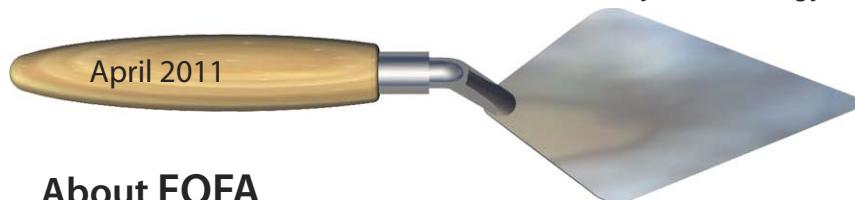


# The Scoop

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

April 2011



## About FOFA

A new support group for archaeology has been formed, the **Friends of Fairfax County Archaeology and Cultural Resources. (FOFA)**

**FOFA** exists to befriend and support the Cultural Resource Management and Protection Section of the Fairfax County Park Authority, and to further the understanding and appreciation of Fairfax County's cultural resources through archaeology and historic preservation.

**FOFA** will offer support in such areas as communication, community education programs, volunteer activities, personnel and funding, and advocacy for archaeology and historic preservation

The **Cultural Resource Management and Protection Section** of the Fairfax County Park Authority (**CRMPS**) is the primary steward of cultural resources in Fairfax County and conducts archaeological and other cultural resource studies county-wide. **CRMPS** oversees the protection of archaeological sites, historic structures, historic districts, cemeteries and the great variety of cultural landscapes in Fairfax County.



**FOFA** and the Fairfax County Park Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding on March 15, 2011. Shown are John Dargle, Director of Fairfax County Park Authority, and Sallie Lyons, President of FOFA.

**FOFA** anticipates providing its members with a regular newsletter reporting on-going archaeological and preservation activities. It will offer professional presentations, opportunities for the public to participate in volunteer activities, tours of on-going excavations and a diversity of entertaining events.

For further information contact Sallie Lyons at [lyonshare@cox.net](mailto:lyonshare@cox.net).

Friends Of Fairfax County Archaeology and Cultural Resources also lives on Facebook.



**Supporting Archaeology, History, and Preservation in Fairfax County.**  
[lyonshare@cox.net](mailto:lyonshare@cox.net)

# SYMPOSIUM

Sponsored by the Friends Of Fairfax County Archaeology and Cultural Resources (**FOFA**) and Cultural Resources Management and Protection Br., Fairfax County Park Authority



8:30 AM - 12:00 Noon; 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM, April 16, 2011

2nd Floor Auditorium, James Lee Community Center, Falls Church, VA  
2855 Annandale Rd, #101, Falls Church, VA 22042



Please join us in presentations of projects receiving current national interest and selected local archaeological undertakings.

Dennis Stanford, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Paleoindian/Paleoecology Program, will speak on current paradigm-shifting very early Paleoindian discoveries in the lower Chesapeake Bay region, including his work with Darrin Lowery.



Dennis Stanford, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Keynote Speaker,  
*Origins of the First Americans: New discoveries in the Chesapeake Basin.*

Mike Johnson, Senior Archaeologist, Fairfax County  
*Prehistoric Overview of Fairfax County*

Ruth Trocolli, Ph.D., City Archaeologist, Washington, D.C.  
*New Tools of the Trade: GIS and Geoarchaeology in Washington, D.C.*

Liz Crowell, Director, Cultural Resources Management & Protection, Fairfax County  
*Colchester in Context: Project Background and Context*

Chris Sperling, Fairfax County Archaeologist  
*Diggin' Old Colchester: Archaeology of a Virginia Port Town*

Maddy McCoy, Fairfax County Historian  
*Sleuthing History in Northern Virginia*

Mary Furlong, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Maryland  
*Archaeological Investigation at Fort Ward, Alexandria, Virginia*

Earnie Porta, Historian and Mayor of Occoquan, Virginia  
*Tales of Early Occoquan*

Michael Clem, Loudoun County Archaeologist  
*Topic To be announced*



## Stories of historic but forgotten roads of Hunter Mill Road Corridor uncovered

Charles Balch

Three local men have produced a 36 page illustrated booklet telling the stories of 12 historic abandoned roads and five remnants of "Old Lawyers Road" in the Hunter Mill Road corridor. Extensive historical research along with photography and cartography were needed to fully expose a surprisingly good record of local history. The booklet, entitled "Forgotten Roads of the Hunter Mill Road Corridor," contains wonderful color photographs of roads, stream crossings or fords, and mill races that were originally built over one hundred years ago. The fact that many of these historic remnants can still be clearly seen today makes their history come to life. The stories of road history encompass pre-Revolutionary War, pre-Civil War, Civil War, post Civil War and 20th Century events. This range of over 250 years demonstrates the entrepreneurial and agrarian character of the citizens from Difficult Run to Vienna. As we travel daily through the area, we are typically unaware of the history wrapped around old roads crisscrossing the land.

In addition to the many color pictures throughout the booklet, four aerial photographs from 1937 and 1981 dramatically illustrate the routes of the forgotten roads. Many of these roads are also shown on an 1862 Civil War map. In order to accurately track the abandoned roads in the Corridor, they were surveyed on foot using a hand-held GPS receiver. Then these paths were overlaid on U. S. Census Bureau Maps in order to put the findings into the context of modern roads. In total, 13 maps, both old and new, are included in the booklet to aid the reader in understanding road placement.

The booklet is now offered to the public for sale for \$14 at [www.HMDL.org](http://www.HMDL.org). All proceeds from the sale of the booklet will be used to support local preservation efforts, historical research, and placement of historical markers.



**Ken Jones, Jim Lewis and Charlie Balch on Old Lawyers Road**

## Colchester Archaeology Research Team

C.A.R.T. has been nearly overwhelmed by new volunteer support. We foresee continued interest as the weather improves and are formalizing an orientation schedule. Orientations will now be done at the field lab on Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00a.m. Just drop a line at [CART.Volunteers@gmail.com](mailto:CART.Volunteers@gmail.com) to sign up to be oriented. Also, reserve your volunteer slot early; we can only take so many people on site any given day.

Historic excavations at the town site focused on the south side of town. Thanks to the help of our volunteer army, we have figured out where most of the historic activity occurred, and where it did not. Despite several negative MTUs, we also established the distribution of artifacts across the land form and identified several cultural features dating to the town period.

## 30,000 Years of Mason Neck Prehistory: Archeology as Detective Work

Mike Johnson

Mason Neck today is merely the resultant landform from a long interaction between climate, geology and more recently human activity. It is not known when the first people settled the New World. Recent discoveries in Southern Virginia at the Cactus Hill site and along the Chesapeake Bay strongly suggest that traditional theories about who got here first, when and how, no longer work.

The earliest people to arrive in the Americas and who likely walked on what was then the land that became Mason Neck possibly did so during the last Ice Age, called the Wisconsin glaciation. The Wisconsin peaked between 17,000 and 21,000 years ago. Its most impressive feature was a massive, mile thick, mantle of ice that covered the northern half of the North American continent from Greenland to the Pacific Ocean and from as far south as Northern Pennsylvania and Central Ohio to the Arctic.

Two of its more profound effects were that it and other glaciers locked up enough of the World's water to drop Worldwide sea levels as much as 350 feet. The weight of the ice on the North American plate caused the land immediately south of the glacier to rise, possibly more than 200 feet. This rise is called a "fore bulge." As a result, the land around Mason Neck may have been as much as 600 feet more above sea level than today. These two factors, working together, would have left the current Mason Neck high and dry. The Occoquan and Potomac Rivers would have been free flowing and confined to their current deep channels, in many places thousands of feet from the current shore. Belmont and Occoquan bays on the south and Pohick Bay and Gunston Cove on the north would have been dry land, covered with a northern forest consisting of spruce, other conifers, and with broad leaf deciduous trees in the sheltered areas. Mastodons and/or mammoths were the largest animals present.

Clearly, if we went back to that time we would not recognize Mason Neck. However, that was what the first people to set foot on Mason Neck would have seen. Since it is likely that their settlements would have been along the main rivers, much of the evidence they left is probably submerged under the Pohick Creek, Potomac and Occoquan Estuaries.

How did their camps get submerged? As the Wisconsin glacier melted the resulting run-off of

water re-filled the oceans causing the sea levels to rise dramatically. At the same time the shrinking glaciers also reduced the downward pressure on the northern part of the North American plate. This has resulted in the "fore bulge" subsiding, which it appears to still be doing. This subsidence did not happen all of a sudden but took thousands of years and may still be going on. Mason Neck is a dynamic landscape.

Throughout the time frame, spanning from the arrival of Mason Neck's first inhabitants, possibly 15,000 to 25,000 years ago, until the last Native people were forced out of their homeland in A.D. 1675, native people lived along the shrinking shorelines of Mason Neck. These shores eventually stabilized some time between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago, as it appears to have done throughout the Chesapeake Bay. Some of the evidence for this can be found in the archeological record. Very few sites can be found on Mason Neck's shore that are older than 4,500 years. By then also the aquatic plant and animal life in the Potomac and Occoquan Estuaries were able to stabilize, too. People could better exploit the abundant fish, shellfish, bird and plant resources. Some archeologists think that this abundance could have contributed to the relatively late arrival of agriculture as a major industry in the Chesapeake: why do all that work when everything you need is there in abundance for the picking.

The search for Tauxenent, which was recorded by Captain John Smith on his 1608 map, provides a great example about how events that happened 30,000 years ago are relevant today. Back then it is likely that Belmont Bay was being carved out of the surrounding sedimentary cliffs by a large bend in the Occoquan River. With the onset of the Wisconsin glaciation and the relative raising of the land some 600 feet, it appears that the Occoquan River down cut a new, deep, straight channel that left Belmont Bay and the 30,000 year old Occoquan channel high and dry. By 7,000 years ago rising sea levels had probably reached the Occoquan-Potomac confluence off High Point and started the process of creating the current Mason Neck. The gradually rising water levels eroded their way up the newer Occoquan River channel eventually reaching above Sandy Point.

By 1608 and Smith's arrival, Mason Neck, including Belmont Bay, were beginning to take shape. Smith's map shows Mason Neck as an amoeba-like peninsula jutting out between Occoquan and Pohick Bays. His projection shows seven distinct points of land, six of which match today's map. What happened to the seventh point? That is where the 30,000 years of

# The Scoop

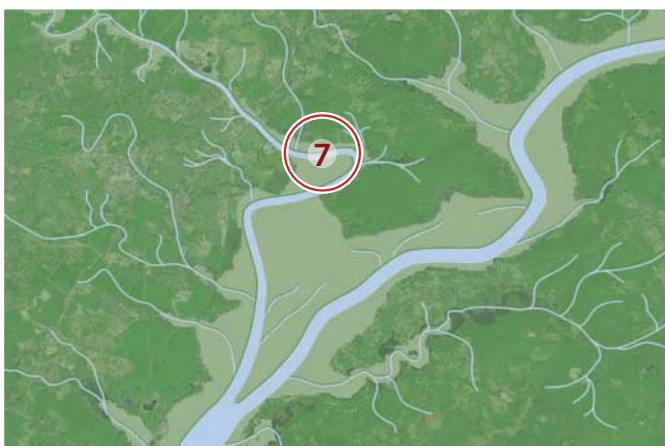
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geologic and climatological history become apparent and applicable.

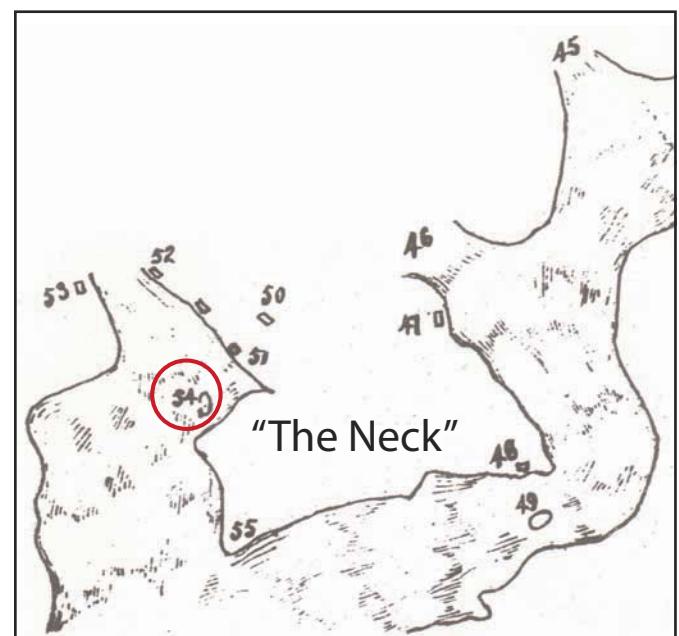
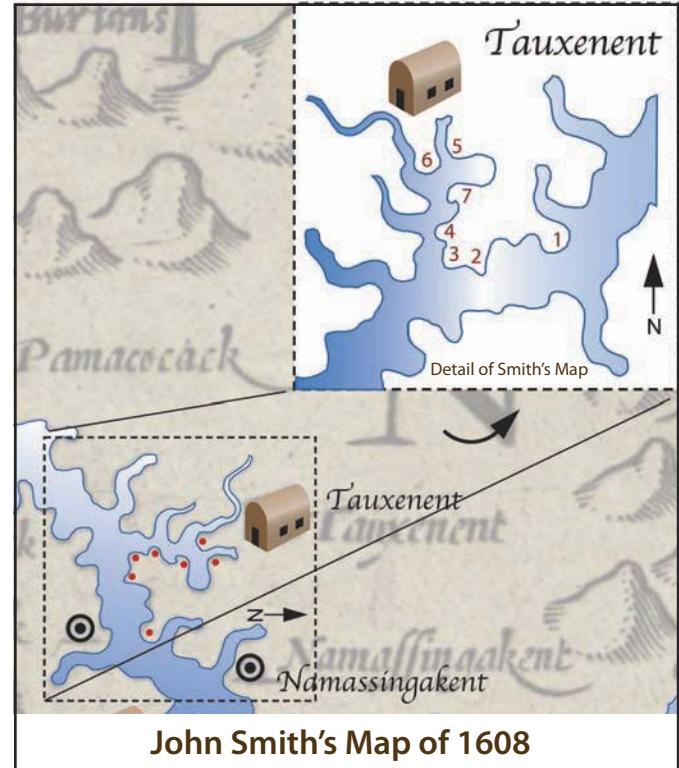
The lost seventh point of land is in Belmont Bay. According to a citation in Landmarks of Old Prince William In 1650, "he (Richard Turney) then sailed up the Potomac above Capt. Brent's until he saw the young corn fields of the Doegs, separated from the mainland by swamp, on what was, and still is, the most outstanding neck of land in all the freshes" (Harrison 1987: 45) . That "neck of land" had to be Mason Neck. The 1737 Brooke map shows an island clearly in Belmont Bay. The legend refers to the Island as "Doge Island once and indian habitation in Occoquan Bay now little left of it."

The chronology of the reduction of the seventh peninsula on Smith's Mason Neck down to a small, remnant island in 1737 fits the geological history. As sea level has risen a 1608 peninsula in Belmont Bay would have been shallow enough to have been subject to severe erosion. By 1650 the area between the end of the peninsula and Sandy point may have been a marsh (Turney's "swamp") with Kanes Creek at its head. That marsh may have filled the pre-Wisconsin Occoquan River (ox bow) channel. As sea level continued to rise, by 1737 the marsh may have become a part of Belmont Bay with the end of the peninsula becoming an island.

The question remains, is Conrad Island a spoil island from modern dredging or is it the last remnant of Dogue Island? Could it be both?



Mason Neck 30,000 Years Ago



Brooke's Map of 1737



## A Volunteer's Reflections on the Clark's Branch Excavation

Paul Antsen

Clark's Branch is a stream that flows into the Virginia side of the Potomac River at the western edge of River Bend Park. The Potomac Heritage Trail follows the Virginia side of the Potomac River from Roosevelt Island to the Fairfax – Loudoun County line. This trail crosses over Clark's Branch at the site of this excavation. The previous bridge had collapsed during a high water incident and a new larger bridge was planned. The Fairfax County office charged with an archeological review prior to any excavation had previously began a survey to determine any signs of historic or pre-historic activity in that portion of the park - specifically at the site of the future bridge.

Initial survey efforts indicated that that had been pre-historic campsites near the future location of the bridge. Accordingly, it was determined that Fairfax County archeologists would do a more comprehensive dig in this area and that the units unearthed might also serve as part of the abutment structure for the future bridge. In the summer of 2008 a number of volunteers began the process of digging out two 5 foot by 10 foot units to a depth of about 5 feet. The project was under the supervision of Paul Inashima, a professional archeologist under contract with the county. During that summer the group discovered numerous stone points and other evidence of at least seasonal habitation at the site. Paul also conducted additional sample excavations near the two larger units which disclosed additional evidence of habitation. After completing the two large units the group moved to another promising location and began a 5 foot by 5 foot unit which immediately produced many more stone artifacts and evidence of habitation.

The soil in this later pit appeared to have not been disturbed by the washing of soil down the hill or the action of the nearby stream bed. This undisturbed condition allowed professionals to accurately date charcoal removed from several of the layers which was used to more precisely date the artifacts found at the different layers. Evidence to date suggests habitation dating back between 6,500 to 8,500 years ago.

Digging operations were suspended in early fall of 2009 in order that the bridge could be constructed and plans are to return to the smaller site sometime in the near future to look for signs of even older artifacts.

As a member of the volunteer archeology group, the experience has been rewarding both for the excitement of discovery of ancient artifacts, the camaraderie of making new and interesting friends and the opportunity to enjoy a tranquil setting along the undeveloped portion of the Potomac River so close to our metropolitan area.

I would encourage anyone with time to share and an interest to consider volunteering for this rewarding opportunity. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Liz Crowell at 703 534-3881 ext. 402 of the Fairfax County Archeology Office.



If you would like to join FOFA, please fill out a copy of this membership form, and mail to Charles Balch at the address below:

## 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** \_\_\_\_\_

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**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

**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

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**Daytime Telephone**      **Evening Telephone**      **Cell Phone**      **Email Address**

Please indicate skills and background that might be shared with the Friar

**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 CABalch@aol.com

For Internal Use: Date Received: Amount Received: