A Whale of a Discovery in the Cliffs

Stratford Hall staff member Jon Bachman was walking on the beach in June with USGS scientists, who were collecting samples for pollen analysis of the Miocene cliffs, when he noticed what appeared to be a fossil sticking out of the face of the cliff about three feet above the waterline.

Expert paleontologists from the Calvert Marine Museum in Maryland were called in to help extract the fossil. As the Calvert team started the removal process, it became clear that this was a large, intact whale skull. The more they dug, the bigger the fossil got. The Calvert team, including several interns, worked at the site off and on for several weeks.

When the plaster-encased skull was finally ready to be removed, it was six feet long and weighed approximately 1,000 pounds. It was lifted off the beach onto a boat, taken to Westmoreland State Park where it was loaded off the boat dock by a tractor and placed into a pickup truck.

The whale skull is now on loan to the Calvert Marine Museum where they will be working to identify it. A new, larger education center is among the projects to be funded by our ongoing $17M comprehensive campaign. When the facility is completed it will allow fossil finds like this one to be displayed here at Stratford.
As I write this column in the first week of August, Stratford Hall has just received a lot of international media attention because of the discovery of an intact Miocene baleen whale fossil in our cliffs. The presence of fossils in the cliffs has been known for a long time. In fact, if you visit Robert E. Lee’s office in the basement of Lee Chapel at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, you will notice a large “Megalodon” shark tooth on the mantel. A “Megalodon” was a Cenozoic era cousin of the Great White Shark—only much larger. Lee’s office supposedly remains as he left it upon his death in 1870. Lee probably found the tooth on a youthful expedition to Stratford Hall and kept it as a happy reminder of his connection with this place.

The discovery of the intact baleen whale fossil is important and may enable us to discover how these sea creatures evolved over time. The discovery of this fossil here at Stratford Hall is also a reminder that this part of Virginia did not always appear as it does today. Fossil remains of baleen whales, sharks and other sea creatures are found here because all of what is now eastern Virginia was once part of the Atlantic Ocean. The coast of North America was closer to modern-day Washington, D.C.

This brings me to a point made in this column before. The way we teach history focuses entirely too much on individuals and events, rather than on narratives that extend over centuries or perhaps even millennia. Historical change is influenced by a lot of factors, events and processes. Thinking about history in this way enables us to ask new questions and see the past differently.

The presence of these fossils here at Stratford Hall is evidence that the earth was warmer fifteen million years ago than it is today. As the earth cooled, polar ice expanded, the seas receded, and the present form of the Potomac River took shape. Geological evidence and Native American oral history traces these developments. By the time Europeans arrived in the 17th century, the native population had adapted to this changing environment, developing agricultural practices and social organization that was highly structured and based on thousands of years of experience. They lived in villages and practiced intensive cultivation of crops, including corn. Observation of these Native American practices significantly influenced European settlement patterns and agricultural activities—the cultivation of corn being the most important example. Many plantations were established on sites of former Indian fields—a name often attached to those places by European settlers.

Unlike human action, the impact of the environment on history is difficult to perceive over short time periods, but it is nonetheless significant. The recent discovery of the whale is a reminder of this important fact.

Paul C. Reber
Executive Director
Restoration Effort Begins in the Dining and Cherry Tree Rooms

View work as it progresses in Great House

Discovering how our ancestors in centuries past literally built their lives through the process of restoring their homes in the present is an intriguing, if dusty, journey. “It's a giant jigsaw puzzle,” says Phil Mark, Stratford's Director of Preservation. Phil is in the process of restoring Stratford's Dining room and Cherry Tree room. Both rooms have been touched by all four generations of Lees at Stratford Hall, as well as the two original restorations that were led by architect and preservationist Fiske Kimball in the 1930s.

Having at least six transformations, with changing walls and varying building materials, can make for a complex mystery to solve. Using their knowledge of popular architectural styles, paints, timbers, and plaster, Phil and other experts can trace each layer of the room back to a specific period. Once their studies are complete, the Dining room and Cherry Tree room will be fully transformed and returned to the time of Henry Lee IV, a time known architecturally as the Late Federal Period.

Furnishings in both rooms have been transferred to the Visitor Center where they are on exhibit, along with some of the original woodwork that had been saved and kept in storage. The walls have been stripped, the rooms are bare, and the journey is just beginning. Throughout the next eighteen months we will see Stratford Hall transformed once again to reflect another generation of Lees. Visit us as we discover and honor the story of the Lee family at Stratford Hall.
Stratford Hall has received the largest contribution to date since the start of the “Securing a Place for the Past” comprehensive campaign. Ethel Riley of St. Simons Island, Georgia, left the equivalent of $1.172M to Stratford Hall in her will. Mrs. Riley was a member of the DC Friends of Stratford Committee and her gift will be completed in 2036.

“When we first heard of Ethel Riley’s generous bequest to Stratford, we were overwhelmed with gratitude and delight. Her gift could not have come at a more opportune moment as it will enable Stratford to significantly increase the endowment portion of the Comprehensive Campaign,” noted Carol and Ted Price, Campaign Co-Chairs.

“Mrs. Riley’s bequest illustrates the value of including Stratford in one’s planned giving options. By including Stratford in her will, Mrs. Riley is able to continue giving to a beloved organization and charity well beyond her death. We hope many Stratford friends will follow in Mrs. Riley’s wise footsteps as they make their financial plans for the future.”

If you are interested in including Stratford Hall in your estate plans and becoming a member of the Futuri Society, please contact Chandler Battaile, Director of Development at (804) 493-1974 or CBattaile@StratfordHall.org.

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, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and Charitable Gift Annuities. As you think about your estate planning, please consider continuing your philanthropic legacy by making Stratford Hall a beneficiary.

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 the Development Office at 804-493-8919 or rpitts@stratfordhall.org.
Join us for a very special opportunity when Ms. Fabrizia Lanza, Sicilian chef and proprietor of the Case Vecchie cooking school, visits Stratford Hall for a talk and lunch on Saturday, November 16, 2013.

Ms. Lanza, daughter of the late Countess Anna Tasca, will give a presentation in the duPont Library at 11 a.m. where hors d’oeuvres and Tasca d’Almerita wine will be served. She will discuss her new cookbook, *Coming Home to Sicily, Seasonal Harvests and Cooking from Case Vecchie*, with a preface by Alice Waters. The presentation will be followed by a 12:30 p.m. lunch in the Dining Room featuring a seasonal harvest prepared by Stratford Chef Benedicte Merian under the direction of Ms. Lanza.

Case Vecchie is one of Europe’s most respected cooking schools. It is situated on one of the oldest and largest estates in Sicily and includes the family’s Tasca d’Almerita winery. Ms. Lanza, a former art historian and museum curator, returned to the family estate in 2007 to assist her mother in running the cooking school. Since then she has traveled the world hosting dinners and teaching classes in Sicilian cooking.

A book signing in the Dining Room will follow the luncheon. Great House tours will also be available after the book signing. The cost for the presentation and lunch is $100 per person. Seating is limited; reservations are required and can be made by calling 804-493-1966 or e-mailing dob@stratfordhall.org.

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**APERTIVO**

*Sfincione*

Palermitan Pizza

**PRIMO PIATTO**

*Pasta con Broccoli Arriminati*

Pasta with cauliflower, pine nuts and currants

**SECONDO PIATTO**

*Spezzatino di Agnello alla Menta*

Stewed Lamb with Fresh Mint

*Insalata con rucola e pecorino*

Mix greens with arugula and pecorino cheese

**DOLCE**

*Cassata*

Sponge Cake with Ricotta Cream and Marzipan and candied fruit

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**From Sicily to Stratford: World-Renowned Sicilian Chef to host lunch in November**

Case Vecchie cooking school recipes to be featured
A "tremendous gift," an "amazing" and "unique" opportunity to "gain hands-on experience;" these are just some of the ways Stratford Hall sets its internship program apart from numerous other programs in the country.

During this summer six students and young professionals made their way to Virginia to work in various departments at Stratford. The program was made possible by a gift from the Otter Island Foundation.

“Sometimes in larger institutions you may only get the chance to explore one aspect of [a museum]...but at Stratford Hall I get to be a jack of all trades,” says Mollie Armstrong, the Collections Management Intern. Like Mollie, Natalie Sherif, Stratford’s Curatorial Intern also came looking for the chance “to discover another side to...history.”

While discovering Stratford Hall, the interns planned and executed programs to portray the diversity of the plantation's historical legacy. “All of the residents of Stratford, past and present, have such interesting stories to tell,” says Sandy Jensen, Education Intern, “—the dynamic Lees, [the] Native Americans who lived here, the Pope family of the Clifts Plantation, and, of course, the slaves whose labor enabled the plantation to exist. That doesn't even include the stories about the pre-historic animals preserved in our cliffs!”

The stories of the past are what draw so many to Stratford in the present, and of course there is the attraction of Stratford itself. “It’s a truly bucolic scene,” says Daniel Taylor Weldon, Stratford’s Cultural Landscape Management Intern. Lindsay Laws, who interned with Stratford's Archives Department, agrees. “[Stratford] looks like the setting of a Jane Austen novel,” she says. “It is a peaceful and idyllic atmosphere in which to spend the summer, and I love that.”

Editor’s note: Lizzy Thomas, who served as the Marketing and Public Relations intern this summer, wrote this article.
UMW-Stratford Hall Archaeology Field School finds more components of plantation life

Structures found add to scope of 18th-century residences

This summer archaeology students from the University of Mary Washington-led by Andrew Wilkins, Adjunct Instructor at UMW, began to examine new findings in their excavations south of the Oval. We are “focusing on a portion of the Oval Site,” says Wilkins, “—a circa 1740–1800 agricultural and domestic complex…south of the Great House.”

Students from UMW have found a wide array of artifacts, some of them still bearing the royal emblem of the lion and the unicorn from before America’s Revolutionary War. The items found add another intriguing component to Stratford’s complex history. “[These] items…lead us to interpret the structure as both a kitchen that served [an] overseer’s house and a residence for the slaves,” explains Wilkins.

Wilkins hopes that the findings from this summer’s dig will help to complete a picture of how overseers and slaves lived on a plantation such as Stratford. The process is far from complete. There are three sites that have been found and many more that may be hidden beneath Stratford’s landscape. Wilkins and the students of UMW are looking forward to continuing their research and analysing their recent findings. “One thing that keeps me coming back to Stratford is the variety,” says Wilkins, “—[the] things to do in and around the plantation, and the…staff and community that make it such a pleasure to work and live [at Stratford] during our excavations.”
Stratford Under Our Feet: Geology and paleontology program will feature talk and exploration

Join us on October 5, 2013, at 9:30 a.m.

Most of the visitors walking the Stratford Hall beach looking for the occasional sharks tooth or bone fragments do not realize that they have just found a small clue to a distant time. The cliffs at Stratford Hall record millions of years of earth’s history, and, more importantly, divulge evidences of vast earth changes and continental movements.

Dr. Robert Weems, retired United States Geological Survey paleontologist, will be presenting this rare opportunity on October 5, 2013, to learn more about these earth transformations as they are recorded in the cliffs at Stratford Hall. After a short discussion and slide presentation in the duPont Library, registrants will proceed to the Mill parking lot where, accompanied by Dr. Weems and Stratford Hall staff, they will be allowed special access to the area below the cliffs.

The remainder of the program will be spent examining fossil clues to the Miocene world of over 15 million years ago. This “all ages” overview of the geological forces and the paleontological evidence will demystify and explain the significance of the Stratford cliffs below and above our feet.

The program begins at 9:30 a.m. in the duPont library and lasts till 1:00 p.m. Cost is $10.00 per person and advance registration is strongly recommended. The maximum number for this event is 35 people.

To register, contact Jon Bachman at 804-493-1972 or e-mail jbachman@stratfordhall.org.
Summer at Stratford

From Grandparent/Grandchild camps to educational programs, preservation work in the Great House, archaeology in the Ham House field, and even a whale of a discovery in the cliffs, it has been a very busy summer season.
On October 26 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., the winds of autumn will blow the goblins about at Stratford Hall. The annual Historical Haunts event will offer ghost hunters of all ages an unusual and paranormal evening.

For the first time, the event welcomes noted writer L. B. Taylor, author of 9 volumes of the *Ghosts of Virginia* books to share his research on the ghosts of the Northern Neck. Following Mr. Taylor’s duPont Library talk, visitors (over 6 years of age) are invited to take guided ghost tours of Stratford Hall and the historic grounds. The lantern-lit tour will feature new stories and legends surrounding the Lees of Stratford Hall.

Children of all ages are invited to make seasonal crafts and enjoy our famous ginger cookies and hot cider. Or perhaps you might want to take a glimpse into the future through the divination of the famous Seer Sisters, Magda and Madam Sedonia, whose gifted Tarot and Palm Reading insights are spooky.

This year we will be offering three choices for Halloween at Stratford Hall:

- “Spook-tacular” Historical Haunts Night Package.” Visitors are treated to the lecture by L. B. Taylor plus the ghost tour, refreshments, crafts and special fortune telling readings. Cost for adults is $15.00, children $13.00.
- Ghosts of the Northern Neck lecture only. $10.00 per person.
- Historical Haunts Package: Ghost tour, refreshments, palm and tarot readings 6:30–9:00 p.m. Cost for adults is $5.00, children under 13, $3.00.

Call Jon Bachman to make your reservations at 804-493-1972 or e-mail [Jbachman@stratfordhall.org](mailto:Jbachman@stratfordhall.org)
Order Your Gift Baskets from the Stratford Hall Gift Shop in Time for Christmas 2013!

These wonderful gift baskets, filled with Stratford products, are available from the Stratford Hall Gift Shop. Please use the convenient order form provided here, phone your order to (804) 493-1969 or fax to (804) 493-0333.

Custom gift baskets can also be ordered. Visit us on the web at www.StratfordHall.org.

**Stratford Holiday Basket**
Includes a 3-pound Virginia Hamlet (fully cooked and boneless), Sweet Winter Pickles and Apple Chutney.

$80.00

**Pride of Stratford Basket**
Includes Fruit Cake, Strawberry Preserves and Stratford Cornmeal.

$45.00

**Stratford Party Basket**
Includes a 22 oz. can of Virginia Peanuts, Pepper Jelly and Orange Honey Mustard Dip.

$40.00

**Stratford Breakfast Basket**
Includes Stratford Grits, Pancake Flour and Stratford Honey.

$35.00

**Stratford Cornmeal Gift Box**
Includes a 2 lb. bag of White Cornmeal ground at Stratford, Reproduction Seasoned Mini Corn Breadstick Pan and Booklet of Southern Cornmeal Recipes compiled from the Family Archives of the Georgia Director for the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association.

$25.00

**Order Form**
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Phone: (804) 493-1969

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Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, Inc. (RELMA)
December 15—last date to order for Christmas delivery. Additional charge for oversized boxes and air service. No discount on gift baskets.
Calendar of Events

For more details visit StratfordHall.org

October 5
Stratford under our feet: Geology and Paleontology
Noted international paleontologist, Dr. Robert Weems, will present a lecture and field experience opportunities. Pre-registration is required. Program is from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

October 26
Historical Haunts: A “Spook-tacular” Halloween
Our annual Halloween program has something for everyone this year. L.B. Taylor, author of over 13 books on the Virginia paranormal, will present a talk on the ghosts of the Northern Neck in the duPont Library. There will be ghost tours, refreshments, craft making, palm reading and Tarot card readings.

November 7
SOS: Simple Outdoor Survival
Noted local naturalist, Linda Bailey, offers a unique workshop on basic orienteering and survival skills for kids ages 8-13. Fun, safe and important tips on how to handle getting lost in the woods will be included. All equipment is provided.

November 28
Thanksgiving Dinner
Plan a memorable Thanksgiving Dinner at Stratford. Seating times will be at noon and 3 p.m. Call now to get your choice of seating times.

December 4
Holiday Decorations Workshop with Mary Young Tracy
Join artist Mary Young Tracy for one or both of her unique holiday workshops. Explore the 18th century through seasonal holiday creations. Learn how to make the Hogarth Curve, holiday topiary, a boxwood tree, and kissing ball. Pre-registration is required. 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

December 14
1774: A Stratford Hall Christmastide
Come celebrate the season and participate in Colonel Phil’s Holiday Party. It will be December 14, 1774, and, as a guest at the party, meet members of the Lee family and its staff and servants. Enjoy the beauty, music, games and holiday spirit at Stratford Hall. Be sure to make dining and lodging reservations early.

Save The Date! November 16, 2013
Presentation and lunch with Fabrizia Lanza
Join us for a very special opportunity when Ms. Fabrizia Lanza, Sicilian chef and proprietor of the Case Vecchie cooking school, visits Stratford Hall for a talk and lunch on Saturday, November 16, 2013. Ms. Lanza, daughter of the late Countess Anna Tasca, will give a presentation in the duPont Library at 11 a.m. where hors d’oeuvres and Tasca d’Almerita wine will be served. She will discuss her new cookbook, Coming Home to Sicily, Seasonal Harvests and Cooking from Case Vecchie, with a preface by Alice Waters. The presentation will be followed by a 12:30 p.m. lunch in the Dining Room featuring a seasonal harvest luncheon prepared by Stratford Chef Benedicte Merian under the direction of Ms. Lanza. See article on page 5 for details.