

NEWSLETTER

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**Excavations at the Jacob and Hannah Hart Site in
Setauket**



Jacob Hart House & Home
Courtesy Three Village Historical Society

The Center for Public Archaeology (CfPA) at Hofstra University tested and excavated the archaeological remains at the Jacob and Hannah Hart site in Setauket in June 2011. The excavation is part of the it "A Long Time Coming" project, a research collaboration between the CfPA and Higher Ground Intercultural and Heritage Association, Inc. Higher Ground is a community-based preservation organization who initiated the effort to create the Bethel- Christian Avenue-Laurel Hill historic district in Setauket in 2005. The historic district recognizes and help preserve the heritage of the area's historic Native and African American community. The project directors for A Long Time Coming are Robert Lewis (Higher Ground), Judith Burgess (Education Works, Co.) and Chris Matthews (Monclair State Univ.).

The Harts were a prominent family in this community. They are documented in the U.S. Census, *The Port Jefferson Echo* newspaper, the Tyler store account books, and even in a fortuitously preserved school registry from 1898-99. Jacob Hart was born in Setauket in 1856. He is known to have spent time at sea as well as worked as a mason, laborer, and factory worker. Hannah Hart was born in Virginia, but moved to Long Island to work as a domestic. She is recorded as a laundress in the U.S. Census of 1910. Jacob and Hannah had several children. Some moved away and others stayed in Setauket. Many of their descendants still live in the area.

The Harts lived at the site we excavated from the 1880s until the 1930s. The house was a three-room, one-and-a-half-story structure that is documented on various historic maps and a historic photograph. The house is also remembered by several members of the Setauket community, who shared their knowledge with the research team.



Figure 1

The 2011 excavations uncovered several features and collected hundreds of artifacts dating to the period when the Harts lived at the site. The bulk of the excavation entailed exposing an intact stone foundation that is believed to have supported the rear lean-to that served as the kitchen. Within this foundation we uncovered a stone hearth base that was likely the principal source of heat for the family (Fig.1). In another area we revealed a buried brick pathway that would have provided access to the front entrance (Fig.2). In yet another area, a collection of stones bricks and an *in situ* wooden plank await further research to be understood. We also identified the family's well, which could still be of use at the mouth of the nearby stream.





Figure 2

The artifacts recovered include a variety of late 18th century historic ceramics of both service and storage/preparation types. A great deal of window glass was discovered, suggesting the house was torn down rather than moved away. Several bottle fragments were found. One set of bottle fragments is of particular interest. It was embossed with SPERM SEWING MACHINE OIL. The bottle has a 'tooled' top dating it to before 1905. See Figure 3 for these artifacts.

Having also recovered a wide variety of ceramic, glass, and metal button types, this bottle may have part of the Hannah Hart's sewing kit that she used as laundress.



Figure 3

Another very interesting artifact found in an area that would have been on the exterior of the house was a knapped quartz projectile point. We have not yet been able to research this point further, but it may very well represent material evidence of the survival of some Native American skills and traditions among the Hart family.

In addition to the excavation of the Hart site, the CfPA ran a field internship program for Hofstra students who were trained in both archaeological and historical research techniques. Students researched four properties in the BCALH historic district and interviewed community members to help to build a richer archive from the memories and collections about their history in the community.

We also partnered with the Three Village School District to create an Archaeology Club, in which students from Gelinas Junior High School were able to participate in the excavation.

We will be returning the Hart Site in summer 2013. We will also be working with Bethel AME church of Setauket to developed an exhibit of the findings and to undertake research to help to develop a more comprehensive history of the church in the community. To stay up to date with the project, please visit our website:

<http://people.hofstra.edu/ChristopherMatthews/ALT.html>



Student excavators: Brienne Nicole, Rachel Iancangelo, Tami Longjohn, and Angela.

Montclair State University in collaboration with Higher Ground Intercultural and Heritage Association, Inc. is offering the opportunity to work in an historical archaeological field school. Field school participants will contribute to three ongoing research projects. These include excavation at the Jacob and Hannah Hart site, a late 19th -century home associated with one of the community's most well known and highly regarded families, as well as excavations at the Thompson House site, a locally prominent 18th century farmstead. In both cases the fieldwork seeks to collect data on the early history and development of Setauket's Native and African American community in the contexts of both slavery and freedom. The third project is a community-based historical study of Setauket's Bethel AME Church, which was found by community members in 1845 and remains a vital

community institution. Participants will learn fundamentals of archaeological excavation, site interpretation, and oral and archival research methods.

For more information on program costs, etc, go to: www.montclair.edu/student-accounts/tuition-and-fees/summer The Field school is limited to 12 students, to apply for more information go to: matthewsc@mail.montclair.edu.

The Unkechaug Indians of Eastern Long Island: A History. John A. Strong. U of Oklahoma Press, 2011.

John A. Strong has produced another valuable book on the Indian experience in eastern Long Island by chronicling the survival of the tiny Unkechaug nation, whose fifty-acre state-recognized reservation at Poospatuck is located in Brookhaven, New York. For the better part of three and a centuries the Unkechaug have weathered myriad assaults on their sovereignty and culture. Strong walks readers through these challenges, including epidemic disease, greedy land speculators, colonial-era debt slavery, racism, Christianization grinding poverty, (sometimes) hostile white neighbors, duplicitous state officials, and an unsympathetic federal bureaucracy. More recently they have faced down hostile business interests and New York's governors in conflicts over attempts to tax tobacco sold in reservation smoke shops. While the Unkechaug experience resembles that of other tribes in the region, Strong notes important differences that make this book worth reading.



Thomas Hill (1888- c.1930). Smithsonian Institution.

Unkechaug Indians falls into three methodologically distinct sections.

The first (chaps. 1-3) is an analysis of the complex and often confusing seventeenth- and eighteenth-century regional land deals between Indian leaders and whites. Breaking little-new ground, it is essentially an overview of what Francis Jennings famously called "the deed game"¹ – the Euro-American use of deeds to legitimize land acquired from Indians through trickery, coercion, and fraud.

For most readers of Ethnohistory, the second section (parts of chap. 3; chaps. 4-6) will likely prove the most insightful, informative, and innovative. Covering the late seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, it explores new occupational patterns among the Unkechaug and the impacts of Christianization, poverty, and indentured

servitude on their culture as well as the increasingly multiracial composition of the Poospatuck community.



Hannah Ben Edwards, ca. 1810-1893. Photo taken ca. 1885. FINS, William Floyd Estate.

A fascinating and unique aspect of the tribe's history is clearly the establishment of William Tangier Smith's Saint George Manor and the nearby Floyd estate in the late 1690s. Anachronisms for their time, they nevertheless went on to play an important role in Unkechaug survival, cushioning colonialism's effects and enabling the tribe to maintain cultural cohesion. The fact that the Poospatuck reservation was on the ground, of the Smith manor and that a quasi-feudal relationship developed between the Unkechaug and the families controlling the estates, whom the Indians served as a dependent labor force for generations, frames a large portion of Unkechaug history. Strong's reading of the impact of the tribe's participation in whaling has broader implications for the study of colonialism and gender in the region.

Another significant finding is their rejection of revitalization efforts spearheaded by Samson Occum and other Christian natives from the region in the eighteenth century. In exploring why participation in the Brothertown migration proved unappealing, Strong reveals a hitherto neglected native ethos characterizing the vibrant Poospatuck Christian church, led by Unkechaug ministers and with its own distinct religious traditions.



Unkechaug matriarch, Martha Davis Hill Maynes (1835-1933) Photo taken ca. 1906. Chief Harry Wallace.

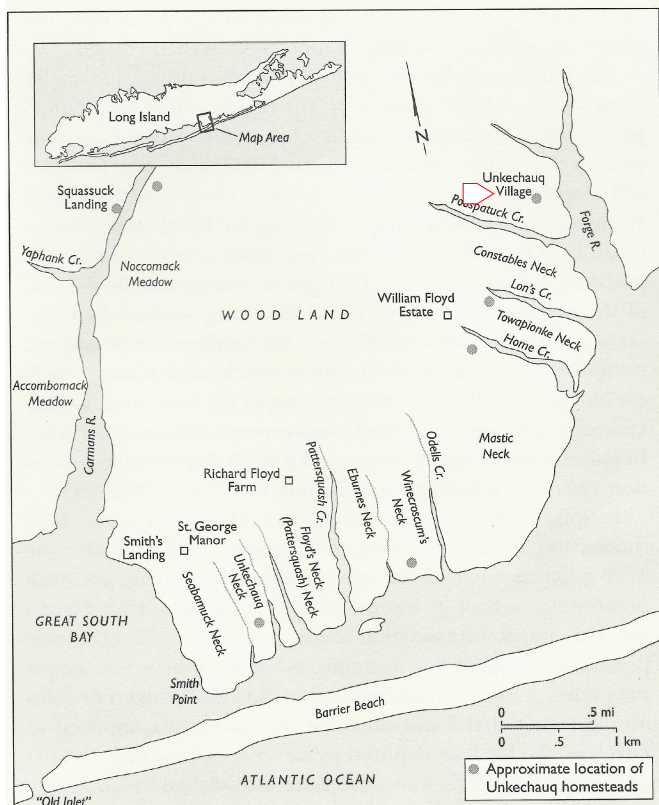
The final section deals with post-1875 political developments that affected the tribe and their ongoing fight to maintain sovereignty and gain federal recognition. Some of the research for the book was drawn from Strong's earlier scholarship, but most was gathered with the aid of the Unkechaug's legal team for their defense in a federal lawsuit over tobacco revenues, the 2009 *Gristedes Foods v. Poospatuck (Unkechaug) Nation*. Strong served as an expert witness on behalf of the tribe and was given unprecedented access to unpublished tribal histories and allowed to interview tribal members. Despite condemning the arbitrary criteria and cultural biases inherent in the current Bureau of Indian Affairs tribal recognition process, Strong never-the-less constructs many of his arguments around demonstrating that the Unkechaug meet these benchmarks. For some, Strong's efforts to make his evidence conform to this flawed definition will prove off-putting. However, others will doubtlessly value the book as an example of how ethnohistoric scholarship can have real-world application, bolstering Unkechaug efforts at federal recognition rather than merely serving the often narrow agendas of academic research.

Brian D, Carroll, Central Washington University

Note:

1 Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York, 1976), 128-45.

This Strong volume was rated in the top 10% of the 7,000 volumes in 2011 rated by *Choice Reviews Online*, a service for libraries nationally.



Map 4. Unkechaug homesteads and English colonial estates on Mastic Peninsula, ca. 1750

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