



Letters from Lost Towns

Autumn 2009

News & Future Events

Upcoming Conferences:
Eastern States Archeological Federation (ESAF) 76th Annual Meeting, Nov. 5-7, 2009, Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

This conference covers a broad range of prehistoric archaeological research. Stephanie Sperling will present on the Middle Woodland Period in Anne Arundel County.

Lost Towns Evening Lecture Series. November 10, December 8. 5 pm - 6 pm, London Town Visitor's Center.

You are invited to our evening lecture series! *Lost Towns* staff presents our latest research and host a discussion following. Light refreshments provided. Free for members, \$3 for non-members. Call our lab at 410-222-1318 with questions.

Nov. 10 Steve Tourville - "Archaeobotany - a new foray for *Lost Towns*"

Dec. 8 John Kille - "Recent Discoveries at the Chew Site"

Important Discoveries at the Chew Site

~John Kille

With the hunting season in full swing in South County, the *Lost Towns Project* has wrapped up excavations at the Chew site in Fairhaven for the year. A hiatus from removing four to five feet of cellar rubble is quite welcome, especially since our crew of interns has returned to college!

Despite the arduous physical challenges involved with this site, the *Project* made steady progress over the spring and summer. We now have a much better understanding of the layout of the 66 x 56-foot colonial brick mansion owned by several generations of the wealthy and accomplished Samuel Chew family of Herring Creek Hundred. A detailed and informative site plan rendered by field director Shawn Sharpe and interpreted by Dr. Al delineates excavated areas within the footprint of this enormous structure destroyed by fire in 1772.

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Wonders never cease at Pig Point

~Al Luckenbach



A highly decorated Late Woodland Rappahannock incised pot.

Since the last issue of this newsletter, the prehistoric archaeological site at Pig Point has continued to amaze. The upper excavation block is now roughly 25 feet square, large enough to encompass what appears to be a minimum of seven or eight wigwam patterns. Precisely dating these structures is difficult because of generally poor charcoal preservation, but one hearth produced a C-14 date of A.D. 510 +/- 40. A second date from this block, obtained closer to ground surface, appears to be an historic disturbance dating to the 18th century -

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The *Lost Towns Project* Thanks our Partners and Supporters



A Warm Thank You to all of our Members

At the *Lost Towns Project*, we are very lucky to have supporters that value the discovery and preservation of the the past. Our sustaining membership program is helping us to support and continue many worthwhile educational activities within our local community. Please consider renewing your *Lost Towns Project* Sustaining Membership today! Remember, you can now conveniently make your contribution online via Paypal, a secure payment portal, at our new website at www.losttownsproject.org/support.html. We greatly appreciate the support of the following individuals who have recently joined or renewed their memberships:

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Cheryl Stanley
Michael and Patricia Towle
Elizabeth Williams

A Closer Look at Middle Woodland Life

~Stephanie T. Sperling

We are in the middle of Year Two of the Middle Woodland project grant, which is funded by the Maryland Historical Trust. We found some really cool stuff this summer! Regular readers of *Letters from Lost Towns* may remember my previous articles about Year One of the grant. We wanted to know what archaeologists had already discovered about the period (dating from ca. 400 B.C. to A.D. 1000), so we first examined the available literature to establish patterns of behavior in the region and then revisited all of the 169 previously recorded Middle Woodland period sites in the County. We were surprised that over 50% of the sites were

relatively undisturbed and had good potential for telling us more about the period. In the end, we selected eight sites to excavate further.

This summer, we took advantage of lovely weather to excavate four of these sites. Pig Point is one of them, and we can learn a lot about the Middle Woodland period here. However, this village was occupied for so many centuries (before, during, and after the Middle Woodland) that we wanted to dig at a few sites - mostly single-component temporary camps - that could serve as a comparison for Pig Point.

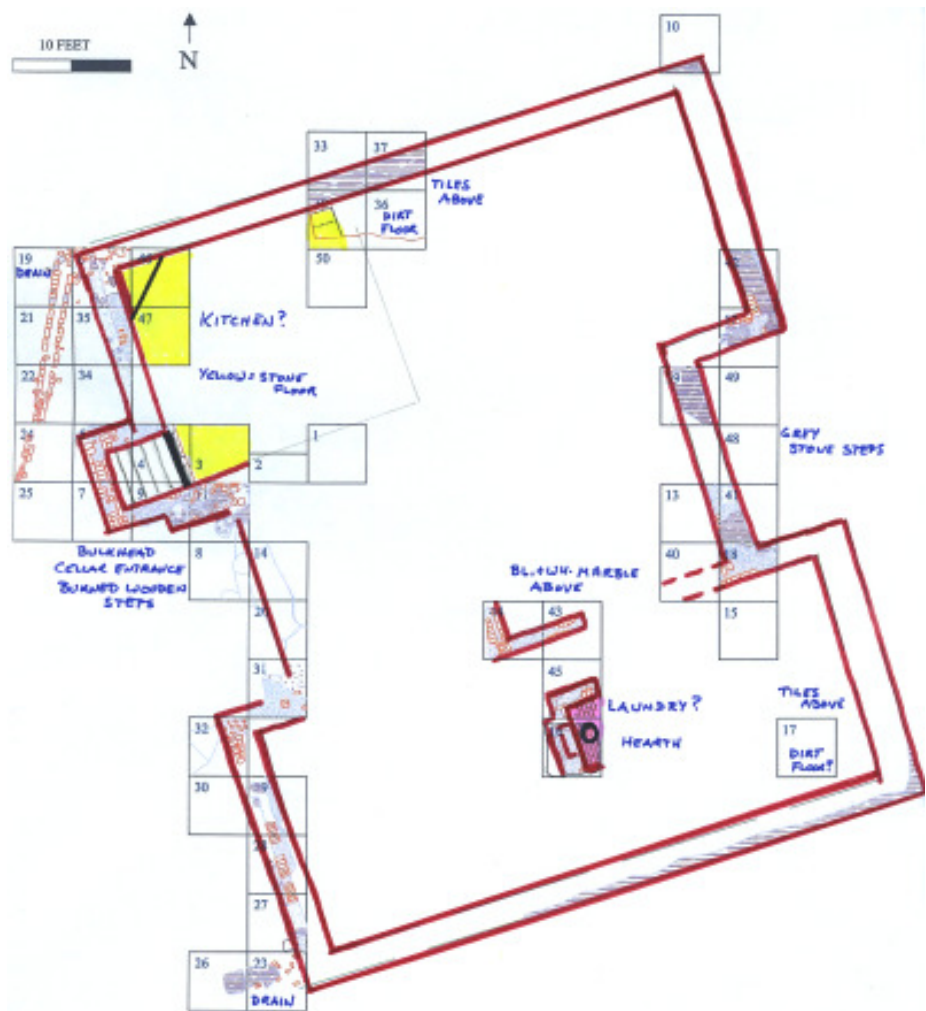
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Fragments of gray stone steps retrieved in proximity to the building's main entrance are important architectural elements, as well as a tangible connection to the historical figures who once tread on them. Two units placed nearest the front door within the interior indicate that the main entrance led to a room paved with 12" square slabs of black and white marble. This marble was likely arranged in a checkboard pattern of the type seen at the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg and at Rosewell near Gloucester, Virginia.

Other interior units led to the discovery of the building's long-sought chimney base and cellar hearth which was paved with bricks and showed extensive evidence of high heat. Ash and charcoal from the last domestic fire were still in place. In this area, perhaps the most intriguing find was a large iron ring lying on the center of the hearth floor, as discussed in the Winter 2009 edition of *Letters from Lost Towns*. The bricks inside this ring were not darkened by heat, and it is possible that a pot or kettle was used as part of the cellar laundry.

While the wooden steps within the bulkhead cellar entrance are long gone, a "ghost" outline can still be seen on the brick wall that once supported them. Units excavated in proximity to this entry exposed a relatively large room paved in stone. Incredibly, a portion of what appears to be the base of a wooden corner cabinet is all that remains following the fire centuries ago. Architectural historian Mark



The Chew Mansion site plan with interpretations of various architectural features.

Wenger suggests that this paved room may have served as a dairy instead of a kitchen as we supposed. Orlando Ridout V with the Maryland Historical Trust notes that this grand mansion may have warranted a separate kitchen.



The remains of the corner cabinet in the northwest corner of the cellar.

Staff and volunteers in the lab are now busily processing the thousands of architectural and domestic artifacts from the site. Al and I are preparing an article that will detail the site's history and archaeological finds, which will be submitted to an appropriate scholarly journal in the coming year. If you get the chance, stop by the lab to see first-hand some of the amazing finds recovered from this exciting dig.

Teardown or Preserve? That is the Question

~ Darian Schwab

Have you ever driven through an older neighborhood and came upon a house that looked... out of place? If so, then there is a good chance that the current house is the result of a "teardown." A "teardown" is the practice of purchasing a property in order to demolish the house and build a new, larger house in its place. This practice is sweeping across the United States and poses a major threat to the preservation of our historic buildings and neighborhoods.

There are various reasons that contribute to this "epidemic," with one being the notion that bigger is better! Many of the neighborhoods that are at high risk for teardowns date to the early-20th century. The architectural fabric of these neighborhoods consists of bungalows and small cottages, vernacular four-squares, and a variety of Revival styles. For today's standard of living, these older homes are often viewed as too small, as the average American house size has increased by 138% since the 1950s alone. Another pro-teardown argument is that the economic impact on a homeowner to renovate an existing historic home would cost well beyond what it would to tear it down and build anew. These reasons, accompanied by the fact that many historic homes were built on land that is now highly developable due to location, lot acreage, or view are a few of the driving forces behind this rampant threat. While there is no question that renovating a historic home, or any home for that matter, would indeed be a large investment, is that price too high to forsake the

preservation of our historic communities?

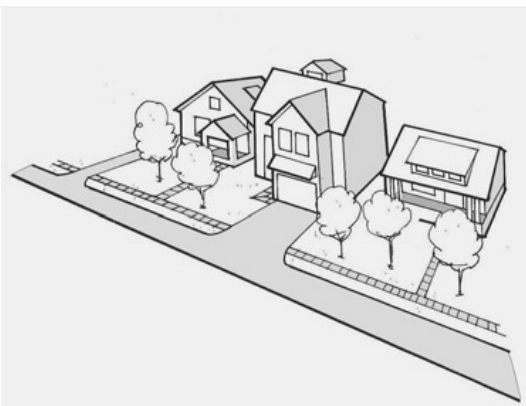
Let's consider some of the effects of teardowns on the greater community in order to better understand their impact. With today's growing concerns about climate change, there

is a growing movement for people to live a more "green" and sustainable lifestyle. Tearing down any building is an enormous waste of energy, if you consider all of the energy and materials used to construct the original home, demolish the existing building and put it in landfills that are quickly reaching capacity, and finally, the energy and materials needed to construct an entirely new building! This practice is the antithesis of recycling. In fact, many preservationists like to say that "preserving a building is the ultimate form of recycling" and that "the greenest building is the one already built." This

comparison of building preservation to recycling is a new approach, but it makes sense, doesn't it?

Loss of livability and community character in neighborhoods where teardowns occur are other effects to consider. For most neighborhoods, defining qualities of the community are the homes themselves - the scale and harmony between the buildings and the surrounding environment. As teardowns take place, a historic neighborhood's architectural significance and sense of place is destroyed as well as its open space. Trees are removed and yards are diminished in order to build larger, out-of-scale

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*Images: Adrian Scott Fine, NHTP
Compare the difference between the center house
above and below.*

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although one possible interpretation places the date in the Late Woodland at around A.D. 1560.

Ceramics also tell the upper block's chronological story. We are now removing Level 6 from this block and have yet to reach sterile soils. As we dug deeper, the pottery changed from Late Woodland Townsend Wares to Middle Woodland Mockley and Popes Creek types, to Early Woodland Accokeek. Level 6 now appears to be from the pre-ceramic Archaic Period - and the post patterns from structures have not ceased.

A simply astounding Late Woodland Rappahannock incised vessel was recovered in this block. It probably ranks as the most elaborately decorated pot yet found in Maryland (see page 1).

The lower block is incredible in its own right. There are no building patterns in the 10 x 10-foot excavation, but there is excellent seed, charcoal and bone preservation. After digging through the same ceramic sequence as described above, we are now finding soapstone bowl fragments and a Bare Island Point. There is also evidence of the firing of ceramic vessels



Whole paint pot recovered from the lower excavation block at Pig Point.

in this block, including an intact "paint pot" that seems to have been left behind. The two C-14 dates from this layer are A.D. 1290 and 1300.

We would like to thank the Maryland Historical Trust for their continued support of this excavation. Come out and visit us in this beautiful setting on the Patuxent River.

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With that in mind, we investigated one site on the Patuxent River upriver from Pig Point and two sites on the South River that had strong Middle Woodland components. The Patuxent River site, located near Governor's Bridge, turned out to be a sporadically occupied hunting camp, and we did not find many artifacts. The two South River sites were much more interesting. The first site is located in a small cove near the mouth of the South River, while the second site is on a bluff overlooking the headwaters of the river.

Both of these sites were used primarily for oyster harvesting and were occupied most heavily during the Middle Woodland time period. We found a great deal of shell-tempered Mockley pottery dating to about A.D. 200 - 900, but we also found a few Late Woodland artifacts. This

demonstrates how people became increasingly dependent on shellfish that could be reliably obtained from the county's rivers. The Native Americans traded and feasted on the smoked or roasted oyster meat and used the shells to temper their pottery. People would camp at sites like these for short periods of time before heading back to their main village at places like Pig Point, where there were substantially fewer shellfish to harvest. The lack of available oysters in the Patuxent



Jane surveys a shell heap overlooking the South River.

River near Governor's Bridge could also explain why we don't see evidence of longer-term camping in that area.

Shell middens are one of the most obvious Native American features remaining on the landscape but are an increasingly endangered resource. In the 19th and 20th centuries people harvested the shell heaps for lime production, and more recently many sites have been lost to development, erosion, and sea level rise. The examination of these intact features lets us glimpse the lifestyles of the native people that lived here thousands of years ago. This Middle Woodland grant offers a unique opportunity to study regional subsistence practices as well as the symbiotic relationship between village sites like Pig Point and the less glamorous temporary resource-procurement sites.

When Interns Descend...we get LOTS of work done!

~Lauren Schiszik

This summer, the *Project* had a whopping record of 16 interns! They ranged from rising high-school freshmen to college graduates, and came with a broad range of backgrounds and experience. Each brought their enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, and positive work ethic. Over the course of the summer, our interns clocked over 2,500 hours (that's the equivalent of a full-time staffer working over a year!). Way to go, interns!! Our interns not only provided brawn in the field, artifact processing in the lab, and learned the basics in both field and lab, but some also pursued research projects, learned metal and glass conservation, completed a Maryland State archaeological site form, contributed analysis for a site report, updated our archaeology files, completed Maryland Inventory forms for historic buildings, and helped us with educational outreach. Whew! We had quite a productive bunch.

Our interns this summer were: Katie Bentz (UMBC), Katie Eierman (Lycoming College), Joe Emmerich (Saint Leo University), Mark Hannan (UMBC), Caitlin Herrera (AACC), Irene Lewis (home school), Alexanna Page (Broadneck High School), Ben Pollack (Clark University graduate), Julie Powers (University of Delaware), ToniMarie Rappaciulo (Nichols College), Rachael Rose (Goucher College), Rachel Setting (UMD, College Park graduate), Gordon Smith (Williams College), Taylor Teske (UMBC), Josh Wilson (Beloit College), and Yukari Yamahiro (UMD, College Park). We also want to thank our spring interns Bobbie Griffie (home school) and Joanna Hagerty (UMBC) for their tireless work.

Two of our summer interns are doing internships with us again this fall - Rachel Setting is doing a vesselization of ceramics from Cheney's Hills, and Ben Pollack is inventorying and processing the Anne Arundel County artifacts from the Bob Ogle collection. Thank you, *Lost Towns* interns for all of your hard work!



Dr. Tim Riordan teaches Lost Towns interns about current excavations at St. Mary's City during one of our field trips.



Lauren puts on her best supervisor pose while interns Mark Hannan, Gordon Smith, and Taylor Teske do the dirty work.

Mystery artifact

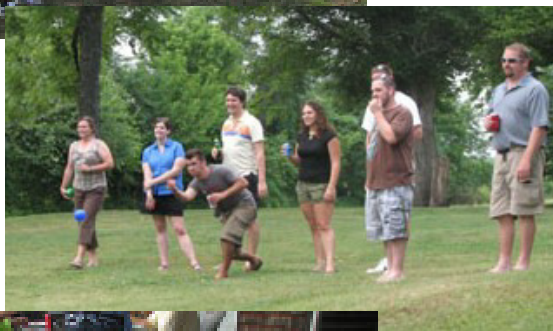
~Shawn Sharpe

While metal detecting for a lost sentimental trowel among the rubble heaps of the Chew site (the trowel was later located elsewhere) an odd discovery was made. One of the bricks began beeping loudly as if made of metal so I immediately struck it with a hammer to quiet the brick. I was later informed that the metal detector produced the infernal racket and not the brick. However, upon breaking the brick a very well tooled piece of brass was revealed; apparently having been sequestered within the brick for the past 300 years. What is it? Why was it in the brick? How many other historic bricks conceal such treasures? I think I'll need a bigger hammer. If you think can unravel the mystery, we'd love to hear from you. Give us a call at the lab at 410-222-1318.



Volunteers and Interns Party It Up!

~ Jessie Grow



Can you believe it? We ran out of room!

We have so many things going on at the *Project* that we didn't have room for all of them in the newsletter! Check out our blog to learn about recent finds, new initiatives, and more!

A huge thank you to all who attended our volunteer and intern appreciation party this year! During the past year, we've had 74 wonderful volunteers who have contributed over 1,870 hours of work! The volunteer with the most hours this year was Leslie McCluskey, who worked 123.5 hours. Close behind her was our Junior Volunteer of the year, Joey Peake (a freshman at South River High School), who put in 118 hours of service. I know we say this a lot, but I can't stress it enough: we could never do what we do without you! And the best way that we can come up with to say thank you is a party, of course. This year was one of our best, I think, with a beautiful view of Jug Bay, delicious potluck food, and a ruthless game of Bocce Ball. Check out some more pictures from the party on our blog, accessed through our website, and thanks again!

Lost Towns Project Staff

Al Luckenbach....Director/County Archaeologist

John Kille....Assistant Director

Jane Cox....Cultural Resources Planner

Darian Schwab....Historic Preservation Planner

Shawn Sharpe....Field Director/Conservation Specialist

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

Coordinator/Archaeologist

Stephanie Sperling....Archaeologist

Part Time

Steve Tourville....Archaeologist/Lab Specialist

Gabriela Harris....Assistant Architectural Historian

Carolyn Gryczkowski....Lab Specialist

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

Tony Lindauer....Historian

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homes that dwarf their neighbors and ultimately change the disposition of the neighborhood forever.

There is no single solution to this growing problem. Instead, a combination of building restrictions/guidelines, community activism, local government involvement, and financial incentives to spur preservation are a few key steps toward tackling this crucial issue. If you would like to learn more about teardowns and how you can be a preservation advocate in your own community, visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation at www.preservationnation.org.

Lost Towns Project



of Anne Arundel County

Member Benefits:

- 3 newsletters per year
- 20% off *Lost Towns* gear and publications
- Free admission to our lecture series
- Invitations to special events and trips

Become a Sustaining Member of the *Lost Towns Project*!

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



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