The 2015 summer field school will be held at 44NB11 (known as Mottrom’s or Coan Hall) in Northumberland County on Virginia’s Northern Neck. The project will explore the landscape of early colonialism in the Potomac Valley through documenting and interpreting cultural and environmental changes at a single plantation, and situating them within the context of broader transformations in the region and the wider Atlantic world. Recent scholarship has challenged the notion that the Chesapeake can be understood as a single cultural region, advocating for a finer-grained approach to questions of economic, demographic, and socio-political colonial development. The Northern Neck is underrepresented archaeologically, with most work relating to the 17th century focusing on the James and York River drainages.

Site and Project History

Site 44NB11 is located north of Heathsville, Virginia on the Coan River. John Mottrom, one of the earliest English settlers of the Potomac’s south bank, established a household there sometime before 1644. The property quickly became the center of the Chicacoan community who settled at, and took their name from, the principal village of an important Indian chiefdom. The settlement of the 1640s included families displaced from the Kent Island fur trading outpost in Maryland, and possibly Puritans from southern Virginia. Some of the English Chicacoans opposed the Catholic manorial system of Maryland, and participated in the uprising known as Ingle’s Rebellion, which resulted in the overthrow of the government of Cecil Calvert in the mid-1640s. Mottrom helped arm the rebel faction. He was elected to the House of Burgesses, and his property became the legislative seat for Northumberland County, the first English county on the Northern Neck.

Mottrom’s was among the earliest plantations in the Potomac Valley to use enslaved African labor. Elizabeth Key, a woman whom Mottrom attempted to enslave, contested her status in court and won her freedom. Other Africans living on the property were not as fortunate as Key. Mottrom died in 1655. Subsequently his son and grandson developed the property, expanded the labor force, and navigated the troubled political, ethnic, and economic currents of the second half of the 17th century.

Based on excavation and remote sensing data collected from 2011 to 2014, we have located the manor house, which measures approximately 20 ft x 54 ft. The size, construction methods, and layout of the house suggest that it is the original circa 1640 dwelling, but this cannot be confirmed without excavating associated features. At its center is an H-shaped chimney that divides the structure into two equal-sized
rooms. The house was originally earthfast (built with posts set directly into the ground), repaired with new posts, and later underpinned with brick. West of the hearth, GPR results revealed a large, deep anomaly that is consistent with a cellar in this area of the house. A second anomaly north of the hearth appears to extend at least 2 ft. below plow zone and may represent a smaller cellar. The archaeological and geophysical results hint at a complex landscape that developed across the six acres that surround the house, with most activity concentrating within the acre around the structure.

Two north-south fence or palisade lines are visible in the data, with parallel sets of anomalies indicating that the west line was moved over time. Five anomalies, forming a 15 ft. diameter enclosure, are located northwest of the house and may represent a defensive bastion, with additional anomalies possibly representing an east-west fence or palisade. Magnetic anomalies associated with the pits and northwest of them may represent additional outbuildings.

In 2015, feature sampling will be carried out to confirm dates and better understand the evolution of the structures and associated landscapes. Artifacts that predate 1650 have been recovered overlying the manor house, but the majority of catalogued artifacts date from 1660 to 1720. All of these materials have been recovered from plow zone however, and firm dating awaits the excavation of features and the completion of artifact cataloguing and analysis.

Questions that the project will explicitly address are anthropological, geographical and historical, and include:

- How did early colonial settlement impact the environment?

- How did colonial people, both free and unfree, form communities in this new place? What are the spatial dimensions of community, and how do they change over time?

- How did Englishmen living along the Potomac design spaces in response to threats of violence, real or perceived?

- How did colonists organize domestic spaces to structure or resist unequal social relationships that emerged out of plantation economies centered on the production of Oronoco tobacco? How were landscapes modified in response to changes in social relations over time?
To answer these questions, more site-specific questions also need to be addressed.

- When was the manor house at 44NB11 constructed? What is the chronology of modifications to it, and when was it abandoned?

- How was the landscape structured immediately around the manor house? What is the evidence of landscape change over time?

- What do the house, the landscape, and the associated artifacts tell us about conflict and community in early Northumberland County?

Goals for summer 2015

Manor house:

- Excavate quadrats along the northeast and southeast walls to determine the relationship between structural post holes and later repairs; excavate a sample of post holes/post molds to establish the construction sequence, and a robber’s trench to date the period of abandonment.

- Sample the western cellar to understand its relationship to the sequence of construction and to collect artifacts and environmental samples pertinent to the use of space and community formation.

Landscape:

- Explore the eastern, northern and western fence/palisade lines, sample postholes/postmolds to establish chronologies.
- Explore anomalies northwest and northeast of the house to test for possible defensive features (bastions).
- Partially excavate pits northeast of the manor house seen archaeologically and in the geophysical data.
- Test areas where remote sensing data indicate the presence of additional outbuildings.
Dates, Credits, Costs and Logistics

Dates: June 1-July 2, 2015 (1st summer session)

Credits:
Six hours of undergraduate or graduate credit are offered. Depending on the number of students, participants will either enroll in Anth 430 or Anth 530 (Archaeological field school) or Anth 492/592 (off-campus study).

You must be enrolled as a UT student to take this course. People who are not currently enrolled at UT can participate by following the instructions under "Visiting Students" at http://admissions.utk.edu/undergraduate/applications/AdmApp10.pdf (undergraduate) or following the instructions for "transient admission" at http://admissions.utk.edu/graduate/req.shtml#Trans(graduate).

Costs:

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*based on current posted fees for 2014-2015 academic year. Cost subject to change when summer 2015 charges are posted.

Additional costs include:
- Housing costs are dependent on the number of participants, but costs will run about $20-$30/night. We will stay within a few miles of the site. If grant funding is forthcoming, housing fees will be waived.

Payment for housing is due separately from tuition.
Students are responsible for arranging their own transportation to Virginia and to and from the site each day (we usually carpool) and for the cost of all meals and incidental expenses.

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.
- One page letter stating your reasons for participating in this class and reviewing any prior archaeological experience (although prior experience is not necessary to participate).