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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Urban archaeologist to lead Chicago dig with Lake Forest College students

Media Day/Open House to be held on July 28 from 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

(CHICAGO) June 10, 2015 — Chicago’s own urban archaeology expert and Lake Forest College professor Rebecca Graff will lead a group of Lake Forest College students in a summer Archaeological Field School at the Charnley-Persky House in Chicago. The grounds of the Gold Coast house, a National Historic Landmark designed by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, still contain many historical artifacts and site elements waiting to be unearthed.

The upcoming excavation is part of an \$800,000, four-year grant at Lake Forest College from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to involve students and faculty in urban archaeological digs in Chicago, and in complementary coursework in various disciplines.

The Society of Architectural Historians, headquartered at the Charnley-Persky House at 1365 N. Astor Street, is a key project partner for this phase of the grant.

A Media Day will be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28, at the house, located near the southeast corner of Schiller and Astor streets.

Television, radio, and print journalists are welcome and should contact SAH at 312-573-1365 to schedule a time to witness excavation firsthand, meet Graff and her students, and view artifacts.

“Urban archaeology allows us to bring the past to light in ways that inform our present understandings of our great American cities,” said Graff.

“Chicago deserves to have its stories told before we lose them to construction and development. This initiative will help connect people to the history right under their feet, informing the daily lives of Chicagoans past, present and future.”



Charnley-Persky House (credit: John Gronkowski)

SAH Executive Director Pauline Saliga sees similar opportunities: “We look forward to working with Professor Graff and her students as they unearth household artifacts and use them to interpret life in 19th-century Chicago. As a learned society, SAH recognizes the importance of such cooperative ventures that are rooted in serious research and are opportunities to mentor undergraduates in the art of critical thinking.”

Prior to its purchase by James Charnley in 1890, land underneath the house belonged to noted 19th-century businessman Potter Palmer, who is responsible for much of the development of Chicago’s State Street. Artifacts already found at the site include glass containers and Wedgewood tile.

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About the Society of Architectural Historians

Founded in 1940, the Society of Architectural Historians is a nonprofit membership organization that promotes the study, interpretation and conservation of architecture, design, landscapes and urbanism worldwide. SAH serves a network of local, national and international institutions and individuals who, by vocation or avocation, focus on the built environment and its role in shaping contemporary life. SAH promotes meaningful public engagement with the history of the built environment through advocacy efforts, print and online publications, and local, national and international programs. Learn more at sah.org.

About Lake Forest College

Lake Forest College is a national liberal arts institution located 30 miles north of downtown Chicago. The Center for Chicago Programs sponsors more than three-hundred course trips and lectures each academic year. The College has 1,600 students representing 43 states and 73 countries. For more information, visit www.lakeforest.edu.

About Rebecca Graff

Rebecca Graff is an assistant professor of anthropology at Lake Forest College (BA, University of California, Berkeley; MA and PhD, University of Chicago) with research interests in American urban archaeology of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Originally from Los Angeles, Graff has directed several archaeological projects in Chicago, including her doctoral research on the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.