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## Introduction

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## Introduction

Alexandra G. Martin

*The articles in this issue were originally presented at the annual Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology meeting held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in November 2017. Professional archaeologists from each decade of Strawberry Banke's institutional history reflected on their experiences. Since the 1960s, the museum has made archaeology an important part of efforts to interpret history, educate visitors, and engage the public. Strawberry Banke is considered "one of the best urban archaeological sites in America" (Starbuck 2006: 109), and the many professional archaeologists employed by the museum have contributed to Portsmouth's recognition as "one of the richest resources for historical archaeology in northern New England" (Garvin 1974: 7). These articles reflect on the museum archaeologists' challenges and successes, their contributions to both the academy and to the public, and discuss the future of the program.*

*Les articles de ce numéro ont été initialement présentés lors de la réunion annuelle du Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology qui s'est tenue à Portsmouth, New Hampshire, en novembre 2017. Les archéologues professionnels de chaque décennie de l'histoire institutionnelle de Strawberry Banke ont réfléchi à leurs expériences. Depuis les années 1960, le musée a fait de l'archéologie une partie importante des efforts pour interpréter l'histoire, éduquer les visiteurs et engager le public. Strawberry Banke est considéré comme « l'un des meilleurs sites archéologiques urbains d'Amérique » (Starbuck 2006 : 109), et les nombreux archéologues professionnels employés par le musée ont contribué à la reconnaissance de Portsmouth comme "l'une des ressources les plus riches pour l'archéologie historique dans le nord de la Nouvelle-Angleterre" (Garvin 1974 : 7). Ces articles reflètent les défis et les succès des archéologues du musée, leurs contributions à la fois académique et au public, et discutent de l'avenir du programme.*

### Introduction

Strawberry Banke Museum is an outdoor living-history museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The area's history of human activity begins thousands of years ago, as material evidence uncovered by museum archaeologists and oral histories indicate that Abenaki people hunted and fished on the seacoast. Among the most significant indigenous sites in New Hampshire's seacoast region are the Rocks Road site at the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant, a multiphase occupation site with multiple human burials (Starbuck 2006: 69), and the Late Archaic Seabrook Salt Marsh site (Starbuck 2006: 70). Strawberry Banke is also the location of one of New Hampshire's oldest European settlements, dating to 1630. Legend says that, when an English sea captain chose the area, it was named "Strawberry Bank" for the wild strawberries growing on the banks of the Piscataqua

River (Robinson 2007: 18). The settlement grew into a thriving waterfront port surrounding a tidal inlet known as "Puddle Dock," which was filled in around the turn of the 20th century. Many employees of the nearby Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and diverse immigrants made the neighborhood their home in the 20th century. By the 1950s, the neighborhood had become known for its scrapyards and rundown buildings (Robinson 2007: 110).

When the area was slated for urban renewal in 1957, a group of local preservationists helped to save the historic neighborhood. Dorothy Vaughn, a Portsmouth librarian, generated enthusiasm in Portsmouth's history and the potential for tourists. In 1958, a group had proposed the creation of a museum as an alternative to urban renewal, and they incorporated as Strawberry Banke, Inc. While the general public was largely in favor of the plan to turn the Puddle Dock neighborhood into a

museum, most of the residents there were unhappy with the planned changes to their neighborhood. Almost a year after Strawberry Banke's incorporation, approximately 370 people attended a public hearing, after which one of the *Portsmouth Herald's* headlines reported that "Residents Voice Bitter Opposition to Land Taking" (*Portsmouth Herald* 1959). One local resident of Jefferson Street specifically objected to the characterization of the neighborhood as a slum (Robinson 2007: 223). However, in 1960, with city-wide support, Strawberry Banke became the official developer for the area that had been designated the "Marcy-Washington Streets Urban Renewal Project" and negotiated with the Portsmouth Housing Authority to purchase the site and preserve 27 of the historic houses (Garvin 1998).

### Strawbery Banke Museum

The museum was originally conceived as a ca. 1800 "colonial village," inspired by Colonial Williamsburg and Old Sturbridge Village (Robinson 2007: 209, 233). The architects of Colonial Williamsburg, Perry, Shaw & Hepburn, helped create the initial master plan (Candee 1992: 50). However, there was little funding to build planned replica buildings in addition to documenting and rehabilitating the many in situ historical buildings. The museum's first employees included executive vice president Captain Carl Johnson, hired in 1961, and architectural historian James Garvin, who was hired in 1963. Johnson coordinated between the Portsmouth Housing Authority and Strawberry Banke, Inc., as many 20th-century homes and garages were cleared from the neighborhood (Candee 1992: 50; Robinson 2007: 237). Garvin was responsible for documenting the conditions of the many houses in the Puddle Dock neighborhood as well as salvaging architectural elements that were not preserved in place, and he served as the curator from 1970 to 1974.

Garvin also described the first archaeological activity at the museum in 1964:

We soon had a summer volunteer, a student at a nearby school, whose passion for digging foretold his future as an archaeologist. We assigned him a site, and he quickly reported for duty with pick, shovel, khakis, and pith helmet. Each mighty swing of his pickaxe rebounded off the rock-hard soil, so recently compacted by bulldozer treads. But after days of hard, hot labor, he had his first artifacts—enough to recall that his site had been the yard of a scrap metal dealer a few months earlier. That was my first lesson in archaeology. (Garvin 1999)

This student was a 15-year-old Lawrence Straus, who went on to become a distinguished professor of anthropology. The public showed an early interest in archaeological research, and Strawberry Banke had to arrange for insurance for visitors in order for the Portsmouth Housing Authority to grant permission for Straus's research (*Portsmouth Herald* 1964). Captain Carl Johnson hosted a visit to Puddle Dock by the New Hampshire Archeological Society and hoped to create an archaeological exhibit when the museum opened (*Portsmouth Herald* 1964).

In 1965, the museum opened to the public and continued to grow through the process of restoring and interpreting historic buildings. Today the museum encompasses an 8.9 ac. campus in downtown Portsmouth, with private roads and 42 buildings surrounding a 1.8 ac. open green space (the location of the former tidal inlet). A few buildings were moved to the museum grounds in the 1960s, including the ca. 1753 Stoodley's Tavern, the ca. 1784 Daniel Webster House, and the 1811 Goodwin Mansion. Strawberry Banke has been featured as a case study for moving a significant historic building while maintaining its structural integrity, despite many financial hurdles (Paravalos 2006). Most of the buildings are historic houses that remain on their original foundations, including the ca. 1695 Sherburne House; the ca. 1720 Marden-Abbott House, restored to its 1943 appearance when it was a local corner store; and the ca. 1795 Shapiro House, restored to its 1919 appearance

when it was the home of a Russian Jewish family. Ten furnished buildings represent different periods of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Visitors' explorations are complemented by period gardens and additional exhibition houses, including permanent exhibits on maritime history, architectural history, and Abenaki historical and 21st-century lifeways. Four of the museum buildings are also featured on the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire, a separate nonprofit organization that "promotes awareness and appreciation of African American history and life" (Boggis et al. 2018); see also Sammons and Cunningham (2004). Museum visitors interact with a combined staff of uniformed interpreters, museum educators, and costumed role players who portray different characters, including former Puddle Dock residents.

The mission of Strawberry Banke to "promote understanding of the lives of individuals and the value of community through encounters with the history and ongoing preservation of a New England waterfront neighborhood" entails conducting research and educational activities. Since the 1960s the museum has made archaeology an important part of efforts to interpret history, educate visitors, and engage the public. Strawberry Banke was called "one of the best urban archaeological sites in America" (Starbuck 2006: 109), and, combined with excavations directed outside the museum grounds, "Portsmouth is the most intensively researched urban area in New Hampshire" (Starbuck 2006: 113). The museum was also described as "one of the richest resources for historical archaeology in northern New England" in its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (Garvin 1974: 7). The area is recognized as a National Register Historic District, bounded by Court and Marcy streets, and both sides of Hancock and Washington streets.

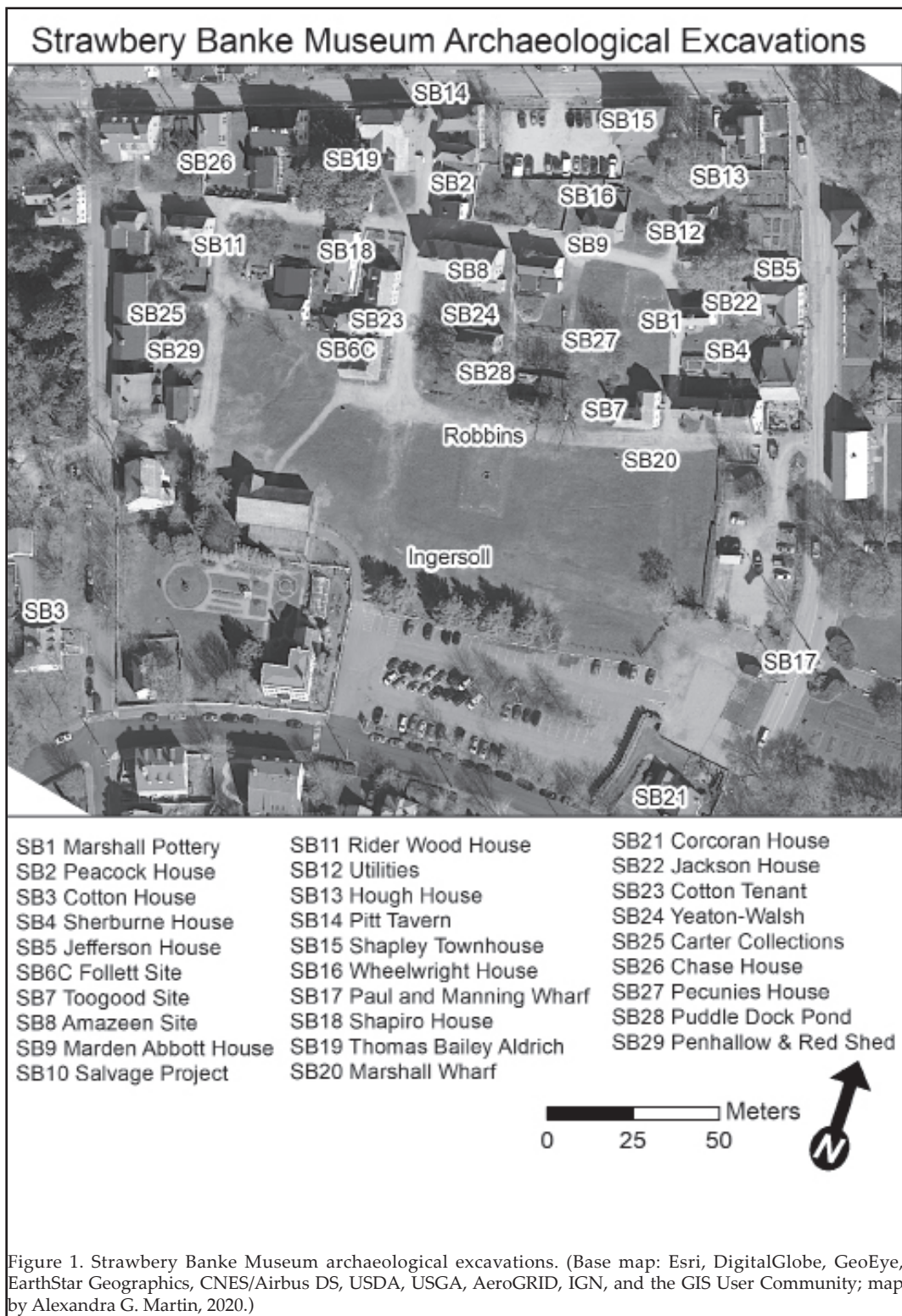
The Strawberry Banke Museum Archaeological District (27-RK-432) was added to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources Archaeological Inventory in 2009 (Charles

2010). The museum site includes 2 early unnumbered locations excavated by Roland Wells Robbins and Dan Ingersoll, 29 locations numbered using the system implemented by Steve Pendery in 1975, and dozens of miscellaneous monitoring projects (FIG. 1). Archaeological excavations have provided extensive evidence to help inform the interpretations of the museum's furnished houses and personal histories of the Puddle Dock neighborhood. However, the combined responsibilities of Strawberry Banke as a museum, an historic preservation site, and as an archaeological site have caused unique tensions at times.

### Strawberry Banke: Fifty Years of Public Archaeology

The articles in this issue were originally presented at the annual Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology meeting, held in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in November 2017. Professional archaeologists from each decade of Strawberry Banke's institutional history reflect on their experiences, challenges, and successes, their contributions to both the academy and to the public, and discuss the future of the program (FIG. 2).

In the first article, Dan Ingersoll reflects candidly on his experience as the first professional archaeologist to work at the museum in the late 1960s, shortly after the explorations of Roland Wells Robbins. Robbins was a self-proclaimed archaeologist whose work on New England houses as a painter and handyman honed his interest in research (Robbins and Jones 1959). In the summer of 1966, Robbins worked with heavy machinery to trench across Puddle Dock. Robbins successfully exposed the locations of several 18th-century wharves, seemingly related to a very early plan for the museum to re-excavate the tidal inlet at Puddle Dock. His approach, however, lacked systematic documentation, and only photographs of his excavations remain. The wharves' exact locations were not mapped, no notes of Robbins remain on file,



and many artifacts he collected are unprovenienced.

Ingersoll helped set the tone for more rigorous academic research projects to be carried out in urban settings, as at this museum, described in his 1971 Harvard University dissertation, *Settlement Archaeology at Puddle Dock* (Ingersoll 1971b). As Marley Brown writes in his concluding essay, Ingersoll became a role model as an “academic anthropological historical archaeologist” in the formative years of the discipline of historical archaeology.

In 1975, the confluence of greater preservation efforts at nearby history museums, the increasing recognition of historical archaeology as a professional subdiscipline, and the arrival of a new museum curator led to the hiring of Steve Pendery for a short-term excavation. Pendery’s temporary job turned into a

much longer project that shaped the direction of archaeology, both at the museum and in the discipline more broadly. Pendery describes how his early work at the Marshall Pottery site prompted the museum to begin engaging in public archaeology as well as in more mitigatory excavations, as various public and local funding agencies were inspired to fund exploration of areas that could have been affected by museum ground disturbance. The largescale excavations directed by Pendery required the assistance of many members of the public, who participated as volunteers and as the first of many groups of field-school students. Furthermore, the 1979 opening of the museum’s public lab and exhibit space at the Jones House Archaeology Center demonstrated the significance of archaeological research to the museum as well as its visitors.



Figure 2. Archaeologists at the 2017 CNEHA meeting (left to right): Dan Ingersoll, Faith Harrington, Elizabeth Donison, Sheila Charles, Alexandra Martin, Martha Pinello, and Steve Pendery. (Photo by Alexandra G. Martin, 2017.)

The data produced during this phase of archaeological research also provided the foundation for scholarly work about Portsmouth, including Pendery's own publications on redware production at the Marshall Pottery site (Pendery 1985) and his analysis of urban settlement patterns and phases in historic Portsmouth (Pendery 1978). This research fit into a larger trend in American museum research and social history during the 1970s and 1980s, as "public or popular history outside the academy was growing at phenomenal rates," and more scholarly research was being produced by museum staff (Krugler 1991: 353).

By the 1980s, the Jones House at Strawberry Banke was providing a venue for staff, volunteers, and students, as well as museum visitors, to engage with archaeology on a daily basis. The substantial growth in archaeological research, activity, and interest prompted the museum to hire Martha Pinello as the director of archaeology in 1986. In her article, Pinello discusses the importance of involving the community in museum archaeology. Community science, or citizen science, includes volunteer labor in various aspects of data collection, processing, and scientific inquiry (Silvertown 2009). Community science became a purposeful methodology at Strawberry Banke. As archaeologist Monica Smith has pointed out, a "reliance on professional archaeologists for data collection and management has negative implications for researcher workload as well as for stakeholder satisfaction" (Smith 2014: 749–750). Furthermore, many archaeologists may struggle to manage the "behind the scenes" collections care that follows the more visible, more public excavation seasons (Thompson 2000). Welcoming community members as volunteers allows for more extensive professional research and creates opportunities for public education.

At Strawberry Banke, indeed, years of excavation by many hands resulted in a backlog of unprocessed artifacts and unwritten reports. Pinello paused the museum's excavations to catch up and experimented with offering the

museum's first artifact-based field schools, finding a balance that allowed for better collections care. The attention given to the archaeological collection by Pinello and her staff led directly to more intensive scholarly work and engagement with Portsmouth artifacts, including Suzanne Findlen Hood's thesis about Deer Street ceramics (Findlen 2001), appearances of Deer Street artifacts in illustrated reference books (Edwards and Hampson 2005; Skerry and Hood 2009), Carolyn White's dissertation examining personal adornment artifacts from Portsmouth sites (White 2002), and Kathy Wheeler's dissertation, which applied an understanding of site-formation processes to depositional patterns at the Rider Wood, Follett, and Wheelwright sites (Wheeler 1992).

In the early 2000s, archaeology at the museum adapted again. Construction of a new building to house the museum's decorative-arts objects and archival collection meant that curatorial and archaeological staff would be housed in the same building for the first time. When Strawberry Banke hired Larry Yerdon as president and CEO in 2006, Strawberry Banke, Inc., became "Strawberry Banke Museum." At that time, some building uses changed. The Jones House became the "Discovery Center," with a new hands-on exhibit space for children, and the archaeological exhibits and lab space were moved out. In 2008, the Thayer Cummings research library was closed, in part to make space for the Heritage House Program, an initiative to restore and lease underutilized museum spaces. The Heritage House Program includes office or residential rentals in 15 buildings on the museum grounds, some of which are in buildings still awaiting rehabilitation.

Sheila Charles was also hired in 2006, just before the new Carter Collections Center was completed and opened in 2007. In Charles's article, she describes her focus on excavations at the ca. 1762 Chase House. Over the course of four field seasons, as well as concurrent and subsequent lab seasons, an in-depth analysis and report was produced, supported by field-

school students and archaeology volunteers (Charles and Martin 2015). Recent scholarship has engaged with research at the Chase House, including Katherine Evans's thesis about the personal artifacts associated with children (Evans 2016) and Diana Smith Gallagher's dissertation, which included the Chase privy in her analysis of historical sanitation (Gallagher 2014). Artifacts from the Chase House excavations have also been featured in exhibits at the Rowland Gallery, a new space in the Carter Collections Center.

When I was hired in 2012, I found that another aspect of collections care required us to pause, as Pinello had done in the 1980s. Today, the museum maintains a collection of over one million archaeological artifacts for research and display, along with the associated paperwork, maps, photographs, and reports from over 30 excavations carried out by museum archaeologists. When Carolyn White came to the museum to analyze personal-adornment artifacts, she noted that "the archaeological collections at Strawberry Banke Museum are not cataloged on a database and the catalog sheets for each site are in different formats, are inconsistent among sites, or are incomplete" (White 2002: 17). This is not a new problem in archaeological curation (Marquardt et al. 1982), but modern technology has offered archaeologists and curators new tools to improve archival records and increase public access to collections. As Julia King has pointed out: "Creating electronic access touches on many issues in archaeology ... digital technologies indeed represent the next—but sometimes scary—frontier in archaeological collections research and management practices" (King 2009: 25).

At Strawberry Banke, the collections department staff now manages a shared database, which was recently upgraded into Past Perfect, a computer application that is designed for museums to manage their collections. The database is available for the public to search from our museum Web site and includes photos, object descriptions, and exhibit histories. With the help of volunteers and

interns, significant archaeological artifacts that were once on view to museum visitors in Jones House are being photographed and uploaded to the public database, accessible from the front page of the museum Web site. The many reports by museum archaeologists have also been scanned to be made easily available. (Yes, the reports referenced in this issue as "Manuscript, Strawberry Banke" are online.) This has resulted in renewed researcher interaction with Portsmouth archaeology.

Staff continues to direct archaeological field schools, which offer professional training for students and members of the public. As in the past, ongoing excavations also provide a valuable learning experience for members of the public visiting during the field season. Strawberry Banke currently receives over 100,000 visitors a year, so field-school students are advised that the Strawberry Banke field school places a special emphasis on public interpretation. The department has also worked to extend its reach online, including on social media and through blog posts. ([www.digstrawberrybanke.blogspot.com](http://www.digstrawberrybanke.blogspot.com); <https://www.facebook.com/StawberyBankeMuseum>; <https://www.instagram.com/strawberrybanke-museum>)

These field schools also intersect with programs offered by the education department, including annual summer internships that provide a stipend for graduate or advanced graduate students and, every three summers, an archaeology-themed summer camp for 10- to 13-year-olds. In her article, Elizabeth Donison, a recent intern, reflects on her role as interpreter to the public, teaching assistant to field-school students, and professional example to the young students. As with past archaeology interns, Donison concludes that the intern experience is beneficial as a teaching *and* learning experience.

Marley Brown provides a concluding review, informed by his many years of experience as the director of archaeology at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and as a research professor at the College of William



and Mary. Brown puts the contributions of each archaeologist in the context of larger trends in both the developing discipline of historical archaeology and museum archaeology. From Ingersoll's 1971 *Man in the Northeast* article (Ingersoll 1971a) to recent research by Sheila Charles and myself on a 20th-century Jewish ritual bath, work at Strawberry Banke Museum has engaged with multiple communities: academic, public, local, and even familial. As Brown (This issue) argues:

The better we archaeologists, as a profession, become at communicating with individual members of communities of all backgrounds and, most notably in this case, those families and their descendants who once lived in and around Puddle Dock, the more likely we will be to maintain our relevance by continuing, in Carol McDavid's words, to provide "the public with the means for constructing their own past"

Multiple articles in this issue cite McDavid's (2002: 3) definition, demonstrating how the approach of public archaeology has driven the successes of the museum's archaeological programs. We hope these articles serve as useful and relatable case studies that celebrate public archaeological methodologies among the many exemplary public archaeology programs throughout the United States.

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