



# THE DATUM POINT

September 2021

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

Chapter Website – [www.nvcasv.org](http://www.nvcasv.org)



## FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT PATRICK O'NEILL

Zoom talk this month!!!!!!



In-Person ASV Annual Meeting is canceled. There will be a virtual meeting and I will send out information on that when I receive it!

Great time at the picnic last month at Burke Lake Park! NO RAIN!!!! Thank many of you for coming and bringing something to eat!



## CHAPTER TALK

WEDS SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

START 7PM

Join Zoom Meeting (cut and paste link)  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84289064596>

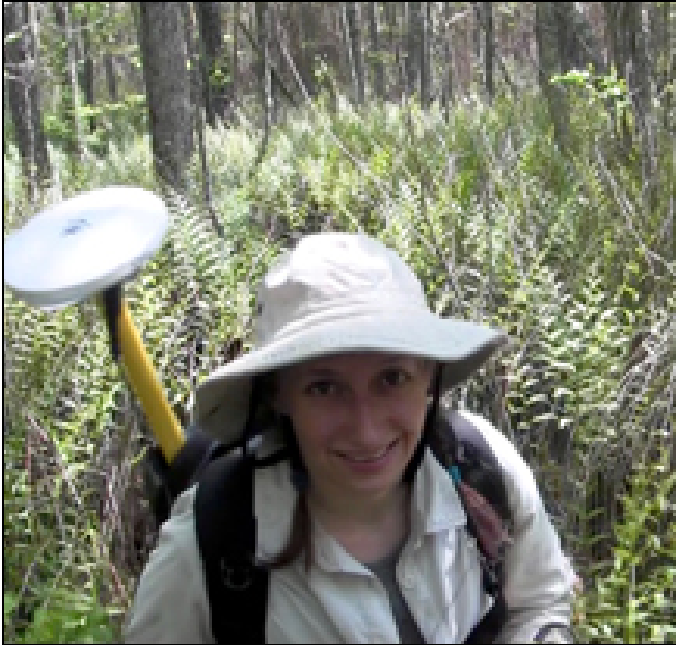


## ARCHAEOLOGY OF MAROONS IN THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP

By Becca Peixotto

How do you find archaeological traces of people whose lives were built around not being found? You look for the tiniest clues in the documentary record, the gaps in the map, and you get your feet muddy. From the seventeenth century until the start of the U.S. Civil War, thousands of people sought refuge from the exploitation and violence of colonialism and enslavement in the Great Dismal Swamp. The thick vegetation and difficult terrain of the pocosins (wetland bogs with sandy peat soil and woody shrubs) of southern Virginia and northern North Carolina provided a rich though

harsh landscape for the hidden communities that formed there.



For almost 20 years, archaeologists have been exploring the Great Dismal Swamp, piecing together the largely unrecorded story of African and African American Maroons (“runaway slaves,” or self-emancipated formerly enslaved people) who went into the Swamp to claim a measure of freedom for themselves. In this talk, Becca Peixotto will survey the history of archaeology of the Dismal Swamp, discuss the findings, share her experiences exploring the Swamp, and preview a new outreach initiative aimed at helping teachers bring the story of the resistance and resilience of the Dismal Swamp Maroons to their students.



Datum Point

For a five-minute overview of Swamp residents, visit the animated video, [“The secret society of the Great Dismal Swamp,”](#) by Daniel Sayers, Associate Professor and Department Chair, Department of Anthropology, American University. For more information, visit Dr. Peixotto’s blog on [exploration and archaeological survey in the Great Dismal Swamp](#), which also has links to other articles.



Becca Peixotto is a Senior Archaeologist for HJF supporting the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and an adjunct lecturer at American University. Dr. Peixotto earned her PhD from American University with research focused on Maroon landscapes in the Great Dismal Swamp. She has participated in archaeological research spanning 250,000 years of human history in the United States and South Africa. Dr. Peixotto served as Field Assistant for the 2013-2015 ASM Field Sessions at the Biggs Ford Site and oversaw the lab processing of the Biggs Ford artifacts. She is an AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador for women in science, and her work in the Great Dismal Swamp was supported by grants from the ASV, The Explorers Club Washington Group, WINGS WorldQuest, and American University. She previously spoke to the Northern Virginia chapter about the 2013 discovery of *Homo naledi* fossils in a South African cave.



## CART

### **Fairfax County Archaeological Research Team**

This month the CART team is working in the lab on a wide variety of tasks. Our field work in Ash Grove is completed for now, we may return to the property in the future. Everyone is working on processing and interpreting what we found! We collected the soil from various features during excavations to use a finer method of collection than normally used in the field. Normally all soil is screened through ¼" mesh, but water screening is a little bit different. The soil collected from features is not screened in the field, we place the soil in sandbags and bring it back to the lab for processing. We use a method called Water-screening, which typically involves placing the collected soil into 1/16" window mesh screens and using water to clean away any silt and clay.



Once the dirt is gone, everything left behind in the window mesh screen is dried in the lab and then carefully picked through to find small artifacts you normally wouldn't see in the field. Picking can be tedious, but sometimes we get lucky and find artifacts like glass beads or straight pins that never would have been seen otherwise! When these tiny artifacts are found they are evaluated and cataloged by our lab staff. This process will keep the entire team busy for the next few weeks.



We hope everyone is staying safe in this hot weather! Our volunteer program is currently suspended, and our offices remain closed until further notice. If you would like to be notified when we can again accept volunteer assistance, please email [cartarchlab@live.com](mailto:cartarchlab@live.com).

## 2021 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	Patrick O'Neill	<a href="mailto:PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET">PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET</a> 703-244-6275
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### Other Public Archaeological Programs in Northern Virginia/DC

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### NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_

Student (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_

Family (\$17) \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:**

**Barbara Leven, Treasurer, NVC/ASV**

**9518 Liberty Tree Lane**

**Vienna VA 22182**

**Chapter members can join our parent organization, the Archeological Society of Virginia at [www.virginiaarcheology.org/](http://www.virginiaarcheology.org/)**

**The Chapter meets at 7:00p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed. of each month either in person or on Zoom.**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!**