

INDIAN ARROWHEADS

are the "GEMS" of the Carolina Piedmont

By Ron Harris

Reminders of North Carolina's earliest inhabitants appear in the form of Indian arrowheads that were once plentiful in central North Carolina. These Carolina gems have been found in almost every area of North Carolina, especially in the central Piedmont region. There are numerous collectors throughout that area who have hunted, traded, bought and otherwise accumulated collections of various sizes over the past decades.

The earliest inhabitants of what is now North Carolina were the Paleo Indians of the Clovis Culture, who made beautifully flaked stone Clovis points. Fluted channels on the points aided in "hafting" or attaching them to a spear shaft. Clovis points date back 10,000 to 12,000 years ago and are infrequently found at various locations throughout North Carolina as well as other areas the United States. Clovis points are highly prized by collectors and are displayed with pride, considering their rarity.

Later cultures, like the Hardaway people, inhabited various areas of the Piedmont region in slightly greater numbers than did the Clovis. The Hardaway technology in the making of flint-tipped spears or "atlatl" darts changed to what is called the Hardaway-Dalton, and Hardaway side-notched style points. The Hardaway culture existed in what archaeologists term the early archaic period or about 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. Later prehistoric cultures or traditions to evolve in North Carolina included Palmer, Kirk, Rowan, Stanly, Morrow Mountain, Guilford, Halifax and Savannah River. These cultures existed through the early, mid and late archaic

periods with a time span of 3,000 to 10,000 years ago. Spear points and flint knives from these traditions are found on knolls or ridges near streams and natural springs where these cultures camped while in search of fruit, nuts and wild game for food. These earliest inhabitants of North Carolina were considered "hunters and gatherers."

The bow and arrow wasn't introduced into use in North Carolina until sometime in the millennium after the birth of Christ. This was the Woodland period that dates from 3,000 years ago until around AD 1400. Projectile points during this period were small and triangular-shaped. These flint points were actually the first "true" arrowheads. They are found on Woodland period sites close to major rivers, streams and water sources. By this time, the Woodland people were more settled in their way of life and engaged in the planting, growing and harvesting of crops in the rich fertile river bottoms along major Piedmont waterways and their tributaries. Arrowheads from this period are called Yadkin, Eared Yadkin, Pee Dee, and Uwharrie. These are all named after major rivers in the area near where they are found.

European contact with the indigenous Native Americans began in the early 1600s and into the 1700s. This period of time is called the Historic period. Arrowheads used by the Native Americans during this period are called Caraway, Randolph and Hillsboro types.

The projectile points and cutting blades made and used by the ancient natives were essential for their survival and existence at that point in our prehistory. Today, however, many consider these flint points or artifacts as gems and even objects of ancient art. They are highly prized, treasured and collected by both old and young alike.

In the past, archaeologists excavated stratified (layered) sites where prehistoric people once camped or existed. They were able to establish a chronological sequence of the various ancient cultures and their associated projectile points by the carbon dating process. That is how we are able to differentiate between the various point types found today in plowed fields, gullies, washouts, riverbanks, construction sites, and elsewhere. Credit for establishing this culture sequence is given to the late Dr. Joffre Coe of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In the 1940s and 1950s, he completed scientific surveys and excavations of stratified sites at Hardaway, Doershuck and Gaston among others.



These arrowheads in the Harris collection were found during many years of surface hunting in fields of the Piedmont region where Indians lived hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years ago.

E A D S



ABOVE: This Hardaway side-notched projectile point from the Harris collection was found in Stokes County. These points are considered to be among the oldest artifacts of North Carolina's prehistoric cultures, dating to about 10,000 years ago. It is a 2 1/2-inch fluted point, thinned at the base to facilitate hafting (attaching) to a shaft. It probably was used to tip a dart or spear shaft, because the bow and arrow were not introduced to the area until thousands of years later.

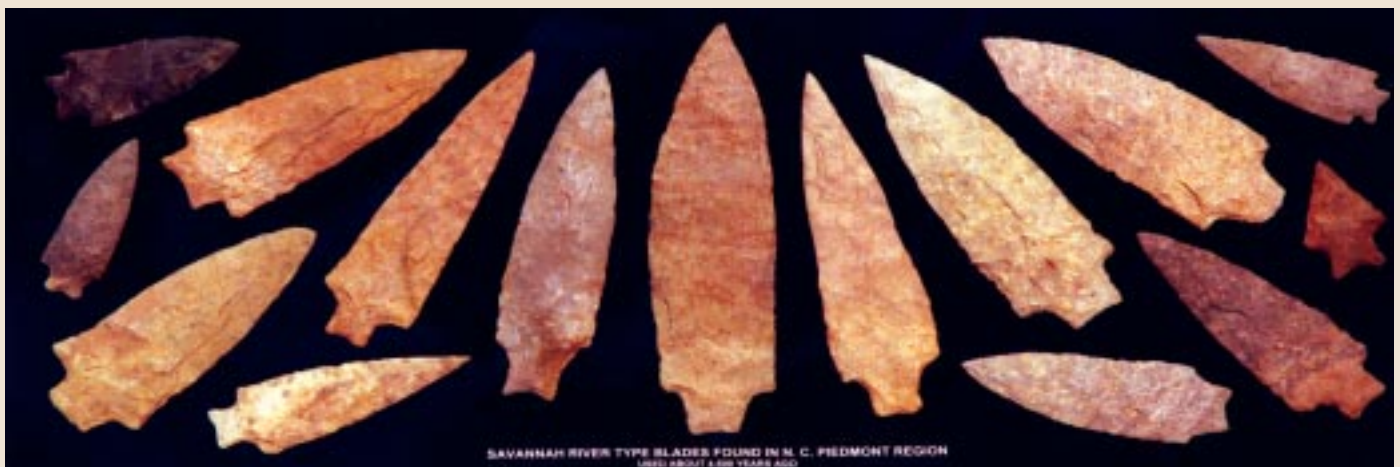


LEFT: Ron Harris holds a prized Southern trophy stone axe head found in 1940 by a friend of his father's, who later donated it to the Harris collection. The axe was found at Lyle Creek, near Conover in Catawba County. Considered one of the finest ever found in the state, the axe has been featured in several archaeological publications. Harris is shown in his "relic room" with Indian arrowheads and artifacts found in the Piedmont region. His collection is included in the *Who's Who in Indian Relics* reference guide.

Interest in Indian prehistory and the collecting of their arrowheads was so great that the Piedmont Archaeology Society of North and South Carolina was formed several decades ago and is still going strong. It is composed of individuals, enthusiasts, hobbyists, amateur archaeologists, educators and collectors who are genuinely interested in learning from and preserving the remnants of prehistoric life in North Carolina.

The Piedmont Society holds at least three or four relic shows each year at various locations in North and South Carolina. Admission is free and hundreds of member collectors and the general public as well attend to swap stories, display their artifacts, buy, sell, trade and generally exchange archaeological research information and updates.

BELOW: Examples of Savannah River type projectile points found near the Uwharrie National Forest in Randolph, Montgomery, Davidson and Stanly counties. The center blade is about 7 1/2 inches long.



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