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North Carolina Indian Cultural Center... A Brief History

KEEPERS OF THE PAST

At day's end, they gather up the treasures and lock them into a secure room.

The staff of the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center (NCICC) sometimes work until 8 or 9, even later; nonetheless, the ritual collecting and safeguarding of the treasures never gets overlooked because this is the heart and soul of the task they've taken on: the preservation and telling of a way of life.

Few in number, the treasures aren't likely to interest thieves since their value isn't in their market price. They include a handmade quilt of magenta, maroon and white, handwoven baskets, both simple and intricate, beaded ornaments, gourds, a hooded clay figure with piercing eyes, a contemporary effigy carved from stone. They also include an architect's rendering of the phase one focal point, the Visitor's Center and Museum, and shelves of plans, proposals, impact studies, histories, ecological reports, budgets, travel brochures, archaeological data, in short, all that will one day come together as eastern North Carolina's chief repository of Indian lore.

Although the idea of an Indian Cultural Center emerged more than 25 years ago, it was not until 1981 that it found its earliest fiscal support. A \$15,000 planning grant from the Coastal Plains Regional Commission to the North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs funded a study of the concept. A year later the Council of State gave \$100,000 for the initial property option purchase. By 1984 the ball was rolling and almost half a million additional dollars were accrued for purchase of land.

Consistent efforts over the six years resulted in the incorporation of a private, non profit organization, establishment of a 15-member Board of Directors, the hiring of an Executive Director, the completion of archaeological and feasibility studies, and the raising of yet more funds and more support.

MANY CAREFUL STEPS

Amassing artifacts, both ancient and recent, and the products of today's Indian artists and craftsmen may be one of the more enjoyable aspects of developing a cultural center, but it is not the major part, nor is it the starting place. In fact, a single starting place probably never existed. Instead, there have many places to begin and the lead juggler of these multiple beginnings is the Center's Director, Dr. Helen Maynor Scheirbeck, a woman who believes that having only one thing to do at a time constitutes walking backward.

By the time Dr. Scheirbeck was hired in 1987, a first market study had already been completed and the multi-tribal Board had money in the bank. The issue was how to proceed and the answer was forward--in every direction. In rapid succession more staff was hired, repair work to the site's amphitheater, lake, and grounds got underway, plans were solicited for a phased-in approach to development, meetings with tourism specialists, museum curators, and marketing experts took place, and most importantly, the public began to participate in the project.

"This has never been the Board's Cultural Center or my Cultural Center," says Dr. Scheirbeck. "It belongs to the people and from the first we wanted the public to work with us, to be part of the fun and the headaches of development." So, the public was invited to special events such as the Ground Blessing, pow wows, and art shows and also to simply drop by, to ask questions, to meet the staff, to see how things are coming along, to lend a hand.

For Dr. Scheirbeck, members of the Board and many others, the importance of proceeding with the Visitor's Center, Museum and other Phase I elements, are very important for the sagging Robeson County economy. The \$60 million Cultural Center will mean about 500 new jobs,

untold numbers of spin-off businesses, and will provide a major marketing outlet for the entire state's Indian population. This is in addition to meeting the Cultural Center's primary objective: To create a regional cultural and educational park that will serve as a preservation and presentation center of the historical culture of the Native American throughout North Carolina--the Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Haliwa-Sapoin, Lumbee, Tuscarora, and the Waccamaw-Siouan.

At this time--early in 1991--the project advances roughly on schedule. There is every reason to believe that the opening of the east coast's newest cultural theme park--complete with living displays, interpretive exhibits, archaeological features, films, ceremonial reenactments, and gift shop filled with Indian arts and crafts--will coincide with America's celebration of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' most important voyage.

A WALK THOUGHT MANY YESTERDAYS

Who doesn't remember being small and magical? Who doesn't remember marching through a still, green, sweet smelling place and feeling powerful, feeling as though the world was good, that all things in it were good and that they knew you and approved of you?

Another memory: there is something fearsome out there, just beyond the clearing, deep in the dark, shadowy woods. Is it a wild animal mad with a strange sickness? Is it someone or maybe a lot of people come to avenge some wrong or come to take your food?

There are other things, stories your parents and grandparents told you, and you remember telling, sitting at the kitchen table with the smell of coffee or maybe bread, warm and strong, circling about your heads. The older folks nod in agreement to a shared knowledge that you don't really understand. But it's all right. The stories hold your attention and you know that their wisdom will

keep you safe.

Our pasts are both private and communal. Our histories blend and tangle like the threads in a blanket so that we remember many things, some of which happened to us and some of which happened to ancestors. Because we believe that both kinds of memories are important, we honor them by recording and preserving them.

The North Carolina Indian Cultural Center will be a kind of family album of the state's first citizens.

On arrival at the Cultural Center, guests will be greeted at the Visitor Center and Museum, a 25,000-square-foot facility housing an auditorium, gift shop, class rooms and meeting rooms, and, most important, exhibits covering more than 12,000 years of North Carolina history.

An Exhibit Orientation Area will set the stage for the entire cultural site experience--in the museum, along with the riverwalks, in the seven Indian villages, at the ceremonial grounds, and on the nature trails.

There will be six additional exhibition galleries in the central facility, all of which will be filled with the elements that most typify the period. The galleries and some of the features are: the Paleo Indian Hall which stretches into the most distant past to present ancient relics of flintknapping, bone work, and weaponry;

The Archaic Indian Hall which will feature examples of early basketry and shell work as well as descriptions of the trade practices of the period;

The Woodland Indian Hall which introduces the elements of myth, religion, ceremony, art, and medicine--The Early Historic Period (1500-1840) Hall which presents the North Carolina Indian as he is most often depicted in American history. This gallery will most certainly offer a few surprises;

The Late Historic Period (1840-1960) Hall which

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Whatever Happened to ...

Willard B. and Pearlle Mae Locklear

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear

Special to THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

Age is a state of mind say Willard Brantley Locklear and his wife, Pearlle Mae Emanuel Locklear.

"Why, you're not old until you get up in the 80's," Mrs. Locklear says as her husband nods in agreement.

The Union Chapel community residents are pushing old age. He is 74 and she is 73 years old. And though they are in the winter of their lives, spring shines brightly as they reminisce about their 55 years together as husband and wife.

He was born the third of ten children to Hayes Locklear and his wife, Phodie Woodell Locklear of Robeson County.

Born in Claxton, Georgia, Mrs. Locklear is the daughter of the late Isaiah Dixon Emanuel and Annie Mae Ransom Emanuel. Her parents moved from Georgia when she was seven years old. She is the only surviving child of the six children born to "I.D." and Annie Mae Emanuel, Robeson County natives.

Mr. Locklear grew up in the Union Chapel community and attended Union Chapel School. He says among his teachers at the all-Indian school were Martin Luther Lowry, Lettie Mae Baker and John L. Carter.

After completing the 11 grades offered at the school, he enrolled at Cherokee Indian Normal School in Pembroke. It was there he met Mrs. Locklear who had attended the Thompson and Barker-Ten-Mile School.

"It was love at first sight for me," Mr. Locklear says of meeting his future wife. The couple graduated from the high school in 1934 and married a year later.

"I'd just become to be 18 years old when I got married," she remembers. Mrs. Locklear says she told her mother that she and Mr. Locklear, her boy friend, were just going for a ride on the night they got married. Later on they slipped away to Dillon, SC. Their wedding night was spent in the home of the groom's sister, Strawdie. A week later they moved in with his parents in the Union Chapel community.

A year later after his parents built a new home, the couple took up housekeeping in the original Hayes Locklear house. Mrs. Locklear remembers it was a one-room house with paneless windows. "A wooden shutter covered the window opening."

Mr. Locklear says he learned first hand from his father the importance of frugality. "I was born and raised in a two-room log house with a clay floor and lived there until I was six years old."

"I can remember living there when my parents had six of us children. There were no cribs or storage buildings to keep cured tobacco in, and Daddy would store sheets of the farm crop inside the house for safekeeping."

"If my daddy made two dollars, he always kept one of them. He could really squeeze money."

The couple worked on the Locklear farm during their second year of marriage. "It was a time when monthly wages were twelve dollars. That year my wife and I were given forty dollars for our wages," Mr. Locklear comments.

With the earnings Mr. Locklear says he bought a #8 woodburning cook stove, a bed and a dresser.

"And I didn't spend it all because we had to have some left to live on," he interjects.

A few years later the young couple moved near Red Springs where she operated a country store and he did

carpentry work at Ft. Bragg Military base. Three years later they moved back to the Union Chapel community and remained. They were to raise ten children: six sons and four daughters. Another child died in infancy. By now the Hayes Locklear estate had increased from the ten acres he'd purchased from his mother for ten dollars, to 65 acres which consisted of three farms.

Drawing on his carpentry skills, Mr. Locklear built a home for his growing family. It was at his father's homestead he engaged in farming crops of tobacco, corn and soybeans. He supplemented his income by working as a master carpenter with construction companies.

He was employed with a Robeson County-based corporation for 29 years and farmed, too. As a construction site supervisor he was able to work parttime during tobacco harvest season. He also worked parttime for 20 years with his late brother-in-law, Juddie A. Revels, Sr. in a funeral home business.

In 1984 Mr. Locklear retired. Mrs. Locklear is a retired homemaker.

Today the couple's activities are slowed by declining health. The family farm is attended by a son who also operates an auto garage nearby. Mr. Locklear limits his driving because of "stiffness" in a foot caused by a medical ailment. He says he relies on a relative and neighbor to drive him most places.

However, when he does drive, beside him is his beloved dog, Prince. The 16-year-old friend goes wherever his master goes.

"I even take him to church with me every Sunday. He stays in my car and waits patiently," Mr. Locklear smiles. "He even goes with me to town," he says of the dog which was given to him by a daughter.

Mr. Locklear has been a Sunday School adult teacher for 35 years. He is very active in his beloved Union Chapel Community Baptist Church where he serves as chairman of the Steward committee.

For going on four decades he has been a vital figure in his community where he continues to coordinate efforts in helping others in need.

"I've always felt that service to my community was important," the Lumbee Indian comments.

Severe arthritis resulted in a knee cap replacement for Mrs. Locklear several years ago. She learned to drive an automobile years ago, but never was licensed to drive. That fact did not hinder travel over the years for the Lumbee grandmother. She says she has toured more than a dozen states in the nation and has taken a cruise ship on a visit to Nassau.

She is active in her church and belongs to the women's auxiliary which meets monthly. She busies herself in hobbies which include lap quilting, watching television and visiting friends and relatives on the telephone.

The couple no longer take long distance trips. They seem content to have visits from their ten children; 84 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Many items in their home reflect trips of bygone years. Mr. Locklear is very fond of a cap collection which boasts thirty some in number.

"I got so many caps I have to share them with my sons," he comments.

There remains too much to do in the lives of Willard B. and Pearlle Locklear for them to dwell on the creeping of old age. He says food tends to be his only vice right now and he is trying to cut back on eating too much for health's sake.

"Probably one reason I've lived as long as I have is that I've never been a drunkard, and have never hit a fighting lick in my entire adult life."

And Mrs. Locklear attributes her longevity to her love for people. "Honey, I love everybody."



Willard B. and Pearlle Mae Locklear

Native American Resource Center has many references about Indians

By Dr. Stan Knick

Are you looking for information about a particular tribe or nation of Indians? Are you trying to find out the real story about Geronimo or some other Indian leader? Are you searching for general knowledge of Indians of the Eastern Woodlands? If so, the Native American Resource Center, in Old Main Building on the Pembroke State University campus, is a good place to look for some answers.

The Native American Resource Center has recently opened a Reading Room where people can find information about various topics related to American Indians. The books are arranged by regions which reflect the similar cultures among the Native Americans in each region. The regions include: Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Plateau and Great Basin, Northwest Coast and Arctic, Southwest, and California. Within each of these regions are various books: some about specific tribes; some about the art of that region; some about particular people. A person interested in finding out more about one of these cultural regions can "browse" through the books for items of interest.

The Resource Center has also recently developed an index for the books in the Reading Room. With this index a person can find out which books contain information about specific Indian-related topics. A sample of the topics in the index includes: agriculture, arts and crafts, clothing and regalia, dance, federal policy, housing and villages, languages, myths and legends, and treaties. There are many other topics as well.

Although the books in the Reading Room may not be checked-out, the public is welcome to sit in the Reading Room and make use of these references. For persons who need to take references home with them, many of these same books are also available in the Pembroke State University Library, which is also open to the public. Staff members of the Native American Resource Center are available to assist people looking for references, and to discuss many of the topics included in the Reading Room. If you want to learn more about Native American cultures, visit the Native American Resource Center.



Joe Chavis (left) of Pembroke was chosen North Carolina Watershed Person of 1990 by the North Carolina

Local Person Receives State Award

Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. He was presented an award January 7 during the Association's annual meeting held in Fayetteville.

Mr. Chavis was nominated by the Robeson Soil & Water Conservation District (RSWCD) for his involvement in the development and maintenance of Moss Neck Watershed. Through meeting with numerous individuals and explaining the benefits of the project, he helped obtain the necessary landrights and financial backing for the installation and continued maintenance of the watershed.