

The Glastonbury Citizen

A GOOD CITIZEN IS A WELL-READ CITIZEN

Vol. 66, No. 1

Glastonbury, Connecticut

September 1, 2016

One Dollar



A small clasp, possibly from a book cover, was among the items found during a recent archeological dig on what is believed to be the original site of the Lt. John Hollister house in South Glastonbury. Other items included a pipe bowl dating to about 1650.

‘Dig’ Reveals Colonial Past

by Shawn R. Dagle

Not far from the Connecticut River, new evidence is being uncovered regarding one of Glastonbury's earliest settlements.

A team of professional and amateur archeologists joined together early last month to excavate a plot of land believed to be the site of Lt. John Hollister's original homestead in the Nayaug section of South Glastonbury.

The existence of three cellars – first discovered using ground-penetrating radar last year – has been confirmed, according to Connecticut State Archeologist Dr. Brian Jones, who led a series of excavations at the site beginning the weekend of August 13.

The cellars are believed to date to 1650 or even earlier and could be part of one homestead or multiple homes.

The land – once owned by Lt. John Hollister, who was one of Glastonbury's earliest settlers – is now the property of a private owner who is a descendant of the original family.

While there are many stories about the original Hollister farm and home, a multitude of questions remain. Dr. Jones said he hopes continued work on the site might provide some answers thus far lost to history.

A “dig” on the site on August 15 uncovered a variety of intriguing artifacts which may help to uncover some of that lost history. Hosted by the Historical Society of Glastonbury, the dig was conducted by Dr. Jones' team, along with volunteers from the public, the Friends of State Archeology and even local Girl and Boy Scouts

earning their archaeology badges.

Among the objects uncovered were an earthenware jug handle, an apothecary jar, pipe stems, a gun flint, a large brass pin, a small decorated clasp (possibly from a book cover), a padlock key hole cover made during the reign of Queen Victoria with a “V.R” and a crown stamped on it and a pipe bowl dating to approximately 1650.

Other important discoveries included part of an Italian ceramic vase (only a few pieces of this type of Italian ceramic from this period have been found in the U.S. and none were as intact) and a Native American urn, indicating an interaction between the early settlers of Glastonbury and Wangunk Indians who lived in the area.

Work at the site has also shed light on the early settlers' diets. Numerous animal bones were discovered on the site, including the remains of fish, turtle and deer – indicating that the early settlers had quite a varied diet consisting of native species.

All the evidence at this point appears to point toward the site being the former location of Lt. John Hollister's home, according to Dr. Jones.

Lt. Hollister is believed to have constructed a home in the Nayaug section of Glastonbury near the Connecticut River around 1650. That structure was said to have been moved at a later date, due to frequent spring flooding to the area near Roaring Brook on Tryon Street.

The Hollister house still stands on Tryon

See ‘DIG’ REVEALS, page 20



★'Dig' Reveals cont. from page 1

Street, though presumably not in the same form as it was originally. According to Dr. Jones, while it appears that some of the original Hollister home was incorporated into the new home on Tryon Street or other structures on the property, it is doubtful that the entire home was moved and reconstructed completely intact as it had existed near the river.

Nevertheless, it is considered to be the oldest standing home in Glastonbury and one of the five oldest standing homes in the state, according to the Historical Society of Glastonbury.

Born in Britain in 1612, it is believed that Lt. Hollister ventured to America at the age of 30, sailing from Bristol, England. A large landowner in Wethersfield, Hollister married into the Treat family and had a brother-in-law who served as Governor of Connecticut.

The land in the Nayaug section of Glastonbury was among the first regularly surveyed and laid out for distribution among the colonists (the first survey being done prior to 1640). The land was laid out in farms of various sizes and widths, providing colonists with good farm land and woodland for timber.

Hollister's land holdings in Nayaug appear

did not uncover any substantial evidence, according to Dr. Jones.

It wasn't until UConn graduate student Peter Leach ran ground-penetrating radar over the area last year that the first real evidence of Lt. John Hollister's farm showed up. The ground-penetrating radar uncovered a disturbance that appeared to be cellar holes.

It was unclear whether the cellar holes might be associated with tobacco barns or other out-buildings constructed on the property much later than the Hollister home, but the discovery provided a place to start.

This year Jasmine Saxon and Maeve Herrick — students from the University of Denver — came to Glastonbury to perform a non-invasive magnetometry survey of the property which covered a much larger area than the one surveyed last summer.

The results — along with the excavation of the cellar holes — has led Dr. Jones to conclude that this indeed is the site of the original Hollister farm.

The find is significant—"an absolute historic treasure," as Dr. Jones describes it. Most sites this old have been built over. This one has not, making it extremely unique and undisturbed.



At left, spectators watch as an archeologist volunteer carefully scrapes away the earth in search of artifacts. Above, dirt from the excavation is carefully sifted for small items that might have been missed.

Business Beat

Attends Embalming Organization Conference

Richard J. Bowden of Glastonbury Funeral Home recently completed 18 contact hours of specialized embalming and reconstructive training at the 4th FNA International Embalming and Reconstructive Surgery Conference for Professional Embalmers in Springfield, MO.

The Biennial Conference "is dedicated to the goal of viewing before final disposition of the deceased." FNA founder Vernie R. Fountain

spoke concerning what he feels is the importance of final viewing of the deceased by family and friends as a means to "accept and process the reality of life without a loved one."

The conference also featured ten embalming professionals who shared highly specialized techniques for repairing severe trauma and disfiguring facial injuries on a deceased to allow for viewing by family and friends.

Hollister's land holdings in Nayaug appear to have been significant – so much so that the area around his land was known as "Hollisterbury," according to a town history.

There is an old, possibly apocryphal, tale that during one of his visits to survey his farmland on the eastern side of the river Hollister encountered a local Native American who challenged him to a test of strength. The pair allegedly spent the rest of the day wrestling, finally agreeing at sundown to call it a draw before parting as friends and in peace.

No matter his strength, time eventually caught up to Lt. Hollister. Upon his death in Wethersfield in 1665, he had eight children who received various parts of his estate. His oldest son John, then 22 years-old, was given the whole farm at Nayaug and a featherbed, according to Hollister's will – with the condition he provide his mother with 20 bushels of apples and two barrels of cider for the rest of her life.

At the time of his death it appears that Lt. Hollister had a significant estate for the time – including a collection of plows, Indian corn, trunks, tables, farm animals, utensils and ten pounds worth of wampum. His house at Nayaug, his barn, his orchard and pasture alone were valued at 200 pounds at the time of his death.

Lt. Hollister rented a home on his Nayaug farm to three brothers – Josiah, Jonathan and John Gilbert—who apparently farmed the land surrounding the home. In an odd footnote to history, their mother was hung as a witch some years after they left the farm.

During his lifetime, Hollister had given his sons land along Tryon Street, according to Dr. Jones, where they built homes in the 1690s. It is believed the old Hollister home by the river was moved near to those houses in the early 18th century due to flooding at the original site. The original location became farmland.

Early evidence at the dig site seems to indicate that the Hollister property was indeed quite large, according to Dr. Jones.

"The Hollister family was quite wealthy and it appears to have been a substantial farmstead," he observed. Dr. Jones described the property as a "plantation," growing and producing items that could have been sold as far away as the Caribbean.

While the site of the original Hollister farmstead has long been a matter of some speculation, no concrete evidence had been discovered until last year of its exact location. A previous exploration and dig at the site two years ago

making it extremely unique and undisturbed.

"This is really the most significant site I have had a chance to work on," remarked Dr. Jones—which is extraordinary, considering that Jones has had the opportunity to work on ancient Roman burial grounds in Germany and 12,000-year-old sites in Connecticut, among others.

The public appeared to share the doctor's appreciation. Twenty-eight people took part in the historical society's public dig on August 15, with another 80 people on a waiting list. The following day, 27 Girl and Boy Scouts took part in another dig at the site to earn the archaeology merit badge. A UConn fields study group also performed work at the site.

"The weather was very humid but people were real troopers through it," said Historical Society Education Director Diane Hoover. According to Hoover, members found a variety of different items that day which seem to point toward this being one of Glastonbury's earliest settlements.

All the items have been collected by Dr. Jones and his office and have been bagged and boxed up, awaiting delivery to the archaeology labs at UConn. One of Dr. Jones' students will spend 15 hours a week over the next two semesters carefully cataloguing each item. Metallic items will need to be conserved and the bags and bags of animal bones will be sifted through, inventoried and identified.

"The easy part is the archeology," explained Dr. Jones. "The long, hard, detailed work of analysis is just about to begin."

All items collected belong to the property owner. Dr. Jones hopes they can be stored at UConn and some type of arrangement can be made so they are available for study and research.

"We are just really at the beginning of understanding what is out there," he noted.

Dr. Jones said he would like to be able to do future studies of the property to get more answers, including why the three cellars appear to be aligned and if that means they were all part of the same household or different homes.

At this point it appears at least one of the homes was a "long house" or more medieval style of home.

Dr. Jones thanked the Friends of State Archaeology for all their hard work on the project as well as the property owner for allowing them access to the site.

According to the state's top archaeologist, there is a lot more yet to discover. "There are plenty of more surprises," he predicted.

The Glastonbury Citizen
is open 8:30-5:00 Mon.-Thurs.
and is closed on Fridays

Bulky Waste Closed Monday

The Bulky Waste Facility on Tryon Street will be closed on Monday, Sept. 5, in observance of Labor Day.

The hours of operation at the Transfer Station on New London Turnpike are Tuesday through Saturday from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Both the Bulky Waste Facility and the Transfer Station will be open on Saturday, Sept. 3, from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Questions may be directed to the Sanitation Department, Refuse Disposal Division at (860) 652-7772.

Dog Training Classes to be Offered

Classes for dogs and their owners will be offered starting this month through Glastonbury Parks & Recreation.

Family Dog Manners : This is a beginning level class for dogs 5-months and older for owners who want to teach their dog manners and learn more about canine behavior. Class will provide the training and management tools to teach your dog to pay attention, sit, down, stay, polite greetings, coming when called and loose leash walking, among other behaviors. Class will meet at Academy cafeteria Mondays from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Sept. 12-Oct. 24 (no class Oct. 10). Fee is \$100. Instructor is Deana Nickels.

Focus on Focus with your Dog: Does your dog get rambunctious, excited and uncontrollable? This class teaches self-control techniques to calm your dog around distractions. Learn more than 20 focus exercises and management tools that will help your dog with loose leash walking, settling in different environments, greeting people, excessive barking and fearful behaviors. Class is for dogs over a year old that have had basic training. Class meets Monday from 6:45-8:45 p.m. at the Academy cafeteria Sept. 12-Oct. 24 (no class on Oct.10). Fee is \$100. Instructor Deanna Nickels.

Trick Training & Games with your Dog: Teaching tricks is fun, great mental exercise and a great way to use that extra energy. Class is

★Survey cont. from page 9

"The surveys are one piece of the overall project of conducting a community health assessment," said Mis.

"As is typical in the creation of a health assessment, we are gathering information and data from state and national databases about disease and illness in Glastonbury," added Mis. "In order to make sure we understand how people in Glastonbury view health and quality of life in town, we are collecting thoughts and ideas directly from residents and people who work in Glastonbury."

Overall, "The goal of the Alliance and the Community Health Assessment initiative is to identify the current state of health in the community, as well as areas for potential improvement," says a town announcement.

The consultant was hired using CT Department of Public Health grant funding.

devoted to learning new tricks and teaching games to your dog to improve their behavior and strengthen your relationship. Use trick training methods and your imagination to teach your dog things you never thought possible. Also included is agility for fun and some great games. For dogs over one year that have basic training skills. Class meets Wednesdays from 10-11 a.m. at Academy cafeteria Sept.14-Oct. 26 (no class Oct. 12). Fee is \$100. Instructor is Deanna Nickels.

Out and About with your Dog: For dogs that can do sits, downs, stays and walk politely at home and in the training room, but when you go somewhere new your dog seems to have forgotten everything. Dogs need to repeat the basics in many different situations before they can generalize behaviors they have learned. In this class meet in a variety of dog friendly environments around town to teach your dog that they can do their sits, downs and walk politely anywhere. Fee is \$100. Class meets Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Academy cafeteria, Sept. 12-Oct. 26 (no class Oct. 12). Instructor is Deanna Nickels.

Registration is currently underway on-line and by mail at the Parks & Recreation Department, 2143 Main St., Monday - Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Call (860) 652-7679 for more information.