

# Digging up George Bush's Homestead

## The Evergreen State College's First Archaeological Field School

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### History:

George Bush was one of the first settlers to the Washington Territory. He was born to an African father and an Irish mother around 1790 in Pennsylvania.

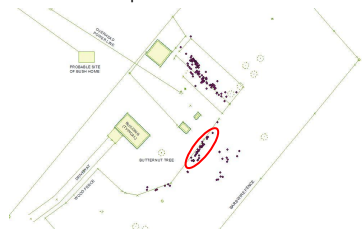
In 1844, he, his wife Isabella James, and their 5 children joined 4 other families leaving Missouri for the Oregon Territory. Upon their arrival, racist, discriminatory "lash laws" in the region lead their party to continue north to settle in and around modern day Tumwater, WA.



Artist's depiction

### Previous work at the site:

In 2010, now-retired South Puget Sound Community College anthropology professor Dale Croes, SPSCC students, and Thurston County Historical Commission members conducted an archaeological survey at the Bush Homestead site, recovering more than 200 surface artifacts. Their work paved the way for our project. In particular, their findings helped us determine where to open the excavation.



(Our excavation site is marked in red)



### Excavation:

Excavation took place from July 29th thru August 20th, 2015 and was executed by a team of 20 to 25 TESC students, local archaeologists, and a few community volunteers. Excavators were instructed in archaeological methods and tasks, and given their own 1x1m unit within our 10x5m grid in which to apply them.

Due to a lack of significant stratigraphy or identifiable contexts in the region, we utilized layer-based archaeology, meaning excavators dug cm by cm down through their units, keeping an even level with the surface. This allowed excavators to become more easily familiarized with excavating as a practice, and helped ensure artifacts were excavated carefully, without damage.

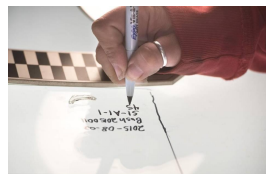
In addition to collecting (and recording) artifacts found, each excavator kept a record of their field work in a field notebook for their unit. Excavators worked with a myriad of tools, including trowels, shovels, sifters, planning frames and a Total Station.

### Lab Work:

Students and excavators attending the Field School also performed the artifact processing and all lab work. In the lab, we inspected, sorted, and cleaned each of the artifacts, organizing and cataloging them as needed. Each student and volunteer was trained in all tasks and rotated through the positions.

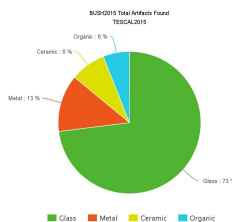
For the diagnostic finds - the finds which we felt provided enough information for further research and possible identification - we also collected data on their size and significant features, adding to the field data collected on their find location. Diagnostic artifacts were also numbered and photographed.

In addition to artifacts, excavators collected soil and flotation samples in the field. These types of samples help determine soil composition, present flora and fauna, and recover tiny artifacts for a given archaeological site. These samples were also cataloged and processed in the lab.



### Results:

During the 5 weeks of excavation we recovered 4,146 artifacts. The artifacts uncovered consisted of glass shards, metals (mostly nails), ceramic sherds (some porcelain), and organic fragments (including bones, shells, and some leather).



257 of the artifacts uncovered were identified as diagnostic. Research and analysis is currently being conducted on these artifacts, and a full DAHP report of all findings will be published in December 2015.

### Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank TESC, Mark & Kathleen Clark of the Bush Prairie Farm, and DAHP for helping make the field school happen, as well as The Squaxin and Nisqually tribes, the Northwest African American Museum, The Burke Museum, Thurston County Historic Commission, Tumwater Historic Preservation Commission, Olympia School District, and the Thurston County community for their support and collaboration. We would also like to thank our sponsors: the TESC Foundation Grant and the TESC Sponsored Research Committee.