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Dedication to Mrs. Alice Fiske

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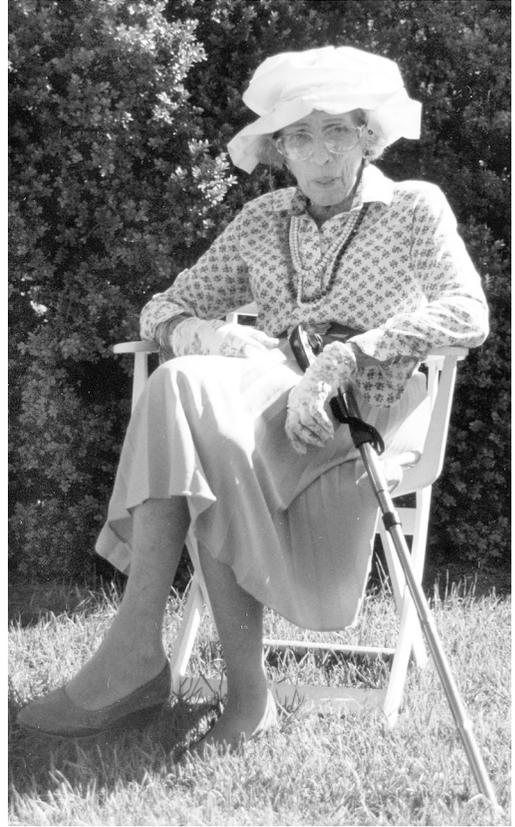
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Dedication

In 1996 I was asked by Mac Griswold to come to Shelter Island to meet Alice Fiske to discuss the possibility of doing archaeology at Sylvester Manor. Mac had worked with Alice and her late husband Andy before his untimely death in 1993 to explore the possibility of having excavations carried out at the Manor, but these discussions did not bear fruit. When Mac discussed the idea of doing archaeology with my brother-in-law Gresham Lang, he mentioned me, and the beginnings of a long relationship were set in motion. When I visited Mac and Alice that fall day in 1996 I was accompanied by my wife Anne Lang and our two children Sam and Peter. I will always remember Mrs. Fiske offering my sons Pringle's chips in a silver bowl because it symbolized everything that I would come to admire about Alice—her understated elegance matched by a lack of pretense. I actually went to the Manor that day to decline the offer to start a new project at Sylvester Manor. Having just spent three seasons working at Jamestown, Virginia with the Office of Archaeological Research at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, I had more international designs, feeling that my interest in the archaeology of the Northeast had run its course. All of those thoughts evaporated when I met Alice Fiske. Her welcoming manner and commitment to the memory of her husband Andy and his wish that archaeology might reveal a deeper understanding of the history of Sylvester Manor were a compelling combination. What impressed me the most, however, was her willingness to have us investigate the complete history of the Manor, including the lives of the enslaved Africans who toiled on the Manor, and her interest in the kind of multidisciplinary archaeology I was attempting to develop as a focus at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Little did I know just how central she would later be in seeing that aspiration realized.

When I left the Manor that day I was careful not to promise more than I could deliver. I told both her and Mac that they would need to be patient, that I had just become involved in a new project, the Native American community of Magankaquog, but that I would get started



This volume is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Alice Fiske.

when that project was completed. It was almost two years before we began our work at Sylvester Manor, but with the ever present voice of Mac Griswold keeping things moving we began our work during the summer of 1998. It is now almost a decade since we began and the site and project has proven to be everything that Mac and Alice promised it would be. Archaeology is unfortunately a long and unpredictable process. More than anything else Alice hoped we would unearth the remains of the original Manor house constructed sometime after 1652, and the possibility remains that we have found traces of that very structure. Sadly I can offer no more assurance than this possibility. Neither have we found unequivocal evidence of the enslaved Africans who appear in the documentary record of the Manor. What we have unearthed are the rich remains of a dynamic, multi-cultural landscape that has provided a picture quite different than we expected.

Alice Fiske most generously decided to support our work by endowing an archaeological research center at UMass Boston in the name and memory of her late husband Andrew. This endowment truly provided the foundation for a dramatic expansion in the scope of our research, not only on the Sylvester Manor project, but also on several others addressing similar scholarly questions of colonialism, pluralism, and identity. The endowment has provided additional support to students, allowing many to focus more fully on their training and research. It has also greatly facilitated our engagement with new technologies and experimental techniques. When we brought these students and techniques to Sylvester Manor, Alice would come out to see and ask questions on our efforts, genuine in her interest and attentiveness. We enjoyed her gentle humor as she often sat or strolled between excavation units, and we were gratified when we could show her a recent find that astonished her.

Beyond the scholarly legacy of the endowed research center and the Sylvester Manor project, a legacy that is far from complete, there is a deeper importance for all of the faculty, staff and students who have worked at Sylvester Manor these past eight summers, and that is the memories of Alice Fiske. Every year when our field work would come to an end, I would find time to write Alice a letter outlining what we had found and thanking her for her hospitality. Words are frustratingly limited in their inability to communicate the appreciation all of us have felt just being a part of Alice's

life these past eight years. One point I would make to her every year was my appreciation for how welcoming she was to the students. Over the past four years those students came from increasingly greater distances as the visibility of the project grew. Over and over again the students spoke about Alice's warmth and interest in what they were doing. Every year she came for dinner at our rented field house, and to watch our whiffleball tournament, and it was easily the high point of the social season. Her generosity to the students was unstinting, for example the summer she rented kayaks for all of them for the day. More than anything else it was her charm and constant excitement about the project that endeared her to all who came to work at Sylvester Manor.

Having wanted to be an archaeologist for as long as I can remember, I saw Alice as the kind of patron that artists and scientists had relied upon throughout history for support. And so when I would sit with her in her wonderful garden to discuss the project, the new methods we were experimenting with, or the latest results, it was as if this is where I was meant to be, and Alice was meant to be there with me. I do not think I was alone in feeling this way about her or knowing that when she was gone the heart and warmth behind the project would also be gone. And so it is that she has left us too soon, and while the project will continue, it seemed a good time to pull together the various threads of our work and to dedicate this work to her memory.

Stephen A. Mrozowski