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Field session restores a sense of normalcy

By Matt McKnight

Chief Archeologist - MHT

This winter, the prospect of a return to the Billingsley Site for the 2021 Field Session looked pretty bleak. Our COVID-19 positivity rate was skyrocketing, hundreds of thousands of Americans had died of the disease and both travel and large gatherings had been restricted by numerous executive orders.

The one bright light of hope was the development of safe and effective vaccines, but at the time these were not yet widely available and the logistics of distributing them seemed daunting. But with the arrival of spring, Charlie Hall and I began to feel a little more hopeful. The vaccine distribution was going faster than expected, and positivity rates were beginning to show a downward trend. Thank you, Science!

In early April we held our first tentative meeting with M-NCPPC to discuss whether it was even possible to consider having a field session. Though the talk of relaxing physical distancing and masking requirements was little more than rumor, the PG County folks were optimistic.

Fast forward a couple of months and there we stood on May 28, ready for 11 days of fieldwork…the 50th Field Session in Maryland Archaeology. Though the deafening roar of cicadas was a bit unusual, the 2021 excavations at Billingsley represented a refreshing slice of normalcy (and for some of us, a high point) in an otherwise insane year.

As in 2019, field research actually commenced long before the first shovels went into the ground. One week before we opened the first units, the MHT Office of Archaeology, M-NCPPC and the Maryland Free-State Treasure Club partnered on a systematic and controlled metal-detection survey of the field at Billingsley.

Our hope was that we might be able to home in on the elusive 17th-Century Native American component at Billingsley (attested to in historic documents) by searching for high-conductivity metals like brass. Put more succinctly, we wanted to find some brass arrowheads.

While no brass points were found, we did locate some brass scrap fragments of the very thin gauge often seen at Contact-era Native American sites; by-products of the point manufacturing process. However, plenty of other metallic evidence of both Colonial and later historic occupation by Europeans was also encountered.

The brass could easily have been related to these later occupations. All of the metal detector hits were meticulously recorded with a high-accuracy (7mm) GPS system and many of these artifacts were collected (especially those pieces of brass scrap).

Despite our misgivings, we placed two of our initial test units in the area where the scrap was uncovered. We also carried out a small ground-penetrating radar survey in the area where the brass scrap was encountered in the hopes of finding subsurface features that might be interesting to sample.

The results of that effort were pretty disheartening as nothing overtly cultural appeared in the data, but we placed two additional units on the edge of what appeared to be a soil transition of no known explanation several meters to the north. A couple of units were also placed where gradiometer data from 2019 suggested

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Help wanted:

1. New CAT coordinator

Don't be shy. The CAT program is looking for a new coordinator. A great chance to mold willing minds and influence a corps of amateur archeologists. Preference given for Marylanders and ASM members. For information on the job and to apply contact Claude Bowen (contact info on back page of this newsletter).

2. Who should get the 2021 Marye Award?

Each year, ASM honors one of the people who keeps Maryland archeology advancing, with the Society's highest honor, the William B. Marye Award.

Nominations for the award are made by ASM members. Winners need not be Marylanders or even archeologists, just someone who in the course of his/her work has made significant contribution to archeology in our state.

The award is presented at ASM's fall meeting October 23 in Anne Arundel County. The deadline for nominations this year is August 17, to leave enough time to get a plague made. A form accompanies this newsletter.

Nominations are not held over from year to year, nor is not winning the award one year a handicap to winning it the next.

Think about who you think deserves this honor and then make the nomination. Be specific in stating why you think your candidate deserves the award: Specificity is more valuable to the committee than generalizations.

Upcoming events

October 23: ASM annual meeting. SERC. **NOTE THIS**!

Volunteer opportunities (non-covid)

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

ASM Volunteer Lab, most Tuesdays: The lab in Crownsville. Contact Charlie Hall at charles.hall@maryland.gov or Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net It is currently working on cataloging artifacts form the Levering Coffee House Site, Baltimore (a mostly late 18th/early 19th Century site).

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

Montgomery County for lab and field work volunteers, contact Heather Bouslog at 301 563 7530 or Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org

The Anne Arundel County Archaeology Program and the Lost Towns Project welcome volunteers in both field and lab at numerous sites. For diggers, the Linniston site on Gibson Island Fridays from 8 to 3. The lab will be open some weekdays at the Anne Arundel collection facility at 7409 Baltimore-Annapolis Blvd. in Glen Burnie. For more information email Drew Webster at volunteers@losttownsproject.org or call 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 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.

UPAG/Howard County Recs and Parks invites volunteers interested in processing collections and conducting historical research to contact Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.

CAT corner: For information on the CAT program, contact chair Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.

Dennis Stanford: trail-blazing, controversial

By Tamara Jager Stewart

Condensed from American Archaeology, Summer 2021

Since the renowned Paleo-Indian archaeologist Dennis Stanford passed away in 2019, his colleagues and friends have celebrated his remarkable career. But 20 years earlier, many of his colleagues weren't speaking so kindly of him.

In 1999 at the Paleoamerican Odyssey Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Stanford, then the curator of North American archaeology at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, revealed the details of his and colleague Bruce Bradley's Solutrean Solution to the peopling of the Americas. [*Stanford also gave an early talk on the subject to an ASM audience.]*

The prevailing theory then was that the Clovis, who were thought to be the first people to arrive in the New World, came by way of an ice-free corridor connecting Siberia and Alaska around 13,000 years ago. Stanford and Bradley contended that the Clovis tradition first developed along the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. and it may have had its roots in and around the Pyrenees Mountains of southern France and Basque Country in northern Spain, the region from which people crossed the Atlantic by boat during the Last Glacial Maximum 18,000 to 22,000 years ago.

This idea was well received in much of Europe, where Bradley worked, but it faced intense opposition in North America. The Solutrean theory was criticized as unscientific and some people thought it could ruin Stanford's career. He was even accused of being a racist.

Growing up in Colorado and New Mexico, Stanford developed an early fascination for arrowheads he found. When his family moved to Rawlins, Wyoming, he continued to pursue his interest in archaeology. Stanford received his undergraduate degree from the University of Wyoming in 1965. During his graduate studies at. the University of New Mexico he frequently interacted with Native Americans, which made him sensitive to tribal concerns and perspectives.

Stanford's Ph.D. dissertation on the Thule Inuit culture was based on his excavation of the Walakpa site outside Point Barrow, Alaska. "I always thought that his practical experiences hunting seals with the Inuit people … created an important foundation for thinking about hunter-gatherers in an Ice Age environment," said Margaret (Pegi) Jodry, a Paleo-Indian expert who became Stanford' life and research partner.

Stanford was offered a position at the Smithsonian, which had just launched a new Paleo-Indian studies program. One of the first excavations he led was the Jones-Miller site in Colorado. Prior to his work there, archeologists tended to pay little attention to the specific locations of bones found at a site.

"It's one thing to have a pile of bones from a site and be able say 40 percent of them have cutmarks," said Lawrence Todd, professor emeritus at Colorado State University. "It's another to be able to plot the location of every cutmarked bone on a map, which allows you to have a much more detailed picture of the activities that took place on site.

"Dennis was an exceptional field archaeologist as well as a generator and proponent of provocative ideas."

The Jones-Miller project also included fine-mesh water screening and collecting microfauna. In 1978 Stanford gathered a team of scientists to study the use of stone tools in ancient elephant butchery and the edge damage and breakage patterns that occurred, which was pioneering work at the time.

"Experimental archaeology was a key component of Dennis' approach to learning about the past," said Jodry.

At the Smithsonian, Stanford held various positions that included curator of North American archaeology, head of the Division of Archaeology and chairman of the Department of Anthropology. He produced some of the most significant and influential works in Paleo-Indian studies worldwide, publishing numerous journal articles, book chapters and more than 10 books.

Over the course of his career, Stanford brought over 1 million objects to the Smithsonian, amassing what is now known at the Dennis Stanford National Paleoindian Collection.

"Dennis occupies a unique place in American archaeology, especially as it relates to the paleo-Indian period and the topic of initial peopling of the New World," said Vanderbilt University emeritus professor Thomas Dillehay. "Dennis' overall effect on archeology has been nothing short of outstanding."

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Stanford and Bradley's theory about a pre-Clovis trans-Atlantic crossing sprang from their vast knowledge of lithic technologies and Stanford's appreciation for Arctic people's navigation skills and their ability to thrive in harsh environments. He and Bradley argued that paleolithic technology of Europe, specifically technology identified at Solutrean sites in France and Spain, evolved into the Clovis technology.

In "Across Atlantic Ice" they suggest that, roughly 20,000 years ago, Solutreans crossed the Atlantic in winter, moving from ice floe to ice floe in their watercraft until they reached the Eastern Seaboard of North America. Their evidence includes Cactus Hill in Virginia, Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania, Miles Point in Maryland and several other ancient sites recently discovered in the Chesapeake Bay along the now-submerged continental shelf.

This idea is not new: the similarities between Solutrean and Clovis technology had been pointed out by researchers back in the 1960s, and then as now it was dismissed by numerous archaeologists.

Many North American archaeologists believe that the technological similarities between the Solutrean and Clovis peoples' stone tools were the result of different cultures finding similar solutions to similar problems using similar materials.

Most of the extant ancient DNA evidence points to an early influx of immigrants from Asia, not Iberia, to the New World, but Stanford and Bradley have asserted that that evidence is insufficient and they noted that small groups of Solutreans could have interbred with much larger populations arriving from Asia, in which case the Solutreans' DNA signature might not be discernable.

Book review: A different look at American history

An Indigenous Peoples' History of The United States, *by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Beacon Press, 2015, 296 pages*

Panting and sweating, Heather Bouslog, Montgomery Parks archeologist, and I were making our way through an endless dark tunnel. Accused of distorting the historical record and negations, we had been advised to go into hiding. People in black capes and hoods were coming ever closer.

This bad dream is the result of reading and discussing "An Indigenous Peoples' History of The United States," written by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, retired professor of Native American studies at California State University, Hayward. Her interpretation of United States history dismantles the founding myths of Europeans arriving to an empty, pristine wilderness, of Indians being a vanishing race, of the United States being uniquely democratic, free and multicultural.

She writes, "Everything in US history is about the land -- who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity ('real estate') broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market."

Ortiz discusses "firsting and lasting," displacing and disappearing. The history that I was taught was all about the first European this and that, as well as the Last Indians, tribes and nations; "Framing Indigenous genocide as past events with no bearing on lives lived today and framing European firsts as innovative and the indigenous as extinct is a subtle form of White Supremacy."

By portraying the real experiences of the Native Nations genocidal wars waged against them, Ortiz raises the question: How might acknowledging the reality of United States history work to transform society? Frederick Douglass observed that challenging hypocrisy and not acknowledging the truth does not discredit the ideals found in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, but instead calls for urgent application of those very ideals.

Ortiz invites readers to try on some indigenous footwear and walk the indigenous landscape from the beginning of the European invasion to the present. The idea of walking in someone else's shoes was expressed in the 1895 poem, "Judge Softly," by Mary T. Lathrop. "... take the time to walk a mile in his moccasins."

Seventy- two years later in 1967 Joe South wrote and sang "Walk a Mile in My Shoes."

Renditions by Big Daddy Wilson and my favorite rendition by Elvis soon followed. Native systems of roads tied nations and communities together across the entire land mass of the Americas, so put this important well-documented book in your backpack and start walking.

-- Lynne Bulhack

2017-18 field session site already eating away

By Zac Singer

Condensed from the MHT Blog, Summer 2021

In 2017 and 2018 Tyler Bastian Field Sessions with the Archeological Society of Maryland were held to investigate the Calverton site before storm-surge flooding and the wind-driven waters of Battle Creek further eroded what evidence remained of the town. In the summer of 2020, supplemental archeological investigations were conducted to continue documenting those portions of the site at heightened risk from shoreline erosion and flooding the caused by sea-level rise.

Prior to 2020 field investigations, the MHT Office of Archaeology conducted a ground penetrating radar survey within 10 meters of the eroding bank overhanging Battle Creek to identify anomalies in the area of the site most at risk to further loss from wind and water action.

In total, eight test units were excavated during the 2020 fieldwork to assess the form and function of the GPR anomalies. The excavations resulted in the identification of 10 cultural features and the recovery of 3,369 artifacts mostly dating from the late 17th and early 18thCentury, including a Charles I sixpence coin (1639-1645).

One important aspect of the project was to monitor the shoreline at Calverton to continue assessing the risk of the site to the destructive power of wind and water action along Battle Creek, which remains an imminent threat to the archeological resources at the site.

MHT map projections show that the town's important public buildings, including the courthouse and chapel, have already been lost to Battle Creek. Comparing the 2020 location of the Battle Creek bank to the location recorded by a 2017 Calvert County LiDAR survey shows shoreline loss ranging from 0.0313 meters to 3.204 meters, with an average of 1.333 meters of loss over two years, or 60- 70 centimeters per year.

Most alarmingly, seven of the 28 points taken for the analysis (25 percent of the total) show shoreline loss in excess of 2 meters and these points occurred over the entire length of the surveyed shoreline. At this rate, the late 17th/early 18th-Century cellar feature will be lost to erosion by 2028 without intervention. With climate change comes increasing numbers of catastrophic storms. Tidal surges during such storm events can wreak havoc on the shoreline, severely undercutting the bank at Calverton.

Another important aspect of the 2020 project was to monitor the shoreline at Calverton to continue assessing the risk of the site to the destructive power of wind and water action along Battle Creek, which remains an imminent threat to the archeological resources at the site.

This reinforces the urgent need for additional archeology at Calverton before the resource is entirely lost. The 2020 archeological investigation at Calverton provided additional data crucial to understanding the Colonial occupation of the town in the portions of the site most vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Most significantly, it identified a previously unknown cellar and an associated post hole/mold both of which likely reflect the location of a Colonial structure.

While the small window into this structure excavated to-date has allowed some preliminary conclusions to be drawn, additional excavations could further reveal the size, layout and function of the former building. Additional excavation and GPR survey in the vicinity of the paling trench identified during the 2020 investigation could also provide valuable data on lot divisions in Calverton and Colonial towns as a whole.

Field session restores a sense of normalcy

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we might encounter metal.

So, what did we find this year? To be sure, the vast majority of artifacts (as in 2019) appear to date to the Terminal Archaic/Early Woodland transition. Hundreds of Accokeek sherds and various Late Archaic projectile points were recovered. We also verified that the buried A Horizon encountered in 2019 continues well to the west of where we worked previously. It is massive!

We also encountered and sampled another large pit feature (Feature 10), which yielded several artifacts. If any enterprising graduate students out there read this and take an interest: If you want to study the

transition from hunting and gathering lifeways of the Terminal Archaic to the more settled horticultural societies of the Early Woodland, Billingsley would be a perfect place to do it.

What about earlier occupations? Despite Herculean efforts and some really deep test units, there does not appear to be deep cultural stratigraphy at the site. It's just too high above the floodplain and a visit mid-session by soils scientist Dr. John Wah (Matapeake Soil & Environmental Consultants) confirmed that there is little to no Holocene-epoch soil development taking place that could generate such deep stratigraphy.

A handful of lithic flakes and a couple of small pottery crumbs probably worked their way into the sterile subsoil through bioturbation. Earlier Archaic artifacts have been found on the site, but they were in the plowzone, as most of the site represents a palimpsest. The buried A horizon was probably preserved by anthropogenic earthmoving.

My working theory is that when the terraces were cut in the 18th Century to accentuate the hill on which the historic house sits overlooking the site, either 1) an erosional event occurred which buried the A-horizon, or 2) the cuttings were intentionally spread on the agricultural field inadvertently preserving the A-horizon below.

And what of the elusive Mattapany and Patuxent Indian occupation of Billingsley? Well, we didn't hit a home run (trade goods), but I think we may have rounded third. Some very tantalizing clues were uncovered from the plowzone levels of the units placed where the brass scrap was recovered.

In addition to the brass, these units (and subsequent adjacent units) yielded some triangular points, several fragments of a "Running Deer" or "Chesapeake" pipe, numerous thin and uniform Potomac Creek sherds and a tiny French flint fragment with faint evidence of "nibbling" (light retouching) along one edge. Nibbling of European flints is more commonly associated with Native American use (scarce resource) than European use (an easily replaced resource).

The Potomac Creek sherds are well-fired, thin and very uniform in thickness… something that tends to be seen later in time rather than in the pottery type's Late Woodland period of use. And the Chesapeake pipe is generally considered to date from about AD 1600 to 1700. It was likely (but not definitively) made by a Native American.

The fact that the VAST majority of Late Woodland/possible Contact-era artifacts from the excavations came from the five units placed specifically where the brass scrap was recovered during metal-detecting work is tantalizing. What's more, most of the finds came from two units where a small feature was uncovered.

That feature (Feature 9) was a small oyster roasting pit. The pit appeared to extend down from the base of the plowzone, through the buried Terminal Archaic/Early Woodland A-horizon and at its base, heated stones were placed to cook the oysters, which were placed above. After the meal was consumed, the shells were discarded back into the roasting pit.

The pit's excavation into the buried A horizon suggests that it is later, but an apparent Pope's Creek sherd at the plowzone/feature interface argues otherwise. No other diagnostics were recovered that would clear the dating up. Fortunately, ample charcoal was recovered, so hopefully, we can sort out which era it dates to. It appears that the Mattapany and Patuxent will continue to "whisper" to us from the past, rather than "shout."

All in all, it was a great field session. MHT, the ASM and M-NCPPC made valuable contributions to the understanding of this site. We collected a valuable dataset that will be housed at the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab for future researchers to examine. And we had fun doing it!

Chapter News

Check with your local chapter to see what activities will take place.

Central Chapter

All Meetings will be held on Zoom the third Tuesday of the Month. For more information and to be added to the Zoom list contact: Katharine Fernstrom at kwfappraising@gmail.com

Charles County

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September–May). The next few will be virtual. Contact President Carol Cowherd at ccasm2010@gmail.com for Zoom access information. Website ccarchsoc.blogspot.com and Facebook @ccasm2010

Mid-Potomac

Until further notice, all Mid-Potomac Chapter Meetings will be by Zoom starting at 7 p.m., the talk at 7:30, the third Thursday of the month. Contact Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: www.asmmidpotomac.org Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at digfrederick.com or call 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at 410- 273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net Website: http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake

St. Mary's County

Meetings are the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Joseph D. Carter State Office Building in the Russell Conference Room, Leonardtown. For information contact Chris Coogan at Clcoogan@smcm.edu

Upper Patuxent

Meetings the second Saturday or Sunday of the month, virtual or at the Heritage Program Office, 9944 Route 108, Ellicott City, unless otherwise noted. www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358 or www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com or call Kelly Palich, 410 313 0423.

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 211 S. Lee Street in Cumberland, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm

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-percent discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Ethan Bean, 765-716-5282 or beans32@comcast.net 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 20178-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net

Submissions: Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 3126 Gracefield Rd., Apt 106, Silver Spring, MD. 20905 or 240-867-3662 or myronbeck@verizon.net