



THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

August 2013

FROM THE PRESIDENT – JACK HRANICKY

Hope everyone is having a great summer. Weather has turned to ðagreeable.ö Remember, there is no chapter meeting this month; instead, we are having our annual picnic, which is:

Host: CD Cox (703) 830-4121

Cox Farms:

<http://www.coxfarms.com/>

Time: 11:00 am

Date: August 10, 2013

**Location: 15621 Braddock Road,
Centreville, Virginia 20120 (Corner:
Braddock Road and Pleasant Valley
Road)**

We have a great meal coming up, thanks to long-time chapter member CD Cox. He is preparing pulled pork for us. Past and present officers are providing the picnic basics, but we still needs desserts; so if you are inclined, bring a small one. Not much more for your president's message.

No August Meeting!

PICNIC!



OLD COLCHESTER BY THE CART CREW

With the help of our summer interns, Matthew, Marianna, and Simon, and volunteers, CART was able to finish surveying the newly acquired Kite Property in just one month! The property is approximately 1.5 acres and when seen on a map the property boundaries form a kite-like shape. We excavated a total of 35 MTUs, all while

encountering ground bees, poison ivy, ticks, and poisonous spiders. Despite these occupational hazards, there were a number of excellent prehistoric artifacts uncovered! CART found several argillite and jasper flakes. Kayla and Jonathan found a large argillite flake that shows evidence of use wear. We also found a number of quartz flakes and at least one quartz biface. Several historic artifacts were also uncovered, including glass, nails, and a few ceramics.

CART would like to welcome our two new hires, Peter and Jean. Peter will be our new Crew Chief and Jean will be our new Senior Tech. They both will be starting this month. Both are joining us with an extensive background in historic and prehistoric archaeology. CART is very excited for them to join our team.

Our crew contributed several posts on the Day of Archaeology website (<http://www.dayofarchaeology.com/finds-from-the-ocpp/>). CART was one group of approximately 300 archaeologists that contributed posts relating to archaeological finds, lab and field procedures, experimental archaeology, etc. The Society of Historical Archaeology (SHA) even tweeted on the social media site, Twitter, about CART's Day of Archaeology posts.

The lab crew would like to thank Chris Havlicek for helping us to fix our microscopes and sending us the proper light bulbs for them. These microscopes have been essential in helping us to identify extremely small artifacts, such as glass beads, bone, seeds, and ceramics. Our summer interns and volunteers are helping us to wash and re-bag our artifacts; this will help assist us in the analysis process for the Kite and Roysdon reports.



Open Season on History

The New York Times

August 2, 2013

By TAFT KISER

CHESTER, Va. — FOR archaeologists like me, the Flowerdew Hundred Plantation near Williamsburg, Va., is our Woodstock, a sentimental spot where dozens of professionals earned their trowels. The farm's incredible archaeological wealth ranges from 12,000-year-old Native American tools to a tree that shaded Union soldiers in June 1864.

Imagine our dismay, then, when a professed relic hunter from Texas named Larry Cissna sold some \$60,000 in tickets for his Grand National Relic Shootout — an artifact-hunting competition — at Flowerdew Hundred. The shootout took place in early March, and participants walked away with 8,961 artifacts dating from the Civil War or before.

In Virginia, as in many states, relic hunting is illegal on public land, but legal on private land. Flowerdew, it turns out, belongs to the James C. Justice Companies, whose chairman, president and chief executive is [James C. \[Conley\] Justice II](#), whom Forbes ranks as the 882nd-wealthiest individual on the planet. (According to a spokesman, Mr. Justice was unaware of the shootout.)

Paid hunts like this have increased in the last 15 years, fueled by the market for Civil War relics, where a rare button can bring \$5,000. Mr. Cissna has built a small empire using a Web site to organize hunts and sell advertising, a job that became easier in June when the Travel Channel began airing his reality show, "Dig Wars."

Assuming a mean value of \$10 an artifact on the relic market, the Flowerdew participants took about \$90,000. But the lost history cannot be quantified. Competing to grab objects, the relic hunters shred the ancient matrix, erasing stories that remain written only in the soil.

Modern migratory bird tags were taken, for example, along with an object that may be a manila,

a type of copper bracelet used in the African slave trade. Flowerdew's first owners, Sir George Yeardley and Abraham Piersey, made Virginia's first recorded purchase of slaves, in 1619. Some of those Africans must lie in Flowerdew's fields. If that copper band identified their graves, it would be an artifact beyond measure. But its historical context was destroyed when it was ripped from its resting place.

Hunters on private property are required to get permission from the landowner, and taking artifacts from archaeological sites without permission is trespassing, a misdemeanor. Often the law is ignored. "They always have a story," one 70-year-old landowner said. "They are always professors or writers." Or so they claim. Although recently threatened by a zealous relic hunter with a small shovel, he continues to defend his farm.

Most owners avoid confrontation. In 2006 Mr. Cissna collected about \$35,000 for a hunt near Fredericksburg, without permission. Police removed more than 175 trespassers, but the owner did not press charges.

That may be because relic hunters are a vocal lot. In 2005, Virginia's General Assembly considered a bill requiring written permission from the landowner and increasing the penalty for trespassing with the intent to take artifacts. Relic Web sites blasted it. Representative Kenneth R. Plum, the Democrat who sponsored the bill, told a reporter that "the floodgates opened," and the proposal faded away.

As a result, it's open season on vast stretches of Virginia's heritage. Even graves are in potential danger, though all human interments are protected by law. Pre-1900 burials, regardless of their demographic, are typically unmarked and easily violated by accident. Flowerdew has three known cemeteries, containing Woodland Indians, 1620s colonists and enslaved individuals from about 1760. All three are in the area metal-detected last March. In some burials, one blow from a shovel could destroy all surviving remains.

Another problem is the lack of awareness on the part of landowners. Imagine someone offering \$5,000 to remove "junk" from your yard. You may

not realize that your familiar universe veils a lost world. Relic hunters exploit this. I have heard of organizers paying \$40,000 for a year's access to a farmer's field.

To be clear, I have nothing against nonprofessionals. When I was a child, my introduction to history came from relic hunters, people who should have been archaeologists but never got the chance. Later, as a professional lawn mower, I wandered into Flowerdew, and remain astounded by the opportunities that place provided for me to pursue that childhood fascination. Every town needs a Flowerdew, where people like my first mentors can explore history through archaeology.

Preserving local history requires passionate locals, and in today's era of shrinking budgets, the ideal model is a cadre of professionals assisted by volunteers. At the Little Bighorn Battlefield, in Montana, volunteers have used their metal-detecting machines to pinpoint artifacts, whose position rewrote the story of Custer's Last Stand.

But archaeologists, professional or not, do not hunt objects. We hunt lost worlds. Sadly, here in Virginia and elsewhere, those worlds are slipping away under the relic-hunter's shovel, all for the sake of a few bucks.

Taft Kiser, an archaeologist, is an author of the forthcoming book "Struggling in the Tide: Robert E. Lee's Shirley Cousins."

Datum Point Editor's Note:

James Conley Justice, Jr., apparently the current owner of Flower Dew Hundred, is the Great⁸-grandson of William Justice, English colonizer and colonist who immigrated to Charles City County, Virginia in the 1650s. William Justice and his colonists settled land adjacent to the west edge of modern-day Kittiewan Plantation. William Justice married the daughter of John Frame, who lived just south of Flowerdew Hundred.

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