



# NEAA News

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## Archeology of Coastal Pioneers in Downeast Maine

*Benjamin P. Carter, Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Muhlenberg College*

In August 2011, seven students and I journeyed to the Joy/Flood site on the coast of Maine for an archaeological field school. As with any field school, the goals were twofold. The first was to train a new generation of students in the methods and ethics of archaeology. Second, the research goal, and the one discussed here, was to investigate early pioneers in Downeast Maine (the coast east of the Penobscot) between 1760 and 1820. This is a tumultuous time period when pioneers experienced two wars, an embargo, and unclear land rights. It is frequently argued that the settlement of Downeast Maine was hampered by the environment (poor soils, cold winters, etc.), but the legal, political, economic and military situation also restrained settlement. The history of Downeast Maine during this time is poorly recorded. Extant documents, with a few important exceptions, were produced by the General Court of Massachusetts and tell us little about the lives of the settlers. While these documents provide a baseline for the project, archaeology has the ability to access information recorded in the landscape, in artifacts and in botanical and faunal remains.

Prior to 1760, European settlement in Maine was hampered by violence between English settlers and Native Americans supported by the French. Downeast Maine was uninhabited by Europeans except for a small outpost at Castine. At the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, England obtained definitive title to Downeast Maine and neither the French nor the decimated Native American populations threatened settlers any longer. Settlement boomed. The economy of these pioneers was based upon maritime trade. Most goods such as household wares, tools, food, and rum were imported. In return, wood products such as firewood, shakes, barrel staves, resin, and pine masts were exported.

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## Message from the Editor

Happy New Year All-

I cannot believe it is time to write another Editor's Message about the upcoming conference. I am happy once again, as I was when the conference was at Rhode College, that everyone is coming to "our neck of the woods." Not because I don't like to travel but because I think the anthropology programs in this area are worth showcasing. I also fondly remember the last time Bridgewater State hosted the conference because I was only two years into what was then my new teaching position at Roger Williams. At the time I think I had been to the NEAAs once before and I was reminded what a great and friendly organization it was. It also turned out to be a small world because I presented on a panel with someone who was a good friend of my graduate school advisor. It is because of these memories – and my belief in benefits of regional professional organizations that are undergraduate and graduate friendly – that I continue to work with and let other people know about the NEAA. So don't miss out on this year's conference at Bridgewater State University co-sponsored by the Bridgewater State Department of Anthropology, the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and the Greater Boston Anthropology Consortium on March 9-10. We have printed many of the details here but please visit the NEAA website for the updated conference information (<http://www.neaa.org/>).

Also be sure to check out Benjamin P. Carter's article, "Archeology of Coastal Pioneers in Downeast Maine. Dr. Carter not only gives us a history of the area and description of the site but for those of you who are interested there may be opportunities for you to get involved.

I hope to see everyone in March.

Jess Skolnikoff  
Editor-in-Chief

**NEAA 2012 Conference hosted by Bridgewater State University  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts**

**March 9-10, 2012**

**Co-sponsored by Bridgewater State Anthropology Department, the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, and  
the Greater Boston Anthropology Consortium**

**“Anthropological Constructions of Time”**

**Abstract and Session submission deadline is February 16, 2012**

**Welcome from the Organizers:**

The Department of Anthropology at Bridgewater State University is pleased to be hosting the 52nd Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association on the Bridgewater State campus in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. This is the third time we have hosted the meeting; we seem to do this at ten-year intervals! Our institution has recently been upgraded to a University. The Bridgewater campus is one of the most highly wired institutions in the region. It is located in a quiet suburban town 30 miles south of Boston, easily accessible via commuter rail from South Station (there is a station right on campus) or by road from Interstate 495 (Take Exit 7 onto Route 24 North, then take the first exit onto Route 104 East. Take Route 104 to one block beyond the Bridgewater rotary, turn right, and look for signs). Bridgewater is the second daughter town of the original Plymouth Colony, having been founded in 1629 by settlers from Duxbury. The Anthropology major at Bridgewater State includes Cultural, Biological, and Applied Anthropology and a unique Public Archaeology concentration, the only one in the Commonwealth. We have linkages with local indigenous peoples, particularly the Wampanoag from Mashpee and Aquinnah.

**This Year’s Theme:**

The dimension of time cuts across all of the anthropological subdisciplines. It is one of the intangibles around which all human cultures, at least since the Upper Paleolithic, have constructed both ideas and monuments. Anthropological constructions of time seemed to us to be a most appropriate topic, especially given the popular culture’s emphasis on the Maya calendar and the December 12, 2012 “event”. Our keynote speaker, Dr. John Carlson, has done extensive research on this subject, and he is very adept at fielding questions from those whose beliefs have led them to the conclusion that this date will mark an “end time”. Nonetheless, he concludes that the turnover in the Maya calendar does mark something of significance, at least for the Maya. He will explore the roles and identity of “God K”, who marks the transition between baktuns. We encourage paper submissions on all topics relevant to Anthropology, but especially those whose focus is on time.

## **Session and Paper Abstracts:**

Session, paper, and poster abstracts will be accepted via this website through February 16, 2012. Papers should be 20 min long (max). Bridgewater will provide Windows laptops and digital projectors for all sessions. Please make sure your presentation is Windows and Microsoft Powerpoint compatible.

If you wish to submit a paper or poster abstract, please login in through the NEAA website (<http://www.neaa.org/conference/cfp>)

## **Conference Registration**

Online conference registration **is now open** on the website ([neaa.org](http://www.neaa.org)) and accepting online payments. If you wish to pay by check or pay at the door, you may still register online and select "pay later." All presenters are required to register in advance to secure their position in the program. Other attendees may register at the door. <http://www.neaa.org/conference/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=1>

## **Some highlights:**

- Friday night reception and tours at the Robbins Museum of Archaeology, 17 Jackson St., Middleborough MA. This will include a showing of We Are Still Here, a new film about the Wampanoag Language Project, introduced by Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson of the BSU English Department
- Saturday Afternoon Annual Members' meeting (aka Business Meeting)
- Saturday evening cash bar and banquet with keynote speaker: Dr. John Carlson (University of Maryland): "The Maya Calendar and the 2012 Event"
- Book exhibit
- Graduate and Undergraduate paper prizes
- Papers, symposia, and poster sessions all day Friday and Saturday
- Modest registration fees (includes Conference Fee and NEAA membership dues; presenters must register in advance and be NEAA members): \$65 professional, \$40 student

## **Local Information:**

The area of Plymouth County offers many opportunities for sight-seeing, including visits to the ocean beaches, Plimoth Plantation, local historical societies, and shops. Information and directions to the Bridgewater State University campus may be found at <http://www.bridgew.edu/directions.cfm>. Information and directions to the Robbins Museum may be found at <http://www.massarchaeology.org>. A listing of local restaurants will be provided with the registration packet.

## Lodging:

There are no hotels or motels in the town of Bridgewater, but we have arranged with three motels in nearby towns for a conference discount. Arrangements may be made for singles, doubles, triples or quads at the same per night rate. Mention NEAA for the conference rates below:

- Days Inn (Middleborough – I-495 Exit 4 - closest to the Robbins Museum): \$60/night. Phone: 1-508-946-4400. <http://www.daysinn.com/>
- Holiday Inn (Middleboro/Raynham – I-495 Exit 6): \$99/night. Phone 1-508-946-3396. <http://www.holidayinn.com/hotels/us/en/taunton/tauma/hoteldetail>
- Hampton Inn (Raynham– I-495 Exit 6): \$99/night. Phone: 508-821-3367. <http://www.hamptoninn.hilton.com/en/hp/hotels/index.jhtml?ctyhocn=RAYMAHX>

## 2012 NEAA STUDENT PAPER & POSTER PRIZE COMPETITIONS

**The online submission deadline is April 6, 2012 for the:**

- **M. Estellie Smith Graduate Paper Prize**
- **John Omohundro Undergraduate Paper Prize**
- **NEAA Poster Paper Prize**

Each year the NEAA awards prizes of \$200 each to the best graduate and undergraduate papers presented at the annual meeting. Separate awards of \$200 are also given for the best undergraduate and graduate student poster papers.

In the past, awards were announced at the conference. **For 2012, we are extending the submission deadline for 1 month past the conference (April 6, 2012).** Awards will be announced in the following NEAA newsletter and on the website. Guidelines for submissions can be found on the NEAA conference website: <http://www.neaa.org/meetings/studentprize.html>

*Continued from page 1 [Archeology of Coastal Pioneers in Downeast Maine](#)*

*Benjamin P. Carter, Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology*

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However, trade was severely undercut by three major events. Only between these events did commerce proceed unhindered. First, during the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), the British occupied Castine, effectively claiming eastern Maine. From this base, British cruisers bombarded rebel settlements and made maritime trade impossible. New settlement stopped and most Loyalists moved to Castine. Second, in 1807, President Thomas Jefferson prohibited trade with Britain and France in an effort to halt their taking of American vessels and seamen. Although the embargo did not achieve the desired result, it undermined Maine's maritime economy. Third, Mainers once again faced deprivation by the British when they reoccupied Castine in 1814.

Not only did Downeast settlers face war and impoverishment, but they were not sure if they owned their land. Between 1760 and 1820, land rights were contested. In January 1762, David Marsh and 358 others petitioned the General Court for a land between the Penobscot and Union Rivers. They were granted six numbered townships that would become the towns of Bucksport, Orland, Penobscot (which included Castine), Sedgwick, Blue Hill and Surry. Most of the proprietors listed on the Marsh Grant were farmers and merchants from northeast Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, but they did not settle the area. Pioneers came from southern and Midcoast Maine.

From the beginning it was not clear who had the legal right to Downeast land. First, the General Court required approbation of the Marsh Grant by the King within eighteen months, but that time, and two extensions, expired without approbation, nullifying the grant. Second, the grant required that the grantees “settle each township with sixty good Protestant Families,” clear five acres of land each, build a church, settle a minister, and more within six years. This was not achieved. Even with these failures, the grant was confirmed by the General Council of Massachusetts in 1786 legally giving the settlers 100 acres and *resident* proprietors 200 acres. Non-resident proprietors were out of luck.

Prior to 1786, grantees owned rights to a portion of land, but it was not connected to a parcel of land. At the same time, settlers were living on, and thereby claiming, land in the same townships. Some grantees sold or traded their shares and a few settlers, such as Mathew Patten and Leonard Jarvis of Surry, accumulated a large number of rights and began claiming plots of land, some of which were already occupied. Even once the grant was confirmed, land rights remained contentious. For example, Leonard Jarvis fought for years to retain the rights he had purchased, much to the chagrin of the “squatters” who lived on it.

Because of the chaotic nature of settlement and land rights, it is difficult to investigate the time period between 1760 and 1820 in Downeast Maine. Many of the original settlers had no deed to their land and their ownership is only recorded in the deed when they sold their property. They do not appear to have had any documented legal right to that land until 1786.

It is in these interstices of history that historical archaeology can aid our understanding of the human condition by providing insight into topics such as material culture, diet, trade, settlement organization, livelihood and more. Even where history can address these topics, historical archaeology brings different types of evidence to the reconstruction of history. The investigation of the Joy/Flood house is an attempt to flesh out life in a time and place difficult to assess with other methods.

The Joy/Flood site is located on Weymouth Point in Surry, Maine. The point is located between the entrances to Patten Bay and Union River, both of which had multiple sawmills at a time and place when sawmills were economic hubs. The Joys owned shares in the Union River sawmills and the Floods operated a sawmill at the head of Patten Bay.

Historical documents provide a baseline for the Joy/Flood house. In the first deed to the property Nathaniel Joy sold the land to Andrew Flood in 1784. Andrew sold it to his son, Dominicus, in 1806. However, since surveyor John Peters indicated that Dominicus Flood had made “significant improvements” to the property in 1787/8, it is probable that Dominicus took up residence in 1784. He lived there with his wife, Elizabeth, and their family until 1810/11 when they moved inland to a new road through his property.

It is not clear how long Joy lived on the property. His father, Benjamin Joy, arrived in the 1760s and Nathaniel likely accompanied him. In 1787/8, John Peters indicates that “Said Flood Lot was first settled by Nathaniel Joy.” Samuel Wasson indicates that Nathaniel was a “squatter sovereign,” suggesting that he was prominent and did not have the legal right to the land upon which he resided. Joy did not have a wife or children. Other than this, we have few details about the Joys or the Floods. Archaeological investigation will help clarify their lives.

To date we have spent more than three weeks excavating the Joy/Flood site, but this is the beginning of a long term project. The excavations have focused upon the house, which sits atop a small ridge and faces the coast 200 meters to the south. We have opened thirty meter square units outside, inside and on top of the foundation wall. To date we have recovered 1342 ceramic artifacts, 155 metal artifacts, 185 glass artifacts, 270 fragments of animal bones and 13 pieces of shell. The majority of the artifacts are probably related to the Flood family.

The foundation is roughly 7 meters by 6 meters (c. 20 by 23 feet) and is divided into two sections. The eastern half of the foundation is a two meter deep cellar, but the western portion contains a ground level stone floor. The wooden superstructure likely contained two rooms mirroring these divisions. A large concentration of brick near the center of the foundation suggests that a fireplace once stood there. We believe that the western room was a kitchen/hall and the eastern room was living space. The central fireplace would have warmed both spaces. The presence of flat glass on east and west sides and lack on the northern side suggests absence of windows on the latter.



Our excavations have allowed us a preliminary glimpse of the lives of the Flood family just after the American Revolution. With further excavation and full analysis, we will be able to better contextualize the development of Downeast Maine communities.

At this point, although we have collected some excellent data, we lack definitive conclusions about life on the Downeast Maine coast between 1760 and 1820. The project continues. On the last day of our field season this summer, we located waterlogged wood in the bottom of our deepest unit. This may suggest that other perishable materials, such as textiles or plant remains, remain unearthed. We are also particularly excited about the faunal remains, which provide insight into the diet of the Floods, including their use of marine versus terrestrial resources. Similarly, during future excavations we will collect soil samples to recover botanical remains. Finally, we will be undertaking a survey of Weymouth Point to relocate the neighborhood in which the Joy/Flood house existed. We are currently looking for faculty and students to assist us in this fascinating project.



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*MEMBERS RECEIVE 4 ISSUES OF THE NEAA NEWSLETTER PER YEAR*