

**North Carolina
Archaeological Society**

N e w s l e t t e r

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SEARCHING FOR COAL MINERS AT BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

Forest Hazel (NCAS Member, Mebane, NC)

For several years now, local historians with an interest in North Carolina's coal mining heritage have been conducting research in the Deep River region of Chatham and Lee Counties. It is unclear when coal mining began in North Carolina. According to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), at least one mine, the Horton Mine, was in operation near the present town of Gulf by 1775. Coal was mined in the area on a small scale for the next seventy-five years to supply local needs. In 1852, the first attempts at high production mining along the Deep River began. Around 1921, the Carolina Coal Company developed a mine on the site of the old Farmville village on the Chatham County side of the Deep River; however, because the coal seam was deeply buried and badly broken by numerous dissecting faults, production in the Deep River area ceased in 1953 and has not resumed since.

Over the course of that roughly 100-year period, dozens of men died in various explosions and accidents. The worst industrial accident in North Carolina history came out of the coalfields on May 27, 1925, when the Coal Glen mine exploded and killed at least 53 men. Other explosions at the nearby Egypt Mine, also known as the Cumnock Mine, killed scores more. Many of these men were buried nearby, in cemeteries at Farmville, Cumnock, and Sanford. At Bethany Baptist Church (Gulf, NC), a tradition among older members of the congregation existed that there was a "mass grave" in the middle of the church cemetery, where miners killed in the nearby mines had been buried after one of the disasters. An examination of the lists of men killed in the various explosions indicated that the likely event was the 1895 Egypt Mine explosion, which resulted in the deaths of at least 43 men. It should be noted that Bethany is the final resting place of several other men who can be documented as having worked and/or died in the mines, but there was no tradition of who specifically might have been buried in the "mass grave," or if indeed it actually existed at all.

In the fall of 2017, researchers contacted New South Associates (New South), a cultural resource management firm out of Greensboro NC, for assistance in confirming the potential existence of multiple unmarked graves within an open area of the Bethany Baptist Church Cemetery. In particular, researchers requested that New South use ground penetrating radar (GPR) to examine a certain section of the cemetery and to see if any potential burial anomalies were present in that area. On January 30, 2018, a bitterly cold, windy morning, Sarah Lowry and Maeve Herrick spent several hours surveying the area of the cemetery believed to contain unmarked graves. Their analysis showed that the area contained "34 probable individual graves and one area of disturbed soil with many graves." Of these, 15 had markers. It is possible that the remaining 19+ graves represent men who died in the 1895 explosion as well as additional mining related deaths. It is also possible that several of the Black miners were interred here, as newspaper accounts say many of the bodies were so badly burned it was difficult to distinguish the race of the victims. Subsequent to the completion of the survey and analysis, the report was shared with the church, and a memorial stone was placed in the cemetery that read:

**IN LOVING MEMORY
OF THE MEN BURIED HERE, SOME
WHOSE NAMES ARE KNOWN. OTHERS
KNOWN ONLY TO GOD WHO LABORED
IN THE DEEP RIVER COALFIELDS TO
BUILD A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR
FAMILIES AND DESCENDANTS. ERECTED
IN THE 150TH YEAR OF THE FOUNDING
OF THE BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Preparing and Running
GPR Grid Lines at
Bethany Baptist Church
Cemetery*



*Monument to those who
perished while working in
the Deep River Coalfields*



Are you looking to publish in archaeology? – Do you have current research on North Carolina archaeology, history, or ethnohistory? Consider submitting an article or report to *North Carolina Archaeology*. We are currently accepting manuscripts for Volume 70 (2021) and beyond. If you have something to submit or have any questions about the submission process, please contact David Cranford, NCAS Journal Editor (david.cranford@ncdcr.gov).

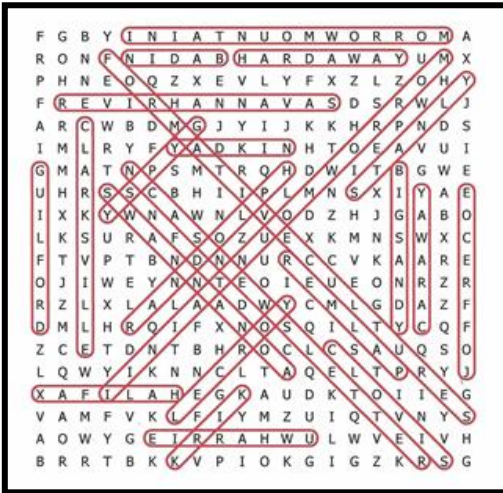
NCAS Word Find: Prehistoric Ceramics*

“Dig” through the letters and find the 35 words “buried” inside the matrix of letters. Terms include ceramic traditions, series, and types. Words can go forward, backward, or diagonally. Answers will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter. WORD LIST:

BADIN	DANRIVER	LEAK	SARATOWN
CANECREEK	DEEPCREEK	MCDOWELL	SWANNANOA
CAPEFEAR	DONNAHA	MITCHUM	TEAL
CARAWAY	FREDRICKS	MOUNTPLEASANT	THOMSCREEK
CASHIE	GASTON	NEWRIVER	UWHARRIE
CATAWBA	HAMPSLANDING	PEEDEE	VINCENT
CLEMENTS	HAWRIVER	PIGEON	WHITEOAK
COLINGTON	HILLSBORO	PISGAH	YADKIN
CONNESTEE	JENRETTE	QUALLA	

N	C	M	O	U	N	T	P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T	D	R	R	F	N
N	O	A	T	K	U	L	E	J	H	T	H	O	M	S	C	R	E	E	K
W	A	T	S	X	E	N	D	E	O	S	R	U	Q	Z	R	H	V	M	T
O	O	C	G	H	W	J	E	T	T	E	R	N	E	J	X	I	P	L	M
T	P	Q	S	N	I	Q	R	O	V	S	O	J	K	I	N	I	D	A	B
A	D	K	R	L	I	E	F	I	Z	E	E	K	V	C	B	A	Y	I	I
R	K	E	E	E	L	L	R	R	G	T	E	N	E	K	N	F	J	F	O
A	G	A	E	D	V	W	O	I	E	E	N	N	N	R	B	D	E	R	B
S	K	N	Z	P	A	I	P	C	R	D	T	O	I	O	H	C	O	C	L
V	H	Q	P	H	C	E	R	C	J	D	R	V	T	A	C	B	A	A	K
C	A	U	W	D	A	R	E	W	I	J	E	I	M	S	S	S	H	T	K
W	G	A	T	V	R	N	E	W	E	R	R	P	C	L	A	N	A	A	S
H	S	L	P	P	A	E	E	E	M	N	S	W	L	K	I	G	N	W	D
I	I	L	M	C	E	I	K	C	K	L	F	I	V	T	S	Q	N	B	A
T	P	A	W	I	R	E	D	O	A	Z	H	T	E	A	L	I	O	A	H
E	Q	E	A	R	T	O	D	N	S	T	N	E	M	E	L	C	D	P	I
O	G	E	A	U	W	C	D	E	C	A	P	E	F	E	A	R	Y	B	B
A	B	H	I	E	S	I	H	V	E	Y	A	D	K	I	N	T	F	S	L
K	W	C	L	B	N	X	M	U	A	V	O	I	C	A	R	A	W	A	Y
U	Q	L	B	G	I	A	P	K	M	S	W	A	N	N	A	N	O	A	I

**Submitted by Tom Beaman*



*Answer Key for Fall Issue
Word Search*



MYSTERY ARTIFACTS – These objects were found by a student on a gravel road just off Old Military Road in Wilmington, NC, near where Camp Davis used to be located. After examination, we know what these are, but do you? Answer in the next issue of the NCAS newsletter.

Digital Spotlight: “Wake County Historic Maps Rescued, Restored, and Preserved by the Register of Deeds”

(https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com-if-us-west-2/prod/documents/2021-02/9-10-2020_wake_county_register_of_deeds_announces_expansion_of_official_records_accessible_online_-_historical_maps_restored_and_preserved.pdf)

In 2019, Wake County Register of Deeds Charles Gilliam initiated a project to rescue, restore, protect, and make accessible to the public historic maps recorded from the late 1800s into 1926. These maps have been seen by only a few since they were put away years ago. Maps were professionally cleaned, flattened, mended, de-acidified, and encapsulated in polyester sleeves. Old tape and adhesives were removed. Some of the items were in very poor condition and in danger of being lost to decay. They are now safe and available to the public.

Due to COVID-19, the plan to make the paper originals available for public view had to be postponed. All restored and preserved historic maps are online as part of the Register’s [consolidated real property index](#). Search results now include an Historic Map column and an icon for when a corresponding Historic Map is available. The Register will have an event in 2021 to introduce the preserved originals in their permanent location in the Register of Deeds Information Room. For more details, contact Luther Snyder, Deputy Director (luther.snyder@wakegov.com).



Archaeological Discoveries in Wake of Complete 540

(Susan Bamann, Ph.D., RPA, Regional Director,
Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc.)

Fieldwork for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's archaeological data recovery at 31WA1997 was completed in December 2020. The site, located near Garner in the wake of the Complete 540 highway project, yielded evidence of multiple precontact-era components related to short-term occupations by indigenous Americans. Excavations were conducted by Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc., with support from Seramur and Associates, PC, for geoarchaeological and geochemistry work. The project plan was developed by NCDOT's Archaeology Team in conjunction with other interested and concerned groups – with the project reflecting the kind of successes that can come from environmental review and compliance-based archaeology.

Site preservation, very generally, appeared to relate to not only a lack of plowing but also burial in alluvial and possible aeolian sediment. Within the sediment, three ceramic concentrations appeared to represent deposits related to former living surface areas within one or more camps. These may date to the Early and/or Middle Woodland periods (1000 B.C. to A.D. 800) and reflect a small number of fairly large earthenware cooking or storage vessels with cord-

marked or fabric-impressed surfaces. Below the possible Woodland surfaces, excavation levels yielded a diverse diagnostic point assemblage including side- and corner-notched, stemmed, lanceolate, and triangular forms. Some of the corner-notched points appear consistent with Early Archaic (8000 to 6000 B.C.) types and are from deeper contexts. Lithic raw materials reflect broad procurement within the North Carolina Piedmont and Fall Line areas. Much of the assemblage from the site constitutes evidence of patterns of technological, exchange-related, and subsistence-related behavior, and one item, a small stone gorget fragment dating to the Middle Woodland period or earlier, may be a personal decorative or functional item and a more unique reflection of the past. We are fortunate that archaeological sites like 31WA1997, with multiple components from intact stratigraphic contexts, can provide a rare opportunity to investigate the long history of a single place significant to multiple generations of people in the past and much more. For more details and videos, go to <https://abc11.com/nc-artifacts-triangle-expressway-complete-540-ancient-in/9625300/>.



2021 Dues Reminder

Ring in the New Year is always a cause for celebration. As we look forward to eventually spending time once again with friends and family, please remember to 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.ncarchsociety.org/membershipoptions>.

NCAS offers for sale a variety of items, including t-shirts, visors, and prints. These make wonderful gifts and show your support for archaeology in North Carolina. Those wishing to purchase should contact Tom Beaman, who can provide information about sizes, availability, and shipping costs. All prices include sales tax.

[Merchandise — North Carolina Archaeological Society \(ncarchsociety.org\)](http://ncarchsociety.org)

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IN MEMORIAM – We are saddened by the passing of Lee Novick, long-time archaeologist for the NCDOT and OSA. She was a friend to many and an outstanding researcher, and had a storied career, even before coming to North Carolina. Her obituary appeared in the SAA Archaeological Record ([The SAA Archaeological Record November 2020, Volume 20 Number 5 new \(onlinedigeditions.com\)](#)).

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

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