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PIONEER SETTLEMENT AND SUBSISTENCE ON THE OZARK BORDER:
PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE WIDOW HARRIS CABIN SITE PROJECT

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Introduction

Our current research on the Widow Harris Project grew out of a need for data on Euro-American settlement on the Ozark Border in southeast Missouri. The Eastern Ozark Border Region of southeast Missouri is a major ecotone with the rolling hills of the Ozark Escarpment and the rugged divides of the Eastern Ozark Highlands to the west and the swampy lowlands and the low sandy ridges of the Western Lowland of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley to the east. The two zones provide a diverse set of natural resources within the space of a few miles.

We have conducted research in this region for well over a decade based on an all inclusive or holistic research design for explaining man's changing use of this ecotone throughout the past 12,000 years. Our research has been regional in scope and cultural-ecological in approach in order to develop anthropologically based models of changing settlement and subsistence patterns in the area from those of the Paleo-Indians of 12 millenia ago to those of the moonshining industry of the 1920s and 1930s.

The research is based on the premise that all sites of human activity within a given cultural system are of equal importance to an understanding of that system and that this premise is valid for the historic period as well as for the prehistoric period.

From our perspective as archaeologists who have until recently dealt with data from the prehistoric past there is an obvious bias in the literature dealing with archaeological data from the historic past. As has been pointed out before (for example Cleland 1973) most archaeologists dealing with historic period sites have been concerned with forts, trading posts, towns, battlefields, mansions, and shipwrecks while frequently ignoring the smaller sites such as the work camps or nuclear family dwellings or farmsteads which may often have been associated with the larger sites. The resulting literature, particularly for the midwest, has thus often presented a biased view of settlement systems during the period of western expansion. In many areas of the westward moving frontier (for example Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas) the basic unit of settlement was the

Fig. 7. Selected artifacts from the Widow Harris Cabin site, Key

- A. Pearlware bowl rimsherd with blue painted floral design, Feature 6.
- B. Blue edge decorated pearlware plate rimsherd with raised feather and fishscale design, Feature 6.
- C. German silver cast metal object, possible Jew's harp fragment, Feature 6.
- D. Lavendar faceted glass bead, Feature 5.
- E. Exhausted French honey-colored gunflint, Feature 5.
- F. Brass straight pin, Feature 5.
- G. Kaolin pipe bowl with human face, Feature 5.
- H. L-head cut nail, Feature 5.
- I. Saltglazed pipe fragment, Feature 5.
- J. Brass button, Feature 5.
- K. Brass comb fragment, Feature 5.
- L. Glass bottle rim fragment, Feature 5.
- M. Incised bone handle fragment from Sheffield fork or knife, Feature 5.
- N. Annular decorated cup or bowl sherd with dendritic Mocha design, (probably whiteware), Feature 5.
- O. Brown glazed earthenware rimsherd with embossed design, Feature 3.
- P. Allen and Thurber pepperbox pistol barrel, ca. 1855, Feature 3.

SCALE: All artifacts actual size.

