



# The Datum Point

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE  
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

March 2005

## From the President – Patrick O’Neill

Hope the snow is not discouraging you too much! Chin up, maybe there is **good digging** this spring and summer awaiting you!!! Make sure you come to the March meeting and see a different side of professional archaeology and the law from Bob Sonderman. I had mentioned the NVC's potential involvement with the three ASV Quarterly publications, but I guess they do not need our help with the graphics. Too bad, but at least we volunteered!! Let us know who you would like to see as a speaker to our chapter. We are always trying to keep the talks interesting and informative and you may have some ideas we have never thought about!

**The next meeting is at 7:30 p.m.  
Wednesday March 9, 2005**

## **Robert Sonderman will speak on Building Closer Relationships Between Law Enforcement Specialists and Archeologists**

Robert Sonderman is the Senior Staff Archeologist for the National Park Service, National Capital Region. He has served as the archeological collections manager for the National Capital Region's Museum Resource Center for over a decade. Mr. Sonderman is the Chair of the Society for Historical Archaeology's Curation, Conservation and Collections Management Committee and has served in that capacity for 10 years. He is the current Chair of the Council for Maryland Archeology's Curation Committee. Bob is now serving his second term as a member of the Society for American Archaeology's Curation Committee. His other interests include historic preservation of the District of Columbia, where he serves as a member of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board.

Datum Point

## **Announcements**

All new and seasoned Fairfax County archeology volunteers are invited to attend the Volunteer Orientation on Saturday, March 5, at Hidden Oaks Nature Center, 9:30 to 11:30. This is an opportunity to meet other volunteers in the Parks, as well as learn about the Resource Management Division and the County Park System. C.K. Gailey and Barbara Leven will be there to talk about archeology. Hidden Oaks is in Annandale, on the west side of Hummer Rd between Little River Turnpike (Rte 236) and Gallows Road, just south of Royce St. RSVP by March 2 to Erin Chernisky, 703-324-8750 or [erin.chernisky@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:erin.chernisky@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## **County Happenings in Archaeology Mike Johnson**

Land Bay A (44FX2723) - While cataloguing the consultant, Cultural Resources Inc. (CRI) artifacts, we discovered that in Block B they trowelled the bottoms of each of three 10x10 squares. In one of the 10x10s they had a significantly higher number of flakes, tools, pottery and fire cracked rocks. This is the block to the east of the fallen tree and north of feature 12 (the large FCR feature). Since that is also the 10x10 in Block B that produced the most pottery and artifacts in level 1, it is likely that it is on the core living area for that part of the site.

This points to the problem with the Land Bay A project. With the developer planning to begin work at the site in early March and our commitment to the Meadowood Farm survey it looks like we will not be able to go back and further investigate that part of Block B. We learned late in the excavation that we (and CRI) had stopped excavating at too shallow a depth to detect the tops of features. The

March 2005

page 1

developer gave us more than one year and spent tens of thousands of dollars on the consultant, trying to do the right thing.

It appears that the "E" soil horizon, which is an active transitional soil zone between the top soil and the deeper "B" soil horizon, blurred evidence of the tops of features. We had instructed the consultant to excavate only three inches into the "E" soil. The assumption was that since the site was unplowed the features should show up near the top, at the same elevation as the fire cracked rock features.

Two probable pits under the large fire cracked rock feature (Feature 12) demonstrated that soil and charcoal related features probably are not detectable until one almost reaches the top of the "B" soil horizon, some 10 inches below the surface.

As a result, it is likely that features in Block B were undetected, because they did not appear at the levels at which CRI was instructed to stop.

We have have gotten dates on four LBA carbon samples:

Sample 44FX2723-9 came back as 1520 $\pm$ 40 BP (BETA 199896) - This is feature 9 and places the calibrated age probably between AD 430 and 630, which is the Middle Woodland Period. The feature is in Block K which is the smaller FCR scatter near the northwest corner of Feature 12.

Sample 44FX2723-17 came back as 280 $\pm$ 60 BP (BETA 199897) - This is feature 17 which was a charcoal concentration in Block H where the tree fell over the block. The calibrated age is AD 1460 to 1680 and AD 1740 to 1800 or AD 1930 to 1950. Essentially, this means that it is a modern date and the feature probably is also modern.

Sample 44FX2723-12E came back 3150 $\pm$ 40 BP (BETA 199898) - This is feature 12E which is the fire cracked rock filled pit under the southwestern edge of feature 12. The calibrated age is 1500 to 1380 BC. That puts the feature in the Late Archaic in the

Susquehanna/soapstone bowl period, which does not fit any of the diagnostic artifacts we have noticed so far. Of course that is not a problem. Just because we have not found a Susquehanna point or more than a few soapstone bowl fragments does not mean that those people did not use the site.

Sample 44FX2723-12H came back 370 $\pm$ 40 BP (BETA 199901) - This is from charcoal immediately under one of the FCR concentrations (feature 12H) in feature 12. It calibrates to AD 1440 to 1640. This date is close to the one for feature 17, indicating that it also reflects a modern event.

Feature 2, submitted by the consultant also came back with a Late Woodland age, suggesting that it also may be contaminated. Feature 2 also started near the surface. The older dates came from cleaner and deeper contexts.

We have also just received two additional Middle Woodland dates on other features. This makes three Middle Woodland dates and suggest a possible age on the sandstone and diabase tempered, cordmarked, Culpeper ware pottery which is the dominant pottery type on the site.

If we are fortunate enough to be able to re-examine Block B, where the original Culpeper ware was discovered by CRI, we might be able to find a Culpeper ware pit. Until then the Middle Woodland dates are not directly associated with any diagnostic artifacts. The Middle Woodland-Culpeper ware connection is hypothetical.

Meadowood Farm Survey - The winter has kept the survey crew in the lab, where they have been able to complete the background historical archives study. They have also begun the task of cataloguing the 800 artifact bags brought back from the field.

Middle Atlantic Archeological Conference (MAAC) - This year the conference is in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, March 11-14. The Park Authority staff will be presenting a session of papers on Friday morning (March 11). It will

include presentations on Land Bay A and Lee Road 2.

## Other News

Check out the article "County Has the Most Archeological Sites" in the Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> Chronicle Newspapers. This article discusses archeology sites in Fairfax County, and points out that 3,000 sites have been recorded in the county. Archeologists Mike Johnson, Paul Inashima, and Nancy Anthony were interviewed, and the photo below of volunteers Gene Silva and Myra Lau at Meadowood Farm accompanies the article: ([www.south-county.info/articles/2005/02/02/news/news07.txt](http://www.south-county.info/articles/2005/02/02/news/news07.txt))

The Library of Congress has 38 digital photos of cuneiform tablets on their website: [http://international.loc.gov/intldl/find/digital\\_collections.html](http://international.loc.gov/intldl/find/digital_collections.html). This is an excerpt from the site: "*Cuneiform Tablets: From the Reign of Gudea of Lagash to Shalmanassar III* - This collection presents clay tablets, cones, and brick fragments inscribed using the ancient pictographic writing system known as cuneiform from the Library of Congress' collections. The Sumerians invented this writing system, which involves the use of a wedge-shaped reed stylus to make impression in clay. *Cuneiform Tablets: From the Reign of Gudea of Lagash to Shalmanassar III* includes school tablets, accounting records, and commemorative inscriptions... The 38 tablets are dated from the reign of Gudea of Lagash (2144-2124 B.C.) to Shalmanassar III (858-824 B.C.) during the New Assyrian Empire (884-612 B.C.)."



Archeology volunteers Gene Silva (left) and Myra Lau examine soil from a shovel test pit dug in November 2004 at Meadowood Farm on Mason Neck in Fairfax County. Photo by Nancy Anthony. The Chronicle Newspapers, Feb. 3, 2005.

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Return to:

NVC/Archeological Society of Virginia  
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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 Wednesday of each month at the James Lee Center at the above address.**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**

### **The Datum Point**

Northern Virginia Chapter  
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED