

District of Columbia
Office of Planning



PRESS RELEASE

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District Launches Yarrow Mamout Archaeological Project in Georgetown



Simpson (1822), Georgetown Public Library

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The Office of Planning’s Historic Preservation Office has started archaeological investigation at what is believed to be the burial site of Yarrow Mamout, a prominent African Muslim freeman whose legacy is chronicled in James H. Johnston’s book, *From Slave Ship to Harvard: Yarrow Mamout and the History of an African American Family*.

In June, City Archaeologist Dr. Ruth Trocolli received permission from the property owner to conduct a thorough survey of the site, located at 3324 Dent Place, NW, in Upper Georgetown. Initial efforts to excavate at the site began in 2012, after modern structures on the site were demolished. Residents in the neighborhood also advocated for an archaeological investigation focused on Mamout's occupation of the property.

Mamout became famous after Charles Wilson Peale painted his portrait in 1819. A second portrait of Mamout was painted in 1822 by James Alexander Simpson, a Georgetown-born artist, and the portrait now hangs in the Peabody Room at the Georgetown Public Library. Mamout died on January 19, 1823, and his obituary suggests that he was buried at the excavation site.

In 1800 Mamout secured his freedom at the age of 60, and purchased the lot that is being excavated. Little is known of Mamout's life before being sold into slavery at the age of 16 in Annapolis, Maryland.

"This excavation presents a unique opportunity to shed light on the life of a free African American in Georgetown in the early nineteenth century," said Office of Planning Director Eric Shaw. "I am also excited that this project engages District residents, scholars, and amateur archeologists through regular fence talks and social media."

For more information about the project, please visit the project website:
www.yarrowmamoutarchaeology.weebly.com.

The Office of Planning will hold fence talks daily at 10:15 a.m. and 1: 45 p.m. at 3324 Dent Place NW on days when the archaeologists are on site and weather permitting. Please check the project's Facebook page www.facebook.com/YarrowMamoutArchaeology for the schedule.

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