

Letters from Lost Towns

November 1999

Future Events

November 8

1:30-2:30, 2664 Riva Road
Maritime History of Londontown

Archaeologist Jason Moser will discuss the maritime history of London Town.

November 29

1:30-2:30, 2664 Riva Road
3-D Modeling and Animation

Graphic artist Mike Rinker will discuss 3-D images created from historical and archaeological research.

December 6

1:30-2:30, 2664 Riva Road
London Town's European Trading Partners

Historian Mechelle Kerns will describe her London Town research from her studies in Scotland.

January 10

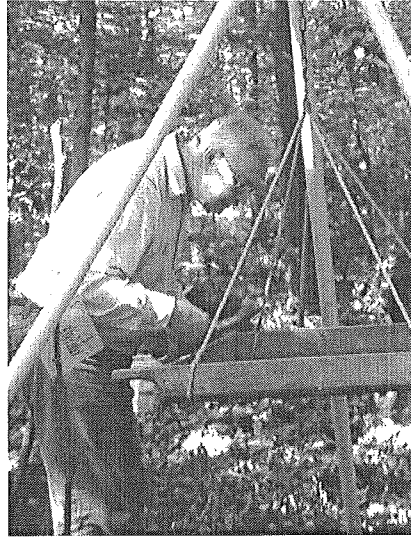
1:30-2:30, 2664 Riva Road
Architectural Styles

Architectural historian Donna Ware will illustrate the different architectural styles of the Middle Atlantic region.

January 24

1:30-2:30, 2664 Riva Road
Window Leads

County archaeologist Al Luckenbach will discuss the origin and meaning of window leads found in the archaeological record of early colonial America.



The Chaney Hill's Footprint

John Kille

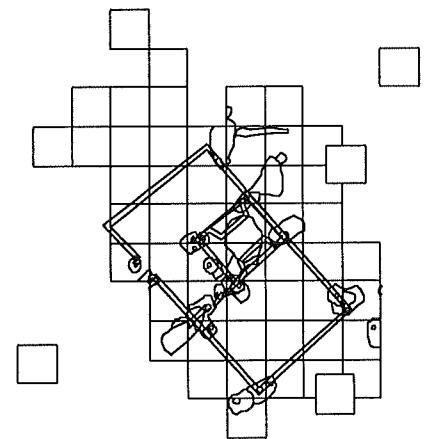
The Lost Towns Project continues its quest to uncover the footprint of the mid-17th century home that belonged to Anne Arundel County settlers Richard and Charity Chaney (sometimes spelled Cheney). A welcome addition to the regular Friday field crew of staff members and volunteers excavating the Riva Road site are several local descendants of the Chaney family. Their participation and enthusiasm at the site is greatly appreciated.

The outline of the Chaney homestead, which at present measures 20 x 26 feet, had emerged from a pattern of distinct features or stains in the soil where post holes were dug over three centuries ago. These post hole features are generally rectangular and distinctly reddish orange; smaller round post molds within the postholes are darker brown. Many of the postholes appear to be replacement holes for wooden posts that deteriorated from termite damage or exposure to the elements. A hearth. These post hole features are generally rectangular and distinctly orange; smaller darker molds within the holes are darker brown. Many of these

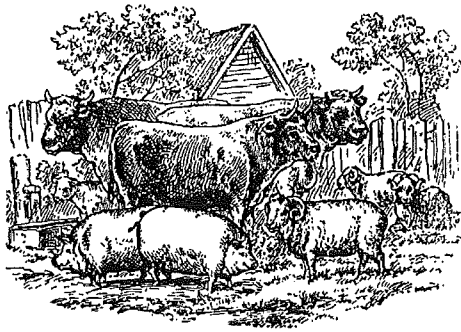
which were dug when wooden posts deteriorated. A feature found within the perimeter of the building displays a reddish hue (the result of intense heat), and contains clay daub (used in chimney construction) and bits of charcoal.

Interestingly enough, the floor plan of the Chaney homestead resembles a type of structure more commonly found in 17th-century New England than the Chesapeake region. As far as we know, this building featured two side-by-side rooms divided by an interior fireplace at the end of a main front entryway. It is quite possible the fireplace was open to both rooms. In this "lobby entrance, central chimney" layout, a set of stairs probably existed which led to a second story loft.

Plans are underway to broaden the project's excavations to areas surrounding the Chaney homestead structure, moving in the direction of where another building is thought to have once stood. The project has already found a posthole and evidence of a hearth, as well as bricks and window glass at this location. It is hoped that this expansion strategy will reveal the presence of outbuildings and fence lines that will assist in interpreting this fascinating cultural landscape.



Plan view for the Chaney site



Animal Bones: Not Just What Was for Dinner

April Beisaw

Peek into the partially excavated cellar at London Town and you may see the bones of a pig, sheep, or cow. These animals are easily recognizable as the remains of many colonial or contemporary meals. Along with the various ceramic and glass vessels and metal utensils recovered from the cellar, analysis of these bones assist in recreating colonial dining at London Town. To many, this is the extent of the value of animal bones to historical archaeology. Bones, however, contain a wealth of information that goes far beyond just what was for dinner.

The skeleton serves as a record of a body's physical activity. Individual bones hold the clues to the age, sex, health, number of offspring, nutritional state, diseases, cause of death, and even season of death of an animal. With certain animals, at least four of the eight items mentioned above can be determined from the teeth alone.

The bones of small animals, such as mice, require more effort to be found in the cellar but it is time well spent. This microfauna provide archaeologists with important ecological information. Small animals are very specialized for specific environmental conditions. The presence/absence of certain species are,

therefore, indicative of environmental changes.

Beyond food sources and environmental indicators, animal bones can be used to understand the processes that create archaeological sites. Carnivores, rodents, and plants all leave traces of their activity on bones. This type of information is crucial when attempting to determine if an animal died and was buried naturally, was part of a person's meal or an intentional burial.

Through these and other analyses, bones can answer questions about human activities such as farming, animal domestication, trade, and economic practices. Animal bones can also provide valuable information regarding the impact of human activities on the environment and vice versa.

Leavy Neck: Providing More Insight Into Providence

Jane Cox

The Leavy Neck archaeological site, the most recent Providence site to be explored by the Lost Towns Team, was identified by a surface collection in 1992. This surface collection revealed an early colonial site, most likely dating to the 1650-70s. The plowed sod farm field (primarily concentrated in the southeastern corner) yielded typical artifacts for 17th century Providence, including North Devon ceramic, Westerwald, olive bottle glass and wrought nails. Initial archival research indicates that the site was occupied by William Neale (an early settler of Providence - 1649) and his descendants from at least 1661 until perhaps as late as 1703.

To further establish the boundaries of the site and to better define the internal site structure, geophysical testing of the survey area was undertaken. Using a cesium magnetometer and ground penetrating radar, the Lost Towns Team (Jane Cox, Lisa Plumley and Cory Seznec) conducted the survey over two days to evaluate the site for potential archaeological features. This work was conducted to locate the most sensitive areas of the site, which would be taken out of cultivation to prevent further damage from plowing and sod farm activities.

Both geophysical evaluations of the site provided information on the composition of the site. The concentrations of artifacts were noted primarily in the southeastern portion of the field. Magnetic anomalies, however, showed activity over a much broader area, extending to the north. Radar transects also revealed a substantial subsurface feature in the northeast of the survey block. These anomalies to the north are associated with oyster shell and nails across the site surface, while much of the domestic debris (ceramics, glass, and shell) are found toward the southern portion of the survey block. It is possible that this site is much more complex than originally thought, with multiple activity areas that can only be confirmed through excavation.



What's going on in the Lost Town's lab?

Volunteers and interns are diligently washing and labeling artifacts from the Chaney, Burle, and London Town sites.

April and Kate spent a day examining turtle specimens in the Smithsonian collection. They concluded that some of Rumney's patrons dined on a diamond-back snapping turtle! Two complete box turtle skeletons also were found in the cellar remains, probably from them wandering into the cellar in search of water and dying. April continues to spend time with her beloved bones, and is instructing a new intern, Brian, to do the same!

April is also developing a database for the thousands of slides that the project has taken over the years. This database will enable the staff to easily retrieve slides on specific sites.

Carolyn is inventorying London Town artifacts. She is fine sorting water-screened soil from Carpenters' Shop postholes and is analyzing tobacco pipe fragments from the third quadrant of Rumney's cellar. This data will assist in the dating of these important features of London Town.

Shawn is refining his conservation skills. He has conserved two keys, a smoker's companion, and a buckle from the Chaney site, along with a knife, file, clothing hook, and other iron objects from the Burle site.

No excavation has occurred on this site, and the Project waits for time and funding to explore this new chapter in the rediscovery of Providence. When able to conduct archaeological testing on this site, we will explore several subsurface features identified by the geophysical survey. The owner of the property has taken measures to protect the site from further disturbance and erosion from sod farm activities by removing a large portion of the field from cultivation. This preservation effort will allow us to explore the site when resources allow and will prevent further damage to a sensitive resource. Many thanks to Thackery Seznec for her ongoing enthusiasm and commitment to historical research and archaeology of Providence!

London Town Research Update: Calling All Scots!

Mechelle Kerns

For many years now, historians and archaeologists with the Lost Towns Project have been working under the assumption that many of our London Town residents were from Scotland. Names like Ferguson, McColloch, Strachan, and Mackelfish sounded Scottish to us. Now we are beginning to see some hard evidence.

Recently, a young man named Douglas Crawford visited London Town. He talked with Greg Stiverson and me about his long lost relative David Mackelfish: our David Mackelfish. Mr. Crawford had a wonderful and impressive family tree. He put me in touch with his cousin Bob O'Neal, who sent me photocopies of original records from Scotland. I also spoke with Rose McElefish (a modern spelling of Mackelfish) and she eagerly sent me

some additional records. I love helpful people! Our David Mackelfish was the third child born to John and Jonet (nee Thompson) Mackelfeish (this name is spelled many different ways, sometimes within the same document). David was born sometime in the spring of 1658; he was christened on June 27th of that same year. The Mackelfeish family lived in Midlothian, in the parish of South Leith. Close to Edinburgh, Leith was a seaport town much like our London.

It is unclear exactly when David arrived in Anne Arundel County, but in 1694, he married Alice Jones, the daughter of a local sea captain. David and Alice owned many lots in London Town, including lot 49 on High Street, the location of London Town's first ferry and perhaps its first tavern. The Mackelfishes also grew tobacco and shipped it to London, England.

In 1709, an ill David Mackelfish penned his will. He distributed his seven London Town lots and other tracts of property to his children. He also describes his newly built house on lot 74 in the park near the current log tobacco barn. During his illness, his wife Alice took over both the ferry and ordinary operations at London Town. In 1711 David Mackelfish died. He was 53 years old and a long way from home.

I am in Scotland working on my dissertation, studying our residents' origins and tracking the history of London's maritime history. I'll be back in late November to tell you about it!

*There once was a London Town Ferry
Which had too much tobacco to carry.*

It leaned to the right

And sank out of sight

And that was the end of the ferry!

-contributed by Cirila Hans

Teaching the Future: Education at London

Lisa Plumley

New projects and new directions for existing programs have emerged from London Town over the past several months. Under the direction of Jan Hayes, director of education for London Town, programs with children have blossomed into meaningful experiences. Public Dig Days have become more than "just screening" by providing more context to their experiences.

Every Wednesday, herds of school children come to take part in the archaeology at London Town. Not only screening along side professional archaeologists and volunteers, students also participate in newly-developed hands-on activities. These activities encourage the understanding of artifact identification for site analysis. They also stress the less glamorous but still fundamental importance of documentation and preservation of archaeology sites. Every Wednesday is booked for the entire school year,

reflecting the popularity of the program within Maryland's schools!

The exciting news within London Town's education circles is its new "Simulated Excavation" program development. Created for students to use when the archaeologists are not on site, the area consists of a small shelter containing two 4 x 4 foot units. Students will "excavate" two separate strata, measure and document the units, and generate analysis. The idea is not to create "little archaeologists", but rather to give students an idea as to what methods archaeologists use and types of responsibilities (ie: report writing, preservation, etc.) an archaeologist should employ. This program will start in the spring.

Lastly, this season's "Public Dig Days" have been extremely successful. October's participants totaled 177, surpassing the previous record. These numbers of people have been manageable, thanks to new efforts to provide more tours and workshops throughout the day. Next year's dig days will start in April, so watch for the next newsletter to give you specific dates!

While these different programs have been extremely successful this season, the Lost Towns Project and London Town staff have lots of help. Docents and volunteers have taken these projects, students, and new volunteers under their wings. Thanks to all who have helped these programs take off!

Volunteer Spotlight:

Joan Beck

One of our most reliable laboratory volunteers, Joan Beck, started working with the project in January of this year. Although one of our newest recruits, Joan has roots to Maryland's "lost towns" that go back generations. Through her research, Joan has traced her ancestry to Herring Bay and London Town, both of which are objects of the project's interest.

Joan's dedication to historical research brings her to the lab every Tuesday. She tackles each job assigned with enthusiasm, and enlightens the staff with her stories of China and Nashville. She has labeled countless splinters of bone, glass, and ceramics, working through the day without getting too giddy! We appreciate her never-ending patience and humor. Thanks to her for joining our family!

Working Towards a Meaningful Experience: Adult Workshops for Inquiring Minds

So often it seems the term "education" is used to describe programs meant for children. They don't take into account that adults have inquiring minds. They are, however, "students of life", to use a corny little expression. Experiences can be so much more valuable if you have some sort of context in which to put them; reading a guide book before traveling to Greece, for example.

With that idea in mind, The Lost Towns Project established a program consisting of a series of "workshops" directed towards our adult volunteers. Held twice a month, these talks pertain to a wide variety of subjects related to archaeology. The "Introduction to Historical Ceramics" workshop, for example, was designed to establish meaning behind the small fragments volunteers are finding in the screens and wash basins. The "Writing Historical Narratives Using Documents" discussion planned to give volunteers creative alternatives for archival research. Future talks, like "Maritime History of London Town" and "Architectural Styles" will give adults more of a context with which to understand the Projects' overlying goals of their research.

To date, Project staff has directed the informal workshops, but other professionals in the field are invited to future talks. Who wouldn't want to join the Monday workshop family? Not only are the experiences of the volunteers validated, but cider and cookies are included in the deal, too!



In Memory: Gretel Brown and Dick Reed



Gretel Brown, a volunteer in the archaeology lab, died on August 4th. Those of us who worked in the lab with Gretel will miss her in lots of ways.

She liked washing artifacts, with one exception: she hated to wash tobacco pipe stem fragments. At times, we “shared” artifact bags. It was not unlike Gretel to pass on all the stems for the other person to wash!

Gretel lived in St. Margarets, and was always interested in the Burle site, although I don’t believe she ever visited the excavations. She was an avid reader, and especially liked history. I am sure this is one reason why she enjoyed participating in archaeology. Her other great joys besides her family and friends were her chocolate lab named Cocoa and her cat named Hershey. Other passions of hers were her zany earrings, one pair of which she made out of coke caps!

To commemorate Gretel’s life, the Project has set up the Gretel Brown Memorial Book Fund. Money donated to this fund will go towards the purchase of books for the archaeology lab, a place Gretel spent a lot of time.

We miss you, Gretel, and think of you every time we clean a pipe stem.

-Noreen DeDeyn

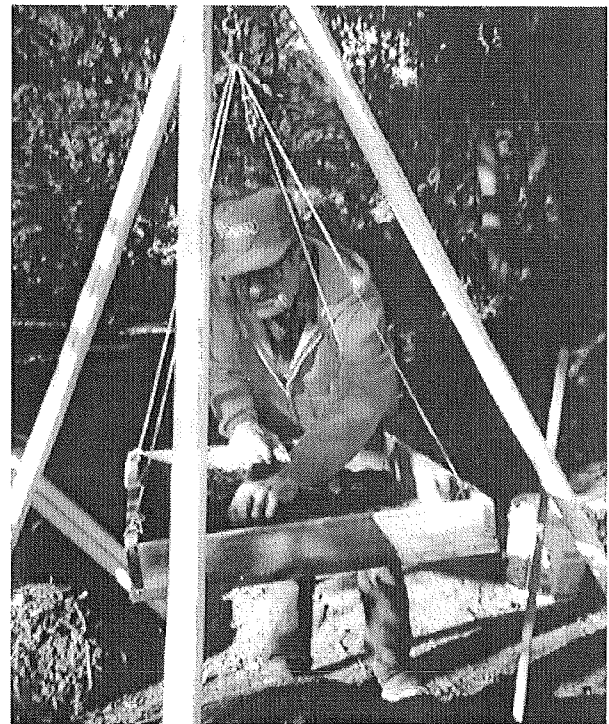
In September, we lost one of the shining spirits that was part of the birth of the Lost Towns Project. Dick Reed played a significant role in the quest for information about the story of Providence. If you were to tell him how important he was to the project, he would have just smiled and shifted his cigar in his mouth.

Dick made the screens, tripods, and “Dick sticks” (sticks with clips that hold bags for artifact collecting), which the Project find invaluable. Every time a school child screens a bucket of soil through the screens and puts an artifact in the bag, Dick will be there.

The “Richard Allen Reed Internship” has been set up to preserve Dick’s memory. Students are chosen based on their enthusiasm and interest in archaeology, both strong characteristics of Dick’s personality.

Dick is now walking the freshly-plowed fields, picking up artifacts. Maybe when I see him again, he will tell me where he found them.

-Tony Lindauer



Donations to the Richard Allen Reed Internship and the Gretel Brown Book Fund can be made to the Anne Arundel County Trust For Preservation (ACT), P.O. Box 1573, Annapolis, Md, 21404.

Who makes up the Lost Towns Project?

Al Luckenbach.....Director/County Archaeologist

April Beisaw.....Lab Director

Jane Cox.....Assistant County Archaeologist/Technology Director

Carolyn Gryczkowski.....Assistant Lab Director

Mechelle Kerns.....Historian/Archaeologist

John Kille.....Operations Manager

Tony Lindauer.....Historian/Equipment Manager

Sherri Marsh.....Architectural Historian

Jason Moser.....Field Director

Lisa Plumley.....Archaeologist/Volunteer-Education Coordinator

Shawn Sharpe.....Archaeologist/Lab Assistant

Letters from Lost Towns is published by The Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project. Published quarterly February, May, August, and November, contributors consist of Lost Towns staff and volunteers. Lisa E. Plumley is editor. To be added to or deleted from the mailing list, please contact Lisa Plumley, Department of Planning & Code Enforcement, P.O. Box 6675, Annapolis, MD, 21401. The Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project is supported by the Anne Arundel County government, in cooperation with the Anne Arundel County Trust for Preservation, Inc. and the London Town Foundation, Inc.

The Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project
Planning and Code Enforcement
2664 Riva Road
Annapolis, MD 21401

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Subscriber Name
Number Street Address
City, State Postal Code
Country