



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

October is Archaeology Month

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Image: This year's archaeology month poster prominently features this photo from Alexandria. An archaeologist carefully maps the timbers of the second ship discovered at the Robinson Landing development site. Courtesy, Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Each October, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources sponsors archaeology month to raise awareness about the Commonwealth's rich archaeological sites and collections. During the month, Virginia celebrates local archaeology with public events at libraries, museums, historical societies, clubs and active archaeological sites. These events serve to enhance public appreciation for Virginia's diverse heritage on both land and water.

This year's statewide theme highlights "Shipwrecks and Archaeology in Virginia's Waterways" – fitting given the recent archaeological discoveries on

Alexandria's historic waterfront. While not technically shipwrecks, in the past three years archaeologists on contract with developers have uncovered the remains of four ship hulls used as part of the land-making process along the Potomac River during the late 18th- and 19th-century.

Think of the four ships like a foundation on which the city is built. Additionally, the remains of wharves, warehouses, dwellings, industries, privies and thousands of artifacts have emerged from the waterlogged depths at the river's edge.

The City of Alexandria is built upon its past. The ground beneath modern Alexandria is a record of this past and contains an array of archaeological sites, features and artifacts. Recognizing the importance and uniqueness of these historic resources, the City of Alexandria passed an Archaeological Protection Code nearly 30 years ago. This has enabled the recovery of information about Alexandria's history and the preservation of sites that otherwise would have been lost, that span thousands of years of human occupation.

Alexandria Archaeology now manages more than 2,000,000 artifacts collected from more than 200 archaeological sites scattered across the city. Celebrate archaeology month with a stop by the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory, to learn more about the city's maritime heritage and archaeology events taking place this month.





Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

“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 staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.