

**Above-ground Archaeology:
Dendrochronology Testing on Eastern Long Island**

November 2003 was an exciting time for seven of the oldest structures on the North and South Forks. Dan Miles and Michael Worthington of the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory of Oxford, England brought their skills and equipment to the Terry-Mulford house in Orient, the Old House in Cutchogue, Sylvester Manor on Shelter Island, the Halsey House in Southampton, and the Mulford Farm, Home Sweet Home Museum, and the Gardiner Brown House in East Hampton.

Dendrochronology consists of boring a 5/8" core from major white oak timbers in a house, especially those with the bark still intact. Back in the lab, the cores are polished and examined by a special computer system which can analyze and count the rings that indicate a year's growth by the tree. A timeline back to the 1400s has been established for Massachusetts, due to a timber found by the "Big Dig" tunnel project under Boston. A timeline for Rhode Island has also been established due to testing of historic houses there. It is anticipated that the eastern L.I. cores can be attached to those chronologies.

Including the 7 L.I. structures, 60 homes have now been dated in the U.S. An example of this method's accuracy is the dating of the Jonathan Fairbanks house in Massachusetts, thought to be the oldest in New England, to 1641 rather than the 1637 date formerly attached to it. Due to a large backlog of work, answers to the dates of the Island houses will not be available until summer 2004. They are eagerly awaited by the house owners, as so little is known about the construction of many of them. Each of the societies and owners of the structures had to raise \$2,000.-\$3,000. to pay for the coring and analysis.

The Oysterponds Historical Society, for example, plans to hold a gala fund-raising celebration at the Terry-Mulford house when the date is known. The dendrochronologists were very impressed with the quality and datability of the L.I. houses tested, as very few historic houses are suitable for this technique. The Oxford Laboratory group has tested, among others, the Tower of London, Anne Hathaway's house (which was found not to be her home, as it was too 'young.'), and

over 598 other structures in England.

The project here was suggested by Abbott Lowell Cummings, dean of American architectural historians, who plans to examine Sylvester Manor this summer. He finds dendrochronology testing to be the best scientific way to ascertain the age of a house. He asked Dr. Gaynell Stone of the SCAA to contact historic preservation consultant Anne Grady, who had worked on the Massachusetts dendro project with him and climatologist Dr. Edward Cook of Columbia University. Anne is the U.S. liaison for the Oxford Lab group and fit the L.I. structures in after a grueling two weeks of boring timbers in New England (finishing with the President John Quincy Adams home), as they only come here once a year for 2 weeks in November.

An interesting aspect of this study is that it was pioneered over 20 years ago by Columbia University graduate student Joel Snodgrass under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation of L.I. Antiquities. He tested the Old House in Cutchogue and other structures more westerly on L.I., but since there was no established timeline, could not date the buildings. Also, the computer programs necessary to carry out the complex analysis are much more advanced today than what was available at that time.

Maria Brennan, House Committee Chair of the East Hampton Ladies Village Improvement Society, who secured the dating of their headquarters, the Gardiner Brown house, and her assistants also provided a most welcome delicious dinner to the dendro group and directors of the historic houses being tested. She and Richard Barron, director of the Southampton Historical Society's Halsey House, are seeking owners of other area historic homes who would like to be tested when the dendro group returns this year. It is hoped it will be possible to test the old oaks on Gardiner's Island, as they may be the oldest in the area and thus begin the timeline for L.I. Historic groups in central Suffolk are interested in having their structures tested; they may be too far west to tie into the East End chronology, but Joel Snodgrass's early tests might provide the 'missing link.'

Stay tuned for the results: solving a lot of the mysteries of L.I.'s oldest structures, in the Fall Newsletter.

Native Skeletal Finds on Shelter Island Dated

Dr. Vincent Stefan of Lehman College, CUNY, Forensic Anthropologist/Investigator for Suffolk County, has issued his report on the Shelter Island Native American skeletal remains for the Shinnecock Intertribal Historic Preservation Task Force, Elizabeth Haile, Chair. They were found 2-3 feet below ground on October 7, 2003 at 17 Osprey Rd. while homeowners were excavating for a barn foundation. This is a very typical scenario for finding skeletal remains on Long Island, but unusual in that the homeowners stopped excavation and the County's forensic anthropologist has analyzed samples of the jumbled bones in fragile condition.

A condensed review of his findings indicates that the minimum number of individuals appears to be between 7 and 11 individuals. The poorly preserved bone fragments may represent between 1 and 4 female and 3 to 7 male individuals. Fusion of ossification centers and dental wear would indicate individuals of 30-55 years of age. The shoveling of the incisors and the platymeric index of femurs are consistent with Native American individuals.

Stature of the individuals ranged between 5'6" to 6' for males and from 5'3" to 5'7" for females. Dental remains are clear evidence of wear and disease (caries, infection, abscess), common in historic/prehistoric Natives. (This has been associated with a horticultural diet rather than a foraging one at Cahokia and other archaeological sites. Ed.)

There is no skeletal evidence for the cause or manner of death, though it may be present on the skeletal remains still at the site. Because the burial appears to have been careful and deliberate, interment occurring at or nearly the same time, the cause/manner of death (i.e., warfare, disease epidemic, famine, etc.) could be attributed to all the burials.

Based on the archaeological context, bioarchaeological analysis of the remains and comparative and statistical analyses, Stefan believes the individuals were interred sometime during the period of AD 1410 to 1640. They were likely members of the Manhasset Tribe, historically documented to have inhabited Shelter Island. For further details in the report, contact Ms. Haile at the Shinnecock Reservation. It is hoped that further analysis of the carbon isotope ratios could determine the major diet (whether plan or marine based) of these individuals. This is the first time in L.I. history that a Native burial has been preserved and professional assessment of it conducted.

Above-Ground Archaeology: Local History Hero

John Huck of North Wading Road in Wading River noted a few years ago that there were gravestones and building evidence (a stone wall) on the overgrown

property across from his house. A "For Sale" sign indicated that soon the area would be developed and potentially this material culture evidence of the first settlers in Wading River would be lost. Huck began a long search through historic maps, genealogical records, cemetery evidence, etc. to find out more about the gravestone of Capt. John Payne (c.1690-1762), his family and homestead.



John Huck with Isaac Pain gravestone

He found the gravestone of John Paine's father, Isaac Pain, d. 1733, in the Aquebogue cemetery, who settled in Wading River in 1717. He cleared and photographed the John Payne and other gravestones at the endangered site, and enlisted the help of the S.C. Archaeological Assn., the Riverhead Town Historian, and the Wading River Historical Society. The Riverhead Town Board, upon granting the new land owner's request for a subdivision, mandated that lot 5, which includes the Payne

Cemetery, and an easement for access would be deeded to the Wading River Historical Society, thus preserving the material remains of early Wading River settlers. Without John Huck's extensive volunteer work that record would have disappeared from our heritage.

SCAA's Golden Trowel Award to Dave Thompson

SCAA President Dr. John Strong awarded the organization's Golden Trowel Award to Dave Thompson of Mt. Sinai for many services to the group. Dave, a descendant of an early L.I. family, is a knowledgeable naturalist and an archaeological surface collector who serves on many non-profit boards. He has shared his extensive knowledge of archaeological artifacts with the professional archaeologists of the region and educational programs. He also donated his fine craftsman skills to construct a one-quarter size replica of the corner of a post and beam house frame for SCAA's Colonial Life & Technology program at Blydenburgh County Park.



The Great Frontier on Long Island, N.Y.: Verrazzano and Early Epidemic Diseases, continued...

Phil C. Weigand, Ph.D.

Conclusions:

Clearly, the societies around Long Island Sound were not truly stratified or even close to being organized as early states. In the parlance of the evolutionary literature, they appear to have been early ranked chiefdoms. An event, like the contact with Verrazzano, would have affected them all, regardless of what side of Long Island Sound they lived upon. The intense, face-to-face fifteen day visitation by Verrazzano among the Narragansett was sufficient to have introduced the European diseases. The pre-contact populations of southern New England and Long Island were certainly high enough and in sufficient concentrations, whether completely sedentary or not, to have supplied the critical mass for epidemics, as even the 1617-19 colonial situation shows.

Whether or not this hypothesis about a post-contact/pre-colonial Long Island epidemic is correct, the growing discrepancy between the emerging archaeological picture and the descriptions of the early and mid-17th century must be explained. The most logical explanator is an epidemic. One century transpired, from the Verrazzano contact, before the first documents with any ethnohistorical content were written. Hence, for Long Island, the mid-17th century cannot represent an accurate ethnographic base-line. Therefore, that base-line must be reconsidered in light of the intervening period. A late ethnographic base-line of this nature, no matter how well documented, must never become a determinant for the examination of prior sociocultural configurations, especially if the archaeological evidence is not in agreement. Analogy is an important tool in historical discussions of this type. The situations for western Mexico (Weigand 1993), the southeastern United States (Swanton 1985), and the southwestern United States (Upham 1986) have already been alluded to. Upham's words are particularly pertinent:

"First and most important is the widely held notion among Southwestern anthropologists that Southwestern populations were extremely small during the protohistoric and early contact period... Second, the size of native populations in the Southwest is directly related to the kinds of interpretations of sociopolitical and economic systems that are generated... Many of these interpretations have been extended to the prehistoric period without consideration of the possible effects of Spanish contact and population reduction." (p. 126).

Concerning Long Island, this is not a situation where Ceci (1977, 1990) is right and the archaeological record is wrong, or versa. Ceci accurately and with great insight describes and analyzes the ethnography as witnessed during the post-1640 period, just as archaeologists are beginning to describe and analyze a different demographic and socioeconomic setting for the

pre-contact period. Both descriptions, for their relative periods, are correct, and the contrast apparently is somehow embedded in the processes implied by McNeill's concept of the 'Great Frontier.' That frontier, which accompanied in one manner or another all European contacts in the New World was a complex of biological and cultural factors. Long Island was not the exception.

Footnotes:

- 1) The eastern United States is commonly defined as the area to the east of the Mississippi River. As a great region, it includes four sub-areas: New England, the Northeast, the Southeast, and the Midwest.
- 2) Other New World examples of the contrast can be found in Roosevelt's (1991) study of Amazonia, Weigand (1993) for Western Mexico, Cook and Borah (1971-73) for Central Mexico and the Caribbean basin, and Cook (1937) for Baja California.
- 3) 1524 is the date of the Verrazzano expedition to New England; 1640 is the date of eastern Long Island's first European colony.
- 4) The spelling of Verrazzano offered by Hakluyt (1582) is the one that will be followed in this text, as it appears in literally all of the secondary sources. Giovanni da Verrazzani was his full and correct name.
- 5) This same type of reasoning has placed the anthropological and historical analysis of other New World areas into a conceptual straight-jacket. As examples: western Mexico (Weigand 1993); the southwestern United States (Upham 1986, Riley 1982); Amazonia (Roosevelt 1991).
- 6) Suffolk County comprises the eastern two-thirds of Long Island's area.
- 7) The Suffolk County Archaeological Association (SCAA) has published around eight volumes of monographs since the late 1970s on archaeology, ethnohistory, history, and linguistics, most of them edited or sponsored by Gaynell Stone. Some research reports of the Long Island Archaeological Project (LIAP), a salvage-oriented archaeological undertaking co-directed by Weigand and Johannemann, were published by the SCAA, though most still remain in manuscript form.
- 8) The coastal sections of the northeastern United States were not heavily affected by the Middle Mississippian or 'Southern Cult' developments, and so remained within the Late Woodland tradition, until the contact/colonization by Europeans.
- 9) In addition, Verrazzano mentions objects that may help define the archaeological context for post-contact and pre-colonial levels: The things that they esteemed most of all those which we gave them, were bells, crystals of Azure colour, and other toys, to hang at their ears or about their necke. They did not desire cloth of silks or golde, much lesse of any other sorte, neither cared they for things made of steele and iron, which we often showed them on our armour, which they made no wonder at, and in beholding them they onely asked the arte of making them: the like they did at our glasses, which when they behelde, they sodainely laught and gave them vs againe." (p. 65-66). Morrison (1971) postulates that the "crystal of Azure colour" was Venetian glass.
- 10) A common assumption of archaeologists is that the copper in use throughout New England and New York was derived from trade/exchange with the Great Lakes, especially the lower peninsula of Michigan, by way of the Middle Mississippian societies in the Midwest. While this assumption is probably in part true, nonetheless it has not been proven by advanced analytical techniques, such as neutron activation (cf. Veakis 1979). Other sources of copper exist: eastern Tennessee, and, perhaps more relevant to the area under discussion, the Cape D'Or in Nova Scotia. The Cape D'Or deposits were easily accessed, and utilized for ornamentation by the Micmac upon contact (McGee 1974).
- 11) It is interesting to note that the epidemics of 1617-19 did not affect the Narragansett as much as they did their neighbors. If they served as the initial point of entry for the postulated Verrazzano period epidemic, then they may have had a generation more than their neighbors during which to develop immunities.

List of Figures:

- 1) Map of Long Island and New England, showing 'tribal' territories at ca. 1630. Taken from Salwen (1978: 161).
- 2) A detail of the 1605 Nauset Harbor map (Cape Cod, Massachusetts) by Samuel de Champlain, with farmsteads and fields. Taken from McManamon et al (1986:26).

Acknowledgments:

This study would have been impossible without discussions with the Long Island community of anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians. Conversations with Lynn Ceci; and Bert Salwen were always stimulating. The collaboration of Edward Johannemann, Laurie Schroeder, Robert Kalin, Gretchen Gwynne, Geraldine Edwards, Elice Gonzalez, Kent Lightfoot, and Gaynell Stone during my brief periods of field work on Long Island was essential. The SCAA and the LIAP were the organizations which facilitated my work. Of course, these interpretations are not completely shared by everyone just mentioned, and any errors are mine alone.

Linguist Carl Masthay of St. Louis suggests the following corrections: the word "sachem" need not be italicized and should be in the plural, "sachems." "Cot d'Or" should be "Cote d'Or," "Narragassett" should be "Narragansett."

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New News of the Ancient

The recent find of skulls in Africa, 2 adults and 1 child, one found in complete condition, was dated at 160,000 years ago, 30,000 to perhaps 60,000 years earlier than previously known. These are the oldest known Homo sapiens remains, and some paleoanthropologists feel that this is evidence that near-humans had evolved in Africa long before European Neanderthals disappeared, thus there was never a Neanderthal stage in human evolution. Other scientists believe humans evolved in several places in the world, such as China, Europe, and Indonesia. The skulls show evidence of cut marks. (LA Times, 6/12/03)

Recent New York State Archaeology

N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation's Historic Sites staff conducted projects this past summer at Ft. Montgomery State Historic Site near Bear Mountain, Stony Point Battlefield, Senate House in Kingston, Johnson Hall in the Mohawk Valley, Schuyler Mansion in Albany, Mills Mansion near Hyde

Park, Olana near Hudson, and processed materials from Chittenago Landing, a canal site near Syracuse. Reported by Lois Feister.

Mark Twain's Quarry Farm, Elmira, NY was the site of a cistern excavation by Dr. Heidi Dierckx. Many objects were found and will be become part of the permanent display at Quarry Farm.

Forensic experts excavated what are believed to be the remains of Jane McCrea, who was buried in Union Cemetery in Fort Edward, NY. She was murdered by Indian allies of the British on July 27, 1777. Some historians feel this outrage contributed greatly to the American victory at Saratoga that year. DNA testing will be done to compare with her descendants.

Archaeological Conferences

Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference (MAAC) meeting to be held on March 12-14, 2004, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

Society for American Archaeology (SAA) 69th Annual Meeting, Montreal, Quebec, Canada to be held March 31-April 4, 2004.

New York State Archaeological Association 88th Annual Meeting, Rochester, NY to be held April 30-May 2, 2004.

Society for Industrial Archaeology (SIA) 33rd Annual Conference, Providence, RI to be held June 10-13, 2004.



Hoyt Farm Native Life and Archaeology Program Site Manager Mary Koretzky directing students carrying out archaeology at the site.

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