



THE DATUM POINT

September 2019

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER (NVC) OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

PATRICK O'NEILL

The ASV Annual Meeting is next month in Williamsburg, Virginia. Go here to register

<https://www.virginiaarcheology.org/2019-asv-annual-meeting/>

REGISTER!!!!!!

Important details for the ASV Annual Meeting hotel registration

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting in Williamsburg at Fort Magruder Hotel and Conference Center. Several of you have let us know that the hotel registration process has presented some challenges, and we are sending this suggestion:

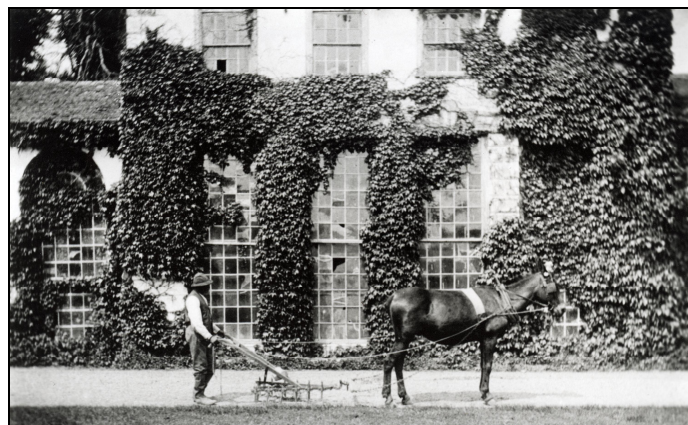
When you call the hotel, use the local number (757-220-2250) and **ask to speak to a registration assistant THERE (in Williamsburg)** to make a reservation for a conference. Otherwise, you will be connected to the international Wyndham Hotels system, which is problematic.

Chris McDaid also wanted to make sure that you knew that Colonial Williamsburg's archaeology program will host an open house event on the Saturday of the ASV conference from 1:00 to 4:00. They will have the Custis collection out on display. The archaeology staff will be on hand as well to talk with folks, show off the materials and the project, and answer questions.

Join Chapter members at Anthony's Restaurant at 6 pm before the meeting! Located at 3000 Annandale Rd, Falls Church, VA 22042 - (703) 532-0100

**Chapter Meeting 7:30pm
Weds September 11, 2019**

REORDERING THE LANDSCAPE OF THE WYE HOUSE PLANTATION By Elizabeth Pruitt



Elizabeth Pruitt is the Staff Archaeologist and Manager, Education and Outreach at the Society for American Archaeology in Washington, DC. She focuses on promoting public education and advocacy for archaeology and professional development for archaeologists. Her book, *Reordering the Landscape of Wye House: Nature, Spirituality, and Social Order*, is based on five years of research at the plantation in Maryland where Frederick Douglass was enslaved.

The archaeological work at the Wye House Plantation was born out of the Archaeology in Annapolis project and those descendants with connections to the plantation on Maryland's Eastern

Shore. Archaeologists entered into this landscape at the invitation of Mary Tilghman in 2005. At the time, she was the matriarch of the family who owns it. The plantation was founded around 1655 by Edward Lloyd I, and the Tilghmans are direct descendants of the Lloyd family.

The most famous historical figure at Wye House was Frederick Douglass, and his story is pervasive there. He was enslaved there as a young boy, and he writes about the plantation in his autobiographies. Archaeologists from the University of Maryland studied the historical records, Douglass's writings, and the landscape itself. Pruitt's research combined those with the archaeological record and fossilized pollen remains to recreate a landscape that was alive and populated. For the other enslaved people on the plantation, the ones who didn't make it out and share their experiences like Douglass did, she used the archaeology and archaeobotany to tell their stories.

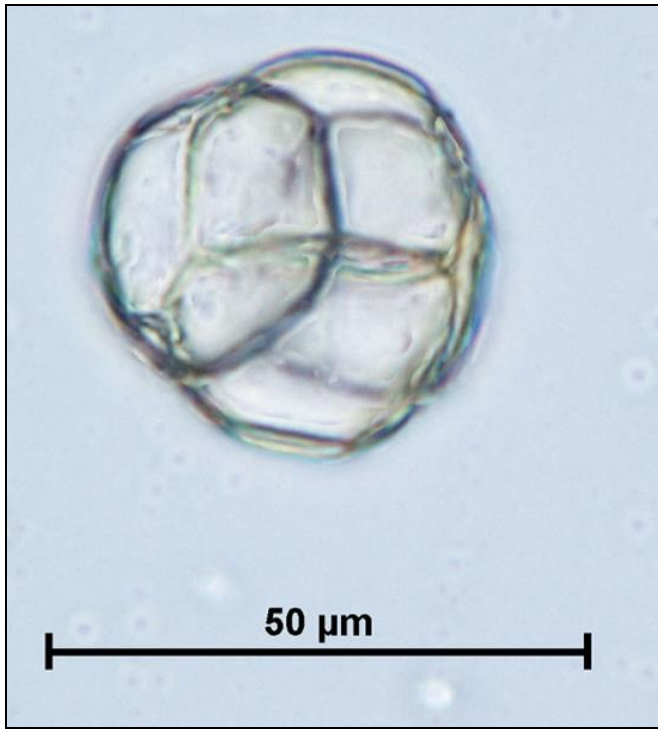
The project was enmeshed in the present-day concerns of descendants — both of the Lloyd family and of the enslaved people from Wye House — and of the local community. Many of the former enslaved people from the plantation founded the towns surrounding it, like Easton, Unionville, and Copperville. Some of their descendants live there, and they've been doing genealogical and historical research into this past. It was important for her to answer questions that couldn't come from the historical records. These were answers that could only come from literally digging into their roots. Throughout this research, a driving force behind it was how to resurrect this past, which is often a painful and brutal past, and use it to tell a story that is needed right now. How do we reshuffle or reorder things to bring forward the pieces that have been ignored and make them more visible?

There were two main areas where archaeologists excavated. The first was called the Long Green by Frederick Douglass, and he described it as teeming with the lives of enslaved people. Since this is where the crops of the plantation were stored and loaded onto boats, this is also where most of the enslaved people lived and worked. The second was a slave quarter attached to the back of the Lloyds' greenhouse.

Pruitt's research focused on buildings where enslaved people lived and worked and the buildings and gardens where they cultivated plants for the Lloyd family. In both of these locations, there were particular objects buried underneath the doorways of slave quarters — interpreted by us as a way for enslaved people to spiritually protect the buildings where they lived. This was a hidden landscape, meant just for them, as a way to care for their well-being within an inhumane system.



The archaeobotanical analysis — fossilized pollen grains excavated on the plantation — also helped expose this landscape of survival. The pollen provided a profile of at least some of the kinds of plants that were in or near different areas at different times in the past. There were some plants that were only found in the greenhouse buildings but not elsewhere. Those were likely cultivated for the Lloyd family. There are also plants that were found just in the slave quarter samples. Those represented plants likely used by the enslaved people for themselves — gathered from the nearby environment for food or medicine.



It is important to bring this story to the surface, not just for the importance that it has to our history, but also as a way of thinking about the connections between the past and present. There is racism and segregation and injustice where we worked in Maryland. We find it throughout the United States. The country still struggles to heal from the wounds of slavery, which makes a lot of this not really about the past at all.

What we remember, what we forget, what we choose to keep buried, all shape the present. How have the landscapes around you been made and remade, shaped, and rewritten? What are the ghosts that you see bleeding through, and what are the ones we're still ignoring? Rendering something visible is just the beginning of contending with it. Although the archaeological project has ended, this work, like Frederick Douglass's work, is necessarily ongoing.

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Return to:

Barbara Leven, Treasurer, NVC/ASV

9518 Liberty Tree Lane

Vienna VA 22182

Chapter members must join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia at www.virginiaarcheology.org/

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month at the James Lee Center, 2855-A Annandale Road, Falls Church, VA.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!