

# 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 Sissie or Lisa at the addresses listed above.

## "I wish you could see the style in which we live" Archaeology of a Soldier's Cabin at Cantonment Saranac, Plattsburgh, New York

By Timothy J. Abel  
Clinton Community College

Over this past summer, archaeologists and students conducted excavations at the Zagreb site, part of Col. Zebulon Pike's 1812-1813 winter cantonment in Plattsburgh, New York. The excavations were part of a summer field school in military sites archaeology offered at Clinton Community College.

In the fall of 1812, American forces launched an invasion of Canada from Greenbush, opposite Albany, New York. In September, a force of about 2000 soldiers moved north to Plattsburgh, New York, where they established a forward encampment. There they awaited more troops to join them. On November 17, nearly 6000 troops moved to within a mile

of the Canadian border, stopping at the small village of Champlain, New York. In the early morning hours of November 20, 1812, about 600 American forces engaged British opposition at Lacolle, just four miles into Canada. The midnight attack was confused and ill-conducted, owing to the fact that the units were newly-trained. Six Americans were wounded, two of which later died. They retreated back to Plattsburgh and by November 28 were busy building winter huts at what would become Cantonment Saranac.

Life at Cantonment Saranac was harsh for the American soldiers there. For the first four weeks, there were no shelters, and men huddled under makeshift lean-tos made of pine

boughs and covered with their blankets. Disease and exposure claimed an estimated 200 men before they were allowed to move into the first huts by Christmas. By mid-January, all the men were under the cover of prepared huts. The rate of death dropped precipitously, but disease was still rampant due to the cramped nature of the encampment. Each hut, a small room 20x20 feet, housed more than a dozen and sometimes up to 20 men.

The Zagreb site, an archaeological site representing a portion of this cantonment was documented in 1993, but its significance was not made clear until diagnostic artifacts and portions of a structure were revealed in 2011. Since

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Artifacts from  
the 2011 survey  
of the  
Zagreb site.



## Excavating the Red Barracks: the 2013 archaeological field school at Old Fort Niagara.

By Susan Maguire, SUNY Buffalo State and F.M. Houghton Chapter

The 2013 SUNY Buffalo State Archaeological Field School took place at Old Fort Niagara between May 20 and June 28, 2013 and focused on exploring the American construction of the Red Barracks in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Red Barracks is commonly associated with the British capture of the fort on the morning of December 19, 1813. At that time, the barracks was serving as an infirmary for wounded soldiers; these soldiers and those in the South Redoubt offered the greatest resistance to the invading British forces. A review of the historic plans of the fort indicates that a structure was built in this location possibly as early as 1795 although subsequent plans show the building with slight variations in shape and location. The 1816 plan of the fort drawn by Lt. John L. Smith appears to most accurately depict the location of the barracks (Smith 1816).

In 2013, three 2 x 2 meter test units were excavated



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

to reveal the foundations of the barracks and to identify any features related to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century occupation of the fort. The project team was directed by Susan Maguire, Ph.D., assistant professor of anthropology at SUNY Buffalo State and consisted of eleven students: Genna Ackley, Erin Baccari, Natalie Bock, Miranda Dietz, Samantha Doty, Amy Getty, Matthew James, Michael Krupski, Alyssa Paciello, Sabrina Sharraf, and Dianna Urbanski and one teaching assistant, Sean Johnston.

One unit was placed to reveal the western corner of the structure with the other two units located along the southwestern foundation wall (fig. 1). The outline of the foundation stones for this structure has been documented using infrared aerial photography and can even be viewed from the redoubts during extremely dry summers.



## Excavating the Red Barracks, continued:

These units clearly revealed the foundation of the structure consisting of a single course of rough cut stones. This construction technique is similar to that found in 2011 in excavations of the eastern end of the structure thought to represent a British expansion of the barracks. The cut stones were encountered, on average, at a depth of only 10 cm and the foundation wall itself was approximately 15 cm deep.

A number of interesting finds relating to the War of 1812 occupation of the fort were recovered. Interestingly, this material was primarily American rather than of British origin. Military buttons recovered include a U.S. general service button, a “foliated A” button from the first regiment of artillery, a cannon and eagle artillery button, a “foliated I” button from the 14<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry, and an eagle button with an anchor. This button does not comply

with the standard designs for navy buttons of the time but the manufacturer stamped on the back of the button was active during the War of 1812. An artillery capplate, shown here next to a reproduction capplate and shako currently being worn by the interpretive staff at the fort, dating to 1814 was recovered (fig. 3). Below the foundation for the Red Barracks we encountered a number of features related to earlier occupations of the fort. Artifacts recovered from these features include an ornate shoe buckle, a wine glass stem, two 18<sup>th</sup> century French soldiers’ buttons, a pulverin (French powder horn) base cap (fig. 2), four French gunflints, glass “seed” trade beads, nine wooden beads, possibly from a rosary and a Jesuit ring.

The excavations have now been closed and we have moved to the lab to continue washing, cataloging, labeling and analyzing the artifacts from this exciting season of digging. The field school students have prepared an exhibit of the artifacts

recovered from the excavations that will be on display in the Visitors Center through at least the end of the summer (fig. 4). Be sure to stop by the fort to share in the discoveries from the 2013 field season.

### *Smith 1816*

1816, n.d. [January 16]  
Lt. John L. Smith,  
“Plan of Fort Niagara with its proposed alterations”,  
National Archives and Records Administration, RG 77, Drawer 3, Sheet 6.

Fig. 4: Setting up a new display.





## "I wish you could see the style in which we live" continued:

then, archaeologists have been annually working in this same area of the site, investigating this structure and its contents.

Excavations at the Zagreb site have uncovered what appears to be an officer's hut associated with Col. Zebulon Pike's winter encampment at Cantonment Saranac, 1812-1813. The structure is 12'x15' and was most likely built of logs with a frame roof. Excavations reveal the structure was built directly on or very near to the ground surface at the time, with little to no prior ground preparation. Construction began by partially digging two footer trenches within which were set the first logs. Chimney foundations of dry-laid limestone were built on each end of the structure. Hearths were built on the facing sides of these foundations. Earth was piled around the base of the structure to provide stability and seal out the cold.

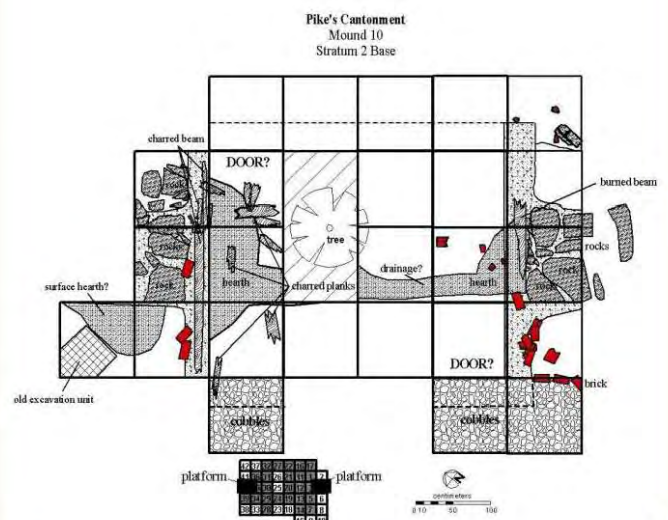
The interior of the structure is remarkably void of artifacts, save for architectural remains. The latter is dominated by nails falling into three general categories: heavy framing, framing and finish nails. A number of the latter suggests a large amount of finish work and/or shingling, which is corroborated by archival receipts. Clues derived from the artifact assemblage suggest two doors: one on the front and one on the rear of the structure. There were also at least three windows based on concentrations of recovered window glass, though it is not clear whether they were set on the facing sides or on the gable ends of the structure.

The few non-architectural artifacts recovered suggest domestic activity that was confined largely to one end of the structure. Ceramics, bottle glass and faunal remains make up the bulk of this material. The fragments are all very small, suggesting a high attention to discipline and cleanliness. Large fragments of debris were likely swept out daily into a refuse dump. Only these small fragments, perhaps that got pushed to edges and corners, survived to be recovered.

The structure from the Zagreb site is believed to be the first of its kind from the War of 1812 time period to be fully excavated. It reveals for the first time details about War of 1812 castramentation that are archivally lacking including the size and configuration of officer's huts. The structure itself appears to conform to a common vernacular style and type that would have been familiar to most of the inhabitants of the camp. At least for this officer, however, the structure seems to be built with comfort in mind. With two hearths in such a small confined space, it would have been plenty warm inside. And with at least three windows, it would also have had ample ambient light.

While the early months of the encampment were by all accounts miserable, this officer appears to have finished the winter in relative comfort. That is, as long as he didn't have to go outside.

The Pike's Cantonment Archaeological Field School will continue in 2014, pending enrollment. Plans have been made to test for adjacent structures on either side of the soldier's hut, as well as to investigate the kitchen area, which was discovered at the end of 2013. We may also be conducting survey to locate the 1814 British camp at Plattsburgh. Students interested in the field school can visit us on Facebook at "Pike Cantonment Archaeology Project" for information on how to register. Credits may be transferred to any outside institution.





## The Archaeological Conservancy continues to expand in the Northeast

by Kelley Berliner, Eastern Regional Field Representative,  
The Archaeological Conservancy

2014 marks the 34th year of The Archaeological Conservancy's efforts to permanently preserve the nation's most significant archaeological sites. As the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to this cause, the Conservancy has now protected over 465 sites in 41 states, including some considered to be America's most remarkable and famous. Without taking action many of these sites would have been destroyed and the information that they contain lost forever. Once sites are acquired, they are managed as permanent open-space, archaeological research preserves which are available to professional archaeologists for research, and descendant communities for passive use. Any excavations conducted must guarantee that part of the site will remain unexcavated and undisturbed in accordance with an ethic of conservation. In order to pursue diverse sites in all areas of the United States, the Conservancy operates through five regional offices. The Eastern Regional Office is located in Frederick, MD, and handles the area from North Carolina to Maine.

In its more than 10-year history in Frederick, the Eastern Regional Office has doubled its holdings to over 50 sites dating from the Paleo through the 19th century. This includes sites at Lamoka Lake, NY; Thunderbird, VA; the Royal Blockhouse at Fort Edward, NY; the Pamplin Pipe Factory, VA; Ely Mound, VA; King's Quarry, PA; and Contentnea Creek, NC.

Recently, the Eastern Office has acquired the PE Soapstone Quarry, located in central Virginia. It is the largest and most intact soapstone

quarry that has been found in the state thus far. Another recent acquisition is the well-known, 16th century Cayadutta Mohawk village near Johnstown, NY. The village site was featured in archaeologist Dean Snow's Mohawk Valley Project and it is where Snow conducted excavations in the early 1980s. In 2013, the Conservancy also acquired several other important Iroquois village sites across New York and made advances in the acquisition of several sites in Pennsylvania and Virginia. In Maryland, we have wrapped up our project with the Maryland Historic Trust to compile a database of all National Register eligible sites.

In addition to saving important sites, the Conservancy also publishes American Archaeology magazine and offers archaeological-based tours throughout the Americas. These tours are generally 1-week long bus trips that take visitors to important archaeological sites and museums in the area. The Eastern office offers tours focusing on themes of the Colonial Chesapeake, the French and Indian War, and Iroquoia, with plans to add a tour of the Archaeology of Canada. The eastern regional office's next tour

will visit sites connected to the French and Indian War in September of 2014.

The Conservancy's eastern regional office is led by Andy Stout. Kelley Berliner is the region's new Field Representative. We can be reached at 301-682-6359 or [tac\\_east@verizon.net](mailto:tac_east@verizon.net). Nationally, the Conservancy has also expanded its staff and it is launching a new website and outreach initiative for 2014. For more information on the Conservancy and to join its nearly 25,000 members, see their Facebook page or visit them on the web at [www.americanarchaeology.org](http://www.americanarchaeology.org).



The Archaeological Conservancy

*Preserving the past...for the future*



## Relocating a Lost St. Lawrence Iroquoian Village in Jefferson County, New York

Timothy Abel  
1000 Islands Chapter

The Sanford Corners site was first documented by Ephriam G. Squier in 1849, with an accompanying illustration of extant palisade ditch features (Squier 1849). His description was repeated by Franklin B. Hough (1851, 1854), a local doctor and historian, who states that site was then largely obliterated save for artifacts found in garden plots. Later historians copied Hough's description nearly verbatim. Squier's description and illustration was copied by Beauchamp (1887, 1900), and the description reiterated again by Parker (1922).

In the 1970s, Earl Sidler attempted to locate the site in support of dissertation research at the University of Buffalo, which he unfortunately never completed. He managed to locate a small collection in the hands of one Harold Cooper of Calcium, but no fieldwork was attempted. The area of the site was identified by Engelbrecht using Sidler's notes, but again no fieldwork was conducted (Engelbrecht et al. 1990). There are no known collections held by any public museums.

In 2013, a sewer line project was proposed by the Town of LeRay that would cross the historically-known area of the site. A Phase 1 archaeological survey for this project was conducted by the author. Shovel-testing at 5 meter intervals, prehistoric artifacts were found in several locations, verifying the details of Squier's map and the loca-

tion of the site which had been lost for more than a century.

Speaking with the property owners, the 1000 Islands Chapter may return to the site in 2014 for more testing. The site also offers a unique opportunity for remote sensing, as it is characterized by mostly cleared ground. We eventually hope to relocate the palisade to determine the original size of the village (Squier gives dimensions, but they are likely unreliable) and perhaps portions of longhouses.

Beauchamp, W. M.

1887 The Aborigines: Traces of a People Long Since Departed. *Transactions of the Jefferson County Historical Society* 1(1886-1887):105-131.

1900 Aboriginal Occupation of New York. *New York State Museum, Bulletin* 32.

Engelbrecht, W., E. Sidler and M. Walko

1990 The Jefferson County Iroquoians. *Man in the Northeast* 39:65-77.

Hough, F. B.

1851 Notices of Ancient Remains of Art in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. *Annual Report of the New York State Board of Regents* 4:103-109.

1854 *History of Jefferson County in the State of New York from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. Joel Munsell, Albany.

Parker, A. C.

1922 The Archaeological History of New York. *New York State Museum, Bulletin* 235-238:239-238.

Squier, E. G.

1849 *Aboriginal Monuments of the State of New York*. Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge 2. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.



Ephriam G. Squier



## Lithic Tour: 1000 Islands Chapter

### Tim Abel



In mid-November, 1000 Islands Chapter member Tim Abel took a group of Canadian archaeologists, including Bill Fox, Adrian Burke and several Universite de Montreal students, on a tour of aboriginal lithic materials in northern New York. Our first stop was to Taleville, New York to visit a newly-documented source of steatite. This dark grey material was used extensively by Woodland cultures in the area. Several local Middlesex-period platform and blocked end pipes appear to be made of this material, and local St. Lawrence Iroquoians used it to manufacture beads. These unique beads have been found on contemporary Iroquoian sites as far away as central New York and the western end of Lake Ontario.

Our second stop was to the Black River Valley and outcrops of local Middle Ordovician Black River (aka LeRay, Chaumont) chert. This dark greyish black material is found on numerous local sites spanning prehistory. Oddly, however, while the banks of the river are lined with lithic reduction workshops and debitage, relatively few finished tools are found made of this material. Those few that are found are commonly made of Onondaga chert, rather than Black River chert. This leads to the conclusion that this chert source was mostly sought for use in an expedient tool industry.

Our tour ended at the Burrville Cider Mill, where we found the best local outcrop of cider and warm cider donuts.





**SUMMER OF THE MASTODON**  
**BY DAVE MOYER, CHENANGO CHAPTER**  
**REPRINTED FROM THE WINTER 2012-2103 NEWSLETTER**

This past summer the Chenango chapter has been hot on the trail of the Hyde Park Mastodon, thanks to the collaborative efforts of Cornell University and the Paleontological Research Institution's Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, NY. As part of their Mastodon Matrix Program, we had the opportunity to pick through soil samples collected at the site of the Hyde Park Mastodon, which was found in a pond in a back yard Dutchess County in 2000. Since 2000, over 3,000 groups from 49 states and two countries have participated in the project. The Mastodon Matrix Project is a unique way to get everyday people involved in active scientific research. The project is not a laboratory exercise but an open-ended research project aimed at discovering New York's Ice Age past (late Pleistocene, 10,000-14,000 year ago). Participants provide real data that will be used by scientists to reconstruct the Pleistocene environment where the mastodon roamed, and the results will also help to create a Pleistocene reference collection at the museum for other researchers to further study.

As part of the project, we were provided with a bag of dirt, along with a packet of instructions on how to process the samples. We used tooth picks and plastic spoons to sort through the soil, then separated out our findings into basic groups like rocks, shell and twigs. We took some more of the matrix, mixed it with water and collected floating twigs and organic remains using coffee filters. Finally, all of the materials we separated out were studied and weighed before sending

everything back to the museum.

Everyone enjoyed picking through the soil and separating out the twigs, shells and rocks we found. Many of us were surprised to find how perfectly preserved the wood and plant remains were, many of which looked "brand new." It was also a great opportunity for some of our older members who can't get out in the field much to recapture that sense and feeling of discovery. Most significantly, members felt that by collaborating with Cornell University and the museum that we were part of a larger research effort and contributing to our understanding of the ice age environment.

Following our session, we also watched an excellent short documentary about the Hyde Park mastodon that came with the sample which helped to answer some of the questions we had about it. The following month the chapter sponsored a field trip to the Museum of the Earth to visit the Hyde Park mastodon in person. Between the sorting session, the documentary film and the field trip to the museum, our summer is quickly turning into the "season of the mastodon."

I would recommend that other chapters with an interest in New York during the Ice Age consider participating in the matrix project. The instructions were simple to follow and required little material other than household objects like tooth picks and paper plates. Members brought magnifying glasses and cleaned pill containers to store the sorted samples. Dr. Carlyn Buckler, director of the project, was extremely helpful and supportive throughout the process. While the soil samples usually come in 1 kilogram bags which would keep approximately 20 people busy for approximately 90 minutes, you can also get half kilogram samples, which might be a better choice for smaller groups.

Conducting the matrix project in a chapter setting was a nice alternative to our usual monthly programs, which tend to be focused around having speakers. The project would also make for a good "winter project" when it isn't possible to get into the field. I liked that it was a non-destructive way of "playing in the dirt" that had real research value and was fun and educational in the process.



Members of the Chenango chapter sorting through soil samples from the Hyde Park Mastodon Site.



**SUMMER OF THE MASTODON continued:**

To learn more about the mastodon matrix project there are two useful websites:

[http://scistarter.com/  
project/250-Mastodon%  
20Matrix%20Project](http://scistarter.com/project/250-Mastodon%20Matrix%20Project)

[http://  
www.museumoftheearth.org/  
research.php?  
page=Mastodon\\_Research/  
Mast\\_Matrix](http://www.museumoftheearth.org/research.php?page=Mastodon_Research/Mast_Matrix)

This third web address is a link to a nice article about 4<sup>th</sup> graders who found a mastodon hair in their sample.

[http://  
www.livescience.com/14205-  
mastodon-matrix-excavation-  
citizen-science-volunteer.html](http://www.livescience.com/14205-mastodon-matrix-excavation-citizen-science-volunteer.html)



Examples of beaver chewed twigs, shells and seeds found in the soil matrix. (above)

Chenango chapter members posing in front of the Hyde Park Mastodon on a field trip to the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca. (below)





**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**New York State Archaeological Association**

98th Annual Meeting  
April 11-13th, 2014

Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center, Oneonta, NY

The Chenango and Incorporated Upper Susquehanna Chapters, NYSAA, announces the First Call for Papers for the 98th Annual Meeting of the New York State Archaeological Association. The deadline for submissions is March 1, 2014.

**Keynote Speaker:** David Starbuck, Professor of Anthropology, Plymouth State University, "Fighting on the Frontier in America's Colonial Wars"

David will present some of his favorite discoveries from the past 30 years, covering projects and sites from both the French & Indian War and the American Revolution.

The meeting will be held in the beautiful Susquehanna Valley at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center in scenic Oneonta, NY. We will be offering three tours in conjunction with the meeting including the Yager Museum at Hartwick College, the Roland Hill Memorial Museum of Archaeology in nearby Otego, NY and the Fenimore Museum in Cooperstown. Hotel and registration information is forthcoming.

**Deadline for Abstracts: March 1, 2013**

Paper proposal abstracts of approx. 250 words should be e-mailed as Microsoft Word attachments. Indicate any audiovisual requirements. Poster presentations are acceptable and encouraged, especially by students. Any topic related directly or indirectly to NYS prehistory/history will be considered.

Submit proposals to **David Moyer** at: [birchwoodarch@yahoo.com](mailto:birchwoodarch@yahoo.com)  
or call with questions: 607-437-7189.



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**New York State Archaeological Association**

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For renewals, back issues of the journal, etc.



**NEW YORK STATE**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
**ASSOCIATION**



The 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the New York State Archaeological Association April 11-13<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Holiday Inn Oneonta, NY NYS Route 23

Hotel accommodations will be available at the Holiday Inn at the special discounted rate of \$79/  
per room. Call (607) 4332250 and mention NYSAA

Registration (includes meeting program and weekend coffee bar)

Weekend Registration No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Day Registration No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Student Day (with ID) No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ 15.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Name Chapter Affiliation

Meal Package (includes banquet)

Friday Dinner Saturday Breakfast Buffet Saturday Soup/Salad/Sandwich Bar Saturday Buffet  
Banquet Sunday Breakfast Buffet No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Buffet Banquet only No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday Guided Tour : Native American Collections Fenimore Museum Cooperstown (min 20)  
No. \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$14.50 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to "Chenango Chapter, NYSAA" and mail to: NYSAA Registration  
c/o Bob Mason 5314 County Road 32 Norwich, NY 13815