

# Historic Preservation

at University of Mary Washington

Spring 2008

## Department News

### A Momentous Occasion for the Department: Celebrating 22 Years of Professor Brown Morton

*by Professor Doug Sanford*



*The Professor Brown Morton we all know  
and love, in his office in the spring of 2008*

At the end of the spring 2008 semester, Professor W. Brown Morton III will retire from our program and Mary Washington. This event is hard to fathom, as Professor Morton has been here almost from the beginning, and it is difficult to imagine the Department without him. This also marks the first retirement of a tenured faculty member in the program's history. His contributions are too many to mention, with his tenure (1986 to 2008) spanning from the Department's early history, when we averaged about 16 graduates per year, to the present when well over 30 graduates head into the preservation future. (See the photographs on page four of Professor Morton through the years in the Department.)

Professor Morton broadened our course offerings to include international preservation, the popular summer course in Scotland, and historic preservation administration. And what past and current students cannot conjure up stories from the Documentation and Fieldwork class? All those students who swore they couldn't draw and couldn't understand buildings somehow managed to overcome those hurdles, with many going on to graduate school and careers in architectural history and conservation. Speaking of stories, please stay tuned for the Historic Preservation Club's forthcoming collection of Morton sayings, metaphors, episodes, and "saving the world" moments. On behalf of our Department, faculty, students, and alumni, let me express our deep gratitude and debt to Professor Morton, while congratulating him on an amazing career. Thanks for the memories Brown, and we wish you nothing but enjoyment and continued preservation success in your retirement. Bon voyage! ♡

*more pictures of professor Morton on page 4*

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# Stratford Hall Update

by Professor Doug Sanford

Summer 2007 marked the 13th archaeological field school held by the Department at Stratford Hall Plantation. It also made for the fifth season at what has become known as the "Oval site." The Oval itself, a pasture field with curvilinear boundaries and framing trees, fronts the Lee



Thirteenth Stratford Hall Field School students and crew

family's 1738 mansion and came into existence during the reconstruction of Stratford's formal landscape in the 1930s and 1940s. First discovered during an archaeological survey in the mid-1970s, the Oval

site was dated to the mid-18th century, and over time it has slowly, but surely, revealed its nature to a regular cast of Mary Washington field-school students. As discussed below, archaeological discoveries at the Oval site are providing critical information for this part of the plantation and its former residents, as no documentary evidence for the site is known at present.

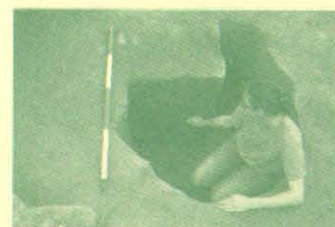
A small, but elite group of historic preservation students comprised the 2007 field school class: Ruth Barnish '07, Sarah Gardner '09, Katie Hummelt '10, and Katie Kosack '08. Joining them was an expanded crew of field school veterans: Kelly McCauley '08, Brad Hatch '07, Sally Stephens '07, and Andrew Wilkins '06. Andrew returned to Stratford from his first year of graduate school at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, where Sally Stephens joined him last fall. Brad also enlisted in the graduate school ranks, but at the College of William and Mary.

As in past seasons, students learned the basics of field archaeology – how does one handle a trowel, control one's dirt, keep straight balks, and bend over in diverse angles? Acquiring the proper technique for shoveling plow zone soil is a must, while also remembering periodically to fill out field forms that document daily findings and interpretations.

Our students also come to terms with an array of newly encountered artifacts of the small, broken variety – rather than of the whole, exotic kind that students know don't usually occur, but dream of nonetheless. This particular summer season made such education a harder lesson, in that we endured exceptionally dry weather. The record-setting drought forced us to constantly water nearly all of the excavation units, while suffering through a self-inflicted dust storm of fine particle soil as we screened. Despite these hardships and the pleasures of calluses and blisters, students

and crew moved a significant amount of plow zone, allowing us to expose numerous features and to recover a range of artifacts that will prove useful in interpreting the Oval site.

A field season at Stratford would not be the same without the usual amenities (truck rides, for example) and summer fun. Adjusting to log cabin life can be instructional, especially to find what else is living there besides you. Grocery shopping and pizza at Angelo's in downtown Montross form a weekly routine, along with swimming and canoeing trips to the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers. In a first-ever excursion, we ventured to the rooftop of the Great House, taking in the views from the chimney clusters. Being out in the rural countryside does not preclude cinematic entertainment, such as a viewing of that seminal 1969 archaeological film *Doorway to the Past*. In less than a half-hour, one understands the relationship between the archaeological record and a



Sally Stephens shows a posthole from the Triangle Site

bawdy colonial tavern. Field trips to Mt. Vernon and Jamestown enlivened the class, and for those staying after the field school, joining the masses for a Fourth of July celebration in Colonial Beach ranked right up there with refreshments at the Back Draft in Hague.

On the serious archaeological side, students and staff made crucial progress at the Oval site, which entails a farm quarter complex of at least two buildings and likely more. Occupied between ca. 1740 and the 1780s, the complex was purposely demolished as part of a major reorganization of the plantation. The area became an agricultural field, with tilling continuing until the 1930s. Next to a previously uncovered 16-by-20-foot earthfast building, we further explored the structure's brick-lined basement addition. Here we discovered a bulkhead entrance, with brick walls forming the entrance's sides and framing where steps would have led down to the basement floor.

In another portion of the site known as "the triangle" (named for the area's shape as bounded by modern roads), we opened numerous five-by-five-foot units to reveal a second earthfast building. Initially expected to measure about 10-by-20 feet, the structure "grew" over the summer season into a 20-by-40-foot building. Although we have not seen enough of this building to determine its exact use, the large posts could argue for a barn, while the regular presence of domestic artifacts and window glass may denote a slave quarter. Until we see interior storage features and a chimney or hearth however, the guessing game will continue. Stay tuned for additional updates and for those interested, please contact Professor Sanford about the Stratford field school. ♡

# Alumni News

## Conservation and Preservation Passion

by Kaitlin O'Shea

"Eventually you are desensitized and realize that you cannot help everyone."

"Speechless? Confused?"

A co-worker said this to me, and I don't think I'll ever forget it, or the occasion. Traveling throughout Iowa for site visits, we had an appointment with an old woman and her beautiful stone house, which wore a façade of years of neglect. This sweet and well meaning woman lived in only two rooms of her two-story house. Papers, possessions, junk, and garbage filled every single room from the floor to just below the ceiling. It was a sight I had never seen. In the two rooms where she spent her time, she had carved pathways resembling mouse holes to get to the other side of the room. We had to stand in single file in the house. She lived without electricity; the old, rotted wires constituted a fire hazard. The exterior looked equally sad, showing cracks in the sinking foundation, efflorescence, flora, and fauna overtaking the rear of the property.

The woman understood the importance of her house in the community's history; she asked our advice on how to restore it to her own period of significance – the way it looked years earlier when she had raised her children. Unfortunately, many of the building's problems necessitated specific answers from construction engineers, something beyond our capabilities. And, as I learned, this was a recurring case. The obstacle to this woman was the prospect of clearing out the entire house for work to begin.

After we left, my co-workers seemed to agree that this, again, was a lost cause. It appeared to me that we had to find some way to help, perhaps find a volunteer group to clean the house. My naïve ideas elicited the above response. Having graduated two months prior, filled with the mantra of saving the world through preservation, I could not imagine a fellow preservationist becoming cynical and losing sight of the whole picture, especially one whose intelligence, career, and professional endeavors I admired. "That will never happen to me," I told myself. "I will always believe there is some way to help."

A key to maintaining an invincible, passionate attitude is to keep others close to you believing the same. Such a feat is easy at Mary Washington, but once people enter the "real world," the daily eight-hour grind and the reality of the politics of work can become oppressive. I loved my job as an oral historian from the beginning in September 2006, but I found that I missed the diversity of conversation in my former academic world. Some of the best discussions spawned from late-night studying for a Stanton test, drafting all night in the lab, or drinking

coffee in the Underground: we were going to save the world and continually outlined how to go about this process.

Communication: This will be your best defense from falling victim to the sometimes dreary 40-hour work week. Stay in touch with classmates, colleagues, and professors. Having someone who knows you as a student, friend, and a professional is extremely valuable: you can say silly things without looking unprofessional, but you can be taken seriously minutes later as the topic changes. To me, I could read all of the textbooks I wanted to fill an academic gap, but I needed the coffee conversation. To solve my own dilemma, I decided to create a newsletter.

*Preservation in Pink* is a casual newsletter/forum for all of the sidebars of preservation: theories, thoughts, photographs, road trips, anything preservation-related. It is for fun, not necessarily academic or professional, just good discussion that you might have late at night.

Luckily, my Class of 2006 peers all miss the preservation conversations that Mary Washington engendered and have contributed to the newsletter in artistic and literary fashions. Someday I hope to make it more than an informal online document, but I have to start somewhere. I would like to ask and invite everyone to contribute – all ages, professional levels, and preservation interests included! Visit [www.preservationinpink.wordpress.com](http://www.preservationinpink.wordpress.com) for the past issues and more information (including the explanation of the name!)

Most of all, find whatever keeps your preservation passion alive. If you don't love and believe in what you do, it will never be as satisfying as you had once hoped. Though the seemingly lackluster and cynical statement shocked my young preservation soul, it has affected me for the best. ♡



## Alumni Advances

Samantha Merz '07 has worked at the Broadway Gallery in Northern Virginia since June 2007, and has achieved the position of Gallery Director. As Gallery Director she establishes fine art sales and plans gallery events. In the future she is planning to pursue graduate school in museum studies.

Elizabeth Talago '06 will be attending a master's degree program in school counseling at Montana State University.

**Remember to keep the Department updated with your information!**

**You can contact the Department:**

**By phone: (540) 654-1041**

**or by email to**

**Sharon Hale: [shale@umw.edu](mailto:shale@umw.edu)**

Take time to visit the  
Department on the Web!  
[www.umw.edu/historicpreservation](http://www.umw.edu/historicpreservation)

Also be sure to check out the  
Department's job site at  
[www.umw.edu/historicpreservation/  
jobs\\_in\\_preservation/](http://www.umw.edu/historicpreservation/jobs_in_preservation/)  
for jobs, internships, and more.

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*Professor Brown Morton, "back in the day!"*



*Name Professor Morton's Style: Is it Georgian? Beaux Arts?*

## Preservation Club Spring Update

*by Kate Egner, Club President*



*Photo by Amy Benjamin*

*Preservation Club outside of Hampton House*

The spring semester is a busy time for the members of the Historic Preservation Club. As we prepare to say goodbye to our seniors, we take a moment to reflect on how exciting it is to be a part of such a dynamic club. In January, the group hosted the Annual Victorian Ball in the Great Hall for the first time. There was an excellent turnout of costumed club members and their guests. Several of the officers led a successful trip to Hampton House in Maryland, which came complete with a special tour of the historic home's cupola.

To jump start our commemoration of Preservation Month, celebrated during April, the club designed an interactive scavenger hunt downtown and organized historic walking tours of campus that were open to the entire University community. The group also journeyed to historic Lancaster, Pa., in early April to get a taste of Amish country and this quaint city's downtown. Monthly meetings continue to draw a crowd, and our themed meetings on preservation jobs and the exciting projects that our Department's classes are undertaking have proven popular. Hyperion coffee night discussions have also been a hit! Please consider joining us, and if you would like information about upcoming events, email the club at [hispclub@umw.edu](mailto:hispclub@umw.edu). ♡

## Director's Den

**James Monroe:**

**Preservation, Restoration,  
Memorialization, and Re-use**

*by Professor John Pearce*

In the 250th Monroe-birth anniversary year, here's a question for us: were James and Elizabeth Monroe preservationists?

Well, yes! They oversaw the final restoration of the White House and, especially, its re-furnishing and decorating in "presidential" style, as is suggested in our collections and exhibits at the University's James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library (see [www.umw.edu/jamesmonroemuseum](http://www.umw.edu/jamesmonroemuseum)). It was in that same process that the Capitol was restored.

Here's a specific demonstration of the Monroes' concern for the historic architecture and decoration of the White House: When Elizabeth Monroe and Dolley Madison saw large fragments of the great reception-room mirrors in the burned-out ruins of the house, it is said Mrs. Monroe had them removed and cut to be used in a pair of matching shaving stands – one for Madison, one for Monroe. I suspect that every time one of the shaving stands was used, it was a reminder of loss and restoration at the White House, in the capital city, and throughout the nation. In their way, the shaving stands were miniature but mighty memorials.

Much earlier, Monroe had even been involved in adaptive re-use, and as later, with a historical twist. During the years he lived in Fredericksburg (1786-1789), in addition to his numerous other duties, he served as a trustee of the Fredericksburg Academy. The academy buildings were a re-use of the buildings of the Fredericksburg Gun Manufactory (including the City's Powder Magazine). The Gun Manufactory had been built under an ordinance of Virginia's third revolutionary convention, July 17, 1775, and provided weapons for the Revolution. What must the teachers and students of the academy have thought of both the positive and negative parts of using a gun factory and powder magazine for a school?

I only wish Monroe had left us some commentary on this adaptive use and on the questions of memorialization and restoration suggested above. I hope you'll join me in seeking other data of "the founding generations and preservation" – and let me hear from you! ♡