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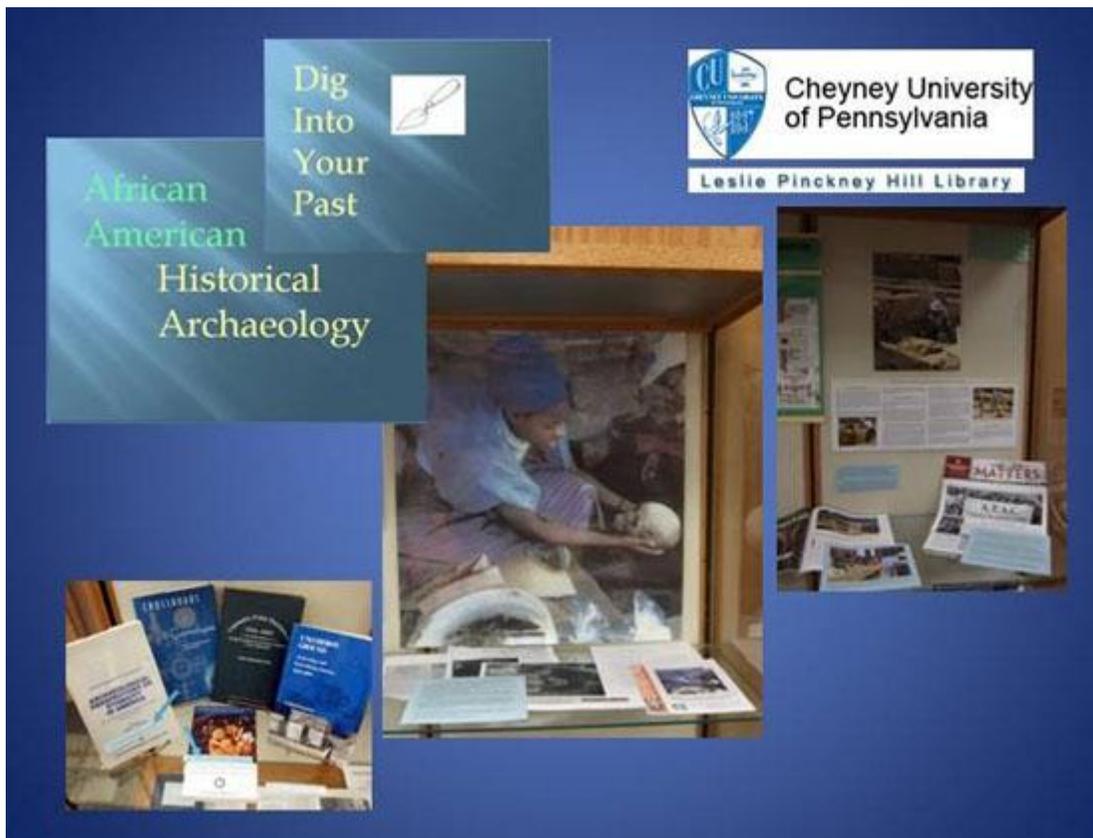
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African American Archaeology on Display at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

By Patrice L. Jeppson*

African American archaeology is the focus of a display mounted in the Leslie Pickney Hill Library at Cheyney University in Pennsylvania. *Dig Into Your Past: African American Historical Archaeology* is designed to introduce and reintroduce Cheyney University (CU) students and faculty to this flourishing field of scholarship. Founded in 1837, Cheyney (www.cheyney.edu) is the oldest African American institution of higher education. It is one of 103 HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities) established before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community.

The library display is built around 41 annotated items related to African American historical archaeology. Academic books, journals and newsletters, and MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations are on view along with popular magazine and newspaper articles reporting research discoveries. Photographs of site excavations and artifacts are included, as are brief biographies for several practitioners. These bios include African American historical archaeologists and students-in-training who are important role models for the Cheyney student population. Part of the original design plan, such bios were also an item specifically requested by L. P. Hill Library officials.



Featured materials cover archaeology projects found nation-wide as well as more locally in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Internet resources such as the African Diaspora Archaeology Network, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, and the National Park Services Visit Archeology Archeology of African Americans web page are included. This web-based information is presented alongside community newspapers and newsletters highlighting African American engagement in archaeology and preservation issues. CU faculty, alumni, and student involvement in African American archaeology is likewise highlighted. Materials related to the *Pennsylvania Archaeology Month 2008* celebrations were added to the display during the month of October. The display also serves instructional purposes, and is assigned as part of an exhibit analysis project for a *Culture, Language, and Society* course and it serves as an example illustrating historical archaeology for the *Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology* class.

The display debuted on September 28, 2008 to tie in with the Archaeology Month celebrations held each October in Pennsylvania. Display materials are being rotated to keep the presentation fresh as well as updated with the latest research findings. A sequel to this display that illustrates archaeology's research methods is planned for the 2009/2010 academic year. This forthcoming display will include information on the depth and breadth of the African American archaeological record recovered to date.

The selection of the library as the venue for this display allowed for a substantive sub-theme relevant to the university population, entitled "The library is a portal to learning about your past. Dig In!" The exhibited items were selected for their ability to demonstrate information retrieval about a topic often ignored, forgotten, overlooked, and denied in more commonly available popular history resources. The displayed items are secondary sources of information obtainable through library and internet research that demonstrate research and resulting history interpretations over an extended period of time -- from the 1950s through to the present. L. P. Hill Library Archivist and Reference Librarian Keith Bingham created a Library Finding Aid on the topic of archaeology in support of this display's library and instructional science-promoting effort.

Dig Into Your Past: African American Historical Archaeology was organized by Patrice Jeppson. Materials on view were loaned by her as well as by historian Dr. Shirley Parham, also of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Cheyney, and historian of the *Avenging the Ancestor's Coalition*. Other items came from physical anthropologist Nadja Palm of the African American Museum of Philadelphia and by archaeologists Kim Morrell, Doug Mooney, and Jed Levin. Graphics were loaned and or provided by the Living History Center Archeology Lab at Independence National Historical Park, by URS Corporation (New Jersey), and by the architectural, urban planning, and historical preservation consulting services firm of Kise, Straw and Kolodner (Philadelphia). Archaeology Month materials were provided via the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum.

Note

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