



North Carolina Preservation Consortium

**Hindsight is 20/20: Lessons Learned from Successes and Failures in Preservation**  
2020 Virtual Zoom Conference

Empirical learning can be one of the most effective teaching tools. Learning from our mistakes is a hard but not easily forgotten lesson. How can we as professionals leverage these “life lessons” and get the most out of these less than ideal situations? Share them!

NCPC’s 2020 annual conference will focus on sharing our experiences of success and/or failure and what we can all learn from that moment or event. The goal of the conference is to create an open and inclusive forum for both sharing what we may view as the “lowlights” of our past performance in a constructive way, as well as learning how to best include these types of dialog into our professional environments. One way to view this is that a failure not shared is a learning opportunity wasted.

### **Conference Schedule**

#### **9:00 am Welcome**

**9:15 am To Clean or Not To Clean: Cultural Resource Manager's Response to Acts of Vandalism and Tagging** - The Vance Birthplace was vandalized on December 9, 2017. The side of the Vance house was spray-painted in red, "Black Lives Matter." Staff along with help from the State Historic Preservation Office cleaned the structure to the best of our ability. With the ability to reflect on the process, we hope our insights will encourage professionals across the cultural heritage field to consider their evaluation and decision-making processes as well as inspire discussion around whether to clean or not to clean. Presented by Kimberly Floyd, Site Manager, Vance Birthplace State Historic Site, and Jennifer Cathey, Preservation Specialist, State Historic Preservation Office

#### **10:00 am Preservation Peer Assessment: A Framework for Feedback-based**

**Improvement** - Self-evaluations and performance reviews are traditional ways to evaluate mistakes and identify opportunities for improvement, but have you ever tried conducting an evaluation with a peer? Inviting a partner from outside your organization to review your practices can provide a valuable third-party perspective and promote a culture of open communication between institutions about learning from past mistakes. This session presents a framework for practitioners to conduct a general preservation assessment with a peer institution. Presented by Sean Ferguson, Northeast Document Conservation Center

**10:45 am Sometimes the Simplest Solutions are the best: Reconserving the Lake Phelps Canoes** - In 1986, four canoes were recovered from Lake Phelps in Pettigrew State Park in eastern North Carolina. These canoes were treated with sugar as a bulking agent to prevent serious damage upon drying. After many years of being stored in uncontrolled conditions, some of these canoes have become unstable with sugar leaching to the surface and crystallizing. This causes major concerns for the long-term preservation of these artifacts. This presentation will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of treating waterlogged archaeological wood with sugar, using the Lake Phelps canoes as a case study, reviewing their history, treatment, and retreatment. It will also focus on turning around the missteps of past preservation initiatives in relation to the canoes and how we can learn from our mistakes to better conserve and care for our artifacts. Presented by Timothy Smith, Staff Archaeologist/LPC Conservator, NC Office of State Archaeology/QAR LAB

**11:30 am Burwell Strong: How a Small Historic Site Rebuilt After Catastrophic Theft by an Employee** - The Burwell School Historic Site, the location of a 19th-century school for young women, has been operating in Hillsborough, NC since the 1960s. However, in 2019 its very existence was threatened when the governing commission discovered significant financial theft by an employee. Over a three-year period, nearly \$175,000 was embezzled, a nearly catastrophic amount when the annual operating budget was only \$90,000. This session will guide participants through the lessons learned by The Historic Hillsborough Commission, who own and operate The Burwell School Historic Site, as they sought to remain "Burwell Strong." From identifying the lack of proper procedures to entering into a management services agreement, learn how the new staff and the board of directors have transformed how they do business and put safeguards in place to ensure sound site operations for years to come. Presented by Brooks Graebner, Chair/The Historic Hillsborough Commission and Carrie Currie, Historical Coordinator/The Burwell School Historic Site

**12:15 pm If I Could Turn Back Time: Time Capsule Creation & Preservation** - "Does anyone remember where we buried the time capsule?" In the last two years, the High Point Museum has participated in the opening of two-time capsules belonging to local organizations. While there were many similarities in the age of the capsules and their construction, the contents of the two capsules suffered very different fates. Marian and I will go over the opening of both capsules, the associated complications, and the condition of the contents. We will also share our recommendations for new time capsules and lessons learned - #1: write down where you buried it! Presented by Corinne Midgett, Registrar and Marian Inabinett, Curator of Collections, High Point Museum

**1:00-1:15 pm Awards and Wrap Up**

The NCPG Grants Committee will share which organizations were awarded preservation grants this year. General announcements.