



THE DATUM POINT

March 2024

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

Remember to save the date for the 2024 ASV Annual Meeting to be held in Williamsburg at the Fort Magruder Convention Center from October 4-6, 2024!

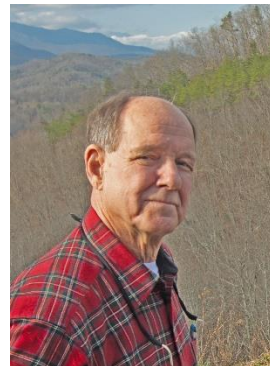
I am sending in a research design for archaeology survey and some clarification of the walls of the Everhart Mill in Loudoun County. The Northern Virginia Chapter will be working with the Banshee Reeks Chapter on this project. Field dates are not yet set.

I am teaching my Field Methods in Archaeology Site Survey and Recording at NOVA this summer. If you are interested in taking the course, let me know!



**Chapter meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday,
March 13 at Thomas Jefferson
Library, 7415 Arlington Boulevard, Falls
Church, VA.**

“Traveling through Time with Maps by Author John E. Ross”



Thanks to maps on the internet, we can travel back thousands of years to see history where it happened.

While working on my forthcoming book *Beyond the Blue Horizon:*

Virginia's Great Valley and Ridges (UVA Press 2025), I prowled the web looking for early maps of Jamestown. Along the way I stumbled on Ajacan. There on the York River, Spanish Catholics attempted to establish a mission in 1570. The English weren't the first Europeans to attempt to colonize Virginia.

And as I poked around further, I came across the sketch that Pedro de Zúñiga sent to King Philip III of Spain in 1608 or thereabouts. It showed the fort at Jamestown, a nifty bit of intelligence for

Spaniards worried about British raids on their treasure galleons riding the Gulf Stream back home.



But maps can be far older. Archaeologists surmise that the orange and blue Paint Rock petroglyphs are the work of Archaic people 5,000 years ago may have been an early billboard directing travelers along North Carolina's French Broad River to warm springs a couple miles upstream.

Among my favorite research tools is the USGS map viewer, <https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#8/35.398/-83.584>.

Digitized topo maps go back to the 1880s, and are loaded with routes of old roads, canals, and railroads and names that people called places near where they lived. And then there are those horsts and grabens on geologic quads. As you may know, these are geological features from the stretching of the Earth's crust, called extension. Horsts are raised fault blocks, grabens are lowered.



Every time I look at an ancient chart, I'm amazed at the detail cartographers of the day achieved with tools no more sophisticated than a compass, an astrolabe, and a log line. I cannot imagine the patience of drawing and lettering maps with quill pens. Equally impressive are maps by Gene Scheel, a historian and mapper known for his work in Loudoun County, to whom we are all very grateful.

Bio:

Living in Middleburg, Va., John E. Ross writes about the intersection of natural and human ecology. His most recent book is *Through the Mountains: The French Broad River and Time*

(University of Tennessee Press 2021, 2nd printing 2023). Through the Mountains was a finalist for the 2022 Reed Environmental Writing Award sponsored by the Southern Environmental Law Center. He is currently writing a similar book, Beyond the Blue Horizon: Virginia's Great Valley and Ridges, to be published in early 2025 by UVA Press. Among his previous books is The Forecast for D-day and the Weatherman behind Ike's Greatest Gamble (Lyons 2014). In addition, Ross writes regularly on conservation for Country Zest and Style.

Growing up in Knoxville, he participated in the documentation of ancestral Cherokee sites on the Little Tennessee River before they were flooded by Tellico Lake. As a college student in the late 1960s, he worked as a geologic aide exploring dam sites on the upper French Broad and other rivers in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. During his career as a senior communications officer and later consultant for numerous colleges and universities, Ross traveled the country and a bit of the western hemisphere as a contributing editor for Sports Afield and Sporting Classics.



CART

Fairfax County Archaeological Research Team

Volunteers Welcome Back Recap



Image: CART Lab Director Elizabeth Paynter giving tour of archaeology lab and showing artifacts to volunteers.

On February 16, CART had a great turn-out for the first volunteer information session and lab tour! 15 prospective and returning volunteers attended the presentation to learn about future volunteer opportunities in the lab, field or collections. We look forward to working with those who attended and will post more information when specific opportunities become available.

News & Highlights

To see more from CART, check out our latest artiFACTS blog posts by visiting <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/artifacts>



Reflections on the Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Memorial Field Study Scholarship at James Madison's Montpelier

Hello everyone,

My name is Kateland Weeks and I am an aspiring archaeologist, just beginning my career as a field technician. In the spring of 2023, I was a recipient of The Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Memorial Field Study Scholarship, awarded through the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia. I was extremely grateful for the scholarship because this is a field I have been intrigued by for the majority of my life. Last summer from May 22 to June 30th, I was privileged to participate in James Madison's Montpelier Archaeology Field School in Orange County, Virginia. I was so excited to have the chance to work at a site of such historical significance and I will always remember the many eye opening experiences I had while working at the birthplace of the United States Constitution.

I spent the first week of field school learning virtually about Montpelier's plantation history, the history and culture of enslaved communities, the history of James Madison and the rest of the Madison family as well as studying archaeological

methods and terminology. After the virtual week, physical work began and for the next month, most of my days were divided between doing extensive field work, occasional laboratory work and participating in historical lectures and walking tours around the property with the rest of my field school peers. The lectures we took part in included learning about plantation landscapes within historical context, for example, learning about the various types of skilled labor that went into building structures like homes and canals on the grounds.



I also toured the Madison cemetery and the enslaved cemetery and even learned about the interpretation of a Civil War encampment.



I learned about the process of working with the descendents of enslaved people on plantation grounds and learned to interpret historic sites to the public at the dig site during the holiday of

Juneteenth. I learned how to describe the field of archaeology to the public as well as how to identify and describe the significance and various types of material culture to the public, for example how to identify animal bones by way of identifying ossification. On Juneteenth, I witnessed a libation ceremony also on the grounds of the enslaved cemetery and was asked to take part in a dance in honor of the ancestors and descendents of the enslaved. I developed valuable experiences, doing hands-on archaeological work during a phase 3 excavation at a 19th century overseer's site. There I



learned how to properly read soil stratigraphy and how to identify features and cultural landscapes. I learned the basics of archaeology such as trowel technique, taking

measurements, etiquette surrounding fieldwork, teamwork, how to do a cleaning pass for photos, and how to record and digitize notes. I learned how to clean, wash and label artifacts as well as how to use a flotation tank and do water screening. My field school experience at Montpelier also allowed me the opportunity to train with GIS, assisting with land clearing for a GPR survey around the historic enslaved burial ground, and further cultural sensitivity training.

My experience at James Madison's Montpelier gave me a much larger appreciation for all of human history and taught me to value the diversity of interpretations across this field of work. It's even more important to me now to recognize that history belongs to all of us and that it is significant to recognize cultural differences and to properly



contextualize places and events. There is so much more we can do to continue to learn about each other and to appreciate that we have so many things

in common as well. I now see that this can be further emphasized throughout the field of archaeology and I am very sure that the fields of archaeology and history are where I am meant to reside professionally. I look forward to making many more discoveries and connections within the field of archaeology and greatly appreciate the opportunities that the Archaeological Society of Virginia has given me through the awarded scholarship.



Julian Williams and Eleanor Mullen Field School Scholarship Available

To be eligible for consideration for the scholarship the applicant must be a member of the ASV in good standing for at least four months prior to the application deadline date of May 1. The scholarship award of up to \$400 but not more than \$750, or 25 percent of the fund total in special circumstances, may be used for:

- tuition and fees;
- travel, lodging, and subsistence expenses;
- equipment and supplies to be used by the recipient during the field study experience, or

- any other legitimate expense that serves to enhance the field study experience.

The recipient(s) will be announced on or before the June issue of the Datum Point. Two people may receive a scholarship in any one year.

Learn more about the scholarship at [Williams-Mullen Field School Scholarship](#) and how to apply at [Williams-Mullen Scholarship Application](#).



2023 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

Address: _____

Dues:

Individual (\$15) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Please make check payable to NVC/ASV.

Return to:

Barbara Leven, Treasurer, NVC/ASV

9518 Liberty Tree Lane

Vienna VA 22182

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month. Meetings may take place in-person and/or on Zoom. Details with start time and on-line/in-person information will be provided in the Datum Point newsletter prior to each meeting.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!