



THE DATUM POINT

June 2020

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**

What a difference a few weeks makes in our personal, professional, and national lives. I hope everyone is healthy and safe, and practicing social distancing. There will be no June 2020 in person chapter meeting, but we are working on getting a live stream meeting set up, but we are still working on the logistics. I want everybody to have access to any meeting whether it is in person or on line!

I am organizing the probing at the Freeman Store in Vienna and the Vienna West End Cemetery as soon as it is allowed for me to have people gather and probe without worrying about someone getting sick as a result, or upset that I am doing this project during the pandemic. So, I visualize when we get to Phase 3, we should be good to go, and Fairfax County is guiding that decision.

Research at Bull Run Mountain on the Preserve with Joe Villari and his group is expanding by leaps and bounds as all sorts of new research subjects are coming into the picture. I visualize going out and conducting a 100 percent pedestrian survey on the Preserve over the next couple of years, with a lot of volunteer opportunities for all!

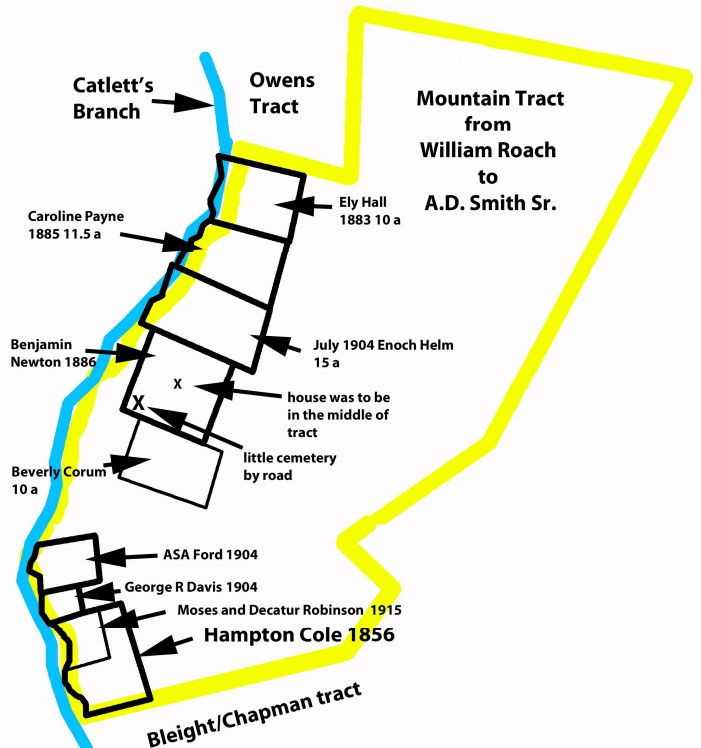
As a result of the relationship between myself and the Virginia Outdoor Foundation, with the approval of the NVC Officers, I wrote a letter of support for the VOF in their efforts to raise funds to acquire a 10-acre tract of land on Catletts Branch. The land connects to a series of quarries mined for rock in the late 19th and early 20th century by mainly African American laborers who purchased small lots of land on the rock formation.

NO CHAPTER MEETING IN JUNE

We may try and set up a Zoom meeting, and will let you know when we get that organized!

O'Neill cont'd

Within this new Bull Run Mountain study area were at least 10 quarries and at least two residences and associated family cemeteries. The ASV also wrote a letter of support for the land acquisition. See a map of the quarry area below.



CART

Fairfax County Archaeological Research Team

Heading into the month of May under the Governor's stay at home order due to the Covid-19 outbreak is giving the CART staff plenty of time to adjust to our new telework routines while learning how to effectively communicate with each other. Normally, if a staff member has a question about something they are working on they could walk into another room and have it quickly answered.

As this is not a possibility right now, we are taking advantage of the many technological tools available to us including email, texting, and using Microsoft Teams to hold video conference meetings. It has been great to communicate "face-to-face" through these video conference meetings and we often find that we missed seeing each other during the daily bustle in the lab. We also received several emails from our volunteers over the past few months and love to hear how you all have been doing during this pandemic!

In addition to relying on technology to maintain our human connection, computers have been an important tool for archaeologists to document and store data collected when we are not excavating in the field. It's typically stated that for every day in the field, four days of work are required in the laboratory. While some of the CART team has shifted to research and document review at home, many have been working on the digital components of archaeology. Information recorded in the field is later transferred to our computers in order to track, identify, and understand the artifacts as well as the site. This allows us to store our information in a secure location that can be accessed by our team anywhere in the world if we have a computer connected to the internet. Furthermore, we can rest easy knowing that our digital records are stored safely in the event of a disaster that could compromise hard copies, such as paper documents used in the field.

One of the first things that we do before processing artifacts is enter [provenience](#) (location) information into our computer system. The specific horizontal coordinates and the vertical depth where each group of artifacts was recovered goes into our artifact

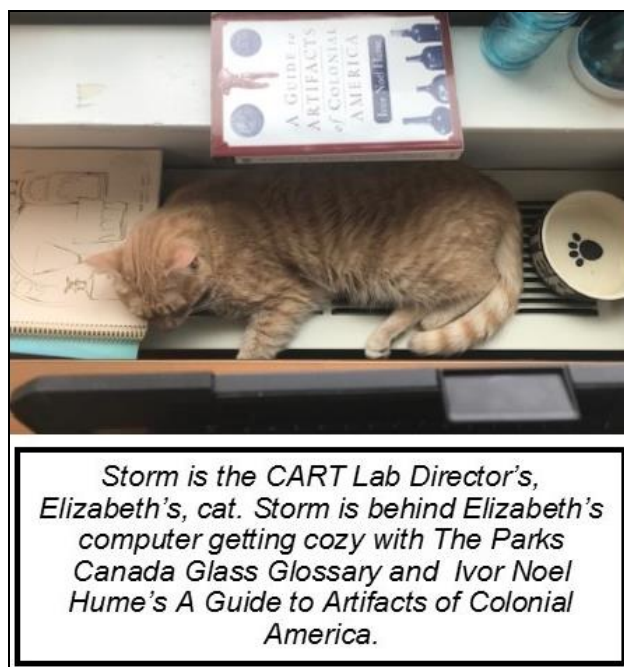
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database. The artifacts and their provenience are tied to a [field specimen number](#) that can be tracked through the lab and curation processes. This information is entered when there are enough artifacts to make both data entry and artifact processing, such as [cleaning artifacts](#), a worthwhile activity.

Later, at a time when most convenient, we add information to our database about the soils from which the artifacts derived, such as [soil color](#) and soil type. We often also include information about any tests where no artifacts were discovered. The specifics about the surrounding soil and knowing areas that were negative help us better understand the overall site. While these are only small examples of digitized information, they are important examples. Retaining exact [location of the artifacts and features](#), as well as where no artifacts are recovered, is vital to interpreting a site and understanding our history.

Our volunteer program is currently suspended and our offices for the most part closed. If you would like to be notified when we can again accept volunteer assistance, please email cartarchlab@live.com



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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

Individual (\$15) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Family (\$17) _____

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Chapter members can 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!!!!