

# Friends of Green Spring

DEDICATED TO THE OPENING OF A NEW NATIONAL PARK

Vol. 3, No. 1

Winter 2005

## RIVERSIDE FOUNDATION DONATES \$50,000 TO OPEN GREEN SPRING

### NEW CNHP SUPERINTENDENT DANIEL SMITH MAKES FRIENDS HAPPY TO SHOW GREEN SPRING

Shortly after assuming his duties as new superintendent of the Colonial National Historical Park, Dan Smith said he wanted to visit Historic Green Spring, a wish eagerly welcomed by members of the Friends Board of Directors. Though he could visit Green Spring any time on his own, Smith made the Friends happy by asking them for a tour.

*Superintendent Dan Smith, center, flanked by Roger Guernsey, left, and Dan Lovelace, right, poses for his first visit to Historic Green Spring. Others attending the breakfast or site tour were Archie Cannon, Bob Taylor and Cliff Williams.*



Smith joined President Dan Lovelace and several members of the board for breakfast on December 16, and then walked Green Spring for an hour and a half, focusing mostly on the archaeology assets west of Centerville Road. The orientation included flowing Green Spring itself, exploratory digs underway, as well as a demonstration of the size and location of projected improvements. Hoped for capital improvements to open Green Spring include a wayside turn out, a new entrance, parking lot and a visitor contact station served by water and sewer lines.

After visiting Green Spring, Superintendent Smith drove up Centerville Road to James City County's Freedom Park to see development there and understand the geographic proximity of the two parks and the linkage they share in African American history. Slaves freed after the death of the Green Spring owner, young William Ludwell Lee in 1803, were willed land in the area now named Freedom Park.

### GIFT ALLOWS SEARCH FOR MATCHES

Friends of Green Spring continue to receive fabulous support from Riverside Health System, owner and operator of neighboring Patriot's Colony. The latest is a \$50,000 donation from the RHS Foundation earmarked to capital improvements to Green Spring — meaning constructing infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, new entrance and parking lot and if needed in the future, turn lanes at the entrance.

Gen. Archie Cannon, a member of the Green Spring Board of Directors and founder of Patriot's Colony, originated the Friends' application and guided it to a successful conclusion. Gen. Cannon also is a member of the main Riverside Health System Board of Directors. The \$50,000 donation will be paid in \$25,000 increments — 2005 and 2006.

Friends' officers were hosts at a Two Rivers Country Club luncheon on January 27 to receive the first \$25,000 check from Riverside Health System representatives. Friends' President, Daniel Lovelace, accepted the check and thanked Riverside for its support in the past two years, noting particularly, sponsorship of the June 2003 open house and the acclaimed Historic Green Spring film in 2004.

Receiving the donations enables the Friends to apply for matching money from local, state and federal sources. Top construction priorities on the site include a new entrance or wayside turnout with an historic sign that educates the public about the importance of Green Spring.



*Loretta Hannum, director of education for the Friends Board of Directors presented two copies of the Voices of Green Spring DVD and Kent Brinkley's book, The Green Spring Plantation Green House/Orangery, to Benjamin Goldberg of the Williamsburg Regional Library. Mrs. Hannum was the social studies curriculum director for the Williamsburg-James City County schools before retirement. Copies of the DVD history of Green Spring and Brinkley's book about Governor Berkeley's mansion and farm are available from the Friends.*

# Historic Green Spring, Moses, Gowan Pamphlet and North America's First Black-led Baptist Church

BY LINDA H. ROWE

Tradition at First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, maintains that during at least part of the formative period (1776?-1792) for the historic congregation, African Virginians (slaves and a few free blacks) gathered in secrecy for religious meetings in the thickets and woods on the plantation of Green Spring in James City

County. The clandestine nature of these early gatherings has hampered efforts to develop a clear timeline of the events set in motion by Moses and continued by Gowan, later known as Gowan Pamphlet.

The story begins with an illusive figure known only as Moses who preached among "the people of color" in the Williamsburg area. Moses is known through the work of nineteenth-century Baptist historian Robert Semple who reported that, "Moses, a black man, first preached among them, and was often taken up and whipped for holding meetings." Historian Semple said nothing more about Moses, only that Gowan then "became popular among the blacks, and began to baptize as well as to preach." Unfortunately, historian Semple did not provide exact or even approximate dates for the early activities of Moses and Gowan.

An item in a 1779 *Virginia Gazette* identified Gowan as the slave of "Mrs. Vobe of Williamsburg" but made no reference to his religious life. Widow Jane Vobe had kept tavern in Williamsburg since about 1752, and her slave Gowan lived and worked at her establishment. Given the beatings Moses received, it is likely that he was also a slave, belonging to whom we do not know.

On their own time, slaves and other area blacks began to swell the ranks of prayer meetings led by Moses and then Gowan. Moses could have held clandestine prayer meetings with slaves as early as the mid-1770s, since Semple's account has Moses preaching in the Williamsburg area before Gowan. Baptist sources tell us that Gowan had commenced his own religious work by 1781. (Tentative though it is, this



*First Baptist Church*

timeline moves Moses back into the 1770s which squares more or less with the undocumented tradition at First Baptist Church that puts the founding of the church in 1776.)

Though the written record does not document outright the tradition that initially the

gatherings took place at Green Spring, that plantation is a plausible location for slaves to have assembled secretly. Circumstantial evidence supports the idea. Green Spring, five or six miles southwest of Williamsburg and north of Jamestown Island came into the possession of William Lee, a Virginian living in London, when his wife inherited the place about 1770. Over 4000 acres of fields and woodland fanned out from a mansion house providing ample cover for Lee's own slaves, other slaves and free blacks from the surrounding area to meet in relative safety. Criss-crossed by three roads that led to Jamestown and different parts of James City County, and connected to roads to York County, Yorktown, and Williamsburg, the Green Spring tract was accessible to slaves from perhaps ten or fifteen miles around.

Within a few years, the meetings moved closer to Williamsburg. Raccoon Chase, as it was known, was across Jamestown Road from Matoaka Lake (then Jones Mill Pond) in wooded low ground below a spillway. By 1793, Gowan was a freedman and had gained membership for his 200-member congregation in the regional, white-run Dover Baptist Association. Presumably less secretive by that time, the congregation remains shrouded in mystery until 1808 when tax records place it on Nassau Street in Williamsburg. By that time Green Spring was a fairly distant memory, but clearly, a hallowed one for the remarkable church.

*Linda Rowe (M.A., American Studies, The College of William and Mary) is an historian with The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

Daniel D. Lovelace

*President*

Randy Smith

*Vice President*

Donald S. Buckless

*Treasurer*

Robert W. Hershberger

*Secretary*

### BOARD MEMBERS

Professor Warren M. Billings

Winnie Bryant

M/G Archie S. Cannon, Jr. (Ret.)

Betty Cutts

Roger Guernsey

John Hamant

Loretta J. Hannum

Trist B. McConnell

Gayle K. Randol

Marc B. Sharp

Randy Smith

Richard G. Smith

Robert Taylor

Carol D. Tyrer

Jane Yerkes

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

David Ball

Sean K. Fitzpatrick

Hon. Jay T. Harrison, Sr.

Dr. James Horn

Julie Leverenz

Martha McCartney

Mary Minor

Hon. Thomas K. Norment, Jr.

Douglas Pons

Hon. Melanie L. Rapp

Timothy Sullivan

Friends of the National Park  
Service for Green Spring, Inc.

P.O. Box 779, Williamsburg VA 23187

Phone: (757) 221-0800

Email: greenspring2@aol.com

Daniel Lovelace

*Editor*



# GREEN SPRING

Colonial National Historical Park

# Finding Lost Outbuildings and a French Button:

An Archaeological Update from  
Dr. Andrew Veech



During last October and November, CNHP archeologist Dr. Andrew Veech and his team of volunteers continued to investigate Historic Green Spring. According to Dr. Veech, they discovered evidence of an 18' x 18' outbuilding (identical in size and symmetrical in location to one on the western edge of the formal garden) on the garden's eastern edge, located more than 1½ feet below a bed of heavy, waterlogged clay. This clay apparently aided in the preservation of the outbuilding itself. Hewn wooden beams, presumably dating to the 18th century, were noted on the outbuilding floor.

In addition, a 22'-wide gateway into the formal garden also was discovered, located midway along the 250'-long southern garden wall. The brick piers framing this central gateway are massively oversized, measuring 32" square. Such oversizing suggests that the gateway was grand in scale and designed to impress visitors — an architectural flourish in keeping with the size and complexity of Green Spring's formal gardens during first half of the 18th century.

Finally, the team discovered a pewter French uniform button embossed with the number "104" — the designator for The Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment, a German-speaking unit (from the Saar region of France) that formed part of General Rochambeau's army. After playing a critical role in the Siege of Yorktown, the regiment remained in the greater Williamsburg area for many months before being evacuated. The "104" button probably was lost by a French soldier who visited Green Spring during this period.

## FOUNDER OF FRIENDS RETIRES FROM BOARD BUT REMAINS LOYAL

Cliff Williams, founder of the Friends of Green Spring in 1997, will continue to contribute, but no longer be a member of the Board of Directors or chairman of the Advisory Council.

"My age and health tell me it is time to pass this effort to younger hands. I have not lost one ounce of enthusiasm for seeing Green Spring open to the public. Its magnificent history calls us to complete the mission," Williams said.

Williams said he thanks retired superintendent Alec Gould and staff for persevering to produce a General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for Green Spring. Without them, the park would never open.

"I thank Skip Brooks and the CNHP maintenance crew for their support. Somehow, they always managed to mow Green Spring when needed. Thanks also should go to Ranger Hiram Barber and the Green Spring Park Watch volunteers he trained. Road cleanups and having a presence on the property helped maintain order," he concluded.

## GREEN SPRING FILM AND KENT BRINKLEY ENTERTAIN CROWD

*Voices of Green Spring*, the new history film produced with the financial and technical support of Riverside Health System, premiered on October 24 at the Ford's Colony Swim and Tennis Club. Kent Brinkley, author of the book, *Green Spring Plantation Greenhouse/Orangery*, introduced the film by describing the imposing size and layout of Green Spring as begun by Governor Berkeley in the 1640s and enlarged following his marriage to Lady Francis in 1670.

A crew of professionals produced the 11-minute film on site last summer. It portrays the dramatic and often deadly events that challenged the colonists to survive. Actors from Colonial Williamsburg again portrayed the Berkeleys, as they did at the 2003 Green Spring open house. The film is available from the Friends in either DVD or VHS tape.

Friends' board members and special events co-chairs, Winnie Bryant and Jane Yerkes, assisted by Joan Lovelace and Tiffany Cutts, served wine and cheese after the program.



# News Briefs

## “Voices” Receives Proper Fanfare

On Wednesday, February 2nd, at 3:30pm Friends of Green Spring President Daniel Lovelace presented a lecture entitled “Varying Perspectives on the Battle of Green Spring, July 6, 1781” at the Yorktown Victory Center. The lecture was offered free to the public as part of the Jamestown/Yorktown Foundation’s Winter Lecture Series.

If you are a member of The College of William and Mary’s Christopher Wren Association adult education program, you may have noticed that CWA’s Spring, 2005 catalog lists a rather unusual course entitled: “17th Century English Colonial Governors Sir William Berkeley and Colonel Francis Lovelace: Cousins, Conspirators, and Casualties of History.” The course will be taught by Daniel Lovelace and meets on three consecutive Thursdays in April (the 7th, 14th, and 21st) from 2:00-4:00pm. For additional information, contact the CWA at their registration telephone number (757) 221-1506.



*A movie, a talk and wine and cheese were crowd pleasers at the premiere of Voices of Green Spring. Spreading the bountiful table and serving were Jane Yerkes, Winnie Bryant, Joan Lovelace and Tiffany Cuts.*

PRESORTED STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Newport News, VA  
Permit 110

Friends of  
GREEN SPRING  
P.O. Box 779  
Williamsburg, VA 23187