



THE DATUM POINT

October 2018

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER (NVC) OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT PATRICK O'NEILL

I will see many of you at the Annual Meeting this week in Winchester! The conference is full of good papers, field trips, and the weather indicates a great weekend!

As the ASV Membership Secretary, I can tell you that the Northern Virginia Chapter is still the largest chapter in the state, with almost 100 members registered with the state organization!

This month's talk by Erin Cagney is going to be great! We worked with Erin at the Ball-Sellers House a couple of years ago, and she is doing and will do great things in archaeology!

In this issue of the Datum Point, Yvonne French submitted a great article on the chapter involvement with the People of the Americas Conference last month. Thank you, Yvonne!

The Salubria Field Trip was a success, with several members of the chapter traveling to the 18th century manor! We hope to have some photos and a write-up for the next DP.

Time to also look to December with potential elections for new chapter officers! If you would like to run, please contact Yvonne French! Get involved with the chapter on a whole new level!

Join Chapter members at Anthony's Restaurant at 6 pm before the meeting! Located at 3000 Annandale Rd, Falls Church, VA 22042 - (703) 532-0100

Chapter Talk 7:30pm Weds October 10, 2018

EXPLORING THE POTOMAC CREEK ESTUARY THROUGH THE BETTY VEATCH LEGACY COLLECTION

By Erin Cagney

Erin Cagney holds an MA in Public Anthropology from American University (2018) and a BA in Anthropology from the University of Tennessee (2011). Erin currently works as an Assistant Lab Manager for the Veterans Curation Program in Alexandria, Virginia. Prior to this role, she interned with the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, took part in several CRM projects in D.C. and Virginia, and volunteered at numerous sites throughout the D.C. Metro area (including the Ball-Sellers House in Arlington).



In the past year, archaeologists at American University (AU) rediscovered the Betty Veatch collection sitting forgotten on the shelves of boxes upon boxes of prehistoric and historic artifacts alongside Veatch's personal journals, field logs, and photographs. Lab volunteers helped to conduct an emergency re-housing of the collection as most of it had been improperly stored and was at risk of losing its archaeological context. During this process, it became apparent that the Betty Veatch collection was rich with recoverable and important data from over 54 sites in the Potomac Creek estuary in Virginia.



Veatch (AU Alum 074) surveyed over 85 localities, collecting at least 33 boxes of artifacts, 500 pages of journal entries, field logs with piece plotted provenience information, photographs, and miscellaneous notes.

Betty's journals, which date her work to the late 1970s and early 80s, detail the dedication of this lone archaeologist who devoted at least a decade of her life to the survey of the estuary, which has long been a subject of historical and archaeological interest. The estuary has been occupied for thousands of years and most famously, was the location of the village of Patowomeke, which John Smith encountered in his explorations of the Potomac River in 1607. The Patowomeke tribe played a significant role in the socioeconomic politics of early colonial America, and descendants of this tribe still occupy the estuary.



Betty's salvage efforts included at least one trip to the ancestral Patowomeke village, 44ST01, and her collection contains some of the only known artifacts to have been collected from this site, which has since been plowed away and sunk into the Potomac River.



This talk aims to shed light on the life and legacy of Betty Veatch, using her journals to inform the research and frame Betty's work in the feminist page 2

archaeology movement of the early 1980s. She will also discuss the contents of Betty's collection, her research goals, and the potential implications of the collection for our understanding of the prehistory of the Potomac Creek estuary. Artifacts from the collection will be on display.

CART

Fairfax County Archaeological Research Team

Hope to see you at the Friday morning session at the Annual ASV conference in October featuring the Archaeology and Collections Branch presentations celebrating 40 years of Fairfax archaeology! Topics will range from new data analysis of Ash Grove Collections, ongoing excavations at Old Colchester Park and Preserve, using virtual reality to reconstruct Fairfax County's past, and analysis and interpretation of excavations near Centreville.



Rainy weather has kept the CART team inside the lab for many days. Only a few bags remain for picking through the window screen mesh size. Beads, straight pins and small fragments of bone have been discovered. Shown in image are a

wrought nail, two types of ceramics and a small lead shot also recovered in the wet window screen mesh size samples from Old Colchester Park and Preserve.

During a few dry days, CART excavated mini test units at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park for work relating to parking lot and drainage improvements. Only a few fragments of glass and nails were recovered during excavations. No features were discovered.

Hopefully cooler fall weather will allow for excavations to continue in the few remaining units in the center of the park at Old Colchester Park and Preserve. After a bit of brush clearing CART will return to the northern section of the park to discover more structures associated with the town of Colchester.

Please join us in the field or lab, for questions about volunteering in the field, email CART staff in the field at cart.volunteers@live.com. Volunteer days in the field are Thursdays through Saturdays, weather permitting. Volunteer days in the lab are Wednesdays through Fridays. Keep an eye on our blog: cartarchaeology.wordpress.com for information on local events and recent finds by CART.

CHAPTER MEMBERS ATTEND PEOPLING OF THE AMERICAS CONFERENCE

**Submitted by Yvonne French,
Chapter Vice President**

Chapter members Mary Green and Yvonne French attended the "Peopling of the Americas: Recent Research and Perspectives" conference on September 15th in Washington, DC. Speakers addressed the question of when people first arrived in the New World.

Hosted by the Pre-Columbian Society of Washington, D.C., the conference was opened by David Meltzer, professor of anthropology at Southern Methodist University (SMU), who asked "Are we finally arriving at some answers?"

"It's quite certain people reached the Americas in Ice Age times. Yet, questions remain about who the first Americans were. The good news is we have plenty of answers The bad news is we can't say which answers are right."

Meltzer and another speaker, Jennifer A. Raff, an associate professor at University of Kansas (UK), focused on genetics, which they said indicate the first Americans were pre-Clovis.

"Recently the pace of research has accelerated to the point where it can be difficult for even specialists (let alone the interested public) to keep up . . ." said Raff, an anthropological geneticist who serves as associate director of the UK Laboratory of Biological Anthropology.

By looking at DNA as an ancestral clock, they can see that "a split was taking place in Asia in the depths of the Ice Age," Meltzer said.

Raff put the split at 15,700 years ago based on ancient DNA research and said that they are calling the branches Northern Native Americans and Southern Native Americans. She placed descendants in modern-day Inuit and central Brazilian communities respectively.

"If you look at it they are distant cousins way back," said Raff, who ended by saying that Native Americans have high levels of ancestry from the Denisovans and Neanderthals.

Other speakers included:

James M. Adovasio of SMU, who discussed perishable technology such as cords, mats, nets, baskets, and sandals. Adovasio found a basket fragment of birch-like bark in the mid 1970s while excavating Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania. Carbon dated to to 12,800 years ago, it is the oldest basket fragment in North or South America, he said. He offered that fiber technology likely involved both sexes of hunter-gatherers and that terrestrial netting of small prey was probably a communal activity in which many ages of people participated.

Kelly Graf of Texas A&M University, who digs in Siberia and Alaska in an effort to ground truth when

people dispersed into North America via the Bering Land Bridge or Beringia, which she described as a continent at the time. It was windswept, dry and cold, but did have woody shrubs that would have provided fuel for fire, she said, before describing the microblade technology, which has been traced to Japan 24,000 years ago. She explained how tiny blades are slotted into bone to form a point, a toolkit technology that was lighter to transport because they could get up to two linear meters of cutting edge from a single, very portable core.

J. David Kilby of Texas State University at San Marcos, who talked about Clovis caches and presented many images of the assemblages noteworthy because because the artifacts are not worn, broken or discarded. "Caches thus provide relatively clear views into working toolkits, tool reduction, transport strategies, and movements of people across Pleistocene landscapes," he said.

Todd Braje of the California Academy of Sciences, who discussed "Pleistocene Migrations along the Margins: Kelp Forest, Stemmed Points, and the Peopling of the Americas." His research takes him to the Channel Islands near Los Angeles, where he is trying to map the continental shelf and search for submerged prehistoric archaeological sites. "Kelp forests and other marine resources may have facilitated early human migrations," he said, for example, kelp would make a good holdfast for boats, reduce wave action along rocky coasts, and provide an environment rich with fish, birds, and sea mammals to hunt. He finds a preponderance of stemmed points along with crescent-shaped lithics that he said were ideal for shooting migrating birds.

All the speakers appeared to recognize the collapse of Clovis-first. It was noted that Monte Verde, the site in southern Chile dug by Tom Dillehay beginning in the late 1970s is reliably dated to 1,000 years before Clovis. "Were Clovis and Monte Verde part of the same pulse?" asked Meltzer, continuing, "Clovis sprang like dragon's teeth out of the ground and spread fast, suggesting nobody was home."

The agenda, papers, and a suggested reading list from the conference may be found [here \(https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hd6wt3LIDiU_-Y5bpSVDZx0oaf-moMEQ?usp=sharing\)](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hd6wt3LIDiU_-Y5bpSVDZx0oaf-moMEQ?usp=sharing).

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Return to:

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Chapter members must join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia at www.virginiaarcheology.org/

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month at the James Lee Center, 2855-A Annandale Road, Falls Church, VA.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!