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Commentary on the History of Public Archaeology at Strawbery Banke, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

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This commentary reflects on the ways Strawbery Banke Museum archaeology was affected by, and in turn, influenced the field of historical archaeology. It can be argued that in the late 1960s urban historical archaeology got its start in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The stories and narrative histories told in these articles are essential to the success of the Strawbery Banke archaeology program, as they reach to the heart of the importance the Portsmouth community attaches to this place. The process of community building has always been at work in Portsmouth and has been what makes Strawbery Banke the museum that it is today. The story of public archaeology and its development at Strawbery Banke discussed in these articles has been a key part of its institutional history.

Ce commentaire reflète la manière dont l'archéologie du musée Strawbery Banke a été affectée et, à son tour, influencé le domaine de l'archéologie historique. On peut affirmer qu'à la fin des années 1960, l'archéologie historique urbaine a fait ses débuts à Portsmouth, dans le New Hampshire. Les histoires et les histoires narratives racontées dans ces articles sont essentielles au succès du programme d'archéologie de Strawbery Banke, car elles touchent au cœur de l'importance que la communauté de Portsmouth attache à ce lieu. Le processus de construction communautaire, identitaire a toujours été à l'œuvre à Portsmouth et a fait de Strawbery Banke le musée qu'il est aujourd'hui. L'histoire de l'archéologie publique et de son développement à Strawbery Banke discutée dans ces articles a été un élément clé de son histoire institutionnelle.

The articles in this volume have provided an excellent review of the role that public archaeology has played in the history of archaeology at Strawbery Banke, a history that goes back a few years before the pioneering 1966 efforts of New England's "pick-and-shovel historian," Roland Wells Robbins, whose work for the museum is well described by Don Linebaugh (2005: 145–151) in his very thorough biography of Robbins. Robbins, a very experienced restoration-oriented excavator, quickly found remains of Puddle Dock with the help of a backhoe and, in the process, initiated the museum's first foray into public archaeology. In fact, two years prior, in 1964, teenaged Lawrence Guy Straus, who grew up in Portsmouth, organized his own dig, also looking for the edge of Puddle Dock. Straus later became known as an expert on the Paleolithic in Cantabria, and his many accomplishments during a distinguished career at New Mexico include an effort to bring reason to the so-called Solutrean-hypothesis debate (Straus 2000), which is based on Bruce Bradley and Dennis Stanford's idea that morphological similarities between Solutrean and Clovis points mean that there was a "North Atlantic Ice-Edge Corridor" that can account for the peopling of the New World (Bradley and Stanford 2004). It turns out that Straus, a noted prehistorian, began his career as an historical archaeologist before he left home for the University of Chicago. It has so often been the other way around, to the point where many of us, trained explicitly in historical archaeology from the beginning of our careers, often refer to our mentors, who began their careers as prehistorians, as "retreads."

But I first learned about archaeology in Portsmouth from Dan Ingersoll, who used to come down to Plymouth from Cambridge during his days as a graduate student at Harvard to have Sunday brunch with the Deetz family. By that time I had been adopted into the household and was often hanging out on weekends and so had a chance to get to know Dan a bit and learn from his conversations with Jim. In fact, Dan became my role model for what I wanted to become, an academic anthropological historical archaeologist.

His article reminded me of the importance of the formative phase of the discipline, a time when we were trying to find a firm anthropological footing for historical archaeology. As he notes, one of the prevailing frameworks of the late 1960s was that of "settlement archaeology," an approach championed by then Yale archaeologist and later Harvard archaeologist, K. C. Chang, whose 1967 book, *Rethinking Archaeology*, and 1968 edited volume, *Settlement Archaeology*, helped establish this approach, perhaps best summarized by then-recent Yale Ph.D. and friend of Chang, Bruce Trigger, in his classic essay on the determinants of settlement pattern (Trigger 1967).

As Ingersoll notes, this was also the beginning of the "New Archaeology," with its emphasis on the integration of a whole range of environmental data into archaeological field sampling and analysis. With the help of National Science Foundation support and other grants, Ingersoll was able to establish a truly interdisciplinary benchmark for his settlement archaeology of Puddle Dock, and, as he has shown, palynology, zooarchaeology, dendrochronology, and lithic sourcing all produce important results, along with the kind of careful identification and dating of historic period artifacts made of ceramics and glass that he pursued. This was inspired in part by the example set by the late Norm Barka (e.g. Barka [1965]) and by the late Bunny Fontana as well, whose work at Johnny Ward's Ranch and "Tale of a Nail" (Fontana 1962, 1965) made clear the importance of detailed artifact study, no matter the period of time. More importantly, and on a much broader scale, Ingersoll helped pioneer "urban historical archaeology," which, to recall Bert Salwen's phrase from his important 1978 review essay "Archaeology in Megalopolis: Updated Assessment," means the archaeology *of* the city, not simply archaeology undertaken *in* the city. Ingersoll published on this significant facet of his research, and the title of his article, "Problems of Urban Historical Archaeology," underscores this fact; thanks to Ingersoll it can be argued that in the late 1960s urban historical archaeology got its exemplary start in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

In the fall of 1971, when Ingersoll completed his dissertation and published his article in *Man in the Northeast* (Ingersoll 1971a), alerting those few historical archaeologists around at the time to the challenges of this type of research, I had the good fortune of being the teaching assistant in James Deetz's first offering of his class on American material culture, the course that over the next few years would become the first edition of *In Small Things Forgotten* (Deetz 1977).

Among my section members was a freshman by the name of Steven Pendery. Steve had grown up in Paris and as a teenager began to do archaeology of the medieval period in Alsace. He showed up at Brown with considerable excavation and recording skills, and with his help I was able to excavate a few important 18th-century features at the Mott Farm in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, which, much later, became part of my doctoral dissertation in anthropology (Brown 1987). Steve himself was able to use material he gathered from the Mott Farm project for his 1975 senior honor's thesis, which also employed the settlement archaeology framework used by Ingersoll in his dissertation (Ingersoll 1971b).

As described in his summary of 10 years of public archaeology at Strawbery Banke, Pendery came to Portsmouth for what was expected to be a short-term project, a kind of compliance archaeology funded by David French as part of his much larger gift to the museum of a collection of joinery tools and a properly renovated space in the Peter Lowd House to display them. Steve was looking for evidence of the Marshall Pottery site in an area to be impacted by the construction of an HVAC system, and, as so often happens, on the last day of the excavation evidence of a waster pit was encountered. This discovery ushered in an important period of public archaeology at Strawbery Banke, as Steve was able to secure funding from Mr. French, the National Endowment for the Humanities' old Youth Grants Program, the New Hampshire

State Historic Preservation Office, and other sources to have a fuller look at Marshall's pottery works and, over the next several years, at areas on several properties that were to be affected by various ground-disturbing activities resulting from museum maintenance and interpretive activities. Key elements initiated by Pendery that have continued at Strawbery Banke include the use of field-school students, incorporation of volunteers into field- and lab work, both excavation and laboratory work as exhibit activities, and outreach to specialized groups of the public, in his case, the Boston Student China Circle, to see what can be learned by looking at the range of ceramics recovered from archaeological contexts. Even though, for me, one of Pendery's most important intellectual contributions from his early work at Strawbery Banke is his Dublin Seminar article, "Urban Process in Portsmouth, New Hampshire" (Pendery 1978), which can be considered a substantive extension of the approach that Ingersoll began, there is no question that Steve's friendship with Diana Edwards led to many more significant studies of ceramic consumption by archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike, one of the more comprehensive being the Winterthur master's thesis of Colonial Williamsburg's curator of ceramics and glass, Suzanne Findlen Hood (Findlen 2001).

One can reasonably ask how was it that Hood or Carolyn White (2002) or other students of material culture were able to do the studies they have accomplished, which in a real way place the archaeological finds of Strawbery Banke and surrounding area right at the top of meaningful object-level analysis and interpretation from any colonial entrepôt or capital along the Eastern Seaboard? The answer to that question comes from Pinello's review of the lows and highs of her tenure at Strawbery Banke—a five-year moratorium on excavation in favor of getting the collection in order with the help of a dedicated group of volunteers and input from the museum's curatorial staff and visiting experts. When I arrived at Colonial Williamsburg to take over the field program from Ivor Noël Hume, I discovered that there was no fragment-level catalog of any site he had excavated since arriving at the foundation. By the time I got there Noël Hume had been running the show for 15 years and had directed some very large excavations indeed.

Only objects that were whole or reconstructed through cross mending and featured in publications were cataloged. Everything else was in bags and boxes (sadly, not acid free), and had not been inventoried in any way. So, I can relate to what Pinello found upon being hired part time. I can also relate to what happened to her with a change at the top—just like many species of shark that need to swim to stay alive, the archaeologist needs to dig to justify being there at all. That was certainly the expectation of my role over a more than 25-year tenure as director of archaeological research at Colonial Williamsburg—from one excavation to the next with no time to attend to remedial cataloging and collections management. But, unlike Pinello, I did not create that needed balance between time excavating and time processing the artifacts. Even in gift-funded projects, I found that it was impossible to create the proper balance between field and laboratory levels of effort and avoid what one vice president often referred to, in evaluating our budgets, as "sticker shock".

In her article, Pinello also defines some important dimensions of how the discipline of archaeology and professional archaeologists articulate with the broader society: public archaeology, public history, community archaeology, and citizen science. As she notes, all four have contributed to the development and success of archaeology at Strawbery Banke, but it is two aspects of these that strike me as especially relevant: the idea that we archaeologists can provide the public with the means for constructing their own past, and that, through community engagement, we are willing to cede some of our control over our work, what Chris Matthews has called "leaking authority" (Matthews 2004: 5). For

those of us who made an early commitment to collaborative archaeology, these two kinds of engagement hardly seem radical. For example, the summer that Steve Pendery was uncovering the Marshall Pottery, Jim Deetz and I were digging at Parting Ways at the behest of a very well-organized and persuasive group of local African Americans in Plymouth (Deetz 1977).

What are the implications of the growing commitment in historical archaeology to collaboration and community engagement for the program at Strawbery Banke and, for that matter, other museum-based programs? One of the most important revolves around what Elizabeth Donison, citing Yannis Hamilakis (2004), refers to as a critical pedagogy, not to be confused with what you learned about your history in the fourth grade. She and her supervisor, Alexandra Martin, explain the opportunities for such pedagogy afforded by the projects they undertook in the context of the Heritage House Program (i.e., how individuals learn, how knowledge is produced, and how subject positions are constructed). Other than the opportunity to interpret an excavation in general, Martin and Donison had the opportunity to shape specific curriculum for both an archaeology camp aimed at 10–13 year olds and an archaeological field school for adults. There has also been the opportunity to create more traditional museum interpretation through exhibits, in this case those that take advantage of orphanage-associated toys recovered during Sheila Charles's excavation of the Chase House site as well as the interpretation of the 20th-century *mikveh* found by geophysical prospecting during Charles's tenure. As Martin notes, the excavation of the latter provides an important opportunity to reach out to the contemporary Portsmouth Jewish community, an example writ large of the kind of emotional connection that Pinello was able to make with Mollie Shapiro's son while giving a lab tour of artifacts found in his grandparents' backyard, artifacts that he understood included toys that the mother he never knew had held in her very young hands.

In a way now I have come full circle back to Dan Ingersoll and what has made him one of the unique voices of his generation of historical archaeologists. Though he had a most refined, dry sense of humor, I never heard my good friend Norm Barka contextualize a find by quoting William Faulkner, even though he shared Steve Williams with Ingersoll as a dissertation advisor (as did both Jim Deetz and Steve Pendery). In fact, this kind of interpretation is not a strength of most archaeologists, whether brought up in the age of processualism or not. As Ingersoll observes with reference to the Ed. Pinaud bottle he found: "[F]or the historical archaeologist, literature offers possibilities, and here enriches the now-scentless glass bottle, and gives it a place in a real or imagined world of people and their objects." These stories, or narratives, that Pinello especially has written so evocatively, are essential to the success of the archaeology program at Strawbery Banke, as they reach to the heart of the importance the community of Portsmouth attaches to this place. 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" (McDavid 2002: 3).

From what I know of how Strawbery Banke came into existence, this was the process of community building, conflict-ridden as it was at various points in time, that has always been at work in Portsmouth and, through thick and thin, has been what makes Strawbery Banke the museum it is today. The story of public archaeology and its development in Portsmouth, so well set forth in these articles, has been a key part of this institutional history. At the same time, the importance of the excellent scholarship on urban historical archaeology that has come out of what has been excavated here must not be forgotten.

I am sure that the ongoing efforts to make the collection available digitally and through geographic information systems, as Martin has described, will enhance opportunities for further study and perhaps lead to a grand synthesis of what has been learned about Portsmouth, both within the museum's campus and beyond.

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