

Lost Village

Our esteemed researcher at the museum, Dr. Mark Herlong, recently sent me an article from the Washington Post of Apr. 21, 1889, entitled “When the White Man Came.” The article covered a presentation under the aegis of the Bureau of Ethnology by James Moody, who spoke about the Indians living in what became Washington, D.C., when Europeans first arrived.

The English explorer Capt. John Smith, who sailed and rowed up the Potomac River to Little Falls, mapped Indian villages he encountered. In his lecture, Mr. Moody reported “. . . Several other small settlements are indicated on the map on the Maryland side, but none are marked on either side of the river above Washington although archaeologic researches go to show the former existence of a considerable settlement about two miles above Georgetown and within the present District limits.”

It’s understandable that Capt. Smith would have missed this “considerable settlement” since much of the Palisades’ geography lies above the line-of-sight from the river. This nameless village(s) may get some occupation dates if the museum’s collection of carbon samples are tested. At this time though, funding for the carbon testing is beyond the museum’s finances.



John Smith's map published 1612

Palisades Park

On matters of the Palisades Park, apparently there will be no mitigation for the archaeological malfeasance by DPR’s development of the soccer field. I had hoped that prior to installing the new parking lot, some type of archeology would be performed. I understand there will be none. My FOIA request concerning the archaeology of the site, and the response provided by the Dept. of Parks and Rec can be found [here](#). The FOIA response obviously brings up more questions than it answers.

Perhaps a report due within the month from the Office of the Inspector General on the DPR contractor will shed some light. Apparently general contractor Jair Lynch has a record of ignoring the archaeology at their construction sites. In a May 15, 2007 Examiner story, “Lynch defended his company’s work. He said the cost overruns were caused by ‘unforeseen conditions’ — for instance, the discovery of an uncharted underground stream at Lamond, or a World War II-era 6-foot concrete slab found under the courts at the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center.” Had any archaeology been conducted at these projects, Lynch might have avoided imposing these additional expenses on taxpayers.

There is a bright side to the events at the park - the artifacts that we “preserved” are on display to the public. Had the government funded archaeology at the site, the artifacts would be taken away and made unavailable for viewing. Such is the case with the Whitehurst Freeway archeological project that took place over ten years ago. In fact, all artifacts in possession of the District of Columbia are unavailable to researchers.

On the Radio

This Friday, March 21 at 1:00 PM, WAMU’s [Metro Connection](#) will air a visit to the museum. Seems the museum qualifies as a “[Mondo](#)” DC destination.

Happy Vernal Equinox, Doug Dupin