“The Miocene Era”—A Whale of a New Exhibit

Have you ever found a shark’s tooth while walking on the beach at Stratford? How about a 14 million year old whale rostrum? That and other finds from the beach and cliffs are part of a new exhibit in the Preservation Gallery that was installed in late October.

Included in this exhibit is the snout (rostrum) of an extinct Cetothere Baleen Whale that did not have teeth, as well as many critters that did have teeth. They include a Megalodon shark that grew up to 50 feet in length as well as a sperm whale. Also featured are clam molds, a scallop shell, stingray plates and various sharks’ teeth which show the diversity and size of sea life from that time period.

The cliffs at Stratford are a unique resource. They are composed of compacted sea matter dating from the Miocene Epoch when rising land replaced the ocean that once covered Stratford. These geological formations can be found in only three other places in the world; the Los Angles Basin, Austria and in Belgium.

“The Miocene Era” is one of two new temporary exhibits in the Preservation Gallery. The other exhibit, “On the Way to Stratford” is featured on page 7 of this issue. Be sure to plan a visit to take in both of these new exhibits.

The Lee Gallery also has had new items and additional information added to it. Look for more information on these changes in the next issue of the Chronicle and keep up-to-date on everything Stratford by visiting the website, click on “Learn” and check out the blogs contributed by members of the staff.

Part of the new exhibit (right) showing the diversity and size of sea life during the Miocene Era found at Stratford.
The Virginia Council for the Social Studies presented Stratford Hall with their *Friend of Education Award* at the opening meeting of their state conference at the Greater Richmond Convention Center on Friday, October 23, 2009. Accepting for Stratford Hall was Carol Price, Director for Virginia and Immediate Past President of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association.

In announcing the award, Council President Diane R. Neylan noted that Stratford Hall “has been very active in providing enrichment activities for the teachers and students of the Commonwealth of Virginia. A glance at your website shows the breadth of experiences available to all at Stratford Hall. The Board believes that your efforts to provide knowledge to teachers and hands-on learning experiences are deserving of this recognition”.

In receiving the award, Mrs. Price expressed appreciation on behalf of the Stratford Hall Board of Directors and staff for the Council’s statewide recognition. “Through programs such as our Educational Adventures, teacher seminars and symposiums, and our summer camps, Stratford Hall continues to expand our educational offerings to benefit both students and teachers.”

Additions to Stratford Hall’s educational program have included the Symposium on Slavery for teachers offered in October as well as the Cultural Landscapes of the Northern Neck Symposium and the Robert E. Lee Symposium on Civil War History which were instituted last year. Both the Educational Adventures school program and Stratford Hall summer camp offerings have also been recently expanded to give children more hands-on educational experiences.
Looking Back to the Future
Stratford Hall’s Symposium on Rediscovering the Historic House.

As we prepare for the implementation of the Lee Heritage Interpretive Plan in the coming years, one of the principal challenges is finding a way to make a tour of Stratford Hall engaging for the broadest possible audience.

An important step toward resolving this challenge took place on October 28 and 29, when we hosted a symposium called “Rediscovering the Historic House.” The purpose of the symposium was to draw together representatives from a variety of diverse perspectives to consider changes to the current historic house tour model. Extensive visitor surveys and other evidence indicate that the traditional historic house tour model, where visitors are guided through a series of period rooms, does not appeal to a growing portion of visitors.

Thanks to the support of the Chipstone Foundation, we were able to assemble a diverse panel of experts to consider solutions to this challenge. Included on the panel were Erica Donnis, from Reach Advisors; Kati London and Demetri Detsaridis of Area/Code Games, Tom Scheinfeld, Director of the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, Brian Sturm from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, who specializes in storytelling and storytelling theory; Philip Kennicott, the cultural critic for The Washington Post; Phil Bigler, a former national teacher of the year and Director of the James Madison Center at James Madison University; Barbara Charles, an exhibit designer with the firm Staples and Charles; and Jonathan Prown, Director of the Chipstone Foundation.

Also on the panel were Cary Carson, retired Vice President of Research at Colonial Williamsburg, and Kym Rice, Professor and Director of the Museum Studies Program at George Washington University. Cary and Kym were included to help provide synthesis among the various ideas and perspectives.

The first day of the symposium began with a tour of the Great House and grounds. The panelists were divided into three groups and asked to develop some new ideas for presenting the story of the Lees and their plantation community, focusing on three ideas: desire, boundaries, and senses. These ideas were discussed and served as a starting point for a wide-ranging discussion of the challenges of presenting multiple stories at Stratford Hall. This exercise was highly useful, and might serve as a model for other sites.

The second day of the symposium was open to the public. Nearly one hundred museum professionals and other interested participants were in attendance and were treated to a series of fascinating presentations by the panelists on their ideas for improving the tour model at historic house museums. All these presentations are available as podcasts on our website at StratfordHall.org/learn/podcasts/housesymposium.php.

No magic solutions came from this symposium. There were, however, a lot of great ideas. We will be implementing some of these ideas as the Lee Heritage Interpretive Plan progresses.
Mary Dell Olin Pritzlaff was presented with the Lee Integrity Award at an award dinner on October 17, 2009 at Stratford Hall.

The Lee Integrity Award, the highest recognition bestowed by the Board of Directors of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, is awarded to an individual who exemplifies the characteristics and demeanor of General Robert E. Lee through a lifetime of service to mankind, flawless integrity, self-denying spirit, leadership, devotion to God and dedication to duty.

The award was presented on behalf of the Board by Carol W. Price, Director for Virginia and President of the Association.

“This award fittingly pays tribute to her lifetime of service.”

Mary Dell Pritzlaff was born in Alton, Illinois. She grew up along the Mississippi River, developing both a lifelong commitment to voluntarism and to horses. After graduation from Briarcliff College, she married John Charles Pritzlaff, Jr. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They would be married for 54 years until his death in 2005.

She has been affiliated with the Board of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association for 36 years, where she served first as the Arizona Director from 1973 to 2001 and since 2001 as an Honorary Director for Arizona. In recognition of her work in historic preservation in Virginia, in 1999, she received an award from the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, now known as Preservation Virginia.

Past recipients of the Lee Integrity Award have included Mr. Robert B. Pamplin; The Honorable Lewis F. Powell, Jr.; Mr. W. Thomas Rice; Sir John Marks Templeton; Rear Admiral Thomas E. Bass III; Mrs. Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek McClanahan; and The Honorable John H. Chichester.
Summer Camp Offerings
Expanding for 2010

Beginning this coming summer, Stratford is adding a new camp to the selection of exciting offerings: a Weekend Family Adventure Camp. The camp will be open to not only grandparents and their grandchildren, but to other family relationships as well, such as mother-daughter and uncle-nephew. Since the camp begins on a Friday evening and ends late Sunday afternoon, it will be possible for working folks to participate. The camp will be very similar to Stratford’s traditional grandparent camp, but slightly shorter. This new 2010 camp will run from June 25 to June 27.

Marking its fourth successful year, the 2010 Grandparent-Grandchild Camp dates have been set for July 13-15. Since there is only one session of this popular program, early registration is highly recommended. One grandparent camper called this camp “One of the most meaningful and memorable experiences that I have ever had with my grandchildren.” A grandchild added, “Had a blast! I want to come next year and the next year until I can’t come any more!”

Both of these camps include lodging in Stratford’s comfortable guest house (air conditioned with private baths), and all meals served by the Stratford dining room/restaurant. The all-inclusive cost for the Weekend Family Adventure camp is $295 per person and the Grandparent-Grandchild Camp is $310. It is recommended that children be between the ages of 8 and 12, but 7 year olds will be considered.

Information and a camp brochure can be obtained from Bill Doerken, Coordinator of Special Programs at (804) 493-7700 or online at StratfordHall.org. Registration may be done by mail or on-line.

Stratford also offers a residential intergenerational Elderhostel Program that is patterned after their Grandparent Camp. It is two days longer and runs from July 26-29. Elderhostel is changing their name to “Exploritas” and information/registration for this particular program may be obtained directly from them online at exploritas.org (program #16283) or by phoning (877) 426-8056.

All of these summer programs at Stratford include a host of hands-on activities such as blacksmithing, cooking on an open hearth, colonial games, fishing, ghost hunts, brick making and laying, archaeology, searching the beach for shark’s teeth fossils, and professionally guided music and art programs.
In mid-October, 85 committed Stratford Hall supporters braved wind, rain and plunging temperatures to gather for the annual Lee Circle event. The 2009 dinner was chaired by Northern Virginia Director Franny Kansteiner and her husband Walter. After enjoying cocktails in the Great Hall, guests had dinner prepared using local and organic ingredients and heard from General Brent Scowcroft, who continued the Lee Circle tradition of entertaining and educating speakers.

General Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), is one of the nation’s preeminent authorities on international policy, having served as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush. Scowcroft discussed current foreign relations challenges facing the President and his administration.

The Lee Circle was established in 2006 as a crucial network of donors who generously contribute $5000 or more annually to support Stratford Hall’s educational mission, historical and cultural preservation, and historical architectural and archeological research. These funds allow us to tell the stories of all of the past residents of Stratford and to continue the work of promoting scholarly historical understanding. Circle members enjoy this annual October gathering, are listed in our Annual Report and receive special invitations to other Stratford Hall events.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Lee Circle, please contact Moira Holdren, Director of Development, at 804-493-8038 ext. 8920 or mholdren@StratfordHall.org.
A new temporary exhibit in the Preservation Gallery highlights photographs of visitors to Stratford going back all the way to 1897. The exhibit includes photos of some famous people including Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as other visitors including relatives of the Stuart family, who owned Stratford from 1897 to 1932.

The exhibit gets its title from a photo taken in 1897. Irene Moore, who was visiting some friends about 12 miles from Stratford Hall, took the photograph of their departure in a horse-drawn wagon. She wrote the date and the words “On the Way to Stratford” on the back of the photo. This photo is a gift of Miss Irene Moore.

The photo of Franklin D. Roosevelt was taken on July 27, 1913 when Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He had sailed down the Potomac in search of Stratford on the yacht Sylph. The photo is courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Some twenty years later, Eleanor Roosevelt arranged for a group of Senators’ wives to visit Stratford on May 17, 1933. They were greeted by members of the Stratford Board of Directors including Board President May Field Lanier and Resident Superintendent General Benjamin F. Cheatham.

The exhibit also features photos of families visiting Stratford. Robert Eugene Coles is pictured holding his daughter Geraldine on a visit to his Stuart relatives in 1921. The photo is a gift of Mrs. Geraldine Stuart Coles Cowart.

But perhaps most importantly, this exhibit is also interactive, in that it has allowed room for more pictures of visits to Stratford—including possibly one you might own. So get digging and send your photo of your family or group visit to Stratford to Laura Lawfer. You can contact Laura at 804-493-8038 ext. 1920 or by e-mail at llawfer@stratfordhall.org

“On the Way to Stratford”—Picture yourself as part of History

Left: Eleanor Roosevelt (third from right) arranged for a group of Senators’ wives to visit Stratford Hall in 1933. Top right: The decorative fence behind the subjects, separating the lawn from the drive, dates this photograph to the 1920s, but the identities of the well-dressed visitors are not known. Bottom right: Robert Eugene Coles holding daughter Geraldine in 1921. Robert Coles visited his Stuart relatives and memorialized the occasion with this photograph.
February 13 and 27
African American History Walking Tours
Meet a Stratford Hall interpreter at the Visitor Center at 1pm on the 13th and 27th for a guided walking tour focusing on the contributions of African Americans at Stratford Hall. Tour is included in the price of Great House Tour. Rain or shine.

March 20
Plants from the Past: A Living Legacy for our Gardens and Yours
Greet the first day of spring with a celebration of historic plants and gardens featuring Monticello’s curator of plants Peggy Cornett; antique rose authority Dennis Whetzel, nursery manager at Monticello’s Historic Plants Center; and long-time Stratford Hall gardens advisor and plant expert Donald Haynie. The day will include Walks and Talks in the gardens and “shrubberies” of Stratford Hall. 9:30–3:00. Fee $45, Friends of Stratford; $40. Includes a delicious boxed lunch.

April 3
Easter Egg Hunt
Join us for this fun annual event for children ages 1 to 12. Sponsored by the Northern Neck Lodge 32 of the Fraternal Order of Police. No admission charge for participants and their parents. The hunt begins exactly at 11 a.m. on the Oval. No rain (or snow!) date.

April 22
Grand Opening of restored and reinterpreted Southwest Outbuilding and Northwest Stair Passage. Come and see the reconstructed Federal Period interior stair and the newly furnished workshop.

May 9th
Mother’s Day Luncheon in the Dining Room. Special preservation-focused tours by staff at 2:00 p.m. included with purchase of regular tour ticket.