Archaeological Investigation in East Garden Finds Evidence of Early Planting Beds

Archaeologist Dennis Pogue, along with a crew from Dovetail Cultural Resource Group in Fredericksburg, Virginia, spent two weeks in April looking for evidence of the original garden east of the main house. This is part of an effort to understand and to restore the landscape around the Great House, including the east and west garden areas. The funding for this effort, along with the hiring of a Director of Landscapes, is a part of the ongoing Comprehensive Campaign, “Securing a Place for the Past.”

Restoration of the East Garden originally began shortly after the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation bought Stratford in 1929. The assistance of The Garden Club of Virginia was sought, and the East Garden became one of the organization's first restoration projects. Arthur Shurcliff, a Massachusetts-based landscape architect, was hired and began archaeological investigations beginning in July and ending in September 1930. During this time Shurcliff and his assistants uncovered the ha-ha wall on the south side of the Great House and found another ha-ha wall at the end of what is now the East Garden.

The investigation would resume again in 1932 under the direction of Morley Jeffers Williams, a faculty member of the Harvard School of Design, assisted by a graduate student, Charles C. Pinkney. At this time other features of the garden area were discovered, including the system of terraces. Williams submitted the restoration plan to The Garden Club and the Foundation Board of Directors in 1932.

It is in one of these terraced areas (closest to the Great House) covered with grass where Pogue and his crew opened up a series of excavation units. There they found long, narrow planting beds of dark soil lined at the bottoms with unmortared brick trash. Pogue's findings will be shared with The Garden Club of Virginia and with the Association's Board of Directors to determine a further course of action.
I recently had the pleasure of attending a lecture by John Meacham about his new book on Thomas Jefferson. The presentation was very compelling—compelling enough to convince me to purchase a copy. While very well written, it is a little too sympathetic to Jefferson for me. As I was reading, I couldn't help thinking I had read all this before.

If you type “Thomas Jefferson” into the Library of Congress card catalog, you get over 6,000 citations. Many of these are not books, but it is an enormous amount of material for a single individual. A similar search for George Washington returns over 17,000 entries. These two men are extraordinarily important figures in American history, so there is no question they deserve scholarly attention. But one does have to wonder if there is anything new to learn about either of them. Based on John Meacham’s book, the answer is probably not much. The books on these two men will nevertheless keep coming, because people buy them and the biographies of other prominent men and women.

Given our national amnesia about American history, anything we can do to encourage attention to the past is a good thing. From this perspective, the popularity of biography is helpful. Unfortunately, it is rare for the full effect of historical change to occur over one person’s lifetime—and our obsession with biography therefore inhibits a full understanding of how the ideas and actions of these individuals affect our lives today.

What we need is narrative history that engages people like biography. Unfortunately, historians don’t produce as many narrative histories as they did thirty or forty years ago. There have been several good Civil War narratives. I am thinking particularly of Allen Guelzo’s *Fateful Lightning* and, of course, James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom*. On the topic of the American Revolution, however, there have been few comprehensive accounts since Robert Middlekauff’s *A Glorious Cause* in 1982. The challenge with Middlekauff is that he focuses mainly on things military and ended the tale in 1789, which does not help the reader to understand how the ideas of the revolution played out in the critical early national period—and beyond.

As those of you who have read these columns before can attest, I consistently argue that we need not only a better understanding of the past, but a more “useable past.” This would be a past that relies less on individual biography and gives us a better understanding of how events and people have impact far beyond their lifetimes.

This is precisely the kind of history we offer at Stratford Hall. There are few families that had the same extended engagement with the pivotal ideas and events of American history as the Lees. From the colonial period through the Civil War, you can find a Lee that was involved in some fashion. This rich history and Stratford Hall’s profound sense of place enable us to tell a very compelling tale that helps our visitors understand how decisions and choices made in the 18th century had a profound impact in the 19th century. This kind of history connects the public with the past in a new way and enables our visitors to leave with a more useful American history lesson. We are grateful for the support that has allowed us to improve and expand on this mission over the past several years and hope we can continue to count on that support in the future.

Paul C. Reber
Executive Director
This will be the third year that Stratford Hall will host the Institute for Teachers. Each summer over 30 teachers from across Virginia and the nation gather at Stratford for four days and share in a truly unique experience. Funded through the generosity of former Stratford Hall Director Mary Dell Pritzlaff, and with support from the Virginia Geographic Alliance, teachers are provided a fully-financed residential opportunity. The Institute will take place July 24-27, 2013.

The current economic and history curricula, though thoughtfully planned, leave the average teacher looking for that “hook”—that extra bit of insight that will pique and engage a class and deepen the study of lesson plans. The Institute will give teachers a useful and critical knowledge base that can be applied directly in the coming school year.

The seminar is led by a distinguished group of scholars: Dr. Dawn Bowen from the University of Mary Washington; Dr. Kevin Hardwick from James Madison University; Dr. James Wilson from James Madison University; and Dr. Don Zeigler from Old Dominion University.

During the Institute, teachers will be treated to a content-rich set of lectures, outstanding field excursions, and practical insight into the Standards-based curriculum enhancements. This experience will explore the pre-history of Indian cultures inhabiting the Northern Neck of Virginia; the origins of the plantation economy; the enslaved populations; and the dynamics of the plantation economy in the 18th century. The Institute is designed to offer teachers a solid knowledge base of the interplay of colonial economic, cultural, and physical geographies of the Virginia Tidewater region.

This year marks the first year that graduate credit will be offered by the University of Richmond. Teachers wishing to take the course for graduate credit may apply to the University of Richmond School of Professional & Continuing Studies.
In spring, School Buses Return to Stratford

Educational programs reach out to scouting groups, older students

In spring, the Stratford Hall landscape starts waking up. Everything looks green, the daffodils start to bloom, and the school buses return. Kids will try writing with a quill pen, card wool, search for shark teeth, explore the Great House, and so much more.

During spring 2013, students are coming from Fairfax County, Westmoreland County, Powhatan County, Quantico, Stafford County, Prince William County, Essex County, King & Queen County, Fredericksburg, and Richmond, Virginia, as well as Calvert County, Maryland.

This summer we will open up our educational programs to scouting groups. Modifying our current programs for scout groups has proven to be relatively simple and was well received by Girl Scout Troop 3235. The response from their leader says it all: “Everyone had a great time!” The weather was perfect the day they came and quite a few of the girls found shark’s teeth as well. When asked what their favorite part was, we got all sorts of different answers, so we count the entire day a huge success! We plan on getting the word out to more local troops to grow this program.

Lately we have welcomed some older students to tour Stratford Hall. Our normal menu of offerings is geared towards third and fifth graders, but that does not mean that we are limited to just those age groups. We can cater our tours to the desired lesson plan, conduct extended tours, and visit buildings/sites that are not typically on our daily guided tour. Additionally, Judy Hynson, Director of Research and Library Collections, has given talks and pulled primary source documents out for the students to view.

Anyone with a scouting or school group interested in participating in an educational program should contact Abby Newkirk, Director of Education, by email at anewkirk@StratfordHall.org or by phone at 804-493-1973.
Securing a Place for the Past Campaign Now Over the $11m Mark Towards $17m Goal

Stratford Hall’s $17 million campaign, Securing a Place for the Past, continues to gain momentum. The campaign was announced publicly in October after having exceeded $10 million in funds raised. Highlights of the campaign include converting the existing Visitor Center into an Education Center with new exhibits, new tours, thorough restoration of the Great House, research and restoration of the gardens, and additional endowments.

As of March 31, the campaign has reached over $11 million in gifts and pledges. We are truly grateful for the generous outpouring of support from members and friends across the country.

The campaign is a comprehensive one, and your annual gift as a Friend of Stratford helps us toward our goal. We appreciate your continued participation in Stratford’s campaign and encourage you to consider increasing your gift as part of our comprehensive fund-raising effort.

For more information about Stratford’s campaign, Securing a Place for the Past, contact Development Director Chandler Battaile at 804-493-1974 or CBattaile@StratfordHall.org.

Making a difference with a planned gift

Stratford Hall’s Futuri Society offers donors the opportunity to make a lasting legacy through planned gifts such as bequests, named endowments, Charitable Lead Trusts and Charitable Remainder Trusts. As you think about your estate planning, please consider making Stratford Hall a beneficiary which will continue your philanthropic legacy.

Help us honor the Lee Family motto Non Incautus Futuri: be not unmindful of the future. Generations of the Lee family viewed their motto as a solemn charge to be aware of the impact its decisions would have on future generations.

By making a planned gift now, you will help sustain Stratford’s future while also ensuring your individual needs and long-term estate goals are met. If you are interested in learning more about the Futuri Society, please contact Chandler Battaile, Development Director at 804-493-1974 or cbattaile@StratfordHall.org.

We can work with you and your legal team and/or your personal estate planning attorney to find an estate planning option tailored to suit your individual needs and the long-term goals of your estate. As a Planned Giving Donor, you will automatically become a member of the Futuri Society.
Bluebird Trail Gets Makeover Courtesy of Virginia Bluebird Society

*Trail Has 50 Nesting Boxes across the Plantation*


But our newly restored trail is, well, strictly for the birds! Thanks to the Virginia Bluebird Society we now have 50 new or reconditioned bluebird nesting boxes. Anne Little and her husband Carl, along with Virginia Bluebird Society Coordinator for Westmoreland County Pam Narney and her husband John, spearheaded the work.

Renovations to the trail took place in February to help increase the population this spring. With proper protection like baffles and wire mesh guards to ward off predators like snakes, raccoons and other birds, the boxes could produce as many as three broods, totaling 12 to 20 new chicks a season.

As loss of habitat has been a major reason for past decline in the state population of the Eastern Bluebird, Stratford’s trail spread out over 1,900 acres will continue to be important to help increase the population in the future.

Volunteers are needed to monitor the Stratford Hall Bluebird Trail at least once a month from March to August. Those interested in volunteering can call John Narney at 804-224-0014 or email him at jnarney@verizon.net. You can check out the society’s website at www.virginiabluebirds.org. And be sure to catch the sighting of a bluebird or two the next time you visit.
The lodging component of Stratford Hall has been undergoing some growth in the past six months. With a full-time General Manager and Director of Sales at the helm, the Lodging department has been transitioning to a more formal business model. Though the rooms have had recent (past two years) extensive redecoration and improvement, the Executive Housekeeper, Gale Griffin, and her team have spent the past six months polishing the rooms to a warm welcoming hue that has been receiving rave reviews from our guests. Some software upgrades and constant vigilance will help overnight guests experience the “Southern Hospitality” Stratford Hall is famous for.

While rooms got some in-house attention, the food and beverage department led by Chef Benedicte Merian, got a much-needed capital improvement to the main kitchen. All of the latest equipment, along with many mechanical upgrades, will go a long way to serve all the lodging guests better. Along with more folks coming in to the restaurant, our food and beverage department has over seven weddings already on the books for this year. Pairing that with the many events going on throughout the grounds, that new kitchen is just in time for quite a bit of use.

If you have a need to escape, retreat, meet, or experience what interesting events are going on at Stratford Hall, please call us 804-493-1966 or go to our Website www.StratfordHall.org/Lodging. We look forward to seeing you here.
The “Lees” to Visit the “Washingtons” at this Year’s Grandparent/Grandchild Camps

Space Remains in June & July; August Camp Sold Out

This summer, campers at Stratford Hall’s grandparent/grandchild camps will enjoy an extended visit with the “Washingtons” at Wakefield. Stratford Hall and Popes Creek Plantation (Wakefield) are in close proximity. This made it possible for 18th-century residents to experience some mutual sociability. They shared many of the same interests, particularly farming and involvement with the evolution of our country. Richard Henry Lee and George Washington were born the same year, although young George Washington moved from Popes Creek at an early age. “Light Horse Harry” Lee’s admiration of George Washington, may have considerably shaped Lee’s career and his character. Likewise, Robert E. Lee’s personal traits developed in the shadow of Washington. Robert E. Lee’s wife was, of course, the adopted granddaughter of Washington.

All of these relationships provide the rationale for including a visit to George Washington’s Birthplace as one part of Stratford’s summer camp program—a day concluding with tea and dancing with the Washingtons. While at the Birthplace, campers will experience sheep shearing, oxen training, farming, blacksmithing, open-hearth cooking, dancing, and learning to survey as did young George—all in cooperation with the National Park Service.

Information and registration on this innovative camp program may be obtained through the website, www.StratfordHall.org, or by contacting camp coordinator, Bill Doerken, at (804) 493-1026. The camp dates are June 25-27, July 9-11, and August 6-8 (now sold out). The cost is $340 per person and includes comfortable lodging in the Stratford Inn (air-conditioned, private baths and single or king beds) and meals in the newly renovated Stratford Dining Room.

These camps put the “grand” in “grandparenting”—a memorable bonding experience between generations. Many campers return year after year to participate in activities such as brick making, spinning and weaving, 18th-century school, marching with the Virginia Militia, colonial music and games, archaeology, fossil hunting and much more.
Spring at Stratford

We thought you might enjoy a look around the plantation during this spring season. This issue we focus on some of our furry, and not so furry, residents.
Blue Star Museum Program Offers Free Admission to Active Duty Military and Their Families

Program runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day

For the second year, Stratford Hall is taking part in the Blue Star Museums program, a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 1,800 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2013. Leadership support has been provided by MetLife Foundation through Blue Star Families.

“We are proud to be a part of this program and offer the opportunity to active duty military and their families to visit Stratford and learn about the land, the lives and the legacy of the Lee family,” said Paul Reber, Executive Director. “We feel this is especially important with the many major military facilities in Virginia and in nearby Maryland and Washington, D.C.”

“Blue Star Museums is something that service members and their families look forward to every year and we are thrilled with the continued growth of the program,” said Blue Star Families CEO Kathy Roth-Douquet. “Through this distinctive collaboration between Blue Star Families, the National Endowment for the Arts and more than 1,800 museums across the United States, service members and their families can connect with our national treasures with this unparalleled opportunity to visit some of the country’s finest museums for free.”

The free admission program is available to any bearer of a Geneva Convention common access card (CAC), a DD Form 1173 ID card, or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card, which includes active duty U.S. military — Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, as well as members of the National Guard and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps —and up to five family members.
Oysters Added to Lineup for 6th Annual Wine Festival

Save the Date: Festival to be held Sept. 22 & 23, 2013

Our popular wine festival will be even better this year with the addition of oysters and a wine and oyster tasting ticket. Participating oyster growers will include Chapel Creek Oyster Company, Chesapeake Seafood, Delaville Oysters, Dragon Creek Oyster Company, Rappahannock River Oysters, Sewansecott Oysters, and Ward Oyster Company.

Participating wineries as of press time include Ingleside, Vault Field, Trump, Horton, Williamsburg, Mattaponi, General’s Ridge Vineyard, Glass House Winery, Cooper, Athena Vineyards, Oak Crest Vineyards, and Rogers Ford Farm Winery.

In addition, a special Friday night preview dinner is being planned, which will be a separate ticketed event but will include admission to the festival.

The event will also feature other specialty foods, arts and crafts vendors, children’s arcade, and an antique car show with over 75 classic cars by the Memory Lane Car Club on Sunday. All activities are included in admission price. Discounted advance tickets will sold on-line on the Stratford Hall website.

Festival hours will be Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is held rain or shine, and there is no refund on tickets.

Ticket prices for the event will be:
- Advance Purchase (Online) Wine & Oyster Taster Ticket (1-Day) $40 (All advance ticket sales will end at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14)
- Wine and Oyster Taster Ticket, Purchased at Gate (1-Day) $45
- Advance Purchase (Online) Wine Taster Ticket (1-day) $20
- Wine Taster Ticket Purchased at Gate (1-day) $25
- Non-Taster Ticket, (1-Day) $10
- Child Ticket, Non-Taster (Over 6 and Under 13) (1-Day) $5
- Child Ticket (6 and Under) Free

Wine Tasters must be 21 or over.

New this year will also be a featured wine benefit preview dinner held on Friday night. For complete details, visit www.StratfordHall.org.
Calendar of Events
For more details visit StratfordHall.org

June 16
Father’s Day Brunch
Don’t forget Dad! Brunch will be served buffet style with a special treat for all fathers. Reservations requested. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

June 25-27, July 9-11, August 6-8
Grandparent/Grandchild Camp
Our popular summer camp will be offered in June, July and August. Three days of fun-filled, 18th-century activities offer a memorable family bonding experience. New this year will be activities at the nearby George Washington’s Birthplace. Registration available on StratfordHall.org.

July 13
Edible Pants of Virginia with Hal Wiggins
Nationally known author and naturalist, Hal Wiggins, will present both a discussion and field experience in identifying edible plants found at Stratford for ages 8 and up; children must be accompanied by an adult. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Pre-registration suggested.

July 20
Italian Wine Dinner
Join us for an Italian-themed evening with a three-course dinner and wine. Reservations required. Full menu and details available on StratfordHall.org.

July 24-27
Teacher Institute: Life and Land on the Colonial Plantation: From Jamestown to Stratford
This institute is open to middle and high school educators and focuses on the relationship of history, geography and economics of colonial Tidewater Virginia.

Save The Date!
Stratford Hall Wine and Oyster Festival: September 21-22, 2013
Mark your calendar now to join us for our expanded wine festival which will include many local oyster growers this year. See page 11 of this issue for more information including a listing of participating wineries. Be sure to check StratfordHall.org for updated event information and the opportunity to buy discounted advance tickets. Also sign up on the website for our e-newsletter which will alert you when discounted tickets go on sale.

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