries of Europe. The prior experience of hardened military veterans contributed to the defeat of the Pequot at Mistick.

## ***Archeological and Remote Sensing Methods***

One of the unique contributions of this project, in addition to the many historical insights, was the method developed by staff in reconstructing the Battle of Mistick Fort. Douglas Scott's pioneering approach to battlefield archeology developed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn was adapted to the seventeenth century battlefield at Mistick, eventually resulting in a dynamic reconstruction of the battlefield – a rare accomplishment.<sup>6</sup>

## ***Preservation, Memory, and Legacy***

The general location of Mistick Fort and Porter's Rocks were locally famous from centuries-old oral traditions, perhaps passed down from English Pequot War veterans who were the region's first English settlers. In the late nineteenth century, the location of the Mistick Fort site was confirmed after decades of artifact collecting and during discussions of monument placement atop Pequot Hill. The monument, a statue of Captain John Mason (commander of the English and Native allied forces during the Mistick Campaign) was erected in 1889. Over a century later, the statue gained notoriety with a proposal for its removal. The state and municipality established a John Mason Statue Advisory Committee to handle the contention of divided individuals in their opinions of the war's events, especially the Mistick Massacre and the prospect of the MPMRC conducting additional archeological research on Pequot Hill. The

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas D. Scott, Et al, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).



notoriety of this event raised public awareness of the Pequot War; however, it left behind issues even after contention was resolved following months of discussion and negotiations with key landowners. With a final majority vote, the statue of Mason was relocated to the Palisado Green in historic Windsor, Connecticut.

With the exception of a limited archeological survey on Pequot Hill and Mistick Fort in 1987, no professional archeological or historical research was conducted during intervening years until work in 2010. The 1987 survey resulted in a 3-acre area surrounding the fort's suspected location and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (1990).<sup>7</sup>

### ***Project Success***

Three critical factors played into the ultimate success of the Battle of Mistick Fort project, the first and foremost being landowner support and participation. Many of the landowners at Porter's Rocks and Pequot Hill actively participated in the process of battlefield event synthesis and interpretation, often on a daily or weekly basis, and made important contributions to the final reconstruction. Secondly, the Yankee Territory Coinshooters (YTC) metal detectorist club member's participation and experience were crucial in discriminating and recovering potential battle-related artifacts from landscapes that contained thousands of nineteenth and twentieth century artifacts. YTC members were tireless in their efforts to revise their methods, techniques, and technology to the complexities of battlefield archeology on a modern landscape. Finally, the Conservation Department facilities at the MPMRC, and particularly the expertise of Head Conservator Douglas Currie, were instrumental in identifying many battle-related artifacts recovered from Mistick Fort. Currie culled through hundreds of radiographs (X-rays) of potential battle-related artifacts brought in from the field. The use of radiography was essential in order to see through accumulated oxides masking the object's nature, form, and details. Lastly, the final step in this process was the entire battlefield staff's growing expertise in the identification and analysis of seventeenth century military and domestic material culture, crucial to the reconstruction of battle events.

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<sup>7</sup> National Historic Register, Pequot Fort #89002294, McBride 1991.

# Historical Context

## *Brief History of the Pequot War (1636-1637)*

The outbreak of the Pequot War is best understood through an examination of the cultural, political, and economic changes that occurred in the region after the arrival of the Dutch in 1611 and the English in the early 1630s.

Traditionally and historically, Pequot territory before the time of the war consisted of approximately 250 square miles in southeastern Connecticut. Today, this area includes the towns of Groton, Ledyard, Stonington, and North Stonington, as well as southern portions of Preston and Griswold. The Thames and Pawcatuck Rivers formed the western and eastern boundaries, Long Island Sound the southern boundary, and Preston and Griswold the northern boundary. Some historic sources suggest that Pequot territory extended east of the Pawcatuck River to Weekapaug (Charlestown, Rhode Island). During the early seventeenth century approximately 8,000 Pequot men, women, and children lived within this territory. Communities of fifty to 400 people resided in fifteen to twenty villages located along Long Island Sound and the estuaries of the Thames, Mystic, and Pawcatuck Rivers. Following the smallpox epidemics of 1633 and '34, their number fell to an estimated 4,000.

During the 1620s, the Dutch and Pequot controlled all trade in the region as the Pequot attempted to subjugate other tribes regionally (throughout Connecticut and offshore islands). By 1635, the Pequot extended their political and economic ties through a tributary confederacy. With the arrival of English traders and settlers in the Connecticut River Valley the balance shifted, resulting in conflict and intense competition for power as tribes wrested themselves from Pequot subjugation. This struggle to gain—or maintain—control fueled the outbreak of war. The English tried to break the Dutch-Pequot control of trade, while the Pequot tried to maintain their political and economic dominance. The murders of English traders are cited as the cause for the Pequot War; however, these deaths were the culmination of decades of tension between Native tribes further stressed by the arrival of the Europeans.

John Stone and his crew were killed by the Pequot in the summer of 1634 on the Connecticut River. Although the Pequot provided several explanations for Stone's death, all of which suggested they viewed their actions as justified, the English decided they could not afford to let any English deaths at the hands of Natives go unpunished. As tensions grew among all

parties, the murder of trader John Oldham in July 1636 by the Manisses of Block Island resulted in a military response by Massachusetts Bay. This reaction sparked a cycle of escalating retaliation—and signaled the start of what is now known as the Pequot War, a Euro-centric interpretation of a conflict that was as much Native vs. Native as it was English vs. Native.

In August 1636, Massachusetts Bay forces containing ninety soldiers under John Endicott undertook a punitive expedition against the Manisses of Block Island and the Pequot residing at present-day Thames River to exact retribution for the murder of John Stone. The forces sailed from Boston (August 24, 1636) bound for Block Island, instructed to kill all men and take captive women and children. After a contested amphibious landing along the east beaches, the expedition established camp near their landing and anchored ships (Crescent Beach). The English burned several villages after two days of searching unsuccessfully for the Manisses, who had fled into the swamps for safety. Leaving Block Island, the expedition preceded next to the Thames River Harbor, searching for the murderers of John Stone and crew. Massachusetts Bay forces disembarked on the east side of Thames River, and after several hours of unsuccessful negotiations with an aged Pequot ambassador, attacked and burned a village. Several Pequot were killed in the engagement and “and thus began the war between the Indians and us (English) in these parts.” The Pequot however, led by the sachem Sassacus, viewed this action as unprovoked and immediately began a siege on Saybrook Fort, an English outpost and small settlement.

At and near Saybrook Fort more than twenty English were killed (many of the garrison) during the Pequot siege in winter and spring of 1636-1637.<sup>8</sup> The Pequot attacked English who ventured far from their palisade, destroyed English provisions and burned warehouses, generally attempting to interrupt all river traffic with Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford. During this time, the Pequot attempted diplomatic initiatives with other neighboring tribes against the English. In mid-March and April 1637, Massachusetts Bay sent twenty soldiers under Captain John Underhill to relieve the siege at Saybrook Fort and the Pequot shifted their attention to other Connecticut River settlements.

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<sup>8</sup> All of the following dates used to reconstruct the Mistick Campaign are based on times, dates, and references to the “Sabbath” which are found throughout the relevant primary Pequot War narratives. Recorded dates were in the Julian calendar, generally used by most European countries during the seventeenth century. The Julian calendar year consists of 365 days divided into twelve months with a leap year occurring every four years. The Gregorian calendar superseded the Julian calendar and in 1752, the British Empire adopted the new system. Even so, the Julian calendar remained in use in the Americas well into the early nineteenth century.

On April 23, 1637, a large force of Pequot warriors attacked English settlers along the Connecticut River in Wethersfield. The Pequot killed nine men, two women, and captured two girls. The attack on Wethersfield caught the settlers by surprise and galvanized the English at Connecticut. In response, the General Court at Hartford levied ninety men for an expedition against the Pequot – a declaration of war on May 1, 1637. On May 10, Captain John Mason from Windsor, commander, sailed downriver to Saybrook Fort with his forces among who were sixty to eighty Native-allies, including Mohegan and “river Indians.” One week later, Mason arrived at Saybrook Fort to Lieutenant Lion Gardiner, Captain John Underhill, and at least twenty-nine other men and shared the General Court’s orders to land and frontally assault the Pequot at the Thames River. Over the next day, the English commanders revised the original battle orders given to Mason. The amended plan included a surprise-attack of two Pequot fortified villages, Weinshauks and Mistick, by sailing east first by Pequot territory to Narragansett, then marching west to the Mystic River and location of the Pequot forts.

The forces sailed from Saybrook to Narragansett, where they enlisted the help of the local Natives, and marched west to Niantic, joined by 200 additional warriors. The English-allied forces continued their march through Pequot country; now consisting of 350 Natives and seventy-seven English. On the evening of May 25, they encamped within two miles of Mistick Fort at a location now known as Porter’s Rocks.

On early morning May 26, the forces marched to Mistick Fort. The attack began at dawn and in less than two hours more than 400 Pequot men, women, and children lay dead; 200 of them burned to death. Between 150 and 200 Pequot warriors were killed in the attack, reinforcements from other villages who had arrived the night prior. The Pequot continued to counterattack the English as the forces retreated to their ships waiting in Thames River harbor, eight miles away. The English reported that they killed more Pequot warriors in these counterattacks than at Mistick Fort. By the end of the campaign on the evening of May 26, the Pequot may have lost as many as half their warriors. With the attack on Mistick Fort and the loss of so many individuals, the tribe shortly thereafter abandoned their villages. In the following days, the remaining Pequot sought refuge with neighboring tribes and a continuance of war against the English.

In late June 1637, the English organized another campaign against the remaining Pequot. The English-Native allies pursued the main body of Pequots under Sassacus west along the Connecticut coast towards present-day Fairfield. At Quinnipiac (New Haven), the English

crossed the Housatonic River, advanced towards Poquonnock (Stratford, Bridgeport) and encountered a major group of Pequot encamped with the Sasqua at Sasquanikut (Southport). The Pequot and Sasqua fled into a swamp, which was immediately surrounded. After allowing eighty women and children to surrender, a daylong fierce battle continuously raged as the English attempted to kill or capture the remaining Pequot combatants. Nearly sixty Pequot warriors escaped, and the Fairfield Swamp Fight proved to be the last battle of the Pequot War.

Pequot leader Sassacus was not present at the Fairfield Swamp Fight; he had evaded English-allied forces at Quinnipiac and split off from the main body of Pequot at Sasquanikut. Sassacus and a small group followed the Housatonic River north to seek refuge and an alliance with the Mohawk. The Pequot group of men escaped an attack of hostile Mahican, only to be intercepted again later by Mahican warriors near present day Dover Plains, New York. In July of 1638, scalps and hands attributed to Sassacus and other Pequot sachems were brought to Agawam (Springfield), Boston, and Hartford.

The Pequot War concluded on September 21, 1638 with the Hartford Treaty, signed by Uncas (Mohegan) and Miantonomi (Narragansett) with English leaders John Haynes, Roger Ludlow, and Edward Hopkins. Over the course of the war, many Pequot lost their lives. Captured Pequot men were killed, while women and children were given to colonists as spoils of war, placed in captivity under other tribes who had pledged allegiance to the English, or transferred to Massachusetts Bay Colony, sold into slavery, and shipped to the Caribbean islands and British outposts.

### ***Detailed Account of the Mistick Campaign***

Prior to the events at Wethersfield in April 1637, the Connecticut English did not have just grounds for an offensive war against the Pequot. Connecticut officials disapproved and thought of John Endicott's actions at Block Island and Pequot villages as unjustified. However, the Pequot reactions, offensive or defensive, at Saybrook Fort and Wethersfield, caused the General Court at Hartford to order "an offensive war ag<sup>t</sup> the Pequoitt" on Monday, May 1, 1637. The court cited thirty English deaths to date and accused the Pequot of attempts "to ingage other Indians in their Quarrel against the English."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. Hammond Trumbull, Ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, Prior to the Union with New Haven Colony* (Hartford: Brown & Parsons, 1850). Vol. I, Pp. 9-10.

The General Court quickly instituted a draft of “90 men levied out of the 3 Plantacons...Hartford 42, Windsor 30, Weathersfeild 18.” The court named Captain John Mason commander, Robert Seeley, William Pratt, and Thomas Bull lieutenants, and eight sergeants. Towns were charged to supply twenty sets of armor, arm their soldiers with firearms, poles, edged weapons, accoutrements, and to provide provisions to sustain the army for a prolonged campaign. Each soldier was required to “carry w<sup>th</sup> him 1<sup>lb</sup> powder, 4<sup>lb</sup> of shott, 20 bullets”.

Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield prepared the men in little over one week. The soldiers rendezvoused at Hartford, joined by approximately sixty to eighty Native allies, the bulk of which were Mohegan Indians from the Thames River, and Wangunk, Suckiaug and Poquonnock Indians from the middle Connecticut River Valley. On May 10, the allied forces sailed from Hartford, encountered long delays of contrary winds and tides, and finally arrived at Saybrook Fort on Wednesday, May 17.

The General Court ordered Captain Mason to “land our Men in Pequot River,” and conduct operations against the Pequot in a frontal assault in the open field.<sup>10</sup> At Saybrook Fort, the three commanders, Mason with Captain John Underhill, and Lieutenant Lion Gardiner, discussed the plan of attack. Gardiner and Underhill both expressed concern about the plan and the quality of Mason’s men, and declared no men of theirs would join the campaign unless an improved plan was devised. The issues Gardiner and Underhill raised were critical, and vital to eventual success. The original orders, to land along the Thames River and to engage in open combat using English battle formation, were doomed to fail. Unlike Mason, Gardiner and Underhill experienced fighting the Pequot. Their battle-related encounters were educational at the Thames River and Saybrook Fort; the Pequot, when faced with traditional English battle formations, retreated out of musket range. Gardiner and Underhill’s reluctance to support Mason’s original commission indicates their knowledge that traditional English tactics and weapons were not effective against an enemy who refused to be drawn or stand to battle on

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<sup>10</sup> The details of Mason’s orders are unclear; they resemble the operation Captain John Endicott conducted at the Thames River on August 29, 1636. Connecticut leaders may not have been privy to the same Narragansett intelligence conveyed to John Winthrop by Roger Williams in his May 1, 1637 correspondence. Connecticut forces were aware of the former village on the east side of Thames River, however, may not have known about the existence of Weinshauks. In any case, the capture or killing of Sassacus was undoubtedly an objective of the English-allied forces. John Mason, *A Brief History of the Pequot War: Especially Of the memorable Taking of their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637* (Boston: S. Kneeland & T. Green, 1736). Pp. 2-3; Glenn W. LaFantasie, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*. Volume I 1629-1653 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1988). Pp. 72-75.

English terms. In addition, the Pequot were very successful in their siege on Saybrook Fort. The Pequot had greater maneuverability using ambushes, feints, and flanking maneuvers.

Additionally, Gardiner and Underhill expressed distrust of Uncas' Mohegans, former Pequot allies. While Gardiner wrote "how they durst trust the Mohegin Indians who had but y<sup>t</sup> yeare come from the pequits", Mason countered that they could "goe without them for want of guides."<sup>11</sup> Mason noted the importance of these men to lead them through unknown territory, and their provided intelligence on Pequot numbers, movements, dispositions of warriors, and villages. He relied on these guides during the Mistick Fort Campaign and throughout the rest of the war. Additional intelligence arrived during the debate at Saybrook Fort when a Dutch trading vessel arrived returning two Swain girls (captured in the Wethersfield attack) from their captivity in Pequot territory.

Mason perceived there was "an exceeding great Hazard" in following the original orders. With Gardiner and Underhill, the group formulated an alternative plan.<sup>12</sup> According to Mason the commanders "concluded, God assisting us, for Narragansett, and so to March through their Country, which Bordered upon the Enemy; where lived a great People, it being about fifteen Leagues beyond Pequot....we should come upon their backs, and possible might surprise them unawares, at worst we should be on firm land as well as they."<sup>13</sup>

Several factors were cited for changing the battle orders including the Pequot's continual guard on the Thames River, their large population, and their possession of guns, powder, and shot (as related by the captured Swain girls). If the English tried to disembark along Thames River, then the Pequot had the advantage; they being "on land, and being swift on Foot, might much impede our landing...we being expected only by land, there being no other place to go on shoar but in that River." The commanders favored a surprise attack rather than a frontal assault.<sup>14</sup> With their altered plan vetted by God, Underhill volunteered the assistance of his nineteen-man company while Gardiner agreed to send additional men and the fort's surgeon. On Thursday, May 18, Mason with his officers agreed to invade the Pequot and attack two fortified villages, Weinshauks and Mistick.

On the morning of Friday, May 19, 1637, the English-allied forces sailed for Narragansett. They sailed along the coastline and according to Underhill, they "deluding the

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<sup>11</sup> Gardiner, *Relation of the Pequot Warres*. P. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Mason, *Brief History of the Pequot War*. Pp. 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Mason, *Brief History of the Pequot War*. P. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Gardiner, *Relation of the Pequot Warres*. P. 19.

Pequeats thereby, for they expected us to fall into Pequeat River; but crossing their expectation, bred in them a securitie.”<sup>15</sup> By the evening of Saturday, May 20, the English vessels arrived at Narragansett Bay. Forces were delayed several days due to negotiations with the Narragansett, observance of the Sabbath, and bad weather. During this time, Miantonomi (Narragansett sachem) provided Mason with intelligence of Pequot territory, their fortified villages (Weinshauks and Mistick), and tactical suggestions similar to the advice he gave Massachusetts Bay leaders. Miantonomi suggested “the assault would be in the night, when they are commonly more secure and at home, by which advantage the English, being armed (wearing armour), may enter the houses and do what execution they please...That before the assault be given, an ambush be laid behind them, between them and the swamp, to prevent their flight, etc.” Miantonomi also volunteered the services of two Pequot scouts “Wequash and Wuttackquiackommin, valiant men...who have lived these three or four years with the Nanhiggonticks, and know every pass and passage amongst them”<sup>16</sup> Now supported by the Narragansett, Mason intended to march through Pequot territory, conduct simultaneous night attacks against the two Pequot fortified villages, and then retreat west eight miles to their waiting ships. The English commanders coordinated with their naval contingent, three ships with a crew of thirteen to sail from Narragansett Bay “the Night before our intended Assault” with instructions to meet the English-allied forces at the Thames River harbor.<sup>17</sup>

The keys to the success of the plan were secrecy and speed. Mason was clearly frustrated by many delays; the more time went by, the greater the chance the Pequot would discover them. Despite the news of the arrival of Captain Daniel Patrick and forty Massachusetts Bay soldiers at Providence, the commanders chose not to wait for their additional reinforcements knowing that delaying further would negate the surprise.

On the morning of May 24, the army began the 35-mile march towards Mistick and Weinshauks. That evening, they arrived at a Niantic fort, “it being a frontier to the Pequot.” The English forces were not allowed into the Native fort, therefore Mason felt compelled to surround it. He feared that anyone “might discover us to the enemy, especially they having many times some of their near relations amongst their greatest foes.”<sup>18</sup> Mason’s concerns were well grounded, as intelligence of the approaching English-allied forces reached the Pequot the next

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<sup>15</sup> John Underhill, *Newes From America* (London: Peter Cole, 1638), P. 36; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. Pp. 4-5.

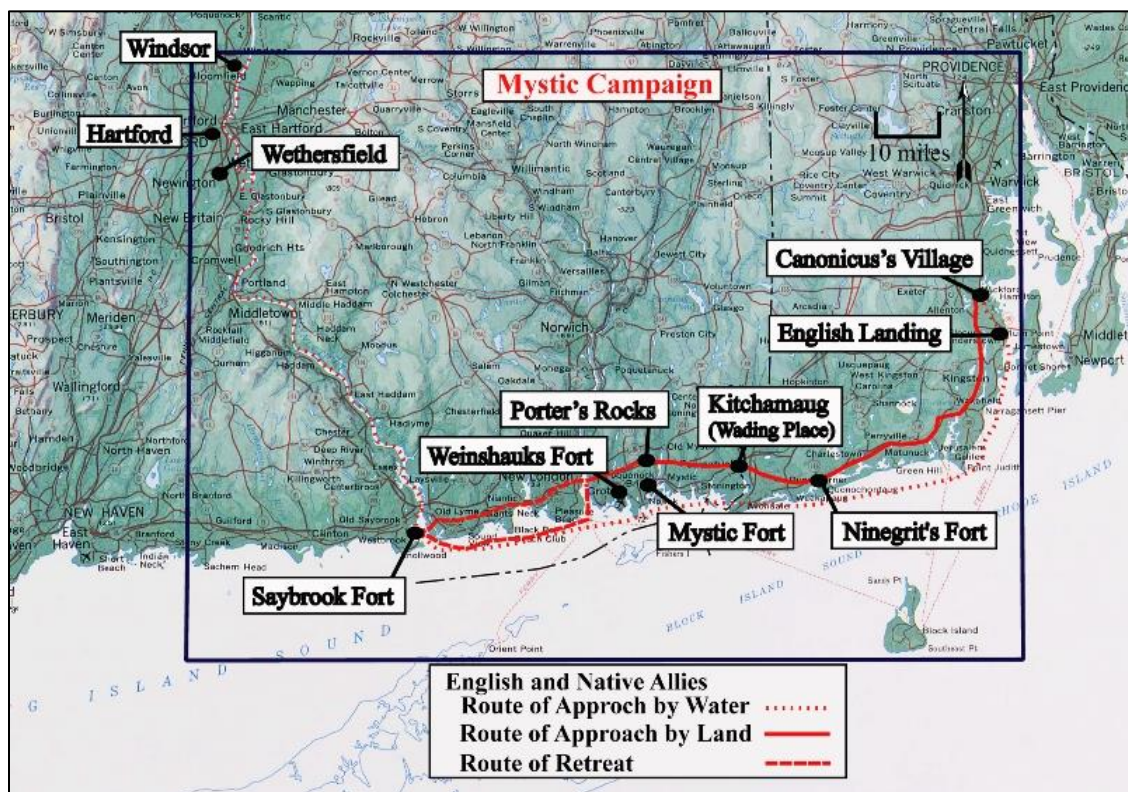
<sup>16</sup> LaFantasie, *Correspondence of Roger Williams*. Vol. I. Pp. 72-73.

<sup>17</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. Pp. 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 24.



day. Mason relays on May 25 (the day before the battle at Mistick), the Pequot sent “one hundred and fifty men from their other fort, to join with them of [Mistick], who were designed as some of themselves reported to forth against the English, at that very instant when this heavy stroke came upon them.”<sup>19</sup> Vincent’s narrative also states that several Mohegans who fought with the Pequot reported “they [Pequot] had resolved to have sent an hundred choice men out of their fort, as a party against the English, the very day after they were beaten by them.”<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 1. The Mistick Fort Campaign, May 17-27, 1637**

The army, now joined by 200 Narragansett warriors, left the Niantic fort on the morning of May 25 for the final push towards Mistick (approximately fifteen miles away), crossed the Pawcatuck River, and proceeded several miles to a “field which had been planted with Indian corn” to hold a “Council of War” and allow their men to rest.<sup>21</sup> The English gathered their Native allies and were informed they were further than expected from Sassacus’ main fort, and

<sup>19</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Vincent, *A True Relation of the Late Battell Fought in New England Between the English, and the Salvages* (London: M.P. for Nathanael Butter and John Bellamie, 1637). P. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Increase Mather (Mason Account), *A Relation of the Troubles which have hapned in New-England by reason of the Indians there from 1614 to the year 1675* (Boston: John Foster, 1677). Pp. 30-31.

the Pequot “had two forts almost impregnable.” According to Mason, this challenge “did no ways discourage the souldiers, but rather animated them, insomuch that they resolved to assault both the forts at once.”<sup>22</sup> Mason and Underhill assumed that Weinshauks was “three or four miles nearer”, but with further Native explanation, it became clear the intended target was much too far.<sup>23</sup> Mason wrote “understanding that one of them was so remote that we could not come up with it before Midnight, though we Marched hard; where at we were much grieved, chiefly because the greatest and bloodiest Sachem there resided, whose Name was Sassacous.”<sup>24</sup> At this point, many English soldiers faced exhaustion and the commanders planned to attack the closer of the two forts.<sup>25</sup>

The army continued their march westward while Mason continued to gather intelligence: “They having sent an *Indian* to discover beforehand, brought us newes that they were secure, having been fishing with many Canooes at Sea, and diverse of them walking here and there.”<sup>26</sup> The army marched “another two or three miles”, forded the Mystic River at the head of the estuary and “continued our march one Hour in the Night.”<sup>27</sup> There, at “a little Swamp between two hills...quartering the last nights march within two miles of the place [Mistick Fort]”, the English-allied forces “being much wearied with hard travel” encamped at a bedrock outcrop now known as “Porter’s [sentry or guard] Rocks.” The English and Natives camped separately, as they “appointed their Guards, and placed their Sentinels at some distance, who heard their Enemies, singing in their Fort until midnight, with great insulting and rejoicing.”<sup>28</sup> English commanders intended “to storm the fort a little before break of day; at which time they supposed the Indians being up late in their jolly feasting, would bee in their deepest sleepe.”<sup>29</sup>

In the early morning of Friday, May 26, the English-allied forces arose and prepared for battle. Underhill recalled that “wee set forth about one of the clocke in the morning, having

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<sup>22</sup> Mather (Mason Account), *A Relation*. P. 31; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6.

<sup>23</sup> William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians in New England...To which is added a Discourse about the Warre with the Pequods in the year 1637* (Boston: John Foster, 1675). P. 125; Mather, Mason Account, *A Relation*. P. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6; Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 125.

<sup>26</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126.

<sup>27</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126; Mather, Mason Account, *A Relation*. P. 30; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence* (London: Nath. Brooke, 1654). P. 114; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6.

sufficient intelligence that they knew nothing of our coming.”<sup>30</sup> The English commanders “rowed the Men with all expedition” and “About two hours before day we marched toward the Fort, being weary and much spent, many of us having slept nothing at all.”<sup>31</sup> The English traveled from Porter’s Rocks on a path that led directly to the edge of Pequot Hill. Approaching from the north, where they viewed the tops of the palisade wall, the English made their final preparations. Mason and Underhill divided their men into two contingents and sent “Capt. Underhill to the western entrance with one division” and Mason’s company “to the eastern entrance” intending “to enter both at once.”<sup>32</sup> The English told the Narragansett, Mohegan, and other Natives “their best course would be to flanke the Fort on both sides.”<sup>33</sup> English-allied forces moved to encompass Mistick Fort and begin the battle.

According to Mason, his company was within two rods (sixteen feet) of the fort “before we were discovered, at which time a dog began to bark and an Indian crying Owanux! Owanux! Which is Englishmen! Englishmen!”<sup>34</sup> Mason was forced to begin the attack at this time with neither contingent, his or Underhill’s, in position. The attack began as Mason’s contingent fired a volley and wheeled to the east to enter the fort through the northeast entrance.

The seventeen men (with Mason) who penetrated the fort’s northeast entrance did not encounter Pequot resistance until they entered the wigwams. There, many armed Pequots awaited them as “some of the English entered the Wigwams” they soon “received some shot with their [Pequot] Arrowes” while Mason noticed how other armed men began “issuing out of the Wigwams, shooting at us desperately” and then ran for cover.<sup>35</sup> The palisade’s interior was densely packed with wigwams, and the layout hindered Mason’s men as they moved through the fort. Mason’s contingent both inflicted and suffered numbers of casualties. The English endured arrow fire at point blank range while they continued to fire their weapons into the crowded Pequot dwellings in the northern section of Mistick Fort. The wigwams laid east to west, and Mason’s contingent pressed westward through openings or “streets,” driving many Pequot defenders and inhabitants towards the southwest palisade opening.

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<sup>30</sup> Underhill, *Newes From America*. P. 36; Mather, Mason Account, *A Relation*. P. 31; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 125.

<sup>32</sup> Mather (Mason Account), *A Relation*. P. 31; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126.

<sup>34</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence*. P. 114; Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126; Mather (Mason Account), *A Relation*. P. 31; Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. Pp. 8-9.

Captain Mason “perceiving his men wounded, and the enemy not yet routed” decided on a new means to defeat the Pequot. He turned towards “two soldiers standing close to the Pallizado with their Swords pointed to the Ground” and “The Captain told them that *We should never kill them after that manner*,” insinuating that firearms and swords were not enough.<sup>36</sup> Mason took a firebrand from a wigwam and set it to fire, and his men quickly followed suit. Underhill further explained Mason’s use of fire; that his decision to burn the fort was to “save our selves and prejudice them” because “the Fort was to hotte for us.”<sup>37</sup> Mason recalled that they had resolved not to have burned or destroyed the fort, but “being we could not come at them, I then resolved to set it on fire after diverse of them were slain, and soe of our men sore wounded”.<sup>38</sup> When Mason made the decision to set fire to the fort, they were losing the engagement due to numerous English casualties; in fact, more than fifty percent of Mason’s contingent. The stiff resistance and additional presence of 100 to 150 Pequot warriors clearly turned the battle in their favor until the fire took wind.

Meanwhile, Underhill’s contingent (due to the lengthier distance of their approach) took longer to reach the southwest fort entrance and did not enter the fort until the battle and fire were well underway. The “Fire was kindled on the North East Side to windward” and drove the remainder of the Pequot to the southwest entrance. Underhill described how “having given fire, wee approached neere to the entrance which they (Pequot) had stopped full, with armes of trees, or brakes.” As Underhill approached the entrance he “found the worke too heavie for mee, to draw out all those which were strongly forced in”, and he ordered “one Master Hedge, and some other souldiers to pull out those brakes.” After clearing the southwest entrance, Underhill and his men entered “having our swords in our right hand, or Carbines or Muskets in our left hand”, at which time Mason’s men were exiting the fort after having been engaged in close quarters combat for at least fifteen to twenty minutes.<sup>39</sup> The northern half of the fort was already on fire, and Underhill chose to “set fire on the South end with a traine of Powder, the fires of both meeting in the center of the Fort.”

Underhill evacuated his contingent out of the burning fort, and the battle continued outside of the southwest entrance.”<sup>40</sup> Surviving Pequots amassed to the southwest as fire spread

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<sup>36</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. P. 39.

<sup>38</sup> Hubbard, *Narrative of the Trouble with the Indians*. P. 126.

<sup>39</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. P. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. Pp. 38-39.

with a stiff wind from the northeast and engulfed the fort. Pequot bowman immediately engaged Underhill's company from the protection of their palisade, as he noted, "many courageous fellowes were unwilling to come out, and fought most desperately through the Palisadoes".<sup>41</sup> The unarmed inhabitants of Mistick Fort attempted to escape in any way possible, by fleeing through the main entrances, scaling the palisade, or through small gaps in the wall, yet Mason and Underhill redeployed their contingents outside the southwest entrance, leaving an unknown number of men to surround the fort. To the north Mason observed, "some of the enemy climbed to the tops of the pallizadoes, where they were shot down". He noticed how many Pequot bowman had "gathered to the windward side of the Fort, and lay pelting at our men with their arrows".

The Native allies also surrounded the fort; some may have joined Mason's men as they shifted west to engage the Pequot. They focused on particular areas, engaged Pequot warriors, and took captives. Outside the fort, a fierce fight developed as Pequot warriors engaged the English and Native Allies, and men, women, and children attempted to flee. Underhill states the Pequot were "forced out, and came in troopes to the Indians, twentie and thirtie at a time, which our soldiers received and entertained with the point of the sword."<sup>42</sup> Mason witnessed how "others of the Stoutest issued forth of the Fort, about forty of them who fell by the Sword."<sup>43</sup> Edward Johnson described how the Pequot fought to the death and "some of these Indians, as is reported, whose bodyes were not to be pierced by their sharp rapiers or swords of a long time."<sup>44</sup> One anonymous narrative described how "The Indians Goliath, even their only Champion, being a man of huge stature was then slain, he brake through the souldiers, and although one Sergeant stroke him on the neck with his Cutlass, he got by him, and by five souldiers more, but the sixth killed him."<sup>45</sup> Underhill described the carnage outside the fort when the battle ended: "Great and dolefull was the bloody fight to view of the young souldiers that never had beene in Warre, to see so many soules lie gasping on the ground so thicke in some places, that you could hardly pass along."<sup>46</sup>

By the end of the Battle at Mistick Fort, more than 400 Pequot men, women, and children lay dead; 200 hundred of them burned to death. The English suffered two dead and between

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<sup>41</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. P. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. P. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Mather, (Mason Account), *A Relation*. P. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence*. Pp. 114-115.

<sup>45</sup> Mather, "Anonymous," *A Relation*. P. 47.

<sup>46</sup> Underhill, *Newes from America*. Pp. 39-40.

twenty and twenty-four wounded. The entire battle lasted little more than one hour. In spite of their victory, the English suffered serious casualties. More than 30% of their men were killed or wounded, some so severely they were carried on stretchers. Their Native Allies suffered up to forty wounded, many by mistake, as the English misidentified them as Pequot.

The English-allied forces moved a south a short distance to a vantage point on Pequot Hill, viewing Long Island Sound for sight of their ships sailing to Thames River Harbor. They established a temporary camp, tended their wounded, and prepared to meet expected Pequot counterattacks. Hundreds of Pequot warriors from nearby villages converged on Pequot Hill shortly after the destruction of the Mistick Fort. They immediately mounted a series of counterattacks against the English-allied forces at their temporary camp. Underhill with fourteen soldiers and an unknown number of Native allies advanced and met the first counterattack. The Pequot stayed out of range of musket fire; therefore, Underhill ordered the Mohegan and Narragansett to engage. Fearing the English were running out of ammunition, a group of approximately fifty Narragansett warriors left (approximately one quarter of the Narragansett allies), retreating to the safety of their territory. The retreating Narragansett allies headed north away from the main forces but were attacked by the Pequot. Underhill, with thirty soldiers, aided them and engaged the Pequot in a set battle: “in the space of an hour rescued their men, and in our retreat to the body, slew and wounded above a hundred Pequots, all fighting men, that charged us both in rear and flanks.”<sup>47</sup> Underhill’s description indicated the Pequot engaged in close combat, undeterred by the English small arms or Narragansett forces. The English and Narragansett fought back Pequot assaults for nearly an hour as they returned to the main contingent still waiting to view their ships in the Sound.

Shortly after Underhill’s return, the English witnessed their ships sailing towards their rendezvous point at Thames River Harbor, eight miles west. As English-allied forces prepared to break camp, Mason reported a third major Pequot attack: “We had no sooner discovered our vessels, but immediately came up the enemy from the other Fort; Three hundred or more as we conceived. The Captain (Mason) lead out a file or two to skirmish with them, chiefly to see what temper they were of, who put them to a stand: we being much encouraged thereat, presently

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<sup>47</sup> Underhill, *Newes From America*. P. 42

prepared to march towards our vessels.”<sup>48</sup> The Pequot committed hundreds of warriors to these attacks and suffered significant high casualties.

Mason and Underhill descended the western slope of Pequot Hill with their wounded, forming a column with Mason at the front and Underhill at the rear. When the English-allied forces were one quarter mile west down the hill more than one hundred Pequot (who observed the remains of Mistick Fort) attacked the rear of the column. When Pequot forces were within musket range, the rear of the column “faced about,” and fired into the midst of the Pequot, which broke the main charge.<sup>49</sup> The Pequot continued their assault by maneuvering around English-allied forces, and engaged the retreating column with arrow fire from concealment. At the base of the western slope of the hill, the English-allied forces refreshed briefly at a stream (present day Fishtown Brook) and tended to their wounded, who required twenty men to carry them.

The forces continued west towards Pequot Harbor, still with Mason at the head and Underhill the rear. The column’s flanks and rear faced Pequot counterattacks, ambushed from swamps and thickets. In response, the English responded by firing volleys into any swamp or thicket that they approached. These attacks continued until the English-allied forces were within two miles of Pequot Harbor, when they inexplicitly stopped. Underhill reported the Pequot lost more warriors in these engagements than at the Battle of Mistick Fort.<sup>50</sup>

After six miles, the counterattacks inexplicably stopped and the English-allied forces reached the top of a hill, overlooked Pequot Harbor, and saw their vessels at anchor.<sup>51</sup> Some were ferried to the west bank of the Thames and spent the night ashore; while vessels transported Underhill and the wounded to Saybrook Fort. On the morning of May 27, Mason’s contingent marched twenty miles through Western Niantic territory and reached the east bank of the Connecticut River by evening. The English-allied forces encamped along the Connecticut River for the night and in the morning returned to Saybrook Fort, concluding the Mistick Fort Campaign of the Pequot War.

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<sup>48</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 11

<sup>49</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 11

<sup>50</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 12.

# Project Research Design and Methodology

The “Battle of Mistick Site Identification and Documentation” project consisted of six tasks: 1.) analyze primary sources (eyewitness battle accounts and narratives) to construct a timeline of battlefield events with anticipated archeological signatures; 2.) evaluate military significance of the terrain using Military Terrain Analysis (KOCOA); 3.) hold meetings with landowners to secure permission to conduct fieldwork, inform them of the progress of fieldwork, and directly involve them in the process of battlefield event synthesis; 4.) conduct a fieldwork program of metal detection, remote sensing and archeological surveys to locate, define, and assess the integrity of battlefield sites, and obtain a representative sample of battle-related artifacts; 5.) perform ongoing laboratory analysis and conserve recovered battle-related artifacts; and 6.) integrate battlefield terrain, and historical and artifactual data into Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to reconstruct battlefield events.

## ***Revised Study and Core Areas***

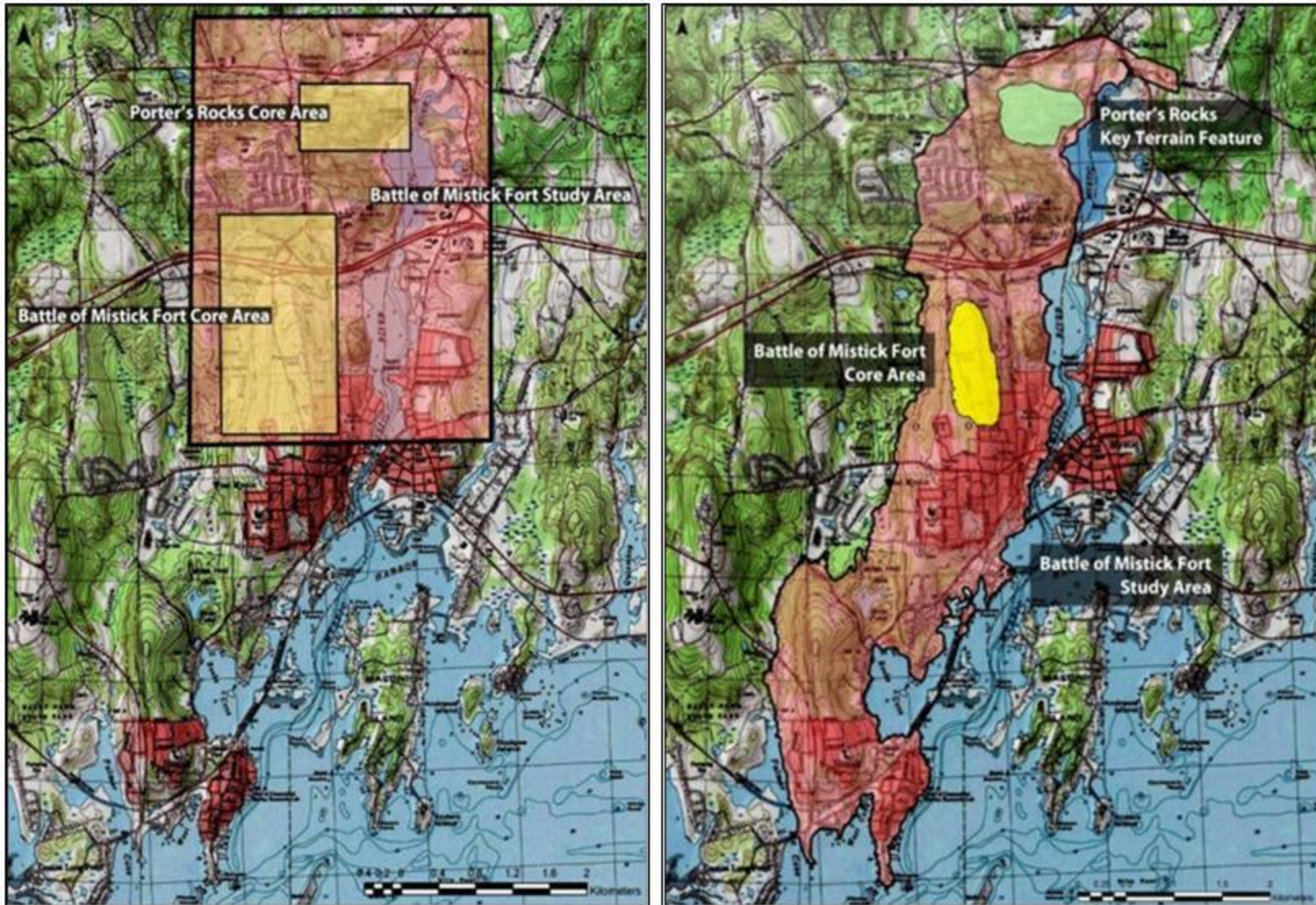
The Battle of Mistick Fort Study Core Areas initially defined during the “Battle of Mystic Fort Documentation Plan Planning and Consensus Building” (2007) were revised after further historical and archeological investigations (Figure 2).<sup>52</sup> The revised boundaries include cultural and landscape features, and English and Pequot movements before, during, and after the Battle of Mistick Fort.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> McBride and Naumec, *Battle of Mystic Fort Documentation Plan* (GA-2255-07-011).

<sup>53</sup> The Study Area defines the tactical context and visual setting of the battle and reflects the geographic and historical extent of the battlefield. This includes all places related or contributing to the battle such as avenues of approach, retreat, and troop maneuvers before, during and immediately after the battle. The Study Area is restricted to the immediate flow of battle after one side or other has moved to initiate combat and the Study Area should end when the combatants disengage and withdraw. The Core Area of a battlefield is the area of direct combat. There may be multiple Core Areas on a battlefield, but all must fall within the Study Area. Core Areas include critical land where fighting occurred, casualties incurred, and are made up of those places where combat engagements, key associated actions, and features were located. Events such as minor skirmishing along approach or withdrawal routes would not be included in a Core Area but would fall within a Study Area. NPS ABPP, *Battlefield Survey Manual*. P. 17.





**Figure 2. Initial Battle of Mistick Fort Study and Core Areas (left), and revised Battle of Mistick Fort Study and Core Areas Study and Core Areas (right)**

## **Battle of Mistick Fort Study Area**

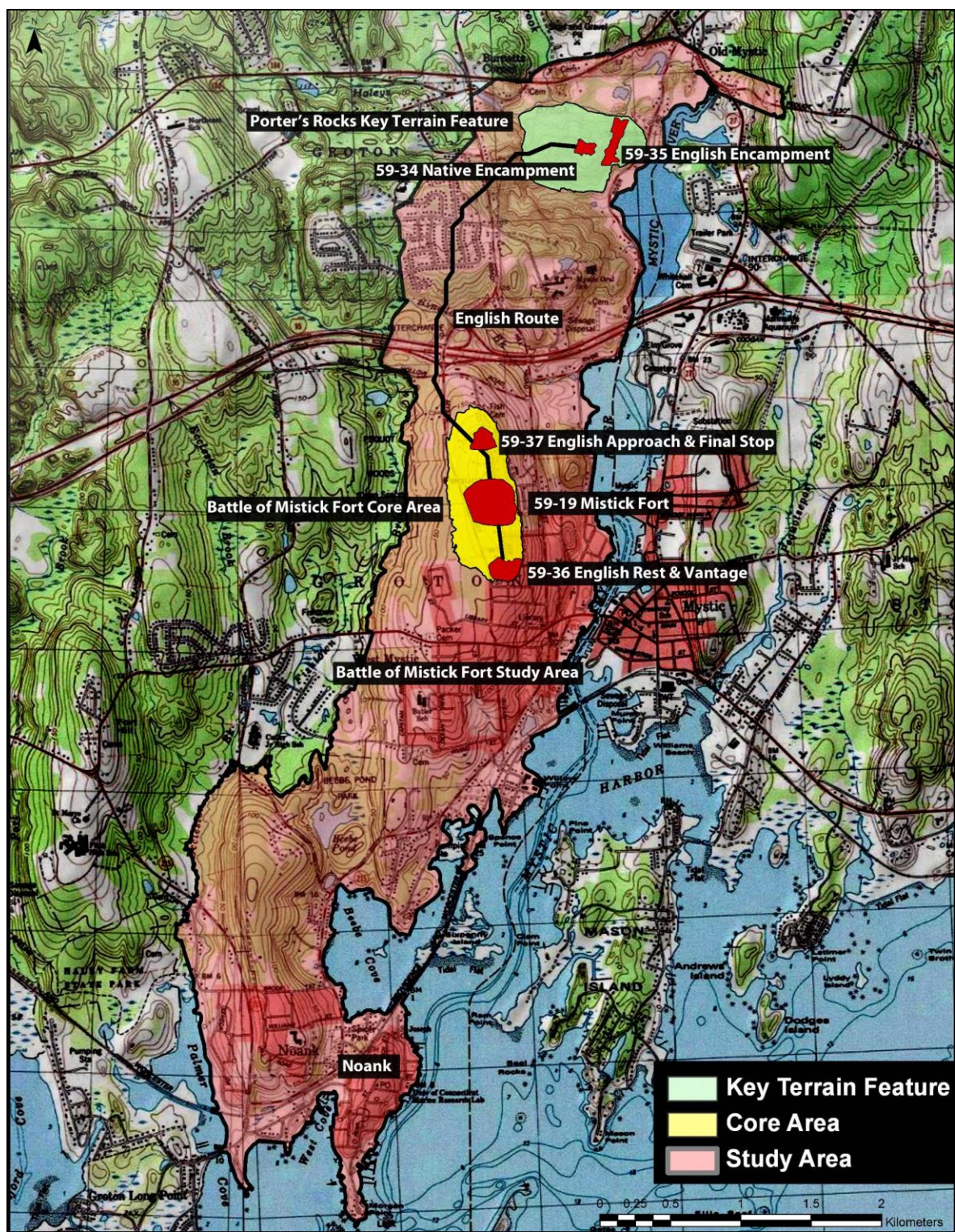
The Battle of Mistick Fort Study Area encompasses 870 acres and is delineated based on events from the evening of May 25 (when the English and their Native allies forded Mystic River) until late morning May 26 (when the English begin their westward retreat, vacating Pequot Hill) (Figure 3). For the purpose of this study, the events that occurred between these two dates and movements define the Mistick Fort battlefield landscape using both temporal and physical boundaries.<sup>54</sup> Physically and spatially, the Study Area is bounded on the north by the ford at the head of the Mystic River and Porter's Rocks, on the east by the west bank of the Mystic River, including Noank Neck, on the south by Long Island Sound, and on the west by Fishtown Brook and Cow Hill Road (English route from Porter's Rocks to Pequot Hill). Temporally, the Study Area encompasses the avenue of approach to Porter's Rocks from the ford at the head of the Mystic River, the Native and English encampments at Porter's Rocks, the avenue of approach to Pequot Hill, the sites of the English Approach and Final Stop, the battle and site of Mistick Fort, and the English Rest and Vantage Point (Figure 3).

Battle-related archeological sites identified within the study area include the movements and actions of the Native and English encampments at Porter's Rocks (Sites 59-34 & 59-35), the final stop and preparation before the attack on Mistick (59-37), the Mistick Fortified Village and Battlefield (59-19) and the English Rest and Vantage Point (59-36) (Figure 3).

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<sup>54</sup> The physical boundaries consist of natural (hills, streams, valleys, etc.) and cultural (roads, trenches, fortifications, etc.) features defining the original battlefield landscape.







## ***Porter's Rocks Key Terrain Feature***

The key terrain feature known as Porter's Rocks encompasses approximately 320 acres and is the area where seventy-seven English soldiers and 250 Native allies encamped the night before the attack on the Mistick Fort (Figure 4).<sup>55</sup> Porter's Rocks is an east west trending bedrock outcrop. The formation is a half-mile across, 1,500' north to south, and rises 75-100' above the surrounding landscape. Two natural (75') lanes provided a concealed entrance perhaps used by the English-allied forces. Two ancillary sites were identified within Porter's Rocks; the Native Encampment (59-34) and English Encampment (59-35).



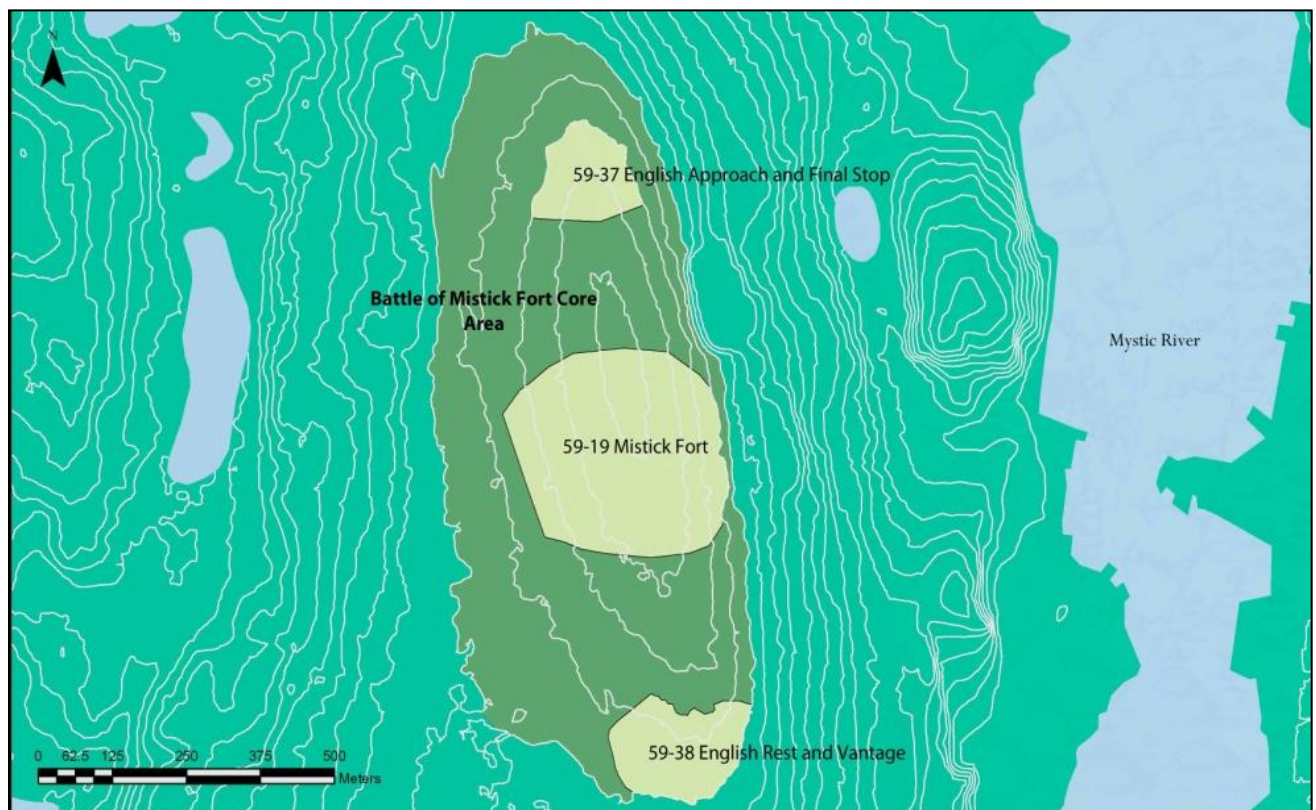
**Figure 4. Porter's Rocks Terrain Feature and Associated Sites**

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<sup>55</sup> Approximate final determination of English-allied combatants, including English soldiers and Native warriors from Mohegan, Narragansett, Niantic, Wangunk, Suckiaug, and Poquonnock tribes.

## ***Battle of Mistick Fort Core Area***

The Battle of Mistick Core Area (Figure 5) encompasses 555 acres and is defined by the actions, sites, and topography associated with the attack and moments directly before and after the battle at Mistick Fort. It is defined largely by 150-200' contour intervals at the summit of Pequot Hill. The 200' contour interval forms a one and a half acre terrace at the summit, the exact location of Mistick Fort. The eastern boundary of Pequot Hill is severely sloped, and moderately so on the north, south, east, and west. The boundaries of the Battle of Mistick Fort Core Area are delineated on the north by the site of the English Approach and Final Stop (59-37) and on the south by the site of the English Rest and Vantage Point (59-36). This Core Area encompasses the site and battle of Mistick Fort (59-19).



**Figure 5. Battle of Mistick Fort Core Area**

# Results and Battlefield Event Synthesis

## *Introduction*

The Battle of Mistick Fort occurred in four chronological distinct phases at the site locations above defined. These locations were identified using historical accounts and archeological and remote sensing surveys. The phases in chronological order are: 1.) English-allied forces crossing of the Mystic River and four-hour encampment at Porter's Rocks (Native Encampment, 59-34; English Encampment, 59-35); 2.) English-allied forces two-mile march from Porter's Rocks to the base of Pequot Hill, where they stopped briefly to make final preparations (English Approach and Final Stop, 59-37); 3.) Two-hour attack and battle at Mistick Fort, a Pequot fortified village (Mistick Fort, 59-19); and 4.) English-allied forces movement to the southern end of Pequot Hill to tend their wounded and await sight of their ships (English Rest and Vantage Point, 59-36).

### **Phase 1: English-allied forces cross Mystic River & encamp at Porter's Rocks**

The Battle of Mistick Fort began when the English-allied forces (seventy-seven English, 250 Native allies) forded the head of the Mystic River in the early evening of May 25 and marched until one hour into the night (8:00-9:00 p.m.). The forces encamped at “a little swamp between two hills” (Porter's Rocks, 59-34 & 59-35), and left the area (1:00 a.m.) for the two-mile march to Mistick Fort.<sup>56</sup> The stay at Porter's Rocks was brief (4 hours). The English-allied forces spent their time resting, praying, and checking equipment for the upcoming planned attack.

### **Phase 2: English-allied forces Approach and Final Stop**

The English-allied forces left Porter's Rocks (1:00 a.m.) on May 26 guided by a Pequot, Wequash, who guided them on the path “told us it led directly to the fort. We held our march two miles...” and arrived at the northern base of Pequot Hill. Mason described corn crops planted at the base of the hill “...a champion country being round about us” (just before dawn).<sup>57</sup> The area around Mistick Fort was open due to Native slash-and-burn agricultural clearing and

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<sup>56</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 6; Underhill, *Newes From America*. P. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Mason, *History of the Pequot War*. P. 7.

defensive purposes (during high-tension periods with neighboring tribes). The allied forces approached Mistick Fort using a land-based path (Cow Hill Road), rather than an exposed route along Mystic River.<sup>58</sup> The English-allied forces made final preparations while stopped roughly 1,500' north of the summit (English Approach and Final Stop: 59-37). This site was identified using eyewitness accounts, which noted the palisade tops (10-12' high) in view. Using the hill's topography with the projection of line-of-sight from Mistick Fort's northern palisade wall, discrete locations were chosen for archeological and remote sensing surveys. Three recovered artifacts from this site are considered seventeenth century.

### **Phase 3: Attack on and Battle at Mistick Fort**

#### ***Mistick Fort Description***

Mistick Fort, a Pequot fortified village, was described in detail by Philip Vincent, who interviewed Underhill and other eyewitnesses. The fort was:

forty or fifty foot square (but this was at least two acres of ground). Here they pitch, close together as they can, young trees and half trees, as thick as a man's thigh or calf of his leg. Ten or twelve foot high they are above the ground, and within rammed three foot deep with undermining, the earth being cast up for better shelter against the enemies discharges. Betwixt these palisadoes are divers loopholes through which they send their winged messengers. The door for the most part is entered sideways, which they stop with boughs or bushes, as need requireth. The space therein is filled with wigwams. This fort was so crowded with these numerous dwellings, that the English wanted foot-room to grapple with their adversaries, and therefore set fire on all.<sup>59</sup>

The entrances to the fort were formed by overlapping sections of the palisade, so narrow that one had to move sideways to enter the fort.<sup>60</sup> The boughs and brush used to block the entrances were an obstacle to the English.<sup>61</sup> The palisade posts at Mistick described by Vincent were approximately six to eight inches in diameter and set close together with gaps between the posts

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<sup>58</sup> Present-day finer agricultural soils of this region are concentrated on the north and west quadrants of Pequot Hill. Additionally, a 1650s land record of the area references old cornfields.

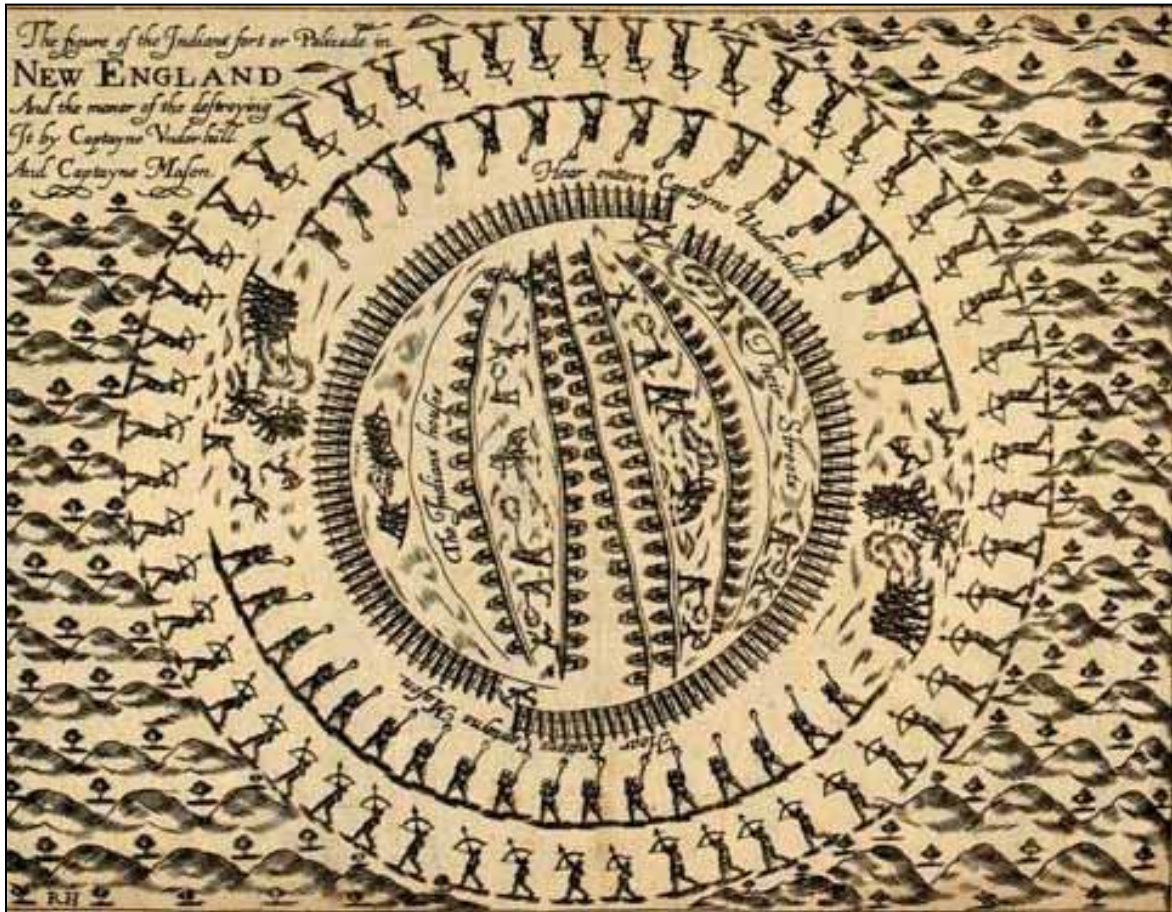
<sup>59</sup> Vincent. *A True Relation*. Pp. 13-14.

<sup>60</sup> Circular palisades depicted in Underhill's print were common along the eastern seaboard during this period (Figure 6). In lieu of European-style bastions, the "divers loopholes" described by Vincent allowed defenders to shoot projectiles. Native construction of circular forts disappeared from the region within a decade after the Pequot War, as they were less effective than the flanking fire provided by bastions. Circular forts were a secure defense against attackers firing arrows, but were ineffective against firearms, particularly demonstrated at Mistick Fort.

<sup>61</sup> Underhill, *Newes From America*. P. 37.



– enough room to fit a musket.<sup>62</sup> With their revised plan of attack (an open-field frontal assault to a surprise attack), the English mitigated Pequot defensive tactics (retreating from musket range) and trapped them in the enclosed fort.



**Figure 6. Underhill print of “the Indian Fort or Palizado” (1637)**

Archeological evidence indicates Mistick Fort was approximately 250 feet in diameter (approximately 1.1 acres). The boundaries of the fort were determined by a combination of an electrical resistivity survey, trenching to intersect palisade remains, locating the distribution and presence/absence of domestic artifacts, and the distribution of melted lead shot. Although no palisade remnants remained, the boundaries of the fort were determined by the abrupt transition from sterile soils to those with a relatively high density of Pequot domestic artifacts. Evidence of the palisade trench was destroyed by plowing, with a plow zone between 30 cm – 40 cm below surface. The palisade posts may have gone through three feet of soil, but it included the

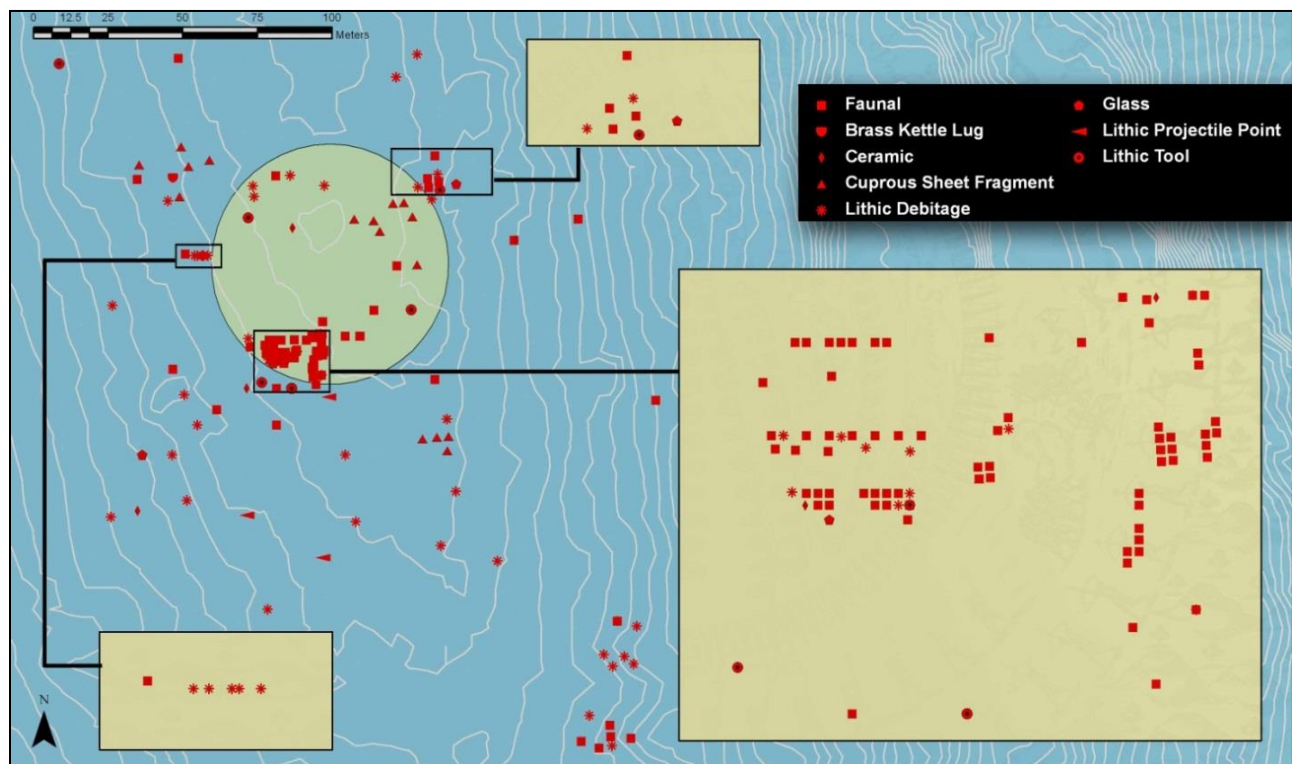
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<sup>62</sup> Vincent. *A True Relation*. P. 14.



“earth being cast up for better shelter.”<sup>63</sup> This “undermining” left a circular embankment as noted by nineteenth century land proprietors, obliterated soon after by plowing.

Archeological testing recovered European and Native domestic artifacts inside and outside the fort’s former boundaries. Figure 7 depicts all Pequot domestic artifacts recovered during the 1987 and 2009-2010 archeological surveys. Recovered artifacts include Pequot and European ceramics, stone lithics, bottle glass, brass fragments and a wide range of faunal remains. The density of artifacts increased dramatically inside the fort boundaries. Low volumes of brass fragments, lithics, and shell were found well outside the fort, suggesting certain activities such as tool production, food processing, and refuse disposal. In general, the density of artifacts found at Mistick Fort is comparable to fortified places with short-lived occupations.



**Figure 7. Distribution of Native Domestic Artifacts – Mistick Fort**

At other local identified pre-Contact Period (ca. 1000 A.D. – 1600 A.D.) sites, defensive structures were situated in the same locations as non-fortified villages (low areas adjacent to estuaries and marshes). However, Mistick and Weinshauks denote a shift in settlement patterns. Both forts, built on the two hilltops with steeply sloping sides and views of Long Island Sound

<sup>63</sup> Vincent. *A True Relation*. Pp.13-14.

were defensible and a distance from a tidal marsh or estuary without adjacent villages.<sup>64</sup> If the two Pequot forts were constructed at naturally defensive locations just prior to the Pequot War, then it suggests the Pequot were engaged in or anticipated conflict. The forts may have been constructed as a defense against other tribes. One source states these forts were a frontier against the Narragansett with whom the Pequot had recently renewed conflict (ca. 1634).<sup>65</sup> A second reason for construction is an anticipated war with the English.

#### **Phase 4: Redeployment to English Rest and Vantage Point**

When the Battle of Mistick Fort concluded, the English retreated a few hundred meters south to tend their wounded and await their ships. The archeological signature associated with this activity was a light scattering of discarded and dropped equipment, as their stay here was very brief and served as a defensive lookout position before their eight-mile retreat west to the Thames River.

#### ***Battlefield Timeline***

In order to create a dynamic reconstruction of the Battle of Mistick Fort, the documented events were divided into twelve discrete actions and incorporated into a timeline with archeological signatures. These actions, with coordinating Connecticut state-assigned archeological site numbers<sup>66</sup> (if applicable), are:

- I. English-Allied Forces Ford Mystic River and Approach Porter's Rocks*
- II. Native and English Encampment at Porter's Rocks (Sites 59-34 & 59-35)*
- III. English Avenue of Approach & Final Stop (Site 59-37)*
- IV. Attack on Mistick Fort Begins (Site 59-19)*
- V. Approach to Mistick Fort*
- VI. Mason's Initial Volley (Site 59-19)*
- VII. Mason's Entry and Fight in Northeast Quadrant of Mistick Fort (Site 59-19)*
- VIII. Mason's Movement and Fight in Northwest Quadrant of Fort (Site 59-19)*
- IX. Mason's Traverse to Northeastern Entrance, Firing the Fort, and Exit (Site 59-19)*
- X. Underhill's Entry & Fight (Site 59-19)*
- XI. Redeployment & Fight in Western Quadrant of Battlefield (Site 59-19)*
- XII. Redeployment to the English Rest and Vantage Point (Site 59-36)*

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<sup>64</sup> Kevin McBride, "The Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots, 1637-1900" in Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, Eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Rise and Fall of an American Indian Nation* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

<sup>65</sup> LaFantasie, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*. P. I:36, and Hosmer, Ed., *Winthrop's Journal*. P. I:139.

<sup>66</sup> Connecticut archeological site numbers are assigned by state town number and by numerical archeological site identified within that town. Mystic is town number 59.



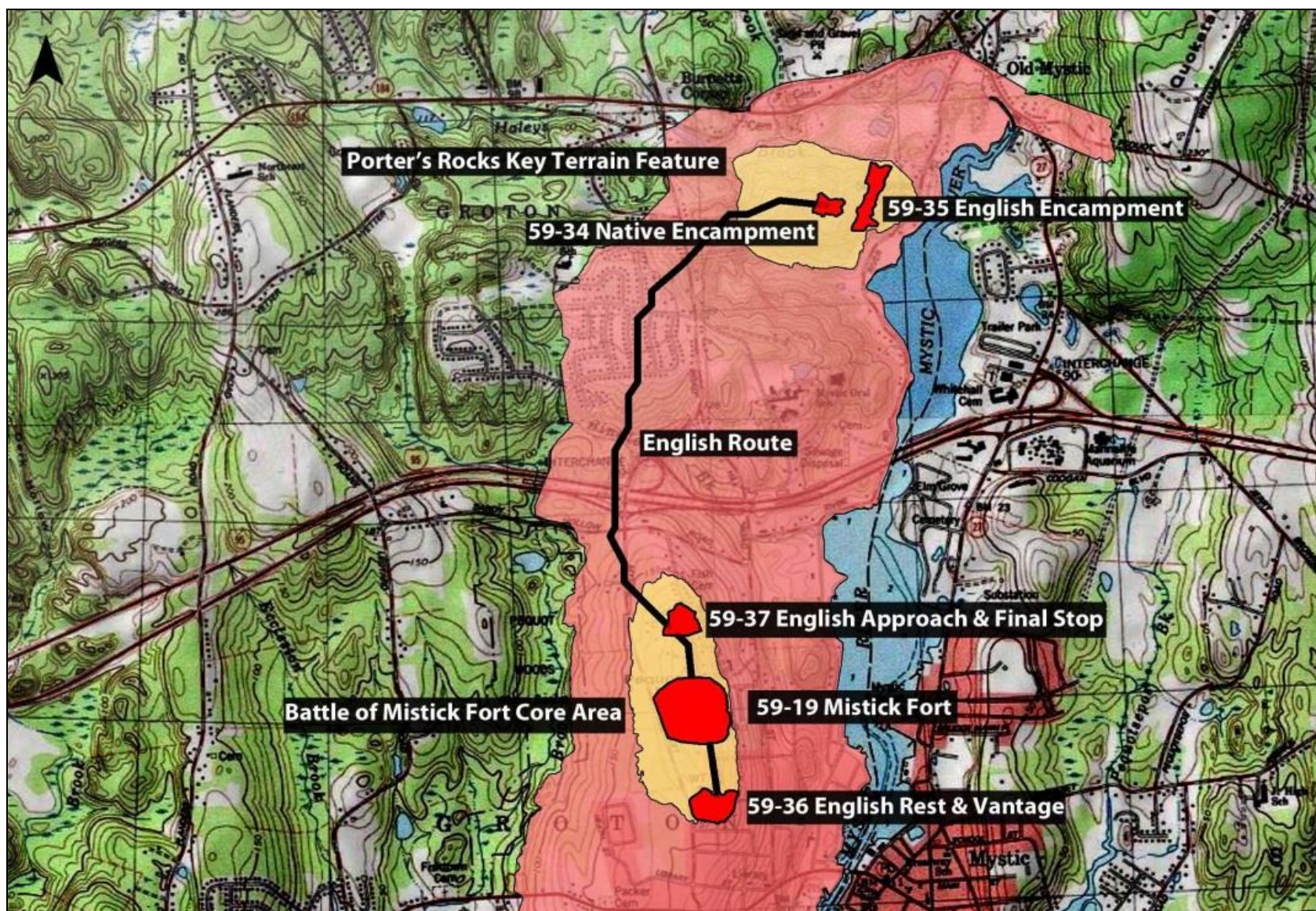


Figure 8. Final Battle of Mistick Fort Study and Core Areas with Site Locations



## Action I: English-Allied Forces Ford Mystic River and Approach Porter's Rocks

The first event was the English-allied forces fording of the Mystic River and establishing their camp at Porter's Rocks. No attempt made to identify the route, as the avenue of approach would have an extremely low archeological signature. However, after the encampment sites at Porter's Rocks were established the route used by English-allied forces was inferred. Two possible approaches into Porter's Rocks exists. One route begins as a south-faced entrance directly parallel to the Mystic River, the other inland, a northern concealed entrance that took the group west of the Mystic River (2,400') then south for (900') into one or two wide (75') natural valleys. The English, guided by Wequash, opted for latter.

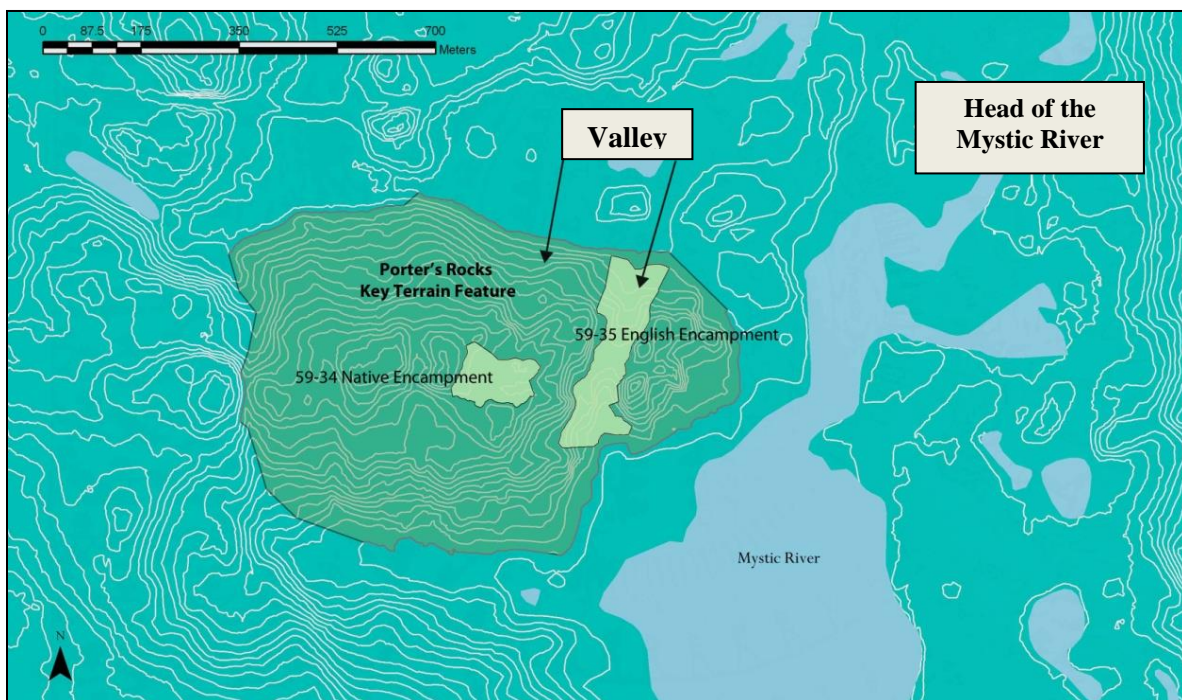
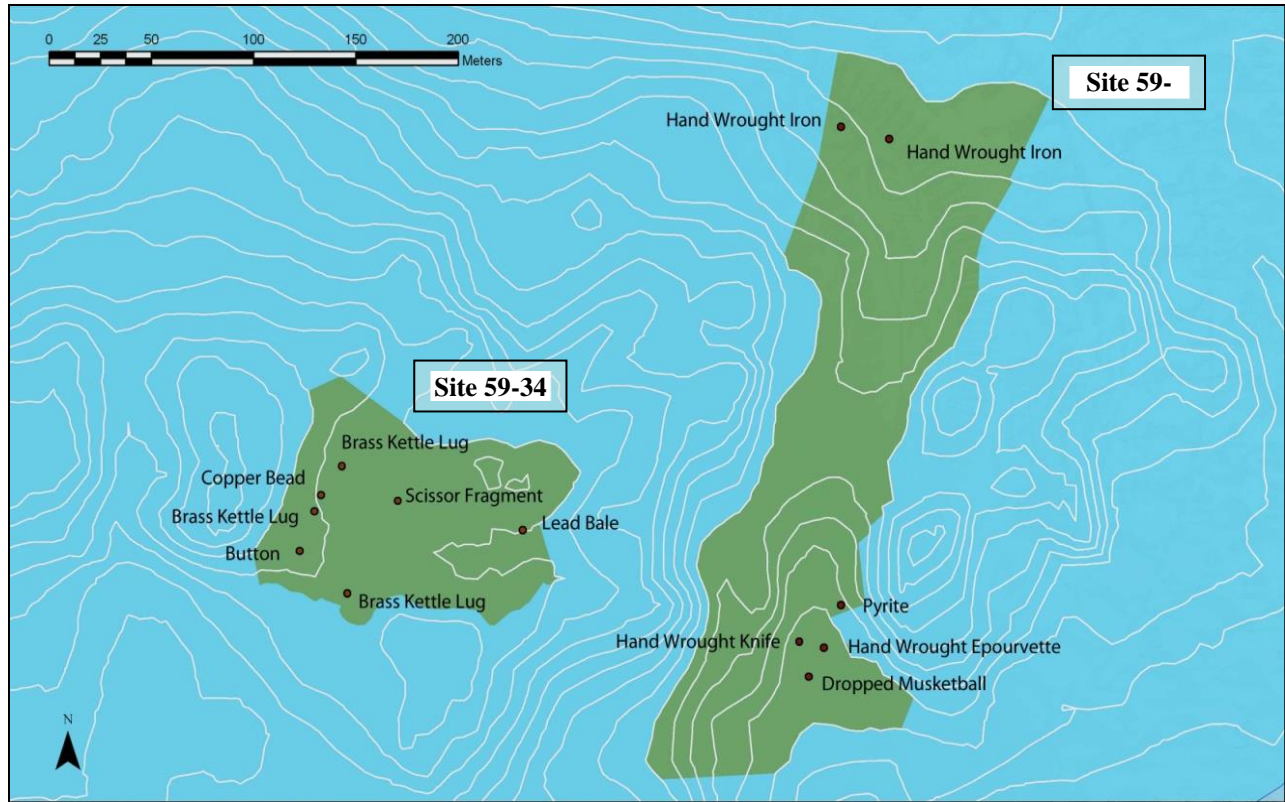


Figure 9. Porter's Rocks; Sites 59-34 & 59-35

## Action II: Native and English Encampment at Porter's Rocks (Sites 59-34 & 59-35)

Figure 9 depicts the site locations of the Native (59-34) and English (59-35) encampments at Porter's Rocks. Fieldwork located evidence of the English encampment at the northern and southern ends of the valley. The Native encampment was at a higher elevation west of the English encampment. These locations naturally protected and concealed the groups from attacks (north, south, and west), gave an avenue of escape, and a strategic elevated lookout.

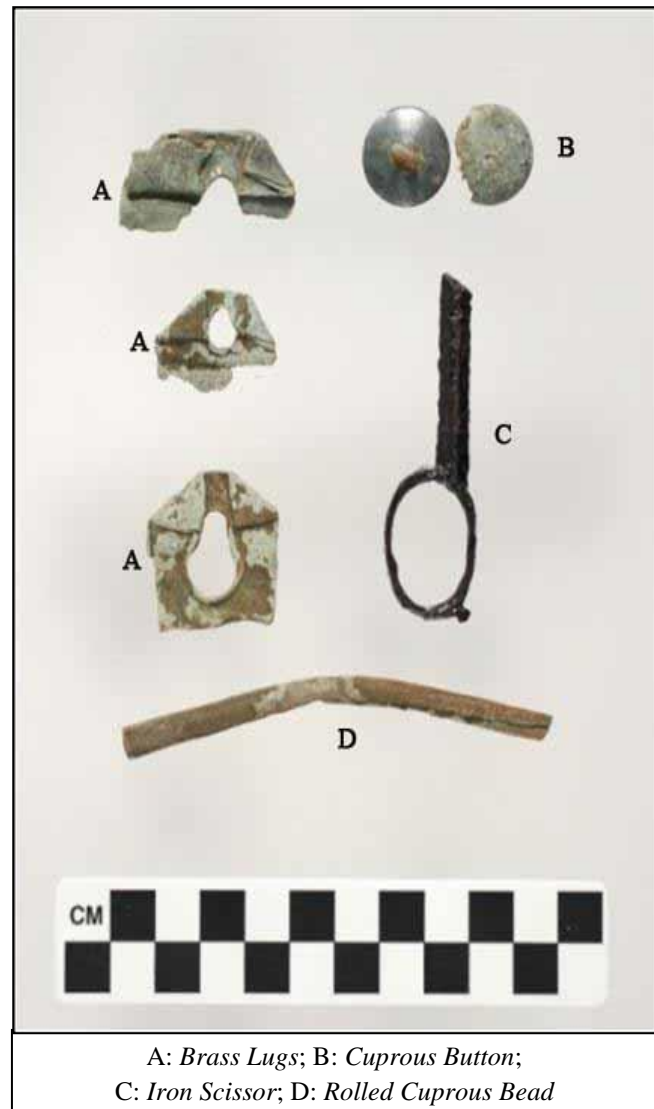
Figure 10 depicts the artifact distributions recovered from the two encampments, while Figure 11 depicts the artifacts. Site boundaries were defined by a combination of the topography as well as the distribution of artifacts: on the east and west by the walls of the bedrock outcrop that rose 50 to 100 feet above the valley floor, and on the north and south based on the distribution of artifacts at the northern and southern termini of the valley.



**Figure 10. Native and English Encampments and Artifact Distributions**

Although the site was occupied only a few short hours, the identification of the Native encampment at Porter's Rocks was an overall significant project outcome. The artifact assemblage depicts dropped items carried by Native warriors on the eve of battle, and their nature and distribution is a rare and unique assemblage. The majority of artifacts were located along the outer edge of a basin, just as it slightly rises to form walls, suggesting these objects were dropped or lost while resting or leaning against the natural curve (Figure 10). Recovered artifacts include three brass kettle lugs, a two-piece brass button (likely from a shirt) a fragment of a wrought-iron iron scissor, and a rolled brass bead (likely from a native breastplate) (Figure 11).<sup>67</sup>

Based on the assemblage of artifacts recovered at Site 59-34, it was determined to be associated with the English encampment (Figure 12).<sup>68</sup> The 0.40 diameter musket ball and pyrite are associated with English weapons. There is no written evidence



A: Brass Lugs; B: Cuprous Button;  
C: Iron Scissor; D: Rolled Cuprous Bead

**Figure 11. Porter's Rocks  
Site 59-34: Native Artifacts**

<sup>67</sup> The button, scissor fragment, and brass bead were unexpected, reflecting a combination of clothing and utilitarian objects. The three brass kettle lugs do not necessarily reflect objects of a functional, ornamental or clothing nature. The lugs (which attach the handle to the kettle) are the last remnants of the process of cutting up brass kettles for a variety of utilitarian, decorative and symbolic uses such as projectile points, spoons, beads and amulets. The lugs seemingly can't be used for any purpose, as they are very small and perforated with little usable brass. However, an alternative explanation is that brass and other substances were viewed by Native people in southern New England as an animate substance with positive and reflective qualities. In this context, the brass lugs may have deflative qualities and were carried by Native warriors as a defense against brass projectile points used by Pequot warriors. George R. Hamell, "The Iroquois and the world's rim: speculations on color, culture, and contact" in Jordan E. Kerber, Ed., *Archaeology of the Iroquois: selected readings and research sources* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> A wrought-iron trigger mechanism, a wrought-iron scissor fragment, a 0.40 inch diameter musket ball, a block of pyrite for a Wheelock firing mechanism, and a hand-wrought iron drill. An iron knife blade was also found, not pictured here.

suggesting the Native Allies carried firearms - and certainly not a Wheelock musket. The close spatial relationship of the trigger mechanism and musket ball suggest they were associated. The pyrite was found by a landowner, along with seventeenth century clay pipe fragments. Oral history associated with this collection suggests they originated from a nearby rock shelter, likely part of the English encampment. The trigger mechanism has not been positively identified, although preliminary research suggests it could be part of an epreuve (a device for assessing the quality of gunpowder) or a powder measure. Documentation states the English left behind a barrel of ammunition at Porter's Rocks.



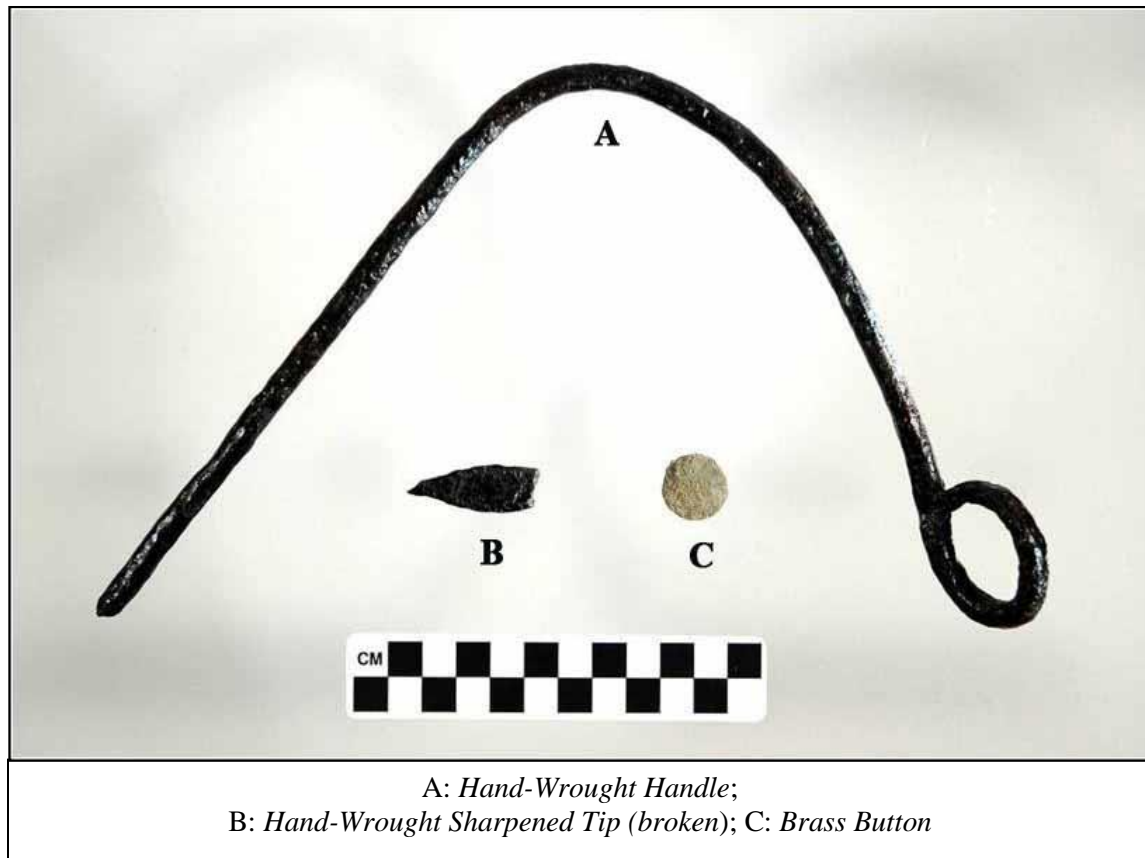
**Figure 12. Porter's Rocks Site 59-35, English Encampment**

### **Action III: English Avenue of Approach & Final Stop (Site 59-37)**

The two-mile route from Porter's Rocks to Pequot Hill (where the English-allied forces briefly stopped and made final preparations) runs west from Porter's Rocks, south along Cow Hill Road, avoiding the more visible parallel route along Mystic River. A metal detector survey at the hypothesized location of the final stop identified three seventeenth century artifacts; a hand-wrought handle fragment, the sharpened tip of a hand-wrought iron object (a weapon or tip

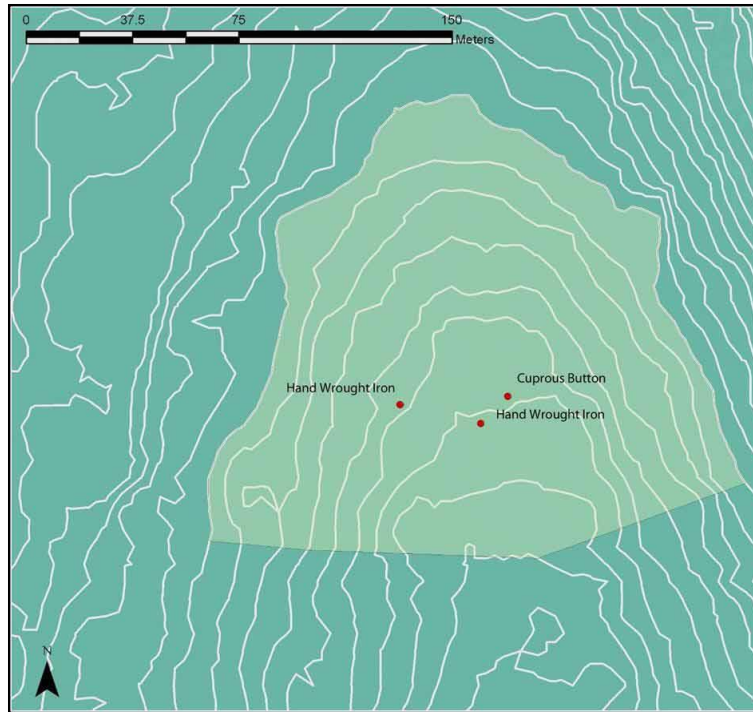


of a pike), and a brass button (Figure 13). This location, determined by topography and the historical narrative indicates an English position. Site boundaries were determined based on topography at the northern base and slope of Pequot Hill, forming a flat area of 4.5-acres, with the distribution of seventeenth century artifacts (Figure 14).



**Figure 13. Artifacts from Site 59-37, English Approach and Final Stop**





**Figure 14. Site 59-37, Artifact Distributions and Site Boundaries**

## **Action IV: Attack on Mistick Fort Begins**

The attack on the Mistick Fort begins here, and comprises of seven discrete actions based on the historical narratives, established battlefield timeline, with corresponding archeological evidence.

## **Action V: Approach to Mistick Fort**

The English divided their seventy-seven soldiers into two contingents of approximately thirty-eight men, commanded by Mason and Underhill. Mason's division would approach from the north and surround the fort to the north and east, while Underhill was to approach from the west and surround the fort to the south and west. Native allies were to ring the fort outside of the English.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> An avenue of approach from the final stop to the Mistick Fort is inferred from a single seventeenth century iron button (identified in 1987 and since disintegrated) found approximately 180 feet north and 75 feet west of the fort. The button was found in an isolated context away from other battle-related objects closer to the fort, suggesting it is associated with an avenue of approach rather than an English battle position. It is inferred the button indicates Mason's route rather than Underhill's, as Underhill would have taken a western trajectory towards the southwest entrance.

## **Action VI: Mason's Initial Volley**

After each contingent surrounded the fort, the plan was to fire a volley simultaneously. However, Mason's contingent was discovered before either contingent was positioned. Upon discovery, Mason quickly approached the fort, firing a volley through the palisade. The archeological signature of Mason's Initial Volley resulted in a concentrated pattern of lead in the northeast quadrant (rather than an evenly disbursed pattern around the fort, which would result from an English fired volley in their planned surrounding positions). Masons' contingents' initial volley through the palisade consisted of several rounds of small shot in the 0.30 - 0.48 diameter range. The overall distribution of shot recovered from Mistick Fort indicates a higher number of small shot in the northeast quadrant. Employing volleys that included multiple rounds of varying diameters of shot was an English tactic used when engaging densely grouped individuals.

Figure 15 depicts the diameters, frequency, and spatial distribution of all 68 lead shot recovered. Musket balls were grouped into categories of dropped, melted, and impacted. Only one of the musket balls in the northeast quadrant of the fort was a dropped ball 0.62 - 0.65 range (carbine or musket), the remainder were impacted and melted. Dropped musket balls indicate an English position, no matter how briefly occupied (Figure 16).

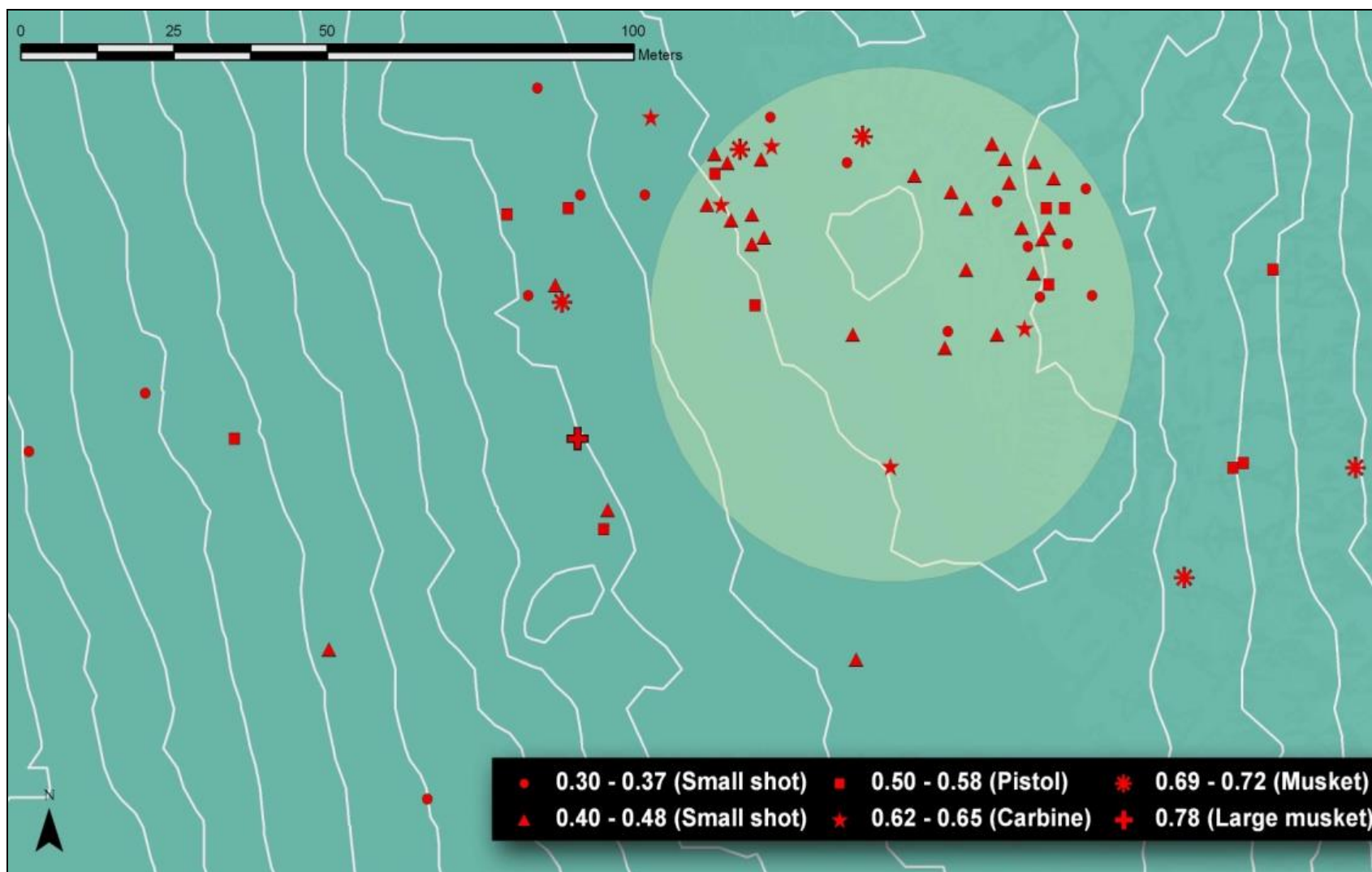


Figure 15. Spatial Distribution of Lead Shot by Diameter

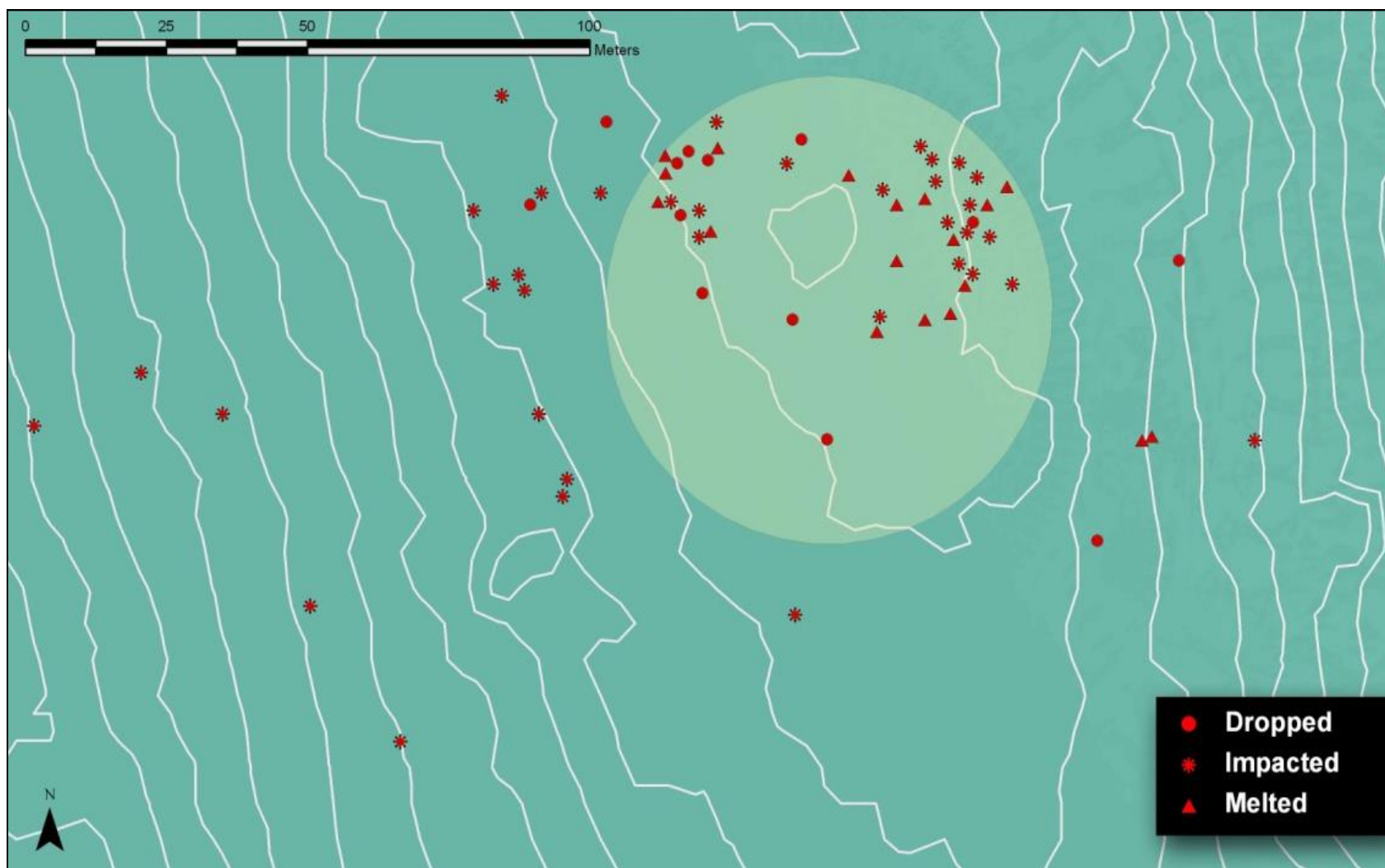


Figure 16. Distributions of Musket Balls by Condition





**Figure 17. Several Musket Balls from Mistick Fort with Flint (dropped, melted, impacted, fired, dropped)**

## Action VII: Mason's Entry and Fight in Northeast Quadrant of Mistick Fort

Mason's division penetrated the fort after the Initial Volley. The English entry into Mistick Fort was uncontested until they entered the wigwams. Based on the pattern of non-musket ball battle-related artifacts from the northeast quadrant of the fort, the fighting was a combination of hand-to-hand combat, with musket fire from positions near the entrance (Figures 18-22).<sup>70</sup> Two recovered musket rests suggests the presence of heavy arms, near a flintlock sear mechanism and brass buttons. The location of these artifacts represent strategic placement of soldiers to provide cover and protection for an avenue of retreat (through Mistick Fort's northeast entrance). The recovered artifacts and pattern attest to the fighting and intense combat that took place in the northeast quadrant. A dropped 0.62 - 0.65 diameter musket ball, wrought-iron pike strap, aglet, and impacted brass arrow point were also recovered (Figures 19 and 20).

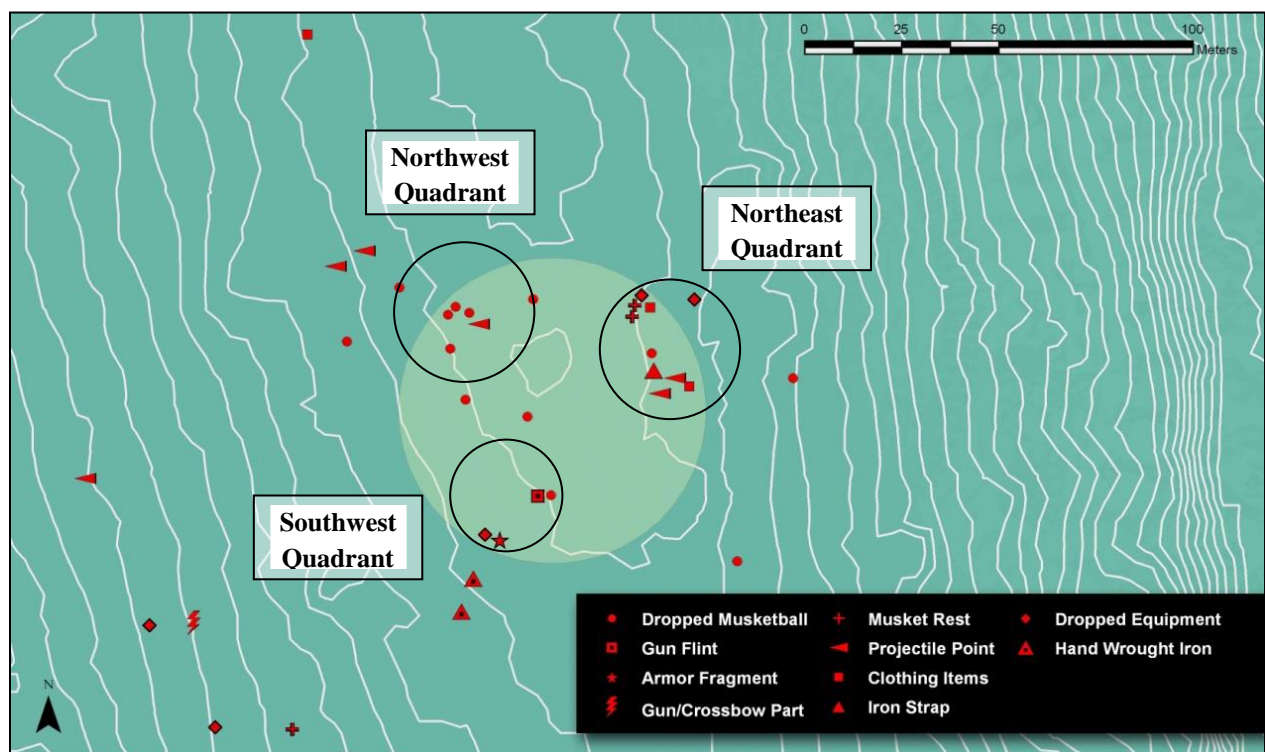


Figure 18. English Positions and Related Artifacts

<sup>70</sup> Recovered artifacts include: two iron musket rests, brass button and aglet, two brass projectile points (one impacted), iron pike strap, a broken piece of flintlock iron sear mechanism, and an iron loop attachment.

Both Mason and Underhill reported men shot in their armor, upper and lower body, and extremities.<sup>71</sup> Wounded English were carried on stretchers during the retreat, “some of them with the heads of the arrows in their bodies.”<sup>72</sup>



**Figure 19. Battle Related Artifacts. A, C, H, I Recovered From Northeast Quadrant of Fort**

<sup>71</sup> Underhill, *Newes From America*. Pp. 38-39.

<sup>72</sup> Trumbull, Benjamin. *A Compendium Of The Indian Wars in New England: More Particularly such as the Colony of Connecticut have been concerned an Active in New Haven, August 25 anno 1767*. (Hartford, CT: Edwin Valentine Mitchell, 1926). P. 24.



A, B & C: Impacted Brass Arrow Points Interior of Fort; C & F: Brass Conical Points - Native Positions Exterior of Fort; D: Wood Arrow Shaft Fragment; E: Impacted Brass Arrow Point – Native Positions Exterior of Fort.

**Figure 20. Native Brass Conical and Flat Points**



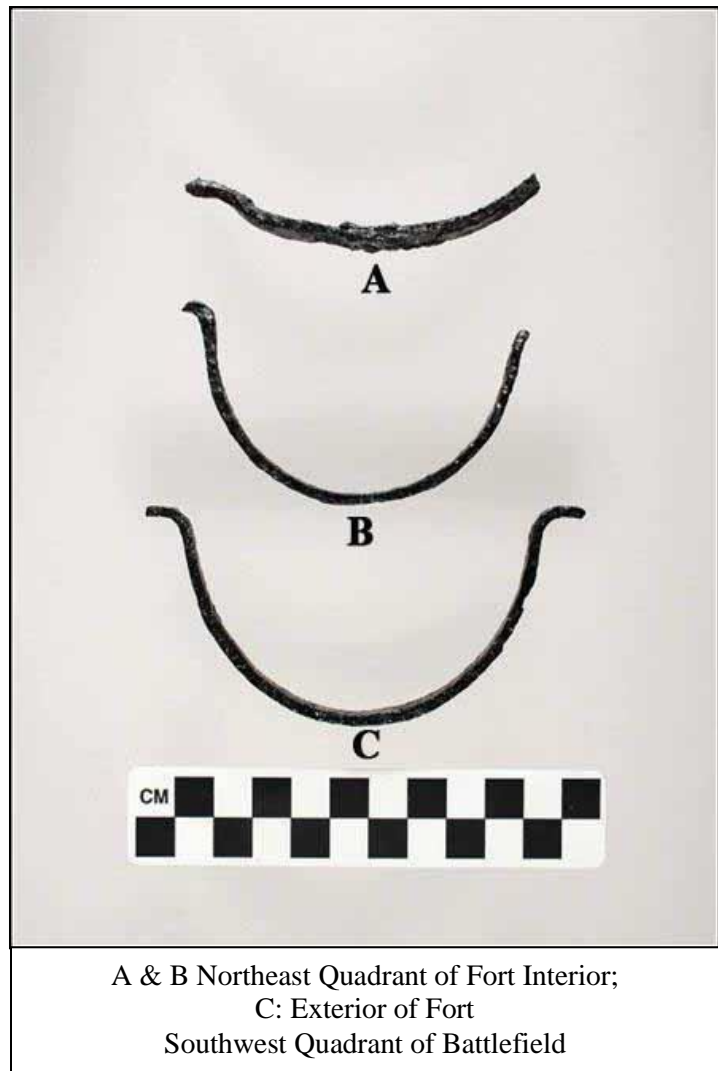
The pattern of battle-related artifacts from the northern half of Mistick Fort perplexed archeologists until a closer inspection of the historical timeline noted that the English commanders split the fort into separate operations. The archeological signature of few artifacts in the southwest represents Underhill's actions, as his division entered the fort already afire, retreating quickly. Based on this realization, the pattern of battle-related artifacts in the northeast quadrant of the fort was confidently associated with Mason's actions.

### **Action VIII: Mason's Movement and Fight in Northwest Quadrant of Fort**

Mason described walking the lane, formed by wigwams arranged in a linear pattern. He mentioned "many Indians in the lane or street" and pursued them, indicating close-quarter fighting at the end of a lane opposite the northeast entrance. The assemblage of battle-related artifacts in the northwest quadrant is quite different from that associated with the actions in the northeast quadrant of the fort. Of the seventeen objects recovered, sixteen were musket balls with one impacted brass projectile point.

### **Action IX: Mason's Traverse to Northeastern Entrance, Firing the Fort, and Exit**

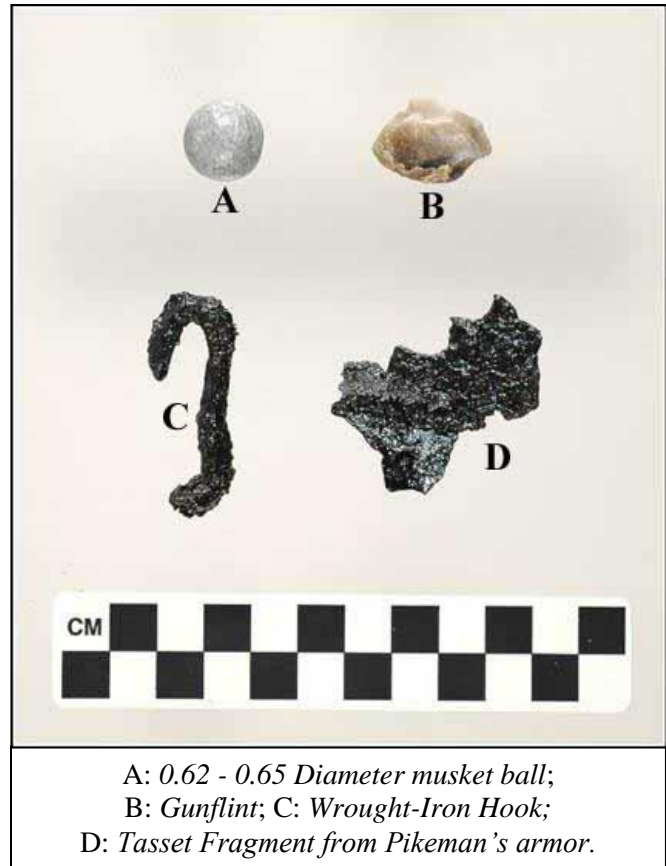
After this action, Mason returned worn to the northeast quadrants, where he saw two soldiers with swords pointing to the ground. He decided, "we should never kill them after that manner" – in reaction to difficulties of fighting in such dense quarters and rapidly high number of English casualties. Mason's men set fire to the fort and exited.



**Figure 21. Iron Musket Rests**

## Action X: Underhill's Entry & Fight

Underhill's narrative and battle-related artifacts recovered from the southwest entrance indicate his division gained entry into Mistick Fort and engaged Pequot warriors for a short time.<sup>73</sup> Only four battle-related artifacts were recovered from the southwest quadrant of Mistick Fort (Figure 22).<sup>74</sup> These recovered artifacts include a dropped 0.62 - 0.65 diameter ball (carbine or musket), gunflint, tasset fragment from a Pikeman's armor<sup>75</sup>, and hand-wrought iron hook (commonly associated with accoutrements). Underhill's division also faced stiff resistance, and suffered many casualties in a short time.



A: 0.62 - 0.65 Diameter musket ball;  
B: Gunflint; C: Wrought-Iron Hook;  
D: Tasset Fragment from Pikeman's armor.

**Figure 22. Underhill's Entry,  
Southwest Quadrant of Mistick Fort**

## Action XI: Redeployment & Fight in Western Quadrant of Battlefield

When Mason exited the fort, his detachment joined Underhill in the southwest quadrant outside the palisade. Figure 24 depicts all battle-related artifacts recovered, including dropped and impacted musket balls. The nature and distribution of objects outside the fort is consistent with the reconstruction of the actions and positions during the final phase of the battle. English positions, individual and unit, were identified based on dropped musket balls and assemblages of equipment. The presence and positions of the Native allies were identified based on recovery of

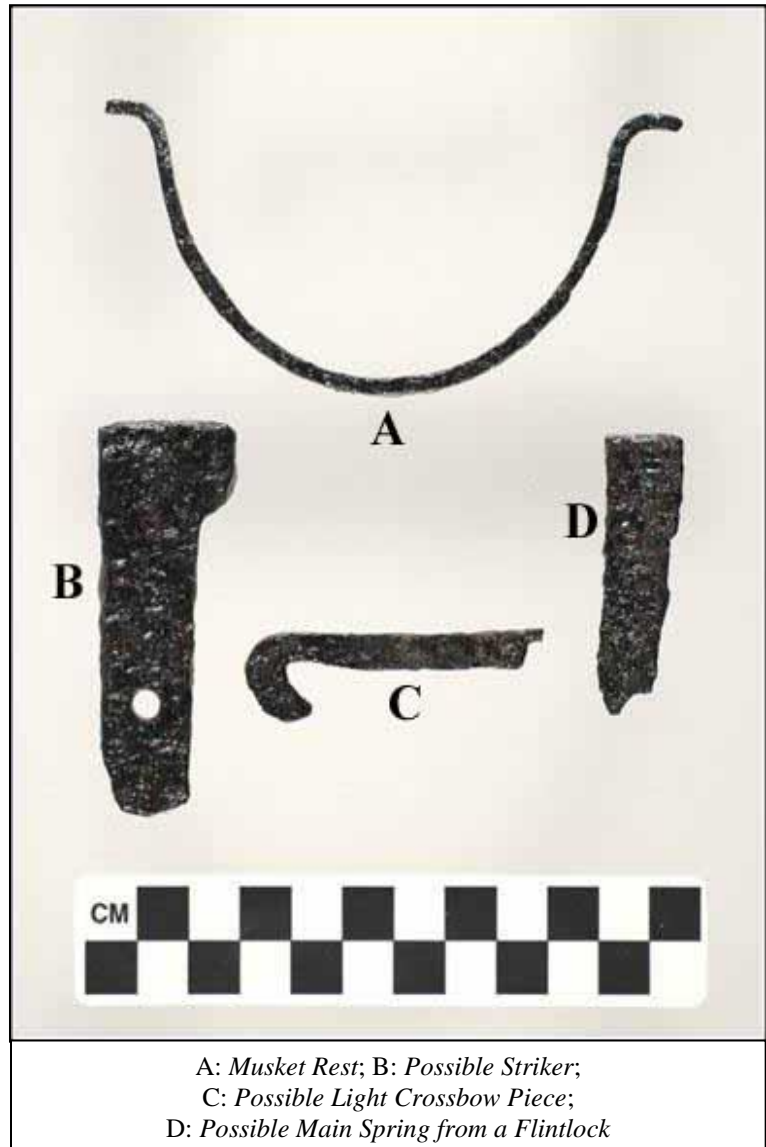
<sup>73</sup> Based on Mason's account, Underhill entered the fort too late to support the battle. Underhill's account not only draws from his own perspective, he supplements it with actions that occurred from across the battlefield. This narrative makes it difficult to distinguish Underhill's and his contingents' personal experiences.

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, all artifacts recovered here were from archeological excavation. Metal detection was extremely difficult due to hundreds of modern iron objects just inside the southwest fort entrance. All other areas of the fort site were remote sensory surveyed without issue.

<sup>75</sup> The armor fragment testifies to Pequot stiff resistance during Underhill's entrance; a significant force must be applied in order to damage and break off a piece of Pikeman's armor.

triangular and conical brass arrow points outside of the fort walls. The locations of these points are consistent with primary documentation, including Underhill's depiction in print of the battle (Figure 6). The Native allies encircled English positions surrounding the fort.

The density and distribution of impacted musket balls, arrow points, and dropped and broken equipment and weapons in the western quadrant of the fort indicate intense fighting over a large area (Figure 24). In three instances, archeologists noted the presumed direction of fire (impacted musket balls and a conical projectile point). These artifacts, protected between and against boulders, were found in the western quadrant of the battlefield (without an evident plow zone). The cuprous point was in close proximity to three impacted musket balls. The two conical brass arrow points recovered outside the northwest boundary of the fort (Figures 20 and 24) appear to be dropped, not impacted. These points were located approximately 150' from the fort and 75' outside projected English lines (Figure 25). They likely mark the English-allied Native positions surrounding Mistick Fort.<sup>76</sup>



**Figure 23. English Iron Battle-Related Artifacts Recovered from Southwest Quadrant**

<sup>76</sup> The most interesting aspect of these conical points is their association with the Wangunks and other Native peoples of the middle Connecticut River Valley between Hartford, Connecticut and Deerfield, Massachusetts.

English positions (identified by a concentration of weapons and equipment) were located in the southwest quadrant of the battlefield approximately 150 feet from the palisade entrance, a strategic placement to intercept fleeing Pequot. Six battle-related artifacts were identified within an area of approximately 13,000 square feet: an impacted musket ball, a wrought-iron musket rest, a wrought iron cross bow part, a wrought iron-striker, a wrought-iron flintlock main spring fragment, and a wrought-iron ring or loop attachment (Figure 23).

Collectively, the nature, distribution, and direction of fire of projectiles, equipment, and weapons indicate a chaotic and intense battle took place in the west half of the battlefield. The directions from which various weapons were fired suggest a melee, and the hand-to-hand fighting reported by a number of sources is represented by the recovered artifacts of broken and discarded equipment.

## **Action XII: Redeployment to the English Rest and Vantage Point**

Shortly after the Battle of Mistick Fort concluded, the English retreated a few hundred meters south to tend their wounded and await their ships. Archeological surveys recovered four objects associated with this encampment: a lead flint wrap, brass Great Coat button, unidentified cuprous/brass object, unidentified fragment of a pewter object, and a brass boot clip (Figures 26-27). Artifact distribution was over 1.8-acres.

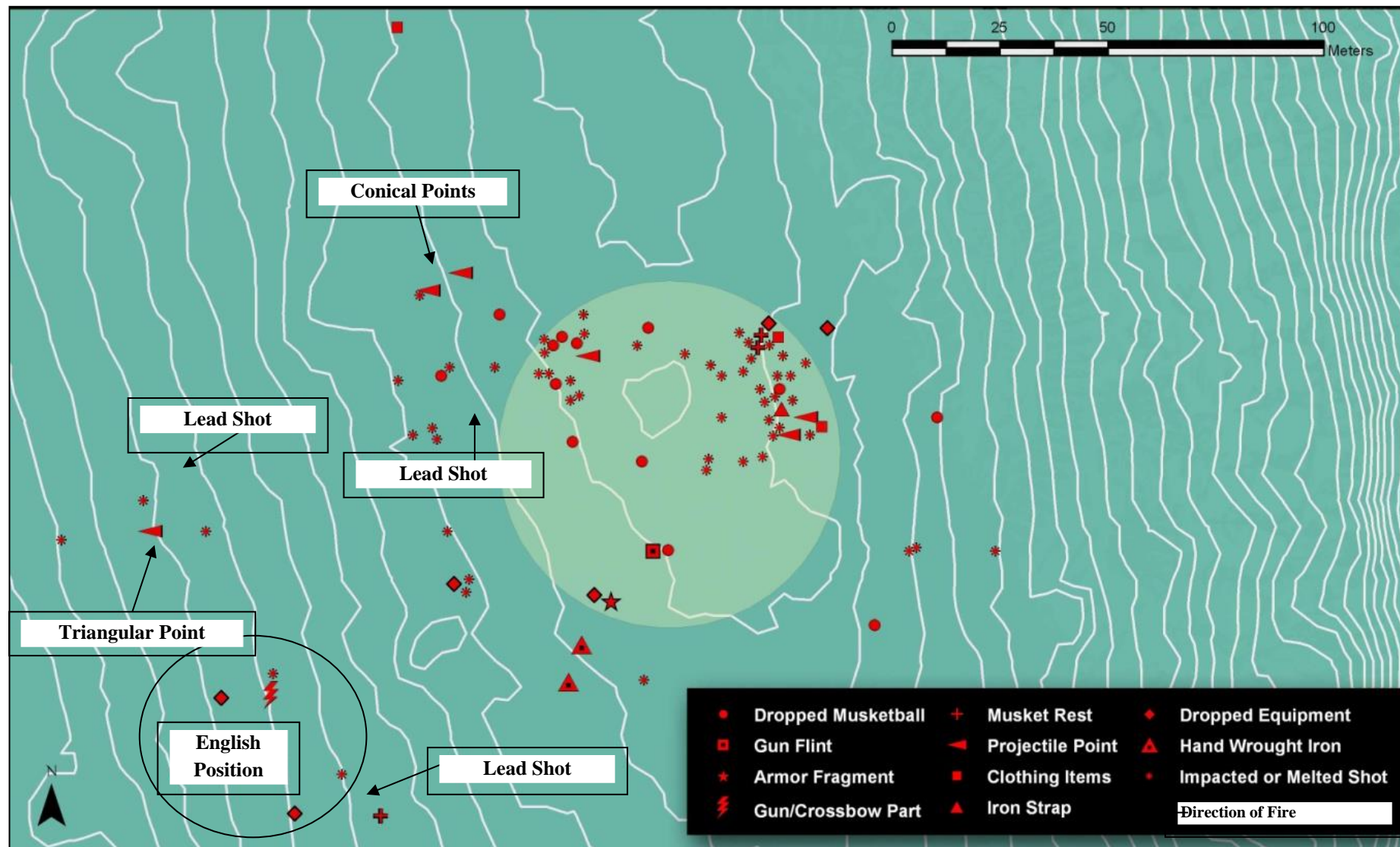


Figure 24. All Battle-Related Recovered Artifacts from Mistick Fort



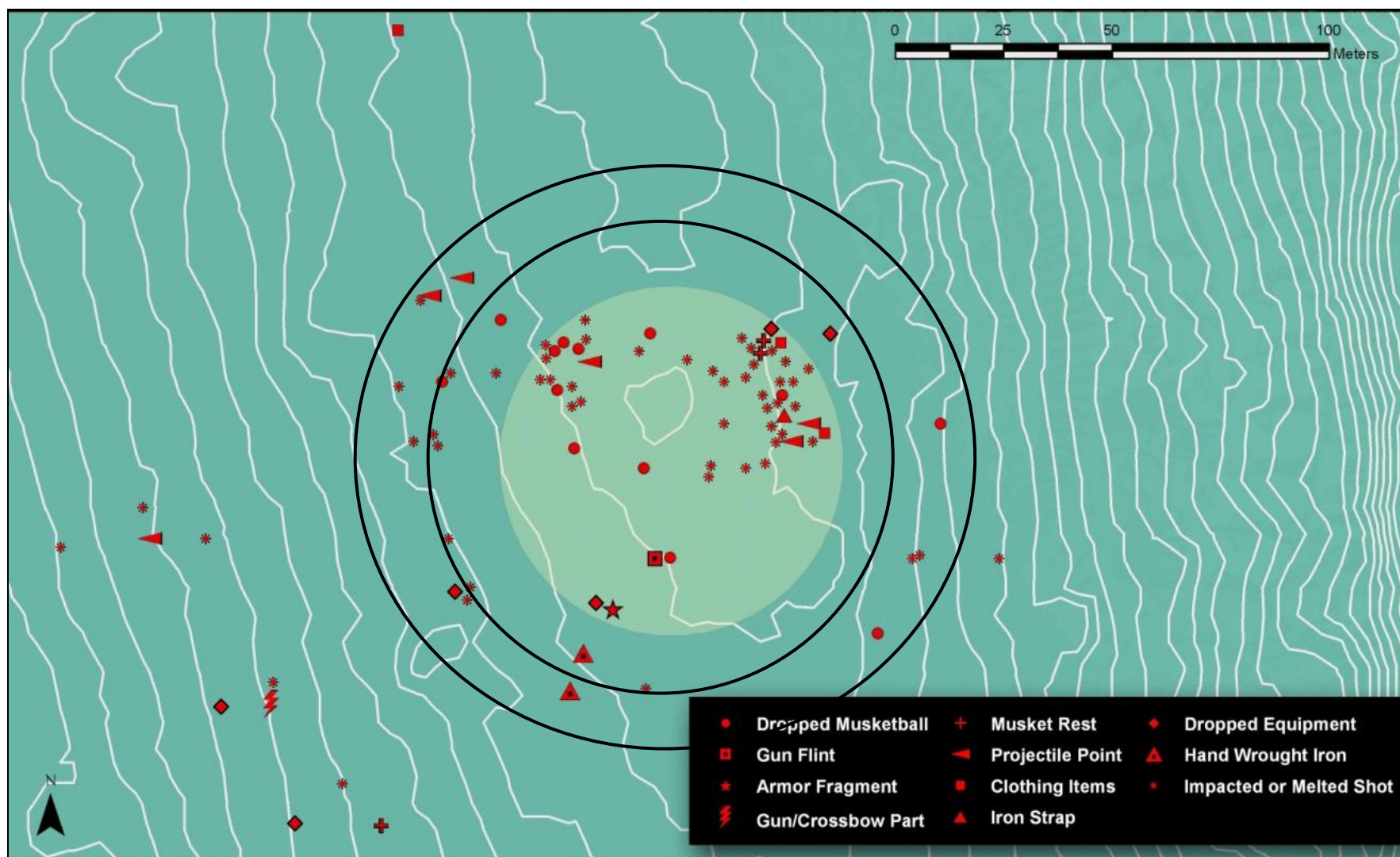
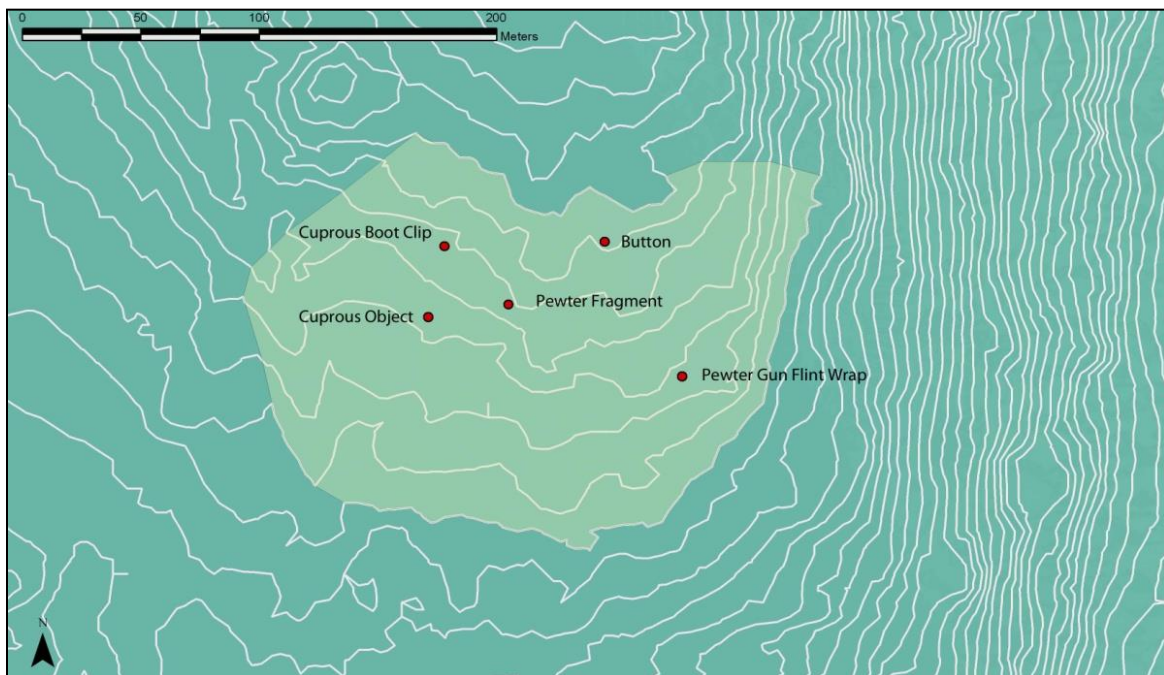


Figure 25. Circumference Showing English (inner circle) and Native (outer circle) Positions Outside of Mistick Fort



**Figure 26. Artifacts Recovered from English Rest and Vantage Point**



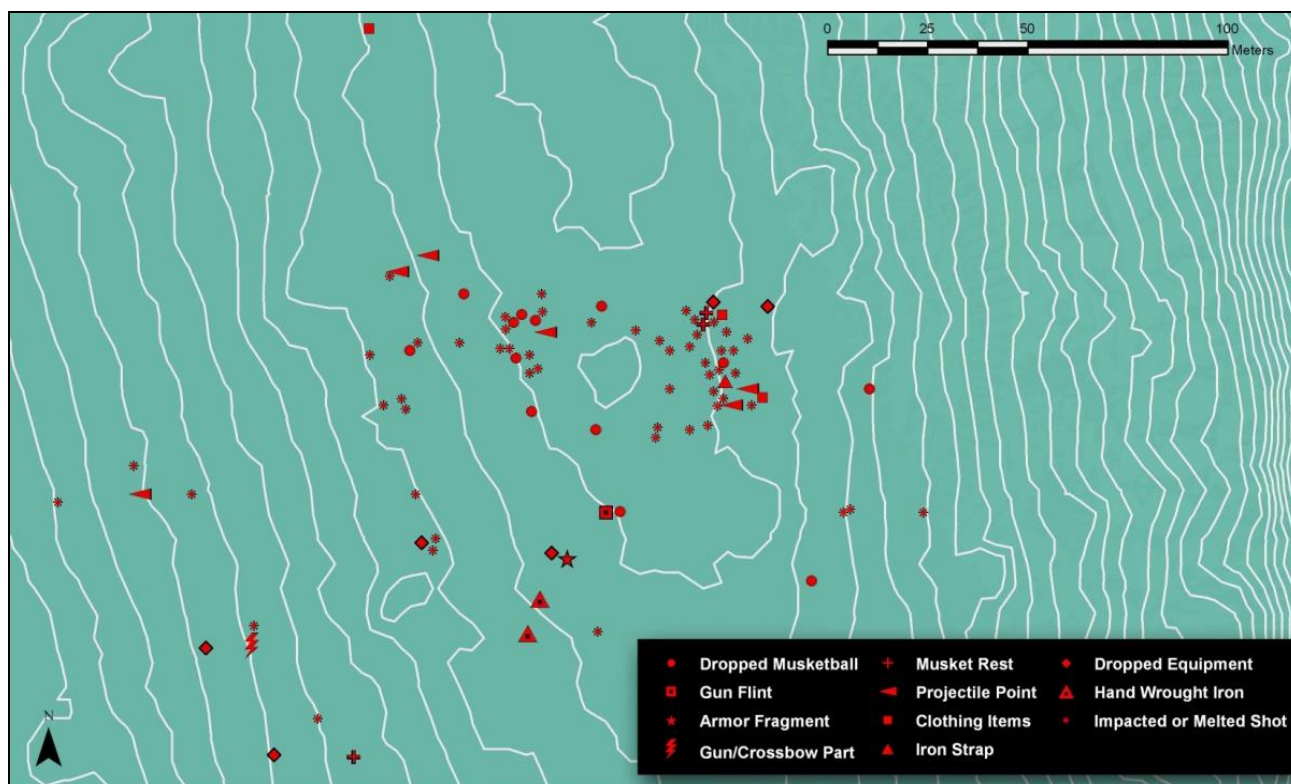
**Figure 27. Site 59-36: Artifact Distributions at English Rest and Vantage Point**

# Dynamic Battlefield Event Synthesis

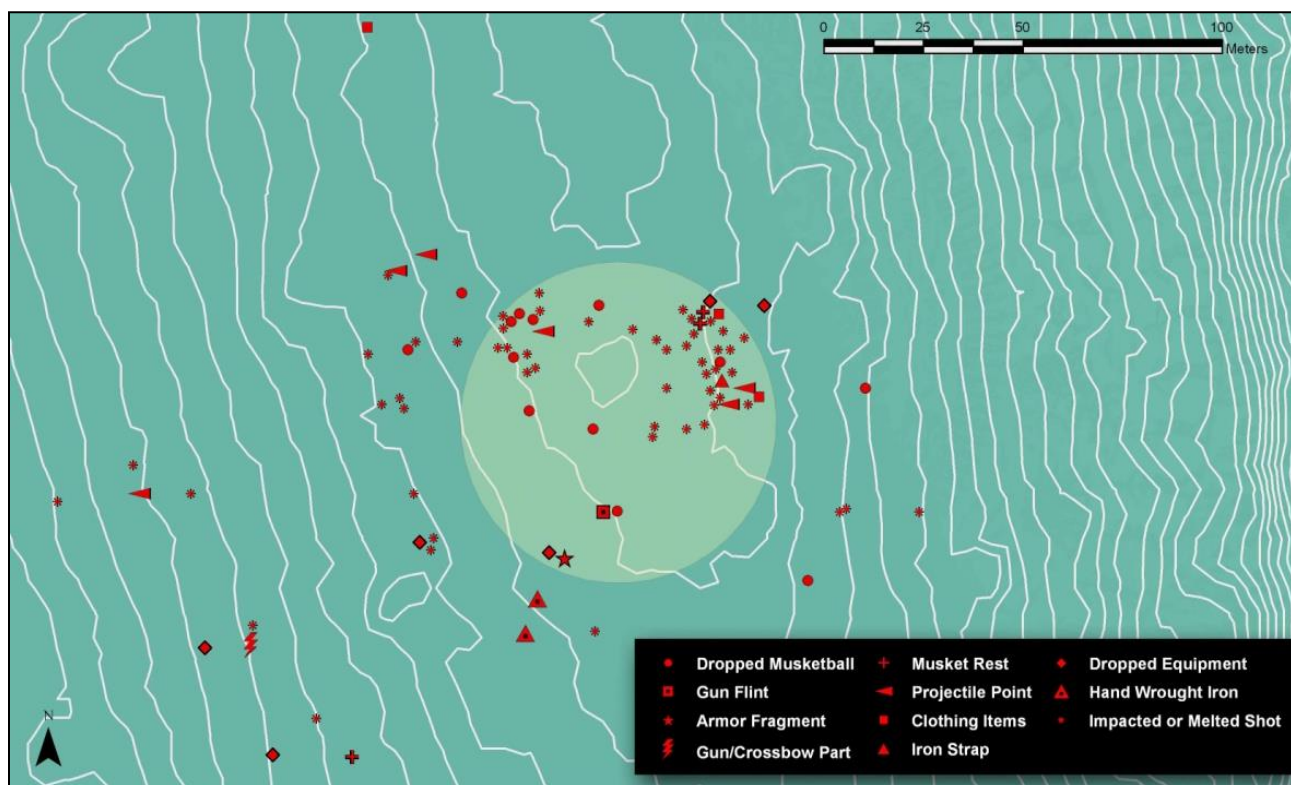
The keys to synthesizing the Battle of Mistick Fort was the identification of individual and unit actions from eyewitness accounts, place these actions in temporal sequence, and understand the archeological signatures associated with them. A critical component of this analysis was delineating the boundaries of the fort, thereby placing recovered battle-related artifacts into two distinct spatial and temporal categories: those that occurred inside the fort during the initial phase of the battle, and those that occurred outside the fort during the final phase of the battle.

The best illustration of this concept is viewing all battle-related artifacts without and then with the Mistick Fort's palisade. Figure 28 depicts all battle-related artifacts without the benefit of the palisade boundary, where very little of a battlefield sequence can be inferred using just the artifact signature. While the overall pattern clearly indicates a battle took place, it is impossible to make any meaningful inferences of the nature and distribution of battle-related artifacts, or what they might represent using the context of the historical narrative and battlefield timeline. When Mistick Fort's boundary is added, the potential for sequencing battle events and actions is apparent (Figure 29).





**Figure 28. All Battle-Related Artifacts without Palisade Boundary**



**Figure 29. All Battle-Related Artifacts with Fort Palisade Boundary**

Once the boundary of the fort was determined and overlaid, the broad spatial dimensions of the battlefield and artifact associations correlating to events and actions was evident. Patterns associated with discrete anticipated archeological signatures from historical narrative timeline were inferred to enable archeologists to sequence four discrete actions in the north quadrant of the fort; *Mason's Initial Volley*, *Mason's Entry and Fight in Northeast Quadrant of Mistick Fort*, *Mason's Movement and Fight in Northwest Quadrant of Fort*, and *Mason's Traverse to Northeastern Entrance, Firing the Fort, and Exit*.

In order to correlate discrete archeological signatures with the reconstructed battlefield timeline of actions and events (Figure 30), it was vital to reassess the archeological and historical record. The two data sources provided unique clues, and supplemented gaps on and across the battlefield. This process resulted in a number of permutations of the reconstructed battlefield, each becoming increasingly complex as battlefield staff continued correlation of anticipated and tangible archeological signatures with battlefield events and actions with increasing confidence. Each resource alone was insufficient in reconstructing the Battle of Mistick Fort. While the historical record was a key element in interpreting and contextualizing the archeological record, there were many aspects of the battle that were brought to light using only archeology.

Notwithstanding the massacre of 400 men, women, and children at Mistick Fort, the action was an intense battle between two adversaries of equal strength and determination, one in which the English almost lost. Pequot defenses and weapons were highly effective in within the fort, largely negating any English advantages of firearms and edged weapons. The battle narratives and archeological record attest to the ferocity of Pequot defense, and the professionalism and determination of both Pequot warriors and English soldiers. Overall, the English battle plan, weapons and tactics employed, and prior combat experience of carefully selected soldiers reflects in a carefully conceived and executed battle plan that left very little to chance.

While the Pequot lost as many as 200 warriors at the battle of Mistick, the remaining 600-800 warriors were a formidable force, capable of exacting a toll on the English directly following the Mistick battle. The Pequot, who up until the Battle of Mistick, had defeated English forces in every engagement (using superior tactics that negated English tactics and firearms). As Pequot warriors mobilized to attack the English and their allies from villages across Pequot territory, the rage of what occurred at Mistick led them to abandon tactics which

had served them so well in previous successful engagements against the English. John Mason's description of the Pequot response and reaction to the carnage at Mistick vividly conveys how the warriors must have felt: "The enemy coming up to the place where the fort was, and beholding what was done, stamped and tore the hair from their heads...came mounting down the hill in full career." In the hours following, the Pequot sought revenge as they repeatedly counterattacked the English forces as they retreated to their waiting ships in the Thames River harbor. In their lack of caution, the Pequot lost hundreds of men in these attacks; virtually eliminating any possibility the Pequot could continue the fight. The Battle of Mistick Fort was not the final episode of the Pequot War, but it was the beginning of a final stage, which led to the complete defeat of the Pequot.

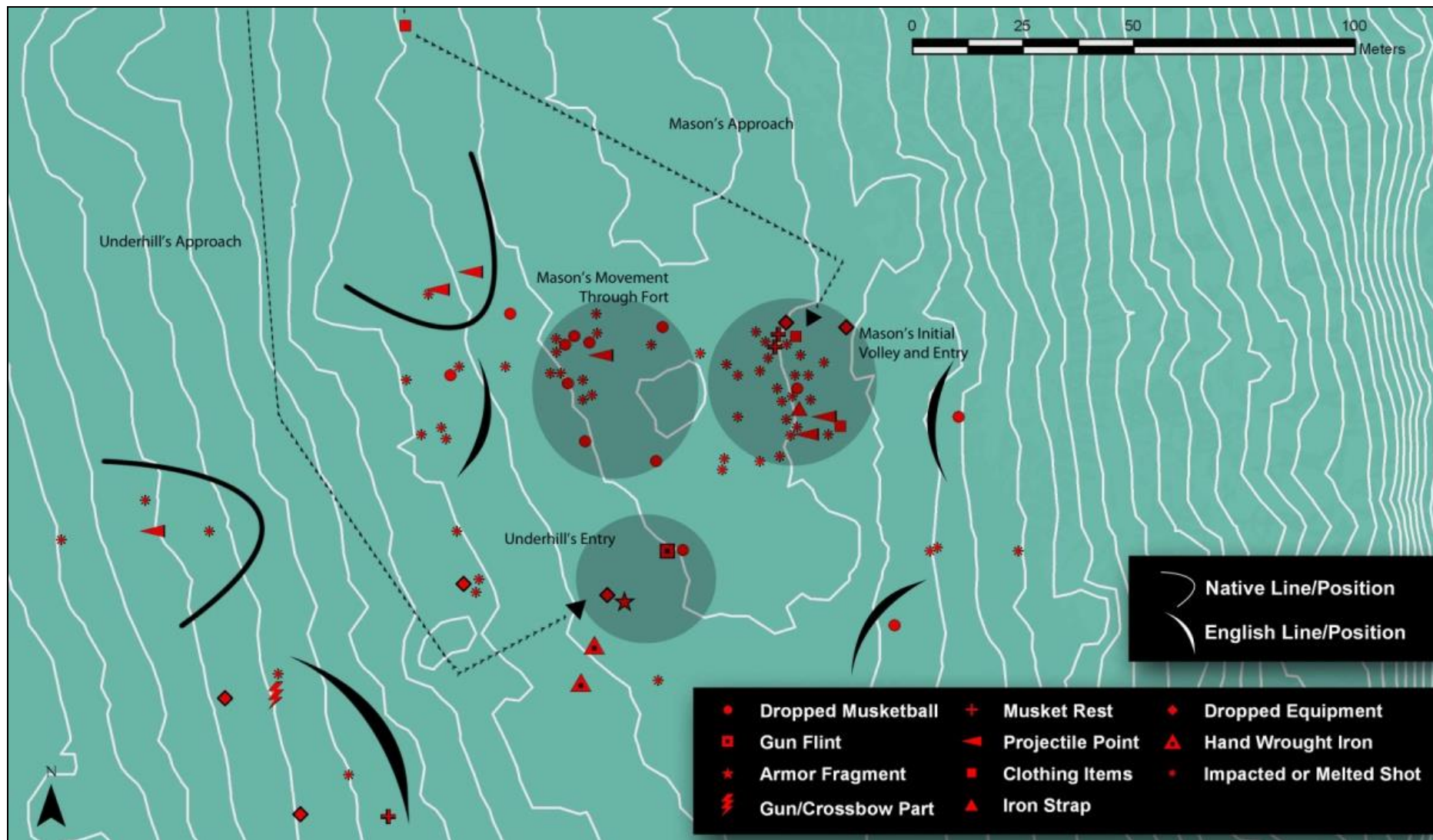


Figure 30. Final Dynamic Battlefield Reconstruction of the Battle of Mistick Fort

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