



THE DATUM POINT

August 2026

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



**THIS MONTH'S MEETING
WILL BE:
THE ANNUAL PICNIC!
AUGUST 15TH @ 10AM**

FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT
PATRICK O'NEILL

This month is the Chapter Picnic!!!! I want to also invite the Banshee Reeks Chapter to attend!!!! I will give you a tour of the Saint's Hill Manor ruins (1825-ish), potential outbuilding features, stone ice-house, recently discovered stone alignment and half-dugout, the 1745 Peter Cornwell log house ruins, and the nearby cemetery!!!!



Location: Alanwood Farm
5601 Beverleys Mill Rd.
Broad Run, VA 20137

What to bring:

- A chair
- A dish to share

What the Chapter will bring:

- Meats for the grill
- Soft drinks and water
- Carrots to feed the horses

You have received an announcement on the 2026 ASV Annual Meeting to be held in Richmond in late September 2026. The ASV will be sending out updates throughout the year. **Register and Book your hotel room!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Dr. Eleanor Breen named to State Review Board (SRB)

Starting in June 2026, Dr. Breen will serve as Chair of the SRB, working with the Department of Historic Resources recognizing and honoring Virginia's significant archaeological and historic sites through the National Register. *Congratulations, Dr. Breen!*

Cleaning an American Revolutionary War Gunboat, one swab at a time

The task seems like a cruel punishment from a vindictive Naval officer, but instead it is the meticulous work of a handful of preservationists at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

“We’re charged with making sure that the boat makes it for another 250 years,” said Peter Fix, lead conservator from Texas A&M University.

In the temperature and humidity-controlled room at the museum, Marissa Agerton, a research assistant with Texas A&M, lathered a small cotton swab with an ethanol mixture and slowly started cleaning the 250-year-old awning piece from the Gunboat Philadelphia. The team cleaned “about one square foot an hour, give or take, depending on how dirty it is,” Fix said, adding that there were a staggering 7,200 square feet aboard the last surviving U.S. ship from the American Revolution — all requiring the same Q-tip cleaning.

“Surviving” is a strong word. The Philadelphia, captained by Benjamin Rue, was sunk by a British fleet during the first day of the Battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain.

The exact cannon ball that sunk the gunboat was found aboard and is displayed in a claw-like holder emerging from the hole in the hull. The arrow marked on the cannonball identifies British artillery.

Cannons on the bow and each side of the ship remained as it was raised, several of them still had shot loaded down the muzzle.

And while the Americans, lead by a yet-to-turn-traitorous Benedict Arnold, lost the naval battle, they delayed British forces from sailing down the Hudson River and cutting the colonies in half.

“They do sail down to the American fortifications after the battle, and they take a gander, and they say, ‘we don’t have what’s required in order to do this,’” said Kenneth Cohen, curator of Early America and Chair of the Division of Military and Society at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. “They turn around and go back to Canada, and one of

the Americans who’s there writes to his father, who was governor of Connecticut at that time, and he says, ‘Delay is to us a victory.’”

The Philadelphia was raised from the lake bed bottom in 1935 and installed in the museum in the early 1960s. Since that time, it has seen previous preservation projects, including a coating of liquid nylon.

“That liquid nylon now is 60 years old, and that is starting to get really tight,” Fix said. “Since the liquid nylon is only on one side it is beginning to peel these little chips off the boat.”

The conservator said if “you breathe on it” wrong, these chips can easily come off.

As visitors look at the gunboat, they may also notice small nodules along the hull. These are the areas where the iron nail fasteners oxidized into the wood.

Fix explained these nodules are actually the original width of the planks before the bacteria in Lake Champlain started breaking down the wood. The microbes do not eat the oxidized wood as easily and instead eat around it.

“That means that we’re actually looking at the inside of this plank as it was originally built,” Fix said.

The remaining article and accompanying video can be accessed [here](#) on WTOP’s site.

2026 ASV ANNUAL MEETING

Banquet Speaker: Dr. Matt Reeves

(Montpelier Archaeologist)

Location: Richmond, VA

Date: **September 24-27**

Registration: [2026 Annual Meeting](#)

Payment via PayPal link inside Registration

Hotel: Drury Plaza Hotel **804-354-1542**

11049 West Broad Street

Glen Allen, VA 23060

Meeting: \$40

Banquet: \$45



11 Generations Later: Inside America's Oldest Working Farm and Family-Owned Business in North America

After more than 400 years, Shirley Plantation remains both a working farm and a living record of American ag. Not only is it the oldest family-owned business in America, but it still unlocks pieces of America's past.

Before America was a nation or the Declaration of Independence was even signed, this Virginia land was already being farmed along the James River. Today, that same ground continues to carry a family legacy that stretches back more than 400 years at [Shirley Plantation](#). And as America celebrates 250 years of history, this family-owned business may be the key to taking a peak at the past.

For Charles Carter, who owns Shirley today, he's part of a strong history of family to live and work this land. "I am the 11th generation of the family here on the land in this patch of land in Virginia. My son and daughter are the twelfth generation," says Carter.

Full article and video interview of Charles Carter is available on the AGweb site [here](#).

Sadly, Historic Shirley is closing to general tours. It's website (historicshirley.com) notes that it will only be open for select days in the future. In 2026, that was April's Garden Week.

23andme – Colonial St. Mary's City

This July 4th, as America celebrates its 250th birthday, we're adding 29 individuals from the nation's founding era to the Historical Matches® feature. Their DNA connects them to more than 1.3 million consented 23andMe research participants members.

But here's the remarkable part: one of them was lost to history until your DNA helped name him again.

In May, we shared the story of a groundbreaking study published in [Current Biology](#). 23andMe researchers, working with colleagues at Harvard University, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History and [Historic St. Mary's City](#), analyzed the DNA of 49 individuals buried at St. Mary's City, Maryland, the first colonial capital of Maryland, founded in 1634.

We compared their DNA to millions of consented 23andMe research participants. We found that more than 1.3 million 23andMe research participants share DNA with at least one of the St. Mary's individuals.

The strongest genetic connections were to participants with ancestry from western England and Wales, consistent with the likely origins of many of the colony's earliest residents. Several individuals also showed strong connections to Ireland, lending weight to historical accounts of Irish settlers among the founding colonists.

Among the burials at St. Mary's City's Chapel Field cemetery was a man whose identity had been lost to time. By analyzing his skeletal remains, we knew roughly his age at death, date of death, and where he was born, but his name was lost. That is, until we used genetic data to find him.

This individual, known as Burial 56, left DNA that allowed us to search across our database for genetic relatives living today. When we compared his DNA to thousands of consented research participants, several thousand shared genetic connections with him. We then looked at the family trees of two 23andMe research participants with the strongest genetic links and found the same name appearing in both: Leonard Greene.

Leonard's story aligned with what we knew about Burial 56. He was the son of Thomas Greene, page 3

Maryland's second governor, and Anne Cox—who were both reidentified as burials in the Chapel Field cemetery through their genetic connection to Leonard. This marked the first time ancient DNA has been used to identify unknown historical individuals without any prior hypothesis about who they might be.

Today, Leonard Greene is one of 29 colonists whose stories you can now explore through Historical Matches.

When researchers looked at who shares DNA with the St. Mary's colonists today, they also found that 23andMe participants with roots in Kentucky showed strong genetic connections with these early Maryland settlers.

This pattern has a historical explanation. After the Revolutionary War, many Maryland Catholic families faced economic hardship and mounting religious pressure. Between roughly 1780 and 1820, many migrated to Kentucky, where they established communities in what are now Nelson and Washington counties. Nearly four centuries after their ancestors first set foot at St. Mary's City, the genetic echo of that migration is still visible in your DNA.

The full article is available [here](#). Maybe you are related!

ACHP Advance New Regulations that Devastate Protections for Historic Properties

On Friday, July 17, 2026, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Vice Chairman sent a draft revision of 36 C.F.R. Part 800 to members of the Council asking for their vote on these new [Section 106](#) regulations through email by Friday July 24, 2026. You can read the redlined version [here](#) and the [draft](#) here.

On July 24, 2026, ACHP announced they had [voted to approve](#) the revised regulations and sent the draft to OIRA for review.

These revisions will devastate our ability to protect and preserve historic places and would dramatically curtail public participation in federal decisions that affect local communities. They strip the regulations of the language for meaningful consultation, change the definition of consultation, eliminate the requirements for "avoidance, minimization, and mitigation," eliminate

protections for Traditional Cultural Landscapes, and imperil thousands of significant cultural and historical sites who will not meet the new definition of "historic." They are a betrayal of Congress's intent when it passed the NHPA sixty years ago, and a betrayal of the government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations.

Places to read more:

[War Room for Threats to Section 106 - Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC](#)

[The End of Section 106 as We Know It? - NCSHPO](#)

[Section 106 Under Threat | National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)

In Dorchester County, Maryland:



Mammoth Blood in Dorchester County?

Presented by Zachary Singer
August 5th at 7:00 PM



The Dorchester County Historical Society in cooperation with the South Dorchester Folk Museum will support the Mid-Shore Archaeological Club in hosting the State Terrestrial Archaeologist Zachary Singer.

Dr. Zachary Singer will share new results from a study of Maryland's Ice Age stone tools. Several local artifacts showed traces linked to animals such as mammoth or mastodon, bison, deer, and horses. This discovery offers a rare glimpse into what early man hunted 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.

Folks are invited to bring potential fluted points starting 5:00 PM for recordation and inclusion in the Maryland Fluted Point Survey.

This will be a rare opportunity to see this many Paleo points in one place.

Location:
The Robbins Heritage Center, at Dorchester County
Historical Society in Cambridge, MD
Directions at www.dorchesterhistory.com
For questions, please call 410-228-7953, or Terry at 410-221-5122.

Directions at: <https://www.dorchesterhistory.com/>

2026 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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Gunston Hall	Dave Shonyo	archaeology@gunstonhall.org 703-638-9724
Alexandria Museum	Dr. Eleanor Breen	Eleanor.Breen@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399
DC City Archaeologist	Dr. Ruth Trocolli	Ruth.Trocolli@dc.gov 202-442-8836
Germanna Foundation	Dr. Kelly Arford-Horne, MA, RPA	kelly.arford-horne@germanna.org 540-423-1700

NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The link above allows you to pay online via PayPal (no need for an account) or Venmo. You can still pay via a traditional check, as well. Our dues go towards many different supportive efforts beyond paying for our website. We participate throughout the state with: Scholarships; Donations to Sites; Memorials; Fieldwork Opportunities; Educational Programs; and more.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

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!!!!