



# THE DATUM POINT

May 2026

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

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



## THIS MONTH'S MEETING WILL BE AT A NEW LOCATION:

**City of Falls Church Community Center**  
Kenneth R. Burnett Building  
Room 103, across from the gym  
223 Little Falls St.  
Falls Church, VA 22046  
7:30-9:30pm

## *Legacy Methodology: Concrete Examples* By Mike Johnson

Field and lab methods are either learned directly from our mentors or are built upon through field and lab innovations we develop. Giving credit where it is due, my primary mentors included Bill Gardner (Thunderbird/context), Charlie McNett and June Evans (Shawnee-Minisink/sampling), and Errett Callahan and Bob Patten (cognitive archaeology/lithic analysis). Methodologically, I was also influenced by the writings of Louis Binford, David Hurst Thomas, James Judge, Earnest Burch, T. C. Chamberlin, Carl Butzer, and many others. Numerous examples/results, including audits, from more than 33 years of “running in front of bulldozers” in Fairfax County, Va., and more than 25 more years of independent research, especially on the initial peopling of the Americas, particularly in the Nottoway River Valley of SE Virginia (e.g. Cactus Hill, Blueberry Hill, and Rubis-Pearsall) will be discussed. Some serious methodological problems have crept into what we do, and creative and methodological mitigations derived from innovative approaches to field and lab sampling will be discussed. Auditing my and CRM methods/results will be a theme throughout. The methodological feedback loop between CRM and research is the core of my presentation.

Michael F. Johnson is a retired Senior Archeologist with Fairfax County Park Authority. With over 30 years of experience, he is particularly interested in the initial peopling of the Americas, Paleoindian lithic technology, experimental archeology, public archeology, archeological methodology, and 17th Century European-American Indian interaction in the upper Potomac River Valley. He served as

## FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT PATRICK O'NEILL

What a great opportunity to hear Mike Johnson give a talk about archaeology field methodology!!!!!! Please come to the chapter meeting next week!!!!

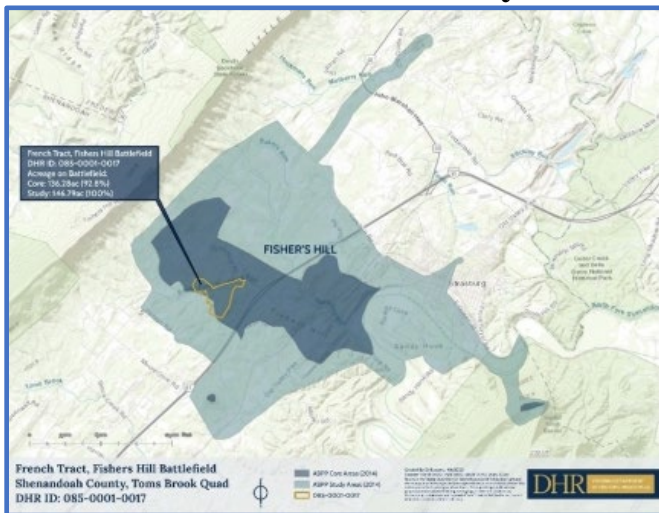
Diane and I are members of the Banshee Reeks Chapter in Loudoun County, too. Last week they adopted a charter and elected officers. They gave us a tour of the spring house at the park. I consider them a sister chapter to the NVC and invite them to all of our activities!



Springhouse at Banshee Reeks

project director with the Archeological Society of Virginia for Paleoindian research in the Nottoway River Valley, directing excavations at the Cactus Hill, Barr, Blueberry Hill, Koestline, Watlington, and Rubis-Pearsall sites. Most recently, he has been engaged in exploring and cataloguing the Paleoindian quarry complex at Jasper Ridge alongside Dr. Robert Richards, MD, Lithic Technician.

## Battlefield Preservation: The French Tract and Civil War History



Map showing the French Tract within the Fisher's Hill Battlefield.  
Credit: DHR.

*The historic preservation and open-space easement over the 146-acre French Tract in Shenandoah County helps protect two Civil War battlefield landscapes, along with their stories of perseverance, struggle, victory, and defeat.*

### By Kyle Edwards | DHR Easement Program Archaeologist

To date, DHR and its coordinating partners have protected over 17,000 acres of Civil War battlefields as part of the Commonwealth's historic preservation [easement program](#). These protected battlefields can be found across the state and represent various actions, campaigns, and events that tell a collective story of America's bloody Civil War, while also providing valuable open-space land for recreation and conservation purposes. However, within this expansive collection of properties, we can

sometimes lose sight of the more nuanced and individual stories associated with the battlefield landscape. Each preserved property has its own story to tell—of perseverance, struggle, victory, and defeat—that add a human quality to our understanding of the War and Virginia's history. This is especially true of one of DHR's newest easements over property known as the French Tract (The Property), located in Shenandoah County.

On April 8, 2026, the Commonwealth of Virginia accepted a historic preservation and open-space easement over the 146-acre French Tract. The easement was donated by the [Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation](#) (SVBF) with the support of grant funds provided by the [Virginia Land Conservation Foundation](#) and the [American Battlefield Protection Program](#). Significantly, the easement falls within two battlefields, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek, and protects the historic battlefield landscape, three archaeological sites, and three historic structures associated with these battles. The French Tract is particularly important for telling the story of Fisher's Hill, and how the battle shifted the balance of power within the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War.

The Battle of Fisher's Hill was a pivotal moment in the Civil War and, specifically, the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. Over the course of the War, control of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley was hotly contested for both logistic and strategic reasons. Perhaps most importantly, the Valley was an essential source of provisions for the Confederate capital in Richmond and the Army of Northern Virginia, which by the fall of 1864 was besieged within Petersburg. As a result, U.S. control of the region could limit valuable supplies for the Confederacy, weakening its army. The 1864 campaign began with this factor in mind. Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant detailed to Major General Phillip Sheridan, who would lead the campaign, that, "...it is desirable that nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return. Take all provisions, forage, and stock necessary for the use of your command. Such as cannot be consumed destroy..." (Foote 1974:543). For Grant, this was to be the end of Confederate control over the Valley.

[To read the full article available here.](#)

## 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

## Virginia Designates 7 Historic Sites as State Landmarks

The newly designated landmarks are in the county of Bedford; in the cities of Newport News, Suffolk, Lynchburg, and Roanoke; in the Hanover County town of Ashland and in the Fauquier County town of Warrenton.

The Commonwealth's Board of Historic Resources approved these properties for designation on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) during its quarterly public meeting in March. The VLR is the commonwealth's official list of places of historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural significance.

- 2108 Jefferson Avenue in the City of Newport News – currently the site of Pearlie's Restaurant
- Ames-Old Farm in the City of Suffolk
- Henry Clay Elementary School in the town of Ashland
- The Saunders House in the town of Warrenton
- Montvale High School in Bedford County
- Randolph-Macon Woman's College Historic District in the City of Lynchburg
- Fishburn Park Keeper's Cottage in the City of Roanoke

[Read more here.](#)

## King Charles III loans a bottle to Historic Jamestowne



(Jamestown Rediscovery) Bottle: China, One of a pair of bottles, ceramic, 1580; gilt bronze mounts, late 17th-early 19th century, lent by His Majesty King Charles III from the Royal Collection. © Royal Collection Enterprises

Lent by His Majesty King Charles III from the Royal Collection, this bottle is one of only 3 examples known to exist. One other is at Buckingham Palace, but the other? Found in fragments inside muddy James Fort. How did it get there? Who brought this object fit for a king to a tiny fort on the edge of the world?

Come see the bottle and the fragments excavated at Historic Jamestowne in "Following the Dragon: Chinese Ming Porcelain in Early Jamestown," now open at Jamestown Settlement.

The special exhibition explores compelling discoveries that connect the early years of the Jamestown colony and Asia. More than 100 Chinese Ming porcelain vessels have been discovered during archaeological excavations of the 1607-1625 fort at Historic Jamestowne. For this exhibition, a total of 31 vessels recovered during Jamestown Rediscovery excavations will be paired with intact parallels from English, Dutch and American museums, as well as private collections from across the globe.

On loan for the first time from the Royal Collection and usually displayed at Buckingham Palace, the Ming bottle has gilt-bronze mounts and features a fenghuang, a mythical bird representing the Chinese

empress and symbolizing joy, peace, and sincerity. One of only three examples known to exist, it is displayed near archaeological fragments of another Ming bottle uncovered at Historic Jamestowne.

## From CNN: Egyptian mummy unearthed with literary text on abdomen in first ever find



Mummy is around 1,600 years old

Archaeologists working at the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt have unearthed a [mummy](#) with a passage from Homer's "Iliad" stuck to its abdomen, in a first-of-its-kind discovery.

While other mummies in the area have been found with sealed packages containing papyri with what appear to be ritualistic formulas placed on them as part of the embalming process, this is the first time that a literary text has been found, Ignasi-Xavier Adiego, a classical philologist at the University of Barcelona, Spain, told CNN on Thursday.

"This is the big development for us," said Adiego, who's part of a team that's been working at the site for years.

"Until now, we didn't know that they would have used literary texts as part of this funerary ritual," he added.

[See entire CNN entry here.](#)

## Julia Roberts Sues for Freedom

The Arlington Historical Society sponsored a play at the Ball-Sellers House (oldest house in Arlington) in

conjunction with Guillotine Theatre. The play was created from the official court records about Julia Roberts successfully suing for her freedom in 1842.



Ball-Sellers House built in 1742



Sign about the play alongside three stumbling stones commemorating three people enslaved at the property



Ball-Sellers house during performance, as seen from the former lean-to, current rain garden



Performers from L-R: Ricardo Frederick Evans (Attorney Robert J. Brent); Bruce Eells (Judge William Cranch); Lisa Hill Corley (Julia Roberts); Ken Jackson (Attorney Christopher Neale)



Performance viewed from current community garden

The basis of the play arose from the detailed research by Jessica Kaplan (Arlington Historical Society). Catherine Aselford took the research and created the dialogue for the play.

At the end of the performance, the audience was encouraged to ask questions of the actors and writers. It was revealed that none of Julia's siblings sued for their own freedom, even though the documentation included Julia's siblings. The manumission paper referred to her mother and all children born and unborn at the time of filing. A point of contention in the case was the fact that the papers were filed in Fairfax County, but the home of the filer had recently been made part of the newly created Alexandria County in the District of Columbia.



A few of our Chapter members attended the performance, including Annette Benbow (Director, Ball-Sellers House), Bao Truong, Patrick O'Neill, and Diane Schug-O'Neill

## 2026 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	Patrick O'Neill	<a href="mailto:PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET">PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET</a> 703-244-6275
<b>Vice-President</b>	Darius Roby	<a href="mailto:darius.robby@live.com">darius.robby@live.com</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Barbara Leven	<a href="mailto:levenbarbara2@gmail.com">levenbarbara2@gmail.com</a>
<b>Recording Sec</b>	Matt Windt	
<b>Datum Point Editor</b>	Diane Schug-O'Neill	<a href="mailto:schugoneill@gmail.com">schugoneill@gmail.com</a>
<b>Webmaster</b>	Chris Havlicek	<a href="mailto:christo829@juno.com">christo829@juno.com</a>

### Other Public Archaeological Programs in Northern Virginia/DC

<b>Fairfax Co. Archaeology (FCPA)</b>	Dr. Jeffery Alvey	<a href="mailto:fcpa-archaeology@fairfaxcounty.gov">fcpa-archaeology@fairfaxcounty.gov</a> 703-534-3881
<b>Mount Vernon</b>		
<b>Gunston Hall</b>	Dave Shonyo	<a href="mailto:archaeology@gunstonhall.org">archaeology@gunstonhall.org</a> 703-638-9724
<b>Alexandria Museum</b>	Dr. Eleanor Breen	<a href="mailto:Eleanor.Breen@alexandriava.gov">Eleanor.Breen@alexandriava.gov</a> 703-838-4399
<b>DC City Archaeologist</b>	Dr. Ruth Troccoli	<a href="mailto:Ruth.Troccoli@dc.gov">Ruth.Troccoli@dc.gov</a> 202-442-8836
<b>Germanna Foundation</b>	Dr. Kelly Arford-Horne, MA, RPA	<a href="mailto:kelly.arford-horne@germanna.org">kelly.arford-horne@germanna.org</a> 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 usually meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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!!!!**