



County Archaeology Collections Exhibit (CACE) Project Grant Funded by Preserve America

On September 27, 2010, The Maryland Archaeological Conservation (MAC) Lab at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum (JPPM) and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) received a \$27,623 grant from the Department of Interior, National Park Service (NPS) through the Preserve America grant program, for a project entitled the County Archaeology Collections Exhibit (CACE) Project. The CACE project will create two public exhibitions, scheduled to open in 2011, that will bring archaeological objects held at the MAC Lab back home to their “County” of origin. Project partners include the St. Mary’s County Public Libraries and the Washington County Historical Society.

As part of this project, objects excavated in St. Mary’s and Washington Counties will be brought out of storage at the MAC Lab into public view along with interpretive materials and programs that will aid the public in understanding the rich messages of archaeological materials. In some instances, this will be the first time that the public will have an opportunity to see and understand this archaeological evidence.

“These exhibits provide us with a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the state’s most important archaeological sites,” stated Patricia Samford, Director of the MAC Lab. “The lab holds more than eight million objects in trust for the citizens of Maryland. Here is an instance where the Lab, the Trust and county representatives are working together to assist the public in appreciating the importance of these historical resources.”

The first of the two CACE exhibits opened at the St. Mary’s County’s Lexington Park Library in February 2011, with the Washington County exhibit opening later in the year as a key element of the Washington County Historical Society’s centennial celebration. Public programs will be created around these exhibitions with the assistance of the MAC Lab staff and representatives of the Archeological Society of Maryland and the Council for Maryland Archaeology.



St. Mary’s County’s Lexington Park Library Exhibit.

What is **Archaeology**?

Have you ever wondered what life was like 100... 1,000... or even 10,000 years ago? Ask an archaeologist! By excavating the places where people lived and worked in the past, archaeologists can uncover stories buried by time, even when no written record exists. Archaeologists learn about past human cultures by studying the objects or artifacts people left behind. Anything made or used by humans is part of the archaeological record – from the smallest nail to the grandest palace. Archaeologists excavate these remains to understand all parts of past culture, from the daily lives of ordinary people to the conquests of kings and queens.



Why are Artifacts **Important**?

Have you ever lost a penny or a button? Everything from coins, house foundations, letters, drawings, and even buttons can be an important piece of the puzzle that tells us about life in the past. Sometime in the future, the object you lost today might be used by an archaeologist to help understand life in 21st-century Maryland. Just as paleontologists learn about dinosaurs from fossil evidence, archaeologists gain understanding about humans from material evidence (like lost coins and buttons) called artifacts.



People have lived in Maryland and St. Mary's County for thousands of years. One way to learn about the people who used to live here is by studying the objects they left behind...



Washed



Labeled



Catalogued/Stored

During an archaeological excavation, thousands of artifacts may be found, each one offering a small window into the past. The challenge lies in understanding the stories they hold. Long after the digging is done, the work continues in the laboratory as archaeologists analyze and interpret the artifacts they found. Although some artifacts are beautiful or interesting in their own right, the goal of archaeology is to understand the people who made and used the objects. Artifacts help us understand when people lived at a site, what they ate, who they traded with and much, much more.



What happens to Artifacts Once the Digging is Done?

Museums and other institutions care for and store archaeological artifacts so they will be available for future generations to study and see them in exhibits like this one. In Maryland, the primary repository for archaeological artifacts is the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory (MAC Lab) at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum in St. Leonard. All the artifacts on display in this exhibit are from the MAC Lab collections. Interested in seeing more artifacts? The MAC Lab encourages the public to schedule a tour of the facility and collections.



How Do Archaeologists Know Where to Dig?



Any place humans live or work, they leave behind visible evidence that can be discovered by archaeologists. Beneath our feet is a wealth of information – but only if you know where to look. Before ever picking up a shovel or trowel, an archaeologist spends time searching books, maps, and even oral histories for clues to where to find sites. They then head to the field to hunt for evidence at ground level. Finding features on the landscape, such as old house foundations and even fence lines, provides the archaeologist with evidence that a site may lie underfoot.

Why Do Archaeologists Dig So Slowly?

Excavating a site is more than just digging a hole in the ground. Archaeologists excavate slowly, soil layer by soil layer, carefully documenting each artifact they uncover. Discovering an arrowhead is interesting – but knowing that the arrowhead was found lying next to deer bones and a cooking hearth tells us a lot more about what happened at the site. Recording the exact location and context of an artifact is as important as finding the artifact itself. In archaeology, patience and attention to detail are job requirements.



Pottery and oyster shells in an 18th-century trash pit.



We can learn a lot about life in St. Mary's County from archaeological sites and artifacts. Explore the sites, artifacts, and stories described here by opening the drawers below...

Voices From the Past

The Sotterley Plantation Slave Cabin

Artifacts can bring the past to life and help us understand people who otherwise are lost to history. Open drawer #1 below and explore how broken pottery, a ritual burial, and a slate pencil helped archaeologists better understand the lives of the enslaved African Americans who once lived at Sotterley Plantation.



19th-century English pottery

18th-century iron hoe

Local Legend: Fact or Fiction?

Notley Hall

Just like in a game of “telephone,” stories handed down through generations can sometimes become distorted. Archaeology can help cut through the noise, revealing the truth within a legend. Explore drawer #2 and discover how this yellow brick, a collection of 18th-century artifacts, and a house foundation helped separate fact from fiction at colonial Notley Hall.

Stone tools

Food for Thought

The Aud Site

Imagine a world without grocery stores or restaurants. How would you get your food, what would you eat? Open drawer #3 and learn how blood residue on stone tools discovered at the Aud site helped archaeologists better understand the diet of the Native Americans who lived in St. Mary's County for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans.