

Editorial and Opinion Page

Along the Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stanley Knick
Director, UNCP Native American Resource Center

In the past five weeks, we have begun the journey toward seeing the Lumbee in context. We have noted that diverse kinds of information and various ways of thinking about evidence and interpretation are necessary for the journey. This week we move on to discussion of the prehistoric context of the Lumbee.

Not much academic attention had been given to the prehistoric context of the Lumbee before 1986. The millennia before Europeans came to the Americas lay undiscovered in countless corn fields and beans fields and tobacco fields. From reading the best and standard book about the Lumbee (*The Only Land I Know* by Dial and Eliades), and from conversations with Lumbee people, it seemed that many folks had accepted the notion that history began for the Lumbee in the 1580s with John White's "lost colony." Such documentary historical evidence as there was did not begin until the early 1700s. As one Lumbee scholar put it, there seemed to be a "blind spot" about prehistory (Linda Oxendine, personal communication).

Meanwhile, the Lumbee were carrying on a hundred-year-old struggle for federal recognition. As had all-too-often been the case with other Native Americans, the Lumbee were having to wade through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' acknowledgment process to prove to the government that they are who they say they are. Almost no other Americans are held to such a regime in asserting their ethnic identity, but for some reason Indian people are. It seemed to me in 1986 that anthropology, and specifically the sub-discipline of archaeology, ought to be capable of shedding some light

on the struggle.

Archaeology is a set of ideas, methods and techniques for understanding human beings in the deep and not-so-deep past. It is a way of looking at artifacts and sites in order to find out what happened with the people of that past. As a science it is not perfect, but as a way to learn it is useful.

What was needed was survey and planning with regard to the archaeological resources of Lumbee Country. The purpose of such activity would be (and is) to preserve, properly manage and learn from those archaeological resources.

As it turned out, in the land of the Lumbee scientific archaeology had not been commonplace. It had literally just scratched the surface of Native American heritage. A few sites had been identified, but no comprehensive perspective of Lumbee prehistory had been gained. There had been advances in the body of data collected, particularly within the previous ten years, but there were still many questions to be answered. It seemed to me then that someday it should be possible to speak of Eastern Siouan, Algonkian or Iroquoian archaeological elements of Lumbee heritage; perhaps even to tell when the differences occurred. But it would have to be taken from the beginning.

Archaeology ought to be able to answer some important questions. Had the area been occupied during all of the named periods of prehistory? What artifacts did the people make and use, and when? Could living Lumbee people look to archaeology as a means to help them understand their own context and the region's past? Within each of these questions resided other

questions, waiting to be answered.

To my amazement I was told by one of North Carolina's elder statesmen of archaeology, a man for whom I have considerable respect, that we shouldn't bother doing archaeology here because we "wouldn't find much." I believe he said "there wasn't much going on down here" in prehistoric times. My amazement stemmed from the fact that there were so many Native people living here in the present day. How could there be good documentation of Indians having been here straight along since the early 1700s, without "much going on" in prehistoric times? How could the Lumbee be the largest group of Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River, and there not be an abundance of archaeological sites in their homeland? Perhaps it was just that very little archaeological survey had been done here? Someone or some agency needed to investigate this apparent contradiction.

In 1987 and 1992, the Native American Resource Center was awarded survey and planning grants from the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, administered by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Those two grants enabled us to take some beginning steps forward along the necessary archaeological road — a road important to the prehistoric part of seeing the Lumbee in context.

But what is meant by the concept of "prehistory?" In the next segment, we will continue the journey. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.



Last week we stopped discussing the prehistoric context of the Lumbee with the question: what is meant by the concept of "prehistory?" When we speak of pre-World-War-II Germany, we are talking about that European country before the war. When we speak of pre-Columbian ceramics, we are talking about pottery made by Native Americans before Columbus. In this line of reasoning one might get the notion that "prehistory" means before history. But there was never a time in Native American culture which could truly be said to be before history.

Native Americans in the Eastern Woodlands apparently always had a concept of history. They remembered and told stories about their collective past down through the generations. But theirs was an oral rather than a written history. Does this mean that it was any less true or reliable than written history? Certainly not. Mistakes and falsehoods are no more likely to occur in oral history than in written history (despite the modern misconception about the infallibility of the written word). So when we speak of the prehistoric context of the Lumbee and other Eastern Woodland Native Americans, we are really speaking of the time before written history.

What is known of the general prehistory of the Eastern Woodlands? Although there was enormous cultural diversity among the many tribes and nations of the Eastern Woodlands, there were also some widespread similarities. These similarities can be

best understood by reference to four major divisions of general Eastern Woodland prehistory. The divisions are mainly based on differences in artifact types, which are clues to the way of life of the people who made and used those artifacts. Although different names are used for artifact types in different parts of the Eastern Woodlands, similar technological advancements occurred throughout much of this large area. Here I use the artifact type names as they are commonly seen in North Carolina archaeology (Coe 1964; Phelps 1983).

The Paleo-Indian Division of Prehistory: The first known ancestors of the Lumbee and other Eastern Woodlands Native Americans are now called Paleo-Indians (Willey 1966). This is, of course, not a word which would mean anything to them, as they doubtless had their own names for themselves in their own various languages. The prefix "paleo-" comes from the Greek word meaning "ancient," and these Paleo-Indians were the most ancient people we know about in North America.

The earliest evidence of Paleo-Indian occupation here in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina goes back to the very end of the Pleistocene geological epoch, 12,000 years before Christ (Phelps 1983). It is possible that people lived here earlier even than that, conceivably as early as 20,000 BC (Mathis and Gardner 1986). The Pleistocene was a time of colder global climate, when glaciers extended well down into the present United

States. A northern or boreal type of forest covered all of North Carolina (dominated by conifers such as pine, spruce and hemlock).

During this part of prehistory, Native Americans lived in small nomadic groups of one or two extended families (probably 25-30 people). They frequently moved from place to place, and subsisted by hunting and by gathering whatever wild plant foods were available. It was most efficient for them to hunt the (now extinct) larger species of animals which still lived in that colder climate, although they probably would have taken just about any animal that was available. These Paleo-Indians were extremely well adapted to their life in the boreal forest, and their type of culture persisted for thousands of years.

They made, among other tools, distinctive lanceolate projectile points (spearsheads; the bow-and-arrow had not been invented yet). The earliest of these point types is called Clovis, followed by the Dalton and Hardaway types as the gradual transition to the later Archaic culture unfolds. Prior to 1986, there had been no documentation of Paleo-Indian sites in Lumbee Country (Mathis and Gardner 1986).

In the next segment, we will continue the journey of prehistoric Lumbee context. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

UNCP Campus Police Sponsor Youth Trip to Zoo

PEMBROKE -- Thanks to the efforts of the campus police of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke and a group of local volunteers and sponsors, 19 Pembroke youngsters visited the North Carolina Zoo recently.

The CAPPY program (Campus police and Pembroke Youth) is a community outreach to youth organized by Chief David Helton, director of UNCP Police and Public Safety. In two years, CAPPY has taken more than 100 area youth on field trips to Charlotte Hornets and Atlanta Braves games, Rockingham Speedway and the North Carolina Zoo.

"We had a really good time," Helton said. "There were many positive interactions between the kids and the adult role models."

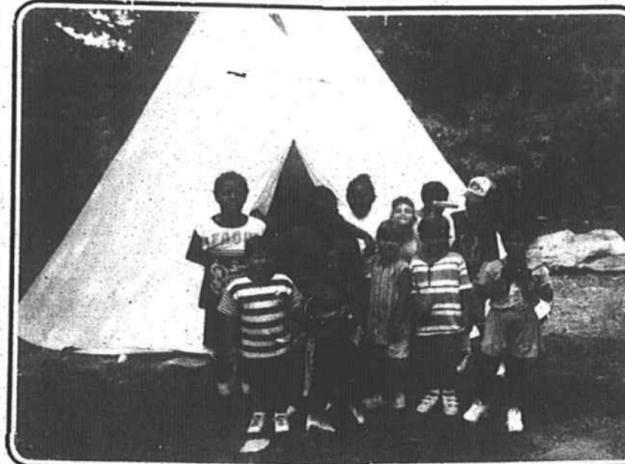
"It takes a lot of caring volunteers and financial contributions to make a program like this work," the veteran police officer said. "Trips like this are very special for these kids."

Helton said more money is needed and contributions may be made to the UNCP Foundation Inc., P.O. Box 1510, Pembroke, NC 28372-1510.

Chaperons were Patsy Oxendine, human resource administrator for Daniels' Home Bakery, Mitchell Locklear of Pembroke Housing Authority and wife Doris, Rita Jacobs, Willic Betha and Chief Helton.

Daniel's Home Bakery provided the children with money for souvenirs, bag lunches were donated by the UNCP campus police and the Pembroke Housing Authority served an ice cream social. Dinner was at Burger King compliments of Burger King owner Clifford Bullard and Robeson County Sheriff Glenn Maynor.

"I can't thank volunteers and contributors enough for a very important day in the lives of 19 children," Helton said. "With more contributions, there can be more days like this."



Reflections

By: Alta Nye Oxendine

Family Reunion

On the second weekend in August 100 Page descendants gathered in Sheridan, Montana for this year's Page-Redfield family reunion.

Now it's being held every other year in or near the Pageville community where three Page brothers and their two sisters settled after Montana Territory was opened up to homesteaders.

They had found it hard to make a living in the mid-west and were looking for a new start.

I doubt that any of my ancestors stopped to think that this new "frontier" was land where the nomadic Plains Indian tribes had roamed for centuries. Of course the same thing

applied to the east and midwest, except that Indian tribes in these areas had apparently built more stable communities before the Europeans arrived.

Back to the Reunion

It's a good thing my cousin Shirley and husband John's new house (that Mother watched going up from the nursing home) is large even though meals were eaten outdoors.

I had hoped to attend, but had to change my plans. A good thing since Byron's measles-like rash turned out to be a sign of strep throat! Glad he didn't have to stay in a day care center or keep Mama home from work.

"By George! It works!" user crows.

Little-known 'vitamin' makes love grand

McKinney, TX—Little did Dr. Philip Handler know, back in 1941, that his newly discovered nutrient "Vitamin 15" would one day have men and women all over the country smiling quietly to themselves.

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Catch the Spirit of the West!

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