

**North Carolina  
Archaeological Society**

**Newsletter**

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<http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas>

## **Celebrating the Newly Established Salmon Creek State Natural Area**

by Martha Williams (First Colony Foundation volunteer)

Nearly 250 intrepid souls—from state and local officials to history buffs—braved overcast skies and drizzly weather on St. Patrick’s Day to assemble at Site X at the confluence of Albemarle Sound and Salmon Creek in Bertie County for a momentous celebration (Figure 1.1). But, it wasn’t St. Patrick whom the crowd had gathered to honor, although beer, wine, roasted oysters, pulled pork barbecue, and turnip greens certainly made the occasion even more festive (Figure 1.2). Instead, the gathering marked the acquisition by the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust of its newest property—the (future) North Carolina Salmon Creek State Natural Area.

To the preservation community, this property is of more than passing interest. The bottomland forests, cypress swamps, and managed agricultural fields that comprise the 1,000 acre tract encompass an area of profound archaeological significance. Ample evidence has been recovered to indicate recurring and intensive occupation of the area by Native Americans, possibly beginning as early as the late Paleoindian period, indicated by the recovery of Hardaway-Dalton projectile points, and extending through the Contact period, as evidenced by the recovery of hundreds of sherds of shell-tempered Colington ceramics. By 1585, when Ralph Lane’s exploratory party set out from its base on Roanoke Island to explore the Albemarle Sound and its tributaries, a palisaded Native American village known as Mettaquem was located in this general area (see Theodor De Bry’s 1590 map at <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/debry>). The Trust’s acquisition of the Salmon Creek property ensures the preservation of this important Algonkian village site.

Artist-cartographer John White’s celebrated ca. 1585-1587 map of what is now coastal North Carolina depicted a European sailing vessel approaching this same area, near the confluence of the Chowan and Roanoke Rivers (Figure 1.3, bottom of page 3). Here, a curious plain paper patch had been affixed to the map. The importance of this patch remained unknown until 2012, when, at the request of the First Colony Foundation, researchers at the British Museum used light-imaging technology to reveal the now well-known,

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**Figure 1.1. Overview of Site X, looking south toward Salmon Creek.**



**Figure 1.2. Property owner and Site X benefactor Mike Flannelly samples barbecue and turnip greens at the event.**

## Archaeology at River Bridge Exhibit

by Wanda Lassiter (Museum of the Albemarle)

The Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City will open an exhibition on June 16, 2018, about the River Bridge site located along the Pasquotank River, north of the city. The site's name comes from a bridge built before the Revolutionary War and noted by George Washington when he visited the area. At one time, ships could navigate to the bridge and adjacent customhouse and warehouses, where workers loaded and unloaded cargo. Today, the only reminders of this once important center of commerce include a few pilings and several vessels submerged just below the river's surface, as well as a large collection of artifacts spotlighted in the upcoming exhibit.

The River Bridge site was first issued a permit from the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology (OSA) in 2011 with an objective to "explore a location in the Pasquotank River noted as an early colonial port." Excavations over the past seven years have yielded more than 10,000 objects that date from the middle of the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. Ceramic artifacts range from pearlware and creamware to gray salt-glazed Westerwald stoneware and earthenware dairy pans (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Other artifacts include glass case bottles and flasks, iron axes, shoes, and roof shingles along with personal effects such as chamber pots, scissors, and buttons. Faunal and botanical remains were also recovered. The artifacts' excellent condition, and the fact that many items remained intact, makes the site unique. This collection also provides a glimpse into colonial and Federal period trade patterns in eastern North Carolina.

The Museum of the Albemarle in partnership with the OSA invites researchers to view the exhibit and study this collection to learn more about ceramic traditions, colonial trade, and commerce in northeastern North Carolina. For more information, please visit the Museum's website at <https://www.museumofthealbemarle.com/>.



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star-shaped, fort symbol hidden beneath it. This discovery set in motion an effort to archeologically document a late sixteenth-century European presence at what became known as "Site X."

After five two-week seasons of work at Site X that included remote sensing and test unit excavations by the First Colony Foundation and archaeologists Nick Lucchetti and Dr. Eric Klingelhofer, the results are in. The archeological record, when combined with documentary and cartographic evidence, has led to the conclusion that the British visited Site X. Whether that presence reflects a temporary encampment by Ralph Lane's party or later survivors of the ill-fated Lost Colony venture is a matter of debate. Some of the artifacts recovered include yellow- and green-glazed Surry-Hampshire Border Ware (dated to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries) along with fragments of North Devon plain baluster jars, an aiglet, and part of a snaphaunce firing mechanism (Figure 1.4). On early colonial sites in Virginia, green-glazed border ware is generally not recovered from contexts dated much later than the 1630s. We know the first permanent English resident in this area, Nathaniel Batts, did not settle here until much later in time, in the 1650s. These two facts, combined with the absence of artifactual evidence (such as datable tobacco pipe stems) of a site component that dates to the second quarter of the seventeenth century, indicates that there was a pre-Batts occupation at the site that can only be attributed to Roanoke colonists.

The archeological heritage of this site does not end in the sixteenth century. Another portion of this large property has yielded remains associated with Bal-Gra, the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century home of Thomas Pollock, who succeeded Edward Hyde in 1712 as colonial governor of North Carolina. Pollock, whose home at Bal-Gra was the site of the first Carolina Assembly in 1710, deserves credit for facilitating the Swiss settlement at New Bern, North Carolina, and for helping to maintain neutrality among Tuscarora Indians in northeastern North Carolina during the disastrous Tuscarora War.

The Coastal Land Trust's acquisition of the Bertie County site, and its eventual incorporation into the North Carolina state park system, should be savored by every archaeologist and history-lover in the state. Read more about this acquisition on the Coastal Land Trust's website at <https://coastallandtrust.org/sitex/>.

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Figure 2.1. Gray salt-glazed stoneware vessel dated to the 1700s with a checkerboard motif and impressed "GR" medallion on band and capacity mark.



Figure 2.2. Shallow saucer dated ca. 1810-1830 with a blue hand-painted floral design and impressed maker's mark on base (spread-eagle, marked "William Adams warranted—").



Figure 1.3. Excerpt from John White's ca. 1585-1587 map, showing the patch covering the "fort" at Site X (Map source: British Museum).

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Salmon Creek State Natural Area*



Figure 1.4. Surry-Hampshire border ware sherds recovered from Site X.

## Unexpected Developments: Untangling the Complex History of Eagle Tavern and Lot 55

by Sherry Boyette (North Carolina Office of State Archaeology)

Eagle Tavern (31HX1\*55\*2) currently sits on Lot 55 in Halifax, North Carolina, at the intersection of St. David Street and Main Street. The tavern, which originally stood on a different lot, was moved to its present location in 1976. In 1973, in preparation for the move, Stuart Schwartz and Larry Babits excavated Lot 55. They uncovered the brick foundation of a structure and numerous artifacts (Schwartz 1974). The artifacts they collected were stored unanalyzed until 2016, when Office of State Archaeology Research Center (OSARC) staff began to study the collection. Having lost some information in the 40 years between excavation and analysis, we initially believed the collection was associated with Eagle Tavern. We realized our mistake when we examined the site form, reports, and field notes, but then we were left with the question: where did these artifacts come from, if not Eagle Tavern? Were the artifacts once associated with a house, another tavern, or something else?

The artifacts from Lot 55 tell us about a long period of occupation from prehistory to the twentieth century, with the most intense use occurring between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Four prehistoric artifacts are present in this collection: three tertiary flakes and one rose quartz bi-face. The historic artifacts consist mostly of ceramic objects, but also include bottles, nails, animal bones (mostly cow and pig), tobacco pipes, hardware, and per-



Figure 3.1. Fragment of a manganese mottled, refined earthenware mug (1680-1750). Sherd measures about 10 cm in width. Photo credit: Douglas Hill.



Figure 3.3. Electric brush to a motor (twentieth century). Object measures about 6.5 cm in length. Photo credit: Douglas Hill.



Figure 3.2. Moravian pipe, anthropomorphic style (1770-1840). Fragment measures about 3 cm in width. Photo credit: Douglas Hill.



Figure 3.4. Wine glass with 12 pressed panels (1850-1910). Fragment measures about 5.5 cm in height. Photo credit: Douglas Hill.

sonal items. The ceramic objects, bottles, nails, and pipes date from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Artifacts from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries include medicine bottles, wine glass, soda bottles, kerosene oil lamp parts, plastic buttons, and machinery parts, such as nuts, bolts, and rivets. Figures 3.1 through 3.4 depict a few of these items. Based on the artifacts recovered and their associated dates, it was easy to believe that they had come from Eagle Tavern, but based on the history of the property this scenario was not possible.

According to the Deed records compiled by Bradley (1989), Eagle Tavern started out as a private residence, built on Lot 51 in the 1760s by Alexander Elmsey. Elmsey did not live there long and in 1763 he sold the house and lot to Blake Baker and Abner Nash. In 1770, Baker's widow, Mary, sold the property to William Martin, who turned it from a private residence into a tavern. Martin began leasing out the tavern in 1786. It was leased to several people over the next 15 years, before being turned back into a private residence in 1802. Between 1817 and 1824 the tavern was joined with other buildings on Lot 51 and referred to as The Eagle Hotel or Big Tavern. The lot was briefly subdivided among multiple owners, but by 1841 Michael Ferrell had purchased the whole parcel. By that time, the center of town had shifted southwest toward the rail line. Ferrell, a local merchant who wanted to be closer to his shops and the tracks, decided to move Eagle Tavern outside of town in 1845 and turn it into a private residence once again. The house remained in Ferrell's family until 1969, when Miss Nannie Gray died and left the house, lot, and cemetery to the adjacent Roman Catholic Church. The Church sold the house to the State under the condition that it be returned to Historic Halifax (Bradley 1989). A school had been built on Lot 51 during the 1950s, so the tavern could not be returned to its original location (Cross 1973a). Archaeologists tested several lots to find a suitable new location, and on May 17, 1976, Eagle Tavern was moved to its current location on Lot 55.

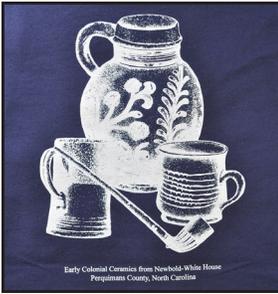
Once we established that Eagle Tavern had not sat on Lot 55 prior to the archaeological excavation, we had to determine how the lot had been used in the past to understand the context of the artifacts. In 1758, the Trustees of Halifax granted Lot 55 to Robert Hardy (Bradley 1989). Two years later, Hardy sold the property to James Martin, who built a house there. In 1763, James died and left the house and property to his wife and children. Mary Martin Troughton, James's widow, lived on the property until her death in 1780. The property then changed hands several times before being purchased in 1785 by John Berry, who allowed Hickman Rose to reside there. After a dispute about the property, John Sitgreaves purchased it at an auction. He died in 1802 and left it to his wife and children. In 1810, Allen Jones Green, Sitgreaves's stepson, received the property; however, there is no record that Green actually lived there. By 1847, Charles Webb had purchased the property and lived there with his family. His family resided there for the next 80 years. In 1928, Mrs. Webb deeded the property to John Bass. The Bass family lived there for 30 years. Finally, in 1965, the property was purchased by the State for the Halifax Historic District (Bradley 1989).

So, whose house was revealed by the Lot 55 excavations? According to the historic research report completed by Jerry Cross after the 1973 excavation, a complete structure was uncovered that measured 18 ft. x 10 ft. It had a brick foundation with a chimney base and possible cellar. The 1769 Sauthier map showed the original James Martin House on Lot 55 (Cross 1973b). The L-shaped structure was on the northeastern corner facing Main Street and adjoining Lot 54. It measured 27 ft. x 40 ft. (Schwartz 1974). Based on the location and size of the structure uncovered by Schwartz and Babits, it is unlikely this building was the original Martin House. It remains unclear who built this structure and when. The recovered artifacts show evidence of a long occupation, but questions remain, such as: who originally owned the house and when was it built? The research and artifact analysis have helped to untangle some of the complex history of Eagle Tavern and Lot 55, but many mysteries remain unsolved.

### References Cited

- Bradley, Stephen E. (1989). *The Deeds of Halifax County, North Carolina, Volumes 1-9*. South Boston.
- Cross, Jerry L. (1973a). *Historic Research Report for the Eagle Tavern, Lot 51, Halifax, North Carolina*. Research report on file with the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
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- Schwartz, Stuart (1974). *Field Notes from the 1973 and 1974 Excavation of Lot 55: The New Location of Eagle Tavern*. Documents on file with the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology.

## New NCAS T-Shirts



Thank you to Steve Allen, who submitted the winning graphic of colonial period ceramics from the Newbold White House (31Pk7) for the “NCAS Design Our Next T-Shirt” contest. Available navy blue with white print in both men’s and

women’s t-shirt styles. Purchase yours today at <http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Merchandise>.

### 2018 Membership Dues

To stay current with the Society’s latest news, please submit your dues payment to: NCAS c/o Mary Beth Fitts, Office of State Archaeology, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619. Or, you can renew online via PayPal at <http://www.rla.unc.edu/ncas/Join/PayPal.html>.

Your current (paid) membership year is indicated in the top right corner of the mailing label.

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### NCAS Newsletter

#### Publication Schedule

Members should submit articles and news items to Heather Lapham ([hlapham@unc.edu](mailto:hlapham@unc.edu)) for inclusion in the Newsletter. Submission deadlines are as follows:

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

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