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April 2006

Dig This Summer

Kim Christensen will be returning to the Gage House this summer to complete the preliminary archaeological excavations started on the property last summer. These small-scale excavations – the first archaeological work done on the property – are intended to provide a window onto the archaeological deposits left in the yard so that future excavations and restoration work can be planned.

This past summer, the excavations found a large number of artifacts across the property that would have been trash from the Gage household and those after them – including broken ceramics; window, bottle, and lamp glass; and animal bone. We also found the stone stoop to the woodshed that was attached to the rear of the house during the Gage family's time on the property, and what may be part of the foundation to the bay window that was on the Walnut Street side of the house. In all, nearly thirty small test pits were excavated across the property, and this summer we need to do about fifteen more to be done with our preliminary look at the property. During the fall semester, fourteen undergraduate students at the University of California Berkeley helped Kim wash, sort, identify, and label all of the artifacts recovered from the excavations last summer, and now Kim is focusing on cataloguing these artifacts, the ceramics especially, and determining how old they are.

Once the excavations are completed this summer, a long-term plan for more extensive excavations, in concert with the ongoing restoration projects, can be made. Kim hopes to undertake more extensive excavations on specific areas of the property – to be determined based on our excavations during these two summers, and the remote sensing to be conducted by the Fort Drum Cultural Resources crew this month – during the summer of 2007 with both volunteer and student help.

The excavations for this summer are estimated to take about two weeks to complete, with another three weeks anticipated after that to process the artifacts recovered – and Kim wants your help! Volunteers are needed for both the excavation and artifact-processing tasks this summer, which will take place in late May through July. No previous experience is necessary to volunteer; just email Kim at kchristensen@berkeley.edu to sign up. Scheduling will be flexible and any help is appreciated. More information on the excavations from last summer, and plans for this summer as they are announced, can be found on the GageDig blog at: <http://iis.syr.edu/WP/gage/>

Your Support is Invaluable!

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Fort Drum Provides Invaluable Assistance

Noted archaeologist Dr. Laurie Rush, the Fort Drum Cultural Resources Coordinator, led a team of researchers and scientists from Fort Drum on April 13 to determine what structures may have existed on the Gage House property in the past. The assembled team used ground-penetrating radar and other remote sensing equipment to locate 19th century outbuildings no longer present on the property, and found, in preliminary analysis, what may be the site of the ice house, woodshed, garden house and a retaining wall. Identifying these former structures will help Kim determine where to dig this summer and next. The Gage Foundation was extremely fortunate to receive this unique service from the personnel at Fort Drum, and we are grateful.

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