The Datum Point

November 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 on Zoom only:

7-9 PM - November 11, 2026

Link to Zoom

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86592074273

From the Chapter President

PATRICK O'NEILL

I will be meeting with Senator Mark Warner on Monday morning as President of the ASV with other prominent people from Virginia, just prior to the Section 106 rally on the south lawn of the Capitol! Then, I will also be at the rally! We certainly hope that they will stop the gutting of the Section 106 process, but we shall see.

Next month is December, time for our annual holiday party, but also time for elections. If you would like to run for an office, let me know (patrickloneill@verizon.net). Here are the current officers.

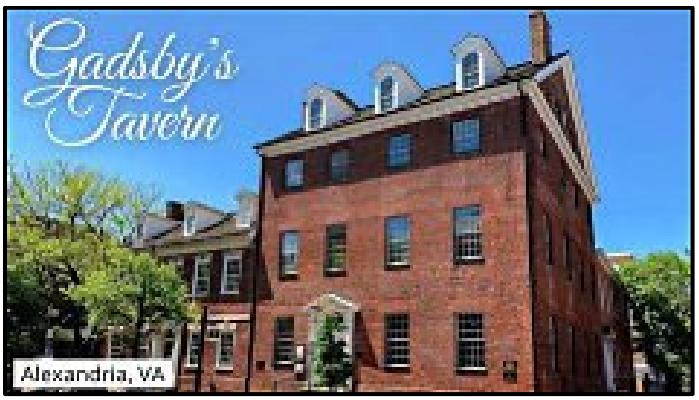
President	Patrick O'Neill
Vice-President	Darius Roby
Treasurer	Barbara Leven
Recording Sec	Matt Windt
Datum Point Editor	Diane Schug-O'Neill
Webmaster	Chris Havlicek

The December meeting/holiday party is going to be at the Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St, Springfield, VA.

Topic: 18th Century Taverns and the Making of the New Nation

Speaker: Michele Longo

As places of business, politics, and socialization, taverns provide a glimpse into the formation of the United States. Learn about the people of Alexandria and the national events they experienced through the lens of the two taverns that make up Gadsby's Tavern Museum.





New Lease on Life For Historic Tall Ship Providence



The recently-formed United States Maritime Foundation (USMF) is set to acquire the tall ship *Providence* with the intention of reopening it as a museum, educational and tourist attraction in the port city of Alexandria, Virginia.

The *Providence*, a replica of an 18th-century ship that played an instrumental role in the American Revolution, was facing the prospect of fading into oblivion after its previous owner, the Tall Ship Providence Foundation, suspended its educational and tour programs in June. Considering that the ship had become a top tourist destination, the charity said the decision to suspend operations was not made lightly.

A longtime attraction on the Alexandria waterfront, the *Providence* is a reproduction of the sloop *Providence*, originally named Katy, which was built in 1769 and was one of a fleet of ships owned by John Brown of Providence. Six years later, the ship would go on to become the flagship of the tiny Rhode Island Navy, which was created to protect the interests of Rhode Island merchants against British naval captains.

Full article here

Digitizing Virginia's "Free Negro Registers"

They said it couldn't be done—that tracking down, borrowing, and digitizing every surviving "Free Negro Register" in Virginia was simply too massive a project to pull off. It would be one thing to digitize the volumes available in the Library of Virginia's collections, but how would we ensure the trust of nearly forty different circuit court clerks to borrow their volumes for scanning? Well, you know what they say: it takes a village. Thanks to dedicated efforts of many Library of Virginia archivists and digital librarians, the generosity of several genealogists and cultural heritage professionals, and participation of Virginia circuit court clerks and records room archivists, there are now **ninety-nine** register books representing **sixty** different Virginia localities available through the Library of Virginia's digital collections.

"Free Negro Registers" or as we typically refer to them "Free Registers" document Black and Multiracial people who were free before the Civil War. While these registers reflect Virginia's early efforts to control and police its free Black population, they also serve as vital descriptive resources for tracing family history and include genealogical and biographical information that is often missing from other records.

Readers who have been following along with us will be familiar with this five-year project. The bulk of this digitization effort was made possible through a two-year National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant administered by the National Archives and Records Administration that the Library received in 2020. While working to get our first set of registers available online, we started reaching out to circuit court clerks in localities that were known to have surviving volumes. After the completion of the NHPRC grant in April 2023, we devoted more time and attention to identifying extant free registers, connecting with clerks, and traveling to various Virginia localities.

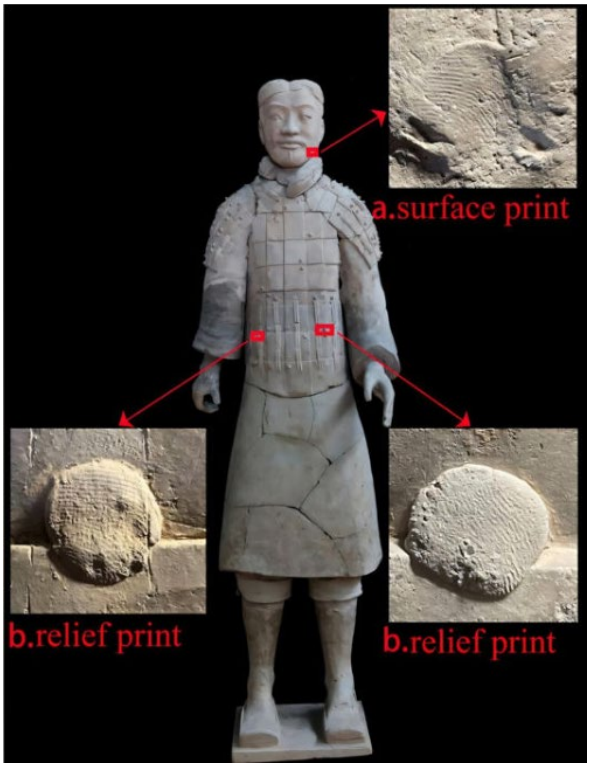
Full article here

Study Reveals Something Remarkable about the Makers of Terracotta Army

China's famous Terracotta Army figures, dated to the third century BC, were likely built by artisans who included women and children, according to a new analysis of fingerprints found on the statues.
The thousands of life-size figures were created to guard the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang near Xi'an. It was assumed the army, along with its chariots, horses and weapons, were built exclusively by men.

Literature from the time suggested that women and children participated in other forms of production under state supervision. For instance, inscriptions on Qin dynasty lacquerware include titles like *da nüzi* (adult woman), *xiao nüzi* (young girl), and *xiao nanzi* (young boy), indicating the participation of women and children in lacquer production.

But whether their participation extended to the massive Terracotta Army remained an unanswered question.
Previous studies of fingerprints found on the figures could not differentiate between those made by adult women and teenage boys.



Full article here

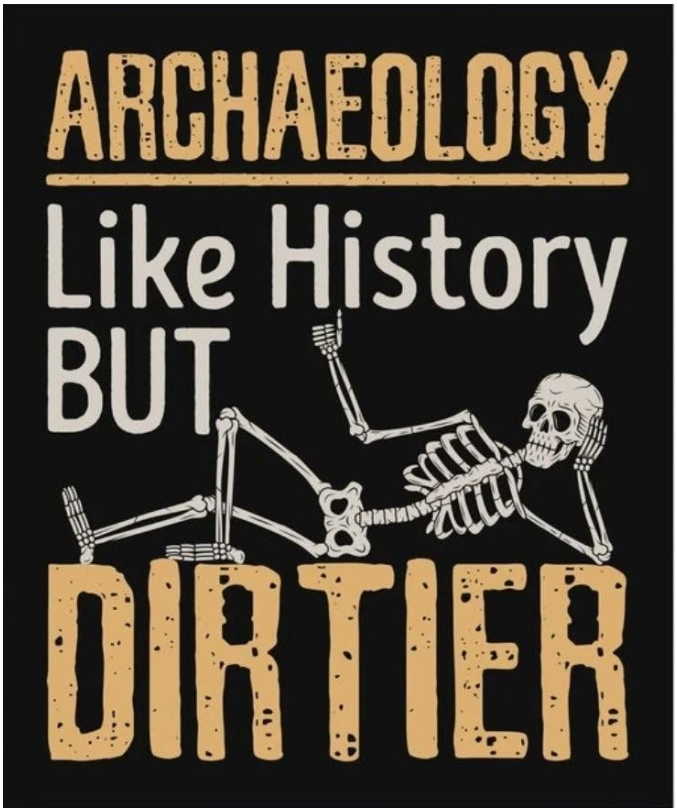
The War Room – The Battle of Waterloo

With Sean Bean (Yes, of 80s show *Sharpe's Rifles*)

It's an in-depth look into the entire battle and includes descendants of some involved.

Link in the photo:

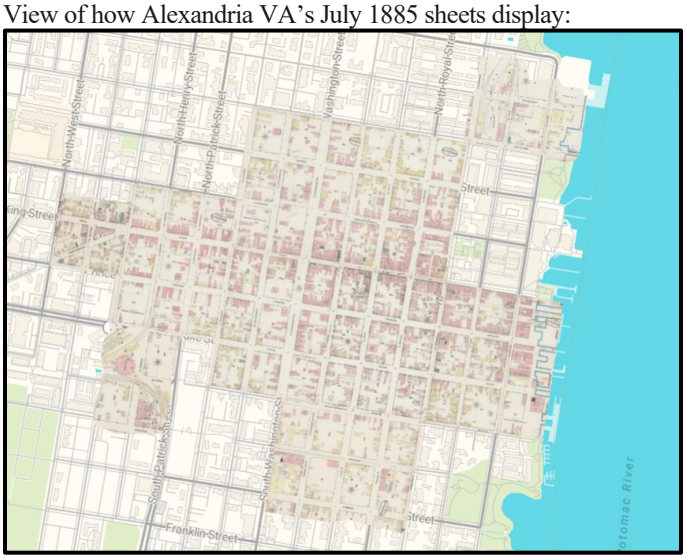




Check out a new Sanborn Fire Insurance map site: Mapsnap

See what almost any city or town in the United States looked like 100 years ago, building by building. mapsnap places the Library of Congress's Sanborn fire insurance maps on today's map automatically: it reads the street names printed on each sheet and matches them to OpenStreetMap. The results cover tens of thousands of volumes, and are free to explore, download and reuse.

View of how Alexandria VA's July 1885 sheets display:



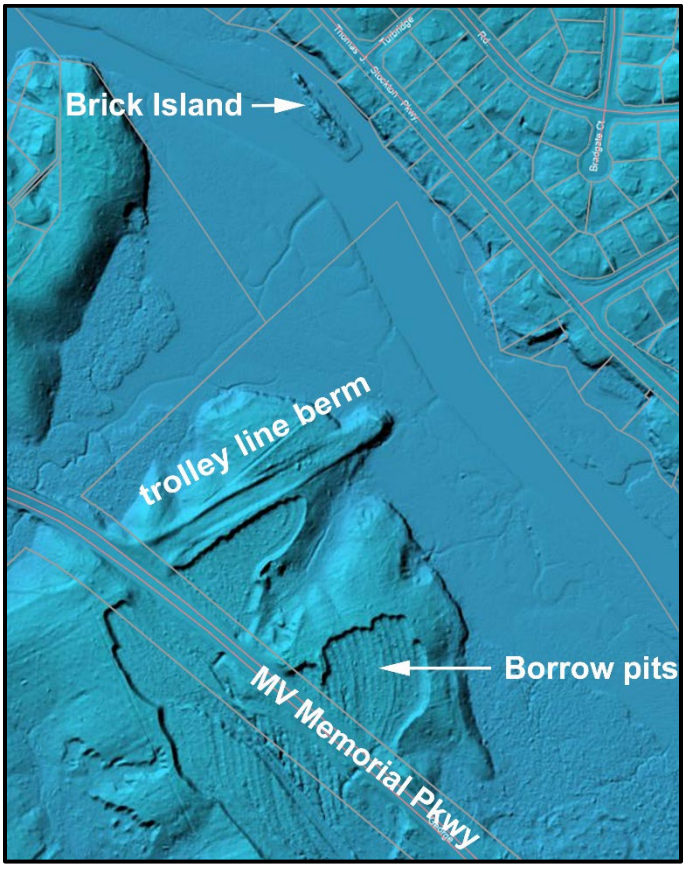
Virginia
446 of 489 volumes published, with 5,864 of 7,755 sheets placed. A title opens the volume's page, with its catalog record and every scan. **View** opens its placed sheets over today's map in Allmaps; **JSON** is the IIIF file behind them. **Images** chooses whose scans they draw: Chronoscope's faster copies, or the Library of Congress's originals.

Not every page is placed, or placed accurately: please report problems. Missing a volume, or pages of one? Look for it on OldInsuranceMaps.net, or georeference it by hand there. If a volume doesn't load on your phone, switch Images to loc.gov, or try a desktop browser.

Bill McGovern speaks to the Mount Vernon Regional Historical Society



Bill McGovern speaking about *The Brickyard, Railway, and Parkway and their lasting Impacts on the Landscape*



LIDAR of area Bill spoke about, near the Mt Vernon Memorial Parkway in Alexandria

For years, a stone helped hold up a barn in a Czech village. It turned out to be a Bronze Age mold!



The discovery dates back to 2007, when a man identified as J. Tomanec found the stone in Morkůvky, a village in southeastern Czechia. The object eventually attracted the attention of archaeologists, who recognized it as **a rare Bronze Age mold for casting spearheads**.

Measuring nearly nine inches (23 centimeters) long, the artifact was made from rhyolite tuff, a volcanic rock. Researchers estimate that it dates to around 1350 BCE, making it more than 3,000 years old.

Milan Salaš, an archaeologist at the Moravian Museum in Brno, explained in an interview with Radio Prague International that the stone is a casting matrix. Its flat surface preserves a carefully carved negative impression of a bronze spearhead, showing the shape that molten metal would have taken as it cooled.
Salaš led a **scientific study published in Archeologické rozhledy in 2025**, which examined the artifact's construction, composition, and possible origins.

Using visual examination and X-ray-based analytical techniques, the researchers reconstructed the ancient casting process. The original mold consisted of two matching stone halves, although only one has survived. The halves were positioned upright and secured together with copper wire before molten bronze was poured into the cavity.

The resulting weapon would have been a socketed, lance-shaped spearhead. Its hollow base allowed a wooden shaft to be fitted into the finished metal object. The blade also featured distinctive raised ridges running lengthwise along its sides and central section.

Full article here

Scientists found eight sets of 1.4-million-year-old footprints, and they weren't expecting who made them

Eight sets of **1.4-million-year-old footprints**, pressed into the mud of an ancient Kenyan lakeshore, are rewriting what scientists thought they knew about one of humanity's extinct cousins. The footprints belong to ***Paranthropus boisei***, and several of the individuals who left them were far larger than researchers had ever imagined.

Most of what scientists have known about Paranthropus boisei has come from **skulls**, some with strikingly **large jaws and teeth**, but very little else, since the rest of the skeleton has always been frustratingly rare in the fossil record and has left huge gaps in our understanding of how this species actually looked and moved.

This new discovery, made near an ancient lake margin in northern Kenya, does exactly that. It offers researchers a fleeting glimpse of **eight individuals** occupying the same patch of ground at roughly the same time, and in doing so, hints at a social world far more complex than anyone had previously pieced together from bone fragments alone.

Full article here

2026 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Patrick O'Neill	PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET 703-244-6275
Vice-President	Darius Roby	darius.roby@live.com
Treasurer	Barbara Leven	levenbarbara2@gmail.com
Recording Sec	Matt Windt	
Datum Point Editor	Diane Schug-O'Neill	schugoneill@gmail.com
Webmaster	Chris Havlicek	christo829@juno.com

Other Public Archaeological Programs in Northern Virginia/DC

Fairfax Co. Archaeology (FCPA)	Dr. Jeffery Alvey	fcpa-archaeology@fairfaxcounty.gov 703-534-3881
Mount Vernon		
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!!!!