

Dig this

Archaeology students uncover JMU history

A group of JMU students sought to uncover some of the history and stories hidden beneath the university's 106-year-old campus. The historical archaeology students' work is directed by Dennis Blanton, an archaeologist and JMU professor of anthropology. The students initially focused on the changes in landscaping on the Quad over time and the area around Moody Hall, which rests on the site of a post-Civil War farmhouse that belonged to the original land-owners, the Henry D. Newman family.

A team working outside Moody Hall uncovered a brick believed to have been part of the Newman farmhouse. The find sent a charge through the group, which was excited to be finally excavating after months of research and numerous weather delays.

"As archaeologist David Hurst Thomas so aptly says, 'It's not what you find; it's what you find out,'" says Aaron Lovejoy, a junior anthropology major from Yorktown, Va. "History is always written with a certain bias. The cool thing about archaeology is that what's in the ground is unbiased. It's a clean slate of interpretation. And historical archaeology gives you a chance to listen to the voices of people who weren't written about."

Previously, the class' fieldwork involved trips up to an hour away, but Blanton, who arrived at JMU in the fall of 2013, wanted the students to gain experience at sites that were more localized and sustainable. "Why not tell the story of our own property?" he asks. **m**

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'It's not what you find; it's what you find out.'

— DAVID HURST THOMAS, *archaeologist*



JMU students uncover JMU and local history by digging on campus under the supervision of Dennis Blanton, JMU anthropology professor. A brick believed to have been part of the Henry Newman house was found near Moody Hall.

