

THE EDWARDS CUPULE SITE

Thomas R. Whyte (Appalachian State University)

The Appalachian State University (ASU) Summer 2021 Field Archaeology course focused its efforts on a newly discovered site in Watauga County, North Carolina. The Edwards Cupule Site (31WT403) consists of a large boulder or outcrop of anthophyllite schist containing at least 14 cupules on its apical surface (**Figure 1**). Adjacent to the rock is a small, wooded spur of an alluvial fan where ASU undergraduate students under tutelage of the author excavated a line of 1m by 1m squares (**Figure 2**) and recovered numerous items

from the A and B horizons, including fire-cracked rocks, chipped stone tools, anthophyllite schist (“soapstone”) vessel fragments, pottery sherds, and samples of carbonized plant remains. Also recovered was part of a flat green slate object that had been notched along its margin (**Figure 3**). Most of the artifacts (Swannanoa pottery, Swannanoa projectile points, Appalachian stemmed knives, and soapstone vessel fragments) appear to date to the Early Woodland period. Lesser amounts of artifacts (triangular arrow points and stamped pottery) indicate Middle and Late Woodland period encampments.



Figure 1: Cleaning and Mapping the Edwards Cupule Site Rock Surface.



Figure 2: Excavation Units at the Edwards Cupule Site.

At this time, it is not known which if any of these Woodland components is associated with the cupules on the adjacent rock. The cupules are variable in size, ranging between 6 and 10 cm in diameter and between 2 and 5 cm in depth (**Figure 4**). No patterning that can be related to astronomical or other natural phenomena is discernible, nor do the cupules resemble bedrock mortars more common to sites of the Mid-South. Furthermore, the soft rock on which they were found would not have benefitted food processing. The cupules more closely resemble those found on soft boulders such as nearby Cranberry Rock and ones in southwestern North Carolina that have been interpreted as symbolic artifacts (Whyte 2020). In support of this interpretation is that the site is located along the “Old Buffalo Trail” connecting the New and Watauga River headwaters (Hardy 2006). Many cupule sites in western North Carolina are located along trails (Loubser et al. 2018). However, these are situated on top of a boulder that is 2.5 m in height and cannot be seen from a ground position.

In the following months, flotation samples and artifacts will be processed and analyzed to determine better the ages, seasons, and reasons for site occupation. In addition, the author’s Fall-semester Experimental



Figure 3: Notched Green Slate Object found at the Edwards Cupule Site.

Archaeology class undertook cupule replication experiments in an attempt to determine how and why the cupules were made. A report on the site will be submitted to the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology in Spring 2022.

References Cited

Hardy, Michael
2006 *A Short History of Old Watauga County*. Parkway Publishers, Blowing Rock, NC.

Loubser, Johannes, Scott Ashcraft, and James Wettstaed
2018 "Betwixt and Between: The Occurrence of Petroglyphs between Townhouses of the Living and Townhouses of Spirit Beings in Northern Georgia and Western North Carolina." In *Transforming the Landscape: Rock Art and the Mississippian Cosmos*, edited by Carol Diaz-Granados, Jan Simek, George Sabo, III, and Mark Wagner, pp. 200-244. Oxbow Books, Oxford.

Whyte, Thomas R.
2020 *Boone before Boone: The Archaeological Record of Northwestern North Carolina through 1769*. McFarland, Jefferson, NC.



Figure 4: Cupules Found at the Edwards Cupule Site.



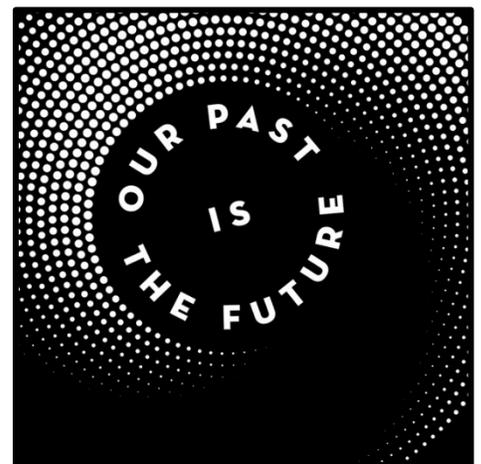
DIGITAL SPOTLIGHT: "OUR PAST IS THE FUTURE"

<https://sapienspodcast.libsyn.com/our-past-is-the-future>

After much anticipation, the Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA) is proud to announce the release of *OUR PAST IS THE FUTURE!*

In partnership with Sapiens, the Indigenous Archaeology Collective, and RadioCIAMS, the SBA is launching a new podcast, asking what makes you ... you? And who tells which stories and why?

SAPIENS hosts Ora Marek-Martinez and SBA Secretary, Yoli Ngandali, explore stories of Black and Indigenous scholars as they transform the field of archeology and the stories that make us ... us. Subscribe on their website or wherever you get your podcasts (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, etc.).





GRANT-IN-AID PROGRAM



The North Carolina Archaeological Society (NCAS) invites applications for The Whitey Graham Award (WGA) in support of research pertaining to North Carolina archaeology. The WGA is underwritten by the NCAS Endowment Fund, which was established in 2001 from the proceeds of the sale of the “Blue Banks” property near Greenville. The sale took place largely through the efforts of then-president Robert Graham. We owe him our thanks for making these grants possible!

Applicants must be members of the North Carolina Archaeological Society (exemptions for public educators, as defined below, will be considered) and must also meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. An applicant must be: (a) a graduate or undergraduate student actively pursuing a degree in archaeology or a related field; (b) an individual enrolled in an internship program with a museum, a state historic site, an archaeological park, or a Native American group (with state or federal recognition); (c) an avocational archaeologist who is a member of the North Carolina Archaeological Society and has over time demonstrated a concern for the protection or study of archaeological resources within the state (including working under the direction of professional archaeologists); or (d) a public educator (e.g., school teacher or museum personnel). Collaborations between educators are encouraged.
2. An individual must apply for the award with a proposal that states how the grant will aid in the individual’s research relevant to North Carolina archaeology. Each proposal must include (a) a statement of research design (up to 2 pages long), (b) a budget showing how grant funds will be spent in pursuing this research, (c) a curriculum vitae, and (d) a letter of support from a professional archaeological mentor or advisor. The advisor is expected to take an active role in overseeing and/or guiding the research to completion and should explicitly indicate a willingness to do so in the letter. Public educator applications include all of the above but can substitute the following for the research design statement above: (a) an explanation of the educational goals and methods or activities used to promote public awareness of archaeology in North Carolina (up to 2 pages long).
3. Each grant award will not exceed \$500. The budget may include any direct expense in support of the proposed research, except for wages paid to the grant’s recipient. Examples of allowable expenses include travel (fares, mileage, and per diem), supplies, and fees for specialized services (photography, radiocarbon dating, drafting, etc.). Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs or institutional overhead.
4. Selection criteria shall include, but need not be limited to, (a) the quality of the proposed research, (b) the likelihood that the research can be successfully carried out in a timely manner, (c) the individual’s promise as a professional or avocational archaeologist, and (d) the degree to which the individual has contributed to the programs of the North Carolina Archaeological Society. Note that the committee reserves the right to make no award in any given year.
5. Normally, the term of the grant shall be for one year, subject to extension for an additional year. The recipient shall submit interim reports of progress and expenditures to the Committee’s chair at six-month intervals from the initial date of the grant. A final report is due within six months after the grant’s term ends. This final report must include a description of the project’s research results, as well as a detailed summary of expenditures made under the grant. If asked, the recipient of the grant will present the results of his or her research at a meeting of the North Carolina Archaeological Society. Each recipient is also required to submit an article on the grant-supported research to the NCAS Newsletter or to the Society’s journal, *North Carolina Archaeology*. Grant recipients should acknowledge the North Carolina Archaeological Society in any printed, electronic, or graphic material produced through the grant and in announcements at any public meetings, classes, or events to which the grant gives rise, as follows: *This (publication, project, etc.) was produced in part by a grant from the North Carolina Archaeological Society.*

The next deadline for receipt of proposals is November 1, 2022. Awards will be announced by December 31, 2022. Email all materials to NCAS Grant-in-Aid Program co-chairs, Dr. Randy Daniel (danieli@ecu.edu) and Dr. David Moore (dmoore@warren-wilson.edu).

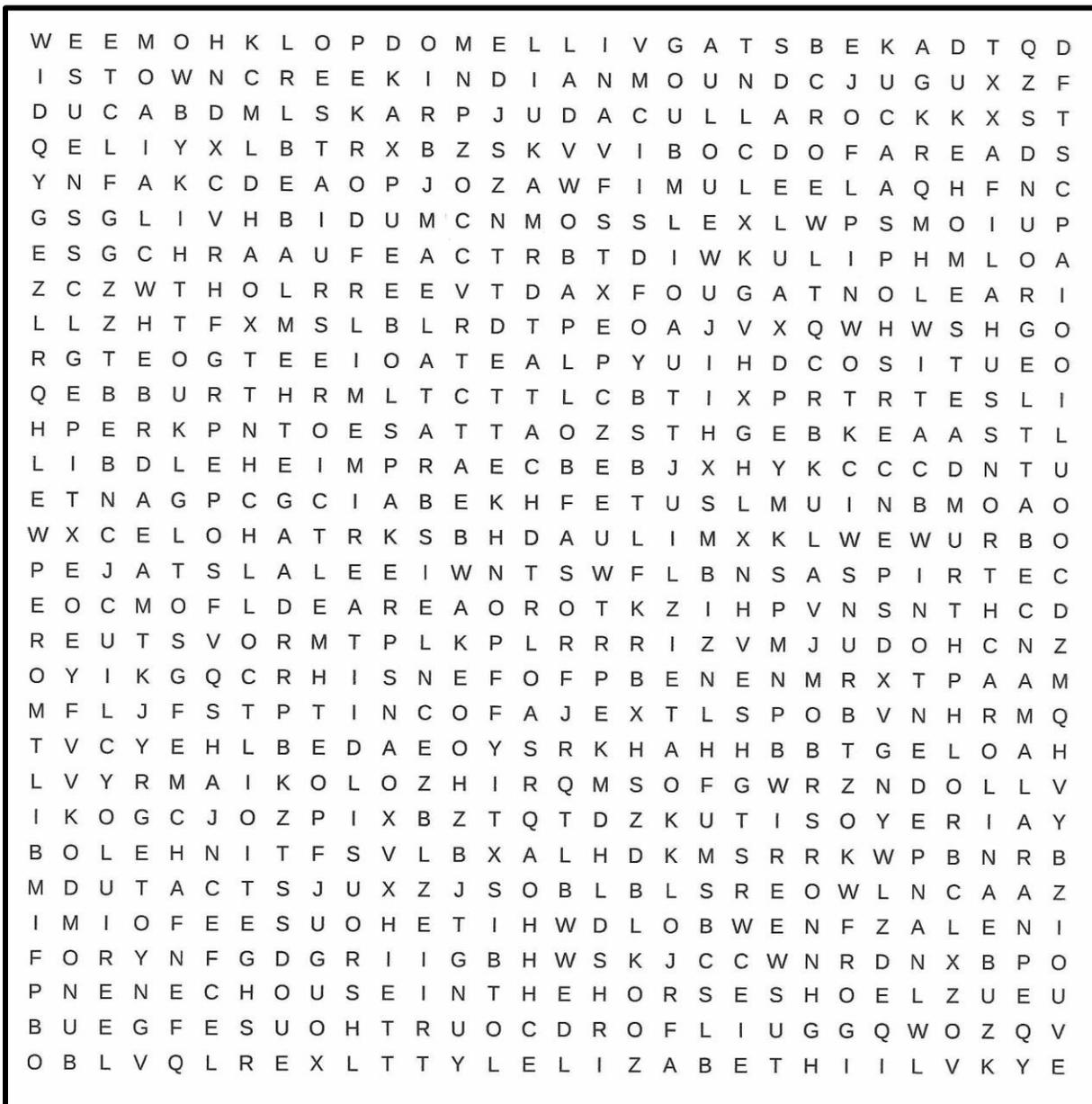
NCAS WORD FIND: NC HISTORIC SITES

North Carolina has a rich and varied history. From Murphy to Manteo, there are many public and private parks and sites ranging from prehistory to the near present that one can visit. The words in this puzzle represent 38 such places. If you finish the puzzle, let us know how many you have visited! As always, words can appear forward, backward, and diagonally. Answer key will appear in the following issue of the newsletter.

ALAMANCE BATTLEGROUND
 AYCOCK BIRTHPLACE
 BATH
 BENNETT PLACE
 BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD
 BETHABARA
 BILTMORE
 BRUNSWICK TOWN
 CHARLOTTE HAWKINS BROWN
 CSS NEUSE
 DUKE HOMESTEAD
 EDENTON
 ELIZABETH II

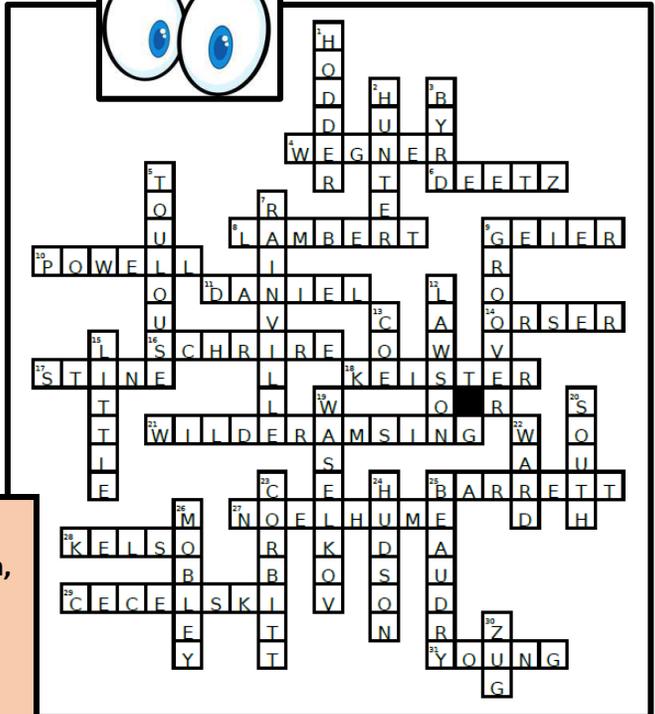
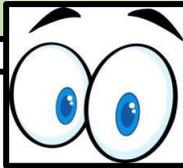
FORT DOBBS
 FORT FISHER
 FORT RALEIGH
 GUILFORD COURTHOUSE
 HALIFAX
 HORNE CREEK FARM
 HOUSE IN THE HORSESHOE
 JUDACULLA ROCK
 MOORES CREEK BATTLEFIELD
 NEWBOLD WHITE HOUSE
 OLD FORT
 OLD SALEM
 POLK HOME

REED GOLD MINE
 ROANOKE ISLAND PARK
 SOMERSET PLACE
 SPENCER SHOPS
 STAGVILLE
 STATE CAPITAL
 THOMAS WOLFE HOUSE
 TOWN CREEK INDIAN MOUND
 TRYON PALACE
 USS NORTH CAROLINA
 VANCE BIRTHPLACE
 WRIGHT BROTHERS MEMORIAL





MYSTERY ARTIFACT TIME! This artifact was found in a 2009 excavation along the coast of North Carolina. What is this artifact, and what activity is shown?



A HIDDEN FIGURE IN NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY – A Black cowboy named George McJunkin, who died 100 years ago, found a site that would transform scientific views about the deep history of Native Americans in North America ([A Hidden Figure in North American Archaeology - SAPIENS](#)).

Answer Key for Fall Issue Crossword

GARDEN ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE DUNLEATH NEIGHBORHOOD, GREENSBORO, NC

Shawn Patch (New South Associates, Inc.)

I live in the Dunleath Historic District in downtown Greensboro. In many ways, it’s a typical early twentieth century neighborhood with a mix of architectural styles including American foursquares, bungalows, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival houses. Given the urban setting of my neighborhood, it seems at first glance to be an unlikely place to find precontact artifacts.

In summer 2020, I was reminded once again that appearances are often deceiving. As I was tilling a new garden plot in our front yard, I discovered a broken Savannah River point in one of the furrows. As I looked in the tiller’s wake, I immediately noticed the distinctive point shape and color contrast of the light brown rhyolite with the dirt. As I picked up that point, I actually said out loud to myself, “how about that?”

The point itself is certainly not unique to North Carolina archaeology. However, the setting and context are. Over the past several years as I planted flowers and shrubs in various locations around my yard, I repeatedly noticed how “good” the soil is, considering I live in an urban neighborhood. As an archaeologist, I’ve learned to appreciate a well-developed, intact, natural, unaltered soil profile, and my yard checks all those boxes. There are two reasons for this good fortune. First, my future neighborhood was a pecan orchard associated with the antebellum Dunleath Mansion in the nineteenth century. Vestiges of the orchard are everywhere, with mature pecan trees in many yards.



The orchard likely saved the landscape from agriculture and plowing. Second, my yard is slightly larger than others and has only been disturbed by the footprint of the house; the rest of it has not been impacted.

All of this leads to finding that Savannah River point. It's easy to be cynical in our current times. I know I am. After more than 25 years as an archaeologist, I still get excited about finding artifacts, handling them, wondering who made them, how they were used, how they were lost, and why they were discarded. My wife added the Savannah River point to her display of other items she has collected from nature -- rocks, shells, and feathers. It's fun to show friends, neighbors, and family, and they all have the same reaction when we tell them we found it in our front yard. For me, it's a reminder of what I have always loved about archaeology but sometimes forget in our busy world.



2022 DUES REMINDER



It's that time of year again, and I don't mean when you realize your New Year's resolutions completely went out the window! No, it's time to renew your membership in order to stay current with the Society's latest news and events. 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 at <http://www.ncarchsociety.org/membershipoptions>.



Every member of the society should have received one of our new promotional (and free) "Member" magnets with a copy of the journal last December. Where is your magnet proudly displayed? On the back of your car? At the office on the side of a metal filing cabinet? Hopefully not on the side of your computer (or is that just a myth?). Has your magnet visited any of the historic sites from our Word Find? If so, post a picture of your magnet's travels to the society FB page ([North Carolina Archaeological Society | Facebook](#))!

FIELD SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT

Come join the RLA's FIELD SCHOOL in ARCHAEOLOGY between May 11–June 16, 2022 (Summer Session 1).

This summer's field school will begin to assess several new areas along the Eno River in Hillsborough, North Carolina, that have significant potential to contain important Native American habitations during the late pre-contact and contact periods, revealing new insights into indigenous land use practices and settlement during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

We are currently accepting applications from prospective students. For more information and an application form, visit <https://archaeology.sites.unc.edu/home/ca/field-schools/> or contact Dr. Heather Lapham at hlapham@unc.edu.

Application Deadline: March 15, 2022




“In Safe Hands: An Introduction to Historic Cemetery Care”

Melissa Timo, Historic Cemetery Specialist (NC Office of State Archaeology)

It's an all too common tale — A historic cemetery you know and love has become overgrown. Or, taking a hike or exploring a new property purchase reveals a forgotten cemetery. Something should be done! But what are the next steps? How do you care, clean, and record an old cemetery without causing further damage? When do you bring in a professional? This presentation will share some easy cemetery care best practices you can employ.

- **Where?** Online via Zoom
- **When?** Monday, March 14, 2022 – 11:30a.m. – 1:00p.m.
- **How Much?** Free
- **Registration:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYtcu-uqz0sHtj0ICsHRJAg5dLAQG47EHkF>

Congratulations to C. Trevor Duke!

For his paper, *Tempered Subjects: Ritual Potting as Efficacious Action in Pre-Columbian Tampa Bay*, Trevor was awarded 1st place in the Student Paper Competition at SEAC 2021 and received one-full year (student) membership to NCAS, a set of recent past issues of our journal, and some very nice society swag.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS...

Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference

Ocean City, MD, March 24-27, 2022

Society for American Archaeology

Chicago, IL, March 30-April 3, 2022

Association for Gravestone Studies

Beverly, MA, June 9-19, 2022

Southeastern Archaeological Conference

Little Rock, AR, November 9-12, 2022

AND STAY SAFE!

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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

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