Massachusetts Archaeological Society

Susan Jacobucci and Tonya Largy, Program Co-Chairs

71ST ANNUAL MEETING

Join us on October 23rd in celebrating the release of:
Nantucket and Other Native Places: The Legacy of Elizabeth Alden Little
Welcome to the 71st Annual Meeting of
The Massachusetts Archaeological Society.

Today’s special thematic program is in honor of Elizabeth (Betty) Little. Betty had many archaeological interests, some of which are featured in *Nantucket and Other Native Places: The Legacy of Elizabeth Alden Little*. The Massachusetts Archaeological Society is co-publisher of this volume with SUNY Press, Albany, New York. Editors, Elizabeth Chilton and Mary Lynne Rainey, organized this Festschrift of chapters written by archaeologist who knew Betty and were influenced by her during her lifetime. The celebration begins at 1:00 PM at the Middleborough Public Library with a CONFERENCE consisting of seven papers from the book presented by authors Elizabeth Chilton, Mary Lynn Rainey, Tonya Largy and Mitchell Mulholland, Kathleen Bragdon, Duncan Ritchie and Shirley Blancke. Elizabeth Chilton will read Betty’s final paper. The Celebration continues at the Robbins Museum of Archaeology following the conference with a GALA BOOK SIGNING and Catered Reception generously underwritten by Dr. John D. Little and Family. The authors will be available to sign copies of the book which will be available for purchase ($26.00 tax included – cash or check only).

Betty Little was President of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society from 1984-1986. She earned a Ph.D. in Physics from M.I.T. as a young woman and later pursued an M.A. in Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Following this, Betty carried out important research in several areas of interest in Nantucket and also broader research questions in the field of Archaeology. Before her death, Betty was working on a manuscript concerning maize agriculture in the Northeast. Her final paper, edited by Elizabeth Chilton, is included in the volume and will be featured in today’s program.
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 23, 2010

Morning Program
Lecture Hall – Robbins Museum, Middleborough, MA

9:30 – 10:00  Registration

10:00 – 12:00  Annual Business Meeting (Open to all members)

12:00 – 1:00  Lunch

Afternoon Program
Middleborough Public Library

1:00 – 1:10  President’s Welcome and Program Chair’s Remarks

1:10 – 1:30  The “Ancient Dwelling” on Sunset Hill: Preliminary Archaeological Investigations at the Jethro Coffin House
Duncan Ritchie

Abstract: In recognition of the tercentennial year for the Jethro Coffin House, the Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) initiated a multi-disciplinary study of this historic property in 1985. One aspect of the research at this prominent island landmark was an investigation of the below-ground archaeological component. A plan for an archaeological survey of the Jethro Coffin House property developed by the Archaeology Committee of the NHA, then under the direction of Betty Little, pointed out the importance of collecting information that would supplement documentary research, folklore and the architectural history of the property.

A primary objective of the survey was to identify archaeological deposits and confirm features described in documentary sources such as former outbuildings, fence lines and garden plots in a yard and swale adjacent to the Jethro Coffin House. An electrical resistivity survey of the yard done in 1985 identified anomalies marking possible outbuilding sites and other subsurface features. In 1986, an archaeological survey by PAL, Inc focused on sampling the anomalies identified as a result of the 1985 electrical resistivity project. Through the application of methods such as remote sensing, subsurface testing, and analysis of artifact assemblages (ceramics, glass) and paleobotanical remains it was possible to identify a range of archaeological deposits and features. Deposits of sheet refuse, cobble and brick paving around a well, a trash pit and former garden plot were sources of information about the historic use of space within the Jethro Coffin House lot. These deposits relate to occupation of the house by members of the Coffin and other families from the late seventeenth to mid nineteenth centuries (ca 1690 – 1867), abandonment in the late nineteenth century, and repair and restoration in the 1880s and 1920s. The archaeological data generated through these efforts supplement archival history and provide an expanded interpretive context for the Jethro Coffin House.
1:30 – 1:50  Native American Architecture on Nantucket
Mary Lynne Rainey

Abstract: Over a ten-year period, cultural resource management investigations on Nantucket by PAL have turned up new and important information about Native American building traditions and island settlement patterns over time. The archaeological data compliments Betty Little’s island legacy of research manuscripts, and has begun to fill one obvious void in the ethnohistoric record of Nantucket Indians. This discussion will review aspects of the archaeological sites PAL discovered that contain architectural information, and the underlying significance of Betty’s lifelong work to this topic.

1:50 – 2:10  Island Queens: Women Sachems on Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket in the Colonial Period
Kathleen J. Bragdon

Abstract: A salient feature of the native New England “interaction sphere” centered around the islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, and the territories ringing Buzzard’s Bay, and Long Island Sound, was the number of prominent “queen sachems” who appear to have ruled there in their own right throughout the seventeenth century. Among these were several from Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket. This paper looks at the details of Queen sachem’s lives, to consider women’s place in these small, chiefly societies, which were themselves continuously evolving during the first century of English settlement there.

2:10 – 2:30  Pilgrim Subsistence: A Seventeenth Century Profile from the John and Priscilla Alden House, Duxbury
Tonya Baroody Largy and Mitchell Mulholland

Abstract: In the late 1960s, popular archaeologist Roland Wells Robbins excavated a seventeenth century house site in Duxbury, Massachusetts, believed to have been built and occupied by John Alden and Priscilla Mullins. Elizabeth Alden Little traced her ancestry to this important colonial family, and the results of archaeological studies conducted at the Alden House were among her many interests. This paper describes the archaeological faunal materials (bones, teeth, and shell) recovered from the site by Robbins, and what variables had to be considered in the interpretation of their meaning. Much of the bone came from the house foundation fill in which Native American and European American artifacts were mixed, presenting a challenge for interpretation. The study resulted in the identification of a wide range of wild and domestic species of mammals and birds, and several varieties of shellfish remains. The assemblage has revealed insights into potential 17th century Colonial and Native foodways, while taking into consideration the processes that led to the accumulation and preservation of the remains. The current study has also provided information about the size of early domestic species during Pilgrim times, and illustrates the potential research value in collections from the past.

2:30 – 3:00  Break
The "Indian Planting Fields" in Concord, MA: Interpretation of a Site
Shirley Blancke

Abstract: Surveys and excavation over three years, 1997-1999, produced traces of features that were mostly unidentifiable. New techniques helped to interpret two features: a Late Archaic fire pit, and a 14th century A.D. living floor, possibly a wigwam floor. The living floor's local Late Woodland context among sites indicated by surface finds, and its likely significance with respect to archaeological agricultural models are reviewed.

Pre-Contact Maize Horticulture in New England: A Summary of the Archaeological Evidence
Elizabeth Chilton

Abstract: While some New England archaeologists argue that the adoption of maize had a major transformative effect on native groups, the extant archaeological evidence supports a model of mobile farming and the continuation of hunting and gathering by Native peoples. At the source of the maize debate is the lack of an accurate chronology for the adoption of maize. While associated radiocarbon dates from wood charcoal associated with maize have led archaeologists to believe that maize was adopted at the beginning of the Late Woodland period (AD 1000-1600), the results of accelerator mass spectrometer radiocarbon dates directly on maize indicate that it became prevalent only after AD 1250. These results are consistent with other studies that have demonstrated the problem with relying on wood charcoal for radiocarbon dates, since wood charcoal may be considerably older than the archaeological deposit in which it is found. In this paper I examine when and in what manner maize (Zea mays) was introduced to New England’s Native peoples and what effects the production of maize had on the region’s populations.

Limestone, Shell, and the Archaeological Visibility of Maize and Beans in New England: A Fertilizer Hypothesis
Elizabeth A. Little, Paper read by Elizabeth Chilton

Abstract: As of 2002, nine calibrated radiocarbon dates taken directly on maize kernels and ten dates on associated charcoal or shell from features in alluvial floodplains or coastal shell deposits in New England (Little 1999a, 2002). Four charcoal or shell samples from three coastal features are older than the associated maize kernels by 150 to 400 years. By contrast, four out of six pairs of dates on maize and associated charcoal from floodplains match surprisingly well. The simultaneous increase in archaeological visibility of radiocarbon dated maize and beans on the coast and floodplains, and a documented movement of people to the coasts and rivers, supports a hypothesis that by cal A.D. 1290 to 1390 New Englanders had learned to use old saltwater shell midden on coasts and limestone or freshwater mussel shells on alluvial floodplains to increase the yields of beans and maize. As a by-product, this fertilizer increased the preservation of cultigens in New England's acid soils. The river valleys and coasts provide the warmest climates in New England, and it is important to note that the onset of the Little Ice Age in New England coincides with the increase in archaeological visibility of maize

Book Signing and Reception at the Robbins Museum to Celebrate the Release of Nantucket and Other Native Places
Books Available for Sale (Cash and Check Only)
Bios:

**Duncan Ritchie** received his BA from Franklin Pierce College and his MA from Brown University. He is a senior archaeologist at PAL in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He has over thirty years of experience in cultural resource management, which has included many archaeological investigations of both the precontact Native American and historic period Euro-American sites on Nantucket. His primary research interests are the New England precontact period and historical archaeology, ethnohistory, and lithic material sourcing using petrography and trace element analysis.

**Mary Lynne Rainey** has worked in the fields of cultural resource management (CRM) and environmental consulting since 1979. From 1993 to 2005, she directed numerous Phase I, II and III projects on Nantucket for PAL, in the areas of Siasconset, Sesachacha Pond, Pocomo, Polpis, Plainfield, Nobadeer, Madequecham and Miacomet Valleys, downtown, and in the Eel Point neighborhood. She has written environmental and cultural contexts for many different regions of Nantucket and has fostered public awareness of island archaeology whenever the opportunity arises.

**Dr. Kathleen J. Bragdon** is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the College of William and Mary. Her research focuses on the ethnohistory and sociolinguistic history of Native southern New England. Bragdon has published several books on New England Native language and culture. Her latest, *Native People of Southern New England 1650–1775* (2009), represents her recent focus on “ethnohistorical linguistics.” Bragdon has received the Erminie Wheeler Voegelin Best Book Prize from the American Society for Ethnohistory and (with Ives Goddard) the Kenneth Hale Prize from the Linguistic Society of America.

**Tonya Largy** is a consultant specializing in the analyses of both plant and animal remains from archaeological sites and also is on the staff of the Zooarchaeology Laboratory of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. She has conducted excavations in the Sudbury/Assabet/Concord River basin and participated in projects sponsored by the National Park Service and several Cultural Resource Management firms in the broader northeast and as far away as Harappa, Pakistan. She is Past President of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society.

**Mitch Mulholland** is a Research Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is Director of UMASS Archaeological Services and has conducted archaeological projects in New England for the past 36 years.

**Shirley Blancke** received her M.A. in Archaeology and Anthropology from Cambridge University, England. As a Scientific Assistant in the Anthropology Department at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, she created archaeological and historical exhibits for the Hall of Man in Africa. After moving to Massachusetts, she began specializing in the local archaeology for her Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University. A long-time member of the MAS, and Editor of the Bulletin, she is Associate Curator for Archaeology and Native American Studies at the Concord Museum where she continues to identify and catalog archaeological collections from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**Elizabeth S. Chilton** is a Professor of Anthropology, Department Chair of Anthropology, and the Director of the Center for Heritage and Society at UMass Amherst. Her research, publications, and teaching focus on the archaeology of New England, Native history, maize horticulture, social complexity, cultural resource management, and the analysis of material culture. She received her MA in 1991 and her PhD in 1996, both from the Department of Anthropology at UMass Amherst. She was an Assistant and then Associate Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University from 1996-2001, and has been on the UMass Amherst faculty since 2001.
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--- Junior members receive a Junior Newsletter, but no other publications or ballots – they may be up to the 8th grade in school.
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