



# The Datum Point

Newsletter of the  
**NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE  
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA**

Website – [www.nvcasv.org](http://www.nvcasv.org)

November 2007

## From the President – Patrick O’Neill

Finally some rain to soften up the soil for digging! Make sure and come to this month’s meeting to see the Virginia State Archaeologist talk about statewide research! We received a nice letter from the VARC (Virginia Archeological Research Center) Foundation for the NVC’s \$777.00 contribution. Part of it has gone to purchase late 18<sup>th</sup> century curtains for the main room in the Kittiewan Plantation! Thank you for your support! The 2007 Annual ASV Meeting in Williamsburg was a great success and we look forward to preparing for the NVC-sponsored 2009 meeting here in Fairfax County!

## November 14th, 2007 Chapter Meeting

**Speaker** – Dr. Mike Barber (Virginia State Archaeologist)

**Topic** – The Archaeology of Virginia: A March through Time and Space

The power point presentation will follow the ca. 17,000 years of the human occupation of the Commonwealth and present a number of sites from Early Archaic through the Historic Period and from the Appalachian Plateau of southwest Virginia to the Coastal Plain. The general concepts of the science of archaeology will be emphasized as well as the current trajectory of DHR and Virginia archeology.

## Sycamore Point (44FX1474)

by Mike Johnson

The current testing of the probable location of George Mason's Dogue Neck Plantation has proven to be rewarding and frustrating. It is frustrating, because the primary purpose of locating features has been illusive. The results have been rewarding, because we have documented what appears to have been 11,500 years of human presence on the site.

The most rewarding part of that reward is the recovery of mid-18th century, high status ceramics along with appropriate architectural remains (hand made glazed brick, dark aqua window glass, and wrought nails) at the western end of the site. This suggests that Mason's pre-Gunston Hall plantation, called Dogue Neck Plantation, is nearby.

The crew has completed the first two 10x10-foot excavation blocks. The recent heavy rain event has finally made the clay sub-soil receptive to troweling for visible soil features. That has only just begun.

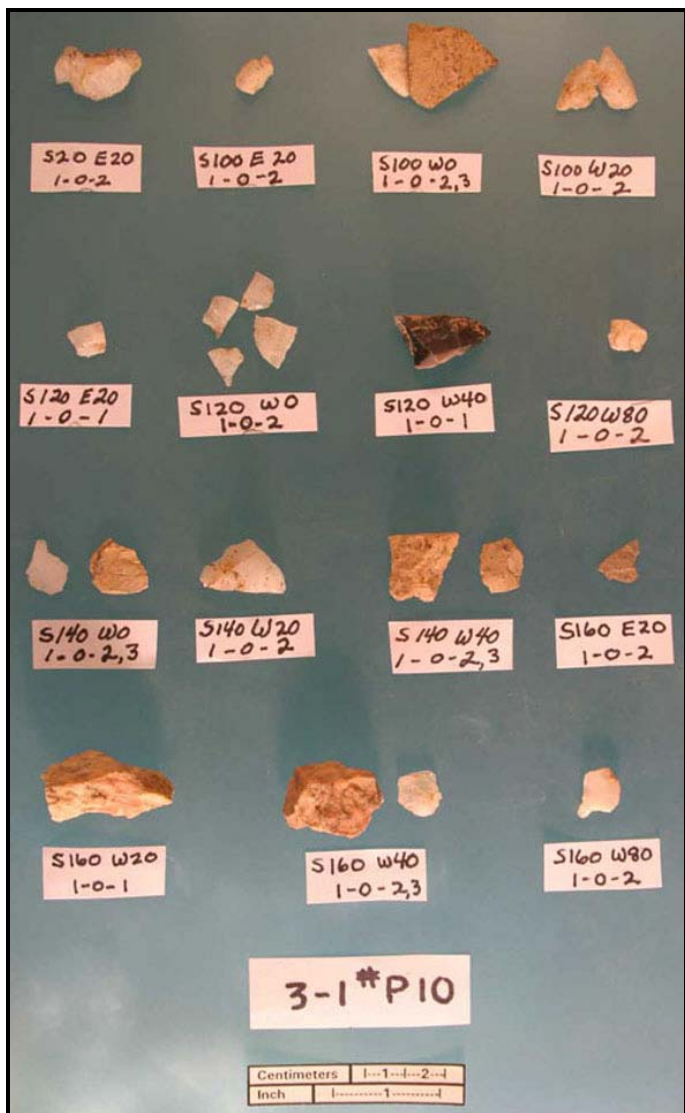


*Overlooking the Potomac River at Sycamore Point*

At the same time the crew has opened up two contiguous 5x5-foot test pits over a shovel test pit that produced the possible brick rubble and pig bone feature 17 inches below the surface. The upper two levels of the new block were artifact-rich. Most of the artifacts, though, are post 1800. However both early historic and prehistoric artifacts are increasing with depth.

On one cool, windy and cloudy afternoon the crew was treated a scene that probably often greeted the American Indian and European Colonial inhabitants of the site. The picture accompanying this narrative is looking down the Potomac River from the center of the 18th century part of the site.

Our work at Sycamore Point will continue into November.



Artifacts from Sycamore Point

## Archeological Lectures

### American Indian Heritage Lecture Series

**November 9, 2007, *Ten-Thousand Years in the Upper Potomac River Valley: The Archaeology of the Barton Site*** by Dr. Robert Wall, Towson University

Excavations at the Barton Site near Cumberland, Maryland, have revealed a long sequence of human occupation that dates from Paleoindian times to the early 1600s when the Susquehannocks established a small settlement on the site. Ongoing investigation are revealing significant details about life near the headwaters of the Potomac over the last 10,000 years.

**November 16, 2007, *Trading Cultures: The Bolling Family and their Trading Plantation at Kippax*** by Dr. Donald Linebaugh, University of Maryland

Dr. Linebaugh will draw on several decades of excavation and research to explore the Bolling family's

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ties to commercial trading networks in Virginia and North Carolina. Sited along a trading path from Bermuda Hundred to Fort Henry (now Petersburg), the Kippax Plantation contains evidence of Bolling's active participation as a supplier of trade goods to the western Indian groups.

**November 30, 2007, *Ancient Peoples and Ancient Shorelines: New Discoveries in the Search for the Earliest North Americans*** by Dr. Dennis Stanford, Smithsonian Institution

For over thirty years Dr. Stanford has researched for the traces of the earliest people in North America, an odyssey that has taken him from Alaska to Texas to the remnant shorelines of Pleistocene Europe and now to the Chesapeake Bay where an exciting suite of sites holds tantalizing clues about the colonization of ancient North America.

**December 7, 2007, *Hidden Landscapes: Memory, Myth and Archaeology in the Construction of the Story of Early Native American History in the Far Northeast*** by Ted Timreck, Spofford Films/Smithsonian Institution

Maverick film-maker Ted Timreck presents a portion of his current work in progress, a film depicting a remarkable journey of discovery with archaeologists, antiquarians, and First Nation's historians exploring their shared interest in the extraordinary accomplishments of early Native American cultures in New England and the Canadian Maritimes.

**December 14, 2007, *Ancient People and Climate in the Colorado Rockies*** by Pegi Jodry, Smithsonian Institution

A high country tale of relations among prehistoric peoples, animals, plants, stone and water near the northern Rio Grande.

### Seneca Trails Collection

by Mike Johnson

With this project the Park Authority tried a 21st Century experimental approach to deal with the artifact storage problem that has become a major issue, especially for older, established programs. That approach involved cleaning, cataloguing, labeling and photo documenting the artifacts from individual shovel tests. The artifacts were then returned to the field and redeposited at the locations of their respective STPs.

Recently, the Park Authority completed preliminary Phase II testing on a large 19th century historic site (44FX3248) that turned out to also contain an extensive prehistoric component. "Preliminary" in this case means

that we dug only a series of shovel tests at 20-foot intervals to detect the site's boundaries.

The historic component caused the Regional Park Authority to try a second, adjacent option for the location of a horse trailer parking area at the entrance to their Seneca Trails Park. That second area was surveyed by a consultant firm at the minimum, VDHR sanctioned, 50-foot interval (1/3,185 sample) and cleared for the parking area. In our attempt to locate the boundaries for the original site we discovered that the prehistoric component extended well into the new area cleared by the consultant. This turned out to be just another of many examples of how the minimum state guidelines are seriously failing the public's interest in conserving our heritage.

Fortunately, we did find the extent of the prehistoric site. The Regional Park Authority requested that we test a third option on the other side of the historic site. There we chose to combined a 20-foot interval (1/400 sample) with a 40-foot interval (1/1,600 sample). We recorded two small prehistoric sites (44FX3268 and 3269), which caused the Regional Park Authority to select a fourth option. Artifacts from those two sites are shown in the figure.

The fourth area had extensive surface erosion with high surface visibility. A reconnaissance demonstrated that no archeological material was present. As a result, the Regional Park Authority was able to select the fourth alternative for the parking lot.

### **Holiday Season**

#### **Northern Virginia Chapter**

Holiday Party

December 12<sup>th</sup>

at the Lab @ 6:30pm

Bring a Dish to Share

#### **Alexandria Archaeology Museum**

Ornament Decorating Workshop

Saturday, December 1 from 1 to 4 p.m.

in Studio #327

Torpedo Factory Art Center

105 North Union Street

[www.AlexandriaArchaeology.org](http://www.AlexandriaArchaeology.org)

703.838.4399

Join us for a free, family-oriented hands on holiday activity.

Decorate take-home dough ornaments with designs inspired by the colors and patterns found on the

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museum's collection of 18th and 19th century artifacts excavated from Alexandria sites.

### **In RELIC (Prince William County Library)**

**MISSED BY THE CENSUS TAKER?**

Presented by the Staff of RELIC

**Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> @ 11am & 27<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm**

Census records provide important, detailed information about individuals and families and are one of the most important resources available to researchers. Original census images are now readily available in digital form, but locating an individual of interest in the index is not always easy or straightforward. RELIC Staff will offer tips to find that ancestor whose name is missing from the census indexes.

**NOT FOUND ON A PASSENGER LIST?**

Presented by the Staff of RELIC

**Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> @ 11am**

The handwriting on passenger lists is often difficult to read. That presents problems for the indexers and challenges for researchers. RELIC staff will demonstrate some strategies for finding your ancestor in the Ancestry Library Edition=B8 Ellis Island and other immigration databases, and suggest alternative sources for learning about your immigrant ancestor's arrival.

To register for these free events, contact RELIC at (703) 792-4540 or at [relic2@pwcgov.org](mailto:relic2@pwcgov.org).

### **Richmond in Postcards @ VCU**



*Franklin St., Richmond, Va. Detroit Publishing, Co. - 1905*

VCU has a wonderful online exhibition of Richmond in Postcards. The collection is comprised of over 600 postcards, most dating from 1900-1930. The collection's URL:

[dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm4/index\\_postcard.php?CISOROOT=/postcard](http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm4/index_postcard.php?CISOROOT=/postcard)

## **NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS**

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## **Fairfax County Archaeologists (FCPA)**

<b>Chapter Sponsors</b>	<b>call 703-534-3881</b>
Elizabeth Crowell	<a href="mailto:elizabeth.crowell@fairfaxcounty.gov">elizabeth.crowell@fairfaxcounty.gov</a>
Mike Johnson	Richard Sacchi
Bob Wharton	John Rutherford

## **Public Archaeological Programs in N. Va.**

Mount Vernon	Esther White	<a href="mailto:ewhite@mountvernon.org">ewhite@mountvernon.org</a>
Gunston Hall	Dave Shonyo	<a href="mailto:archaeology@gunstonhall.org">archaeology@gunstonhall.org</a> 703-550-0441
Alexandria Museum	Pam Cressey	7030838-4399 (information)
Pr. William County Archaeologist	Justin Patton	703-792-5729

## **NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_  
(W): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_

Student (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_

Family (\$17) \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

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 Wednesday of each month at the James Lee Center at the above address.**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**

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Falls Church, VA 22042

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED