

Year 2006: the formative year of a small museum

This newsletter takes a look back on the year past, and what is in store for 2007.

In February of 2006, the Palisades Museum of Prehistory was incorporated in the District of Columbia, and applied for a non-profit tax-exempt status. As we await the non-profit status, the museum's accounting for 2006 at least suggests we have attained the status in financial terms.

The museum and its website were formally launched on March 25th with a grand opening party. Artists Sean Griffin and Jaime Wimberly displayed some of their works in the wine cellar, while the museum's fledging artifact collection on the main floor demonstrated to neighbors our prehistoric past.

In September, Dr. Stuart Fiedel gave a lecture at the museum on projectile point style changes as a consequence of climate change. The talk helped put in prospective the wide variety of spear points found in our region.

On December 10th, with the support of the DC Commission for the Arts and Humanities, the Palisades Museum of Prehistory sponsored an exhibit on petroglyphs and other rock art along the Potomac River. Also on display were recently found artifacts from the construction at Palisades Park. Some of the highlighted objects found: a silver Spanish coin from 1781, a spear point possibly 10 - 11 thousand years old, indian pottery sherds. The artifact collection continues to expand thanks to a volunteer network whom have found to date approximately fifty Native American objects from the Palisades Park alone.

In September, the museum finally received some press coverage in the Washington City Paper, with a 5,000 word story entitled "[Just the artifacts, Ma'am](#)". The writer, Huan Hsu, is not only a gifted writer but a good digger as well. Accompanying me on some "field trips", his entertaining article also highlights some serious issues that need more publicity.

As development continues to rip the Earth asunder in the Palisades, there appears no end to salvaging the archaeological record in 2007. Besides expanding the volunteer network, I hope that the museum can find funding for radio-carbon testing. Samples from the Palisades Park, taken in context of projectile points at the lowest stratum, can tell us *when* some of the first habitants made the Palisades Park home.

Also in 2007, the museum stands to lose its primary consultant, Dr. Stuart Fiedel, as he is being relocated to Richmond, Virginia. The museum will appeal to the District of Columbia that it hire a full-time archaeologist, and that it consider Dr. Fiedel for the position. The value



of his expertise and civic duty compared to the "part-time position" within the DC Office of Planning is unconscionable.

As funding permits, the museum hopes to expand the online artifact map to include areas beyond the Palisades. Hopefully, a new administration will usher in a more sensible approach to historical preservation, and the imminent development of waterfront properties in DC will be accompanied by archaeological excavations.

Best wishes in the new year,
Doug Dupin, Director

Exhibit: "Rock Art of the Potomac Fall Line"

The photography exhibit will likely hang in the museum's wine cellar for the next several months. Photos of petroglyphs and other rock art found along the Potomac River show faint signs of human creativity dating from the prehistoric to the present.

The petroglyphs acquire a new visual presence using a multiple-shadow technique.

Interpretations of the glyphs are offered, and the museum hopes that the audience will share their own conjecture on these vestiges of the distant past.

