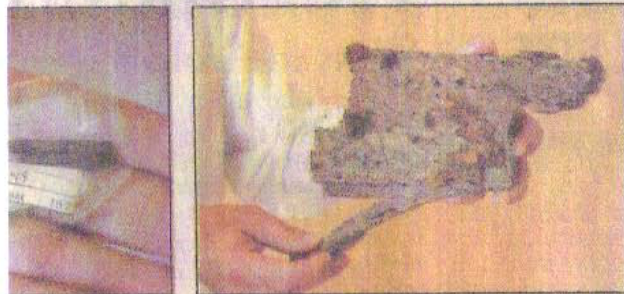


MARYLAND



GAMBLING'S WORLD SERIES SOLDIERS ON WITHOUT MIKEY, THE POKER-PLAYING CHIMP PG 2B



sorts over artifacts in the living room of his Annapolis home. Fragments of slate pencils (above left) and metal support (right). His current project involves analyzing old Talbot

W. BUSCH [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

Blackboard jumble yields schools' past

BY JAMIE STIEHM
(SUN REPORTER)

WITH ITS PILLARS AND STONE walls on a prominent hilltop in Ellicott City, the Patapsco Female Institute was once a 19th-century vision of a Greek temple: an academy to educate and refine young ladies and "future mothers."

But in southern Anne Arundel County, a humble, even homely one-room structure built several decades later was all the Nutwell School could offer its students.

The myth of the little red schoolhouse has only a kernel of truth, says James G. Gibb, an Annapolis-based archaeologist. From town to town, they varied in size, shape and stature. In a sense, each early school building was a measure, along with teacher pay, attendance rates and textbooks, of how high a community aimed in educating the next generation.

"Schoolhouses were the most common public buildings on the landscape," Gibb says. "They are a great place to look at a community, since so much of our lives are

spent in school. The differences tell a lot. You get a view of a community's ambition, or lack thereof."

Gibb has photographed, excavated artifacts and compiled data on hundreds of the state's schoolhouses — some still standing, many gone — from the post-Civil War period, 1865 to 1920.

His latest project, funded by a Historical Society of Talbot County grant, involves analyzing that county's school board reports to the state for all four seasonal school terms. He uses the same 55-year time frame for this project because 1865 was the starting point of a new state constitution and school system after the shambles of the war. Local control over school governance predominated across the counties, even under the statewide organization.

The project's goal, society Director Glenn Uminowicz says, is to create "living history" for children who visit the Longwoods School outside Easton. The program will be taught in a restored red schoolhouse built in the late 19th century.

Gibb's findings "will help us design this [Please see SCHOOLS, 5B]



C. KAWAJIRI [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

Nigerian festival

Bunmi Omoshebi gets ready for the fashion show at Naija Fest 2006 at Patterson Park.