

Ancient Artifacts Unearthed In Southpoint

On a warm day in February this year Leonard and Karen Shelor were planting a bush behind their home on Southpoint Lane when an amazing discovery of ancient artifacts was made. Leonard had just dug a hole two feet in diameter and about a foot deep and was in the process of back-filling dirt around the new bush when he and Karen noticed some odd shaped rocks mixed in with the red clay. They first thought they were arrowheads due to their shape and by the way the edges had been flaked.



Once they realized that they had found something very unusual, the bush was removed from the hole and all the loose dirt was checked a handful at a time. It seemed that each handful revealed one or more of the objects. All total, 65 of the artifacts were found. They are shown in a circle in the picture to the left.

With the help of neighbor David Ford and his reference books, it was surmised that the points were most likely 'Guilford Points'. Guilford Points were fashioned by ancient people who inhabited this area 5,000-7,000 years ago and pre-dated bows and arrows. They were projectile points used for tips on lances and spears. What was found was a 'cache' of these points - an extremely rare find.

The Shelors kept their discovery low key until they better understood state and federal laws concerning artifacts. They were reassured that since the objects were found on private property the government had no claim to them or right to intervene.



On Easter Sunday the Shelor's children couldn't resist doing a little digging on the edge of the original hole. They came up with nine more points and the large rock in the picture shown here. The rock was flat with a fairly sharp rounded edge and is thought to be a scraper or digging tool.

The artifacts were shown to the director of the Town Creek Indian Mound Center in Mt. Gilead. It was recommended that Dr. Randy Daniel, Anthropologist at East Carolina University be informed of the find. Dr. Daniel is a foremost authority on the Uwharrie Mountains, particularly Morrow Mountain near Badin, NC. He is also an authority on the Hardaway Site at the Badin Lake dam. The Hardaway Site is on the national registry of historical places and is the source of over a million and a half artifacts discovered when the dam for Badin Lake was being built in the 1920's. The Hardaway site was excavated on and off for almost 50 years by archaeologists. Those artifacts, originally owned by Alcoa have been donated to the University of NC at Chapel Hill.

Dr. Daniel (Randy) has a master's degree in Archaeology and doctorate from UNC in Anthropology. He is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at East Carolina University and is the author of a book 'Hardaway Revisited'. He recently spoke at the Morrow Mountain Visitor's Center on the history of the region and stressed how important Morrow Mountain and its supply of a type of rock called 'rhyolite' were to the early people. Rhyolite was the primary raw material for tools and weapons for these early hunter gatherers for thousands of years. They literally depended on it for their survival. The rock was valued by these people because of its quality

and predictable way in which it would chip when struck. The rock was quarried by generations of the early people until it was exhausted. Rhyolite is only found in this region in the Uwharrie Mountains in a range running from Morrow Mountain to Asheboro, NC. The Uwharrie Mountains are thought to have been the tallest in North America millions of years ago, with elevations reaching 20,000 feet. Today they're barely 1000 feet due to erosion.

Dr. Daniel visited the Shelor home on Monday, May 19 to look at their discovery. He was very impressed with the points and verified that they were made from Morrow Mountain rhyolite. He took many pictures and was puzzled by exactly which type they were. The points resemble Guilford Points in shape, but are smaller than typical Guilfords. Dr. Daniel said that when he was doing his doctorate work at UNC he studied over 50,000 points of various types and that those found at the Shelor home do not exactly look familiar to him. So, the jury is still out on the exact identification of the find.

Dr. Daniel said the large flat stone found by the kids is definitely a tool, most likely a digging tool. Probably the person who dug the hole to cache the points left the digging tool in the same hole and covered the hole with dirt and some type marker.

In surveying the Shelor property and the adjacent area it's conceivable that there might have been a campsite there. There's a spring running down the hollow beside the Shelor home and the lay of the land is conducive to a campsite. If there was a campsite then other artifacts may be present. The hunter-gatherers traveled in groups of 20-50 and would move around often, following the food supply. Their primary interest was finding enough food to survive. Once the food was exhausted they'd move on.

Dr. Daniel wants to study the points found on the Shelor site and conduct a small dig in the vicinity of where they were found. Once the dig is complete all their findings will be photographed, cataloged and a paper written by one of their graduate students for publication to the archaeology world. The dig is currently scheduled for Saturday and Sunday October 11 and 12. Dr. Daniel and three ECU students will participate.

The Shelors are more than happy to show the points to anyone having an interest. The unanswered question is 'What else is just beneath the surface?'

If you have interest you can do internet searches on 'Morrow Mountain Badin NC', 'Hardaway Site Badin NC', 'Guilford People', 'Projectile Point Caches', 'Rhyolite' and 'Middle Archaic People'.