

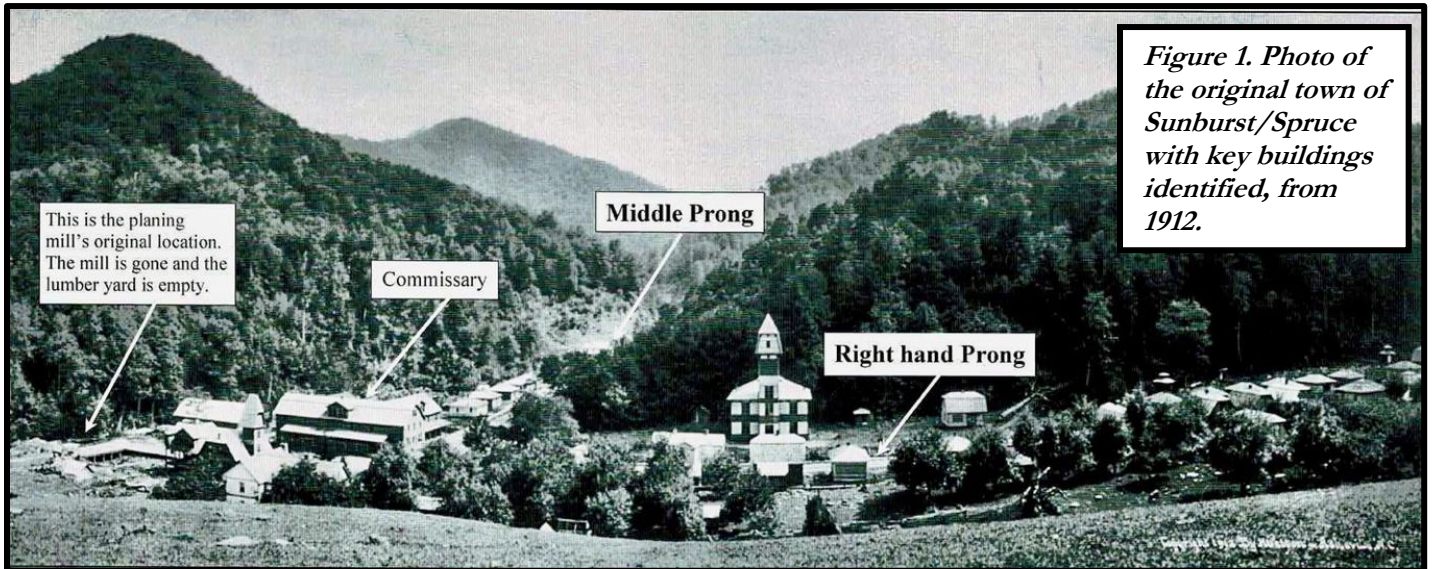
North Carolina
Archaeological Society

Newsletter

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Research Laboratories of Archaeology, Campus Box 3120, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120

Society Website: <http://www.ncarchsociety.org>



RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AT A UNIQUE HISTORIC TOWNSITE IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Mary Noel

(Noel Archaeological Consultants)

In 2022, Noel Archaeological Consultants contracted with the Pisgah National Forest to locate archaeological sites on a proposed timber sale area in Haywood County, NC (34 miles southeast of Asheville). One of the sites identified was the location of the town of Sunburst/Spruce, NC (**Figure 1**). The unique nature and history of the townsite, along with the available data, make it an ideal subject for future archaeological excavation and research.

Background/History

The town of Sunburst was a planned company town owned by the Sunburst Timber Company (later Champion Lumber). Town construction began in 1906, with the mills in full production by 1908. Its architect was Eli Potter; prior to his time at Sunburst, he had helped design buildings for the Biltmore Estate, and after Sunburst, he designed Ravensford in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and became one of its first rangers. The town had more than 50 structures, including three mills, a school, a church, a hotel, a general store, workers' houses and several boarding houses (**Figure 2**). The 1910 census recorded 160 individuals living on the Main Street of Sunburst – this number rises to 217 if adjacent structures just outside of town are counted. An abandoned cemetery sits on a hill above the town.

Due to the town's remote location and right-of-way issues, a planned railroad line into Sunburst was never completed. The Sunburst mills were closed in 1910 and moved six miles downstream to the "new" town of Sunburst – site of the present Lake Logan. At this time, the original community was renamed Spruce. After cutting



Figure 2. The boarding house for single men, taken in 1910.



ties with Biltmore, forester Carl Schenck moved his summer forestry school to Spruce for four seasons, 1910-1913. Most of the surviving town maps and photos of Spruce were done by his forestry students (**Figure 3**).

Cinders thrown from a passing locomotive burned a significant part of the town in 1914, but timber employees and their families continued to live there. The 1920 census recorded 237 residents of Spruce, and a 1922 map still shows multiple structures. When a catastrophic 1923 fire destroyed the mill at the second Sunburst – Champion consolidated their operations further downstream in Canton. It was about this time that Spruce residents were told to leave and all buildings in the town were demolished. The 1930 census does not record Spruce as existing. The Spruce townsite and thousands of adjacent acres were sold to the US Forest Service by the timber company in 1935.

Current Condition

The Sunburst/Spruce townsite location currently shows no obvious signs of its past habitation. The primary surviving indicator of the townsite's location are non-native flowers and bushes that were planted during its occupation. Modern roads and trails do not run through the townsite (but are close enough for easy access). No subsequent occupation occurred at the site. Subsurface materials from the time of town occupation (like privies and trash dumps) appear to be intact.

Research Opportunities

The unique aspects of this site that make it an ideal candidate for archaeological research (a field school, thesis or dissertation topic):

- The known, short-term occupation of Sunburst/Spruce makes it possible to tie artifacts and features to a specific, limited time period (about 17 years).
- A town map from 1910 identifies the locations of many specific structures. Photos from that date also show the architectural styles and identities of many of the buildings.
- The site does not appear to have been occupied or disturbed after the town demolition.
- Available census records (1910 and 1920) identify the specific occupations and ethnic and gender make-up of town residents. The isolation of the townsite from other settlements would make it possible to tie data directly to artifacts and features that could be excavated at the townsite.

The US Forest Service campground, Sunburst, is very near the site and could provide camping options.

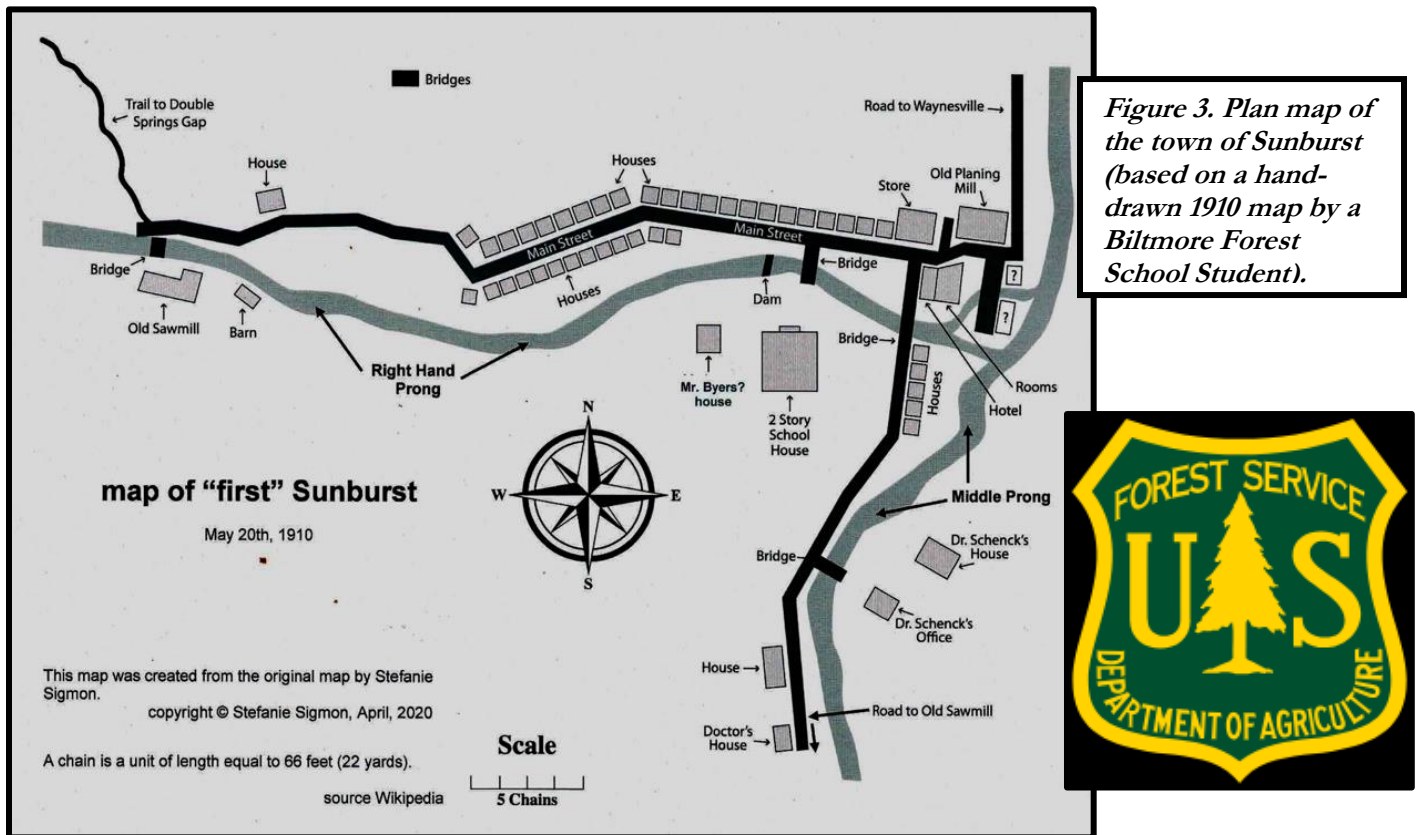


Figure 3. Plan map of the town of Sunburst (based on a hand-drawn 1910 map by a Biltmore Forest School Student).



References:

- 1910 and 1920 US Census for Haywood County, NC
- Bethel Rural Community Organization's (BRCO) Historical Committee Website: Bethel Cemeteries Churchyards and Graveyards.
- Haywood County Soil Map, 1922 (NC Historic Map Collection).
- *If Rails Could Talk... Logging the North Carolina Great Balsams, Volume 2, Sunburst and Champion Fibre*, Second edition, 2021. Ronald Sullivan and Gerald Ledford.
- *Legends, Tales & History of Cold Mountain*, Pigeon Valley Heritage Collection, Book 4, 2008.
- Personal Communications with Carroll Jones, Evelyn Coltman, Lewis Oats, Gerald Ledford and Scott Shumate, 2022.
- *Sunburst and Other Logging Operations in the Bethel and Cold Mountain Regions*, BRCO DVD, 2017.

OPPORTUNITIES –

- [The Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora \(ASWAD\)](#) has extended their 2025 Conference call for papers - all proposals should be submitted by **December 6, 2024**. Acceptances will be issued on a rolling basis. They encourage multidisciplinary panels defined by diversity across identity markers, including but not limited to age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, academic rank, language, and geographies among others. More info here: [\[LINK\]](#)
- [The International Gullah Geechee and African Diaspora Conference](#) will be held at Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC) on February 20-22, 2025. The conference theme is Reconstruction Through the Lens of Gullah Geechee and Communities within the African Diaspora. The mission of the IGGAD conference is to center a community-based participatory model. We recognize the importance of cultural practitioners and community participation to the success of the conference. To this end, the last day of our conference is a public-facing community day held in the Historic city of Conway, South Carolina. Gullah Geechee Community Day will combine workshops, performances, project presentations, and lectures.

HELENE'S IMPACT TO THE EXPLORING JOARA FOUNDATION

Mike Carpenter (NCAS BOD Member & EJJF Volunteer)

Berry Site:

- Although under water during the flood, the Berry Site (Fort San Juan and the native village of Joara) was not significantly impacted by hurricane Helene. A new layer of river sand was deposited on parts of the field. Wheelbarrows, sawhorses, and a portable toilet were relocated, and a large piece of the plastic sheeting was torn, but there is no damage to the actual excavation area due to the storm. EJJF public Dig Days resumed October 26, 2024.



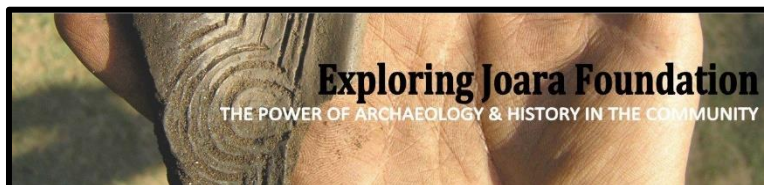
Living History Village at Catawba Meadows:

- There is significant damage to both the Catawba Meadows Park and to EJJF's Living History Village (LHV). The park itself is heavily damaged and closed indefinitely. Public access to the park and to the LHV is denied for the foreseeable future. We were authorized to make a quick inspection of the Living History Village. Thankfully, there were no artifacts stored at the LHV.
- We anticipate that one of the reconstructed native structures is a total loss and there was minimal damage to a second structure.
- The raised-bed garden is destroyed. Six of the eight wooden beds have washed downstream, and the irrigation system is damaged.
- Most of the kiosks have washed downstream. Only one remains in place.
- The palisade surrounding the LHV is virtually gone.
- The EJJF shed was moved downstream and is at an unsafe angle. The condition of its contents (tables, chairs, hand tools, pop-up tents, etc.) is unknown.



Wall Center for Archaeological Research:

- The Wall Center was damaged by the wind-driven rain. Some shingles were blown off; water infiltration damaged the floor tiles downstairs, and the veneer of an external door was blown off. The insurance adjuster has inspected the building, and we are waiting for his report. There is no known damage to any artifacts or educational supplies and equipment.





LET'S TALK TURKEY... Please consider renewing your membership today to remain current with the Society's latest news and events. Membership types include: Student (\$10), Regular (\$15), Family (\$20), Sustaining (\$25), Institution ((\$25), and Life (\$500). Please submit your dues payment to: North Carolina Archaeological Society c/o Mary Beth Fitts, Research Laboratories of Archaeology, UNC-Chapel Hill, 108 Alumni Building, CB #3120, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120. If you wish, you may also renew your membership online at <http://www.ncarchsociety.org/membershipoptions>.

QUOTED – “A house without books is like a room without windows.”
- from my fortune cookie the other night (also your lucky numbers are 16, 5, 13, 7, 36, and 28)



NEW NCAS BOARD MEMBERS
Please extend a warm welcome to the society's newest board members: **Casey Kirby (President-Elect)**, **Sami Taylor (At-Large)**, and **Stephen Atkinson (At-Large)**. We would also like to offer our appreciation to not only **Jane Eastman**, **Kelsey Schmitz**, and **Kelly Darden** for their service to the NCAS BOD but also **Linda Carnes-McNaughton** for her continued and unparalleled efforts as our organization's Secretary.

Congratulations, Cameron!
For his paper, “The Political Economy of a Trading Post: ‘Feasting’ at the Musgrove Cowpens (9Ch37),” Cameron Walker (University of Maryland) was awarded the Judith G. Knight Student Paper Book Prize at SEAC 2024 and, by doing so, also received one full-year (student) membership to NCAS, a set of recent past issues of our journal, and some very nice society swag.



GRANT-IN-AID PROGRAM



The North Carolina Archaeological Society (NCAS) invites applications for The Whitey Graham Award (WGA) in support of research pertaining to North Carolina archaeology. The WGA is underwritten by the NCAS Endowment Fund, which was established in 2001 from the proceeds of the sale of the “Blue Banks” property near Greenville. The sale took place largely through the efforts of then-president Robert Graham. We owe him our thanks for making these grants possible! Applicants must be members of the North Carolina Archaeological Society (exemptions for public educators, as defined below, will be considered) and must also meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. An applicant must be: (a) a graduate or undergraduate student actively pursuing a degree in archaeology or a related field; (b) an individual enrolled in an internship program with a museum, a state historic site, an archaeological park, or a Native American group (with state or federal recognition); (c) an avocational archaeologist who is a member of the North Carolina Archaeological Society and has over time demonstrated a concern for the protection or study of archaeological resources within the state (including working under the direction of professional archaeologists); or (d) a public educator (e.g., school teacher or museum personnel). Collaborations between educators are encouraged.
2. An individual must apply for the award with a proposal that states how the grant will aid in the individual’s research relevant to North Carolina archaeology. Each proposal must include (a) a statement of research design (up to 2 pages long), (b) a budget showing how grant funds will be spent in pursuing this research, (c) a curriculum vitae, and (d) a letter of support from a professional archaeological mentor or advisor. The advisor is expected to take an active role in overseeing and/or guiding the research to completion and should explicitly indicate a willingness to do so in the letter. Public educator applications include all of the above but can substitute the following for the research design statement above: (a) an explanation of the educational goals and methods or activities used to promote public awareness of archaeology in North Carolina (up to 2 pages long).
3. Each grant award will not exceed \$500. The budget may include any direct expense in support of the proposed research, except for wages paid to the grant’s recipient. Examples of allowable expenses include travel (fares, mileage, and per diem), supplies, and fees for specialized services (photography, radiocarbon dating, drafting, etc.). Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs or institutional overhead.
4. Selection criteria shall include but need not be limited to: (a) the quality of the proposed research, (b) the likelihood that the research can be successfully carried out in a timely manner, (c) the individual’s promise as a professional or avocational archaeologist, and (c) the degree to which the individual has contributed to the programs of the North Carolina Archaeological Society. Note that the committee reserves the right to make no award in any given year.
5. Normally, the term of the grant shall be for one year, subject to extension for an additional year. The recipient shall submit interim reports of progress and expenditures to the Committee’s chair at six-month intervals from the initial date of the grant. A final report is due within six months after the grant’s term ends. This final report must include a description of the project’s research results as well as a detailed summary of expenditures made under the grant. If asked, the recipient of the grant will present the results of his or her research at a meeting of the North Carolina Archaeological Society. Each recipient is also required to submit an article on the grant-supported research to the NCAS Newsletter or to the Society’s journal, *North Carolina Archaeology*. Grant recipients should acknowledge the North Carolina Archaeological Society in any printed, electronic, or graphic material produced through the grant and in announcements at any public meetings, classes, or events to which the grant gives rise, as follows: *This (publication, project, etc.) was produced in part by a grant from the North Carolina Archaeological Society.*

The next deadline for receipt of proposals is January 1, 2025. Awards will be announced by February 1, 2025. Email all materials to NCAS Grant-in-Aid Program co-chairs, Dr. Randy Daniel (danieli@ecu.edu) and Dr. David Moore (dmoore@warren-wilson.edu).

Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of Fort Fisher State Historic Site Visitor Center and New Underwater Archaeology Branch (UAB) Office

David Cranford (Assistant State Archaeologist, OSA)

On October 29th, 2024, the brand-new Fort Fisher Visitor Center and reconstructed earthworks were officially opened in a ribbon-cutting ceremony that brought together representatives from NC State Historic Sites, Office of State Archaeology, local historians, elected officials, members of the Lumbee Tribe as well as other Indigenous communities from across North Carolina, and others (**Photo 1**). This event marked the culmination of a decades-long project to improve the Fort Fisher facilities as well as expand the histories and stories that are presented about the site and those that are connected to it.

Also unveiled was the newly rebuilt segment of the Civil War earthworks, a portion of which had been bulldozed to make way for a WWII airstrip. The current reconstruction includes a walk-through sallyport, traverse/tunnel, and bombproof/magazine (**Photo 2**). These fortification reconstructions were directly informed by recent ground penetrating radar surveys by OSA staff and subsequent excavations carried out by archaeological consulting firms Commonwealth Heritage Group and New South Associates.

This event also marked the official opening of the new Underwater Archaeology Branch office, located across the parking lot from Fort Fisher. Current and former UAB staff (**Photo 3 – Stephen Atkinson (L) and Nathan Henry (R)**) were on-hand to provide tours of the new facilities, which include offices, library, collection space, a small conservation lab, dive locker, and boat storage garage (**Photo 4**).



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

Getcha somethin' real nice for Christmas

Although we don't carry any dickies or ushankas, the NCAS has you covered if you need a new trucker hat or a hoodie. Head over to the society's [Merchandise](#) section or email our "Merchandise Czar" Mr. Tom Beaman (tombeamanjr@gmail.com) just in case you have some unexpected guests.



NCAS Board

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Newsletter Editor: Paul J. Mohler

(pjmohler@ncdot.gov)

At-Large Members: Stephen Atkinson, Mike Carpenter, Melissa McKay, Emily Sussman, and Sami Taylor

NCAS Newsletter

Publication Schedule

All NCAS members should submit articles and news items to Paul J. Mohler (pjmohler@ncdot.gov) for inclusion in the Newsletter. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions:

Winter Issue – January 31

Summer Issue – July 31

Spring Issue – April 30

Fall Issue – October 31

mark  your **Calendar**

**Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA)
Annual Conference**

New Orleans, LA (January 8-11, 2025)

(<https://sha.org/conferences/>)

Mid-Atlantic Archaeology Conference

Gettysburg, PA (March 19-23, 2025)

[2025 Conference Details](#)

CFP Deadline – December 15, 2024

[MAAC 2025 Call for Papers Draft2.docx](#)

Society for American Archaeology (SAA)

90th Annual Meeting

Denver, CO (April 23-27, 2025)

<https://www.saa.org/annual-meeting>

NC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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