

Getting the Dexter Site Findings Out of the Archeologist's Hands and Into the Classroom



Jed Levin (National Park Service)

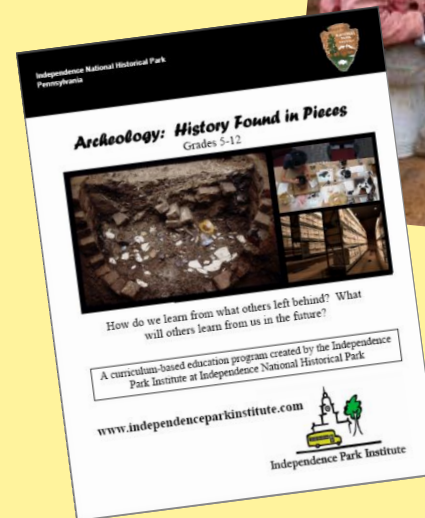
Jeffrey Collins (Independence Park Institute, Independence National Historical Park)

James Dexter, a free black coachman, lived during the years c.1790-1798 in a small house in the city of Philadelphia. The founding meetings to establish what became the first black church were held in Dexter's home.

In 2003, redevelopment activities in **Independence National Historical Park** led to the construction of a Transportation Center --a bus drop-off--located atop of the James Dexter house lot.

Independence Park undertook planning for archeological treatment of the Dexter site through full consultations with the leadership of the descendant black churches.

Today, this archeological research is interpreted to school children from across the country through the educational programming of the **Independence Park Institute**.



3D interpretation of the Dexter house created by students and faculty of the College of Media Arts and Design, Drexel University (Courtesy, G. Muschio), Barrel feature excavated by Kise Straw & Kolodner archeologists (NPS, 2003), Cover of the IPI Lesson plan.

The James Oronoco Dexter Lot: The Archaeology of a Black Founder

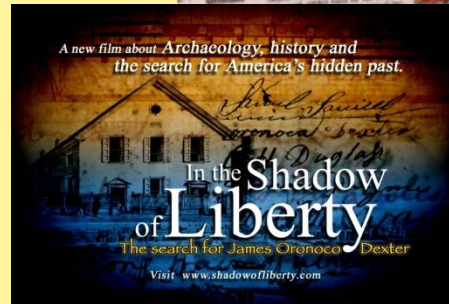
James Oronoco Dexter played an influential role in helping to shape and secure the independence of Philadelphia's antebellum free black community. Despite the importance of his contribution, Dexter had, until recently, disappeared almost entirely from the public's collective historical memory. This changed when the Dexter house lot was included in the construction plans for the new National Constitution Center in Independence National Historical Park (opened, 2005). Historical Archeology investigations undertaken at the site have helped renew appreciation of Dexter's place in our shared heritage.

Excavation and Civic Engagement

The National Park Service initially chose in-place preservation as the stewardship option for the Dexter site however consultations with descendant church communities and other interested parties led to a reevaluation of the site's treatment. In 2003 the site was excavated and its location was subsequently commemorated in a series of interpretive panels.

Public Interpretation

Since their recovery, artifacts from the Dexter site have remained on public view. The story of the archeological search for James Dexter is also the focus of a full-length feature documentary film. Reproductions of the recovered artifacts and documents related to Dexter are used in educational programming at Independence Park.



Benediction by descendant church clergy on site (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2003), Privy shaft excavation at the Dexter house lot (NPS, 2003), Location of Dexter house lot among other properties impacted by the NCC construction, Documentary film still (MitchSmith Productions, 2008)



Archeology Learning Lab Independence Park Institute Independence National Historical Park

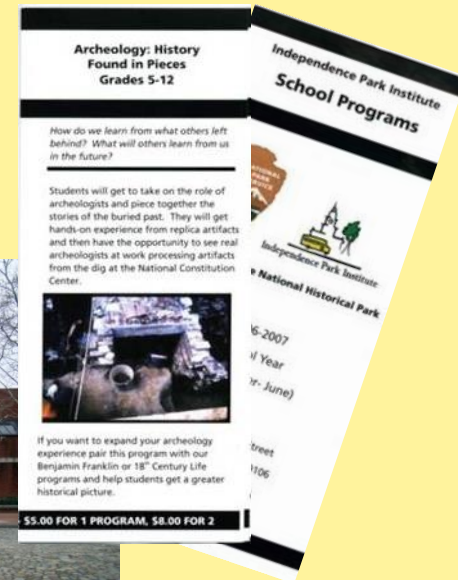
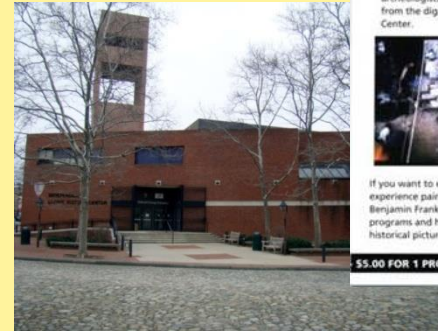
James Dexter features centrally in one of three IPI instructional spaces that serves school groups visiting Independence Park.

Archeology: History Found in Pieces

is an IPI educational package that uses reproduction artifacts and documents from the Dexter site to teach about the life of a freed black person in colonial America.

This instructional program was created in collaboration with both archeologists and educators.

The Independence Park Institute Endowment, established through Eastern National and funded by the William Penn Foundation, provides an ongoing source of financial support for the IPI education programming and staffing .



Classroom images here

Archeology: History Found in Pieces

Presented by the teacher in their home classroom:

▪ Pre-visit Lessons

- Lesson 1. What is Archeology?
- Lesson 2. The Archeological Process-
Why do it and how is it done?
To Excavate or Not to Excavate
Archeology Step-by-Step
- Lesson 3. Historical Document Research
- Lesson 4. Digging for Clues!
Answers in Stratigraphy
Vocabulary, Further Research Resource List

▪ Post-visit Extension Activities

All pre- and post- visit instructional material is available for download as pdf files.
Included: Instructions, Student Worksheets, Resource Sheets, Teacher Answer Key.

Conducted during the class fieldtrip while at Independence Park.

▪ One (1) hour-long activity on-site at Independence Park

This practicum takes place in the IPI Archeology Learning Lab classroom.

Independence National Historical Park
Pennsylvania



Archeology: History Found in Pieces

Grades 5-12



How do we learn from what others left behind? What will others learn from us in the future?

A curriculum-based education program created by the Independence Park Institute at Independence National Historical Park

www.independenceparkinstitute.com



Independence Park Institute



The **National Park Service** cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our cultural and natural heritage.



Independence National Historical Park commemorates the birthplace of American democracy. The park's *Interpretive Plan* centers on what was revolutionary about the American Revolution. It examines both the promises and paradoxes of liberty and it illustrates the democratic nation of diverse people with different cultures, beliefs, and political ideas. INHP has had more than 50 years of historical archaeology research and interpretation. As part of a major national and international tourist destination, these are likely the most visited historical archaeology sites in the US.

The Independence Park Institute (IPI) is the education branch of the Interpretation and Visitor Services Division of Independence National Historical Park. IPI offers facilities, materials and educational programs that connect people of all ages to the resources and stories of Independence National Historical Park. In specific, the educational aims of the Independence Park Institute include:

- developing curriculum-based school programs and materials for visiting classes
- conducting professional development workshops for teachers
- creating standards-based instructional materials that teachers can use to make the student's experience more relevant and meaningful while at the park

Our ultimate goal is to connect all learners, both intellectually and emotionally, to the resources and stories of Independence National Historical Park that center on the ideas and ideals that led to the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States.

