

JNCAS

Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society

Spring 2012 Newsletter

In This Issue...

Meet an
Archaeologist

Archaeology
in the News

Logo Contest

Upcoming Events

Mystery Artifact

Join our
Advisory Board



Kids looking for artifacts at the Berry site.

North Carolina's First European Settlement

If you know anything about North Carolina's history, you are undoubtedly familiar with the story of the mysterious "Lost Colony" of Roanoke Island. You might even know that before establishing the ill-fated colony, England had made two other unsuccessful attempts to colonize the island off our state's coast.

But did you know that the English were not the first Europeans to try settling the area we now call North Carolina? In fact, the colonists on Roanoke Island weren't even the first to mysteriously disappear!

It turns out those dubious distinctions belong to the Spanish. And every summer, a team of archaeologists works hard to uncover new evidence of the doomed Spanish colony that was also the first European settlement anywhere in the interior of North America.

Key Terms

fort: a permanent army post
manned by soldiers

artifact: any object made,
modified, or used by humans

chainmail: a type of armor
made of small metal rings

sherd: a broken fragment of
pottery (also called *potsherd*)

scribe: an official secretary;
in this case, a member of
Captain Pardo's expedition
tasked with recording the
details of the journey

Fort San Juan

Almost twenty years before the first English colonists arrived at Roanoke Island, Spanish soldiers built a small fort in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. They were following the instructions of their Captain, Juan Pardo, who was leading them on an expedition to find an overland route between the Spanish settlement of Santa Elena on the coast of South Carolina and silver mines in Mexico.

According to historical accounts, Captain Pardo and 125 Spanish soldiers began their quest to reach Mexico in December of 1566. As they trekked across the Carolinas, Pardo's hungry army went from one friendly American Indian community to another in order to obtain food and information.

In early 1567, the expedition reached a large native town called Joara. Something about the town must have appealed to Captain Pardo, for he renamed it Cuenca in honor of his home city in Spain. He also ordered his men to build a fort there, which he named Fort San Juan.

Although Fort San Juan was the first inland European settlement in North America, Spain and France attempted to establish colonies on the continent's Atlantic Coast even earlier. Most of their attempts eventually failed, but St. Augustine in Florida has been continuously occupied since the Spanish founded it in 1565.

Captain Pardo thought that he would easily find an overland route from Santa Elena to the silver mines in Mexico because he mistakenly believed that the Appalachian Mountains were part of the Rocky Mountains. Pardo never did reach Mexico, but he was nevertheless more successful than the unlucky soldiers he stationed at Fort San Juan.



The Berry Site

Although historians have long known about the existence of Fort San Juan, it was not until the 1980s that archaeologists began to find evidence of its location at the Berry site near the modern city of Morganton, NC. The Berry site represents the remains of a large native town dating to the mid-1500s. On the northern edge of the town, archaeologists have discovered a variety of Spanish artifacts and the remains of five burned buildings that they believe constitute all that is left of Fort San Juan.

When Captain Pardo and his army left Joara to continue their journey west, 30 Spanish soldiers stayed behind to man the fort. But the Spanish settlement only lasted 18 months. In May of 1568, a lone survivor delivered the news to Santa Elena that the Joarans had killed the other 29 soldiers in a surprise attack.

What went wrong for the Spanish? And why did the Joarans wait more than a year to destroy the settlement when they had the strength and numbers to do it all along? Archaeologists working at the Berry site are painstakingly recovering buried evidence that could reveal the answers to these questions and more.

Some of the most significant Spanish artifacts found at the Berry site include iron nails, fragments of chainmail, and sherds of Spanish pottery. These artifacts suggest that the site was the location of Fort San Juan because they were not likely to arrive at a native town through trade alone. Decorative objects like glass beads were desirable trade goods that show up at many native towns, but American Indians would have had no need for Spanish nails, chainmail, or Spanish pottery. Archaeologists therefore conclude that these items must have belonged to the Spanish soldiers occupying the fort.



Aerial view of the remains of two burned buildings believed to have housed soldiers.

The five burned buildings at the Berry site support the idea that Fort San Juan came to an abrupt and violent end. Archaeologists think these buildings were houses that the Joarans built for the Spanish soldiers. They were larger than a typical native house, suggesting that they were not for the Joarans themselves. Inside, archaeologists have found telltale clues of the Spanish presence, including a board cut with a European tool and a scale for weighing supplies. Archaeologists know that the Spaniards had a scale with them because Captain Pardo's scribe wrote that he left 34 pounds of nails with the soldiers at Fort San Juan.



Sherds from a Spanish olive jar found at the Berry site.

According to the scribe's account, the Spaniards asked the Joarans to feed them and provide them with other supplies and labor. Archaeologists think that these sorts of demands may have eventually angered the people of Joara. Perhaps they initially thought of the Spanish soldiers as friendly guests, and there is some evidence to suggest that the soldiers initially gave the Joarans gifts and helped them in their own way. But after awhile, the Spanish soldiers may have run out of exotic European goods to give away, and the Joarans likely grew tired of their strange bearded guests who demanded things and seemed to have no plans of ever leaving. Some disgruntled residents of the town may have taken matters into their own hands by burning down the Spaniards' houses.

Joara

The area that archaeologists believe represents the Spanish fort is only a small part of the Berry site. The rest of the site contains a now-destroyed earthen mound and the remains of the native town believed to be Joara.

Although much of the town has been destroyed by subsequent activities, there is still enough of it remaining for archaeologists to be able to investigate what life was like for the Joarans before and after the Spanish arrived. They already know that even after the Spanish fort had been destroyed, life changed significantly for the people at Joara. Within another 50 years, they had entirely abandoned the area for reasons that archaeologists are still trying to understand.

Two Worlds, Once Place

The story of Fort San Juan is a tale of two peoples from very different worlds coming together for the first time. By studying clues from the Berry site, archaeologists hope to learn what life was like for both the Joarans and the Spanish soldiers during the 18 months that their two worlds coexisted. They also hope to piece together what ultimately happened to sour relations so much that the experiment ended in the violent destruction of the Spanish compound.

Moreover, archaeologists are optimistic that their excavations at the Berry site will reveal more than just the story of the brief encounter between the Joarans and the Spanish soldiers at Fort San Juan. They believe the site could also yield clues to help them understand how other native and European groups may have interacted when their different worlds came together in places across North America.

And who knows? Maybe by solving the mystery of what happened to North Carolina's first "lost" colony, archaeologists will gain some insights into what happened to the second one on Roanoke Island. ■



Young archaeologists at the Berry site.

Did You Know?

Kids just like you are part of the team of archaeologists studying the Berry site! Through Archaeology Explorers programs, 3rd through 12th graders can spend up to a week exploring the site and learning about archaeology.

MEET AN ARCHAEOLOGIST!

For each newsletter, we interview an archaeologist working in North Carolina. This time we caught up with Emma Richardson and asked her some questions about her job and how she first became interested in archaeology.



Emma excavating the remains of a collapsed Native American house.

1. Please briefly describe your job.

I work as the Staff Archaeologist for the Exploring Joara Foundation, a non-profit public archaeology program in western North Carolina. I travel to schools to teach about archaeology and I lead excavations at the Berry site. Right now I'm helping to plan an outdoor exhibit that will show what a Native American village from the 1500s would have looked like.

2. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a very small town overlooking the Chesapeake Bay on the eastern shore of Maryland. My parents ran the general store and Post Office that our family lived above.

3. What sparked your interest in Archaeology?

When you work in a post office, you hear all sorts of stories from people who have lived in the area their whole lives. Most of the stories were about the town's ferry that used to take people to the other side of the state or the train that used to go through town. As a kid, my friends and I loved to look for the old train tracks and the bottles left behind a hundred years ago by ferry passengers. By looking at what each bottle was used for, we were able to figure out where the old ferry restaurant used to stand as well as the where the small doctor's office used to be. It always amazed me how many people had called my town home before I was born.

4. What was your first archaeological excavation, and how old were you?

When I was 18, I was given the opportunity to work at the Ensley site in western North Carolina. It was a Native American village occupied at the same time as the Berry site. One of my classes at Warren Wilson College required that we visit the site and work for a couple of hours. After the first day of excavation, I begged to come back the next day. I ended up working there for the whole week!

5. What other interesting excavations have you participated in since then?

I have been lucky enough to excavate sites throughout the country. In Illinois I worked in negative degree weather and needed ladders to get in and out of the excavation units since they were so deep, but what we found was incredible! A series of Archaic hunter-gatherer camps showed us that people had been coming back to the same spot for over four thousand years! My favorite site to excavate is the Berry site, which I have worked on for the past seven years. I am fascinated by the time period when Native Americans and Europeans first saw each other and lived together. What did they think of each other? Did they eat or play games together? Since there aren't many written records from that time, it is up to archaeologists to piece together what those interactions may have been like.

6. What do you like most about your job?

I love teaching archaeology out in the field and getting to share discoveries with students. The best part is being there when someone finds his or her very first artifact. I feel very fortunate to be able to do something I love! ■



Emma proudly displaying an arrowhead she discovered at the Berry site.

Have a question for Emma?
Contact her at ExploringJoara@att.net
or 410-924-8229.

JNCAS Logo Contest

The Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society needs a logo, so we're holding a contest to find one! The creator of the winning design will receive a North Carolina Archaeological Society T-shirt and a free membership for 2013. The deadline for entering the contest is September 1, 2012, and the new logo will debut in the October newsletter. The specific guidelines are below. Good luck!

Contest Rules

- Contestants must be 17 years of age or younger and JNCAS members.
- The logo should include the letters JNCAS.
- The logo should be attractive when reproduced in color or black and white.
- The logo will be small, so the design cannot be too complicated.
- There is no limit to the number of designs an individual can submit.
- Logos in electronic format must be saved as JPEG or TIFF files.
- Send your design(s) to tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu or Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society, c/o N.C. Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619.
- Entries must be postmarked by September 1, 2012.

ARCHAEOLOGY...

The Maya "End of the World" Prophecy



Have you heard all the hype about the end of the Maya calendar? Are you wondering if you should study for that upcoming math test if the world is ending later this year?

Relax, say Maya experts. Much of the confusion appears to stem from a partial translation of a badly damaged inscription found at a site in Mexico named Tortuguero. One of the world's leading Mayan epigraphers, Dr. David Stuart, has made a more complete translation of the legible glyphs and says the year 2012 is mentioned in the inscription merely as the future anniversary of an event that occurred in AD 669.

The event was the dedication of a building. In essence, the inscription says that when the end of the current Maya Long Count cycle, or Bak'tun, occurs in 2012, people will still be talking about the dedication that occurred some 1,343 years earlier. It would be like President John Adams predicting back in 1800 that people will still know about the grand White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue when the end of the 21st century rolls around.

Dr. Stuart claims that novelists, movie producers, and others who don't fully understand the Tortuguero inscription have misinterpreted it to mean that something bad will happen when the building's anniversary rolls around later this year. But Dr. Stuart dismisses that interpretation as "crazy" in his Maya Decipherment Weblog (decipherment.wordpress.com; see Dr. Stuart's "Q&A About 2012" entry from October 11, 2009).

Of course, it does appear that the ancient Maya may have been correct after all: people *will* still be talking about their building on December 21, 2012.

Guess you should probably start studying for that math test.

Cool Fact: David Stuart, who spent part of his childhood in Chapel Hill, NC, was only 8 years old when he began deciphering Maya hieroglyphs. When he was 15, he made a breakthrough discovery that was the key to unlocking the meaning of many glyphs that had long puzzled other Maya scholars.

JNCAS Advisory Board

Want to shape the future of the Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society? The JNCAS is looking for six motivated and creative kids to join its 2012-2013 Advisory Board. Members of the Advisory Board share their ideas for the JNCAS, review newsletters before they are sent, and assist with JNCAS events when they are able. Any current member is eligible to apply, and the deadline for submitting applications is August 1, 2012.

To apply, please send us your name and answers to the following questions:

1. Why did you join the JNCAS?
2. Why would you like to be a member of the Advisory Board?
3. What new ideas do you have for the JNCAS or its newsletter?
4. If you were given the opportunity to propose a JNCAS event, what would it be?
5. Please provide the name, phone number, and email address of at least one adult who is not related to you and can tell us more about you. Be sure to tell us how you know the adult.

Applications should be sent to tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu or JNCAS, c/o N.C. Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619.

Reviews: J & P Voelkel's "Middleworld"

Have you recently read a book, seen a movie, or explored a website about archaeology? If so, we want to know what you thought about it!

Future JNCAS newsletters and e-blasts will include member-submitted reviews of books, movies, or websites related to archaeology. If you'd like to submit a review of a book or movie, please send a couple of paragraphs describing the plot and your opinion. To review a website, please send us the link and an explanation of what you liked (or didn't like) about it. Reviews should be sent to tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu or Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society, c/o N.C. Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619.

To get the ball rolling, we're soliciting reviews for "Middleworld," the first book in J&P Voelkel's Jaguar Stones series. The series chronicles the adventures of 14-year-old Max Murphy, the son of two archaeologists, and his Maya sidekick, Lola. In "Middleworld," Max sets off to find his parents after they mysteriously disappear at a site in Central America. Along the way, he and Lola must save themselves from the dangers of the rainforest and the Maya Lords of Death.

Happy reading, and let us know what you think!



Upcoming Events

May

5th: Boy Scout Indian Lore Merit Badge Workshop, Town Creek Indian Mound, Mt. Gilead. \$10; preregistration required. 910-439-6802; towncreek@ncdcr.gov

5th: Native Technology Demonstration, 1–3PM, Catawba Meadows Park, Morganton. Archaeologist Scott Jones will demonstrate knapping, fire, cordage, tools, and weapons. Free. 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

5th: Flintknapping Workshop, 9AM–12PM, Morganton. Learn to make stone tools and take home a basic flintknapping kit. Ages 14 and up; \$15-\$20 plus additional fee for flintknapping kit; preregistration required. 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

19th: Third Annual Joara Pottery Festival, Morganton. Pottery festival featuring contemporary and traditional potters. \$4; free for children under 12. 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

26th: Groundbreaking Ceremony, 1PM, Catawba Meadows Interpretive Center, Morganton. Free. 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

26th: Palisade Building Workshop, 9AM–3PM, Catawba Meadows Park, Morganton. Learn how to use stone axes to prepare and erect palisade posts. \$15-\$20; preregistration required. 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

June

11th: Archaeology at Colonial Brunswick, 10AM–4PM, Winnabow. Archaeologists will discuss the site and examine visitors' backyard finds. Local artisans will demonstrate their crafts. 910-371-6613

18th (through Aug. 8): Archaeology Explorers Camps, Morganton. Day and residential archaeology camps for rising 3rd graders through adults. exploringjoara.org; 919-749-5212; archaeologyexplorers@gmail.com

23rd: Field Day at the Berry Site, Morganton. View the latest discoveries at the Berry site and learn what life was like in the sixteenth century. Appropriate for all ages; special section with hands-on activities for kids. exploringjoara.org; 828-439-2463; exploringjoara@att.net

27th: Archaeology Day, Museum of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City. Talk to archaeologists, watch ground penetrating radar demonstrations, learn about dendrochronology, and participate in hands-on activities. Free and appropriate for all ages. 252-335-1453

July

9th: Native Americans on the Cape Fear, 10AM–3PM, Winnabow. Learn about American Indians who lived along the Cape Fear and their crafts. 910-371-6613

Mystery Artifact



This artifact was found at the Hardaway site in Stanly County. Do you know what it is and how it was used?

Send your ideas to tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu. The correct answer and the names of all members who figured it out will be included in the next newsletter.

JNCAS Newsletter Publication Schedule

The JNCAS Newsletter is published in April and October. E-blasts are occasionally sent to notify members of upcoming events.

JNCAS members are encouraged to submit letters, artwork, reviews, etc. for inclusion in the Newsletter. Send your submissions or update your contact information by emailing Theresa McReynolds Shebalin, JNCAS Newsletter Editor, at tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu.



Contact Us

Junior North Carolina Archaeological Society
c/o N.C. Office of State Archaeology
4619 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4619

JNCAS Newsletter Editor: Theresa McReynolds Shebalin
(tmshebalin@alumni.unc.edu)

NCAS Board of Directors: Butch "Archie" Smith, Theresa McReynolds Shebalin, Steve Davis, Bill Conen, Linda Carnes-McNaughton, Tom Beaman, Clay Swindell, Kevin Donald, Joel Hardison, Tony Boudreaux, Charles Heath, Dee Nelms

Special thanks to Emma Richardson and Dr. Patricia McAnany for reviewing articles featured in this newsletter.