ANCIENT WASHINGTON

American Indian Cultures of the Potomac Valley

Robert L. Humphrey
and
Mary Elizabeth Chambers

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FIGURE 1
Archaeological Sites in the District of Columbia
Introduction

Washington, D.C., was the institutional center for the emerging discipline of scientific ethnology in nineteenth-century America, but the prehistoric culture of this metropolitan region was seldom the subject of sustained attention from the new scholars. However, the concurrent revivals of interest in American Indian culture and in the history of the city of Washington suggest that this neglect will soon be rectified. It seemed to the editors that both the general public and the academic community would welcome a concise summary of the best present knowledge of ancient Washington and its first inhabitants.

This monograph is written in the standard style of anthropological journals. The full references for the parenthetical citations in the text can be located easily in the bibliography.

Professor Humphrey and Ms. Chambers intend to continue their research in this field. Inquiries, comments, and bibliographic suggestions can be directed to them in care of the department of anthropology in this university.

RSF
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“... Discoursing as along I rode,
Whether this Race was framed by God
Or whether some malignant pow'r,
Contrived them in an evil hour
And from his own infernal look;
These dusky form and image took:
From hence we fell to argument
Whence peopled was this cont'd
My friend suppos'd Tartarians wild,
Or Chinese from their home exiled;
Wandering thro' mountains hid with snow,
And Rius did in the vallies flow,
Far to the south of Mexico:
Broke thro' the barrs which Nature cast,
And wide unbeaten regions past,
Till near those streams the humane deludge roll'd,
Which sparkling shin'd with glittering sands of gold,
And fetch Pizarro from the Iberian shoar,
To rob the natives of their fatal stoar.
I smil'd to hear my young logician,
Thus reason like a politician;
Who ne're by fathers pains and earning
Had got a Mother Cambridge learning;

"Thinking his reasons to confute;
I gravely thus commenc'd dispute,
And urged that tho'a Chinese host,
Might penetrate this Indian coast;
Yet this was certainly most true,
They never cou'd the Isles subdue;
For knowing not to steer a boat,
They could not on the ocean float,
Or plant their sunburnt colonies,
In regions parted by the sea:
I thence inferr'd Phoenicians old,
Discover'd first with vessels bold
These Western shoars, and planted here,
Returning once or twice a year,
With naval stoars and lasses kind,
To comfort those were left behind;
Till by the winds and tempest toar,
From their intended golden shoar;
They suffer'd ship-wreck, or were drown'd,
And lost the world so newly found."*

FIGURE 2
*William Henry Holmes in Rock Creek Steatite Quarry*
THESE were the speculations in verse of the Englishman, Ebeneezer Cooke, concerning the origins of the native peoples of southern Maryland whom he had encountered during his three-month visit to the region in 1707. Although Cooke disputed the "politician's reasoning" of his companion, it appears that the young man was not too far off the mark. More recent archaeological findings have demonstrated that the original homeland of the ancestors of the American Indian was indeed somewhere in Eurasia, albeit north of the regions suggested in the poem.

As this volume deals with prehistory in our nation's capital, it may be noted that later politicians also speculated on American Indian culture with varying degrees of insight. Thomas Jefferson, in addition to his other accomplishments, was perhaps America's first archaeologist. He attempted the scientific excavation of a small burial mound near Monticello and left remarkably astute comments on its contents in his Notes on the State of Virginia (1785). On the other hand, both Benjamin Franklin and Daniel Webster were firmly convinced that the mounds were beyond the capabilities of indigenous North Americans and must have been constructed by DeSoto's men in the sixteenth century.

Serious scientific studies of American Indian cultures in the Potomac Valley were not undertaken until late in the nineteenth century. In 1889 the Anthropological Society of Washington presented a symposium on "The Aborigines of the District of Columbia and the Lower Potomac." This represented the first comprehensive examination of the subject.

Although the Smithsonian Institution was active from its inception in furthering scientific archaeological research, Smithsonian scientists did not direct attention to this environment for several decades. (The first Smithsonian publication, Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley by Ephriam Squier and Edwin Davis, appeared in 1848, two years after the institution was founded.) In 1897 William Henry Holmes published "Stone Implements of the Potomac-Chesapeake Tidewater Province" in the Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology. This massive work remains the only comprehensive study of the archaeology and prehistory of the District of Columbia.

Holmes, a gifted artist turned geologist, systematically surveyed, excavated and researched the archaeological evidence in the District of Columbia and neighboring states for nearly ten years. In spite of the state of the discipline at the turn of the century, his methodology and field techniques are in the best tradition of contemporary archaeology. Holmes thoroughly surveyed the work of former explorers and collectors in the region; since no archaeologists were available, he trained his own and personally oversaw all of their work. His geological training also enabled him to make a number of important cultural-ecological observations on the region. He used the methods of ethnographic analogy to manufacture and use stone implements himself. The stimulus for this activity derived from ethnological observation of Western American Indians which he had made during his work as a member of the United States Geological Survey. Holmes was able, through this replication of artifact manufacture and extrapolation from present to past, to refute the widely held idea that the crudely percussion-flaked tools found at several sites represented a lower Paleolithic stage of culture. Holmes demonstrated that they were simply the by-products of the toolmaking process and quarrying implements used by the Algonquians and neighboring Indians. He distinguished quarrying and manufacturing sites from habitation sites and wrote extensively on identification of artifact function. He further demonstrated that the random cordmarkings on pottery of the region was an incidental result of the paddle and anvil technique of manufacture and not, as previously believed, a consequence of being molded in baskets or bags. In making these deductions, Holmes was far ahead of most of his contemporaries in anticipating trends in archaeological science.

Holmes based much of his initial scientific study on the work of earlier nonprofessionals. The collections made by those amateurs still comprise the bulk of the Smithsonian's holdings of archaeological materials from the District. Among these pioneer collectors were J.D. McGuire, H.M. Murray, O.N. Bryan and John Bury of
Maryland; W. Hallett Phillips, Elmer R. Reynolds, Louis A. Kengla, Thomas Dowling, Jr., J.C. Lang, F.W. Von Dachenhausen and Thomas Wilson of Washington; and S.V. Proudfit, William Hunter and C.M. Callace of Virginia. A number of scientists from the Smithsonian Institution and the U.S. Geological Survey were also involved with early researches in the region. Frank Hamilton Cushing, best known for his work among the Zuni of the American Southwest, had previously worked at the Amelia County, Virginia, soapstone quarry. William Dinwiddie, Gerard Fowke and J.W. McGee were all associated with Holmes in his surveys in the 1890's.

In his 1897 report to the Bureau of American Ethnology Holmes stated:

It must be regarded as a striking circumstance that a large part of the varied phenomena considered in this paper are assembled within 2 or 3 miles of the capital city or within the area over which the city streets are now laid out. The greatest aboriginal bowlder (sic) quarry known, and the most important implement shops yet observed on the Atlantic slope, are located on Fourteenth Street 2½ miles from the President's house. One of the most interesting native soapstone quarries in the great series extending along the eastern base of the highland from Massachusetts to Georgia is on Connecticut Avenue extended, barely beyond the city limits; and the most important ancient village-site in the whole tidewater province is situated on the Anacostia River within the city and little more than a mile from the Capitol. Partly within the city limits and extending up the Potomac to Little Falls, we have a great native fishing ground surrounded by a multitude of inhabited sites from which our collectors have filled their cabinets with curious objects of art. The spot now the political center of the nation was thus in prehistoric times a chief resort of the native peoples of the region.

It may not then be too much to expect that the glimpses of aboriginal life afforded by this study will prove of interest to the student of history, and the numerous phases of suburban scenery presented in the photographic views will doubtless be appreciated by future generations of Washingtonians. (Holmes 1897: 15-16)

Holmes' expectations were not to be realized. The tragedy of unchecked urban development and suburban sprawl have eradicated every trace of nearly all these remarkably rich archaeological sites (Figs. 2 and 3). The remains of the implement shops, soapstone quarry and fishing villages referred to by Holmes now lie below buildings, houses and roads; and the large village site of Nacochtanke is buried under
fill used in constructing the runways at Bolling Field and the Blue Plains sewage treatment plant. This trend continues to the present day; construction of the Washington subway system (METRO) has unearthed millions of cubic feet of the subterranean city with minimal archaeological supervision.

This surprising lack of sustained interest in the ancient inhabitants of our nation's capital on the part of the Smithsonian Institution, the Department of the Interior and other scientific and regulatory agencies has been offset in part by a few first-rate archaeological studies of the region since Holmes' survey of the last century.

Holmes (1903, 1919) and Proudfit (1923) continued their work in the region during the first part of the twentieth century. Titus Ulke published a short article on artifacts of Potomac Valley Indians in 1929. During the 1930's, Judge William J. Graham made important surveys of the Potomac Valley near Port Tobacco (1935), and Drs. T. Dale Stewart and Waldo Wedel of the Smithsonian Institution excavated two important ossuaries on the village site of Nacochtanke (1937). Stewart subsequently excavated another important village site and ossuary at Patowomeke (1939, 1940, 1941). Alice Ferguson also began her excavation at the Piscataway Indian village of Moaone in 1937; these were carried further by Stephenson and Lloyd in the 1960's (Stephenson and others 1963) and by Thurmond and Hume in the 1970's. During the 1940's scattered sites in the general vicinity were excavated by Manson at Marcey Creek (1948), Slattery on Selden Island (1946), Stearns in the Tidewater region (1940, 1943), but it was not until the following decade that any comprehensive attempt was made to synthesize the discoveries made since Holmes' survey. In 1955 Clifford Evans of the Smithsonian Institution published his Ceramic Study of Virginia Archaeology (with a section on projectile points by C.G. Holland), and the results of survey and testing of District sites by Virginia State Archaeologist, Howard McCord, produced Archaeology of the Anacostia Valley of Washington, D.C. Both studies were able to establish more reliably at least portions of the local chronology.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's the National Science Foundation supported a comprehensive consortium survey of the Potomac Valley by Humphrey, Gardner and McNett which resulted in the discovery and excavation of several important sites in the vicinity. One of the few stratified Paleoindian occupations in Eastern North America, the Thunderbird site in the upper Shenandoah Valley, was one of those discovered. It has begun to reveal considerable information on the earliest inhabitants of the region. Recent work by Hume and Chambers on the Anacostia and by Ubelaker on Late Woodland ossuaries in Charles County in southern Maryland have also added to our fragmentary picture of the prehistory of the District of Columbia.

It unfortunately is far too late to undertake the kind of thorough and comprehensive archaeological survey which would enable us to tie these loose ends together in a complete picture of prehistoric life in this region, but the following chapters represent an attempt to make sense of the material which is available. One can hope that enlightened legislation and heightened public awareness of our vanishing cultural heritage will lead to more effective preservation of those sites and materials which do remain.
CULTURAL SEQUENCE OF THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIODS</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PERIODS</th>
<th>DIAGNOSTIC CULTURAL EVENTS IN EAST</th>
<th>WASHINGTON AREA CERAMIC SEQUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>HISTORIC</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td></td>
<td>HISTORIC TRIBAL GROUPS</td>
<td>LOCALIZED WARES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPLE MOUND II</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>LATE AND TERMINAL WOODLAND</td>
<td>EUROPEAN CONTACT</td>
<td>POTOMAC CREEK WARES</td>
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<td>TEMPLE MOUND I</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>MIDDLE WOODLAND</td>
<td>SOUTHEASTERN CEREMONIAL CLIMAX</td>
<td>RAPPAHANNOCK WARES</td>
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<td>BURIAL MOUND II</td>
<td>A.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td>EARLY SOUTHEASTERN CEREMONIAL COMPLEX</td>
<td>MCKEY WARES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mesoamerican Influence</td>
<td>POPE'S CREEK WARES</td>
</tr>
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<td>300</td>
<td>EARLY WOODLAND</td>
<td>INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE BEGINS</td>
<td>ACCOKEEK WARE</td>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>LATE ARCHAIC / EARLY WOODLAND TRANSITIONAL</td>
<td>HOPEWELL DECLINE</td>
<td>MARDEY CREEK WARES</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIDDLE ARCHAIC</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>MIDDLE ARCHAIC</td>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
<td>STEATITE VESSELS</td>
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<tr>
<td>EARLY ARCHAIC</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>EARLY ARCHAIC</td>
<td>WOODLAND CERAMIC TRADITION</td>
<td>NOTCHED AND STEMMED POINTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALEOINDIAN</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>PALEOEASTERN</td>
<td>POSTGLACIAL ECOLOGY - SUBSISTENCE SHIFT TO SMALL GAME, GATHERING AND FISHING</td>
<td>FLUTED POINTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9000</td>
<td></td>
<td>BIG GAME HUNTING; FLUTED POINTS, BLADES, ETC (SHOOP, WILLIAMSON, THUNDERBIRD SITES)</td>
<td>UNSPECIALIZED HUNTING TOOLS</td>
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*OLD TERMINOLOGY  *MORE RECENT TERMINOLOGY

FIGURE 4
Cultural Sequence of the Eastern United States
CHAPTER TWO

The Paleoindian Period
The Earliest Inhabitants of Washington

Archaeologists are now certain that man did not originate and evolve in the New World. The evidence of sites and artifacts indicates that he came to this hemisphere with a cultural inventory developed in some part or parts of Eurasia. The original point of entry into the North American continent was through the Bering Strait region of Alaska and Siberia. A bridge of land 1,400 miles wide connected the two continents when sea levels were lowered as water was locked up as ice in the great glacial advances of the Pleistocene. The enormous variation in physical morphology among American Indian populations today, as well as the diverse nature of early archaeological finds, suggests that many isolated waves of migrants made the trip during the final (Wisconsin) glacial advance of the Pleistocene, some 40,000 to 10,000 years ago.

In view of the fact that the climate of the Arctic and Subarctic regions has not been significantly warmer at any time since the Pleistocene, it is assumed that these first Americans were hunters of big game, closely related to the Upper Paleolithic cultures of Siberia and Northern Russia. It is further probable that as they slowly expanded their hunting ranges in response to changing herd patterns they were unaware that they were moving from one continent to another.

Because the new continent was free from serious competition from other hominid species, the early hunters were able to diffuse through North and South America fairly rapidly, probably reaching the tip of South America by at least 9000 B.C. Paul Martin (1967) and others have even suggested that the Paleoindian hunting groups that invaded this lush, new environment had a role in the extinction of several unsuspecting species of Pleistocene game animals.

Although no stratified occupation sites of Paleoindian age have been discovered within the District of Columbia, the evidence from the surrounding region strongly suggests that this area has been occupied by human groups ever since the end of the Pleistocene era, 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. Recent excavations by James Adovasio (1975) at the Meadowcroft Rock shelter in nearby eastern Pennsylvania have revealed man-made artifacts which may date as early as 19,000 years ago. Equally early dates from the Arctic (Irving and Harrington 1973) and California (MacNeish 1976) seem to support this early occupation.

Due to the paucity of evidence from most of these sites and the dubious nature of the human associations in others, however, this stage of New World occupation remains somewhat conjectural. The earliest widespread and distinctive American cultural complex which has been reliably dated in several sites is the so-called Clovis or Llano Complex. The lanceolate Clovis fluted spear points, blades and scrapers typical of this culture are often found in association with remains of wooly mammoth, mastodon and other extinct Pleistocene mammals which served as the major food source for Clovis hunting bands. Points and artifacts of general Clovis type, dating between 9000 and 9500 B.C., have been discovered in sites from North Alaska to Central America and from New England to California. Several have been found in Washington and its environs.
Clovis culture is named for the type-site in eastern New Mexico, in an area now called the Llano Estacado or "staked" plains. Most of our stratified and dated evidence for Paleoindian occupation has been found in the Great Plains and the Southwest. Thousands of fluted projectile points of a wide variety of types have been discovered east of the Mississippi, but the great majority have been surface or isolated finds and thus are very difficult to date or even to identify. Stratified sites are extremely rare and we do not have one clear association of man and elephant in the East, despite the fact that the browsing Eastern mastodon was much more prolific than the grazing mammoth of the West.

Several fluted points typologically similar to Clovis forms have been recovered from the Washington area (Fig. 5). Three fluted points from Anacostia and one from the northwest area of the city were collected in the late 1800's; as surface finds they have only a general provenience. Others come from Tuscarora, Maryland, and various locations in the Piedmont, from Zekiah Swamp in the Tidewater region of Maryland, and one from Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay. The rise in sea level which accompanied the melting of glacial ice at the end of the Terminal Wisconsin glaciation may have inundated many formerly exposed sites in the lower Potomac Valley, leaving only scattered remains such as the finds in this area. The Piedmont and mountain zones of the upper Potomac basin appear to be the regions most likely to produce Paleoindian sites that could help to clarify the nature of late Pleistocene and early Post-Pleistocene adaptations in this region.

The Washington area, in fact, lies almost directly between two of the most productive Paleoindian sites so far discovered in the East. The Williamson site in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, and the Shoop site in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, both located in the Piedmont zone, have revealed evidence for an extensive early occupation of the area. Unfortunately, both are surface sites, but the fluted points, blades, scrapers and wedges from the two areas are strikingly similar to the Clovis complex and also to each other. On the basis of a recent reinvestigation of the Shoop collection in the Smithsonian Institution, Cox (1972) has inferred that the occupation units here probably consisted of bands of thirty to fifty highly mobile hunters seasonally exploiting the resources of different microenvironments in the region and living in one place for only a short time.

In 1968 Wilmsen conducted a study of both the Shoop and Williamson site materials, as well as other Paleoindian collections, in an attempt to discern the types of activities carried on by the prehistoric inhabitants. His evidence suggests that the Shoop site was occupied seasonally by small bands who carried out a rather limited variety of tasks there (resharpening tools, hideworking and woodworking). The high ratio of flaking debris to finished tools at the Williamson site, on the other hand, indicates this was a chert quarry site where flakes and preforms to be used for tool-making were obtained.

Similar recent finds at the Thunderbird site located on ancient alluvial terraces and fans of the south fork of the Shenandoah River provide even more secure evidence that Paleoindian occupation along this tributary of the Potomac River was con-
temperate with the Clovis occupations of the Great Plains. A radiocarbon date of 9,990 years before the present has been given for the geological strata immediately overlying an occupation layer containing fluted projectile points. This places the fluted point level during the period when the open boreal woodlands were being replaced by a closed forest of mixed conifer hardwoods and the taiga-adapted faunal populations were gradually being replaced with modern temperate climate species (Carbone 1974).

Another deeply stratified Paleoindian site called Shawnee-Minisink was recently discovered at the confluence of the Delaware River and the Broheads Creek in eastern Pennsylvania (McNett 1975). The site contains both early Archaic and Paleoindian occupation levels. In 1975 archaeologists found a point of general Clovis type in the bottom layer, along with later varieties of fluted points, endscrapers, cores, bifaces and other tools. Radiocarbon dates for the Paleoindian occupation at Shawnee-Minisink extend from 8600 to 8800 B.C. and place it well within the range of dates for Clovis in the Plains.

Unfortunately for the archaeologist, good stratified Paleoindian evidence of this kind is rare in the East. The picture is further complicated by significant variation among artifacts both in minor detail and major form. Some of this variation is unquestionably due to functional differences between sites. As previously mentioned, Wilmsen and others, in studying edge angles of cutting and scraping tools, have pointed out that what formerly have been considered stylistic or chronological differences between similar artifacts may in fact reflect differences in site function between hunting camps, woodworking areas or quarry sites. It is to be expected that the artifacts from a caribou kill site, for example, which was occupied by only a few males and for a very short time might seem almost completely unrelated to the heavy picks, flaking debris and preforms found at a flint quarry utilized by the same group.

Functional variation alone, however, is not sufficient to explain all the differences between early Eastern complexes. The evidence increasingly suggests that a "settling in" to the varied resources within localized territories occurred very early in the East in contrast with the relatively mobile way of life on the Plains. The focal point of the territory may not have been the ecological zones supporting large fauna but rather sources of preferred raw materials for tools, such as extensive deposits of flint, jasper, chert and other cryptocrystalline stone (Gardner 1973). Fitting, in a 1965 statistical study of the metric attributes of 293 fluted projectile points from Virginia, found that fluted point lengths in this area are not normally distributed but instead can be represented by a bimodal curve. He concluded that size may be a functional distinction here, and also noted that the regional differences in fluting may reflect cultural variation. Both of these variables of course would be strongly affected by the quality and quantity of lithic resources available. Several of the larger fluted point sites in the East, including Shoop, Williamson, Thunderbird and the Hardaway site in North Carolina, are located on or near the geological Fall Line where resources of this kind were most available.

Another persuasive explanation for the bewildering variety in Paleoindian artifact complexes from the Eastern United States must lie in the relatively large number of microenvironmental zones which exist in this area. While big game hunters in the Great Plains and Southwest were ranging over thousands of square miles of essentially open grassland, their Eastern cousins were faced with the great variety of ecological niches in the first coniferous, then deciduous forests which covered the land as the glacial ice melted back. Although mammalian species in both areas were similar, big game animals tend to form much smaller herds in wooded areas than in the open, and human groups living in the forest must have depended increasingly on locally available plants, small game, reptiles, and shellfish. It is an ecological maxim that because there are more floral niches in the forest, there is a greater number of faunal species to fill them. This regional and seasonal variation in food and resources would understandably result in considerable variation in cultural adaptive strategies and their material manifestations.

Inasmuch as the early cultures which inhabited the East may never have been "Paleoindians" in terms of the standard definition as full-time big game hunters, some
archaeologists believe that this terminology should be revised. The climatic change which occurred at the end of the Pleistocene seems to have had a much more dramatic effect on the subsistence ecology of the West than it did on most of the Eastern area. In the West, there is a well-marked transition from hunting to an increased dependence on gathering of plant foods and small game in response to the onset of warmer conditions. In the East, however, where the adaptive strategies related to subsistence were already quite varied, the transition is very difficult to perceive. On the face of it, the situation in the East is somewhat contradictory: the subsistence economies of Eastern cultures form an unbroken continuum from the late Pleistocene to relatively recent times, but within this continuum there is enormous regional and seasonal differentiation. Perhaps a return to “Paleoeastern,” Worman’s 1957 term for the cultures of the region, would help to emphasize some of the basic differences in cultural-ecological relationships between East and West.

The Washington area, lying almost astride the Fall Line where the Potomac River breaks out of the Piedmont and onto the coastal plain is an especially good example of this complex environing system. Lying just south of the boundary of Wisconsin glacial ice, the region would have provided an abundance of plant and animal resources well suited to the needs of Pleistocene hunters and gatherers. Pollen profiles from eastern Pennsylvania (Guilday and others, 1964) suggest that the environment here was cool taiga with spruce and pine as the dominant species, but that as the climate began to warm there was a development toward boreal forest, with birch and oak invading the community. In the Chesapeake Bay area a change from spruce-birch-pine-alder forest to hemlock-white pine-northern hardwoods seems to have occurred about 11,000 years ago, and another change to oak-hickory-gum forest about 9,500 years ago (Whitehead 1965). This varied flora supported an equally varied faunal community, including woodland caribou, elk, moose, black bear, Pennsylvania peccary, wolf, lynx, beaver, mastodon, mammoth and musk ox.

Haynes (1964) has suggested that the Clovis people entered interior North America during the Two Creeks interstadial when a corridor east of the Rocky Mountains opened between the two major North American ice sheets about 10,500 B.C. The glacial chronology of the Great Lakes region, where finds of fluted points are abundant, seems to support Haynes, as do distributional studies of fluted points found in upstate New York (Ritchie 1965). It appears that the very rapid dissemination of Clovis fluted points may be a result of cold-adapted Northern hunters following big game animals just south of the Valders glacial mass and into the Northeast and Middle Atlantic regions, thus remaining within a single ecological zone.

Once in this area, the Indians could have diffused southward into boreal and deciduous forest zones, and the environmental changes involved would have resulted in cultural regionalization as well. As Cox (1972) has pointed out, it is certainly no accident that the bulk of Eastern Paleoindian sites are found on or near the Fall Line. The varied ecological attractions of the area for hunters and gatherers has been demonstrated, and this also was the place where it would have been easiest for animals and men moving from north to south to cross the rivers which dissect the East coast. The Onondago chert from New York State found in the Shoop collection and Pennsylvania jasper discovered at the Williamson site further support the theory of a north to south movement for early man in this area. The Potomac basin, surrounded by some of the largest Paleoindian assemblages yet discovered in the East, offers an ideal route of migration between the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys to the west and the Atlantic coastal plain. Ritchie (1957) has suggested that fluted point hunters moved through the Ohio and Tennessee valleys into Virginia following a “prairie corridor.” All the evidence suggests that the area around the District of Columbia holds great promise for future Paleoindian studies—if the archaeology of the region is handled more systematically than has been the case in the past.
CHAPTER THREE

The Archaic and Transitional Periods
Changing Climates and Changing Lifeways

As the great continental ice sheets of the Pleistocene began to melt back with the onset of warmer climatic conditions beginning about 10,000 years ago, the environments of the East changed dramatically from taiga to dense deciduous forests. The Archaic period designates the period of adaptation to the new and varied resources of the temperate forests and riverine ecosystems which emerged with the stabilization of modern climatic conditions about 8,000 years ago (Fig. 4).

The Archaic is marked in the archaeological sequence of the Potomac Valley, as elsewhere in the mid-Atlantic region, with the appearance of stone mortars, pestles, and milling stones. The presence of these artifacts reflects somewhat greater dependence on food gathering and food processing technologies than is evident in the preceding period. The utilization of protein-rich nuts, seeds, and wild grains, as well as consumption of fish, mollusks, and shellfish reflects increases in the yearly protein intake which may have provided the conditions for increased rates of population growth. The larger number of Archaic sites indicates that significant demographic changes were taking place, although the patterns of settlement and movement within the river valleys do not differ greatly from the Paleoindian period.

The earlier Archaic sites reflect a continuing pattern of temporary, intermittent use by small semi-nomadic bands moving within a familiar territory to exploit its seasonal food resources. Camps oriented to the scheduling of hunting, trapping, gathering, and fishing pursuits would have been occupied for several nights or weeks, with periodic return to centrally located base camps. By 1000 B.C. there is clear evidence from substantial midden deposits along the major rivers and tributary streams of larger populations. The Indians of this period followed a more sedentary way of life oriented heavily to fishing and mollusk collecting, as well as hunting and gathering.

Information from some two dozen tested or excavated sites in the vicinity of the District of Columbia comprises the bulk of our still fragmentary knowledge of the Archaic in the Potomac Valley. No deeply stratified sites have been excavated, although a number of sites on the eastern shore of the Anacostia River in the Benning and River Terrace areas were apparently occupied repeatedly during some 4,000 years from ap-

FIGURE 6
Archaic Projectile Points from the District of Columbia

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proximately 2000 B.C. to 1600 A.D. (McCord 1957). The Peters Collection (#172-199, Smithsonian Institution) from the higher terrace south of Benning Road is exceptional in this regard. The surface collection contains Late Archaic Piscataway points, transitional period Susquehanna points, stemmed points and pottery types of the Middle and Late Woodland periods, as well as the small triangular points and local pottery types of the immediate protohistoric period. A similar collection of artifacts representing several thousand years of occupation was recovered from the Monument Grounds and the Chain Bridge area in the late 1800's.

While typological and technological characteristics of the Archaic manifestation in this area are now reasonably well established, recent problem-oriented research has been directed toward assessing the range and distribution of economic activities related to the scheduling of the subsistence cycle. Using statistical techniques to plot the distribution of artifacts from controlled surface collections at the Rowe Site, Charles County, Maryland, Gardner and McNett (1970) have been able to define a series of activity areas within the site which relate to hunting (a tool manufacturing area, primary and secondary butchering locations, and habitation areas) and to determine the relative associations of several occupations over time.

Most recently, a small site excavated by Hume and Chambers in 1976 on the terrace of Beaverdam Branch adjacent to the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens (site #18PR126) promises to yield additional information regarding the Archaic and Woodland occupations and to define the relative uses of the site during each time period.

Another important point of investigation is the Potomac Avenue site located below Chain Bridge between the Dalecarlia Reservoir and Arizona Avenue. The site was a small fishing camp used sporadically from Early Archaic through Middle Woodland times (McNett 1972). It was ideally located for the seasonal harvest of anadromous fish which ascend the Potomac each spring to spawn. A number of Archaic materials were recovered earlier in this century from the Chain Bridge area.

Fish may also have been channelled into traps in the narrows of the river above the falls; the recovery of an Archaic projectile point from one of a series of fish traps and weirs recorded by Strandberg and Tomlinson (1969) indicates that some of these underwater structures may have been constructed during this time. Similar fish weirs are known elsewhere in the East during this period (Griffin 1967).

The Eastern Archaic has been characterized by Caldwell (1958) as a period of "primary forest efficiency" during which the resources of the woodland environment were intensively exploited. Tools for the working of wood, such as the axe, adze, wedge, celt, and gouge suggest that wood was cut and dressed, probably for containers, shelters, and possibly some form of watercraft. Baskets and mats of twined fibers have not survived the acidic soils of the Eastern woodlands although awls, needles, and punches reflect their manufacture. The earliest ceramics impressed with cordage prior to firing clearly illustrate a variety of nets and twined cordage were utilized during the "transitional" phase between Archaic and Woodland cultural developments (Holmes 1903; Evans 1955).

FIGURE 7
"Bannerstones" or Atl-Atl Weights, Archaic Period, District of Columbia
A new hunting weapon is the spear-thrower or *atlatl*. Gardner (1974) suggests that the typical corner- and side-notched points which characterize Archaic components at the Thunderbird site may be specialized forms for this weapon (Fig. 6). The similar Vernon, Holmes, and Piscataway points of this area, manufactured generally of local quartz and quartzite, can definitely be assigned to the Archaic period (Handsman and McNett 1972). Atlatl weights or “bannerstones” were fashioned with a central hollow cylinder for insertion over a wooden shaft, providing extra leverage in throwing (Fig. 7).

The evidence for social patterns is slight. The few mortuary examples indicate that simple, flexed interment with few burial goods was practiced. The period is one of widespread cultural contact and interregional exchange of raw materials (Griffin 1967). One of the most interesting problems now being addressed by McNett and Gardner is the development of cultural patterns in the Potomac Valley in relation to the social and technological processes occurring throughout the Atlantic seaboard.

For the period under examination, the clearest evidence for interaction stimuli is the local expression of the widespread transitional “soapstone culture.” This cultural period was defined by Witthoft (1953) and Ritchie (1969) from the repeated association in Eastern sites of steatite (soapstone) vessels with large-stemmed broadspear points of the Susquehanna, Savannah River, and Perkiomen types, “fish tail” eared points, and, more infrequently, with pottery tempered with crushed steatite. Ritchie suggests that the steatite-rich Washington area was a major source of dissemination northward of the complex (1969: 162), a possibility about which Holmes speculated in 1898 in view of the extent of steatite quarrying operations in the nation’s capital and adjacent areas (Fig. 8).

**FIGURE 8**

*Pickax Used in Quarrying Steatite from Rock Creek Park*
Steatite deposits imbedded in the gneissic bedrock of the city have been exposed along the fault at the juncture of the Piedmont and Tidewater zones. Highly resistant to weathering, the deposits are exposed to view in ravines, on cliffs, and on the crests of hills and ridges. Five or six major outcrops occur within the city. The Rose Hill quarry excavated by Holmes in 1890-91 was the largest of these. The quarry spanned two hills on the west flank of Connecticut Avenue between the present Albemarle Street and the campus of the Washington Technical Institute. When examined by Holmes, both hills were pitted with depressions two to six feet deep and some twenty-five feet in diameter. They were spaced at intervals for several hundred feet along the crests of the ridges. Commercial quarrying for street paving had already scarred large sections of the southern promontory by the time Holmes made his observations.

Excavation of the quarry led Holmes to conclude that vessels were shaped into rough form at the spot prior to their detachment from the rock face; they were completed at the campsite. He was able to reconstruct the entire technical sequence of their manufacture from the numerous partially completed and finished forms preserved in archaeological collections from the Washington vicinity.

Characteristically oblong or round and flat-bottomed, the larger vessels were fashioned with projecting lug handles on both ends. Some specimens are two feet in length. Small cups and bowls also were produced, as were doughnut-shaped “net sinkers” and pipes (Fig. 9).

By 1900 the Rose Hill quarry and several adjacent quarries had been leveled for residential and commercial developments. Only the narrow parkland adjoining Soapstone Creek remains today as evidence of the former steatite mining sites. It is fortunate that several quartzite quarries have been preserved in Rock Creek Park.

FIGURE 9
Unfinished Steatite Vessel and Platform Pipe from District of Columbia Quarry
Whole and fragmentary steatite vessels and sherds of steatite-tempered pottery were particularly abundant before the turn of the century along the Potomac flood plain below Chain Bridge. The technological and temporal relations between these two artifact types was first noted by Holmes and are best documented from Manson's (1948) excavations at the Marcey Creek site and comparable material from the Selden Island site excavated by Slattery in 1946. Lower levels of the Marcey Creek site produced lugged steatite containers of the characteristic form, accompanied by larger spear points of the Savannah River and "fishtail" types. This assemblage was overlain directly by similar, but smaller, points, a perforated winged bannerstone, a fully grooved axe, a steatite "net sinker," and steatite-tempered pottery. The ceramics were flat-bottomed, straight-edged, lugged containers virtually identical in shape to the stone vessels from the lower level. Marcey Creek wares are contemporaneous with Vinette I Ceramics of the northeast, the earliest ceramics in this area. The technological development from stone to ceramic vessels in both regions provides the link between the essentially pre-ceramic Archaic period and the Woodland period.
FIGURE 10
Captain John Smith's 1612 Map of Virginia
CHAPTER FOUR

The Woodland Period
Regionalization and European Contact

A number of significant cultural innovations occurred in the Eastern United States during the first millennium B.C. which stimulated a series of changes and adaptive responses known to archaeologists as Woodland Culture. Among these innovations were the introduction and widespread manufacture of pottery; the domestication of native plants such as the sunflower, pigweed, marsh elder, and goosefoot; the introduction of domesticated varieties of gourds, squash, and maize from Mexico; and the development of elaborate mortuary practices. The effects of these several influences in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys resulted in the gradual development of Adena and Hopewellian cultures as well as several distinctive localized manifestations in the northeast and southeast.

Hopewell cultures produced the enormous burial and effigy mounds characteristic of the Middle Woodland period in Ohio and Illinois. Many areas of the East, however, were not affected by these changes to a sufficient degree to effect marked changes in the local cultural pattern; these areas were characterized by an essentially Archaic way of life well into the Woodland period.

The Potomac Valley is one of the latter areas. The manufacture of simple, utilitarian pottery homologous to ceramics throughout the Middle Atlantic is evident in the “transitional” period and is well established by 500 B.C.. Maize is thought to have been introduced to the area as early as the first century A.D., but its short-term effects, like that of pottery manufacture, are difficult to detect in the archaeological record.

Pottery is the clearest indicator of change in this early Woodland period. Changes in the frequency and distribution of Accokeek, Pope’s Creek and Mockley wares—each type identified by differences in tempering material, shape, and decorative technique—indicate that shifts in food procurement strategies were taking place (Hands-

FIGURE 11
Late Woodland Pottery
from the District of Columbia

FIGURE 12
Incised Designs from Late Woodland Pottery of the Potomac Region
man and McNett 1973) although all appear to predate the use of agricultural products (Figs. 11 and 12).

The Potomac remained peripheral to Adena and Hopewell expansion in the Ohio and Illinois Valleys. Trade networks radiating from these centers penetrated adjacent areas of the Appalachians and the Eastern Shore of Maryland, but the elaborate ceremonial art and burial practices never were adopted in these outlying areas. Later Mississippian influences were likewise minimal in the Potomac region.

The introduction of cultivated legumes into the northeast around 1000-1200 A.D., and the probable development of improved strains of maize at this time, did stimulate significant changes in population structure in the area. Many of the cultural traits which characterize the historic tribes of the northeast are evident in the archaeological record shortly after 1200 A.D.. However, we lack adequate archaeological evidence from the Potomac Valley to allow us to identify the developmental processes which produced the tribal cultures known to the first European travelers on the river. We must rely on the historical documents of the colonial period and a handful of excavated sites to reconstruct the protohistoric culture.

* * * * *

![Figure 13](image)

**FIGURE 13**

*Woodland Projectile Points from the District of Columbia*

The numerous tribes along the Middle Atlantic coast were among the first American Indians to encounter Europeans during the era of exploration following the discovery of the New World. The following pages present a brief background of the history of the contact period in this region and trace the history of the native inhabitants of the District of Columbia by means of a synthesis of ethnohistorical and archaeological data. The result is at best an interpretation.

Explorers, pirates, traders and slave raiders from the West Indies plied the Atlantic coast throughout the sixteenth century. The news of these strange peoples must have passed from village to village long before the first colonists arrived. Few descriptions of native life survive from the early expeditions. It is the journals, maps, and sketches of the English colonists and missionaries which provide the bulk of the documents offering firsthand accounts of the native Americans.

In 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh received a patent authorizing him to settle “such remote, heathen and barbarous lands, countries and territories not actually possessed by any Christian prince nor inhabited by Christian people.” The first expedition under Amadas and Barlow landed along the coast of present-day North Carolina in the same year and returned to England with glowing accounts of “Virginia”—and two Indian hostages. The second expedition in 1585 planted a short-lived colony on Roanoke Island just south of the entrance to Albemarle Sound. In this company were Thomas Hariot, chronicler of the colony, and the artist, John White, whose carefully detailed watercolor drawings of the native inhabitants and wildlife were accompanied by many explanatory notes.

Hariot's history of the Roanoke colony published in 1590 by the Dutch cartographer Theodore de Bry was illustrated by copperplate engravings taken from White's original watercolors. De Bry's engravings embellished the original drawings con-
“Hunting Deer” engraving by De Bry after le Moyne 1590

“How They Cook Their Fish” engraving by De Bry after White 1590
FIGURE 16
"A Weroans, or Chieftain, of Virginia" engraving by De Bry after White 1590

FIGURE 17
"An Old Man in his Winter Clothes" engraving by De Bry after White 1590
FIGURE 18
"The Town of Secota" engraving by De Bry after White 1590
siderably, although individual Indian figures remained essentially faithful to White’s representations.

The Indians of coastal North Carolina described by Hariot and White were the Algonquian-speaking Machapunga Indians of Roanoke Island and the Weapemeoc whose lands extended over most of the mainland coast north of Albermarle Sound. The manners and customs of daily life were the focus of White’s attention. The several portraits of notable Algonquian personages are particularly interesting for the details
of dress and body ornamentation which they provide (Fig. 16 and 17). White also illustrated the village of Secota, a typical cluster of huts interspersed with cultivated plots (Fig. 18). The palisaded village of Pomeiock closely resembles the fortified settlements of the Algonquian Indians of Virginia and the Potomac River Valley.

From Pamlico Sound to Delaware Bay most of the region lying east of the geological Fall Line was occupied at the time of contact by southern Algonquians. They are thought to have migrated southward from the Algonquian heartland in the northeastern United States several centuries before European colonization (Speck 1928). West of the Fall Line were Siouan and Iroquoian tribes; they were considered alien and hostile by the Tidewater Indians and colonists alike.

The arrival of the Jamestown settlers in 1607 brought the colonists into contact with the thirty Algonquian tribes of the Powhatan Confederacy united under the great chief Wahunsenacawh, called Powhatan by the Europeans. Forged through inheritance and conquest, the Confederation extended from the Potomac to the Neuse River in North Carolina and included most of the territory east of the Fall Line of the several great tidal rivers emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. Major population concentrations were located along the James, York, and Rappahannock Rivers and their tributaries; the capital of the Confederacy was Powhatan's camp at Werowocomoco on the York River (Mooney 1907).

From the Jamestown colonists we have the most detailed accounts of southern Algonquian life. Captain John Smith (Arber 1910) and William Strachey (1935) wrote extensively for readers in England, and the diaries and journals of other merchants and adventurers recorded valuable accounts of commerce and intrigue as they plied the rivers trading for corn and skins.

Smith travelled the Virginia rivers in the first year of settlement. In the following year his party explored the Chesapeake Bay and the Elizabeth (Potomac) River as far as the Little Falls. Smith's remarkably accurate map (Fig. 10), first published in 1612 and later revised several times, locates a series of villages along both sides of the Potomac River. Among the tribal groups noted by Smith in Northern Virginia were the Taunexen whose main village was near Mt. Vernon; the Patowmeke, located at the mouth of Patowmacke (Potomac) Creek, and the village of Nameroughquena on the Virginia shore opposite the foot of Analostan (Theodore Roosevelt) Island. The Northern Virginia tribes were thought to have been loosely aligned with Powhatan, but the early historic records are replete with hostilities with both Powhatan and the peoples across the Potomac. Accounts of diplomacy, kidnapping (including the celebrated Pocahontas) and intrigue are recorded by the young trader Henry Spelman who lived several years with the Patowmeke (Spelman 1884).

The Maryland side of the Potomac River was inhabited by the Conoy (variously spelled as Kanoi, Kanawha, Canawese, or Ganawais), a tribe or tribal confederation of Algonquian-speaking peoples whose territory extended northward from the Potomac to about Baltimore and included the several rivers and major streams flowing into the Tidewater section of the Potomac and the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Several Conoy villages located along the Potomac appear on John Smith's map: Moyaone near Piscataway Creek in Prince George's County; Pomunkey, located six miles downriver; and Portobak, situated at the head of the Port Tobacco River. The Nanticoke who occupied the greater part of the Delmarva Peninsula may have been related to these groups by consanguineal and/or affinal ties. A petition to the Maryland authorities in 1660 traces the genealogy of the chiefly lineage of the Piscataway through thirteen "kings" to the Nanticoke on the Eastern Shore (Archives of Maryland 1885).

Smith identified two villages in the area later designated the District of Columbia, an unnamed village below Little Falls on the narrow terrace between MacArthur Boulevard and the C & O Canal, and the village of Nacochtanke (or Nacostan) on the east bank of the Anacostia River in what is now the Benning neighborhood. The Necostin Indians are thought to have been affiliated with the Conoy, although the paucity of historical or linguistic information leaves the matter unresolved. (Our modern place name "Anacostia" is a corrupt transliteration of the original Indian word
through Latin into English.) The few references to the Necostin in the writings of the Jesuits and colonial documents suggest close political and/or ethnic ties with the Piscataway.

The Conoy political organization was similar in many respects to the Powhatan Confederacy, although never as tightly structured or as powerful in historic times. Males in positions of political authority received the title Tayac, a term used to designate the chiefs of both large and small villages, as well as tribal leaders. Europeans applied concepts of hierarchy derived from their own experience in dealing with the welter of titles. They translated levels of political authority into the familiar terms "chief," "king," and "emperor." Although entirely inappropriate to the native political structure, these terms probably reflected rather accurately the range of political positions. The Conoy (or Piscataway) "emperor" was a member of the chiefly lineage of the Piscataway who resided at Moyaone. Nacochtanke, on the Anacostia River, was the residence of a "king" and was fortified by a palisade. Smith estimated the fighting strength of this village at eighty warriors, suggesting a population of some three hundred souls. Very little is known about Nacochtanke. The archaeological evidence suggests a dispersed settlement pattern consisting of open clusters of dwellings adjacent to large agricultural fields. A small palisaded enclosure containing the chief's house and associated religious structures may be the village recorded by Smith. The thousands of artifacts in the Smithsonian collection from the east bank of the Anacostia have come primarily from surface collections recovered in the late 1800's when the area was still on the periphery of the city and lay relatively undisturbed. Today most of the sites are covered by Bolling Air Force Base and the Pepco power plant.

* * * * *

Nacochtanke was probably very similar to the village of Moyaone, excavated in the 1940's by Alice Ferguson and analyzed by Stephenson (1963). The village was surrounded by a series of stockades, the largest being 400 feet in diameter. At least one stockade line was built of live trees, perhaps the thorny honey locust which grows along the Potomac bank today. Others had been burned and probably represent several episodes of destruction and rebuilding. The number of residential structures within the enclosures could not be determined from the hundreds of small postmolds representing houses, drying racks, cooking spits, and other temporary structures, but they probably numbered no more than thirty.

Freshwater clams, crabs, turtles, and fish were abundant in the storage pits uncovered by Ferguson. Eighty percent of identifiable mammal bones were those of deer. The catch also included elk, bear, wolf, beaver, wild turkey, squirrel, fox, bobcat, raccoon, skunk, duck, heron, eagle, hawk, trumpeter swan, and buzzards.

Dogs were the only domestic animal and were occasionally eaten, although they were held in some reverence, for several individual dog burials were found. Four complete dog skeletons were recovered from ossuary pits at the top of the pile of human bones where they had apparently been placed just prior to closure (Stephenson 1963).

Ossuary burial, or periodic reinterment of the bundled bones of individuals in a solemn community ceremony, is best known from Algonquian-speaking Iroquoian groups in Canada and the Great Lakes, but the historical literature and burial remains in the mid-Atlantic region indicate this practice was also characteristic of the southern Algonquians. Two ossuaries in Anacostia associated with the village of Nacochtanke were examined by T.D. Stewart and Waldo Wedel of the Smithsonian in 1937 and 1940 when portions of the Bolling Field were being extended. Each pit contained between 63 and 70 individuals, each represented by disarticulated bones grouped into bundles. A few burial ornaments were recovered, including a delicate necklace of shell beads and a pierced slate pendant.

Most recently, two ossuaries from the Juhe Farm Site (site #18CH89) have been excavated by Ubelaker (1974). Located approximately fifty miles south of the District of Columbia on the north bank of Nanjemoy Creek, a tributary of the Potomac, these sixteenth-century Woodland burials represent a population that is ancestral to the
Conoy of that area. Ubelaker was able to determine that the Nanjemoy had a life expectancy at birth of twenty-three years and an infant mortality rate of thirty percent before the age of five.

These sobering figures reflect the precariousness of aboriginal life even before the introduction of European diseases in the seventeenth century. Despite the archaeological and ethnographic suggestions of abundance, the yearly cycle was one of feast and famine.

Nacochtanke figures in very few of the early historical accounts of the area. There are some references to the village in the journals of the early fur traders, particularly that of the young Henry Fleet who was trading on the Potomac in the 1620's.

Fleet records that in 1622 a party from Jamestown arrived at Patowmack to trade for corn. Declining the offer, the chief suggested that his "mortal enemies" the Necostins were well supplied and offered fifty bowmen to assist in obtaining supplies. The traders and their Indian accomplices attacked Nacochtanke, drove women and children into the woods, and plundered and burned the town. Eighteen Necostin were reported killed (Fleet in Neill: 221-235). The survivors apparently took refuge with their kinsmen down the river, for the warriors of Moyaone promptly revenged the sacking of Nacochtanke by raiding Patowmack (Ferguson and Ferguson 1960).

One year later Henry Fleet and Henry Spelman led a party of Englishmen up the Potomac for trade. In a surprise attack on the party near Nacochtanke twenty Englishmen were killed. Spelman was apparently beheaded; Fleet was taken prisoner. On his escape five years later, Fleet sailed to England to muster financial backing and returned to the Potomac in 1631 with the hope of developing a monopoly of the lucrative beaver trade.

Fleet set out to establish trading relations with "a strange, populous nation called Mowhaks, man-eaters" (Fleet in Neill: 221-235). He obtained "800 weight" of beaver at Nacochtanke, and being made to understand that travel up the river was restricted to canoe navigation only, anchored his "barke" two leagues below Great Falls and sent out messengers with presents to notify the Indians of the upper valley that he would trade for beaver from his ship.

Within days Fleet received notice that over one hundred Indians carrying 4,000 weight of beaver were approaching. His hopes were soon dashed by the Necostins who asserted their rights to monopoly of such trade and offered to deliver the furs from the upper river themselves if Fleet would "make a firm league with them and give their king a present" (Fleet in Neill: 229). Fleet declined the offer, to his later regret. When he attempted to trade surreptitiously with a party on the riverbank he found they demanded "hatchets, and knives of large size, broadcloth, and coats, shirts, and Scottish stockings . . . bells, and some kind of beads" of a quality he did not carry (Fleet in Neill: 230).

Nacochtanke was apparently a major trading center. Fleet reports that at times hundreds of Indians congregated in the vicinity of Washington with their wares. The Necostins, it appears, were sufficiently powerful to control the upriver beaver trade. Fleet reports: "They coming in their birchen canoes did seek to withdraw me from having any commerce with the other Indians and the Nacostines were earnest in that matter, because they know that our trade might hinder their benefit" (Fleet in Neill: 227).

The Necostins may have been able to maintain their position of strength through the alignments with Iroquoian groups of the interior. Fleet suggested that "they are protected by the Massomacks or Cannya Indians."

Not only was Nacochtanke favorably situated for trade, the locality was rich as well in resources (Fig. 19). Fleet wrote.

This place without all question is the most pleasant and healthful place in all this country, and most convenient for habitation, the air temperate in summer and not violent in winter. It aboundeth in all manner of fish. The Indians in one night commonly will catch thirty sturgeon in a place where the river is not above twelve fathoms broad. And as for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkey, the woods do swarm with them, and the soil is exceedingly fertile. (Fleet in Neill: 228)
The Necostins seldom figure in colonial records after this time. The village of Accokeek near Bryan Point is mentioned in land records of the mid-century as a village of the “Nacostan,” but few references to this village are found in later documents.

* * * * *

European settlement of the present-day District of Columbia occurred relatively late, the first land patent being granted in 1662 to one George Thompson who called his 1,000 acre tract Blew Playne. Consequently, mid-century documents refer almost exclusively to the Conoy with whom Jesuit missionaries and provincial administrators in St. Mary's City came into contact.

The lessons of Roanoke, Jamestown, and other ill-fated colonies were not lost on the earliest Maryland settlers who arrived in 1634 on the Ark and the Dove. Previous reconnaissance of the situation by Sir George Calvert in 1620 had enabled his brother, Leonard Calvert, now Governor of Maryland, to determine the safest course of action. Upon reaching the Chesapeake, Calvert enlisted Henry Fleet, then on another trading mission, to escort him to the “emperor” of Piscataway. The reception was not cordial, and Fleet persuaded Calvert to locate the settlement at his trading post with the Yowaccacomaco Indians at the mouth of St. Mary's River.

By 1639 the Jesuit Fathers had received permission to establish missions among the Conoy. From the Annual Letter of the Provincials of the Society of Jesus for 1639, we learn that the Patuxent had provided a plantation at Mattapany for the Fathers, although Maquaacomem, the “king” of the Patuxent, had refused to be converted. Father Andrew White had established a mission at Piscataway, now renamed Kittamaqund for the new Piscataway emperor Chitomachan (Semmes 1937). Andrew White's mission was successfully established when he “administered a certain powder of known efficacy” to the sick Tayac and “himself, wife, and two daughters were converted” (Hall 1910: 124-131). In the following year they were baptized in a large public ceremony followed by a Christian wedding and were given the names of Charles and Mary.

Mission activities were extended to the people who had come to be called Anacostans. The following “miraculous cure” of an Anacostan Indian is told by Shea, shortly after the baptism of Chitomachan.

An Anacostan Indian fell into a Susquehanna ambush, and pierced from side to side with the keen spear, lay writhing in his blood. His friends recalled by his cry bore him to Piscataway and laid him on a mat before his door. Here Father White found him chanting in his dying voice the never-forgotten death song, while his friends join in, the Christians invoking the aid of heaven in his behalf. He too was a Christian, and Father White, seeing his perilous state, renewed his faith and heard his confession. Then reading a gospel and the Litany of Loretto over him, he urged him to commend himself to Jesus and Mary. After applying to his wounds a relic of the Holy Cross he directed the attendants to bring his corpse to the chapel for burial, and then launched his canoe to visit a dying catechumen. As he was returning the next day, to his amazement he beheld the same Indian approaching him in a canoe, paddling with as vigorous a stroke as his comrade. Still greater was Father White's surprise when the Indian, stepping into his boat, threw off his blanket and showed a red line, the only trace of his deadly wound. Glorifying God for so signal a favor, the good missionary admonished the happy man never to be ungrateful to god (Shea 1854: 493).

Following the baptism of Chitomachan, the “king of the Necostin” requested that a separate mission be established in his domain (Hall 1910: 132). The mission was never established. White remained at Kittamaqund until 1643, when he was transferred to Portobacco. White made regular reports on Piscataway life and mission progress, wrote a catechism in the native dialect, and compiled a short dictionary of the Algonquian spoken at Piscataway. No similar body of information is available for the Necostin.

White's eyewitness account of the Piscataway people is an interesting example of an early European perspective on the “noble savage.” This excerpt from his Briefe Rela-
tion (1666) stands in marked contrast to the more exotic imagination of Ebeneezer Cooke whose poem was cited as a prelude to this study.

The natives of person be very proper and tall men, by nature swarthly, but much more by art, painting themselves with colours in oile a darke read, especially about the head, which they doe to keep away the gnats, wherein I confess there is more ease then honesty.

The natural wit of these men is good, conceiving a thing quick to. They excell in smell and taste, and have farre sharper sight than we have. Their diet is poane, made of wheat, and hominie, of the same with pease and beanes together, to which sometimes they add fish, foule, and venison, especially at solemn feasts. They are very temperate from wines and hot waters, and will hardly taste them, save those whome our English have corrupted. For chastity I never see any action in man or woman tendinge to see much as levity, and yet the poore soules are daily with us and bring us turkie, partridge, oisters, squirrels as good as any rabbit, bread and the like, running to us with smileing countenance and will help us in fishing, fouling, hunting, or what we please.

They hold it lawful to have many wives, but all keep the rigour of conjugal faith to their husbands. The very aspect of the women is modest and grave; they are generally so noble, as you can doe them noe favour, but they will returne it. There is small passion amongst them. They use in discourse of great affaires to be silent, after a question asked, and then after a little studdie to answere in few words, and stand constant to their resolution. If these were once christian, they would doubtlesse be a vertuous and renowned nation. They exceedingly desire civill life and Christian apparell and long since had they beene cloathed, had the covetous English merchants (who would exchange cloath for nought but beaver, which every one could not get) held them from it (God forbid we should do the like).

I will end therefore with the soyle, which is excellent so that we cannot set downe a foot, but tread on Strawberries, raspries, fallen mulberrie vines, echeorns, walnuts, saxafaes etc: and those in the wildest woods. The ground is commonly a blacke mould above, and a foot within ground of a readish colour. All is high woods except where the Indians have cleared for corne. It abounds with delicate springs which are our best drinke. Birds diversely feathered there are infinite, as eagles, swans, hernes, geese, bitters, duckes, partridge read, blew, partie coloured, and the like, by which will appeare, the place abounds not alone with profit, but also with pleasure.

The Jesuit missions were terminated in 1645. For the next two decades the colonial government struggled to maintain peace between warring Indians and to ameliorate conflicts between Indians and settlers. The grant of Calvert Manor to William Calvert in 1662 was intended to protect the village of Piscataway and its adjacent lands from further encroachment, although the fertile terraces along the river were already in private hands. Seven years later a protected reservation was again established for the Piscataways, Anacostins, Doegs, Mattawomans, and other Indian groups from southern Maryland. The reservation extended from Piscataway Creek to Mattawoman Creek and included “all land by the water and three miles into the woods above Piscataway to a total of 10,000 acres,” thus encompassing Calvert Manor (Ferguson & Ferguson 1960: 30).

Nevertheless, increasing conflicts over grazing rights and raids by the Susquehannock resulted in constant fear among the colonists. Maryland authorities decided in 1673 to resettle all Indians at a garrisoned fort near the Falls. They decreed that Othotomaquah, the current “emperor” of the Piscataways, would be “chief commander and Governor over all the Nations of Indians living within the limits of the province on the Western Shore, and for to Rule and Govern them in such manner and form and by Such Rules and Orders as is Customary amongst you” (Semmes 1937: 487-89).

The title was to be held at the pleasure of Governor Nicholson whose orders and commands were to be obeyed. The Indians agreed to move and the fort was built—probably within the present boundaries of the District of Columbia—when news reached the Maryland capital in 1697 that the Indians had established instead a fortified settlement approximately twenty miles north of Warrenton, Virginia, in the Occoquan-Goose Creek valley (Semmes 1937). Maryland authorities quickly dispatched a delegation to seek their return with the offer of resettlement at either Piscataway or Rock Creek. This offer was supported by Virginia authorities eager to be rid of the Conoy.

The matter was resolved when in 1699 the Conoy, including the Indians of Accokeek, moved to a large island in the middle of the Potomac near Point of Rocks, now
known as Heater's Island. According to early accounts they built a palisaded village about 150 feet square with eighteen houses inside the enclosure and nine without. The village was called Canavest.

In 1700 the chief and several leaders went to Annapolis to renew the treaties of peace and protection. They were promised land at Accokeek or Pamunkey. Soon thereafter an outbreak of smallpox took many lives and the Conoy, now tributary to the Five Nations, abandoned the island and moved to Conejohola (or Dekanoagah) on the eastern bank of the Susquehanna River near Bainbridge, Pennsylvania. They lived there on lands assigned to them by the Iroquois in close proximity to the Nanticoke and Conostoga (Speck 1927).

Some of the Conoy may have remained along the upper Potomac, as occasional references to them appear in records of the early eighteenth century. The Swiss Baron Christoph de Graffenreid travelled the area in 1711 to survey the prospects for colonization and sketched a map of the Piscataway enclave on the Maryland side of the river near Point of Rocks (Gutheim 1968).

Around 1718 the Conoy moved from Conejohola to Conoytown further up the Susquehanna. This settlement was abandoned by 1744 for Shamokin (now Sunbury) where they, with the Nanticoke and Mahican, lived under Iroquois protection.

An account of these movements is recorded in 1743 by the Conoy chief, Old Sack. In a letter written for him by Thomas Cookson of Lancaster to the Governor of Pennsylvania, Old Sack briefly recounts the history of his people and informs the Governor of his decision to leave Conoytown and relocate at Shamokin. Excavations at Conoytown in 1970 by the William Penn Memorial Museum revealed several pits and a possible house outline in the village. Seventy-five bundle burials in the village cemetery were accompanied by trade good grave offerings, including flintlock pistols, mirrors, clasp knives, catlinite and glass beads, engraved shells, objects of brass and pewter, and thousands of wampum beads (Kent 1971).

Pennsylvania records indicate that between 1718 and 1735 the “Ganawese” sent representatives to councils held in Philadelphia and Conestogoe to renew the old League of Friendship originally contracted with William Penn in 1682 (Keyser 1882). The Ganawese are recorded as a separate tribe, along with the Lenni Lenape (Delaware), Mengue (Six Nations), the “Shawnee,” and the Conestoga (Kent 1971).

The Conoy were formally incorporated into the Iroquois Confederacy in 1753. Progressive movement northward brought them to Catawissa and Wyoming, Pennsylvania. By 1763 four small nations—the Nanticoke and Conoy of the Algonquian family and the Tutelo and Saponi of Siouan affiliation—were living near each other in southern New York State on the upper Susquehanna. The total population numbered about 500 persons (Speck 1927) of whom 150 were Conoy (Swanton 1952).

The final historical references to the Conoy as a distinct tribe are to the “Kanoii” chief, Wilakuko, who represented his people at a meeting of the Council of the Six Nations in Easton, Pennsylvania in 1777 (Speck 1927) and a conference in Detroit in 1793 where they signed with the symbol of a wild turkey (Mooney 1889). At that time the tribe numbered fifty persons. By that time the former land of the Necostins had become the national capital.

While it has been suggested that the Conoy were absorbed into the Mohican and Delaware tribes as they moved westward to the Ohio Valley (Mooney 1889), the Record Book of the Six Nations for 1845 includes a group of families which Speck (1927) believes can be identified as the Conoy element among the Nanticoke who were incorporated into the Iroquois Confederation and later settled on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. Families of the same names who still remembered Algonquian terms were interviewed by Speck between 1914 and 1925.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The Conoy nation, of which the Piscataway were a part, had been displaced by Europeans by the end of the seventeenth century, but many descendants of these ancient Washingtonians still reside in the area. With the resurgence of interest among contemporary American Indians in reestablishing a definable ethnic identity, the Piscataway of southern Maryland have emerged once again as a distinct, if scattered tribe. The twenty-seventh chief of the Piscataway is Turkey Tayac, now in his eighties. Mr. Tayac has practiced herbal medicine in and around southern Maryland for decades. He attends most of the regional meetings on archaeology and ethnology and is well-known to the Washington anthropological community. He was the subject of an oral history research project conducted in 1974 by Kelly Giorgio of George Washington University. Mr. Tayac is also assisting William Leap of American University in his attempt to reconstruct the Piscataway language. Leap is working with the partly-translated seventeenth-century catechism of Father Andrew White, Speck’s Piscataway vocabularies of the 1920’s, and those words whose meanings are still known to Mr. Tayac.

Turkey Tayac’s son William Tayac (whose former family name was Proctor) has become a very active leader in establishing Indian rights in the area (Fig. 20). In 1974,
following a conflict with the National Park Service, the Piscataway incorporated under Maryland law as a nonprofit organization called the Piscataway Conoy Indians, Incorporated. According to Mr. Tayac, the organization now has over eight hundred members, mostly located in Prince George's and Charles Counties, Maryland. Many members of this organization were drawn from the Wesorts, an isolated southern Maryland community of Caucasian-Indian and sometimes Negro descent.

The Piscataways' problems with governmental regulations actually began with the first European contact in 1634, when Leonard Calvert sailed the Dove up the Potomac to the large village of Moyaone on Piscataway Creek. By 1669 the Indians' territory at Moyaone had been reduced to a twenty-acre reserve; by the end of the seventeenth century the Piscataway were further restricted to a wooden fort on the margins of Zekiah Swamp. The tribe was completely dispersed early in the following century.

In 1969 Turkey Tayac allegedly turned over the original twenty acres of reserved land to the National Park Service to be incorporated in the 4,200 acre preserve which makes up Piscataway Park. Although Mr. Tayac claims he had a verbal agreement with the Department of Interior giving him access to the land and the right to be buried in the Piscataway ancestral cemetery, the National Park Service denies any knowledge of the agreement and cites the inability of the Piscataway to produce a legal document to this effect. An armed confrontation occurred between the Park Service and several Piscataway over rights to the land in the spring of 1974; the issue is still unresolved.

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As the ancient inhabitants of the nation's capital reemerge from prehistory, archeological discoveries continue to be made in Washington as well. Recent legislation protecting archaeological sites and requiring professional surveys of areas impacted by technological change have produced excellent research in the Anacostia area and along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. In the 1960's, Smithsonian archaeologists Henry Wright and George Phoebus made a compilation of known sites and literature on Washington archeology. The Smithsonian Collections from the area have recently been restructured by Joseph Brown.

New finds continue to be made within the District of Columbia, although controlled excavation is still the exception rather than the rule. In 1975 National Park Service curator Robert S. Marshall, not a professional archaeologist himself, conducted salvage operations on excavations for the President's swimming pool on the grounds of the White House. In fill that had been removed for the pool, Marshall discovered seventeen chips, flakes and other debris of quartz and quartzite, two quartz points, a broken biface or blank and a fragment of pottery. The site was apparently mixed; the two projectile points illustrated in Figure 21 seem to be Archaic type, while the potsherded is from a thin-walled, tempered, cord-pressed vessel typical of the Late Woodland period. A sample of coal found in the excavations was radiocarbon dated by Robert Stuckenrath of the Smithsonian Institution to approximately 1830 A.D., which further supports the concept that site materials are from several different periods. Archaeology students from Montgomery County College (Maryland), under

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**FIGURE 21**

_Artifacts from the Excavations of the White House Swimming Pool_
the direction of Jack Young, are conducting salvage operations on the soil transported from the pool site in an attempt to reconstruct the cultural sequence.

Subsequent excavations in the President's Park on the White House ellipse revealed more artifacts in 1976. A broken biface, a small projectile point and a flake of quartz were discovered here by Marshall, along with a sizeable collection of historic ceramics, glass, and bone materials. The projectile point, illustrated in Figure 22, seems to be an arrow point of Woodland affiliation.

Marshall's discoveries at the White House clearly indicate that the story of Washington's prehistory is far from told, in spite of the neglect that it has received at the hands of archaeologists in the past. William Henry Holmes (1890:32) stated: "So numerous indeed are [the remains] in certain localities that they are brought in with every load of gravel from the creek beds, and the laborer who sits by the wayside breaking bowlders for our streets each year passes them by the thousands beneath his hammer; and it is literally true that this city, the capital of a civilized nation, is paved with the art remains of a race who occupied its site in the shadowy past."

As indicated in this study, the "shadowy past" of Washington is a history extending some 10 to 12,000 years, from the terminal stages of the Wisconsin glacial epoch to the final retreat of the American Indian from this area at the end of the seventeenth century. Many of the problems which remain to be solved in the prehistory of Washington may be expected to be of significant consequence for the solution of some of the major issues in Eastern North American archaeology. The increased awareness of the importance of research in this area promises that the capital's prehistory will not remain in the shadows.

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