

VCU 3D AT GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BOYHOOD HOME

June 29, 2012 Bernard K. Means Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Digital Archaeology, Finds, Historical Archaeology, Museum Archaeology Academia, Alison Curran, Archaeology, Artifact, Ashley McCuiston, Augustine, Belgium, Bernard K. Means, Betty, education, ferry farm, Ferry Farm archaeologist, France, Fredericksburg, george washington, Ian Salata, Laura Galke, Luxembourg, Mary Ball Washington, project director, Stafford County, The Netherlands, Victoria Garcia, Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virtual Curation Laboratory

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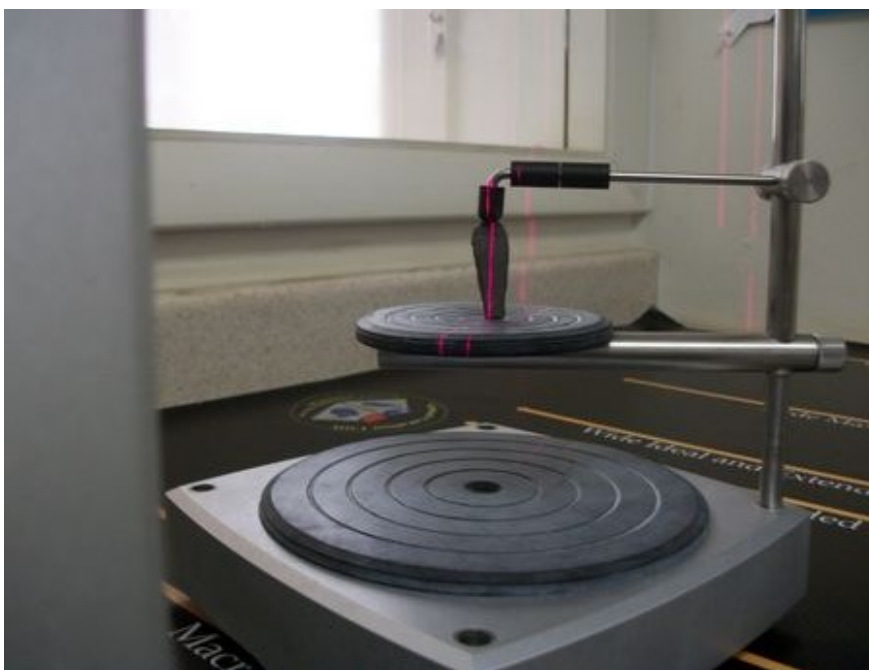
VCU students Alison Curran and Ian Salata participate in the Day of Archaeology by excavating at Ferry Farm.

I chose to spend my Day of Archaeology at George Washington's Boyhood Home, located in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Archaeologists working here have uncovered traces of human occupation dating back thousands of years, but understandably have been focused on the period associated with [George Washington's tenancy](#). George moved here at the age of 6 with his mother Mary, his father Augustine, and several family members. A team of archaeologists is working this year—as they have in past years—seeking to broaden our understanding of George Washington's childhood—a rather poorly documented time period.



VCU students Ashley McCuiston and Victoria Garcia look on as the “BW” spoon is being scanned.

My goal today is to use my NextEngine scanner and create digital models of archaeological objects recovered at Ferry Farm, including items recovered this year by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) students as part of their recently completed field school, as well as objects recovered in past years from contexts definitely associated with the Washington family occupation. These objects are categorized as “small finds” or unique objects that might be lost in traditional archaeological mass data analyses. For a recent article on small finds at Ferry Farm, and how they can broaden our understanding of the Washington family’s personal and social worlds, I recommend Ferry Farm archaeologist Laura Galke’s (2009) article [*“The Mother of the Father of Our Country: Mary Ball Washington’s Genteel Domestic Habits”* *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 38:29-48](#). I began the day by scanning a pewter spoon handle with the initials “BW”—representing George Washington’s sister, Betty. This spoon and its significance for socializing Betty in gentry-class society is discussed by Galke (2009).



“BW” spoon as it is being scanned.

The spoon actually proved more challenging than expected because it is thin, dark, and the design is shallow. But, a little fine powder coating and a long scan seems to have resulted in a nice digital model.

The second artifact we scanned is a lead alloy cloth seal that resembles late 16th century AD examples from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. We also scanned a Civil War Minie ball found by VCU student Ian Salata during this year's field school. An interesting artifact that we scanned was a toy hatchet made of lead dropped by a tourist visiting the place where some claim (erroneously) that George Washington chopped down the cherry tree!!!