



The Datum Point

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

Website – www.nvcasv.org

October 2007

From the President – Patrick O’Neill

Fall is here, so the extreme heat is gone! Get out and enjoy digging these last few weeks of good weather before Winter sets in! Still volunteer opportunities out there, including Gunston Hall. See inside. Come to the ASV Annual Meeting in Williamsburg on October 12-14th, 2007. For details contact me or Diane Schug-O’Neill. The Kittiewan Plantation, new home of the ASV, was open to the public during the Autumn Pilgrimage on September 29th, and had almost 300 visitors!!!

October 10th, 2007 Chapter Meeting

Speaker – Mike Johnson, Fairfax County Archaeologist

Topic – The Taft Site (44FX544)

The Taft Site was dug in the mid-1980s. It included a Certification Field School. Located on Mason Neck State Park, the site was being eroded in a similar fashion to Sycamore Point. The Taft Site is a Middle-Late Woodland encampment with numerous mussel shell features.

CD Cox and Bob Norton are probably the only two remaining volunteers that worked the site. Bob earned his level 2 certification – the first, and only one known of, to date. Bob wrote a fine report, with Edie Baird, published in 1994 in the Eastern States Archeological Federation Bulletin.

On the WWW

@ THE SMITHSONIAN

The Smithsonian has released a number of their reports in PDFs available at this website: http://www.sil.si.edu/SmithsonianContributions/HistoryTechnology/sc_Browse.cfm?by=filename

There is a wide range of topics and reports available, here are some examples:

Eighteenth-Century Ceramics from Ft Michilimackinac: A Study in Historical Archeology
J. Jefferson Miller, II and Lyle M. Stone

The Copp Family Textiles
Grace Rogers Cooper

Roebing’s Delaware & Hudson Canal Aqueducts
Robert M. Vogel

Small Arms Ammunition at the International Exposition Philadelphia, 1876
Berkeley R. Lewis

AFRICAN DIASPORA ARCHAEOLOGY

The September 2007 issue is available online (<http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/newsletter.html>). It features articles and essays by Nigel Sadler, Jerome Handler, Neil Norman, Chris Espenshade, Matthew D. Cochran, Lisa Kraus, Mark P. Leone, Lydia Wilson, Beatrice R. Cox, Gustavo Acioli Lopes, and Patrice L. Jeppson; a compiled list of recent dissertations in African diaspora archaeology and history; news reports and announcements; and a book commentary and reviews by John McCarthy, Yvonne Brink, and Antonio Santamaria Garcia.

In The Region

FT WILLARD

Park Authority archaeologists, interns and volunteers conducted excavations in the ditch surrounding the earthwork at Fort Willard prior to the installation of a drainage system. Bob Wharton, Kira Bonomo, Kate Grandfield, Aimee Wells, CK Gailey, Barbara Leven, Barbara Welch and Tom Boltz participated in the project. They discovered the 1861 surface and tested Section C-D on the engineer drawing. They determined that the

dimensions on the engineer drawings represent a plan of how to build the trench, thus, they are not “as built” drawings. This is important information, since it shows that in this instance the engineer drawings are the ideal. The findings from the archaeology show the actual dimensions. The interns then mapped the bottom of the trench using the transit reading w/ transit every 5 feet.

Currently, archaeologists from Louis Berger group are conducting archaeology in the area of the magazine and the bombproof. The goal of the study is to provide information to accurately reconstruct these features. The findings also will be used to develop a treatment plan. Thus far, archaeologists have found post molds from the posts that were part of the entrance to the magazine. A soil stain from the wooden floor of the magazine was discovered at a depth of 10 feet below surface. The fort was one of the 62 forts built to defend Washington, DC. The only artifacts that have been discovered as a result of the study are a few nails.

Notes of Interest

Oct 11th

“Rethinking Captain John Smith’s Map in Light of Aboriginal America”

Thursday, October 11, 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Dr. Stephen Potter, Regional Archaeologist for the National Parks Service, will use historical linguistics, historical chronology, and a new interpretation from ethnohistory and anthropology to transform Captain John Smith’s map into a dynamic cultural landscape upon which to interpret a rapidly changing aboriginal world. This is the final of the Jamestown Lecture Series sponsored by the Alexandria Historical Society, Friends of Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria Black History Museum, The Lyceum, Carlyle House, and Mount Vernon. The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria.

Oct 12th

Grand Opening of the Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park

Friday, 2pm – 4:30pm Ribbon cutting and speeches.
Saturday, 13th, 11am – 8pm Military Demonstrations and Trenchlight Tour. Sunday, 14th, 11am – 3pm more demonstrations. Contact David

Born, for more information: (dborn@pwcgov.org) or (571) 641-0042.

Oct 13th

“Forgotten Cemeteries” Heritage Bike Trail Ride

Saturday, October 13, 10am to 1pm

Three-hour 15-mile guided bike ride of the Alexandria Heritage Trail, with stops at forgotten and abandoned cemeteries dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Includes street cycling and hills. Pack a snack and something to drink and meet in the parking lot of the George Washington Masonic Memorial (101 Callahan Drive) in Alexandria. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Helmets and reservations required. Please call 703-838-4399.

Oct 20th

“The Great Archaeological Yard Sale: International and Domestic Site Looting and the Sale of Archaeological Items Online”

Saturday, October 20, 10am

Tammy Hilburn, an archaeologist, cultural resource manager, cultural property crime specialist, and Egyptologist, will discuss international and domestic archaeological site protection and anti-looting initiatives and the various related task forces sponsored by organizations such as Interpol. Alexandria Archaeology Museum, 105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria. Please call 703-838-4399 or e-mail for reservations.

(archaeology@alexandriava.gov)

Oct 27th

“Rediscovering Alexandria’s Historic Free African Americans” Walking Tour

Saturday, October 27, 10am to Noon

City Archaeologist **Dr. Pamela Cressey** on a two-hour guided walk of sites associated with early free black neighborhoods and Civil War refugees seeking freedom, including Freedmen’s Cemetery. Tour begins at the corner of South Alfred and Duke streets in Alexandria. Please call 703-838-4399 or e-mail for reservations.

(archaeology@alexandriava.gov)

Volunteer Opportunities

GUNSTON HALL

Gunston Hall has supported an ongoing archaeology program since 1998. The program depends heavily on the involvement of volunteers. The program also welcomes the opportunity to work with ASV/DHR/COVA certification candidates. Several successful candidates have met their historical archaeology certification requirements through work at Gunston. Contact Dave Shonyo: archaeology@gunstonhall.org / 703-550-0441.

ASV Certification Information

Carol Nash

FIELD SCHOOLS

These field schools will fulfill requirements for approved field school and excavation. If you are interested in participating in either school (or both), please contact Dr. Michael Barber (mike.barber@dhr.virginia.gov)

Battersea Villa (Petersburg)

Battersea Villa is a rare surviving example of a Palladian house in the United States. Battersea is found on the banks of the Appomattox River and is owned by the City of Petersburg. Constructed in 1767/68 by John Banister, occupied by the British during the Revolutionary War, and played an important role in the 1781 battle of Petersburg. Excavations will be geared to determine construction techniques and outbuilding placement and will culminate in a Public Open-House on Saturday, October 20, 2007, during Archaeology Month.

Date: **Tuesday, October 16 - Sunday, October 21, 2007**

Archaeologist on Staff: Mike Barber

Chippokes Plantation (Chippokes State Park, Smithfield, Surry County)

Chippokes State Park is located on the banks of the James River in Surry County Virginia. A working farm since 1617, the ante-bellum plantation house is the historic focus of the site. In addition to extant historic structures, more than 40 archaeological resources have been recorded at Chippokes. Among these are 2 Woodland sites on the high terraces above the James. These sites will be tested during this field season. While prehistoric ceramics have

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been collected from both sites, questions as to time period of occupation and site function remain.

Date: **Monday, October 29 - Friday November 2, 2007**

Archaeologists on Staff: Mike Barber, Randy Turner, and Mike Madden

CERTIFICATION LECTURES

Sunday, October 14, 10am – Noon

* Historic Glass, presented by Mike Madden (USFS)

* DSS Site Survey Forms, "Filling them out," presented by Sara Lenoard (VDHR)

Bring your Blue Books to the lectures.

VDHR LABORATORY SESSIONS

October 26 & 27

November 9 & 10

Contact Dee DeRoche to fill out the appropriate form to participate in the Lab sessions.

(dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov)

Sycamore Point (44FX1474)

Mike Johnson

The Park Authority Archeology program is well into testing the Sycamore Point site on the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge. We began work in August with a line of shovel test pits (STPs) along the edge of the 35-foot high bluff overlooking the tidal Potomac Estuary and Maryland.

We completed approximately 60, 1x1-foot square STPs at 10-foot intervals noting the kinds of artifacts. Based on those results we have begun test excavating at the western end of the site. There we are excavating 5-foot squares down to the top of the sub-soil. The purpose is to reveal evidence of either prehistoric or historic features that may be in immediate danger of being destroyed by bluff slumping.

The bluff is why we are testing the site. It is the result of thousands of years of erosion caused by rising sea levels after the last Ice Age. The wakes from boat traffic on the Potomac along with storm waves have magnified the erosion and left the bluff unvegetated and vulnerable to undercutting and "mass wasting" or slumping.

Sadly this site is one of fifteen out of 22 shoreline sites the Park Authority identified as being in immediate threat of destruction by erosion. These sites are located in the area of earliest Colonial settlement in the Upper Potomac Estuary. Mason Neck appears also to have been the main seat of the Dogue or *Moyumpse*, who were the last American Indian tribe to occupy Fairfax and Prince William Counties.

As a result, the sites on the Refuge have a very high potential to be some of the most significant in the Washington, D.C. area. The Little Marsh Creek site (44FX1471), which is one of the 22 total sites recorded on the Refuge shoreline was tested by the County in the late 1980s and found to contain a seventeenth century American Indian component. Until the Fish & Wildlife Service installed a breakwater off the edge of the site, Little Marsh Creek was also threatened by erosion. Now it is stabilized. The testing program is designed to assess the significance of the other threatened sites so that appropriate conservation measures can be included in future planning.

Sycamore Point was chosen first, because, during the initial survey it was found to have Potomac Creek Plain pottery, which is thought to be the pottery used by the *Moyumpse* immediately before and during European contact. The attached map and documents also point to the site being occupied by George Mason before he moved to Gunston Hall. The 1747, Warner map shows a plantation at Sycamore Point with "Mason" written above it. For many years, Sycamore Landing at Sycamore Point was one of the largest fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay Region.



Survey of the Northern Neck... 1747?, John Warner

We have had some success in our search for the the Mason Plantation. We have recovered numerous early to mid-eighteenth century ceramic sherds from the western end of the site, which occupies approximately 400 feet of bluff edge at Sycamore Point.



Pictured ceramics include three coarse red earthenware sherds (top row), three white salt glazed stoneware sherds (2nd row), three tin glazed (delft) sherds (3rd row), three creamware sherds (4th row), three pearlware sherds (5th row), and a Westerwald stoneware and white clay pipe stem (6th row).

Other early ceramics not shown include English brown stoneware, brown salt glazed stoneware and Staffordshire slipware. We have also recovered sherds of large base, hand blown wine bottles. Lab work will be ongoing throughout the rest of the year.

The joke on the site is that George Mason drank the wine from the wine bottles in containers, sherds of which we are finding. If we are lucky he may also

have been serving that wine to his neighbors, Bryan Fairfax and George Washington.

As of this writing we have located one possible early historic feature, 17 inches deep in a shovel test. Two 5x5-foot squares have been completed. We are planning to work into early November. With the initial problem of biting sand flies having abated the site has become a pleasant place to work.



Ann Wood (Vice President) and Barbara Welch

Editor's Note:

As you can see, these artifacts, along with the view, make the poison ivy worth it all!



Buckley sherd



Brown Salt-Glazed Stoneware

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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