



THE DATUM POINT

July 2026

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

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



THIS MONTH'S MEETING:

Thomas Jefferson Library
7415 Arlington Blvd.
Falls Church, VA 22042
7:30-9:30pm

Weds July 8th

The 1570 - 1571 Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia By Fr. Andrew Fisher

FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

PATRICK O'NEILL

This month's meeting is in-person only, not on Zoom!

I am going to return to Saint's Hill later in the summer to finish shovel testing around a stone foundation of unknown age and function. It is on the 1937 aerial photograph about 350 feet from the 1820s manor. So far, several nails (most machine cut 1820s-1890s), window-pane glass, and mortar have been recovered.



The next ASV Board Meeting is July 25 at Kittiewan. If you have anything you would like us to address, please let Diane or I know. Also, remember to get your hotel reservations for the Annual Meeting!!!! Go to this link for information!

Time to think about a summer picnic in August! Last year we had it at Saint's Hill in Fauquier County. Where do you want the picnic this year? Let me know!!!!



Father Andrew Fisher is a native of Northern Virginia. He earned a Master's Degree in both Divinity (Theology) and Church History from Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He was ordained a Catholic priest for the Diocese of Arlington in 1998.

He is a popular speaker on topics in Catholic Church history. His works have been featured on EWTN Catholic Television and Radio, the Institute of Catholic Culture, and the St. Augustine Institute.

In 2007, he began working for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond as a historian and researcher on an investigation of the 1570-71 Spanish Jesuit mission. In 2018, that investigation was transferred to the Catholic bishops of Florida, and Fr Fisher was named as a member of the Historical Commission of the Martyrs of La Florida.

This group of 58 martyrs (Spanish missionaries and Native American) includes the eight Spanish Jesuits who died in Virginia.

Fr. Fisher's research has been submitted to the Vatican as part of the cause of canonization. His research will also be published in a book due out in the spring of 2027.

There are still a few active members of our Chapter that assisted Martha Williams with the Brent Family House site in Aquia, VA. The attempt to locate the first Catholic Chapel in Virginia. The [Brent family](#) relocated from England to Maryland in the 1630s, then again to Virginia in 1650. Margaret Brent and Giles Brent both held significant amounts of land in Virginia. Margaret was often referred to as the first suffragist and first female lawyer in America; less is known about their sister Mary. Giles was arrested with Jesuit Priests in Maryland (1645). Later, Giles married Piscataway Princess, Kittamaquad.

July 11th is a Kittiewan Open House day

12106 Weyanoke Rd., Charles City, VA 22030
Come see the Historic Manor House, home of the ASV! You may also enjoy checking out the VARC Lab. Two other Chapters have used VARC for presentations and Lab work.



Kittiewan built during the last half of the eighteenth century (American Revolution era Dr. William Rickman) read more [here](#)



August Herrman map: Virginia and Maryland as it is planted and inhabited this present year 1670 (full map [here](#)). Brents in red circle.

2026 ASV ANNUAL MEETING

Banquet Speaker: 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

First People in America Came by Sea,
Ancient Tools Unearthed by Idaho river suggest
16,000 year old occupation predates possible land
route into the continents

About 16,000 years ago, on the banks of a river in western Idaho, people kindled fires, shaped stone blades and spearpoints, and butchered large mammals. All were routine activities in prehistory, but their legacy today is anything but. The charcoal and bone left at that ancient site, now called Cooper's Ferry, are some 16,000 years old—[the oldest radiocarbon-dated record of human presence in North America, according to work reported this week in Science.](#)

The findings do more than add a few centuries to the timeline of people in the Americas. They also shore up a new picture of how humans first arrived, by showing that people lived at Cooper's Ferry more than 1 millennium before melting glaciers opened an ice-free corridor through Canada about 14,800 years ago. That implies the first people in the Americas must have come by sea, moving rapidly down the Pacific coast and up rivers. The dates from Cooper's Ferry "fit really nicely with the [coastal] model that we're increasingly getting a consensus on from genetics and archaeology," says Jennifer Raff, a geneticist at the University of Kansas in Lawrence who studies the peopling of the Americas.

The Clovis people, big game hunters who made characteristic stone tools dated to about 13,000 years ago, were once thought to have been the first to reach the Americas, presumably through the ice-free corridor. But a handful of earlier sites have persuaded many researchers that [the coastal route is more likely.](#) Archaeologists have questioned the signs of occupation at some putative pre-Clovis sites, but the stone tools and dating at Cooper's Ferry pass the test with flying colors, says David Meltzer, an archaeologist at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. "It's pre-Clovis. I'm convinced."

[Full article in SCIENCE here](#)

Liberty of Conscience: The Founding of Maryland

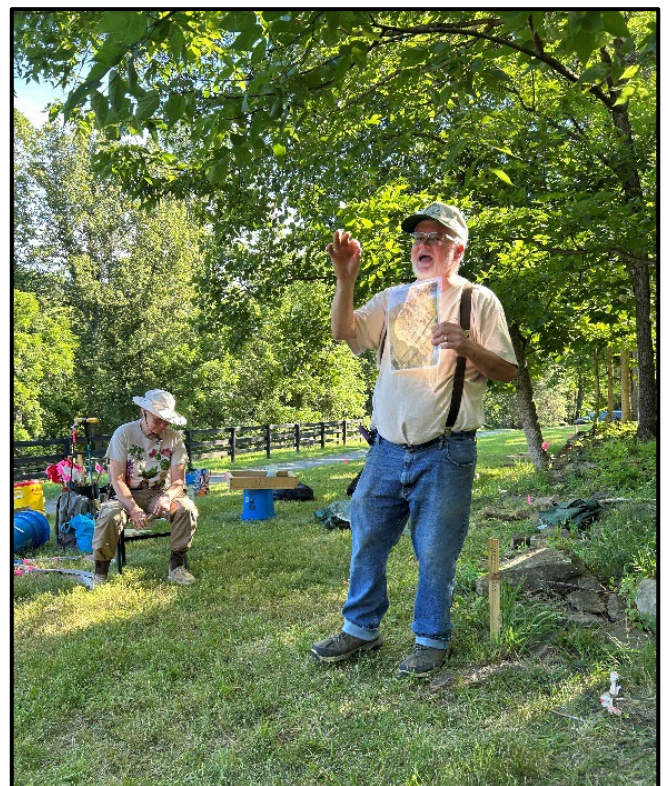
WETA / PBS [link here](#) (1:25:03)

The story of the founding of colonial Maryland and the influence of the Calvert family. This documentary examines the Calvert family's quest for a place in the Americas to exercise religious freedom and the challenges they faced. At the heart of George Calvert's notion of a Liberty of Conscience representing the freedom for people to worship as they choose.

Upon Lord Calvert's death, Margaret Brent, Esq. was executer of his will. Before being forced to move to Virginia, with her brother and sister, she also wielded power in Maryland. She has also petitioned to vote in Maryland.

Saints Hill – NVCC class activities

Students of Patrick O'Neill learned about setting up a site grid, digging test pits, as well as preliminary site discernment.



Patrick O'Neill going over the day's plan with students



O'Neill speaking with students and volunteers



Students and volunteers digging shovel tests and screening for



Students and volunteers working outside a structure on the site



O'Neill points out an outcropping of rock that needs to be investigated as a cultural resource versus a natural occurrence

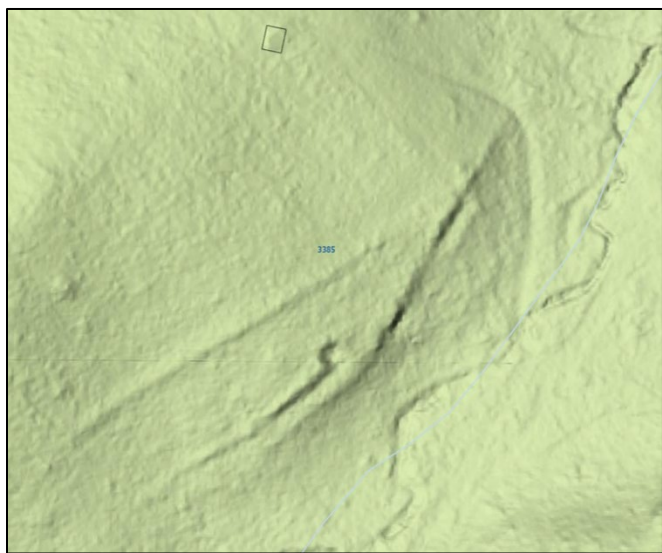


Working in teams of two or three, students learned about identifying artifacts and completing test unit paperwork, including Munsell color designations



Tools for clearing the area along a possible new site on the property
Students also learned the methodology and use of solid rod probes

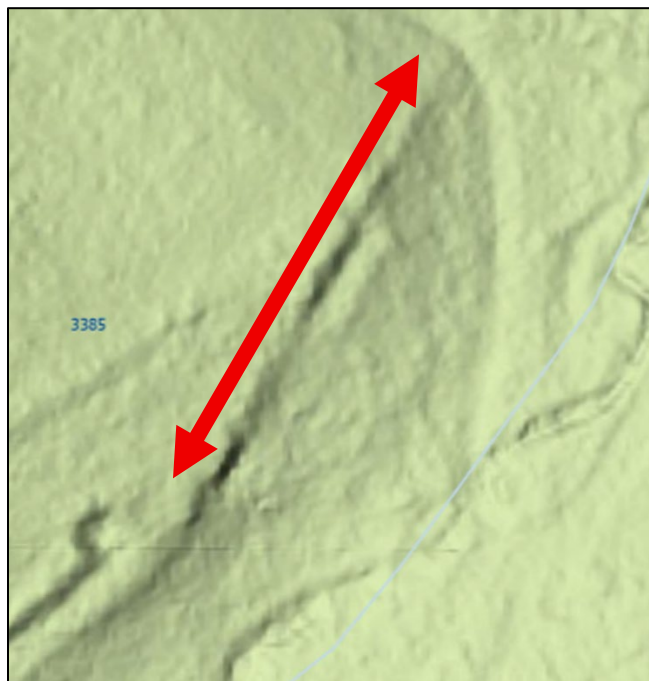
At the very end of the summer session, the students helped to uncover an interesting feature along a creek on Saint's Hill (see below).



Interesting feature in lidar at Saint's Hill

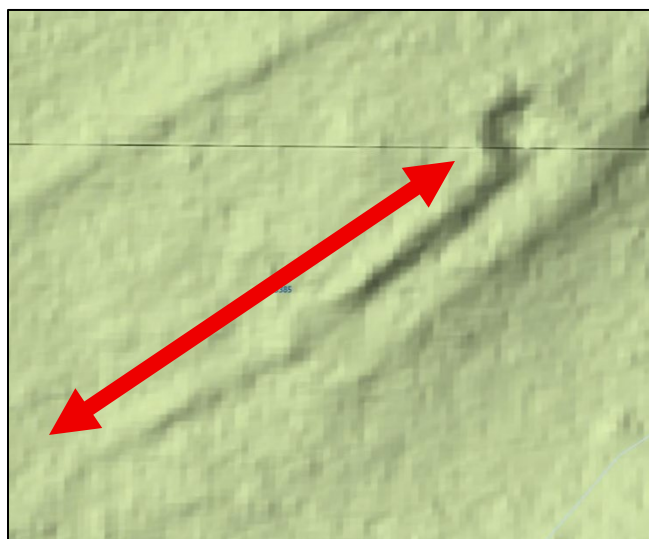
A rock formation/layer has been cut into a 214-foot long straight line above the west side of a creek (see below). It is yet unclear if this rock was quarried and

the result is a straight edge to the formation and a flat area below it that may have been part of a road.



Rock formation in straight line for 214 feet

At the west end of this rock edge, and "above it" in elevation, is a 20x20ft depression (cellar?) and 160 foot long stone alignment with a flat area (upslope side) (see below). The area might may have been used as a road or building platform/work area. There is no depression in this area to suggest the 160 ft line is part of a millrace or such.



Depression with 160 ft long stone alignment above the stone edge

2026 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

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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 usually 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!!!!