

Gorgas Mill Complex records

1135.1986.28

Finding aid prepared by Samuel Butler.

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Kenyon, Jeff, 1948-
Creator	University of Pennsylvania. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.
Title	Gorgas Mill Complex records
Call number	1135.1986.28
Date [inclusive]	1964-1976
Extent	1.9 linear feet (two 5 by 7 index card boxes, and one manuscript box)
General Physical Description note	Good. Certain documents and the newspaper clippings had to be photocopied onto acid-free paper due to poor paper quality.
Language	English
Abstract	This collection, the Gorgas Mill Complex records, includes documents from the Monastery archaeological site, on the Wissahickon Creek in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The excavation site was an 18th-century mill site which later became part of Fairmount Park. It was excavated in 1974 by the field school of the Penn Museum under the direction of Jeff Kenyon. This collection was divided into four series based on subject: administrative records, historical research, field notes and visual materials.

Cite as:

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Gorgas Mill Complex records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

Biography/History

This project, called the Gorgas Mill Complex Project here because that was the name the project leader, Jeff Kenyon, used (though it was generally known as the Monastery Project), was an excavation carried out during the summer of 1974 at the site of a mill on the Wissahickon creek near Kitchens Lane in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The project was conceived and led by Jeff Kenyon, the director of the education department at the Penn Museum (then called "The University Museum"), as well as a doctoral student in the American Civilization department of the University of Pennsylvania. Kenyon initiated this project not only to excavate the site and find physical evidence to support the information known from historical documents, but also to provide a summer course for high school students that would give them hands-on experience in the field of archaeology. Kenyon had led a similar, though smaller, project in 1972 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, involving eleven students who worked only on Saturdays. To facilitate the integration of education and historical archaeology, Kenyon set up two courses, the first from June 17 to July 19, the second from July 22 to August 23, with each course accommodating up to 30 students. The students learned how to dig test trenches, catalogue artifacts, and other rudiments of archaeology, under the close supervision of Kenyon and his staff.

While the students made up the bulk of the project team, Kenyon hired a small staff consisting of a Naturalist-Ecologist, Stanley Hunter, a Laboratory-analytical Archaeologist, Betty Cosans, and, as field supervisor Bill Schauffler. By hiring these specialists, Kenyon hoped to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to the project, and to give students a broader understanding of the relationship between archaeology and other disciplines.

The project was named after the site, which was termed "The Monastery" probably because the earliest known owner of the mill, John Gorgas, had been affiliated with the Church of the Brethren. In reality the site had no religious affiliations, and had been the spot of a mill from the mid 1700's to the late 1800's. The excavations was therefore called the "Gorgas Mill Complex" after the family that owned the land for many generations. Besides the house, which still stands, there had been several buildings related to the milling operations which were torn down in the 19th century, and the remains of which were mostly buried underground. The excavation covered five structures along the Wissahickon creek, a portion of the yard near the house and one building near the house.

While the excavation did not yield a large number of artifacts, it did uncover evidence of many of the structures, below ground. In the yard north-east of the house, parts of a garden wall were excavated and hypothesized to have been made from a re-used building wall. A springhouse was uncovered, cleared of debris, and mapped. An unidentified structure next to a small stream flowing into the Wissahickon was excavated to a great extent, and evidence was found suggesting that the structure may have been a saw mill, with a possible mill race site next to the stream. There was also evidence of blacksmithing in another corner, which may point to other interpretations. Both the head and tail race of the main water wheel were excavated to provide a cross section of the mill race and the walls of the race were uncovered. The excavation of the water wheel housing revealed large bolts in the floor which may have been used to

support a bearing for the axle of the wheel. Also the creek-side wall was found to be a re-used apple press base.

This project served as the subject for Kenyon's dissertation in American Civilization, which he wrote in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his doctoral degree.

Scope and Contents

Records of the Monastery site on the Wissahickon Creek, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, excavated in 1974 by the field school of the Penn Museum (then named "The University Museum"), under the direction of Jeff Kenyon. Mr. Kenyon was a University of Pennsylvania graduate student in the department of American Civilization, and his dissertation on the excavations is in the Van Pelt Library of the university. The excavation area is an 18th- and 19th-century mill site owned by the Gorgas family and others, which was incorporated into Fairmount Park in the mid-19th century.

This collection was divided into four series based on subject: administrative records, historical research, field notes and visual materials.

The Administrative Records were separated into different folders, again based on subject. This collection contained several items that did not relate to the Gorgas Mill Complex Project at all, but seemed only obliquely related to either the director, Jeff Kenyon, or his interest in making archaeology accessible to high school students. Of these materials only some press releases about a project Kenyon led in 1972 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, were kept because of their similarity to the Gorgas Mill Complex Project. The main collection of documents pertain to the conception and production of the Gorgas Mill Complex Project and were divided, essentially, into the different steps of this process: the project proposal and outline, grant applications, permit for digging applications, personnel recruitment, course material for the students, and the press releases printed during the project.

The Historical Research contained two subjects. First was the history of the Gorgas family and the property now called "The Monastery," which had been researched about 10 years before the Gorgas Mill Complex Project by the Roxborough Baptist Church on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. This research was easily sorted by subject. The next kind of research consisted of nothing more than records of transactions concerning mills, but proved harder to sort because it contained both documents and index cards with the same information and there was much information on each document that was not common to all the documents. The two formats were kept separate and divided first geographically and then by number, for they all had an index number, which has remained a mystery but seemed the best way to arrange the cards and documents since it was the only common feature, and used by the creator of the research. Some of the index cards contained mills from the same location as those on the documents so in this series some folders ended up with the same name but some contain index cards while others contain documents. There was also one notebook of the same kind as the field notebooks, which contains tax information about the Gorgas Mill site, and was stored with the other notebooks.

The Field Notes were the most diverse series, containing documents, index cards, and notebooks, but all pertained to different information so they were easily divided. The notebooks were issued to the students to use during the excavation, and while apparently 30 student could be accommodated by each of the two sessions, only ten journals remain, eight from the first session and two from the second. They all contain similar information taken from lectures and diagrams of the excavation site. There was one notebook containing a land survey of the mill complex site done in 1976 and also one notebook containing results from lab tests on the artifacts that were bagged. This system of bagging artifacts is what led to the

organization of the rest of the series, because the only common information on the note cards, termed "Field catalogues" was the number of the bag which held the artifacts listed on the cards. Fortunately, both these index cards and the documents termed "Field Reports" were already divided by area and location before processing, so everything was divided first into area, and then the index cards were ordered numerically by bag number and the documents chronologically. This series also includes a rather enigmatic collection of documents called "Feasibility Reports" which seem to relate to the selection of an excavation site. These were left in their original order.

The Visual Materials series contains aerial pictures of the Gorgas Mill Complex, as well as photographic records of the features the excavation uncovered. The slides came already ordered in a case and the original order was retained.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

1/19/2009

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Use Restrictions

Although many items from the archives are in the public domain, copyright may be retained by the authors of items in these papers, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law. The user is fully responsible for compliance with relevant copyright law.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

A film called "Search", produced at the same time as the Gorgas Mill project, is part of the archives' holdings and available online at http://www.archive.org/details/upenn-f16-4062_1974_Search. This is an educational film that is aimed at a grade 7-12 audience to introduce them to the field of archaeology. It was produced by the University Museum and features footage of the Gorgas Mill excavation (approximately ten minutes into the film).

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Field notes
- Photographs

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Wissahickon Creek (Pa.)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Kenyon, Jeff, 1948-

SUBJECT(S)

- Mills and mill-work

Bibliography

"The Gorgas Mill Complex Project" by Jeffrey L. Kenyon, [Philadelphia] 1977. Dissertation in American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania.

Collection Inventory

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS, 1972-1976.

Series Description

Correspondence between Jeff Kenyon and the National Endowment for the Humanities with a grant proposal for the Gorgas Mill Complex Project. Also correspondence between Kenyon and Museum Director Froelich Rainey about a research grant for Jenifer Leighton, a student of anthropology. Correspondence between the Penn Museum and the Fairmount Park Commission and the City of Philadelphia requesting a permit to excavate at the Gorgas Mill site. Documents related to the initiation of the project as a summer program for students, including student application forms, a course description, excavation instructions and a list of personnel. Also contains press releases and newspaper clippings concerning the Gorgas Mill Complex Project, and Jeff Kenyon's Valley Forge project of 1972. Arranged by document subject.

	Box
Correspondence, Grants and Applications.	1
Correspondence, Fairmount Park Commission and City of Philadelphia.	1
Summer Program in Historical Sites Archaeology.	1
Personnel.	1
Excavation Instructions.	1
Press Releases and News Clippings.	1

FIELD NOTES, 1968-1976.

Series Description

Contents include: field records; artifact catalogues; and 14 notebooks, including those of 10 students, Jeff Kenyon, and Bill Schauffler. Field records arranged by location, artifact catalogues arranged by bag number, and notebooks arranged alphabetically.

	Box
Feasibility Logs, Feasibility Records.	1
Surface and Mounded Material.	1
Area B, Feature 1, N.E. Wall.	1
Area B, Feature 1, N.E. Wall + Deep Pit.	1
Area B, Feature 1, S.E. Wall.	1
Area B, Feature 3.	1
Area B, Feature 4.	1
Area B, Feature 5.	1
Area B, Feature 6.	1
Area B, Feature 7.	1
Area B, Misc.	1
[Map of Site and Excavation Section].	1
[Lots Containing Metal Artifacts].	1
Area A, Springhouse.	2
Area B, Unknown Structure.	2

Area C, Mill Race Section.	2
Area D, Adjoining Mill Race.	2
Area E, Tail Race.	2
Area F, Mill Interior.	2
Yard.	3
Notebooks: J.L. Kenyon, W. Shauffler.	3
Notebook: '76 Surveying.	3
Notebook: Lab Records.	3
Notebook: Lauren Dvonch.	3
Notebook: Carolyn Fox.	3
Notebook: Sue Lippincott.	3
Notebook: Kathy Miller.	3
Notebook: Raymond Murphy.	3
Notebook: Amy Roche.	3
Notebook: Amy Rosenberg.	3
Notebook: Owen Siegel.	3
Notebook: Pat Thatcher.	3
Notebook: Mimi Winn.	3

HISTORICAL RESEARCH, 1964-1974.

Series Description

Research conducted on the history of the Gorgas family and the property taxes on the mill complex from the late 18th century. Also information concerning the sales of mills in Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey from the 18th century. Gorgas family research arranged by subject, mill information arranged geographically. Some mill transaction information is duplicated on documents and notecards.

	Box
“The Monastery”.	1
Gorgas Family, Tax Records.	1
Bucks County Mills.	1
Chester County Mills.	1
Montgomery County Mills.	1
Philadelphia County Mills.	1
Misc. Mill Descriptions.	1
Berks County Mills.	2
Bucks County Mills.	2
Cecil County Mills.	2
Chester County Mills.	2
Kent County Mills.	2
Lancaster County Mills.	2
Maryland Misc. Mills.	2

Newcastle County Mills.	2
New Jersey Mills.	2
Philadelphia County Mills.	2
Misc. Mills.	2
Non-Grist Mills.	2
Agricultural References.	2
Notebook: Mills.	3

VISUAL MATERIALS, 1974.

Series Description

Photographic records (35mm slides and black and white negatives and prints) of the excavation and site are arranged by format and numbers. Slides and negatives are catalogued in the image database of the Museum Archives.

	Box
Photographs.	1
Slides.	