

A Guide to the Battlefield Project Reports

Introduction and Compilation by Jeff Singleton, Montague Historical Commission

This section of the website on the origins of the name “Turners Falls” is a guide to the first two “Technical Reports” reports of the project to study the 1676 battle and massacre next to what is now called Turners Falls. Both reports appear on the Battlefield Grant Advisory Committee website, which also includes a number of other documents related to the project, on the Montague town website.

<https://www.montague-ma.gov/g/48/Battlefield-Grant-Advisory-Committee>

The Battlefield Project’s first two technical reports (published in April 2016 and January 2017) contain nearly 500 pages of material. They reflect a study design based on the criteria of the National Park Service’s (NPS) American Battlefield Protection grant program. This criteria requires projects to evaluate a “battle” with two well-defined opposing forces and a clearly defined “battlefield.” The grant includes funding for traditional historical research based on primary and secondary sources but is heavily oriented toward archaeological research on a “battlefield.” Most of the results of the archaeological research appear in the second report.

Prior to the grant project, the events of 1676 at the falls were generally considered a massacre. This was certainly the theme at the [2004 Reconciliation Ceremony](#) held at Turners Falls involving tribes in the region, Montague town officials and residents (See the “Reconciliation Agreement” on the Advisory Committee website NOTE TITLE). The NPS grant, however, required a battle and, as the archaeological research proceeded, the findings of that research supported the assumption that the event could also be called a battle with well defined combatants and a geographically coherent battlefield.

This guide is topically organized, combining the two reports into sections on 1.) Project design, 2.) Historical narratives based on primary and secondary source research, and 3.) Archaeological research.

The guide also directs the reader to unique elements of the project, including the key role of tribal representatives, inventories of the holdings of local libraries and archives, independent research on the evolution of the falls over the centuries, and public events during the project.

-Jeff Singleton
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1. Project Design.

The Phase I Technical Report includes a discussion of the project's research design as of April 2016 (pp. 5- 17). This section includes a description of the NPS American Battlefield Protection Program and its methodology for "battlefield surveys." (pp.9-10) The report also includes a description of "probable battlefield areas" and a design for future archaeological research (pp.66-117).

The Phase II Technical Report focuses on the initial archaeological research, (primarily using metal detectors), which is said to have comprised approximately "1.25 miles and 170 acres of the estimated 6.5 miles of the entire battlefield." (9), The report also contains a more detailed description of the methodology of battlefield research and how it was applied to the 1676 battle (pp.4-24)

2. Historical Narrative

[The Phase I Technical Report](#) features a narrative of the 1676 battle/massacre and its origins in King Phillips War (KPW) (pp.18-34). There is also an analysis of the primary and secondary sources used (pp.42-45), as well as excerpts from the primary sources in Appendix 1 (pp.126-140).

[The Phase II Technical Report](#) contains a similar narrative of KPW (pp.45-97) but a longer discussion of the Great Falls battle with more detailed analysis of various primary source accounts. (pp.63-91). The report also lists five "Original Core Areas" derived from the historical narrative (pp.4-11) that, with the exception of the massacre site itself which is now presumed to be under the Connecticut River, have been the basis for archaeological research.

3. Archaeology

The Phase I grant was used to determine the dimensions of the battlefield and key sites for future archaeological research using primary and secondary source accounts, "terrain analysis," visual inspection, and consultation with local residents. (pp.41-106).

Phase II implemented an archaeological survey of a portion of the battlefield; primarily the initial English retreat from the point of the massacre to what is now "factory hollow" in Greenfield, some points along what is now Cherry Rum Brook and a site near the retreat crossing at

Deerfield River (pp.105-146). Approximately 284 musket balls identified as from the 1676 battle were recovered along with other artifacts. A number of battle “events” were identified by large concentrations of musket balls (pp.105-108).

The archaeological research did not identify the specific location of the native village where the massacre took place, which is presumed to be under water. The Phase II report stated that approximately 1.25 miles and 172 acres of the estimated 6.5 miles of battlefield. (p.9)

4. Tribal Narratives

Tribal perspectives on battle/massacre based on oral traditions and other research are found in Appendixes V through VIII, Report 1 This section features by [Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican](#), the [Nipmuc Preservation Office](#), the [Narragansett Tribal Preservation Office](#), and the [Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head \(Aquinnah\)](#). The tribal representatives from the [Elnu Abenaki](#) also served on the oversight committee, spoke on forum panels, and participated in the archaeological research.

5. Other Features of the Project.

The project also featured public monthly meetings between the oversight board and researchers and larger informational meetings at Turners Falls High School (Three Phase I Technical Report pp.316-317 and Three in Phase II Administrative Report p3). These forums have been recorded by Montague Community Television. Other features of the project include inventories of holdings in local museums and libraries and a study of the changes in the Great Falls since 1676 and how the falls may have appeared at the time of the massacre by archaeologist and historian Peter Thomas. [Phase I Report Appendix IX]. The research project was covered by the Montague Reporter and Greenfield Recorder. Television.