

“HE WILL BE A BOURGEOIS AMERICAN AND SPEND HIS FORTUNE IN
MAKING GARDENS”: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF JOSEPH
BONAPARTE’S POINT BREEZE ESTATE

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ABSTRACT

Monmouth University’s archaeology survey of Point Breeze, the former estate of Joseph Bonaparte the elder brother of Napoleon and King of Spain and Naples, has identified the site of his palatial home and documented surviving surface features associated with his gardens. Winding paths, carefully placed pieces of sculpture, scenic lookouts, a large belvedere tower, and exotic plantings graced the property. Joseph’s estate, known during his occupation as Point Breeze, was once a 220-acre picturesque landscape. His finely-appointed home contained the largest private library and one of the largest collections of fine art in the United States. Our excavations, informed by theories relating to landscapes and power emphasize the role Point Breeze played as a public stage where Joseph could regally entertain visitors and play the part of exiled king. Moreover, archaeology has revealed the tensions between Joseph’s aspirations and the realities of his life in the United States highlighting the estate’s role as a contested landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Bonaparte, the elder brother of Napoleon Bonaparte and former King of Naples and Spain, fled from Europe following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and sought refuge in America. Despite an attempt to conceal his true identity, Joseph was soon recognized and requested asylum in the United States. With some misgivings, President Madison allowed him to remain in the country. Joseph would reside in North America, with short interregna, from 1815 until 1839. He divided his time between a townhouse he rented in Philadelphia and his country estate, Point Breeze in Bordentown, New Jersey. At Point Breeze he constructed one of the first picturesque gardens in the United States, a pair of grand houses, as well as numerous outbuildings (Figure 1). During his American sojourn, Joseph, who styled himself the Count de Survilliers, also became a major figure in the cultural life of the Delaware Valley.

From 2005-2009 the former Point Breeze Estate which was also known as Bonaparte's Park, has been the focus of Monmouth University's annual field school in historical archaeology (Figure 2). Through documentation of the former estate's extensive above-ground remains and selective subsurface testing of the property, new information about the design, meaning, and function of the property have come to light. At Point Breeze, Joseph Bonaparte created an early American picturesque garden, which hearkened back to European antecedents, both English and French, and physically reproduced aspects of properties he had once owned in Europe (Weber 1986). The estate highlighted Joseph's great wealth and unusual social position as an exiled king. The substantial houses he built and the carefully designed but natural appearing landscape Joseph created served as a grand stage where he could play the role of king in exile for

visiting dignitaries and impress local residents. Furthermore, the lavish scale of Joseph's projects meant that he needed to employ large numbers of craftsmen, farmers, laborers, and servants. In so doing, he created a network of individuals financially tied to him and his estate. Both symbolically, and economically the estate served to strengthen these bonds. We argue that Joseph Bonaparte's Point Breeze estate was a multivocal landscape (Upton 1988), which embodied different and indeed conflicting meanings for different individuals and different groups at different times and continues to be an evocative landscape of memory and promise.

JOSEPH BONAPARTE AT POINT BREEZE

Almost immediately upon arriving in the United States, Joseph began searching for an appropriate estate. The estate needed to be suitable for a country gentleman, embody the landscape features necessary for the creation of a grand picturesque garden similar to those with which he became acquainted in Europe, and be located between Philadelphia and New York, enabling him to rapidly communicate with both friends and family abroad. Most importantly, it needed to command attention and communicate to the public an impression of the owner's wealth. In July of 1816, Joseph found the property he had hoped for. It was an estate called Point Breeze located in Chesterfield (now both Bordentown Township and Bordentown City), New Jersey (Figure 3). Historically owned by the Farnsworth and Douglas, families, and just prior to Joseph's purchase Stephen Sayre, former High Sheriff of London and later Benjamin Franklin's personal secretary, it was a fine property prominently sited on a high bluff overlooking the confluence of Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware River.

Once ensconced at Point Breeze, Joseph immediately set about reshaping the numerous abutting small farms he had acquired into a single grand estate. Eventually owning over 1,900 acres in Nottingham and Chesterfield Townships, his Point Breeze estate consisted of roughly 220 acres of undulating upland and marshland terrain. The land purchased, and new buildings erected on the estate were financed with money and treasure that Joseph's secretary Louis Mailliard retrieved from a secret burial place in Switzerland (Stroud 2005:59). At Point Breeze, Joseph replaced Sayre's modest home with a "splendid mansion" (Gordon 1834:107) built partially of brick and wood. The former king, who was much more interested in art, architecture, and landscapes than he had been in power or military conquests, acted as his own general contractor during the construction of the house. Employing between thirty and fifty workmen, Joseph was able to make rapid progress on the estate.

A review of contemporary paintings provides a unique chronological view of Point Breeze's evolution from Sayre's respectable Georgian home and grounds to Joseph's neo-classical mansion and extensive picturesque garden. Joseph also began a major landscaping campaign at Point Breeze. Though, unlike so many of his contemporaries and predecessors in America, he eschewed formal Georgian geometric gardens and their grand illusions and instead constructed one of North America's first picturesque gardens, modeled after European prototypes. Like the wealthy European gentleman he was, Joseph regularly opened his garden to the public. One happy result of this is an extensive body of contemporary commentary through which the meanings of this landscape for Joseph, his supporters, and detractors can be measured.

Sadly, in January 1820, four years after construction began, Joseph's first mansion, the primary focus of our archaeological fieldwork was destroyed by fire (Tower 1918:302). During the blaze, many of the mansion's furnishings were salvaged and removed to safety. As Joseph wrote a friend later that week, "All the furniture, statues, pictures, money, plate, gold, jewels, linen, books and in short everything that has not been consumed has been most scrupulously delivered into the hands of the people of my house" (Heston 1906:244-245). The remains of the ruined building were removed so that all that was left standing was a picturesque observation tower called the Belvedere (Berkley 1845:186).

Following the loss of the first house, Joseph constructed a second home on the site of his former stables (Berkley 1845:184) in the southern portion of the park (Figure 4). It had a lawn and garden in front and in the rear was a large garden of rare flowers and plants, with statuary. Visitors described it as a "house built in the style of an Italian villa and with a flat terrace roof overlooking the park and woods. There was a large marble entrance-hall with wide staircase at one end, the steps broad and very low...The state rooms and picture gallery were on the ground floor" (Berkley 1845:184). Joseph's art collection, which was the largest in the United States, included the work of many master's including David's painting of Napoleon Crossing the Alps and a reclining half-scale nude statue of his sister Pauline, which scandalized some of his visitors (Stroud 2005:66). A supporter of the arts, Joseph made the collection of sculptures and paintings available for display, where they could be viewed and studied by local amateur and professional artisans.

Near his second mansion Joseph constructed a large home, called the Lake House, for his daughter the Princess Zenaide and her cousin-husband, Prince Charles Bonaparte. Charles was a noted naturalist (Stroud 2000). Both he and his father-in-law would become members of the Academy of Natural Sciences. Joseph also constructed a small guest house or lodge, later known as the Wash House and a home for his gardener, the Garden or Gardener's House. Of these, only the Gardener's House still stands.

He also delighted in landscaping and contemporary sources note, that he had transformed his grounds "from a wild and impoverished tract into a place of beauty, blending the charms of woodland and plantation scenery" (Barber and Howe 1868:102). Joseph undertook several other major landscaping projects including bridging a number of small streams (Berkley 1845:186), throwing a dam across Thorntown Creek, laying out twelve miles of drives through his property, and creating a deer park.

Joseph lived much of his adult life in New Jersey. It was at Point Breeze that he learned of the Death of Napoleon on St. Helena. Although his wife never joined him, he had two daughters by Anne Savage. As he aged he was drawn more and more to events in Europe. In 1832 he returned to Europe hoping to install Napoleon's son, Napoleon II on the throne of France. When this failed he returned to America. Finally, in 1838 he returned to France, and reunited with his wife. The next year he suffered a massive stroke. Five years later, in 1844, he died in Florence (Stroud 2005).

After Joseph's return to Europe in 1838 the property was managed by and eventually willed to his eldest grandson Joseph Lucien Charles Napoleon Bonaparte. Young Joseph sold off the contents of the house in a pair of auctions in 1845 and then conveyed the property to Thomas Richards, owner of the famous Batsto Ironworks

(Woodward 1879). In 1850, Henry Beckett, the British Consul in Philadelphia purchased the estate. He razed the famous Bonaparte House to build a more modern and more modest home (Woodward 1879:94). Essentially a private park, it served as a site for Grand Army of the Republic reunions in the 1890s. In the early 20th century, Harris Hammond a wealthy industrialist proposed to restore the property and hired Everett Shinn, noted Ashcan artist, to reconstruct the landscape. However, the stock market crash and ensuing depression brought these plans to naught. Point Breeze has been owned by Divine Word Missionaries since the 1940s.

LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE GARDEN

Monmouth University's archaeological survey of Point Breeze is an example of Landscape Archaeology, a sub-sect of archaeology in which the cultural landscape, ranging in size from a house lot to a region, is the principal focus (Deetz 1990:2). Early landscape archaeologists focused much of their attention on settlement archaeology, carefully plotting the distribution of sites and their relationships to each other and to their geographical and environmental contexts (Chang 1972; Knapp and Ashmore 1999:2). Other scholars examined sacred landscapes and the symbolism they embodied (Fritz 1987; Knapp 1996; Townsend 1992); while still other researchers focused on the interstitial areas, an area of study sometimes called non-site archaeology (Dunnell 1992; Foley 1981). Much of this work was influenced by the New Archaeology and cultural ecological approaches which saw the environment as determinative (Kealhofer 1999:61). From these descriptive but productive approaches researchers have increasingly moved towards a more reflexive understanding of landscapes as "Something that not only shapes but is shaped by human experience" (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:4).

Historical archaeologists have been heavily influenced by postprocessual ideational approaches and often strive to understand the meanings that landscapes embodied to those who inhabited and interacted with them, how they reflect identities and values. Although some historical archaeologists have examined large scale issues such as settlement patterns (South 1980), other historical archaeologists, likely due to their close relationship with the historic preservation movement, have worked to uncover highly detailed information about the organization, function, and indeed contents of specific historic landscapes/ gardens (Yentsch 1996:xxv; Beaudry 1996). This archaeology, done in the service of restoration and interpretation, has provided considerable new information about historic horticultural practices (Yentsch 1996:xxv) and also the social implications of early gardens.

The publication of Mark Leone's 1984 article on the William Paca garden was one of the first explicitly theoretical forays into the study of American landscape archaeology (Hicks 2005:376). Leone and colleagues, influenced by such diverse thinkers as James Deetz (1977) and both Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley (1982), argued that the formal garden reflected the status differences inherent in Annapolis Society and that the Georgian Order influenced not just landscape design but also behavior, and indeed understandings of the world. Leone later expanded his argument to present the Georgian Order as a set of rules which influenced the material culture of the time and were internalized in a somewhat piecemeal pattern by individuals. He and others, (Leone and Potter 1988:236-237; Leone, Ernstein, Kryder-Reid, and Shackel 1989; Leone and Shackel 1990; Miller, Yentsch, Piperno, and Paca 1987; Yentsch 1990; Wheaton 1989) explored the formal gardens of the 18th century, and the cultural norms underlying their

design. Their work has shown that gardens were status symbols with extraordinary resonance in early America.

Other scholars, most notably Ian Hodder (1986) focused on issues of agency that were previously overlooked (Hicks 2005:377). Moving in a different direction, Rebecca Yamin and Karen Metheny (1996:xiv) have also argued for an archaeology of meaning, employing different data sets to construct narratives about people in the past. Martin Hall approached the Georgian Order as part of a larger reading of material culture as personal statements, and as a means to themselves (Hall 2000:374; Hicks 2005:379). For Hall gardens were statements, objects of discourse (Hall 1992:377-378). Mary Beaudry and her colleagues have also argued for multiple meanings in the Paca Garden (Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski 1991). Dan Hicks (2005:387) has presented a situational approach to historical archaeology, “operating at multiple scales and stances, with both familiar and unfamiliar.”

In essence, historical archaeologists have moved from understanding the formal gardens of the late 18th century as status symbols reflecting a particular worldview and the social achievements and aspirations of their creators, to social statements embodying different meanings to the different groups of people who interacted with them and as cultural constructions which have meant different things to different groups of people at varying points through time.

Point Breeze is a cultural landscape that was intentionally designed and created. In constructing his extensive garden Bonaparte was following in a long tradition of grand landscapes. To quote Lisa Kealhofer (1999:70), “one conscious presentation of self was in the form of landscape gardens.” One of the earliest in America is Governor Berkeley’s

plantation at Green Spring in Virginia which was an early example of a naturalizing landscape, a style just becoming popular in England. It contrasted strongly with the geometric garden found at nearby Bacon's Castle. While Bacon's Castle garden speaks to order and control, Berkeley's reflects his social and political interactions. "The style of garden, its meaning, and its social context, reveal choices made by men to define and legitimate their place in the world" (Kryder-Reid 1994).

JOSEPH'S POINT BREEZE ESTATE

For Joseph Bonaparte, the former king turned American country gentleman, the creation of his Point Breeze picturesque garden assumed many roles and meanings. A lover of the arts, gardening offered Joseph a means to practice art, design, and architecture on a grand scale. Embellishing the natural environment by creating painting-like landscape scenes and views intended to be the subject of an artist's painting, Joseph focused his efforts, time, and money on designing a large picturesque garden at the core of his estate. Contemporary sources note, that he had transformed his grounds at Point Breeze "from a wild and impoverished tract into a place of beauty, blending the charms of woodland and plantation scenery" (Barber and Howe 1865:102). The creation of gardens such as this one provided the idle wealthy, pleasure seeker, and student of art an opportunity to tame the wild, create art from nature, exert dominance over the environment, and display wealth and status. It was a suitable hobby for an exceptionally wealthy country gentleman such as Joseph.

To design a picturesque landscape, the gardener used terrain, trees, shrubs, and flowers, elegantly winding paths, fields of crops, brooks, and broad vistas to create a setting with natural and ornamental views; views which could be contrasted against

sections of the garden left wild (Watelet 2003:49). Like the author of a play or a novel, the gardener used these tools to construct theatrical scenes and set the stage for a journey upon which a visitor or the gardener could embark. The journey was both physical and emotional; it engaged the senses, challenged intellect, and was designed for hours of leisurely enjoyment (Watelet 2003:50).

Meandering paths through the garden were configured to provide changing scenery and views intended to inspire, surprise, and delight. As if part of a game of intrigue, paths were placed to provide glimpses of pleasing views (Watelet 2003:27). Shade cast by clustered trees allowed one to stop for a moment, observe, contemplate, and reflect on the scene before continuing on one's course. Some garden designers, like Joseph, even created large lakes where casual boat rides provided added enjoyment and changes in view and scenery (Watelet 2003:49). According to 18th-century French garden theorist Claude-Henri Watelet (2003:50), the garden's intent was to utilize elements of nature: wind, clouds, water, and vegetation, with architectural ruins, selectively placed statuary, and paths to create an impression of subtle, almost undiscernable landscape change and "arouse [one's] curiosity and compel [one] to move about with elements that fix[ed one's] attention and invite[ed one] to linger."

Joseph Bonaparte was no stranger to garden art and design. While living in Europe, he used his wealth to create and improve vast gardens at Mortefontaine, his French estate. He also made extensive improvements at his Swiss estate, Prangins (Stroud 2005:74). The former was adjacent to Ermonville, a famous garden park once owned by the 18th-century picturesque garden theorist the Marquis Rene-Louis Girardin. Girardin's design at Ermenonville was used as a model by Mortefontaine's initial owner,

and Joseph likely continued to employ many of Girardin's landscape theories at Mortefontaine and later at Point Breeze (Stroud 2005:75).

Girardin designed his picturesque gardens with naturalistic views that would be pleasing to the eye, and which were intended to be the subject matter of paintings—hence picturesque, particularly scenes viewed from the estate mansion (Wiebenson 1978:74, 82). Girardin's interpretation of the picturesque garden, like those of contemporary garden theorists J. J. Rousseau and Watelet (2003; Wiebenson 1978:70, 72), were founded on the notion that landscapes should flow organically and be embellished only with agreeable, natural scenery and vernacular building styles. Nevertheless, Girardin did tastefully incorporate classical architecture, particularly temple ruins and villas, as well as altars, memorials, mills, a village, a tower, and even an obelisk into his Ermenonville garden. Girardin's pastoral themes stood in stark contrast to the *jardin anglo-chinois* picturesque style that characterized the gardens of wealthy French eccentrics, who wanted English gardens, but who designed them in their own style, often with exotic scenes, building types, and scenery that appeared inorganic and discontinuous (Wiebenson 1978:89). Though these styles had fallen out of vogue in France by 1789, they regained credence after Napoleon Bonaparte's coronation in 1804, when such luxuries were once again permitted (Wiebenson 1978:107).

Like his use of terrain at Mortefontaine to create natural, agreeable, and picturesque scenery, Joseph's Point Breeze estate contained similar qualities enhancing its picturesque character. Even before Joseph acquired the Point Breeze property, the striking landscape was of interest to painters (Foster 1997: plate 39; (Myers 2000:504). Complete with forests, farms, undulating terrain, meadows, and steep cliffs commanding

a grand view of the confluence of the mighty Delaware River and Crosswicks Creek, the core of the estate contained 220 acres well suited for creating a picturesque garden.

Joseph's park was typical of many contemporary French picturesque gardens (Weber 1986). His first mansion served as the focal, but not centrally located, point of the estate and was surrounded by a series of dispersed buildings, serving both functional and aesthetic purposes, including a boat house, a classical domed circular temple, an aviary house for imported European pheasants, a spring house, gardener's house, and servants' quarters. The lake and spring houses were located near the lake edge. The temple was sited adjacent to the first mansion along with the servant's house. Marble statuary in the form of deer, lions, gods, goddesses, and historical figures, such as Richard the Lion-Hearted, Ivanhoe, and Caesar Augustus could be found throughout the park either in plain sight or tucked away in a garden scene (Stroud 2005:79).

Joseph may have also embellished his garden scenery with non-formal, vegetative plantings, including white lindens, poplars, weeping willows, button-flowering locusts, and peach, apricot and hazelnut trees (Stroud 2005:78-79). Other trees included chestnut, tulip, sassafras, ash, beech, oaks, pines, sweet gum, dogwood, honey locust, and white birch. These too were planted as if their seeds were dispersed by the wind. Among the trees, shrubbery, artichoke plants, grasses, native flowers, and flowering plants, such as azalea, rhododendron, mock orange, and viburnum were planted.

The picturesque garden Joseph created at Point Breeze was among the first of its type in America and, in a region known for grand estates, e.g. Lansdowne, Andalusia, the Woodlands, was one of the finest. Its prominent position on the high bluff overlooking the confluence of the Delaware River and the Crosswicks Creek enabled it to be clearly

seen by travelers. Visible for miles up and down river, as well as from nearby Pennsylvania, Joseph's estate and mansion stood as a grand advertisement of his wealth, creativity, and sophistication. The grandeur, elegance, and artistry in its creation was appreciated by dignified guests, family members, friends, local community members, and artists invited to utilize the pleasant views as subjects in their paintings. Still, many found it to be an ostentatious representation of wealth far beyond the means of the vast majority of Americans, even the Delaware Valley elite.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological investigations of Joseph Bonaparte's Point Breeze estate consisted of ground penetrating radar, subsurface testing and careful mapping of above-ground landscape features. The subsurface testing focused primarily on the site of Joseph's first mansion (1817-1820). The surface survey focused on carefully identifying and mapping still visible landscape features located in the southern portion of the estate at and near the first and second mansions and a preliminary examination of the remainder of the estate.

A series of historic maps of the estate, in particular an 1823 sketch map, an 1847 estate sale map, and a 1911 topographic and existing conditions map, were utilized to locate and document the condition of numerous exposed features (Anonymous 1823; Miller 1847; Thompson 1911) (Table 1). Moreover, numerous early 19th-century paintings, by noted artists such as Thomas Birch, Charles Lawrence, and Charles Bodmer show the property during the Sayre and Bonaparte occupations. Moreover, dozens of historic photographs and postcards survive which show the property in the post-Bonaparte era. The ruins of his buildings were of intense interest to local photographers and their gradual decay was documented in considerable detail. The historical imagery

provided an important chronology and context for the continuously changing appearance of the Point Breeze estate before, during, and after Joseph's occupation.

Table 1: Mapped and Identified Surficially Exposed Features

Map/ Structure or Feature	1823 Map (Anonymous 1823)	1847 Map (Miller 1847)	1911 Map (Thompson 1911)	Identified Surface Remains
South Western Estate				
1 st Mansion	X			
1 st Mansion Well				X
Boat House	X	X		
Belvedere	X	X		
Rustic House	X			
Detached House	X			
Western Winding Staircase				X
South Wharf		X	X	X
Central Wharf		X	X	X
Western Tunnel Entrance				X
Western Tunnel				X
Lake Dam	X	X	X	X
South Eastern Estate				
2 nd Mansion	X	X		
Lake House	X	X	X	X
Wash House	X	X	X	X
Office	X			X
Kitchen	X	X		X
Stables		X		
Spring House				X
Eastern Tunnel Entrance			X	X
Eastern Tunnel				X
Eastern Winding Staircase				X
Central Estate				
Gardener's House	X	X	X	X
Paths	X	X	X	X

Three Bridges		X	X	
Rhododendron Covered Bluffs				X
Northern Estate				
Paths		X	X	X
Farm House and Outbuildings		X		
North Wharf			X	

The remaining surface features provided physical evidence of Joseph’s vision for his picturesque park at Point Breeze. Landscape features, structures, and buildings served both an aesthetic and functional purpose. The only Bonaparte-era building currently standing on the former estate is a two-story gardener’s house sited in the central eastern section of the property. Once surrounded by an orderly kitchen garden, the home of the gardener, a critical component of the estate, was situated along a main thoroughfare away from the mansions. Though both mansion complexes were razed, a close examination of these locales provides strong evidence of the scale on which Joseph’s park was constructed. Exposed clustered building foundations, such as the Lake House, wash house, kitchen, office, and spring house associated with the second mansion, provided evidence of these once massive structures, the foundations of which are now largely hidden by almost two centuries of vegetative growth and soil accumulation. Yet not everything in the park was intended to be obvious. To obscure its location, and perhaps remove servants as actors on the landscape, at least one deep well near Joseph’s first mansion was constructed with an arched brick cover enabling it to be hidden below the ground surface. Abutting the mansion’s foundation, evidence suggests that access to the well shaft was granted through a narrow window that connected to the house.

Garden paths, though clearly depicted on historic maps, were constructed as gently winding earthen mounds or horizontal cuts into undulating topography, only traces of which can still be seen. Some have been incorporated into the current functional use of the property and now serve as asphalt driveways. Others are now visible only as faint depressions running through the heavily wooded property and along the edges of rhododendron-planted bluff slopes and knolls. Partially intact cut sandstone blocks along the bluff's edge, now almost completely covered with soil, once formed steps that snaked down steep bluffs to wharves and docks below the park's houses. The form and construction material used in a now crumbling stone and brick arched bridge spanning a natural divide and seasonal brook hints at its once elegant construction and Joseph's intent for such structures to blend into the natural scenery.

Huge well-preserved interlocked horizontally-laid timbers and vertical wooden pilings formed the foundation of two identified wharves at the base of the bluff near the first mansion's former location. Exposed only during low tide, the wharves provided a platform from which goods and travelers could be unloaded from watercraft. The southern most of the two wharves was also associated with a boathouse at the base of the bluff.

Among the most unusual features of Joseph's park are the remains of two massive stone and brick arched tunnels associated with the first and second mansions (Mills 1902:296). A third unidentified tunnel also connected the second mansion to the lake house, where Joseph's daughter Zenaide, resided with her husband (Shippen 1954:215). The first identified tunnel was an arched brick-lined underground passageway, ten-feet wide and fifty-feet long, which led from the cellar of his first mansion, through a side

yard beneath an observation terrace, to a steep bluff bounded by the Crosswicks Creek (Heston 1906:242). When the first mansion burned, a Belvedere Tower was erected above the tunnel (Shippen 1954:215). The second was a stone-lined tunnel, which granted access from the lake to his second mansion. This stone tunnel exhibited a tripartite arched opening. The triple arch, often seen in triumphal arches, was a feature commonly employed in picturesque gardens (Hunt 2002:26-35). The tunnel system enabled goods, servants, residents, and guests to travel unnoticed from lake and river docks into buildings without altering the park ambiance overhead. Other grand estates in both Europe and America employed similar techniques, which served to render the landscape natural looking by hiding service functions (Moss 1998:71; Stroud 2005:81). Indeed, a similar method is used today in amusement parks such as Disney World.

While a number of structural and landscape features are still visible, many remain hidden, buried under two centuries of soil. An examination for such features was undertaken as part of the second stage of the investigation. Between 2007 and 2009 Monmouth University conducted three annual field schools, which focused on the site of Joseph's first mansion. During the first season of fieldwork, a close-interval shovel test grid identified the site of Joseph's first house. Excavation units were employed to sample its contents. During the second season of fieldwork additional excavation units and judgmentally placed shovel tests were used to better define the size and orientation of the mansion. Prior to the third year's fieldwork a ground penetrating radar survey was commissioned to identify outbuildings and other subsurface features on the site. It identified six additional structures, and several other features. Fieldwork in the summer of 2009 confirmed the presence of a deep shaft feature, and at least four of the structures

identified by the ground penetrating radar survey. Fieldwork at the site is ongoing with a current focus on an outbuilding containing, possibly a servants' quarters/kitchen, associated with the Bonaparte-era occupation of the property. To date over 100 shovel test pits and twenty three excavation units, generally five-foot-square, have been excavated at the site. Just under 20,000 artifacts have been recovered. The bulk of the resources identified are historic, with most dating from the Bonaparte era. Earlier historic deposits dating to the 18th century as well as prehistoric deposits are also present.

Subsurface features include the filled-in cellar hole of the first mansion, what appears to be the filled in cellar of a mid-18th-century structure, an 18th-century sheet midden, foundations associated with either a wing of the main house or an outbuilding, foundations associated with the belvedere, a well, gravel paths, and a possible kitchen, containing Bonaparte era deposits, and a second well. Minor features such as builder's trenches and interior division walls within the main house were also recorded but are not discussed here.

The foundation of the first mansion measures roughly 60' by 60'. Ten excavation units were used to identify the parameters of the structure and two were used to sample its contents. The building had a massive 18 inch thick cut stone foundation extending at least 6.5 feet below the current ground surface. It faced south/southwest towards the Delaware River. When the building burned Joseph reported that it nearly all of his possessions had been saved (Stroud 2005:63). Other contemporary sources noted that most of his possessions were lost (Shippen 1954:213). It appears that the cellar of the house was filled with much of the rubble from the building's destruction, including enormous quantities of broken brickbats—not cataloged, thousands of nails, large

quantities of melted wine bottle glass, mirror glass, and very small quantities of French porcelain, furniture hardware, and personal items. Fragments of carbonized floorboards, joists, and even cloth, possibly from heavy tapestry wall hangings was also found. A single fragment of a compo picture frame was recovered. Bonaparte apparently undertook a rather massive salvage operation, removing most of the stone foundation from the northern and eastern walls of the structure. Nearly all of the recovered bricks are broken, likely indicating an attempt to salvage and reuse intact bricks.

Charred fragments of wooden tongue and groove flooring were also unearthed. Other artifacts of note include decorative bronze appliqués, possibly from pieces of furniture, butchered sheep bones, a sugar bowl lid and a mendable, transfer-printed French porcelain bowl. The latter two exhibited fire damage, however, the pattern and inscription on the bowl, which reads, in French, Roman History, were clearly discernible (Figure 5).

The marble floor fragments, silvered mirror fragments, compo picture frame chips, and bronze furniture appliqués show Bonaparte's intense desire to advertise his wealth in highly visible ways with items that were purely decorative. The fragmentary marble and wood floors encountered in Unit 2 is a study in contrasts, as the wood floor, which lined the cellar out of view from most visitors was austere and functional, while the marble floor, likely trodden upon by important guests, was primarily intended to impress with its stunning visual beauty, rather than its sturdy form as a surface. Similarly, ornamental porcelain vases were recovered from Excavation Units 1 and 2—fifty feet from each other. They probably once graced niches within the house.

The deposits encountered in Unit 1 and 2 provide information not only about the time of the fire, but the aftermath of the clean-up as well. Non-architectural items such as wine bottles may have been present within the cellar at the time of the fire. Other items may have been introduced after the fire as the building collapsed and the cellar was filled with debris from the overlying structure. Documentary sources describe how movable valuables, such as paintings and drapes were saved from the burning structure, while other more bulky items were left behind.

Within the mansion the remains of truncated partition walls within the cellar were noted. These may have been used to divide off specialized areas within the larger structure. The large number of wine bottles found in this area suggests that this may have been a location where wine was stored. Bonaparte's nickname as King of Spain had been *Pepe Botellas* or colloquially Joe Bottles, a moniker that seems well supported by the archaeological evidence.

Three wells were identified. One is largely intact and one appeared to have been robbed out. Still open, this well was associated with the mansion but was much too deep to excavate as part of a field school. A second well dating to the mid 18th century was identified near a possible mid-18th-century cellar, associated with an earlier house on the estate. The third well was robbed out and backfilled. Testing there failed to reach intact cultural deposits. Next to and likely associated with the well is a building with a stone foundation. It was not aligned with the mansion—but rather on a north/south axis. Very late 18th or 19th-century deposits associated with this structure include small quantities of burned artifacts, much like the mansion itself. However, the deposits consist primarily of ceramics: redware, creamware, and pearlware, with a small quantity of refined

earthenware, likely French, decorated with cherubs involved in a bacchanal scene. This structure may have served as a kitchen or in some other form of ancillary capacity.

Deeply buried brick walls near the tunnel are likely associated with the belvedere which also housed servants on the property (Shippen 1954). Similarly brick walls unearthed to the south of the house's main block may be the remains of the building's wings. Earlier domestic deposits and a filled cellar hole likely relate to the earlier Douglas or Farnsworth occupations of the property.

The catastrophic fire that destroyed the remains of Joseph Bonaparte's first mansion and the subsequent landscaping of the site served to preserve a rich deposit of early 19th-century material culture which reflects a truly extraordinary structure. An imposing brick building with what may have been a copper roof centered the property. Service functions were hidden. Upon entering the building visitors would have trod upon black and white checkerboard marble floors, walked through well-lit rooms, decorated with statuary and large mirrors, and if invited to eat, would have dined off imported French ceramics and consumed fine wines (Figure 6). It would have been a memorable experience. Joseph had recreated a bit of the splendor he had known in Europe in the Delaware Valley.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

When asked to compare his own situation with that of Joseph, Napoleon wrote, the following telling line, "He will be a bourgeois American and spend his fortune in making gardens." Napoleon knew his brother well. But what does Joseph's garden tell us about him and about landscapes in general. Thanks to its location on the main route across the state and Joseph's exceptional hospitality, it saw regular attention from

travelers. A review of the guests who visited there reads like a who's who of early 19th-century America: John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, the Marquis de Lafayette, Robert Stockton, and many others. Point Breeze functioned as a grand stage where Joseph played the role of an exiled king and acted as an unofficial cultural attaché. Here he dazzled his guests with his knowledge of art, nature, politics, and culture.

While many visitors left Point Breeze suitably impressed, others were less kind. Edouard de Montule who visited in 1816 noted that "The house [was] not pretentious but the estate should someday be very comfortable" (Seeber 1951:197). A less sympathetic English traveler, William Harris, wrote that Joseph was "laying out some of the spoils of Europe in an elegant mansion and grounds" (Harris 1821:26-30). William Dalton, an English traveler noted that Bonaparte's mansion had a "princely appearance but was surrounded by poor land (Dalton 1821:90). Two years later, in 1823, a Scottish Botanist David Douglas called Bonaparte's mansion splendid and noted that he had pleasure grounds laid out in the English style (Douglas 1959:27-28). Perhaps the most intriguing description of the landscape was provided by Thomas Gordon (1834:106). He wrote

The attractions of the scene determined Joseph Buonoparte [sic], Count de Surveilliers, in his choice of a residence in this country; and this distinguished exile, who has filled two thrones, and has pretensions based on popular suffrage to a third, has dwelt here many years in philosophic retirement. He has in the vicinity about 1500 acres of land, part of which possessed natural beauty, which his taste and wealth have been employed to embellish. At the expense of some hundred thousand dollars, he has converted a wild and impoverished tract, into a park of surpassing beauty, blending the charms of woodland and plantation

scenery, with a delightful water prospect....With characteristic liberality, the County has opened his grounds to the public, we regret to perceive, that he has been ungratefully repaid, by the defacement of his ornamental structures and mutilation of his statues.

Clearly this was a landscape could be read and interpreted in many different ways. Historical archaeologists have argued that gardens were a way for elites in the Chesapeake insecure in their power to demonstrate and convince others of their merit. Joseph's gardens may also have been an attempt to do this.

At the same time, Joseph's garden provided him with an appropriate setting for entertaining guests and acting the part of a king in exile. It also functioned to bind the people of Bordentown to him through employment and perhaps some reflected glory. In constructing the gardens Joseph hired large numbers of workmen. A recent mayor of Bordentown described Joseph as a one man WPA program for Bordentown. This may not have been unintentional. Joseph, even today, is a revered figure in Bordentown, a local hero. A WPA mural in the local post office depicts him distributing oranges to delighted children on his frozen pond. While King of Spain Joseph was viewed as a despot, in America he was seen as a democratically inclined monarch.

Many of the visitors who came to the park went away impressed by the landscapes, plantings, statuary, and buildings. Others, as seen in these quotes, were clearly less impressed. They hunted without permission and even damaged Joseph's property. A thoughtless visitor or perhaps, as some believe, an arsonist burnt down his first home.

To date we have succeeded in relocating the first mansion, the second mansion and several outbuildings. We have begun mapping the extensive remains of the property. Although our study of Point Breeze is just beginning it is clear that the site has tremendous archaeological potential. By documenting the site and understanding the varying contexts through which people experienced it, we can better understand how individuals, past and present use landscapes as stages to perform their roles in society and how those landscapes continue to influence us today.

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Figures

Figure 1: Point Breeze on the Delaware, Thomas Birch, 1818. Courtesy of the Newark Museum.

Figure 2: Students excavating at Point Breeze. Courtesy of the Asbury Park Press.

Figure 3. Lithograph “Map of the Residence and Park Grounds, Bordentown, New Jersey, Joseph Napoleon Bonaparte” (Miller 1844). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Figure 4. Anonymous map of the Point Breeze estate. Courtesy of the Municipal Archives of Versailles.

Figure 5. A French earthenware plate with a fine transfer print

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