In the late 1890s, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation planned to realign portions of Routes 18 and 105 in Lakeville, Massachusetts. Prior to construction, archaeologists from the University of Massachusetts Archaeological Services discovered a foundation, cellar hole, and the surfaces remains of outbuildings in an area required for the highway relocation project. These architectural remains of outbuildings were once located in the vicinity of the park you see in front of you.

During the investigation of Sampson’s Tavern, archaeologists created a site map to record and interpret the soil variations they see at a site. Note the difference in soil color between the walls of the cell hole and foundation wall (above) are easily recognized, but other features appear as differences in soil color and texture. With the differentiation in color and texture between the walls and floor of the excavation unit (above), archaeologists used surveying equipment to record and map. Artifacts in direct proximity to a feature helped to explain the feature’s function and to date its construction and use. The archaeological study and recording of artifacts and features provided details about the history of the changes that occurred at the Sampson’s Tavern Site through the centuries.

Town records and other historic documents revealed these remains to be the former site of Sampson’s Tavern. The history of the Tavern Site spans close to two hundred years, beginning in the mid-1700s with construction of the original house and several small outbuildings. In the early days, the tavern operated under the names “Eagle Tavern” and “Forster Tavern.” After the Sampson family purchased the property in 1768, it was renamed “Sampson’s Tavern” and was used as both a tavern and an inn. The tavern owners provided food, drink, and sleeping rooms for travellers. They also operated a mail service and a retail store for local residents.

In later years, the property was locally known as a small resort, sportsman’s tavern, and hotel. Finally, it became the summer retreat for a wealthy family from New Bedford. Historically, Sampson’s Tavern has been associated with several famous people including Daniel Webster and Henry David Thoreau. After a catastrophic fire, the buildings were demolished in 1911.

Over time, the buildings at the Sampson’s Tavern Site changed and expanded. Many building additions were constructed during the Sampson family occupancy. Porches were added to the main house in the mid-1800s, when purchasing the property as a summer residence in 1869, the Perry family expanded the barn and added several outbuildings. After the fire in 1911, and prior to the highway relocation project, the traces of these structures were erased or obscured by dense vegetation. Archaeological excavations identified building foundation walls, building floors, cellars, stone terraces, and stone fences (called features by archaeologists) that were drawn, photographed and mapped. Features in direct proximity to a feature helped to explain the feature’s function and to date its construction and use. The archaeological study and recording of artifacts and features provided details about the history of the changes that occurred at the Sampson’s Tavern Site through the centuries.

Each feature is separately numbered. The features on the plan (left) in part of the main house and other lots of the main house are labeled, and the traces of these structures were buried or obscured by dense vegetation. The map is used with sites to determine the location and outlines of the site. Many photographs were taken to record the features in detail. The plan to the left shows the original house, the additions made, and the outline of the site. The outlines are used in conjunction with site photographs to record all items associated with several famous people including Daniel Webster and Henry David Thoreau. After a catastrophic fire, the buildings were demolished in 1911.

The map is used with sites to determine the location and outlines of the site. Many photographs were taken to record the features in detail. The plan to the left shows the original house, the additions made, and the outline of the site. The outlines are used in conjunction with site photographs to record all items associated with several famous people including Daniel Webster and Henry David Thoreau. After a catastrophic fire, the buildings were demolished in 1911.