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Changes coming soon in CAT program

By Alex McPhail

CAT Program Coordinator

Since I became CAT coordinator in September, I have been working to organize the program and to reach out to each of the current 46 CAT candidates. I also feel it is important to keep the ASM membership aware of the challenges that each of the candidates is facing and to know how far they have progressed in meeting the certification requirements.

The CAT Committee recently met to discuss two of the most pressing issues for the program. First, the reading list, although very extensive and comprehensive, is considered by many CAT candidates to be confusing and also difficult to access. Second, many of the CAT-required workshops have not been offered in a long time, leading to uncertainty and a lack of progress for many candidates.

Regarding the reading list, we are in the process of clearly identifying which readings are required and which are optional for those seeking a more in-depth knowledge of particular topics. We plan to make the reading list easily available by using professional publishing assistance which will take care of the copyright issues.

We will then supplement this reader with a CD-ROM of noncopyrighted required materials which are published either by the ASM or by neighboring archeological societies. Finally, expensive texts which are of interest to CAT candidates and provide essential knowledge will be purchased by ASM and made easily available, most likely through the individual chapters on a library loan basis.

As for the CAT workshops, we are in the process of defining exactly which workshops are required and then plan to schedule each workshop at least once in a 24-month period. This will bring predictability to the program, as CAT candidates will be able to know well in advance when particular workshops will be given. As for the CAT workshops, we are in the process of defining exactly which workshops are required and then plan to schedule each workshop at least once in a 24-month period. This will bring predictability to the program, as CAT candidates will be able to know well in advance when particular workshops will be given.

We also plan to start offering a CAT introductory session, which will be presented several times a year. These one-hour sessions will be taught by CAT graduates and will help new candidates understand how the program works, how they can learn the requirements and access materials and who are the important people to speak with, including mentors.

To help integrate the CAT program more fully into the annual field sessions, I have joined the Field Session Committee. The objective is to offer at least two CAT-required workshops in conjunction with each field session and hopefully tying the subjects to the particular site we are working.

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Upcoming events

February 28: Quarterly ASM board meeting, Columbia. All are welcome to attend.

March 7: Annual Archeology Workshop, Crownsville.

March 19 – 22; MAAC conference, Ocean City.

April: Maryland Archeology Month.

April 4: Spring Symposium, St. Mary's City.

May 18–22: National Park Service archeological workshop in Natchitoches, Louisiana, for those interested in forensic and cemetery investigations. \$475. For information, contact Steven L. DeVore 402- 437-5392, ext. 141 or steve_de_vore@nps.gov

May 22 – June 1: ASM field session, Port Tobacco.

October 17: Annual Meeting, Havre de Grace Maritime Museum.

Volunteer opportunities

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

Montgomery County is offering opportunities for lab and field work Wednesdays, 9:30 to 2:30. Call 301-840-5848 or contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org. CAT opportunity.

ASM field session collection: Volunteers are needed to work on up-grading collections associated with previous field sessions. Currently being curated is the collection from the Late Archaic Baldwin site collection. The lab in Crownsville is open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. For additional information contact Louise Akerson lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall hall@mdp.state.md.us.

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County. 410-222-7440.

Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301-627-1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its various activities, including archeology, historical research and artifact conservation. Contact Ed Chaney at echaney@mdp.state.md.us or 410-586-8554.

The Archaeological Institute of America provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide, Call up www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/ to get started. Remember to add the extra A in archaeological.

CAT corner

For updates and information on CAT activities check the ASM website.

A website has been set up for CAT candidates and graduates:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/MDcat/> . To join the group email MDcat-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Members can choose to get emails or just use the

website to send messages. Courtesy of CAT candidate Tom Forhan.

Workshop, on March 7, to look at very old sites

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the 18th Annual Workshop in Archeology, to be held in Crownsville on Saturday, March 7. The workshop will feature Mike Johnson, Fairfax County Archeologist, who will present "Cactus Hill: The Search for Pre-Clovis." This keynote presentation will focus on one of the hottest topics in North American archeology today: sites that appear to have occupations dating to more than 10,000 years ago.

There will be a workshop entitled "A Prehistoric Overview of Maryland," designed for members of the CAT (certified archeological technician) program, but open to all.

Come learn about archeologically recovered clothing and sewing items, prehistoric bow making, clay pipe manufacture, underwater archeology projects in Maryland and more. Look for the full program in the next newsletter. We hope to see you there.

-- Maureen Kavanagh, MHT

Body found on Antietam battlefield

By David Dishneau

Condensed from the Associated Press, January 9, 2009

SHARPSBURG, Md. — Cutting through a cornfield where soldiers were literally blown to bits on the bloodiest day of the Civil War, a hiker spied something near a groundhog hole: fragments of bone and a metal button, clotted with red clay.

He brought the remains to the visitors center at Antietam National Battlefield, where they were turned over to experts who made a stunning discovery: They belonged to a Union soldier from New York state.

Many of the nearly 3,700 soldiers killed in the pivotal 1862 battle were buried in nearby cemeteries five years later, but the New York soldier's remains were somehow overlooked until now.

The handful of bone fragments, iron uniform buttons and U.S. belt buckle help bring into focus the story that battlefield rangers strive to tell.

"These armies were made up of people, of men who fought here," Superintendent John W. Howard said.

The soldier's identity may remain a mystery. Howard said he was young, probably between 19 and 21, based on the condition of teeth in a recovered jawbone. A National Park Service archeologist and Smithsonian Institution anthropologist were the ones who confirmed he was a soldier.

And he apparently was no fresh recruit. Five iron buttons found along with textile fragments included some from a coat issued in New York and others bearing the "Excelsior" slogan of federal uniforms, an indication that he had served long enough to replace the lost originals.

"We've always worked with the number that there's somewhere between 140 and 200 missing in action here, and some of them, because of the volume of fire, they just ceased to exist as an entity — they were just totally destroyed," Howard said.

Howard said the New York soldier's remains were found beside one of the limestone outcroppings that stud the rolling hills at Antietam like whitecaps. He said farmers who worked the soil after the war avoided such outcroppings to spare their machinery, which explains how the soldier stayed hidden for so long.

Remains turn up from time to time. A visitor found the last set, belonging to four unidentified members of the Irish Brigade, in 1989, Howard said.

He said the New York soldier's bones may be buried in the Antietam National Cemetery next spring, after the park service and Douglas Owsley, a forensic pathologist at the Smithsonian's natural history museum, complete their examination. The park service will first contact the adjutant general of New York state to ask whether the state wants the remains, he said.



Archeological remains and partial reconstruction of the "Great House" at St. John's Site Museum

New museum opens at St. Mary's City

By Silas Hurry

Curator of Collection and Archeological Laboratory Director, Historic St. Mary's City

Historic St. Mary's City has opened its newest exhibit, the St. John's Site museum. This 6,500-square-foot exhibit incorporates the archeological remains of the St. John's house, built in 1638 as the home of Maryland's first Secretary, John Lewger.

St. John's witnessed many of the remarkable events in early Maryland's history. Some of the earliest meetings of the Maryland assembly occurred there, including Margaret Brent's 1642 request for "vote and voyce" in government and Mathias de Sousa's 1648 participation in the legislature, the first by an individual of African descent.

St. John's later served as the residence of Gov. Charles Calvert and subsequently as one of the major ordinaries or inns in the colony.

Archeological excavations at St. John's in the 1970s and again in the early 2000s recovered over a million artifacts and provide us with an excellent picture of life in early Maryland. The St. John's site has provided data for numerous dissertations, theses and scholarly articles about the archeology of the early Chesapeake region.

The façade of the structure that houses the museum is inspired by the original St. John's building. The exhibit includes an orientation pavilion, the archeological remains of the great house and its kitchen, and numerous artifact galleries and graphically rich text panels. The orientation pavilion includes an introductory movie that tells the story of the site and how important archeology was to our understanding.

Both the "Great House" and the kitchen incorporate reconstructions that demonstrate how archeologists go from the evidence in the ground to an understanding of the architecture they represent.

The artifacts include examples from the various households that occupied the St. John's site through time, architectural artifacts, environmental artifacts and objects that speak to the diversity and challenges of early Maryland as part of a larger Atlantic World.

Image-rich text panels discuss the legacies of early Maryland and attempt to relate them to the modern world. Ceramics, glass, metal and bone artifacts are exhibited with related discussions of what they tell us about the site and its occupants.

An entire segment of the exhibit discusses the archeology of the site and explores how we know what we think we know. A highlight of this part of the exhibit is a special artifact case which reproduces the profile of a stratified feature at the site with pull-out drawers showing all the artifacts from each layer. The feature in question was the earliest privy found in Maryland -- in fact, the only 17th Century one -- which tends to elicit great interest from students visiting the site.

The stories told by the remains and the artifacts are reinforced with audio-visual presentations about some of the unique individuals and events which make St. John's so significant in early Maryland history. A number of computer interactives allow visitors to go through the process of building their own home in the early colony or enable them to further explore the artifacts and archeological remains which were discovered at St. John's.

The museum, on the campus of St. Mary's College of Maryland, is opened Wednesday through Sunday year round. Admission to the museum is free. For more information, visit the Historic St. Mary's City web site at www.stmaryscity.org or call 800-762-1634.

Changes coming soon in CAT program

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I also hope that we can provide candidates with the opportunity for structured basic instruction in field techniques, as well as provide a chance for them to fulfill hard-to-get laboratory time.

This year's field session will again be at Port Tobacco and I'm already busy working with the field session coordinators to make sure that we fully exploit this opportunity when so many CAT candidates are together. We will also have a CAT introductory session at least once during the field school.

We hope that by the end of 2009 the major initiatives will have been implemented and the CAT program will be fully organized and running smoothly. I am especially looking forward to the responses from CAT candidates to my recent mailing to them.

But the changes won't stop with this. We are thinking of adding two more CAT specialties this year to the existing laboratory, field survey and excavation modules. We will be glad to hear any and all ideas on this.

We also are looking to build intrastate links. A CAT program in Delaware is just getting started and I have been working with its coordinator on ways that we can cooperate for workshops and other activities. The well-established Virginia program is very streamlined and we have learned a lot by examining its requirements and reading list. We also plan to coordinate with Virginia for workshops.

We have reviewed both societies' web sites and CAT manuals and have gained many insights into how to better organize our own program.

With these changes, we hope to bring more clarity and certainty to the CAT program without a major revision to what is an already widely respected and admired certification procedure. In order to do this, I need the cooperation of everyone in the ASM and I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward.

A few words about the new CAT director, from himself

"Archeology is for me a new interest, and although I have been in a ASM only for a few years, from the first moment and my first dig a Swan Cove I was a CAT candidate. For me, the best part about archeology is the wonderful combination of intellectual curiosity combined with the opportunity to work outdoors with

people from diverse backgrounds and interests. My current interest is prehistoric sites and developing a better understanding of water and irrigation systems."

Do nanodiamonds explain Clovis end?

By Joel Achenbach

Condensed from the Washington Post, January 2, 2009

Something dramatic happened about 12,900 years ago, and the continent of North America was never the same. A thriving culture of Paleo-Americans, known as the Clovis people, vanished seemingly overnight. Gone, too, were most of the largest animals: horses, camels, lions, mammoths, mastodons, saber-toothed cats, ground sloths and giant armadillos.

Scientists have long blamed climate change for the extinctions, for it was 12,900 years ago that the planet's emergence from the Ice Age came to a halt, reverting to glacial conditions for 1,500 years, an epoch known as the Younger Dryas.

In just the last few years, there has arisen a controversial scientific hypothesis to explain this chain of events, and it involves an extraterrestrial calamity: a comet, broken into fragments, turning the sky ablaze, sending a shock wave across the landscape and scorching forests, creatures, people and anything exposed to the heavenly fire.

Now the proponents of this apocalyptic scenario say they have found a new line of evidence: nanodiamonds. They say they have found these tiny structures across North America in sediments from 12,900 years ago, and they argue that the diamonds had to have been formed by a high-temperature, high-pressure event, such as a cometary impact.

"This is a big idea," said Douglas J. Kennett, an archeologist at the [University of Oregon](#) and the lead author of a paper on the Younger Dryas impact hypothesis published today in the journal *Science*.

The hypothesis has been hotly contested, as would be expected for a catastrophic tale that, so far, lacks anything as compelling as a crater. Nor are there signs of deformation in rock debris that is a signature of the massive impact that, 65 million years ago, apparently wiped out the dinosaurs.

But Kennett and his colleagues say that they have found these diamonds at the layer of sediment that marks the start of the Younger Dryas. They are not found above or below that layer.

These diamonds are measured in nanometers -- mere billionths of meters -- and one of them would not suffice for an engagement ring unless the recipient had an extremely small finger. Indeed, these diamonds are visible only with the aid of the most advanced microscopes.

The wide distribution of the nanodiamonds could be a sign that the comet broke into pieces in space and that the fragments burned up explosively over a broad area of North America. The heat and pressure from the event transformed carbon on the planet's surface into the tiny diamonds, the scientists said.

"Imagine these fireballs exploding in the air. A Clovis hunter standing and looking at these things would have seen a canopy of fire as these things came in and exploded," said Allen West, a geophysicist and one of the paper's co-authors. "There would have been no sound. There would have been massive explosions. Brilliant light, brighter than the sun. There would have been radiant heat -- it would have been capable, at the very least, of giving him serious burns and, at the maximum, of incinerating him."

The hypothesis of a catastrophic impact at the start of the Younger Dryas has incited abundant skepticism in the scientific community. [NASA](#) space scientist David Morrison, an expert on impacts, said he doubts that a comet could have broken up in the manner proposed by the Kennett group.

"They talk rather blithely about a comet disintegrating in the atmosphere," Morrison said. Referring to the nanodiamonds, he said: "They may have discovered something absolutely marvelous and unexplained. But the impact hypothesis just doesn't make sense."

The impact scenario incorporates the meltwater scenario. The scientists say that the impact could have destabilized and melted the edges of the ice sheet resting on the northern tier of the continent bringing warmer water toward higher latitudes. That, in turn, could have created a long-term climate change.

An impact would also have created a short-term environmental disaster. Dust from the impact and soot from

continent-spanning wildfires could have risen into the atmosphere, blocked sunlight and dramatically hampered plant growth. With vast portions of the landscape burned, large animals requiring a great deal of food may have died off, even if they had survived the initial catastrophe.

Chapter notes

Anne Arundel

The Chapter meets five times a year in February, April, June, September, and November at the All Hallows Parish Brick Church at the Parish Hall near London Town, at 7 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns-Nocerito at AAChapASM@hotmail.com or visit the chapter website www.marylandarcheology.org/aacashome.php

February 17: Archobotanist Kathy Furgerson of URS will share her research at the Barton Site.

Central

Central Chapter has no formal meetings, but it does engage in field work and related activities. For site investigations, contact the MHT or chapter President Stephen Israel, 410-945-5514 or ssisrael@verizon.net

Charles County

Meetings are held 7:30 on the second Tuesday (September-May) at the Port Tobacco Court House. Contact President Paula Martino at paulamartino@hotmail.com or 301-752-2852.

Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion.. Monthly lab nights are the first Thursday, from 7 to 9 at Needwood Mansion. Contact james.sorensen@mncppc-mc.org or heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848. Chapter website: www.mid-potomacarchaeology.org

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the Community Room of the C. Burr Artz Library, 110 East Patrick Street, Frederick on the second Wednesday of the month, except for July and August, at 7 p.m. Contact Jeremy Lazelle at 301-845-9855 or jlazelle@msn.com or Nancy Geasey at 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Thursday of the month. Members and guests assemble at 6:30 p.m. for light refreshments. A short business meeting at 7 is followed by the featured presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at dancoates@comcast.net or 410-273-9619(h) and 410-808-2398(c)

Upper Patuxent

Programs are the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida, near the court house in Ellicott City. Potluck suppers are held at 6:15 in September and March. Otherwise, dinner is available at an Ellicott City restaurant. For information, contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

March 9: The second annual, Alfred J. Prufrock: Oh, Do Ask What Is It? game.

May 11: Kathie Fernstrom, "Pueblo, Mound-builders, Frogs and the White City."

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Chapter email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: www.geocities.com/wmdasm

February 27: Primitive technology presentation by Roy Brown, "Gift of the Deer."

March 27: "Allegany County During the Civil War," talk by Allegany College history professor Joseph Weaver.

April 24: Stephen R. Potter on new evidence on the Civil War battle, "Antietam and the Archeology of Tactics."

The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.

ASM. Inc members receive the monthly newsletter ASM Ink, the biannual journal MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10% discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Belinda Urquiza for membership rates. For publication sales, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net.

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