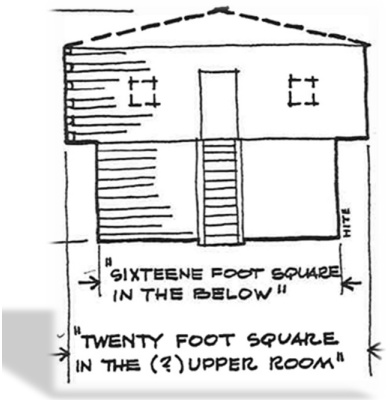
# The Early Colonial Delaware Valley
# An Archaeological and Historical Symposium




Saturday, May 9, 2015
New Castle Court House Museum
211 Delaware St., New Castle, DE 19720

8:45 **Introduction** **Craig Lukezic**

9:00 **John Bansch – Volunteer Coordinator of Archaeology Projects, Historic Odessa Foundation**

***New Archaeological Research for the Lost Corbit Tannery***

A local tannery was crucial to the early colonial farmers of Delaware, yet we know very little about these early tanneries. The neighboring colonial towns of Noxontown, Middletown, Smyrna, and Cantwell's Bridge (now Odessa) all had tanneries. The tannery in Cantwell's Bridge was in continuous operation by the Corbit family from 1767 through 1854, yet even its location has been a mystery. For the past 3 years, John has reviewed the historical documentation located in the research library at the Historical Odessa Foundation, and with a small crew, has dug over 200 shovel test pits and test units to try to determine the location of the tannery. The results of this archaeological research effort will be summarized in this presentation.

**9:45 Bruce A. Bendler - Adjunct Professor of History, University of Delaware**

***Thomas Noxon: Building Appoquinimink Hundred***

The purpose of this paper is to study the career of Thomas Noxon and to consider the impact of Noxon's activity on the landscape of lower New Castle County, Delaware. The first Europeans to settle in lower New Castle County were the Dutch, who settled along the Appoquinimink and Drawyers watersheds in the mid-17$^{th}$ century. They were followed by English settlers, who moved in after the English conquest of New Netherlands in 1664.

Commercial connections were established with nearby settlements in Maryland, mainly under the aegis of Augustine Herman. Indeed, the first proposal for a trans-peninsular canal was set forth at this time.

Thomas Noxon arrived in the area around 1726. Previously, Noxon, a native of New York of Dutch background, had been involved in trade between the Middle Colonies and the West Indies. Furthermore, he owned property in Jamaica. His involvement in that trade led to a growing familiarity with the Three Lower Counties. He quickly became involved in political and religious life there, winning election to the Assembly of the Three Lower Counties, as Delaware was then known. He united with St. Anne's Anglican parish, and his fellow parishioners chose him to serve on the parish vestry. He held both positions for the rest of his life.

Noxon established connections with authorities in the provincial government of Pennsylvania, which had executive jurisdiction over the Lower Counties. He also served as a surveyor, drew one of the first maps of the Lower Counties with Benjamin Eastburn, and he offered extensive testimony in the ongoing boundary dispute between the Penns and Calverts. His experience in the West Indies trade and as a cartographer emerged in that testimony.

Noxon acquired extensive property holdings in lower New Castle County, including a number of mills. He built a village, Noxontown, near one of those mills. Probate and property records offer detailed descriptive information about that village. Such documentary evidence suggests that Noxon sought to enhance the development of the area and link it more deeply into the commercial networks in which he had participated. Such is the argument of this paper. Noxon was lost at sea on a voyage to Great Britain in 1743, and this voyage may well have been linked with Noxon's vision for his adopted home.

**10:30 John P. McCarthy - Delaware State Parks**

***Testing Taste in a Community of Faith: Some Implications of Colonial Quaker Aesthetics and Consumer Patterns***

In 1999 I published a paper titled "Eighteenth-Century Quaker Lifestyles: Philadelphia's Merchant Elite at the Front and Dock Streets Site" (*Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology* 15: 137-155) in which I suggested that colonial Quaker merchants choose relatively unpretentious, but high quality, ceramic wares due to the influence of their faith. In this paper I revisit that analysis and the results of other investigations to consider how Quaker faith was *operationalized* in the consumer choices of its adherents. The implications of patterns of Quaker aesthetics and consumer choice are developed relative to Bourdieu's theory of discernment toward a broader understanding of the operation of "taste" and "community identity" in everyday experience.

**11:00 to 1:00 Lunch**

**1:00 Daniel R. Griffith - Archaeological Society of Delaware**

***Discovery and Recovery of Eleven Colonial Burials from Avery's Rest, Sussex County, Delaware***

During the field season of 2012, archaeological investigations by the Archaeological Society of Delaware encountered the first of what would become, by the end of the 2013 field season, eleven unmarked colonial burials. This presentation reviews the processes of discovery, investigation, consultation and recovery, while offering some interpretation regarding the period of internment.

**1:45 Meagan Ratini and Kevin C. Bradley - JMA – a CCRG company**

***Carter's Alley: A Case Study in the Evolution of Colonial Philadelphia***

Carter's alley was a minor passage cut into a late 17th-century Philadelphia city block. As the city evolved, so too did Carter's Alley. Initially designed as a dead-end alley set in a primarily residential neighborhood, the lane was later opened up to Third Street, creating a narrow thoroughfare and allowing increased access to the commercial entities developing along it. In 2014, JMA excavated the western half of Carter's Alley as part of the Museum of the American Revolution site. This presentation will trace the development of Carter's Alley as a microcosm of urban transformation.

**2:15 Presenters are students from the Introduction to Field Archaeology, Department of Anthropology, of the University of Delaware**

***Service Learning Archaeology at Old Swedes Church***

**2:45 Michael J. Emmons, Jr. – University of Delaware**

***Digging at the Surface: Historic Graffiti, Inscription, and the Liminality of Text At Holy Trinity Church (Old Swedes) in Wilmington, Delaware, 1698-1870***

In 1699, as builders put the finishing touches on the impressive new Holy Trinity Church in Wilmington, DE, they affixed large, iron letters high on its exterior walls. These letters formed highly visible, public inscriptions—messages for all visitors to consider. Over time, the church and its grounds attracted more texts—masons and other builders scratched their initials into the church's stone walls; hundreds of gravestones were set with names, dates, and epitaphs to honor departed congregants; and inside the church's south porch, scores of young people carved graffiti on the exterior side of large, wooden doors on both the main level and the second story entrance to the gallery.

Scholars have not yet examined in depth the significance and meaning of historic graffiti, inscriptions, and other markings on buildings. This paper takes an anthropological approach to these phenomena. Closely examining these historic texts as material culture, this presentation will consider the liminal dimensions of the words and dates at Old Swedes. How do the markings on the doors, walls, and gravestones represent thresholds—words suspended between two worlds? The historic inscriptions at Old Swedes are fascinating and evocative artifacts that prompt us to consider many dimensions of marking culture, while shedding new light on the history of the site.

**3:30 Marshall Joseph Becker - Professor of Anthropology Emeritus**
**West Chester University**

## *The Origins of Indian Trade Silver: Lenape Brooches from Southeastern Pennsylvania*

Reports by 17th-century explorers and colonists reveal that Eastern Woodland natives were not interested in gold and silver artifacts, but were very interested in woolen cloth. Glass beads long dominated foreign goods used for ornamentation, along with native-produced wampum.
Archaeologists have demonstrated that small pewter castings were in use among northeastern Native American peoples during the 17th and early 18th centuries, although they are absent from the documentary record. The archaeological evidence now indicates that sterling silver ornaments, produced specifically for the Indian trade, entered the exchange networks as early as 1700, and certainly by 1733.

By 1660 Lenape families and perhaps entire bands had joined the Susquehannock as major players in the pelt trade. The route from the Delaware River out to and beyond the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers became controlled by the Lenape when the Five Nations Iroquois destroyed the Susquehannock Confederacy. After 1660 various silver-colored white metal castings began to be worn by Indians; the precursors to sterling-quality silver trade items that were first worn about 1700. By 1750 Native groups in Pennsylvania and elsewhere were receiving sterling silver goods in ever growing numbers. The development of the trade in silver objects is an important indicator of cultural change among many Native American groups. The incorporation of silver items into the colonial exchanges with the Lenape is an archaeologically detectable indicator of this process. The early trade in silver goods reflects a period of transition among the Lenape and also may provide a means of evaluating patterns of cultural resistance to change.

An earlier report, Becker reviewed the early transition to Native use of sterling ornaments ("trade silver"), demonstrating that pewter ornaments were a "gateway" to Native use of sterling silver ornaments. The specific find site of the earliest and best documented piece of trade silver from eastern Pennsylvania is discussed here, and the significance of that archaeological site is reviewed.