

Mississippian Smyth and Washington  
Counties: the Evidence

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Video Presentation

Recorded in Wise, Virginia

12 November 2018

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# Mississippian Smyth and Washington Counties: The Evidence

Originally Presented to the  
Archeological Society of Virginia

Winchester, Virginia  
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Remnant Yuchi Indian

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## Dedication: Lawrence Richardson 1913-2013



Picture courtesy  
of Lawrence  
Richardson

Lawrence Richardson, of Adwolfe, at right above, shown excavating at the Fox site in Smyth County in 1974, was a Smyth County dairy farmer and avocational archeologist. He figured out well before anyone else that the Yuchi Indians were in Holstonia.

## My Winchester Abstract

Abstract: Virginia's Smyth and Washington Counties have yielded vast quantities of Mississippian Period Indian goods — mostly from flood plains and caves. Almost all of this material went into the private holdings of Indian relic collectors. This presentation shows images of much of that material drawn from the author's personal photographs taken during visits to private collections, from the relic collectors' literature, and from contemporary newspaper accounts. **In aggregate, the evidence is overwhelming.**



## Mississippian Culture and Relic Collecting

**Mississippian** is a poorly defined term that describes the American Indian societies that occupied the Mississippi River watershed and the Deep South during the period 800-1600 AD. The people of these societies were generally mound builders, relied on maize-based sustenance, had social ranks, engaged in ceremonial activities, produced highly artistic objects with iconic designs from marine shell, copper, pottery, etc., and engaged in long distance trade and exchange.

**Indian Relic collecting** is the practice of privately accumulating American Indian objects. Points (arrowheads) are the most commonly collected objects. Many of the highly artistic relics (such as those shown here) were dug from Indian burials.

## Indian Relic Collecting, 2017



Collection of Ron Harris, Bethlehem NC

I have seen dozens of such collections though not this one.



*Hickory Daily Record*, 13 February 2017

## “Consternation in 2000”

“The presence of ... Mississippian origin artifacts in an isolated area of Virginia has caused some consternation in Virginia archaeology.”

Barber, Michael B. and Eugene B. Barfield. “The Late Woodland Period in the Environs of Saltville: A Case for Petty Chiefdom Development?” *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology*, 16, 117-132, 2000. Barfield died in 2016. Barber is currently the Virginia State Archeologist

## Gene Barfield & Mike Barber



Author's picture September 2009,  
Hollins, Virginia.

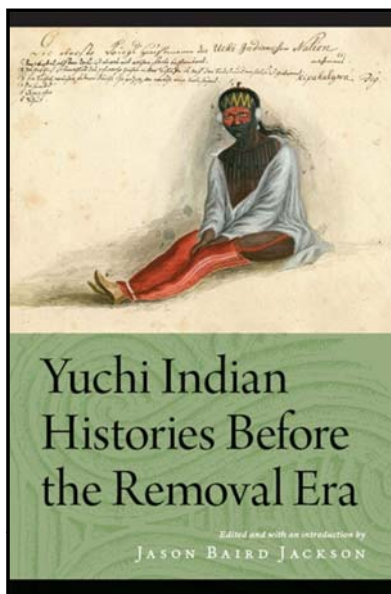
## Two Important Recent Developments

1. The 1567 Spanish Fort San Juan at Morganton, NC, has become big-league, mainstream archeology
2. Yuchi history is finally receiving serious academic study

These developments radically change our view of  
SW Virginia contact history and prehistory

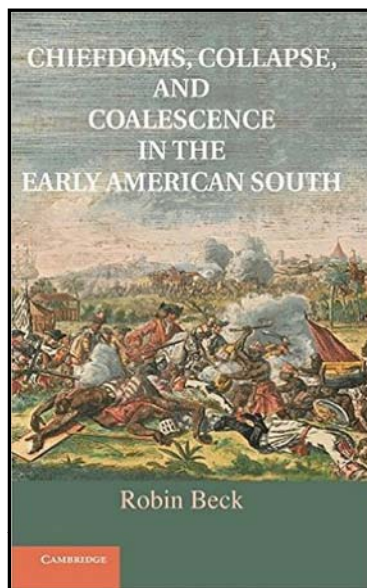
Recent scholarship ...

## Some Recent Scholarship

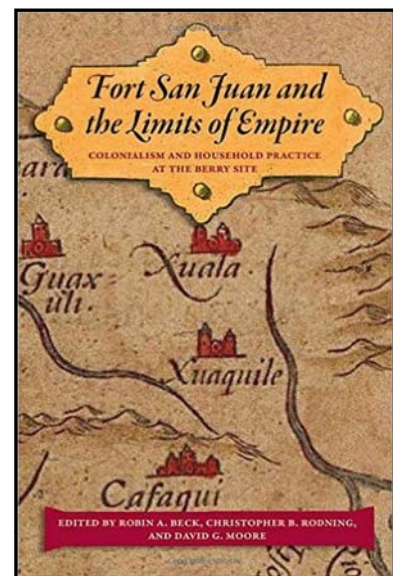


Essay collection 2012

Plus recent articles.



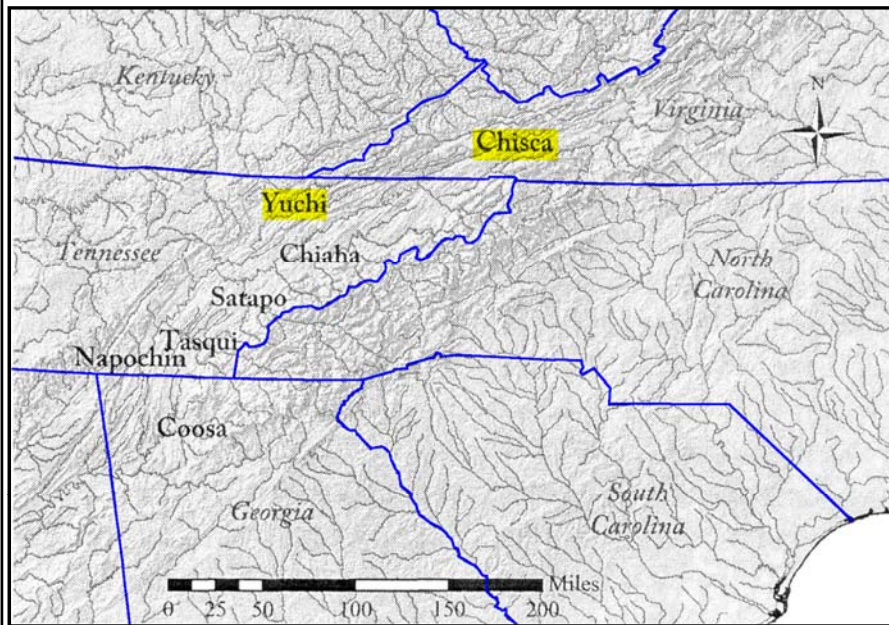
Single author synthesis 2013



Essay collection 2016

## Brett Riggs/John Worth 2012 Map

The Yuchi and their neighbors in 1567



Map from an essay titled “The Enigmatic Chisca.” In *Yuchi Indian Histories before the Removal Era* edited by John Worth, 2012: 38.

Neill (in *Southern Indian Studies* in 1955) called the Chisca a “band of the Yuchi.”

Yuchi oral history tells that Chiaha was a Yuchi town



## Chief Lee Vest and the 1857 Yuchi Tribal Roll



Author's picture March 2016

- Recently I was granted permission to publish about this post-removal Yuchi roll
- I have a paper in press telling the story of this roll
- The roll adds weight to the Yuchi story

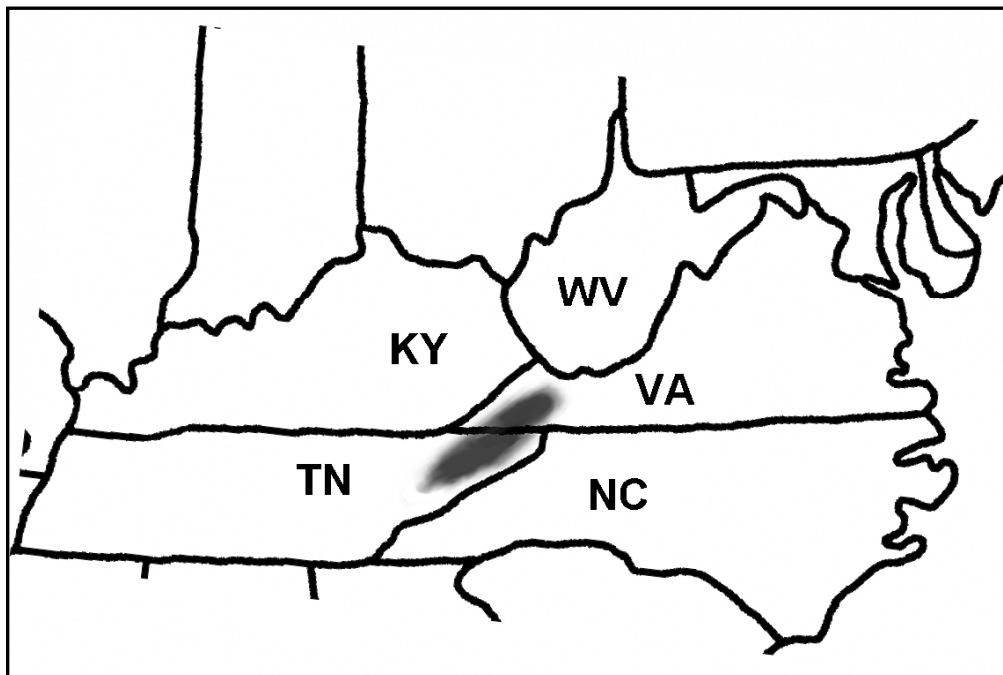


## The Purpose

- The principal purpose of prehistoric archeology in SW Virginia must surely be to tell the story of the region's pre-Columbian inhabitants
- That is the Yuchi story

Jim Glanville, ““Improper Archeology, ‘Fabulous Saltville,’ and the Ancient History of Southwest Virginia.” *The Smithfield Review*, IX: 55-100, 2005.

## Greater Holstonia



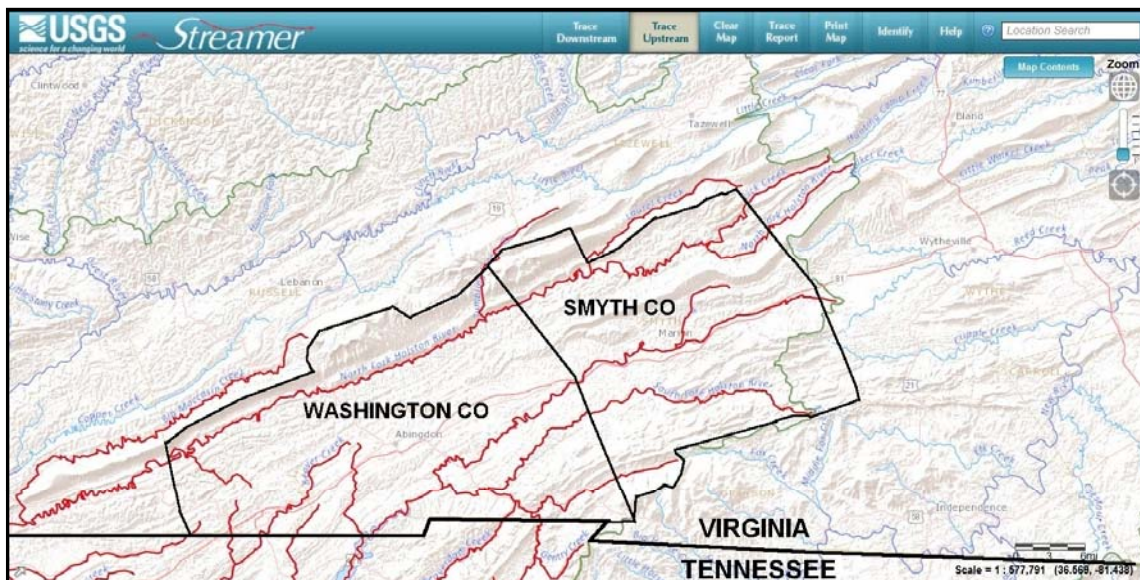
The Yuchi were the pre-Columbian inhabitants of Holstonia

## The Holston River and Its Forks



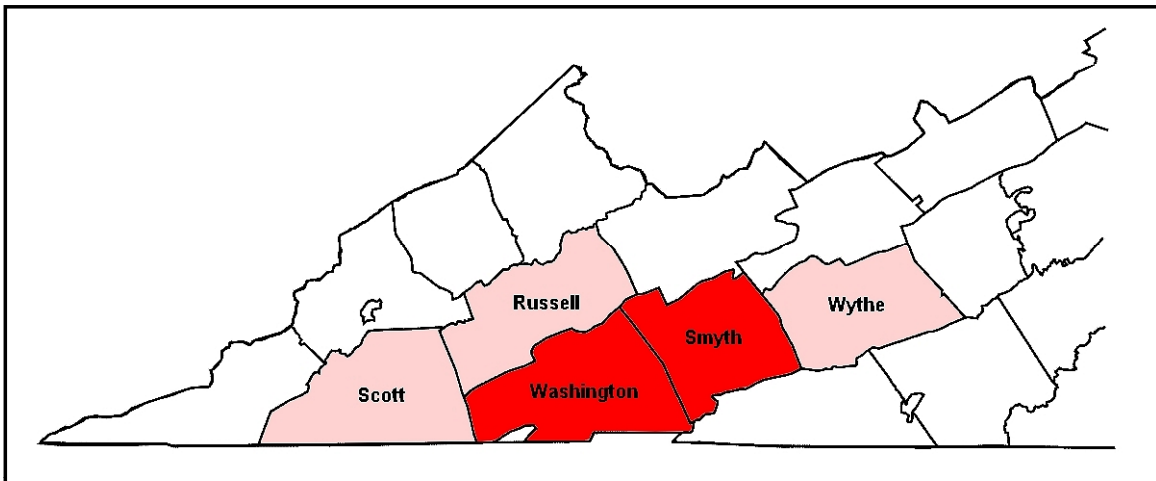
Modified from Kmusser at Wikipedia Commons

## Three Tributary Forks of the Holston River Straddle Washington and Smyth Counties



The North, Middle, and South Forks of the Holston drain almost all of the two counties

## Virginia Counties with Mississippian Goods



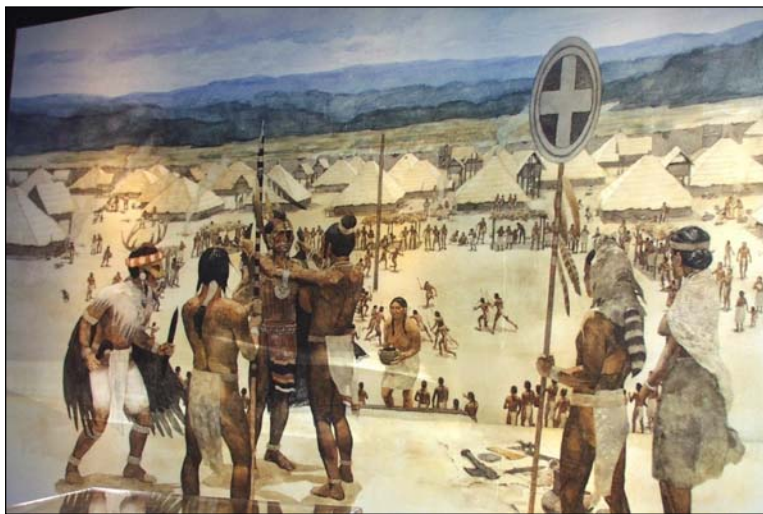
Red = Much evidence for Mississippian grave goods

Pink = Some evidence for Mississippian grave goods

## Indian Burials in Smyth & Washington Counties

- On flood plain sites adjacent to the three Holston River tributary forks.
- In the caves that are common in the karst landscape of Holstonia that is underlain by limestone, dolomite, and gypsum.
- A few in the mountain gaps.

## Tennessee-Holston River Mississippian People



The, engraved marine shell gorgets (throat ornaments) and platform pipes depicted here are the principal objects shown in today's presentation.

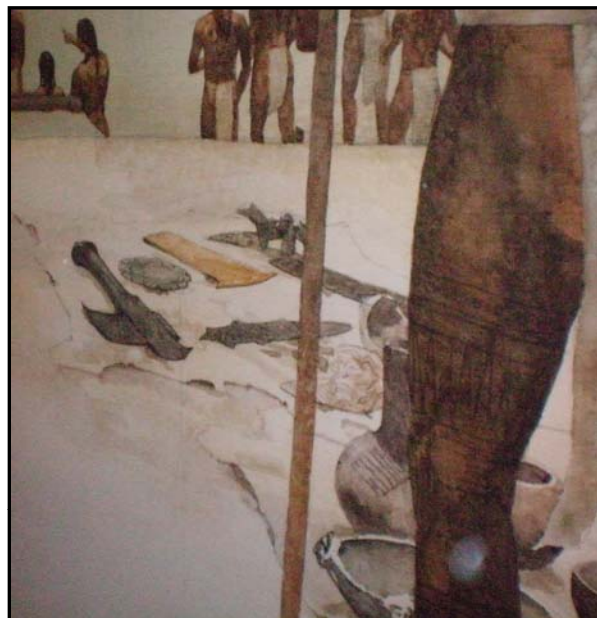


Marine shell  
gorget origins

Mural by Greg Harlin at the McClung Museum in Knoxville. Shows leaders of a Late Mississippian Period town. Author.



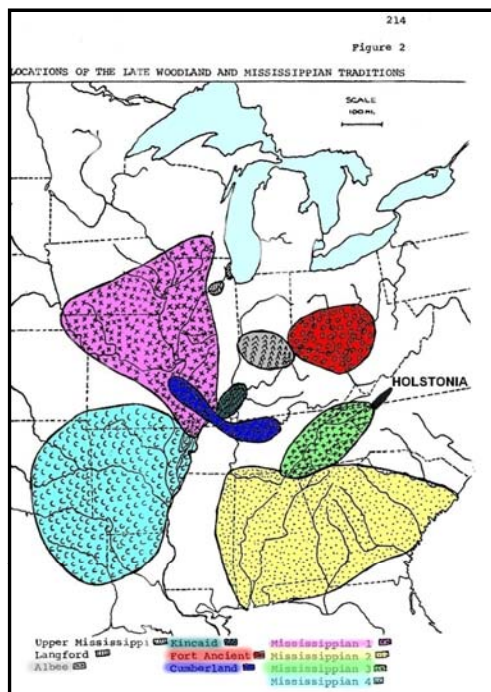
## Detail from Preceding Greg Harlin Mural



“Based on research by UT archaeologists who excavated Toqua in the 1970s.”



## Holstonia Abuts Tennessee Valley Mississippian



Major Mississippian regions shown colored

Holstonia shown black

Tennessee-Holston Valley Mississippian region shown green

Ottesen, Ann. *Acquisition of Exotic Raw Materials by Late Woodland & Mississippian Peoples*. Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1979. Modified.

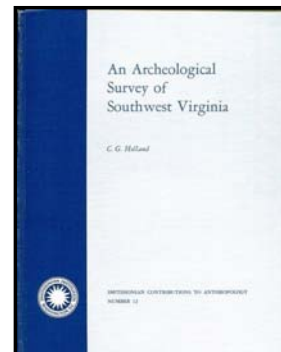
## In the Beginning, Archeology was Indiana Jones

On November 26, 1922, Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon entered King Tut's tomb, and found an immense treasure. On February 16, 1923, Carter opened the innermost chamber and found the sarcophagus of King Tut.

The Archeological Society of Virginia was founded in Richmond on January 8, 1940, as the Virginia Indian Relic Collector's Club. when 17 Virginians met at the Valentine Museum

## C. G. Holland on the Grave Robbers

“About 40 years ago one of a family of several brothers began to dig at night in open sites and to enter caves for artifacts. Through the following years this man [Robey Maiden] with single-minded determination dug in nearly all the open, pottery-bearing sites and caves within a large radius of Saltville. The artifacts sought were mainly pipes, ear ornaments, shell pendants and similar objects that were highly prized and sold well. Others of the family took up this activity and the pattern spread to embrace many people in their town and surrounding community. It is estimated that 40 to 50 people are now engaged in this destructive digging between Tazewell and Washington Counties.” (Preface, 1970)



## The Seven Maiden Brothers



Published by me 2007 in the Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia

Robey Maiden, 1911-1975



## Pictures of the Robey Maiden Collection



Photographs of uncertain provenance of the Robey Maiden collection given to the author by Tom Totten in 2005. Totten called this “all Saltville stuff.” Present whereabouts of objects unknown except for big pipe.

## Clarence Maiden 1908-c1990



Clarence Maiden at his relic closet. Undated.

Pictures in author's files.

## The Salt-Powered Chiefdom

The “salt-powered chiefdom” centered at Saltville was given that name by Barber and Barfield in 1996

They also said in that 1996 paper that the prehistory of Saltville is: “[O]ne of the most fascinating developments within Native American cultures within the Commonwealth.”

This work was not followed up on

Barber, Michael B. and Eugene B. Barfield. “The Late Woodland Period in the Environs of Saltville: A Case for Petty Chiefdom Development?” *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology*, 16, 117-132, 2000. Barfield died in 2016.

Barber, Michael B. "Saltville and Environs: The Woodland period," pages 39-50 in Eugene B. Barfield and Michael B. Barber. eds. *Upland Archeology in the East: Symposium Number Five*. Richmond, Virginia: Archeological Society of Virginia, 1996.



## The Salt Powered Chiefdom

“Areas of Smyth and Washington counties, Virginia have long been known for the recovery of abundant exotic goods dating to the Late Woodland period. These include Citico conch shell gorgets copper disks and beads, and small funerary pots. The presence of these Mississippian origin artifact in an isolated area of Virginia has cause some consternation in Virginia archaeology. The authors suggest that this displacement of trade goods is a direct function of the exploitation of the salt deposits at Saltville Due to the high salt content of the brine copious amounts of the surface deposit could be easily processed. It is hypothesized that an indigenous Late Woodland population provided trade salt to the Southeast in exchange for exotic goods. Concomitant with this exchange system was the evolution of the local population from tribal to chiefdom level to control the trade.”

Mike Barber and Gene Barfield, 2000

## Salt Trading Enriched SW Virginia Indians

“Areas of Smyth and Washington counties, Virginia, have long been known for the recovery of abundant exotic goods dating to the Late Woodland period. These include Citico conch shell gorgets, copper disks and beads, and small funerary pots. The presence of these Mississippian origin artifacts in an isolated area of Virginia has caused some consternation in Virginia archaeology.”\*

Barber and Barfield proposed that salt was traded out for high quality incoming goods.

\*Mike Barber and Gene Barfield, 2000

## Role of Caves in Holstonia

In Holstonia caves substituted for mounds as Indian ceremonial and religious sites

The below cited 1997 report tells that of 37 known Indian burial caves in Virginia (34 of which are in Smyth and Washington Counties) “...only three remain relatively undisturbed by looters.”

Barber, Michael B., and David A. Hubbard, Jr. Overview of the Human Use of Caves in Virginia: A 10,500 Year History. *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies*, 59, 132-136, 1997 and Virginia Burial Caves: An Inventory of a Desecrated Resource. *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies*, vol. 59, 154-159, 1997.

### Cautionary Note

- Reproduction or fake pipes are common
- Reproduction or fake gorgets are less common and somewhat easier to spot
- With a couple of noted exceptions, I believe this presentation to be free of reproductions and fakes

## Part of the Space Farms Zoo & Museum Collection



Web



Ralph Space, a self-made man from Sussex County, NJ, met Rufus Pickle of Saltville and Marion in 1931. They dug together in Holstonia for many years. I photographed these gorgets at the Space museum in 2006. **The collection is said to contain 25,000 SW Virginia objects!**

## Gorgets at Space Farms Zoo and Museum



Author's picture May 2006, Sussex Co., NJ

## Shell Objects at Space Farms Zoo & Museum



**“Found by Ralph Space  
and R. W. Pickle”**

Author's picture May 2006,  
Sussex Co., NJ

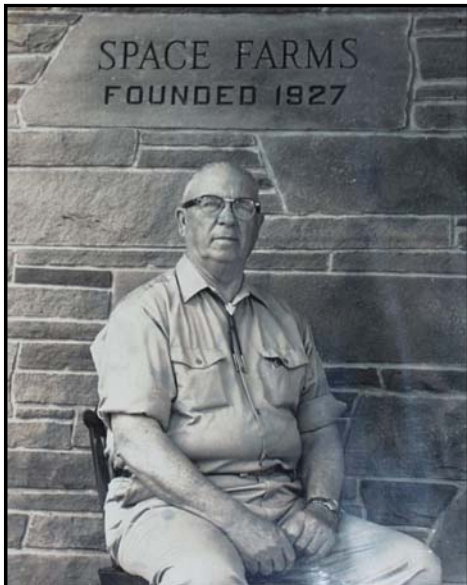
## Pipes at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum



Author's picture May 2006, Sussex Co., NJ



## Ralph Space and R. W. Pickle



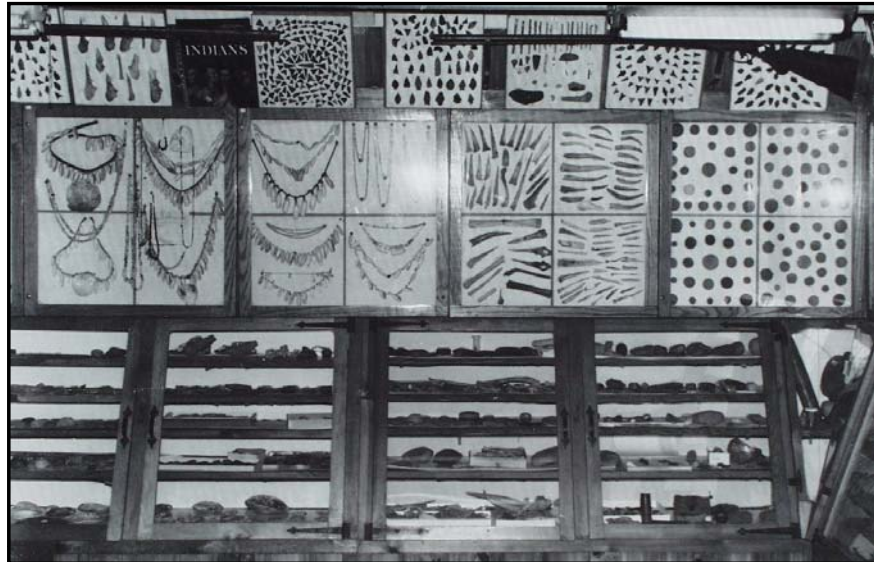
Ralph Space, 1902-1986



Rufus Wilson Pickle, 1896-1975

Jim Glanville, "The Space Farms Museum Collection of Southwest Virginia Artifacts"  
*Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia*, 62(1): 7-30, 2007.

## Part of the Rufus Pickle Collection



Pickle (1896-1975) was a legendary digger and collector who worked with Ralph Space. He lived in Saltville and later Marion. Undated picture taken about 1970. It is said that this material went to Space Farms in NJ. Picture in author's files. Thanks Tom Totten.

## The Kinderhook Site on Holston North Fork



Washington  
County

Note the dark earth. Never dug professionally.  
Hundreds of graves were robbed here!

Author's picture  
June 2005.

## The Richard Slattery Gorget



Slattery Citico style gorget dug at Sproles in 1945. Now in NY museum.



Author's picture June 2005. Sproles site, North Fork Holston

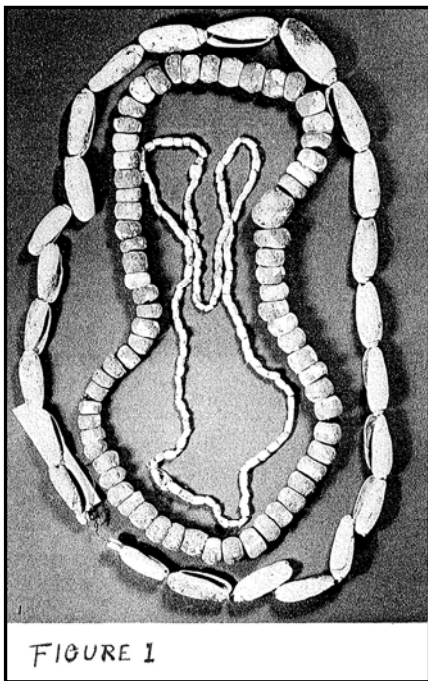
## Dick Slattery 1918-2012



He excavated a gorget in 1945 at the Sproles site on the Holston North Fork in Washington County

I wrote his biographical sketch. Jim Glanville, "Richard G. Slattery and the History of Archeology in Southwest Virginia." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia*, 62(2): 86-106, 2007.

## Shell Necklaces from Saltville



“Olivella shell beads, Saltville site;  
large discoidal shell beads, Broadford  
site; tubular bone beads, Saltville site.”

From the Robey Maiden collection

Ben McCary, "Additional Information on the  
Archaeology of the Saltville Area as Reported by  
Mr. Robey Maiden." *Quarterly Bulletin of the  
Archeological Society of Virginia*. Pp. 7-11,  
volume 9, issue 3, 1955.



## Two Smyth County Gorgets at Smithsonian/NMAI

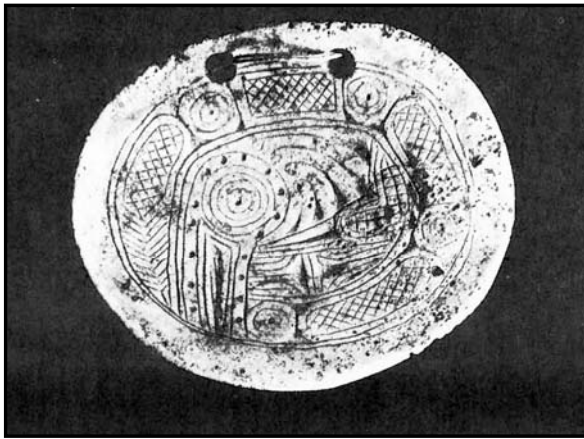


Left: Saltville Style engraved gorget from Saltville.  
Right: Citico Style engraved gorget from Broadford



Author's pictures April  
2007, Suitland, Maryland

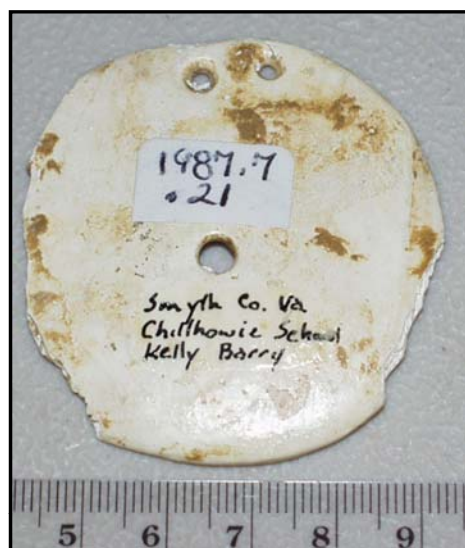
## Two Citico Style Gorgets From Broadford



Waldo Wedel. "Archeological Reconnaissance near Saltville, Virginia, in 1940." *Archeological Society of Virginia's Quarterly Bulletin*. 45(3): 114-122, 1990 [1951].



## The Chilhowie Saltville Style Gorget in Ellerbe, NC



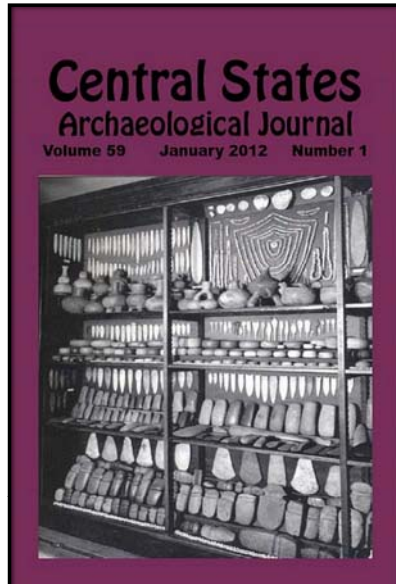
Author's pictures. Rankin Museum July 2007.

## Typical Relic Show

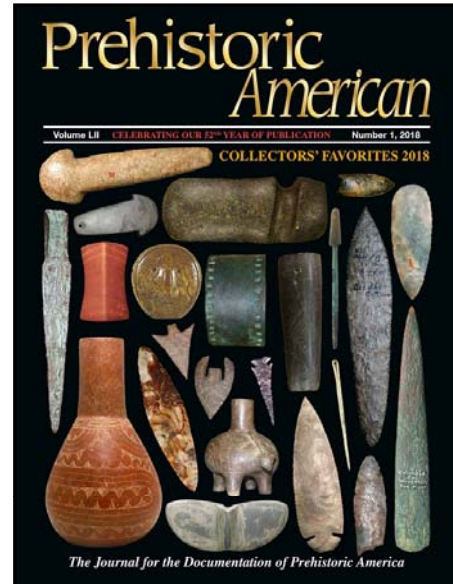


This is the 2006 Fletcher, NC, show. Such shows have a congenial family atmosphere. Author's picture.

## Examples of Relic Collectors' Literature



*Central States Archeological Journal*  
January 2012



*Prehistoric American*  
Issue 1, 2018

## Chilowie [sic] Turtle Gorget



Offered with a Certificate of Authenticity for \$2900 at the April 2006 Fletcher, NC, GIRS relic show. Author's picture

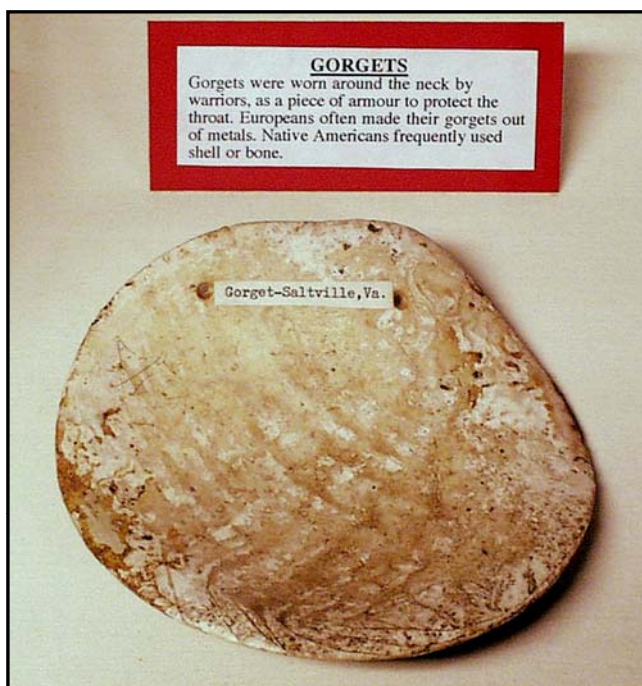
## The Bill Thompson Chilhowie Gorget



Author's picture. ASV meeting Virginia Beach, 2005



## Gorget Formerly on Display at Smithfield



Labeled: Gorget-Saltville, Va.  
No other information.

Legend on card wrong.

Author's picture August  
2004, Smithfield Plantation,  
Blacksburg, Virginia.

## Jon Muller at the Chilhowie High School Site



Author's picture.  
Chilhowie, 2005

Muller wrote a Harvard Ph.D. thesis about gorget styles and the book *Mississippian Political Economy*. He named the Saltville style of gorget.

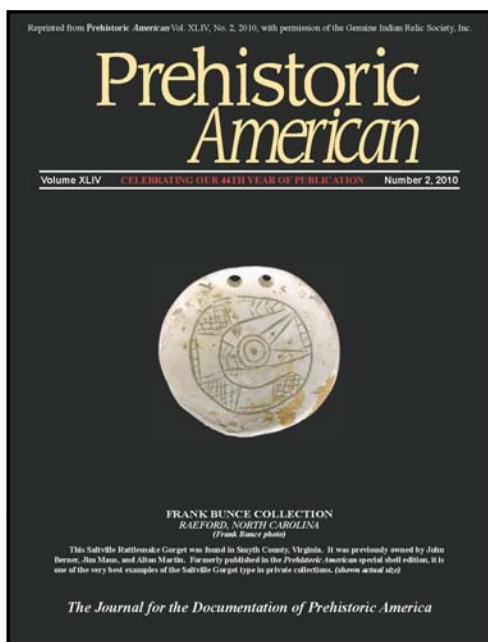
## Two Small Saltville Gorgets



Author's pictures. Photographed in June 2005 in the collection of the late Chub Arnold in his home in downtown Saltville.



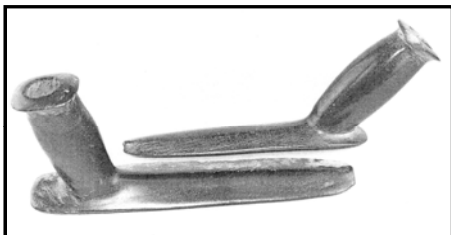
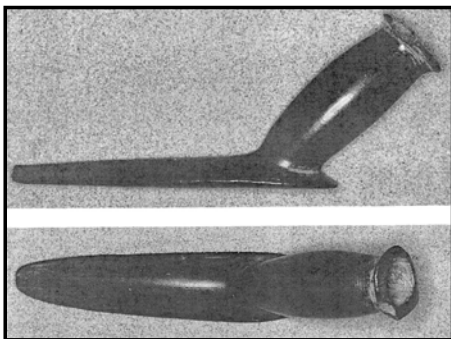
## My Article Gorget Review



Jim Glanville, “Engraved Marine Shell Gorgets: A Review.” *Prehistoric American*, 44(2): 3-13, 2010.

Online at <http://www.holstonia.net/files/EngravedGorgets.pdf>

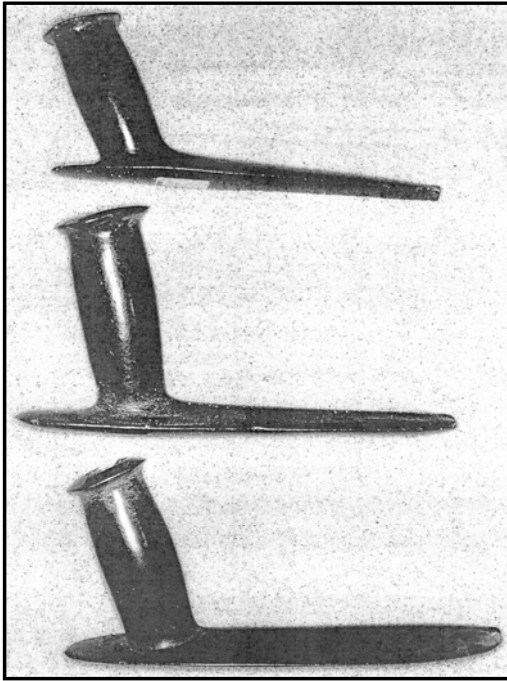
## Doug Heffinger's Two Chilhowie Pipes



Found circa 1965 under what is now the Chilhowie (Smyth County) exit of I-81. Passed through many private collections.

Hart, Gordon. *Hart's Prehistoric Pipe Rack, Volume #2*. Huntington, IN: Hart Publishers, Inc., 1999. Pages 110,117, 119.

## The Cornelius Site Pipes



Wayne Mann and Gordon Hart

Found circa 1980 just below the confluence of the Middle and South forks of the Holston in Washington County. Passed through many private collections.

Hart, Gordon. *Hart's Prehistoric Pipe Rack, Volume #2*. Huntington, IN: Hart Publishers, Inc., 1999. Pages 145, 144.

## Platform Pipe in the Tommy Beutell Collection



Formerly in various collections. Said to have been dug by Robey Maiden in a “vegetable garden in Saltville.”

Author’s picture June 2005  
Tuckasegee, NC

## Pipe From Rich Valley in Smyth County



Web picture

6½" Monitor Pipe came with Davis Certificate of Authenticity

Sold For \$4,000 by Old Barn Auction, Findlay Ohio, in 2007.

## Virginia Pipes in Smithsonian/NMAI Collection



The large pipe in the upper left was found by Robey Maiden in a cave behind a Saltville church and sold to George Gustav Heye.

Heye sent Maiden a plaster cast reproduction (next picture)



Author's picture April 2007, Suitland, Maryland.

## Plastercast of Maiden/Heye Pipe at Space Zoo



Author's picture May 2006,  
Sussex Co., NJ



## Smithsonian/NMAI Saltville Pipe

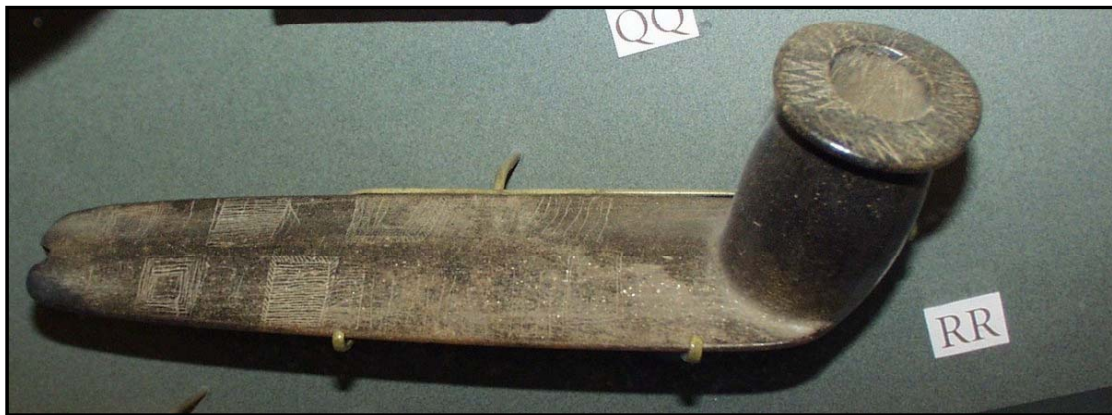


Probably “newly found” in 1934  
According to George West.

Author’s picture April 2007,  
Suitland, Maryland.



## Virginia Historical Society Platform Pipe

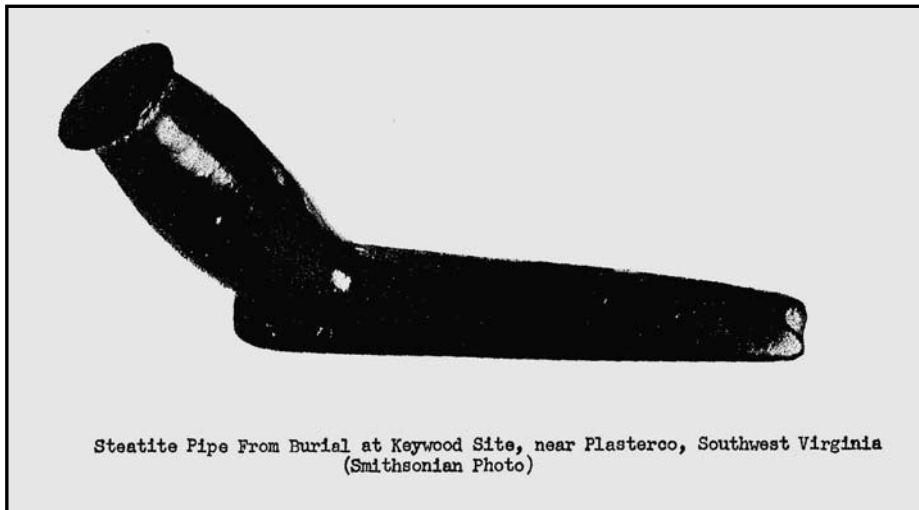


RR **Ceremonial Pipe** One of the finest examples of a stone ceremonial pipe found in Virginia, this pipe is covered with incised chevrons and geometric designs.

Origin not stated.

Author's picture April 2007,  
Richmond, Virginia.

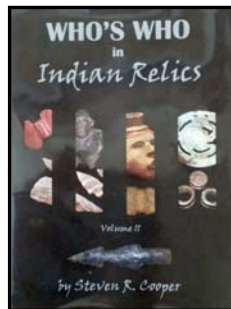
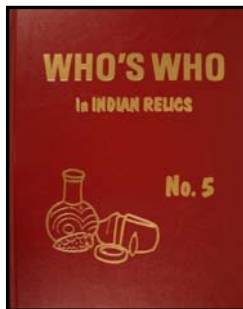
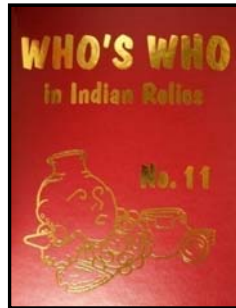
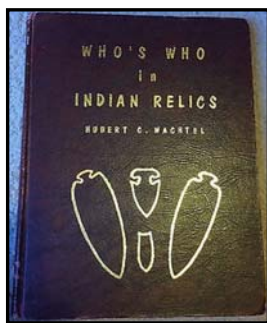
## Pipe from Keywood Site



The Keywood site is about a mile south of Saltville in Washington County  
In Robey Maiden Collection, seen and photographed by Waldo Wedel in 1940.

*Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia* vol. 5, issue 2 page 2, 1951.

## Who's Who In Indian Relics



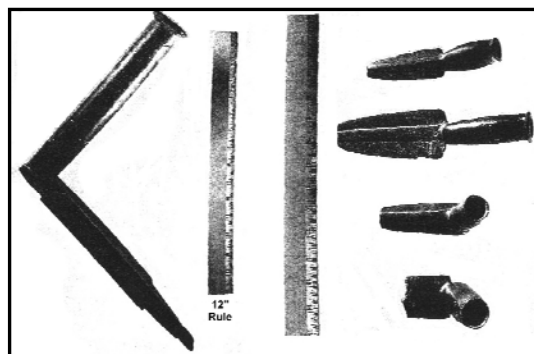
- 11 volumes
- Published irregularly 1960-2017
- Typically 50-100 entries
- Collectors with their collections
- Collectors paid to be included

## The John Orr Collection

Gorgets and other shell objects

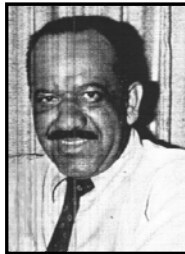


Platform Pipes



From *Who's Who in Indian Relics* volume 2 (1968). Orr was Bristol-based and drove a bulk milk collecting truck. Fate of collection unknown.

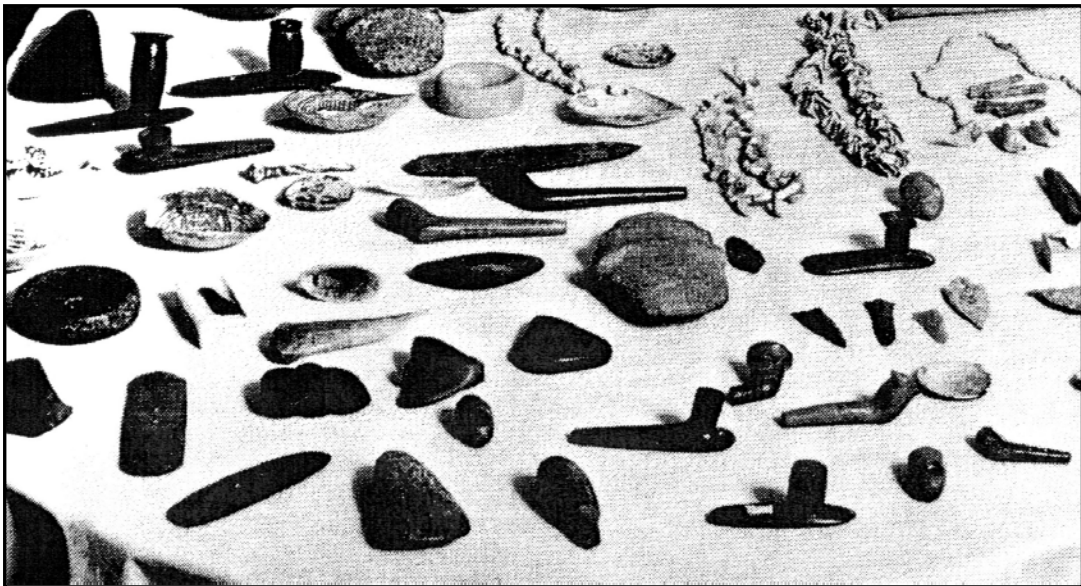
## The Fred Sharpe Collection



Author's picture 2008

On left from *Who's Who In Indian Relics volume 3*, (1972). Sharpe ran a bar/restaurant in Marion. Collection now owned by daughter and seen by me.

## The Charlie Burnette Collection



From *Who's Who In Indian Relics volume 3*, (1972). Burnette is a retired fire fighter. The collection comes almost entirely from Smyth and Washington Counties. Note platform pipes and gorgets.



## Views of Charlie Burnette's Collection



Author has pictures of more than 50 gorgets from this collection.



Author's pictures 2005 & 2008, Mechanicsville, Virginia.

## Smyth County Copper Bead and Pipe



From the Chilhowie High School site

Items in Charlie Burnette Collection.



From Grinstead Cave near Chilhowie

Author's pictures 2008,  
Mechanicsville, Virginia.



## Clarence Maiden and Charlie Burnette



Undated, circa 1985?

Author's picture of a picture  
2008, Mechanicsville, Virginia.  
Courtesy Charlie Burnette.

## Holston Shell from the Tommy Beutell Collection



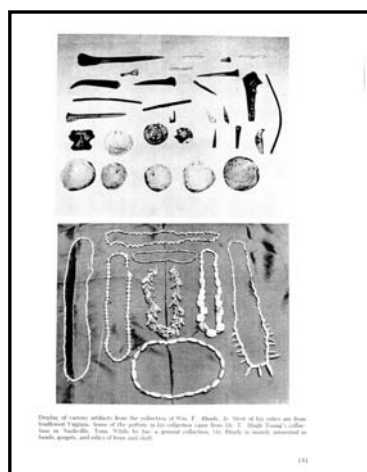
Tommy Beutell of Tuckaseegee, NC, is a wealthy Indian relic collector currently (2018) in the process of selling his collection. I photographed these Virginia shell artifacts in his collection in June 2005. Gorgets sell for thousands of dollars.

## Gorgets from the Dr. C. C. Hatfield Collection



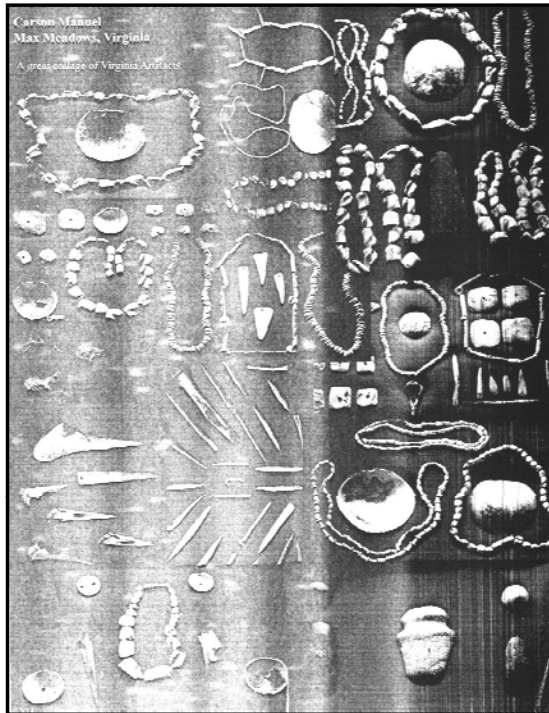
Dr. C. C. Hatfield (1908-1993) was a many-year Saltville physician. He sometimes accepted Indian relics in payment for his services. Photographed in Abingdon when they were exhibited by his son in 2005. **Several of these gorgets are probably fakes.**

## The William Rhudy Collection



Two on left from *Who's Who in Indian Relics*, volume 2, (1968). I visited Rhudy in 2007 in Elk Creek (Grayson County) and took photographs including the one on the right. Note the gorgets. Collection now curated by his daughter

## The Carson Manuel Collection of SW Virginia Mississippian Objects



From *Who's Who in Indian  
Relics*, volume 9, 1996

The late Carson Manuel lived  
at Max Meadows in Wythe  
County. He never responded to  
my many attempts to contact  
him. Collection apparently  
now sold.

## Pipes in the Tony Adams Collection



Adams lives in Sugar Grove (Smyth County). His collection is intact and active. Author's picture, 2005.



## Pat Bass and Her Collection



Newspaper clippings circa 1970 of Pat Bass of Marion. Many of her items went to the Saltville museum.



## Museum of the Middle Appalachians in Saltville



The Saltville museum displays many shell bead necklaces and gorgets from the collection of the late Pat Bass of Marion (Smyth County). A rare public collection.

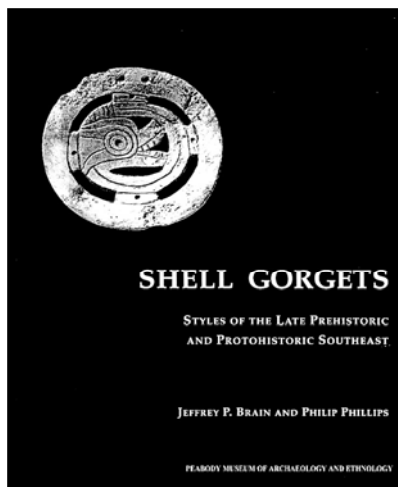
Author's pictures.

## Ethel Brown and Her Collection



Brown (1909-2008) was a nurse and cotton farmer in Wythe County (adjacent to Smyth). Fate of her collection unknown.

## Engraved Marine Shell Gorget Counts



This work lists 34 Virginia engraved marine shell gorgets

By 2010 I could document about 150

Today my count approaches 300

Peabody Museum Press, 1996

## Conclusions

- The incredible array of Mississippian gorgets and platform pipes from Smyth and Washington counties is unmatched anywhere else in Virginia.
- Any chance of us getting a proper archeology of Holstonia has long gone. But for the sake of the Yuchi (and for Virginia history) the story must be reconstructed to the extent that it can be.



End