



# Alexandria Times

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## Marking Time

### Prehistoric Points

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*Image: This past summer Alexandria archaeologists at the site discovered a significant number of flakes, the slivers of rock left behind as stones are chipped and fashioned into projectile points, scrapers and other tools. From the collection of the Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

Archaeologists working at Freedmen's Cemetery expected they might find something much older than the grave shafts where 1,800 African-Americans were buried in the 1860s. Based on earlier studies, they thought their dig might yield evidence of prehistoric peoples.

Decades before the Capital Beltway was built, the site was a bluff overlooking Hunting Creek. The area would have been an ideal location for Indians to manufacture and re-shape stone tools for hunting and fishing. This past summer Alexandria archaeologists at the site discovered a significant number of flakes, the slivers of rock left behind as stones are chipped and fashioned into projectile points, scrapers and other tools.

They also recovered points representing multiple distinct periods of use, from Middle Woodland around 1,200 years ago to Late Archaic around 4,000 years ago to Paleoindian around 13,000 years ago. Variations in the points, such as fluted stems and notched corners, indicate how they were attached to the handles of spears and knives. Serrated edges also reflect changes in lithic technology, or stone tool manufacturing.

Among those recovered at Freedmen's Cemetery are (clockwise from bottom left) a quartzite Potts point ca. 1,200 years ago, a quartz Savannah River point ca. 4,000 years ago, a quartzite Hellgrammite point ca. 3,000 years ago, a quartz Calvert point ca. 3,200 years ago, a rhyolite Lamoka point ca. 3,500 years ago, a slate or hornfels Hellgrammite point ca. 3,000 years ago, and (center) a clovis point made of quartz ca. 13,000 years ago. See these and other prehistoric tools at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory or visit [www.alexandriarchaeology.org](http://www.alexandriarchaeology.org).



*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*