

Professional Archaeologists of New York City Newsletter

Issue 193 | Spring 2025

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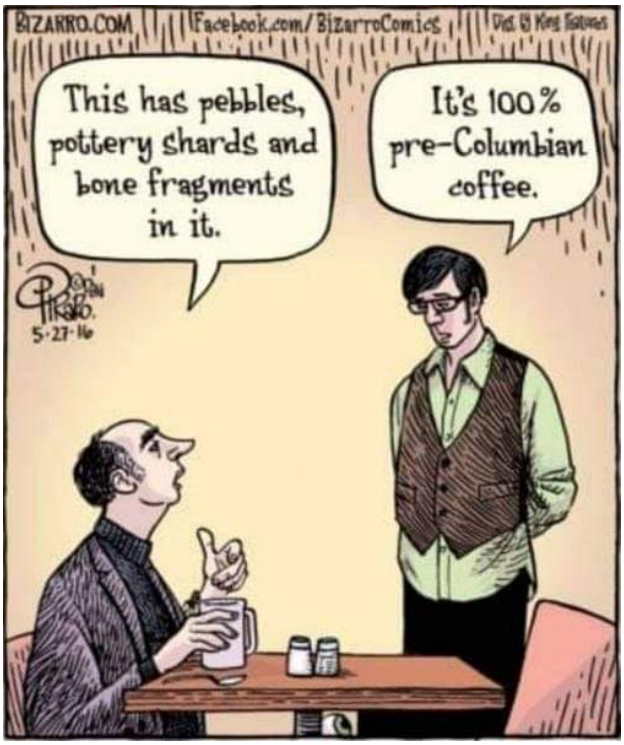


President's Message

Dear Fellow PANYC Members,

Happy summer! In this edition of the newsletter, in addition to the usual meeting minutes, you will find some wonderful news and notes related to our organization and its members.

I would like to draw your attention particularly to the save the date for our long-awaited PANYC public program, the first since the pandemic! Thanks to the much-appreciated planning efforts of Jessica Striebel MacLean and Meghan DeVito, it will be held in the South Street Seaport Museum's fantastic newly renovated event and exhibit space on Saturday, October 18, 2025. The fitting theme will be the "Maritime City." Please see below for a few more details and contact Jessica and/or Meghan if you would like to be part of the event or help with planning.

Speaking of the maritime city, we are pleased to reprint a short chapter written by Joan Geismar, "One Ordinary Extraordinary Brick," that was originally published in 2020 in *Artifacts that Enlighten: The Ordinary and the Unexpected*, edited by Linda Stone, Barbara J. Heath, and Patricia M. Samford. The article features terrific images and tells the story of one of Joan's favorite artifacts, found within the hull of a scuttled merchant ship at the 175 Water Street site.

Please also see the news about Charlotte Boesch's presentation at the United Nations about the history of oysters in NYC and the work of the Billion Oyster Project. It is wonderful to celebrate the fantastic work of PANYC members' children! And also please note Allison McGovern's excellent ongoing work to protect the Sugar Loaf Hill Shinnecock Burial Ground.

I extend great thanks to Meghan DeVito for putting together this excellent newsletter. Please send her news and updates or ideas for other content for the next edition in the fall.

Wishing you a wonderful summer!

Meredith B. Linn
PANYC President (2024-present)

NEWS AND NOTES

SAVE THE DATE

We've set a date for the return of our annual PANYC Public Program, this year to be held at the South Street Seaport Museum on Saturday, October 18, 2025. The program will be held in the museum's newly-renovated event and exhibit space in the 1868 Thompson Warehouse (formerly a cast iron and stone warehouse for A.A. Thomson & Co.) at 213-215 Water Street. We'll be curating our program around the museum's inaugural exhibit in the space—Maritime City. If you have an idea for a topic, or would like to be part of the planning committee, please contact Jessica Striebel MacLean and/or Meghan DeVito.

NEWS

Charlotte Boesch, daughter of Met Chapter member Eugene Boesch, gave a presentation to the Turkish Journal at the United Nations about the history of oysters in New York Harbor and the work of the Billion Oyster Project, where she serves as Senior Program Manager. View the presentation on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gu4lEUPSGA

PANYC is now an "Affiliated Society" with the Register of Professional Archaeologists. This will help PANYC to become more visible nationally, as we will be listed on RPA's website, and it will provide our members with a discount on their RPA registration or renewal fees. Please stay tuned for more information.

Our PANYC President, Meredith Linn's recently-published book, *Irish Fever: An Archaeology of Illness, Injury, and Healing in New York City, 1845–1875* was selected by Choice magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title of 2024. Congratulations, Meredith!

The 53rd Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial Archeology, was held May 29-June 1, in Buffalo, NY. More information: https://www.sia-web.org/sia-2025-conference-buffalo-ny/

Harlem community members and project leaders recently met at City College's Spitzer School of Architecture to begin discussing ideas for memorializing the Harlem African Burial Ground, located at the site of the former 126th bus depot on Second Avenue. Read more here: https://pix11.com/news/local-news/new-york-city-plans-to-preserve-african-burial-ground-in-harlem

The Whalers' Washing House shrine, acquired (controversially) by Franz Boaz and George Hunt for the American Museum of Natural History in 1905, was returned to the Mowachaht First Nations people in Canada as part of the museum's repatriation efforts. Read more about it in the NY Times or ARTnews.

Some of you may have seen this Gothamist article about the 18th century vessel found at the WTC site 15 years ago, which completely overlooked the role of archaeologists in its discovery and excavation. In response, Jessica Striebel MacLean wrote an informative letter on the work at the site and archaeological practice in general, and Meredith Linn sent it to the author and received a positive reply. Read a copy of the letter at the end of the newsletter.

A bit further afield...the Sutton Hoo helmet recently made the news thanks to new research from the National Museum of Denmark, which may suggest it has Danish origins. Read more here: https://news.artnet.com/art-world/sutton-hoo-helmet-danish-new-find-2626392

NOTES FROM NYAC

NYAC met all day June 2, 2025. The meeting, as usual, was split into two parts: Morning (officers and board) and afternoon (general membership). NYAC's new President is Kathryn (Kate) Whalen and Carol Weed was elected to the Board seat vacated by Dave Witt. Sissie Pipes won election to fill the remaining two years of Kate's board position. The meeting highlights follow.

* NYAC approved advancing annual monies to support the newly created Charles Vandrei grants. These will complement the Funk Foundation grants.

* NYAC will continue to participate in the newly re-formed Professional Councils Workgroup which currently has professional archaeological councils representing Colorado, Michigan, New York (us), Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. These councils have agreed to speak with a common voice on certain issues dealing with maintenance of regulations and laws that protect cultural resources.

* New York's Unmarked Burial Protection Act Burial Review Committee (BRC) reported on presentations about the Act to the Fordham Law Symposium and the New York State Conference of Coroners. Similar presentations will be made by NYAC members supporting Christine Reith (NY State Archaeologist) and Lisa Anderson (NYSM bioarchaeologist) who are both named members of the BRC. NYAC and NYSHPO also are both named to the BRC. Carol also will continue to represent NYAC on BRC.

* NYAC members have reported a lack of qualified field technicians who have had field schools or even boot camps. To this end, a committee being led by Beth Selig will be compiling information about the existing SUNY field schools, the feasibility of NYAC running field schools through Empire State College, and other options. Initially, available field schools will be posted on the NYAC web site. NYAC is also looking into creating scholarships for persons to attend field schools.

* NYAC also may offer other Workshops including 1) preparation of NEPA level CATEX, EA, and EIS documents; 2) What is the Role of the Archaeologist in assisting Lead Agencies in the creation of Tribe/Nation Agency Consultation Packages.

* Under Kate's guidance, NYAC will begin preparation of protocols dealing with the use of AI in work plan, report, and research in general.

* Sissie Pipes noted that she is retiring in two years and has asked that NYAC consider the creation of a Web Manager officer-level position to replace the role she has had for several years. She also presented a concept to expand the offerings presented on the NYAC website and she will be writing up the description of this over the summer.

* Throughout the meeting, the fallout from various federal-level EOs and other regulatory changes were subjects of discussion. Of particular concern were the loss of IMLS grants, changes to both NEPA and NHPA, the implementation of unrealistic review periods for projects impacting federal lands or with federal leads, and, somewhat surprisingly, changes to ESA definitions. Uniformly, the NYAC members support face-to-face meetings with our federal representatives (Senate and House), member-signed letters supporting (few) or opposing (many) federal level actions, and anything else we can do to keep the potential destruction of historic properties and TCPs on peoples' minds.

* Daria Merwin will be advancing a meeting with SHPO to get clarification on the criteria used to define CRIS Archaeological Buffer Areas, unmarked cemetery protections, and use of AI.

SEND US YOUR NEWSLETTER ITEMS!

If you have items you'd like included in any upcoming newsletters (new publications, notes, events, etc.) please send them to Meghan DeVito at **meghanldevito@gmail.com**.



Help us improve our website

If you have any suggestions for our website, or any photos we can use on it, please email **info@panycarchaeology.com**

Check out our website here: www.panycarchaeology.org

NEW PUBLICATIONS

In the Wilson's Kitchen: Discoveries from Seneca Village is a new digital exhibit launched by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, created in partnership with the Bard Graduate Center and curated by Meredith B. Linn, Samantha Fleischman, and Josh Massey. View the exhibition here.

Allison McGovern published an ***Archaeological Management Plan for 520 and 536 Montauk Highway*** for the Peconic Land Trust and the Niamuck Land Trust. Our President, Meredith Linn, wrote a letter to Southhampton Town Councilmembers and planning officials on behalf of PANYC in support of the plan. You can view the letter of support at the end of the newsletter.

We're pleased to include another chapter from the SHA's Special Publication *Artifacts that Enlighten: The Ordinary and the Unexpected*[1], this time from Joan Geismar, titled "**One Ordinary Extraordinary Brick**." Find the chapter at the end of the newsletter.

[1] Chapter 12 in Stone, Linda, Barbara J. Heath and Patricia M. Samford (editors) 2020. *Artifacts that Enlighten: The Ordinary and the Unexpected.* Germantown, MD: Society for Historical Archaeology. Special Publication.

Minutes
PANYC General Meeting
Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 6:30 PM
Online

NEXT MEETING: TBD

Attendees: Britt, Berrocal, DeVito, Geismar, Lee Kinsey, Linn, Martin, Mollin-Kling, Reilly, Rogovoy, Rothschild, Stone, Striebel-MacLean (Note: Berrocal, Lee Kinsey, and Rogovoy are guests of Britt)

President's Report:
Linn reported that she applied for PANYC to be an "Affiliated Society" with the Register of Professional Archaeologists, which was accepted. This will allow members of PANYC who are not already members of another affiliated organization to register or renew their RPA membership at $40 off the regular rate.

Treasurer's Report:
Linn reported on behalf of Meade that PANYC has $7876.03 in the bank, which is lower than the last meeting, as the three-year Wix renewal of $803.05 was paid. Our only current expenses are for the website, specifically the GoDaddy monthly hosting fee, which currently is $18.72. There is a discounted rate, if we pay for a whole year at once, rather than month to month. The Website committee should discuss ways forward.

Committee Reports:

Advocacy: Britt stated no new news to report.

Awards: Please provide nominations for the best Student paper (the Salwen prize, $100.00) or the best contribution by a non-archaeologist to the archaeological process to the committee by July 1st. Martin has volunteered to serve on the committee as Cantwell has stepped down. Britt offered as well if needed. Thank you to Anne-Marie for her years of service on the committee!

Bylaws: Linn reported on behalf of Wiley, the Chair, that the committee has no new updates to report as of yet. Geismar announced she will resign from the committee. Discussion ensued. It was suggested that for now, to alleviate time commitment, the Bylaws committee will just focus on reviewing the formal election process, which is the section that currently needs to be reviewed and edited.

Met Chapter: Linn stated that there is no new news to report. They are looking for activities! If you have any suggestions, please let Linn know. Email: mbl2002@gmail.com.

Newsletter: Please send content to Meghan DeVito. She is compiling the next newsletter and looking for material. If you have had any publications, awards, or good news to share email Meghan for the Newsletter! Email: meghanldevito@gmail.com

NYAC: Linn shared on behalf of McGovern that there is no new news to report. All PANYC members are encouraged to join NYAC. https://nysarchaeology.org/nyac/join-nyac/

Public Program: MacLean reported that the PANYC Public Program will be held on October 18th in the afternoon. The date is also International Archaeology Day. There will be no charge to PANYC since SSSM is a co-sponsor. They will promote the event through their outlets, but PANYC can reach out to our contacts. The room seats up to 120 attendees. The suggested theme is "Marine City" to work in tandem with the new exhibit at the museum.

The committee welcomes your ideas! If you have any thoughts on papers, presenters or want to join the committee and help plan the event, reach out to Megan or Jessica. Thanks to both of you for finding PANYC a new venue to restart our public program!
Emails: meghanldevito@gmail.com and jsmaclean@mac.com.

New Business:

Reilly brought news to the members that the Theoretical Archaeology Group-TAG will be held in NYC from May 29-31, 2026. It will be co-hosted by CUNY Graduate Center and Pratt Institute. The plenary session will be held Friday night at the GC, and the remaining session will be held at Pratt. Pratt also has secured affordable housing for students who would like to attend. TAG conference representatives will be soliciting people who can serve as advisors for the conference. Discussion was had around PANYC's involvement in the conference, from mentoring students, offering career advice at a brownbag lunch, holding a session, or poster, etc. It is a great space to bring professional archaeologists from all sectors in for discussions. Reilly also stated that TAG will be looking for monetary support from organizations, including PANYC. These funds will go to offset the cost of registration for students, so it will be affordable for them to attend. The official asking price is $1000, but any amount is welcome. The Board will discuss these options and come up with a recommendation before our next meeting in September

MacLean brought up an article recently written in the Gothamist, https://gothamist.com/news/a-revolutionary-war-era-ship-found-under-the-world-trade-center-finally-has-a-home#comments, that is about the World Trade Center ship returning to New York and being housed and eventually exhibited at the New York State Museum. While this is wonderful news, the article barely mentions archaeology, and is written as if it were accidently found by workers and that archaeology was a side note. It was requested that PANYC write an official letter in response to this, but also for members to write directly to the Gothamist and leave notes in the Comments section of the online article (see above link). Britt will compose some one- to two-sentence responses, comments, and MacLean will draft an email response directed to the writer and editor, and both will be shared with the membership so they can cut and paste or edit accordingly in response. These will be sent shortly, while the article and information are still fresh in the news.

<u>UPCOMING PANYC MEETING DATES</u> (2025/26):
TBD via email

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm

Minutes prepared by:
Kelly M. Britt, PANYC President Elect for Lynn Rakos, PANYC Secretary

Minutes
PANYC Board & General Meeting
Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 6:30 PM
Online

NEXT MEETING: Tues. May 20, 2025

Attendees: Britt, DeVito, Geismar, Linn, Martin, McGovern, Meade, Mollin-Kling, Rakos, Reilly, Rothschild, Spigelman, Spritzer, Wiley

A single meeting was held for all members as opposed to a separate Board meeting followed by the General meeting. The March meeting is PANYC's "Annual Meeting" as per the bylaws.

President's Report:
Linn reported that the next step to becoming an "Affiliated Society" with the Register of Professional Archaeologists is to provide them with a list of PANYC members which she will do now that people have renewed for 2025. Meade noted that two members have opted not to renew their PANYC membership for 2025.

Treasurer's Report:
As this is PANYC's Annual Meeting, Meade gave an accounting of PANYC's 2024 fiscal year. Her report is attached to the minutes.

Committee Reports:

Awards: Please provide nominations for the best Student paper (the Salwen prize, $100.00) or the best contribution by a non-archaeologist to the archaeological process to Nan Rothschild before April 15th. The committee is recruiting a new member as Anne-Marie Cantwell is stepping down. Thank you, Anne-Marie, for your years of work on the Awards committee! Email: nar8@columbia.edu.

Bylaws: Wiley reported that the committee has a working document that includes their suggested edits and highlights the issues that they see in the bylaws. They are preparing new language, as appropriate, that they will provide to the board, possibly by the May meeting.

Field Tech: Meade reported that she and McGovern are working on this but do not have anything substantive yet to report. This is a joint effort with NYAC to increase visibility for field techs and provide information to them on jobs, pay, rights, etc.

Met Chapter: Dues are due! Please renew. Linn noted that $20 of the dues go to NYSAA to pay for the bulletin. They are looking for activities! If you have any suggestions, please let Meredith know. Email: mbl2002@gmail.com.

Newsletter: Please send content to Megan DeVito. She is compiling the spring newsletter and looking for material. Email: meghanldevito@gmail.com

NYAC: McGovern encouraged all PANYC members to join NYAC.
https://nysarchaeology.org/nyac/join-nyac/
The NYAC spring meeting will be held jointly with NYSAA, May 2-4, 2025, in Niagara Falls.

Public Program: DeVito reported that she and Jessica MacLean met with the South Street Seaport Museum (SSSM) staff and toured their new facility in the Thompson Warehouse. She showed photos of the space to meeting attendees. The SSSM is excited to co-sponsor a public program with PANYC. October 18th in the afternoon has been tentatively scheduled as the date which happens to be International Archaeology Day. There will be no charge to PANYC since SSSM is a co-sponsor. They will promote the event through their own outlets but PANYC can reach out to our contacts. The room fits up to 120 seated attendees. A topic/theme has yet to be decided but maritime and/or archaeology of the South Street Seaport area were suggested.

The committee welcomes your ideas! If you have any thoughts on topics or want to join the committee and help plan the event reach out to Megan or Jessica. Thanks to both of you for finding PANYC a new venue to restart our public program!
Emails: meghanldevito@gmail.com and jsmaclean@mac.com.

New Business:

Linn wrote a letter on behalf of PANYC in support of the Peconic Land Trust and the Niamuck Land Trust's Archaeological Management Plan (AMP). McGovern prepared the plan and provided meeting attendees an overview of the situation. The AMP is attached.

Linn asked how people felt about the online breakout rooms. They seem to work.

Rakos noted that the Annual Conference for the Society for Industrial Archeology will be in Buffalo, NY from May 29 – June 1.

Linn and Rothschild reported that the Central Park Conservancy has a Mellon grant to plan a commemoration of Seneca Village. They are engaging the broad community in this effort.

UPCOMING PANYC MEETING DATES (2025):
Tues. May 20, 2025

Meeting adjourned at 7:15.

Minutes prepared by:
Lynn Rakos, PANYC Secretary

Final Minutes
PANYC Board & General Meeting
Thurs. 1/23/2025, 6PM
Online

NEXT MEETING: Weds. Mar 19, 2025

Reminder: 2025 Dues are Due!

Attendees: DeVito, Geismar, Linn, McGovern, MacLean, Meade, Mollin-Kling, Rakos, Semon, Simon, Stone, Wiley

A single meeting was held for all members to work collaboratively on committee issues, as opposed to a separate Board meeting followed by the General meeting.

President's Report:
As approved at the November meeting, PANYC will apply to become an "Affiliated Society" with the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA). Linn reported that the next step is to provide RPA with a list of PANYC members which she will do once most people have renewed for 2025.

Treasurer's Report:
Meade reported that she filed the 990N e-postcard for PANYC's 2024 taxes.

NYAC Committee Report: McGovern reported that the winter meeting was held recently. She encouraged all PANYC members to join NYAC. https://nysarchaeology.org/nyac/join-nyac/
The NYAC spring meeting will be held jointly with NYSAA, May 2-4, 2025, in Niagara Falls.
The Human Remains & Unmarked Burial Sites Committee has been presenting to organizations on the New York State Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act.

New Business:

MacLean brought up the possibility of holding meetings, when online only, at 6:30. This later time allows people to get home from work. All in attendance agreed it was a good idea. Future online meeting will start at 6:30PM. In-person and hybrid meetings will still begin at 6:00PM.

McGovern brought to attendees' attention a change in the NYSHPO Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS). The program no longer depicts "Sensitivity Areas" but now shows "Buffer Areas." A discussion ensued as to what this means for when an archaeological survey is required or not, what it means for site identification, how the buffer areas might be interpreted by different parties, etc.

Stone noted that the SHPO has a "short form" for use when preparing reports in certain areas. She provided the "Phase IA/IB Archaeological Investigation Abridged Report Form" and it is

enclosed with these minutes. As noted in the meeting, and on the form, it cannot be used for projects in NYC!

The next meeting is our Annual Meeting. It will be held on Wednesday, March 19th.

UPCOMING PANYC MEETING DATES (2025):
Weds. Mar 19, 2025
Tues. May 20, 2025

Meeting adjourned at 6:30.
The following committees met afterward in small break-out groups:

1. By-laws
2. Field Tech Initiative
3. Public Program

Minutes prepared by:
Lynn Rakos, PANYC Secretary

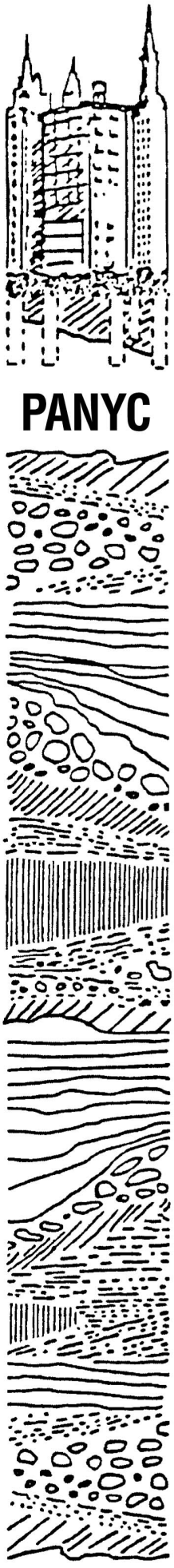
DRAFT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP LIST BASED ON NOVEMBER 19, 2024 MEETING

If you do not see your name where it should be, please let the committee chair know. If you are listed as a member of a committee and are not, or no longer wish to be, please let the committee chair know. Conversely, if you would like to join any committee, you may do so by contacting them.

Committees Required by Bylaws:
Advocacy and Community Engagement (part of PANYC's mission) – Britt, George, McGovern, Mollin-Kling
Education (part of PANYC's mission) – Britt, George, Linn, Martin, MacLean
Public Program (specified in current bylaws) – President-elect (Britt), DeVito, MacLean
Membership – President-elect (Britt)
Newsletter – Editor (DeVito), Wiley, President (Linn)
Nominations/Election – President (Linn), 1 board member, 1 non-board member

Committees Formed as Needed (some of these may change to "Required by Bylaws" depending on future bylaws amendments):
Archives – Geismar, Linn
Awards – Cantwell, Rothschild (chair), Schuldenrein?
Bylaws – Geismar, Simon (co-chair), Stone, Rothschild, Wiley (co-chair)
Field Tech. Initiative – McGovern (co-chair), Meade (co-chair), Spigelman
Social Committee (new) – Mollin-Kling, Reilly, Spigelman
Website – Britt, DeVito, Rakos, Stone

Liaisons:
Landmarks/Repository – President (Linn), President-Elect (Britt), Past President (Stone), Geismar, Linn
Met. Chapter, NYSAA – Linn, MacLean, Martin, Meade
NYAC – McGovern
Parks & Historic House Trust – Geismar



Professional Archaeologists of New York City, Inc.

March 21, 2025

Maria Moore, Southampton Town Supervisor
Michael A. Iasilli, Councilperson
Cyndi McNamara, Councilperson
William Pell IV, Councilperson
David Wilcox, Town Planning Director
Janice Scherer, Town Planning & Development Administrator

Dear Supervisor Moore, Councilperson Iasilli, Councilperson McNamara, Councilperson Pell, Director Wilcox, and Administrator Scherer,

I am writing to you on behalf of Professional Archaeologists of New York City (PANYC) in support of Dr. Allison McGovern's Archaeological Management Plan for 520 and 536 Montauk Highway in Southampton, New York. Founded in 1980, PANYC is an organization devoted to the protection and preservation of archaeological and historic resources. Part of our mission is to advise and educate public agencies on matters relating to archaeology.

We were asked by Tela L. Troge, Esq., a voice for the Shinnecock Indian Nation, as well as Carol Weed, President of the New York Archaeological Council (NYAC), to review Dr. McGovern's Archaeological Management Plan (AMP) and to convey to you whether or not we believe it to be a good plan that follows best practices.

PANYC has reviewed the AMP, and we strongly support it. The AMP outlines how the properties in question have been used in the past, that they are part of the larger Sugar Loaf Hill site—a sacred burial site used by the Shinnecock Nation and their ancestors for thousands of years—and that they meet the National Park Service's definition of a Traditional Cultural Place. The AMP also explains why there is a high probability that intact human burials are present on both properties, and ground penetrating radar testing conducted by Southampton Town and Sean Tvelia from Suffolk Community College has identified a crematory pit on nearby Sugar Loaf Summit (536 Montauk Highway).

The AMP offers sound advice for the sustainable management of the properties, which are protected under the town of Southampton's *Sugar Loaf Hill Shinnecock Burial Ground CEA* and supporting legislation as well as the new 2023 New York State Unmarked Burial Site Protection Act. The land is now owned by the Peconic Land Trust (PLT) and the Niamuck Land Trust (NLT), who will partner with the Shinnecock

Nation to protect and manage the properties. The AMP outlines responsible and sustainable next steps that are both in compliance with the law and respect the site as a sacred burial ground.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We urge you to ensure that the AMP is implemented in order to protect the Traditional Cultural Lands in question. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions.

Sincerely,

Meredith B. Linn, Ph.D.
PANYC President
Associate Professor of Historical Archaeology
Bard Graduate Center

cc:
John Halsey, Peconic Land Trust
Dr. Allison McGovern
Tela Troge, Esq. Niamuck Land Trust
Chief Harry Wallace

From: info panycarchaeology.org
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 11:00 AM
Subject: Comment on your Gothamist article and request for correction

Dear Jon Campbell,

As professional urban archaeologists in New York City, we are delighted to see and hear your capture the excitement and mystery of the discovery—the phoenix rising from the mud—while World Trade Center site, which has made its way back to New York for permanent display. You coverage in the Gothamist and on WNYC of the 18th-century wooden gunboat excavated at the shedding light on the years of work it has taken to excavate, research, conserve, and bring the vessel home to New York for reassembly. The missing piece in the narrative frame is the vital (and legally mandated) role New York City archaeologists played in the discovery of the vessel in 2010. The "workers" who discovered the ship, like the "workers" from Texas A&M steaming and cleaning the ship's timbers in Albany, are archaeologists!

The World Trade Center Vehicular Security Center (WTC VSC) site and the ship discovered therein are an excellent example of federal, state, and city laws protecting archaeologically sensitive sites doing their job by mandating archaeological investigation. Before construction began at the WTC VSC site, an archaeological sensitivity study was conducted to assess the site's potential for archaeological remains. The WTC site is located on landfill—artificially made land—that extended the site out into the Hudson River in 1690, in 1790, and again in 1818. Archaeological excavations at other landfill sites in the city have similarly unearthed ships (175 Water Street), revealing that the hulls of decommissioned ships, as well as timber cribbing, were used to contain the loose fill and prevent it from washing away.

Given this precedent, the WTC VSC site was deemed archaeologically sensitive, and urban archaeologists were on-site, working alongside construction workers, to identify archaeological features, such as ship hulls, as the foundation for the new building was being excavated. It was through this collaborative effort that archaeologists (whose hard hats and reflector vests render them indistinguishable from construction workers) identified the timbers of the ship as it emerged from the mud and subsequently photographed, 3D scanned, and excavated the "about 600 planks of wood in all, along with more than 1,000 artifacts."

We are always excited to see archaeology profiled in the news, especially in New York City, where it's commonly believed that "there's nothing left to find." Part of our role as professional archaeologists is to illuminate the work we do, communicating the importance of the laws that protect our city's archaeological heritage. And, because what we find is really cool, we want to share it with everyone. The generic term "workers" obscures the planning and expertise brought to these discoveries, as well as the collaborative nature of the enterprise. The discovery of the ship was not happenstance but the result of laws and the critical eye of experts onsite. Similarly, the accidental discovery trope in Brian Williams' story is a great narrative device, but in this case, it is inaccurate.

We would appreciate your help to correct these inaccuracies and would be grateful if you could issue a correction. The ship was not discovered accidentally but through the coordinated efforts of archaeologists, construction workers, and legislative mandates.

If you would ever be interested in writing an article about archaeology in New York City, our organization and its members would be happy to work with you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Professional Archaeologists of New York City (PANYC)
https://www.panycarchaeology.org/

The archaeological sensitivity assessment and a final report detailing the excavation of the ship, as well as guidelines for archaeological work in New York City, can be found on the NYC Landmark Preservation Commission's website, linked below. Also included are links to the state and federal laws governing archaeological work in New York City and State.

- Topic Intensive Archaeological Documentary Study WTC Vehicular Security Center (2009)
- World Trade Center Memorial and Development Plan: Data Recovery and Analysis of the WTC Ship (2013)
- Guidelines for Archaeological Work in New York City, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (2018)
- Guidelines for Archaeological Work in New York State (State Historic Preservation Office Environmental Review Program)
- Federal Archaeological Guidelines under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

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One Ordinary Extraordinary Brick

Joan H. Geismar



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Let me be perfectly clear: I don't keep artifacts from archaeological sites. However, the small, ordinary, misshapen, Dutch brick in question is the exception, and I treasure it. It apparently served to help sink a 100-foot, derelict merchant vessel discovered at the 175 Water Street Site in Lower Manhattan (Figure 1), and was one of many about to be trashed (Figure 2). While "ordinary," it was totally unexpected as was the ship repurposed as cribbing to keep the landfill in while keeping the East River out.

Beginning in the late 1730s, the site was one of numerous Lower Manhattan blocks reclaimed from the East River (Figure 3). Situated between Water and Front Streets, its western boundary was Fletcher Street, and its eastern boundary John Street, initially known as Burling Slip. The middle of the block between Fletcher and John Street was our focus. It was here that we hoped to learn about many aspects of mid- to late-18th- and 19th-century life in New York City, in addition to how the block was created by its water lot grantees, mainly the city's merchant elite (one of them a woman, but that's another story).

Archaeologists investigating these Lower Manhattan landfill sites in the 1980s have referred to that decade as the "golden age" of New York City archaeology. It was a time when a spate of new office buildings in or near Manhattan's Landmarked seaport district often warranted archaeological investigation. The construction offered the opportunity to learn how New York City's British colonials created land from the river and changed the configuration of Manhattan.

With my degree in hand, the Soil Systems Division of Professional Services Industries, Inc., hired me as the project's Principal Investigator. On October 28, 1981, the investigation began by transforming what had been a parking lot for over 25 years (Figure 4) into an archaeological site. This meant exposing the block's backyards to locate features that included privy pits and cisterns (Figure 5). And we hit the jackpot.

Over the next three months, field archaeologists, lab technicians, specialists, and consultants exposed, recorded, and analyzed features in and material from the backyards of mixed-use structures, all but one covered by building extensions.

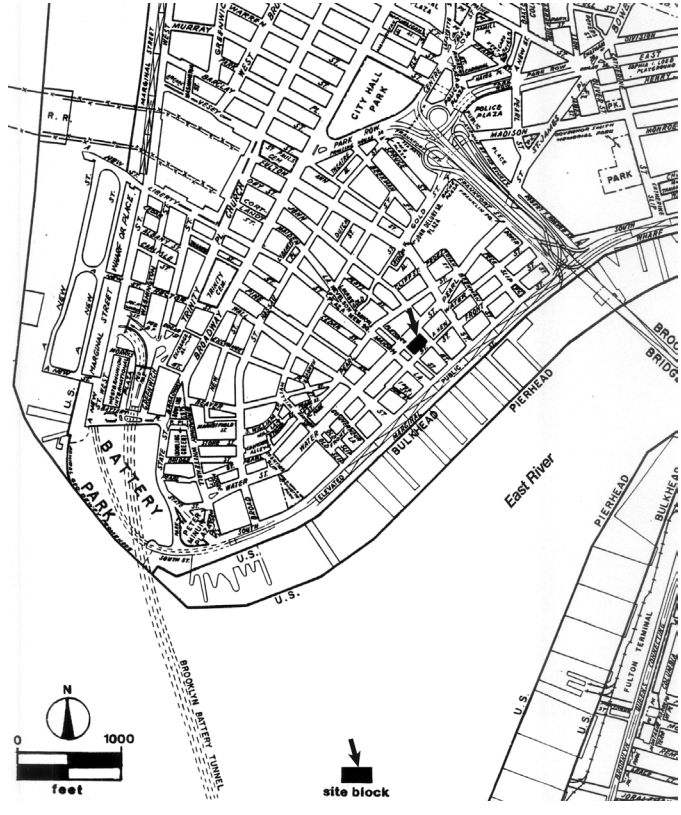

FIGURE 1. The 175 Water Street Block Location in Lower Manhattan

Under these extensions were the sought after features with their detritus from "stores" (warehouses) and domestic households. And beneath all this was the landfill; that is, the trash and soil used to fill the block structured by the parallel and perpendicular wharves required by water lot grants. These massive structures supported the streets that defined blocks and, initially, created slips (here, Burling Slip) to accommodate the merchant ships that brought goods to the water lot owners.

But the backyard features weren't our only interest. The landfill itself, and what preceded it, that is, the material associated with piers, wharves, and the river bottom were also important to study. We excavated "deeptests" to determine the depth and components of the landfill.

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FIGURE 2. Five of the many small, misshapen yellow Dutch bricks recovered in and around the hull of "The Ronson." (Photo courtesy of Professional Service Industries, Inc., Soil Systems Division, 1982)

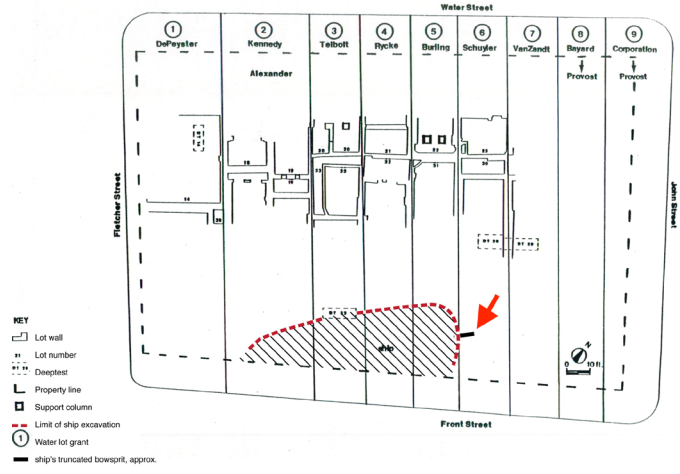

FIGURE 3. The 175 Water Street Excavation Plan Showing the Block's Nine Water Lots, the Water Lot Grantees, and the Location of "The Ronson" Note: the ship's bowsprit (arrow) extends into Lot 6 owned by a woman grantee (Ann Elizabeth Schuyler).

The deeptests were excavated with a backhoe (as, of course, was much of the site clearing and removal of the backyard building extensions). Here, sampling was accomplished by excavating approximately 1 ft. levels and recovering and wet screening seven 5-gallon buckets of material from each level.

Four deeptests were excavated, the fourth and last (DT 33) near Front Street. It was here that I thought we would find the block's deepest landfill since it was the most southerly of the four and therefore the furthest into the river (in retrospect, this was not necessarily so since the depth of the landfill undoubtedly fluctuated as did the river bottom).

Now for the exciting part: the backhoe operator asked where to locate this final deeptest and I pointed, somewhat arbitrarily, I admit. The spot was quite far south but not where it could possibly undermine the site's construction fence on Front Street.

Being an accommodating fellow, and actually a dream of a backhoe operator, one with a delicate touch (he would pick up a bottle and lay it at my feet, intact), he began to excavate. We collected our seven bucket samples and kept digging. At about 10 ft. below the surface, the dirt fell away, exposing horizontal planks (Figure 6) and I assumed we had found the cribbing that held the landfill in place. However, as we went deeper the "cribbing" curved toward the river. In consultation with Norman Brouwer, then the maritime historian at the nearby South Street Seaport Museum, and with additional excavation, it was determined that we had serendipitously exposed the midsection, port side of the aforementioned merchant vessel incorporated into the cribbing that kept the landfill in place.

While someone said, "Joan, your ship came in," it actually heralded the end of my on-site duties at 175 Water Street. A team of nautical archaeologists from Texas A & M headed by Warren Riess and Shelli Smith was brought in to excavate a

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FIGURE 4. The 175 Water Street block, a parking lot, shortly before it became an archaeological site. (Photo by A. Donadeo, 1981). The view is looking west toward Fletcher Street. Water Street is to the right and Front Street to the left. John Street (originally Burling Slip), which would be in the foreground, is not shown.

ship on land (Figure 7). The entire bow and most of the hull proved to be situated on the block (Figures 8 and 9).

Initially dubbed *The Ronson* after the site's developer who was waiting in the wings to build his 32-story office tower, the ship now has a proper name. After three and a half decades, Warren Riess believes he has identified the vessel as *The Princess Carolina* constructed in the Chesapeake in 1717.

And now back to my extraordinary ordinary brick.

The ship mainly proved to contain the same artifact-laden matrix found throughout the block. The nautical archaeologists (now joined by some of the land archaeologists who had worked with me), removed, measured, and photographed each accessible plank before it was carted off to what was then an active landfill on Staten Island. However one ship-related find was the small, misshapen bricks found in and around the vessel, apparently a component of ballast then reused to sink the vessel. These, too, were documented. When they, like the ship's planks, were about to go off to the landfill, someone asked if I would like one (or even more). With only a moment's hesitation, I said, "yes" and kept what to anyone else might be one ordinary brick. To me, not only wasn't it ordinary, but the fact that I kept it was extraordinary.

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FIGURE 5. The 175 Water Street block during backyard testing in early November 1981. The view is west toward Fletcher Street (Photo Courtesy of Professional Service Industries, Inc., Soil Systems Division, 1981).

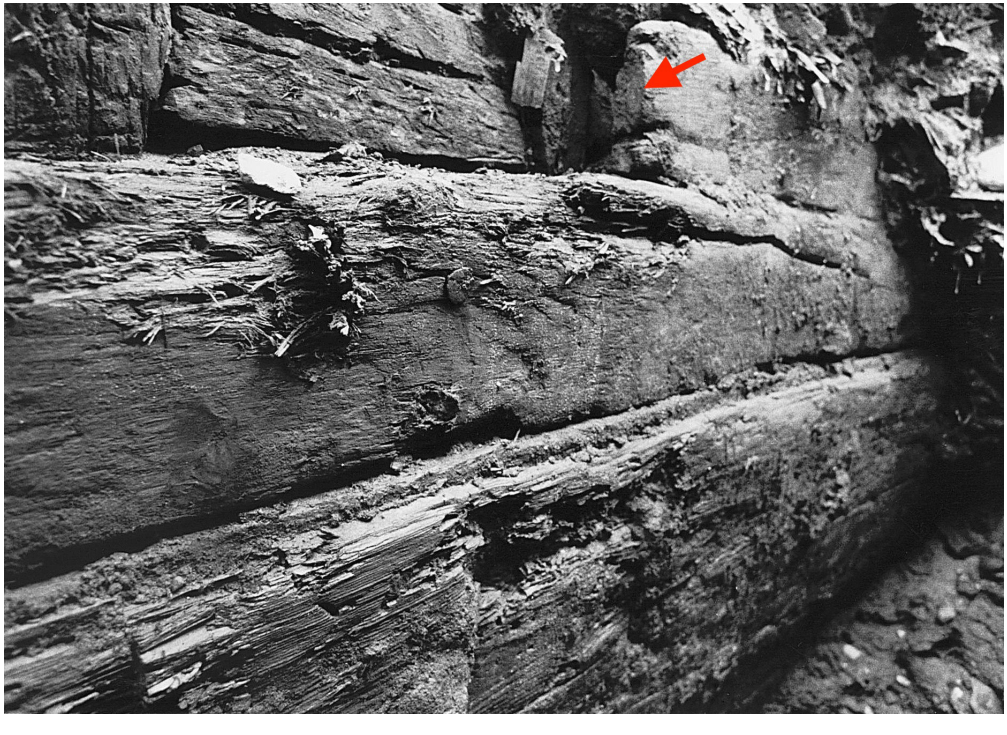

FIGURE 6. Deeptest 33 after the soil had fallen away to expose what proved to be the mid-section of the port side of a derelict merchant vessel incorporated into the block's cribbing. (Photo Courtesy of Professional Service Industries, Inc., Soil Systems Division, 1981). Note the gun port (arrow).

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FIGURE 7. Excavating "The Ronson." (Photo courtesy of Professional Service Industries, Inc., Soil Systems Division, 1982)



FIGURE 8. The exposed bow of "The Ronson" covered with salt hay to prevent freezing during 1982's record breaking cold January. (Photograph by author, 1982)

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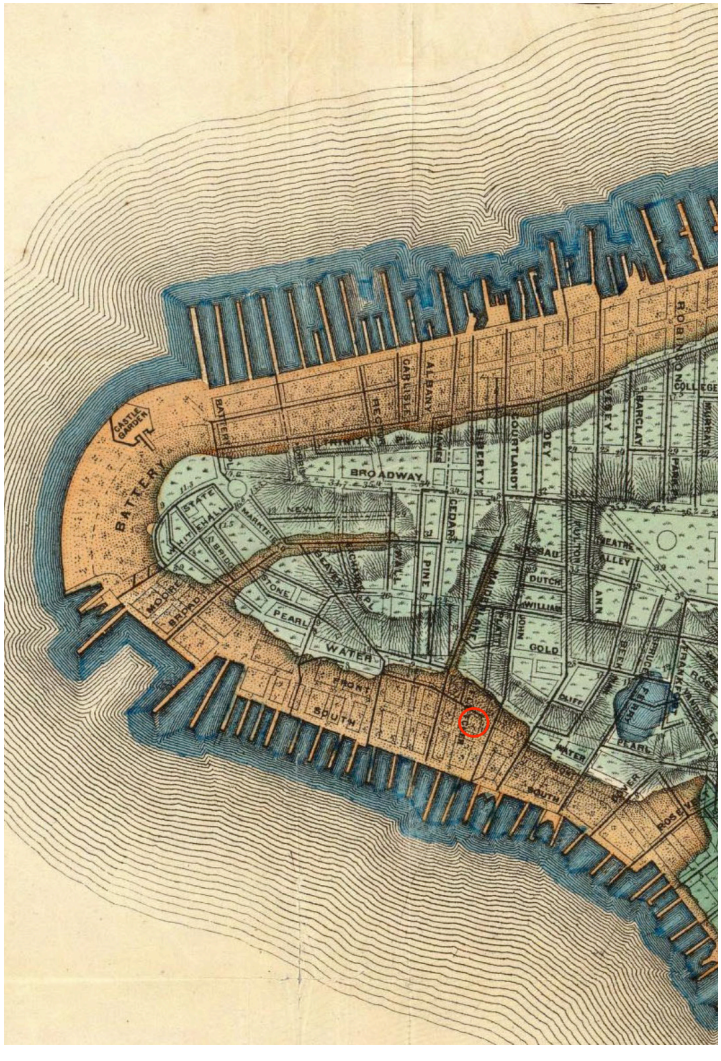

FIGURE 9. The 175 Water Street block (red circle) on Egbert L. Viele's 1865 reconstruction of Manhattan landfill (detail). The original landmass is green and the landfill is orange.

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Endnotes

[1] Information about 175 Water Street mainly is from memory augmented by the project report (Geismar 1983).