

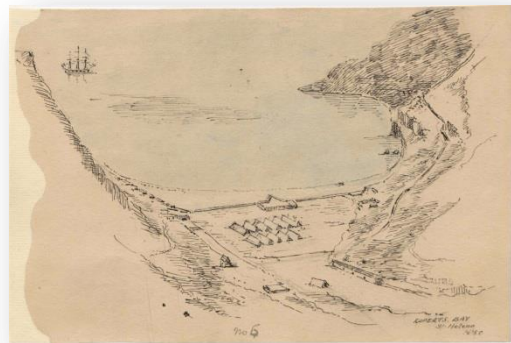
Public Talk at UMass Amherst
**DISTANT FREEDOM: ST HELENA AND THE ABOLITION OF THE
ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE, 1840-1872**

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Thursday, January 22nd, 4-5:30 pm
UMass Campus Center Room 917 (light refreshments provided)

Lecture abstract

In 2007-8, archaeological excavations on the South Atlantic island of St Helena unearthed the graveyards of thousands of “recaptive” or “liberated Africans”. These people – virtually the last victims of the notorious Middle Passage – had been aboard slave ships intercepted by Royal Naval patrols, but had died on their voyage to St Helena, or subsequently in the refugee camps set up on the island to receive them. This lecture tells the story of this overlooked outpost of Abolition. In its first part it considers the diplomatic circumstances that brought St Helena’s “Liberated African Establishment” into being, and the longer-term articulation of power between the Imperial government, its distant South Atlantic colony and the Royal Navy. All these factors would be critical in shaping the circumstances in which the captives would live – and die – after their arrival at the island. The second part of the lecture comes to rest on St Helena. Drawing on a combination of historical sources and archaeological evidence, it describes the experiences of all those – both African and European – whose lives were drawn into the compass of Abolition, long after 1807 and far from the political ideals of London.



Sketch of St Helena's Liberated African refugee camp

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