



THE DATUM POINT

November 2022

Newsletter of the
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CHAPTER (NVC) OF THE
ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Chapter Website – www.nvcasv.org



FROM THE CHAPTER PRESIDENT

PATRICK O'NEILL

November's meeting will be a Zoom meeting, not an in-person meeting. Dr. Bernard Means from VCU will give us a very entertaining presentation!

I saw some of you at the ASV Annual Meeting, which was a sound success! Many great papers, good fellowship, and a great used book sale! I donated 21 boxes of books to sell to raise funds for the VARC at Kittiewan, and raised \$660! I was elected President of the ASV for the second time, first was from 2009-2010. Yvonne French was elected to the ASV Board of Directors, and Diane Schug-O'Neill is still serving on the ASV Board of Directors from 2022-2023.

NVC elections will be held at the December chapter meeting on December 14th. Most of the NVC officers have agreed to run again. Maggie Johnson is stepping away from the Recording Secretary. The slate is as follows:

Patrick O'Neill – President
Yvonne French – Vice-President
Barbara Leven – Treasurer
Diane Schug-O'Neill – Recording Secretary
John Kelsey – Corresponding Secretary
Chris Havlicek – Webmaster
Kurt Fredrickson – Datum Point Editor
Ann Wood – Certification Liaison

The December meeting will also be our Christmas Party, so please bring a food item to share! It can be a main item, snack, or desert! The chapter will provide some drinks, plates, and utensils. We hope to have it at the Richard Byrd Library in Springfield, but we will make the formal announcement in the December DP.



Zoom Meeting this month

Wednesday, November 9. 7:30 p.m.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89954758769>.

This Month's Lecture

America's Founding Monsters: The Comic Book

Dr. Bernard K. Means, Director of the Virtual Curation Laboratory at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), will discuss the *Founding Monsters* comic book, a collaborative effort by VCU student Maggie Colangelo and Dr. Means, a VCU anthropology professor.

The *Founding Monsters* comic book was created as a science-friendly graphical storytelling framework that tells the story of the Founding Fathers and their obsession with prehistoric megafauna, especially mastodons and giant ground sloths.



Founding Monsters combines sequential art (e.g. comic book style) with historical and scientific data. The first mastodon (*Mammuth americanum*) fossils were found in New York in the early 18th century. Later in the 18th century, Thomas Jefferson was sent fossils from what is now West Virginia for what were eventually identified as bones from a giant ground sloth (*Megalonyx jeffersoni*).

The founding fathers, including not only Jefferson, but also Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, saw these and other isolated bones discovered in Kentucky, New York, and Virginia as critical to countering a notion that simply being in the

Americas physically affected its inhabitants—animals, plants, and people—causing them to degenerate relative to their Old World counterparts. Jefferson, Franklin, and Washington all owned the fossils of Ice Age megafauna.

Some of Jefferson's mastodon and giant ground sloth fossils were collected by William Clark from Big Bone Lick at Jefferson's request and these are preserved at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. While the fate of Washington's mastodon fossils is unclear, a mastodon molar belonging to Franklin was found in property he owned in Philadelphia. However, even as more mastodon and giant ground sloth fossils were uncovered, they were not seen as a compelling counterpoint to the notion of American degeneracy—a complete or at least nearly complete skeleton was needed. In 1799, bones from a mastodon skeleton were discovered on a farm in Orange County, New York, eliciting great interest from Jefferson and his compatriots, including Charles Willson Peale, a famous painter and owner of the first public museum in the United States.

In 1801 Peale traveled to New York to purchase the mastodon bones found two years earlier and secure the right to excavate more bones. As part of America's first scientific excavation, he developed an ingenious pumping system consisting of a human-powered wooden wheel to remove water from his excavation areas, famously portrayed in his 1806 to 1808 painting *Exhumation of the Mastodon*. Peale recovered enough bones to reconstruct two mastodons, one of which was among the first of any fossil animals to be reconstructed. He displayed it in his museum in Philadelphia beginning on Christmas Eve 1801.

You can download a digital copy of *Founding Monsters* and its sequel *Founding Monsters Tales* at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/founding_monsters/.

In addition to being Director of the Virtual Curation Laboratory, Bernard K. Means is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the School of World Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. He earned his Ph.D. from Arizona State University and his B.A. from Occidental College.

His dissertation research involved applying new theories and cutting-edge technologies to American Indian village sites from southwestern Pennsylvania, many excavated during the 1930s by New Deal archaeologists. His scholarly pursuits include reconstructing American Indian village life from cross-cultural studies of village spatial and social organizations, the research potential of archaeological collections, and the history of archaeology across the Americas, especially during the Great Depression.

Means is the author of "Circular Villages of the Monongahela Tradition" (2007) and editor of and contributor to "Shovel Ready: Archaeology and Roosevelt's New Deal for America" (2013), as well as numerous articles on the Monongahela tradition, New Deal archaeology, and applications of 3-D scanning and printing to archaeology, especially public outreach.

In the Virtual Curation Laboratory, Means and his students are creating 3-D digital models of historical, archaeological, and paleontological objects used for teaching, research, and public outreach from across the Americas as well as northern India.



This month has been a busy one for the CART team! Some of our field crew had a table at this year's Centreville Day in Historic Centreville Park, it was estimated that 4,000 people were in attendance with a variety of vendors and events! We appreciate everyone who stopped by to learn a little bit about the archaeological history of the park!

The Lab crew has been busy labeling artifacts and preparing several projects for transfer to Collections. For every hour of field work there is an estimated 3-4 hours' worth of lab work that need to be complete. There are no active field projects right now, so this is a great opportunity for the field crew to assist with the lab work.

This month's ArtiFACT highlight features a common form of insulation often used in older houses, newspaper. While monitoring the demolition of an abandoned house in Fairfax County, CART archaeologists recovered a series of newspaper fragments

lining the interior walls of the home. Some of the pages were in fantastic condition ranging from 1923 to 1926 offering clues to the home's construction and what the homeowners were reading at the time. For more information on this post and others please visit:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/artifacts>



Please note that we are not currently taking volunteers until further notice. We will post new opportunities on the Volunteer Management website when they become available. Until then, ACB volunteers are encouraged to share their talents with other branches and/or parks where opportunities are now available. For more information, please visit Fairfax County's Volunteer page for more information. If you would like to be notified when we can accept volunteer assistance again, please email cartarchlab@live.com



ASV BOARD
DIANE SCHRUG-O'NEILL
Representative



Just a quick note to share some thoughts about the Annual Meeting and the Board meeting. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces *in person!* There were some very good presentations and I know many left with the usual “Now, I have more questions!” or “How can I get involved with that project?” sort of response to the Annual Meeting. And that’s a good thing! That’s the point of conferences. I encourage everyone to get in contact with the many people running interesting projects.

Bruce and Carole do a very good job informing Certification Students about projects that will fulfill Certification requirements. Check out the ASV site for their contact information or ask me and I’ll help you get in touch with whomever. Patrick O’Neill and Mike Johnson are great resources within the Northern Virginia Chapter. Many of our members are retired and live beyond the Beltway - there are other areas to get involved. Virginia Department of Historic Resources also has archaeological related projects and events to get you “out and about” or active from home.

The Board meeting spent a large part of its time precisely discussing these issues. Another big issue discussed was: Electronic Voting. The pandemic forced the ASV to try e-voting and the Board was very pleased to see so many voting participants beyond the physical meeting votes of the past. The reality is that the majority of ASV members do not attend the Annual Meeting for many reasons (distance; money; personal issues; etc.). I want to assure you that the ASV is seriously working on making e-voting a reality. The ASV Board wants all its members to be heard on all issues brought to a vote. On issues not voted upon...*please reach out* to any Board Member. You elected the Board, YOU should feel free to ask questions and present issues and solutions. Kittiewan was another big topic discussed. There will be more Work Days coming. Some will include archaeology some will include property upkeep. I will do my part to try to get this information out to you.



2022 NVC/ASV CHAPTER OFFICERS

President	Patrick O'Neill	PATRICKLONEILL@VERIZON.NET 703-244-6275
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Other Public Archaeological Programs in Northern Virginia/DC

Fairfax Co. Archaeology (FCPA)	Dr. Elizabeth Crowell	elizabeth.crowell@fairfaxcounty.gov 703-534-3881
Mount Vernon	Joe Downer	JDowner@mountvernon.org 703.799.6831
Gunston Hall	Dave Shonyo	archaeology@gunstonhall.org 703-638-9724
Alexandria Museum	Dr. Eleanor Breen	Eleanor.Breen@alexandriava.gov 703-838-4399
DC City Archaeologist	Dr. Ruth Trocolli	Ruth.Trocolli@dc.gov 202-442-8836

NVC/ASV MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Dues:

Individual (\$15) _____

Family (\$17) _____

Student (\$5) _____

Please make check payable to NVC/ASV.

Return to:

Barbara Leven, Treasurer, NVC/ASV

9518 Liberty Tree Lane

Vienna VA 22182

The Chapter meets at 7:30p.m. on the 2nd Wed. of each month. *Due to COVID-19 concerns, meetings may take place in-person and/or on Zoom. Details with start time and on-line/in-person information will be provided in the Datum Point newsletter prior to each meeting.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!!