

THE GOVERNOR'S LAND

At Two Rivers

GOVERNOR'S LAND, A PART OF HISTORY

In an area with such a culturally rich past, it is no surprise that The Governor's Land at Two Rivers shares so closely in the early history of our country.

As part of the initial construction of The Governor's Land at Two Rivers, the developer, Dominion Resources, funded an archeological dig to better understand the history of the area and uncover historical artifacts. While there are many interesting landmarks throughout the community, the eighteenth hole is one of the more historical sites. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth century this area was the center of a Paspahegh Indian village, and contained their burial ground.

To commemorate the Indian heritage of this area, the remains of eighteen Indians along with their found personal effects were reinterred in a ceremony at a new site in the community on November 20, 1993. Conducting the service were representatives from the eight state-recognized Indian tribes and the Virginia State Council on Indians. On December 19, 2000, Governor's Land Foundation dedicated the new site with the placement of a plaque.

Also of historic significance, our land has a unique connection with the early founding of Jamestown by the Virginia Company of London. The Virginia Company established a plantation in 1619 on what is today our first fairway. Many of our streets are named for prominent settlers and leaders of the Jamestown expedition, and our land was 'Company Land,' set aside to provide income to the company.

Artifacts discovered during the excavation of the Paspahegh village and the European sites are on display at the Two Rivers Country Club and at the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation. The Governor's Land community deeded specific artifacts for display at the Jamestown-Yorktown Settlement, along with a large number of research quality items to the Foundation in 2010 for the benefit of future study and scholarship. Displayed Indian artifacts were deeded by the residents of Governor's Land in the memory of the Paspahegh people.

Archeology - Rediscovering Governor's Land

In the 1980s, Dominion Resources' residential development of the Governor's Land community and Two Rivers Country Club necessitated a detailed archeological survey to identify and preserve sites meeting National Historic Registry criteria.

Beginning in 1988, archeological surveys were conducted by James River Institute for Archaeology on the 1,400-acre property, revealing the rich history beneath the surface. The research produced exciting findings on 17th and 18th century occupancy, including the remnants of a Paspahegh Indian village and Virginia Company settlement.

Between 1991 and 1995, the James River Institute for Archaeology developed four separate documents, collectively providing a survey of the area and an in-depth understanding of specific historic sites. The first three documents were formally presented and are available to the public in their entirety. The historical overview from the fourth report is also available.

* Phase I Archaeological Survey of the Governor's Land at Two Rivers, James City County, VA

* Phase II Archaeological Significance Evaluation of Sites at the Governor's Land at Two Rivers, James City County, VA

* Paspahgh Archaeological Significance Evaluation for Site 44JC308 at the Governor's Land at Two Rivers, James City County, VA

* Archaeology at Paspahgh 44JC298 – Historical Background Section

The Phase I document provides a comprehensive discussion of the environmental setting at Governor's Land, detailing the characteristics of 94 specific sites spanning across the community. It also provides an extensive view of human occupation and recommends 49 sites for further research.

In Phase II, 28 of the initial sites were subsequently researched to determine their eligibility for National Historic Registry status and the findings for each site are presented within designated segments of the Phase II document.

The third report details the survey of the Paspahgh Indian Village (44JC308) that is currently occupied by the Two Rivers County Club 18th fairway and green. Archeological findings suggest that the Paspahgh village was established sometime after 1500 AD and occupied during the period of sustained contact between Europeans and native peoples following the establishment of the English settlement at Jamestown in 1607.

Lastly, historical background relevant to the Virginia Company Settlement (44JC298) that is now occupied by the golf club's 1st fairway is provided in the fourth document.

Since the initial archeological investigations, sites identified as historically significant and over 90,000 artifacts were successfully preserved. While numerous artifacts are on display at the Two Rivers Country Club, the vast majority of the artifacts have been transferred to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation for display at Jamestown Settlement museum and for safe keeping.

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Paspahgh Indian Village

An expanse of land located along the Chickahominy River that is now occupied by the 18th fairway and green of the Two Rivers Country Club in Governor's Land was once the site of a Paspahgh Indian village, dating to the 1500s.

Archeological excavations and analysis indicate that the village occupation extended into the period after the establishment of the Jamestown Settlement in 1607. By 1611, the Paspahgh Indians abandoned the site.

Research performed by James River Institute for Archaeology between 1990 and 1992 unearthed the prior presence of 48 structures, 2 hearth pits, and 25 human burials. The structures are thought to have been residences, mortuary temples and warehouses. It is estimated that the Paspahgh community was comprised of 189-620 residents who were reliant on maize agriculture in addition to a range of other foods, including nuts, small grains, fruit, deer, small animals and fish.

Construction Techniques. Evidence of the structures is found in postmolds that formed the frames of buildings. These postmolds – along with colonist observations and depictions – suggest construction techniques incorporated regularly spaced wall posts positioned along the length of both sides of a structure. Saplings were then lashed to these posts from one side to the other, creating a roof with an arbor-like appearance.

While this construction technique is common to all structures, the relative size and elevated setting of structures 29, 30 and 33 suggest they were associated with a tribal werowance or chief. Further, the location and distinctive east-west orientation of structures 1 and 28 suggest that they may have been mortuary houses for prominent members of the community.

The archeological findings of site 44JC308 serve as the model for Jamestown Settlement’s recreated Powhatan Indian village.

Mortuary Features. The extensive archeological research and documentation of the mortuary features of site 44JC308 enhance our understanding of Native American burials. Eight of the 25 confirmed or supposed burial sites contained well-preserved skeletal remains, providing invaluable data to researchers on the condition and relative health of the community. The largest of the mortuary features, 9CH, revealed a single internment of a male estimated to be 35 years of age or older in full funerary regalia. Based on the size, location and the presence of copper ornamentation, the male is presumed to have been of high social status such as a priest.

A cemetery consisting of a cluster of ten mortuary features was excavated and presumed to be the site of internments for members with lesser social status. Notably, feature 57 contained skeletal remains sufficiently preserved to enable identification as a primary, extended internment.

An in depth analysis of Site 44JC308 is presented in Paspahugh Archaeological Significance Evaluation for Site 44JC308 at the Governor’s Land at Two Rivers, James City County, Virginia.

Early Virginia Company Settlement – Now Two Rivers Country Club 1st Fairway

The close proximity to Jamestown and the abandonment by the Paspahugh Indians of the immediate area made the property an ideal location as part of the “Virginia Company land” in 1619.

While the findings of the James River Institute for Archaeology at 44JC298 were not formally published, the Historical Background portion of the draft document is available to the public.

Background. By 1618, the Virginia Company had been issued their third and final charter and had dramatically restructured their settlement approach, enabling the ultimate success of the colony. Central to their strategy was the implementation of a new land policy that incorporated indentured servitude with the ultimate goal of land ownership, thereby attracting much needed immigrants to America from England.

Another sweeping change was the division of the colony into four corporations, including James City. Similar to each of the other corporations, portion of James City land was set aside as Company Land used to generate revenues to support the governance of the community and compensate investors. The property now known as Governor’s Land at Two Rivers is contained within the boundaries of James City land designated by the Virginia Company for its own use.

Archeology. Research performed by James River Institute for Archaeology revealed at least four distinct, historically relevant occupation phases at Site 44JC298:

Phase I: 1620-1640

Phase II: 1680-1730

Phase III: 1700-1730

Phase IV: 1740-1780

Specific to Phase I, there were three excavated buildings at 44JC298 that represent the earliest period of colonist occupation of the site. The remains of a small, isolated root cellar may indicate the presence of a fourth building.

Two of the structures appeared to have been domestic dwellings. Both structures had clear evidence of a fireplace at one end and were located near trash pits containing domestic refuse. A third structure, with half the floor space of the other two, and no indication of a fireplace, probably served as a shed or storage building rather than a dwelling.

The configuration of the three structures at 44JC298 formed a triangular area, roughly 140' by 100' by 80'. This area between the buildings defined the central activity and work area of the settlement and contained all the refuse pits, the root cellar representing a possible fourth structure, and other associated features of the site except the burials and possible outlying fence lines.

