

The Scoop

A Newsletter of the Friends of Fairfax County Archaeology and Cultural Resources FOFA



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Welcome back to The Scoop - FOFA has been busy so far this year...beginning in February with our Spring Symposium, co-sponsored with the Cultural Resources Management and Protection Division of the Park Authority and Gunston Hall; followed by our May meeting where Mike Johnson presented his dissertation research on Cactus Hill.

On June 1st, the Colchester Archaeological Research Team (CART) held their annual open house. The Town of Colchester came alive again under Chris Sperling's tours, while ASV volunteers and Fairfax County staff educated the 100+ visitors about the archaeological features and artifacts recovered to date. The nature walk with Charles Smith was also well attended despite the heat and serenading cicadas. FOFA was happy to provide refreshments and parking assistance at the Enyedi Property.



Chris Havlicek (ASV) and Chris Sperling (FCPA)



CART Volunteers



Sallie Lyons (FOFA President)



Megan Vaness (CART)

NEW Regional Archeology Program Web Site

The Regional Archeology Program of the National Capital Region is pleased to announce the launch of a new web site -- www.nps.gov/rap. The site highlights archeology around Washington, D.C. and is geared towards the general public, kids, teachers and the historic preservation professional. As the National Park Service approaches its second century of service and stewardship, the website is one tool to share the program's connection to the National Park Service mission.

Information about past and present archeology projects at national parks around the nation's capital is presented through "virtual exhibits" and multimedia presentations. Teachers as well as children and their parents will find information about archeology, fun things to do, and how to get involved. Professionals will find reference materials, links to key laws and policies, and important contact information.

Regional Archeologist, Dr. Stephen R. Potter notes, "It is exciting to launch a comprehensive web site for National Park Service archeology here in the National Capital Region. We hope that both the public and professionals in the field will find something of interest and we will continue to update and expand the site to serve the needs of the community."

FOFA Founding Board Member receives Community Service Award

The Mason Neck Citizens Association ([MNCA](#)) bestowed its inaugural community service award to the late Gerald "Jerry" Lyons; his wife, and current President of FOFA, Sallie Lyons, accepted the award bearing his name on his behalf on June 4th. In addition to being a founding member of FOFA, Jerry served on the MNCA board, was a member of the Seeds of Independence project at [Gunston Hall](#), and designed several interpretive displays on Mason Neck.

Governor McDonnell Dedicates Werowocomoco, Paramount Chief Powhatan's Seat of Power in 1607, to [Permanent Conservation](#)

Long lost to history, in 2003 the site was publicly identified by archaeologists with DHR and the College of William & Mary

"Werowocomoco was basically our peoples' Washington DC." - Kevin Brown, Chief of the Pamunkey Tribe



**Supporting Archaeology,
History, and Preservation
in Fairfax County**

Meet the FOFA Board: Top Row: John Mullen, Paul Antsen, Paula Elsey, Barbara Naef, and John Kelsey. Bottom Row: Charlie Balch and Sallie Lyons

WSSI Archeologists Discover Rare 18th Century Slave Overseers Dwelling

Contributed by Boyd Sipe, Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc

Thunderbird Archeology Associates, a division of Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. (WSSI) recently excavated a mid-18th century slave quarter site (Accotink Quarter) in Fairfax County, Virginia, which has been described as one of the most important archeological sites in Virginia. The unique nature of this site was identified through several landmark discoveries, including the dwelling of a slave overseer and the best preserved assemblage of colonoware pottery ever found in the state.

Slave and Overseer Quarters

Historic research revealed that the Accotink Quarter site was a part of a sprawling Potomac River tobacco plantation owned by the McCarty family and later by Abraham Barnes.

During the 18th century the economy of Virginia was largely focused on the production of tobacco by enslaved African or African American laborers. As tobacco cultivation was very labor intensive, planters relied on a 'gang' system to manage slave labor. Many enslaved men, women, and children lived on outlying quarters and worked each day at planting, tending, harvesting, and processing the tobacco crops under the close surveillance of overseers.

Outlying quarter farms in the Chesapeake region have not been well documented archeologically. The challenges in locating, identifying, and interpreting such sites has proven difficult over time. The site was originally recorded as a prehistoric camp site following a survey conducted in 1980. Over 30 years later, WSSI archeologists discovered the previously unrecognized and highly significant occupation of the site during the colonial period.

The research conducted by WSSI on the Accotink Quarter site focused on exploring the lives of the overseer and the enslaved laborers that lived on the land in the half-century before the American Revolution. Unlike previously excavated colonial quarter sites in the Chesapeake, the overseer's house and the dwelling for the enslaved laborers at the Accotink Quarter were separated by over 120 feet. This meant that the associated material culture from each could be isolated and the assemblages compared. Intensive archival research was conducted by WSSI during the excavations and the overseer during the last years of the site's occupation was identified as John Marvill from store ledgers recorded in the colonial town of Colchester.



Archeological data recovery at the Accotink Quarter site involved excavation of the full cellar underlying the overseer's house and the sub-floor pits in the slave dwelling. Five sub-floor pit features were found within the footprint of the dwelling occupied by enslaved laborers on the site in the mid-18th century.

Sub-floor pits are often found in association with housing for the enslaved in Virginia. African or African American bondspeople may have used these pits for various purposes including storage of root vegetables and the concealment of valuable personal possessions or ancestor shrines linked to West African religious practices.



Colonoware Pottery

Archeological excavations at the Accotink Quarter resulted in the recovery of the second largest and the best preserved assemblage of colonoware pottery ever found in Virginia. A total of 1,400 colonoware sherds representing a minimum of 197 vessels were found at the site.

Colonoware is handmade, low-fired earthenware that was produced and used from the early to mid-17th century through the early 19th century. It has been found in archeological sites typically associated with plantation slavery, along the east coast of the United States and in the Caribbean. Whether colonoware was made by enslaved Africans or by Native Americans has been the subject of considerable debate amongst archeologists.

Analysis of the colonoware recovered at the Accotink Quarter site; however, has provided strong evidence that it and similar pottery found at other archeological sites in northern Virginia was a trade ware produced by a remnant Native American population in the region. The wares were probably sold or traded to planters, such as Abraham Barnes and George Washington at his nearby Mount Vernon plantation, and provisioned to the enslaved and overseers.

D.R. Horton, Inc., the property owner and a sponsor of the archeological investigations, has generously agreed to donate the colonoware vessels and other artifacts recovered at the site to Fairfax County. Fairfax County is considering various options for public exhibition of the colonoware including a display at the Herrity Building for Black History Month in February 2014.

Contributions to the Field of Archeology

Major research issues in the archeology of American plantation slavery during the 18th century including the lifeways and material culture of the enslaved and overseers, ethnicity, agency, and plantation provisioning were reconsidered in view of findings at the site.

Although documentary evidence suggests that an overseer was present at most outlying quarters on Virginia's 18th -century tobacco plantations, historical and archeological data relevant to 18th century overseers was extremely limited prior to WSSI's groundbreaking research on the Accotink Quarter site. Comparative analysis of the Accotink Quarter with other regional slavery sites indicated that previously unidentified overseers may have been present at several other sites.

The Accotink Quarter ranks amongst the most important historic archeological sites in Virginia and news of the discoveries at the site spread quickly in the local and regional archeological community. Archeologists and historians from the Smithsonian Institution Museum of Natural History, George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate Museum and Gardens, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, and the Fairfax County Park Authority volunteered their time to assist in the excavations or the analysis of artifacts and data from the site. WSSI archeologists have subsequently presented the results of research on the Accotink Quarter at several professional conferences and public outreach events.



Several nearly complete colonoware vessels were found during the excavations and sherd mending resulted in the partial reconstruction of numerous fine examples including a bowl with a flanged base (top), a possible jar (middle), and a bowl with incised chevron decoration (bottom).

Bowls and jars are the most frequently found colonoware vessels and other forms are rare. The collection recovered from the Accotink Quarter site also included plates, goblets, cups, and chamber pots. Many of the vessels found at the Accotink Quarter were burnished, or polished to a lustrous sheen by rubbing the pottery with water-worn stones.



**FRIENDS OF FAIRFAX COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY
AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Membership Application

Date: _____ New Member ___Renewing Member
Annual Dues: Individual (\$15) ___Family (\$20) ___

Title (Mr., Ms, etc.) First Name Middle Initial Last Name

Street Address City State Zip Code

Daytime Telephone Evening Telephone Cell Phone Email Address

___ Check here if you prefer that your contact information NOT be published in a future directory of members.

Please indicate skills or background that you would be willing to share with the Friends:

___ IT ___ Fundraising ___ Public Relations ___ Events Planning ___ Graphics ___ Photography
___ Writing ___ Archaeology ___ Preservation ___ Other (please specify)_____

What ideas would you suggest for the enhancement and support of Fairfax County's archaeology and other cultural resources programs?

For Family memberships, please provide information for a second member (spouse, partner, or child):
(To provide information for more than two family members, please use multiple membership forms and attach them together.)

Title (Mr., Ms, etc.) First Name Middle Initial Last Name

Daytime Telephone Evening Telephone Cell Phone Email Address

Please indicate skills and background that might be shared with the Friends:

___ IT ___ Fundraising ___ Public Relations ___ Events Planning ___ Graphics ___ Photography
___ Writing ___ Archaeology ___ Preservation ___ Other (please specify)_____

Please make checks payable to FOFA, and mail to:

Charles Balch 2922 Oakton Ridge Circle, Oakton, VA 22124

CBalch@aol.com

For Internal Use: Date Received: _____ Amount Received: _____