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Is Carolina site 20,000 years old?

By John Noble Wilford

Condensed from the New York Times, June 25, 2005

BARNWELL, S.C., June 24 - On a hillside by the Savannah River, under tall oaks bearded with Spanish moss, an archeologist and a graduate student crouched in the humid depths of a trench. They were on to something more than 20,000 years old that would throw American archeology into further turmoil over its most contentious issue: When did people first reach America, and who were they?

The sandy soil of the trench walls was flecked with pieces of chert, the source of flint coveted by ancient toolmakers. Some of the stone flakes appeared to be unfinished discards. Others had the sharp-edged look of more fully realized blades, chisels and scrapers. Long ago, it seemed, Stone Age hunter-gatherers had frequently stopped here and, perhaps, these toolmakers were among the first Americans.

With deft strokes of his trowel, the archeologist, Dr. Albert C. Goodyear of the University of South Carolina, excised a chunk of chert about the size of a cantaloupe. Its sides, he said, had all the marks of flintknappers' work. They had presumably smashed one cobble against another, leaving fracture lines through the rock, and then recovered thin slices for making sharp tools.

"This is not a natural occurrence," Dr. Goodyear said, showing the beaten-about chert cobble afterward. "No river, fire or animals could do this. Too many blows have been struck."

If he is right, American prehistory is being extended deeper in time at this remote dig site near Barnwell. Dr. Robson Bonnichsen, an expert on early Americans who is not directly involved in the excavation, said it could even be "the single most significant Ice Age site in North America" as a place bearing tantalizing evidence for "understanding the earliest prehistory of the Americas."

The land is owned by the Clariant Corporation, the big Swiss chemical company, which allows archeologists to dig to their minds' content in the forest at the Topper Site, named for the person who brought it to their attention more than 20 years ago.

Judging by the depth of sediments, the Topper site may have been a toolmaking center at least 7,000 years earlier than the arrival of big-game hunters known as the Clovis people, once thought to be the earliest Americans.

The two men in the trench leaned into a seam of darker soil interspersed with black grains that the graduate student, Tony Pickering, had found three weeks before. It just might be the remains of a fireplace. If so, any residue of charcoal should give a reliable date through radiocarbon analysis. **Continued on Page 10**

Upcoming events

September 11: ASM board meeting, Crownsville. 10 a.m. All are welcome.

October 1 – 2: Catoctin Regional History Conference, Frederick Community College. 301-624-2803 or bpowell@frederick.edu

November 4 - 7: Joint ESAF – Ontario Archeological Society meeting, Midland, Ontario.

November 13: Annual ASM Fall Meeting, at Brookeside Gardens' Visitors' Center, 1800 Glennallen Avenue, Wheaton, Md.

Volunteer opportunities

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT program participants and other ASM members:

ASM field session collection: Volunteers are needed to work on up-grading collections associated with previous field sessions. Work has started with the Nolands Ferry collection. Nolands Ferry is a Late Woodland site excavated by ASM in 1978. The lab in Crownsville will be open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. For additional information contact Louise Akerson rakerson@comcast.net or Charlie Hall hall@dhcd.state.md.us.

Montgomery County lab and field work. Call 301-840-5848 or contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org. CAT opportunity.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County. 410-222-7441.

Mount Calvert. Lab work continues and field work is beginning. 301-627-1286.

Proposed bylaw amendment to be offer at Fall Meeting

At the March 1, 2003 meeting of the ASM Board of Trustees, an amendment to the ASM Bylaws was approved. Inadvertently, it was not brought up for ratification at last year's Annual Meeting. So it will be presented at this years meeting, November 13, in Wheaton. It reads:

Article VII, Meetings, Section 2, Add new paragraph as follows: "Another lecture at the Spring Symposium shall be designated the 'Iris McGillivray Memorial Lecture' in honor of the founder and long-standing organizer of the Spring Symposium. The importance of Mrs. McGillivray to Maryland archeology shall be noted in the printed program for the meeting."

Three opportunities available for letting ASM know

You have three chances right now to make your voice heard in Society activities.

First is this year's election. A ballot was included in last month's newsletter, along with profiles of the candidates. Mail the ballot to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, Maryland, 20782, or bring it to the Fall Meeting in November. It might be a good idea to mail it now; that will give it less chance to get lost.

Second and third, we need your nominations for the Society's two major awards of the year.

The William B. Marye award honors those persons who have made outstanding contributions to Maryland archeology. Awardees need not be members of ASM or residents of Maryland. The only measure is that they have played a very important role in the advancement of Maryland archeology.

Nominations submitted by Society members are reviewed by the Marye Award Committee. Nominees selected are announced at the Fall Meeting and presented with a plaque.

Nominations must be received by August 16. Submit your nomination on the form enclosed with last month's newsletter. Your participation will help ASM recognize deserving workers in Maryland archeology.

The other award is for Teacher of the Year. July 31 is the deadline to nominate a Maryland teacher who has used archeology with his/her students in a special way. If you need another copy of the form email Anne Radin at anneradin@prodigy.net. Quickly.

Anne Arundel body poses a mystery

By Andrea F. Siegel, *Condensed from the Baltimore Sun, July 12, 2004*

Archeologists digging in one of their favorite kinds of pits -- a trash cellar -- figured its mix of coins, pottery shards and pipestems would tell them about one of the earliest European settlements along the Chesapeake Bay.

But a unique and mysterious discovery along a cellar wall promises to be the most telling of all, offering insights into the difficulty of forging a new life in the New World settlement of Providence in the 1600s.

"We did not expect to find this dead guy," said Anne Arundel County archeologist Al Luckenbach.

Beneath a few feet of rubbish, along a basement wall of a house from the 1660s near modern-day Annapolis, was a human skeleton stuffed into a small grave. This is the region's first discovery of an apparent 17th-century basement burial, experts say.

Archeologists hope the secrets in the bones can help reveal details of life in the Puritan community established on the banks of the Severn River in 1649, though why the teenager's body was in a cellar grave baffles them. It does not appear that the house was built after the burial.

The well-preserved remains point to an indentured servant whose master owned the house in the 1660s, experts said.

Continued on next page

From the Trust: Site reports play a key role

By Maureen Kavanaugh, *Chief, Office of Archeology*

In the last newsletter I touched on our mission here at the Maryland Historical Trust: to assist the people of Maryland in identifying, studying, evaluating, preserving, protecting and interpreting the state's archeological resources. I'd like to start now to explore each of these items in more detail to round out the picture on our office activities and how our partnership with ASM benefits us in achieving our goals.

Before we can evaluate, preserve or protect sites, they must be located, identified and recorded in our statewide inventory. The staff uses the inventory daily for a variety of purposes, including reviewing proposed development projects, conducting research and answering inquiries from a variety of sources. Our inventory not only contains information on specific sites, but also provides some of the context in which we interpret the site's significance (e.g. how common or rare a particular site type is).

The basic site record consists of an archeological site form and a site location mapped on a USGS topographical map. Over the years the records have been computerized for easier access. Now the site database provides a great way to quickly compile information.

As an example, I was able to summarize these statistics while sitting here at my desk: Currently, there are 11,110 sites recorded in the state. Of these, 109 are rockshelter sites. There are 222 recorded mill sites, almost half of which are in the Eastern Piedmont. Some 183 sites have LeCroy points listed in their assemblages. And, there are 1,183 of those ubiquitous shell middens.

The state inventory was begun in the late 60s by Maryland's first state archeologist, Tyler Bastian, incorporating an inventory begun by the old Archeological Society of Maryland in the 1950s. Members from both that now defunct organization and the current ASM Inc. assisted Tyler through reporting and visiting sites and were instrumental in recording some of Maryland's most significant sites. The early site forms are peppered with familiar names: William B. Marye, Tom Mayr, Spencer Geasey, Dick Johnson, Richard Slattery, Paul Cresthull and many more. These first site reports became the solid foundation of the Maryland Archeological Site Survey.

Today most sites are recorded through surveys generated by development-related projects, through survey by this office, and by grant-assisted partnerships. ASM members, however, also continue to contribute to the inventory. Registering archeological sites is one of the requirements of the CAT program and we encourage all ASM members to report sites. Charlie Hall, State Terrestrial Archeologist, is willing to assist anyone wanting to register sites and he welcomes any inquiries.

"They haven't studied a lot of colonists from this time period. If you can make the argument that he was an indentured servant, you can tell that he had a hard life, what kind of diet he had, and that he may be representative of certain people of that time," Luckenbach said.

The find last fall marked the second time in two years that Luckenbach's team discovered human remains interred beneath a house. The first, dating to about 1725, was the teeth, but little else, of an African child at the Colonial seaport of London Town, also near Annapolis.

But, said Wayne E. Clark, chief of the Maryland Office of Museum Services, finds such as the 17th-century basement skeleton may lead experts to scratch their heads. So few cellars of that era have been excavated, he said, and the difficulties of life on the frontier may have led to certain expediencies in burials.

Douglas Owsley, a forensic anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, said his studies of the bones and teeth tell this of the young man:

He was about 16 years old and stood 5 feet 5 inches tall. He suffered from tuberculosis. He endured labor so hard that he had herniated discs and other back injuries. When younger, he had a broken elbow. He began life in northern Europe, most likely England, but his diet changed from the European wheat-based foods to the Colonies' more meager corn-based diet.

He probably died of a systemic infection that may have had roots in his rotting and abscessing teeth, 19 of which had cavities.

"This young man is a fascinating story for me," said Owsley, who plans to use the skeleton in an exhibit on early Chesapeake settlers to show how life's hardships took their toll.

Only part of the story lies in the bones. The rest is in documents and what Henry Miller, director of research for Historic St. Mary's City -- a settlement that predates Providence -- called a "very strange burial by any interpretation." The circumstances, he said, suggest "that this was someone nobody cared about."

Records show that starting in 1662, William Neale was the first to live on the site known as Leavy Neck, said David Gadsby, who directs the Anne Arundel County archeology lab. He and Luckenbach think the teenager served Neale.

An estate inventory from 1675 to 1676 shows Neale had two indentured servants. But Luckenbach doubts the skeleton was one of those because the trash on top of him appears to be from the previous decade, including a little-worn 1664 English coin.

"It was not a proper burial. ... He was not carefully interred. He was dumped," said Ivor Noel Hume, the retired director of archeology at Colonial Williamsburg, Va., and a pioneer in historical archeology.

By the 1660s, informal burials had become a problem in the Colonies. A 1662 law adopted in Virginia noted that "private burial of servants and others give occasion to much scandal," Hume said.

No record of a similar law affecting Maryland's early communities has been found, though one was considered, Luckenbach said.

Because the grave is so short, the body is not in repose. The legs were folded to fit. It's possible that a milk pan, found broken on the chest, was used to press the body down. Also odd is that there was a similar grave at a right angle to this one -- but it was empty, leading to speculation that if a body had been in it, that person had what the teenager did not: somebody who cared enough to move him, perhaps for a more dignified burial.

An indenture lasted seven years, and many an English adolescent jumped at the prospect of upward mobility. Upon completing their servitude, they were given clothes, a barrel of corn and 50 acres -- an enticing stake in the New World for poor English youths.

But life was so arduous that half of the Chesapeake region's indentured servants did not survive, said Michael Johnson, a Johns Hopkins University history professor.

Frontier frugality might have meant that the master whose investment died could have been unwilling or unable to pay for a proper burial, experts said.

But there are other complexities, Clark said. He noted a practical one: "What are you going to do if it was February? You couldn't dig the ground [outside]. An easy way would be to bury the person in the basement."

The basement burial is leading to plenty of theorizing and speculation. The Public Broadcasting Service's American history television series History Detectives plans to feature a segment on the skeleton in a Sept. 27 show, said producer Annie Heringer.

Copper quickly lost its trading allure

By Carol Morello, *Condensed from the Washington Post, June 29, 2004*

YORKTOWN, Va. -- The two tiny shards of copper unearthed from a centuries-old trash dump are not much to look at. They are no bigger than the nail on a pinkie finger, and years of corrosion have left them misshapen and discolored. Most people would simply look past them.

But archeologists who plucked them from a layer of common household debris about two feet underground at the Naval Weapons Station in Yorktown say the copper squares are crucial pieces of history. The shards have confirmed for them something they had long suspected: that trade with the earliest English settlers led to a rapid deterioration of Native American traditions and authority.

The metal's significance comes as much from where it was found as from what it is. The pieces were discarded in a common midden, or trash heap, rather than buried like jewels in the graves of tribal leaders. When colonists first arrived at Jamestown Island in 1607, the scarce metal was so highly prized by the indigenous tribes that only leaders of the highest rank and prestige were entitled to wear copper, fashioned into beads and throat pieces known as gorgets.

In revealing hyperbole, John Smith wrote that "for a coper kettle and a few toyes they will sell you a whole Countrey." The settlers survived largely because they could trade the smallest piece of scrap for a bushel of corn or other food.

Within a few months, however, English traders had flooded the tribes with so much copper that what had once been a mark of privilege ceased to have any value. Common folk had so much access to it that they could throw it away without a second thought. The tribes' refusal to trade for copper anymore led to the first conflicts.

"It's a familiar story told around the world," said Dennis Blanton, who led a dig for the William and Mary Center for Archeological Research. "Native communities and institutions were destabilized as European goods were introduced. And that undermined the authority that had traditionally structured society."

As he displayed the copper pieces in a small shadow box at the weapons station, Blanton said the revealing rubbish was "preserved from ruin because it was protected on the heavily guarded ordnance depot.

"It's rich in artifacts," he said. "They're not plowed. They were buried after abandonment. It's a superlative place to do archeology."

The dig in which the copper was found is one of many at the 9,500-acre Naval Weapons Station. The Navy contributes $100,000 a year for William and Mary archeologists to locate and classify sites and advise which ones are the most important to protect from future development.

In the last five years, archeologists have dug 25,000 holes, most no wider than dinner plates, on the grounds of the station along the York River. They have found relics at 366 locations, reflecting several eras and cultures.

"Yorktown is one of the premier areas," said Bruce Larson, who is assigned to look for hidden treasures at sites in the mid-Atlantic and the Caribbean, as well as at several Navy bases in Europe. "This is a weapons station. They imposed an explosive arc. It was too dangerous to build on. As a result, all over there is green space that's never been mucked about since the horse-drawn plows from the Revolutionary period."

For the leaders of Virginia's eight surviving Indian tribes, the discoveries provide a validation of the role their ancestors played. It also gives them further ammunition in their quest for federal recognition.

It has been difficult for the state's tribes to achieve acceptance as bona fide tribes, and the benefits that accompany it, because so many historical records were destroyed early in the 20th century by segregationists eager to legislate racial purity. In effect, they also erased Indians from much of the state's written history.

The discoveries also served as a reminder of what has been lost.

The trash heap helped pinpoint the location of the Indian village of Kiskiak for the first time. The Kiskiaks were one of 32 tribes that formed the Powhatan Nation, which made it possible for the early settlers to survive.

"I don't know of any Kiskiak descendants still living," said Wayne Adkins, second assistant chief with the Chickahominy tribe. "Nobody identifies themselves as such."

Good website for archeology

Stephen Israel passes on this website as a good one for information on archeology: www.archeology.about.com

Who is this?

This speaker is well-known to ASM members and audiences. But can you recognize her from this early picture? Test you memory cells before they are eligible for C-14 testing. Etch the answer on the back of a trowel and mail it to someone you want to impress. (Thanks to Dennis Curry for the picture. Is that a hint? Can't say.)

ASM license plates still available

Have you seen the special ASM license plates and wished you too could have a set? Wish no more, they are still being offered to ASM members. Here's how to get yours:

1. Write to Tyler Bastian, 13047 Penn Shop Road, Mt. Airy, MD, 21771-4565, asking for MVA form VR-124, or get one from your MVA office.
2. Send the completed form to Tyler, enclosing two checks. One should be made out to the MVA for $25 (its fee for the organizational plate) and one to ASM for $10. Tyler then will sign the form on behalf of ASM and send it to the MVA. Your plates will be ready in a few weeks.

When you pick up your new plates, you must turn in your current plates, if you have any. The ASM plates will arrive with a new registration form and new stickers (with the old expiration date). Renewals are handed by MVA in the same way and at the same cost as standard plates.

The $25 MVA cost is a one-time charge and the check to ASM is tax-deductible.

If you have any questions, contact Tyler at 301-829-1172 or contact Mary Beard, MVA Title Correspondence Unit, 410-787-2968.

Major site find revealed in Utah

From newspaper reports

RANGE CREEK CANYON, Utah -- Seven centuries before Columbus went to sea, an American woman wove an elegant basket of grass and willow for her stone-walled house in this majestic canyon. In the early 1940s, a young cowboy named Waldo Wilcox found the basket, and the stone walls, in nearly perfect condition. "And I thought, this stuff has got to be protected," Wilcox recalled recently.

For six decades, Wilcox and his family kept tight control over public access to a 12-mile stretch of Range Creek that had been the site of a bustling Fremont tribe community in the first millennium A.D. Few knew of its existence and Wilcox closely controlled the archeologists and researchers he did permit to visit.

But now the aging rancher has turned over his 4,000-acre spread to the government -- and handed public land managers a significant dilemma along with it.

"A piece of ancient America like this, that has not been looted or vandalized, is almost unique -- an absolute treasure of our national history," said Kevin Jones, the Utah state archeologist. "So the stupidest thing we could do is just open the gate.

"But this is public land now, and we owe it to the American public to let them see this fantastic collection of historic sites, so they can appreciate it and learn from it. The problem is how to balance public access with preservation."

On June 30, Wilcox, with the state and federal officials who now manage the site, offered the first public tour of the Wilcox Ranch ruins to a group of reporters. It is a string of 1,000-year-old villages so pristine that the ancient neighborhoods, cemeteries and granaries are still covered with beads and tools and pottery abandoned when the Fremont people left the canyon about 800 years ago.

Cliffside grain-storage vaults have been found here with their lids still intact, the corn and rye still inside. And while many sites in the West can still produce an old stone arrowhead or two, researchers found whole arrows here just a few weeks ago, apparently lying in the dust just where they were dropped 10 centuries ago at the time of William the Conqueror.

Jones said that, so far, 225 sites at Range Creek have been documented, some as small as a single wall of pictographs, others as large as a village cluster of a half-dozen dugout pit houses. Twenty of the sites were documented in the 1930's -- the only other scientific work here that anyone knows about -- by a team from Harvard University. After the initial examination, no further research was done at the site as far anyone knows, Jones said.

"The other 200 sites have never been seen by anybody," Jones said, adding that there are unquestionably thousands of sites, and that every time a team goes out, still more are found. The Fremont culture existed from about A.D. 500 to 1300.

"I don't think I've ever seen or heard of a collection of artifact scatters like we find here," said Shelley Smith, an archeologist with the federal Bureau of Land Management. "My head gets all banged up when I'm in this canyon because every step I take my head is down and I'm finding ancient tools, just lying there."

As she said those words, Smith bent over and picked up a hand-chipped piece of red chert that had been cut to a sharp point. "That's a pretty nice awl somebody made a thousand years ago or so," she said. "That point was for sewing pieces of leather."

The Range Creek community, in Utah's high-desert Book Cliffs region about 130 miles southeast of Salt Lake City, was not as advanced as the famous cliff dwellings south of here at Mesa Verde, Colo., or Chaco Canyon, N.M. But the site is richer in many ways for archeologists because its unsullied state teaches significant lessons about Fremont daily life.

In a rugged, wind-swept valley laced with the perfume of juniper and sage, the ancient Indians proved to be extremely efficient farmers and hunters, historians say. "They managed to provide for maybe 200, 250 people along this creek," Jones noted. "In modern times, the same stretch of land hasn't ever supported more than three families."

The Fremont built homes of round stone with pine bough roofs that were cool in the summer and warm and dry all winter. They carved and painted intricate designs on the towering cliff walls, sometimes erecting adobe

awnings to protect their artwork from the elements. They built stone silos for corn and beans on the same high cliffs, presumably to protect their food supply from raiders.

Other ancient Indian villages in the Southwest have been ravaged by tourists, collectors and sometimes outright vandals over the centuries.

Two factors preserved the community here. For one, the tall, narrow canyon -- studded with so many dramatic rock formations and natural arches that it would be a national park in many countries -- is difficult to traverse, which limited traffic until the dirt road along the creek was built in 1947.

The Fremont people built many of their homes and their granaries in the most remote parts of the remote canyon, on the summits of ridge lines and high on the sheer faces of cliffs, where they were not likely to be disturbed.

"These places were secure because nobody in his right mind would go up there," he said.

Then, the second factor, 1951 the Wilcox family erected gates at the north and south ends of the canyon, partly to keep their cattle from straying, but largely to keep out strangers.

"I was cussed all my life for locking those gates," the 74-year-old Wilcox said. "Now the archeologists tell me we were heroes for doing that. Otherwise the hippies would have come in here and destroyed the place."

Mr. Wilcox sold the ranch to the Trust for Public Land in 2001 for $2.5 million, but officials at the trust kept quiet. The Federal Bureau of Land Management then acquired the land from the trust and kept quiet. The State of Utah obtained title earlier this year and had been delaying an announcement until a management plan was in place to protect the grounds from looters. That strategy was shattered last week when a local paper in southern Utah broke the story, which was then picked up by The Associated Press. That led to the invitation to the news media from around the country for the valley's unveiling.

As archeologists study the site, some tribal leaders are asking why they were not notified sooner and if their cultural and religious beliefs will be respected if human remains are found.

"Out of respect for our ancestors, I think the tribes should be given a chance to go in and pray," said Patty Timbimboo-Madsen, cultural resources manager for the Northwest Shoshone Tribe of Utah and chairwoman of the state's Native American Remains Review Committee.

Lora E. Tom, a chairwoman of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah in Cedar City, Utah, said any skeletons and sacred or funerary objects found with them should be "put back in the earth" or remain buried and untouched.

It is not known how many remains have been found at the site. It also is not clear if any link between the Fremont people and any modern tribes could be made with such old remains.

State and federal officials are now working together on a management plan that will protect the site's inestimable archeological value and allow public visits at the same time.

"The public owns this site now," said Jones, the state archeologist. "I wouldn't want to lock it up just for a few scientists."

But Wilcox is worried. "If you don't lock it up the way our family did," he grumbled, "the looters are going to come in here and destroy it."

Hikers have been seen in the canyon in the last few days -- an extremely rare site out here -- and some artifacts that were on the ground, ready for cataloging, were later found missing. Looting and vandalism are common in many of the cliff dwellings on public lands east of here.

Late 1600s wine cellar found at Jamestown

From the Washington Post, July 17, 2004

Archeologists at historic Jamestown have unearthed a brick-lined wine cellar and more than a dozen empty wine bottles dating to the late 1600s.

The head of the archeological project that turned up the site of America's first permanent English settlement said that there is evidence that the wine cellar might have belonged to someone with wealth and status.

Yesterday diggers found bottles from between 1680 and 1700. One of them bears the initials of royal governor Francis Nicholson.

Artifacts found in Annapolis circle

By Jamie Stiehm

Condensed from The Baltimore Sun, June 27, 2004

In Annapolis, a town that wears three centuries of history proudly, a simple sidewalk project can quickly turn into a public archeology lesson. Witness the work taking place outside St. Anne's Episcopal Church in the heart of the state capital's historic district, a stone's throw from the governor's mansion.

A team of archeologists stood by this month as city workers installed new granite curbs and prepared to put in new bricks near the church cemetery, keeping watch for more bones like those uncovered in January -- a find that shut down work for a few months.

"While the workers are excavating, we watch them very carefully," says Lori Ricard, an archeologist employed by R. Christopher Goodwin, Associates Inc. in Frederick, the project consultants. "We're concerned that no one's remains are disturbed. You never know, so close to the edges of a graveyard."

The Church Circle project's problems illustrate the complications that public works projects in a compact, Colonial-era city can face.

In January, as workers began the sidewalk project around St. Anne's, they unearthed pieces of bone that looked human. Work came to a halt while state and city officials argued over permits and propriety. The parties agreed to have a team of experts on hand to assure the proper handling of any artifacts unearthed, and work resumed in recent weeks.

Archeologists say there was ample reason for such caution. A Colonial graveyard surrounded St. Anne's in the 18th century. Experts said it is a safe bet that the bone fragments recovered will be identified as human remains dating from the 1700s. The fragments are still under analysis.

The exact dimensions of the graveyard remain uncharted.

On a recent afternoon, Ricard watched workers dig out a cow bone and a clay pipe stem in an area thought to have remnants of domestic life, but not burial remains. She could hardly contain her excitement as she held the slender kaolin clay object because, she said, archeologists can use pipe stems to help determine the age of a site.

"We love stuff like that," she said. "It's so rare, so time-sensitive."

William Lowthert, the Goodwin project manager, said his cultural resources team examined, cleaned, photographed and documented every archeological feature found on the church site buried about two or three feet deep. With the fieldwork mostly done, he is preparing a report.

The team did not excavate or explore a burial vault or evidence of burial shafts, Lowthert said, noting that identifying remains by individual names or families is not the goal.

"You'd be disturbing buried human remains for the sake of curiosity," Lowthert said. "That isn't ethical." Still, the project will help archeologists map the known burial spots and the scope of the graveyard. "Now we can tell there were graves at least as far as the edge of the sidewalk on the northern side," he said.

Christian Davenport, a bones expert on the Goodwin team, said such work is highly charged, especially when projects are near houses of worship.

City officials said the last stage of the Church Circle project, putting a circular brick sidewalk on top of the battered concrete one, will be finished this summer.

A city historian who played a part in the dispute over the work earlier this year said he was pleased with how things turned out.

"The intact vault is useful information," said Gregory Stiverson, president of the Historic Annapolis Foundation. "And I'm delighted, it's going to be wonderful to have a brick sidewalk in the second-most important circle in Annapolis."

Artifacts found during the sidewalk project will be returned to the church, Lowthert said. The process also highlights how much has changed over the years when it comes to historic preservation.

Annapolitan and St. Anne's parish member A. Weems McFadden, 78, said as a boy he heard family stories about bones that surfaced in Church Circle during a construction project. As he remembers it, they were not studied.

"People threw them in a wagon and took them to the [College] Creek," McFadden said.

Is Carolina site 20,000 years old?

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Dr. Goodyear emerged from the trench clutching four small plastic Ziploc bags. "I don't know how we ever did archeology before Ziploc bags," he remarked. Each bag contained soil and several pea-size black fragments that he hoped represented the residue of charcoal from a hearth.

"I hope the laboratory gets three dates out of this," he said. "And I hope they're all similar dates."

In his more exuberant moments, Dr. Goodyear ventured that the dates could be as old as 25,000, even 30,000, years ago. He has already found elsewhere on the site what appear to be 16,000-year-old artifacts, evidence for a pre-Clovis peopling of America similar to findings in Virginia and Pennsylvania. None of those discoveries has convinced skeptics.

A few conservative holdouts still question the one widely accepted pre-Clovis claim: that earlier people were living in Chile at a site excavated by Dr. Tom D. Dillehay of the University of Kentucky known as Monte Verde.

Dr. Bonnichsen, who is director of the Center for the Study of the First Americans at Texas A&M University in College Station and has visited the Topper site and examined some of the possible artifacts, said, "If the preliminary findings hold, this is a tremendous discovery." But he cautioned that "a lot of hard research needs to be done to really test this thing thoroughly."

Dating the putative fireplace will be an important next step. As soon as that is done, Dr. Goodyear said, he and other scientists from several universities expect to announce the age and describe the excavated materials in a journal article, perhaps by the end of the year. Even if the charcoal is from a natural fire, not a human campfire, he said, the analysis should establish the age of any artifacts from the same sediment layer.

A bigger hurdle, scientists said, may be to establish that the stone pieces are indeed human-made tools. Many a presumed pre-Clovis site has failed to gain scholarly acceptance over the question of whether stone pieces that look like tools were the work of early humans or of nature.

Dr. Bonnichsen said much of the 16,000-year-old chert material previously excavated at Topper "looks really good" and might well be tools. At his laboratory at Texas A&M, microscopic examination of the supposed cutting edges showed gouges and scratches that appeared to be wear marks from scraping hides, butchering and cutting wood. They look, he said, "as if they are going to qualify as artifacts."

But it is too soon, he added, to render a nature-versus-culture verdict on the stone pieces from the greater depths and earlier ages at Topper. More experimental work is required to understand how the chert could have been modified into tools.

Dr. Goodyear, whose specialty is the study of stone tools, agreed, though he insisted that "so far we have found no plausible way nature could have made these tools, but we have shown how humans could have made them." The sample collected so far, Dr. Bonnichsen and others said, is too small to be definitive.

At the end of dig season this year, Dr. Goodyear seemed reconciled to the prospect of hard years of excavation, research and argument ahead.

"If this is 25,000 years old, and I think it is, then scientists will come here from all over the world to see for themselves," he said, while driving back to Barnwell after a day in the field. "And they will argue about it for another 10 years."

The challenge for the Topper archeologists, as for others making pre-Clovis discoveries, is not only the ambiguity of the evidence, but also its unfamiliarity. Clovis workmanship was painstaking and distinctive. Nearly all the spear points were several inches long and sharpened on both sides. Many of them were found among bones of mammoths that they were used to kill.

Yet all claims for pre-Clovis cultures rest largely on finds of a much more primitive technology. If these are tools, they are simpler and the weapon points are not bifacial; they are finished on only one side. For these and other reasons, archeologists who made their careers on the Clovis culture usually react to possible evidence of predecessors with stiff skepticism.

Signs of pre-Clovis people are sparse because these mobile bands were few in number and trod lightly on the land, and also because archeologists had until recently not been looking deeply enough.

CAT Corner

Program director Chris Davenport reports that the committee is working on scheduling workshops. He urges CAT participants to check the CAT web page on the ASM site in upcoming weeks. He also asks people interested in becoming mentors to contact him at 301-845-8092 (home) or dig4funds@aol.com

Chapter notes

Most chapters are winding up their summer hiatus. Here is information for getting in touch.

Anne Arundel

The chapter meets on the third Wednesday of the month from 7:30-9 in the Chesapeake Room, Heritage Center, 2664 Riva Road, Annapolis. Contact Karen Ackermann at karenlta@juno.com

Sept 15: Carol Ebright on lithics.

Nov 17: Richard Hughes on Benjamin Banneker.

Central

Phone Stephen Israel at 410-945-5514 or ssisrael@abs.net, for information.

Mid-Potomac

Contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848.

Mid Shore

The Mid Shore Group meets at 7:30 on the fourth Friday of the month at the SunTrust Bank on Goldsboro Street in Easton, from January through September. However, the April meeting is held at the Talbot County Historical Society Auditorium. Contact Bill Cep at 410-822-5027 or email ccep@crosslink.net

Monocacy

The Monocacy chapter meets the Wednesday closest to the 15th of each month at the Walkersville Middle School. Contact Joy Hurst at 301-663-6706 or email hurst_joy @hotmail.com. Website: www.digfrederick.org

Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Thursday of the month. Contact Dan Coates at dancoates@comcast.net

Southern

Meetings are the second Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the MAC Lab meeting room. Call 410-586-8584 or katesilas@chesapeake.net for information.

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of each month at 7:30 at Mt. Ida, near the court house in Ellicott City. Most are preceded by dinner at 6 at the Tiber River Café in Ellicott City. Contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or roseannlee@earthlink.com

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 pm in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Ed Hanna, 301-777-1380. Chapter email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: www.geocities.com/wmdasm

*The **Archeological Society of Maryland** Inc. is a statewide non-profit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.*

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Submissions welcome, please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD 20782 myronbeck@aol.com, (301) 864-5289.

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