

AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Newsletter of the African American Archaeology Network

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Mark Bograd, Assistant Editor

Editor's Notes

This newsletter is still in its formative phase. It remains smaller than we would like and we are still trying to formalize the format, establish a chain of regional editors, etc. Although network members have sent some pieces for inclusion, the response rate is light. We would like to present small synopses of current research for the next issue. In order to do that we need your help. Please send research notes either to us or the regional editors listed at the end of this newsletter. All submissions should be of interest or related to the archaeological study of the African diaspora.

We received a number of letters about subscription information. At present, the newsletter is free --your tax dollars at work. Given the federal budget situation, let's hope we can keep it that way.

Research Notes

We are actively looking for information of research in African American archaeology. Send us information about your current research, findings, etc.

North America

W.E.B. DuBois Homesite, Great Barrington, Massachusetts

The W.E.B. DuBois Boyhood Homesite in Great Barrington, Massachusetts has been the focus of work by researchers from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Archaeological survey of the five acre National Register Property was conducted by the Department of Anthropology's summer field school, under the direction of Robert Paynter. Features

described in DuBois' reminiscences of Great Barrington and in National Register nomination papers were identified, along with two large middens. Surface collection of the middens produced some 12,000 artifacts dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Laboratory analysis of these objects continues with the goal of preparing a grant for excavation of the middens, house and barn areas, trash pits and well. Papers based on preliminary research were presented at the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) and at the 1990 Society for American Archaeology Meeting. A version of the WAC paper can be found in the book Politics of the Past, edited by Peter Gathercole and David Lowenthal (Unwin Hyman, 1990).

In addition, work on the documentary and oral historical resources is the basis for Nancy Muller's dissertation research on the relationship between gender, race, and land in northern African American communities. DuBois' understandings of the color line guide the archaeological and ethnohistorical projects stimulated by this remarkable site.

Contact Bob Paynter at the Department of Anthropology, Machmer Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 for more information.

First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia-

This past spring, as part of an ongoing monitoring and data recovery investigation associated with the construction of Philadelphia's Vine Street Expressway, John Milner Associates (JMA) excavated a new portion of the First African Baptist Church (FABC) cemetery dating from 1810-1822.

The extent of the remains revealed was surprising. Included were the remains of over 90 individuals, approximately half of which were infants or children. The 1983-1984 excavations at FABC uncovered 144 individuals, 43 percent of them subadults.

Skeletal and other materials, from this most recent excavation, were generally very well preserved. All but one of the coffins was of the pinch-toed, gabled-roof type which predominated at the later, 1824-1848 portions of the FABC

cemetery. Preliminary field results seem to reflect fewer African burial traits in this earlier population.

Jeanne Ward supervised a project team of over 20, assisted by Jeffrey Snyder. Thomas Crist is the Project Osteologist.

The director of the project is Thomas McCarthy who can be reached at JMA, Inc., 309 North Matlack Street, West Chester, PA 19380.

Charleston County, South Carolina-

SouthArc Inc. of Gainesville, Florida is currently working on a plantation site on the Wando River in Charleston County, South Carolina. Among their findings is a very unusual foundation which is identified on an 1828 plat map as "Negro houses." It is approximately 208 feet long by about 18 feet wide. It is divided into two equal rooms, each with a fireplace. The foundation and chimney bases are substantial brick, and the rest of the structure is believed to be the frame. There are very few artifacts located in or around the structure. With its close proximity to an extensive brick kiln complex, it is believed that the structure was used as a seasonal quarters for slaves brought in to make bricks.

They have also found another area, marked as "Negro houses" on the plat, containing both single structures and another linear structure. The latter is comprised of five or six rooms, but with only two definite fireplaces. This area

has a dense artifact deposition, particularly in the vicinity of the linear structure. It is believed that this area represents the year-round slave quarters for the plantation and that the linear structure served as the cooking-eating center for the settlement.

A report is now out on SouthArc's findings. The reference is:

Wayne, Lucy B. and Martin F. Dickinson (1990) Four Men's Ramble: Archaeology in the Wando Neck, Charleston County, South Carolina. SouthArc Inc., Gainesville, FL.

Freedman's Cemetery, Dallas-

A large Freedman's cemetery has been discovered in Dallas during the widening of the North Central Expressway. The highway had been built on top of part of Freedman's Memorial Park, a burial ground used by the Black community from 1861 to 1925. Work is being conducted by Jerry Henderson, an archaeologist with the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation.

It is estimated that there may be as many as 2,000 burials in the cemetery, fifty percent of which are believed to be children. Some of the graves were decorated with shells and other objects. Six to eight hundred of the internments must be relocated. At present, the community is uncertain whether it wants the burials analyzed or just reinterred. If these burials are analyzed by physical anthropologists, this would be the largest historic African American skeletal population ever studied.

Articles on the cemetery excavation appeared in the August 13 issue of the New York Times and the September 16 and October 5 issues of the Dallas Morning News.

Africa

Cape Town, South Africa-

The Historical Archaeological Research Group at the University of Cape Town is studying the underclass of that city. The late 18th and early 19th centuries were periods of change in the development of urban Cape Town. Between 1795, when the Dutch East India Company lost the Cape of Good Hope to the British, and 1838 when slaves were finally emancipated, the population of the town grew rapidly. Dispossessed indigenous herders moved into the town, former slaves moved off the farms and "Prize Negroes", captured by the British from other nations' slaving ships, were put into permanent "apprenticeship: at the Cape. By 1840, backyards, cellars, lofts, and lanes on the outskirts of Cape Town were packed with an impoverished underclass seeking a means of survival.

As part of its project studying the underclass of Cape Town, the Historical Archaeology Research Group has excavated five backyard areas, a well, and a low status living area in Cape Town's Castle. A central interest in this research is developing an understanding of the forms of resistance expressed through material culture and used by the underclass to gain an identity.

Understanding Cape Town in the early 19th century is crucial background to understanding the development of racial segregation and of the apartheid city.

For further information contact Martin Hall, Historical Archaeology Research Group, Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa.

Publications of Note

Colonial Williamsburg Magazine-The Spring 1990 issue is devoted in large part to African-American history. Included is an article by Rex Ellis on the past decade of interpretation of African-Americans at Colonial Williamsburg.

Archaeology Jamaica (New Series)- The Archaeological Society of Jamaica has begun publishing a newsletter and is looking for subscribers. The Editor is Dr. E. Kofi Agorsah of the Department of History of the University of the West Indies, Mona. Archaeology Jamaica will be published twice a year. For subscription information write Dr. Agorsah, The Editor (Archaeology Jamaica), Department of History, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica, W.I. or The Secretary, Archaeological Society of Jamaica, 1 Hillview Avenue, Kingston, 10, Jamaica, W.I.

Other News

Additions to the Video List

In our last issue we noted four films on African American

archaeology. Two more have been brought to our attention.

Blacks and Whites in Buxton: A Site Explored, A Town Remembered (23 min., 1/2" VHS; for purchase \$65.00). Discusses the excavation of Buxton, Iowa conducted by David Gradwohl and Nancy Osborn in the early 1980's. Available from the Media Resources Center, 121 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011, (515) 294-1540.

Black Warriors of the Seminole (30 min., not yet available for purchase). Produced by Vinnie Jones and Denise Matthews for WUFT-TV, Gainesville, the documentary explores the history of the Black Seminoles. Escaped Black slaves from the southeast joined the Seminole Indians. They fought against the U.S. government and then, after a treaty in 1830, fought with the U.S. Army in the West. Jane Landers and Brent Weisman, who has identified a Black Seminole archaeological site, were consulted for the project. Contact WUFT-TV at (904) 392-5551 for distribution information.

Call for Papers

The Winterthur museum is seeking paper proposals for its 1991 conference on "Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture." The conference is intended to promote dialogue among scholars from diverse fields interested in material culture studies. Tentative topics for the sessions include theory and method/culture and context; things not found; household and

domestic economy; landscape and architecture; and industrial archaeology. Proposals are limited to 250 words and must be postmarked by Dec. 31 and should specify not only the subject of the paper, but also its relevance to the conference and the session(s) for which it is most appropriate. Send proposals to Lu Ann De Cunzo/Bernard Herman, Office of Advanced Studies, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, DE 19735.

Grants for Archaeological Research in Liberia

The Foundation for Field research is looking for grant proposals for fieldwork in Liberia, West Africa. Support is for the Spring and Summer of 1992 and 1993. Perhaps the political situation will quiet down by then. The application deadline is January 1, 1991. For additional information contact the Foundation for Field Research, P.O. Box 2010, Alpine, CA 92001. Phone: (619) 445-9264.

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