

# Conference on New England Archaeology

## Black Archaeology in New England: Theory, Dialogue, and Interpretation

Meeting at Kemper Auditorium, Phillips Academy  
 Reception at Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology  
 Andover, Massachusetts  
 April 20, 2013



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The 2013 topic will focus entirely on aspects of historical archaeology of the African American experience in New England. Presentations will include historical and archaeological research from the maritime, rural and urban environments of the region. The presentations will underscore the importance of theory and practice in understanding the narrative as well as, representation of the past and descendant communities. The sessions will underscore the importance of confronting the history of race in New England. Special attention to the role of public dialog, interpretation and memorializing of the past will be addressed.

### Conference Schedule

- 9:00-9:30 am Coffee and breakfast
- 9:30-9:45 am Greetings and Introduction: Nathan Hamilton, Chair
- 9:45-10:00 am Welcome and Note on the Lucy Foster Site Exhibit: Ryan Wheeler
- 10:00-10:30 am Whitney Battle-Baptiste, PhD (UMass Amherst): *In Search of Lena and Lucy: Intersectional Narratives of Race, Gender and Class in New England*
- 10:30-11:00 am Matthew Lawrence, MA (Stellwagen National Marine Sanctuary): *Voyage to Discovery: Revealing Dimensions of the African-American Maritime Experience in New England*
- 11:00-11:30 am Kathleen Wheeler, PhD (Independent Archaeological Consulting, LLC): *Portsmouth's African Burial Ground: How, When, Who?*
- 11:30-12:00 pm Questions and Discussion
- 12:00-1:15 pm Lunch at Phillips Academy
- 1:15-1:45 pm Business Meeting
- 1:45-2:15 pm David Landon, PhD (UMass Boston): *Constructing Community: Experiences of Identity, Economic Opportunity, and Institution Building at Boston's African Meeting House*
- 2:15-2:45 pm Jason Mancini (Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center): *Beyond Reservation: Indian Survivance in Southern New England*
- 2:45-3:15 pm Kate McBrien, MA (Maine State Museum) and Rob Sanford, Ph.D. (USM): *Malaga Island: The Making of a Public Archaeology*
- 3:15-3:45 pm Questions and Discussion
- 3:45-4:15 pm Memorials
- 4:15-4:30 pm Adjourn to Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology
- 4:30-6:00 pm Reception at the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology

#### Posters:

Kate E. McMahon (Howard University): "A Sufficient Number": *The African American Historic Community of Peterborough in Warren, Maine*

Danielle Cathcart (UMass Boston): *Health Conscious: A Look inside the Privy at 71 Joy St.*

David Landon (UMass Boston) and Teresa Dujnic Bulger (UC Berkeley): *Recent Archaeological Research at Boston's African Meeting House.*

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***In Search of Lena and Lucy: Intersectional Narratives of Race, Gender and Class in New England*****Whitney Battle-Baptiste, PhD (Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)**

For more than three decades archaeology related to African Diaspora populations have centered on the artifacts and landscapes of plantations. Whether in the Southern United States or the islands of the Caribbean, much of our focus has remained fixed on the period of captivity. However, two of the first excavations of African American domestic sites were located in the state of Massachusetts. The recent shift toward understanding the experiences of people through postemancipation sites, once again reminds us that African American and African Diaspora archaeology is not just about plantations and captivity, the very foundation of the discipline has been based on the complex nature of freedom and equality in the Northeast. This paper is an exploratory effort to think critically about the intersectional relationship between race, gender and class in both Eastern and Western Massachusetts and the larger implications for a more inclusive narrative approach to historical archaeology in the discipline and the region.

***Voyage to Discovery: Revealing Dimensions of the African-American Maritime Experience in New England*****Matthew Lawrence, MA (Maritime Archaeologist at NOAA's Stellwagen National Marine Sanctuary)**

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is currently undertaking a nationwide initiative to educate the American Public about the significant role African-Americans have played in the nation's maritime heritage. In New England, the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary protects the shipwreck remains of the steamship Portland lost in 1898 with all hands. Many of the steamship's crew were African-American. Through examination of the Portland archaeological site and the historical record, sanctuary archaeologists seek to shed light on the lives of the Portland's crew and the African-American maritime experience.

***Portsmouth's African Burial Ground: How, When, Who?*****Kathleen Wheeler, PhD (Independent Archaeological Consulting, LLC)**

In October 2003, Independent Archaeological Consulting, LLC (IAC) recovered the remains of eight African-Americans from beneath a city street, and in 2008, encountered several additional burials. The location had been long rumored to have been the site of the "Negro Burial Ground," and was posted as such along the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail. In the process of recovery, analysis and interpretation of human remains, IAC partnered with multiple groups, including:

- ✦ The African-American descendant community (researchers, pastors, students, members of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail)
- ✦ An avidly interested public
- ✦ Strawberry Banke Museum
- ✦ Forensic anthropologists
- ✦ Scientists from the University of New Hampshire and USDA
- ✦ DNA biologists
- ✦ Clients and contractors

In working with these various constituencies, we were challenged to tell a fuller, more compelling story of those individuals recovered from the segregated burial ground. This paper offers some of the lessons learned about how to inform both a professional and lay audience about the role enslaved labor played in the Portsmouth seaport. I will also review where the City is in the process of devising a memorial for/at the site.

**Conference  
Presentation  
Abstracts  
10:00-11:30**

***Constructing Community: Experiences of Identity, Economic Opportunity, and Institution Building at Boston's African Meeting House***

**David Landon, PhD (Associate Director of the Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research, Department of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts, University of Massachusetts, Boston)**

The African Meeting House in Boston became a center of the city's free black community during the nineteenth century. Archaeological excavations at this site recovered material from the Meeting House backlot and a neighboring apartment building occupied by black tenants. These artifacts reveal strategies the community used to negotiate a place for themselves, create economic opportunities, and build community institutions. The Meeting House helped foster community success and became a powerful center for African American action on abolition, educational equality, and military integration. This paper emphasizes how archaeological and historical evidence from the African Meeting House demonstrates the power of the actions of individuals in the black community.

***Beyond Reservation: Indian Survivance in Southern New England***

**Jason Mancini (Senior Historic Researcher, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center)**

There are 9 million acres of land in southern New England. The process of colonization by Europeans was so rapid and thorough that by the American Revolution, Indians in this region collectively possessed less than 30,000 acres. This presentation briefly addresses how Indians and their communities responded to land dispossession, negotiated race, ethnicity, and identity, and how they maintained social and kinship networks on land and at sea. Specific attention is given to areas beyond the bounds of colonially established reservations including rural communities of color, Indian mariners, and an urban Indian neighborhood.

***Malaga Island: The Making of a Public Archaeology***

**Kate McBrien, MA (Curator of Historic Collections at Maine State Museum) and Rob Sanford, Ph.D. (Professor of Environmental Science & Policy and Department Chair, University of Southern Maine)**

The Malaga Island Project represents an application of the public archaeology approach in which museum staff collaborate with archaeological researchers in multiple phases from field school to exhibit. Malaga Island was occupied by a predominantly Black community until 1912, when its residents were forcibly removed by the state of Maine. Four years prior to the 100th anniversary of this regrettable event, the Maine State Museum began planning an exhibit and initiated collaboration with archaeologists from the University of Southern Maine, and the island's owner, Maine Coast Heritage Trust. The proposed exhibit required careful, honest treatment of controversial history of the island community, and included extended work with the community's descendants. This informed partnership between educators, researchers, curators, descendants, and other stakeholders culminated in a year-long exhibit (May 2012 - May 2013). But the collaboration did not end there and will continue indefinitely. The mechanisms and consequences of a collaborative, public approach to archaeology are described.

**Conference  
Presentation  
Abstracts  
1:45-3:15**

***"A Sufficient Number": The African American Historic Community of Peterborough in Warren, Maine*****Kate McMahon (Howard University)**

Warren, Maine is located in the midcoast region of southeastern Maine. The small town has a long history that is intrinsically linked to the maritime activities of the region, which began in the mid-seventeenth century. Sometime around 1780, Sara Peters was brought to Warren as a slave on a ship, owned by Captain James McIntyre. After slavery was outlawed in Massachusetts in 1783/1784, Sara successfully sued for her freedom and married a man named Amos Peters. Together, they raised a large, mixed-racial family, and settled near South Pond, a good distance away from the main village. By the 1820s, they had their own school district, a Baptist church, and had a good deal of land. Their population and wealth peaked in the 1850s, with as many as ninety mixed-race people living in the village of Peterborough. My research focuses on how African American and mixed-racial communities were able to establish themselves in maritime northern New England in the years prior to the Civil War, particularly during the antebellum period. I focus on their ability to financially support themselves in areas of relative isolation, and how the sea acted as a way for these people to make their way in a time that grew increasingly hostile towards people of color.

**Conference  
Poster  
Abstracts*****Health Conscious: A Look inside the Privy at 71 Joy St.*****Danielle Cathcart (University of Massachusetts at Boston)**

In addition to the African Meeting House, 71 Joy St. is one of the only domestic sites associated with free African Americans for which any archaeological evidence exists from Boston's historic Beacon Hill neighborhood. The standing brick structure was built in 1840 as a single family dwelling that was occupied by members of the free black community until 1878 when Wendell T. Coburn sold the property to William J. Rounds. In 2006, archaeologists discovered the brick-lined privy capped by a concrete floor in the shed attached to the back of the house which contained a wealth of material culture dating primarily to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Analysis of the privy contents is currently underway with two primary goals: first, to understand the depositional history of the feature so that discrete deposits may be linked to specific periods of occupation, and second to evaluate how residents of Number 71 made specific choices relating to personal health that contributed to the way they presented themselves to friends, family and strangers in the bustling and vibrant Beacon Hill community.

***Recovering Ethnobotanical and Local Environmental Pollen Data from an Exposed Archaeological Site in Northeastern North America: Locus 2 at the Carns Site, Cape Cod National Seashore, Massachusetts*****Submitted by Gerald K. Kelso**

The pollen in the matrix of temperate-zone archaeological sites is moved downward by percolating groundwater and progressively destroyed by natural processes. This limits the age of the ethnobotanical and environmental pollen spectra in sites. Flat rocks, flat artifacts, and artifacts and shells found concave-site-down are commonly encountered in excavations and will shelter occupation-period pollen spectra. At Carns Site Locus 2, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, pollen grains recording the presence of agricultural products and probable gathered non-agricultural vegetation, as well as the season of construction of a feature and the placement of a rock, were recovered from under three of the four flat-bottomed objects tested. The data suggest that a systematic investigation of the pollen spectra from under a series of stratigraphically or chronologically organized flat-bottomed rocks and artifacts, backed by a comparative pollen profile, will yield ethnobotanical and environmental data not normally recovered from northeastern prehistoric archaeological sites.

**Professional  
Research  
Abstracts*****Archaeology and Native History of the Den Rock Area***

**Submitted by Edward L. Bell. 2013 In *The Birds of Den Rock Park, Lawrence and Andover, Massachusetts: A Guide to the History and Natural History of Den Rock Park and its Birds* by Susan Hegarty, pp. 4-11. Mass Nature, Andover, Mass.**

***NHDOT Berlin Heights Neighborhood Coos County, NH***

**Submitted by Alexandra Chan, MAC LLC.**

Monadnock Archaeological Consulting, LLC, under the direction of Principal Investigator Dr. Alexandra Chan, recently completed Phase II Determinations of Eligibility study of several properties impacted by the NHDOT relocation of State Route 110, in the Berlin Heights Addition neighborhood of Berlin, Coos County, NH. The APE included a variety of mill-associated single- and multi-family dwellings and while, none of the parcels was found to meet the criteria for National Register, archaeological research has shed interesting light on the daily lives of a largely immigrant workforce.

Archaeologists found that to varying degrees, the inhabitants of each site seem to have existed in a number of gray areas, between working class ideals and realities and middle class aspirations. Generally speaking, their working-class background can be seen in

- the frugality of their purchases, opting generally for the less expensive alternatives of a variety of popular items, from clothing to toys to tablewares;
- the incorporation of patent medicines and possibly an ethos of self-reliance and active guardianship of the family into the ideals of wife-, mother-, and womanhood that was distinctly *not* middle class, and yet present on every single site in question;
- a weedy yard with disturbed soils and various “pioneer” taxa that was not in keeping with the middle-class ideal of making the yard an integral part of one’s public social persona.

On the other hand, most of these people seem also to have heard of and, on some level, accepted the “sanitary idea,” that linked the accumulation of garbage with disease, and which represented an essentially middle-class view of the world. So, too, did the efforts to keep up neat personal appearances. Archaeologists found fancy buttons for outerwear, hair pins and combs in imitation tortoise shell, a watch or jewelry chain, shaving cream, and perhaps most tellingly of all, a can of bluing to keep shirts and collars bright and white.

Most of the sites in question also had ceramic vessel assemblages, roughly 20% of which consisted of teawares. These were overwhelmingly decorated with fashionable transfer prints, flow blue, decalomania, and gilt designs, which identify the vessels as having been purchased for the purpose of showing them off – by entertaining guests in the home.

In summary, the families from the Berlin Heights Addition neighborhood appear to have been ordinary working-class families who inhabited a liminal kind of space, leading lives that were a patchwork of middle-class assumptions and aspirations; working-class realities (particularly economic ones); and their own social constructs concerning gender roles that resulted from, and were influenced by, both.

**Professional  
Research  
Abstracts**

***Livingston Ave Bridge Project, Albany and Rensselaer County, New York***

**Submitted by Christina B. Rieth, Cultural Resource Survey Program, New York State Museum, Albany, New York**

Archaeological excavations were completed by staff from the New York State Museum’s Cultural Resource Survey Program in advance of the renovation of the Livingston Avenue Bridge over the Hudson River in Albany and Rensselaer Counties, New York. The survey extended along the river crossing portions of the original Erie Canal outlet on west and an early 19th century residential area on the east. The results of the survey produced evidence of four mid-late 19th century residences associated with the early life and disposal of the occupants of the Capital District. The Livingston Avenue #1, #2, #3, and #4 sites produced household debris related to the development of the Hudson River waterway and the early working class families. Many of these families were employed to work as part of the shipping industry that developed in upstate New York during that time. Domestic (decorated and non-decorated whitewares and ironstone stone containers, canned and bottled food items, glass stemware, and food preparation containers) and architectural remains (handmade and machine made brick fragments, window glass, wrought-iron and machine-cut nails, etc.) provide insights into the nature of domestic life in these households. The excavations produced a large number of children’s toys (i.e. glass and clay marbles, doll parts, toy guns, etc.) document the presence of some of the youngest members of this community. Features, including large areas of sheet midden, were also produced and provide archaeologists with information about the spatial organization of these households

and their relationship to growing ideas about refuse disposal and household sanitation. The site is considered to be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on its ability to contribute to our understanding of the lives of early New Yorkers. The collection from the Livingston Ave # 1, Livingston Ave # 2, and Livingston Ave # 3, and the Livingston Ave # 4 sites are curated within the Division of Research and Collections at the New York State Museum in Albany. The project was sponsored by the New York State Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

***Malden Bridge Project, Columbia County, New York***

**Submitted by Christina B. Rieth, Cultural Resource Survey Program, New York State Museum, Albany, New York**

Staff from the New York State Museum's Cultural Resource Survey Program completed archaeological excavations in advance of the upgrade of Route 66 over the Kinderhook Creek in the village of Malden Bridge, Town of Chatham, Columbia County, New York. The project, which was conducted for the New York State Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, identified the Peaslee Paper Mill Site (NYSM # 11979). A subsequent site examination recommended the site to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Place due to its ability to contribute to the history of the community and its association with important persons in NYS history. The Peaslee Paper Mill site consists of the remains of a small mid to late 19th century paper mill established along Kinderhook Creek by Samuel Hanna and Horace Peaslee in 1843. Over the next 50 years, the paper mill supplied paper and cardboard products to local vendors in eastern New York and New England. By the 1860s, the mill had become one of the largest in the country and supplied materials to the federal government during the Civil War. By 1900, the mill was competing with other mills in urban areas. Historic maps dating to the early 20th century suggest that the mill finally closed its doors in 1933. The mill consisted of several buildings located along the Kinderhook Creek. Included among these buildings are a dam that harnessed water for the mill, a large multi-story mill building, and several storage buildings. The foundation of the main mill is still visible on the ground surface. Little is known about the lives of the worker who occupied the property although food preparation and consumption containers (undecorated whiteware and ironstone fragments, black-glazed redware hollowware fragments, blue and white transfer-printed whiteware), animal bone and shell refuse, as well as bottles from condiments, suggest the mill's workers consumed at least one daily meal on site. Kaolin smoking pipes document the potentially congenial atmosphere of the workplace. Architectural refuse also provides us with insights into the arrangement and construction of the mill itself. The artifacts from the Peaslee Paper Mill site are curated at the Division of Research and Collections at the New York State Museum in Albany.

**Professional  
Research  
Abstracts**

***The Edgewood Apartments Site: A New Gulf of Maine Archaic Tradition Site in Plainville, Massachusetts***

**Submitted by Brian Jones, AHS, Inc.**

The Early Archaic Edgewood Apartments Site was excavated last summer by AHS, Inc. with the help of University of Connecticut field school students. The site is situated on a glacial outwash plain adjacent to a 38-acre wetland in Plainville, Massachusetts. Artifacts consist overwhelmingly of quartz lithic-reduction materials distributed in two loci. The site primarily represents two "Gulf of Maine Archaic Tradition" activity areas. Evidence from a small number of non-quartz artifacts indicates that a limited Late Archaic Otter Creek component is also present in the southern portion of the south locus.

The Edgewood Apartments Site was identified as a Gulf of Maine Archaic Tradition site based on lithic technological patterning comparable to that observed at other Gulf of Maine Archaic sites across New England. Two radiocarbon dates (one from each locus) were returned from charred botanical fragments, confirming the Early Archaic chronological association of the assemblage. Dates of 8830+/-40 rcBP (Beta-327481) and 8600+/-40 rcBP were assayed from probable hickory nutshell and an unidentified hardwood respectively.

The dates fall within a calibrated date range of 10,150 and 9500 years BP. They do not overlap at the 2-sigma calibrated range, suggesting they likely reflect separate events. They fall in the expected "pre-bifurcate point" date range indicated by most other dated Gulf of Maine Archaic

Tradition sites in southern New England, between about 9000 and 8500 rcBP (e.g. Bolian 1980: 125; Curran 1994: 46; Maymon and Bolian 1992: 123; Forrest 1999; Jones and Forrest 2003: 85). Transitional Early Archaic-Middle Archaic dates are, however, reported from the Whortleberry Hill site in Dracut, Massachusetts (Dudek 2005).

The finds likely reflect two episodes of activity adjacent to a relatively large wetland area. The presence of carbonized hickory nutshells suggests the site may have been used in the fall, when hickory nuts were available. The site's occupants evidently stayed long enough to light a fire, probably to warm themselves and cook a meal, some of which ended up back in the coals. Fall is also the time that wetland plant foods develop their greatest starch stores and are ripe for harvest. Based on the identification of numerous wetland plant species from Sandy Hill (Jones and Forrest 2003), it is reasonable to speculate that the occupants of the Edgewood Apartments Site visited this location to gather a large number of cattail, water plantain or other rhizomes and process them into a starchy paste or dried them for transportation back to a base camp.

Gulf of Maine Archaic Tradition sites remain relatively poorly documented in southern New England (but see Peterson and Putnam 1992; Robinson 1992, 1996). It is likely that the human population density of New England was low throughout the early Holocene, and subsequently sites are expected to be relatively rare. Nevertheless, it is probable that Gulf of Maine Archaic sites have been missed during archaeological surveys because many regional archaeologists remain unfamiliar with the techno-complex. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of diagnostic bifacial tool forms associated with this tradition. Familiarity with Gulf of Maine Archaic assemblages permits one to recognize its most diagnostic artifact type, the quartz micro-core (or "core-scraper", see Forrest 1999: 90). These distinctive, small single-platform cores are not like any tool form produced in later periods and should be considered diagnostic of the tradition when encountered in the field.

AHS hopes that new data from the Edgewood Apartments Site will continue to raise awareness of the rich Gulf of Maine Archaic presence in the region. For further information about this Early Archaic tradition, Brian Jones will be presenting a more detailed discussion at the upcoming 28th Annual R.I. Statewide Historic Preservation Conference on Saturday, April 27, 2013 in West Warwick, Rhode Island (<http://www.preservation.ri.gov/conference/13overview.php>).

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## Professional Research Abstracts



# Conference on New England Archaeology

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