

Riverbend Naturalist



Riverbend Naturalist is the newsletter from Riverbend Park and its friends group, Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB).

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THE VIRGINIA INDIAN FESTIVAL is on Sept. 12, 2015, 10:00AM-3:00PM.

Meet representatives from Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Chickahominy and Upper Mataponi tribes, Monacan Nation and Piscataway Nations.

- See dance performances, dug-out canoe demonstrations and more

- Try atlatl spear throwing and bow-and-arrow shooting
- Choose from pottery, jewelry, flutes, dream catchers and other American Indian crafts for sale, plus music CDs and t-shirts

New This Year: Virginia Indian Food

Festival:

The Virginia Indian Festival is an annual celebration of the customs and crafts of the first Virginians. Discover the interesting history and tribal cultures of Virginia Indians. See how the Indians of Fairfax County lived nearly 400 years ago. Admission is \$5 per person.

While the festival is enjoyed by all ages, there is a special focus on activities for grade-school children who will be studying Indians in their Virginia and American history classes this year. The program will consist of the following demonstrations.

The **Mattaponi** tribe demonstrates the domestic life of the tribe as it existed at the turn of the last century. Visitors have a chance to grind corn, to see how Indians made houses, cooking utensils and clothes out of materials collected from the wild, and to see and savor how food was preserved through drying and smoking. The smells of wood fire and smoking meat will permeate the park.

The **Rappahannock** tribe performs and explains traditional dances. Indians used dance to celebrate special occasions and also as a diplomatic gesture. The Rappahannock drummers mesmerize visitors with their rhythms, drawing people from all over the park to the circle where the dancers gather.

The **Pamunkey** tribe brings their beautiful pottery and explains the symbols in the decoration and the uses of the various pieces.



Pamunkey Bowl

by *Ada Bradby Bush*,
1930's, www.baylink.org

A traditional **Chickahominy** story-teller shows how the tribe's history and values were passed down in stories.

Craftsmen show how Indians made canoes, fire and tools and how they tanned deer hide.

Children can try throwing spears (atlatl), shooting with bow and arrow and napping flint.



Colonial settlers access to fishing holes and was a well-established trade route. Virginia Indians traded with the Seneca nation who lived north of the river, crossing just upstream of today's park boundaries.

Although a large part of what we know about Virginia Indians at the time of the English settlement comes from archaeological digs and diaries like that of Henry Fleete, the native people who put on the demonstrations and exhibits at the Indian Festival dedicate their lives to preserving the oral, handicraft and spiritual traditions of their ancestors, ensuring that their children and the children of their fellow tribesmen can in turn carry on the traditions in generations to come. Their trip to Riverbend Park is symbolic of their ancestors' trips to fish and trade.

By Cathy Mayes, Past FORB President

Historical Significance:

Of approximately 30 tribes that lived in Virginia when Jamestown was settled, 8 survive today. In addition to the four who put on the festival, there are the Eastern Chickahominy, Monacan, Nansemond and Upper Mattaponi. Most of the tribes have fewer than 100 members living on the reservations, primarily in the Middle Peninsula.

When Captain John Smith first glimpsed the Potomac River in the early 17th century, the banks were lined with native fishermen and the water teemed with shad, sturgeon and herring. The trail that still hugs the riverbank through Riverbend Park provided Indians and

The Indians and the Collision of Cultures

by George Brown - published in a 1991 newsletter of Historic Prince William with this introduction:

“The following article is excerpted from a book about the history of Prince William County written by Historic Prince William, Inc. member, George Brown, over a period of thirty years. We hope that HPW, Inc. will be able to publish this in its entirety within the next few months. *(The Editors)*”

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the area which is now Prince William County was occupied by two Indian tribes. Along the Potomac River dwelt the Doegs (sometimes called the Tauxenent, Taux or Toags) a tribe of the Algonquian Federation. In the western part of the area could be found the Manahoac ("they were very merry"), a Siouan tribe.

THE DOEG INDIANS:

The Doegs had a structured society, living in villages and, although they hunted and fished, planted crops of maize (corn), pumpkins, sunflowers, squash, beans

and tobacco in fields adjacent to their villages.

From John Smith's map and narrative, we know that the Doeg's main village was on the north bank of the Occoquan River, perhaps on the hill where the Lazy Susan Restaurant is now located, or nearby where the colonial town of Colchester later developed. The "Werowance" (tribal chief) lived in the village. There were also at least four hamlets, from Dogue Creek to the south to Theodore Roosevelt Island to the north, each ruled by a lesser "Werowance." (The main village, now in Fairfax County, was in Prince William prior to 1742 and the hamlet of Pamacocack ("fish, plenty of") was located on Quantico Creek.)

The Doeg's werowances were male, but inherited their high position through female lineage. Holding absolute power of life and death over tribal members, they were permitted as many wives as they could support. Lesser officials included the cockarounse (an advisor); the priest having charge of the temple and advising on matters of war; and the shaman (conjurer.) The

priest and shaman performed rites and maintained a temple containing remains of deceased werowances. Completing the population were common Indians and, lowest of all, the war prisoners.

Werowances and priests were supported by tribute from the members of the tribe, including those living in the hamlets. This income was sufficient to cover family needs, communal feasts, entertaining visitors of note, religious activities, alliances with other tribes and a reserve in case of need.

THE MANAHOAC INDIANS:

The Manahoac were a nomadic tribe of hunters, with no established villages, who had learned to burn the forest to create grassland and attract buffalo, their chief source of food. As with other nomads, they left little evidence of their presence except for arrowheads and spear points which still turn up in farmer's fields today. (We do not know if they were indeed "very merry" but that is reported to be the meaning of the tribal name.)

JOHN SMITH'S MISSION:

The first documented visit by a European to the area of our County was the voyage of Captain John Smith in 1608. He sailed from Jamestown "to the freshies" in a two-ton barge with a party of fourteen men. We have not only an account of the trip but his map of the river, its tributaries and the location of Indian villages.

Before departing Jamestown, Smith was warned by Indians friendly to the settlers, that Powhattan, Chief of the Algonquian Federation, had issued orders to betray him. Knowing this, he sailed past their main town and sought a location where he might find a more friendly reception.

Rebuffed by many Indian tribes along the way, Smith was pleased to find a friendly reception at "Tauxenent" on the Occoquan river, the main village of the Doeg Indians. They were members of the Algonquian Federation but, at least at that time, disliked Powhattan which may account for the fact that they welcomed him with a feast at the "King's Howse"

(Smith's description) which was the residence of the chief of the Doeg Tribe. Smith estimated the size of the tribe to be from 135 to 170, including 40 bowmen. (We cannot judge the accuracy of his estimate, but it is likely that the Werowance did not fully trust him and may have kept some of his tribe concealed.)

An interesting sidelight to Smith's voyage is a report by one of the men accompanying him: "a few beaver, otters, bears, martins and minks we found, and in diverse places that abundance of fish, lying so thick with their heads above the water as for want of nets (our barge driving among them) we attempted to catch them with a frying pan; but we found it is a bad instrument to catch fish with. Neither better fish, more plenty, nor more variety for small fish, had any of us ever seen in one place so swimming in the water, but they are not to be caught with a frying pan."

COLONIZATION BEGINS:

The arrival of the settlers in this area proved to be a disaster for the native

Indians. Decimated by the Europeans' diseases for which they had no resistance and overwhelmed by the settlers' firepower in battle, they were soon driven away. Before 1700, the Doegs abandoned their villages and moved to the west. Later, they moved southward into King George County near the present town of Dogue on the Rappahannock River and, by 1714, the remnants of the tribe were located on the upper Mattaponi River, but none survived until modern times.

The Manahoac had much less contact with the settlers, since they occupied land in the area beyond, and buffered by, the Doegs, the Manahoac found themselves dispossessed. As they moved westward, they come under attack by the warlike Iroquois, and the few who survived were later found in the vicinity of Lynchburg, but soon disappeared. The Iroquois, in turn, despite their warlike nature, were unable to resist the settlers and were forced to sign a treaty promising to stay to the west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The treaty with the Iroquois, as with most treaties the

Indians signed, was temporary. As more and more settlers came to this country, more Indian Tribes were dispossessed.

THE INDIAN HERITAGE

The Manahoac, as we have mentioned before, left only an artifact or so to show that they lived in our County, but the Doegs left a heritage of some importance. As the settlers arrived, they learned the best locations for, and the Indian methods of, hunting and fishing; they copied their techniques used their trails, expanding them into roads (i.e.: the Indian "Potomac Path" essentially became U. S Route 1); and learned the Indian method of warfare which was to prove so frustrating to the British regulars during the Revolutionary War! Had the Doegs not been here, the settlers would have had much more difficulty in establishing and maintaining themselves as occupants of this land. When the Doegs left the area, some of the settlers moved into their villages and cultivated the crops the Doegs left behind.

Although the Doegs welcomed John Smith and his party in 1608, and

continued to trade with the Jamestown settlers for some years thereafter, the settlers in this area were to call them "Liars, murderers and thieves." (In all probability the Doegs had an equally uncomplimentary description of settlers, but we do not have a record of it!) It is believed that this was the genesis of the common epithet: "He lies like a dog (Doeg!)"

There are those who claim that the Indians have not left us. According to one local legend, a tall Indian has often appeared in the mirror of the upstairs "necessary room" at a house in Occoquan, but he is gone when one turns around to look for him. The ghost of an Indian chief is said to haunt the cellar of the Snow Hill plantation house in the vicinity of Haymarket, incensed that the white man built upon a spot considered sacred by his tribe. Psychics have claimed that they have seen scores of Indian ghosts in the vicinity of Manassas Battlefield Park. Do you suppose. . . ?

In a very real sense the Indians have not left us. The Doegs' heritage is evident today, at least in the names

of many places, such as: Occoquan ("At the end of the water"); Marumscoc ("At the island rock"); Quantico ("By the long stream"); and lastly in the most common name of all: Potomac ("Trader").

Again because of their nomadic lifestyle, the Manahoac have virtually disappeared with a trace. Even today when one finds an arrowhead or spear point in the western part of our county, the origin of the artifact is not clear: was it a Manahoac, a Doeg, an Iroquois or even a settler who threw the spear or launched the arrow? (We must remember that the shortage of gunpowder and shot often resulted in forcing the settlers to use Indian weapons for hunting and some settlers used Indian weapons in preference to their guns because they were silent and did not frighten game away.)

Hugh Conn's Ferry

In the 1790s, Hugh Conn established a ferry across the Potomac River two miles above Great Falls. In 1790 he purchased 15 acres on the river from Joseph Porter and

50 acres, likely adjoining, from George Viall (Veal, Viley). Conn later purchased Porter's half interest in the land his wife and sister-in-law inherited from their father James Carter, who was the original land grant owner. This collection of land, about 150 acres, made up what Conn referred to as his tract of land at the ferry.

In October 1793, Hugh Conn, along with other Potomac River ferrymen, was required to keep travelers who may have yellow fever from entering Virginia. The governor of Virginia wrote to the Justices of Loudoun County requiring them to adopt some safe Mode for preventing the Introduction of the Pestilential disease (which now prevails in the city of Philadelphia the Granadies and the Island of Tobago) into this State. At this time, Conn's ferry was within the bounds of Loudoun County. The Justices called court and recommended that the magistrates establish regulations that there be stationed at each ferry a sergeant or corporal and four men whose duty would be to examine all persons who

attempt to cross the river for satisfactory proof that they did not come from Philadelphia or its vicinity. If you were suspected of traveling from an infected area, you were not allowed to cross the river into Virginia for six days. During that time, your goods and baggage were exposed to the open air on the Maryland side of the river. If after six days you did not show signs of disease, the traveler was permitted to cross the river. If you suffered from some illness, a doctor was called to determine if the disease was yellow fever, and if it was, the traveler was compelled to return home. William Stanhope was appointed to make arrangements at Conn's Ferry for providing the provisions of the guardsmen; including access to a horse should the doctor be needed. Stanhope could contract with anyone in the area who would provide the best terms, and the governor of Virginia agreed to pay for the provisions from the treasury. There were six other Potomac River ferries in Loudoun County that were also required to quarantine travelers: Edward's, Myer's, Noland's,

Heator's, Smith's, and Beltz's ferries.

Description of the Area by a Traveler:

When Irishman Isaac Weld, Jr. traveled through North America and Canada in the late-18th century he visited Great Falls, which he described in one of a series of letters that he published in 1807. Likely in the spring of 1796, Weld travelled from Montgomery Courthouse (now Rockville) to the Maryland side of Great Falls. He then proceeded upriver until he reached a ferry where he could cross the river to view the falls from the Virginia side. The ferry he took was probably Conn's ferry. Following is his description of the area:

Having followed the highway as far as Montgomery court-house, which is about thirty miles from Frederic, I turned off along a bye road running through the woods, in order to see the great falls of Patowmac River. The view of them from the Maryland shore is very pleasing, but not so much as that from the opposite side. Having reached the river therefore close to the Falls, I rode

along through the woods, with which its banks are covered, for some distance higher up, to a place where there was a ferry, and where I crossed into Virginia. From the place where I landed to the Falls, which is a distance of about three miles, there is a wild romantic path running along the margin of the river, and winding at the same time round the base of a high hill covered with lofty trees and rocks. Near to the shore, almost the whole way, there are clusters of small islands covered with trees, which suddenly opposing the rapid course of the stream, form very dangerous eddies, in which boats are frequently lost when navigated by men who are not active and careful. On the shore prodigious heaps of white sand are washed up by the waves, and in many places the path is rendered almost impassable by piles of large trees, which have been brought down from the upper country by floods, and drifted together. The river, at the ferry which I mentioned, is about one mile and a quarter wide, and it continues much the same breadth as far as the Falls, where it is considerably

contracted and confined in its channel by immense rocks on either side. There also its course is very suddenly altered, so much so indeed, that below the Falls for a short distance it runs in an opposite direction from what it did above, but soon after it resumes its former course. The water does not descend perpendicularly, excepting in one part close to the Virginia shore, where the height is about thirty feet, but comes rushing down with tremendous impetuosity over a ledge of rocks in several different falls. The best view of the cataract is from the top of a pile of rocks about sixty feet above the level of the water, and which, owing to the bend in the river, is situated nearly opposite to the Falls. The river comes from the right, then gradually turning, precipitates itself down the Falls, and winds along at the foot of the rocks on which you stand with great velocity. The rocks are of a slate colour, and lie in strata; the surface of them in many places is glossy and sparkling.

Isaac Weld, Jun., 1796

Income From the Ferry Tract

Conn kept both a boat and a canoe at the ferry landing to facilitate the business. He also used the land at the ferry to grow tobacco. Many area farmers; however, had switched to grain cultivation at this time due to the high prices they were receiving for wheat and flour due to the European war. While there is no known record of Conn keeping a tavern at his ferry, he was charged in court for retailing spirituous liquors without a license.

Ferry rates were established by the Virginia General Assembly for each ferry. A typical rate in 1792 for a relatively easy crossing was 4 cents for each man and 4 cents for each horse. All other charges were based on the rate for horses. Coaches, chariots, and wagons, inclusive of their drivers, were charged at the same rate as six horses. Carts and four-wheeled chaises or chairs were charged at the same rate as four horses. Two-wheeled chaises or chairs were charged at the same rate as two horses. Each hogshead (large barrel) of tobacco and each head of cattle was charged the same

as one horse. Smaller livestock, such as sheep, goats, lamb, and hogs, were assessed at one-fifth part of the ferriage for one horse.

When Hugh Conn died in 1806, he provided in his will for the income from the ferry to support his widow, Susanna Conn, and their children. However, if she remarried before the children reached 18 years of age, she received the standard dower portion of $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of the land. She didn't remarry during that period, and the ferry became known as Mrs. Conn's ferry. Hugh Conn's will suggests that his family was living on other property he owned, i.e. not the tract of land at the ferry, at the time of his death. This other land was divided among his heirs, while the land at the ferry remained jointly owned by his widow and children.

In 1812, Susanna Conn, Rezin Elliott, Henry Conn, and Jesse Conn, heirs of Hugh Conn, petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for a law to legally establish a ferry across the Potomac River. They acknowledged that Hugh Conn and they themselves, since Hugh

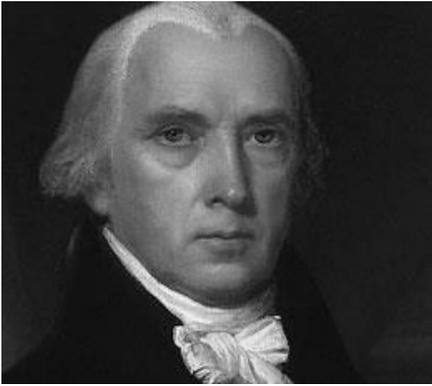
Conn's death, kept a boat for the purpose of ferrying people over the Potomac River. The ferry went from the land of Hugh Conn in Virginia to the lands belonging to the heirs of John Hawkins, deceased, in Maryland. The petitioners stated several advantages for the ferry. They asserted that it was the best and safest passage of the river between the little falls and Seneca; that it shortened the distance from Baltimore to the intersection of the Fauquier Turnpike (later known as the Warrenton Turnpike) and the Little River Turnpike from ten to fifteen miles; that several citizens have real estate on both sides of the river; and that the ferry afforded citizens a shorter and more direct commercial route to the Baltimore market. The Virginia General Assembly passed an act authorizing Conn's Ferry that same year.

Location of Conn's Ferry Landing

Evidence suggests that Conn's ferry landing was located at the same place that is currently used as a boat ramp at the Fairfax County Park Authority's Riverbend Park.

The location of the ferry landing on the Conn property is known from two sources. A land dispute between Spencer Jackson and James Roberts, whose disagreement was over the land just south of the ferry, resulted in a survey being made of that property in November 1824. George Gunnell, who performed the surveyed, was taken to Mrs. Conn's ferry, which was the starting point of his survey.

The second source is an excellent survey plat prepared in 1818 when a canal was contemplated from Goose Creek in Loudoun County to Hunting Creek near Alexandria. By this time, Mrs. Conn was living in a house on the north side of the road leading to the ferry. The house was located up on a hill and had a porch and nearby kitchen. Both the ferry crossing and Mrs. Conn's house are depicted on the plat. (See [Survey Plat](#) at Library of Virginia.)



Conn's Ferry Role in the War of 1812

Conn's Ferry achieved its moment of fame during the War of 1812 when President Madison crossed the Potomac at Conn's Ferry on the morning of August 26, 1814 during his flight from Washington when the British burned many public buildings there. He and his party had reached the river the night before, but were unable to cross due to bad weather. Charles Ingersoll wrote in 1849 in his *Historical Sketch of the Second War between the United States of America and Great Britain* that Madison spent the night in a hovel in the woods before taking the ferry the next morning.

Subsequent Ownership and Use

Hugh Conn's heirs sold the tract at the ferry to John Coad in November 1830. He then sold a 50-acre portion of the tract with the ferry to Henry Dawes the following year. It is unknown when the ferry discontinued operations.

The land changed hands several times before being purchased in 1909 by Dr. John Ladd. He built several cottages, buildings, and wells with well houses for the River Bend Camp he operated there.

Women Unplugged Weekend Set For Riverbend Park

Explore your rugged side with the help of Riverbend Park naturalists during the Women Unplugged Weekend planned for August 29-30, 2015. Enjoy a kayak float trip, camp out, learn about edible plants and take in the natural world at every turn.

This is a weekend you will not forget. It's perfect opportunity to join with girlfriends or daughters,

nieces or perhaps your mother-in-law! Participants must be 16 years old. Advance registration is required. Participants must provide their own camping equipment. Indoor camping is also available.

Unplug and spend the weekend outdoors. Saturday you will kayak from Algonkian Park to Riverbend and have an outdoor dinner with a bonfire. Spend the night under the stars, in your tent or in the nature center if you prefer. Sunday explore birds, edible plants and learn to shoot a bow and arrow. Bring a bagged lunch and water bottle for Saturday's trip; all other meals are provided. Meet at Riverbend on Saturday morning at 8 a.m. Program ends at 2 p.m. on Sunday. This program is for women only.

The weekend costs \$200 per person and includes kayaking equipment, float trip transportation, dinner on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. For more information or to register contact Julie Gurnee at 703-759-9018 or via email at Julie.Gurnee@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Burdine Farm Trail

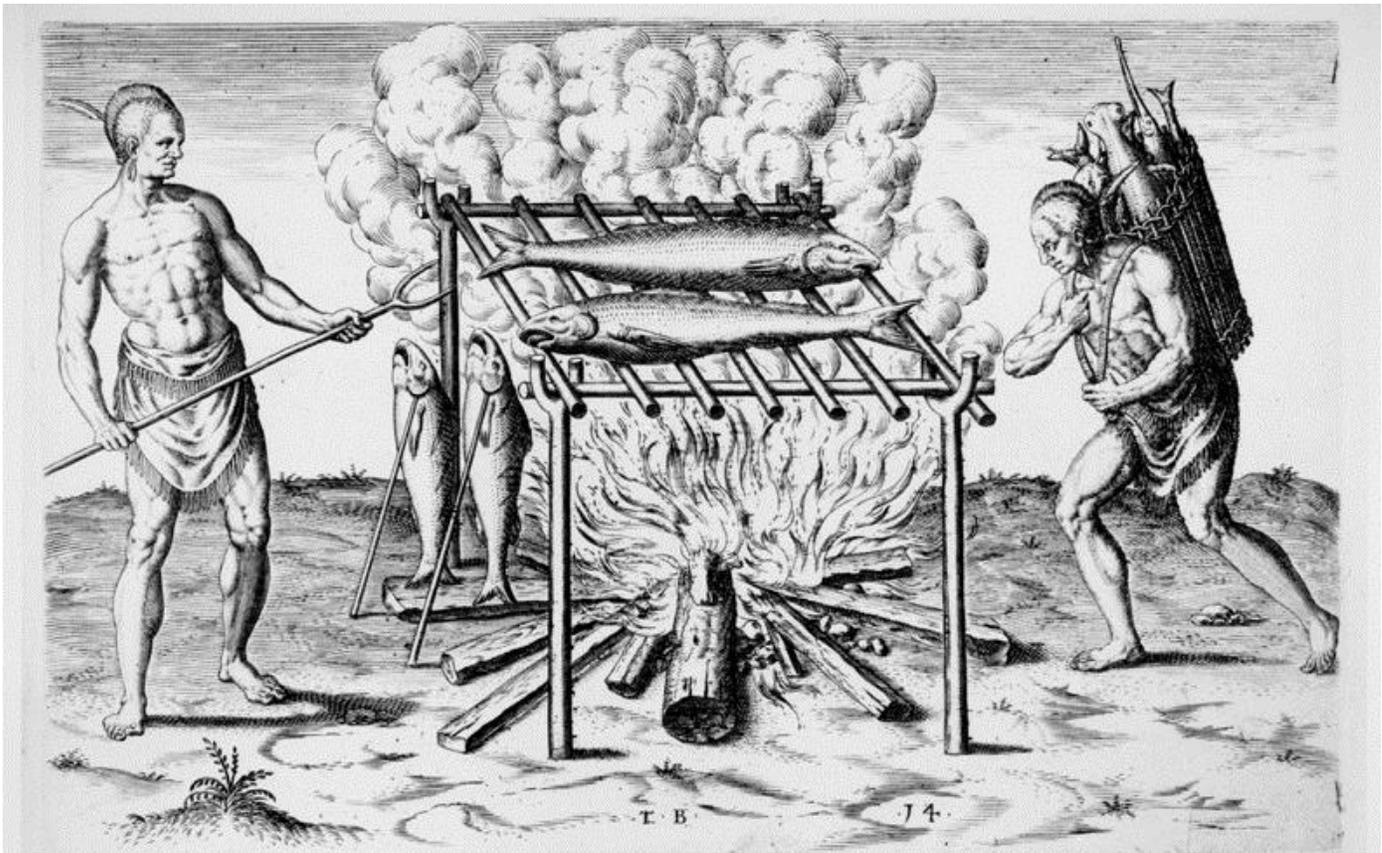
Boy Scout Greg Gersony along with the help of parents, students and neighbors established a new trail that parallels Jeffery Road in Riverbend Park on June 13, 2015. The trail was Greg's Eagle Scout project. He did a tremendous job planning and organizing the project which resulted in a truly outstanding resource. The trail serves a very important function for both park visitors and particularly local neighbors. Visitors now have a trail that parallels Conn's meadow and Jeffery Road north of the main entrance road. The trail will also provide students a place to walk to and from the bus stop at the end of Eaton Park Drive. The trail has been named the Burdine Farm Trail in honor of the Burdine family who ran a farm in the 1930's and 40's in what is now Conn's meadow. Greg is a very thoughtful young man. He dedicated the project to troop 673 Eagle Scout Mark Waugh. Please come out and enjoy the new trail. Thanks to Greg and troop 673, the Gersony family, the Waugh family, and the Bowles family for their help.

Make the new trail part of your hike at Riverbend!

Rent Kayaks and Jon Boats until Mid- October, Friday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm. Kayak and Fishing classes are still available.

Riverbend is on the Web at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park The website includes links to Riverbend's hiking trails, Visitor Center and programs and events. There also links to information about the Potomac River as well as the picnic areas and wildflowers and wildlife at the park. Volunteers may sign up at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/volunteering or call 703-759-9018.

Credits and Notes: Indian engraving, attributed to Theodore deBry, shown on Captain John Smith's Map of Virginia, 1612; Atlatl thrower, Mississippi Valley Historical Center; Runaway Slave, Wisconsin History.org; The plate on this page, entitled *'The brovyllinge of their fishe over the flame'*, was engraved by 'T.B.' (Theodor de Bry), from Virtual Jamestown.



Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) is a 501c(3) non-profit corporation and citizen's group dedicated to the responsible stewardship and preservation of the undisturbed natural beauty at Riverbend Park on the Potomac River and to safeguarding the Park as a natural 'classroom' for the inspiration, enjoyment, and education of all visitors. If you would like to contribute, please send your tax deductible donation to FORB, P.O. BOX 1481, Great Falls, VA 22066.