



Letters from Lost Towns

Winter 2009

More discoveries at the Chew mansion

~ Al Luckenbach

News & Future Events

Saturday Public Lab Days January 24 & February 21, 2009, 9 am - 2 pm

It's too cold to dig, so come join us in the lab instead! We will process artifacts, offer tours of the lab, and the library will be available for research. Space is limited, so be sure to RSVP by calling the lab at 410-222-1318.

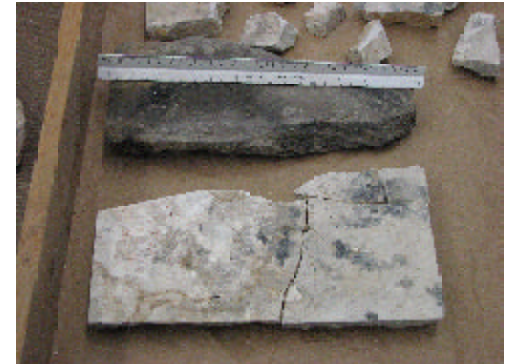
Ceramics Workshop April 4, 2009, 9 am - 3 pm

Learn how to identify historic ceramics in this intensive, hands-on workshop led by Jessie Grow. Call the lab at 410-222-1318 to reserve a spot at this event.

Mark your calendars for the 2009 Public Dig Days: May 16, July 11, & September 12, 2009! 9 am - 2 pm, London Town

Lost Towns archaeologists invite the public to help screen soil and find artifacts, take tours, and attend workshops. Call London Town at 410-222-1919 to reserve your spot.

As we wrapped up another excavation season at the Samuel Chew mansion site, the discoveries were coming fast and quick. The last three test units dug in November were all in search of the structure's chimney bases, and proved to be particularly enlightening. Each were deep and proceeded very slowly down to the cellar floor.



A 12" square slab of marble from the site.

While the unit placed nearest to the front door failed to find the chimney, it did produce ample evidence that the main entrance of the Chew mansion led to a room paved with 12" square slabs of black and white marble. Since the two colors occur in equal numbers, we assume that this is the same kind of checkerboard stone floor seen at the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg and at Rosewell near Gloucester, Virginia. We are still researching the two materials involved, but they may be what the colonists called "Portland Marble" and "Belgian Marble." Both are actually limestones capable of taking a high polish.

The final two test units led to the discovery of the long-sought chimney base. The cellar hearth was paved with bricks, and showed extensive

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The iron ring in the cellar hearth.

The Lost Towns Project Thanks our Partners and Supporters



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evidence of high heat. Ash and charcoal from the last domestic fire were still in place.

An unusual feature was discovered on the center of the hearth floor. An iron ring had obviously been used to support some kind of kettle, which had been in place since the structure was first built. The bricks inside this ring were not darkened by heat. Given its static nature, we assume that this pot or kettle was being used as part of the cellar laundry.

It also should be noted that a number of Chew descendants visited the site this year. Many thanks to those of the family who made contributions to support our ongoing research and excavation at the site.

As soon as temperatures permit, we plan to return to this amazing site. Most of the crew are praying for global warming...

Membership Update

~ John Kille

At the start of 2008, the Anne Arundel County Trust for Preservation (ACT) launched a new annual membership program to sustain the *Project's* worthwhile programs in the face of reduced funding. I am very pleased to report that this effort has been a resounding success, as you can plainly see from the large and growing list of supporters above.

I hope you will consider renewing your sustaining membership for 2009, which will help us plan for the coming year. Just return the attached form with your contribution, which will be dedicated to continuing the operations of the *Lost Towns Project* team, including our excavations at sites around the county and our exciting and popular programs and hands-on activities that benefit our local community in many ways.

As a reminder, your support is tax deductible, as ACT is 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Again, thanks very much for your continued friendship and support, and we hope to see you soon, whether it be in the field or lab!

“Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th-Century Chesapeake” opens on February 7, 2009 at the Smithsonian

~ Jane Cox

The Leavy Neck excavations at Providence in 2003 uncovered a shocking find: A body - in the basement. Who was this person - and what stories might he tell us?

The tale of this 17th-century burial comes to life when “Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th-Century Chesapeake” opens on February 7, 2009 at the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. The exhibit will highlight the burial found right here in Anne Arundel County and will run for two years. More information on the exhibit can be found at www.anthropology.si.edu/writteninbone.

The indentured servant unceremoniously buried in the circa 1660s trash cellar tells a significant story - one of a nameless young man who came to the New World but soon perished in the harsh environment. His bones are all that survive to tell his story, as no written documentation about his life has been preserved. This forensic perspective on the County’s early history emphasizes how important the archaeological



The full body reconstruction of the boy from Leavy Neck.

record is in gaining a better understanding of our past.

As this discovery is a key element of the exhibit, the Smithsonian and their partners have given the boy from Leavy Neck the royal treatment. Included in the exhibit are full facial and body reconstructions which will anchor the Leavy Neck gallery. There is an associated web

comic “The Secret in the Cellar” which shares the discovery and investigation process, which also serves as an educational web-based tool. View the webcomic at www.anthropology.si.edu/writteninbone/comic/. See if you can figure out which character is based on AI!

But wait, there’s more! The exhibit will be covered in other media as well - including an exhibit companion book, a second book geared towards children and young adults titled “Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland,” by Sally Walker, as well as a show on the History Channel. Later in 2009 the Smithsonian will host a scholarly conference. There’s even a YouTube clip that introduces the exhibit!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=So6L3s1tc2E

Make time in the coming months to take a day trip into D.C. so you can see Anne Arundel County’s colonial history highlighted in one of the Nation’s premier museums!

The Wonders of Java Continue

~ Jessie Grow

Our third field season at Java came to a very productive end this fall. This season, we focused our attention on the circa 1671 post-in-ground structure that we can attribute to the Thomas Sparrow family. The land that we now call “Java” was then known as “Sparrow’s Rest”.

At present, we have uncovered at least one room of the post-in-ground structure, with the hearth situated at the end of the building. The room measures 16 ft wide by about 20 ft long and is marked by an interior

post - one of six large structural posts that we have identified thus far. This season, we also excavated four features both in and outside of the footprint of the house. We are still processing the artifacts and haven’t finalized our conclusions, but it seems that one of the two features located outside of the house was a trash pit relating to cooking, as it was filled with faunal material, and the other pit may have been used for drainage or a fence line. Inside the footprint of the house, we exca-

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vated two features. One feature may represent a sub-floor storage pit, and the other, located in front of the hearth, represents a cellar consisting of two subfloor pits, separated by a narrow strip of subsoil wall. Based on the presence of intact wood in small postholes aligned with this subsoil strip, it is likely that the strip corresponds with the location of a floor joist. Just about all of the artifacts found in these features date to the 17th and early 18th centuries, which correlate with the early occupation of the Sparrows.

In the course of our excavations, we have found an amazing amount of iron slag, a by-product of smelting iron. What is most interesting about the slag is that it is concentrated in the plowzone layers, and does not appear in the features. It seems that a blacksmithing operation was going on sometime after Thomas Sparrow's tenure on the land. Stephanie has suggested that the blacksmithing operation may have been started to supply the nails and other metal needed to build the 1747 mansion.



The pits in front of the hearth, separated by a strip of subsoil that likely underlaid a floor joist.

“Paddle Through History” Kayak Tours wins Heritage Product Award!

~Jessie Grow

In July and August of 2008, Jane Cox and I had the great opportunity to share stories of Anne Arundel County history from the perspective of our local waterways. With the generous help of a grant from the Four Rivers Heritage Area, we offered four guided tours of Back Creek and Spa Creek, and the Rhode River. The tours were booked, with a waiting list!

The biggest surprise, however, was that one of the participants in the kayak tours (and one of our dedicated volunteers), Rick Morin, nominated us for an award given by the Four Rivers Heritage Area! Jane and I were presented with an Heritage Product Award for our “role in development and implementation of the innovative and collaborative ‘Paddle Through History’ Kayak tours of Back Creek, Spa Creek, and the Rhode River.” Many thanks for the support from the Four Rivers Heritage Area, the Annapolis Maritime Museum, Sarles Boatyard and Marina, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), the participants of the tours, and of course Rick! This award is as much theirs as it is ours!

For those of you who were unable to take the guided tour, there are packets available for self-guided tours. The Annapolis Maritime Museum and Sarles Boatyard and Marina have guide packets for the Back Creek and Spa Creek tour, and SERC has packets for the Rhode River tour. Please contact them regarding their hours and any applicable fees. Thanks again to everyone who helped make these tours a success!

Mystery Artifact

~ Shawn Sharpe

A tiny star-shaped object recovered from an early 18th-century pit at Sparrow's Rest (aka Java) is the subject of this issue's Mystery Artifact. The artifact weighs less than a hundredth of an ounce and consists of a half inch long flat piece of iron with six apparently asymmetrical teeth. It is possible that up to two further teeth have broken off the object. It resembles the rowel of a rider's spur but is far smaller than any examples with which I am familiar, and it lacks a central hole for attaching to the spur. A small gear is possible, but the teeth seem far too irregular for that. Perhaps it's a throwing star discarded by an itinerant band of leprechaun ninjas...we really don't know. If you have any ideas, don't hesitate to contact the lab at (410)-222-1318.



Ongoing Research about the Middle Woodland

~ Stephanie T. Sperling

One of our most recent projects is a multi-year study of the Middle Woodland time period of prehistory, sponsored by a generous grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. The Middle Woodland period, which spanned from ca. 400 B.C. to A.D. 900 in the Mid-Atlantic region, represents a very interesting time in the prehistoric past of Anne Arundel County. During this time, the Native Americans in this area were gradually settling down from the more transient lifestyle that they had led for thousands of years. The population was growing, and they were spending increasing amounts of the year in base camps located mainly along the Patuxent River. Although people still roamed across the region hunting and foraging, some archaeologists speculate that at this point in time, early horticulture

was beginning to supplement their diets. The artifacts recovered from later Middle Woodland sites in the area show that sweeping regional changes were occurring during this time. In the Early Woodland period, people tended to use local lithic materials, like quartz and quartzite, and also used a variety of tempers in their pottery. Artifacts from the Middle Woodland period show a distinct shift in material culture. There was suddenly a strong preference among the population for rhyolite and other lithic materials that were not available locally. Also, Native peoples ranging from modern-day New York to southern Virginia appear to have made only a shell-tempered pottery, called Mockley. These changes in

the material culture demonstrate that local people were traveling far distances to interact with others, and traded both goods and ideas.

The first step in the Middle Woodland project was to review the available literature relating to the period in order to understand what archaeologists and researchers have learned in the past. Some of the earliest books and articles were written



Jane examines a shell midden in an eroding shoreline.

over 100 years ago, but most of the scholarly documents come from the past 40 years. Last summer, I began assembling a list of over 130 sources and then annotated, or summarized, 45 of the most pertinent documents. I also wrote an extensive summary of the current state of knowledge of the Middle Woodland. All of these materials are available online at the new *Lost Towns Project* website - which is under construction - at www.losttownsproject.org. This summary document also contains a number of research questions that will guide us as we continue the multi-year project. We hope that researchers across the region will find this a useful "one-stop shop" of information about the Middle Wood-

land that can assist their own projects.

Since completing the literature review in late November, we have been busy with the next step of the process, which is to visit every single one of the 170 previously recorded Middle Woodland sites in Anne Arundel County. Their locations and lists of recovered artifacts have been filed with the State, but many of

them have never been visited by a professional archaeologist - or at least, not anytime recently. We want to see how many of these sites are still intact, and how many have eroded away or have fallen victim to the rapid pace of development. Marc Browne, a recent graduate from the Anthropology program at the University of Maryland, College Park, has volunteered many hours to gather information vital to our site visits. Every week,

we tour the County, photograph the current conditions of the sites and dig a few small shovel test pits to see what is left below the ground surface. Eventually, we'd like to excavate one or two Middle Woodland sites in order to gain more understanding about this interesting time period that occurred between 1,000 and 2,000 years ago.

As we conduct these sites visits, we are informing local residents about the project. Everyone that we speak with seems very excited to learn about the rich prehistory of Anne Arundel County. And don't be surprised if a *Lost Towns* archaeologist comes knocking on your door this spring to tell you about the Middle Woodland site on your property!

The Vernacular “I-House”: A Vanishing Resource

~ Darian Schwab

The “I-house” is perhaps the most common type of architectural style seen throughout Anne Arundel County. It is also one of the most threatened, and is quickly disappearing from the landscape. Many readers have likely passed by a number of these houses, and have not been aware of their significance. While some are still structurally sound and hold a sufficient level of historic integrity, many are in various states of disrepair and are under threat of demolition.

The defining characteristic of an “I-house” is its structural form. Typically, the form is two stories tall and one room deep (called “single-pile” in architectural terms). These houses often have a wing (ell) built perpendicular to the main block of the house, giving it an overall shape of an L or T. While some earlier Colonial examples were built of stone or brick, most are of wood frame construction and sheathed in weatherboard. Variations can be seen in their roofline; some have a simple side-gable roof, and others have a cross-gable roof, which is commonly seen in Anne Arundel County. For the most part, these houses would be considered “plain” in style, lacking the decorative embellishments that one would see on a Georgian-style house, for example.

There has been speculation over the origin of the term “I-house”. Some architectural historians suggest that the term refers to the structure’s tall and thin profile, while others believe that it refers to the states where this style grew rapidly: Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. An “I-house” can date anywhere from the 18th to the early 20th century, although the majority of the “I-houses” that remain today in Anne Arundel County were built ca. 1860-1900.

This type of house was the most popular vernacular style house and standard dwelling for farmers until the early years of the 20th century. The popularity of “I-houses” among the farming community explains why so many of them can be found in southern Anne Arundel County today. Although development pressures have led to demolition of many of these houses in the northern part of the County, the number one cause for their shrinking numbers in the County is “demolition by neglect”. This is a common term used in the historic preservation field and is defined as the process of allowing a building to deteriorate to the point where demolition is necessary to protect public health and safety.

Many people outside of the historic preservation field do not see these relatively small farm houses as being architecturally significant, particularly when compared to high-style mansions. Thus, these “I-houses” can be overlooked as a building type worthy of preservation. However, the historic preservation movement embraces vernacular architecture. These were the homes of the common people, of the working class who were the majority in this County during the popularity of the “I-house”. These buildings reflect the time in which they were built, the cultural landscape of post-bellum agricultural communities, and “speak” to the lives of the men and women who built and lived in these structures.



Note the architectural similarities and differences between these two “I-houses” above.

In Memoriam

Harold West - better known as "Westy"- recently departed this life at age 89. Westy was a long-time volunteer and supporter of the *Lost Towns Project*. He was the original discoverer of the Providence Site of "Burle's Town Land," the home of Robert Burle. His friendship and enthusiasm will be deeply missed.



ACT Hosts Another Successful Awards Ceremony

~ John Kille

The 2008 ACT Awards ceremony held at the Wiley H. Bates Heritage Park in Annapolis on October 15 proved to be a truly memorable gathering. Those who attended this premiere event were treated to a tour of the facility following the awards ceremony. ACT Chairman Will Mumford presented the following awards:

The Volunteer Award to Ward Brockett for his extraordinary service to Historic London Town and Gardens, exemplified by his outstanding leadership in the reconstruction of historic buildings, his dedication to the Education and Horticultural Programs, and his unwavering support of the London Town Foundation.

The 28th Marjorie Murray Bridgman Award to Emily Peake for her incredible contributions and willingness to share her extensive knowledge of the history of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, including her important research and documentation on the historic St. Anne's cemetery.

The Special Achievement Award to Tina Simmons for her significant contributions pertaining to the hundreds of cemeteries located in Anne Arundel County. She was honored for her ongoing research, recordation, and education involving these important cultural resources and her books published by the Anne Arundel Genealogical Society, of which she is a long-time member.

The 33rd Orlando Ridout Prize to the Wiley H. Bates Heritage Park, an adaptive reuse project, which converted the only high school for African Americans in Anne Arundel County operating before integration (1932-1966) into a multi-use complex. The school now serves as an independent living facility for low-income seniors, a senior center, and a Boys and Girls Club.

Congratulations to the awardees, and many thanks to those of you who attended this important event recognizing these achievements in historic preservation!

Many Thanks to the Friends and Relatives of Eugene Wugofski and Harold West

~ John Kille

We at the *Lost Towns Project* are extremely grateful for the memorial contributions made on behalf of two special people associated with the *Project*. Many generous gifts have been made in memory of Eugene Wugofski, late husband of dedicated volunteer Caroline Wugofski; and also in memory of long-time volunteer and supporter Harold West. These donations will help us continue our vital programs, and we are pleased that in doing so, we honor both Gene and Westy.

Lost Towns Project Staff

Al Luckenbach....Director/County Archaeologist

John KilleAssistant Director

Jane Cox....Cultural Resources Planner

Darian Schwab....Historic Preservation Planner

Shawn SharpeField Director/Conservation Specialist

Jessie Grow....Lab Manager/Education and Volunteer Coordinator/Archaeologist

Lauren Schiszik....Archaeologist/Intern Coordinator/Newsletter Editor

Stephanie Sperling....Archaeologist

Part Time

Tony Lindauer....Historian

Carolyn Gryczkowski....Lab Specialist

Steve TourvilleArchaeologist/Lab Specialist

Gabi Harris....Assistant Architectural Historian

Lost Towns Project



of Anne Arundel County

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If you are not yet a sustaining member of the Lost Towns Project, please consider becoming one, or give the gift of membership to a friend or loved one. Your tax-deductible contribution supports our public outreach and education programs, such as our "Public Dig Days", our high-quality newsletter publication, and helps us fulfill our mission to discover, interpret, and educate citizens and students about the history of Anne Arundel County. We greatly appreciate your support!

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Lost Towns Project



of Anne Arundel County

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