

**Fairfield Foundation 2014 Year in Review:
Five Fascinating Finds from Middle Peninsula and surrounding areas**

2014 was an exciting, successful year for the Fairfield Foundation, as we officially expanded the mission of our non-profit organization to focus on archaeology, preservation and education not just in Gloucester County, but on Virginia's Middle Peninsula and surrounding areas. With engaging, public-oriented projects spanning the region, it's hard to choose favorite sites or moments, but here are a few highlights that we'd like to share.

- 1) New Quarter Park, York County: 17th-century locally made tobacco pipe bowl



We began a collaborative public archaeology project at New Quarter Park in York County in the fall of 2013 (partnering with the Tidewater Virginia Historical Society, the Archeological Society of Virginia, New Quarter Park, and the York County Historical Museum), at a significant 18th-century site on property historically owned by the Burwell family, who controlled thousands of acres across Virginia at the time. During excavations in April of 2014, a volunteer excavating within an undisturbed layer discovered this intact tobacco pipe bowl, its red clay composition indicating the pipe's local manufacture (as opposed to imported white ball clay pipes from England), and this example was also carefully decorated by hand with rouletting. This pipe bowl, in conjunction with the neck of square case bottle discovered within the same layer, hint at a late 17th-century component to a site we initially surmised was occupied solely within the 18th century, and gives us a chance to look at the daily lives of African slaves, indentured servants, and other occupants of the property.

2) Fairfield Plantation, Gloucester County: Foundation constructed of brick bats, unknown structure



In the summer of 2011, at Fairfield Plantation (also home to the Burwell family in the 17th and 18th centuries) one of our visiting summer students recovered a large brick fragment while excavating in a 5 ft. by 5 ft. test unit to the east of the manor house foundation. Thicker and wider than most of the bricks from the main house, this brick suggested a different building. After carefully cleaning down the test unit where the unusual brick was unearthed, we discovered a foundation just under two feet wide, constructed almost entirely of brick bats. Over the next three summers we slowly expanded our excavations, chasing the foundation to the south and north, learning that it was part of the east wall and much more intact to the north than the south. And while part of the south wall appears to have been completely plowed away, the northeast corner survives and includes several complete bricks. The use of fragmented bricks suggests that they may have been recycled from an even earlier building, or were leftovers from the construction of a nearby building, but not necessarily the 1694 manor, given the differences in brick size. Since the building's orientation differs from the manor house (and other post-1694 landscape features) by about 10 degrees, we believe it was built in relation to an earlier landscape scheme. On most contemporary plantations, outbuildings, fences and other features are usually built to match the orientation of the main house, as it brought a formal ordered arrangement to the landscape. In the summer and fall of 2014 we were able to excavate enough to determine the dimensions of the foundation (22 ft. by 44 ft.), and we believe this was part of a house, a domestic space likely associated with the pre-1694 manor house landscape, but also surviving into the period of Lewis Burwell II's later ownership and that of his son, Nathaniel, who died in 1721. We are still open to other ideas for this building, including a large stable or kitchen, but only further archaeology will help us to answer these questions.

3) Gwynn's Island, Mathews County: tar net furnace



In early 2014, while undertaking a county-wide architectural survey in Mathews County aimed at adding undocumented historic structures to the state's inventory, we were made aware of a vestige of maritime history on Gwynn's Island by a local resident. This structure, known as a tar net furnace, is a remnant of an early 20th-century practice, representing the translation of an older European tradition of tarring nets for preservation onto the rural landscape of Gwynn's Island. According to well-established net preservation methods, fishermen utilized a tar (creosote) mixture which they applied to a fishing net to prevent the rope from rotting and extend its use. The procedure required the fishermen to "roll their nets and dip them in the tar which is melted in cauldrons. Then the nets are pulled up an inclined plane of grooved galvanized iron sheeting so that the surplus tar drains back into the cauldrons. The tar treatment of nets is usually done in an open field". This furnace, located on the edge of an open field, consists of a cauldron or pot sitting at the bottom of an inclined, grooved iron ramp, as well as a brick chimney, all of which are coated in the remains of the creosote/tar mixture. (Figure 16) This furnace has been abandoned and is in a state of disrepair, but is nonetheless a wonderful example of local 20th-century watermen practices.

4) St. Paul's Churchyard, Norfolk - Charles N Taylor headstone

In the churchyard of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Norfolk, we have recently undertaken the search for the 17th-century church structure which served as the predecessor to the current church. Archaeological excavation in a cemetery requires planning, caution, and patience; and we take precautionary measures to avoid disturbing graves. One unexpected artifact find,



however, was a large reddish sandstone tombstone fragment, broken and discovered upside down with no clear association to any known grave. The tombstone fragment is the upper half of a 1' wide grave marker, with a flat top, a carved bead around the perimeter of the stone, and the name 'Charles N. Taylor' carved on the stone, with no date. The rest of the marker has not been found, but may still be in situ with Charles Taylor's grave in an undiscovered location. Research later revealed that Charles Nicoll Taylor was born in 1750 in Connecticut, and was visiting Norfolk in September of 1792 when he died and was buried in the cemetery at St. Paul's. The tombstone fragment was discovered within a layer of soil containing a mix of late 18th- and early 19th-century material, which was likely deposited in the first or second quarter of the 19th century, perhaps in an attempt to fill in slumped burials or low areas of the churchyard.

5) Center for Archaeology, Preservation, and Education (CAPE), Gloucester: Newly restored mid-20th-century gas pumps

2014 has also been a year of progress in our process of restoring the former Edge Hill Service Station (at the corner of Route 14 and Main Street) into the future Center for Archaeology, Preservation and Education (CAPE). A number of changes have taken place on the interior of the structure, and we look forward to 2015 bringing more visible exterior changes. Historic photographs of the service station show the location and arrangement of gas pumps beneath the porte cochere, although these pumps have long been absent from the landscape. Thanks to the hard work and restoration efforts of gas pump hobbyist Mike Horton, as well as the generosity of former property owner Andy James, we will soon be able to re-install authentic (although non-functional) mid-20th-century gas pumps to the CAPE's exterior. Mike Horton painstakingly took each pump apart, removed rust and other dirt with a sandblaster, coated parts of the pump with rustproof paint, and reassembled and repainted the pumps. The restored pumps, once reinstalled, will provide a stunning visual statement of appreciation for the history and former use of this iconic Gloucester landmark.

