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Archaeological Investigation of St. George's Manor, Strong's Neck, Setauket, Suffolk County, New York

Prepared by Hofstra University's Center for Public Archaeology

Introduction

In 2010 an archaeological survey consisting of a series of 22 shovel test pits was conducted in the west yard of the property at the colonial-era St. Georges Manor site to determine if cultural deposits from the original manor house existed. Based on the initial positive results of the survey, further unit excavations (eight units total) and additional six shovel tests were conducted in 2011. These excavations revealed a stone foundation along with a several artifacts dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. While the foundation cannot be definitely attributed to the colonial manor house, the date of the associated artifacts and its method of constriction are consistent with buildings from the 18th century. As such, these findings warrant protection of the unexcavated sections of the site and call for additional testing to be undertaken in the future.

Background

In 1686, Colonel William "Tangier" Smith, nicknamed for being the past Mayor of the city of Tangiers, Morocco, arrived in New York Harbor to begin a new life with his wife, Martha, and their two children. By 1689, he managed to purchase the rights of approximately 410 acres in the north of the township of Brookhaven, called Little Neck. This purchase was facilitated through the efforts of then New York Governor Thomas Dougan, who had also been the Lieutenant Governor of Tangier in the same period that Colonel Smith held his mayoral position. Sometime in 1689, Colonel Smith and his family left New York City to settle on Little Neck, and construct a family homestead. This homestead was probably the original Manor house. Five years later, Colonel Smith negotiated the rights of another major land purchase within the middle and southern portions of Brookhaven. Following this, he applied to Benjamin Fletcher, the current Governor of New York, to be granted a patent to all of these properties, north and south.

The application was granted under the Crown of William and Mary as a *manorial* patent. Thus the *Manor of St. George* came into existence, with Colonel Smith the Lord of the Manor, and that "the said lordship and manor shall

be and forever continue free and exempt from the jurisdiction of any town, township or manor".

Colonel Smith died in 1705 and was buried in the family cemetery on Little Neck. His properties were bequeathed to his sons. His eldest son, Colonel Henry Smith, inherited the properties of Little Neck and the surrounding areas, as this was considered the more valuable. The second eldest son, Major William Henry Smith, received the other portion of his properties, although much, much larger in composition. The northern properties became to be known as St. George's Manor, while the larger property retained the name of Manor of St. George. A second Manor house was constructed there by Major William Smith on Mastic Neck; now know as Smith's Point.



Many years pass, and Anna Smith, the greatgranddaughter of the original Lord of the Manor, married Selah Strong, the descendant of another prominent family of Connecticut and Long Island. In 1760, they take up their residence in the original Manor house at St. George's Manor (Figure 1) and would reside there until 1769. The land was then sold by the Smith family to Andrew Seton, a British loyalist. After the American Revolutionary War, the property was repurchased by Selah Strong through a foreclosure proceeding, and Little Neck became known as Strong's Neck. In 1823, Selah H. Strong, his wife Cornelia (nee Udall) and family took up residence in the original Manor house. But eventually, the old homestead proved too small for their growing family and, in 1844, a second Manor house was built which still stands today, and is occupied by direct descendants of the Strong family (Figure 2). The original Manor house was demolished, and its location still undetermined. (Bailey 1961), (Duffield 1921), (Smith and Bainbridge 1978).



Research Design

The broader research goal of the present project was to explore the St. George's Manor site on Strong's Neck for the possibility of recovering deposits associated with the original St. George's Manor house. The first manor house stood at the site from as early as the 1690s until the still standing manor house was built in the 1840s. Previously untested data collected at St. George's Manor would ultimately help to produce an archaeological collection that could be compared with collections from similar colonial manor sites in Suffolk County such as Sylvester Manor and Lloyd Manor.

Project Description and Field Methodology

To test the site we pursued a two-step strategy. The first, pursued in 2010, was to test the west yard area based on the incidental discovery of historic artifacts by owner Jack Strong while gardening. The second, pursued in 2011, was to further explore a fragment of a foundation which was identified in 2010. In addition, excavation units were opened in the northwest section of the west yard, which in 2010 produced a concentration of early 18th century historic ceramics.

The project began in 2010 by establishing site grid over the west yard. A N0/E0 datum point for the grid was established at the corner of a chain link fence on the neighbor's property (Figure 3- not pictured). The baseline (N0) of the grid ran east from the chain link fence corner. A series of four 80-meter, north-south, running transects were then laid in every five meters at N0/E8, N0/E13, N0/E18, and N0/E23.

A site datum for elevation purposes was established in 2010 by placing a nail in the utility pole in proximity to the excavation area (Figure 4 - not pictured). Elevations were taken at various shovel test locations in reference to this point. In 2011 this datum was tied into temporary unit datum stakes for the season's two excavations area. For excavations units 1-4, the unit datum was 44.5cm below the site level datum. For excavation units 5-8, the unit datum was 86cm below the site level datum. Field recording for the units excavation were thus recorded as Below Unit Datum (BUD) rather than Below Site Datum (BSD). As such all measurements must be added to the 44.5cm and 86cm to determine the actual measurement below the site datum.

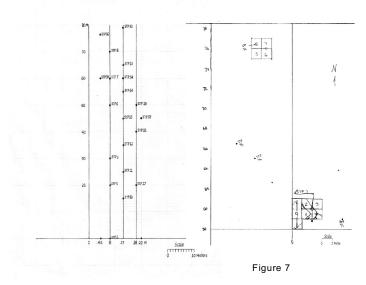


Figure 5

The 2010 shovel test survey involved the excavation of 22 shovel test pits (Figure 5). All shovel test excavations were completed using hand tools such as shovels and trowels., Soil characteristics such as color, texture, and inclusions were recorded for each identified deposit. Most STPs were excavated following the natural stratigraphy such that each test pit involved the identification and excavation of between two and six stratigraphic layers. All artifacts were collected and recorded for each layer.

The 2010 fieldwork identified a concentrated area in the northern section of the survey area of 18th and 19th century ceramics and an *in situ* section of a stone foundation feature. This area was more intensively tested in 2011, and this additional testing is the focus of this report. While the artifacts from the 2010 survey were preliminarily analyzed for distribution patterns, they were not fully processed and are not included in the attached artifact catalog.

In 2011, a set of four one-meter square units (EUs 1, 2, 3, and 4) was centered around STP 7, the shovel test pit where the *in situ* foundation feature was identified. The center of these units was located at N60/E10. In order to further explore a foundation feature found in Units 1-4, an additional 1x3 meter unit (EU9) was excavated adjacent to EU 1-4 on the west side. Another quadrant of four one-meter square units (EUs 5,6,7, & 8), was established in the area adjacent to STP 36 at N76.5/E4.5. Finally, six additional STPs were also excavated in 2011 to further understand the archaeological deposits in the productive northern section of the west yard (Figures 6 - not pictured and Figure 7).

All excavated deposits were dry-screened through a 0.6 mm (1/4 in) wire screen mesh and artifacts were washed, placed in bags, and delivered to the Center for Public Archaeology's lab for analysis, cataloging, and packing (Appendix A - available from CfPA). Artifacts that weren't collected were noted on provenience sheets. All artifacts and original notes are to be delivered to St. George's

Manor for curation along with this report. Information was recorded on standardized archaeological forms, and soil color and textures were noted using the Munsell system of soil colors and textures (Munsell Color 1975). This subsurface archaeological investigation was designed to fulfill the guidelines of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

In addition to excavations, Dr. Dan Davis, Professor of Geosciences at Stony Brook University, undertook a ground penetrating radar survey of the west yard at St. George's Manor. Initial results of this survey could not determine the presence of any anomalies outside of those already define archaeologically. Some deeper transitions were noted, though these were determined to beyond the scope of archaeological interest.

Excavation Results - Units 1, 2, 3, and 4 - Surface

The surface was comprised of a layer of sod, consistent with a landscaped yard.

Stratum A - Stratum A was encountered just below the sod and consisted of a sandy loam ranging from very dark brown in units 1 and 4 (10YR 2/2) to dark grayish brown in units 2 and 3 (10YR 4/2). Stratum A in units 1, 2, 3, and 4, ranged from 29cm at the shallowest and 43cm at the deepest. The stratum was excavated in three levels in units 1 and 4, and in four levels in units 2 and 3. Ceramic fragments, glass fragments, brick, wire nails, metal, bone, lithic flakes, metal zipper pull, clay pipe stems, and a button were found in units 1, 2, 3, and 4 of stratum A. The artifacts discovered in all four units infer a date range of 1800 to the present (Noel Hume 1991).

In unit 1, stratum A was stopped because of a soil change between 34 and 36cm BUD. In unit 4, stratum A was stopped because of a feature encounter between 29 and 30.9cm BUD. Extensions of this same feature were encountered in unit 1 as well, but because the feature wasn't definitive enough a new stratum wasn't created until a soil change became evident. Units 2 and 3 ended in level 4 upon encountering the feature at a depth of 39.5 – 42cm, and 41-43 cm BUD respectively.

Stratum B - Stratum B was encountered in units 1 and 4. In unit 1, stratum B was excavated in one level, while in unit 4, stratum B was excavated in two levels. Excavation was stopped in unit 1 stratum B level one at 37-41cm BUD upon reaching the similar depths as those in units 2 and 3. Unit 4 required two levels to reach this same depth, which ranged from 30cm-44cm BUD. In an attempt to create a uniform depth among all units before proceeding to combine units 1-4 into a single unit, units were lowered accordingly. All of stratum B consisted of a loamy sand ranging from dark yellowish brown (10 YR 4/4) to very dark brown (10 YR 2/2). Ceramic fragments, glass fragments, cut/wrought nail, bone, lithic flakes, an apparel clasp, bricks, mortar, clay pipe stems, and a button were found in unit 1 and 4 of stratum B. The artifacts discovered in both units infer a date range of 1740 to 1810 (Noel Hume 1991), (Figure 8 and 9).

Stratum C - A decision was made to combine units 1, 2, 3, and 4, in an effort to further excavate the feature found in all four units. This newly combined unit was referred to as EU 1-4. It was decided to call continuation of the excavated unit 1-4 stratum C to make things more terminologically convenient.

The sandy loam soil of Stratum C of EU 1-4 was excavated around the feature and divided into two levels. The first level was dark yellowish brown (10 YR 3/4), and the second level was brown (7.5 YR 4/4). Because of time restraints, the soil surrounding the feature in EU 1-4 were only excavated to a depth of 76cm BUD. Ceramic fragments, glass fragments, a clothing fastener, a button, cut/wrought nails, bone, and clay pipe stems were found in EU 1-4 of stratum C. These artifacts infer a date range from 1740-1820 (Noel Hume 1991) (Figure 10 and 11).

It is very notable that a small concentration of personal items including straight pins, a button, a clothing fastener were found immediately adjacent to the exterior of the corner of the foundation. It is possible this collection was intentionally placed here. That this would have been the northeast corner of the building suggests a tentative association with a documented pattern of buried caches of personal items found in sites associated enslaved Africans like St. George's Manor (e.g., Leone 2005, Matthews 2010, Rava and Matthews n.d.) (Figure 12).

Feature 1 - The feature was found to extend throughout the newly created units 1-4. Designated as Feature-1, it consisted of various sized stones and cobbles stacked in a linear pattern forming a right angle whose acute angle faced west. A significantly larger stone was encountered at the point where the two linear patterns met forming a right angle. Another very large stone was found southeast of that point (Figure 13). Based on these qualities it was readily apparent that this feature was a stone foundation for a structure that formerly stood in this location. Based on its association with 18th century and early 19th century artifacts, the foundation is believed to have been a part of the original manor house complex.

Unit 9:

Unit 9 was a 1 by 3 meter extension unit excavated for the purpose of determining whether Feature-1 extended further northwest and southwest from EU 1-4. It was excavated to a depth of 67 to 73cm BUD. Feature-1 definitively extended into the southern third of unit 9, however rubble found in the northern third was not definitively identified as part of the feature-1. In addition, it appeared that a large quantity of bricks was found at 67 to 73cm BUD in the northern third of unit 9. (Figures 13 and 14).

Shovel Test Pits (STP) 11-1, 11-4, 11-5, and 11-6

Four STPs were excavated for the purpose of exploring possible extensions of the feature. No architectural remains were encountered in STP 11-1 at N59/E13. STPs 11-4 (N65/E5.5) and 11-5 (N66.5/E3.5) encountered bricks, stone, and mortar, suggesting the foundation

continues some ways to the northwest (Figure 6). Artifacts from these test pits included a small set of late 18th century ceramics.

STP 11-6 (N55/E5.2) discovered a buried concentration of late 19th century artifacts including "semi-granite" and "semi-porcelain" vessels as well as medicine bottle and tin can fragments. This small collection suggests a clearing and landscaping of the west yard around the turn of the 20th century

Shovel Test Pits (STP) 11-2 and 11-3

STPs 11-2 an 11-3 were excavated in the northeast section of the west yard, an area untested in 2010 due to a lack of time. STP 11-2 was located at N65/E16. STP 11-3 was located at N60/E16. A small collection of late 18th and early 19th century artifacts was taken from these tests.

Units 5, 6, 7, and 8

Excavations in the northwest area of the west yard were undertaken based on the recovery of early 18th century ceramics types: white salt-glazed stoneware and tinglazed earthenware shards in the 2010 survey. Unit 5 was excavated to a depth of 40 to 49cm BUD. A deposit of creamware fragments was encountered in the middle of the north wall of unit 6 resting at a depth of approximately 40cm BUD. Units 7 and 8 were then prepared to be excavated. Unit 7 was established directly north of unit 6. Only the southern half of unit 7 was excavated to a depth of 42 to 50cm BUD to reveal the remainder of the ceramic deposit. Also at approximately 31cm a large amount of coal and ash were encountered in unit 7. Unit 8 was laid in adjacent to the northern side of unit 5, but it was not excavated. Among the three excavated units there was a large concentration of ceramics, glass fragments, and cut/wrought nails. The creamware fragment deposits give a date range of 1762-1820 (Noel Hume 1991). The coal and coal ash suggests that at least some of these deposits date to later in the 19th century (Figures 6 and 15).

Interpretation and Summary

As stated in the Research Design, the broader research goal was to explore the site for the possibility of recovering deposits associated with the original St. George's Manor house. The feature that was encountered in units 1-4 appears to be the remnants of a building foundation. Although the foundation exists, the excavation could not securely date the possible structure to the late 17th or 18th century. Only further testing would be able to determine if this feature was part of the original manor house or the foundation for an ancillary outbuilding.

It appears that stratum A in units 1-4 was a 19th century landscaping deposit laid in to cover remnants of the historic foundation that may have remained exposed in the yard. The presence of prehistoric (probably Woodland period) lithic projectile points and flakes with 19th century wire nails indicates a disturbed stratum of landscaping deposit soil matrix. It is unknown whether that top soil was from the site or brought in from another location.

Strata B and C in units 1-4 contained artifacts dating from the mid-18th century to the mid-19th century. This date range indicates that the deposit may be associated with occupation of the original manor house until it was demolished in the mid-1800s. The possible buried cache near the northeast corner of the foundation feature also suggests that this site has the potential to produce compelling material culture associated with enslaved African community that served the Smith and Strong families in the 18th century.

Excavations within unit 9 could indicate that the interior of the foundation was perhaps lower than the exterior, but further excavations are needed to confirm. Shovel testing in the yard could not definitively give an outline of the rest of the foundation. Thus, the actual size or dimensions of the building supported by this foundation could not be determined by the results of this excavation. The presence of coal, ceramics, and ash in units 5, 6, and 7 indicates the possibility of that area being used as a trash deposit, but further investigation would be needed to confirm.

Significant artifacts were presented in a display to the property owner (Figure 16).

Recommendations

Due to the presence of at least an intact segment of an early foundation feature and a high density of artifacts throughout the west yard, we recommend that prior to any landscaping the land be further surveyed and tested for any cultural materials. In order to identity the size, date range, and use of the possible foundation encountered, additional archaeological investigations would be required. We also recommend that an expert be consulted to analyze the recovered brick and mortar fragments discovered to assist in assigning a date to the structure.

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Figure 8. Units 1,2,3 and 4, Level B, before combination into unit 1-4, facing south.



Figure 10. Units 1-4, Stratum C, showing feature 1, facing east.



Figure 9a. Units 1-4, stratum B, sample artifacts.



Figure 11a. Units 1-4, Stratum C, sample artifacts.



Figure 9b. Units 1-4, stratum B, sample artifacts.



Figure 11b. Units 1-4, Stratum C, sample artifacts.



Figure 12. Personal items found adjacent to the northeast corner of feature 1.



Figure 13. Units 1-4 and Unit 9, showing Feature 1, facing west.



Figure 15. Ceramic fragments in Units 6 and 7, facing north.



Figure 14. Unit 9, southern portion, facing south.



Figure 16. Display of selected artifacts given to home owner.



Principal investigator Dr. Chris Matthews and 2010 site supervisor Jenna Coplin examine test hole.



2010 SCAA volunteer Milton Hostetter reviewing square excavating with Jenna Coplin.



2011 Transect in preparation.

All excavations were supervised by the director and staff of the Center for Public Archaeology (CfPA) at Hofstra University. The 2010 excavation crew consisted of volunteers for the Suffolk County Archaeological Association with Jenna Coplin serving as site supervisor. The 2011 excavation crew consisted of Janine Billabello, Caitlin Poore, Megan Ekstrom, Brienne Giodano, Desire Palma, Kathy Droesch, Dwayne Lindsey, William Keating, Tami Longjohn, Arial Flanjik, Rachel lancangelo and Brandon Ungar. The 2011 project supervisor was Ray Scelzi. This report was compiled by Hofstra University students Joe Tonelli, Tess Jay, and Julie Procopio under the supervision of Ross T. Rava, CfPA Lab Director. Additional lab assistance was provided by Caitlin Poore and Megan Ekstrom. Dr. Christopher Matthews is the principal investigator of this project. Photos - Matthews, Scelzi and Stone. Webpage for this project is: http://people.hofstra.edu/Christopher_Matthews/Manorstgeorge.html



Geophysicist Dr. Dan Davis of Stony Brook University teaching GPR technique to dig volunteers, 2011.



2011 Site Supervisor Ray Scelzi starting a square.



2011 Measuring artifact depth in a square being excavated.



2011 Sifting behind the manor house.

Resources

The Long Island History Journal, Vol. 21- 2 is now available on line at www.lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/. All back issues from 1988 to 2008 are available at www.sunysb.libguides.com/lihj. Vol. 21-1 contains an article by Ann McGovern, "Rocky Point's African American Past: A Forgotten History Remembered Through Historical Archaeology at the Betsy Prince Site." Vol. 21-1 also contains a video review of the March-May, 2010 Southampton Historical Museum exhibit, "Southampton Women Who Made a Difference," curated by Gaynell Stone, Ph.D.

The Institute for American Indian Studies has launched a new website, www.iaismuseum.org to showcase their exhibits, research and collections department, instructional videos, classroom materials, and publications, especially focused on Connecticut Native people.

St. May's College of Maryland has produced archaeological reports on Maryland governor Josias Fendall's/Charles Town dwelling house and plantation, Westwood Manor, Manahowic's Neck/Notley plantation, and the Zekiah Fort/Piscataway Indian Settlement. These reports are available on CD and may be requested from Julia King by emailing jking@smcm.edu. Further images and artifact databases will be added to the website www.chesapeakearchaeology.org.

Eastern American Indian History Conference will be held April 28 and 29 at the Fort Pitt Museum in Pittsburgh, PA. For information follow the Museum link at www.heinzhistorycenter.org.

A Historical Guide to Soda, Beer & Mineral Water Bottles & Bottling Companies, 1840-1970-Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Queens. George Wm. Fisher and Donald H. Weinhardt. Myshkin Press, 300 Walden Court, East Moriches, NY 11940. CD - \$22.00, additional CDs - \$12. Lisoda@optonline.net.

Long Island Medicine Bottles - Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, Suffolk - Patent Medicines, Bitters, Sarsaparillas, Hair Products & Citrates - c. 1830-1920. George William Fisher. Myshkin Press, lisoda@optonline.net

The New Amsterdam history Center, home of the Virtual New Amsterdam Project, has created a detailed portrait of the Dutch city nearly four centuries ago. Besides their research center and archives, the Center helps create school curricula, and organizes historical and cultural events. To take a 3-D virtual tour of the city as it appeared in 1660, go to:

www.newamsterdamhistorycenter.org

Archaeologies of Poverty, in **Historical Archaeology**, Vol. 45, Number 3, 2011, is co-edited by Suzanne M. Spencer-Wood and Christopher N. Matthews (Hofstra University). Chris' chapter is "Lonely Islands: Culture, Community, and Poverty in Archaeological Perspective."

It is an examination of the Setauket/Stony Brook Christian Avenue African/Native American community and the establishment of the Bethel Christian Avenue Laurel Hill Historic District. Chris' current excavation of the Hart house in the area is part of the support for the district.

PANYC (Professional Archaeologists of New York) annual Public Program at the Museum of the City of New York, will be held April 22 from 1 - 3 PM. The program will explore the archaeological remains of the ship found at the World Trade Center. SCAA's June 2010 Annual Meeting program was about this buried ship.

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