As an intern, I worked at the Sewanee Environmental Institute, specifically with Dr. Jon Evans and Dr. Sarah Sherwood, for ten weeks this summer. For three weeks I spent my internship organizing and compiling all archaeological data into a user-friendly database. The next four weeks were spent doing historic research on the land use and land ownership in the area referred to locally as “King Farm.” Following this research, two weeks were filled with preparing and excavating archaeology sites with the Sewanee Environmental Institute’s pre-college students at “King Farm.” I finished the last four weeks polishing off the archaeology database, synthesizing “King Farm” research, and occasionally helping out domain management in reviewing project areas for previously recorded archaeological sites.

The University’s archaeological records were in need of reviewing and reorganization. Using these records, I would create the Sewanee Archaeological Database that was comprehensible for any researcher or University employee, having received permission from the University. Cultural resource management (CRM) is the management of cultural assets that are prehistoric, historic, or current. CRM at the University of the South is of great importance due to being a finite educational resource and can easily be irreversibly damaged by mismanagement, concerning in particular the Domain’s archaeology. In the 2008 Strategic Plan, the University agrees with this, stating that the “Domain and campus management will support the educational mission of the University and engage in an inclusive planning process focused on conservation and appropriate use of present resources, the restoration of areas previously subjected to environmental damage, and the pursuit of principles of eco-justice.”
During the first three weeks, I went daily into the Landscape Analysis Lab and reviewed the archaeological computer files left by Dr. Major McCullough. It was my job to evaluate the importance of each file and decide if it was merited. This required making judgment calls and an understanding of preservation. Next, I gathered all information into a database by combining and synthesizing all data from the files. This was particularly difficult because while some files seemed to be duplicates of others, small changes were evident. Finally, I completed a comprehensible database containing all information pertaining to the 307 archaeology sites registered with the state of Tennessee on the domain. These three weeks have allowed me to expand my knowledge and experience of the archaeology of archaeology: the synthesizing and understanding of previously recorded archaeological data. Most employment opportunities in archaeology today are in cultural resource management or museum curation. I have thereby required this knowledge and experience during this internship by building this database.

For the next four weeks of my internship with SEI, I immersed myself in historic research of King Farm. First, I reviewed my past research (deeds and maps) and Dr. Evans past research on the subject (interviews). I then reviewed the gaps in our timeline and researched to fill them using Ancestry.com and University archives. By attempting to bridge the gaps, I realized that a portion of the information we assumed to be fact was actually false. Therefore, I started from scratch and with the help of Domain Manager Nate Wilson; I was able to correct and rebuild the timeline. This required sleuthing through University records, county records in Winchester, and state records in Nashville. The timeline proved that the University bought the land of King Farm a total of three times due to poor record keeping and a lawsuit. At first it was difficult to
understand how this could happen, but while processing these historic deeds the property lines are not GPS points or latitude and longitudes, but have colloquial descriptions such as “starting at a white oak in the east heading 9 poles to the west to a black gum.” Needless to say knowing where a property ended and began would be terribly difficult and therefore, easily misinterpreted. I was able to rebuild the shape of King Farm using the deed descriptions and traced this shape through out deeds from 19th to 20th century. One of the most entertaining finds was that the King family never actually owned King farm, which goes to prove that when doing any research assumptions are your worst enemy and facts your best friend.

While scanning and geo-referencing historical maps of the Domain during the school year with my research partner, Nancy York, we were able to find GPS points for several historic archaeological sites on the domain previously unrecorded. One such site was a small cabin next to King Farm. This summer, I was able to locate this site which we optimistically have named Green cabin after Ned Green. This find was particularly impressive because it was located using remote sensing. I, having located this site, participate in the completion of a geophysical survey under the direction of Dr. Nick Herman, and in a leadership role, partake in the excavation of the site with the pre-college SEI students. Therefore, I was part of every stage of archaeology on this particular site. This archaeological experience is particularly memorable and I am grateful to be able to claim it.

The pre-college SEI students came in the following two weeks. Because King Farm was the area in which the students would be trying there hand at archaeology, I was invited to share my historic research with the students in a quick lecture, create a map of
the sites we would have excavations at, and participate in those excavations. This part of
my internship taught me about how to present the information I’ve gathered creating a
story rather than a complete data set. I also learned the truth behind the phrase “the best
way of learning is teaching.”

The remaining time of my internship was mostly spent in the polishing off my
database by running queries and creating maps. I also completed a poster showing off my
historic research at King Farm. However, my favorite part of my ending four weeks was
using my database to help Domain management prevent the destruction of archaeological
sites in areas where the University has working projects. We would use my database to
see if any sites were located in the project area and then attempt to locate those sites.
Once in the project area Dr. Sherwood would then talk about the likely hood of a site
being in the location and if a site would have any value after erosion and human
disturbance. It was at this time I got to see Cultural Resource Management and how my
database had value to the University.

In closing, my internship with the SEI has given me unique experiences in the
field of archaeology. I was able to create a useful database for cultural resource
management, to undertake historic research that cleared up 150 years of misinformation,
to participate in all steps of an archaeological excavation at Green’s Cabin, to have
teaching experience with the SEI pre-college students, and to all of this work come to
fruition with the help of domain management. These experiences could not have been
achieved anywhere else and I am blessed to be able to claim them as my own.