

Archaeology at Old St. Stephens

June 11, 2010 Newsletter

by George Shorter RPA, Archaeologist

Week 4 – Field School

During Week 4 we continued to focus on the south wall of our “rental” building, finally connecting last year’s excavation block to the east with this year’s work. We also completed a number of units in Level 1 inside the building and in the slaves’ yard. We did not encounter any additional features and the artifact density was a bit low. Rachael Kangas did find the blade of a flat shovel, a first for us. We also found a tool that may have been used by the rock masons.



The Survivors!!!

**Front row: Rachael Phelps and Rachael Kangas.
Second row: Mary Flentge, Adam McBride, and
Mike Breedlove. Last row: David White**



View of the east wall looking south

We also found the northeast corner of the building under a large bolder of limestone and we completed the excavation of the south wall of the building.



South wall looking west



**Detail of the northeast inside corner of the building
under the corner of a large limestone boulder**



Mary Flentge



David White

Mary Flentge and David White continued their work in the lab with some help from the rest of the crew. This year we finished with about 50 buckets to be washed and about 50 trays to be sorted, a great improvement. Last year we ended up with 240 buckets.

This year we completed 80 units and dealt with several features. We made great progress and moved the research significantly forward.

THANKS to the Crew of Old St. Stephens Field School II - 2010

We had a **great crew!!!** Everyone worked together to the best of their ability. That's all anyone could ask. I must particularly thank all the **"survivors"** that endured for all four weeks. You all became "expert" at what you were doing so by the third week we were working quickly and efficiently. I trust you all found the experience valuable, just another peg in your career journey. Thanks especially to my "right hand," Mike Breedlove. I can not tell you how much his support and work have meant to me and to our program. Also I am pleased to welcome David White, a local resident, to our volunteer group. We need more like him. Of course, I want to thank Jim Long, park director. Jim has always been an enthusiastic supporter of archaeology at Old St. Stephens. As a descendent of John McGrew, one of the earlier settlers, I know Jim values the importance of the site to the early history of Alabama and the region.

Lab Volunteers need at USA and at Old St. Stephens

Please consider joining our volunteers at our USA lab or our lab in Old St. Stephens. We had a small but dedicated group of Tuesday morning volunteers. Over the past months they have worked at cleaning artifacts, particularly ceramics. They have helped with the analysis of these ceramics by learning to identify the different wares and decorative techniques. After counting and weighing each sherd has been labeled. Soon we will begin sorting to specific vessels, the really exciting part of this process. This spring they also completed the analysis of a large glass bottle assemblage from a feature associated with the slaves' house. They identified over 150 individual bottles from this particular assemblage.

Of all our finds this summer the artifacts in Feature 62, a builder's trench adjacent to the east wall of what we think was a rental building, was the most interesting. The assemblage appears unique to other encountered at the site. It contained lots of creamware included at least 6 or 8 chamber pots and over a dozen pitchers. We have a few interested painted vessels, some edgeware, and at least one particularly interesting greenish-black transfer printed bowl. The feature contains some glass bottle fragments, and animal bone. We also found three pair of small scissors, but very little else...none of the small items, buttons, etc, that were common in other features on the site. This leads me to believe we have the broken vessels of creamware shipped to a store and not a residence. Creamware was only produced to c. 1810. Of course the later edge wares and transfer printed vessels will determine the date of the feature, but it appears to be "early." Do we have an early occupation, say between 1807 and 1815? We'll see. Become

a part of this investigation. Learn about historic ceramics analysis. For the next few months we will be looking at this feature in detail. We'd be glad to have your help. Just email me for a schedule of when we will be working.



A few ceramics from Feature 62

T-Shirts

Shirts are now available for purchase, \$15 each plus \$3.50 for shipping. The shirts have the St. Stephens logo on the front and the map of Old St. Stephens draw by Mary Welch in 1899 on the back. She lived in the town as a girl in the 1830s. The map was drawn at the centennial celebration in St. Stephens commemorating the first raising of the American flag over the region in 1799. You can come by and pick up a shirt at the lab (no shipping cost) or we will be glad to send you one. Our gray shirts may be purchased by the general public, but we reserve our sage green shirts only for folks that have volunteered. They have the designation "VOLUNTEER" on them. These are quality shirts available in S, M, Lg, and ExLg. Please state size. You may send checks to me (no cash please), but please make them out to the St. Stephens Historical Commission. Tab them for the size and type shirt you want. Proceeds go to help support the archaeology program at Old St. Stephens.

George Shorter
6989 Bay Road
Mobile, Alabama 36605
(251.709.7369)