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Charles Towne Landing Archaeology Update

The Charles Towne Landing Archaeology Conference in February was a great success, thanks to all those who lent a hand in putting this inaugural meeting together, and all those who devoted their Saturday to archaeology. Our special thanks go to the presenters, most of whom travelled from other cities, and even other states, to share their research with us.

Our silent auction raised a substantial amount of money for the local chapters of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the Archaeological Society of South Carolina (ASSC). Bidding wars ensued all day over the reproduction pottery by Chris Espenshade and Bobby Sutherlin. The exhibit *"The History of Archaeology in South Carolina: From Curiosity Cabinets to Science"* was made possible through a joint effort between the College of Charleston, Drayton Hall, Brockington and

Associates, New South Associates, the Historic Charleston Foundation, and South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism. Last but not least, we would like to thank our sponsors (AIA and ASSC Charleston Chapter) for making this event possible, Sojourn Coffee for providing the coffee, L&B Carribean for the tasty lunch, and the Charles Towne Landing Education program for the black powder demonstration.



Notes from the field: On March 21st we returned back to the field to reveal what else the Miller Site may have in store for us. We are also proud to announce that the field school conducted by the College of Charleston and the Charleston Museum is dedicating three weeks to the Miller site in May and June. We are really excited to have the expertise of Dr. Barbara Borg, Ron Anthony, and Martha Zierden, as well as the hard working students of the College by our site. Stop by between May 23rd and June 10th to see future archaeologists reveal history!
 —CTL staff



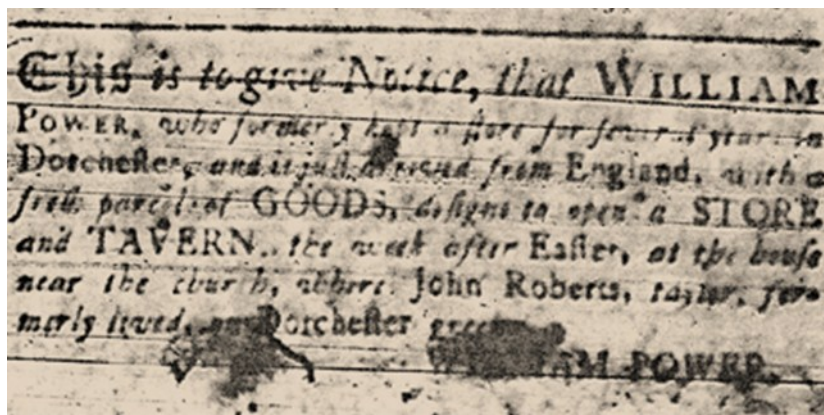
The "cabinet of curiosities" at the exhibit lounge.

Colonial Dorchester Archaeology Update

This field season, we are returning to what historic records suggest is the location of a tavern. This site is situated just to the east of the bell tower on lot 95. The past field season, after completing a portion of the five meter interval shovel tests, archaeologists began to compare the data found on lots 92 - 97. Surprisingly, the site is intriguing, not so much because of what has been recovered, but for its lack of certain expected artifacts. Creamware, a mid-18th century ceramic, is seen in abundance at Colonial Dorchester. It is found in unexpectedly low numbers on this site. Wine bottle glass and pipe stems are common artifacts found on a tavern site. These too, are conspicuously low in number. The scarcity of these artifacts raises some questions about the function of this site. Are the historical records accurate? Did William Power's intention to start a tavern not come to fruition? Are we on the

edge of the supposed hostelry? In order to answer these questions, as well as some future ones, further shovel tests are necessary. Testing outside the presumptive tavern boundary gives scientists comparable data for the contiguous lots. It also provides us with a larger sampling area which will in turn give us more data to address the questions Lot 95 is posing.

Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site offers several opportunities this spring to witness the unveiling of the tavern site. Come spend the day with an archaeologist by participating in a program titled *Digging the Past Through Archaeology*. This program provides first-hand experience during each step of the archaeology process. For more information on programs, please contact Rebekah Sease at (843) 873-7475. — CD staff



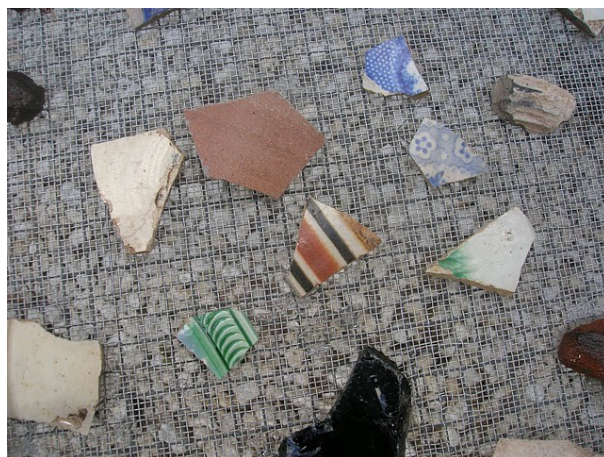
South Carolina Gazette, March 27 - April 3, 1755 (Early South Carolina Newspapers, Microfilm Reel 3, p. 3, col. 3).

This is to give Notice, that William Power, who formerly kept a store for several years in Dorchester. And is just arrived from England, with a fresh parcel of GOODS, designs to open a STORE and TAVERN the week after Easter, at the house near the church, where John Roberts, taylor, formerly lived, on Dorchester green.

WILLIAM POWER.

Hampton Plantation Archaeology Update

In 2010, archaeological excavations conducted by New South Associates at Hampton Plantation revealed the foundation of a possible slave cabin (see the article by Stacy Young in our [Fall 2010 issue](#)). Since then, our archaeologists have been working with volunteers to uncover more of this mystery building. Two recent trips by archaeologists and volunteers have been fruitful: we were able to unearth enough of the chimney foundation to record its size. The overall dimensions of the building, however, are still unknown. We hope to return to this feature periodically and trace the entire length of the foundation. — SCPRT staff



Ceramics from the slave cabin at Hampton.

Meet an Archaeologist

Rebekah Sease

When Rebekah first visited Charleston as a kid, she was impressed. "I'm gonna go to school here!" she declared. Years later, she made good on that promise and returned to study anthropology at the College of Charleston. Charleston was lucky to have her.

After graduation, Rebekah travelled far and wide as a CRM field technician. Archaeology must have stirred the adventurer in her: she mapped cemeteries, worked in the Bahamas, and even

participated in a cave archaeology project with the University of Tennessee. Her experience in landscape archaeology and Total Station mapping systems made her an asset for archaeological projects.

A few years ago, Rebekah stored her suitcase away and became part of the archaeology crew at the Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site. Since then she has been uncovering the lost town of Colonial Dorchester and managing the curation of artifacts in the lab. A big part of her job is public archaeology: she helps with the development of programs and works toward making archaeology more accessible to the public. Even after 6 years in archaeology, she feels passionate about her field and wants to share her enthusiasm with the visitors. But she also wants people to understand the *true* nature of archaeology. "It is difficult to convey the importance of *every* aspect of the archaeological process," Rebekah

cautions. "There is a prevailing common view that archaeology is a field of glamor, excitement, and intrigue. But the true excitement of the field comes through aspects of the practice that are typically viewed as less glamorous." Luckily, the mundane and routine tasks of a lab did not wear this archaeologist down. She does, however, have a word of advice for the aspiring archaeologists out there: "Keep in mind that professional archaeology will test your passion."



Rebekah Sease in a cliff dwelling in Arizona.

We tested *her* passion by asking her what the most exciting artifact that she ever found was. "All artifacts are special to me," she replied, and passed the test. When pressed further, she picked an atlatl weight she uncovered at a dig in upper South Carolina, but maintained that all artifacts are tightly

connected to the site that they are found at, and that creates a special bond between the object, the site, and the archaeologist.

If you want to see Rebekah in action, visit the Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site and participate in one of their active archaeology programs. Visitors are welcome to witness archaeology first hand, chat with the archaeologists about the latest finds from the site, and even take a behind-the-scenes tour of the archaeology lab. For program details, call Colonial Dorchester at (843)873-7475. ■

Featured Article

Tabby: The Vernacular “Limestone” of the Coastal Southeast

by John Hiatt

The quest to develop an “artificial stone” for building purposes culminated in the nineteenth century with the invention of Portland cement. The principal binding agent of modern concrete, Portland cement revolutionized architecture worldwide, allowing city skylines to rise higher and higher. Between 2004 and 2009, South Carolina, alone, consumed an annual average of 1,500 metric tons of the powdery substance.

Colonial and antebellum Carolinians may not have had the benefit of Portland cement; but, those who lived along the coast, where oyster shells abounded in middens, employed a unique building material known as tabby. Essentially an artificial limestone, tabby consisted of a mixture of oyster shells, lime, ash, sand, and water. To make tabby, laborers first built a kiln, or rick, by digging a square pit in the ground and filling it with pine knots or fat lighter. Above the pit, they erected a slightly pyramidal framework of hardwood logs (in log-cabin style), which supported alternating layers of wood fuel and oyster shells. Made up chiefly of calcium carbonate (CaCO_3), the oyster shells provided the ingredient necessary for making lime.

Next, the tabby-makers fired the kiln. The structure would burn for several days, driving off carbon dioxide (CO_2) and reducing the wood and shells to ash and quicklime (CaO). Far from contaminating the lime, the ash actually served to increase the hardness of the final product.

The lime was then slaked, i.e., exposed to water, transforming the substance into calcium hydroxide, or $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$. Aggregates (unburned oyster shells and sand) were also added to make a semi-liquid slurry. Builders poured the slurry into a wooden form, usually averaging about a foot in height, and let the mixture cure by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the air. Once one layer had hardened,

laborers removed the form, placed it on top of the previous course, and poured in more slurry. (Thus, a wall rose successively over a period of days.) Finally, to protect the tabby from the elements, builders covered the walls with a sacrificial parging of lime stucco that would require periodic reapplication.



A tabby wall under construction, showing the design of the wooden form used to create each layer.

Scholars continue to debate both the etymology of the word “tabby” and the origins of this unique building material. Many linguists believe that the word derives from the Spanish term *tapia*, meaning earth compacted between boards. As for its physical origins, architectural historians view tabby as a New World innovation based on Old World techniques adapted to local materials and climate.

Tabby first appeared in Spanish Florida (St. Augustine) in the late-sixteenth century, but only for making roof slabs. By the 1680s, it was being used in both floor and wall construction. Eventually, the technology made its way northward into the British colonies, first showing up in South Carolina, then spreading to coastal Georgia and North Carolina. The ruins of the Paul Grimball House (built, 1686) on Edisto Island, SC represent the earliest, known evidence of tabby in the British colonies.



◀ *Brick and tabby were sometimes used together in building construction, as seen in this detail of the Chapel of Ease on St. Helena Island, SC.*

▼ *A versatile building material, tabby was not only used for forts, chapels, and floors; it was also used for houses, such as these slave dwellings at Kingsley Plantation, Florida.*



South Carolina also boasts some of the largest and best-preserved tabby ruins in the Southeast. The fort at Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site (Summerville, SC), built between 1757 and 1760, was erected to serve as an inland powder magazine. It remains largely intact, a testament to tabby's durability. Another impressive tabby ruin is the Chapel of Ease (ca. 1740), located on St. Helena Island, SC. At Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site, in Charleston, SC, archaeologists recently uncovered a tabby floor that dates to the

last decade of the seventeenth century or the first decade of the eighteenth, making it the oldest floor of its kind discovered thus far in South Carolina. ■

For further reading:

Gritzner, Janet B. *Tabby in Coastal Southeast: The Culture History of an American Building Material*. Ph. D. Diss., Louisiana State University, 1978.

Sickles-Taves, Lauren B. and Michael S. Sheehan. *The Lost Art of Tabby Redefined: Preserving Oglethorpe's Architectural History*. Southfield, MI: Architectural Conservation Press, 1999.

Weldon, Jane Powers, ed. *The Conservation and Preservation of Tabby: A Symposium on Historic Building Material in the Coastal Southeast*. Held on Jekyll Island, Georgia, 25-27 February 1998. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, 1998.



◀ *The tabby fort at Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site is still standing, despite 250 years of exposure to elements and a major earthquake in 1886.*

John Hiatt is an interpretive ranger and historian with the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism.

Around the World

NEWS!

- Archaeologists are getting ready to study Ohio's famous Serpent Mound by taking core samples and using ground-penetrating radar to understand the mound's internal structure. Archaeologist William F. Romain is hoping to locate the foundation feature, which may contain enough charcoal to run a radio-carbon test. A detailed outline of the proposed research is available [here](#).

Few hundred miles away in Arkansas, archaeologists are launching a similar investigation of the Cavannaugh Mound. More information on the mapping process of this mound can be found [here](#).



Serpent Mound in Ohio.



Anubis attending the dead.

- Excavations at the "Dog Catacombs" of Saqqara in Egypt revealed millions of mummified dog and jackal remains. Dr. Paul Nicholson of the Cardiff University thinks that there may be up to 8 million dog mummies in the tunnels and suggests that the canines may have been offerings for Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the Egyptians. The tunnels also contain cats, foxes, and bulls, among other animals. For Dr. Nicholson's comments, visit [here](#). Visit the [Archaeology magazine's website](#) for a special on dogs in the ancient world (includes a short article by Dr. Nicholson).

- An 1,800-year-old archaeological site in Turkey lost a long battle against a dam and its waters. Despite pressure from archaeologists, heritage organizations, and the EU, the construction of the Yortanli Dam in Western Turkey could not be stopped. The dam will flood the Roman bath complex of Allianoi, expected to be 30 meters under water by the end of the year, along with its wall paintings and mosaics. (More pictures of the flooding [here](#)).



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A room in the bath complex of Allianoi, soon to be completely under water. ▲



Remnants of a bridge at Hasankeyf. ▲

Meanwhile, residents and activists continue to fight against the construction of the Ilisu Dam in southeastern Turkey. The dam project threatens the ancient town of Hasankeyf and may result in the displacement of thousands of people. More of the story [here](#).

Image credits: page 2: Hampton– Zoe Butler; page 3: Rebekah Sease– Rebekah Sease; page 4: painting by Ralph Hutto; page 5: Chapel of Ease, slave cabins– John Hiatt, fort– Ashley Chapman, page 6: Serpent Mound– Heironymous Rowe at en.wikipedia, Anubis– public domain on Wikimedia Commons, Allianoi– Ahmet Usal on Flickr, Hasankeyf– Adam Reeder on Wikimedia Commons; All others: SCPRT.