

Episode 4 Field Recording

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Guests: Randi Flaherty and Addie Patrick, Arthur J. Morris Law Library, University of Virginia

Meggan Cashwell 00:01

I'm here with Randi Flaherty and Addie Patrick, behind the UVA Law School at the entrance to the Rivanna Trail, to discuss the historical landscape of North Grounds Project. Randi, can you explain what the project is and how it got started?

Randi Flaherty 00:15

Thanks, Meggan. Yeah, well, for one thing, we started to notice these really intriguing rock structures right here along the Rivanna Trail behind the Law School. And that happened about the same time we were really pushed by UVA's Commission on Slavery and the University to research our landscape, I mean, to ask questions about this place that go beyond the traditional UVA narratives. And here on North Grounds, really in UVA memory and narrative, this place doesn't have a strong history. It's the home of the Law School, it's the home of the [Darden] Business School, JAG [Judge Advocate General's] School, some athletic grounds. It's got the Rivanna Trail that goes through it, so it's accessible to hiking and to experiencing nature, but that was really it. And so, we started to ask who would have lived here, who would have labored here, in its history. And we also knew from Philip Harrington's work on the architectural history of the Law School that this, this land was known as the Duke tract when it was purchased by UVA in 1963. And so, we knew that this Duke family, this prominent white Charlottesville family, had lived here. But who else? And so, we were really surprised through our research to be able to identify and unearth lot of information about the enslaved individuals who would have lived in labored here, and really surprised to find out that this land was formerly home to the Albemarle County Poorhouse, and also to Charlottesville's former barbecue grounds.

Meggan Cashwell 01:30

You mentioned the Duke family, but I was hoping you would talk to us a bit more about the longer history of the land itself.

Randi Flaherty 01:37

So, this land, like all of Charlottesville, is traditional Monacan land. And white ownership of this land didn't start until the late 18th century, with land grants to English settlers, English families, colonizers, and that would have continued up through the 19th century, with a string of white families ending with the Dukes, who bought the property in the 1860s. And there was a school here at one point, and all of

these white families would have farmed this space by using enslaved laborers who would have lived and labored here on this landscape.

Meggan Cashwell 02:10

And Addie, would you talk to us about next steps for the project?

Addie Patrick 02:14

Sure. So as of spring 2021, we pulled together the research that we had into a virtual walking tour video, that video is available at landscape.law.virginia.edu. So, I encourage listeners to check that out. We were originally going to do an in-person walking tour for alumni during spring alumni day, alumni reunion, but then the state of the COVID pandemic in April 2021 was not so great. So, we decided to put it online. But since then, the summer right afterwards, we hired an intern through the Institute of Public History, Jack McLeod, who helped us to do some mapping of the Poorhouse landscape and how that acreage developed over its seventy years or so that it was situated on this part of the county. And so that was some really great and interesting work, and we learned a lot about the Poorhouse community, specifically, during that. And then fall 2022, we applied for and received a grant through the Jefferson Trust Foundation to— In the past few months, in the past year, we applied for a grant through the Jefferson Trust Foundation, and we received the grant and so with that grant, we hired another intern, an undergraduate student named Chloe Leon, who's going to help us to draft and install two interpretive signs along the Rivanna Trail that are going to point out and interpret ruins of the Poorhouse as well as the property, the part of the trail where we think Charlottesville's first barbecue grounds were, so those two signs. And then, Randi, do you want to talk more about your class?

Randi Flaherty 03:42

Yeah, this fall, I'm really excited to be teaching a research seminar on North Grounds, with Christa Dierksheide in the history department. And so, we have a group of law students and history students who are all doing research on this landscape to find, to see what other histories and stories and people they can illuminate from this historical landscape.

Meggan Cashwell 04:01

Well, this is all really exciting. Thank you so much.

Addie Patrick 04:03

Thank you, Meggan.

Randi Flaherty 04:04

Thanks, Meggan.