

Citizenship, Property, Identity And Representation: The Historical Journey Of Southern New England's Native Peoples

3 October, 2007

Workshop Session 1:

Introductions: Daly, Richard Latham, Jennifer Connors, Andrea Bien, Tim Gervais, Henry Zussman, Philip Hureau, Michael Penney, Kelly Davilla, Thomas Doughton, Amy Gazin-Schwartz, Jim Moran

AMY GAZIN-SCHWARTZ ON ARCHEOLOGY

- If archeologists were to look at this room, introduce one another, they would look for and present artifacts to describe it.
- Archeologists study material remains—things that people don't write about (either due to "commonness") or because they were from a pre-literate society

- **TECHNOLOGY:** How was it made?
- **FUNCTION:** What was it used for?
- **DATE:** When was it made?
- **CONTEXT:** where was it found, with what? Can't talk about date, how & why it was used unless you have the actual context
- If spear tip found in bison ribs—hunting, if found next to it—butchering **CONTEXT** is everything
- If found with person in grave—different connotation than above

- **ARTIFACT:** something made or used for a purpose (transportable) artifacts are **MODIFIED**

- **ECOFACT:** animal bones, wood remains, stone piles, seeds, etc—natural things that have been used by people but not made into tools---Most often (ecofact) something relating to food

- **FEATURES:** immovable things (stone walls, fire places, building remains) that have been subject to human modification--- most commonly living facilities (building, fireplace)

- **SITE:** an artifact of archeologists' imagination---a place where features come together in such a way to leave enough material remains to study—a concentration of artifacts and features. May be complex (multi layered as in a middle eastern 'tel'—Jericho) or simple (a winter hunting site used just once)

- EXCAVATION: must be very careful not to destroy evidence.... Careful gridding, careful dissection.... Move incrementally and note any change in context—texture, color, smell, etc. (color, b&w photos)
- Unless there is a specific reason(something is going to disturb it anyhow—natural or cultural process of destruction will occur) to excavate the ethical thing to do is to leave it, or because unique knowledge will be added
- Limit excavation in terms of area, time.... Requires permit and conditions (good reason, not for sale...)—on federal and state lands

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

- Without proper context it is not really possible to decipher the meaning, function, date of an artifact

ARCHEOLOGICAL DATING

- RELATIVE DATING:
- **Law of superposition** Stratigraphy: things from the bottom layer are earlier than things at the top ...
- **Law of association**: things found in the same layer are from (about) the same time.
- **Chronometric Dating**
- Provides specific calendar date/age estimates
- **DATING METHODS**---most often **C14 dating**—due to constant/predictable rate of decomposition—contained in every organic thing... ratio of C14/C12 is relatively constant
- Once an organism dies no further C14 is taken in and predictable decay takes place
- BUT time limited—less than 300yrs affected by fossil fuel burning, older than 50,000—too little C14 left

ARCHEOLOGY AS A WAY OF THINKING

- Observation and interpretation... the objects themselves are mute.... Interpretation is an art—with certain tried and proven rules.... (see ***“The Material World” ***)

STEPHEN MROZOWSKI (U Mass Boston), Historical Archeology (last 500 years), Hassenamissit (sp?) site in Grafton

- Historical Archeology would be different in Malaysia than it is here
- Traditional Archeology---as above (described by Amy)
- Historical Archeology is very different....uses different resources (written data, living memory, etc.)
- Gives more than just baseline information---there is a real sense of the actual material lives of the people being studied
- Things that people wear, eat, choices in color, etc..... are an expression of who they are— what their cultural values are, etc.
- The people being investigated in this case were not heavily invested in the established culture (were marginal/marginalized)

THE NIPMUC OF HASSANAMESITT (Grafton) were a remnant of one of the “Praying Towns” created by John Eliot....

- Eliot had a clear idea of a schedule for conversion (the Native Americans would not convert before the Muslims, Jews in the Old World).... There was an actual protocol
- Eliot believed that the Native Americans were from the Lost Tribes of Israel
- Part of the project was to teach the Natives to live like the English (culturally)
- The communities that were set up were quite small—a few dozen to a few hundred
- Motivation for joining (on part of Natives) seems to have been self-preservation... they saw the English as having power over the material world—iron, guns, houses
- *Since the natives saw the material world as a living thing and the English had power over the material world, the god of the English must be powerful*
- Those who joined the “praying towns” did so more or less as a hedging of bets
- Little archeological evidence of the praying towns (other than a few burial places)
- So what happened?
- You have to know how to find things.....
- In CT what was probably the Meeting House in a praying town was found (by accident) Mugunkaquoag valuable things were stored there, English preachers would stay there when they visited (bowl, pot, bed rings, part of a drawer)
- Also found in the corners of the foundation were quartz crystals (not expected), also gun flints made out of quartz (English didn’t make these)... these were native adaptations.....
- Evidence: Quartz Crystals were used in native cosmology for thousands of years...their presence indicates religious adaptation
- In Metacomet’s uprising (King Philip’s War) the natives who adopted Christianity were in a difficult position in relationship to both parties....it put an end to trust between the communities

- In Hassenamissit...7 native families remained after the war (most of the land was taken by English)

HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF NATIVE OCCUPATION AT HASSANAMESITT (PRAYING TOWN)

- The “Indian Church”; Eliot’s Church
- The property of Peter Muckamugg and Sarah Robbins (daughter of native sachem)
- English recognized passage of property through males, Nipmuc recognized female ownership
- Documents: 4 properties—all belonging to women named Sarah
- After King Philip’s war all native property transfers were handled by English overseers (guardians), so there is lots of written information (purchase records, transfer of deeds, etc.)
- **Sarah Boston’s House:** bulldozed? when orchard was put in (lots of records, though, of purchases through the ‘guardian’) (time period 1820’s-1830’s)
- Dug around a bit.... Found foundation stones, etc.... but rather poor results
- Used ground penetrating radar to find the actual foundation
- Very rich site in terms of materials (found outside hearth)—combination of cultural types (natives used outside hearths, but there would have been an inside fire-place, as well)
- Sarah Boston (and other native people in Hassenamissit) adapted English customs and mixed them with native customs
- Hassenamissit people were integrated into the local economy—**Sarah Boston was middle class** ??? (even though her real property was handled by a non-native guardian)
- Something of a contradiction here—there was the assumption (by the dominant culture), that the native culture/peoples were dying off but Sarah Boston didn’t fit the bill.... She was very large-weighted about 300lbs, often dressed in men’s clothes, did very heavy work, hard working, independent, a little scary....
- In contrast, her homestead was described as derelict & dark... but the **evidence** is different—she owned Chinese porcelain and other things that would have belonged to the middle class—even upper middle class (mill managers, etc.). But with this were very ancient native artifacts.
- Sarah Boston sold some property to improve her house... nails found, lock, table settings..... Middle Class things (even a butter dish, with cover)
- But... native people at this time were described as thieves, layabouts, etc. (evidence of extended family—movement in and out of the house, relatives from Worcester, Providence....)

- Lots of buttons (of many different types) were found, including military buttons (brother was in the military)—this suggests a lot of clothing (stolen? Recycled?—this is contradicted by the age of the material found, some old, but most contemporary)
- Tumblers, etc., indicate drinking (would have been found in non native houses, too).... Broken glasses were worked in a traditional native way for working leather (instead of stone)
- Overwhelming majority of material found indicates ‘middle class’ living standard for this time period
- Evidence of importance of material things (very American)
- Is the adaptation of ‘middle class’ material values a means of countering racism?
- (Analogy: the desire for iPods by poor kids in the inner city...whether through purchase or theft)

TOM DOUGHTON’S RESPONSE:

- We are being asked to imagine a new model for native relations in the ante-bellum period
- Sarah Boston’s “little tribe of homeless, shiftless men” may have acquired, stolen the things she had at her house
- She was a very colorful character....may have been given these things...but they may have been pilfered
- Sarah Boston didn’t seem to care about what people thought of her... she was a rather outrageous character in her own time....
- She was described by Harriette Merrifield Forbes one of the founders of the AAS
- All of the information we have comes from the guardians (overseers)
- The description given by Steve M is entirely different from what is ‘traditional’...
- BUT this kind of project does point out the counterfactual mythology that arose in the 1960’s, 1970’s when Native Americans began to adopt “customs” that never existed, or were alien to their region (Western “pow-wow” with a conglomeration of customs, dress, etc. instead of the authentic traditions of the Nipmuck)
- If Sarah Boston’s “area of control” was her home in Hassanamesitt It might not have been in the traditional way since she lived a sort of ‘gypsy’ life wandering the county.... Her daughter actually adapted the middle class/respectable life (married a successful barber)....

AMY GAZIN-SCHWARTZ (Afternoon session)

GOALS OF ARCHEOLOGY

- Reconstruct Past Life Ways
- Understand Culture History

- Understand The Processes Of Culture Change
- Practice Stewardship Of Historical Resources

“A Teacher’s Guide to Material Objects” (may not be in print any longer, but an excellent resource)

50 WAYS TO LOOK AT A BIG MAC BOX

- Helps students to think about artifacts in their environment
- How can one process information (in context/out of context)
- MA Archeological Society once had a teaching kit. We will look into finding out if they still have one.

FUN WITH BROKEN DISHES EXERCISE

- Sorting by type—individual vessel lots (to see how community actually used them)
- Or, by technology—high fired earthen ware, high fired porcelain, etc.... ? where did things come from?
- By use (how were they used by the people who made them? What was their purpose?)
- Seriation—by level (same strata—relatively close to the same age) ? how do things change over time? Look for overlap
- **We, (participating teachers) sorted by visual commonalities (patterns, colors) which is legitimate and is a sign of a culture that has a lot of visual stimulation in its artifacts (hence the need to categorize this way)**
- **Amy used a different set of criteria (“paste” i.e. ‘wet/dry’, firing techniques (technology involved), stamped vs. painted, etc.)**

Resources and Links

Evaluation