

**North Carolina
Archaeological Society**

N e w s l e t t e r

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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>

STEVE DAVIS RETIRES, WITH A LASTING LEGACY

Vin Steponaitis (UNC-Chapel Hill)

On June 30, 2022, my colleague and fellow Society member R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr. retired after nearly 40 years of service at UNC-Chapel Hill. Arguably, no living archaeologist has done more to advance knowledge of our state's archaeology than Steve.

Steve grew up in Charlotte, attended UNC as an undergraduate in the early 1970s, and then, after graduate studies at Calgary and Tennessee and a brief stint working in West Virginia, he returned to Chapel Hill in 1983 to accept a job in UNC's Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA). He started as a staff archaeologist, and in 2000 was named the RLA's associate director, a title he held until retirement. The upshot is that he spent most of his adult years at Carolina, and throughout that time showed a deep commitment to North Carolina archaeology, which he has demonstrated in many ways — as a steward of our state's heritage, a researcher, an editor, and a teacher. Let me give a few examples of his extraordinary service in each of these areas.



Steve grew up in Charlotte, attended UNC as an undergraduate in the early 1970s, and then, after graduate studies at Calgary and Tennessee and a brief stint working in West Virginia, he returned to Chapel Hill in 1983 to accept a job in UNC's Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA). He started as a staff archaeologist, and in 2000 was named the RLA's associate director, a title he held until retirement. The upshot is that he spent most of his adult years at Carolina, and throughout that time showed a deep commitment to North Carolina archaeology, which he has demonstrated in many ways — as a steward of our state's heritage, a researcher, an editor, and a teacher. Let me give a few examples of his extraordinary service in each of these areas.

As most Society members know, the RLA is home to the North Carolina Archaeological Collection — the preeminent archaeological archive in the state, with more than 8 million objects, 60 thousand photographs, and hundreds of linear feet of paper records that pertain to these items. From the time he started working here, Steve was the primary caretaker and curator of this irreplaceable archive, which documents the human history of this state going back more than 12 thousand years. In 1983, when Steve arrived, the collection was stored in decrepit boxes stacked in an old warehouse in Durham with minimal security, no air conditioning or heat, and difficult access.



Today, the collection resides in a secure repository, with movable shelving, precise climate control, and archival boxes, and can be searched online from anywhere in the world. Moreover, the entire photographic collection has been scanned and placed in the Carolina Digital Repository. This transformation could not have happened without Steve's extraordinary vision, dedication, and skill. When I arrived in 1988, Steve had already acquired a scanner with primitive OCR capabilities and was in the process of scanning the collection's catalog in order to create a database that could be used on an IBM PC. This database took two decades of persistent effort to build, and it eventually morphed into the state-of-the-art search tool we have



today. Similarly, the collection's journey from Durham to its present location required two major moves, each of which was a major logistical undertaking. Steve planned and executed these moves with amazing skill, never compromising the safety of the objects and the physical integrity of the collection.

Steve's familiarity with and care for the collection has always been rooted in his scholarly work. Without question, he is widely regarded as one of the preeminent experts in the archaeology of North Carolina, particularly the Piedmont, where most of his research and writing has been focused. He has published dozens of articles, book

chapters, and technical reports, as well as a number of important monographs. They are far too numerous to catalog here, but I can highlight two of special note: In 1998, he was the principal author of *Excavating Occaneechi Town*, published by UNC Press, which was one of the very first electronic monographs in archaeology and won the PSP Electronic Product Award from the American Association of Publishers. And in 1999, he co-authored a book called *Time Before History*, also published by UNC Press, which still remains the most comprehensive description of this state's ancient American Indian cultures as seen through archaeology.

Steve's scholarship, while widely read by academics, has never been confined to the "ivory tower." Rather, public outreach and engagement have always been central to his work. He is routinely asked to speak at local historical societies and libraries, to help museums with exhibits, to identify artifacts, and to give tours of UNC's archaeological collections and labs. All of these things he does cheerfully, thereby building a tremendous amount of good will across the state. His scholarly work and support were also central to the Occaneechi tribe's quest for state recognition, which they achieved in 2002.



His engagement with public is also evident in his involvement with the North Carolina Archaeological Society. Steve has been a leader in this organization since 1983 and served for much of that time as editor of the Society's journal, *North Carolina Archaeology*. His work with the journal — soliciting papers, working with authors, copy-editing, and single-handedly bringing each issue to print — was not glamorous, but was extremely important not only in disseminating information on the state's archaeology, but also in forging a broader community of people across the state who are interested in archaeology and site preservation. Steve also served for three years as the elected editor of *Southeastern Archaeology*, one of the most important regional archaeology journals in the U.S.



Last, but not least, it is important to recognize Steve's contributions as a teacher. He is widely known as a superb field archaeologist who has trained generations of UNC undergraduate and graduate students in the intricacies of excavation techniques, principally through UNC's summer

field schools. Many of these students went on to become prominent archaeologists in their own right and are continuing to use and pass along what they learned from him. Steve has also helped and mentored many graduate students as they've written their dissertations. Some years back, when the Anthropology Department circulated a list of doctoral committees for its students, I noted with interest that Steve, as a staff employee (albeit with a secondary faculty appointment), was serving on more doctoral committees than most of the tenured professors in the department!



Throughout his career, and long before the “digital humanities” became popular, Steve was an innovator in the adoption of digital technologies in archaeology. For example, he began working with digital photography and image editing back in the mid-1990s, when a six megapixel camera cost \$25,000! He learned the techniques himself, then trained our graduate students in using them, which gave these students a tremendous boost as they entered the job market in subsequent years. The expertise he developed also led directly to the publication of *Excavating Occaneechi Town*. More recently, he has been a pioneer in adopting the techniques of digital 3D modeling of artifacts and excavations.

The one consistent thread throughout his career, and that runs through every activity and accomplishment I've described, is *service*. It's therefore not surprising that he received the C. Knox Massey Distinguished Service Award from UNC in 2020. Steve dedicated his career to the advancement of North Carolina archaeology, as well as to helping his colleagues and students thrive. To use a sports analogy, he's been like a teammate who makes everyone around him better. And he's done all this with grace, humility, and good humor. I consider it a privilege to have worked with him for more than 30 years as a UNC colleague — and, like many of us, I look forward to working with him for many more years in his retirement!

ANCIENT NORTH CAROLINIANS

A VIRTUAL MUSEUM OF NORTH CAROLINA ARCHAEOLOGY

DIGITAL SPOTLIGHT:

[Ancient North Carolinians \(unc.edu\)](https://www.unc.edu/ancientnorthcarolinians)

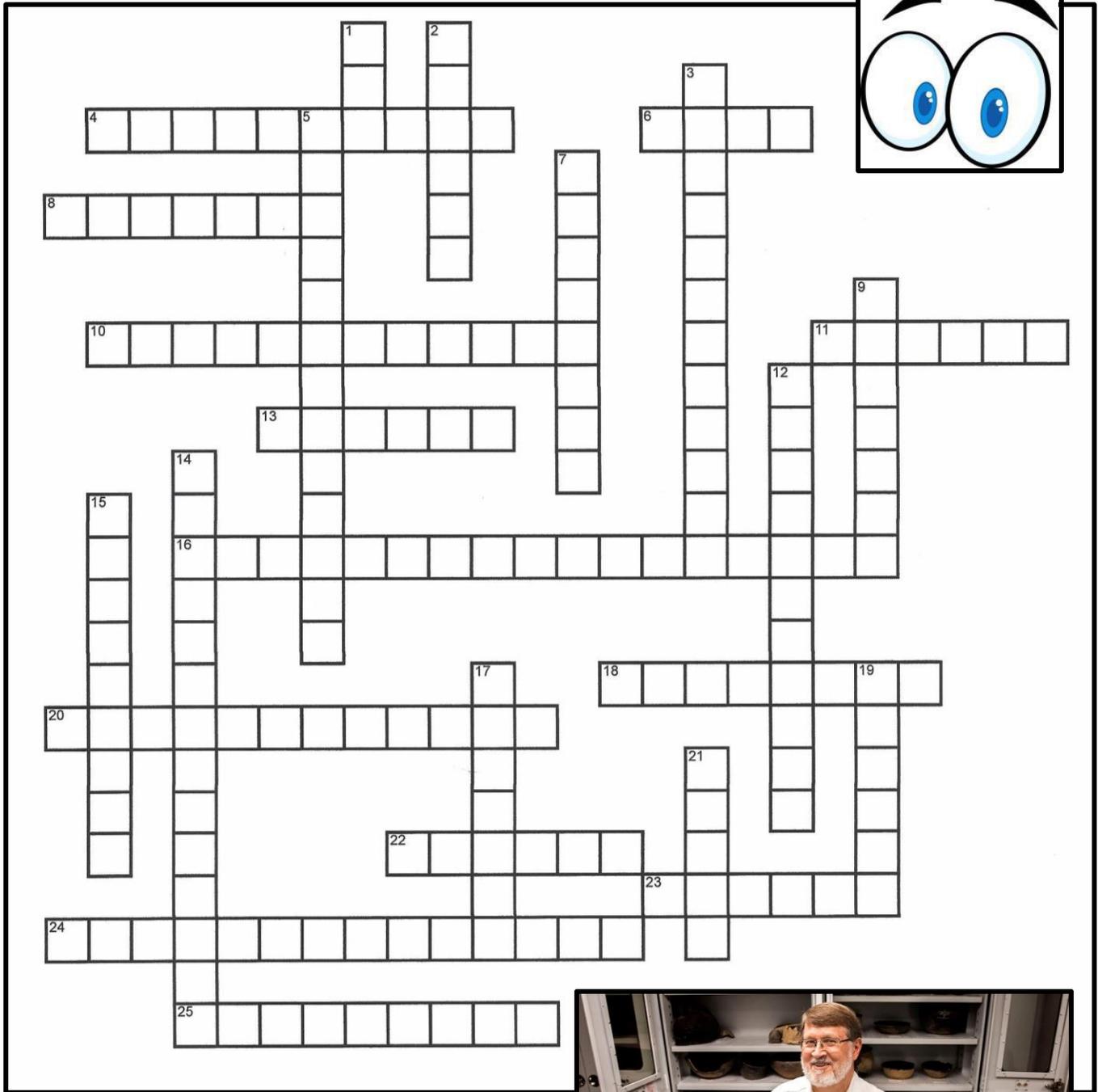
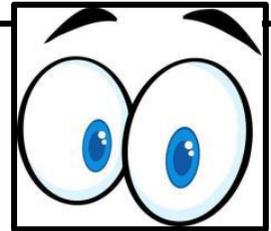
People have lived in North Carolina for at least 15,000 years. This site tells the story of who these people were, how they lived, and who they are today. *Ancient North Carolinians* is a project of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Its creation was made possible by the generous support of the C. Felix Harvey family (through a Harvey Award at UNC-Chapel Hill) and a grant from the Kenan Creative Collaboratory. Other organizations that provided key support are the N.C. Archaeological Council, the N.C. Archaeological Society, the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs, UNC-Chapel Hill's American Indian Center, UNC Libraries, and the Office of Arts and Sciences Information Services (OASIS) at UNC-Chapel Hill.



“A GATHERING SPOT” – UNC Archaeologist Steve Davis explains the social significance of the Hardaway site (Click picture for video [01:19]).

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW STEVE?

It is difficult for any professional or avocational archaeologist to study or practice archaeology in North Carolina without knowing the work of Steve Davis. You may know him from his litany of scholarly works, service to the NCAS or other professional organizations, as collections manager of the Research Labs at UNC, or if you were fortunate, worked with him on one of his field projects. He has truly been one of the guiding lights in our chosen discipline. But the real question is, "How Well Do You Know Steve"?

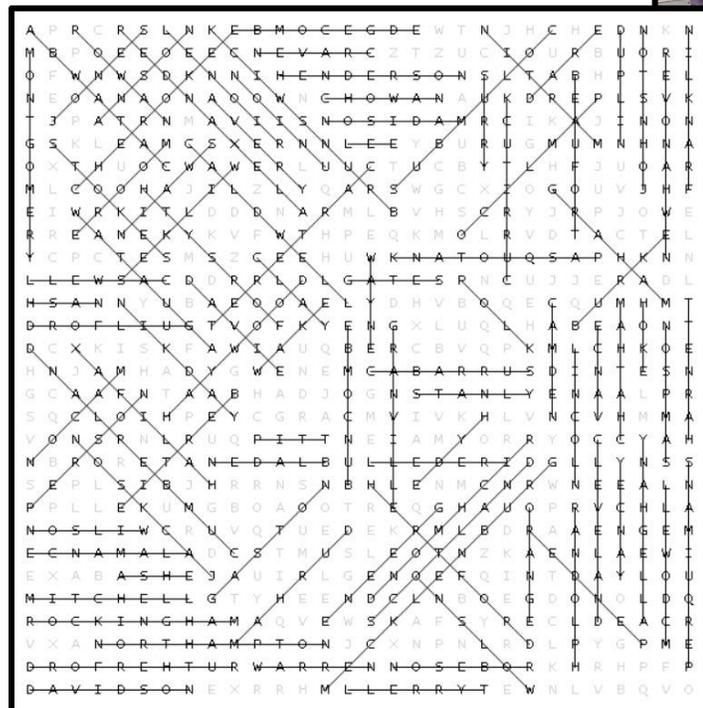
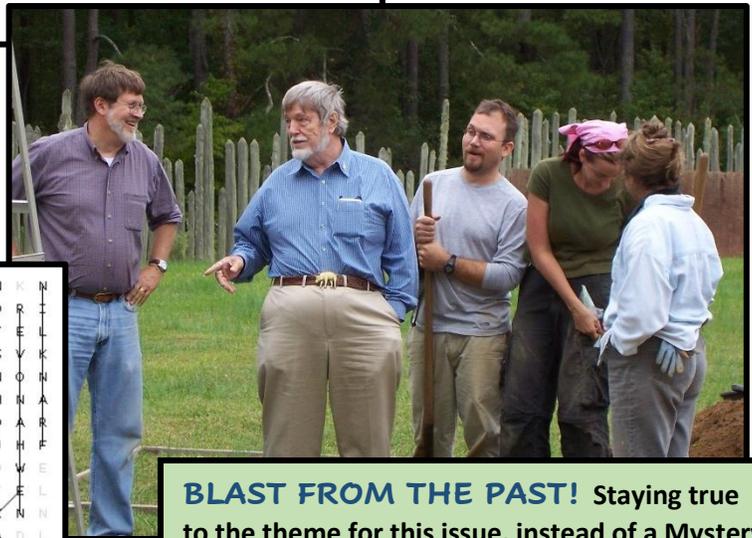
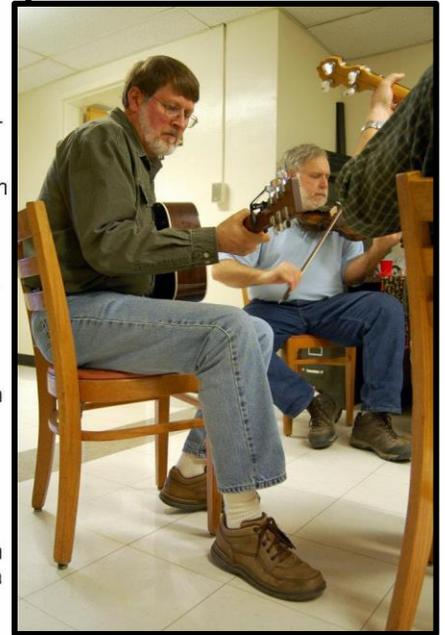


Across

- 4 Steve achieved this rank in the Boy Scouts of America when he was 14 years old
- 6 Steve has been very active in this regional society for many years
- 8 Steve served as a project director under Jefferson Chapman for this notable archaeology project
- 10 For his contributions, Steve was awarded as a member of this order, UNC's oldest and highest honor society in 2017.
- 11 Steve also received this award for outstanding service to UNC in 2020
- 13 Steve's Wife
- 16 Steve was co-author of this seminal book on North Carolina prehistory
- 18 Steve was not an only child. He has several of these.
- 20 The "R.P." in R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr.
- 22 Steve consistently served as this position for the NCAS from 1994 until 2019
- 23 Steve's grandson
- 24 The site in Tennessee that was the focus of Steve's M.A. thesis
- 25 The Lower Little River Valley in this state was the region in which Steve's Ph.D. focused on Native stability and change.

Down

- 1 Steve graduated with a BA degree in Anthropology from here in 1974
- 2 Steve's oldest daughter
- 3 Steve joined this center of archaeology-- then of anthropology-- in 1983
- 5 Steve has been involved in two long term field projects. This one focused on the sites in the north-central Piedmont of North Carolina from 1983 until 2002.
- 7 Steve has helped shepherd several generations of these into professional colleagues
- 9 Steve earned an MA in Archaeology from this university in 1976
- 12 In 1986, Steve earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from this university (abbreviated).
- 14 The other long term field project began in 2001, focusing primarily on sites in South Carolina.
- 15 Steve was born and grew up in this city
- 17 Steve also created and regularly maintained this medium for the NCAS
- 19 Steve plays this musical instrument
- 21 Steve's youngest daughter



BLAST FROM THE PAST! Staying true to the theme for this issue, instead of a Mystery Artifact, can you identify everyone in this photo? **HINT** – They are all archaeologists, outstanding in their field, who have conducted extensive research across our great State of North Carolina and are either current or former NCAS BOD members. As a bonus, do you know where this photo was taken?

FALL DIG & ANNUAL MEETING AT TOWN CREEK INDIAN MOUND

SAVE THE DATE!!! October 10th – 15th 2022



The North Carolina Archaeological Society will be partnering with the NC Office of State Archaeology, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at UNC-CH, and Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site to offer a hands-on archaeological experience for NCAS members. This fieldwork is planned for October 10th – 15th, 2022 (Monday through Saturday), and we invite **current** NCAS members to participate (to join or renew, go to: <https://www.ncarchsociety.org/membershiplanding>). Activities for which help is needed include digging, sifting soil to recover artifacts, troweling, and mapping with a laser transit. Archaeologists will be available to train participants in field methods, so no previous experience is required. Come for the whole week or just an afternoon! If you would like to volunteer, please contact Douglas Hill (dbhill222@gmail.com).

The specific research goal of this project will be to investigate an area north of the palisaded portion of the site where a 2014 magnetometer survey indicated the presence of numerous subsurface anomalies. Subsequent probing confirmed that at least one of these anomalies was likely a large cultural feature. Due to the lack of archaeological investigations in this part of the site, little is known about how this area was used and how it relates to the core of the site to the south. In this first phase of fieldwork, the primary goal will be to expose, document, and map any intact features. For more information, click on [NCAS Fall Dig](#).

Excavations will begin daily at 8:30am and continue until 4:00pm. In case of inclement weather, please bring rain gear. Canopies will be on site. Please wear comfortable outdoor clothing that can get dirty and bring gloves and camping chairs if needed. Food and lodging will NOT be provided, but free on-site tent camping is available. The camping area has a large fire pit, ample firewood, and a spigot, but no power.

Other local accommodations include: Uwharrie Cabins (<https://www.uwharriecabins.com/>), Ellerbe Springs B&B (<http://www.ellerbe-springs.com/>), and Quality Inn Albemarle (704) 983-6990 (<https://www.choicehotels.com/north-carolina/albemarle/quality-inn-hotels/nc110>)



MEMBERS ONLY: The NCAS Annual Fall meeting will be held at Town Creek on Saturday, October 15th, coinciding with International Archeology Day and the final day of excavations. Please join us for our business meeting, speakers, and guided site tours. We may even provide lunch! **STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS**

During the Dog Days of Summer, please be SAFE! Hot Weather Safety TIPS:

- Supervisors should schedule heaviest work during the cooler morning hours whenever possible.
- All employees who have not been working in a hot environment must adjust to the heat before expecting to be fully productive (5-7 days).
- Employees should drink 2 cups of water before beginning work. Then 2-4 additional cups should be taken during each hour of work.
- Light meals are better than fatty foods as they are easier on the digestive system.
- Frequent, short breaks in the shade are better than infrequent, long ones.
- Employees should wear proper clothing such as loosely woven cotton shirts, sunglasses, sweatbands, and the proper footwear.
- Supervisors should ensure that each crew has adequate water and that employees are allowed enough break time for drinking purposes.
- Employees must remember that a lack of sleep, obesity, alcohol use, and similar factors can increase the risk of heat related injuries.





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 (d) 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 November 1, 2022. Awards will be announced by December 31, 2022. 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).



mark your **Calendar**

Historic Cemeteries in Cultural Contexts
Clemson, SC, October 24-25
[Woodland Cemetery Research Symposium](http://www.clemson.edu)
([clemson.edu](http://www.clemson.edu))

Southeastern Archaeological Conference
Little Rock, AR, November 9-12
[Meeting Details – Southeastern Archaeological](http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org)
[Conference](http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org) ([southeasternarchaeology.org](http://www.southeasternarchaeology.org))

2023 Conference on Historical and Underwater
Archaeology
Lisbon, Portugal, January 4-7
[SHA-2023-Call-for-Papers.pdf](#)



Be on the lookout for new NCAS merchandise! Coming to an online store near you... [Merchandise — North Carolina Archaeological Society](#) ([ncarchsociety.org](http://www.ncarchsociety.org))

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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

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