

Please find below, Utah State Parks news for June 1:

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STUDENTS UNCOVER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CLUES TO UTAH'S PIONEER POTTERS

Parowan - A team of archaeology students is uncovering what may be the oldest pottery kiln ever studied in the state of Utah. The discovery, which occurred at the site of Thomas and Sarah Davenport's pottery shop in Parowan, will help reveal the story of Mormon settlers who brought their crafts and skills to the Utah Territory.

Students Samantha Foss and Renée Blackburn discovered the top of a curving arc of bricks last Monday, May 18. They scraped up dirt with their trowels, exposing the brick wall just before the end of their workday.

"It started out as pieces of rubble, then, just became something," said Foss. "It was exhilarating to find whole bricks in place after moving so much dirt and rubble," added project field director Jessica Montcalm.

"This is exactly what we hoped to discover to answer our research questions," said dig leader Dr. Timothy Scarlett. "This site provides archaeology the unique opportunity to study individual people as they learn and adapt to new landscapes." Dr. Scarlett is an associate professor of archaeology in the Department of Social Sciences at Michigan Technological University.

The Davenports began trying to make pottery shortly after their arrival in Utah. Their efforts resulted in repeated failures until 1859, when family history records reveal their first complete success. It is likely that Thomas, and perhaps Sarah, worked as throwers or laborers in a Derbyshire pottery factory before leaving England. They probably knew little about clay, kilns or glazes. In 1852, they settled in Parowan, the mother town of the Mormon Iron Mission and many other southern settlements. Dr. Scarlett hopes fragmentary remains on the site will teach him about how the Davenports adapted and learned.

"How did they transform themselves from general laborers into expert artisans?" Scarlett wondered. He added that these immigrant potters struggled against the limitations of their local raw materials and the lack of supplies in the territory's harsh environment.

Dr. Scarlett concluded, "Family history says that they had built three or four kilns over their potting careers. I hope all of them are this well preserved." He added, "This discovery is too important to rush."

The dig is open to the public whenever archaeologists are on site. A schedule is posted on a dig blog along with daily updates. Visit <http://utahpotteryproject.blogspot.com> (<http://utahpotteryproject.blogspot.com/>).

Potters of the Gathering: Clay Work in Early Utah, an exhibit of 19th century artifacts including pieces by the Davenports, is on display at Iron Mission State Park in Cedar City. Iron Mission State Park Museum is located at 635 North Main Street in Cedar City. Both the excavation and exhibit are open to the public during the month of June. The dig ends on June 26, while the exhibit remains open until July 31.