



THE DATUM POINT

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org

January 2015

Chapter meets at the James Lee Center, 2855 Annandale Rd, Falls Church, 2nd Weds. of each month

THROUGH THE TRANSIT

From President Diane Schug-O'Neill

Happy 2015, everyone! I hope you all enjoyed the holidays and are looking forward to a new year of new experiences.



My first order of business is to **Thank Jack Hranicky** for running our chapter these past years. Jack, you did a fine job and set us up with the 2015 Annual Meeting. Big shoes to step into, for sure!

My second order of business is to **Thank Everyone** who agreed to continue with their posts. Thank you, very much. Your continued work goes a long way to this Chapter's success. If everyone steps up to do a small part, it only takes a small effort to go far. One small effort that is a chapter must is to review our Treasurer's books. Every year, we ask for an internal audit. It's simple and doesn't take

very long. Now that we have Excel, it's almost just a proof reading exercise. Please contact me, if you have about 30-60 minutes to give. I can put you in contact with one of our past auditors and they can provide a quick how to for you to follow.



Cont'd page 2

January 14th Meeting

CRAFTING PRESERVATION CRITERIA: THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND AMERICAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BY JOHN H. SPRINKLE, JR.



The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of places worthy of preservation, but where did the criteria that shape the construction of a useable past come from? The National Park Service mandated an orderly, balanced, and comprehensive panorama of historic sites that illustrated a textbook of US history, while the pragmatic goal was to deter and deny acquisition by the agency, because there were simply too many historic sites and not enough money in the treasury. This presentation elucidates the prehistory of the National Register of Historic Places, with a special focus on the evolution of the concept of archaeological significance. A resident of Alexandria's Rosemont Historic District, John Sprinkle is the Chair of the Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission.

Cont'd from page 1

This year will definitely be a year to remember; we are hosting the 2015 Annual Meeting for the Archeological Society of Virginia (in Manassas)! This will be quite an eye-opener to our newer members. There will be things to do for new and experienced so trust me, well, believe me, anyway. I encourage everyone to step up and offer to help. Not only will you learn about the state level organization, you will meet folks from other areas of Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia. YES, we have attendees at our meetings from those neighboring states. You will get to meet these people and cultivate new opportunities. In the coming months, we will begin to parcel out points of contact and other information.

Finally, I want to mention that this is *your Chapter*; you do make a difference. Please do not hesitate to speak up; ask a question; send an email; give a call to any of the Chapter Board members. We all want things to move smoothly and stay interesting. One last reminder: it's *Dues Time*; we synced our membership up with the State in January.

NVC MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2015

This is just a friendly reminder that membership dues are now due for annual membership to the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia. Fees are \$15.00 for individual and \$17.00 for family. Make checks payable to ASV NVC and mail check and application to:

Isabella Pease,
Treasurer ASV NVC
8304 Graceway Drive
Lorton, Virginia 22079

Application/Renewal can be found on the last page of the DP in the square box!

FROM FOSSILS AND FACTS TO ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARTIFACTS

By Staci R. Martin

<http://www.virginiaoutdoors.com/article/more/5332>

Standing Witness: The History is in the Soil at York River State Park

Another interesting article in our Park of the Month Series

It is most certainly entertaining to attend first-person history programs with all the pomp and circumstance of period costumes and affected accents. We do it all the time at [York River State Park](#). But do you ever wonder where those characters and stories come from? Sure, they come from documents, deeds, and letters, but they also come from the soil.



First-person costumed interpretive programs bring history to life at York River State Park

Soil. Dirt.Sand. Rocks.

These stories come from soil that is painstakingly core-sampled, screened, viewed, sifted, given a second look, sifted again, and given a third look. Archaeology at [York River State Park](#) is slow, tedious, methodical work in hot weather when the air is full of the buzz of insects and cicadas. That is how [York River State Park](#) Archaeologist Jerry Travers likes it.



Jerry Travers points out the location of the wheelwright house to visitors on an archaeological tour

Slow and steady until....a glimmer of metal against a backdrop of centuries of rust, a stark white piece of pottery laid bare against the dark soil, or a certain feel of a horn button among clods of clay. That is what makes this type of history-sleuthing so worthwhile--finding clues and artifacts to the past.

How does the park know that there was an antebellum plantation on park property?

We learn this by the types of brick uncovered during archaeological surveys cross referenced with historic deeds at the [Library of Virginia](http://www.libraryofvirginia.org).



Jerry Travers teaches children how to use the soil screen to look for artifacts and clues to the past

How does the park know that [Eastern Woodland Indians of the Powhatan Federation](http://www.easternwoodlandindians.org) traded with colonists at Moody's Wharf?

By finding a mix of Virginia Indian clay pipes and colonial era beads and buttons near the wharf site.



A variety of artifacts found in the park are on display in the Visitor Center at York River State Park



Chief Ranger Brad Thomas sets up a replica civil war soldier encampment

How does the park surmise that Union or Confederate cavalry rode by?

By finding parts of spurs with a design particular to the civil war era and cross-referenced with old tin type photographs of civil war cavalry.

What do these archaeological finds do for us?

These types of archaeological finds help the park create the characters and stories that you'll meet at events like Estuaries Day on August 22, 2015 and Ghost History Trail Rides in the month of October in 2015. These archaeological finds help the park staff interpret the area's history for you through programs like fossil walks, colonial children's games, and trail side signage.



Did you know that Jeffersonian scallops are the state fossil of Virginia? During York River State Park fossil walks you can find large ones like this visitor found on the shore of the river.

On the other end of the historical spectrum is the park's abundance of fossils along the river beds. Once part of a vast ocean bed, the area's shoreline is a wealth of fossilized information from macro invertebrates to the mastodon discovery in nearby York County.



Dr. Johnson explains the ancient geologic history of the park and the river bed during a fossil walk. Millions of years ago, the entire area was a giant maritime sea bed.

The park works with volunteer and retired [College of William & Mary](#) professor, Dr. Jerre Johnson, who leads fossil walks and displays some of his great discoveries during special events. His collection includes mastodon teeth and a cross section of fossilized algae that is believed to be millions of years old, possibly dating back to the [meteor impact](#) in the [Chesapeake Bay](#) approximately 35 million years ago.



Usually set up at the Estuaries Day event in August of each year, Dr. Johnson shows off his fossil collection that includes mastodon teeth and bones. It is thrilling to hold something so ancient in your hands.

In the spring, summer, and fall, York River State Park offers great history programs and fossil walks.

Click [here](#) for the schedule. Be sure to bookmark the website since the parks are updating their schedules during our winter planning season. There are occasional programs in the winter, too. Don't forget the upcoming New Year's Day First Day Hikes at all [Virginia State Parks](#).

As they say...the proof is in the pudding...or rather the history is in the soil.

But let me remind you of one last thing. Permits are required for any digging, plant or artifact collection. Many of the archaeological sites are returned to their natural state so that "treasure hunters" do not disturb the areas.



Our Park Rangers takes their jobs very seriously. Please join a scheduled fossil or archaeology program and do not go treasure hunting on your own.

[York River State Park](#) only takes core samples in certain areas of the park with permission from the [Virginia Department of Historic Resources](#). Anyone caught attempting to dig, disturb or collect artifacts and/or fossils could face criminal charges.

Be mindful of these rules and remember to take only photographs and leave only footprints on your journey into the past at [York River State Park](#). See you at the park!

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Other Public Archaeological Programs in N. Va.

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Name: _____

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[] Please send *Datum Point* via e-mail

Individual (\$15) _____	New _____
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Family (\$17) _____	Renewal _____

Return to:
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8304 Graceway Drive
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