



# VERMONT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## **Preservation in Place: A Mitigation Plan for the Fort Vengeance Monument Site (VT-RU-216)**

*by Chris Slesar*

*Vermont Agency of Transpostation*

Archaeological field investigations conducted by VTrans' consultant, The Louis Berger Group, Inc., have come to an end along the corridor of the Route 7 Upgrade Project in Pittsford and Brandon. One focus of this substantial investigation has been the Fort Vengeance Monument Site. So far, very little is known about Fort Vengeance, which was built in 1780. But we are certain that this site has the potential to provide valuable information on a variety of historical research topics. To date, only a small portion of the site has been excavated; just enough for archaeologists from The Louis Berger Group, Inc., and Werner Archaeological Consulting, Inc. to accurately identify it and establish its spatial boundaries. A wide variety of artifacts and animal bones was recovered during these initial excavations at the Fort Vengeance Monument Site. In addition to identifying a possible portion of the Fort's stockade, excavations also revealed portions of the foundation of a house owned by Deacon Caleb Hendee, Sr., the local landowner who allowed Vermont to construct and occupy the fort on his property. This house also served as a tavern between 1783 and 1808. The site will be included on the National Register of Historic Places, and VTrans is recommending an innovative and cost-effective method for mitigating this site - to preserve it for future generations.

Preservation in place is a preferred method for protecting in-ground archaeological resources. If a site is not threatened, then it is best to leave it alone. This approach is obviously less costly and less destructive than archaeologically excavating a site. But what is the best approach for preservation when a site is being threatened by development? Should we as archaeologists jump at the chance to excavate it? Or should we try to preserve it in place? Whenever possible, VTrans will redesign a project that threatens an archaeological site in order to avoid the need to excavate it - thus preserving the site in place. In the case of Fort Vengeance, the proposed improvements to Route 7 in Pittsford are threatening to impact this site. Despite efforts to modify the project's design, there is no feasible way to move the road far enough to the east in order to keep it out of the site area. But this does not necessarily mean that the site will be impacted by the proposed road construction. Nor does it mean that the site will need to be excavated.

see Fort Vengeance →4

## **Update on the 2001 Mount Independence Archaeological Investigation and Revised Trail Design**

*by Sheila Charles and Chris Slesar*

The sound of distant drums beating Revolutionary War drills at Fort Ticonderoga were helped across the lake by the wind - much as they must have been over two centuries ago. For those of us conducting the 2001 Mount Independence archaeological investigation, these sounds helped construct a mental image of how this landscape must have appeared in July of 1776 when thousands of men occupied the Mount with thoughts of defending their homes and creating a new democracy. Mount Independence has returned to a mostly forested state; and in the summer of 2001, the sound of marching was replaced by the scraping of trowels, the rattle of screens, and the banter of archaeologists. Employing a precise and deliberate process of gathering and weaving together data, we attempted to sweep away time and learn the stories hidden in the ground. What was once common knowledge to the soldiers who were the vanguards of our American Society has become devilishly elusive to archaeologists. In addition to our attempts at satisfying our desire to understand America's past, this project had a very focused Cultural Resource Management (CRM) goal. This project was intended to help guide the planning and design of the new interpretive trail system for the Mount, by identifying, investigating, and if possible avoiding specific areas of extreme archaeological sensitivity.

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### NOTICE

**VAS Spring Meeting  
Saturday, April 13  
Bellows Falls, Vermont  
(Further Information on Page 2)**

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Although the analysis of the results of the investigation is proceeding, we can add some detail to our Fall 2001 Vermont Archaeological Society Presentation. As we indicated, we know through the historical record that for 16 months, between July 1776 and November 1777, when our Nation was defining and asserting its independent character, up to 6,500 American soldiers populated this 350-acre rocky peninsula in Orwell. But, without the intellectual time-travel offered by archaeology, it is difficult to fully grasp the scale of the activity  
see Mount Independence →5

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### From the Editor's Desk . . .

#### Joshua Toney new VAS President

Elections at the 2001 Fall VAS Meeting returned Ronald Kilburn and Elise Manning-Sterling to three more years on the VAS Board, and the election of new board member Jeannine Russell-Pinkham. Ron and Elise will be serving their second terms while Jeannine, a former board member, will be serving her first. One vacancy still exists on the board, and any VAS member in good standing who would like to get more involved in the

society, please contact any board member.

At the December 4, 2001 Board Meeting, the following Executive positions were elected: President - Joshua R. Toney; Vice President - Scott Dillon; and Secretary - Brigitte Helzer. Reappointed were Treasurer - Joseph Popecki, and Editor - Victor Rolando.

Treasurer Joe Popecki reported that after moving 26 members who had not paid their dues since 1999 to the "ex-member" file, net membership now stands at 244. If you have not yet renewed for 2000 and 2001 (and 2002), your check would be most welcome (see last page of Newsletter for renewal information).

The board has been meeting the second Wednesday of every other month, at locations and times that vary. Board meetings are open to all members. Contact any board member for meeting information.

### The Fall 2001 Annual Meeting

Delehanty Hall, on the Campus of Trinity College in Burlington was the site of our 2001 Fall Meeting, the first time we haven't met for our fall annual meeting at the Windjammer Conference Center in years. Reason for the move was to better accommodate the larger numbers of people attending the meetings, and Delehanty Hall did the trick, as 62 people attended without undue crowding. Of these, 9 were non-members and 6 were presenters. Brigitte Helzer led planning effort for the successful day.

Due to airline scheduling difficulties, our main speaker, Douglas Scott of the National Park Service, was unable to make the meeting. By reshuffling our schedule, however, no idle time occurred and everybody's appetite for archeology appeared satisfied. At the noon break, some 40 members, guests, and speakers enjoyed lunch "al fresco" on the patio.

Ten volumes of our Journal were sold (mostly the few remaining copies of Volume 1); and Joe Popecki reported that income over expenses for the meeting netted the society a tidy \$5.46 profit.

### Spring 2002 Meeting

We are fortunate to have been invited by Richard Ewald to hold our Spring 2002 meeting at Bellows Falls, on April 13. Ewald is Historic Preservation Coordinator for the Town of Rockingham, and Executive Director of the Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance. I will be working with Ewald to help organize and set up this meeting.

The VAS will meet in the 74-year-old Rockingham Town Hall, located in the heart of downtown Bellows Falls. Archeology in Bellows Falls and the Connecticut River Valley will be the focus of the meeting, with morning papers and possible afternoon tours of remains of a paper mill (1869-1950s), the Bellows Falls Canal (1792-1802), and of course, the Native American petroglyphs, which are not always easy to get to and see.

A meeting announcement will be mailed when specifics are established (by March).

**Valcour Bay Research Project**  
by Adam Kane, Nautical Archaeologist  
Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

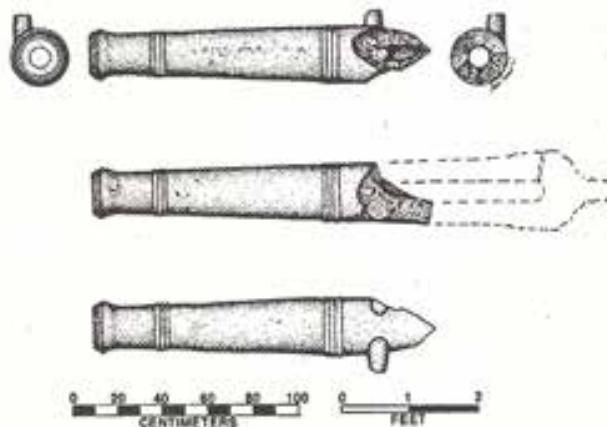
This past summer saw the completion of the third field season of the Valcour Bay Research Project, a Phase I underwater archaeological investigation of the submerged battlefield at Valcour Bay, in Lake Champlain. Today, the waters around Valcour Island are frequented by recreational boaters who are drawn to the sparsely developed area for its Adirondack and Green Mountain vistas, and the sheltered waters created by the inlets around the Island. The present tranquility of Valcour Bay belies the violent naval battle that took place there in 1776.

On October 11, 1776, Commodore Benedict Arnold engaged the British Navy in perhaps the most important naval contest of the American Revolution. After an intensive five-hour battle with heavy casualties on both sides, darkness finally ended the conflict. With some 60 men killed and wounded on the American side and three-quarters of their ammunition gone, Arnold and his officers executed a daring nighttime escape past a British blockade. Two days later, on October 13, the British fleet caught up with Arnold and a second running battle ensued. Outgunned and surrounded, Arnold deprived the British of battle prizes by intentionally destroying five of his own vessels in the spot known today as Arnold's Bay in Pantion, Vermont and escaped back to Fort Ticonderoga.

This naval engagement left a behind significant quantities of military related artifacts and debris. During the twentieth century many individuals have searched the underwater battlefield for the tangible remains of the conflict. The most notable, Colonel Lorenzo F. Hagglund, raised the American flagship *Royal Savage* and the Gunboat *Philadelphia* in 1934 and 1935, respectively. Since the widespread application of scuba technology many individuals have collected smaller artifacts from Valcour Bay. Only in recent times has society begun to recognize the value of "underwater cultural heritage" and discuss how it should be managed. In 1961, the Battle of Valcour Island site was awarded National Landmark status, however, the site has been a favored area for artifact collecting by sport divers. In 1999, New York State Police diver Edwin Scollon discovered a portion of a broken cannon in Valcour Bay; the catalyst for the Valcour Bay Research Project.

The Valcour Bay Research Project (VBRP) is a cooperative effort between a dedicated team of volunteer sport divers and the Maritime Research Institute of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. The intent of the VBRP is to map the submerged Valcour Island battlefield, while providing sport divers a way to channel their interest in history and archaeology into a formally permitted project.

This archaeological fieldwork was implemented through a systematic inspection of the bottomlands of Valcour Bay using handheld metal detectors. Focusing



Scale drawing of the cannon muzzle recovered from Valcour Bay in 2001 (drawn by Gordon Cawood, inked by Adam Loven).

on the area of the bay where the American lines were located, the bottomlands were divided into 50ft by 50ft areas. These "grids" were surveyed along transects spaced at 3ft intervals. Crew members used metal detectors to locate buried metallic objects. During the three seasons of fieldwork, 29 Revolutionary War-era artifacts have been located. These include six fragments of a cannon, a sword, a bayonet, a cartridge box, an anchor, a hatchet, and many cannon balls.

While the survey was progressing, the LCMM was also conducting archival research on the Battle of Valcour Island. This effort was aimed at determining the identity of the "missing gunboat" discovered during the LCMM's 1997 Lake Survey Project. We now know that gunboat is *Spitfire*, but we also uncovered some new information about the battle. Historian George Quintal, while compiling information about the men who fought at Valcour Island, found a pension record for one of the American participants, Sergeant Jonas Holden.

In early 1776, Jonas volunteered to join the Northern Army and was sent to Lake Champlain. Along with his brother Sartell and his fellow townsman Lieutenant Thomas Rogers, he was assigned to the gunboat *New York*, one of the eight gunboats in the American fleet. Through the pension record, we learn that during the battle on October 11, one of the gunboat *New York's* cannon burst while attempting to be fired, injuring Sergeant Holden in the right arm and side, and killing Lieutenant Thomas Rogers. Although Arnold reported, "the *New York* lost all her Officers except her Captain", the *New York* was the only gunboat to survive the battle.

We are now convinced that the six cannon fragments discovered in Valcour Bay were from *New York*. This archival research combined with the archaeological data has allowed us to make some conclusions about the events of October 11, 1776. The distribution of the

cannon pieces and other artifacts suggests that the cannon fragments on the upper face of the gun were blown into the air, but others on the underside were sent into the bottom of the gunboat. The largest piece of the cannon, the muzzle, likely plunged directly into the water after the explosion. We see this pattern on the lakebed with the muzzle by itself at the center of the explosion and the fragments of the upper face of the gun 140 to 180 feet northwest of the muzzle. The pieces on the underside, which remained in the hull after the explosion, were found southeast of the muzzle. These artifacts are part of a "dump zone" in which the debris in the gunboat was cleared out as the vessel was adrift after the explosion.

The VBRP has thus far mapped only a very small portion of the Valcour battlefield. Future years of research will undoubtedly provide us with a greater understanding of this important naval engagement. The Valcour Bay Research Project is made possible with the funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Park Service and the Department of Defense Legacy Program.

#### Fort Vengeance (continued)

Through a collaborative effort between VTrans, CLD Consulting Engineers (the project designer), the local landowner, and the local Pittsford/Brandon Transportation Steering Committee, a solution has been found. The road can be built up and over the site. VTrans is proposing to preserve the Fort Vengeance archaeological site by intentionally burying the affected portion of it under approximately 2 to 3 feet of fill, and then rebuilding and realigning Route 7 on top of that fill.

The intentional burial or covering of archaeological sites (also known as in situ burial) has been used as a preservation and mitigation method for years. It is a relatively simple process that essentially follows nature's model of site preservation. There are four crucial steps to in situ burial. First, permanent benchmark data is established and recorded, and markers are set in place before a site can be buried. This is to insure that the site's provenience and boundaries are well recorded and will not be lost. Then, a buffer lens of geotextile or culturally sterile sand, gravel, clay, or other material is placed over the site. This separates the site matrix from the fill soil, which is added next. It is very important that care is taken to not damage the site while placing this lens or the fill on the existing ground surface. Finally, a plan for monitoring the site once it is buried must be developed and implemented. Implementing the practice of intentionally burying a site involves much planning and thought. It is also not an appropriate mitigation methodology for every site or situation. Guidance and technical assistance for developing a plan for in situ burial are readily available from the National Park Service Archaeology Assistance Program. When presented with this alternative mitigating plan for the Fort Vengeance Monument Site, the Local Pittsford/Brandon Transportation Steering Committee, which has been

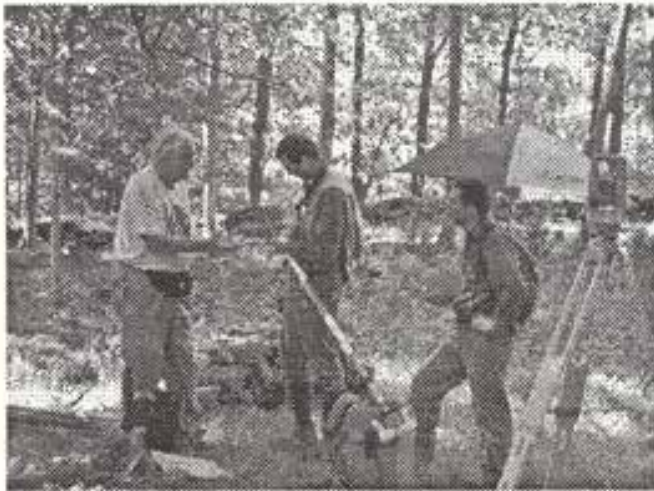


*Clay tobacco pipes retrieved from the Cox/Falloon Site, (VT-RU-337), about a quarter-mile south of Fort Vengeance (photo by Rob Tucher, The Louis Berger Group, Inc.).*

closely involved with the design of the Route 7 upgrade, was extremely pleased - especially when the cost of this plan was compared to the cost of excavation.

It is unrealistic to think that this or any other method of preservation is absolute. The aging process of all materials is inevitable and constant. Yet with in situ burial it is possible to keep sites stable for extraordinarily long periods of time by simply leaving them alone in their archaeological context. Undisturbed and in the ground, archaeological sites interact only with the natural environment and can remain stable for thousands of years. Additionally, in situ burial provides archaeologists and communities with an alternative to full-scale excavation of archaeological sites. Most archaeologists agree that it would have been beneficial if their predecessors of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had been less zealous in their excavations. This realization is reflected in the restraint demonstrated by most professional and academic archaeologists. Likewise, most people today understand and regret that far too many irreplaceable cultural resources have been lost in the past 100 years to the unregulated shovel and bulldozer. VTrans recognizes this, and designs projects that reduce the environmental footprint of Vermont's roads. In the case of Fort Vengeance, VTrans is proposing striking a delicate balance between preservation and progress. Burial in place, for the portions of the Fort Vengeance Monument Site that cannot be avoided by the Route 7 upgrade, will serve the dual purposes of expediting this road improvement project while preserving a nationally significant archaeological site.

For more information regarding In-Situ Site Burials, check out the following web sites: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/pubs/tch5.htm> and <http://www.geology.sdsu.edu/activities/seminar/spring00/mathewson/>.

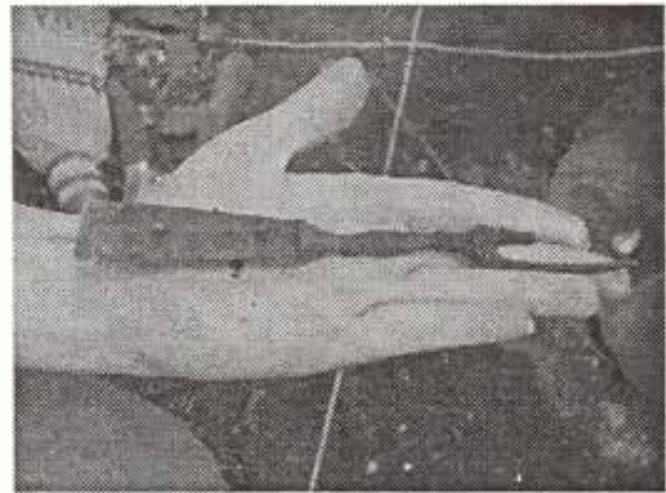


*Dave Pinkham and Larry Walters survey the proposed Mount Independence trail (both photos courtesy DHP).*

### **Mount Independence (continued)**

that had crowded this landscape. This past July, archaeologists joined forces with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and Castleton State College, and conducted the first professional archaeological dig in over a decade at America's most pristine Revolutionary War site - Mount Independence. The primary goal of this dig was to clear the way for the Mount's first handicap accessible trail. This 1515-foot trail will permit wheelchair access from the visitor center to the spectacular promontory associated with the Mount's Southern Defenses.

During the two weeks of fieldwork, professional archaeologists, assisted by approximately 50 students and volunteers, excavated nearly 140 test pits. What we found was a dense ambient sheet scatter of artifacts, which included musket parts, iron and lead shot, and nails - crystal clear evidence of the magnitude of military bustle that took place here 225 years ago. Portions of the new trail will lead visitors past a group of mounds and depressions. Preliminary excavations of one of these depressions revealed that it was an officer's hut made of logs. It may have had a brick chimney or fireplace, and stone floor. Artifacts recovered from the hut include wine bottle fragments, a fork with an antler handle, two French gunflints, iron shot, a hand grenade, and a magnificent blue glass cufflink. Although we hoped the 2001 investigation would allow us to confirm whether encampments along the southeast exposure of the Mount could be linked to British, Loyalists, Germans or Americans, no diagnostic artifacts, as British regimental buttons or German ceramics, were recovered to provide clear evidence of the origin of the occupants who discarded these artifacts. In addition, artifacts recovered during the field investigation were not limited to the Revolutionary War period. A Native American stone-tool manufacturing site was also identified, reaffirming that this area had been extraordinarily rich with human activity for thousands of years.



*Two-tined fork recovered from soldier's hut encountered along the proposed Mount Independence trail.*

On November 26, members of the 2001 Mount Independence archaeological staff and Vermont Division for Historic Preservation met with the trail designer, Peter Jensen of Openspace Management. We discussed the necessity of delicate care in the region where the trail extends adjacent to the line of soldiers' huts (Our investigation of possible alternate paths indicated increased archaeological potential in the surrounding area!). In addition, we discussed the high archaeological potential of the South Battery, confirmed during the 2001 field season and in former investigations. We feared even a trail design with minimal subsurface impact could cumulatively have a significant impact, not only on the archaeological resources but also on the pristine nature of this relatively small landform.

Although several alternatives were discussed, ultimately the consensus opinion was to eliminate entering the South Battery and instead bring the trail to the plateau above the South Battery. Thus, visitors will still be able to experience the expansive view southwest towards Lake Champlain. Additionally, the new proposed trail will take the visitor along a battery wall, historic sites on this plateau will be accessible, and sites in the South Battery can be pointed out through signage. Moreover, the South Battery's pristine natural beauty and archaeological sensitivity will not be compromised. In the near future, the final decision regarding the trail alignment will be made and additional testing and monitoring will be undertaken.

In this instance, archaeologists, in cooperation with site managers and designers, resolved to alter the original proposed trail alignment. We were, and still are, all mutually intent on ensuring that the trail is as unobtrusive as possible while still achieving the goal of making Mount Independence accessible to all. In the end, it looks like this is a case where archaeology can transcend intellectual curiosity and become an effective planning tool helping to preserve one of this Country's most dynamic cultural resources.

Press Release, October 1, 2001  
submitted by Robert Sloma, GEOARCH, Inc.

Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. of Burlington, Vermont announces free distribution of *Rock River Valley: Pathway to the Past* to educators in Franklin County, Vermont. The educator's guide and poster are available to others upon request while supplies last and on the Internet at [www.vermontgas.com](http://www.vermontgas.com). Archeologists from GEOARCH, Inc. and Vermont artist Reed Prescott, III teamed with Vermont Gas to develop these groundbreaking curriculum materials. *Rock River Valley: Pathway to the Past* uses archeology and local history to inspire students in grades 5-8 to meet Vermont educational standards in history and social sciences. Our nation's archeological sites are rare, unique, and threatened non-renewable resources. Vermonters from all walks of life will find *Rock River Valley: Pathway to the Past* an invaluable guide to stewarding the state's rich and ancient heritage for the future.

This real-life example demonstrates how a modern Vermont firm balances the need for growth with concerns for historic preservation as part of the land-use planning process. Since the 1980s, Vermont Gas Systems has planned the construction of a natural gas pipeline through Franklin County. Many archeological sites were identified and most were avoided. The *Rock River Valley: Pathway to the Past* educator's guide explores the roles of developers, agencies who review archeological sites under Act 250 and the National Historic Preservation Act, law enforcement officials, local planning boards, townsfolk, and others involved in the Vermont Gas System Expansion project. Reed Prescott, III's original acrylic painting traces landscape

changes across one Rock River Valley farmstead from 1609 to 2000 A.D. Authors Kathleen Callum and Robert Sloma challenge students to meet *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* (1996, revised 1999) through educator's guide sections such as "archeological detectives", "scientific explorers", and "earth's archeology library." The concluding section invites everyone to exercise archeological citizenship, become an archeological educator, and increase stewardship of non-renewable sites.

To request a free copy, please send your name, affiliation, address, grade level of students, email, and telephone number to Michael Flock, Vermont Gas Systems, Inc, P.O. Box 467, Burlington VT 05402-0467, phone 802-863-4511, Fax 802-863-8871, email [mflock@vermontgas.com](mailto:mflock@vermontgas.com). After all printed copies are distributed, we will add your name to a waiting list for possible future printings. If you have any questions about these educational materials or this press release, please contact Kathleen Callum, GEOARCH, Inc. 594 Indian Trail, Leicester VT 05733, phone 802-247-8127, Fax 802-247-0107, email: [geoarch@sover.net](mailto:geoarch@sover.net).

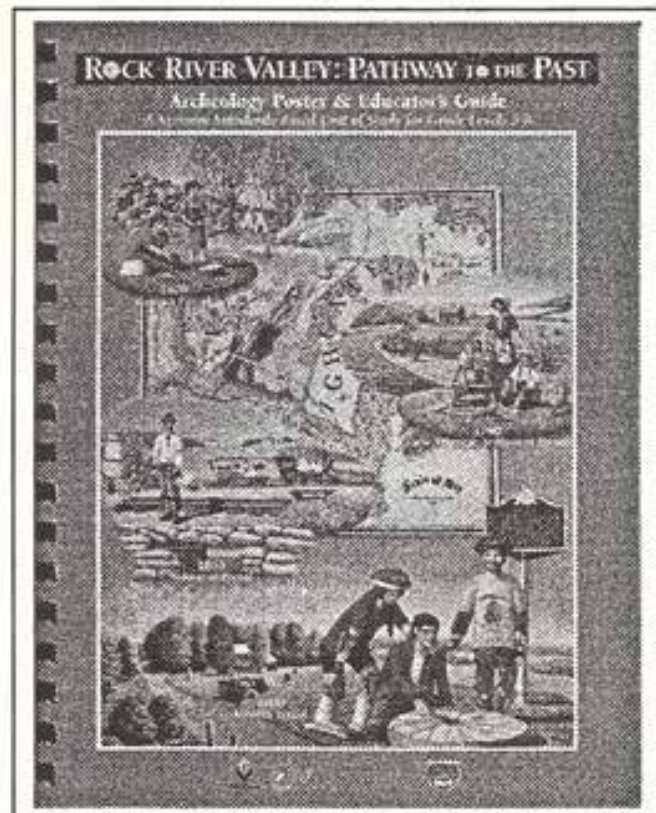
#### An Elusive Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Vermont Forge Site by Morris Glenn, edited by Victor Rolando

Attempts to locate one of Vermont's earlier forges in 1985 by Vic Rolando in the vicinity of Fraser's Falls on the Little Otter Creek at Ferrisburgh was foiled by high water. John Fraser operated a sawmill at his namesake falls during 1820-30, and contemporary with that, one of the Fuller family operated a forge just upstream, according to Smith's 1886 *History of Addison County*.

Last year, inveterate ironworks researcher Morris Glenn, who rarely takes "no" for an answer, enlisted the aid of fellow ironworks aficionado, Jim Dawson (VAS), and visited Frasers Falls. Approaching the falls during low water, they were able to criss-cross the small stream on both banks fairly easily, from the pond area upstream of the last dam to the Lake Champlain floodplain, without finding any charcoal, slag, or other evidence of a forge. They did find evidence of dams and the like in about three or four locations above and below the dam.

Undaunted, Glenn returned with local historian Bob Mitchell, owner of the old General Amos Barnum (of Vergennes fame) House near the site, and inspected the creek by boat, looking for the three major landings on the stream from the era of water transport. Again, they found no evidence of the forge but there did seem to evidence of a landing on the south bank.

As iron ore, slag, and/or charcoal are almost always found around even forges that operated the shortest times, this amounts to the first time that Glenn has had to admit to not (yet?) finding a forge he has looked for. Associated land disturbances for other industrial uses at the falls may well have "muddied" the clues. Any reader out there who can provide information regarding this elusive site, please contact Glenn at [glenn@shorenet.net](mailto:glenn@shorenet.net) or write: Morris F. Glenn, P.O. Box 629, Oxford MD, 21654.



**VAS Members Abroad:  
Chinese Museums and Archaeology Sites**  
*by Robin Tenny, Barton, Vermont*

This past summer my husband, Frank, and I traveled in China. We saw Beijing, toured to northwest China and the Silk Road (used by merchants and Buddhist monks from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to about 1000 AD), sailed through the Yangtze River Gorges, and flew into Shanghai. It was an amazing experience.

The new museums in China are superb - in Wuhan the tomb of Marquis Yi from the Warring States Period (475-221BC) displays musical instruments, gigantic bronzes, and ceramic and lacquer objects. Parts of the Wuhan collection were exhibited in Washington, DC, in recent years. In the Shanghai Museum the superb bronzes, statuary, ceramics, and paintings are breathtaking. The Shaanxi History Museum is also excellent. In the Forbidden City in Beijing, the bronzes and ceramics are wonderful, many in shapes and sizes that I had not seen before. Recent excavations are bringing startling new treasures to light. These modern museums have lights that turn on as you approach the object and turn off as you leave, modern humidity controls, and superb English labels with the dynastic dates.

True, there are smaller museums with wonderful objects of wood or ceramic or cloth that are dusty and relatively uncared for. But by and large the Chinese are now proud of the artifacts of their past, instead of regarding them as examples of cruel serfdom as they did in the Cultural Revolution of the 1970s.

And some of the major sites are well cared for and overwhelming - like the Terracotta Warriors of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). In the current excavations, the Chinese are building a roof and protective shelters first, and then digging. They are working with a German archaeologist who is finding new ways to conserve the paint on the soldiers and their horses from the moment they are exposed to air. One of our tour members remarked that when she was there 12 years ago visitors were allowed to walk among the warriors and their horses, but that fewer statues had been excavated. Now you stand on platforms built above the terra cotta army.

At the exquisitely painted Buddhist caves of Dunhuang (6th-12th centuries) exterior walkways have been built and doors have been fitted to the caves to keep out the desert dust storms and vandals. A guide leads you through about 20 caves, and then locks the door after you leave. The caves are only open for a half-day. A nearby research institute photographs and studies the caves and plans a volume on them for the coming year.

Some places are hard to preserve. By donkey cart and foot we toured the ancient city of Gaochang, built about 2,100 years ago. The earthen walls are crumbling into dust, but the effect is of a huge impressive Buddhist city in the desert.

And there are the hanging Han tombs on the cliff sides of the Yangtze River, which will be flooded when the new dam is in place in the next few years. But in general, the new China is aware of the worth of its rich past and is trying to take care of it.

**What I've Been Doing the past Two Years**  
*by Vic Rolando, IA Research Consultant*

I am frequently asked what I've been doing regarding my avocation - industrial archeology - the past few years. I have given no papers lately on the subject, so have I crawled into a hole and commenced vegetating? Crawling into holes - yes; vegetating - hardly. For the past two years I have been working two sites, both far removed from Vermont - Oxford, N.J. and Sharon, Ct.

At Oxford N.J. stands the remains of a 1740s-1880s blast furnace and its associated engine house. We're not positive, but the original 1740s stack might be somewhere inside the existing stack, enlarged and heightened over time. Outlines of something former can be seen in its stone walls, however, it is difficult to determine which era furnace configuration the outlines represent.

In 2000, I assisted Project Director Carla Cielo in removing bricks, sections of wood supporting beams, and other debris inside the engine house that had fallen many years ago (a dirty, gritty, hard-hat job - loved every minute of it!). We also excavated the two flywheel pits down to what we determined was the original floor, and in the process, discovered unrecorded/unknown subterranean crawl-ways and other features.

The project was renewed last year when masons emptied the interior of the stack of collapsed material that had accumulated there for some 30-40 years. I monitored and screened the materials, and many artifacts were salvaged. After the shaft was cleared, Carla and I measured and drew the shape and condition of the bowels of the stack, probably not seen by anyone in 100 years. After removing some 70-75 tons of debris, the masons repointed the stack with lime putty and installed a wood roof to protect the stack from effects of weather.

Two sites received my attention at Sharon, Ct: a ca. 1880s-1920s lime kiln and an 1825-1898 blast furnace, both at one time owned and operated by the Sharon Valley Iron Company. The kiln stands, but the furnace is a collapsed mound (dynamited in 1912), a few hundred yards away. In early 2001, the Sharon Historical Society contracted me to excavate debris that had accumulated the past 80 years in the two side-draft archways and the main draw arch. The work was done in anticipation of stabilization/repair work to be done during 2002, and it exposed previously unknown structural features that explained the function of the archways.

The surprise of the project was at the furnace site, where local historians always wondered if anything remained of the furnace under all the brush, bricks, stones, and dirt that covered the site. Three days of shoveling tons of overburden uncovered enough to discover most of the bottom third of the furnace might still be intact, that is, the whole bottom operating area of the furnace might still be as it was the day it was abandoned - not affected by later attempts of repair or "restoration," as is unfortunately the case at so many other sties. Hopefully, with the owner's permission, I might be able to lead a weekend work crew this spring to uncover the whole bottom area of this tantalizing find.

Volunteers anybody?

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