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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

www.marylandarcheology.org

‘Grandest house on Chesapeake’ found

By Frank Roylance

Condensed from The Baltimore Sun, September 24, 2007

DEALE - Anne Arundel County archeologists knew they were looking for one of 18th Century Maryland's rich and famous.

Samuel Chew was a well-connected Quaker planter and merchant, and his home on a knoll above the Chesapeake Bay was an early landmark, used by ship captains to guide them into the tobacco port of Herrington, on Herring Bay.

But no one expected this. Months of digging to uncover the foundation walls of the Chew House have revealed one of the largest, most opulent homes in the Chesapeake region during the early 18th Century.

Most amazing of all, the 2 1/2 -story mansion appears to have been bigger than the original Governor's Palace at Williamsburg, Va. - an extraordinary 66 feet on each side, says county archeologist Al Luckenbach.

"We weren't aware we were looking for ... the grandest house on the Chesapeake," Luckenbach said. "Somehow this has fallen out of the tribal memory."

Tobacco and slave labor made the community that grew up around Herring Bay one of the wealthiest in the Colonies. In building their homes, the planters were "trying to demonstrate their success and Chew seems to have outdone them all," Luckenbach said.

"The vast majority of people at that date were still living in wooden houses with earth-fast frames - posts that went into the ground," said Edward A. Chappell, director of architectural research at Colonial Williamsburg. "They might be multiroom, particularly if it were a fairly successful planter. But the majority are not brick, or very survivable."

The Chew House burned in 1772. Family members left for prominent positions in Delaware and Philadelphia.

"People had heard of Samuel Chew, but as far as the house being here, I don't think anybody had any idea," said Lois Nutwell of the Deale Area Historical Society, a volunteer on the dig for much of the summer.

Last spring, John Kille, assistant director for the Lost Towns Project, and field director Shawn Sharpe, set out to dig test pits at likely spots above the bay that seemed to match the Chew House site on a 1732 map. Their second attempt paid off, and they began finding Dutch and German ceramics of the right age and traces of a large structure.

"We have delft! And Rhenish! And a suspicious stone wall! And it's in the right place!" they told Luckenbach.

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Upcoming events

November 3: The Vienna (Virginia) Heritage Museum celebration of Native American month includes a presentation by Virginia Busby about Chicone Indian Town. 10 - 4. www.viennamd.org/vhf.html

November 8-11: ESAF conference, Burlington, Vermont.

January 9-12: SHA conference, Albuquerque.

January 26: Montgomery County history conference. Detail in next month's newsletter.

Volunteer opportunities

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT program participants and other ASM members:

Montgomery County lab, field work Wednesdays, 9:30 to 2:30. Call 301-840-5848 or contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org. CAT opportunity.

ASM field session collection: Volunteers are needed to work on up-grading collections associated with previous field sessions. Work begins October 9 on the Long Draught Mill site collection. This site was a Montgomery County 19th Century mill complex tested by ASM in 1971. The lab in Crownsville is open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. For additional information contact Louise Akerson lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall hall@mdp.state.md.us.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County. 410-222-7441.

Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301-627-1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its various activities, including archeology, historical research and artifact conservation. This year's public archeology program runs until July 8, with digging on Fridays and Saturdays and lab work Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Contact Ed Chaney at 410-586-8554 or echaney@mdp.state.md.us

The Archaeological Institute of America provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide, Call up www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/ to get started. Remember to add the extra A in archaeological.

CAT corner

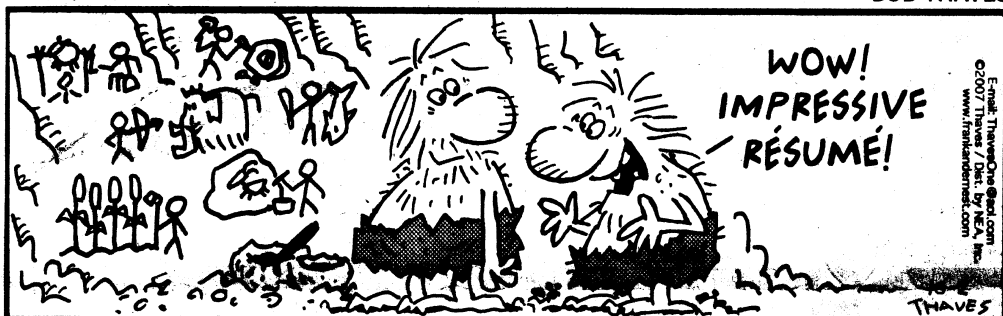
A legal workshop will be held November 17, from 9 to noon, at Needwood Mansion in Montgomery County. Charlie Hall will give the presentation. Contact Vivian Eicke at veicke@erols.com to register.

For updates and information on CAT activities check the ASM website.

Special fieldwork opportunity: Richard Ervin of SHA is working on the Broad Creek Cemetery, a 17th through 19th Century cemetery on Kent Island. On occasion and on very short notice, it is necessary for him to conduct emergency excavations in preparation for new interments. Work is expected in October. Contact him at 410-545-2878 (days), 410-643-7128 (evenings) or by email at rervin@sha.state.md.us

FRANK AND ERNEST

BOB THAVES



Carol Ebright wins '07 Marye Award

Only a continuation resupply of chairs kept the October 13 annual meeting in Millersville from being a standing-room-only affair. Some 94 people made their way to Baldwin Hall for the Saturday event.

At the meeting, a proposed change to the bylaws was passed unanimously. It added the Spencer O. Geasey lecture, which was recently installed as part of the yearly field school.

The 2007 William B. Marye Award for outstanding contributions to Maryland archeology was presented to Carol Ebright. The citation was read by Tyler Bastian:

"This year's William B. Marye awardee has been dynamic presence in avocational and professional archeology in Maryland for over 20 years. Her discovery of Native Americans, anthropology, colonial history and archeology began as a child in Pennsylvania and led to a master's degree in anthropology.

"While in gradate school in New York, she developed an interest in flintknapping and became acquainted with William Henry Holmes' studies of quarries in the Maryland-Virginia tidewater region. Her interest in local quarries continued while she worked at the National Register of Historic Places in Washington DC. She has since conducted archeological field work in several areas, including Pennsylvania, Indiana and Texas.

"Since beginning her Maryland career at the Maryland Geological Survey's Division of Archeology in 1986, our awardee has been active with many organizations in Maryland related to her chosen profession, especially ASM. She served two terms as president of ASM, was editor of ASM INK and is a major contributor to the success of ASM's Certified Archeological Technician (CAT) program.

"She has given countless presentations on archeology to teach and enlighten ASM members and the general public. Especially notable are her presentations on the use and fascination of lithic technology. Another spare-time project was the cataloging of the extensive Spencer O. Geasey collection.

"A highlight of her professional research in Maryland was her excavation and reporting on the Paleo-Indian and Archaic Higgins site, one of Maryland's most notable archeological sites. She has long maintained a special interest in constructive interaction among archeologists, Native Americans and the public."

Volunteer wanted – in the financial area (no money needed)

Now's a good chance to combine an interest in archeology with an interest in bookkeeping. ASM is looking for someone to help treasurer Sean Sweeney handle ASM's financial records. Millions of dollars are not at stake, but it is important to keeping ASM up and running. If you have knowledge of the basic skills needed and would like to lend a hand, contact Sean at 410-569-8715 or seansweeney1224@comcast.net

Smithsonian to hold lecture series on Indians

A weekly series of Friday lectures in honor of American Indian Heritage Month will be held at the Smithsonian's natural history museum from November 2 through December 14. The talks are:

November 2: Stephen Loring of the Smithsonian, "New Revelations about Paleoindian lifestyles in Vermont."

November 9: Bob Wall of Towson University, "The Archeology of the Barton Site."

November 16: Donald Linebaugh, University of Maryland, The Bolling trading networks in Virginia and North Carolina.

November 30: Dennis Stanford of the Smithsonian, "New Discoveries in the Search for the Earliest North Americans."

December 7: Ted Timreck of the Smithsonian, Memory, myth and archeology in constructing the story of the far northeast.

December 14: Pegi Jodry of the Smithsonian, "Ancient People and Climate of the Colorado Rockies."

Sponsored by the Smithsonian and the Archaeological Conservancy, the talks will begin at noon in the museum's Baird Auditorium. They are open to the public and free.

Profiles in Maryland archeology

An interview with ... Henry Miller

Henry Miller's title is research director of Historic St. Mary's City, but he is its public face and head archeologist. He also teaches at St. Mary's College of Maryland. He last spoke to ASM at this year's spring symposium.

Q. How did you get started in archeology?

A. I was at the University of Arkansas and was majoring in drama and took an anthro class and found it absolutely fascinating and went on my first dig. And that captivated me. It was an historic dig and I was just mesmerized by the idea of records and artifacts and you knew who these people were you were digging up, their names, where they were from. All those connections. And so historical archeology for me became very early a field I wanted to specialize in. I went to graduate school and they were just starting -- this sort of archeology in the late 60s and early 70s was brand new. So I got in sort of on the first floor, if you will, of the development.

Q. How did you come to Maryland and St. Mary's City?

A. When I graduated in 1972 from the University of Arkansas, I saw a flier on a bulletin board that was an advertisement for diggers needed at a place called St. Mary's City and I applied, got hired ...

Q. Where were you then?

A. I was an undergraduate then, I was just getting my BA degree at that time. So Gary Stone hired me for the summer of 1972 as a digger. It was \$1.50 an hour and all the water we could drink. And it was a great experience. I just fell in love with Maryland and the idea and potential of the whole lost city. And then went to graduate school at Michigan State University. And at Michigan State I had one of the few programs at that time on historical archeology and so I decided my dissertation was going to be on the Chesapeake

region because I just love the early period. And in 1977 a job opened up at St. Mary's City as a laboratory curator and I got hired for that. I've been at St. Mary's ever since. I am now director of research. So I started out as a digger and I guess worked my way up.

Q. Did you work on any projects outside of St. Mary's City?

A. I did a number of projects down in Virginia, but prior to that I worked up in Michigan and Arkansas and did projects in Texas. I worked in a number of locations around the country. But the Chesapeake was the area I really loved.

Q. What is it about St. Mary's that you like so much?

A. I like the fact that it is a complete city from the first century of English settlement. We don't know much about it, there's no maps or descriptions. It's an archeological mystery to solve. It's also a place where important events in America's history occurred and where precedents were set that still resonate with us today. So I think it's where the archeology and the history combine, come together to give us really valuable new insights about the past. There's centuries of digging yet to be done there. Far after me people will still be excavating St. Mary's City. It's also a very beautiful location. It's attracted Native Americans for 8 - 9,000 years and still attracts people to this day. It's a place of great potential, beauty and a rewarding place to work.



Q. Do you find very many Native American elements?

A. Absolutely. Probably the Native American materials are richer than the Colonial materials, just because of the greater time depth there. Our oldest site thus far is Early Archaic and there's extensive Late Archaic, Early Woodland, Middle and Late Woodland materials. And we also of course have the Yaocomico village that the first colonists acquired and we are finding where those buildings were located, so that's another whole contact story between the English and the Yaocomico that I'd love to spend more time working on. But there's a very, very rich prehistoric record there that we need to give more attention to. It's just that our focus, because of the way the museum was established, is the 17th Century era. But there are many dissertations on prehistoric life in the Chesapeake Bay region.

Q. What's been your most exciting find?

A. I would say there are two most exciting finds. It would be hard to outdo the lead coffins. Certainly that was the find of a lifetime. But for me personally, I think discovering that the first city of Maryland was an elaborately designed metropolis that had these ideas of baroque planning and that sort of information gave us a whole new perspective on what Lord Baltimore and his people were attempting to develop. So this was a great case where the archeology was pivotal in changing our understanding of what these early colonists were trying to do.

Q. Is there any particular date associated with that find?

A. It was based on our survey work and the accumulation of evidence about where the city was. And it was really in 1986, 1987, finally the pieces clicked together. We had to find the center of town first and then we had to find where the chapel was, where the brick prison was, where these other major buildings were. And once we finally got a relatively good map, then I could start analyzing it and see any relationships. I was predicting that we'd find a scattered, unplanned city, because that's what the documents suggested. Then I started finding this regularity. I said, "Wait a minute, this can't be just due to chance." And so I started looking and continued to probe and figure it out and it was a real puzzle. But finally all the evidence said this had to be intentional, had to be a real design for the first capitol. It just is not documented anywhere.

Q. Discounting that, what was your most surprising find?

A. I suppose one of the most surprising finds is, based on Jamestown, we would have thought there had been all kinds of brick buildings in early Maryland and yet what we found was that St. Mary's City was largely a city of wood. There's the earthfast or post-in-the-ground buildings. Jamestown has much more brick in it than does St. Mary's City. There's only really five all-brick buildings in St. Mary's that we know of, but there's dozens in Jamestown. And why that is interesting and important is that it shows that a royal colony versus a private colony, such as Maryland was, a proprietary colony, they attract very different levels of money and investment. Especially a Catholic proprietary. So this finding is giving us a material reflection of the differences in how a colony is put together and what it needs. So that was a real surprise, because when we started the digging we were expecting to find Jamestown North, or something very similar to it. And yet it has proven to be a very different type of city.

Q. What do you think is the future of Maryland archeology in general?

A. Maryland has an extraordinary archeological record and if we can preserve it for study we will add immensely to our knowledge of its history. The pace of development right now throughout Maryland is a matter of big concern to me and all archeologists because sites are being destroyed with absolutely nothing being done to them. There's not much we can do. We try to save what we can at this point. But the history of Maryland is unequalled by any other colony, or is equal to any colony, and I think it just hasn't received the attention, the international recognition that it so richly merits.

Q. What advice do you have for somebody who wants to go into archeology?

A. I would say there's always room, even in a crowded field, for people who are willing to work hard and make their own way, make their own discoveries. Archeology takes a lot of time. It requires, certainly, patience but it's also a field that is very rewarding when you make these discoveries. Don't ever expect to get superwealthy, but at the same time expect to have a lot of fun and enjoy the process of exploration. That's what archeology should be about.

Port Tobacco dig hints at big things

By Nancy Bromley McConaty

The Maryland Independent, September 28, 2007

Slowly sifting through piles of dirt is the closest thing to heaven that James Gibb can imagine doing on a warm autumn day.

Gibb, who owns Gibb Archaeological Consulting in Annapolis, is spending a lot of his free time digging for Colonial artifacts as part of an archeological survey being done for the Port Tobacco historic district. What has been unearthed so far could make the project as important as similar digs at St. Mary's City, said Gibb.

The project, funded by a \$9,270 Maryland Historical Trust grant, is sponsored by the Archeological Society of Maryland and the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco.

So far, a handful of volunteers have dug about 250 shallow holes at the site, Gibb said.

"There's an incredible amount of stuff," he said. "Who knows what amazing things will come out of the ground? That's what makes this really exciting. You never know what you're going to hit."

So far, the dig has uncovered four sites dating to the 1700s and a blacksmith's shop from the 1800s, he said.

Ceramics, prehistoric Native American artifacts, bricks, nails, a wine bottle, fine table and window glass and bones and fish scales from long-ago meals eaten by early settlers have been unearthed so far, Gibb said.

"This is going to produce an enormous amount of material from a long-occupied town," he said.

"We're looking at the emergence of a town during the late 1600s; we're going to see the rise and fall of an important port town," he said. "We also know that the people knew the river was silting in and because of that the town could lose its reason for being. ... This is an interesting exploration of environmental degradation and the town's response to it."

Port Tobacco served as the county seat until the late 1800s, when the seat was moved to La Plata following a fire that destroyed the courthouse.

Gibb said he expects to uncover more prehistoric Native American artifacts as the excavation moves closer to the river.

April Beisaw, adjunct research associate at Binghamton University in New York, is working as Gibb's director of research for the project,

"It's a very rich area; there are hundreds of years of occupation at the site," she said. "There's a lot of material that's been plowed under the fields and around the remains of buildings."

Gibb became aware of the wealth of artifacts buried in the area while doing an archeological survey around Catslide House to make way for a major restoration of the structure, said Jay Lilly, president of the Society for the Restoration of Port Tobacco.

During the early history of the county, Port Tobacco boasted three hotels, dozens of homes, a blacksmith's shop, carriage-making shop, two newspapers and countless other enterprises, Cathy Hardy said.

Lilly and Hardy, Charles County historical planner, hope the archeological project will be a great draw to Port Tobacco during Charles County's 350th anniversary celebration next year.

It would not be surprising if Port Tobacco's archeological project ends up rivaling the St. Mary's City excavation, Hardy said.

"The archeological material here is on par with other Colonial sites in Maryland," she said. "It's relatively undisturbed. It's a very significant site. We've got a lot to learn."

"Jim [Gibb] and April [Beisaw] are really doing a fantastic job bringing such professional expertise to this project," she said. "We're very fortunate to have them."

The Archeological Society of Maryland is donating volunteer labor and expertise to the project, said John Fiveash, the society's president.

The next phase of the project would be to establish larger excavation sites in the area, Fiveash said, adding that typically dozens of volunteers descend on a site and spend 11 days excavating for artifacts.

Local history enthusiasts might provide the magic to bring Colonial Port Tobacco back to life.

"Right now it's all just an exciting possibility, but how it will develop in the future will be up to the people of Charles County," said Charlie Hall, Maryland's terrestrial archeologist. "I hope that they get very excited

about the project. I'm not saying that it could be Jamestown or St. Mary's City — but, maybe. There's a lot there."

Book review: John Smith's world, and ours

John Smith's Chesapeake Voyages 1607-1609, by Helen C. Rountree, Wayne E. Clark and Kent Mountford, University of Virginia Press, 416 pages, \$30 hardbound, \$20 paperback

1607 is the Year of Jamestown and All Things Associated With It. Nothing is more Jamestown than John Smith and one of the captain's major contributions to the colony, history and general knowledge were his boat expeditions in and around the Chesapeake Bay.

The book uses his two voyages as its starting point to look at the world that Smith found and lived in and the world we live in today.

One of the book's goals is "to recount the full story of the Chesapeake Bay in John Smith's time To bring together the best and most current of historical, scientific, archaeological, and ecological knowledge." The other is to examine what has happened to the area.

Chapters deal with the lives of the Indians who inhabited the area and of the settlers who struggled to survive on the new continent. The bay itself and various of its tributaries are examined in detail, looking at their historical and current stories.

The book seeks to offer "a painstakingly researched description of people, places, events, and natural conditions representing the whole Chesapeake Bay in Smith's times [and] shine a light on the state of the bay today - and on the work that needs doing if we are going to conserve and preserve [it]."

The book is heavily illustrated with pictures, maps and graphics. The bibliography runs 25 pages of small type.

For reading or for reference, this book will be a fine addition to a library.

-- Myron Beckenstein

More secrets chipped away from the Monitor

Condensed from the Washington Times, August 8, 2007

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (AP) - Conservators have finished chiseling concreted sand and rust from the inside of the USS Monitor gun turret, which was salvaged from the Civil War shipwreck off Cape Hatteras, N.C., in August 2000.

This summer's final stage of the five-year excavation at the Mariners Museum turned up more than a dozen unexpected artifacts - including silverware, bullets and gun-sight covers - hidden inside the last few inches of concretion.

It also revealed several previously unknown features of the historic turret, including brass fittings for the sight holes drilled through its thick armored walls.

"The amount of new information we discovered was really astounding" said museum conservator Dave Krop.

The next step is subjecting the walls and roof of the upside-down turret to a long period of anti-corrosion treatment with a low-ampere electrical current.

"Ideally, you'd like to excavate something like this from start to finish," Krop said. "But for a variety of conservation reasons we had to do it in stages."

Unlike most archeological digs on land, this project required the time-consuming use of hammers and chisels.

"You have to hammer through everything to get at the artifacts. It's very slow and tedious - and sometimes even painful," said Tiffany James, a Monitor National Marine Sanctuary intern who worked inside the turret this summer and last year.

"But it's really great when you finally get them out and you get to touch something that no one has held in their hands for 145 years."

The 21.5-foot-wide turret is the hallmark feature of the Union ironclad, which made naval history when it clashed with the CSS Virginia - also known as the Merrimack - in the March 9, 1862 Battle of Hampton Roads.

Several excavation campaigns have resulted in the removal of tons of sediment and concretion as well as a set of human remains, hundreds of artifacts and the Monitor's two cannons.

A funny thing happened while mowing

By Michael G. Williams

Condensed from the Erickson Tribune, October 1, 2007

Given its grand distinction as "The Fort That Saved America," it's hard to imagine how Philadelphia's Fort Mifflin ever got lost in the tourism shuffle.

The fort allowed George Washington's tired army to escape to Valley Forge in 1777 during a five-week British naval bombardment that otherwise would have ended the Revolution.

But other nearby attractions eclipsed the fort for years, leaving it to a quiet existence along the Delaware River. This all changed in August 2006 when Wayne Irby, the fort's projects manager, was cutting the grass.

As Irby maneuvered around the torpedo magazine, a loose patch of earth gave way, exposing a sinkhole more than a foot deep. For reasons he still can't explain, he felt compelled to stop the mower and start digging.

He had discovered the entranceway to a series of underground rooms hidden for over a century. The fort's staff named it Casemate 11.

"The discovery amazed us because we originally believed there was only one room there, and the only record of that is a dotted square on an 18th Century diagram," says Lee Anderson, executive director at Fort Mifflin. "The other rooms aren't in any documents."

Casemate 11 started as two rooms used for storing gunpowder and munitions during the Revolutionary War. The Army added three more rooms throughout the mid- 1800s, creating an L-shaped labyrinth of five chambers that served as a prison during the Civil War.

After the war, the Army sealed and buried the casemate's entrance, leaving no traces of its existence. The August 2006 discovery was the first time anyone had set foot in Casemate 11 in over 130 years.

On entering, it was clear they had stumbled upon a veritable time capsule. Nineteenth-Century artifacts, many in pristine condition, remained exactly where the owners left them in the late 1860s.

"We found everyday items like tin plates, a wash basin, several bottles and a flask with a picture of George Washington on one side and General Burnside on the other," says Lee Anderson, the executive director.

Even more striking are messages from Civil War-era prisoners, literally scrawled on the doors and walls in their own handwriting. Men left notes of contrition preaching that "To be good is to be happy," and also issued warnings to "Shun this place oh, man who so ever art thou." Others just wrote their names, perhaps to leave some evidence that they lived.

The casemate's environment has held a constant temperature and humidity for over a century. Its wooden doors have been moist for so long that the water is actually holding them together. If dried too quickly, they would disintegrate.

To preserve and restore these artifacts, conservators must simulate the casemate's environment and change it incrementally to slowly adjust them to conditions above ground. Then they clean any corrosive surface products to prevent further deterioration.

The process is painstaking and time-consuming, with the drying stage alone taking several months, according to architectural conservator Andrew Fearon.

Earlier traces found at 1747 Java Mansion

By Jane Cox

Condensed from Letter from Lost Towns, Fall, 2007

While the present-day ruins of the Java Mansion, built ca. 1747, are impressive, the archeological story tells of domestic occupation that predates the mansion by more than 60 years.

Though we are digging only 100 feet away from the mansion, we are finding late 17th and early 18th Century ceramics, glass and buttons in numerous excavation units, which correlate with Thomas Sparrow's ownership and habitation of the land.

Only a few days before press time, we discovered a brick chimney base. Though we have not yet found the rest of the building footprint, we have found copious rocks, brick and wrought nails, which are evidence of the rest of the structure. We have also found ample burned materials (charcoal, animal bone and nails) adjacent to a larger oyster midden feature filled with 17th and early 18th Century artifacts.

Archival documents clearly state that there was "a Mansion House" on the property by 1712 and other documents strongly suggest that a brick building was constructed in the last quarter of the 17th Century somewhere on the property.

So is this the Sparrow's "Mansion House"? Stay tuned in the coming months as we analyze our field results and take a closer look at the artifacts uncovered.

The site is so interesting that we hope to return in coming years as funding allows. We will be investigating a prehistoric site at Camp Lett's this fall as part of this MHT-funded grant.

'Grand house on the Chesapeake' found

Continued from Page 1

In the weeks and months that followed, Kille, Sharpe and Luckenbach enlisted bands of interns from area colleges, volunteers from the Deale Area Historical Society and financial help from the Four Rivers Heritage Area. They began looking for the home's "footprint" and confirmation of its age.

Hacking through the undergrowth, and slicing into the drought-hardened soil, the team began turning up ceramics they could date. They pointed to a period between the 1690s and 1710.

Probate records suggested Samuel Chew - the third in a line of five Samuel Chews - built the place after the death of his father (Chew Two, as the archeologists refer to him) in 1718.

The foundation's grand footprint suggests four large rooms and a central hall with recessed entrances at the front and rear, which reduced the total area.

"If you count the second story and a full cellar, that's 11,880 square feet. We're just totally shocked at the dimensions of this thing," Luckenbach said. The Governor's Palace at Williamsburg, by comparison, had floor space of 10,368 square feet.

Luckenbach began checking other grand Chesapeake homes from the first half of the 18th Century. The only one completed with more floor space was Rosewell, in Virginia, a full three stories with 14,160 square feet. The Chew House's footprint, at 3,960 square feet, was second only to Stratford Hall, in Virginia, at 4,866 square feet.

And there is much more to find. Luckenbach said, "Volunteers are welcome."

Why the Chew Mansion discovery is significant

By Al Luckenbach

Condensed from Letters from Lost Towns, Fall 2007

In terms of fascinating discoveries, the Lost Towns Project has been most fortunate over the years. The lost town of Providence, the immense Whitehall brickyard, the ceramics at Rumney's Tavern in London Town and the tobacco pipe kiln at Swan Cove all stand out, but now there is another to join the list - the Chew Site.

Why so important? In a word, architecture. As the slow, dry, dusty excavations continued over the summer, we grew more and more amazed at what we were finding. Simply the embellishments were shocking. Four types of molded bricks, three types of quarried and polished stone (including marble), molded plaster, polychrome delft tiles and the list keeps growing.

But the biggest shock by far was the building's size. The basic footprint measures 66' x 66' and apparently contains a full cellar. We know from a small 1730 sketch that it was two stories tall. That's over 11,500 square feet of floor space.

Context? That's bigger than familiar historic mansions like Tulip Hill, Chase-Lloyd or Mount Clare. It's bigger than St. Peter's, the Governor's Mansion in St. Mary's or even the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg. The main rivals are Berkeley's home at Greenspring in Virginia, which had a smaller footprint, but was a full three stories, and Rosewell.

Chew had clearly built one of the great mansions of the Chesapeake, but its existence was virtually forgotten since its destruction in 1772.

Boy found in D.C. cast-iron coffin identified

By Randolph E. Schmid

Condensed from the Associated Press, September 20, 2007

WASHINGTON — Researchers have solved the mystery of the boy in the iron coffin. The cast-iron coffin was discovered by utility workers in Washington two years ago. Smithsonian scientists led by forensic anthropologist Doug Owsley set about trying to determine who was buried in it, so the body could be placed in a new, properly marked grave.

The body was that of 15-year-old William Taylor White, who died in 1852 and was buried in the Columbia College cemetery, they announced Thursday.

The researchers believe that the coffin was inadvertently left behind when the cemetery was later moved.

White was one of several potential candidates the team focused on after studying census records, obituaries and other public documents. They then tested the DNA of known living descendants to make the positive identification.

The pathologists and forensic anthropologists reported that White had congenital heart disease, a ventricular septum defect, which is a hole in the heart, that contributed to his death.

Because they are sealed, cast iron coffins tend to yield well-preserved bodies. Indeed, the young person looked not unlike an ancient mummy, even though he had not gone through the Egyptian embalming procedures.

Midshore Chapter drops out of existence — for now?

The Midshore Chapter of ASM has gone dormant. In a letter dated Sept. 17, 2007, former chapter officer Joe Reinhardt said the chapter had been inactive for three years and that he was returning its assets to ASM.

ASM Vice President Jim Gibb hoped that some good would come out of this, that people on the Eastern Shore would realize the need to reorganize the chapter and activate it under new leadership and with a more supportive membership. If you are on the Shore and interested in reviving the chapter, please contact Gibb or ASM President John Fiveash. Their addresses are on the back of this newsletter.

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

The Chapter meets five times a year in February, April, June, September, and November at the All Hallows Parish Brick Church at the Parish Hall near London Town, at 7 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns-Nocerito at AACHapASM@hotmail.com or visit the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

November 13: Greg Lockard of URS will discuss his work in Peru, "The Political Power of Moche Rulers on the North Coast of Peru."

Central

Central Chapter has no formal meetings planned. But if someone has a site he wants investigated, contact the Maryland Historical Trust or Central Chapter President Stephen Israel at 410-945-5514 or ssisrael@abs.net

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion. Dinner at a local restaurant is at 6. Monthly lab nights are the first Thursday of the month, from 7 to 9 at Needwood Mansion.

Contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848. Chapter website: www.mid-potomacarchaeology.org

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the Community Room of the C. Burr Artz Library, 110 East Patrick Street, Frederick on the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Contact Jeremy Lazelle at 301-845-9855 or jlazelle@msn.com or Nancy Geasey at 301-293-2708.

Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Wednesday of the month. Contact Dan Coates at dancoates@comcast.net or 410-273-9619(h) and 410-808-2398(c)

Nov. 10: Native American cooking demonstration at Maritime Museum Founders Day, Havre de Grace.

Nov. 15: Monthly chapter meeting at the Maritime Museum, Havre de Grace. Speaker: Keith Colston, "Efforts and Problems in State Recognition of Native Cultures."

Dec. 10: Annual chapter business meeting and dinner at Harford Glen, Abingdon. Speaker: Dana Kollmann, "Forensic Anthropology Experiences."

Jan. 10: Monthly chapter meeting at the Harford Historical Society, Bel Air. Speaker: Richard Sherrill, "Accessing the Harford County Archives."

Southern

Contact Kate Dinnel for information at katesilas@chesapeake.net or 410-586-8538.

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida, near the court house in Ellicott City. Some months, potluck suppers are held at 6:15 in September and March. Otherwise, dinner is available at an Ellicott City restaurant. For information, contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

Nov. 12: Lee Preston, "Prufrockian Archeology Lab, Please Do Ask What Is It When You Make Your Visit: A Hands-On Analysis of Artifacts, Documents and Images."

Jan. 14: Dr. L.J. Cripps, University of Durham/University of Leicester, "Cornish Iron Age (800 BC-43 AD): A Cultural Backwater?"

March 10: Rebecca Morehouse, collections manager, MAC Lab, "Life Beyond the Field: Artifact Curation at the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab."

May 12: Howard Wellman, lead conservator, MAC Lab, "Archeological Conservation and Artifact Handling in the Field."

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Ed Hanna, 301-777-1380. Chapter email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: www.geocities.com/wmdasm

Nov. 3: Field Trip and Tour of Smithsonian Exhibit "Key Ingredients" at Frostburg University.

Upcoming events in nearby Pennsylvania
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Chapter 27 of the Society for Pennsylvania Archeology will host the following meeting at the Renfrew Museum and Park Visitor's Center, in Waynesboro, Pa. The programs begin at 7 p.m.

November 13: Jim Herbstritt, archeologist with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Bureau of Historic Preservation, will talk on "Ceramic Types of the Lower Susquehanna Valley".

The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.

ASM. Inc members receive the monthly newsletter ASM Ink, the biannual journal MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10% discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Belinda Urquiza for membership rates. For publication sales, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net.

Submissions welcome. Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD 20782, 301-864-5289 or myronbeck@verizon.net

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