James Oronoco Dexter
Who was he?
James Oronoco Dexter was a manumitted slave who, after gaining his freedom, worked as a coachman for a wealthy Quaker family, the Pembertons. Living as a citizen of Philadelphia during the 1700s, James Dexter rented a house located on the grounds where the National Constitution Center now stands.

What did he do?
Together with Absalom Jones, Cyrus Porter, William White, Doras Jennings and several others, James Dexter helped found the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, a church still active today. Dexter himself is known to have hosted a number of meetings for the church’s establishment at his home in Philadelphia. Archaeological artifacts found at the house have provided clues as to what they ate, and what foods the Dexter family ate, and what possessions they owned.

Day of Archaeology
The Day of Archaeology is an international annual Internet event occurring every summer. People “working, studying, or volunteering in the archaeological world” share posts, i.e. text, photo, or video, describing archaeological projects they are working on that day.

This year, I submitted a post about my work on two sets of storyboards for two Public Service Announcements to be shown on the PECO Building Crown Lights in October.

(See Accompanying Slideshow for post and Storyboards)

PECO PSA Storyboards

“October is Pennsylvania Archaeology Month”

“Explore Philadelphia’s Buried Past”

Looking Ahead: Applications with Serious Gaming
After researching the lives of James Oronoco Dexter and Charles Willson Peale this summer, I intend to pursue the creation of a draft for an educational serious game, teaching students and curious minds of all ages about the life of the people of Philadelphia during the late 18th century and early 19th century. Players will use problem-solving skills to find solutions to realistic obstacles that are either character-based (conversational segments with individuals found in the game) or non-character-based (segments involving objects, places, etc.). During gameplay, players will also encounter historical individuals like Absalom Jones, Rembrandt Peale, Benjamin Rush, Richard Allen, as well as Dexter and Peale themselves.

Charles Willson Peale
Who was he?
Charles Willson Peale was a painter, inventor, naturalist, and politician. He was well-known for his prowess in portrait painting and deep interest with natural history.

What did he do?
While Peale may be best remembered as a painter, he is also honored for building his famous natural history and art museum, the Peale Museum, in Philadelphia. Within its walls were archaeological artifacts, mounted taxidermy specimens of animals, fossils, collections of insects and minerals, as well as portraits of notable figures (such as George Washington). Perhaps the most famous exhibit among Peale’s collections was the bones of a mastodon. Moses Williams, as a slave of the Peale Family, was a worker in the Museum, managing a Physiognotrace, a device used to make silhouette portraits and eventually used the money he earned to buy his freedom at the age of 27.

References

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