

# The Datum Point



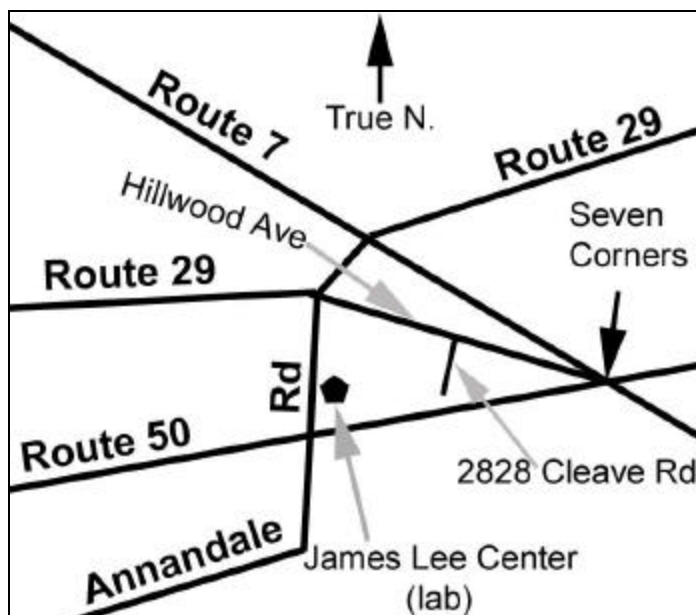
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

August 2004

## From the Veep – C.K. Gailey

Now that the archaeologists have settled in at James Lee Center, it's time to start meeting there again. The Chapter picnic at Mike Johnson's was a great success. Joyce Pearsall was in town and was able to be there. I won't try to name everyone else ... I don't want to miss anyone. You know who you are. I'll bring to the meeting copies of a couple of publications the Chapter gets: the NPS Heritage News and the Maryland ASM Ink. You should take a look at them once in a while. Interesting stuff. See you at the meeting.

**Directions :** Go east on Route 50 from the west side of the Beltway and go west of Route 50 from Seven Corners. When you come to Annandale Road, turn north, there is a Chili's on the west side of the road after you turn. At the first light about 1/4 to the north, the James Lee Center will be on your right. Turn right into the parking lot and go in the nice large main entrance on the east side of the building. We will be using one of the Literacy Council's classrooms (room 112) for the next two months (Aug and Sept). Also, we will have to be out of the room by 9:45, so the meeting will move right along!



## **August Presentation - By Dr. Douglas Stanford**

### **Archaeology at Two Virginia Plantations: Germanna and Stratford**

Dr. Stanford is an Associate Professor of Historic Preservation at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia. This presentation is an overview of archaeological research conducted at two major plantation sites. Germanna, in Orange County, is best known as the location of the "enchanted castle," the ca. 1720-50 mansion complex associated with Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood. This immense brick and stone residence stood amidst a working plantation and the first government seat of Spotsylvania County. Germanna began in 1714 as a frontier fort, the settlement for immigrant Germans who pioneered the region's iron industry. Stratford Hall Plantation in Westmoreland County offers a tidewater contrast to piedmont Germanna, but also has a famous association - the Lee family of Virginia. Recent archaeological excavations there have focused on the evolving landscape surrounding the mansion and on sites associated with the plantation's enslaved African American population. Information from one of Stratford's slave quarter sites has become part of the Digital Archaeological Archive of Chesapeake Slavery (DAACS).

### **Stratford Hall**



## **NATUREFEST VOLUNTEERS** **NEEDED!!!!!!**

Susan Lilly has asked the Northern Virginia Chapter for participation in the NatureFest in Herndon, Virginia on September 19<sup>th</sup>, from 1 to 5 pm!!!! Call the O'Neill's at 703-249-9593 if you are interested. They usually send the chapter a tidy amount for helping!!!!!!

### **Agenda item for new business of the ASV: Revisions/adjustments to Virginia burial regulations.**

**By Martha Williams**

Explanation: I currently am serving on a committee that is discussing some revisions to the VDHR's regulations concerning the disposition of human remains. I was informed that my primary function was to represent the ASV on this committee. The committee is concerned with two basic issues:

1. Should excavated human remains ever be curated rather than reburied, as required by current VDHR regulations? If so, under what circumstances and by whom?
2. Should excavated human remains be publicly displayed (this includes photographs in magazines and technical reports as well as museum displays, etc.). If so, under what circumstances?

I should note that this committee is composed of a wide variety of folks, ranging from academics: (Jeff Hantman-UVA, Cliff Boyd), museum professionals (Liz Moore-VMNH, Martinsville), forensics experts (Doug Owsley), Native Americans (Karen, a rep from the VA Council), government archeologists (Tim Thompson-COE, Norfolk District), contract archeologists, and VDHR (Ethel Eaton, Joanne Wilson).

## **Job Announcement**

Historic St. Mary's City is looking for an Archaeological Conservation Assistant. The job will be for approx. 37.5 weeks at \$13.50/hour. The assistant will work in a team to perform a box-by-box survey of the collections housed at Historic St. Mary's City, MD. The condition of the artifacts and their packaging will be entered in a Microsoft Access database. More details, with procedures for applying, will be available at the meeting, or from the project conservator, Lisa Young, at [conserveit@earthlink.net](mailto:conserveit@earthlink.net) or the lab director, Silas Hurry, at [sdhurry@smcm.edu](mailto:sdhurry@smcm.edu) or phone 240-895-4973.

### **MOUNT VERNON POSITION:** **ARCHEOLOGICAL FIELD ASSISTANT**

Mount Vernon Archaeology seeks applications to fill the seasonal position of FIELD ASSISTANT. Individuals are needed to participate in this final phase of excavation at the site of an 18th-century whiskey distillery.

Constructed in 1797, the distillery was part of George Washington's gristmill complex, with five stills operating within the large (30 x 75-foot) stone structure. This excavation, funded by the Distilled Council of the United States, continues a multi-year project designed to study the foundation and associated features for a proposed reconstruction.

Under the direction of Mount Vernon staff, the field assistant carries out the full range of excavation procedures, as well as assists in supervising interns and volunteers. Other responsibilities include artifact processing and public interpretation of the fieldwork. Successful completion of a field school and class work in archaeology is required. Additional archaeological field experience in the Chesapeake is preferred.

Employment is through November 30, 2004, Monday through Friday. Please send a resume, cover letter, and three references to: Eleanor Breen, Assistant Archaeologist Mount Vernon Ladies' Association Mount Vernon, VA 22121 703) 799-6303 [ebreen@mountvernon.org](mailto:ebreen@mountvernon.org)

## CULTURAL RESOURCE SECTION FAIRFAX COUNTY

**Land Bay A (44FX2723)** - The weekday crew finally exposed the center of the large FCR feature (feature 12) they have been excavating for the last month. They also have recovered two more quartz endscraper-like tools. These look later than the first one, which looked like a Paleoindian endscraper, and may date to the Early Archaic. This is supported by recovery of a bifurcate point base, which dates to ca. 10,500-9,000 BP (calibrated C-14 years).

The project has been debating the reasons for the intense amount of fire cracked rocks, ranging in size from larger than a fist down to pea sized. The varied sizes indicate recurring use of the same spot over a long period of time and a need for replacing rocks that have broken down to very small sizes. In other words, whatever was being done required larger rocks, hypothetically because the larger rocks retained heat longer. Three primary hypotheses come to mind:

1. The rocks were being used in some kind of annual roasting process.
2. They were the leftovers from sweat lodges. The process involved heating rocks in a fire and then dragging the hot rocks into a small air-tight hut. Water then would be poured over the rocks to create steam as in a steam bath. The cold water hitting the hot rocks would shock them into cracking.
3. The newest hypothesis is that the larger rocks were used as "radiators" inside winter houses. The site is on a south facing slope in an interior setting which is characteristic of winter fission camps. Hunter-gatherers could not stay in larger groups during the winter because food and, especially fire wood resources, in a relatively small area would not support larger groups. As a result, larger social units would break up in the fall into smaller family sized units and spread out over the tribe's territory for the winter. If they were smart, and they were, they would choose well-drained terraces with southern (usually southeast) facing slopes, which were protected from cold north winds and would be exposed to the early morning sun so they would warm up quickest after a cold

night. However, at night they would wish to keep the house warm so that in the morning they wouldn't awaken to a frozen house. A way to do that, because keeping a fire going all night is sleep interrupting and expensive in fire wood, could have been to put large rocks in the fire to serve as a radiator. Over time the rocks would crack from the thermal shock of being heated faster than they could expand to absorb the change in temperature. As a result they would need to bring in more large rocks, because the cracked ones would no longer retain heat long enough. 'just a thought - we'd love to hear other ideas.

They also have completed the jasper/quartz crystal block at the southern end of the site and recovered two high quality quartz, blade-like flakes but little else.

Fieldwork at the site should be done by the end of August and lab work can expect to last into September. The State has approved the application for Threatened Sites funding to pay Berno Tops to do the analysis and write the report. Acceptance will probably require Park Authority Board approval.

Meadowood Farm Grant - The Park Authority Board has approved our accepting a \$60,000 grant from the Federal Bureau of Land Management to conduct a survey of their approximately 800 acre Meadowood Farm on Mason Neck. The survey should begin before the end of August and will be our big volunteer program for the remainder of this year and well into next.

Those Chapter members needing practical experience for the survey portion of State Archeological Technician certification will have plenty of opportunity.

**C.K. Gailey, our trusted Vice-President, will be awarded the Elly Doyle Award for 2004 for excellence in volunteering on a county-wide level!!!! Last year he was awarded for excellence in the cultural resource division, and this year it has spread to the entire county!! Go, C.K., Go!!! A reception is planned for late October, details to come.**

# June at Mount Vernon

By Eleanor Breen

This summer, with a crew of six, we are working towards completing excavations of George Washington's distillery. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, Patrick O'Neill, along with some dedicated ASV volunteers, came out the site to take samples of our fired-hardened subsoil for use in archaeomagnetism. If you studied really hard, you may remember the term archaeomagnetic age determination from your Archaeology 101 class.

Archaeomagnetic dating is a chronometric or absolute dating method that relies on the fact that the earth's magnetic field and magnetic north change through time. Without getting too technical, when clay containing iron particles is heated to a certain point, those particles align to magnetic north. When the clay cools, this new magnetic alignment is preserved. Archaeomagnetic testing is usually done on archaeological features such as hearths or brick clamps. At the site of the distillery, burned subsoil surrounds one of the five whiskey still furnaces. This feature serves as the heat signature that Patrick tested.

## Tools of the trade



These magnetic alignments have been associated with dates on prehistoric sites that were radiocarbon dated. Magnetic changes vary by region so whereas the southwest has well-developed calibrations for the magnetic changes, the mid-Atlantic region lags

behind. In order to further the development of dates associated with magnetic changes, Patrick came out to sample the bright red subsoil at the distillery, which has a firm construction date of January 1798. Hopefully the information he collected on Saturday, which will be sent to Dr. Jeff Eighmy at Colorado State University for analysis, will aid in the calibration of dates and magnetic variations.

## O'Neill with Ed Redmond, Washington scholar



Additional information on archaeomagnetic age determination:

[http://id-archserve.ucsb.edu/Anth3/Courseware/Chronology/11\\_Paleomag\\_Archaeomag.html](http://id-archserve.ucsb.edu/Anth3/Courseware/Chronology/11_Paleomag_Archaeomag.html)

<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/Anthropology/lab.htm>

Sharer, R. and W. Ashmore  
1993 *Archaeology: Discovering our Past*. Mayfield Publishing Company, Mountain View, CA.

# PREHISTORY OF THE COAST OF ECUADOR

By Wilther Santamaria

I traveled to Ecuador on two occasions this year and learned about the Prehistory of the coastline of this country. I did some research and found out notably early achievements in many cultural developments. The Las Vegas culture of Santa Elena Peninsula dates back to about 10.000-6.000 BC, and the El Inga site, near Quito in the highlands (sierra), is dated back to about 9.000-8.000 BC.

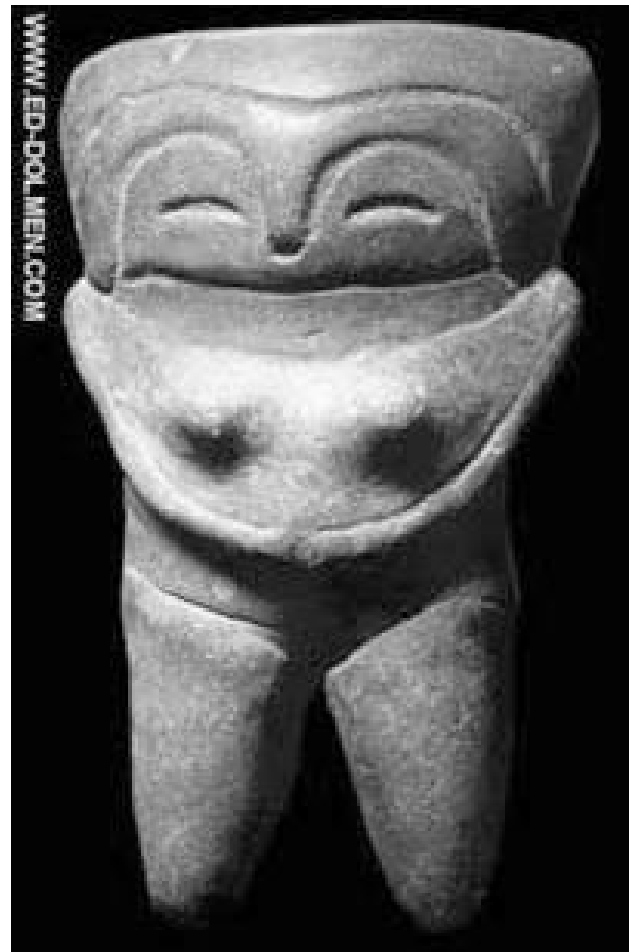


Ecuador produced some of the earliest New World ceramics, textiles and metalwork. The use of ceramics molds is apparently earlier there than elsewhere. It is literally a crossroads for northerly and southerly ocean currents and for intermountain valleys to the north and the east. There is also a route along the pacific coast. It is, therefore also a crossroads for people.

The possibility of relationships between Ecuador and Mesoamerica is very convincing. A number of similar objects and traits are found in both regions, for example, garment types, shafts tombs, raised fields, copper axes and shoe-shaped pots. It is thought that balsa rafts were used in the past for travel along the pacific coast.

The major focus of the trade may have been Spondylus shells found in the Ecuadorian coast. The demand for it was widespread. Spondylus is shown on the sculptures and ceramics of the Chauvin culture in early Peru's cultural development, mantles of

Spondylus have been found in Sican burials and early Spanish sources tell that the shell, whole or ground, plain or burned was the food of the gods. With heavy demands over long periods of time is it possible that the Ecuadorian shores may have been fished out.



The coastal region of Ecuador is the best known archeologically. Today it is a semi-arid scrub land apparently a development of the last few centuries. Early Spanish accounts indicate that it was once forested. There are still small pockets of forest some of them lush, but for the most part it only remains of the past forest, are the ceiba trees which stand out dramatically in the inland scrub.

On the Santa Elena Peninsula, north of the gulf of Guayaquil, there are pre-ceramic Las Vegas sites with shells middens and posts for thatched houses. There is even some evidence for the cultivation of maize and bottled gourds before 6.600 BC.

As in other places, a shift can be noted from the hunting of land mammals to an emphasis on sea resources and the beginnings of plant domestication.



The early communities tend to be close to the coast, near bays or harbors and curving beaches, with gently rising ground behind them, which could be used for agriculture.

At Real Alto, a Valdivia –related site on the Santa Elena Peninsula, phytoliths of maize were found dating to about 2.450 BC. This suggests the possibility that maize or other agriculture was more important as a food source than sea-gathering, and recent work at inland Valdivia sites confirms this.



Today modern fishing villages overlie the sites of the Santa Elena Peninsula and the Valdivia culture. In the past, fishing, hunting and gathering would have been possible, along with agriculture.

Valdivia is part of the formative period in the prehistory of Ecuador I visited the small museum located in the small town of Valdivia that is managed and supported by the local population. Valdivia and other later coastal sites of the formative period have produced textile remains, small abstract stone figures, and ceramic figurines, bowls and wide-mouthed jars. The pottery is simple, decorated with a modest variety of techniques.

The later periods 500 BC- 500 AD produced a number of local styles along the coast, highlands (sierras) and the Amazonian region of Ecuador. Particular notable are the coastal cultures from North to South, of La Tolita, Jama Coaque, Guangala, Guayaquil and Jambeli. In the more northerly cultures metalwork arrives on the scene, mostly gold work, with some copper and platinum as well. Many new ceramic

forms appear at this time, for example, polypod vessels; pedestal bowls with rattles and head rests.

In the highlands or Sierra, the late styles are overlaid by fairly abundant remnants of the Inca intrusions, which began about 1463. Numerous artifacts found in the sierras of Ecuador have Peruvian forms and motifs.

The Inca never succeeded in integrating coastal Ecuador into their empire, however, and virtually no Inca-style artifacts remain there.

A number of Ecuadorian sites have very long sequences. Although a single site may not have been continuously in use, the coast generally has been occupied for at least 12 millennia.

These are some photographs of the newly renovated James Lee Center. Color images will be located on the chapter website soon.

**Outside of the main entrance**



**One of the main lab rooms**



**The receiving area**



**The Library (in semi-working order)**



**The hallway outside the labs**



**Artifact Storage**



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Return to:  
NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia  
2855 Annandale Rd.  
Falls Church, VA 22042

*Chapter members are encouraged to join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia.*

**The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the James Lee Center at the above address.**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**

### **The Datum Point**

Northern Virginia Chapter  
Archeological Society of Virginia  
2855 Annandale Rd.  
Falls Church, VA 22042

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED