



## **December 2007 Newsletter**

### **The Archaeology of Captivity and Freedom at Joseph Lloyd Manor**

By Jenna Coplin and Christopher Matthews\*

Joseph Lloyd Manor located in Lloyd Harbor, NY and built in 1767, affords a rare opportunity to better understand how captive Africans formed communities on Long Island within and against slavery. Ongoing research is examining the lives of those who labored at the site through a combination of archaeology at the Manor's presumed slave quarter and a unique documentary record. In addition to extensive Lloyd family papers, the writings of Jupiter Hammon are available for analysis. Hammon, who was born into slavery in 1711 and lived his entire life as property of the Lloyds, is considered among the first published African American authors. Hammon's poetry and prose (see Ransom 1970) permits a comparison between his first-hand perspective on captivity and the material record left behind by other captive laborers who made up his immediate community at Lloyd Manor. Hammon's focus on Christian conversion and spirituality guide the direction of this research as it often takes the form of a dialogue with other captive Africans, the Lloyds and Phillis Wheatley. The Long Island Lloyds, a segment of a far-reaching and wealthy Atlantic merchant-planter family, employed captive African labor throughout the 18th century. Hammon was among 10 slaves were enumerated in the 1790 federal census of the site. Our research aims to collect information that will document the diversity of this community and reconstruct the broader local networks in which the Lloyd slaves were enmeshed.

Excavations are focused on a historic outbuilding depicted with a chimney on an 1814 map of the area. The location, size and shape of the structure and especially the chimney suggest a human presence, and based on the findings from our first season of research, we believe these persons were captive Africans. Initial work involved the excavation of seven one-by-one meter test units. These tests identified important subsurface remains of the small 18th century outbuilding detailed on the 1814 map and visually located through ruined surface remains of the brick chimney and its foundation stones. Well-preserved sections of the dry laid south- and east-facing stone foundation walls were uncovered (Figures 1 and 2). Associated displaced layers of foundation stones suggest structure walls collapsed outward after it was abandoned.

The structure's interior remains, foundation fragments, and fallen wall lay beneath several layers of mixed debris, soil and pebbles that eroded from the slope above. Removal of these layers uncovered a deposit capping significant cultural deposits and containing an 1828 half-cent



**Figure 1. East-facing foundation wall showing interior builder's trench feature at the Joseph Lloyd Manor slave quarter 2007 excavations.**



**Figure 2. Hofstra University staff, students and volunteers excavating deposits surrounding south-facing foundation wall.**

coin (Figure 3). The date of this coin falls squarely within the time period we think this structure would have been occupied and indicates that the deposits associated with the architectural remains relate to the past occupants we wish to learn more about. Associated with the east-facing foundation fragment was an interior builders' trench containing material remains currently under analysis.



**Figure 3. An 1828 half-cent coin.**

A different trench was identified in front of the structure. This trench appeared intentionally filled with a deposit of oyster shell and large artifacts fragments. The size of these artifacts and intact state of most of the shell indicates this deposit is undisturbed. Large fragments of a finely molded white salt-glazed stoneware plate and the base of a wine-bottle provide a mid-18th century date. The trench was likely created to manage slope erosion and facilitate the displacement of rainwater away from the house. A complete turtle plastron found at the base of the trench may indicate use of local resources for a dietary supplement and when considered with other evidence may indicate other cultural practices. Being a boundary crossing creature, the buried turtle may also represent evidence of retained African religious beliefs associated with the occupation of this house and possibly a powerful form of resistance.

While additional research in upcoming years will examine this potential in detail, the preliminary findings confirm the occupation of this structure during the time when captive Africans made up the majority of the household's members and, therefore, that this structure was most likely home to at least some of the Lloyd family slaves. Future work will be focused on collecting data that will record efforts by residents to create freedoms in their everyday lives through various expressions of autonomy. Faunal and botanical remains will be identified for signs of supplemental food and medicine. Regional availability of these and other remains will be identified to better understand patterns of exploitation. How far residents were allowed to and capable of traveling off site to gather materials is of particular interest. These actions are expected to disclose the extent of connections between Lloyd family slaves and other people in the region, possibly revealing a larger network built by captive people to expand their horizon, improve their lives and by extension resist their captivity. This would require crossing

boundaries predetermined by others, which were part of early New York's burgeoning political, religious and colonial identities and foundational to their enslavement. These boundary crossing efforts mirror those identified by archaeologists working throughout the African Diaspora and possibly symbolized at Lloyd Manor by the buried turtle plastron discussed above. In addition, these actions assert a form of self-mastery distinct from but in conversation with Hammon who wrote of embracing Christian conversion as the best means for seizing control.

Although our research is focused on the past, it occurs with in living communities in Long Island. By doing work founded upon shared interests in the local past we hope to provide tools these communities can use to direct their future. Archaeology contributes otherwise unrecorded diversity to our understanding of past captive African communities. Then instead of a myopic focus on captivity, we can also consider the incredible accomplishments of people whose past acts that form part of the foundation for our communities today. To this end Community Dialogues on history and archaeology with speakers on local African Diaspora research including Warren Perry, Kathleen Velsor and Thelma Jackson-Abidally are essential to the fabric of our work.

### *Note*

\* The authors are affiliated with Hofstra University. To learn more about this program or to inquire about participating in the 2008 field season please contact the authors at anthlab@hofstra.edu or (516) 463-7625.

### *Reference*

Ransom, Stanley A., Jr.  
1970 *America's First Negro Poet: The Complete Works of Jupiter Hammon*. Kennikat Press, Port Washington, NY.

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