

# The Datum Point



NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

February 2004

## From the Veep – C.K. Gailey

Election time is upon us; the slate of candidates is elsewhere in the DP. Folks, ask yourselves if you are contributing as much as you could. The office of President is continuing to go unfilled. It's not like you'd be the leader of the Free World. Ask any of the current or past officers what's involved; you get a lot of help. Diane Schug-O'Neill has been a real trooper to do the searching out of speakers when she's not even an officer; how much longer can we ask her to do that? You'll see elsewhere in the newsletter some very sad news: we've lost a real treasure. In the words of a Country Music classic, "Who's going to fill their shoes?" It's going to be tough. See you at Clark House on Thursday the 12th.

## February 12th Meeting - 7:30 pm Clark House

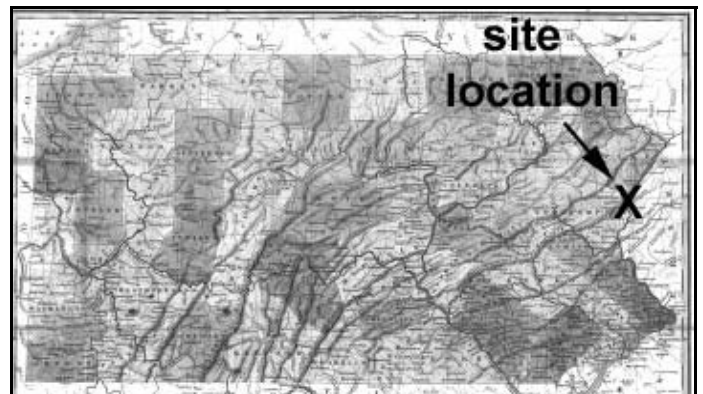
Located at **6332 Barcroft Mews Drive** in Falls Church, take the Beltway Exit east on Little River Turnpike 2 miles to a left on John Marr Drive. Make a right onto Columbia Pike, go 1.8 miles and turn right onto the service road at Barcroft Plaza (by a Harris Teeters). Turn left on the service road and proceed to the Barcroft Mews Townhomes adjacent to the plaza. Clark House is a three story yellow house on the left as you enter the town homes. **Turn at the bus stop enclosure.** Overflow parking in the Plaza.

**Coming from Bailey's Crossroads:** West on Columbia Pike. Go through light at Braddock Road. Take the **FIRST** left (protected turn lane) and make an immediate left to townhouses.

***VISIT THE CHAPTER WEBSITE AT [www.nvcasv.org](http://www.nvcasv.org) & SEE THIS ISSUE IN COLOR ONLINE AFTER THE FEBRUARY MEETING!***

## **February Talk The Shawnee Minisink Site**

By Dr. Joe Dent



**Dr. Joe Dent's** geographic focus is the Middle Atlantic region, with early research concerning Paleoindian studies with regard to matters of adaptation, paleoecological, and landscape reconstruction. Recently he has focused on the Chesapeake Bay area with large-scale excavations on 18th- and early 19th-century sites in Philadelphia.

**The Shawnee Minisink Site** (36MR43), located at the confluence of the Delaware River and Brodhead Creek in the Upper Delaware Valley of northeastern Pennsylvania, was discovered in 1972 and excavated between 1973 and 1977. The history of the Shawnee Minisink site spans nearly 11,000 years, six geological and climatological periods, and nearly a score of distinct cultures. In its clearly stratified sequence, it has provided an unparalleled view of Pocono prehistory and contributed to shattering a few myths about the continent's earliest inhabitants. Because of this excavation, we have a much clearer picture of the lifeways of early man in both the Upper Delaware Valley in particular and the East in general. Ultimately, the site yielded data which indicated the site was occupied as early as 10,590 +/- 300 years ago (radiocarbon dating, W-2994). Other recovered data shows that the site was also occupied subsequent Archaic and Woodland periods.

## Meeting Agenda items:

By the Veep, C.K. Gailey

### **Election**

It's finally election time again. Having had it postponed twice, from December and January, we now have a chance to vote on the officers for 2004. That's the good news. The other good news is that all the incumbents have agreed to run for reelection. The bad news is that nobody has stepped forward to run for President. Therefore, we have the following slate:

<b>President</b>	<b>no candidate</b>
<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>C.K. Gailey</b>
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	<b>Vicki Monken</b>
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	<b>Rachael Mangum</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>George Monken</b>
<b>Datum Point Editor</b>	<b>Patrick O'Neill</b>

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the February meeting. A majority of those present and voting is required for election.

### **Sad News**

It is with a heavy heart that I have to announce two passings of chapter members in this issue of the *DP*.

**Edith Sprouse** died on January 29. She was truly a great lady. Anyone doing historical research in Northern Virginia will miss her immensely. Her recent columns in the Datum Point, **Peopling the Past**, gave us the merest glimpse into the depth and breadth of her research. Edith was that rarest of people, someone who was good at research, writing and making things happen. The History Commission and Historical Society can attest to that. Her memorial service was at the Lyceum, and a tribute to her is at the end of this issue. **I would ask the readers of the Datum Point to send me notes and letters on your relationship with Edith and stories of how she helped you or someone you know and we can send them on to the family and maybe put them in the DP.**

**Pat Gallagher**, of the famous "Friday Crew", passed away on Tuesday, February 3, 2004. She started archaeology in 1992 on the Centreville Tanyard project with Larry Moore. She worked on the excavations of the Union Soldiers at the McDonald's site in Centreville. Pat also transcribed information on Union Soldiers at Centreville and the names carved in the Blenheim House in Fairfax City. Her husband Kevin survives her. For information on her services contact the Lab at 703-787-3778.

## George Mason's

### **Possible Dig Opportunity**

Bob Shuey has been contacted by the members of an African-American congregation in Loudoun County about the possibility of having archaeology done in the vicinity of their former church, just south of Purcellville. The congregation is exploring the renovation of the 3rd quarter-19th Century church, which would include some earth moving (after archaeological exploration!) around the building. Anyone interested in helping with this project (certification candidates take note) can contact C.K. Gailey. Also, they're looking for someone to be in charge of the archaeology.

## Gunston Hall Plantation

### FREE Annual Liberty Lecture Series Slave Societies: 1700s to the Present

Where and why does slavery exist in the world today? This thought-provoking series will begin with an exploration of current societal conditions that contribute to the enslavement of men and women. Ensuing discussions will consider slavery, the law, and human rights in Virginia during George Mason's day and in the nation during Reconstruction. Each program begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Ann Mason Room of the Gunston Hall Visitors' Center.

**Wednesday evenings in February at 7:30 pm Gunston Hall Visitors' Center. Admission is free.** Registration recommended, not required. Teacher recertification available. Students welcome. For information, call (703)550-9220.

#### **Feb. 4** *Slave Societies Today*

Jolene Smith, Free the Slaves, Washington, DC

#### **Feb. 11** *Involuntary Migration of Africans to the New World: Case Study, Virginia*

Robert C. Watson, Hampton University

#### **Feb. 18** *Slavery & the Law in 18th-C. Virginia* Philip J. Schwarz, Virginia Commonwealth University

#### *George Mason, His Slaves, & the Law*

Terry Dunn, Gunston Hall & Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

#### **Feb. 25** *The Black Citizen in a Free Society: The Thirteenth Amendment & the Promise of Freedom*

Lois Horton, George Mason University.

## Cultural Resource Protection Group

**Land Bay A (44FX2723)** - No action has taken place on the site for several weeks, because of the weather. Since the last DP article on the site, access was finally obtained in late November to continue data recovery work. Additional shovel testing located a concentration of clear, glass-like, quartz and dark brown jasper in the southern end of the site, where initial shovel testing indicated no potentially significant material. The methodological differences were a 22.5% greater sample between the later one-foot square samples as opposed to the earlier one-foot diameter STP samples, and total recovery and water screening of later samples.

After a five-foot interval, infill, STP sample, a block excavation was opened, using the same two-foot square STP sub-squares used on other blocks on the site. The sub-squares were chunked out down to the "B" soil stratum (approx. eight inches deep). Although the crystal and jasper indicated a potential for a Paleoindian occupation, the development and weather constraints caused by delaying work until winter, forced the crew to use the more massive recovery methods. Some of the problem was mitigated by systematically recovering six, one-foot square fine mesh samples in one-inch levels down through the top four inches of the "B" soil stratum.

Most of the block was completed before the subfreezing weather set in. The tip of a chalcedony point was recovered, several rhyolite stemmed points and a jasper pentagonal point of the same material as the jasper debitage. The jasper pentagonal point, a jasper point fragment and, therefore, the jasper lithic component are almost assuredly part of the Jack's Reef archeological culture. This culture is a late, Middle Woodland manifestation, which is centered in the Upper Ohio Valley, Upstate New York, and the Eastern Shore of Delaware. It is also common in the Chesapeake Bay. However, it is rare in the Piedmont, south of the Potomac River and particularly in Northern Virginia. It has been associated with Fort Ancient in the Upper Ohio Valley.

This is an important discovery for the Middle Atlantic, since along with the possible buried Jack's Reef Component at the Jarrett Site (44FX2296) it is not well documented as far south as Northern Virginia. The dating of the jasper component does not explain the quartz crystal, which is often associated with Paleoindian occupations. The chalcedony point tip also has Paleoindian technological attributes: blade shape and being the product of what appears to have been a failed fluting attempt (technically called a "reverse hinge" from a flute struck from the point's base). With so little of the quartz crystal distribution left to be excavated, the crew may not be able to definitively identify the component.

Berno Tops has been working on a large, oval, basin shaped pit about ten feet east of the fire cracked rock concentration in the northern part of the site. The pit appears to have been partially lined with pebbles and is rich in charcoal. Less than half of the feature has been recovered. This is the most distressing part of the delay in permitting access to the site, because the crew may not be able to adequately sample and define the feature before it is either destroyed by the weather or development. This is one of the few (if any) upland pit features yet found in the Piedmont.

Crew members will be notified by e-mail when the weather permits work to resume on the site.

## **Note from Mount Vernon:**

"*George Washington's Workshop*," featuring Esther White and colleagues, will be shown on the **History Channel on Friday, February 13, at 8 pm!!!!** The hour-long program highlights Washington's innovative approach to milling, distilling, agriculture, fishing and architecture.

## Alexandria Archaeology

By Ruth Reeder

A **Winter & Spring Lecture Series** is being offered by Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Friends of Alexandria Archaeology, Carlyle House, and the Alexandria Historical Society. Dates and topics include:

**Wednesday, March 24 – 7:30 p.m. at The Lyceum**, Alexandria's History Museum, 201 S. Washington Street, Old Town Alexandria. Professor Roger Wilkins, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and former Assistant Attorney General of the United States under Lyndon Johnson, will speak on his book, *Jefferson's Pillow*. Co-sponsored with Carlyle House and the Alexandria Historical Society.

**Wednesday, April 21 – 7:30 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern Museum**, 134 N. Royal Street, Old Town Alexandria. Barbara Magid, Archaeologist with Alexandria Archaeology, presents *Happy with My Bowl & Friend: The Archaeology of Alexandria's Taverns*. Presented with Friends of Alexandria Archaeology and the Carlyle House. Ms. Magid has co-authored an article in the *Ceramics in America Series* by the Chipstone Foundation. Her article is entitled, "*In the Philadelphia Style: The Pottery of Henry Piercy.*"

Furthermore, and more importantly (wink!)

The **Friends of Alexandria Archaeology** Invite You to Experience **Images of America: Mount Vernon**

The Friends of Alexandria Archaeology will sponsor a Java Jolt presentation by Patrick O'Neill on *Images of America: Mount Vernon*, on Saturday, February 21 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The presentation will take place at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, located in the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union Street. The event is free and open to the public, but reservations are required.

## Ratcliffe Cemetery - Fairfax City

By Patrick O'Neill

Richard Ratcliffe was truly the founding father of Fairfax City. His land was purchased for the Fairfax County Courthouse in the 1790s as well as for the town he laid out called Providence, now Fairfax City. On his land was his residence, called Mount Vineyard. When he and his wife died, they were presumably buried on the property. When Richard's son Charles Ratcliffe sold the land to his brother-in-law George West Gunnell in 1828, he set aside 2 acres for a burying ground. Gunnell sold the land to another in-law, Thomas R. Love, who then sold it out of the family to William Taber Rumsey in 1842.

Rumsey's family lived on the land until they sold it in 1904 to Oliver and Moore, two developers who built a housing subdivision between, you guessed it, Oliver and Moore Streets. Five members of the Ratcliffe family were known to have been buried in the cemetery, as their stones were recorded and are being preserved in the Fairfax County Library. However, more are suspected as being buried there, including Richard and his wife.

Doug Owsley and Rich Richardson conducted a short survey of the site in 1995, indicating some 30-40 depressions were located on about 1/2 half of the two acre reserve. The Louis Berger Group will map and record the depressions and try to determine the edges and total number of the grave locations through the City of Fairfax. The City wants to create a park around the site with signage and a walking trail for the bicentennial of Providence/Fairfax City in 2005.

One exciting find was the correlation of the data base that C.K. Gailey created of Union Soldiers removed from outlying cemeteries in the area that were repatriated to Arlington Cemetery. Until this project, it had been suggested that as many as 173 Confederate war dead may have been buried on the site. However, Gailey's transcriptions related that 35 Union Soldiers were removed from "Mount Vineyard"!!!

# Edith Sprouse 1923-2004

## Goodbye, Edith.

We are grieving her loss in many ways and for many reasons, not only for the vast array of knowledge in her head when she passed away, but also for the friendly spirit that sparked her soul and gentleness that let everyone crossing her path wanting to know her more and be in her presence. We are comforted when we think of all that she gave us in her writings and books and articles as we will feel her around for years to come. We are also thankful she did it so unselfishly, untiring, and willingly.

She wrote more down and organized more historical information on Fairfax County and Alexandria, Virginia as a volunteer than most paid professionals will ever do in their entire career, and she did it with few errors and the very highest of integrity. Edith recorded on of the first historic sites in Fairfax County in the early 1960s. **She was a charter member of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASV** and did archaeology during the JFK administration. She was also a charter member of the Fairfax Historic Commission.

Edith traveled abroad to quench her thirst of her love of Virginia history, which took her to England to see Captain John Smith's effigy in St. Paul's in England and she looked for the Church of Pocahontas' husband in Heacham, Norfolk, England. It brought her into contact with Royalty as she became friends with the current Lord Fairfax and her relationship with those involved with the Belvoir Manor. Her **Fairfax County in 1860** has more than proven its worth as a wonderful and invaluable research tool for historians. Fairfax County, however, did not lay claim to all of Edith's research interests. Because of her help and contributions, the rare book room in the Barrett Branch of the Alexandria City Library is named for her.

**"Call Edith Sprouse".**

**"You should get a hold of Edith Sprouse".**

**"Edith Sprouse can either help you or point you in the right direction".**

These phrases are the responses everyone dealing with the history of Fairfax County and Alexandria City would give to a researcher, whether professional or individual just looking for information on something.

She willingly let you come over to her house and see her notes and records, or would copy them at the local Staples

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and send them to you. Maps, articles, clippings, snippets, first editions, books, photographs, she had it all and gave so, so, so much to the local institutions. Edith wrote most of her notes on 3 x 5 inch note cards and her handwriting can be found on well over a quarter of a million note cards (by her calculation). Many of these cards are in the Archives of the Fairfax County Clerk in the basement of the Fairfax County Courthouse. When Edith found out something new to add to a card, she would travel to the place where the card was located and add another note.

She even embraced the computer age and learned how to email and type her articles in a word processing program. She was always selling herself short because she figured every time she would email an article, it would be her lack of knowledge that attributed to its not being sent right. Well, I never received a corrupted file from her, they always came through. She has written 15 entries to the **Datum Point** entitled **Peopling the Past**, plus numerous articles on other historical subjects for the **DP**.

She was tirelessly helping Gunston Hall's archaeology program survive, which has fallen on tough times. She was trying to raise funds to help the investigations continue and process the artifacts already retrieved on the site. As a result of this effort, her family has requested that donations be made to the **Gunston Hall Archaeology Program**.



**Edith Sprouse 1923-2004**

## NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Rich Sacchi and John Rutherford 703-827-8672 (work)

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Alexandria Museum Pam Cressey 703-838-4399 (info)

## NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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(W): \_\_\_\_\_

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Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_  
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Family (\$17) \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_  
Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Return to:  
NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia  
2739 West Ox Road  
Herndon, VA 20171-3807

*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.**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**

### **The Datum Point**

Northern Virginia Chapter  
Archeological Society of Virginia  
2739 West Ox Road  
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