

UTK Archaeological Field School at Coan Hall, June 1-June 29, 2023

The 2023 summer field school in historical archaeology will be held at 44NB11 (known as Coan Hall) near Heathsville in Northumberland County, Virginia. The site is located on a tributary to the Potomac River on Virginia's Northern Neck. The project, now in its 8th summer, explores the landscape of colonial encounters. Our work documents and interprets the cultural impact of colonialism in the Potomac River valley within the context of broader regional changes and the wider Atlantic world.



Photo of Coan Hall feature excavation, Summer 2023

Site and Project History



Students will meet and work with other field school participants working in the Chesapeake region.

Algonquian-speaking Indians who called themselves the Sekakawon occupied the site prior to and into the 17th century. Over time, their village covered a 70-acre area along the Coan River. By 1640, John Mottrom, an early English settler on the Potomac's south bank, acquired the property from their *werowance* and established a household there. The property served as the center of the English Chicacoan community, who took their name from the principal Indian village. Mottrom was elected to the House of Burgesses, and his property became the governmental and religious seat for the first English county on the Northern Neck.

Mottrom was one of the earliest planters in the Potomac Valley to enslave Africans for their labor. Members of his family attempted to enslave Elizabeth Key following his death. She contested her status in court and won her freedom in 1656. Other Africans also lived in Mottrom's household and labored on his plantation.

Subsequent to Mottrom's death, his son and grandson developed the property, expanded the labor force, and became prosperous planters and local leaders.

Excavations from 2011 to 2018 exposed portions of the 21.5 ft. x 54 ft. main house, which was among the largest houses in Virginia at the time it was built and occupied. The house consists of one large room on either side of a masonry H-shaped chimney, with a possible smaller, unheated room on the east side of the house as well. The house was earthfast (built with posts set directly into the ground), repaired with new posts, and underpinned with brick. A large brick- and stone-lined cellar extends beneath the western room and was accessed via a bulkhead entrance on the building's west gable end.



Aerial view of the house, Summer 2017

Archaeological and geophysical results from previous field surveys hint at a complex landscape that developed across the six acres that surround the house. Features associated with probable outbuildings have been located north of the house. Evidence of fence lines, a palisade that enclosed a portion of the Sekakawon village, and the foundations of the 18th- century mansion that replaced Mottrom's house were found during excavations and via the 2015-2018 and 2021 geophysical surveys of the site.



Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey, Summer 2021



Large rectangular feature (foreground) filled with mid-17th to early-18th-century artifacts.

2023 Goals

In 2021, we began to focus on an area approximately 350 ft. northeast of the manor house that contains numerous domestic artifacts and animal bones associated with the English settlement, and lithics, ceramics and pipes associated with the Sekakawon and other Native groups in the region. In 2022 we uncovered edges for a large, shallow rectangular feature that appears to be intruding into an earlier feature. We will focus our efforts in 2023 in defining and excavating portions of the two features to determine their original use.



Tobacco Pipe Fragment

Course Objectives

Students will gain hands-on experience in archaeological field methods, including identifying and mapping cultural and natural features, classifying and describing sediments, identifying and recording changes in stratigraphy, total station and hand mapping, and site photography. Students will also learn about 17th - and 18th-century artifacts and sampling and processing protocols for the recovery of plant and animal remains.

Class will meet Mondays-Fridays from 8am to 4:30 pm with some evening discussions or lectures. Weekends are free to explore the Northern Neck region, visit Washington, D.C. or Richmond, VA, or just relax at the house that we share.



Butchered pig in the fill of a pit, 2018



Excavations at the site in 2022.

Dates, Credits, Costs and Logistics

Dates:

June 1-June 29, 2023

Credits:

Students earn 6 credits.

Participants should register for ANTH 430 or receive research-intensive credit by enrolling in 430R. Graduate students should register for ANTH 530.



Washing artifacts at Coan Wharf

Participants must be enrolled as UT students to take this course. Prospective students who are not currently enrolled at UT can participate by following the instructions under "Visiting Students" at the UTK "Transient admission" (graduate students).

Estimated cost (tuition and fees):

	<i>In-State</i>	<i>Out of State</i>
Undergraduate*	\$2,730.00	\$7,362.00
Graduate*	\$4,404.00	\$10,548.00

*based on current posted costs for summer 2022. Consult onestop.utk.edu for 2023 summer fees.

Tuition and fees are covered for graduate students holding a GTA position. Undergraduates eligible for the Hope Scholarship should be able to apply it to this course.



Lodgings at Coan Wharf

Housing is provided for participants at Coan Wharf, a few miles from the archaeological site. Students and staff share a renovated farmhouse with modern facilities and access to the Coan River for swimming and boating.

Students should also budget for travel to and from Heathsville, food, and incidental expenses during the summer session.



2021 summer program participants

To Apply

Please contact Dr. Barbara Heath (974-1098; bheath2@utk.edu) and provide the following information.

- Personal information: full name, home address, phone number and email address.
- Brief statement summarizing your reasons for participating in this course and discussing any prior archaeological experience (although prior experience is not necessary to participate).

Application deadline is April 10, 2023.



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