

Hidden Stories: Uncovering African American History Through Archaeology and Community Engagement

The lives of African Americans prior to the 20th century are poorly documented in the historic record and frequently biased. In addition, the contributions of enslaved, indentured, and free African Americans are mostly missing from our history books and museum exhibits. Archaeology is a method that can be used to help fill this gap in our understanding of past cultural behavior in Pennsylvania. This year's Workshops in Archaeology will feature an overview of several African American archaeological investigations and community archaeology projects in Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic.

Session Descriptions

9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks

Beth Hager, Director, The State Museum of Pennsylvania

9:10 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Introduction to Community Archaeology

Alexandra Jones, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Practice in History and Anthropology, Goucher College, Towson, Md., founder of the Archaeology in the Community, and Consultant, The State Museum of Pennsylvania

Community archaeology is the practice of archaeological research in which at every step in a project at least partial control remains with the community. The Workshops at The State Museum are an opportunity for archaeologists to share information but, also for the community to provide input on the future of African American community archaeology in Pennsylvania.

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

The Hallowed Ground Project in Pennsylvania

Barbara Barksdale, CTA, Friends of Midland Cemetery, Steelton, Pa., and Chair, Hallowed Ground Project

The mission of the Pennsylvania Hallowed Ground Project is to conserve, interpret, and honor the burial sites of Pennsylvania's United States Colored Troops (USCT) and the cemeteries in which they are interred. The project supports the conservation and maintenance of cemetery properties, assists in building the capacity of cemetery caretakers, and interprets and honors the story of the USCT through commemorative events.

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Break: Coffee & Snacks, Auditorium Foyer

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

The Role of Archaeology in Bridging Informational Gaps Between Diasporic Communities: A Case Study at Pandenarium, Mercer County, Pennsylvania

Samantha Taylor, Archaeologist, New South Associates, Greensboro, NC

African American cultural landscapes are often plagued by inaccurate yet deeply rooted historic narratives. These unreliable accounts of the past are often the result of longstanding prejudice, absence of primary sources, and historically denying African American communities' control over their own historical narrative. Since 2009, archaeology investigations at Pandenarium have sought to uncover a more accurate account of settlement and to compare that narrative to similar archaeological sites.

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Telling Untold Stories of Underrepresented Populations

Angela Jaillet-Wentling, M.A., RPA, Cultural Resources Program Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Many of the lessons learned at Pandenarium can be applied to publicly-owned and interpreted cultural resources to the benefit of present and future populations. DCNR's recent strategic plan, Penn's Parks for All, and the work of its cultural resources program field crew, help to tell untold stories from the varying perspectives of a diverse population.

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

"A Gift to the Nation": The Perkins-Dennis Farm, an African American Farm in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier

Wade P. Catts, RPA, President/Principal, South River Heritage Consulting, LLC Board Member, Dennis Farm Charitable Land Trust

The Historic Dennis Farm is a 153-acre property in Susquehanna County settled and farmed by the Perkins and Dennis families for more than two centuries. The property is now owned and operated by the Dennis Farm Charitable Land Trust which is working to develop the Farm as an accessible space sharing the story of free African Americans north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. Lunch

On your own, or order boxed lunch online:
<http://statemuseumpa.org/WorkshopsinArchaeology>

1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

African American Archaeology in Philadelphia

Douglas Mooney, Senior Archaeologist, AECOM

Over the past several decades, efforts by members of the Black community to advocate for the documentation, preservation, and commemoration of African American sites in Philadelphia has taken an ever greater urgency. This presentation will provide an overview of three of the most important African American sites discovered in the city—the National Constitution Center/James Oronoco Dexter Site, the President's House, and the Bethel Burying Ground—as well as of the public involvement that, in many cases, helped make the study and celebration of these sites a reality.

1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

African American Archaeology in Gettysburg

Erik Kreusch, Archaeologist, Gettysburg National Military Park

Finding personal meaning and value in our national parks can be difficult for some if parks present programs that cannot connect with the diversity of potential park users. Parks must diversify not only park audiences but diversify park narratives. Recent historical and archaeological research have illuminated the African American experience in parks. This work is transforming how history is being taught to the public. The paper will explore current park efforts at contextualizing Confederate monuments and public archaeology programs that broaden park narratives and engage African American youth.

2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Break: Coffee & Snacks, Auditorium Foyer

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Communities Reclaiming Ancestral Lands through Public Archaeology:

A Case study from a Presidential Plantation

Matthew Reeves, Director of Archaeology, Montpelier Plantation in Virginia, home of President James Madison

Over the past twenty years, the Montpelier Archaeology Department has used archaeology as a tool for community engagement. Developing relationships with

community members through the shared experience of discovery of artifacts, sites, and stories has been a way to develop and maintain relationships. What has come from this activity is a community identity that is tied to the sites we uncover together and a sense of reclamation of family lands, homes, artifacts, and lives. Community reclamation of Montpelier as a space has resulted in the community addressing the chronic power imbalance that typifies racism in this country. This paper explores the impact of this work on the community, Montpelier as an institution, and how we define ourselves as archaeologists in relationship to the descendant communities we serve.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Keynote – "Free Black Communities and Archaeology"

Cheryl LaRoche, Ph.D., Lecturer, University of Maryland, College Park



Cheryl LaRoche is a trans-disciplinarian who believes that African American history permeates every facet of the American experience. She is a founding member of the Society of Black Archaeologists and holds a Ph.D. in American Studies with a concentration in archaeology and African American history. She received the Society for Historical Archaeology's John L. Cotter award in 2011 and contributed to the edited volume, *Tales of Gotham: Historical Archaeology, Ethnohistory and Microhistory of New York City* which won the James Deetz Book Award in 2015. LaRoche has enjoyed a decades-long career consulting with museums, archaeological and historical sites, and the National Park Service. She began her career as an archaeological conservator for the African Burial Ground Project in New York City. Most recently, she completed two major ethnographic studies for the National Park Service, one for Hampton National Historic Site in Towson, Maryland, and the other for the President's House Site in Philadelphia. She was the Project Historian for the Cultural Expression exhibition for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Her book *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance* examines the relationship between five mid-western archaeological sites and the Underground Railroad.

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Panel Discussion: The Future of African American Community Archaeology in Pennsylvania

Alexandra Jones, Cheryl LaRoche, Barbara Barksdale, Angela Jaillet-Wentling, Matthew Reeves

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Meet the Speakers

Reception, Susquehanna Room, Ground Floor

Additional Programming

Available during break times 10:00–10:30 and 2:15–2:30

Susquehanna Room, Museum Ground Floor

Site Recording in Cultural Resources Geographic Information System

Noel D. Strattan, PA-SHARE Administrator, Sara-Ladd Clark, PA-SHARE Triage Specialist, Taylor Napoleon, Pennsylvania Archaeological Site Survey (PASS) Coordinator, Casey Hanson, Eastern Regional Archaeologist and Justin McKeel, Western Regional Archaeologist State Historic Preservation Office, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC)

Artifact Identification

Jim Herbstritt, Historic Preservation Specialist, and Janet Johnson, Curator, Section of Archaeology, The State Museum of Pennsylvania, PHMC

Recording of archaeological sites is an essential task in protecting and preserving our archaeological resources. Assistance in identifying artifacts and recording the archaeological sites from which they came will be provided by these qualified individuals.

Special Thanks

Society of Black Archaeologists
State Historic Preservation Office, PHMC