

Elk Run 'dig' to become historic park

BY EDWARD F. DANDAR

The archaeological research project at Elk Run Anglican Church is nearing completion. The all-volunteer, community project has been underway since 1999.

Volunteers have worked on Saturdays, in good weather in spring, summer, and fall to help expose the foundation of the church and dig controlled excavation units for recovery of colonial artifacts and building materials.

On weekends during the winter months, they have worked to clean and identify the artifacts recovered from the site.

Historic area

Settlers first arrived in the Elk Run area between 1715 and 1719. By the time that Hamilton Parish was established in 1730, there were several hundred people living in the Elk Run vicinity of Virginia.

A wooden chapel is believed to have already existed by the 1740s, when Prince William Minute Books make note of road repairs being done in front of the "Elk Run Chapel."

The chapel preceded the pre-Revolutionary brick cruciform structure that was built there in the late 1750s. The first rector of the Elk Run church was the Reverend James Keith, a native of Scotland, who from the 1740s until 1751. Rev. Keith was the grandfather of Chief Justice John Marshall, born not far away at Germantown.

Preservation efforts

To preserve the site for posterity, a preservation committee — led by St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Catlett, and in collaboration with St. James' Church in Warrenton and ecumenically with other churches in the region — ini-



Photo courtesy of Edward Dandar

A PARK: The site of Elk Run Anglican Church will become a historic park later this fall.

ated the project.

The group has sought to raise funds through appeals to residents, organizations and businesses to support the research and the eventual development of the site as an historic park.

Neighbors and nearby residents, including members of the A. W. Patton family, have been especially helpful in these efforts.

Over the last five years, 54 controlled excavation units have been laid out and excavated under the supervision of our volunteer archaeologist, Dr. John Eddins.

A digital survey of key excavation unit points was accomplished in 2004 and final excavation unit measurements will be completed this fall. To date, found artifacts include hand-made nails, ceramic dish fragments, 18th and 19th century coins, and Indian arrowheads dating back 4,000 years or more.

In transition

The transition of the "dig site" into an historic park will happen later this fall.

The park will have the original four foot wide foundation

outlined on the surface with colonial bricks, to reflect the actual size of the church. A designated section of the church foundation has been selected to be enclosed with a plexiglas-like material for year-round viewing once the site is converted into a historic park.

The accompanying overhead-view of the church foundation indicates how the surface may appear, once park landscaping is completed. This photograph was made possible by Virginia Dominion Power.

Over the next few months the volunteers will help finish up the excavations and detailed documentation of the remains of the church. We will also begin back-filling the site, preparing a report and historical tourism pamphlets, landscaping the site, and developing permanent historical displays.

Volunteers are welcome to assist, and financial donations and or materials for the historic park are greatly appreciated. For more information visit <http://elkrun.thediocese.net>.

Edward F. Dandar, of Nokesville, is the chairman of the Elk Run Church Site Preservation Committee.