

NYSAA NEWSLETTER



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THE EDITORS ENCOURAGE ANY NYSAA MEMBER WHO WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, LETTER, EDITORIAL OR NEWS ITEMS TO SUBMIT IT ELECTRONICALLY TO BILL OR LISA AT THE ADDRESSES LISTED ABOVE.

STONELESS CHERRIES, PERSIMMONS, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

By David Sorg, djsorg@windstream.net

In The Jesuit Relations (43: 256-259) in a paragraph describing the flora of Iroquoia written from the new mission at Onondaga in 1656-7 we find the following statement.

“Stoneless Cherries are found there. Fruits grow there which are the color and size of an apricot, whose blossom is like that of the white lily, and which smell and taste like the citron. There are apples as large as a goose’s egg; the seed has been brought from the country of the Cats and looks like beans; the fruit is delicate and has a very sweet smell; the trunk is the height and thickness of our dwarf trees; it thrives in swamp spots and in good soil.”

It is generally believed that the third and following sentences describes the Pawpaw. The first two sentences appear to describe the "stoneless cherry."



Image of the Common Persimmon, *Diospyros virginiana*

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis is that the fruits described as stoneless cherries were seedless persimmon fruits collected from one

or several trees that had been planted by the Iroquois from seed secured further south. A corollary of this hypothesis is that the Iroquois had been planting exotic tree fruits in prehistoric times before the introduction of apples and that these native fruits were subsequently abandoned in favor of apples.

I was struck that the description could possibly apply to a seedless persimmon, though the flower resembles more the lily-of-the-valley, which is a different word in French. Persimmons normally have bean-sized seeds, but if there is no male pollinator nearby (persimmons are dioecious), some female trees can produce seedless fruit.

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NYSAA Annual Meeting

Our 94th annual meeting will take place April 23-25. It is hosted by the Incorporated Orange County Chapter (IOCC) and will be held at Honor’s Haven Resort and Spa in Ellenville, NY. Daily rates per person, per night, customized American plan are as follows: deluxe Rooms \$126, double occu-

pancy \$86, and executive rooms \$144, double occupancy \$98. This rate includes 4 meals, breakfast on Saturday through breakfast on Sunday. For more information on Honor’s Haven, go to: <http://www.honorshaven.com/index.aspx>.

(See photos on page 4.)

The banquet speaker will be Dr. James Adovasio, Director of the Mercyhurst Archaeological Institute, Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA. His talk is entitled: “Early Human Populations in the New World: A Biased Perspective.”

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STONELESS CHERRIES, PERSIMMONS, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

DISCUSSION

If the "stoneless cherries" reference is to seedless persimmon it implies that it is the description of fruit from a single tree or at most a couple female trees isolated (intentionally?) from a male pollinator. Since Iroquoia is outside the natural range of the persimmon, seed brought in would grow into a mixture of male and female trees, which can't be distinguished until flowering. The described fruit would need to be from an isolated female, perhaps the only survivor of a planting.

The corollary to the hypothesis implies that the persimmon was deliberately planted as an exotic fruit. The persimmon and pawpaw are two native fruits that MAY have been deliberately planted from exotic seeds. They both have natural ranges that include USDA zone 6 (Average annual minimum temperatures between 0F and -10F) and sometimes in USDA zone 5 (Average annual minimum temperature between -10F and -20F) areas. However pawpaw appears to be just slightly harder than persimmon and occurs near Lake Erie and SW Lake Ontario in western NY and Southern Ontario. The reason for the pawpaw in this region has generated a small literature. Keener and Kuhns (1997), maintain it is from deliberate Iroquoian plantings, Murphy (2001) maintains it is a natural distribution, and Wyckoff (2009) maintains it is a combination. The persimmon, however, is not found in this area naturally and the closest natural occurrence is in Southern Pennsylvania and Ohio, though Skallerup (1953) has a site on

his distribution map near lake Erie in extreme NE Ohio.

This implies that any persimmon seed found on archaeological sites in New York would be from deliberately planted sources unless one would postulate a natural population that has since disappeared. The intriguing part of this corollary is that persimmon WILL GROW in Iroquoia if planted. I have purchased persimmons from nurseries in Ontario and Western New York, where they are being grown, and have been growing persimmon (and pawpaw) here in Elk County, PA (a cold-end zone 5 with a 110 day frost-free season) for 30 years, including growing new trees from collected seed. If I can do it, the Iroquois certainly could have done it, as much of their area is zone 6. What we have here is a natural laboratory to test the hypothesis of aboriginal fruit cultivation. We have an area where the exotic fruit could be grown, but is not naturally occurring, and a source only several hundred miles to the south, well within aboriginal travel range. Stoneless fruit, of course, would not be found in the archaeological record, but the presumption is that other planting trials would have yielded the more normal seeded fruit.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The implication here is that finding persimmon seeds in Iroquoian sites would be strong evidence for pre-Columbian fruit tree cultivation (or at least planting). I

have been led to believe that neither persimmon nor pawpaw seeds have so far been found in New York archaeological sites. In the case of the pawpaw at least, this is strange. Pawpaws are found in western New York and both Parker (1968: 95) and Waugh (1916: 129) list the pawpaw as fruit utilized by the Iroquois. The seeds should appear in refuse pits. My request is for archaeologists to check for the possibility of pawpaw and persimmon seeds when they find odd-looking "beans". Positive or even negative findings would have implications on the possible extent of prehistoric fruit tree cultivation.

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Miscellaneous from the President

The Fall NYSAA Executive Meeting was held Saturday, Nov. 14 at Sainte Marie among the Iroquois, Liverpool, NY. There was good chapter representation at the meeting and we are again indebted to the Beauchamp Chapter for their hospitality. Carolyn Weatherwax reported that the association is in good financial shape. Portions of the Corresponding Secretaries Report (Membership Trends) and the Publications Report appear elsewhere in this newsletter.



Concern has been expressed over the need for guidance for archaeology programs in high schools and middle schools. Christina Rieth chairs an NYSAA committee that is in the process of establishing guidelines for these programs. We hope to put these on our web site in the near future.

We are still planning on a marketing survey of the NYSAA membership. A major aim of this survey is to see how the effectiveness of our organization might be improved. Mary Ann Niemczycki a long time member and marketing analyst volunteered to undertake this for free. There was considerable discussion at the Executive Meeting of the kinds of questions that we might ask the membership. Sherene Baugher will be working with Mary Ann on formulating a brief questionnaire which will then be forwarded by e-mail and regular mail to the membership. We look forward to your cooperation.

Finally, at the Executive Committee Meeting we established an NYSAA Public Service/ Preservation Award. This will enable the NYSAA to publicly recognize public officials, developers, and others who have acted in the best interests of our state's archaeological heritage. Currently serving state officers will constitute the committee. Nominations should be forwarded to the NYSAA president.

Membership Trends

I am happy to report that NYSAA membership is now at its highest point since I began tracking it in 2005. We have a total of 606 memberships for 2009. This does not include the Long Island Chapter, which has yet to report membership for 2009. With the 49 or so from Long Island, NYSAA has 655 members. The Orange County Chapter, the hosts of our 2010 annual meeting, especially has been successful at recruiting new members with 42 new members from 2008 to 2009.

—Bill Bouchard, NYSAA Corresponding Secretary, from his report at the Executive Committee Meeting in Liverpool, NY on Nov. 14.

NYSAA ANNUAL MEETING CONTINUED:

Barry Kass, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at SUNY/Orange is serving as Program Chair. Paper proposal abstracts should be e-mailed to him as Microsoft Word attachments at barry.kass@sunyorange.edu.

Pre-registration is \$30 until April 1, after which it is \$35. To register, please send a check made out to IOCCNYSAA to Harold Decker, 60 Decker Dr., Middletown, NY 10949. An optional tour of nearby Dutchess Quarry will be available on Sunday afternoon. For additional information or to reserve space in the book room, please contact David Johnson, 24 Manor Dr. W, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603; phone (845) 454-1860; e-mail: globaldj@optonline.net.



CONFERENCES:

The Society for Historical Archaeology: January 6-9 Amelia Island Plantation, Jacksonville, Florida. See <http://www.sha.org/>



Integrating Terrestrial and Underwater Archaeology

THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTER:

The Susquehanna River Archaeological Center (SRAC) in downtown Waverly, NY reports that the mural for the Woolly Mammoth exhibit set to be unveiled in early 2010 has been completed. A video of the mural and artist Peter Quilles talking about the mural can be seen at www.SRACenter.org.

The entire exhibit will be approximately 300 square feet, wrapping around the entire one end of the SRAC exhibit area and will include Carnegie Museum's reproductions of the ten foot tusk, jaw and teeth of a woolly mammoth excavated at Spring Lake in Wyalusing, PA in 1983. The Andaste Chapter of Pennsylvania Archaeology received a \$5,000 grant from the Alan Pierce Foundation earlier this year for the artifacts to be placed in Susquehanna River Archaeological Center with the agreement that SRAC would fund the rest of the exhibit to house them. The exhibit will also include actual photos and reports from the excavation, the mural, and a video screen.

SRAC's Deb Twigg reports, "The next phase will include building a 3D riverbank around the mural which will include trees and even scattered artifacts from different cultures that once traveled along the Susquehanna River in our region. The final phase will be housing the artifacts from Carnegie that should be arriving in late January." She added, "For those that want to take a part of history home with them, we invite the public to take pictures as the exhibit continues to be created."

For those interested in donating towards the SRAC Woolly Mammoth exhibit, send donations to SRAC Woolly Mammoth Exhibit, PO Box 12, Sayre, PA 18840. (SRAC is a 501(c)3.) For more information, visit www.SRACenter.org, email info@Sracenter.org, or call (607)565-7960.



ARCHAEOLOGIST WRITES FOR KIDS

While in fourth grade, Lois Huey told her mother, "someday I'm going to write children's books." After 30 years as an historical archaeologist for New York State's Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation agency, stationed at Peebles Island, Lois has met her childhood goal. Her five books on American historical archaeology have been published by Marshall Cavendish, a company that specializes in providing quality books to schools and libraries. More may follow.

Lois started preparing for her new career by taking courses about writing for kids, joining the national writers' organization, attending several workshops and conferences, and helping to establish a

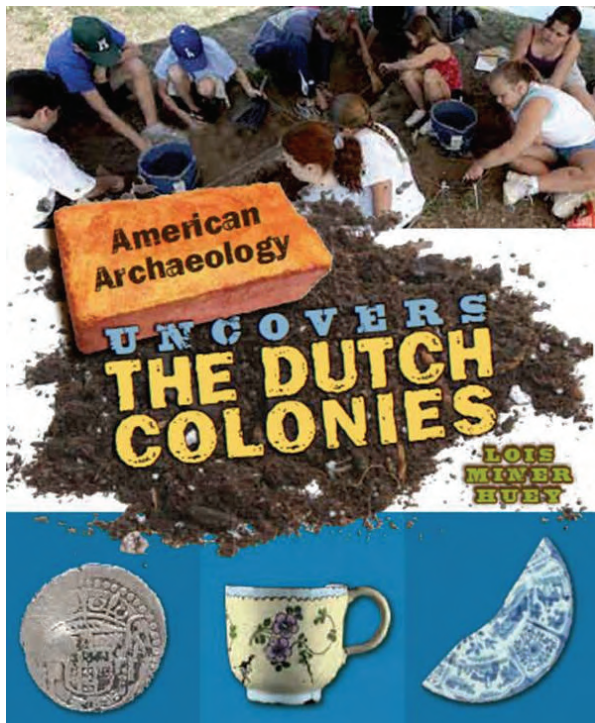
local children's writers' chapter in Albany. Author of more than twenty magazine articles for children, including her prize-winning pieces "Terror in New York" in *Cricket* and "Mr. Lincoln's Dog" in *Highlights for Children*, she moved on to writing books.

The five books are entitled: *Uncovering the Vikings*, *Uncovering the Dutch*, *Uncovering the Early English*, *Uncovering the Underground Railroad*, and *Uncovering the Westward Movement*. All concentrate on archaeology here in North America at early historic sites, including shipwrecks. Written for grades 4 through 7, all are heavily illustrated.

Lois recently finished two books

for Capstone, another educational publisher. These feature true stories about soldiers' experiences on the front lines in the American Revolution and World War II. Both will appear in 2010.

"I love doing this, using information I've gathered over the years both in my head and in our home library," Lois says. "Fortunately, my husband Paul and I have contacts all over the country. People have jumped at the chance to help. I very much appreciate that. Archaeologists are wonderful people." Lois' web site is: www.loismhuey.com.



The Author, Lois Feister Huey

Nominations Committee

The members of the NYSAA Nominations Committee are: Karen Hartgen (Van Epps-Hartley) Chair, Dolores Elliott (Triple Cities), Fred Stevens (Van Epps-Hartley), and Sue Maguire (Houghton). The preliminary slate: Sherene Baugher (Finger Lakes) for President, Sissie Pipes (Morgan) for Vice-President, Lori Blair (Van Epps-Hartley) for Recording Secretary, Abigail McGuirk Herlihy (Adirondack) for Corresponding Secretary, and Fred Assmus (Orange Co.) for Treasurer. Additional nominations are encouraged and are due to Karen by Jan.1 with write in nominations accepted until Jan. 15. Karen Hartgen's address: Hartgen Archaeological Associates, Inc., 1744 Washington Ext., Rensselaer, NY 12144. Phone: (518) 283-0534.

The Metropolitan Chapter

We feel we have had some success in revitalizing the chapter. Chapter membership is now up to 44 and the chapter has had a meeting every month except in summer. Meetings have been a mix of walking tours and lectures, along with a behind the scenes tour at the American Museum of Natural History. The meetings have been held at Fordham University, arranged by Allan Gilbert. Unfortunately, the cost of space there has now increased, so we are looking for a new home.

—Diana Wall, Chapter President, diana.diz.wall@gmail.com

Publications

Charles Hayes reports that no. 125 (2009) of The Bulletin is currently in the first stages of being edited and should be out in the late spring of 2010. Contributions to The Bulletin are encouraged. Peer review of a submission remains an option for authors. It should be noted that The Bulletin is now printed on recycled paper.

A major effort is now in the final layout stages by Martha Sempowski and Gian Cervone. NYSAA Researches and Transactions Vol. 18 No. 1, "The Archaeology of Maspeeth, Long Island New York and Vicinity" by Stanley H. Wisniewski and Ralph Solecki is expected out in 2010. It is an important publication for all concerned. The exact cost has still to be determined after consultation with printers.

Ontario Archaeological Society Announcement:

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new online resource from the OAS, the Ontario Archaeology Theses Database. The online resource can be accessed via the main OAS website; <http://www.ontarioarchaeology.on.ca/publications/thesis-search.php>.

The Ontario Archaeology Theses Database is a resource for OAS members and the general public who wish to obtain details about the work produced by graduate students on Ontario Archaeology, a category of research that is often unavailable in traditional web and library searches. We now have a comprehensive listing of theses and dissertations from many of Canada's major universities and are working to add past and recent graduate theses on a continuing basis.

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