

# Archeological Society of Virginia Massanutten Chapter

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# POINTS



## Primitive Technology Day

*Submitted by Cindy Schroer*

On Saturday morning the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, members of the Massanutten and Upper James River chapters wandered down the paths past the German and Irish farmsteads for the first Primitive Technology Day hosted by the Frontier Culture Museum. The weather was perfect, cloudy and in the cool low 80's. After weeks of dry hot near 100 degree heat, it was a welcome change. White canopied tents had been set up for the exhibitors along a spring/pond fed stream. I couldn't help but wonder if we could only sink a couple of test pits, we would find evidence of native peoples having chosen the same spot many years ago. The chapter's role was to identify any artifacts that visitors may bring with them; alas these were in short supply and we spent our time meandering to and from the tents looking at and talking to the makers of flint knapped tools, ground axes, steatite bowls, brain tanned leather, bows, and clay pots. Children and adults delighted in making holes in stones with pump drills. Over the bridge across the creek and up the hill was the atlatl throwing area. George had set up hay bales for us to practice with. A Giant Virginia Toad (*Bufo americanus gigantous*) sat quietly on one set of

bales, and the largest freshwater fish (*Salmo trutta*) I have ever seen swam silently on another. A bit further in the distance, you could make out the outline of a large saber-toothed cat (*Smilodon fatalis*) and if you squinted your eyes you could just make out the fierce pygmy black bear (*Ursus americanus pygmaeus*).



MCASV President Cindy Schroer displaying her Atlatl skills.  
(Photo by Jeff Good)

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# Primitive Technology Day

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We patiently instructed both the young and the old on how to throw. First make sure the notched back of the dart is snug to the antler spur. Next grasp the atlatl at the front placing your hand or fingers through the leather strap. Then balance the dart horizontally holding it to the atlatl with your fingers and point your non throwing arm toward the target. Stand sideways towards the target and place your opposing foot forward, pulling the atlatl back over your shoulder. Keeping the dart horizontal, whip your arm forward with the appropriate follow through (which I akin to pitching a baseball). When everything is in alignment, it is amazing how easy the atlatl is to throw. It's the accuracy thing that is really the problem. I threw a lot of darts on Saturday and wasn't sore at all (from the throwing, the bad case of sunburn was another matter). The bear would escape harm this day and many hunters would go away hungry. I think the experience was wonderful and I remember fondly the jumping up and down of one small boy as he ran back to his parents squealing "Momma, I hit the frog, I hit the frog!" All in all in was a great day.

Footnote: We were fortunate to have an unexpected and interesting experimental lesson...because of the repetitive use of the atlatl's and darts we discovered what does and does not work from a design standpoint. Atlatl's with inserted rear spurs were hardier while those that had rear spurs that were tied did not fare as well. Atlatl's do not have to be fancy to be effective - the one George made from Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) from his back yard performed well. Overall, the darts did well... except they are really hard to find in the woods. We look forward to next year.



Event Organizer and MCASV member George Lott demonstrating his flint knapping skills. (Photo by Cindy Schroer)

## July Birthdays

July 15      Carole Persinger

July 29      Laura Roder

Please complete the MCASV Membership Application and submit to the MCASV Treasurer, so we have your birthdates for the newsletter.



## Certification Program Opportunities

*Submitted by Carole Nash*

The following is information on upcoming certification opportunities:

**Historic and Prehistoric Lab Work**: Artifact processing and analysis from several 19th century historic home sites and prehistoric base camps. M, W, F schedule -- set your time! Contact Carole (432-6864 or nashcl@jmu.edu) for parking information and directions to her new JMU lab space.

### **2010 Field School and Volunteer Opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities available throughout the state for Certification members and Chapter volunteers. Check out the MCASV website at [www.mcasv.org](http://www.mcasv.org) for a full listing of the programs, their websites, and contact information.

#### **\*\*2010 Virginia Field Schools Still Available\*\***

(More details are on Pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter)

Mount Vernon  
Golden Ball Tavern  
Chippokes Plantation, Surry County  
Fairfield Foundation

### **Department of Historic Resources (DHR) Volunteer Program**

Volunteer days can be arranged during the week for anyone interested. Prehistoric and historic artifact processing, cataloguing, data entry, documentary research, and outreach activities are some examples of what work is available. Please contact Chief Curator Dee DeRoche at [dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov) or (804) 367-2323 x134 for an application and to set up day(s) to volunteer if you are interested.

## MCASV Picnic July 31, 2010 4 p.m.

Please come out and join us for an evening of food and fellowship at our Annual Summer Picnic at the home of Linda and Wayne Waggy. Please bring a covered dish to share with everyone. Linda and Wayne will be providing BBQ Chicken. Please call 540-828-3260 or email Linda: [llwaggy@aol.com](mailto:llwaggy@aol.com) to let her know you are coming and if you need directions.

There will be NO business meeting at the Picnic.



## Upcoming Events

- July 10, 2010 Primitive Technologies Day 9a.m. until 5 p.m. Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. Go to <http://www.frontier.virginia.gov/> for more information.
- July 31, 2010 Chapter Picnic 4 p.m. at Linda and Wayne Waggy's Home. Please bring a covered dish to share.
- August 4, 2010 TBA
- October 28-31, 2010 ASV Annual Meeting, Clarion Hotel Historic District, Williamsburg, VA  
Speaker: Dr. Douglas Owsley, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

## \*Updated\* 2010 Field School Opportunities for Certification Students

*Submitted by Carole Nash and Bruce Baker*

The following field schools are still scheduled for the summer. Contact them to see if there are any open spots for certification students.

1. Mount Vernon Archaeology needs certification students in the field on Monday - Friday and two Saturdays each month through August 31. Hours are good for field survey or historic excavation as well as checking off field skill requirements. The site is an undocumented plowzone site from the late 18th - early 19th century (c. 1790 - 1830). They are sampling plowzone to recover a distribution of artifacts to better understand who might have lived on this site. In addition, Mt. Vernon staff is willing to offer historic lab hours and provide hours for the new public education component (for those who have joined the program since Jan. 1, 2010). INTERESTED PARTICIPANTS SHOULD CONTACT CURT BRECKENRIDGE ([cbreckenridge@mountvernon.org](mailto:cbreckenridge@mountvernon.org)) OR DR. ESTHER WHITE ([ewhite@mountvernon.org](mailto:ewhite@mountvernon.org)).

2. Golden Ball Tavern, Petersburg. Golden Ball Tavern excavation that will run from June 16-July 19, 2010 (each Wed-Sun, except July 4th weekend). Participants can enroll for credit through Richard Bland College or volunteer. There are several different types of Certification opportunities for volunteers that include archival research, field experience in historical archaeology, and the new public education requirement. The latter would include hours spent interfacing with the public who come to the excavation during a regular work day. INTERESTED PARTICIPANTS SHOULD CONTACT DR. CHRIS STEVENSON -- CERT STUDENTS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO TAKE THE COURSE THROUGH RICHARD BLAND, BUT MUST CONTACT CHRIS ASAP IF INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING ([cmstevenson23805@gmail.com](mailto:cmstevenson23805@gmail.com)).

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## \*Updated\* 2010 Field School Opportunities for Certification Students

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3. Chippokes Plantation State Park, Surry County. July 12 - 21, 2010, VDHR/Passport In Time joint field school. Excavation directed by Dr. Mike Barber in front of the kitchen at Chippokes Plantation house. This work will satisfy requirements for historic excavation. There will also be an associated prehistoric survey to delineate the boundaries of the Middle-Late Woodland Hatch Site (44PG51).

Note: As of June 19, the Passport and Time spots are filled, but there are still openings for Certification students. Check with Dr. Barber to check availability.

4. Fairfield plantation in Gloucester County -- another opportunity from the Fairfield Foundation fellows. This will run from July 13-17. They welcome ASV certifications students for any time during this 5-day field school, but ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO COMMIT TO SEVERAL DAYS to either fulfill the field school requirement or just acquire more field experience. This opportunity will also fulfill the historic excavation requirement, as they will be working on testing yard areas surrounding the destroyed 1694 manor house, as well as working on portions of the house itself. There will also be opportunities for historic lab work, and again they may be able to do some lectures if there is interest.

Thane also writes that anyone interested in learning about other digging opportunities that might occur in our area (Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck) please contact him at [fairfield@inna.net](mailto:fairfield@inna.net). He and Dave and crew from the Middle Peninsula Chapter will be digging at Fairfield for much of the summer; he is glad to include you in the Middle Peninsula chapter update list.

5. Additional projects in the works: more work at Camp Misery on Civil War huts (Stafford County), led by Dr. Mike Barber; survey on the Claremont Farm tract (Clarke County), led by Dr. Mike Barber; survey on Overall Run Farms, Page County, led by Carole Nash. As soon as we have details on these projects, we will send them on.

We hope that you will take advantage of some of these wonderful opportunities!

Carole and Bruce

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*We're on the web*  
*[www.mcasv.org](http://www.mcasv.org)*

## We Need Your Help in Contributing Articles!

Your article could be here!

Please help by contributing articles each month.

The deadline for any information to be included in the newsletter will be the TWENTIETH of each month. Please have articles sent to Laura and Jeff by this time.

Your article could be here! Please email the Newsletter Editors at [roderla@aol.com](mailto:roderla@aol.com) (Laura Roder) and [atlatlist@comcast.net](mailto:atlatlist@comcast.net) (Jeff Good) if you are submitting an article to the MCASV Newsletter.

