

DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

July 6, 2012 Angel Green Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology
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My name is Angel Green and I am an Anthropology major at Binghamton University in Binghamton, New York. It has been a lifelong dream of mine to work as an archaeologist in the field and this summer I fulfilled that dream. I am one of ten students participating in the Binghamton University Archaeology Field School 2012. This experience has not only opened my eyes to the wonderful intrigues and strenuous tedium of archaeology, but has also enlightened me on my strength as a woman in the field and has helped illuminate my future path as an archaeologist.

This year the field school is conducting excavations at a local site call John Moore Farm. This site has yielded fascinating information about prehistoric Native American settlement patterns from approximately 1500 B.C., a time known as the Transitional Period here in the Northeastern United States. John Moore Farm is located on the banks of the Susquehanna River and Native Americans used this site for seasonal camps. Our focus is to recover as much information from this site as we can before the City of Binghamton constructs a pedestrian/bicycle walkway on top of the site.

A day in my life as an archaeologist at John Moore Farm begins with lots of sun screen and bug spray. The site does not offer any shade and the banks of a river is a lovely home to many creepy crawly creatures. It is very green and lush here in Binghamton and most of our test units are dug

in the midst of a poison ivy forest. All inconveniences aside, with trowel proudly in hand, I dug and toiled with the best of them.

We have opened 18 test units during the past six weeks here at John Moore Farm. I have personally dug into four of them and have discovered exciting bits and pieces of history. Currently, we have uncovered several prehistoric hearths that can be identified by a cache of fire cracked rock, charcoal and reddened soils. Also, throughout the site we have found the tiny remnants of flintknapping. Flintknapping is the ancient process of making stone tools and this process leaves behind distinct tiny flakes of stone material. These materials have included chert, jasper, and rhyolite. Steatite, commonly known as soapstone, is another material found at the site and was used by Native Americans in the region for carving vessels. The chert is a local material, but the jasper, rhyolite and steatite are non-local and this offers interesting glimpses into the trade patterns of ancient Native Americans. We get very excited when one of our team digs up an actual stone tool such as an arrowhead. It is common to find the minute traces of the stone that was chipped away while making an arrowhead, but the Native Americans usually took the complete arrowheads with them when they left the camps so finding one still at the site thousands of years later is a real treat for us. All 'cool' and unique artifacts found will immediately make the rounds among the students which, in turn, receive excited gasps and intrigued praise. Archaeologists find happiness in the little things.