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A Window to the Past - 1993

South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology--University of South Carolina

SOUTH CAROLINA
ARCHAEOLOGY
WEEK

"A WINDOW TO THE PAST"
SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 2, 1993

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PHOTOGRAPHS
ELLIOTTS PLANTATION, HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA (1865) COURTESY OF WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CLEVELAND, OHIO
EXCAVATION OF TRENCH WALL STRUCTURE, DANIEL'S ISLAND SOUTH CAROLINA/COURTESY OF THE CHARLESTON MUSEUM, CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA
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SOUTH CAROLINA-A RICH AND VARIED HERITAGE

Many ethnic groups have created the tapestry of what is South Carolina today. This blend of diverse cultures has left its mark upon the landscape and the descendants.

As we explore the lives of men, women and children who walked this landscape as far back as 12,000 years ago, we trace the footsteps of our Native American, African and European ancestors. Their ways of life, missing from our textbooks, come alive as archaeologists piece together the details that are left in the ground. These details reveal aspects of people who once lived here and tell us about their settlements, beliefs, and relations with other cultural groups sharing the same landscape.

When one picks up an artifact, an important connection is made with the past that no history book can relate. It is our duty to protect this connection for future generations. Every artifact discovered at a site generates questions of the past. There are reasons why relics are left behind. They might have been lost by the owner, abandoned, or thrown away. Whatever the reason is, when an artifact has been collected by either the curious passerby or an archaeologist, it has been removed from its unique place.

In other words, the importance of the site lies in the ability to teach us something we do not already know about the past because of its location on the landscape, its relationship to other sites and the artifacts it may contain. When artifacts are found, it is important to document all you can about it including where it came from on a map. Without this knowledge, questions of who these people were cannot be answered. This knowledge will also help in the preservation and protection of archaeological sites.

By becoming a part of the archaeological community, through the Archaeological Society of South Carolina, we not only learn about our past but also discover, preserve, protect and maintain the many significant sites which mark South Carolina's rich and varied heritage.

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Archaeology ... what picture springs to mind? Strange little men in pith helmets? Buried treasure? Dinosaur bones?

Archaeologists look for clues to past "whodunits." They reconstruct events at specific "sites," or places where people did something, by analyzing soil stains and layers that contain artifacts battered by centuries of wind, rain, erosion, and disturbance. As anthropologists, or students of human culture, prehistorians study ancient cultures that lack written records, like North American Indians. Historic archaeologists study cultures after written records came into existence. Classical archaeologists study cultures of the classical world -- Egyptian, Roman, Greek. Despite differences in subject matter, all archaeologists use the same basic techniques to investigate the past.

WHO: Indiana Jones? In fact, archaeologists are part Indiana Jones and part Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, they are detectives with an appetite for mysteries and an eye for detail. Like "Indy", they use maps, shovels, trowels, transits, brushes, dental picks, lab equipment and drafting equipment to bring the past to life. But it's not all glamorous -- archaeologists deal with dampness, cold, heat, mud, pesky critters,and murky water. They must also possess good management, supervisory, writing, and speaking skills.

WHEN: Archaeologists have nearly six million years of humankind to study. Our past doesn't include dinosaurs -- they died out several million years before humans appeared -- so archaeologists don't study them (paleontologists do).

HOW: The past is about time and place. People have always lost, abandoned, and thrown things away. Some objects in the ground rot. Others don't, at least not completely. To reconstruct a sequence of events through time and place, archaeologists familiarize themselves with changes in the style and manufacturing method of those objects that remain.

WHY: Community growth destroys the past. Our unwritten history once lay undisturbed in the soil of our forests and farmlands. Today, parking lots, shopping centers, man-made lakes, mining, and logging obliterate that history. Because federal laws seek to insure that technology and expansion do not erase fragile clues about our past, archaeology has been a routine part of land development in South Carolina for over 15 years. Look around. Archaeologists work statewide on city streets, highway construction sites, real estate developments, state parks, federal forests, rivers, and harbors.

WHERE: People choose to do things at specific places and times, based on how plant, animal, and mineral resources occur across the landscape. After these places are abandoned, evidence lies buried in the ground or under water, where archaeologists look for it.

THE EARLIEST AMERICANS

South Carolina Prehistory

Called "primitive" by the Europeans arriving in South Carolina, Native Americans were actually an advanced society thousands of years old. The ancestors of the first "Paleoindians" who walked here (at least 12,000 years ago) arrived in North America more than 20,000 years ago from Siberia. They crossed the Bering Straits with herds of giant Ice Age animals -- woolly mammoths, mastodons, bison, caribou -- and migrated down an ice-free corridor to the Great Plains and other parts of the Americas.

Their Archaic period descendants used other foods and developed new ways of life in the cool, rich environment that followed the Ice Age. These people moved seasonally within the river valleys, gathering, hunting, fishing, quarrying stone for tools, and socializing with other bands of people. After the climate warmed to nearly what it is today, they settled in base camps and their population grew. They developed new tools -- including the "atlatl" or spear thrower -- and produced small amulets and pottery.

Indians along the Savannah River made the oldest clay pottery in North America. Among Late Archaic Indians, clay pots probably replaced stone pots and woven baskets for cooking and storage. New ideas developed slowly because of strong traditions.

Settling Down

By 2,000 years ago, plant cultivation was important to "Woodland" Indians, the descendants of Archaic hunters and gatherers. Except for pumpkins and sunflowers, most of the crops these people grew are no longer important food sources today. Although they still went on seasonal hunts and foraging trips, Woodland people spent most of the year in their villages and base camps. They built earthen burial mounds for their leaders. They made new kinds of tools, including the bow and arrow, and decorated pottery for household use and trade.

Temple Mounds and Warfare

About 1,000 years ago, "Mississippian" culture spread through Indian societies of the southeastern United States. Leaders in this new culture had great power associated with the sun, wind, rain, and earth spirits. Some Indians in South Carolina adopted "Mississippian" social and political customs. We see this shift in their ceremonies and artwork.

In the Mississippian period, South Carolina Indians belonged to chiefdoms that contained at least one big town and several villages. Frequent fighting among the chiefdoms led people to build protective log palisades around their villages and towns. Towns contained several large earthen mounds -- platforms for temples and leaders' houses. The wood and thatch buildings on these "temple mounds" commanded a broad view of the clean-swept plaza below, where villagers gathered for ceremonies. Crops included many that are familiar today, like corn, beans, squash, sunflower, and tobacco.

One great Mississippian town was located on the Santee River. Abandoned for centuries, its largest temple mound stood high enough to serve as a strategic position for Patriot soldiers during the American Revolution. This now-eroded mound still stands on the shores of Lake Marion at Santee State Park.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY— CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Archaeologist Robert Schuyler states that "African Americans have been part of American history since its inception." One of the most dynamic aspects of African-American archaeology is the survival of Africanisms through the **artifacts** or **material culture.** The dynamic **culture** and life ways of the slaves may surprise and challenge our notions of the past as documented by diaries, historic accounts and popular literature. The information lacking in these texts is being revealed through archaeological excavations, collections of oral histories and still-present reminders on the landscape such as abandoned rice fields and dikes of the lowcountry. The **context**, that is, the historic documents, the landscape, the environment of the times, along with interpretations of the archaeological record found at African-American sites allows us to understand objectively where African-Americans originated, the social conditions in which they lived during their enslavement, their contributions to American history and their emancipation.

Though Africans brought to America as slaves carried few material possessions, they brought their cultural background, some of which included "their sacred beliefs and knowledge of such things as rice growing, basketry and pottery." As a result of interactions with other Africans, European Americans and Native Americans, some African customs were altered and abandoned but in other instances they remained unchanged.

One example of the retention of West African (Bakongo) beliefs and practices among African-Americans is the decoration of graves. The Bakongo believed that life did not end at death but was transformed. They believed that there were two worlds — that of the living and the watery upside-down world of the dead. Objects such as cups, pitchers, glass and shells, to name a few, were turned upside-down on the graves and represent the personal possessions the deceased would use in the world of the dead.

The Bakongo understanding of God, life and the interrelationship of those forces in the universe was illustrated through drawings. The **diamonds** on the front of the poster, called a **cosmogram,** describe the "four moments of the sun." Moving in the counterclockwise path of the sun from dawn to midnight encompasses the cycles of life and death. In both worlds, man experiences birth, life, death and rebirth.

The material culture or personal items found within African-American sites, in combination with historic accounts and oral histories, guide archaeologists in formulating questions about the past. Such questions include: In what ways do these artifacts recovered from African-American sites reflect ethnic patterns? What were the material differences in the lives of slaves, free blacks and tenant farmers and between urban and rural communities? The study of these artifacts and an understanding of their historic context will shed light on everyday plantation life, the African-American response to enslavement and the processes of change and exchange between masters and slaves.

INDIAN - EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS

Spanish explorers first claimed the coast of North America from modern Florida to Virginia, calling it "la Florida," or "the beautiful land." After Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon failed to establish a settlement in 1526, Hernando de Soto and a group of men, horses, and pigs left Florida and traveled to South Carolina in 1540. They paused at Cofitachequi, a fortified Indian town on the Wateree River, before continuing up the Catawba River.

In 1566, Pedro Menendez de Aviles established a permanent settlement, Santa Elena, on Port Royal Sound near Beaufort. Predating Charles Towne by more than 100 years, this fortified town, along with St. Augustine, defended Spain's huge new territory from French rivals. The first capitol of Spanish Florida, Santa Elena was occupied for about 20 years, then was abandoned to the forest and the Indians.

Between 1566 and 1568 Captain Juan Pardo was sent from Santa Elena on two expeditions into South Carolina's interior. When he visited five Indian towns which de Soto had visited 20 years earlier, he found native societies and economies floundering and the Indians dying of European diseases.

As Europeans continued to compete for control of the Carolina colony, they used Indian populations as allies and trading partners. In spite of poor treatment, Indians continued to offer European settlers farmland, food, and animal skins in exchange for imported goods.

Eventually, Indian-European relationships strained to the breaking point. Those native people who survived disease and war were relocated or enslaved as European settlers claimed new territories. By the end of the Yemassee War (1715), one-third of all slaves in the Carolina colony were Indians.

South Carolina's landscape has changed greatly since the first Paleoindians arrived thousands of years ago. Indians endured the loss of land and social recognition in a world their ancestors shaped. Considering the devastation to their tribes and cultures, it is remarkable to find Indian populations in South Carolina today. Of over 8,200 residents in 1990 claiming Indian identity, the largest group is the Catawba, an 18th century coalition of North Carolina and South Carolina Indians. Other local populations claim descent from the Chicora, Santee, Edisto, and Pee Dee -- tribes that once thrived in the South Carolina lowcountry.

SEVEN WAYS YOU CAN PRESERVE THE PAST

1. Report archaeological sites to the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology.
2. Be a responsible hobby diver. Report uncharted shipwrecks and questionable salvage activities to the State Archaeologist.
3. Report vandalism of archaeological sites to the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, the SC Department of Archives and History, and local law enforcement.
4. Join the Archaeological Society of South Carolina.
5. Avoid damaging old buildings and archaeological sites on your property until an archaeologist can evaluate them.
6. Notify the State Historic Preservation Officer about development activities that may threaten a known archaeological site.
7. Support community ordinances that protect or rehabilitate archaeological sites.

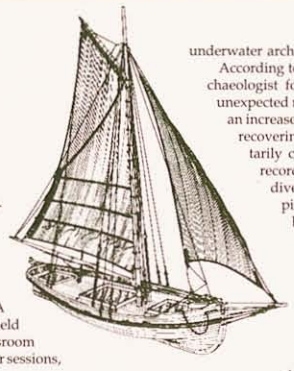
SCIAA's Underwater Archaeology Division and volunteers excavate the Malcolm Boat, an 18th century sloop abandoned on the banks of the Ashley River.

SPORT DIVERS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Hobby (sport) diving has been licensed in South Carolina since the 1970s. With a hobby license, divers can collect fossils and artifacts, if they provide a list of items they collect to the Underwater Archaeology Division at the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. (SCIAA)

To help divers identify and record their finds, SCIAA staff offer basic archaeological training, including a field manual. Divers attending annual field schools get classroom and laboratory instruction, swimming pool and open water sessions, and practical experience.

Local dive stores distribute educational literature, including "The Goody Bag", a newsletter of articles and artwork. This newsletter answers common questions about archaeological sites and lists conferences, field school dates, statewide diving activities, and changes in underwater archaeology laws.



According to Chris Amer, Deputy State Archaeologist for Underwater at SCIAA, one unexpected result of state licensing has been an increase in volunteerism. Instead of just recovering artifacts, sport divers voluntarily coordinate weekend teams that record and document sites. In 1991, divers from all over the state compiled a study of barge architecture based on shipwrecks in the Waccamaw River. The following year graduates from the program field school conducted a survey of the Cooper River. And this year graduates will survey the Savannah River near Augusta for submerged cultural sites under the direction of Underwater Archaeology Division archaeologists.

With the addition of a strong education component to the state licensing program, Institute staff report that the quality of information turned in by sport divers has improved. The program also helps archaeologists by training a pool of volunteers to help on projects statewide.

"An active combination of recreation and cultural resource management," says Amer, "has made South Carolina a national leader in promoting education about underwater archaeological sites."

Archaeology and education at Santa Elena.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

- **SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology**
  University of South Carolina
  Office of the State Archaeologist
  Bruce Rippeteau, Director and State Archaeologist
  Jonathan Leader, Deputy State Archaeologist
  Nena Powell, SC Archaeology Week Coordinator
  (803) 777-8170 or 734-0567
- **State Historic Preservation Office**
  SC Department of Archives and History
  George Vogt, State Historic
- **Preservation Officer**
  Mary Edmunds, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
  Lee Tippett, Staff Archaeologist (803) 734-8609
- **Council of SC Professional Archaeologists**
  P. O. Box 12214, Columbia, SC 29202
  David Anderson, President (404) 331-2628
- **Archaeological Society of South Carolina**
  % SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology
  George Lewis, President (706) 793-4169
- **SC Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism**
  J. W. Lawrence, Executive Director
  Donnie Barker, Staff Archaeologist (803) 734-0156
- **SC Wildlife and Marine Resources Department**
  James A. Timmerman, Jr., Executive Director
  Tom Kohlsaat, Chief, NonGame Heritage Trust Section
  Chris Judge, Archaeologist (803) 734-3753 or 734-3893
- **SC State Museum**
  Overton Ganong, Executive Director
  Fritz Hamer, Chief Curator of Cultural History
  Elaine Nichols, Curator of AfricanAmerican Culture and History
  (803) 737-4921, 737-4942, 737-4953
- **SC Department of Highways & Public Transportation**
  Daniel Fanning, Executive Director
  Wayne Roberts, Archaeologist (803) 737-1395
- **US Forest Service**
  David Wilson, Forest Supervisor
- **Francis Marion National Forest**
  Bob Morgan, Archaeologist (803) 887-3257
- **Sumter National Forest**
  Jim Bates, Archaeologist (803) 229-2406
- **National Park Service**
  Interagency Archaeological Services Division
  Southeast Regional Office
  John Ehrenhard, Chief
  David Anderson, Archaeologist (404) 331-2628
- **US Army Corps of Engineers**
  Judy Wood, Archaeologist (912) 944-5840
- **University of South Carolina**
  Department of Anthropology
  Stanton Green, Chairperson (803) 777-6500
- **Wofford College**
  Department of Geology
  Terry Ferguson, Archaeologist (803) 585-4821
- **Clemson University**
  Carrel Cowan Ricks, Archaeologist (803) 656-0972
- **College of Charleston**
  Department of Sociology and Anthropology
  Barbara Borg, Archaeologist (803) 792-5408
- **Coastal Carolina University**
  Waccamaw Regional Studies Program
  Jim Michie, Associate Director (803) 347-3161
- **University of North CarolinaCharlotte**
  Janet Levy, Archaeologist (704) 547-2252
- **Savannah River Archaeological Research Program**
  SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, USC
  Mark Brooks, Richard Brooks; Directors (803) 725-3623
- **Underwater Archaeology Division**
  Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program
  SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology
  Chris Amer, Head and Deputy State Archaeologist for Underwater
  (803) 777-8170
- **McKissick Museum**
  University of South Carolina
  Lynn Robertson, Director
  Deanna Kerrigan, Curator of Educational Services
  Cinda Baldwin, Registrar (803) 777-7251
- **The Charleston Museum**
  John Brumgardt, Executive Director
  Martha Zierden, Ron Anthony; Archaeologists
  (803) 722-2996
- **Museum of York County**
  Wayne Clark, Executive Director
  Rita Kenion, Archaeologist (803) 329-2121
- **Museum of Hilton Head Island**
  Mike Taylor, Executive Director (803) 842-9197
- **Parris Island Museum**
  Steve Wise, Curator (803) 525-2951
- **Schiele Museum of Natural History**
  Alan May, Ann Tippitt; Archaeologists (704) 866-6917
- **Lexington County Museum**
  Horace Harmon, Curator (803) 359-8369
- **Horry County Museum**
  Williams Keeling, Director (803) 248-6489
- **Florence Museum of Art, Science, and History**
  Susan Leath, Director (803) 662-3351
- **Historic Columbia Foundation**
  Ray Sigmon, Executive Director (803) 252-7742
- **Mann-Simons Cottage**
  Pat Middleton, Coordinator and Education Assistant
  (803) 252-1450
- **Historic Charleston Foundation**
  Lawrence A. Walker, Executive Director
  Jonathan Poston, Director of Preservation Programs
  (803) 723-1623 or 724-8486
- **Historic Camden**
  Joanna Craig, Director
  Susan Jackson, Site Director (803) 432-9841
- **Historic Beaufort Foundation**
  Cynthia Jenkins, Director (803) 524-6334
- **Drayton Hall**
  Meggett Lavin, Education and Research (803) 766-0188
- **African American Heritage Council**
  Liz Austin, President (803) 720-3067
- **Penn Center**
  Emory Campbell, Executive Director (803) 838-2432
- **Catawba Indian Preservation Center**
  Winonah Haire, Director (803)324-5214
- **Chicora Foundation, Inc.**
  Michael Trinkley, Archaeologist (803) 787-6910
- **AF Consultants**
  Lesley Drucker, Archaeologist (803) 787-4169
- **Diachronic Research Foundation, Inc.**
  Carl Steen, Chris Judge; Archaeologists (803) 929-0294
- **New South Associates**
  John Cable, Archaeologist (803) 781-8417
- **Paul Brockington & Associates**
  Eric Poplin, Archaeologist (803) 881-3128
- **Garrow & Associates**
  Joel Gunn, Archaeologist (919) 821-3197
- **Southeastern Archaeological Services**
  Chad Braley, Tom Gresham; Archaeologists
  (706) 546-1850

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