

# Archeological Society of Virginia Massanutten Chapter

Volume 29, Issue 6

June 2008



# POINTS



## Thoughts on Vanished Cultures

*Submitted by Joe Sharrer*

Three unrelated events took place over the last several months that seemed random at the time but in retrospect were full of significance for my understanding of the concept of culture that we use so frequently in the field of archaeology.

First, the Harrisonburg Rockingham Historical Society sponsored a lecture from the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton on the topic of the newly planned African homestead to be constructed there to be based on the Ibo or Igbo culture of Nigeria. Nigerian builders will come to the Museum to assist staff and volunteers in building the exhibit using traditional Igbo tools and building techniques which is scheduled to begin this summer.

Second, I purchased a copy of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Things Fall Apart, a novel about the African culture of the Ibo as it was before western contact and later during the process of western contact and change.

Finally, Mike Barber spoke eloquently to our May chapter meeting about lost culture and how its texture is gone forever despite our efforts to understand the material remains available to archaeologists of today.

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## Correction to June MCASV Meeting Info in "Eighty-One" Newspaper

Please disregard the information published in Eighty-One newspaper regarding this month's meeting. They have published our meeting date as Monday, June 2 and have also listed the wrong speaker for this month. As always, our meeting will be held this **Wednesday, June 7** at 7:00 in the Bridgewater Town Hall. The speaker will be Dr. Bernard Means from Washington and Lee University, discussing "New Deal Archaeology." The **July 2** speaker is Dr. Steve Thompson, from Rivanna Archaeological Associates discussing "Excavations in a Free State: A Rare Ante-Bellum Free Black Community in Albermarle County"

## Website Problems

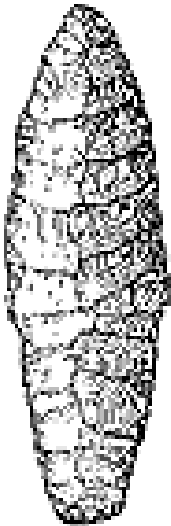
*Submitted by Jeff Good*

Due to a major hardware crash on the host server we have been experiencing problems with the website. The site has been moved to another server that will provide better support. This should be resolved within the week. Sorry for any inconvenience or confusion it may have caused.

## Artifact of the Month

*Submitted by Carole Nash*

The June Artifact of the Month comes to us from the High Plains. Or is it the Upper Great Lakes? New England? No! It was found at 44MA127, 50 miles east of Bridgewater. It is the midsection of a Plano projectile point, one of the hallmarks of North American flintknapping. A drawing of a complete eastern Plano point from southern Ontario is seen below. These thin, parallel-flaked points are almost always manufactured of the highest quality stone, and this one is no exception, made of a non-Virginia chert. It dates to the time of the late



\_\_\_\_\_ period and is usually associated with highly mobile hunters, not the hunter-gatherers living at the base of the Virginia Blue Ridge who were making a transition to more restricted territories.

So what's a projectile point, first identified in the western U.S., doing in Virginia? Come to the August meeting to find out!



## Morris Pottery Kiln Pledge Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, wish to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_\_ towards the construction of the MCASV Morris Pottery Kiln shelter.

*Please send this form along with a check made out to the MCASV to the following address:*

MCASV  
c/o Tom Mizell—Treasurer  
984 Airport Road  
Bridgewater, VA 22812

## 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.

### \*\*2008 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.

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

The DHR Volunteer Program has ended for the spring, but there are many opportunities still available on weekdays. Contact Chief Curator Dee DeRoche at [dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:dee.deroche@dhr.virginia.gov) or (804) 367-2323 x134 to receive an application and set up a day to begin volunteer work. Assistance is still needed with various projects.

## MCASV June 2008 Meeting Agenda

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| I. Call to Order   | VI. Newsletter Editors' Report    |
| II. Welcome to Guests  | VII. Certification Program Report |
| III. Program:<br>"New Deal Archaeology"<br>by Dr. Bernard Means,<br>Washington & Lee<br>University | VIII. Morris Pottery Kiln         |
| IV. Secretary's Report   | IX. New Business                  |
| V. Treasurer's Report  | X. Announcements                  |
|  | XI. Adjournment                   |

## Upcoming Events

- June 4, 2008      Dinner at Taste of Thai 917 South Main Street in Harrisonburg, 5:00 p.m.  
For a Menu go to [http://www.taste-of-thai.com/wst\\_page4.html](http://www.taste-of-thai.com/wst_page4.html). Please  
contact Kay Veith for reservations at: [vaveith@comcast.net](mailto:vaveith@comcast.net).
- June 4, 2008      MCASV Monthly Meeting, Bridgewater Town Hall, 7:00 p.m.  
Program: "New Deal Archaeology" Dr. Bernard Means, Washington and Lee  
University
- July 2, 2008      MCASV Monthly Meeting, Bridgewater Town Hall, 7:00 p.m.  
Program: "Excavations in a Free State: A Rare Ante-Bellum Free Black  
Community in Albermarle County", Dr. Steve Thompson, Rivanna  
Archaeological Associates

## Thoughts on Vanished Cultures

*(Continued From Page 1)*

Then I began to read Mr. Achebe's book about the Ibo before their culture was radically impacted by western contact. The richness and complexity of the Ibo culture, its customs, cosmology and the roles of various people, clans and villages are revealed in startling clarity.

The agricultural practices, foodways, marital customs, conflict resolutions process and religious practices would be unknown from the remains of a material culture. For example the Ibo thought twins were an evil sign and consigned them to a quick death in the Evil Forest, a custom promptly banned by the western missionaries. Women who lost children in their early years were thought to have given birth to an *ogbanje* or changeling who would die and be reborn repeatedly until forced to reveal the location of a stone called an *iyi-uwa*. There were expert shamans who alone could make the child reveal the hiding place of the *iyi-uwa*. These few examples illustrate the breath of a cultural complexity that would have vanished before documentation by a literate observer.

The last section of the book tells the story of the arrival of western missionaries, the start of churches, the intrusion of a central government with western values into Ibo culture, the destruction of the Ibo systems of conflict resolution and the education of young men in the ways of the Europeans. The old culture slowly collapses and the old ways really do fall apart.

When the new African exhibit at the Frontier Culture Museum opens I will experience the presentation with an enhanced understanding of what we don't see in the reconstruction of vanished cultures. Read the Achebe's book before you go. The exhibit will be much more powerful. It will add immeasurably to your experience.

And as we continue to explore pre-historic cultures of the Valley, I will always have a better understanding of the limits of our ability to know the richness of those vanished cultures.

**Massanutten Chapter of the  
Archeological Society of Virginia  
Minutes  
May 6, 2008**

**Call to Order:** President Cindy Schroer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed members and guests.

**Attending:** Members: Joe Sharrer, Carole Persinger, Alexandrya Click, Barry Click, Jeff Good, Kay Veith, Hank and Bobi Deyerle, Linda Waggy, Glenn Huffman, Tom Mizell, Robert Frye, Carole Nash, Cindy Schroer, Agnes Donnelly, David Brightbill, Matt Gerome

Visitors: Charles and Pat Churchman, Rick Powell, Richard and Elizabeth Harris, Roman and Elva Miller, Marty Neary, Hugh and Ginny Whitten, Fred and Kathy Lindsey, Steve Stutzman, Nathan Posbith, Betty Redmond, Phyllis Showalter, Dot and David Hatmaker, R. B. Eggleston, Jessica McDade, Nancy Simmons, Frank and Joyce Aigner, Wayne Waggy, Richard E. Harris, Jr., Logan and Jacob Harris, Ken Weaver, Frank Gerome, Angus Carter, Page Shields, Paul Bisgaard

**Program:** Dr. Michael Barber, State Archaeologist, Virginia Department of Historic Resources presented a very interesting program on "17,000 Years of Human Occupation: Virginia Archaeology from the Coastal Plain to the Appalachian Plateau."

**Secretary's Report:** The minutes of the April meeting were approved as published in the "Points". Carole moved minutes approved, Linda seconded, motion approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Tom Mizell reported the following balances:  
Special Account: \$13,146.69 (When the check is received from the ASV the balance in the Special Account will be \$15,646.69.)  
Checking Account: \$940.57  
Kitty: \$35.16

**Newsletter Editors' Report:** Editor Jeff Good reminded the group that he needs articles for the Points by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**Certification Program Report:** Carole Nash reported that there are a number of activities going on for certification members. She is hoping for a graduate from our chapter this year. Lectures and workshops needed for completion of the program are being set up around the state. The field school at Kittiewan and the Uplands Conference in Roanoke are scheduled in May, check the ASV website for details. A workshop on completion of the DSS form will be held Thursday night at the New River Chapter. Carole will be working at Big Meadows, Mt. Vernon, then Wintergreen starting next week. Please let Carole know if you want to go with her.

Board meeting report: The ASV will provide the \$2,500 donation for the Morris Pottery Kiln project. When we received the check, it will put us over our goal of \$15,000, however, fund raising will continue so we will be able to have funds available for upkeep of the kiln. Rudy Tucker has a firing in May where he is hoping to have room for at least 12 crocks for us now. He will do jugs for us next year. We have three crocks left to sell from the last firing.

**Morris Pottery Kiln:** Please check the “Points” for an update on the work being done at the kiln. The next work day scheduled is this Saturday, May 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The south trench is completed and currently we are working on East trench. The ground is “heaven to dig” and all members are encouraged to come out to help. Additional work days are scheduled for May 24, June 7 and 21. Carole explained the plan as controlled dig, 2.5’ x 10’ where members can learn about soil, artifacts and documenting the site. James Madison University Student Evan Wilson is doing a six credit study on the Morris Pottery Kiln project identifying vessel forms.

**New Business:** DSS training to register sites on line is available. Hopefully, our chapter will be able to schedule a workshop in the fall. We need to have a professional teach the workshop.

**Announcements:**

Cindy Schroer asked that a thank you letter be sent to Luanne Austin for the article in the “Escape” and “Rocktown” sections of the Daily News Record.

Dr. Michael Barber reported that Professor Norm Barka of William and Mary died last week. Dr. Barka was instrumental in leading William & Mary archaeology into the historic arena. Dr. Barber reported that he was brilliant man who brought a lot into Virginia archaeology.

Spring Creek Town Hall Association is sponsoring a pancake breakfast Saturday, May 10, 7:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

At the Uplands Conference next weekend a visit is scheduled to a cemetery that Cliff Boyd of Radford and his group are working on.

Northern Shenandoah Historical Society is opening the Peter Stevens house site for interpretation with public.

The program for June will be presented by Bernard Means. Dinner prior to the meeting will be at Taste of Thai at 5:15 p.m. Please let Kay Veith know if you would like to go so she can reserve a table for the group. —July Monticello

Don’t forget the dig Saturday, bring your lunch and water.

As there was no additional business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by  
Kay Veith, Secretary



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Archeological Society of Virginia  
P.O. Box 204  
Bridgewater, VA 22812-0204



*We're on the web*  
*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 (Laura Roder) and atlatlist@comcast.net (Jeff Good) if you are submitting an article to the MCASV Newsletter.

