

VI. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Archaeological investigations on the Coastal Plain of North Carolina were initiated with burial mound studies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Holmes 1883; Thomas 1887, 1894; Peabody 1910). Cultural chronologies used for the interpretation of prehistoric and historic occupations on the North Carolina coast were developed as a result of survey work by William Haag (1958), Joffre Coe (1964), Stanley South (1976) and David Phelps (1983). A summary of this work is presented in a US Army Corps of Engineers Cultural Resources Study of the coast north of Cape Lookout (Lewis 1986).

The establishment of archaeological research programs at East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in the 1970s provided more focused regional research. In conjunction with federal legislation addressing historic preservation, environmental impact survey work conducted by academic research facilities and privately owned contract archaeological companies has resulted in an increasing accumulation of site type and location data.

A. CRAVEN COUNTY

Prior to the 1970s, the majority of archaeological sites recorded in Craven County were included in general surveys of the coastal region (Phelps 1983). The majority of prehistoric sites were found on high elevations adjacent to small watercourses. The majority of these sites were found associated with sandy and loamy soils.

Several small surveys within the Croatan National Forest (Ham et al. 1976; Barber 1977, 1979; Wilson 1978; Hall and Littleton 1979; Ross 1980a-f, 1981; Snedecker 1986, 1987; Harmon 1989, 1991) indicate that the most frequently recovered ceramic types at prehistoric sites corresponded to Phelps's (1983) ceramic typology of Mount Pleasant, Hanover, Deep Creek and Colington. Based on the surveys within Croatan National Forest, as well as other areas of Craven County, [Archaic period] "sites tend to be small, temporary hunting and gathering camps rather than areas of extended occupation" (Ross 1981). Recent work within Craven County found similar small, prehistoric sites with Archaic to Woodland period components (Lautzenheiser et al. 1990). The primary historic feature/site type recorded in the Croatan National Forest is the tar kiln, which was utilized extensively in the production of naval stores during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Ross 1981; Snedecker 1986, 1987; Harmon 1989, 1991). Materials associated with tar kiln sites include nineteenth-century ceramics and glass.

A survey of the US Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point identified nine prehistoric sites having Mount Pleasant, Hanover, Deep Creek and Colington ceramic phases (Hargrove et al. 1985). Historic sites located during the survey consisted of small deposits of nineteenth-century material, as well as historic cemeteries, which had been severely impacted by ordinance bombing.

The development of the Simmons-Nott airport in New Bern began in the mid-1970s. An archaeological evaluation of the impact of construction on cultural resources was prepared (Brown 1976a) and eventually led to several archaeological surveys. One survey that was associated with expansion documented nine sites affiliated with the Clermont plantation (Drucker et al. 1981). The majority of the historic artifacts recovered during this survey were from the late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century. Other archaeological work associated with the New Bern airport includes monitoring for the grading of the airport baseball field (Clauser 1984a) and the search for Brice's fort (South 1963).

A survey of the Bryan cemetery, adjacent to the airport expansion area, resulted in locating 12 graves (Phelps 1976a, 1979; Phelps et al. 1979). Background research revealed that James City residents had used the cemetery during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A Civil War camp occupied during the 1862 Battle of New Bern and two possible eighteenth-century sites were also identified during this survey.

Wake Forest University (Abbott 1988) conducted archaeological testing at James City, a freedmen's community in the New Bern area. Testing revealed intact, undisturbed deposits of material that had the potential to yield information regarding the lifeways and occupation of the late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century African-American community.

Further work was done for NCDOT road improvements (Lautzenheiser et al. 1990; Gray 1994; Joy and Gray 1994) and bridge replacements (Robinson 1993a-b); construction projects (Phelps 1975, 1976b; Loftfield 1977a-b, 1980a-b, 1981; Kimmel 1982; Phelps and Hartsell 1980; Loftfield and Littleton 1982, 1983; Hargrove 1983, 1986; Hammond 1984); artificial reefs (Wilde-Ramsing 1983, 1987; Wilde-Ramsing and Angley 1983); and clearance for CAMA permits (Watts 1982, 1984).

B. NEW BERN and TRYON PALACE HISTORIC SITE

Archaeological investigations have also been conducted at several properties in the New Bern Historic District. The earliest work was conducted at Tryon Palace, prior to the 1950s restoration. Gertrude Caraway, a prominent historian who lived in New Bern, had recorded the site during the restoration. She recovered one prehistoric rim sherd (accession number 2043P1) and the site was designated as 31CV³ that identified the site as a prehistoric village. Morley Williams, a landscape architect, supervised the archaeological investigations conducted prior to the reconstruction of Tryon Palace. Most of the information regarding this investigation has been destroyed. All that remains is a site plan showing the palace foundations, a few photographs (Figures 21 and 22) and artifacts stored at Tryon Palace (John Green, personal communication 1993).



Figure 21. Ca. 1950 archaeological excavations, view east (negative on file, NCDRC, DA&H).



Figure 22. Ca. 1950 archaeological excavations, view west (negative on file, NCDRC, DA&H).

Other work at Tryon Palace includes clearance for a fire security alarm system (Funk 1978) and an examination of nineteenth-century house foundations (Watts 1977). The inspection of the nineteenth-century house foundations on the palace grounds in the vicinity of the kitchen garden revealed the presence of approximately two feet of fill material over a layer of brick rubble. Evidence of stratified remains, as well as a grade change within a portion of the palace complex, seemed to have been the result of filling rather than grading. As noted in the investigation of this property, the nineteenth-century fill material could protect archaeological remains rather than destroy them (Watts 1977).

Archaeological excavations at Tryon Palace resumed in 1993 after the discovery of the 1783 papers of Francisco de Miranda which included a written description by John Hawks, the architect of Tryon Palace, and a map showing detailed garden plans. Testing the "historical reality" of the map resulted in locating a hard-packed sand garden path, a shell walkway, the remnants of raised planting beds and root stains that were possibly part of a hedgerow and postholes. The conclusions of this work "demonstrated that the Miranda Map may well accurately depict the original garden and that 18th-century features associated with the gardens may remain reasonably intact, buried beneath modern and 19th-century fill" (Kelso et al. 1994:22).

Additional work within the Tryon Palace vicinity was conducted in 1995 during the removal of underground storage tanks (Clauser 1995). Monitoring during the removal of underground storage tank 1 (UST 1) documented a brick foundation about two feet below the present ground surface; the size of the brick and type of mortar suggested that construction of the brick foundation was from the early to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Clauser's work identified this feature as the same reported by Funk in 1978. The stratigraphy of the mechanically excavated pit (4 feet deep and 5 feet in diameter) revealed extensive soil disturbance to 1.8 feet below surface. A "thin, undisturbed construction layer, associated with the brick foundation" lay below the 1.8 feet of soil disturbance.

Archaeological work in New Bern has been conducted at the Attmore-Oliver House (South 1962), Christ Episcopal Church (South 1964), the Lila Moore estate (Brown 1976b), the Branch Banking and Trust construction site (Hartley 1981), the waterfront on Tryon Palace Drive (Hammond et al. 1982), an unmarked cemetery at the old county home (Clauser 1984b), the New Bern Motor Inn (Garrow and Joseph 1985) and the Gabriel-Rains House (Espenshade 1990).

The most recent work within New Bern was done in conjunction with the construction of the United Carolina Bank on Tryon Palace Drive (Lautzenheiser and Eastman 1993; Lautzenheiser et al. 1994). Testing and excavation of this site (31CV183) documented the remains of three lots depicted on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century maps. Of the more than 200 features encountered, a sample was excavated for information about the ballast-stone foundation (Feature 200) and the stratified eighteenth-century trash dump (Feature 102). Feature 200 was determined to have been a 20 x 20-foot structure with a 10 x 20-foot addition constructed in the late eighteenth century. Archaeological evidence suggested that the house had a partially excavated basement with plaster on the interior walls. Feature 102 was determined to have accumulated between 1750 and 1820. A 10 x 10-foot excavation unit was used to sample this feature which had six deposition zones and covered an area at least 40 feet in length.

Underwater archaeological testing conducted throughout the New Bern area included sites along the Neuse and Trent rivers. Tidewater Atlantic Research conducted a reconnaissance of the area and uncovered a modern barge and a possible late nineteenth-century schooner (Watts 1985). Later, in 1992, several shipwreck remains were located in both the Neuse and Trent rivers during a reconnaissance survey performed in conjunction with the bridge replacement projects of US 17 and US 70 Business (Watts 1992).