

# ASM Ink

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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.



[www.marylandarcheology.org](http://www.marylandarcheology.org)



*Charlie Hall, Bob Wall and Dennis Curry try to think of a way to get the crew to work harder*

## Back to Biggs Ford = back to buckets of finds

The first days of this year's ASM field session at Biggs Ford in Frederick County lived up to the expectations of session planners. Of the first 11 units opened, the first two to get through the plow zone found numerous postmolds and possible features.

"This is the coolest archeological site in the state of Maryland," declared an enthusiastic Charlie Hall, the state's Terrestrial Archeologist.

The search was continuing for signs of a building. "There's got to be a structure there," Hall said.

In addition to coming up with Keyser and Shepardsware ceramic shards, a smattering of points and a host of flakes and animal bones, Contact Period artifacts were uncovered, including glass beads and a brass triangular point.

The field school continues through Monday, June 1. On-site registration is available. See the ASM website for more information.

## Upcoming events

**May 22 – June 1:** Field session at Biggs Ford Site in Frederick County.

**May 30:** ASM board meeting. At Biggs Ford.

**October 9 – 19:** Fall field school. Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Edgewater.

**October 24:** Annual meeting, Oregon Ridge Nature Center.

## Volunteer opportunities

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

**ASM Tuesday Volunteer Lab:** The lab in Crownsville will be open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 3 and has moved on to sorting, labeling, packaging and cataloguing prehistoric material from the Willin Site. There are a number of other projects waiting to be worked on. Contact Louise Akerson at [lakerson1@verizon.net](mailto:lakerson1@verizon.net) or Charlie Hall at [charles.hall@maryland.gov](mailto:charles.hall@maryland.gov)

A volunteer opportunity is available at a 17<sup>th</sup> Century site in Edgewater in Anne Arundel County, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, with Jim Gibb [jamesggibb@verizon.net](mailto:jamesggibb@verizon.net) and Laura Cripps [lcripps@howardcc.edu](mailto:lcripps@howardcc.edu) under the auspices of the Smithsonian. Contact either one to participate. There will be magnetometer training.

The **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center** seeks participants in its Citizen-Scientist Program in archeology and other environmental research programs in Edgewater. Field and lab work are conducted Wednesdays and on occasional Saturdays. Contact Jim Gibb at [jamesggibb@verizon.net](mailto:jamesggibb@verizon.net)

**Montgomery County** offers opportunities for lab and field work. Lab is at Needwood Mansion in Derwood on Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and the first Tuesday evening of each month (except July and August). 301-563-7531 or contact [heather.bouslog@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:heather.bouslog@montgomeryparks.org). CAT opportunity. It also is doing field work at the Josiah Henson site at various times. For information contact Cassandra Michaud at 301-563-7531 or [cassandra.michaud@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:cassandra.michaud@montgomeryparks.org)

The **Anne Arundel County** Archaeology Program and the Lost Towns Project welcomes volunteers in both the field and lab at numerous sites throughout Anne Arundel County. Weekdays only, please email Jasmine Gollup at [volunteers@losttownsproject.org](mailto:volunteers@losttownsproject.org) or call the Lab at 410-222-1318.

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

**Jefferson Patterson Park** invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact Ed Chaney at [echaney@mdp.state.md.us](mailto: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/](http://www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/) to get started.

# Piscataway have long presence in state

By **Dennis Curry**, Chief Archeologist, Maryland Historical Trust

*Condensed from MHT blog*

In 1608, Captain John Smith mapped the Indian village of Moyaons near the confluence of the Potomac River with Piscataway Creek. Smith did not describe the people of this village in his journal, but 25 years later Governor Leonard Calvert met with this Indian nation, the Piscataway.

When Calvert met the Piscataway, their village had moved from Moyaons to the head of Piscataway Creek. Over the years, their principal village would move to Zekiah Swamp (1680) and then to the foothills of Virginia (1697). In 1699, the Piscataway returned to the Maryland side of the Potomac, settling on what is now known as Heater's Island.

Thanks to colonial documents preserved in modern archives, we have a surprisingly good picture of the Piscataway Fort on Heater's Island. In April 1699, two emissaries of the Virginia governor, Giles Vandercastle and Burr Harrison, journeyed to the island and estimated a population of 300 people.

In December of 1704, Col. James Smallwood found the fort nearly abandoned and learned that a smallpox epidemic had recently taken the lives of 57 men, women, and children. The Piscataway rebounded, however, and in 1712 the Swiss adventurer Baron Christoph von Graffenried encountered a vibrant population on the island. Shortly after von Graffenried's visit, the Piscataway left to settle in Pennsylvania and later in New York.

Fast forward to the summer of 1970, when Heater's Island served as the focus of the University of Maryland-College Park's first archeological field school. Excavations under the overall supervision of Robert revealed a corner bastion of the fort structure (marked by a trapezoidal soil stain), a number of pit features containing evidence of what the Piscataway ate (mostly corn and deer) and an incredible collection of artifacts. Unfortunately, a report on the excavations was never prepared.

In 2004, Schuyler (now at the University of Pennsylvania) transferred the collection and records to the Maryland Historical Trust and staff began analysis and report preparation. Readily apparent in the artifact collection is the material culture shift that occurred among the Piscataway: European goods (glass beads, iron nails, glass bottles, and more) had clearly replaced Native-made items.

Stone arrowpoints are virtually absent, but triangular brass arrowpoints are plentiful. The Piscataway also adopted another European weapon, the firearm. Similarly, Indian ceramics and Native tobacco pipes were largely replaced by those of European manufacture.

But this adoption of European goods seems to have resulted more from practicality than from assimilation. Metal knives were sharper and more durable than chipped-stone versions, and wine bottle glass could be flaked into scrapers more quickly than quartz. The Piscataway strove to define their destiny.

When the Piscataway from Heater's Island left Maryland around 1712, their documentary presence began to fade. In Pennsylvania, this group of eventually merged, with Nanticoke groups. The Piscataway (or Conoy, as they were later known) appear as signatories on a handful of treaties as late as 1758. The last official mention of the Conoy tribe is on correspondence they signed in 1793.

Yet this is not the entire story. When the main group left Heater's Island for Pennsylvania, there were other Piscataway Indians still living in southern Maryland. These people may have been less visible, but they did exist. Documentary evidence appears in several court cases: in a 1707 case (not

resolved until 1712), Queen Nannsonan and a group from Choptico sought restitution for a plundered Indian grave and in 1736 "George Williams, an Indian" petitioned the legislature for title to the land he had long occupied in Prince George's County.

Certainly, many other Piscataway remained in southern Maryland but left no written record. In the 1920s and 1930s, chief Turkey Tayac began a Piscataway resurgence that reached a crescendo in the 1970s. Today, many in southern Maryland identify as Piscataway.

This Indian presence led Governor Martin O'Malley in 2012 to grant state recognition to three Piscataway groups: the Piscataway-Conoy Confederacy, the Piscataway Indian Nation and the Cedarville Band of Piscataway.

## Virginia opens a chapter on the Eastern Shore

By Malissa Watterson

*Condensed from DelmarvaNow, May 19, 2015*

Saturday afternoon marked the beginning of a sought-after collaboration between archeology professionals and Virginia Shore residents as the first meeting was held for the recently founded Eastern Shore Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia.

"We are ecstatic to know that we are going to have a presence over here," said Carole Nash, president of the archeological society. "This part of the puzzle has been missing."

The Eastern Shore became the 16th chapter of the nonprofit group comprised of volunteers. Its mission is to promote the study of archeology and anthropology in Virginia.

In the last three years, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources has recorded more than 5,000 hours of volunteer work at excavations on the Eastern Shore.

"Folks really care about the resources around here," said archeological society board member Richard Guercin on why the decision to form an Eastern Shore chapter was made.

## Finds galore at Herring Run site

By Pamela Wood

*Condensed from The Baltimore Sun, May 17, 2015*

Beneath the tall trees and wildflowers of Baltimore's Herring Run Park, the ground holds clues to the city's distant past.

With a small budget, a short time frame and a dedicated group of volunteers, archeologists Jason Shellenhamer and Lisa Kraus are working with neighborhood history buffs to uncover remains of an impressive estate owned by Baltimore merchant and politician William Smith.

"We got lucky with a lot of this," Shellenhamer said. "It seemed every time we put a shovel in the ground, we found something."

After doing test digs last fall, Shellenhamer and Kraus — working with Baltimore Heritage and the Northeast Baltimore History Roundtable — organized a nine-day dig that wraps up today.

Shellenhamer and Kraus are focused on an area where they've uncovered part of the fieldstone cellar and foundation of Smith's home, called Eutaw Manor, a site off Eastwood Drive in the Belair-Parkside neighborhood near Arcadia.

The property was first settled in 1695, but Smith was its most famous resident. He bought the land in 1770 and lived in a 60-by-60-foot wood frame house. He also had farmland and a milling operation on Herring Run.

Smith became rich during the Revolutionary War as a flour merchant. Later, when he lived at Eutaw Manor, he served as a delegate to the Continental Congress, in the U.S. House of Representatives and in the Maryland Senate. He died in 1814.

The Eutaw Manor home burned down in 1865. Artifacts that have been found include some with signs of being damaged by fire, Shellenhamer said.

In addition to finding bits of pottery, glass and household items, the dig participants have discovered an underground pile of oyster shells that are likely from the early 1800s, as well as artifacts from the late 1700s in another part of the property — possibly the remains of an earlier structure, Shellenhamer said.

Kraus said it's been rewarding to work with volunteers on the nine-day dig. Some who signed up to help for just a half-day ended up coming back every day, she said. Best yet, the volunteers have been able to find "an embarrassment of riches" in the artifacts, she said.

"We were very nervous; we said, 'Please just let us find something,' " Kraus said. "I've never heard of anyone being this lucky."

Organizers hope to have another dig at Herring Run if they can find funding. A small grant from Preserve Maryland covered the costs of this year's dig.

## ASM lab backlog eliminated, but workers carry on

Under the leadership of Louise Akerson, ASM volunteers have succeeded in clearing up the processing of materials from Society projects, including several field session sites.

Their original goal reached, they then moved on to other projects. Most recently the volunteers finished repackaging the Heaters Island material. They then moved on to sorting, labeling, packaging and cataloguing prehistoric material from the Willin Site.

There are a number of projects waiting to be worked on. So, even though activities in the lab slow down because of the summer holidays, work continues. Those interested in volunteering in the lab should contact either Louise or Charlie Hall to schedule time on Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Contact information is in the Volunteer Box on Page 2 of this newsletter.)

## What can be learned from a single tooth?

By Bradley T. Lepper

*Condensed from the Columbus Dispatch, April 6, 2014*

University of Toronto archeologist Susan Pfeiffer and an international team of scholars are recovering DNA as well as chemical isotopes from ancient American Indian teeth to sort out what happened in the northern Iroquoian communities of southern Ontario between the 13th and 16th centuries.

The Late Woodland period was a time of rapid cultural change in eastern North America. It extended from the dramatic collapse of the Hopewell culture about A.D. 400 to the appearance of relatively large, fortified villages that were increasingly reliant upon maize about A.D. 1000.

In the Mississippi Valley, this process would culminate with the rise of the great city of Cahokia, but that level of social complexity never developed in the Great Lakes region for a variety of reasons. In southern Ontario, there was a complex mix of Iroquoian and Algonquian-speaking groups beginning in the Late Woodland and continuing into the historic era.

Pfeiffer and her team are working with modern Canadian First Nations communities to learn how these ancient groups interacted with one another as well as how their diets changed over time. The results were published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*.

Pfeiffer and her co-authors indicate that interest in archeology is growing among First Nations descendant communities and that permission to study the remains of "archeologically discovered ancestors" often is granted with the conditions that only small amounts of bone are retained for analysis and that the researchers address questions that are relevant to the descendant communities.

Pfeiffer's team met these conditions by actively consulting with local tribes and by retaining only a single tooth from each skeleton for extensive analysis.

They determined the age and sex of 53 skeletons from seven archeological sites across southern Ontario. Then they took small samples from a tooth extracted from each skeleton to obtain DNA and

to analyze the chemistry of the bone.

The DNA results revealed a great deal of genetic diversity and some specific mutations that might directly connect some ancient villagers and particular modern tribes.

The varying ratios of carbon and nitrogen in the teeth showed that while Late Woodland folks mostly ate maize and fish, the relative importance of fish declined as villages grew larger. Perhaps overfishing forced some villages to rely increasingly on maize, which meant less variety in the diet.

Pfeiffer's team concludes that the "Middle and Late Woodland periods were times of population movement, mixing and diversification in the lower Great Lakes."

They also were times of expanding populations living in larger and more sedentary villages with a shift toward less-healthy diets.

Given the increasing interest descendant communities are showing in what archeology can teach us about the lives of their ancestors, there is hope that projects such as this will become more commonplace.

## Definition of an archeologist

An archeologist is someone who, when he finds himself in a hole, wants to keep digging.

-- Alaric Thistle

## Open-access imagery both good and bad

*Condensed from ASU News, May 20, 2015*

Open-access imagery is changing the face of archeology, and that may not be a good thing.

The May issue of Discover magazine takes a look at this phenomenon and enlists the expertise of Arizona State University archeologist Francis McManamon to help size up the problem.

Increasingly, amateur archeologists are using imaging technology like Google Earth to help them find indications of ancient sites - such as eroded agricultural furrows, defensive berms and burial mounds - that might go unnoticed at ground level.

While some archeology hobbyists report their finds to the proper authorities and act responsibly, others despoil sites and their holdings through improper excavations or outright looting.

The main issue is that the framework of discovery is often lacking in amateur finds.

"Most archeological data is contextual. It's important to know what was found next to what, in which layer [of soil]," McManamon said. "It's what happens at a site after the discovery of an artifact that's crucial."

Though professional archeologists still use satellite imagery for field site planning, for new finds they tend to rely more heavily on light detection and ranging technology or hyperspectral imaging, which provide greater detail and accuracy.

Google Earth appears to be the domain of nonprofessionals. As the program joins the ranks of metal detectors in archeology buffs' toolkits, there is a danger of unscrupulous individuals finding sites with greater ease and causing more damage.

McManamon is also the executive director of Digital Antiquity, which houses the massive archeological data archive known as the Digital Archaeological Record (tDAR). Designed for researchers, tDAR is also open to - and frequently used by - amateurs, which pleases McManamon, who believes the open access creates better informed people who become better stewards of archeological sites.

"Take a photo, get precise GPS coordinates, but then take that information to the state archeologist's office," he suggested. "You can still have the excitement of exploration and discovery, of getting out there, but ensure what you find gets properly preserved and interpreted."



## Chapter notes

### Anne Arundel

Meets the second Tuesday of the month at the Severna Park Branch Library, 45 West McKinsey Road, Severna Park. 7:30 p.m. Contact Mechelle Kerns at [AAChapASM@hotmail.com](mailto:AAChapASM@hotmail.com) or the chapter website <http://www.aachapasm.org/calendar.html>

### Central Maryland

For information contact [centralchapterasm@yahoo.com](mailto:centralchapterasm@yahoo.com) or Stephen Israel, 410-945-5514 or [ssisrael@verizon.net](mailto:ssisrael@verizon.net) Or visit the Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/asmcentralchapter>

### Charles County

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September-May) in the community room of the LaPlata Police Department. Contact President Sarah Grady at [sarahgrady11@gmail.com](mailto:sarahgrady11@gmail.com) or 410-533-1390. Chapter website is [charlescoasm.org](http://charlescoasm.org) and its blog is [ccarchsoc.blogspot.com](http://ccarchsoc.blogspot.com)

### Mid-Potomac

The chapter meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road, Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant at 5:30 p.m. Contact [heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org) or 301-563-7530 or Don Housley at [donhou704@earthlink.net](mailto:donhou704@earthlink.net) or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: <http://www.asmmidpotomac.org> Email: [asmmidpotomac@gmail.com](mailto:asmmidpotomac@gmail.com) Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-Potomac-Archaeology/182856471768>

**June 11:** (note this is the *second* Thursday) Annual Picnic at Needwood Mansion from 6 to 9:30 p.m.

### Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at [digfrederick.com](http://digfrederick.com) or call 301-378-0212.

### Northern Chesapeake

Meetings are the second Wednesday of the month. Members and guests assemble at 6:30 for light refreshments. A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at 410-273-9619 or [dancoates@comcast.net](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net) Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

**June 6:** Annual ASNC picnic meeting, Rock Church and "Beehive" Historic Site, MD 273 at Little Elk Creek, in Cecil County.

### St. Mary's County

Meetings are the third Monday of the month at St. Francis Xavier Church in Newtown. For information contact Scott Lawrence at [graveconcerns@md.metrocast.net](mailto:graveconcerns@md.metrocast.net)

**May 18:** Patricia Samford offers a presentation on King's Reach.

### Upper Patuxent

Meets the second Monday at 7 p.m. at 9944 Route 108 in Ellicott City. Labs are the second and fourth Saturdays. For information contact Dave Cavey at 410-747-0093 or [hoplite1@comcast.net](mailto:hoplite1@comcast.net) On Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358> or try [UPArchaeologygroup@yahoo.com](mailto:UPArchaeologygroup@yahoo.com) or <http://uparchaeologygroup.weebly.com/>

**June 8:** Potluck dinner followed by Steve Israel on Central Chapter's past and present projects.

## 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](mailto:wmdasm@yahoo.com) Website:

<http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm>

**June 12:** "Keyser Villages," a report by Bob Wall on the Biggs Ford and Barton sites.



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

ASM 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 Jo Boodon, PO Box 1584, Ellicott City, MD 21043 for membership rates. For publication sales, not including newsletter or Journal, contact Dan Coates at ASM Publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-2104 or 410-273-9619 or [dancoates@comcast.net](mailto:dancoates@comcast.net)

**Submissions.** Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD. 20782, 301-864-5289 or [myronbeck@verizon.net](mailto:myronbeck@verizon.net)



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