

## THE SPACE FARMS MUSEUM COLLECTION OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA ARTIFACTS

**Jim Glanville**

### **Abstract**

This article describes a large and hitherto mostly unrecognized trove of Southwest Virginia artifacts on display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum in New Jersey. This facility is a regionally well-known tourist attraction located in the northernmost county of New Jersey about an hour's drive west of New York City. It was founded in 1927 by the late Ralph Space and continues to operate today under the management of the Space family. On display in the museum are an estimated 24,000 archeological artifacts from Southwest Virginia. At least as early as 1932, Ralph Space was collaborating on amateur excavations in Smyth County with local resident Rufus Pickle and continued to visit the county until 1984 – nine years after Pickle's death. The vast storehouse of relics at the museum resulted from their long collaboration. This article describes the Pickle-Space collaboration and pictures many of the artifacts on permanent display at the museum. Displayed artifacts include points, pots, celts, discoidals, pipes, etc., characteristic of Holstonia (the drainage of the forks of the Holston River in Virginia). Noteworthy in the display are over 100 marine shell gorgets, about one-sixth of which are engraved. Information in this article comes primarily from the author's forthcoming book (Glanville n.d.).

### **Archeology in Southwest Virginia**

The purpose of this opening section is to provide a backdrop for what follows by summarizing some of the more important citations to the formal archeological literature of the region. As this paper highlights, formal Late Woodland Period archeological knowledge of Southwest Virginia is slight, particularly when compared with what is known about the comparable time period in the nearby regions of northeastern Tennessee, the North Carolina Piedmont, and the Appalachian Summit.

Any study of Southwest Virginia archeology can usefully begin with the Smithsonian survey (Holland 1970). In that survey many sites in the region are briefly described, often including information from the relic hunters who were at that time actively mining them for saleable artifacts. Most of the sites that Holland described even today have not received formal investigation and lack professional reports. Such sites along the North Fork of the Holston River near Saltville include multicomponent complexes at Broadford and Buchanan in Smyth County and similar

sites upstream and downstream from Mendota in Washington County.

Two studies that provide an overview of the regional archeology are one that proposed a Late Woodland Period village culture in Southwest Virginia (MacCord 1989) and a second that noted additional sites and recognized that studies of regional archeology were incomplete inasmuch as that they failed to take account activities of the amateur diggers and relic hunters (Egloff 1992).

Some of the semiprofessional excavations in Washington County undertaken by the members of the Wolf Hills Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia have been made available in a collected volume (Bartlett 1997). The work in the region by the amateur Emory Jones has also been compiled into a collected volume (Jones 2001).

Despite its being focused more on the New River Valley than on Southwest Virginia, many relevant references and a useful bibliography are provided in an article in a collective work examining Native Americans and the early Virginia frontier (Barber and Barfield 1997).

The richness of artifacts from Saltville and vicinity and the unprofessional manner of its excavation were noted nearly 60 years ago by the recently deceased former editor of this journal, C. G. "Gillie" Holland. He wrote in an editorial:

One hears of fabulous Saltville with its cemeteries and of rude men who go around that region with their noses to the ground smelling out dollars in Indian pots and spelling out loss to some greater advantage than just their own [Holland 1948].

Recently, based on the richness of locally found artifacts, the possibility has been raised that Saltville was the center of a Late Woodland Period chiefdom (Barber 1996; Barber and Barfield 2000; Meyers 2002).

Very recently, professional reports based on limited excavations at Chilhowie and Saltville have appeared (Boyd 2005; Boyd, Boyd, Barber, and Gardner 2005).

### Ralph Space

The late Ralph Space (1902-1986) of New Jersey was a true American original (Figure 1). He was a school dropout, a bootlegger, and at a young age a self-made wealthy man. He was also a friend of George Gustav Heye, the legendary artifact collector of heroic ambition and accomplishment whose enormous collection at the Museum of the American Indian in New York eventually moved to Washington and became the basis for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian that opened on the Mall in Washington in 2004 (Force 1999; Kidwell 1999; Carpenter 2005).

Space was bitten hard and early by the bug of archeology as a child growing up in New Jersey. In what was then rural and largely undeveloped farming country he found abundant stone points and began collecting them. Today, in the museum he founded, there is displayed a small board of 37 points labeled: "Ralph Space's First Indian Relic Collection – arranged by Ralph Space at the age of ten years old in 1912."

Much biographical information about

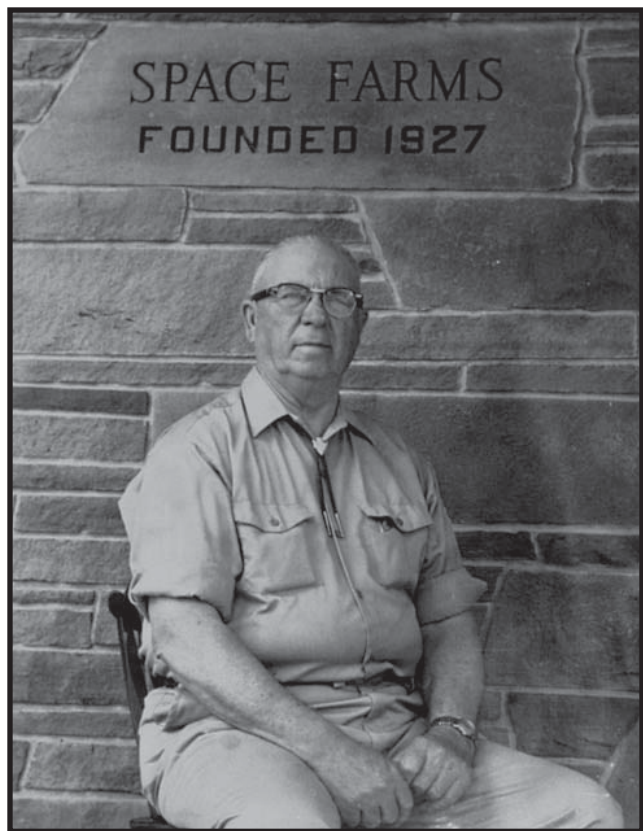


Figure 1. Ralph Space aged about 75. This is a picture of a photograph on display at Space Farms Zoo and Museum in Beemerville, Sussex County, New Jersey, about 60 miles west of New York City. Except where noted, the above and all other pictures in this article are by the author.

Ralph Space is provided by his granddaughter Lori Space Day in her book about growing up as the zoo keeper's daughter (Day 2004). Other biographical details were provided by Ralph Space's son Fred Space (2006, personal communication). Fred Space is Lori's father and the "zoo keeper" of the title of her book.

Although details are lacking, Ralph Space's various ventures, legal and illegal, during the 1920s must have been quite successful, and by the end of the decade he seems already to have become a wealthy man. In 1927, he founded the Space Farms operations (Space Farms 2006), which continue today, and eventually came to incorporate the present zoo and museum. Around this time he also made the first of what were to be many trips to Africa, and other exotic locales, in pursuit of big game. Today, the walls of the

main hall of the museum are covered with animal skins and mounted animal heads recovered during those hunts.

Collecting became his lifelong passion – and he collected in many different categories. Today at Space Farms one can view a large collection of rare Americana. In addition to Indian artifacts, the collection includes 50 antique cars, antique carriages and wagons, old farm tools and equipment, antique dolls and toys, rocks and minerals, an enormous collection of guns, and big game trophies from around the world.

During the early 1930s Space became involved in the mink business. It was an enterprise that involved not just selling mink pelts, but also raising and selling mink breeding stock. According to Fred Space, the mink business really pulled in the money during the 1930s. Later, in the 1960s, when the mink operations became less profitable, farming and tourism took over as important sources of income.

The earliest date on record for Ralph Space actively relic collecting in Smyth County is January 1, 1933. Records at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian tell that on that date 16 bone pendants, collected in Saltville by Ralph Space, were presented to the museum (Pat Nietfeld 2004, personal communication). So Space had certainly been digging in Smyth County by at least 1932 and perhaps several years earlier.

Subsequently, Space was for 50 years a regular visitor to Southwest Virginia. He did make the trip every year, but rather arrived periodically at two to three year intervals. In 1975, Space attended Rufus Pickle's funeral in Marion. Even after that he visited Pickle's daughter Freda Chapman in Marion several times before he himself died in 1985. She recalls his final visit occurring in 1984 (Freda Chapman 2005, personal communication).

### Rufus Pickle

According to family tradition, Rufus Wilson Pickle (1896-1975), who is shown in Figure 2, was born in North Carolina and brought to Saltville as



Figure 2. Rufus Pickle is seen here towards the end of his life among the artifacts in his basement collection. Picture by Tom Totten, circa 1974. Original in the author's files.

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a very young child.

Pickle was raised in the Lick Skillet section of Saltville ("On the Skillet," as local parlance has it). He married Ida Sparks in 1924 and became stepfather to her two sons. Apparently his habit of acquiring archeological and Indian relics was established early in life. After the birth of their daughter Freda, in 1926, the family moved to a brick house in the Allison's Gap section of Saltville with an external garage that Pickle maintained as a museum. Pickle's obituary in the *Saltville Progress* on Wednesday, December 17, 1975, after reporting his death in a Marion hospital at the age of 79, simply said "He was a collector of Indian relics."

For a time, Pickle worked as a plumber and pipe fitter at the Mathieson Alkali Works in Saltville and later as a heating and plumbing teacher at Washington County Technical Center

in Abingdon. In 1951 the Pickle family moved to a house in Marion, where he made a basement museum. The years Pickle spent teaching were among the happiest of his life. Naturally gregarious, "He could talk to a ground hog," said someone who knew him well. A "plumber cum archeologist [who] bounces enthusiastically from one display to the next lovingly handling the handiwork of 'a great people' caught up in the rapture of discovery," was the way one newspaper reporter described him (Calhoun 1973).

In the 1940s Pickle published three articles in the *Tennessee Archaeologist*. The first of these reported the finding of a Folsom-like point near mastodon remains in sink-holes in Saltville's well fields during a collaborative excavation with "Mr. Ralph Space of Sussex, N. J." (Pickle 1946).

This paper, in which Pickle wrote of finding mastodon bones that displayed "indications of human handiwork," represents his single most significant contribution to archeology. The paper's significance was recognized at the time of its publication by the editor of the *Tennessee Archaeologist* who appended a footnote to the paper commenting on "the remarkable find reported by Mr. Pickle." Speaking of this paper, 20 years later, Howard MacCord wrote: "What we need, and need badly in Virginia, is to find human bones or artifacts reliably associated with bones of some of the big game animals.... The one 'almost' find we have on record so far is that by R. W. Pickle in Saltville, Va." (MacCord 1964).

Pickle's second *Tennessee Archaeologist* article described several Southwest Virginia

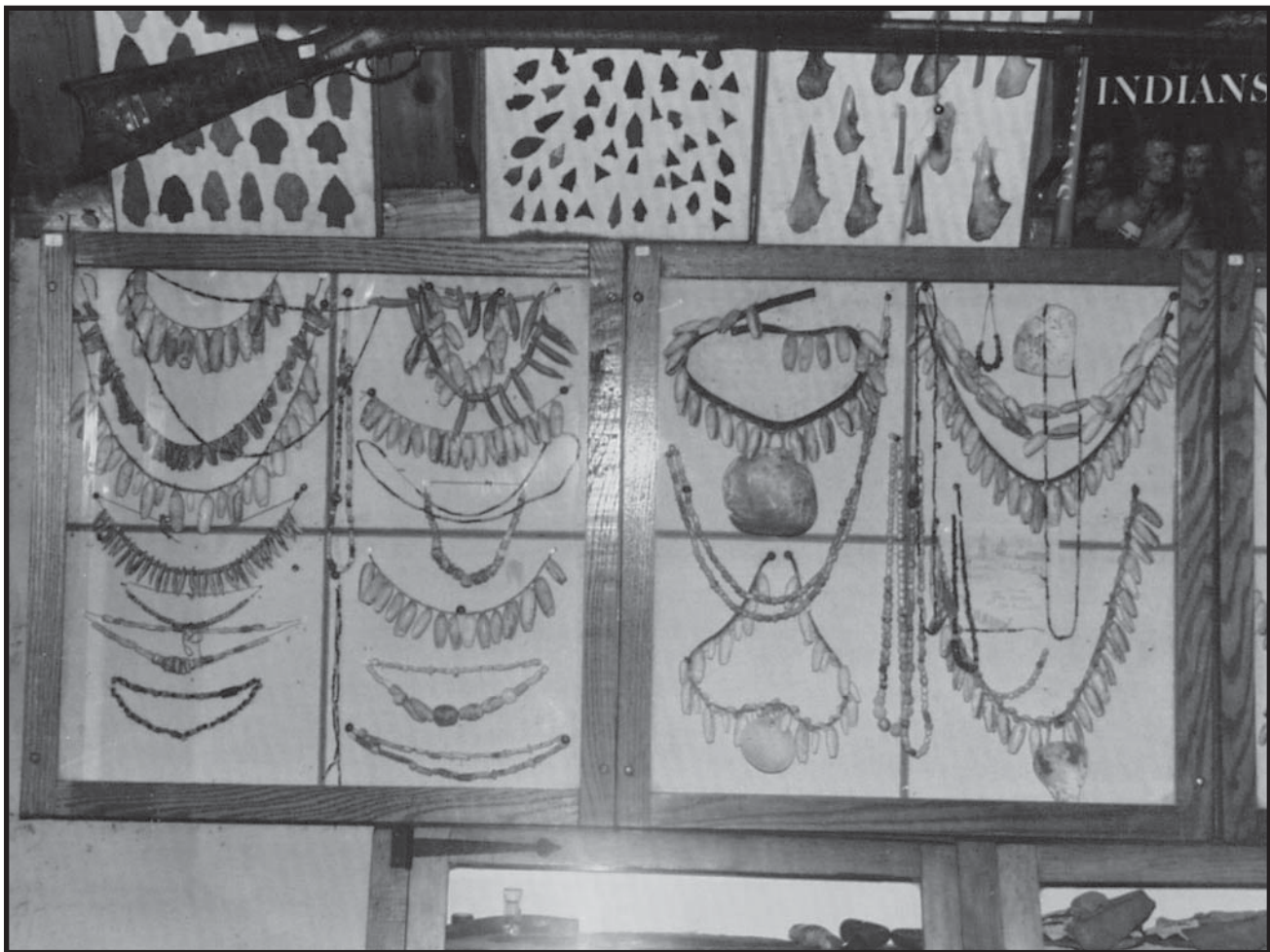


Figure 3. Part of Rufus Pickle's basement relic collection. Following Pickle's death, the collection was transferred from Pickle's home in Marion to the Space Farms Zoo and Museum in Beemerville, New Jersey. The author believes that many of the objects seen above are currently on display there. Picture by Tom Totten, circa 1974. Original in the author's file.

artifacts, including a point embedded in a piece of chestnut wood railing and four marine shell gorgets – three of which were engraved (Pickle 1947). The chestnut-embedded point and the three engraved gorgets are currently on display in the Space Farms Museum and will be described later in this article.

Pickle's third short *Tennessee Archaeologist* article described marine shell beads he found in a cave 10 miles west of Saltville (Pickle 1949).

In 1971 Saltville historian and newspaper columnist Frank Sanders prepared a eight-part series of articles about Pickle (Sanders 1971a through 1971h). Published just four years before the end of his life, these articles provide a broad, informal account of Pickle's career as a relic collector and describe his basement collection as seen in Figures 2 and 3. Pickle's career as a *tombarolo* (a term the author has adopted to describe individuals who were too serious to be regarded simply as grave robbers, but insufficiently serious to be regarded as proper archeologists) was included in a recent survey of improper archeology in and around Saltville (Glanville 2005).

### The Space-Pickle Collaboration

We will probably never know the circumstances under which the paths of Ralph Space and Rufus Pickle crossed. But Space loved Indian artifacts and by 1930 had the money to buy the very best. Pickle was a vigorous digger who lived where abundant Indian artifacts were available to be dug. So when they did meet, a lifelong relationship ensued. Their partnership is memorialized by the signs such as that shown in Figure 4 dotted throughout the relic collection in the Space Farms Museum.

After Pickle died, the contents of his basement museum were soon transported to Space Farms. The Pickle family believes that in the Pickle-Space collaboration there was an agreement that the surviving partner would purchase the entire collection of the deceased partner. In addition to Indian relics, Pickle had a large collection of guns. Fred Space, on the other hand,

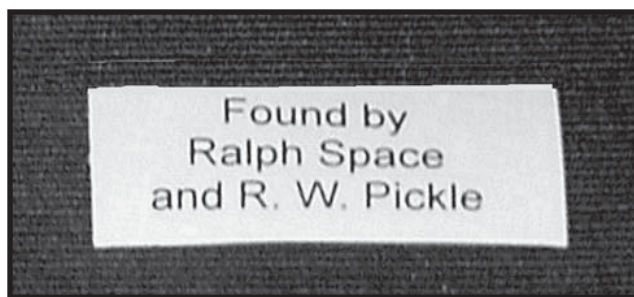


Figure 4. A half-dozen signs such as this scattered through the museum exhibit cases tell of the origin of the items on display.

thinks that Pickle was a paid collaborator of his father, and that the collection was always Space's, although it was allowed to remain in Marion as long as Pickle lived (Fred Space 2006, personal communication). Whatever the truth of the matter, it is not of much consequence for our purpose here, which is mainly to describe the collection.

Except for some boards of artistically arranged points (sold after Space's death to raise money to pay estate taxes), most of the collection survives intact and available for study. Unfortunately, none of the artifacts in the collection has any associated provenience information. The author's opinion is that we can be fairly sure that most of the items came from Smyth and Washington counties and center around Saltville. Beyond that, all other information is either lost or was never recorded in the first place.

Sadly, this wonderful collection remains uncataloged. The only inventory of the collection consists of a tabulation made in connection with an IRS investigation to assess Space's estate taxes. This tax inventory lacks any useful archeological information. Rather, it is an accountant's appraisal, listing prices and estimates of artifact values, but not giving any account of dates and places where the artifacts were dug (Fred Space 2006, personal communication).

### Prior References to the Space Collection

For a collection of Virginia artifacts of this size and importance, the Space Collection is almost totally unreported and unknown. The collection has apparently never been mentioned in the published



Figure 5. The principal row of display cases containing Southwest Virginia artifacts at Space Farms. The cases are each about five feet high and together stretch for about 40 feet. Each contains three shelves full of artifacts. Four cases are visible in the photograph, the fifth (shown in Figure 6) is behind the camera.

archival literature. The only written reference to the Space collection seems to be several sets of remarks in an unpublished survey and inventory of Saltville's archeological resources (McDonald 1985). The four quotations that follow are taken from that survey.

The most notable collection of prehistoric artifacts is that belonging to Ralph Space, Sussex, New Jersey. This huge collection of 24,000 items was collected primarily by Space, Rufus Pickle, and Rob[e]y Maiden

between the 1920s and 1960s. This collection had minimal documentation, and even this was lost during a tornado in the early 1980s [McDonald 1985:1].

Robey Maiden mentioned above was like Pickle, a well-known local *tombarolo* whose story was also told in the recent survey of regional improper archeology (Glanville 2005).

The most extensive amateur collection of archeological resources from Saltville was accumulated by Rufus Pickle, with the assistance of his friend Ralph Space. This collection is still intact at the Space Museum in Sussex [County], New Jersey, but all of the written records that accompanied this collection when it was moved to New Jersey reportedly were lost during a tornado in the early 1980s (Ralph Space, pers. comm., Dec. 7, 1984) [McDonald 1985:9].

The tornado struck on September 3, 1981 (possibly 1980, Fred Space was not completely certain about the year). It took the roof off the main display building after touching down only 1/4-mile away. There was rain in the building and 150 volunteer firemen moved artifacts from the open air portion of the building to still-covered parts. Not one artifact was lost during this operation, a fact that Fred Space cites as a tribute to the integrity of the members of the local fire and rescue teams (Fred Space 2006, personal communication). As noted above, some artifacts may have subsequently been sold, but the far greater part of the collection remains intact to the present time.

The Rufus Pickle-Ralph Space collection contains several Dalton, Hardaway-Dalton, and Hardaway side-notched projectile points, all of which types are considered to date from before ca. 10,000 yr B.P. [McDonald 1985:12].

The author saw many points during his visit to Space Farms, but lacking time made no attempt to assess them.



Figure 6. Some of the pots and mortars and pestles on permanent display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum. This is the fifth display case in the principal row, the one unseen behind the camera in Figure 5. The object in the background behind the pots that looks like a zebra skin is a zebra skin.

The Ralph Space collection contains an estimated 24,000 artifacts; most specimens reportedly are from Saltville and all are in good condition. It is clear that undesirable debitage - and the information it contained - was never collected [McDonald 1985:15].

The fourth McDonald quotation immediately above is important because it establishes a general provenience for the entire collection. Rufus Pickle was already dead by the time MacDonald investigated the collection, and elsewhere in the inventory and survey McDonald refers to having had personal communication with Ralph Space. So when McDonald writes that "most specimens reportedly are from Saltville" it is a reasonable inference that Ralph Space himself was the source of that provenience information.

Excellent additional information about Space Farms came during a chance meeting of the author with Billy Lea (2006, personal communication) of Carthage, North Carolina. Lea, a former collector of Indian relics, had exchanged correspondence with Fred Space in 1987 and subsequently visited the museum, met him, and saw the collection. It was Lea who convinced the author he needed to visit Beemerville.

### Views of the Collection

Figures 5 and 6 show the principal row of the display cases containing artifacts from Southwest Virginia. In Figure 5, in the case in the immediate foreground, the top shelf is thickly covered with shell bead necklaces; on the middle shelf, many pointed tools made from animal bones can

be seen; on the bottom shelf can be seen a few of the museum's enormous collection of stone celts. Fred Space can just be made out standing in the far distance – near the case that contains the engraved marine shell gorgets in the collection.

Points and boards of points are mainly located on the wall opposite the principal display cases. The points shown in Figure 7 are among the few on display that are labeled and archeologically classified. Most of the spear points on display at the museum are incorporated into "artistic" display boards such as the one shown in Figure 8.

Rufus Pickle was well known locally for his interest in the megafauna fossils that are abundant in the Saltville Valley. Many of his larger specimens he partially encased in concrete as a conservation measure. Several examples of such specimens on display in the museum can be seen in Figure 9.

Polished stone artifacts are particularly abundant in the Pickle-Space collection. Some of the many stone axes are shown in the principal row of display cases in Figure 10. Some of the many game stones and so-called discoidals are shown in Figure 11 as they are exhibited in the

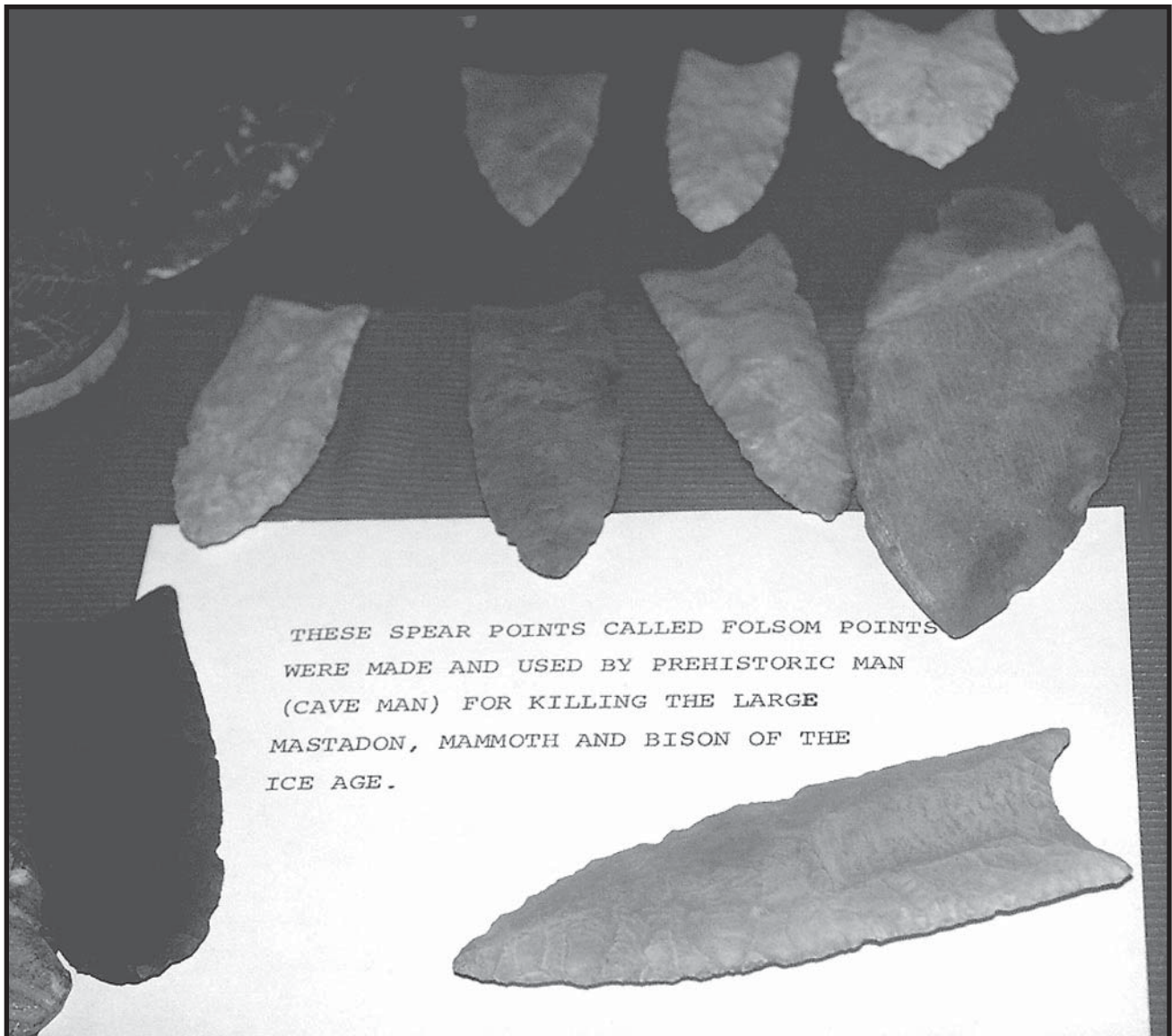


Figure 7. Points on permanent display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum. The label reads: "These spear points, called Folsom points, were made and used by prehistoric man (cave man) for killing the large mastadon [sic], mammoth, and bison of the Ice Age."



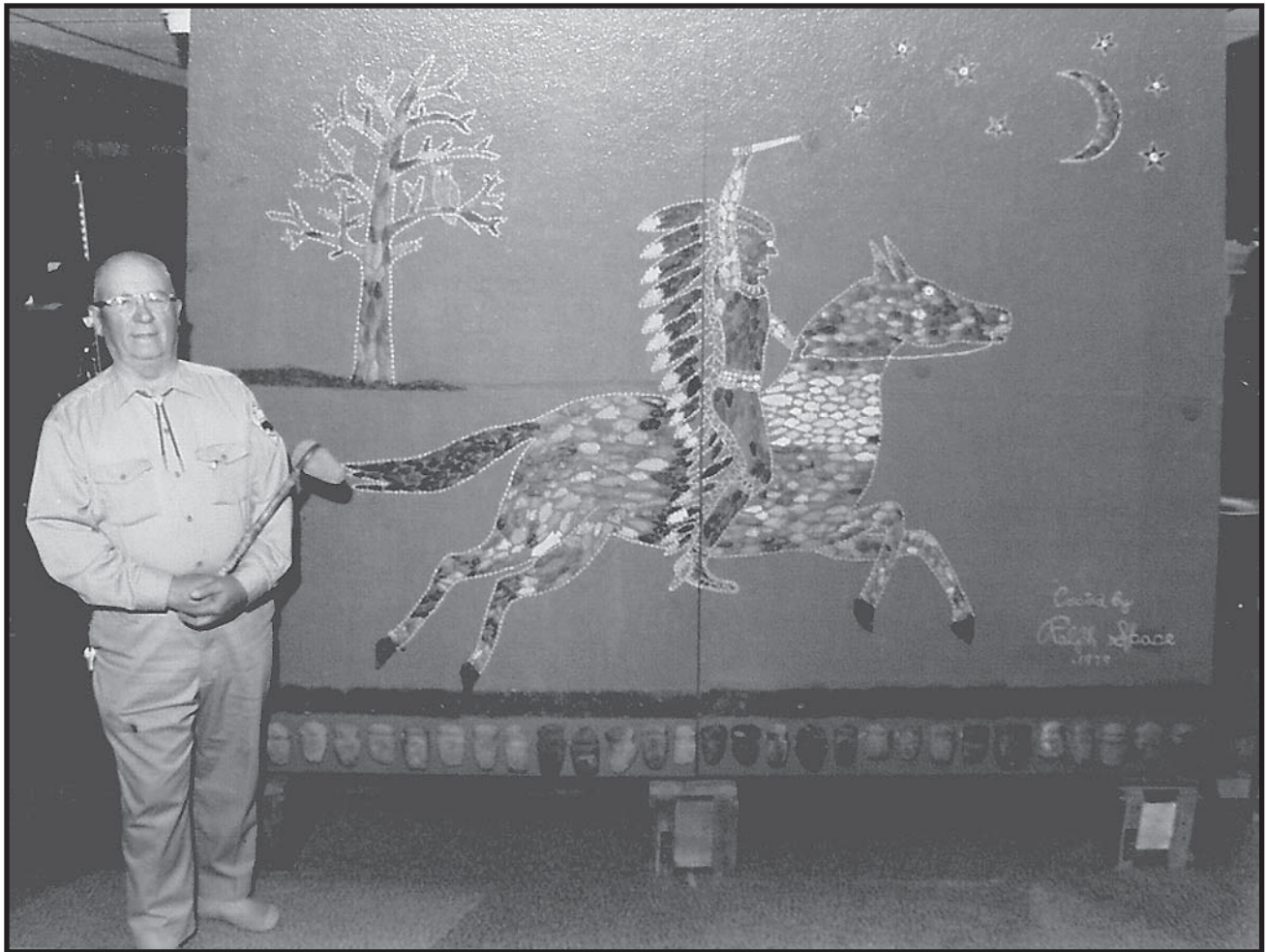


Figure 8. Ralph Space is seen here with one of his arranged boards of points. The legend in the bottom right hand corner reads: "Created by Ralph Space, 1977." This image is of a photograph on display in the private office area of the museum. Readers will note the irony of points from an ancient Southwest Virginia native culture being assembled into the shape of a horse – a creature that arrived in the Americas with the Spanish in the sixteenth century.

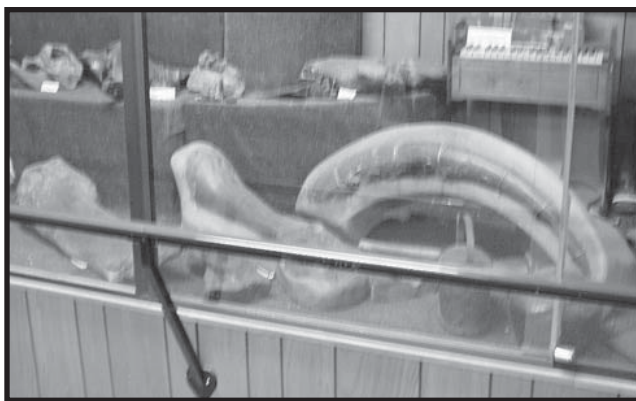


Figure 9. Megafauna remains: a large bone and a tusk stabilized in concrete are seen in this display, which is separate from the principal row of display cases.

principal row of museum display cases.

Copper artifacts from Saltville and its vicinity have been regularly described and reported in the anecdotal literature. For example, in 1933 the amateur archeologist Nathan Brisco (Brisco n.d.; Glanville 2005) donated an object described as a copper gorget found on the south bank of the Holston River three miles east of Broadford (probably the Buchanan site) to the National Museum of Natural History (James Krakker 2004, personal communication). In a 1965 newspaper article, Robey Maiden was quoted by Mack Blackwell as saying in connection with copper artifacts:

...most all of the copper Indian artifacts



Figure 10. Part of the stone axe collection on permanent display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum.



Figure 11. Some of the many game stones and discoidals on permanent display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum.

found in the eastern half of the United States came originally from the extensive aboriginal workings in upper Michigan. In these ancient mines, ore was obtained so nearly pure that it could be hammered and worked as found. All the copper artifacts found in the Saltville site were in the form of beads, and representative samples were tested and found to be native copper [Maiden 1965].

Copper artifacts on display at the Space Museum are shown in Figure 12. Local anecdotal reports say that the Chilhowie High School site, which was heavily plundered by relic collectors

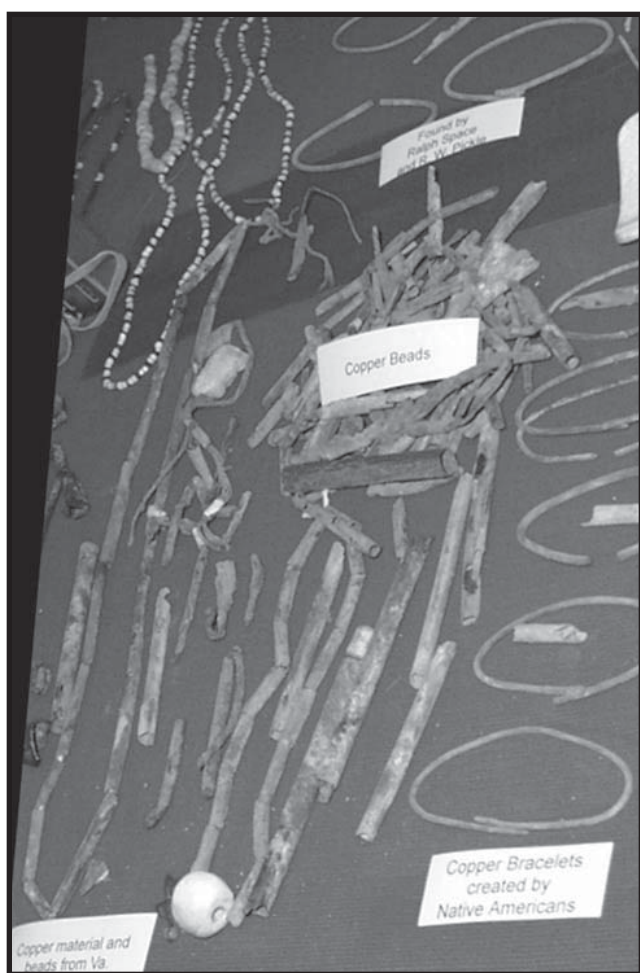


Figure 12. Copper artifacts on permanent display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum. The labels read: "Found by Ralph Space and R. W. Pickle"; "Copper Beads"; "Copper material and beads from Va."; and "Copper Bracelets created by Native Americans."



Figure 13. The arrowhead in chestnut wood on display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum from Smyth County.

during the school's ground breaking and site preparation in 1957, yielded many copper artifacts. It is likely that some of the artifacts shown here came from that site. Other copper artifacts from Chilhowie almost certainly made their way into the collection of the late C. C. Hatfield (Jimmy Hatfield 2005, personal communication).

It has occasionally been possible to recreate the story of an individual artifact using the record of Rufus Pickle's publications. One such object is the arrowhead found in a piece of chestnut wood on display in the museum and pictured in Figure 13.

The arrowhead was described by Pickle in a newspaper interview he gave to local Saltville journalist and amateur historian Frank Sanders. Here are Sanders' question and Pickle's reply (Sanders 1971b):

Sanders: Rufe...how do you know the arrow in the piece of chestnut is genuine?

Pickle: ...A person near Saltville said that a neighbor of his brought in the piece of chestnut, and said he accidentally found it in a log he was cutting up.



Figure 14. Part of the collection of pipes on display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum.



Figure 15. Part of the collection of pipes on display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum.

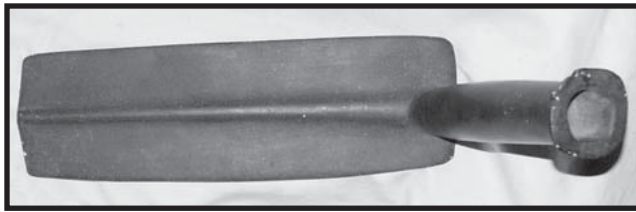


Figure 16, A plaster reproduction of a large ceremonial pipe found by Robey Maiden and sold by him to George Gustav Hays in 1940. The base plate of this reproduction is about 12" long.

### Pipes

Pipes are commonly encountered in relic collections originating in Southwest Virginia. Some of the specimens on display at Space Farms are shown in Figures 14 and 15.

Large ceremonial pipes from Southwest

Virginia have frequently been described in the relic collectors' folklore, though such information has proved difficult to confirm. A photograph of one such pipe, previously in the Saltville collection of Robey Maiden, has been published (Glanville 2005).

The large, alate, angled pipe (Figure 16) on display at the museum appeared to be typical of the large ceremonial pipes frequently said to be associated with Saltville. However, when the author picked it up to pose it for the photograph, he was surprised to discover that it was extremely lightweight and an obvious reproduction. Interestingly, he was already aware of the existence of such a plaster reproduction pipe and thus believes he can reconstruct the object's provenience.

Thanks to detective work in their files by the staff of the National Museum of the Ameri-



Figure 17. Some of the shell artifacts at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum. The label in the foreground reads: "Native American Shell Beads."

can Indian (Pat Nietfeld 2004, personal communication), we know that Robey Maiden sold a large pipe from Saltville to George Gustav Heye in 1940. That sale is described in the letter from Maiden to Heye reproduced below:

Saltville, Virginia, May 17, 1940: Mr. George G Heye, N.Y.C. New York. Dear Sir: I received your check and the cast several days ago. The bowl of this cast was broken from the stem and also a piece about an inch and a half long was broken off alongside this break. Otherwise I like the reproduction very much. I have mended it myself and decided to keep it as it is. Below you will find my receipt. Received from George G. Heye, \$40.00 for large Indian pipe and cast of same. Sincerely, Robey G. Maiden.

The plaster cast pipe mentioned in Maiden's letter must surely have been the object pictured here – the reproduction pipe mended by Maiden and which he almost certainly later sold to Ralph Space.

### **Shell Artifacts**

Southwest Virginia has long been recognized by the relic collecting community as one of the prime sources of well-preserved marine shell artifacts (James Maus 2005, personal communication). Furthermore, for the reasons to be detailed later, studies of engraved marine shell gorgets are particularly valuable in any attempt to understand the life of precontact Southwest Virginians.

Broadly, marine shell artifacts from the Late Woodland Period fall into three categories: (1) beads cut from marine mollusk shells, (2) gorgets cut from marine mollusk shells, and (3) drilled whole shells. Bead and drilled shells were typically strung into necklaces or sewn onto clothing. Examples of objects from all three categories can be seen on display in Figure 17. For the remainder of this article we will focus our attention on the gorgets.

The rich archeological heritage of artistically engraved gorgets in the Tennessee River

Valley, only a couple of hundred miles to the southwest of Saltville, has long been known. That knowledge dates from the early days of burial mound investigations (Holmes 1883). Speaking of gorgets from that region Madeline Kneberg wrote:

Many forms of art expression were associated with the late temple mound period when the ceremonial life of the southern Indians reached its highest development in what is called the Southern Cult. Among such art forms, the engraved shell gorgets represent both technical competence and true aesthetic qualities.

In eastern Tennessee the gorgets are characteristic of the Dallas culture, the local manifestation of the late temple mound culture. The Dallas period we now believe goes back to about 1000 A.D. and lasted up to the beginning of the 18th century [Kneberg 1959].

The aesthetic qualities of engraved shell gorgets are much admired in the art world, and attractive, high quality images of gorgets appear in the glossy publications that record important public exhibitions of Native American art. Notable among these are the lavishly illustrated catalogs of exhibits at the Detroit Institute of Arts (Brose et al. 1985) and the Art Institute of Chicago (Sharp 2004). The second of these catalogs pictured 284 art objects of which 23 were shell gorgets and 10 were other sorts of engraved shell. Thus, engraved shell constituted about 12% of the exhibited objects in Chicago.

Given the widespread recognition of engraved marine shell gorgets as culturally interesting and aesthetically satisfying objects it is surprising that reports of them in the Virginia archeological literature are rare. Not long ago, Howard MacCord wrote "...carved shell gorgets are rare in Virginia, but most known were found in the southwestern counties" (MacCord 1998).

In fact, carved shell gorgets are abundant in Southwest Virginia. Unpublished recent



Figure 18, In November 2005, Jon Muller returned to Saltville for the first time in 40 years. Here, in a private Saltville collection, he is seen once again examining a Holstonian gorget.

research by the author in public and private collections, and among local people, has increased the number of previously documented Southwest Virginia specimens (Brain and Phillips 1996) over five-fold – placing Virginia second only to Tennessee in engraved gorget count, and ahead of states with rich mounds, such as Alabama and Oklahoma.

It is the author's opinion that marine shell gorgets will come to be regarded as the culture-defining artifacts for Southwest Virginia and that had the region been excavated over the past decades by professional archeologists – rather than by amateurs and relic hunters – the abundance and stylistic range of its gorgets would have made the region world famous (Glanville 2006). The gorgets pictured in this article begin to make that case.

Gorgets now in the Pickle-Space collection were first reported and pictured in Jon Muller's Harvard Ph.D. dissertation (Muller 1966a). Muller, recounts that during the summer of 1965 he traveled 25,000 miles through the South in a

Dodge Dart, studying gorgets and photographing them for his dissertation. After leaving Boston and heading south, the first place he encountered gorgets was Saltville, where he met both Rufus Pickle and Robey Maiden (Jon D. Muller 2005, personal communication). Muller is pictured in Figure 18.

The majority of Southwest Virginia gorgets are variants of a highly stylized rattlesnake design. Rattlesnake gorgets have been divided into three major sub-categories or styles: Lick Creek-Brakebill (LCB), Citico-Carters Quarter (CCQ), and Saltville (SVS) (Muller 1966a; Brain and Phillips 1996).

The term "style" is closely related to the anthropological notion of "culture," although both terms have found many definitions (Muller 1966b:26).

Interestingly, while father Ralph Space liked rattlesnake gorgets, son Fred Space liked live rattlesnakes and wrote a book about them (Space 1965). A color picture on the back cover of that book shows Fred Space holding a live rattler.

### Lick Creek-Brakebill Style Gorgets

The dating and geographical range of rattlesnake gorgets (discussed in this and subsequent sections)

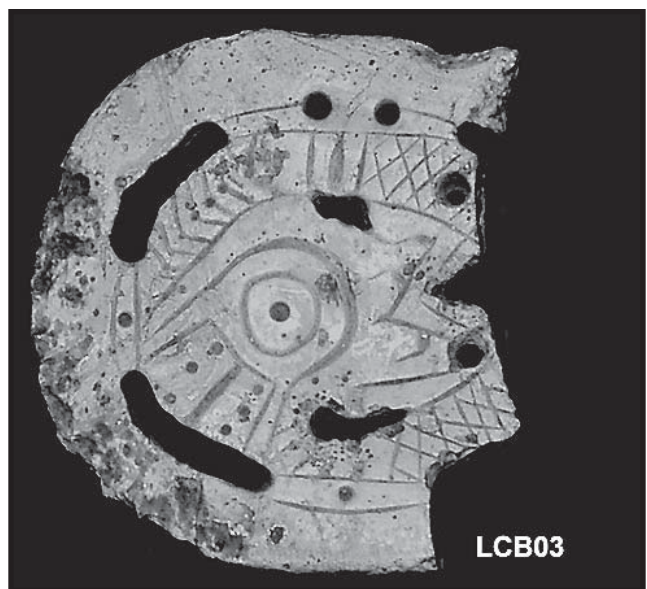


Figure 19. A 3" diameter Lick Creek-Brakebill style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-S7 and said by him to have come from Saltville.

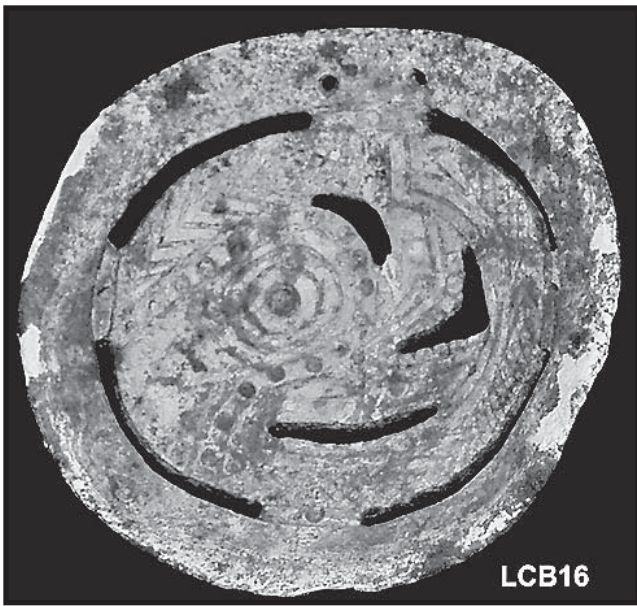


Figure 20. A 4" diameter Lick Creek-Brakebill style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

have been analyzed by Muller (1997:370-379) in connection with the distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods in the Mississippian economy.

The oldest and founding rattlesnake gorgets are in the Lick Creek-Brakebill (LCB) style, which perhaps originated to the northeast



Figure 21. A 2-1/4" diameter Lick Creek-Brakebill style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

of Knoxville, Tennessee, a little after A.D. 1400. There are four LCB style gorgets on display at Space Farms (Figures 19, 20, 21, and 22). The first of these was seen by Muller and is pictured in his dissertation. The other three are here published for the first time.

In addition to Southwest Virginia, many Lick Creek-Brakebill style gorgets have been found in the Appalachian Summit region (Dickens 1976:164-168) and in the Tennessee River Valley (Kneberg 1959; Brain and Phillips 1996:83-91).

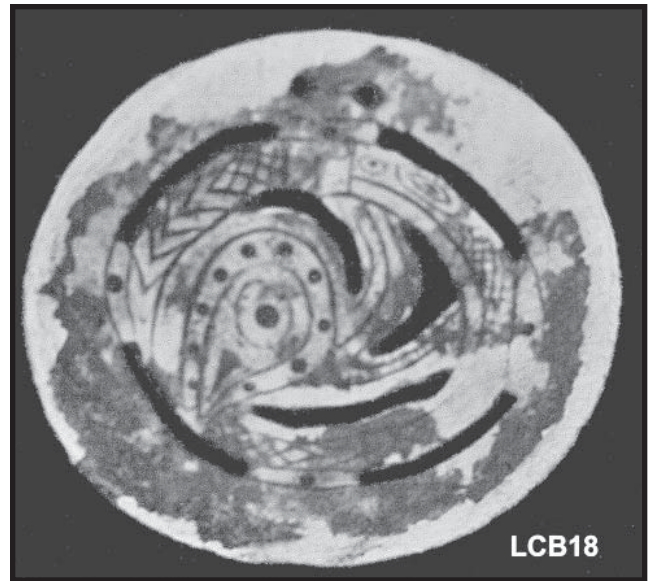


Figure 22. A 3-1/2" diameter Lick Creek-Brakebill style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

### Citico-Carters Quarter Style Gorgets

Both the Citico-Carters Quarter (CCQ) style of gorgets and the Saltville style of gorgets (discussed in the following section) were independent developments that evolved out of the of the Lick Creek-Brakebill style. Jon Muller considers that the Citico style dates to around the time of the de Soto *entrada* (A.D. 1540). Gorgets in the Citico-Carters Quarter style have been found widely spread throughout the Southeast.

There are three Citico-Carters Quarter style gorgets on display at Space Farms (Figures 23, 24, and 25). Two of these were seen by Muller in 1965 and are pictured in his dissertation. The



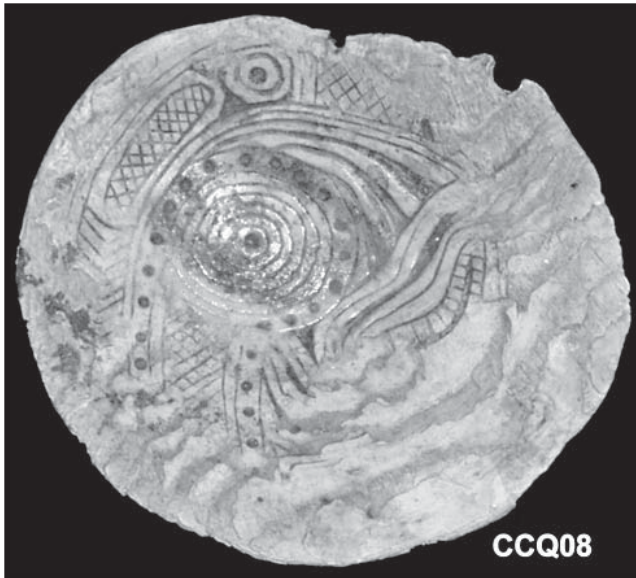


Figure 23. A 4-1/2" diameter Citico-Carters Quarter style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-C3 and said by him to have come from Chilhowie.



Figure 25. A 4" diameter Citico-Carters Quarter style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.



Figure 24. A 5" diameter Citico-Carters Quarter style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-S8 and said by him to have come from Saltville.

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### Saltville Style Gorgets (SvS)

Depending on who's counting, there are about 50 named styles of marine shell gorgets. Most styles were named for places at which early specimens in the named style were found. Only one is named for a Virginia locality and that is the Saltville style (SvS).

third CCQ style gorget (see Figure 25) is here published for the first time.

Beyond Southwest Virginia, Citico-Carters Quarter style gorgets have been found widely spread, but principally in the Tennessee River Valley (Brain and Phillips 1996:91-102). Locally within Smyth County, the accumulating evidence suggests that CCQ style gorgets were abundant in Chilhowie and relatively scarce in Saltville.

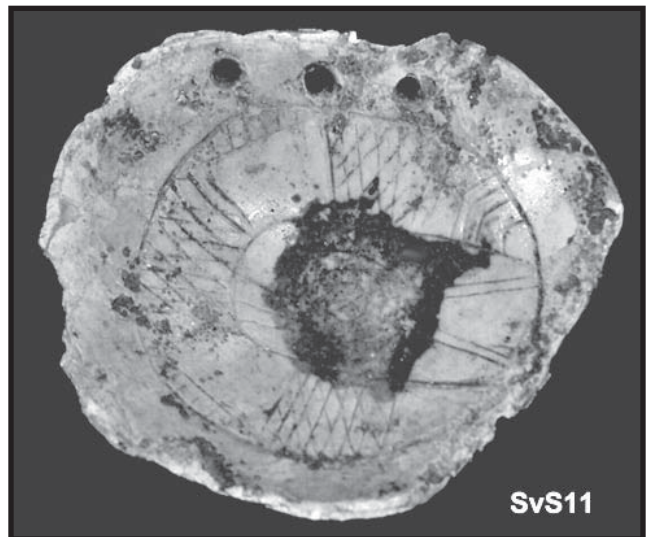


Figure 26. A 4" diameter Saltville style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-B6 and said by him to have come from the Buchanan site.

Saltville style gorgets were so-named by Jon Muller in his Ph.D. dissertation (Muller 1966a). The style consists of abstract rattlesnake images of a relatively simple design. Such gorgets were made in and around Saltville as a regional development by local artisans of the Lick Creek-Brakebill style, and according to Muller are of a late date – possibly as late as A.D. 1600.

Although Saltville style gorgets are unremarked in the traditional Virginia archeological literature, they have not failed to attract the attention of connoisseurs of Native American shell art (Maus 1999; Stein 2005).

There are five Saltville style gorgets on display at Space Farms (Figures 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30). Three of these (see Figures 26, 27, and 28) were seen by Muller in Saltville in 1965 in Rufus Pickle's collection and are pictured in his Ph.D. dissertation. The other two (see Figures 29 and 30) are here published for the first time.

The somewhat idiosyncratic Saltville style gorget pictured in Figure 27 was first illus-



Figure 27. A 2-1/4" diameter Saltville style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-M1 and said by him to have come from "Matheson." As explained in the text, this particular specimen can be retroactively provenienced to the Boat Yard Cliff, about 200 yards downstream from the former Mathieson soda ash plant in Saltville on the southeastern side of the North Fork of the Holston River.



Figure 28. A 3-1/4" diameter, fragmentary Saltville style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Sm-S2 and said by him to have come from Saltville.

trated and described by Rufus Pickle (1947) when he wrote: "It was found with a burial in a small cavity in the face of Boat Yard Cliff near Saltville." Many years later, when being interviewed by Frank Sanders, Pickle used slightly different language and said that this specimen had come from a "cleft in the cliff across from the Chlorine Plant" (Sanders 1971c).

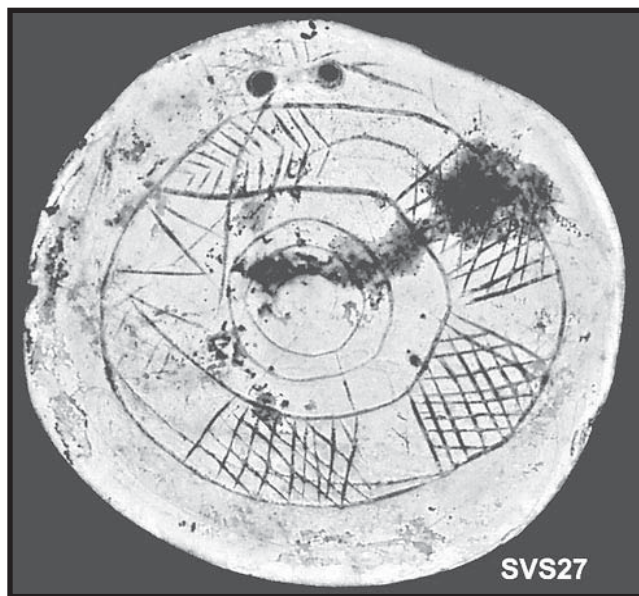


Figure 29. A 2-1/2" diameter Saltville style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.



Figure 30. A 1-1/2" diameter, fragmentary Saltville style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.



Figure 31. A 3" high mask style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

In contrast to most other styles of gorgets, those in the Saltville style are tightly geographically localized. With just one possible exception (a 1900 specimen known only from a drawing), all known published specimens come either from the upper Holston River Valleys (principally from in or near Saltville itself) or from the northwest North Carolina Piedmont (Hammett 1987; Brain and Phillips 1996:102-104). Unpublished work, which has added many additional specimens, confirms that conclusion.

Locally within Smyth County, the accumulating evidence reveals that while Saltville style gorgets were abundant in Saltville, none has been found in Chilhowie, only nine miles distant.

### Gorgets in Other Styles

Figure 31 shows a mask gorget on display at the Space Farms museum. While not necessarily engraved, the characteristic shape of mask gorgets makes them distinctive artifacts. Historically, only one mask gorget has been known from Southwest Virginia, and that was the specimen found in the Ely Mound in Lee County around 1875 (Carr 1878). However, current research has revealed evidence for many more mask style gorgets from the region. Mask gorgets are among the most widely distributed of any class of marine shell artifacts. They are abundant in West Virginia (Hoffman 1997) and have been found as far west as Montana (Lippincott 1997).

Like mask gorgets, cruciform (square cross) gorgets are not necessarily engraved, but they too as a family have a characteristic shape which makes them distinctive artifacts. Figure 32 shows a cruciform gorget in the Donnaha style on exhibit at the Space Farms museum. The eponymous Donnaha site is located on the Yadkin River in Forsyth County, North Carolina, 30 miles northwest of Winston-Salem (Rights 1947:272; Ward and Davis 1999:79). So the presence of a gorget in this style in the Saltville vicinity suggests a Late Woodland Period cultural connection from Smyth County to the North Carolina Piedmont.

Saltville and its environs have produced



Figure 32. A 2-1/4" diameter Donnaha style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

a number of gorgets in quite distinctive and presumably local styles. Two such gorgets are on exhibit at the Space Farms museum. Figure 33 shows a star design gorget originally seen and photographed by Jon Muller and classified by Brain and Phillips in the geometric style. Figure



Figure 33. A 2" diameter star style gorget designated by Jon Muller as Va-Ws-L3 and said by him to have come from Lyon's Farm in Washington County.

34 shows a previously unpublished gorget in the bulls-eye style. The gorget pictured in Figure 33 is nearly circular and measures slightly under 2" wide – smaller than the 3-1/4" reported in Brain and Phillips (1996:500). It has not been possible to ascertain the precise location of the Lyon's Farm site, whence this gorget is said to have come. There is a Lyon's Gap, but it is in Smyth, not Washington, County and that Lyon's Gap is not noted for having yielded artifacts. So a small mystery remains unsolved. Preliminary evidence suggests that both star style gorgets and bulls-eye style gorgets are characteristic cultural developments that arose in the Saltville region during the Late Woodland Period.

### Summary and Conclusions

The Pickle-Space collection is a remarkable record of Southwest Virginia Native American culture. Unfortunately, its value as an archeological record is greatly diminished by a lack of provenance. Nonetheless, the collection reminds us that the Native American heritage of Virginia was extremely rich and that the western end of the state had a high Late Woodland Period culture.

Gorgets are important to understanding the

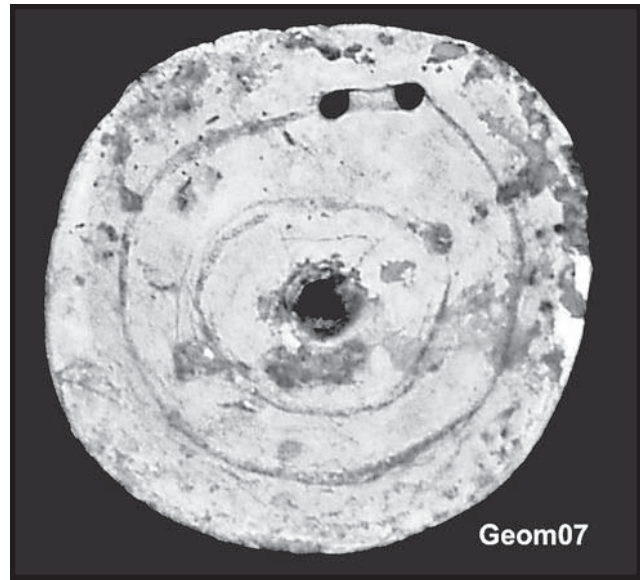


Figure 34. A 1-3/4" diameter bulls-eye style gorget. Its detailed provenience is unknown, but it is almost certainly from Southwest Virginia, and possibly from Saltville itself.

culture, the period, and the region because they are abundant, they are distinctive, and they retain and carry significant information even when their precise archeological context (provenience) is doubtful or unknown.

The engraved gorgets in the Pickle-Space collection are particularly valuable because studies of these and other gorgets may tell us something about the Late Woodland Period culture of Southwest Virginia.

For now, the relationships remain to be assessed between that culture and the contemporaneous Dallas and Mouse Creek cultures of Tennessee, the Southern Appalachian Mississippian culture of the Appalachian Summit, and the Catawba, Donnaha, and Saratown cultures of the North Carolina Piedmont. However, ongoing cataloging of Holstonian gorgets and their comparison with gorgets from nearby regions – as begun here – will allow some conclusions to be drawn about relations among the people of the Southwest Virginia culture and people of surrounding cultures.

The Pickle-Space collection deserves proper acknowledgment and formal cataloging. Perhaps we may hope that someday a graduate student from a Virginia university archeology department will be dispatched to Beemerville to make a complete photographic and documentary catalog of it.

Artifacts in the Pickle-Space collection, in conjunction with many other similar unpublished artifacts now known to have originated in the region, are likely to sharply change the traditional assessment of Southwest Virginia's Late Woodland Period archeology as not important.

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