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Students dig into hunt for Revolutionary era fo

By **SALLY CAPONE**
STAFF WRITER

MADISON – Whether or not the small brick structure that stands on the property of the historic Luke Miller Homestead on Ridgedale Avenue is an original forge dating from the 18th century, was among the mysteries that some Madison High School juniors sought to unravel during a dig on a drizzly Tuesday morning.

Radar had already mapped out an area that might contain artifacts. Now it was up to the students to extricate them. Perhaps the greatest mystery of the property is the storied forge of the Miller blacksmithing family – and the tunnel beneath.

While it is likely that a forge stood on the spot, it is unlikely that much of the original brick

structure remains. The underground tunnel was rediscovered during an elevation drawing done in the 1930s.

16 Students Dig In

Led by Madison High School social studies department Chairman Mark De Biasse, eight of his students from last year's class participated in the excavations on the morning of Tuesday, May 20.

"They did research that led to a documentary completed in April 2007," De Biasse noted.

"This year's sophomore class viewed the film to prepare for this afternoon, when they will dig," he added.

Local history is a requirement in De Biasse's class. The students must explore local history and complete a one-page news report.

So far that day, nails, bolts and

glass were found, as two students, Kyle Aristizabal and John Dunne, grandson of former mayor Jack Dunne, sifted through the earth.

But more importantly, a brick that appeared to be handmade had been uncovered.

"The brick doesn't match the structure – it's smaller and you can tell it's handmade.

"That's a clue that the forge was located here," De Biasse said.

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Right: Madison High School juniors Christina Rooney, left, and Kimberly Eng, both 17, help sift pieces of iron from the soil excavated May 20 at the 18th century Luke Miller forge site off Ridgedale Avenue in Madison.

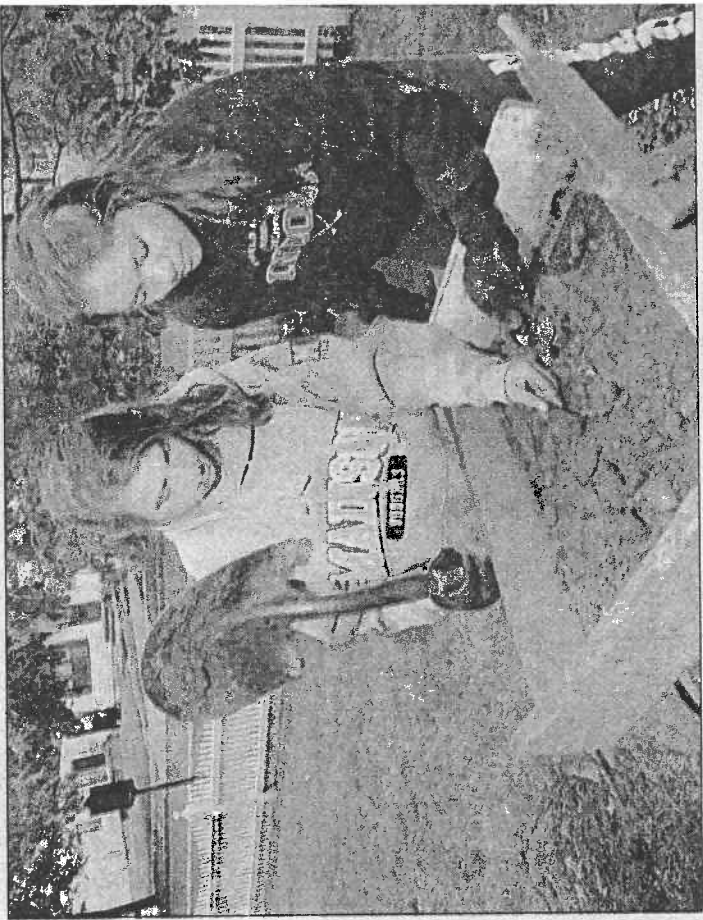


Photo by Judi Whiting

