Cultural Landscape Symposium
In October To Offer Rich Depiction
Of Early Northern Neck

Stratford Hall, in association with the University of Mary Washington and the Menokin Foundation, will offer its first symposium on the “Cultural Landscapes of Early Virginia” October 23-25, 2008.

Speakers will include symposium coordinator and distinguished architectural historian Dr. Camille Wells whose knowledge of the architecture and cultural landscape of early Virginia is widely acclaimed; Dr. Carter Hudgins, Hofer Distinguished Professor at the University of Mary Washington; and Dr. Douglas Sanford, Chair of the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Mary Washington.

The symposium will involve a vibrant array of lectures and site visits. Participants will encounter a rich depiction of the early Northern Neck of Virginia’s structural environment, as well as a landscape delineated by roadways, fences, gardens, fields, forests, and river landings.

Package rates will be available, and registrants are encouraged to take advantage of Stratford Hall’s residential opportunities to maximize their enjoyment of the symposium. They will not only take pleasure in the comforts of our lodging facilities and the quiet beauty of the Stratford setting, but they will also be treated to a series of gourmet dinners offering finely prepared foods of the season and an array of excellent wines. Of course the greatest advantage of all may be the camaraderie to be had between those who share a passion for the exceedingly rich past of the Northern Neck of Virginia and who also enjoy fine amenities provided at one of the region’s most significant historic properties.

For more information contact Kenneth McFarland, Director of Education, 804-493-8038 ext. 1558 or email kmcfarland@stratfordhall.org.
Fossils Program Among Additions to Educational Program Bringing More Students to Stratford

Pointing out that students can learn about Virginia history at Stratford Hall may have worked fine in the past, but increasingly, teachers need more than history to entice a school district to pay for a class field trip.

Stratford Hall has recognized and is addressing this need by adding additional school programs that cover more than just history. Now, we are using history to talk about both science and math at Stratford Hall. Because of this, teachers can argue that a trip to Stratford is absolutely vital for their students’ education because it addresses a variety of Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOLs)—namely math, science, and history.

This year, we added a fossils program that takes place on the beach. This program addresses both science and history components for schools by exploring the landscape of Stratford before the Lee family lived here. As part of this program, students talk about the Miocene-era cliffs, how they were formed, and what kinds of fossils have been found in those cliffs. In fact, fossils still wash up on the beach every day, and students have the opportunity to look for and identify shark teeth, whale vertebrae, and other fossils during the program.

A new school program about architecture has also been added, which addresses the math component of Virginia’s SOLs. In this program, students talk about the Miocene-era cliffs, how they were formed, and what kinds of fossils have been found in those cliffs. In fact, fossils still wash up on the beach every day, and students have the opportunity to look for and identify shark teeth, whale vertebrae, and other fossils during the program.

Finally, the education department is working together with staff at Westmoreland State Park to develop alternative school programs that would involve both sites. Staff from Stratford Hall and Westmoreland State Park complement one another in different subjects—science from Westmoreland and history from Stratford—and working together, we believe we can create successful, recurring programs. More information will be coming out about these programs in the near future, and we hope to start at least one joint program with Westmoreland State Park by the fall of 2008. School programs grew in number this year at Stratford, and we hope to continue that trend next year despite rising gas prices. Offering varied options for school programs will help to realize this goal.

For more information on Stratford Hall’s school programs, contact Laura Lawfer at 804-493-8038 ext. 1920 or by email at llawfer@stratfordhall.org
Dear Friends: The economic news has been pretty grim lately: dramatic stock market declines, falling housing prices, rising unemployment and more expensive gas. All recipes for what could be some anxious moments...or not. As is typically the case with economic trends, it’s incredibly difficult to understand what’s really happening until after it’s already happened.

This was certainly the case with the early American economy. Of course, there were no economic statistics as we know them to rely on at the time. It was only very recently, through the work of some very patient economic historians, that the actual cycles of the early American economy have truly been understood. Their collection of what data did survive on things like commodity prices, exchange rates, land prices and wealth patterns paint a picture of an economy that was in increasingly desperate condition in the last decade of the 18th century – especially here in Virginia. The cause: the collapse of foreign tobacco markets, excessive debt and declining land values. These problems were particularly acute in eastern Virginia and impacted many of the most affluent planters – including the Lees. The survivors were those who could quickly learn to adapt and diversify. As we are witnessing today, especially with automobile manufacturers, this is not an easy task. It is also useful to point out that these Virginians did not have a national government to supply relief or a Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. There were not even any banks to turn to for loans. They were effectively on their own.

It is helpful to reflect on these things from time to time, both to be thankful for what we have today, as imperfect as it is, and to recognize that it was from these past struggles that our modern economy has emerged.

This opportunity to reflect on the past is the real value of historic sites like Stratford Hall. We hope that your own adaptation to today’s economic challenges, while it may not include a drive to California or a flight to Europe, might still include a short drive to the Northern Neck. We have a room for you right here at Stratford Hall, and will throw in the reflection part for free.

Hope to see you here!

Paul C. Reber
Executive Director
While the weather in April can be fickle, devotees of Stratford Hall’s Triennial Coaching Day are anything but. Rain or shine they come to see the handsome parade of antique horse-drawn coaches and carriages.

And this year’s Thirteenth Triennial Coaching Day proved to be no exception as people turned out to view the coaches, take part in the tailgate picnic competition, view the performance by the Lancaster High School Marching Band as well as the equestrian and canine demonstrations, visit the exhibits, take in the food and refreshment concessions and take tours of the Great House.

“Coaching Day is a unique opportunity for visitors to Stratford Hall to get a sense of travel in the 18th century,” said Paul Reber, Executive Director. “For nearly 40 years Coaching Day has served not only as a major fund raising event to help further the mission of Stratford Hall, but also to bring history to life.”

Coaching Day was founded by the late Dr. E. Douglas Vere Nicoll of Charlottesville, Virginia, and the late Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss, Stratford Director for Rhode Island and the mother of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The 2008 Coaching Co-Chairs were Mrs. E. Kimbark MacColl, Jr., Stratford Director for Oregon, and Mrs. Bonnie Buchanan Matheson, Stratford Director for Rhode Island. Stratford Honorary Director Mrs. Franklin Leigh Burke of Georgia was Honorary Chairman for this year’s event.

The tailgate competition included awards in three categories: Most Elegant, Most Tempting Cuisine and Most Humorous. First Place for the Most Humorous category was the Westmoreland Players; Most Tempting Cuisine was booth #38 from Charlottesville; and First Place for Most Elegant was The Boat People with 1906 “Bay Fawn” from Colonial Beach. Spectators attending Coaching Day registered at the Stratford Gift Shop for a Stratford Silk Coaching Scarf valued at $75. The winner was Karen Schenck from Summerduck, VA.

Stratford is most grateful to the following companies that supported our Coaching Day event. They included our Title Sponsor, The Price Group of Davenport & Company LLC. Our Platinum Sponsors were Rosner Toyota and Christie’s Auctions. Our Gold Sponsors were Bank of Lancaster and Brown-Forman Company. Bronze Sponsors were The King Agency, Jefferson’s Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whisky, Hantzmon Wiebel LLP, Sklar Technology Partners and the B.H. Baird Insurance Agency. Our Friends Sponsors were Northern Neck State Bank and Design Printing.

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What’s cooking in the Lee Family Kitchen? It’s Chocolate!

Cocoa beans from the West Indies and South America were imported into the Chesapeake by 1694, well after the first Lees were established in the Northern Neck of Virginia.

Chocolate (often referred to as chocolate nuts or cocoa nuts in inventories) was a popular alternative to the traditional beverages of coffee and tea, particularly during the Revolution when tea consumption was discouraged. Chocolate was made in America—usually in northern urban cities—throughout the colonial period and was even sold in Williamsburg.

While chocolate was not consumed exclusively by the elite, there was a difference in quality that was reflected in its price. Manufactured chocolate shipped from the north in cargoes containing fish (taking on a distinctive odor in the process) may have prompted chocolate connoisseurs to make their own. Early recipes for chocolate, besides that of a beverage, were for puddings, creams, and a candy called chocolate almonds.

Chesapeake probate inventories yield an abundance of chocolate-related items such as chocolate pots, cups and mills. However, chocolate stones for grinding the cocoa beans are rarely found in 18th-century inventories. Chocolate stones are known to have been owned by Lt. Gov. Alexander Spotswood, Robert “King” Carter, and Councillor Philip Ludwell Lee of Stratford.

At Stratford, Philip Ludwell Lee’s kitchen and dairy slaves would have made chocolate by hand to his specifications, possibly under the supervision of indentured cook Richard Mynatt. Making chocolate was a labor-intensive and specialized task. It involved roasting and shelling the cocoa beans, hand grinding small batches of them on a heated, flat stone (metate) to reduce the chocolate to a fine consistency, and finally, adding desired flavorings. It is possible that Philip’s chocolate stone, valued at 10 shillings, may have been inherited from his father Thomas Lee who was a contemporary of the other two known owners of chocolate stones.

Upon researching probate inventories, it seems that other local Lees had a taste for chocolate as well. Richard Lee II, of Machodoc, owned specialized china cups for drinking chocolate. The 1747 estate inventory of Henry Lee, who lived at Lee Hall in Westmoreland County, included a large copper chocolate pot and a chocolate mill. The Richmond County inventory of Philip Ludwell Lee’s sister, Hannah Corbin, listed a box with some chocolate nuts worth 1 shilling 3 pence in 1782. Perhaps the consumption of high quality, homeground chocolate, with its stimulating, nutritional value, energized the Lees into revolutionary action.

Jim Gay, journeyman in the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Foodways Department, once again will demonstrate the skillful art of making chocolate during the Northern Neck Food and Harvest Festival at Stratford Hall this September. According to Gay, a successful batch of chocolate depends on the availability of the preferred type of cacao bean, the right humidity, the proportions of added spices and flavorings, and the critical timing of the roasting process. Whether or not Jim Gay’s Stratford Hall chocolate passes his taste test, its heavenly aroma is sure to attract a score of Festival attendees!
Lee’s Lieutenants
Encampment Brings
History to Life


During the weekend visitors walked amongst the tents and asked questions of Generals Lee, Longstreet, Pickett, Stuart, and Armistead, to name but some of the famed Southern leaders present for the event. In addition to the Generals, several of their wives also took part in the encampment which included a quilting demonstration.

Among the visitors to the event was Tristan Telman, 11, of Hampton, VA with his grandfather Bob Guillotte of Jamaica, VA. Telman, who was inspired by Al Stone who portrayed Lee, played Lee in his school play and had exchanged letters with Stone over the last year. Al Stone has been portraying Lee for over 10 years and has reprised the role at Stratford most notably on Lee’s birthday in January.

For more information on Lee’s Lieutenants including biographies of their re-enactors and a schedule of events, visit their website at www.leeslieutenants.com

The next Robert E. Lee event at Stratford will be held on Saturday, August 2. Stratford Hall Director of Education, Kenneth McFarland, will examine R.E. Lee’s tenure as Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy in Thankless Duty: Robert E. Lee at West Point, 1852-1855, a period which marks a fascinating interlude between his remarkable successes of the Mexican War and the apogee of his military career in the next decade.

In addition, a Robert E. Lee symposium is being planned for January 2009 and more information on that will follow in coming issues of the Chronicle.
Stratford Hall Among First To Receive Conservation Bookshelf From IMLS

Treasured objects and artifacts held by Stratford Hall will be preserved for future generations with help from the IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf, a core set of conservation books, DVDs, and online resources donated by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the primary source of federal funding of the nation’s museums and libraries.

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“This award will help us as we move forward in protecting some of Stratford Hall’s most valuable assets,” said Paul C. Reber, Executive Director. Collections at Stratford Hall include curatorial, archaeology, paleontology, architectural fragments, rare books, manuscripts and a specialized reference collection that combined total over 10,000 pieces. Shown above are Delft plate fragments from the Clifts Plantation site which pre-dates the Great House.

Stratford Hall is among the first to receive this essential set of resources based on an application by Curator Gretchen Goodell describing the needs and plans for care of its collections. “The IMLS Bookshelf will provide us with important resources for tackling some basic concerns we currently face across our collections,” said Goodell. “It addresses major issues including the philosophy and ethics of collecting, collections management and planning, emergency preparedness, and culturally specific conservation issues,” Goodell added.

“We are pleased to announce the first group of IMLS Bookshelf recipients. These small libraries and museums are taking up the charge to care for America’s heritage,” said Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, Director of IMLS. “A recent national study tells a sobering story about the state of America’s library and museum collections. Without immediate action we stand to lose important collections that are at the heart of the American story.”

Among the 851 institutional recipients of the bookshelf, 236 are libraries or archives and 615 are museums. The IMLS Bookshelf focuses on collections typically found in art or history museums and in libraries’ special collections, with an added selection of texts for zoos, aquaria, public gardens, and nature centers. IMLS and its cooperator, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), will award a total of 2,000 free sets of the IMLS Bookshelf by the end of 2008.

The IMLS Bookshelf was made possible by a cooperative agreement with AASLH and with support from the Getty Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. It is a crucial component of Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action, a conservation initiative that the Institute launched in 2006. IMLS began the initiative in response to a 2005 study by Heritage Preservation documenting the dire state of the nation’s collections. The multi-faceted, multi-year initiative shines a nationwide spotlight on the needs of America’s collections, especially those held by smaller institutions, which often lack the human and financial resources necessary to adequately care for their collections.

Stratford Hall’s collections include curatorial, archaeology, paleontology, architectural fragments, rare books, manuscripts and a specialized reference collection that combined total over 10,000 pieces. Shown above are Delft plate fragments from the Clifts Plantation site which pre-dates the Great House.

The IMLS Bookshelf will provide Stratford with important resources to help with its collections that include this looking glass, circa 1730-1770.
Calendar of Events

July 29–July 31
Grandparent/Grandchild Residential Camp
During this three-day and two-night camp, participants will build precious family bonds while experiencing plantation life in the 18th century. Cost for the camp, including lodging and all meals, is $275 per person. Children should be ages 6 through 12. Activities include making and laying bricks, hunting for fossils, fishing in the Mill pond, marching with muskets and drums as the Virginia Militia, and hammering hot iron on a blacksmith’s anvil.

August 2
Thankless Duty: Robert E. Lee at West Point, 1852–1855
Stratford Hall Director of Education, Kenneth McFarland, will examine R.E. Lee’s tenure as Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy, a period which marks a fascinating interlude between his remarkable successes of the Mexican War and the apogee of his military career in the next decade.

SAVE THE DATE

September 27
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Come celebrate the fall season with a fun festival for the whole family.
$5 for adults, $3 for children
~ Friends of Stratford admission is free ~
Great House tours and wine tasting not included in festival admission price.