

ASM Ink

July 2009, Vol. 35, No. 7

Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

www.marylandarcheology.org

Field session result: No hard answers

By April Beisaw

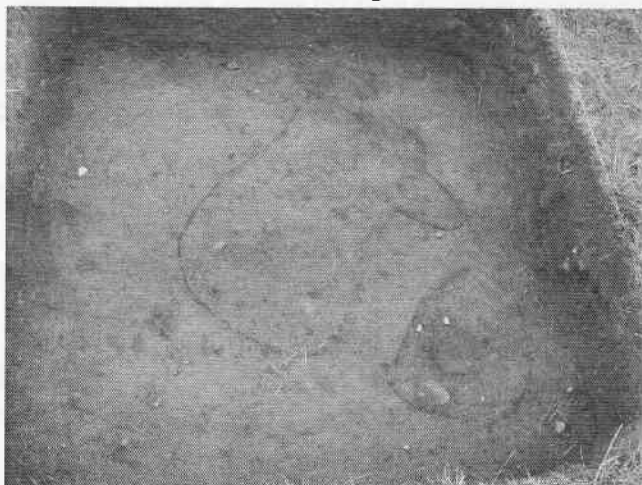
Port Tobacco Archeological Project

The goals of this year's ASM field session were to delineate a colonial cemetery, find the church associated with that cemetery, find the Swann House and determine if intact Native American deposits exist at the site. Thirty-one 5 X 5 foot excavation units later, we made progress on all four goals but none were fully realized.

Last year's field session uncovered four grave shafts, or what appeared to be portions of four grave shafts. This year, when we expanded our excavations to fully uncover those shafts the complexity of a site with 400 years of continuous occupation became obvious. The units adjacent to the possible grave shafts all contained possible postmolds in an alignment that crossed the shafts.

We opened new units to determine what type of building the posts may have been associated with, but ran out of time before we could understand if and how the shafts and postmolds were related. In all we uncovered four lines of postmolds in the 21 units excavated north and west of the cemetery area, likely the remains of fences and buildings.

Continued on Page 5



It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a coffee set? The search for clues and meaning in the soil produces some strange markings. Maybe it's two cartoon characters.



When that Aprille with her shoures soote: Still smiling despite days of rain interrupting the dig, April Beisaw looks forward to a break in the weather.

Upcoming events

July 6 - 10: Archeology camp for children aged 10 - 13, Jefferson Patterson. \$150. Contact Michele Parlett at 410-586-8501 or mparlett@mdp.state.md.us

July 27 - 31: American Indians lifeways camp for children 10 - 13. Jefferson Patterson. \$150. Contact Michele Parlett at 410-586-8501 or mparlett@mdp.state.md.us

September 12: ASM board meeting. All members are welcome to attend.

October 17: Annual ASM 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 Kanawa Springs Site. The lab in Crownsville is open Tuesdays from 9:30 until 4. Contact Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net or Charlie Hall chall@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

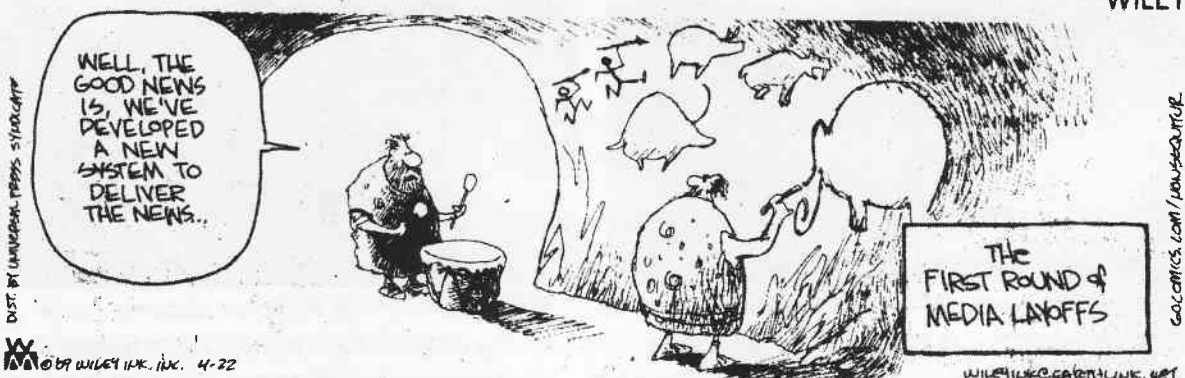
For updates and information on other CAT activities check the ASM website.

A website has been set up for 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.

NON SEQUITUR

WILEY



Probing treasures of Zekiah Swamp

By Frank D. Roylance

Condensed from the Baltimore Sun, June 17, 2009

Parts of Charles County's Zekiah Swamp are every bit as inhospitable as the name suggests, choked with tick-infested woods and boot-sucking wetlands. But as archeologists are discovering to their delight, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries Zekiah was a growth center for the young colony.

The site of a 1674 courthouse was found last summer. Excavations this month have uncovered what might be traces of the "summer house" that Gov. Charles Calvert built to dodge his political enemies. And diggers are searching for traces of Zekiah Fort, built in 1680 to resettle several hundred "friendly" Piscataway Indians.

"Zekiah is just the coolest place," said St. Mary's College anthropologist Julia A. King, who is leading the multiyear archeological survey, the first ever for the area. "The more I get to know it, the more exciting it becomes."

The digs are a cooperative project of St. Mary's College of Maryland, the College of Southern Maryland and the Smallwood Foundation.

Smallwood President Michael Sullivan, a developer with a passion for Charles County history, has provided almost \$40,000 for the work "to preserve the history of this county and to help create a better sense of pride" for the fast-growing area, he said.

Compared with St. Mary's County, site of Maryland's first Colonial capital, and Anne Arundel County, which funds an active archeology office, Charles County has seen little professional archeology.

Zekiah Swamp lies at the head of the Wicomico River, a tributary of the Potomac. It extends northward for 20 miles, flanked by the fertile bottomlands that attracted Colonial tobacco planters.

In 1674, the government ordered a proper courthouse built at Moore's Lodge in the Zekiah to accommodate the county's growing legal needs. The spot served as Charles County's first county seat until 1727, when local government moved to Port Tobacco.

A Colonial map included a sketch of the courthouse, so "everybody knew exactly what it looked like," King said. "But nobody knew where it was." Last summer it was found.

This summer, her crews of students and volunteers are expanding their surveys. In May, the first diggers set out to find "His Lordship's Favor," a house built in the Zekiah in 1674 by Charles Calvert.

After hacking their way through thick woods near the Charles County Landfill and digging hundreds of shovel tests, King's crew hit on a striking concentration of artifacts, including brick fragments.

But when the ceramics, pipe stems and a one-quarter slice of a Spanish coin from the 1730s were examined, she said, the site "didn't look like 1674." The oldest items dated to the 1690s. If this really was Calvert's summer house, where were the signs of occupation from the 1670s?

"He built the house, but maybe he's just not there," King said. The artifacts they found could be the refuse of later tenants or owners who lived there into the early 1700s. On the other hand, if it's not Calvert's house, it's not at all clear from the archival record just who else's it might be.

The Zekiah survey crews have moved on. They are looking for anything, really, but especially for traces of the 1680 Zekiah Fort.

Calvert ordered the fort built to resettle 90 to 320 Piscataway Indians being raided by hostile Susquehannocks from the north. By moving the Piscataways into the fort, Calvert figured, they would be safer. The Indians remained there, in close commerce with the settlers, for 12 years.

"It's always a challenge. Every day is a different learning environment," said Amy Publicover, 21, an anthropology/archeology major at the College of Southern Maryland.

Sophomore Sara Greenwell, 18, found the Spanish coin fragment at the Calvert house site, a thrill for any archeologist. "I just couldn't believe it ... that something from so long ago was in my hand. I just wanted to keep it forever," she said.

This season's search will continue for several weeks, King said. But the archeological work in the Zekiah Swamp is likely to continue for years.

Something to think about

It's almost time to accept nominations for ASM's highest honor, the William B. Marye Award for contributions to Maryland archeology. Think about who deserves recognition. The ballot will appear in next month's newsletter.

24 indicted for stealing artifacts

By Mike Stark

Condensed from June 10, 2009, article

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Two dozen people were indicted Wednesday after a sweeping undercover investigation into ancient artifacts stolen from public and tribal lands in the Four Corners area.

Federal indictments unsealed Wednesday accuse the people of stealing, receiving or trying to sell American Indian artifacts including bowls, stone pipes, sandals, arrowheads, jars, pendants and necklaces.

Some 300 federal agents — about half from the Bureau of Land Management — were involved in the arrests. Nineteen of those arrested are from southern Utah, four are from Colorado, and one is from New Mexico. They range in age from 27 to 78, and several appear to be related.

All 24 were part of a tight-knit underground network of people involved in illegally excavating, dealing and collecting stolen artifacts, including burial objects, said FBI agent Timothy Fuhrman.

Four BLM and four FBI agents were assigned to the investigation that lasted more than two years. They used a confidential source who came forward in 2006 with a decade of experience in dealing artifacts. In 2007 and 2008, the source paid more than \$335,000 for 256 stolen artifacts, according to court documents. In most cases, the transactions were caught on video or audio tape.

Federal officials said the case was the nation's largest-ever investigation into the theft of archeological objects.

"Those who remove or damage artifacts on public or tribal lands are taking something from all of us," said U.S. Attorney Brett Tolman. "These treasures are the heritage of all Americans, and in many cases, the objects are sacred to Native Americans."

Federal officials said most of the stolen objects came from BLM land. Some came from tribal lands, but authorities didn't specify which ones.

The Four Corners area once was the center of Anasazi, or ancestral Puebloan, culture and is a treasure trove of archeological artifacts, said Mark Michel, president of the Archeological Conservancy.

"There are thousands of archeological sites in that area, and I've never seen one that hasn't had some looting," said Michel, who has worked in the areas for 30 years.

The items are popular among black market collectors in the United States and overseas, he said. Artifacts taken illegally are often lost forever to researchers trying to piece together the histories of ancient people.

It's illegal to take artifacts from public or Indian lands without a permit or from private lands without permission from the landowner, said Kevin Jones, Utah's state archeologist.

The suspects are accused of violating the Archeological Resources Protection Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Some of those arrested face up to 10 years in prison if convicted of charges that include trafficking in stolen artifacts and theft of government or tribal property.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar flew into Salt Lake City Wednesday to be part of a news conference announcing the indictments. The case should serve as a warning for anyone planning to loot archeological sites, he said.



First comes the digging. Crew and volunteers open up new squares to give the screeners something to do.



Then comes the screening as ASM's new screens get a trial by dirt and rocks and sometimes artifacts.

Field session result: No hard answers

Continued from Page One

Our search for the Swann House ended after five units failed to reveal the building's remains. These units did, however, help us narrow down the possible location for it and a portion of the artifacts recovered may be from the Swann's occupation of that property.

We reopened last year's excavation units within the Native American area and excavated five new units to move away from the brick and mortar rubble feature that dominated last year's units. We recovered a significant amount of Late Woodland to Contact period artifacts that await analysis. One or two pieces of pottery may be colonoware, vessels that mimic European design but are made using Native materials and techniques.

We encountered several possible Native American features but were only able to test one, a possible postmold, before the field session ended. Historic features clearly intrude into this possible Native American living surface that may be Potopaco, the Native American village described by Captain John Smith in 1608.

We still have a few weeks of artifact washing and data entry before we can refine these preliminary results. Until then, on behalf of the entire PTAP staff, I would like to thank the Maryland Historical Trust and the Archeological Society of Maryland for their support and assistance.

Wanted: Member stories, tips and the like

Do you have a favorite archeological site or story that you'd like to share with other ASM members, something about a field school, a recommendation of a place worth going to or a place worth avoiding, of a funny thing happened on the way to? Contact the editor to get the ball rolling.

Profiles in Maryland archeology

An interview with ... Silas Hurry

Silas Hurry is the curator of collections at the Historic St. Mary's City Commission.

Q. How did you get started in archeology?

A. I actually got started by volunteering with Stephen Israel, briefly, in the archeology lab in St. Mary's City when I was in high school. And then subsequently one of my high school teachers had an archeology class that Steve helped, on weekends he would come back and teach us how to dig. And after that I met Garry Stone, who came in as the first archeologist in St. Mary's City and he actually hired me in 1972 for the lordly sum of \$2 an hour and I got to work at the St. John's Site at St. Mary's City and from then on I've pretty much only done archeology for a living.

Q. You're a local boy then?

A. Yes, I'm from St. Mary's County. I grew up down here. Our family's been in the southern Maryland region since probably the 18th Century.

Q. What interesting projects have you worked on?

A. Well, probably the single most interesting project would be Project Lead Coffin, the excavation and all the science that went on with that. That was quite remarkable, a very interesting project. But beyond that, the overall project of St. Mary's City. St. Mary's City is kind of to be viewed as one huge archeological project of which the various sites we work on are actually just facets of the overall city. And it's kind of hard to top the Lead Coffin Project for a unique experience.

Q. How long have you worked at St. Mary's City?

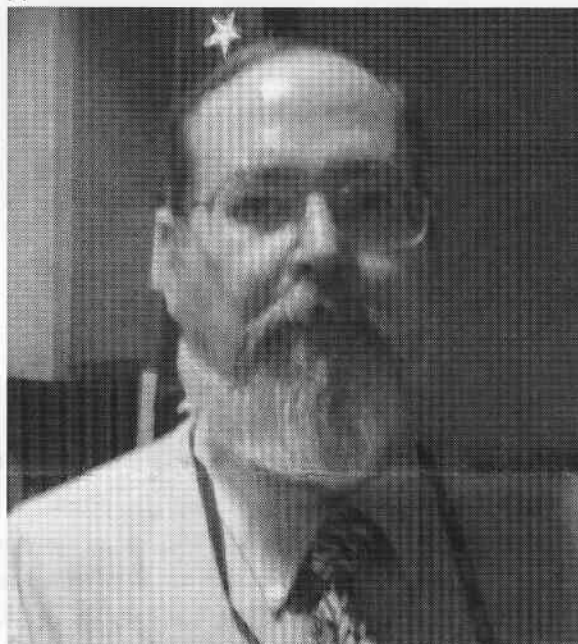
A. Actually, from high school I went to St. Mary's College for my undergraduate work and every other year I would dig in St. Mary's City for HSMC, the Historic St. Mary's City Commission, and in the intervening years Garry Stone and then George Miller and others would find me a job somewhere else, because they were very strongly of the opinion that the way to be an archeologist was to work under a lot of different archeologists and work at a lot of different sites and a lot of different regions. So I spent one summer in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, spent a summer out in Albuquerque and spent the better part of a year down in Georgia, around Marietta, Georgia.

Q. Have you worked on any sites associated with your family's long history here?

A. No. Not really. The house I grew up in, we actually did architectural documentation of it before it fell down - it was heading toward being a ruin 15-20 years after we had moved out of it and Carry Carson and others came up and we documented the structure and it was an early 19th Century house.

Q. How has archeology changed over your years in it?

A. It's changed drastically. When I started out I was at archeological conferences and I knew just about everybody there. But in the last 20-30 years the discipline has just gotten huge. The number of folks engaged particularly in historical archeology has increased tremendously over the last 20 years. A lot of that is the rise of cultural resource management. But when I started out in archeology the only reason we did archeology was for research questions and usually it was basically done as cheaply as possible because there was no great, huge budgets or no great sums of money to do archeology. Nowadays you have a lot more technology too. I can't imagine now trying to write a report without a computer and yet, until probably what, the mid-80s, we didn't have access to it, we couldn't afford computers. So it is kind of hard of hard



to imagine how you would do the analysis, write up a project without computers and yet some of the great archeologists of the past were able to do all that without computers, with a strong, strong emphasis on their energy, I would say.

Q. You say that you worked in the Upper Peninsula and Albuquerque. Do they practice archeology differently there than in Maryland?

A. Well, everybody does it a little bit differently. Everybody has a slightly different terminology. But the basics are always the same. It's all about taking the site apart in the opposite direction of which it was put together. That is to say, the most recent deposit comes out first, then the deposit before that comes out. It's the "first in, last out" rule of archeology. The key is context, recording where stuff comes from. I've dug in English and metric grids, that doesn't really make a lot of difference. But the techniques and processes are fairly comparable across the board. One of advantages of having worked a lot of different places when I was learning archeology is I could see the similarities rather than the differences and one of the things we are very careful to teach our field school students is when they finish with our field school and go to work for someone else never say, "But we didn't do it that way in St. Mary's." They probably have a very good reason why that archeologist is excavating the site that way. When I worked with Maureen Kavanagh as State Highways for a couple of years we dug in arbitrary levels on prehistoric sites, which makes perfect sense. But there are some archeologists who just shudder at the thought of digging in arbitrary levels, but sometimes you haven't got a choice. It all depends on the site. But the techniques of recording context and doing analysis are fairly similar.

Q. What do you think is the future of Maryland archeology?

A. I think Maryland archeology is actually growing and getting more professional through time. I think there's a lot more to be done with prehistory than has been done. Historic archeology is definitely maturing as a discipline. I think the future's quite bright and, particularly, what I'd like to see in the future of archeology in Maryland and everywhere is for people to turn back and study the collections that are already out of the ground, the stuff that was dug up 20 years ago, given a cursory look at and then we moved on to the next project. There's an incredible depth of information in the collections that are in storage that really needs to be brought forward and understood.

Q. What is the biggest surprise you've come across in archeology, other than the lead coffins?

A. Sometimes the surprises are little things. One of the interesting things with the St. John's Site was when we returned there in the early 21st Century, at the end of the 1990s, primarily after 2000, to do archeology in preparation for the construction of the building, artifacts would come into the lab and I would recognize them as being part of another pot that I had looked at 20 years earlier. In fact, we found the face of a white pipe clay cherub statue in 2003 while we had found the back of the head in 1973. Part of a candlestick we had found in '73, we found another part of it in 2003. There's a little excitement about that. I very much enjoy the small artifact that is part of a compound object that you only have a little teeny piece of and you have to kind of have to use your imagination to fill in the blanks. One of the neat artifacts that we found at the St. John's Site was a little triangular copper thing that was the pointer for a sundial, a gnomon.

Q. The one at the new St. Mary's Museum?

A. Yes. And I thought I immediately knew what it was but then to start doing the research on it you find out that there's a pocket sundial from the Mary Rose, Henry VIII's flagship that went down in England. A lot of the joy to me in material cultures studies is finding the information that others have discovered about this and it sort of informs the object. One of the coolest little artifacts we found was at the print shop. It was a little teeny piece of tin-glazed earthenware that had the word "what" on it. I went searching through published sources and it became pretty clear to me pretty quickly that it was the fragment of what is called a merryman's plate. These were sets of generally six, they were called verse plates, and each plate has one line of the verse on it. And the verse is, "What is a merry man? / He does what he can / to entertain his guests/ with wine and merry jests, / until his wife does frown, / then all merriment goes down." But just that one little word was able to lead us to looking in the right sources and then looking at the sources we had what clearly was a broad, general joke in the 17th Century that people were sharing while they were eating off their ceramics.

Jamestown well yields slate tablet

By Zinie Chen Sampson

Condensed from a June 8, 2009, article

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Archeologists have pulled a 400-year-old slate tablet from what they think was an original well at Jamestown, a historic preservation group announced Monday.

The slate is covered with faint inscriptions of local birds, flowers, a tree and caricatures of men, along with letters and numbers, according to Preservation Virginia, which jointly operates the dig site with the National Park Service. It was found May 11 at the center of James Fort.

Research director William Kelso said the inscriptions were made with a slate pencil on the 4-inch-by-8-inch slate. The writings were wiped off, but they left grooves on the surface, he said.

"There were things written over things, written over things," Kelso said.

Researchers at NASA Langley put the slate through three-dimensional digital analysis to decipher its pictures and text. The imaging system normally is used to inspect materials for aerospace use.

An eagle and a heron appeared on the slate, along with three types of plants, which haven't yet been identified. A depiction of lions — the British armorial sign in the early 1600s — indicates that the writer could have been a government official, Kelso said.

The archeologists think a colonist deposited the tablet into what's believed to be the "well of sweet water" built by Capt. John Smith during the winter of 1608-09, according to Preservation Virginia. Historic records indicate that the water had gone bad by 1610 and might have contributed to numerous settlers' deaths during what was known as the "starving time" of 1609-10.

Archeologists dated the slate based on the site's history and the discovery of coins dated 1601-02 among the items. Colonists used the well as a trash pit after the water became fouled, Kelso said, and records show it was covered up in 1611.

South Dakota spares state archeologist

By Chet Brokaw

Condensed from a June 20, 2009, article

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Archaeological Research Center narrowly escaped elimination during this year's search for ways to cut the state budget, but state archeologist Jim Haug says closing his office would not save any money.

If the office disappeared, someone would still have to do the research, manage more than a century's worth of records and take care of more than 9,000 collections of artifacts, Haug said. State agencies would have to hire their own archeologists or consultants to protect graves and other records of the past at road projects and other construction sites.

If his office closed, Haug said, the state Transportation Department would "have to start letting out contracts for every little gravel pit and small road project they are doing because they wouldn't have an agency like ours to fall back on."

When state tax collections plummeted as the recession hit, Gov. Mike Rounds proposed closing the archaeology office to save about \$309,000. With the arrival of federal stimulus money and passage of a boost in the state tax on tourism businesses, the Legislature spared the office.

Haug, who has been state archeologist for two decades, said his office may have been identified as a possible budget cut because many people do not know what the archaeologists do.

The center has 13 permanent staffers and about a dozen temporary employees who are working mostly on a study of the nearly 100,000 acres of land along the Missouri River transferred from the federal government to the state, Haug said.

Although only 20,000 archaeological sites have been identified in South Dakota, archaeologists estimate 150,000 to 300,000 sites exist in the state.

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

Central

Central Chapter has no formal meetings planned, but it does engage in field work and related activities. Contact 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 the Agricultural History Farm Park Activity Center in Derwood. Dinner at a local restaurant is at 6. Monthly lab nights are the first Thursday of the month. Contact heather.bouslog@mncppc-mc.org, or call 301-840-5848 or Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: www.asmmidpotomac.wordpress.com

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick on the second Wednesday of the month 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 business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Ann Persson at 410-272-3425 or aspst20@yahoo.com Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake>

Upper Patuxent

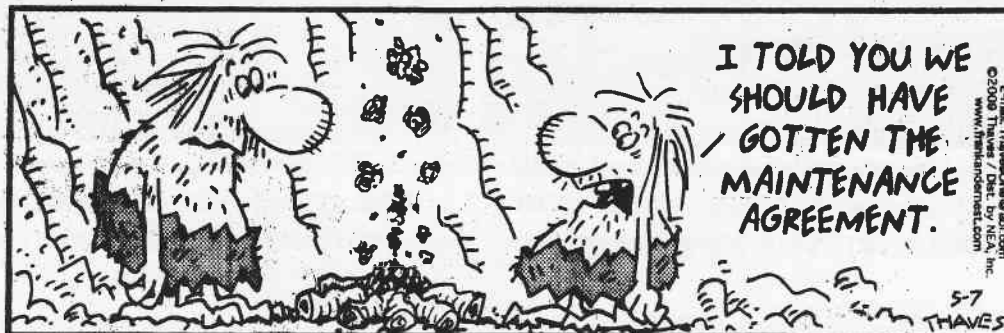
Programs are the second Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Mt. Ida, near the courthouse in Ellicott City. Potluck suppers are held at 6:15 in September and March. Otherwise, dinner is available at an Ellicott City restaurant. For information, contact Lee Preston at 443-745-1202 or leeprestonjr@comcast.net

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

FRANK AND ERNEST

BOB THAVES



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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.

Submissions welcome. Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 6817 Pineway, University Park, MD 20782, 301-864-5289 or myronbeck@verizon.net

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