

# ARCHAEOLOGY

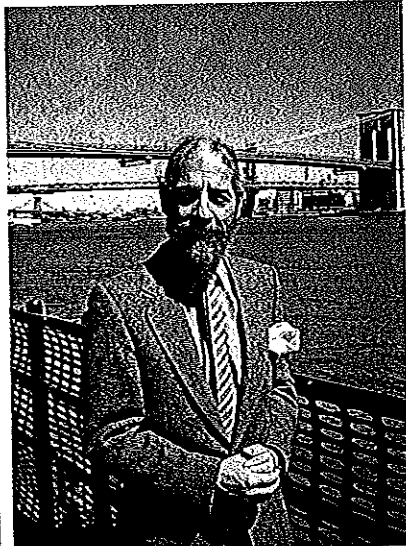
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## Secret Rites of Lesbos



PERIPATETIC SCHOLAR



Contributing Editor Bianchi

Robert S. Bianchi has joined our masthead as a Contributing Editor, bringing with him a welcome expertise in Egyptian archaeology. A longtime member of our Editorial Advisory Board, Bianchi is the author of more than 300 journal articles and some two dozen books, the most recent being *The Nubians, People of the Ancient Nile* (Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1994). A natty dresser and an impassioned lecturer who has been known to knock over a podium with a sweeping gesture, Bianchi is also a peripatetic scholar. Recently he lectured in Syria, Jordan, Turkey, and Greece; flew on to Egypt to

lead a tour of the Giza Plateau; returned home to New York City to advise the editors of *Animating the Past*, a video production; then boarded a plane to resume work in Egypt, where he is cataloguing masterpieces of classical art in the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, and collaborating with Canadians in excavations of Ptolemaic and Roman cemeteries in the Dakhla Oasis.

We are also pleased to announce that, beginning with this issue, *ARCHAEOLOGY* will publish drawings from the portfolio of the acclaimed designer David Macaulay (see page 17). A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Macaulay intended his first book to be about a gargoyle beauty pageant set in medieval France. His editors at Houghton Mifflin's children's department, however, were more impressed with his cathedrals than his gargoyles. The pageant was scrapped and Macaulay set off for France to work on *Cathedral* (1973). He then built a Roman metropolis (*City*, 1974), erected monuments to the pharaohs (*Pyramid*, 1975), and built a medieval fortress (*Castle*, 1977). Among his other works are *Motel of the Mysteries* (1979), a future archaeologist's examination of a Holiday Inn, and most recently, *Ship*, a fictional account of the discovery of an early sixteenth-century Spanish caravel.

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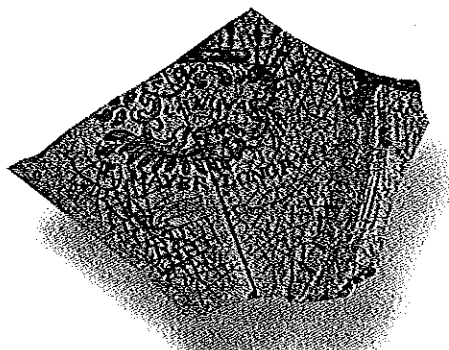
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# Legend of the Barkhamsted Lighthouse

The hills of northwestern Connecticut yield evidence of a colony of outcasts once the subject of tall tales and fanciful poetry.

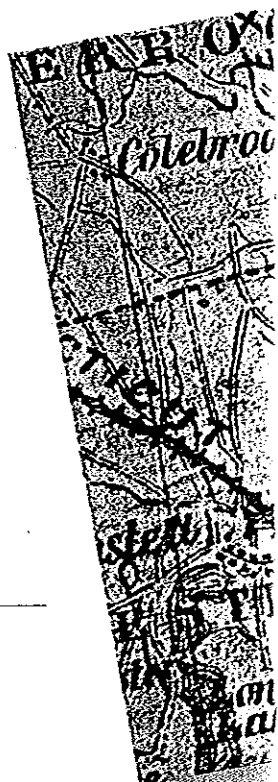
In the summer of 1855 J.E. Mason, a reporter for the *New Haven Journal*, became intrigued with the story of Molly Barber. According to legend, Molly had been a well-to-do young woman from Wethersfield, Connecticut, who eloped with James Chaugham, a Narragansett Indian, in 1740. The couple fled to the hills of northwestern Connecticut to escape the wrath of Molly's father. There, near what would become the town of Barkhamsted, they founded a settlement called "the Lighthouse."

The story was well-known in nineteenth-century Connecticut. Mason wrote: "The millionaire in his mansion, with more money than brains, and the laborer in his cottage, with more children than dollars, have all heard of Barkhamsted Light-House and have wondered whether it was a real or an ideal structure." Mason was determined to find out more about Molly Barber and James Chaugham. He journeyed to Barkhamsted where he met Jesse Ives, a local innkeeper. Ives told him that the "Lighthouse" was actually a village that served as a landmark for stage-coach drivers traveling from Albany, New York, to New Hartford, Connecticut, on the Farmington River Turnpike. According to Ives, when the coach drivers saw light from hearth fires through gaps in the walls of the villagers' crudely built cabins, they knew they were but a few miles from their "port" of New Hartford. They called it "the Lighthouse," and the name stuck.

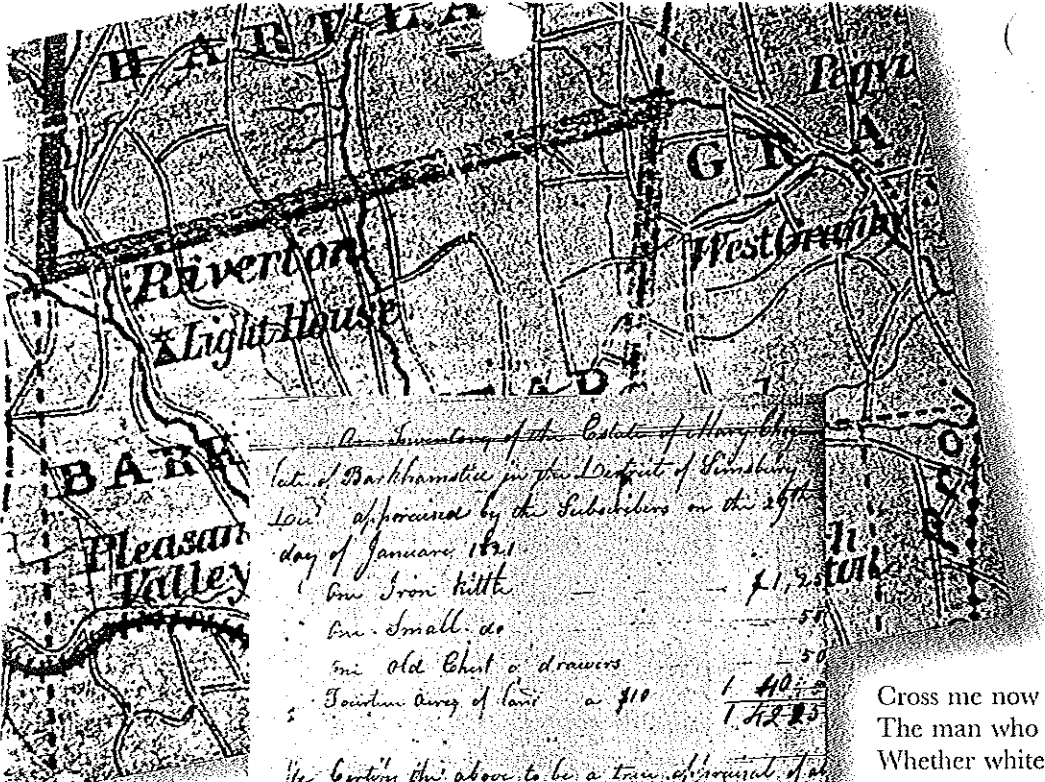


Best of all, Ives directed Mason to the village itself, where he met with at least one Chaugham descendant, Polly Elwell, who told him of the elopement of her grandparents, the eight children they raised, and how other outcasts had been drawn to the hillside overlooking the river.

Mason wrote about his search in two reports that first appeared in the *New Haven Journal* and were later reprinted in the *Mountain County Herald*, a local newspaper. The articles may well have inspired Lewis Sprague Mills, a twentieth-century Connecticut educator and historian, to write his 115-page epic poem about Molly Barber and James Chaugham, and their descendant settlement. Mills also relied on the work of a local historian, William Wallace Lee, who based his own version of the tale on an 1866 interview he had with Polly Elwell, 11 years after Mason spoke with her. Mills begins his "Legend of Barkhamsted Lighthouse":



BY KENNETH L. FEDER



Clockwise from top:  
 A portion of an 1876 map showing location of the Lighthouse; an 1821 probate court document listing the possessions of Molly Chaugham; a 19th-century polychrome sherd; a turn-of-the-century photograph of John Elwell, a great grandson of the Chaughams, and his daughter, Lurie (New Hartford Historical Society); and the base of a transfer-printed vessel with the mark of a Staffordshire potter.



Near the winding Tunxis River,  
 Where the groaning mills and presses,  
 Flow with sweet and luscious cider  
 In the sunny days of autumn  
 Lingers yet this ancient legend  
 Told by fathers to their children  
 Gathered round the supper table  
 When the candle light is feeble  
 And the wind is in the chimney.

According to the poem, Molly, born in 1715, reaches marriageable age and falls in love with a man beneath her station. Her father forbids her to marry him. In response Molly presents her father with the ultimatum:

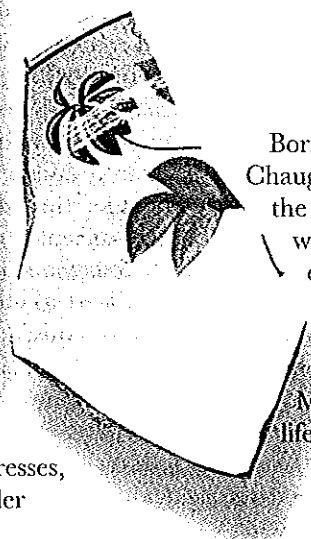
An inventory of the Estate of Henry Chaugham late of Northampton in the County of Hampshire Senr. deceased by the Subscribers on the 25th day of January 1821  
 One Iron kettle — \$1.50  
 One Small do — .50  
 One old Chest & drawers — .50  
 Fourteen Aveys of Lard — a \$10 1.40  
 Total \$12.90

We certify this above to be a true & correct copy of the Estate Exhibited to us  
 J. S. & M. Smith  
 Sole Executors

Cross me now and I will marry  
 The man who first may seek my hand,  
 Whether white or any color.

Meanwhile, James Chaugham has come to work on the Barber estate:

Tall and straight and very handsome  
 Was this Narragansett suitor,  
 Once a savage from the forest  
 With a face with paint resplendent.  
 And a head-dress gay with plumage  
 From the feathered inmates  
 Of the forest dense and dusky.



Born on Block Island, off the coast of Rhode Island, Chaugham is an itinerant laborer who has traveled up the Connecticut River, learning the ways of the white settlers and doing odd jobs. Molly carries out her threat by marrying Chaugham. They flee to northwestern Connecticut, making camp on the slope of what will become known as Ragged Mountain. There, beyond the reach of Molly's father, they build a cabin and begin their life together:

Of she whispered in the darkness,  
 'Better face the catamountains  
 [mountain lions]  
 Better face the bears and panthers,  
 Better face the wild wolves howling  
 Than an angry father shouting.'

Molly and James have eight children. One daughter, Sally, dies during childhood, and another never marries; the rest, two sons and four daughters, marry as others move into their community in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Most of those who congregate in the village and marry into the Chaugham fam-

ily are outside the mainstream of society, and include other Native Americans, poor whites, and at least one free black.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century James Chaugham dies. He is buried in a community cemetery that will eventually, according to Mills, hold the remains of some 50 Lighthouse residents in graves marked with simple fieldstones. Molly dies, according to Mills, in 1820. After her death, social forces draw children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to other communities and other towns. A decade or so after J.E. Mason's 1855 visit, the village is abandoned.

I first heard of the Barkhamsted Lighthouse story during the eighth field season of the Farmington River Archaeological Project. In the early years of the project we looked for prehistoric sites along the Farmington River, documenting occupation of the valley from 10,000 years ago until the time of European settlement. In 1986 we expanded our efforts to include the highlands bordering the valley on the west, a rough, hilly region that is now part of Peoples State Forest. Toward the end of the season, we discovered a site that both excited and perplexed us. On a flat, wooded terrace overlooking the Farmington River floodplain we found peculiar stone foundations. Clearly they were not aboriginal, because Native Americans in this region did not build in stone; nor were they the remains of typical colonial structures, because the foundations were quite small and irregular and the stonework was extremely crude.

Then one of my crew found a boulder with a plaque set into it, bearing the inscription:

This Portion of the Peoples Forest  
Was Given by the Connecticut  
Daughters of the American Revolution  
1929  
Near This Spot was the  
Site of an Indian Village.

We soon realized that our crude foundations were the remains of the Lighthouse settlement, not an Indian village as denoted by the D.A.R.

Our investigation of primary historical documents indicates that many elements of the story related by Mills were essentially true. The Lighthouse name, for example, turns up in the records of Barkhamsted's town clerk. A baby was born on May 14, 1858, to Solomon Webster and his wife, Mary, who, town birth records clearly show, was a great-granddaughter of Molly and James Chaugham. The Websters' place of residence was recorded as "Barkhamsted Light House." Further evidence documents the presence of descendants of Molly and James in Barkhamsted and elsewhere in northwestern Connecticut as they were born, married, purchased land, attended church and school, borrowed money, and died. Molly's death is listed in the records of the First Congregational Church of

Date	Name	Sex	Name of Parents	Age	Race	Residence
April 11	James	Male	Charles & Hannah	26	White	Barkhamsted
April 24	James	Male	Charles & Hannah	21	White	Barkhamsted
April 26	James	Male	Charles & Hannah	20	White	Barkhamsted
May 5	Henry	Male	Henry & Mary	39	White	Barkhamsted
May 14	Solomon	Male	Solomon & Mary	30	White	Barkhamsted
April 16	William	Male	William & Ann	27	White	Barkhamsted
May 1	Milo	Male	Milo & Hannah	25	White	Barkhamsted
June 20	James	Male	James & Sarah	44	White	Barkhamsted
April 20	Julia	Female	Julia & William	21	White	Barkhamsted
April 10	Affie	Female	Affie & Moore	34	White	Barkhamsted
Oct 23	Henry	Male	Henry & Louisa	33	White	Barkhamsted
Jan 1	Jed	Male	Jed & Van Post	31	White	Barkhamsted
May 30	Robert	Male	Robert & Trill	25	White	Barkhamsted

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY KENNETH L. FIDLER

This 1858 Barkhamsted document records the birth of a daughter to Solomon Webster and his wife Mary, a great granddaughter of James and Molly Chaugham.

Barkhamsted. Mills almost had it right: she died in February 1818 at the age of 104.

In 1990 and 1991 we excavated the Lighthouse site. Beginning with a surface walkover, we located the foundations and cellar holes of ten buildings, a stone quarry, and a large grinding stone made from a glacial boulder. In the Mills poem, Molly "pounded corn" in an "ancient mortar."

We recovered more than 12,000 artifacts. Few could be dated to the eighteenth century, probably a reflection of the community's initial isolation. We found some black-glazed redware (an American imitation of English Jackfield ware), first made in the late eighteenth century. Some of the creamware, pearlware, and salt-glazed stoneware found at the site may date from the eighteenth century as well, but these were also manufactured in the nineteenth century. A few handwrought nails and some smoking pipes of white ball clay could be either eighteenth or nineteenth century in date. We also found simple stone knives in the earliest levels of the site, but nothing like the finely flaked, symmetrical stone tools that often characterize the prehistoric record in southern New England. The knives seem to be a pragmatic response to a lack of metal tools during the site's early occupation. A small number of granite-schist cutting tools appear to have been sharpened on a single face of both lateral edges, which does not correspond with any known native



stone toolmaking tradition in this region.

Beginning in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the population and industry of the village of Riverton, less than two miles north of the Lighthouse along the Farmington River Turnpike, grew rapidly. Contact between Lighthouse inhabitants and Euro-American society became more frequent, and within a few decades the Lighthouse inhabitants were part of the dominant culture. The nineteenth-century artifacts we recovered bear this out. They include transfer-printed whiteware, brass buttons, machine-made iron nails, bottle glass, horseshoes and bridle parts, gunflints, gun parts, cutlery, an eyeglass lens, and even coins.

The Lighthouse people subsisted on the resources of the forest. According to Mills:

Oft they hunted through the forest  
For the rabbit and the squirrel.  
Oft they labored by the river  
Building swift canoes for sailing.  
Often in the shallow water,  
Spearing eels and trout and suckers.

More than 1,100 animal bone fragments were recovered at the settlement, representing cow, white-tail deer, fish, dogs, and assorted small mammals. Most of these fragments (except for the dogs) show evidence of burning, almost certainly from cooking.

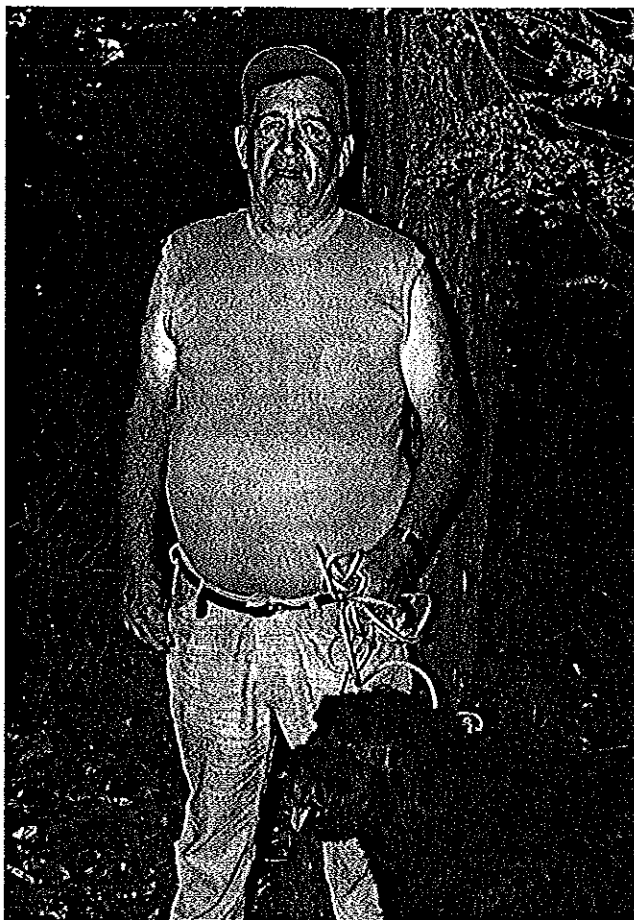
We also surveyed the village cemetery. William Wallace Lee had counted some 50 upright fieldstones in the late 1860s, no doubt leading him to believe that 50 people from the settlement were buried there. We mapped, drew, and photographed about 100 stones; at least 50 appeared to be headstones, and some were associated with slight surface depressions likely resulting from burials. Others may have been set up at the foot of graves, and a few may have been talus from the slope above the cemetery.

In 1879, the town of Barkhamsted celebrated its 100th anniversary. Lee spoke disdainfully of those drawn to the legend of the Barkhamsted Lighthouse:

"Every few years some city chap, with a pen behind his ear, comes out among these plain country folk, puts on airs, shows off large, and in return gets badly sold...and forthwith is launched a new version of the Lighthouse story and doubtless this process will be repeated for years to come."

In a sense, our research is fulfilling Lee's cynical prophecy, although I think he would applaud our attempt to illuminate the lives of the people of the Lighthouse.

When Mason visited the village in 1855, Chaugham's granddaughter Polly Elwell identified herself and her generation as the last of the Lighthouse people: "We Narragansetts once great, now poor...Narragansetts all gone—me last one." But Polly



Ray Ellis, a great-great-great-great-great-grandson of James and Molly Chaugham, was a recent visitor to the site.

was wrong. A heavy-set man in his 60s visited us one day during our excavation. He thrust out his large callused hand and said: "Shake my hand." I did. Then he placed his hand on my shoulder and said with a big smile: "My name is Ray Ellis and you've just shaken hands with one of them. I am a descendant of Jimmy Chaugham."

He proceeded to give me the details of his own genealogy as best he could. Of course, he knew his parents' names, as well as the names of his aunts and uncles, grandparents, and even great-grandparents. But he could go back no further than this. He did know one thing for certain: all of his life he had been told that he was a descendant of "Jimmy" Chaugham and Molly Barber.

He wondered if I could help him fill in his family genealogy. I could. Records show that Ray Ellis is the great-great-great-great-great-grandson of James and Molly Chaugham. The Lighthouse "tribe" had not disappeared. Descendants of James and Molly, like Ray Ellis, continue to live throughout western Connecticut, passing along the history of their ancestors. ■

KENNETH L. FEDER is a professor of anthropology at Central Connecticut State University.