

# African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

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Volume 9  
Issue 2 June 2006

Article 5

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6-1-2006

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### Recommended Citation

Battle, Emily (2006) "Hotel Site Yields History," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol9/iss2/5>

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## **Hotel Site Yields History**

**Story by Emily Battle  
Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star**

**April 23, 2006**

**Article posted online by the Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star at:  
<http://fredericksburg.com/News/FLS/2006/042006/04232006/185269>  
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**Archaeological dig at downtown hotel site yields groundbreaking finds.**

**Just a few feet below the asphalt parking lot at the corner of Caroline and Charlotte streets, archaeologists believe they may have uncovered remnants of the first slave quarters ever found in Fredericksburg.**

**At a dig site that has become a popular stopping place for tourists, City Council members and local residents, Kerri Barile of the Dovetail Cultural Resource Group points to the 12-by 16-foot foundation of a structure that she believes may have housed slaves.**

**Barile admits that she and her archaeology crew don't know for certain that the building was a slave quarters, but all the little clues seem to indicate that it was.**

**They think it was built sometime in the 1830s. Its chimney is too small for the building to have been a kitchen, and it was behind a bigger house that fronted Caroline Street. The tiny building also is listed as a "dwelling" on old insurance maps.**

**If Barile and the archaeologists she's working with are reading the clues correctly, it would be a significant find for the city. Because urban properties tend to be developed and dug up over and over again, it can be hard to find well-preserved remnants of buildings that were torn down in the past.**

**And because space in cities is usually so tight, Barile said not a lot of dedicated urban slave quarters were built. Sometimes kitchens, attics or basements doubled as housing for slaves.**

**"In the entire United States, very few urban quarters have been excavated," Barile said. "To have an urban slave quarters here, it can tell us a lot."**

**The foundation lies in what was once the backyard of a house that was built after the Indian Queen Hotel, which took up that whole corner, burned down in 1832.**

**All of these layers of history are visible at the site. You can see the old sandstone foundation of the Indian Queen -- built in 1771 -- underneath the foundation of the newer dwelling.**

**And underneath the Indian Queen foundation, Dovetail crews have dug down to find artifacts from the early to mid-1700s.**

**The Dovetail team has been at the site at Caroline and Charlotte streets for the past two weeks. The city hired them to look into the site's history before the land is sold to a developer that plans to build a Courtyard by Marriott hotel there.**

**City officials are planning a May 9 public hearing on the hotel plans. Tommy Mitchell, who has partnered with two Northern Virginia hotel operators on the Marriott project, said he plans to show the latest plans for the hotel to the Architectural Review Board on Monday.**

**The archaeological work will go on through much of this week. The \$26,920 price for the work is being paid partly with private donations.**

**Doris Buffett's Sunshine Lady Foundation gave \$13,500, the Silver Cos. gave \$3,000, city resident Tom Byrnes gave \$1,000, Councilman Matt Kelly gave \$500 and Downtown Retail Marketing Inc. gave \$100. The city picked up the rest.**

**Barile and her crew are trying to learn as much as they can about the site in the three-week time period the city gave them. They'll work a few days this week to make up for some rain delays.**

**The site has become a sort of gathering spot downtown.**

**Barile said that last Saturday, she had to have someone on the site all day dedicated to talking to tourists about what was going on. She estimates that a couple of hundred of them came by as students from the University of Mary Washington's historic preservation program helped with the digging.**

**City Council members also have stopped by and helped with digging or sifting the dirt for artifacts.**

**Mitchell was at the site sifting dirt on Friday morning. He said he's talking to his partners about incorporating some of the site's history into the new hotel. He said they're talking about maybe naming a room or the lobby bar after the Indian Queen.**

**Brian Hyland, co-owner of J. Brian's Tap Room, was out helping at the dig site on Thursday. He said he's been at the site the past five or six days, and plans to keep coming until Barile and her crew wrap up their work.**

**Hyland said he's been fascinated by the artifacts that the dig has turned up. Things like butchered animal bones, pieces of ceramic plates, doll legs, eyeglasses, a toothbrush, buttons and marbles all reveal details about the lives of the people who frequented the Indian Queen, which was one of Fredericksburg's central gathering spots in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.**

**Hyland said it's a way of learning about the history of the hospitality business.**

**"I'm connecting with people who were here 200 years ago doing the same thing I'm doing," he said.**

**Hyland may share another connection with the site.**

**The building that houses J. Brian's was originally built in 1833, Hyland said, before it burned and was then rebuilt.**

**It was formerly the Exchange Hotel, and since it was built just one year after the Indian Queen burned, Hyland and Barile both think it might have been built to replace the Indian Queen.**

**Now that the Exchange and several other downtown buildings that once housed hotels have been converted into offices and apartments, the Courtyard by Marriott could be the next chapter in the downtown hotel story.**