The Archaeology of the Potomac River Valley: A View from the National Parks

by

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In the late nineteenth century, William Henry Holmes and his associates began the first archaeological survey of the Potomac Valley. Almost one hundred years later, professors William Gardner, Robert Humphrey, and Charles McNett and their students followed-up and expanded on Holmes’ earlier efforts. Starting in 1995 and continuing to the present day, the National Park Service has been conducting Overviews, Assessments, Identification and Evaluation studies of 11 major parks in the Potomac River basin. These investigations were planned as a connected series of studies moving westward up the river from Prince William Forest Park to the terminus of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Highlights from this research include the discovery of new prehistoric and historic archaeological sites spanning over 13,000 years of changing human lifeways and different cultures represented by campsites, villages, workshops, stone quarries, domestic sites, taverns, kilns, mills, armories, forges, fortifications, and battlefields.