North Carolina Archaeological Society Newsletter

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# The Currituck Clovis Point

by Thomas R. Whyte and Keith C. Seramur (Appalachian State University)

In February 2006, Appalachian State University (ASU) student Mary Heather Burt reported a fluted projectile point that her father, David J. Burt, had found at the edge of the surf on Currituck Beach, North Carolina in July 1978 (Figure 1). Mr. Burt generously loaned the specimen to the authors for a brief period of time for non-destructive analysis. He recalled that he observed the artifact rolling in a receding wave on the beach when the gradient of the shoreline was unusually steep and that there were no tidal creeks or banks in that section of the beach from which the artifact may have eroded.

The fluted projectile point (Figure 2) measures 77.4 mm in total length, 27.45 mm in maximum width (at mid-haft), and 9.15 mm in maximum thickness (at the top of the haft). The haft length, as indicated by the extent of intentional grinding along the edge, is approximately 26 mm. It has a basal incurvation of 5.04 mm, a maximum flute length of 30.85 mm on one face, and a maximum flute length of 18.26 mm on the opposing face (Figure 2). The surface color is a dark metallic brown due to a manganese precipitate, but recent collision scars on the edge of the tool reveal a composition of yellow jasper (Figure 3). This manganese precipitate likely formed when the buried projectile point came into contact with groundwater.

The closest known quarried sources of yellow jasper are in northern Stokes County in the Piedmont of North Carolina and in Powhatan, Culpeper, and Warren Counties, Virginia (https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/lithics/little-cattail-creek-chert/). Williamson Chert, also known as Cattail Creek chalcedony occurs in Dinwiddie County, in the Piedmont-Coastal Plain Fall Zone. A variety of this material has been described as yellow-brown jasper (https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/lithics/little-cattail-creek-chert/). It is possible that the material represented by the Currituck Clovis point was derived from one of these sources or from an alluvial cobble of jasper ultimately derived from a primary jasper source.

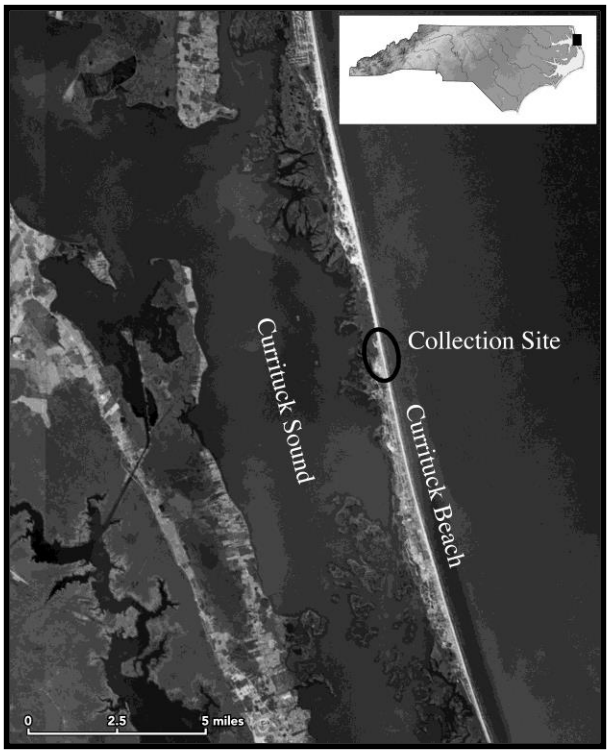


***Figure 1: Location of the Currituck Clovis Point Discovery.***

The Outer Banks formed about 5,000 years ago as sea level stabilized near its present elevation (Dolan and Lins 2000). There could not have been Clovis occupations on the Outer Banks. The primary sediment transport mechanism at Currituck Beach is long shore currents moving north to south. These currents transport sand size and smaller particles. The Clovis point would not have been transported along the shore by these currents. Large waves produced during hurricanes can disturb sea floor deposits. We propose that the Currituck Clovis point most

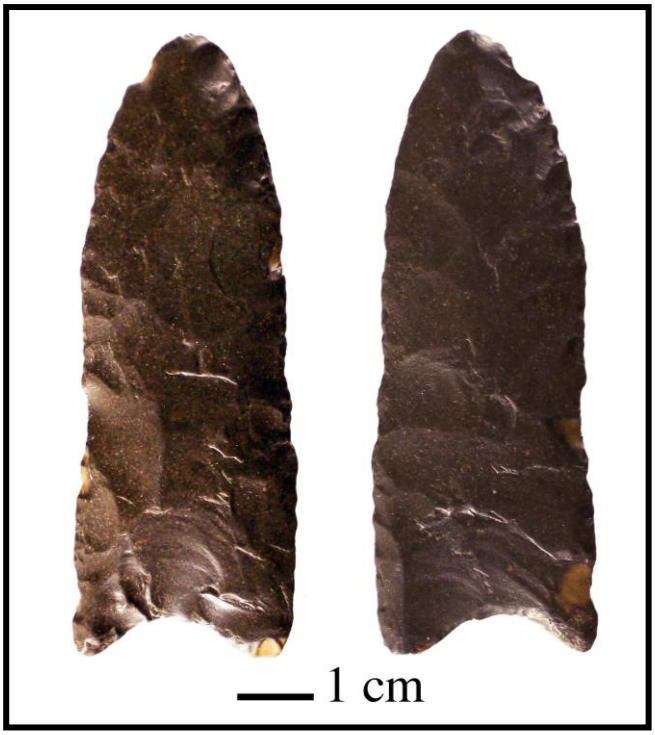


***Figure 2: The Currituck Clovis Point***

likely came from a site that is now offshore. As sea level rose and the shoreline migrated across the site sometime between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, the artifact was dislodged. More recently, it was transported to the current tidal zone where it underwent further erosion and ultimately was deposited on the beach where it was discovered. It is also possible that the point was collected and brought to the outer banks by a more recent mid- to late Holocene visitor; lithic scavenging was common in post-Clovis times (Whyte 2104; Whyte and Kimball 2017).

All edges of the tool and flake ridges and valleys exhibit a dull smoothing from sand abrasion. Several collision fractures along the edge have exposed the yellow color of the jasper beneath the manganese precipitate. Edges of these scars are only slightly smoothed and must have resulted from collisions with sediment after the tool was dislodged from a previous depositional context and tumbled by waves. An experiment with a yellow jasper biface placed in a commercial rock tumbler with water and sand from a nearby beach (Surf City, NC) required only 250 hours to produce a similar degree of erosion. An artifact in a rock tumbler, however, is a poor

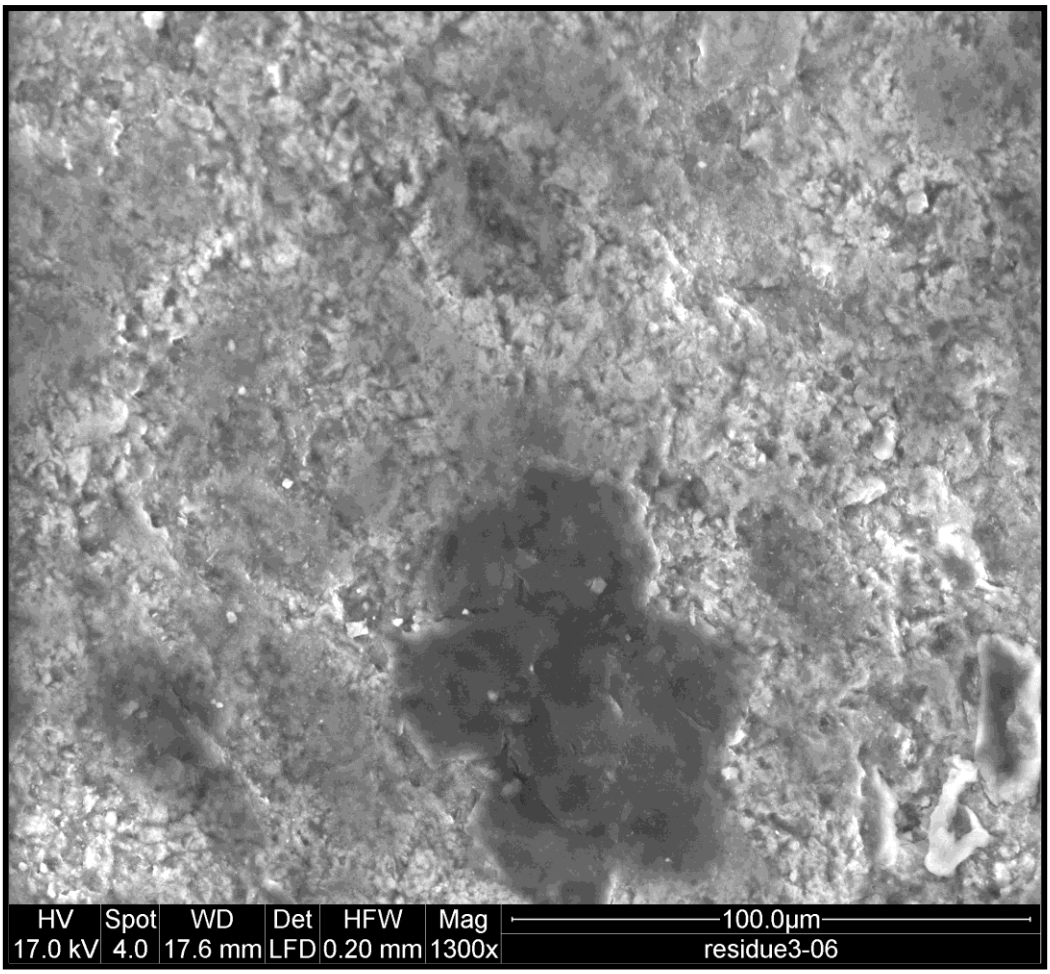


***Figure 3: Possible organic residues adhering to one face of the Currituck Clovis point.***

analog for one in the ocean surf, where objects may move from contexts with gentle undulations to those with violent tumbling and from settings with fine sediments to those with coarser ones. If the Currituck Clovis was dislodged from its archaeological context by wave action and remained in the active surf until it was found, the rock tumbler may be a reasonable analog for wave action. Beach glass collected along Currituck beach often exhibits more severe rounding than that found on the artifact.

The Clovis point was scanned and analyzed using a Scanning Electron Microscope with an Energy Dispersive Spectrometer (EDAX) at the Dewel-CAS Microscopy Facility at ASU. Scanning electron microscopy revealed a residue in the hafting zone on a lower face of the artifact (Figure 3). This residue was analyzed for its elemental composition and showed that it is carbon or organic residue. However, considering the degree of postdepositional surface erosion evident on this same surface, the residue likely accumulated after deposition.

Although hundreds of Clovis spear points have been found in North Carolina, exceedingly few have been found on the outer Coastal Plain, and this is the first one reported from the Outer Banks (Daniel and Moore 2011).

**References Cited**

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# SEAC 2020 (Durham, NC)

Save the date! This year's Southeastern Archaeological Conference (SEAC) will be held right here in our own fabulous state. The meeting, hosted by the Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will take place October 28–31, 2020, at the Durham Convention Center in downtown Durham. If you have not yet visited Durham, now is your chance. It is a hip and happening town with an incredible foodie scene and one known to delight craft-beer lovers as well as those who prefer award-winning distilleries. For anyone driving to the conference, we are pleased to offer four hotels all within walking distance of the convention center with reduced room rates ranging from $149–$199. A call for presentations will be released in May or June, with submissions due in late August. Preliminary details can be found on the SEAC 2020 web page at https://www.southeasternarchaeology.org/annual-meeting/details/.

# 2020 Dues Reminder

Stay true to your New Year's Resolutions and renew your membership today to stay current with the Society's latest news. Membership types include: Student ($10), Regular ($15), Family ($20), Sustaining ($25), Institution (($25), and Life ($250). Please submit your dues payment to: North Carolina Archaeological Society c/o Mary Beth Fitts, Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619. If you wish, you may also renew your membership online via PayPal at http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Join/PayPal.html.


# Archaeologists Team Up with Brunswick Search & Rescue

by Paul J. Mohler (NCDOT Archaeology) and Shawn Patch (New South Associates)

As part of mitigation efforts for the Fayetteville Outer Loop (FOL) Project (TIP# U-2519BA), NCDOT Archaeologists contracted with New South Associates, Inc. (New South), to re-establish the location of an unmarked cemetery along Stoney Pointe Road in Cumberland County. Initial survey for the FOL occurred in 2001, resulting in the documentation of what has become to be known as the Barefoot Cemetery (Site 31CD976), the moniker for which is based solely on who owned the property at the time of the survey and not because of any extant grave markers. Unfortunately, crew members were denied access to the property in 2001 and could only take photographs from a distance. Very little information is available for this cemetery location other than its appearance on the Parkton, NC (USGS 1972) quadrangle map and the fact that historic aerials from 1966, 1971, and 1976 indicate a small square feature, measuring about 50 feet by 50 feet, in the middle of an agricultural field. By 1987 though, any visible indication of the cemetery is gone.

In June 2017, New South conducted a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey of the field, resulting in numerous anomalies not all of which were interpreted as graves. However, the patterning and clustering of several anomalies in the middle of the investigation area were thought to represent the unmarked cemetery location depicted in the mid-20$^{th}$ century aerials. Two years later, NCDOT Archaeologists and New South returned to the Barefoot Cemetery location in order to disinter all unmarked remains, under the auspices of NC GS 70, and potentially identify those who were left behind. Regrettably, there was no archaeological evidence of any graves in the entire field surrounding the supposed cemetery location. No signs of intact graves were observed nor were there any signs of graves having been previously moved. Almost 1-full acre was stripped down to subsoil in an attempt to locate any remains. In the end, no one was home.

In a move that can be described as both a "good faith effort" and a "last-ditch effort" (pun entirely intended), a team of cadaver dogs from Brunswick Search & Rescue was brought to the site in December 2019 not only as a training exercise but to also validate the potential absence of any remains within the project area. The investigated area was essentially "cleared" by their keen sense of smell, but to our dismay, several "hits" were detected in an area not thought to have been part of the cemetery location but still within the area of impact for the proposed highway. On behalf of NCDOT's Archaeology Team, New South will continue their field operations at the site in order to verify these olfactory anomalies and potentially "lay to rest" the case of the missing cemetery. If anyone has questions regarding this project, please contact Paul J. Mohler (pjmohler@ncdot.gov) or Shawn Path (spatch@newsouthassoc.com).

# NCAS Merchandise

Holding true to your New Year's Resolutions? If so, do you need a new NCAS t-shirt to fit the new you? Visit our website at: http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Merchandise/index.html. In addition to our regular offerings, we have new t-shirts with the re-designed projectile point chart on the back. They are available in blue and green, and also come in men's (crew neck) and women's (v-neck) styles.

# Spring Dig at Town Creek Indian Mound (April 15-19, 2020)

SAVE THE DATE!!! The North Carolina Archaeological Society will be partnering with the NC Office of State Archaeology and Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site to offer a hands-on archaeological experience for NCAS members. The specific research goal of this project will be to investigate an area north of the palisaded portion of the site where a 2014 magnetometer survey indicated the presence of numerous subsurface anomalies. Subsequent probing confirmed that at least one of these anomalies was likely a large cultural feature. Due to the lack of archaeological investigations in this part of the site, little is known about how this area was used and how it relates to the core of the site to the south. In this first phase of fieldwork, the primary goal will be to expose, document, and map any intact features.

We invite current NCAS members to participate (to join or renew, go to: http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Join/). Activities for which help is needed include digging, sifting soil to recover artifacts, troweling, and mapping with a laser transit. Archaeologists will be available to train participants in field methods so no previous experience is required. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Catie Bailey (cwidin@gmail.com).

Excavations will begin daily at 8:30am and continue until 4:00pm. In case of inclement weather, please bring rain gear. Canopies will be on site. Please wear comfortable outdoor clothing that can get dirty and bring gloves and camping chairs if needed. Food and lodging will NOT be provided, but free on-site tent camping is available. The camping area has a large fire pit, ample firewood, and a spigot, but no power. Other local accommodations include: Uwharrie Cabins (https://www.uwharriecabins.com/), Ellerbe Springs B&B (http://www.ellerbe-springs.com/), and Quality Inn Albemarle (704-983-6990).

# Edisto Island (SC)

The Indiana University of Pennsylvania is offering a 3-week advanced Archaeological Methods and Field School (ANTH 520) in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Heritage Trust Program from May 11–29, 2020. Students will excavate test units at the Pockoy Shell Ring in Edisto Island, South Carolina. This project is designed to investigate the Late Archaic coastal occupants of South Carolina. The Pockoy Shell Ring was occupied approximately 4,000 years ago and is one of the most intensively studied shell rings in the region.

This course is a hands-on, experiential learning experience and provides students a platform to hone their archaeological field skills. Activities will include test unit excavation, mapping, and lab work. Students will interact with site visitors on a daily basis. Through this work, we will gain a better understanding of Late Archaic lifeways and discuss ways of presenting information to the public.

This course does NOT count towards the 6-week field-school requirement for IUP Archaeology students. Accommodations for field school are provided courtesy of SCDNR for the 3-week field session. Housing and meals will be provided for students. Travel may be arranged from IUP to SC. Students must be enrolled in ANTH 520 to participate. Information on IUP fees can be found at https://www.iup.edu/bursar/tuitionfees/summer-tuition-and-fees/.

# *Upcoming Annual Meetings*

**Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference**
**Ocean City, MD**
**March 19-22, 2020**

**Society for American Archaeology**
**Austin, TX**
**April 22-26, 2020**

**Association for Gravestone Studies**
**Austin, TX**
**June 23-28, 2020**

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**NCAS Newsletter**
**Publication Schedule**

All NCAS members should submit articles and news items to Paul J. Mohler (pjmohler@ncdot.gov) for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions:

**Winter Issue – January 31** **Summer Issue – July 31**
**Spring Issue – April 30** **Fall Issue – October 31**