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Archaeologists' toils shrouded in mystery

■ Speculation abounds research connected to 'Lost Colony' settlers

From staff reports

Reports of archaeological crews being hard at work on a rural site in Chowan County have fueled speculation that the research could be related to a decades-old find of a stone purporting to describe the untimely

death of "Lost Colony" child Virginia Dare and her father.

The research at this time is shrouded in mystery.

A local landowner, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed that archaeologists were working at a site on his land. But the landowner said he knew very little about the nature of the research the archaeologists were conducting.

But speculation has been widespread in recent weeks that the archaeological work is focused on pursuit of a lead related to the fate of the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island.

In recent years there has been extensive research into the existence of European settlement very early on the southwest side of the Chowan River and Albe-

marle Sound, in the vicinity of

Scotch Hall Preserve. That research has led some to postulate that a remnant of the Lost Colony settlers might have lived for a time at that site in Bertie County.

The connection to Chowan County is based mainly on the discovery in the 1930s of a stone along the eastern shore of the Chowan River near Edenton that purported to describe the

death Virginia Dare, her father, Ananias Dare, and more than a dozen other settlers.

The stone, which was never fully authenticated but also was never discredited in any of the many scientific tests applied to it by researchers from Georgia's Emory University, claims that the remains of Virginia Dare and her father were buried four miles east of the river.

County closes on sale of historic hotel

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

After nearly two years of negotiating the deal, Chowan County has sold its former office building on East King Street — and the new owner plans to return the structure to its historic use as a hotel.

The sale closed on the afternoon of July 14. Preservation North Carolina acquired the property from the county and then resold it immediately to SAGA Construction and Development. That process allowed for the establishment of historic preservation covenants that will protect the historic integrity of the building, which previously was known as the Hotel Hinton.

County Manager Kevin Howard explained that the county's goal was to get the building into private hands and to maintain its historic character.

County officials are relieved that the process is over, according to Howard.

Chowan Board of Commissioners Chairman Jeff Smith agreed.

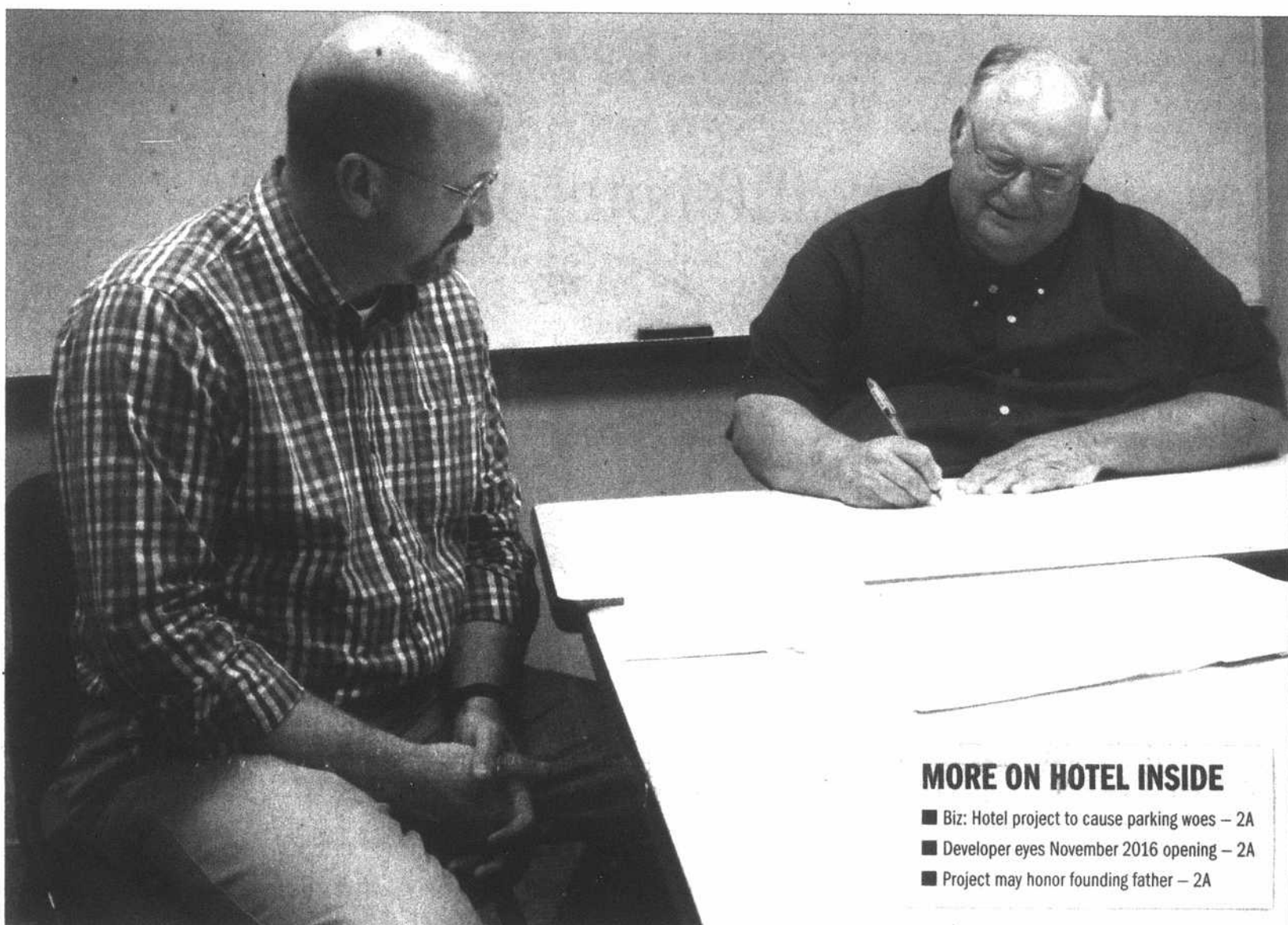
"It's been a long time in the making but we're glad to see the project progressing along like it is," Smith said.

Smith said he believed SAGA's hotel project would be excellent for tourism and would lead to a wonderful revitalization of the entire downtown area.

Although nothing has been decided for certain, discussions among county commissioners so far has indicated the plan is to have the proceeds from the sale of the building set aside for capital projects.

Smith said the goal that county officials had from the beginning was exactly what has now happened: To get the building into the private sector and have it become a taxpaying entity.

See CLOSES, 4A



As Chowan County Manager Kevin Howard (left) watches, Board of Commissioners Chairman Jeff Smith (right) signs documents closing the sale of the former county office building on East King Street — also known as the historic Hotel Hinton building. The county sold the structure to Preservation North Carolina, which in turn sold it to Dare County-based SAGA Construction and Development.

MORE ON HOTEL INSIDE

- Biz: Hotel project to cause parking woes — 2A
- Developer eyes November 2016 opening — 2A
- Project may honor founding father — 2A

STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

Building sale sparks excitement among officials

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The closing on the Hotel Hinton — nearly two years in the making — has left officials excited about the potential impact of the project on the town's finances, jobs, tourism and accommodation choices.

"This will truly be a transformational project, not only for Edenton, but for all of northeastern North Carolina," said state Rep. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, an Edenton resident.

Mayor Roland Vaughan said he was "thrilled" about the sale and thought it was just the start of good things to come.

"I firmly believe that it will become the cornerstone of future tourism growth and a business retreat destination that will benefit our community in many ways," he said.

Vaughan said he had met with the proposed management team for the hotel and had come away impressed.

"Their level of expertise and experience was very reassuring," he said. "I believe that this facility will noticeably enhance Edenton for many years to come, not to mention the job opportunities and expansion of the tax base that will also occur."

Jennifer Harriss, executive director of Destination Downtown Edenton — the town's Main Street program — said she agreed with the mayor that the impact of the hotel's presence in the

downtown area would be significant.

"The hotel will be a game changer for our downtown efforts," she said. "This \$15 million project will provide a major boost to our local economy by adding jobs, visitors and tax revenue."

Harriss added that SAGA has a team of nationally known architects, engineers, designers, contractors and management all working toward a common goal — a hotel that will become a destination for travelers in and of itself.

"This is an important step toward our long-term vision for downtown Edenton and an economically robust local economy," she said.

See BUILDING, 4A

Green algae in local waters not a threat, official says

From staff reports

While algae spotted in the waterways around Chowan County may be unsightly they are not a cause for concern, according to area Extension Agent Steve Gabel, whose focus is aquaculture.

Gabel said the sightings simply mean conditions are favorable for this particular type of blue-green algae that feeds on nitrogen in waterways. When the available nitrogen is used up, Gabel

said, this particular type of algae would disappear.

Fish kills can also result when algae growth blocks sunlight, Gabel said. Typically the greatest impact in that situation would be on larger fish, while toxins in the water would have a larger effect on smaller species.

Gabel said those swimming in affected areas should exercise caution. Prolonged exposure could cause pneumonia-like symptoms or gastrointestinal distress.

For boaters, he said, the algae would be more of a nuisance than a danger — they'd need to make sure they gave their boats a good washing after using them.



PHOTO BY MARJIE ANNE HOLLOWELL

Clumps of green algae are seen floating in the river near Water Street in Edenton, Monday.



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