

“WHO WERE THOSE INDIANS”

When one becomes an archaeologist they are equipped with large hand-held screens through which they sift dirt and sand. If they find an item to be significant then that relic and the information it bears could add to or change the pages of history. This is when their work becomes more than just an “earth-shaking” experience.

In 1983, archaeologists who entered into a four year study of Causton Bluff determined that human life did indeed exist here as early as 4,000 BC, but it took more than just sifting dirt to determine this. Bulldozers, radio carbon dating and a lot of modern science expertise were needed to confirm this information.

Who were those 4,000 BC residents of Causton Bluff? Yes, they were Indians but more than that they were descendants of Paleoindians – “paleo” meaning simply “ancient.” Paleocene history tells us that this is the era when placental mammals first appeared (internal placental feeding as opposed to laying eggs). Earlier in time, by 9,000 BC these ancient Indians were hunting game all over North America having arrived from Asia by way of a Bering land bridge that connected Siberia with what would be known as Alaska.

Discovering proof of our first Causton Bluff inhabitants wasn’t easy. First, they had to sift through their “middens”, the archaeologists term for “trash heaps.” Notable finds were “shards”, pieces of ceramics and animal bones, both not only revealing the Indian’s progress as a culture but also the types of fauna they hunted for food.

Since our paleoindians were first here at Causton Bluff, they came and went frequently being gone for as long as 100 years at a time. The American author Willa Cather (1873-1947) best explains the Indian’s behavior as a people who had no concept of land ownership feeling that the land was for everyone’s use but never to own.

Indians were also known to build earthen mounds all along the Georgia coast, some as high as 15 ft. Our Causton Bluff earthen mounds have three possible origins. Higher-ground earthen mounds could have been Indian-made and used both for burials and protection. Others are remnants of our Civil War Fort Bartow, and some are developer-made (ex. Causton Harbor Drive’s south side).

Our 1733 Indians were the Yamacraw of the Creek Nation with Tomochichi as their chief. They were friendly with the new English colonists and both lived in peace during their settlement. When Tomochichi died the Yamacraw gradually disappeared from the colony area.

The archaeologist’s middens made the telling of this story possible. But what about recording our future? Modern day garbage cans and incinerators will tell our future generations nothing because it appears that “middens” themselves have become a thing of the past.

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