

Northeast Historical Archaeology

Volume 36 *The Historical Archaeology of Sylvester Manor*

Article 12

2007

Conclusion: Meditations on the Archaeology of Northern Plantations

Stephen A. Mrozowski,

Katherine Howlett Hayes

Heather Trigg

Jack Gary

Follow this and additional works at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha>

 Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mrozowski, Stephen A.; Hayes, Katherine Howlett; Trigg, Heather; and Gary, Jack (2007) "Conclusion: Meditations on the Archaeology of Northern Plantations," *Northeast Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 36 36, Article 12.
<https://doi.org/10.22191/neha/vol36/iss1/12> Available at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha/vol36/iss1/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Northeast Historical Archaeology by an authorized editor of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Conclusion: Meditations on the Archaeology of Northern Plantations

Stephen A. Mrozowski, Katherine Howlett Hayes, Heather Trigg, Jack Gary, David Landon and Dennis Piechota

A summary of the methods employed and the conclusions reached after nine seasons of archaeological fieldwork are presented. Emphasis is placed on the success and limitations of the methods employed in the investigations at Sylvester Manor and results of those investigations. Although excavations concentrated on the plantation core, additional areas examined produced little in the way of archaeological features. The results, although preliminary, point to a major role for Native Americans as laborers during the earliest phases of the plantation's operation. Landscape evidence also suggests an evolving economy as the Manor transitions from a provisioning operation to a commercial farm/tenant run operation within a decade of Nathaniel Sylvester's death in 1680. A third transition saw the commercial farm reconfigured once again as a Georgian-inspired country estate eclipsed it.

Ce chapitre présente un résumé des méthodes utilisées lors des neuf saisons de fouilles archéologiques et soumet les conclusions des recherches. Les succès et les faiblesses des méthodes utilisées pendant les investigations au Sylvester Manor de même que les résultats de ces recherches sont mis en évidence. Quoique les fouilles aient été concentrées au cœur de la plantation, un examen de certains secteurs additionnels n'a révélé que peu d'éléments structurels archéologiques. Les résultats, quoique préliminaires, indiquent que les ouvriers autochtones ont joué un rôle important dans le fonctionnement de la plantation alors que cette dernière n'en était qu'à ses débuts. Les éléments paysagers suggèrent aussi une économie en développement. En effet, dans la décennie suivant la mort de Nathaniel Sylvester en 1680, le manoir passera d'un mode d'opération par approvisionnement à une opération commerciale dirigée par des fermiers. Enfin, le manoir verra une troisième transition alors que la ferme commerciale est restructurée et transformée en domaine d'inspiration Georgienne.

Introduction

From the outset the archaeological investigations at Sylvester Manor have had a dual purpose. The first was to explore the early history of the property, during the period that it supplied provisions for two large sugar plantations on Barbados. The second was to further refine the multi-disciplinary, multi-scalar approach employed in those investigations. Over the course of the past nine field seasons the ability to experiment with new methods and techniques has been one of the great luxuries of project. From the use of geophysical survey in planning the overall excavation strategy to our experiments with micro-stratigraphic block lifts, the results have proven both instructive and informative. Although questions still remain concerning the archaeology of the manor and its interpretation, there seems little doubt concerning the productivity of the approach brought to the project.

In summarizing the results of our investigations we are struck by the organic quality of the overall strategy that has been employed in

the endeavor. Many of the excavation and sampling protocols we began with have changed, although not dramatically. Our initial use of arbitrary, 10 cm levels within visibly differentiated stratigraphic levels has proven to be useful in discerning depositional differences within what appear to be discrete layers. Five cm levels have proven even more sensitive, while a limited employment of microstratigraphic analysis offers the greatest resolution when needed. A large-scale archaeobiological sampling program proved to be overly ambitious and in many cases redundant. In some instances decisions to change sampling protocols were due to a demonstrated lack of results. Such was the case with parasitological analysis, and to a lesser degree the study of insect remains. After several seasons it was decided that samples for these analyses would no longer be collected unless a specific context were encountered that would promote better preservation, such as a privy or drain.

These kinds of changes are inevitable in any long-term project and are part of the archaeological process, a concept Hodder is correct

to highlight (1999). Changes in method and emphasis are, after all, driven in large measure by evolving interpretations. The peaceful, well-tended grounds at Sylvester Manor cloaked a substrate that is both socially and stratigraphically complex, thus we have found microstratigraphic and micromorphological studies helpful. Perhaps the most profound example of this change has been the shift in focus brought about by the discovery of concentrations of Native American material culture within archaeological deposits clearly linked to the European occupation. Our original goal was to examine European/African American cultural interactions, a relationship memorialized by the large stone marking the "Burying Ground of the Colored People of the Manor," which we believe was placed in its current location at the direction of Cornelia Horsford in 1909. We did not question the idea that enslaved Africans had been the sole workers at the Manor and did not anticipate what now appears to be a strong Native American presence during the early years of the plantation's operation. It is healthy to ask why our focus was what it was. It reveals our privileging of a documentary record that indicates the presence of a significant number of enslaved Africans but is largely silent regarding Native Americans, and our unquestioned association of plantation slavery with Africans. That we did not anticipate a large Native American presence on the site also reflects a very real lack of archaeological knowledge concerning the topic of Native American labor during this period. Although archaeological studies that focus on Native American labor have recently been conducted in parts of North America outside the Northeast (e.g. Deagan 2003; Lightfoot 2005; Silliman 2004; Trigg 2003, 2005) much of the literature on Native labor and enslavement is in historiography based on documentary sources (e.g. Brooks 2002; Cope 1994; Gallay 2002; Malone 1993; Rushforth 2003; Spear 2003; Usner 1992). These works have demonstrated the degree of entanglement of Native Americans in English, French, and Spanish labor systems that must make us reconsider our expectations for the labor relationships at Sylvester Manor.

It may be useful to conceive of the social relations of production at Sylvester Manor as more akin to a modest colonial Spanish hacienda than a Caribbean plantation. While the

economic and cultural practices upon which haciendas were created and functioned were different from those at Sylvester Manor, there are profound similarities between the manor and haciendas. The emphasis on agricultural production for a larger market and use of architecture for the aggrandizement of the estate owner are among the more overt resemblances (Wolf and Mintz 1957), and haciendas were a notably variable phenomenon (Alexander 2003; Van Young 1983). However, the presence of Native peoples living on the estate and providing the bulk of the labor characterizes both haciendas and Sylvester Manor (Chance 2003; Gibson 1964; Van Young 1983). This stands in stark contrast to labor relations and productive structures on Caribbean sugar plantations such as Constant Plantation, where enslaved Africans toiled at monocrop production. The interactions at hacienda estates were not necessarily mutually beneficial being built upon debt peonage and labor obligations (*repartimiento*), but at times the estate may have provided some sense of physical protection for its Native workers, a situation we also hypothesize for Sylvester Manor. Viewing Sylvester Manor's economic structures in this way has implications for both the material culture record and, more importantly, the nature and intensity of power relations among the Sylvesters, Africans, and Native peoples living in the region.

The evidence of Native American laborers working, and possibly living, at the Manor is quite clear. The presence of ceramics, lithic tools and debitage as well as items such as the etched coin and stone, which appear consistent with local and regional Native American styles and manufacturing techniques suggests their presence at least on a temporary basis. This interpretation is also consistent with Rothschild's findings concerning Dutch/Native interaction in New York (2003). Drawing on a wealth of archaeological evidence Rothschild notes that the Dutch acquired very little in the way of Native material culture during the 17th century (2003: 192–194). She also found that Mohawk and Seneca assemblages dating to the 17th century provided strong evidence that many classes of material culture continued to be manufactured throughout the period, including stone tools and ceramics (Rothschild 2003: 201–215). This seems to bolster the argument that the Native materials at Sylvester

Manor are perhaps best interpreted as evidence of Native laborers. Such a conclusion is supported by documentary evidence of commercial transactions between the Sylvesters and local Natives as well as more general descriptions of large crowds of Native observers at appearances by Quakers George Fox and John Taylor on Shelter Island, one of which was held at Sylvester Manor. Numerous other examples are provided in Priddy's contribution to this volume.

The use of a Native American labor force also makes sense if we assume that activities at the Manor varied seasonally and could fluctuate dramatically. During the years when preparing large shipments of provisions to Barbados was a major focus, temporary laborers would have been needed. Slaughtering animals, disposing of the waste, salting meat and preparing for shipment, presumably in barrels, would have required a sizable labor force. Other seasonal activities, such as the gathering of apples for cider production, would have also required a sizable work force for perhaps 30 to 60 days. These are just two examples of what were probably many activities that would have required laborers who were available for short periods of time. In all probability, the enslaved Africans and/or paid white laborers who were regular members of the Manor's work force divided their activities between those linked to its commercial operation and the daily maintenance of the sizeable Sylvester household. Documentary evidence helped us to piece together some idea of the composition of the Manor's labor force, but there were also gaps between that evidence and the archaeological record.

Documentary sources indicate an African presence at the Manor, for example, but at present their contribution to the archaeological record is seemingly invisible. We accept this apparent lack of visibility as both a conceptual and evidentiary issue. Rather than adhere to an approach that seeks to identify discrete evidence of culturally bounded spaces or material culture "types" as markers of identity, we have shifted our perspective to look at the archaeological deposits at Sylvester Manor as the direct result of intense cultural interaction between all three ethnically distinct groups. This more pluralistic approach is consistent with that taken by other scholars who have explored similar

colonial contexts, most notably Lightfoot (1995, 2005), Deagan (1995, 2003), Rothschild (2003) and Trigg (2005). What these studies share is a focus on hybrid cultural expression at the household level as a window on the broader changes wrought by colonization. At Sylvester Manor evidence of cultural interaction has come in several forms, but most consistently in the appearance of mixed contexts in which so-called Native American and European material culture is found together. Less frequently occurring are specific items that we believe served as mediums for cultural expression. Examples of the latter include diverse and unusual usage of European flint and glass, as well as a European coin with deliberate etchings on both faces, one similar to an Algonquian symbol, while another "X" mark might be comparable to West African cosmograms sometimes found on ceramics (Ferguson 1999). Other evidence includes the presence of both maize and wheat in midden deposits, residue of mortar production found in conjunction with Native American ceramics that could have been used in the process, and faunal evidence of a butchered dog that could be evidence of Native American dietary practices or fur procurement.

The presence of so much Native American material culture in contexts dominated by European artifacts resulted in a fairly substantial shift in our interpretive focus from that conceived of at the start of the project. It has also forced us to reexamine some of our early assumptions concerning the nature and dating of the deposits encountered on the South and Southeast Lawn. Over the span of the past nine years the best approach we have found for dealing with the complexities of the site is to conceive of our work as the examination of multicultural or pluralistic space. And while the pluralistic part of this equation is obviously important, it has been the notion of space that has been most central to unraveling some of that complexity. At its core archaeology is a study of space—space that is physically configured and reconfigured, eminently meaningful because it is lived in and through, but never in the same way for all people (despite the intentions of some). We discuss this space in three main heuristic strands: material, social, and cultural historical space. These three conceptualizations of space offer a more simplified way of talking about the very

complex space of Sylvester Manor's plantation core. Material space encompasses the physical landscape changes and subsurface remains of spatial structuring that must be puzzled through, complicated as it is by the effects of the environment, the intentions of historical agents, and our own sets of expectations. Social space would have been forged from the network of relations that developed between the different groups and individuals over time. Social space is also critically shaped by the histories, skills, and expectations of all, tempered by the constraints of power relations all are subject to. This space is perhaps the most enticing, because while we are sure it existed as a reality for everyone involved, it remains a relatively blank canvas with only the roughest of sketches drawn upon it. Finally there is the cultural historical space that draws the early plantation context forward through time, and more broadly into geopolitical contexts that are defined to a significant degree through both historiography and social memory. It is also actively shaped, and often, in turn, impacts archaeological space.

For example, one conclusion we have reached concerning the spatial development of Sylvester Manor is that it was a fairly continuous process punctuated at times by more dramatic periods of change. This is especially true of the first thirty years of the plantation's history. While the actual process and its precise sequence continue to elude us, as the archaeological space is enormously affected by later landscaping, there has emerged a general sense of some of the events that may have precipitated change. The first efforts probably involved the construction of temporary buildings to house a work force. Once established, the more substantial buildings to serve both the domestic and commercial needs of the first plantation were constructed, indicated not by structural remains but by demolition debris. In that such debris in early deposits was associated with construction materials, it is clear that there was a subsequent phase of expansion. In some instances it is possible that alterations to the landscape of the manor, its buildings and grounds, were influenced by political factors, for example in signaling Dutch cultural affinities with yellow brick and red ceramic roof tile. In others it seems that commercial activities such as slaughtering may have resulted in large

amounts of waste that needed to be discarded, and using it to fill holes was clearly a landscape strategy. Making sense of it all has been made considerably easier by viewing the process as one of spatial production, but not merely in terms of the physical deposits we have encountered. Many of our conclusions below focus on this period, the activities that took place, and the social relations that evolved over time.

The archaeological record also contains deposits that appear to be linked to other events that post-date the death of Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester. Based on a combination of documentary and archaeological evidence it seems fairly clear that Nathaniel's death coincides with a commercial transformation that may have already been underway before he died. The period of ownership of the manor by Giles Sylvester, his leasing of the property to Edward Downing, the eventual reclaiming of the estate by Brinley Sylvester in the early decades of the 18th century, and subsequent periods of occupation up to and including the present, all represent important periods of transition that have left their marks on an ever changing landscape. The changes that often accompanied these moments of transition have left behind a complex material record that we have spent the last nine years exploring. It seems only natural then that in outlining our conclusions about the history of Sylvester Manor, we begin with a discussion of the material space of Sylvester Manor and the events we think shaped it.

The Material Space of Sylvester Manor

The archaeological investigations at Sylvester Manor reveal a complex record of building and demolition as well as extensive landscaping efforts. Although many of the subsurface features identified by both the geophysical testing and actual excavation date to the 19th and 20th centuries, the bulk do seem to be linked to the first 80 years of the Sylvester occupation. There is also a substantial record of Native American occupation of the property dating back at least to the Middle Woodland period and possibly longer. This is especially true of the North Peninsula, where geophysical testing and limited excavation points to a rich Native occupation that probably spans the past 1000 years up to and including the arrival of

the Sylvesters on Shelter Island. We plan to obtain radiocarbon dates on organic material from stratified deposits here in order to clarify the chronology of this occupation. The Native deposits surrounding the ca. 1735 manor house are less clearly defined. Native materials recovered from the West, North, South and Southeast Lawns include ceramics and smoking pipes consistent with the period prior to and after the arrival of Europeans in the region. There is also stratigraphic evidence of a possible pre-Sylvester occupation layer on the South Lawn, particularly in the CC units directly south of the 1735 Manor House. Questions still remain about this layer, however, as the results of the block lift suggest it could be the product of bioturbation and leaching. These apparent discrepancies are currently being addressed through further micromorphology studies.

The extent of development resulting from the establishment of the manor after 1650 is perhaps most graphically represented by the results of Ken Kvamme's geophysical testing. Only limited subsurface testing has been employed to examine features suggested by these results. Excavations on the West Lawn, have for example, found evidence of a cobble apron that appears to have served to keep down mud, or as a general landscape feature associated with the extant manor house. Kvamme was also successful in identifying the remains of a substantial vegetable cellar that appears on an 1828 map of the property. What is thought to be the remains of a large warehouse has not yet been fully ground-truthed, because our excavations have been too limited in scope. A possible cart path and evidence of filling episodes on the West lawn were less apparent in the geophysical testing in this area of the site.

The geophysical testing was most successful in the area of the South and Southeast lawns. The subsequent unearthing of foundation remains and evidence of a hard packed surface possibly resulting from large-scale filling episodes were direct out-comes of the geophysical testing. The hard packed surface in the western area of the south lawn was first thought to be a second ornamental paving matching the one found to the east. Through a combination of excavation and soils analysis it was possible to link the surface to a filling episode that could have involved an earlier cellar

or other subsurface feature. Beyond what these results tell us about the depositional history of the manor they also speak to the importance of employing complementary testing and analysis strategies. More recent features such as the numerous modern pipes and pipe trenches were also clearly visible in the various results of Kvamme's work on the South and Southeast Lawn, though ironically these did obscure the signatures of two major early features (F221 and F226). Perhaps most importantly, there is some correlation between his observation concerning two orientations for possible buildings and those unearthed archaeologically. This is one facet of our overall research goals that would have benefited from more attention as there seems little question that this shift in orientation signals some broad-scale transformation in the history of the Manor.

The overall summaries of the archaeological discoveries discussed in the chapters by Hayes and Gary provide ample discussion of the particular features unearthed and their interpretation. Rather than restate these findings we would like to focus instead on the depositional events that we believe punctuated the early history of the manor. These results are preliminary and subsequent excavations or analysis may result in significant reinterpretation.

The choice of the location for Sylvester Manor may have been influenced by the presence of cleared land and/or earlier buildings. Feature 226 appears to be the earliest structural remains found on the site although it might be contemporaneous with what may be building remains found at the base of Feature 221. With only a robbed out foundation or builder's trench to go by in both instances it is difficult to suggest the architectural character of either structure. The trench-like feature (Feature 226) may have held a stone or brick foundation and may have been accompanied by earth-fast posts. With so little of the feature remaining it is difficult to offer any idea concerning the size of the structure, however the combination of residue from wampum production, fish bone and fish scales suggests one possibility is that it may have been used as a small work house by Native laborers during the provisioning phase of the plantation. It is also possible there was an associated cellar, as some of the artifacts found in the feature suggest materials that could have dropped through floorboards.

Feature 226 is partly overlain by Feature 245, the deposit of shell based mortar and plaster that thin-section analysis links to similar material in Feature 221. The construction activities inferred by the shell-based mortar may have been associated with the larger structure on the South Lawn indicated by what we believe to be sill trenches (Features 27, 54, 57 and 71) unearthed in the 1999 and 2000 seasons. These features represent the most extensive architectural remains discovered so far on the site, however, the date or function of the structure remains unclear. Its size suggests it could be the original structure of “six or seven rooms” allowed by the Articles of Agreement. With no evidence of a large chimney base or a clear pattern of accompanying corner posts it is difficult to know with more certainty. The chimney base might have been robbed either for use in a Manor House constructed by Nathaniel Sylvester when he took complete control of the property in 1674, or earlier. It is also possible that a chimney base and/or foundation could have been robbed during the demolition of the building at the time the extant 1735 Manor House was being constructed.

Given that the material culture recovered from both the sill trenches and postholes on the South Lawn all contain material consistent with that found in the midden, it seems the structure in question was probably demolished sometime in the early-18th century, most likely in conjunction with the construction of the extant manor house. Although we remain uncertain about the function of the structure we do believe it dates to the early phase of building, although later than the structure in Feature 226. The large ornamental paving found on the South Lawn may have been laid as part of the original construction of the provisioning-related buildings or it could be linked to an expansion phase of construction. The demolition related materials recovered from Feature 221 bolster this latter possibility. The shell based mortar and plaster from this deposit is believed to be demolition residue based primarily on the presence of plaster with lath markings, and suggests a major remodeling episode. This deposit also contained the largest concentration of Native American ceramics, a fact that seems to point to the continuing presence of Native American laborers at the Manor.

The ornate character of the paving has led to some speculation that Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester may have embarked on a more ambitious building campaign possibly linked to two political events. The first was when Nathaniel was granted manorial status by the crown in 1666. The second was Nathaniel’s acquisition of sole control of the island in 1674, when the property was first confiscated by the Dutch and then resold to Sylvester. Either event may have prompted construction to reinforce the higher status accorded to a manor or the stability gained through complete ownership. The later of these two events, the 1674 sale, also post dates the death of Sylvester’s brother Constant in 1671, an event that may have also severed the provisioning ties to the plantations on Barbados.

If some of the landscape elements we have unearthed were indeed linked to political events such as the granting of manorial status then it may well be these are examples of what Lefebvre calls representational spaces that often served as meeting places or arenas for public discourse (1991: 40–46). The most likely candidate would be the ornamental paving discovered on the South Lawn. Its use of geometric patterns suggests it could have served as a focal point for public expression. There is reference, for example, to a large number of the Manhanset attending sermons given by Quaker notables such as John Taylor, in the “door yard” of the manor and this may well have included the paving. If this is true, then the paving may represent one of the few examples of a landscape feature serving as an element of social space (see below).

Although documentary evidence can prove to be a blessing it can also overly influence archaeological interpretations. This might be true of attempts to link depositional or construction events to political events such as those discussed above. Taken at face value, the archaeological deposits on the South and Southeast lawn do suggest several periods of construction and demolition, some of which may predate the beginning stages of the midden’s accumulation. Gary argues that the earliest construction on the site employed a shell-based mortar and plaster, yet the mortar from the lowest levels of the midden is coral based, a fact confirmed by the block lift analysis. Therefore if Gary is correct and the shell based

mortar and plaster is linked to the earliest phases of construction, then this appears to have taken place before midden accumulation begins. Furthermore, based on the layering of shell mortar in both construction (unset material) and destruction debris, there were likely to have been multiple construction or repair episodes very early in the plantation's history. If this is in fact true, and the coral based mortar represents the residue of later construction, what date do we assign to that construction? At best we can suggest that it occurred while provisioning activities were in operation, providing the link to the Caribbean where the coral originated. Consider also the large deposit of bone that sits *beneath* the deposits of the shell based mortar and plaster found in Feature 221, and analysis suggesting that these bones were linked to provisioning activities prior to early construction. Although the 1652 Articles of Agreement specified that no animals were to be slaughtered for a term of six years, the bone beds suggest that either the terms of the agreement were ignored, or slaughters occurred prior to the signing of the agreement.

Our understanding of the Manhanset presence, suggested by material culture in these stratified deposits, must likewise be considered against a backdrop of the early history of the Manor and the cultural historical maelstrom in which that history was embedded. If the Native ceramics recovered from Feature 221 reflect the presence of Native laborers it would be consistent with other events on Eastern Long Island at this time. The apparent good relationship the Montauk sachem Wyandanch maintained with the English could easily have translated into a high degree of interaction between the two groups. Wyandanch's death in 1659, possibly at the hand of a Native assassin (Strong 1996: 69), could have provided further impetus for Manhanset laborers to stay close to the English, thereby enhancing their security. Additionally, a particularly gendered participation by Native Americans, discussed further below, may have contributed to the specific character of the ceramic assemblage.

Events after Nathaniel and Grissell's deaths obviously had an impact on the landscape of the Manor, and these too can be seen archaeologically. The faunal assemblage from the midden that spans this later period suggests household consumption rather than large

scale slaughtering. Such evidence might exist in another location, but as yet has not been unearthed. As noted earlier, the trenches and post holes associated with the large structural remains on the South Lawn all contained material that is consistent with that found in the midden. This strongly suggests that the demolition of the structure was linked to the construction of the extant Manor House. The extensive evidence of landscaping that takes place in conjunction with and after the construction of the 1735 building also points to some level of continuous activity well into the 19th and even the early-20th century. Evidence for this comes from virtually every area surrounding the current Manor House: from the stripping of top soils to make room for an extension of the Manor House to the north; the continuous filling and landscaping on the South Lawn; the rough stone aprons along the Manor's west side; and the addition of top soil on the Southeast Lawn. The depression left from the earlier buildings on the South Lawn may well have required repeated filling over a period of decades to level the area.

The cumulative evidence of building and landscaping is all capped by an early-20th-century/early colonial revival veneer that appears to have been the work of Eben Horsford, but even more so the actions of his daughter Cornelia, proprietor of the estate around the turn of the 20th century. The 19th- and 20th-century landscapes have not been the focus of our research, yet their traces are everywhere. Similar to the 17th-century ornamental paving, these later landscapes contain discursive elements that are best viewed as examples of social space.

Social Space, Practice, and Social Relations

The buildings and landscape constructed at Sylvester Manor served as the context for daily interaction between individuals of different cultures and histories. What then was the nature of the social relations that shaped these interactions? Ironically, we have come to realize that the preoccupation with re-voicing the subaltern at Sylvester Manor often comes with the danger of neglecting the perspectives of the Sylvester family itself. Having taken to heart such a postcolonial position, we find

we must remind ourselves that the lives and actions of the Manhasset and the enslaved Africans cannot be understood unless we also know of the Sylvesters, their practices and desires, and not as a monolithic “European” group but as individuals. For example, we have noted the identification of enslaved Africans in Nathaniel Sylvester’s 1680 will; but the way in which they were distributed is also illustrative. Each of Sylvester’s children received one or two of the enslaved, suggesting that their roles lay primarily in domestic service. How is it possible that such a large domestic staff is necessary for one household? Attention to the details of the family answers this question. Grissell bore eleven children, all of whom survived to adulthood, in a fairly isolated new settlement. This number would be astonishing even back in England or Holland at the time. The birth spacing of these children offers clues to the domestic service available to her. The births of the two oldest children, Grissell (in 1654) and Giles (in 1657) were followed by three to four years before the subsequent birth, but thereafter births were spaced one to two years apart (Mallmann 1899: 177), suggesting at the very least the presence of a wet nurse. The young family actively sought additional household help, as in a 1655 letter to John Winthrop Jr. where Nathaniel wrote, “I was informed that y[ou] had an Irish wooman wch y[ou] would willingly part withall; if so, and shee good for to doe any buseness aboute ye house, I will be your Chapman if y[ou] pleas to lett me have her resonable” (N. Sylvester 1655). It is unknown whether the Irish woman was in fact brought to Sylvester Manor. However, these bits of family information suggest that the needs of the family changed over time, and with them the occupations of the labor force. As the children grew to marriageable age, especially the daughters, their respectability and status had to have been on full display, which was no simple matter. One anecdotal example may serve well here: daughter Patience was apparently first seen by Benjamin L’Hommedieu, who would fall in love with her and marry her, as she and her sister were en route to church in Southold, “in a barge with a canopy over it, and six negro slaves rowing it” (Mallmann 1899: 32). Patience was in her late twenties when she married, obviously in

a position to wait for the socially appropriate match. The implication here is that in fact the family may have easily had employment for a sizable domestic staff. The Africans who were brought to Shelter Island in the 1650s may have begun and ended their tenure there in very different occupations.

The material record reveals the central importance of the Sylvester family in setting the parameters of the interactions that took place and the setting in which they were played out. The buildings, landscape and bulk of other forms of material culture were European manufactured or inspired. Yellow Dutch brick and red earthenware roofing tiles are numerous in the midden, and suggest that one of the early buildings included these materials. A building with a red roof and yellow brick chimney, even if otherwise constructed out of wood, would have visually signaled a Dutch building to colonial observers. The use of these materials may provide some evidence of a Dutch sensibility as part of the Sylvester’s social space. Another characteristic may have been an early level of insecurity and ambivalence toward the landscape and buildings. In the same manner that impermanent architecture in the Chesapeake may have reflected a general uncertainty among early residents of the area (Carson et al. 1981), the early buildings at the Manor may have been viewed as only temporary structures. As time went on, the Sylvesters clearly became more confident in the permanence of their operation, investing in remodeling and additional construction, such as the ornamental paving. There seems little doubt that the 1735 Manor House was, and still is, an expression of permanence and English cultural values. The smallest of items also convey cultural parameters, like the hundreds of copper alloy straight pins recovered. Pins of various sizes would have been used for an array of purposes, from sewing and pinning of clothing elements to fixing household cloth drapes. They are indicative of a style of dress for women (and men, to a lesser extent) and often their sewing activities, and were not inexpensive at that time (Beaudry 2007: 14–43). It is interesting to note that these pins are to be found throughout the central spaces of the plantation.

The predominance of European manufactured goods and building materials at

Sylvester Manor stand as testimony to Europe's expanding economic power in the New World. Yet it would be a mistake to read this as evidence of the Sylvesters' hegemony over their enslaved Africans or Native laborers. The presence of so much Native material culture points, at the very least, to the kind of overlapping cultural lexicon described by early postcolonial theorists as a "creole continuum" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffen 1989: 44–51). From this perspective the material remains recovered at Sylvester Manor, particularly the small finds, may be viewed as the fragments of conversations that were governed by an emerging grammar of cultural interaction. For example, diverse persons on the plantation may have used the straight pins mentioned above, and as Loren (2000) has noted, practices of dressing are potent grounds for contested identity. Recent perspectives have emphasized the mutually transformative character of cultural exchange in daily practice, while stressing the inability of this practice to completely transcend the power relations that permeate the interaction of the colonizers and the colonized (Coombes 1994: 6; Parry 2005: 8–9; Thomas 1991: 8). This is one reason why more hybrid cultural forms, such as the handled pot, might be expected in colonial settings such as Sylvester Manor. The functional efficacy of the handle, as Gary suggests, is not clearly evident, suggesting it may have been an experimental form. And, while the design does most closely resemble Native work, it is possible that the pot could have been the work of an African potter as well.

These materials might suggest other potential explanations, such as an earlier, pre-Sylvester occupation, a group of day laborers, laborers who lived on the Manor, or perhaps multi-cultural households. The latter could have been comprised of any number of ethnic combinations, however, with no archaeological evidence of distinct household contexts similar to those described by Lightfoot (1995) or Deagan (2003), it is difficult to promote such an idea. Furthermore, Rothschild (2003: 192–194) has argued that the Dutch in New York neither took Native wives nor used much in the way of Native material culture (although see Foote 2004 on pluralistic interactions in colonial New York City). Rothschild has also characterized the use of Native Americans for "reimbursed labor" as "a rarity" (2003: 22). Although the Sylvesters were a culturally mixed family, the

results of Rothschild's research call into question European use of Native material culture in the region. Therefore the presence of the Native material culture on the site is most likely linked to Native American laborers working on the site. A careful assessment of its distribution will be necessary to interpret Manhanset experience in this space.

The Native ceramics recovered from the South Lawn are perhaps best considered in comparison to those recovered from the North Peninsula and the region as a whole. An analysis by Priddy (2002) suggests a connection between the later historic Native ceramics found on the South and Southeast Lawns with earlier Native ceramic traditions, in particular the Sebonic stage of the Late Windsor tradition (see also Lavin 1997, 2002). The relationship of these earlier ceramic traditions to the later Shantok wares is a source of interesting debate (e.g. Goodby 2002; Johnson 2000; Lavin 2002; Pretola 2002). Johnson (2000: 166–167) has argued that the notion of a Shantok type, albeit subject to variability (see also Lizee 1994; Lizee et al. 1995; McBride 1990; Williams 1972), can be read as an expression of Mohegan identity at a time when political instability was pervasive in Southern New England. The politically dynamic and fluid situation that characterized the intervening decades between the Pequot massacre of 1637 and King Philip's War in 1675 may have inspired Mohegan potters, who Johnson assumes are women, to use their ceramic art to project their identity.

Goodby (2002) presents an alternative interpretation in calling for the abandonment of the notion of a Shantok ceramic type that was the exclusive product of the Mohegans. His critical analysis of the history of the Shantok-type first developed by Irving Rouse in 1947, calls into serious question the Mohegan genealogy of the ware and suggests instead that it represents a local variant of a more generalized ceramic style that could speak to a larger Pan-Native cultural reaction to European colonization (Goodby 2002: 152–153). Goodby's interpretation presents the intriguing idea that the incised, barbed collars and elaborate castellations that are visible on ceramics through out much of New England, New York and areas to the South (see Funk and Kuhn 2003; Lavin 2002; Ritchie 1954; Snow 1995), are emblematic of a cultural consciousness that sought

to counter politically divisive forces, both Native and European (2002: 152). The idea that Native potters were experiencing an “artistic renaissance” (Goodby 2002: 152) in the face of increasing political pressure certainly has appeal.

The analysis of the majority of Native ceramics from Sylvester Manor still remains to be completed. There seems little question that a combination of approaches examining both stylistic and morphological characteristics (e.g. Chilton 1999; Lavin 2002; Pretola 2002) will be necessary to situate the Sylvester Manor data into the changing cultural landscape of Native society. As part of her dissertation research, Hayes is currently carrying out compositional and mineralogical analyses of these and comparable regional examples. At this point, two very interesting possibilities do present themselves. The first is that the apparent similarity between the ceramics at Sylvester Manor and those recovered from Fort Shantok and Fort Corchaug, would seem to point to cultural interaction between the Pequot/Mohegan homeland and the Natives working and possibly living at Sylvester Manor. Given the documented political and cultural relationships these various groups shared, this should come as little surprise. More importantly, the ceramics from Sylvester Manor could represent an expression of cultural identity that could reflect the ambiguities of a rapidly changing political landscape. Whether it is indicative of a strong Mohegan reaction as Johnson (2000) has postulated, a desire to promote a Pan-Native response to European colonization as Goodby (2002) posits, or the continuation of historically deeper, socio-political relationships that Lavin (2002) has suggested is perhaps less important than seeing all three ideas as part of a larger whole. In this sense, steps to reinforce group and individual identity through material expression would be consistent with the tensions evident in moves to bolster Native unity.

If we accept that these ceramics are expressive media, then it seems safe to assume that they played an important role in the cultural dynamics at Sylvester Manor. Possible tensions within the greater Native community of Southern New England and Long Island would have been part of the cultural historical context in which ceramics were being made and used. At Sylvester Manor there would have been the added dynamic provided by interac-

tion between Native laborers, the Sylvesters, their enslaved Africans and possibly laborers of European descent. The social space resulting from the interaction of these various groups must have been an admixture of overlapping sensibilities and expectations. If, as Moussette (2003) has suggested, it was a space characterized by instability, this may well have given rise to hybrid cultural forms only some of which are visible in the archaeological record. Although subtle in character, these hybrid forms may have included items such as the handled pot, or the European coins etched with Native symbols. The mixing of foodways traditions as evidenced in European grains and Native maize and ceramics is another example. The use of European flint in the production of a variety of tool forms represents still another instance of hybrid material culture.

The evidence of Native cultural expression at Sylvester Manor helps in returning these actors to a history that has essentially been forgotten. In this sense it breathes life back into a Native history that has indeed been silenced (Handsman 1989). For the enslaved Africans, there are no clear-cut material markers to point to, but rather only the hybrid forms and the notion that their skills and labor are embedded in the production of the plantation and household remains. These are far more complex conceptual and evidentiary issues that we have yet to work through.

Cultural Historical Space

Finally, what can the archaeology tell us about the broader changes that flowed through and above the daily activities at Sylvester Manor? Based on a combination of the architectural and landscape information, it seems that the cultural identity of the Sylvesters themselves were changing over time. The physical space constructed to suit the economic needs of the early provisioning plantation may well have been inspired by a set of hybrid, English/Dutch cultural sensibilities. Although concerns for protection and efficiency may have contributed to the production of archaeological deposits that resemble urban spaces, they may also literally be an extension of cultural sensibilities forged from city life.

A second factor may well have been Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester’s desire to establish a fitting testament to their status

in the New World—a status that served the needs of their children in seeking marriage partners in an evolving social structure. These desires may have driven the evolving landscape as well as the face of historical memory. By instilling higher-status values and aspirations in their children, Nathaniel and Grissell may have planted the wish to leave behind the trappings of mercantile and planter roots. As such, those roots have been quite literally buried, perhaps examples of the need to establish new beginnings by rejecting earlier practices and the spaces they produced (Lefebvre 1991: 52; Mrozowski 1991). Today the landscape's peaceful veneers belie a struggle on the part of different generations of owners to recast the manor's landscape at the expense of earlier iterations of place. This silencing of the past through the active construction of landscape resulted in the exclusion of some memories while others were actively venerated (Forty 1999).

Such was the case when it came time to dismantle this earlier landscape in order to make way for a new set of cultural sensibilities. Embodied in the Georgian character of the 1735 Manor House and its attendant landscape treatment, the Manor as conceived by a third generation of Sylvesters on the property was distinctly rural and English. Perhaps reflected in a complete reorientation suggested by Kvamme's geophysical data, this new space seems to have been the conscious effort of a family whose Continental roots were now overshadowed by a set of new cultural expectations. Beyond this, however, there is little in the way of evidence of broader cultural influences shaping the lives of the Sylvesters.

These desires and values also contribute to the repression of the Native American or African American histories of the Manor. How long the Sylvesters continued using Native laborers is unclear. As the commercial operation of the Manor shifted from provisioning plantation to Georgian estate, the need for a large labor force probably diminished considerably. The presence of enslaved Africans likely provided an available workforce for many farm activities as well as domestic service. Whether events such as the 1712 slave uprising in New York were felt in a community like that on Shelter Island is not known. Documentation of a later court case, however, is suggestive.

In the early 1730s a New York County court heard the case of Cato, an enslaved man of Shelter Island, accused of rape. Although Cato was acquitted of the crime, the court offered the option of removing him from the colony altogether to spare the Sylvesters the presence of the defendant, an offer that was apparently refused (Foote 2004: 154). Such an account speaks to the continued presence of enslaved individuals at Sylvester Manor as well as the racial unease that characterized the relationship. Shelter Island's African American residents of the past are commemorated, as in the engraved stone marking an area believed to be the burial ground of Sylvester Manor's "colored people." Yet, despite efforts to identify a descendent African American population connected to Sylvester Manor, no such connection has been made.

In the end the archaeology at Sylvester Manor reveals a complex web of interaction that involved three very different groups of individuals with different sets of cultural expectations and different histories. At the center of it all was the space constructed for a series of commercial enterprises that provided the context and arena for daily interaction. The densely layered remains we have unearthed have not disappointed in delivering a wealth of information from which to construct images of Sylvester Manor's changing landscape. And while those images remain outlines awaiting further definition and completion, they nevertheless spark the imagination concerning what life was like for those who found themselves, willingly or unwillingly, participants in one of the many colonial struggles that were the seeds of today's still troubled world.

Acknowledgements

Mrozowski would like to thank the amazing staff of the Fiske Center for their continuing intellectual dedication to the project. Thanks to David Landon, Heather Trigg, Dennis Piechota and John Steinberg for helping to set such a stellar example of collaboration. I would also like to thank my wife Anne Lang and my sons Peter and Sam who had to spend too many weeks without me. Katherine Howlett Hayes would like to thank Laurie Wilkie, Kent Lightfoot, Rosemary Joyce and Jennifer Spear of UC Berkeley for helpful discussions and

questions on Sylvester Manor; her family and John Matsunaga for their patience and support; and the best of friends and colleagues in the field and labs (you know who you are) for sharing ideas, worries, Fat Tire Ale and Pabst Blue Ribbon. All of the authors in this volume are to be thanked for their incredible patience and effort in seeing this to publication. In particular, David Landon has been extraordinarily helpful and encouraging, and should be credited for suggesting the venue for publication in the first place.

References

- Alexander, Rani
2003 Introduction: Haciendas and Agrarian Change in Rural Mesoamerica. *Ethnohistory* 50: 3–14.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin
1989 *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, London.
- Beaudry, Mary C.
2007 *Findings: The Material Culture of Needlework and Sewing*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Brooks, James F.
2002 *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Carson, Cary, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton
1981 Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies. *Winterthur Portfolio* 16(2/3): 135–196.
- Chilton, Elizabeth S.
1999 Ceramic Research in New England: Breaking the Typological Mold. In *The Archaeological Northeast*, ed. by M.A. Levine, K.E. Sassman, and M.S. Nassaney, 97–111. Bergin and Garvey, Westport, CT.
- Chance, John K.
2003 Haciendas, Ranchos, and Indian Towns: A Case from the Late Colonial Valley of Puebla. *Ethnohistory* 50: 15–45.
- Coombes, Annie
1994 *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Cope, R. Douglas
1994 *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Deagan, Kathleen, ed.
1995 *Puerto Real: The Archaeology of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Town in Hispaniola*. University of Florida, Gainesville.
- Deagan, Kathleen
2003 Colonial Origins and Colonial Transformations in Spanish America. *Historical Archaeology* 37(4): 3–13.
- Ferguson, Leland G.
1999 “The Cross Is a Magic Sign”: Marks on Eighteenth-Century Bowls from South Carolina. In *“I, Too, Am America”: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, ed. by T.A. Singleton, 116–131. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Foote, Thelma Wills
2004 *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Forty, Adrian
1999 Introduction. In *The Art of Forgetting*, ed. by Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, 1–18. Berg, Oxford.
- Funk, Robert E. and Robert D. Kuhn
2003 *Three Sixteenth-Century Mohawk Iroquois Village Sites*. New York State Museum Bulletin 503, New York State Museum, Albany.
- Gallay, Alan
2002 *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Gibson, Charles
1964 *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Goodby, Robert G.
2002 Reconsidering the Shantok Tradition. In *A Lasting Impression: Coastal, Lithic, and Ceramic Research in New England Archaeology*, ed. by J. Kerber, 141–154. Praeger, Westport.
- Handsman, Russell
1989 *The Fort Hill Project: Native Americans in Western Connecticut and an Archaeology of Living Traditions*. American Indian Archaeological Institute, Washington, CT.

- Hodder, Ian
1999 *The Archaeological Process: An Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Johnson, Eric S.
2000 The Politics of Pottery: Material Culture and Political Process among Algonquians of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England. In *Interpretations of Native North American Life: Material Contributions to Ethnohistory*, ed. by M.S. Nassaney and E.S. Johnson, 118–145. University of Florida Press, Gainesville.
- Lavin, Lucianne
1997 Diversity in Southern New England Ceramics: Three Case Studies. *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 60: 83–96.
2002 Those Puzzling Late Woodland Collared Pottery Styles: An Hypothesis. In *A Lasting Impression: Coastal, Lithic, and Ceramic Research in New England Archaeology*, ed. by J. Kerber, 155–178. Praeger, Westport.
- Lightfoot, Kent G.
1995 Culture Contact Studies: Redefining the Relationship Between Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology. *American Antiquity* 60(2): 199–217.
2005 *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Lizee, Jonathan M.
1994 *Prehistoric Ceramic Sequences and Patterning in Southern New England: The Windsor Tradition*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut. University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.
- Lizee, Jonathan M., Hector Neff and Michael D. Glascock
1995 Clay Acquisition and Vessel Distribution Patterns: Neutron Activation Analysis of Late Windsor and Shantok Tradition Ceramics from Southern New England. *American Antiquity* 60(3): 515–530.
- Lefebvre, Henri
1991 *The Production of Space*. Blackwell, London.
- Loren, Diana
2000 Social Skins: Orthodoxies and Practices of Dressing in the Early Colonial Lower Mississippi Valley. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 1(2): 172–189.
- Mallmann, Jacob E.
1899 *Historical Papers on Shelter Island and its Presbyterian Church*. Printed for the author by A.M. Bustard Co., New York.
- Malone, Patrick
1993 *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- McBride, Kevin A.
1990 The Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots, 1637–1900. In *The Pequots of Southern New England*, ed. by L.M. Hauptman and J.D. Wherry, 96–116. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Mrozowski, Stephen A.
1991 The Landscapes of Inequality, In *The Archaeology of Inequality*, ed. by R. H. McGuire and R. Paynter, 79–101, Basil Blackwell, London.
- Moussette, Marcel
2003 An Encounter in the Baroque Age: French and Amerindians in North America. *Historical Archaeology* 37(4): 29–39.
- Parry, Benita
2005 *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. Routledge, London.
- Pretola, John P.
2002 An Optical Mineralogy Approach to Northeastern Ceramic Diversity. In *A Lasting Impression: Coastal, Lithic, and Ceramic Research in New England Archaeology*, ed. by J. Kerber, 179–205. Praeger, Westport.
- Priddy, Katherine Lee
2002 On the Mend: Cultural Interaction of Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans on Shelter Island, New York. M.A. thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- Ritchie, William A.
1954 *Dutch Hollow, An Early Historic Period Seneca Site in Livingston County, New York*. Researches and Transactions of The New York State Archaeological Association, New York State Archaeological Association, Albany.
- Rothschild, Nan A.
2003 *Colonial Encounters in a Native American Landscape: The Spanish and Dutch in North America*. Smithsonian Books, Washington D.C.
- Rushforth, Brett
2003 “A Little Flesh We Offer You”: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France. *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 60(4): 777–808.
- Silliman, Stephen W.
2004 *Lost Laborers in Colonial California: Native*

- Americans and the Archaeology of Rancho Petaluma*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- Snow, Dean R.
1995 *Mohawk Valley Archaeology: The Sites*. The Institute for Archaeological Studies, University at Albany, SUNY, Albany.
- Spear, Jennifer
2003 Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana. *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series, 60(1): 75–98.
- Strong, John A.
1996 Wyandanch: Sachem of the Montauks. In *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632–1816*, ed. by R. S. Grumet, 48–73. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst.
- Sylvester, Nathaniel
1655 *Nathaniel Sylvester to John Winthrop Jr., In Sheltr Islde, ye 6th of Oct, 1655*. Winthrop Family Papers collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
- Thomas, Nicholas
1991 *Entangled Objects*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Trigg, Heather B.
2003 The Ties That Bind: Economic and Social Interactions in Early-Colonial New Mexico, A.D. 1598–1680. *Historical Archaeology* 37(2): 65–84.

2005 *From Household to Empire: Society and Economy in Early Colonial New Mexico*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- Usner, Daniel H., Jr.
1992 *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Van Young, Eric
1983 Mexican Rural History Since Chevalier: The Historiography of the Colonial Hacienda. *Latin American Research Review* 18: 5–61.
- Williams, Lorraine E.
1972 *Fort Shantok and Fort Corchaug: A Comparative Study of Seventeenth Century Culture Contact in the Long Island Sound Area*. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University. University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.
- Wolf, Eric and Sidney Mintz
1957 Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles. *Social and Economic Studies* 6: 380–411.
- Stephen Mrozowski
Department of Anthropology
University of Massachusetts Boston
stephen.mrozowski@umb.edu
- Katherine Howlett Hayes
Department of Anthropology
University of California Berkeley
khhayes@berkeley.edu
- Heather Trigg
Fiske Center for Archaeological Research
University of Massachusetts Boston
heather.trigg@umb.edu
- Jack Gary
Thomas Jeffereson’s Poplar Forest
jack@poplarforest.org
- David Landon
Fiske Center for Archaeological Research
University of Massachusetts Boston
david.landon@umb.edu
- Dennis Piechota
Fiske Center for Archaeological Research
University of Massachusetts Boston
dennis.piechota@umb.edu