

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUNY ARCHAEOLOGISTS REVEAL RESEARCH INTO EARLY BRISTOL HILLS SETTLEMENTS

Research teams from two SUNY schools this summer dug deeply into pioneer life in the Bristol Hills with a pair of archaeological digs aimed at learning more about the earliest European-American settlements in our region.

This fall, the Bristol Hills Historical Society will host a pair of lectures by those projects' lead researchers to reveal what was found at the sites in Bristol and South Bristol, both of which date to the 1790s.

The first event, on Sunday, Sept. 25, features the work of a SUNY Brockport team whose Frost Town Archaeology project is investigating one of the earliest industrial logging communities in the region, founded in 1790.

The project leader, Dr. Alexander J. Smith, said the research tells as much about the settlement's last days, as timber resources were exhausted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as it does about the town's origins.

"Population numbers across the county plummeted, timber resources were exhausted, and whole settlements were abandoned," Smith said. "Most of Frost Town was abandoned during this period, leaving a fascinating set of archaeological traces that showcase this demographic and industrial shift in the area, which ultimately led to the creation of numerous ghost towns in the Finger Lakes region."

The Sept. 25 event will begin at 1 p.m. at The Rochester Museum & Science Center's Cumming Nature Center, 6472 Gulick Road, in South Bristol, with a lecture by Smith on this summer's work and what is planned for next year. Following the talk, Smith will lead a guided tour to Frost Town's Gulick Road site, about a 10-minute walk from the nature center.

Cumming Nature Center admission costs \$3 per person. This fee will be waived for Bristol Hills Historical Society members for this event. Membership can be purchased in advance on the Historical Society's website or at the event.

Smith's Brockport researchers – whose work is supported by a grant from the American Council for Learned Studies – concentrated this summer on digging at Frost Town's Hall Residence and Gulick Road sites, unearthing hundreds of items plus a carriage house foundation and possibly the remains of a saw mill.

At the second event, on Thursday, Oct. 6, researchers from the anthropology department at Geneseo College will give a talk on their work this summer at the Burt-Wilder farm. The farm, on Case Road in Bristol adjacent to the Burning Springs site, was established in 1797 by the Burt family and later was the home of the Wilder family. Both families were instrumental in the founding of the town of Bristol.

Researchers Mia Iverson and Dr. Marie-Lorraine Pipes will present a summary of the excavations, which located the foundations of a springhouse and barn, as well as a large cellar. "The cellar yielded a wide range of artifacts that tell the story of early pioneer life in the Bristol Valley," Pipes said.

That Oct. 6 lecture will take place at 7 p.m. at the Historical Society's Grange Hall in Bristol Springs, 6457 State Route 64. While the lecture hall on the Grange's second floor is not handicap accessible, video and audio will make the lecture viewable in the ground floor meeting room. This lecture is free and open to the public.

Parking in front of the Grange is limited, so the society asks that spaces there be reserved for people with limited mobility. Additional parking is available at the nearby South Bristol Town Hall and across the street from the Grange at Gannett Hill Gardens.

The Bristol Hills Historical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that was formed in 2020 through the merger of the historical societies of Bristol and South Bristol, N.Y. It cares for two of the region's most distinctive historic buildings, the 1923 Grange Hall in Bristol Springs, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the 1846 Methodist Episcopal Church in Bristol Center. The society's website at bristolhillshistory.org and Facebook page at facebook.com/bhhistorical provide calendars of upcoming history presentations and other events, articles on local history, and a convenient way to become an annual donor at levels starting at \$15 for individuals and \$30 for families.

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ATTACHED: Photos from archaeological digs at Frost Town and Burt-Wilder farm

For more information:

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