Virtual Tusculum and a Revised RFP Available

Edward Triplett, a graduate student in the history of art and architecture at the University of Virginia, and Tusculum Institute director, Lynn Rainville, created an animated version of historic Tusculum. The two photos below show part of the virtual reconstruction, accomplished by meticulously using measurements and photographs from the real structure. Visit the Tusculum website to view two short tours of the house.

The College has also posted a revised Request for Proposals (RFP) from interested parties who would be able to reconstruct Tusculum in a historically accurate way. Sweet Briar College has been storing, maintaining, inventorying and conserving the building materials associated with the historic home for the past eight years. At this point the college is looking for a new steward to rebuild the colonial-era house. The house is available, with stipulations as to its accurate reconstruction, for $11,500, which will serve as reimbursement to the College for the costs associated with the care of the structure. Interested parties should prepare a proposal that outlines their background and ability to rebuild Tusculum according to the Secretary of the Interior’s preservation standards (as outlined on the nps.gov site). A complete RFP can be found on the Tusculum website. For additional information, please contact Lynn Rainville.
**Student Research Produces Historic Movies**

During the fall term at Sweet Briar College, the Tusculum Institute has employed six students. These students are digging through the archives for historic photographs and documents, exploring the college and former plantation landscape and using new technologies to share their discoveries.

Anna Richards '14 has been researching the built environment at Sweet Briar and historic events. She has been compiling this research into short movies (one to two minutes long) in order to share her research with a wider audience. These videos incorporate photographs from the college archives, quotes from old letters and magazine articles, and highlights Richard's own interest in college history. Below are some images she uncovered in her research. Videos on Sweet Briar's dormitories and past May Day celebrations can be found on the Tusculum Institute website: [http://www.tusculum.sbc.edu/SweetBriarPlantation/BriarVideos.shtml](http://www.tusculum.sbc.edu/SweetBriarPlantation/BriarVideos.shtml).

![An early 20th century May Day pole](image1)

![An apartment on Faculty Row](image2)

**Tusculum Mini-Grants Awarded for Student Research**

In the fall of 2013, the Tusculum Institute announced mini-grants for student research into local history. These grants support interdisciplinary research; thus, "history" can be broadly defined as a study of historic plants, the chemistry of 19th-century wines or an analysis of antebellum landscapes.

The first recipient is Karen Samples '14. Samples submitted a fascinating application titled "The Effects of Historical Land Use on Carbon Sequestration at Sweet Briar College." Her research builds on professor of environmental science Rebecca Ambers' detailed study of the early land grants and expansion of what has become "Sweet Briar." With guidance from her advisor, professor of biology Janet Stevens, Samples will study the underground impact of three centuries of agricultural activities at Sweet Briar. As she explains in her proposal, "I am curious as to the health of campus soils after many decades of agricultural use, and I am interested in knowing how these areas have recovered since cultivation ceased." She will study the levels and health of "soil organic matter" (SOM) in Sweet Briar land. This will enable her to determine how much carbon is currently in sequestration (underground) and how these levels vary across campus.

The soils beneath the old growth trees in The Charles W. Carry and Constitution Oak Sanctuaries will be one of the study sites. The photo was taken by Martha von Briesen in 1964.

The Indiana Fletcher Williams Preserve, an area of second growth forest that will be compared to the old growth areas. The 1927 photo below illustrates this area, near the dam.
Over the summer, an anonymous donor gave a generous gift to sponsor a Sweet Briar honor student’s research into a new angle on a traditional topic: the life of Daisy Williams. Sometimes we forget that Daisy spent half of her life in New York City (she spent the summers at Sweet Briar). While much is known about her time spent with "Uncle Sing" and "Aunt Lillybell" at Sweet Briar, less is known about her daily life as a young urbanite at the end of the Victorian Era in the largest American city. The recent gift funded a research internship for Madeline Artibee ’16, of Knoxville, Tenn. Majoring in anthropology and minoring in gender studies, Artibee is interested in Sweet Briar history, political theory and social movements. Her junior year she plans on studying at the London School of Economics.

This term she has delved into the on-campus sources: Daisy’s daily diary (kept for a handful of years in the 1880s before she died), her letters to Martha Penn Taylor and her mother, and her report cards and concert programs from her New York adventures. The image above is an advertisement from her "Day School," where she took lessons in geography, Latin, music, painting, drawing and "scientific education." One of Madeline’s most interesting discoveries, so far, is the extent of Daisy’s knowledge about the harp. Not only did she learn to play her mother’s harp (purchased in London decades earlier), she attended many harp concerts in NYC and often knew the harpists personally. If she had lived she might have pursued the harp more formally. On the left is a photo from decades ago of the harp Daisy played when it stood in the west parlor of Sweet Briar House (Elijah Fletcher’s portrait is behind the sofa). Today the harp is preserved in the Sweet Briar Museum and efforts are ongoing to raise the necessary funds to restore it.

Next term, Artibee will conduct research in Manhattan and try to recreate the 19th-century neighborhoods, businesses and cultural events that Daisy encountered during her time in the "city that never sleeps." One of the final products will be an online walking tour of "Daisy’s New York City."

About Tusculum Institute

Tusculum Institute is a historic preservation resource center on the campus of Sweet Briar College providing education and outreach to students, faculty and the wider community and region. Using the rich historic and intellectual resources of the College and working in partnership with the Department of Historic Resources, the Institute supports the preservation of the region’s historic assets and promotes the use of Virginia’s historic legacy as a learning resource. If you wish to support us, please contact our development office, P.O. Box 1057, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. Email: hmccrory@sbc.edu.