

# HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY & VISUAL ART

June 30, 2012 Philadelphia Archaeological Forum Day of Archaeology 2012, Digital Archaeology, Historical Archaeology, Illustration Anthropology, archaeological site, Archaeological sub-disciplines, archaeologist, Archaeology, art photographer, artist, Benjamin Franklin's mansion, Benjamin Pykles, Black, Black artist, Cheyney University, Coordinator, Cultural heritage, editor, Franklin, historical archaeologist, John Edward Dowell Jr., Moore, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, Philadelphia, President, Secretary of that non-profit advocacy group, Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter, U.S. National Park Service, visual material, West Chester University, [www.phillyarchaeology.org](http://www.phillyarchaeology.org)

I am an historical archaeologist who teaches at Cheyney University and at West Chester University, two campuses of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education that are located in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA. I am not teaching during the summer term which gives me time to pursue my research which involves studying the public's engagement



*Jackson Ward 'Smokey' Moore, Jr. in a National Park Service Public Affairs Photo, circa 1960. (Independence National Historical Park Archives).*

with the archaeological resources in Independence National Historical Park (a U.S. National Park Service property commemorating the birthplace of American democracy). Today, June 27<sup>th</sup>, has been a 'catch-up' day for me where I had time to move ahead on several items on my 'wanting to do' list. First, I wrote to the editor of the "Images of the

Past” column of the Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter (Benjamin Pykles) proposing a write-up about Jackson Ward ‘Smokey’ Moore, Jr. Moore, a retired archaeologist and a Native American Chippewa, excavated in Philadelphia in the 1960’s at the site of Benjamin Franklin’s mansion.

My offer to undertake this write-up required researching the Newsletter’s back issues to determine the type of information expected for the column and I spent an hour doing this prior to contacting Pykles to make sure I had the kind of information wanted. I then turned to some ongoing background research I’ve been doing for a possible book project that the art photographer John Edward Dowell Jr. and I have talked about doing. This would be a book designed for the general reader which would feature photographs John took during the excavation of the President’s House archaeological site in Independence Park. These photographs document the archaeological excavation and its findings about slavery and freedom at the birth of the American nation and, in doing so, they help create African American history. They are also art pieces made by a Black artist. Beyond documenting new American history evidence and documenting new African American history evidence, his photographs are art pieces (re’ artifacts) of black visual art. Today I spent time researching and considering how these images therefore fit into the history of Black visual art. After reading a significant portion of N.I. Painter’s *Creating Black Americans* I realized that Dowell’s President’s House archaeological site photographs not only help make Black history more visible but also help make black art history more “visible” and that this is something we would likely want our manuscript to address given that the history of black visual art, like African American history, has been ignored, overlooked, and excluded in the canon.



*ne of artist John E. Dowell’s photographs of the President’s House Site in Independence Park (right center, above the blue tarp-covered, back dirt pile). Dowell takes large format images (2 x 5 – 4 x 20 feet) which are then digitally scanned to produce highly detailed, deeply contextualized, images. His photographic style is known to convey life in the urban metropolis and he uses both unique perspective and lighting — namely pictures shot from high-rise vantage points that are taken at sun-up and sun-down.*

Later on in the day I began typing up the meeting notes taken during the last monthly meeting of the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum (PAF). I am Secretary of that non-profit advocacy group and I post the meeting minutes on the PAF listserv. However, I am coordinating a local version of the Day of Archaeology for the PAF

and I switched to work on this task. I am coordinating Philadelphia area Day of Archaeology contributions from local area archaeologists as well as members of the public during the period June 25<sup>th</sup>-June 28<sup>th</sup>. I will use these contributions to develop a new page of content for the PAF webpages at [www.phillyarchaeology.org](http://www.phillyarchaeology.org) that will help demonstrate and explain what people in our area do with archaeology both at work and at play. I will also be forwarding the contributions to the coordinator of the international Day of Archaeology blogging project.



*The logo of the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum, which is based on a commonly found historic dish.*