

The Archaeology of Race in the Northeast

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(EDITORS)

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In *The Archaeology of Race in the Northeast*, editors Christopher N. Matthews and Allison Manfra McGovern have assembled a diverse range of scholarly essays by 20 authors that cover a geographic area extending from central New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, northwest into upstate New York, and northeast into Massachusetts. Together, the authors and editors shed important light on the complex construction, manifestation, transformation, and long-lasting effects of race and racialization in the Northeast region among various groups. The Northeast has an undeniably, long-held identity crisis as a place where liberty, equality, and abolition prevailed early in American history, largely due to abolitionist efforts. Yet, the region has a hidden, rarely discussed past characterized by often-violent European American and Native American relations, the persistence of slavery through the end of the Civil War, postbellum Jim Crow structural racism, and the marginalization of non-Anglo Saxon immigrant communities. These distressing, dark aspects of the region's history undoubtedly need to be illuminated, understood, and told, which may be uniquely accomplished through archaeology. Filling a critical research gap in studies of the Northeast, their work is an indispensable examination of the ways black, white, and indigenous native

populations have been racialized in the region from the contact period between Native Americans and European settlers to the 20th century. More importantly, their work poignantly highlights race relations between white Anglo Saxons and African Americans, Native Americans, and other non-Anglo Saxon white immigrant groups. It also examines the normalization and material expressions of whiteness and the failure of many archaeologists to factor whiteness into archaeological interpretations.

Race is a social and cultural construct by which differences among social and ethnic groups are used by one population to dominate and subjugate another, through the process of racialization. This process develops and changes over time as populations diversify, compete, and resist, and new factors emerge. The immediate and lasting effects of racialization result in the accumulation of a dominant group's power by marginalizing and disenfranchising one or more other groups. Through the lens of race, Matthews and McGovern argue that the process of racialization has a material element that may be discernable archaeologically when archaeological sites, their material assemblages, and their associated former occupants are examined in a broader context of social and material relations. This context must also consider the competition between groups for resources and power.

This volume effectively introduces and demonstrates how archaeology can be used to better understand and elucidate the ways racial groups have been influenced by, coped with, and responded to structural and institutional racialization. The editors' work is also noteworthy as it calls attention to a difficult, uncomfortable, and oft-ignored topic

that has clear historical and, indeed, present-day significance. This text is particularly relevant given the recent resurgence of civil rights activists' calls across the United States to address the pervasive and debilitating institutional racism that persists in modern American society and the various reactions to those calls by communities.

Following the coeditors descriptive introduction, the book is organized into four parts. In the first part, nine chapters are devoted to the archaeology of African Americans in the region. Arranged in chronological order, chapter 2, by Anne-Marie Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall, discusses a mid-17th-century African artifact cache in New York during Dutch colonial rule, the translocation of African customs to the New World, and the reinvention of material culture to suit changing cultural needs. In chapter 3, Christopher R. Linder and Trevor A. Johnson examine community formation, social gatherings, consumer strategies, and African confrontation with racialization, along with its role in the formation of new cultural identities in Hyde Park, New York. James A. Delle and Kristen R. Fellows present in chapter 4 research on spatial segregation and the racialization of labor among African Americans and their subsequent replacement by marginalized Irish immigrants, who filled a labor void following statewide emancipation in upstate New York during the early 19th century. Chapter 5 highlights structural and racial differences in the concepts of womanhood, domesticity, engendered spaces, labor, and private/public spaces for white and black women in Federal period Massachusetts. Rebecca Yamin and Grace H. Ziesing in chapter 6 focus on the multivalent symbolism on cultural material of the American eagle image for African Americans in 19th-century Philadelphia and the selective perseverance of modified African customs in language and religion. In chapter 7, Hadley Kruczek-Aaron delves into the

importance of critically examining local memory, the commemoration process, and alternative narratives in challenging racial stereotypes by exploring the physical community of Timbucto, New York. Corey D. McQuinn's study of varied identity construction and expression through material culture signaling in chapter 8 aids our understanding of resistance strategies and community solidarity among African Americans in an activist community in Albany, New York. In chapter 9, Joan H. Geismar continues on the theme of community formation by focusing on Weeksville in Brooklyn, New York, and the identification of artifacts that reveal aspects of race consciousness among the African American community residents. Part 1 is concluded by Christopher P. Barton and David G. Orr's discussion of identity formation through improvised practices and challenges assumptions that the act of yard sweeping was limited to African Americans. Instead, the authors argue that yards for African Americans and other marginalized groups were dynamic extensions of the home and a stage for socializing and play.

In part 2, Allison Manfra McGovern and Russell G. Handsman each author chapters (11 and 12, respectively) on the racialization of Native Americans in New England. These authors examine responses to conceived notions of native authenticity, white insistency upon native racial purity, and the repercussions of racialization in community survival, diasporic population movement, power, negotiations, and identity expressions. Part 3 of the book centers on the idea of whiteness. In chapter 13, Matthews focuses on changing household views toward the systems of slavery and freedom among successive white owners of King Manor in Long Island, New York. Changes in these systems resulted in differences in interior space use and the architectural form, style, and fabric of King Manor over time, along with

the formation of ideas about whiteness as a binding element among white populations in a capitalist economy. Quentin Lewis, in chapter 14, subsequently examines the ways whites use commemorative objects, events, spaces, and exclusionary historical narratives to assert a white identity and supremacy over perceived, racially inferior nonwhite and non-Anglo Saxon white groups through his study of public spaces in Deerfield, Massachusetts. In chapter 15, Meg Gorsline analyzes the normalization and invisibility of whiteness, and argues for the critical examination of material manifestations of whiteness in archaeological deposits to promote more dynamic and nuanced interpretations that include race and racialization. Lastly, in part 4, Charles E. Orser Jr. provides reflections on the power of false impressions of the Northeast as a pristine region free of racial marginalization and subjugation. Orser argues that multiple groups experienced racialization in the Northeast and those groups changed over time, along with their

responses to racialization, which varied among disenfranchised groups.

In this work, Matthews and McGovern have eloquently compiled a series of well-balanced, organized, scholarly articles with clear and strongly supported arguments. Their text is easily read, engaging, and will undoubtedly appeal to a broad audience, among whom include history enthusiasts, archaeologists, students, and scholars of race and regional studies, and may be well-placed as a college text. This important and strongly recommended volume is also expected to have a profound impact on future archaeological studies in the Northeast and the ways archaeologists address the development and archaeological manifestations of race on a broad scale.

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