

100 DEGREES, HIGH HUMIDITY — FIELD SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA'S SHENANDOAH VALLEY

June 29, 2012 nashcl Day of Archaeology 2012, Education, Historical Archaeology Archaeological Technician, Archeological Society of Virginia, ASV Chapter, Carole Nash, Charles III, Cindy Schroer, Council of Virginia Archaeologists, Cullen Byers, Field School, Fork, James Madison University, Janice Biller, Kay Veith, Laura Wedin, Linda Waggy, Man-Made Disaster, Marsha Summerson, Massanutten Mountain, Maxine Grabill, Natural Disaster, Oh Shenandoah, Page County, Philip Mulford, President, Shenandoah River, Shenandoah Valley, Stoneware, Virginia, Virginia Archaeologists, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, White House, White House Farm Foundation

Carole Nash writing to you from Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley, where I'm finishing up a week-long field school at a ca. 1760 Rhenish stone flurkuchenhaus, the White House, on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. I teach at James Madison University in Harrisonburg and co-direct the [Archaeological Technician Certification Program](#), an effort of the Archeological Society of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and the Council of Virginia Archaeologists. This week's field school was created for Cert students — we have over 70 grads and almost 90 active students who commit to 60 hours of lab work, 60 hours of field survey, 60 hours of excavation, 20 hours of public education, 12 courses, and a reading list a mile long. Our students range in age from 16-83 and all share a remarkable dedication to archaeology. The White House field school is but one of our 2012 Cert programs.

What started as a very clear, cool week ended with a blast of summer — today's temps reached 100 degrees at the site — and we have one more day to go. Anyone who has spent a summer digging in Virginia knows what this means: start early, drink lots of water, and take a LONG lunch! Fortunately for us, we're working in an amazingly beautiful location in the shadow of

Massanutten Mountain, we have shade trees and canopies, and we have a clean portajohn. We have an outdoor lab set up to wash artifacts. Actually feels pretty luxurious.

So...the White House: built by a German immigrant family in ca. 1760; now part of the [White House Farm Foundation](#), which has put 270 acres of land in conservation easement and is working toward a National Register nomination for the structure. A flurkuchenhaus is a Rhenish (German Rhineland) design, with three rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs, plus a vaulted basement. They are sometimes referred to as 'stone forts' because they were constructed during the French and Indian War years on the Virginia Frontier, but they were not defensive structures. They're beautiful stone houses, though. This one was covered with skim and stucco at least three times. We have been reading Valley documents and know that the house was called "White House" as early as 1769 and used as a Mennonite and Baptist meeting house.

Our goals (in addition to getting our students solid archaeological training): confirm the date of construction; learn about the evolution of the house; determine the impact of flooding on the landform (first terrace, South Fork of the Shenandoah); and learn whether the terrace was occupied by Native Americans prior to the Kauffman family. A tall order for a week of work! Gotta aim high, right? We did, indeed, find evidence to assist with each of these goals, although admittedly, the heat slowed us down today.

I am so proud of our team — today's crew included six Certification grads (Laura Wedin, Marsha Summerson, Maxine Grabill, Janice Biller, Linda Waggy, and Kay Veith), a Certification student (Philip Mulford), our local ASV Chapter President (Cindy Schroer), and a new archaeology student (Cullen Byers). Our smaller crew today was down from 18 on Wednesday. GO TEAM! You're the best!

Our findings from thirteen 2.5' x 2.5 units and one backhoe trench: our arms aren't long enough to dig on the South Fork floodplain! We have a .4' flood deposit on top of a 1' plowzone filled with late 18th/19th century artifacts, with Native American lithics and pottery included. Under the plowzone we have flood deposit 1, flood deposit 2, flood deposit 3, flood deposit 4, flood deposit 5 — and that's where we stopped. The bucket auger is our friend.

Cool artifacts: a piece of eight from the reign of Charles III (Carolus dollar); two French gun flints; English brown stoneware; Westerwald stoneware; a kaolin pipestem; creamware; a remarkable variety of pearlware; cut nails and more cut nails; Middle and Late Woodland pottery.

Our plan: come back in the Fall when the weather is cooler.

Happy Day of Archaeology from Virginia, all!



East wall of White House